VIKING CLOTHING & AESTHETIC

& Influence on Scandinavian Identity

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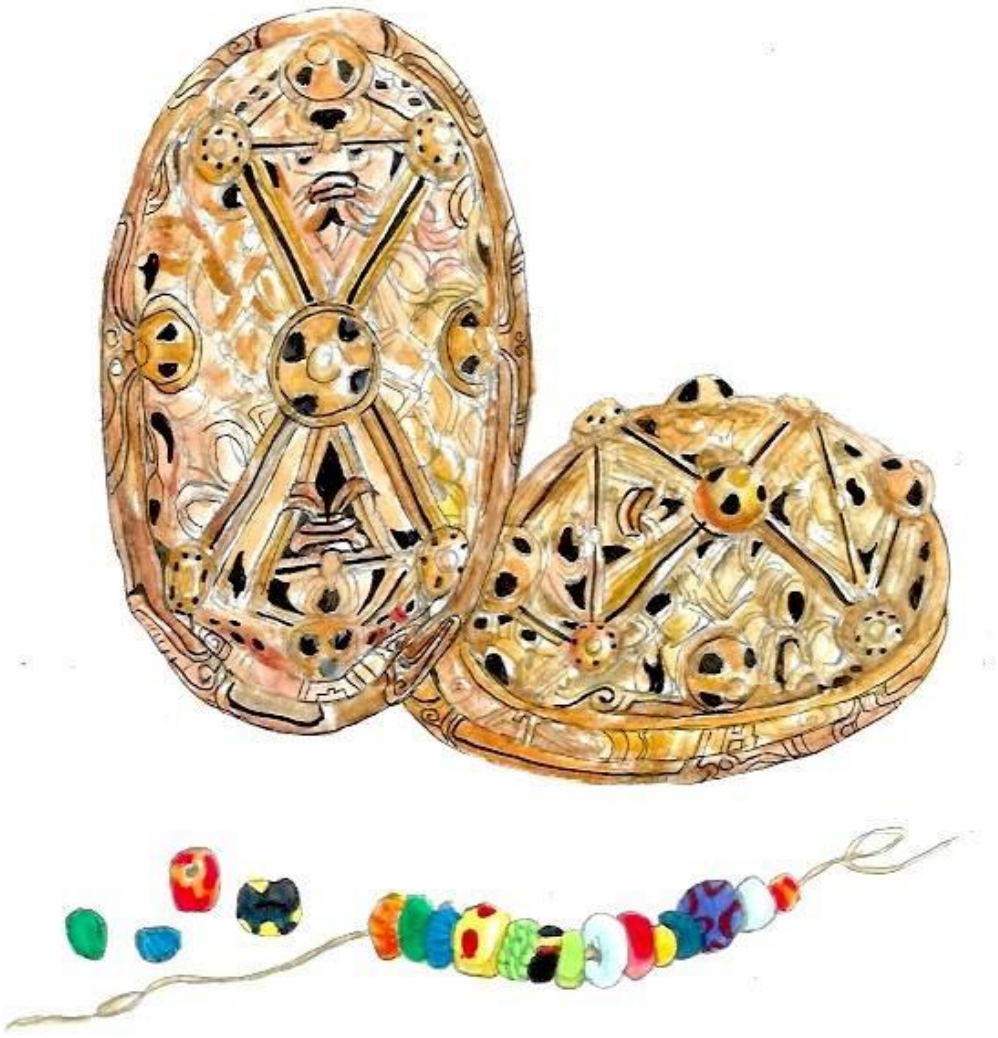

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Resumén

La vestimenta de la Edad Vikinga se produjo a lo largo de todo el periodo de la Edad de Hierro Tardía, estimado entre (800-1050), los hallazgos de las tumbas indican que los vikingos eran hábiles y estaban bien informados sobre la comprensión y la producción textil, los tintes y la creación de joyas. Partiendo del concepto de vestido y el acto de "vestir" como elemento clave para definir la identidad y comprender una civilización, se examinan los vestidos de la época vikinga (que incluyen, aunque no se limitan a ellos) vestidos largos, camisones, capas, chaquetas y accesorios femeninos en forma de collares, anillos, colgantes o tocados, así como camisas, capas, pantalones y zapatos masculinos, además de joyas y adornos, como posibles marcadores culturales y de identidad. También se revisa el uso de joyas con fines de usos religiosos o tipos de amuletos como marcadores de identidad en el proceso de autoidentificación realizado por los hombres y mujeres de la época vikinga, aunque este aspecto de la investigación se mantiene dentro de los límites disponibles sobre el tema. El análisis también propone conocer y revisar los tipos de fibras y tejidos encontrados mayoritariamente en las tumbas de la Edad Vikinga, en busca de pruebas de fabricación local, así como de comercio exterior, para comparar posibles preferencias dentro de las categorías de tejidos y telas. La investigación demuestra que las mujeres eran las principales productoras de tejidos durante la Era Vikinga, lo que aporta pruebas de una formación de identidad a través de la creación de ropa y telas como medio de profesión y producción, además del acto de vestirse. La procedencia de los estereotipos sobre los vikingos, su cultura y su vestimenta se discute y se analiza en profundidad para separar las posibles pruebas que podrían utilizarse con efectividad en la investigación frente a las pruebas basadas en la narración de historias y las influencias mitológicas las cuales deben ser observadas con más cuidado. También se compara la identidad vikinga desde el punto de vista local con los relatos escritos en el extranjero, con el fin de considerar las diferencias y los posibles factores de identidad que pueden estar presentes en ambas versiones.

Abstract

Viking Age dress occurred throughout the Late Iron Age period estimated between (800-1050), grave finds indicate that the Vikings were skilled and highly informed on the understanding of textile production, dyes, and jewelry creation. On the basis and the concept of dress/costume as a key element of defining identity and understanding a civilization, Viking Age dress (which includes and is not limited to) women's dresses, underdresses, cloaks, jackets as well as accessories in the form of necklaces, rings, pendants, or headgear; as well as men's shirts, cloaks, pants, and shoes, in addition to jewelry and adornment, are examined as potential cultural and identity markers. An overlook of jewelry for the use of amuletic or religious purposes is also reviewed as a potential addition to the self-identification process made by men and women of the Viking Age, but within the limits of available research on the topic. The analysis also proposes to understand and review the types of fibers and textiles mostly found in Viking Age graves, for evidence of local manufacturing as well as foreign trade, to compare possible preferences within textile and cloth categories. Research shows that women were the main producers of textiles during the Viking Age, providing evidence of identity through the creation of clothing and cloth as a means of profession and production in addition to the act of dressing. The provenance of stereotypes concerning the Vikings, their culture and their dress are heavily discussed and analyzed to separate possible evidence which could be used in research, as opposed to evidence based on storytelling and mythological influences. A comparison between Viking identity as looked at locally, versus through written foreign accounts is also made, in order to consider the differences and possible identity factors which may be present in both versions.

Dedications

To my mom, and my sister, without you I would not have achieved any of this, thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me to not give up.

In loving memory of my grandfather Salvador Mancebo Urbaez whose passion for history, mythology, and learning, fueled my interest in art history and in writing a thesis someday; also, of my grandmother Maria Agustina Peña Segura whose couture creations changed lives –showing others that finding an identity through clothing is truly possible. Lastly, in loving memory of my father Luis, thank you for believing in me and telling me to just go to Norway and live my dream.

Filipperne 4:13

By studying artefacts connected to the body, one can also say something about the body and the society it lived within, even when the actual body and physical remains are missing. —Sophie Bergerbrant

Bronze Age Identities

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Hypothesis

Viking clothing becomes throughout its use and creation a definitive sign of identity. It is my theory that Viking clothing is the best definition of the identity of these people as a culture, and consequently it is important to research and study their clothing in order to understand who they were. The identity of the Vikings through their clothing has been shaped and adapted over time as archaeological evidence has changed and the perspective with which Viking Age objects are analyzed has also changed with the times. Just as clothing and jewelry has been analyzed from different perspectives, so has the way of relating to this clothing and how the Vikings used it to define themselves. However, the existence of this link between the Viking culture, textiles and clothing has been constantly maintained, that is the reason why in this work, we have been concerned with analyzing the different levels in which this dressed identity is defined over time.

Objectives

This thesis will explain the relationship between the Viking culture, textile production, and clothing, to understand and comprehend the identity of the Viking civilization. The main objective is to prove that the observation and analysis of fashion as an art form is an effective way to define and understand a culture. The secondary objective is to use multidisciplinary methods and the research found through the practice of archeology, anthropology, and art history simultaneously in order to understand and define the use of dress, and how it relates to identity.

Methodology

The methodology for my thesis is considered multidisciplinary as there were various methods used for my research. However, most can fit under the category of Qualitative research. The point of my thesis is to describe and explain how Viking Age dress and identity is a necessary and important part of understanding their culture and who they were as a people, as well as understanding how that identity and their visual aesthetics is influential to Scandinavian culture. This is a type of research that I would like to establish in the future as a means to research other cultures and civilizations as well, and so, to make this research valid, it had to be investigated in a variety of

different ways and using a mix of methods. The research for this thesis was extensive, and at times challenging, and required a mixed and open approach to gather the necessary information to obtain a concise research result. There were many limitations regarding literature and finding specific content which would match the subject of this study, and therefore it was necessary to gather information from varying sources and try to piece them together in as orderly fashion as possible, to create the necessary result from which this work could benefit.

Ethnographic

Ethnographic research is considerably one of the familiar types of research when it comes to anthropological observation. Although my subject falls under the branch of Art History, it was necessary to combine Archaeology and Anthropology for the research and understanding of my thesis subject. A lot of my methodology was ethnographic because I was able to immerse myself in Scandinavian culture in order to understand the culture, observe the history of the Vikings from the perspective of Scandinavians, and have temporary work at an archeology museum in Norway (Appendix E, Image Group B). One of the ways in which I participated in this anthropological research, was by spending time in some of the different grave sites and Viking Age settlement ruins within varying parts of Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway, where I visited the Stiklestad Cultural center and was able to access the costume and clothing department (Appendix E, Image Group C/D), to watch the Viking Age clothing investigations and recreations; Stavanger, Norway, where I visited the Gausel queen grave (Appendix D, Image Group A) as well as varying grave sites throughout Bryne, Rogaland also in Norway (Appendix D, Image B). While in Sweden, I visited the many rune stones of importance, including the Sigurdsristningen (Sigurd Carving) which form a group of 8 or 9 different rune stones with the main one being a depiction of Sigurd and a dragon (Appendix D, Image Group D). During my visit to Denmark, I had the privilege of receiving a behind the scenes tour of the Viking Age event and exhibition which was taking place at the National Museum of Denmark during the spring of 2019 (Appendix D, Image Group F). Through my immersion in both living and observing various aspects of Scandinavian culture, I was able to understand how the varying countries relate to their own history, how they talk about it, and what differences there are between the way the Viking Age is viewed outside of Scandinavia. This was also a helpful part of my research because I was able to understand the climate, landscape, and resources the Vikings would have had available to them. It was interesting to live and experience

the mountainous and rainy maritime climates the Vikings of Norway would have dealt with, as well as the lush forests and hills of Sweden, and the much flatter and humid terrain of Denmark, and how this would have affected the development of settlements, markets, and textile production.

Phenomenological & Narrative

As the bulk of my research dealt with identity through dress, a lot of my method depended on observing and describing an activity or "phenomenon". I used a combination of methods, such as conducting interviews, reading appropriate literature, watching videos and documentaries as well as visiting the places and events to understand the importance of these places and events to the society which I am interested in understanding. In my case, I conducted a series of eight in-person interviews throughout Norway. The interviews were conducted with Viking Age reenactors and craftsmen who specialize in recreating the clothing, weapons and leather goods typically used during the Viking Age (Appendix A). I created a series of questions which asked the participants to explain their interest in the Viking Age, why they felt identified with this specific period, and in what ways they engaged with it. My questions also included whether they felt influenced to dress with some type of Viking Age elements in their daily life when they are not participating in reenactment. I was able to conduct one interview in the United States with the leader of a Viking Age reenactment group in Atlanta, Georgia, this interview was useful in terms of understanding some of the differences there are in reenactment groups within Scandinavia and outside of it, however, it was not heavily relied upon when it came to my writing. One of the great privileges of my research was my time at the Arkeologisk Museum in Stavanger, Norway. During my time working and studying there, I was able to work with a variety of Viking Age experts who have dedicated their lives to researching Viking Age graves and objects. My interviews, and tutorial days with some of the experts were crucial in understanding and reframing some of my perspectives on the Viking Age in general, and especially on the dress, jewelry, and adornment. Many of my tutorials were conducted within the museum, and it required the observation of Viking Age remnants and artifacts which were present within the museum. A lot of this research included taking photos of some of these objects, analyzing their shapes and materials, as well as gathering information on the places where they were found, and how they related to the objects.

Literature reviews

Most of my research relied heavily on reviewing documents, scientific articles, theses, and dissertations. Throughout my research I found that literature and texts on my exact thesis subject was arguably limited, it was a challenge to find books which were specifically focused on Viking Age dress, and so at the beginning of my research the foundation of my literature became *Viking Clothing* by Thor Ewing and *Viking: Dress, Clothing, Garment* by Nille Glæsel. These were the first books which I read and analyzed in order to understand what Viking clothing could have looked like, and how it was made, however, later on I also included the literature of Nanna Løkka *Kvinner i vikingtid* which dealt more specifically with women's fashion during the Viking Age as well as their general culture, traditions, and activities. The best literature I was able to find regarding fashion identity as directly related through clothing and the performance of dress was *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory* by Joanne Entwistle, this particular book was essential for the identity portion of my thesis, as it compiles the majority of available literature from the 20th century to present-day on dressed identities and the topics surrounding it. The information in this book was incredibly helpful in helping me identify some of the symbolisms within clothing which could be an expression of identity. It was also helpful in understanding both the definition of "dress performance" and what it could mean when describing a dressed identity. Analyzing dress performance required an entirely different understanding on how to observe clothing on the person wearing it, it meant observing things which might have been otherwise overlooked, things such as: what sound an item makes when it is on the person wearing it, for example, how heavy cloaks must have felt on the body, most especially if they got wet in the rain, as well as whether brooches and beads made any particular sounds when they came in contact with each other, hence providing a sort of sound for the woman wearing it as she walked around her settlement, as well as a sound for those who could hear her approaching. These are things which are often not considered when analyzing dress performance and identity, and yet they are important in creating mental imagery, as well as an understanding of function in relation to the wearer. Varying journals and dissertations have articles concerning Viking Age dress, with the majority investigating and focusing more on jewelry and adornment, versus actual clothing. Some of the articles I used were also related to textile production and dyes, but perhaps did not place as much emphasis on the actual clothing produced from those textiles, and so it was necessary to use various articles at a time and analyze them all together to obtain a wider understanding of each of the

branches within the subject, but also individually like pieces of a much larger puzzle. One of the challenges with the literature review portion of my methodology was language barriers, most of the available literature on Viking Age culture is available both in English and Norwegian/Swedish, however, there are plenty of articles and books which took me longer to review due to my intermediate Norwegian language skills. This required me to learn the language more proficiently in order to analyze and understand some of the text, as well as rely on the assistance of my Norwegian professors, and colleagues at the archeology museum. Many of the texts I had to analyze, and reference were also written in Old Norse and or Icelandic, which I have very limited knowledge of. The understanding of these texts was necessary to my research because it is my opinion that a lot of important details can be lost in translation, most especially when it comes to sources of ancient texts. When it came to understanding rune stone inscriptions, I relied on the assistance of varying Viking Age inscription experts in Sweden, this was important when gathering information on the Viking culture and understanding what ideas and thoughts would have been expressed in the rune stones I was visiting. Many rune stones contain both text and images, and because the observation of any type of artistic illustration is necessary for my research, it was also crucial to understand what they could have meant to the creator, by understanding the context of what was inscribed.

In summary, my methodology was primordially qualitative, and within that there were a variety of different methods used to obtain a result which was satisfactory. The results of my research methods were satisfactory for the results I was looking for in order to write a concise and well-informed thesis. As previously stated, there were many challenges and difficulties presented with the research of this thesis, from limited literature which related directly and specifically to my topic, to language barriers of different sorts, as well as the many travels and interviews which were conducted throughout different countries and continents. It became helpful to the growth of my research to organize the articles, books, images, and sample questions, to find what would be most useful for my thesis as well as fit the niche topic of dress identity I would be working with.

Archaeological methods and techniques

Archaeology has been the foundation for the work conducted in this thesis, without the use of archaeology and its varying methods, it is easy to say that any of my theories concerning the Viking Age would have been impossible to research. The type of archaeology which I have relied on the most for my research has been Experimental archaeology. Experimental archaeology is a research approach that aims to recreate and replicate past technologies, behaviors, and environments to gain insights into ancient civilizations and their practices. By combining archaeological data with practical experiments, researchers can test hypotheses, answer specific research questions, and bridge the gap between theory and practice. Because this particular field of study brings to life some of the things which I have sought to investigate, through this method I was able to gather a clearer image of the Viking Age and most especially the clothing and textiles.

Experimental archaeology involves reconstructing ancient techniques, tools, and cultural practices through hands-on experimentation and analysis. It offers a unique perspective that complements traditional archaeological research methods by allowing researchers to test assumptions, explore hypotheses, and generate new knowledge. There are various parts to experimental archaeology which have been useful to my research and which I have combined in order to gather the results I needed. The first type which I relied on is the reconstruction experiments, they involve replicating ancient artifacts, structures, or technologies using traditional techniques and materials. These experiments help archaeologists understand the mechanics, functionality, and limitations of ancient tools, weapons, and other artifacts. They provide valuable insights into the technological capabilities and skill levels of past societies.[1] Visiting cultural centers and museums with loom replicas as well as Viking longhouses, where textiles would have been created, serve to understand the way the culture would have interacted with its surroundings. Behavioral experiments aim to replicate ancient cultural practices, such as pottery production, food preparation, or hunting techniques. These activities aide researchers in gaining firsthand experience and understanding of the challenges and complexities faced by Viking civilization, these experiments also shed light on social organization, division of labor, and the cultural significance of specific practices.[2]

[1] Buchanan, B., Collard, M., Edinborough, K., and O'Brien, M. "Experimental Archaeology and Its Implications for the Behavioral Sciences." *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 26, no. 6 (2017): 288-302.
[2] Kuijt, I. "Experimental Archaeology." In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, edited by C. Smith, 1-6. Springer, 2018.

Hypothesis Testing and Validation Experimental archaeology enables researchers to test and validate hypotheses derived from archaeological data. By recreating past conditions and employing similar tools and techniques, researchers can evaluate the plausibility of proposed theories and gain a better understanding of their feasibility.[3] Experimental archaeology also offers a practical understanding of ancient technologies and skills; and I was able to witness this by interviewing and meeting a variety of skilled craftspeople who are using these skills to recreate some of the objects I've researched. By actively engaging in the process of tool production, for example, there is a stronger comprehension of the artisanal aspects of Viking culture, and this was crucial when writing a thesis on Viking dress and aesthetics. This type of knowledge enhances the interpretation of archaeological remains and provides a more nuanced understanding of past cultures and gives a visual imagery that is necessary for research which focuses on visuals.[4] Experimental archaeology has a strong educational component that can engage the public and promote a better appreciation of cultural heritage, and when it comes to the Viking Age it is by far one of the most important in perpetuating and sharing its importance within Scandinavia and beyond. Actively involving individuals in experimental projects such as dying materials with dye material which would have been used during the Viking Age, fosters a deeper connection with the past, allowing for a more immersive and interactive learning experience.[5] For example, the reconstructing of stone tools prehistoric Europe has provided valuable insights into the skill levels, lithic material procurement strategies, and tool manufacturing processes of past societies,[6] This gives a deeper understanding on how those tools would have advanced after the Stone Age and into the Late Iron age. These sorts of practices also aide in understanding the things the culture finds important, and why they would develop certain tools,[7] and what that says about what was important to them as a people. This has been a powerful tool for understanding the past by

[3] Trakadas, A., Gandolfo, M., and Bennett, M. "Interpreting the Tools of History: The Theoretical and Practical Achievements of Experimental Archaeology." *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2016): 769-777.

[4] Wilkins, J. "Practical Experimental Archaeology: The Transformative Role of Craft in the Study of the Past." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 27, no. 4 (2020): 1035-1067.

[5] Fennema, K. "Experimental Archaeology in an Educational Context." *European Journal of Archaeology* 21, no. 4 (2018): 557-575.

[6] Odell, G. H. "Stone Tool Production and Exchange among the Cahokian." In *Cahokia in the Past*, edited by T. R. Pauketat and S. M. Alt, 155-181. University of Alabama Press, 2019.

[7] Clark, J. E. "Experimental Archaeology." In *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, edited by D. C. Potts, 81-94. Wiley-Blackwell, 2017

integrating theory, practice, and empirical evidence, through reconstruction, behavioral, and environmental experiments. This aspect of archaeology was helpful in forming the foundation for my research.

Introduction

The Viking Age (800-1050 AD) is a period within the Late Iron Age which despite being relatively short in length has caused an arguable impact on present-day media and filmography. Many of the ways in which this period has influenced visual elements have also influenced views on Scandinavian society, this is not limited to past images, but also present ones. The Vikings have an "image" and the way that image forms their identity as a civilization does not stay within the reigns of creating and building a historical past, but it also expands to how many aspects of Scandinavian culture and history are observed. There has been a rise in "Viking tourism" over the last few years, with many people visiting varying parts of Scandinavia from all over the world, in search for Viking Age "experiences", and the opportunity to understand what it was like to live *like* the Vikings. It could be suggested that the interest in this type of tourism could be related to the rise in popularity of TV shows like *Vikings* which aired from 2013-2020, as well as the most recent film, *The Northman* (2022) and of course, Norse mythology. Major media franchises like the Marvel films which are based on the Marvel comics by Stan Lee, have also included characters of Norse origin such as Thor, Odin, and Loki, expanding on the characters traits and creating entire story lines based out of Aasgard and Thor's many battles. Indeed, the Vikings have been a source of inspiration and fascination for many authors and directors, displayed through the means of literature and cinema for many years, there have been many versions created of who they were and what they were like. However, it could be argued that somewhere along the line it has almost been forgotten that they were indeed a real civilization, with people who were not limited to the single profession of sea voyaging in search for treasure and loot through the means of violent attacks, but rather that there were those of the Viking civilization who stayed behind and built the foundation of ancient Scandinavian history.

What is interesting about the effect this period has caused, is that most of what we see now and interpret as "Viking Age" is limited to the content from the Icelandic Sagas, myths, and unspecific theories. Most of what is offered about the Viking Age is in the form of interpretations,

often enhanced by imagination and speculation. Who were the Vikings? It is a question that still stands and continues to be difficult to answer without resorting to fiction over fact. According to the popular films and TV shows mentioned previously, the Vikings are often blood-thirsty savages who feared nothing and no one on their quest to find and obtain what they wanted; they had bizarre and outlandish rituals, they paid little attention to self-grooming and or aesthetics. Their interest in normal civilized living seems almost nonexistent in most of the depictions and making it rather difficult to gather any kind of individual identity or personality which could help them to understand who they were as a people. Aside from their reliance on travel and trade –mainly through violent acts, the Vikings exist solely in the imagination of writers and film producers, not as a civilization. Indeed there are debates as to whether the word Viking is even a useful term to describe the people of the Nordic countries during the Late Iron Age, many researchers suggest that the term "Viking" should be applied to those who were not partaking in the activities of seafaring and raids, as to be a *Vikingr* (the original use of the word), was more of a profession than it was the label for a particular civilization; since this profession was also limited to men (as evidence has shown to date) it has often been argued whether the term Viking woman is even acceptable for use.[8] However, for the purpose of this research I have used the terms Viking man or Viking woman, as the *Viking Age* is still considered a respectable term for describing and referring to this period.

It is known that the Vikings traveled extensively around the world on boats they had crafted themselves, reaching places no other society had known of at the time, and through their travels mercilessly pillaged their way through most of Northern Europe and beyond. However, the Vikings also lived in settlements throughout most of Scandinavia, parts of Denmark which would be considered present-day Germany, and also Iceland, which meant that there were plenty of activities and lives being built and lived within these particular locations as well. It has been found that the Scandinavians who would have historically inhabited the Viking Age settlements were living rather dispersed through a variety of different areas. They lived mostly in scattered settlements and farmsteads, yet three major trading centers existed, one in each of these lands:

[8] Jesch, Judith. *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse.* Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001. Accessed February 12, 2023. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt163tb4f.

Kaupang in Norway, Hedeby in Denmark, and Birka in Sweden; situated on the western shore of the Oslofjord (The Vik), Kaupang was the smallest of the three, where it was visited in the late ninth century by Ohthere, a Norwegian from Helgeland who said that the place was called Sciringesheal and that it was a market – Its modern name, Kaupang, means a market. [9]

Many accounts which were written about the Vikings was through the opinion and views of foreigners who had encountered them, something which will be discussed in more detail within the chapters of the thesis, this meant that many of the descriptions we have of them might have been understood from a cultural perspective rather foreign to what the identity of the Vikings actually was. One account written by an Arab merchant named al-Tartushi from the caliphate of Cordova described his experience traveling to Hedeby, the following text narrates a description of what was witnessed in this particular settlement:

> Hedeby is a large town at the other end of the world sea. Freshwater wells are to be found within the town. The people there, apart from a few Christians who have a church, worship Sirius. A festival of eating and drinking is held to honor their god. When a man kills a sacrificial animal, whether it be an ox, ram, goat, or pig, he hangs it on a pole outside his house so that passersby will know that he has made a sacrifice in honor of the god. The town is not rich in goods and wealth. The staple food for the inhabitants is fish, since it is so plentiful. It often happens that a newborn infant is tossed into the sea to save raising it. Also, whenever they wish, women may exercise their right to divorce their husbands. Eye makeup used by both men and women causes their beauty never to fade but to increase.... Nothing can compare with the dreadful singing of these people, worse even than the barking of dogs.[10]

This review is perhaps a useful example of how some of the views from one culture can influence how another culture would have been viewed. In comparison to Islamic Spain, it could be argued that there were dramatic contrasts which became evident to this Arab traveler sufficiently so that he had to write this description. However, what is helpful about this description in particular is the imagery that is provided, there seemed to be a mix of beliefs within Hedeby, and according to this traveler the town was not very rich in goods, the observation regarding the make-up worn by both men and women is also useful to the understanding of dressed identity, as make-up could count as a possibly type of adornment of modification of the body. Regardless of

[9] Logan, F. Donald. *The Vikings in History.* London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 20-22.

[10] Ibid.

its organization as a settlement, Hedeby was soon to perish, in the middle of the eleventh century, it died: burned by Harald Hardrada in 1050, ravaged by Slavs in 1066, and, in the end, probably abandoned as the water levels receded,[11] and possibly put an end to the fish supply which they so heavily relied upon. This in itself is rather descriptive of how difficult it must have been to maintain a settlement of this magnitude with the resources of the time. Although there isn't a way to know how accurate some of these descriptions might have been, through analyzing some of the remains and artifacts from Hedeby there is the possibility to corroborate some of the facts in this description. It could be considered that a lot of the stories and descriptions written about the Vikings can be somewhat proven through sufficient literature review, studies of grave finds, and so forth, but these facts must be analyzed in a very different way in order to understand what their dressed identity was, who they were as a people, and how they wanted to be thought of long after they were gone. In accordance with some of the descriptions by foreigners, the Vikings did pay some mind to grooming and even beautifying themselves through make-up, but there are often few resources available to understand what means they used to achieve these sorts of things.

The aim of this research has been to find those answers within something very personal, in the absence of the body it could be suggested that clothing and adornment can be observed. My background in fashion design has aided me in seeing that fashion is not only a wearable art, but an extension of the body, the person, and a descriptor of a society. Although it might be argued that clothing is merely a means to an end for the wearer, with the goal being protection from the elements and or a simple covering of the body, it is important to analyze and understand the lengths to which the Vikings went to find specific textiles and embroideries through trade and travel. This would suggest that it wasn't just the harsh northern climate which was important when choosing garments, but also, aesthetics, beauty, and self-identity. The Vikings were not simply covering their bodies and protecting themselves from the cold, but rather using clothing and accessories as an identification of the self, and as an expression of who they were as a people and what they believed. Fashion history often paints us a picture of what the people of that time were like through the things they wore; what was important in the defining through observing and studying the fashion expression of one society, will vary greatly in explaining the same things of another. Hence why it is important to analyze every society's fashion through an unbiased perspective and with

[11] Donald, F. *The Vikings in History.* London: Routledge, 1992, 20–22.

an open mind, in order to gain an accurate understanding of what the particular society's identity was. Things like gender roles, societal norms, and expectations, are not always the same within the context of a society, more so if the society in question is an ancient civilization such as the Vikings. The ideas we might have presently could be influenced by current norms, and therefore produce a different result from the ones which would be beneficial to our research, that is important to keep in mind.

Clothing can become a type of art history book, through textile remnants and constructions we can see important things such as: techniques, skill levels, modernity, and advancements within the living time of a society. Through textiles, we are also able to analyze the behavior of a civilization, what was important in their trade and purchase practices, and what resources were necessary for them to obtain the textiles they wanted. There may be a distinct image available of what a Viking man was like (for example), this image will not only depend on the physical attributes of such a man, but on his clothing and how he performed in those clothes as well. How is he dressed? Aside from perhaps being tall, with long hair, and a beard, what did he wear on his head? Did he wear a long cloak in the winter? Or was it short instead? These are the questions which could be used to research a person from the past and create a narrative surrounding what his life could have been like. For the Vikings, we have several cinematic representations of a Viking man who is unkempt and dirty from battle, with long unruly hair and a charcoal-stained face. These images have served for years in forming a visual description of what the Vikings would have dressed like, and how their identity was expressed through clothing. A lot of the cinematic and media versions of what the Vikings wore are often neutral or devoid of any color, thick cloaks made of animal skin cut in haphazardly draped shapes, and metallic helmets often horned giving a fearful and menacing appearance. The attention to detail is minimal, and there is perhaps very little art in the design of some of these versions of Viking dress. The image of this Viking-Age man is one that has not only been shared endlessly through the means of films and literature, but it has unfortunately oftentimes been perpetuated through the process of reenactments in Viking themed fairs, comic conventions and video games. This has created a situation through which historical figures from the Viking Age have arguably merged with the more fantastical elements of the Icelandic sagas and Norse mythology and lost their reality altogether. In this way, the Viking Age is often question by the common masses as perhaps an event that has solely taken place within

the pages of the sagas and myths, and not as an actual civilization which existed, sailed most of the world through the creation of impressive ships and woven sails, as well as were helpful in defining the history of Europe itself. By losing its sense of reality, Viking Age dress and aesthetic is designated to the realm of stereotypes, on its way to becoming a gimmick.

The aim of this thesis is to find the personal identity of Viking society through their clothing and accessories. The aim is also to understand how they were made and what resources were used. The study will attempt to separate myth from fact, by relying on the research available through archeological finds, and anthropological study, combined with appropriate literature. The main purpose will be to explain why and how the Viking age clothing and aesthetic redefines who they were as a society and seeks to share insight into their identity as a people. This research also relies on the present-day Scandinavian identity, something which is arguably necessary to understand the past through local views and history. Within the world of Viking Age reenactment, there are many who seem to have found a fashion identity for themselves, thanks to their passion and research of the Viking age. Through these historians and researchers, the Viking Age can come alive with perhaps a much wider perspective than that which is found solely through text and the archaeological research of grave finds. This research has relied extensively on archeological grave finds and anthropological literature. It has been necessary to be quite cautious with religious aspects of Viking society, as well as poems and texts such as those found in the Icelandic Sagas as they could be rather subjective and problematic for the desired result. Much of this research will explore the concept of identity through clothing and garment, the defining of the body, cultural elements, and traditions as well as symbolism. Textiles from the Viking Age and subjects such as: weaving techniques, plant dyes, dye procedures and loom work will be discussed. Brooches and other jewelry are essential to the research, as the few fiber-remains that have been found through extensive archeological research offer the foundation of understanding Viking Age textiles. The places in Scandinavia where much of this research has been focused include, Western Norway (the counties of Rogaland and Hordaland), as well as Central Norway (Trøndelag). In Sweden there is an important focus on the town of Eskilstuna on the outskirts of Stockholm, as there has been ample research conducted on the local rune stones of that area. Lastly, the finds located at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, Denmark, have offered some of the more detailed

and important reviews of grave finds pertaining to jewelry as well as textile remains. One of the main challenges which has presented itself throughout the process of this research has been in achieving a satisfactory result in interpreting textile remains. There is not much to work with in terms of Viking Age textiles, and with the exception of the Viborg shirt (which will be discussed) no complete garment has been found from the Viking Age. What is left to analyze are miniscule remnants of wool, pieces of silk, and small scraps of other fibers left behind on brooches and beyond. Much of the literature used does practice a certain reliance on the sagas and Viking Age poetry in order to piece together some of those remnants. Because of this reason, other parts of the world are also analyzed when it comes to their descriptions and encounters with the Vikings. Descriptions found in historical finds and texts from England, Ireland, France, and Iceland have been crucial in learning about the encounters that were had with the Vikings and how they might have appeared. It could be argued that separating myth from fact when it comes to how the Vikings is perhaps the greatest challenge of this and other research; often it will be necessary to work back and forth between referencing the Icelandic sagas and Eddic poetry, whilst simultaneously working closely with archeological finds to understand what Viking Age dress and adornment symbolizes. These challenges have made the subject interesting and passionate to research, and since the intention is to use this research as a way to understand and create a foundation for what Viking Age dress and identity means; this research is therefore constantly evolving and changing. The aim of this research has been achieved only through combining art history and an anthropological approach, in order to observe how the clothing and garments not only described the identity of the Vikings as a people; but also, how the process from manufacturing, trade, creation and finally the dressing of the body, has become symbolic in truly understanding who they were as a people.

It could be argued that a part of Scandinavian society finds their historical identity through the means of researching and reenacting the Viking Age; through the and attendance of Viking fairs, and meeting with experts who work diligently to stay true to the Viking Age and their ways of producing clothing and objects. This is not only for entertainment, but for the sake of finding the art and creativity behind a historical era often reduced to only its negative aspects. This subject is of great importance because the Viking age is not only in many ways different from the one-dimensional picture often painted by the media, but also one of the civilizations which allowed us to have some of the greatest advances in clothing production and manufacturing. Art history has

many branches and different ways in which it speaks about a civilization. The intention of this research is to show that clothing and its production is part of that artistic process. It has been said that we are not what we “wear”, however, if we can be identified through the art in our clothes, a great part of us just might be.

The Viking Age culture and customs

Chapter 1

i. Introduction
ii. The Viking Age
iii. Men and women of the Viking Age
iv. Culture, customs, and design aspects
v. Understanding the stereotypes
vi. Conclusions

Introduction

There is often a fine line between myth and reality, a lot of myths are based on true events, and sometimes the division where reality suddenly becomes the art of storytelling can become quite blurred. When it comes to understanding the Viking Age such might be the case; yes, it is true that the Vikings led a rampage through Northern Europe and beyond, leaving destructive traces of pillaging, plundering and violent acts. There were towns and villages which lived in utter fear of their existence and the threat of being attacked. Entire monasteries had been ransacked for all they were worth, homes set on fire, and men and women kidnapped to be used as slaves or worse, killed. When the Vikings are looked at from other perspectives, there are multiple angles which may show a completely different culture to the one which has come to be known, something which can happen with the analysis of most ancient civilizations –it is a well-known fact that nothing is written in stone, there are indeed gray areas when analyzing societies of the past, and the Viking Age society is not the exception.

The culture of the Viking Age was strong, independent, rich in tradition and vibrant; it was good at observing, adapting, developing, and creating –foreign ideas could be incorporated or rejected in favor of obtaining the desired identity.[12] The Vikings had the privilege of being in contact with many cultures and places, and unlike many civilizations of the Late Iron Age, they were quite transient and adaptable. The many points of contact which the Vikings had, meant that well-informed and well-traveled Scandinavians were familiar with a variety of nationalities, environments, and cultures; their tolerance of other cultures was presumably an important factor in the Scandinavians' ability to establish themselves as traders, conquerors, or colonists in new countries well into the present.[13] Apart from Finland and the Sami areas of the Viking Age Nordic territory, much of Scandinavia shared a common and similar culture, mostly due to their position in the furthest areas of northern Europe, and of course, the fact these sparsely populated territories were often almost completely surrounded by water, so that its regions could be linked by seaborne traffic.[14] The natural resources of Scandinavia also encouraged them to pursue shipping and trade.

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[12] Roesdahl, Else, and Preben M. Sørensen. "Viking Culture." In *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, 121-146. 2003. Accessed February 23, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1017/chol9780521472999.008.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

Whatever is known about the Vikings from their own written accounts is often in the form of fantastic storytelling, poetry, and verses. Arguably written in their majority by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) Iceland's greatest Medieval historian, the Icelandic sagas were written sometime between the 13th and 14th century. The Icelandic Sagas explain events which took place around fifty years either side of 1000AD, this collection of stories is, to my mind, the most important European work of the past thousand years; as tragic as a Shakespearean novel, as colorful as The Canterbury Tales, and as enduring as Beowulf, the Sagas contains some monumental events, even the account of the Norse explorer Leif Ericsson's discovery of a large island he called Vinland and which was later divided into two and renamed Canada and America.[15] The Icelandic Sagas have been relied upon to explain the world of the Vikings for centuries, the Sagas being an interesting mix of family genealogies and storytelling, with *Grettis* saga becoming arguably the most famous. It has been said that the sagas lie somewhere in the middle between truth and fiction, although they were written in many years after the Viking Age, it has been considered that perhaps these stories could have been written and told by several families and people for hundreds of years, and passed down by generations, to formally be edited some hundred years later into the sagas known today, but nothing is certain as to how exactly they came about. The dating and ordering of the written sagas are difficult enough, but more difficult still is any attempt to imagine their oral prehistory. All scholars agree that there was such a prehistory: that is, that the sagas were told in some form before they were written down; there have been many debates concerning original form, one extreme view suggests that the sagas were orally performed in more or less the same shape as the written form that we now have.[16] Then there's the skeptical view that the saga writers composed their works like novelists, using only scraps of oral tradition[17]. Whatever may be their original form, what is certain is how elaborate and detailed a lot of the accounts in the sagas were. Many of the stories describe in illustrative detail accounts of betrothals, adventures, and assassinations, often tinged in a colorful

[15] Myers, Benjamin. "The Icelandic Sagas: Europe's Most Important Book?" *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 2008. Accessed February 3, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2008/oct/03/1.
[16] Andersson, Theodore M. *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280).* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012.
[17] Ibid.

almost humorous nature which can be entertaining for readers, but by consequence also questioned in their accuracy by researchers. Giving the impression that perhaps indeed they were stories passed down from one generation to another, albeit with added fantasy.

The Vikings and their activities have a strong presence within the sagas, and one of the most interesting things about them is how well detailed they are when it comes to describing the clothing that was being worn, with many poems describing the cloaks worn by Viking men, the short dresses of slaves, and the long gowns of Viking women. The sagas were illustrative when narrating incidents involving dress, however these descriptions have been analyzed primarily from a literary point of view –the main issue being how the writer has used clothes either symbolically or otherwise as part of his narrative technique, and not the outward appearance of the garment itself, which is often not given importance.[18] Although the sagas occasionally do provide some extra details about a garment and the way it is worn, this can also be misleading as the descriptions of the clothes may be more representative of what was worn at the time of writing during the thirteenth century, and therefore a thirteenth century view of a tenth century dress and customs may not always paint a clear picture.[19] The sagas continue to be one of the most important sources for Viking culture even in present-day, one of the main reasons is because documentary sources concerning the Viking Age are limited and often written from the countries they visited by the foreigners who encountered them; and so the Icelandic sagas are often considered to be the most extensive and colorful accounts we have about the Viking exploits and Viking life.[20] There continues to be several blurred lines between truth and fiction within the sagas, and when just as their written views on dress could have been an interpretation of dress through thirteenth century lenses, just as so, the cultural description could have been tainted with the beliefs of thirteenth century culture as well. But how do we separate truth from fiction? It isn't always convenient to completely discard the sagas to find out the unaltered truth about the Vikings, in many ways, understanding the sagas is necessary. In the same way, we need Nordic mythology, and Eddic poetry, all Nordic literature concerning the Vikings must be combined to find commonalities, and

[18] Jane Christine Roscoe, *The Literary Significance of Clothing in the Icelandic Family Sagas*, Durham theses, Durham University, 1992, available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/5798/.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Else Roesdahl and David M. Wilson, *From Viking to Crusader: Scandinavia and Europe 800-1200* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Nordic Council of Ministers, 1992).

within those commonalities we find the truth, aided by the foreign accounts. Through the literature we often find descriptions which we need to put the puzzle pieces together of the Viking Age grave finds. If the Eddic poetry such as *Rígspula* describes a woman as a "linen goddess" dressed in a floor length gown of pleated linen, and a grave find in Birka unveils a brooch with strips of pleated linen remains, there is a connection to be made between a literary description and an archaeological find, working together they might be able to give us a clear description.

The Viking Age

There are debates concerning the beginning of the Viking Age, traditionally it is dated from AD 93 to 1050 (Recent research has focused on isolating the earliest manifestation of the period and moving it back to the mid-8th century) it is also perceived as a watershed in European history.[21] The Viking Age above all else, is recognized as the birth of Scandinavian state formation; there is no simple answer to the question when did the Viking Age happen, different elements of the Viking Age were adopted earlier in some places than in others, perhaps reflecting the distinction between cores and peripheries.[22] What is interesting about elements of the Viking Age being adopted in different times throughout different places, is that perhaps they were able to develop differently, so that there are now different aspects and traditions from the Viking Age in which to look at from varying angles. In the year 793 AD, a monastery on the small unsuspecting quiet town of Lindisfarne off the North-east coast of England was viciously attacked by the Vikings. They were indeed taken by surprise no less, and it is highly probable that they must have believed the attack to be influenced by supernatural forces. It could be argued that very few civilizations at the time had such advancements in seafaring as to perpetuate such an attack, and even those that did would surely steer clear of attacking Holy places such as a church or a monastery. Thus, a terrifying description of the Vikings is written by what is more than likely a monk which has witnessed the attack:

In this year came dreadful forewarnings over the land of Northumbria, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of lightning and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons were seen flying through the sky. A great famine soon followed these signs and not long after in the

[21] J. Barrett et al., "What Was the Viking Age and When Did It Happen? A View from Orkney," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 33, no. 1 (2000): 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/00293650050202600.
[22] Ibid.

same year, on the sixth day before the ides of January, the harrowing inroads of heathen men destroyed the church of God in Lindisfarne by robbery and slaughter.[23]

Historically this is considered as the first attack perpetrated by the Vikings in Europe, and since it is one of the first written accounts to describe the Vikings, they most definitely leave an impression. From that point on, monasteries all over the coasts of England, Scotland, Ireland and beyond, lived in fear of these "terrifying" Vikings, and with good reason; monks were slaughtered and killed, and those which managed to survive were taken as slaves aboard ship on the long journey to Scandinavia and maybe even to settlements in other places. These sorts of written experiences increased after Lindisfarne, with encounters with the Vikings written from multiple places, all equally sharing the horrors which they had left behind in their wake. Although some of the accounts written from monasteries have been questioned by historians in terms of times, dates, and accuracy, it is evident that multiple violent invasions took place and established the Vikings as fearsome creatures to encounter. However, it is important to ask the question of what happened to those left behind in the raids during the Viking Age? Were they all Vikings? And if they were, were they always participating in violent raids and pillages? There are many unanswered questions when it comes to understanding who the Vikings were, and what their lives were like beyond the descriptions of violent acts. The Vikings had homes, farms, and other professions which are often not as discussed in literature. Somewhere in between the fantastical sagas, the violent descriptions written about the raids, and the plethora of grave finds, there must be an untold story yet to be discovered –that is what this chapter attempts to research and shed light upon.

Men and women of the Viking Age

It could be suggested that the Vikings were aware of life's contradictions, within their mythologies even their most venerated gods had contrary positions: Odin god of war and poetry, Freyja god of beauty and war, and Thor god of thunder, agriculture, and war. The average lifespan of a Viking woman was about 20 years of age, their lives were incredibly short, and most of those years would have been spent bearing and tending to children, it is said that the average Viking woman would have had anywhere from six to seven children in her lifetime, and very few of them

[23] M. Hanson, "Viking Raid on Lindisfarne," *English History*, 2022, accessed February 5, 2023, https://englishhistory.net/vikings/raid-on-lindisfarne/.

would make it to adulthood [24] –death surely must have been a powerful factor in the writings of the Vikings. Many of their customs would have surrounded their shorter lifespans as well as their rituals and everyday habits. Men and women during the Viking Age undoubtedly had different roles. Women would have spent most of their time in the home, unlike some of the possible hypotheses about women joining men on raids and voyages, it is more likely that they were not aboard ships raiding or trading, but instead lived busy lives at home and on the farm. Women had positions of authority within the home, often bearing the keys and necessary tools to direct the farm while the men were away. Women of the Viking Age were the producers of textiles, creators of weaves and spun and masters of the loom, it could be said that the Viking Age itself would not have occurred if it had not been for the Viking woman's ability to weave and create material for sails and beyond. A Viking woman who would have lived much beyond the age of twenty, and was unmarried, unable to bear children, or a widower, had a noticeable degree of freedom and equality with her male counterparts, there is a possibility that women who fit these descriptions could have been aboard voyages, and even on raids, but it is not certain. The laws of the sagas have been analyzed to understand some of the differences between men and women during the Viking age: there were reasonable distinctions between unmarried women, married women, and widows; while widows had a great degree of autonomy, unmarried women were always under guardianship, it was through marriage that women gained some degree of independence, probably because her skills and her contribution to the farm work were important economic factors.[25] What is interesting to note is that this could signify that Viking Age women were not completely dependent on their husbands when it came to finances, giving them a very different position in the world than the women of other civilizations during their time. If we accept that the law gave the Viking Age woman greater independence from her husband than was usual in most European societies, then the picture of her drawn by the saga tellers seems broadly accurate; she is depicted as proud, strong in a crisis, very conscious of her own and her family's honor, if the sagas are to be believed, the woman could, without further ado, take her capital and leave her husband.[26]

[24] Kingsley, Lauren. "Homespun." In History: Vikings the Rulers of Sea and Sword, 80–81, 2020.

[25] Bertelsen, R., A. Lillehammer, and J.-R. Næss. Were They All Men? An Examination of Sex Roles in Prehistoric Society. Stavanger, Norway: Arkeologisk Museum i Stavanger, 1987.

[26] Ibid.

Often, the sagas described women as the protagonists in seeking revenge for the wronging of a family member, the role of housewife was not described as passive and weak, but rather it was a position of authority over her own property and household as well as the farms. To understand the position of "housewife" during the Viking Age it is perhaps necessary to rid the mind of present-day gender norms which perhaps are introduced through the tainted lens of the stereotypical 1950's housewife who stays at home and serves her husband with little to no authority of her own.

The Viking Age housewife was not exactly subservient to her husband, nor was she lesser than him for staying behind from raids to tend to the home; rather, the Viking Age woman and her husband functioned more like a unit. It is possible that through what she could do on the farm and at home (such as creating the cloths that were needed, tending to the farm etc.), her husband could then continue his journey to seafaring the seas and trading the cloth that she created, rather than a submissive role a marriage in the Viking Age could have possibly functioned as a partnership with cyclical advantages for both the man and the woman, as well as the village. The roles of women during the Viking Age have perhaps been difficult to interpret due to some of the gendered influences in archaeology during the time of certain discoveries; it has been said that archaeology was born at a time when women and children were not supposed to be visible, at least not in the public sphere.[27]

This might explain why there are views concerning women's roles during the Viking Age which may not be as accurate, and have warped some of our understanding of what their position actually was. In Scandinavia, archaeological sources relevant to the study of women's roles are more abundant from the Viking Age than from any other period. The reasons for this are uncertain, but it has been argued that relatively few archaeologists have tried to exploit their potential.[28] It could be considered that because of the sagas themselves, the interest of studying women's roles in the Viking Age peaked, as the sagas describe a certain degree of freedom for women in an ancient civilization, this is a rarity when studying past civilizations, and perhaps something which

[27] Hays-Gilpin, Kelley, and David S. Whitley. "Women, Kinship, And the Basis of Power in The Norwegian Viking." In Reader in Gender Archaeology, London, UK: Routledge, 1998, 337–338.
[28] Ibid.

people find the need to explore, especially when understanding gender identity and norms. Although it cannot be said that men and women's roles were completely equal during the Viking Age, it is noticeable that on a more global perspective, research does indeed show that women's roles were much less subversive and much more involved than in other societies where they were required to live almost invisible lives in comparison to the men. The Viking Age seems to offer a sort of historical opportunity for the woman to be more present in the world, be it through descriptions in the Icelandic sagas or through Norse mythology, the woman has a recognizable public sphere in which has an active role in commanding her household, running a farm, handling legal disputes, and even having some type of say regarding who they would marry. Although they were not completely equal to the men within the Icelandic sagas, when they are mentioned (as they quite often are) women are always tied to their family and their loyalty towards family is very much highlighted; the popular image of the Viking Age woman seems to be that of the ardent protector and, if need arise, avenger of family honor, like Gunhild in one of the Edda poems, this may or may not have been one aspect of women's role in Viking society, but what could be said is that they were indeed respected.[29]

The most common category of finds (besides jewelry) in women's graves is textile implements, other common categories are kitchen utensils and agricultural tools, kitchen utensils are only slightly more common in women's graves than in men's,[30] which might be an indication that men could have had roles related to cooking and food preparation as well as women. There have been surprising finds in graves which have led to women's roles being further revised; in a rich woman's burial at Hopperstad, Vik (Norway) was found a boat-builder's implement of a kind previously associated only with men's graves, this suggested that the dead woman had been the owner of the farm and therefore responsible for all its activities, including boatbuilding.[31] So although women might not have been active on the raids, it could be possible that they were helping build the boats for the raids, giving them another role which had possibly not been considered. Other female graves have further indicated that women had other important positions within

[29] Hays-Gilpin, Kelley, and David S. Whitley. "Women, Kinship, And the Basis of Power in The Norwegian Viking." In Reader in *Gender Archaeology*, London, UK: Routledge, 1998, 337–338.
[30] Bertelsen, R., A. Lillehammer, and J.-R. Næss. *Were They All Men? An Examination of Sex Roles in Prehistoric Society*. Stavanger, Norway: Arkeologisk Museum i Stavanger, 1987.
[31] Ibid.

society, a pair of weight-scales was found in one particular grave indicating that perhaps the burial was of a female merchant.[32]Viking women from different regions often worked together at the loom with evidence of Norwegian and Finnish women working besides each other,[33] and it is possible that during the Viking Age, if a woman reached high societal ranks within the society it was because she had taken over many of the jobs which the men had left behind.

Men of the Viking Age have taken most of the attention when it comes to researching the Viking Age as a whole. Their plundering, raping, and pillaging has been the protagonist when it comes to their identity both within the sagas and stories, and out of them. Their acts of violence cannot be denied, and the impact they made in shaping Europe and its history is undoubtedly present. However, it could be argued that little mind is paid to what Viking men's lives were like outside of their many voyages and trades, what roles they had within their homes, and what legacy they sought to leave behind. It is sometimes forgotten that not *all* men were Vikings during the Viking Age, but rather that navigating the seas for the purposes of raids was more of a "profession" in the same way that piracy was also an option, versus something which was done by an entire civilization.

Although the Viking civilization is often depicted as a rough ruthless sea people who have been exclusively studied for their extensive trade, conquests, and subsequent colonization of the North Atlantic, these studies are often seen through the eyes of the *vikingr* profession.[34] It is rare for men of the North to be seen or investigated under a different light –their lives at home, on the farm, researching and investigating plants for dyes and textiles, have been arguably ignored. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence in understanding the Vikings from another perspective. Archaeological investigations throughout central Sweden and other parts of Scandinavia have uncovered new material which suggests a different image of everyday Viking life and even provides a glimpse into some of their religious practices; the finds also indicate that the Vikings did not live in a wear-and-tear-and throwaway society (as we often do today) but took

[32] Ibid.

[33] Barber, Elizabeth Wayland. *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years, Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times*. New York City, NY: WW Norton, 1995.

[34] Damell, David, and Marianne Modin. "Another Look at The Vikings." Archaeology 32, no. 3 (1979): 15–21. Accessed February 6, 2022. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41726835

care of their household goods, reusing material whenever possible.[35] This shows that Vikings were also responsible with their land and taking care of the things they had, which perhaps shows a different type of Viking man, an alternative to the violent plunderers who terrorized much of Europe and the North. The settlements and graves in the Mälar region of Sweden, reveal quite a different picture of the Vikings than the popular version given in most literature, many Vikings were simple, down-to-earth farmers who spent their whole lives on and around the family farm, this peaceful and unassuming image is strongly confirmed by artifacts from the sepulchral mounds located near farmsteads, containing both women and men.[36] It could then be assumed that men of the Viking age had plenty of other alternatives when it came to professions and things to do within their civilization, cooking and preparing food was one of the most important ones.

The most common way of cooking in the Viking Age was wet-cooking in vessels, although cooking-pits/*seydir* have been found inside houses both in Norway and in Iceland, it seems that for the most part, people cooked their food in vessels of soapstone or iron filled with water, there was plenty of knowledge concerning dry-cooking fish or meat but wet-cooking was the dominating custom in their old house both for everyday meals and festive occasions.[37] It is very possible that many men of the Viking Age were the overseers of catching and hunting the food that was to be consumed by their families, as well as cooking and preparing it using some of the techniques described in the sagas.[38] Men of the Viking Age had many occupations within their homes, although the weaving and work done at the loom was strictly saved for the women, men would have had to contribute to textile production in other ways, such as perhaps finding sources for the dyes, as well as building the looms and perhaps the tablets for weaves. Men of the Viking Age would have more than likely built their homes and gained knowledge of architecture throughout their life, sufficiently enough to not only build but teach younger generations about building as

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Damell, David, and Marianne Modin. "Another Look at The Vikings." *Archaeology* 32, no. 3 (1979): 15–21. Accessed February 6, 2022. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41726835a

[37] Amborg, J., and B. Grönnow. "Borg in Lofton–From Early Iron Age Viking Age Chieftains to Medieval Farmers." In *Dynamics of Northern Societies: Proceedings of the SILO/NABO Conference on Arctic and North Atlantic Archaeology*, 259–271. 2004. Accessed February 3, 2023. https://www.academia.edu/download/52176121/SILA.pdf.

[38] Evans Tang, H.J., and S.P. Ashby. "Of Pots and Porridge: Food, Cooking, and Serving in Old Norse Sources." *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 17 (2021): 221–251. Accessed February 2, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1484/j.vms.5.126488.

well. It could be argued that perhaps more men stayed behind from raids and sea voyages than originally assumed, in order to complete some of the tasks that would be required within a settlement, most especially when referring to a much larger settlement such as Birka.

Culture, customs, and design aspects

When introducing this portion of the chapter I must acknowledge that although cultural aspects, customs and traditions were researched and referenced, they were not the principal focus of my research. The reason being that within some of the traditions, there are religious practices relating to paganism and spirituality which I find is outside of the scope of my knowledge, as well as not quite as useful when attempting to separate myths from historical fact. Surely understanding the religious aspects of the Vikings is necessary in understanding their identity and some of the motives behind why they lived a particular lifestyle or why they created certain artistic designs throughout their lives, however, when discussing the culture and daily habits I have found it best to limit research to some of the more basic aspects of their religious and cultural beliefs and how they influenced some of the more visual aspects of their culture, as to maintain a more concise result which does not surpass the subject of my focus.

The cultural aspects of the Vikings have been beautifully illustrated through some of their artistic styles and developments throughout the Viking Age. Besides developing and creating textiles and weave patterns, the Vikings also had various design styles which highlighted some of the traditions of their civilization, as well as the changes they would be undergoing. The Vikings built their traditional long houses out of wood, and the use of wood would be especially important in constructing not only their home, but also in displaying their artistic skills and design features. Well before the Viking Age, there was an art style which was evident throughout Scandinavia; it was a style of contorted and distorted animal ornamentation which continued through the end of the Viking Age, when Scandinavian artists eventually began to adopt the new Romanesque art which was to prevalent in Europe later in the Middle Ages.[39] These distorted animal ornamentations are still visible in many of the Stave churches located throughout different parts of Norway, most of the Stave churches provide excellent examples of some of the wood workings

[39] Wolf, Kirsten. *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. New York, NY: Sterling, 2014.

which would have been made during the Viking Age and later on as well. A lot of the decorations displayed in the woodworking's tell stories about the lives of the Vikings, their surrounding nature, and animals, as well as some of their historical events –like sea voyages, raids, and trades. Although very little of Viking Age art can be termed as "art" in the primary sense of art for art's sake, most of it is applied art which appears through decoration on functional objects such as clothing, weapons, cups, sledges, ships, buildings, memorial stones, and of course brooches.[40]

It could be suggested that even though these types of decorations and ornamentations are not considered "art" in the historically traditional sense, many of the cultural aspects of the Viking civilization lead to an understanding that perhaps for the Vikings this was indeed considered an interpretation of art, and thus should be treated as such. The artistic elements from the Viking Age are typically abstract rather than naturalistic, and it is often characterized by originality, vitality, and ostentation; a large portion of the preserved objects are decorative metal items, but other materials such as gold, amber and walrus ivory were also highly prized.[41] Many of these styles of decorations and ornamentations are seen on traces left over on rune stones, the snake-like ribbons of texts and curves, as well as some of the more stylistic images found similarly within metal items and Stave churches alike. It seems to be that many of the run stones would have originally been painted red, blue, brown, or black, with scenes found on the Gotland pictures stones showing popular motifs of ships filled with warriors in full sail across stylized waves –both of which are generally thought to be symbolic of the journey to Odin's Valholl.[42]

These artistic elements speak about the artistic culture of the Vikings, and how it is arguable that they had quite an interest in beauty and aesthetics, favoring the painting of stones in order to tell stories and leave a mark in their territory. The use of color was also important, and it could be suggested that perhaps some of the techniques which were implemented in creating the dyes for their clothing were also used in making the paints for their household items and decorations. The oldest of all art artifacts know from the Viking Age is a little wooden man found legless and broken

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Wolf, K. (2014), *Viking age: Everyday life during the extraordinary era of the norsemen*. Sterling, New York, NY.

in the plundered grave chamber of the Danish King Gorm the Old and his queen when the northern mound at Jelling was excavated in 1820; it is a small flat figure, 15cm (5.9 in) tall, and carved in oak, the little man is seen in profile and has a large belt like circle around his waist, it seems that it was painted, and traces of color –black, red, and yellow–can be seen on the largest of the fragments.[43] This find corroborates that perhaps the Vikings found art, and creativity important, painting and sculpting could have been something which was done routinely around the settlements.

Although it is said that no innovative styles marked the beginning of the Viking Age, Swedish archaeologist Bernhard Salin divided some of the animal-style ornamentations from the entire period into three distinctive styles. His classification is still used today, the different styles are; the Broa Style, which display the earliest styles in Viking Age designs (the style normally contained three different animal motifs), the Borre style which has been found in many of the rich ship burials in Norway and is known exclusively as a design form found on metal objects, also the Jelling style which is said to have originated in Denmark, the animals in Jelling style are commonly interlaced with ribbonlike tendrils, which sprout from the limbs, and sometimes they have spirals at the shoulders and hips.[44]

The Jelling style lasted well into the 10th century, where it seems to have merged with the Mammen. The Mammen style developed in the latter half of the 10th century and lasted until the first quarter of the eleventh century, the style is named after a wealthy man's grave from about 970 at Mammen near Jelling in Denmark and is identified with a beautifully produced iron ax found in the grave; it is inlaid with silver wires on both sides, one with a foliate pattern and the other with a human mask and a bird whose head is thrown back over its body –what's interesting is the use of silver, as it seems that the Mammen styles were normally found in bone, ivory or stone carving.[45] The final two design styles are possibly the most heavily associated with the Viking Age, and the ones most often referred to when referencing Viking Age decorations and visuals. The Ringerike

[43] Randsborg, Klavs. "Kings' Jelling." *Acta Archaeologica* 79, no. 1 (2008): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0390.2008.00107.x.
[44] Wolf, Kirsten. *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. Sterling, New York, NY, 2014.
[45] Ibid.

style (which may have been created in Denmark) was named after the district of the same name just north of Oslo, Norway; The three main elements of the Ringerike style are the lion, the snake, and the extended tendril, these are often represented through a mix of many different types of ornamentations like the gilt-bronze weather vane found in Söderala Sweden, which has at its center a dragon-like animal with a lesser animal locked around its foot Its primary innovation is the handling of the plant ornamentation, which dominates the animal ornamentation and often takes over the entire pattern.

Fine examples of the Ringerike style are a gilt-bronze weathervane from Söderala in Sweden, which has at its center a large dragon-like animal with a lesser animal locked around its foot, a stone monument possibly raised in memory of Danish King Knud the Great.[46] What is noteworthy about these developments is the practice that must have gone into bettering some of the designs which share similarity with the earlier design elements, the animal-motifs continue, and it is evident that some of the more abstract and curvaceous lineage also continues to develop. With its earliest occurrence in memorial stones of Uppland, Sweden, the final style is the Urnes style. Developed shortly before the mid-eleventh century, it takes its name from the woodcarvings of the little Stave church in Urnes (western, Norway); animals occupy the preeminent position in the Urnes style, the animals comprise stylized quadrupeds (some of which are lions), ribbon-shaped animals, snakes, and winged dragons also have appeared –the Urnes style is characterized by elegance, sophistication, and patterns of smooth and unbroken curvy loops.[47] The Urnes style remained popular well into the mid-twelfth century, however, it lasted slightly longer in England and Ireland.[48]

Animals were of significant importance to the Vikings, and this can be seen in the animal-motifs which stayed consistent throughout the many periods of art which transpired throughout the Viking Age. High ranking men from the Viking Age were often buried with their favorite

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Horn Fuglesang, Signe, Klaus Düwel, and Sven Nowak. "Swedish Rhinestones of the Eleventh Century: Ornament and Dating." In *Runeninschriften als Quellen interdisziplinärer Forschung: Abhandlungen des Vierten Internationalen Symposiums über Runen und Runeninschriften in Göttingen* Vom 4.-9. August 1995, Berlin, Germany: W. De Gruyter, 1998, 4–9.

[48] Wolf, Kirsten. *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. Sterling, New York, NY, 2014.

horses, with many beliefs surrounding the horses indicating that perhaps they believed they would be riding into eternal paradise on their horses.[49] Sheep were also very important to the Vikings as they were their main local resource to produce cloth, as well as for agricultural purposes.[50] It is not clear at which point the Vikings might have encountered a dragon-motif decoration perhaps on their trades and sea voyages, or if it is indeed a creature which they would have created themselves in reference to a large powerful snake, but what is true, is that the Vikings believed these snake/dragon creatures to be symbols of power, protection and strength. Traditionally, Viking ships were built with a dragon at their head, however, a fact that is not often discussed is that these dragon heads were often detachable. There are references in old heathen laws which explain that the dragon heads must have been detached when approaching unknown shores, as to not frighten or anger the spirits of the place,[51] providing perhaps one of the greatest contradictions in behavior to be observed in a group of raiders ready to attack and pillage a town.

Books during the Middle Ages were a rarity, they were difficult and expensive to produce, and most people were illiterate, it appears that the same is true of runic inscriptions from the Viking Age, since they are generally believed to have been the concern of a privileged minority.[52] This could mean that when interpreting the writings and symbols of runestone, it should be taken into consideration that these might have been written by families of high-social standing who had access to more resources, and which perhaps explained situations and stories which were limited to only an elect few within the society of that time. However, it is worth noting the importance that was given to documenting and telling stories within the Viking society, although there is no stable evidence that the sagas were written as direct accounts of things that happened during the Viking Age, there was still an active interest in documenting aspects of Viking Society family life and the

[49] Shenk, P. (2002). To Valhalla by Horseback? Horse Burial in Scandinavia during the Viking Age. [MS Thesis], 54–55. Accessed February 6, 2022. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-9034.

[50] Catlin, K.A., and D.J. Bolender. "Were the Vikings Really Green? Environmental Degradation and Social Inequality in Iceland's Second Nature Landscape." *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 29, no. 1 (2018): 120–133. https://doi.org/10.1111/apaa.12102.

[51] Catlin, K.A., and D.J. Bolender. "Were the Vikings Really Green? Environmental Degradation and Social Inequality in Iceland's Second Nature Landscape." *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 29, no. 1 (2018): 120–133. https://doi.org/10.1111/apaa.12102.

[52] Samson, Ross. "Social Approaches to Viking Studies." Boydell & Brewer Incorporated, 1991.

different advancements and events which had taken place, as well as the sea voyages of the time. Many rune stones were descriptive of family lineages, as well as births, deaths, and other important events within the community, it could be argued that perhaps rune stones were a type of local "newspaper" which would explain to the community some of the things that had occurred, as well as the history of the place. A fascinating fact is how many rune stones are still present throughout Scandinavia today, in my research, I was able to witness hundreds of rune stones between farms in Norway, towns all over Sweden (most especially in Eskilstuna), and of course a few of the rune stones which were found in Denmark and exported to the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. Runestones continue to be an especially important aspect of Scandinavian history, and proof of the Viking Age and its importance in keeping community stories alive. Many of the runestones witnessed contained stories about sea voyages and those who had committed acts of bravery, as well as mentioning those who had been lost at sea. Other runic inscriptions were in many ways, like the sagas, often describing fantasy stories and animal images. Some of the differences in what is scripted on the runes depends on time; the earlier rune-stones of the tenth and early eleventh centuries tend to carry only text, whereas late eleventh and twelfth century runestones were given ornaments and more elaborate zoomorphic images.[53] As the Viking Age advances and eventually Scandinavia is Christianized the runestones also continue to change in content and designs. The Christian faith is expressed through the common symbol of the cross on many runestones as well as the contents of some inscriptions expressing formulae and deeds in relation to Christian teaching; some runestones contain a Christian blessing for the soul of a deceased in a similar fashion to gravestones of present-day –Often times runestones are also generally described as memory stones: that is, stones raised in memory of someone who died.[54]

Understanding the stereotypes

Understanding the stereotypes which have risen regarding the Vikings requires a look at some of the media representation which has covered the Viking Age. The Anglo-American stereotypes for example, have perpetuated a cinematic representation of Viking heritage through the means of seafaring, sexist, and blood thirsty men who are eager to sail the seas in search of

[53] Danielsson, I.-M.B. "Walking Down Memory Lane: Rune-Stones as Mnemonic Agents in the Landscapes of Late Viking-Age Scandinavia." *In Early Medieval Stone Monuments*, 62–86. 2015. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781782045823.003.
[54] Ibid.

villages and town in which they can pillage, rape, and steal.[55] Indeed it has been suggested that the image of the Viking man itself has been sexualized and used as inspiration for many "Viking" characters in films and romance novels, where female violence is often a type of entertainment in which the attractive and strong Viking man ends up seducing and ultimately convincing his victim. Rape is often seen as an integral aspect of Viking masculinity, although often times within stories containing descriptions of Viking men and their female victims, the hero's masculinity is defined instead by his sexual restraint, and his ability to love a worthy woman and look for her love in return; at the same time, often times violent sexuality plays a role in Viking masculine identity in particular cases such as those of minor characters where there are blurred lines between abduction and voluntary marriage.[56] One of the first films to propagate these depictions of the Vikings, was the Kirk Douglas film *The Vikings* (1958), novels such as *Røde Orm (The Longships)* by Frans Bengtsson (1954) as well as the popular cartoon strip *Hagar the Horrible* by the Dik Browne which is published globally; in August of 1999 the film *The 13th Warrior* directed by John McTiernan and starring Antonio Banderas –the Vikings in this film were given the stereotypical description of: "big men with big swords".[57] The stereotypes have continued well into the 21st century with the popular TV show *Vikings* (2013-2020), images of the final season preview open with views of Nordic landscapes, Viking ships, men with angry bloodied faces, violent battles, women undressing, both men and women going into battle and plenty of sea monsters rising up to violently devour its victims. In 2022, the film *The Northman* was released, an American epic historical action thriller directed by Robert Eggers and co-written with Icelandic author The Sjón, it is based on the legend of *Amleth*, and heavily influenced by various aspects of Nordic mythology. The film was heavily researched by various Viking Age archaeology and Scandinavian culture experts, and it could be said that it does indeed capture some of the visual aspects which might have been present during the Viking Age, however, it continues to rely on Norse mythology and the sagas, to tell a story about the Vikings, which might be another addition to the realm of Viking stereotypes.

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[55] Halewood, C., and K. Hannam. "Viking Heritage Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 28, no. 3 (2001): 565–580. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(00)00076-1.

[56] Sigurdson, E. R. "Violence and Historical Authenticity: Rape (and Pillage) in Popular Viking Fiction." *Scandinavian Studies* 86, no. 3 (2014): 249–264. https://doi.org/10.5406/scanstud.86.3.0249.

[57] Halewood, C., and K. Hannam. "Viking Heritage Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 28, no. 3 (2001): 565–580. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(00)00076-1.

Although it is often the bloodthirsty images of Vikings which initially inspire readers, tourists and even researchers to learn more and study about the Viking Age, it is interesting to see that within Scandinavia, the image of Vikings in popular culture finds fewer references to war and warriors; here the Viking representation is more concerned with the people who abroad were known as pirates, but at home lived in a well-ordered and civilized society.[58] It could be argued that the stereotypes have been created and propagated due to lack of sufficient written evidence which tells stories about the Viking civilization and their everyday lives, and that lack is heavily overpowered by the presence of multiple stories, sagas, poetry, and of course foreign testimonies about the Vikings who raided and attacked. Further injury has been caused by the entertainment factor of some of these stories and accounts, the antics by the "bloodthirsty" Vikings have gained such notoriety in the media, that the stories have almost become a cinematic formula for adventure and gore. In a positive light, surely the stories about the Vikings create an awareness and spark interest in understanding the culture, however, in a negative aspect, outside the scope of archaeological and anthropological research the information found about the Vikings is very much limited to fantasy films, books, and media gimmicks. The Viking Age diaspora contributed to state formation and/or urbanism in what are now Ireland, Scotland, England, Russia, and the Ukraine – not to mention Scandinavia itself; it was one of the catalysts leading to fragmentation of the Carolingian empire and it created the semi-independent principality of Normandy in France.[59] So many geographical aspects of the world, trade, textiles, and globalization itself were forever changed and molded by the effects of the Viking Age, it could be argued that even the Christianization of Europe would not have progressed had it not been for the Vikings. Hence making it an important era for research, and an important civilization to liberate from stereotypes.

Conclusions

In this introduction to the Viking Age, it was my intention to give a brief introduction into the Viking Age, basic aspects of their culture and customs without delving to heavily into some of the religious and mythical aspects, as well as discussing some of the stereotypes which have helped

[58] Ibid.

[59] Barrett, James H. "What Caused the Viking Age?" *Antiquity* 82, no. 317 (2008): 671–685. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003598x00097301.

to form the narrative on who the Vikings were. In subsequent chapters, I will be focusing on the discussions of identity, identity through dress, and some of the elements surrounding Viking society which could have influenced their identity through dress and adornment. The importance of this chapter lies in introducing the Viking Age as an important period which has influenced other aspects of civilization in Europe and beyond, identifying the Vikings as people beyond the profession of seafaring and plundering, as well as attempting to clarify why some of the stereotypes regarding the Vikings exist and are propagated.

When observing ports of trade like Birka, on the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren Sweden, there is sufficient evidence to showcase a well-developed and advanced society. During the 10th century, the population is estimated to have amounted to about a thousand inhabitants, a number which might have fluctuated, a peak of foreign visitors during the trading season in the summer.[60] Birka gives evidence of an established settlement with summer and winter activities for its residents. Archeological teams have found bone skates indicating skating activities during the winter, and even evidence of a winter fur market; archaeological finds also show that Birka had trading contacts with western and eastern Europe, and as far East as the Arab Empire, there is even proof that several workshops and crafts were practiced, including bronze casting, iron forging, comb making and bead elaboration.[61] The markets of Birka present a very different image to the somber desaturated reality shown to us by the TV show *Vikings*, it is possible to see within these finds that the Viking civilization was not only artistically inclined, but that they also enjoyed regular activities which were varying depending on the season, similar to the way activities are planned in present-day Scandinavian societies. The markets full of foreigners indicate sufficient civility to attract visitors and even interact and trade with them, a stark contrast to plunder.

For women, the Viking Age civilization offered a lifestyle that was in many ways beneficial when compared to the lives of women in other parts of Europe. Studies have found that women of the Scandinavian periphery already had relatively favorable health in both absolute and relative terms before and during the Medieval period, when compared with other European women of their

[60] Sundman, E. A., and A. Kjellström. "Signs of Sinusitis in Times of Urbanization in Viking Age-Early Medieval Sweden." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40, no. 12 (2013): 4457–4465. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2013.06.010.
[61] Ibid.

time; a potential explanation for this early gender equality might be based on agricultural specialization in cattle and sheep farming during the Viking Age, which provided a stronger role for women in generating substantial parts of the family income, as well as providing sufficient nutrients for their bodies.[62] These resources provided women of the Viking Age with health advantages which could have inspired some of the Nordic myths surrounding women, such as the strong and courageous Valkyries. Stronger women with certain privileges would have undoubtedly given birth to stronger and healthier children, also providing the foundation for the nourishment of stronger Viking males.

Viking men may be known primarily for their raiding and violent activities, however, there is sufficient evidence to show that they engaged in plenty of other activities which were both necessary and vital for the Viking Age community. It continues to be unclear why certain men from the Viking Age began to raid and attack coastal towns of Northern Europe and beyond, one of the oldest explanations for Viking raiding was suggested by Dudo of St. Quentin (965-1043) in the history of the Normans, he argued that the raids were caused by an excess of unmarried young men.[63] It was his belief that a lack of family stability was perhaps a source of anxiety or boredom in areas which were overpopulated by men (with arguably nothing better to do) needed to find adventure and potential wives. Later, in 1610 a volume of Britannia was published which suggested that the "*wikings*" were selected by lot from among the young men of an overpopulated area and sent abroad to avoid civil strife, after they had multiplied themselves into quite a burdensome community.[64] These ideas and theories were eventually dropped by scholars.

In summary, it could be concluded that although the sagas, poems and stories told about the Vikings by foreigners have served to give us a glimpse into who they were as a society, they have been used as a species of double-edged sword, both providing insight and creating stereotypes. It could be suggested that the truth about the Vikings lies in the little they left behind,

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[62] Maravall Buckwalter, L., and J. Baten. "Valkyries: Was Gender Equality High in the Scandinavian Periphery Since Viking Times? Evidence from Enamel Hypoplasia and Height Ratios." *Economics & Human Biology* 34 (2019): 181–193. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2019.05.007.

[63] Raffield, B., N. Price, and M. Collard. "Male-Biased Operational Sex Ratios and the Viking Phenomenon: An Evolutionary Anthropological Perspective on Late Iron Age Scandinavian Raiding." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 38, no. 3 (2017): 315–324. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.10.013.

[64] Ibid.

and the art that they created in their clothing and household items. The development of their artistic styles is both stylistic and influential in understanding some of their beliefs and traditions, and how those artistic styles developed gives many indications of their advancements as a civilization. The Vikings were an organized and well settled society, which in a variety of ways were exemplary in a time where gender equality was non-existent, trade and seafaring relatively unexplored by Northern Europe, and textile production limited. When revisited, the Viking Age offers a plethora of interesting evidence which indicates that perhaps within ancient civilization existed a certain type of "modernity".

Viking identity through dress

Chapter 2

i. Introduction
ii. Defining Viking Age dress & identity
iii. Defining the act of dress & adornment
iv. How are stereotypes through dress formed?
v. Viking reenactments and dress interpretations in Scandinavia.
vi. Viking reenactments outside of Scandinavia
vii. Conclusions

Introduction

Many authors and social analysts credit psychoanalyst Erik Erikson as the first to use the term 'identity' in 1946 when describing human behavior. The definition of identity can be described in numerous ways, it can be used to define how a person describes themselves and extends into how they are defined by others. When defining Viking culture, there are several elements that help in creating a mental picture to define who they were as a people and as a culture. Pillaging, raiding, ships, and seafaring are some of the words most used when researching the Viking age, there is also the presence of Nordic mythology: Thor, Loki and Freyja and the battles and victories of gods and their marvelous creatures. These are some of the elements which surround the Vikings culture, which have been used to describe and interpret what they were like, but as sources, they are limited, and find many obstacles when it comes to answering the questions about what a daily life of dressing for a Viking could have been.

Viking settlements were functional and well prepared for the business of textiles and weaving, often designating a complete long house, for the production and care of yarns and dyes and coordinating the production around the seasons. Of course, the seasons would be especially important to a Viking woman working long hours on weaving and crafts, as proper lighting and sunlight would be important. In Scandinavia, the autumn and winter are extremely short on sunlight, in certain parts of Norway and Sweden the sun might not rise for more than an hour, if at all, and so the Vikings must have been well prepared for this to produce textiles effectively. The Viking production of textiles could be observed as not only work or employment, but as a type of self-definition. The making and weaving of cloth for the Vikings was part of their voyages, as it took a few years of weaving to make one sail for a Viking ship. Viking women at the loom were said to be working with magic, and many Viking myths alluded that women were the only ones that could work the fabric looms as they were spinning the threads of life. The cloth and the loom connected the Vikings with life, it was a part of their community, their beliefs, and their unity.

If the making of cloth was so important to the Viking, it is likely that how the cloth was used to express and dress themselves was just as important. It is important to ask the question ¿what did they want to say? On the search for answers, it is easy to create stereotypes of what an ancient culture could have dressed like, and what they wanted to convey through their dress, because through fragments leftover in brooches left in grave finds it is necessary to rely slightly on the

imagination to recreate what was being worn and how. Dress defines the entirety of what is worn as an extension to the self, and for this reason, stereotypes when trying to define a specific period of dress for any culture can be dangerous; stereotypes are not only powerful but lasting. Upon hearing or reading the word: *Viking,* there are images that will undoubtedly come to mind. But whether those images are accurate to the reality and history of Viking society is another topic. More importantly, learning and researching what is needed to achieve the clarity necessary to understand the identity of Vikings through dress, is where we gain understanding of who they were as a people. It is also where the start of separating stereotypes from historical fact becomes a possibility.

The clothing from the Viking era, although seemingly simple in cut and design, was surprisingly complex and elaborate. There was a system to how it was made and worn, and it took time to create the simplicity and wearability of the garments most recognized from the period. The apron dress for example, is a prime example in which functionality and style come together to create a garment which both defines the wearer as someone with important tasks to achieve, but also concerned with adornment and beauty. Held together at the shoulders by a series of pins and brooches, the garment was simply cut and draped easily over the woman wearing it, something which must have been convenient for the long days of working around the settlement and handling important matters around the farm and house, but the length of the dress showcased a certain status and modesty. Viking women wore long apron dresses which have been argued to have at times had a bit of a train which would touch the grown, or at least be long enough where the feet would not have shown. Female slaves however were not to wear dresses that long and were often depicted wearing simple short shifts. If dress is the extension of the self, it could be suggested that a Viking woman of a certain status would have wanted to show her wealth through the extension and length of her skirt or dress, indicating that more time was spent at the loom weaving the fabric of her dress, perhaps weaving a longer life for her future in her current life, and perhaps even granting her prosperity in the afterlife. Women's apron dresses often had a type of pocket or an added belt in which the woman would hang her keys, sewing utensils and some sort of knife, in addition to these types of items there have sometimes been finds of combs, and items for personal groom. A lot of these items present an image quite different to that of a *Hollywood* cinema Viking, instead of warriors in heavy furs and leather suits and coal-stained faces, there is instead a homemaker,

who perhaps runs the farm and legal matters around her settlement while her husband is away on raids. She keeps herself clean and tidy with the use of combs, brushes, and daily baths, she protects her home by keeping her keys close to her body, she protects her children and possibly farm animals from any danger by maintaining a weapon, and she maintains elegance and artfulness through her jewelry and length of dress.

Defining Viking Age Dress and Identity

Viking society created strong bonds with the production of textiles and design to assert power and presence during the Late Iron Age. It could be said that fashion (as recognized through clothing and design) emerges within a particular kind of society; one where social mobility is possible.[65] The Vikings had a great advantage when it came to mobility, because they had mastered the craft of building ships and boats, which successfully traveled as far across as the other side of the Atlantic. Due to their great advantage in travel, the Vikings were able to connect with a variety of trade routes, including the silk road. This created the opportunity to view many diverse types of cultures and forms of dress, as well as access to materials and textiles unknown to other cultures of the time.

This meant that the Vikings could be defined as a mobile society, which in essence gave them a certain modernity in comparison with other societies of the time. It could be argued that the Viking age was one of the first periods of modernity, textile manufacturing and distribution. This could also define Viking dress as fashion forward when it came to craftsmanship and design, also defining the importance the Vikings found in identity through their image. Appearances are very serious, not only because of what they make obvious to others, but also because the wrong appearance can be destructive in social conditions, making the person bad or good, and creating difficulties in terms of establishing a positive identity.[66] This presents itself as an issue when separating the Vikings true fashion identity from their current public image which has been arguably tainted through the lens of cinematic design and present-day media systems. It could be

[65]Entwistle, Joanne. "Theorizing Fashion & Dress." In *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress & Modern Social Theory*, 44. 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015.

[66] Sennett, Richard. "Personality in Public: New Images of the Body." In *The Fall of Public Man*, 170–170. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.

suggested that if an ancient society is presented as always in battle, there is little time or attention spent on understanding their identity as a civilization, and what we could learn about who they were as a people. The Vikings were originators of many weaving techniques and designs which are still used in present day, they gave foremost importance to creating long lasting garments, and were resourceful in making use of whatever textiles they had so that nothing would go to waste. This presents an identity concerned not only with appearance and functionality, but also with preservation of the land and resources. The people of the Viking age were not merely receiving and trading textiles, but they were also creators. Within fashion exists the understanding of life, history, and culture, working together to create identity. The history of fashion does not restrict itself to form and material goods alone. It encompasses social and cultural history, including aspects of human existence such as ecology, economy, social organization, ideology, and politics as well as religion, philosophy, and general worldviews.[67] With that there is an understanding that any practice taking place within the dress and adornment of a Viking, perhaps placed an emphasis on some form of change which had also taken place within their society in that present moment.

It could be argued that it was not all Viking men within a settlement who would leave their home to travel the seas, but perhaps a substantial majority of them. This means that the clothing worn by these men must have had to be durable, flexible, comfortable, lightweight but also warm (the textiles & materials will be further discussed in chapter 4). There must be a sense of envelopment in the clothing worn by Viking men, as a lot of it contained drapes and capes. The Scandinavian climate is cold and can be unforgiving, it is important to see how the climate can contribute to the dress identity. Layers are normally worn, which means the body is not only covered and touched by one type of fabric, but often also it can be two or maybe even three. This adds to the enveloping nature of the wearer. To be 'enveloped' in a fabric is comforting, most especially in cold wet weather aboard a ship. The movement of an enveloped body is different, there might be a certain degree of stiffness, but if the fabric extends from the body as it simultaneously envelops, it can create a certain ethereal quality in the wearer. The fabric extends from the body, therefore making the wearer longer, and or wider. A Viking man would have taken up more space aboard a ship, and supposing his rank and social standing was high and prosperous,

[67] Venborg Pedersen, Marianne, et al. "Prologue." In *Fashionable Encounters: Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, 14. Copenhagen, Denmark: Oxbow Books, 2014.

the quality, weight and length of his fabric would have been greater, allowing him to take up more space than his companions. This is important to analyze, because taking up more space has been indicative of a certain social standing throughout history and across civilizations. As previously noted, the Viking woman wearing the longer dress with a train, will overpower the slave girl in the shorter dress of lesser layers. As fabric expands, so does the identity of the wearer. When picturing a married Viking woman whose husband would have been away on a sea voyage, in her element she would take on a similar position of leadership as her husband would, as well as engage in laborious work. This could include bending over frequently to lift heavy items, milking cows, or goats for milk, and of course, working at the spindle whorls and looms. Her clothing would have had to adapt to these movements throughout the day. Viking women often wore a thinner and lighter layer underneath their woolen apron dresses, these layers more than likely provided a comfortable barrier between the skin and the dense wool which can be itchy and distracting (once again, the element of envelopment becomes apparent). Her long dress could have provided a certain level of modesty for bending down and moving about the farm and house, thus modesty becoming a part of her identity as woman of the house, also perhaps as a married woman. It is not uncommon throughout history to see a change in skirt length and or level of covering once a woman is married, this seems to also be the case for Viking society.

Movement becomes an integral part of understanding how an item of clothing performed on the wearer, in the case of the enveloped and modest identity of a Viking woman, clothes had to cover and protect the body, while also moving with it vigorously. Movement has also become an underrated aspect of dressed performance when it comes to archaeology, even within elements of the post Viking age Anglo-Saxon costume, it is suggested that movement was a conscious concern. Glitter bronze, gold and silver jewelry and the way it was decorated in relief would have created a protruding effect which would have created flashing, reflective surfaces as the wearer moved.[68] This is something to possibly consider when analyzing brooches worn on the shoulders or breasts of Viking women to hold up and (or) decorate their apron dresses. Reflective and shiny materials might have been another element in which the Vikings felt they could improve their appearance and accessories. However, the way they were worn suggests that the Vikings found importance in

[68] Blinkhorn, Paul, and Caroline G. Cumberpatch. *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology.* Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2014.

wearing and using the items of value they had available with regularity. Samples of female Viking brooches reveal that they were moved about consistently. The high rates of breakage among brooches, suggest that these items really were moved around daily and were not just brought out for occasional use or special situations[69]. Thus, indicating that they were an especially important part of female Viking identity.

Men's identities throughout the Viking age are mostly defined by the weapons they were buried with and by the records of raids and attacks around Europe and beyond. However, diligence was carefully paid to men's clothing as well, most especially when establishing a proper identity. Masculinity and femininity may have shifted and changed throughout the ages, and so past interpretations of what masculinity or femininity is in terms of dress may differ from current analysis. This presents a few obstacles when identifying and understanding the identity of the people observed, there may be established preconceived notions of what something could mean, and in other instances one could rely so heavily on past observations that innovative ideas and perspectives are stifled. Therefore, it is important to proceed with caution in stating what was considered "masculine" for a man of the Viking age. That being stated, there are accounts which historically show that the neckline of Viking men's tunics or shirts were of dire importance in determining their identity as masculine. Men's necklines were high, since a garment that revealed the chest was considered effeminate.[70] If Viking men had to wear high necklines to be established as masculine, it is easy to conclude that their identity was indeed reliant on their dress. Women, though modest in dress, would have worn a lower neckline in contrast to the men's higher more 'masculine' looks, to accentuate their femininity. It could be considered that any accentuation or visibility of the breast area was interpreted as a distinguishably female characteristic, and breasts were a distinctly female feature which the Vikings may have considered to be a feature of not solely attraction or beauty, but for provision and sustenance as is the case of breasts in the use of breastfeeding children. It is possible that breasts were important for female Vikings to accentuate in their dress because it represented a nourishing and well capable woman who could take diligent

[69] Blinkhorn, Paul, and Caroline G. Cumberpatch. "Dress, Bodies & Identities." In *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology*, 35. Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2014.

[70] Short, William R. "Clothing in the Viking Age." Hurstwic. Hurstwic LLC, 1999. Accessed January 27, 2023. https://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/clothing.htm.

care of her current or future children. Men had no need to display such features, and the insinuation of doing so would bring about the consequence of being viewed as someone who wanted to create an impression of false femininity through showcasing a female breast they did not have. On the other hand, male Vikings had other bodily parts to accentuate, and this is where the trouser became a very distinct part of male Viking identity. As one of the first civilizations to create a type of adjustable wearable trouser, this became a distinctly male garment during the Viking age. The contrasts between what men would have accentuated from their bodies, and what women would have shown is quite different. Women would be encouraged to conceal most of their bodies, meanwhile the men had to mostly conceal their chest area. Men's garments were also much more fitted than women's during this period, and that creates a vastly different effect to that of female clothing. It can be understood that through these differences, identity can exist in accentuating the body as much as it in concealing it. The following text supports this idea:

> Although clothing is foremost a practical measure for protecting against the sun, rain, cold and the wind, its major social purpose is to screen and control the display of the anatomical body. As such, clothing can act to accentuate or diminish the importance of anatomical features through exposure or concealment. This is not necessarily a straightforward process. For instance, the covering of male and female genitalia, observed as a bare minimum in the dress of most societies, accentuates, just as much as it attempts to diminish, the social significance of this anatomy. Clothing also adapts the shape and size of bodies, whether through the enlargement of the body with a cloak, the constricting of a waist with corset, or the elevation of height through high-heeled shoes. How the individual uses clothing to perform these morphological transformations, exposures and concealments is just as important to identity formation as the specific style of the brooch they wear, or the weave and color of a textile…The transformation of the anatomical body into a clothed, 'social skin', however, does not diminish its importance…The idea of clothing as a 'social skin' implies that garments and other adornments do not just conceal the body. Dress also inscribes the body's surface and demarcates its anatomical elements. Focal points on the body are signified by concealment, exposure, or ornamentation. Alternatively, bodily foci can arise from habits of dressing on the contrary…[71]

Defining the act of dress & adornment

The act of dressing is private and personal, it is normally done in a more secluded place, and is one of the first movements a person makes when beginning their day. There are a few choices to make when it comes to defining one's look or image for the day, but what is truly being

[71]. Blinkhorn, Paul, and Caroline G. Cumberpatch. "Shaping, Concealing & Exposing the Body." In *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology*, 30-31. Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2014.

defined is identity. It is not rare to find an item of clothing which on its own has no personality or life, but once associated with a particular person or era, becomes full of story and background. It is through the act of dressing and adorning that human beings have been able to cultivate a personal relationship with cloth and dress, seeing the body move in a particular way, and exploring how those movements can change and feel differently depending on what is worn.

For the Vikings, the act of dress meant planning ahead, and being resourceful with the materials available. Women oversaw the making of the garments, which meant a long process of looking for the animals and plants that would help in making the fibers and dyes, mastering the techniques of the looms and spindle machines to work endlessly at creating the fibers for the clothing, and having sufficient knowledge of the human body and design, to create clothing that was not only durable and wearable, but that perhaps also contained an element of artistic beauty. It has been argued that the importance of dress was so great for the Vikings that decisions in terms of property and land were made surrounding where cloth would be produced. Demands for new types of cloth in Merovingian and Viking-Age Norway, may have irreversibly altered how people formed rurality. For example, the potential expansion of heathland for coastal grazing in Norway, based on pollen data, may well be linked to the need to produce larger amounts of specific fabric types. [72] Areas of central Norway like present day Trondheim and the smaller towns surrounding it were once highly sought after for their flatter terrain and easier grounds for farming and textile production. When defining the act of dress and adornment in the Viking age, it is important to consider the element of time, and how long it would take to make a garment for it to be worn, as well as how important the garment was to the wearer once it was placed on the body. It could be argued that if such great lengths were taken to find proper land to produce plants and areas for grazing animals that would also provide fiber for the garments (sheep for example), then the act of dress was not an afterthought, but perhaps something much more sacred and even ceremonial.

In many aspects it could be argued that dress is less than appearance because it does not include, as appearance does, features of the undressed body, such as its shape and color as well as

[72] Bender Jørgensen, Lise, Marianne Hem Eriksen, and Ulla Mannering Pedersen. "Making the Cloth That Binds Us." In *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces and Movement*, edited by B. Rundberget, 161. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2014.

expression through gestures and movements. In other ways, dress is more than appearance for it includes aspects of the body modification supplements recorded by all the senses -not just sight alone as the term appearance implies. [73] This gives us an advantage in understanding the importance of dress for the Vikings and how they approached it, because although we are in the absence of their personas, we can understand what they wanted to highlight from their bodies and selves when living. Brooches, for example, are a unique form of dress and adornment, they were quite thick and oval, and it has been deduced through research that they were more than likely worn either on the female breast itself or directly above nearing the shoulder area. There are some debates as to whether they were indeed worn directly on the breast or on the shoulder. The brooch itself has a breast-like shape, with some brooches having designs similar to female cow udders or pig teats (this will be more thoroughly covered in Chapter 5).

Now that it has been established that brooches were worn with consistency and possibly utilized daily, it is easier to conclude that the act of daily dressing meant some handling of brooches, to create the desired effect of the dress. Through the act of wearing and using brooches, females of the Viking age were distinguished from men, although it cannot be said with absolute certainty that men never wore brooches during the Viking era, it is unlikely that they did, as they seem to be a female object, mostly found in female graves. The women wore clothes made from the same material as the men's clothing was, which would also have had a similar feeling when handled, and possibly did not provide differentiation from men. Women, however, wore large pieces of bronze jewelry; this would have produced a very different sensation of touch.[74] Through this we can conclude that the act of dressing was equally important for women and men in the Viking era, but that their acts of dress and adornment were very different from each other when it came to identifying themselves. Their clothes were made from the same materials, but the cuts had to accentuate and conceal distinct aspects of the body to aid in their individual constructions of identity. Brooches were important in establishing female identity and hence important in the act of dress.

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[73] Roach-Higgins, Mary Ellen, Joanne B. Eicher, and Kim K.P. Johnson. "Dress Versus Appearance." In *Dress and Identity*, 3. New York City, NY: Fairchild Publications, 1995.

[74] Bergerbrant, Sophie. *Bronze Age Identities: Costume, Conflict and Contact in Northern Europe 1600-1300 BC*. Lindome: Bricoleur Press, 2007, 64.

How are stereotypes through dress formed?

"Stereotypes" is the popular term for the images formed in our minds when thinking of a specific group of people. More frequently, in the common use of the term, "stereotype" is used to define a group image of a vocational, racial, cultural, or national group.[75] Stereotypes live in all aspects of life and art, dress and adornment are no exception, but how are these stereotypes formed? The answer often lies in perception and dissemination. There are a large variety of wrongful stereotypes that have been formed when it comes to Viking dress, and most of them are due to misunderstandings of texts, misreading of Nordic myths and of course, misinterpretations of the Icelandic sagas. Through misinterpreting rituals and myths, we find ourselves believing that Viking men wore bronze helmets with animal horns attached at the sides, and that the women who accompanied them in battle as the mythological Valkyries did, wore breastplates of gold or silver which would have been sculpted around the breasts to maintain their femininity in battle, nonetheless.

The dangers in the propagation of these stereotypes are that slowly they become a new story around a culture, possibly erasing what the culture wore originally and how they identified. The main reason for the misunderstanding of Viking culture is due to the rise of the Nazis in Germany. In attempts to unify Germany through the means of a particular propagandas and symbolisms which exalted the Aryan race, the Nazi's would organize events with "Old Norse " themes. A German *Dingspiel,* a semi-religious form of Germanic theater organized by the Nazis and performed in large outdoor arenas reminiscent of the Old Norse Thing meetings. The plot was often taken from the Edda or the Viking world, and the idea was to create a large collective manifestation of the Aryan spirit.[76] These images spread quickly through Germany thus encouraging some of the visual stereotypes we recognize today as part of Viking identity and dress. A few decades later, after Germany's humiliating defeat in the First World War, such ideas were

[75] Heaton, Marjorie M. "Stereotypes and Real People." *The English Journal* 35, no. 6 (1946): 327. https://doi.org/10.2307/807768.
[76] Sawyer, Peter H. "The Viking Legacy." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, 241-248. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.

turned into party politics by Adolph Hitler and his followers.[77] This adoption of the Old Norse mythologies and beliefs were perhaps one of the reasons why later on some of the advances and practices of the Vikings are dismissed by historians, it could be argued that the Nazi propaganda was crucial in creating some of the wrongful stereotypes, as well as creating a barrier for further investigation.

When the war ended in 1945 the Nazi form of Viking enthusiasm naturally came to an end, at least temporarily, and the Viking heritage in general lost much of its appeal not only in Germany but also in the Scandinavian countries, particularly among academics and intellectuals.[78]

Viking heritage had been reduced to the symbols which were used by the Nazi's throughout much of Europe, and since many of these Nazi organized events took place during the 20th century, it would have been much harder to investigate and understand what things had occurred during the Late Iron Age, as opposed to a much more recent period, by consequence it could be argued that what was established as "truth" became that which had taken place in the 1940's. Dragon ships and horned helmets became the protagonists in identifying a *Viking.* The stereotypes might have been further cemented by Nazi Germany, but they had begun to form as far back as the 1800s, in this photograph from 1869 we see a group of people in high society Stockholm, Sweden celebrating a fancy-dress ball, in which they are dressed as "Vikings", plenty of horned helmets are visible. Another cause for confusion is the term Viking itself, throughout history there have been many questions surrounding whether it was a title for a profession (in that case, a profession for which a person should dress in a particular way), or if truly, the word Viking described a civilization of people. Recently an eminent Anglo-Saxonist declared that the Vikings, 'as they were labeled', were a transnational imaginary constructed by the peoples with whom diverse groups from countries that are now Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, encountered.[79] When defining Viking identity through dress, this is a theory that could become particularly useful because it poses the question of whether what has been learned through the means of poetry, letters, and myths, has indeed created an idea that is unfounded in reality. There is evidence that indeed

[77] Sawyer, Peter H. "The Viking Legacy." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, 241-248. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Jesch, Judith. *The Viking Diaspora*. London, UK: Routledge, 2015.

Viking raids occurred around the European continent and beyond, and due to this it can be assumed that there was a particular clothing style and adornment that was used to perform these raiding practices. But what it does not do is provide an alternative to the Viking person that "raids" and "pillages", to the Viking as a collective group of men, women and children left behind on farms and organized settlements with identities they wished to construct, and stories they wanted to tell through their everyday dress; stories which more than likely did not include horned helmets.

Viking reenactments and dress interpretations in Scandinavia

Reenactments, although sometimes gimmicky and comical, can sometimes offer the opportunity for profound research and investigation needed to further understand a period or civilization. Reenactments are an interesting combination of research work as well as theater, it indulges the combination of work and play, which are generally separate from each other. Some of the more interesting aspects of reenactment I encountered throughout my research is the large presence of reenactors who also work in archaeological and research fields, thus creating a deeper relationship with their findings, and often allowing themselves to experience some of their findings in a kinetic way. This can be challenging when considering that the line between subjective experiences and objective academic research can become blurred.[80]

Reenactment licenses dressing up, pretending, and improvising, becoming the protagonist of research, and getting others to play along.[81] Viking reenactments within Scandinavia have become increasingly popular in present day, with people from all over Norway, Sweden and Denmark often taking months out of the year to prepare for different festivals and gatherings. At first it may perhaps seem outlandish and lacking in substance, but upon researching the lengths of research and investigations that are done to comprehend and rectify some of the Viking era misconceptions to live in and recreate the reality of the Viking philosophy as much as possible, opinions are subject to change. There are approximately 40 reenactment groups in Norway, with

[80] U. Moilanen and J. Sahramaa, "Exploring Materiality and Sensory Experience through Viking Age Reenactment," *Time and Mind* (2024): 1-18.

[81] Agnew, Vanessa. "Introduction: What is Reenactment?" *Project MUSE* 46, no. 3 (2004): 327–339. https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2005.0001.

an estimated 2000-4000 people involved, outside of Norway the number is much higher.[82] For many of the people involved in these groups the journey towards reconnecting with their Viking heritage is as personal and sacred as discovering ancestral roots. In the town of Gudvangen in Western Norway, there currently exists a permanent Viking village by the name of Njardarheimr which opened in 2017. Author Georg Olaf Reydarson Hansen who founded the village and is considered the leader or "Viking king" of the village, had researched and dedicated his life to bring the village into existence since the year 2000. Georg credits Mentors author Vera Henriksen and professor emeritus Arne Emil Christensen for helping him with his Viking age research since 1995. Georg has also been elemental in the foundation of some of the most popular reenactment groups in Norway.[83] Images of Georg in his Viking dress, are in many ways different from the images that could normally result from researching "Vikings", his clothes are made and dyed with traditional Late Iron Age methods and dyes, he's wearing plenty of Norwegian sheep's wool, linen undershirts, and weapons made in the design and aesthetics of Viking Age times. On his feet there are soft leather shoes, his beard is long but well kept, his hair is long and often worn loose underneath a woolen cap, and more importantly, he is wearing reasonably bright colors, something which is often mistakenly removed from Viking dress, especially for males. When asked about his clothing and dress, Georg decidedly explains that his identity is found in Viking dress and says that when he puts on his Viking clothes, he is not attempting to wear a costume or be someone that he is not, but rather to emphasize who he already is.[84]

There are still debates as to whether these acts of reenactment are helpful in breaking the stereotypes found in Viking culture, especially since a lot of the villages and reenactment festivals created to bring about historical accuracy have become so popular that they are now a form of "Viking tourism". Some argue that 'authenticity' is also often consciously invoked as an actual marketing strategy. Similarly, things such as souvenirs, are produced and consumed as "authentic" experiences. But, quite clearly, their production is contradictory because while it may be lucrative

[82] Lunde, Marius. *The Modern Vikings*. Visit Norway. Accessed January 28, 2023. https://www.visitnorway.com/things-to-do/art-culture/vikings/the-modern-vikings/.
[83] G.O. Reydarsson Hansen, "About Olafr Reydarsson," Olafr Reydarsson, 2020, https://olafrreydarsson.com/about/ (accessed January 28, 2023).
[84] M. Lunde, "The Modern Vikings," Visit Norway, n.d., https://www.visitnorway.com/things-to-do/art-culture/vikings/the-modern-vikings/ (accessed January 28, 2023).

for a host community, it may also lead to a craft product being mass produced and becoming another gimmick, disassociated from its original meaning.[85] However, people like Georg Olaf Reydarson Hansen have been making sure that anything he wears and identifies as Viking, is as true to historical facts as possible, especially when presenting that to a public. For many people, dressing as a Viking has indeed become a part of their present-day identity, almost as a form of cultural dress, versus a costume from a distant past. Dressing in Viking clothing in the present-day may be more than just a connection to the past for some, but rather an ancestral connection to their culture. It could be observed that most cultures indeed have some sort of "cultural dress" which is worn to identify oneself as being from a particular group of people, a nationality, a tribe, etc. It could be argued that through reenactment, Scandinavians have found a type of cultural dress which identifies their cultural history. Norway has the *bunad*, although though the term, *bunad,* did not yet exist in the 1840s, it was during this time that the concept of regional national costumes began to emerge, more than likely as a type of rebellion and implementation of Norwegian identity (through dress) after becoming independent from Denmark for a short period of time in 1814, before their final and formal independence on May 17, 1905.[86]

> Costumes composed of dark wool fabrics with multi–colored wool embroideries emerged as supposedly authentic bunads in the early twentieth century, yet there is hardly any region in Norway where these dresses had been traditionally worn. The first bunad to be popularly worn was the Hardanger version from the west coast of Norway, which was called the Nasjonalen [The National], as a truly national dress that symbolized Norway…But regardless, the concept of the bunad is rooted in the traditional, authentic Norwegian folk costume.[87]

Dress becomes important in connecting with a person's past, and for many Norwegians for example, the wearing of a *bunad* passed down by a grandmother or other relative is a way to connect with not only an important person, but with their region. Each *bunad* design and pattern is particular to a certain area of Norway, and is designed differently from city to city, but sometimes even towns separated by only a few miles can have variations in designs as well.[88]

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[85] C. Halewood and K. Hannam, "Viking heritage tourism," Annals of Tourism Research 28, no. 3 (2001): 565–580, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(00)00076-1.

[86] S. Strand, "The Norwegian Bunad: Peasant Dress, Embroidered Costume, and National Symbol," *The Journal of Dress History* 2, no. 3 (2018).

[87] Ibid.

[88] T.A. DuBois, "Costuming the European Social Body: A response," *The Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 440 (1998): 218, https://doi.org/10.2307/541942.

Sweden has the *Sverigedräkten,* a blue dress, worn with a yellow apron to match the colors of the Swedish flag, often worn with a white shirt underneath in a similar fashion to the *bunad*. Denmark is unique in the sense that although it has a national costume similar to both the Swedish and the Norwegian (aside from color as it is mostly in shades of reds, blacks, and whites), it does not have one particular costume to define their national identity, having as many as five or more.[89] What is interesting to observe in all of these national Scandinavian costumes are some of the connections found between each other as well as the notable similarities to Viking clothing. In observing the apron dresses worn by female Vikings during the Viking age, it is found that there are two distinct layers: the white softer underdress often made of linen or cotton, the heavier dress which is placed over the top often made of a dark wool, and of course the brooches. It could be suggested that although most Norwegian *bunads*, and other Scandinavian national costumes are said to have derived from various folk costumes throughout the 18th century, their similarities to Viking dress are very much present. The brooches have been replaced by various broches of silver, which are similarly placed around the shoulders or chest area, and multiple silver adornments are worn in terms of jewelry. Through research I have found that Viking dress and identity is still present in Scandinavia, albeit perhaps in its fair majority adapted to national costumes like the *bunad* and the *sverigedräkten*, but also by being brought to life through reenactment and researching of Viking dyes and materials.

The importance of preserving the identity of Scandinavia through Viking clothing persists and adapts to the present times even through costumes worn on stages as part of musical performances. The Norwegian band Heilung, combines heavy metal music with Viking traditions and mythology, and has often performed in Viking ritual garments, as well as traditional Viking weaves[90] made at the loom by Anna Økstra and Lasse Norlemann Mathiesen, both experts in historical recreation of Viking clothing, shoes, weapons, and leather-goods from Stavanger, Norway (Appendix A, Image A). Further north in the city of Trondheim is Tonje Rogersdatter, a historian and reenactor who has created a blog dedicated to teaching people how to make authentic

[89] L. Gradén, "FashioNordic: Folk costume as performance of genealogy and place," *Journal of Folklore Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 337, https://doi.org/10.2979/jfolkrese.51.3.337.

[90] I. West-Knights, "The Sound of the Vikings, With a Heavy Metal Twist:" *The New York Times*, September 2, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/02/arts/music/the-sound-of-the-vikings-with-a-heavy-metal-twist.html (accessed January 28, 2023).

Viking clothing and recreates them for a variety of Viking festivals like the ones hosted in Gudvangen. Tonje explains to her readers that although there are not many surviving garments from the Viking era, the few that are left, are carefully investigated, and researched through archaeological findings:

> First, I would like to point out that we don't have many garments left from the Viking age. In fact, we only have a few handfuls of close to intact garments. Some examples are the Viborg shirt, the Kragelund tunic, the Moselund tunic and the Skjoldhamn tunic and trousers. These are all from the transition period between the Viking age and the medieval period. We also have some later findings, from the early and mid-medieval period, like the Guddal shirts and the Herjolfsnes findings. It is also useful to look at older findings when we are trying to recreate garments. The Huldremose lady is one example of earlier Viking age findings. The Huldremose lady probably died sometime between 160 BCE and 340 CE. These are all very useful to look at in an attempt to recreate the clothes of the Vikings.[91]

In Sweden and Denmark, there are also a variety of reenactments and new investigations on Viking dress and identity. The National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, Denmark has arguably one of the largest collections of Viking artifacts containing jewelry, adornments and even clothing finds. The museum hosts important information on the Egtved girl finds and the Gundestrup Culdron, among many others. They have also created an entire section of the exhibition to explain the clothing and textile production methods of the Vikings, and how they were quite fashion conscious for their time.[92] Proving once again that obtaining new knowledge of the Viking dress and identity has become essential in understanding the foundations of the Viking age. Strängnäs, Sweden hosts the Stallarholmens Vikingr festival, one of many Viking Age festivals, where reenactors have brought in different clothes and shoes made in the traditional Viking age way to sell in the markets at the events. These are some of the ways in which Viking dress and finding identity through it, have become increasingly more popular throughout Scandinavia, and how it is arguably more helpful than it is damaging when it comes to learning more about the Viking civilization's dress and identity. In summary, through the variety of present-day Viking villages and reenactments throughout Scandinavia, it could be observed that many

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[91] T. Rogersdatter, "What to think about when making historical clothing," *Tonje Rogersdatter- My Historical Life: Viking life, living history, experimental archeology, reenactment, history, craft.*, May 6, 2019, https://tonjesvikinglife.home.blog/2019/05/06/what-to-think-about-when-making-historical-clothing/ (accessed September 19, 2020).

[92] *Join the Vikings - on raid*, National Museum of Denmark, n.d., https://en.natmus.dk/museums-and-palaces/the-national-museum-of-denmark/exhibitions/join-the-vikings-on-raid/ (accessed January 28, 2023).

Scandinavians have found a connection with their Viking ancestry from a different and more positive standpoint. As more emphasis is continually placed on Viking dress and adornment, by consequence the focus on the history of the Viking age could increasingly turn more towards craftsmanship and design, versus plundering and violence. Gimmicks aside, reenactments can be an embodied way to learn about history through dress.

Viking reenactments outside of Scandinavia

There is a strong relationship between the body and dress. Dress is not just a type of badge or emblem which proclaims or encodes the identities of its wearers, it is an embodied practice through which behaviors are learnt and identities are constructed, negotiated, and reinforced. Identity is more than just something that is represented or expressed but is something that is experienced through the (clothed) body.[93] This makes the case for reenactment so particularly important when it comes to understanding Viking age identity through the means of the clothed body. As there are no longer any survivors from the Viking age, it could be argued that present day bodies are the only ones which can truly embody the Viking age identity and express them in a way that could inform and clarify.

When it comes to my research on Viking reenactments outside of Scandinavia, I have had difficulties in separating the reenactments which would further add to some of the negative stereotypes, versus the ones which are well researched and performed with caution to preserve a more historically accurate narrative. Of course, when it comes to reenactments, especially those taking place outside of Scandinavia, there are more opportunities for freedom of interpretation and expression without the need to consult any local historian or archaeologists. For this reason, this portion of my research is limited and less abundant. One of the first Viking villages to analyze is Hedeby/Haithabu in Germany. As the biggest Viking village in the world and as home to some of the greatest Viking Age finds, Haithabu is one of the more accurate places where reenactments and recreation of Viking Age clothing take place. The Sommermarkt Haithabu which normally takes place on the grounds of the Haithabu Viking Museum in the summer [94], is one of the largest

[93] R. Weech and T.F. Martin, in *Dress and society: Contributions from archaeology* (Oxford; Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2017), 9–9.
[94] J. Garrett, *Viking Museum Haithabu*, Vikings of Bjornstad - Museum Haithabu, https://www.vikingsofbjornstad.com/MuseumHaithabu.shtm (accessed January 28, 2023).

Viking Age markets in the world and the only one in Germany. Located on the museum grounds, it has some of the largest attendance of Viking age reenactors globally. The market is arguably also one of the most historically accurate. Moreover, it could be argued that since the beginning of the 2000s, reenactors have become increasingly interested in aspects of the past not related to combat, such as traditional handicrafts and the recreation of pre-Christian rituals.[95]

Within Europe there exists a wide array of Viking-Age markets, including Ingolfshatid in Reykjavik, Iceland, the Festival of Slavs & Vikings in Wolin, Poland, Jorvik Viking Festival in York, England, as well as the Largs Viking Festival in Largs, Scotland. However, some of the biggest Viking Age festivals and events take place across the Atlantic in the United States and Canada. From the Runestone Festival in Oklahoma, the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba Canada to the extreme southern Florida Viking Festival in St. Petersburg Florida, the search for a Viking Identity has extended far across the Atlantic. Although plenty of the festivals in North America may have run the course of becoming more of a themed Viking gimmick, some of them like the Midwest Viking Festival & Scandinavian Hjernkomst in Minnesota, seek to preserve history and identity, through the inclusion of teaching attendees about old farming techniques as well as a marketplace for traditional leather-goods made through old Viking practices.[96]

It could be concluded that Viking Age dress and identity has impacted the culture of many outside of Scandinavia. it is uncertain to find the answers as to why it has become such an important part of history to recreate and reenact, opinions are varied on the subject, however, it could be argued that perhaps so many people are drawn to the Viking identity outside of Scandinavia due to the stereotypical imagery that is formed when Vikings are thought as the brave warriors who conquered much of Europe and the world, it could also be related to finding a sense of identity through clothing of an era that was seemingly adventurous and perhaps exciting. There is no concise answer to this portion of my research, but what is important to understand is, that although Viking reenactments outside of Scandinavia can make plenty of mistakes when it comes

[95] K. Karpińska, "4. women in Viking reenactment," in *The Vikings Reimagined*, 69–88, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513886-005 (2019).
[96] D. Melquist, *Scandinavian hjemkomst and Midwest Viking Festival: Visit Fargo*, Fargo-Moorhead, https://www.fargomoorhead.org/cultural-historical/article/scandinavian-hjemkomst-midwest-viking-festival/ (accessed January 28, 2023).

to authenticity in recreation, many could argue that they are creating more problems in terms of separating the myths about Vikings from the reality of their history. These claims are reasonable, as there are plenty of occasions on which these festivals aid in encouraging and celebrating these mistakes. However, one of the positive aspects of them is their ability to spark research and further questions. By asking the right questions, curiosity about Viking age dress can lead to the right answers, this is necessary when looking to understand the importance of identity through Viking dress, and why so many are working to keep it alive in other parts of the world.

Conclusions

In summary, it can be said that clothing is a powerful tool in understanding the identity of a society or of a person. In the absence of the person, sometimes it is necessary to rely on their dress and clothing practices. It can be used to both disclose and conceal social differences.[97] Through analyzing textile in itself (cloth) as well as the clothing designed and cut from the cloth, there is a means of investigating how social identities were formed and molded. It also emphasizes things like human interaction, how people related to each other through their clothed identities, and how they moved and communicated with the textiles they wore on their bodies. Every change in dress said something different about a Viking's identity, and what could have been the desired impression to convey.[98]

Through dress and adornment Viking women tell a story of both functionality and vanity, seeking to look ornate and elegant with brooches, but the brooches are worn daily, making use of what they have, wearing them with pride but enjoying them while they have them instead of keeping them locked away for a special event or moment. When the brooch is taken away from the Viking woman, we see underneath the layers of linen and wool, the blue or red dye of an apron dress, and perhaps a needle which holds it in place; most importantly we have an idea of how it was worn, how the identity of the wearer shaped the garment.

When dress is pulled apart from the body/self, as it is in the costume museum, we grasp only a fragment, a partial snapshot of dress, and our understanding of it is thus limited… What it

[97] M.L. Sørensen, "Reading dress: The construction of social categories and identities in Bronze Age Europe," *Journal of European Archaeology* 5, no. 1 (1997): 93–114, https://doi.org/10.1179/096576697800703656.
[98] Ibid.

cannot tell us is how the garment was worn, how the garment moved when on a body, what it sounded like when it moved and how it felt to the wearer. Without a body, dress lacks fullness and movement; it is incomplete.[99]

Therefore, to understand Viking identity, dress and adornment must be observed. The clothes, shoes, and jewelry left over are not silent, they are means of communication that were used to convey aspects of their personalities, their lives, and what they did. A deeper and sociological perspective of dress requires putting aside stereotypes and moving away from the consideration of dress as a collection of simple objects and looking instead at the way in which dress embodies and represents activity and one that is embedded within social interactions, relationships and beyond.[100]

Through understanding the relationship between clothing and body; there is a deeper understanding of the Vikings. When boarding ships for voyages Viking men relied on the enveloped and clothed identity which was made for them by their mothers, wives, and daughters. For the women, their identity revolved around the cloth, that which they produced, and that which they wore. Like in many of their myths, their lives and futures were spun at the loom.
Taking the importance of identity through dress into consideration, by studying artifacts connected to the body, one can also say something about the body and the society it lived within, even when the actual body and physical remains are no longer in existence.[101]

[99].J. Entwistle, "addressing the body," in *the fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 10–10.
[100] Ibid.
[101] S. Bergerbrant, *Bronze age identities: Costume, conflict and contact in Northern Europe 1600-1300 BC* (Lindome, Sweden: Bricoleur Press, 2007).

Viking Dress and Clothing

Chapter 3

i. Introduction to Viking Dress
ii. Women's Viking Dress and ways of wearing
iii. Men's Viking dress and ways of wearing
iv. Interpretations of Viking Dress
v. Conclusions

Introduction

The previous chapter covers the explanation of identity, what it means, and what it could mean in terms of dress for the Vikings and how they wanted to express their dressed body to the world. In this chapter, I seek to expand and explain some of the ways in which they expressed those ideas through dress, and how they wore their clothing. An apron dress had a specific role in the 'performance' of dress for a Viking Age woman, it was worn in specific way, and accessorized in a specific way as well, this makes a difference when understanding how a woman of that time must have looked, but also how it must have felt on the body to wear a garment of that type for everyday activities. In the same way, a Viking man would have worn a wool tunic, perhaps over a linen undershirt, but how long did the shirt have to be in relation to his trousers? Although it is estimated that men did not wear brooches, did they accessorize their shirts in any way? What did they try to say through these adornments and accessories?

These are some of the questions I would like to explore in this chapter, and some of the ones I have found most difficult to answer within the scope of my research. As there are limited archaeological Viking Age grave finds with complete items of clothing, it is often necessary to rely on the analysis of the sagas, Norse mythology as well as general knowledge found through accounts told by other civilizations which encountered the Vikings, to find some understanding as to how they wore the clothes that they made, and how they looked while wearing them. This creates a few issues: the first issue being the reliance on sagas, Eddic poetry, and Norse mythology. When it comes to relying on mythology for understanding of dress, the main problem that presents itself is whether the descriptions of dress were the product of the imagination of the writer or storyteller, it is not certain that some of those descriptions would have matched the reality of how the person would have worn the garment. Some accounts told through these sagas could be exaggerations of reality (as stories often are), there is no certainty in these descriptions, and hence that creates some limitations when researching the dress of the Vikings. Another issue is the limited research on the topic, as archaeology has only taken a more recent interest in the study of textiles, it has been challenging to find supporting evidence from multiple sources when it comes to understanding the clothing worn by the Vikings. My research on the topic relies heavily on the work of Thor Ewing, author of the book *Viking Clothing*, it is one of the only forms of literature which covers in detail some of the possible ways in which Viking men and women wore and created their clothes. As

well as a few details on the creation of textiles, designs, weaving and use of the loom. Lastly, the lack of archeological evidence with entire garments is another possible limitation. There is the Viborg shirt, and garment evidence from earlier ages such as the Bronze Age (pre-Viking age) and of course the latter Medieval era (post-Viking age) but understanding what happens in the middle takes understanding of both prior and latter developments, as well as relying on the research of textiles, and what tools were used to make the garments.

This has made this portion of my research challenging yet invigorating, I have found that in attempting to put together pieces of a puzzle when it comes to understanding Viking age clothing and how it was worn, there are several aspects of the Viking Age which need to be understood, studied and researched, in order to gain clarity on what the clothing would have been like. This allows for ample learning, and development, which is what fuels the passion for this topic. It is necessary to be conscious of the limitations there might exist within this area of Viking Age research, but it is exciting to see it develop in the future, to see what is yet to be discovered and learned about the Viking Age dress.

Introduction to Viking Dress

What is Viking dress? Firstly, it is important to define and explore the concept of "dress" itself. To say "dress" embodies more than just the garment on the wearer, but rather the full act of the wearer dressing, adorning, and accessorizing as well as the identity the wearer conveys through the act and daily performance in the dress that is being worn. Dress, so defined, includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, color added to the skin, hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements.[102] In addition to dress as a modification to the body through garment and adornment, it could be added that the act of dress is also an activity which implies a particular movement and relation with the body and the self. Not all garments are placed on the body in the same way, and thus, depending on what the garment is and how it moves and adapts, it could be moved in diverse ways and manipulated to fit

[102] M.E. Roach-Higgins and J.B. Eicher, *Dress and Identity* (New York, NY: Fairchild Publishing, 1995).

the body in different ways as well. These topics are important to clarify to be able to proceed with clarity on defining how the Vikings dressed, and how those garments were used regularly.

The act of Viking Age dress was primordially located in Scandinavia, this is important because weather would likely have been a feature in understanding how the Vikings would wear the clothes they did, and why they made the choices of using certain textiles over others. Dress in everyday life is always located spatially and temporarily in a specific place and climate: when getting dressed it is important to understand the situation, and how the garment would perform on the body during that occasion; dress is therefore a crucial dimension in the articulation of personal identity. [103] In the case of the Vikings, climate was arguably the main factor in determining the performance of a garment; firstly, the garment had to be warm, it had to cover the body appropriately, and shield it from the elements. Textiles more than likely had to be adapted to being water repellent or resistant, this gave the garment a different feel perhaps to a garment which wasn't adapted to repel water. The climate in Western Norway where a lot of noticeable Viking settlements were located is quite wet and humid, it rains very often, and it is likely that the Vikings had to adapt their clothing to protect themselves from the rain. Cloaks and capes were often used by both men and women, the cloaks and capes were more than likely made of wool, through a tight knit weave like the ones used for making sails. Underneath the woolen cape were usually garments with more wool, creating layers of warmth against the skin, preparing the body against wind gusts and freezing raindrops.

Dress is a way of seeing and understanding human-object interaction, and how it performs against and or with its surroundings, it can attribute meaning to the anatomy of the body by guiding or even restricting movement.[104] For the Vikings, there had to be specific ways in which to wear a cloak for it to be effective against the weather. The cloak could not be worn open, as it could easily fall off the shoulders and flop away in the wind, there would have had to have been some sort of enclosure or pin-like device to make sure that the cloak would stay around the neck and shoulders.

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[103] Entwistle, Jennifer. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.

[104] Blinkhorn, Paul, and Caroline Cumberpatch. "Dress, Bodies and Identity." In *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology*, edited by Caroline Cumberpatch, 28–29. Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2014.

Likewise, any sort of cape or shawl worn by a Viking woman, had to have been fastened unto the body with the aid of a pin or maybe a type of brooch. In understanding how clothing was made for the Vikings, we can see how fashion can contribute to generating and building an identity.[105]

It's been established that the clothing worn by the Vikings had to be warm and well suited for the rain, it also had to worn in a way which meant that the clothing stayed well-fasted to the body in case of wind gusts and stormier weather; the main fiber of choice was wool as it is warm and easier to make water-repellent, but how did it look on the body? Some of the archaeologists and researchers of notice who have helped developed these subjects are Agnes Geijer Swedish textile historian and archaeologist, Danish graphic artist and draftsman Flemming Bau who discovered that Viking age dress were covered with wool, and archaeologist Inga Hägg who was focused on reconstructing the costumes.[106] The work of these researchers and artists have become important in understanding how Viking clothing was worn, as well as starting discussions of interpretation and identity through clothing.

Inga Hägg did most of the research on the Hedeby/Haithabu finds and published two works in which the textile finds were analyzed and ultimately reconstructed.[107] Evidence from several graves indicate that brooches were worn on the upper area of the chest, smokkrs (apron dresses) have been highly debated concerning their shape and how they were worn. Hägg suggested that smokkrs were closed around the body, almost in the shape of a tube.[108] On the other hand Geijer believes that the dresses were rectangular pieces of cloth wrapped around the body, leaving an opening at the sides, while Bau believed that they were open in the front.[109] In the end Hägg's theory was further proven after analyzing that the particular fragment belonging to the smokkr was only 16 cm long, and its slimness as well as its shape being wider at the bottom than at the top

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[105] Uria Contador–Sanchez, Ana. "La Identidad a través de la moda." *Revista de Humanidades* 29 (2016): 131–152. Available at: https://doi.org/http://e-spacio.uned.es/fez/eserv/bibliuned:revistaRH-2016-29-7050/La_identidad_a_traves.pdf.

[106] Ewing, Thor. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[107] Hägg, Inga, Gunilla Göransson Nyberg, and Hilde Thunem Schweppe. *Die Textilfunde aus dem Hafen von Haithabu*. Neumünster, DE: Karl Wachholtz, 1984.

[108] Thunem, Hilde. "The Apron Dress from Haithabu Harbour, Viking Women: Clothing: The Apron Dress from Haithabu Harbor." Available at: https://urd.priv.no/viking/haithabu.html. Accessed February 2, 2022.

[109] Ibid.

indicated that this was a tailored garments and that it more than likely contained several panels, making it unlikely to have been left open in the front.[110] The smokkr presents an excellent opportunity to understand dress and the concept of how something is worn. It is through research and debates such as these that Viking Age garments are reconstructed and understood in a clearer fashion, by adding the embodiment expressed through the garment, we understand the culture better.

Women's Viking Dress and ways of wearing

It could be considered that perhaps Viking women would have been more concerned about wearing garments that were equally as aesthetically pleasing to the eye as they were functional than their male counterparts, as historically it is often seen that 'beauty' and anything pertaining to that aspect of a society, was the only public space which women were allowed to participate,[111] but that could have been different in the case of Viking Age women, as they are known to have played a bit more of an active role in their society. Beauty, nonetheless, must have been an important aspect in the clothing for women of the Viking age, this is evident when analyzing some of the brooches which were worn with the woolen apron dresses. Brooches were ornate and detailed (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5), more than likely adding the element of elegance needed to their daily attire, like how earrings or a necklace could complete an outfit in the present-day. Besides brooches, additional jewelry was also worn, mostly beads of different colors, gathered around the front of a garment like how a necklace would be worn, except it would have fallen closer to the chest than the neck. It is not certain that most Viking women would have been so heavily adorned. However, it is more likely that these adornments were left to a select minority of a certain social status, but it could be suggested that some attempts at similar adornments could have been attempted by women of lower social positions as well, albeit with resources of lesser quality.

[110] Thunem, Hilde. "The Apron Dress from Haithabu Harbour, Viking Women: Clothing: The Apron Dress from Haithabu Harbor." Accessed February 2, 2022. https://urd.priv.no/viking/haithabu.html.

[111] Bañuelos Madera, María Carmen. "La Influencia De La Moda En El Cambio Social De Los Valores Estéticos y Corporales." Junta de Andalucía [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/iam/catalogo/doc/1996/143487825.pdf.

A Viking woman would wear an outfit which consisted of two or three different layers, all containing different ways of utilizing textiles. The first layer consisted of a shift or underdress made of either linen or wool, it had sleeves, was sometimes pleated, and gathered at the neck.[112] Perhaps the linen layer could have been more comfortable and soothing to the skin, as well as helping reduce moisture from the body as linen is a lot more breathable than wool. There is also a possibility that linen was worn closer to the body because it is a lighter fabric which is easy to wash when soiled. A heavy woolen garment might not have been as often washed, also due to the properties of wool which can shrink and lose its shape when being overly worked in water. The linen undergarment would have provided a way to shield the outside less washable clothing from bodily sweat and odor. The following text by author Judith Jesch, explains the way the female Viking dress was worn, in more detail:

"The neck opening was basically a rectangular piece of material wrapped around the woman's body and reaching to her armpits; holding the gown up were looped straps over the woman's shoulders which were sewn at the back and joined to smaller loops sewn on to the front by means of the two oval brooches, the pins of which passed through the loops. Thus, the term 'brooch' is something of a misnomer since their function was more like a buckle."[113]

It could be suggested that brooches worked like a species of button from which the dresses were looped, however, since a lot of finds have registered fabric pinned at the back of the brooches, it might have been used more like a pin than a button. This could also indicate that neither the layer of linen or wool could have been very heavy and thick, had it been so, it would have probably caused a lot of problems in daily wear, as pins could move around and open easily depending on the weight of the garments it's holding up. In 1980, a small cemetery in Denmark (Køstrup) discovered a female Viking Age grave containing a pair of double-shelled oval brooches, from the brooches hung a knife, and eight beads, two of them were made of crystal; both the distinctive bossed nature of Viking brooches and the unusual position in which they were worn suggest that the Viking dress was unique from other garments of the time.[114] This gives Viking garments an

[112] Jesch, Judith. *Women in the Viking Age*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2005.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ewing, Thor. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

original design in the ancient dress world, and possibly a position of modernity and development within the categories of dress and fashion. Discovery of textiles from the Viking Age consistently show us that women's garments normally consisted of the long loose-fitting shift or underdress, it also could have contained a split-opening at the neck which could have also been fastened by a smaller brooch than those worn on the chest.[115] Over this garment there was the woolen dress, worn with brooches; shoulder brooches were usually oval especially those found in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, but finds from Finland show us that they were round and on the island of Gotland they were shaped like animal heads.[116] Indicating that brooches could have varied by region.

Variations in dress have also been found through research of the varying Viking graves around Scandinavia and the Nordic countries. This could be due to resources, trade possibilities, and perhaps even different desires in terms of what to be expressed through the dressed identities of each of these areas. At Hedeby for example, there is evidence that the woman's gown in the 10th century was tailored at the waist to emphasize the form of the body; the undergarment could have been lined and have decoration and ornamentation, while both at Birka and Hedeby remains of sleeves from a jacket or cape have been found.[117] Emphasizing the waist with a garment will add a certain distinction to the gender of the wearer, it is possible that during the Viking Age it was important to emphasize a certain form of "femininity" to contrast with the masculinity of the male garments. Female garments often included accessories for the head as well, it seems to have been part of the ensemble to wear some sort of decoration or protection on the head. The head was usually covered with a scarf knotted like a kerchief; otherwise, a woven, patterned headband was worn; finds in Sweden and Finland show that a band was possibly worn across the forehead, which in Finland was elaborately finished with bronze spiral.[118]

Later findings show evidence of how some of these costumes developed beyond the Viking Age and in communities in which had developed settlements. What is interesting about observing

[115] Roesdahl, Else, et al. "Thor's Hammers, Pendant Crosses and Other Amulets." In *From Viking to Crusader: The Scandinavians and Europe, 800-1200*, 190–193. New York, NY: Nordic Council of Ministers, 1992.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

these developments is that similar patterns are followed, giving further proof that the Viking Age garments were indeed worn in the way which has been suggested by most archaeologists and researchers. The costumes of some early Anglo-Saxon women in Early medieval England for example, continued to use a lot of similar layering to those worn by women during the Viking Age; the standard adults feminine costume was a peplos dress worn over another garment, often evidenced as a sleeved under-dress by decorative copper-alloy clasps that fastened the cuffs, when women reached the age of eighteen they often donned a cloak fastened by one or two substantial brooches.[119] The tradition of wearing brooches had continued, and although perhaps they were worn in different ways depending on the location and resources, the Viking Age influence is evident.

Footwear is not as heavily discussed or researched during the Viking Age as clothing garments, hence it is often difficult to find sufficient research and literature on the subject. One of the main burials in which we find Viking Age footwear is the Oseberg burial. The Oseberg burial contained the grave of two women from high society, this is known due to the great amount of items of luxury value within the grave; there was a body of an old woman with an arthritic foot, as well as a younger woman who accompanied her, there are a pair of ankle boots, not well-matched, presumably belonging to the woman with the arthritic foot, and two other ankle shoes– the woman's condition affected her right leg, although the boots give the impression that the left foot was the problem, perhaps because she put more weight on it.[120] The difference in shoe styles are an interesting observation, as this is a case where an item of clothing has been shaped to the body of the wearer indicating something about their life during that time, in this particular case the woman has a mismatched shoe, but we can see that issues with her feet where the reason behind it, and also provide a mental image of how this woman would have walked in those shoes while she was alive. The ankle shoe was the most common style of shoe in early in Sweden, leather shoes were often made from goatskin, and a leather thong sandal has been found which was made from

[119] Martin, Timothy, and Paul Blinkhorn. "Dressing the Anglo-Saxon Body: Corporeal Meanings and Artifacts in Early England." In *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology*, edited by Caroline Cumberpatch, 27–38. Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2014.

[120] Swann, J. "Viking Period 800-1030." In *History of Footwear in Norway, Sweden and Finland: Prehistory to 1950*, 39–48. Stockholm, Sweden: Kungl. Vitterhets, historie och antikvitets akademien (Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities), 2001.

calfskin (it is suggested these types of shoes were only for the summer, as winter shoes would be enclosed and use fur.[121] The Viking Age has little surviving footwear, with perhaps more found in the countries settled by the Vikings than in Scandinavia itself; in those particular countries it is now difficult to decide which shoes would be of a Viking design and which would be local, however, one feature does seem to repeat itself and it is the pointed back and upcurved sole, although the pointed back upcurved sole had been used as early as the fifth century B.C. in Trøndelag. [122] Although shoe finds from the Viking Age are limited, some of the fibers known to be used during the time indicate that perhaps there were indeed shoes made of leather from different animal skins, as well as linings of furs and wool; leather continues to be a great textile for retaining heat, even more so if it was lined with wool or fur on the interior parts of the shoe.

Danish cities like Ribe, Odense, and Viborg, have been useful in identifying and understanding the available resources and manufacturing of leather shoes in urban contexts during the Viking Age; historical skin samples analyzed have shown that sheep, goat, and cattle were used to produce shoes and perhaps different types of leathers were chosen for different purposes.[123] To summarize, although there haven't been as many shoe finds as clothing finds, it is evident that the Vikings did indeed find ways to build and make shoes which were functional and warm, and that perhaps they varied in style depending on the season. It is also evident that Viking women wore very similar, possibly identical shoe styles to their male counterparts for most of the Viking Age, although perhaps later in the period they developed a few differences.

In conclusion, thanks to the Oseberg grave finds there is a better picture of what female Viking Age clothing would have looked like, and how it would have been worn. The costumes consisted of one or more dresses in linen or wool, there would have been a shift, over the shift either a dress with sleeves or a sleeveless suspended dress was worn, supported by bossed oval brooches, over this garment a cape (with high social status wearing capes quilted with down or

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[121] Swann, J. "Viking Period 800-1030." In *History of Footwear in Norway, Sweden and Finland: Prehistory to 1950*, 39–48. Stockholm, Sweden: Kungl. Vitterhets, historie och antikvitets akademien (Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities), 2001.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Brandt, L.Ø., Ebsen, J.A., and Haase, K. "Leather Shoes in early Danish cities: Choices of animal resources and specialization of crafts in Viking and medieval Denmark." *European Journal of Archaeology* 23, no. 3 (2020): 428–450. https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2020.2.

fur); women must have worn many layers of thin dresses stacked on top of each other often alternating linen, wool, down and probably also garments made of other vegetable fibers which have rotted away due to time and grave conditions.[124] Several finds and research indicate that slaves worn mid-calf or knee-length dresses, whilst dresses with long hems (including trains) and narrow waistlines were for superior women; also in Birka a coat was found where the neckline was cut lower as to show the oval brooches which suspend the long dress.[125] There are varying opinions from archaeologists are researchers regarding small of the female Viking dress; whether it was open at the sides, in the front, or whether it was a solid tube of fabric with straps attached, or two rectangular pieces which were sewn together leaving an opening for the underdress to show through. In the end, it could be concluded that there are more similar ideas regarding the way Viking dresses were worn than competing ones, this aids in understanding how they performed.

Men's Viking dress and ways of wearing

In comparing women and men of the Viking Age, it could be argued that it is the men's garments from the Viking Age which have been ruthlessly stereotyped by the media and beyond. In recent years there have been a few more developments in terms of showing appropriate Viking Age clothing on the men which are shown throughout different media platforms, most especially in films and TV shows. One of the greatest stereotypes that has been created about Viking men is that they dressed completely devoid of color. Due to gender stereotypes and because many of today's gender norms limit our perception of how ancient societies functioned, the idea has spread that men did not wear certain types of clothing; there is a widespread thought that while women may have been interested in wearing color, men were not. Another faulty belief is that perhaps they were not as adorned and or decorated as their female counterparts, however, this could not be further from the truth when it came to men of the Viking Age as they were very interested in both grooming and fashion.

The Vikings were fond of color and were skilled in extracting the finest and strongest colors from nature's hand. Leave's bark, roots and lichens are used to make dyes. The Vikings could also get more exclusive dyes from the continent. Madder was a prized dye, the Oseberg queen's dress *was dyed red with madder. Blue was a difficult color to produce and was therefore exclusive. Most*

[124] Nille Glæsel, *Viking: Dress, Garment, Clothing* (S.l.: Nille Glæsel, 2014), 28.
[125] Ibid.

dyes are extracted through boiling, but blue is extracted from a plant called woad that grew everywhere. To free the blue dye you needed ammonia, this the Vikings obtained from Urine. The most beautiful blue color a talented Viking could make is called "potteblåt" (potty blue) or in English "royal blue".[126]

For a man of the Viking Age, color was a symbol of status, power, and possibly distinction from slaves and servants, it is unlikely that the clothing of servants and slaves contained much color, as they were normally given lesser quality fabrics and it is doubtful that they would have been further processed through dyes as this meant taking attention away from the clothing of more important members of the Viking Age society. Therefore, it could be easily assumed that a Viking man of a certain social standing more than likely wore plenty of color and went to great lengths to obtain the right supplies to make the colors desired. Men probably made more use of leather accessories than women did, most especially if they were also going on Viking voyages; this gave them a particular look when analyzing the layers of clothing they would have worn, and how they would have worn them. Leather goods were more than likely belts, types of purses or encasements for swords and knives. If a sword was being carried, it was often inside a scabbard (a protective case for a sword, dagger, or bayonet) suspended from a baldric over one shoulder, both belts and baldrics were fastened with buckle, and were often embellished with bronze or silver mounts.[127] It is likely that men carried bigger and heavier weapons than the women did, and therefore they could have worn thicker belts which allowed for layering of weapons and other purses or smaller pouches in which to carry things that they needed.

A common outer covering for men was also a cloak, likely made of wool and it could have also been cowled in the neck area, globes, finger-gloves and mittens were used and made of wool or fur; depending on the weather and situation it is estimated that there were various kinds of hats and caps worn by Viking men as well: tight-fitting caps of wool or other warm material, fur hats were also possible (often called a 'Russian hat'), and it has been suggested that some men preferred to wear a helmet not much more elaborate than a close-fitting metal bowl.[128] Cloaks were worn by

[126] Nille Glæsel, *Viking: Dress, Garment, Clothing* (S.l.: Nille Glæsel, 2014), 28.

[127] Foote, P. "Dress and Adornment." In *The Viking Achievement: The Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia*, edited by D.M. Wilson, 173–174. London, UK: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970.

[128] F Foote, P. "Dress and Adornment." In *The Viking Achievement: The Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia*, edited by D.M. Wilson, 173–174. London, UK: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970.

both genders, but its design and the manner in which they were worn vary by gender and chronology, Scandinavian textile material from the Viking age can attest to the existence of several types of jackets worn by males and females, of these jackets, at least one resembles the iconographical kaftans often pictures on gold foils and spoken about in sagas.[129] It can be seen through some of these textile finds that men more than likely had a variety of jacket and cloak styles which they wore depending on occasion and climate, the amount of jackets that one Viking man would own at a time however, is highly dependent on social status and what was available to him during that time, it is likely that although varieties existed, there weren't as many expressed in everyday life by middle class Viking men, but that perhaps they owned a heavier cloak for the winter and a lighter one for the summer, more than likely adjusting the textiles used accordingly.

Although it is within the Migration period (AD 400-500) that most of the elaborate and ornate material culture appear in terms of jewelry and accessories [130], the Viking Age could boast of sufficient finds to indicate an interest in adornment. The Nydam mose archaeological site located at Øster Sotrrup near Sønderborg Denmark had a large grave find of many small silver clasps in different variations; clasps are well known in Scandinavia from around 300 AD onwards, such hooks and eyes had the same function as cuff links or simple buttons nowadays and were often placed in rows.[131] This further proves that garments were adorned and detailed. Although it could be assumed that they were worn as cuff links or buttons on sleeves, they are not the only way in which they could have been worn. There are examples where they closed the bottommost part of a tunic along the seams on the right and left side – again a decoration of the seams – as well as on trousers down on the ankles. In any case, they are valuable decorations of clothing; some of the tiny fragments of textiles connected to clasps found in Nydam are reddish in color, no traces of coarse or carelessly made textiles were found.[132] It has been suggested that there was

[129] Mannering, U. *Iconic Costumes: Scandinavian Late Iron Age Costume Iconography*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2021.
[130] Vedeler, M., Kristoffersen, E.S., and Røstad, I.M. "Dressed for ritual, dressed for life. A migration-period grave from Sande in Norway." *Medieval Archaeology* 62, no. 1 (2018): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2018.1451470.
[131] Möller-Wiering, S. "Warrior Costumes in Iron Age Weapon Deposits." In *Wearing the Cloak*, 109–116. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1ds7f.11.
[132] Möller-Wiering, S. "Warrior Costumes in Iron Age Weapon Deposits." In *Wearing the Cloak*, 109–116. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1ds7f.11.

considerably more variety in male clothes than female clothes during the Viking Age.[133] Women's clothing was much less diversified and traditional, maintaining similar patterns and styles. This raises important questions regarding gender stereotypes of the time, and why perhaps men felt more freedom to experiment with new and different styles, and women stuck to the same looks even abroad, were they somewhat restricted by their societal standards or were they simply not as interested? It could be argued that their lesser interest came from their limits in travel, whereas the men could travel more freely and be exposed to different ideas on first account. Apparently, certain merchants and traders during the Viking Age, who traveled widely, like to introduce new and foreign fashions in their clothing, while women, who were evidently less fashion-conscious, typically maintained their dress close to the traditional Scandinavian designs even after they had moved to the colonies in the East and West.[134] This is perhaps a reasonable explanation to why women were seemingly not as interested in varied fashion as the men are described to be.

The book *Daily Life of the Vikings* by Kristen Wolf goes into ample detail about the different layers worn by men of the Viking age, and some of the pieces which were crucial to their ensemble. The description in the following text has been important to my research in understanding how these garments would have performed on the body.

"A typical male outfit probably consisted of an undershirt and under breeches (long or short) of wool or linen, though concrete evidence for the existence of men's and women's underwear is lacking. On top of the shirt, a knee-length, sleeved tunic, or kaftan-like jacket was worn, which, if the man was wealthy, might have decorative silk borders and embroideries with gold and silver thread. A bead was sometimes used as a button to close the opening at the neck. Such tunics or jackets could be tight fitting or loose. The small bronze buttons found in graves in Birka on Lake Mälaren in Sweden presumably belonged to tight-fitting garments. A belt or sash was worn around the middle, fastened with buckles of bronze or silver."[135]

[133] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Wolf, K. *Daily Life of the Vikings*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

Another aspect which is often overlooked when analyzing clothing, is the sounds these clothes and adornments would have made when on the body of the wearer, surely buttons made of bronze would have brushed against belt buckles and made a particular sound, as well as the swooshing sound of cloaks and jackets being placed over the shoulders. Men would have also carried a knife and purse attached to a belt, though sometimes the knife was carried on a cord around the neck. A coat or cloak of heavier material –fur, hide, or wool–was worn on top of the tunic, and it was fastened over the right shoulder either by a large penannular brooch or pin or by ties, so that the sword arm could be kept free.[136] The cloaks found in Birka show evidence of fur trims made of beaver and marten, fashion in trousers or breeches, which were kept up by a belt, seems to have varied considerably.[137] Viking men of poor social standing, like slaves for example, would not have owned very elaborate clothes of course. It is likely that they had very rough woolen clothes, which weren't colorful, and that covered the essentials, but of course there isn't as much surviving evidence concerning the clothes of slaves or servants. Children may have been dressed in a similar way, though very little is known about their clothing.

Interpretations of Viking Dress

Historically there have been varying interpretations about Viking Dress, how it was worn and what they could mean. The Vikings had interactions with people from all over the world, and several accounts have been written about them from the perspectives of those many encounters. Reading about those encounters may create biases when it comes to interpreting their appearance. Roman soldiers on first encounter with Viking men in their trousers, believed them to be barbaric and effeminate,[138] an irony to consider that in the present-day trousers are the ultimate symbol of masculinity, extending itself to symbolize 'manhood' even on the covers of bathroom doors. Upon his arrival from the frontier on the Rhine, the Roman general Aulus Caecina, shocked the toga-clad Roman citizens of Northern Italy by wearing Germanic trousers and a cloak of various colors.[139] The idea seemingly caught on and soon most Roman soldiers began to don the very clothes they had criticized so heavily; long-sleeved tunics, tight trousers and brightly colored

[136] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Olson, K. *Masculinity and Dress in Roman Antiquity*. London, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2020.
[139] Möller-Wiering, S. "Warrior Costumes in Iron Age Weapon Deposits." In *Wearing the Cloak*, 109–116. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1ds7f.11.

cloaks, all previously considered effeminate and barbarian, became the new third century dress, worn in all branches of the Roman army.[140] Through this anecdote it is evident that clothing identity and interpretation work hand in hand and can determine how a person or civilization is seen. What at first was gendered as "feminine" by ancient Rome in reference to the Vikings and their trousers with tunics, was later changed to "masculine" by the same, and hence the interpretation of trousers was now different and accepted.

One of the interpretations about the Vikings and their dress is whether they placed more importance on homespun goods, over obtaining foreign goods, according to the sagas, when given the choice the Vikings opted for imported cloth; it is said that Icelandic men were particularly vain in preferring exotic imported goods over the garments made at home.[141] It is highly possible that the Vikings themselves considered that with imported goods they were superior, more luxurious and therefore more respected and revered. It could be argued that the Vikings considered the resources from their own land poor and lacking in value, and imported goods, more valuable.

The Vikings and their habits of dress had been interpreted by the English for many years, Viking Age costume expert Elizabeth Wincott Heckett who published the book *Viking Age Headcoverings from Dublin* has researched that the Vikings had a reputation of wearing expensive clothing, especially hooded cloaks sometimes adorned with pearls; they were often prepared to spend substantial amounts of money on luxury cloth.[142] What we know about the Vikings is that they were well prepared to navigate the seas with a high standard of shipbuilding and well-shaped boats,[143] and because of their advanced skills in boat building and seafaring they were able to obtain textiles, dyes, and jewelry from places that other civilizations would not have been able to obtain as easily.[144] The many sea travels of the Vikings also allowed them to be viewed and

[140] Möller-Wiering, S. "Warrior Costumes in Iron Age Weapon Deposits." In *Wearing the Cloak*, 109–116. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1ds7f.11.

[141] Jochens, J. *Women in Old Norse Society*. Ithaca, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

[142] Owen-Crocker, G.R. *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2010.

[143] Brøgger, A.W. "The Vikings of the Mediterranean and the Vikings of the North." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 37 (1937): 13–20. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0068245400017925.

[144] Wolf, K. *Viking Age: Everyday Life during the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. Sterling, New York, NY: Sterling, 2014.

observed by more people, and by consequence they were also written about and described.[145] These written accounts may have created some of the issues in interpreting how they were dressed and what they meant to convey, however, most of the accounts written about the Vikings seem to have substantial similarities in regards to some of the items they wore, and their dedication to finding the textiles and dyes they desired, this is helpful in understanding the best ways to interpret Viking Age dress.

Conclusions

There are a couple of things which can be established about Viking dress, what they wore, and how they wore their garments. The first being that they wore plenty of layers, both men and women of the Viking Age had a species of undergarment normally made of linen (but could have also been made of wool), which they placed on their bodies first. After the linen garment, (which once again was probably worn as a type of protection against a seemingly itchy wool, or also to not soil their outer garments), they placed a heavier woolen garment. For women, the woolen garment was normally a rectangular shaped apron dress which was fastened with straps that were looped in such a way that needed the assistance of a brooch, in which several layers of fabric were then pinned to. Women's garments were often accompanied by a cloak, and the cloak was often adorned and lined with a warmer material such as down or fur. The brooches were of great importance to Viking women, and they seem to have been worn daily with their dresses.

The textiles from the Viking age reflect long-distance trading networks; in the Birka grave finds here are Chinese silks from the Tang dynasty, rich finds of silk from Syria and Arabia, and further exotic silks are also found at Oseberg.[146] This meant that for a great percentage of women in the Viking Age, dressing in fine exotic fabrics and prints was possible, even if just through the means of small samite silk strips which decorated the hems. What is most important to consider is the importance that was placed on adorning even the hems of garments with silk or fur. For women, the use of color was important, especially when it came to showing a certain status, their clothes had complicated weaves and patterns. An interesting fact which further impacts the meanings of

[145] Jesch, J. "The Crew, the Fleet and Battles at Sea." In *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse*, 180–215. Boydell & Brewer, 2008.
[146] Larsson, A., Price, N.S., and Brink, S. "Viking Age Textiles." In *The Viking World*, 181–185. London, UK: Routledge, 2012.

identity through dress is the use of color and how it could have meant different things for various occasions. For example, It has been found through research that an estimated 23 textile samples from the Viking Age tested positive for the dye indigotin (indigo), implying that most of the dresses worn by the women at the time of burial were dyed blue, corroborating with the Icelandic sagas which tell that the color blue is associated with death.[147] This could possibly lead to the theory that during their daily lives, Viking Age women might not have worn as much blue, and instead wore reds or possibly greens, what is certain is that they found it important to wear color as well as understand color.

If blues were associated with death during the Viking Age, it could be assumed that perhaps other colors were descriptive of other things, thus creating a type of color dictionary of what should be worn for what moment of life and beyond. However, another important thing to consider, is that when it pertains to women's dress, bridal clothes may have also been used as burial clothes, and that could possibly contradict the use of the color blue for deaths and burial purposes only; textiles and grave goods are evidently not arranged at random but intentionally displayed by the descendants to signify the social identity of the deceased,[148] therefore indicating that perhaps a burial dress could have been seen as something celebratory and similar to a wedding in certain aspects –this however is just an assumption, as death and burials are not the main focus of my research, but are important to consider when analyzing what the purpose was behind certain garments and textiles.

When females appear in Viking Age monumental graves, they are generally understood as representing housekeepers with administrative roles over certain domains within rural households—food storage and production, maintenance of clothes and other textiles.[149] These grave finds show that women of higher ranks in Scandinavia were buried in their best clothes: in one or two dresses, sometimes with a cloak; the fabrics were made in different qualities, related to

[147] Smith, H.M. "Weaving in the Viking Age: Iceland and the North Atlantic Expansion." In *The Valkyries' Loom: The Archaeology of Cloth Production and Female Power in the North Atlantic*, 30–34. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2023.
[148] Øye, I., Netherton, R., and Wright, M.L. "Production, Quality, and Social Status in Viking Age Dress: Three Cases from Western Norway." In *Medieval Clothing and Textiles 11*, 1–28. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2015.
[149] Ibid.

their function, in some cases the cloak seems to have been the most exclusive garment perhaps signaling its great importance to the wearer, however, all of the textiles and tools indicate textile production on a high level,[150] and a desire to elevate the identity through the garments worn. Visual effects in woven styles have been used since the beginnings of time, and it is natural that these would only develop into ways of describing the self through dress; men and women embellished the textiles used especially for garments and as we have seen from Viking Age grave finds, different techniques were introduced to transform a flat woven cloth,[151] into something descriptive of the person who would wear it, and perhaps since it is female graves that contain brooches with fabric remnants attached, it is female burials which are heavily overrepresented with regard to textiles.[152] Norse poets of the Viking age would often describe a woman as a *lín-Gefn* or *lín-eik*, a "linen goddess" or a "linen oak" this gives further proof that Viking women must have been routinely wearing a visible linen undergarment, which by the tenth century was generally pleated.[153] The costume is described in detail in the Viking-era poem Rígspula st.16, where it is worn by Amma, the of a yeoman farmer:

> There sat a woman…a 'sveigr' was on her head, a 'smock' on her chest, a cloth was at her neck, 'dwarf' brooches at her shoulders... but the lady of the house was thinking of her arms, smoothing the linen, pleating the sleeves. [154]

Through the understanding of women's clothing in the Viking Age and how it was described in the sagas, Eddic poetry, and beyond, there is a more definitive image which is drawn to interpret how the women of the Viking Age would have looked, and how they would have made use of their garments. To summarize this portion of the chapter, I would like to add that women's dress during the Viking Age might not have been as influenced by the styles witnessed abroad as the men's clothing could have been, however, it has still been noted by researchers that the

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[150] Øye, I., Netherton, R., and Wright, M.L. "Production, Quality, and Social Status in Viking Age Dress: Three Cases from Western Norway." In *Medieval Clothing and Textiles 11*, 1–28. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2015.

[151] Rast-Eicher, A., and Grömer, K. "To Pleat or Not to Pleat – An Early History of Creating Three-Dimensional Linear Textile Structures." *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien. Serie A für Mineralogie und Petrographie, Geologie und Paläontologie, Anthropologie und Prähistorie* 121 (2019): 83–112. https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/26595688.

[152] Øye, I., Netherton, R., and Wright, M.L. "Production, Quality, and Social Status in Viking Age Dress: Three Cases from Western Norway." In *Medieval Clothing and Textiles 11*, 1–28. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2015.

[153] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[154] Ibid.

suspended dress and its accompanying brooches went rapidly out of fashion at the end of the Viking Age;[155] It could be suggested that perhaps enough trade and interaction had occurred which influenced the style of women's dress, changing its design all together by the end of the Viking Age.

Men of the Viking Age were also not timid when wearing color, and research shows that any ideas about them wearing furs and neutrals should be left behind. Although it is easy to assume that perhaps it was the women's clothing which was the most spectacular in the Viking Age, it is the male burials which contain even more decorative textiles than the female graves; a large number of burials show that men also wore headbands or thin diadems of gold and silver, from which small pendants (also in gold and silver) hung down like a necklace, decorated with glittering mirror fragments.[156] The fantastical details of male dress during the Viking Age further contradicts some of the present-day stereotypes about how they were dressed, and also suggests that it is perhaps modern day gender-norms which have contributed to the idea that the most masculine of Vikings must have been dressed in the darkest most ruddy neutrals so as to identify himself as the fearless warrior able to pillage, raid and destroy villages and rob monasteries without mercy.

Great details of embroidery can be found in the dress of a man buried in Mammen in Denmark; threads of precious metals, such as silver-on-silk finds from one of the Valsgärde boat graves from Swedish Uppland –giving way to the idea that perhaps the Eddic poem *Rígspula* from the 10th century, might have been describing the dress of a man with a brooch on his chest rather than that of a female.[157] It is important to consider that when applying present-day concepts of gender to our understanding of male Viking dress for example, there may be differences in perception.[158] When it comes to male grave finds, there are a few differences from female grave finds which should be considered. Archaeological evidence shows that Vikings could be buried in linen shirts, which were worn with a belt and often a cloak, but without a woolen overshirt or

[155] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[156] Larsson, A., Price, N.S., and Brink, S. "Viking Age Textiles." In *The Viking World*, 181–185. London, UK: Routledge, 2012.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Stig Sørensen, M.L. "Gender, Material Culture, and Identity in the Viking Diaspora." *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009): 253–269. https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/45019127.

tunic.[159] Linen shirts were worn as undergarments beneath tunics, but sometimes were worn on their own in the summer,[160] raising the question of whether the male graves which contained solely a linen shirt indicated that he was buried during the summer, or if in difference to females of the Viking Age, men were not as required to layer. At the grave finds in Birka, were the remains of a linen shirt decorated with silk and with silver braids; this shirt was in fact worn under a caftan, but it cannot have been intended only for use as underwear or nightwear due to its rich decoration and embroidery –it must have been worn without a caftan for it to have been seen.[161] It could be summarized that male dress during the Viking age was elaborate, decorative and colorful, plenty of attention was paid to the detail of how it would be elaborated and made, how they would wear it, and how they identified themselves through those clothes. Men had the advantage of traveling further than women during the Viking Age and therefore had more fashion influences from other cultures, which aided in developing their dress and style even further than the women of their time.

Societal inscriptions impact how we are perceived and may be at odds with our embodied or desired experiences, this has impacted how the Vikings were viewed and how they continue to be viewed historically; by producing visible gendered cultural inscriptions, they can often be critiqued rather than adopted and perpetuated, thus creating a mix of opinions and thoughts on the subject.[162] Tacitus, a Roman politician and historian who encountered the Vikings during his travels gave a detailed description on their attire, his descriptions corroborate some of the established finds on male dress in the Viking Age, however, as most descriptions by foreigners, they are open to interpretation and can be considered rather subjective in many regards, the text reads:

The clothing for everyone is the cloak, which is fastened by a brooch or failing that by thorn; they spend whole days at the fire by the hearth in nothing else. The greatest landowners are marked out by clothes, not loose like the Sarmatians' and the Parthians', but tight and shaping every limb. And they wear the skins of wild animals –casually near the coasts, more carefully

[159] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[160] Hennessy, K., and Fischel, A. "Medieval Romance and Trade: The Age of Migrations 600-1100." In *Fashion: The Definitive History of Costume and Style*, 40–41. New York, NY: DK Publishing, 2012.

[161] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[162] Keifer-Boyd, K. "A Pedagogy to Expose and Critique Gendered Cultural Stereotypes Embedded in Art Interpretations." *Studies in Art Education* 44, no. 4 (2003): 315–334. https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/1321020.

farther off as there is no trading culture. The animals are chosen, and the piebald coats are flayed and the skins of beasts which are born of the Outer Ocean and the unknown seas.[163]

Accounts about Viking Dress come from foreigners who encountered the Vikings, this can cause quite a few complications when it comes to understanding Viking dress and culture, as many of the cultural differences in the observers and their accounts can generate views which could arguably contradict the reality of what was. One of the most noticeable accounts about Vikings written by a foreigner, were those by Ibn Fadlan;[164] Although quite famous, a lot of what is written is believed to have pertained to the Volga Bulgars and the 'Rus' which were not the original Vikings which originated in Scandinavia, and which have been the focus of my research.[165]

Some of the information that is transmitted silently from person to person by dress is not easily translatable into words, dress can play a similar role in the telling of "dress stories," narratives that – through their concrete descriptions, literary or poetic qualities can create a dress identity for the wearer (although that identity may not be the original intention of the wearer).[166] Interpretations can be subjective. However, some of the interpretations concerning the Vikings and their dress can be useful if looked at carefully.

We know from Ibn Fadlan and from Tacitus that Viking men did indeed wear cloaks, and that they were worn in a particular way in which an arm was left out so that swords could be used with ease in case of any brawl or battle. In conclusion, Viking dress was very descriptive of who the Vikings were as a people, the things that they did, the trades they were involved in, and the climate they lived in. There was attention paid to the importance of finding the right textiles to make the different garments in the layers that they wore. The dress and attire of the Vikings was noticeable enough that it was written about in several accounts, so that even in the present-day there is a curiosity to know what they dressed like.

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[163] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[164] Fadlan, I. *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travelers in the Far North*. London, UK: Penguin, 2012.

[165] Pritsak, O. "The Origin of Rus'." *Russian Review* 36, no. 3 (1977): 249. https://doi.org/10.2307/128848.

[166] Weber, S., and Mitchell, C. "Chapter 32: Theorizing Dress Stories." In *Not Just Any Dress: Narratives of Memory, Body, And Identity*, 220, pp. 251–272. https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/42978316.

Textiles & techniques

Chapter 4

i. Introduction
ii. Common textile finds: Wool
iii. Common textile finds: Silk
iv. Common textile finds: Linen & beyond
v. Furs and skins
vi. Dyes and processes
vii. A look at weaving and embroidery techniques
viii. Conclusions

Introduction

Textiles, weaving techniques and fibers are an integral part of Viking culture and identity. To understand the Viking garment, it is necessary to understand the use of plant and animal fibers, the dyeing techniques, the loom, and weaving. Through archaeology we have been able to understand the Viking culture and gather information through examining grave finds and samples. However, it has been suggested that archaeology has been traditionally biased against fabric and its analysis. As they are highly perishable, withering away within months or years, or rarely leaving traces behind for following generations to investigate. Most male archaeologists gave ancient names like iron and bronze to ancient ages, in preference over pottery or flax.[167] In this chapter, I seek to investigate and provide research on the textiles most used during the Viking age, and what they produced from them.

Most aspects of Viking culture were surrounded and intertwined with textile production; from the weaving and sewing of sails needed for sea voyages, to Nordic myths surrounding life and death as seen through the weavings made on looms which were powerful to the touch and left only to be used by the women.[168] It could be argued that to understand the Viking civilization, one must understand the textiles they made. Textiles themselves are an ancient and intrinsic part of human civilization, with the first textiles being found in a cave called *Dzudzuana* on the Caucasus mountains in the western part of Georgia. It is estimated that the humans in this cave and their textile had existed there as early as 34,500 years ago.[169] By the time the Late Iron Age had arrived textiles had been developing and flourishing around the world for thousands of years, Northern Europe was no exception, although due to climate, their resources and methods would have had to adapt. Flax is historically reported to be the first fiber found in the caves of *Dzudzuana*, this is the plant fiber that was first used to make linen[170], its origins lie in the Mediterranean, Iran, and Iraq, it is argued that perhaps humans had begun cultivating it there long before it reached the caves of

[167] Clair, S.K. "Fibers in the Cave." In *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History*, 29–29. London: John Murray (Publishers), 2019.
[168] Freeman, S. "The Role of Women in Plant-based Textile Production during the Viking Diaspora in Scotland and the Irish Sea Region." *The Scottish Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (2021): 335–358. https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2021.0534.
[169] Clair, S.K. "Fibers in the Cave." In *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History*, 29–29. London: John Murray (Publishers), 2019.
[170] Weiss, E., and Zohary, D. "The Neolithic Southwest Asian Founder Crops." *Current Anthropology* 52, no. S4 (2011). https://doi.org/10.1086/658367.

the Caucasus mountains. Implying that perhaps humans had been exchanging and trading textiles earlier than previously concluded.

Among some of the most notable surviving textile finds from the Viking era are the textiles found in the Ketilsstadir finds. The grave, which belonged to a woman, contained samples of linen, and wool which had survived due to an unusual condition of natural events which caused mineralization to occur, allowing the fabric to withstand the tests of time better than other natural fibers.

"The textiles worn by women in Scandinavia varied greatly according to social status (and presumably task) from coarse woolens to fine linens and decorative oriental silks. Like most Viking women in mainland Scandinavia, the woman from Ketilsstadir wore a long undershirt or gown, this long undergarment could have been represented a partially mineralized textile that was found adhering to a woven woolen fragment from the grave; alternatively, this could represent a lining sewn into the top apron...while the fibers themselves had undergone considerable degradation, it was possible to determine that three of these were made of cellulose fibers."[171]

The Viking Age seems to have been a textile renaissance, from producing cloth for heavy weather to elite garments, textiles were at the heart of daily life. Sea-routes were important for the Viking-Age economy, and for that, sailcloth was needed. Cloaks worn by the Vikings have been found in Viking graves throughout western Norway, across the top of Scotland and down into the Irish Sea, most of them produced in Birka, Sweden, York, England, and Iceland.[172] The textile material found in Scandinavia is unique in that it has relatively even distribution, with numerous finds. From Denmark, textile remains have been found in 149 graves, from Sweden in 82, and in Norway 136 graves. A few grave finds can also be added from Schleswig-Holstein.[173] Textiles are the foundation of understanding the term 'performance of rurality', a rhythm of activities and exposure to particular places at a certain time of the year, by certain people.[174]

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[171] Sverrisdóttir, B., and Walser, J.W. *Bláklæða Konan: Ný rannsókn á fornu Kumli = Bundled-up in Blue: The Re-Investigation of a Viking Grave*. Reykjavík, Iceland: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, 2015.

[172] Eriksen, M.H., et al. *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces, and Movement*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2019.

[173] Bender Jørgensen, L. "Viking Age Textiles." In *Forhistoriske Textiler I Skandinavien*, 317–317. København, Denmark: Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab, 1986.

[174] Eriksen, M.H., et al. *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces, and Movement*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2019.

The textile production of the Viking Age shows us the advancements of the Vikings as a society, their farming practices, as well as their general sense of community and socialization. This establishes a bridge between our scientific and archaeological present-day studies of who the Viking's were and their dressed identities; as well as how they performed in the cloth they created throughout their lives.

Common textile finds: Wool

Wool, linen, and silk are among the most discussed when it comes to the Viking Age. Beginning with wool, the practice of grazing sheep and understanding how to use their fibers became the foundation of Viking life itself[175]. Without sheep, the Vikings could not have traveled as far as they did, for they required wool to build the sails they needed to travel the seas for trading and beyond. Norwegian wool has specific characteristics; the wool comes in a variety of colors - black, brown, and white. But the most peculiar thing about it was that it was made up of two layers: a wiry outer layer covering a soft and very warm underwool, something uncommon for sheep today. Their high lanolin content also made it more water repellent.[176] Wool was shorn or plucked from the sheep in the month of June and Norwegians relied solely on their flocks for their clothing.[177] It could be said that wool was the most important fiber in forming the identity of the Viking, whatever they may be recognized for both stereotypically and historically speaking, begins with the sight of their wool sails sailing across the seas.[178] Wool was not only important for sailing, it was crucial for their clothing and comfort. Wool was essential in keeping the Vikings warm during the long dark winters of Scandinavia. Sheep farming and the working of wool requires sophisticated knowledge of the properties of fibers, and when and how to harvest and process them. Selecting the right wool types for different things was important for Viking Age production.

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[175] Wolf, K. *Viking Age: Everyday Life during the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen*. New York, NY: Sterling, 2014.

[176] Clair, S.K. "Surf Dragons: The Viking's Woolen Sails." In *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History*, 107–109. London, UK: John Murray (Publishers), 2019.

[177] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[178] Bischoff, V. "Viking-Age Sails: Form and Proportion." *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 12, no. 1. https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/44508681.

For sweaters, whether wool was the best; for sailor's mittens, white ewe-lambs with shiny wool were selected, but they would only harvest the wool when the sheep had reached the age of three.[179]

Wool made for sailing the seas was treated with oils and fats to make it water-repellent, although it could have also been treated in this way for the use of cloaks and sometimes trousers and shoes. To create water repellent fabric which would give the Vikings protection against the wind and rain, a process of turning wool into 'wadmal' was required. Wadmal is an undid cloth turned into smooth matted texture as a result of fulling, a process where the cloth is trodden underfoot in warm water or lant (stale urine), until the cloth shrinks and thickens becoming an impenetrable mat of felted fibers.[180] It is known that wadmal went on to become a sort of currency in Shetland and the Faroe Islands, as there are records that it was often used to pay taxes, and that it was shipped to Bergen to be sold.[181] Differences have also been found in analyzing wool samples from Denmark and Norway, suggesting that the Danish wools are more homogenous than the Norwegian ones where several specialized types have been found; but this could be due to the grave finds in Norway being a lot wealthier than Danish ones, suggesting the possibility of imported garments in addition to local ones.[182] Sheep were already in Denmark during the late Stone Age, and that provided the raw material to make textiles of varying methods and techniques.[183] Wool was also being produced in Sweden during the Viking Age, it has been suggested that sheep were being used for wool production on the island of Gotland, as present-day Gotland sheep produce a wool which is well suited for the creation of heavier outerwear or possibly even sails, than the finer woven cloth remnants which have been found in the graves of Viking age men and women.[184] It could be suggested that learning the differences in wool types

[179] Bender Jørgensen, L., Wild, J.P., and Pritchard, F. "Textiles of Seafaring: An Introduction to an Interdisciplinary Research Project." In *Northern Archaeological Textiles: Nesat VII; Textile Symposium in Edinburgh, 5th-7th May 1999*, 65–68. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2005.

[180] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.

[181] Sabatini, S., and Bergerbrant, S. "Wool Textiles in the Early Nordic Bronze Age: Local or Traded?" In *The Textile Revolution in Bronze Age Europe: Production, Specialization, Consumption*, 259–259. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

[182] Jørgensen, L.B. "Chapter 1." In *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, 136–137. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1992.

[183] Hald, M., and Olsen, J. "Wool." In *Ancient Danish Textiles from Bogs and Burials*, 131–132. Copenhagen, Denmark: National Museum of Denmark, 1980.

[184] Klessig, B.K. *Textile Production Tools from Viking Age Graves in Gotland, Sweden*. Humboldt State University, 2015. Unpublished MA Thesis.

could have been an important part of everyday life for Viking Age men and women, and also a way for an entire community to work together on a common project. There had to exist strong ties between farmers, shepherds, those who would oversee the shearing of the animals, and most importantly the women who would process the wool and weave them into fibers. Thus, making wool production, one of the central activities in Viking Age life.

Common textile finds: Silk

In the summer of 2019, archaeologists in Uppsala Sweden uncovered an incredibly rare boat grave, the grave likely belonged to an elite family as these types of burials were only for important people, further proving their importance was the finding of a preserved piece of samite silk; boat graves are rarely found in Sweden, making this find truly remarkable.[185]

It was not until the beginning of the Viking age that silks begin to appear more frequently in the archaeological records,[186] corroborating that textiles were so important for the Vikings that they found ways to seek and have access to it so that they could use it to dress themselves. Silk during the Viking Age was prized and rare, arguably making it one of the most sought after and desired by Viking men and women. Silk was not the easiest thing to produce or obtain. Silk is produced from animals and is defined as insoluble filaments that animals secrete from specialized glands, as animals store silk precursors as gels in the body; ancient Greeks and Romans made Corn silk from a moth *Pachypasa lotus* until the second century AD, when Chinese silk took over the market.[187]

Chinese silk is rarely found in Scandinavia, although it has been estimated that perhaps one or maybe two fragments of silk found in Sweden may have been made there. Because of this, the silk manufacturing of the Persian/Byzantine Empire is where the main areas of provenance for the silk products found in Scandinavian Viking graves,[188] possibly giving a clearer insight as to the origins of some of the designs and prints found on the silk strips which Vikings used on the trims of their garments. These strips by the name of samite, were thin strips mainly used as facings,

[185] A. Larsson, "Samite Silk in Viking Age Old Uppsala: A Review on the Finds in Boatgrave 36," *Muinaistutkija* 39, no. 4 (2023).
[186] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.
[187] Russell, E. "Spinning Their Way into History: Silkworms, Mulberries and Manufacturing Landscapes in China." *Global Environment* 10, no. 1 (2017): 27–28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44653435.
[188] Vedeler, M. *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014.

trimmings, and bindings. It was of evident value in the Viking world.[189] The way that the Vikings used silk to adorn the trimmings of otherwise simple garments suggests an affinity for the finer things, and for wanting to add specialty touches to their clothing. Silk was not easy to find, and it is more than likely that when the Vikings found silk, it was expensive and in small quantities, so there had to be ways to do as much as possible with what was found, indicating once again that resourcefulness was an integral part of Viking civilization. The largest group of samite silk samples found in Scandinavia was of 110 fragments; these fabrics have been cut into narrow strips and were probably used as decoration on clothing. The concentration of silk finds in high status graves in Scandinavia suggests that even lower quality silk products were highly valued in this region.[190]

Some of the most interesting aspects of how the Vikings used the silk fragments they would obtain through trade, is how often times little attention was paid to the original design of the fragment, there is no clear evidence which explains whether some of the original designs in the silks obtained were purposely ignored when it came to re-adding them to dress or tunic trims, or whether it was part of the intentional design choices, this could be left up to interpretation. A very interesting silk sample from the Viking Age includes a small silk strip (likely used as the trim for a garment) which featured an interesting bird pattern (possibly a *shahrokh* bird)[191] embroidery. There are opinions that suggest that the pattern is from somewhere in Central Asia. The sample has been labeled the birds and axe clovers, and features two wefts, both in latté with weft threads that are thinner, in white and green, or black and yellow without spinning.[192] A lot of the designs found on the silk sample suggest heavy trade with the middle east, more than likely Persia. Persian art, Sasanian decoration art, and Zoroastrian mythology are some of the patterns that have been found[193]. Although the precise place of production of some of these silk samples are unknown, it is likely they originated in Sogdiana; an ancient Iranian civilization that at different times included territory located in present-day Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.[194] The Vikings dress was

[189] Ewing, T. *Viking Clothing*. Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012.
[190] Vedeler, M. *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014.
[191] Van Gorder, A.C. "The Rise of Islam and the Role of Non-Muslims in Persian Islam." In *Christianity in Persia and the Status of Non-Muslims in Iran*, 83–83. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.
[192] Vedeler, M. *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014.
[193] Vogt, Y. "Norwegian Vikings Purchased Silk from Persia." *Apollon. University of Oslo.* https://www.apollon.uio.no/english/vikings.html (accessed January 31, 2023).
[194] Vedeler, M. *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014.

now being influenced by the textiles of different civilizations and religions. Although it could be suggested that they might not have known the significance of some of the symbols (or gave it a significance of their own), their appeal for textiles from faraway places meant a connection with other lands, and perhaps a blooming curiosity with expanding their identities beyond the use of wool and sheep farming and connecting with other civilizations through dress and clothing as well. Silk samples that have been found in Scandinavian graves appear in larger quantities in a Christian religious context in many parts of Europe. Silk with Zoroastrian symbols spread across religions to the heathen, Christian and Islamic; thus, explaining why we find the ax-clover symbol and *shahrokh* bird in both the heathen graves of Scandinavia, and used as cover relics for the saints of churches in France.[195]

Most textiles were woven from wool but there is also an impressive quantity of over 100 textiles made from silk yarn.[196] It could be suggested that at some point in the Late Iron Age, the Vikings were finding ways to produce their own silk or had found easier ways to obtain it. In Scandinavia, 23 archaeological sites with finds of silk dating to the 9th and 10th centuries have been registered; the finds spread among 94 graves in total. They include both woven fabrics of silk and silk thread used in embroideries and braids.[197] Viking grave sites such as Valsgarde and Tuna in present-day Sweden, found two or three graves containing silk. However, the largest concentration of graves containing silk is in Birka where 63 graves contained various remnants. The largest concentration of silk in a single grave was however, found in Oseberg, where over 100 fragments of samite silk from different fabrics are preserved in addition to silk embroideries and tablet woven braids.[198] What is most interesting is that although silk was relatively difficult to find for certain parts of Norway, there have been silk samples found even in Northern Norway and beyond.

The most notable Viking age silk sites in Scandinavia to date are in the Southern and central parts of Scandinavia as well as varying areas between the north of present- day Norway south to

[195] Vedeler, M. *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014.
[196] Coleman, N.L., and Løkka, N. "Kvinder og Klær." In *Kvinner I Vikingtid = Vikingatidens Kvinnor*, 230–230. Oslo, Norway: SAP, Scandinavian Academic Press, 2014.
[197] Vedeler, M. "Silk Sites in Scandinavia." In *Silk for the Vikings*, 23–24. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books.
[198] Ibid., 27–28.

the north of present-day Germany. The northernmost silk found so far was discovered at Ness in Hamarøy in Nordland County; a large grave mound containing a small fragment of samite silk (Appendix C, Image C). Continuing along the coastline, we find another single item containing silk c. 305 km further south. In the county of Hordaland, a rich woman's grave dating to the 10th century contained small fragments of samite silk, with both z-spun and unspun threads. The fragments were on the back of an oval brooch. The deceased woman was found at Veka in Voss and was buried in a large mound c. 30 m in diameter.[199] Research indicates that possible close contact between the Viking Age Scandinavians, the Rus, and the Byzantine empire resulted in economic advances, and an important exchange of knowledge, which could have also provided political and military alliances.[200] The Vikings had made the expansion of silk possible across Scandinavia and even into Germany; this textile from faraway origins had brought a sense of identity to the Vikings in their dress, so much so that they preserved it and were buried with whatever they had left of it. It is easy to conclude that of all the Viking Age textiles silk might be the most prized.

Common textile finds: Linen & beyond

One of the only complete garments to be found from the Viking Age is the Viborg shirt, found in Viborg, Denmark. It is believed to be a male garment made of linen, cut similarly to a tunic, with long sleeves, which could have reached to just above the knees.[201] Linen was an important element to Viking Age life, it worked quite closely with the Vikings, as most of the men wore linen undershirts, whilst the women began their day by layering first a linen underdress. However, it was not always this way, Linen was rare in Scandinavia, and did not exist until later. Archaeological records show that linen was an important part of Viking Age clothing which developed gradually from being nonexistent in Scandinavia at the start of the first millennium AD, to being an important part of fashion during the Viking Age a thousand years later.[202]

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[199] Vedeler, M. (2014) "Silk sites in Scandinavia," in *Silk for the Vikings*. Oxford et Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, pp. 27-28

[200] C. Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Warriors Wearing Silk," in *Vikings in the Mediterranean*, November 27-30, 2019, Athens, Greece, ed. Norwegian Institute at Athens (Norwegian Institute at Athens, 2023), 223-240.

[201] Brøndsted, J., and Kjærum, P. *Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab Satte Dette Kuml til Minde om Johannes Brøndsted I Hundredåret for Hans Fødsel den 5. Oktober 1890*. Århus, Denmark: Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 1990.

[202] Ejstrud, B., and Bender Jørgensen, L. "Introduction." In *From Flax to Linen: Experiments with Flax at Ribe Viking Centre*, 5–5. Ribe, Denmark: Ribe Viking Centre, 2011.

It could be suggested that linen was primordially grown and cultivated in Denmark, as it requires sandy, slightly humid, and possibly warmer terrain to grow the flax plants needed to produce the fabric. Flax also grows well near coastal areas[203], and considering that the Viborg shirt was found near the coasts of Denmark in the Jutland areas, it is easier to see that perhaps Denmark and parts of Germany were Scandinavia's main resource when it came to linen production and trade. Linen is complicated to produce, besides finding appropriate areas and climates for flax production, it takes a lengthy process to turn filaments of flax into fibers for weaving linen. The flax goes through a series of treatments and processes to be associated with textile production; linen may also be bleached in the sun, or possibly dyed, although the white, clean appearance of the fabric is a recurrent theme in historical sources across the ages.[204] Although it was historically well used by the Vikings, linen does not seem to appear as much in archaeological evidence, this is due to simple survival capabilities of the fiber. The following text from an experiment conducted at the Ribe Viking Center in Denmark, explains why linen is perhaps not as popular in Viking finds, as wool is, whilst also explaining the importance of the Viborg shirt and why it is crucial for understanding the use of linen and the processes through which it is obtained:

> One main difficulty in studying the archaeology of flax is that plant remains are only rarely preserved in the ground, at least in Northern Europe. Organic remains are in general rare in archaeological excavations, but there is an added difficulty with flax. In the ground, flax is best preserved in a basic environment, whereas most soils are slightly acidic. The opposite is true for wool, which is better preserved in an acidic environment. We can therefore assume that wool is overrepresented in the archaeological record. The many well-preserved pieces of clothing that are found in Northern European bogs are thus invariably of wool. It is for this reason that the linen shirt from Viborg is so unique.[205]

Denmark contains the largest collection of complete prehistoric costumes in Europe, possibly due to the warmer climate, and lower lands. By contrast in Norway, the number of bog finds containing textiles and complete garments is not large.[206] However certain textile types like hemp have not been found in Denmark, This is surprising because a certain amount of hemp has been excavated at the Viking settlement in Birka, Sweden, and some traces of it have been found

[203] Ibid., 9–12.
[204] Ejstrud, B., and Bender Jørgensen, L. "Introduction." In *From Flax to Linen: Experiments with Flax at Ribe Viking Centre*, 12–15. Ribe, Denmark: Ribe Viking Centre, 2011.
[205] Ibid., 17–18.
[206] Hald, M. and Olsen, J. (1980) "introduction," in *Ancient Danish textiles from bogs and burials: A comparative study of costume and iron age textiles.* Copenhagen, Denmark: The National Museum of Denmark, pp. 7–12.

in Norway, i.e. scraps of hemp textile from a ship-burial on the island of Karm, and some hemp seeds from the Oseberg ship-burial.[207] Hemp was cultivated and used for textiles and perhaps even medicinal purposes, although it seems unlikely that it was used for clothing but rather for items like ropes and perhaps even on sails[208]. Hemp was still important enough for cultivation as it shows up in archaeological records with seeds from Norway, Sweden, and Finland. In Norway, palaeobotanical finds from Trondheim (dating from a period before the eleventh century and into the twelfth century), Oslo (from the eleventh century), and Bergen (from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) all show that hemp was grown in pre-urban environments.[209] Recent studies of the Huldremose Woman, a pre-Roman Iron Age bog body found in northeastern Jylland (Jutland) in 1879, have contributed with information about prehistoric textiles made of plant fibers. The Huldremose Woman probably wore a garment made of plant fibers and it is currently being analyzed whether those fibers are flax, nettle, or hemp. The results of the analysis so far show that the plant fibers found on her body were not of local provenance, whereas the wool derived from local and foreign sheep.[210]

Nettle is another one of the fibers used during the Viking Age which has gone quite unnoticed in the archaeological records. Due to its similarity to flax, there was a time when it was not labeled as 'nettle' but added into the group of fibers under the label of flax. Ancient plant fiber textiles have frequently been identified as flax based on superficial examinations. This may have caused a distorted view of the relative importance of flax, nettle, and hemp in ancient textile production.[211] Nettle has similarities with linen, but it is much stronger, giving it a certain advantage when it comes to durability in clothing, however, it is a carbon-neutral fiber which means it leaves no waste, thus making it harder to appear in Viking Age finds. However, nettle seeds have been found in Danish deposits dating from the transition between the last Ice Age and

[207] Ibid., 129–130.
[208] F. Dhondt and S. S. Muthu, "History of Hemp," in *Hemp and Sustainability* (Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2021), 1–3.
[209] G. Skoglund, "Construction and reconstruction of the past," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 16 (2020): 67–84, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvrdf144.9.
[210] S.T. Andresen and S. Karg, "Retting pits for textile fiber plants at Danish prehistoric sites dated between 800 B.C. and A.D. 1050," *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* 20, no. 6 (2011): 517–526, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00334-011-0324-0.
[211] H. Lukešová, A.S. Palau, and B. Holst, "Identifying plant fiber textiles from Norwegian Merovingian period and Viking age graves: The late iron age collection of the university museum of Bergen," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 13 (2017): 281–285, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2017.03.051.

the early Boreal Period, and as the nettle is a plant which needs no cultivation in order to survive, it could be assumed that it was the precursor of flax as a spinning material in Northern Europe.[212]

My research on the use of tendon threads (gut thread) is very limited, as there aren't sufficient sources to prove their use in Viking clothing and adornments, although it has been suggested that they could have been used for household textiles, and things to do with ship construction and so forth. For these reasons, I will not go into much detail concerning the use of tendon thread. However, it is a fact that nettle thread and tendon thread have existed side by side throughout the ages, with several studies indicating that nettle is a far older spinning material than wool or flax and belongs to the same culture as the tendon thread due to its strength. However, vegetable matter decomposes far quicker than animal matter in soil, and because nettle fiber is even less resistant to moisture than flax, there is little likelihood of finding much direct evidence of its earliest forms.[213] The Vikings had gathered extensive knowledge identifying and understanding the way particular plant fibers worked, and how they could be used. Perhaps there were designated people who would oversee the study of plants and understand what they could be used for. Although some of these fibers came through trade, many were cultivated and treated.

Furs and skins

Although furs and skins were not the stereotypical garment of the Viking man and woman, there is no doubt that they were certainly made, traded and worn during the Viking Age. They have become a definitive identifier of Viking men, mostly due to trade and travel, as it is believed that many of them wore them to trade in markets, as well as during raids and plunders. Furs were mainly traded/purchased by an Icelandic settler Bjorn, who gained the nickname *Skinna-Bjorn* (skins-bjorn) due to the many furs that he wore and traded.[214] Arguably, this Icelandic settler could have been one of the main sources for believing the Vikings to wear a lot of heavy furs. Norwegian merchants were so recognized for dealing and trading furs that they were often referred to as "white wares". Furs from red foxes, pine martens, red squirrels, brown bears, otters, lynx, and beavers

[212] M. Hald and J. Olsen, "Nettle and other plant fibers," in *Ancient Danish textiles from bogs and burials: A comparative study of costume and iron age textiles* (Copenhagen, Denmark: The National Museum of Denmark, 1980), 127–129.
[213] M. Hald and J. Olsen, "Nettle and other plant fibers," in *Ancient Danish textiles from bogs and burials: A comparative study of costume and iron age textiles* (Copenhagen, Denmark: The National Museum of Denmark, 1980), 126–127.
[214] T. Ewing, "Cloth and Cloth Making," in *Viking clothing* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012), 153.

were some of the most notable furs that the Vikings made for trade and for their own use in a variety of ways including trimmings for clothing hems, warm linings for silks and other fine cloth.[215]

The Sami, which were a hunter-gatherer and reindeer pastoralists civilization in the northernmost portions of Scandinavia became the main providers of fur for the Vikings. Mentioned in Medieval sources as Finns or Scriðnnas, the Sami's land was called Finnmrk (present-day Finnmark in Northern Norway) and during the ninth and tenth centuries, a lucrative trade system was created between the Sami and their neighbors.[216] The Sami provided furs to the Scandinavian Norse, and to peoples of the Baltic, Karelia, and northwest Russia, and aided in the expansion of furs to further lands, including the Middle East. Both the Norwegian and Swedish traders were extorting tribute in furs from the Sami and Finnish-speaking hunter-gatherers. What was initially a peaceful trade developed during the Viking Period tragically fell into an extortion cycle.[217] During the Viking and Middle Ages, the Sami, became subject to harsh and violent extortion of "tax", i.e., tribute, often from three countries at the same time,[218] This likely created a hostile situation between the Sami's and other traders.

Furs are biodegradable fibers, making them difficult to find in archaeological evidence. In Europe in general, the preservation of skin, fun and leather artifacts is limited due to the destructive effects of alternating wet and dry weather.[219] Like fur, leather is a highly perishable material that rarely survives climatic changes through time and rarely survives. It is however very likely that the Vikings used plenty of leather in their daily life. Viking Age shoes were made from leather, and even today, they are made of leather by Viking Age reenactors who specialize in recreating Viking leather goods. It is suggested that leather and fur were used extensively to fulfill multiple necessities during the Viking Age; animal skin was exploited to produce clothing (e.g., cloaks,

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215 Ibid.

216 C. Keller, "Furs, Fish and Ivory," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 3 (2010): 1–23, available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/26671834.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 K. Grömer, G. Russ-Popa, and K. Saliari, "Products of Animal Skin from Antiquity to the Medieval Period," *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien. Serie A für Mineralogie und Petrographie, Geologie und Paläontologie, Anthropologie und Prähistorie* 119, no. 15 (2017): 69–93, available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/26342924.

shoes, and gloves), working and military equipment, as well as items for living spaces and seafaring. Further proving that leather, skin, and fur belonged to one of the most important material groups in prehistory to serve different human needs.[220] Leather was an important tool in defining the identity of the Vikings through their dress and adornment, because it was probably highly used by Viking men during their raids and plundering through the means of belts, sword slings, bags or purses to hold looted goods, gloves, and beyond. It is possible that leather-goods were some of the first items seen by foreigners when encountering Viking men, for these reasons leather and fur became important textiles in the foundation of clothing for the Viking civilization. In Denmark, fur finds are rare and fur in clothing has been limited to a few reports and not recorded systematically. Through research and the DNA analysis of six high-status Viking Age graves, it was determined that fur was produced from wild animals, while leather was made from domesticated animals.[221] Among the samples analyzed from the Denmark finds, several examples of beaver fur were identified, a species which is not native to Denmark, and therefore indicative of trade. It is argued that beaver fur was a luxury limited to and worn by the elite.[222]

In summary, although Vikings men and women were more than likely not dressed in head-to-toe leather looks in dark, ruddy, and neutral colors and consistently draped in heavy furs, they were still wearing and consuming fur and leather-goods in wider aspects of their culture and dressed identities. It is possible that perhaps Viking men wore more leather-goods than females, solely because they traveled more extensively and more than likely made more use out of leather using weapons, and aboard ships. Women were likely to have worn smaller leather-goods, perhaps as small purses for their keys, needles, and grooming tools, perhaps as well as saddles for smaller weapons like knives and even shearing tools. There is evidence that Viking women of high-status graves could have worn garments with fur as well,[223] but it might not have been something which most women of the Viking Age could have worn as much.

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[220] Ibid.

[221] L.Ø. Brandt et al., "Palaeoproteomics Identifies Beaver Fur in Danish High-Status Viking Age Burials - Direct Evidence of Fur Trade," *PLOS ONE* 17, no. 7 (2022): 1–14, available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0270040.

[222] Ibid.

[223] S. Brink, N.S. Price, and A. Larsson, "Viking Age Textiles," in *The Viking World* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008), 181–185, available at: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203412770-22/viking-age-textiles-annika-larsson (Accessed: January 31, 2023).

Dyes and processes

Through researching the clothing of the Viking Age there is something that constantly repeats itself, and that is the Viking's search for color. The Viking civilization seemingly had a strong affinity for color and finding ways to decorate themselves with it. A stark difference from the stereotypes in Viking dress, it was rare for a Viking man or woman from high society to be wearing neutrals or dark muted tones, it seems that by the contrary, the Vikings sought out as many dying methods as they could to produce the colorful tunics, dresses, shirts, and trousers that they were historically known for wearing throughout the Viking Age. This begins with understanding plants, and the fibers they were already used to overseeing for making cloth.

From the beginnings of Bronze Age Europe, research shows that different processes of dyeing and treating fibers were developing. The research behind new dye analysis of Danish Viking Age textiles from the areas of Bjerringhøj, Hvilehøj and Hedeby show that as early as 500-1 B.C. (Pre-Roman Iron Age), Indigotin (indigo) dyes were being processed and used in Northern Europe.[224] Entering the Viking Age, and the Vikings with their passion for textiles and color further reinforced the development of these and more complicated dyes for the use of their textiles. The Vikings found the decorating and processing of textiles important for dressing and also for decorating. The presence of undoubtedly imported dyes in several Norwegian finds include genuine madder, and Polish Cochineal/Kermes; emphasizing the point that migration-period Norway had contacts abroad,[225] and found them important when it came to obtaining the necessary dye materials to make their clothing. Since there is no evidence which suggests that Danish Bronze Age textiles were dyed, isolated finds do suggest that the use of dues gained popularity during the Iron Age.[226] The best blue shade made by the Vikings was *potteblåt* (potty blue) or in English "royal blue.[227] This is important to consider, as it might suggest that Vikings became quite the experts in creating dyes, something that probably defined them as makers of colors and/or colorful garments during that time.

[224] I.V. Berghe, U. Mannering, and C. Rimstad, "New dye analyses of Danish Viking Age textiles from Bjerringhøj, Hvilehøj and Hedeby," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 49 (2023): p. 103965.
[225] L.B. Jørgensen, "Dyes," in *North European Textiles until AD 1000* (Aarhus C, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1992), 136.
[226] Ibid.,137–138.
[227] N. Glæsel, *Viking: Dress, Garment, Clothing.* (S.l.: Nille Glæsel, 2014), 28.

The great Oseberg ship-burial from the Viking Age contained woad seeds in a little bowl (woad is used to make blue dye) or box. The blue dye so highly prized however, does not come from the woad seed but rather from the foliage of the plant.[228] The Oseberg find was a high-status grave, so it is no surprise that it would contain dye materials, however, it could be possible that at the time of burial, the overseers of the burial procedure might have thought it wise to include the seeds of the woad plant so that in the 'afterlife' the owners of the grave could grow the woad plants to use their foliage for blue dye, possibly indicating just how special the shade was to the Vikings. There were four main dyes used during the Viking-period in Scandinavia: woad for blue, lichen purple; dyes were made from walnut shells (possibly browns), red from madder or sometimes bed straw referred to as "yellow-x'; woad was mostly used for making blues, also making it by far the commonest color for clothing in the sagas.[229] Iron dioxide could be used as a mordant, this was important when creating red, as red clothes were often promised as riches. Kermes dye came from the Mediterranean Kermes oak whilst silks might have been left undyed in their natural golden color; linen was usually bleached rather than dyed.[230]

Of course, most of these colors are not as visible in archaeological finds, the first color to disappear when it comes to ancient textiles is yellow,[231] Quite possibly due to its lightness in color, it does not adhere well to fabrics, and much less ancient textile finds which have been found in quite precarious conditions. Like most archaeological textile finds from Scandinavia, the colors nowadays are mainly reduced to shades of brown, more than likely due to their life in the bogs and changes which could have taken place during conservation, thus losing their original colors.[232] It could be suggested that blues and reds likely survived better than other colors. It is also possible that not all dyes were available to all Viking societies. If plants vary from region to region, it could be that there were different qualities of similar dyes, and depending on social status, only certain people would be able to afford the best kinds of dyes. The dyestuff made of kermes vermillion has been used in combination with the lesser expensive madder in some finds; meanwhile some pattern

[228] L.B. Jørgensen, "Dyes," in *North European Textiles until AD 1000* (Aarhus C, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1992), 137–138.
[229] T. Ewing, "Cloth and Cloth Making," in *Viking Clothing* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012), 154.
[230] Ibid.,155–156.
[231] R.A. Hall, "Dye Plants from Viking York," *Antiquity* 58, no. 222 (1984): 58, available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00056490.
[232] M. Vedeler, "Cut and Use," in *Silk for the Vikings* (Oxford and Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014),16–17.

suggests that Viking Age fabrics dyed in this shade was produced in Constantinople or in the Eastern Mediterranean area associated with Butane silk production.[233] It has been claimed that kermes is the most expensive red dye to have existed during the Viking Age, 13th century sources highlight the exclusiveness of kermes: "with which the most precious fabrics of kings are dyed"– the dye found in the silk from Oseberg, the kermes dyestuff is mixed with the cheaper madder suggesting a high-class product which still had certain limits.[234] The Viking graves at Mammen (Denmark) are dyed with a lichen purple, another very highly sought after and expensive dye, it has been suggested that perhaps it was obtained by the Vikings through trade, as lichens to produce purple dyes were derived from The Mediterranean and the Middle East during that period.[235]

Natural dyes during the Viking Age are often made of vegetable and animal origin, and they're divided between two main groups: dyes applied directly to unmodified fibers not requiring a dyeing assistant, and dyes depending for their tinctorial effect on forming a complex between the organic molecule supplied by the dyestuff and a metal deposited on the fiber [236] such as the mordant dyes described above to make reds. Dyes in widespread use included the blue colorant indigotin, which at this time would be sourced from woad rather than from the indigo plant; the related shellfish dye Tyrian Purple would occur only on imported fabrics but was rare during the Viking Age.[237] Some of the earliest uses of indigotin (indigo) in Scandinavia date back to Rebild, Denmark, dated between the 4th and the 3rd century BC, while the earliest evidence of the use of alizarin-containing madder dye in Scandinavia is dated to the 1st century BC, and was assessed in the textiles collection from Skærsø (Denmark). The Scandinavian finds indicate that madder became a common dye source in Scandinavian finds during the Migration period (AD 400–520/540).[238] The Viking Age was a full exploration of colors and dyes, corroborating that perhaps the Vikings were great enthusiasts of art and pleasing aesthetics. There were great lengths that

[233] M. Vedeler, "Cut and Use," in *Silk for the Vikings* (Oxford and Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014), 16–17.
[234] Ibid.
[235] M. Vedeler, "Silk Varieties in Scandinavia," in *Silk for the Vikings* (Oxford and Philadelphia, UK, PA: Oxbow Books, 2014), 40–41.
[236] G.W. Taylor, "Detection and Identification of Dyes on Anglo-Scandinavian Textiles," *Studies in Conservation* 28, no. 4 (1983): 154–156, available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1505962.
[237] Ibid.
[238] J.J. Łucejko, M. Vedeler, and I. Degano, "Textile Dyes from Gokstad Viking Ship's Grave," *Heritage* 4, no. 3 (2021): 2278–2286, available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage4030129.

were taken in order to create and replicate some of the dyes with which they perhaps came into contact with on their journeys, and there are many finds which could indicate that the women of the Viking Age would take time into possibly investigating some of the colors found in silks from afar, to try to replicate them using the ingredients they could source from their farms and settlements, like plants, berries, leaves, and different clays.

A look at weaving and embroidery techniques

Although weaving and embroidery were not heavily focused on in my research, it is important to give a brief explanation on their importance when it comes to Viking Age textiles. The weaving techniques of the Vikings were well developed and used, when it came to constructing instruments for tablet weaving, it seemed almost as if it were an innate capability of the Vikings to weave intricate and beautiful pieces of cloth and yarn for their clothing and possibly also for home décor. There is much evidence from the migration period, the "Vendel" period, and the Viking Age to show that tablet weaving was one of the textile hand-skills people developed and mastered to the full. We have no reason to doubt, for example, that the fine bands found in Birka (9th-10th centuries) were woven in a Nordic country,[239] more than likely by highly skilled women, who were expert weavers.

The earliest known tablets used for weaving in the Nordic countries were found in Dejberg bog in Jutland (Denmark) and date back to the Celtic Iron Age, ca. 200 BC. These somewhat irregular four-holed tablets are ca 47X55mm and ca mm thick and were made of wood.[240] This suggests that perhaps the noticeable skills the Vikings had in weaving had already been in practice for many years before the Viking Age. This also suggests that they had time to improve upon the qualities of the looms and tablets in which weaves were made. Weaving is accomplished on a loom. The loom that has left its traces in the Scandinavian Viking Age archaeological record is the warp weighted loom. This loom is up-right, and the warp is stretched by loom weights.[241] Loom weights are the main archaeological evidence for this type of loom. The weights found in Birka

[239] S. Berlin et al., "Tablet Weaving," in *Tablet Weaving: In True Nordic Fashion* (Sweden: Brickvävnad, 2017), 10–13.
[240] Ibid.
[241] M. Gleba, *Dressing the Past* (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 76–79.

were made of clay. Heights between 400 g and 800 g were the most common.[242] Textiles typical of Scandinavian dress in the Viking period are: fine, tabby weaves with a high thread count in the warp; fine wool twills with z-spun yarn; and heavy woolens with a woven pile. However, they vary by region. Tabbies are rare on the island of Gotland.[243] The use of the loom was almost completely exclusive to women, and thus it became a ritual of an activity for groups of women to gather and work together at the looms, making fabrics and weaves for their families. This is an important aspect of understanding the impact textiles had on the identity of women in the Viking Age, and how they impacted the rest of their community through their laborious skills.

The work of making cloth was particularly conclusive to storytelling: groups of people, usually women, penned together and engaged in repetitive work for hours on end. How natural to create and exchange tales to pass the time. This also explains why spinning and weaving characters appear so frequently and are so often blessed with preternatural skills and guile."[244]

Viking women were undoubtedly more attached to the home than the men were, and because of this had been able to polish many skills which they gained there. Thus, their form of production became more conservative, and this gives a potential precisely for textile research, as it can be hoped that certain aspects of the textile products which women created, can show clearer cultural differences than is the case for other types of products.[245] Textiles were such an integral part of a woman's life during the Viking age, that even grave sites show the evidence. The Oseberg queen for example, was buried with a partly completed tablet weaving she had been working on before she died.[246] This find reveals a great interest and affection for the textile arts, once again revealing that for the Vikings textiles were woven deeply into their identity throughout life, and even after it.

[242] Ibid.
[243] T. Ewing, "Cloth and Cloth Making," in *Viking Clothing* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012), 154–154.
[244] S.K. Clair, *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History* (New York City, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2021).
[245] I. Øye, *Middelalderkvinner - Liv Og Virke* (Bergen, Norway: Bryggens museum, 1989).
[246] T. Ewing, "Cloth and Cloth Making," in *Viking Clothing* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2012), 154–154.

Conclusions

Viking Age textiles are perhaps the most profitable area to research when wanting to comprehend Viking society, and their identity through dress and beyond. Through their use of textiles, they were able to communicate to the world who they were as individuals and as a civilization. Of course, they had the great advantage of seafaring and trade, and this allowed them to obtain more textile making materials than other civilizations of their time, but this does not discount their cultivated skills of textile making. When it came to wool, the Vikings had created an organized and fructiferous system which allowed them to plan when the sheep would be gathered, when they would be sheared, and how much time would be needed for weaving and creating the fibers for the garments. It could have taken years to master the exact time frames that would be needed to produce some of the wool they needed for sails for example, and beyond that, the wool would also be needed to clothe families and slaves –and possibly other articles used in Viking Age homes. Linen and flax were carefully produced through plants and crops, which meant knowledge and understanding of farming not just for the men in the community, but also the women. It could be suggested that Viking settlements were well organized townships with skilled workers able to master their craft to help and assist their community.

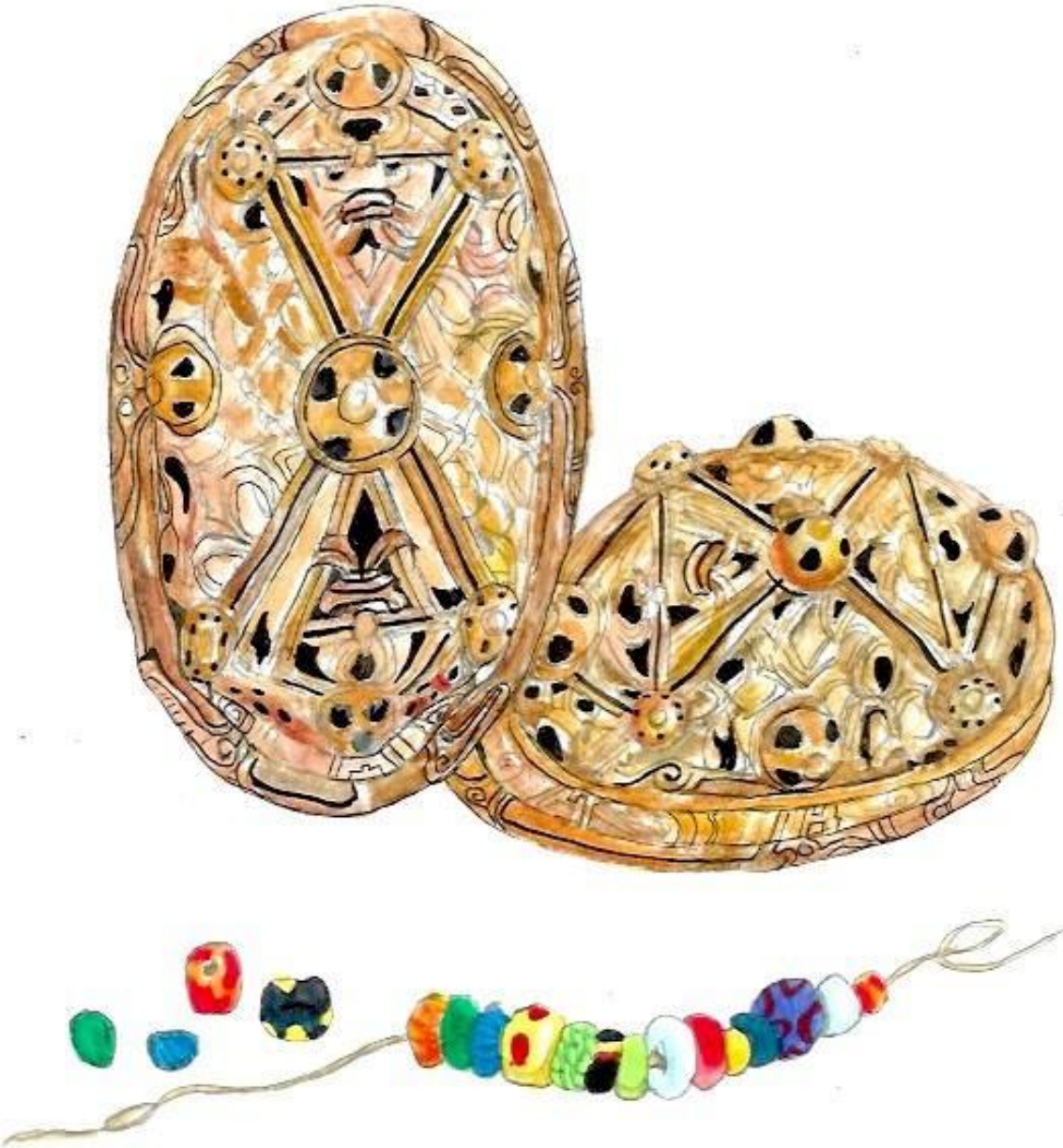
Silks provided the aesthetically pleasing beauty that was needed for their garments, possibly giving Viking Age women a sense of joy when seafaring husbands brought home samples of it from faraway lands. Although little attention could have been placed on the original silk designs of some of the strips the Vikings obtained, it is easy to understand that silk was precious to them, and perhaps provided luxury and elegance to them, in addition to distinction from other social classes. When it came to furs and leather goods, although it is rare that any Viking man or woman would have been dressed entirely in fur or leather, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that it was a useful textile for them not only for wearing but also for selling and trading. Leather goods without a doubt must have been used incessantly for many things around a Viking home, and as adornment in the means of accessories for swords, daggers, or types of purses. Color was also important and highly sought after, indicating that instead of simply leaving a processed textile in their plain and raw form, the Vikings found it important to decorate it further by adding color and design. Dyestuffs were improved upon, and when certain dyes were too expensive to purchase in trade, the Vikings would turn to creativity and experimentation to understand how to recreate

similar dyes for their textiles. These designs were further decorated by intricate weaves and patterns made at the loom by women dedicating their lives to learning and perfecting the craft. It could be argued that some of the weaving techniques developed during the Viking Age have aided in the modern developments of creating textiles and sewing techniques. Needles and single-needle knitting- Analysis of textiles have shown that Viking Age people used several of the sewing techniques that are still used today.[247] When analyzing a technique such as pleating for example, it is found that the Vikings used the technique and developed it on many of their linen garments. Woolen material can also be pleated, although finds show us that perhaps linen was more commonly used during the Viking Age. Pleating is done by sewing small folds. 2-3 mm deep, with needle and thread; the threads are then pulled so that cloth is wrinkled, after which it is moistened and put in a press until the folds are permanent. The threads are then removed from the cloth.[248] It is possible that even the underdress worn by women during the Viking Age had some sort of attention to detail or decoration, adding further to the connection between textile and Viking identity.

In Birka (Sweden) the textile tools, especially spindle whorls, show that textile production in Birka was extensive and varied. Research has demonstrated that the inhabitants of Birka had all the necessary tools for making the range of qualities of wool and linen cloth found in the graves.[249] Showing us that Viking Age societies were advanced and well developed when it came to clothing manufacturing and design. The importance of textiles would follow Viking lives from birth, throughout their life and at the end of their lives. Work at the loom was so important for a Viking woman, that even after her death, her identity was tide to what she could possibly continue to produce in the afterlife with her loom, and therefore, the loom was kept in her grave with her, as a companion on her journey to the afterlife. Thus, it is no surprise that almost every grave site in Scandinavia has some sort of textile related find; be it needles, a loom, or tablet weaves, the Vikings wanted to establish their attachment to textiles within their identity. In summary, the Vikings' lives were built around the making and usage of textiles, if either for trade, or for wear,

[247] E.B. Andersson, "Tools, Textile Production and Society in Viking Age Birka," in M. Gleba, C. Munkholt, and M.-L. Nosch, eds., *Dressing the Past* (Oxford, UK: Oxbow, 2007), 80–82.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.

their identity was carefully crafted at the loom, by women who, like the mythical Valkyries, used the loom to weave the thread of life.



Jewelry, adornment & gold foils

Chapter 5

i. Introduction
ii. Jewelry and Adornments
iii. Common bead finds
iv. Gold foils and possible meanings
v. How were they worn
vi. Conclusions

Introduction

On September 7, 2023, a man by the name of Erlend Bore found one of Norway's most incredible gold finds, with some suggesting that it might be the best gold find ever made.[250] What makes this particular find so important for my research is the fact that these findings were exactly where I conducted the majority of my research, in Stavanger Norway on the beautiful island of Rennesøy. The finds are now displayed at the archaeology museum where I worked during my period living in Stavanger and are helping to further highlight the beauty and intricacies of Viking era gold designs, as well as their significance aide in understanding the Viking identity. An article from Science Norway explains that the gold finds were more than likely gold pendants or bracteates that served as part of a larger intricate necklace:

> They look like coins, but the round and flat gold pendants that Bore found are called bracteates. Once upon a time, these nine bracteates formed quite the flashy necklace, according to Håkon Reiersen, associate professor at the Museum of Archaeology in Stavanger. This piece of jewelry was made by skilled goldsmiths and worn by the most powerful in society. It is very rare to find so many bracteates together. We have not had any finds that compare to this since the 19th century," Reiersen says in the press release.[251]

Jewelry is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of Viking Age dress, it is also one of the best remains of the Viking Age which we could use to analyze and understand Viking identity better, this recent finding is proof of that. Through the assorted designs and possible interpretation of what they meant, we are able to understand what the Vikings believed and how they lived their lives. For instance, in the case of this 2023 find, there is an anomaly in the design of the bracteates. According to research, bracteates normally share a similar pattern, with depictions of Odin performing certain actions.

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[250] Tasos Kokkinidis, "When an Amateur Metal Hunter Made the 'Gold Find of the Century'," Greek Reporter, June 8, 2024, https://greekreporter.com/2024/06/08/metal-hunter-gold-find-century/.

[251] Lasse Biørnstad and Ida Irene Bergstrøm, "1,500-Year-Old Gold Treasure Discovered by Metal Detectorist: 'This Is the Gold Find of the Century in Norway'," Science Norway, September 7, 2023, 20:02, https://www.sciencenorway.no/archaeology-history/1500-year-old-gold-treasure-discovered-by-metal-detectorist-this-is-the-gold-find-of-the-century-in-norway/2247536.

“The usual image on these round gold plates shows the god Odin healing his son Balder’s sick horse. According to Oehrl, this myth was viewed as a symbol of renewal and resurrection during the age of migration. It was believed to give its bearer protection and good health.

The Rennesøy-bracteates, however, merely show a horse.

Figure 1. Bracteate with Horse Motif, 6th century AD. Courtesy of the Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

In these gold pendants, the horse’s tongue is hanging out, and its slumping posture and the twisted legs show that it is hurt. Just as with the Christian symbol of the cross which was becoming

widespread in the Roman Empire at the time, this horse symbol represented disease and distress, but at the same time also hope of healing and new life." [252]

Like bracteates and their pictorial display of history and storytelling, it is also important to analyze the Viking Age brooch. In previous chapters we briefly analyzed the importance of the brooch when it comes to preserving some of the materials needed to identify Viking clothing. The brooch has done the job of encasing historical textiles, providing a window into the past and preserving remains of the Viking world which would have otherwise disappeared. In 2021 the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, released the statement about a rare viking textile find, which was found pinned inside a pair of brooches worn by a woman.[253] The find also indicated the presence of an inner and outer layer decorated by pearls, making the artifact extremely rare.[254] Through the colorful beads found in grave sites around Scandinavia, there is evidence of paints, texture and even glass making. It has been suggested that bead making was one of the most popular activities in the markets of Birka, it is also possible that there were even workshops which taught how to make beads, indicating that the making and obtaining of any type of jewelry during the Viking Age was incredibly important.

It is important to highlight that when it comes to jewelry, research has focused heavily on women and their expression of femininity through jewelry and adornment. However, there is considerable evidence that shows that men of the Viking Age also wore jewelry and adornments, through trade or craftsmanship, they were actively interested in obtaining jewelry not only for women, but also for themselves. During the Viking Age, several types of jewelry were worn and traded: silver and gold neck rings, amulet rings, bracelets, bead necklaces, adornments for the head, and most importantly brooches. Although brooches themselves are primordially associated

[252] Lasse Biørnstad and Ida Irene Bergstrøm, "1,500-Year-Old Gold Treasure Discovered by Metal Detectorist: 'This Is the Gold Find of the Century in Norway'," Science Norway, September 7, 2023, 20:02, https://www.sciencenorway.no/archaeology-history/1500-year-old-gold-treasure-discovered-by-metal-detectorist-this-is-the-gold-find-of-the-century-in-norway/2247536.
[253] "Viking Fabric and Clothing Discovered in Norwegian Burial," Archaeology Magazine, June 13, 2021, https://archaeology.org/news/2021/06/13/210614-viking-fabric-clothing/.
[254] Ibid.

with Viking women, it has been researched that Viking men did indeed wear brooches, although findings show that they wore penannular brooches to fasten cloaks and other outer garments.[255]

Oval brooches were the most popular and widespread brooch type of the Viking period, an important part of female dress, they were normally worn in pairs over the apron dress and often the brooches themselves were adorned with colorful and elaborate beads hanging between them. When defining Viking identity through dress, the way jewelry performed on the wearer adds an element of interest to the item itself. It estimated that Viking women wore brooches as part of daily dress –although it is argued that brooches belonged to married women. In her daily life a Viking woman would have had to handle and use her brooches quite frequently, brooches are suggested to have been the button or pin-like hold for their suspended dress. The suspended dress itself was composed of many layers, starting with the linen dress (which could often be pleated), then followed by the wool layer of the apron dress, it is not certain that the underdress was always made of linen, depending on the climate of where the dress was being made and worn, the underdress layer could have also been a thinner more delicate wool type.

The brooches would have been responsible for holding all those layers together, and they must have been sturdy enough to suspend them throughout a busy day of working on the farm, weaving textiles at the loom, tending to children, as well as cooking and taking care of the home. It could be suggested that brooches themselves could have been part of the dowry ritual for brides, or also wedding gifts. It is possible that brooches served as a species of marital symbol, similarly to how rings are worn by married women and men today to indicate marital status. What is interesting about brooches is that despite their inherent ornateness, they would have still been additionally decorated with the presences of different colored beads. It could be argued that beads provide excellent evidence of artistic importance during the Viking Age, although research has considered that the Viking Age did not contain art in the traditional sense of (art for art's sake) I disagree with this perspective, as beads could offer the type of canvas the Vikings needed to explore certain designs and colors –in addition to the woodworking and metal embroidery styles developed and mentioned in previous chapters. Viking Age beads are not only colored with bright

[255] Elizabeth Fowler, "Origins and Development of the Penannular Brooch in Europe," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* (May 27, 2014), accessed June 13, 2024.

paints, but they often have circular and rectangular designs, stripes, contrasting colors, and colorful polka dots which might resemble some type of flower. Throughout this chapter the focus will be discussing the jewelry and adornments which were most frequently worn by women and men of the Viking Age, as well as how it was worn, and how it could have performed on the body. This will be discussed as a means to understanding how jewelry and adornment could have been used to define the dressed identity of the wearer as well as some of the symbolism and meaning behind the items discussed.

Jewelry and adornments

Jewelry is important to the daily dress and identity of the Vikings, it is important for the completion of their dress, and for trading purposes. It is possible that jewelry and adornments were motivations of trade, and possibly even of theft and plundering during raids. For women, neck rings and necklaces were popular, most metal necklaces were cut and made very short like a choker-type necklace worn close to the neck, women often wore small pendants such as coins, Thor's hammer charms, and loops of wire with a few beads on them, the only forms of pendants worn by men were Thor's hammer and after the Christianization of Scandinavia, the crucifix was often worn.[256] Necklaces could have been used in a variety of ways throughout the Viking Age, as gifts, for trading and selling, or also as part of betrothal rituals, there is also a possibility that necklaces were worn attached to brooches, and then used in other ways for other occasions, making them multipurpose items, which were useful for gifting and also for trading in markets.

Metal working was an integral part of Viking Age jewelry, most of the neck rings and arm rings, were more than likely crafted by expert metal workers, and the gold and silver material of the rings must have been found during raids, or also traded through markets etc. Objects of gold and silver are an interesting part of the artifacts from the Viking age; the large quantity, and the variety of types, are evidence that high status of goldsmiths was present in the society and that the Viking Age civilization had easy access to the metals used –with outside contacts serving as a possible source of inspiration and innovation.[257] Goldsmiths had a very important job during the Viking Age, they were not only overseeing the making and creating of the jewelry worn within the Viking

[256] Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 61.

[257] E.R. Roesdahl and D.M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader 800-1200* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 193–200.

community, but also the jewelry which would be sold through trade. The levels of society with which the goldsmiths were involved were those of kings, chieftains, and noblemen of their time; they also had contacts with similar classes in Scandinavia and within the rest of Europe and the Orient.[258] It could be suggested that goldsmiths would have helped fuse some of the traditions and influences from foreign places, with those of Scandinavia. Many of those influences are evident in the mirroring styles which are found throughout Western Europe and the Middle East. Goldsmiths of the Viking Age would have devoted many hours to understanding some of those influences, as well as copying and recreating them. An important part of the goldsmiths' work would have been devoted to the manufacture of high-status objects such as neck-rings and arm-rings made of a flat band, a single rod, or up to 12 twisted rods, the twisted rings were quite new to Scandinavia and have oriental prototypes from which they would have more than likely copied from; from Byzantium came skill of making fine, elastic, chains in a crochet- like technique or of small-linked rings, with techniques like punching with repeated triangular stamps, niello, inlaying of silver using black silver sulfide and filigree and granulation, developing into high art during the Viking Age after being introduced into Scandinavia from Western Europe.[259] Neck, arm and finger rings, and even rings made of silver, gold, or, occasionally, jet, served the dual function of ornamentation and bullion for trade, such rings were typically made according to weight and from hammering out ingots of gold and silver and they normally consisted of broad bands stamped with patterns of two, three, or more rods twisted together which during commercial transactions could be easily be cut up.[260] This indicates that jewelry was more than likely made with multipurpose functions, this could be considered as evidence of resourcefulness and creativity when it came to the creation of jewelry and adornment. Viking Age jewelry may be divided into two groups: functional objects which depended for their form on their use with garments; and items worn purely for decoration; of the purely decorative items arm rings, neck rings and finger-rings of gold, silver, and bronze, as well as necklaces seem to be the most popular found in grave sites.[261]

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[258] E.R. Roesdahl and D.M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader 800-1200* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 193–200.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Kirsten Wolf, *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen* (New York: Sterling, 2014), 104–105.
[261] E.R. Roesdahl and D.M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader 800-1200* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 193–200.

Oval brooches began to lose popularity quite quickly after the Viking Age, as well as the suspended dress.[262] But prior to their loss in popularity, oval brooches were arguably the most defining feature of women's dress during the Viking Age, featuring different designs which varied reasonably by region and settlement. Many brooches featured some type of animal-motif, others were symbolic to an aspect of the Norse religion, often paying tribute to *Freyja* the god of fertility. Brooches of course were used to hold up the suspended dress worn by women, however, they also served other functions.

Women often used brooches like mini-storage kits, which often included ear spoons, tweezers, and dressmaking equipment.[263] The oval brooches, worn in pairs are so generally considered the most typical item of female Viking dress, and are so standardized that they have been used as gender identifiers in Viking burials, even where skeletal observations of sex are impossible,[264] This is important when considering the fact that identity and clothing are intertwined, to such a degree that in this particular case, the gender of the wearer is identified through the finding of brooches. Oval brooches were worn with the basic garment women wore during the Viking Age, outfits consisting of a long-sleeved dress of pleated linen, fastened at the neck with a brooch and the pair of oval brooches worn on the chest.[265]

The brooches are normally quite concave. Brooches also served the function of being an accessory which held other accessories, to understand the construction of the brooch would be beneficial, as it must have been built in a way which allowed the encasing of not only the fabric of the dresses being worn but of the items within it. It was common for example, for brooches to contain a string of beads or a pendant hanging in each other, along with other useful items like knives, scissors, and keys.[266] It is possible that brooches were carefully crafted and designed in wax, before being formed out of any metal material, as gold and silversmiths often made their

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[262] Thor Ewing (2012). *Viking clothing*. Stroud: History Press, p.61.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816.

[265] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816.

[266] Ibid.

original models by wax.[267] Brooches also had varying shapes and sizes, in Gotland for instance, brooches were often shaped like animal heads, there were also round penannular brooches which might have served a special value in women's costume, often representing sentimental value regarding the woman's husband.[268]

Cruciform brooches were another type of brooch which is commonly found in Norway and could have a quite different significance to the popular oval brooch. Cruciform brooches were particularly popular in Western, Norway and originating almost simultaneously across the substantial area of North-West Europe in the first part of the fifth century; the women who wore cruciform brooches were part of several symbolic realms: the household, the settlement, the wider network of local settlements and probably even beyond.[269] It is very possible that Viking women wore brooches for purely aesthetic reasons,[270] versus functionality.

This theory could be further supported by evidence of other types of items which could have also been used to carry some of the small items and keys found within brooches. Leather goods could have undoubtedly kept the items which are found in brooches, but it could be suggested that Viking women found brooches more functional or just better looking than a small leather bag –this is not to say that Viking women did not use bags in addition to their brooches, rather that brooches were not replaced using a leather good. Another question that may arise concerning brooches, is how heavy they might have felt on the wearer's body, and if they might have been difficult to wear after some time, most especially if they were also carrying other items. It is possible that women of the Viking Age could have become accustomed to the weight. There are some distinctions to be made between the small round brooches which were typically worn as more of a button around the neck of the linen underdress. The small round brooches would be called *knappar* or buttons, whereas the larger round brooches are *sølvar*.[271] There is evidence that the use of brooches had a strong connection with the pre-Christian Norse cult of the goddess Freyja; this could also be explained by the relative disappearance of brooches post-Christianization

[267] Else R. Roesdahl and David M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader 800-1200* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 193–200.
[268] Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 61.
[269] Toby Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015).
[270] Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 62.
[271] Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 61.

of Scandinavia. It has been argued that the embossed and the disc-on-bow brooches which were often decorated with red stones represent *Brísingamen* Freyja's necklace which held a special position and is mentioned in several stories of Norse mythology; *Brísingamen* means a glowing or flaming ornament worn at the neck, and this corresponds well to the relief and disc-on-bow brooches decorated with gleaming gold or 'burning' red garnets, and which were worn or fastened in front of the neck –the word *brísing* can be translated to ember or glowing fire, a word still used in modern Norwegian language (nynorsk).[272]

The disc-on-bow brooches developed as a distinct fibula type during (c.AD 550–790), with the first examples known from the early sixth century; they evolved from typological forerunners around the North Sea coast, such as relief brooches and fibulae decorated with filigree, garnets, or other semi-precious stones and glass.[273] These brooches are of particular interest because they have a very different appearance to the usual oval or circular brooches normally found within the Viking Age graves. Disc-on-bow brooches are of particular importance because they seem to have served the purpose of identifying a Viking Age woman with the Norse goddess Freyja.

Freyja was the most important goddess in Scandinavia before Christianization, and the cult and worship of this goddess was associated with the uppermost strata of Norse society, one of Freyja's most important aspects was that she played a central part in rituals relating to the knowledge of the origin and lineages of the royal dynasties; on this basis it has been argued that Freyja functioned as an administrator for the ruling families, and the women who inherited brooches such as disc-on-bow brooches, not only inherited the brooches, but that the brooches functioned as a mnemonic device transferring the family histories about heroes and heroines of the past, and the myths of the family origins from generation to generation.[274] The majority of disc-on-bow brooches have been found in Norway and Sweden, although the Swedish island of Gotland

[272] H.L. Aannestad, I.L. Nødseth, K. Armstrong Oma, H. Reiersen, and M. Figenschou Simonsen, *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP, 2018), accessed February 3, 2023, https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.51.

[273] Z.T. Glørstad and I.M. Røstad, "Echoes of the Past: Women, Memories and Disc-on-Bow Brooches in Vendel- and Viking-period Scandinavia," *European Journal of Archaeology* 24, no. 1 (2020): 1–19, accessed February 9, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2020.23.

[274] H.L. Aannestad, I.L. Nødseth, K. Armstrong Oma, H. Reiersen, and M. Figenschou Simonsen, *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP, 2018), accessed February 3, 2023, https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.51.

in the Baltic sea also has a large concentration of them –here they developed well into the eleventh century.[275]

Most pairs of oval brooches have been recovered from the remains of women's chests in Viking Age graves, confirming that this was more than likely their intended placement on the body.[276] The decoration of most of the brooches contain some type of tribute or description of the goddess Freyja, once again confirming the evidence that this particular goddess was very important to the Vikings when showing their identity through dress and adornment. Many of the brooches have decorations of sexual nature, multiple bosses allude to nipples (frequently nine, a recurring number in Viking Age religious art and mythology); there is a striking similarity between the appearance of these brooches to that of the belly of a lactating pig.[277] It is very possible that the connection between Freyja and the brooches also gave indication that brooches were meant for married women, because the name Freyja itself means *husfrue* or lady of the house; women buried with certain brooches would have been a prominent housewife, old Norse sources dictate that all women of rank are known as *frúvor* (ladies) and by the goddess Freyja's name, according to Snorri Sturluson in Heimskringla.[278]

Beyond functioning as decorative adornments, brooches tied Viking women to their religious beliefs, social status, and marital status, their hyper-emphasis of stylized female sexual traits could be further indication that they were indeed limited to married women, but as they are only found on women of a certain social standing, this may not always be the case. It could also be that they represented women who ran independent households. Whatever may have been the case, what is important is the significance that brooches would have had on the identity of a Viking woman, further investigation of their varieties and development only continue to reveal some of

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[275] Hilde Thunem Glørstad and Ingvild Margrete Røstad, "Echoes of the Past: Women, Memories and Disc-on-Bow Brooches in Vendel- and Viking-period Scandinavia," *European Journal of Archaeology* 24, no. 1 (2020): 1–19, doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/eaa.2020.23.

[276] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Neil Price, "Alexandra Pesch & Michaela Helmbrecht (Eds) Gold Foil Figures in Focus: A Scandinavian Find Group and Related Objects and Images from Ancient and Medieval Europe," *Current Swedish Archaeology* (2020), no. 28: 309–311, doi: https://doi.org/10.37718/csa.2020.14.

the ways in which they would have been worn and what they represented. Ties to supernatural or divine origins was an important part of identity within the Norse society, this was especially important within high society families, to establish power and position.[279] These views on supernatural identities are not unique to Viking society, as many civilizations before them, often relied on creating divine lineage to justify their established kingdoms.[280] There had to be a way to prove and legitimize not only a natural earthly identity but a supernatural one which connects to another world, when deciding what dress and adornments would be appropriate these views and the want of an otherworldly identity would be highly considered.[281]

Many brooches show influences from foreign places, the woman from Ketilsstadir for example, had with her a trefoil brooch at the time of burial. It is a three-tongue brooch said to be of Scandinavian origin, although its acanthus motifs are continental Frankish in origin, proving that these brooch types were possibly adopted by the Vikings and embellished with indigenous Scandinavian design.[282] Another brooch type which may have originated in Scandinavia but was later developed and found mostly in Viking Dublin was the kite-brooch, in many kite shaped brooches, enameling would have formed part of the decoration; however, during the Viking period in Scandinavia enamel had ceased to be a popular method of embellishing an object with goldsmiths relying on glass or amber studs to fill the ornaments spaces.[283] These developments show that brooches might have taken different forms as well as different meanings and cultural representations the further they traveled from Scandinavia, and as the Vikings continued to create settlements in Iceland, Ireland, and beyond. It is possible that by the time the end of the Viking age had approached, the brooches looked differently all together, it is also possible that they might then have been used for different purposes than when they were originally worn. The burial find

[279] Håkon Larsen Aannestad, Ingrid L. Nødseth, Kristin Armstrong Oma, Heidi Reiersen, and Margrete Figenschou Simonsen, *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP, 2018), doi: https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.51.
[280] Olivier Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors: Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 240–266.
[281] Håkon Larsen Aannestad, Ingrid L. Nødseth, Kristin Armstrong Oma, Heidi Reiersen, and Margrete Figenschou Simonsen, *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP, 2018), doi: https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.51
[282] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816
[283] Orla Somerville, "Kite-Shaped Brooches," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 123 (1993): 59–101, accessed February 7, 2023, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/25509045.

of the Ketilsstadir woman is one of the most remarkable Viking Age finds because it reveals the significant meaning of the brooches. Oval brooches were normally made of copper alloy, gilded, and embellished with silver and bosses, corroding copper releases metal ions that can contribute significantly to the preservation of organic materials, such as textiles, slain, or hair; this meant that as the Ketilsstadir woman was buried, her cheek lay upon the left broach preserving fragments of fibers [284] With which researchers have been able to understand so many things concerning Viking Age dress, without this find, it might not have been possible to know as much –this knowledge we owe to the brooch.

The Vikings gave great importance to jewelry, and one of their most prized jewelries was beads. Even though they weren't as valuable as gold, silver and brooches, beads were highly sought after and valued. The types of beads which they seem to prize the most is the dark green ceramic beads, Viking men often had these types of beads on board their boats to make necklaces for their wives; glass beads although ubiquitous were highly prized by the Vikings, with most beads made of glass, while others of amber, carnelian, rock crystal, silver, and gold.[285] Since the Vikings were an arguably mobile society, their attraction to beads could be easily explained, beads are easily transported, easily traded, and it is a functional gift to bring back from foreign lands in the same way that charm for charm bracelets are a popular type of jewelry in present-day. Beads are also a great identifier, the woman from Ketilsstadir for example may have had a family connection with continental Europe, this is assumed because she was adorned with beads that would have hung between her two brooches and some of these beads also suggest possible exchange with the southern Mediterranean.[286] Different beads were associated with different parts of the world, and since the Vikings were prominent traders, it is possible that they had unlimited resources when it came to bead finds, as well as the adoption of certain bead designs into their own culture. Women of the Viking Age might have found it very entertaining and useful to learn how to make beads to further decorate and adorn themselves. Necklaces made of beads either complete or strung in

[284] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816.

[285] Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: History Press, 2012), 61.

[286] Mélanie Hayeur Smith, Kevin P. Smith, and Karin M. Frei, "'Tangled up in Blue': The Death, Dress and Identity of an Early Viking-Age Female Settler from Ketilsstaðir, Iceland," *Medieval Archaeology* 63, no. 1 (2019): 95–127, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2019.1589816

between oval brooches, were frequently used by women, glass, and amber beads, some of which were domestic products, appear to have been the most common, but beads made from imported semi-precious stones, such as crystal, cornelian, and obsidian, were also used.[287] Gold, silver, and bronze beads are not as commonly found.

Finds of genuine pearls were extremely rare, and those that had been found were of extremely inferior quality until a find in 2021 revealed the possibility that more pearls might have been used during the Viking Age than originally thought. Archaeologists in Norway discovered the burial of a Viking Age woman who was laid to rest with hundreds of miniature pearls, and a rare set of embroidered wool textiles; the deceased woman was found placed in a wooden burial chamber in an elongated burial mound at Hestnes in the Southern Trøndelag county, and has been dated to approximately AD 850-950, the middle of the Viking Age.[288]

A pearl find from the Viking Age is corroborating evidence that the Viking Society was indeed heavily identified with dressing themselves in elegance. It is without a doubt that splendor was important for the dressed identity of the Vikings, and most of that can be witnessed in the considerable amount of jewelry which has survived.[289] Although most beads might have belonged to women, it is also possible that beads were used and worn by men. Certain researchers have argued that the stereotypical gendering systems of the 19th and 20th century may have contributed to the belief that beads and jewelry were to be considered *women's* items, when the reality is that most of the gendering systems used then and even in present-day, may not have been the least bit applicable to the beliefs of the Viking Age. It is argued that perhaps a more cautious approach is needed when it comes to beads and gendering them as female items, it could be suggested that glass beads, and those of other materials such as amber or rock crystal, were flexible items, relevant to the construction of multi-layered and fluid, group, and individual identities, indicating that

[287] Kirsten Wolf, *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen* (New York: Sterling, 2014), 104–105.
[288] Mary Pina Dacier, "Rare discovery of Viking Age embroidery delights archaeologists," *DigVentures*, 2021, accessed February 8, 2022, available at: https://digventures.com/2021/06/viking-age-woman-embroidered-textiles-pearls/.There seem to be no journal articles officially published concerning this find, however, there was an original article published on Medievalists.net.
[289] Kirsten Wolf, *Viking Age: Everyday Life During the Extraordinary Era of the Norsemen* (New York: Sterling, 2014), 104–105.

perhaps gender was a part of this complex process.[290] This is also important when considering that male grave finds have also been found to contain jewelry and beads, which corroborates the point that although females of the Viking age might be the most recognized as wearers of jewelry, men more than likely would have worn jewelry and adornments as well.

Common bead finds

One of the most fantastic aspects of bead finds from the Viking Age is the amount of color that they retain. The vast array of color found in these beads are one of the only artifacts we have from the Viking Age which give an insight into what shades, dyes and materials would have been preferred. It is very likely that different colors of beads also meant different things; as previously discussed with the garnet stones adorning the disc-on-bow brooches which represented the fiery *Brísingamen* of Freyja and her many powers, it could be suggested that beads were also indicative of symbolisms and powers –perhaps even religious connotations. Glass beads seem to be the most popular types of beads found within Viking graves in Scandinavia and beyond; In 1847 in Ireland, there was a Viking Age glass bead find which was estimated to belong to the Norse cemetery at the Island Bridge in Kilmainham, Dublin. The beads were of various types, the first to be analyzed was a dark blue bugle-shaped bead with white bands shaded blue in the center, the second belonged to the roped variety with the main color being green and the ropes shaded with white threads; the third had an inlaid wavy pattern of white with a red inset, on a dark blue ground; the fourth has an irregular ribbon pattern of white on a green ground; the fifth and sixth were plain, others being a clear pale blue, and opaque green, glass; the eighth was a grooved ring bead of pale green glass; the two last were ring beads of amber.[291] The beads were suggested to have come from Norway.

We have little evidence for the colors of the Viking Age, even though most people lived in a world dominated by colors that drew on and deviated from the natural world: among the artifacts we possess from the Viking Age, glass beads stand out in their rare ability to preserve lost colors and restore them to brilliant life.[292] One of the greatest Viking Age bead finds is from

[290]O'Sullivan, Johanna. "Strung Along: Re-evaluating Gendered Views of Viking-Age Beads." *Medieval Archaeology* 59, no. 1 (2015): 73–86. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2015.1119384.
[291] Armstrong, Edward C. R. "Two Irish Finds of Glass Beads of the Viking Period." *Man* 21 (1921): 71. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2840242.
[292] Matthew C. Delvaux, "Colors of the Viking Age: A Cluster Analysis of Glass Beads from Hedeby," *Journal of Glass Studies* 60 (2018): 41–68, accessed February 7, 2023, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26678008

Hedeby/Haithabu, the Hedeby finds represent some of the best variety and diversity of beads which were available to Scandinavia throughout the Viking Age.

More than 7,700 beads have been collected in excavations and fieldwork: 7,141 beads were made of glass (93%), 228 beads were made of rock crystal (3%), 198 beads made of carnelian (3%), 139 amber beads (2%) and a modest but unspecified number of beads made from other materials; and Gotland where beads were found to be commonly made of cowrie shells.[293] Focusing on the bead finds recovered from the Hedeby graves, shows the various types of beads could have had other unique materials, previously not found. There were 284 beads of glass (71%), 101 beads of rock crystal and carnelian (25%), eight beads of amber (2%), four beads of silver (1%), two beads of amethyst (0.5%), and one bead of jet (0.3%); it has been suggested that the most obvious explanation for the large number of glass beads is that they represent settlement waste from glass bead production— however, this theory cannot be taken as definitive.[294] When it comes to amber beads, their color might have been useful for creating tributes to Freyja's necklace, this means that whilst there are amber finds, they would not have been as readily available as beads of other materials and might have been left for high-society individuals. It is also possible that amber would have been used for amuletic purposes as burial evidence of amber beads were only found in eight different graves at Hedeby, suggesting that they were indeed special.[295] The variety of beads from the Viking Age also came by the way of trade, and due to the changes in trade, oftentimes the types of beads which were readily available began to change in style, shape and type. It has been estimated that by the end of the 800s objects and beads from the Middle East had begun to disappear from Viking settlements and began to be replaced by Eastern Islamic and Russian objects, the only exception would have been finds of a couple of Arabic coins and several glass beads which are assumed to have originated from Syria.[296] Scandinavia expanded into many settlements throughout Europe which created a sort of "melting-pot" of cultures and design styles

[293] Matthew C. Delvaux, "Colors of the Viking Age: A Cluster Analysis of Glass Beads from Hedeby," *Journal of Glass Studies* 60 (2018): 41–68, accessed February 7, 2023, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26678008
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] B. Ambrosiani and P. Anderson Ambrosiani, "Birka and Scandinavia's trade with the East," *Russian History* 32, no. 3/4 (2005): 287–296, available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24663264, accessed February 7, 2022.

that could have influenced the appearance and cuts of beads which were used [297] –a mix of identities unique for the time. The interesting situation which was offered by the trade and imports of Scandinavia gave way to an influx of different jewelry styles and adornments, that of course meant more variety and assortment of beads. The marketplace of Kaupang in Vestfold, Norway is an excellent example of these bead variety changes: these beads were predominantly monochrome and devoid of decoration, an interesting difference considering that graves from the same immediate areas or cemeteries contained high numbers of decorated glass beads; there was however, no lack of availability for decorated beads, instead a deliberate and conscious selection of monochrome beads took place for inclusion with burials containing male-sexed individuals.[298]

This could signify that Viking men did indeed wear beads, however, their choice of beads for adornment were monochrome and less colorful than those for females, this is an interesting possibility considering the fact that after the 18th century the color palette for "fashionable" males became rather devoid of color. It is a possibility that beads for males might have been monochrome or less decorated as a sign of male identity. The phenomenon of monochrome beads in male-sexed graves is not unique to Vestfold; notable examples from inside and outside mainland Scandinavia underline the use of beads within the male burial context: finds are known from the Vestfold region of Norway, Plakun in modern-day Russia, the Ire cemetery on Gotland, the 'warrior' burial at Ship Street Great, Dublin, Repton and Cumwhitton in England, and Iceland.[299]

It could be concluded that beads were not only an important aspect of jewelry and adornment for women of the Viking Age, but they also were symbolic in the identity of male Vikings –even if it is not certain what they could have symbolized for men of the Viking Age exactly. The colors of the beads in Hedeby, Birka, and other places throughout Scandinavia were varied and plentiful; unlike other grave remains which have lost their color and shape, beads have retained much of their original beauty and brightness. Beads of amber were more than likely rare and special, as they resembled the embers which represented Freyja's necklace, and finds like

[297] C.S. Briggs, M. Guido, and A. Walsh, "A Neglected Viking Burial with Beads from Kilmainham, Dublin, Discovered in 1847," *Medieval Archaeology* 29, no. 1 (1985): 94–108, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.1985.11735466.
[298] Johanna O'Sullivan, "Strung Along: Re-evaluating Gendered Views of Viking-Age Beads," *Medieval Archaeology* 59, no. 1 (2015): 73–86, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2015.1119384.
[299] Ibid.

amethyst, garnet, and jet show that the Vikings were very interested in finding precious stones to decorate and adorn themselves and their surroundings. Beads are an essential part of understanding adornment for the Viking Age civilization because they are found in almost every single grave, small and convenient enough to be easily traded and handled but important enough to take on the journey into the afterlife.

Gold foils and possible meanings

Of all the mysteries and questions surrounding the Viking Age, gold foils more commonly known as *guldgubber* are one of the strangest and most fascinating. They've been researched and investigated by hundreds of archaeologists, historians, and researchers, and yet there hasn't been one definitive answer which could explain their meaning and use. As my research covers the expression of identity through dress, adornment, and aesthetics, it is my theory that gold foils are yet another way in which Vikings expressed their identities through adornment. It could be that gold foils served as a type of "wallet-photograph", perhaps a way for Viking men to have a memory of their loved ones when on raids and voyages, this is only an assumption of course, but since many of the gold foils have scenes of men and women together (similarly to a wedding portrait) the possibility does exist.

There are many different types of *guldgubber*, some of them depict men and women together, others have only women, others are pairs of men, and a few also have animals. Many of the gold foils seem to possess images which could be related to Nordic mythology or pagan rituals. It could be argued that one of the most interesting things about gold foils is some of the garments which are depicted, often they are very detailed. The guldgubber from Sorte Muld on Bornholm, Denmark have been unique *guldgubber* to analyze, although they are from a slightly later period, it depicts an apparently bearded individual, naked, and wearing only a necklace; Other gold-foil figures similarly represent apparently nude individuals wearing just a belt or necklace, one of which, from the obvious depiction of a phallus, is unambiguously male.[300] These gold foils seem to depict some type of masculinity and bravery, but it also might provide evidence that men did indeed wear jewelry, it could even be suggested that if the male bearded figures were naked except

[300] Paul Blinkhorn and Christine G. Cumberpatch, *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014), 31–32.

for a necklace, jewelry might have been just as important in the dress identity of males than previously considered. Depictions of women are rare in the art of this broad period, however, there have been a variety of gold foils found which seemingly depict women swathed in clothing.[301] Currently, there are about fifty spots with gold foil figures which have been recorded, all but one located in Scandinavia; the total number of these places is not easy to determine, due to the lack of information about finds from as long ago as the 18th century, however, it is possible to list 21 find spots in Sweden, including famous sites like Helgö, Uppåkra, and Västra Vång, about 20 places in Denmark, among them Sorte Muld on Bornholm and Gudme and Lundeborg on Fyn, and about nine in Norway, such as Borg on Lofoten, Mære in Trøndelag, and Hauge on the Tu hill in Rogaland, as well as, allegedly, one site in northern Germany, near Schleswig.[302]

Gold foils are very small in size, most of them about the size of a small pinky nail, this makes the etched work on them so detailed and interesting, but also raises many questions regarding why they were used in the first place. The traditional perception of gold foil figures as made of gold sheet and either die-stamped or cut-out and/or incised has recently been challenged by new finds of "hybrid" figures with three dimensional heads from a locality known as "Guldhullet" (literally the 'gold hole') on Bornholm; because of their miniature size and extremely low weight, the gold foil figures were practically untraceable for standard metal detectors up to the second decade of the 21st century.[303] Gold seemed to have been essential for the production of the foils, the precious metal is more than a direct expression of value, of wealth and social status as the Old Norse sources show evidence that gold was also ascribed special powers due to its enduring radiance and immaculate brilliance.[304] It is very possible that gold foils might have some sort of religious value, since they were created from gold, and perhaps could have been used as a sort of amulet or luck charm. Their size arguably dictates that they were intended to be mobile enough to transport with ease, as they could have easily fit inside of any small leather purse or

[301] Paul Blinkhorn and Christine G. Cumberpatch, *The Chiming of Crack'd Bells: Recent Approaches to the Study of Artifacts in Archaeology* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014), 31–32.
[302] Neil Price, "Alexandra Pesch & Michaela Helmbrecht (Eds) Gold Foil Figures in Focus: A Scandinavian Find Group and Related Objects and Images from Ancient and Medieval Europe," *Current Swedish Archaeology* (2020), no. 28: 309–311, doi: https://doi.org/10.37718/csa.2020.14.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Michaela Helmbrecht, "Figures, Foils, and Faces–Fragments of a Pictorial World: Anthropomorphic Images from the Vendel Period and Viking Age Found at Uppåkra," *Folk, Fä och Fynd* (2013): 9.

even inside of the brooches that, as is known, were occasionally used to carry small items of importance as well.

One of the largest gold foil finds were in Uppåkra in the Southern Sweden region of Scania; the small gold sheets were either stamped or contained cut-out images, more than one hundred gold foils were found there, which makes Uppåkra the second-largest find-spot for gold foil figures in Scandinavia, after Sorte Muld on Bornholm.[305] If we are to judge by the clothing in the gold foils, it seems to be that most gold foils from Uppåkra represent me, these are caftan-clad standing or pacing figures, sometimes with a staff.[306] Female figures are rarer to see on gold foils, however not impossible; there are gold foils which show a woman, who in addition to drinking out of some sort of vessel, is also carrying some type of club or twig. die shows a woman who, in addition to the drinking vessel, even carries a club and/or some sort of twig.[307] Gold foils sometimes feature a man and a woman embracing or seemingly holding each other, the gold foil figures show varying degrees of artistic style and design when it comes to the garments, while other figures seem to be naked. Concerning the iconographic meaning of the gold foil figures, there are several fundamentally different interpretation models, the German medievalist Karl Hauck interpreted the gold foil figures as representations of individual gods, whose names are known from later written sources, mainly Thor, Odin, Frey, and Freya; however, other scholars have interpreted the majority of the gold foil figures as masked persons, possibly shamans performing rituals.[308] A lot of the theories concerning whether the gold foils could be species of tributes or amulet renditions of Nordic gods have been considered cautiously by researchers and scholars, mainly due to the fact that the figures have very animated body positions and gestures, which are very enhanced and seem to be the most important part of their message.[309] It is my theory that the enhanced gestures and body positions of the persons in the gold foils are further indication that these could have been photographs or portraits of people and situations within the settlements where they were made. It

[305]Neil Price, "Alexandra Pesch & Michaela Helmbrecht (Eds) Gold Foil Figures in Focus: A Scandinavian Find Group and Related Objects and Images from Ancient and Medieval Europe," *Current Swedish Archaeology* (2020), no. 28: 309–311, doi: https://doi.org/10.37718/csa.2020.14.
[306] Ulla Mannering, *Iconic Costumes* (Oxbow Books, 2016), 41–73.
[307] Lotte Headeager, "Split Bodies in the Late Iron Age/Viking Age of Scandinavia," *Body Parts* 11 (2010): 111–112.
[308] Neil Price, "Alexandra Pesch & Michaela Helmbrecht (Eds) Gold Foil Figures in Focus: A Scandinavian Find Group and Related Objects and Images from Ancient and Medieval Europe," *Current Swedish Archaeology* (2020), no. 28: 309–311, doi: https://doi.org/10.37718/csa.2020.14.
[309] Ulla Mannering, *Iconic Costumes* (Oxbow Books, 2016), 41–73.

could also be considered that some of the more dramatic figures could be a form of idealized identity, such as the naked man fighting the bear –another way to interpret the self through image.

How were they worn

Viking Age jewelry was representative and symbolic to the Vikings, each piece and how it was worn was an important part of daily dress and adornment. It has been established that Viking women wore their brooches on their chest, and that they were multifunctional objects used as a type of button or suspending device for the apron dress, they were important enough to be worn daily, and passed down from generation to generation. Different types of brooches were also significant for different things, with some even being especially reserved for high-society women who could have possibly claimed supernatural ties to Freyja. Beads were also worn as hanging garlands in between brooches, and it is very likely that they were also worn by men, something which was previously not thought of as likely due to gender-normative interpretations. How the jewelry was worn and what it could have meant to the wearer is important to consider when interpreting Viking Age jewelry.

There is a Viking Age pendant from Aska in Östergötland that shows a pregnant female with rich dress and jewelry which has been interpreted as Freyja with her *Brísingamen* necklace,[310] What is worth noting about this pendant, is that perhaps it was meant to be worn by pregnant women for protection, something with Freyja was recognized as –the goddess of protection. Pendants and necklaces were both worn by men and women alike, and it is likely that they were worn similarly to how some cultures and religions wear their religious symbols on pendants for protection in present-day. Thor the god of thunder was usually called upon for protection on the dangerous voyages at sea, pendant necklaces relating to Thor are likely to have been worn by Viking men. It was customary to wear little models of Thor's hammer as amulets in the tenth century, and these were usually fitted on to a ring, and sometimes on to a twisted chain as well. A carving of Thor's hammer on a Swedish gravestone from Stenkista, Södermanland shows it hanging on a king of cord, which forms the border to the stone; from such illustrations it seems

[310] Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt, Samuel A. Mitchell, and Jens Peter Schjødt, *Old Norse Mythology—Comparative Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2017), accessed February 8, 2023, available at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_HermannP_etal_eds.Old_Norse_Mythology.2017.

possible that Thor's Hammer was sometimes thought of as a missile weapon hanging on a string, and this might account for the idea that it could return to the hand of thrower.[311] Often it is difficult to know why certain necklaces and pendants were worn, the line between jewelry worn for pure aesthetic purposes and amulets worn for religious or mystical purposes is often quite blurred. It is also notoriously difficult to draw the line between amulets on the one hand and ornaments or cult objects on the other; miniatures tools and weapons of silver or bronze were frequently worn on the neck which means they could have easily been worn as ornaments, the interpretation of them as amulets rests partly on the simultaneous occurrence of identical models in iron and perhaps as etching on gravestones or in other items unrelated to jewelry.[312] Bracteates were a type of pendant which were also worn around the neck on a string, however, unlike regular pendants worn as jewelry, bracteates were more closely related to amulets[313]. Most bracteates have decoration only on one side, while medallions are decorated on both sides; one of the motifs which has been analyzed is the motif with the emperor on horseback that seems to develop into a horse figure with a head above, reminiscent of the emperor portrait which is interpreted as the god Odin; often, we can see that he is breathing in the horse's ear or on the neck –Odin's healing breath. Many of the horses on the bracteates have horns, some also have beards.[314]

Although the differences between jewelry worn for beauty and jewelry worn for amulets might be difficult to distinguish, the tributes to specific Nordic gods may be the best way to decipher the meaning, as it seems that amulets would have been worn more for protection purposes, and perhaps even rituals. However, there may indeed be no need to separate the use of amulets from the use of jewelry as adornment, it is very much possible for the Vikings to have worn jewelry for adornment and dress identity which simultaneously served the purpose of protecting and or reinforcing their beliefs through the wearing of symbols. The wearing of religious symbols is a very personal and often important part of a person's identity, it is very possible that

[311] Hilda Roderick Ellis Davidson, "Thor's Hammer," *Folklore* 76, no. 1 (1965): 1–15, accessed February 8, 2023, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1258087.
[312] Signe Horn Fuglesang, "Viking and Medieval Amulets in Scandinavia," *Fornvännen* 84 (1989): 15–27, available at: http://kulturarvsdata.se/raa/fornvannen/html/1989_015%20Ing%C3%A5r%20i:%20samla.raa.se.
[313] Charlotte Behr, "New Bracteate Finds from Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Medieval Archaeology* 54, no. 1 (2010): 34–88, doi: https://doi.org/10.1179/174581710x12790370815698.
[314] Eva Simonsen Kristoffersen, "Gullbrakteater," in *Kreativitet & Kunnskap: Rogaland Gjennom 11.000 år*, ed. by Elisabeth Solheim Pedersen (Stavanger, Norway: Arkeologisk Museum, Universitet i Stavanger, 2021), 26–27.

for the Vikings, it was crucial to combine both aesthetic beauty, adornment, and spiritual meaning. It could be summarized that the Vikings wore jewelry for functionality and for beauty, but also to say something about who they were as a people, and what they believed in.

Conclusions

The Vikings wore jewelry and adornment regularly, from the use of brooches we have understood that Viking women wore them daily, and that they were used for their functionality as much as for their beauty. Brooches must not be thought of as purely decorative objects, they served the highly practical purpose of keeping a woman's dress up, and had it not been for their daily purpose and use, we would in fact know very little about what the well-dressed woman wore in this period.[315] Viking men also wore jewelry, although it is not known how much they wore it in the same way the daily use of brooches are understood, grave finds do indeed indicate that they wore monochromatic beads, and more than likely also wore pendants and bracteates with symbols relating to Norse gods. The finding of abundant jewelry in female graves (and to certain degree male graves) is indicative that the Viking Age was an important period for jewelry, adornment and jewelry craftsmanship; Viking women were buried fully dressed and with the complete set of accessories and jewelry they would have worn throughout their lifetime, jewelry would not have been solely a thoughtless addition but rather a part of the entire dress, once again serving the purpose of showcasing identity.

As the Viking Age ended the jewelry undoubtedly adapted to the changing of the times, the strings of beads found in many women's graves which would hang between the oval brooches with pendants of amber, jet or silver at intervals would soon be joined by a silver cross; a Viking woman newly converted to Christianity would add a small silver cross in her hanging set of beads, perhaps also joining useful household implements like scissors and knives.[316] Both Viking men and women wearing necklaces with (*mjolne*) Thor's hammer, would have had to adapt their beliefs to the new Christian faith; evidence of such adaptation is found in the pendants carrying a mix of *mjolne* and silver crosses. This was a fusion of identities, the old identity of the Viking meeting the new, and perhaps through Viking Age jewelry is where we can see this fusion of identities

[315] Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, Suff.; Rochester, N.Y.: The Boydell Press, 2006), 15–19.
[316] Ibid.

best. For the Vikings, jewelry was symbolic, protective, attractive, and powerful tools for showcasing identity.

In closing, it is my opinion that jewelry and adornment should be highly considered when understanding and analyzing the Viking Age civilization, especially as it pertains to dressed identity and artistic expression. Through brooches, we have been able to understand the layers of the female Viking Age dress and how they were worn, through beads we have been able to see the changes in trade and craftsmanship, along with the importance of colors for the Vikings, through metal objects like necklaces and bracteates there is significant evidence of the importance the Vikings paid to their gods for protection, safety, and blessing. Whilst gold foils provide the necessary evidence for artistic endeavors in etching and stamping, as well as the mystery of their significance and what they could have been used for –mystery being the best word to encourage the passion and continuing pursuit for understanding the identity of the Vikings.

Chapter 6 Conclusions & observations

i. Introduction
ii. Key findings
iii. How does Viking Age dress define identity?
iv. The importance of aesthetics in identity.
v. The influence on Scandinavian identity
vi. Contributions of the find
vii. Limitations
viii. Future research
ix. Conclusions

Introduction

The closing chapter of this research is perhaps one of the most challenging to write, as the research comes to an end, it is necessary to reevaluate the question: ¿How does Viking clothing and aesthetic influence Scandinavian identity? The question is simple, yet the answer is composed of many layers. The first layer introduces the Vikings as they are known by the media: ruthless, violent, pillaging, and with little regard to dress, adornment let alone hygiene, this layer is important to analyze because it constructs a picture; one which has been reinforced by the media and cinematic pictures, and which is arguably the most common one referred to when hearing the word *Viking*. From the opening image offered by the first layer, we may have reached the conclusion that the Vikings were violent (this has been well established), we know that they were skilled seafarers and navigators, and that their boats were some of the most impressive ever built, most especially for that period, it is also known that they had more contact with foreign lands than most other civilizations of their time were able to have. But how did they look? What were their interests and activities? How did they behave when their journeys ended and they had to return home to their settlements, what was their interest in trade, and what would they buy? If the first layer only offers us a one-dimensional image, it is difficult to establish anything further than that image. Seeking answers to those questions leads to the second layer, deconstructing the initial image. When it comes to deconstructing the image of Viking dress, the first step was establishing what dress as both a combination of objects as well as a performative action means, and how it can be explained; as well as what is commonly known as "Viking dress" to begin with, and how to find commonalities (or lack thereof) with the stereotypes of the first layer. At first it was easy to type the word "Viking clothing" on search platforms only to find recurring images of Vikings in dark, muddled colors, wearing a lot of leather, furs, and black war paint on their faces, delving further into the search results, some of the images turned to gimmicks like horned helmets, metal breastplates for Viking warrior women with clear demarcation for the breasts and leather skirts. It was only using Google Scholar, and other academic research platforms that search results rendered a very different type of image. This brought the conclusion that the academic research on Viking dress (and through that an understanding of their identity), had not been propagated sufficiently to be recognized as the most accurate and valuable information available. Instead, the stereotypical images previously described have been the ones to take on a protagonist role in defining the dress identity of the Viking Age. In understanding that much of the research available for the masses

concerning Viking dress is more closely related to stereotypical cinematic gimmicks about the Vikings, it was considerably clear to see why some of these stereotypes continued to spread, and why they were not so easily broken. The danger in those stereotypes lie beyond basic misinformation, but indeed, through my analysis I have concluded that cultural stereotypes concerning a past, or present society could potentially impact the identity of the people being described or questioned. The differences between how Vikings are viewed within Scandinavia to how they are viewed within a group of people attending a "Viking fair" in Atlanta, Georgia is stark. Within Scandinavia, there have been efforts made to research and analyze the evidence from grave finds, understand the textiles, recreate the clothing using Viking Age methods, and an attempt at separating the Viking Age from the one-dimensional image of violence and raiding. However, a lot of the violence and the pagan rituals surrounding the Viking culture is what continues to inspire and attract foreign cultures to the Viking Age, and since those are the aspects which have become the focus, they are also the most recognized worldwide. To add insult to injury, a lot of the stereotypes are considerably negative. Especially as it pertains to grooming, hygiene, and dress; it could be suggested that an entire area of textile research and jewelry research has been for the most part ignored as a means to understanding the Viking culture, solely because the focus continues to be on ships, pagan rituals, and invasions. This leads to the third layer, what happens when the stereotypes of the first layer are deconstructed? What is achieved through the rethinking of Viking identities? There lies the answer to my research.

Key findings

Some of the main key findings of this study have included: the incredible use of color throughout the Viking Age, the arguable modernity and advancement of textile production, the intrinsic connection between textile creation and the identity of women in the Viking Age, the artistic and aesthetic interests of men and women throughout the Viking Age, the detailed and elaborate production of jewelry as well as trade and purchase, the understanding and purpose of specific jewelry/adornments and the reevaluating some of the gendered misconceptions concerning Viking Age garments and their dress identity for both males and females of the time. Beginning with the use of color throughout the Viking Age, it has perhaps been one of the most interesting aspects of this research. The effort which was placed on finding the correct plants for dyes to create particular colors for clothing as well as for beads, have served as inspiration to

continue and further understand what symbolisms could be found in the use and wear of particular colors. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the woman from Ketilsstadir was wearing the color blue when buried, and many other grave finds indicated that blue might have been the color of choice for burials, however, when taking a second look, it could have also been suggested that blue was the color for brides –changing the meaning and the identity of the color all together. Another interesting point to consider about blue for women's dresses in the Viking Age, is that since burials are estimated to have been a type of ultimate display of the person's life and their journey into the afterlife, they were buried with their very best or most favorite garments and belongings. For women, it is possible that since blue was considered the color which identified a female as a bride,[317] It was also the "best dress" which was worn at the time of burial. Chapter 5 discussed the use of garnet, amber and other reddish/fire-colored stones to represent *brísingamen, the* necklace worn by Freyja and most likely reserved for women of very high society which could have also claimed supernatural identity and relationship to the Nordic deity herself. When it comes to clothing dyes, it seems that red was also a preferential color (perhaps also in association with Freyja), the use of madder, and other elements to create a red sometimes burgundy shade for clothing was very prominent.[318] It could be suggested that red might have been associated with Freyja, and that women were more likely to wear the color in some type of way, throughout their daily lives. When it comes to beads, it is evident that the Vikings also sought vivid color, although Chapter 5 also discusses the rarity of colorful beads in men's grave finds, where instead monochromatic beads are found. This has been evidence that color could have been used to define gender in certain ways, be it through specific types of beads, it is clear that particular distinctions were likely to be made in terms of who would wear what colors of beads. The importance of shape and color in beads was also clear when considering what would be used for trading[319], through this it could be derived that perhaps the Vikings made differences between the items they would craft for trade and marketplaces, versus what they would make for themselves and as gifts for each

[317] Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda: Mythological Poems* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1969).
[318] G. W. Taylor, "Detection and Identification of Dyes on Anglo-Scandinavian Textiles," *Studies in Conservation* 28, no. 4 (1983): 153–160, doi: https://doi.org/10.1179/sic.1983.28.4.153.
[319] Mary Hickey, "Perler fra vikingtiden (Beads of the Viking-Age): A Study of the Social and Economic Patterns in the Appearance of Beads from Viking-Age Sites in Britain," MA research thesis, 2014, 68–75.

other. The colors of beads would have also influenced the overall look of the jewelry and adornment worn by the Vikings, as often, metals were also accessorized by beads.

Textiles are arguably the foundation on which this research finds its grounding. The advancements in textiles which the Vikings were able to achieve during their time is quite remarkable, especially considering that it was these very advancements which led them to create the sails that made them famous. Something which should be considered is the ongoing research and debates concerning whether female Vikings were also involved in raids and battles like the men, it seems to be a popular thematic to research more than likely due to the general knowledge that women within the Viking Age had privileges which were unknown to women of other parts of the world during that time. However, most research has found little evidence that women were involved in the raids and battles in the way that men were, indeed there have been a few grave finds which are currently under investigation in the hopes of finding new conclusions as to whether some of those graves were wrongfully sexed –something which is arguably probable considering that most weapons are automatically presumed male, whereas textile equipment classified as female. The margin for error is evident. However, it could be suggested that the very desire to identify graves with weapons and battle equipment as potentially female and not only male, could lie within the gender-normative ideas existing within present-day discussions. Just as textiles have often been ignored as the means to identify an era or a civilization, it could be argued that they are ignored when considering women's involvement in Viking Age raids and travels. It is true that it might have been unlikely for most women to board ships to distant lands and fight in battle (although there must have been exceptions), but they made all of those journeys possible through the working of the loom, the understanding of textiles, and the creation of water-repellent fabrics. This should not only be considered as involvement in the male world, but also as a type of leadership, the woman was not limited to actively fighting and using weapons, she was making the battle possible in the first place.

A recent discovery in a church of Saint-Denis, near Paris, revealed fragments of material from the tomb of Merovingian queen (from possible Norse origin), which showed that she was

buried in a chemise of fine linen with a violet silk robe over it.[320] Following wool, linen was undoubtedly one of the most important textiles of the Viking Age, and it became such an important part of European identity following the Viking Age, that it continued to be used by the rest of Europe as the foundation of many gowns, tunics, and shirts. It could be argued that the Vikings contributed to Europe's ample use of linen in the way in which it was used once the Viking Age had reached its end. The uses of linen were plenty, it is likely that linen was worn extensively during the summer months, and on its own, whereas in the winter it functioned primordially as an undergarment for both men and women; as children's clothing is almost nonexistent from research text, it has been assumed that they probably wore similar garments to adults, and that linen would have also been used to create garments for them. The Viking age poet's descriptions of a *liin-geen* (linen goddess) or *lin-eik* (linen oak), adds to the evidence that the use of linen was way to be seen as beautiful and perhaps alluding to supernatural qualities. The Vikings, in a similar fashion to other civilizations, seemed to find an interest in emulating deities or finding some sort of common ground with their supernatural beliefs. In many ways, textiles would have helped to achieve these supernatural identities. It has been previously discussed throughout this research, that the establishing of some sort of connection to Norse gods like Thor through wearing the *mjølner* (Mjolnir) pendant across the neck, or the use of red stones to have a likeness to Freyja was an important part of Viking identity. There could have been a number of reasons why these commonalities were important, but it is likely that the main appeal was for leadership purposes. It was easier to lead a settlement, or also become captain of a ship if there was a supernatural connection to the gods. That lineage undoubtedly had to be proven in some sort of way, so it could be possible that through dressing in specific ways, wearing particular colors and adorning with special amulets, that these "super-human" identities could have been created and most importantly, believed. Finding the necessary items to create this effect could have been one of the priorities when it came to trading and finding goods from distant lands, as not everyone in a settlement could travel, it is possible that those that could have been seen as privileged and "chosen", especially if they brought with them foreign goods which could not be found locally on Scandinavian lands. Linen and silk would have been important in constructing these identities, as much for women as

[320] James Laver, *FASHION: A Concise History*, 6th ed. (S.L.: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 50–51.

they would have been for the men. With silk we find that the Vikings were rapidly enamored of its texture and design, Using mainly strips of it at first to decorate the hems of garments and to give linen garments a special touch. It is unlikely that many Viking men and women had access to silk strips of samite, but abundant finds in Oseberg, Birka and Haithabu/Hedeby indicate that the Vikings would have gone to great lengths to find and wear silk. The artistic and aesthetic properties of the Viking Age are ample and present, completely contradicting some of the more basic stereotypes as well as redefining the use of the term "art for art's sake". The Vikings found interest in poetry, storytelling, pottery, jewelry, adornment, and of course creating textiles and weave patterns. Perhaps before moving any further into the discussion of aesthetics, it is imperative that the aesthetics as a description be defined as it relates to this portion, the following text by Jeremy Coote author of *Anthropology, Art & Aesthetics*, is found to have the explanation which relates to this research in the best way:

> Aesthetics is valued perceptual experience; all human activity has an aesthetic aspect. We are always, though at varying levels of awareness, concerned with the aesthetic qualities of our aural, haptic, kinetic, and visual sensations.[321]

The term and concept have since been reviewed by varying researchers of the Viking Age in relation to how items from the period would have been noticed and perceived.

> Our 'visual valued experience' will notice the golden shine of the Teig bracteate – it is made of pure gold. We will notice the shimmering effect when changing light brings the relief to life. When up close, we will appreciate the intricate animal style. The strangeness/otherness of the abstract and mysterious language of form will intrigue us.[322]

One of the more interesting aspects of Viking Age poetry is the amount of attention paid to explaining the looks of a garment worn by the narrator, in a similar fashion to *Rígspula*, many Eddic poems and stories within the sagas give some explanation to whether the person in the story was a slave and therefore wearing a very short tunic or dress, as a contrast with the *husfrue* or lady

[321] Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York, 1992).
[322] Håkon Larsen Aannestad, Ingrid L. Nødseth, Kristin Armstrong Oma, Heidi Reiersen, and Margrete Figenschou Simonsen, *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP, 2018), doi: https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.51.

of the house which would have worn a long dress with a train, indicating that long dresses meant that the identity of the wearer was somehow attached to the length of her garments. Aesthetics were also greatly important when considering the making of brooches, it has been established that they were made of metals, either silver, gold, or bronze, and that sometimes they were further enhanced by a particular stone or enamel addition. Brooches were such a compulsory item in many women's dresses from the Viking Age, that as discussed in previous chapter, little to nothing would have been known about the Viking's clothing and what textiles they used had it not been for them and the leftovers which they so conveniently preserved.

Brooches have also provided an understanding as to how women identified as "married" would have dressed, and what items of value they would have carried with them. It is very likely that to be gifted or given a pair of brooches was considered to be a right-of-passage for women of the Viking Age, it might have been something that younger girls looked forward to and desired, not only for their value and significance but because they were beautifully ornate and more than likely shimmery with metallics, adding to their visual aesthetic value. It has been said that men of the Viking Age did not wear brooches, and the lack of brooches near male grave finds does support this idea, however, caution should be taken in dismissing the possibility that men also had/wore something similar to brooches or that brooches were gendered as "female" during the Viking Age. One of the more prominent reasons why brooches could have been gendered as a female item is since they were worn with a suspended dress, and dresses have been described to be a female garment during the Viking Age. Another reason are the hyper-sexualized female traits found on some of the brooches discussed in Chapter 5. This indicates that there is more evidence that brooches were indeed a female adornment, however, the use of necklaces, rings, pendants, bracteates, bracelets, headgear, and other jewelry was not limited to females, and also worn by men.

One of the most important take-aways from the finds of my research has been to maintain caution when gendering any item of clothing or adornment. The reality is, that although there is evidence in the forms of texts like the Icelandic Sagas or the Eddic poems, which do indicate particular forms of expressing gender and identity; be it through the wearing of a long dress for a female of high society, the short dress of a slave, or the wearing of a low-cut shirt for a male who

is subsequently shamed and deemed effeminate by his wife and counterparts, there is little evidence in clear definitive terms from the Viking Age, which explains their views on gender and how it should be expressed through any particular color, type of clothing, adornment or jewelry. This is important to take into consideration when researching any type of Viking Age garment or accessories, because the gender-normative ideals which were first applied to the archaeological finds by specific archeologists, and secondly by research including my own, should not limit and restrain the multiple functions which a specific item could have served for both men and women of the time. To this point it should be added, that although my research did not focus heavily on Nordic religion, rituals, or beliefs an important aspect that could be added to questions about Viking Age gender-norms (in relation to dress identity) is the changing and transformative abilities/power of some of their more important deities. Thor reluctantly disguises himself as Freyja in the Poetic Edda: *Mic muno Æsir argan kalla*,[323] whilst Loki is a well-known shapeshifter, who shapeshifts into an old woman to catch the goddess Frigg off-guard.[324] Freyja and her falcon feathered cloak were also a sign of her ability to shapeshift.[325] It is very possible that whilst cross-dressing might not have been a habitual thing in Viking civilization, perhaps there were blurred lines when it came to defining certain items of clothing or jewelry as male or female.

Another item which seems to have no definitive gender for use is *guldgubber* (gold foils), the tiny little pieces of cold normally etched with some design featuring mainly a single man, two men, or both men and women in varieties of positions and expressive gestures, are one of the greatest mysteries of the Viking Age. My theory on gold foils is that they could have been some sort of pictorial representation of either family members, ancestors, or deities. Their small size would have been convenient to transport easily to any location, and it could be argued that they were for the sole use of the Vikings as there is little to no evidence that they were used for trade or as coins. A reference to Nordic mythology and gold foils could possibly be found in the stories

[323] Jukka Frankki, "Cross-Dressing in the Poetic Edda: Mic muno Æsir argan kalla," *Scandinavian Studies* 84, no. 4 (2012): 425–437, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/scd.2012.0063.
[324] Helena Bassil-Morozow, "Loki then and now: the trickster against civilization," *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2017): 84-96, available from Brill, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19409052.2017.1309780, accessed February 10, 2023.
[325] Roman K. Kovalev, "Grand Princess Olga of Rus' Shows the Bird: Her 'Christian Falcon' Emblem," *Russian History* 39, no. 4 (2012): 460-517, available from Brill, https://doi.org/10.1163/48763316-03904002, accessed February 10, 2023.

concerning Freyja and the tears of red gold she would cry for her husband when he was away.[326] The term "red gold" might bring to mind the color of amber (often called Freyja's tears), written sources explain that Freyja's tears turned into solid gold when they touched the earth, however, they fell into the sea they turned into amber,[327] possibly explaining the term red-gold. while simultaneously shedding some possible light on the meaning of gold foils. It could be that gold foils were indicative of Freyja's tears as some type of blessing for the Vikings. Viewing gold foils as symbolic for tears would certainly explain their small size, although the detailed designs and images are still difficult to ascribe to that particular theory. The artistic detail which has gone into gold foils is yet another piece of evidence which shows that the Vikings found it important to bring art even into the smallest of objects, it also shows the importance, which was placed on clothing and adornment, as most gold foils are clothed and adorned in detail. As discussed in Chapter 5, there are some gold foils which contain what appear to be naked men, but even though they lack clothing, they will contain some form of adornment in the form of a necklace or pendant.

How does Viking Age dress define identity?

Defining identity through the means of dress is something which every civilization has done and continues to do well into the present-day. Cultures and subcultures of people ascribe to a specific look or style in order to define themselves as a "part" of something; a part of a group, a part of a religion, and maybe even to do the opposite thing by differentiating themselves instead. The dress of the Vikings is no different, although perhaps some of the difficulties lie in understanding what was meant to be said through their dress.

The Vikings wanted to practice their religion through their dress, and this is evident in the wearing of pendant necklaces containing Thor's hammer, the use of amber and garnet to recreate Freyja's beloved *brísingamen* necklace, the influences of Norse beliefs on the design of brooches, and possibly even the meaning behind *guldgubber*. This becomes even more evident when Scandinavia is Christianized, as the leaving behind of amulets became one of the necessary tasks, and Vikings seemingly had a hard time doing so. Many grave finds which are dated to the end of

[326] Sandra Billington and Miranda Green, *The Concept of the Goddess* (Routledge, 2002).

[327] Mathias Højbjerg, "Freya the Goddess of Love and Fertility - Norse Mythology," *Nordic Culture*, accessed February 9, 2023, https://skjalden.com/freya/.

the Viking Age often found containing necklaces of Thor's hammer with a silver cross right beside it, it has even been suggested that there might have been a type of cross pendant which was created to disguise a *mjolner* as a resistance to Christianization.[328] It is evident that for the Vikings the representation of their beliefs through jewelry was something habitual and meaningful.

Jewelry and adornment may be easier items to observe when seeking to define Viking age identity through dress; jewelry can easily be made in any specific shape or symbol, and any type of pendant or bracteate can depict the image of something which is explicit in its significance. The same cannot be said for clothing. If an arm sleeve is cut in a rectangular fashion and made in such a way where it is perhaps cut wider near the elbow than the wrist, that might not necessarily be enough to indicate any symbolism. With clothing, it is often necessary to look at the sum of all the objects working together to create a specific silhouette and look to determine possible meanings. In the case of the Vikings, a repeating pattern which is seen in the overall silhouette present in the male dress as in the female, is length.

Length is arguably very important in the overall look of Viking Dress, the opposite of length is reserved for slaves and servants, and within Nordic mythology it is also reserved for creatures such as trolls/thralls or other lowly figures.[329] It could be concluded that the length of dress in a Viking Age woman was very much dependent on her social status; women who were considered of high society were likely to wear a train, as well as long sleeves, and cloaks which also had length. Men wore long pants and over them tunics with long sleeves, it has been understood from previous chapters that men could not wear tunics or shirts which were low cut and could possibly reveal their chest, as this was considered an effeminate thing and possible ground for divorce within Viking Age couples. In my view, that length was indicative of status because for any type of dress, cloak, or pants to be long, a greater effort had to be made in creating this garment, and the more fibers and dyes the garment contained. This of course meant that the wearer of the longer garment had the necessary funds and resources to obtain a garment that would

[328] Jörg Staecker, "Thor's Hammer - Symbol of Christianization and Political Delusion," *Lund Archaeological Review* 5 (1999): 89–104, accessed February 10, 2022, https://journals.lub.lu.se/lar/article/view/21723/19565.
[329] Neil Price and Stefan Brink, *The Viking World*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

require this much time and material to make. It could also be considered that if a woman had several dresses and cloaks in her possession, she would have without a doubt been of higher social standing and of certain influence. Another main reason for length is due to climate; the climate of Scandinavia is cold, and it also rains in many areas, like in the coasts of Western Norway for example. This would mean that the Vikings would have had to wear clothing, which was long enough to cover their bodies well, and protect them from the elements. As discussed in previous chapters, wool would have been treated for it to function as a water-repellant fiber, not only for clothing but also for sails.

Viking Age dress may define itself as resourceful, functional, and aesthetically pleasing, the clothing of the Viking Age was adaptable to climate, it was conveniently warm for the body, and it enhanced the identity of the wearer by adding length and an extension of the self. In many ways, the dressed identity of the Viking Age was influenced by their pagan gods, and their belief systems, this could be interpreted through the way certain clothing is described in the sagas, and Eddic poetry, and how it mirrors some of the ways Viking clothing was worn, through the evidence in the grave sites. However, it could also be suggested that the way their gods were modeled had a lot to do with how they were dressed themselves, albeit perhaps a more distinguished and fantastical version, but it could be believed that some of the Viking's affinity to particular fiber choices such as linen and silk (for example). Linen is mentioned in *Rígspula* of course, and the cloaks and colors of certain dresses are also mentioned, this could mean that the style of the clothing and the color is not only relevant to the story being told, but also to the identity of the wearer.

Studies on identity and clothing often dictate that clothing might not always necessarily say something about the identity of a wearer, indeed, certain beliefs can be had which are not revealed through clothing. There may also be differences between groups of people which may not be evident through the clothes they wear. In the case of the Vikings, some of the main differences in identity expressed through clothing are seen between men and women, followed by differences in social status. In the case of gender differences, we have discussed the identity of males and the height of the neck on shirts, as well as the importance of women wearing longer dresses and skirts; these different characteristics are emphasized by the clothing descriptions

within the sagas, as well as the poetry. The Icelandic saga of *Laxdæla,* analyzes some of the differences which are noted in the dress of men and women and how they should identify, it is evident that there are problems when those identities are expressed incorrectly. Thord Igunnarson suggests that Gudrun make Thorvald a low-cut shirt, that would give her a reason for terminating the marriage, Gudrun follows the plan and marries Thord, after he divorces his wife on the same account of cross-dressing. Alice Spruit, author of *Judging Vikings: Ethics and morality in two Icelandic family sagas Laxdæla saga & Vatnsdæla saga,* has also commented on the story, suggesting that it is unclear whether Gudrun really saw Thord's wife wearing men's clothing. It could be that Gudrun made up the rumor, so that Thord would have a reason to divorce his wife,"[330]

The same principles of crossdressing which applied to men, also applied to women, thus indicating that dressing for the correct gender was a crucial part of Viking life, regardless of whether those gender roles were similar or opposite to some of the roles we recognize in present-day societies. The following text from the *Laxdæla* saga explains in detail how women must also have been careful not to wear something which could identify them with the male gender:

"One day, as they were riding across the Blaskogar heath in fine weather, Gudrun asked Thord 'whether the rumour is true, that your wife Aud is often dressed in breeches, with a codpiece [mistranslation for 'gore;' gore is a triangular piece of cloth inserted to adjust the width of a garment] and long leggings?'

He replied that he had not noticed.

'You can't pay her much attention, in that case,' said Gudrun, 'if you haven't noticed such a thing, or what other reason is there then for her being called Breeches-Aud?'

Thord said, 'She can't have been called that for long.'
Gudrun replied, 'What is more important is how long the name will follow her.'

They arrived at the Althing soon after that, where the proceedings were without event. Thord spent most of his time at Gest's booth talking to Gudrun. One day he asked her what consequences it could have for a woman if she wore trousers like the men.

[330] Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, *Laxdaela Saga* (Penguin, 1969).

Gudrun answered: "If women go about dressed as men, they invite the same treatment as do men who wear shirts cut so low ... — both are grounds for divorce."[331]

It could be concluded that for the Vikings, identity through clothing was not only an essential part of expressing themselves in life, but it was also the basis of identifying each other. Even though certain clothing was to be used as a tool for distinguishing genders, it is evident that it went beyond distinguishing and into their beliefs, and moral values. In the sagas Gudrun finds grounds to leave her husband through giving him a low-cut shirt to wear, because the identity of a man in the wrong clothing is not only questioned, but also rejected. In a similar fashion, Thord is influenced by Gudrun to reconsider his relationship with his wife Aud, simply through a possible rumor that she is wearing men's breeches, and that this will bring shame to her name and by consequence his.

Although it is almost impossible to know how much of the sagas mirrored the realities of what life was like during the Viking Age, it could be argued that there were similarities ingrained within the culture and some of the values they might have applied. In summary, I have concluded that the Vikings expressed and maintained a lot of their identity through their clothing, and how they wore it; if a man wore a shirt, the way in which it was worn had to be "masculine" meaning that it could not be worn low cut, it could not showcase the breast/chest area, and therefore it had to be cut closer to the neck, they wore long breeches and cloaks, and it is unlikely that they wore brooches, although other types of jewelry such as pendants or bracteates could have been worn. Although it is not impossible that men would have adorn themselves with beads of some sort, evidence shows that perhaps those beads were colored shades which might have been considered "masculine". It could perhaps be considered that men might have avoided wearing amber or garnet, as these types of colored stones were associated with the goddess Freyja, this might have been left solely for the use of women's beads, and of course their disc-on-bow brooches which as discussed in previous chapters, were worn by women of a very high-society who more than likely claimed relation to Freyja or some supernatural identity. From the sagas it could be concluded that women did in fact avoid wearing breeches and pants, as this would have been a "masculine" item, instead, they wore long dresses and their skirts would have been long, floor-length, or with a train. The

[331] Leifur Eiricksson, *The Saga of the People of Laxardal and Bolli Bollason's Tale* (Penguin UK, 2008).

length of the skirt for Viking women would have been indicative of social standing and if the dresses were dyed colors like blue, and most especially purple, the rarity and cost of the creation of such garments would have been a clear indicator of wealth for anyone within their civilization and beyond. It was important to show some sort of wealth and good social standing within the Viking Age, and for women, wearing brooches daily must have been a way in which they asserted their social standing, perhaps as a way to exude some sort of power and prestige within their settlement. The dressed identities of both men and women would have been intertwined through the use of jewelry and adornment, as any possession of gold, silver, and semi-precious stones would have been indicative of some sort of wealth. As both men and women wore jewelry, it could be argued that apart from brooches jewelry between men and women would have been somewhat interchangeable. The Viking Age is an interesting and exciting period to analyze when it comes to dress and identity, the first reason being that there are many gaps which have yet to be filled and fully understood regarding the extent of what was worn, but also, because of the many elements of dress within the Viking dress which tie to the Nordic myths, stories, and pagan rituals which could be further analyzed in order to understand the identity of the Vikings better.

The importance of aesthetics in identity.

How something is designed and created is an essential part of understanding what it could mean to the person who obtains the garment, artwork, or household décor. Art must tell a story to the person who enjoys it and partakes in it, this can be applied to many forms of art, and many displays of it. Art should not be limited to paintings hanging on a wall, or marble sculptures within a museum, art also can extend to clothing and jewelry, especially when it comes to understanding the ideas and concepts of design behind the items being worn. When it comes to the Viking Age, there is sufficient evidence to prove that the Vikings had an interest in observing nature, animals, and the sea, there was a need to take in the world around them and find a way to interpret that world through the designs in small woodworking of various styles (as discussed in chapter 1), etching on metal household items, and of course through jewelry and clothing.

When analyzing some of the aesthetics within the Viking Age there are a few common elements which can be found; there is a particular use of curvature within lines, animal-motifs, and uses of natural elements. A lot of these aesthetics can be observed in the clothing and jewelry of

the Vikings. One of the main artistic elements from the Viking Age is the design on brooches, most brooches feature some type of animal motif, and design. For example, one of the brooches discussed in previous chapters contains the shape and look of a pig belly, the design is most likely a nod to Freyja and the pig which she used for transportation in many of the Norse stories.[332] The pig belly also shows that it is a female pig, as the teats of the pig are quite evident, arguably suggesting the importance of breastfeeding and or fertility. There is also evidence that brides were given a pair of turtle shaped brooches for their betrothal.[333] Many of the brooch designs are generally oval shaped or round, and since they are worn on or near the Viking woman's breast, it is very likely that the shape was meant to complement and or enhance the breast, whilst also being another symbol for fertility and femininity. Animal-motifs continue to be seen throughout the Viking Age, sometimes through metal workings, and household decorations; this could be interpreted as evidence that animals were an important part of Viking Age aesthetics. Pottery from Birka shows lines that mimic ocean waves, and leaf stems, while other plates and housewares feature a series of horizontal lines and squares which are similar to some of the shapes which are found etched on the gold foils and amulets.

What is interesting about the general aesthetics of the Viking Age is that there was an overall cohesiveness in the patterns and designs which were being created. There are natural elements and influences which are visible from the designs of tablet weaves to the paintings of cups and plates which were more than likely used in the homes of the Vikings. In conclusion, it can be suggested that the Vikings might have considered a particular style and look to carry out in the designs and things which they used and wore, there may have been a particular level of premeditation when selecting what designs would be used to make brooches for example, as well as what colors and weave patterns would be used on the hems of skirts and tunics. It seems likely that the Vikings found importance in creating cohesiveness within the items that would be used and worn in their communities, and that in itself is indicative of artistic interest.

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[332] Nicola Corazzo, "The Social Reconstruction of Sexual Difference," *Semiotics* (1993): 445–464, doi: https://doi.org/10.5840/cpsem199346.

[333] Donald Ostrowski and Christian Raffensperger, *Portraits of Medieval Eastern Europe, 900–1400* (Routledge, 2017).

The influence on Scandinavian identity

As discussed in previous chapters, the Vikings are in many ways viewed considerably differently within Scandinavia than they are viewed by the rest of the world. In places like the United States and Brazil, many of the stereotypes associated with the word *Viking* is the very reason for the creation of festivals, parties, books, and of course cinematic productions. But within Scandinavia there seems to be a resurgence of reclaiming the true Viking identity, understanding how the clothing was made and dyed, and even facing the elements in the clothing that they would have worn to understand what it would have felt like to be dressed as a Viking in the cold Nordic winters. In my research I had the great privilege of meeting many groups of reenactors who are a part of a large community of historians, archeologists, anthropologists, craftsmen, and artisans who research the Viking Age thoroughly in efforts to understand it and recreate it with each other. It is a team effort, and many times within one group there is someone who can use Viking Age methods to sew and create clothing, whilst another is an expert in creating dyes out of the plants used during the Viking Age. There are experts at making Viking Age weapons, as well as leather-goods, and when they can unite in any Viking market, they are excited to put all of their Viking Age items to the test, as well as showcase them to each other and engage in some of the activities which are believed to have been done during that time.

When discussing the Viking Age with some of the reenactors within Scandinavia, this becomes more than just a research topic, and a disdain for the stereotypes which keep the Vikings within a dark violent ship of horned helmets and fur mantles, fuels their passion to continue to offer a new perspective of what the Viking Age could have been. Many of the women who are involved in these sorts of activities find that dressed as Viking women and partaking in some of the activities and experiences they might have had, they are able to reconnect with a part of themselves. Many I spoke to felt that this was a time where women had liberties which she would not have otherwise had in ancient times. Although those liberties might not compare to present-day privileges in the slightest, perhaps the idea that there could exist a past civilization where women had a voice, creates some type of historic nostalgia. It could be argued that it has a positive effect on the identity to know that there is also evidence of equality in ancient times. An interesting thing to be observed is the great effort which is made by many of these reenactors to maintain the

Viking Age persona, not only are they wearing the clothes and shoes of the Viking Age, but they are also cooking, eating, and living as the Vikings would have. This means a complete immersion into the Viking identity, and according to my research, for most it has served to understand their sense of style and even influence their own identities.

Within the groups of people that I interviewed and met, most of them study Iron Age archaeology, or have a career that involves Viking Age studies, many are also historians and work within museums, and some truly create and design Viking clothing and objects as part of their careers; the latter normally spend their time at varying market fairs and festivals around Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and sometimes even in Germany. As discussed in Chapter 2, the main objective seems to be authenticity, making sure that the Viking Age is as well researched by attendees and creators as possible. One of the main concerns seems to be the leaving behind of stereotypes and gimmicks, which within the top-league of Scandinavia's Viking Age reenactors simply cannot exist or be accepted. One of the women that I interviewed for my research has created a social media blog dedicated to Viking Age fashion and lifestyle, where she shares some of the dresses and cloaks she has made, as well as patterns for others to recreate them, she does not simply share these creations however, she also adds the historical reference and the grave finds where some of these types of gowns would have been found –once again maintain a strict tie to the historical research.

It was also explained that when it comes to which Viking Age dress social media accounts she would follow, she would first have to carefully observe the types of posts they made to see if they were indeed researching the garments they were wearing, and if they stayed true to Viking Age designs or fell into gimmicks. A look through her own account is perhaps the closest thing to immersing oneself in the Viking Age as could be considered possible, some of her activities even include testing leather shoes in the snow during days of camping outside to see if indeed they would have kept the feet of the Viking's warm. Through some of these interviews I was able to see that the connection with the Vikings is present and growing within Scandinavia, and that the use of Viking Age history has augmented the possibility to redefine the identity of the Vikings of the past as well as those who seek to recreate their lifestyle in the present.

It can be said that not everyone in Scandinavia is an active participant within the reenactment community, so how is the Viking Age influence apparent? As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the ways in which I consider the Viking Age dress to still be present within Scandinavian culture is through the use/wearing of the *bunad* and other forms of cultural dress within Scandinavia. Although it has been stated that the original bunad from Norway developed as a type of folk dress in farms throughout the country worn as their only style of clothing,[334] to later be worn by their first queen as a *national dress* in 1863 for a portrait and later in 1905 when she became queen, the visual elements which share similarities with the Viking dress are undeniable.

At first the dress appears perhaps as a colorful two piece (sometimes three) outfit containing a white shirt which is often embroidered and decorated (also in white), followed by a heavy woolen dress with different patterns and designs which will vary considerably from county to county within Norway, the bunad often also features a few additions; some sort of apron which is normally embroidered, as well as the silver brooches and jewelry which accompany the final touches of the garment. The *Bunad* was originally a female garment, although there are now versions of the garment for both genders; the bunad for men often has similar colors and designs to those of the women whilst still maintaining more somber colors for the jackets and knee-length breeches. Specific bunad are often worn with other accessories like belts with silver chains, and a small purse which hangs from the belt which oftentimes can contain an ornate dagger or enameled knife.

The commonalities between the female bunad and the female Viking dress is indeed present and easily identified: the white shirt worn with the *bunad* is often made of linen or cotton, and could easily pay tribute to the linen underdress worn by women of the Viking Age, the shirt in this case is then followed by a thicker and heavier woolen dress, similar to the apron dress which would have been held up by brooches which in the case of the *bunad* could be interpreted through the many silver elements within brooches and buttons as well as chains which accessorize it. Another interesting element of the bunad is the foreign influences which are evident in some of the silk patterns and touches on the bodice, many of them seem to have influences of *chinoiserie*

[334] A. Noss, "Norwegian Folk-Dress as Seen by the Artists," *Costume* 36, no. 1 (2002): 75–85, doi: https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.2002.36.1.75.

and Middle Eastern designs, which were originally present in some of the samite silks which were added to the woolen dresses and tunics worn by the Vikings as well, most likely obtained through their ample trade. The small purse which is normally attached to the *bunad* dress is very much in likeness to the small leather purses Viking women would have worn around a belt on their waists filled with important household and grooming items –in the case of the *bunad*, oftentimes a dagger is also worn.

It could be concluded that in many ways, Scandinavia is very much influenced by Viking dress and aesthetics, and that is evident through the bunad and other cultural dresses from Sweden and Denmark, as well as by the active presence of Viking Age reenactors which work tirelessly to research and bring to life the Viking Age and the elements that surrounded it. Some of the most notable differences between how the Viking Age is viewed within Scandinavia as opposed to elsewhere, is how Scandinavia has grown and adapted to the history and finds. The opportunity to visit a grave mound or the ruins of an old Viking settlement are readily available within Scandinavia, and it is easy to understand that due to this and the overall effort which has been placed into encouraging the learning and understanding of the Viking Age by schools, institutions, and museums, there has been more of an opportunity to leave behind gimmicks and stereotypes and find truth. Unlike in Scandinavia, foreign places have heard *of* the Vikings, and they have read about them through the fantastical stories of the sagas and through learning about Norse mythology, but that is indeed very different than witnessing the lives they lived through the finding of a rune stone whilst on a walk through a forest, or through studying the beads and brooches left over at the local museum while on a possible school trip. For Scandinavia, the Vikings are not exactly a species of mythological beings only found in the sagas, it could be suggested that for Scandinavia the Vikings are present in their everyday history and cultural identity.

Contributions of the find

The main contribution of this study is to provide another way in which the Vikings could be viewed and observed –through their dress, adornment, and aesthetic. It was my objective that dress and aesthetics become an important and recognized way for cultures to be observed and to have their identities as people understood. It is my opinion that clothing and dress can become voices through which people can be heard, and in the case of the Vikings, it could be suggested

that the voice was very much evident. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Vikings believed textiles to be of such utter importance, that they designated entire areas of their civilization for it, they created plant dyes, machinery, and that is all in addition to how important it was for them to find particular textiles like silk, when on trade routes and marketplaces. Aesthetics were important to the Vikings as well, things could not be simply left “as is", it is clear that there was design intention and premeditation when choosing particular colors for particular beads and dyes, it was important to add a particular animal-motif to a brooch or to the design of a weave, and instead of simply using the textiles in the colors they came naturally, they chose to create dyes out of varying plants and substances. With this research I seek to unite the fragments of literary research which have spoken about Viking dress and clothing and unite them into an overall statement and conclusion that seeks to define the Viking Age as an era worthy of recognition as a fashion-period. It has been my experience throughout my time researching this subject that when looking through fashion encyclopedias, the Viking Age was often entirely missing or only briefly mentioned. No in-depth look was taken at understanding some of their contributions to textile making, nor were the ornate craftsmanship of brooches considered, and nothing was said about their love of silk and skills in the textile trade. This is something which I seek to change with this research. In addition to understanding the Viking’s identity through the means of their dress, it was also imperative that my research provide an opportunity for the Viking Age to be considered as an important fashion era in its entirety.

Limitations

Although this research was rewarding, it was also very challenging as I had many limitations. My main limitation was literature, finding literature on the subject proved a lot more difficult than originally thought. Due to this I was forced to rely on a few books and articles continuously, the main one being *Viking Clothing* by Thor Ewing as well as the first book which I encountered about Viking Age clothing, *Viking: Dress, Clothing, Garment* by Nille Glæsel. These books became the initial foundation of my research, and at first it was very difficult to find other books which spoke clearly and explicitly about Viking dress and much less so on the subject of interpreting identity through said dress. One of the first things I had to do was consider separating my research into two categories which I could later fuse together into one solid topic. It was necessary to re-read and analyze the works on dress identity by Pierre Bourdieu which I had

covered during my MA dissertation at the London College of Fashion, as well as the works of Michel Focault on the body's created identities through dress and the performance of dress. Reintroducing myself with these texts was necessary so that I could remind myself of some of the research which I had conducted on dress identities during previous studies to see how I would apply my findings to the current subject. Through analyzing identity through dress separately from the Viking Age, I was better adept at understanding what to look for, what details were signs of identity expression, and where I could tie it all together.

Other limits in my study were the usage (or lack thereof) of sagas, Eddic poetry, and Norse mythology. On the one hand, it was important to refer to the sagas and other literature written during or directly after the Viking Age, however, this was also an obstacle because a lot if not most of the text regarding the Viking Age is often blended and mixed with fantasy elements, exaggerated storytelling, and plenty of mythology. This often aided my understanding of details concerning certain clothing the Vikings would have worn and how they would have worn it, but it also raised plenty of questions. In my understanding of the sagas, there were many events which are proposed to have happened within the certain families of the Viking Age, and they are suggested to have been told previously before being published in the 13th century, however, this is not only difficult to rely on, but also potentially dangerous if one seeks to steer clear of stereotypes in favor of historical accuracy. The fact that the sagas themselves were published in the 13th century also offers another set of limitations and questions: could it be that their interpretation of dress is completely based on their 13th century views? Is there a possibility that the Vikings were not wearing any of the things they were mentioning but instead were wearing something completely different? All these questions were raised during my research of the sagas, and oftentimes I found it most beneficial to find where some of the text alluded to something which had already been "proven" in some way or another to be an accurate depiction from the Viking Age. A similar situation arose when it came to Norse beliefs, paganisms, and rituals. I found that it would present too much of a challenge to the point of exiting the realm of my research if I delved too heavily into literature and text which related to Nordic myths and rituals. Although some mention and research of the topic was inevitable, I found the separation of my topic of dress and identity from the topic of religion and ritual to be both necessary and beneficial but also difficult and prejudicial. It was necessary because the topic of dress and how it is worn should be able to stand on its own and be

researched on its own; it was my intention to understand what each individual item could have meant to the wearer and why they would have chosen to wear what they did. It was also beneficial because it had already come to my understanding that a lot of what is considered "stereotypical" in Viking Age dress, is founded in rituals and myths, and descriptions of what could have been worn by shamans or other spiritual leaders of the Viking civilization. Because of this, and due to mythology and religion being outside of my area of expertise, I found it important to separate the two topics from each other for a positive result. However, that quickly became difficult for the substance of my research when I realized in how many ways Viking dress, jewelry and adornment intertwined with some of their beliefs, upon that realization it then became imperative for me to at least research some of the items that had their origin in the Norse mythology and belief system. When understanding the use of red stones like garnet and amber to recreate the *brísingamen* for example, the ties to Freyja were evident and present, and they had to be researched and accounted for. In the same way, understanding what gold foils could mean to the identity of the Vikings also required a further look into their rituals and belief systems. Through these limitations I was able to understand that the Vikings did indeed include their beliefs and superstition in many of the items they used to identify themselves with. In summary the weaknesses of my study would consist of the lack of concise literature on my particular subject, as well as the challenge it is to expand the research regarding dress and identity without relying so heavily on Norse mythology, sagas, and belief systems. I would also add that as the subject itself has many branches, there are many paths and conclusions that can be made regarding Viking Dress and identity if the literature or approach chosen is different. It is necessary to know what to look for to understand and explain the topic well.

Future research

It is my desire that this topic continues to be researched as much as possible, the Viking Age is rich with history, art, and advancement. Recent research is taking note of the importance of design and aesthetics within Viking Age finds, with some researchers in Sigtuna, Sweden further analyzing runic text on bone needles and smaller items found in the area, that perhaps in the past

might have been overlooked.[335] This new research gives a positive outlook on what the future might hold for Viking textiles and dress, and what else could be given importance.

Although the Vikings were known for their violent antics; the raids, battles and warship aspects of their civilization have taken protagonism for far too long, ignoring other important and useful aspects. For this reason, I feel that although things are changing in terms of what literature is available for research and study, more work needs to be done on expanding this type of research in order to understand the culture and their identity through dress in a more effective way.

In the future, it could be suggested that a greater emphasis could be made on understanding the details of the art and designs from the Viking Age, including an expanded study on brooches, an understanding of how they were made and the purposes they served, as well as some of the possible influences they could have had. I would also suggest that more could be done in terms of analyzing beads and their colors, as there is some evidence which could allude to each color having particular significance, but not enough research has been done to provide proof of that. Other aspects which would be important to analyze are the items which were brought back from foreign lands and or purchased through trade, the Vikings had an affinity for clothing and items from distant lands, but the understanding of what those items could have been and where they could have come from is limited. Although I found reasonable amounts of literature on the making of textiles during the Viking Age, more could be researched regarding the dyes, the colors that were created and most especially the meaning behind those colors. I believe color to be a powerful tool in understanding the dressed identity of the Vikings, so researching their use of color would be a wonderful place to start, we are just at the beginning. Recently, publications such as *Textiles of the Viking North Atlantic: Analysis, Interpretation, Re-creation* by editors Alexandra Lester-Makin and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, have taken the analysis of textiles and dyes to new heights, whilst simultaneously exploring the full expansion of the Vikings reach and how far they went to trade and find inspiration. New literature is providing further insight on the Vikings winter settlements in places that have not been heavily discussed before such as Spain and North Africa.[336]

[335] S. Pereswetoff-Morath, "Två bennålar från kv. Trädgårdsmästaren 9–10, Sigtuna," *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 13 (2024): 55-78.
[336] *Textiles of the Viking North Atlantic: Analysis, Interpretation, Re-creation*, ed. Alexandra Lester-Makin and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2024).

Conclusions

The journey through the Viking Age has come to an end, and though there have been many challenges which have risen and presented themselves throughout the course of this research and writing this thesis, in the end, it can be said that it is a topic which has been a joy to study and analyze, and even more so to visualize and imagine. As I write this conclusion, it is important to note that there are many layers to this topic, and that since identity is a complicated construction, there are many elements that can contribute to the construction of it. When using dressed identity to understand the Viking Age and the influence that it may have, it has been imperative to gain knowledge and understanding of the culture in all their aspects, as well as insight on what their day to day lives could have been like. For this is what is necessary to delve deeply into textile manufacturing; from the fibers that were made to the loom that was built, and into understanding what sorts of animals and plants were needed to collect those fibers and dyes. Understanding the dressed identity of the Viking meant understanding the Viking Age as a whole, with and without the violent raids and sea voyages and understanding and dissecting the stereotypes.

Through this research it has been my intention to share the culture of ancient Scandinavia, and the passion for textiles and craftsmanship which is evident and present in the culture today. It is my hope that it inspires others to also research and understand more about the Viking Age, and most especially the Viking elements which form their dress and identity. The inspiration for this research was found within the Scandinavian lands, the territory, and the history which lies through every inch of it, it is my hope that the research does not end with this particular work, or with the literature, which is currently available, but that it expands much further igniting the need for formulating new questions, as well as sparking the interest in finding new answers. In closing, it would be beneficial to take one last look at the image of a Viking woman on a cold rainy day, weaving and knitting together a wool cloak, she has prepared the wool for the cloak with different fats and oils in order to make it water-repellant for the weather, she makes a similar one for her husband who will wear it to go outside and tend to the farm before setting on a sea voyage to distant lands where he will undoubtedly wear the cloak when he encounters foreigners during trades and at different marketplaces. The woman stays behind as the lady of the house, the leader of the farm, her keys dangling from her brooches and a few sewing utensils contained inside. As

she stands in the cold holding on to her woolen cloak which she has now finished, and she sets her attentions to the weather, she feels that it is cold, but considers how she is well enveloped and protected inside her cloak, the cold is no longer as much of an obstacle, she has figured out a way to be prepared for it –and with that comes to mind a Norwegian quote which a person can grow fond of after living in Norway: *det finnes ikke dårlig vær bare dårlig klær*, there isn't such a thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothing.

The end.

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Appendixes

Appendixes

content

APPENDIX A

Introduction

This portion of the appendix is dedicated to the journalistic field work which was conducted to understand some of the thoughts and processes behind Viking Age reenactments and recreation. In this portion of my research, I used my journalism background to create a series of questions which would help me to understand why there is such an interest in the Viking Age and recreating the clothing and objects from that period, as well as how some of the techniques and skills used to recreate this era become part a larger community identity. One of the most interesting parts of this research was that I conducted 2 interviews in Norway and one in the United States, the interviews in Scandinavia were conducted in person, and the one in the United States was conducted via email. All the people interviewed have varying craftsmanship and design skills, and they've used those skills to recreate Viking Age items of different kinds. For maintaining clarity in my research, I have chosen to share the sample sheet with the questions I asked, and only the interview conducted in Norway. I felt that the interview in Norway contributed the most useful material to my thesis subject. The interview conducted with the Viking Age reenactor in the states was insightful and provided a clear contrast from some of the answers I received from the Scandinavian reenactors and craftsmen, however, it was not useful for my research in the end.

Viking Thesis Questions

Massiel Mancebo

Through these questions I seek to understand in greater depth the influence and the importance of viking period textiles and fashion as it pertains to people who recreate and attempt to preserve their fashion identity by using the style and techniques from this era.

***Introduce yourselves: name, last name, field of study/work, how it relates to the late iron age.**

1. How do you define the viking era aesthetic?
2. What do you think fashion in the viking era was like?
3. What do you consider it says about the viking lifestyle, and their identity?
4. How do you feel identified with this style and identity?
5. How does the viking era influence your choice in clothing?
6. How does the viking era influence your creativity and why?
7. What are some of the most difficult and challenging things about preserving this era for you?
8. Why is it important for you to stay to true to what the viking era textiles, clothing, and look was like?
9. What are some of the steps you have taken to research and understand this era?
10. What are some of the steps you have taken to stay as close to being historically accurate as possible?
11. What places and or events do you go to for inspiration on the viking era?
12. Why do you feel this period in time was so important?
13. How do you feel the viking period has influenced current Scandinavian identity?
14. Where do you see this identity manifest the most?
15. Historically, where there any viking era revivals that interest you?
16. In what way do the sagas aide or disservice the understanding of true viking era style?
17. What do you think we can learn from viking period fashion?
18. What mistakes are often made in trying to recreate viking era style?
19. How can these mistakes be avoided?
20. What can fashion say about personal identity?

Viking Age reenactment & recreation

Interview with Anna Økstra & Lasse Mathiesen

January 2020, (Rennesøy) Stavanger, Norway

By: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

MASSIEL: So, we can begin with the questions and well first if you guys would like to briefly introduce yourself briefly, name last name field of study, work and how it relates to these periods that we're going to be discussing.

LASSE: My name is Lasse Mathiesen, and I am a trained fine artist, but I've been working in communications for 20 years. My fine arts background has always lingered and this sort of need to make things with my hands, and not only in photography but also in design. I grew up very close to Hafrsfjord and the monument, so Viking history has been a big part of my life. I wanted to be an archaeologist until I was 16 or 17 and I still regret not committing to that, archaeology has always been a big part of my sort of hobby interests.

When I discovered this history dissemination and reenactment scene lots of things just clicked because suddenly you had this community with people that had the same interest in archaeology and history and also did lots of crafts. I have this sort of almost arrogant way of looking at crafts in which I think that if someone else's "two hands" can do something, mine can too; so, you don't have to be some kind of special person to do any craft you just need to do it 10,000 times and you can be a master of this.

MASSIEL: And yet I'm really intimidated by the idea of weaving something like that!

LASSE: yeah I guess I don't have that intimidation gene that many have (laughs), so when I discovered this community there were so many skilled Craftsman that you were able to learn from and then when you spend a week in the woods with someone you're bound to absorb something and then you know, one thing led to the other and here I am 6-7 years later.

ANNA: (to Lasse) But do you not get intimidated by some of the crafts in the Viking community?

LASSE: Not intimidated by it, or thinking I can't do it, but I sometimes get a bit overwhelmed because it's so time consuming; but I still haven't seen anything that I don't understand how it's done, but it is almost difficult to understand how much time they spent doing things. Once you dive into these crafts and look at historic finds and stuff, you sort of get the idea that their conception of time has to be disconnected from the sense of value you know? Because today we need "time is money" that's what we say, and I think they have a very different outlook on that, because if something took ten hours to make, it is irrelevant because it's more about the value of the object, it was linked to some other kind of value other than time and money.

If not, the craftspeople would be the richest people around, for example some of the craft things they do like… the migration period tablet woven band from the Swedish grave, the embroideries are made with horsehair, it's sewn to the inside of the tunic and it's 1700 hours to make that one band, and that just becomes absurd if you if you link time and value.

ANNA: My name is Anna Økstra, I am a social anthropologist, bachelor's degree, and master's degree, and I started working at the Museum of archaeology when I was 19, and then mainly at the Iron Age farm where I was a guide ten or eleven years ago.

There was a woman who came to show us some tablet weaving, and I thought it was cool and I went home and tried it for myself and then I became really really good at it (laughs).

MASSIEL: And then you just became the Yoda of tablet weaving (laughs).

ANNA: (laughs) but it took me almost 10 years to become really good at it, I also did my master's degree on dissemination in a Viking Museum in Skåne in Sweden. I think my interest in Viking age and the migration period started before I began working at the museum, I grew up on a farm, and I lived closer to nature, and we went fishing and my dad went hunting, and when people around told us about the Viking age and primitive cultures, I always found that really fascinating, I think that's one of the reasons I studied anthropology as well…
LASSE: because I find anthropology is like some sort of interest in the basics…

ANNA: Yeah, the basics of living.

MASSIEL: I think that's a really good point to make to go into the first question, which is, how do you define the Viking era aesthetic? What is it that drew you to it in the first place? When you were talking about nature and the fascination with the primitive, what was it about that which first drew your attention –even if later it evolved into something else.

ANNA: I think then it was the idea of something…maybe the thought that the Vikings were "us" but they're not "us" they're from a long time ago, so I think a lot of the fascination that I have with the with the past is that you can never truly know how it was. I go around every day thinking I wish I had a time machine, then I could go back and just find out exactly how it was, but then I think that would ruin it… that would ruin the Viking age…

MASSIEL: so, the mystery really?...

LASSE: The mystery of it is a big thing because there is so much room for interpretation, but it's a double-edged sword… there's many ridiculous interpretations as well (laughs) but you study it and learn from others that are more experienced than you and so your interpretations become more qualified. There is always something new to find, and you know, stuff still keeps coming up from the ground around Scandinavia and also in the UK, so there is always something more to learn.

ANNA: Also, my grandparents live quite close to one of the big Viking ship finds (now at the Viking ship museum in Oslo) so as a child I was running up that hill where it was found and dug out.

MASSIEL: Which ship?

ANNA: Gokstad, so that kind of adds to that mystery because you think here is where something big and beautiful came out, and we don't know anything about it!
I also think another way that I got into the Viking thing is through heavy metal…

LASSE: Which many people do (laughs)

MASSIEL: yeah, I have noticed (laughs) it's a really big thing in Norway, makes sense you know? Dark climate, it's cold, makes for moody music (laughs)

MASSIEL: What would your answer be for how you would define this era?

ANNA: Colorful.

LASSE: yeah… I've always… when I think of Viking "aesthetics" for me it's the non-symmetric almost French art nouveau approach to ornamentation…

MASSIEL: Hmm… okay, that makes a lot of sense.

LASSE: Yeah, because that's sort of what's most defining for me, from the Viking age is this sort of incredibly detailed design but it's an organized non-symmetric design too, it looks very organic but there are so many rules, but it doesn't contain symmetry, which is… you know, after the industrial revolution everything is symmetric because it's repeating itself. Our modern way of patterning stuff is always repeating, and I have always been fascinated by that because I'm a symmetry geek. I get ticks if something is not...(laughs) I am a trained designer, so symmetries are a big thing. Also balance and all of that.

But I've always been intrigued by stuff that works without being symmetric, and how balance is achieved without a center line, and you know…caring for the golden ratio. When I started to study art and stuff, I was super into Alphonse Mucha and all those French Art Nouveau artists and the Viking ornaments sort of came back to me. I returned to the Viking age aesthetics from studying art.

MASSIEL: Okay, that is very interesting.

LASSE: I grew up when the Norwegian black metal scene was at its worst, I was in the middle of it, I listened to it, but I've never connected to it. I knew there was some Norse fascination with the metal scene, but for me there just wasn't…

MASSIEL: There just wasn't a connection.

LASSE: Right, for me it's much more a fascination with these characters, when I was a kid we had Conan and He-Man and Star Wars and you had these Viking kings, because I grew up around Hafrsfjord you know with the battle and Harald Fairhair and Erik the Red and all of those guys, so you had these mystical hero figures and then as I grew I started to study shapes and designs and colors and stuff, the Viking age fascination came back through that.

ANNA: I think for me those characters that kind of inspire you… (since I'm a little bit younger) I think it was a lot of… *Ronja rövardotter*? "Ronia, the Robber's Daughter (the original book is by Astrid Lindgren) have you heard of it?

MASSIEL: No, actually…

ANNA: It's a Swedish film about a girl… I think it's in the Medieval era but it's not really clear when it is, but they're living in nature and everything is just idyllic and amazing, you should see this film. It's a children's film.

MASSIEL: Yeah! That sounds really interesting.

ANNA: There's that and then there's… Disney films (laughs)

MASSIEL: (laughs) we are millennials we can't get away from Disney films under any circumstances.

LASSE: Even though I'm older than Anna I have to say I feel the same way about this *Ronja rövardotter*…

ANNA: And Narnia!

MASSIEL: Narnia is my favorite book of all time and of all my life so… yeah, I understand.

LASSE: when I first saw *Ronja rövardotter*… I think I've seen it in the cinema because I'm really that old (laughs), but it was a big thing because it was one of the first movies I saw that was real? you know, with real people… and it was… although it's a fantasy story, it wasn't full of any of those fantasy props, it was full of horses and brown clothing, and the story is a big part of Scandinavian children's literature. It's one of those big children's stories that were read to Scandinavian kids since Astrid Lindgren wrote them. So, when they turned that story into a film, you suddenly see it on screen. It was my first sort of meeting with medieval or early medieval visuals in photographic form and not cartoon and I found that really fascinating. This girl Ronja, she sort of runs away and she survives with her friend in the woods and she's like 10 years old, and for a 10-year-old that was a big thing!

MASSIEL: It's very exciting.

LASSE: She was in nature, and she was scared of the wild and then fears are sort of personified with these semi scary beasts and stuff.

MASSIEL: So now that we have sort of talked about what you see from that era, and how you were influenced by it at different points during childhood and throughout life, what do you consider it says about the Viking lifestyle and their identity? What is it about the way that everything in that era looked (aesthetically) that helps in defining the identity of the Vikings as people? And I mean, I want to know this from your own perspective and opinion and not so much from some of the things that are assumed by people and media, like helmets with horns and so on. Everyone has this idea that battling is all they did, yet they made very beautiful kind of delicate asymmetrical things– what do you think that says about them and their lifestyle and their identity?

LASSE: I think they were still very vain? But still function before form, but when they could, I think their vanity allowed them to spruce things up, you know with their ornaments and stuff, but

it seems to me as a designer and Craftsman that function comes first. There's also this sort of more primitive sense of using as much of anything as you can, like the basic cuts in their clothing, is basically made to squeeze as much clothing out of the piece of fabric as you can.

ANNA: Yeah and carrying around what you own and what you need on your belt, being able to have everything you absolutely need on you all the time.

MASSIEL: That's a very good point.

LASSE: Yes, and care about objects more… like we did up until the 70s or 80s when it was, you know, instead of having one gold watch that you got for your birthday when you were fourteen, in the 80s you bought a new swatch watch every two months and just threw away the old one. So they had much more of this preservation, and you can see that on way they re-use, you even have high status objects that you can see have been worn down over time and were made into something else; or a loot from Ireland that's been turn into brooches, they had this sort of sense of seeing an object as a valuable thing and squeezing the most out of it. So, I think they were probably as vain as we are, but they were more basic in their approach, and more concerned with using their resources sensibly.

MASSIEL: How do you feel identified with this style and this sort of identity that you've just described? What is it about this description that makes you say: "this is me" or "this is part of who I am and what I want to show to people"?

LASSE: Us being as crafty and as handy as we are, it's sort of an easy way to show people how skilled we are…you know, there's a big trap of looking like an arrogant show off (laughs) but you sort of try not to because it's all about sharing and I have this need to try to make people enthusiastic and to try things themselves. It's interesting to sort of push people into trying something they think they can't master; you have to sort of show them what the goal can look like.

ANNA: For me it's more like, when I dress up in my Viking clothes or my migration period clothes, I know that I've spent a long time making them, and I know that it's a piece of clothing

that I will probably have for as long as I do Viking reenactment. So that's why I also spend enormous amounts of time planning it.

MASSIEL: And do you feel like that says something about you as a person?

ANNA: Yeah, because I want to put thought and care into my clothes, I don't buy a lot of clothes but in the Viking age it's impossible for me to show people that I care…

LASSE: I've always had this question that fascination about heirlooms and quality objects compared to… you know, crappy objects? Not because something is expensive but because I've always been fascinated by things that have been worked on and the effort and time into making, and through this sort of synthetic dissemination reenactment Viking lifestyle, you sort of get to live out some of that and be the Craftsman not just the wearer of precious objects. A lot of what we do you cannot buy in shops; you have to make it.

MASSIEL: How does the Viking era influence your choice in clothing in terms of, how does it make you feel differently about the clothes that you purchase and wear for your regular daily life?

ANNA: I try to buy less clothes.

LASSE: I'm more quality conscious.

ANNA: and I keep thinking that I wish I had more courage to use some of my Viking clothing in my daily life, like that coat hanging there for example, it's a perfect coat for winter, both for Viking Age and now. I want to use some of my clothes across periods.

MASSIEL: I would totally wear that out right now. I think for me, one of the reasons that I am so attracted to the clothing of this time period, is the fact that I do think many of the cuts translate very well to modern style.

LASSE: I think the only way it influences me is that I'm a bit more quality conscious, but I know I still buy clothing at H&M because it's cheap and I can afford it, and as a designer I'm allergic to logos and stuff so that's a bigger influence in my clothing choices than the Viking Age, but I think in my everyday life it's more you know the most obvious thing that's influenced is my hair… I wouldn't have had this long hair if it wasn't for this Viking stereotype that many kids and tourists expect. I have this long hair it's because I still can have long hair (laughs) so I might just yeah and you know she wants it and then my daughter wants it and everyone wants it, but I'm so sick of the super long hair, but I think that's the only way it influences my everyday look –it's this hair I keep for…

MASSIEL: For Viking purposes.

ANNA: Also, the tattoos!

MASSIEL: But you also have very long hair!

ANNA: Yes, I do!

LASSE: But yeah, after years of making these clothing for use only at events, you start to have this sort of… you want to wear some of them, not the big flashy ones maybe but toned-down versions of them during everyday life as well just because…

ANNA: You appreciate them so much.

LASSE: Yes, I appreciate them more and they're different, and I think it's always cool to sort of stand out a bit and they're super comfy. The tunic is probably the comfiest thing you can wear. When it's summertime and we run around for weeks and weeks in these Viking clothing at the various events it's not a costume that you put on and feel that it would have been nicer to wear Bermuda shorts, because it wouldn't. The costume is more comfortable than modern clothing. So, you start to appreciate them more. For example, I have a bad back, and some modern shoes aren't that good for that.

MASSIEL: Oh really? So, do you find that the Viking period shoes are better for you?

LASSE: yeah, because they're more like the Native American moccasin, it's just a piece of leather under your foot to protect you from stones, so you're basically walking barefoot, and that's much better for the lower back then wearing heels, and so after a summer walking in the Viking period shoes for weeks my back is good for a month.

ANNA: I'd say it's also influenced the choice of material in clothing, I'm wearing wool leggings under my clothes for half a year now because I know that it will keep me warm and I've learned that from wearing all this wool and linen and I know that wool is awesome and linen sucks when it comes to sweating and everything, so I don't wear a lot of linen I just choose wool.

LASSE: Yes, and especially if you're into textiles like we are, you become a textile geek in 2020s clothing as well, because you feel you touch, you ask yourself is this good fabric? Will this itch? you sort of become a bit more conscious.

MASSIEL: How does the Viking era influence your creativity and why? I mean looking around your home I see a lot of the influence, but if you could narrow it down to a paragraph (laughs).

ANNA: That's difficult…

LASSE: It becomes difficult because you've chosen to do Late Iron Age and Viking Age stuff as a hobby, and it influences my creativity in the sense that I have a subject. I have a box that my creativity sort of fits into, and that's it you know if you feel the need to make something or create something it's easier to pull something out of a specific box than to just go out into space and cry for options. It makes it a bit easier to be creative, but it also makes it a lot harder to be creative because there are so many written and unwritten rules especially when you sort of climb this authenticity ladder and both yourself and people around you expect you to sort of deliver a certain degree of authenticity...

MASSIEL: I'm going to stop you there, because I think the next question is going to be really good for you in terms of describing that. For you Anna, what are some of the ways in which your creativity is influenced?

ANNA: Well, I am a big tablet weaving nerd, and I think all of the communities that we are in on Facebook groups and social media groups really give me a lot of inspiration, and it feeds my creativity all the time. I can go long periods without leaving but then suddenly I see something really cool and then I just have to. I have to leave work early, preferably…

MASSIEL: Oh really? (laughs)

LASSE: (to Anna) But you don't go more than a day or two without doing something. Something that is crafts related in some way.

ANNA: Well, yes that's true (laughs).

LASSE: You know if she isn't weaving, she is sewing or embroidering something.

MASSIEL: So, it really does fuel your creativity and gives you ideas.

LASSE: Also, because there is so much source material to choose from, and you have this community on Facebook and social media sort of communicating…

ANNA: Yeah, and everyone in this community is really happy to share!

MASSIEL: Yes! I've noticed that, and it's really very nice.

LASSE: Yeah but you know that's the only way to move forward, is to be inspired by others and see what others have been doing, especially because the community is really divided between the academics that maybe have an archaeology or history background, or some kind of museum connections, and then you have us that are academic maybe in other fields or not academics at all.

But you know, the history and archaeology academics have access to stuff on a whole another level than us.

ANNA: I have so many friends in the community, there's always someone that comes with a ball of yarn and says: "you should try this this yarn" and then someone shows me a new find of tablet weaving and that feeds it as well, and then you get all these inputs from everywhere… from friends and people on Facebook, that just makes me really creative.

MASSIEL: I think there's a very important question for me to have answered by you guys: what are some of the most difficult and challenging things about preserving this era for you? Especially in terms of what you were saying earlier about how some people can be very pushy concerning these unwritten and written rules?

ANNA: For me it's difficult to tell people: "that's wrong"

MASSIEL: Hmmm… yeah.

LASSE: Yeah, the most difficult thing outside the community (you know for the public) is mass media influence you know and Hollywood and all these making helmets with horns and worse things like HBO whatever history channels and the like… which is just horrible.

MASSIEL: Yes! I agree, everyone asks me about that…

LASSE: That's one difficulty we have to sort of battle, but the other one within the community I think is encouraging others to stay true to sources and have sources for their stuff, without them having their toes stepped on. There is a big division also in the community with being interested in having sources and someone who could care less unless they look like those guys on the history channel.

ANNA: Yeah it's so difficult to…–well you don't do it this way really–but to walk up to a person who spent days, and weeks, and months making a piece of clothing and telling them: "you can't wear that because it's not Viking Age" …

MASSIEL: (laughs) you can't sit with us!

ANNA: Yes (laughs) Viking Age, *Mean Girls*.

LASSE: Yes, because the community sort of prides itself on being really inclusive and welcoming everyone and it's apolitical and areligious and you know it is very inclusive…

ANNA: yeah, but on the right terms…

LASSE: Yeah, because if you're in some part of public woodland and the county there has spent you know a million kroners for this event and almost paid you to come there and the public pays several hundred kroners to get in the door, they expect to see the Viking Age, not something from Hollywood or Game of Thrones, you know? It's like in a museum, you don't go into a museum and see some plastic fancy stuff you know? So, at some point you have to become this sort of "authenticity police" so sometimes people will say: "oh you're so historically correct" and stuff, and it becomes a little battle. There's no problem in being historically correct and having sources and trying to strive for authenticity… although we will never achieve authenticity, because the only authentic thing is the actual object in the ground.

MASSIEL: Of course, the only way to see the actual authentic thing is if you could go back…

LASSE: But once you're interested in the Viking Age, it's not a big deal… but there are so many in the community that don't really care about which kind of fabric the original was made of, as long as it looks sort of the same, if they can make it out of cotton they would. One of the hardest things it's encouraging them over to the "dark side" basically (laughs), to try to try to give them the same kind of appreciation for being able to say: "this is as close as we get to the original"

because when you've made something that is as close as you get, it's a huge sort of thing, it’s almost as cool as the object itself, knowing that this is as similar to the object as possible.

MASSIEL: So, you've been explaining how for you both it's important to kind of influence people who are trying to get into the Viking reenactment world to create new things and find proper references and sources. On that note, my next question is what are some of the steps you've taken to research and understand this era?

LASSE: One of the biggest things that fuels me to do this, is seeing other people being excited by something and then encouraging them into trying and then watching them succeed, also kids, showing digital kids today that barely know they have two hands, and showing them, all these wonders they can create with their ten fingers. When you have a kid that is holding an ax in their hands and they’re asking you if that ax is real… there is something completely scary and wrong in the world, because they still haven't accepted that the ax is real, even though they feel the weight of it (laughs) you know? So really that’s another big thing, but my biggest drive is encouraging others into this, but when it comes to myself…

ANNA: Buying books in foreign languages just so you can look at the pictures, for example…

LASSE: Yeah, and accessing information that is hard to access, because I am not a researcher and…

MASSIEL: Yet you have suggested a lot of books that I've read for my research (laughs)

LASSE: Because I've been “nerding” on it on my own time, but like I said in this community there are a big portion of people that work in the museum business, and if you can connect with them through helping them…and because lots of the academics are just academics and theorists they aren’t “hands-on” some of the biggest holes they have in their sort of daily work is being able to try something and see something and touch something and feel something. Through me as a Craftsman, they can sort of try and feel and touch and because it's not something behind glass.

MASSIEL: Absolutely, you've brought a lot of the things we read about to life basically.

LASSE: So, by being available to those people as a craftsperson, and someone that is really interested in knowing their side of things, you create this environment of 'give and take'.

ANNA: a good example of that is that they asked me to recreate the Helgaland band in red and yellow, and I did that for them, and then they did something in return for me when they asked us to come and see the actual fragments of the band and come along when they were taking pictures of it and I was able to like study it in detail and I'm not an archaeologist but I was allowed because I was am a weaver.

LASSE: In the same way I was invited as well, because I'm a photographer, and photographing a piece of textile for display in a book is a completely different thing than photographing and lighting a piece of textile for weavers and textile experts…

ANNA: and because we are both weavers and he's a photographer, we can give the photographer perspective on how it should be photographed so that the weavers should get the information that they need.

LASSE: It is a very different photograph you need as a weaver to understand the techniques and stuff, because you know you need to see textures and stuff.

MASSIEL: Oh absolutely, it's like it was for me in pattern drafting, my BFA was in fashion design and merchandising so for me, when I create an illustration for the design, I had to draw the dress in a way that someone who's going to make a pattern from it would understand what to make for that pattern.

LASSE: It's the same thing, you have this opportunity to contribute to the research and the theoretic field with your own sort of skill set and crafts in return for more knowledge and access to some of these objects that are too precious to be on display that you're really interested in. It's not common, so you feel really privileged when you're allowed to go backstage in a museum (laughs), but it is

a field or an opportunity that is growing because the museum world has started to see that there are some people in this community that are really resourceful as well, and they've started to open up towards some of us, but you know they can't open up to everyone.

MASSIEL: Yeah, because not everyone is going to have the same dedication perhaps, or stick to the sources…

ANNA: Part of your question is what steps I've taken to understand this era… and I think one of the ways that I wanted to try to understand the era was to actually live in it, in the way that I did my master's degree because I went to work at the Viking museum, and I thought I was going to be a Viking for half a year and I wasn't (laughs), I was just a museum worker, but I lived kind of in a village with other "Vikings" and we got to know each other, we had parties and it was very immersive, it was an immersive experience.

[Anna returns to work and Lasse continues the interview]

LASSE: Immersion is an important tool for that, even though we never forget that we are living in 2020 and not in 1020 when we do these things (laughs), still you have these pockets of immersion that are really good; like the first time with the winter Vikings, I slept outside with in minus seven Celsius, so it was really cold and I was without a modern object or thread on my body, and the Viking Age clothing really worked! and I woke up and my first thought was that my feet were so hot they were going to explode.

MASSIEL: Oh wow!

LASSE: Yeah, and I woke up with snow on my hood, because my head was a bit outside of the tent. You have these sorts of small experiences during those bigger events that are really immersive, and it sort of makes you understand and expands your understanding of the time.

MASSIEL: Now is a good time to ask what places and or events do you go to for inspiration on the Viking era?

LASSE: We go to (of course) museums here, and talks if they're interesting or within our interest area, and of course the Iron Age farm we hang out there, Anna has been working there for 10 years and I've grown up in that area, so I used to play at the Iron Age farm after school with my friends and stuff, so the Iron Age farm has been a big inspiration since forever. But, after we started doing this reenacting and digging deeper into the Viking Age, the Iron Age farm has become a sort of local hub. Before they rebuilt the house when they had the old toilets and stuff up there, me and some friends used to just borrow the keys and have sleepovers! Some historic sleepovers just for immersion, and to do something different. We hope to do more of that once the new house is up and running.

Other than that, we of course go to all these different markets and festivals, and we have hundreds of them during the summer season. There's a calendar, if you look at the Scandinavian calendar you can go to one each weekend from April to September. We can't go to every one of them, but some of them once you've been there once you really want to go back because it's so good, so you sort of…

MASSIEL: You pick your favorites?

LASSE: Yeah you have some favorites, and you try to maybe do one new one every year or every other year, once you reach a certain level of stuff that you do, clubs and markets start to notice you so instead of applying and having to be on the waiting list to go there and stuff, you start to get invited and sometimes even paid to show up, so that's in the mix as well. But we really love a place called *Bronseplassen* just outside Kristiansand, it's more of a Bronze Age interpretation of the longhouse, but it's privately built, some older ceramic making hippies moved into the woods and built this bronze edge park (basically), on their own estate, and then 20 years ago they started to invite these Viking enthusiasts and reenactors to come and have their markets and there are (especially for Viking age) there are clubs in almost every city and in Kristiansand they have this one called *Agder Vikinglag* which is for the whole county and they have several markets during the summer but one of them is at *Bronseplassen* and it's very child friendly, and it's out in it's in

the middle of nowhere in the woods so we don't have any modern light pollution, or any modern houses that sort of thing…
MASSIEL: Oh wow, that must feel really authentic…

LASSE: Yeah, that's one of the reasons why we like it because the immersion is so good, you're in the middle of nowhere yeah with no sort of modern sounds or lights or anything yeah and it's brilliant for kids, they can go swimming and… we stay there for a full week or maybe even more, maybe 8-9 days and it's only open to the public the last weekend and for the whole week before that it's like Vikings only, and it's just full of workshops and courses and talks and stuff so it's fantastic. It's a great way to meet people and hang out and you know… just be lazy and have a summer holiday in a costume (laughs) an Iron Age summer holiday, where you learn new stuff and then show and disseminate all of this new stuff to the public on the last weekend.

So, we go to that one, and of course me and Anna we have much to do with the *Vestagder Museet* the little museum at Tingvatn, and they have all of the tablet weaving and grave finds from the migration period, the woman who runs that is Katja. We met Katja through the Viking circuit at *Bronseplassen* because it's in the same county and then she got the job running this museum and you know she is one of the biggest textile historic textiles nerds in Norway and you know…she loves our work, and we love her. We've been going there for various jobs, volunteer work and paid work, and the last time I was up there I did photography work for the county. They have published a new sort of cultural and heritage sites protection plan, and all the photographs are mine.

MASSIEL: My next question is, why do you feel that this period in time was so important? In your own opinion what do you think makes it so attractive to people despite there being so much more to find in the Migration period and the bronze age?

LASSE: I think for me much of the fascination with it started when I was a kid like we talked about earlier, there these iconic Viking images, you have these hero figures that are publicly known, you have the same kind of chieftains and hero figures in earlier and later periods but they are not that iconic, and they are not brought to life in the same way so you don't have them on your

plate in everyday life. So, I think that's why it started with the Viking edge but then it sort of progressed into the Iron Age as a whole, because the Iron Age as a whole is so interesting because there happen to be all these changes; right from the early Roman influences up until the migration period. Then you have this Justinian plague and everything, and you have this almost abrupt stop (at least in the West Country here) and then the Viking Age kicks off, and trade with the outside and there is so much interesting stuff that happens.

As a designer and Craftsman… you see that the material is so rich yeah in every aspect: textiles, wood, metal, there is so much stuff available, and because of this worldwide popular thing the collection stretches far beyond Norway, so if you go to London, it's always about going to the British Museum to have a look at the things there. In the earlier period like migration, they started to do this trading with the foreign countries and you know you have all these very interesting similarities, so when you start to dig into ornamentation and weaving techniques and all sorts of shapes it becomes really obvious that it's not by chance that it's so similar that it has to be some sort of communication and commerce between these cultures, this precedes the official start of the Viking Age trade. Everyone says like… "oh the Vikings suddenly invented the sail and then they started to trade with the whole continent" but you know that happens much earlier…

MASSIEL: Of course, there was a process.

LASSE: Yeah, so I don't think there is one specific thing I can put my finger on that explains why the Iron Age is special, but I think it's probably because of iron, it's the very beginning of so much of what we still use today, you know? Because the Bronze Age and Stone Age, the Neolithic stuff, it becomes so far removed from us today, that it's harder to relate to.

MASSIEL: It was maybe like the invention of the Internet almost, for that period, because everything changed after that point, the way everyone communicated shifted.

LASSE: You have much more material and it's easier to communicate and disseminate it to a public, because they can still relate to all these objects, but when you show Bronze Age and Neolithic stuff it becomes so abstract and so primitive that they almost look at it in almost ironic

way yeah but when it's Iron Age they can recognize the objects and almost guess what it is in most cases because it still looks remotely like something we have today.

MASSIEL: Would you say that it was possibly like one of the first "modern" periods?

LASSE: I think it's like I said, the first industrial revolution was the break into the Viking age, because of trade and commerce. You know we have the first example of fake brands during the Viking age? You know with these *Ulfberht* swords?

MASSIEL: Oh wow, I did not know about that.

LASSE: They became a like a fashion "brand" we don't know if it was just a fashion thing, or if it was because these words were exceptional quality, but you see fakes of those swords and for me as a marketing person that's super interesting because it's like fake Nike or Adidas shirts but 1500 years ago. There is this…almost like a logo that says "*Ulfberht",* and you have all these different misspellings of that and it's obviously made in the wrong way, but close to an original, I think that's really interesting as well because we have all of these mechanisms that we know in modern society starting to emerge in that period.

MASSIEL: That is very cool, I'm going to have a lot to collect from that. How do you feel that the Viking period has influenced current Scandinavian identity?

LASSE: I think it's sort of the glamorized version of the Viking history, the fantastic Vikings with the horned helmets and big muscles and the raping and pillaging has sort of created the foundations of this Scandinavian… sort of calm arrogance? Without being d***s? We are really confident in much of what we do even though we maybe shouldn't be *that* confident. It's like when you discuss climate stuff in Norway, it doesn't really matter what Norway says towards the climate because it's so minute, the country is tiny, we tend to see ourselves as much bigger than we are and I think that stems from as early as the Viking Age because then we really made an impact, you know?

MASSIEL: Yeah and that's a very good answer, because I have noticed that a lot of (especially) the younger generation, or this up in coming generation, is very obsessed with becoming famous on social media and there's like almost every other Norwegian person that I meet that is quite young is quick to say: “here's my Instagram” and then you follow them and they all have like twenty thousand followers, and yeah like are you all models, are you all famous what is happening? (laughs) yeah so, I do see this sort of overall interest in Norway to kind of like, “break records” or be the first to do this and that…

LASSE: Yeah, and the competitiveness might stem from that period as well, because everything had to do with “making it” you know? or being something, I think, but I’m not sure. World War II really destroyed a lot of that for us, but it's starting to come back, and I think a lot of our sort of “base” foundation culture hasn’t really gotten over the Nazis stealing it; there’s been this need to sort of reclaim it? And it's a topic that we touch on more often than many other Viking reenactors because we do all these tablet weaves with all these swastikas on them, and of course the public, especially the older ones, the seniors that maybe lived through the war and stuff, they have really big objections and problems with these patterns, but when you start to discuss it with them they… especially when they sort of get over these disgusting symbolisms and they start to talk about Norway before the war, that's really interesting because they have a different perspective on the Viking culture before it was sort of tainted by the Nazis.

MASSIEL: Yeah that that really does suck when those sorts of things happen, I mean, I'm American, so yeah definitely there was so much that went wrong with the country’s history and so much in history that sort of was taken to be used in the wrong way, and then after those things happen it becomes hard for people to understand that there was an original purpose to a sort of symbolism or item, that it different, so yeah that makes a lot of sense to have these discussions. On that note, where do you see this identity manifest the most if you can pinpoint it at all?

LASSE: I think there is a saying in Norway, and you know, roughly translated, it says…that it's typical Norwegian to be “good”, and I think that's one of the biggest ones for that. We have this sort of arrogance towards everyone basically, it's very typical for us Norwegians or Scandinavians

to excel and be good at stuff, and it's almost expected? But at the same time, you know, we have this *Janteloven* (Law of Jante)

MASSIEL: Right! It's contradictory, very much so…
LASSE: Very contradictory, and that's a big dilemma in our culture it's sort of expected and typical of for us to push things as far as it can be pushed and it's not good enough before you're in the place where the goal is reached, but you can't really show and tell that you're doing it because then you might offend someone (laughs), you know, you have be really good at everything but you have to be really quiet about it.

MASSIEL: That's a very strange thing to navigate, but it's interesting…

LASSE: But then in other aspects, I think it's also a sort of pillow for much of the modern Norwegian thinking in every kind of craft and stuff, it's like we were so big and good and sort of leading the way during the Viking age and Iron Age, but we're sort of still leaning on that, and we think that we are much better and bigger than we might be. Because we haven't really done anything to make such an impact since the Viking Age, I mean, we've pumped lots of oil (laughs) you know, and we've made lots of money, so you know, we are rich as f*** (laughs); but we haven't really contributed anything culturally to the world since then, we've just been sort of helping other cultures and fueling various other things…

MASSIEL: So, I think it's almost a nostalgia factor like *this* period is when we were great so we're going to hold on to this time.

LASSE: Yeah, yeah, I think that's a very good point. I think the Viking Age is our biggest period of greatness, and since then it's been on the decline almost since we're holding on to that.

MASSIEL: I get it because it's like the "Wild West" in the states…

LASSE: Yeah, it's the Wild West in the states, so if you look away from all the all the Native American horrors and just look at The Pioneers and stuff like that, it's obvious that that's the part

of American history that you cling to, because it's sort of the pinnacle of it so far and the space race of course…

MASSIEL: yeah, I'm trying to think what that period is for Spain actually, and there's a lot, so I don't know, but I do see a lot of people in like renaissance and Baroque costumes reenacting, and doing renaissance type fairs, so maybe it was that whole Renaissance era, or the Baroque period, with the painters like Velazquez and Goya…

LASSE: Yeah, and you don't have to go far away from Norway before the earlier periods like the Iron Age and earlier are sort of just "comments" at the historic markets because it's the medieval period that is big, but during the medieval period in Norway we were nothing, we were owned by all our neighbors.

MASSIEL: I wrote this question out because through the research that I've done I have found a lot of Viking era revivals and they they're not always the same, they're sort of different, so were there any Viking Age revivals that interest you, which you find were kind of helpful to getting closer to the truth of what it could have really been, or maybe even distanced it further, but you just find it interesting?

LASSE: I think the first Viking "revival" that really took the Viking history back into the limelight was back in the 1870s when Wagner did this symphony or his opera, and you had these romantic national romantic painters so suddenly you know taking the sagas to visual form again, which is an interesting period, but it's all about glamorizing these hero characters, so it becomes a bit dumb (laughs) and it's also when fantasy (for many) started to become reality, and that you know is a problem for us that are interested in facts.

MASSIEL: I think this goes perfectly into the next question actually because I'd like to ask in what way do the sagas aid or disservice the understanding of the true Viking style.

LASSE: I mean, you know the Sagas are probably embellished and fantasized and you know you can't really read them as literal sources. The Sagas is the obvious first, because of course the sagas

were written only two or three hundred years after the actual events, so that's the first one we look to, and then you have this Wagner national romantic artist side of it, and then it's been back and forth, and you've had these sort of other revivals influenced by the Sagas; I think it was in the 30s that there was silverware and cutlery and stuff where they started to add some Viking ships and things, but it was more to fuel this feeling of a "nation" you know? a sense of nationality, and then of course the Nazi party in Norway… They really brought the Viking Age to light and milked it for what it was worth, and since then it's been sort of a touchy thing, at least some of it, but it's been up and down all of the time.

Marvel comes along in the 60s with Thor, so you have all these sort of small glimpses of the Viking history that sort of emerges in various forms and various medias, but I don't have a specific revival, I just find them all fascinating, and that they are very positive, because they sort of put the spotlight on this period that I'm interested in, and it sort of helps public interest into it, but it's also feeding the public with all this misinformation.

MASSIEL: Yes, it's created the HBO shows (laughs)

LASSE: Right! Yeah so, it's… (laughs) but I still think it's better to sort of have a discussion with a public that is misinformed than with a public that has no information at all to discuss.

MASSIEL: You'd be amazed how many people have asked me if I going to meet the people from Game of Thrones or the Vikings show on my research (laughs)

LASSE: Yeah, yeah, I have friends that live up at *Gudvangen* (Viking village) for long periods and even the whole summer and stuff, and you know, there's cruise ships coming in every day for several times a day during summer, and they've had American tourists

MASSIEL: Of course, it's always us (laughs).

LASSE: They've been asked several times if *Gudvangen* is a reservation and they live there all year… because they think they are like Native Americans, or that they are sort of fenced in to this

community, so we get questions like that every now and then like: “do you live here all year?” or “are you allowed to leave and go outside?” and so there are some strange questions like that, then you have to tell them: “I'm a designer, I have a house, I'm just like you, this is just for fun, this is our summer holiday with the kids” and then they’re normally like: “no way!” (laughs) and you know, when you meet a public like that, it's harder to start to sort of teach them about this, because they are so clueless about the Viking Age, it's better to talk to people who know something about the Vikings, and maybe start to help them tear away the sort of glamorized versions of the time period, and show them “this is the reality”.

I know these people who have studied Viking history, and they've just started a YouTube channel where they sort of pull the “Vikings” show apart, they watch it and they just go and say: “no they didn't have llamas in Russia during the Viking Age” (laughs) because you know the last season, they have a llama and a hot air balloon, and it's mad…

MASSIEL: Wow…okay I didn't know that, see I don’t have TV, but I hear about some of the things, I didn’t know about the llama though, that’s insane.

LASSE: But I've been discussing this topic about historic identity with them and what's really obvious with the United States is that it's such a new country, so you sort of stick to the 300 years we have and let's just milk it for what it's worth…

MASSIEL: Yes, and the 300 years are not very good at explaining some things.

LASSE: Yes, and the US has been really bad at sort of teaching people that their history or their ancestry goes much further back, (this translates into the media). So what we experience a lot is when we have people from outside Scandinavia or outside Europe that are really interested in the Viking Age, it’s very often because they've seen season one and two of the Vikings show and they and want to become Vikings (laugh), and they contact us and they're like: “oh you're so lucky you can trace your ancestry to Harald Fairhair” and I mean, everyone that has a European relative can do that, it’s like 34 generations back, so everyone has a cousin's cousin that has a grandmother that was Harold Fairhair’s sister, you know? (laughs). Yet there are so many people that don't know

this, I think this sense of history that stretches far back is something that people have a latent need for. We are a bit spoiled here because we know we have 10,000 years of back history; where we live, only 200 meters from our house, there are remains of people that go back 12,000 years –it's one of the oldest sites in Norway. We have this monumental history we can trace as far back as we want, and people that live in in new countries or especially in the US where the whole continent has basically been occupied by westerners 300 years ago, everything is so new that they sort of they crave this sense of grounding or have having roots that go further back. When they don't have them where they live, they start to dig in other places, and then you have this fascination with cultures that do have that sort of obvious connection and they really want to be a part of that, and they almost cry when they realize that they have it too.

For us we've just been growing up with history, we take it for granted because we have it all over the place, we go for a walk in the hills and climb a fence that might be 2000 years old, and you don't even think about it.

MASSIEL: I would say this is the last portion of the interview. What do you think we can learn from Viking period fashion? What is something that you feel was sort of invented or that we could learn from today?

LASSE: I think what would be very interesting to take even more of a look into is sustainability. Sustainability but combined with export production for resale because they really started to do that, they were the first that produced stuff for sale or trade and especially when it comes to clothing. The basic cuts are older than the Viking Age, so you have this sustainability of making the most out of a piece of fabric and that is of course older than the Viking period, but up until the Viking period it looks like it was more production of clothing for the home or for your own personal use or for a chieftain or something, maybe as a higher as payment to a higher ranking person, but once the sails are invented textile production really kicks into high gear.

There is something really interesting that happens, but what really happens as far as I know isn't clear yet, you see it like we did in the tablet weaves, things start to become narrower and simpler and much faster to make. You still have some of these sorts of super "high-status", complicated

objects, but stuff becomes faster, and I think if we managed to… you know we need two or three bog bodies from the Viking Age, with complete clothing, that's what we need to find that at some point (laughs).
MASSIEL: Yes, we absolutely do need that (laughs).

LASSE: Yes, and it would be really cool to investigate the link between these basic and very sustainable ways of making clothing and cutting the fabric to maximize the use of textile pieces and look at the weaving techniques and everything if it's been simplified in the Viking Age for speed. Especially when compared to earlier periods where everything is so complicated.

MASSIEL: Yeah, and it's just not easy to replicate… What mistakes are often made in trying to recreate the Viking Age style and how do you think these mistakes could be avoided?

LASSE: I think the biggest mistake is the… bling, bling, bling, and the overdoing things (laughs).

MASSIEL: How do you define "bling, bling, bling" …

LASSE: Shiny objects… and having a belt full of all the objects, like drinking horns and belt pouches and knives and swords and the sharpening stones and you know all these objects that have been found in graves combined into one massive Viking Museum around your waist, you know? Because if you look at the great reenactors, they do one grave on the belt of the person, with one, two or three objects. But earlier in the migration period, you have these chieftains that have belts that are quite loaded (laughs), but I think the biggest mistake is overdoing it.

One of the second mistakes is mixing the periods within the Viking Age as well, you know, because the Viking age is 350 years of change, but that's more of a subtle mistake and I do it too, I mix objects; so I'd say the biggest mistake is overdoing it and trying to look like this "Wagner-esque" Chieftain king, right because that's not the correct picture of the Vikings Age, 95% of the population were farmers or slaves. Also, it's colors, because there are these sort of dual mistakes, some beginners they go for the full thing at once with gold and bling and fancy colors, but they get the color palette wrong because they don't do natural dyes and then maybe they use cotton, so

they have understood that rich or status was displayed through colors, but they interpret that wrong, so the color palette becomes very strange. Then you have the other ones that go the other way, and they think that the Vikings were such a long time ago that they were really primitive, so they make things and stitch them rough and make them look almost like Neolithic in this kind of way?

MASSIEL: Yes, I've seen that as well, there's this sort of barbarian look, lots of primitive cuts of furs and skins…

LASSE: They might get some of the color palette right, because they make sort of lower status browns and natural colors, but they've missed this whole thing that craftsmanship right was a huge deal and like we discussed earlier yesterday the concept of time. Anna has this replica of this *Bernuthsfeld* shirt from Germany, which is 38 pieces of fabric, and it's just the stitching there is, you know, 400 hours probably to stitch all these pieces together, because it's properly done, they've saved all of these tiny pieces of fabric to be able to make this shirt, but it's not done roughly, and you find very little, especially textile stuff that is made rough. Many beginners have this sort of misinformation that the Vikings had lots of shiny stuff and lots of cool things and cool clothing, but they were primitive in their crafts when it's the complete opposite. From the thread counts and textiles and…

MASSIEL: Yeah, and the way that thread was either a Z-spun, or an S-spun, or when different types of spinning techniques were used to make different threads…

LASSE: It's like our tablet weaving yarn, if you want some of the bands, if you want to make a replica of that, it's a problem because it's almost impossible to get machines spun yarns that are thin enough to replicate them, because the handspun yarn can be even thinner than modern machines can do.

MASSIEL: Okay, so the last and final question is, what can fashion say about personal identity? and this is kind of an important question because I want to get a feel and a sense of your personal view.

LASSE: In a Viking context? Or just in any…

MASSIEL: Just in any context. In your view, what do you think fashion can say about personal identity? Can clothing say something about who you are? Can it say something about a period, and what the people in that period were like?

LASSE: I think fashion is one of the most important ways of showing to the general outside world where you sort of want to belong, it doesn't necessarily mean that you belong there, but you show where you want to be. I try to avoid logos, like I said earlier, because I don't want to be put on the Nike hanger, or Adidas, or… I just want to be more anonymous, more neutral, whereas I still have a look, but I've been working as an art director for so many years so I "art direct" myself basically. If I go to England, to the countryside, I wear tweeds and go pheasant shooting and I look like I'm in Downton Abbey, you know?

MASSIEL: (laughs) Yeah, that's what I try to do as well, I like blending in.

LASSE: Yeah, and I like for me clothing is such a part of any bigger experience, so if I want to experience, especially different cultures, dressing appropriately is a very big part of that immersion, of blending in. I think the same goes for modern fashions like we see on kids and ourselves as well, the clothing you wear will always be some kind of statement of you, both status and where you want to belong, and I think it's very important that it's about where you *want* to belong not necessarily where you belong.

MASSIEL: That is the best place to end it, that was awesome, thank you.

APPENDIX A

(IMAGE GROUP A)

MAGES (A) Tablet weaves created by Anna & Lasse, which they showed me in their home in Stavanger, Norway. January 2020
Photos by: Massiel Malagon Mancebo

APPENDIX B

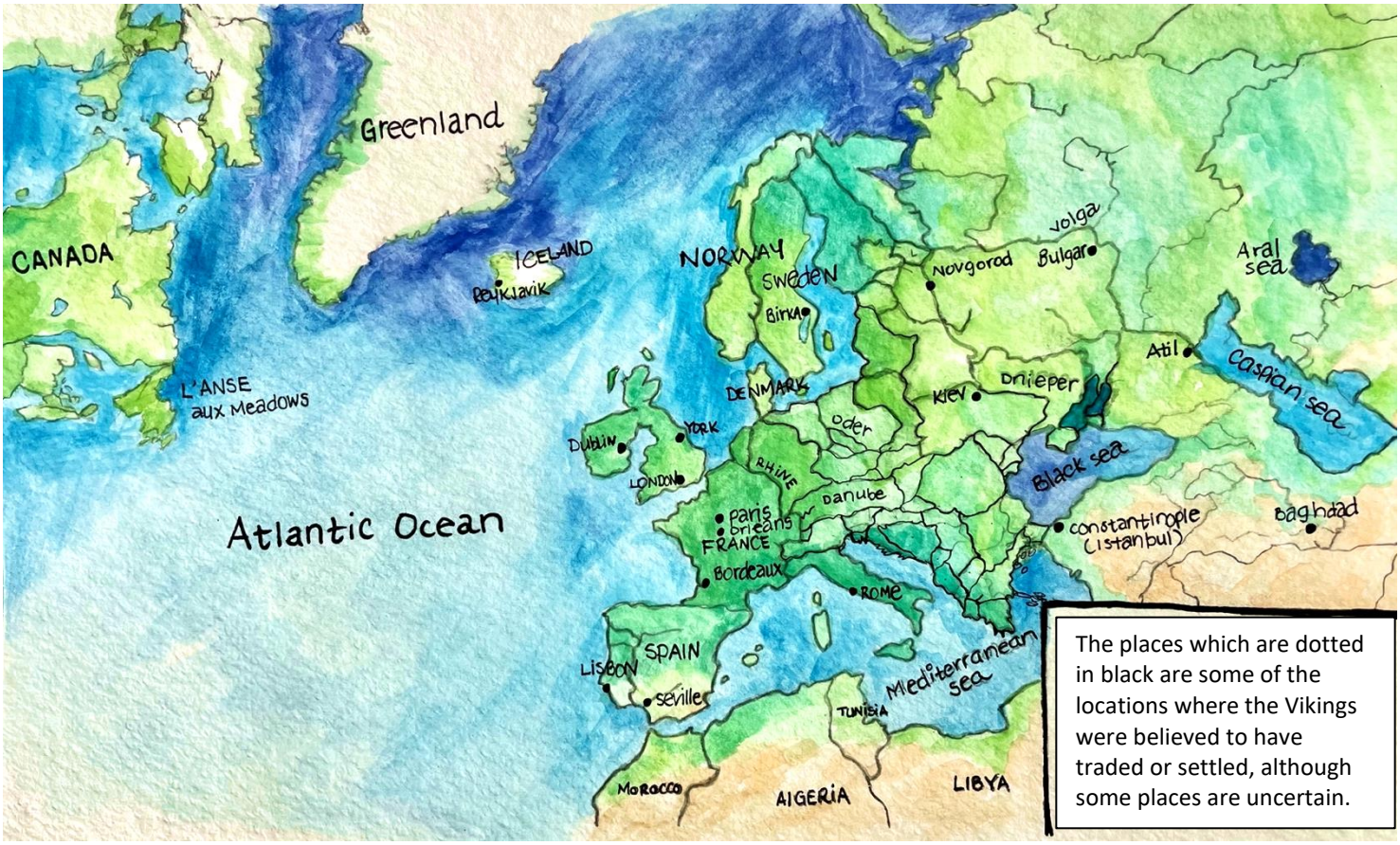
Introduction

This appendix contains several illustrations of maps which are relevant to the understanding of distances and locations where some of the most important Viking Age finds were found. The first of the maps shows some of the common trade routes and locations where important settlements could have held seasonal trade markets, this is important when considering some of the finds, and where they could have come from, as well as the differences between them, it could have been easier to trade certain materials with certain areas as opposed to others. The second map focuses on some of the most important grave finds within Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, which are discussed within several chapters of the thesis, as well as a focus on where one of the grave finds discussed is located within Iceland. Lastly, this appendix features a map of the silk road. The purpose of this map is to show some of the possible locations where the Vikings could have traded silk, or where some of their silk samples could have come from. The importance of this appendix is to give a visual understanding of what travel looked like during the Viking Age, as well as an estimate of the distances that would have been covered during the Viking Age.

APPENDIX B

(IMAGE A)

Viking trade route and settlement map
Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

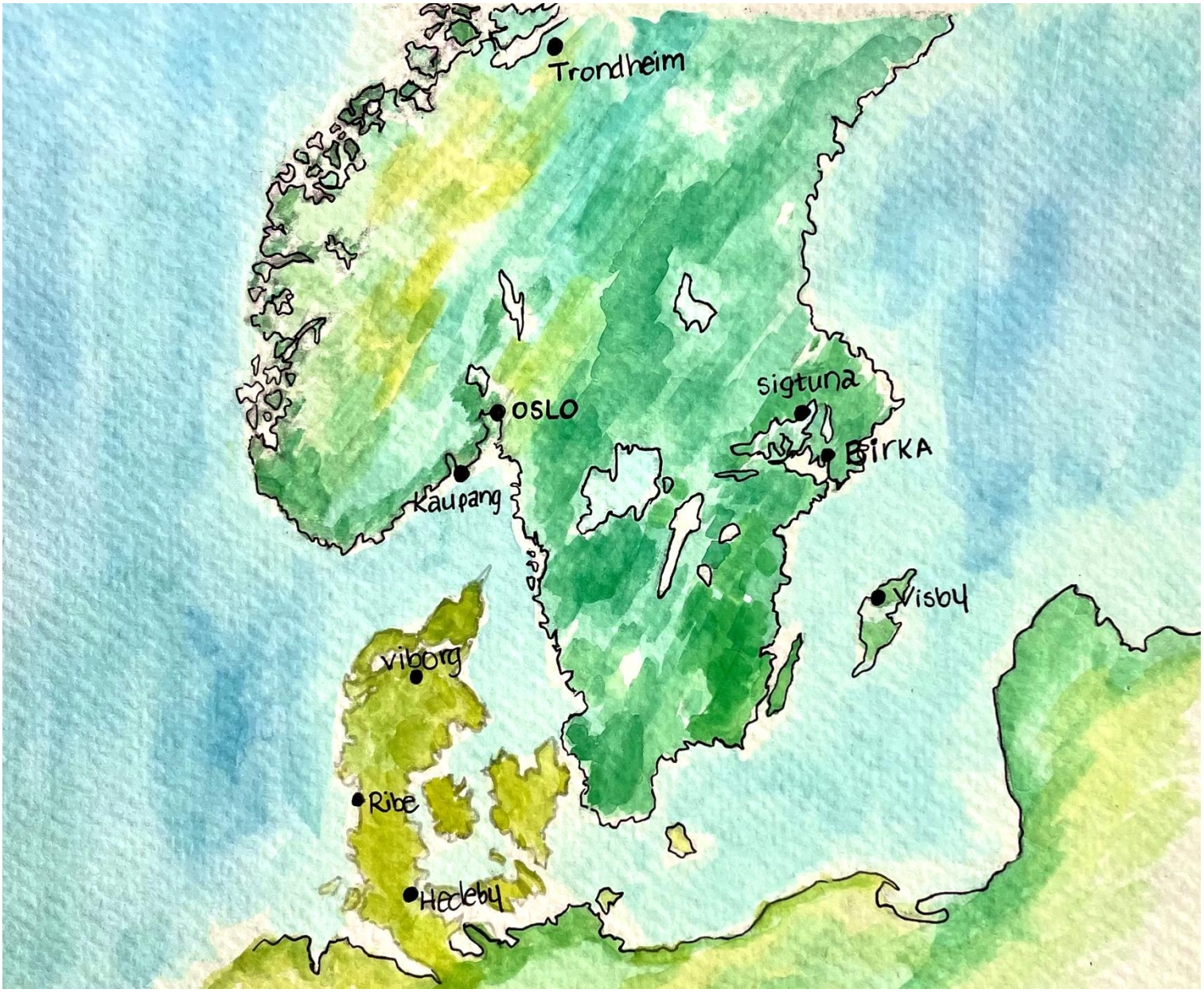


APPENDIX B

(IMAGE B)

Important graves, and settlement locations in Norway, Sweden, Denmark. (Some locations include modern day Germany but would have been considered Denmark during the Viking Age).

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

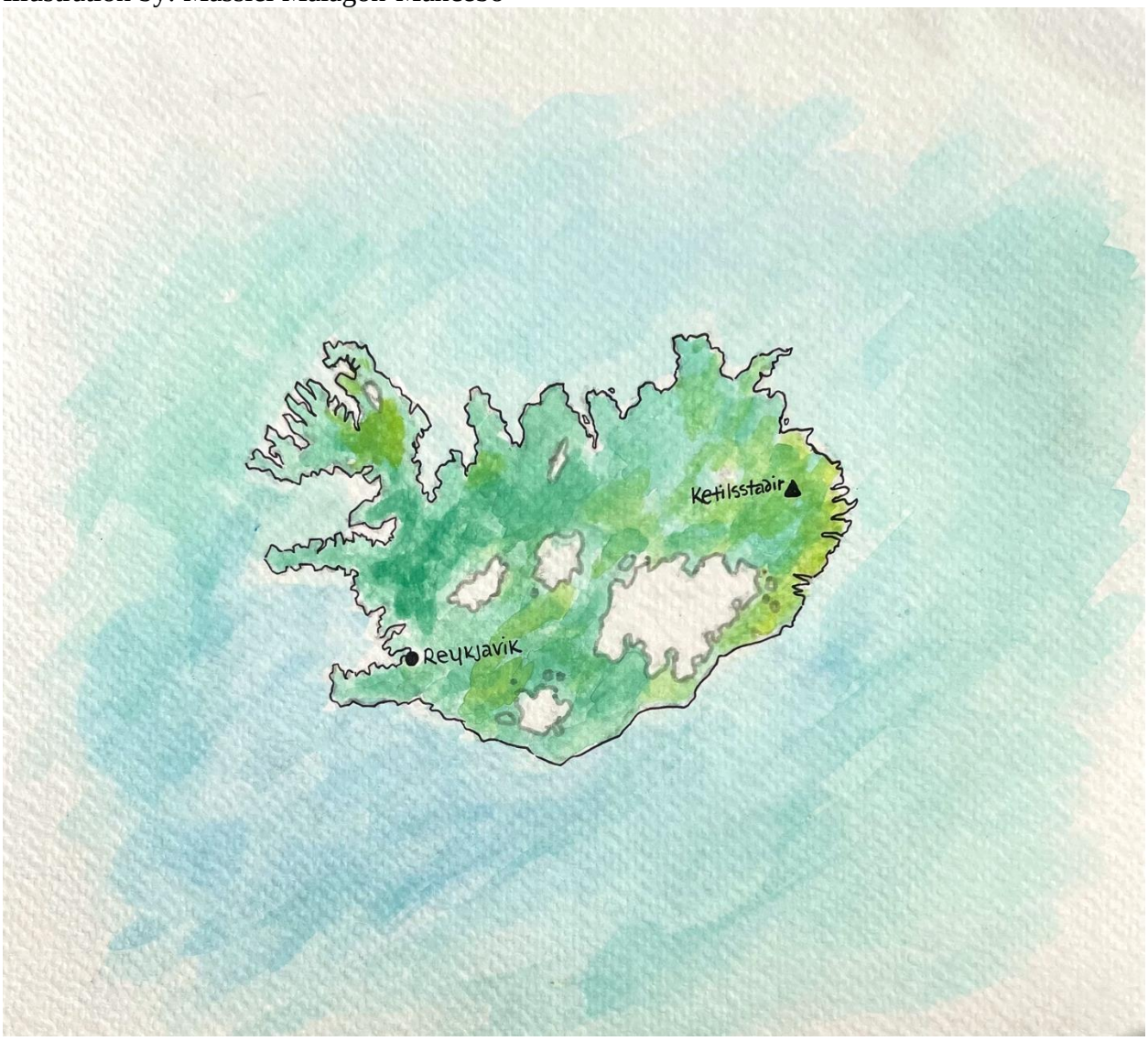


APPENDIX B

(IMAGE C)

Important grave & settlement locations in Iceland

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo



APPENDIX B

(IMAGE D)

Silk road map.

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX C

Introduction

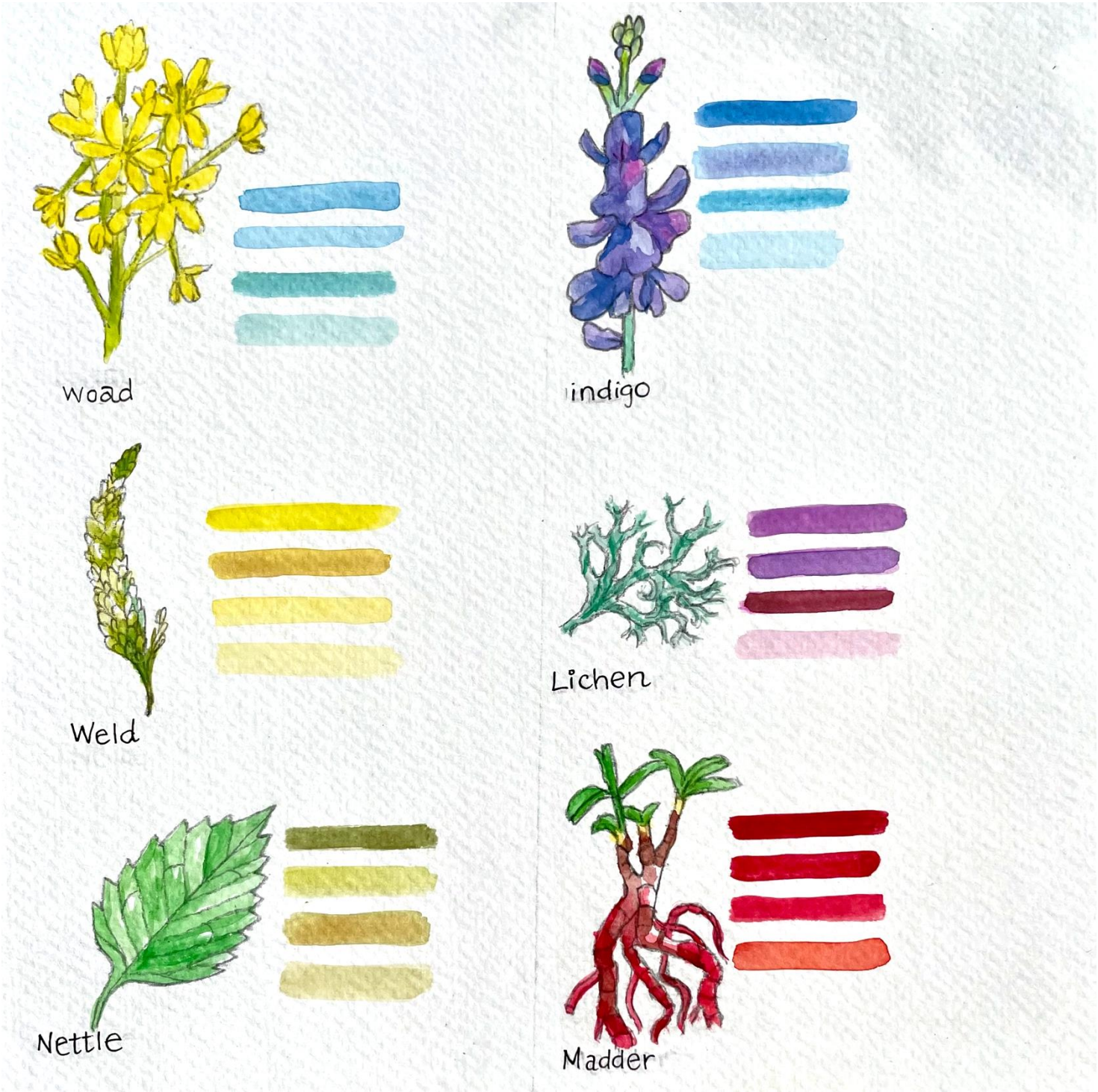
This appendix contains illustrations showcasing several different types of plants, and fiber sources which would have been used during the Viking Age for textile manufacturing as well as the dyes that would have been used. Considering that chapter 5 of the thesis focuses on textile dyes and fibers, it was important to give a visual example of what some of those plants and sources would have looked like. It was also necessary to showcase the ranges of colors that could be produced from those sources, to further add to the understanding that the Vikings would have had access to a majority of color, especially those of higher social standing. The first illustration focuses on dye plants and sources, and the types of colors that would have been produced from those materials. The second is a continuation of the dye sources, but also includes some of the textile fiber sources. Lastly, is an illustration and copy of a samite silk piece from the Viking Age.

APPENDIX C

(IMAGE A)

Viking Age dyes & color swatches

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

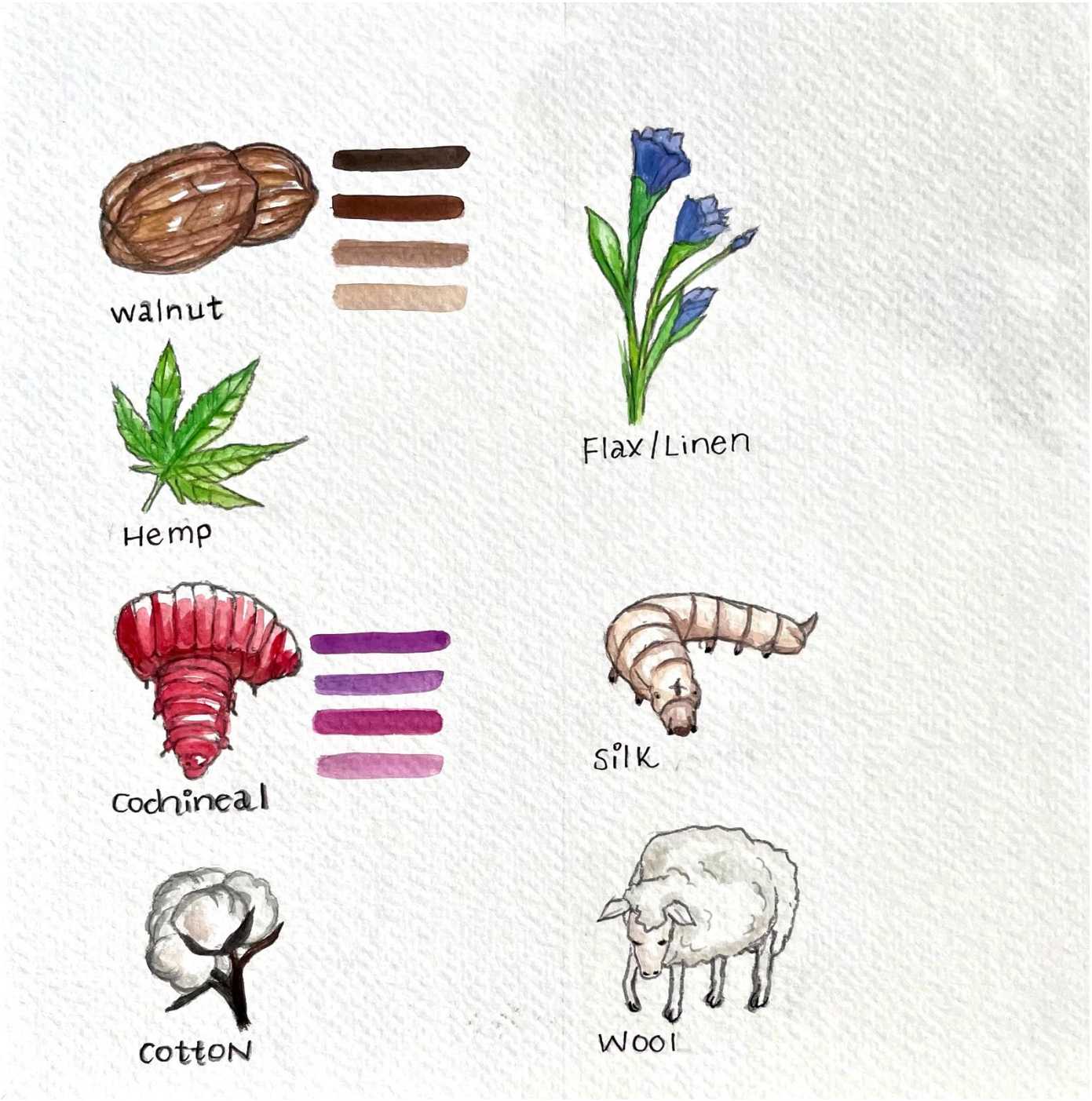


APPENDIX C

(IMAGE B)

Viking Age dyes, color swatches & fiber sources

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo



APPENDIX C

(IMAGE C)

Samite silk sample

Illustration by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX D

Introduction

Appendix D is an image archive of some of the field work I conducted throughout my years of research. The first of my images includes some of the Viking Age grave sites I visited in Norway, including a rectangular grave in Gausel (Stavanger) Norway where the Gausel queen would have been found, as well as a star shaped grave in Bryne, Norway. In Sweden I visited several of the most important runestone finds in Eskilstuna outside of Stockholm, as well as several Viking Age settlement sites. In the National Museum of Denmark, I was able to see one of the largest runestone finds from the Viking Age. This portion of the appendix is very relevant to my work because in the beginnings of my research I was traveling consistently and doing a lot of field work, this became important to the understanding of the Viking Age, what would have been worn, how it would have related with the surrounding land, and how the materials would have been useful in the climate. Visiting these locations also helped me to gain a visual image of what life in the Viking Age could have looked like.

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP A)

Gausel grave, Stavanger, Norway.
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP A)

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP A)

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP A)

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE B)

Star-shaped grave, Bryne, Stavanger, Norway.
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP C)

Södermanland Runic Inscription 109 (Eskilstuna, Sweden)

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX D
(IMAGE GROUP C)

APPENDIX D
(IMAGE GROUP C)
VS2 at Stora Rytterne, Varangian runestones, Västmanland, Sweden

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP D)

Viking Age rock carving Sigurdsristningen, Sundbyholms Slott & Mälaren, Sweden
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

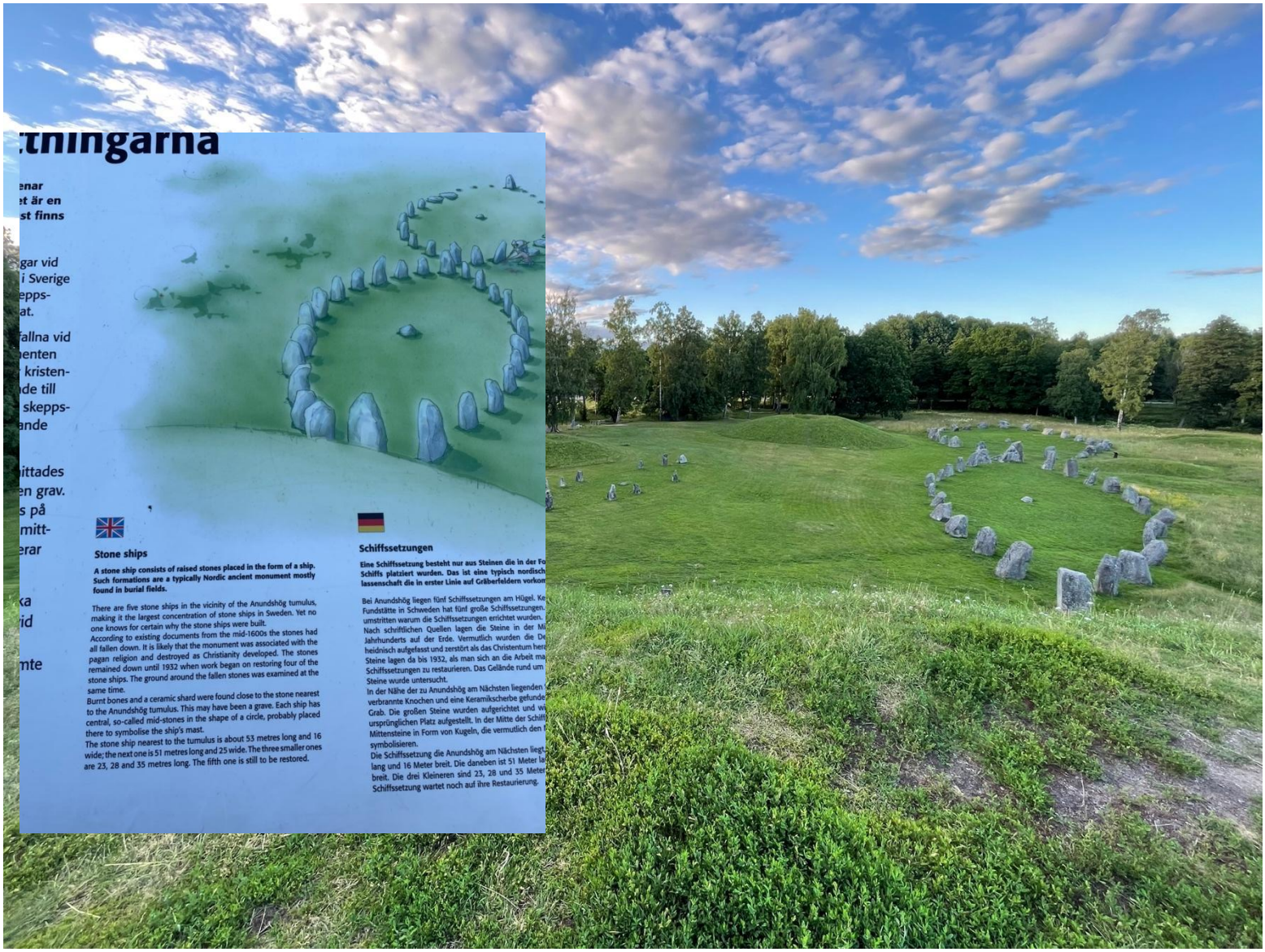
APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP D)

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP E)

Viking Age mounds and settlement grounds, Anundshög, Västerås, Sweden.
(Largest in Sweden)
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo



APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP E)

The following image explains some of the raised stones and why they form several stone ships possibly used for burial mounds, although it is not certain.

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP F)

Tryggevaelde Runestone, Copenhagen, Denmark
The National Museum of Denmark
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX D

(IMAGE GROUP F)

Minnekors Erling Skjalgssons, Copenhagen, Denmark
The National Museum of Denmark
Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

Introduction

The final section of my appendix is a review of some of the museums where I've worked and the museums which I visited as part of my research. I had a research stay at the museum of Stavanger, which became the core portion of my research. I have included some images of what the museum was like when I was working there, and some of the areas which featured Viking Age artifacts. The Stiklestad cultural center in the region of Verdal in Trondelag, Norway was crucial for my research as they have a large costume department which specializes in recreating Viking Age clothing, I was offered a private backstage tour of the costume department by Gunhild Risktad who was kind enough to show me all of the different departments from clothing, weaponry, the Viking long houses, the textile manufacturing areas, and even jewelry replicas. This appendix also includes images from the Viking Age exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark, at this museum I was also able to work with a guide and ask questions about Bronze Age clothing and the developments that were made into Viking Age clothing. Finally, across the ocean we find a small feature of Viking Age artifacts and information at the Epcot Norway Pavilion in Orlando, Florida. Because I have been in Florida for the final portion of my research, I was able to visit and analyze this particular collection of items and displays with great detail and make proper comparisons to its European counterparts. The observations made about the Epcot Norway Pavilion are important, when it comes to understanding the way that Viking Age artifacts are interpreted outside of Scandinavia.

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE A)

Gold foils (guldgubber) Stavanger Archeology Museum UiS, Stavanger, Norway

Image by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP A)

Viking Age bracteates & jewelry, Stavanger Archeology Museum UiS, Stavanger, Norway

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE B)

Viking Age exhibition, Stavanger Archeology Museum UiS, Stavanger, Norway

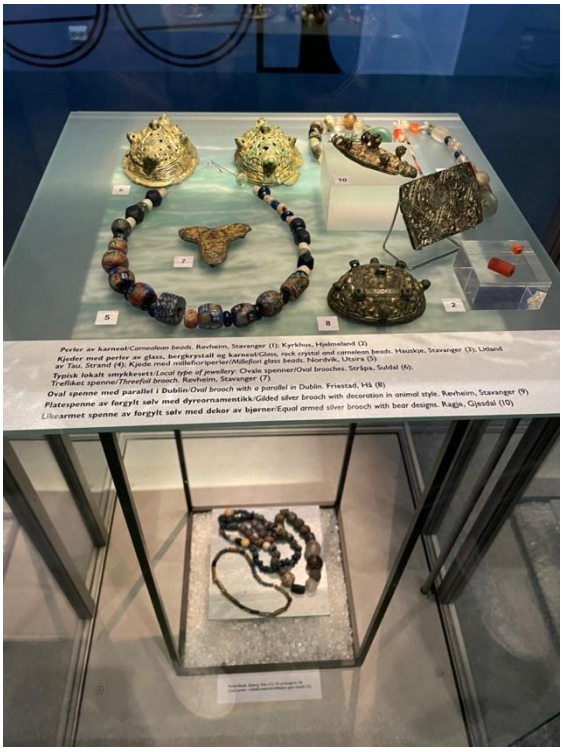
Image by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP B)

Images from the Viking Age exhibition at the Stavanger Archeology Museum UiS, as well as the library where I conducted most of my research during my stay there. Stavanger, Norway

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo



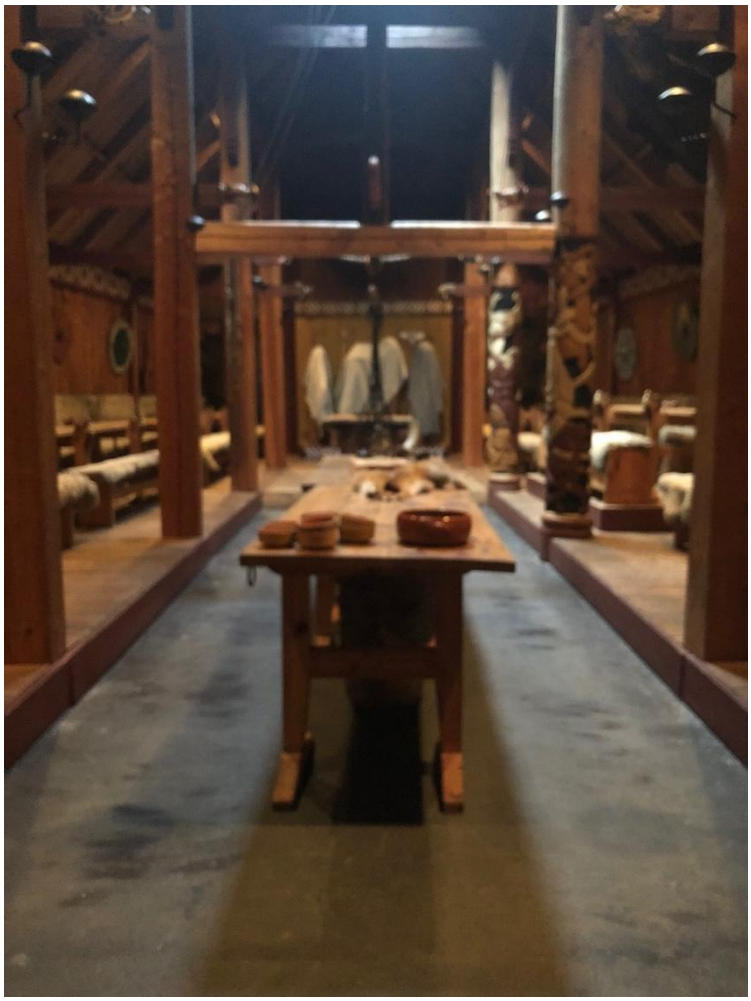
APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP C) (continues below)

Viking Age longhouses interior reconstructions.

Stiklestad, Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway.

Images by: Massiel Malagon Mancebo



APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP C)

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP D)

Visit to the costume department at the Stiklestad Cultural Center, where I was able to review some of the Viking Age wardrobe and jewelry created for various reenactment purposes.

Stiklestad, Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway.

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

Left: wool open face coat for males, would have most likely been closed by pins at the neck.

Right: 'Rus' bagged breeches made of linen, also worn by males of the Viking Age, but not necessarily throughout all of Scandinavia.

APPENDIX E

IMAGE C: White linen under dress which would have typically been worn by women and girls of the Viking Age during the warmer months.

APPENDIX E
(IMAGE GROUP E)
Images by:Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

Varying Viking Age male garments; including a leather tunic, a leather sleeve with embroidery and fur trim, and a woolen coat with fur trim.

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE D)

Visit to the costume department at the Stiklestad Cultural Center: In this image, I try on a replica of a Viking Age apron dress, dyed with madder. The dress was made of wool and was a crimson red color. I have oval shaped brooches sustaining a chain of red beads and gold pendants, which is how the garment would have been worn in its time. **(Refer to Appendix C, Image A for information on red dye source.)**

Stiklestad, Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway.

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP F)

This section of the costume department at the Stiklestad Cultural Center, had many of the linen garments which had been dyed with natural dyes in the same manner that they would have been dyed during the Viking Age; the most notable garments are dyed with weld or nettle to create this shade of lime green. **(Refer to Appendix C, Image A for information on green dye source.)**

Stiklestad, Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway.

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP G)

Replicas of varying yarn weaving and wool yarns which have been dyed with Viking Age dyes **(Refer to Appendix C, Image A for information on dye sources).** There is also an image of some of the animal fur sources that would have been used and traded in markets by the Vikings.

Stiklestad, Trøndelag, Verdal, Norway.

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP H)

Images from the Viking Age Exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark, I attended the exhibition in April of 2019, it consisted of varying artistic recreations of the different roles in society which would have participated in the Viking Age and how they would have appeared.

The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark

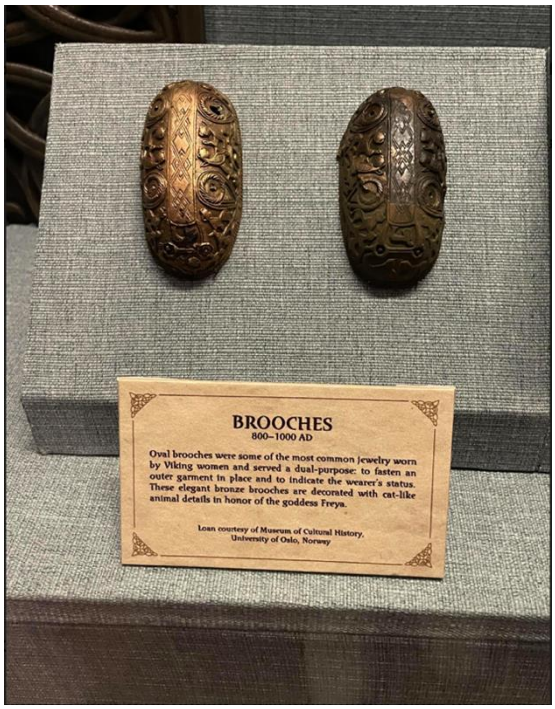
Images by: Massiel Malagon Mancebo

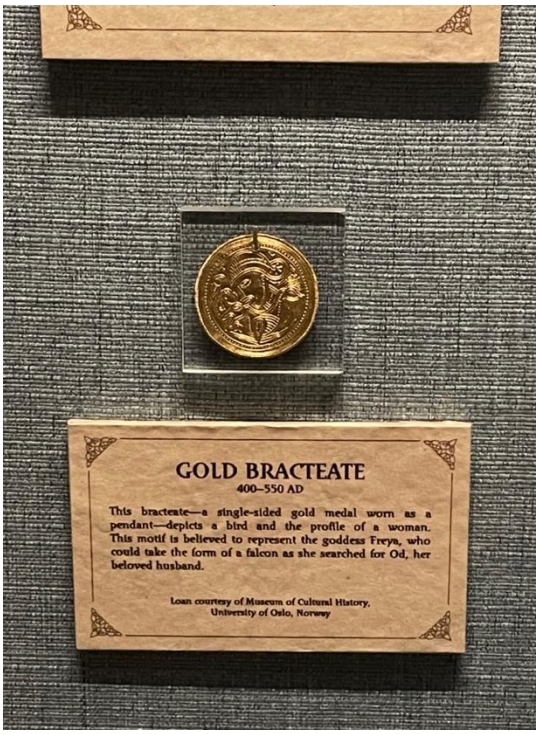
APPENDIX E

(IMAGE GROUP I)

The Epcot Norway Pavilion is a tourist attraction inside the Epcot amusement park inside Disney World. These are images of some of the Viking Age artifacts and information which is available to guests who enter the Stave Church replica where the items are held. Epcot Norwegian Pavilion, Orlando, Florida

Images by: Massiel Malagon Mancebo





APPENDIX E

Observations & critiques of the Viking Age displays at the Epcot Norway Pavilion

Images by: Massiel Malagon-Mancebo

The Epcot Norway Pavilion is a tourist attraction located inside a replica of a Norwegian Stave church, the Stave church itself is rather realistic and features wooden designs typical of Stave churches decorated in the ornate Urnes style. The inside of the building is made completely of wood, and it also features a wraparound walking area on the outside which continues with the Urnes style wooden motif which is typically found in these types of churches. Having visited the Gol Stave church in Oslo, Norway, I can say that this is a spectacular recreation of a Stave church, and it is easy to have a proper interaction with some of the Viking Age visuals which can be observed in the Stave churches in Norway, something which adds to the experience of the visit.

The inside of the building is a small museum for Viking Age artifacts, but it also features plenty of information on Nordic mythology as well as mannequins recreating what a "seeress" would have looked like, and stories about Thor and Loki. The exhibition was curated by Dr. Elisabeth I. Ward who has also served as an Assistant Curator for the special Smithsonian Institution exhibition Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga and is the former Program Director for Vikingaheimar Museum in Reykjanesbær, Iceland. She has also served as Director of the Scandinavian Cultural Center at Pacific Lutheran University, and therefore has ample knowledge of creating exhibitions which showcase artifacts in an instructional but also entertaining way. The artifacts within the pavilion include bracteates, oval brooches, and

runestones as well as plenty of jewelry and figurines. The items have come from a variety of places, including: The Arni Magnússon institute in Reykjavik, Iceland, Gotland Museum in Visby, Sweden, The Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, Norway, The National Historical Museums of Stockholm, Sweden, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway.

The space is considerably small and features dim yellowish lighting which allows the spotlight on the artifacts and illustrations to be much more visible and exalted, as well as mysterious music with scratchy violins and somber notes which add to the general Viking Age feel (or at least what we would have imagined having felt like during the Viking Age). The interesting aspect of the atmosphere created within this small museum is that there is a certain disconnection from the outside amusement park world. Once inside, there aren't many indications that you are at Disney World, and the building is constructed in such a way, where most of the outside noise is almost completely canceled. The temperature inside is also kept much cooler than other attractions, and this also adds to the experience as there is a stark contrast to the usual higher temperatures in Orlando, FL –it is almost instant to feel as if you are now in another world. The lighting around the artifacts is bright and appropriate for the items; they are showcased in a way that is easy to see and read, but also not too reflective on some of the metallic items, so they are appreciated in their natural form and color. You can easily see everything within the museum in 10-15 minutes or less, and so it is a fast consumption of art history and Nordic mythology, but this is both crucial and necessary considering where the display is located. Epcot is visited mainly by adults with their children, and a lot of the displays and attractions are busy and crowded, the attractions which are dedicated to explaining a particular country's history and art is normally smaller, and much more subdued in appearance and style, the Epcot Norway pavilion is not the exception. In my opinion, the Norway pavilion is one of the most well researched of all the varying country displays within the park, it is easy to spend more time viewing the artifacts there.

Although there are artifacts which give some information on the brooches and some of the jewelry and accessories worn by the Vikings, there is little information about their dress, and textile manufacturing advancements. Something which I consider is necessary when informing the public about the Vikings and what their lives could have been like. Considering that wool was such an important aspect of the Viking Age and of course the sails which were created from it, there is nothing to be said about it, or about the material of their sails. However, it could be that due to the size of the location, there had to be less focus on dress and clothing, and more about the characters of Nordic mythology which are widely recognized. It could also be suggested that because Disney itself makes use of Nordic mythology in many of their stories and films, that this was the aspect that was chosen to be highlighted the most.

Overall, it could be concluded that the exhibition does a good job at staying true to the location where it is in by keeping the collection small and easily viewed, meanwhile still maintaining the historical aspects, as well as educating the public on the Viking Age and its relation to some of the Nordic mythology they may be familiar with through their interaction with media and films, be it Disney or otherwise. A smaller museum such as this one, is a challenging thing to organize in a place like Epcot, because so many other aspects of the park will be competing for the attention of both children and adults alike, and most of those attraction will be fantasy related, this might create a species of misunderstanding when it comes to consuming the historical content within this exhibition, as perhaps it could be overlooked. It would be beneficial to add more interactive displays, as well as feature more Viking Age weaves, and textile machinery. It would also be great for the children visiting the park to have some sort of area where they could get to touch and feel some of the materials the Vikings used to make sails and clothing, it would not only heighten the interest in the Viking Age, but also give the public a way to connect with the past in an unexpected place.