ISSUE 06 • JUNE 2022

HUGIN & MUNIN

DESTINATION VIKING ASSOCIATION
Cultural route of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel du Conseil de l'Europe
COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

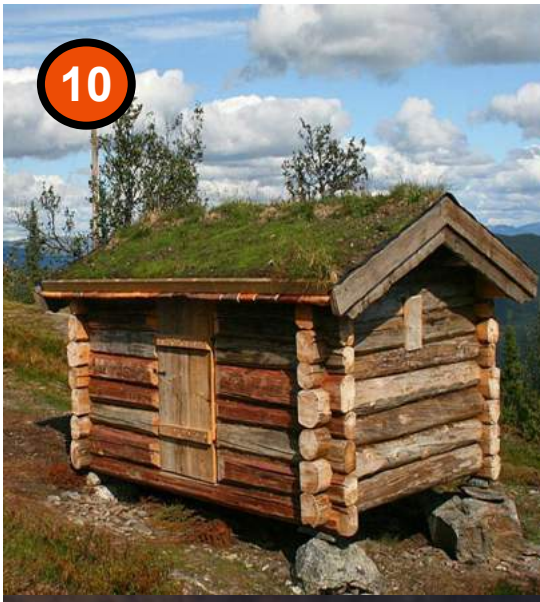
FROM THE EDITOR

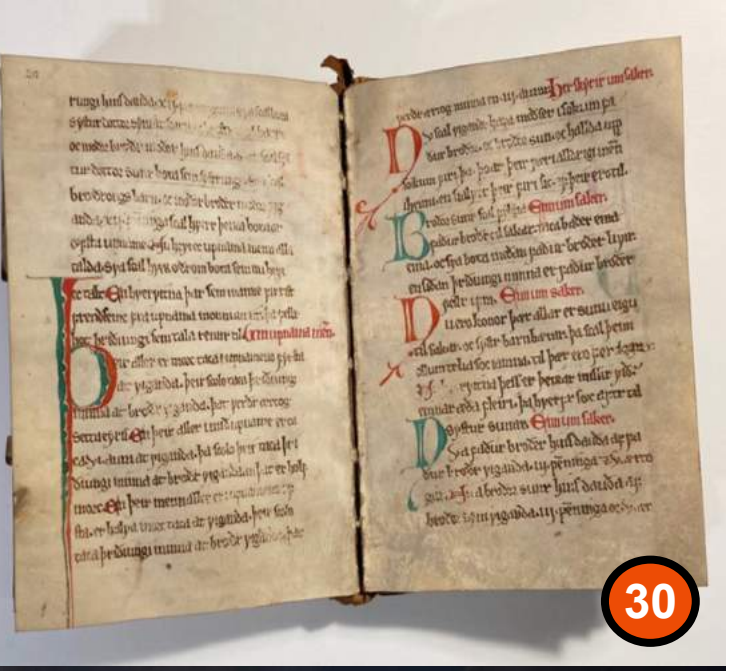
Welcome to issue 6 of Hugin & Munin.

Odin's eyes and ears 'Hugin & Munin' are back in the Viking homeland of Norway to celebrate the 1150th anniversary commemorations of the unification of Norway and the Battle of Hafrsfjord (872 AD). With that in mind we have dedecated this issue of Hugin & Munin to the Viking history of Norway. Discover how this great nation state was founded under King Harald 'Fairhair' from his royal seat at Avaldsnes. The intricate Norse ship levy and early warning system and also how the Viking 'Ting' assembly shaped world democracy.
If you are in Rogaland, Norway later on this month for the celebrations and you see me, come and say 'hello'.
As tradition dictates, I will leave you with some words of wisdom from the Norse poem the Hávamál
(The words of Odin, the High One).

Ben Baillie

"Moderately wise a man ought to be, not all too wise; in advance no one should know his own future, that gives only sorrow in the mind.".

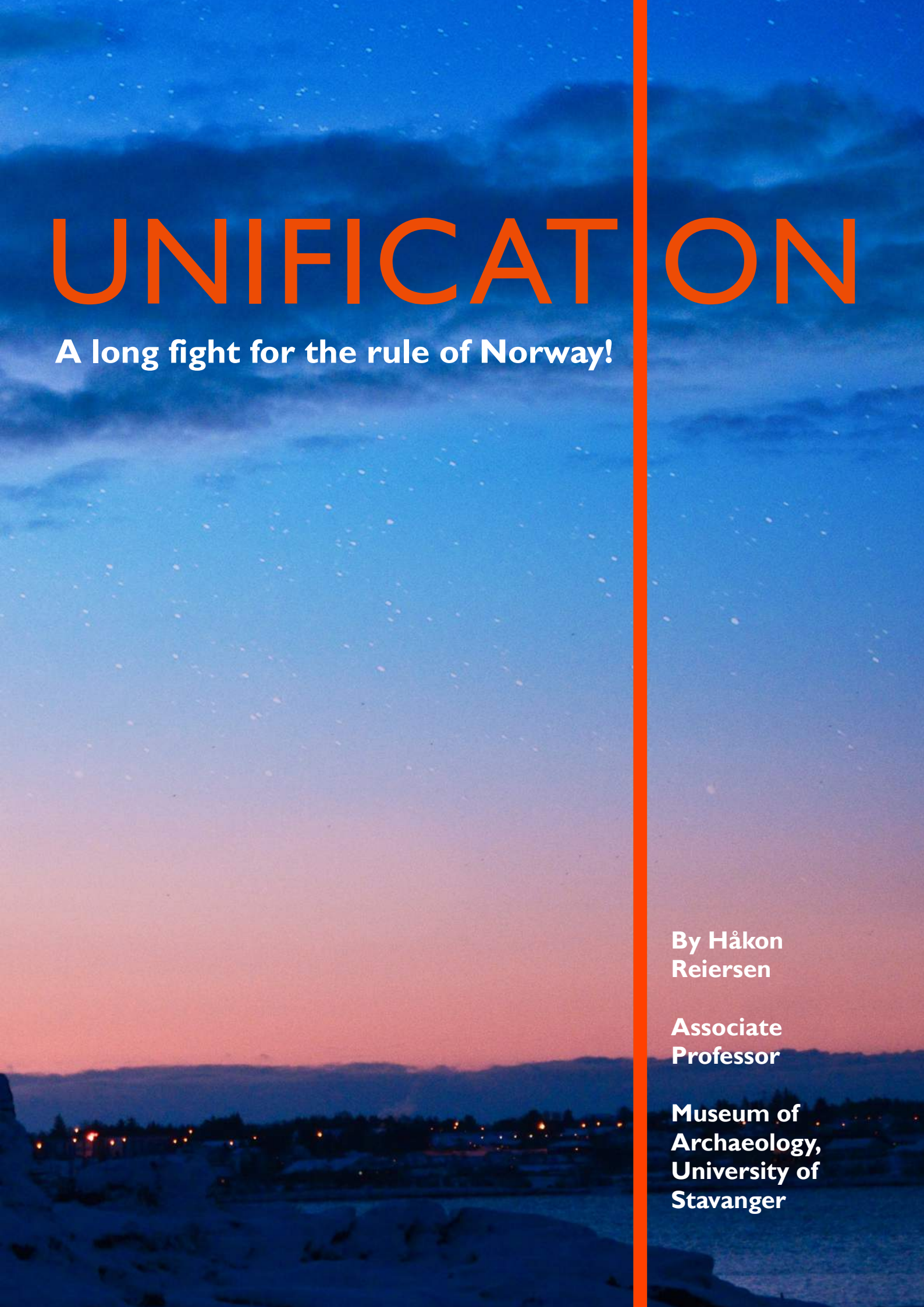




CONTENTS

Editor: Ben Baillie
Cover image:Draken Harald Hårfagre © Viking Nilsson, Vikingkings A/S. Contributions and suggestions are more than welcome. Submissions can be made directly to the Editor by e-mail: benbaillie45@hotmail.com

Hugin & Munin is the official magazine of the Destination Viking Association. Managers of the Council of Europe's Viking cultural route.



UNIFICATION

A long fight for the rule of Norway!

By Håkon Reiersen

Associate Professor

Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

The Battle of Hafrsfjord

In Norwegian Viking history, the Battle of Hafrsfjord traditionally has been seen as a crucial point in the unification of the realm. According to Snorri Sturluson, this was the final battle in King Harald Fairhair's strategic campaign to conquer all of Norway as the first sole king. Snorri's main source for the battle was a contemporary poem made by the skald of the victorious king. The epic description begins: Did you hear in Hafrsfjord / how hard they fought / the high-born king / and Kjotve the rich? While the historical accuracy of both the poem and Snorri's account for good reasons has been disputed by generations of researchers, it is beyond doubt that this battle was seen by contemporaries and medieval writers alike as an event of great importance. Here, an older mode of separate regional kingdoms was contested by an ambitious king attempting to rule them all.

The traditional date of the battle is set to 872. In June, the 1150th anniversary is celebrated with many activities both along the Hafrsfjord, and at Avaldsnes where the victorious king is said to have settled. As part of the celebrations, the Museum of Archaeology has put up a temporary exhibition on display in Stavanger this summer and autumn. The theme is the establishment of the kingdom of Norway, displaying gold objects from the Merovingian period, swords from the Viking period, and parts of a stone hall from the medieval period. This text is based on some of the themes of the exhibition.

The 'Heimskringla'

"News came in from the south land that the people of Hordaland and Rogaland, Agder and Thelemark, were gathering, and bring together ships and weapons, and a great body of men. The leaders of this were Eirik king of Hordaland; Sulke king of Rogaland, and his brother Earl Sote: Kjotve the Rich, king of Agder, and his son Thor Haklang; and from Thelemark two brothers, Hroald Hryg and Had the Hard. Now when Harald got certain news of this, he assembled his forces, set his ships on the water, made himself ready with his men, and set out southwards along the coast, gathering many people from every district. King Eirik heard of this when he came south of Stad; and having assembled all the men he could expect, he proceeded southwards to meet the force which he knew was coming to his help from the east. The whole met together north of Jadar, and went into Hafrsfjord, where King Harald was waiting with his forces. A great battle began, which was both hard and long; but at last King Harald gained the day. There King Eirik fell, and King Sulke, with his brother Earl Sote. Thor Haklang, who was a great berserker, had laid his ship against King Harald's, and there was above all measure a desperate attack, until Thor Haklang fell, and his whole ship was cleared of men.

Left: Illustration of the Battle of Hafrsfjord 872 AD © Ben Baillie

Main photo: Pages 4-5 © Konstantins Jaunzems,Stavanger-4947986_640 copyright, pixabay.com

Then King Kjotve fled to a little isle outside, on which there was a good place of strength. Thereafter all his men fled, some to their ships, some up to the land; and the latter ran southwards over the country of Jadar".

A western Norwegian kingdom

As all of King Harald's known royal estates were situated in western Norway, in modern history writing it is assumed that this region was the original core of the realm. Other regions were ruled indirectly with alliances with other leaders, although this kind of personal alliances shifted throughout time. The reason why the western region was so important, is that those controlling it did also control the important sea route from northern to southern Norway. The name of the sea route was *Norðvegr*, which eventually became the name of the whole Norwegian realm. It would, however, take several centuries before the kingdom of Norway was a stable territory with a strong royal governance.

While the Battle of Hafrsfjord was an important event in the unification and establishment of the Norwegian kingdom, King Harald Fairhair neither finished this process nor did he start it.

Heirs of the Gods

Gold-foil figures, or *gullgubber*, are associated with the Scandinavian centres and rulers of the Merovingian period preceding the Viking period. In western Norway, such gold figures are only found at Tinghaug in the Rogaland region. Being an old centre from the Roman and Migration period, the elites of Tinghaug now were established as regional leaders. The centralisation of power had started.

The motif on the gold-foils is interpreted as the fertile god Frey and the giant woman Gerd, joined in a holy marriage. According to later sagas, this union of the divine forces representing cultivated land and the wild outfields was the origin myth for several royal lineages. Stamped in gold, the motif communicated an effective symbolism, acting as proof of the new ruler's divine inheritance.

In the Rogaland region, placenames indicate a widespread worship of Freyr and his sister Freya, protectors of the food production. Near Tinghaug, the large Lake Frøylandsvatn is named after Freya. Scarified objects have been found in the lake, perhaps the traces of rituals performed by the rulers.

The Storhaug king

According to Snorri, King Harald was buried near his royal estate at Avaldsnes. At

Above: The Storhaug ship burial in the summer of 779. Drawing by Eva Gjerde © Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger.

Avaldsnes, there is evidence that the process of gathering power on fewer hands started over hundred years prior to the Hafrsfjord battle. Here, the two earliest ship burials in Scandinavia are found. The first burial was in the large mound Storhaug in the summer of 779. The Storhaug king wore a gold ring around his arm, an evident symbol of rulership. No other grave in Norway from the 8th to the 10th century has ever yielded a gold arm ring. His successor was buried nearby in the mound Grønhaug in the early 790s. They probably ruled a regional kingdom that later became the core of King Harald Fairhair's realm.

Iceland and the aftermath of the battle

The sagas portray King Harald Fairhair's victory at Hafrsfjord as a turning point in the history of both Norway and Iceland. A high number of people are said to have fled from Norway across the North Sea, establishing new farmsteads in the newly discovered island of Iceland. One of those fleeing was the man Geirmund Heljarskinn. This man claimed to be related to the ancient royal line of regional kings at Avaldsnes, and therefore had to escape when King Harald established a new regime. Iceland retained close common old Norse literary heritage for the future. This includes skaldic works such as the Hafrsfjord poem, as well as the Eddas and the sagas of the Norwegian kings.

The high-medieval kingdom

Although probably established on a rather stabile regional kingdom, the larger kingdom of King Harald Fairhair and his next successors indeed was an unstable one. The kings of the 11th century gradually gained power over the whole realm. Several towns were established, and the Christian church gained a foothold in the country. After a period of civil war, a series of kings in the 13th and 14th century established a stable high-medieval kingdom. King Håkon IV Håkonsson made great efforts to build an efficient royal administration and law code over the whole realm. The first law code covering the entire kingdom is attributed to his son, King Magnus Lagabøte, the 'law-mender'. At this peak of the Norwegian realm, the kingdom included several territories in modern-day eastern Sweden, as well as territories in the west such as Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland,

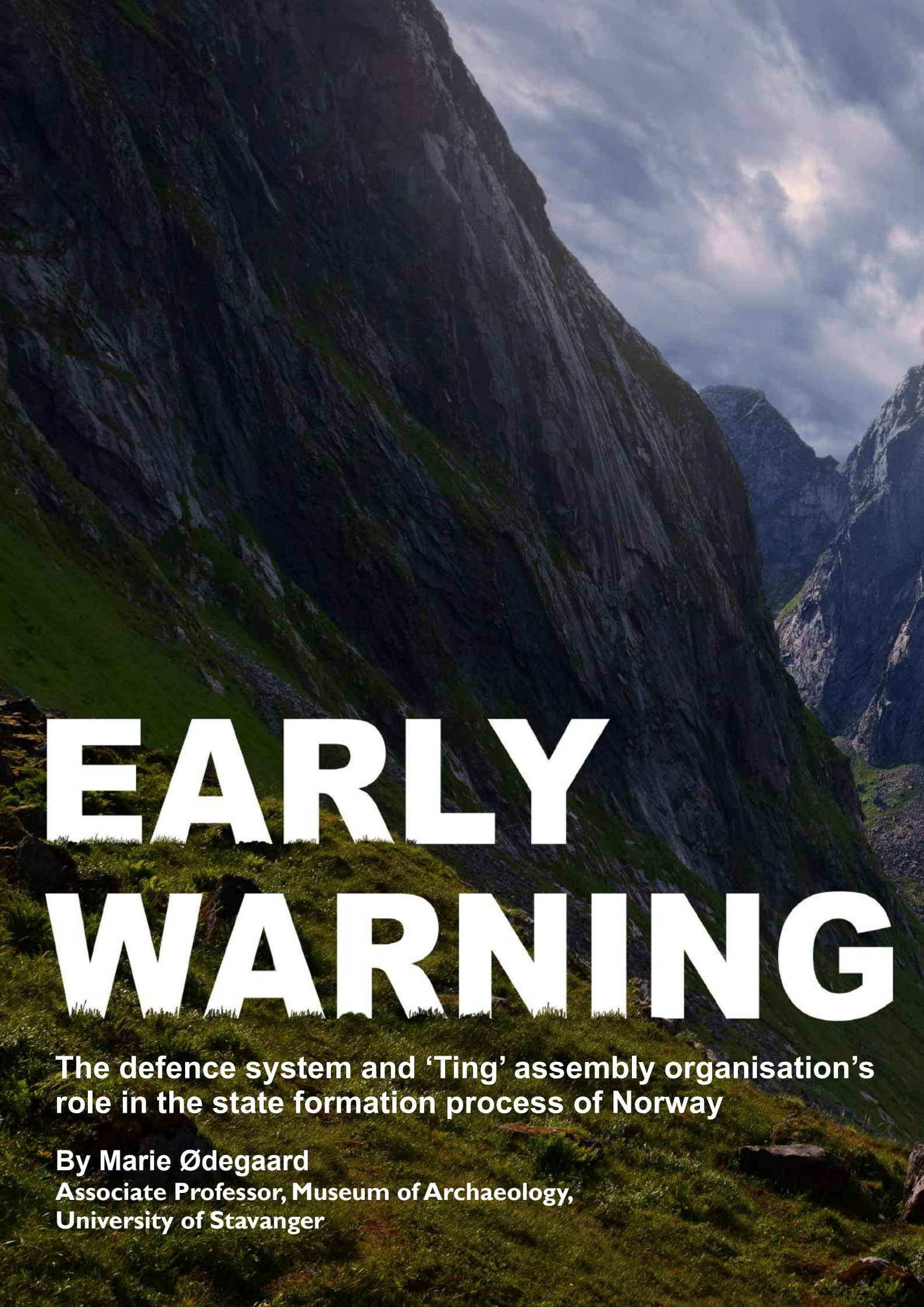
Isle of Man and certain areas in Scotland. Finally, the Norwegian kingdom was a proper state that gained respect in medieval Europe. The monumental royal estate in Avaldsnes is a good example of the established Norwegian state around 1300. The royal hall of stone had its counterparts in the towns of Bergen, Tønsberg and Oslo, being the only such hall built outside a town. This indicates the enduring importance of the control of the *Norðvegr,* as well as the need for legitimizing royal power by utilizing the ancient royal seat of Avaldsnes. The large church of the royal saint of St. Olaf is still standing. It was one of four royal cathedrals in a separate royal church organization. An important port was also established close to the royal estate. It was used by international ships sailing to Bergen, then the largest town in Scandinavia.The wreck of a ship made in Polen around 1400 still lies on the seabed at Avaldsnes.

New excavations at Avaldsnes

First being discovered in 2012, the remains of the royal stone hall at Avaldsnes was excavated in 2017. This year, new excavations will take place in the port area, both under water and on land. In addition, new excavations in the mentioned Storhaug mound will start this year. Hopefully, this will bring new knowledge of both the early beginnings and the high-medieval end of the story of the Norwegian kingdom in the Viking and medieval periods. The 1150th anniversary of the Battle of Hafrsfjord thus provides us with new opportunities to rewrite our history yet again.

The new investigations are part of the research project 'Avaldsnes – Port of Power' (Norwegian: 'Avaldsnes – Maktens havn'). The progress of the excavations can also be followed on: www.facebook.com/maktenshavn or on the web site www.maktenshavn.no.

Below: Haraldshaugen monument, celebrating Finehair's victory at Hafrsfjord © Jaba Haraldhaugen-og-korshaug-0001-+Foto_Jone_Torkelsen © VisitNorway.com



EARLY WARNING

The defence system and 'Ting' assembly organisation's role in the state formation process of Norway

By Marie Ødegaard
Associate Professor, Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

“There were two important institutions in Norway in the Viking Age: the ‘Ting’ assembly and the ship-levy. The assembly was a meeting place where people came together to discuss all common legal issues, agreements and decide disputes, as well decide military duties. The ship-levy was the naval defense organization, in which people in the districts had the obligation to provide a warship, men and equipment for the defense. This defense also included beacons on high mountains, set on fire when facing attacks on the kingdom to warn and mobilize the population.”

The battle of Hafrsfjord in 872 is counted as the start of the state formation process; where the victor Harald ‘Fairhair’ united Norway into one kingdom. Today it is agreed that Harald's kingdom originated in western Norway. A classic problem in early state formation was that they were largely ‘person’ dependent when the leader died, whether he was a chief, Jarl or king, the kingdom easily collapsed. So, it was with Harald's conquest. First under king Haakon Haakonsson (1217-1263) was the Norwegian kingdom consolidated. It is thus a lengthy process. Why was control of the defense and the judicial system important to the kingdom in the state formation process?

Warning of war

According to the sagas of the 12th-13th century, when the beacon system was lit, it should taken no more than seven days before the whole of Norway was mobilised. However, this passage was probably from the time when the sagas were written down, and the system was originally organised regionally, within different districts and law areas. The earliest provincial laws of Scandinavia, dating from the 12th to 14th centuries, required a sighting of at least five warships for lighting a beacon. The famous Gokstad ship (AD c. 890) could carry 32 warriors, while later Scandinavian warships could have more than 100 warriors. This means that beacons were lit at the threat of attack from some hundred men, and that lighting beacons defined a state of war.

When the beacons were lit, it would mobilize the ship-levy organisation. Each administrative ship district, a so-called ON shipreiða, was obliged to build and keep a warship for the defence in addition to provide for men and equipment, such as weapons and provisions. The ship-levy crew were thus mainly farmers. Importantly, the ship districts also functioned as judicial areas for assembly sites (ON thing), a multi-functional arena for discussions and decisions of all communal matters and settling of disputes. That the ship districts were districts for defence and assembly illustrates how closely intertwined the military and the judicial system were in the Viking Age.

The ship levy’s origin and influence

King Haakon the Good (934 to 961) is in the sagas given credit for expanding and strengthening the defense system around the mid-10th century and based it on general conscription.

Haakon, fostered by the Anglo-Saxon King Athelstan, may there have become acquainted with a military organization called the ‘Fyrd’ in which the rights to land obligated to service in the defense organization. However, the origin of the ship-levy may be found in chieftains and his warrior bands use of private ships for general defense duties. Nevertheless, it was most likely forms of defense organizations in Norway prior to the Viking Age. This is supported amongst others by large boathouses found along the west coast and northwards,dated from approx. 50 to 1500 AD. Hillforts, usually dated to Late Roman and Migration period (1 – 500 AD), must also have been part of an area's common defense system. The so-called courtyard sites, a collection of house foundations located around an oval emicircular open space (yard), in western and northern Norway also indicate forms of judicial and military organization, dating from c. 200-900 AD.

Control over the defence and judicial system was important for the royal power

Calculations show that if the entire ship-levy was conscripted at the same time, it would consist of between 26-33,000 men. These were not standing forces but called out in times of crisis. It was rare that the whole ship-levy was conscripted at the same time.

Above: A reconstructed beacon and beacon hut, Olberg, Valdres, Norway. Photo: © Svein Erik Ski

Main photo: Pages 10-11 Norwegian coast © pixabay,com

Overleaf: Page 14 The Gokstad Ship, Viking Ship Museum, Oslo,Photo: Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, CC BY-S

Nevertheless, the total number of men is high. Most European armies were much smaller. Compared to e.g., William the Conqueror's army at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, he had 7,000 men in his army. The men were also to provide provisions for two months. In peacetime, these provisions were transferred to a tax, based on the farms' production. Consequently, gaining control of the ship-levy and utilizing it to its own advantage were important to the king to gain and maintain power, and in addition to obtain income through the imposition of taxes.
During periods of unrest, such as the Viking Age arguably was, defense systems are important. Increased cooperation and association over larger areas ensured survival. The provisional law of the Gulathing, dating from 1150-1250, bans looting in local areas, which indicates that this must have been common, and indirectly that the society had an urge to protect itself against such behavior. The saga literature contains many examples of Viking chieftains ravaging domestic settlements. Most people were farmers and wanted security and peace. Fear of a common enemy can act as a catalyst for response, prompting leaders and communities to adopt strategies that reduce risk and build resilience. The local communities could, by attaching themselves to the king, take advantage of his authority and power to sanction the laws, and thus maintain peace. This secured the royal power resources based on statutory cooperation between the king and the peasants.

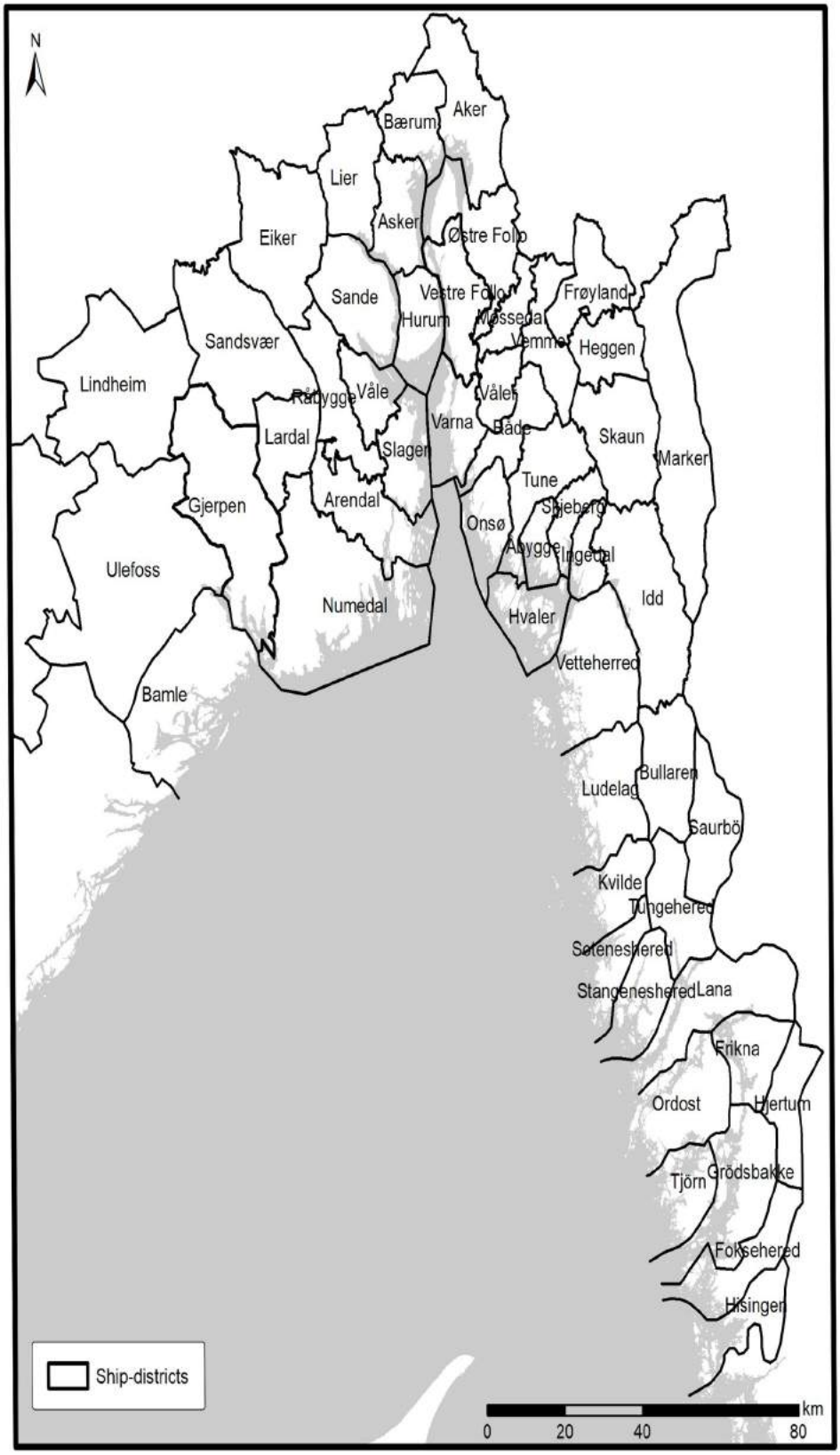
Below: Reconstructed beacon hut, Veten, Stryn, Norway.
Photo: © Hermund Kleppa/Fylkesark

However, in the early Viking Age, the king did not have authority over the military resources as they belonged to the people. This is reflected in the provisional laws, e.g., in the so-called resistance provision in the Frostathing Law, which states that if the king violates the laws, the people had the right and duty to kill him. The king was to serve the interests of the people, and he did not stand above the law. Elite power is therefore limited and balanced by the power of ordinary people in the peasant society in the early Viking Age. Here, the 'thing' played a decisive role. A king had to be elected by the 'thing' in the Viking Age and earlier. At the 'thing' the military duties were discussed and decided. Therefore, control of the 'thing' organization to ensure military control was of crucial importance to the king. There is clear evidence of increased elite and royal involvement in the assembly organization during the 800-900s and onwards.

Royal power, the king's army, and state formation

From the middle of the 10th century, the kings succeeded in establishing a permanent military structure based on the utilization of the resources in the peasant society. The ship-levy provided the basis for royal power to mobilize the peasants for direct military service, but also to use this as a basis for taxation. If the peasants were not called into the levy that year, the king could instead of military service get the provisions, i.e., parts of the peasants' production, as tax. For the aristocracy, serving in the king's private army as professional warriors (ON hirð) became an important part of the military and political-administrative service and partly as an organization for the secular aristocracy for the management of the country. From the beginning of the state formation process at the battle of Hafrsfjord in 872 until the country was united under one king in the 1240s under King Haakon IV Haakonsson, military struggle was no longer linked to internal strife between royal subjects. The king's most important military task was now to secure the Norwegian kingdom.

Below: The ship-districts of Viken, southeast Norway
Illustration: M. Ødegaard 2021



#follow the vikings

1

Welcome to our Instagram feature. We have selected a few photos from around the Viking world for you to enjoy. We would like you, our readers, to follow us on Instagram and tag your viking-themed photos with **#followthevikings**. We will then repost and publish the best of them on our Instagram account and in future issues of the magazine.

2

3

#followthevikings

1. Foteviken runestone, Sweden

2. Helga chapel, Rosala Viking centre, Finland

3. The three Norns of Avaldsnes, Norway

4. Viking guard at Trondenes Historiske Senter, Norway

4

THE SEAT OF POWER

Avaldsnes, King Harald Fairhair's royal seat

By Geir Sør-Reime

“Most countries have names linked to their territory or ethnic groups, but unlike them, Norway derives its name from the sailing lane along the coast: when people came sailing along the unsheltered stretch from Lista via Jæren northwards, the Karmsund lay as a sheltered sea route towards the north. To the people that lived before us, this was the Norðvegr – the Norway – the Way North.
This strategic location by this important sailing lane made Avaldsnes a centre of power for more than 3000 years. Here, the Avaldsnes princes controlled the coastal traffic up and down the Norwegian coast, and from here, they sent their own ships across the North Sea”.

Avaldsnes was in many ways the outermost border of ‘civilised’ Europe. We know that the princes that had Avaldsnes as their residence adopted Roman habits during the Roman period.
The Karmsund is difficult to transverse without motor power due to strong currents and sailing ships had to wait for the currents to turn before they could proceed.

At Salhus just north of Avaldsnes, the currents from north and south meet and in practice creates a barrier when the tidal waters collide there. The alternative route along the western coast of the island of Karmøy is very difficult for rowing and sailing boats to cross due to heavy seas and an abundance of small islands and skerries. This situation created the preconditions for a mighty seat of power at Avaldsnes, especially since the ships were forced to wait for the tide to turn before they could continue through the sound. Many therefore choose to unload their cargo at Avaldsnes, others paid fees/tolls to be able to wait in peace for the tide to turn. In any case, large fortunes were created at Avaldsnes, and that was an important factor when

Harald ‘Fairhair’ (born ca. 850 and died AD 931/32), the first king of Norway, choose Avaldsnes as his main residence after his victory over an alliance of Norwegian and Swedish petty kings in Hafrsfjord in AD 872. The reason was simple:
Avaldsnes was the centre of Norway.
It was also quite natural for the Hanse League when it wanted to establish trade relations with Norway and its stockfish that they originally choose Avaldsnes as their base and exchanged their goods with stockfish there. Unfortunately (for Avaldsnes), a conflict with the Norwegian king made the Hanse destroy and burn down the Royal Manor at Avaldsnes, and subsequently, they moved their base to Bergen, where they could trade directly with the ships bringing the stockfish from northern Norway.

Burial mounds

The Karmsund still is and has from time immemorial been the gateway to Norway for people arriving from the south, and the gateway to Europe for people coming from the north. The lively traffic through the sound also led to the erection of impressive monuments along the sound, monuments that could be seen by the travellers and remind them of past events.
From the Bronze Age to the Viking Age, several majestic burial mounds were erected along the sound, and in addition, the monumental church at Avaldsnes was also placed in close proximity to the sound. In front of the Avaldsnes church, there was a gigantic burial mound called Flagghaugen (the mound with a flagpole) with one of the richest burials from the Roman period in Norway. The so-called Flagghaug Prince was buried together with a wealth of quite unique grave goods.
In fact, the Flagghaug was the site of the first scientific excavation in Norway, excavated between 1834-35 and inside the mound, there was a central burial from around AD 400 with an oak cast, sword, lance, spear, a massive golden arm ring, a silver finger ring, game pieces of glass, a bronze mirror, silver vessels and dishes, silver drinking cups, silver fittings for drinking horns and a bronze wine strainer, a must for wine drinking in those days.

Below: The first royal seat at Avaldsnes, about 300 AD. To the left; Hall facing the strait Karmsund: Center of the picture; large long house. The triangular stone setting with bautas is the oldest one we know in Norway and the highest erected stones in Scandinavia. © Arkikon, Ragnar L. Børsheim

The mound also contained two secondary burials with large bronze vessels containing cremated burials.

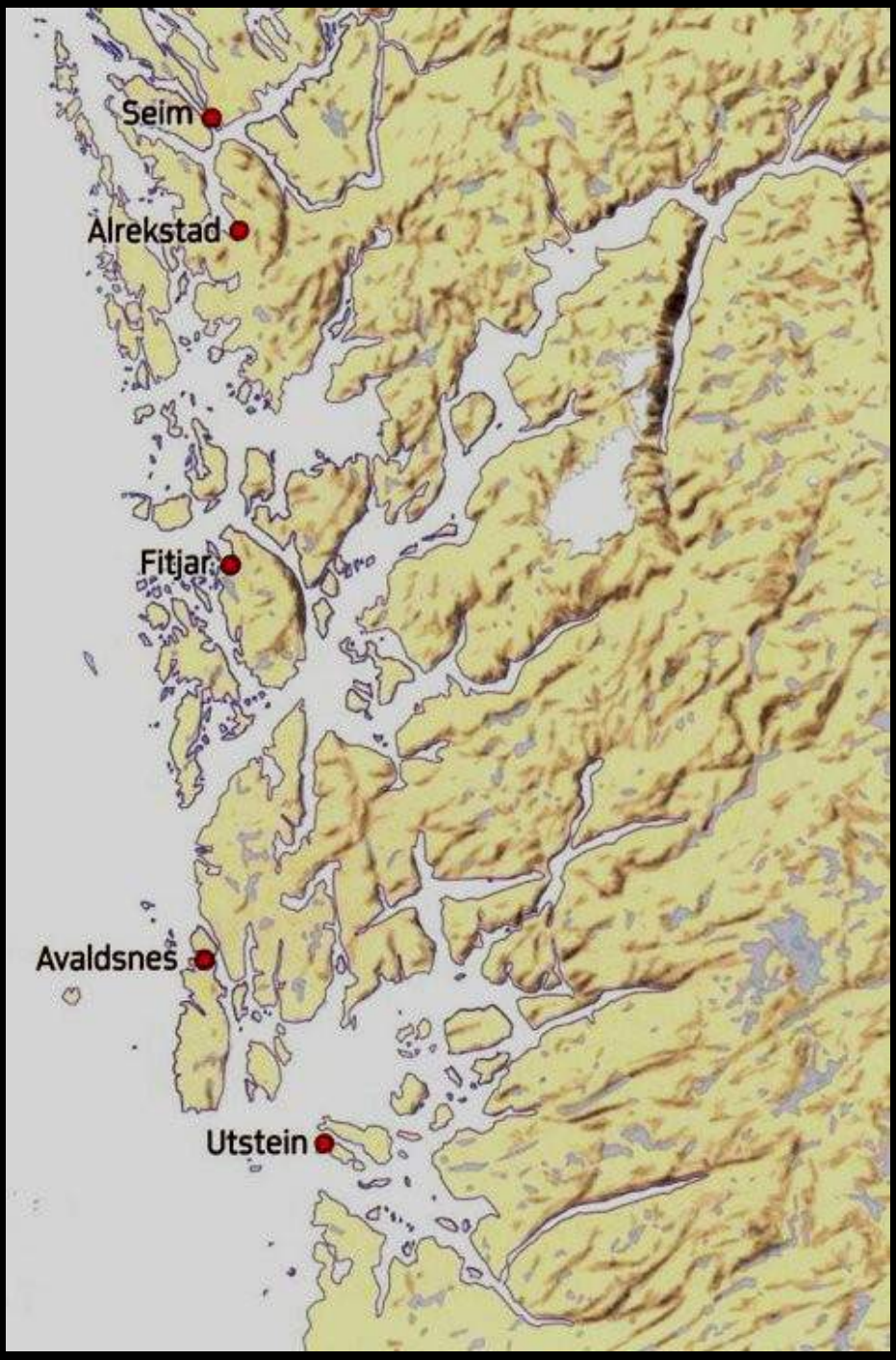
‘Skrattaskjær

The old Sagas along with the archaeological evidence are the most important sources for our understanding of the Viking Age. The Sagas are Norwegian and Icelandic stories from Medieval times, and they tell stories about kings, families, and the gods. Just outside of harbour area of Avaldsnes is the skerry ‘Skrattaskjær’, where, according to the Saga of the Norse kings, collected, compiled, and written down by the Icelander Snorri Sturlasson, king Olav Tryggvason, allegedly a grandson of Harald ‘Fairhair’ drowned a group of sorcerers. The Saga says that during Easter AD 997 or 998, a ship full of sorcerers and magicians came to Avaldsnes. They wanted to cast spell on Olav, and conjured up a thick, black mist, but the mist instead of hitting Olav, turned on the sorcerers, who then wandered helplessly around, blinded. Olav caught them and tied them to the skerry at low tide. When the tide came in, the sorcerers drowned. The skerry was then named Skrattaskjær (Sorcerer skerry/rock).

The Royal manor

The ruins of the royal manor were uncovered by archaeologists in 2017. The ruins can now be seen just south of the church. The building of the large hall was started by king Håkon Håkonsson and completed under king Håkon V Magnusson around AD 1300. The manor ruins are currently being conserved. Avaldsnes is best known as the royal seat of king Harald ‘Fairhair’ and his successors up to the reformation in 1537. But when king Harald choose Avaldsnes as his primary residence, Avaldsnes had already been a royal estate for centuries.

The princes or kings at Avaldsnes are known both from the old sagas and from several rich archaeological finds. All kings we know of before Harald were so-called sea-kings. The first sea-king we know the name of is Augvald and lived during the 7th century. King Harald ‘Fairhair’ also started his career as a sea-king, but during his long reign he also managed to become a land-king. He became the founder of the Norwegian royal dynasty, and subsequent kings always tried to prove their ancestry to him. Avaldsnes is called the oldest royal seat in Norway as king Harald ‘Fairhair’ made it his



Above: The royal manors of King Harald ‘Finehair’. All Harald’s royal manors were located in the region of Rogaland and Hordaland © Avaldsnes Nordvegen Historiesenter

Above: St Olav's church, Avaldsnes. The church was built by King Håkon Håkonsson around 1250 as part of the royal manor complex at a time when Norway's power was at its greatest. Norway's tallest standing stone, Virgin Mary's Sewing Needle can be seen in the photo leaning heavily against the church wall. Credit and copyright Visit Haugesund

main residence after the battle of Hafrsfjord in AD 872. His victory there is still the symbol of the unification of the many petty kingdoms into one unified state, albeit his victory was only the start of the unification process, which was more or less completed by the 13th century.

Final resting place

Based on the description of the Icelandic saga writer Snorri Sturlason in his Sagas of the Norse Kings, Harald's grave was thought to be in the mound that the millennium monument was erected on top of. Snorri had personally been to the area and to Avaldsnes itself and made detailed descriptions of both places in the Saga of Harald 'Fairhair'. Even though Snorri has a detailed description of the mound, it is uncertain if the Millennium Monument was erected on what really is the grave of king Harald 'Fairhair'. Both the size of the mound and in fact also Snorri's description of the grave itself indicated a Bronze Age mound rather than a Viking Age one. Three mounds on the Karmøy side of the Sound have also been suggested as burial mounds of king Harald, but recent dendrochronological and radiocarbon dating of objects from these seem to indicate that they were erected for princes or kings that lived long before king Harald 'Fairhair'. Nonetheless, Harald's Mound has since 1872 been the concrete manifestation of one of the most important events in Norway, and we are now commemorating the 1150th anniversary of the idea that the whole of the 'North Way' should be one, unitary kingdom. The idea for this, king Harald 'Fairhair' probably imported from Anglo-Saxon England. All of the 'civilised' and gradually Christian Europe adopted the Roman organisation of the Empire into provinces. The introduction of Christianity and the consolidation of Papal power, the Church became a sort of Empire with Church provinces ruled by archbishops. The Church provinces were mirrored by temporal authorities ruled by Kings that guaranteed the safety and status of the Church.

We should also remember that king Harald 'Fairhair' sent his youngest son, Håkon, later known as Håkon the Good, to the English royal court to learn how to rule a country, and he returned to Norway as a

converted Christian. Håkon's attempts of Christianisation of Norway had some initial success, and he won a decisive battle over the sons of his older brother Eirik Bloodaxe (once king of Norway and also the last Viking ruler of Jorvik, England) at Reheia (or Blodheia, Blood Hill) on Karmøu, not far from Avaldsnes, in AD 953. There are many more stories from the Viking age in and around Avaldsnes. A focal point for a visit to the area is the Avaldsnes Nordvegen Histoiresenter.

https://avaldsnes.info/

Above right: Avaldsnes Viking farm boathouse and harbour area © Avaldsnes Nordvegen Historiesenter

Below: Haraldshaugen (Riksmonumentet Haraldshaugen) in Haugesund is the traditional burial site of King Harald I 'Fairhair' © Øyvind Aske VisitNorway,com

ICON
OF THE VIKING AGE

Ship building in the Viking Age

By

Massimiliano Ditta

Phd student, Museum of Archaeology,
University of Stavanger

“Ships and boats can rarely be left out when talking or even thinking about the Viking Age. These were indeed the most complex structures and machines built in any pre-industrial society.
The topography of Norway, and Scandinavia in general, has always made seafaring an indispensable requirement for its population. Since prehistory, boats and ships were critical tools for communication, trade, and war, and represented one of the most important motifs in religious symbolism. This especially holds true for the Late Iron Age (AD 550-1050), where boats and ships were pivotal for forming and maintaining power centres and the Viking Age’s westward expansion.
In the Viking Age, the northern European seas became busy to unprecedented levels since Roman times, connecting people, goods, and previously unreachable lands by seafaring. The westward expansion of the late 8th to 11th centuries was a maritime endeavour that heavily relied on the shipbuilding skills developed by these coastal societies.”

The source material

Our knowledge about ships and boats during the Viking Age comes mainly from archaeological finds and experimental archaeology. The latest has enabled researchers to investigate hands-on their technology by reconstructing and building some of these finds. There are over 50 ship and boat finds in Scandinavia alone. Still, just a dozen have been reliably reconstructed.
The oldest ships and boats finds are from Norway, dating to the 8th and 9th centuries AD. We observe a more extensive geographical spread for the later periods, with a wealth of finds in Denmark, Sweden, and Northern Baltic Germany. From 700 AD to 950 AD, we have a ship find every 50 years, while after that, we jump to one every 15 years. Thus, a clearer picture of the vessels used in the late Viking Age is available rather than for the earlier phases.

How were ships built?

Vikings built their ships and boats in the so-called Nordic clinker tradition. The primary feature was a shell of planks, fastened together with clenched iron nails through their overlapping edges. Moreover, vessels shared several similar traits unique to this tradition. For example, double-ended symmetrical bow and stern, evenly curving sheer lines, decorative mouldings on planks and on other components.
The archaeological finds and written sources clearly show that vessels were built with the notion that the shell, not the skeleton, was the starting point for the design and the final hull form. A Viking age shipwright did not use drawings or templates to shape and supervise the construction. Instead, master-builders mentally fixed the whole concept of the vessel, dimensions and run of the lines for each plank before the keel was laid. This was possible only if the Viking Age shipwright had a set of rules of thumb to work from, probably laid down by predecessors and cemented through experience.
A unique trait of the Viking Age shipbuilding was that the construction process was a dynamic one. The builder tested and modified parts until attaining the desired form. So, the boatbuilder needed to have an idea of the hull forms and a clear picture of the dimensions and form of the necessary raw materials.
The shipwright headed into a forest already with a clear idea of the necessary raw material to be collected. Logs were probably felled in winter, when fewer nutrients and sap are present in the wood, making it less prone to cracking when drying. The builders roughly prepared the timbers on the spot for easy transportation. Once on the construction site, the timbers were stored in water or used directly. In contrast to modern practice, people in the Viking Age and for most of the medieval period worked wood when still green rather than seasoned. In this context, water storage

Above and pages 28-29: Reconstruction of the Oseberg Viking ship © Oseberg Vikingarv, Norway, Page 29 photo: Trond Håvard Malvåg

in bogs, lakes or rivers allowed the timber to be kept green and soft to be worked later. The tools of choice for working the timbers were simple but effective: axes and adzes. Planks were prepared not by sawing the logs but by radially splitting them. Although more time consuming and labour intensive, this method produces more robust and highly flexible planks. The preferred wood was oak due to its qualities and resistance to the marine environment. Pine was also used, primarily in Western Norway where oak was not an abundant resource. When available, oak was preferred for the most critical elements, such as the keel and stems. This durable wood was also used for planks and other internal structures in southern Scandinavia. However, we rarely find ships built with only one wood type in the archaeological records, as resources and shapes needed sometimes did not match. Instead, various other timbers were employed besides oak and pine, such as ash, maple, beech, and lime trees.

The sequence

Keel and stems were the starting point in constructing any vessel. The stems were considered of extreme importance as they influenced the overall shape and properties of the ship. Thus, it is not surprising that in the sagas, the master shipbuilders were called Stem-smith. After this stage, the vessel's plank shell was begun. The planks of the next level were positioned to overlap the previous ones. The planks were tried out, planned, and adjusted to fit perfectly in line with the dynamic process. Once a plank was ready, the overlapping edge was lined with a mix of animal hairs and tar to waterproof the seam. Then, the builder drilled holes and inserted iron nails clenched to square roves, effectively clamping the planks together.

Iron was of great importance in constructing a vessel as it held the hull together. Analyses on boat graves from Vestfold have shown that specific qualities of iron were used in different parts of a boat. As soon as the bottom shell was completed, floor timbers (the internal bottom ribs) were inserted. The floor timbers were shaped from naturally crooked lumbers and trimmed on the spot until the fitting was precise. With all the floor timbers installed in the vessel, the erection of the plank shell continued. One or two runs of planks were probably put in place before the shipwrights inserted internal strengthening timbers such as stringers, beams, knees, and the foot for the mast. Finally, the vessel was finished by installing a side-mounted rudder, a mast, a square sail, and standing and running rigging.

The ships and boats of the Vikings, as modern-day vessels, received surface treatment to protect the hull before being sent out at sea. Skaldic poems describe coal-black, dark blue and red ship hulls, while the saga of Erik the Red describes a special surface treatment called seal tar. Several archaeological finds show a mixture of wood tar, yellow ochre, and a binder made of a fatty substance such as linseed oil or tallow.. Ropes were also an essential item for the sailing and mooring of the vessel. These were mainly made out of bast from oak, elm, willow and lime tree but also of animal skin, hide and hair. In his account of his voyages from the end of the 9th century, the chieftain Ohthere claims that he received tribute in ropes of whale, walrus, and seal skin. Hide ropes seem to have been particularly suitable for standing rigging, which requires much strength as they held the straight mast up, and anchor cables. Ropes made from horsehair are also known from the archaeological records. These were somewhat elastic and probably used for manoeuvring the sails.
Sails were made of wool and were extraordinarily resistant and long-lived. Uncoated sails were not functional and would have deteriorated very fast. As a remedy, sails were smeared with grease, tar, and ochre.

A matter of resources and time

Building a ship required several resources, such as wood, iron, and wool and the necessary craft people who could turn raw material into a sailing vessel with their skills. Several reconstructions through experimental archaeology have allowed researchers to quantify the time needed to build some of these ships. For example, a group of 10 skilful shipbuilders would have produced a medium-sized longship of around 17 meters in length in about five months, between sourcing the necessary timbers and the actual construction. The necessary sail and ropes production would have probably required a similar amount of time. Thus, ships were an enormous investment in labour and resources, making them one of the most valuable objects of their time.

Specialised ship types

The archaeological finds show that different vessel types were built by the shipbuilders of the time, especially in the late Viking Age. The early ships found at Oseberg, Tune, and Gokstad are all quite broad vessels that allowed the transport of larger crew than needed. Still, these ships had a modest cargo capacity, like the estimated 7 tons of the Gokstad ship. However, in the context of the volume of trade in the 9th century AD, this can still be considered a good cargo capacity and probably enough to satisfy the transport needs of Scandinavians in early trade, piracy and warfare. Only in the 10th-century AD does a clear distinction emerge between the ship finds to indicate specialisation in their design. While boats were used for a variety of menial tasks, ships were built to transport either cargo or crew. Based on the archaeological records, the specialised cargo ship was

introduced around the year 1000 AD. Instead, the long narrow ship particularly suited to transport crew gradually developed throughout the 10th-century, only to become over time more specialised. Trading ships or cargo ships were the shorter and broader ships. Generally, this ship type is less than five times as long as it is wide and primarily or exclusively propelled by sails. Specialised cargo ships enabled the transport of large goods and made a particularly lucrative occupation out of trading. A cargo ship could also have been used to move large amounts of military equipment and supplies, making more manageable protracted raids and wars of conquest. The oldest example of a Viking cargo ship in the archaeological record is the Klåstad ship. It was built sometime at the end of the 10th-century AD and wrecked near Kaupang, Norway, with a cargo partly consisting of whetstones. The Klåstad ship had an estimated cargo capacity of 13 tons and an overall length of 21 meters. It is, however, possible that specialised cargo ships were built earlier than reflected in the archaeological record. The only complete ship finds from before the late 10th-century stem from graves, and cargo ships were clearly not used as grave ships. The long narrow ships are labelled warships, personnel carriers, and longships. The ship type is characterised as at least five times longer than they are broad and propelled by oars and sails. Usually, these ships had room for many oarsmen, and their shallow draft and hull shape allowed them to manoeuvre in shallow waters and land on a beach. In 1997, the remains of a longship were found in Denmark during construction works at the Roskilde Ship Museum.

The so-called Roskilde 6 (built after 1025) was 36 meters long and had room for 78 oarsmen. To date, this is the longest Viking ship yet discovered. We assume that these long, narrow ships were mainly used for warfare when using the name warship. However, they were also used as civil transport vessels for chieftains or kings and their courts. Therefore, these ships should be seen more as prestige ships that played a significant role in maintaining dominance and presence over the land.

Conclusion

We can frankly state that seafaring made the Viking Age possible. Scandinavians, with their ships, managed to transport and reach around Northern Europe (and not only) people, goods, and ideas. Although we have a pretty clear picture of the basic technology behind their vessels, many more remain to be explored. An ongoing PhD project at the Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger aims to shed new light on this topic. Most of the studies on shipbuilding during the Viking Age have been focused on more or less complete ship remains. However, hidden in museum deposits lies a wealth of fragmentary nautical material from this period that awaits to be studied. New knowledge about shipbuilding technology, past environment, and the relation between society and craft can all be extracted from them.

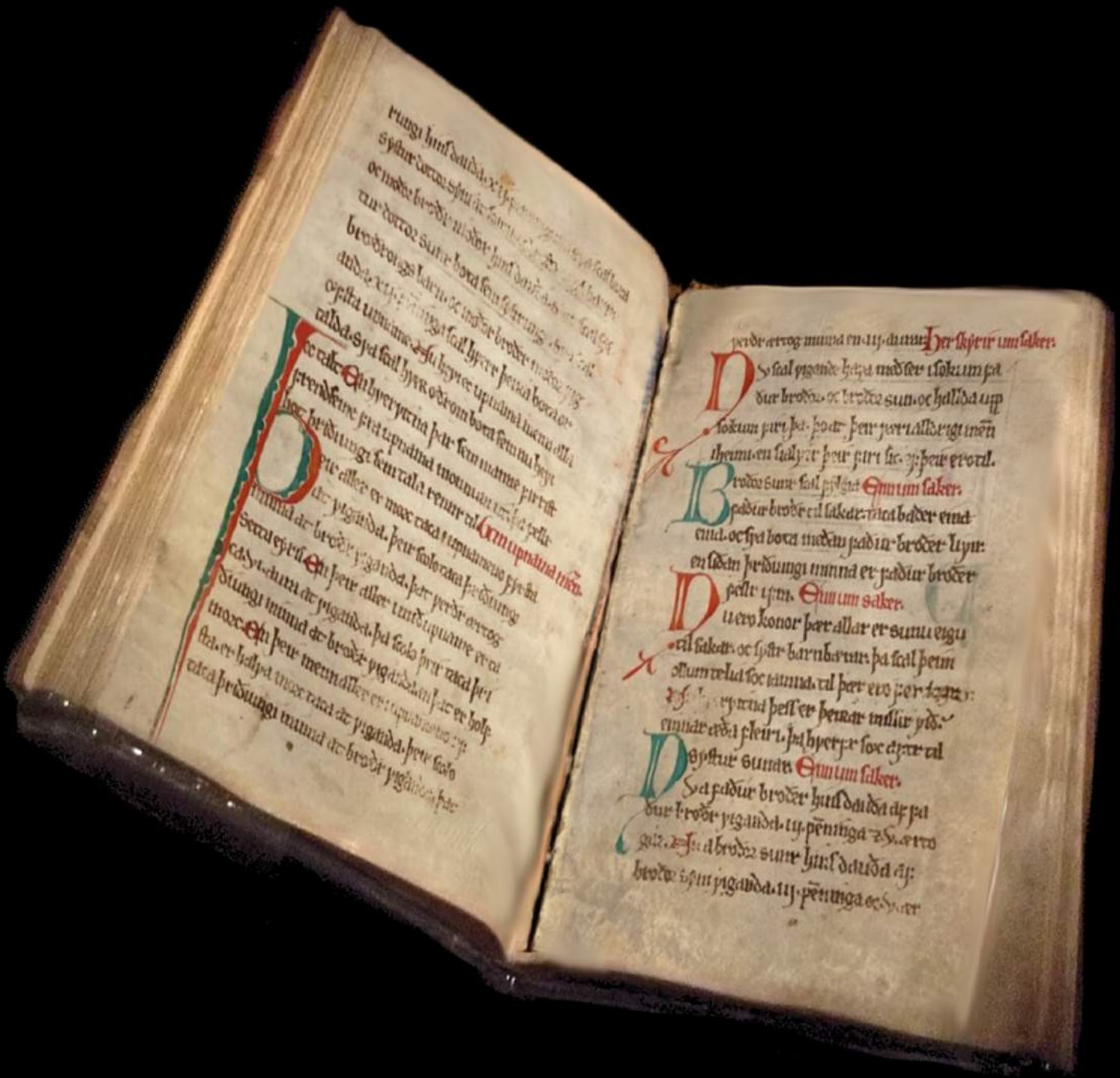
DEMOCRACY

The Gulating Law

In a time when our very freedoms and liberties are being threatened by the world's autocracies and dictatorships, let us go in search of the famous "Ting"assembly in Viking age Norway

The Gulating Law is the oldest preserved, complete and original law manuscript in the Nordic Countries. It is the result of 400 years of legal procedures at the Gulating in Gulen, West-Norway from 900 AD until 1300 AD.
The Gulating (ting pronounced thing) was a Viking and medieval parliament/assembly and court of law covering the coast from Aalesund to Kristiansand and part of inland Norway. The assembly was held annually in Gulen, a municipality north of the former capital of Norway, Bergen. The Gulating Laws were developed during the deliberations at the assembly. They were initially orally transmitted and read out by a law speaker, but were later written down and preserved in the codex. The Gulating laws are preserved in the "Codex Rantzovianus" (Edonatione variorum 137 4) in The Royal Library of Copenhagen. The manuscript represents the start of Norwegian political and judicial history as well as state formation. It is the only codex containing the Gulating laws, and it is Norway's second eldest book. It's a relatively small book (approx. 5 x 10 x 20 cm), containing close to 300 pages comprising approx. 300 law texts. It is made from a light, fine parchment, with titles in red and initial capital letters in each chapter in red or green ink. The latter indicates a connection to English handwritten documents from the same era. The leather cover is of more recent date, indicating a care for preserving antiquarian gems like this manuscript. The manuscript is sparsely decorated. It has an unusually low number of abbreviated words, and the author was not frugal with his parchment. It is written in Gothic handwriting, in the Norse language, which is unusual for handwritten

By Anne Hopland
Daily leader, The Millennium site of Gulatinget



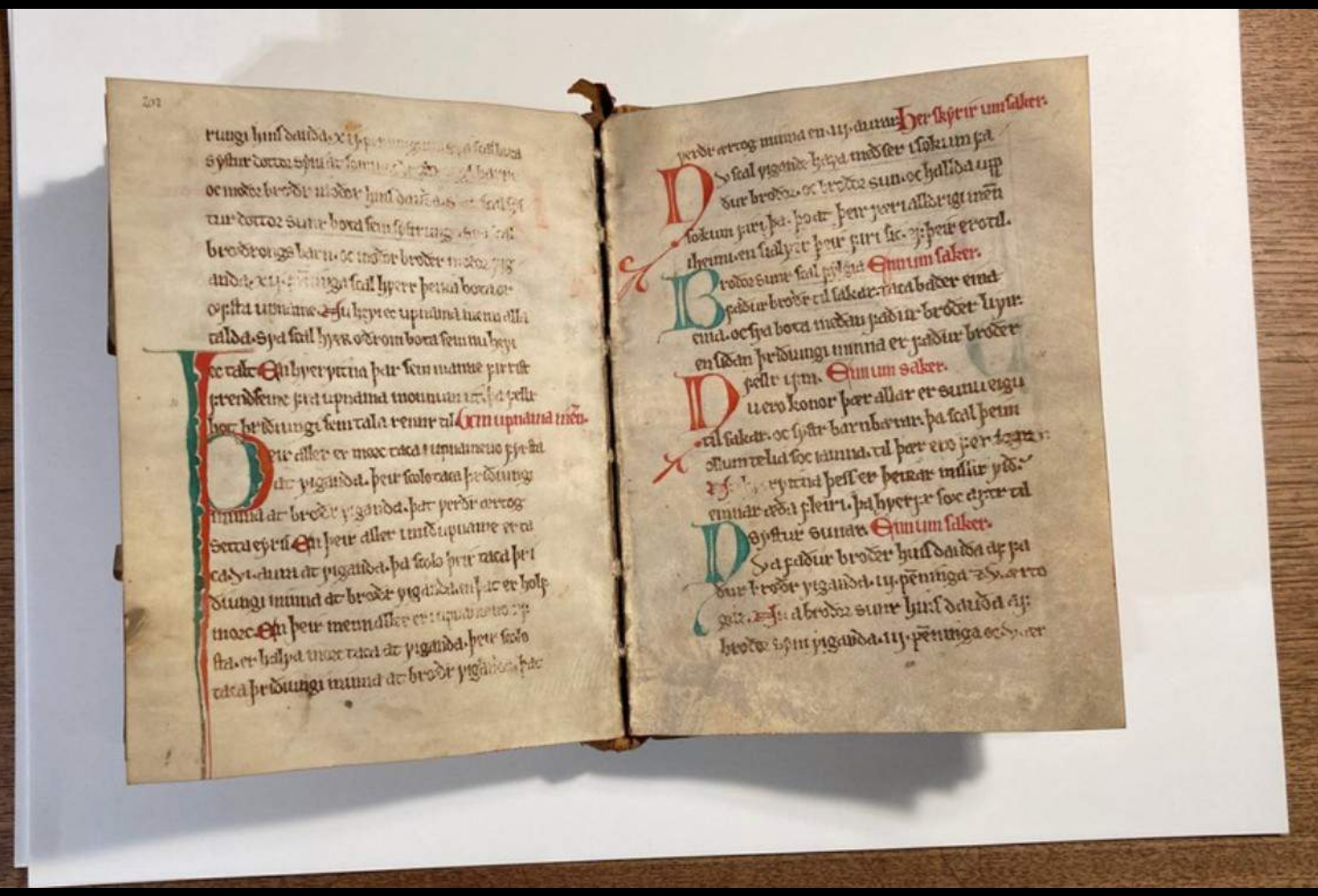
documents of its age. Only very few documents written in Old Norse have been preserved, and the Gulating law manuscript is the longest of this kind that is preserved. It was accepted to Norway's Documentary Heritage in 2020 and was nominated to the international UNESCO's Memory of the World register by The Norwegian UNESCO committee in 2021.

The Nordic model – a Viking legacy

It is not known who first wrote down the Gulating laws. It has also never been established when and how the "Rantzau book" ended up in Denmark. In this period, a growing interest in antiques had developed in Europe, and it is believed that this has ensured the manuscript's survival. The law book formed part of the Rantzau family's private library and was donated to the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen by Christian Rantzau (1684–1771) in 1731.

The Gulating Law provides a window in time, showing the early development of laws and state formation in Norway, as well as the relationship between the assembly and the increasing power of the Church and King. The manuscript expresses values and traditions that have not only been fundamentally important to the development of Norway as a legal state and democracy. The Gulating law offers insight into the structures, processes and values that moved Norway from a clan-based society, into what we recognise as a state – all firmly established in laws regulating central aspects of Viking and medieval society. It may also serve as a source by which to understand the historical backdrop for the traditions and values that shaped the Nordic and North-Atlantic nations into democratic societies based on the rule of law. The Nordic countries have a preference for cooperation which, in turn, creates a foundation for compromise and resolving conflicts. These are values that can be traced back to the deliberations and attempts at solving conflicts through dialogue at the *ting.*

Below: "Codex Rantzovianus" Photo: Erik Petersen © Royal Library of Copenhagen



The self-governing principle

The Gulating Law is rather unique in European legal tradition as it guaranteed inhabitants a high level of autonomy. This model of governance has its roots in natural conditions with large land areas and a relatively small population. These factors shaped a *decentralised system of governance* in which the *ting* played a key role. This, in turn, is further associated with the opportunities throughout history to participate in governance in Norway. The Gulating Law describes in detail this system of laymen governing and acting as judges. It is a system of governance that relies on a fundamental belief that laymen have the knowledge and capacity to govern, and thus carry out measures of the state. These values remain predominant in the Nordic countries, particularly Norway. On a European level, Norway has the highest number of lay judges with relatively high scope to influence the application of the law. In global terms, the Nordic countries are among the six countries with the highest number of lay judges. Norway tops this list with more than 800 lay judges per 100,000 citizens.

The Nordic countries share certain characteristics with regards to values, traditions, and natural conditions; all of them enjoy stable and peaceful democracies. This has historical roots based on a tradition of governance through popular assemblies, as manifested in the Gulating Law.

The Language of the Law

The Gulating Laws are written in Old Norse. This is of interest in a European context, as the legal tradition in other parts of Europe during the High Middle Ages was to use Latin. As university studies of Canon- and Roman law were written in Latin in countries other than Norway, it became the *language of the law* in most other European countries. However, Norway, Iceland and (in part) Sweden instead adopted a *translation strategy* whereby Latin terms were translated into Norse. Throughout the Middle Ages, laws were *never* translated into Latin in Norway.

This principle of Norwegian legal tradition suggests that the laws were understandable for all Norwegians, which was wholly unique in a European context. The Rantzau book shows how Norway consciously endeavoured to make use of a legal language that was as close to the common language as possible.

This principle is relevant today, as the use of the common language and the emphasis on a clear legal language remain a Norwegian legal precedent. Thus, Norway has one of the clearest languages of the law in Europe, and the language of the court in Norway has never been Latinised. The use of the common language is an expression of the values, principles and traditions that have been kept alive in Norwegian society from the 11th century to the present day. In terms of both terminology and organisation, Norway has stayed loyal to the *ting* system. Had Norway made the transition to Latin, it would not have been possible to sustain such a model. The decision not to introduce Latin allowed Norway to preserve strong principles of democracy and elements from the *ting*, and the Rantzau book is a testament to this tradition.

The Gulating Law is a unique collection of laws, providing examples of the broad-scale social governance of Western Norway from the 10th to the 13th century. It is thus related to the collection of laws of the Franks, Visigoths, Burgundians and Lombards from the 6th to the 8th century. The oldest parts of the Gulating law also inspired the first Icelandic law – Ulvljots Law – from before 930 AD. However, the Gulating Law represents a far more comprehensive regulation of society, addressing issues such as Christian life, contracts, marriage, slavery, crime and tort, property, whaling, defence of the realm, as well as fines and clan responsibility. The abundance of legal rules offers an insight into the complexity of society in the Early and High Middle Ages. In terms of the *form* of the legal rules, the Gulating Law is broad and comprehensive. It contains legislation allegedly from the 10th century, but at

Above: Reconstruction of the Viking 'Ting' at Thingvellir, Iceland © Gagarín, Iceland, Thingvellir National Park

least from the 11th century, generalised court rulings and customs representing the participation in social governance of King and Church, and the popular assembly. The provisions of the Gulating Law were created in Western Norway and were applicable to the western islands under Norwegian rule (Faroe Islands, Shetland and Orkney). This gives us reason to adopt a broader perspective in relation to this outskirt of Europe. It contains rules that are legal transplants from Roman Law and Canon law, as well as rules that can be traced back to the old slave routes from the Middle East to the Nordic countries. Together with the chapter concerning trade with, for example, the Byzantine Empire, this demonstrates the intense interaction of the Gulating region in Norway with the rest of Christendom in the Early and High Middle Ages. This makes the Gulating Law a remarkable source of insight into society, politics, and law in Western Norway from the 10th to the 13th century. It is an outstanding source for understanding state formation and the transition from a clan society to a medieval realm relevant to most European countries, as well as a source by which to understand the general origins of this universal process of state formation.

An alternative European tradition

The *tings* or legal assemblies from the Viking Age and through the medieval period played a crucial role in state formation in Norway and Europe. The Gulating Laws provide insight into the

choices made during the formation of Norway as a state. It shows how governance of society was established in the body of laws regulating the relationship between the people, royal powers, and the Church.
The Gulating law is evidence of an *alternative* European tradition, in which the increasing distribution of state power (the King and Church) is *linked to the ting*, instead of the abolishment of the *ting*. As the formation of Norway as a state in the 13th century has a form that we can recognise, the *ting* becomes incorporated into the state organisation, and not abolished as in other parts of Europe.
This is of relevance today. Elements and principles from the popular assemblies from the Viking era remain in place in Norway, with the system of broad representation in the political system, and the high number of laymen in the legal system. Norway's current national parliament is called Stor*ting*, divided into an Odels*ting* (*odel* = allodial) and a Lag*ting* (*lag* = law). When Norway established its *Grunnlov* or constitution at Eidsvoll in 1814, the founding fathers introduced a radical form of democracy in the belief that they had re-introduced the old system that had been founded in the Gulating law. Thus, the Gulating law represents the historical backdrop to a development that has led Norway into a modern democracy; from a relatively autonomous democracy via stages during which the power held by King and Church was stronger.
The Gulating law shows a developing Norwegian tradition; that although the Church is relatively strong, the King and Church are part

Above: Students visiting the ‘Ting’ at Gulatinget, Norway © Gulatingnet heritage site

of the same power of the State and are reliant on cooperation. It depicts a Christian law in which the King and Church are assigned joint responsibility for Christianity in Norway. The relationship between the Church and King in Norway was cooperative rather than conflicting, as both parties were mutually interdependent. The Christian law is predominant in the Gulating law, and the King is just as involved in this part of social governance as the Church.

Under autocratic rule

During the 18th century, European countries began to show an interest in the *Nordic model of democracy*. As Europe started on the path towards a new democratic tradition, inspiration was found in ancient Greece and Rome prior to autocratic rule, as well as the Nordic countries and Switzerland.

Both Montesquieu and Voltaire wrote about the Nordic countries. The Rantzau manuscript became relevant as intellectuals of this era were interested in the old Viking and medieval laws, and this interest spread to the Dano-Norwegian Realm. During the second half of the 18th century, scholars in Denmark and Norway wrote of a Nordic Middle Age, and referred to the Gulating law, as it was generally believed that it was the oldest law. When the Gulating Law was donated to the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen in 1731, it gained further significance outside of Norway. When it was translated into Danish in 1750 (by Hans Paus), it was reported in German publications, generating interest throughout Europe.

Thus, the Rantzau book played a contributory role in the entire autocratic Dano-Norwegian Realm. Sigurd Rothe, one of the greatest minds in Denmark-Norway at the end of the 18th century, wrote books that were critical of autocratic rule. Such criticism was prohibited and strictly censored, but as he wrote of the history of the Gulating law and of what was seen as a former democracy, he was able to avoid censorship. The Rantzau book is therefore not only important in terms of Norwegian history – it represents a piece of European history, as it forms the basis for the

democratic debates that took place in the 18th century. The Gulating law also had a direct influence beyond Norway's borders, as it was applied to areas under Norwegian rule during the Middle Ages. It is therefore possible to find this system of politics and legal cases being debated and resolved among laypeople in several countries in proximity to the North Sea and in the Nordic countries. The Gulating Law shows how the egalitarian principle of broad representation in political and legal processes is a legacy of the tings from the Viking medieval period in Norway. We may conclude that the medieval parliaments and courts, established in the Nordic countries well before 900 AD, created structures that later developed into more modern political and legal institutions throughout the Nordic and North-Atlantic region.

For more information visit the Gulatingnet website below:

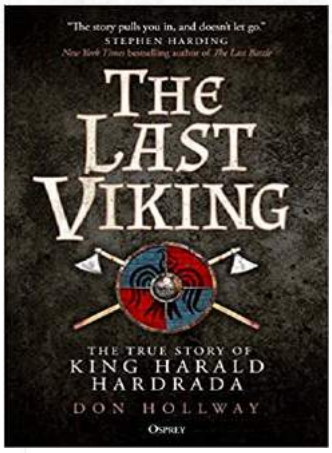
https://gulatinget.no/

Below: Reenactment of the Viking age 'Ting' at Gulatinget, Norway © Gulatinget Centre

Illustration of the law speaker at Gulatingnet

HUGIN & MUNIN
BOOK CORNER

WELCOME TO THE HUGIN & MUNIN BOOK CORNER. TO COMMEMORATE THE 1150th BATTLE OF HAFRSFJORD AND UNIFICATION OF NORWAY ANNIVERSARY DISCOVER SOME NEW FACT AND FICTION NORWEGIAN THEMED BOOKS AVAILABLE ONLINE OR AT YOUR NEAREST BOOK STORE



Non-fiction

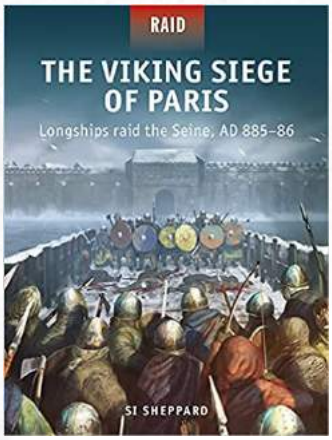
The Last Viking: The True Story of King Harald Hardrada Hardcover
Author: Don Hollway
Hardcover: 2 Sept 2021

Harald Sigurdsson burst into history as a teenaged youth in a Viking battle from which he escaped with little more than his life and a thirst for vengeance. But from these humble origins, he became one of Norway's most legendary kings. The Last Viking is a fast-moving narrative account of the life of King Harald Hardrada, as he journeyed across the medieval world, from the frozen wastelands of the North to the glittering towers of Byzantium and the passions of the Holy Land, until his warrior death on the battlefield in England.

Non-fiction

The Black Viking
Author:Bergsveinn Birgisson
Hardcover: TBA

This story begins in Rogaland year 846 AD. One day a very special royal son is born- Geirmund Heljarskinn. But we know almost nothing about this personality, there is no saga about him, and posterity has done it´s best to forget him. Why?
We know that his mother was from Siberia, therefore, he was born with Asian features. Geirmund Heljarskinn becomes the “Black Viking” – the most powerful settler on Iceland through times. Dark-skinned and with Mongolian facial features he was a pioneer in international hunting economy. Heljarskinn had hundreds of slaves; Christians from Scotland and Ireland.

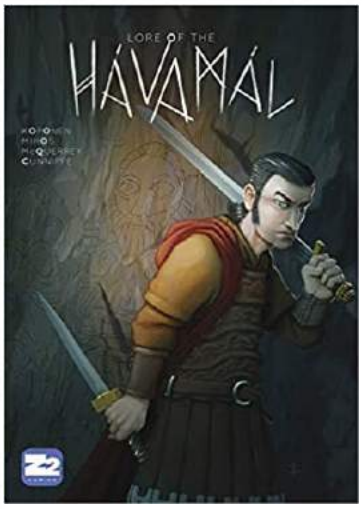


Non-fiction

The Viking Siege of Paris: Longships raid the Seine, AD 885–86
Author: Si Sheppard
Paperback: 20 Jan 2022

The Vikings' siege of Paris in 885-86 was a turning point in the history of both Paris and France. In 885, a year after Charles the Fat was crowned King of the Franks, Danish Vikings sailed up the Seine demanding tribute. The Franks' refusal prompted the Vikings to lay siege to Paris, which was initially defended by only 200 men under Odo, Count of Paris, and seemingly in a poor state to defend against the Viking warriors in their fleet of hundreds of longships. Paris was centered around the medieval Île de la Cité, the natural island now in the heart of the city, fortified with bridges and towers.

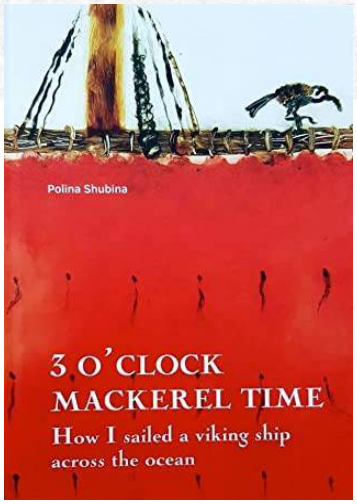
fiction



Lore of the Hávamál
Author: Cat Mihos
Paperback: 23 Dec 2021

Hávamál 'Sayings of the high one': a collection of old Norse poems containing advice for living, proper conduct and wisdom.
Ragnarök, The Twilight of the Gods is over, but something went wrong. Instead of dying heroically in the final battle, Odin One-Eye finds himself working as a bartender, reflecting on past losses and the death of his loved ones. If this truly was Ragnarök, why didn't the old world end and a new better world emerge? Summoned via a globe-spanning creative team, Lore of the Hávamál re-imagines the story of Ragnarök. Come now… join illustrator Jouni Koponen, writers Cat Mihos and Ethan McQuerrey, and colorist Dee Cunniffe on this epic journey through time, and Norse wisdom.

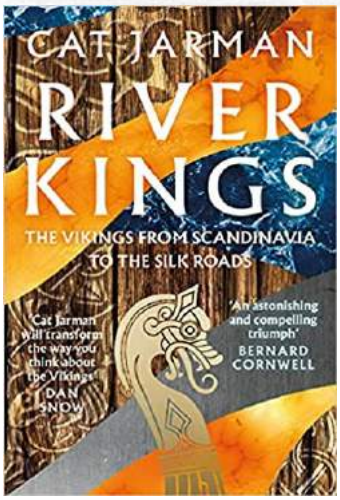
Non-fiction



3 O'clock Mackerel Time: How I sailed a viking ship across the ocean
Author: Polina Shubina
Hardcover: Aug 2019

Have you ever wondered what it was like to sail across the Atlantic Ocean in the Viking ship? Crew member and author Polina Shubina wrote about her experiences onboard the Viking ship Draken Harald Harfagre which traced the routes of the Viking explorers from Norway to America in the 11th century. Superbly illustrated by the author in a day to day account of the voyage. This book gets as closer as humanly possible of what it was like for the Norse sailors who ventured out into the unknown over a millennium ago.

Non-fiction



River Kings: A Times Book of the Year 2021
Author: Cat Jarman
Hardcover: 2 Sept 2021

River Kings sees her trace its path back to eighth-century Baghdad and India, discovering along the way that the Vikings' route was far more varied than we might think, that with them came people from the Middle East, not just Scandinavia, and that the reason for this unexpected integration between the Eastern and Western worlds may well have been a slave trade running through the Silk Road, and all the way to Britain.
Told as a riveting story of the Vikings and the methods we use to understand them, this is a major reassessment of the fierce, often-mythologised voyagers of the north, and of the global medieval world as we know it.

NORWAY

VISIT THE VIKINGS

Welcome to the special edition of 'Visit the Vikings'.To commemorate the 1150th Battle of Hafrsfjord anniversary and the unification of Norway we focus on the DVA members in this northern kingdom. From Tønsberg in the south to the wilds islands of Lofoten in the north, the Viking heartlands await your arrival!

2 Lofotr Viking Museum

Lofotr Viking Museum is the result of the onsite archaeological find of the largest longhouse from the Viking Age. The house is reconstructed right beside its original site.There is lots to understand about the people living in Lofoten during the Viking Age. By visiting the longhouse, the Viking harbour and modern exhibitions, you can learn about: Trading, Travels, Mythology, Daily life and the Political situation.

https://www.lofotr.no/nb/

3 Musea i Sogn og Fjordane

Museums of Sogn and Fjordane comprises a total of 12 different sites, spread across the entire county. At our museums you can learn about how people in Sogn and Fjordane have lived and worked, especially during the Viking Age

https://misf.no/

4 Gulatinget

Gulatinget was one of the oldest and largest parliamentary assemblies in Norway, thought to have been established in Gulen by King Harald Fairhair (c.872-932). Farmers came here to meet the king, discuss political matters, pass legislation and judge cases.

https://gulatinget.no/

5 Viking Valley Gudvangen

Viking Valley is a Viking town comprising 18 historic houses. Constructed following Viking-Age building techniques. The life and atmosphere of a Viking-Age society has been recreated and visitors can observe and take part in many activities

https://www.vikingvalley.no/

6 Avaldsnes

The Nordvegen History Centre at Avaldnes tells the story of how Avaldsnes became Norway's oldest royal seat. Movies, figures, lights, symbols and finds will help you learn about Harald Fairhair and some of the chieftains and kings who lived at Avaldsnes.

https://avaldsnes.info/en/vikinggard/

7 Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger

The Viking Age has a central place in our research and dissemination. The museum has a new and modern Viking exhibition, it shows the Viking Voyagers travels to the west. The Iron Age Farm is also a part of the Museum of Archaeology. It is the only one of its kind in Norway and has been rebuilt on the original remains.

https://www.uis.no/en/museum-of-archaeology

1 Sør-Troms Museum

Experience 1000 years of Harstad region's history through a comprehensive exhibition that ranges from the Stone Age to the 1950s with a focus on the Vikings, the Middle Ages and the 2nd World War

https://stmu.no/

14 The Museum of the Viking Age and Historical Museum (Viking Ship Museum)

One of the most spectacular collections from the Viking Age is located in Oslo. A new museum will be built in conjunction with the existing Viking Ship Museum, but three times larger! Home of the three famous Viking ships; Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune, as well as thousands of other fascinating Viking artifacts.

https://www.khm.uio.no/english/visit-us/viking-ship-museum/

12 Oseberg Viking Heritage

In the middle of Tonsberg´s pulsating harbour you can watch history being recreated – all year around. Here you will find the Saga Oseberg, a full-scale archaeological replica of the Oseberg ship. Other forms of handicrafts are demonstrated on a regular basis, including forging and textile work.

https://osebergvikingarv.no/eng/

10 Rogaland County Council

Discover Norway's Viking history in Rogaland County. In 872 AD a crucial battle was fought in Hafrsfjord that resulted in the unification of Norway under its first King Harald 'Fairhair'. Celebrate the 1150th unification commemorations this summer.

https://www.rogfk.no/

13 Kaupang

Kaupang, Norway's first town, was founded around the year 800 and extended in a 500m-wide belt along the west side of the Kaupang inlet. A Viking house has been recreated in the style of how it is thought it would have looked in Viking times

https://vikingtown.no/

15 Kystlaget for vikingskipet Tyra

Just east of Bergen in the Hardanger Fjord at Øystese you will find the Association for the "Tyra", a replica of a Viking Era ship. Join the crew and become a Viking for the day sailing along the Fjord!

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108666856449547/

11 Vestfold & Telemark fylkeskommune

In Vestfold Fylkeskommune we have many museums, beautiful landscapes and a rich history. Especially when we talk about the Vikings! Feel free to drop by and discover the true history of the Vikings!

https://www.vtfk.no/

8 Viking House

Board our Viking ship and join us for an exciting adventure. Viking House is the world's first saga-based Virtual Reality experience telling the story of the Vikings of our region through VR technology. The film called 'The First King' tells the story of King Harold Fairhair and the battle of Hafrsfjord in AD 872 as it is told in de Norse sagas.

https://www.vikinghouse.no/

9 Guidecompaniet

We know that history is the most important ingredient for a successful trip "great tours - great stories." Service, quality and good experiences are our guides and we have selected the best partners to create great experiences and make dreams come true. Regular Viking themed trips in Stavanger and Haugesund

https://www.guidecompaniet.no/

Viking Stamps – 1972 Norwegian Unification Celebrations

By Geir Sør-Reime

This year, the 1150th anniversary of the decisive battle in Hafrsfjord is celebrated. The battle, where Harold Fairhair consolidated his powers, is the symbolic event for the unification of Norway into one country and one state and enabled the subsequent Christianisation of the country.
The first nation-wide celebrations of the unification took place in 1872 for the millenary. It was centred round the Harold's Mound in Haugesund, the alleged burial mount of king Harold and was attended by the Swedish-Norwegian Crown Prince and later King Oscar II, the Norwegian parliament (Storting), other notabilities, the armed forces, and thousands of people from all over the country. Although postage stamps had been introduced in Norway in 1855, no commemorative stamps had been issued that early, the first were issued in 1914 for the centenary of the modern Norwegian Constitution.

But in 1972, the 1100th anniversary of the battle was celebrated, this time at Hafrsfjord and four stamps were issued for the event. The sculpture Swords in Rock was placed at Hafrsfjord in 1983 as a memory of the 872 battle. It was depicted on one of the three stamps issued 2008 for Stavanger as European Capital of Culture.

The four 1972 stamps depict Viking Age art: a pictorial memorial stone from the late 900-ies, part of the wooden portal at Hemsedal stave church, a carved animal head from the Oseberg burial, and a richly decorated Viking sword handle.

There are no contemporary portraits of king Harold, but an artistic impression of him appears on a Norwegian stamp from 2008 illustrating a myth about him. The myth tells that as a young man Harold was educated by one of Jotun gods up in the Dovre mountains, where the Jotun gods reigned. Later, at Tofte in Dovre, Harold meets the Sami women Snøfrid and immediately fall in intense love with her. Behind Harold's back, Snøfrid's father Svåse and see to that they Harold and Snøfrid become married before they become too intimate. It is said that the later king Harold Hardrade was a grand-grand son of this marriage. The Dovre mountains are seen in the background of the stamp sheet.

This year, the unification will be celebrated both at Avaldsnes and Haugesund, as well as at Hafrsfjord, but no new stamps are planned for the 1150th anniversary.

ISSUE 7
COMING SOON

/FOLLOWTHEVIKINGS

#FOLLOWTHEVIKINGS