

Burial – settlement relations at Forsandmoen, Southwest Norway

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Abstract

In 2017, a pre-development excavation of two burial mounds and surrounding buildings was carried out within the densely settled archaeological site of Forsandmoen, southwest Norway. The investigation provided an opportunity to explore relations between burials and buildings. It is hoped that pre-development excavations can offer fresh insight into the earlier excavations and finds. Whereas the excavated buildings cover a time span of 2200 years, all the burials in Forsandmoen appear to be from AD 300–550. This evidence leads into discussions of social changes in the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period, the construction and use of material culture, as well as source critical and methodological challenges. The ‘construction process appears to have been more important in the local community in the Late Roman Iron Age, pinpointing a change between the two periods. The investment in building new monuments in the Late Roman Iron Age might point towards larger changes starting far earlier than the discussed break at the end of the Migration Period. The burial practice in the Late Roman Iron Age could further hint at the necessity to direct more archaeological attention towards the act of constructing material culture. Repeated use of the monuments in the Migration Period underlines that reuse and the multitemporal should be regarded more as the rule than the exception in our investigation of material culture.

Keywords: Late Roman Iron Age, Migration Period, constructing material culture, reuse, long-term perspective, multi-temporality

Introduction

At Forsandmoen in Rogaland county, Southwest Norway, research-led excavations between 1980 and 1990 uncovered a large site which has come to play a unique role in the study of settlement development in Norway. The project was the first large-scale excavation of a settlement beneath cultivated fields in Norway (Løken *et al.* 1996; Løken 1997; Dahl 2009). Through the adaptation and development of new survey and excavation methods, 275 houses covering a time span from 1500 BC to AD 700 were found on the moraine terrace. During the Late Roman Iron Age (AD 150–400) and Migration Period (AD 400–550) the settlement reached a maximum of 20 farms organized in east-west oriented rows. At the end of the Migration Period and the transition to the Late Iron Age, the settlement rapidly shrank down to two smaller areas, one within the oldest core area in the northeast and one in the southwest. In the southwest, the last inhabitants built their houses in a cluster next to a grave mound. This mound, as well as another mound and the entire southern part of the large settlement remains, were excavated in 2007 and 2017 (Dahl 2008, 2009, 2019). The pre-development excavations offered an opportunity to investigate two large mounds and their

relationship with the entire southern part of the settlement. In order to serve as generators of research and future strategies, pre-development excavations have to raise new questions, perspectives and ways of perceiving the past. The challenge of the excavations in 2007 and 2017 was to generate new insights and raise new questions from the largest research project of the Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

The settlement at Forsandmoen was first discovered in 1980 during excavation of one of the many cairns on the terrace (Bårdsgård 1980a-c). In large open-area excavations burials and buildings are typically treated separately during both fieldwork and post-excavation analysis (Dahl 2016b). Up until the Forsandmoen project and the introduction of the large-scale excavation of cultivated fields in Norway, the presence and development of Iron Age settlement was inferred from preserved graves visible in the landscape (Løken 1974; Myhre 1981; Ødegaard 2007). We need to bring together and discuss material from both cultivated fields and pastures (Dahl 2020). In this sense, the farm complexes preserved in the pasture areas, which used to be one of the main objects of archaeological investigations in southwest Norway prior to the Forsandmoen project, are important reminders of the close link between buildings and burials in the Iron Age. Houses and graves are interrelated aspects of landscape organization (Dahl 2016b), and both the large number of houses and all the previously excavated mounds in Forsandmoen have to be put into play.

Relations between burials and buildings have previously been discussed, drawing on regional cases, in Rogaland (Dahl 2016b) and Mälardalen in Sweden (Stenholm 2006, 2012), as well as in a larger geographical perspective through five cases of reuse in Norway and Sweden (Eriksen 2016). While reuse was a central theme in these studies, the aim of this paper is to use the large material from Forsandmoen as a possibility to explore relations between contemporary buildings and burials. However, reuse is considered to be an inevitable aspect in analysis of burial practices (Dahl 2016a), as an example that can highlight multi-temporality and challenge the long-lived linear time in archaeological practices of today (Olsen 2010; Olsen *et al.* 2012; Dahl 2020). There is a fascinating tension regarding reuse and multi-temporality. The urge to slice different forms of use into successive sequences that can be dated and placed on an axis of time is experienced as a crucial step towards gaining more knowledge of past practices. This paradox is a challenge that helps to put our present archaeological practises in perspective. The dissection and destruction of archaeological sites appears to be the opposite practice of people in the past constructing and reconstructing the material culture.

The aim of investigating contemporary buildings and burials is another challenge that illustrates fascinating tensions

between past and present multi-temporality. In the same manner as the present is not comprised of things belonging to the same age, but takes the form of a multitemporal field in which the past has accumulated itself (Olsen 2010:108), people in the past were not living in a context merely made up by contemporary things. This comes into play not only regarding the reuse of burial monuments, but also in the construction of mounds superimposed on earlier buildings, as well as the already mentioned only remaining cluster of houses built next to the mound with burials from previous periods. The layering of the past in the present is hard to conceive of without things (Olsen 2010:120). Symmetrical archaeology can be used as a component and a guideline (Olsen and Witmore 2015; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018), as a critical commentary to the conceptions of history as inevitably successive, of the past as gone and of memory as only a recollective capacity that might be activated in search of this lost time (Olsen 2010:8). From an archaeological perspective it is necessary and rather uplifting to accentuate the role things themselves play in enabling and in upholding the past. In this paper, I further wish to emphasise the construction and use of monuments, as a remixing of things seen in the longevity of burials and buildings throughout the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period.

The excavation of two mounds in 2017

The mounds located at a distance of 64 metres from each other illustrate the variation and complexity that might be expected when excavating burial monuments (Dahl 2016a). The mounds had a similar appearance with heights of 1.2 metres and diameters of 11–13 metres. The northern mound (Mound 2) had a large plundering pit in the centre, while the southern mound (Mound 1) had several visible, but luckily superficial, disturbances caused by modern agriculture (fig. 1).

Mound 1 consisted of a complex layering of turf bricks and sorted stones (fig. 2). The first context in the construction sequence was a rectangular stone layer, from where thin, alternating layers of stone and turf were made. On the eastern and western edge two cremation burials were cut into the rectangular stone layer. In the middle of the two burials a third funerary context was placed on top of the rectangular stone layer. The sequences of turf and stones, and the funerary contexts within them, were sealed by a 1.2 metres thick stone layer.

The western cremation burial contained three glass beads, a decorated spindle whorl, one fragmented bucked shaped vessel and burnt bones from one, perhaps two, juveniles (Denham 2019). The beads were deformed by high temperature. The eastern burial contained four glass beads, a fragmented, decorated bone comb, a fragmented, decorated vessel of finer tableware and the burnt bones from an adult (Denham 2019). Neither of the burials had a distinct burial chamber.



Figure 1. A) Overview of the settlement area at Forsandmoen at the start of the excavation in 2017. Mound 1, in the southwestern part of the settlement, has been uncovered. B) Mound 2 surrounded by buildings. Mound 1 is visible at the southern edge of the excavation area in the background. Illustration: Theo Gil, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

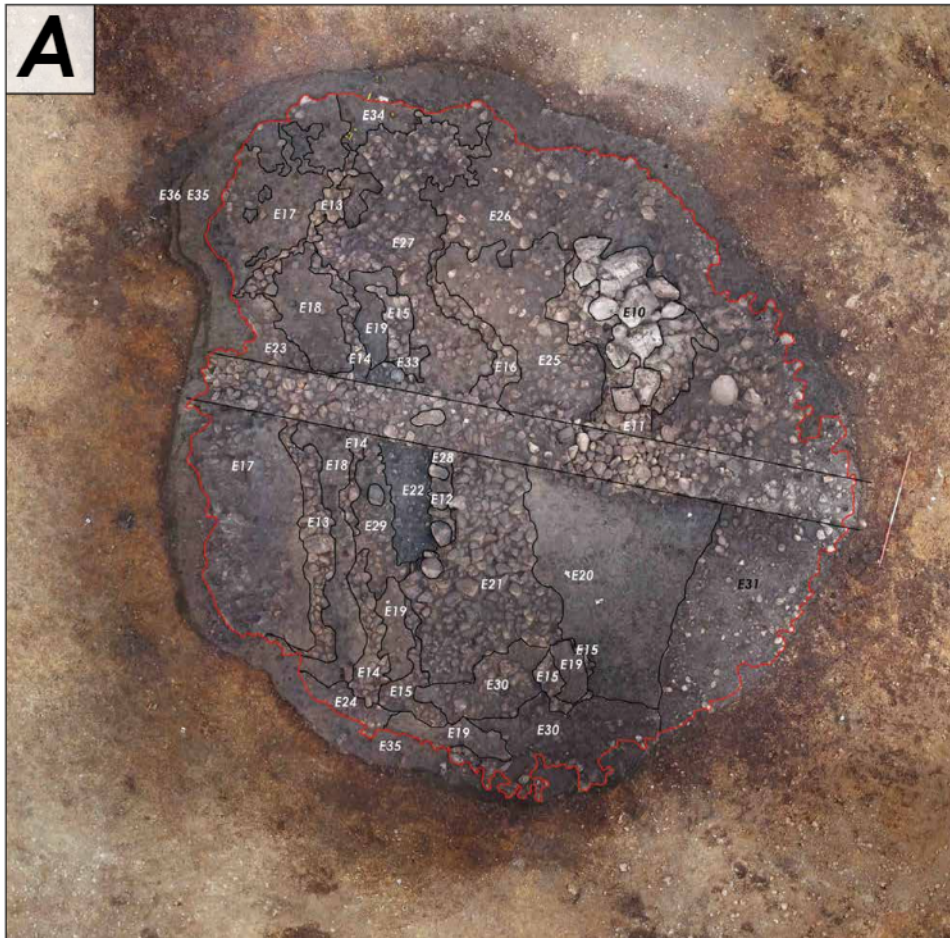


Figure 2. Identified contexts towards the bottom of Mound 1, seen from above (east is up) (A) and seen towards west (B). Yellow sticks mark the eastern burial. Photo A: Theo Gil, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger. Photo B: Barbro Dahl.

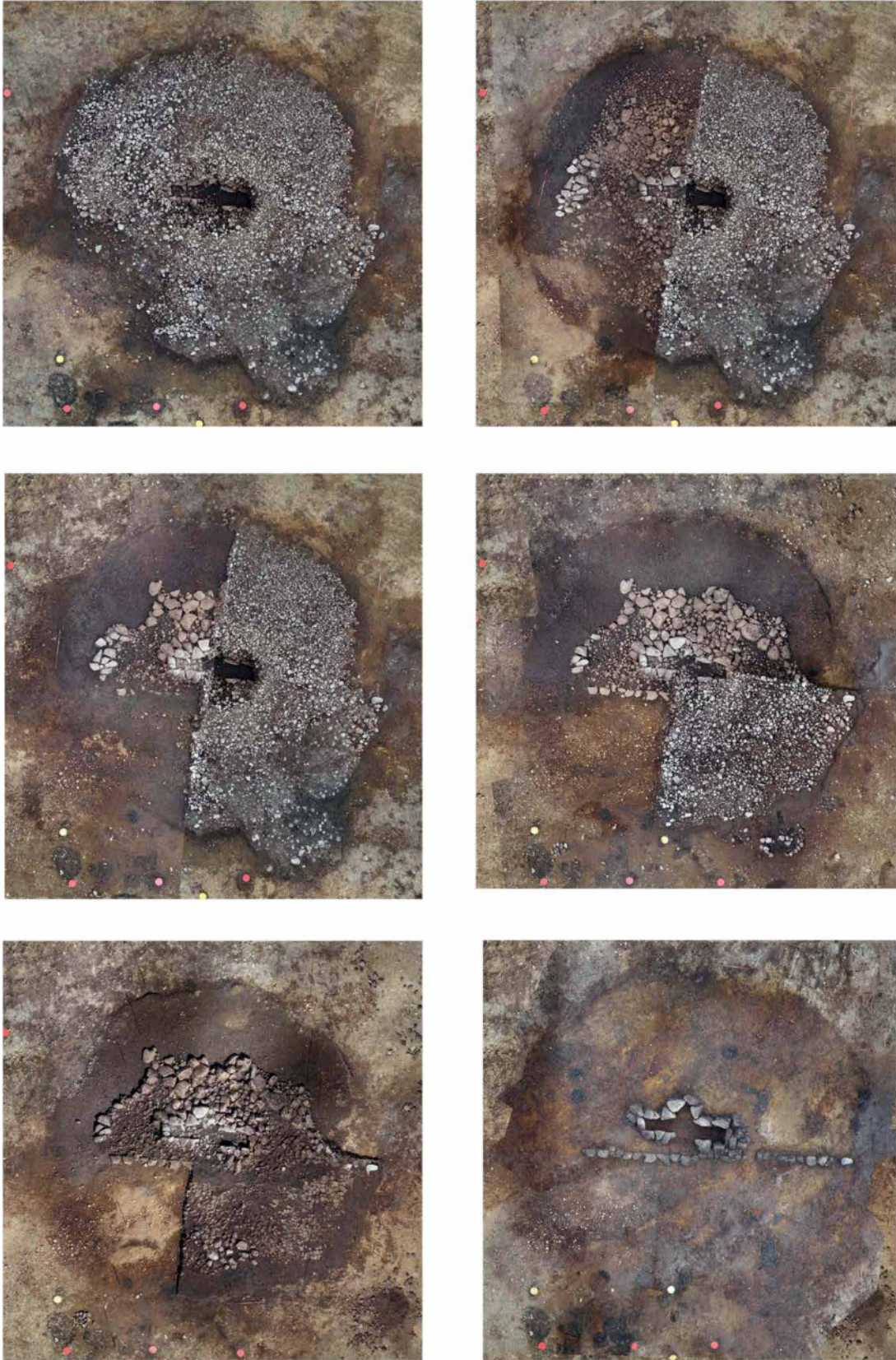


Figure 3. Mound 2 during excavation. Illustration: Theo Gil, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

The funerary context in the centre of the mound was a thick, rectangular charcoal layer outlined by fire-cracked stones. The layer measured 2.4 × 0.6 metres. Two glass beads were found in the layer, as well as an unidentified iron fragment, two round stones and a perforated piece of burnt oak. During excavation, this feature was interpreted as the remains of the cremation pyre for the two cremation burials on the eastern and western edge of the mound, although no burnt bones were found. The compact charcoal layer and the fire-cracked stones indicate that burning has occurred on top of the bottom stone layer. On the other hand, its elongated regular shape, outlined by larger stones, resembles the bottom of an inhumation chamber.

The bones from both cremation burials are dated to AD 128–322 ± 30 (Beta-498541 and 498542). However, burnt plant materials from both burials are dated to AD 382–538 ± 30 (Beta-498547 and 498548). Organic residues from the ceramic in the western burial are dated to AD 253–406 ± 30 (Beta-498549). Marine reservoir effect may be the reason for the older dates of the bone samples (Denham 2019). Another factor that has been debated is the old wood effect on burnt bones (Olsen *et al* 2013). The burials would thus be dated by the plant material to the transition between the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period, coherent with the diagnostic finds.

While Mound 1 had several simultaneous burials sealed by one grave monument, Mound 2 consisted of three superimposed constructions. The first phase was a circular mound built of small stones mixed with loose, grey soil. Over the northern part of the earliest mound, a half-circular mound was constructed. Its unusual shape was outlined by larger stones dug deep down into the earlier mound. These two earlier monuments were completely covered by a circular mound with a diameter of 13 metres. In the centre of the latest mound a large, rectangular grave chamber was found. The chamber had an inner length of 3.3 metres and was oriented east-west. The chamber had been inserted into the previous constructions, probably disturbing earlier burials. In other superimposed burial monuments large chambers have intentionally been constructed on top of earlier burials (Møllerop 1953a and b; Randers 1988; Dahl 2016a).

The excavation of the superimposed mounds revealed two distinct burial contexts with multiple individuals and different body treatments. In addition, sherds from at least five different vessels and bones that could not be positively identified as human were found scattered in different locations. Although the spread of these finds may be due to later disturbance, we cannot disregard the possibility that they may belong to other funerary rites.

No remains of bones were found in the chamber. A pair of bronze tweezers were recovered from the eastern end of the chamber, while 218 fragments of heavily

corroded iron were found concentrated in the western end. Among these iron fragments, 33 pieces are parts of a two-edged sword, with traces of textile and leather, while 22 fragments belong to six different knives. The many iron objects found compressed at the bottom of the chamber may indicate heavy disturbance. The chamber contained sherds from at least six vessels. The finds indicate the presence of several inhumation burials. Four of the vessels in the chamber are bucket shaped, some of them undoubtedly from the last part of the Migration Period (Kristoffersen and Magnus 2010). Two sherds of soapstone may even indicate deposits from other periods in the chamber.

A cremation burial was found in a stone packing on the southern side of Mound 2. The burial contained a large concentration of sherds from one bucket shaped vessel, three sherds from a finer handle vessel and burnt bones from one adult and one younger individual (Denham 2019). The bones are dated to AD 210–383 ± 30 (Beta-498551). The cremation burial of the two individuals was marked by a packing of larger stones placed on top of the oldest mound. Both individuals appear to have been buried together at the same time, in the same way as the two juveniles buried in the western part of Mound 1. However, Mound 1 contains several individuals buried separately and simultaneously, illustrating the variation and complexity in the mortuary customs at the transition between Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period.

Mound 2 overlapped House 10 (fig. 1 b). The postholes under the mound have been dated to AD 133–242 ± 30 (Beta-498557 and 498558), representing a *terminus post quem* for the primary mound construction. The youngest radiocarbon date from Mound 2, AD 346–536 ± 30 (Beta-498554), comes from charcoal found directly under the stones in the chamber wall and represents the limit after which the large chamber was constructed. Six other radiocarbon dates from charred organic material sampled from different contexts in Mound 2 fall within the range AD 130–326 ± 30 (Beta-498543, 498544, 498552, 498553, 498555, 515249). These dates indicate a time span within the Late Roman Iron Age for all the construction sequences between the first mound and the large chamber.

A close parallel to Mound 2 was excavated in the southeastern part of Forsandmoen in 2000 (Gellein 2000; Gellein and Skjelstad 2001). The mound consisted of numerous superimposed constructions (see fig. 4). Larger stones mixed with a lighter sand layer was interpreted as an initial burial mound with an outline of stones and a diameter of 14 metres (Gellein 2000:5–6). No burial contexts were identified in association with the earliest mound. A circle of stones with a diameter of 4 metres represents a younger phase on top of the earliest mound, and turf visible in the profile indicate a time gap between these constructions (fig. 4). A large

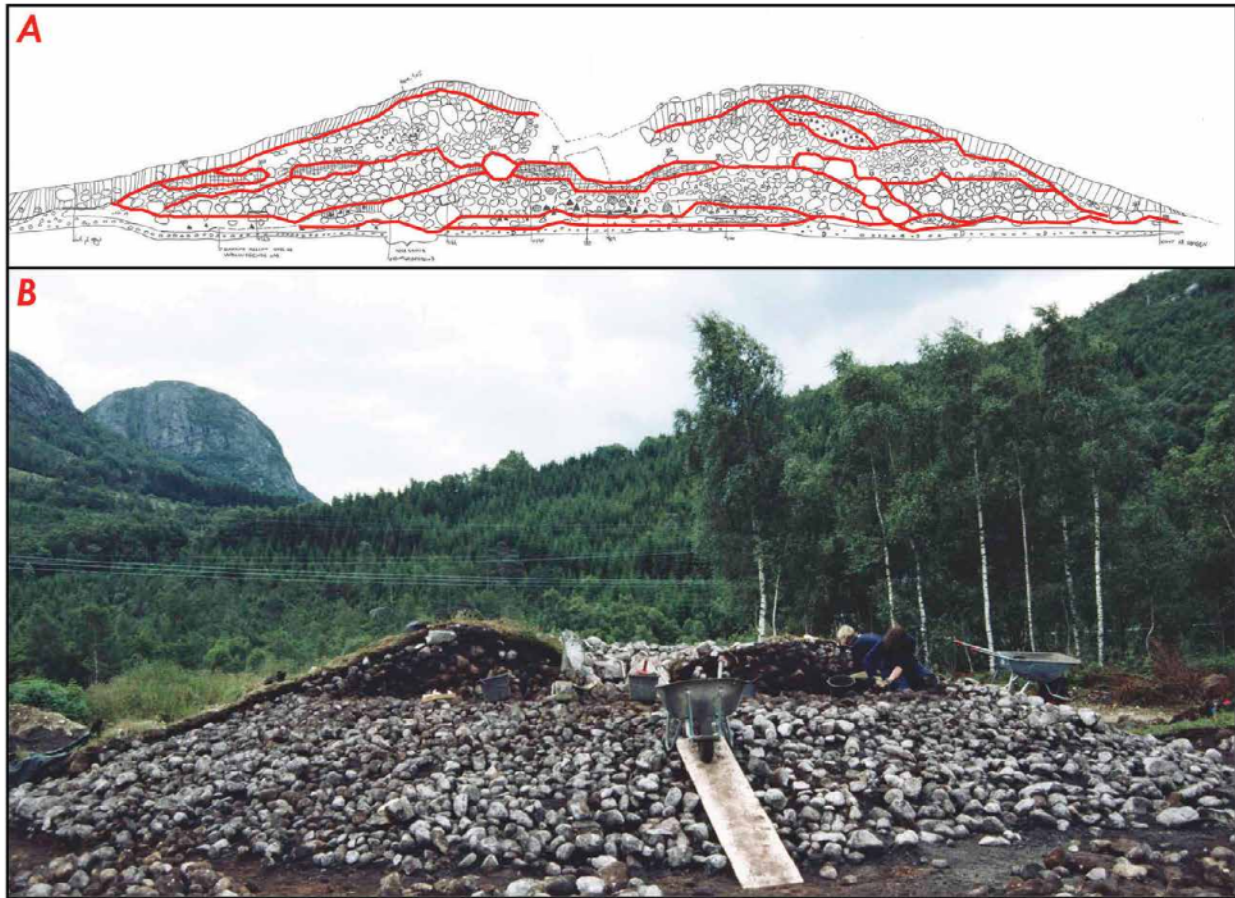


Figure 4. The mound excavated in 2000 in the southeastern part of Forsandmoen (see fig. 5). A: A new sketch suggesting several construction phases. Based on the layers documented in the profile in 2000 B: The mound during excavation. Photo: Thomas Bruen Olsen, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

grave chamber was built within the stone circle. One or two burials with weapons, a gold ring and bucket shaped ceramics, as well as burnt animal bones, were found on top of the stone circle, at the same level as the bottom of the chamber (Gellein 2000; Sellevold 2001a and b). Bucket shaped ceramics give a typological date to AD 450–500. The large chamber in the top may have been used for several burials. Burnt bones identified as an adult individual (Sellevold 2001b), a spindle whorl, ceramics and a gilded silver clasp with niello were found in the chamber.

Source criticism and representativeness

Figure 4 from the mound excavated in 2000 in the southeastern part of Forsandmoen is an example of new interpretations of previously investigated grave mounds facilitated by new excavations. Regarding far older investigations, the objects in the museum magazines might represent the only information about a grave mound. New excavations represent important opportunities to raise

new questions and use the material in the magazines and archives. The two mounds excavated in 2017 will be discussed in the context of previously excavated mounds in Forsandmoen (tab. 1). In 1930 Jan Petersen registered 47 mounds at Forsandmoen (Petersen 1930). We know of finds from 18 of these mounds. With one exception (Reiersen 2021), all the finds that can be diagnostically dated fall within the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period, as well as all the radiocarbon dates from graves excavated during the last 20 years (tab. 1).

The impression we get from the grave finds in general do not correspond well with what we know about the size and chronology of the built environment at Forsandmoen. The number of grave finds, their narrow chronology and status do not indicate a 2200 year long and massive settlement with houses up to 50 metres in length. The discrepancy between the known grave finds and the large settlement offers a challenge regarding representativeness and source criticism. An interpretation of the farm and its development based solely on the presence, distribution

Year	Location (in Forsandmoen)	Construction	Burials	Placement of the burial	Pos. Gender	Typ/radioc. AD	Finds	Reference
1905	Building of youth center	Mound	Cremation		Female	LRIA (C3)	S2757: 1 finer handle vessel, 1 bucket shaped vessel, bow brooch, spindle whorl of clay, spoon and needle of bone, burnt bones	Helliiesen. 1905:fig. 7
			Cremation (+inhumation)	Chamber		LRIA/MP	S2758: Bucket shaped ceramic, burnt bones	
1907	Forsandmoen	Small mound	Cremation	Small chamber/cist (l=1m)	Female (+male?)	MP	S2948: Spearhead, lance, cruciform brooch, bow brooch, tweezers, scissors, knife, whetstone, finer handle vessel, burnt bones	
1916		Mound previously dug by Helliiesen (see S2758)			Female	MP (D1)	S3887: Cruciform brooches	
1919	Removed during farming		Cremation		Female	MP	S4082: 2 cruciform brooches, bucket shaped ceramic, finer table ware, spindle whorl, fittings, claw, burnt bones	
1921	SW. Gnr. 41/5. 50m from id. 14501	Cairn. No soil. Rather large.		Small cist (0,7x0,4x0,3m)	Female	MP	S4162: Cruciform brooch, bucket shaped ceramic	De Lange 1921-24
1926	Gnr. 41/23 (Ryggjen/Gjøyse)	Mound					S4819: 2 ceramic vessels	Jan Petersen 1927
1945	W. Id. 14501. Removed by farming	2 mounds						
		D=12m, chamber in remaining part	Inhumation + cremation?	Chamber (2,4x0,47m)	Male?	MP	S7086: Bronze ring, spearhead, 2 bucket shaped vessels, awl, iron fragment, burnt bones, charcoal	Jan Petersen 1945
1980	SW. Gnr. 41/5. Id. 71854. 2 cairns	Oval mound L=6m, br=4,5m, h=0,4m ¹		Ceramic from features under the cairn			S10548: Sherds from 10 different vessels, whetstone, slag, resin	Bårdsgård 1980a, 1980b, 1980c
		Low, oval mound D=6m, h=0,3m ²	Cremation	Cist (0,3x0,4m) in the NE ³	Female		S10556: Spindle whorl, sherds tempered with asbestos, iron and bronze fragments, quartz and burnt bones	
1984	SW. Gnr. 41/5	Mound VII. D=6m, h=0,75m	Cremation?	Small cist with some charcoal		200-600 (ca.)	S13192: 10 sherds found under the first stone layer, charcoal samples from cist	Løken 2009
1992	Gnr. 41/4 Id. 14499	Cairn D=7m, h=0,7m (Cairn 1)	Cremation (Burial 1)	Larger concentration of burnt bones	Female	385-550 (T-10703)	S11256 (Burial 1): Bronze pendant, 3 fragmented bronze fibulas, 52 pieces of glass, 10 glass beads, undecorated bucket shaped sherds, burnt bones	Hemdorff og Kjeldsen 1992, Hemdorff 1992
			Cremation (Burial 2)	Smaller concentration of burnt bones under large stone		LRIA/MP	S11256 (Burial 2): Ring for tweezers, bone comb, 83 bucket shaped sherds decorated with lines, burnt bones	
		Cremation	Concentration of burnt bones and charcoal			S11257: Iron ring with fragment of tweezers of bronze, 4 bucket shaped sherds, sherds from a finer handle vessel, iron hook, burnt bones, charcoal		
		Cremation	Charcoal concentration with burnt bones in the E	1 adult	MP	501,5 g burnt bones (human)		
1992	SE. Gnr. 41/3. Reconstructed	Long cairn. L=30,4m, br=3,8-5,0m, h=0,7m.	Cremation	SW-side of the kerb	1 adult		S11258: Decorated ring of bronze for tweezers, 34 sherds leirkarskår, burnt bones, charcoal	Hemdorff and Kjeldsen 1992, Hemdorff 1992

Table 1. Grave finds from Forsandmoen.

¹ Middle-sized stones mixed with large amounts of soil.

² Small- to middle-sized stones mixed with little soil.

³ Burnt bones and charcoal found in the small cist. The other finds from five spots outside the cist.

⁴ Charcoal and burnt bones inside and outside the small cist.

⁵ The concentration of burnt bones and charcoal found in the plundering pit (D=2m).

Year	Location (in Forsandmoen)	Construction	Burials	Placement of the burial	Pos. Gender	Typ/radioc. AD	Finds	Reference
2000	SE. Gnr. 41/3, 26. Id. 14272.	Mound with several phases D=14m, h=1,8m	Cremation+inhumation	Chamber	Female		S11865: Gilded button of silver with niello, spindle whorl, sherds, burnt bones from an adult individual	Gellein 2000, Gellein og Skjelstad 2001
			Inhumation	Outside bottom of chamber	Male	450-550 (typ)	S11865: Ring of gold, shield grip, spearhead, lance, 5 arrowheads, scissors, burnt animal bones, several vessels (bucket shaped from 450-500AD)	
2001	SE. Gnr. 41/3, 26. Id. 61178.	Cairn D=16m, h=1m	Several cremations	Small cist of four flat stones (0,7x0,35m) ⁴	Female	MP	S12027: Glass beads, spindle whorl, sherds (finer handle vessel), fitting, metal band, small rivet, burnt bones	Sørheim 2007
2017	SW. Gnr. 41/5. Id. 14498.	Mound 1 D=11m, h=1,2m	Cremations W		2juveniles	128-322, 253-406, 382-538 (Beta-498542, 498549, 498548)	S13867.1-5: 3 glass beads, decorated spindle whorl, bucket shaped vessel, burnt bones, burnt clay	Dahl 2019
			Cremation E		Female	128-322, 382-538 (Beta-498541, 498547)	S13867.6-12: 4 glass beads, bone comb, a decorated vessel of finer table ware, burnt bones, burnt clay	
			Cremation/pyre	Cist (2,7x0,6m)	Female?		S13867.13-16: 2 glass beads, iron fragment, perforated object of oak, 2 round stones	
	Inhumations	Chamber (3,3x0,6m)	Male	MP (late) (typ)	S13868.1-10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 23, 25: Sword, tweezers, 6 knives, 4 bucket shaped vessels, 1 finer table ware vessel, 2 sherds of soap-stone, 1 iron rivet, 218 iron fragments			
Cremations						1 adult, 1 child	210-383 (Beta-498544)	S13868.11, 14, 28: 59 sherds from one bucket shaped vessel, 3 fine tempered sherds, burnt bones from 2 individuals

Table 1. continued.

and character of the finds from graves would have been inadequate in the case of a massive site like Forsandmoen.

All typologically dated burials fall within the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period, the latter period dominating. We only know of one mound with finds from the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Reiersen 2021). The complete domination of burials from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period cannot be explained by the burial customs. Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period burials seem to have been placed in the mounds and not dug down into the subsoil, as we, for instance, more commonly observe in the Viking Period (Dahl 2016b). The majority of known finds from burials at Forsandmoen have been found while removing or excavating mounds, and, considering the extent of the settlement area uncovered by top-soil stripping at Forsandmoen, any burials placed in the subsoil should have been identified. Investigating all features that might represent burials preserved in the subsoil around the mounds and buildings was heavily prioritized during the excavation in 2017. The absence of burials from other periods than the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period indicates mortuary customs that left no preserved traces identifiable as burials, either in

the large areas of uncovered subsoil or related to the fully excavated mounds of 2017.

The diagnostic ceramics play a crucial role in the identification of burials from Forsandmoen. The mounds excavated in 2017 illustrate the complexity surrounding burials containing diagnostic ceramics from Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period, in particular the deposition patterns. In the case of Mound 2, the type of ceramic from the chamber would have led us to place the mound in the later part of the Migration Period. There is only one radiocarbon date stretching into the Migration Period, while all the other radiocarbon dates from Mound 2 are older and concentrated within the Late Roman Iron Age. The relationship between the radiocarbon dates and the diagnostic finds draws attention away from one particular age and towards a longer duration of use.

The time span within the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period is an argument for the need to approach burial monuments as potentially being used for several burials over a longer stretch of time. However, this approach has not been very evident in earlier excavations, where an individual burial was identified and typologically dated by the grave goods. Chasing singular burials solely dated by

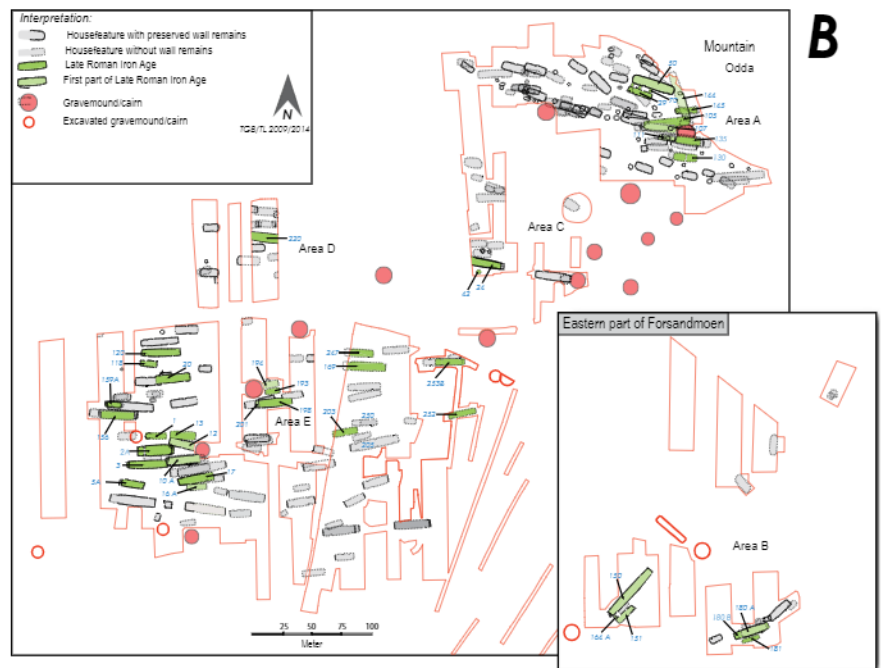
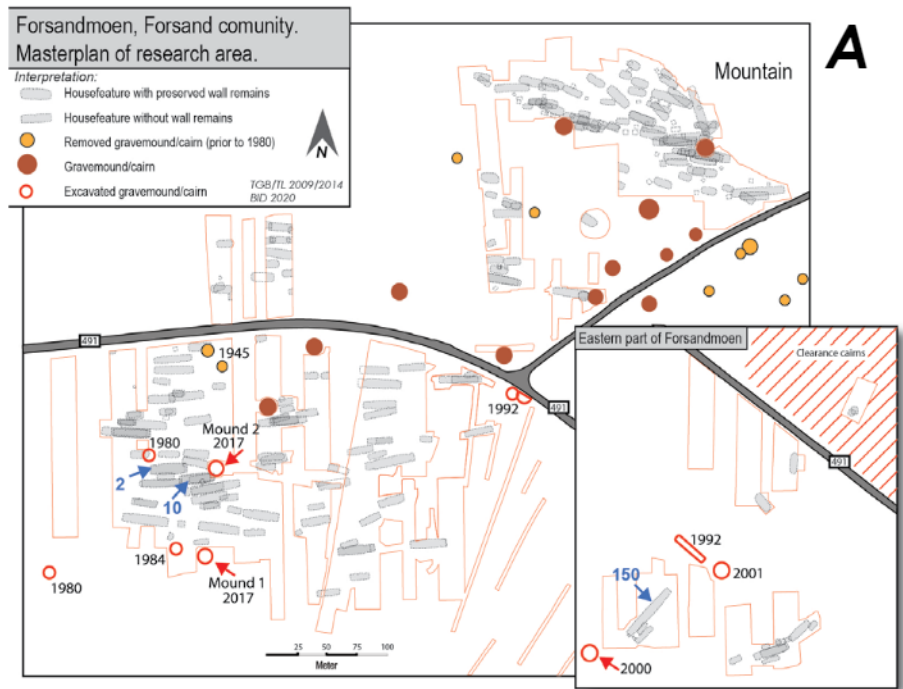
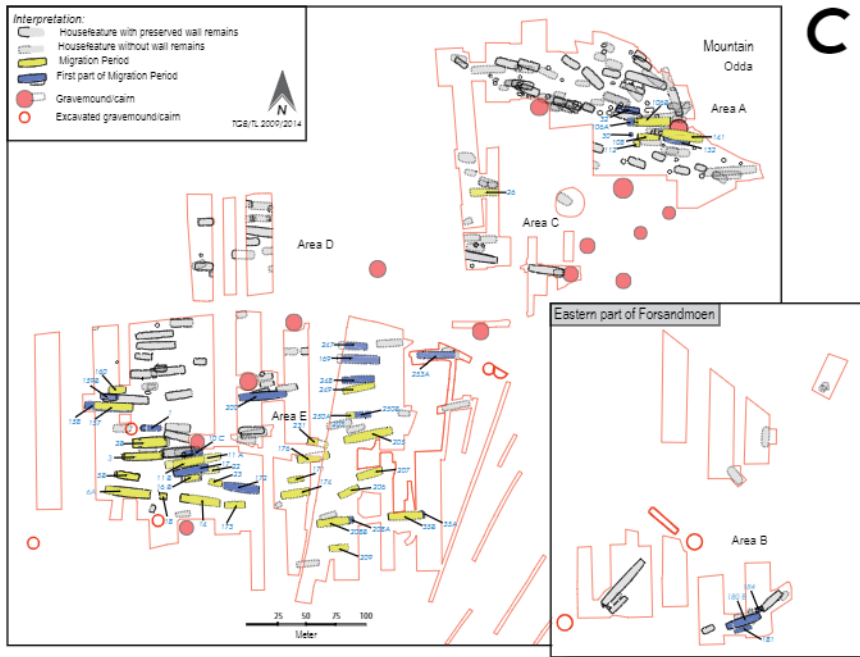


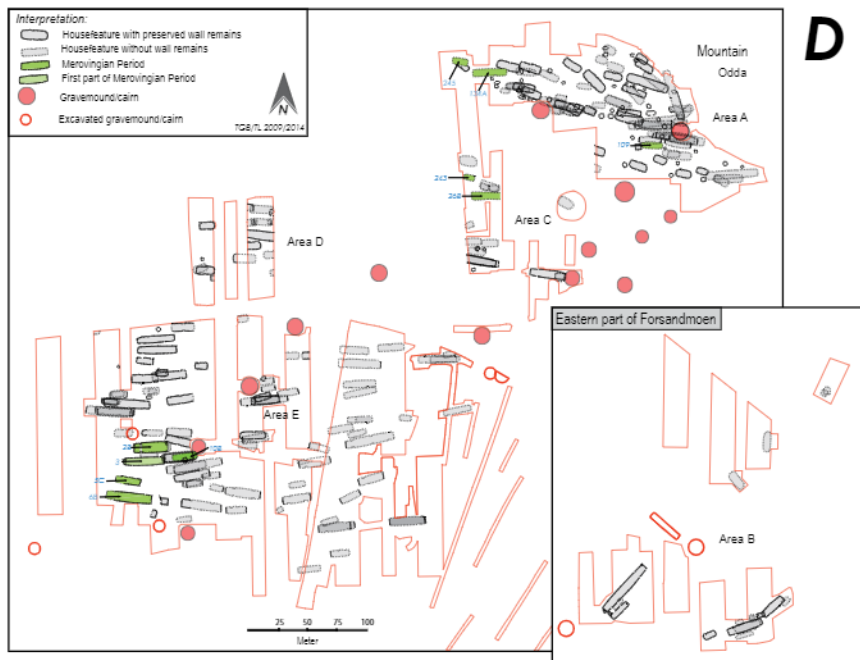
Figure 5. A) Mounds mentioned in the text marked by red arrows, mentioned houses marked by blue arrows. Prior to 1980 mounds were removed without excavation and exact locations are uncertain. Mounds excavated from 1980 onwards named by year of excavation (see table 1). Illustration: Theo Gil, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger, based on Løken 2020. B) Houses from the Late Roman Iron Age. C) Houses from the Migration Period. D) Houses from the Merovingian Period. Illustrations B, C and D from Løken 2020.

diagnostic finds represents other source critical challenges that we have to be aware of when analysing material from older excavations. Still, if we keep the two periods Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period together, most of the radiocarbon dates from the two mounds excavated in 2017 fall within the same time span as represented by the diagnostic ceramic present in 16 of the mounds in Forsandmoen. At the same time, Mound 2 might

be representative for other burial monuments at Forsandmoen, where the use of radiocarbon dates has detected earlier use than diagnostic finds limited to the Migration Period (tab. 1). Based on recent excavations, all the burials from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period can be seen as representative and actual. In fact, the continuous use documented in Mound 2 suggests an even higher frequency of burials in the Late Roman Iron



C



D

Age and Migration Period than the impression we get from table 1, revealing the contrast between old and modern excavations.

Continuous use of the burial monuments represents a challenge in a quantitative comparison with the number of farm units. We cannot assume a 1:1 relationship between a mound and a burial, or that all the un-excavated mounds are from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. At the

same time, we cannot assume that the buildings of a farm unit have been used only by one generation. The finds we know of are primarily from the southern and eastern part of the settlement since the mounds in the northeast have not been excavated (see fig. 5). At the peak of the settlement, Forsandmoen had 20 simultaneous farm units and we have finds from 19 mounds. However, the number of mounds with finds we know of is low, considering the 47 mounds

registered at Forsandmoen in 1930 (Petersen 1930). Eleven of the 19 mounds with finds at Forsandmoen contain more than one burial. Most of the identified burials are cremations, which are far easier to identify and date. There are also three mounds with large chambers. We assume that the chambers were built for inhumations (Dahl 2016a), although burnt bones were also present in two of these chambers. Here the burnt bones provide the strongest indication of reuse. In the grave chamber of Mound 2, the high number of vessels, and sherds from different periods, also indicate multiple burials. Since most burials contain bucket shaped ceramic or finer table ware, a future study of these types of ceramic has great potential for providing more specific typological dates for the burials and identifying longer sequences of use.

Built to last

The continuous use of larger burial mounds mirrors the longevity of many buildings from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. Repairs and replacements of roof-bearing postholes are common in the large constructions. In many cases new buildings have been rebuilt on the same spot as previous buildings, with the same orientation of the aisles (Dahl 2008, 2009). Trond Løken has argued for long lasting houses in the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period (Løken 1991:27, 2006:312). Both houses and graves appear to have been built to last. They have been repaired, expanded and rebuilt, in such a way that the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period stands out as a continuum. Both the dead and the living were tightly incorporated into the established built environment. The period at the peak of the settlement at Forsandmoen gives an impression of continuity between the generations, with a focus on maintaining the status quo and existing power relations.

There is a close relation between the large buildings and the large mounds at Forsandmoen (fig. 5 a). The above-mentioned mound excavated in 2000 in the southeast, containing multiple phases, was situated close by two other large mounds and a large building, House 150 (Løken 1997, 2001, 2006; Gil 2016). In fact, House 150 is surrounded by three larger mounds. In the southwest, another large longhouse, House 2, is next to Mound 2 (fig. 5 a). Three of the mounds have large grave chambers. We can assume that the superimposed monuments and the large chambers were closely connected to the families occupying the largest houses. The location of houses and graves at Forsandmoen underlines the strong proximity between the living and the dead that we recognize from contemporary farm complexes. Although we are well familiar with this proximity from the farm complexes, the same practice seems strikingly inconvenient in a dense settlement twenty times the size of the single farm. The limited space between the buildings must have been tightly regulated. Although we do not have preserved

traces of any kind of fence around the different farm units, the distribution of the cooking pits, most commonly located in smaller clusters outside the southwestern entrance of the main buildings, indicates an organised outdoor space (Dahl 2009).

New radiocarbon dates support the impression of two phases for House 2 adjacent to Mound 2. House 2a was in use in the Migration Period, at the same time as the chamber in the mound (Dahl 2019:63) (fig. 5 a and c). However, the radiocarbon dates from House 150 show use in the Early and Late Roman Iron Age, whereas the two identified burials in the mound are from the late Migration Period. We have to take into consideration that these two burials belong to the two last construction phases of the mound. We might have the same situation as in Mound 2, with the primary sequence constructed in Late Roman Iron Age, at the same time as House 150 was in use. A little cluster of houses close by, some of them in use in the Migration Period, should also be seen in relationship with the large mounds (fig. 5 c). At the same time, the continued use of the mound may still have been related to the abandoned House 150, commemorated and present as a significant ruin (Herschend 2009; Dahl 2016b).

Mound 2 was constructed on top of the eastern corner of House 10 (see fig. 1 b, 5 a and 5 b). Two of the phases of House 10 were in use in Late Roman Iron Age, and the primary phase of Mound 2 must have been built shortly after the abandonment of House 10a and 10b. It is tempting to suggest that the earliest phase of Mound 2 was constructed for inhabitants of House 10, at the foot of the house ruin. In the Merovingian Period new buildings were constructed on the same plots as House 10 and House 2 (Dahl 2019). In the Merovingian Period, the largest cluster of houses of the once large settlement is located next to Mound 2 (see Bjørdal 2016). While there are no identified burials from the Merovingian Period in Mound 2, only two sherds of soapstone, its proximity to the last remaining cluster of buildings implies that the mound still played an important role in the Merovingian Period mind-set (fig. 5 d). Mound 2 may have been considered as the dwelling for the predecessors. The affiliation to older monuments can be perceived both explicitly and judicially, as ownership of land, and as a more symbolic connection to ancestors (Dahl 2016b). The built environment of both houses and graves is thus conceived of as monuments of an outstanding past, at the same time present and entangled by being incorporated into later practices.

The constructions and the construction process

The exploration of the burials known from Forsandmoen place almost all of them within a short time frame of 300 years, compared to a settlement with a duration

of 2200 years. More than just pinpointing a pattern, we have to look into possible reasons for the investment in building burial monuments and the largest houses during the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. These are highly expansive periods in Rogaland that left massive material traces in the landscape (Myhre 1981:118–120). The largest monument at Forsandmoen is the 30-metre-long cairn in the south-east (fig. 5 a). The few objects found within the large monument, from a Late Roman Iron Age / Migration Period cremation burial (tab. 1), reveal a discrepancy between the mound and high status finds. A large mound does not indicate high status finds. This discrepancy was also prominent in the graves in Hålandsmarka, approximately 55 kilometres southwest of Forsandmoen (Dahl 2016a). Oddmunn Farbrege has pinpointed that a large grave monument demands common work effort and approval, while rich grave goods can be seen as a more short-lived demonstration of status during the funeral (Farbrege 1993:6). The ability to mobilize the local community indicates another form of power than the wealth necessary to furnish a rich burial.

Questions regarding the investment in building monuments in the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period unavoidably touch upon the archaeological interpretations of burial monuments. Burials are not seen as directly mirroring society, but more as its material arguments (Lillehammer 1996; Williams 2006). Large monuments may not necessarily indicate growth and prosperity, rather a need to argue and convince when power is under debate (Hedeager 1992; Löwenborg 2012). In this sense, the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period and the peak of the settlement at Forsandmoen can be characterized as times of larger disputes, where the display of power in the form of an investment in monuments was considered important. The discrepancy between the finds and the mounds demonstrate that the attention was directed towards the constructions and possibly also the process of constructing. This might also apply for the buildings.

The death of individuals with key roles could result in a dangerous interregnum with the potential to throw the society into stress and reorganisation of power. We can imagine the importance of the building of monuments as a communal grieving process with the local society occupied in conducting larger work efforts. Most probably the work was tightly directed and used as an opportunity to visualize, maintain or transform hierarchy. Such theatrical performances could interplay with the sense of stability, expressed through the continuous use of graves and buildings, creating the successful assurance of stability in a fast-growing community at Forsandmoen, as in the rest of the region.

Mound 1, 2 and the larger mounds in the southeast offer important insights into the care and attention directed towards building meticulous constructions for the dead. In Mound 1 the carefully constructed thin layers of turf and

stones were covered by a large cairn, and in Mound 2 the half circular mound outlined by larger stones was sealed by a larger mound. Only the people that participated in the construction, or viewed the spectacle that we can assume every burial provided, shared this collective memory. However, the mounds made the past present and transformative. More than monumentality, the landscape was furnished by complex and layered constructions in Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period.

The construction process appears to have been more important in the local community in the Late Roman Iron Age. Here we might be able to identify a change between the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period. In the Late Roman Iron Age new monuments were constructed for new burials. Mound 1 illustrates that one mound could be constructed for several simultaneous burials at the transition between the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. The large chambers appear to have been in use throughout the Migration Period (Næss 1996; Kristoffersen and Oestigaard 2008; Dahl 2016a; Fredriksen and Kristoffersen 2020). The shift represents a significant difference in the way societies in the past faced death, from the massive work effort of building large constructions at the time of death, to incorporating the dead into an already existing monument. The same pattern could be identified in Hålandsmarka where meticulously constructed burial monuments from the Late Roman Iron Age were crowned by a large chamber containing at least four inhumations and cremations from throughout the Migration Period (Dahl 2016a). In Mälardalen in Sweden both the over- and underlying graves were from the same century within the Migration Period (Stenholm 2006:343). Hence the Migration Period material from Rogaland and Mälardalen can be seen as marking the beginning of long-lasting practices of monument reuse seen as a strategy in Western Europe from the Migration Period and throughout the Late Iron Age (Williams 1997:1; Stenholm 2012:10).

We can imagine how material culture gained more attention during larger transformations in society. As mentioned in the introduction, the important role material culture plays in enabling remembering and in upholding the past was earlier underrated (Williams 2006:3; Olsen 2010:110). Regarding material culture and transformations, the investment in building new monuments in the Late Roman Iron Age might point towards larger social changes starting far earlier than the discussed break at the end of the Migration Period (Løken 1988; Dahl 2009, 2016b). The burial practice in the Late Roman Iron Age could further hint at the necessity to direct more archaeological attention towards the act of constructing material culture. The burial practices in the Migration Period can be seen as examples of acts to revitalise the past, to underline the repeated use of things to enhance a sense of continuity. The change also causes less variation in the burial practice (Fredriksen

and Kristoffersen 2020), a phenomenon also seen in the standardised construction principles of houses from the same period (Løken 1983, 1987, 1999, 2001; Gil 2016).

Conclusion

A major goal of pre-development excavations is to generate new questions and insights into previous excavations and finds. The excavations offer both unique and repeated possibilities to challenge our perspectives on past, present and future practices. A multitemporal approach can bring more attention to construction processes and other practices demonstrating the repeated use and transformation of the built environment (Dahl 2016a and b). Challenging the traditional approach to graves as containers of a single burial event allows us to explore possible variations over time. The mounds excavated at Forsandmoen in 2017 offer important insights into the care and attention directed towards building meticulous constructions for the dead. Several superimposed monuments imply that Late Roman Iron Age society invested in building new mounds for new burials. The large grave chambers appear to have been in use for several burials throughout the Migration Period. The shift represents a difference in the way past societies faced death, from the massive work effort in building large constructions at the time of death to incorporating the dead into an already existing monument (Dahl 2016a). It is reasonable to believe that the explanation can be sought in the construction process itself and the central role it may have played in a fast-growing society. Repeated use of the present monuments in the Migration Period underlines that reuse and the multitemporal should be expected when investigating material culture.

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