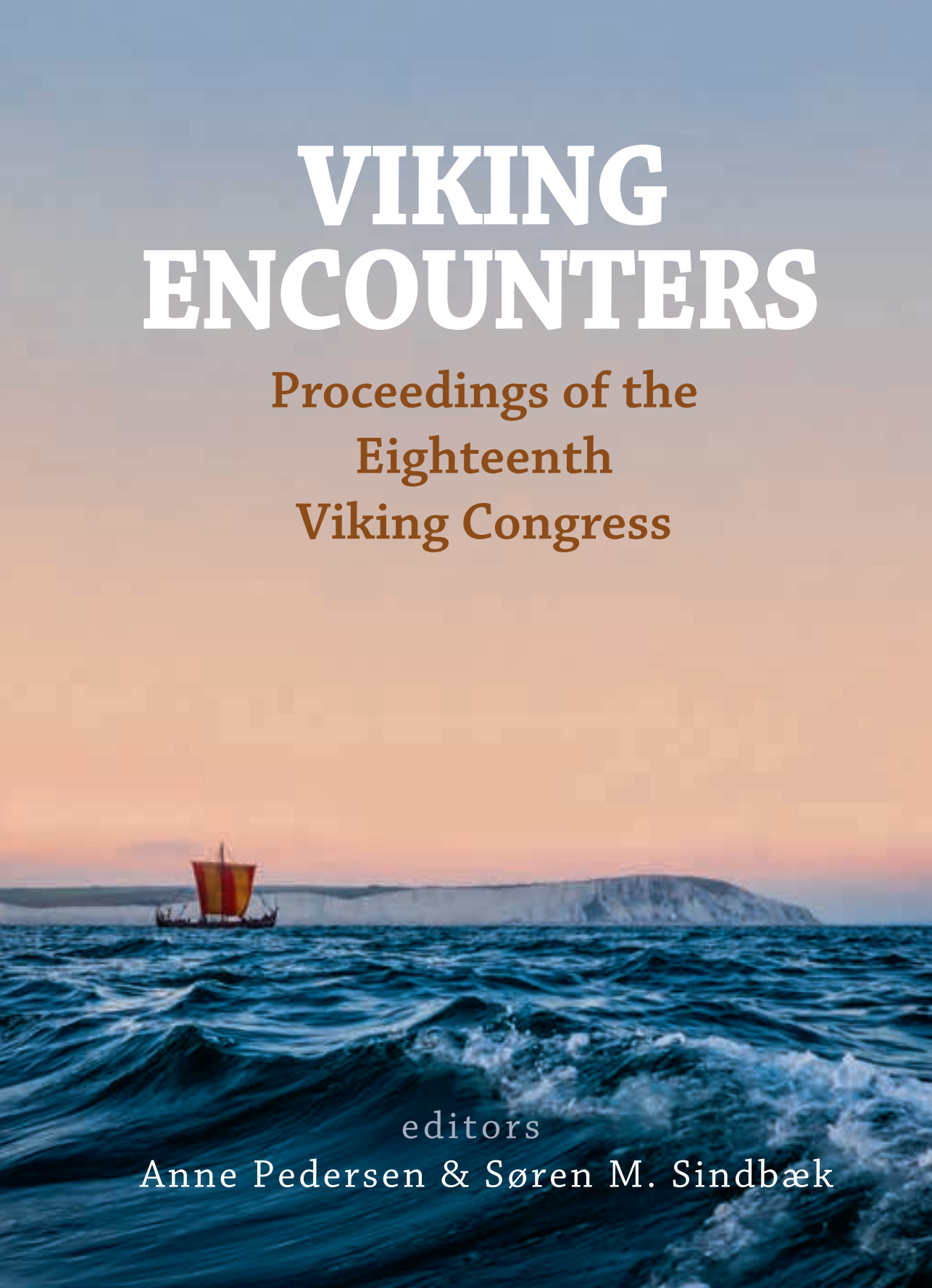
VIKING ENCOUNTERS

Proceedings of the Eighteenth Viking Congress



editors
Anne Pedersen & Søren M. Sindbæk

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Delegates of the 18th Viking Congress assembled at the Trelleborg ring fortress. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark.

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Proceedings of the Eighteenth Viking Congress, Denmark, August 6-12, 2017

Anne Pedersen & Søren M. Sindbæk

EDITORS

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Viking Encounters

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The logo of the Viking Congress was adopted at the fifth congress in the Faroes. Known in the Faroes as a held (Icelandic: *högld*), it is a ring made of a locked loop of ram's horn. It was, and still is, used for a number of purposes, but chiefly as a loop attached to a rope and used when carrying hay.

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Encountering Denmark

Pride and Prejudice

Foreword by Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark, Patron of the Eighteenth Viking Congress

The 18th Viking Congress took place in Copenhagen and Ribe in August 2017, 40 years after the 8th Viking Congress in Aarhus at which I also had the opportunity and honour to act as patron. Much has happened since then. I have visited many archaeological excavations of Viking-Age sites, and it has been a wonderful experience to follow the many advances made in research within and across scientific disciplines.

40 years ago settlement archaeology was in its early stages in Denmark. Farms, villages, and 'manors' were only just becoming part of the Viking landscape, and the new discoveries were presented at the Aarhus congress to an international audience of Viking scholars. Settlements have now been identified and in part excavated all over the country and today, it is the hundreds of metal detector finds brought into museums by members of the public which open new doors to the past. A far more complex picture is emerging. Unexpected features still come to light, among them the palisade complex in Jelling and the fortress site at Borgring, two sites on the program of the 18th Viking Congress.

Similar advances are seen in other fields of research. The Norse sagas and evocative Scaldic poetry captured the minds of early scholars, offering tales of momentous events, beliefs and the daily life of individual people. Their appeal still fascinates as new approaches reveal new aspects of the old texts and view them in a new context. Also, a far wider range of archaeological sources, data and not least research techniques and methods are available to Viking scholars than ever before. The application of natural sciences in the study of the past is no new phenomenon, but the possibilities have grown immensely. Among them are DNA and strontium isotope analyses which can bring us much closer to the individual – What was the colour of their eyes and hair? Were they in good health, ill or perhaps marked by battle? Where did they travel during their lifetime? Equally significant are material and environmental analyses, and studies of the ancient landscape have benefitted greatly from the revolution in remote sensing and geophysics which make it possible to explore without necessarily having to excavate. Future studies will no doubt reveal much more than we can imagine today.

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Cross-disciplinary approaches have been the backbone of the long series of Viking Congresses since 1950, their goal to create a common forum for current research and theories within Viking-Age studies, and to enhance collaboration between scholars, crossing geographical and disciplinary borders. I was fortunate to attend the first day of the 18th Viking congress and listen to the first four papers, which clearly demonstrated the wide range of Viking studies today. The present volume offers a whole series of papers by the participants of the Congress, and it is my hope that it will contribute to the aim of the congress and to Viking-Age studies by furthering and securing scientific knowledge and the never ending story of past and present Viking Encounters.

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Introduction

Viking Encounters

Encounters mark out the Viking Age as a watershed for northern societies. They could be culturally transformative events, as when groups, families or individuals travelled or settled in new lands, and were confronted with different practices, customs or beliefs. They could be violent engagements, as when armies clashed along new social fracture zones. And they could be politically disruptive, as new resources of wealth and power upset the equilibrium of political hierarchies or family roles. A common trait of these and many other changes is that they were brought out by changing patterns of maritime travel, trade, war, exploration and settlement, which transformed the northernmost parts of Europe.

This volume reflects the new currents and dynamics at the forefront of interdisciplinary studies of the Viking Age. Today, this research is characterized by a bold engagement with grand questions about profound cultural, religious and social transformations, their causes and catalysts. Across disciplinary boundaries, new studies are developing through the exploration of mobility and social networks – in the communications across seas or boundaries or in the relations traced in written records and literature. The memory and heritage of the Viking Age is critically revisited, as studies turn due attention to the image of the period in historic or contemporary contexts, in part inspired by the immense public interest in all things Viking in modern society.

These themes are brought together in the title chosen for this book – encounters – the meeting of people and cultures across space and time.

The first section sets focus on *Catalysts and change in the Viking Age*. As a historical period, the Viking Age is a period of profound cultural and social changes from shifting cultural, religious and personal identities to urbanization, settlement in new landscapes, political destabilization and centralization. Exploring the causes for these changes is a core theme of Viking Studies. Contributions for this section debate grand cultural transformation as well as localized and/or individual changes, looking also beyond the specific cases and materials to debate the general causes and catalysts, which brought them about.

The second theme is *The power of social networks – interactive dynamics in the Viking Age*. Interaction across boundaries or within communities constitutes the substance of the dynamic events of the Viking Age, and is prominently reflected in the legacy of the period. The investigation of social networks has formed an active focus of Viking Studies in recent years, from the mapping of geographical interaction attested by the archaeological and scientific evidence to the analysis of social relations in written records and literature. This section

Figure 1. Delegates on board the Sea Stallion of Glendalough, a replica of the Skuldelev 2 longship, at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde during the cross-country excursion. Photo: A. Pedersen.

comprises studies, which develop a relational perspective on Viking-Age developments and discuss the cultural and historical implications in an inter-disciplinary outlook.

The third section is titled *Viking impact – pride and prejudice.* The memory and heritage of the Viking Age has been a matter of profound fascination for later generations, from medieval historians and saga writers to contemporary novelists, artists and popular media. The legacy of the Viking Age maintains a strong impact in the present as a matter of pride, but also prejudice. This theme gathers papers, which approach the presentation of the Viking Age as a cultural heritage from either historic or contemporary contexts.

A final group of papers present a string of case studies focused on one key region of the Viking world – *Denmark*. Important new discoveries are here discussed in comparative perspective. Denmark was at the threshold between worlds from the eighth to the eleventh century, when cultural developments clashed or connected and merged at the confluence of the northern seas of Europe. Recent research has challenged many accepted beliefs about Denmark's place in the Viking world, and particularly the archaeological knowledge base has been greatly expanded by new finds, some adding to the existing range of sites and artefact types, others introducing hitherto unknown forms of evidence and new analytical opportunities. Thus, this theme includes contributions, which present or take stock of significant new findings, and discuss them in comparative perspective.

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The 18th Viking Congress

The contributions to this book present a selection of papers given at the 18th Viking Congress in 2017. For decades, the Viking Congresses have remained the leading, multinational, interdisciplinary conferences within Viking-Age studies. Viking Congresses have been held on a three- to four-year basis since 1950, by turns in Scandinavia and the British Isles.[1] Since this early beginning, the objective has been to create a common forum for the most current research and theories within Viking-Age studies, and to enhance communication and collaboration within the field, crossing disciplinary and geographical borders. Thus, it has become a multinational, interdisciplinary meeting for leading scholars of Viking studies in the fields of Archaeology, History, Philology, Place-name studies, Numismatics, Runology and other disciplines, including the natural sciences, relevant to the study of the Viking Age.

The 18th Viking Congress was held in Denmark, 6-12 August 2017. Throughout the years, the Congress has had the honour of having prominent protectors. In 2017, it was exactly 40 years since Denmark last hosted this tradition-rich congress in Aarhus with Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II as patron. It was therefore a great pleasure and honour that Her Majesty would once again accept to be the Protector of Congress, and to open the conference on the first day. The Congress was attended by 110 delegates with 62 papers and 17 posters, selected by the National Committees of the Congress and by open call from the Organizing Committee. The delegates represented the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), the Faroes, Iceland, Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Belgium, Poland, Russia, the U.S.A. and Canada.

The Congress opened with a two-day session at the National Museum in Copenhagen during which the delegates were offered the opportunity to visit the newly discovered fortress site at Borgring in eastern Sjælland and the Arnamagnean manuscript collection at the University of Copenhagen. The Congress proceeded on a cross-country excursion to The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, the Trelleborg Fortress, and the Jelling Monuments, ending in the cathedral town of Ribe in Jylland, the second congress venue. A half-day excursion took the delegates into present-day northern Germany to visit Hedeby, one of the great trading sites of the Viking Age, and the Danevirke, the former border between Denmark and the Continent. Several journalists attended the conference, and the event made it to the evening news on the national TV Channel DR1 and into national newspapers including Jyllands-Posten and Weekendavisen.

The organizing committee headed by senior researcher Anne Pedersen at the National Museum and professor Søren M. Sindbæk at Aarhus University worked hard over two years to prepare for the Congress. We would like to thank our colleagues in the committee: Peder Gammeltoft, Bergen University, Anne C. Sørensen, The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Stine Larsen, Trelleborg Viking Fortress, Morten Søvsø, Museum of South West Jutland, and Pernille Hermann, Aarhus University.

We have been fortunate that so many have wished to support our efforts, both financially and workwise, thus making this congress possible. We should therefore like to extend our thanks first of all to the following foundations: Farumgaardfonden, Krogagerfonden, Carlsbergfondet, Dronning Margrethe II's arkæologiske fond, Aage & Johanne Louis-Hansens fond, Letterstedtska Föreningen, Destination Viking, Bikubenfonden (via the National Museum Jelling Project).

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Early in the process, The National Museum and the Sydvestjyske Museer in Ribe agreed to jointly host the conference, while the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet), funded by the Danish National Research Foundation at Aarhus University, took on many of the planning details, for which we are exceedingly grateful. We should also like to thank other institutions who welcomed the conference delegates: The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Trelleborg and Kongernes Jelling both branches of the National Museum, Esbjerg Kommune, Ribe Katedralskole, and Ribe Vikingecenter. Moreover, The Arnamagnean Manuscript Collection at Copenhagen University, The Viking Fortress Borgring, Wikinger Museum Haithabu and the Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen, who offered visits to excavations and collections.

Our thanks also go to the many individuals who by their assistance and inspiration made the congress possible. Lastly, we should like to thank all conference delegates. Their enthusiasm, their papers and posters made the congress a most interesting and memorable event, and this book a privilege to edit.

Anne Pedersen & Søren M. Sindbæk
February 2020

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As per July 2017

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Figure 2. An impromptu assembly in the reconstructed building at the Trelleborg ring fortress during the cross-country excursion. Photo: C. Hedenstierna-Jonson.

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Notes

1 Smith, B. 2016: *'An Idea Original and Sympathetic': Viking Congresses and their Transformations 1950-2013.* V. Turner et al. (eds), Shetland and the Viking World. Papers from the Seventeenth Viking Congress, Lerwick. Lerwick. 1-6.

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Catalysts and Change

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The Viking Age and the Scandinavian Peace

Jón Viðar Sigurðsson

In this article I will argue that Scandinavia was a peaceful society in the Viking Age. When talking about this peace, it is important to stress that, from time to time, there were battles between kings and between chieftains and, obviously, some feuds must also have been taking place. The existence of tension can best be seen in stanza 38 in *Hávamál*:

> From his weapons on the open road
> no man should step one pace away;
> you don't know for certain when you're out on the road
> when you might have need of your spear.[1]

However, both the written and the archaeological sources lack any evidence of defence constructions, and the overall picture they paint is that Scandinavian society was *rather* peaceful. There are three main reasons for this: overlapping kinship ties, overlapping friendship and the dominant position of the Danish kings. I would like to underline that due to the source situation my focus will be on the period c. 900-1035.

The Meeting at Göta älv in 1036

Let us start this discussion with a description of a meeting between the Norwegian king Magnús Óláfsson and the Danish king Hǫrða-Knútr, held at the Göta älv in the year 1036. The meeting was arranged to decide which of these two men should control the kingdom of Norway:

> The following spring both kings ordered out a levy, and the news was that they would have a battle at the Göta älv; but when the two armies approached each other, the leading men in both armies sent messengers to their relatives and friends in the other army; the message was that they should make peace between the two kings. Because both kings were young, some powerful men, who had been chosen in each of the countries for that purpose, had the rule of the country on their account. It was thus brought about that a meeting of reconciliation should be held, then the two kings met, and at this meeting a peace was proposed; and the agreement was that the kings became blood brothers and made peace between themselves to the end of their lives; and if one of them should die without leaving a son, the one who lived longer should inherit the land and people of the other.[2]

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The background for this meeting was the unpopular reign of Sveinn Knútsson, son of Knútr inn ríki, who had secured supremacy over Norway in 1028. In 1035 Magnús, son of Óláfr Haraldsson, returned from Russia, where he had been fostered, to be made king of all of Norway. Sveinn fled to Denmark that same year without challenging Magnús' right to the throne. His father, Knútr inn ríki, died on 12 November, and all his sons perished in the next few years, Sveinn as early as 1036. Haraldr succeeded to the throne of England in 1035 and was king until his death in 1040. His younger half-brother, Hǫrða-Knútr, whom Knútr had fathered with Queen Emma, also made claims to the inheritance. Thus, after the death of Knútr inn ríki, a conflict arose between Magnús and Hǫrða-Knútr about the rule of Norway. Both thought they had legitimate claims to the throne. Magnús believed it was his right as his father's legacy, and Hǫrða-Knútr claimed it was his right due to his father having conquered the kingdom. Both kings gathered large armies and planned, as mentioned earlier, to meet at Göta älv to fight a battle. This did not happen, however; instead a meeting of reconciliation was organized between the kings. As *Heimskringla* stresses, the kings did not fight, but came to an agreement due to the overlapping of kinship and friendship ties.

Kinsmen

The kinship system in Scandinavia during the Viking Age was bilateral. That is, one could trace one's kin through both the maternal and the paternal line. Only siblings of the same parents had identical families. Their father had another, so did their mother, each of their grandparents yet another, and so on and so on. These groups overlapped and formed a continuous network of family relations. The bilateral kinship system had clear patrilineal tendencies; only sons could carry on the family line. This is evident from the custom of using the patronymic. In a bilateral kinship system, it is difficult for individuals to maintain equally close contact with all their relatives. One had to make choices, and what determined one's choice was a kinsman's power. It was more important to nurture a relationship with a chieftain, though he may be a distant relation, than with a brother. Power and wealth also determined the degree of family loyalty. Loyalty was greater in families that had significant power and wealth to defend than in families who had little or nothing to protect. Therefore, we must recognize the different degrees of family loyalty, usually strong at the highest level of society and weak at the bottom (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2017a, 62-63; 2017b, 103-115).

Written sources from the Viking Age are few. They sometimes mention marriages between members of the royal families, but almost never between the hundreds, if not thousands, of chieftain families. However, as we know from other parts of the world, throughout history intermarriages among the social elite have always taken place. This must also have been the case in Scandinavia. I would thus state that the family ties within the social elite stretched across Scandinavia, with endless overlaps.

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Friends

Let us now have a look at friendship, a relationship that I have characterized as 'the most important social tie in the Viking Age' (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2017a, 53-62; 2017b, 11-71). Most householders, chieftains, kings and other high-ranking members of society, both male and female, could establish friendships. This group constituted 15-20% of the population. The friendships they established can be described as 'political friendships'. Their purpose was to secure support and/or protection. These friendships also extended to other members of the households. Thus, nearly everyone was influenced by these relationships.

Viking-Age friendship bears little resemblance to our contemporary notion of friendship. Friendship in the Viking Age was a kind of contract between two individuals that ensured mutual support or protection. Friendship was of vital importance for both chieftains and householders – and their households. It was the tie that bound them together and provided a certain predictability for both parties: the householders getting protection, and the chieftains support. It is important to emphasize that in this relationship loyalty was strong, and to betray a friend resulted in the loss of honor.

The friendships between chieftains, and between kings and chieftains, were unstable. As a rule, the chieftains supported the most generous king. Once the king's finances worsened and gifts became fewer, i.e. when he could no longer uphold his friendship obligations, the chieftains began to look for a new and more benevolent king. Friendship between members of the social elite was established through gifts, as is so clearly seen in *Hávamál*, for example in stanza 41: 'With presents friends should please each other, / With a shield or a costly coat: / Mutual giving makes for friendship / So long as life goes well.'[3]

One important aspect of friendship in the Viking Age is that it was established between two individuals, but the obligation to support and/or protect also included the friends of a friend, as is plainly stated in *Hávamál* stanza 43: 'A man should be loyal through life to friends, / To them and to friends of theirs, / But never shall a man make offer / Of friendship to his foe's friends.' The chieftains and kings could therefore rely on the support of the chieftains' friends.[4]

As stated before, the overlaps between kinship groups were numerous. Friendship ties also overlapped, though not on the same scale as kinship ties. We can assume that most householders were friends with only one chieftain. For them, there was no doubt about where their loyalty should lie. Nevertheless, in a number of conflicts we hear about a group of householders referred to as *beggja vinir*, 'friends of both'. These men were friends with both of the conflicting chieftains.

Householders who were friends with two chieftains at the same time were an important buffer in conflicts between them. As friends of both the chieftains involved, they could not support one against the other. Therefore, it was their task to mediate. It could be advantageous for householders to be friends with two chieftains simultaneously. In this way, they secured their own interests; if someone tried to violate their rights, they could seek support from both men. However, the drawback was that these householders might encounter a conflict of loyalty if their chieftain friends had a dispute. Nonetheless, for society as a whole, it was greatly beneficial for the overlap between the groups of chieftains' friends to be as large as possible. Their role as mediators aided in keeping the peace. The situation for the chieftains was identi-

cal; they were friends with other chieftains and kings, and in a dispute between their friends they could not support one side against the other but had to mediate.

Let us return to the episode from 1036. The chieftains fighting for the two kings were obviously their friends, but over the years they had also established friendships with other chieftains and were related to some of them as well. This type of situation was in no way unique. We find a number of similar episodes in sources describing events in the 12th and 13th centuries. The problem the social elite then faced was: which man among their "enemies" could they kill? This situation was of course problematic for the kings, and how they dealt with it is a question I will not answer in this article.

In the Viking Age power was built up by establishing friendships, between chieftains and householders, and obviously their groups of retainers as well. The kings established friendships with their retainers, kings, chieftains and householders. Power was thus first and foremost about networks of friends, being *vinsæll* (having many friends). But power was also about control over people, to have '*mannaforráð*'. The entire society was linked together through these ties of friendship (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2011, 69-108). The importance of friendship can probably best be seen in the first paragraph of the *Gulaþingslög*, from around 1160: 'The first in our laws is that we shall bow toward the east and pray to the Holy Christ for peace and a fruitful harvest, and that we may keep our country settled and our sovereign lord complete; may he be our friend and we his, and may God be a friend to us all.'[5] Friendship was a tool that ensured loyalty between householders and chieftains – the participants at the assembly – and the king. To protect them, it was beneficial to all also to have God as their friend. Kings and chieftains also established friendships with the Old Norse gods, and after the introduction of Christianity, with saints and God.

To summarize the discussion so far, we can claim that friendship and kinship played a crucial role in the power game, and the overlap of these ties was one important reason for the peace in the Viking Age. I stated in my introduction that the power of the Danish kings was also significant for the peace in Scandinavia. So, let us have a look at the political situation in Scandinavia; due to the source situation, we will, as mentioned, focus on the 10th and 11th centuries.

The Power of the Danish

Exactly when kingship emerged in Denmark is unclear, but it must have been quite well established early in the 8th century (Sawyer 1988, 37-48, 213-288; Lund 1996, 83-144; Näsman 1998, 1-26; Albrectsen et al. 2001, 10-53; Knut Helle 2003, 168-83; Jensen 2013, 935-45; Dobat 2009, 65-104; 2016, 193-217; Feldbæk 2010, 17-26; Andersen 2015, 44). Two building projects from that time were on such a large scale that they must have had a powerful organizer: the Kanhave canal at Samsø in Kattegat, and the Danevirke (Ramskou 1963, 89, 91; Skovgaard-Petersen et al. 1977, 117-118; Albrectsen et al. 2001, 19-32; Daly 2006, 40-41; Dobat 2008, 27-67). Danevirke lay on the southern border of the Danish kingdom and stretched across Jutland at its narrowest point; between the bottom of the fjord Slien in the East and Hollingstedt by the River Treene in the West. It was an effective protection against eventual invasions

from the Slavic and northern Saxon tribes, and later also from attacks by the Carolingian emperor (Albrectsen et al. 2001, 21).

An external military pressure has often been used as an explanation for state formation. One such theory claims that because of outside pressure one family is elevated to or takes on a role of leadership in warfare; that is to say, the task of defending the region and attacking the threat (Hodges 1982, 187; Arnold 1984, 277; Bassett 1989, 23-24). When Danevirke and the emergence of the Danish royal power is discussed, one should remember that it defended not only Jutland, but also larger parts of Southern Scandinavia, which must have had consequences for the influence of the Danish kingdom. After the new kingdom was established, it could start to expand in the area around Jótlandshafið (Skagerrak and Kattegat) and incorporate new chiefdoms. Most of these chiefdoms were small and unable to offer much resistance. In addition, we can imagine that in many cases it would have been advantageous for local chieftains to enter into an agreement with their powerful neighbour. The Danish kings were able to organize a defence not only against the threat to the South, but also against other local, bothersome chieftains. The kingship could provide a way to minimalize armed conflicts between chieftains, as they could not accept that their friends, which in fact was the base on which they built their power, harmed each other.

There are few written sources that mention the geography of the Danish kings' realm and how they expanded it. The most important ones are the *Voyages of Ottar* from Hålogaland, the *Frankish Annals* and the kings' sagas. Sometime between 871 and 900 the voyager and tradesman Ohthere, who resided the furthest north of all Norwegians, in a place called Hålogaland, came to the court of King Alfred the Great in England. The king, who was very interested in geography, arranged for the tales of his voyages to be written down. Ohthere described his travels north to Bjarmaland and also his journey from Hålogaland to Kaupang in Vestfold and further on to Hedeby, which was by Slien just inside Danevirke. He did not state when he entered into the realm of the Danish king, just that when he sailed from Kaupang to Hedeby, from Vestfold across the Oslo fjord, and along the coast of Østfold and Båhuslen, he had Denmark on the port side (*Two Voyagers*: 22. Cf. Kroman 1976, 12-14).

The *Frankish Annals*, which are a main source of Danish history at the end of the 8th and the start of the 9th centuries, state that in 813 the Danish kings Haraldr and Reginfred left with an army to 'Westarfoldam', an area in the furthest north-west of their kingdom, and which 'looked out towards the northern point of Britannia (Scotland) where princes and people refused to be subordinate'.[6] A series of problems arise with this interpretation of the note. Let us start with the geographical localization of 'Westarfoldam'. Researchers have almost without exception believed it to be the equivalent to this day's Vestfold (Munch 1852-63, ii, 391-392; Albrectsen 1970, 125; Jørgensen 1985, 84; Reallexikon 32, 304; Krag 1995, 89; Jensen 2006 (2004), 427; Skre 2007, 460-461; Andersen 2015, 45). Such an interpretation, however, is very doubtful, as Vestfold does not 'look…out towards the northern point' of Scotland. Another more convincing interpretation of the name is that it actually alludes to Agder (Pedersen et al. 2003, 382-386).

In the Norse sources there are no suggestions that "Vestfold" was called anything other than Vestfold. The saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, for example, states that King Haraldr blátǫnn (c. 930 to 986) gave Haraldr grenski a king's name and made him ruler of 'Vingulmǫrk, Vestfold and

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Agder to Lindesnes' on the same terms that his friends had possessed them, and as Haraldr hárfagri had given his sons.[7] This ambiguity around "Westarfoldam" is probably best explained by the fact that the authors of the *Frankish Annals*, and possibly also people of Viking-Age Scandinavia, used the term "Vestfold" in a somewhat broader sense than it is used today.

It is the kings' sagas, and then especially *Heimskringla*, written by Snorri around 1230, that make up the grounds for which most of the discussion about the unification of the Norwegian state – from around the end of the 9th century and into the second half of the 12th century – is based. Snorri claims that it was the power base of Haraldr Hárfagri in Vestfold, which was the starting point for unification. From there he conquered Opplandene, and thereafter, through an alliance with Hákon Grjótgarðsson in Ørlandet, the later Earl of Lade, he overpowered the chieftains from Trøndelag and gained control of their area. In the end he traveled to the South-west, and in the battle of Hafrsfjord in Jæren around 880 conquered the chieftains there. The gathering of Norway under one king was thereby finalized. We should, however, be wary of Snorri's account: Haraldr Hárfagri was first and foremost a western king. He ruled Sogn and Fjordane, Hordaland, Rogaland and parts of Agder, and his main base was at Avaldsnes at Karmøy outside of Haugasund. The archaeological source material in Northern Jæren in Rogaland seems to support such a conclusion, as it shows us that there was a decline in grave goods after 900, which points to the confiscation of farms by the new royal power after the battle of Hafrsfjord (Solberg 2000, 286).

The battle of Hafrsfjord is important to us. It has been interpreted not only as the last battle of Haraldr Hárfagri's quest to unify Norway under one king, but also as the first attack on his kingdom. The opponents were possibly acting on Danish orders. In a poem about Haraldr, *Haraldskvæði*, which was composed not long after the battle had taken place, the poet Þorbjǫrn hornklofi tells of King Haraldr winning the battle *austkylfur* fleeing to the East. One of Haraldr's opponents was called Haklangr, a 'person with a long chin', a name that also appears on a rune stone from Lolland.[8] After the battle of Hafrsfjord it appears that Lindesnes became a border between the Danish and the Norwegian kings' realms (Krag 1995, 86; 2000, 44-46, 215-217). This is alluded to in several younger sources, for example the kings' saga *Fagrskinna* from around 1225. There it is written that the Danish king Sveinn Haraldsson tjúguskegg (c. 960-1014) made Eiríkr Hákonarson earl over parts of 'The Norwegian realm, which he owned', but he himself kept control of Viken, which was the area between Göta älv and Lindesnes.[9]

There are no reliable statistics for the population of Scandinavia in the Viking Age, but later, around the year 1300, around 3 million people probably lived in the three Scandinavian kingdoms. In Sweden there were around 500,000 (Finland was at this time a part of Sweden, but the Finns are kept separate from this calculation). In the Norwegian kingdom, which at the time also encompassed the Swedish areas of Båhuslen, Jämtland and Herjedalen, c. 500,000 people lived, and in the Danish, which included Skåne, around 2 million (KLNM 13, 384-395; Lund & Hørby 1980, 107; Benedictow 1993, 179-186; Myhre & Øye 2002, 252-253; Hybel & Poulsen 2007, 128; Jensen 2013, 965; Gammeltoft et al. 2015, 19). It looks like the population of Western Europe doubled in the period c. 650 to 1000, and thereafter tripled between 1000 and 1340 (Russell 1972, 36). If we believe such an increase in population also occurred in Scandinavia, around 650,000 people lived there about 800, and a million by 1050. Probably

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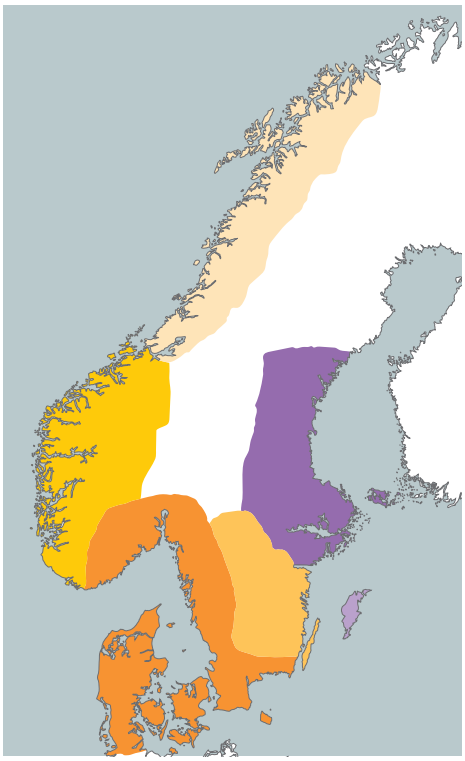

Figure 1. The political situation in the second half of the Viking Age. Graphics: Author.

more than half of the population lived in areas the Danish kings ruled. This calculation is highly unreliable, but it does provide some indications as to the supreme position of power the Danish kings possessed in Scandinavian politics.

In the Viking Age, at least from 813, the Danish kings had firm control over Denmark and much of southern Norway and western Sweden, the area coloured brown in the map **Fig. 1**.

The yellow region on the map is the kingdom allegedly founded by Haraldr Hárfagri and his sons, in particular Hákon, in the years c. 865-930. What is important for us is that the Danish kings controlled this kingdom for most of the period c. 960-1035. The two Óláfrs, Óláfr Tryggvason, who ruled c. 995-1000, and Óláfr Haraldsson, who ruled 105-1028, probably started out as Danish sub-kings. If we move further north, to the light red part of the map, we come to the earldom of the Earls of Lade. After 960, the earls were close friends of the Danish kings, and for a period they controlled the kingdom established by Haraldr Hárfagri on their behalf (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2017a, 32-47).

If we now move to Sweden, and the orange part of the map, we can assume that the chieftains there were also included in the network of the Danish kings. Finally, the purple part, the kingdom of the Svear. We know that the kings of Svear opposed the Danish kings from time to time; however, there can be little doubt that they, and some chieftains, were also included in the network of the Danish kings (Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2017a, 32-36). The most obvious argument in support of the belief that chieftains from all over Sweden were fighting with the Danish are the so-called England rune stones, that is, rune stones that refer to voyages to

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England:[10] 'And Úlfr has taken three payments in England. That was the first that Tósti paid. Then Þorketill paid. Then Knútr paid.'

In short, the network of the Danish kings, especially in the period c. 960-1030, literally stretched over all of Scandinavia. This resulted in a rather strong and consistent state of peace throughout most of the period, as stated in one of the poems about Knútr inn ríki.[11] The Danish kings, thanks to their networks and manpower, could therefore launch attacks on England and conquer it.

To keep their networks together the Danish kings needed resources, the most obvious being the Danegeld. They had another source of income, however, that was probably equally important: taxes from trading in the North Sea. In his book from 2013, *The wealth of Anglo-Saxon England*, Peter Sawyer states that one of the main 'conclusions of this book is that the remarkable development of England's economy in the century before the Norman Conquest [that is c. 960 to 1060] was due to its abundant and widely dispersed coinage, which was made possible by a flourishing export trade' (Sawyer 2013, 111). How many believe that the Vikings, and the Danish kings, were not controlling this trade? But what is significant is that at about the same time the German silver starts flowing, around 960, Haraldr Bluetooth (958-987) starts his building activity in Denmark; the Danish kings take control of Western Norway and establish alliances with the Earls of Lade; and finally the large-scale attacks on England begin with Sveinn around 990.

Overlaps of kinship and friendship ties were the principal means of securing local peace in Scandinavia. The Danish kings were without a doubt the most important political players in the Viking Age, and it was this position and their networks that guaranteed the peace.

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