



LOST KINGDOMS

OF THE

WIKING

From Canada to Constantinople, the Norse raiders pillaged and plundered the known world in search of treasure and territory

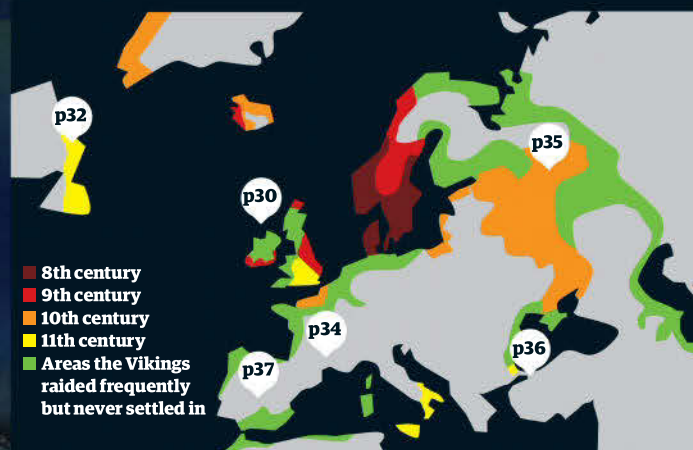
Written by Jack Griffiths

Often portrayed as bloodthirsty raiders, the Vikings were a civilisation that travelled to more of the Early Medieval world than anyone else. Originating from Scandinavia, they branched out into mainland Europe to find food, land and riches, establishing kingdoms across the known world. For hundreds of years a fleet of longships on the horizon struck fear into the hearts of European peoples like the Franks, Saxons and Byzantines. The men from the north were traders as well as raiders, though, and commerce helped fund their lengthy expeditions. Bringing with them fur, wool and whalebone, they traded their goods for silver, silk and spices, which they then

sold on. To trade or raid? It all hinged on the best way to make profit.

The Vikings are perhaps most famous for their attacks on the British Isles, the forced establishment of the Danelaw and battles against Alfred the Great. However, they sailed their longships all across Europe and ruled over many diverse lands. They even made forays into parts of Asia, America and Africa. From Newfoundland in the west to Kiev in the east, the Norsemen braved treacherous oceans and faced deadly adversaries. They may have seemed like savages, but it's the Norsemen we have to thank for the establishment and development of many of the European kingdoms that flourished after their decline.

Viking expansion



IRELAND

For more than 200 years the Vikings exerted influence over vast swathes of the Emerald Isle

Norwegian Norsemen first appeared in Ireland at the end of the 8th century with a hit-and-run attack on a monastery on either Rathlin or Lambay Island. These sporadic coastal attacks continued for 30 years, and despite later spreading to the mainland, actually had no great effect on the Irish settlements that would rebuild during the lulls in fighting. At this stage, the marauders were content with staging assaults that lasted no longer than a few days before returning to Scandinavia to sell their spoils. At the start of the next century, however, the Vikings grew in confidence and the pillaging intensified. Ship enclosures (known as longphorts) were established in Dublin, and these fixed positions allowed the raiders to ravage the countryside at will. It wasn't long until Irish kings had had enough. The king of Tara, Máel Seachnail, took the fight back to the Vikings, and near Skreen in County Meath, killed no less than 700 Nordic raiders.

The increase in assaults had a profound effect on the Celtic-Irish society for more than two centuries. Norse-Irish alliances became common, but by the start of the 10th century, Vikings from Denmark were added to the mix. To differentiate, Vikings from Norway were known as the 'Lochlainn' and the Danish Norsemen as the 'Danair'. The Viking success on the British Isles only increased the number of attacks, and in the years leading up to 1000, they tactically used their longships to travel up rivers and attack further inland. The Norwegians dominated initially, financed by all the monasteries they plundered, but the disorganised nature of their attacks meant the Danes' power base grew steadily.

On the Irish side, one man rose above the others, the king of Munster, Brian Boru. With his support base in the southern kingdom, Brian assembled a unified confederate army, which imposed itself as the major force in the region. The army destroyed Dublin's fortress, allied with many of the Viking leaders and was even powerful enough to expel

several Norse clans from Ireland entirely. Brian claimed kingship in league with the Dublin Norse, and no one dared challenge him. His supremacy lasted until 1012, when a series of intense Viking attacks culminated in the critical Battle of Clontarf in 1014.

Taking place on 23 April, Clontarf was a battle between the majority of the Irish kingdoms led by Brian against Vikings supported by Mael Morda, the king of Leinster, who had switched allegiances after a dispute. Brian had approximately 7,000 troops at his disposal, and they marched to Dublin to engage 4,000 Leinster men and 3,000 Norsemen who had landed on the shoreline at sunrise. As the armies brawled, Morda's men scored an early advantage as his vicious Viking centre proved devastatingly effective. The pendulum swung in the other direction, however, when the Viking champions Brodir and Sigurd were defeated. As afternoon came, Brian's men managed to cut off the Viking access to their longships. This was a critical blow to Morda's forces, who began to flee towards the one bridge over the nearby River Liffey to safety. As they tried to escape, the returning Máel Seachnail and his men emerged and cut off access to the bridge. The Vikings and the Leinster men were now trapped and subsequently routed.

The battle was the bloodiest single conflict in ancient Irish history. Brian lay dead in the mud with 4,000 of his own men and, crucially, 6,000 Leinster men and Vikings lay slaughtered alongside them. The battle resulted in the end of a period of great turmoil in Ireland and initiated a time of relative peace in which the Irish and the remaining Vikings lived together. The Norsemen who stayed in Ireland were absorbed into Irish culture and started to intermarry. The Danish kingdom of Dublin had stood for more than 200 years prior to Clontarf, but just 52 years later, Harald Hardrada would lose at Stamford Bridge and the great Viking age of the British Isles would be over.

Historic Viking settlements can be easily identified by '-by' and '-thorpe' suffixes, which in Old Norse meant homestead and farm. Therefore, cities and towns such as Derby Grimsby, Whitby and Scunthorpe were once Nordic settlements.

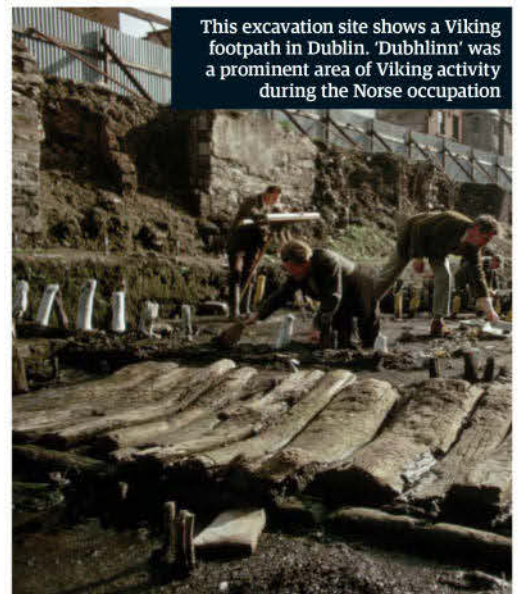


■ English territory ■ Danish or Norse territory
■ Celtic lands ■ Swamp

Vikings in the British Isles

The areas of Viking conquest that became known as the Danelaw

The first significant Viking attack on the British Isles was in 793, when the Vikings carried out a brutal raid on the island monastery of Lindisfarne. The almost constant assaults on Britain's coastline over the next few centuries were too much for the Anglo-Saxons, and Celts, who surrendered a vast swathe of land to the Norse raiders.



This excavation site shows a Viking footpath in Dublin. 'Dubhlinn' was a prominent area of Viking activity during the Norse occupation

The theories behind the Viking expansion

Exhausted farmland



Scandinavia has a variety of landscapes but none were ideal for farming. Norway was too mountainous, Sweden had extensive forests while Denmark could be too sandy.

Desire for treasure



Searching far-off lands for plunder is something the Vikings became associated with. Raids were carried out overseas and a settlement would be built to cement their claim to the loot.

Overcrowding



As the Viking population swelled, many sought to move elsewhere. The eldest son inherited family lands, so younger brothers would venture in search of territory to call their own.

Wanderlust



A sense of adventure was a common Viking trait. Even when the treasure dried up, the Norsemen were keen to seek out new lands in far-off places like America and Constantinople.

New trade routes



The popularity of Christianity meant that many of the nearby Christian kingdoms refused to trade. As a result, the pagan Vikings would either invade the lands or look elsewhere for trade.



The Norse raiders initially concentrated their attacks on monasteries as this was the best chance of gaining the priciest plunder

At Clontarf, the Vikings amassed allies from both the Orkneys and the Isle of Man, but the reinforcements were not enough for victory



Norse words that invaded the English language

OLD NORSE

Modern English

Sala

Sale

Klubba

Club

Beit

Snack

Rannsaka

Ransack

Fiall

Hill

Berserkr

Berserk

Hloppa

Flea

Burðr

Birth

Kalla

Call

Kasta

Cast

Krafla

Crawl

Hús bóndi

Husband

Leggr

Leg

Uggr

Ugly

Rotinn

Rotten

Renna

Run

Traust

Trust

Sloegr

Sly

Slatra

Slaughter

Lauss

Loose

Gervi

Gear

Kip

Kid

Knifr

Knife

north america

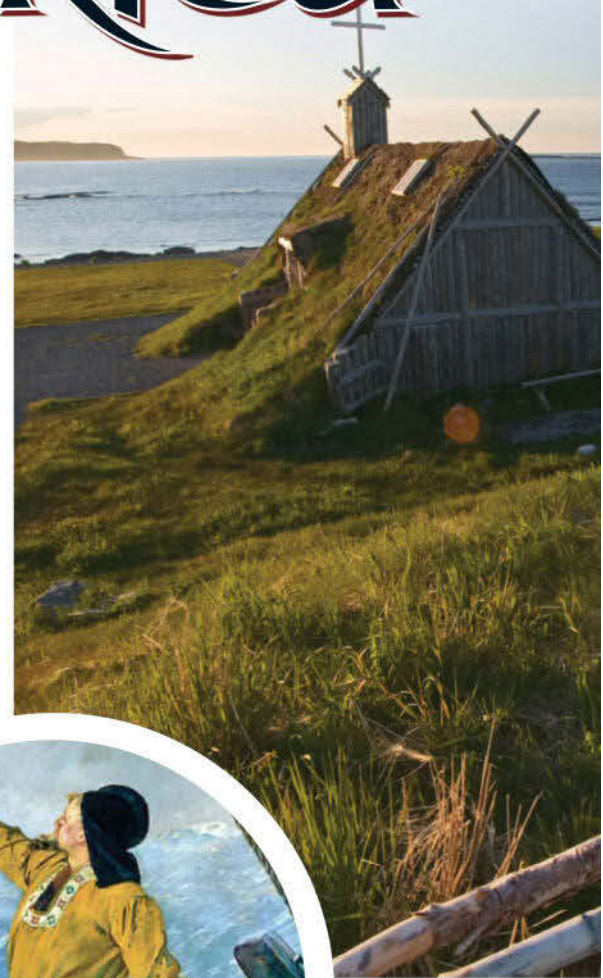
With parts of Northern Europe ransacked, the Vikings turned their attention to the other side of the Atlantic



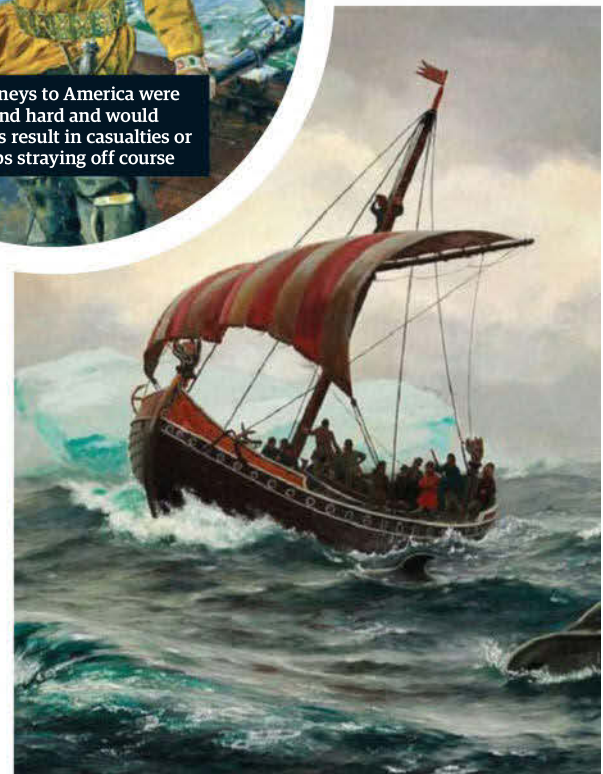
After this initial excursion, the westward journeys only continued. The most extensive voyage was undertaken by Thorfinn Karlesfni, who intended to settle in this new found land for good, taking more than 100 men and women as well as tools, weapons and farm animals on his expedition. His wife gave birth to the first child from the old world to be born in the new. As more Vikings made the journey, it was inevitable they would make contact with the native population. Norse men and women called the natives Skraelingjar and became trading partners, benefiting from the fur given to them by the locals. The Skraelingjar were a pre-Iron Age civilisation and most likely the ancestors of the modern Inuit. They were given their first taste of iron weaponry and tools by these visitors from across the sea.

The settlements built by the Vikings in North America consisted of sod walls with peaked timber roofs. The most prominent settlement, and what is seen as proof of Viking occupation, is L'Anse aux Meadows. Located on the northern tip of Vinland, the area is believed to have been home to about 75 people and would have probably acted as a base camp for repairing ships. After approximately two or three years of attempted colonisation, the Skraelingjar began to see the Vikings as a threat and unrest broke out. As a result of the violence, trade visits were no longer a worthwhile venture. Viking activity in North America was dramatically reduced, as the settlements in Greenland could no longer support further trade missions that lost both men and valuable resources. Greenland wasn't a fully functioning Norse colony, and these less than favourable economic conditions made journeys to North America more and more difficult.

The Viking failure to colonise the Americas on a long-term basis was due to both natural hazards and native resistance, but also confirmed the limitations of nautical conquest in the early Middle Ages. The distance from Greenland to Vinland is about 3,500 kilometres, which was a tough journey for any Medieval vessel, and the small population didn't have the manpower to overpower the natives. They may have discovered North America 500 years before Columbus, but the Vikings were unable to sustain a stable colony in the New World.



The journeys to America were long and hard and would sometimes result in casualties or longships straying off course



The true extent of the Viking presence on North America is hotly debated, but it will always be one of the greatest achievements of maritime exploration. After the Norse Vikings populated Iceland in about 870, Greenland was next to follow, with its conquest instigated in the 980s by the notorious Erik the Red. The rough seas of the Atlantic were much tougher than the Vikings had previously experienced on the North Sea. To combat the difficult conditions, the Norse mariners used a type of ship known as a knarr. Larger than the standard longship, it could carry much more cargo and would stand up to whatever the Atlantic had to throw at it. This allowed for longer and more fruitful journeys. By 1150, 72,000 Norsemen were living in Iceland while 5,000 resided in Greenland.

The adventuring continued, and the first Viking sightings of North America came in about 985, when Icelander Bjarni Herjólfsson spotted uncharted land after being blown off course on his way to Greenland. The stories of a new land encouraged others to seek it out. In about 1000, Leif Eriksson, the son of Erik the Red, was the first to set foot on this unexplored territory. Eriksson and his 35-man crew may have been sent by Norwegian king Olaf I to spread Christianity (Olaf was one of the first Vikings to preach the ideas of the religion) and discovered three places around the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Eriksson named them Helluland (land of flat rocks), Markland (land of forest and timber) and Vinland (land of warmth and vines). We know them today as Baffin Island, the Labrador coast and Newfoundland.

The Vikings made it to Greenland in 982 and established both eastern and western settlements with about 300 farmsteads



Norse technology was not significantly more advanced than that of the natives meaning the Vikings found it difficult to assert their authority



What became of Vinland?



Expert bio: Dr Alex Sanmark is reader in Medieval Archaeology at the Centre for Nordic Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands. She specialises in various aspects of the Viking Age, from religion to law and gender, both in

Scandinavia and the Norse settlements in the north Atlantic.

How important is L'Anse aux Meadows to our understanding of Viking settlements in the New World?

It is hugely important because it is the only Viking settlement in the New World. There are other types of archaeological evidence though. Two Icelandic sagas, for instance, tell us about the Vikings sailing to Vinland from Greenland and Iceland. This has, of course, spurred people's imagination, and many have been looking for evidence of Viking presence a lot

further south, especially in the US. Others have faked the evidence by producing their own runic inscriptions. The Viking settlement of the New World is an important political issue for some who are keen to show that 'Europeans' were there from early on. The sagas are highly problematic as sources as they are very

late, dating from the 13th century onwards, and they are also literature, meaning that they don't necessarily tell us exactly what happened. We can't rely on them for evidence, so this settlement is of great importance.

Are there any similar Viking settlements to L'Anse aux Meadows in the Americas?

No, but a possible Viking camp has been identified on Baffin Island in recent years. There is also an increasing amount of archaeological evidence from Canada that shows that the Vikings were there and traded with the natives. It is possible that established trading networks were in place and the Vikings may well have travelled a lot further inland than previously thought. Viking presence is above all traced through artefacts that the native people did not have, such as finds of metal, strike-a-lights and woollen cloth. These finds are important as they point to friendly interactions, which is not always the image provided by the written sources.

Why did the Vikings survive hundreds of years in Greenland but could not establish themselves in Vinland, with its richer resources and better climate?

The settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows was probably never intended to be permanent, but rather a base for resources, such as wood, which they could not get in Greenland. The Vikings seem to have stayed there for short periods of time as the number of Norse in Greenland was never very large, and setting up a new colony would have required a substantial group of people to be successful. Also, L'Anse aux Meadows was not a very useful area for resources that were unavailable in Greenland, for these the Vikings had to travel quite far inland. The journey between Greenland and Canada was long and could take up to a month, which of course made regular journeys between the two areas difficult. It may be, although there is no evidence to prove this, that the relationship with the natives was so difficult that the settlement was abandoned.

What were relations with the Native Americans like?

We don't know very much about this. The sagas tell us both about trading with the native population and about fights between them. On the other hand, there is increasing evidence of interaction between the two groups and it may be that the

whole situation was a lot more positive than the image provided by the sagas. The sagas are literature after all, and it may have been more interesting to describe fighting than trading. In view of recent archaeological finds, I'm sure more evidence will be appearing in the future.

"The settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows was probably never intended to be permanent, but rather a base for resources"

How could a longship or a knarr make it all the way across the Atlantic?

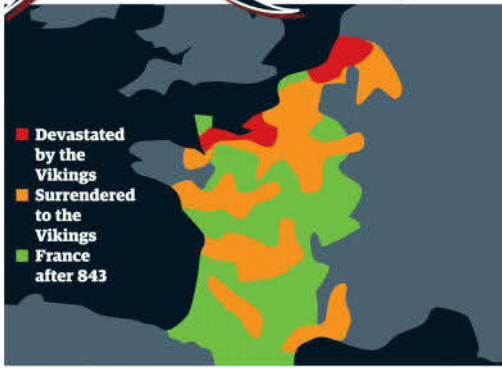
It may seem strange to us that people set out across the North Atlantic in open ships, but we need to see this in its context. It was of course a very long and dangerous journey, and the sagas contain stories about ships being lost on the way. People in the Viking age were, however, very used to travelling in this way and they didn't start by crossing the Atlantic. People in Scandinavia were using ships with sails from the early Iron Age and developed their ships and sailing skills over several hundred years. They were extremely talented seamen and knew when and how to sail, following currents, fish and seabirds.

LOST KINGDOMS OF THE VIKINGS

The longship could easily make the trip from Scandinavia to France and was nimble enough to traverse rivers as well



FRANCE Across the Channel, Vikings threatened the Franks in Normandy, Brittany and Aquitaine



By the end of the 9th century, Vikings from Denmark had increased the amount of coastal assaults on Western Europe and would proceed to populate significant amounts of territory in Normandy, Brittany and Aquitaine. Their leader, Reginherus or Ragnar, thought by some to be the legendary figure Ragnar Lodbrok described in Old Norse poetry, had the confidence and the audacity to siege Paris in 845.

Ragnar led an army of 120 longships and 5,000 warriors - fierce men who had already scorched the earth all over Europe. After plundering Rouen, the siege of Paris began on 28 March. Although the attackers were stopped in their tracks by a plague that spread through the camp, they still managed to take the city, and were only stopped from

burning it to the ground by a last-ditch Frankish ransom of 7,000 pounds of silver.

Despite being primarily Danish territory, a Norwegian leader emerged by the name of Hrólfr, or, as he is more commonly known, Rollo. Already a veteran of conflicts on the British Isles, his military forces besieged the city of Chartres, forcing the king of the Franks, Charles III, to sign the Treaty of Saint Clair-sur-Epte in 911, granting Rollo feudal rights in the area around Rouen.

Viking land now stretched from Normandy in the north to Aquitaine in the south, and remained under Viking control for about two centuries. Even though they had foreign invaders in their lands, this was actually of benefit to the Franks as it meant the Norsemen would effectively provide them with a buffer zone against coastal invasions from other enemies of the realm.

It was not long until Christianity and Frankish customs started to take over from Nordic culture. Rollo himself was baptised and the Normans that invaded England in 1066 were descendants of the Normandy Vikings. The Medieval French word for a Scandinavian is 'Normand', a term that was then given to the area (Normandy) and the people that inhabited it (Normans). Harald Hardrada may have been defeated at Stamford Bridge, but William the Conqueror's forces that were victorious at Hastings were more Norse than many think.



Russia and Eastern Europe

Using the river systems of the Baltic to their advantage, the Vikings travelled east for further trade and conquest

One of the greatest Viking achievements is perhaps their foray deep into Eastern Europe. In the 9th century, the Slavic tribes in Russia and Eastern Europe were fast becoming exhausted by constant inter-tribal wars that were stretching their resources and affecting their commerce. Capitalising on the broken alliances, the Viking ships arrived from the Gulf of Finland in huge numbers. Using large rivers such as the Volga, Neva and Volkhov as waterways, the men from the north vastly expanded their territory.

The town of Novgorod on the banks of Lake Ilmen became one of the main strongholds for the Nordic invaders, who were known as the 'Rus'. The East European plain provided the Vikings with forest and grassland that was ideal for hunting, fishing and farming. The plentiful food supply helped trade routes expand further northwards towards Lake Ladoga and southwards down the River Dnieper. The Rus people traded with local Slavic tribes and travelled into modern-day Russia, helping give the nation its name in the process. The

three Swedish kings who came from overseas were Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, who settled in Novgorod, Beloozerg and Izborsk. Rurik's son, Oleg of Novgorod, travelled 600 miles south to take control of Kiev in 882 and went on to pillage lands even further southwards, knocking on the door of the Byzantine Empire in the process.

Like many of the areas that the Vikings inhabited, their influence steadily declined and was replaced by local customs. This happened once again in Eastern Europe as the Russian identity began to become distinct from Norse. One of the kings of Kiev, Vladimir, took the decision to make Greek Orthodox the area's religion in 988, decreasing the impact and relevance of Viking paganism even further. The culture change of the Norse people to more Slavic customs resulted in the growth of a Russian dynasty that rivalled the Carolingian Empire in Western Europe. The founders of the Russian tsardom were descendants of the Rurik Dynasty, a Viking dynasty that became one of Europe's oldest royal houses.

Trade and negotiation were essential to Viking conquests. Here, a Norseman is bargaining with a Persian merchant over the price of a female slave



Seven other travelling civilisations

Normans

Well known for their lands in France and England, the Normans were descendants of the Vikings. A realm was established in Sicily and southern Italy in the 10th century and the Norman people also established states in North Africa and even as far east in what is now Lebanon.



Phoenicians

To the Mediterranean what the Vikings were to the north Atlantic, the Phoenicians were one of the finest trading civilisations of the ancient world. The most powerful city-states were Sidon and Tyre, which became almost too tough for Alexander the Great to conquer.



Venetian Republic

One of the finest nautical trading powers of all time, Venice was the greatest seaport in Late Medieval Europe. The Venetians were excellent shipbuilders thanks to the marshy lagoon in which they lived. The Republic controlled states such as Istria and Dalmatia until its decline and fall in the Napoleonic era.



Genoese Republic

Venice's rival in chief, Genoa benefited from a natural harbour that led to the Ligurian Sea. Its booming maritime economy allowed it to be an independent republic for 800 years. Genoa's trade helped the West in the Crusades and had links as far away as Crimea before losing ground to Venice.



Kalmar Union

In many ways the successor to the Vikings in Scandinavia, the people of the Kalmar Union were great travellers. The kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were incorporated under one crown with Copenhagen as the capital. The Union also incorporated Iceland and Greenland.



Srivijaya

Another civilisation that based its power on sea trade, the Srivijaya Empire prospered between the 7th and 13th centuries. In its heyday, the civilisation had trade links with India, China and the Malay Archipelago. Their power waned after attacks by the Chola and Malayu people.



Abbāsīd Caliphate

After overthrowing the Umayyad Caliphate in 750, the Abbāsīd Dynasty became the strongest empire in Asia Minor and northern Africa until the Mongols in 1258. The caliphate presided over the 'Golden Age of Islam' as Muslim merchants traded in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean.



CONSTANTINOPLE

The Vikings venture to the gates of the Byzantine Empire



Viking lands were growing ever southwards, and by the early 10th century, an encounter with the Byzantine Empire was imminent. The movement came to a head in 860 during the siege of Constantinople, as a flotilla of 200 Viking warships emerged from the darkness and headed for the city they knew as 'Miklagard' (the Great City). After this, accounts become quite hazy, but the most likely outcome is the Vikings could only conquer the suburbs and not the fortified inner city without siege equipment. Determined to plunder the wealth of what was the biggest city the Vikings had ever seen, assaults continued, eventually resulting in the 2 September 911 commercial trading treaty. This brought friendly relations between the two states and frequent trade across the Black Sea as the Vikings took control of the Volga Trade Route from the Baltic Sea to the north and the Caspian Sea to the south. By 944, the relations soured, and Oleg's successor, Igor of Kiev, led an unsuccessful campaign against

the Byzantines in 941. A new treaty introduced restrictions on Rus attacks on Byzantine lands in Crimea and a complete ban on fortress construction at the mouth of the Dnieper River. As time went on, the overstretched Vikings reasoned they could not conquer Constantinople, so many decided instead to go into the service of the emperor.

The Vikings that had ventured further south were called Varangians, which was the name given to them by the Greeks. After the final failed siege of Constantinople, the Byzantines were so impressed with the Varangian fighting mentality that the emperor, Basil II, hired them as warriors as part of his personal guard in 988. The Byzantine military was very multicultural in nature, so Viking men were warmly welcomed. This new breed of soldier travelled far and wide to the likes of Syria, Armenia and Sicily under the Byzantine banner as the attacks from non-Byzantine Varangians ended in 1043 after the Rus-Byzantine War. The loss signalled the end of the Varangian advance towards Asia as the area became either Slavic or Byzantine, not Norse. The Varangian Guard soldiered on until the 14th century, though, ensuring that there were still some Vikings standing in Constantinople.



Anatomy of a Varangian guard

The fearsome warriors who became the most brutal bodyguards of the age

01 Axe

Wielding a foot-long bladed axe, when the Varangian guards arrived, the Byzantine emperor's presence on the battlefield was confirmed.

02 Weaponry

Double-edged swords and spears would also be used if an axe wasn't available, or it was favourable for the conditions of battle.

03 Shield

Shields would be in the classic Viking round style and would be worn on the back when warriors were wielding a two-handed weapon.

04 Helmet

Varangian guards wore an iron conical helmet but were also happy to don a headdress instead in the hot Mediterranean weather.

05 Boots

Tough leather boots were covered by greaves or leg guards to protect the lower legs from hacks and slashes.

06 Clothing

A standard tunic would be worn under the armour along with metal strips that protected the wrists and forearms from slashes.

07 Armour

This elite unit had a choice of lamellar armour made out of iron or bronze plates or a chain mail hauberk.

08 Mounted infantry berserkers

The Varangian guard rode to battle but did their fighting on foot. Their heavy armour had pros and cons depending on the battle.

Constantinople had 12 miles of walls so even the Vikings had almost no hope of sieging it



Legacy

The remnants of Viking expansion in Europe, Asia and the Americas

The influence left by the Vikings is greater than many are led to believe. From the Normans in the west to the Rus in the east, many civilisations that went on to dominate the late Middle Ages and beyond owe their roots to Viking expansion. The Vikings helped open the doors to pan-European trade and established urban centres at Dublin, Kiev and Reykjavik, cities at almost opposite ends of Europe. The effect of Norse culture is restricted more than it could have been as the Vikings never truly settled south of Denmark. They were an exploring people who lacked mass land armies and huge cities to stamp their authority and leadership on areas outside their own sphere of influence. They simply did not have the construction nous to establish a citadel as large or as powerful as Constantinople or Rome. Additionally, the Christianisation of Europe watered down the Nordic influence further and ended it completely when Scandinavia was fully converted in the 12th century.

Outside of Europe, Africa and Asia Minor were only briefly settled upon, so the influence seen today is from the Mongol Empire and Islamic caliphates. America suffers from the same problem, and that is why Columbus is and always will be seen as the first to discover the New World. The Viking age lasted for hundreds of years, and whether it's a city name in northern England, a type of axe or French surnames, the legacy is there for all to see.



The Christian Reconquista was well under way by the time the Vikings began their raids



IBERIA

The Norse expansion into the Christian north and Islamic south of Spain

After controlling the Bay of Biscay and establishing themselves on France's western coast, the Vikings moved even further south to the Iberian Peninsula. The first known attack was made up of 100 ships launched from Aquitaine in 844 and raided both Gijon and Coruna. After meeting strong resistance, the seafarers changed tack and headed for what is now Portugal. The raids were initially small and infrequent and, as with most Nordic attacks of the age, the coast was the worst affected. Prisoners were taken and monasteries were destroyed.

The first few assaults were mostly concentrated in the north of the Christian kingdoms of Asturias and Galicia. The southern Islamic part of Spain, al-Andalus, was targeted as well. Seville became a Viking city for six weeks in 844 and Lisbon was plundered for all its worth. The attacks came at a bad time for the Muslim population, who were

enduring the start of the Christian Reconquista. Despite the ability for longships to sail from Normandy in less than a week and evidence of longports, Iberia would soon become a bridge too far for the Norsemen.

As the attacks subsided, the lands were regained from the Vikings. The Muslim leader, Abd al-Rahman II, took back Seville and sent the heads of 200 Viking warriors to his Moroccan allies. The Vikings returned in 859 led by Bjorn Ironside and Hastein. They sailed around the peninsula in search of southern France and Italy. This turned out to be a shrewd move as both the Muslim and Christian settlements were too strong for long-term attacks to be worthwhile and repelled the Vikings before they could get close to Seville this time. The Norsemen returned north to France but their descendants, the Christianised Normans, would be back in the Mediterranean in later centuries.



Viking invasion