Editorial

Here at Viking Heritage we often get the question "What was the role of women in the Viking Age?" This is not surprising, because when studying the Vikings usually only men are seen; the strong, wild seafarers and warriors remain at the forefront. But half of the population, the women, are harder to catch a glimpse of, their conditions of life are in shadow. In this first issue of the year, we are happy to present you with some very interesting articles that will discuss and shed some light in these otherwise quite hidden corners of the Viking Age.

The second theme of this issue deals with the time of transition when the Viking Age meets the European Middle Ages and what this meeting brings forth. This is a time of great change that also includes a new view of women - and men!

For the new year, Viking Heritage intends to go on making interesting magazines that will keep you updated about what is happening in the Viking world, both 1000 years ago and today! For this we need your co-operation and contributions, so always feel free to contact us!

The editorial staff here at Viking Heritage wishes you all enjoyable reading!

Marita E Ekman
Editor
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“Wounded I hung on a wind-swept gallows
For nine long nights,
Pierced by a spear, pledged to Odin,
Offered, myself to myself
The wisest know not from whence spring
The roots of that ancient rood
…
Runes you will find, and readable staves,
Very strong staves,
Very stout staves,
Staves that Bolthor stained,
Made by mighty powers,
Graven by the prophetic god”
From Hávamál
(Words of "The High One")

About the front page Runestone from Litslena parish, Sweden. “Ingegerd had the stone erected in memory of Torlak, her good husband, and in memory of Jorund and Åbjörn. Balle cut the runes.” Photo Marit Åhlén, Runverket, The National Heritage Board.
Glimpses of Viking-Age women in runic inscriptions

By Marit Åhlén

Sweden is famous for its rune stones, or Viking-Age memorials, most of them dated to the 11th century. Rune stones are not grave memorials. They were erected in remembrance of a dead relative near a road in the vicinity of the home farm, at an assembly place like a thing place or other places where many people passed.

Rune stones are something of a Swedish speciality. About 3,000 carved rune stones are known; over 2,500 of them are from Sweden. As mentioned, most rune stones were erected in the 11th century. But by then a runic alphabet had been used for writing for a long time. The oldest runic script was created in the 1st or 2nd century AD, probably inspired by Latin capitals. This oldest runic alphabet had 24 signs. As far as we know, these runes were used mainly for short inscriptions on weapons and jewellery. This alphabet, called the Proto-Nordic, was used until the 9th century. As example of such an inscription I cite the text of a fibula from the 5th century. It was found in Gotland. The inscription is a

"Åbjörn and Ingjald and Häming had the stone erected in memory of Björn, their father". Bälinge parish. Photo Marit Åhlén, The National Heritage Board.

The Proto-Nordic, also called the Primitive Norse, runic alphabet (from about the year 0 until the 9th century).

The Viking-Age runic alphabets

Runic alphabet used in the Middle Ages (from 1100 AD).
sharp knife. Hardly any wood of such an age remains, and thus most such carvings are lost forever.

The rune stone texts
The texts of the Viking-Age rune stones are built up according to a formula. The names of those who had the monument raised and the name of the dead person and their family relationship form the main part. The majority of the rune stones were erected in memory of men. Their sons, brothers or father had the stone raised. Sometimes a wife, daughter, sister or mother took part in the commemorative act. As example of a typical 11th century rune stone I give you the text of a stone north of Uppsala: “Åbjörn and Ingjald and Háming had the stone erected in memory of Björn, their father”. But, as I just mentioned, women can be among those who had the monument raised.

Women in the inscriptions
“Ingegerd had the stone erected in memory of Torlak, her good husband, and in memory of Jorund and Åbjörn. Balle cut the runes.” The widow Ingegerd put up a rune stone east of Enköping in memory of her husband and two more men, probably their sons. Between the lines you can read that she is now left all alone. If they had had more children they would have been named together with Ingegerd. “Ulfkel and Gye and Une, they had this stone raised in memory of Ulf, their good father. He lived in Skålhamra. May God and God’s mother help his spirit and soul; grant him light and paradise.” The rune stone bearing this text in which three sons commemorate their father Ulf stands on the western shore of Lake Vallentunasjön i Uppland. Across the lake on the eastern side there are two more rune stones in memory of Ulf erected in a Viking-Age thing place. From the text we learn that even the construction of the thing place is part of the commemorative act. “Ulfkel and Arkel and Gye, they made here a thing place. There shall no mightier memorials be found than those Ulf’s sons set up after him, active lads after their father. They raised the stones and worked the staff also, the mighty one, as marks of honour. Likewise Gyrid loved her husband. So in mourning she will have it mentioned. Gunnar cut the stone. "Ulf’s widow Gyrid mourns the loss of her husband.

It is unusual that feelings are shown in runic texts. When feelings are expressed you find not sorrow but pride. East of Uppsala Stenhild raised a stone in memory of Vidbjörn, her husband “a traveller to Greece”. She is eager to tell that Vidbjörn had taken part in an expedition to a far country.

Another Viking from Uppland who went east was Ragnvald. He came back as an esteemed man. On a boulder he had an inscription cut in memory of his mother: “Ragnvald had the runes cut in memory of Fastvi, his mother, Onäm’s daughter. She died in Ed. God help her soul.” But Ragnvald had been commander of a troop of the famous band of Norse soldiers, known as Varangians. Therefore he does not stop after having commemorated his mother. To show off he adds one more inscription to the boulder: “Ragnvald let the runes be cut. He was in Greece, was leader of the host.”

In the Uppsala University Park there are nine rune stones gathered from the surrounding parishes. One of these rune stones was erected by a mother in memory of her daughter. Both of them were obviously widows. “Gillög had the bridge made for the spirit of Gillög, her daughter, and whom Ulf was married to. Öpir cut.” The building of a bridge is frequently mentioned in runic texts. Sometimes it is stated that the building was performed for the dead person’s soul. Thus building a bridge must have been a pious deed in the 11th century.

In southern Uppsala there is a rune carving in a rock. “Sigvid, Gillög’s son, raised the runes in memory of Ragnelv, his mother-in-law.” Gillög was a pretty common name. There are some 20 examples from Viking-Age rune stones in Uppland. So there is no reason to assume that the two names Gillög refers to the same person. The reason why I chose to cite this inscription is the uncommon...
kinship. We know of only two rune stones commemorating a mother-in-law.

The rune stone of Vigmund and Åfrid
Another rune stone in the University Park was brought there in the 1670s. In 1867 this stone was sent to Paris for the World Exhibition together with two of the other rune stones in the park. When the Exhibition ended, the stones were to be transported back to Uppsala by boat from Le Havre. During loading this stone slipped into the water. In the 1890s the harbour was dredged and the rune stone came up. This time it was transported safely back to Uppsala.

The stone is carved on two sides, and the text is unusual: "Vigmund had the stone carved for himself, the cleverest of men. God help the soul of Vigmund, the ship’s captain. Vigmund and Åfrid had the memorial made while he was still alive."

It is rare for someone to have a rune stone carved for himself during his lifetime. And he announced to the world that he was "the cleverest of men". The last sentence suffers from being worded strangely. The predicate has a plural form after the two names Vigmund and Åfrid. But the ending, literally "to himself alive" only refers to Vigmund. The adjective meaning ‘alive’ has the masculine singular form. If Åfrid, probably Vigmund’s wife, had died before the making of the monument, she should not have been included in the memorial action. If on the other hand she was still alive, the adjective ought to have a plural form. She is added like a jollyboat to the ship’s captain’s memorial.

Homage to a wife and sister
In Västmanland we find a rune stone on which a housewife and sister receives her homage. "The good yeoman Holmgöt had the stone erected in memory of Odendisa, his wife. There will not come to Hassmyra a better mistress who holds sway over the farm. Balle the Red cut these runes. To Sigmund was Odendisa a good sister." From Fläckebo parish. Photo Runverket

A peculiar chain of inheritance
A rune carving in a rock at Hillersjö in southern Uppland records a peculiar chain of inheritance. "Read the runes! Germund took Gerlög to wife when she was a maid. Later they had a son, before Germund was drowned. Afterwards the son died. Then she had Gudrik as her husband. [A part of the inscription is destroyed.] Then they had children. One of them only a girl lived. She was called Inga. Ragnfast of Snottsta took her to wife. Afterwards he died and then the son. And the mother took the inheritance after her son. Inga afterwards had Erik as her husband. Then she died. Then Gerlög came into the inheritance after Inga, her daughter. Torbjörn Scald cut the runes."
The story continues on four other inscriptions from Snottsta, further north in Uppland. Inga had them made in memory of her husband Ragnfast. In one of these four inscriptions we read: “Inga had the runes cut for Ragnfast, her husband. He alone owned this farm in succession to Sigfast, his father. God help their souls.”

In the Hillersjö inscription it is said that Inga “took the inheritance after her son”. This is confirmed in the text of one of the Snottsta inscriptions: “Inga raised staff and stones in memory of Ragnfast, her husband. She came into the inheritance after her child.”

From this we learn that children inherited from their parents and parents from their children. But a husband did not inherit from his wife. Therefore it was important to state that the child lived when the parent died. Gerlög first inherited from her son, who had inherited from his father. Then Inga inherited from her son, who had inherited from his father, who had inherited the farm from his father. When Inga died she had no children alive. Therefore her mother Gerlög inherited from her. Inga’s second husband Erik was left without any share.

The runes of the Sigurd Carving

On a very famous rock near Eskilstuna in Södermanland a runic inscription tells about building a bridge:

![The Sigurd Carving at Ramundsberget near Eskilstuna, Sweden.](image)

“Sigrid, Árki’s daughter, made this bridge for the soul of Holmger, father of Sigrid, her husband.” However the rock is not famous primarily because of this inscription telling about members of a very distinguished Viking-Age family.

The rock is decorated with pictures showing some of the most dramatic episodes in the legend of Sigurd, the slayer of Fafner, the dragon. There is Sigurd in his pit thrusting his sword through the dragon’s body. Another picture shows Sigurd roasting Fafner’s heart over the smithy fire. He has burnt himself and has stuck his thumb into his mouth to ease the pain. When the dragon’s blood came on his tongue, he understood the birds’ warnings. Fafner’s brother Regin is lying with his head cut to the left on the carving. There is also the smithy, with its bellows, hammer, anvil and tongs. Sigurd’s horse Grane is tied to the tree.

A female rune master

Sometimes a rune master signed the carving. In the cited texts we have met Öpir and Balle. We know some 100 Viking-Age rune carvers by name. Only one of them is a woman. This female rune master has signed a rune stone in Hälsingland. It was found in Jättendal church. Parts of the inscription have been destroyed by fire. But fortunately the part with the name Gunnborga is still there. This rune stone was copied in the 17th century therefore the complete text is known. “Åsmund and Fartegn they erected this stone in memory of T orkel their father of Vattrång. Gunnborga the good cut (or coloured) this stone.”

Runes of love

In the first half of the 12th century the tradition of erecting rune stones to commemorate dead relatives ended. But for several centuries runes were used for writing. The inscriptions are cut on everyday tools found during excavations in mediaeval town centres. The last runic text I want to cite was found in Lödöse, the predecessor to Göteborg. On a well-carved weaving knife, probably a gift of a fiancé, the appeal, which can almost be interpreted as a charm for insuring mutual love, can be read: *Are you thinking of me? I am thinking of you. Love me! I love you!*

About the author

Marit Åhlén, PhD in Scandinavian languages in Uppsala, Sweden, 1997 (thesis: The rune-master Öpir. A monograph). Since 1985 she is employed by the National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) and is head of the department Runverket (Runic studies) including. She is well known in Scandinavia after having demonstrated and explained more than 100 runic inscriptions in 78 TV-programs.

http://viking.hgo.se
Freyja – a goddess of love and war

By Britt-Mari Näsström

Before the change of religions into Christianity, the people of the North worshipped goddesses and gods.

We know the names of some of them and even something about their functions and their myths, others remain are buried in silence or remain as only names like the earth-goddess Jord, the wife of Odin and the mother of Thor. It is uncertain if this divinity ever had a cult; she was regarded rather as a personification of Earth.

We also catch other glimpses of such obscure divinities, like Sunna, and Singunt, who appear in a manuscript from Merseburg of the 9th century. There is no problem interpreting Sunna, who is the sun, but how do we interpret Singunt? Many scholars have tried unsuccessfully to make her a moon-goddess and she remains an anonymous goddess, like Njörun, Nauma and Ilmr. There is another goddess called Bil who appears together with her brother Hjuke, representing the waning moon. Her name means “wound, impairment”, which could hint at the relation between the phases of the moon and menstruation. This is one speculation among the many referring to many of the goddesses in Old Norse religion.

The place-names provide us with information about forgotten divinities like Njärd, whose name appears in Närtauna, Nälsta and, according to some toponymists, in Norderön in the province of Jämtland, Sweden. This goddess disappeared but her male counterpart Njord survived as one of the Vanir in the myth. Probably Njärd was the same as the goddess Nerthus, mentioned in Tacitus’ account of the Germanic tribes in the first century AD. She was evoked as terra mater, “mother Earth”, and an idol of this goddess was carried in a wagon around seven tribes during a period of peace and quiet. According to Tacitus when she returned to her holy island, several slaves were drowned as a sacrifice.

Perhaps we can notice some traces to this old goddess in the archaeological finds of bog-corpses. A cult wagon which seems to have carried an idol was also found in Dejberg in Denmark. Some of the tribes mentioned in Tacitus’ description are also identified as place-names in the counties of Schleswig and Holstein in Germany.

Still, most of the traces of the goddess Nerthus are lost, but perhaps she survived in the goddess Freyja. Freyja means “the Lady” and could express an onomastic taboo of Nerthus, as some scholars have suggested. In the mythology, written down by the learned Icelander Snorre Sturlason, in the 13th century, Njord was described as the father of Frey and Freyja, “the Lord” and “the Lady”. This may be a construction of Snorre or his contemporaries, who wished to present genealogies among the pagan gods after a model of the classical antiquity.

The Vanir, literally “the voluptuous ones”, ruled fertility of the beast and soil as well as mankind. In Adam of Bremen’s description of the temple at Uppsala from 1060, Frey is described as a phallic god, who was evoked at marriage. According to Snorre Sturlason, it was Freyja’s function to arouse love between male and female. “She is the one to evoke in love affairs”, he writes and he also describes her fast way of living. She was married to a certain Od, who is identical to Odin, according to other sources like the short story of Sörle in Flateyjarbók. In this story Freyja desired a beautiful adornment, made by four dwarves and they agreed if she promised to sleep with them each a night in turn. Freyja agreed, but Loke tattled to Odin about what happened. She had to evoke a never-ending fight between two mighty kings to get it back and she managed to do so.

Freyja’s lovers were many but they were of her own choosing. When Thor had lost his hammer and the thief, the giant Trym, wanted Freyja as bride instead, she became furious and refused to travel to the giants’ world. Thor had to appear disguised as Freyja in order to get his hammer back. In another poem,
These myths, or rather fragments of myths, made Freyja a parallel to the Greek Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, the great love-goddesses of classical antiquity. She still bears other characteristics and is connected to the Netherworld in many ways, especially as a death-goddess. She received the warriors, who had died on the battlefield in her commodious hall Sessrumne, a parallel to Odin's Valhalla. Her home was called Folkvang, “the battle-field”, which includes the after-life activity of the fallen warriors.

When not at battle, Freyja usually drove a wagon drawn by tomcats according to the myths. We do not hear about any ritual progress like Nerthus concerning Freyja, but her brother Frey travelled round the people at certain times of the year, according to some notices in Flateyjarbók. Still, she seemed to have had a cult in the Old Norse Religion. In one poem one of her worshippers sacrificed cows on her altar (borg). Place-names like Frövi, Fröjel and Frölunda are also evidence of a living cult to this goddess.

Freyja also receives those who suffered a honourable death - women, who committed suicide in order to protect their honour and men fallen on the battlefield. She has a conspicuously belligerent character; we can observe it in Hyndluljóð where she utters: “You are dull, Hyndla, and dreaming, I believe, since you say that my man is among the dead warriors. It is the boar with the golden bristle, Hildisvíni (War Boar), which the skilful dwarves, Dáinn and Næsbjark (War Boar), which the skilful dwarves, Dáinn and Nabb, made for me”.

If we interpret the text literally, on her journey to Valhöll, Freyja seems to ride on a pig, which has been explained as an appropriate mount for a fertility goddess. Nevertheless, as Hilda Davidson remarked, this beast is a boar, called Hildisvíni, “war-swine”, and not a plump mother sow. Hildisvíni is thus connected with war and not with fertility, representing the ferocious wild boar used in heraldic contexts.

Freyja’s warlike aspect is evident in literature, as well as her aspect as death goddess. This picture has not been noticed earlier, where the scholars preferred the yearning and lecherous love Goddess. Freyja is, however, a complex nature, who like many other great goddesses, gives life and receives the dead. She is the great magician and she obviously has courage. In my opinion, Freyja reflects the ideal noble woman, a lady, whose important duty was to incite her husband, brother and son to fight to protect the honour of the family, which was also theirs. In a wider context, this held the family and the clan together; and as far as we know from the sources, the women were the ones who perpetually upheld feuds.

Freyja was a goddess with many functions and played a leading role in many myths in the Old Norse religion. She was a goddess who was worshipped by both men and women and according to Snorre Sturlason she was the one who was nearest to mankind. Many of Freyja’s functions were transmitted to the Virgin Mary at the change of religions like wedding, childbirth and prosperity of the beasts and the soil. Some ceremonies like the ritual drinking in the beginning of the winter were dedicated as thanks to Christ and Santa Maria, behind which we may imagine the names of Frey and of Freyja.

A similar example is found in the formula “God may help his soul and the mother of God”, as a reflection of the old goddess who brought the fallen warriors home. The people who once raised these monuments were more interested by the mother than the maiden at any rate. Perhaps they recalled the Great Goddess of the North, Freyja.

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**About the author:**

Britt-Mari Näström is PhD and professor in history of religions at Göteborg University. She has written monographic studies about Freyja – the Great Goddess of the North (1995), Blot – tro og offer i det forhistoriske Norden (2001, will be published in Swedish this year) and Fornskandinavisk religion - en grundbok (2001). Her other fields of interest are religions in Classical Antiquity and new religions. E-mail: b-m.nasstrom@religion.gu.se

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**Tacitus**

Cornelius Tacitus (55–120 AD) was a Roman historian and chronicler. He was a member of the Roman senate and served as a praetor and consul. In the year of 112 he became proconsul in the Roman province of Asia.

Today Tacitus is known mostly for his great essay *Germania*. The work was completed in 98 AD and is the most used source of knowledge about culture, religion, manners and customs among the Germanic tribes during his lifetime. He also wrote *Historiae* and *Annales* that are our foremost written sources knowledge about times in the early Roman Empire.

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**Historical ships 2002**

Historical vessels, such as Viking-Age ships, Hanseatic crafts, historical replicas, galleys, sailing ships and small cargo boats, historical sailing and motor boats and modern ships that show the latest maritime progress, will participate in the Historical Ships Sailing 2002 taking place in three different places this summer. All historical ships are invited to take part.

**Stockholm, Sweden, July 18–21**

All ships are invited to participate in a big historical harbour festival on Skeppsbron, as a part of the 750th jubilee of the City of Stockholm. All activities will be in keeping with the times and aimed at showing the maritime history of Stockholm both on land and water.

**Mariehamn, Åland, July 22–23**

The ships will then sail to Mariehamn, where they will be a part of the big RockOff Carnival.

**Åbo/Turku, Finland, July 25–28**

Here the historical ships will be part of the city festival in connection with Forum Marinum maritime centre.

Further information:

[www.maxnav.com](http://www.maxnav.com)
[www.historicalships.com](http://www.historicalships.com)
Images of Women and Femininity on Gotlandic Picture Stones

By Eva-Marie Göransson

The picture stones from Gotland, especially those made in the Viking Age, are crowded with human figures. Masculine human figures dominate on the stones, both in numbers and activity. This fact makes the feminine figures that do exist especially interesting. Here the focus is on the feminine figures. They tell us slightly quieter stories than usual, giving us a glimpse of the Viking Age with the noisy Vikings in the background.

The picture stones from Gotland were constructed and erected between ca 400–1100 AD. In the last century of that long period, Christianity was accepted as a state-religion in most parts of Scandinavia. This can be seen in the form of the new symbol of the cross, centrally placed on the later stones (fig 1). By that action, the Scandinavian Viking Age meets the Middle Ages.

There are, however, other stories told by the stones, where we can try to find transformations in people’s attitudes to themselves in the world, a kind of mental archaeology. I would like to excavate the images on the stones, looking for changing ideas about the female body and feminine gender roles related to the conversion.

What is a woman?

In images produced today, gender is often taken for granted. We engender human figures in photos published in newspapers and magazines, on TV and in films without much ado. Women are women and men are men.

It is when our gender rules are disturbed that we react, often quite vigorously. – Is THAT a man!? Look at his feminised way of dressing! How awful, etc. Where images produced in the distant past are concerned, we must start at a different point, making our opinions on gender clear from the beginning. What is the reason for calling a figure “a woman”?

On the picture stones a large number of apparently human figures can be seen. These can be divided into two large groups. In one group beards never occur, in the other they do, but not on all figures. This is the basis for my engendering the human figures on the Gotlandic picture stones (fig 2).

The figure “woman” thus becomes possible based on the assumption that men have beards even in the “Gotlandic Picture Stone Age”, like they/you have today. The picture stone woman is a non-male, technically speaking. A bit sad, but that’s how things are, and can itself be subject enough for an article.

Fig 1. A Christian cross on a picture-stone from Hogrän church on Gotland. After Lindqvist 1941.

Fig 2. Examples of group figures; “women” (left) and “men” (right). Illustration: Eva-Marie Göransson.

Fig 3. Ornamentation on the border of the Bjärs III picture-stone from Hejnum parish, Gotland, 5th century AD (top), corresponding with a contemporary textile find from Snartemo, Norway (bottom). After Lindqvist 1941.
**Changing femininity**

At first, figurative femininity is of no interest to the picture stone makers. Only an aggressive masculinity working in warfare-associated activities is represented in the 5th and 6th centuries AD.

On the other hand, borders with clear textile design corresponding to actual textile finds from the period can be seen as an abstract form of femininity framing the image (fig 3). This, of course, assumes that women and only women produced textiles.

Feminine human figures begin to appear in the late 8th century and, at the beginning, are very stereotyped. They form a norm of femininity expressed in a certain bodyline – the slightly S-shaped curve and gestures tightly held to the upper body (fig 4). The dress reaches to the feet with train and a shorter cloak/shawl combined with a typical hairdo – ponytail or hair-bun. In her hand the figure often holds a drinking horn stretched out to a mounted man dressed as a warrior.

The picture stones now occasionally show other forms of femininity – for instance the carriage-driver woman (fig 5). Here the woman figure is active, often standing up, on what seems to be a rather wild journey.

In an example of special interest, the carriage driver seems to be greeted by another woman, stretching out a drinking horn (fig 6). This is an all-feminine equivalent to the male warrior-female drinking-horn server mentioned above.

**Fig 4. Woman with typical S-shaped bodyline and ponytail and bun hairdo. Tjängvide picture-stone from Alsksog parish, Gotland. Illustration Eva-Marie Göransson.**

**Fig 5. Carriage-driver woman on the Levide church picture-stone I. Illustration: Eva-Marie Göransson.**

**Fig 6. All-female meeting motif on the Barshalder picture-stone Norrkve 1:16, Grötlingbo parish. Illustration: Eva-Marie Göransson.**

**What a woman is**

Trying to interpret what the figure “woman” means in the Gotlandic picture stones, is foremost a question of nuances of movement and rest. The feminine human body is shown as a “bloc” on tiny feet. The train of the dress, however, leads us to understand that the figure is moving forwards, slowly. Hands and arms are held tightly to the upper body. Trunk and legs are covered by the dress. Fighting, running or jumping is out of the question!

Not standing still, not walking fast. In between this, the feminine norm of the picture stones is hidden. Dignified movement, prepared for meetings with others, flexibility, speaking the same language as the textile ornaments in the borders framing the stones.

So a woman on the Gotlandic picture stones is a story of silent movement, a striving for something, an ideal, a dream.... This woman is a silent activity, separating the figure not only from the men on the stones, but also from the invisible women she is not; all those other women, those forms of femininity, that must have been there outside the stones, the hard working ones, the suffering, laughing, running ones that we are unable to see.

**Images disappear**

In the latest phase, the 11th century, the feminine figures disappear altogether, while the masculine ones remain, now embedded or hidden in snake loops and framed by runic inscriptions in place of the former textile borders.

Women and femininity are there, but now in a new form – runic inscriptions. Women have picture stones erected for them, and are given names and, sometimes, personal qualities in the inscriptions.

In one stone we are told that Ailikni was a good wife and mother (fig 7). She was given a picture stone by her husband Liknat. In another, the man Siba tells us in runes that his wife Rodiaud died young leaving her small children (fig 8).

When the figurative images of women disappear on the picture stones, Christianity is accepted in society. This includes a new view of women (and men). The ideal is no longer wealth in property per se, but wealth in property given away (to
God, the Church, to the poor etc). In other images like wall paintings and textile images, women's heads bow down as an expression of humility. On the Gotlandic picture stones, at the other hand, feminine figures disappear altogether. It seems that "the picture stone woman" was incompatible with the new religion.

**Picture stones and people**

The Gotlandic picture stones are a part of society, not reflections of it. The ideas of femininity, the way women are represented on the stones, can be seen as actively working in people's lives as ideals, perhaps unattainable norms for life.

Even if only wealthy women had picture stones erected after them, the way they are represented in the images affected society as a whole. What was considered a good wife was bound in stone, carved in images and runes, erected for all to see.

**About the author:**

Eva-Marie Göransson is an archaeologist, PhD, and an artist. She is now following a special training programme for professional artists at the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm. In her current work she explores different approaches to time, using old techniques, like fresco and concrete sculpturing, in new ways. Special interests are spirituality and gender issues.

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The Viking Project in Ale was started and is run by the Administration of Education and Culture in Ale Municipality in response to interest in the Viking-Age ships, which were discovered in Äskekärr in 1933 and 1994. The Viking Project in Ale was one of several Nordic projects within North Sea Viking Legacy, which also co-operated with Viking Heritage Magazine.

The project is divided into three areas: Viking-Age Village, Nature and Culture path and Research Project.

Plans are to construct a Viking Village with a dwelling house, a cattle shed, craft rooms, pastureland and fields. The first step is to build a ship-shaped longhouse about 16.5 m in length and 7 m wide. The prototype for the house was excavated at a Viking-Age site in Tisø on Sjaelland, Denmark.

Now a Nature and Culture path has been opened at the site for the interested public to follow. School youth can also participate in educational programmes. The pathway is around the Ranneberget hill. You can follow the information signs or accompany the guide who tells details about the history, flora and fauna of the area.

Parallel with the other projects, Kristina Carlsson, the antiquarian project manager, will be summarising research findings from the Viking Age in the area. This part will culminate with an exhibition about the Viking Age in Ale Municipality, which will also be shown in other North Sea Viking Legacy countries.

Ale Municipality is located in the province of Västergötland, north of Gothenburg, Sweden.

For more information about the project see VHM 2/2001, where the project secretary, Bodil Peterson, gave a briefing about the ongoing project in Ale County, and the project's homepage.

www.alevikinatid.nu
The Baltic Rim, here defined as the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea.

Computer drawing: Gustaf Svedjemo.

Viking Heritage Magazine 1/02

Where have all the Vikings gone...

By Nils Blomkvist

The 11th Century Heights

It is well known that the Viking Age culminates in some great heroic and even herostratic enterprises undertaken in the first half of the 11th century – the Danish conquest of England and the subsequent establishment of a North Sea Empire, Íngvar’s fabulous expedition to Kaukasus, related on more than 25 mid-Swedish runestones; not to mention the North Atlantic expeditions, departing originally from Norway, then from Iceland, reaching Greenland and finally America.

These widespread contacts are characteristic of the small Viking population, which fulfilled a unique historical function for a limited period of time, beginning around 800 AD and ending around 1050 AD.

A whetstone found on Gotland concludes the spirit of it all using only six words: ‘Orniska. Úlfar. Greece. Jerusalem. Iceland. Serkland’ (The land of the Saracens). The first two are men’s names. The rest is no doubt a narrative, charged with extreme adventure; the shortest epic in history.

Who were the Vikings? Scandinavians, no doubt. However this is not the name of a specific people or a nation in the sense we know today. They were seafaring bands and their home waters were the Baltic and the North Sea. Vik means simply bay in the Scandinavian languages, but on the other hand

Vik in Dark Age Latin was a technical term for the coastal towns on the Channel which were ravaged by Vikings, so we have to admit that we don’t know the meaning of the word. Yet it opens up a world of pictures and associations: a cruel, brutal attitude towards foreigners, an intensive, heroic and strongly emotional cult, the beautiful, well-balanced ship’s architecture, the intricate animal ornaments on art objects, a cynical humour demonstrated in the hard-boiled saga literature and on runestones. In Russia people bearing those connotations were known as Varangians, derived from a Scandinavian word for ‘sworn brotherhood’.

The Viking Age – What Was It?

The historical role of the Vikings is debated continuously. One way of reading their dramatic history is by studying the silver that was hoarded along their routes. During the 9th and 10th centuries the Russian river valleys, their Baltic estuaries and the Baltic coastslands – notably the island of Gotland – were flooded with Arabian silver! This was obviously not due to plunder in the first place, but to commerce. In many Viking-Age graves weights and scales for weighing up quantities of silver are found, and the hoards contain broken jewellery, silver bars and even pieces of Arabian dirhems as tokens of its use as weighed (not counted) currency.

The Viking Age was a period when long distance trade was established for the first time between the lavish cultural centres of Islam and north-western Europe, using the shortcut over the Russian landmass. And it has actually been proven that the Viking raids in the west correlate in time with periods when the influx of Arabian silver was low.

Certainly scholars will never entirely agree on the nature of Viking activities, but modern research has tended to demonstrate its normality, given the time and the space. In some sense it was a long-term conjecture, which was rare in as much as it allowed the Baltic area to dominate over Western Europe. In the 970s, however, for some reason the influx of Arabian silver ceased to reach the Baltic. Almost instantly, a whole series of nations in the area

The Baltic Rim, here defined as the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea.

Computer drawing: Gustaf Svedjemo.
Oh When the Saints...
This drawing tells – in animated form – the story of the shift in mentality during the Middle Ages. The scene is the city of Visby: once a Viking-Age Vi, a cult place connected with asylum rights. According to the Guta saga this had the interesting consequence that it was lawful to erect a Christian church in the area. Hence a pioneering Gotlandic merchant called Botair of Akebeck built a church dedicated to All Saints. This proved prophetic, since Visby was to become full of churches dedicated to all kinds of saints. Instead of the churches the drawing shows their personified protectors with their respective attributes – e.g. St Olav with his axe, St Clement with his anchor, St Nicholas with his pastoral staff, St Jacob with his mussel-shell, the Hand, Lamb and Dove of Holy Trinity etc. In the right upper corner Woodan (Odin), Thor, Freyr & Co. are seen leaving the field. Drawing by Ingrid Blomkvist.

decided that Christianity was a better religion than their former practices. A couple of decades into the 11th century characterised by extravagant expansionism and then, poof… it was all over.

The Sudden Disappearance
In Scandinavian archaeology there is a difficult period of some 60 to 80 years, known as the transition period. It begins around the Battle of Hastings, and comes to an end around 1143 with the founding of Lübeck, the first German city to have direct access to the Baltic. In this period new times began. The Scandinavians were busy building cathedrals, from which singing in Latin and others in ties of tenancy. Monasteries and churches of stone, imitating the ones they had seen in England, Germany and France. They were also transforming their way of life in many other ways. The broad masses began working harder to till the earth. Overcrowded villages were drained of people who were moving into the forests, clearing land and forming new villages. A smaller group – some of which in former times would have been chieftains and the helmsmen of ships – were ‘re-schooling’ themselves and learned to behave like an aristocracy, binding up the others in ties of tenancy. Monasteries and cathedrals, from which singing in Latin and even the scratching of feather-pens was heard, were rising. Around many of them, towns were growing denser. All in all Scandinavia and the entire Baltic Rim was growing into a European costume. The Vikings became re-schooled into ordered ways of living; into a regulated society. At the same time, this meant a considerable shift in the power balance between the Baltic Rim and Continental Europe. It is easy to see that from 1100 onwards the process of change had its roots in a trans-European core area, uniting northern Italy with the Low Countries.

But what about the Viking spirit? Was it really buried in the hard toiled earth of Scandinavian small-scale homesteads, or under the cloaks of Cistercian monks? In a sense, this has been the key problem of a rather grand multinational research project that has been going on for six years now at no less than ten universities and university colleges surrounding the Baltic.

The CCC Project
Under these initials, some 20 archaeologists, historians and human geographers of eight Baltic Rim nationalities have joined forces to attack the scholarly problem of Europeanization. The three Cs are to be read as Culture Clash or Compromise? And the scientific problem has been narrowed down as: The importance of regional strategies in the Europeanization of the Baltic Rim 1100-1400 AD. The large team was first and foremost brought together in series of conferences which has been ‘touring’ the University cities of the Baltic, from Visby, Kurusare, Kalmar, Talsi, Klaipeda, Greifswald, Lund, Tartu, and back to Visby, where its main office has been located.

Intellectually, the work has been held together by a fairly strict interdisciplinary scheme, pointing out problem areas to be solved (known internally as Die Vergleichsmaschine - the official project languages have been English and German, using all the vernaculars of the Baltic Rim, plus gestures and even singing songs for additional understanding). Solving the problems was up to each and everyone, which sometimes led to forming smaller working groups within the larger context. Communications were organised in a network seminar (using e-mail), and the publications have been channelled into a series of CCC papers. So far, six volumes have appeared; but no less than twenty more are underway. The CCC project’s main financier has been The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, which has provided more than 14,000,000 SEK over the years. So what were the results?

Into Citizens...
The Viking-Age inhabitants of the Baltic Rim had been living in political units at a predominantly regional level, call them tribes, lands or landskap. Even in the Viking Age, however, some form of kingship emerges, particularly in Denmark, Sweden and, heavily influenced by the Varangians, in the Kievskja Rus – the kingdom linking Novgorod to Kiev. In the East Baltic countries a somewhat different structure has been observed. It is characterised by rather limited hillfort-territories, forming a more cellular structure. In most other ways the East Baltic territories were quite similar to their Scandinavian contemporaries, but for some reason the social organisation emerged more dispersed. The tendency to form larger units remained weak.

This made a difference when Europe appeared. Whereas in Scandinavia, a self-
assured elite was already learning how to administrate the Continental Catholic legacy and was largely able to transform their countries into centralised European states; the East Baltic peoples were much more unprepared for the demands, economic as well as ideological, that were directed towards them from the continent. We even hear of the Curonians and the Osilians having their own Viking periods, in the late 12th century – thus giving Swedes and Danes some of their own medicine. In the end the lack of interest in the East Baltic for taking up Christianity was judged intolerable by the church authorities. From around 1200 AD, crusades were directed towards these coastes. Hence two westernised states, one called Livonia and the other Prussia were founded. The way this was carried out made them into a sort of rehearsal for the European worldwide expansion some centuries later.

### Into a New Era...

At the moment the members of the CCC project are busy putting their respective results together, a necessary first step before synthesising the results of the entire project. The transactions of our final conference will be published in the renowned series *Acta Visbyensia*, as its number XII. Some of the articles published in this and the next issue of Viking Heritage Magazine are shortened versions of its content.

However, people keep asking for simple sentences, telling where the Vikings went. In Visby, a working group which is discussing how to find a straightforward, popular presentation of these problems has been formed. This has led to the preparation of an exhibition to be held in the *Gotlands Formid*, the distinguished museum in Visby, in the summer and autumn of 2003.

The preliminary answer is in all simplicity that the Vikings went into other business activities. Some became herring fishermen, salters and tradesmen, others became building masters and bricklayers, again others priests and missionaries. A new society was built up from the ground. When we read the texts from the bewildered 12th century, we sometimes see that the former Vikings were a bit disoriented in the brave new world around them.

The fashionable new way of preserving foodstuff by putting it in salt – hitherto unknown in the Baltic area – thus induced the leaders of a Danish sea expedition to separate their fallen comrades into two groups: Ordinary men who were to be buried on the spot, and aristocrats who were to be conserved in salt and brought home to be honourably buried as Christian men.

Visitors to the harbour of Visby must also have been astonished. It was of course a vi – a Holy place protected by the deities of Valhall; but in the 12th century around 15 Catholic Saints – Peter, John, Michael, Mary, Clemens, Nicholas, Gertrude, Olav, George etc., most of them brave martyrs from the Mediterranean basin – had taken over the guard. Each one of these was in command of his own stately church tower that rose towards the sky in a hitherto unseen way. In fact the whole town was rebuilt from wood to limestone.

Or why not consider the infuriated Semigallians, a Baltic people living on the south bank of the river Daugava (not far from today's Riga), who saw that the Germans had brought Gotlandic bricklayers to make a tower on the little island of Holme in the middle of the river, and got hold of ropes to pull it into the river… They didn't know, the chronicler says laughingly, that the stones were mortared together by cement! This is why the working title of the exhibition underway is – “the Pope, the Salt and the Bricklayer: aspects of changing times”.

### Literature published in the CCC-project

**Visby Symposium papers**


**CCC-papers**


### When Will They Ever Learn?

My attempt to let this article paraphrase a well-known folk song, extremely popular some 30 years ago, calls for a sens moral. The end of the Viking era was the transformation from a locally and regionally bound society into a world dominated by larger organisations. My observation is rather that the Vikings were quick learners. They understood that times were changing. That’s why they disappeared.

Another observation to be made is the striking similarity between the Europeanization of the Baltic Rim in the 12th and 13th century, and the events merely 10 or 12 years ago, when the Soviet empire collapsed and a very quick advance into the Baltic was made by the NATO and the EU. The movement was the same, but the tempo was remarkably quicker. I am pointing this out because the political change around 1990 was indeed crucial to the CCC project. Half of its staff has grown up east of the Iron curtain, and had received their first scholarly training under the auspices of the Soviet system. It would be telling a lie, if I claimed that the integration of two research cultures hasn’t had its problems. On the other hand, its most important result will probably be the durable network of personal relations which has been built across the former barrier. We will always learn.

### About the author

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![Image](http://viking.hgo.se)
The woman on the wagon

Pagan Scandinavian burials in a Christian perspective

By Jörn Staecker

In recent decades research has focused intensively on the Christianization of Scandinavia. The point of departure has mainly been the change in religion, i.e. the issue of which forces in society triggered the changes, which missionary elements generated the process of Christianization and finally what happened to pagan elements of cult after the conversion.

We realize today that it was not only the nobility that backed up the process of Christianization, but that German and English missionaries were probably much more confrontational than earlier believed, and that the question of continuity of cult still needs to be assessed. But there is one question in particular which remains to be solved, the issue of who had the principal role in a conversion.

As Eva-Marie Göransson has recently pointed out, research on Scandinavia’s Christianization quite often describes the actors as males or as genderless individuals. This is linked to the discussion about social status, where for example the Swedish term “storman” (nobleman) implies a male person. But the supernumerary role of women is far from certain.

Between the late ninth and early tenth centuries we have no record of a mission and the silence could give us the impression that the first attempts of the ninth century failed. According to written sources, mainly the ecclesiastical history of Hamburg-Bremen by Adam of Bremen, a new mission was launched in 936. This mission was the starting point of a new wave of Christianisation, ending with the conversion of the Danish and shortly afterwards of the Swedish kings.

Is it possible to trace Christianity in this early phase of the tenth century? There are only a few items of Christian symbolism known from this period. Objects like crosses and crucifixes are not common before late tenth century. Instead it must be stressed that the sudden introduction of single Thor’s hammers gives us a hint of the confrontation between the new and old faiths. The author has already intensively discussed these objects, but there is another object, which might give us – in spite of its pagan character – a glimpse of the early phase of Christianisation, namely the wagon-grave.

Fig 1. Reconstruction of a 10th century burial with carriage-body from Thumby-Bienebek.

Fig 2. Sex-determination of 10th century wagon-graves. ♀female grave, ♂male grave, no sex-determination.
The wagon grave – purely pagan?

Carriage-bodies are given a special role in tenth century grave burials, that is the upper part of the wagon that could be removed from the lower chassis. The wagon with detachable body was already known from the early ninth century Oseberg ship-burial in Norway, where it was part of the furnishing of a chamber containing two women.

A similar type of wagon-body was first observed in tenth-century burials in the 1970s (fig 1.). Iron-fittings which could be connected with a wooden wagon have since made it possible to identify a lot of wagon-graves among old excavations. Even graves with snaffle-pairs were counted in this group.

The importance of gender and the social position of the dead were quite soon pointed out by different researchers. It could be observed that the majority of the graves belonged to women from the upper classes. Of fifty burials, thirty-four were female, six male and ten non-determinable (fig 2.).

During the 1970’s the role of society was under discussion. Roedahl & Nordquist wrote concerning the Fyrkat grave IV: “You do not get the impression that this is a noble, Nordic woman. She seems to have travelled, perhaps she is a foreigner who has bought some fine goods at different places on her way to Fyrkat and uses these items like a tourist in her own way. Another possibility is that some of the objects are gifts, and one is struck by the idea that she could have been a lady belonging to the camp followers”.

But with the magnificent Oseberg burial in mind, where not only a complete wagon but even textiles illustrating the use of wagons were discovered, it became quite clear that these women were not exotic elements in society or even prostitutes, but instead members of the highest stratum of the local community. The interpretation of the wagon as a medium of transport and as an expression of vassalage changed slightly to an interpretation as a carriage to the other world, comparable with the ship. The image of wagons on four Gotlandic picture stones has been added to the group of real objects.

In recent research the wagons are regarded as representations of pagan mythology, like the story that the heroine Brynhild went to Hel in a carriage. Ships and carts were the main attributes of the Vanir, the divinities of fertility and death. The goddess Freyja had a wagon drawn by cats and the goddess Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus, was placed in a wagon drawn by cows.

There is still another question to be adressed: Why do the wagon-graves begin during the most intensive phase of Christianization?

One possibility is that they had no religious significance. Another possibility is that the pagan attributes could equally be interpreted in a Christian way and that burial parties of Christian dead were not forced to sacrifice their status symbols. It has also been argued that the burials must be regarded as “a reaction of the upper class society on the meeting with a faith, which transferred new and strange values”. The leading stratum was afraid of being reduced to a lower social level by being buried without gravegoods. But this view seems to be rather too simplistic. Proximity of the burials to the church and position inside the church were of highest importance. The “pagan revival” is the wrong expression for a phenomenon, which could be defined as a “Prunkgräbersitte”.

The meeting between a socially stratified culture and an exotic culture of high standing encouraged society’s leaders to emphasise their own rank. Graves with wagons are in this case an expression of a transition period but not necessarily of religious affiliation. Several graves, like Thumby-Bienebek, Jelling, Hørning and Oldenburg in the Slavonic territory, indicate a direct connection with Christianity by the furnishing (cross pendant), or the topography (inside the church or on the churchyard). In this context, it is necessary to mention the Gotlandic picture stones which feature wagons. It is argued here that the stones in general may not be regarded as part of pagan custom. It is important to stress that the inscription on these picture stones gives us no hint of that. On the contrary, of four preserved stones with a wagon-motive, the Levide church (Go 77) stone tells us “… son, like his father … on one. That was … God (help) the souls of this couple” (fig 3.).

The Gotlandic picture stones from Levide, Ekeby, Alskog and Grötlingbo must be further differentiated into two groups: in some the wagon dominates the scene while in others it is only part of the scene. These different iconographical concepts of using the wagon centre stage or as part of the narrative may even be of importance in relation to religion. The first could be connected with the Christian belief while the second refers to tradition.
At the same time it is obvious that the carriage-body burials are widely spread in medieval Denmark, with usually only a single such burial at each cemetery. Exceptions can only be found at two cemeteries. It has been suggested that we should not distinguish between richer and poorer furnished carriage graves but rather interpret the female individuals as “leader of the cult in a pagan religious context”.

If this is the case, the female graves should be looked upon as part of a transition-period phenomenon, where the women had a special function in the pagan cult and where their task could have been to prepare society for the change of religion.

This thesis might be supported by the fact that some of the burials are furnished with Thor’s hammer or cross pendants. In this context the wagon can not only be regarded as a part of pagan mythology, but even as a part of Christian Viking-age iconography, where Christ’s journey into Jerusalem might not necessarily have been made on a donkey but perhaps on a wagon drawn by horses.

The use of the wagon by women also seems to be of high importance during the eleventh century. A large number of women are mentioned on the rune stones as erectors of bridges. The practical need for building better communication systems for the wagon is connected here with a meritorious act and in the eyes of the builder probably even regarded with the Christian idea of Christ as pontifex, i.e. the conception that the bridge builder will have a place in heaven (fig 4.).

The role of women in a conversion period
As the short survey has demonstrated, burials containing wagon-bodies are far from easy solutions. What is the reason for the fact that the wagons occur in both a pagan and Christian context, exclusively spread among women?

According to Anne-Sofie Gräslund men had a higher mobility and while travelling they would more easily make contact with Christianity. Women on the other hand were tied to their home. If a mission was stationed at the trading place, “one could expect that the new belief would bear fruit among women”.

Birgit Sawyer has pointed especially to the social and religious factors which might have attracted women to Christianity. “The belief in paradise may have filled a gap, especially for women who were excluded from Valhall and who could only look forward to the black pit of Hel”.

There are even other factors like the equality of the sexes before God, the value of the individual, irrespective of fertility, the belonging to a house, her position in society. Even a change in attitude towards children, where infanticide was forbidden, might have been one of the reasons.

These arguments sound quite convincing, but there is one problem: usually there is no more than one grave with a cross or crucifix pendant existing in each cemetery and if we bear in mind the “classical pagan” gravegoods like Thor’s hammer and the wagon, favoured at the same time, it seems that the reason might be another, or at least a more complicated one.

What do we know about the position of the woman in the Viking Age? Is she a free, proud and independent individual or an oppressed and powerless one?

Christianity is mainly transferred by males like bishops, missionaries and priests. But what was the situation in pagan religion? Could women have a position in cult religion which allowed them the possibility of being among those who had control over the pagan cult and its ritual involving different types of women in Norse mythology.

As pointed out by E.-M. Göransson we can make a distinction between different types of women in Norse mythology. There is the virgin (mod), the wife, the widow, the concubine (frilla), the slave and the sybil or cunning-woman (völva).

The wife could be married in a kind of “contract-marriage” without necessarily having intensive contact with her husband. In this case strong economic or political interests of the families may be the reason for marriage. The concubine could have children with her lover, but the children belonged to the father.

Both contract-marriages and the concubine relationship were heavily attacked by the church, where the ideal of a monogamous marriage with children was fulfilled by either marrying the concubine or by begetting children with the wife.

A special status among the single women was given to widows and sybils. Living circumstances for widows did not necessarily mean a turn for the worse. Inheritance of land was widespread and the basis for pious generosity to women in a Christian society. Finally there is the sybil. She was asked for help in special occasions, to give a forecast for the season, to foretell the future and to tell men other things they wanted to know. Unlike the mythical volva, the human sybil did not have direct access to the desired information but had to engage in a magic ritual involving seidr.

Returning to the archaeological record it would be useful to discuss knowledge of which group these commemorated “high-status” women belonged to. The position of the warrior-wife has been pointed out concerning the wagon-graves without solving the riddle that there is a gap in...
time between the male (early 10th century) and female (middle 10th century) graves.

Other positions in society like the old woman, the concubine and the sybil have never been discussed. There is only the material from 2000 Scandinavian rune stone inscriptions that has been thoroughly investigated by Birgit Sawyer. She has focused especially on widows and their social status. This group of individuals makes it possible for us to understand the vital interest in pious actions like bridge building in early medieval Scandinavia, which would explain the necessity of wagon-graves.

But the regular distribution of both pagan and Christian attributes in Viking-age cemeteries, which is quite striking with the exception of three places, could have another reason. We cannot exclude that women had a close contact with religion (not only in the sense of sibyls) making it possible for them to integrate Christian elements and thoughts at an early stage in Scandinavian society. The role of a priestess cannot be determined, we know too little about pagan religion.

But the archaeological record suggests that special cult functions were not carried out by just anybody but assigned to certain persons. Since there are still hundreds of graves hidden in the ground and the symbolic role of artefacts is open to many interpretations, this thesis may turn out to be wide of the mark. But still it is time to turn from defining social trends which are too general and investigate the role of smaller communities and the individual.

The distribution of the different items with concentrations and blank areas makes it even clearer that regional differences must have played an important role in Viking-Age society. Concerning the erection of rune stones, B. Sawyer has stated that in areas like Denmark, Norway, Småland and Gotland only a small number were commissioned by men and women (fig 5.). In these areas women did not hide behind their male relatives. They could own and dispose of property and did not have to submit to distant male relatives.

It was these widowed and single women who took on the role of men. In other words: perhaps widows and single women had a stronger interest in symbolizing their Christian faith, especially in areas where their status was regarded as lower (with the exception of Gotland).

At the same time the large number of graves in early medieval Denmark with a wagon or a Thor’s hammer present us with a problem. If we regard the wagon as a materialization of a phenomenon that is later documented by the raising of bridge-builder rune stones, the problem could be solved in a chronological way. Tenth century rune stones in early medieval Denmark are quite different from eleventh century rune stones in Uppland in their inscriptions and images.

The status of a widow or a single woman could have been the same in Denmark, but it was expressed in burials rather than on rune stones. Or could it be that these women with wagons and pagan symbols belonged to a different group in society, like the sybils? A group which disappeared after the Christianization of Scandinavia even if they had played a major part in its success?

The article is part of the contribution “The Cross goes North: Christian symbols and Scandinavian women” in Martin Carver (ed.), The Age of Conversion in Northern Europe 500-1000 AD. York, forthcoming.

**Further reading**


The Gotlandic farm – a history of 2000 years

By Dan Carlsson

On the island of Gotland, situated in the middle of the Baltic Sea, the traditional form of settlement during Viking Age was the single farm. There are no traces of villages or hamlets as far back as the 1st century AD. Investigations carried out during the last twenty years has clearly shown that there is an extensive continuation in the settlement pattern, meaning that the farms we see today actually have their roots as far back as the time around the birth of Christ.

Though, in most cases it is rather difficult to follow this long line of settlement history, from prehistoric time to our days, depending most of all of the last centuries huge changes of landscape and settlement. In some rare cases, where the farm has been abandoned early, we do have a unique chance to investigate a farm in more detail.

One of these examples, and the best-known one at present, is the deserted farm of Fjäle in the parish of Ala in eastern Gotland. Extensive archaeological and cultural geographic investigations over a number of years have produced a comprehensive material that provides an excellent illustration of an Iron Age – medieval farm in rural Gotland.

The farm is situated in the southern part of Ala parish, quite isolated from the rest of the settlement. Thanks to its isolated situation, the area has not been subjected to building, cultivation or road building during latter times. Traces of the farm have, in other words, been preserved until our time and the area is now a well-kept meadow. Archaeological and scientific investigations have examined the buildings as well as the graves and development of the countryside.

Fjäle – a 1200-year old farm

Through the archaeological investigations it is possible to follow the Fjäle farm’s history for a period of 1200 years. The farm was established around AD 100 and continued to be in use until about 1360.

During the pre-Christian era the farm inhabitants were buried in three grave-fields, located south of the buildings. However certain individuals are buried along the roads that connect Fjäle with the rest of the community. The area of cultivated fields increased continuously through the years, from the beginning covering an area of about 1.5 ha, increasing to about 10 ha at the end of the farm’s history.

During the 12th century a smaller farm was separated from the main farm and set up in the northern end of the property. This separation has many parallels with other farms on Gotland, and can be seen as the expansion that occurred during that time.

In the mid-14th century Fjäle is abandoned, both the main farm and the small northern farm. The coins found in the younger farmhouse indicate that this happens about 1360. Why it is abandoned is not explainable. We can, however, confirm that the farmhouse was burnt down. It seems to have been done on purpose, since relatively few larger artefacts were found during excavation. The era was a time of turmoil on Gotland, not least in connection with the Danish King Valdemar Atterdag’s conquest of Gotland in 1361 and it is not entirely unlikely that the farm’s abandonment can be related to that.

An example of historical settlement

The results from the investigations in Fjäle give a clear indication that the farm should be regarded as a normal farm during that time period, both by the size of the fields and the kinds of artefacts found on the farm. Area-wise the farm can be thought to have had about 50 ha of land (fields and meadows), which is relatively large compared to other farms on Gotland around 1700. The field area is reckoned to 10 ha, which lies in the upper scale in comparison with other existing farms in the neighbourhood during the 17th century.

Even in the oldest part of the farm, that is the Iron-age house, it is possible to discern that the farm and the people living there had a certain status. In both an Iron-age house, and the fields belonging to the oldest era, we have found Roman silver coins (denarius). In total six Roman denarii were found during excavations, of which one came from a child’s grave in one of the
graves and their owners. Besides the coins there were also several pieces of very rare glass, seldom seen in Sweden. One of them was a piece of red-violet glass, which is only found in a very few examples in Scandinavia, and there were also four pieces of a glass horn from the 1st century, the only one of its kind on Gotland. Finds from the graves show that even during the late Iron Age the farm cannot be regarded as a poor fringe farm, but rather as belonging to the category of well-to-do farms.

During investigations of the 13th century medieval manor-house remains of a tall, narrow glass of the type originating from the Rhine-area and a relatively large amount of stoneware pottery imported from the southern Baltic area were found. All in all these signs would seem to indicate that the farm should be regarded as quite a normal farm for the Viking Age – Middle Ages. The only exception from a normal farm is that Fjäle would be abandoned for reasons we cannot determine today.

People at the farm
Calculating the number of people on a farm during Viking Age – early Middle Ages on Gotland involves certain difficulties, especially since we lack written sources from that time. We are forced, in other words, to use different kinds of substitute sources to make an estimate. Here we are dealing with two kinds of sources. On one hand we attempt to calculate backward from more recent sources, mostly the oldest land registry books and census registers. On the other, it is a matter of trying to calculate the possible number of people from the field material. It should be observed that it is naturally impossible to arrive at completely reliable figures, but by combining a number of different sources it should be possible to arrive at an approximate estimation of the likely population on the farm during the Middle Ages.

The written sources from early Middle Ages indicate that a normal farmer could be expected to have a number of thralls on his farm. Naturally we cannot calculate exactly how many there might have been, but it may be supposed that the freed thralls, when they became free, corresponded to the hired farmhands and maids. From later sources one gets the impression that it was usual for each farm to have one or two farmhands and one or two maids.

This gives us a certain lead in interpreting a possible social grouping of the people on a Gotlandic farm during the early Middle Ages. What becomes clearly apparent is that we can see two groups, possibly three: the landowners (farmers), landless (harvest hands, crofters) and thralls. This division of three is clearly evident in the Gutalagen (the Gotlandic Law, written down around AD 1220). In the law there is an additional grouping of people that cuts more crosswise. The law makes a clear distinction between Gotlanders and non-Gotlanders, i.e. people coming from outside Gotland, including the Swedish mainland.

What traces can we find of possible social stratification at Fjäle and how should we interpret the situation during the early Middle Ages? To begin with it must be stated that we have no direct physical traces of people, since they are in all likelihood buried in the graveyard at Ala church. But indirectly we can create a certain picture of the situation. Here I would like to point out three possible sources that can be used. One angel of approach is the graves, to the extent they exist. Another is to calculate the number of houses at a given time, which should give a picture of how many households there were on the farm. A third possibility is to calculate the arable acreage available at a certain time, and by estimating the probable yields making a rough estimate of how many people could be supported by that area. This assumes, of course, that the main part of the food supply came from their own farm, which is not always so certain on Gotland during a period when trade and commerce were at a premium.

The Graves
The prehistoric graves at Fjäle are concentrated in three grave fields located south of the settlement, as well as a number of graves spread along the roads connecting Fjäle with the rest of the community. Attributing these spread-out graves to Fjäle is probably quite certain considering that the closest settlement, prehistoric as well as historic, lies several kilometres away.

One of the grave fields at Fjäle has been completely investigated, making it possible to conduct an osteological analysis and estimate the size of the underlying population. Dating the grave field stretches from about 550 AD to 800 AD. The investigation has shown that the grave field contains a total of 65 persons, 40 adults and 25 children. The number of persons alive at the same time has been estimated to 10–16 persons, including 3–5 children. It is likely that the number of children was somewhat low. These numbers would...
suggest that here we are dealing with 2 households, if we assume that the population then, as in the Middle Ages, was built up based on the family. The investigation of the graves indicates a clear social grouping as well, in so far as one can suspect a division between the farm people and another group of persons. Those I call farm people are buried in clearly shaped graves, usually man and woman in the same grave. Consistently the man has his weapons with him, and the woman wears a traditional set of jewellery for the era. Nearly all the graves contain dogs. In several of the graves there are also one or several infants.

Besides these graves there are also a number of individuals who are buried on the edge of the more traditional graves. As a rule these persons have no objects with them, with the occasional exception of a simple knife, a comb or a few beads. This gives a strong impression that we are dealing with a group of people who could be called thralls or slaves. It is interesting to note that the graves scattered along the roads that we investigated also contained individuals lacking objects, with a few exceptions.

If we summarise the early Viking period grave material it can be stated that we are dealing with an obvious social stratification on the farm in the form of two classes, the landowners – farmers on one hand, and the thralls or slaves on the other. The osteological investigation of the grave field also indicates that the population of this time probably corresponds to two households.

The Dwelling Houses

On the farmyard there are three dwelling houses whose construction (stone foundation and fireplace) would indicate a medieval dating. Two of these houses have been investigated. In one case it is a question of a relatively small building that can be dated by find objects to the 12th or early 13th centuries. It was presumably the rich building. It can be dated to about 7 x 10 meters and contained rich finds. In several of the graves there are also one or several infants.

The third house has not been investigated. It lies in the western edge of the settlement site, quite near the edge of the cliff. The construction is reminiscent of the large farmhouse that was studied, although not just as big. We don’t know how old the building is, but considering its construction, I feel that it is probably about the same age as the forenamed farmhouse. This means that we obviously have two farmhouses in use simultaneously. The centrally situated farmhouse was clearly the Fjäle farmer’s dwelling house. But what was the use of the other one? I can see two possibilities, either it is a case of sharing the farm, which would mean that there were two farmers on the place, or the other building was meant for the domestic servants or thralls.

If we add up the results of the analysis of the dwelling houses it seems a reasonable interpretation that there was two farm households on the farmyard during the Middle Ages plus a smaller habitation to the north where the workers (thralls, servants, crofters) lived.

The Fjäle Farm – a summary

The farm was probably made up of two households during the Viking Age – Middle Ages with an additional number of thralls or domestic servants. Furthermore the find material shows clearly that the people on the farm were in direct contact with Visby as well as with the international currents that came that way. In other words we can conclude that the farm was as active in the European trends taking place in the Baltic region as the townsmen of Visby were.

In Fjäle there are several phenomena that clearly indicate a level of prosperity on the farm and the question arises of how this prosperity could be achieved, or in other words, what products people could sell to accumulate the luxury we can perceive on the farm. It seems convenient to assume that these were agricultural and forestry products, since it is difficult to imagine anything else. However it is more difficult to point out exactly which wares they might be. Possibly there are some answers in the land registry book from 1653. It lists all the things that people earned money from. In Ala and the neighbouring parishes people made money in the same way as in the Garde Ting according to the land registry book, i.e. “from tar, beams and the sale of other material”. In Halla ting, which was very similar to Ala in terms of the landscape, “people earned an income from the sale of grain, tar, beams and other timber”.

If we transfer this to Fjäle farm and its isolated location in a well-forested area it is likely that the farm’s profits were from the sale of forest products, but also from grain considering the extent of the farm’s arable land. These sales must certainly have yielded an economic profit that could be spent on imported luxury articles. In this way a picture appears of a farm and its inhabitants who despite their isolated location were influenced to a high degree by European trends in the Baltic area and who were actively involved in the currents of the time.

About the author

Dan Carlsson is associate professor at Gotland University College and project leader for Viking Heritage as well as for the excavations of the Viking-Age harbour and trading place at Fröjel, Gotland. He has contributed two monographs and several articles to the CCC-project. He is one of the senior staff members at the Gotland Center for Baltic Studies, Gotland University.

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Vasalles or seniores?

The old nobility and new power structures in post-conquest Estonia

By Heiki Valk

Estonia was conquered and Christianised by German and Danish crusaders in 1208–1227. The conquest also meant the end of Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Ages. What happened to the old native nobility after the conquest?

Nobility in late prehistoric Estonia

Written data about the nobility of prehistoric Estonia is limited to that found in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia who mentions the leaders of Estonians as meliores and seniores. The traditional treatment of the Estonian prehistoric society has been egalitarian. The seniores and meliores have been regarded as representatives and war leaders, not as nobility with hereditary power.

In the 1990s new views of prehistoric society appeared. Now, on the basis of new theoretical approaches and the reinterpretation of hillforts and stone graves, it is regarded as largely non-egalitarian. As the number of stone graves is not large enough to account for the whole population, they are regarded as grave monuments of the nobility and/or “higher middle class” rather than the common people. Evidently, the latter followed some other burial tradition. Also hillforts are no longer interpreted so much as communal centres for defence purposes and under collective ownership, but more as power centres connected with the social elite – seniores and meliores.

The usage of hillforts gives evidence of power consolidation in post-Viking Estonia. In the 11th century several small hillforts from the Viking Age were deserted. The process of power consolidation can be clearly observed in the surroundings of Viljandi, the main centre and most important prehistoric fort of Sakala district. Thus, in the mid-12th century the hillfort of Naanu a distance of 10 km from it was abandoned. Somewhat later, but still before the German conquest, the hillfort of Sinialliku, 7 km from Viljandi was also deserted. Evidently, the leaders of these local centres were the losers in the struggle for power.

The stratification of prehistoric society is also reflected in recent finds from Viljandi. There, 130 m from the hillfort,
on a small hill with steep slopes, an intensive inhabitation layer was found. The relative height of ca. 30 m and impressive views over the lake and the surroundings enable interpretation of the place as the site of a fortified manor of a local nobleman. The manor, founded in the 2nd half of the 12th century, was destroyed by fire in course of the conquest, most likely in 1211. German crossbow bolts evince this dating. From the cultural layer two pendants, representing different ideologies – a cross and a wolf fang – were found close to each other.

The conquest and the nobility

From 1208–1227 in the course of fierce fights, Estonia was gradually forced, district by district, to surrender to German and Danish crusaders and accept Christianity. When the conquered land was divided between the Danish king, the Order of the Swordbrothers and the bishoprics of Tartu and Ösel–Wiek, medieval models of society and corresponding power structures were also introduced.

Although a large part of the old nobility was killed in the battles, some of it still survived. What was its role in the new society? There were probably great regional differences, depending on the conditions of subjection – hardest for South Estonian lands of Sakala and Ugandi which were subdued after total military defeat in 1223 and 1224 –, the landlord and the reliability of the local nobility, i.e. on its behaviour during the conquest period.

Continental Northern and Western Estonia

In continental northern and western Estonia sharp contradictions existed between the Germans and the Danes during the conquest period. To relieve the situation, a buffer state directly subordinated to the Pope, was created in the lands under dispute – Läänemaa, Järvamaa and Virumaa.

In 1225 the Pope's legate Wilhelm of Modena sent all the Germans out of Virumaa, Ugandi and Ilmandu which were conquered after total military defeat in 1223 and 1224 –, the landlord and the reliability of the local nobility, i.e. on its behaviour during the conquest period.

Southern Estonia

From southern Estonia there is almost no data about the preservation of Estonians' autonomy and the involvement of the old nobility in the vassal system. The land surrendered – Sakala in 1223, Ugandi in 1224 – after suppressing the uprising which began with the killing or imprisonment of all the Germans.

In Ugandi, the core area for the bishopric of Tartu, the bishop divided the land between 4 magnate vassals who probably enfeoffed it in turn to their subordinates of German origin. In the Order lands, due to the structure of the military organisation, vassals were not needed. The lands were governed from castles which were later joined by Order manors as economic centres.

Enough reason for mistrusting the South Estonian nobility had caused the treacherous murders of the Germans in 1223. Differently from the South Estonians, however, the people of Virumaa and Järvamaa had sent their priests intact to the Danes in Tallinn.

There is still one exception in southern Estonia where archaeology indicates the preserved political autonomy of the natives and the local nobility's involvement in the vassal system. The excavations of Silvia Laul in Siksali in the most southeasterly corner of the country have shown the preservation of pre-Christian burial customs even into the 15th century.

Thus, men were buried with a spear and an axe and the opposite orientation of different sexes – a custom of non-Christian origin – was also observed until that time. The special status of a man buried in the 13th century is evinced by a sword with Latin inscriptions. As its hilt was made of bone, the sword was probably not a real weapon but a gift of symbolic value given by the Order authorities to the leader of the border community.

The special status of Siksali region is also shown by attempts to build a hillfort as late as the end of the 13th or the first half of the 14th century. Evidently, the unusual autonomy of the area was a result of its peripheral location at the Russian border.

Different course of cultural processes

Regional differences in the status of the
local nobility in new power structures are also evinced by the different course of cultural processes. By the end of the 13th century burial customs and fashions in North and West Estonia had taken on a rather “medieval” character, finds disappear from the graves and also ornament types based on Iron Age traditions, largely vanish. The acceptance of cultural innovations was evidently caused by the presence of native noblemen in the new power structures: through its authority the nobility also mediated new ideas among common people.

In South Estonia, on the contrary, in the 13th century no signs of “Europeanisation” of the burial customs and fashions exist, except for those immediately connected with the conquest and Christianisation. The lack of innovations can be explained by the fact that after the conquest the local old elite was not included as vassals in the new power structures. Having lost its status in the new society, the South Estonian nobility remained in opposition and also did not act as mediator of “European” cultural innovations.

Two status groups
After the conquest the local nobility was divided into two clearly defined subgroups: those involved in the vassal system and those excluded from it. In spite of their different status, the two status-groups still had much in common.

The real government of the land by new authorities was probably based on the old administration system, at least during the first post-conquest decades but perhaps also longer. Throughout the country it was probably just the old nobility – no matter whether vassals or not – who were responsible in their former areas of power for fulfilling the duties accepted with the subjection treaties, as well as new obligations: collecting taxes, organising the military service and finding people for building castles, roads and churches.

However, different social status involved different rights. Those who became vassals were enfeoffed with lands and received the right to a share of the taxation revenues. The share of the other group, on the other hand, remained limited with personal responsibility for fulfilling collective obligations.

What was the social status of the Estonian nobility involved in the feudal structures? Undoubtedly, it must have differed greatly, depending on the viewpoint.

For the foreign landlords the vassals of native origin were nothing but vassals with all corresponding rights and duties – although with a strange language and habits and maybe somewhat mistrusted.

From the popular viewpoint, the authority of the native local landlords, in terms of preserving ethnocultural identity, could still be based on prehistoric traditions. In such conditions, the vassals who had preserved some of their former rights were probably regarded as “ours”. The attitudes and respect towards the vassals of native identity, however, could depend greatly on the stage of taxation for “private”, i.e. their own purposes.

The fate of the native nobility
What was the historical fate of the native noblemen in the new society? As a result of marriages with members of other, non-indigenous vassal families, as well as effected by the linguistic and cultural demands of the “status environment”, the Estonian vassals gradually lost their ethnocultural identity and became Germanised.

Probably it was the large uprising of 1343/45 that put an end to the Estonians’ control over the strongholds and gave a powerful impetus to the fall of vassals with native identity. The vassals who participated in the uprising were killed or lost their status. The others who remained neutral, due to the general changes in atmosphere and sharply awakened mistrust of the natives, probably soon lost their ethnocultural identity.

What about the part of the native nobility who was not involved in the new power structures? Parallel to the birth of manors as new administrative and economic units, the old elite or their descendants ceased to be personally responsible for fulfilling the collective duties: respective control functions were transferred to the manors.

Probably, in the new context some of the former native noblemen were given a new status as manor officials with coercing and overseeing functions but most melted in among common peasants. In some cases, however, oral tradition about how some Estonian peasant families were descended from the old nobility lasted until the 19th and 20th centuries.

About the author
Heiki Valk is the head of Archaeology Center of the University of Tartu, Estonia. His research period stretches from the final Post-Viking Iron Age until Early Modern times. The main field of interests concerns cultural processes and the history of mentality and religion, as reflected in the archaeological record. For opening the meaning of material remains also folkloric and ethnological parallels are being used. Heiki Valk was a member of the CCC project. His PhD thesis Rural Cemeteries of Southern Estonia 1225-14800 AD is published within the series CCC-papers.

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On Saturday 11th August, the Viking Longboat Races 2001 World Championships were held at Peel in the Isle of Man.

Despite poor weather conditions, the Scottish Life International sponsored event was great entertainment for both competitors and spectators. A strong breeze assisted the teams in rowing the longboats down Peel Harbour to the buoy, but caused difficulties when rowing back.

Teams competed in mens, womens or mixed team categories with ten rowers per boat. Each boat was also supplied with an experienced coxswain to steer the boat and shout encouragement when needed.

Thirty-six teams participated in the mixed race which was won by “Northern Young Farmers Mixed” with a time of 3 minutes 30.56 seconds. Of the eleven ladies teams competing, “Central and Southern Young Farmers” won the women’s race with a time of 4 minutes 11.9 seconds. Sixteen teams battled in the men’s race which was won by “Oar Inspired by Sweeney” in a time of 3 minutes 25.25 seconds.

The races first started in 1963 but have been World Championships since 1994. Teams from all over the world have competed in the Championships including Alaska. Next year’s races will be on 13th July 2002 and any teams interested in competing should book their places well in advance. Further details will be available on www.peelvikinglongboat.com from early Spring and the event will be listed on www.gov.im/tourism/Events.

The Manx National Heritage team “Manannan’s Marauders” arrive at Peel.

Sue Palmer, Manx National Heritage
Mjöllnir: an enduring symbol of honour and one which commands recognition among the folk of northern Europe and beyond. Its great wielder, Þórr (Thor), continues to receive admiration and respect as his vigour thunders through the pages of history, but how far back does the legacy of the hammer/axe travel?

In Post-glacial south Scandinavia, for instance, the inhabitants were confronted by an environment dominated by forest trees and this heightened the need for the axe, being further exacerbated by the later transition from birch and pine to tougher and often thicker deciduous trees. The material used for the construction of such tools included flint, stone, antler and bone – with flint providing the hardest and sharpest objects.

During flint working a core would be struck with a hammerstone thereby producing flakes or larger fragments which could then be further worked into objects such as an axe or arrowheads (this method of production is known as “knapping” and is still practised today, although mainly by ethnoarchaeologists). When the hammerstone struck the core sparks would also be an inevitable outcome. I would suggest that this may then have been viewed in association with the working of a blacksmith as he uses his hammer to construct tools and weapons upon an anvil, again sparks – tiny lightning flashes – accompany the process. Such axes or adzes were used in the felling of trees and again here an association may have been drawn between the effect of a lightning strike against a tree and the tool which would, through human effort, produce a similar result, that of the felling of a tree.

It may also be of interest to note that excavations at Talheim, Germany, exposed a Neolithic mass grave in which thirty-five skulls had been fractured by shoe-last axes used as maces (the tool was also a very practical weapon).

Another factor of such tools/ weapons, I feel, is that they should not necessarily be interpreted as merely extensions of men’s limbs but rather a projection of their mind. The recognition of a need for subsequent construction and method of the use of such tools/weapons would determine the user’s life and that of his community and the very environment in which they found themselves.

What of Mjöllnir’s construction?
According to Snorri, clouds of blood in Brokk’s eyes determined the forged form of Mjöllnir, yet it was a form that would crush and shatter. Loki’s wager spawned the hammer and when:

“...he gave Thor the hammer and said he would be able to strike as heavily as he liked, whatever the target, and the hammer would not fail, and if he threw it at something, it would never miss, and never fly so far that it would not find its way back to his hand, and if he liked, it was so small that it could be kept inside his shirt. But there was this defect that the end of the handle was rather short. Their decision was that the hammer was the best out of all the precious things and provided the greatest defence against frost-giants...” (Faulkes 1987).

Þórr was certainly revered as literary and archaeological accounts attest to the fact that temples were built to him in Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Ireland, the two most well-known being Uppsala and Throndheim.

Another famous and well-furnished temple stood in Dublin on the river Liffey’s north bank and close to a forest sacred to Þórr. The temple survived until 994 AD when it was despoiled by minions of an Irish king. Within such temples images of Þórr could be found in various sizes and postures with Mjöllnir ever present.

At Throndheim it has been alluded to that there was an image of Öku-Þórr which was constructed in such a manner that when the chariot was pulled, by means of an attached cord, it produced the noise of thunder as it was...
rolled forward. Certainly in the ritual environment this may be viewed as a defining part of the ritual whereby the image of Öku-pórr became animated through the medium of sound, that of thunder.

A further indication of the employment of noise in a ritual context may be found in Saxo as he recounts when Magnus Nilsson entered Pórr’s temple in Sweden in 1125 AD and removed a number of models of Mjöllnir:

“He took care to bring home certain hammers of unusual weight, which they call Jupiter’s, used by the island men in their antique faith. For the men of old, desiring to comprehend the causes of thunder and lightning by means of the similitude of things, took hammers great and many of bronze, with which they believed the crashing of the sky might be made, thinking that great and violent noises might very well be imitated by the smith’s toil, as it were. But Magnus, in his zeal for Christian teaching and dislike to paganism, determined to spoil the temple of its equipment and Jupiter of his tokens in the place of his sanctity. And even now the Swedes consider him guilty of sacrilege and a robber of spoil belonging to the gods” (Davidson & Fisher 1996).

The Saami shaman are also known to have used hammers to strike their drums in religious ceremonies, thereby heightening the ritual environment through which a trance state may be entered into. Decisions were reached by consulting the shamans’ drums. The sound of the drum told the shaman where food could be located and allowed him to see into the past and the future.

The likeness of some Saami hammers were, in the past, compared to that of Mjöllnir by early scholars though of late this has been questioned in that the Saami hammers where primarily constructed from reindeer antler and that the inherent shape of the antler was naturally hammer-shaped. Yet I would not hasten to discount the earlier premise as the antlers may have been chosen due to their resultant shape and they too were ritual implements.

The antler also provided a useful tool and several forms, such as the perforated mattock-head, made from the base of stag antler. A progressive stage saw a new form constructed from a section midway up the antler and perforated through the stump of the trez tine, which in turn formed a useful socket for the handle.

There are also a significant number of finds of ornamented deer antler such as at Skalstrup and Kalundborg, Zealand, which display anthropomorphic designs accompanied by geometric motifs such as chevrons and barbed lines. Here, I suggest, such artefacts may be seen to have been embraced on a personal and/or ritual context. Their primary function thereby being refined and enriched by ornamentation which added a greater definition to the object in question.

The exploits involving Pórr and Mjöllnir are well documented in the lore and familiar to many, therefore I do not wish to recount such in length in respect of this subject. Suffice it to say Mjöllnir was used by Pórr as a weapon, often thrown, the stunting of the handle may have contributed towards balance and control during flight.

We have previously seen Snorri’s account of the happenings by which Mjöllnir was formed; Saxo also relates a version, herein Mjöllnir is described as a club:

“...Thor shattered all their shield-defences with the terrific swings of his club, calling on his enemies to attack him as much as his comrades to support him. There was no armour, which could stand up to his strokes, nor anyone who could survive them. Shields, helmets, everything he drove at with his oak cudgel were crushed on impact, nor were bodily size or muscle any protection. Consequently victory would have gone to the gods, had not Hother, whose line of men had bent inwards, flown forward and rendered the club useless by lopping off the handle” (Davidson & Fisher 1996).

In Pórr’s confrontation with Hrungir the giant carried a whetstone which, when shattered by Mjöllnir, a fragment of the whetstone lodged in Pórr’s head despite, as Snorri relates, the distracted attempt of the seeress, Groa, to remove it. The whetstone was commonly used as a sharpener for edged weapons but if struck with a lithic or metallic object it would emit sparks assisting in the cultivation of fire.

The association of the whetstone with Pórr may be indicative of this process, a human replication of lightning and its effect upon contact with a combustible material. A malleable image of Pórr may have had a fragment of whetstone placed into it along with a striker to symbolise the kindling elements of fire available to man and, in a fashion, their greater form within the God.

A whetstone sceptre topped with a young male stag was amongst the seventh century royal treasures of the heathen kings of East Anglia recovered from the ship burial at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk. The presence of such may have served as a physical reminder of the royal lines perceived connection with the Gods in the distant past.

To be continued in next issue.

About the author
Michael Cunningham is an archaeologist living and working in Ireland. His main interest is prehistoric Scandinavia. He is presently studying the Viking Age and its subsequent impact on North Western Europe.

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Hammer amulet, Viking Age, from Scania, Sweden.
Curriculum Vitae

Viking Heritage proudly presents a short story written by José Fernando Blanco a Viking enthusiast from Spain

It is so kind of you to listen to my story. I hope I won't waste too much of your time. I'll have to use some names that you may find difficult to pronounce, but don't worry; there won't be many.

To help locate my story, let me start by saying that humans (such as you and, at least for the time being, also me) live here, in what I'll call middle land or Midgardr. The gods and their kin inhabit Asgardr, while the evil creatures are in Utgardr. You might understand it better if I called them Earth, Heaven and Hell, respectively; but to tell the truth, they aren't exactly the same.

There is a great hall in Asgardr called Valhöll (the House of the Dead). This is the venue of the banquet of the supreme god, Odin. That name, at least, won't sound unknown to you. The guests of this banquet are the einherjar, warriors from Midgardr that have died in battle. The valkyries pick them up from the battleground and take them to Valhöll, where, so to speak, they are resurrected. They spend their days there fighting, and their nights eating and drinking. They drink mostly wine and beer, and some of them also hydromel, a beverage for women which the valkyries call nectar of the gods. Their food is the meat of a wild boar prepared for them daily by Andhrimnir, Odin's cook.

All the above is documented in thousands of books. You can even find it on the Internet. Later I will give you the address of a Web site I have prepared myself. There you will easily be able to expand this information with other interesting data, such as, for example, how the world was created, some of Odin's surnames, and the different kinds of beings living in Asgardr.

What you won't find, neither there nor anywhere else, are the recipes that Andhrimnir employs to cook the boar he serves daily to the einherjar; but I do know those recipes. Because I am Andhrimnir.

Odin, a great expert in magic, created the House of the Dead to host his einherjar. To feed them he formed a kitchen with an abundant storeroom. On the fire he placed a gigantic boiling-kettle, and in the kettle a suitably huge boar, ready to kill and cook. A moment later I appeared.

I immediately put my hands to work, as if I had been there all my life. Killing the boar was easier than could have been expected, provided that the poor animal lacked any survival instinct; he probably had the intuition that he would come back to life next morning, his meat totally regenerated on his bones.

But when I was about to cook the boar, I discovered I was missing some information. Thus, when a valkyrie entered the kitchen a moment later, I took the chance to ask her:

"How many people must I feed with this boar?"

"Don't bother about that," she answered. "Just prepare the meat and cut it in big portions. We'll come to fetch the plates when they're ready and inform you when no more are needed."

Obediently, I went on with my task. Although the supreme god had put in me the knowledge of a first-class chef, I really lacked the time to do my best that day. Therefore, my first recipe in Valhöll was, let me say, rather simple: wild boar roasted in its own juices, and that's all.

When the meat was ready I started to cut it as I had been told. From its size I estimated I would get some fifty big portions, but when a valkyrie came in and told me it was enough, I had prepared no less than a thousand dishes. ...

Before I go on with the story, I think it's time to tell you a few things about every day life in Valhöll. The House has five hundred and forty gates, through which the einherjar walk out each and every morning. As I have already said, they spend their whole day fighting each other. When the sun dies, their injuries (even the mortal ones) heal instantly, and they reenter the House, bewailing hair-raising hymns of war. They sit on benches around the table, swallow up their boar, and drink their fill. Then they sleep a deep, sound slumber on those very same benches until the sun rises again, when they walk back to the battlefield.

Daily fights are not meant to be only a pastime, they are also an exercise to maintain the physical prowess of the einherjar, who, when Ragnarök (something like your Apocalypse) arrives, will have to face the evil forces coming from Utgardr to invade the gods' premises. I have the feeling that you don't take this part too seriously, so I will spare you the details.

You might feel that the warriors' lives are a little dull. If so, just imagine mine, alone all day in my kitchen: first, kill and cook the boar; next cut it in thousands of pieces and serve it on the plates; and finally, completely exhausted, lie on the kitchen floor; and do it all over and over until Odin and all the einherjar had been served.

And thus, as I have stated, the centuries came to pass, each one resembling the former, until, that is, one year ago, more or less.

Not surprisingly, a time arrived when it became more and more difficult to find a new combination of ingredients to cook my boar (always observing the laws of gastronomy). Finally, one morning I had to face the inevitable: the possibilities afforded by my storeroom were completely exhausted. Surely, nothing prevented me from repeating any of my previous recipes. The einherjar wouldn't have noticed, and at any rate they wouldn't have cared at all. But I did care. I believed that would mean surrendering to the routine I had so long fought.

There was only an alternative: I needed to...
change the main element. In other words, I had to do without the boar. Logistically that was not a problem, since the storeroom had huge reserves of all kinds of meats and fish. But would the einherjar like that? And, moreover, how would the irascible Odin react?

Finally, my determination to innovate was stronger than all my fears. For the first time, the boar stayed alive; his place was taken by a few thousand partridges. I started filling the dishes and held my breath, listening to any sound coming from the dining room.

The Valkyries, consumed by their routine, didn’t notice the change. Regarding the einherjar, surely their ability to taste had completely atrophied, since I could hear them sing and belch like any day before.

But while I was serving the last partridges I heard dreadful screams of pain coming from the main hall. No Odin’s warrior could utter those hurls, not even if he were submitted to the torment of the blood’s eagle (which description I’ll spare you to avoid that you faint right here).

What had happened? Who was proffering such shrieking hurls? While I was asking myself these questions, Odin himself entered my kitchen like a hurricane and stared at me with the hideous look of his only eye.

... Next thing I remember is being tagged mid air by two Valkyries riding horses, in the midst of a terrible storm. They let me fall on a swampy forest, black as death, filthy and fetid.

I quickly understood I was in Utgardr. Odin had condemned me (for a reason I couldn’t work out then, except that it was no doubt related to my partridge dinner), perhaps until the end of time, to be the victim of all the evil creatures inhabiting that land.

Before I could get up, a group of rambling trolls fell upon me. Those monsters find an endless delight in cruelty; the view of a possible victim wildly excites them. When they saw me, they started a bitter discussion about the most suitable torture. At last one of them said: “Let’s take him to Loki. He will decide.”

The other trolls surely thought that was a good idea. Loki, Odin’s brother by oath, is sly, envious and elaborately cruel. He devised the death of the handsome Baldr, son of the supreme god and whose kindness he could not stand. For his crime he was punished for eternity; thus, when I was taken before him, he was admittedly not at his best.

He was inside a cave, tied to a rock. Above his head, a snake ejected a nasty-looking poison. A woman (his abnegated wife Sigyn) snapped it up in a glass, but every time her glass filled up she had to retire and empty it. Then the corrosive fluid fell on Loki, causing him to burst into unearthly yells of pain. In one of his moments of relief, he looked at me despisingly and asked:

“Who are you and why have you come to Utgardr?”

I introduced myself as Odin’s cook and added that the Valkyries had brought me by force.

“And why has my dearest brother punished you?” Now his voice sounded a little more interested.

I claimed my ignorance and related the partridges’ incident. When I finished speaking, Loki broke into a spine-shivering laugh.

“Ha ha ha! You really got that one-eyed pretentious food with your partridges! You deserve to be rewarded rather than punished, but I am too old to change my ways. Besides, these trolls want to see something. But before that I’ll give you a chance.”

At that moment Sigyn had to empty the glass and Loki howled again. Then he went on:

“You’ll go to Midgardr. You’ll adopt the appearance of a human being and go to the inns where meals are served to the peasants. For a whole year you’ll visit as many inns as you can and talk to their owners. You’ll tell them your story from the beginning, including the partridges incident and your meeting with me. While you’re amongst the humans, I’ll halt time in Valholl.”

I was surprised that someone who could do that had let himself fall into such a humiliating condition; but I withheld expressing my doubts about it. After yet another forced interruption, Loki went on:

“You’ll ask every host for a job as a cook. Should any of them accept, you’ll work for him for one year, after which you’ll return to your kitchen in Asgardr. Odin will not remember what happened. You’ll work there the same as before; but let me advise you to restrain yourself and cook only your boar in the future.”

After a new stop, Loki finished dictating my fate:

“Should no innkeeper hire you in one year, you’ll come back to this cave to serve as the troll’s pastime. When they’re finished with you, I’m afraid my brother will have to find another cook. And now go out! Everybody!”

While the trolls pulled me out, he added in laughs:

“When you’re in Midgardr, try to find out what made the great Odin so angry with you!”

... One moment later I found myself as the person you’ll come back to this cave to serve as the troll’s pastime. When they’re finished with you, I’m afraid my brother will have to find another cook. And now go out! Everybody!”

Throughout all these months I have gotten accustomed to a really good life, but I am afraid the end of this strange dream is near.

The wicked god, in short, made a modern man out of me, which allowed me to get to know, among other things, the Internet. Thanks to that I discovered some aspects of life in Valholl that, despite happening near my kitchen, I completely ignored. This is how I could at last find out what happened with my partridges.

About that and other things related to my story you can find information in my above mentioned personal Web site; I recommend that you visit it before Loki erases every trace of my stay in Midgard:

http://www.geocities.com/andhrimir_valholl

Loki chose this beautiful country as my purgatory. He most likely did so to hinder my objectives, since nobody among you believes that the beings I am talking about really exist. At least I must admit you all are extremely polite with strangers. In the months I’ve been around visiting restaurants, all the people I have talked to have kindly listened to my story until the very end.

True, nobody has ever believed me, and they all have dismissed me with a nice smile. But I really don’t need your belief. The only condition that Loki stated to avoid my torture was that some of you give me a job.

And that is my story. I am Andhrimir, Odin’s cook. Nobody in this world has more experience than I. As I said, you needn’t believe me if you don’t want to. But... will you hire me?

© for the original in Spanish, José Fernando Blanco, 2000

© for the translation into English, Rick Himes & José Fernando Blanco, 2002

About the author

José Fernando Blanco (Spain, 1961) is an amateur writer. His story in Spanish about Odin’s cook won first prize in the “Cocina y Leyenda” literary contest in 2000. His friend and co-worker Rick Himes (Exton, Pennsylvania) provided invaluable help with the English version. José Fernando welcomes whatever information he can get to help him write his projected novel about the Vikings’ raid in Seville in the year 844.

E-mail: correo@jblanco.com

For some Valhalla-recipes, see page 35.
For much of the Viking Age the Scandinavian people retained their traditional religious beliefs. They worshipped pagan gods and buried their dead according to pagan rituals and the objects that were interred with the dead, for what we assume were religious purposes, are today an invaluable source of information about the way they lived.

The Vikings practised two types of burial, inhumation and cremation. The corpse seems to have been buried or burnt in everyday clothes. Personal possessions and utensils used in life were also provided in the grave.

Sometimes the corpse was buried inside a boat or wagon. This leads to the assumption that some form of transportation was believed necessary to carry the deceased to the next world - burial with horses may suggest the same thing. However, it seems clear that burial with a boat or wagon was reserved for wealthy individuals, and may merely have been the means of emphasising the high standing and importance of the deceased person.

Archaeological records suggest that different religious rituals took place. In central Sweden, for instance, the burnt remains were usually carefully separated from the ash and charcoal of the funeral pyre and placed in a pottery vessel which was deposited in a pit dug into the earth. In parts of Finland the cremated remains were scattered on the ground instead. The remains, whether buried or scattered, were then covered by a mound of earth or simply marked by stones arranged in a number of different ways according to locality, again indicating divergent religious practises.

By the end of the tenth century the custom of burial with rich grave goods had died out in Denmark and was becoming less common elsewhere, no doubt as a result of the final triumph of Christianity over the pagan religion. From then onward the practice of inhumation in East-West orientated graves and without accompanying equipment became prevalent throughout Scandinavia.

In recent years many graves have been excavated in the Viking-Age harbour of Fröjel on the island of Gotland, Sweden. Visit Fröjel’s website at [http://frjoel.hgo.se](http://frjoel.hgo.se)

You may also check out Viking Heritage's database at [http://viking.hgo.se](http://viking.hgo.se)

You can find the information in the "excavations" and "sites" categories interesting!

Dear Tina,

There are about 120 single Thor’s hammer amulets known to archaeologists and about 100 of these were found in the Scandinavian countries Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland (most of them were found in Sweden and Norway). The others were discovered in Viking-influenced regions such as England, Ireland, Russia and Poland.

Most of the Thor’s hammers found are made of cast silver or wrought iron but there are also examples made of amber, lead, bronze and even gold. No hammer is identical to the others – they have all been made individually.

On average the Thor’s hammers found are about 3 cm long and 2 cm wide, their weight depending on what material they are made of.

Most of the hammers that the archaeologists have found in Scandinavia were part of hoards but some have also been discovered in graves. The majority of these Thor’s hammers were found in female graves.

**Hi,**

*What does the word “berserk” mean?*

Hello,

As you probably know the word berserk is used for someone who is violent and runs amok. The word has been interpreted in different ways. One way is as “bearskin shirt” as berserks dressed in hides and skins. It has also been interpreted as “bare-sark” as in “bare of shirt” due to the berserkers habit of going into battle without armour.

In Swedish “bärsärk”, “särk” means “shift” or “nightshirt”.

**Hi,**

*Hi, I’m interested in Norse medicine – do you have any information?*

Thanks! Wayne

Dear Wayne,

The art of healing was primarily a woman’s job. Skilful women assisted at childbirths and sometimes female doctors joined the men at battlefields to bandage wounds and take care of the diseased. The Saga tells us that after the battle at Stiklestad in 1030, where Olaf the Holy King was killed, the injured gathered in a granary where a woman gave them milk and bandaged their wounds. She gave the men a special decoction of herbs so by smelling them she could determine whether their bowels were injured. She also tried to pull out an arrowhead from the chest of a mortally wounded warrior with a pair of tongs.

People with special knowledge knew about medicinal herbs and one of the herbs used for pain relief was henbane. Seeds from henbane have been found in many graves from the Viking Age.

However the female doctors could do more than give medicine and clean wounds. They also had special knowledge about the connection between the mind and illness and used both magical and sacred means in the art of healing to invoke help from the Gods. The connection between practical and magic cures can be found in old verses from the Viking Age.

These verses were used to establish contact between the helper and female divinities who had power over life and death.

Christianity deprived the women of the art of healing and left it to men. By and by the old pagan knowledge of healing was lost.

This site also has information on medicine: [http://www.regla-na.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/health_and_medicine.htm](http://www.regla-na.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/health_and_medicine.htm)
Norse gods and goddesses, giants and trolls, elves and dwarves and – of course - dragons abound in the pages of this book, a collection of twelve short stories. The author has been performing as a storyteller of Norse myths for many years in the U.S. and has spent several years studying Norse mythology. He found that he sometimes missed something in between the myths, something that wasn’t told, and this void gnawed at his imagination. For example, the original Eddas often left him wondering what happened next. He felt compelled to tie up these loose ends by writing a series of entirely original stories with roots in the old myths. The result is collected in this book.

The stories offer new perspectives on some of the traditional myths as well as tying up loose ends with altogether new stories. They are like a combination of a serious study of Norse mythology and a creative imagination. The stories are like timeless messages directed to thoughtful people of all ages, just like the original myths may have spoken to the people of the Viking Age. They include messages like trying to see the other person’s point of view as well as choosing responsible decision-making.

Dag Rossman’s book, The Nine Worlds: A Dictionary of Norse Mythology, was published early last year (reviewed in VHM 3/02). He has also released five storytelling collections on audiocassette, the most recent being Wizard Ways: Four Original Myths in the Norse Tradition, also available from the same publisher.

Destination Viking – Western Viking Route is meant to be used together with the earlier Follow the Vikings, Highlights of the Viking World guidebook published by the Council of Europe Cultural Routes in 1996. This means that attractions described well in Follow the Vikings are not repeated in the Western Viking Route unless major developments or alterations have taken place. (Note: When becoming a subscriber of VHM you receive a free copy of Follow the Vikings.)

Destination Viking – Western Viking Route comprises 184 pages and is richly illustrated in full colour. It takes you on a tour to many sites in 19 regions around the North Sea, all connected with the Vikings and the Viking Age. It presents an amazing journey in both time and space as the remains of these sites bear testimony to conditions of life during the Viking Age. The thrill of the Vikings is still to be experienced, 1000 years after the Viking Age!

The book can be ordered from Viking Heritage, Gotland University College, SE-621 67 Visby, Sweden
E-mail: majbritt.andersson@hgo.se

New book!

Theft of the Sun and Other New Norse Myths

Written by Douglas “Dag” Rossman
Published by Skandisk, Inc.
6667 West Old Shakopee Road, Suite 109
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438-2622, USA
ISBN 1-57534-015-1

http://viking.hgo.se
In VHM 4/01 the article called Old gods are still alive presented last year's excavations in the Russian city of Azov, written by two of the participating archaeologists, Gunilla Wickman-Nydolf and Nils-Gustaf Nydolf. These excavations, that will continue this coming summer, are initiated and funded by Thor Heyerdahl, the man who became world-famous when he crossed the Atlantic on the balsa raft, Kon-Tiki, in 1947.

Thor Heyerdahl, together with Per Lillieström, has now written a book about the whole project where they discuss in a dialogue form the background to the expedition and their reasons for and the results of the excavations last summer in Azov.

The basis of the Azov project is a text by Snorre Sturlasson written in the 13th century. There he tells about a chieftain called Odin who lived in Azov with his people until the Roman army made them flee northwards around the year 60 BC. Odin settled in Sweden and gained such great respect that he later came to be regarded as a god by the Vikings.

The authors mean that the Snorre's text describes an actual historic process and that Odin was a real person. Through the archaeological examinations in Azov they maintain they have found proof of Snorre's statements.

As is the case in most of Thor Heyerdahl's projects, this one is also controversial. But even at this old age (he was born in 1914) he doesn’t give up. In this new book he continues his lifelong research in how people have moved over long distances in the past and to make visible the cultural contacts in prehistoric times.

Here at Viking Heritage we hope to be able to follow the continuation of these interesting excavations in Azov with articles in coming issues of this magazine.

At present the book is only available in Norwegian.

### Viking Festival in Poland

The 8th Viking festival/market in Wolin-Jomsborg, Poland, will be held July 12–14, 2002.

Last year about 350 Viking re-enactors from Denmark, Sweden, Germany, England, Russia, Holland, USA and Latvia, the Czech Republic and Poland took part and about 30,000 tourists visited the festival.

Four Viking (Gogstad, Oseberg) and Slavic (Orunia II, Chabrowsk) ships and two music groups contributed to the historical atmosphere. The Viking re-enactor and craftsman Erik den Rode made the biggest rune stone (12 tons) in Europe so far. The Swedish Minister of Agriculture and Polish Ministers also visited the Festival.

Interested? Please contact:
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"Slavic & Viking Centre Wolin-Jomsborg-Vineta" Society
E-mail: blazejst@kki.net.pl
Tel. +48 91 32 61 885
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**Jakten på Odin**

På sporet av vår fortid

(In search of Odin)

Written by Thor Heyerdahl and Per Lillieström
Published by J.M. Stenersens Forlag AS, Oslo, Norway
ISBN 82-7201-316-9

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**About the artist Lou Harrison**

Viking Heritage Magazine has the privilege to present a piece of artwork by Lou Harrison of Thunderheart Studios. He has illustrated the quotation on page 2 from “Hávamál – Words of the High One”. We thank him for his contribution.

Lou Harrison is a professional artist and illustrator (born in Medellin, Colombia, 1964). He studied in USA, but now lives in Denmark where he does advertising and book cover illustrations. Lou has his own business under the name of Thunderheart Studios and works in pencil and ink, watercolours and oils. He formerly freelanced for Marvel and DC Comics in New York City. He will now continue to work for Marvel Comics to draw the adventures of the super-hero “The Mighty Thor”. Lou has also a great interest in the Viking period and is a member of a Viking re-enactment group in Denmark.

Thunderheart Studios
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☎ +45 6441 3140
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**Viking Festival in Poland**

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New Exhibition

Treasures of the Baltic

Underwater Archaeology

In December 2001 a new exhibition opened at The National Maritime Museum in Stockholm. The exhibition continues throughout 2002 and has underwater archaeology as its theme.

It is a presentation of marine archaeology from the nine countries around the Baltic Sea (Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Denmark, Poland and Sweden). It is arranged by The National Maritime Museum and Södertörn University College in cooperation with marine archaeologists at universities and museums around the Baltic Sea. The intention is that the exhibition will, at a later stage, travel around to all the nine countries.

The showroom contains three different areas, one with a screen exhibition, one with a film and one with an underwater landscape (a seabed). In the screen exhibition room all nine countries present their underwater archaeology such as sunken ships, defence works, Stone-Age settlements and remains of harbours. This part of the exhibition is crammed with facts about diving techniques, environment and protective legislation pertaining to cultural remains under water.

I must say that it was rather difficult to get a clear view from all the countries; there is quite a lot of information in these presentations. The screens were all the same size. There were more pictures than text, which I think is good. If you wished you could get more information on a free printout from each country. There were some showcases with artefacts, but I missed smaller texts with information about the artefacts.

The film shown in a small room was about 15 minutes long. The sound quality was poor, which made it difficult to concentrate on what was said. The picture quality of the film was even worse because the camera was shaking all the time. That was a pity because the presentation about underwater archaeology and ecology was very interesting. You could learn a lot from it, but the annoying sound and shaking camera made it rather difficult.

The third room gave the visitors the opportunity to experience the world under the surface. I actually took a walk on the seabed! This underwater landscape was built up in a dark room full of atmosphere.

The floor was covered with pebbles and stones so it looked like a seabed. The surface was made up of a transparent bluish textile and, with the help of some lights, the feeling of being underwater was almost perfect.

On the seabed lay some shipwrecks, for instance an old Russian submarine, a Danish Viking ship and a wheat clipper from the 18th century. A funny detail was all the garbage, like old rusty bicycles and beer cans, which you can actually find down on the bottom of the sea.

There were also the black outlines of three divers in actual size with big diving suits on. Small monitors placed right in front of their eyes showed how a diver experiences the world under the sea. This was quite suggestive and created a mystical atmosphere.

The “Treasures of the Baltic” exhibition is interesting and well worth visiting. There are other activities connected to the exhibition too; just ask the museum.

Maybe the best way is to pay the exhibition more than one visit. This requires that the museum thinks about offering to sell tickets that allow two or three visits on the same ticket. Almost every exhibition is too large to visit just once.

Altogether this exhibition gives the visitor a glimpse of the hidden landscape under the sea. And if you have the time and energy you can learn much about underwater archaeology methods, diving techniques and also some reading about underwater remains from different time periods. There is also a detailed book on the theme that costs 150 Swedish crowns.

The screens from the nine countries were informative but not much fun or easy to understand. The film could have been done much more professionally. If I had to choose one of the rooms as my favourite, the seabed room would be the one. It gave me the feeling of being under the surface and was relaxing after all the information in the other parts. It gave me time to reflect upon the rest of the exhibition.

TOVE ERIKSSON
Archaeologist, Fröjel Discovery Programme/Gotland University College
Opportunities to participate in an excavation!

Opportunities to participate in the 2002 excavation of the Viking Age harbour and trading place at Fröjel on the island of Gotland, Sweden. This summer marks the fifth season of excavations and surveying in the “Fröjel Discovery Programme” project.

The aim of this year’s excavation is to investigate the harbour and its jetties as well as the settlement area. In the autumn of 2001 we investigated the harbour area using geophysical methods, such as ground resistance measurements, and made some very interesting findings. It looks like we have located some of the jetties and there is a possibility that we might have an indication of the remains of a Viking ship.

The excavations at Fröjel are run by Gotland University College in cooperation with Residential College for Adult Education (Folk High School) at Hemse. The field school will take place in two different forms.

The first field course is open to anybody interested in joining an archaeological excavation. This course is reserved for Swedish-speaking people only, and will take place June 26th to July 12th. It's run by the Residential College for Adult Education in Hemse. Final date for applications is the 1st of May.

For more information about the first course please contact the school at: folkan@gotland.fhsk.se

Telephone +46 (0) 498 20 36 50. See also www.gotland.fhsk.se

The second field course is run as a field school with the possibility of receiving credits. It will take place July 16th to August 11th. This is a four-week course open to archaeology and anthropology students as well as experienced amateurs from all over the world. The course is run by Gotland University. An application form to join the excavation is available and will be sent to everyone registering an interest to participate. Final date for payment is May 15th.

For more information concerning the second course please visit our homepage at http://frojel.hgo.se. If you have questions about the excavation and methods contact associate professor Dan Carlsson: dan.carlsson@hgo.se.

If you have further questions concerning the application form contact project assistant Carina Dahlström: carina.dahlstrom@hgo.se

Viking Market on Åland
July 26-27, 2002

This year’s Viking market on the island of Åland will take place on the historical ground of the village of Kvarnbo in Saltvik. The market is being arranged for the third time and has been visited by around 3,000 persons per year. It has become one of the most popular family events of the summer.

Over the years, the modern-day Vikings in Saltvik have created a marketplace with attributes in keeping with the times. A runestone has been erected and a longhouse built of peat walls and a reed roof. An impressive Viking, four meters tall and carved in wood, welcomes visitors.

This year three Viking groups from Sweden – Storholmen, “The ancient archaeologists” from Kungö and Riddarhyttan – will live and act during the market days. Among them are some leather dressers, potters and blacksmiths who will show Viking-Age handicrafts. Besides these, there will be a large number of salesmen in period clothing selling souveniers, homebaked bread and handicrafts all in the spirit of the Viking Age.

The programme for the market days will include axe throwing, horse riding for children and music, theatre, song and an auction sale of thralls. If you need help to get a job done you will be able to make a bid on an able workman.

On both days, the Riddarhyttan Viking group will present theatrical performances, the Austr Vega medieval group will perform a play with a lot of song and music and the Finish Viking group, “Tsakku”, with three ladies taking part, will play happy Viking music and songs.

For more information, contact Ålands Turistförbund, Johanna Enberg, Storgatan 8, 22100 Mariehamn
Tel: 018-24259, fax:018-24265
E-mail: johanna.enberg@turist.aland.fi

A silver ring found in the in the settlement area during the excavations in the summer of 2000. The finder is archaeologist Michael Wall. Photo Dan Carlsson.
Recipes from Valhalla

For a Valhalla party you have to serve some dishes made with wild boar or pork. Here we have chosen some from the book Vikingars gästabud (The Viking Feast) by Michaël Fant, Roger Lundgren and Thore Isaksson, reviewed in VHM 5/98. Without doubt, these dishes could have been served in Valhalla by Andhrimnir, Odin’s cook! (Read the short story on page 28-29!)

Roast of wild boar with blueberry sauce
For 4 persons

A good full 1 kg joint of wild boar
butter
2 small onions
2 carrots
a piece of green ginger
2 tablespoons honey
salt and pepper
2 decilitres bouillon

Brown the meat on all sides in a frying pan and then put the joint in a casserole. Peel the onions and carrots. Add the onions, carrots, ginger, honey and bouillon to the casserole. Let the meat roast covered on low heat. The estimated cooking time is around 1 hour; the inner temperature of the roast should be 75 degrees Centigrade.

Blueberry sauce
5 decilitres pan gravy
1 decilitre cream
3 tablespoons flour
1 decilitre blueberries
1 tablespoon grated green onion
salt and pepper

Sieve and measure the pan gravy. If needed, add bouillon to make 5 decilitres. Add the cream and bring it all to a boil. Stir the wheat flour in cold water and whisk it into the gravy. Let it all simmer for 3–5 minutes. Season with ginger, salt and pepper. Carve the roast in slices. Serve with honey-glazed root vegetables.

Honey-glazed root vegetables
For 4 persons

1 turnip
2-3 carrots
1 slice cabbage
1 leek
butter
honey
salt and pepper

Peel the root vegetables and cut them into pieces. Boil together in slightly salted water about 5 minutes and drain. Fry the root vegetables in butter until soft. Fry the leek with them at the end. Add some honey and stir the dish carefully. Season with salt and pepper.

Applebacon
For 4 persons

400 grams fresh or slightly salted bacon in slices
1 teaspoon butter
2 onions
1-2 apples
1 tablespoon pork dripping or butter
white or black pepper
2–3 cloves

Peel and slice the onions. Core the apples and cut them in slices. Fry the bacon on medium heat. Turn them 2-3 times, the longer the frying time the crispier the bacon. Fry the slices of onion and apples in the dripping on quite low heat until browned and soft. Put the onion and apple-slices in layers with the bacon in the frying pan and let heat thoroughly. Season with pepper and cloves. Serve with new baked bread.
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