

CHAPTER 6

THE CHURCHES AS SETTLEMENT INDICATORS

6.1 THE CHURCHES AND THEIR LOCATION

6.1.1 The problem:

Some of the most important written records on Norse Greenland deal with church matters.

Two geographical descriptions of the Eastern Settlement are based on the names and locations of churches: The so-called church-list of the Flateyjarbók, and the "Description of Greenland" by Ivar Baardson.

Also, the church ruins have been subject to special attention from the archaeologists, and are among the best dated ruins in the Eastern Settlement. As described in Chapter 2, much care has been taken to identify church ruins with the churches named in the church lists (Rafn GHM III:845, Schirmer 86 & 05a, Jónsson 98 & 30a, Bruun 15 (18), Nørlund 28, 67 (34), Nørlund & Stenberger 34:7-18, Vebæk 43b, 53a, 53b, 56b, 66, 68, Krogh 67, 75a, 76, 82a, 82b, 83. See Langer Andersen 82 for a review).

Special interest has been tied to a particular group of "small" churches with a circular churchyard, the so-called Qorlortoq-type. These churches and churchyards are of particular interest, and a possible influence from the Celtic area is discussed below.

As few of the ordinary ruin-groups have offered possibilities for dating, the church ruins represent perhaps the most important group of material for the dating of ruin-groups at present.

In the following, I will use the church sites to try and locate initial settlement areas, in order to understand the ecological adaptation of these settlements. I will also discuss the two church lists and their relevance.

But first I will start with a brief description of the church ruins and their dating.

6.1.2 The churches of the Eastern Settlement:

Today, ruins of 23 church buildings on 17 locations are known in the Eastern Settlement (Krogh 82 a & b), see PLATE 23 below.

The church lists contain 10 and 12 locations respectively, and are not fully corresponding with each other (Langer Andersen 82:173, Krogh 82a:125-131).

Among the ruins a particular group of small churches may be singled out.

The group consists of 7 churches. They are small, and with a circular or near-circular churchyard, usually called the Qorlortoq-type. Except for the so-called Tjodhild's Church at Ø-29a, nothing exact is known about their building construction.

The other churches are of diverse sizes and types, and will be dealt with later. In the following setup they will be called **ordinary**, to separate them from the **small** churches. The cathedral is large, even by Norwegian standards, but will be included among the ordinary churches in this section.

These labels are of course vague and inaccurate, but they will serve the purpose. A more detailed discussion of sizes and types will follow in Section 6.2. Till then, the reader will have to study PLATE 27 for details in size and lay-out.

The distinction does, however, carry a significance, as the "ordinary" churches are believed by for instance Krogh (67, 75a, 76a, 82a & b) and Vebæk (66, 68) to be of some official status, while the smaller churches are believed to have been private chapels, 'bænhús' (oratorium, prayer-house) or the like (see Section 2.7.2 above). This will be discussed later.

In the following, I have listed the churches, identified by the ruin-groups to which they belong, together with the modern name of the location. The asterisk "*" refers to the ordinary churches, and the letter "S" (small) refers to the small churches, as listed in the column at right.

EASTERN SETTLEMENT CHURCHES:		
Ruin-group number	modern name of location	group
Ø-1	Nunataaq	?
Ø-18	Narsap Ilua	*
Ø-23	Sillisit	*
Ø-29a	Qassiarsuq (Brattahlid II & III)	*
Ø-29a	Qassiarsuq	S
Ø-33	Qorlortoq	S
Ø-35	Qorlortup Itinnera	S
Ø-47	Igaliku	* (cathedral)
Ø-48	Igaliku	S
Ø-64	Inoquassaat	S
Ø-66	Igaliku Kujalleq	*
Ø-78	Egaluit	S
Ø-83	Qaqortukulook	*
Ø-105	Tasermiutsiaat	*
Ø-111	Ikigaat	*
Ø-149	Narssarsuaq in Uunatoq	*
Ø-162	Narsaq in Uunatoq	S
SUMS:	6 ordinary, 7 small, 1 uncertain	

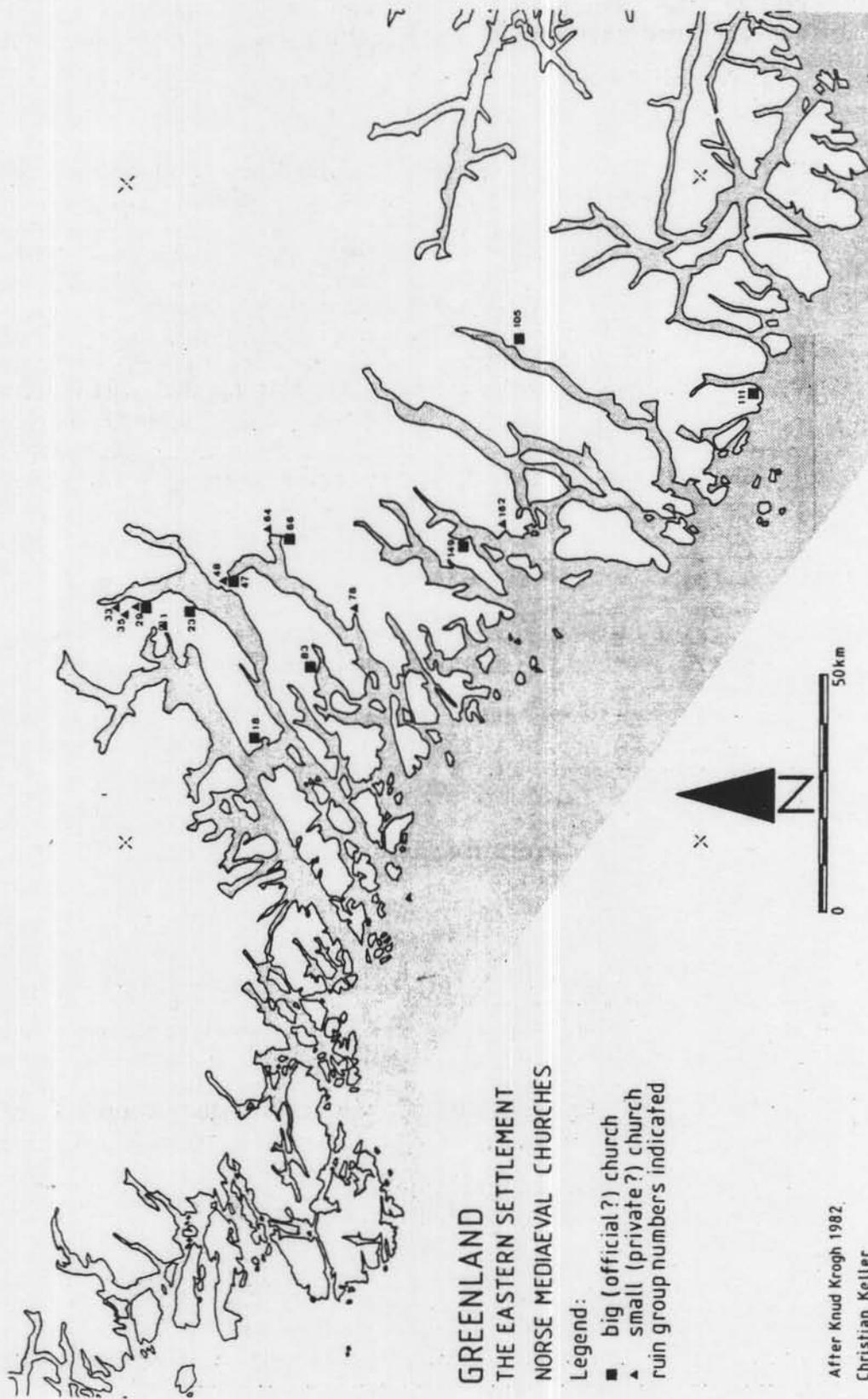


PLATE 23

6.1.3 The location of the churches:

In PLATE 23 the churches are presented on a map, with different signatures for ordinary and small churches. (The cathedral is counted as ordinary).

When regarding this map, one thing is striking. The church locations appear to fall in two parallel lines, roughly following the coast line.

The inner line is made up of churches at the head of the fjords, representing settlements with good access to inland pastures. They will be called **inner fjord sites**.

The outer line is made up of churches lying about half way out the fjords. These sites have access to the outer coast as well as to reasonable pastures. They will be called **mid-fjord sites**.

One church location, Ø-111 Ikigaat (Herjolfsnes), deviates from these two lines, lying on the outer coast.

Presented in a table, sizes marked as above, the distribution is like this.

CHURCH LOCATIONS IN DIFFERENT ZONES:		
Inner fjord	Mid-fjord	Outer coast
Ø-105 *	Ø-162 S	Ø-111 *
Ø-66 *	Ø-149 *	
Ø-64 S	Ø-78 S	
Ø-47 *	Ø-83 *	
Ø-48 S	Ø-18 *	
Ø-23 *		
Ø-33 S		
Ø-35 S		
Ø-1 ?		
Ø-29 * + S		
Sums: 10	5	1

If all church sites are counted, we have 10 church locations in the inner fjord area (Qassiarsuq counted as one), 5 in the mid-fjord area, and 1 on the outer coast. As Ø-47 and Ø-48 both are located on the Igaliku plain, the inner fjord sites should perhaps be counted as 9.

If we eliminate the small churches and count the churches of a possible official status, we have:

5 churches in the inner fjord area
3 churches in the mid-fjord area
1 church on the outer coast

This distribution is hardly accidental. Churches are usually located at central points within a settlement, and it must be assumed that the location of the Greenland churches also indicate points of some importance within the settlement.

If so, this distribution of church locations may actually indicate settlements with different types of ecological adaptation.

The one church on the outer coast is Ø-111 Ikigaat, usually

identified as Herjolfsnes, on the trans-Atlantic trading port Sandhavn. The basis for the location of this church may thus diverge from that of the others.

The distributive pattern will be discussed in more detail.

6.2 CHURCH TYPES AND CHRONOLOGY

6.2.1 The Qorlortoq-type churches:

These are the small churches mentioned above. With the possible exception of Ø-29a Qassiarsuk (the so-called Tjodhild's church at Brattahlid), all of them have a circular dike surrounding the churchyard. There are 7 such churches located in the Eastern Settlement, see PLATE 27 below. As they are rather difficult to spot, it is likely that the figure will increase with closer survey. The churches are

- Ø - 29a Qassiarsuk (Brattahlid I)
- Ø - 33 Qorlortoq
- Ø - 35 Qorlortup Itinnera
- Ø - 48 Igaliku (Gardar)
- Ø - 64 Inoquasaat
- Ø - 78 Equaluit
- Ø - 162 Narsaq in Uunatoq

The most important of these is the one at Ø-29a Qassiarsuk (Brattahlid I), usually called Tjodhild's Church, PLATE 24 below. It was excavated 1961-65, and even if its presumed connection with Eric the Red's wife Tjodhild is doubtful (Krogh 75a:139), it definitely belongs to the 11th century.

It appeared to be a wooden construction with protective walls of turf. The walls were curved, as in Viking Period long-houses. 144 bodies had been buried around it. The position of the graves indicate a circular churchyard, although no enclosing dike was found. A section of a turf wall found directly outside the churchyard may be the remains of a surrounding dike, but most probably it is part of a fence surrounding the farm (Krogh 65 and 82a:33 - 60, Jansen 72:102, Meldgaard 64 & 82).

Except for trial excavations that show the existence of burials in the churchyards of Ø-33 and Ø-35 (Nørlund & Stenberger 34:15-16), the other churches in this group have not been excavated, and hence little is known about their construction and dating.

Usually, this group of churches has been related to similar churches in Iceland (Krogh 82a:38-39 & 122, but see Section 2.7.1 for references and review). Krogh suggests that these churches should be regarded as wooden constructions, similar to the early wooden churches in Norway, and that the protective wall of turf was an adaptation to a treeless environment in the Atlantic Isles (op. cit.:122).

So far, no attempt has been made to compare these churches with the roughly 50 turf churches in Northern Norway (Reidar Bertelsen, pers. comm.). This will be more closely discussed in Section 6.2.3 below).

6.2.2 The circular churchyards:

One feature which deserves special mention, as it has not been subject to previous discussion, is the circular churchyard, known from 7, possibly 8 locations, see PLATE 27 below.

The remains of a circular dike was found at the other church-site at Qassiarsuk, belonging to Brattahlid II, PLATE 25 below (Nørlund & Stenberger 34:34-35). As this church probably succeeded Brattahlid I after a relatively short period of function, it may belong to the late 1000s or the early 1100s.

This is the best indication we have that the circular churchyard is an early phenomenon in Greenland.

As the circular churchyards appear together with two early churches, and shortly after the *landnám* at that, this feature must certainly have developed outside Greenland.

Circular churchyards seem to have been common in Iceland in later times (Bruun 28a:169, Nørlund & Stenberger 34:35, Thórdarson 43:134). Magnús Már Lárusson claims that the circular or oval shaped churchyards were the oldest, while the rectangular were later. He refers to the churchyards in Greenland as part of his argument (KLN VIII:401).

Roussell mentions a circular churchyard at Oluf's church at Gunnsteinstadir in Iceland. He discusses the church, but does not comment on the dating of the churchyard (Roussell 41:116).

Gudbrandur Jónsson has discussed the shape of the churchyards in Iceland. He lists the following churches or church locations with circular churchyards:

Bólstadarhlíð
 Draflastadir
 Gásar
 Gunnsteinsstadir
 Háls í Fnjóskadalur
 Hof í Öræfi
 Hofsstadir í Skagafjórður
 Hrafnagil
 Núpufell
 Saurbær í Eyjafjórður
 Selárdallur
 Ulfljótsvatn
 Vatnsfjórður
 Vídimyri
 (Thorodd-) Stadir í Kinn
 (From Jónsson 29:74 - 75).

(The church at Gásar referred by Jónsson is depicted with a circular churchyard in a map of Gásar in Eyjafjórður in Jónsson 08:(plates), also in Bárðarson 82:73, & Stefánsson 86:82).

In addition can be mentioned a ruin at Hofstadir in Thorskafjórður. It has an appearance similar to the churches with circular churchyards, but competing traditions label it as a 'hov', i. e. a pagan temple, and a 'bænhús', i. e. a church (Olsen 66:199). Olaf Olsen seems inclined to accept it as an early church site (Olsen 66:201).

Jónsson's explanation to this phenomenon is partly functional, in that a circular dike is shorter than a rectangular. But he does state the possibility that the circle had a symbolic value. He also makes

the interesting statement that circular churchyards were common in a number of countries, such as England, Germany and France, as well as in the early churches of Africa (?) (Jónsson 29:76-78).

Olaf Olsen suggests that the circular shape may have been a logical consequence of the shape of the Viking Period churches with curved walls (Olsen 66:199-201).

A churchyard of special interest was excavated at the deserted farm Skeljastadir in Thjósardalur, Iceland. From the position of the burials, the churchyard was estimated to be circular, and roughly 20 meters across. (The Eastern Settlement churchyards vary from say 18 - 22 m in diameter). The church was assumed by the excavators to have been built shortly after the year 1000 (Thórdarson 43:134).

In any case, it was evidently abandoned before or under the Hekla eruption which is now dated to 1104. (By the time of excavation, this eruption was believed to have taken place in 1300 (Thórarinsson 67:50-54, Steffensen 75:109-132, Rafnsson 76:91)).

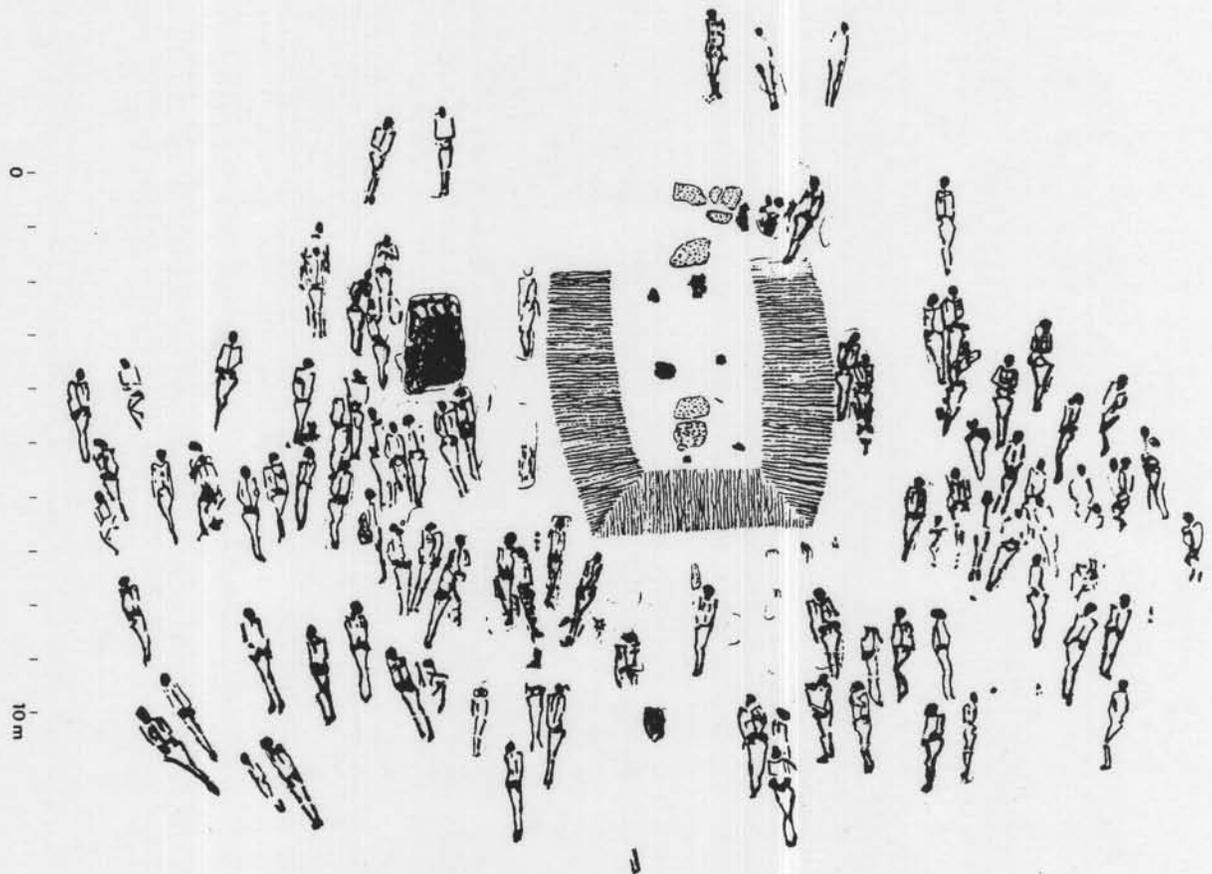


PLATE 24

The church BRATTAHLID I, the so-called "Tjodhild's Church", at Ø-29a Qassiarsuk. From Krogh 82a:47.

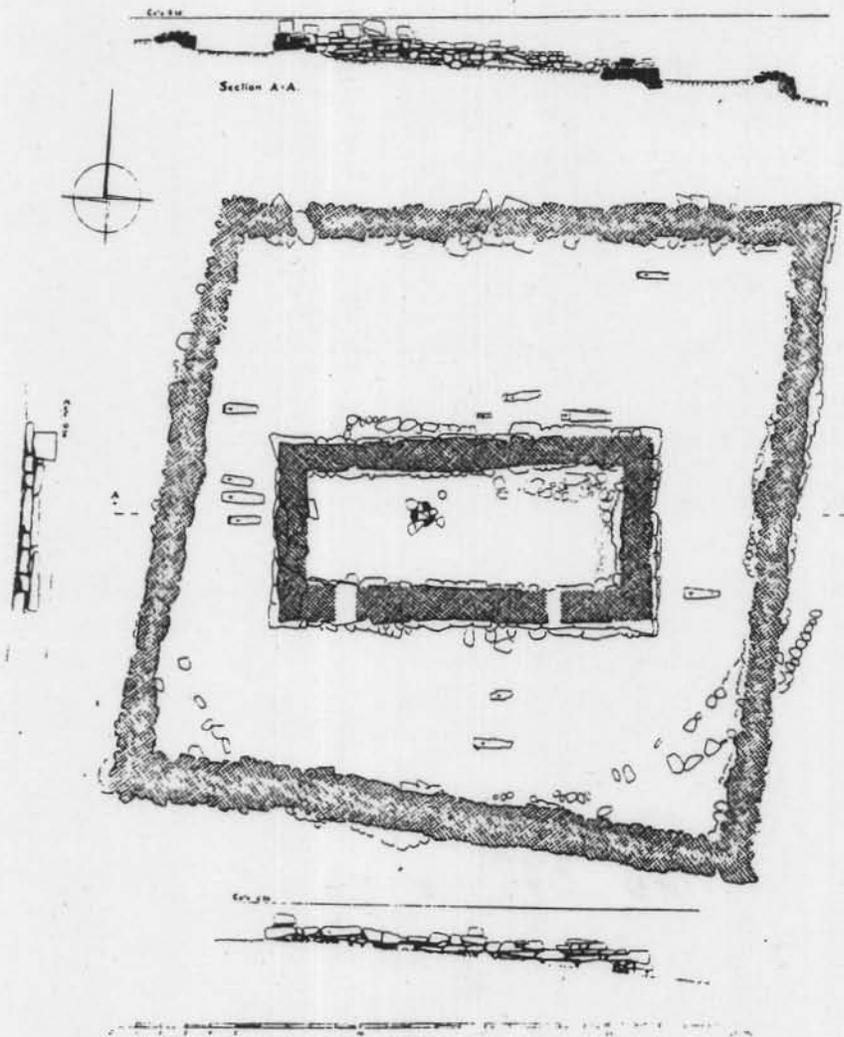


PLATE 25

The churches BRATTAHLID II (outlined) and BRATTAHLID III (hatched) at Ø-29a in Qassiarsuq. The foundations for a circular church dike appear to belong to the Brattahlid II situation.

Also note that the northern walls of the two churches are slightly askew, indicating a change in the east-west axis.

From Nørlund & Stenberger 34: fig. 12.

Certain regulations in Iceland say that a main church owned its surroundings in a circumference of 40 steps, while a chapel owned only a circumference of 30 steps (Dipl. Isl. II, doc. 127). This must be considered minimum figures, and it is a question whether it was ever followed (Lárusson in KLN M VIII:400).

The question is:

Where did the idea of circular churchyards originate? Was it developed in Iceland before the landnám in Greenland, or did the

Icelanders learn it somewhere else?

So far, the presence of circular churchyards in Norway has been unknown, or at least not been considered noteworthy of discussion in the literature. Thus previous authors have had little reason (or opportunity) to argue that the tradition of circular churchyards in the West Atlantic was derived from Norway. A closer study of the Norwegian material reveals that there is more to this than meets the eye. This will be discussed more closely below.

For the time being, however, the most obvious place to seek the provenance of the circular churchyards is in Celtic Britain.

Ireland was, according to the Irish annals, Christened by St. Patric in the 5th century (de Paor 67:28). During the sixth century, the Irish Church developed to a strong monastic system, and became a church of monks (op. cit.:49-52). The layout of the Irish monasteries is of special interest:

"The settlement was usually in a large rath or ringfort, i.e. a circular enclosure bounded by a stone or earthen bank with a ditch outside. Within the enclosure the most important building was the church or oratory, a rectangular structure of oaken planks or of wattle and daub. In spite of its importance this building seems rarely to have been of even moderate size. The cellae or huts (usually of wickerwork) of the monks were dispersed about the enclosure, one or two monks usually, but sometimes more, to a cell. The other buildings of importance were the guest-house (tech n-oiged) and the refectory (praindtech), and if the monastery was of any importance there was also a school." (de Paor 67: 53-54).

The contrast between these monasteries and the strict rectangularism of the Continental orders is striking. But the interesting part is the fact that the monks continued the tradition of living in raths or ringforts, although these constructions were now called monasteries. This tradition is undoubtedly Celtic, and without influence from Roman architecture or the Roman Catholic Church.

The same applies to the early Celtic Christian cemeteries, which seem to continue pagan Celtic burial traditions, transformed into Christianity. They are described like this:

"The numerically smaller communities, inhabiting less populated tracts in the southwest, west and north, (of Britain, my comment) favored in sub-Roman times small enclosed burial-grounds - frequently marked by walls or banks or ditches, which enclose little oval or near-circular plots - whose Christian character is not really in doubt. ... In very many cases it seems that, ... small churches were erected within them.

Excavations can reveal that such churches, if built (say) in the late 7th century, are likely to be sited unwittingly and directly above burials of the 6th or even 5th century." (Thomas 86:136).

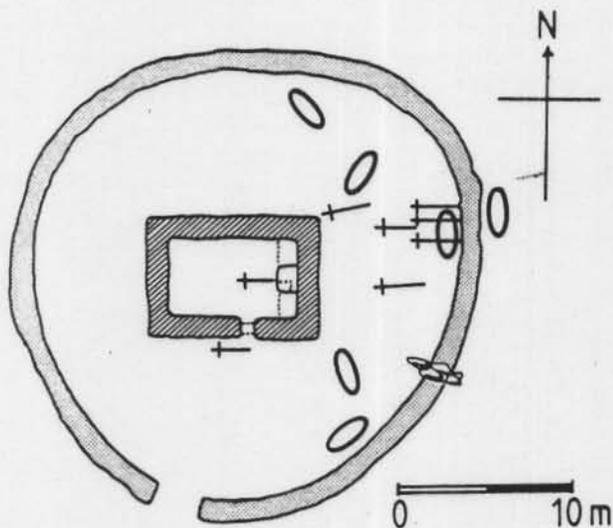
Thomas argues that "the sacred circle", whose boundary separates the holy from the profane, was present in Britain for at least three

millenia, beginning with the neolithic henges. And the enclosed Christian cemeteries may be viewed as the primary field-monuments of insular Christianity (Thomas 71a:51-53).

There are also numerous examples of Christian cemeteries of this type imposed upon, and spatially coterminous with, pre-Christian burial grounds (Thomas loc. cit.).

Thomas traces the origin to a common north-west European Iron Age burial tradition (Thomas op. cit.:53-90). But the examples of transformation of circular enclosed pagan burial-grounds into Christian cemeteries are clearly dominating the Celtic area:

Thomas lists a great number of famous examples from Northern Britain (Thomas op. cit.:53-90). Among them can be mentioned St. Ninian's point, Isle of Bute (Aitken 55) see PLATE 26; Ardwall Isle, Kirkcudbright (Thomas 67); and possibly Church Island, Co. Kerry (O'Kelly 58).



- Phase 1, non-Christian grave?
- † Phase 2, Christian grave

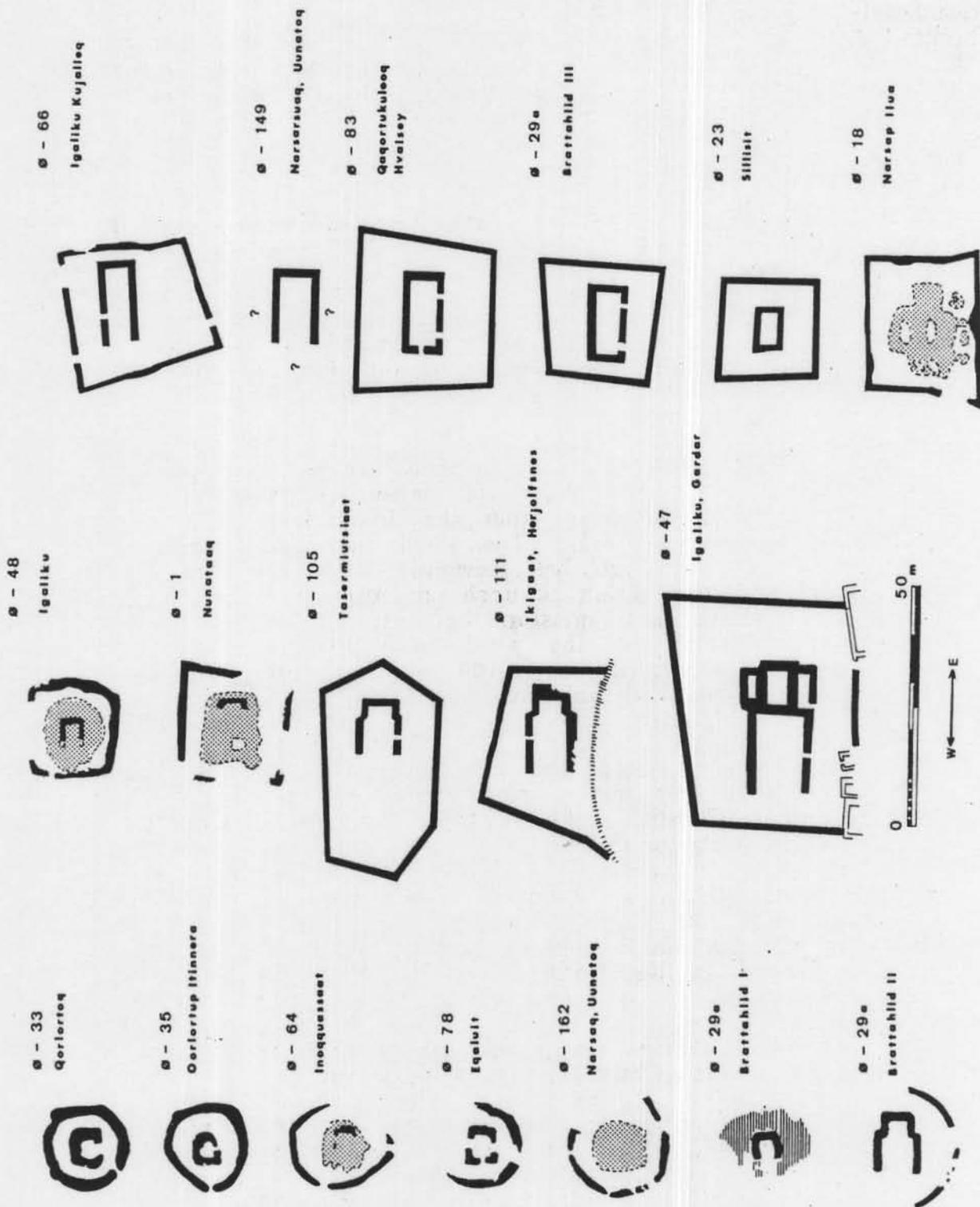
PLATE 26

Enclosed cemetery of the developed type, at St. Ninian's point, Isle of Bute in western Scotland. Aitken 55, after Thomas 71:56.

PLATE 27, facing page:

THE CHURCHES OF THE EASTERN SETTLEMENT

Sources: Ø-33: Plan from Nordic Archaeological Expedition 1976. Ø-35: Plan by Balslev Jørgensen, Eldjarn & Krogh 1962 (Archives D.N.M.). Ø-64: Plan by Asmussen, Albrethsen, Motzfeldt & Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-78: Plan by Motzfeldt, Albrethsen & Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-162: Plan by Albrethsen, Motzfeldt & Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-29a (Brattahlid I):Krogh 82a:47. Brattahlid II & III: Nørlund & Stenberger 34:34. Ø-48: Plan by Albrethsen & Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-1: Plan by Albrethsen 1971 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-105: Roussell 41:106). Ø-111:Nørlund 24:192-193. Ø-66: Plan by Albrethsen, Asmussen & Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-149: Krogh 82a:123. Ø-83: Roussell 41:121, Krogh 82a:84. Ø-23: Report by Vebæk 1969, plan by Albrethsen & Berglund 1971 (Archives D. N. M.). Ø-18: Plan by Krogh 1968 (Archives D. N. M.).



There are also a few examples in the Germanic area, such as Putten, Gelderland in the Netherlands (featuring a Saxon cemetery); Audincourt at Holzerlingen near Wurtemberg; and Bernerring near Basle (from: Thomas 71a:61). Gudbrandur Jónsson mentions Hartmannsweiler in Elsass (Jónsson 29:77).

Thomas distinguishes between "undeveloped" cemeteries, marked by the enclosure and a pillar, cross-incised slab or a special grave at the center; and the "developed" type, with oratories, chapels, internal divisions and even huts (Thomas 71a:50-51 & 67, & 71b:111).

Parish-churches of later times often reveal a direct continuity from these types (Thomas 71b:111).

The evidence of contact between the Vikings and the Celtic Christian area is abundant (see for instance Brøgger 29, Shetelig 33, 40 & 54, Bøe 40, Grieg 40, Petersen 40, Marstrander 63, Bakka 65a, Blindheim 76, Wamers 85, Crawford 87, Fellows-Jensen 87).

And the idea of Celtic influence on early Christian tradition in Scandinavia and Iceland is hardly controversial (see for instance Helle 88:47), although the older arguments for an Irish influence on Norwegian churches of the Romanesque period (see for instance Schirmer 1900-1905) are now doubted. As for the Vikings in the British Isles, Haakon Shetelig wrote:

"...it is evident enough that the mission augmented early in the Viking settlement areas (in present Britain, my comment), and that it came from the Irish clergy, who found this task near at hand. The small stone-chapels in the Orkneys and Man, ect. has previously been mentioned as typical for the Irish church organization, and demonstrate where the mission had its source. The Norwegian emigrants to the west have greatly been converted to Christianity say 100 years before this religion was introduced in their homeland." (Shetelig 33:190, my translation).

In Iceland, Landnámabók states that the country was totally pagan for the first 100 years, but this is not believed to be factual. The same book describes Christian colonists from this period, and their ties with the Celtic area. (Helgason 25:18).

Most of them were descendants of Ketill Flatnefur ("Flatnose"), a man of Norwegian origin who conquered the Hebrides, where he came in contact with the Christian religion (Helgason 25:13-18). It has been argued that Celtic cultural elements in Iceland to some extent were suppressed by the Norse writers (Hastrup 85:8), and Jón Jóhannesson writes that

(There are) "...stories in Landnámabók that certain Landnáms-men were Christians or semi-Christians. There are also preserved stories (about these men) which indicate a Celtic influence. In the long run, however, Norse language and culture proved to be the stronger. Celtic personal names also waned after some time. ...The Irish Christianity had to withdraw too, and the Icelandic population was, for a period, nearly totally pagan." (Jóhannesson 69:17, my translation).

Jóhannesson argues, in other words, that Celtic cultural tradition and Christianity had practically vanished by the time when Christianity was again introduced and finally accepted by the 'Allting' (General Assembly) in 999 or 1000.

The question is, of course, how profound this break in tradition actually was, and whether some of the Celtic Christian elements lived on in the "new" Christian tradition.

The circular churchyards in Iceland and Greenland are of the developed type, if we are to employ Thomas' terminology.

There was a marked break in the monastic and clerical tradition of the Irish church in the 12th century, marking its subjection to Canterbury and Rome (de Paor 67:171-175). As these events also opened Ireland to the (official) Romanesque style, it is unlikely that Celtic Christian styles were spread after this century.

This may be taken as an indication that the Christian Celtic influence on the Norse population took place early, and was already part of the Norse Christian tradition around the time of the landnám in Greenland, i. e. shortly before the year 1000.

But there can be no doubt that the circular cemeteries were known to Norse peoples before this time. The areas in insular Britain that were raided by the Norse in the 8th and 9th centuries, and eventually colonized by them, featured circular enclosed Christian cemeteries, with and without chapels.

It is interesting in this connection to note that Knut Helle has pointed out that the Orkneys may have functioned as a bridgehead by which some of the early Christian and ecclesiastical impulses passed to Norway from the British Isles (Helle 88:47).

Radford has argued that the spread of the cult of St. Patric to Normandy, Brittany, Isle of Man and Solway was carried out by Irish-Norse dynasties (Radford 67:124).

Further, the areas with circular cemeteries were much the same that featured the stone crosses, many of them were in fact raised within such cemeteries. The origin and dating of the many groups of ogams and "high crosses" is a complex discussion, and somewhat secondary to our subject. Here, it shall just be noted that it has been argued that some types may have developed from wooden crosses (Thomas 71a:123).

As noted above, stone crosses and circular cemeteries were parts of the same tradition. In south-west Norway about 60 stone crosses are known. The main part of these are distributed like this: 24 in Rogaland, 9 in Hordaland, 18 in Sogn og Fjordane. These are generally taken as evidence of Christian influence from the British Isles during the 10th and early 11th century (Birkeli 73 & 82, Birkeli in: KLN VII:118-122, see also Magerøy 53:55).

It is interesting in this connection to note that most of the finds of Irish jewelry and relics from the Early Viking Period come from roughly the same area, with Rogaland in the lead, and after it Sogn og Fjordane and Nord-Trøndelag (Shetelig 33:164, Sognnes 79:19, Wamers 85:49-57). Also, some are found at the trading port Kaupang in Vestfold, in South East Norway (Blindheim 76, Heyerdahl-Larsen 81).

Shetelig draws the conclusion that people from these areas of Western Norway dominated in the Viking raids and emigration to Ireland in the 9th century (Shetelig 33:164).

If the stone crosses in Norway can be taken as evidence of an early Irish Christianity, I would find it likely that some of the first

Christians in south-west Norway buried their dead in circular cemeteries, perhaps of the "undeveloped" type.

The question is whether we have further evidence of circular churchyards within the Nordic area? I have tried to uncover as many examples of circular churchyards as possible, to show the archaeological potential. It appeared, however, that the material is richer than first believed, and I have no illusions that the lists below are complete.

Let us first have a look at the churchyards of the undeveloped type outside Norway.

Åland (in Finland):

Three circular churchyards are known in Åland, between Sweden and Finland (Stig Dreijer, pers. comm.).

Sweden:

Gräslund points to an area in Uppland and Västmanland with indications of early Christian religion, based on rune-stones and early stone-churches, some of them round (Gräslund 87:88). This would be a likely area to look for circular cemeteries.

A possible Christian cemetery has been discovered at Birka, but nothing is known about its shape or enclosure (Gräslund 80, & 87:84-85).

In Sântorp, Västergötland, is excavated a burial ground enclosed by a circular fence of erected slabs of limestone. The enclosure was 22 meters in diameter, and contained 32 graves, dated to the beginning of the 11th century (Skara Tidning of January 24. 1972, Lundstrøm 84:7, Gräslund 87:86).

In Löddeköpinge, Skåne, a similar 11th century cemetery was surrounded by a ditch, possibly with an adjacent earthen wall (Ohlsson 78:8 & fig. 5, Cinthio 80:114 & fig. 2, cited from Gräslund 87:86).

At the Viking and Medieval site Kapelludden in Öland, a Gothic (!) stone cross is encircled by a bank of limestone and earth, 17 meters in diameter (Fernholm 86: 13, 14, 29 & 30).

Similar constructions are said to exist elsewhere in Öland (op. cit. with reference to Anderson 31).

Orkneys:

At the Brough of Deerness the remains of a wooden Norse church, of a type typical to the late 11th or early 12th century, has been uncovered in association with a Viking settlement. Excavation of the early churchyard uncovered a curved, narrow gully, possibly with an inner fence of wooden stakes (Morris 87:123-125). The excavators draw no conclusions from this feature, and the dating is uncertain.

These examples are all possible cases of circular Christian cemeteries, and with a possible exception for Brough of Deerness, they may all belong to the "undeveloped type".

Now, let us have a look at the churchyards of the developed type.

Sweden:

In **St. Olofs hamn (Gammelhamn)** at **Fårö**, north east of Gotland, Sweden, is the ruin of a chapel, **St. Olof's Church**, within an oval shaped churchyard. There are 15 pagan graves in the vicinity, and early medieval pottery found in the nearby lagoon indicate a prehistoric / early medieval environment (Munthe 42).

Denmark:

Olaf Olsen has demonstrated that the old churchyard around **Tingsted Church** in **Falster** was circular (Olsen 66:258-263). Its dating is uncertain.

Taken with all possible reservation, these cemeteries may indicate an early Irish influence on the Nordic countries.

Knud J. Krogh has suggested a circular church dike around the first church at **Sandi** in the **Faroe Islands**, but this is, as the author says, a suggestion and not based on archaeological evidence (Krogh 83:233, see also Diklev 81:17).

Under the church near the Viking Period fortress **Aggersborg** in **Jutland, Denmark**, an 11th century cemetery surrounded by a ditch was discovered under the present church, but this seems to have been straight (Græbe & Roesdahl 77:14 & fig. 3, Græbe 86:177).

Thus we undoubtedly also have an early tradition of rectangular churchyards in the Nordic countries.

Now, let us have a closer look at Norway:

One possible case is **Mosterøy** in **Rogaland**, where a near-circular churchyard surrounded an 11th century church (Øverland 87:351).

Rounded, though not circular churchyards are found surrounding a church ruin at **Opnan** in **Nordkapp** (see PLATE 31 below), and another at **Makhaugen, Båtsfjord**, both in **Finmark**. The church at **Opnan** was probably deserted around 1600, the church at **Makhaugen** was last mentioned in 1589 (Bratrein, reports).

The so-called **St. Maria's churchyard** at **Borgund** in **Sunnmøre** has a rounded shape, although not completely circular. Nothing is known about its dating, but it appears from a description in 1766 that it was completely in ruins at the time (Aars 05:129-131).

The medieval churchyard at **Hillesøy, Troms**, seems originally to have been circular, but was later extended to one side (Karl-Dag Vorren 88).

A similar extension from a semi-circle can be observed at the churchyard around the medieval (Romanesque) stone church at **Borre** in **Vestfold**. It is depicted in a similar way on a map from 1852. Nothing is known about its dating. If the semi-circle is completed to a full circle, the church will touch the periphery, but not the center of the

circle. Can the semi-circle be the remains of the original churchyard, built for an older, wooden church?

The churchyard around the ruins of **Korskirken** in medieval Oslo has a similar shape, i.e. it is rounded at one side.

Bernt Lange has observed the remains of a circular church dike at the site of **Nesland stave-church** in Vinje, Telemark, (torn down in 1850) and an elliptic shaped dike around the stave church at **Eidsborg**, in Lårdal, Telemark. He draws no conclusion on their dating, but assumes that they are older than the present rectangular churchyards (Bernt Lange, pers. comm.).

A near-circular cemetery can be found at **Engesland** in Birkenes, Aust-Agder (Økonomisk Kartverk, map-sheet BL 013-5-4, see also **Iveland Church** in Aust-Agder, map-sheet BJ 011-5-2).

In addition must be mentioned the many turf churches of Northern Norway, of which we have very little information. There may be more circular churchyards among them than the ones mentioned above.

"Churchyards of the Black Death":

A near-circular construction, 13 - 15 m.s across, is found at the tiny island **Taralden** in Rygge, and another at the island **Akerøya**, Hvaler, both in Østfold. In later times they were used as burial-places for corpses found in the sea, but according to tradition they were also cemeteries "from before the Black Death". (Økonomisk Kartverk, survey report from Rygge, Grefsrud G. nr. 30/1).

A similar tradition is linked to a circular enclosure in **Mollesund** in Båhuslän, Sweden (Hans Andersson, pers. comm.).

As this is just a first survey of the material, we may safely assume that the number of circular churchyards will increase with systematic work.

In fact, most of the sites mentioned have one thing in common: Nothing or very little is known about the dating of the churchyard, simply because the subject has not been found to be of interest.

Altogether, the findings referred above may indicate that circular churchyards were more common in Northern Europe than previously believed, but as yet our knowledge about their dating is insufficient to draw reliable conclusions.

Accordingly, we must be open for the possibility that the circular churchyards may have been known, and even common, in Norway in early Christian times. In that case, the emigrants to the West Atlantic may have brought the idea of circular churchyards with them from Norway, although it is nearer at hand to suggest that the idea was derived from Ireland. Obviously, this subject needs further scrutiny before the question can be settled.

The "official" Christian mission to Norway was basically an 11th century affair, carried out by Norwegian kings.

Most of their contacts in this respect were in England, and the Anglo-Saxon church is usually considered the "mother" of the Norwegian church, even if the country sorted under the Archbishop of Hamburg/Bremen in Germany until 1104, and under the Archbishop

of Lund in Denmark (present Sweden) until 1152/53 (see Taranger 90, Birkeli 82:26-29, Helle 88). At that time, Norway got its own archbishop in Nidaros (Trondheim).

The Roman Catholic Church, and that includes Canterbury, continued the architectural tradition of the Romans, hence the Romanesque style. Equally, the Continental orders based the layout of their monasteries on the architectural principles of the Roman villa.

In Norway, Romanesque style is present from an early stage, even if the style of the earliest church buildings are somewhat obscure (see PLATE 28 below). Celtic or Celtic-Romanesque stylistic features are virtually absent in these churches (Håkon Christie, pers. comm.). It is, in other words, difficult to demonstrate a continuity from the Celtic Christian influence, as signalled by the stone crosses, to the Roman Catholic Church of the 11th century, at least on architectural arguments.

The circular churchyards in Iceland and Greenland are, however, most probably evidence of a Celtic Christian style. And it may indeed be asked if this stylistic feature also symbolized a Celtic Christian faith. Whether this tradition was brought to Iceland by Irish monks or by Norse Christians can be subject to discussion. But I see no reason to doubt that it could be brought to Greenland with people of Norse heritage.

The fact that most of the larger (and later) churches of Greenland feature rectangular churchyards may bear evidence of the attachment to the Roman Catholic Church. This attachment was made formal in 1123, when the Greenlanders decided to apply for the appointment of a Bishop of Greenland. He was appointed in Lund in 1125 (GHM II:682-684, III:6, 44, 76, 676, 680).

To me, the material discussed above indicate a Celtic Christian influence on much of the Norse population around the Atlantic, say during the 9th and 10th centuries.

In Norway, the traces of this influence may have been overrun, perhaps even deliberately removed, under the Roman Catholic Church. While in the more independent Iceland and far-away Greenland, some traits continued. For how long they continued in Greenland will not be known until the Qorlortoq-type churches are properly excavated and dated.

As indicated above, the big question is to what degree the circular churchyard was a mere stylistic feature, i.e. a passive symbol, or whether it also represented elements of a Celtic Christian faith, i.e. an active symbol. Could it be that introduction of the Romanesque style was considered an active symbol of attachment to the Roman Catholic Church?

Is it farfetched to use the shape of the cemeteries as evidence in this matter? I think not. In the Gulating Law, Chapters 12 & 13 of the "Christian Section", it is clearly stated that maintenance of the churchyard and its fence (Chapter 13) is as important as maintenance of the church building (Chapter 12). Thus the fines for offense against these paragraphs are the same (Robberstad 69:24-25).

Even if this part of the law is later than our case, it is an indication that the churchyard was subject to the same reverence and care as the church itself. This near-contemporary attitude must, to my opinion, be a strong argument for accepting the feature as important.

6.2.3 The churches with a narrow chancel:

These churches have a chancel that is narrower than the nave. They also have the peculiar feature of an "open" west wall, without trace of masonry or turf. There are 5 such churches in the Eastern Settlement. These are:

- Ø- 29a Qassiarsuq (Brattahlid II)
- Ø- 47 Igaliku (Gardar I)
- Ø- 47 Igaliku (Gardar II)
- Ø-105 Tasermiutsiaat
- Ø-111 Ikigaat (Herjolfsnes)

See PLATES 25 and 27 (above) and 30 (below). Nørlund regarded these churches to be the latest type, and indicated the church at Ikigaat (Herjolfsnes) to be built around 1200 (Nørlund 67:30).

This idea was based mainly on English parallels; and it may even be true for Irish churches, where the chancel appears to be a later addition to the rectangular church, aimed to give space for a larger congregation (Leask 55:76). This evolution seems, however, to have taken place as early as the 8th to 10th centuries, and the narrow chancel was therefore probably a well established feature by the time it was copied in the northern countries (see Leask 55:61-78).

Roussell argued that the layout of these Greenland churches was basically Romanesque, with a more or less quadratic nave and a narrow chancel. The churches were presumably plotted in a Roman foot of about 295 mm, which he argues was used in Norwegian church building until around 1225 (Roussell 41:129 and 134-135). This method may indeed be questioned (see Jensenius 88 on a discussion of metrological methods on Norwegian churches, and Doursther 40:402-419 on ancient and modern feet).

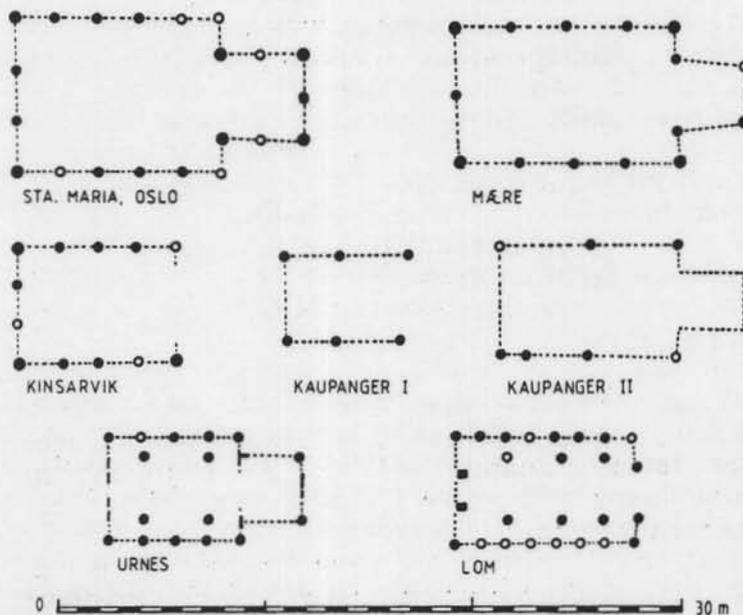


PLATE 28

Plan of early Norwegian churches with post-hole pillars, uncovered through archaeological excavations.
After Christie 81:205.

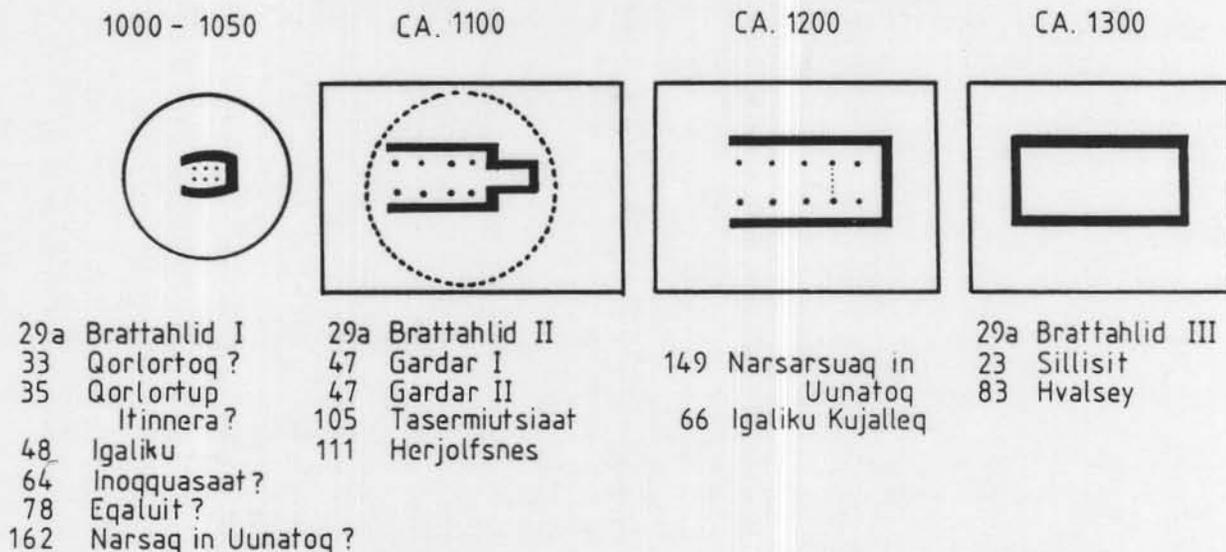


PLATE 29

Chronological sequences of Norse Greenland churches, based on information in Krogh 82a.

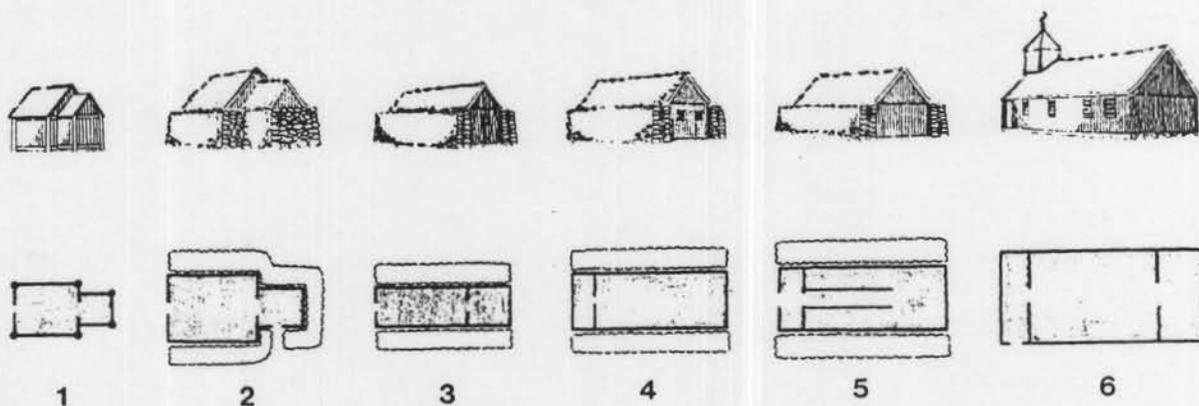


PLATE 30

Chronological stages of church buildings excavated at Sandi in the Faroes, from Krogh 75b:52-53. Krogh takes reservations for the accuracy of the reconstructions in the upper line.

Roussell dated the churches to before or around 1200, and earlier than the rectangular churches (below).

The first to offer a real breakthrough was Krogh, who forwarded the theory that these churches were in fact wooden churches with a protective wall of stone and turf around three sides.

(Obviously, the technique with a protective wall, as observed in this type of Greenland church ruins, complicates the use of metrological analyses on the present remains.)

Krogh argues (76a:307), that these churches were related to the vast number of wooden churches erected in Norway between the introduction of Christianity and the early 1200s, see PLATE 28.

(See Christie 81:204-219 on 11th century Norwegian churches).

Churches with protective walls are known from Iceland (mainly with turf walls, but stone walls are known) and the Faroes (with stone walls). Nearly 200 years ago the Faroese churches were described like this:

"... along both sides of the churches stands a thick wall, built of big stones, 1 - 1 1/2 ells away from the wooden building, but not higher than to allow short crossbars to be laid from the roof of the church and upon these walls, and these crossbars are, like the church, covered with planks, birch bark and turf, so that this roof runs in a straight angle down from that of the church." (Landt 1800:53, my translation).

This building technique was, according to Krogh, to reflect an adaptation to the environment of the Atlantic isles and the shortage of wood (Krogh 76a:307, see also Capelle 83). This explanation makes sense, but it is harder to believe the suggestion that the technique first developed in the Atlantic isles.

There can be little doubt that this building technique was known in Norway long before the emigration to the Atlantic isles.

Wooden houses with an outer, protective wall are known from the Old Iron Age in Western Norway, particularly from the Late Roman and the Migration Period (Myhre 82:98-108).

In Northern Norway, this is in fact the most common type of Iron Age houses. The parallel to the churches of the West Atlantic becomes even more evident if we look at the so called "court sites" ('ringformede tun') that are distributed along the coast of Western and Northern Norway.

The court sites are made up by a series of houses, radially arranged around an open space or courtyard, often with a mound in the center. As there are no economy buildings attached to these sites, they are usually associated with some kind of religious, military or political center. Radiocarbon datings indicate that such sites existed from the 1st century A.D. and into the 10th century (See Johansen & Søbstad 78 for a review of the Northern Norwegian material, and Wik 83).

The long-walls of the houses consisted of stone and/or turf, but the short-wall facing the courtyard seems to have been "open", i.e. probably with some kind of wooden construction. This seems to be the case for the sites Bjarkøy, Steigen, Bø, Leknes, Gimsøy, possibly Bøstad (Johansen & Søbstad 78:15,35,39,45,46, but see Wik 83, esp.:120), and Åse (Sjøvold 71). Thus the court sites may in fact have appeared very similar to the Icelandic farms known from later periods.

Similar arguments may be presented if we look at the boat-sheds. They too had long-walls of stone or turf, and "open" walls at the gables. Like the court sites, they are found along the West Coast of Norway, dating from the Late Roman Period and onward (Rolfesen 74, Christensen 77).

It is reasonable to assume that the building tradition of the Atlantic isles was part of the same tradition as demonstrated for the Iron Age houses, the court sites and the boat-sheds. As the court sites also seems to have been of some religious or socio-political standing, it is hardly surprising that similar techniques were

used for church building.

So far, Norwegian churches with a protective wall have not been published. This has undoubtedly deluded people to believe that such churches existed in the Atlantic isles only.

As previously noted, Section 6.2.2, it is virtually unknown that Northern Norway holds sites of around 50 turf churches, i.e. probably more than in the rest of the North Atlantic together (Reidar Bertelsen, pers. comm.).

Although the importance of this material for the research in West Atlantic church building is obvious, it has not attracted the interest of scholars, and little is known about the construction and dating of these churches. This is probably one of the unfortunate effects of the Greenland Case.

I will, however, present one example. At Opnan in Nordkapp, in Finnmark (mentioned Section 6.2.2 above), is a church ruin of the rectangular type with a narrow chancel. It is possible that the west wall was an open, wooden construction, see PLATE 31. Håvard Bratrein, who surveyed the site in 1968, describes it like this:

"The church ruin lies at an angle with the churchyard, and (the axis) runs more in an east - west direction. It has a nave with a narrow chancel, and is clearly visible, but with the walls somewhat blurred. (It is) ca. 8 x 9 meters, with a chancel 2,5 x 4,5 meters. There are stones visible in the walls, and the inside of the ruin is uneven, with some depressions. The west wall is without a marked profile. In the south is an indistinct bank, which is from an older church, or an addition. It seems likely that the original church has had the same direction as the churchyard, and that it was adjusted more in the direction east - west with the building of the later church. (Bratrein, survey reports, page 19, my translation. Published with the kind permission of the author).

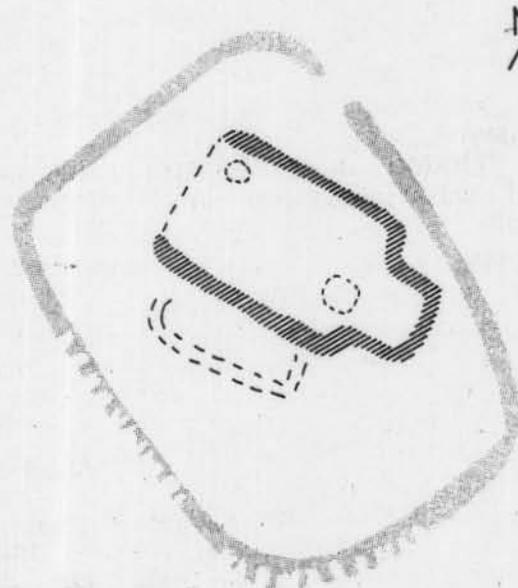


PLATE 31

The church ruin at Opnan in Nordkapp parish, Porsanger, Finnmark in Norway. The church is mentioned in a written account of 1589 to share a priest with the churches of Hellnes and Kjelvik. After 1601 the church is not mentioned. The place Opnan was settled till 1937. Information and drawing based on Håvard Bratrein's unpublished survey report, in the archives of Riksantikvaren, Oslo, and Tromsø Museum, Tromsø, and published with his kind permission.

It must, in my opinion, be asked whether it is fair to compare the Greenland churches with protective walls with the Norwegian wooden churches, as suggested by Krogh (above).

It is, in fact, possible that the turf churches of Northern Norway may offer a better basis for comparison and explanation. Under any circumstances, it must be stated that this particular building technique had its roots in Roman and Migration Period houses on the Norwegian West Coast.

Finally, we may add that the stone foundations at the church Aggersborg in Jutland, Denmark (mentioned in Section 6.2.2 above), may have belonged to a church with protective walls (see Græbe 86:177). The technique may therefore have been more widespread than previously assumed.

As a conclusion, it must be stated that further research is indeed demanded as to the origin and dating of this group of Greenland churches.

(The Cathedral at Gardar also belongs to the type, with an open west wall, but has some later additions. It will be discussed among the cruciform churches, Section 6.2.5 below.)

6.2.4 The rectangular churches:

Today, altogether 5 stone churches of a simple, rectangular shape, are located. These are:

- Ø- 23 Sillisit
- Ø- 29a Qassiarsuk (Brattahlid III)
- Ø- 83 Qaqortukulook (Hvalsey)
- Ø- 66 Igaliku Kujalleq
- Ø-149 Narsarsuaq in Uunatoq

See PLATES 23 & 26, above.

Nørlund believed these churches to be the oldest in Greenland, and related to early Anglo-Saxon churches. Thus he dated the last church at Qassiarsuk (Brattahlid III) to 1100 - 1150 (Nørlund & Stenberger 34:37-38, Nørlund 67:29).

Roussell argued against this, and compared the churches with a group of Norwegian churches built around 1300. (The earlier Norwegian churches, shown in PLATE 29 above, were not known at that time). His investigations were based on metrological studies of the church buildings, especially that of Hvalsey.

He argued that their layout was plotted in the Carolingian-Greek foot of 322 mm, which he claimed was introduced in Norway with the Gothic style around 1225. He also demonstrated that the churches were built 'ad quadratum', with a lay-out of the nave based on a double square, an idea which had been advocated by Macody Lund (Roussell 41:119, 127-135, 328, Lund 19:119).

Roussell's measurements of the Norwegian churches were, however, based on small-scale drawings. Today, his work appears speculative and with dubious methodical foundation (Jørgen Jensenius, pers. comm. See also Jensenius 88 for methodical discussion). It was also subject to criticism when published.

Krogh agreed to the principle in Roussell's chronology if not to the method, and concluded that the rectangular churches must belong to the later settlement period (Krogh 76:304-306). He did, however, take some reservations for the churches at Ø-66 and

Ø-149, both of which have an open west wall, indicating that they might have been wooden constructions, and hence somewhat older (ibid).

Thus, an evolutionary sequence for the Greenland churches can be demonstrated, PLATE 29. The credibility of this principle is supported by excavations made by Krogh at Sandi, in the Faroes. Here, six generations of churches, five of them on top of each other, were excavated, demonstrating a typological sequence parallel to that above (Krogh 75b), see PLATE 30.

6.2.5 The cruciform churches:

The church at Ø-18 at Narsaq is totally collapsed, and without excavation no safe conclusions can be drawn about its construction.

Krogh has pointed out that a cruciform church could collapse to such a shape (Krogh 76:301).

This is of little help as regards the dating, but is conspicuous in another way: The prevailing use of cruciform churches in Western Scandinavia was usually tied to cathedrals and monastic churches (KLN M IX:197). The ruin-group at Ø-18 lies far away from any of the suggested locations for the monastery and convent mentioned in the records. An excavation of the site would prove highly interesting as a test of the suggested name-topography.

As regards the Cathedral at Ø-47 (Gardar II) PLATE 32 it has, with reference to the open west wall, been indicated that the church may originally have been a wooden construction, with the protective walls possibly erected at a later stage (Jansen 72:118).

The chancel was at one time extended, and the side-chapels were added. The nave was possibly plotted in Roman feet, indicating a building date some time around 1200. The chancel and side-chapels were plotted in Greek feet, which indicate a date after ca. 1225, all according to Roussel.

A crucial point here is a bishop's grave found in the northern side-chapel. Nørlund identified the grave to that of Bishop Jon Arnasson Smyrill, who was reported dead in 1209 (Isl. Ann.:123,182,325, Nørlund 30:74), although we have no proof that he actually was in Greenland at the time.

Obviously, there is a contradiction between the dating of the extended chancel and the chapels to definitely Gothic, i.e. at least after 1225, and the dating of the grave to 1209 (Jansen 72:116-118. For a more detailed discussion on the dating of churches, see Jansen 72:102-121).

6.2.6 The east - west axis of the church buildings:

In Norway, I.H. Vibe-Müller has made an interesting observation: Churches erected on top of older church foundations often show a slight shift in the direction of the east - west axis.

She has raised the question whether this is accidental, or rather a result of official directions issued from some authority. (I.H. Vibe-Müller 86).

Such a shift in the direction of the east - west axis can be observed between Brattahlid II and III, PLATE 27. It must have taken place between the building dates of these churches, i.e. roughly between 1100 and 1300.

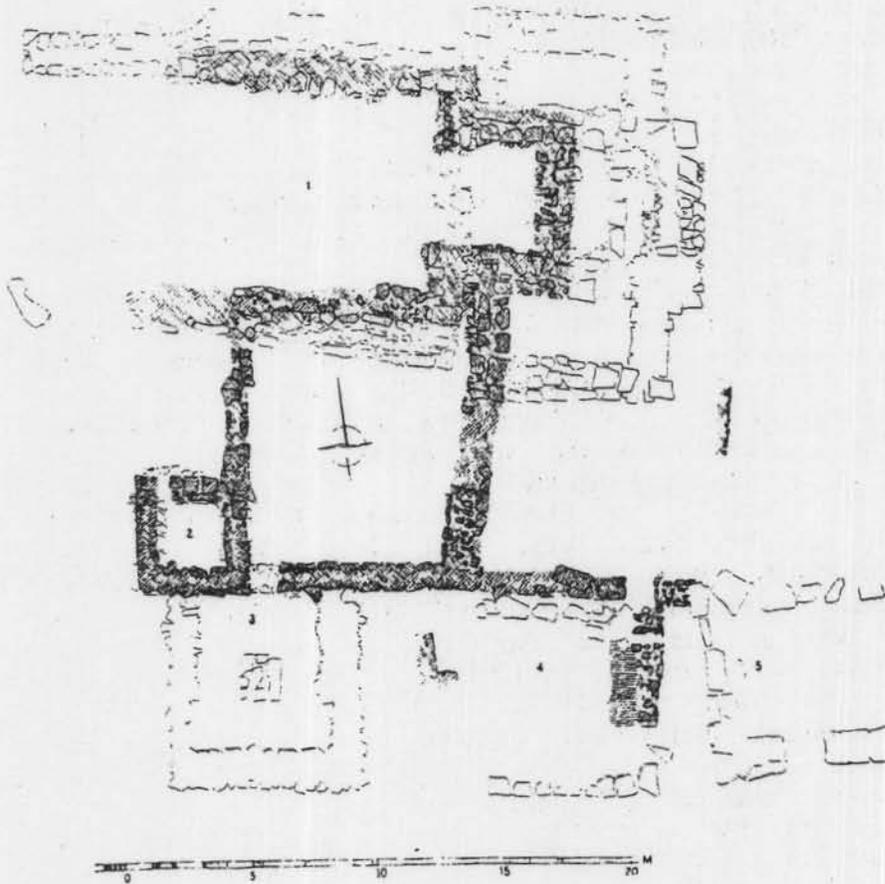


PLATE 32

Plan of the church ruins at Ø-47 Igaliku (the Cathedral at Gardar). The first building (Gardar I) is marked with hatching. The later stage (Gardar II) is outlined. Note that the east - west axis of the two church buildings are slightly askew. From Nørlund and Roussell 29: fig. 18.

A similar shift can be observed between Gardar I and II, PLATE 32, indicating that the shift took place before say 1200.

Could it be that the direction of the east - west axis of church buildings was defined differently by the official (Roman Catholic) church and the mission-stage priests? And that the "new" orientation of the long axis reflects the presence of a bishop in Greenland? In that case, Brattahlid II and Gardar I may have been built before 1126, an assumption which, by the way, is not unlikely.

A shift in the east - west axis can be observed in the church ruins of **Opnan, Finnmark** (mentioned Sections 6.2.2 & 6.2.3 above, see Plate 31 above). Nothing is known about the dating of these churches, but they are most probably medieval.

A similar phenomenon was observed in the church at **Aggersborg, Jutland in Denmark**. It is interesting that the excavators conclude that the building of the first church, which was started around 1100, was never completed (Græbe 86:176-178 & fig. 9, see also Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3). Was this the result of rules demanding a different orientation?

Under the stone church at **Brørup in Ribe, Denmark**, was found the postholes of two older wooden churches. The long axis of the two generations of wooden churches were the same, but differed significantly from that of the stone church (Møller & Olsen 61:43).

Also, a shift in the direction of the longitudinal axis has been observed in at least two Celtic church sites, **Church Island, co. Kerry, Ireland**, and **Ardwall Isle, Kirkcudbright, Scotland**, both with the later churches 15 degrees off the long axis of the original buildings.

For Church Island, this seems to have happened in the first half of the 8th century, and in Ardwall Isle before the year 1000 (Thomas 71:69-73). In other words, too early to act as direct parallels to our case. The phenomenon must, therefore, be considered widespread, and not yet explained.

6.2.7 Concluding remarks on the dating:

It looks as if the small churches originated in the 1000s and perhaps the early 1100s.

They may indeed have continued after this date, but so far excavations and datings are lacking. The 5 wooden churches (with the "open" west wall) were probably built between 1100 and 1225 or somewhat later.

The 5 rectangular churches were probably built between 1225 to 1250 and 1300 to 1350.

It is, however, easier to give datings 'post quem' than 'ante quem'. Thus we do not know when the last church was erected.

Even so, it seems as if the 12th and the 13th century were the active periods what church building is concerned.

It is interesting to note that the cathedral (Gardar II) was enlarged after ca. 1225, but so far there is no evidence of an attempt to build a new cathedral in the Gothic period. Although a small sign, it may, as we shall see later, be significant.

If church-building activity can be regarded as a sign of economic wealth, it seems as if the prosperous period of church building lingered in the 12th and 13th centuries, possibly the early 14th. It is curious then, to observe that the four "last period" churches are concentrated around Gardar.

Why is that? Had the population been concentrated around (but outside) this clerical center, or was it a last-minute consolidation of clerical power? (It must be noted in this connection that one of the churches of the Western Settlement,

V-7 Anavik, belongs to this group. It seems, in other words, to have been built just before the desertion of the Western Settlement.)

The material tells us little of what happened in Greenland after say 1300, except that the area around the bishop's farm was not invaded by squatters (see Section 4.3.3).

6.3 EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

6.3.1 Early Christian Norway:

The early Christian period can tentatively be divided into four stages:

1. A mission stage from perhaps the 9th century. This may have contained Celtic and Anglo-Saxon mission as well as mission from Germany. This was probably of the type called "cultural mission" (i.e. accidental contact with Christian foreigners) and "verbal mission", (i.e. foreign missionaries preaching in pagan countries), (KLNМ XVIII:704).
2. A "royal mission stage" from the middle of the 10th century. This may partly be associated with "mission by the sword" (i.e. conversion by means of force), see KLNМ XVIII:705).
3. A stage of royal church administration from the middle of the 11th century, i.e. the church was subordinated the king.
4. A stage of clerical administration from the middle of the 12th century, i.e. the Church was an independent organization. Later, the Church gradually developed its power towards the High Middle Ages.

1. The idea of a Celtic mission stage in Norway is first of all based on the presence of stone crosses in Southwest Norway, similar to those in Ireland (Birkeli 72, see also Section 6.2.2 above). Celtic and Norwegian societies had many structures in common at that time, with kinship and chiefdoms as the main elements of the social organization. This similarity may have been of importance in order to integrate the new religion in the society.

At the same time, mission from Germany was directed towards the Nordic countries (Rimbert, Sveaas Andersen 77:190).

2. The "royal mission stage" still lies much in the dark, but the influence from the Anglo-Saxon church is clear (KLNМ XVIII:702, Taranger 90, Birkeli 82:26-28). The Norwegian kings brought bishops from England as missionaries and to help organize the church.

It is hardly accidental that the regents of the newborn Norwegian kingdom turned to the young kingdoms of England for this assistance. Again, a similarity in social structure may have been of importance.

3. In the royal administration stage the church system consisted of "fylkeskirker" (county churches), and churches of lower status (see Smedberg 73:34 for a review of the designations). County churches were erected by the king, and clerical and secular administration probably were all and the same (Smedberg 73:24-63, but see Koht 21c).

During the royal administration stage, King Harald Sigurdsson the Hardruler (1047 - 1066) came in conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1053 Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg/Bremen had been given an enormous district, in which Iceland and Greenland were specified.

(These countries had previously been considered part of "Norden", i.e. the Nordic countries, which sorted under the Province of Hamburg/Bremen. The specification of Greenland ('Gronlondam') in a transcript of a document issued by Pope Gregor IV in 831, i.e. ca. 50 years before its discovery by Eric the Red, is a later interpolation (Rey 76:84-85).).

Adalbert's power in the Nordic countries apparently was limited, and especially King Harald opposed. The matter concerned who was to have the authority over the bishops (Johnsen 68:12).

The rule of Hamburg/Bremen did not last for long, however. In 1104 a province was created in Lund (at that time part of Denmark), which also included most of the later Province of Nidaros (Trondheim).

At this stage, the Norwegian Church had not yet developed to an autonomous power. It rested for a great deal on the authority and belief of the ruling kings.

4. The clerical administration stage was formally introduced with the ordination of a Norwegian archbishop in Nidaros in 1152-53. From this time, secular and clerical power was formally divided, although the king continued to control a minor part of the clergy ("Kapell-geistligheten") as royal officials (Bagge 76).

More or less, this development can be said to fall in line with the development from a kingdom to a real state. A clerical tax system, based on annual tithe and organized parishes, seems to have been introduced, although certain districts in the interior (particularly upper Telemark) never gave in to these demands (KLNMI XVIII:281).

Most probably, the Norwegian king(s) had to give in to demands of the Roman Catholic Church to obtain a province this extensive. The Orkneys, the Hebrides (Suderøyene) and Man had in fact belonged to York (Gunnes 70:127). Louis Rey has suggested that the transfer of these islands to the Province of Nidaros was made in order to put an end to the Viking raids in Britain (Rey 76:118-120).

The new province of Nidaros also included Iceland and Greenland, but the Norwegian king(s) had no authority to make promises on the behalf of these countries.

Thus it is highly improbable that his obligation to abolish the proprietary church system, and to donate the royal churches to the Church, extended to Iceland and Greenland. As we shall see later (Section 8.2 below), this question is of utmost importance as regards the later development in Greenland.

Again, a conflict with the Roman Catholic Church occurred. In

the 1190ies, King Sverre Sigurdsson tried to withdraw some of the rights the Church had previously obtained (Gunnes 71). In the long run, however, this protest was futile.

The next important step was taken in 1277, with a concordat between Archbishop Jon Raude of Nidaros and King Magnus Håkonsson the Lawmender, the so-called "Settargjerden i Tunsberg" (Norske middelalder dokumenter 73:136, Kjelder 76:24-25, Koht 21a, Seip 42). This was an agreement which first of all stated that the archbishop had no authority as regards the election of the king. Further, that the king had no right to intervene in church matters as they were defined by Canon Law. The agreement met strong opposition, and did not become fully effective.

Still, this is the time from which the Roman Catholic Church developed to the major economic power, thus advancing towards the position it was to maintain in the 14th century.

As Iceland and Greenland had become parts of the kingdom from the 1260ies, (they were already--subjected to the Archbishop of Nidaros from 1152/53), the agreement from 1277 should theoretically include these countries, but it is doubtful if it did (see Section 8.2 below).

6.3.2 Early Christian Iceland - and Greenland:

The stages in the development of the church were much the same in Iceland and Norway.

According to the written sources, Iceland was first settled by Norwegian emigrants in the later part of the 9th century.

Radiocarbon datings from recent excavations at Vestmannaeyjar suggest settlements already from the 7th century, thus indicating an early, unrecorded *landnám* (Hermannsdóttir 86:135, Hermanns-Audardóttir 89). The dating has, however, met severe criticism.

Written accounts tell that "paper", probably Irish Christian hermits, were present in Iceland at the time of the *landnám*, i.e. the 9th century (Jóhannesson 69:2-6). Several place-names in Iceland, such as Papey (an island) contains the element "Papar", and may be evidence of Christian hermits. The names may, however, have been "copied" from the other West-Atlantic islands (Magnús Stefánsson, pers. comm.).

Irish mission was probably present already from the early stages. It is important to note that the Irish Church was independent until the 12th century (de Paor 67:174).

The Irish mission was later replaced by German and English mission (Jóhannesson 69:101-104, see also Sawyer 88:37).

The Christian religion was formally introduced in Iceland by the Allting (General Assembly) in 999 or 1000, as a result of pressure from the Norwegian King Olav Trygvason (Jóhannesson 69:105-113). At this occasion, Iceland was on the verge of being split into two "states", a Christian and a pagan (Jóhannesson 69:110).

Some sources indicate that a missionary bishop was sent by Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg/Bremen to Greenland in 1055, but this is uncertain (see GHM III:74-76, 401, 404, 413, 415, 423-425, 903 on the situation between 1054 and 1096).

The first native Icelandic bishop, Isleifr, was consecrated Bishop of Iceland by Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen in 1056. On his return to Iceland, Isleifr brought with him a letter from Adalbert to the Icelanders and Greenlanders, stating that the Archbishop would visit

them within soon. The islanders were, of course, left with the promise.

Jón Jóhannesson has assumed that Isleifr had a certain responsibility to look after the Christianity in Greenland, but this is a hypothesis (Jóhannesson 69:119). No Icelandic sources indicate that he held any authority in Greenland (Magnús Stefánsson pers. comm.).

Annual tithe was introduced in Iceland by law in 1096-1097. Unlike other countries, it was calculated to 1 % of the total assets. The income was, in other words, not calculated from the actual income, but on the value of the property, based on a fixed interest of 10% (KLNLM XVIII:287-291).

Smedberg argues that this custom is unknown from other countries (Smedberg 73:109), but Stefánsson suggests that it may have been modelled on the Carolingian tithe in Sachsen (KLNLM XVIII:287).

Concerning other aspects of the Icelandic tithe system, Sawyer has observed certain parallels with the tithe in Celtic Britain (Sawyer 88:37).

The parish system was introduced as a consequence of the tithe system, but opinions about its fulfillment are diverse (KLNLM XVI:380-381, Krogh 82a:136, Sawyer 88:39-40).

It is clear, however, that the parish in Iceland was an economic entity, and not a geographical unit (Smedberg 73:17). Still, it obviously had some sort of a core area (Magnús Stefánsson pers. comm.). This may have had early parallels in Scandinavia (Sawyer 88:41).

Even from the very short present narrative we can see the potential of an inherent conflict in Iceland: The transition from an old Norse or Norse/Celtic type of Christianity, to a European, Roman Catholic type of Christianity from the 11th century.

In this perspective, the peculiar expression in *Historia Norvegiae* that the Icelanders "strengthened" the Catholic belief in Greenland may bear evidence of a similar transition in Greenland. It may, on the other hand, just be a unusual way of expressing that the Christianization of Greenland had its roots in Iceland.

In *Landnámabók* (GHM I:172-194, Benediktsson 68) and *Eiriks saga Rauda* (GHM I:194-281) the introduction of Christianity to Greenland is described. According to them, Eric's son Leiv brought the new religion from Norway, and his mother Tjodhild built a church "far from the houses" at Brattahlid, because of Eric's dislike.

Knud J. Krogh has, on archaeological evidence, argued that this part of the story is a later invention (Krogh:Hoops, see also Section 2.7.2 above). The story may well have been an attempt from the secular aristocracy to claim first right to the land (Langer Andersen 82:167-168).

It may even have been a point to claim that Eric and his followers came to Greenland as pagans, and that Christianity came later, through a reported mission sent by King Olav Trygvasson. While in the *Groenlendinga saga*, Eric is reported dead before Christianity was introduced (Jansen 72:65-66, 142).

If we bear in mind the very few pagan relics found in Greenland, we must keep the possibility open that a number of the first settlers may have been Christians already on their arrival in Greenland.

It is possible that the early settlers belonged to a Celtic Christian faith or rather, to a Norse Christian tradition near connected to it. This would have been the result of the mission

stage, in which "cultural mission" was an important element (Section 6.3.1 above). The report of Greenland being Christened by King Olav Trygvasson may refer to the "royal mission stage", and there may of course have been some differences between this and the (presumed) local Christian tradition. It is also possible that this report was a later attempt to link the mission to Norway, or to add to the glory of King Olav Trygvason.

6.3.3 Organization of church building in Norway:

In the early stages of the Christian period in the Nordic countries, church building and -keeping was a private undertaking, as in many European countries.

Krogh argues that this probably was the case even in Greenland, at least in the early stages, and refers to the fact that the proprietary church system held out in Iceland till 1297 (Krogh 82a:136 - 137). In fact, a great number of the Icelandic churches were proprietary churches throughout the Middle Ages.

It has traditionally been argued that the Norwegian church system was divided in two strata: An upper with 'hovedkirker' (main- or county-churches) and 'heradskirker' (township churches), built by the king; and a lower with 'høgendeskirker' (proprietary- or convenience churches), built by the local aristocracy (Koht 21c, and Sveaas Andersen 77:322).

A study by Smedberg demonstrates that the system was complex and incoherent, and differed considerably from one part of the country to another (Smedberg 73:60-63).

Gro Vilberg (77) has criticized Smedberg, and demonstrated that the system was even more complex). A number of the convenience churches appear, for instance, to have served as parish churches, while others were private chapels (Smedberg 73:37 & 40).

Parts of this hierarchic church system evidently reflects some kind of secular administration. This concerns the "fylkeskirker", "hovedkirker" and "herreskirker". While the private church building seems to have been independent of such structures (Smedberg 73:24-63, see also Koht 21c).

However, most of the written documentation of the early church administration seems to refer to the "royal administration stage". The organization and church building in the preceding period is practically a black box.

There is evidence that the proprietary church system in Norway lost ground after Nicholas Brekespear's negotiations to create a Norwegian province in 1152-53. One source is of particular importance in this connection: A set of documents, the so-called "Canones Nidrosienses", which were found by the German Walther Holtzmann in the British Museum in the 1930ies (Holtzmann 38, also *Norske middelalderdokumenter* :54). Their exact dating is controversial, but must be between 1152 and 1170 (Skånland 69 & 83, Gunnes 83, see Birkeli 82:59-60 for a narrative, also Section 8.1.2 below).

It is known that the three ruling kings in 1152 (Øystein, Sigurd and Inge Magnusson) abjured the kings' rights to the royal churches. Canon no. I defines the rights and duties of the former church owners, now called patrons (Jonsen, A. O. 51, Gunnes 83:97).

The proprietary church system in Norway was, at least in principle, formally abandoned before 1170, although the later

conflict between King Sverre (excommunicated 1198) and the Pope probably had bearings on the subject (Smedberg 73:137-149).

It is extremely important to be aware that even though Iceland and Greenland were included under the Province of Nidaros in 1152-53, these countries were not parts of the Norwegian kingdom till 110 years later. Thus the proprietary church system in these countries cannot have been affected by the regulations mentioned above (see below, Sections 8.2.4 & 8.2.5).

It has been argued that the early parish churches in Norway were probably erected at the biggest farms (Sandvik 65:57).

This view has been challenged by Dagfinn Skre. Skre uses the models presented by Ebbe Nyborg for the different systems engaged in organizing church building (Nyborg 79, but see Sawyer 88:39-41).

Skre argues that only a few of the churches in his district of investigation (Southern Gudbrandsdal) were built as "one-man-tasks", i.e. as convenience churches (høgendeskirker). Such churches were usually built at a rich farm, often in disregard to practical communication within the community.

As a contrast, he assumes that about 1/3 of the churches were built as communal efforts. These churches were often located to minor farms, but on sites central to communication (Skre 84). It is likely that these were built as parish churches, or at least churches for a larger congregation.

It is by no means unknown that a church could achieve the status of a parish church, independent of its origin (Christie 83:95-96). The Norwegian church building is, by the way, in striking contrast to Gotland in Sweden, where churches and parish borders were placed with nearly mathematical accuracy in an organized system, possibly inherited from an older type of administration (Lindquist 81:45-63, see Section 7.3.5 below). Most probably, this demonstrates that the political organization of Gotland had reached an advanced level before the introduction of Christianity.

Gro Vilberg has discussed a problem which has bearings on our subject. She has pointed to the fact that according to Germanic Law, the church as such could not hold property, especially not land. Ownership could only be held by a living person, and even this was limited. Inherited land belonged to the family, and could not be sold. Thus a church belonged to the (living) owner of the land on which it stood, as an appurtenance.

The situation known from the High Middle Ages, when the church as such owned land on a grand scale, was the result of the introduction of principles in Roman Law, first of all advocated by the church itself through Canon Law.

The essential idea in this connection is the concept of the "juridical person", i.e. the concept that a body or organization, such as the church, can hold the same juridical rights as a human being. This was in conflict with Germanic Law, and was but slowly accepted in the Nordic countries. This transition of concepts from Germanic to Roman Law had direct bearings on the organization of church building, the ownership of the churches, and the income of the church. The proprietary church system was, in fact, a logical consequence of the prevailing concept of Law at the time when Christianity was introduced (Vilberg 77:14 - 31). This seems, by the way, also to have been the pattern elsewhere in Europe.

As we shall see, these questions are highly relevant for our

concept of the church organization in Greenland. But first, we shall have a look at the settlement pattern in Greenland, and the location of the churches within this settlement.

6.4 LOCATION OF THE GREENLAND CHURCHES TO EARLY FARMS

6.4.1 The problem:

As previously stated, it is important to uncover where the settlement in Greenland started, and in what direction it expanded (Section 1.1.2).

The Eastern Settlement covers an area of roughly 10.000 square kilometers. If we look back to the maps of the settlement, PLATES 2 and 3, we observe that although there are settlement concentrations, there is no obvious center. Even at the densely populated inner part of the Tunulliarfik fjord settlements are well spaced. In other words, if we are to uncover the initial settlement area, we shall look for several areas rather than for a specific center.

The review of the few finds being dated to the first century of settlement gave us only slight clues to retrieve the early settlement pattern (Section 5.4 and Plate 22).

In the following, I will argue that the church locations may actually point to some of the earliest farmsites in the settlement. This line of thinking is primarily based on the concept of private church building.

6.4.2 Church and farm in Greenland:

Nørlund was of the opinion that "It was on the big chieftains' farms that the churches were erected..." (Nørlund 67:29 my translation).

Although church ruins in Greenland are known even at the smaller ruin-groups, Nørlund's concept seems to have been accepted even among later authors (Vebæk 82:208).

The statement evidently holds true for Iceland, where the first churches were built on the good farms (Nasjonale forskningsoversikter vol. I:131).

Krogh has argued along similar lines as regards the church sites at the Faroes, but he has, to my knowledge, not made similar conclusions for Greenland (Krogh 83:231).

Krogh has further pointed to the peculiar fact that no known churches in Greenland lie isolated, a phenomenon also typical to Iceland. As the church is always located close to, or as part of a bigger ruin-group, he takes this an indication of a very close relation between farm and church (Krogh 82a:134, & 82b:274).

The so-called "Tjodhild's Church" (Brattahlid I), is dated close to the *landnám*, from the curved church walls and the postures of the bodies (Krogh 65:10 & 82:33). The recent discovery of a Viking Period house near by, ruin 60, further demonstrates the close relation between farm and church (Krogh 82a:36-37).

The written sources also give an impression of close chronological connection between the *landnám* and the Christian

religion:

The oldest report simply states that "... the Icelanders discovered and settled Greenland and strengthened the Catholic belief..." (Historia Norvegiæ, Norw. ed.:19, my translation).

The Landnámabók states that Greenland was settled 14 (15) years before the 'Allting' ("General Assembly") in Iceland introduced Christian religion by law, in 999 or 1000 (GHM I:178).

Other sources credit Leiv "The Lucky", son of Eric the Red, with the introduction of Christianity in Greenland on behalf of the Norwegian King Olav Trygvasson (Eiriks Saga Rauda, GHM I:207, Olav Trygvassons Saga, GHM II:222, comments Jóhannesson 69:82 and Jansen 72:49-67, see also Sections 2.7.2 & 6.3.2 above).

The history of the institutional church starts at a later stage, with the ordination of Arnald as Bishop of Greenland in 1125 (The Story of Einar Sökkesson, GHM II:672, 676, 680-685, Jóhannesson 69:82, Krogh 82a:141 & 83:231).

As already indicated, the relation between early (Celtic?) Christian mission and the official church (read: the Roman Catholic Church) lies much in the dark.

It is, as previously argued (Section 6.2.2), quite possible that the Greenland church may have preserved more features from the early Christian faith and church organization than the other Nordic countries. This may of course have been just a conservative attitude to style and tradition, but it may also have been discrepancies of religious and organizational nature.

6.4.3 Conclusions on early church locations:

As mentioned above, at least some of the small churches must have been 11th century churches (Sections 6.2.1 & 6.2.2).

There is a possibility that they functioned as proprietary churches or chapels ('bænhus') at later stages. Still, it is likely that the early churches represent farms that were settled during the first century.

The large churches were probably erected either at big farms, if built as one-man-tasks; or at farm-sites central within the communities, if built as communal efforts. (I find the latter alternative improbable, and will argue for this later). Big farms were probably also early farms. In both cases, the church sites should indicate areas of early settlement.

Thus I will emphasize the great probability that church building was an early undertaking within the colonization period, even if a number of the now visible church ruins are of a later date. If this reasoning can be accepted, we may assume that the church locations indicate where 16 of the first century farms were located.

This is roughly one third of the number of farms estimated to be built during the first century (Section 5.2.5).

6.5 LOCATING THE INITIAL SETTLEMENT AREAS

6.5.1 Landnámabók:

We must assume that the first settlers seized the areas considered by themselves to be the best, and that marginal areas were settled later, when population pressure and legal restrictions gave less options.

This may seem like stating the obvious: The written sources appear to be quite clear on this issue, as in this frequently quoted passage from the Landnámabók:

"Herjolf took the Herjolfsfjord in his possession, and became a most distinguished man. Thereafter, Eric the Red took the Eiriksford, and lived at Brattahlid, but his son Leif after his death.

These men, who left (Iceland) together with Eric, took the following areas in Greenland for settlement:

Herjolf the Herjolfsfjord, he lived at Herjolfsnes; Ketil the Ketilsfjord, Rafn the Rafnsfjord, Sølve the Sølvedal (a valley, my comment), Snorre Torbrandsson the Alptefjord, Thorbjørn Glora the Siglafjord, Einar the Einarsfjord, Hafgrim the Hafgrimfjord and Vatnahverfi (an inland area, possibly a group of farms, my comment), Arnlaug the Arnlaugsfjord, while some went to the Western Settlement.

...Thorkel Farserk ... took the Hvalseyfjord, and most of the area between the Eiriksford and the Einarsfjord, and settled in the Hvalseyfjord". (GHM I:180, my translation).

Even if doubts have been cast upon the real existence of the persons mentioned (Langer Andersen 82:168, Gad 84:26), the authors seem to have held the concept that the initial settlement was wide spread.

Whether this view reflected real history or was constructed for (later) political purposes is another matter. Personally I would find it most careless to accept the picture drawn in Landnámabók without archaeological evidence to support it.

6.5.2 Archaeological material:

What can the archaeological finds tell us about the early settlements?

Most archaeologists seem to have accepted, directly or indirectly, the words of Aage Roussell:

"The original settlers having taken the heads of the fjords, latecomers would have to be content with what land was to be had as close as possible." (Roussell 41:12).

Visitors touring the inner parts of the fjords will find this a reasonable statement. But it does not fully correspond with the archaeological material.

This material has, unfortunately, severe limitations.

First of all, this is due to the archaeologists themselves. Nearly all the excavations in the Eastern Settlement have been made on the "classic" sites: Gardar, Brattahlid, Hvalsey, and Herjolfsnes, with

Vebæk's excavations at Narsaq and in Vatnahverfi as the positive exceptions. And with the exception of Vebæk's excavations, these are all major church sites.

As a result, most of the uncovered material from the landnám period also came from these sites. This may unjustly enforce the impression from the written sources that the settlement started just at these points.

The second limitation is the nature of the material. In style or constructions it offers few opportunities to distinguish 10th and 11th century material from that of later periods.

The early finds and constructions were presented above (Section 5.4), and the 10th century finds were presented on the map, PLATE 22. When compared to the map showing the church locations, PLATE 23, it appears that few of the early finds are located outside the church sites.

With all possible reservations for the systematic selection of this material, it may be argued that the early finds and the church sites agree in their indication of early settlement sites.

6.5.3 Conclusion on early settlement areas:

In the presentation of the ruin-group distribution map, PLATE 6, it was demonstrated that the ruin-group density was at the largest around the inner part of the Tunulliarfik (Eiriksfiord).

But it was also an apparent "ridge" of ruin-group density, parallel to the coast, in what might be called the mid-fjord zone.

A similar picture was demonstrated for the church locations: 10 (9) were in the inner fjord zone, 5 were in the mid-fjord zone, and 1, Ikigaat (Herjolfsnes) was on the outer coast, PLATE 23.

A similar picture, but hardly as representative, was drawn by the presentation of early finds, PLATE 22.

It looks, in other words, as if the settlements were concentrated to these two zones: Inner fjord and mid-fjord.

The presence of early finds, as well as the church locations in both zones indicate that this picture was created already from the first century of the settlement, perhaps even from the very start.

How does this picture agree with the description in Landnámabók?

With the exception of Vatnahverfi, it is a description of chiefs taking one fjord each. In other words a system where each chief controlled an area from the outer coast to the inland ice, making a cross-cut of the ecological zones.

Whether Landnámabók is reliable in this respect or not, it is an indication of the ecological perspective of the authors: A cross-cut of the landscape from the ice brim to the outer coast would give the best possible control of the resources.

But this would also imply that each chief controlled two settlement concentrations: Inner fjord and mid-fjord.

6.5.4 The ecological adaptation:

If the picture presented above can be accepted, we may ask what kind of adaptation it reflects?

The inner fjord areas evidently benefit from the short distance to the inland pastures. Also, as mentioned earlier, the inland

vegetation is different from that further out. Birch trees were available in the early stages. On the negative (?) side is less precipitation, less driftwood, and possibly ice on the fjords during the winter.

The mid-fjord areas had less access to inland pastures, but more precipitation. They also had easier access to the outer coast, to driftwood and sealing grounds, and to open waters in the winter time.

The mid-fjord areas thus probably had access to a greater variety of resources than the inner fjord areas, which in turn had the better conditions for animal husbandry.

The high percentage of seal bones in the middens of the inland farms indicate that these farms either were active in outer-coast hunting, or rather, that some kind of mutual exchange between the farms of the different zones had been established.

The outer coast settlements around Herjolfsnes have by all authors been regarded as directed towards the sailing contacts from abroad. This explanation is reasonable, but there are other explanations to discuss:

First of all, there had to be conditions for living. The drift-ice from the east coast of Greenland passes close to the coast here, and probably offered possibilities for seasonal hunting. It is therefore possible that the activity was more directed towards marine resources.

Also, part of this activity may have been a kind of "cash hunt", with polar bears and seals as the target animals; in other words, a kind of supplement to the Nordrsetur hunts. This would explain the somewhat peculiar location of this settlement, and perhaps give it a special status within the community.

From this discussion emerges a picture of the Eastern Settlement as a highly varied ecological and economic system.

Unfortunately, the surveys reports offer few opportunities to test this model on the material in detail.

One attempt along these lines was performed by Müller-Wille in 1972. On maps, he showed that ruin groups with cow-byres dominated the inland areas, and rarely appeared outside the mid-fjord areas (Müller-Wille 72:171).

Further, he demonstrated that ruin groups with sheep-sheds dominated inner and mid-fjord areas, but were rare in the outer settlements (op.cit. 167).

As the paper was printed in 1972, less than 75 % of the ruin groups known today were included. The general picture could of course still be relevant, but he based his investigations on tables in Roussell 41:289. In the cases when I have had the opportunity to check the identifications in these tables with ruins in the field, I have found them highly unreliable.

Although interesting, I hesitate to use Müller-Wille's maps as a confirmation of my model, even if his conclusion probably has a general relevance.

Finally, we may ask if there are chronological differences between the types of settlement areas described above. I can see no way to test this except through extensive excavations.

It is not unlikely that there were population movements between the different zones, seasonally as well as during periods of climatic change. Also, we may assume that there was some kind of exchange of goods between households in the different zones.