

THE NORWAY TO BE: *LAITHLIND* AND AVALDSNES

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LAITHLIND IN THE IRISH ANNALS

The forms *Laithblind*, *Laithlinn*, and *Lothblind* feature in Irish sources during the ninth century AD, and appear to be the name of a location from which the king of the Vikings originates. The claim pursued in this chapter is that the sovereignty in question is likely to be a strong kingdom in pre-unified Norway. It aims to locate this particular polity, to discuss a potential semantic content of the early name forms, and to suggest a motive behind their designation.

The forms *Laithlinn* or *Laithblind* appear three times in the Irish annals. Their initial occurrence is found in the *Annals of Uster (AU)*, as we are told that a deputy of ‘the King of Laithlinn’ takes part in a mighty battle south-west of Dublin in 848:

AU 848.5 Bellum re nOlcobur, ri Muman, & re Lorggan m. Cellaig co Laighniu for gennti ecc Sciaith Nechtain in quo ceciderunt Tomrair erell, tanise righ Laithlinne, & da cet dec imbi

[Ólchobor, king of Mumu, and Lorcán son of Cellach, with the Laigin, won a battle against the heathens at Sciath Nechtain, in which fell the jarl Tomrair, tanist of the king of Laithlinn, and two hundred about him.]²

Although this *Tomrair erell* (Old Norse *Pórir jarl*) was an ostensibly important chieftain, this reference represents the only occasion we hear about him. The title ‘King of Laithlinn’ reappears five years later, however:

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- 1 This work represents a much edited version of a longer article in Norwegian in *Namn og Nemne* (Kruse 2015). The principal subject matter of the former article – not included here – constitutes a discussion on what the skaldic poems say about King Harald Fairhair’s possible interest in Ireland/Scotland and his struggle with the Danes, which is likely to be reflected by the Viking in-fighting in Ireland.
 - 2 Unless stated otherwise, the Old Irish texts and corresponding English translations are all taken from CELT (<https://www.ucc.ie/celt>). The usual substitution of *Laitlinn/Laithblind* with *Lochlann* is not followed here.

AU 853.2 Amhlaim m. rígh Laithlinde do tuidhecht a nErinn corogiallsat Gaill Erenn dó & cis o Goidhelaib

[Amlaib, son of the king of Laithlind, came to Ireland, and the foreigners of Ireland submitted to him, and he took tribute from the Irish.]

Amlaib (ON *Áleifr*, later *Óláfr*) evidently has or assumes command of the ‘foreigners’ in Ireland, which also had to be achieved a few years before; in 849 (*AU* 849.6), we hear that ‘the king of the foreigners’ (*rígh Gall*) came with 140 ships to submit the Vikings in Ireland. As no names are chronicled here, it is impossible to know whether this refers to the same King of *Laithlind*. Nevertheless, a king’s son by the name Amlaib does appear in *The Fragmentary Annals (FA)*:³

FA 239 Isin mbliadain-si bhéos .i. in sexto anni regni Maoil Seaclainn, tainig Amhlaoibh Conung .i. mac rígh Lochlainne i nEirinn & tug leis erfhuagra cíosa & canadh n-imdha ó a athair & a fagbhail-sidhe go h-obann. Tainig dno Iomhar an brathair ba sóo ‘na deaghaidh-sidhe do thobhach na ccios ceadna

[Also in this year, i.e. the sixth year of the reign of Máel Sechlainn, Amlaib Conung, son of the king of Lochlainn, came to Ireland, and he brought with him a proclamation from his father of many tributes and taxes, and he departed suddenly. Then his younger brother Imar came after him to levy the same tribute.]

From what we know about Máel Sechnaill from other sources, Amlaib Conung⁴ (ON *Óláfr konungr*) and Imar (ON *Ívarr*) are likely to

3 The *FA* is a non-contemporary compilation of earlier sources and, thus, as a source it is not nearly as valuable as the contemporary *AU*. In this case, we notice that the presumably original *Laithlinn* has been substituted with *Lochlainn*, which is not otherwise attested in contemporary sources before the eleventh century. The entry, however, could be regarded as an example of the type of annal entry that Peter Hunter Blair terms ‘embellished annals’. See Blair 1939.

4 Note that the form *Conung* is different from the Old Irish personal name *Conaing*, which is likely to be a pre-umlaut borrowing from Old English into Irish, i.e. before AD 700 (Greene 1976, 78; 1978, 119). The implication is that the Irish scribe writing *Conung* does not see the word as a name but most probably as the title that it is. The same applies to the title *erell* or *iarla* from Old Norse *jarl* (Greene 1976, 78).

have accomplished this in 852 or 853. As such, these must be the same events that are referred to in the *AU* for the year 853. Furthermore, the son of the same ‘Óláfr of Dublin’ is likely to be the one taking part in the battle at Cell Ua nDaigri in 868, as described in the *Annals of the Four Masters*:

M866.10 Dos-fail dar Findabhair fhind,
fialach grinn dond dar laith linn luind,
As ar chédaibh rimhthear Goill,
do cath fri righ n-Etair n-uill.

[There comes over fair Findabair
a keen host from fierce Laithlind –
the Foreigners are counted in hundreds –
to do battle against the king of great Étar.]⁵

The final ninth-century Irish source to be mentioned here is perhaps the most often cited, providing us with a glimpse of a scribe’s personal experience of this unsafe century. Found in the margins of a copy of Priscian’s *Institutiones Grammaticae* (see Figure 1), this Old Irish poem is usually dated to the mid-ninth century:⁶

Is acher in gaíth in-nocht
fu-fúasna fairggæ findf[.]olt;
ní ágor réimm mora minn
dond láechraid lainn úa Lothlind

[The wind is sharp tonight
he throws up the white mane on the sea;
I have no worries that the wild warriors from Lothlind
shall lay their course over a calm sea.]

We notice that the form *Lothlind* is different from the previous annal entries with *Laithlinn/Laithlind*. We shall see that the form *Lothlind* is given much attention in the many attempts to explain the name complex.

5 Translation from O’Corrain 2001.

6 O’Corrain 1998, 302-3.

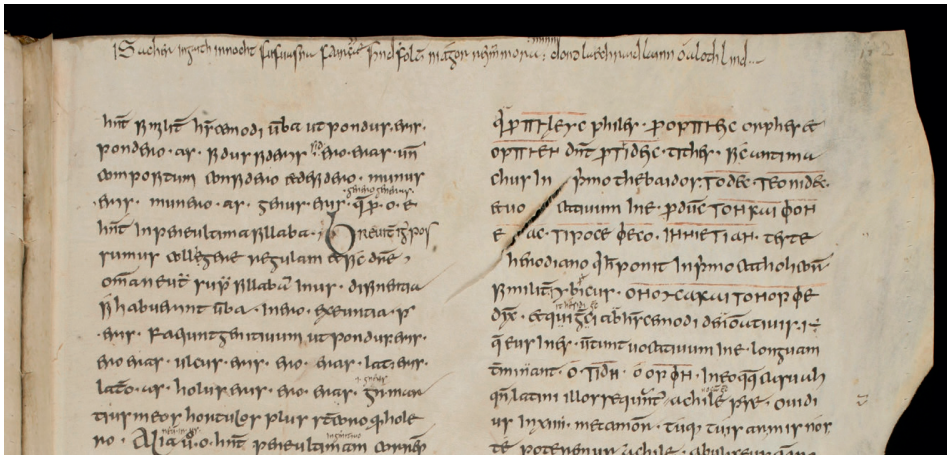


Figure 1: Marginal note in Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*, Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen, Cod. Sang. 904, 112. With permission from Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen.

RESEARCH HISTORY

The numerous authors who have written about the name complex *Laithlind/Laithlinn/Lotblind* may be placed into two categories: those who claim that the name denotes a Scandinavian location, and those who rather see a British/Irish denotation. Unsurprisingly, most early Scandinavian and German Celticists adhere to the first category, Heinrich Zimmer being the first.⁷ He claimed that the name in the Irish sources signified the Danish island of *Lolland*, a theory that Alexander Bugge proved unlikely.⁸ Carl J. S. Marstrander, later supported by Alf Sommerfelt, initially suggested that *Lochlann* had an origin in the area name *Rogaland* in the south-west of Norway, whilst the former author, upon reflection of the earlier forms, came to doubt this etymology.⁹

Egon Wamers is the most recent to propose that the Irish name forms may be traced to a specific Scandinavian name.¹⁰ He suggested that the first element of the name might be *Hlaðir*, now *Lade*, near Trondheim – a well-attested seat of power in the early Viking Age.¹¹ There are, however, linguistic issues with Wamers' proposition; in the suggested transition *Hlaðir* > *Laith-*, one of the two syllables is syncopeated in

7 Zimmer 1891.

8 Bugge 1900, nos. 4-6.

9 Marstrander 1911, 250-51; 1915, 56-57; Sommerfelt 1950.

10 Wamers 1997; 1998, 66.

11 For the name *Hlaðir*, see Stemschaug 2010, 108-9.

the Irish form, and a monophthong becomes a diphthong – if it is the case that the written <ai> represents a diphthong, as is argued here. Colman Etchingham supports Wamers' proposal and suggests that the second syllable in *Hlaðir* is dropped in compositions.¹² This, however, does not seem to be the case. Although *Hlaðir/Lade* is not attested in compounds with *-land* in any of the medieval or modern name forms, the second syllable of the farm name remains present in other compositions, cf. *Hlaðajarl* (m.), 'earl of Laðir', and the modern name *Ladehammaren*. Etchingham also suggests that the Irish *linn*, 'pool, sea', may serve as the basis for the second element, and as such refers to the Trondheimsfjord. In this case, it would have been the Irish who were the name-givers, implying their familiarity with the area. There is no evidence to sustain a claim that the Irish (clerics, nobles?) knew Norwegian local geography in such detail by the middle of the ninth century, at a time when they had just started to record the names of the leaders of the marauding incomers. In addition, should *Laithblind* represent a Norwegian place-name compounded with an Irish generic element, it will be a typological exception to the degree that one struggles to find similar compounds in Irish sources.

David Greene, proposing that 'it is at least possible that the original *Lothblind* was [...] perhaps in Gaelic-speaking Man or Western Scotland', has suggested a Celtic word *loth/lath*, 'marsh', as the origin to the first element in *Lothblind*.¹³ In spite of his own uncertainty, his proposal has won the support of Anders Ahlqvist.¹⁴ Most scholars, including Ahlqvist, believe that the element *-lind* or *-linn* derives from Germanic *-land*. If Greene is right, the name will be a hybrid creation, this time with a Germanic generic and Celtic specific. The rarity of such constructions is probably why Greene himself suggested that we might have to instead accept Irish *linn*, 'pool', referring to the estuaries in which Vikings often camped.¹⁵ We shall return to this proposal shortly.

In 1998, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, who has discussed this name on several occasions, proposed a much-quoted etymology for the form *Lothblind*.¹⁶ He believed it to have originated from ON *loð* ('hairy' or,

12 Etchingham 2010, 83; 2014.

13 Greene 1976, 76-77.

14 Ahlqvist 2005, 19-27.

15 Greene 1978, 119-23.

16 Ó Corráin 1998.

more specifically, ‘covered with long grass’), which would have turned into **loth* in Irish, and which he believes refers to the good grassy land the Vikings found in Orkney and the north-east of Scotland.¹⁷ Accentuating Greene’s proposal, Ó Corráin argues that *Lothblind/Laithlind* does not refer to Norway or any part of Norway, but instead designates ‘Viking Scotland’, a kingdom the Vikings had established on the Scottish islands, which was used as a foundation for further expansion southwards into the Irish Sea.

Although the source material is scarce, it is reasonable to assume that Shetland, Orkney, the Hebrides, and the Scottish coastal strip to the north and west were colonised before Man and Ireland. Nevertheless, Greene and Ó Corráin’s hypothesis falters in the assumption that there would have been a political organisation in these areas since ‘the main thrust of the ninth-century Viking attack on Ireland (c. 825-850) was mounted from Scotland’.¹⁸ There is no archaeological or historic evidence to support any Norse ‘maritime centre’ in the north or west of Scotland as early as this.¹⁹ A review of the Norse graves in the area shows that these mostly emerge between 850 and 950, and only in exceptional cases before this – an indication that any large-scale settlement only took place after c. 850.²⁰ The first sign of what can be perceived as a political initiative is the Vikings’ apparent control over the Gaelic-Pictish kingdom of Dál Riata around the mid-ninth century.²¹ The Irish monks reporting on these events, however, never imply that *Laithlind* equals Dál Riata. They, on the contrary, state that Gallgoídil warriors – possibly with a base in Viking-controlled Dál Riata – were in conflict with the Dublin dynasty. In summing up his criticism of Ó Corráin’s hypothesis, Etchingham bluntly states: ‘Only the eye of faith can locate the *Laithlinn* of the sources in Scotland’.²²

There is also a pragmatic objection to Ó Corráin’s hypothesis. By presuming a Scottish place of origin for the aggression towards Ireland, Ó Corráin removes from Old Irish a term for the provenance of a people that terrorised and suppressed large parts of Ireland during

17 As a metaphoric adjective referring to rich grassland, it is found in *Fornmanna sögur* ii, 278: ‘á grasi þóat loðit væri’.

18 Ó Corráin 1998, 297.

19 Etchingham 2007.

20 Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, 152-53.

21 Jennings and Kruse 2009; Downham 2015.

22 Etchingham 2010, 83.

the ninth century.²³ It is simply not enough to claim that the Vikings in Ireland had stronger contacts with the western colonies than those with Norway directly. The archaeological material – which we shall return to shortly – convincingly demonstrates a strong and direct link between Norway and Ireland during the ninth century.

Within the Irish poem known in English as *The March Roll of the Men of Leinster*, the titular men warn against *forlunn echtrann*, ‘hordes of foreigners’, who arrive *dar glasa in mara móir*, ‘over the big blue ocean’.²⁴ If the proposed tenth-century origin of the poem is accurate, it seems that, at any case, there existed an impression for the foreigners (i.e. Vikings) at that time to have come from somewhere further away than just the opposite side of the North Channel.

In contrast to the non-committal style of the Irish annalists, the scribe who penned the poem containing *Lothlind* provides the modern reader with a glimpse of genuine human emotion, and it is understandable that this text is so frequently used to illustrate exactly this; the terror and anguish the Vikings produced, perhaps especially among the relatively well-informed but also vulnerable clerics.²⁵ It is, however, another matter when the form *Lothlind* has played a pivotal role in the scholarship around the name complexe, and it may be justified to ask if the linguistic importance of *Lothlind* is warranted. As in other cases when a name is recorded in various written forms, the etymologist will have to choose what form or forms appear the most reliable or trustworthy. In this case, *Laith-* is the more recurrent, with *Loth-* only occurring once. Apart from the uncertainty about when and where the poem containing *Lothlind* is written²⁶, the text itself is difficult to contextualise. Unlike the annalistic entries with *Laithlind*, the unknown

23 See also Greene 1976, 77.

24 *The March Roll of the Men of Leinster*, 122.

25 There is a slight possibility that the form *Lothlind* is influenced by the name *Lotharingia* or *Lotharii regnum*, one of the successor kingdoms to the Carolingian Empire, carved out by the Treaty of Verdun in 843 and named after Emperor Lothar II in 855. The unknown monk glossing Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae* would have been part of a monastic network which included clerical and political institutions inside of this Frankish kingdom. Could it be that the poet monk is actually referring to Vikings menacing the coast of the Low Countries, i.e. the littoral of *Lotharingia*, or ‘Lothar’s land’, and that his expressed fear is that the wild warriors who raided that land would now find their way across the sea to where he is?

26 Ó Neill 2000.

poet provides the name *Lothlind* in isolation; no further information is supplied in the form of place names or personal names. In addition, we may assume that the poet is not writing his text as a record of events – meant for future references and where one would expect a degree of accuracy – but rather as an outburst of personal anguish, expressed in a verse which is perhaps only meant for himself. Of the four ninth-century entries discussed above, the poem containing *Lothlind* is the odd one out, both linguistically and contextually. As we have seen, a majority of scholars have actually focused their efforts on the form *Loth-* and, in light of the relative anomaly of the source, it can be argued that the form *Loth-* has been given an exaggerated importance in the research history of the name complex. The most important consequence, however, is that scholars have assumed that the variation *Loth-/Laith-* is indicative of a monophthong, and it has been taken for granted that the written <ai> follows the Old Irish orthographic habit where the <i> indicates that the preceding consonant is ‘slender’, i.e. that it has a palatal quality. The complicating factor is that the diphthong /ai/, which ‘should’ be written <aí>, is in practice very often written without an accent, such as in the examples from *AU* when the Norse name *Áleifr* (Proto-Scandinavian **AnulaiþaR*) is rendered *Amlaim* or *Amlaib*. If we adjust the importance of *Loth-* to the anomaly that it is, we simply cannot know for sure if the form *Laith-* contains a monophthong or a diphthong. An etymology based on a monophthong has – in spite of much scholarly attention – not produced an irrefutably satisfying proposal, and other options deserve to be tested. In the following, therefore, our main focus will be on the annalistic forms where the first element is *Laith-*, and the <ai> in both *Amlaib* and in *Laitlind* will be treated as the Irish scribes’ attempts at representing the Common Scandinavian diphthong /ai/.

LAITHLIND AND LOCHLANN

Until relatively recently, it has been mostly taken for granted that the name *Laithlind/Laithlinn/Lothlind* is the equivalent of *Lochlann*, which in Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic depicts ‘Norway’ and has done so since at least 1102, when Magnús berføettr was referred to as

rí Lochlainni.²⁷ It has been assumed that folk etymology has gradually converted the name to *Lochlann*, where the first element, ‘fjord, lake’, aptly reflects a characteristic feature of the Norwegian coastline.²⁸

Several scholars have recently pointed out that it is not obvious for *Laithlind* to be an early form of later *Lochlann*. In fact, there are good phonological and historical reasons for claiming that the forms are independent creations. Colman Etchingham accentuates the semantic content:

Laithlinn is hardly an earlier form of *Lochla(i)nn* (‘Norway’). Why should we assume they were the same? After all, the words are different, even if the latter replaces the former in linguistically modernised annals (*AFM* and *FA*). They occur in annals of distinct periods.²⁹

John MacInnes points to the early, mythical use of *Lochlann*:

Lochlann, translated ‘Norway’ above, and in many contexts in modern Gaelic meaning just that, is in earlier, medieval Gaelic a fabulous land which later came to be associated with the Vikings and their homeland.³⁰

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh discusses this in more detail, demonstrating that *Lochlann* had an early literary life as a mythological name of the home country of the Vikings. In such stories, they are portrayed as almost invincible warriors, who are still defeated by clever Irish heroes.³¹ The name *Berbhe* has a similar duality, acting as both the Irish name of the present-day town of Bergen and the name of a mythical and nebulous town in folk tradition. Ní Mhaonaigh believes that, rather than folk traditions having created *Lochlann* from *Laithlind*, the early literary mythical name *Lochlann* would have assimilated the similar sounding

27 *AU* 1102.7. In the eleventh century, the linguistically modernised annals, such as the *Fragmentary Annals*, are using *Lochla(i)nn* with the meaning ‘Norway’. In 1058, the *Annals of Tigernach* make use of the name in reference to the son of Haraldr harðráði.

28 See, for example, Greene 1976, 77.

29 Etchingham 2010, 82.

30 MacInnes 2006, 190.

31 Ní Mhaonaigh 2006.

Lathlinn and *Lothlind* prior to taking over the particular meaning of ‘Norway’:

One could in fact argue that it was this term [*Lathblind*] which applied originally to an actual historical place whence Viking raiders came – wherever it might have been – and that *Lochlann* was from the beginning a created imaginative location.³²

It is probable that the name *Lochla(i)nn* would have assimilated *Laithlind* at a time when *Laithlind* had ceased to exist – as a political entity and, therefore, as a name used by the Vikings residing in Ireland – because it had been included within the larger realm that became ‘Norway’ in English.

The element *-lann* in *Lochlann* has the expected vowel for a potential origin from Germanic *-land*, whereas the equivalent element in *Laithlind/Laithlinn/Lothlind* possesses an unexpected vowel for that same origin, and Etchingham, therefore, finds it unlikely that *-lind* derives from *-land*.³³ A possible explanation for the fronted vowel /i/ is that the Irish would have often been exposed to the Scandinavian ending *-lendingr*, the mutated form designating a person from a particular area, as in ON *Íslendingr*, ‘person from Iceland’, or *Hallendingr*, ‘person from Halland’, and also the derived adjective, *íslenzkr*, etc. Even though the inhabitant variation or the adjective is not found in any documented Irish form,³⁴ it may be assumed that frequently used *-lendingr* and *-lenzkr* would have helped to weaken the impression of the back phoneme /a/ in *-land*, paving the way for a fronted vowel in the Irish records.

The transition *-land* to *-lind* or *-linn*, ‘pool, lake, sea, ocean’ or ‘drink, liquid, brew, ale, beer, intoxicating drink’, need not merely be morphophonologically driven but may also be semantically motivated.³⁵

32 Ibid., 36.

33 Etchingham 2010, 83.

34 We do not often see the inhabitant form of names in annalistic or legal documents. A survey of eighty-one medieval documents concerning Iceland in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* did not produce a single find of the inhabitant form *íslendingr*, and only one of *íslenzkr*. This is in contrast to the relatively frequent use of these forms in the epic Icelandic sagas.

35 Both meanings are used, for example, in the glosses of Priscian’s *Institutiones Grammaticae* (eDIL, s.v.1 *linn* and s.v.2 *linn*).

David Greene's claim that *Lothlann* may have carried the meaning of 'pool of mud' is interesting, although not quite for the reason he imagined (i.e. as a purely Irish composite creation).³⁶ What instead warrants interest is that Green's suggested semantic meaning could have added an associative aspect to the name *Laithblind*. When the Vikings started overwintering in Ireland, they established a type of camp the Irish often refer to as *longphort*, 'ship-place', which would typically be located some distance up a navigable river at a confluence, allowing two sides of the camp to be protected by water.³⁷ This is archaeologically documented as the origin of Dublin, Old Irish *Duiblinn*, 'dark pool', and other *longphuirt* (pl.) are similarly situated.³⁸ In addition to *Duiblinn*, *linn* is frequently used in connection with Viking bases, including *Linn Duachaill* in Annagassan, where a *longphort* has been archaeologically identified on the confluence of two rivers:³⁹

AU 842.8: Longas Nordmannorum for Boinn, for Linn Roiss. Longas Nordmannorum oc Linn Sailech la Ultu.

[A naval force of the Norsemen was on the Bóinn at Linn Rois. There was also a naval force of the Norsemen at Linn Sailech in Ulaid.]

AU 842.9: Moran m. Indrechtaigh, abbas Clochar M. nDaimeni, du ergabail do Gallaibh Linne, & a éc leo iarum.

[Mórán, son of Indrehtach, abbot of Clochar Mac nDaiméni, was taken prisoner by the foreigners of Linn and he later died on their hands.]⁴⁰

AU 842.10: Comman, abbas Linne Duachail, do guin & loscadh o genntibh & Goidhelaibh.

[Comán, abbot of Linn Duachaill, was fatally wounded and burned by heathens and Irish.]

36 Greene 1976, 77.

37 Griffiths 2010, 31.

38 Simpson 2010.

39 Wallace 2008.

40 The 'Gallaibh Lindae' is again referred to in AU 852.2.

The use of *Laithlind* in the Irish sources does not provide us with the impression that the name is an original Irish compound, but rather that it is an Irish phonological and possibly semantic adaptation of a name that was originally introduced by the Vikings themselves. The use of the name is related to a royal title, which on one occasion survives directly from Scandinavian in the form of *Amblaoibh Conung* (ON *Óláfr konung*).⁴¹ It is unlikely that the Vikings would have adopted an Irish place name and given their chieftain a royal title based on the Irish name. The impression is given that the royal title is – quite unsurprisingly – linked to their place of provenance, which we hear they are traveling to and from and in which they have affairs to tend to. Even Colmán Etchingham admits the possibility for the name *Laithlind* to be Scandinavian, and, by extension, its potential to hold valuable information:

Could it be that the contemporary Irish annals afford a glimpse of ninth-century Scandinavian history that is more reliable than the Icelandic sagas, albeit one that is fleeting, tantalizing and capable only of tentative interpretation?⁴²

The historian Mary Valante argues that *Laithlind* must be localised to a still Danish-controlled Vestfold by the Oslofjord, principally based on rich finds of Insular material at the trading centre Kaupang.⁴³ The archaeologist David Griffiths opposes this view by noting:

In the opinion of this author and numerous others, the most likely location is the south-west coast of Norway, around the powerful Iron Age chieftdom centres of Avaldsnes on Karmøy, and Jaeren south of modern Stavanger – the area with Norway's densest concentration of insular material from ninth- and tenth-century graves.⁴⁴

The following supports Griffith's preferred location for *Laithlind*. Griffith does not discuss the matter any further, and his archaeological

41 *FA* § 239.

42 Etchingham 2010, 84.

43 Valante 2008, 68-69.

44 Griffiths 2010, 36-37.

assertion will need to be reinforced with evidence. A subsequent proposal for the interpretation of the name *Laithblind* will be put forward, linking the name to the south-west coast of Norway.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological evidence suggests that the south-west of Norway is an exceptionally relevant area in this context, exhibiting a remarkably consistent concentration of finds. By far the greatest amount of imported Roman artefacts in Norway is found here. At Avaldsnes on the island Karmøy, a chieftain with a massive golden neck ring and silver shield boss was found to have been buried in the mound Flagghaugen in the third century. A recent investigation has unearthed a continuous set of buildings at Avaldsnes for AD 200-500, all of which exhibit an aristocratic character and are likely to have economic roots beyond mere local resources.⁴⁵ Although no buildings are manifest to prove a continued aristocratic presence after 500, the burial mounds confirm this nonetheless. Between the Oslofjord and Trøndelag, there is only one large burial mound from the eighth century: Storhaug, 'Large Mound', at Avaldsnes. The elites buried in this mound and in Grønhaug, another mound containing a ship from the second half of the eighth century, were furnished with grave goods featuring evidence of cultural contacts with the Frankish realm.⁴⁶

On the other, southern side of the wide Boknafjord, near the farms close to today's Stavanger, major buildings dating to AD 500-800 have been identified.⁴⁷ Here, at Gausel, a female burial from the first half of the ninth century has been found, characterised by Egil Bakka as the richest and most high-ranking female grave in Norway after Oseberg.⁴⁸ The burial included high-quality domestically produced artefacts, as well as Irish or Scottish objects such as metal finials from a sarcophagus, possibly associated with Iona.⁴⁹ In the area surrounding Stavanger, there are more finds of Insular metalwork than anywhere else on the Continent (Figure 2), and there are forty-three of such ninth-century finds in wider Rogaland overall.⁵⁰

45 Skre 2012.

46 Opedal 1998; 2005.

47 Børsheim and Soltvedt 2002.

48 Bakka 1993.

49 Kruse 2013.

50 Børsheim 1997.



Figure 2: The distribution of Viking Age Insular artefacts in Scandinavia. After Wamers 1997, with permission.

Heading north along the coast to the region of Hordaland, however, surprisingly few Insular objects are evident in Viking Age graves from the ninth century compared to more northern and southern areas (see Figure 2).⁵¹ How, then, does this correspond to the historical record, in which people from this area feature among the first identified Vikings?⁵² Modern archaeologists have interpreted this pattern of distribution as a likely indicator of a concentration of power and increased social stratification, in which local farmers have lost their independence.⁵³ This may also account for the dramatic drop in Insular grave goods in the second half of the ninth century in Jæren, the fertile area south of Stavanger, the very same district where the intensity of Insular objects was highest a generation before.⁵⁴ By the end of the ninth century, a centralised power structure seem to have arrived in the south of Rogaland as well.⁵⁵

This shift is concurrent to what Ann Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad has observed concerning Celtic and Celtic-inspired penannular brooches in Norwegian graves.⁵⁶ Before c. 850, this type of brooch was nearly always evident alongside other Insular artefacts in female graves. Subsequently, however, these are mainly found in prestigious male graves, concentrated around south-west Norway and Vestfold. The early brooches used by men were locally-produced copies or derivatives of Irish originals, made of iron or bronze and glazed with silver or pewter. Glørstad interpretes this change as the arrival of a new type of power structure, whose background is an ideological influence from Ireland, where such brooches were used to express hierarchy and to reinforce political alliances. She also defines the homemade brooches worn by

51 See also the table in Iversen 2007, 157.

52 Around AD 900, a number of manuscripts of the *Anglo-saxon Chronicle* were supplemented with local traditions from Northumbria. One such addition is for the year 787 [=789], when ‘*préo scipu Norðmanna of Hæreðalande*’ are noted to have arrived at Portland in Dorset (*English Historical Documents*, 180.). This late addition only demonstrates that *Hordaland* was known in the north of England towards the end of the ninth century. See also Woolf 2007, 64, 100.

53 Skre 1998, 247ff.; Iversen 1999; 2004.

54 Although Sola and Madla, just south of Stavanger, have divulged twenty-two Insular grave objects from the ninth century, only two appear after AD 900. See Myhre 1980, Solberg 2003, 286-87.

55 I have argued elsewhere (Kruse 2015, 73-74) that the skaldic poem *Haraldskvæði* – the closest that one gets to a contemporary Old Norse source – alludes to Jæren being under the control of Haraldr hárfagri before the battle of Hafrsfjörðr, Jæren.

56 Glørstad 2010; 2012.



Figure 3: Penannular brooch from a single find near Avaldsnes, Karmøy. Made of bronze, it is likely to have been produced in Norway, and closely mirrors Irish and Scottish silver thistle brooches. According to Glørstad 2010, 255-56, the brooch is of a type associated with high-status male burials from c. 850 to 950, with a large concentration in Rogaland and Vestfold. Image from the Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger (S331a), with permission.

men as symbols of authority, linked to the instigation of a central power structure in Norway.⁵⁷

Ships were found in both the Storhaug and Grønhaug mounds at Avaldsnes, estimated to be 22-24 m and c. 15 m long, respectively. Dendrochronology has dated the ships to c. 770 and c. 780, whilst the Storhaug ship seems to have been entombed in 779.⁵⁸ Because of their relatively weak keel structures, it has been assumed that the ships were propelled by oar rather than sail, although no doubt exists that ships of this size were able to cross open seas. The first large dedicated sailing ship discovered in Scandinavia is the famous Oseberg

57 Glørstad 2010, 254-79.

58 Bonde and Stylegar 2009.

ship, buried in 834 in Vestfold. The dendrochronological investigation of the ship concluded that it was built in 820. Surprisingly, it was not manufactured in the local Oslofjord region but rather in the south-west of Norway.⁵⁹ This provides the region with a unique continuity of large, seagoing ships at the very beginning of the Viking Age. Moreover, the provenance of the Oseberg ship is interesting, as Vestfold and the south-west of Norway both stand out as centres of power, which Glørstad has also pointed to.⁶⁰

AVALDSNES AS A CENTRE

The island name Karmøya (ON *Kǫrmt*, genitive *Karmtar*), a dental derivation related to the Old Norse noun *karmr* (m.), 'chest protection', carries the meaning 'that which protects (from the ocean)'.⁶¹ Avaldsnes is located on Karmøya at the narrowest passage of the sound separating the island from the mainland, and it is difficult to overestimate the importance of this position, which is the starting point of the *Leið*, the all-important sailing course northwards along the coast of Norway. There can hardly be any doubt that this setting represents the economic foundation for Avaldsnes, centre of the most powerful pre-unification kingdom on the west coast of Norway.⁶²

Around the southern tip of Norway, between Lista and Stavanger, no islands exist to provide shelter for ships. This is a common coastal stretch, similar to those found across Europe (e.g. along the Atlantic coast of France or the North Sea coast of England). Northwards from Karmøya, however, the *Leið* embarks on its long way along the Norwegian coast. The *Leið*, in Modern Norwegian *Leia*, names the sailing course, the aquatic highway northwards from Avaldsnes. At this point, it is possible to venture inshore along a series of islands protecting travellers from the predominant westerly weather. A transport network along the *Leið* north to Trøndelag and the north of Norway would have certainly existed as early as the Migration Period.⁶³ Bjørn Myhre has linked the emerging west Norwegian elite to a control over the northward

59 Ibid.

60 Vestfold was probably under Danish authority well into the ninth century, although Glørstad 2012 and Bonde and Stylegar 2009 have argued its transfer into the jurisdiction of Avaldsnes during this period.

61 Rygh et al. 1897-1936, vol. x, 378.

62 Skre 2014.

63 Solberg 2003, 108ff.



Figure 4: 'Augvaldsnæs [Avaldsnes] Church and Ruins', illustration from Wergmann 1833-1836. National Library of Norway (public domain). The church, now restored, was constructed by King Hákon Hákonarson around 1250, on the site of an older wooden church, assumed to have been built by King Oláf Tryggvason.

transport of goods along the *Leið*, as well as from the inner parts of the country out to the coast.⁶⁴ To govern the entrance to this protected sea-course meant to take charge of northern commodity flows along the coast of Norway, as well as goods coming from the north and west of Norway (e.g. fur, hide, and soap stone). In addition, Avaldsnes was also situated on a junction of communication lines between the interior of south-western Norway and the coast, granting it access to trade and the transport of iron, antlers, hides, etc.

Its position at a crossroads of crucial communication lines is an explanation for the remarkable continuity in Avaldsnes' history as a

64 Myhre 1993, 56-58.



Figure 5: After Opedal 1998, 138, illustrating what Opedal interprets as manor farms under Avaldsnes in the eighth century. See also Opedal 2005, 130-34; 2010. For an analysis of Avaldsnes as a central place, see Reiersen 2009. Map data © Norwegian Mapping Authority/Kartverket.

central place of power. After the battle of Hafrsfjord, Harald Fairhair decided to make this his main seat of residence and, according to tradition, this is where he chose to be interred. Avaldsnes remained a major residence for Norwegian royalty for 500 years. To the early Norwegian royals, control of western Norway, knitted together by communication lines which started and ended at Avaldsnes, was a first priority.

The extent of the chiefdom around Avaldsnes at Harald's time is indicated in Snorri's *Heimskringla* (see Figure 6).⁶⁵ Knut Helle regards this list among the most reliable parts of an otherwise untrustworthy prose tradition after Harald:

En er Haraldr konungr tók að eldast þá settist hann oftlega að stórbúum er hann átti á Hörðalandi, á Alreksstöðum eða Sæheimi eða Fitjum, og á Rogalandi, að Útsteini og á Ögvaldsnesi í Körmt.⁶⁶

[And when King Harald started to grow old he often stayed at the large farms he owned in Hordaland at Alrekstad or Seim or Fitjar, and in Rogaland at Utstein and at Avaldsnes in Karmøya.]⁶⁷

These farms are, apart from Utstein to the south, located along the *Leið*, as if to underline the importance of this communication line to the kingdom. The farms Etne and Halsnøy are also likely to have been central places, strategically located along the *Leið* and rich in gravemounds. Arnfrid Opedal points to several other similarly-positioned farms, rich in finds from the eighth century (see Figure 5).⁶⁸ Common features of these strategically located farms are artefacts of Frankish origin, as well as the occurrence of large boathouses. No such farms are located north of Sunnhordland and south of the Boknafjord.

Frode Iversen, having investigated Seim, Alrekstad and Fitjar, concludes that the medieval farms are unusually large.⁶⁹ He identifies them as part of a network demarking an ambulant Iron Age kingdom, whose king controlled the coastal landscape by frequently changing residence between farms.

65 *Heimskringla*, ch. 39.

66 Helle 1993, 149f.

67 My translation, with modern place names.

68 Opedal 1998, 109-40; 2005, fig. 11.

69 Iversen 2004; 2007.



Figure 6: Harald's farms according to *Heimskringla*. The *Leið* is highlighted. Map data © Norwegian Mapping Authority/Kartverket.

Avaldsnes will have been severely affected by Frankish developments in the second half of the eighth century. Because of northward Carolingian aggression into Saxony and Frisia, the normal routes of contact and trade across the North Sea region would have been seriously disrupted. This would have undermined an economic fundament for Avaldsnes – the control of the transport along the *Leið* – as the customary and amicable supply of goods, ordinarily distributed along the lines of aristocratic power, is very likely to have dried up. Consequently, this provided the rulers of a powerful kingdom in the west of Scandinavia with an excellent incentive to explore alternative supply routes. There is hardly any better candidate than the kingdom encompassing Avaldsnes as a likely starting point for the Viking *adventus*.

THE NAMING MOTIVE

We do not know the name of this Iron Age, pre-unification kingdom, which is likely to have been unrivalled in size and organisation across the west of Norway. Its name does not appear in any runic inscription, skaldic poem, or saga, and neither are its vestiges evident in any modern place name. The extent of the kingdom, as suggested by Iversen⁷⁰ and Opedal,⁷¹ comprises present-day northern *Rogaland* and southern *Hordaland*, i.e. parts of old landscape names denoting the extent of the *rygir* and *hǫrðar* people.⁷² Rather than being based on tribal units, however, it seems that the kingdom around Avaldsnes was politically organised around an ambulant chieftain.⁷³

Although the name *Laithlind* cannot be attached to the south-western Norwegian kingdom through the use of documentary evidence, a good reason for this parity nevertheless exists. I will argue that the name *Laithlind* corresponds to a Common Scandinavian **Laipland* and a later Old Norse **Leiðland*, and that the name refers to the *Leið*, the protected northward coastal route that starts at Avaldsnes.

From the earlier discussion around the Irish form *Laithlind* it is reasonable to claim that we are dealing with a compound name with two elements, the first of which, the specific *Laith-*, would have been

70 Iversen 2004.

71 Opedal 2005.

72 Mentioned as ‘Rugi’ and ‘Arochi’ by sixth-century author Jordanes (*Iordanis Romana et Getica*, 60), and the latter is possibly the ‘Harudes’ noted by Julius Caesar in 52 BC (*Bellum Gallicum*, 35).

73 Iversen 2007.

Leið*- in Old Norse. This ‘classic’ ON form will – with an expected voicing of the dental fricative and a raised diphthong – have developed from Common Scandinavian **Laip*-.⁷⁴ This represents the language stage spoken by the Vikings who arrived in Ireland at the beginning of the ninth century. The Irish written form of the Scandinavian dental fricative is as expected⁷⁵ and, as argued earlier, the diphthong /ai/ is recorded with the digraph <ai>, a usual practice for Irish scribes, as in *Amlaib* (Proto-Scandinavian **AnulaiþaR*, Old Norse *Áleifr*, later *Óláfr*). This corresponds to the representation of the diphthong in near-contemporary West Norwegian runic inscriptions, for example, **stAin (‘stone’) in the well-known inscription on the stone from Eggja, Sogndal.⁷⁶

An interesting legal and administrative use of the noun *leið* is the Icelandic ‘local assembly in the summer or in the autumn a few weeks after the end of the Althing, for the announcement of its decisions and judgement’.⁷⁷ In Iceland, the term is found in names like *Leiðöllur* in *Skaftafellssýsla* and *Leiðarhólmur* in *Dalasýsla*.⁷⁸

A legal-administrative meaning of *leið* is certainly relevant when discussing the possible name of a kingdom, and it may well be that this connotation of the word could have played an associative role in a name like **Leiðland*. Our focus, however, will be on the principal meanings of Old Norse *leið* (f.), which are

- ‘that which leads, a lode’,
- ‘way, road’,
- ‘the course on the sea’⁷⁹

This focus is justified by the geographical and historic importance that the *Leið* has had for Avaldsnes as a centre of power.

74 According to Einar Haugen, the term ‘Proto-Scandinavian’ refers to the period up to AD 550, ‘Common Scandinavian’ to AD 550-1050, followed by ‘Old West Scandinavian’ (= Old Norse) and ‘Old East Scandinavian’. See Haugen 1976, 89-93.

75 Ó Corráin 1998, § 13.

76 *Norges indskrifter med de ældre runer*, Niær 55. This inscription represents a transitional phase between Proto-Scandinavian and Common Scandinavian. Among the runes in the Older Futhark there are novelties like the oral A-rune which is used alongside the old a-rune, now representing /ä/.

77 Lárusson 1963, 341. My translation.

78 Cleasby, Vigfusson, and Craigie 1957, 380.

79 Ibid.

The Germanic **laiðō-* produced the cognate Old English *lād*, Middle Low German *leide*, Old Norse *leið*, Old Swedish *lēþ* and Old Danish *lēth*, all with the main meaning ‘road’ or ‘journey’, developed from the Germanic strong verb *lēiþan-*, ‘go’.⁸⁰ In Middle English, *lode* means ‘water-course’, cognate in Old Scots with *lade*, ‘mill-race’.⁸¹ In Old Norse, *leið* forms compounds with *-ar-*; *leiðarsteinn*, ‘lodestone, magnet’, *leiðarstjarna*, ‘lodestar’, *leiðarsund*, ‘sound where one’s vessel is taken through’; or without a genitive morph; *leiðvísi* (f.), ‘knowing the right course’, *leiðsagari* (m.), ‘guide, pilot’, *leiðsagnarmaðr* (m.), ‘pilot’.⁸²

In Flateyjarbók, a difference exists between *innleið* and *útleið*, a distinction which is still made along the Norwegian coast when there is a choice between an inner and outer route along the course.⁸³ The latter is also referred to as the *djúpleið*, ‘the deep course’, which can be quicker, broader, and deeper, but also more exposed and dangerous than the inner route.

Parts of the main course are named with *-lei(d)* used as a generic, like *Kobbaleida* (first element ON *kobbi* (m.), ‘seal’), the sound between Sotra and Tyssøy in Hordaland. In Modern Norwegian, *Leia* (f. def. sing.) can be used in local contexts as a name for a sailing course between islands and skerries leading to a settlement or harbour.⁸⁴ Outside of local usage, however, and all along the west coast, the simplex definite form *Leia* will consistently refer to the important main sailing course. Many compound names exist with *Lei-* as a specific, such as *Leiskjeret*, *Leiholmen*, *Leiøya*, and *Leisundet*,⁸⁵ all of which indicate a relationship to the main course or a local sailing route.

The name *Leidland* is found as a farm name on one occasion, on Eigerøya, some 60 km south-east of Stavanger. According to Oluf Rygh, the farm name has an origin in Old Norse *leirr* (m.), ‘clay’, which is likely, considering the exceptional amounts and quality of clay this location has provided for the production of porcelain.⁸⁶ This particular

80 Nielsen, 1989, 257; Bjorvand and Lindeman 2007, 640.

81 *Dictionary of the Scots Language*.

82 Fritzner 1867. My translation.

83 *Flateyjarbók* ii, 308.

84 The usual pronunciation of the indef. form of the appellative is /lei/. In some dialects in the north-west of Vestlandet, the dental stop /d/ reflects the older dental fricative /ð/, such as in the name *Leiaflua*, /leidafluˈda/. Slyngstad 1951, 33.

85 Referring, respectively, to a skerry, islet, island, and a sound.

86 Rygh et al. 1897-1936, vol. x, 80.

farm name is one of many holding the generic *-land*, which shows a remarkably dense concentration to the south-west of Norway. Out of the approximate 2,000 names of habitation with *-land* in Norway, 80% are found between Telemark and Hordaland. In certain settlements in this area, the majority of the old farm names carry the generic *-land*. The element seems to have been employed during two periods of agrarian expansion – c. AD 200-500 and c. AD 650-1000. As a habitation generic, it is productive during the Viking expansion, with c. 80 such names in Iceland, c. 75 in Shetland, and c. 35 in Orkney, as well as more sparsely on the mainland of Scotland, the north-west of England, and the Isle of Man. In Norway, the lack of specifics indicative of Christian culture is seen as proof of the habitative generic *-land* going out of fashion around the year 1000.⁸⁷

In the late-ninth-century accounts of both Ohthere and Wulfstan, we can observe that *land* is both used as an appellative and as a generic in compound names. On his journey from Hedeby to Truso, Wulfstan uses *land* to indicate a territory ruled over by a king:

Ðonne æfter Burgendalande wæron us þas land, þa synd hatene ærest Blecingaeg, and Meore, and Eowland, and Gotland on bæcbord; and þas land hyrað to Sweon.

[Then after Bornholm we had on our port side the lands which are called Blekinge, Möre, Öland and Gotland, and these lands belong to the Swedes.]⁸⁸

We note that Bornholm is thus mentioned, and that Wulfstan claims that the *svear* as a people will have had some sort of superiority over the 'lands' of Blekinge, Möre, Öland, and Gotland.

A similar frequency in the use of *-land* for large areas, either geographically defined or settled by a people or a kingdom, is also evident in Old Norse tradition.⁸⁹ A suitable example is Níkulás Bergsson's lesson in geography for the benefit of pilgrims, *Leiðarvísir og borgarskipan*, produced around 1157.⁹⁰ Here, the generic *-land* is

87 Sandnes and Stemshaug 1997; Særheim 2001.

88 From *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred*. See also Bately and Englert 2007.

89 See also Brink 2008.

90 *Leiðarvísir og borgarskipan*, 395-415.

almost systematically used to indicate a kingdom or land area, e.g. '[...] Jórsalaland, er þeir kalla Sýrland'.⁹¹ Closer to home, Níkulás lists areas surrounding Norway:

Gautland er fyrir austan Gautelfi, en þar næst Svíþjóð, þá næst Helsíngaland, þá Finnland; þá er talið til móts við Garðaríki, sem fyrr er (sagt). En öðrumegin hjá Gautlandi er Danmerk.

Næst Danmerk er Svíþjóð en minne, þar er Eyland; þá er Gotland; þá Helsíngaland; þá Vermaland; þá Kvenlönd ij, ok eru þau norðr frá Bjarmalandi. Af Bjarmalandi gánga lönd óbygð of norðr ætt, unz við tekr Grænland.⁹²

[Götaland is to the east of Götaälv, and next to that is Svíþjóð (the land of the Svear), next is Hälsingland, then Finland; this, it is said, meets the realm of Garðaríki (the Kievan Rus) as said before. And on the other side of Götaland is Denmark.

Next to Denmark is lesser Svíþjóð (Småland?), there is Öland; then Gotland; then Hälsingland, then Värmland, then two Kvenlands, and they are to the north of Bjarmaland. North from Bjarmaland the land stretches unsettled by Norse people until it meets Greenland.]⁹³

The generic *-land* is the most productive element for large land areas in both the old and the modern Scandinavian languages.⁹⁴ Compounds with peoples or tribes serve as one of its principal group, as seen in Níkulás Bergsson's lists: *Götaland*, *Hälsingland*, *Gotland*, *Värmland*, *Finland*, *Kvenland*, and *Bjarmaland*. Current Norwegian area names are *Hordaland*, *Rogaland*, *Hadeland*, and *Hålogaland*. The productivity of this type of name-creation during the Viking Age is witnessed by names like *Skotland*, *Írland*, and *Pétland*. During the Viking Age, however, *-land* is also used in area names with elements other than the names of peoples and tribes. In reference to the Abbasid Caliphate, *Serkland* indicates how its people are dressed, whilst *Blámannaland*, the Old

91 Ibid., 414.

92 Ibid., 405.

93 My translation, with modern names.

94 Særheim 2001, 26.

Norse name for Africa, refers to the skin colour of its inhabitants.⁹⁵ Moreover, we find *-land* as part of geographically descriptive area names, such as *Uppland* and *Småland* in Sweden. This usage is also common during the Viking Age; from *Ísland* and the newly discovered *Grœnland*, the Scandinavians travelled to *Markland*, *Helluland*, and *Vinland*.⁹⁶

When referring to its inhabitants, the meaning of *-land* is clearly ‘nation, kingdom’, although it may also have developed as a secondary meaning in names like *Uppland* and *Småland*. In the names of some large islands, like *Gotland*, *Lolland*, and *Sjælland*, it is uncertain if *-land* was originally employed to designate ‘island’ or ‘land area’.⁹⁷

As an appellative, *land* carries the general meaning ‘land, surface not covered by water’. This meaning is evident in the English noun *island*, from Indo-European **akwa-*, ‘water’, and Germanic **aujo*, ‘something on the water’ + *land*. This is probably the origin of the name of the large Swedish island Öland. Other Swedish names like *Svartsjölandet* and *Mörttjärnlandet* similarly employ *-land* in its definition ‘land as opposed to water, beach area’.⁹⁸ In Norway, *-land* has sometimes been added to old island names, like *Hareidlandet* and *Gomalandet*, whilst it is also frequently used in coastal names signifying ‘(main)land (as opposed to water)’.⁹⁹ The latter usage is still alive as an appellative. Personally, I know this usage from Nordmøre in Norway, where fishermen mark fishing grounds by orienting themselves with landmarks ‘oppi landet’ [up on the land], or in this case ‘oppi smølalandet’ [up on the land of the island Smøla]. It is a usual naming pattern all over Norway to name a stretch of land along a section of the coast, a fjord, a lake, or a river, with the generic *-land*, for example *Monsåslandet* (Romsdal) and *Tysselandet* (Sogn), where the named stretch of land is limited to a headland or a settlement. However, in the examples *Strandalandet*, *Haugalandet*, and *Lyselandet*, all from Rogaland, the generic *-land* denotes a larger area along the sea, including several settlements.¹⁰⁰ A similar practise is documented from the west coast of Sweden, for example *Vettekullalandet* and *Maralandet*, Blekinge.¹⁰¹ Such usage of *-land* allows an appellative

95 ON *serk* (m.) means ‘sark, shirt’, and *blá* (adj.) can mean both ‘blue’ and ‘black’.

96 The specifics respectively mean ‘ice’, ‘green’, ‘forest’, ‘flat stone’, and ‘wine’.

97 Sandnes and Stemshaug 1997, 279-82.

98 Wahlberg 2003, 185, 387. My translation.

99 Sandnes and Stemshaug 1997, 279. My translation.

100 Særheim 2001, 31-32.

101 Ohlsson 1939, 165.

**leiland(et)* to be straightforwardly understood by people along the coast of Scandinavia as ‘the land along the *Leið*’.

THE MISSING EVIDENCE

It is evident that **Leiðland* would have been an exceptionally suitable name for a coastal kingdom which was relating to the *Leið* in two ways: the control of the *Leið* as the main route of transport and a network of major farms along the *Leið*. Although the motive for this designation is obvious, there is, of course, a serious flaw in the argument that **Leiðland* would be located in Avaldsnes and south-west Norway; namely, that such a name is not documented in any Scandinavian source. It is, however, reasonable to advance the question whether one should expect a name of this kind to exist in medieval Scandinavian texts or in the form of a modern place-name. Apart from some well-defined geographical names with long histories, such as Sogn, Møre, and some area names based on old tribal names, such as Rogaland and Hordaland, we do not know the names of the small kingdoms which are likely to have existed along the coast of pre-unified Norway.

Around 500, Jordanes, historian of the Goths, listed some of Norway’s tribal names, most of which are recognisable in modern area names: *Grannii* (Grenland), *Augandzi* (Agder), *Taetel* (possibly Telemark), *Arochi* (Hordaland), *Rugi* (Rogaland), and *Ranii* (possibly Romsdalen).¹⁰² In his list, he also includes *Eunixi*, which is presently not recognisable and thus serves as a reminder that such names can vanish. This is better documented in countries with longer written histories than Norway, such as the British Isles. The main reason for us to know the names of the kingdoms Dál Riata and Fortriu (in what is today Scotland) is that they were recorded in the unusually early Irish written tradition.¹⁰³ Both Dál Riata and Fortriu ceased to exist in the second half of the ninth century, becoming parts of the larger Scotland or Alba. The names of the Celtic and subsequent Anglian kingdoms Bernicia and Deira disappeared as they were united into Northumbria, although both were relatively well-documented in contemporary Welsh and English sources. The documentation for subdivisions of larger kingdoms are much poorer, but they are sometimes mirrored in modern place names. For example,

102 Svennung 1967.

103 The inhabitants of *Fortriu* are first mentioned in the fourth century in Latin as *Verturiones* (Woolf 2007, 188).

the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* informs us that the kingdom 'Hwicce' was established in 577, after the Battle of Deorham, and became a sub-kingdom of Mercia after the Battle of Cirencester in 628. The name of the kingdom is thought to be reflected in the modern place names Wychwood and Whichford,¹⁰⁴ but the name of the kingdom cannot be deducted from the modern names alone. If the written sources had not emerged from the British Isles as early, we would not have known the names of many of the pre-unification kingdoms of Scotland and England.

The name 'Norway', too, is for a long time only documented in English sources, perhaps already Latinised as *Nortuagia* in the Durham *Liber Vitae* as early as c. 840, and then indisputably recorded by Alfred of Wessex, who quotes *Norðweg* after Ohthere visited his court just before 900.¹⁰⁵ Around 965, the name first occurs in Scandinavian as **nuruia**k on the Danish Jelling Stone. In Norway itself, its initial appearance dates to 1034, when the name **i nuriki** was carved on the Kuli Stone. As such, we may observe that the name existed without any other documentation than an English source for two to three generations.

A scenario is feasible in which the name **Leiðland* disappears as the larger, unified *Norway* is created towards the end of the ninth century, in a fashion similar to what we have seen in the examples from Britain when Dál Riata and Fortriu, as well as Bernicia and Deira, disappeared into Scotland and Northumbria, respectively. Semantically, the name 'Norway' may carry two meanings. Based on the neighbouring English name and German *Norwegen*, it is very likely that the generic is 'way, road, course'. The most common interpretation of the specific is 'north', creating a meaning of 'the way to the north', which could hardly be anything different than the *Leið*, the coastal route northwards, as seen from the south. A second interpretation is based on the adjective *nór*, 'narrow', for which the name then becomes 'the narrow way'. If this is the case, it must likewise denote the *Leið* or the narrow beginning of the *Leið*, i.e. Karmsundet by Avaldsnes. Both **Leiðland* and **Norðveg/*Nórveg* could have existed as compound appellatives long before they became specific names of politically defined areas, expedited by historical developments. Both as an appellative and a name, 'Norway' is a semantic parallel to **Leiðland*, and in both cases based on the economic infrastructure for a political unit: the *Leið*.

104 Mills 2011.

105 Johnsen 1968.

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