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- Autor/a -

**ANI VASILE GABRIEL**

- Tutor/a -

**MARÍA DE LA PAZ ROMÁN DÍAZ**

## **Anexo IV**

## Summary

En este trabajo nos sumergimos en un mundo lleno de leyendas, rituales y tradiciones: la cultura vikinga, pero también en su historia y expansión por Europa y buena parte del mundo durante muchos siglos. Analizaremos aspectos como su religión (el *Norse*) o la importancia que los dioses (*Odin, Thor, Loki*, etc.) y las historias mitológicas tuvieron en su vida cotidiana. Por otra parte, recordaremos que *Valhalla* o *Asgard* fueron sitios sagrados muy importantes para ellos pues todo lo que hacían estaba relacionado con sus dioses o estos lugares divinos.

El objetivo principal es analizar la influencia que tuvo la cultura vikinga en las tradiciones, religión, etc., de la población británica, especialmente en el idioma dejando su huella en el inglés actual, en el que se usa habitualmente muchas palabras con raíces Vikingas. La estancia de los Vikingos en las Islas afectó a la vida de los habitantes pero al mismo tiempo los Vikingos intentaron aprender de los británicos y los británicos intentaron coexistir con ellos.

Finalmente, veremos que la herencia del *Norse* es mayor en los Países Escandinavos que en Gran Britania, algo obvio debido al foco de origen de la cultura vikinga, pero gracias a las relaciones que hubo entre ambas zonas durante la Baja Edad Media, hoy en día estos países comparten muchos vínculos culturales.

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## **Introduction**

Many people have asked me why I have chosen to talk about Vikings, what influenced me so much in the selection of this theme and many other similar questions. My first reaction to all these questions was a funny one because my answer to all of them was ‘because I look like one of them’, that I think it’s real, but the real reason for this is that even from very young I liked Vikings a lot, their traditions, myths and legends.

I think they were a great nation, a great civilization that taught the world many good things and we should thank them at the same level as we thank Romans or Greeks. Great bearded men and strong beautiful women formed the Vikings, and I hope that this short project would show how they really were and the big influence they had upon the entire world, but foremost upon British Islands and English language.

The objective of the project is first of all to introduce you to the Vikings’ world, showing you where and when they first appeared, how they spread and conquered more lands and territories; secondly, and the most important step, is the moment in which they reached the British Island and how their stance there influenced the Britons, the language, the habits and traditions of the islanders; thirdly, the decadence of the Vikings and the departure from the Islands and primary its legacy, that is, the linguistic influence they had in English Language and other Scandinavian languages such as Swedish, Danish, Norwegian.

# SAILING IN THE SEAS OF VIKING CULTURE

Ani Vasile Gabriel

## 1. Early Scandinavian Kingdoms

To understand the Vikings Age, that is how the great period in which they made a lot of raids and conquered many places, it is necessary to start with Scandinavia, and to examine the changes were taking place there from at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards. By considering Scandinavian culture and society at home it should also be possible to see how it spread and how it was adapted and assimilated in Scandinavian colonies overseas.

Scandinavia first appears in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (d. AD 79), where he calls it a dangerous land of water. The modern Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) did not exist at the start of the Viking Age. Whereas the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England and Continental Europe had accepted the Christian view of the King as God's prime servant on earth, this was not the case in Scandinavia. Scandinavian societies maintained their old structure of tribes each dominated by a numerous aristocracy, and temporarily ruled by a chieftain (Fig.1).

The second main appearance is in the *History of the Franks* written by Gregory of Tours (1976) in which we find out that in 515 a Danish fleet under a King Chlochillaich invaded Gaul from the sea. It is not known where the Danes referred to or came from, or how large an area their king ruled, nor indeed what sort of power he exercised there, although Gregory explicitly uses the term *rex* for the Danish king.

Further 6<sup>th</sup>-century sources mention the Danes as a powerful force and Procopius (c.500-c.565) tells of how the Heruli<sup>1</sup> had to pass through the territory of the Danish on their way to Scandinavia. But care is required in interpreting such reports; we should not impose either later medieval or Roman concepts of kings or people onto other situations. We know that Scandinavia was outside the Roman Empire, although Roman

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<sup>1</sup>The Heruli were an East Germanic tribe who migrated from Scandinavia to the Black Sea in the third century AD.

influence reached Jutland<sup>2</sup> and is reflected in the exchanging of objects such as gold, silver, aliments, slaves, jewels, etc. (Fig.2).

In the 7th and 8th centuries there are only scattered references to Danes and their kings in contemporary sources. We know, however, that the missionary Willibrord<sup>3</sup>, bishop of Utrecht, visited King Ongendus, who ruled over the wild tribes of the Danes, within the period 690–714. Only at the end of the 8th century and particularly in the first half of the 9th century do Frankish Annals provide fuller information on Danish kings, who emerge as worthy opponents of Charlemagne and his successors (Richard 2005) (Fig.3).

In these first eight centuries, we can observe that Scandinavia was formed by a lot of tribes and lands, not former countries as in our present days; also we find out that there are not many documents about the Vikings' earlier history because as they do not belong to the Roman Empire, the writing was not common between the people of the Scandinavia, and the few that knew how to write used a different type that was the Runes. We also observed that their territories expended year by year because they were conquerors and they needed to raid every summer.

On the other hand, we can see that they were not very well organized and they desperately needed someone to rule them and to lead them to better places, to lead them into treasury raids and foremost to unite them in a kingdom, if we may call it that. That is why, in the next five centuries, Vikings realized that and finally formed a kingdom, they were unified and they conquered half of the world, including the British Island and its people. This era of richness and conquering was called The Viking Age, the most prosperous years of their history.

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<sup>2</sup>Jutland is the name of the peninsula that juts out in Northern Europe toward the rest of Scandinavia, forming the mainland part of Denmark.

<sup>3</sup>Willibrord (c. 658 – 7 November 739) was a Northumbrian missionary saint, known as the "Apostle to the Frisians" in the modern Netherlands.



Figure 1. Europe: 1st Century

Source: [www.fgp-arts.com](http://www.fgp-arts.com)



Figure 2. Europe: 6th century

Source: Indo-European Chronology Maps



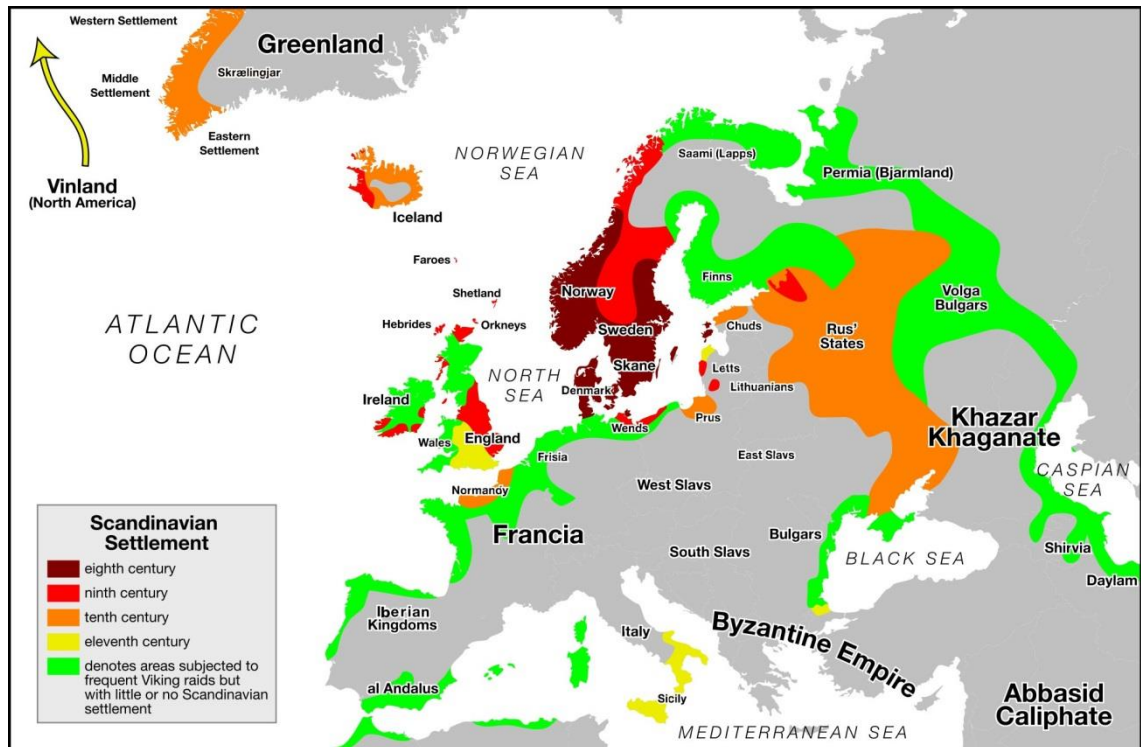


Figure 3. Scandinavia during 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Centuries

Source: www.i.imgur.com

## 2. The Viking Age

### 2.1. First raids and the conquering of British Islands

The Viking Age is the period from 793 to 1066 approximately, in European history, especially Northern European and Scandinavian history. It is the period of history when Scandinavian Norsemen (Vikings) explored Europe by its seas and rivers for trade, raids and conquest above all. In this period, the Vikings also settled out of Europe in many Islands or new territories such as Greenland, Faroe Islands, Iceland and North America, as Hermann affirms that they were the first to reach the new world (Pálsson 1965).

For three centuries, beginning shortly before the year 800, north-west Europe was exposed to attacks by Scandinavians, who had discovered the great wealth, could be gathered by plundering or threatening the rich communities of the British Isles and

Frankia<sup>4</sup>. These raiders were called by many names—pagans or gentiles, as well as Northmen or Danes—but one of the words used by the English, and probably by the Scandinavians themselves, Viking<sup>5</sup>, has become generally accepted as the appropriate term, not only for the raiders but also for the world from which they came. These centuries were, for Scandinavia as well as the parts of Europe they threatened, the Age of the Vikings (Fig.4).



**Figure 4.** One of the runes in which the word *viking* appears. The inscription reads: Tóki the Viking raised the stone in memory of Gunnarr, Grímr's son. May God help his soul.

Source: <http://www.hurstwic.org>

During this period, the Vikings have done a lot of raids and conquest. They used the Norwegian Sea and the Baltic Sea to go through the new territories they wanted to conquer. Geographically talking, The Viking Age has a huge expansion through Europe and through the world since the Norse men shipped each year further and further. Beginning from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as I have said before, they first reached North Germany; secondly they reached different British territories such as Kingdom of Northumbria<sup>6</sup>, parts of Mercia<sup>7</sup> and East Anglia<sup>8</sup> (lately I will go deeply in the conquer

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<sup>4</sup>**Frankia**- France. It was the name given by the northern tribes to the present territory of France.

<sup>5</sup>**Viking**- An Old Norse feminine noun *viking* refers to an expedition overseas. It occurs in Viking Age runic inscriptions and in later medieval writings in set expressions such as the phrasal verb *fara í viking*, "to go on an expedition". In later texts, such as the Icelandic sagas, the phrase "to go on a viking" implies participation in raiding activity or piracy and not simply seaborne missions of trade and commerce. The derived Old Norse masculine noun *vikingr* appears in Viking Age skaldic poetry and on several rune stones found in Scandinavia, where it refers to a seaman or warrior who takes part in an expedition overseas (Skeat 1892).

<sup>6</sup>**Northumbria** was a medieval Anglian kingdom, in what is now northern England and south-east Scotland. The name reflects the approximate southern limit to the kingdom's territory, the Humber estuary (Simpson. [2009]).

of England); and finally they went to further territories like North Africa; Russia; Middle East; Constantinople; and Canada- this last one is not so clear since there are no written proofs to confirm it- and many other territories (Fig.5).

As I have just said before, now I will go deeply in the conquest of British Island. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Viking raiders struck England in 793 and raided Lindisfarne, the monastery that held Saint Cuthbert's relics. The raiders killed the monks and captured the valuables. There was great but sporadic violence from the last decade of the 8th century on England's northern and eastern shores: Viking raids continued on a small scale across coastal England. While the initial raiding groups were small, it is believed that a great amount of planning was involved. In 850 Vikings overwintered for the first time in England (Swanton 2000).

In 865 they first reached East Anglia. There were a lot of fights between the Vikings and the Britons in an attempt of conquering Wessex and any other regions of East Anglia. The Vikings failed in more of their battles of conquering those lands that is why they returned back to the north of England and settle there for few decades.

A new wave of Norwegian Vikings appeared in England in 947 capturing York. By 1012, the Vikings were in service in England as personal bodyguards to the King of England. They were offered payment which lasted from 1012 to 1066 and stopped Viking raids for almost twenty years. The Viking presence last until 1066, when the invading Norsemen lost their final battle with the English at Stamford Bridge. Nineteen days later the Normans, themselves descended from Norsemen, invaded England and defeated the weakened English army at the Battle of Hastings (Fig.6).

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<sup>7</sup>**The Kingdom of Mercia** was one of the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. The name means "border people". The kingdom was centered on the valley of the River Trent and its tributaries, in the region now known as the English Midlands (Aelfgifu. [2007]).

<sup>8</sup>**The kingdom of the East Anglia** was a small independent Anglo-Saxon kingdom that comprised what are now the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk and perhaps the eastern part of the Cambridgeshire Fens (Toyne 1970).

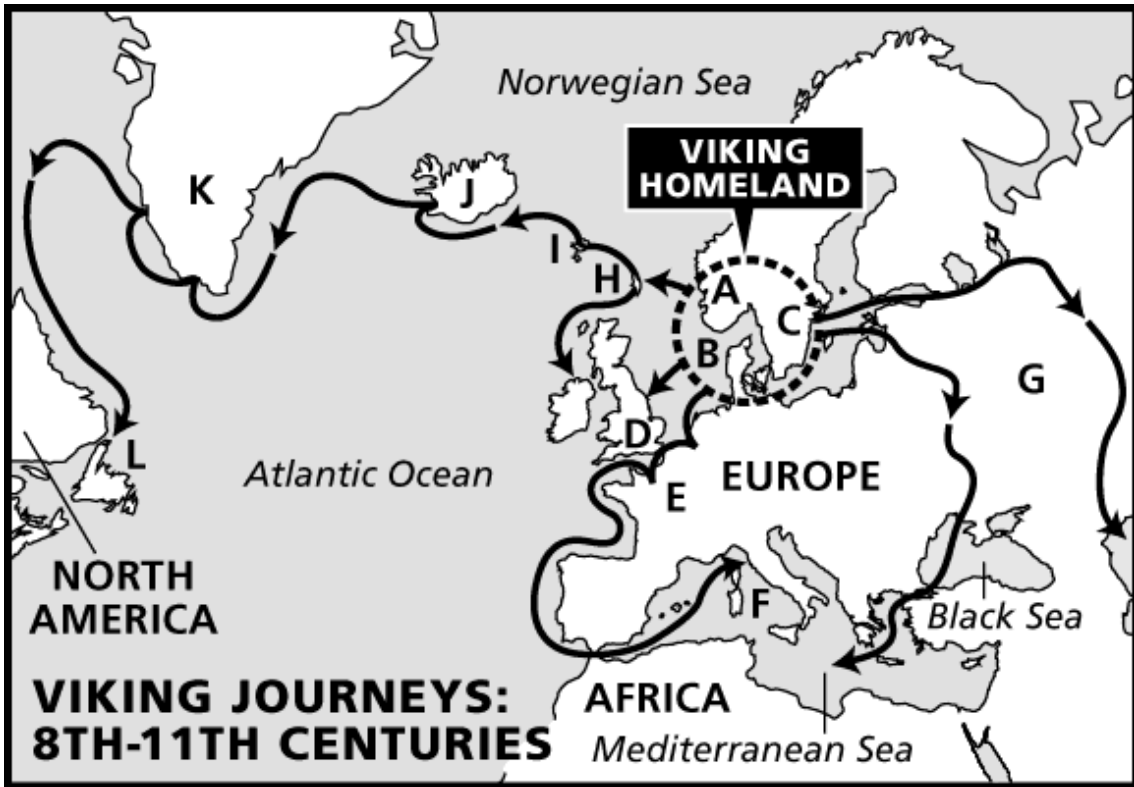


Figure 5. Viking Journeys: 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Source: [www.learningenrichment.org](http://www.learningenrichment.org)

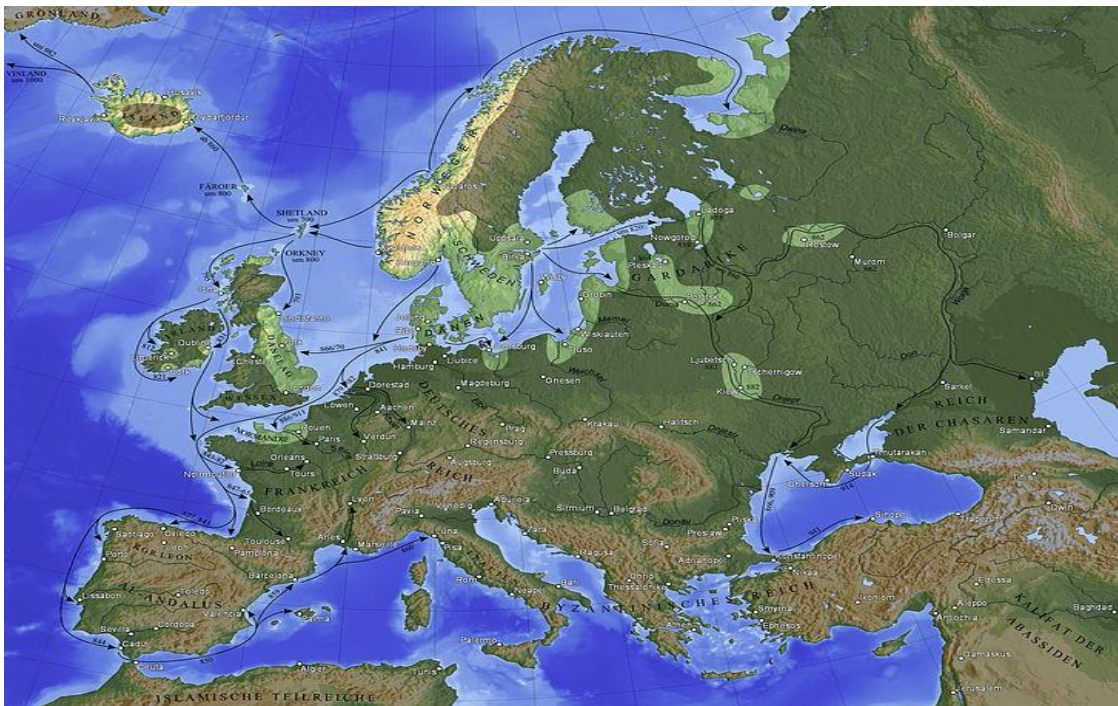


Figure 6. Viking's travels through British Island and the World

Source: Wikinger Karte

## 2.2. Religion, Myths, Legends

Religion played a very important role in the Scandinavian's life. Norse, as their religion is called, is a pagan religion that first appeared in Germania and therefore expanded through the north and central Europe. We have little information about the rituals or any specific details, but the little information we have is from sagas (stories and legends that have been passed down orally) and archeological discoveries.

Thanks to the archeological discoveries we have found many important artifacts portraying the gripping-beast motifs, interlacing art and jewelry, Mjölfnir<sup>9</sup> pendants (Fig.7) and numerous weapons and bracelets with runic characters scratched or cast into them. Many other ideographic and iconographic motifs which may portray the religious beliefs are depicted on runestones, which were usually erected as markers or memorial stones. These memorial stones usually were not placed in proximity to a body, and many times there is an epitaph written in runes to memorialize a deceased relative.

The Norse tribes rarely or never had temples in a modern sense of the word, but it seems to have been few important centers such as Uppsala<sup>10</sup> in which there were three wooden statues of Thor, Odin and Freyr as Adam of Bremen<sup>11</sup> claims.

They made a lot of sacrifices for their Gods and those offerings could comprise inanimate objects, animals or humans. Also they believed in the after live and similar to many other societies the Viking religions also took interest in the eventual resting place of the dead. The Norse held so much dedication that went into making sure that the dead were cared for properly so that they could enjoy their resting place after death. On the other hand, Vikings celebrate festivals for their Gods where the local community or the nation renewed its bonds through shared worship. Those festivals were characterized by sacrifices and orgies.

The main important Gods Norse religion had and in which Vikings believed were: the hammer-wielding, humanity-protecting god **Thor** (Fig.8); the one-eyed, raven-flanked god **Odin** (Fig.9), who craftily pursues knowledge throughout the worlds and

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<sup>9</sup> Mjölfnir is the hammer of Thor, a major Norse god associated with thunder. Mjölfnir is depicted in Norse mythology as one of the most fearsome weapons, capable of leveling mountains.

<sup>10</sup> Uppsala is a village outside Sweden. In the Viking Age, it was an important religious, economic and political center. Also is well known in Northern Europe as the residence of the Swedish Kings.

<sup>11</sup> Adam of Bremen was a German medieval chronicler. He lived and worked in the second half of the eleventh century.

bestowed among humanity the runic alphabet; the beautiful feathered cloak-clad goddess **Freyja** (Fig.10) who rides to battle to choose among the slain; the vengeful, skiing goddess **Skadi** (Fig.11), who prefers the wolf howls of the winter mountains to the seashore; the powerful god **Njörðr** (Fig.12), who may calm both sea and fire and grant wealth and land; the god **Freyr** (Fig.13), whose weather and farming associations bring peace and pleasure to humanity; the goddess **Iðunn**, who keeps apples that grant eternal youthfulness; the mysterious god **Heimdallr** (Fig.14), who is born of nine mothers, can hear grass grow, has gold teeth, and possesses a resounding horn; **Loki**, who brings tragedy to the gods by engineering the death of the goddess **Frigg's** beautiful son Baldr; and numerous other deities.

All these Gods lived in Asgard and Valhalla was the place where people went to when they died, among other places. Also, the Vikings believed in Yggdrasil (Fig.15), the cosmological tree that holds the universe and the nine worlds and in Giants, mythological beings that fought with their Gods; believed in Ragnarök, a mythological dragon that one day will destroy the world and only Thor and his army could stop him; etcetera.

Finally I would like to share with you one of the most beautiful myths and that is the creation of the world, that in my opinion is so original, full of images and metaphors. As Lindow John said, the world was created from the remains of the giant Ymir. The three brothers dragged the dead body of Ymir towards the center of Ginnungagap (is the vast, primordial void that existed prior to the creation of the manifest universe). There is the place where they created the world from the remains of Ymir. The blood was transformed into oceans and water; the flesh became the land; the bones became the mountains; the teeth made into rocks; the hair became the grass and trees; the eyelashes became Midgard<sup>12</sup> (is the name for the world inhabited by and know to humans); the brain became the clouds; the skull became the sky and finally the eyes became the stars.

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<sup>12</sup> Midgard besides being the earth in the Norse culture, also appeared in the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy* written by J.R.R. Tolkien under the name of The Middle Earth, which was the earth inhabited by humans, orcs, elves and any other fantastic creature.



**Figure 7. Mjölmir**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 8. Thor**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 9. Odin**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 10. Freyja**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 11. Skadi**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



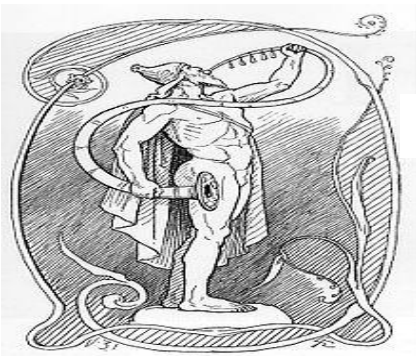
**Figure 12. Njordr**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



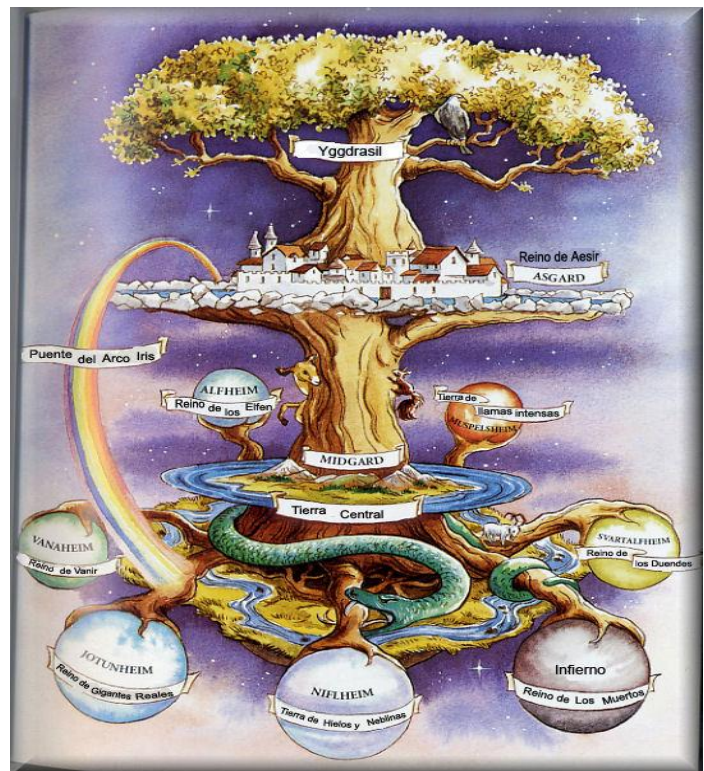
**Figure 13. Freyr**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 14. Heimdallr**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 15. Yggdrasil**

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

As I have said, religion played a very important role in their lives and everything they had done they did it for their Gods and for reaching Valhalla and the other sacred places. On the other hand, Norse religion left us a lot of myths, legends and rituals that nowadays and in the previous century served as inspiration for artists, painters and not for the cinematographic industry in movies such as *Thor*; *The Avengers*; *etc.* Also religion left many words in the English language that now are used and they are important, and for example few words are: *hell*= Hel was the daughter of Loki and she was the ruler of the underworld; *saga*= story, tale; *etc.*, (Harper. [2001-2014]).

### 2.3. The law of the Vikings

We may think that the Vikings and in general the Scandinavian people had no law and they were savages and non-civilized beings, but in fact they were totally different regarding their laws and norms. They were so respectful with their laws that even other cultures and civilizations that had contact with them during the Viking Age copied their system. For example the word *law*= from Old Norse *logu* and *by law* also comes from Old Norse (Harper. [2001-2014]).

For them, the law existed even from the beginning of times, it was eternal. It represented the equilibrium between the good and the evil and any instability could have created a disaster. Precisely for this reason, when somebody committed a crime such as assassination, thievery or anything else, they had to be punished according to their crimes. Also the law was not always the same because as the society changed also the law had to change and fit with the people.

The mission of the organization called *ting*<sup>13</sup> was to judge and maintain the peace, but they were not the ones who had to take a final decision, that is why a group formed by twelve men had to participate in the trials. Also, *ting*'s representatives were the ones who decided the daily life's norms; when the raids would take place; contacts with other villages; and they also participated in the marital relationships.

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<sup>13</sup>*Ting*= In modern English *ting* means a high metallic sound such as that made by a small bell; or to make or cause to make such a sound. If we dig deeply, it makes sense because many years ago in some trials, the judge used to use a kind of bell for keeping the silence in the rooms or for giving his/hers final decision.



Finally, the law was also the one who stabled the trade, but more in local areas and not on the seas, therefore the piracy was legal and not punished. That was one of the reasons why the raids and the colonization were more difficult because the pirates attacked all the time their ships, their cargos and people.

To understand more or less the functioning of the *ting* and how their trials halls could have been divided, in the Fig.16, we could see a representation done by actors in the *Vikings* series.



**Figure 16.** From left to right we can see the chief town's hand (the bald man); the chief town that is sitting behind; his wife dressed in white; and in front of the chief town the accused. In front of the accused we have the people who decide if he is guilty or not.

Source: Picture taken from Viking's series, Season 1, Episode 1

## 2.4.Vikings' Ships

Viking ships were marine vessels of particular designs used and built by the Scandinavian during the Viking Age. The boat-types were quite varied, depending on what the ship was intended for, but they were generally characterized as being slender and flexible boats, with symmetrical ends with true keel. They were clinker built, which is the overlapping of planks riveted together. Some might have

had a dragon's head or other circular object protruding from the bow and stern, for design, although this is only inferred from historical sources (Hall 2007).

As I have recounted before, they ranged in the Baltic Sea and far from the Scandinavian homelands, to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Newfoundland, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and Africa.

The ship was for them the centerpiece of their culture for centuries. In fact, the importance of the ship in Scandinavian culture was very considerable because it worked as a vessel and for religious purposes as well. As we know, Scandinavia is a land of high mountains and difficult access through land. Therefore the only way to travel, or for trading was through seas. Viking kingdoms thus developed into coastal cities, all of which were strong dependent on the North Sea for survival and development. Controlling the seas and the rivers was of critical importance for their development (e.g. conquering, trade, fishing and economy) that is why there was a high demand for ships each year (Fig.17).

In fact, because of their overwhelming importance, ships became a mainstay of the Viking pagan religion, as they evolved into symbols of power. However, in burial sites such as Sutton Hoo (Suffolk, UK) from year 625, evident signs proving that there was a huge devotion to ships were found. Throughout the first millennia, respectable Viking chieftains and noblemen were commonly buried with an intact, luxurious ship to transport them to the afterlife. Furthermore, the Hedeby<sup>14</sup> coins (Fig.18), among the earliest known Danish currency, have ships as emblems, showing the importance of naval vessels in the area. Through such cultural and practical significance, the Viking ship progressed into the most powerful, advanced naval vessel in Viking Age Europe.

There were other kinds of ships called *Knarr* (Fig.19). They were built for Atlantic voyages. The difference from the other ships was that these ones were bigger, larger and a hull capable of carrying 122 tons. They normally were used for cargo transport. Also, Knarr ships were very fast and they could hold a crew of 20-30 men. Other type of ship was the *Karve* (Fig.20), also used for long trips but mostly used for human transport and they were able to navigate in very shallow waters. Finally we have the *Longships* (Fig.21) that were used for trade, commerce, exploration and warfare.

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<sup>14</sup> Hedeby was an important trading settlement in the Danish-northern German borderland during the Viking Age. It flourished from the 8th to the 11th centuries.

As I have said, ships for them were very important and without the ships they would have never reached the glory and the power. Beside of this, the custom to bury dead lords in the ships was very common. The dead man's body was well dressed and carried to the burial place where along with his best horse and his favorite hunting-dog, was place into the vessel and released in the open sea. An archery using a burning arrow was responsible to set fire to the ship. The lord was ready for his final trip next to the Gods.



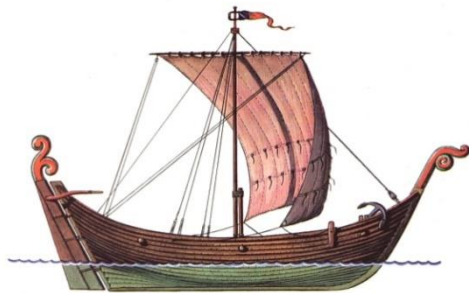
**Figure 18.** Hedeby Coins

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



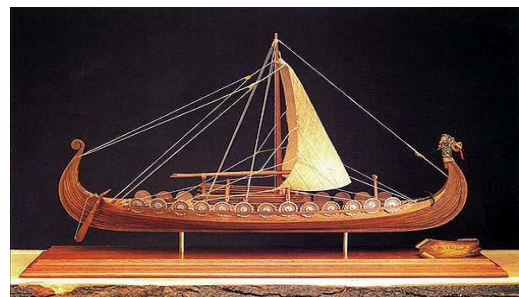
**Figure 17.** Gokstad (the most common ship)

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 19.** Knarr Ship

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 20.** Karve Ship

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 21.** Longship

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## 2.5.Daily Life: Cuisine, Sports, Games and Entertainment

Apart from the raids, violence and other things that Vikings normally did, their daily life was basically divided in three fundamental activities: agriculture, fishing and trade. Most of the people worked in their farms or also called *big houses* in which a large family was living. The main goal for them was to cultivate the few fertile lands they had because of the tough climate. If the lands were not an option, domestic animals were the other choices. The other ones, who did not have lands or animals, took advantage of the sea and became fishermen. The North Sea and the rivers in the north had plenty of fish so it was a well of food and proteins for the Vikings. The sea contributed to their daily diet and entertainment.

Because of dearth of light, they could not work for many hours on their lands or fishing that is why they had a lot of time for entertaining (such as table games or story telling) or for works that could have been done inside their houses, for example spinning; weaving; carving; etc.

Regarding to their cuisine, it has been found in York, England evidences that they were big consumers of grains and bread. Other items that have been discovered in the Viking diet included the seeds of the carrots, parsnip<sup>15</sup> and brassicas<sup>16</sup>. Also we encountered apples, small plums and cherries. Also we know that they ate mostly beef, mutton, wild ducks, geese and finally eggs (Hall 1999).

There is numerous evidence that sports were widely practiced and encouraged by the Vikings. Sports that involved weapons training and developing combat skills were popular. This included spear and stone throwing, building and testing physical strength through wrestling, fist fighting, and stone lifting. Mountain climbing, agility and balance were built and tested by running and jumping for sport, and there is mention of a peculiar sport that involved jumping from oar to oar on the outside of a ship's railing as it was being rowed. Swimming was a popular sport and it was divided in three subcategories: diving, long distance swimming and a contest in which two swimmers try to duck one another (Wolf 2004).

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<sup>15</sup>Parsnip= In Spanish *Chirivía*

<sup>16</sup> Brassicas= In Spanish *Crucífera*

Skiing and ice skating were the primary winter sports of the Vikings, although skiing was also used as everyday means of transportation in both winter time and in the colder regions of the North. Horse fighting was practiced for sport, although the rules are unclear. It appears to have involved two stallions pitted against each other, within smell and sight of fenced-off mares. Whatever the rules were, the fights often resulted in the death of one of the stallions (Ladegaard. [2012]).

Icelandic sources refer to the sport of knattleik (Fig.22). A ball game akin to hockey, knattleik involved a bat and a small hard ball and was usually played on a smooth field of ice. The rules are unclear, but it was popular with both adults and children, even though it often led to injuries. Knattleik appears to have been practiced only in Iceland, where it attracted many spectators, as did horse fighting (Historisk. [2012]).

Hunting, as a sport, was limited to the region of Denmark, where it was not regarded as an important occupation. Birds, deer, hares and foxes were hunted with bow and spear, and later with crossbows. The techniques were stalking, snare and traps and force hunting with dog packs (Historisk. [2012]).

We can observe that Norse people were not only warriors, violent and brutish. They liked to enjoy their lives and to spent time with their families and their community. They worked their lands and took care of their animals for bringing food home and feeding their families. Also they played games and practiced many sports for entertainment. Many of those sports were violent and required to be a real man or a very strong woman. It is not sure if these games were played periodically or if there were competitions every year, like champions ships. When the weather or the climate did not help them to practice any of those sports or to work their lands, inside games were also played, and few of those games were chess, sculpting, playing instruments and singing, and the others I have mentioned before.

All these activities were also practiced in the British Island and even more than in Scandinavia because the climate was in their favor. Almost all of the evidences we have respecting this were found in burial sites in United Kingdom. Many of the games they played are still played today and even the particular game called knattleik is a habit nowadays.

The entertainment area left many words in the English language and few of them are: **ball**= *bǫllr*; **club**= *klubba*; **egg**= *egg*; **knot**= *knutr*; **race**= *rás*; **score**= *skor*; etc., (Harper. [2001-2014]).



**Figure 22.** We can observe Norse men playing Knattleik. It was a very strange sport invented by them that seems to look more or less like Hockey.

Source: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

## 2.6. Weaponry

Their big success in raids and war were their weaponry. Besides their strength, look and courage, weapon, shields and tactics played a very important role in the conquering of the British Islands and the rest of the territories.

All the knowledge we have about the shapes of their weapon, about the material and the type they were made is from archeological sites, pictorial representations and also from sagas and poetry. As we know from sagas, all Norse men had their own weapons and it was legal to carry them in the society. Also, the type of the weapon they had, or the type of the shield and helmet they wore represented the social class they belonged to. For example, a wealthy Viking would have a complete ensemble of a

shield, helmet, mail shirt and sword. A typical Norse man, that his/hers social class was not so flourished, would have worn a spear, a shield, a side-arm and a seax<sup>17</sup>.

In battles, normally at the beginning of those battles, they used to use bows, but it was considered a less honorable weapon. Also, they used axes, normally two-handed axes that could be accompanied by a shield. The weapons were normally made of metal or wood; only the wealthy Vikings had metal shields and armories, meanwhile normal Vikings wore leather armors and wooden shields.

As I have explained before, the main weapons they used were: **bows** (Fig.23), both for battle and hunting; **spears** (Fig.24), was the common weapon of the peasant class normally made by a wooden shaft and a metal head, basically two-three meters in length (Hayward 2000); **knife**, two distinct classes of knives were in use by Vikings. The more common one was a rather plain, single edge knife of normal construction, called a *knifr* (Fig.25). These are found in most graves, being the only weapon allowed for all, even slaves. Smaller versions served as the everyday utility tool, while longer versions were likely meant for hunting or combat or both. Weapon knives sometimes had ornamental inlays on the blade (Kostveit 1985), and the other type was the *seax* (Fig.26), which I have been talking about before; **sword** (Fig.27), the Viking Age sword was for single-handed use to be combined with a shield, with a double edged blade length of up to 90 cm. Its shape was still very much based on the swords of the Dark Ages with a tight grip, long deep fuller and no pronounced cross-guard (Oakeshott 1996); **axe** (Fig.28-29), perhaps the most common hand weapon among Vikings in modern fiction was the axe. Swords were more expensive to make, and mostly wealthy warriors could afford a sword. The prevalence of axes in archaeological sites can likely be attributed to its role as not just a weapon, but also a common tool. This is supported by the large number of grave sites of female Scandinavians containing axes (Pedersen 2008).

The main defensive gadgetry was: **shields** that could be divided in two types, round shields and kite shields (Fig.30-31). The main differences were that the rounds shields were smaller than kite shields and the material they were made of were also

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<sup>17</sup>Seax is an Old English word for *knife*. In modern archaeology, the term seax is used specifically for a type of sword or dagger typical of the Germanic people of the Migration period and the Early Middle Ages, especially the Saxons, whose tribal name derives from the weapon ( Bosworth 2008).

different; **helmet** (Gjermundbu. [2005]), this helmet was made of iron and was in the shape of a rounded or peaked cap made from four plates. This helmet has a rounded cap and has a spectacle guard around the eyes and nose which formed a sort of mask. The eye guard in particular suggests a close affinity with the earlier period helmets. From runestones and other illustrations, it is known that the Vikings also wore simpler helmets, often pointed shape caps with a simple nose guard (Fig.32); **mail** and **leather**.



**Figure 23.** Bow

Source: Google Images



**Figure 24.** Spear

Source: Google Images



**Figure 25.** Knifr

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 26.** Seax

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 27.** Swords

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)





**Figure 28.** Double-hand Axes

Origins:  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 29.** One-Hand Axe

Origins:  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 30.** Round Shield

Source: Google Images



**Figure 31.** Kite Shield

Source: Google Images



**Figure 32.** Helmet

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

The warfare and violence of the Vikings were often motivated and fuelled by their beliefs in Norse religion, focusing on Thor and Odin, the gods of war and death. In combat the Vikings are believed to have engaged in a disordered style of frenetic, furious fighting, leading them to be termed berserkers. Such tactics may have been deployed intentionally by shock troops, which may have induced this mental state through ingestion of materials with psycho active properties, such as hallucinogenic mushrooms or massive amount of alcohol (Green and Frank 2003).

In war tactics they were not so prepared, but in spite of that they had few tactics such as the shield wall (Fig.33), in which they protected themselves from arrows or the enemy's charges. Also, attacking the enemy in groups and fast was one of their strategies. Speed and strength were their main attributes, the way to their success.



**Figure 33.** We may observe a shield wall

Source: Image taken from *Vikings*, Season I, Episode 4

Finally, warfare and weaponry area also left many words in Modern English and I would like to list few of them: **berserk**= *berserkr*; **gad**=*gaddr*; **gun**= *Gunnhildr* (female name, both elements of the name, *gunn* and *hildr*, have the meaning "war, battle"); **knife**= *knifr*; **wight**= *vigr*; etc., (Harper. [2001-2014]).

## 2.7. Women

We know that women during the history have suffered a lot and were dominated by men. They always tried to fight against men's oppression and during the history we have an inequality struggle between men and women. In the medieval age it was very difficult for them to have an opinion or to be equal to men or even to talk to them normally. Women were only seen as living bodies that have to give birth and to procreate. The only reason they live in this world is for reproduction and for the joy of men. Even in modern history, in the twenty and twenty-first century, these problems are still present in our society and in many countries in which religion have more power than logical thinking. Luckily, the situation is getting better in many places of the world and women are winning their true rights and equality.

But, in spite of all this oppression and discrimination against women during many centuries, there was a place, a culture that treated their women equally in many aspects. This society was the Vikings and for them women was equal and had almost the same rights as Norse Men. But it is thought that at the beginning, Norse women, strictly speaking, they could not be Vikings. The Old Norse word *vikingar* is exclusively applied to men, usually those who sailed from Scandinavia in groups to engage in the activities of raiding and trading in Britain, Europe and the East. But some Vikings stayed behind in these regions, and Scandinavian colonies were also established in the North Atlantic.

Women could and did play a part in this process of settlement. Iceland, for instance, was uninhabited, and a permanent population could only be established if women also made the journey there. In regions with an established indigenous population, Viking settlers may have married local women, while some far-roving Vikings picked up female companions en route, but there is evidence that Scandinavian women reached most parts of the Viking world, from Russia in the east to Newfoundland in the west (Jesch 1991).

Most journeys from Scandinavia involved sea-crossings in small, open ships with no protection from the elements. Families heading for the North Atlantic colonies would also have to take all the livestock they would need to establish a new farm, and the journey cannot have been pleasant. The Viking colonists settled down to the farming life in their new home, or established themselves as traders and became town-dwellers. Both farming and trading were family businesses, and women were often left in charge when their husbands were away or dead. There is also evidence that women could make a living in commerce in the Viking Age. Merchants' scales and weights found in female graves in Scandinavia suggest an association between women and trade (Jochens 1995).

According to The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notes, we find out that a Viking army operating in the years 892-5 was accompanied by women and children, who had to be put in a place of safety while the army fought and harried. But this army arrived in England after raiding on the continent and at least some of the women may have come from there. The first Viking settlers who turned their swords into ploughshares are unlikely to have had Scandinavian wives (Jochens 1995).

However, place-names and language suggest that there was considerable Scandinavian immigration into those areas of England controlled by the Viking invaders. Although the nature and extent of the Scandinavian immigration is contested by scholars, the most convincing explanation of the evidence is that there was a peaceful migration of Scandinavian families to parts of the north and east of England throughout the tenth century. Recent finds of large numbers of low-grade, Scandinavian-style female jewellery, particularly in Lincolnshire, have been taken to show the presence of Scandinavian women there in the tenth century. These finds correlate well with the distribution of Scandinavian place-names in the same region: taken together, the evidence does suggest a significant Scandinavian presence (Graham-Campbell and Colleen 1998).

The daily life of the Scandinavian women was a very busy one. They had to do many chores and activities around the house and in their villages. For example in their homes or farms they had to cook; to take care of the children and animals; to plow the lands and to raise the crops; to clean and wash the house and the clothes; when the husband was on raiding or outside the village, they had to protect themselves and their families from thieves attacks or from any kind of robbery, that is why, almost all Scandinavian women knew how to use a weapon and to defend themselves. Outside their homes, they could participate at meetings, reunions and trials, and even being inside the Great Hall to vote a propose men did but not to make a proposal.

There is also evidence that Norse women went raiding with their husbands or alone with other men. They were not scared of dying or of being in a fight. They also wanted to go in Valhalla and to be besides Odin and Freya (as you observe, they even had female Gods and they prayed to them at the same level as to masculine Gods). Other cultures like Roman or Greek culture had women Gods but they did not treat their women equally. A good example of the differences between Norse woman and the other is that they could take part at the politic parties and even being an earl (countess) meanwhile other culture's women could not participate in senates or parties.

It was not normal for a British man seeing a woman fighting, because in their culture, wars and fights were for men, were activities only and specially for them to prove women that they are superior and more powerful than them.

Apart from taking care of their families and participating in raids, Scandinavian women also liked to entertain themselves and few of the 'hobbies' they had were knitting, sewing, carving, painting, singing, dancing, playing board games, etcetera.

In the matrimony area, we know also from sagas and runes that Norse men were loyal to their women and families. But in many cases, especially in festivals and holidays to their Gods, many couples hang out together and practice orgies and consume drugs for their Gods. Orgies were something common in their lives (something very typical in Roman and Greek cultures), but it was not obligatory to participate to those orgies. Many of their women could not choose who to marry and the matrimony was planned by her family and her husband's family, but there were other women who could choose who to marry, but those women were normally the wealthy ones. Also, they could divorce if they wanted and get remarried. Women could request divorce and withhold sex from their husbands when they are displeased, and they quite often did. The sagas and myths show women who choose to take advantage of these freedoms in varying degrees, implying that women were not all taught to act in the same way, and they could alter their behavior to be as submissive or assertive as they wished (Clover 1993).

Women slaves (both Scandinavian and foreigners, but more the local ones) had no legal rights except as property of the owner. In this aspect, the differences between roman woman and viking women were inexistent. They could be bought and sold and the slave-owner could treat them as they pleased. If a slave-owner killed one of their own slaves it was not regarded as murder. If a free-man killed a slave belonging to someone else he had to pay the price of a slave as compensation. The price would be about the same as for a farm animal. When a woman slave had a child it became the property of her owner. If she was sold while pregnant, the child would become the property of her new owner.

To sum up, we could say that Scandinavian women were powerful. Compared to other Western and Eastern women, they had many more rights and they were almost treated equally as men. They played a very important role in the raids and in the conquering of new territories, but also at the same time they took care of their husbands, of their families and they believed in Gods and sacrificed as same as men for

them. To picture better the look of Norse women, I will share some images in which we can see how they could have been if sagas and stories were true (Fig. 34, 35 and 36).

The feminine sphere has left many words in English language, which few of them are very interesting. Few of them are: **birth**= *byrðr*; **cake**= *kaka*; **kid**= *kið*; etc.



**Figure 34.** Lagertha Lothbrok is the main female character of TV Series *Vikings*.

Source: *Vikings* Series



**Figure 35.** Again we can see Lagertha Lothbrok with a typical Norse sword, mail and armory. Blond hair, blue eyes and great beauty can be seen in this character, a perfect representation of Scandinavian women.

Source: *Vikings* Series



**Figure 35.** In this last image we can observe from left to right: Princes Aslogg, Ragnar Lothbrok and Lagertha Lothbrok. A representation of Norse women and man.

Source: *Vikings* Series

## 2.8. Trade and Money

The Vikings established and engaged in extensive trading networks throughout the known world and had a profound influence on the economic development of Europe and Scandinavia not the least. Except for the major trading centers of *Ribe*<sup>18</sup>, *Hedeby*<sup>19</sup> and the like, the Viking world was unfamiliar with the use of coinage and was based on so called bullion economy. Silver was the most common metal in the economy by large, although gold was also used to some extent. Silver circulated in the form of bars, or ingots, as well as in the form of jewellery and ornaments. Traders carried small scales, enabling them to measure weight very accurately, so it was possible to have a very precise system of trade and exchange, even without a regular coinage (Williams Gareth. [2011]).

The organized trade covered everything from ordinary items to exotic luxury products and few of the imported products from other cultures are: *spices* that were obtained from Chinese and Persian trades made in Russia; *glass* that was a very rare material for them and it was used for decoration or prizes; *silk* it was used by them to demonstrate wealthy and status and it was normally imported from Byzantium (modern day Istanbul); *wine* was normally imported from France and Germany and it was used to vary the regular beer; etc.

Also to counter the imports, the Vikings also exported many important items from their culture to the rest of the world, for example: *amber* was a fossilized resin of the pine tree and they had plenty of it, so they used it as exchanged item; *fur* was also exported because we know that the Vikings liked to hunt and they used all the furs for warmth but also as an exchange currency; *cloth* and *wool* because they were excellent farmers and they had many sheep and goats, so the wool of the animals could have been used as material for clothing or trading as we may observe; *down feather* was also collected from Northern birds and after that was exported; *slaves* were also used as exchanged currency because in many of their raids, the Vikings captured many slaves and they used them for trading or as slaves for themselves. Arabs merchants were the ones who used to buy slaves from the Vikings. Other exports included *weapons*; *wax*; *salt* and *cod* and finally *hunting birds* (Jørgensen 2002).

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<sup>18</sup>**Ribe**= Established in the first decade of the 8th century and first attested in a document dated 854 AD; Ribe is the oldest town in Denmark (McKitterick 1995).

<sup>19</sup>**Hedeby**= See page 18.

We know that the foreign currency was used as local currency in Scandinavia and that it was very important for the economic growth. The Scandinavian currency was practically based of the Anglo-Saxon currency and that it was the only currency in Europe in that time to have inscriptions in the local language instead of Latin. Also, commerce and trading opened them a huge opportunity to visit many new and incredible places such as Constantinople, a place that for them was so beautiful and interesting because of its huge walls and richness. They used to call it *Miklagard* (The Big City).

The most important thing Norse men left us regarding to trading and commerce was the foundation of very important cities such as Ribe or Hedeby as I said before, but the most important cities founded by the Vikings were Dublin in Ireland and York in England.

The idea of money for them was not so developed as in Europe. They did not have any currency in particular and the idea of paying for something was rare. They used to make exchanges of materials or anything else. But, in spite of that, they valued a lot the material of which the coins were made, normally silver and gold (one of the reasons of the British Islands' raids was the richness they have found in the monasteries and churches that were full of silver and gold). They usually used to cut the silver or the gold in little pieces and to weight them using them for trades (Fig.36).

We know that many nobles or kings from British Islands tried to pay the Vikings not to attack them or to finish a war, but Vikings did not appreciate their coins that were made of bronze or copper, materials that were not liked by the Vikings. But when the Vikings finally established in Britain they started to mint their own currency, as I have said few paragraphs before, apparently so similar to the islanders' coins, but also similar to French coins or Byzantium coins.

The creation of a currency, besides Christianity and Monarchy that also appeared in Scandinavia when they started to contact with the continent and the British Islands, started to create a revolt because each Scandinavian Kingdom started to create their own currency with their own design and inscriptions on the coins. So, we found that we have a different coin in Norway, a different one in Sweden and finally a different and more powerful in Denmark. This division created a new way of trading between them, but the most important thing is that this division of currency and this influence of Europe and



British Islands upon Norse culture rose between the Vikings hatred and separation, and the real reason of this was that each of the kingdoms I mentioned before wanted to implant their coin as a national coin and to oblige the other kingdoms to use that coin for trading and daily chores. This was one of the reasons of The Viking Age decadence and end.



**Figure 36.** The scales and weights of a Viking trader. Used for measuring silver and sometimes gold.

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Finally we know that with the creation of money and the creation of their own currency, many goods were also traded within the Viking world itself, in addition to goods like soapstone and whetstone for example. Soapstone was traded with the Norse on Iceland and in Jutland, who used it for pottery (articles or vessels made from earthenware or other materials such as soapstone in this case). Whetstones were traded and used for sharpening weapons, tools and knives. There are indications from Ribe and surrounding areas that the extensive medieval trade with oxen and cattle from Jutland reach as far back as c. 720 AD. This trade would have satisfied the Vikings need for leather and meat to some extent, and perhaps hides for parchment production in the European mainland. Wool was also very important as a domestic product for the Vikings. Not just to produce warm clothing for the cold Scandinavian and Nordic climate, but also for sails. There are archaeological signs of organized textile

productions in Scandinavia, reaching as far back as the early Iron Ages. Artisans and craftsmen in the larger towns were supplied with antlers from organized hunting with large-scale reindeer traps in the far North. They were used as raw material for making combs for example (Jørgensen 2002).

To finish with this area, I would like to remember that there are few words that remained in the Modern English and that the origin of these words is Old Norse: **axle**= *öxl* (ox tree); **bag**= *baggin*; **mire**= *myrr*; **slaver**= *slafra*; etc., (Harper. [2001-2014]).

### 3. The End of The Viking Age

Everything that begins does have an end, right? The same happened with The Viking Age. After three centuries of full prosperity and conquering part of the world, the supremacy of the Vikings has fallen down because of many reasons and causes. We know that the main cause of their decadence was the influences they had with the other cultures. But first of all, other important reason was the division and separation between Vikings themselves. As I have said in the previous point, the invention of the currency in Scandinavia and the appearance of coins was one of the most important reasons of their decadence.

During the Viking Age, Scandinavian men and women travelled to many parts of Europe and beyond, in a cultural voyage that left its traces from British Islands to Byzantium. But this period of energetic activity also had a pronounced effect in the Scandinavian homelands, which were subject to a variety of new influences. In the 300 years from the late 8th century, when contemporary chroniclers first commented on the appearance of Viking raiders, to the end of the 11th century, Scandinavia underwent profound cultural changes (Roesdahl 1998).

As Roesdahl said, the influences they had with the other cultures were so important in their history and their lives. They have changed their point of view regarding religion, economy, warfare, etc. That is why, the hand of Christianity, the hand of the Catholic Church and the hand of the western economy affected them and opened a huge way through their daily lives and traditions (the same they have done when they went to the British Islands and settled there). They have started to believe in

other Gods that were not their primordial Gods, they have started to marry other women that were not Scandinavian women and foremost, they have started to mix each others with Christians, Britons and European people.

In the late 11th century, royal dynasties legitimized by the Catholic Church (which had had little influence in Scandinavia 300 years earlier) were asserting their power with increasing authority and ambition, and the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had taken shape. Towns appeared that functioned as secular and ecclesiastical administrative centers and market sites, and monetary economies began to emerge based on English and German models. By this time the influx of Islamic silver from the East had been absent for more than a century, and the flow of English silver had come to an end in the mid-11th century. Christianity had taken root in Denmark and Norway with the establishment of dioceses<sup>20</sup> during the 11th century, and the new religion was beginning to organize and assert itself more effectively in Sweden. Foreign churchmen and native elites were energetic in furthering the interests of Christianity, which was now no longer operating simply on a missionary footing, and old ideologies and lifestyles were transforming (Roesdahl 1998).

Roesdahl here as in the other paragraph explains to us some of the reasons for the Vikings decadence and as can you observe, religion and economy were the most important ones. But a part of these causes we know from our History classes that in Europe battles against England and France have begun and both cultures started to rule the continent, and in the east Europe, Byzantium Empire have conquered all that side of the world, including good part of Asia. So it was almost impossible for them to keep ruling the territories they have conquered in these three centuries. They have started to lose lands in east Europe, in British Islands and in north Europe, remaining only with the territories they have nowadays and with few randomly lands across the world.

The assimilation of the nascent Scandinavian kingdoms into the cultural mainstream of European Christendom altered the aspirations of Scandinavian rulers and of those Scandinavians able to travel overseas and changed their relations with their neighbors. One of the primary sources of profit for the Vikings had been slave-taking.

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<sup>20</sup> A **diocese**, from the Greek term διοίκησις, meaning *administration*, is the district under the supervision of a bishop. It is also known as a *bishopric*. A diocese is divided into parishes (in the Church of England into benefices and parishes). This structure of church governance is known as Episcopal polity (LoveToKnow. [2002-2003]).

The medieval Church took the position that Christians should not own fellow Christians as slaves, so chattel slavery diminished as a practice throughout northern Europe. This took much of the economic incentive out of raiding, though sporadic slaving activity continued into the 11th century. Eventually, outright slavery was outlawed and replaced with serfdom at the bottom rung of medieval society. Scandinavian predation in Christian lands around the North and Irish Seas diminished markedly (Christiansen 1998).

Also we can see in this paragraph written by Christiansen, that it was difficult for them to pay for the raids. The price of raiding was so elevated, but during the first years of The Viking Age, they did not have any problems because they took everything they found in the invaded territories, such as gold and silver from churches; weapons from the defeated warriors; but foremost, slaves and women for selling. However, when Christianity started to grow in their culture, selling slaves that were Christians was forbidden as Christiansen 1998 also said in the previous paragraph. The amount of money they gained decreased and the cost of raids increased so the decadence begun little by little. The same happened with the Roman Empire and all the big empires that tried to conquer the world. The cost of wars and battles was so high that they could not afford to pay all the soldiers and the damages, so finally the tragic end always waited around the corner.

The kings of Norway continued to assert power in parts of northern Britain and Ireland, and raids continued into the 12th century, but the military ambitions of Scandinavian rulers were now directed toward new paths. In 1107, Sigurd I of Norway<sup>21</sup> sailed for the eastern Mediterranean with a host of Norwegian crusaders to fight for the newly established Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Danes and Swedes participated energetically in the Baltic Crusades of the 12th and 13th centuries (Christiansen 1998).

In this last paragraph, Eric explains us that the raids have not totally finished. We can see that there were kings that kept raiding and trying to conquer new territories, but

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<sup>21</sup>**Sigurd I Magnusson**, also known as Sigurd the Crusader, was King of Norway from 1103 to 1130. His rule, together with his brother Eystein I of Norway (until Eystein died in 1123), has been regarded by historians as a golden age for the medieval Kingdom of Norway. He is otherwise famous for leading the Norwegian Crusade (1107–1110), earning the eponym "the Crusader" (Jonathan 1986).

not as powerful as in The Viking Age. They worked more as mercenaries for others and at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, raids have finally finished.

To sum up this point, the Viking Age ended as a result of many factors. Scandinavian kings extended their control over the area. Christianity made inroads into Viking territories resulting in a change in culture. The focus of trade shifted from the east to the west. Lastly, the climate cooled making it impossible to navigate the sea lanes. The Viking Age lasted around four centuries before cultural, political, economic, and climatic changes forced its end. In Fig.37, you can observe how Europe was divided and how Scandinavians were also divided in different territories. Also you may compare this map with the one at the beginning of the project and see the differences between the beginnings of The Viking Age and the end.

I think that the end of The Viking Age was something positive because they could not afford anymore struggling with the rest of the world and every big empire had its beginning and its end, so did the Vikings.

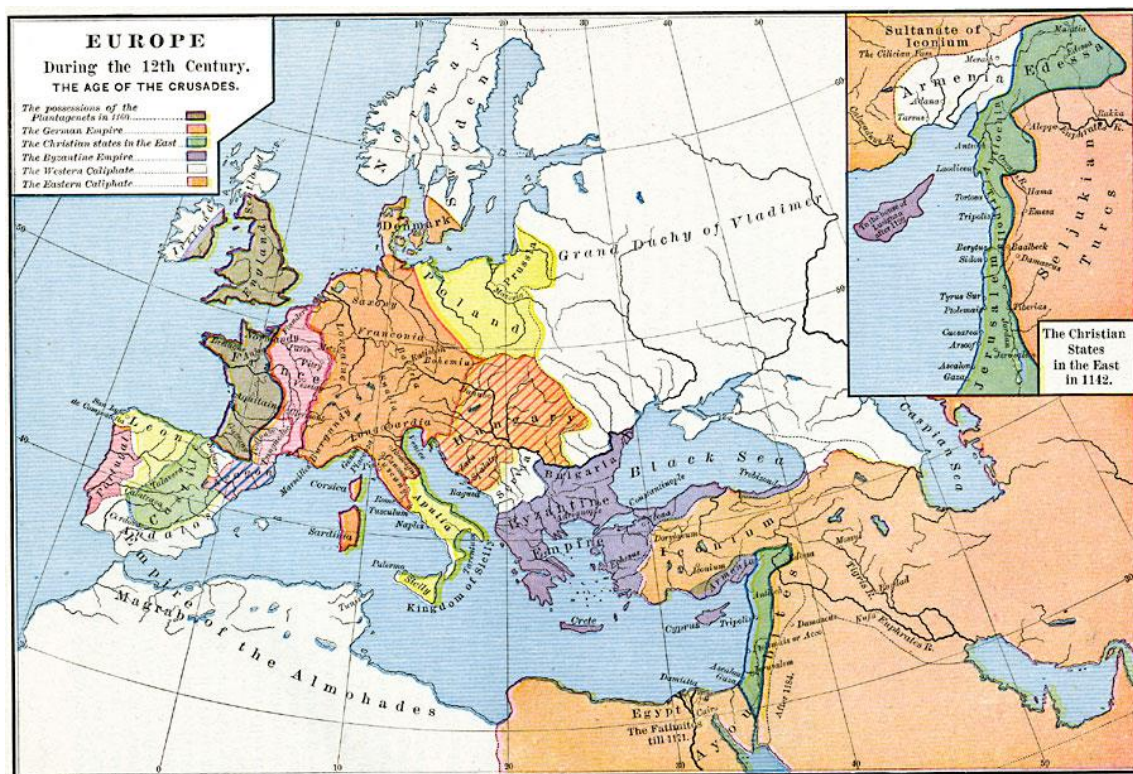


Figure 37. Europe during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, also called The Age of the Crusades

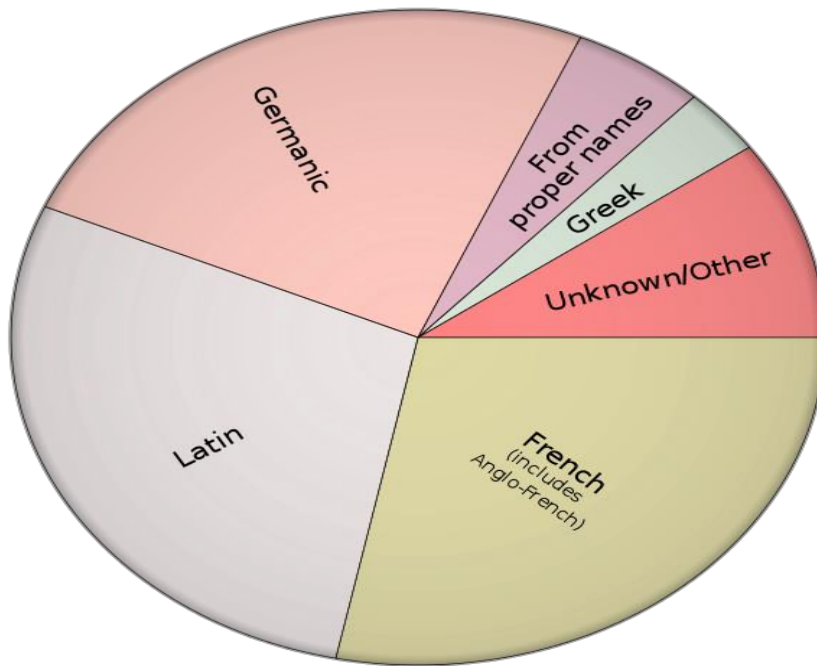
Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

#### 4. Linguistic Influences in English and other Languages

We are therefore drawn here to this point, after analyzing the whole great Viking Age, in which we will take a look at the influences Norse had in English and in other languages such as Swedish, Danish or Norwegian. In the previous stages, we observed few words that Norse left in Modern English, but in this point I will analyze deeper the influence it had.

Before starting with the Norse influence we should see the structure of the English language and the origins of the words we have in its vocabulary. Taking in consideration the Oxford English Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, published in 1989, English language includes 600,000 definitions, even though there is no single sensible answer to this question. It's impossible to count the number of words in a language, because it's so hard to decide what actually counts as a word (Oxford English Dictionary). Another statistic from 2010 done by Harvard and Google found out that the English language contains 1,022,000 words. The findings came from a computer analysis of 5,195,769 digitized books (Alleyne 2010).

We can observe that it is very difficult to find out the amount of words a language has because every day we have new different words and also words that are not used by many people, only by a restricted group of people. In spite of that we can find the origins of these words. A computerized survey of about 80,000 words in the old Shorter Oxford Dictionary (3rd ed.) was published in *Ordered Profusion* by Thomas Finkenstaedt and Dieter Wolff (1973) that estimated the origin of English words as follows: **28.3%** from French and Old Norman; **28.24%** from Latin, including modern scientific and technical Latin; **25%** from Germanic languages (including words directly inherited from Old English; does not include Germanic words coming from the Germanic element in French, Latin or other Romance languages); **5.32%** from Greek; **4.03%** no etymology given; **3.28%** derived from proper names; and **1%** from all other languages (Fig. 38).



**Figure 38.** Influences in English Vocabulary

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Another survey done by Joseph M. Williams in *Origins of the English Language* (1986) of 10,000 words taken from several thousand business letters gave this set of statistics: **41%** from French; **33%** from native English; **15%** from Latin; **2%** from Old Norse; **1%** from Dutch; **10%** from other languages. In this last survey done by Williams we can see that 2% of the English vocabulary is from Old Norse. It is not an elevated amount of words but they are important as many other words from other languages.

Apart from the words that I have recounted in the previous points, many other words of Old Norse origin have entered the English language, primarily from the Viking colonization of eastern and northern England between 800–1000 during the Danelaw <sup>22</sup>. These include common words such as: **anger**=*anгр*; **awe**=*agi*; **big**=*bugge* (great man); **blunder**=*blundra* (shut one's eye); **both**=*bađir*; **call**=*kalla* (cry

<sup>22</sup>**The Danelaw**, as recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, is a historical name given to the part of England in which the laws of the "Danes" held sway and dominated those of the Anglo-Saxons. The term has been extended by modern historians to be geographical. The areas that comprised the Danelaw are in northern and eastern England. The origins of the Danelaw arose from the Viking expansion of the 9th century, although the term was not used to describe a geographic area until the 11th century. With the increase in population and productivity in Scandinavia, Viking warriors, having sought treasure and glory in the nearby British Isles, proceeded to plough and support themselves (Gwyn 1984).

loudly); **cast**=*kasta* (to throw); **cozy**=*kose* (be cozy); **cut**=*kuta* (to cut); **die**=*deyja* (pass away); **dirt**=*drit* (feces); **drag**=*dragg* (grapnel); **drown**=*drukna* (be drowned); **fellow**=*fellagi*; **flat**=*flatr*; **flounder**=*flydhra*; **get**=*geta, gat*> got, *gittan*> gotten; **gift**=*gift* (dowry); **give**=*gefa* (to give); **guess**=*gitse, getze* (to guess); **guest**=*gestr* (guest); **gust**=*gustr* (gust); **hug**= *hugga* (to comfort); **husband**=*husbondi* (master of the house); **ill**=*illr* (bad); **leg**=*leggr*; **lift**= *lypta* (to raise); **likely**=*líkligr*; **link**=*hlenkr*; **loan**=*lán* (to lend); **loose**=*lauss* (loose/free); **low**=*lagr*; **mistake**=*mistaka* (miscarry); **odd**=*oddi* (third number in Norse/the casting vote); **raise**=*reisa*; **root**=*rót*; **rotten**=*rotinn* (decayed); **same**=*same, samr* (same); **scale**=from *skal* for weighing and bowl, drinking cup, or in plural weighing scale referring to the cup or pan part of a balance in early English used to mean cup; **scare**=*skirra* (to frighten); **seat**=*sæti* (seat/position); **seem**=*sæma* (to conform); **sister**=*systir*; **skill**=*skil* (distinction); **skin**=*skinn* (animal hide); **skirt**=*skyrta* (shirt); **skull**=*skulle* (head); **sky**=*ský* (cloud); **stain**=*steina* (to paint); **steak**=*steik, steikja* (to fry); **sway**=*sveigja* (to bend/swing/give away); **take**=*taka*; **though**=from Old English *þēah*, and in part from Old Norse *þó*; **thrive**=*þrifask* (grasp to oneself); **Thursday**=*Þorsdagr* (Thor's day); **tight**=*þétt* (watertight/close in texture/solid); **till**=*til* (to/until); **trust**=*traust* (help/confidence); **ugly**=*uggligr* (dreadful); **want**=*vanta* (to lack); **weak**=*veikr* (weak/pliant); **window**=*vindauga* (wind-eye); **wing**=*vængr* (a wing); **wrong**=*rangr* (crooked/wry/wrong); the pronoun **they**=*þeir* (and its forms); and even the verb **are** merger of Old English *earun, earon* and Old Norse *er* cognates (Harper. [2001-2014]).

There are many other words that came from Old Norse but these are the most common and used in daily English. We can observe that words that begin with an *s* are the most common and also those that begin with a *t* and *w*. Also we can observe that one of the days of the week came from Old Norse and this is Thursday and that is because Thursday was Thor's day. Roman God Jupiter was related to Thor and that is why in English we have Thursday, because in Latin we had *Jovis dies*, that means Jupiter's day.

Apart from common nouns in English, we have more than 1,500 Scandinavian place names in England, mainly in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (within the former boundaries of the Danelaw): over 600 end in *-by*, the Scandinavian word for *village*, for example Grimsby, Naseby and Whitby; many others end in *-thorpe* the Scandinavian word for *farm*; *-thwaite* the Scandinavian word for *clearing*; and *-toft* the Scandinavian word for *homestead* (Crystal 2001).

The distribution of family names showing Scandinavian influence is still, as an analysis of names ending in *-son* reveals, concentrated in the north and east, corresponding to areas of former Viking settlement. Early medieval records indicate that



over 60% of personal names in Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire showed Scandinavian influence (Crystal 2001).

We can say that the influence it has in the English language was not as big as other languages like French or Germanic, but it also was important because the words they brought to England are very common words; the names and the places names are used daily, so Norse was important in the development of the English language.

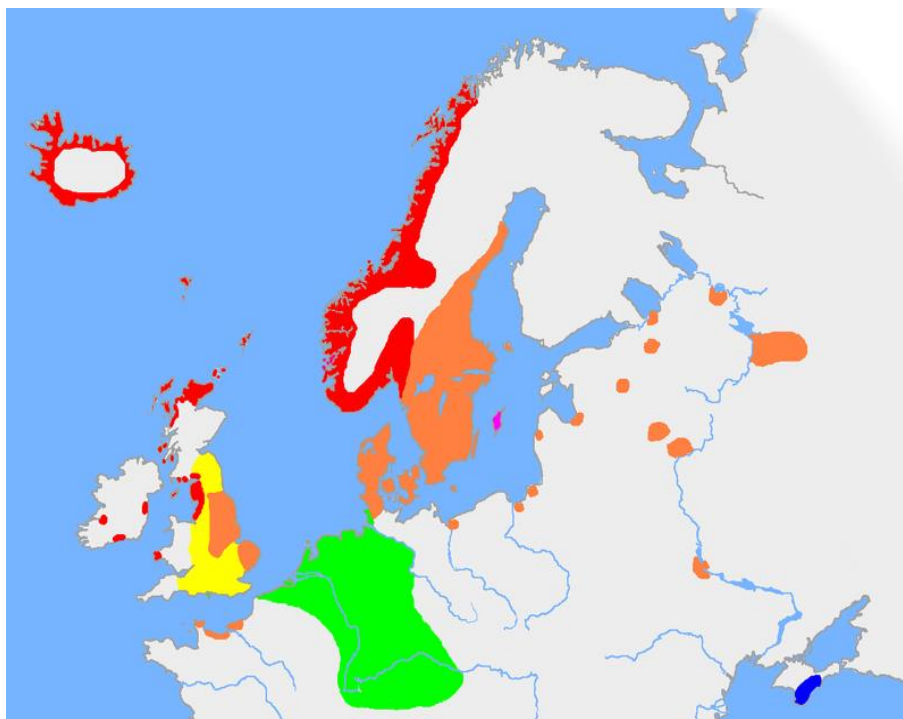
Apart from English, Old Norse had a big influence in other languages such as North Germanic Languages. The North Germanic languages (also named Scandinavian languages), make up one of the three branches of the Germanic languages, a sub-family of the Indo-European languages, along with the West Germanic languages and the extinct East Germanic languages. The language group is sometimes referred to as the Nordic languages, a direct translation of the most common term used among Danish, Swedish and Norwegian scholars and laypeople. In Scandinavia, the term Scandinavian languages refers specifically to the mutually intelligible languages of the three Scandinavian countries and is thus used in a more narrow sense as a subset of the Nordic languages, leaving aside the insular subset of Faroese and Icelandic. The term Scandinavian arose in the 18th century as a result of the early linguistic and cultural Scandinavian movement, referring to the people, cultures, and languages of the three Scandinavian countries and stressing their common heritage (Holmberg and Platzack 2005).

The three Nordic languages have many similarities to Old Norse. Nowadays the three of them are almost equal and they can talk to each other without big difficulties. That is because the main root is Old Norse and there are many likenesses as I have just said before. The little differences they have are because Old Norse was divided into three dialects: Old East Norse, Old West Norse, and Old Gutnish<sup>23</sup>. Old West and East Norse formed a dialect continuum, with no clear geographical boundary between them. For example, Old East Norse traits were found in eastern Norway, although Old Norwegian is classified as Old West Norse, and Old West Norse traits were found in western Sweden. Most speakers spoke Old East Norse in what is present day Denmark and Sweden. Old Gutnish, the more obscure dialectal branch, is

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<sup>23</sup>**Old Gutnish** was the dialect of Old Norse that was spoken on the Baltic island of Gotland. It shows sufficient differences from the Old West Norse and Old East Norse dialects that it is considered to be a separate branch. Gutnish is still spoken in some parts of Gotland and on the adjoining island of Fårö.

sometimes included in the Old East Norse dialect due to geographical associations. It developed its own unique features and shared in changes to both other branches (Tunstall Peter. [2008]) (Fig 39).



**Figure 39.** Red=Old West Norse; Orange=Old East Norse; Purple=Old Gutnish; Yellow=Old English; Blue=Crimean Gothic; Green=Other Germanic Languages

Origins: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

We can observe that the Old West Norse and the Old East Norse were the ones which influenced English language and Modern Nordic languages. It is logical that the Scandinavian countries have more similarities to the Old Norse than English language because of the geographical position of the Scandinavian countries compared with the British Islands.

To sum up this point, we can say that Old Norse had big influences in north Europe countries and also an important influence in British Islands. Aside from the culture, religion and tradition, Vikings left in Britain and in Northern countries, linguistic connections and a quite number of words and names.

## 5. Conclusions

Después de un largo camino en el cual he aprendido muchísimas cosas nuevas, llegamos a este punto de reflexión y conclusión. Con este trabajo, he intentado aprender un poquito más sobre la vida de los vikingos y cómo eran en la realidad.

Primero vimos la localización geográfica de Escandinavia, los países modernos que forman esos territorios (Suecia, Dinamarca y Noruega) y los primeros textos o escritores que mencionaron algo sobre esos *lands* tan fríos y oscuros, pero al mismo tiempo llenos de misterios y paisajes pintorescos. Con el paso del tiempo, los Norse fueron conquistando progresivamente territorios, primero los más cercanos para apoderarse después de los situados en zonas lejanas como Las Islas Británicas, grandes áreas de Rusia, incluso en las del nuevo continente en Canadá. Fue un periodo de grandeza y esplendor llamado *The Viking Age* que duró desde finales del siglo VIII hasta el siglo XII aproximadamente.

En segundo lugar, he hecho hincapié en este periodo tan magnífico en el cual los Vikingos llegaron a su máximo punto de poder y desarrollo. Lograron grandes victorias y un gran desarrollo gracias a las continuas irrupciones que hacían cada verano y en las cuales conquistaban nuevos territorios de los cuales sustraían sus riquezas (oro, plata, esclavos, etc.) y se las llevaban a sus tierras. En esos ataques continuos e insistentes, la religión jugó un papel muy importante: sus múltiples dioses como *Thor*, *Odin*, *Loki*, etc., parecían dirigir sus estrategias de guerra, zonas o pueblos que atacar. Pero eran los grandes líderes vikingos quienes los usaban como excusa para manipular a los guerreros o conseguir lo que querían. Los mitos y las leyendas que crearon a partir de sus dioses sirvieron para fortalecer a los guerreros, para animarles a morir en batalla y dar sus vidas para llegar a los sitios sagrados como *Valhalla*. Además, la religión mantenía un orden en la sociedad Norse y muchas veces sustituyó a la justicia. Llegados a este punto, vimos que la justicia o la ley estaban representadas por un reducido grupo de personas (normalmente hombres ancianos) que hacían el papel de juez y del tribunal, pero el pueblo tomaba la decisión final. El pueblo tenía el poder de condenar, matar o perdonar la vida de un asesino o delincuente.

También, hubo un medio de transporte impredecible para las actividades vikingas de guerra, transporte o pesca: los barcos. Desarrollaron varios tipos según su función, como por ejemplo, barcos para transportar guerreros; barcos para transportar mercancías

o simplemente barcos para trasladar a sus familias a los nuevos territorios conquistados. Las familias, tanto en Escandinavia como en los nuevos territorios, eran autosuficientes y se ocupaban normalmente de la agricultura, caza, pesca y comercio. Cultivaban las tierras, criaban animales y usaban los mares y aguas que les rodeaban para obtener otros recursos: pesca y elementos para la joyería. A los Vikingos también les gustaba entretenerse, jugar y practicar deportes. Solían cantar, tocar instrumentos o practicar juegos en grupo que eran algo violentos. Dentro de sus casas disfrutaban con los juegos de mesa o construían escudos y armas para los ataques veraniegos.

Otro factor importante para el fructífero desarrollo y la conquista de nuevos territorios, fueron sus armas y estrategias de guerra. Vimos que eran personas muy fuertes, grandes, hábiles y diestros en la guerra. Usaban armas pesadas pero al mismo tiempo hachas y cuchillos pequeños pero muy rápidos. Se defendían con escudos y una de las estrategias más comunes de los Norse era el *Shield Wall*, que servía para protegerse a ellos y a los que tenían a sus lados. Las mujeres también podían ir a la guerra y luchar al lado de los hombres. Eran fuertes y podían participar en los ataques. La mujer Vikinga tenía algunos derechos más que cualquier otra mujer de otras culturas de aquella época, como por ejemplo participar en guerras; llevar armas o fabricarlas; divorciarse; rezar de la misma manera que un hombre; etc.

Después de conquistar todos estos nuevos territorios, los Vikingos empezaron a hacer negocios y comercios con los nativos de esos sitios. Eso ayudó al enriquecimiento de la economía de Escandinavia y al descubrimiento de nuevos materiales, alimentos, esclavos, etc. Los Norse hacían intercambios con muchas culturas (África, Europa, Rusia, Asia) y se aprovechaban de todo lo que tenían alrededor para venderlo o intercambiarlo. Vimos que con la expansión territorial y con la explosión del comercio llegó la moneda al mundo escandinavo, moneda hecha de oro, bronce, pero sobre todo de plata. Cada *land* del norte de Europa empezó a tener su propia moneda con la inscripción del conde de esa zona.

Pero, como la historia nos ha enseñado desde la aparición del primer ser humano hasta nuestros días, todo tiene un final, y aún más una cultura que se basa en conquistas y guerras. Conocemos la caída de los grandes faraones egipcios; la decadencia de la gran Grecia; la disolución del imperio Romano; y la finalización del gran periodo de los Vikingos.

Como las otras grandes civilizaciones, los nórdicos nos dejaron cosas muy importantes y útiles. Una de las más importantes fue la influencia que tuvo el *Old Norse* (idioma de los Vikingos) en el inglés. Vimos que más de 1% del vocabulario actual del inglés proviene del *Old Norse* así como expresiones y estructuras muy utilizadas. Por ejemplo, la forma *are* del verbo *to be*, tiene su raíz en el idioma de los Vikingos.

En nuestros tiempos, los Vikingos han sido una fuente de inspiración para los poetas, pintores, para los músicos y sobre todo para el cine. Películas y series como *Vicky the Viking*; *Asterix and Obelix*<sup>24</sup>; *The Northman*; etc., fueron algunas de las películas o series inspiradas en los Vikingos en el siglo XX. En el siglo XXI, este género es más explotado aún por Hollywood u otras grandes compañías televisivas (History Channel en el caso de la serie *Vikings*), en películas como *Outlander*; *Hammer of the Gods*; *Thor*; etc., o la serie *Vikings*, mencionada anteriormente.

Para finalizar, me gustaría añadir que se han creado muchos tópicos sobre la sociedad Vikinga y entre ellos, más difundido y menos fundamental, es que llevaban cuernos en los cascos. Hasta hoy, no se ha encontrado ninguna evidencia física o escrita de que llevaban cuernos, excepto para casos concretos como rituales religiosos o poco más. Tal idea proviene del siglo XIX, de manos de Gustav Malstrom, quien en 1820 ilustró la legendaria y épica obra del siglo VIII, *La Saga de Frithiof*, en la que quiso plasmar a estos temidos guerreros escandinavos dándoles una imagen lo más violenta posible (Fig.40 and 41).

Los Vikingos fueron una sociedad guerrera, luchadora y violenta, pero por otra parte eran muy familiares y creyentes en su religión. Descubrieron nuevos territorios; dejaron un amplio abanico de palabras en el inglés; y son una fuente de inspiración muy rica para los artistas de hoy en día. Para mí, son un ejemplo a seguir porque luchaban para conseguir lo que querían y nunca abandonaban sus metas.

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<sup>24</sup> Esta película tiene muchas influencias, tanto antiguas como recientes (romanas, griegas, francesas etc.). Es una mezcla de muchas culturas en la cual se quieren enseñar las aventuras de dos personajes que aparentan ser vikingos (por los cascos con cuernos que llevan, una cosa que es errónea y que comentaré más adelante).

Terminando en un tono épico, recomiendo la serie de *Vikings* donde se pueden ver más cosas sobre los Vikingos y la historia de Ragnar Lothbrok, el primer Vikingo que llegó a las islas Británicas y a otros nuevos territorios, según las sagas y las leyendas.



**Figure 40.** Uno de los cuadros que dieron lugar al mito de que los Vikingos llevaban cuernos, pintado por Gustav Malstrom.

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Figure 41.** Otro cuadro del mismo autor donde se pueden ver guerreros nórdicos con cascos y cuernos con forma de alas.

Source: <http://edadmedia17.blogspot.com.es>

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