

*Stefan Brink: Early Church Sites and Early Christian Cult Places*

We have today a new and rather complex picture of the usage and localization of pagan cult places in Scandinavia, this mainly thanks to recent archaeological excavations. Cult has taken place at many different localities, i.e. natural places, special cult buildings, but also obvious outdoor cult sites. The long-standing discussion of the so-called cult continuity between pagan and Christian time, which was qualified in the 1960s by Olaf Olsen, has again been turned around, due to new archaeological evidence and reinterpretations. One aspect, the cult-site continuity, can not be neglected today, but the new picture that has arisen regarding the sites of our earliest churches demands a re-examination of the evidence known under the label 'The Church in the Landscape'. We have to differentiate between different kinds of churches, already in the earliest phase of the Christianisation process. Many churches were obviously built on farms, hence private churches, and probably have nothing to do with a 'continuity' of cult sites. Churches built on royal farms and 'manors', however, becomes interesting, since many of these sites obviously were also central places in the pre-Christian time, many hence with halls (*salir*). The most interesting examples, which this paper will focus on, are churches, which have been erected on obvious or probable pre-Christian assembly and cult sites, used by a settlement district. These we mainly find in northern Sweden, some in Norway.