

KING FERKING AND KING AUGVALD

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An old legend from this area recounts the story of how King Ferking from Ferkingstad killed King Augvald from Avaldsnes. Unlike King Augvald, Ferking is not mentioned in written historical sources, but the legend has been kept alive on Karmøy right up until the present day and King Ferking has been linked to the ruins of a building called the “King’s Fortress” and two large boathouses at Ferkingstad.



Slipways, boat landing places and boathouses large enough to accommodate 30m long boats, at Hop, Ferkingstad. (Photo AmS)

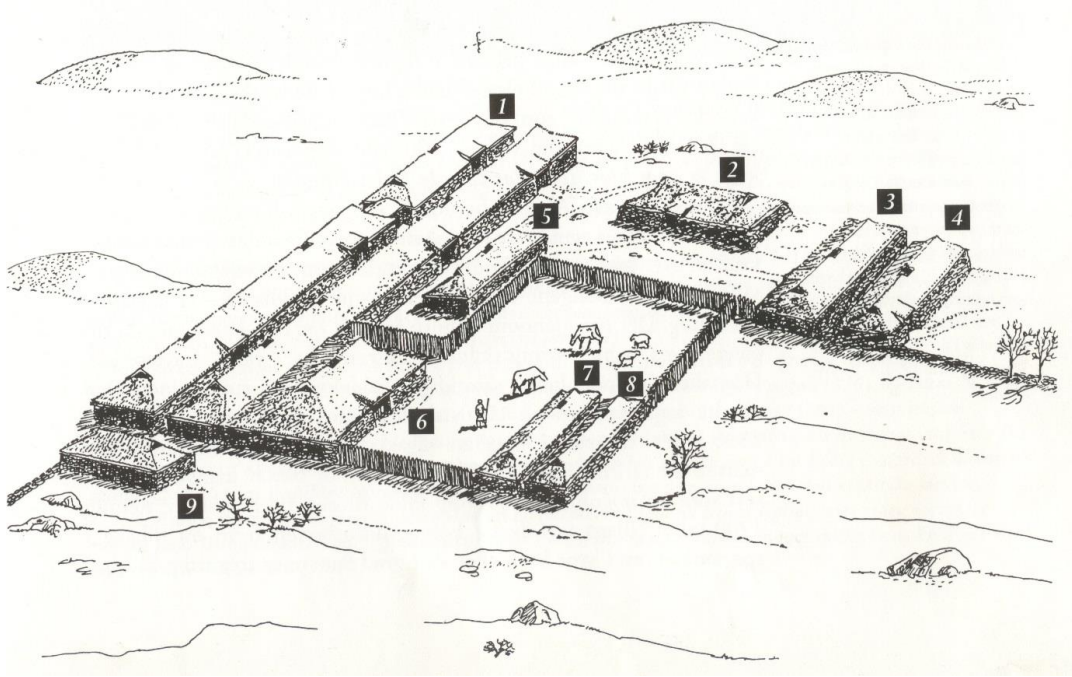
FERKINGSTAD

Ferkingstad (from “farþegn”, meaning “travelling lord”) lies on the furthest tip of the west side of Karmøy, facing the open sea. Here there are slipways, boat landing places and two boathouses large enough to accommodate 30m long boats. The sides are built of large blocks of stone laid on top of one another to make fine, vertical walls. Traces of a third boathouse have been found under the two others.

The level of the land has risen since the boathouses were in use and today, they stand at 1.5-2m over sea level. The water here is named Hop, which means “narrow, confined inlet”. Archaeological dating indicates that the boathouses were in use from the beginning of the Late Roman period and up until the Merovingian period. They lie in a sheltered harbour, tucked away behind outcrops of rock which protect them against the ravages of the sea. From here, ships could be sent out to catch tax-evaders who sailed past the outside of Karmøy in an attempt to avoid paying tax in the strait of Karmsundet.

THE KING’S FORTRESS

At Ferkingstad there were, in addition to burial mounds and standing stones, also the remains of large buildings which the local people call “The King’s Fortress”



THE KING'S FORTRESS AT FERKINGSTAD

Reconstruction after J. Neumann's sketch. The total area for the site was 3,300km².

1. banquet halls ca. 60 metres long, 2. storehouse, 3. sauna, 4. barn, 5 house for food making, 6 farmhouse, 7. farmhouse, 8. farmhouse, 9.farmhouse.

Findings of pottery have allowed us to date the remains of the building from the Migration Period. In 1837, Bishop Neumann was on Karmøy to register this historical monument and he describes the ruins as follows: *"This site exceeds in magnificence everything else that has been handed down to us from the power and glory of ancient heathen times, to the degree that they without doubt are unique and cannot be compared with any other monuments (...)."*

Bishop Neumann linked the remains of this building to King Ferking's fortress and the old, local legend about King Ferking and King Augvald. When J. Neumann visited Ferkingstad, he drew a basic sketch of the site at Hedlabakkane.

THE KING'S FORTRESS – A VILLAGE FROM THE MIGRATION PERIOD?

In 1923, Jan Petersen carried out a few trial excavations on the site of the King's Fortress. He found pottery dating back to the Migration Period. Petersen concluded that the site was the remains of a village from this era.

The remains of the building and all the standing stones at Ferkingstad were slowly but surely removed and used to build stone walls and fences. But on a fine summer's day, yellow stripes in the grass reveal that there are still remains lying in the ground.

FERKING – TITLE OR NAME?

We are not sure whether Ferking was the name of one special chieftain or the title of several chieftains who constructed the buildings and bathhouses at Ferkingstad.



One of the “Shield Maidens” at Stava field. (Photo Marit S. Vea)

SHIELD MAIDENS – VALKYRIES

According to the old legend from this area, Augvald had two daughters who were shield maidens and fought with their father in all the battles. Shield maidens were female warriors who could “ride the wind over land and sea”. They could also be goddesses of fate, related to the Norns. Odin sent shield maidens to the battlefield to choose which of the fallen should be taken to Valhalla. They were therefore called “Odin’s maidens”.

The legend relates that Augvald’s shield maidens were buried at Stavasletta. Here, there are still two standing stones which are called The Shield Maidens. These two stones were originally part of a star-shaped burial monument which resembles the burial site named “The Five Foolish Virgins” at Norheim by the strait Karmsund. At the burial site at Stavasletta, there are now only two stones left, but as late as in 1965, 5 standing stones were registered here. Two had fallen down and one had been incorporated into a stone fence.

THE BURIAL SITE AT STAVA

The “Shield Maidens” were part of an extensive burial site at Stava. When Bishop Neumann was registering cultural monuments on Karmøy in 1837, the site was still partly intact.

The present-day name of the sea on the left side of the sketch is Båsvika (meaning “boat inlet”). The burial site that the “Shield Maidens” belonged to is in the top right-hand corner. The sketch shows that the shapes of the graves on the site were unusually varied. Based on findings from the area, we believe that the age of the graves spans from the Migration Period and the Merovingian Period.

BOATHOUSE AT STAVA FIELD

Immediately northeast of the burial site lies the site of a partly demolished boathouse that has not attracted much attention. It lies about 50 metres up from the Båsvika inlet. Its walls are almost flush with the surrounding terrain.



Remains of the boathouse at Stava field. In 1979 the boathouse was measured to be 35m long, and 10m wide. (Photo Marit Synnøve Veå)

The long south wall is the best preserved; the other walls consist of earthworks with partially visible stones.

In 1979, the site of the building was 35m long from east to west and 10m wide from north to south. A road runs over it, and the building may have been even longer.

THE LEGEND OF KING FERKING AND KING AUGVALD

KING AUGVALD

King Augvald was the son of Rognvald, son of Rugalf. Rugalf was the son of Gard Agde who in turn was the son of Nor from Gotland. King Augvald originally had his throne at Roga in Jørsurshaid between Rogaland and Telemark. His kingdom was limited and only covered the area stretching from Jøsurfjord in Hjelmeland to Brunkeberg and Fyresdal.

As a result of successful battles at sea he managed to capture the land belonging to the *holmrygr* (those who lived at the islands of Rogaland) as he banished the former rulers there and set up his new base on the best possible location on the island of Kormt (Karmøy). This place, Avaldsnes, has since then borne the name of King Augvald.

King Augvald was a battle-hungry man who often raided foreign land, amassing great wealth and honour in his stride. He possessed a sacred cow which he worshipped and which he took with him wherever he travelled. Some say the cow was named Audhumla and that it wore a

golden collar around its neck. Augvald believed the cow was responsible for his victories and that her milk provided strength and vitality.

King Augvald had several daughters, two of which were female warriors, known as shield-maidens (valkyries), who fought together with their father in all of his battles.

Once, when Augvald was out hunting with his entourage, his Queen gave birth to a son by the name of Jøsur who was raised by Gunnvald Stordajarl.

KING FERKING

Ferking was the name of the sea king that reigned on the west side of Karmøy. Some believe that Ferking was not his original name but rather a nickname given to him as a result of his frequent raiding expeditions.

Ferking owned several large houses built of stone that were later collectively known as Kongsborgen (the Kings fortress). Close by was an enormous banquet hall, large enough to hold 500 men as they danced in honour of the golden calf, the deity of Ferking.

King Ferking built numerous large boathouses, but his son built the largest of these at Hop. Ferking ruled over many people and their need for corn was so great that he was forced to attack vessels loaded with corn on their way up the coast from Jæren in order to provide the necessary food. Ferking was a brave and courageous man who always emerged victorious from battles.

His numerous raiding expeditions brought with them many spoils. The most striking of these treasures were the royal pearls, which Ferking had brought with him from overseas and which were often worn by the Queen at celebrations in the banquet hall.

Before King Augvald and King Ferking became enemies, Augvald had attended Ferkingstad for a midwinter sacrificial banquet with a group of people, among them his two daughters. The two kings suddenly fell foul of each other resulting in Augvald gathering up his men and returning home. The two kings remained sworn enemies from that day forth.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN KING AUGVALD AND KING FERKING

The legend tells us nothing of whether Ferking governed all of Karmøy before Augvald's arrival. It is also unclear as to whether this midwinter sacrificial banquet took place before or after Augvald had settled at Augvaldsnes. What is clear, however, is that Ferking could not tolerate the presence of Augvald on Karmøy.

Ferking decided therefore to travel north with his army but came no further than Skeie, where King Augvald and his army met him. There were many fatalities on both sides, though none could claim to be the outright victor.

The final and greatest battle between these two kings took place at the site now known as Stavasletta (The field of Stava). Here there were two gorges, some distance from each other, on this ancient coastal road; a road that was surrounded by beach and quicksand. Ferking and his advisors believed that the area between these gorges was the best place to attack Augvald, so they hid themselves here, lying in wait for him to appear.

Augvald was, as usual, accompanied by his sacred cow. He also had his two warrior daughters, the shield-maidens, with him. Both Augvald and his sacred cow were slain between the gorges at the field of Stava..

THE DEATH OF THE SHILED-MAIDENS

Having witnessed the death of their father, the daughters gave off a terrifying scream before jumping in the river and drowning. These daughters were later buried at the field of Stava where memorial stones were raised over their graves. To this day these stones are known as 'Skjoldmøyane' – "The Shield-maidens".

Historical sources tell of how both King Augvald and his cow were taken back to Augvaldsnes for burial. In Odd Munk's manuscript from approx. 1190, we can read that Olav Tryggvason later excavated the burial mounds where Augvald and his cow were buried. He found human remains in the first mound and bovine remains in the other.

The legend oppose the claims of the historical sources, telling of the burial of Augvald and his cow at Ferkingstad. Augvald was believed to have been buried on the south side of the churchyard, built in the 12th century. The large memorial stone, which is now within the confines of the churchyard, previously lay outside and was raised in memory of Augvald. His cow was buried a stone's throw away on a hill known as "Kontekoien".(The Cow's mound)

A BURIED TREASURE

It is not known how King Ferking died. Legends claim that Ferking buried the golden calf in order to prevent its discovery. However, some clues to its location do exist: "The golden calf lies buried within an acute angle between the memorial stones called the "Skoldmøyane", Stavaklubben and Fløskjer."

There was believed to have been an old sketch outlining the area where the golden calf was buried. Sadly, this sketch was destroyed during a fire at the Falnes vicarage in 1842. Legend has it that the sketch would have been indecipherable for normal people. The legends go on to say that from the area where Ferking is buried it is possible to see Fløskjer to the north of Ur.

The legends give no clearer indication of the exact location, though it is common belief that he is laid to rest in the large burial mound at Kvilhaug. From here, the sea king would have had a clear view of the sea, for as far as the eye could reach. He could also see his home and the reefs to the north of Ur of which the legends tell.