Editorial

We are very glad that so many of you readers enjoyed the new style of the Viking Heritage Newsletter. Many thanks for all your support! As you can see on the front cover, there is something new about this issue as well - the name has been changed to VIKING HERITAGE MAGAZINE to better suit this new expanded version.

Now we are in the midst of the summer season with many events like markets, plays, excavations etc. connected to the Viking Age theme. People with this common interest will come together in many different ways; see the list of some of these events, markets etc. in this issue. Especially highlighted are the Viking celebrations in North America. In the Viking Sail 2000 programme, about 15 replica Viking ships will gather on the coast of Labrador, among them the ship on the front cover, Krampmacken from Gotland.

The knowledge of navigation during the Viking Age was passed by word of mouth from generation to generation. In a few places this tradition is still being upheld. "The Viking's Heritage. Ships, navigation and migration from the North" article deals with this subject. And what about the disputed Vinland map? In this issue we are happy to present the results of the close research of the map by Kirsten A. Seaver.

However, as you know, the Vikings also went far to the east. Luxury goods from the Orient were a great enticement to the Nordic Vikings, as you can read in this issue among many other interesting subjects.

I hope you will enjoy this issue. And please, keep contacting us with any news, ideas and suggestions, big or small, on all issues connected with the Vikings and the Viking Age!

Everyone here at Viking Heritage wishes you all a good summer and pleasant reading!

Marita E Ekman
Editor
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Words of Wisdom

"Cattle die, kindred die
Every man is mortal:
But the good name never dies
Of one who has done well"

From “Hávamál”
(Words of “The High One”)

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About the front page:
The Viking ship replica “Krampmacken” sailing eastwards from Gotland to Miklagårds (Istanbul). Read more about the ship om page 5. Photo: Göran Sjöstrand.

http://viking.hgo.se
The Viking’s heritage

Ships, navigation and migration from the north

By: Olaf T. Engvig

When David Lewis wrote his books on Polynesian sailing and navigation they were based on a living tradition that was on the brink of extinction. At the same time, half way around the world, Olaf Engvig had started researching old Norse sailing and navigation. How could the Vikings find their way across huge bodies of open water and in a much hasher climate, basically without help from man made navigational aid? At a time when people living on other coasts rarely sailed far away from the shore, these two cultures of navigators regularly would set their course straight out into the ocean to small islands or masses of land on the other side.

More than 1100 years ago, the people living along the rugged coast and fjords of Norway with good supplies of fine shipbuilding material had developed a unique boat. This lapstreak boat was light, swift and had a shallow draft, but was still a very seaworthy open Viking boat. It had an optimal combination of sail and oars, making it superior to all vessels of its time.

Raised by the sea and with a culture that encouraged bravery, the Vikings feared none. They developed great skill in navigating the high seas and finding the way without instruments. These tribes were able to escape or challenge, overtake and capture. Even when cornered, they got away moving their lightly built boats over land. As a result, Vikings had high moral and made good warriors.

They came by sea. Leif Eiriksson was the first known man to bring European culture to the new world. He and his party stayed for the winter. His countrymen later developed a settlement in Newfoundland that lasted for 30 years. Oil on canvas by Norwegian painter Christian Krogh. Photo of a reproduction at the Norwegian Club in San Francisco. Original at the Norwegian Maritime Museum, Oslo.

Photo: Olaf T. Engvig.
The Viking raiders, adventurers or immigrants were a confident band, which would venture wide and far in search of trading objects or new places to settle. In doing so, they discovered land that was better than the challenging, barren and weather-beaten coasts where they came from. The Norse left marks in most of today’s Europe, in Russia, Constantinople and Baghdad, in the Mediterranean and south to the Canary Islands. They ventured far into the North Atlantic Ocean to Svalbard, settled Iceland and Greenland, and established colonies in the Americas.

Based on the fine seaworthy vessels they used, their social and adventurous spirit and the navigational skills they possessed, it is reasonable to assume that they sailed beyond L’Anse aux Meadows to the shores and mighty rivers of the American continent itself, as well as the Caribbean Islands. These ventures would only be a mirror of what they did on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Unexplainable recordings of names and maps of land and islands to the west, made before Columbus, only make sense if they are related to lost information from Norse navigators that describe the land where they had been. Columbus himself had knowledge that obsessed him with going to a land west of the ocean. It would jeopardize his brave voyages and his claims to indicate that he was copying others. Columbus was a leader in need of success, but as leaders before and after him, he was inspired by earlier accomplishments.

The coast of “Vinland de Goda” and islands far to the southwest was places where Norsemen would go. But since these places were well inhabited, the men from the North did like they did everywhere else. They simply left the area, were killed, or made peace and blended into the existing population. The most common scenario was probably integration.

“The Nice Viking”, a skillful and hard worker who immigrated to York, Ireland, Normandy, Iceland, Greenland, and other places acted well. Skrelinger, later named Native Americans, would have accepted a well-behaved Viking. The Norsemen worked iron, and had artifacts and “tricks of the trade” that must have impressed the native inhabitants of the land. Compared to the existing population, the immigrants were few, and traces of their achievements are forgotten. Records are often lost, if not, they still need to be understood.

It is challenging to prove that some Norsemen traveled wide and far in America. One day laboratory research in micro-biological and gene technology, along with archaeological developments, will give us new material that might shed light on old maps and puzzling artifacts and supply missing pieces of a lost history. This might prove that some people from the North in their swift and able boats settled on the American continent hundreds of years before Columbus.

Even the Vikings who lived a thousand years ago found life to be easy on the new continent to the west. Leif Eiriksson was called ”Leif the Lucky” because of the fine land he discovered. He gave America its first name, Vineland the Good. Later generations of immigrants were drawn to this newly discovered continent. Many of them did well in America and we know their story. Indeed, they proved the old Vikings to be right. Even if they did not go there in Viking ships, many emigrants from the North went there on a one-way ticket on ships chartered for the sole purpose. Emigrants from other parts of Europe used regular packet-or passenger ships.

The Viking heritage is still alive. At an early age my father, the old master mariner, taught me how to navigate and tell time by observing the movement of the sun. Later, as a scholar, I talked to old fishermen and learned that they hardly ever used maps, or owned a watch or a compass, but often sailed on the Atlantic Ocean outside Norway without sight of land.

When I decided to do my first voyage from Norway around the North Sea to York, I wanted to do it the old way. Viking Chief Ottar describes his voyage to England a thousand years ago. Why not see if his old description would work today? We set out in an open longboat, and kept land to port and observed the obstacles Ottar mentions. I later made several sailing missions, using only basic navigational skills and my knowledge of the sea and my boat to find the way.
It was easy. Even a voyage straight out into the Atlantic to try to sail to the islands to the west was done in the same manner. Nothing on board could aid me, but a following long boat had the means of recording and recorded my way of navigating for later interpretation. I proved to be right on my positions and where I was sailing at all times during several days of an extremely exhausting journey. We did it "The Viking Way", and we experienced much of the same hardship the Vikings must have experienced a thousand years ago.

"The Viking Way" didn’t include a replica Viking ships with a 1900-century sail and rig. We used a traditional open longboat from Åfjord, built like a Viking longboat with its original sail and rig. This longboat is a true descendant of the Viking longboats. It has 10 oars and a square sail. Built back in 1863, it was constructed before they excavated the first relatively complete Viking ship and the world finally obtained knowledge of what these ships really looked like.

We based our sailing and navigation on a living tradition as it was handed to me when I was young. We did our voyages based on knowledge that, like for the boat we used, had been handed down over a period of 1200 years. In many ways, my experiences equals those recorded by David Lewis. But our environment was very different from the South Sea, and their mariners covered greater distances than the Vikings did. But like them, we found land based on the information we had before we set sail. In this respect we did the same as Leif Eiriksson and many other unknown Vikings before and after.

**About the author:**
Olaf T. Engvig grew up in Rissa, Norway and was educated in square sailing by Jacob Kvithyll, better known as "The Last of the Vikings". Engvig is also a mariner, and holds a graduate degree in maritime history. He is an established author and an experienced square sailer.

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**KRAMPMPMACKEN**

- a modern Viking ship reconstruction

**Text by Torgny Andersson.**

Revised and translated by Olle Hoffman, Viking Heritage

Krampmacken will be one of the ships participating in this summer's tremendous event, Viking Sail 2000 in Newfoundland. The ship and crew will be trimmed during the spring in preparation for sailing off the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. Krampmacken has made several longer and shorter journeys since 1980. Sailing in Newfoundland and Labrador will definitely be one of the most memorable.

Krampmacken is a reconstruction of a boat from the late Viking Age. Remains of this boat were found in Tingstäde Lake in Gotland in the 1930's. Under the guidance of Erik Nylén, head of RAGU (The Central Board of Antiquities' Investigations on Gotland), a new boat was built during 1979-80 with the remains from Tingstäde as a model. The boat was clinker-built, about 8 metres long and 2 metres wide. It has a yacht stern, is fitted with 6 oars, a side rudder and designed for a crew of 10 men. Using the figures on the picture stones from Gotland as models, a plaited square sail was made, 6 metres wide and 2.6 metres high. All the material for the boat and the rigging is similar to the material used by the Vikings when building their boats around 1000 AD.

The boat was designed for rowing, towing and sailing on the rivers to the east and the south of the Baltic Sea. It was also intended to be pulled on land between the river systems in Europe. That was why it was smaller than the boats from western Sweden, Norway and Denmark which were constructed for vast open waters.

The majority of the Viking-age or early Medieval boats found around the Baltic Sea are also shorter than 15 metres. Boats longer than 12 metres are very difficult to pull for longer distances on land. For longer towing distances, a primitive type of carriage construction that could be dismounted and stowed under the floor of the boat was designed. Our boat is not particularly like the fishing boats from Gotland (two- and three-man crafts). It has a more marked keel (which provides better sailing qualities) and hasn't as much midship bulge.

The boat's biggest critic, the artist Erik Olsson, expressed his criticism in the following way: "It doesn't rest upon the water - it lies in the water like a "krampmack" (Gotlandic expression for common prawn)". At the launching 1980 in Kovik, Erik Nylén therefore gave it the name KRAMPMPMACKEN.

**Prelude**

During the summer season of 1981 the crew chosen by Erik Nylén was exposed to hard tests both rowing and under sail. We rowed and sailed around Gotland and pulled the boat across the isthmus of Näs. By way of Stora Karlsö and Grankullavik on Öland the voyage went on to Småland. On the journey back we sailed directly to Kovik on Gotland. During 1982 we prepared ourselves even more with demanding sailing tests, capsizing tests, a sailing-match against the KA3 regiment and an instructive round-trip voyage to Gotska Sandön.

**To Miklagård**

After the Swedish king, Carl XVI Gustaf had shaken the crew members' hands and wished them good luck during the journey, we set out on June 9 1983 from the harbour in Vändburg on south-eastern Gotland. We went across the Baltic Sea to Gdansk in Poland and the mouth of the Wisła river. After a very adventurous journey on the Polish

To be continued on page 13
By Kirsten A. Seaver

With a flawless publicity campaign in October of 1965, Yale University Library and Yale University Press announced the library’s acquisition of the so-called Vinland Map and the publication of a book entitled The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation. The publicity blitz was repeated thirty years later for a second edition, the campaign and re-publication both spearheaded by Wilcomb E. Washburn. Five essays added to the original volume were said to constitute further proof of the map’s authenticity, but one looks in vain for either hard evidence or an impartial approach.

The primary purpose of the 1965 book, authored by the reputable British and American scholars R.A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston, and George D. Painter, was to show that the map dates from around 1440 and is an authentic cartographical representation of Norse discovery in North America, based on knowledge passed down over several centuries. In 1965, the potential for excitement was considerable, because Helge and Anne Stine Ingstad discovered their version of the “Tartar Relation” reporting on a papal mission to the Mongols in 1245-47, with “Tartar Relation” reporting on a papal mission to the Mongols in 1245-47, with which the map had been bound at the time of acquisition. Later research has confirmed that this text is a genuine mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, just like the fragments of Vincent of Beauvais’ Speculum Historiale which, still in their mid-fifteenth-century binding, were found to have been a part of the same volume as Yale’s "Tartar Relation."

The book’s secondary purpose, somewhat more convincingly met than the primary one, was to comment on a formerly unknown version of the "Tartar Relation" reporting on a papal mission to the Mongols in 1245-47, with which the map had been bound at the time of acquisition. Later research has confirmed that this text is a genuine mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, just like the fragments of Vincent of Beauvais’ Speculum Historiale which, still in their mid-fifteenth-century binding, were found to have been a part of the same volume as Yale’s "Tartar Relation."

From the moment the map and the book were made public, scholars have questioned whether the Vinland Map’s association with the two textual manuscripts suffices to authenticate the map, given its lack of provenance, the dubious nature of the map’s ink, and the many other troubling aspects of this antiquarian dealer Laurence Witten (originally paid $3,500) has not been expertly assessed. The third troubling circumstance is the lack of appropriate expertise among the authors charged with analyzing a manuscript map supposedly connected with Norse exploration. Although both the Vinland Map and the texts with which it is physically associated are manuscript works, neither the three authors of the 1965 edition nor those writing the additional essays for the 1995 version had curatorial expertise with manuscript maps and texts. Furthermore, they had only a superficial (and outdated) knowledge of Norse history and culture; they lacked the linguistic skills to access Nordic primary and secondary literature; and the imposition of secrecy precluded consultation with more knowledgeable scholars. The result is that their work and the map together have provided a skewed picture of medieval Norse maritime experience.

Ironically, the map’s fake nature is most obvious in the representation of North America which gave the map its name. In the extreme northwest, we find a large island with two deep inlets, accompanied by a large island with two deep inlets, accompanied by two legends. The shorter one names the island Vinlanda Insula and states that Bjarni (byarnus) and Leif Eiríksson (leiphus erissonius) discovered it together. This contradicts the information in the "Saga of the Greenlanders" and the "Saga of Eirík the Red," which describe the voyages of Bjarni Herjólfsen and Leif Eiríkssón as separate ventures.

The first time Leif and Bjarni went sailing together was in 1765, when David Crantz, a German Moravian brother, published his two-volume Historie von Grönland. Long the only work on re-colonized Greenland available to non-Scandinavian readers, it was widely read by people who did not realize that Crantz’s summary of the Norse period in Greenland was wrong. When Crantz wrote that Leif Eiríksson “fitted out a ship with 35 men, and went to sea with Bjarni,” he confidently cited works by the French historian Paul Mallet and the Norwegian Erik Pontoppidan, both of whom were said to have transcribed their information from Arnrígr Jonsson’s [sic] and Torfæus and confirmed it with Adam of Bremen’s work. Alas, Crantz had simply misread Mallet’s terse and encyclopedic French.
The fortunate part of his mistake is that its reuse in the Vinland Map is conclusive evidence that the map could not possibly have been made prior to 1765, because nowhere did the other authors to whom he referred say that Leif and Bjarni were shipmates. Instead, the two men undertook separate voyages for entirely different purposes, as the sagas make clear.

Adam of Bremen, whose *Gesta Hammaborgensis* (circa 1070) contains the earliest written reference to Vinland, mentioned neither Leif nor Bjarni in connection with the “island of Vinland” whose natural attractions he described. It is nevertheless to Adam’s view of Norse Atlantic ventures that we owe much of what we see in the Vinland Map. He wrote that Greenland as well was an island, and as such it is depicted on the map, to the consternation of anyone aware that until early in the twentieth century, European cartographers did not know whether Greenland was an island, much less how it was shaped. Adam’s text is also reflected in the longer Vinland legend on the map (similarly attributing joint discovery to Bjarni and Leif), which describes this “new land” as “extremely fertile and even having vines.”

The map was clearly made by someone familiar with the work of Adam of Bremen as well as of David Crantz, and with an intimate knowledge of early cartography and of the many riddles associated with its study. It is equally clear that the map’s creator wished to indicate the wide missionary reach of the medieval Roman Church, and to couple it with the saga knowledge of the Norse discovery of America and the enduring mystery of Vinland’s location. The patchwork information in the longer Vinland legend also uses the *Icelandic Annals* entries about the Greenland bishop Eirik Gnúpsson who went in search of Vinland circa 1121.

Nowhere, however, does the map reflect Norse familiarity with the Norwegian coast as it runs north and east to the White Sea, nor does it show the Faeroes or the Scottish Islands as Norse sailors would have experienced them. Iceland is named “Isolanda hibernica” — the Irish Island. Worse yet is the assumption that to the Norse, Vinland had been a well-defined location instead of a general region named for a salient feature, in accordance with Norse custom. The very fact that the map purports to show the exact location and actual outlines of Vinland indicates that the map is a fake demonstrating the nineteenth-century passion for precise labeling.

While attempting to indicate unique Norse information, the map’s creator made so many linguistic and cultural mistakes (*erissonius* for Eiriksson being one) that, coupled with the indications that the accompanying textual manuscripts originated somewhere in the Upper Rhine region, we may safely assume that the map was the work of someone on the Continent -- someone steeped in the ideas founded on the widespread nineteenth-century interest in the Norse in Iceland and Greenland that led to the first systematic excavations of Norse ruins in Greenland.

Just as revealing as the textual
connection to Crantz’s work is the depiction of the New World as an island. Because modern archaeological reconstructions of Greenland Norse voyages are very recent, the mapmaker failed to represent the Davis Strait region as the Greenland Norse knew it, either in the early eleventh century or after the four centuries of continuous exploitation of North American resources. The Norse would have experienced the Greenland west coast and the American east coast in essentially the same way as early Renaissance voyagers did -- as an almost continuous, U-shaped coastline blocked off to the north.

Among the handful of continental scholars whose published works demonstrate both the knowledge and the anomalies present in the Vinland Map, only one person seems to fill the bill, namely the German-Austrian cartographic historian Father Josef Fischer, S.J. (1858-1944). An expert on fifteenth-century world maps, Father Fischer was convinced that the Norse had left behind a cartographic record of their North American exploration, which, like the rest of his contemporaries, he considered a daring venture of short duration. Unable to read the Scandinavian languages, he depended on correspondence with Gustav Storm, Finnur Jónsson, and Aksel Anton Bjørnbo while writing his 1902 treatise on the Norse discovery of America -- a treatise in which David Crantz’s Historie appears in the bibliography, and in which Adam of Bremen is lauded.

Bjørnbo was well aware that the medieval Norse lacked a cartographic tradition. However, he believed that the early fifteenth-century Danish cartographer Claudius Clausus had personally visited Norse Greenland, and he died before Fischer learned that he had recently changed his mind. Meanwhile, Fischer commented to Bjørnbo on the numerous Irish monks living on Iceland when the Norse arrived there. Hence, presumably, the name Isolanda hibernica on the map. In a number of other ways, Fischer’s letters tie in with many key aspects of the Vinland Map and show similarities with the writing on the map.

His motives for making the map, shortly after the Nazis had seized power in Germany, were probably as complicated as the map itself. He was an old man by then and had reason to think he would not live much longer, in which case anti-Catholic, Norse-besotted Nazi “culture bearers” would have had to wrestle with a map showing the wide reach of Roman missionaries which could not be dismissed out of hand because of the Norse connection. But while creating this tease, this decent old scholar would also have had the satisfaction of drawing the world map he believed had once existed, in which Vinland was Nova Scotia and Cape Breton combined.

**Additional reading**


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**About the author:**

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**By Malin Lindquist**

A small insignificant whetstone from Timans, in the parish of Roma on Gotland, dating from the end of the 11th century is perhaps the best testimony of the extensive contacts the people of Gotland had with the surrounding world. In the carved runes can be read: *Ormika – Ulfair- Greker – Jerusalem – Island – Särkland* meaning: Ormika and Ulfair have visited Greeks, Jerusalem, Iceland and Särland; an example of two Gotlanders wishing to immortalize their far-off journeys. Särkland was the Norsemen’s name for the Arab Caliphate while the Byzantine empire, was called

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Rock crystal set in silver from Gustavs, in the parish of Fröjel. Dated to late Viking Age. The crystal with its diameter of 4.8 cm is the largest of its kind.

Photo: Raymond Hejdström, Gotlands Fornsal

Greece. Both were powerful states during our Viking period.

**The enticement of the Orient**

Luxury goods from the Orient such as silk, pearls and spices, but above all silver, were a great enticement to the Nordic Vikings who could offer swords, wax, slaves and furs in exchange. To reach these coveted products they sailed on Russian rivers, in the beginning on the Volga river, later on the Dnepr, through Gårdarike, the Norsemen’s name for Russia. This 9th and 10th century Oriental trade along the rivers of eastern Europe, which went via Gotland was probably destined for western Europe.

At the bend of Volga lay Bulgar, the capital of the Volga-Bulgarians’ country and one of the very big marketplaces, just where the river Kama meets the Volga.
Eastwards – about the background to some Viking Age items in Gotlands Fornsal, the Historical Museum of Gotland

Here the trade-routes from north to south met with those from east to west. Thanks to Arab storytellers like Ibn Fadlan we know that the Norsemen traded with swords and furs, took slaves who they sold and buried their dead in mounds together with food and drinking vessels. This Ibn Fadlan, who visited Bulgar in the year 922, was sent out by the Caliph of Bagdad to spread the faith of the Koran and facilitate conversion to Islam.

There he met the Norsemen, who he and his colleagues called rus. His description of their exterior is flattering: I never saw more stately men, they are like palm trees, ruddy-cheeked and with red hair. He mentions their clothing: They wear neither jackets nor caftans, the man wears a dress that covers one side of the body and leaves one hand free. This is a description of a cloak such as one can see on the Gotlandic picture-stones. His main attitude is however quite negative: They are like lost donkeys. Moreover this Arab ambassador sees rus as dirty, even filthy, sexually licentious and ungodly and who dedicate themselves to beer-drinking and carousing day and night. The meeting between an educated Muslim and heathen Norsemen must have been frustrating – for both of them.

Towards Miklagård

“Painted in striking colours,
This stone was erected by Hegbjörn

Map over Viking-age Europe and the routes of the Vikings eastwards and westwards.
Map: Gotlands Fornsal, revised by Therese Lindström.

And his brothers Rodvisl, Oystain and Emund
Who have stones erected after Ravn,
South of Ruftain.
They came far into Aifur
Vivil commissioned it”

Despite its small size the runic stone from Pilgårds, in the parish of Boge provides one of the most suggestive reminders from the Viking period. Shortly and vigorously the runes tell us about five brothers who in the end of the 10th century left for a journey eastwards. One brother, Ravn, fell into the water and drowned. The stone tells not only about a tragic event, it is also a proof of how the trading routes changed.

Towards the end of the 10th century the Caliphate started to fall apart and the silver mines to run short. The Byzantine empire became a more and more important trading partner and the Volga river more and more insecure. The Dnepr river was now the most important trading route between north and south. Now towns like Kiev, Smolensk and Gnezdovo in Gårdarike became important places on the way to Miklagårds, the capital of Byzans and the center of Christianity. Norsemen entered the service of the Byzantine emperor – he even had Varjagi-guards of his own. Even today runes in the Hagia Sophia – the mosque (then a Christian church) are a reminder of these Norsemen’s visit. On a marble balustrade Halvdan has carved his name in runes.
**Furs and slaves**

Thanks to these long journeys Scandinavia became a participant in a large trading-system stretching far away into Asia. The contacts were, as trade often is, mostly peaceful. The dream of a good deal was mutual. The price was paid in weighed silver, either coins or raw material. It was weighed on a small pair of scales that the merchant always carried with him. Certainly there was a great deal of suspicion – and rightly so. Often there are little marks in the silver, made to check the content. If it were too yellow it meant that the silver was mixed with copper.

**Brought home luxury**

A string of marketplaces and harbours along the Gotlandic coast indicate that the Gotlanders themselves took part in the eastward trade. The luxury of the Orient made a great impression – especially the splendid clothing. They returned home full of impressions but also with a souvenir or two. On the picture-stone from Broa, in the parish of Halla, dating from 700–800 AD the rider sits on his horse dressed in a pair of smart puffed trousers of Oriental cut. The women wore necklaces of multicoloured glass beads, semiprecious stones such as rock crystal and carnelian. The men preferred belts with heart-shaped oriental bronze-garnets or with the thongs decorated with bronze spirals in Russian manner.

On a picture-stone from Ihre, in the parish of Hellvi, there is a peculiar scene: two men in striped and checked clothing are holding or supporting something that looks like a coffin. In the middle a figure seems to “rise”. The scene is more or less impossible to interpret but visitors to Jerusalem and Constantinople had no doubt heard amazing stories about a man called Jesus. Could this be a Viking’s idea of the resurrection of Christ? Why not.

One category of finds that are more or less unique for Gotland are the about thirty round or oval rock crystal lenses that have been found in Gotlandic Viking-age silver-hoards. Normally they have a flat underside and a dome-shaped upper side with silver clasps. Without a doubt they come from the Orient. Persian stone-cutters, with the town of Basra as their production center, were famous for their rock crystal. Some of these lenses also show an excellent magnification effect and can have been used as magnifying glass at the exquisite goldsmith shops from the Viking period that have been found on Gotland.

**Silver in the furrow**

The silver that was not converted directly after homecoming was saved and hidden on the farm or in the immediate neighbourhood. These, more than a 1000-year-old, hidden treasures are mostly found during cultivation. A silver spiral stuck on a farmer’s harrow, some coins glimpsed during a little deeper ploughing…. Sometimes they are found in a more unexpected way; while building a poultry house or constructing a duck pond.

Every year there is a silver hoard found on Gotland. Today we know of close to 800 such hoards. Arabic coins dominate in hoards from before 970 AD, later on they consist of English and German coins. Notes from the beginning of the 19th century tell about hoards found in the Gotlandic soil as early as the 17th century. Tradition tells us about a dog who while scratching in the ground “found” Arabic coins which his master had melted down and made into a silver goblet.

A very good example of a typical silver-hoard from the Viking period is the one from Hägvalds, in the parish of Gerum. It contains a representative selection of coins minted in England, Germany, Bohemia, and the Byzantine kingdom together with silver pieces and bits of jewellery. It was all found in a pot with a flat stone as cover.

Another famous treasure is known as “Stavars treasure” which contained nearly 1,500 Arabian coins minted in Samarkand, Tashkent and Bagdad, some of them during the reign of Caliph harun – al Rashid, famous from the anthology of tales: One Thousand and one Nights.

Hiding a fortune is not peculiar in itself – the earth serves as a safe. Why they are still there – that is the question.

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**About the author:**
Malin Lindquist is senior curator and responsible for the exhibitions at Gotlands Fornsalk. Educated in the University of Uppsala, Sweden, she has worked many years as an archaeologist, mainly on Gotland.

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INTRODUCTION
The discovery of two Viking silver hoards on the former island of Wieringen in 1996 and 1999, shows a new aspect of the relations between the local Frisians and the Scandinavians during Carolingian times. The two relatively substantial amounts of jewellery, coins and unminted silver within a few hundred yards of each other and the proximate dates indicate a probable temporary settlement of Norsemen. Additional scattered finds both in the vicinity and in the region (the northwest coastal area) emphasise the strategic and economic importance of the pagus Wirense or Wiron and its position in the Viking Age.

The Weg van de Vikingen Foundation was founded on 23 November 1998 with the support of the Municipality of Wieringen. Both the Foundation and local government have embraced the region’s unique cultural heritage, with the strong support of the local inhabitants.

The main objectives of the Foundation are regarding the conservation of the authentic landscape, the cultural and natural heritage, the support of initiatives related to science and education in the 1st millennium A.D. and the improvement in accessibility to the period for the wider public. The policy and products of the foundation are included in the planning scheme for 2000 - 2004 entitled “The First Millennium in the Third”.

Initial results show a great appreciation by the local and regional inhabitants, who strongly support the initiatives. The local Museum Huis van de Aarde has a small but impressive exhibition on the era with an authentic reconstruction of local dwellings made from sod, twigs, clay and driftwood and animated with living history. A portable exhibition, internet site and informative booklet will be available from July 2000.

Funds are provided by the Municipality, the Regional Development Scheme, the Province of North Holland and some private companies. Weg van de Vikingen has described the importance of the international Viking theme in a feasibility study which resulted in a marketing strategy with a focus on the development of small businesses with locally grown products, new attractive tourism packages, bed and breakfast facilities and a heritage centre, Viking World.

Vikings in Frisia during Carolingian times
For two centuries (c. 810 - 1010), the coastal areas of Frisia were regularly attacked by raiders from Denmark. The classic view of Vikings plundering and burning the most important emporium of the Frisians, Dorestad, and elsewhere is probably greatly exaggerated. This image of the Vikings in relation to other Germanic peoples and society during the Early Middle Ages ignores their astonishing achievements in trade, shipbuilding, seafaring skills and craftsmanship.

The Frisians were together with the Franks the most powerful people on the Continent. After the defeat of the Frisian king Redbad in 719 AD, the kingdom became part of the Frankish empire. The Frisians retained their independence, however, and trade thrrove as never before because of the suggested protection of the Frankish government and the church of Saint Martin of Utrecht, combined with their unique position near two main trade routes. Due to internal problems within the divided Carolingian empire and the ever increasing threat of the Norse raiders on the coastal frontiers, the emperor, Lothar I, gave Dorestad and other parts of the Frisian territory in successive grants to the Danish Viking warlords Roric and Godfred, on condition that they organise the defence and peace at the frontiers in the name of Frankish rule. This, as history reveals, never happened.

In Pagi wirense, Texla and Medemelacha
The north-western coastal area was an important area from Merovingian times onwards (and although situated outside...
the *limes*, in Roman times too). It was close to the main trade routes Denmark-Vlie-Almere-Dorestad and Denmark – North Sea to the Continent and probably the British Isles. Inaccessible over land, the accessibility by sea and rivers probably made the area of both strategic and economic importance, as well as a convenient place to stay during the voyages.

The *pagi* of Texla (now the Waddenzee island of Texel), Wiron (Wieringen) and Medemelacha (the emporium of Medemblik – the only international trading place which is mentioned in old documents and has been excavated and proven to be such) were comparatively well populated (a rough indication: Wieringen about 500 inhabitants in the 9th century A.D.).

The *pagus* of Wiron probably had an important status. In the inventory list of the church of Saint Martin of Utrecht many royal and clerical demesnes are mentioned in Alvitlo, Strude, and Vatrop, localities which are still in existence. In the relatively small *pagus* four churches were erected and dedicated to Willibrord, Saint Michael, Saint Hippolytus and Saint Nicholas. All churches can be dated in Romanesque times (late 11th – early 12th C.), with at least three of them having predecessors in the 9th or 10th century, and are contemporary with the Viking visits.

The silver hoards
Both silver hoards were discovered in hilly landscape, which was formed during the Pleistocene, and consists mainly of boulder clay with later Holocene deposits, in the hamlet of Westerklief, in an old reclaimed area. There exists a saga concerning a possible Viking Hall here.

The first hoard (Westerklief I) buried in a Badorf pot, consists of 1,662 grams of silver and consists of:
- Six pennannular arm rings with similar decoration
- Neck ring c.o. three round rods twisted around each other
- Three silver coin-ornaments: two Sassanian drachmes of Xusro II (590-628) set in a multiple filigree ring; one with a dirhem of Abu al Abbas Safah (750-754)
- Sixteen silver ingots

The hoard is in the possession of the state Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands.

The second hoard, Westerklief II, consists of c. 320 grams of silver, including 165 grams of hacksilver and ingots, 20 complete and partial Carolingian coins and 62 Arabic coins. The hoard is currently being studied; more specific information will be included in one of the forthcoming issues of this newsletter.

The hoard will be on exhibit in the Museum Huis van de Aarde te Den Oever, from 3 June 2000 onwards.

The scattered contemporary finds include more dirhems found in all parts of the former island, fragmentary filigree jewellery, a gold coiled finger ring and Frankish enamelled disc brooches. Other finds in a wider region include Anglo-Saxon pennies, a superb silver neck ring, a Moorish dirhem struck at Cordoba in Spain and some Norse coins.

Latest news
The council of the Municipality of Wieringen decided on 27 April 2000 to ban all metal-detecting in the Westerklief area. A very limited submission will be granted to bonafide and organised detectorists only, and
rivers, Wisla and Bug, we came to a small Polish town, Drohiczyn, situated about 50 kilometres from the Russian border. In this town the boat was pulled up on land since the Russians refused us permission to continue into their country. This first stage had taken us 35 days. We had accomplished about 600 kilometres of which 260 kilometres had been rowing and about 250 kilometres sailing. Over the remaining distance Krampmacken had been towed both on land and water. We had sailed through the "Devil’s cave" and we had pulled the boat across a dam 22 meters high. We had managed to reach our goal for this stage.

In 1984 we tried, unsuccessfully, at a high diplomatic level to receive permission from the Russians to continue our journey.

In May 1985 we started the second stage and went down the Bug river to the Wisla. We journeyed south on this river fighting a strong counter-current. After some time we left the Wisla and went up the San river. A few days later we lifted the boat and pulled it on its trailer towards the Dukla Pass which we passed on the 47th day. From this point it was "downhill" for us. After about 300 kilometres of pulling on land we put Krampmacken in the Ondava river close to the Czechoslovakia-Hungary border. The journey continued on the Tisza and Dunav rivers (the Danube). We travelled through Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria. The final 140 kilometres to the Black Sea, Krampmacken was pulled on land. After a great deal of trouble with the Bulgarian authorities and some problems when crossing the Iron curtain (Bulgaria/Turkey) we reached our goal, the Vikings’ Miklagård, today’s Istanbul on day 131 of the second stage. During this stage we had rowed 2726, sailed 560 and pulled the boat 658 kilometres.

"Krampmackarna"
The boat was left in Istanbul and the crew returned home by air. In 1987 Krampmacken was brought back to Gotland in a Hercules aircraft. The KRAMPACKARNA society was formed in the end of the 1980’s. One of the society’s goals is to arrange another "Viking journey" on the Russian rivers. The society is an INTEREST SOCIETY OPEN TO EVERYONE.

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http://gotland.luma.com/krampm.html

Further reading:
I Österled - Uppströms genom Polen, Erik Nylén, Uddevalla 1983
ISBN 91-7192-590-2
Vikingaskropp mot Miklagård, Erik Nylén, Borås 1987
ISBN 91-7798-119-7
Österviking. Göran Sjöstrand, Arboga 1988
ISBN-91-85516-392

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Heritage News

Children – did they exist? – an exhibition for children about children at the Historical Museum of Gotland (Gotlands Fornsal)

BY MALIN LINDQUIST

The exhibition uses finds from prehistoric graves to explain what archaeology is. Children from stone age to Viking age will be represented by a boy from the stone-age dwelling at Eksta and a five year-old girl from Vallstena. A series of pictures shows how a culture layer grows, and reconstructed Viking-age dresses show how children of that time were dressed. In older times children were considered as "small grown-ups", and it was only towards the end of the 19th century that they were allowed to be – just children. That is why this period is also represented.

The exhibition opens on Friday, June 2 and runs until August 2001. It will accompanied by workshops and school programs.

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Continued from page 5

regulation within spatial planning is scheduled for later this year.
Even as this article is being written, new scattered finds of dirhems, this time from a locality near the church of Saint Nicholas on Wieringen, are being reported.

More specific news about the second Viking silver hoard, the projects and old news from Viking Age Holland will be reported.

Extensive information on and best reference about Vikings on Wieringen: Besteman, J.C. "Viking Silver on Wieringen", (1999) of which copies are available from the following address:

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LANGUAGE CHECKED BY IAN S. GIBSON
Norse religion – a complicated one

BY ANNA MALMBORG

In the Norse religion there are a number of Gods and Goddesses with more or less elaborate functions in myth and ritual. There are two kinds of gods, Asir and Vanir, according to the Icelandic writers. Some of them are more known to us today than others, and for a few we have not much more information than a name. The information you have to work with as a religion historian is of course the Icelandic sagas and skaldic and Eddic poems, but also archaeological material, place names and historical sources such as rune stones and Greek and Roman writers as well as the later medieval writers.

Dumézil’s thesis

Many religion historians try to structure the pantheon into three functions, after a model created by Georges Dumézil some 50 years ago. He argued that all Indo-European peoples had a three-fold pantheon: priest-magician, warrior and fertility gods. The Norse gods for these functions would then be Odin, Thor and the Vanir, that is Frey and Freya. I do not like this model for several reasons, the main reason being the fact that these gods can be very much alike. Frey is sometimes described as a warrior, Odin learned some of his magic skills from Freya and Thor was worshipped by farmers as the god who gave rain.

Some scholars are still following the dumézilian model and argue that the goddess Freya in her different apparitions bears all three functions and that she is thereby a suitable partner for all the male gods. This is something that interests me a lot, why are all the goddesses said to be one, but the gods are at least three? Can it be that the male gods are one as well? This is of course a theoretic question as well as a structural thesis, not the reality as it was perceived by the Vikings and their predecessors back then.

Nerthus/Njord

In the many different sources available for understanding the Norse religion there are several gods and goddesses and they are described in many ways, doubtless a result of regional variations in ritual as well as myth. One of the most mysterious gods is Njord, the father of Frey and Freya in the Icelandic poetry and sagas. In the Roman historian Tacitus’ description of the Germans from AD 98, Njord is described as a goddess, Nerthus or Terra Mater, that is Mother Earth. How can a goddess become a god 800 years later? There are a number of theories. Maybe it was a hermaphroditic deity from the beginning, or maybe they were two, a god and a goddess, just like Frey and Freya. The theory that I choose to believe in is one that says that Tacitus probably misinterpreted his informant, who was talking about a cult involving a god and a goddess, as is usual in fertility cults. The goddess’ real name should then have been Erthu, equivalent to the later Jord, and the god’s, Nerthus, equivalent to Njord. These two names sounds similar and could easily have been mixed up. That then explains why Njord is a male god in later sources, he did not go through some kind of sex-change after all.

All the same, linguists have taken Tacitus’ information seriously and say that Njord in Swedish place-names must be feminine, since these place names are found near places whose names tell us that male gods, such as Thor and Ull, were worshipped here. The god and the goddess would then have been worshipped as a cult pair.

Cult place names

Place names can tell us much about the gods and their cult. They give information about where and when the gods were worshipped. They also give clues to with which other deity a god is worshipped as a cult pair, but they say nothing about who worshipped those gods. Thor is a god often mentioned in place names, mostly in connection with female deities as the disir and Freya. His cult place is often the Hof, today interpreted as a building for cultic feasts. Frey is worshipped in an Aker, the field, as well as Frigg and Freya. Some scholars argue that the fertility cult is an older strain and that it often was conducted in fields and not in cult buildings. The cult in Hof and Sal should then be a younger strain, with gods as Odin and Thor as the most popular. The German Bishop Adam of Bremen describes the temple in Uppsala and says that the gods worshipped here were Odin, Thor and Frey, with Thor the most prominent. This has not always been the case in this area, since we find place names mentioning Ull and Njord in the vicinity. Another term that appears in place-names is “al”, a word otherwise not known from the Nordic languages. Linguists have tried to identify it with the Gothic word “alhs”, used in the Silver Bible as a term for “temple”. Fröjel in
The great goddess of the North
Among the many goddesses who are said to be a part of Freya, the great goddess of the North, are Frigg, Odin's wife, Gefjon, the goddess who separated the Danish island of Själland from the mainland of Sweden with her plow and Idun, the goddess of youth. Frigg and Freya share the function of assisting pregnant women, also attributed to the Valkyries, and both are said to be Odin's consort as well as unfaithful to him for jewellery. Frigg means the loveable one, while Freya means mistress. This seems to be a mix-up, since it is Frigg who is married to Odin, Master of the Gods, and Freya is the Goddess of love.

Gefjon, as well as Freya, is said to care for those who die as maidens, and Gefjon is also described as willing to sleep with men for jewellery. Gefjon means the one that gives, and another name for Freya is Gfen, the same expression. Freya is also said to have two daughters, Hnoss and Gersimi, whose names are interpreted as precious thing. Frigg, Freya and Gefjon are also described as goddesses of foresight and magic.

The male gods
Among the gods many functions, as well as attributes, seem to be shared. Male gods connected to goddesses with similar functions are supposedly also similar, since they are to be considered as one of a cult pair.

Odin is the ambivalent god of war, but even Thor and Frey are described as warrior gods. Oden has a parallel in the warrior gods. Oden has a parallel in the but even Thor and Frey are described as a cult pair.

The radiant Vanir
Frey, Thor's wife, Sif and Idun are described as golden or radiant, a quality that also the male Vanir and their servants have. Frey and his servant Skirner are radiant, as is Balder, the unfortunate son of Frigg and Odin. Some scholars have tried to interpret these gods as gods of the sky, the stars or other celestial bodies. Freya has a name, Mardöll, that means the one who shines over the sea. This could mean the polar star, that the Vikings used to navigate by. Heimdall is the god who has been said to be many celestial bodies, the polar star among them, as well as the sun and the moon.

Death
It was not so easy to say where you go after death during the Viking Age. Some believed they would go to Odin's abode, Valhalla, and if they did not die in battle they could mark themselves with the spear on their deathbed in order to get there. But not everyone who dies in battle is said to go to Valhalla, half of them go to Freya in her abode, Folkvang, a name that means the battlefield. Freya and Odin are also connected through the Valkyries, the female beings who choose the slain in battle as well as help young princes and chieftains. Freya herself is said to be the foremost Valkyrie.

Among other gods and goddesses involved in death we find, of course, Hel, the goddess of the Underworld. She too can be seen as a part of the Great Goddess, or maybe she is just a literary personification of the grave. In poetry Death can be described as an erotic union between the dead and Hel, and the grave is the bed that they lie in. The functions of death and fertility are often intimately connected in religions, since they are both inevitable parts of existence.

In Icelandic sagas there are also many scary stories about the dead still alive in their grave-mounds watching over their grave-goods. Grave-robbers have to fight them and cut their heads off before they can get away with the treasures. Other sagas tell of how families when they first arrived in Iceland chose a mountain as their holy mountain, where all family members were supposed to go after death. Stories like these have given scholars the idea that other beings, said to live in mounds and mountains, play the part of receivers of the dead. Such beings would then be the elves in mounds and the giants in mountains.

Conclusions
Norse religion is very complicated, both in structure and to study. Functions vary among the gods and sources are constantly self-contradictory. I can fully understand the need some scholars feel to bring order into this chaos by using Dumezil's model with the three-folded pantheon, but I still think it is a way of making things too easy. This is/was a complicated and fascinating religion that one never get tires of studying, since there is always something new to discover or learn about the gods. Its beauty lies in these contradictions and its complexity, so why spoil the fun?

About the author:
Anna Malmborg is a student in comparative religion at the University of Stockholm. She has also studied Archaeology, History and the Nordic languages. In a coming issue, Anna will tell us about Scandinavian folklore of the Viking Age.

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“Dómr of daudan hvern: a chronological survey of Swedish picture stones”

By Bart Brigé

First Period: From the origins to the rise of Christianity (4th-10th century)

I. Gotland

Of all the existing definitions of a picture stone, the most general one describes it as a detached stone or mountain side, onto which one or several figures are depicted. Using this general definition, picture stones can be found in the entire Scandinavian area, especially in Sweden, between the 4th and the 12th century. Nevertheless, the name is often exclusively used for one specific kind, which became known as THE picture stone: the classical picture stone from the isle of Gotland, dating from the period between 700 and 1100 AD (see figure 1).

Apart from the easily recognizable shape, the ornamentation which runs along the entire rim of the stone and the division of the surface into several workspaces, the most unique characteristic is the technique used to create the different figures. Instead of cutting out the figures themselves, as is the practice in the rest of Scandinavia, the surrounding and thus superfluous stone surface is removed and coloured in.

Of course, this type of impressive stone is based on a number of earlier and more primitive types. The oldest type dates from the 4th century AD, and is no more than an unadorned piece of stone, of which the part above the surface measures less than half a meter. But even from the very beginning, the stones’ primary function is the one which will dominate until their disappearance: combining indigenous Germanic tombstones with Roman public monuments, they were erected as private memorial stones for a social and cultural elite.

**Why did these stones become necessary?** In those days, every important family had their own burial site, where every relative had to be buried. If the corpse of the deceased wasn’t available for any reason, a fictitious grave indicated by a memorial stone was made in honour of this dead relative. And just in this period, the corpse of the deceased often couldn’t be buried. From the isle of Gotland, people began to undertake trade missions in the Baltic Sea area. These missions were not without danger, since it often happened that one or more crew members drowned in a storm at sea. And the absence of the corpse(s) made raising memorial stones necessary.

From approximately 400 AD the stones become higher and narrower, and in addition to strictly ornamental elements and geometric designs, the picture stones are also decorated with certain figures, e.g. ships, a heritage from the Bronze Age.

From the 8th century onwards, the same figures and scenes are always depicted until the picture stones disappear at the end of the Viking era. This leads to a relatively early heyday: the classical picture stone, like e.g. the stone from Tjängvide (see figure 1).

In fact, this stone is quite unique due to the presence of runes, both at the top left and bottom right. Runes are unusual on Gotlandic stones, since the picture already tells the whole story. Furthermore the runes on the

![Figure 4. The Böksta stone. Photo: Ivar Andersson, ATA, Riksantikvarieämbetet, Sweden.](http://viking.hgo.se)
II. Swedish mainland

In contrast to Gotland, runes had already been used for several centuries on the Swedish mainland, runes that retained their dominant position on memorial stones as well. Any possible picture is thus no more than a confirmation of the runes’ message – on Gotland, it is the other way around; this means that we can hardly speak of a picture stone tradition in this area and explains the focus on Gotland. However, the reason for their existence is exactly the same: picture stones, or rune stones with a picture, are raised as a memorial stone, when the body of the deceased cannot be buried.

Of all the known picture stones in Sweden’s central area, exceptions so to speak, one has intrigued researchers more than all the others: the Möjbro stone (see figure 2), dated to around 450 AD. Interpreting the picture – confirming the runes – depends on our knowledge of the runes’ meaning. Unfortunately, all we know for sure about the message is that the stone is a monument raised for someone called FrawaradaR, whose name can be seen in the bottom line of the inscription. The meaning of the rest of the runes is not known, which of course has led to much speculation with regard to the interpretation of the horseman and the dog-like figures. If the stone shows a hunting scene, why then the sword and shield? If it shows a battle scene, why then the dogs?

Throughout the years, researchers have emphasized the Roman influence on the horseman; but rather than a direct imitation, what we see is an adaptation of both form and content of a horseman, based on a Roman example. Although this is highly unusual on Scandinavian memorial stones, it is very well known from contemporary amulets: bracteats. Bracteats are golden disks which have several figures and designs depicted on one side. These bracteats came into existence as adaptations of coins from the 4th century Roman Empire, but were very soon given a Nordic content: horsemen showing the symbols, figures and scenes from the same myths and sagas.

Furthermore the greatly over-rated magical characteristics of runic and picture stones need to be put into perspective. Runic inscriptions and pictures are magical, but only in the sense that they, by their existence, ensure the presence of (or transition to) a certain desired circumstance, i.e. peace and honour for the deceased and the family, acceptance into Valhalla, etc. Visualization means realization.

Second Period: The rise of Christianity (10th-11th century)

Then, around 980, king Harald Bluetooth of Denmark raises the Jelling stone. The figure of Christ on the south-western side of this stone marks an absolute milestone in Scandinavian history: the coming of Christianity, which eventually led to the assimilation of Scandinavia into and by (Western-) Europe.

First of all, the custom of raising memorial stones was itself generally spread by the coming of Christianity. After all, the converted believer now had to be buried in the sacred ground near the church, and was thus separated from his ancestors and relatives, who were all buried in the family’s own burial ground. A solution for this problem was found by extending the custom which had led to the use of picture stones: raising memorial stones when the body couldn’t be buried. The deceased received his simple grave in the cemetery, but a stone erected on their private burial ground described the family’s deeds so as to bring peace and honour to the deceased.

The Christian influence on these stones could then be distinguished in three different ways:

1/ by adding a Christian element to a heathen stone, as was the case with the runic inscriptions on the Tjängvide stone;

2/ by using its own symbols. This led to the presence of a cross on a very large number of rune stones from the Viking era;

3/ by taking over and adapting the old heathen symbols (snake, ship, …). facilitated by the presence of identical symbols with identical content in both religions.
Thus in the beginning, the coming of Christianity does not involve a radical change in the use of pictures on picture stones. A few new motives are introduced, but these are still connected with the memorial function of the stones; the pictures are still a representation of the Scandinavian religion and death cult.

**Third period: Heyday and decay (11th-12th century)**

During the 11th century, Christianity spread all over Scandinavia, which of course doesn’t mean that the Christianisation happened as fast and easily everywhere. Denmark and Norway were no problem, but Sweden, and especially Uppland, offered resistance for quite some time.

Of key importance to this resistance was the Uppsala temple, situated in the middle of the Swedish kingdom of that time, and in fact the only place in Scandinavia where organised resistance was possible. After all, all the leaders regularly had to attend sacrificial ceremonies there, which were also thus of great political importance. The king was able to keep an eye on rival jarls and strengthen his central power. By accepting Christianity, he risked not only losing the aid of the ancient gods, but possibly the unity of the country as well. Thus longer resistance in Uppland resulted in a prolonged need of memorial stones and a heyday of the rune stone tradition in this area. However, quite remarkably this heyday is immediately followed by decay. Also remarkable is the fact there is only one motif: the rundjur or runic animal, very often depicted in a battle with a snake, e.g. on the stone of Ölsta (see figure 3).

The only symbolical meaning which has been attached to this motif is that of a battle between good and evil. Can this be true, and if so, is it a heathen or a Christian symbol?

1/ By no means is it a heathen symbol. The snake can be interpreted as the Midgaard snake or Midgardormen, but what about the rundjur? Is it one of the four stags that dwell on the branches of the Yggdrasil tree? However this stag is not depicted on any of the old heathen monuments, and consequently is much too weak a symbol of goodness to be able to face the evil of such a worthy adversary as the world snake. Furthermore, Christianised Scandinavian artists have no problem whatsoever in using this motif, and quite often add a cross to it. 2/ Then again, bearing in mind the difficulty in Christianising Uppland, perhaps a Christian meaning is more likely. Especially when it becomes clear that the coming of Christianity in fact is predicted and anticipated by the Nordic beliefs.

The story goes that at Ragnarök all evil will be destroyed and a new world will arise, led by Baldr, the god who, due to his innate innocence, can be described as the saint of Nordic mythology, and perhaps even identified as Christ. What happens then in the eyes of the converted Scandinavians, is that the entire world is changing, and that Christ (as Baldr) will show the way to a new and better world. The battle between good and evil on picture stones thus becomes the battle between the snake and the lion (Christ), between the old and the victorious new religion. Unfortunately, this doesn’t add up.

First of all the battle on the stones is still going on, and the outcome therefore still undecided. When wishing to render the supremacy of Christianity, you would not place this supremacy somewhere in the future, but in the present.

Furthermore raising this type of memorial stone still is a heathen custom; if the snake on picture stones represents heathendom, this means that you would first erect a monument in accordance with your religious beliefs, after which you would represent these beliefs as an evil which must and will be destroyed. In addition the lion and the snake also appear on their own, or even in groups of for instance 6 snakes or 2 runic animals. Furthermore the so-called lion also functions as a dragon, namely as a dragon’s head at the end of the run- or ormlinga (runic or snake/dragon band), and this lion sometimes finds it necessary to bite himself (right runic animal on figure 3 – the forked tail clearly suggests a fantasy animal). Finally Christianity has a much stronger symbol which can compete with any heathen one: the cross.

Figure 2. The Möjbro stone. Photo: ATA, Riksantikvarieämbetet, Sweden.

In conclusion, it is the horror vacui or the fear for the empty space of the Scandinavian artist, in combination with the dominant position of decorative elements in Nordic art, which leads to this final outburst of Germanic animal ornamentation style. The pictures now above all serve to satisfy the Vikings’ desire for pomp and circumstance, with elegance and dynamics eventually usurping any meaning the pictures might have had. The disappearance of the pictures’ typical function inevitably leads to the disappearance of the function of the picture stones as well. When other...
means of expressions then appear in Christian habits – e.g. the use of stone coffins with Latin texts – not only the pictures on picture stones, but the stones themselves cease to exist.

The only problem left is the fact that the step to meaningless pictures is far too large to be taken all at once; you would expect an intermediary stage, where the range of the pictures’ possible meanings is extended. The Böksta stone (see figure 4) provides the proof that this stage exists. What we see is, without a doubt, a hunting scene, a scene from the daily life from the higher classes in Viking society – there is no such thing as a universal skier or hunter.

Thus, Scandinavian artists do not render persons or scenes from daily life on picture stones, as long as the heathen religion continues to dominate. When Christianity begins to take over, it is no longer necessary to render the typical symbols and figures connected with religion and death cult. The cross now fulfils this function, and other than figures and scenes from sagas – which per definition are extremely decorative – Scandinavian artists begin to portray scenes from the daily life of the class for which the stone memorials are erected. Now and again this leads to the depiction of elaborate scenes – as is the case with the Böksta stone, more often to the presence of the typical runic animal. So: no more general representations, but pure decoration and no more reason to raise picture stones.

SCAR. A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday, Orkney

By Olwyn Owen and Magnar Dalland. Publisher: Tuckwell Press Ltd. in association with Historic Scotland 1999.

In 1991 a remarkable Viking boat burial at Scar in Orkney was excavated and in this way also rescued just before the winter storms finally claimed it. In a 7-metre long rowing boat, human skeletons of three people were found; a man aged about thirty when he died, a child of ten or eleven, and an old woman, probably in her seventies, an astonishingly old age by the standards of the time. The grave has been dated to between AD 875 and 950.

Many rich finds were also buried with the three people in the boat; a magnificent carved whalebone plaque, a highly gilded bronze equal-armed brooch, a fine sword, a bundle of eight leaf-shaped arrows possibly in a quiver, a set of 22 bone gaming pieces, two lead weights, a beautiful antler comb spindle whorls, a pair of iron shears, a weaving batten, a sickle still with its wooden handle and two needles in a needle tidy with thread still wrapped around them.

This book contains a thorough examination of the boat burial from many aspects. With the help of different experts the authors have dealt thoroughly with the background, the landscape in the Viking Age, the survey and excavation. All the finds have been carefully investigated and compared to similar ones found in other places. In this book you will also find a discussion and a comparison of Scar and other Viking graves in Britain and Ireland.

The book tells the story of the unlikely group of people buried together in the boat burial, as well as it traces the origin and significance of the possessions these people brought to the pagan afterlife. Here we get in closer contact with the human beings that once left their homeland to settle in a new land, more than 1000 years ago. For all who want to get a broader knowledge of Archaeology, Vikings and the Viking-age World, this book is a must.

About the author
Bart Brigé, from Belgium, has studied English and Swedish at the University of Ghent and was graduated in 1999. When choosing the subject of picture stones for his compulsory final year essay, he combined his interest in Scandinavia, history and language (and runes). He has tried to draw up a typology for picture stones in (central-) Sweden, and to obtain information about the pictures’ meaning based on this typology. The results of this investigation were presented at the Scandinavian days of the Dutch-speaking countries, in Amsterdam (March 23 -24 this year). His wish is to continue this work.
E-mail: bartbrige@goatrance.com
The fourth Board Meeting of the North Sea Viking Legacy Project was held in the County of Rogaland in Norway from 6 to 9 April this year. In addition to representatives from the 20 partners in Scotland, England, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, observers from the North Atlantic Co-operation and from the Dutch Foundation “Weg van de Vikingen” participated, along with one observer from the Via Viking project of the Baltic Sea region. The meeting was hosted jointly by the two partners, Rogaland County Council and Karmøy Municipal Council. On the Sunday, our third partner within the County of Rogaland, the Haugesund Town Council, hosted a reception at its Town Hall.

After arriving at Stavanger Airport, the Board members went on a short excursion in the area close to the airport, including the Mediaeval stone church on what is believed to have been the manor of local chieftain Erling Skjalgsson (a major character in the sagas of Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf Haraldsson). Local lore also attaches the name of Erling to a number of standing stones along the shores of the Hafrsfjord, although these stones most probably date from the Migration period.

The Board then went on an excursion to the islands of Kvitsøy. These small islands, in fact the second smallest local authority in Norway, played a major role during the Viking period, when they often were the last port of call for Vikings crossing the North Sea and their first port of call upon returning to Norway. This importance is still witnessed by the ruins of St. Clemens’ Church there, as well as a huge stone cross still standing close to the church ruins. The church was very rich, receiving offerings from seafarers to secure their safe North Sea crossing or to give thanks for a successful crossing. The islands were also the scene of major political meetings during the Viking and early Mediaeval period.

During the first day, the Board meeting was held at the Vigsnes Mining Museum. Copper was mined here commercially from the 1860s right up to the 1970s. The copper used to cast the Statue of Liberty in New York has been shown to have originated from the copper mines at Visnes. The mines were run by a Franco-Belgian company.

At the board-meeting, a number of important issues were discussed, including further co-operation with Viking Heritage. Two major conferences, one on heritage and tourism and one on heritage and planning, were discussed. Both conferences will probably take place early next year, the tourism conference in Gothenburg from 20 to 23 April and the other in Stavanger in April/May 2001. It was also decided that the North Sea Viking Legacy partnership would invite other Viking projects to join in an application for a new Interreg
project on the Vikings, a project to encompass the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. During the meeting, the partners reported good progress in their own projects. Mr. Jochen Komber, one of our foremost specialists on prehistoric house reconstructions, then read a paper on some problems and challenges concerning the reconstructions at the Viking farm at Avaldsnes.

In the evening, the Board was invited to a Viking dinner at the reconstructed Viking farm at Avaldsnes. During the late night, the party returned to its coach, wandering by torch-light over the meadows from the Viking farm to St. Olav’s Church at Avaldsnes. The next evening, we attended a concert in the church, which this year celebrates its 750th anniversary. An oratorio has been specially written for this event, and we were invited to attend the second performance of this exciting and well-performed work.

The Board’s meeting ended with an excursion from Karmøy to Stavanger. The first stop was the ”Five Bad Maidens”, a circle of standing-stones mentioned in the Saga of Olaf Haraldsson. Although they mark a Migration Period burial, the tale tells that the five maidens were standing on the shore when the saint-king passed by, trying to attract his attention. He became angry and turned them into stone. The next stop was the National Monument in Haugesund, erected in 1872 at the millennium of the battle of Hafrsfjord, after which Norway is said to have become a unified kingdom. The monument was erected on what was then believed to the burial mound of our first national king, Harold Fairhair. A visitors’ centre is currently being planned at this site. We also had the time for a short visit to the important Bronze Age rock carvings at Austre Åmøy before coming to Stavanger, and for a visit to the exhibits of the Museum of Archaeology there.

The fifth Board meeting will be held on the Shetland Islands from 22 to 25 July 2000.

Language checked by Ian S. Gibson

Presenting RANERNA – A Viking-age re-enactment group


BY NY-BJÖRN GUSTAFSSON

I have been asked to write something about the Swedish Viking-age re-enactment society RANERNA. As Ranerna would be totally out of context without the Hornbore ting (Assizes) I will start with a brief historical description.

It all started in Hamburgsund on the Swedish West Coast in the early 90’s. Some 3-km south of the little fishing village there is an area known as ”Slotter”, the castle. There are no traces of the castle nowadays since it was sieged, taken and burnt by a Norwegian/Danish force in 1535, but one can still see the remains of the ramparts up on Castle Mountain. Overlooked by the same mountain lies a narrow, sloping valley where the local tings were held during Viking Age and the early Middle Ages, at least according to local tradition. There has never been any real archaeological survey made at the site so there is no way of proving the tradition right or wrong from an archaeological point of view. There are some 10 Iron Age burrows and graves in the valley though, indicating some significance during prehistoric and early historical time.

Another local name for the castle is Hornbore; HORNBORE TING thus translates as the ting at Hornbore. Well and good, -in the early 90’s a local group of enthusiasts started to plan for an open-air play with a Viking-age theme along with a Viking market. It proved to be a true hit! Due to the strong historical interest among the people of Hamburgsund the first ”Hornbore ting” was a success. A majority of the people in the community took part in the work, either in the planning, the construction on the grounds, or as actors in the play. Hornbore ting became an event that more than anything else drew the people of Hamburgsund closer together.

It was from this local optimism and common interest for every aspect of Viking-age culture that Ranerna came to evolve. The name can be derived from the old name for northern Bohuslän: Ranrike, Ranerna thus translates as ”the people from Ranrike”. Back then, in the early 90’s, those who today make up the

The project manager of North Sea Viking Legacy, Mr. Geir Sør-Reime, can be contacted at
gsr@rfk.rogaland-f.kommune.no

Language checked by Ian S. Gibson
core of Ranerna had little or a very dim knowledge about what the Viking Age was really about. I myself was attending senior high school at the time and was interested mostly in swords and armour, rather than the every-day culture (embarrassing but true).

But somehow the concept seemed to appeal people, and today, some 9 years later there is still a group of people who call themselves “Ranerna”. Today Ranerna is more of a re-enactment group with approximately 15 members; we have no formal record of our members, they mostly come and go as they like. These 15 are more committed to re-enactment though, in a scale which starts at fondly interested and ends at total obsession. The re-enactment phenomena offers a lot of spin-off activities such as a wide variety of crafts, ranging from shoe-making to cooking and MANY of things in between. Archery is another popular activity, and fighting is of course an important part of Ranernas existence, but it feels good to know that when this is written we are more known for our singing than for our fighting.

On the whole, Ranerna as a group is still at the level where most members are working to improve and increase the amount of their own period equipment, may it be cooking utensils or swords. This ongoing “materialism” is of course quite vain in some respects, but it helps to keep one's interest up when trying to make a period object, and the more you have, the more you want…Re-enactment surely creates needs that you seldom encounter in your “ordinary” life…

As with many other re-enactment groups we usually travel around to period markets and events during the summer, offering re-enactors and visitors alike the chance to buy or trade what crafts we have produced during the winter season.

In the later years we have been blessed with a reconstructed Viking-age farm right at our doorstep, Hornbore by, close to the Slottet area. There are many of us that have participated in the construction of a smithy, a naust (boathouse) and more recently at the ongoing reconstruction of a long house. More than one member of Ranerna is impatiently awaiting its completion to working order. And then there are the boats. As this is written there are two of them; the 10m-long Blathuril, and the 8 m-long Skarven. These two are based on the smaller boats, the færings, from the Norwegian Gokstad find. Yet another boat is under construction, this being 12 m long and based on the smallest boat of the Danish Skuldelev find. As the reader might have understood by now there are quite a lot of ongoing activities in Ranrike!

For more information please check out our homepage at: http://msnhomepages.talkcity.com/ LaGrangeLn/midviks/index.html

About the author
Ny-Bjørn Gustafsson is an archaeologist and craftsman, specialising in combining archaeology and re-enactment.

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Imagine an Atlantic Ocean uncrossed...

A TRAVELLING EXHIBIT OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND MUSEUM

One Hundred Thousand Years of Goodbyes
One hundred thousand years ago, our ancestors walked out of their African homeland to explore and settle the rest of the world.

Each gradual step of the way was to bring new challenges as people sought to adapt and prosper in changing environments. Passing through the

Soapstone man with high collar
Northern Labrador c. 900 AD. This is one of the few surviving representations of Dorset clothing. The figure appears to be wearing a parka with a high, three sided collar.

Middle East, some "turned left" into Europe. In only a few hundred generations or so, the descendants of these people ran into the uncrossable barrier of the Atlantic Ocean.

The descendants of those who "turned right" found the road much longer. They gradually made their way across all of Asia. By 15,000 years ago, they had crossed the narrow Bering Strait into Alaska. From there, they spread out into the Americas. 7,000 years later, people had crossed North America to Labrador. Finally, travelling across the Straits of Belle Isle, they settled on the Island of Newfoundland. They had reached the other side of the Atlantic barrier.

The Uncrossable Barrier
A few thousand years later, driven by the need to find new lands and a spirit of exploration, the Norse clans of Scandinavia refined the design of their coastal boats into ocean-going vessels. These sturdy ships were the first built to withstand the wild and dangerous seas of
FULL CIRCLE – First Contact: Vikings and Skraelings in Newfoundland and Labrador

the North Atlantic. With these ships the Vikings began to island-hop westward to the Orkney and Faeroe Islands, then to Iceland and Greenland...

Full Circle
In the spring of the year 1000, Leif Ericson and his crew sailed from Greenland in three ships to explore a land rumoured to be to the south and west. The Viking arrival in L‘Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland marked the end of a very long "voyage" for humanity. After a hundred thousand years, the descendants of the people who turned right were about to meet up with the descendants of the people who turned left.

First Contact
The islands of the North Atlantic were uninhabited before the arrival of the Vikings. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Vikings encountered a number of groups of Aboriginal people they called "Skraelings". The Icelandic Sagas describe the meetings as fleeting - sometimes peaceful and sometimes violent. Within two decades, the Vikings retreated from their L‘Anse aux Meadows camp back to Greenland. While their bold North American experiment did not result in permanent settlement, it did mark the beginning of a time when the ancestors of the people who had turned left would come to know those who had turned right in the journey out of Africa.

The Exhibit
In the year 2000, the Newfoundland Museum is presenting an exhibit to commemorate the Viking landfall in L‘Anse aux Meadows. The exhibit will focus on the contact between the Vikings and the Aboriginal people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It will profile L‘Anse aux Meadows as the only authenticated Viking settlement in the New World, a site which is now recognized as both a Canadian National Historic Site and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The intriguing archaeology of L‘Anse aux Meadows and the history of its discovery will be featured, together with stunning Viking artifacts made of silver, ivory, iron and wood from Nordic country museums. These objects will be exhibited alongside intricate Aboriginal artifacts made of bone, stone, ivory and wood from the Newfoundland Museum collections and from other Canadian museums. Icelandic Saga replicas and Aboriginal history will be presented using the latest multi-media technology. You'll be inspired by the boldness of the Vikings' vision, and impressed by the creativity with which Aboriginal people made their lives in the sometimes bountiful, sometimes harsh environment of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Plan to make your own journey "Full Circle". The travelling exhibit will be at the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre, Friday June 2 - Sunday, August 6, 2000 and in the Corner Brook Museum, Friday August 25 - Monday, October 9, 2000. Following its Newfoundland tour, the exhibit will travel to museums across mainland Canada and the US.

For further information please contact:
Kevin McAleese, Senior Curator "Full Circle" Exhibit, Vikings! 1000Years P.O. Box 1997, Station C 1 Crosbie Place St. John's Newfoundland A1C 5R4 Tel: (709) 729-1999 Fax: (709) 579-2067 E-mail: kmcaleese@mail.gov.nf.ca
Web-site: http://www.gov.nf.ca/fullcircle

"Full Circle" is presented under the patronage of UNESCO

The Exhibit is supported by:

http://viking.hgo.se
A healing rune found in Skänninge, Sweden

A small copper plate was found this spring when excavating to connect some houses to a distant heating system in the small town of Skänninge, in the county of Östergötland, Sweden. It was found together with a large amount of pottery fragments from the 11th century. This “magic” amulet was probably used for curing illnesses and the engraved runes should be interpreted as a “healing rune”. According to Helmer Gustavsson, the rune expert of the Central Board of the Swedish National Antiquities, there have not been any stray finds with runes in Skänninge earlier and no other similar founds have been made in Sweden. But in Norway a similar artefact has been found in Bergen. The copper plate will now be preserved and then hopefully exhibited in the county of Östergötland.

From Populär Arkeologi eNyhetsbrev, week 15, 2000
The sun was, of course, of utmost importance both for navigation on land and on board ship. Even now we use it to hold a steady heading at sea. At the Stockholm boat fair in March some 130,000 visitors had the chance to see a quite new Viking device which uses the sun at sea.

_The first “sun shield” in the world_ was shown and raised great interest and admiration. It is a solar panel in the shape of a beautifully ornamented shield. It will be placed on Viking Plym to generate power in a battery for bilge pumps. A beautifully designed safety device. I felt very proud to see all the admiring smiles my idea, skillfully executed by three of our Vikings, received. Skidbladner will also carry a sun shield to ensure greater safety on the Atlantic crossing.

With sunny greetings

CARL BRÅVALLA

Täby Vikinga Skeppslag

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**Solar power and the Vikings**

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With sunny greetings

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**during the summer of 2000**

Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York are hosting a major international conference.

http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/york2000/conference.htm

_Hööddvver Viking Market_ Aland, Finland Friday 28/7 14.00 Saturday 29/7 12.00 Visit the native place of Hööddvver den Långe, (Hööddvver the Tall), as it looked 1000 years ago. Tel. +358-18 489014

**The story of St Olaf** Norway July 29th Based on the battle of Stiklestad, an historical play about these dramatic events is performed every year. Tel. +47-74073100

_Moøessgåårrdd Viking market_ Denmark July 29 - 30 A “Viking market” is held on the beach near Moøessgåård each summer during the last weekend of July. Tel. +45-89 421100

**August**

Sigurd Fafnirsbane Sweden August 2, 3, 9-10 at 7 p.m. August 5 and 12 at 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. August 6 and 13 at 6 p.m. The drama is based upon the legend about Sigurd Fafnirsbane (Sigurd the Dragonslayer). Tel. +46-16 10 70 00

_The Viking festival of Catoira_ Spain August 6 Thousands of visitors experience a re-enactment of the battle between Galicians and Vikings. Tel: + 34 986 54 60 14 http://www.riebsbakas.net/villages/catoira.htm

_Hombore Thing_ Sweden August 4 - 6 The event will take the public back in time to the Viking Age with experiences for all senses and ages. This year’s theme for the performance is: “The sword does not lie”, directed by Git Kraghe. Tel.: +46-525 34523 http://www.homespages.talkcity.com/ LaGrangeln/midvik/svhbt.html

_Largs Viking Festival_ Scotland The first 2 weeks of September The history of the Viking in Largs dates back to the 9th century AD. In addition to Vikingar! the Viking history of the surrounding area is celebrated annually. Tel: +44-1475 689777

Leif Erikson Parade & Festival New Jersey, USA September 30 Parade with historical speakers, who will speak on various aspects of the Viking Age. Tel: +1-(732)388-3329 http://www.vasaorder.com/eventsnj.htm

_Hastings 2000_ Battle Abbey, England October 14 - 15 The event will consist of one major battle on each day, running for around 90 minutes, with the potential to stage smaller arena events throughout the day. All Dark Age/early Medieval re-enactment groups or individuals that have kit authentic to the date 1066 are invited to take part in the battle or in the Living History Encampment. Tel: +44-(0)171 973 3434 http://www.vikings.ndirect.co.uk/hastings2000/index.htm

This calendar is put together by Therese Lindström, a former member of Viking Heritage’s staff. Now she is a research assistant in the project Culture Clash or Compromise at Gotland University College.
Some reflections on re-enactment

BY VIKTORIA PERSDOTTTER, Archaeologist and craftsman, e-mail: viktoria.persdotter@swipnet.se

I read Marie Gustavsson’s article on being a Viking Mother of Today, in the latest issue of the Viking Heritage Newsletter, with somewhat mixed feelings, and I therefore decided to write down my thoughts and reflections in this article. However, I would like to point out already at this stage that I have not written this article in order to depreciate either the re-enactment movement itself, or the individual author; my aim is rather to emphasize the tremendous complexity and manifold nature of the Viking-age society, and to call for reflection and discernment when using experiences from re-enactment activities in the interpretation of this era and its living conditions.

It is easy to identify with the Viking Age – a period close enough to our own to be tangible in a completely different way than more distant periods like the Stone Age, but still far enough away to give off a romantic, mythological fairyland-light. Yet the life of the Viking Age for us living in today’s western society is as inescrutable as that of a present-day non-western society. One can be fascinated by it, inspired by it, at times even imagine to understand it, but still it remains unfathomable and incomprehensible.

Our present knowledge of the Viking Age is very limited. Archaeological finds are just randomly preserved fragments of a far-from-uniform society. Written sources are scarce, and the brief runic inscriptions do not offer many clues about everyday life. The so-called Norse Sagas should not be viewed as true eye-witness descriptions from the Viking Age, as they were written down centuries after the actual period, and contain many fictional elements. The written descriptions of Norsemen made by non-Nordic authors, like the often-quoted Arab Ibn Fadhlan, can not be viewed as indisputably true either. These descriptions are often strongly influenced by the author’s own prejudices, and his wish to show off his own cultivation and refinement compared to the barbarians*, as well as by misinterpretations and/or statements based upon second- or third-hand information. Still, since the 19th century, the Viking Age has been a very popular period to interpret in different ways, and a lot of what today is thought of as “viking-ish”, cannot be traced further back in time than to the 1800’s, being a product of National-Romantic literature, art and stage performances.

Tendencies in modern western society to idealise and have a passion for both the non-European so-called primitive and ancient peoples, do not originate only from the Age of Enlightenment, and its idealisation of the “Noble Savage”. The idea of a distant Golden Age, when humans were good and life uncomplicated, is probably as old as humankind itself. The myths about the strange, luminous time, when creation was still immaculate, ancestors carried out their great deeds, and gods wandered the earth, are already found in the most ancient religious documents, and can even be traced in the Norse epic, “Edda of Snorri”.

The Viking Age is popularly depicted as a period of freedom and glory, albeit somewhat rough and savage, between the inscrutable mist of the early Iron Age and the darkness of the Middle Ages. It is indeed an incontrovertible fact that the Viking Age represents a time of prosperity and expansion for the Nordic countries. But assumptions that living conditions became disastrously worse in the Middle Ages are probably to be blamed as much upon the presence of more detailed written records, as on the Plague, the climate’s change for the worse and the spread of Christianity.

I myself work with the reconstruction of prehistoric artefacts and their manufacturing techniques, and I consider that we can reconstruct the fragments of the Viking-age material culture that the artefacts represent fairly well. But we can never reconstruct the non-material part of the Viking-age culture; the ways people related to each others, their norms, values, thoughts, feelings, conceptions of the world, etc., and least of all the self-image of the individuals; the ways they viewed both their own roles in the society in which they lived, and their own part in a larger, cosmic context. In these respects, the Viking Age is completely foreign and incomprehensible for us. But we can probably assume that most Viking-age people lived according to considerably less high-flown moral rules than the ones of Havamal (part of the Edda of Snorri), in a society which was far from uncomplicated and outspoken, and free from anxiety, frustrations, conflicts, violence and oppression.

A group of re-enactors, where the members gather by their own free will, joined by a shared interest, to spend some happy summer weeks together undisturbed by outside demands, can not possibly give us a true image of the social life of the Viking Age. The extended family may seem to be the ideal, natural state, for many people of today who have grown up in small, shattered families but it also contains a reverse; a strict social control, which is devastating for a deviant, and an environment which is not necessarily safe and solid, but can well harbour deep conflicts when 2-3 generations daily wear on each other. And contrary to today’s re-enactors, the people of the Viking Age could not choose their own “persona” and social situation, as little as they could change them, or simply abandon the “role” if it became too demanding.

The idea of a society where the family members, mainly the mothers, can offer the small children an unlimited amount of time and emotional engagement, is to be

http://viking.hgo.se
the search for Viking relatives

Scandinavia naturally share an interest in Scandinavian history and this interest goes as far back as the Vikings. There are also people from all around the world interested in the Viking as the ‘mythical hero’ i.e. the blond-haired warrior adorned with horned helmet that has eagerly been promoted in media and in publicity campaigns.

Many of the questions put to us concern Viking relationships in different ways. A typical question can be formulated: “Hello. My family name is …….. My grandfathe always told me that our name dates back to the Viking Age. Do you have any information on that?” or: “I am doing some research on our family line. It seems like our family comes from Harald Bluetooth. Can this be true?” Another common subject is to ask us for our family members that it certainly is regarded as a literary national treasure by the country who owns it. These records are few, often fragmentary and scattered. When approaching the Viking Age we have to realise that written language didn’t exist in Scandinavia in a modern sense. The few sources we have on families and individuals are the Icelandic sagas, Viking or Medieval chronicles together with the rune stones. Almost without exception the rune stones mention persons only by their first name, the chronicles often deal with only royal families, chieftains and people of the church. The value of the sagas as historic sources is difficult to estimate since contemporary testimonies about the occurrences hardly ever exist. The sagas were also written down a few hundred years later.

These problems or obstacles make it difficult or impossible for us to grasp the ‘ordinary person’. A person who perhaps lived and worked the whole life on a farm or in a small village somewhere, who married and had children and grandchildren who also stayed in the same neighbourhood. For this great majority of the people we will never find any written records. Unfortunately their stories and their history disappeared with them. Perhaps we can find traces of the farm or the village in the archaeological records. These people can be almost as hard to find in the written records even if they lived 600 years after the end of the Viking Age!

For that reason my position is that we should consider it impossible to find any trustworthy relationships between the people of today and the Vikings. I think genealogy is a great hobby or interest but we have to be aware of the scarcity of written sources and appreciate the reliable bonds that we still have to the past.

Present-day society can, and ought to, be criticized. But that criticism, if it is to be taken seriously, must not come from comparing present-day society with our image of a distant, and in many respects unknown prehistoric period, but begin and ends in the present.

However, keep on re-enacting! It is great fun, and offers excellent opportunities for creative self-expression, and reconstructing anything from ships to needles also promotes further knowledge about the practical aspects of Viking-age life and craftsmanship. But bear in mind that today’s interpretations of prehistoric societies usually have more to tell about our present society, its dreams and apprehensions, than about the actual prehistoric period itself.
VIKING HERITAGE
A network for Viking-related Knowledge

The objectives of the network are:

- To develop and maintain the European Institute of Cultural Routes project.

- To co-operate with schools, universities etc. in the field of education and training in the study of the Vikings.

- To collect information of present Viking history activities, and to distribute information about Vikings and their history.

Viking Heritage is acting as a monitoring and advisory body on all issues relating to an enhanced understanding of the Viking history.

In promoting these aims, VIKING HERITAGE provides an information service with the magazine VIKING HERITAGE MAGAZINE in co-operation with NORTH SEA VIKING LEGACY.

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Other countries: 250 SEK

As a new subscriber to Viking Heritage Newsletter you will receive a complimentary copy of the guidebook Follow the Vikings, Highlights of the Viking World. The book contains 50 of the most important destinations in different countries, selected by an international group of archaeologists and is richly illustrated in full colour.

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