



## **Freedom Loving Northerners: Norwegian Independence As Narrated in Three National Museums**

Lill Eilertsen

University of Oslo

### **Abstract**

After undergoing three different liberation processes during a relatively short period of time – from a dynastic union with Denmark in 1814, from a *personal union*<sup>1</sup> with Sweden in 1905 and from German occupation in 1945 – independence has become an important term for defining a national and cultural identity in Norway. The narratives presented in this report all refer to an old European mythological construct of Northmen's independent and freedom loving character: The *Museum of Cultural History* presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while the independent Norwegian farmer is portrayed at the *Norwegian Folk Museum*. A series of stories of Norwegians fighting for autonomy is offered by the *Armed Forces Museums*. Norwegian Museum authors unite the mythological basis of Scandinavism to a Grand Narrative of Norway, distancing it from the earlier cultural and political dominance of Denmark and Sweden, saluting the medieval kingdom of Norway.

## Introduction

Norwegian nation building was a project, which developed across different disciplines and competing political and ideological fields during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, as demonstrated by the three national museum narratives presented in this report. However diverse, these narratives all make use of an old European mythological construct of “the independent and freedom loving character of Northmen”. This construct is rooted in classical literature, e.g. *Aristotle* (384—322 B.C.), *Tacitus* (c. 56 - c. 120 A.D.) and *Jordanes* (6th century A.D.), as well as a tenacious belief in the interdependency of elements, climate and human temperament, in accordance with proto-psychological theories of humorism (Arikah 2007). We find that the construct was crucial to Lutheran reformers promoting Protestantism as a natural development within Christianity, and that it would later fuel a politically motivated Nordic Gothicism initiated by a group of seventeenth-century Swedish scholars known as the *Uppsala Circle* (Olwig 2002). The Gothic infatuation was soon adopted by the Danes, as demonstrated by the Danish Royal historian of Swiss origin, *Paul-Henri Mallet* (1730 – 1807), who linked the liberty of Europe to Scandinavian efforts and portrayed the Scandinavian sea warrior as a proud, indomitable individual with a surplus of physical strength. Mallet was also inspired by the French philosopher *Charles-Louis Montesquieu* (1689 - 1755) who explained the supposed freedom of men and women in Norse Saga literature as a consequence of living in a cold, forest environment (Neumann 2001; Olwig 2002; Haavardsholm 2004). The concept of freedom loving northerners became crucial for politicians and intellectuals seeking a shared Nordic past during 19th century’s Scandinavism. Yet at the same time it was adapted to the individual nation-building project of each country.

Norwegian nation-builders have perhaps been especially eager to use the term *independence* in defining and developing a national and cultural identity, as Norway underwent three different liberation processes during a relatively short period of time (from a dynastic union with Denmark in 1814, from a personal union with Sweden in 1905 and from German occupation in 1945). The need to legitimize a separate Norwegian state was strongly felt. The construct of “independent Norwegians” is clearly reflected in the narratives of the museum cases in question: Museum of Cultural History (*Kulturbistorisk museum*), Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum (*Norsk Folkemuseum*)<sup>2</sup> and the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums (*Forsvarsmuseene*).

The Master Narrative of the Museum of Cultural History presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while the love of freedom is associated with ordinary people (represented by the independent farmer) in Norsk folkemuseum. Both refer to a lost Golden Age in Norwegian history. The *Armed Forces Museums* offer a series of stories of Norwegian military history, its strongest narrative perhaps to be found in its Resistance Museum department where resistance work during WWII is presented as a product of the Norwegian people’s democratic spirit. Prominent Norwegian historians have contributed to the Armed Forces’ museum narrative, many of them with a personal experience as resistance fighters. Yet as a young and complex administrative organization (1995) proclaiming professional independence, the Armed Forces Museums as a whole lacks the strong voice of a visionary founder. The two cultural historical museums are contrastingly founded on solid traditions for collecting, preserving and presenting cultural historical material, and on the ideological voices and visions of nationalist founders and developers, as will be presented here, these are *Hans Aall* (1869 – 1946) and *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger* (1884 – 1951).

In the following report, I will discuss how these museum narratives came into existence. I will present the literature and media through which they were promoted and distributed, as well as their authors. I also aim to portray the historical and political climate in which these authors operated, and finally to visualize the role that the national museums have served in forming an overall National Narrative.

### **Museum of Cultural History (Kulturhistorisk museum)**

Our general image of the Vikings is to a great extent dependent on depictions by 19th century Scandinavian historians, poets and artists. When three “long ships” were found and excavated in the Oslo Fjord area between 1867 and 1904<sup>3</sup>, this image was however adjusted. Prominent people buried in ship graves fully equipped for a final journey gave a more continuous picture of life in late Iron Age than earlier romanticist interpretations of Saga literature, and such discoveries aided in accelerating the specialization of academic disciplines in Norway. Norwegian scientists at work in the various institutions constituting today’s Museum of Cultural History (the Coin Cabinet, the Ethnographic museum and the National Collection of Antiquities)<sup>4</sup> developed an artefact based Viking narrative, yet despite their strict scientific focus, we find that these institutions – and especially the National Collection of Antiquities – prepared the ground for popular and political use of the Viking ideal at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Haavardsholm 2004).

### **Oldsaksamlingen (Norway’s National Collection of Antiquities)**

The history of Oldsaksamlingen dates back to 1811 when “the Royal Norwegian Society for Development” (*Selskapet for Norges Vel*) established a Norwegian antiquity commission, as a reaction to a request from the Danish Royal Commission that all antiquities found on Norwegian soil were to be relocated to Copenhagen. The founders’ plan was to establish a national museum of antiquity research in Norway as part of a Norwegian university (Haavardsholm 2004; Bergstøl & al. 2004). Announcements and articles in national newspapers (e.g. *Rigstidende* and *Morgenbladet*) appealed to the readers’ nationalist sentiment and engaged eager donors. Thus SNV<sup>5</sup> invoked what is referred to as a ‘national awakening’ in Norway, corresponding to romantic currents in Germany and Denmark at the time – as well as to the strong patriotism of Norwegian students in Copenhagen<sup>6</sup> (Collett 1999). The constitutional liberation of Norway from Denmark in 1814 did not however affect scientific cooperation across the border, and Norwegian archaeologists looked to Denmark for methods and inspiration<sup>7</sup>.

The Late Iron Age was identified as a period of innovations and accelerated cultural development in the Nordic areas, and archaeological finds indicated a travelling people. The term “Viking Age” would gradually be attached to this period by historians such as *Jens Jacob Rasmussen Worsaae* (1821 – 1885) in Copenhagen and *Peter Andreas Munch* (1810 - 1863) in Christiania<sup>8</sup>. Both found Norway to be the preeminent Viking area, and the Saga literature was by Munch conceived as Norwegian. As head of the Ethnographic museum, Munch introduced the Viking age as an argument for a national unification. Together with Oldsaksamlingen’s manager, *Rudolf Keyser* (1803 - 1864), he presented a racist *myth of origin* in which the pure blooded Norwegians were distinct from Swedes and Danes of the south (Neumann 2001; Haavardsholm 2004). Using historic and mythical figures, Munch supplied his Vikings with names and biographies, thus

making them credible representatives of the period: brutal yet inventive kings and warriors prepared for the civilizing sphere of Christianity (Haavardsholm 2004).

Archaeology was still a young discipline in Norway during the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and scientific portrayals of the Vikings were based primarily on translations and philological studies of Norse Saga literature supported by random archaeological finds such as tools, chain mails, hoards and drinking horns. Yet scientists had great expectations as to future contributions to the Viking Age studies from the field of Archaeology. Worsaae, for instance, hoped that new archaeological material would serve to reveal more peaceful sides to the forefathers of the Danes and Norwegians than the image of brutal warriors presented in Sagas and Christian records of Viking attacks. Like most historians of his time, Worsaae was influenced by romantic poets and painters who idealized the “noble savages” of the North in the spirit of Montesquieu’s aforementioned climate theories. A famous example is *Fridtjof’s Saga*, rewritten by the Swedish author *Esaias Tegnér* (1782 - 1846) in 1825, which became immensely popular and prompted a stream of tourists and painters to visit the west coast of Norway in the following century<sup>9</sup>. The Vikings are given chivalrous characteristics as Tegnér describes the famous Battle of Balestrand (in Sognefjord), and the novel anticipates the future renegotiation of the national narrative of Oldsaksamlingen (Haavardsholm 2004).

When rivets from what archaeologist *Nicolay Nicolaysen* (1817 - 1911) assumed to have been a 17 meter long ship were found in a burial ground in Borre (Vestfold) in 1851, hopes of finding an intact ship were aroused. Worsaae, who became leader of the Danish National Museum in 1856, used his position to encourage scientists as well as the Norwegian government to intensify antiquity research in Norway, requesting ancient burial grounds to be opened,<sup>10</sup> as these were left intact due to a previous understanding of Scandinavian antiquities as having low aesthetical value compared to those of the more sophisticated Greeks and Italians (Eriksen 2009).

Wishes for an archaeological ship find “from the days of Fridtjof” were also expressed by social scientist *Eilert Sundt* (1817 - 1875), who expected a continuous line to run from the Viking *longships* to contemporary boat building traditions observed in the northern parts of Norway (Haavardsholm 2004; Eriksen 2009). Sundt wanted to apply the Theory of Evolution to boat development in Norway, believing that a people’s material skills and techniques reflect its general level of civilization. His wish came true when a ship grave was discovered in Tune in 1867, initiating “the period of burials” in Norwegian archaeology (Bergstøl & al. 2004). Despite being found in poor condition, the Tune ship allowed professors and engineers to study construction details of shipbuilding in Viking times. It is a clinker-built vessel from around 900 A.D. with overlapping strakes, and ribs fastened to the hull ([www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/](http://www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/)).

A 24 meter long and 5 meter wide oak vessel capable of accommodating 32 oarsmen was found and excavated in Gokstad in 1880, causing an even greater commotion than the Tune ship, as well as enthusiasm among scientists and politicians wishing to promote Norway’s glorious Viking past. Three small boats, a tent, a sledge and fine riding equipment were among the grave furnishings of the heavily built, yet gouty man in his 60s, found in his timber burial chamber ([www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/](http://www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/)).

A replica of this ship was sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and up the rivers to the Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 by *Captain Magnus Andersen* (1857 - 1938) and his crew. Eager to appear as a modern and civilized nation, not least as a culturally independent one, Norway

participated in every such world exhibition arranged between 1851 and 1900. Participation in this particular exhibition was, however, especially important, celebrating as it did the discovery of America. Professionally organized by History professor and Saga translator *Gustav Storm* (1845 - 1903), who claimed that Vikings (e.g. *Leiv Eriksón*) reached the American continent (*Nova Scotia*) as early as 1000 A.D., the project aimed at demonstrating how such longships may have been capable of covering great distances at sea, as described in Nordic Saga literature (Haavardsholm 2004; Marstrander 1986). The replica was named *Viking*. Nicolay Nicolaysen, who excavated the Gokstad ship, denounced the project as unscientific, since the ship had not originally been built for long journeys (Haavardsholm 2004).

Captain Andersen however reached the exhibition, thus fuelling the political confidence of Norway, a poor young nation gaining newfound recognition for its remarkable explorers. We find that 1893 was also the year when biologist *Fridtjof Nansen* (1861 - 1930) embarked on his journey to the North Pole together with *Hjalmar Jobansen* (1857 - 1913). His expedition across Greenland five years earlier had caused a popular nationalist boost of grand proportions, resulting in Norway getting acknowledged as a nation capable of competing on an international level in the field of science. The Norwegian government, which refused to support the Greenland project, was *now* sponsoring Nansen's polar adventure with 200 000 NOK. Nansen became a living national icon on returning from his North Pole expedition in 1896, and the national poet *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson* (1832 - 1910), having long since implemented Viking kings in Norway's national anthem, compared him to the mighty king and Saga hero *Olav Tryggvason*, and his ship *Fram* (meaning "forward") to Tryggvason's ship "*Ormen Lange*" (Bomann-Larsen 1993). With the strengthened confidence of decision makers, Norway's struggle for cultural independency as a nation changed into a fight for political independence as a state, and Nansen both accepted and served in the role he was given: an ambassador for Norway<sup>11</sup>. Knowing that he had the authority to affect European opinion in the question of Norway's liberation from Sweden in 1905, he promoted Norwegian sovereignty on behalf of the Norwegian People (at home in a series of articles in the newspaper *Verdens Gang*) (Hestmark 1999).

Previous scepticism as to the artistic abilities of the Vikings was confounded when the last and most exquisitely decorated ship was excavated in Oseberg in 1904 – as if to boost the self esteem of the nation on the eve of its last battle for independence. It had been constructed ca. 815-820 A.D. and put to use as a burial ship for a prominent woman after years of sailing. The abundance of the material found in the ship burial allowed archaeologists to investigate how people lived and worked during the 9<sup>th</sup> century: a wagon, sleighs, kitchenware, tapestries and needlework, beds, tents, remains of dogs, horses and bulls, as well as foodstuffs such as apples and dough ([www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/](http://www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/)). The Vestfold finds revealed a multitude of Viking roles: farmers, fishermen, merchants, seafarers and cultural ambassadors (Haavardsholm 2004).



Figure 1: Professor Gabriel Gustafson and his team excavating the Oseberg ship in 1904 (© Museum of Cultural History).

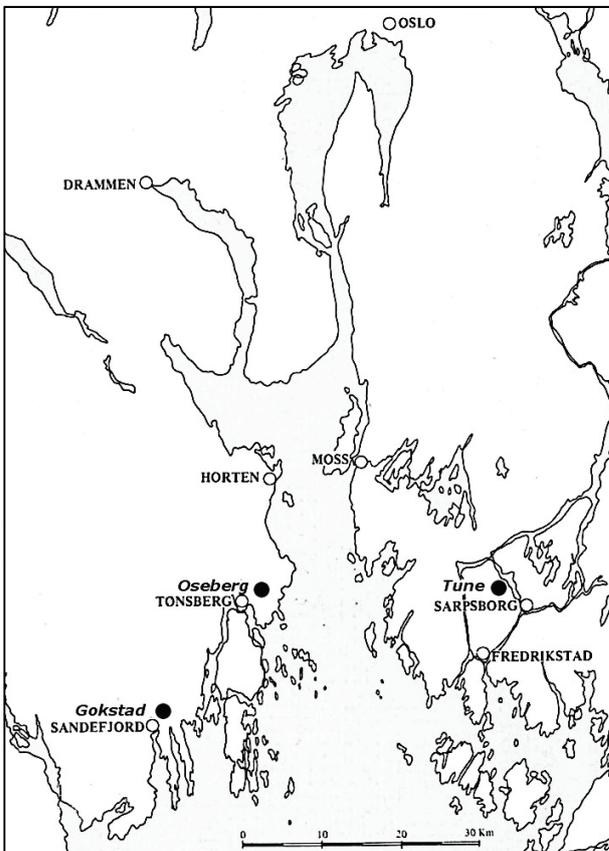


Figure 2: Map of finds. No rights reserved

## Presenting the ship finds

Unparalleled in their time, the ship finds were a great scientific achievement for Norwegian archaeologists, and attracted international interest. Oldsaksamlingen's mediaeval concerns were abandoned in favour of investigation into the ships. Guidebooks were produced for each find, but they all contained remarkably little information about the Viking age in general, and bore the sober scientific spirit of academic publications. Manager *Oluf Rygh* (1833 - 1899)<sup>12</sup> revealed a stronger occupation with the funeral customs than with the ship itself when in charge of the Tune excavation, drawing parallels to the burial scene of *Harald Hildetand* as described in the mythical Icelandic *Skjoldunga Saga*, while antiquarian Nicolay Nicolaysen contrastingly delivered a profound contribution to a developmental perspective on Nordic ship building traditions as head of the second ship's excavation. *The longship from Gokstad* (1882) was a comprehensive, ambitious project, engaging scientists from a variety of disciplines.

Rygh's successor, Professor *Gabriel Gustafson* (1853-1915), was in charge of the Oseberg ship excavation in 1904, however he published little but a preliminary guide<sup>13</sup>, and a description in his book *Norwegian Antiquity (Norges Oldtid)* from 1906. More critical of archaeological methods than Rygh and Nicolaysen, Gustafson corroborated his research with comparative ethnographic studies and Saga literature. He found that ship graves were not a burial tradition exclusively reserved for mighty or male Vikings, and stated like Nicolaysen that the Viking culture was as advanced as any other in Iron Age Europe. This view of the Vikings was supported by historian *Alexander Bugge* (1870 - 1929), who claimed that they contributed to the formation of new states on the British Islands, not only as the results of raids, but of peaceful actions (Haavardsholm 2004).

The first guidebooks concerning the finds contained remarkably little information about the Viking age in general, and the museum narrative was poorly suited to address a non-academic public. Having served the project of nation building by communicating a glorious Viking and mediaeval past since before the Constitution of 1814, the men at work in Oldsaksamlingen were now dedicated to a purely *scientific* investigation of the ship finds (Haavardsholm 2004). Nevertheless, in bringing forth actual evidence of a Viking past, as well as for Norwegians' superior shipbuilding skills, the discipline of archaeology had prepared the ground for a popular, political use of the Viking narrative. At the crux of Norwegian nationalism, the Viking had become a role model, and his virtues of courage, adventurousness and strength were attributed to contemporary explorers like *Fridtjof Nansen* (1861 - 1930) and *Roald Amundsen* (1872 - 1928) (Bomann-Larsen 1993; Haavardsholm 2004).

Debates concerning the housing of these newly discovered national symbols became very intense, especially after the authorities turned down the archaeologists' request for a national institution capable of implementing the Viking ships (Haavardsholm 2004; Bergstøl & al. 2004). Despite the fact that Oldsaksamlingen suffered from inadequate conditions for research, preservation and exhibitions in the university buildings, plans for an institution uniting the museum collections were halted several times, until an architect competition was eventually organised in 1890 – with no plans at this stage for housing the ships (*Tune* and *Gokstad*). The project was delayed once again by *Prime Minister Christian Michelsen* (1857 - 1925), despite a proposition of 200 000 NOK (Bergstøl & al. 2004). Fast growing museums in every major Norwegian town competing for material posed a threat to Oldsaksamlingen's ambition of

becoming a national institution, and before entering the Parliament in 1891, Michelsen had wished to counteract scientific dominance from the capital city as part of a scientific society in Bergen (Hestmark 1999). Nevertheless, the museum managers had to wait until 1897 before 100 000 NOK were finally provided to finance the building construction. Oluf Rygh participated during both planning and building of what today is known as *Historisk Museum* (Historical Museum), but it was his successor as of 1901, Gabriel Gustafson, who finalized it. The building was completed in 1902 and open to the public from 1904. It offered a modern yet patriotic architectural framework for the exhibitions. European art nouveau style was combined with ornamental references to the Viking age, *Norwegian style* being the architectural trend of the time. When planning ornamentation for the facades and interior, it is likely that architect *Henrik Bull* (1864 - 1953) was inspired by Oldsaksamlingen's material (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

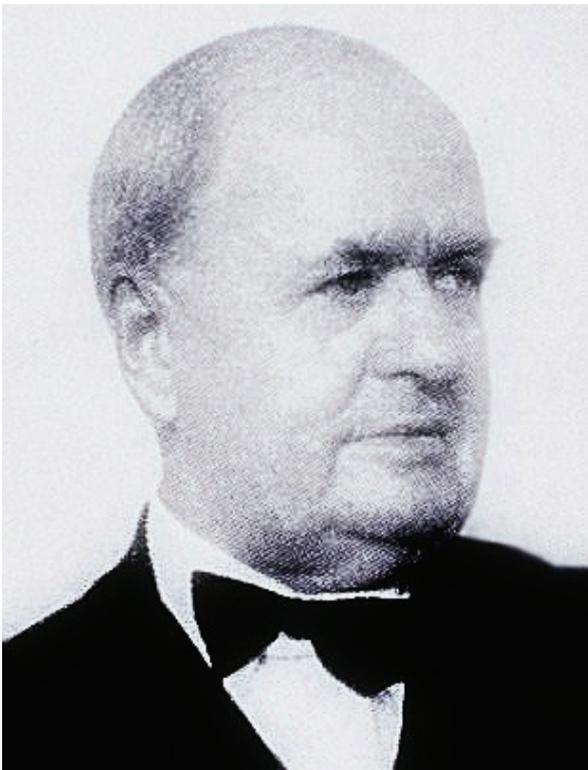
Even without the Viking ships, or any outspoken aim, the exhibitions contributed indirectly to a Master Narrative of "adventurous Norwegians", and continue to do so. The Ethnographic Museum displays a collection of objects from around the world donated by Norwegian sailors, missionaries and explorers<sup>14</sup> over the years. The collection additionally raised popular interest in "the exotic life of heathens", and popularized evolutionist theories of the time, as presented by its first manager, Professor Peter Andreas Munch. In the coin cabinet department, Fridtjof Nansen's and Roald Amundsen's medals and decoration collections are displayed alongside Viking dividends and hoards collected and published by its first manager *Christopher Andreas Holmboe* (1796 – 1882), thus tracing a line of adventurers from antiquity and to the present (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

Gabriel Gustafson stressed the need for a ship exhibition in which research and enlightenment would play the strongest part, in contrast to architect Fritz Holland's (1874 - 1959) competing plan for a vulgar nationalist "Viking hall of fame". Holland's Viking romanticism was not compatible with Gustafson's demand that the ships present a developmental perspective and should be exhibited alongside Oldsaksamlingen's general Iron Age finds. A Viking ship museum close to Norsk folkemuseum (the Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum) on Bygdøy, a peninsula near Oslo, was finally accepted as a first step towards a new scientifically satisfactory national museum. Architect Arnstein Arneberg (1882 - 1961) had the drawings ready by 1914, but Gustafson passed away the following year (Haavardsholm 2004).

### **Anton Wilhelm Brøgger**

When *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger* (1884 - 1951) entered Oldsaksamlingen as deputy manager in 1913, the Viking ships were still awaiting both proper housing and publication. Becoming professor and head of Oldsaksamlingen in 1915, he embraced the challenge, handling it with new narrative and administrative strategies. Norwegian nationalism had never been as strong as after the last union dissolution, and it soon became clear that unlike his precursors, Brøgger was not afraid to use the Viking narrative for either popular or political means. As the son of the famous geologist *Waldemar Christopher Brøgger*<sup>15</sup> (1851 - 1940), who contributed to a peaceful union dissolution in 1905 as the Norwegian government's confidential emissary in Sweden, Anton Wilhelm was additionally predisposed to strong patriotism – as well as an evolutionistic approach to cultural and political matters.

Mineralogical and topographical landscape studies played an important part in forming a national identity in Norway, and Brøgger Senior, University Rector from 1907 – 1911, had befriended Fridtjof Nansen both personally and disciplinarily (Hestmark 1999). During childhood, Anton Wilhelm followed his father in his research fields, developing interest and understanding of the collected material, yet decided early that he wanted to become an archaeologist. He entered the discipline of archaeology through a dissertation establishing a profound basis for later studies of the Norwegian Stone Age, and managed *Stavanger Museum* from 1909 to 1913. Brøgger's organizational skills were unquestionable as he managed to increase Oldsaksamlingen's staff from four to eleven, as well as boosting its general resources, and not least to finalize the museum project on Bygdøy, which had been halted (Grieg 1952; Bergstøl & al. 2004).



**Figure 3: Anton Wilhelm Brøgger (1884 - 1951) (© Museum of Cultural History, UiO).**

Wishing to become rector of the university like his father, he became a notable player in the institutional politics of the discipline and the energetic manager also found time for general politics. He served as deputy representative to the Parliament of Norway during the term 1928–1930, and was chairman of the Liberal Left Party from 1930 to 1931, as well as secretary-general of the Norwegian Archaeological Society (*Norsk Arkeologisk Selskap*), among other things<sup>16</sup>.

Although he was unable to adopt his father's position at the university, Brøgger certainly upheld his patriotic role. We find that he would invoke the Viking narrative in questions of national politics, for example when defending Norwegian territorial rights during Norway's occupation of East-Greenland from 1931 to 1933<sup>17</sup>. In an article from 1932, Brøgger refers to two previous rounds of Norwegian colonization of the island, the first constituted by Viking

settlements included in the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. The growth of the Norwegian shipping industry during the 16- and 1700s made a new round of what Brøgger refers to as Norwegian colonization possible, originally as part of priest *Hans Egede's* (1686 - 1758) missionary quest, accelerated by good (whale) hunting perspectives. He knowingly names this latter period in Norwegian history “the second Viking age” (Brøgger 1932). Recognizing Norwegian activity on Greenland as an expression of Norway’s “national character” (*folkesjel, Völksgesist*), he calls for respect of Norwegian hunting traditions in the arctic areas. The mythological construct of freedom loving northerners is revisited as Brøgger claims the ancient Norse hunting culture to be expansive *by nature*.

### **Borre – cradle of the Norwegian Kingdom**

Another example of how Brøgger employed the Viking narrative as a vehicle for developing a national narrative is when he contributed to establishing Norway’s first national park in Borre, in the northern parts of Vestfold (the western part of the Oslo fjord area). The area is characterized by more than 40 burial mounds which are part of the region’s general history since the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Icelandic historian *Snorre Sturlason* (1178/79 - 1241) presented the 9<sup>th</sup> century’s Norwegian Vestfold kings in his *Ynglingasaga* (Myhre, 2003). *The Ynglings* represent the oldest known Scandinavian dynasty, from which – according to Snorre – Norway’s first sole king, Harald Finehair (*Harald Hårfagre*) descended. As a young nation Norway was in need of an impressive early history, the Borre mounds attracted the attention of Norwegian historians and archaeologists at an early stage, and the first remains of a large Viking ship were actually discovered here by archaeologist *Nicolay Nicolaysen* (1817 - 1911) in 1851. Snorre was still considered a reliable source for historical studies due to the 1873 and 1899 translations made by historian *Gustav Storm* (1845 - 1903), thus Anton Wilhelm Brøgger elaborated the idea of a Viking seat in Borre into a thrilling story of kings and queens from the Saga literature (Myhre 2003; Haavardsholm 2004).

Brøgger suggested that the Oseberg lady, buried in her red dress, was Harald Finehair’s grandmother, *Queen Ása*, and at the opening of the national park in 1932, he named several Vestfold kings who according to him most likely rested in the Borre mounds. Borre became a national symbol, presented as the “cradle of the kingdom of Norway” in schoolbooks and other educational literature. Despite critical readings of the Islandic Saga literature starting already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brøgger’s institutionalized narrative remained more or less unchallenged until 1990, when historian *Claus Krag* (1943- ) argued that Snorre’s history of the Ynglings was a 13<sup>th</sup> century construction, and that Harald Finehair lived in the *western* parts of Norway (Sogn, Sunnhordaland or Karmøy) (Myhre 2003).

*Nasjonal Samling* – the Norwegian National Socialist party led by *Vidkun Quisling* (1887 - 1945) – misused Brøgger’s narrative and staged their annual meetings in Borre from 1935 to 1944 (Myhre, 2003). Despite his genuinely strong nationalism and his evolutionist perspectives, Brøgger himself never sympathized with the national socialists – quite to the contrary. As a member of the *Committee for Cultural War Preparedness* established in 1938 under supervision of antiquarian and head of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, *Harry Fett* (1875 - 1962), Brøgger led a rescue operation to save Oldsaksamlingen’s most important specimens from possible harm when the Second World War broke out. The items were secretly evacuated and

hidden in Fagernes (Valdres). Brøgger also served as a board member of the National Theatre (*Nasjonaltheateret*) during World War II, and was arrested twice by the Nazis for refusing to abide their directions. He was deported to *Grini concentration camp* after the second time. When he returned from Grini his health had greatly deteriorated and Brøgger retired in 1949 (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

### **A popular narrator, yet a controversial scientist**

Professor Gustafson, Anton W. Brøgger's precursor, had been too busy caring for the preservation of the excavated long ships to publish the finds properly, thus the new manager soon identified the need for a comprehensive publication of the last ship find in Oseberg, containing the most extravagantly equipped and elaborately decorated Viking vessel. Furthermore, he composed an exhaustive guide to the ship finds, with detailed information on every artefact, using a manageable small format. Brøgger aimed strongly at generating interest in his field among laypeople thus the story of the Ynglings is present in museum guides and literature produced by the new manager and his contemporaries. Short guidebooks were additionally made to give a popular presentation of Viking life in general, e.g. *The Viking Period* from 1917 by curator *Jan Petersen* (1887 - 1967). Brøgger would furthermore appeal to his audience through popular evening lectures, exhibitions for school children as well as radio presentations, thus implementing a new medium in the museum's dissemination strategies (Helliksen 1996; Bergstøl & al. 2004).

Whereas outwardly popularizing the Viking age, Brøgger was known as an inventive and quite controversial scientist, in retrospect considered ahead of his time. Brøgger was inspired by continental academic trends, and stimulated discussions on the aims of archaeology at an international level. Inspired by the Austrian/German "Kulturkreis"<sup>18</sup> and contemporary social anthropology, as well as Structuralism, he adopted a more complex view of cultural development as contrasted with that of traditional evolutionists categorizing their material in accordance with Thompson's three-age system (Helliksen 1996). In his book, *The Norwegian People in Antiquity* from 1925, Brøgger criticizes a unilateral chronological-typological approach to archaeological material, and considers technology and natural conditions as overriding factors in cultural expressions and development. He found no reason to draw a distinct line between cultures based on hunting and agriculture, and warned fellow archaeologists about the simplifying effect of common racial perspectives (Brøgger 1925). His experimental approaches to archaeological findings did not always meet with success, yet he contributed to broadening the methods and perspectives of his research field, and when the Second World Congress of Archaeologists was held in Oslo in 1936, Oldsaksamlingen appeared as an internationally leading research institute (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

For a more scientific publication of the Oseberg ship, Brøgger cooperated with Bergen Museum's manager, *Haakon Shetelig* (1877 - 1955), who had partaken in the excavation together with Gustafson in 1904. Their work resulted in 5 illustrated volumes, funded by the Norwegian government<sup>19</sup>. Shetelig shared the continental spirit of Brøgger and their fellow friend Harry Fett, and became renowned for his style historical research when dedicating Volume III to Iron Age style and ornamentations. It is likely that Fett – a leading academic in the field of art history establishing a firm method for style of historical analyses – inspired Shetelig, with whom he established the still existing journal *Kunst og kultur* ("Art and Culture") in 1910 (Aas 2003; Harby

2009). Shetelig also laid a strong foundation for both technical and cultural historical boat studies in chapter III of *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* from 1951. This was a publication conceived as “the grand climax to the work of Brøgger and Shetelig” by Harvard Professor *Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.* (1895 - 1979), one of the seminal figures in the study of Mediaeval and English literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Brøgger wrote the remaining chapters, covering the history of early boat types, ship graves and ships in the Saga literature. Yet symbolizing the classic Viking ship, Shetelig’s treatment of the Gokstad vessel “forms the core of the book” (Magoun 1953). When he named the yearbook of the Archaeological Society *Viking*, Brøgger clearly demonstrated that he acknowledged not only the symbolic value of the Viking era, but also its importance for Norwegian archaeology as a research field<sup>20</sup>.

Brøgger maintained a steady interest in *life* among ancient cultures from the onset, following lectures on Norse literature in the course of his studies. Before the 900-year anniversary of the Norwegian church (1930), Brøgger produced a study on the battle of Stiklestad<sup>21</sup>. In 1947 Brøgger executed a translation of *Kongespeilet* (“King’s mirror”), a Norwegian educational text from around 1250. From the 1940s onward, Brøgger would increasingly stress social relations as a driving force in cultural development. We find that a line runs from Brøgger and Oldsaksamlingen to the emerging university disciplines of Ethnography and Anthropology, through some of his students. *Gutorm Gjessing* (1906 - 1979), manager of the Ethnographic Museum from 1947, and of a second university institute from 1963, contributed to reshaping general museum politics in accordance with general post-war perspectives. Encouraging him to apply for the professorship, Brøgger wanted him to focus on arctic studies, but Gjessing instead pursued a *global* perspective. Developing a critical view on national states and the way minorities and indigenous people were treated, he concerned himself with the Norwegians’ treatment of the Sámis, and transferred the Sámi collection to the Norwegian Folk Museum in 1951, to be exhibited as part of *Norwegian* culture. He would gradually emerge as a radical socialist, denouncing evolutionism and the imperial perspectives of the past. Gjessing also opened the academic arena to the famous social-anthropologist *Frederik Barth* (1928 -) (Bergstøl & al. 2004; [www.storenorskeleksikon.no](http://www.storenorskeleksikon.no)).

Brøgger was anxious to secure his students’ reputations as professional and accurate scientists. We accordingly find that the post-war generation of archaeologists was eager to adopt new and improved methods of excavation. During the 1960s and -70s, there was a general shift in the field, perhaps facilitated by Brøgger’s ecological perspectives, from German to British and American research, and to borrowing methods from the natural sciences (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

As his vast number of publications demonstrates, Brøgger’s capacity for work was immense<sup>22</sup>. In 1932, he was awarded the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav for his efforts of studying, communicating and preserving Norwegian Cultural Heritage (Helliksen 1996; Bergstøl & al. 2004)<sup>23</sup>.

### **Finalizing the halted museum project**

Gustafson’s successor met with difficulties in finalizing the halted Viking museum project, due to the 1920’s economic Depression in Norway. He had got the building process started in 1918, after a massive press campaign, and brought the fast charring Oseberg ship to Bygdøy in 1926. He then embarked on his life’s largest and swiftest fundraising campaign (200 000 NOK) in order

to obtain the remaining aisles intended for the ships from Tune and Gokstad (Bergstøl & al. 2004). The museum was opened to the public in 1931, but was never completed as planned. The Oseberg specimens even had to wait for the final step of the building process to be completed in 1957, before being exhibited together with the ships.

Gustafson's museum vision is abandoned in favour of a monumental building which in many respects resembles the planned hall of his competitor, Fritz Holland. The museum resembles a church, and its sacral appearance was constructed as a shrine for important national treasures, rather than as an exhibit of Late Iron Age in a general context of cultural development. The building has a pure and simple expression, elegantly enclosing ships and grave finds in four symmetrically structured aisles around a nave where one may view the national treasures from small, elevated lookout-sites.



Figure 4: Vikingskipmuseet (© the author).

### Today's Viking ship museum

Today we find the narrative of Oldsaksamlingen's men in museum guidebooks and on information boards. It is somewhat toned down, and without any references to the Vestfold kings, as Claus Krag during the 1990's changed the almost 800 years old story of Borre in Viken (an area including Skagerak and the Oslo fjord) (Myhre 2003). Yet the Vikings are still presented as bold, brutal, inventive explorers contributing to cultural exchange and development both at home and abroad. The routes of their travels have been charted, and their boat building techniques illustrated, and informative notes accompany each of the ships and their respective equipment.

The Viking ship museum is one of the most frequently visited museums in Norway, indicating that the archaeological finds in Tune, Gokstad and Oseberg once and for all established Norway as "land of adventuring Vikings" in the Master Narrative of the Museum of Cultural History. The museum environment on Bygdøy additionally places the Viking ships in a milieu of explorers, seeing as both the raft on which *Thor Heyerdahl* (1914 - 2002) crossed the Pacific Ocean in 1947 and the polar vessels of Nansen and Amundsen are exhibited nearby. The close vicinity to the Norwegian Folk Museum strengthens its function as a national museum.

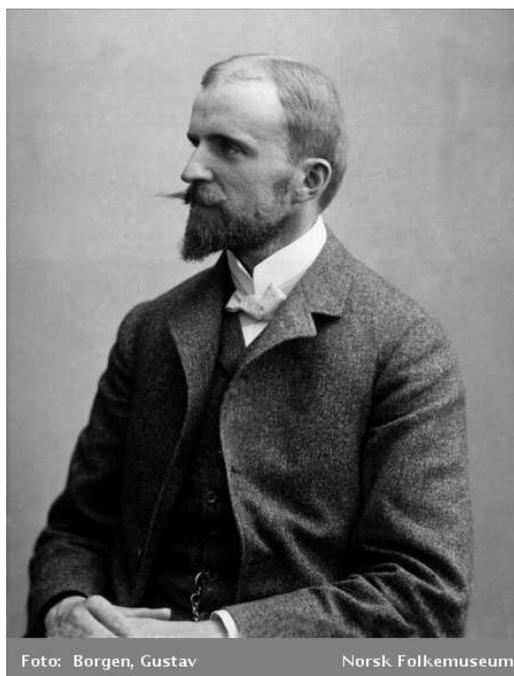
Oldsaksamlingen's manager from 1968, *Sverre Marstrander* (1910 - 1986), wished to expand the buildings both at Tullinløkka and at Bygdøy due to steadily increasing collections, the latter plan

in order to exhibit Oldsaksamlingen together with the Viking ships just like Gustafson wanted it ([www.khm.uio.no](http://www.khm.uio.no); Bergstøl & al. 2004). The plans were never implemented, but in 1998 the University started a process leading to the Norwegian Government's planning of a new building for Museum of Cultural History – and the Viking ships – in Bjørvika, close to the city centre. The plan is strongly contested. In 2006, the Directorate of Cultural Heritage started a process to preserve the Viking shipbuilding and its interior, while the University board and museum manager Egil Mikkelsen (1947? -) suggested that the ships be moved ([www.khm.uio.no](http://www.khm.uio.no)).

If moved, the ships will be displaced from a “national setting”, and will contribute to a cultural centre under development in Oslo as part of the project named *Fjordbyen* (Fjord City) ([www.prosjekt-fjordbyen.oslo.kommune.no](http://www.prosjekt-fjordbyen.oslo.kommune.no)).

### **The Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum (Norsk folkemuseum)**

The history of the Norsk folkemuseum is introduced in most publications by a small “story” about its founder, *Hans Jacob Aall* (1869 - 1946), and how he arrived at the idea of a folk museum during the summer of 1894, in the process of collecting material for the new Art and Design Museum in Trondheim<sup>24</sup>. Aall found that the design oriented material he was collecting on behalf of the Art and Design Museum did not reflect Norwegian culture as a whole, and an idea came to him on reading a newspaper article in *Aftenposten* presenting the outdoor museum of *Skansen* in Stockholm (Sweden). Skansen opened in 1891 as a department of “the Nordic Museum”, an institution established in 1873, aiming to preserve and present Nordic, especially Swedish and Norwegian, folk culture, during perilous times of modernization and industrialization. Aall suddenly realized what was needed in order to save the cultural heritage of Norway from fast decay – as well as foreign collectors. Compelled by a sentiment of national romanticism, he left his work in Trondheim the following December to establish a folk museum of national proportions in Christiania (Hegard 1994; Aall 1920).



**Figure 5: Hans Jacob Aall (1869 - 1946). (© Gustav Borgen, Norsk folkemuseum).**

This introductory tale demonstrates that Norsk folkemuseum is indebted to its founder's national sentiment and sense of responsibility, and establishes a romantic base for the overall museum narrative. It also presents the rural districts and their peasant culture as expressing a genuine Norwegian cultural identity – a bit of a paradox considering the fact that Norway has a coastline of 25 148 kilometres (including more than 58 000 islands)<sup>25</sup> and consequently abundant fishing traditions. Yet this was a perspective shared by most historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, based on the assumption that the most isolated communities were the ones that preserved the oldest and most genuine cultural expressions of language and folklore, as well as of arts, crafts and building techniques. Farmers were accorded an increasingly prominent role in the national narrative of Norway, as historians linked them to the proud and independent spirit of the Norwegian people.

### **Aristocratic farmers**

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Norway's first generation of historians appealed to the "democratic minds" of Norwegian farmers to approve the new constitutional state. *Ernst Sars* (1835 - 1917), the leading Norwegian historian throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, stressed quite a contradictory position by claiming that the farmers were bearers of an *aristocratic* spirit – a reminiscence of the pre-Christian aristocracy of regional clans that were defeated by Christian monarchies during Mediaeval times (Fulsås 1999). Like true aristocrats, farmers allegedly prevented a feudal society from developing in Norway, by defending their property and personal freedom (Mykland 1978; Hodne 1994).

Considered the leading Norwegian historian during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sars contributed to a shift in the national movement from general Scandinavism to a specifically Norwegian romanticism, disparaging the role and influence of civil servants of Danish origin – both during and after the union time. The history of Norway was now conceived as running in a continuous line from the Viking Age to contemporary times, and at the unveiling of the outdoor museum department on Bygdøy in 1902, professor of folklore *Moltke Moe* (1859 - 1913) correspondingly stated as follows: "the Norwegian Folk Museum begins where Oldsaksamlingen ends" (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994). Contributing to establish public legislation for Norwegian cultural heritage preservation, Aall had the Folk Museum recognised as the central museum in Christiania for post reformatory material in a proposition to the Norwegian Parliament in 1897, leaving Oldsaksamlingen in charge of Antiquities and Mediaeval material (Hegard 1994). Thus with his museum, Aall aimed at presenting "Part II" of the Grand narrative of Norway.

### **The initiating phase**

In a visionary letter inviting anticipated and potential supporters to the foundation's meeting in December 1894, Aall states that the historical interest of the Norwegians dates back to the age of the Sagas. The letter requested support for, and assistance in collecting new material, and the readers' national sentiment was addressed with reference to history as a guarantor of national identity (Aall 1920). The aforementioned Gustav Storm, was already heavily involved in the museum plans (he was soon to become the museum's public defender<sup>26</sup>), as was Moltke Moe. Moe – who was a close friend of the Aall family – represents a second generation of folklore collectors as son of the Grimm-inspired fairy tale collector *Jørgen Moe* (1813 - 1882) operating together with *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen* (1812 - 1885). Aall accompanied him on one of his journeys

to the district of Telemark as a young man (1887). Now Aall's elder friend became his ideological advisor during the early years of the museum, and the museum statement in Aall's invitational letter was actually penned by him. Aall would refer to Moe's written museum statement throughout his career as director (which lasted for 51 years), even reprinting it in full length in a 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary yearbook from 1920. After an energetic "door to door"-campaign prior to the 1894 meeting, Aall and his letter garnered 98 signatures to his support lists (one for men and one for women). Later, the museum statement reached all corners of the country in the form of flyers, which earned further support and attention for his project (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994).

Tough competition, both for artefacts and for funding, caused the young director to refuse any salary during his first year as curator. The founding year was characterized by hard work, but also by optimism due to large donations and a generally supportive press. According to himself, Aall worked on pure instinct before gaining professional skills (Aall 1920). From 1896 onwards, Aall exhibited a series of regionally organized collections in a city department before he purchased a plot of land on Bygdøy in 1889 to become its permanent location. He now started re-erecting rural buildings intended for the open air-museum. In 1901, one year prior to the opening, an area close to the projected entrance was rented for the first comprehensive exhibit on cultural history in Norway – a major national event that took place just three years before the personal union with Sweden was dissolved. Art historian and future head of Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Harry Fett, was hired for professional assistance. The exhibition covered most regions in southeastern Norway, distinguishing between urban and rural cultural history. Separate exhibitions on Norwegian church art, military history and the Norwegian coronation regalia were also part of it. The buildings erected for the exhibition were appropriated by Norsk folkemuseum, which opened its Open Air arena the following year (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994; [www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no)).

### **The uniting force of romantic nationalism**

Aall was clearly influenced by the national spirit of his time, seeking to frame and visualize the national character of Norwegian culture in general, as well as that of the various regions. There were actually three independent representations of nationalism superseding and partially overlapping each other during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first was one of bourgeois officials defining folk culture from an outside perspective with appeal to foreign (Danish) standards and language, whereas the second one was that of left winged educators and language reformers who opposed the former. Then emerged the uniting force of a *romantic* nationalist movement, mediating between the two, which made the liberation from Sweden in 1905 possible in an ideologically divided country (Neumann 2001; Hodne 1994). We find that the latter perfectly matches the broad appeal and aim of the Norsk Folkemuseum.

Many of the museum's principal supporters belonged, like Aall himself, to a well-established bourgeoisie. Moltke Moe, for instance, frequented the *Lysaker circle*<sup>27</sup> of artists and intellectuals, and was a close friend of Fridtjof Nansen. The previously mentioned historian, Gustav Storm, was another prominent figure who defended the museum during its more turbulent early years. Yet voluntary museum organizations also supported Aall's project, and central collectors representing the working class movement collected material as part of their political work (Eriksen 2009).

Folklore professor *Anne Eriksen* (1958 -) hypothesizes that the idea of bourgeois collectors “creating a falsely idyllic image of old folk culture” is in part a construct of ideology critics of the 1970s and -80s, and accordingly questions the true influence of the bourgeoisie. She even finds it plausible that their contemporary museum men recognized Moltke Moe and the conservative Lysaker-community to a lesser extent, than later curators and museum forces (Eriksen 2009). Aall’s networking skills were in any case never subverted by harsh political actions or utterances, and he managed to engage representatives of most political fields. In fact little is known of Aall’s political opinions, for example concerning the question of the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union. During a period of heated political tensions between the two nations, he would cooperate eagerly with, and take advice from his most challenging competitors, the manager of the Nordic Museum *Arthur Hazelius* (1833 - 1901) and his son *Gunnar Hazelis* (1874 - 1905) (Galaen 2005). In 1906, one year after the termination of the union, Aall willingly published Professor Gabriel Gustafson’s masterwork *Norges oldtid* (Norwegian Antiquity), while Oldsaksamlingen’s manager met resistance elsewhere on account of his Swedish background. As a museologist, Aall certainly had negotiation skills which served the institution at several occasions when in need of public funding, entering the Parliament building to do his lobbying face to face with the politicians (Hegard 1994).

Yet the Master Narrative of Norsk folkemuseum is to a certain extent also a political one. Erik Rudeng (1946 -), director during the 1990s, states that no museum has a stronger attachment to the events that made Norway an independent nation than Norsk folkemuseum, from 1914 – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution – exhibiting the first Parliamentary room (in use from 1814 to 1866) along with the housing of Norway’s first prime minister *Frederik Stang* (1808 - 1884), personal belongings of national poets and more of the kind confirming political as well as cultural independency (Tschudi-Madsen 1993). The Parliamentary room was exhibited in a new museum building, introducing a city milieu at the open air-arena.

### **A complete picture of Norway’s cultural history**

Aall’s visions certainly embraced more than the rural culture of proud Norwegian farmers. In order to present a complete picture of his country’s cultural history, Aall wanted the Norsk folkemuseum to be a monument to urban life as well. A miniature Norway soon developed on Bygdøy, representing high and low, farmers and poets, pharmacists and politicians. Just like some of the rural material was arranged indoor in separate rooms at *Ridehuset* – a 1903 copy of an older military riding hall, rooms in the new building from 1914 were dedicated to different historical epochs, such as renaissance and baroque, arranged to demonstrate how Norwegian homes were influenced by trends in foreign countries such as Denmark, Germany, Holland and France (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994; Eriksen 2009). As the city centre needed renewal, city apartments were now collected from the central Old Town in order to demonstrate how Christiania had evolved into a typical North European town during the reign of King Christian IV, as he had it rebuilt in stone and brick after a devastating fire in 1624 ([www.folkemuseet.no](http://www.folkemuseet.no); Hegard 1994).



Figure 6: City milieu at the Open Air Museum (© the author).

A significant church art collection was established at the behest of Harry Fett, who worked as amanuensis at the museum until 1911. Fett, whose parents were of respectively Swedish and German origin, lent the national institution a *continental* spirit – as well as a scientific one, in producing several central publications and exhibitions. *Gamle norske hjem – hus og bohøve* (Old Norwegian homes – houses and contents) from 1906 and two volumes of *Norske kirker* (Norwegian Churches) became very influential. No previous analyses of post reformation churches existed prior to the publication of his second volume of “Norske kirker” in 1911, but the controversial art historian was already noted for his interest in art and architecture from the period after the Reformation (1537), as a member of the Society for Preservation of Ancient Monuments. On becoming Director General of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage in 1913, he prepared the ground for modern cultural heritage management, providing legal protection for more recent buildings than before (Harby 2009). Fett further advanced the exchange of competence and experience between Skansen and the Norsk folkemuseum through his friendship with Hazelius’ son as well as another of his employees. He even applied for work there twice, but Aall would not let him go the first time (Galaaen 2005).

Harry Fett considered Norwegian stylistic traits to be nuances of a European style, and he stifled former ideological aspects of the collections, hereby weakening the Museum’s Master Narrative somewhat. Yet when Norsk folkemuseum overtook the Royal outdoor collection of Oscar II in 1907 (the world’s oldest outdoor museum established in 1881) he promoted the stave church as an expression of a genuine Norwegian architectural style. Originally developed as a

gesture to the Norwegian people and a token of Swedish-Norwegian unity, the King's collection now served Norwegian nationalism. *Gol Stave Church* became an important emblem for the museum, just like the Viking ships had become emblematic for Oldsaksamlingen ([www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no); Hegard 1994; Galaaen 2005).



Figure 7: Gol Stave Church (© John Erling Blad).

Fett was loyal to his institution when arguing that ethnographic material found on Norwegian soil belonged to Norsk folkemuseum, rejecting what he understood to be “Swedish cultural imperialism” in the Nordic Museum (Galaaen 2005). In 1947, the Nordic Museum embarked on a lengthy process of repatriating Norwegian material. Thousands of objects were to find their way back during the decades that followed, the last group in 2009 (<http://www.aftenposten.no/>).

During the years 1934 – 1938, a huge building complex enclosing the main square developed in accordance with drawings from an architectural competition held in 1919. Crown Prince Olav unveiled the church art exhibition in 1935, as the first exhibition in the new museum buildings. It

is still located in the same nave shaped room, which is often used for concerts on account of its tall ceiling and favourable acoustics (Hegard 1994; [www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no)).

Aall had the ambition of exhibiting complete farmyards from fifteen different regions of Norway – an old idea which was never fulfilled, but which resulted in the accelerated development of the outdoor area during the final decade of his management. Lillehammer museum had presented a complete yard from Gudbrandsdalen as early as in 1913, when Norsk folkemuseum only exhibited single buildings and farm elements. In a pamphlet from 1945, Aall stresses that this project should be prioritized along with systematic photo documentation of the complete exhibition material.

We find that the Museum's Master Narrative at this point of time is one of a young, complex and modern state influenced by continental currents, but resting on the cultural roots of an old egalitarian peasant culture with a genuine Norwegian character.

### **Setting a new standard**

Norsk folkemuseum became an inspiring model for cultural museums, setting a new standard for exhibiting cultural material. Tableaus of dolls displaying prosaic scenarios, and live performances of folk dance and music in the outdoor department (obviously inspired by The Nordic Museum in Stockholm) accelerated the epistemological development in Norwegian museums, along with their project of popular enlightenment. Aall wanted his museum visitors to be able to see and experience a variety of Norwegian cultural life, and to draw parallels between their forefathers' struggle with nature and their own (Aall 1920). He would soon become the leading voice of Norwegian cultural museum management in general, publishing a small pamphlet of guidelines for local, regional and central museum variants in 1916 and, on behalf of the Norwegian National Museum Association (*Norske museers landsforbund*), a more thorough guide for cultural museum institutions in 1925 (Aall 1916, 1925). He would go on to compose the first thorough museum history, but was never much of an academic and did not publish any major theoretical works (Hegard 1994). Leaving the scientific writing to Fett and fellow art historian *Carl W. Schnittler* (1879 - 1926), Fett in return published several guides for the museum (for instance 1902, 1907, 1914, 1919, 1938), some being simple leaflets presenting a map explaining the museum structure with short references to exhibitions, some constituting more than 200 pages of detailed texts and illustrations. Common to most of them was a recognizable pattern resembling the traditional Norwegian decorative painting style known as 'floral painting' (*rosemaling*).

While the ideological idealization of peasant culture led to the systematic collection of folklore (legends, fairy-tales, songs and ballads) during the 19th century, interest in and concern for its physical aspects was delayed as part of any public project. Aall's idea of "rescuing" Norwegian ethnographic material was therefore much welcomed, but hardly novel. A Norwegian department of cultural history had long since been established on the west coast in Bergen Museum, the dentist *Anders Sandvig* (1862 -1950) had collected material for a regional museum in Lillehammer since 1887, and plans of a Norwegian collection of ethnographic material had earlier been launched by the directors of the Ethnographic Museum. Whilst *Ludvig Kristensen Daa* (1809 - 1877), director of the Ethnographic museum, displayed Norwegian ethnographic specimens alongside with other cultural artefacts in the museum exhibition, his successor *Yngvar Nielsen* (1843 - 1916), claimed that no European culture belonged in an ethnographic museum. Collected

Norwegian material was therefore transferred to the Norsk folkemuseum in 1907, where it was considered to better serve the aim of the new institution than that of the old.

The Ethnographic Museum was established in 1854 as a consequence of a request from London, when Sámi material was requested for an ethnographic museum. Thus a huge Sámi collection accompanied the institution, portraying “the primitive life of northern indigenous people” until it too was transferred to Norsk folkemuseum in the 1950s (Bergstøl & al. 2004). The transfer served to somewhat reduce the “otherness” of the Sámi people, who wished to be treated as equals with respect to the Norwegians, yet focus on the differences between Sámis and Norwegians was continuously maintained on behalf of intercultural aspects. Despite being presented as typical Sámi skills in Norse Saga literature, skiing and boat building techniques, e.g., continued to symbolize “Norwegianness”, with no credit given to possible Sámi sources of inspiration (Hesjedal, 2004).

However, no earlier museum plans matched the grand scale vision of Hans Aall’s Folk Museum, perhaps with the exception of social scientist *Eilert Sundt* (1817 - 1875) who envisioned an outdoor collection of buildings from different regions of the country as early as in 1861, writing a dissertation on rural building traditions in Norway that would later inspire Scandinavian ethnographers, not the least of whom was Arthur Hazelius (Hegard 1994; Galaaen 2005). The novelty of Aall’s idea was the way in which he discarded earlier criteria as “age” and “artistry” when collecting material for his museum, finding the everyday life of ordinary people worthy of display. He moreover wanted his museum visitors to be able to experience a *variety*, if not a *totality*, of Norwegian culture.

### **A miniature Norway today**

Aall’s vision of a miniature Norway on Bygdøy was further expanded by Aall’s successor, Reidar Kjellberg (1904 - 1978), who incorporated the culture of industrial workers. A separate department dedicated to research and collection of “working class memories” was established in 1950 (*Avdeling for arbeiderminner*). Curator *Edvard Bull* (1914 - 1986) argued, as Aall once did, that the times are changing rapidly, and memories are in need of a rescue operation (Amundsen 2007). A section of small wooden workers houses from the suburban area of Enerhaugen constituted a new environment in the Open air-museum from the late 1960s onwards. Enhanced focus on the less romantic aspects of Norwegian cultural history must be viewed in the context of the cultural politics after WWII. In a letter to the Norwegian government from 1945, a group of intellectuals demand ‘a radical re-evaluation of the means and ends of cultural politics’ (*Vår kulturs fremtid* 13, reprinted in Hodne 1994) (author’s translation). The letter stresses the need to protect and develop cultural environments and improve every condition for artists, teachers and students in order to strengthen peoples’ belief in spiritual values (Hodne 1994). The study of working class memories in the Norsk folkemuseum must be considered (at least partly) as a reaction to a constrained, complacent rhetoric attached to a national narrative enclosed by historical perspectives and rural romanticism. The time had come to focus on Norwegian people in an even broader sense than before.

The explicit aims of Norsk folkemuseum have certainly changed since Aall’s time. A private museum of such proportions follows national (and international) trends in museology. In accordance with the official museum policy of the Norwegian government, Aall’s aim of

strengthening national pride and identity has been replaced by an ambition of promoting tolerance and understanding through historical and cultural diversity ([www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no)). Thus immigrant culture has found its way to Norsk folkemuseum, and a Pakistani apartment is now part of the permanent exhibition in Wessels gate 15 (a townhouse which displays apartment interiors from 1879 until 2002). Liv Hilde Boe, director of the museum in 2000/2001, suggested erecting a mosque in the outdoor arena (Boe 2004).

The main structure from Aall's time still remains, and his project of reshaping complete environments of farm yards continued, as have his epistemological visions of making the sceneries come to life through activities and role play. On visiting the just recently restored *Trøndelagstunet* (a courtyard from Trøndelag) last spring – a project initiated in the 1920s – my mother and I were served coffee in an authentically furnished 1950s kitchen by a pleasant 'housewife'. We were accompanied by contemporary radio voices in the background as we had a nice chat, the knitting hostess, my mother and I. Thus a museum experience in Aall's spirit was definitely at play, setting the visitor back in time completely. Intended to paint a vivid picture of life in Trøndelag during the 1950s, Norsk folkemuseum enables visitors to take part in daily farm activities ([www.norskfolkemuseum.no](http://www.norskfolkemuseum.no)).

The museum offers a variety of arrangements, from handcraft courses and concerts, to historical lectures and summer school for children. Traditional celebrations of Christmas and Midsummer's eve still attract some of the biggest audiences.

## **The Armed Forces Museum**

Before presenting the Armed Forces Museums' narrative(s), a quick military historical review is required. Early Norwegian military history is quite unique, as the recourses at hand for mediaeval kings were based on two types of soldiers – on the one hand their personal elite troops, referred to as the *Hird*, on the other hand simple farmers and townsmen obliged to serve the king in times of war. The latter built and equipped their war ships themselves, and kept them ready in case of *Leidang* (expeditions mostly used for defence, but sometimes also for attack). The chain of power was not unilateral, as a king was dependent on the goodwill of farmers to retain a safe position. We find that both the *Hird* and the *Leidang* system were established as early as the 900s, thus marking the transition between a Viking society of internally warring chieftains and the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. As Norwegian military techniques were specialized in naval warfare, they fell behind in the field of land war. We find that only a few fortresses were built in Norway during the middle ages, *Akershus fortress* being one of them. From 1299, the centre of power was moved from Bergen to Oslo, with *King Haakon V* (1270 - 1319) who was responsible for developing Akershus Castle from that year onwards. He led an active foreign policy, hoping to increase Norway's influence within Scandinavia. The Kingdom's position and military abilities were weakened by the Plague, which arrived in 1349, and complex dynastic ties between the Nordic royal houses led to Norway becoming part of the Kalmar Union in 1397. This event is generally regarded as a step towards Danish authority – no longer questioned following the introduction of Absolutism in 1660. The Norwegian Army remained a separate entity under Danish rule, except for a common fleet established in 1509. Norwegian peasants were required to keep weapons in order to do their military duty whenever called upon (Erslund 1999).

The narratives of the Armed Forces Museums are linked to these conditions as a matter of conflict, yet also as just part of our military history. During *The Great Northern War (1700 – 1721)* engaging Tsarian Russia, Denmark-Norway and Saxony-Poland-Lithuania in an anti-Swedish alliance, Norway offered indispensable competence in the field of naval warfare, and Norwegian officers like *Peter Wessel Tordenskiold (1690 - 1720)* and *Iver Huitfeldt (1665 - 1710)* became heroes after contributing to the defeat of Sweden. In 1814, European Post-Napoleonic politics resulted in the forced dissolution of the dynastic union between Denmark and Norway, and the initiation of a new union due to Swedish demands based on the Kiel Treaty of 1813. Norwegian politicians managed to establish a parliamentary assembly, and Norway was established as an independent country with its own Constitution, but in personal union with the Kingdom of Sweden (Ersland 1999).

In the main exhibition of the Armed Forces Museum in Oslo, we actually find that Norway's role during its union period is given a stronger focus than the period of sovereignty preceding it. Neither bold Viking kings nor powerful mediaeval kings are given much attention, despite Norway's quite unique early military history. The relative unavailability of collection material might serve as an explanation for this understated emphasis on early military history, but hardly on the whole. A more likely explanation is perhaps a growing climate of anti-nationalism during the 1970s, as well as the unwillingness to use the Vikings for patriotic means after WWII. The most recent union is however the one, which has been given the least credit as it was established during a period of increasing nationalism resulting in its dissolution in 1905. The many attacks on Norway prior to the union have also given rise to a history of conflict between the two neighbouring states.

### **An early military historian's Saga like narrative**

As already stated, the first generations of Norwegian historians and museologists occupied themselves to a great extent with Saga kings; so did military historians. Of special importance were of course the Ynglinga Dynasty, and the previously mentioned king Harald Finehair, who is presented as Norway's 'first sole king' by Snorre Sturlasson. Yet, *Olav Haraldson 'the Sacred' (995 - 1033)* is actually a better candidate for the title, having reigned over a region more nearly approximating today's Norway between 1015 and 1028. He was slain by a peasant militia in 1030, and became a national Saint as he died in an attempt to Christianize the Norwegian people. Then came a long period of civil wars, and Norway would not become a stable kingdom again before 'the Birch legs' (*Birkebeinerne*), rebelling against royal and clerical powers, were defeated in 1225. Soon after, Norway reached its peak of military power with the reign of *Håkon Håkonsson (1204 - 1263)*. Internal wars were ended, and Iceland and Greenland were included in the Norwegian kingdom. Having already claimed the Shetland and Orkney islands, the Norwegian kingdom had never been bigger. This period is usually where we find that Norway's early military historians begin their narrative.

There is a divine providence that never lets the life cycle of a nation rest until it has reached its purpose (...) (Coucheron-Aamot 1901, author's translation)

This is the opening line of *The Norwegian People on Land and Sea: Norway's political and military history from Harald Finehair to 1814 (Det norske folk på land og sjø: Norges politiske og militære historie fra Harald Haarfagre til 1814)* written and published in 1901 by marine lieutenant and military historian

William Coucheron-Aamot (1868 - 1948). Rather unabashedly, the author argues that an awakened people's knowledge of Norwegian national and military history will contribute to the nation 'retrieving its place in the north', referring to what was considered the peak of Norwegian military history at this period of time: the crowning of King Håkon Håkonsson in 1247. Linking the splendour of mediaeval kings to the ancient Vikings, Coucheron-Aamot appeals to the general spirit of his time to create a Saga-like narration of Norway's political and military history. Quite obviously, it was the national sentiment of the early 20th century that conditioned the general presentations of Norwegian military history, and history professor Ernst Sars was credited for his help and support, along with national archivist Henrik Jørgen Huidtfeldt-Kaas (1834 - 1905). Yet a national narrative of these proportions was unlikely to be found in the early exhibitions of armour and weapons at *the Artillery Museum* of 1879, the first step towards a national military museum institution in Norway.

### **Finding proper housing**

The Artillery Museum was initiated as a model chamber in 1860, in order to keep an overview of the Artillery resources, and was later supplemented with historical artefacts from older magazines. *The Quartermaster museum*, which opened at the Army depot in 1928, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Norwegian Army, displayed a variety of historical banners and uniforms, but likewise did not aim to present any national perspective in a broader sense. The idea of a national military museum at *Akershus Fortress*, the former headquarters of Norwegian heads of the state, was however discussed, but in 1921 unexpectedly turned down by the Norwegian government, the available exhibition material allegedly being of weak relevance to Norway in general, and the Akershus region in particular (Tor Holm, 1961). When promoted once more in 1928 by *Captain Peter Frederik Broch* (born 1897), the idea gained strong support from the now omnipresent head of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Harry Fett, who was engaged in the restoration of Akershus Castle (Tschudi-Madsen and Moberg 1999).



Figure 8: Akershus Fortress (© the author).

Yet the Norwegian Ministry of Defence did not respond properly until 1934, when a committee started working on its realization, engaging Oldsaksamlingen and the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (*Kunstindustrimuseet*) in the preservation of weapons, uniforms and banners. The work was interrupted with the onset of WWII, and in an effort to ease the practical management during the time of occupation, the Artillery and the Quartermaster museums were united. The two collections were named The Army Museum (*Hærmuseet*) in the Norwegian Parliament's White Paper of 1940, and provided the starting point for the museum organization today known as the Armed Forces Museums (Holm 1961; Eyvang 1981).

The museum could not be run legally until after the war, but then the exhibition activity halted. At least 3000 artefacts were destroyed in a fire in 1942, and cannons were melted in the service of the German war industry. Director *Captain Fritz C Skaar* (died 1952) met with severe obstacles in gathering and rescuing the collection material from decay when re-employed in 1945 (Holm 1961).

Housing of the collections was in any case the most overwhelming challenge after the war, since both the arsenal building and the army depot were now being used for other purposes. Thus the struggle for a new museum building after the war was hard, with the Ministry of Defence prioritizing rearmament before public oriented museum management. In 1954, even relocation to *Fredriksten Fortress*, at some distance from the capital, was seriously considered as a solution, but the museum committee soon rejected the idea. As a result, the Army Museum was not able to display its collections on celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1960, as the yearbook woefully reports (Holm 1960). Still this publication of 393 illustrated pages serves as a fine museum history – of a non-existing museum! Norwegian military history had yet to be narrated as part of an exhibition, its collections temporarily stacked away for decades.

16 more years were to pass before the museum could exhibit its collections<sup>28</sup>, by now rearranged and opened to the public in their original housing close to the fortress area (Holm 1961). Architect *Wilhelm Von Hanno* (1826 - 1882) and *Heinrich Ernst Schirmer's* (1814 - 1887) red bricked Arsenal building in romantic style from 1860 constitutes the principal building for both permanent and temporal exhibitions at the Defence Museum, with a total floor area of 7000 square meters. In planning it, the architects were inspired by a mediaeval military fortress block, and it plays an important part of their comprehensive building complex in and outside the area of the Fortress wall (Eyvang 1981). Thus the environmental framing of the museum experience is most appropriate, and the building well suited for the display of historical weapons, uniforms and other military equipment.

### **A complex museum organization**

Before we plunge into the Armed Forces Museums' exhibition material in search for national narratives, a presentation of the contemporary museum organization may shed light on some of the challenges a complex administration structure may encounter in terms of communication.

The Armed Forces Museums is an administrative museum organization under "the Norwegian Ministry of Defence"<sup>29</sup>, with seven departments distributed across the country: The Defence Museum (*Forsvarsmuseet*) and Norway's Resistance Museum (*Hjemmefrontmuseet*) at Akershus Fortress in Oslo, the Naval Museum (*Marinemuseet*) in Horten – allegedly the world's oldest –, the Armoury (*Rustkammeret*) in Trondheim – likewise presenting itself as one of Norway's oldest museums –, the National Norwegian Aviation Museum (*Luftforsvarsmuseet*) in Bodø, Oscarsborg Fortress Museum in Drøbaksundet and Bergenhus Fortress Museum in Bergen. The museums were consolidated in 1995<sup>30</sup>, with the Defence Museum<sup>31</sup> in Oslo serving as a main department. An additional responsibility for the preservation of certain external museum collection's military material underscores the organization's vast field of operation, while the many administrative and decisional forums with which it cooperates – and which it is partly dependent on – indicate further challenges in communication: In 1989, the Minister of Defence established a civil foundation for cultural activity at Akershus Fortress (*SAKK – Stiftelsen Akershus Kunst og Kultur*), and in 1993, The National Fortifications Heritage (*Nasjonale Festningsverk*<sup>32</sup>) owned by The Norwegian Defence Estates Agency (*Forsvarsbygg*) became a new cultural arena – dependent on cooperation with both SAKK and The Armed Forces Museums. Several military fortress departments were turned into public museums during the 2000s, *Bergenhus* and *Oscarsborg Fortress* among others. In 2008, the museums were included in the *Department for Culture and Traditions* (*FAKT*) along with the Armed Forces' eight edicts, their bands and a veteran centre (<http://forsvaret.no/>). Despite a centralized museum administration and the cooperative purposes of the forums mentioned above, information about cultural activities at the museums and fortresses is distributed separately, and their websites are only weakly linked.

### **Two parallel aims of exhibiting military artefacts and material**

The possibility of any leading visionary voice on behalf of such a complex organization seems unlikely. Instead, the Armed Forces Museums offer a series of narratives, and appear to have two parallel aims with their exhibitions: 1) to display Norwegian military history and development in general, and 2) to pass on the specific story of Norwegian resistance during WWII to new

generations. These two contemporary aims of the Armed Forces Museums represent two different applications of the past, and will be at the centre of focus in this report.

The first aim is explicitly stated as an overall objective of the Armed Forces' Museum work both in section 6.1 of White paper no 33 (2008-2009), and at the Defence Museum's official websites (<http://forsvaret.no/>). The national history of the different military branches – the Army, the Navy and the Air force – as well as the Coastal Artillery, is minded by separate museums in Oslo, Horten, Bodø and Drøbakundet. The epistemological structures of the museums' permanent exhibitions differ slightly due to the vast time span over which they were established, and the material, which they display. A permanent exhibition in Oslo's Defence museum presents Norway's military activity from the Viking age up until today. This exhibition will be thoroughly presented below, followed by a presentation of exhibitions at Akershus Fortress. Even if the other museum departments contribute to complete and adjust the national story on display in the Defence museum, they will not be treated here, in the interest of keeping the report short and concise.

As for the second aim, WWII and Norwegian resistance work constitute salient elements in the general exhibitions at every Armed Forces Museum, as well as in separate sections at Bergenhus Fortress and the Armoury in Trondheim, besides constituting the total exhibition of Norway's Resistance Museum. This second aim is not explicitly stated in any governmental papers, and must be regarded as an undisputed and self-evident museum task following WWII. As it was originally established as a private foundation of former resistance fighters, governmental management had little direct impact on the development of the latter museum, which perhaps presents the most *distinct* narrative of all Norwegian military museum departments. The Ministry of Defence immediately accepted a museum plan presented in 1962, despite its lack of general guidelines (Færøy, 1997).

### **The Defence Museum's narrative**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1978, at the Norwegian Army's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary, King *Olav V* reopened the Armed Forces Museums' main exhibition in its original building close to the fortress area<sup>33</sup>, after forty years in storage. The political and ideological climate in Norway had changed dramatically since the material had last been exhibited, and the exhibition was devoid of any vulgar glorification of ancient kings or Vikings. National pride was no longer associated with bold Vikings, but with war-*resistance*, and the Army Museum was accordingly renamed "the Defence Museum" (*Forsvarsmuseet*)<sup>34</sup>. Those who had experienced WWII were anxious to relate their story to new generations, and "remembrance" became the driving force for arranging certain parts of the exhibition material (Holm 2011). As already mentioned, the museum became head department of seven consolidated military museums located in different regions of Norway, in 1995.

*Thor Brynhildsen (1931-)* was one of the members of a project group during the preliminary restoration of the Arsenal building, and leader of the museum's exhibition department from 1976 to 1985. He had no existing exhibition tradition on which to base his work, but approached the collection material in a schoolbook manner, welcomingly addressing younger audiences of school children. Hence the permanent exhibition on the first floor is arranged chronologically in periods of war and peace, unions and occupations, except for a brief and introductory presentation of a

less specific “Viking age”. The Kalmar Union, the Great Nordic War and the period of Danish reign are gathered in a section titled “1300 – 1814”, while the Norwegian union with Sweden is portrayed in the “1814 – 1905”-section. “1905 – 1940” encompasses both WWI and the disarmament period in-between the wars, while WWII is introduced in a section called “War at sea 1939 – 1945” (*Sjøkrigen*).

Written information about women’s military effort provides nuance to the more general historical presentations. Text boards are used as the leading medium to present the military history from the Viking age and to the WWII but they are supported by dioramas and exemplified by exhibited military material (weapons, uniforms, banners, drums, historical documents). Models of Norwegian Fortresses are also presented. The oldest material from Akershus Arsenal dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was implemented in the Model Chamber’s collections soon after it was established in the Arsenal building (Holm 1961). Specimens from the Quartermaster Museum, established in 1928, are also part of the exhibition.

So what story does the permanent exhibition tell? A few Viking weapons are displayed in showcases along with the copy of the Baldishol Tapestry<sup>35</sup> at the entrance of the first section. A brief text states that the Vikings were both traders and conquerors that used sturdy ships for crossing the oceans, i.e. there is no romanticizing of the spirit of the North. There is however no lack of heroes and enemies in the following sections of the exhibition, even if no names are mentioned. The 14<sup>th</sup> century is presented with the title “Mediaeval times – military decay”, and the Kalmar Union is implicitly explained in the context of the Black Death having weakened the Norwegian State, leaving the rather peaceful political processes of the royal houses unexplained. Further on, a point is made of the high number of Norwegians (67%) in the Royal Danish Fleet in 1709, bespeaking the important role of Norwegians in sea battles against the Swedish empire during the great Nordic War. Sweden is by and large presented as Norway’s principal enemy, having engaged Denmark-Norway in battle during the Napoleonic wars, and not least having deprived Norway of its new won independence in 1814. A captured cannon from August 1814 documents a minor Norwegian victory at Skotterud before the union with Sweden was a fact, and a point is made out of the resistance against the Swedish king, Karl Johan. Norwegian military development within the independent Norwegian state is exemplified both through the Norwegian fleet, established in 1814, through Kongsberg weapon factory, established in 1818, and with 1901 investment in a rapid-firing cannon, making the Norwegian land artillery ‘the world’s most modern’.

The quest for military glory is less problematic for a young state like Norway, in contrast to former imperial states such as Sweden or Denmark. Contrary to the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, who avoid mention of former imperial ambitions, or the Swedish Army Museum, which all but mocks their former superpowers in some of their exhibitions, Norway’s Defence Museum makes as much of small victories and war resistance as possible – albeit in a discrete tone. Whereas the cultural ministry administers the central Swedish military museum<sup>36</sup>, the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums are as previously mentioned under management of the Ministry of Defence, and even reports to its military sub-department, the Staff of Defence (*Forsvarsstaben*). In the interest of safeguarding independent and critical museum work, a White paper from 2003 (Str.mld. 48) requests museums to keep a certain distance to their funding ministries. This principle may have had an impact on more recent activities and exhibitions in the

Armed Forces Museums, but the oldest collection material is to a great extent dependent on the work of military officers. Unfortunately, the budgets will not allow the museum to rearrange or restore these older parts of the permanent exhibition in time for the jubilee of the constitution in 2014 (Holm 2011).

Thor Brynhildsen's successor, *Terje Holm (1951- )*, is in charge of the exhibition on the museum's ground floor: The Cold War, 1945 – 1989. It was completed and opened to the public in 2010, presenting an epistemologically more experimental showcase, and breaking genuinely with the older exhibition section. There is a measure of chronological deviation in the service of a visually stronger concept expressing the change from 'hope for peace' to 'fear of a new world war', stressing the two different universes of USA and USSR. The use of the exhibition material is generally more creative, i.e. a locked cellar entrance symbolizes the Norwegian Intelligence Service. Texts are now carved on cement columns and wooden boards, and a 150-meter long row of miniature vehicles running across the walls and ceiling demonstrates the size of a motorized brigade during the Cold War, and the arms race of the period.

The permanent exhibition ends with a note on the museum's plans of extending the permanent exhibition into contemporary time, and the new military history initiated with Norwegian soldiers participating in foreign wars. The slogan "Norway out of NATO" is written on a wall next to a modern tank front, a reference to popular reactions to Norway's contribution to NATO during times of peace – typically expressed by youths during the 1990s.

### **Museum research and epistemology**

The Defence Museum includes a research centre, which produces treatises on narrow historical military topics and selected material, i.e. uniforms and specific battles and wars, which may be purchased in the museum shop. The Defence Museum's first director, Eyvind Eylvang (1920 -) published a short museum history in 1981 (*Forsvarsmuseet blir til*), and Tor Holm presents the Army Museum's history in the previously mentioned yearbook of 1960, yet literature on the museum and its exhibition is by and large scarce, which reveals a weak museological tradition as contrasted with the cultural historical museums. With the exception of a tiny guide, no popular handbooks are distributed. The exhibitions are intended to welcome visitors as part of guided tours, and the museum has a policy, which depends on personal contact with its visitors (Holm 2011). The tours must, however, be booked in advance, and are generally aimed at school children. Other visitors are left to their own interpretations of the exhibitions.

In the early years of the museum's history, it had a feeble academic profile, with few scientific publications, but its scientific means have been gradually strengthened, and the museum's epistemological repertoire has been broadened with the creation of historical tableaux (dioramas) with life size models, and added interactive elements such as sound and light buttons, short films and soldier huts to be explored, along with the experimental use of materials presenting the most recent military history.

There is obviously more than one way to realize the museum's objective to 'inform the public, so that they, based on historical facts, are able to take a stand when it comes to both previous and current military situations', as stated on their website. 'Facts' were, however, not the main focus when the Defence Museum decided to hire contemporary artist *Morten Tråvik (1971-)* for a project called 'Artist in Residence' in 2010, resulting in – among other controversial expressions –

a seven meter long condom strung onto a nuclear missile. The Defence Museum was hereby identified as a brave and modern museum institution, but the event caused some internal discussions within the Norwegian Armed Forces (NRK Johansen 2010; Holm 2011).

### **Akershus Castle**

The Royal Family's protection is, as already suggested, of great value to the identity of the Armed Forces Museum, with the King inaugurating every new or restored department. The National Narrative of Akershus Castle is accordingly linked to its historical role as the headquarters of the Norwegian heads of the state, serving for centuries as a national archive, and from 1936 housing a royal mausoleum. Besides being an attraction for tourists and other visitors, it is used for representational means, and is a national symbol of high value (White paper no 33, 2008 - 2009). The Castle's museum function is of relatively recent origin, due to belated and long lasting restoration. Mediaeval oriented antiquarians such as Nicolay Nicolaysen ignored the castle initially, as they believed it to have been rebuilt after a fire in 1527, and only more recently expanded on. While both Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim and Håkon's Hall in Bergen have engaged historians and archaeologists from the middle of the 1800s, the question of restoration of Akershus Castle was not put forward until 1896, at that point with the ambition of reshaping it in its mediaeval form. Newspaper reports tell of grand festivities (Akershus-festlighetene) staged in 1899, with an immensely popular historical pageant in which the play arranged by King Håkon Magnusson V in honor of his daughter Ingeborg's wedding in 1312 was re-enacted (Tschudi-Madsen and Moberg, 1999). This was at the time when the young art historian Harry Fett made himself noted by the Society for Preservation of Ancient Monuments while protesting against mediaeval romanticism, which led to Nicolaysen's withdrawal and Fett himself becoming the society's secretary (Stang 2009). Yet the mediaeval perspective was to some extent revived when architect Holger Sinding-Larsen, following thorough archaeological research (1906 – 1922) concluded that the original mediaeval castle had in actuality been sizeable, with towers, halls, ring walls and a dry moat – contrary to the previous hypothesis of historian Gustav Storm (among others). Sinding-Larsen's theory formed a basis for the restoration work, together with his and architect Arnstein Arneberg's drawings (Tschudi-Matsen and Moberg 1999). The different epochs are made visible, and the castle emerges as a synthesis of the old mediaeval fortress and the later renaissance castle ([www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/](http://www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/)).

Despite minor damages from bombardment during WWII, a major part of the restoration was finished in 1947 at King Håkon VII's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. A Support Association continued the restoration and decoration work from 1951 onwards and gifts from citizens and other museums (e. g. Norsk folkemuseum) has contributed to turning the castle into the "national treasure" firmly presented by director-general of the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, *Stephan Tschudi-Madsen* (1923 - 2007), and museum lecturer Harald Moberg (1943- ) in their popular handbook from 1999, allegedly the year of its 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A more practical guidebook was also issued by the Norwegian Defence Estates Agency (*Forsvarets bygningsstjeneste*), to support the physical experience of the castle area. The institution of guided tours and cultural activities were accelerated following the jubilee in 1999, and the 1899 festivities inspired the program for the Norwegian Year of Cultural Heritage 2009 (Mathisen, 2009). The castle is often used for contemporary art and musical performances.

The castle website offers “a walk through Norwegian history from 1300 until today”, wings, halls and rooms having been named after castle royalties or historical activities. The main hall originally housed the suite of Christian IV, founder of Christiania (who rebuilt the city closer to the castle after a city fire in 1624), while one of the smaller halls is named after *Margrete I*, the Queen Regnant who facilitated the Kalmar Union, and yet another after the popular *King Olav V*, father of the present King of Norway. The National poet *Henrik Wergeland* served as state archivist from 1840 until his death in 1845, and his room at the castle was reconstructed during the 1970s by Head of Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, and opened to public display ([www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/](http://www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/); Tschudi-Madsen 1971). *Romerikssalen* is yet another hall, named after farmers who according to tradition were ordered forcefully to contribute to restoration work in 1540. Thus, in Akershus Castle Museum we find a narrative of symbolic character, presenting some highlights of Norwegian history, rather than a chronologically oriented story of protagonists and antagonists.

### **The Norwegian Resistance Museum**

The Germans made use of Akershus Castle during the Second World War, imprisoning resistance fighters there. In 1945, 42 Norwegian patriots were executed near the double battery building, which now houses the Resistance Museum. The spot is marked with a memorial site where wreath-laying ceremonies occasionally take place. The battery was first planned for restaurant business, but a member of Akershus Fortress’ terrain committee did not approve of the idea. Neither did former resistance fighters, who found that a museum was better suited for a building standing so close to the memorial (Færøy 1997; <http://forsvaret.no/>).



Figure 9: Memorials at the fortress area (© Arne Bugge Amundsen).

The initiative to construct the Resistance Museum was taken in 1961, but collection and securing of documents and material from WWII had started immediately after the day of liberation (8th of May, 1845). Magnus Jensen, leader of several resistance groups during the war, directed the Home Front Historical Institute (*Hjemmefrontens Historieinstitut*), which operated from 1945 to 1948, and the archive material was deposited in the National Archive (*Riksarkivet*) until the museum's own archive and research department was established in 1966, following significant funding from the government (Færøy, 1997).

Norwegian resistance research lagged compared to the activity in other European countries, which made the museum foundation's board members seek cooperation with History Professor Magne Skodvin (1915 - 2004) at Oslo University. Skodvin, a former resistance fighter himself, was the driving force in the field, and became a link between younger historians, central home front leaders and the Resistance Museum in the years to come (Færøy, 1997). His academic competence is presented as necessary in securing a historically precise portrayal of the years of occupation in the exhibition.

The Resistance Museum committee, consisting of Paul Brunsvig (1921 - 1988), Police Representative Lars L'Abée-Lund (1910 - 1991)<sup>37</sup> and Knut M. Haugland (1917 - 2009), soon to become the museum's first manager, wanted a storyboard based exhibition, using artistic grips and symbolic expressions to evoke an enclosed experience of the horror of the occupation, as contrasted with the open view outside (Færøy, 1997). The Norwegian people's common democratic values and legal opinion were to be presented as a backdrop for the allegedly extensive resistance activity, and the museum's rather emotionally based objective is presented as such:

(...) To give the young people of today and coming generations a true-to-life impression of the evil represented by occupation and foreign rule, in this way helping to strengthen the sense of unity and defence of our national liberties (*Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum 1982, preface*).

The delay in the establishment of the museum was partly due to the building process, but according to museum lecturer Frode Færøy, also to the high academic ambition of its founders (Færøy, 1997). The Museum Committee wanted a qualitative portrayal, not of the occupation history in general, but of the Norwegian resistance force specifically. Despite the committee's decision not to romanticize the period or create heroes by namedropping resistance fighters, the voice of the museum becomes very clear, presenting a moral universe of "good guys" and "bad guys".

Exhibition events are ordered chronologically, starting on the 9th of April, the day of invasion. Following a short descent down into the darkened exhibition area, visitors are met (...) with a brutal sculpture of clustered rifles, and a note in German, impaled on a bayonet, declaring Norway as occupied. A small model shows how an improvised Norwegian force fought a German raiding party by Midtskogen farm as early as the evening of the 9th of April. A knifed copy of the Norwegian book of laws creates another brutal symbolic expression, while Nordahl Grieg's poem "17th of May 1940" in contrast expresses the indomitable spirit of Norwegians despite naked flagpoles on their Constitution Day. The poem is illustrated with a depiction of the historical Eidsvoll building, where the Norwegian Constitution was created, behind iron bars. A constant sports strike after the interference by the Nazis with their youth organizations marks the general antipathy they met from Norwegian youths, and exemplifies strong civil resistance. The

radio speech of Josef Terboven (1898 - 1945) – Reichskommissar during the German occupation of Norway – held on 25th of September 1940, declaring the Norwegian government as deposed, is communicated as text, followed by a new text board presenting the reaction from business and cultural organizations. The continuous examples of Norwegian resistance are titled “Somebody stood in the way”. The Oslo centred *R-group* is presented as a pioneer group of resistance fighters, while nationwide organization of the resistance starting in 1941 is demonstrated by illegal papers, radio activity and sabotage, along with the main resistance movement, *Milorg*. 1942 is presented as a turning point for the Germans, giving nurture to the hope for freedom among Norwegians. Anecdotal material such as an original handwritten song text mocking Vidkun Quisling, founder of the Norwegian Nazi Party, adds a little humour to the exhibition. On approaching the exit, the ground floor ascends and the exhibition lightens up, and the visitors are faced with a clip from the Oslo press saying: “Our fight is crowned with victory” under the date of liberation, 8th of May. King Håkon VII served as a symbol for Norwegian patriots during the war, and his monogram, along with flags, are used to decorate the May parade, as a photography clearly shows. “Never again April the 9th!” has become a Norwegian slogan, as stated on the final wall of the exhibition.

Museum Manager Knut Magne Haugland (1917 - 2009) comes close to a Grand Author designing the exhibition along with other members of the storyboard committee. Like several of his colleagues, he too was a prominent resistance fighter during the war, as a member of Martin Linge’s Norwegian Independent Company no. 1, and participated in the heavy water sabotage at Vemork in Rjukan in 1943. Having also participated in Thor Heyerdal’s *Kon-Tiki* expedition in 1947, Haugland supplies his list of braveries and national efforts with a great adventure at sea (Færøy 1997; <http://www.kon-tiki.no/>), thus fulfilling most criterions for being a national hero according to the Grand Narrative of Norway.



Figure 1: Knut Magne Haugland (1917 - 2009). (© Norges hjemmefrontmuseum).

Originally established as a private foundation of former resistance fighters, Norway's Resistance Museum presents a distinct narrative of Norwegians united in perilous resistance work during a time of occupation. The museum narrative has caused some minor media controversies in this decade, with manager Arnfinn Moland having been accused of monopolizing Norwegian resistance research, e.g. excluding the achievements of communist resistance fighters (e.g. Borgersrud 2010).

## Conclusion

Freedom, independence and democracy as literally *nature given* aspects of being Norwegian characterize the Master Narratives considered in this report, like a mythological layer that structures the presented material. *The Museum of Cultural History's* Master Narrative presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while a Northern love of freedom is attached to the independent farmer in the *Norsk folkemuseum*. A series of accounts of Norwegians fighting for autonomy is offered by the *Armed Forces Museums*. These case studies demonstrate how Norwegian museum authors contribute to a Grand Narrative of Norway that goes as follows: a dormant nation awakens (at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), then struggles (in the course of the 1800s) to become what it had always been destined to be (the potential revealed already by indomitable Vikings and independent farmers), finally succeeding when disentangled from its last union (in 1905), and defended once more by its own people when threatened by a new enemy (during WWII). This is a motif we know from general rhetoric of European national romanticism (Neumann 2001), but we find that Norwegian museum authors encompass the mythological basis of Scandinavism to a Grand Narrative of Norway disparaging earlier cultural and political dominance from Denmark and Sweden, and saluting the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. Thus the Grand Narrative of the museums in question corresponds with Allan Megill's understanding of the term as lying behind the Master Narratives: "a secularized version of the Christian narrative of pristine origin, struggle, and ultimate salvation", and are based on three separate Master Narratives "lying in the background, to be deployed selectively by the historian" (Megill, A., S. Shepard and P. Honenberger 2007).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A personal union is a union of two or more different states sharing the same monarch while their boundaries, their laws and interests remain distinct.
- <sup>2</sup> I will use its Norwegian name "Norsk folkemuseum" in this report in order to avoid that it is confused with the Museum of Cultural History.
- <sup>3</sup> Tune 1867, Gokstad 1880 and Oseberg 1904
- <sup>4</sup> *The Runic Archives* did not get a director until 1948.
- <sup>5</sup> Selskapet for Norges Vel (the Royal Norwegian Society for Development)
- <sup>6</sup> Demands for a Norwegian university were raised as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the injunction that priests and officials in Norway needed university education, a demand upheld not least by the Norwegian Society formed by students in Copenhagen in 1772.
- <sup>7</sup> E.g. arranging their exhibition material in accordance with Thomsen's three-age system and implementing the new periodic understanding of history inherited from German historicism
- <sup>8</sup> *Oslo* was renamed *Christiania* during the reign of Christian IV (1577–1648), spelled *Kristiania* by language reformers from late 19<sup>th</sup> century, before regaining its original name in 1925.
- <sup>9</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Norway occasionally, and had a statue of Fridtjof the Bold raised in Vik (Sognefjorden) in 1913.

- 10 During the seventh meeting of The Scandinavian Society of Natural Sciences held in Christiania in 1856.
- 11 The Nansen family had a strong patriotic tradition. Fridtjof's grandfather, *Hans Nansen*, contributed to Norway's constitutional independence in 1814, settled in Sognefjord and gave his son the Saga inspired name "*Baldur Fridtjof*".
- 12 Appointed professor of Nordic Archeology in 1874, Rygh is considered the founder of the discipline in Norway, succeeding Rudolf Keyser's as collection manager, and establishing a chronological and typological overview of Oldsaksamlingen's Iron Age collection.
- 13 His Swedish background was held against him by Nationalists demanding the Oseberg publication to be a purely Norwegian production, thus his plans were halted.
- 14 E.g. Roald Amundsen (1872 - 1928) and Carl Lumholtz (1851 - 1922), <http://www.khm.uio.no/>
- 15 Topographical and mineralogical studies played an important part in establishing a national identity in Norway, and W. Chr. Brøgger published a monumental work in two volumes, "Norway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (*Norge i det 19de århundre*, 1900), together with prominent scientists serving the project of nation building.
- 16 A. W. Brøgger was additionally associated with Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture and earned the status of honorary member of *Norske Museers Landsforbund* (Norwegian Museum Association). He was a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters from 1914, and the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters from 1927 (Bergstol, Eek and Perminov 2004).
- 17 The case was finally brought to the Permanent Court of International Justice following fruitless negotiations between Denmark and Norway, which resulted in Norway losing the case.
- 18 Probably due to his studying archaeology in Germany during the early 1900s (Helliksen 1996)
- 19 The anticipated fourth volume of the Oseberg series presenting textiles was not published until 2006!
- 20 Brøgger also established the Borre Fund for promoting Norwegian Archaeology in 1916, and contributed to improving the legislation of antiquity preservation.
- 21 The Norwegian Saint Olav the Sacred was slain in this battle, and is considered responsible for the christening of Norway.
- 22 For a total overview: "P. Gjerde and S. Røyneland: *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger. Ein bibliografi*, h.oppg. Statens bibliotekhøgskole, 1988"
- 23 Publications important to this report besides those listed in the bibliography would be the following: *Borrefundet og Vestfoldkongenes graver* from 1916, *Short guide books: The Oseberg-Ship and The Oseberg-Room* from 1918/1927, *Osebergfundet, Vol. 1-3 and 5* (edited together with H. Falk and H. Shetelig) 1917-28, *Osebergdronningen* 1919, *Den norske bosetningen på Shetland-Orknøyene: studier og resultater* 1930, *The Viking Ship Finds: Guide* 1934, *Vinlandsferdene* 1937, *Sagaen om norskebygdene på Grønland* 1945, *Stiklestadslaget* 1946, *The Viking ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* 1950 written together with Haakon Shetelig.
- 24 *Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum*
- 25 Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/english/>
- 26 E.g. when attacked in a conservative newspaper (*Morgenbladet*) by rentier Sophus Larpent, questioning the museum's economic justifiability
- 27 The home of Fridtjof Nansen (and his wife, Eva) was located at Lysaker, close to Oslo.
- 28 The Ministry of Defence had a Defence committee develop plans and strategies for a national museum organization for the first time in 1969, and even demanded the collection material moved once more for temporarily storage (Eyvang, 1981). JH
- 29 Albeit not directly as they report to an intermediary military agency - "Forsvarsstaben" (the Staff of Defence).
- 30 The Naval Museum, The Resistance Museum and The Armory were already administered by the Army museum before the consolidation.
- 31 The department is referred to as The Defence Museum on the Norwegian Armed Forces' web pages, but the name refers technically to the building itself. *The Armed Forces Museum* is allegedly the adopted English name for the department (according to Terje H. Holm), but I use its website name throughout this report in order to keep it separate from the total organization of Norwegian military museums (*The Armed Forces Museums*).
- 32 <http://www.forsvarsbygg.no/Nasjonalefestningsverk/>
- 33 Architect Wilhelm Von Hanno (1826 - 1882) and Heinrich Ernst Schirmer's (1814 - 1887) red bricked Arsenal building from 1860, inspired by a mediaeval military fortress block.
- 34 "The Defence Museum" is the correct translation of the Norwegian name, "Forsvarsmuseet", and this is also the translation used on the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums' web page. Still the official English name of the museum is The Armed Forces Museum.
- 35 The only example of tapestry from mediaeval Scandinavia, and on the whole one of few in Romanesque style, dated to the period 1040-1190
- 36 <http://www.sfhm.se/>
- 37 L'Abée-Lund eavesdropped the German security police and the Nazi State Police as part of a secret police group (Færøy 1997).

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