

The **Viking Age** is the period A.D. 793–1066 in European history, especially Northern European and Scandinavian history, following the Germanic Iron Age. It is the period of history when Scandinavian Norsemen explored Europe by its seas and rivers for trade, raids and conquest. In this period, the Norsemen also settled in Norse Greenland, Newfoundland, and present-day Faroe Islands, Iceland, Normandy, Scotland, England, Ukraine, Ireland, Russia and Anatolia. Though Viking travelers and colonists were seen at many points in history as brutal raiders, many historical documents suggest that their invasion of other countries was retaliation in response to the violence from Christians towards pagan peoples, or motivated by overpopulation, trade inequities, and the lack of viable farmland in their homeland. Information about the Viking Age is drawn largely from what was written about the Vikings by their enemies, and primary sources of archaeology, supplied with secondary sources like the Icelandic Sagas.

Historical considerations

In England, the beginning of the Viking Age is dated to 8 June 793, when Vikings destroyed the abbey on Lindisfarne, a centre of learning on an island off the northeast coast of England in Northumberland, and famous across the continent. Monks were killed in the abbey, thrown into the sea to drown, or carried away as slaves along with the church treasures, giving rise to the traditional (but unattested) prayer—*A furore Normannorum libera nos, Domine*, "From the fury of the Northmen deliver us, Lord."

Three Viking ships had beached in Portland Bay four years earlier (although due to a scribal error the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* dates this event to 787 rather than 789), but that incursion may have been a trading expedition that went wrong rather than a piratical raid. Lindisfarne was different. The Viking devastation of Northumbria's Holy Island was reported by the Northumbrian scholar Alcuin of York, who wrote: "Never before in Britain has such a terror appeared".

Vikings were portrayed as uniformly violent and bloodthirsty by their enemies. The chronicles of medieval England portrayed them as rapacious "wolves among sheep".

The first challenges to the many anti-Viking images in Britain emerged in the 17th century. Pioneering scholarly works on the Viking Age reached a small readership in Britain. Archaeologists began to dig up Britain's Viking past. Linguistics traced the Viking-Age origins of rural idioms and proverbs. New dictionaries of the Old Norse language enabled more Victorians to read the Icelandic Sagas.

In Scandinavia, the 17th century Danish scholars Thomas Bartholin and Ole Worm and Swedish scholar Olaus Rudbeck were the first to use runic inscriptions and Icelandic Sagas as primary historical sources. During the Enlightenment and Nordic Renaissance, historians such as the Danish-Norwegian Ludvig Holberg and Swedish Olof von Dalin developed a more "rational" and "pragmatic" approach to historical scholarship.

By the latter half of the 18th century, while the Icelandic Sagas were still used as important historical sources, the Viking Age had again come to be regarded as a barbaric and uncivilized period in the history of the Nordic countries.

Not until the 1890s, during Victoria's reign in Britain, did scholars outside Scandinavia begin to extensively reassess the achievements of the Vikings, recognizing their artistry, technological skills, and seamanship.

Until recently, however, the history of the Viking Age was still largely based on *Icelandic Sagas*, the history of the Danes written by Saxo Grammaticus, the Kyivan Rus' *Primary Chronicle* and *The War of the Irish with the Foreigners*. Today most scholars take these texts as sources not to be understood literally and are relying more on concrete archaeological findings, numismatics and other direct scientific disciplines and methods.

Historical background

The Vikings who invaded western and eastern Europe were chiefly pagans from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. They also settled in the Faroe Islands, Ireland, Iceland, Scotland (Caithness, the Hebrides and the Northern Isles), Greenland, and Canada.

Their North Germanic language, Old Norse, became the mother-tongue of present-day Scandinavian languages. By 801, a strong central authority appears to have been established in Jutland, and the Danes were beginning to look beyond their own territory for land, trade and plunder.

In Norway, mountainous terrain and fjords formed strong natural boundaries. Communities there remained independent of each other, unlike the situation in Denmark which is lowland. By 800, some 30 small kingdoms existed in Norway.

The sea was the easiest way of communication between the Norwegian kingdoms and the outside world. It was in the 8th century that Scandinavians began to build ships of war and send them on raiding expeditions to initiate the Viking Age. The North Sea rovers were traders, colonisers and explorers as well as plunderers.

Probable causes of Norse expansion

Norse society was based on agriculture and trade with other peoples and placed great emphasis on the concept of honor, both in combat and in the criminal justice system. It was, for example, unfair and wrong to attack an enemy already in a fight with another.

This era coincided with the Medieval Warm Period (800–1300) and stopped with the start of the Little Ice Age (about 1250–1850). The start of the Viking Age, with the sack of Lindisfarne, also coincided with Charlemagne's Saxon Wars, or Christian wars with pagans in Saxony. Historians Rudolf Simek and Bruno Dumézil theorise that the Viking attacks may have been in response to the spread of Christianity among pagan peoples. Professor Rudolf Simek believes that "it is not a coincidence if the early Viking activity occurred during the reign of Charlemagne". Because of the penetration of Christianity in Scandinavia, serious conflict divided Norway for almost a century.

With the means of travel (long ships and open water), their desire for goods led Scandinavian traders to explore and develop extensive trading partnerships in new territories. It has been suggested that the Scandinavians suffered from unequal trade practices imposed by Christian advocates and that this eventually led to the breakdown in trade relations and raiding. British merchants who declared openly that they were Christian and would not trade with heathens and infidels (Muslims and the Norse) would get preferred status for availability and pricing of goods through a Christian network of traders. A two-tiered system of pricing existed with both declared and undeclared merchants trading secretly with banned parties. Viking raiding expeditions were separate from and coexisted with regular trading expeditions. A people with the tradition of raiding their neighbors when their honor had been impugned might easily fall to raiding foreign peoples who impugned their honor.

Historians also suggest that the Scandinavian population was too large for the peninsula and there was not enough good farmland for everyone. This led to a hunt for more land. Particularly for the settlement and conquest period that followed the early raids, internal strife in Scandinavia resulted in the progressive centralization of power into fewer hands. Formerly empowered local lords who did not want to be oppressed by greedy kings emigrated overseas. Iceland became Europe's first modern republic, with an annual assembly of elected officials called the *Althing*, though only *goði* (wealthy landowners) had the right to vote there.

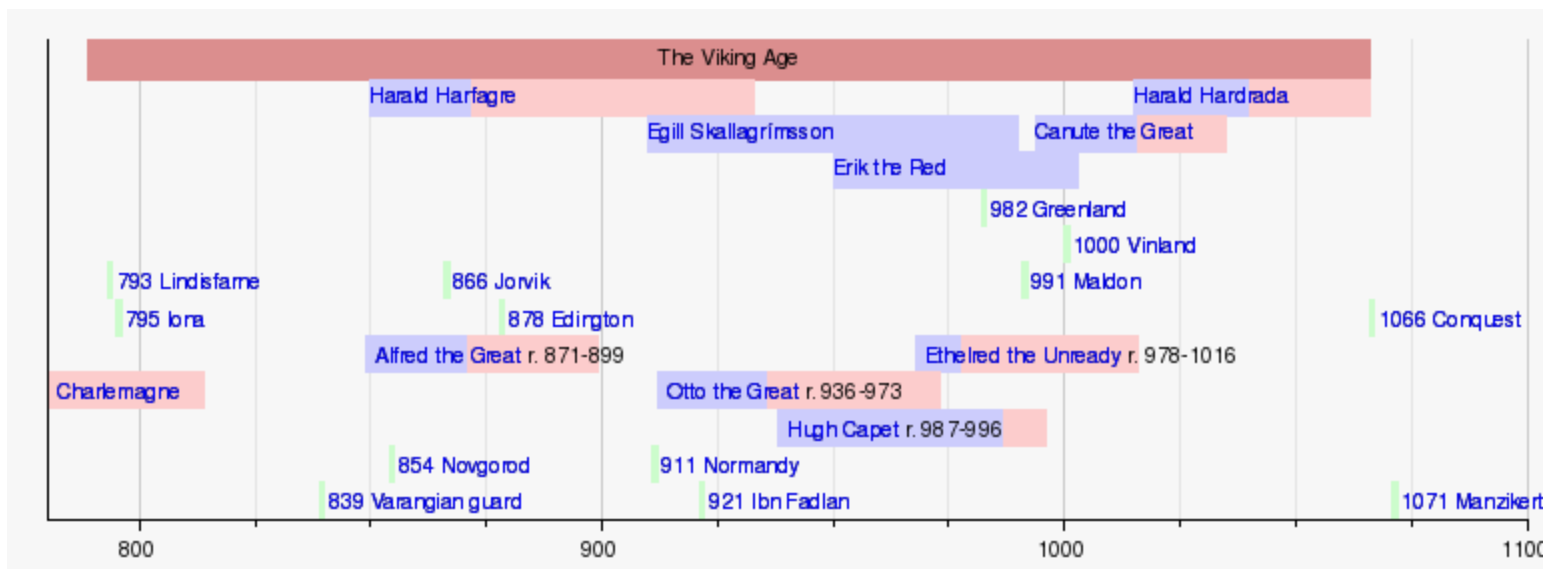
In Scandinavia the Viking age is considered to have ended with the establishment of royal authority in the Scandinavian countries and the establishment of Christianity as the dominant religion. The date is usually put somewhere in the early 11th century in all three Scandinavian countries. The end of the Viking-era in Norway is marked by the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030. Although Olaf Haraldsson's (later known as Olav the Holy) army lost the battle, Christianity spread, partly on the strength of rumors of miraculous signs after his death. Norwegians would no longer be called Vikings. In Sweden, the reign of king Olov Skötkonung (appr. 995–1020) is considered to be the transition from the Viking age to the Middle Ages, because he was the first Christian king of the Swedes and he is associated with a growing influence of the church in what is today southwestern and central Sweden.

The clinker-built long ships used by the Scandinavians were uniquely suited to both deep and shallow waters. They extended the reach of Norse raiders, traders and settlers along coastlines and along the major river valleys of north-western Europe. Rurik also expanded to the east and in 859 became ruler either by conquest or invitation by local people of the city of Novgorod (which means "new city") on the Volkhov River. His successors moved further, founding the early East Slavic state of Kievan Rus with the capital in Kiev. This persisted until 1240, when the Mongols invaded Russia.

Other Norse people, particularly those from the area that is now modern-day Sweden and Norway, continued south to the Black Sea and then on to Constantinople. Whenever these Viking ships ran aground in shallow waters, the Vikings would reportedly turn them on their sides and drag them across the shallows into deeper waters. The Eastern connections of these "Varangians" brought Byzantine silk, coins from Samarkand, even a cowrie shell from the Red Sea, to Viking York.

The Kingdom of the Franks under Charlemagne was particularly hard-hit by these raiders, who could sail up the Seine with near impunity. Near the end of Charlemagne's reign (and throughout the reigns of his sons and grandsons), a string of Norse raids began, culminating in a gradual Scandinavian conquest and settlement of the region now known as Normandy.

In 911, French King Charles the Simple was able to make an agreement with the Viking warleader Rollo, a chieftain of disputed Norwegian or Danish origins. Charles gave Rollo the title of duke and granted him and his followers possession of Normandy. In return, Rollo swore fealty to Charles, converted to Christianity, and undertook to defend the northern region of France against the incursions of other Viking groups. Several generations later, the Norman descendants of these Viking settlers not only identified themselves as Norman but carried the Norman language (a Romance language with Germanic influence), and their Norman culture, into England in 1066. With the Norman Conquest, they became the ruling aristocracy of Anglo-Saxon England.



Geography



Viking expeditions (blue line): depicting the immense breadth of their voyages through most of Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, Northern Africa, Asia Minor, the Arctic and North America

There are various theories concerning the causes of the Viking invasions. For people living along the coast, it would seem natural to seek new land by the sea. Another reason was that during this period England, Wales and Ireland, which were divided into many different warring kingdoms, were in internal disarray and became easy prey. The Franks, however, had well-defended coasts and heavily fortified ports and harbors. Pure thirst for adventure may also have been a factor. A reason for the raids is believed by some to be over-population caused by technological advances, such as the use of iron, or a shortage of women due to selective female infanticide. Although another cause could well have been pressure caused by the Frankish expansion to the south of Scandinavia and their subsequent attacks upon the Viking peoples. Another possible contributing factor is that Harald I of Norway ("Harald Fairhair") had united Norway around this time, and the bulk of the Vikings were displaced warriors who had been driven out of his kingdom and who had nowhere to go. Consequently, these Vikings became raiders, in search of subsistence and bases to launch counter-raids against Harald. One theory that has been suggested is that the Vikings would plant crops after the winter and go raiding as soon as the ice melted on the sea, then returned home with their loot, in time to harvest the crops.

One important centre of trade was at Hedeby. Close to the border with the Franks, it was effectively a crossroads between the cultures, until its eventual destruction by the Norwegians in an internecine dispute around 1050. York was the centre of the kingdom of Jórvík from 866, and discoveries there (e.g. a silk cap, a counterfeit of a coin from Samarkand and a cowry shell from the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf) suggest that Scandinavian trade connections in the 10th century reached beyond Byzantium. However, those items could also have been Byzantine imports, and there is no reason to assume that the Varangians travelled significantly beyond Byzantium and the Caspian Sea.

Northwestern Europe

England

According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Viking raiders struck England in 793 and raided Lindisfarne, the monastery that held Saint Cuthbert's relics. The raiders killed the monks and

captured the valuables. This raid marks the beginning of the "Viking Age of Invasion", made possible by the Viking long ship. There was great but sporadic violence from the last decade of the 8th century on England's northern and eastern shores: Viking raids continued on a small scale across coastal England. While the initial raiding groups were small, it is believed that a great amount of planning was involved. The Norwegians raided during the winter between 840 and 841, rather than the usual summer, having waited on an island off Ireland. In 850 Vikings overwintered for the first time in England, on the island of Thanet, Kent. In 854 a raiding party overwintered a second time, at the Isle of Sheppey in the Thames estuary. In 864 they reverted to Thanet for their winter encampment.



The Anglo-Saxon dioceses before 925. Normal diocesan life was greatly disrupted in England during the Viking Age.

The following year the Great Heathen Army led by the Brothers Ivar the Boneless, Halfdan and Ubba, and also by another Viking Guthrum, arrived in East Anglia. They proceeded to cross England into Northumbria and captured York, establishing the Viking community of Jorvik, where some settled as farmers and craftsmen. Most of the English kingdoms, being in turmoil, could not stand against the Vikings. In 867 Northumbria became the northern kingdom of the coalescing Danelaw, after its conquest by the brothers Halfdan Ragnarsson and Ivar the Boneless, who installed an Englishman, Ecgerht, as a puppet king. By 870 the "Great Summer Army" arrived in England, led by a Viking leader called Bagsecg and his Five Earls. Aided by the Great Heathen Army (which had already overrun much of England from its base in Jorvik), Bagsecg's forces, and Halfdan's forces (through an alliance), the combined Viking forces raided much of England until 871, when they planned an invasion of Wessex. On 8 January 871, Bagsecg was killed at the Battle of Ashdown along with his Earls. As a result, many of the Vikings returned to northern England, where Jorvik had become the centre of the Viking kingdom but Alfred of Wessex managed to keep them out of his country. Alfred and his successors continued to drive back the Viking frontier and take York. A new wave of Norwegian Vikings appeared in England in 947 when Erik Bloodaxe captured York.



Fire-gilded dragon's head from Ireland, found in a Viking grave at Stavanger, Norway (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen)

In 1003 the Danish King Sweyn Forkbeard started a series of raids against England. This culminated in a full-scale invasion that led to Sweyn being crowned king of England in 1013. Sweyn was also king of Denmark and parts of Norway at this time. The throne of England passed to Edmund Ironside of Wessex after Sweyn's death in 1014. Sweyn's son, Cnut the Great, won the throne of England in 1016 through conquest. When Cnut the Great died in 1035 he was a king of Denmark, England, Norway, and parts of Sweden. Harold Harefoot became king of England after Cnut's death and Viking rule of England ceased.

The Viking presence dwindled until 1066, when the invading Norsemen lost their final battle with the English at Stamford Bridge. Nineteen days later the Normans, themselves descended from Norsemen, invaded England and defeated the weakened English army at the Battle of Hastings.

In 1152, Eystein II of Norway led a plundering raid down the east coast of Britain.

Ireland

Longphort phase

The Vikings conducted extensive raids in Ireland. They founded Limerick in 812, then established a settlement near Waterford in 853, invaded Dublin and maintained control until 1169, and founded trading ports in Cork in the 9th century. The Vikings and Scandinavians settled down and intermixed with the Irish. Literature, crafts, and decorative styles in Ireland and Britain reflected Scandinavian culture. Vikings traded at Irish markets in Dublin. Excavations found imported fabrics from England, Byzantium, Persia and central Asia. Dublin became so crowded by the 11th century that houses were constructed outside the town walls.

The Vikings pillaged monasteries on Ireland's west coast in 795 and then spread out to cover the rest of the coastline. The north and east of the island were most affected. During the first 40 years, the raids were conducted by small, mobile Viking groups. By 830, the groups consisted of large fleets of Viking ships. From 840, the Vikings began establishing permanent bases at the coasts. Dublin was the most significant settlement in the long term. The Irish became accustomed to the Viking presence. In some cases they became allies and married each other.

In 832, a Viking fleet of about 120 invaded kingdoms on Ireland's northern and eastern coasts. Some believe that the increased number of invaders coincided with Scandinavian leaders' desires to control the profitable raids on the western shores of Ireland. During the mid-830s, raids began to push deeper into Ireland, as opposed to just touching the coasts. Navigable waterways made this deeper penetration possible. After 840, the Vikings had several bases in strategic locations dispersed throughout Ireland.

In 838, a small Viking fleet entered the River Liffey in eastern Ireland. The Vikings set up a base, which the Irish called a longphort. This longphort eventually became Dublin. After this interaction, the Irish experienced Viking forces for about 40 years. The Vikings also established longphorts in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Wexford. The Vikings could sail through on the main river and branch off into different areas of the country.

Battle of Clontarf

One of the last major battles involving Vikings was the Battle of Clontarf on 23 April 1014, in which Vikings fought both for the Irish over-king Brian Boru's army and for the Viking-led army opposing him. Irish and Viking literature depict the Battle of Clontarf as a gathering of this world and the supernatural. For example, witches, goblins, and demons were present. A Viking poem portrays the environment as strongly pagan. Valkyries chanted and decided who would live and die.

Scotland

While there are few records, the Vikings are thought to have led their first raids in Scotland on the holy island of Iona in 794, the year following the raid on the other holy island of Lindisfarne, Northumbria.

In 839, a large Norse fleet invaded via the River Tay and River Earn, both of which were highly navigable, and reached into the heart of the Pictish kingdom of Fortriu. They defeated Eogán mac Óengusa, king of the Picts, his brother Bran and the king of the Scots of Dál Riata, Áed mac Boanta, along with many members of the Pictish aristocracy in battle. The sophisticated kingdom that had been built fell apart, as did the Pictish leadership, which had been stable for more than a hundred years since the time of Óengus mac Fergusa (The accession of Cináed mac Ailpín as king of both Picts and Scots can be attributed to the aftermath of this event).

Earldom of Orkney

By the mid-9th century the Norsemen had settled in Shetland, Orkney (the Nordreys- *Norðreyjar*), the Hebrides and Man, (the Sudreys- *Súðreyjar* – this survives in the Diocese of Sodor and Man) and parts of mainland Scotland. The Norse settlers were to some extent integrating with the local Gaelic population (*see-Gall Gaidheal*) in the Hebrides and Man. These areas were ruled over by local Jarls, originally captains of ships or Hersirs. The Jarl of Orkney and Shetland however, claimed supremacy.

In 875, King Harald Fairhair led a fleet from Norway to Scotland. In his attempt to unite Norway, he found that many of those opposed to his rise to power had taken refuge in the Isles. From here, they were raiding not only foreign lands but were also attacking Norway itself. He organized a fleet and was able to subdue the rebels, and in doing so brought the independent Jarls under his control, many of the rebels having fled to Iceland. He found himself ruling not only Norway, but the Isles, Man and parts of Scotland.

Kings of the Isles

In 876 the Gall-Gaidheal of Man and the Hebrides rebelled against Harald. A fleet was sent against them led by Ketil Flatnose to regain control. On his success, Ketil was to rule the Sudreys as a vassal

of King Harald. His grandson Thorstein the Red and Sigurd the Mighty, Jarl of Orkney invaded Scotland were able to exact tribute from nearly half the kingdom until their deaths in battle. Ketil declared himself King of the Isles. Ketil was eventually outlawed and fearing the bounty on his head fled to Iceland.

The Gall-Gaidheal Kings of the Isles continued to act semi independently, in 973 forming a defensive pact with the Kings of Scotland and Strathclyde. In 1095, the King of Mann and the Isles Godred Crovan was killed by Magnus Barelegs, King of Norway. Magnus and King Edgar of Scotland agreed a treaty. The islands would be controlled by Norway, but mainland territories would go to Scotland. The King of Norway nominally continued to be king of the Isles and Man. However, in 1156, The kingdom was split into two. The Western Isles and Man continued as to be called the "Kingdom of Man and the Isles", but the Inner Hebrides came under the influence of Somerled, a Gaelic speaker, who was styled 'King of the Hebrides'. His kingdom was to develop latterly into the Lordship of the Isles.

In eastern Aberdeenshire the Danes invaded at least as far north as the area near Cruden Bay.

The Jarls of Orkney continued to rule much of Northern Scotland until 1196, when Harald Maddadsson agreed to pay tribute to William the Lion, King of Scots for his territories on the Mainland.

The end of the Viking age *proper* in Scotland is generally considered to be in 1266. In 1263, King Haakon IV of Norway, in retaliation for a Scots expedition to Skye, arrived on the west coast with a fleet from Norway and Orkney. His fleet linked up with those of King Magnus of Man and King Dougal of the Hebrides. After peace talks failed, his forces met with the Scots at Largs, in Ayrshire. The battle proved indecisive, but it did ensure that the Norse were not able to mount a further attack that year. Haakon died overwintering in Orkney, and by 1266, his son Magnus the Law-mender ceded the Kingdom of Man and the Isles, with all territories on mainland Scotland to Alexander III, through the Treaty of Perth.

Orkney and Shetland continued to be ruled as autonomous Jarldoms under Norway until 1468, when King Christian I pledged them as security on the dowry of his daughter, who was betrothed to James III of Scotland. Although attempts were made during the 17th and 18th centuries to redeem Shetland, without success, and Charles II ratifying the pawning in the 1669 Act for annexation of Orkney and Shetland to the Crown, explicitly exempting them from any "dissolution of His Majesty's lands", they are currently considered as being officially part of the United Kingdom.

Wales

Wales was not colonized by the Vikings as heavily as eastern England. The Vikings did, however, settle in the south around St. David's, Haverfordwest, and Gower, among other places. Place names such as Skokholm, Skomer, and Swansea remain as evidence of the Norse settlement. The Vikings, however, did not subdue the Welsh mountain kingdoms.

Iceland

According to Sagas, Iceland was discovered by Naddodd, a Viking from the Faroe Islands, after which it was settled by mostly Norwegians fleeing the oppressive rule of Harald Fairhair (late 9th century). While harsh, the land allowed for a pastoral farming life familiar to the Norse. According to the saga of Erik the Red, when Erik was exiled from Iceland he sailed west and pioneered Greenland.

Greenland

The Viking Age settlements in Greenland were established in the sheltered fjords of the southern and western coast. They settled in three separate areas along approximately 650 kilometres (350 nautical miles; 400 statute miles) of the western coast. While harsh, the microclimates along some fjords

allowed for a pastoral lifestyle similar to that of Iceland, until the climate changed for the worse with the "Little Ice Age" around 1400.

- The Eastern Settlement. The remains of about 450 farms have been found here. Erik the Red settled at Brattahlid on Ericsfjord.
- The Middle Settlement, near modern Ivgutut, consisting of about 20 farms.
- The Western Settlement at modern Godthåbsfjord, established before the 12th century. It has been extensively excavated by archaeologists.

Southern and eastern Europe



Map showing the major Varangian trade routes: the Volga trade route (in red) and the Trade Route from the Varangians to the Greeks (in purple). Other trade routes of the 8th–11th centuries shown in orange.

The **Varangians** or **Varyags** (Russian, Ukrainian: Варяги, *Varyagi*; Belarusian: Bapari, *Varahi*; Greek : Βάρηγγοι, Βαριάγγοι, *Varangoi*) sometimes referred to as *Variagians* were Scandinavians, often Swedes, who migrated eastwards and southwards through what is now Russia, Belarus and Ukraine mainly in the 9th and 10th centuries. Engaging in trade, piracy and mercenary activities, they roamed the river systems and portages of Gardariki, reaching the Caspian Sea and Constantinople. Contemporary English publications also use the name "Viking" for early Varangians in some contexts.^{[35][36]}

The term Varangian remained in usage in the Byzantine Empire until the 13th century, largely disconnected from its Scandinavian roots by then. Having settled Aldeigja (Ladoga) in the 750s, Scandinavian colonists were probably an element in the early ethnogenesis of the Rus' people, and likely played a role in the formation of the Rus' Khaganate. The Varangians (**Varyags**, in Old East Slavic) are first mentioned by the Primary Chronicle as having exacted tribute from the Slavic and Finnic tribes in 859. It was the time of rapid expansion of the Vikings in Northern Europe; England began to pay Danegeld in 859, and the Curonians of Grobin faced an invasion by the Swedes at about the same date.

In 862, the Finnic and Slavic tribes rebelled against the Varangian Rus, driving them overseas back to Scandinavia, but soon started to conflict with each other. The disorder prompted the tribes to invite back the Varangian Rus "to come and rule them" and bring peace to the region. This was a somewhat bilateral relation with the Varagians defending the cities that they ruled. Led by Rurik and his brothers Truvor and Sineus, the invited Varangians (called Rus') settled around the town of Novgorod (Holmgard).

In the 9th century, the Rus' operated the Volga trade route, which connected Northern Russia (Gardariki) with the Middle East (Serkland). As the Volga route declined by the end of the century, the Trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks rapidly overtook it in popularity. Apart from Ladoga and Novgorod, Gnezdovo and Gotland were major centers for Varangian trade.

Western historians tend to agree with the Primary Chronicle that these Scandinavians founded Kievan Rus' in the 880s and gave their name to the land. Many Slavic scholars are opposed to this theory of Germanic¹ influence on the Rus' (people) and have suggested alternative scenarios for this part of Eastern European history.

In contrast to the intense Scandinavian influence in Normandy and the British Isles, Varangian culture did not survive to a great extent in the East. Instead, the Varangian ruling classes of the two powerful city-states of Novgorod and Kiev were thoroughly Slavicized by the end of the 10th century. Old Norse was spoken in one district of Novgorod, however, until the 13th century.

Central Europe

Viking Age Scandinavian settlements were set up along the southern coast of the Baltic Sea, primarily for trade purposes. Their appearance coincides with the settlement and consolidation of the Slavic tribes in the respective areas. Scandinavians had contacts to the Slavs since their very immigration, these first contacts were soon followed by both the construction of Scandinavian emporia and Slavic burghs in their vicinity. The Scandinavian settlements were larger than the early Slavic ones, their craftsmen had a considerably higher productivity, and in contrast to the early Slavs, the Scandinavians were capable of seafaring. Their importance for trade with the Slavic world however was limited to the coastal regions and their hinterlands.

Scandinavian settlements at the Mecklenburgian coast include Reric (Groß Strömkendorf) on the eastern coast of Wismar Bay, and Dierkow (near Rostock). Reric was set up around the year 700, but following later warfare between Obodrites and Danes, the merchants were resettled to Haithabu. Dierkow prospered from the late 8th to the early 9th century.

Scandinavian settlements at the Pomeranian coast include Wolin (on the isle of Wolin), Ralswiek (on the isle of Rügen), Altes Lager Menzlin (at the lower Peene river), and Bardy-Świelubie near modern Kołobrzeg. Menzlin was set up in the mid-8th century. Wolin and Ralswiek began to prosper in the course of the 9th century. A merchants' settlement has also been suggested near Arkona, but no archeological evidence supports this theory. Menzlin and Bardy-Świelubie were vacated in the late 9th century, Ralswiek made it into the new millennium, but at the time when written chronicles reported the site in the 12th century it had lost all its importance. Wolin, thought to be identical with legendary Vineta and semilegendary Jomsborg, base of the Jomsvikings, was destroyed by the Danes in the 12th century.

Scandinavian arrowheads from the 8th and 9th centuries were found between the coast and the lake chains in the Mecklenburgian and Pomeranian hinterlands, pointing at periods of warfare between the Scandinavians and Slavs.

Scandinavian settlements existed along the southeastern Baltic coast in Truso and Kaup (Old Prussia), and in Grobin (Courland, Latvia).

Western Europe

France

The French region of Normandy takes its name from the Viking invaders who were called *Normanni*, which means 'men of the North'.

The first Viking raids began between 790 and 800 along the coasts of western France. They were carried out primarily in the summer, as the Vikings wintered in Scandinavia. Several coastal areas were lost during the reign of Louis the Pious (814–840). But the Vikings took advantage of the quarrels in the royal family caused after the death of Louis the Pious to settle their first colony in the south-west (Gascony) of the kingdom of Francia, which was more or less abandoned by the Frankish

kings after their two defeats at Roncevaux. The incursions in 841 caused severe damage to Rouen and Jumièges. The Viking attackers sought to capture the treasures stored at monasteries, easy prey given the monks' lack of defensive capacity. In 845 an expedition up the Seine reached Paris. The presence of Carolingian *deniers* of ca 847, found in 1871 among a hoard at Mullaghboden, County Limerick, where coins were neither minted nor normally used in trade, probably represents booty from the raids of 843–6. After 851, Vikings began to stay in the lower Seine valley for the winter. Twice more in the 860s Vikings rowed to Paris, leaving only when they acquired sufficient loot or bribes from the Carolingian rulers.

The Carolingian kings tended to have contradictory politics, which had severe consequences. In 867, Charles the Bald signed the Treaty of Compiègne, by which he agreed to yield the Cotentin Peninsula to the Breton king Salomon, on the condition that Salomon would take an oath of fidelity and fight as an ally against the Vikings. Nevertheless, in 911 the Viking leader Rollo forced Charles the Simple to sign the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, under which Charles gave Rouen and the area of present-day Upper Normandy to Rollo, establishing the Duchy of Normandy. In exchange, Rollo pledged vassalage to Charles in 940, agreed to be baptized, and vowed to guard the estuaries of the Seine from further Viking attacks.

While many buildings were pillaged, burned, or destroyed by the Viking raids, ecclesiastical sources may have been overly negative as no city was completely destroyed. On the other hand, many monasteries were pillaged and all the abbeys were destroyed. Rollo and his successors brought about rapid recoveries from the raids.

The Scandinavian colonization was principally Danish, with a strong Norwegian element. A few Swedes were present. The merging of the Scandinavian and native elements contributed to the creation of one of the most powerful feudal states of Western Europe. The naval ability of the Normans would allow them to conquer England and southern Italy, and play a key role in the Crusades.

Spain

After 842, when the Vikings set up a permanent base at the mouth of the Loire River, they could strike as far as northern Spain. They attacked Cadiz in AD 844. In some of their raids they were crushed either by Kingdom of Asturias or Emirate armies. These Vikings were Hispanized in all Christian kingdoms, while they kept their ethnic identity and culture in Al-Andalus.

In 1015, a Viking fleet entered the river Minho and sacked the episcopal city of Tui (Galicia); no new bishop was appointed until 1070.

Portugal

In 844, many dozens of drakkars appeared in the "Mar da Palha" ("the Sea of Straw", mouth of the Tagus river). After a siege, the Vikings conquered Lisbon (at the time, the city was under Muslim rule and known as Al-Ushbuna). They left after 13 days, following a resistance led by Alah Ibn Hazm and the city's inhabitants. Another raid was attempted in 966, without success.

Other territories

North America

In about 986, Bjarni Herjólfsson, Leif Ericson and Þórfinnr Karlsefni from Greenland reached North America and attempted to settle the land they called Vinland. They created a small settlement on the northern peninsula of present-day Newfoundland, near *L'Anse aux Meadows*. Conflict with indigenous peoples and lack of support from Greenland brought the Vinland colony to an end within a few years. The archaeological remains are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Old Norse influence on the English language

The long-term linguistic effect of the Viking settlements in England was threefold: over a thousand Old Norse words eventually became part of Standard English; numerous places in the East and North-east of England have Danish names, and many English personal names are of Scandinavian origin. Scandinavian words that entered the English language included *landing*, *score*, *beck*, *fellow*, *take*, *busting* and *steersman*. The vast majority of loan words did not appear in documents until the early 12th century; these included many modern words which used *sk-* sounds, such as *skirt*, *sky*, and *skin*; other words appearing in written sources at this time included *again*, *awkward*, *birth*, *cake*, *dregs*, *fog*, *freckles*, *gasp*, *law*, *moss*, *neck*, *ransack*, *root*, *scowl*, *sister*, *seat*, *sly*, *smile*, *want*, *weak* and *window* from Old Norse meaning "wind-eye". Some of the words that came into use are among the most common in English, such as *to go*, *to come*, *to sit*, *to listen*, *to eat*, *both*, *same*, *get* and *give*. The system of personal pronouns was affected, with *they*, *them* and *their* replacing the earlier forms. Old Norse influenced the verb *to be*; the replacement of *sindon* by *are* is almost certainly Scandinavian in origin, as is the third-person-singular ending *-s* in the present tense of verbs.

There are more than 1,500 Scandinavian place names in England, mainly in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (within the former boundaries of the *Danelaw*): over 600 end in *-by*, the Scandinavian word for "village" — for example *Grimsbys*, *Naseby* and *Whitby*; many others end in *-thorpe* ("farm"), *-thwaite* ("clearing"), and *-toft* ("homestead").

The distribution of family names showing Scandinavian influence is still, as an analysis of names ending in *-son* reveals, concentrated in the north and east, corresponding to areas of former Viking settlement. Early medieval records indicate that over 60% of personal names in Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire showed Scandinavian influence.

Technology

The Vikings were equipped with the technologically superior long ships; for purposes of conducting trade however, another type of ship, the *knarr*, wider and deeper in draft, were customarily used. The Vikings were competent sailors, adept in land warfare as well as at sea, and they often struck at accessible and poorly defended targets, usually with near impunity. The effectiveness of these tactics earned Vikings a formidable reputation as raiders and pirates. Chroniclers paid little attention to other aspects of medieval Scandinavian culture. This slant was accentuated by the absence of contemporary primary source documentation from within the Viking Age communities themselves. Little documentary evidence was available until later, when Christian sources began to contribute. As historians and archaeologists have developed more resources to challenge the one-sided descriptions of the chroniclers, a more balanced picture of the Norsemen has become apparent.

The Vikings used their long ships to travel vast distances and attain certain tactical advantages in battle. They could perform highly efficient hit-and-run attacks, in which they quickly approached a target, then left as rapidly as possible before a counter-offensive could be launched. Because of the ships' negligible draft, the Vikings could sail in shallow waters, allowing them to invade far inland along rivers. The ships' speed was also prodigious for the time, estimated at a maximum of 14–15 knots (26–28 km/h). The use of the long ships ended when technology changed, and ships began to be constructed using saws instead of axes. This led to a lesser quality of ships.

While battles at sea were rare, they would occasionally occur when Viking ships attempted to board European merchant vessels in Scandinavian waters. When larger scale battles ensued, Viking crews would rope together all nearby ships and slowly proceed towards the enemy targets. While advancing, the warriors hurled spears, arrows, and other projectiles at the opponents. When the ships were sufficiently close, melee combat would ensue using axes, swords, and spears until the enemy

ship could be easily boarded. The roping technique allowed Viking crews to remain strong in numbers and act as a unit, but this uniformity also created problems. A Viking ship in the line could not retreat or pursue hostiles without breaking the formation and cutting the ropes, which weakened the overall Viking fleet and was a burdensome task to perform in the heat of battle. In general, these tactics enabled Vikings to quickly destroy the meagre opposition posted during raids.

Together with an increasing centralization of government in the Scandinavian countries, the old system of *leidang* — a fleet mobilization system, where every *skipen* (ship community) had to deliver one ship and crew — was discontinued. Changes in shipbuilding in the rest of Europe led to the demise of the longship for military purposes. By the 11th and 12th centuries, European fighting ships were built with raised platforms fore and aft, from which archers could shoot down into the relatively low longships.

The nautical achievements of the Vikings were exceptional. For instance, they made distance tables for sea voyages that were remarkably precise. They have been found to differ only 2–4% from modern satellite measurements, even on such long distances as across the Atlantic Ocean.

The archaeological find known as the Visby lenses from the Swedish island of Gotland may be components of a telescope. It appears to date from long before the invention of the telescope in the 17th century. Recent evidence suggests that the Vikings also made use of an optical compass as a navigation aid, using the light-splitting and polarization-filtering properties of Iceland spar to find the location of the sun when it was not directly visible.

An archaeological find in Sweden consists of a bone fragment fixated with in-operated material; the piece is as yet undated. These bones might be the remains of a trader from the Middle East.

Religion

Trade centres

Some of the most important trading ports during the period include both existing and ancient cities such as Aarhus (Denmark), Ribe (Denmark), Hedeby (Germany), Vineta (Pomerania), Truso (Poland), Bjørgvin (Norway), Kaupang (Norway), Skiringssal (Norway), Birka (Sweden), Bordeaux (France), York (England), Dublin (Ireland) and Aldeigjuborg (Russia).

Settlements outside Scandinavia

British Isles

England

- Danelaw
- Jórvík (York)
- Cumbria

Ireland

- Arklow
- Dyflin (Dublin)
- Hlymrekr (Limerick)
- Veðrafjörðr (Waterford)
- Víkingr-ló (Wicklów)^[60]
- Veisafjörðr (Wexford)

Isle of Man

- Mann

Scotland

- Caithness
- Galloway
- Kintyre
- Norðreyjar (Orkney and Shetland)
- Ross
- Suðreyjar (Hebrides)
- Sutherland

Western Europe

- Normandy

Eastern Europe

- Garðaríki (Russia)
- Seeburg

Atlantic

- Faroe Islands
- Iceland
- Greenland

North America

- L'Anse aux Meadows (and possibly a larger area called Vinland)