Synopsis – academic content for VTM
Version 12.04.21

This version is part of the delivery from the Exhibition planning phase, finalized in May 2021. The synopsis for academic content will be further developed in the detailing phase.
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1. The Viking World (Introduction)

**Location and flexibility**
This installation is located just before the start of the exhibition route. The installation is spread throughout the foyer and information area and the area located in the middle of the axes that link the exit / entrance and shop / auditorium. This exhibition space is extremely flexible in that the physical object(s) can be changed and the digital content can easily be updated.

**Experience goals**
- Visitors receive confirmation that they are in the right place.
- Visitors become curious about when and where the Vikings lived.
- Visitors find the museum’s offerings easy to navigate.

**Learning goals**
- Visitors learn when the Viking Age was, and what Vikings were.
- Visitors gain insight into the geographical distribution of the Vikings.
- Visitors gain an overview of the (global) geopolitical movements taking place at the same time as the Viking Age.

**Main narratives and key objects**

*1.1 The Viking World*
The Vikings were Scandinavian farmers and traders, explorers and migrants, but also pirates and invaders from the early Middle Ages that made their impact across the northern hemisphere. To be a Viking was exactly this – to be someone who went out on ship in the world to win fortune with the sword. Vikings were thus not an ethnic group, they were traders in violence. However, in modern use, Vikings has come be used synonymously with Scandinavians in the Viking Age, and that is how we will use the word in this exhibition.

The story we are telling starts around 400 and ends around 1100, with a main focus on the period defined as the “Viking Age” (approx. 750–1050). Geographically, it stretches across large parts of the Northern Hemisphere, and the Scandinavians engaged in networks that reached towards Africa, the Silk Road, Malaysia and China. The story relates the rise and fall of the main geopolitical movements and trade routes. This installation does not contain any museum objects.

2 The Discovery (Introduction)

**Location and flexibility**
The installation “The Discovery” is a prologue to the exhibitions and is located in the fourth wing of the existing building. All the visitors to the exhibitions pass through this installation. It is currently envisioned with a central excavation trench going through the Oseberg mound. On each side, behind the sides of the excavation trench, are anterooms where smaller group of visitors can study ways of researching the Viking Age and delve deeper into the research and exhibition story of the Oseberg find. While the installation as such is semi-permanent (but not part of the building), extensive use of digital surfaces allows for great flexibility. Display cases will be used in the anterooms and requires flexibility in the physical infrastructure of the building and the possibility of changing the exhibition elements.
Experience goals

- The visitor experiences in this installation pique the visitor’s curiosity about the content of the museum and raise their expectations of an enriching museum visit.
- The installation gives an introduction to, how knowledge about the Viking Age has come and comes into being and highlight the importance and celebrated status of the Oseberg find.
- This prologue gets visitors in the mood to set off on a journey of discovery through history, a journey that only begins with the Oseberg find.

Learning goals

- Visitors understand that the Oseberg ship was found inside a big mound, and that it was part of an outstanding burial from the early Viking Age.
- They understand that the excavation of the Oseberg find was the greatest single event in the history of Norwegian archaeology, and that it marked a break-through of the modern archaeological method in Norway.
- Visitors realise that the soil beneath their feet is a fantastic archive over past life, and that archaeology provides us with the means to read this archive.
- Visitors understand that the study of the Viking Age goes widely beyond Oseberg, and that the period is studied through many different sources and with a many different methods, from text analyses to satellite images.
- They understand that this study leads to perpetually new understandings of how people coped with life back then – and that this knowledge is valuable today, for example in the face of migration, or climate change.

Main narratives

The stories in the installation “The Discovery” revolve around three main narratives:

*2.1 The discovery of the Oseberg ship

The excavation trench takes the visitor back to 1904 and to the excavation of the Oseberg ship grave as a pivotal point in time for Viking Age research. The “new”, scientific approach of the excavation is emphasized, and one side of the trench may show a photographic reproduction of the original trench, the other side the drawing recording it. Integrated into the walls are photos and objects that tells the story of the Oseberg find from 1903 onwards, including main characters. By showing how much knowledge came out of that find, the overarching message is promoted that the ground under our feet is a fantastic archive about events that took place in the past. Therefore, the trench in the burial mound transports us backwards in time, back to the time of the Oseberg burial…

**2.2 The fascinating modern history of the Oseberg find

This larger anteroom, behind the excavation trench’s right hand side, is a place to dive deeper into the history of the Oseberg excavation and its subsequent history. Why was it excavated, how, was it reconstructed, where was it exhibited, etc. In the dark setting of the room it is perhaps possible to show priceless treasures from the excavation, like the original diaries, sketches and drawings from the excavation, and it is possible also to follow the main events in the find’s history, with the recent movement of the ship into the new Viking museum as the latest climax.
2.3 Research is the source of knowledge

In the smaller anteroom on the left hand side, the visitor is passing through an ambient digital presentation of Viking Age research methods, starting from studies of Viking age and medieval written sources over excavation to modern, digital and non-invasive methods including airborne laser, etc. An important question for this section to answer is, why do we need to research the Viking Age? There are several answers to this question, and they should trigger the visitors’ desire to be a researcher in the exhibition, to engage with it.

Key objects
No authentic Viking Age objects are displayed in this installation, but authentic objects from the excavation of the Oseberg mound like tools, packing material, diaries, drawings, etc. Showcases from the Viking Ship Museum can also be reused here, as part of the exhibition history.

3 From the living to the dead (Around 800)

Location and flexibility
The installation “From the living to the dead” is located on the upper level of the exhibition area “Around 800” and is the first installation visitors will see in the new building. All the visitors to the exhibitions pass through this area. The area along the façade is extremely flexible in that the number of display cases can be varied and the contents of the display cases can be changed. The middle area of this installation will not be very flexible in that the large objects from the Oseberg find (the skeletons, the cart, sledges and carved animal heads) will be displayed in permanently fixed display cases.

Experience goals
- The visitor experience the crossing of a threshold when entering into the exhibition. The world of the excavation of the Oseberg mound and modern archaeology is left behind, and the visitor finds him/herself in an ancient world, that of the Vikings.
- The visitor immediately feels that the moment is strongly charged; emotions of loss, grief, fear is present, but also of importance – something immensely significant is happening, something that has the power to shape an entire future.

Learning goals
- Visitors understand that the central part of the installation is a funeral procession, and that it is made with objects that were used in the real Oseberg funeral in the year 834. They comprehend that two women were put to rest in a ship, together with numerous exquisite objects. The size of this investment tells us that the funeral was of huge importance for the burying society, and that its consequences reached beyond grief and emotions, into inheritance, collective memories and ideology.
- Visitors understand that in the Viking Age people differed a lot, like today. They had different beliefs, gender, age and social roles. In many aspects, they were very foreign to us. At the same time they were also a lot like us, and they faced many of the same human conditions as we – joy, grief, love, hate, long life or early death, respect or contempt. Visitors are encouraged to reflect on things we have in common, such as the use of religion and rituals in connection with important moments in life and death.
Visitors understand that in the Viking Age people had different world views, and that they treated their dead in many different ways.

Main narratives and key objects
The installation “From the living to the dead” comprises two main narratives:

*3.1 The final journey

The story of the funeral ceremony for the two Oseberg women buried in the Oseberg ship, “The final journey”, is located in the middle of the room, from the entrance to a large showcase with the original Oseberg stem, situated with a view down to the Oseberg ship in the grave. When the visitors enter the installation, they becomes part of a funeral procession towards something off in the distance. The first thing they see is the remains of two women being respectfully brought on on their way from the world of the living to the world of the dead. They are lying together in a display case, surrounded by four carved animal heads with associated rattles in a resemblance of how these were found in the burial chamber in the ship. In the display case is also down from the mattress or duvet, on which they were once placed in the ship. This provides a strong first impression when entering the room and immediately turns the row of vehicles into a procession. It is conveyed that the animal heads around the women may represent protective magic, thus providing reason for the air of fear, besides that of grief and respect, that perpetrates the entire installation. The women are at the rear of the procession which further consists of three ornate sledges and a cart. These are beautifully carved with cats, serpents, human figures and geometric patterns, and each of them is worth stopping for and admiring. Perhaps the cart is being pulled by the remains of two of the horses from the Oseberg burial mound.

The large spectacular objects follow the curve of the architecture. The visitors are drawn along them in a way that gives them the impression of being part of this special event that is taking place, but at the same time they feel the distance that time has created between us and them. Sound effects such as the whinnying of nervous horses, iron rattles and horn playing, together with lighting effects and shadows, create a sense of ceremony and an “other worldly” atmosphere. Projections on the walls can enhance this mood.

Objects: The installation consists of objects from Oseberg that were part of the funeral ceremony in 834: The skeletons of two women, three sledges, three carved sledge runners, one cart, four carved animal heads and four rattles. Possibly a fifth rattle and fifth animal head can be included too, but they both are poorly preserved. Three of the objects in the procession are icons: the wagon, Gustafsson’s sledge, and one of the animal figures with a rattle. That means that there are allowed for large groups around them. All objects will have full information available and will be presented as exceptional.

*3.2 50 ways to leave your loved ones

This is a story about the many different ways in which the Vikings people buried their dead, but it is also a very essential part of the exhibition in terms of demonstrating the plurality of the Viking world. It shall present a number of individual life stories and identities, underscoring the message that life was always – also in the Viking Age – lived individually. The stories are told through about 12 well-researched and fascinating grave finds displayed along the outer wall. Dramatically, they are persons that are attending the funeral of the Oseberg women, and mostly they stand upright in their glass cases even though they have lost their physical form – only their burial gifts and perhaps skeletal remains are left. However, in each case they have their own story to tell about their life, death, and funeral. These two perspectives are conveyed such that it is clear to the visitors that these stories are not part of the Oseberg complex, but represent other people’s lives.
The different graves represent the wide variety in burial customs, social classes, gender and age. The graves are from the entire Viking Age and it may be considered to exhibit them in chronological order. An identity is created for each individual grave by means of a short “biography” based on burial gifts, burial monument and, when applicable, analyses of human remains. Emphasis is put on demonstrating much of the width in the Viking Age society, from slaves to kings. It may even be considered, if the possible praxis of infanticide should be discussed as a Scandinavian and European practice; that should be dependent on a review of the evidence in a research paper.

The graves for this section have not been selected yet, but will encompass cremation as well as inhumation burials, and different monument types. Possible examples are the androgyne warrior from Nordre Kjølen, the fisheating, decapitated slave from Flakstad, the young adult from Steigen with Samic-Norse parents and female cranial features but male DNA, or the boy from Lødingen with poor health, but who died from smallpox. Suggested slave graves from Bikjholberget has also been suggested. However, interesting grave inventories may also form a very good reason for selection; the graves selected should not be the most exotic ones, but those that in combination gives a good representation of Viking Age society. Rune inscriptions commemorating persons may be used in the exhibition to put words on grief and loss.

The “spectators” are presented in standing display cases that largely follow the curvature of the outer wall, but can be placed asymmetrically. The visitors can move between the displays and view the objects from several sides.

4 Cosmology and “forn sed” (Around 800)

Location and flexibility
This story is placed directly on your left hand when you enter the exhibition, vis-à-vis the glass case with the two Oseberg women. It is a space for immersion in the cosmology and rituals of Viking Age Scandinavians and as such illuminates the themes of death and burial highlighted in the other parts of this exhibition segment. It is fully flexible, so all content and media can be easily renewed.

Experience goals
- The main feeling shall be fascination and surprise. In the section, the visitor meets some of the most popular Viking tropes, with Odin, Valhalla, etc., but finds out that they are very different from their popular image, and that they represent only a small part of the Viking cosmology.

Learning goals
- Viking age religious authority was dispersed in society, and religion existed and developed through rituals. What you did was possibly more important than what you thought.
- Viking age beliefs were based on cosmologies that had been in existence for centuries, and was shared by many Germanic peoples before Christianity. Popular picture of these beliefs stems today, however, from a few high medieval authors’ perception of the heathen past; it is fragmentary, biased, and can be interpreted in many different ways.
Main narratives and key objects

The installation comprises two main narratives:

*4.1 The old roots of Viking Age beliefs

By the late 8th century, Scandinavians together with other Germanic peoples had been worshipping the gods that we find in Viking cosmology for centuries, as attested by Roman historians and runic inscriptions. Thus the belief in Woden, Thor, and other deities was spread over large parts of Europe during the Migration Period, where it left its marks in terms of, e.g., place names. However, in most areas the ancient Germanic beliefs were soon replaced by Christianity, and by 800 Scandinavians were the last Germanic population where these non-Christian beliefs were still favored. From a West European point of view, the Scandinavians were thus, as their Slavic, Finnish and Baltic neighbours, heathens and their religious places and practices were described with horror and fascination. In some instances, what seem to be cult buildings have been identified by the archaeologists, for example in Uppåkra, in Tissø, and possibly also in Ørsta in Western Norway.

Religion and cosmology was not, however, something strongly institutionalized and external to the individuals – it permeated every aspect of everyday life, and was invoked everywhere. Ethnographic examples shows us that rituals often surround everyday practices in pre-state societies, and that ancestors often were an important focal point in family’s religious life. There are many indications that these phenomena were also frequent in Viking Age Scandinavia. Finds of sacrifices and depositions in houses or in the outfields are examples, but also the rich theophoric and sacred place name landscapes emphasize how belief and everyday life were closely weaved together. Archaeological finds indicates that both shamanism and animism existed, in part in the interplay between Saami and Norse cosmologies.

**Key objects:** Digital media, Plans of cult houses from Hofstaðir, Uppåkra, Tissø, Ørsta (?) and finds associated with cult buildings (incl, map showing place names with Norse gods in Europe (pre-Viking Age, Viking Age). Key objects: Goldfoil figures (“gullgubber”) and strike-a-lights from Hov in Oppland. Loan: Goldfoil figures from the supposed cult house under Mære church, Steinkjær, Trøndelag.

*4.2 The nine worlds

The best known part of the Scandinavian cosmology is the one passed on to us through high medieval manuscripts. The poem Völuspá – preserved through the “Poetic Edda” but believed to have been composed in the 10th / 11th century – is the most important of these texts. It depicts the cosmology to have a distinct cyclical motif. It has a phase where cosmos is created, before it is divided into nine worlds around the life tree Yggdrasil. Within these worlds, all beings exist, but they are inevitably drifting towards Ragnarok where a great war destroys the universe. Only a few children gods survive into a reborn world.

Several of the motifs from Völuspá are reflected in the sources. The names of the gods appear in place names, like Odin in Odense (Odin’s vi) or Tir i Tissø (Tir’s lake), and the motif of Yggdrasil seem to be represented both in trees being focus for sacrifices, and perhaps in three-tonged stone settings on graves, believed to represent the tree’s roots under which the worlds of the dead were.
Key objects: Images and any objects showing gods (Altuna stone with Thor’s fishing, U 1161), Yggdrasil, (perhaps from a stone setting or from the Oseberg tapestry), Ragnarok and other key motifs. A wooden figure of Odin, mentioned by Svein. Gaming pieces as a reference to the recreation phase after Ragnarok.. A spindle whorl from Greenland has a Thor’s hammer carved into it, and there are many Thor’s hammers from England and Russia/Ukraine, plus moulds to make them found in Russia and Ireland. The objects & images in parts 4.1 and 4.2 can be supplemented with texts and words, as a way of making verbal evidence visible. Relevant quotes from eddic and skaldic poems and/or runic inscriptions can form textual glimpses into beliefs, customs and (orally-anchored) rituals.

To name one example, parts of the fragmentarily preserved skaldic poem Húsdrápa (i.e. “eulogy on the house”, possibly from the end of 10th c.) by Úlfr Uggason, relate of Þórr’s fishing trip and fight with the World Serpent.

5 Time line (Around 800 – Around 1000)

Location

The installation “Time line” is located on the upper level, along the entire length of the curved core wall containing the arcade rooms. The installation mainly is on the wall, but could consist of different types of elements and even expand to the floor at places if feasible. Its content could be dynamic and interactive, and must be easy to modify or change as new chronological information becomes available.

Experience goals

- Visitors experience the Time line as a structuring and a way-finding element in the exhibition.
- Visitors experience that chronology orders history and make relations visible.

Learning goals

- Visitors understand that the Viking Age was an era lasting just a few centuries during which societies underwent radical changes.
- Visitors understand the changing geography of the Viking world over time.

Main narratives and key objects

The main narrative is “A changing world”, which is also the overall concept of the exhibitions in the new Viking Age Museum. It gives “Time line” a special role in communicating this arer to museum visitors.

*5.1 A changing world

The main message of “Timeline” is that the Viking Age is a dynamic period, with interlinked developments and events through time. Specific years, and visualisation of the timeline with events, topics, maps, etc. along the core wall provide a good understanding of both developments and the various dates. The beginning and end of the Viking Age can be marked with events / years before and after what is considered the Viking Age and which fade out at either end of the line. At these key events / years, different levels of information will be
provided. For example, 793, 865–878 and 1066 all have key historical events, while the oldest dendrochronological date from Kaupang is an archaeological key date, and such dates will often be inside an interval. Developments can be presented graphically, but documented through events that are more closely dated, for example Christianisation through archaeological finds of Christian symbolism or historical dates concerning mission, conversions of individuals, etc. Some of the years and events are selected to illustrate that the dynamics of the Viking Age are linked to events elsewhere in the world. This allows visitors to relate this information to their own background and experience, and understand that the Viking Age was part of a larger whole in world history.

Some events or phenomena may be coupled to historical or archaeological figures. Ottar of Hålogaland, can illustrate the importance of northern Scandinavia, Wulfstan the non-Scandinavians trading in Scandinavian and the Baltic. Ibn Fadlan can tell about Scandinavians on the Russian waterways. Gunnor in Normandy or Thorgerðr Steinar’s daughter, memorialised on a runestone in Barra in the Western Isles of Scotland, can represent stories about building powerful Scandinavian societies outside the homelands. A beheaded Scandinavian (?) Research paper will check) from Ridgeway Hill may tell about the cruel day when he and his companions were executed in Southern England. The Galteland stone may tell about a father who lost his son in Knut’s war in England. The figures should, however, be historically or archaeologically well attested. Together, they should reflect the diversity of the Viking world, incl. Iceland.

**Key objects:** Digital media will be the back bone of the Time line. Small archaeological objects may be incorporated in wall-mounted or standing cases. Life-size human figures may be considered. Visitor flow along the wall is, however, important.

6 The weavers (Around 800)

**Location and flexibility**
The first arcade room, close to the Oseberg skeletons and the first vehicle in the burial procession. The room will be permanently without daylight, because it is holding the Oseberg textiles and some textile tools. Show cases and other exhibition elements should be flexible, however, since future research is likely to suggest changes in the initial selection and presentation of finds.

**Experience goals**
- Visitors feel that they are getting to see something very special and fragile, and that this is an important key to understanding the Oseberg find and the Viking Age as a whole.

**Learning goals**
- The Oseberg textiles are unique sources of knowledge about the Viking Age.
- With reference to the massive amount of textile equipment in the grave, the two women from the Oseberg burial site seemingly were deeply involved in textile work at a high level, and this empowered them in society.
- Poining to the norns spinning the thread of destiny, textile work may have had a cosmological dimension in the Viking Age. (the validity of this should be pursued in RP)

**Main narratives and key objects**
The stories in the textile room are concentrated around collective history and mythology, which harmonises with the stories outside the room. Some textiles used in the top of society were exotic and had travelled over long distances. The many textile tools and remains of clothing found at the site bear witness to a varied and quite specialised craft.
The stories in this installation revolve around three main narratives:

*6.1 Historical textiles

The unique tapestries from Oseberg depict an array of finely portrayed animals, humans, ships, carts and buildings, telling stories that are now to a large extent lost. Tapestries were powerful objects that played an important role in the Viking Age. They were created in high status environments, and those who created them would have power through controlling their story. Central myths and stories can tell us about society and life back then, and tapestries were used to mediate these kinds of stories for many centuries. Norse mythology, as we know it through what was written down in early Christian times, was probably originally conveyed through a combination of oral and pictorial storytelling. The tapestries from Oseberg, which comprise several different works of art, provide valuable insight into the Viking conceptual worldview. It is shown through examples of ekphrasis how important pictures were for the Scandinavians to tell stories.

**Key objects:** Tapestry fragments from Oseberg (with reconstructions and/or animations) and tablet-woven bands. Media with Eddic and skaldic poetry. *The Legendary Saga of St Olaf* tells us that some of the action of the Sigurd story was depicted on a wall hanging in the hall of King Olaf Haraldsson. The king asked his poet Thormóðr to compose verses about the scene on the hanging where Sigurd was shown cutting off the dragon’s head and roasting its heart; the verses are preserved in the saga.

*6.2 The loom of fate

One very noticeable feature of the Oseberg grave is the richness, not only of textiles, but also of equipment for its production – or some of it. It is conceivable that they, and the farm they came from, was an important textile production centre. This section of the exhibition explores, what the Oseberg finds tell about textile production in the Oseberg household. It looks at this question also in a wider, European perspective, where there are examples of textile production taking place at central places.

The section also explores, if textile equipment in the grave may have been associated with ritual and magic. Textile production has a particular role in Norse mythology, where among other things, the three Norns spin and cut the thread of life for all people, thereby determining their fate. Do the grave inventory give us any reason to believe that the Oseberg women had any religious functions?

**Key objects:** Textile production equipment and various textiles from Oseberg. Examples of the kind of equipment missing in the grave (spindle from Kaupang). Media with Eddic and Scaldic poetry.

*6.3 Textiles from distant lands

The Oseberg burial site also contained fragments of many different silk fabrics and silk threads from different places around the world. This section present these exotic goods and discuss what they are telling us about the acquirement and use of silk in Viking Age Scandinavia.

Silk made in Central Asia and Byzantium was spread across much of the Old World, bearing witness to diversity, cultural encounters and change. Passing through the hands of traders from various places and cultures, some of them found their way to the Nordic region. People in different places used similar fabrics for different purposes. The silk fabrics have motifs from myths and stories that belong to other parts of the world (such as the Zoroastrian religion from
Persia, Christian symbols from Byzantium). How did it end up in Scandinavia? And how was it understood and used?

**Key objects:** Silk (samitum fabric) and silk embroidery from Oseberg (the originals as well as additional photographs and reconstructions). Silk finds from other graves than Oseberg, e.g. the northernmost silkfind from Ness, Hamarøy, Nordland? Other media: photographs of similar textiles from Central Europe, chalk paintings from Central Asia.

7 Artful animals (Around 800)

**Location and flexibility**
Second room in the arcade, after «The Weavers». High flexibility.

**Experience goals**
- The visitor shall experience to be surrounded by animal styles and link them to the cosmology and identity of the Scandinavians.

**Learning goals**
- The visitor shall understand that the animal styles were the artistic expression specific to the Scandinavians before and during the Viking Age, and that they brought them with them out in the world, where they often are the feature that identifies an object as Scandinavian.
- The visitor shall understand that animals were not only in the artworks, but that animals lived in the houses of the Scandinavians, that they were parts of storytelling and of personal identities, and, not least, that they also played important roles in the godly world.
- The visitor shall understand that there were regional and chronological aspects to the animal styles, making them an important tool to date the objects on which they are found.

**Main narrative and key objects**

*7.1 The animal style in time and space*
As with so many other aspects of Viking life, the animal style has its roots in a wider Germanic symbolic and artistic language, which again was influenced by Roman decorative art. In the late 4th century and the 5th century AD the first animal styles appears in Scandinavia (Sösdala and Nydam styles), and that over a wide area stretching from Scandinavia to England and Spain. Around 700 the first Scandinavian animal style is in existence, and animal style no longer important on the Continent. Over the following centuries a series of Scandinavian styles develop, often with clear references to changes in Continental art. Several of these styles are well represented in the Norwegian ship graves, and two, the Oseberg- and the Borre style, are named after them. In the 11th and 12th century, the special character of Scandinavian art gives way to Romanesque art. Given the chronological and spatial divisions between the animal styles, they are very often important in dating archaeological finds.

**Key objects:** Examples of different objects with animal styles, illustrating the styles’ chronological and spatial development, perhaps also beyond the Viking Age?. Map (dynamic, interactive?) showing their chronology and distribution.

*7.2 The animals of the animal style*
This exhibit discusses what kinds of animals that were represented in the animal art, and why the Scandinavians took the animal styles so to their heart. Animals played important roles of good and
evil in the cosmology. Different gods were associated with different animals, and so were some humans apparently also, especially warriors. Animal figures probably also were used as apotropaic means, as exemplified of the horses on tent boards or bed posts from the ship graves. So may the serpent on the Oseberg ship be a mean to keep the big serpent, surrounding the world in Scandinavian mythology, at bay.

Key objects: Examples of different objects showing different animals, and of how animals are used on objects. Multimedia to show how to see the animals. The ‘runic serpents’ (stylized animal ornamentation) of Swedish rune stones may also be a nice illustration. One can show through the means of multimedia the reading order of an inscription, starting for instance in the serpent’s head and concluding inside its tail.

*7.3 Animal styles as ideological and political communication

The animal styles followed the Scandinavians wherever they travelled, and can be found in as disperse places as in Turkey, Russia, Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland and Iceland. In some of these places they developed further, and local variations, for example of the Borre style, can be found in east and west. Still, the animal styles were so distinct from other artwork of the time that it, for Scandinavians, must have been standing out – animal style may have served as a carrier and signal of identity among the many Scandinavians travelling in these centuries.

What did the transformations of the animal styles mean? Were they simply expressions of changing fashion, or did these changes signify something? It is remarkable how fat these changes were and how much novelty there was in artistic imagination compared to the periods before and after. We are well aware that architectural styles, like Romanesque, Gothic or Renaissance, were heavily loaded with ideological content, and we may suspect that this also may be behind changes in the animal styles. This part of the exhibition discusses, what such changes in animal style may originally have meant. Was the incorporation of Frankish motifs a way of paying tribute to the idea of an emperor? Were Irish components a message about having a network that extended across the North Sea? Were the incorporation of plants in the late animal style a nod towards Christianity?

Key objects: Examples of animal style objects found and perhaps produced abroad. Examples of objects, pictures (or loan) of foreign objects that shows where inspiration may have come from.

8 Trade and Networks (Around 800)

Location and flexibility

Third room in the arcade, after «Artful Animals». It is connected to »Artful Animals» in the shared theme of early connections between the Scandinavians and other Germanic groups, but it takes a step away from the internal Scandinavian perspective towards focusing on the Scandinavians in the world.

Experience goal

- Here the visitor experience that the Scandinavians were not only aliens to us today – they were engaged in something as common and peaceful as trade.

Learning goals

- The east-west trading network in the centuries prior to the Viking Age developed from the Frankish and Frisian territories, and extended to the east, making the Scandinavians intermediaries in the system.
• Scandinavian products, like whetstones, antler and probably also fur, connected the rural Scandinavia to this system
• Already from around 700, early permanent trading settlements developed in Scandinavia and in the Baltic (Ribe, Reric, Birka, Hedeby, Kaupang, etc.)
• In the early Viking Age, Scandinavians started to use silver by weight as mean of payment.
• The trading sites were important places for cultures to meet and interact, and new urban/merchant identities developed. The import of objects and of silver also changed the life back in Scandinavia where the products came from.

Main stories and key objects

**8.1 Ribe – the gate to the west
Ribe is first of the known Scandinavian trading settlements that tapped into the trading system developing in Frankish and Frisian territories at the southern North Sea coast, and which included numerous small settlements in the tidal coastal landscape. This system extended from Quentovic and Dorestad, Frankish and Frisian trading settlements which from around 600 enabled cross-Channel trade to England and on to the mouth of the Rhine. Ribe itself was founded about a century later at the eastern end of a southern North Sea shore sprawling of agrarian settlements with crafts production and trading sites. Also Ribe right on from around 700 had a flourishing, diverse craft production, and imported antlers and whet stones shows that it also had close connections to Norway. A noticeable feature of Ribe’s is the numerous finds of Frisean sceatta in its earliest layers, showing how strongly it was integrated in the Frisian trade network.

Early Ribe was strictly parceled and thus probably also regulated; it is being discussed to which extent the settlement was permanent. Earlier assumptions that Ribe experienced a settlement lacuna during parts of the Viking Age have been rejected by recent archaeological findings, and the town is now known to show continuity up to modern times.

Key objects: Early imports from the west of likely traded items. Examples of types of objects traded from Norway to Ribe. Sceatta. Loan objects?

*8.2 The Baltic system: Reric, Hedeby, Birka, Gotland and beyond
Slavic speaking people expanded into and consolidated themselves in the region to the south of the Baltic from the 6th to the early 8th century, something that probably disrupted existing trading connections among Baltic and remaining Germanic populations. However, from the mid-8th century the southern North Sea trading system is extended throughout the southern and eastern Baltic and into present day Russia, and the Scandinavians seem to be acting as middlemen. It manifests itself through places like Reric (Gross Strömkendorf) from around 730, Grobina in Latvia with even older roots, and Staraya Ladoga near Volchov’s mouth in Lake Ladoga. A characteristic of these places are their mix of Slavic, Baltic and Scandinavian presence. They are mirrored by trading settlements like Hedeby and Birka on the Scandinavian side, likewise multiethnic according to the burial sites.

Gotland, genetically very diverse already before the Viking Age, seemingly from old plays a key role in the exchange systems across the Baltic. An apparent lacuna seem to be along the southern coast of Finland, where no major places have been identified yet. However, finds of Scandinavian character in the inland may indicate that the trade route here went over land rather than along the coast.

Key objects: Early objects from the east; loan objects?
8.3 Kaupang, Heimdalsjordet and sites along the Northern Way.

Around 800, Kaupang in Sciringsheal came into existence, soon becoming the most important international trading site in present-day Norway until the late 10th century. Lying strategically at the entrance to the Oslo fjord and near the Telemark river valley, it was situated very close to Skiringssal, a contemporary power centre, and a thing site. Archaeological excavations have shown that soon after Kaupang was established, it developed into a permanent settlement with a wide range of craftwork and trade taking place. Metalwork of Scandinavian, insular, and continental origins have been found, whilst pottery and other objects suggest migrants from Slavonic and Frisian regions settled in Kaupang right from its foundation. The site’s international connections demonstrate that it was an integral part of the maritime trading networks that dominated the North Sea and Baltic Sea regions throughout the 9th and 10th centuries. Nearby, the recently discovered site at Heimdalsjordet shows that Kaupang had local competition. Elsewhere along the Northern Way – the name used for the sailing route along the long Norwegian coastline already in Anglo-Saxon sources from the 9th century – trade appears to have been carried around on a smaller scale and under the auspices of central places, like halls and aristocratic manors. Commanding this route allowed for control of the wider territory with its resources and/or for the collection of taxes and tribute. The Northern Way thus facilitated trade and interaction with those residing inland and with the Sami, as well as long-distance movement of goods and people throughout north-western Europe and beyond. Through the Sami, the Nordvegr was linked to another trading network reaching through Finland and Karelen towards the Russian river systems. The products of the north, especially fur, down, reindeer antler, walrus teeth and hide, blubber and perhaps fish, thus could take different ways to the consumers. It may be hypothesized that products with relatively low value, like blubber, walrus hide, fish and reindeer antler primarily traveled on the sea route, while there may have been more competition between the trade routes for light high value goods like fur and feathers. The eastern connections from the North Scandinavian areas are, among other things, reflected in the presence of jewellery in Sami graves, produced in Finland, Karelia and Western Russia.

Key objects: Artefacts from Kaupang, e.g. a well providing an early dendrochronological dating, moulds for the production of jewellery, a crucible hoard with half-melted coins and hacksilver, evidence for other crafts being carried out on the site. A showcase with thousands of glass beads from Kaupang, contrasting the very few from Heimdalsjordet. Imported objects from Heimdalsjordet and other trading sites. Display of ‘invisible’ and perishable, traded commodities, such as food, fur, rope, and textiles. Loan import objects from Bergen/Trondheim/Tromsø? Hellekiste for the production of blubber? Perhaps something about the Tjeldsund excavations?

9 Norøvegr

Location and flexibility

Fourth room in the arcade, after «Trade and Networks». It is connected to that through the joint theme of how goods were moving around in the Viking world, but it has a specific focus on those parts of Scandinavia that were not directly located at the sea route between Eastern and Western Europe, that is, the northern and inland parts of Norway and Sweden.

Experience goal

- Here the visitor experience that the Vikings were not alone in Scandinavia, and that they explored resources in the high north together with the Sami population.

Learning goals
Knowing that several goods were produced in the inland and in the far north, many of them also for export to the Continent.

Knowing that in northern Norway and Sweden lived the Sami apparently peacefully next to the Vikings, and trade and alliances between the two parts were important.

The Sami also had contacts and traded to the east in a trading system that merged up with the Baltic one.

Main stories and key objects

*9.1 Soapstone, quern stones, whetstones
Stone products were important traded goods from Norway already in the 8th century. We want to tell about where and when the production took place, and how the produce was distributed. Soapstone objects were produced in the Fjære region at Arendal, in Vågå and in Hardanger, plus in a number of other places. Soapstone was used especially for cooking pots, but also for, for example, weights for fishing nets. Whetstones and hones were produced, among other places, in Eidsborg; the Klåstad ship was loaded with semifabricata from there. Whetstones are also present in the Norse mythology. Grinding stones were very important products in everyday life (Baug et al., 2015)

Key objects: Examples of the objects. Visuals that shows their distribution, and the visible scars in the landscape where they were produced.

*9.2 Pelt and antler
Reindeer antler is another Norwegian product that can be found in Ribe already in the 8th century, and thus entered early into international trade from Norway. It was probably traded together with much less stable goods like pelt. Antler and pelt would be coming from the inland, and the importance of the Sami for the procurement of pelt is well reflected in Ottar’s report on his relationship to them from around 900. It is probably also reflected in the word “rev”, which is used for fox in Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, and which seem to be a Sami word. It is also likely that pelt was the most important goods that were exported eastward from the Sami areas in the north, and which was perhaps paid for with some of the eastern silver objects that are found in some hoards in the North.

Key objects: Bow, arrows and other reindeer hunting tools from snow finds in the mountains from the last years. Antler. Objects made of antler. Audiovisuals showing how mass hunting works. Maps showing them in the landscape. Bird hunting equipment from graves (or that particular story can be told together with the Gokstad man). Bones of hunted animals from graves.

*9.3 Sea mammals and sea birds
While pelt and antler could be harvested over large parts of alpine Scandinavia, some of the most valuable sea mammals were only to be found in the far north. The most precious of these were the walrus, the teeth of which were used as ivory, while their skin provided material for very strong ropes for ships. From sea mammals were also produced blubber, which was valuable as fuel for lamps, and which seemingly were produced in large quantities by the Sami, in special, stonelined pits called ‘hellegroper’. It is likely that such exports as blubber and ropes were more likely to be

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1 Eidsborg whetstones could be moved to the “Kaupang” section, since it probably comes into the trade system that way; that goes also for Klåstad.
exported with ships than over land along the eastern routes. Down from sea birds is another important coastal product that we find again in many princely graves.

**Key objects:** Down from the Oseberg find. Examples of whalrus ivory objects, whalrus skulls from hunting. “Hellegrope”.

**9.4 Fish**
And how about fishing – today we do that for pleasure – would that also have been the case in the Viking Age? Why not? There were fishing hooks in the Gokstad ship grave, and fishing may have been a welcome pastime on board a vessel – but could also have contributed to the diet on board.²

Fishbones from Viking Age contexts in Haithabu have been demonstrated to originate from the stock of cod feeding the Lofoten fisheries, demonstrating as a minimum that cod were brought on ships travelling from Northern Norway to Haithabu – potentially also as trade goods, but persievely also as provisions for the journey.³ At any rate the findings make it highly likely that dried cod was produced at a significant scale in Northern Norway already in the Viking Age, and it may have been part of the economical basis for the chieftain situated at Borg.

**Key finds:** Fishing equipment from graves. Fish bones from settlements.

**9.5 Sami and Vikings**
The interaction between Sami and Vikings were clearly extensive and important for the exploration of resources in the north of Scandinavia, but how was the relationship? When the Viking Age started, there had already been close contact between the two people for centuries, and cultural influences were travelling both ways. There are signs that a cultural border was established, but that the relationship was peaceful and negotiated, as indicated by treasure hoards laid down in border regions. Also, there is some evidence from burials for intermarriage between them. There are also aspects of shamanism in Viking religion that seem to be loans from Sami culture.

**Key finds:** Grave with mixed Viking/Sami grave goods

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² May be moved to section on life on board.
Learning goal

- The visitor shall understand when and where the raids started, their scale and impact.
- It is likely that the trade paved the way for the raids

Main narrative and key objects

*10.1 The early raids

The beginning of the Viking Age, as an era, is traditionally defined by the sudden appearance of raiders from Scandinavia launching attacks on Britain and Ireland at the end of the 8th century. These first raids are known from a number of written sources and are followed by similar accounts of attacks on Francia soon after. Up until the 830s, the raids are typically thought to have been small scale and of a hit-and-run nature, aiming largely for unprotected monastic sites and ecclesiastical targets. The appearance of artefacts and gravegoods from Britain and Ireland (often described as ‘insular’ regions) found in Scandinavia are likely evidence for the spoils of these early raids brought home. Decades of scholarship have explored the motivations for the attacks and the sudden escalation of violence outwards from Scandinavia. Most such explanations emphasise internal factors, such as population pressure, environmental changes, technological advances, and political factors such as an increased centralisation of power. More recently, new perspectives have been added to the debate, emphasising individual human agency and social factors such as competition over women. Others have questioned and reassessed routes of travel, whilst research has emphasised the role of trade and pre-Viking Age contact through the extensive networks springing up in coastal zones around the North Sea from the early 700s onwards.

Key objects: Finds of insular objects in Scandinavian graves from the early Viking Age. An ambient installation showing the terror of the attacks?

*10.2 Terrorizing Western Europe

The coastal raids with small fleets of the years around 800 soon turned into something much more terrifying – ever larger fleets that went on raiding expeditions lasting several years along the coasts and up the rivers of large swathes of Western Europe. Political weaknesses and possibilities for alliances were exploited wherever they were found and the reach of the raids extended ever further, be it into Frankish territories, or, in exceptional cases, along the coasts of Islamic Iberian Peninsula and into the Mediterranean to Italy and North Africa. The Scandinavians started to set up bases or winter camps, both in Ireland, Britain and in France, from which they could operate for longer time in a region before moving on to the next promising target area. Raiding had become a life-style, and the armies now included also women and children. The heyday of the Viking raids was the mid-9th to early 10th century, but Viking raids continued in some places into the 11th century, and also as remotely as in the Caspian Sea (if not in ships brought from Scandinavia here).

Key objects: Frankish and Irish objects from graves from the second half of the 9th century. Examples of Scandinavian and western finds from the terrorized territories and graves there. Interactive maps showing the spread of Viking attacks over time.

11 The Viking expansion (Around 900)
**Location**
On the open upper floor space, between arcade room 5 about the raids and the theme “Violence”.

**Experiental goal**
- Here the visitor will recognize the uncertainty, fear and curiosity that Scandinavians must have experienced as they went out in the world as migrants and colonists.

**Learning goal**
- The visitor shall understand where Scandinavians settled in other inhabited parts of Europe during the Viking Age, and that this was different from the landnam in the North Atlantic.
- She shall understand that the colonization was the result of different types of migrations and interaction with the existing populations, and that the migrations created diasporas and assimilation processes that came to influence European history.

**Main narratives and key objects**

*11.1 Viking Scotland*
The first known evidence for Scandinavian-Scottish interaction in the Viking Age is preserved in the *Annals for Ulster*, recording an attack on the island of Skye in AD 795. Scandinavian settlements at the northern rim of the British Isles is poorly reflected in written sources, but have left a rich archaeological record from the mid-9th century onwards. Settlements are mainly found on the islands along the coasts, from Orkney and Shetland in the north to Hebrides in the south, but also on the mainland in the north and west. The economy was based on agriculture and fisheries, but also on their position on the sea route to Norway, to which they were politically closely connected; the Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland) developed into a powerful earldom towards the end of the Viking Age. Scandinavian graves are frequent, especially in the Northern Isles, but generally restricted to the mid9th to mid-10th century, and cremation graves are missing.

The relation to the original population in the area is unclear, and it is debated whether a genocide took place or not. It is noticeable that the place names on the islands are almost exclusively of Scandinavian origin, and the islands remained closely related to Norway for centuries also after the end of the Viking Age. That makes these islands, and especially the Northern Isles, one of the few previously populated places, where Scandinavian colonists were not quickly assimilated in the original population and their archaeology makes an excellent case for the study of identity and cultural change, with the option that that original population was assimilated into that of the newcomers.

**Key objects:**

*11.2 Ireland and the Isle of Man*
The first reported raids by Scandinavian Vikings in Ireland are on ‘Rechru’, possibly the island of Lambay, or Rathlin, off Northern Ireland in 795, and Brega in 798. At the latest from 836 attacking armies would stay over winter and at the Dublin longphort winter camp first in 841-2. That marked the beginning of a new era, where Scandinavians established permanent footholds on the island. The political structure that the Scandinavians met in Ireland was different from that of the Northern and Western Isles. Ireland was Christian territory, divided into continuously competing kingdoms. The Scandinavians were good at playing on these conflicts, but in terms of colonization, they largely remained close to their longphorts, which developed into Ireland’s first urban settlements. Dublin was the most important of these, and came to play a major role in Irish-Scandinavian politics throughout the rest of the Viking Age.

The Isle of Man was, according to the Irish Annals, first attacked by Vikings in 798; by 820 it was on Scandinavian hands. As many other island communities in the Viking Age, the Vikings on the Isle of
Man developed somewhat independently from their neighbouring regions, in the Manx case Ireland, mainland Scotland, England and Wales. Its unique position in the middle of the Irish Sea can be compared to that of Gotland in the Baltic, and its rich Viking heritage indicate that the possibilities for trade, but probably also warfare, were utilized well. This is for example illustrated by the rich Scandinavian burials from Peel Castle. The oldest recorded meeting of the Manx thing, Tynwald, took place in 979.

Key objects: early Insular objects from the collections. Loans of Scandinavian objects from Scotland/Ireland? Loan of a Manx rune cross?

*11.3 The Great Heathen Army and the Danelaw

In 865, the Anglo Saxon Chronicle states that a micel here or Great Army – later often referred to as the Great Heathen Army – appeared on English soil in what was a clear escalation from previous, smaller scale raids on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Over the following 13 years, this composite force controlled by several Scandinavian leaders directed a large-scale series of attacks with an apparent focus on political conquest and the capture of land. The Great Army successfully conquered the kingdoms of Northumbria in 867, East Anglia in 869, and Mercia in 873, setting up winter camps as it moved around the country. Archaeological evidence for the Great Army’s movement has primarily come from the camps at Repton and Torksey, with new sites more recently discovered through metal detecting. The emerging picture is of a large army that was accompanied by craftworkers, traders, and hangers-on, with sites yielding material culture similar to that found on smaller trading settlements in Scandinavia such as hacksilver, dirhams, weights, and jewellery. From the mid- to late 870s, the written sources tell us that some of the raiders turned to settlers, proceeding to farm conquered land. A turning point appears to occur after a battle between Alfred the Great and the Viking leader Guthrum in Wessex in 878, after which an agreement was struck, which recognized the existence of a border between two dominions and thus the presence of Scandinavian rule on English soil. Throughout the 9th and early 10th centuries, large territories of land in England came into Scandinavian control, largely in the northern and eastern parts of the country. This region is often described as the Danelaw, meaning areas not subject to Mercian or West Saxon law. It is, however, not until the 11th century that this term start to appear in contemporary sources. The Scandinavians settled not only in the countryside but also in the towns, and the town of York – Yorvik – became a centre of Scandinavian power in England.

Key objects: Artefacts from Viking camps, e.g. ship nails, lead gaming pieces, polyhedral trading weights; objects found in Norway/Scandinavia with close parallels (e.g. lead gaming pieces, matching Thor’s hammers from Torksey and/or Repton and Kaupang); Anglo-Saxon coins dating to the 860s and 870s found in Scandinavia; Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery found in England

*11.4 Normandy and beyond

Scandinavians also established permanent settlements on Frankish territory, although here following yet another path than on the Isles, in England or in Ireland. This part of the exhibition discusses the Scandinavian settlement in Normandy as reflected not only in historical source – from where we learn that politically, the Scandinavians soon became an integrated part of the Frankish aristocracy – but also in the linguistic and place name evidence. In contrast to other areas, where Scandinavian
settled, the archaeological evidence seem to indicate that they very soon abandoned the material culture of their home lands.

Permanent Scandinavian presence in Normandy probably started well before 911, the year of the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte. The treaty conceded the territory around the estuary of the Seine and Rouen to the Viking leader Rollo, in exchange for him being baptized, and in the future protecting the Seine against other Vikings. In the following years the territory, named Normandy after its Scandinavian settlers, expanded further to the west. Scandinavian placenames and maritime loan words demonstrates the presence of not only a Scandinavian elite, but also a broader segment of the population. This, however, are not well represented in the archaeological report, possibly a result of rapid conversion to Christianity.

While Normandy became a focal point for Scandinavian presence in France, signs of possible Scandinavian settlement may also be found elsewhere. In Brittany to the west, the hill fortress of Péran may either have been settled by, or destroyed by, Scandinavians at some point in the 10th century. The famous ship grave from Isle de Groix does not in itself attest enduring Scandinavian presence, but the fact that the numerous shield buckles found in the grave were of a unique design may indicate that the group building the burial had been long enough under ways to start to develop its own material culture.

Another example of Scandinavian-Frankish interconnection is perhaps the mount from a Hiberno-Saxon reliquary at Musee Antiques Nationale in Paris, completely identical with another mound found in the female Gausel burial in Rogaland in Norway (Bakka 1969). There are also several examples of Viking swords that have been dredged up from rivers; they may represent accidental loss, loss during fighting, or sacrifice.

**Key objects:** Interactive media showing Scandinavian presence in Normandy – place names, written sources. Audiovisuals with Scandinavian loan words into French (very often maritime). Loan of Scandinavian objects from France?

*11.5 Rus*

The Scandinavian settlements in the east again seemed to have their unique character, shaped in the meeting between Slavs, Scandinavians and other populations in the vast forests- and steppe landscapes between the Baltic and the Black sea. From the mid-8th century onwards, settlements and artefacts with distinctly Scandinavian characteristics appeared along the riverine routes that stretch from the eastern Baltic and all the way to the Caspian Sea via the Volga river, and to the Black Sea through the Dnieper river route. These eastern settlements and trade networks served as connecting points between Scandinavia and the prosperous Islamic Middle East, providing a direct link to what has been called the world’s central nervous system, the Silk Roads. As a result, goods like furs, amber, swords and slaves were traded to the south and east whilst silver and exotic goods, such as silks, carnelian, and rock crystal, entered the Scandinavian homelands. Islamic dirhams, in particular, were imported in vast quantities, which facilitated and embedded the role of silver in both economy and culture.

Throughout the first half of the Viking Age, the number of eastern settlements grew and sometime in the 9th century, the Rus’ emerged as a distinct entity, covering approximately the territories into the modern states of Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the western parts of Russia. The Rus’ were an integral part of the Viking world, not least for their part in controlling the lucrative eastern trade routes.
**Key objects:** Examples of finds of dirhams, carnelian and rock crystal beads that has travelled along this route. Scandinavian loan objects from Russia/Ukraina, or virtual presentations. Trade charters between Byzantium and Rus’ could also be visualised and explained.

**12 Violence (Around 900)**

**Location**
The installation “Violence” is located centrally in the building, in the area that separates the Oseberg room and the Gokstad room. This installation extends over both the upper and lower levels. The film is shown in the cinema on the lower level.

**Learning goals**
The overarching question of the installation “Violence” is what role violence – so dominant a part of our view of the Viking Age today – actually played in Scandinavian society back then? Who was exposed to violence, and by whom – at home and abroad? Were Scandinavian Vikings particularly violent as soldiers and pirates? What mechanisms did the societies have to reduce violence? How was the relation between violence and concepts like “honour” and “reknown”? What role did the thing play, the family, the king? Was there a change in violence throughout the Viking Age, were there differences between different parts of Scandinavia, including Iceland? What were the tools of violence – the weapons – and how were they used?

**Main narratives and key objects**
In the installation “Violence”, visitors encounter the violence of the Viking Age and have the opportunity to reflect on differences and similarities in the way violence was handled in society in the Viking Age and modern times. They are faced with warfare and atrocities, but also with the contrasting, idealising poetry and how weapons were used to show status. The stories in this installation revolve around three main narratives:

*12.1 Living with violence*
What is violence? In its widest meaning, violence is trespassing the boundaries of an individual’s personality, the forcing of actions upon it. As such it can be found at any seam in society, from between two persons in the same household, to between states or even species. Coercion, or the threat of violence, is as important a part of violence as the act of exerting violence itself. Through coercion, acts of submission are forced, be it the obedience of a slave, or the payment of ransom from a town.

Violence, however, is not only instrumental – it is also cultural and ideological. Raiding may not only be an economic activity; it might also be a ritual to prove manhood. Homocide may serve to protect honour and reknown, rather than any economic end. Genocide may be imbued with ideology. The interplay between violence and culture is thus complex. Nevertheless, social science has proved violence to be a fruitful research field, demonstrating clear relationships between forms of societies and the size and shape of their violence. Crucial elements are, which institutions that are present to regulate violence, but also, which motivators there are to further it.

This part of the exhibition focus on the thing, ar assembly, as an arena for regulating conflicts. Things existed among the Germanic tribes at least from the Roman Iron Age on, and physical remains of assembly places (‘ringformede tun’) are found in Norway, dating from the 4th to the 11th century. But
how did the thing work? For whom was it? Was it ‘democratic’ or an arena for the stronger to coerce the less strong? What can law texts tell us about all this? What was considered “just case” and what not?

Another arena where we can study violence inside the Scandinavian societies is in the skeletal material. What is the evidence of violence on the human remains from the Viking Age? To what extent do we see signs of violence at all on those important enough to be buried? Are there differences between men, women and children? Are the trauma that we see results of warfare and piracy, or of violence at home? Were there differences between different parts of Scandinavia in the extent and character of the violence?

Two of the most distinct types of violence are sacrifice and execution. In both cases, the killing of a defenceless person is the ultimate demonstration of power. A few Viking Age skeletons show signs of hanging or of decapitation – are they examples of sacrifice or execution? And if so, who where the protagonists that ordered this? What does such acts tell us about the societies?

*12.2 Equipped for war
This main narrative provides a close-up look at how ordinary Vikings were equipped for battle, and is situated next to one or more display cases containing arms and armour, presented in such a way that details can be seen and explained. However, the focus is not solely on the weapons from a functional point of view. Weapons also clearly had symbolic or ideological components, which becomes clear for example in their non-functional elements. In this there is a parallel to violence not only being functional. They could also have cultural elements, like when the ratios of different types of weapons in graves varies between different parts of Norway.

The main weapons are: sword, axe, shield, spear / lance, bow and arrow etc. Topics addressed include how the weapons were made, how they were used, the use of horse-riders and ships. In-depth information could describe other finds that we do not have space to display and about how re-enactment helps us understand how the weapons were used. A separate display could be made with ‘Danish axes’, the long-shafted battle axes popular in Knut the Great’s army in England.

Key objects for main narrative 2
The weapons: swords, axes, shields (from Gokstad?), spears / lances, bows and arrows (from Gokstad and/or glacial archaeology finds?), throwing stones (if we have any).

*12.3 The battle
This main narrative is based on an immersive experience of being in a battleground. The weapons and stories about the use of arms from narrative 2 “The warrior’s equipment” are represented graphically here: the visitor witnesses a battle, first with throwing weapons, followed by face-to-face combat (or on ships). At the conclusion of the battle, ravens and eagles (reference to the battle metaphors of the skaldic poems) appear, and perhaps the fallen warriors are collected by valkyries, thereby ensuring the notion of reward for a heroic death is clearly conveyed. In-depth information discusses war in cosmology (Valhalla, Ragnarok, etc.) and poetry.

In an informative section, battle tactics are is discussed on the basis of contemporary sources. It is also discussed whether Viking warfare was particularly violent. References are made to, e.g., campaigns carried out by Charlemagne, demonstrating that with the growth of power, the potential for violence at the superior seams of societies – between kingdoms – also grew.
Key objects:
Visualisation through film and animation. No physical objects, but exhibits and figures based on other archaeological objects. Input from poetry and rune stones.

13 Power (Around 900)
OBS: THIS SECTION IS CURRENTLY BEING REVISED.

Location
On the upper level, along partition wall and part of the way along the timeline, opposite the Gokstad ship on the lower level. Between “Violence” and “Storytelling”, before “The rich and the powerful”. The area in and around Gokstad burial chamber will not be very flexible, other parts will evolve constantly.

Experience goals
• Visitors experience Viking Age power and its means of expression first hand.

Learning goals
• As the Viking Age progressed, higher tiers of authorities emerged.
• Violence was part of, but not the entire foundation for power; kinship, wealth and a good social standing, as well as political and social skills were other important elements.

Main narratives and key objects
*13.1 A stratified society
Power was by no means equally distributed across Scandinavian societies at the beginning of the Viking Age, as demonstrated by the monumental burial mounds of the preceding centuries. It was even less so at its end. The famous poem Rígsþula is the most extent source providing an internal – if mythological and top down – presentation of Scandinavian society. It is notable that it is well aligned with early Germanic law codes from across Europe. It describes the society as created by godly power to consist of three classes, thralls, free farmers, and warriors; kings were recruited from the latter. It is, however, unclear when the poem got its preserved form – the only surviving copy is in a 14th century manuscript, and at any rate it provides a highly idealised and simplified perspective on society. Both archaeology and contemporary written sources like rune stones helps us to differentiate the picture. An important aspect of this is to acknowledge the heterogeneity of Scandinavia in the Viking Age – societies differed across both time and space.

Looking first at Viking Age graves, it becomes clear that society spanned wide. Obviously only a small fraction of the Viking Age graves that once existed have been identified today – but even in well-documented instances, where we have reason to believe that we know the approximate totality of burials associated with a specific farm or site, it appears that many never were ceremoniously treated upon death. Among those ending up in graves, the span in the extent of grave gifts and of the burial ritual speak volumes about social differences – from shallow graves and none or the most humble grave gifts, to monumental efforts, like the ship graves. Still, this is differences in ritual, not necessarily in social status. Hence, it is also difficult to draw any fine-grained conclusions about social status from grave studies, and especially to make comparisons across larger regions. It is hard to believe, for example, that the generally more modest burial rites found in Denmark should indicate that the people living here were less well off than those living in, say Norway, given that other
indicators of wealth, e.g., the numbers of trading sites or the size of hall buildings, indicate otherwise.

The medieval law texts from Scandinavia and Iceland contain elements that philologists consider being elements surviving from the Viking Age. There are fundamental differences between thralls and freemen in how they are treated in the law, but the law is also showing how social mobility – dependent on the owner – was possible also for thralls.

The most direct source to social organisation in Viking Age Scandinavia are the rune stones. On these we find many of the social categories that are also reflected in poetry and sagas, for example hersir, thegn, dróttin, and gode. A particular interesting example is the Danish Glavendrup rune stone from early Viking Age, mentioning a person who is both thegn, drott and gode (heathen priest). The stone is part of a monumental ship setting and one of two stones for the same person, raised on Funen and Sealand respectively. The example demonstrates how already in the early Viking Age individuals could become very powerful in the service of – presumably – kings and jarls, pointing further to a differentiation of the social pyramid.

Key objects: The runestone from By, Sigdal, Buskerud silver broach from Bratsberg in Gjerpen, Skien, both from about 500 (too early?) bearing the inscription “jarl” in runes. The gold spur from Rygge. Map with place names relating to these structures? Spur finds from Scandinavian settlements in Scotland and England? Installation with the Glavendrup stone?

*13.2 The king and the queen

There were kings all over the Germanic regions from the early Iron Age on, but they were very different from the kings of the Middle Ages. Viking Age kings were not the heads of a state power, rather their power was founded on the support of the landowners. The king had to have “luck” (be successful), be generous (i.e. rich), and come from a leading family. For this reason, myths of origin, tracing the family’s ancestors back to a god or hero, were a staple of the Germanic kings’ self-staging. This was also the case in Scandinavia, where several such myths of origin existed. The ship graves themselves may be an expression of these kinds of myths, based on the story of King Skjold (See also “The Oseberg burial”). The emphasis on origins and ancestry also put queens in a powerful position, as exemplified by Thyra Danebod known from the Jelling rune stones. Competition for control of origin myths may also explain the looting of the Norwegian ship graves.

However, the Scaldic sources also mentions another category of kings, the sea kings. Their power basis lay seem to have been coastal manors from which they were able to control sea routes and launch seaborne attacks (Skre 2020, ch. 29); Avaldsnes may be an example of such a manor, and Harald Harfagr an example of one such seaking, turning territorial through turning his armed forces against the kings of Western Norway.

Old Uppsala, Lejre, and the later Jelling may represent Scandinavian royal seats from Viking Age; similar evidence is so far missing from Norway. But the concentration of monumental ship burials in the Oslo Fjord region, and their association with earlier monumental sites like Borre and Gjellestad,
strongly indicate the development of a royal lineage in this part of Norway; in so far the Gokstad burial may be the closest that we currently comes to a preserved example of a royal burial.

Being king or queen required a lavish and aristocratic life stile that could advocate the marketing of the kingdom as a state. In the Gokstad burial this is visible, in spite of the grave being looted, in the size of the burial monument, in the consumtion of an almost new ship in the burial ritual, as well as in the guilded remains of the belt garniture, the two male peacocks and the two hunting birds found in the aft of the ship. Also a couple of containers, possibly for the transport of the hunting birds, a bow and some arrows may be understood as parts of the Gokstad king’s hunting equipment, as may some to the dogs sacrificed at the burial. Hunting equipment and bids is also found in many other burials, including the Salme ship burial, and the Salme and Storhaug burials.

Key objects: The Gokstad burial chamber, remains of the Gokstad man, Gokstad burial gifts. Gokstad bow, Gokstad peacock and feathers, Gokstad goose hawks. The Borre find (bridle, harness fittings, glass, etc.).

**13.3 The homes of the powerful**
The hall was one of the most visible expressions of power in Viking Age society. Typically placed in elevated locations visible from important land and sea routes, halls marked out territory and land ownership, as a visual representation of power and higher social status. While based on traditional longhouse architecture, the halls stood out in their sheer size and grandness. Inside, the visitor was awed by the large central space, focused around a hearth providing light and heat. Evidence from animal bones and glass beakers testify that feasts took place here: these were important social functions to welcome visitors from far and near, and as events were gifts could be exchanged and alliances forged and negotiated. The hall as a central place also had cultic importance, either in a separate space or within the building itself. Many show evidence of cooking outside, either testifying to cultic sacrifices or places where guests and visitors camped for seasonal feasts. In the literature, the halls were linked to the gods and mythological events, while skaldic poems like Husdrapa relate how a hall was once given as a gift from the jarl of Lade to an Icelandic chieftain. The halls were often located near older burial mounds and many survived for considerable periods of time, manifesting the endurance of a ruling dynasty or their successors’ claim to the territory. Craftwork such as metal-and bead-making took place in or near the hall. The association with a ruler and their military retriue could offer protection for precious raw materials, but the fine metalwork produced was also an important way of demonstrating social status. At the same time, such workshop became a crucial part of the economy providing objects for purchase by visitors to seasonal events and feasts. Aristocratic halls and manors thus served both crucial economic and social functions for a ruler’s control over a territory and over the goods and people who travelled through it.

Key objects: Artefacts associated with feasting: glass beakers, high quality ceramics, animal bones. Gaming boards, falconry bell? Cultic objects found in/near a hall.

14 Storytelling, language, and runes (Around 900)

Location
Sixth room in the arcade, one of the rooms considered a place for resting and outlook into the inner yard. A good place for objects of non-organic materials.
Experience goals

- The visitor will find the room as an invitation to experience in another way than in the previous part of the exhibition. With an outlook into the central yard, and with more emphasis on hearing, the room offers a relaxing break.
- The visitor will be surprised and maybe feel empowered by recognizing his own language in Viking Age Scandinavian texts.
- The visitor will feel like a discoverer by finding and reading runic inscriptions on real objects.
- The visitor will experience a different dimension of meeting the cultures of the past – through words and texts that were shared and passed on in various ways.

Learning goal

- The visitor will learn that the Scandinavians spoke a Germanic language, which markedly changed at the beginning of the Viking Age.
- The visitor will learn about the use of runic writing and the main varieties of the script in Scandinavia during the Viking Age.
- The visitor will gain insight into the relationship between speech and writing (with main emphasis on the Old Norse language in its eastern and wester variants), and into the presence of early forms of literacy in a predominantly oral society.
- The visitor will obtain an overview of some characteristic runic inscriptions as authentic written sources to the period.
- The visitor will also learn that Roman script was introduced in Scandinavia during the Viking Age too, as part of the larger transition to Christianity.

Main narrative and key objects

*14.1 What language did the Scandinavians speak in the Viking Age?

The Scandinavian languages belongs to the Germanic language family, which is first documented from the first century BC. Germanic languages persisted in the areas of modern day Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and parts of Switzerland, Belgium, France. English, widely spoken, also belongs to this group of languages. The terms ancient Scandinavian is used to describe the language spoken in Scandinavia prior to the Viking Age, but from around AD 700 it is possible to discern a separate Norse, or West-Scandinavian language, and a contrasting, East-Scandinavian one. There was, however, no sharp boundary between the two. Scandinavian languages continued to evolve after the Viking Age, although some branches, died out. Faeroese and Icelandic are Scandinavian languages that are closer to what was spoken in the Viking Age than Norwegian, Swedish and Danish.

Key objects: Media with examples of Ancient Nordic and Viking Age Scandinavian words and speech. They could present reconstructed examples of how these languages sounded, and how they were similar and dissimilar to modern ones.

*14.2 What are runes and who used them?

Runes were an alphabetic type of script used by the Germanic-speaking peoples from the 2nd century CE onwards, and their use was thus widespread across Europe. The main purpose of runes was to record language, each runic character denoted one or more sounds in the spoken language. Similarly to other scripts, runic writing could be used for practical and symbolic-magical purposes, but runes themselves were not invented to be magical characters. The exact origin of the runic script has been debated, but classical Mediterranean writing systems – in particular the Roman alphabet – are considered as a likely source of inspiration. Rune forms and the set-up of runic characters
changed over the course of time (cf. the main variants in Scandinavia). In Scandinavia, the older runic alphabet underwent distinct changes around 700, also reflecting processes of change that had taken place with the spoken language. What happened?

The uses and functions of runic writing in Scandinavia varied and changed over the course of time. What is clear is that runic text were used on many different types of objects and materials, and could be read and produced by both men and women. It was commonly used on monuments and thus by the wealthy or powerful, but it is unknown to what extent it came to use in other parts of society. An interesting question is how runes were taught? Common types of inscription – preserved from different periods and settings – consist of personal names and brief statements of ownership. An example from the 11th century(?) is a spindle whorl from Hoftuft, Valle, Aust-Agder, or two silver pendants from the same piece of jewellery in the Slemmedal hoard, also from Aust-Agder. Its most elaborate, surviving expression did the rune writing find on thousands of rune stones preserved from all over the Viking world.

**Key object:** The Hoftuft spindle whorl (C23411, runic signum N 188), the Slemmedal hoard (C36000, Inscriptions A 210-A 212 (= preliminary registration numbers in the Runic Archives)). Maybe also include Carolingian sources that explain about the mother as the caretaker of children’s education. The rune stave from Oseberg (C55000, runic signum N 137)? The bronze bowl with rune-like sgraffiti, as an example of pseudorunes from Kaupang? Map of where Viking Age and earlier rune inscriptions have been found (in the world).

**14.3 What is a rune stone?**

A rune stone is a verbal, visual and material medium – a message written in stone on a chosen site to be preserved and experienced by countless generations to come. The practice of erecting rune-inscribed stones is in Scandinavia manifested already prior to the Viking Age; a broader fashion developed from the second half of the tenth century onwards. The Alstad stone, initially commissioned by a woman to commemorate her dead husband around AD 1000, is a characteristic example in the sense that it communicates its messages in different ways. At the same time, it documents an interesting reuse of the same monument: The stone even bears a second runic inscription, roughly 50 years younger, made by a father after his son. The inscriptions, the rich ornamentation and the material properties highlight the Alstad stone as a monument of status, prestige and display. The older inscription marked the stone as a memorial after a deceased man, while signalling the status and position of the female commissioner, Jorunn. According to the inscription, she had the stone transported from a place around 100 km away. This shows that the monument was made with considerable cost and effort. The statement on the stone further tells that “the picture stone” (Old Norse myndasteinn) honours both Jorunn and her husband, as a way of highlighting her accomplishments. The reference also creates a link between the runic text and the carved images (of abstract and figurative nature, found on both of the broad faces of the stone). The younger inscription on the Alstad stone commemorates a man who died on a voyage eastwards, in the region of Kievan Rus’. The notable variation in rune forms (the use of some mixed as well as more simplified rune-forms) as well as the use of the innovative dotted i-rune, shows the inscription as a part of a changing writing tradition. The younger inscription may have been an expression of the commemorative tradition carried on within the same kin, but we will never know the exact circumstances of the reuse of the monument.

**Key object:** The Alstad stone. Runic stone from Berezanj in Crimea, very similar to Swedish ones.
* 14.4 Oral traditions and storytelling.
The preserved runic tradition from Viking-Age Scandinavia is epigraphic. Runic inscriptions on different types of objects are short and do not contain lengthy poems or stories. In contrast, the oral tradition was rich. Poems from the Viking Age seem to have been well preserved into later centuries thanks to their strict metrics, something which is supported by the rare instances of stanza from known poems found in inscriptions on rune stones. It seems clear that producing and presenting poetry could be a very demanding art, and gifted warriors who could create and declaim tribute poems for their lords, could earn valuable gifts and public recognition. Poetry, warrior ethos and aristocracy were thus close connected. Poetry, however, had also a more everyday dimension, reflected in surviving fragments of poems or very short poems called lausavísur and in other short phrases. In this way poetry could be used for entertainment, for insults, and in many other everyday situations.

The storytelling was not only oral, but also visual – and combinations. Some of the stories presented orally may also be presented visually on, e.g. Gotlandic picture stones, and some pictures are described in poems, like, for example, in Husdrapa.

**Key object:** Audiovisual presentation tool with poems read aloud in Old Norse, as well as in translation, to make the visitor feel that she is transported back in time. Examples of rune stones with poem stanzas, e.g., Eggja and Rök. Þjóðólfr frá Hvini and his poetry could be presented, as well as Husdrapa.

15 The rich and powerful (Around 900)

**Location**
Upper level, arcade room 6, near «Power» and as a continuation hereof.

**Experience goal**
- Reflections about how and why the societal pyramid became steeper during the Viking Age

**Learning goal**
- That during the Viking Age richly equipped burials with weapons and horses becomes much more frequent and may signal a new military strata in society, possibly representing kings’ and jarl’s retinues.
- That rich women’s burials show that there were also have other ways to achieve elevated positions in society, for example through trade.

**Main stories and key objects**

*15.1 The Gjermundbu equistrian burial*
The Gjermundbu find is world famous for containing the only well-preserved Viking helmet, but it also includes a number of weapons and – also unique – a Viking chain mail. The Gjermundbu burial is of a type called ‘equestrian burials’, where the deceased has been buried with riding equipment, in addition to weapons. These burials exist throughout the Iron Age, but becomes much more common during the later Viking Age, and especially in Denmark, where it has been suggested that they represent the consolidation of royal power through elite military in the 10th century. The grave goods of horse, horse equipment, and weaponry is believed to point towards the Valhal mythology and thus as the deceaseds’ role as servants of Odin. Equestrian burials are not necessarily monumental, but in the case of the Gjermundbu find, the deceased was not only buried in a stone burial chamber – the grave was also covered with a 25 m long and 8 m wide mound, resembling either a hall-building or a ship.

**Key objects:** The Gjermundbu complex.
**15.2 The golden spur from Rød**

Horses and riding equipment were symbolly loaded objects in the Viking Age, although in different ways across time and space. In Iceland, horses were the most common grave goods at all, perhaps due to its immense importance for transport in the sparsely populated landscape. Also in Scandinavia, and in Scandinavian burials in abroad, the killing and burial of horses were frequently part of the funerary ritual. Horses are found both in female, and in male graves, although more often in male ones.

However, with the equistrian burials, horses and riding equipment like, especially, stirrups and spurs became more important symbols, possibly under influence from the Frankian and Ottonian palace culture. Spurs, for example, became valuable, imperial gifts, and the possession and use of stirrups would create associations to fighting with lance from horseback.

The golden spur from Rød was found near Værne monastery in Rygge already in 1872. In its style and handcraft, it is closely related to the magnificent Viking Age treasure from Hiddensee in Rügen, but also to finds from Harald Bluetooth’s royal fortresses at Fyrkant and Aggersborg. It has been suggested that these objects were produced at Harald’s court, and that the Rød spur could have belonged to Harald’s local representative in Østfold. The Værne monastery was, before it was established as a Knights Hospitaller around 1200, a royal manor.

**Key objects:** The Rød spur with associated fittings. However, metal workers on Kaupang also mastered the techniques to produce such objects.

**15.3 A noble-woman from Reine?**

In the late ninth or early tenth century, a woman was buried on a farmstead at Reine in Buskerud, near the Numedalslågen River. With her in the grave, she had three brooches, a weaving sword, textile fragments, a coin, a large selection of beads, and eight highly unusual and rare coin pendants of silver and copper alloy, unparalleled in Scandinavia. The pendants are made of silver foil impressed with the image of an 8th century Kufic coin minted in Iran. Several of the beads are unusual and include types imported from the East, and the pendants and beads are of a similar category of artefacts to jewellery found in the Hoen hoard, a short distance away. In Scandinavia, the majority of exotic, imported artefacts are found in women’s graves: rare jewellery like this was used as a way to display wealth and status, and perhaps even connections to foreign territories or exclusive access to such traded goods. Where did this woman’s wealth come from? The Reine grave’s location near Numedalslågen, an important transport route inland from the Oslofjord whose mouth lies near Kaupang, could suggest her wealth was linked to the control of inland distribution of goods and raw materials. The weaving sword might suggest a link to the lucrative textile industry. The archaeological record is filled with the graves of wealthy men and women like the Reine burial and it is likely that these belonged to a local aristocracy and held power at a local level.

**Key objects:** Coin pendants, beads, weaving sword

**16 Kings and coins (Around 1000)**

**OBS: THIS SECTION IS CURRENTLY BEING REVISED.**
Learning goal

- The visitor shall understand that towards the end of the Viking Age, Scandinavian kings were very much different from in the beginning of the period. They were more territorial (there were more kingdoms), they were Christian, they were internationally connected, and they used coinage to control the economy.

- The visitor shall understand that although trade had commersed for centuries in Scandinavia, and coins were being used in many areas where the the Scandiavians were going (Frisia, Frankia, England, Byzantium, the Caliphate, the use of coinage was only introduced gradually to Scandinavia during the Viking Age, and that each part of Scandinavia has its own history in this respect.

- The visitor shall understand the intimate link between trade, rulership and means of payment – and get an impression of the link between Christianity and coinage.

Main narratives and key objects

*16.1 The formation of the Scandinavian kingdoms

In the late Viking Age, the Scandinavian kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden formed in the sense that they became largely permanent, unified power bases for one king or royal line each.

Similarities between the development in the three kingdoms were: Christianity, alliances with other royal houses in Europe (including each others), monetization followed by the second urbanisation wave. Taxation also to be mentioned here?

In Denmark Gorm, Thyra and Harald were the main protagonists, and the story here focus on them and on Jelling, but continues on to Knut and England

In Sweden the story focusses on Eric the Victorious and his son Oluf Skötkonung.

In Norway the story focusses on Olav Haraldsson, Magnus Olavsson and Harald Harderade.

*16.2 On the European scene

This part of the section takes on the European dimension of the formation of the Scandinavian kingdoms, both militarily and through diplomacy. This part is looking not only on Svein and Knut’s conquest of England, but also on the importance of the close connections to Kiev and elsewhere.

Objects: C58882/3 Øvre Langeid, Bygland, Aust-Agder: Sword with Christian symbols, plus axe and two coins. Reconstruction of grave and grave building?

Objects: C36640 Kvelperud, Ås, Buskerud: Sword with Christian symbols, parallel to Langeid

Objects: Galteland, Christian runic stone remembering a son that has fallen with Knut in England.

Key objects: Objects from the mid-11th century showing connections to Kiev-Rus and Byzantium. Image showing Ellisiv. Coins from Hardrades coinages.
**16.3 Means of payment**

In this section, focus is on the different means of payments – in kind, via bullion or other valuables, to coins – that the Vikings used. The entire economic system has to be seen on the background of a society widely based on subsistence economy with limited needs for buying things. Throughout the Viking Age, many payments were based on barter, where products considered to be of equal value changed hands. This could be in the form of any commodity or raw material available or needed. Tributes were often paid this way: for instance, Ottarof Halogaland tells King Alfred of Wessex that the Sami paid him specific quantities of animal hides, feathers, whale bone, and ropes as tribute. Monetisation did not take place in Scandinavia on a major scale until the end of the period, but that did not mean the Vikings were unfamiliar with coinage. Sceattas were used in trading settlements in the North Sea zone from the seventh century, while coinage was also encountered and used in the Anglo-Saxon and continental realms, often received as tribute or bribes to avoid attacks. When trade began to take place on a larger scale, more standardised means of payments would also have been necessary. By the late ninth century, silver had become a crucial means of exchange, especially involving Islamic dirhams. Coins and other metal objects were melted down to form bullion, with cut pieces (‘hacksilver’) used for payment. Standardised weights facilitated trade in diverse territories and weight-adjusted objects, such as arm- and neck-rings, were used in a similar way. Throughout the period, gift-giving was also an important way to exchange products, albeit with more of a social and/or political role rather than purely a transactional one.

**Key objects:** Examples of objects used as ‘money’, e.g., iron; weights and hoards with bullion; trading weights; coinage used elsewhere in the Viking world; touchstones, coins with testing nicks, fake/silvered copper alloy coins

**16.4 Scandinavian coinages**

In this section the Scandinavian coin history of the Viking Age is being shown:

Denmark: Coins – pennies – were struck at Ribe c. 825-40 and at Hedeby from c. 820 – or perhaps only one of the places. They were clearly inspired by coins minted in Dorestad. Harald Bluetooth minted «cross pennies», probably in Hedeby, in the 970-980’s.

Cnut the great and Magnus the Good both issues coins in Denmark, but not in Norway (although Magnus presented himself as king of Norway on coins struck in Hedeby. During Cnut the great (1018-1035) the Danish coinage became the most advanced in Scandinavia, but a monopolised coinage, where foreign coins were removed from circulation, was not introduced under Cnut.

Norway: First coinage very limited, king Olaf Tryggvason c. 995/998, organised from Anglo-Saxon mintmaster Godwine. Next Olav Haraldsson in the 1020’s. Harald Harderade organised Norwegian coinage after he returned from Byzantium in 1046. Coinage on a large scale continued after Harald was slain at Stamford Bridge in 1066. From around 1050, only Norwegian coins were allowed to circulate in Norway (monopolised coinage). Hoards older than that consist of 99% foreign coins – those from the 10-70 on only a few percent foreign coins. Harald also soon started to debase the Norwegian coins (reducing their silver content), something that allowed him to produce more coins from the silver entering the country.

Sweden: Eric the Victorious and his son Olof Tribute-king developed the first Swedish coinages in the late 10th and early 11th century as they created strongly centralised royal power and royal mint at Sigtuna. The coins were largely inspired by Anglo-Saxon, but also by Byzantine coinages, and beared witness of the turn to Christianity, especially under Oluf. By the end of Oluf’s son Amund’s rule, the
Swedish coinage system broke down, as did the unified Svea-Götaland kingdom that Eric and Olof had achieved.

**16.5 Scandinavian coinages abroad**
The most advanced Scandinavian coinage was actually produced abroad, in Scandinavian England. Here the Scandinavians were in an environment familiar with using coinage – and the Great Army also had considerable experience from the likewise coin-using Frankish areas. During the time of the Great Army, the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon coins were used in a bullion economy, but later the Scandinavian rulers started to mint imitations of Anglo-Saxon coins. One such example is the design of the later coins of Eric Bloodaxe, who was king in York, and in the mid-10th century produced pennies with a cross on one side and a sword – the symbol of St. Peter, but arguably also of his Viking origins – on the other side. When Cnut the great became king of England in the early 11th century, his English coinages became closely intertwined with his Danish ones, especially those minted in Lund.

*Key objects:* Saint Peter’s coins with Thor’s hammers.

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17 The Vikings and Us (Around 1000)

**Location**
Upper level, the last arcade room. We have placed it there because we do not want it to interrupt the arcade series of themes, but neither do we want it to be the last experience that people get in the exhibition.

**Experience goal**
- Surprise, but also recognition of her own experience that the Vikings are being used everywhere today.

**Learning goal**
- History play both positive and negative roles in any society, and so the history of Vikings.
- The way to support it’s positive use is through source criticism and curiosity, and by fighting dogmatism and exclusion.

**Main stories and key objects**

*17.1 National identities and Vikings*
National identities in the Nordic countries, and in particular Norway, is drawing on the countries’ Viking history, and did so already from the Middle Ages on. This story pursues this path, from the Icelandic manuscripts’ presentation of the Landnam etc. over the invention of the Viking Age in 18th-19th century Scandinavia to the use of the Gokstad and Oseberg ship graves in the construction of a national identity in the 19th and early 20th century. The end point will be the construction of national monuments like Jelling and Viking museums in Denmark and Norway in the 21st century. A path will also extend to the Scandinavian modern diaspora and the use of Vikings as Scandinavian brand across the world. Examples will be drawn from, i.e., poetry (e.g., Esaias Tegnér, 1782-1846), painting (e.g., Mårten Eskil Winge, 1825-1896) and music (e.g., Richard Wagner, 1813-1883).

*17.2 Fake History: Viking Culture and Nazi*
A shadow casts over the public’s perception of modern Viking cultural heritage. The reason for this tainted perception stems from the appropriation of Viking culture and identity by the Germanic Völkisch, national movement during the late 19th century through to the Nazi era of the early to mid
20th century. They conjured up a propaganda that Nordic / pan-Scandinavia peoples were descendants of a ‘pure Aryan race’. The Völkisch movement wanted to revive pre-Christian Paganism and promoted the idea that German people were descendants of the fearless, blonde, all-white seafaring Viking warriors. This belief was adopted particularly by the Nazis and combined the idea of Eugenics – which aimed to improve the genetic quality of a human population by excluding people and groups judged to be inferior or promoting those judged to be superior. They also adapted Viking Sagas and Nordic Poetry in order to aid in constructing Nazi-German art and literature. The appropriation has tainted Viking history and modern Viking canon, with neo-Nazi movements continuing tarnishing it.

**Key objects:** Archive documents, propaganda material, film or photos from Borre nazi events, military Division Viking distinctions. Modern propaganda material from the Internett.

**17.3 Vikings alive**

The Viking Age is vividly present today also, and more creatively, in the film and gaming industry, where it is shaping popular perceptions of the period, but also through re-enactors that are creatively using the modern Viking interest for playing, hobby crafting, and for informal research. This story highlights how the interest in the Viking Age today results in not only a booming industry but also in valuable cooperations with museums and universities. The story also sweeps around the Eco-Vikings, that is, people who are seeing the Viking Age as a “return to Nature and to a simpler life. It also engage with the modern believers in the Viking Age gods.

Suggested key objects: Film, a re-enactor’s full set of cloth, weapons, etc.

**18 The 2nd Urbanisation wave (Around 1000)**

**Location**

On the open floor, towards the arcade, next to «Monetization» (Around 1000). The reason for placing it here is that it can be combined with an installation that shall provide an urban feeling to that part of the exhibition.

**Experience goal**

- The visitor shall experience this part as distinctively different from settlement experiences in the exhibition, with a lasting, urban atmosphere.

**Learning goal**

- The visitor shall understand that towards the end of the Viking Age, new political organization led to reorganization of the economic landscape, and to the relocalization of many towns.
- She shall also understand that in this process, towns increased their importance as centres for the local regions, and less nodes in international trade networks.

Main stories and key objects

**18.1 The birth of the medieval urban landscape**

Around year 1000, a number of towns had already been around for a long while, like Ribe and Århus. But many new towns also came into existence, often at the cost of old ones. Birka were replaced by
Sigtuna, Hedeby by Schleswig, and Kaupang by Tønsberg. Many of the old urban settlements were primarily ports of trade, and although they probably always were under the protection and taxation from kings, they were also dependent on traders and communication routes to exist. So was some of the new towns from the closing part of the Viking Age, like Copenhagen, or Sigtuna. From Sigtuna, recent biometric analyses have shown that many of the people living there in the late Viking Age were non-locals, and this Swedish town, established by the king, seem to have housed a very mobile population of both sexes (Krzezińska et al., 2018). Oslo, seemingly with a much more local population (Nauman et al. 2919), represent another type of towns that started to emerge, designed more to live of the land as administrative centres than of international trade. Their names sometimes seem to indicate that they grew out of earlier religious and political centres, like Viborg, Odense, Lund, and Trondheim, and they often became seats of bishops at the latest around the mid-11th century, as did some of the earlier Viking trading centres, like Ribe.

*18.2 Trade beyond the towns*

However, towns remained few throughout the 11th century and served only part of the demand for trade. Hence there was room for smaller settlements that were not strictly rural, nor had the full scope of urban functions, as well as for seasonal trading places. Not the least in the more sparsely populated regions such sites were crucial for trade and communication. In Norway, we may point to places like Bjørkum I Værdal, Kaupanger in Sognefjord, Veøy (Romsdalsfjord) and Borgund (Sunnmøre) as large, important trading sites situated on the coast. Steinkjer, archaeologically indicated through a concentration of imported finds, and mentioned in Fagrskinna as an important trading settlement, is a further example. But trade was not only focussed on the coast. Where important land routes met, for example between eastern and western Norway, settlements or seasonal sites with similar functions would also appear; in the sparsely populated landscape they would not only be of economical importance but would also fulfill important roles as social meeting places. In Denmark, research have demonstrated a high number of so-called beach market sites serving as trade points in a sub-urban network.

19 The Gods Are Dead – Long Live God (Around 1000)

**Location**

On the open floor, as the last theme in the museum. Possibly the wall with the exit will show a church building, making the guests leave the Viking Age through the church.

**Experience goal**

- The visitor shall have the feeling that here is a clear change in pace. The steady change that has been felt throughout the exhibition suddenly has led to a dramatic, and sudden transformation.

**Learning goal**

- The visitor shall understand that Christianity was not something that suddenly was introduced in Scandinavia by the kings in the late Viking Ages; but that Christianity gradually was taken up by more and more Norse as a result of contacts with Christian parts of Europe. According to rune stones and sagas, women were as active as men in introducing the new religion.

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5 See works by Jens Ulriksen.
The visitor shall understand that when Christianity was made the king’s religion, it was often a political move to win or keep allies – but also that it had a large impact because it paved the way for the introduction of new types of administration and power structures.

Main stories and key objects

*19.1 Scandinavian Christianity in the making
Christianity was long in establishing itself in Scandinavia – remember the early churches erected in Ribe, Hedeby and Birka, and the occasional finds of Christian symbols in graves from earlier parts of the Viking Age. 9th century Christian graves have also been suggested from excavations beneath Stavanger Cathedral, but evidence is uncertain. Early Christianity seemingly shows some bottom-up processes, as exemplified with the Dynna rune stone which seem to emphasise Maria and caring, peaceful aspects of Christianity. But there is also ample evidence for it to be a top-down process led by the rulers. When kings decided for Christianity and attempted to harness the Christian Church for their purpose, it had the potential to reform the entire society and start a new era, but also to throw it into civil war. Hence Christianity as ideology had different faces, and it also already had in it ideas about sacred kingship similar to those already in place in Scandinavia. Hence Christ became a warrior, and the king became God’s selected warrior.

Key objects: Dynna, runic stone with Maria in Bethlehem, raised by a women over her daughter. Lead crosses from Viking Age burials (Stavanger museum, also at KHM?). Other Christian amulets.

*19.2 The religious landscape
The religious landscape changed with Christianity. While the heathen cult was dispersed down to household level and ever-present in terms of holy mountains, lakes, forests and other places, the Christianity focussed the cult in the church. The promise of eternal salvation for all was a momentous change, exemplified by the «deocratization» of burial, with all women and children getting recognizable burial for the first time. Christianity thus took control of life and dead. The children had to be Christened before becoming full members of society, and the dead had to be brought to the church yards (sometimes established at older cemeteries like Vang (check)). Farm cemeteries and ancestor cults were forbidden. Crosses and monuments were erected in the landscape, sometimes thereby taking control of ancient burial mounds, sometimes highlighting the benefits of the new faith – as when bridges were being built in honour of the Lord. However, the changes were gradual. The Christian burial ritual, with its theorem that you can take nothing with you, were not strictly employed on all burials that we find in early church yards, and sometimes we find burials of seemingly Christians on places that do not appear to have been Christian cemeteries. Many Christian rune stones were erected, but Latin letters and language now existed in parallel, introduced and used by the Christian Church.

Key objects: Kuli, runic stone with a cross on it, raised by two men in memory of a third – text says that it was raised when Christianity had been 12 years in Norway. Is at Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim. One of the few rune stones to mention Norway by name. Stone cross from Stavanger, with runic inscription. Any finds with Latin letters.

**19.3 The house of God
With the new dendrochronological datings of the oldest part of the Urnes stave church, showing that timbers for it was felled in 1069-70, it becomes clear that Viking Age churches cannot have looked

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entirely different from this. At the same time Dalby church in Scania – the oldest standing stone church in Scandinavia, built from 1060 on – shows the radical transformation of monumental architecture that the Church brought with it. This section of the exhibition presents and discusses our knowledge about the earliest Scandinavian churches and combines it with the various sources of inspiration – including, for example, the Viking Age wooden church at Sebbersund, with a woman in a stone sarcophagus under the eaves of the church.

20 The Oseberg burial (around 800)

Location
Located on the lower level, but visible from the upper level, where original parts of the stem, not mounted on the ship, are shown.

Experience goals
- Visitors experience awe, standing in front of this magnificent ship, but also curiosity due to the unwieldy, contrasting house construction sitting onboard the ship (if the grave chamber is actually placed on board the ship).

Learning goals
- Visitors understand that the Oseberg ship was used both as a ship for the living and as a burial ship for the dead.
- Visitors understand that the Oseberg grave reflects the uppermost echelon in Viking society.
- They understand that the grave both expresses notions about death and was a tool for the living to shape and use the memory of the deceased in the interest of the clan.

Main narratives and key objects
The experience concept “The Oseberg Burial” tells the story of the Oseberg burial as a grave. Its archaeological discovery and history as an exhibit is shown in “Introduction”, and a stage in the burial ritual in “From the Living to the Dead”. The textiles and textile tools are shown in a special room, “The weavers”, due to the formerers’ fragility.

“The Oseberg Burial” has interfaces with “Life in Midgard” and “Violence” and “The Gokstad Ship”. Some objects will be placed such that the topics they relate to overlap somewhat.

The stories in this installation revolve around three main narratives:

**20.1 Everyday life in death**
The two women in the grave have just about everything they might need for everyday life after death. The many everyday objects placed in the grave express a notion that life continues in the grave after death. The dead person had to have everything they would need, otherwise they might become dissatisfied and a danger to the living. However, this notion may have been more metaphorical and symbolic, as not all the equipment was of particularly good quality. For example, the hand mill included in the grave was very worn. But it is far from certain that all the items that were put in the grave were merely utensils for practical use. Some items may have been included in the grave, because they had been used in the funeral rituals – such as the sledges and the cart. It is also possible that the individual objects and animals have symbolic significance that was important
for the rituals and cosmology, or that some objects symbolised the deceased’s tasks as religious and political leaders.

The Oseberg grave raises many questions. We will never get the answers to all of them, but the researchers are constantly working out more.

This topic borders “Life in Midgard”, and the cooking pot from the Oseberg grave marks the transition between these two experience concepts

**Key objects:** Clothes, shoes, combs, kitchen utensils, apples, farm tools, dog chains. Other media: A long display case along the entire wall containing the grave goods. A presentation – digital or as an inventory list – of the grave goods, primarily to convey the sheer quantity.

**20.2 The ship and the voyage**

The Oseberg ship was – and still is – a magnificent vessel that transported rich and powerful people on the fjords and seas. It was in use for more than a decade, before it was sent on its final voyage to take two women to the realm of the dead. The ship was fully equipped and ready to sail in the grave, with its oars out, and was symbolically moored to a large boulder by a piece of thick rope. Astern of the mast, a burial chamber had been set up for the two dead women and a landing plank provided access on board. The ship was filled with objects from the women’s lives, and sacrificed horses, dogs and cows lay in and around the vessel.

The Oseberg ship grave was made for a high-ranking member of a ruling family, a woman with political and religious power and influence – perhaps a queen. The magnificent ship, the objects on board and the huge burial mound demonstrated clearly both her and her family’s position.

Burials in boats, as the Oseberg ship burial is, were used in Scandinavia already in the Stone Age, and the symbolism can also be found in graves from both the Bronze Age and from earlier parts of the Viking Age. They do, however, become much more frequent in the Viking Age, and can be found in most places where the Vikings went, from Russia to Iceland. Also, from around 600, a few of them are made with monumental dimensions, like to Oseberg burial with its 21 m long ship and 40 m wide mound. It has been suggested that these monumental ship graves were built to make manifest origin myths for some ruling families. Many Scandinavian rulers used myths about their origins to legitimise their power, and one, told in the Beowulf poem about a Danish ruler, is employing the ship grave motif. A baby boy arrives by boat alone on the Danish coast, is adopted and becomes progenitor to a new royal line. Shortly before he dies, he orders his friends to give him a ship burial. Monumental burials with real ships or ship-shaped stone settings are mostly found within or in the border areas of the Danish realm (Scania, Denmark, Viken, to lesser extent in Western Norway). Very rich, but decidedly not monumental boat graves are also known from eastern Sweden, with the sites at Vendel, Valsgärde and Badelunda being the most famous. The godly connections in ship burials is also reflected in the tale – told in the poem Husdrapa – about the ship burial of the only god who dies before Ragnarokk, Baldr.

The Oseberg grave is far from the only ship grave from the Viking Age, but it is by far the best preserved. The ship could also be symbolic rather than real, as seen in the 357 m long stone ship that was built at Jelling as the central element of this royal burial place.

**Key objects:** The Oseberg ship, the grave chamber, the horse skeletons by the prow, the landing plank, in the middle part of the display cases alongside the ship: ship equipment such as oars, truss, and other pieces of rigging equipment, the tent.

**Other media:** Lighting
The powerful woman from Oseberg

The Oseberg ship was pulled ashore and used as a burial ship for the two women. A burial chamber was built immediately behind the ship’s mast. Inside, the chamber was furnished with a large bed in the middle, fragments of which were found at the periphery of the break in hole in the roof of the burial chamber. The most magnificent objects placed in front of the bed, while food and drink were placed in containers behind the bed. The grave has been looted, and the grave robbers entered the part of the burial chamber where the women lay. It is therefore impossible to know if they had been treated as equals in the grave or if, as in the ship grave from Hedeby, that one of them had been clearly the main character of the burial — the latter is perhaps the more likely. Nor is it possible to say what has been removed of the objects that were originally placed directly on or at the deceased, and which were probably the most valuable objects in the grave. Nevertheless, the objects that were left behind suggest unusual wealth and status, such as the beautiful buckets and harnesses from Hiberno-Saxon areas, and the exquisite wood carvings. The chair in the grave is unique in an archaeological context and can be interpreted as indicating the woman’s role as a political and religious leader, with reference to the known examples of figurines of deities in chairs.

At least one of the women must have had a very special place in society to earn such a burial ritual, and she may have been a queen. Many questions remain unanswered: Were they related? Where did they come from? Was one sacrificed to accompany the other into the realm of the dead? Why and when was their grave destroyed? The latter question has at least partially been answered. Tools used in the break-in has been dated to between 953 and 975 CE and has been shown to be connected to similar tools used in a break-in into the Gokstad ship burial at the same time. Since this is the same period when Harald Bluetooth built the Jelling monument with its ship symbolism – and conquered Norway, according to the Jelling stone – one possible answer is that his followers did it. The reason would be to become the sole ruler using the ship burial symbolism to support his kingship.

Key objects: Beautiful boxes and containers from Hiberno-Saxon areas. Cannabis seeds, shoes, bed, containers, personal textile tools, saddles, riding whip with dog’s head, chair (items that were inside the burial chamber, e.g. one sledge runner (#sjekk)), the fifth animal head post. Five beds. The Buddha bucket is part of the icon trail and is situated in the transition to the experience concept “Violence”.

21 Life in Midgard (Around 800)

Location and flexibility
Located on the lower level behind the Oseberg showcases towards the Laboratory area.

Experience goals
- Visitors experience people’s everyday life in Viking times, filled with action, joys and sorrows.

Learning goals
- Farming was the cornerstone of Viking society.
- How did the Vikings get food, keep warm and make a living?
- What was everyday life like?
- How did the Norse people view themselves and their everyday life as part of the cosmology?

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7 See Bill 2016, Apotropaic Magic, CAJ, p. 150-151
Main narratives and key objects

The stories in this installation revolve around four main narratives:

*21.1 The Vikings were farmers

The vast majority of Vikings lived off their farms and the surrounding land, as is mirrored by the many graves containing farming tools like sicles. The farm – sometimes perhaps the village – was the focus of human activity and therefore the farm and the landscape had an important place both in the greater cosmological picture and their own inner cosmological order. Among other things, the distinctions between indoors and outdoors and between farmland and outlying areas were central. How were the land and natural resources around the farm exploited? What livestock existed? The Norse people lived in close contact with their animals – what do we know about people’s relationship with animals in the Viking Age?

The farm was people’s basic source of livelihood: it provided food, light and heat and was the arena for many different forms of social interactions. This was the home of the young and old, the free and the unfree; it was where people lived out their “thread of life” from conception, through birth, childhood, adulthood and old age to death, which many met early. Time passed on the farm, but how was the farm, did people live in villages, or in single farms, how was housing, and how did the Vikings actually perceive time and seasons? When did they feast, when and where did they meet other people?

Key objects: Farming tools—sickles, ploughs, axes, keys, combs, plant and animal remains from Oseberg. Excavation plans or reconstructions showing how farms and villages looked in different parts of Scandinavia.

Other media: Film: The film should entice the visitors and arouse curiosity. It will tempt people round the corner and in “behind the ship”. The film is envisaged as a textless loop depicting a fictional Viking farm through a cycle of one year – the basic unit of time and production for a farm. If the sea or a fjord can be seen in the background, ships can sail in and out. Animals can be heard. The film should be simple and not try to convey too much information. Its purpose is to bring the objects to life, without too much focus on people: people and livestock should perhaps appear more like “ghost figures”. There is a story, but it is the images that carry the film. We see men, women, children, old people, all busy doing things, people moving in and out, being born and dying, celebrating and mourning. They are linked to the objects: ploughs, sickles. We see people spinning, weaving, cooking, forging metal, building boats and performing winter sacrifices, children watching the animals, games. There will also be some unexpected, humorous, elements, such as someone peeing.

*21.2 Life around the cooking pot

Meals are a time for people to gather, no matter what is in the pot. The main thing is that there is enough food for everyone. Was there enough food for everyone in the Viking Age? What differences were there between the social classes? What changes in access to and type of food were there through the year?

What did they eat? What kind of spices, flavours, and variety existed? How was their diet in terms of nutritional content? How long did food keep? Was there always enough food for everyone? What did people do to ensure access to food? Were there any fertility rites? Beer was a social glue both among people and between mortals and the gods. How was it made? In what contexts was it drunk? What kind of festivities did people have? And what was their purpose? The Norse people liked many different types of games: do we know anything about them? Did both adults and children play?
Key objects: The Oseberg cooking pot, pots made of soapstone and iron, roasting spit, meat kettle, game pieces, drinking horn, plant and animal remains from Oseberg

Other media: Rigstula, a poem describing the god-given social classes, tells how Heimdall was progenitor of each of the three classes. The poem also provides insight into the Norse people’s perception of social classes and tells of differences in names, clothing and food, among others. Can perhaps be used as an illustration, but we need to look into, to what extent it is actually mirroring Viking Age conditions, and not later Christian influence. The Viking Garden outside. When in existence, references to it should be included in the exhibition, making people curious to go and see it.

**21.3 Health in Viking times**
What do we know about quality of life in the Viking era? Demographics demonstrate tendencies in people’s lives, different risk phases during the life cycle, such as infancy and adolescence, and differences in class and gender. Skeletons can tell us about diseases, diet, etc. Were there geographical differences? Are there traces of different standards of living? Can we know anything about what people looked like? Did people with disabilities survive? How about contagious diseases, like smallpox and leprosy – did that exist in Viking Age society in Scandinavia? Was that a price paid through the increased mobility?

Key objects: Amulets against diseases, with runic inscriptions - one English examples is a magical formula in ON and runes on a spindle whorl from Saltfleetby in Lincolnshire. Digital representations – interactive. Skull with worn teeth from Aalgaard in Sørmarka. Skeletons with identified lepra and smallpox. Some of these may be found in “50 ways…” Do we have magical formulae from VA, perhaps from Germany?

*21.4 The indispensable textiles*
Farms were not only about making food. The production of various forms of textiles was essential in Scandinavia in the Viking Age, both due to harsh climate, and to the increasing demand for textiles for sails. Production of, and access to textiles was thus essential on all levels, from mere survival to military strength. It was also very labour-intensive, from the production of fibres over spinning of tread to weaving and sewing. Wool was probably the most used fibre and made it possible to explore the outfields through sheep herding. But also vegetable fibres, e.g., linen, were important, although they are more seldom preserved. The economy associated with textile production was thus enormous and one of the most important constants of farm life. Given the overweight of combinations of female accessories and textile tools in graves it appear that textile production was mainly a female occupation (see also “The Weavers”).

Key objects: Spindle whorls, flax combs, scissors, loom weights, weaver’s batons, etc. There are also good examples from graves in Scotland, e.g. a whale bone plate from a boat grave.

Other media: A large display “The thousand spinning wheels” communicates the importance and sheer quantity of textile equipment, linked to both cosmology and technology.

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22 Research workshops

Location
This installation is located centrally on the lower level in the middle of the museum, facing the inner courtyard, and consists of several rooms and spaces in this area. This is the part of the exhibitions with the highest activity. The dissemination, information and activity here is dynamic, varied and constantly changing. The solutions must therefore be very flexible. Parts of the area must be able to operate with varying degrees of public access. In these areas, flexible solutions are needed to be able to partially or completely close off access. Flexible solutions will enable presentation of both ongoing research and basic methods. From the area there will also be access to the inner yard of the museum, when this is activated in relation to the Laboratories / Explore.

Experience goals
Visitors experience the museum’s research and dissemination work as transparent and feel invited to participate in parts of the researchers’ work.

The installations “Laboratories” and “Explore!” are a meeting place for researchers, visitors, students, reproduction artists and others who want to find out more about the Viking Age. This area is the heart and brain of the museum. To keep the rest of the organism running, these organs must be vital and active, and they depend on a constant supply of oxygen. The laboratory area will be filled with life and energy, with a view to ensuring the Viking Age Museum fulfils its vision and ambition of being a research museum that surprises and challenges with new knowledge and perspectives. Here answers will be sought to the questions concerning what it was like to live in the Viking Age and what this might mean for our own lives. In this area, questions and knowledge from the humanities and natural sciences are combined, with a focus on use of the available sources and source criticism.

In this area, visitors get a glimpse behind the scenes and can meet researchers, conservators and others working to find out more about the Viking Age. They will have the opportunity to observe the museum’s work on conservation and knowledge production. The area will also have hands-on stations where visitors can take part in activities that increase their understanding of and interest in research and conservation.

Learning goals
The dissemination in these areas shall be developed with the aim that visitors:

- Understand that research is question-driven.
- Understand that knowledge is created through research and that research is based on data.
- Realise that there is still much to explore and that history is created over time.
- Understand that source criticism and awareness of theory and method is central.

Main narrative and key objects
In the installations “Laboratories” and “Explore!”, there will be a wide range of activities related to research and conservation. Activities can be of very different natures, such as studying objects, excavation work, preservation and CT scanning. The studies will be made available to visitors along with the research questions that the studies aim to cast light on. This will be done both via information mainly presented on screens or similar, allowing content to be changed quickly, and through various audience-participation activities such as taking part in experiments, interactive activities, and guided tours.
The areas will be programmed, i.e. there will be an overarching plan for activities, staffing and events, closely related to ongoing research and excavation projects. The overarching plans will nevertheless be able to accommodate spontaneous topics that arise in connection with popular culture and social interest, and discoveries or questions that arise in connection with research and/or conservation. For example, this could be a new interpretation of old runes, discussions about female warriors in the media, or what is fact and what is fiction in the HBO series “Vikings”.

Proper staffing in this area is key for a good audience experience. In addition to practising researchers and technicians, presenters with good insight into research and knowledge of dissemination will help ensure the desired impression of exciting activity in the heart of the museum.

The area is divided into three main zones: The installation “Laboratories” comprises two zones where the public can witness real-life research:

- A research laboratory – with a wet laboratory, dry-laboratory, microscopy room.
- A scanning area – with a CT room and room for photogrammetry and light scanning.

The third zone in the area will contain activities where visitors can investigate and perform experiments themselves.

- Explore! – the museum’s cultural historical “makerspace”.

A fourth zone will be made up by the museum’s inner yard, which occasionally – primarily in Summer – will be used for, e.g., experimental activities.

**22.1 The research laboratory

Ongoing work will be carried out linked to research, conservation and preparations for exhibitions. Visitors can experience the work carried out here through their own observation and information via screens, posters, etc., and through guided tours and demonstrations outside and inside the various laboratory rooms. In the area outside the research laboratory, there will be information about and activities linked to various methods, such as typology, dendrochronology, research questions, interpretation, and source criticism. Good programming will be required to ensure that visitors experience the research laboratory as dynamic.

The research laboratory will be able to operate in three different modes:

1) Completely open. Visitors can move freely through the entire research laboratory and talk to the people working there if they want.
2) Partially open. Visitors cannot enter the research laboratory, but can observe the work and possibly communicate with the people working there through a window.
3) Completely closed off. Visitors cannot communicate with the people working, but can witness activities through other forms of communication, such as video transmission, digital presentations, interactive installations, etc.

Example: The excavation of the Kaupang woman who lived and died in the Viking town of Kaupang in Vestfold. During excavations of the area in the 1950s, archaeologists found a grave. In order to be able to carry out the excavation in controlled conditions, the entire grave was transported into the museum as a large block of earth inside a wooden crate measuring approximately 1.5 x 1.5 metres, but it was never excavated. The Kaupang woman has been given the nickname “Mother of Pearl” as
there are believed to have been a large number of pearls inside the grave. This excavation could be done inside the Research Laboratory. This work would involve CT scanning and documentation both before and during excavation, and after the excavation, visitors could reexcavate the grave virtually, based on the 3D-documentation. A similar documentation is currently being produced during the Gjellestad excavation.

Example: Through the microscope

Various analyses of seeds, pollen and tree rings can provide valuable knowledge about the Viking Age. Researchers use microscopes in this work, and visitors can assist in analysing seeds and grains, or analysing different types of wood and tree rings in pieces of wood. Perhaps visitors can also experience seeing inscribed letters on a small amulet through the microscope? Demonstrating how specific details become visible depending on the angle of light, etc.

**22.2 Explore!**

This is the research museum’s humanities-oriented science centre. Here there is a strong focus on hands-on activities for visitors, demonstrations, and do-it-yourself installations. There could be simulations of research activities conducted in the Research Laboratory, processing of 3D-printed objects, etc. For example, there could be a generic Viking grave in a crate filled with kinetic sand that visitors can excavate and document using archaeological methods. Other examples could be exercises to systematise copies of different objects into different eras, examining coins under a microscope to determine where they come from, steering and navigating a longship, or a simulation of raising the sails to find out how heavy it must have been to raise a large sail made of wool. It could also involve production, like making your own magical amulet.

Example: Style as a dating tool

Archaeologist Jan Petersen systematised the Viking Age and created a system for dating objects, including swords, which is still in use to this day. Visitors can have a go at systematising objects themselves, using exhibited objects, copies and digital solutions.

Example: Steer a longship

Do-it-yourself installations can be used to try to answer research questions. Here, by simulating interpretations such as use of sun dials and sunstones for navigation and comparing the findings with knowledge from written sources and other research from finds (circumstances, sites, dating, etc.), visitors can learn about source criticism and gain greater understanding of why researchers believe what they believe and know what they know.

**22.3 Scanning**

In this area, objects from Norway and further afield will be analysed. The zones are divided into two rooms with various different scanning methods, such as photogrammetry, light scanning and CT scanning. Visitors can observe the process through large windows and are given information about the project that the scans are part of via digital solutions such as screens or projections. They will also be able to find information at different levels about the different scanning techniques and how using this generates more knowledge about the Viking Age.

23 Hidden Treasures (Around 900)
Location
Sub-floor room between Oseberg and Gokstad halls.

Emotional goal
- The visitor shall experience the place as hidden, underground, mysterious...

Learning goal
- That one major motive for burying treasures was to keep them safe, but others were to use treasure as sacrifice or, possibly, to make it available for the owner in the afterlife.
- That hoards are important for research as they offer insight into what was accumulated as portable wealth at specific times, thereby illuminating contacts and economical practices, but also what was kept for display or used for sacrifice.
- That the Hoen treasure is one of the richest Viking Age treasures ever found, but that Viking treasures are found in many different places.

Main stories and key objects

*23.1 Why hide treasure in the ground?*
Burying treasure or hoards is a complex, universal phenomenon known throughout human history. Explanations range from the practical – hiding objects and valuables for safekeeping – to the sacred: a means of expressing symbolic and ritual behaviours, such as giving offerings to the gods. Deposits can include what we typically think of as treasure; precious metals, jewellery, and collections of coins, as well as more utilitarian objects like tools, raw materials, and food. What these artefacts have in common is that they were deliberately hidden and for some reason never retrieved, either on purpose, because the deposit held a sacred or ritual significance or by accident; forgotten by the owner or because he or she was unable to return to it. In the Viking world, some hoards were buried in or near houses, perhaps as a family’s bank vault; others were buried temporarily whilst on the move or in times of political turmoil. Some treasures were deposited in locations where they could not easily be retrieved, for example in water: such hoards are perhaps better understood as sacrifices, deposits that were intended for the gods or the afterlife. Hoards and buried treasure give researchers unique perspectives on past lives because they present a snapshot of past behaviours that can provide us with evidence of trade connections, art, the use of objects for display, and religious behaviour. Studying such artefacts is especially informative of mobility, cultural contacts, and far-reaching trade networks among past populations, aspects that are of particular importance for the study of the Viking Age.

**Key objects:** One or more hoards containing different materials, contrasting Hoen’s gold (e.g. iron, copper alloy, silver); hoards with and without coins, showing development in practices over time; a hoard buried in a container; a hoard with objects from diverse geographical regions; a hoard interpreted as an offering, either because of context/location/or content.

*23.2 The Hoen treasure (Icon)*
The Hoen treasure is the largest gold hoard from the Viking Age found in Norway and one of the richest known from the Viking world. It was deposited in the late 9th century in a wetland situated at the north-westernmost, navigable reach of the Oslo fjord at that time, at Hokksund. In the surrounding landscape, numerous burials, access to natural resources, and a recently discovered metalworking site testify to the area’s likely wealth and strategic importance. The hoard is a unique
collection of female jewellery including several neck- and arm-rings, beads of glass and imported semi-precious stones, a unique brooch, and numerous pendants of both Scandinavian and foreign origin, many of unparalleled quality. Several converted coin pendants from the hoard carry graffiti and one has a runic inscription of uncertain meaning. The objects demonstrate links to the Carolingian, Anglo-Saxon, Islamic, and Byzantine worlds and some were decades or centuries old when they were deposited, meaning they could have been family heirlooms. The combination of weight-adjusted gold rings and similarities to high-status jewellery assemblages from elsewhere in Scandinavia testifies to an owner with considerable wealth and powerful connections. While we will never know for certain who the Hoen hoard belonged to or why it was buried, it is highly informative of craftwork, trade, and the social use of high-quality artefacts in Viking Age society, both as a series of individual objects but also, as a collection with a biography of its own.

**23.3 Other hoards**

Place holder. Hoards under consideration for display focus on those that contrast with Hoen and illustrate a different theme, to demonstrate the wide range of hoards and deposits found during the Viking Age. Possibilities include a pure silver hoard, containing coins and/or hacksilver; a hoard containing other valuable metals, e.g. iron bars; a hoard hidden in a container; or a deposit of weapons or other objects interpreted as a sacrificial hoard. This display could also be used to demonstrate the wide-ranging origins of looted and/or traded objects brought together in a single hoard.

24 The voyages (Around 900)

**Location**

Around the Gokstad ship and the display cases facing it, east of the entrance to the Tune ship display. The Gokstad ship itself will not be very flexible, but other parts will constantly evolve.

**Experience goals**

- Visitors experience being physically close to one of the ships the Vikings used on their journeys out into the world during the Viking Age. They sense the power of the ship and what it must have been like to go out to sea on such an open vessel.

**Learning goals**

- The Viking ships were actually just large, open boats without any shelter from the rain or sun.
- Seafarers navigated without a map and compass, but were well trained in reading the sea and the stars for navigation. They also relied on mental maps of the seascapes, built on experience and on learning from others who have made the journey before.
- The Vikings travelled far, and in very different waters, from Russian rivers to the North Atlantic. For different kinds of conditions and types of voyages, different types of ships were used.

**Main narratives and key objects**

**24.1 The excavation**

On Gokstad farm in the municipality of Sandefjord, there was a large burial mound called the king’s mound, about which stories abounded. In autumn 1879, the two sons on the farm – young sailors, spending the Winter home – were bored and began digging into the mound, to see if they could find anything interesting. It was said that there was a ship in the burial mound, and that is exactly what they thought they found as wood and iron started to turn up. The antiquarian Nicolaysen at the
Collection of National Antiquities heard about what the boys were up to, and in spring 1880 he started an archaeological dig on the site, revealing that it was actually a ship grave.

The burial mound around the ship had been built up using clay and turf. It was about five metres high and had a diameter of almost 45 metres. The mound was probably even larger in Viking times. The ship itself was buried in the clay below ground level. The two upper strakes and both stem posts only been covered with turf, and had stuck up out of the clay and had therefore been destroyed, but otherwise the ship was exceptionally well preserved.

**Key objects:** Photos from the excavation (there are only a few)

Other media: There are no objects, so film and/or other media should be used

**24.2 The Gokstad ship**

The Gokstad ship was built around 890 in the Oslo fjord area, and was probably not very old when it was used as grave ship. With its high hull, 16 pairs of oars and sturdy mast and sail, it was very versatile. It may have been used simply for its owner’s travels, but would have been equally suited for both warfare or raids and for trade on the scale that Scandinavia saw around 900. It even would have been a reliable vessel for migrants transporting their farm tools and animals to a new life overseas.

**Key objects:** The Gokstad ship. Equipment from the ship: deadeye rigging blocks (“vantjomfruer”), shroud needles, anchor stock, oars, etc.

**24.3 Life on board**

The Viking ships being open vessels, life on board offered little luxury, but probably plenty of boredom. Sailing along the coasts offered the luxury of making landfall at night if safe. Tents could be part of the equipment, or the sail could be rigged as tent, either on board or on land. We don’t know much about the clothing, but some of the later, Icelandic family sagas gives some information. Rain cloth and sleeping bags were probably made from oilskin and necessary for journeys in cold waters.

Sgrafitti on floor planks and incised game boards reveals how time was passed, but perhaps also aspects of religious fervour or protective rituals. Perhaps also the long sailing hours invited to honing the poetic skills. And many hours certainly also were spent with the fishing line in hand, seeking variation from the staple diet of dried fish and meat and other easily preserved food stuffs.

**Key objects:** Fishing hooks from Gokstad. Objects with inscriptions, drawings and runes from the Oseberg and Gokstad burial sites: Ship decking with different motifs, wooden stick with runes.

Other media: Interactive presentation of all objects necessary on a voyage.

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25 The ship (Around 900)

**Location**

Around the Tune Ship.

**Experience goals**

- Visitors should have an “Aha!” experience, a feeling that they understand why the ships were so important to the Scandinavians.
Visitors should become fascinated by the elegance and craftsmanship of the ships.

**Learning goals**

- Viking longships had predecessors and successors. Viking ships are part of a long boat building tradition with roots stretching all the way back to paddled, dug-out log boats.
- The Viking ship was born when simple rowing ships were given a mast and sail.
- The evolution of the Viking ship was needs-driven – changes were made as society demanded them.
- During the Viking Age, Scandinavian construction methods spread across much of Europe, where Scandinavians settled.

**Main narratives and key objects**

**25.1 The stem smith**

This main narrative describes shipbuilding and the construction of the Viking ships throughout the Viking Age. Viking ship building adhered to a number of principles, regardless of the size of the vessel produced. These regarded the way materials were used, the way parts were joined, the general layout of the hull and, not the least, the aesthetics. With examples from the Gokstad Faering and the Tune ship, these principles are explained and shown, and the way the knowledge and skills were preserved and passed on is discussed. The social roles in shipbuilding is discussed, including who the ship builders were, and to what extent they were specialised craftsmen.

**Key objects:** The Tune ship with rudder, the very elegant small faering from Gokstad (possibly placed between Tune and Gokstad), boatbuilding tools from Gulli or elsewhere. Shipbuilding materials, like oak and pine, tar, wool, bast, may be available for the visitors to touch and smell. Other media may include an animation demonstrates the anatomy of a Viking ship and the order in which the different parts are assembled. The focus is on characteristic details, for example Viking ships were clinker built, i.e. the outer shell of the boat was built first out of thin overlapping planks, held together by rivets, and was then reinforced and stiffened with thin ribs. A chaine-de-operatoire demonstrates the complexity of the building process.

**25.2 The slow invention of the Viking ship**

This story aims at showing, how Scandinavian shipbuilding developed in a long time perspective from the Hjortspring canoe (300BCE) where we for the first time see the clinker technique in use, to the end of the Viking Age and beyond. Main developments are the transition from paddles to oars, from sewn to iron-nailed hulls, the introduction of sail, the introduction of specialised cargo carriers, and the continuous development of larger and larger vessels. The story will also discuss which influences that Scandinavian shipbuilding received from the outside, and where it left impulses in other parts of the world, for example Russia, Ireland, Normandy, Britain.

**Key objects:** Interactive animations showing the development of clinker shipbuilding geographically and over time and give the visitors opportunity to explore what the different developments meant in terms of the use that one could make of the ships.

**25.3 The sail – the dragon’s wings.**

This is also a smaller story. Sails from the Viking Age are not preserved, yet they were as important and as valuable as the rest of the ship. Here visitors learn how sails have been researched, how they were made and how they functioned (how can you sail against the wind?).

**Key objects:** Interactive media where you can explore the propulsion by sail and topics like the effects of different hull shapes. A reconstructed sail that people can touch.
25.4 The economy of the Viking ship.

The extensive experimental research into the construction and sailing of Viking ships have furthered a better understanding of the economic impacts that shipbuilding had in Scandinavia. This story explores this knowledge, showing how the construction and maintenance of small and large fleets impacted society due to the demands for labor and raw materials like high quality oak timber, wool for sails, bast for ropes, iron for nails, tar, etc.

Iron was a major commodity, not only for ships but also for weapons and tools, and it was produced from bog ore. This production increased with the population during the Viking Age, and over time moved further up in the mountains, where bog ore and, not the least, wood for charcoal, were more abundant. It was produced in specialized kilns, and the amount of slags found at production sites infer that the production grew and became substantial during the Viking Age. Iron probably also was an important export good, and it has been suggested that the trading site Sebbersund in Northern Jutland was based on the iron trade.

It will also encompass a discussion of ownership of vessels big and small, and the social structure surrounding them.

Key objects: Audiovisuals.

26 The far North-West (Around 900)

Location
At the far end of «The Ship», opposite «Exploring resources. Alternatively in showcases facing the Gokstad ship, but these may be few, if the Gokstad Faering is put on display between the Tune and Gokstad ships.

Emotional goal
- The visitor shall experience the explorer mentality that made Scandinavians settle uninhabited lands in the North Atlantic.

Learning goals
- The visitor shall understand how colonial communities develop their own traditions - life on these islands was not simply a transferred version of life in the homelands, but developed into a new identities.
- The visitor shall understand that one of the success criteria for the Viking Age was flexibility in handling and adapting to new cultural and natural habitats.

Main stories and key objects

26.1 The Faeroes
In the Viking period, the Faroe Islands were undoubtedly one of the most important locations along Viking trajectories in the North-Atlantic. The landnám has been an overarching theme, but in the Faroese landscape, visible settlement remains are few, and stray finds are rare. It is likely that traces of earlier settlements are located in coastal areas, but in many cases, buried under subsequent layers of cultural remains at modern farms. For the past century, however, excavations have revealed series of sites dated to the Viking period. So far, only a couple of Viking burial sites have been identified, which is a surprisingly low number compared to other areas of the Viking world. On the other hand,
the number of known farm sites has been increasing. Elongated, subrectangular dwelling house ruins, such those found at Kvívík and Tóftanes with curved walls made of turf and stone, and on the inside, raised platforms and central fire-places, are of Viking character. Investigations at Argisbrekka have demonstrated that, as early as the 9th century, people in the islands exploited the inland fields by establishing sheilings. Palaeoenvironmental work at Viking sites has thrown new light on Viking adaptation and economic strategies in the islands. There is a general consensus that human habitation began during the Viking Age, but the results of radiocarbon dating of cultural sediments suggest that people may have arrived as early as 4th – 6th century AD. If true, this new find may challenge current views on exploration, movement and habitation in the N-Atlantic prior to the Viking expansion.

**Key objects:** Game board, toy boats from Toftanes; toy stallion from Kvívík.

*26.2 Iceland*

The landnam on Iceland is one of the most famous achievements of the Vikings. This part of the exhibition presents this, and explores the backgrounds for it – economical, political – as well as the history of the republic’s development until the end of Viking Age. According to historical works and other literature, such as the Book of Icelanders, the Book of Settlements, and the Icelandic sagas, which were composed during the 12th century and later, Iceland was discovered and settled by pagan Scandinavian people towards the end of the 9th century. While the tantalising idea of discovering traces of enigmatic, pre-Viking inhabitants has enjoyed considerable popularity, archaeological research has so far simply confirmed the overall chronology and origins of the Settlers. Over twenty, well preserved remains of Viking halls, skáli, located in different parts of the country have been excavated. Based on a variety of methods, such as stratigraphy, artefact typology, radiocarbon dating and tephrochronology, the earliest occupation phases date to the 9th century. Viking hoards are few, but some 360 pagan burials have been uncovered. The grave form, the morphology of the grave fields and the assemblage of grave goods resemble similar finds in the Northern Isles of Scotland and SW-Norway. Recent work includes revisiting alleged sites of ritual and assembly, landscape studies, and the environmental and economic processes of the landnám period.

**Key objects:** A Þórshamar made of stone from Þjórsárdalur, að ringed pin from Hafurbjarnarstaðir, a jet (lignite) arm ring from Álaugarey.

*26.3 The Viking Age settlement on Greenland*

The settlement in Greenland is, as that of Iceland, in medieval sources explained as a result of exile, as Erik the Red led an expedition to Greenland around 985. The new settlement proliferated from the Medieval warm period that had started at the beginning of the century and it spread to several locations in SW Greenland, mainly the Eastern Settlement to the south and the Western Settlement further north. At the most, it is believed that the Norse population was as large as 5 000 persons. In comparison, the original number of settlers on Iceland alone has been estimated to between 4 300 and 24 000 persons. The Greenlanders were well connected with Europe, and started to turn to Christianity at the same time as Iceland. Recent work in Greenland, with particular emphasis on zooarchaeology, palaeobotany and field surveys has shed new light on human adaptation in the Viking settlements, the agriculture, exploitation and management of natural sources and subsequent
trade of high valued goods with neighbouring areas in the NW-Atlantic.

**Key objects**: Wooden objects found at the Gården under Sandet (GUS) permafrost site in the Western settlement.

*26.4 Newfoundland*

One of the great mysteries of the period, is undoubtedly the exploration of Vinland, described in the Icelandic sagas as the result of Viking expeditions from the Greenlandic coast, towards the West. The first and only direct evidence of Viking presence in N-America were discovered at L’anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland in 1962. Subsequent excavations revealed a cluster of Viking type farm remains, a smithy and other features. The overall character of the remains indicate that the site was occupied for a very short period. However, during recent fieldwork, a short distance from the site, woodworking debris, charcoal, as well as plant and insect remains indicate a possible continuation for a longer period.

**Key objects**: A ringed pin from LAM. A map.

**26.5 Navigation and foreign waters**

The sea was infinite, and the Vikings had very few, if any, navigational tools. Yet they, and many others, were busily navigating both home and foreign waters, as illustrated by the reports of Othere’s, Wulfstan’s and Anskar’s voyages. We may theorize that having somebody on board that had made the journey before – either a skipper or a pilot – may have been a preferred precaution, and may have contributed to channel traffic into Many coastal names appear to reflect the appearance of landmarks, indicating that the landmarks were important for wayfinding. There are examples of such names being memorized in poems. In addition, sailors relied on observations of nature, like the movements of the celestial bodies and how birds and whales could revealed directions and distances to land. Viking society was largely an oral community, meaning people were very good at memorising information, a very useful skill in this context.

The Vikings travelled far and on vastly different waterways – but they had already tried most things at home. Rocky coastlines with strong tides are common around the entire North Atlantic, and especially in Norway; the tidal plains from the southern North Sea coast extend all the way to the west coast of Denmark. The rivers of Norway, Sweden and Denmark were not big, but provided ample training ground for developing the skills of using ships under difficult conditions inland.

**Key objects:**

Other media: The poem listing place names along the Norwegian coast.