



# VIKINGS: BEYOND BOUNDARIES

## Abstracts

### OPENING SESSION

**Dagfinn Skre, University of Oslo:** *Vikings: Beyond Boundaries. Introduction and perspectives*

Many European states trace their formation back to the Early Middle Ages. In several of them, the early generations of historians and archaeologists have argued that there was an institutional and ethnic continuity from then and into the modern era. That period of early kingship and state formation was also the time when Scandinavians ravaged the coasts of Northern Europa. In various ways these outsiders have been incorporated into the national historical accounts, as vulgar barbarians, as noble savages, and so on. Conversely, in early Scandinavian history writings, the Viking Period is the heroic age when our peoples were major players on the European scene.

Of course, such nationalistic research perspectives are no longer applied in modern research; however, they still influence which kinds of questions we pose and which we do not even imagine. Is it possible to drive every bit of nationalistic and patriotic spirit out of the scholarly community? If we do, what kinds of spirit will take their place? The paper attempts to supply some answers; or rather some suggestions as to in which direction answers should be sought.

**Jan Bill, University of Oslo:** *Vikings in the future*

Where is Viking research heading? What will interest us about the Viking Age in ten or twenty years from now? This question is currently being pondered at the University of Oslo, as we are planning for a large new, research-based museum focussing solely on the Viking phenomenon. But it is a question that should be of interest for anybody engaged in Viking Studies, because of the persistent, century-long hype about the Viking Age. This steady – and at present particularly strong – wave of public interest has made Vikings a brand for Scandinavia and even makes it part of present day identities, be it on a historical, intellectual or ideological basis. Therefore, Viking Studies are economically and politically important and

interact – for good or bad – perhaps more intensely with contemporary society than any other research field dealing with the prehistoric and early historic past.

The aim of the paper is to stimulate discussion and develop reflective ideas about the future of Viking Studies. It will do so through three steps: 1) by identifying and discussing the main factors influencing the development of Viking Studies today and tomorrow, and their impact; 2) by proposing some research questions and areas that could or should become central in the coming decades, in the light of the impact of internal and external influences; and 3) by suggesting strategies for the development of, especially, a museum-based version of Viking Studies in the future.

**Peter Heather, King's College London: *Empires and Barbarians, the 8th–11th-century case***

Abstract will be made available soon.

## **SESSION 1: BEYOND BOUNDARIES**

**Søren M. Sindbæk, Aarhus University: *Vikings – a global perspective***

By 600 CE, the islands and coasts by which Northern Europe merges into the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea were culturally and socially almost a world to itself. Trickle of exotic objects marked the existence of global flows of material culture, which spread by long and roundabout chains of intermediaries. It is doubtful if people in Northern Europe had any clue as to the real-world origin of these objects, and their involvement is likely to have been limited to the last of many steps in their exchange. This situation was to change. By 1000 CE, sailors from this part of the world were exploring the coasts of Greenland and Newfoundland for walrus ivory and other high-value commodities to be brought back to urban markets in their homelands, while merchants from the same market towns were trailing successful trade routes to the Black Sea and the Caspian for commerce in slaves, silk and silver. The experience of Northern European societies during this period, including the Scandinavian Viking Age, highlights patterns in the agency and social incentives, which generate transcultural interconnectivity, and in the Viking Age as a pre-modern precursor of globalization.

**Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, University of Oslo: *Strangers and foreign lands in the Old Norse literature and law-codes***

In the mythical present time, the Aesir and Vanir live together in harmony in Asgard. But it has been a war between them. As a part of the Peace Treaty, they exchanged hostages, representing wisdom. According to The Prose Edda, the skaldic mead also had its roots in this treaty. The peace-making result in a precious resource: The gift of wisdom/poetry. Read as a model for behaviour, the myth recommends conciliation.

A stranger is a person who diverges distinctively from the group one identifies with. The consideration of a person as a stranger thus depends on one's own group identification. In the run of time from the Viking Age to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Norway developed from unorganized local societies into a kingdom with a common law code. According to the literature, the local identification seems to be dominant even after the establishing of the Kingdom. There is no strong federal identity connected to the kingdom of Norway in the medieval. That may explain why the concept of strangeness is poorly discussed in the literature.

Strangers can be characterized by language, religion or geographic origin. It seems that all these three variables come to account in the attitude to strangers and foreigners. The degree of "strangeness" can be mirrored by their status in the Law codes, may be most clearly defined in the Icelandic laws, but is also reflected in Norwegian law codes.

Tentatively we can set up scale of foreignness:

1. Icelanders
2. People speaking "dönsk tunga" (Old Norse)
3. Other Christians
4. Non Christians

In the Viking Age and up in the medieval, the Lappish population was wider spread than today. As far as the Laps spoke their Sami language and were not Christianized, they were considered in group 4, the most extreme strangers. This hostile attitude to the Sami people may be is of a relative recent origin. In Law codes and literature they are connected to witchcraft, unacceptable to Christianity.

### **Judith Jesch, The University of Nottingham: *Scandinavians overseas - theories and cases***

The expansion of Scandinavians overseas in the Viking Age has in the past been figured as raiding, settlement or even colonisation. More recently, theories of migration and diaspora have been applied to understanding this phenomenon. The paper will explore the applicability of these theories both generally and as illustrated through some case studies.

### **Neil Price, Uppsala University: *Vikings and other politicians: diversity among the raiders***

The days when scholars perceived the Scandinavian raiders of the eighth and early ninth centuries as an amorphous and undifferentiated mass of 'Vikings' have largely passed, but many questions remain as to the nature of these early expeditions. Not least, where did they come from in a socio-political sense, and in this context how do we explain the transition from isolated raiding parties to larger seaborne forces? This paper surveys the archaeological and textual evidence for the internal organisation of properly Viking groups, their interactions within these entities, and their external contacts. Reference will be made to the most

important recent find from the earliest raiding period, namely the Salme boat burials, now provisionally dated to c.750. The Salme finds have not only geographically shifted our awareness of raiding eastwards into the Baltic, but also pushed it further back in time (in alignment with what textual sources have always implied). Salme will be discussed here in terms of lið organisation and ingroup analysis, in the light of the astonishing excavated details of the 43 dead Swedes found in the two boats. At the wider level of the expansion in Viking forces, comparative models of pirate communities will be developed from my earlier work, arguing that they may have essentially been small, fluid and highly mobile polities in their own right. Alongside textual evidence, the new excavations of Viking winter camps (covered elsewhere in the conference) will serve as a background for this discussion. This data will be compared in turn to the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish annals, and later Irish sources, and the evidence they provide for active political engagement of small-scale Viking flotillas, operating within larger conglomerations, working to their own agendas in the intricate power politics of the time.

## **SESSION 2: THE EAST**

### **Johan Callmer: *Meeting diversity: Various kinds of interaction between different populations on the Eastern Way in the Late Vendel and Early Viking Periods***

This contribution begins by drawing attention to some patterns of interaction between Eastern Middle Sweden, Southwestern Finland and Northern Estonia during the 8th century. The importance of the population on the Åland Islands is stressed. The major source of information on interaction is finds of Finnish pottery in the West and beads, combs, jewellery and weapons in the East. In the following section I discuss the strong indications of a long-distance exchange network in the 8th century encompassing Fennoscandia and the lands to the East (the territories of the Veps, the Udmurt, the Permjak and related groups). The last section deals with the rise of Scandinavian presence in North-Western Russia and the development of the Russian Khaganate in the late 8th and early 9th century. This development is an example of complex cultural construction and an economical and social process.

### **Mats Roslund, Lund University: *Exchange and change on the boundary between the East and the West: a socio-cultural background for trade in 10th to 13th century Sigtuna***

Understanding the process of exchange is a challenge for Viking Age scholars. The limitation of a rigid economic model has been stressed. One solution to the attempts to understand pre-modern interregional trade is to combine perspectives, and regard the limit between the economic and the social as constantly transgressed. Actions between these two spheres led to culture change, observed as “foreign imports” and style transmission.

In this contribution, theoretical and methodological perspectives on exchange in Sigtuna from late 10<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century are used to highlight groups of actors that lost their belongings

in the Sigtuna deposits. Foreign influence on the urban Sigtuna community, incited by merchants, and individuals with other occupations, are studied through a methodological tripartite grid, enhancing human choices behind cultural patterns. Strangers' presence relied on *power relations* between peers, leading to *social interaction* between people in town, resulting in *cultural negotiations*. Such a perspective also demands holistic ways of studying material culture. To understand changes in trade directions, larger assemblages of artefacts from everyday life must be drawn into the interpretation, not only coins, weights and commodities. Instead of trade, we have to study economy as a social practice.

However, differences in the impact were caused by the nature of the contacts on site. Depending on differentiation in the intensity of their presence, a suggested division of the strangers as *transient visitors*, *guests* and *diaspora* is discussed as a back-drop for understanding their impact on the community. An organic periodization of trade and exchange is presented, with Baltic Finnic, Kievan Rus', Baltic and German/Danish contacts in a fluid and overlapping historical interpretation.

### **Marek Jankowiak, University of Oxford: *Dirhams for slaves***

Why do we have so many dirhams in Gotland and all around the Baltic? If from trade, then in what? I will argue that slaves, mostly coming from the southern shores of the Baltic, were the most important commodity traded by the Scandinavians with the Muslim merchants in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. This hypothesis can be supported by a number of sources, textual, archaeological and numismatic. I will sketch the functioning of this slave trade system and reflect on its impact on the Baltic area, in particular on how the involvement in the slave trade facilitated the emergence of states.

### **Marianne Vedeler, University of Oslo: *Silk for the Vikings***

Fabrics of silk appear for the first time in Scandinavian contexts from the 9th century. At this time, silk emerges as a high status marker in graves. The majority of the precious fabrics are cut into narrow strips and sewn onto clothing, but there are also silk embroideries and bands interwoven with gold and silver. What was the meaning of these precious objects and where did they come from?

The silk fabrics found in Scandinavian graves vary in quality. Variations in patterns, colour and techniques show that they were originally imported from both the Byzantine Empire and a large Persian and early Islamic production area stretching from the Middle East to Central Asia. The fabrics are interwoven with mythical and symbolic meaning. The nuances of meaning might not have been understood in the consumption areas in the far north. However, cultural meetings encouraged by trade and diplomatic gift exchange must have functioned as an engine for the exchange of knowledge about silk. The importance of silk in the areas of production makes it reasonable to assume that this luxury had symbolic functions even in the north, with possible references to its use in production areas as well as in western parts of Europe. The strategic placement in the burials suggests its function as a symbol of power.

**Anna Wessman, University of Helsinki: *One of a kind? The significance of “Finland” during the Viking Age***

The Viking Age brought a rapid spread of external cultural influences into Finland. Imported goods, such as high quality weapons, glass beads, copper alloy ornaments and raw material came to the Finnish area through social interaction, political alliances and perhaps even through raids. The low number of silver coins and objects on the Finnish mainland, compared to the rest of Scandinavia, suggests that Finland was an economically peripheral part of the Viking world. Still, this did not mean that Finland was isolated.

The masculine identity was defined through weapons already during the Merovingian period, but during the Viking Age the sword bearing men became more frequent in Finland. The similarities in the weapon assemblages and the male dress, in western Finland and Gotland suggest close contacts overseas during the Viking Age.

However, mobility was not restricted only to men. The round brooches with a true distinctive Finnish character emerged at the beginning of the Viking Age. The new design not only reflects changes in metalworking technologies but also in the cultural aesthetics, identity, mythology and beliefs. There are round brooches found also outside Finland, suggesting cultural interaction overseas. How can these female objects found in both Sweden, the Baltic countries and Russia be explained? The paper will explore different kinds of external relations during Viking Age.

**Nikolaj Makarov, Russian Academy of Sciences: *Vikings and the formation of the new identities and new centres of power in the Upper Volga region***

Scandinavian presence on the Volga is regarded an important and undisputable part of the global picture of the Viking expansion in Europe in IX-X cc. The concept of settlement network, established by the Vikings on the trade routes from the Baltic to the East, which opened access to the Cufic silver, assumes the existence of Scandinavian trading centers on the Upper Volga. Archaeological evidence of Viking presence at the sites of the Upper Volga, accumulated by the 1990-ies, is impressive and diverse with burials containing Scandinavian dress ornaments, weapons and pagan amulets as its most valuable component. However, source potential of this data is reduced by the state of documentation, often lacking precise information on the context of the finds.

Field works of the two recent decades in the Upper Volga region (Beloozero, Suzdal, Yaroslavl) included surveys with the detailed mapping of the Viking-age sites as well as the excavations on a number of settlements. Extensive new data reveal the emergence of the new settlement networks at the core areas of the Upper Volga region in the X-th –XI cc. and the formation of the new cultural patterns. Female metal ornaments, items of male costume and amulets of Scandinavian types constitute a modest group in the new collections. However they display rather wide geographical distribution, not limited to the few sites specially

engaged in long-distance trade. Much more numerous are the artifacts relating to the cultural traditions of the Circum-Baltic Province in its broad sense, which can be recognized on most of the sites of the X-XI-th cc.

Artifacts of Scandinavian types and burial assemblages following Scandinavian patterns on the sites of the Upper Volga in general should be regarded as the evidence of Scandinavian penetration to the East and Scandinavian cultural influence on the local communes, but their precise ethnic interpretation in many cases remains uncertain. However, archaeological records give clear indications of the strong influence of the Circum-Baltic Province on the culture of the Upper Volga in the X-th- early XI-th cc., in the time of its incorporation into the Rus' state. Cultural elements of Baltic and Scandinavian origin for a certain time became markers of the new identity of this region and the new centers of power on the periphery of Rus'.

**Hauke Jöns, Lower Saxony Institute for Historical Coastal Research, Wilhelmshaven, co-author Anna Kowalska, Nationalmuseum in Szczecin: *Scandinavians on the southern Baltic coasts***

For almost every phase in prehistory there is undoubtable evidence for more or less intensive contacts between southern Scandinavia and the southern rim of the Baltic Sea, today belonging to Germany and Poland. This is also valid for 1st millennium AD, although it is still in discussion if this may be considered as a continuous development or if we have to recon with a hiatus in habitation between the estuaries of the Elbe and the Vistula during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. New habitation may not be proved before Slavic communities immigrated into the southern Baltic rim during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7th Century. In the debate about "Hiatus or Continuity" a small number of Scandinavian fibulas dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries are discussed as indications of contacts between the elites or hints for the existence of trade networks crossing the Baltic Sea already in the Dark Ages or as remains of the import of dress items as scrap metal during the Viking age. Clear evidence for the attendance of people of Scandinavian origin in the Slavic settlement areas are known from the mid of the 8th century, when along the Baltic coast in many places trading centers became established. The use of typical Scandinavian burial customs and also the building of pit-houses and stone paved roads according to Scandinavian building traditions may be considered as remains of Scandinavian communities, colonizing particular places in the Slavic area. On other places trading centers were founded and ruled probably by Slavic elites. Concentrations of artefacts and settlement remains of Scandinavian origin indicate that they were also attended at least periodically by Scandinavians. The foundation of trading centers in the Slavic area may have been the result of high status political and economic negotiations between Scandinavian and Slavic rulers. The possibility of tagging individuals or communities in the southern Baltic rim, acting according Scandinavian traditions ends with the 10th century although Scandinavian artefacts stayed present in the archaeological record.

**Marika Mägi, Tallinn University: *At the Crossroads: Eastern Baltic' role in the 8th-11th century long-distance communication***

What is called Finland and the Baltic States nowadays is a region consisting of distinctive languages and cultures. The same was the situation thousand and more years ago, with cultural regions that are not evident from the present-day state borders. Nevertheless, all main communicational routes from Scandinavia to the imperiums in the East ran through this region. It is, therefore, difficult to over-estimate the role of especially some parts of the Eastern Baltic when discussing long-distance communication in the Viking Age.

The speech tries to present a more detailed picture of Viking Age communication through the Eastern Baltic, than it has been common in most generalizing overviews. First of all, communication is dependent of topographically determined routes, which relevance to international agents may strongly vary in different centuries. How these itineraries were marked by archaeological evidence, particularly in the light of some recent finds, will be discussed in the speech. It is also possible to distinguish processes and tendencies characterising different centuries of the Viking Age, with some particular times for transformations: around 900 and 1000 AD.

The overseas communication in the Eastern Baltic can be characterised as middle ground colonialism in the southern, and as shared culture sphere in the northern half of the region. These two modes of communication were caused primarily by topographic situations, although linguistic and cultural aspects of different ethnicities certainly also played a role in the formation of them.

**Ingmar Jansson, Stockholm University: *Scandinavian settlement in the east - was it riverbound?***

It is often said that the Scandinavian activities in the east were markedly different from the activities in the west. In the east trade is said to be the dominating purpose of the eastern journeys. Warfare and politics are also usually understood as being part of the activities. These interpretations are mainly based on the written sources but are also understood as supported by the archaeological material, first and foremost the distribution of the Islamic coins but also the many Scandinavian finds in the economic and political centres along the water routes through Eastern Europe. Settlement outside these centres is not understood as part of the Scandinavian activities. In my opinion, however, the archaeological material indicates also settlement in rural environments.

**Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, Stockholm University: *Warriors in Birka and in The East***

The warriors stationed in Birka stood out, even compared to contemporary groups of warriors and armed men from the surrounding region. Their main objective was to serve the functions and people of the town, rather than a regional chieftain or king, and their material culture bear

witness of the warriors' close engagement with the Eurasian Steppe and the Byzantine border zones. Among several unique features in the martial contexts of Birka the knowledge and use of the composite bow and closed quiver perhaps stand out in particular. The remains of several sets in various contexts clearly show that the advanced equipment of the mounted Eastern archer was not only an exotic prize taken on an Eastern campaign, but rather a reoccurring element among the standing troops on the site. Proficient use of an advanced weapon required transfer of knowledge but also training, something that could only have been achieved through extensive interaction with groups of warriors among whom this was an established warfare technique. It stands to show that even military activities could form in-depth cultural contacts through alliances, joint preparations, training and campaigning. The warriors were a dynamic part of a vast network of contacts, interacting over long periods of time with people from other areas and cultures. This paper aims to explore the implications of the strong connection between warriors in Birka and in the East, in terms of identity, organisation, mobility and function.

### **SESSION 3: THE WEST**

#### **Gareth Williams, British Museum: *Meeting Kingdoms: Politics and societies in Britain and Ireland in the Viking Age***

Like the Viking homelands, Britain and Ireland were composed of many different kingdoms and peoples which developed gradually (and not always smoothly) towards greater political unity in the course of the Viking age. The unification of both England Scotland was stimulated, if not directly caused, by the impact of Viking raiding and settlement, but increased political unification masks continued diversity linguistically, culturally and economically. Neither Ireland nor Wales was successfully unified during the Viking age, but across Britain and Ireland there were examples of multiplier levels of kingship which provide alternative models for understanding the Norwegian riksamling to those found in later saga tradition and popular conception.

Given the diversity of the peoples and kingdoms of the British isles, it is no surprise that the impact of Viking raiding, conquest and settlement was also very diverse. This paper considers some of the key elements that the different peoples had in common (eg Christianity) and some in which there were fundamental differences (eg systems of exchange, nature of royal authority) and how existing differences at the beginning of the Viking age helped to shape the diverse character of Viking settlement across Britain and Ireland. The paper also briefly surveys potential influences from Britain and Ireland on developments within the Scandinavian homelands in the course of the Viking Age.

**James Barrett, University of Cambridge: *Viking diasporic economy as globalization? Subsistence, commodities, trade and identity***

This paper explores the shifting chronology of trade in northern commodities such as stockfish, whetstones and walrus ivory, and of regional expressions of identity that draw on ideas of Scandinavian ancestry. Its geographical coverage includes Britain and Ireland, with particular attention to three case studies: the earldom of Orkney, London and Winchester. It aims to illuminate the geographical and chronological heterogeneity of northern links, while also reinforcing the degree to which they were a consistent and perhaps underappreciated backdrop to the economic life of Viking Age and medieval Britain.

**Clare Downham, University of Liverpool: *Viking kings of Britain and Ireland***

In the invitation to this conference it was requested that the topic of 'Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland' should be addressed. The paper presented here will explore the primary sources for viking political interaction between Britain and Ireland from the late ninth century. The nature of the historical material and its interpretation has been hotly debated by amateur and professional historians since the 1970s. Taking a different approach to that adopted in my book *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland* (with its chapters on different regions and nations) this paper will adopt a chronological approach with transcends political and cultural boundaries to evaluate interaction between insular kings in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Discussion naturally focuses on king Ívarr (d. 873) and the rulers who claimed descent from him for whom the Irish Sea was arguably a route way rather than a political barrier.

**Zanette Glørstad, University of Oslo: *Dissolving Viking identities***

Significant work has been done the last decades in broadening the view of Viking identities both at home and overseas, illustrating how the display of Norse identity may have varied in different social and cultural contexts, and challenging the notion of homogeneous identities in the Scandinavian homelands. This paper focuses on the necessity to take into account how Scandinavian society in the Viking Age was influenced by its own past, and how this historicity contributed to shape self-recognition and social strategies within various Norse groups. By assessing the Merovingian disc-on-bow brooches and their use in the Viking Age, the paper suggests how social discord or competition between different social groups in Scandinavia was just as an essential aspect of shaping Viking identities, and discusses whether some of the insular imports should be seen in this light.

**Frida Espolin Norstein, Gothenburg University: *Funerary rituals and the creation of colonial identities in Viking Age northern Scotland***

This paper is presenting the results of a comparison of Viking Age pagan funerary rites in northern Scotland with supposed homeland practices in Møre og Romsdal. The purpose was

to examine how the expression of identities in these burials are affected by migration. In a colonial context, people of different origins cohabit, which leads to an encounter of different ways to understand and construct identities and relations. Cemeteries and funerary rites are crucial in this context, as they are materialisations of the ties between the settlers, their ancestors and the new land. They are creating areas where colonial identities are built and negotiated. The choice of how and where to bury their dead and which artefacts to include was not random, but linked to both a sense of tradition and desire for proper burial, and also affected by the contemporary situation. There are great similarities between the graves from the two areas, and the contents of a burial from northern Scotland would generally not have stood out in Møre og Romsdal. Despite the obvious similarities, there are still interesting differences, for example with regards to gender relations, placement in the landscape and the use of artefacts and traditions that could arguably function as ethnic markers. I would argue that these differences mean that embodied and understood ritualised action were carried out differently and that these differences represent deliberate strategies.

**Jane Kershaw, University College London: *Down the Generations: Maintaining Scandinavian Identities in England***

Through what mechanisms were Scandinavian identities maintained throughout the diasporic settlements of the Viking Age? Recent scholarship has stressed the role of elite courts and towns as conduits of Scandinavian culture outside of the homelands. But evidence relating to Scandinavian settlement in the Danelaw region of northern and eastern England (c. 870-950 AD) paints a different picture. Using a combination of archaeological, numismatic and textual sources, I propose three, alternative, means through which Scandinavian group identities were defined and sustained across generations in this particular overseas settlement: 1) original migration from Scandinavia on a large scale, enforced by the continued arrival of new migrants during the tenth century; 2) the presence of substantial numbers of Scandinavian women among the settler population; and 3) the continuation of Scandinavian rule and authority in the Danelaw, even after the supposed West Saxon ‘conquest’.

**Stefan Olson, University of Bergen: *Hostages, Fosterages, and Intermarriages in Peace Agreements during the Viking Age: Examples from England and Iceland.***

The aim of this paper is to discuss hostages, fosterages and intermarriages in connection with peace agreements from the perspective of the history of religions. Hostages, fosterages, intermarriages and other ritual activities were associated with peace making during the Viking Age. These ritual activities will be discussed in relation to a proposed conflict and consensus model on the macro and micro level, with examples from England and Iceland. The examples include the treaties between the Viking ruler Guthrum and Alfred the Great in the 880s as well as conflicts and agreements in the *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingabók*, in addition to iconography (some archaeological objects) and place names. I will by these examples present an analysis of peace agreements, or peace makings, as mutual understandings, as well as power relations within a ritual framework. The agreements in the examples are also seen in relation to other societal activities and forces such as economy, politics and law. The paper

brings together a synthesis of previous research and new readings and interpretations of primary sources.

**John Sheehan, University College Cork: *The use of silver in the British Isles and Ireland***

Silver hoards and their contents in Britain and Ireland are characterised by patterns of regionalisms. Archaeological investigations and metal-detecting discoveries made over recent decades in the main silver-using regions of the Viking world — southern Scandinavia, England and Ireland — has resulted in the discovery of a number of silver ‘assemblages’. These assemblages tend to be more closely related to each other than to the majority of hoards from the areas in which they are found. The significance and broad implications of the assemblages are considered, and this leads to speculation on how and from where an emerging silver economic system was introduced to the West during a period of political, social and economic adjustment. Perhaps silver was perceived as one of the ways for the incoming Scandinavian leaders to establish and embed themselves within the political elites of the West, and this may explain why so much silver has been found at centres of kingship in Ireland. The Church was closely connected with these elites, and it is probably meaningful that two of the most important Viking-age hoards from Britain and Ireland — the 1802 gold and silver finds from Hare Island, Ireland, and the recent spectacular discovery from Galloway, Scotland — appear to derive from ecclesiastical contexts.

**Stephen Harrison, University of Glasgow: *Viking Graves in Britain and Ireland. Diversity and Conformity***

Across Ireland and Britain (as, indeed, elsewhere), furnished graves have been associated with early ‘Viking’ activity since they were first recognised in the mid-nineteenth century. Dominated by a limited range of artefacts, they are often viewed as representations of an essentially mobile society, created by newly-arrived communities as expressions of a fundamentally ‘Scandinavian’ identity. The rite itself is often seen as conservative, replicating burial practices in a now-distant homeland for the benefit of migrants from these areas.

However, superficial similarities hide complex variations in the burial record at both local and regional levels. These include the proportions of ‘male’ and ‘female’ graves (or at least grave-goods); the form and extent of site re-use for ‘Viking’ burial; and important variations in the number, type and form of artefacts deposited in individual graves. Some of the best evidence comes from Dublin, where an exceptional concentration of burials provides evidence for a distinct material culture that was specific to this ninth-century settlement. More generally, the furnished burial rite in Britain and Ireland underwent continuous change and adaptation, reflecting a complex series of local concerns, some of which extended beyond migrant groups to neighbouring communities.

Using this evidence, this paper considers the importance of these patterns of diversity and conformity, and argues that the furnished burial rite played a key role in the expression of

local, group identity in early Viking Age Britain and Ireland. If time permits, the thorny issue of individuality will also be addressed.

**Catrine Jarman, University of Bristol: *The evidence from mass graves in England***

In this paper I will consider the currently available bioarchaeological data from the recently discovered mass graves in Weymouth and Oxford, alongside the mass burial from Repton in Derbyshire, with an aim to evaluate the contribution these 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century graves can make to the understanding of identities in Viking Age England.

Whereas other evidence for networks and contacts in the North Sea region during the Viking Age is increasing, there is still little *direct* evidence for the flow of people and the extent and nature of contact between Scandinavia and England during the Viking Age. With a rapidly developing range of bioarchaeological methods available for studying aspects of mobility and migration, the mass graves have the potential to significantly add to the body of evidence.

At all three sites studied here, the isotopic data show a striking degree of heterogeneity of geographical origins. If, as hypothesised, the mass graves represent Scandinavian raiding parties, they demonstrate a high degree of individual mobility in this demographic. The common deaths and interments of these individuals suggest that other, shared identities bind them together, which might be reflected in a change in the most recent diets of those buried at Weymouth and Oxford. In the wider context of Viking Age England, this bioarchaeological data is suggestive of dynamic and diverse regional interaction in the period.

**Julian Richards, University of York (co-author Dawn Hadley, University of Sheffield): *The Viking winter camps - what happened there?***

From AD 865 to 874 a Viking army wreaked havoc on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, leading to political conquest, settlement on a substantial scale, and extensive Scandinavian cultural and linguistic influences in eastern and northern England. This critical period for English history led to revolutionary changes in land ownership, society, and economy, including the growth of towns and industry, while transformations in power politics would ultimately see the rise of Wessex as the pre-eminent kingdom of Anglo-Saxon England. Yet despite the pivotal role of the so-called Great Army in these events, we know little about the army and its camps. The available documentary sources provide few insights into its activities and intentions and, to this point, the archaeological evidence has largely remained elusive. The size of the Army and scale of subsequent settlement have been disputed, but the debate about the impact of Scandinavian raiders and settlers is typically informed by evidence that has widely differing levels of chronological resolution and relates to diverse social, economic and political contexts. This paper provides a fresh perspective, based on new evidence from our current research at Torksey (Lincolnshire) where the army overwintered from AD 872-3, and reconsideration of the evidence from Repton and Heath Wood (Derbyshire), where it overwintered from AD 873-4. Our paper will introduce the scale and character of the camps,

and discuss what happened there, both in terms of activities at the camps themselves and their role as vehicles for cultural transmission and innovation during this formative period.

## **SESSION 4: THE SOUTH**

### **Frans Theuws, Leiden University: *Carolingian encounters***

The Viking incursions in the northwestern part of the Carolingian empire contributed to the decline of Carolingian authority in that part of the realm. One wonders why the Vikings sacked places like Dorestad several times, places that they must have visited more peacefully before and where they made money. Why slaughter the chicken with the golden eggs? Ordinary greed is an explanation that one could easily accept these days but the sacking of Dorestad might be related to deep rooted changes in the economy of the Carolingian empire and thus to the vicissitudes of a place like Dorestad. To explain that I would like to present a model for the long term development of the Post-Roman economy from the fifth to the ninth century, to illuminate the role of a place like Dorestad, and to suggest how the Carolingians might be the cause of all trouble in the ninth century. Greed might in the end be an explanation after all.

### **Maria Panum Baastrup, National Museum of Denmark: *Frankish items in the North - who brought and used them?***

The paper deals with two groups of Frankish imports in Denmark: the Carolingian silver and the Carolingian-Ottonian disc brooches. This material has grown enormously within the last decades in Denmark due to the use of metal detectors.

The two groups show very different distribution patterns. The silver is often found in “elite context” or close to geographical boundaries, whereas the brooches appear in all parts of the area and in all types of social contexts.

Both groups seem to be handled differently than domestic objects. Even though the disc brooches are found in large numbers, they are never found in hoards, and there is only one brooch found in a grave. And, in spite of the Carolingian silver’s high metal value, this silver does not seem to be used as payment – it is not found as hacksilver in “normal” silver hoards.

The Carolingian silver has been brought to Denmark through networks that included and, probably were maintained by, the elite, whereas the disc brooches could have traveled through networks that included a larger diversity of social levels.

The imports could be used in various social and political strategies, and they played an important role in cultural transmission and identity and, apart from indicating general refinement, they could also signal that one had an extensive international contact network and that one possessed transcultural skills – one was able to make good abroad.

**Andres Minos Dobat, Aarhus University: *Kings beyond boundaries – The 'Stranger kings' of Viking Age Scandinavia***

Since the beginning of Viking Age research, Viking kings have always constituted a prominent subject and they have been studied in relation to a broad range of aspects of Viking Age society, from economics, to military aspects, to political and social organization, to religion and more. To the various academic stereotypes of Viking kings, I want to add that of the 'stranger king'. I want to argue that the special association of the king with the foreign, traceable in both historical and archaeological sources, can be understood as an integral element of Old Norse myth and a Scandinavian archetype of ruler ship. I will demonstrate that the embracing of the foreign in many different forms was used as a political strategy, illustrating a king's special connection to the forces of the distant and unknown world beyond direct human control, clothing him with an aura of the strange and the exotic, and hence as a means to legitimize his rule.

The paper will connect to the conference's overarching idea in the sense that I will propose an alternative to the traditional focus on Viking Age kings as conquerors, venturing into foreign territories and putting their mark on foreign societies, and instead ask the pertinent question how kings from more or less foreign shores changed Scandinavia.

**Svein Gullbekk, University of Oslo: *The flow of German silver towards Scandinavia in the Ottonian and Salian periods (919-1124) – in the period c. 990 – 1020s***

In total more than 325,000 German pfennigs have been found in Scandinavia from the period c. 950-c.1125. These coin finds provide a detailed insight into where, when and by whom each individual coin were issued and where and when they ended up as archaeological artefacts. Within the life-span of each coin their history of circulation relates to questions such as use, functionality and value, trade, communication and urbanization, attitudes, political organization and identity etc. In this paper I will discuss the Scandinavian finds of German silver coins in relation to our understanding of the concept of the Viking Age. Do they reflect something Viking or medieval? How were attitudes towards coins in Ottonian and Salian Germany compared to Scandinavia? What can they tell us about Scandinavian economy before, after, and around the year 1000.

**Anne Pedersen, National Museum of Denmark: *Ottonian ideals materialised in Jelling?***

As a significant testimony of the religious and political transformation that took place in 10<sup>th</sup>-century Denmark, the monuments of the Danish kings Gorm and Harald Bluetooth in Jelling in east Jutland have been the subject of academic and public interest for centuries. Over the past decade new structural features have been added, an immense palisade and associated buildings similar to those identified at the circular Trelleborg fortresses. They have changed the nature of the site from an assemblage of individual, albeit inter-related, royal memorials in an open landscape to a monumental complex set within a clearly defined space far larger than any contemporary farmstead. Traditional monument and building types, well-known across

Scandinavia and by their very nature imparting a sense of time depth, are combined and built to a vastly exaggerated scale, an innovative solution and yet not one so alien that it became unrecognisable and the message therefore lost. Inspiration from Ottonian art is evident in the great rune stone of King Harald, but may also be sought in other less obvious features. Physical form aside the complex might be compared with, for instance, a royal Carolingian or Ottonian *Pfalz* – prestigious building works which enforced the status and authority of the ruler even in his absence. By their sheer size, impressive architecture and unusual features the monuments would have overwhelmed the senses, possibly even evoking a *stupor Danorum* amongst the king's subjects and followers not unlike that which the Danes themselves might have experienced when travelling to the courts of their neighbours or, as in the case of Danish delegates to Quedlinburg in Germany in 973, when participating at the Easter assembly of Emperor Otto I. The Ottonian empire was a powerful adversary but also a worthy model for the ambitions of the Danish king.

**Richard Hodges, The American University of Rome: *Monastic production and trade***

The lecture reviews the evidence the 8th-9th century economy in Italy with reference to other Mediterranean and northern European connections. It examines the different changing elements of the archaeology of the economy, before focusing upon monastic production and especially the production of counter-gifts linked to the acquisition of estates.

**Sarah Croix, Aarhus University: *Ribe: first town of Scandinavia or last town of the continent? Challenged identities among the early medieval trading communities***

At the core of Ribe's research history and hereby of the urbanization of the North in the early Middle Ages has been the question of its foundation. Alternative views have stressed the importance of a Frisian impetus, or at least, of a foreign one brought by traders, or that of local initiatives, including the role of a royal authority. The increasing amount of burial remains and the results of recent studies supporting the idea of a high level of activity at the market-place from the foundation of the site onwards (instead of a slow development in the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century) provide new elements to this debate. By considering more closely the community of Ribe and its cultural connections, the market-place appears as a potential arena for the appearance of new identities looking strongly towards the South – and not just to the trading towns in the northern Frankish regions or to the Frisian network. The potential multiplicity of cultural backgrounds among Ribe's population leads us to wonder what motivated their moving to Ribe but also how they perceived themselves and their role in the urban phenomenon. Traces for multiculturalism as enabled by the unique early medieval urban context will be considered comparatively across North-Western continental Europe in an effort to identify interconnectedness in the practices and modes of representation of the urban actors. While people and things travelled along the same routes, they did not necessarily end up in the ground in the same places. It will thus be argued that the spark for urbanization is not just to be traced in the movement of traded goods and raw material, but through the movement of those who brought this network to life.

**Unn Pedersen, University of Oslo: *Lead isotopes in Viking hands***

The combination of lead isotope analysis and a more traditional archaeological artefact investigation has contributed significantly to the understanding of the pewter mounts from the ship burial at Gokstad, giving new insight into the working processes and the use and mixing of raw materials. The different methods reinforced one another and yielded a detailed picture of a 9th century working process, demonstrating the potential of applying lead isotope analysis to artefact studies independent of the question of provenance. Given the currently published lead isotope data it is altogether most likely that the lead in the mounts from Gokstad originated from Melle in France and from different parts of England, and that the raw materials was mixed when and where the mounts were cast. The inferred provenance combined with the archaeological investigations suggests that the pewter mounts were cast at a site where quantities of lead from these different areas were available at the same time, along with tin. This does indeed match the 9th-century situation in the Oslo fjord area, the location of the Gokstad barrow. Are the pewter mounts the results of a local production, and if so, who were the craftspeople behind?