

## The ring fortress Nonnebakken and the power structures in Viking Age northeastern Funen, Denmark

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The Viking Age ring fortress Nonnebakken in Odense, on the island of Funen in the middle of Denmark, was built by King Harald Bluetooth at the end of the 10th century and is with its short life span and marked appearance one of the clearest examples of a sudden change in existing power structures. Nonnebakken thus is placed in a landscape that was previously dominated by smaller seats of power. The dominance and control of important areas and routes is shared by Nonnebakken with Harald Bluetooth's other ring fortresses, but in contrast to these Nonnebakken is built directly up to an existing urban-like structure. Furthermore, it is only at Nonnebakken and Odense that Harald's ambitions of nation building, with elements such as towns, bishop's seat etc., crystallize even after the fortress' period of use.

Nonnebakken thus plays a central role in the exploration of Harald's ring fortresses and the understanding of their function and significance for posterity. The challenge being that until a few years ago, the fortress was considered almost completely destroyed by the later urban development. A targeted, interdisciplinary research strategy over recent years has turned this situation upside down. The effort thus has moved Nonnebakken from an almost forgotten ancient monument with an uncertain history to a structure with a very large research and dissemination potential. The first part of the lecture will present these new results.

In the second part of the lecture, the study is expanded chronologically, and focuses on the power structures, that Nonnebakken replaces and how they develop after the fortress' functional period. The diachronic analyzes are carried out in a landscape context covering the northeastern Funen area; an area that through the late Iron Age, Viking Age and early Middle Ages (c. 500-1200 AD) is characterized by prosperity exemplified i.a. through a number of metal-rich sites as well as several distinctive archeological structures and place names with indications of centrality. The area thus can be characterized as a so-called *gateway community*. Within the period, a dynamic can be traced from several smaller centers to a clustering in the second half of the Viking Age, where the city of Odense emerges and Nonnebakken takes on a dominant role.

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