

Travels and Migratory Diasporas of the 'Vikings'

Prepared by M. Eaton & C. O. Alm

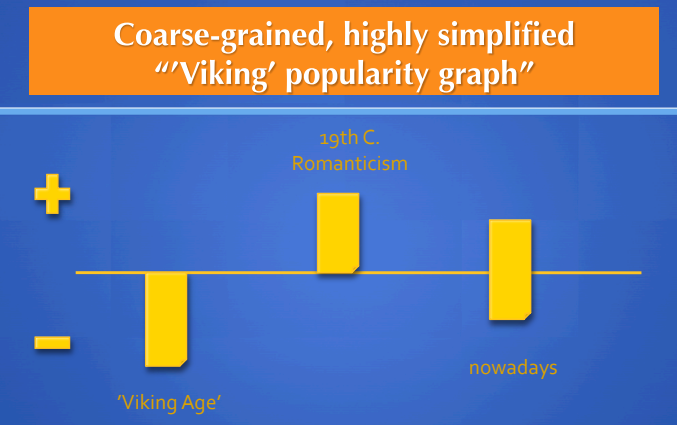
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'Vikings' fascinate – but the labels 'Viking' and 'Viking Age' are historically questionable

- “[...] there is not any evidence that the northerners who set out on combined conquest and trading travels over a couple of centuries at the time of our Christianization were named by the collective label 'Vikings'. And the Viking Age as a chronological era is an 18th century construct which today's serious researchers prefer to distance themselves from. But it is impossible.” (Magnus Bergsten, Chief Editor of *Popular History*)
- “Nowadays, among historians, the Viking Age is not a highly prioritized research area.” (Larsdotter, 2004)
- “The Viking is a troubled character, not only by national socialism but also by the national romanticism of the 19th century” (Walette, reported speech, in Larsdotter 2004.)

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Coarse-grained, highly simplified “Viking’ popularity graph”



Capital One®: Vikings commercial <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7-V9DVAPnQ>

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Roberta Frank (2000:206) on horned helmets and their connection to the Viking Age label

- “Until the viking age was invented [labeled as historical period], there was no horned-helmet viking, and vice versa: the two go together like Easter and bonnet. A 'viking age' is first mentioned in 1873, in two independent Danish and Swedish articles; the period gets its first monumental write-up in Johannes Steenstrup's four-volume *Normanerne* published between 1876 and 1882.[...] Perhaps only an expansionist, empire-building era could have thought up an age that began with naval attacks on foreign shores and ended when these attacks ceased.”

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Anyway, who were the 'Vikings'?

Explorers

Farmers

Ship-builders

Raiders

Settlers

Discoverers

Merchants

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From Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: 793 attack on Lindisfarne monastery on Holy Island, Eng. coast

- "A.D. 787. This year King Bertric took Edburga the daughter of Offa to wife. And in his days came **first three ships of the Northmen from the land of robbers**. The reve [sheriff] then rode thereto, and would drive them to the king's town; for he knew not what they were; and there was he slain. These were the **first ships of the Danish men that sought the land of the English nation.**"
- "A.D. 793. This year came dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully; these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery, dragons flying across the firmament. These tremendous tokens were soon followed by a great famine: and not long after, on the sixth day before the ides of January in the same year, **the harrowing inroads of heathen men made lamentable havoc in the church of God in Holy-island, by rapine and slaughter. [...]**"

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Starting Out

7th-8th C.: increase in trade

Contact w/ Western Europe

Early settlement


Reasons for movements?

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Raids

Mid-9th Century


- increase in raids
- Franks affected
- alliances & exploitation
- first winter in Ireland
- Danish arrival in Ireland



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Conquest

Concentration of activities
sway Ireland-England-Frankia



860s-70s 'Great Army'
conquers Eastern England
(reconquered in early 10th C)

954 Erik Bloodaxe dies, K of York also

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Great Army



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More Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

- "A.D. 867. This year the army went from the East-Angles over the mouth of the Humber to the Northumbrians, as far as York. And there was much dissension in that nation among themselves; they had deposed their king Osbert, and had admitted Aella, who had no natural claim. Late in the year, however, they returned to their allegiance, and they were now fighting against the common enemy; having collected a vast force, with which they fought the army at York; and **breaking open the town, some of them entered in. Then was there an immense slaughter of the Northumbrians, some within and some without; and both the kings were slain on the spot.** The survivors made peace with the army [...]. "
- "A.D. 870. This year the army rode over Mercia into East-Anglia, and there fixed their winter-quarters at Thetford. And in the winter King Edmund fought with them; but the Danes gained the victory, and **slew the king; whereupon they overran all that land, and destroyed all the monasteries to which they came.** The names of the leaders who slew the king were Hingwar and Hubba. At the same time came they to Medhamsted, **burning and breaking, and slaying abbot and monks, and all that they there found. They made such havoc there, that a monastery, which was before full rich, was now reduced to nothing [...]."**

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Westward diasporas



Late 9th C. settlement of Faroe Islands, Iceland (Althing, godar)

Althing votes for Christianity (1000)



10th C. settlement of Greenland

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Vinland

11th Century, Leif Erikson & Co. reach North America

No long-term settlement

Digs at L'Anse aux Meadows (the Ingstad's)



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Eastern Inroads



Finds of silver treasures abundant in Swedish island of Gotland

Eastward reach the Black Sea, Constantinople

Scandinavian dynasties (Rus)

10th Century discovery of Hindu Kush silver

Decline in Islamic Silver

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The End

Late 10th C: renewed, intense activity in England

Short but expansive rule:
 1013 Sven Forkbeard conquers England
 1015 Knut Svensson (the Great) King, stops Viking raids
 1066 Harold Godwinsson succeeds to throne

Norman Invasion (1066)



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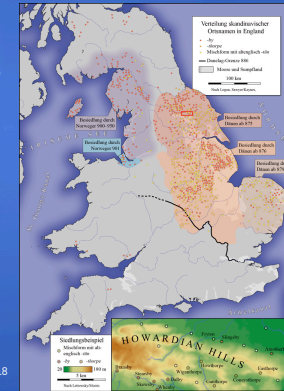
Linguistic residuals

Linguistic evidence in English

Place names, e.g. *-by*, *-thorpe*

Frequent open-class words, e.g. *window*, *egg*, *sister*?

Closed-class words, pronouns, prepositions e.g., *3rd person plural*



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Present day 'Viking' hoaxes: Vinland Map



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Present day 'Viking' hoaxes: Kensington Runestone



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