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Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, and England: The Germanic revival of the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries

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ABSTRACT

The Viking invasion and subsequent settlement of England in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries brought about significant cultural and linguistic effects that rekindled in the Christianized Anglo-Saxons a desire to return to their Germanic origins, both while at war with the Scandinavians and in the subsequent colonization of the Danelaw. This paper argues that the arrival of the Scandinavians sparked nostalgia for a Germanic golden age in the Anglo-Saxon cultural elite and explains why they were so receptive in adopting multiple aspects of their invaders' culture. Through investigations of Anglo-Saxon literature, various accounts of Scandinavian activity, archeological finds, and linguistic analysis, it is evident that the Scandinavians initiated significant cultural and linguistic changes on their Anglo-Saxon neighbors. An analysis of Anglo-Saxon heroic and religious poetry demonstrates that stylistic elements and characteristics typically considered Germanic in origin are common and even emphasized in a theme or character when no such trait existed in the source material (e.g., the *Book of Judith*). Archeological finds also indicate the Anglo-Saxons of the Danelaw and other parts of England intentionally emulated the Scandinavian style. More importantly, the language itself was receptive to many common loan words from Old Norse (e.g., *sister*, *egg*) as well as pronoun and form word shifts (e.g., *they*, *them*) that indicate close contact, familiarity, and prestige value placed on the settlers' language. Based on accounts of Scandinavian activity at the time, the Vikings displayed many of the idealized traits of the Germanic hero so heavily featured in Anglo-Saxon literature and likely would have been the object of English admiration. Due to the nature of the evidence, an explanation of the eagerness that the Anglo-Saxons displayed regarding the adoption of traditionally Scandinavian cultural and linguistic markers represents a resurgence of Germanic values and a desire to return to a perceived golden age in Anglo-Saxon history.

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Introduction

In the year 793, Alcuin, a Northumbrian scholar and clergyman at the court of Charlemagne, writes a letter to Æthelred, king of Northumbria in response to the Scandinavian raid of Lindisfarne, a devastating attack on the holy island and monastery that for many marks the dawn of the Viking Age in England. In vivid imagery, Alcuin speaks of a "terror" the likes of which has never before been seen and laments over the "church of St. Cuthbert spattered with the blood of the priests of God." He warns Æthelred that the pagan attacks on England's righteous serve as a divine warning; that the increase in fornication and violence since the time of King Ælfwald I, a Northumbrian ruler circa 779-788, has incurred the wrath of God in the form of pagan invasions and attacks.

However, he soon gives away his exaggerated fear when he complains about the trend in Anglo-Saxon fashion to reflect the aesthetic choices of the Scandinavians. He writes:

> Consider the dress, the way of wearing the hair, the luxurious habits of the princes and people. Look at your trimming of beard and hair, in which you have wished to resemble the pagans. Are you not menaced by the terror of them whose fashion you wished to follow?[1]

Surely, he is correct in his confusion as to why the people do not have a deep fear of invaders, even going so far as to copy their fashion, despite the Scandinavians having pillaged one of the most sacred religious sites in England at that time. Why would the English feel any allegiance, fashionable or otherwise, with a common enemy with which they had had little contact since they left the main continent at the end of the fifth century? While Alcuin was one of the early observers of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian contact in England, his letter foreshadows what

[1] Alcuin to King Æthelred, 793, in Cotton MS Vespasina AXIV, f. 114r from *Letter-book of Wulfstan*.

would later become a true cultural shift. A group that already seemed to be making waves in the social consciousness of the English from their first raid must have had a deeper connection with the Anglo-Saxons than surface-level interactions indicate.

The Arrival of the Scandinavians in England and the Establishment of the Danelaw

The Viking plague of the English is first mentioned in passages chronicling the year 787; both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Chronicle of Æthelweard* depict the arrival of the first three Scandinavian ships pulling into harbor at Dorchester in modern South West England. A reeve of the king went to meet them, believing they were merchants and was slain by the sailors immediately.[2] Only six years later in 793 does the devastating attack on Lindisfarne occur following "dreadful forewarning over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery, dragons flying across the firmament." [3] This attack on the holy island obviously made an impression on the English people and marked the beginning of the Viking Age in England.

From then on, the Scandinavians attacked sporadically along the British coastlines, targeting primarily monasteries where there would have been plenty of wealth to make a raid worth the effort. These raids were carried out with smaller parties and no intention of conquering the area they plundered. However, this changed in 865, when a "great army" (Old English *mycel here*) arrived in East Anglia, along with the prominent Scandinavian leader Ívarr

[2] ASC 787; Æthelweard, *The Chronicle of Æthelweard,* Edited by Alistair Campbell. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962, 26-27.
[3] ASC 793.

the Boneless who had previously been a successful warlord in Ireland, to winter their ships and acquire supplies and horses.[4] This change did not occur randomly as Viking raids had become bolder in the years leading up to the gathering of the Great Army in East Anglia.

In 851, the ASC notes that Scandinavians wintered in England for the first time, on the Isle of Thanet.[5] In Asser's biographical *Life of King Alfred*, he records that in the same year, three hundred and fifty ships sailed up the Thames River and sacked Canterbury.[6] Aclea in Surrey and Sandwich in Kent were also victims of such attacks and in 855, the army wintered again in England on the Isle of Sheppey.[7] The records go silent on the Scandinavians' activities until 860 when the *Chronicle of Æthelweard* mentions a large Scandinavian fleet arriving and sacking Winchester.[8] Curiously going silent once more, the Vikings are not recorded again until 864, a year before the Great Army was completely established, when a Scandinavian army returned to the Isle of Thanet in Kent and established a base and agreement with the locals, asking that they pay tribute in exchange for peace.[9] Despite this, the Scandinavians soon plundered the eastern part of Kent.[10] This particular breach of agreement noticeably bothered the Anglo-Saxon writers composing the narrative of this piece of history. Asser describes the Scandinavians as "after the manner of foxes, [who] burst forth with all secrecy from their camp by night" to attack the surrounding area.[11] The ASC describes the raid, "under the security of

[4] ASC 866; Æthelweard, 35; See more on Ívarr in
Clare Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland the Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014.* Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2008
[5] ASC 851.
[6] John Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, Translated by Albert S. Cook. Boston: The Atheneum Press, 1906, 3.
[7] ASC 851, 853, 854; Asser, 4-6.
[8] Æthelweard, 35.
[9] ASC 864; Asser, 12-13; Æthelweard, 35.
[10] ASC 864; Asser, 12-13; Æthelweard, 35.
[11] Asser, 12-13.

peace, and the promise of money, the army in the night stole up the country, and overran all Kent eastward."[12] Æthelweard's chronicle depicts the scene similarly: "But the Danes broke the treaty, made a sally in the night without exciting notice, and ravaged the whole eastern area of Kent."[13] This particular attack seems to have been doubly malicious in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon annalists because of the broken promise. However, this first breach of a treaty on the Scandinavian's part acts as foreshadowing of what would later come during the Great Army's conquest.

In 865/6, the Great Army joined with Ívarr the Boneless wintered in East Anglia, and having acquired supplies, horses, and a peace treaty with the locals they headed to the city of York in 867 where they found themselves amongst a civil conflict in Northumbria.[14] King Osbert, the lawful king had been removed from the throne and replaced by the illegitimate ruler, Ælla.[15] Likely taking advantage of the general turmoil, the army overtook the Northumbrians. Despite Osbert and Ælla joining forces in an attempt to defend themselves, both were killed, and the people were forced to make peace with the army.[16]

In this way, the army made their way through the English kingdoms from 867 to 875, lingering in the wintertime and then conquering kingdoms and demanding tribute in exchange for peace the rest of the year. They marched through East Anglia and Mercia, primarily being active in Reading, London, Torksey, and Repton, in addition to clashing with but never quite

[12] ASC 864.
[13] Æthelweard, 35.
[14] ASC 867; Æthelweard, 35-36; Asser, 16-17.
[15] ASC 867; Æthelweard, 35-36; Asser, 16-17.
[16] ASC 867; Æthelweard, 35-36; Asser, 16-17.

overcoming Wessex.[17] In 875, the Great Army split with some going from Repton back to Northumbria and invading the land of the Picts and Strathclydwallians while the rest left for Cambridge and remained there for a year.[18]

In 876 the army in Cambridge moved to Wareham, where a West Saxon fort was located and began plundering the surrounding areas. To make peace, the West Saxon King Alfred offered them money in exchange for the 'worthiest' soldiers in the army, with the promise that these hostages would leave the kingdom. However, the army "again practiced their usual treachery, and caring nothing for either hostages or oath, they broke the treaty, and, sallying forth by night, slew all the horses that they had," and headed to the city of Exeter in 877.[19]

Despite the army's history of broken promises, once again King Alfred brokered a peace treaty with the army now camped in Exeter under the same conditions, though now with the promise to remove themselves entirely from Wessex. The army did honor the treaty for a while, choosing to head to Gloucester in Mercia and ravaging the area.[20] However, that winter they stayed in Chippenham in Wessex, breaking the treaty, and began to battle with the West Saxons frequently in the new year of 878.[21] However, the West Saxons began to see victories, defeating the Scandinavians at a fortress in Devon and at the Battle of Edington, where the Great Army was so soundly defeated by Alfred that he and his army were able to take over the Scandinavian camp.[22]

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[17] ASC 868-875; Æthelweard, 36-41; Asser, 17-25.
[18] ASC 875; Æthelweard, 41.
[19] Asser, 25-26.
[20] ASC 877; Æthelweard, 42; Asser, 25-26.
[21] ASC 878; Æthelweard, 43; Asser, 26-27.
[22] ASC 878; Æthelweard, 43; John Asser, 28-30.

In the aftermath of this defeat, the Great Army and King Alfred established a peace treaty that was upheld at a place called Wedmore. Guthrum, one of the Scandinavian leaders of the army, offered hostages like before, but also converted to Christianity, being baptized with King Alfred as his patron.[23] After this, the army left Wessex as promised, heading first for Cirencester near Wales in 879 and remaining there for a year.[24] Finally, in 880, the Scandinavians returned to East Anglia where they began to settle, divide up the land, and establish their own government, the administration that would later be known as the Danelaw.[25]

In the next couple hundred years, the Scandinavians would establish themselves as a permanent presence in the lives of the Anglo-Saxons, bringing their culture, language, and government along with them. While this was especially strong in the Danelaw, the colony administered by Scandinavians, the influence brought by the Norsemen would impact all of England by the time power shifted to the Norman-French king William the Conqueror, who took over the English crown in 1066. A figure enters around fifty years after the establishment of the Danelaw who seems to personify this cultural shift occurring in the common people of England. King Edgar of England, born 943/4 was a descendent of King Alfred the Great of Wessex and in 955 inherited the Mercian throne following the death of his uncle Eadred. Just four years later at the young age of sixteen, he added the kingdoms of Wessex and

[23] ASC 878; Æthelweard, 43; John Asser, 28-30.
[24] ASC 879; Æthelweard, 43; John Asser, 30-31.
[25] ASC 880; Æthelweard, 43; John Asser, 31.

Northumbria to his domain following the death of his brother Eadwig. By the end of his life in 975, he had reunited the fragmented Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as king of all England.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the text that many consider to be the most important source of English history during the Old English period, describes King Edgar in a positive light, citing his good deeds in the power, funds, and land he allocated to the church. According to the chronicle, his only sin was "that foreign tastes he loved too much; and heathen modes into this land he brought too fast; outlandish men hither enticed; and to this earth attracted crowds of vicious men."[26] The king seemed to have a fascination and admiration for Scandinavian culture, and having ruled Mercia from age twelve or thirteen and later ruling Northumbria at sixteen, he likely had prolonged contact with the Scandinavians who had settled and administered the region that had come to be known as the Danelaw.[27]

Considering the sparse number of details by modern standards about one of England's kings, it is significant that his love for foreign tastes was even mentioned. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is not the only source that demonstrates his infatuation for Scandinavian culture. Edgar's laws, particularly his fourth code, the *Wihtbordesstan Law*, explicitly state his admiration of the Scandinavians' laws, saying,[28]

> And ic wille þæt woruld-gerihta mid Denum standan be swa godum lagum swa hy betst geceosen mægen. Stande þonne mid Anglum þæt ic and mine witan to minra yldrena domum geyhton eallum leodscipe to þeadne.

[26] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. by James Henry Ingram, Translation by Rev. James Ingram (London, 1823), with additional readings from the translation of Dr. J.A. Giles (London, 1847), Entry 959.
[27] ASC 955, 959.
[28] All translations from Old English, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

> And I will that secular rights among the Danes stand as good laws such as they may best choose. Then it stands among the English that I and my advisors added to my ancestors' decrees for the service of all the people."[29]

He mentions the Danes and their good laws two other times:

> Đonne wille ic þæt stande mid Denum swa gode laga swa hy betste geceosen and ic heom á geþafode and geþafian wille swa lange swa me lif gelæst…ceose Dene be lagum hwylce steore hy be þam healdan willað.
>
> Then I will that it stand among the Danes as good laws as they best may choose, and I have always allowed them and will allow them as long as life lasts me…the Danes may choose according to their laws whichever penalty they will observe concerning him.[30]

Additionally, he writes this law while directly addressing the Earl Oslac, an earl of York, who is speculated to be a Scandinavian or possibly descended from the Scandinavians due to the common Anglicization of his name from Old Norse *Áslákr.*[31]

In many ways, King Edgar represents the wider cultural trend that was happening in the era after the Viking invasion of England and their following settlement; a desire to return to a Golden Age. Like the Scandinavians, the English had descended from the same Germanics that celebrated a culture of heroism, warfare, and glory, and when discussing why the integration of Norse culture was rather smooth, understanding the roots of the two groups provides the context of their interactions when their paths intertwined once again. They were both descendants of the Germanic groups that eventually migrated from central Europe, in modern-day Germany and Holland. While the Scandinavians traveled north and settled Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the Anglo-Saxons descended from an army of mercenaries, traditionally

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[29] *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England,* 116.
[30] *Ibid* 117.
[31] *Ibid* 118; Dorothy Whitelock, "The dealings of the kings of England with Northumbria in the tenth and eleventh centuries." *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*. 1959, 70-88.

said to have been led by brothers Hengest and Horsa, that took from the local Celts the portion of Great Britain now called England at the end of the fifth century.[32] The Germanic roots present in the two groups might have continued evolving independently if it were not for the missionaries that arrived and converted the first Anglo-Saxon ruler, King Æthelberht, to Christianity around 596 after he had chosen to marry a Christian princess from the mainland, Bertha of Kent around 579.[33] While the Scandinavians' culture was left to develop uninterrupted, the Anglo-Saxons' was subverted in a drastically different direction soon after establishing themselves as a nation.

A Germanic Revival

It was about four centuries of sparse contact before the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians before the two groups began to have regular contact again in 787, and it is no surprise that each had developed its own cultural identity once they found each other. The cultural movement that occurred in the Danelaw likely would have had a sentiment like the European Renaissance that originated in Florence, Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries; the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy, paired with a desire to revitalize the current society using knowledge and cultural elements from that Golden Age. Unlike the Renaissance, finding evidence that irrefutably demonstrates the nostalgia and desire for a shared Germanic past is difficult. However, clues in the available literature, archeology, and linguistic knowledge of the

[32] Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 8-9.
[33]Nelson, Janet L. "Bertha (b. c. 565, d. in or after 601), queen in Kent, consort of Æthelberht." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep. 2004; https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2269

Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian world hint at a resurgence of Germanic values following the establishment of the Danelaw in 880 that can be likened to a Germanic revival, occurring throughout the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries.

The Early Germans

While the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians were distinct groups, they shared a cultural ancestor in the Germans of Central Europe. A discussion on what is known today of this ancient society sheds light on the clear "Germanness" of later values that can be found in the behavior of the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons, in addition to highlighting where the mythos of the Germanic hero originated. Just like the European Renaissance cannot be fully understood and appreciated without any knowledge of Classical Greek thought, custom, and culture, it would be useless to try and understand the cultural impact that the arrival of the Scandinavians imparted on the Anglo-Saxons without any familiarity of its origins in the Ancient Germans.

The Germanic peoples were a historical group located in Central Europe and Scandinavia that became solidified as a distinct culture in the first millennium BC, likely around 500 BC and after. The available historical attestations of them come from the Romans and Greeks, in particular, Julius Caesar who published a military account of the Gallic Wars around 49-58 BC, and Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman scholar who wrote *On the Origin and Situation of the Germans*, more commonly known as *Germania*, published 98 AD. The veracity of these accounts, however, is a matter of understanding the context in which these works were written. Julius Caesar in his *Commentaries on the Gallic War* records his war campaigns against the Celtic

groups that resisted Rome's invasion and thus is better read with that understanding. Caesar geographically situates the Germans as living east of the Rhine River while the Celtic Gauls, the group he was primarily in conflict with, lived west of it. As Peter S. Wells points out, "Caesar makes it clear that the peoples he called Germans were less civilized and lived in smaller communities than the Gauls; they had no urban centers comparable to the *oppida* of Gaul; and their economic systems and religious practices were less complex."[34] As he was attempting to incorporate the Gauls into the Roman Empire, it would have suited his campaigns to gain public approval of the benefits the new lands would bring Rome, so he crafted his commentaries to emphasize the civility and "Roman-ness" that the Gauls possessed as compared to their Germanic neighbors; though the two groups differed in language and culture, they would have lived in close contact with only the Rhine River separating them.[35] The *Commentaries* remain a work of propaganda and require that lens when making cultural judgments of the Germans.

Tacitus' *Germania*, published in 98 AD, is the other major work that acts as an early ethnography of the German people. It described the physical and cultural characteristics of the people living in Central and Northern Europe, east of the Rhine.[36] While it contains seemingly straight-forward descriptions of the Germanic way of life, many now consider it "a literary work, informing us more about the attitudes and values of Romans of Tacitus' time than about the Germans he was describing" with the Romans having been accustomed to comparably more ostentatious and immoral lives according to Tacitus.[37] In a sense, the "Germans" as we

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[34] Peter S. Wells, *The Barbarians of Ancient Europe: Realities and Interactions*, 213.
[35] *Ibid* 214.
[36] *Ibid* 214.
[37] *Ibid* 215. See also Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus,* New York: Routledge, 1993; James T. Luce and A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

now refer to and think of them are a Roman invention, made to conveniently categorize the various foreign tribes living to their north.

Tacitus cites legend when discussing the origin of the Germans; according to their myths, the German race was founded by the god Tuisto and his son Mannus.[38] Mannus had three sons who the Germanic tribes were named after: the coastal Ingaevones, the Herminones who lived inland, and the Istaevones who consisted of the remaining tribes.[39] In agreement with Caesar, the Germans were a war-loving race whose "whole life is occupied in hunting and in the pursuits of the military art; from childhood they devote themselves to fatigue and hardships."[40] Tacitus describes the lifestyle in detail; young men were raised from birth with the expectation that they would honor themselves in the heat of battle by feats of bravery, as cowardice was strongly frowned upon.[41] Youths were trained by their kinsman before they would be publicly presented with a spear and shield; from then on they were considered independent members of society rather than the household of their father.[42] If they were of noble birth or their father had done great deeds in his life, a young man had the opportunity to become a chief. Otherwise, the youth will attach himself as a retainer to a chief of his choosing.[43] There was no dishonor for a young man being of this station, however. There were ranks within the chief's followers and men would have been able to gain renown with their

[38] Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola; Germania,* trans. by J. B. Rives, London: Penguin Books, 2009, 35.
[39] *Ibid* 35.
[40] Julius Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*, trans. by W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn, Moscow, Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2015, 133.
[41] Tacitus, 38.
[42] *Ibid* 41.
[43] *Ibid* 41.

courageous acts done in service of their chief.[44] In exchange for defense and support in arms, followers were rewarded with feasts and entertainment usually won from battles and raids.[45]

Both Tacitus and Caesar comment on wartime patterns in their accounts. Tacitus notes that during these periods, each district provided one hundred men, called "hundreds," of which it was an honor for young men to be chosen to participate.[46] In addition, Caesar records that men were picked to be absolute leaders over multiple groups in contrast to peacetime when chiefs would settle matters among their own tribes. In wartime matters, men would be placed into these positions based on merit and general approval and their enterprises must also meet the approval of the majority.[47] Tacitus goes into more detail about these councils, saying that men would brandish their spears to show approval. Disapproval would be met with verbal dissent.[48]

Tacitus also describes in detail the battle habits of the Germans. Chiefs led the charges while their followers defended them. It was considered disgraceful for the chief to be surpassed in bravery and for the followers to not match the courage of their chief. As such, it was considered dishonorable to return alive from a battle that killed a follower's chief.[49] While loyalty to a chief was a way of gaining renown and social standing for a follower, the punishment for cowardice and other war-related crimes was harsh.[50] Traitors and deserters were hung from trees while cowards and the immoral were drowned in bogs, weighed down by

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[44] *Ibid* 41.
[45] *Ibid* 42.
[46] *Ibid* 37.
[47] Julius Caesar, 134-35.
[48] Tacitus, 40.
[49] *Ibid* 41.
[50] *Ibid* 41.

a hurdle. As Tacitus puts it, “This distinction in punishment means that crime, they think, ought, in being punished, to be exposed, while infamy ought to be buried out of sight.”[51]

Interestingly, even the women and children had a role in the warfare. Tacitus records an instance where it appeared the German warriors were losing. In response, the women of the tribe stripped naked on the battlefield as a show of the high stakes and their fear of enslavement and this invigorated the men enough to win the battle.[52] Children would usually be present near the scene as well so the warriors could hear their cries.[53] Afterward, the women would tend to the injuries of the men and serve them food and drink.[54] Tacitus seems to place a particular emphasis on the role of German women on the battlefield, noting that they did not shy away from injuries or involvement in war. He also reports that German women would have their opinions heard and respected because it was believed they held an innate level of holiness and prophetic ability.[55] The involvement of women in “men’s affairs” was certainly a cultural difference between the Germans and Rome that seems to impress Tacitus.

In addition to their love for warfare, both Caesar and Tacitus make note of their generous hospitality and customs that bear a degree of similarity to modern socialist theory. Caesar mentions that “To injure guests they regard as impious; they defend from wrong those who have come to them for any purpose whatever, and esteem them inviolable; to them the houses of all are open and maintenance is freely supplied.”[56] Tacitus’ account also coincides

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[51] *Ibid* 40.
[52] *Ibid* 38.
[53] *Ibid* 38.
[54] *Ibid* 38.
[55] *Ibid* 39.
[56] Julius Caesar, 135.

with Caesar's on this point emphasizing the importance of hospitality for guests. He goes a step further in indicating the great cultural importance placed on gifts, saying "It is the custom of the states to bestow by voluntary and individual contribution on the chiefs a present of cattle or of grain, which, while accepted as a compliment, supplies their wants. They are particularly delighted by gifts from neighboring tribes, which are sent not only by individuals but also by the state, such as choice steeds, heavy armor, trappings, and neck-chains."[57] Caesar also records their lack of privatized land. Instead, each year the land was divided how the tribal leaders deemed fit for a family group. The family would be able to use that land for one year before "returning" the land and moving to another plot.[58] Caesar writes,

> For this enactment they advance many reasons - lest seduced by long continued custom, they may exchange their ardor in the waging of war for agriculture; lest they may be anxious to acquire extensive estates, and the more powerful drive the weaker from their possessions; lest they construct their houses with too great a desire to avoid cold and heat; lest the desire of wealth spring up, from which cause divisions and discords arise; and that they may keep the common people in a contented state of mind, when each sees his own means placed on an equality with [those of] the most powerful.[59]

According to this account, they valued the sharing of resources and maintaining a check and balances system that did not allow one particular group to gain too much wealth or power.

Despite the issues of reliability that come with using Roman historical sources, they give an idea of what the Germanic identity was. What they valued, what they held dear, and how they approached the world. Vilhelm Gronbech defines it well: "We find here a community based upon general unity, mutual self-sacrifice and self-denial, and the social spirit. A society, in

[57] Tacitus, 42.
[58] Julius Caesar, 134.
[59] *Ibid* 134.

which every individual, from birth to death, was bound by consideration for his neighbour."[60] This society was the ancestor of what would later become the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian cultures; it formed the foundation of Germanic values which would be retained throughout hundreds of years, and in the case of the English, endure a conversion to the much more pacifist Christian religion.

Though the Scandinavians may have caused ancient Germanic values to resurface in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the Anglo-Saxons undoubtedly retained many traditional Germanic motifs in their literature. Cultural fragments such as the hero archetype, lord and retainer relationship, beasts of battle, and the living relationship between historical figures' actions and their portrayal in literature provide the foundation to understand the basis of the Germanic in the Anglo-Saxons and their later receptivity to the Scandinavians' culture.

Anglo-Saxon Literature, Heroism, and Identity

Despite their conversion to Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons retained remnants of Germanic values even after four centuries which manifests most visibly in their literature. From what remains of Old English literature, a good portion is dedicated to memorializing the exploits of Germanic heroes who follow a 'code of heroism' that essentially boils down to "generosity, loyalty, fairness in conduct, and ambition for fame."[61] Particularly important are

[60] Vilhelm Peter Grønbech and William John Alexander Worster, *The Culture of the Teutons*, London: Oxford University Press, 1931, 13.
[61] Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., "Old English heroic literature," *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature* (2005): 85.

the depictions of absolute loyalty in the lord-and-retainer relationship and the warrior's establishment of a reputation of glory which could only be achieved under the threat of death.[62] These tales likely originated between 400 AD and 600 AD during the period of the Germanic Great Migration, also known accordingly as the Heroic Age.[63] Though this may have been when these works were formulated, the poems are found in manuscripts that date from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries so it is impossible to know with certainty when exactly they were written down for the first time and how they might have changed throughout centuries of retellings.[64] Despite the fogginess of the exact dates, the poems originated from a long oral tradition with an internal structure that would have required close reduplication or run the risk of ruining the poetic integrity. Because of this, they could be seen as a literary time capsule that provides clues that hint into the social values of that time and allow the modern reader to catch a glimpse of what the Anglo-Saxons admired from the remainder of their Germanic roots.

The archetype of the Germanic hero generally appears as a male warrior figure who upholds a set of strong convictions, particularly the pursuit of honor and the demonstration of loyalty to one's lord. These heroes are faced with difficult decisions that ask for a sacrifice of self, and either end in victory, celebration, and honor or a graceful defeat that is then

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[62] Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, "Values and ethics in heroic literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 102-103.
[63] R. K. Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, (London: Everyman's Library, 1967), 78.
[64] Bremmer, 78. For a longer discussion on the dating on OE poems see also Helen Damico, *Beowulf and the Grendel-kin: Politics and poetry in eleventh-century England.* Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2014; Colin Chase, ed, *The Dating of Beowulf*, Vol. 6. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997; Federico Brigatti, "Socio-Historical Context of Judith," *The Old English "Judith": Sources, Analysis and Context.* Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2001, 202-225.

memorialized in the story.[65] Many of the heroes are lords and therefore have retainers that serve and support them in their adventures. This relationship was fundamental to the lord's success because the strength of his retainers' loyalty determined the outcome of a battle while the quality of a retainer's servitude to their lord determined their social standing.[66] A lord would take care of his loyal retainers by inviting them to dine with him at lavish banquets of food and mead and offering them shares of his war bounty, items that usually included weapons, jewelry, and other treasures. Because of this "a lord is referred to…as *sinces brytta* 'distributer of treasure' or *goldwine* 'gold-friend'.[67]

These gatherings are often described in vivid detail in the heroic works; in the poem, *Judith,* the tale of a Hebrew woman who snuck into the camp of an Assyrian army attacking her people, beheaded the general Holofernes and paved the way for her people's victory, one of the first scenes begins with a depiction of Holofernes and his men sitting down to feast:[68]

> Hie ða to ðam symle / sittan eodon,
> wlance to wingedrince, / ealle his weagesiðas,
> bealde byrnwiggende. / þær wæron bollan steape
> boren æfter bencum gelome, / swylce eac bunan ond orcas
> fulle fletsittendum;… /
>
> / ða wearð Holofernus,
> goldwine gumena, / on gytesalum,
> hloh ond hlydde, / hlynede ond dynede,…
>
> …modig ond medugal, / manode geneahhe
> bencsittende / þæt hi gebærdon wel.
> Swa se inwidda / ofer ealne dæg
> dryhtguman sine / drencte mid wine,

[65] Bremmer, 76.
[66] *Ibid* 77.
[67] *Ibid* 77.
[68] Only the last few sections of this poem have survived to the modern age (Gordon, 320).

swiðmod sinces brytta, / oðþæt hie on swiman lagon,
oferdrencte his duguðe ealle, / swylce hie wæron deaðe geslegene,
agotene goda gehwylces.

Lines 15-35[69]

Then they continuously / went to sit,
Arrogantly to the feast, / all his companions in evil
Bold armored warrior / there were deep bowls
Brought in often along the benches / likewise cups and mugs
Filled for the guests…
/…then lord Holofernes,
Men's gold-friend / in joyfully pouring the wine,
He laughed and clamored / he shouted and made noise…
Proud and drunk on mead, / he earnestly urged
Those on the benches / to conduct themselves well.
So the evil one / all day long
Drenched his retainers / with wine
Insolent giver of treasure / until they lay in a swoon
All his warriors intoxicated, / like they were struck by death
Shed of all good.

This passage was written with a tone of disdain at the blatant display of gluttony the writer imagined Holofernes and his men partook in, but it demonstrates the frequent Germanic trope of the hero providing ostentatious feasts, encouraging entertainment and drinking without restraint. If the description of the feast left any doubt in the mind of an Anglo-Saxon about what kind of chief Holofernes was, he is referred to as *goldwine* (gold-friend) and *sinces brytta* (giver of treasure). By explicitly referring to him by the character of his duties to his retainer, a Germanic hero is both humbled by his need for followers and praised for keeping his men nourished and providing them with fine things.

[69] "Judith," *The Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, https://sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/, lines 15-35.

In the epic poem *Beowulf*, the victories of Beowulf against Grendel, a monster terrorizing the court of King Hrothgar of the Danes, and his subsequent defeat of Grendel's mother, a formidable monster seeking revenge for her son's death. In the aftermath of Grendel's defeat, Hrothgar throws a massive feast in honor of Beowulf's victory in which there was never a "māran weorode / ymb hyra sinc-gyfan / sēl gebæran."[70] Hrothgar is referred to as a *sinc-gyfan* (giver of treasure) to emphasize his status as a chief and the multitude of people attending reveals his wealth. There is no shortage of mead on this occasion either with the poem describing,

> Bugon þā to bence / blæd-āgande,
> fylle gefægon; / fægaere geþægon
> medo-ful manig / māgas þāra
> swīð-hicgende, / on sele þām hēan,
> Hrōðgār ond Hrōþulf.
>
> (Lines 1013-1017)[71]

> Sunk down then on the bench / renowned men,
> Who rejoiced in the feast / in fairness received
> Many full cups of mead / their kinsmen
> Bold-minded, / praised in the great hall
> Hrothgar and Hrothulf.

This depiction only further cements his ability to provide for his retainers in a customarily Germanic fashion. During the feast, Hrothgar rewards Beowulf and his men for their services in treasures such as armor and weapons,[72] horses and tack,[73] and heirlooms for Beowulf's retainers, including compensation in gold for one of his soldiers who was killed in battle.[74]

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[70] Howell D. Chickering, *Beowulf: A dual-language edition*, New York: Anchor Books, 2006, 107, lines 1011-12. … a greater multitude / around their giver of treasure / conducting themselves nobly.
[71] *Ibid* lines 1013-1017.
[72] *Ibid* lines 1022-1023.
[73] *Ibid* lines 1035-1038.
[74] *Ibid* lines 1050-1054.

When Hrothgar accepts Beowulf's offer to defeat Grendel, he treats him like he would one of his retainers, providing food and drink and justly rewarding him when he succeeds. In return, Hrothgar's battle was won, and he reaped the rewards from the death of Grendel who had been murdering his court. This symbiotic relationship is a key trope that gives Anglo-Saxon poetry a decidedly Germanic flavor.

This relationship formed the basis of many of the Germanic heroes and side characters in the poems but the prominent goal for all men no matter the literary or social role was doing honorable acts because it "made or broke a man's standing and thereby his role in the social fabric" in addition to "[guaranteeing] a prominent place in the community not only during life but even more so with posterity, through stories and songs."[75] If one could sufficiently demonstrate his courage, valor, and honor, his deeds could forever be memorialized no matter the outcome, like in the cases of Judith and Beowulf. Judith sneaks into the camp of the Assyrian general Holofernes on her own and decapitates him[76], later using his head[77] and a rousing speech[78] to encourage the Hebrews to rise and fight against the Assyrians and claim their victory. Beowulf committed to ending the scourge that was Grendel, even when he discovered that he also needed to challenge Grendel's mother,[79] taking him farther than his original agreement with Hrothgar.[80] Both served as leaders and, especially in the case of Judith, catalysts of the battlefield, in which they were able to prove their loyalty to their lord, have

[75] Bremmer, 77-78.
[76] "Judith," lines 103-107.
[77] *Ibid* lines 171-175.
[78] *Ibid* lines 195-198.
[79] Chickering, lines 1276-1278.
[80] *Ibid* lines 424-426.

their retainers demonstrate loyalty to them, and demonstrate their honor through bravery in battle and violence.

The Battle of Maldon is also a heroic poem but unlike Judith and Beowulf, it tells the story of the historic defeat of an Anglo-Saxon army at the hands of the invading Vikings in 991. The main character of the poem is a poetic depiction of Byrhtnoth, an earl that led the English army in the name of the English king. The earl shows many characteristics of a Germanic hero, such as displays of courage in the face of battle and an idealized example of the lord and retainer relationship. The beginning of the poem depicts an exchange in which a messenger of the Danish asks that if Byrhtnoth will give money in exchange for peace, the other army will stand down and no blood will be shed. However, in a dramatic show of Germanic honor and pride, Byrhtnoth refuses to entertain the offer and says,

/ To heanlic me þinceð
þæt ge mid urum sceattum / to scype gangon
unbefohtene, / nu ge þus feor hider
on urne eard / in becomon.

Ne sceole ge swa softe / sinc gegangan;
us sceal ord and ecg / ær geseman,
grim guðplega, / ær we gofol syllon.

(Lines 55-61)[81]

/ It seems disgraceful to me
That you all go back to your ship / with our wealth
unopposed, / now you all have come /
thus far on this side / in our land.
You shall not reach treasure / so peacefully;
Before that sword point and edge / shall pacify us,
Fierce war-play, / before we give up tribute.

[81] "The Battle of Maldon," *The Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, https://sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/a09.htm, lines 55-58.

Despite leading himself and his loyal retainers to their dooms, his honor will not allow him to be bribed into peace and he gives up his life because of this decision, his character becoming the embodiment of the tragic Germanic hero.[82]

The case of Byrhtnoth raises the interesting question of how the Anglo-Saxons may have internalized heroic values in their daily lives. In the same vein, the memorialization of a historical event and figure in this manner calls back to Tacitus' ancient descriptions of the Germanic chiefs, their loyal, retainers, and their behavior on the battlefield:

> On the field of battle it is a disgrace to the leader to be surpassed in valour by his companions, to the companions not to equal the valour of their leader. To outlive one's leader by withdrawing from battle brings lifelong infamy and shame.[83]

This ideal of honor can be seen almost exactly in the Battle of Maldon where:

ða hine heowon / hæðene scealcas
and begen þa beornas / þe him big stodon,
ælfnoð and Wulmær / begen lagon,
ða onemn hyra frean / feorh gesealdon.

Lines 181-184[84]

Then the heathen soldiers / struck him
And both the warriors / who stood by him
Ælfnoth and Wulmær / both were laid low
Then alongside their lord / they gave up life.

Although Ælfnoth and Wulfmær are only Byrthnoth's retainers, the poet chooses to immortalize their names in the poem likely due to the admiration that their deeds on the battlefield brought the Anglo-Saxon audience. It is unclear how much of the event may have been exaggerated or fabricated for the sake of good verse but the implications of applying

[82] *Ibid* lines 89-90, lines 181-184.
[83] Tacitus, 41.
[84] "The Battle of Maldon," lines 181-184

Germanic tropes to historical events are not subtle. These values were alive and well in the lives of the Anglo-Saxons despite the Battle of Maldon having taken place centuries after the conversion to Christianity.

While the literary components of Old English heroic poetry carry a more obvious connection to the Anglo-Saxons' Germanic past, their religious poetry also contains elements of heroic poetry stylistics. These poems are primarily retellings of biblical stories, but they only need to cover Christian subject matter to be considered a religious poem.[85] Older motifs that are commonly found in heroic poetry are also employed in religious poetry, as described by R.K. Gordon in his *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*:

> The old devices of style are carried on and adapted to new subjects. So, for example, the fallen Satan in *Genesis – B*, with his loyal band of followers, is described in terms that would suit a Germanic chieftain. Abraham's rescue of Lot and the fight at the opening of the *Elene* are told in the phrases of the old battle poetry. Moses leading the Israelites is called 'the glorious hero.' The poet who described St Andrew's mission to the strange land of Mermedonia knew and remembered Beowulf's mission to Hrothgar. In *The Dream of the Rood*, the most beautiful of all the religious poems, Christ is described as 'the young Hero' and the disciples are faithful warriors.[86]

The presence of heroic motifs within Christian literature implies the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was not so complete as the clergy might have hoped by the time many of these poems were written in the tenth century.[87] Despite Christianity having long had a strong foothold in Anglo-Saxon society by the ninth and tenth centuries, these cultural relics were still perpetuated despite the juxtaposition between the glory-seeking, battle-hungry Germanic hero

[85] Gordon, viii.
[86] *Ibid* ix.
[87] Brigatti, 201; Barbara Raw, "The Cross in The Dream of the Rood: Martyr, patron and image of Christ," *Leeds Studies in English* (2007): 1.

and the pacifist, God-fearing Christian. In fact, in the case of *Judith*, these tropes can be seen at once in a single character.

Judith presents an interesting blend of Anglo-Saxon heroic and religious poetry as it has many of the tropes and archetypes of typical heroic poetry, as previously discussed, but it is also considered a religious poem because it is a retelling of the biblical *Book of Judith*. Likely written in the tenth century,[88] it weaves both traditional Anglo-Saxon and Christian values together in a character that is considered a holy woman due to her submission to God's will. However, in the story, God's will is to commit an act of violence to secure the victory of Judith's people which would have been attractive to those that admired the Germanic glory of the battlefield. Because Judith is obedient to God's wishes and fighting for the "good" side, the Hebrew side, the blatant heroic imagery in Judith's character and her act of violence could be attributed to her righteousness. This line of reasoning likely would have settled any lingering discomfort from the pagan values that might have been imposed on the story, considering it is not a traditional Anglo-Saxon myth but a book of the Bible.

The poem shares stylistic choices with the heroic poems of the Anglo-Saxon era such as the previously discussed Germanic tropes of Holofernes as a general – the descriptions of his feast, his and his soldiers' indulgence with mead and wine, and the references to him as *goldwine* and other similar titles – and the heroic character of Judith. These character archetypes are common in other heroic material but there are also plenty of stylistic choices in the writing of *Judith* and other religious poetry that indicate a Germanic past.

[88] Brigatti, 201.

Another common trope is the "beasts of battle" which are animals that heroic poems will reference on the battlefield, waiting to eat the carrion of the slaughter. Typically, they are wolves, ravens, and eagles and are viewed as omens of defeat because their presence anticipates the carnage of battle.[89] That is, the victorious side is the one that provides the feast to scavengers while the defeated must abandon their dead. Rather than moving along the story or action of a battle, they serve as embellishments that will always accompany the narration scene.[90] This literary convention would have been widely recognized by an Anglo-Saxon audience and foreshadowed the victors.

In lines 205-212 of *Judith*, the poet writes,

> / þæs se hlanca gefeah
> wulf in walde, / ond se wanna hrefn,
> wælgifre fugel. / Wistan begen
> þæt him ða þeodguman / þohton tilian
> fylle on fægum; / ac him fleah on last
> earn ætes georn, / urigfeðera,
> salowigpada / sang hildeleoð,
> hyrnednebba.
>
> Lines 205-212[91]
>
> / After that the lean wolf
> In the woods / and the dark raven,
> Bloodthirsty bird, rejoiced. / They both knew
> that the men / intended to provide them
> a feast of ill-fated men / and behind them flew
> the eagle eager for food, / dewy-winged,
> dark-feathered / horn-billed,
> it sang a war-song.

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[89] Judith Jesch, "Eagles, ravens and wolves: beasts of battle, symbols of victory and death," *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, San Francesco: The Boydell Press, 2002, 254.
[90] This is a rule only in regard to battle scenes that are narrated generally; that is to say, when the focus is on the entire group, not when a character is in individual combat, or the narration emphasizes the actions of an individual within a large battle. See Mark S. Griffith, "Convention and originality in the Old English 'beasts of battle' typescene," *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993): 182.
[91] "Judith," lines 205-212

According to Mark S. Griffith, "the beasts form part of a highly conventional and mannered description of battle which is almost entirely an addition to the apocryphal source," and by including them, the poet is making a direct reference to the trope in much of the Anglo-Saxon heroic literature, placing *Judith* in a position more complex than simply being a religious poem.[92] Rather than stay true to the original, keeping with the typical poetic conventions of the day was more tempting when the content matter included a battle scene.

On the more subtle level of diction, the poem *Judith* alludes to Jesus using Germanic heroic language rather than the passive and self-deprecating "Son of Man" title that he takes in the original gospels.[93] The poet refers to Jesus as "ðam mæran þeodne" 'the famous prince,'[94] "dugeða waldend" 'master of warriors,'[95] and "tires brytta" 'giver of glory'[96] placing him in the position of a Germanic hero to the eyes of the Anglo-Saxons. All these epithets could be ascribed to a Germanic chief, especially regarding the society's value of renown and memorialization of deeds, as seen in the *Battle of Maldon* with Byrhtnoth. Being a "master of warriors" is another description of the relationship between a chief and his retainers and implies that the Anglo-Saxons considered themselves to be within the retainer role with Jesus as their lord. Within this role, the chief would take care of his retainers and attract more by doling out his treasure, prompting the name *goldwine* 'goldfriend,' as previously discussed. "tires brytta" 'giver of glory' uses a similar language and structure to "sinces brytta" 'giver of treasure' to make another title of the same vein that highlights the generosity of a Germanic

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[92] Griffith, 183.
[93] "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost," Luke 19:10 (ESV).
[94] "Judith," *The Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, https://sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/a04_02.htm, line 4.
[95] *Ibid* line 61.
[96] *Ibid* line 93.

chief. However, this heroic depiction of Jesus within Anglo-Saxon religious poetry can be better seen in *The Dream of the Rood*, a retelling of the crucifixion from the point of view of the cross that carried him.

The Dream of the Rood depicts the dream of the narrator in which the cross describes the events of the crucifixion and Jesus's death. The language used to describe Jesus is heavily influenced by heroic stylistics and prefers to focus on actions that convey his victory rather than the suffering he endured. The cross says of him,

> / Geseah ic þa frean mancynnes
> efstan elne mycle / þæt he me wolde on gestigan.
> þær ic þa ne dorste / ofer dryhtnes word
> bugan oððe berstan, / þa ic bifian geseah
> eorðan sceatas. / Ealle ic mihte
> feondas gefyllan, / hwæðre ic fæste stod.
> Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð, / (þæt wæs god ælmihtig),
> strang ond stiðmod. / Gestah he on gealgan heanne,
> modig on manigra gesyhðe, / þa he wolde mancyn lysan.
> Bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte. / Ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan,
> feallan to foldan sceatum, / ac ic sceolde fæste standan.
> …þurhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum. / On me syndon þa dolg gesiene,
> opene inwidhlemmas…
> …Bysmeredon hie unc butu ætgædere. / Eall ic wæs mid blode bestemed,
> begoten of þæs guman sidan, / siððan he hæfde his gast onsended.
>
> (Lines 33-49)[97]

> / Then I saw the lord of mankind
> Hurry with great courage / that he wished to climb on me
> Then I dared not / against the Lord's command
> Bend or break there / then I saw tremble
> The surfaces of the land. / I could have
> Destroyed all enemies, / however I stood firm.
> The young hero stripped himself, / (that was God almighty)
> Strong and resolute. / He climbed on the tall cross,
> Brave in many's sight, / then he wanted to redeem mankind.
> I trembled when the hero embraced me. / I dared not yet bend to the earth,

[97] "Dream of the Rood," *The Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, https://sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/a02_05.htm,* lines 33-49.

> Fall to the surface of the ground, / but I must stand firm.
> …They drove me through with dark nails. / The scars are still visible on me
> Open treacherous wounds. /…
> …They mocked us both together. I was all soaked with blood,
> Poured out from the man's side, / after he had sent forth his spirit.

The word choice in this passage is very active, in how he "hurry[ed] with great courage," "stripped himself," "climbed on the tall cross," "embraced me [the cross]," and finally "sent forth his spirit". This language is in sharp contrast with the language of the passage in the Bible which depicts the soldiers stripping and crucifying him themselves. This version even implies that he died exactly when he chose, sending off his spirit when he was ready. In addition, the first depiction of his gore also does not appear until after his death, perhaps further reenforcing his agency, and only losing it once he had truly died. In this poetic depiction, Jesus is almost crucifying himself with none of the other characters present directly injuring him. In her deeper analysis of this depiction of Jesus, Aleksandra Mrówka writes, "The poet omits Christ's fatigue and pain in order to portray the Saviour as an ultimate hero, characterized by might and heroism, making him inferior to his executioners. The image of the maltreated Son of omnipotent God does not correspond to the Germanic ethos of a triumphant warrior of incredible physical strength…"[98] To an Anglo-Saxon audience, a beaten and injured Jesus would not have matched their perception of a hero worthy of a following and so the poet chose to omit and manipulate the language of the original story into something more palatable for Anglo-Saxon tastes.

[98] Aleksandra Mrówka, "The Anglo-Saxon Transformations of the Biblical Themes in the Old English Poem "The Dream of the Rood"," *Nauki Humanistyczne*, no. 8 (2014): 129.

Interestingly, the poet's portrayal of the nails driven in Jesus' hands is placed on the cross instead, writing "…þurhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum. / On me syndon þa dolg gesiene, / opene inwidhlemmas… They drove me [the cross] through with dark nails / the scars are still visible on me / open treacherous wounds…"[99] The cross seems to be taking the brunt of the pain that Jesus endured on the cross, or at least sharing the injury. In addition to this description, the cross uses language that evokes servitude or the relationship between a lord and retainer in its insistence that "Ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan, / feallan to foldan sceatum, / ac ic sceolde fæste standan... I dare not yet bend to the earth, / fall to the surface of the ground, / but I must stand firm."[100] Its loyalty to Jesus in supporting him and sharing the wounds of the crucifixion, both literally and figuratively, would have been considered an admirable quality in a follower in the culture. The cross itself is also "…wæs / begoten mid golde. / Gimmas stodon / fægere æt foldan sceatum, / swylce þær fife wæron / uppe on þam eaxlegespanne… was / covered with gold. / Gems were placed / with beauty on the surface of the ground, / there were also five / up on the crosspiece."[101] The cross' appearance as a jewel-encrusted holy relic is presented at the beginning of the poem, however that appearance also extends throughout the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion when the cross is bearing the weight of the crucifixion. The choice to portray it in this way harkens back to the Germanic appreciation of treasure and wealth. Mrówka writes that "Germanic society practiced the custom of gift-giving and understood the value of beautiful objects," and goes on to say that the five jewels on

[99] "Dream of the Rood," lines 46-47.
[100] *Ibid* lines 42-43.
[101] *Ibid* lines 5-9.

the body of the cross are likely associated with the Five Holy Wounds of Jesus Christ which were considered "a vehicle of his victory over sin."[102]

We have seen how closely much of the Anglo-Saxon poetry aligns with the descriptions of the Ancient Germans' culture as reported by Julius Caesar and Tacitus. It is clear that despite converting to Christianity, a religion that in many ways seems at odds with the traditionally Germanic way of life, the Anglo-Saxons managed to seamlessly weave in the basic values of their original culture into their new religion. Perhaps more than anything, their religious poetry reflects the Anglo-Saxons' innate desires to achieve their idea of a good life; one lived with honor, courage, and loyal servitude to their lord, godly or human.

Scandinavian Culture and Identity

Just as the Anglo-Saxons changed over the course of centuries, the Scandinavians' culture and society also evolved from their origins in the Ancient Germans. However, unlike the Anglo-Saxons, they did not convert to Christianity in mass until much later, around the tenth and eleventh centuries.[103] This, in theory, would have allowed their Germanic customs to evolve naturally, though they were by no means isolated from the Christian world rapidly sprouting up around them. Unfortunately, despite the Scandinavian's prominence as a European power and center for trade, they did not have a culture for writing, so with the exception of runes to mark monuments, there are little to no written records of their history and society from their own scholars' perspectives. However, they left a lasting impression on

[102] Mrówka, 127-128.
[103] Fjodor Uspenskij, "The Advent of Christianity and Dynastic Name-giving in Scandinavia and Rus,'" *Early Christianity on the Way from the Varangians to the Greeks* (2011): 109.

the other, literate powers of the European and Mediterranean world. Scholars from Ireland, the Carolingian Empire, the Arabic world, and of course the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms all wrote accounts of their dealings with the Scandinavians during the Viking Age (circa 750-1066 AD). Primary accounts are valuable in revealing how the Scandinavians and their actions appeared to other cultures. Despite this, many of the accounts were written by Christians and due to the Scandinavians primarily practicing their traditional religion, the picture they paint of them is negatively biased.

With this kept in mind, these works shed light on the aspects of Scandinavian culture that the Christian powers condemned and therefore provide some information on who these people were. It is difficult to say with certainty that the compilation of ancient primary sources provides a clear picture of Scandinavian identity. That is, what was important to them, who did they consider themselves to be, and how did they situate themselves in the grand scheme of their worldview. However, it can at least provide some valuable insights into aspects of their behavior that the Christian worldview found to be worth remembering as well as what Christians left unsaid.

Given the limitations of primary source material from the Scandinavians themselves and the wide diaspora of Scandinavian culture and influence that likely varies from place to place, it is difficult to come to a precise understanding of what “Scandinavians” were like. They populated territories all over the North, primarily modern-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and later colonized Iceland, parts of Ireland, Scotland, and England, and the north of France. While they were a semi-nomadic culture, the widespread nature of their conquest and colonization prompts hesitation in assigning the entire group to certain cultural practices that

other groups wrote about. However, it is necessary to give an idea of what type of people chose to settle in England to understand what a blended Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian civilization would look like. It can highlight components of strictly Scandinavian background but also similarities between the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians that could blur lines in what is influenced by whom.

During this period, the paths of the Vikings and Carolingian Empire often crossed, as the timing of their eras of power were relatively close together. Charlemagne was crowned emperor in 800 and fourteen years later the empire was reaching its greatest extent in territory. The Viking Age in Europe is considered to begin around 750, though 793 is more specific for England. With both powers rising in relatively close proximity, it is no wonder Charlemagne's historians kept records of their engagements with the Scandinavians, and the Danes in particular. The *Royal Frankish Annals* is one of the primary historical works depicting the construction and maintenance of the empire from before and after Charlemagne was crowned emperor from his previous position as King of the Franks and covers major events from 741 to 829.[104] Beginning in the entry of the year 808, the empire began to engage in significant exchanges with the Danes, whether as enemies or neighbors struggling for a strained peace. While diplomatic efforts were often attempted on both sides, there is no lost love on the part of the Frankish author and likely the political leaders of the Carolingian Empire.

While most of the annals are rather stark in descriptive details, there are a couple of times in which the Danish leader, King Godofrid, is described. The entry for 808 marks the first

[104] *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories*. Trans. by Bernhard Walter Scholz and Barbara Rogers. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972, 2.

appearance of any significant Scandinavian action, with King Godofrid having attacked and taken control of several Slavic castles in the land of the Obodrites. After seizing control of the people, he forced two-thirds of them to pay tribute. In this entry Godofrid is explicitly described as a "mad king"[105] and only a year later, he is called arrogant and prideful, presumably by Charlemagne himself.[106] None of the other Danish leaders mentioned later in the annals had descriptions such as these; this could point to the general renown that King Godofrid held among his people and the European political community but does not say for certain that these qualities were characteristic of the Scandinavians or were particularly admired by them either. It is worth noting that he was murdered by one of his retainers in the entry for 810 but not much information is given about the nature of this.[107] Was it due to dissatisfaction with his leadership, personal political ambition, or some other reason? Regardless of the circumstances, it seems the character of Godofrid left a deep impression on the Franks and was ultimately the figure that began their significant dealings with the Danish.

It seems that King Godofrid pushed the Danish onto the European political stage because their major events having little to do with the empire are recorded. After the death of King Godofrid in 810, his nephew Hemming succeeded the throne for a short time.[108] However, in the entry for 812, it is reported that he had died and Sigifrid, another nephew of Godofrid, and Anulo, the nephew of Hemming, fought a bloody battle for the throne with troops they had

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[105] "…he sent his son Charles with a strong host of Franks and Saxons to the Elbe, with orders to resist the mad king if he should attempt to attack the borders of Saxony." *Ibid* 88.
[106] "Since he had heard much about the arrogance and pride of the Danish king, the emperor decided to build a castle on the other side of the Elbe and to garrison it with a Frankish force." *Ibid* 90-91.
[107] *Ibid* 92.
[108] *Ibid* 93.

raised, costing both groups a total of 10,940 men and killing both Sigifrid and Anulo themselves. This is an exorbitant number of deaths, raising questions of its accuracy, in addition to the vague phrasing of the passage itself – "They say that ten thousand nine hundred and forty men died in that battle,"[109] – however whether it is exaggerated or not, it was likely a particularly bloody battle the empire took notice of, and perhaps gives some insight on the Danes' ambition as well as their dedication to their chosen lord.

When describing dealings with the Danish, the annals seem to point to a strong sense of individualism in their character. Unsurprisingly, this shows up in relation to King Godofrid; during the beginning of his invasion of the lands of the Obodrites, it is written he "…set up quarters on the shore for some days and attacked and took a number of Slavic castles in hand-to-hand combat. Then he withdrew, suffering severe casualties."[110] It explicitly mentions that he fought in close quarters with the enemy and despite coming away from the encounter severely injured, it is telling that he was willing to take that risk in the first place. Later in 810, after a series of successful raids against the Frisians, the emperor was so angered that he went to meet Godofrid with an army in case he decided to continue his conquests. In response, the entry says, "Inflated by the vain hope of victory, this king boasted that he wished to fight the emperor in open battle."[111] Nothing came of this as after returning home from the campaign, he was murdered. However, the statement exemplifies his individualistic tenacity that could have been a result of his being raised within the Danish culture; regardless it made such an

[109] *Ibid* 94.
[110] *Ibid* 88.
[111] *Ibid* 92.

impression on the Franks that it was recorded in their annals despite being a less than attractive detail on the perceived might of the empire.

King Godofrid is not the only figure that shows this level of ambition and individualism. The hopeful successors to King Hemming, Sigifrid and Anulo, both raised their own armies for the sake of their reign and in the end, gave their lives for it. Anulo's followers ultimately won placing Heriold and Reginfrid, his brothers, on the throne. Despite their ambition being their downfall, it is striking that they would both give their lives to their cause even when it meant neither of them would achieve their goals.

Heriold maintaining his claim to the throne would prove to be strenuous as he was exiled and re-accepted several times during his lifetime by the Danish rulers known as the sons of Godofrid. Despite his struggles, Heriold seemingly never gave up trying to retain his claim to power. In the entry for 828, he appeals to the empire for help with placing him back on the Danish throne and the two groups meet, alongside other nobles from Saxony. Despite planning to negotiate, the text says that "Heriold was too thirsty for action. He broke the peace that had been agreed upon and confirmed by hostages and burned and pillaged some small villages of the Norsemen."[112] He further demonstrates the ready-for-action mindset characteristic of the Danes and despite having support from the empire, he still felt the need to achieve his goal himself. That is, through his own acts of violence, which may have held more weight for him in terms of what he considered to be his personal achievements. Perhaps he was not satisfied with letting diplomacy work on his behalf and wanted to create a physical change himself (i.e.,

[112] *Ibid* 123.

burning the Danes' villages in a very Scandinavian style raid). It is a kind of independence that at least for Heriold cannot be satisfied by political games but by creating devastating effects himself.

This kind of rash violence and implementation of immediate, significant change in the environment is characteristic of how all the Danish raids recorded in the Frankish Annals are depicted. As mentioned previously, the actions of the Danish are first significantly recorded in 808 when King Godofrid attacked several castles of the Obodrites and forced many of them to pay him tribute. While on the way home with the booty, he also destroyed a trading post "which, because of the taxes it paid, was of great advantage to his kingdom." Taking the merchants as well, he then proceeded to fortify the Saxon border before finally returning home.[113] Two years later in 810, he headed a raiding campaign in Frisia, ravaging the coastal islands and imposing a tribute.[114] The entry for 813 depicts the rulers of Denmark, called the sons of King Godofrid, gathering "troops from everywhere"[115] heading for Westarfolda, a region in the southeast of modern Norway that was a part of their kingdom. While not a raid of piracy, it was meant to put down an insurrection of the local princes and people. They were joined by another mysterious group of nobles who the text describes as "the Danish nobles who for some time after leaving their homeland had been in exile with the Swedes. Since hosts of their countrymen joined the sons of Godofrid from all over the land of the Danes, they easily drove the kings from the kingdom after a battle."[116] Finally, in 820, thirteen vessels set out to raid the

[113] *Ibid* 88.
[114] *Ibid* 91-92.
[115] *Ibid* 96.
[116] *Ibid* 96.

coasts of Flanders but were repelled by defenders, leaving some of the homes burned and only a few cows stolen. They tried again on the river Seine but were similarly fought back by the coast guards. Their raids on the Aquitaine coasts were finally successful, with the text describing them as having "thoroughly plundered a village by the name of Bouin and then returned home with immense booty."[117]

Unsurprisingly, the Danes in the annals saw the value in attempting piracy on their neighbors and reaped the rewards of this seemingly free-for-all style of warfare. They apparently did not have moral qualms with taking material wealth they did not work for like the Christian kingdoms would have. It is easy to imagine this dynamic fostering feelings of resentment towards them; the Carolingian Empire defended itself and even instigated violence against the Danes but did not seem to attempt the same type of small, frequent raids that were only for the sake of piracy. It is interesting to conjecture how the Scandinavians might have viewed this hesitation on the part of the Christian kingdoms never retaliating against the raids. If they did not see the issue with stealing wealth, then they likely valued the strength of the individual to be superior to any moral ground based on working to build personal wealth. That is if you were strong enough to win and take then it was within your moral right to do so. Others allowing themselves to be robbed are in the moral wrong for not having the strength to resist. Of course, from the eyes of a Christian kingdom, stealing is wrong because the Bible describes it as sinful, and the Scandinavians were no exception to this rule of nature. Regardless of how the Scandinavians truly viewed their piracy, it is a foundational factor of how other

[117] *Ibid* 107-108.

cultures viewed them as they devastated villages, monasteries, and anywhere else victimized by the violence.

Despite their tendency to resort to violence, the Danes were not incompetent in the realm of diplomacy, and the Annals record instances of diplomatic attempts to maintain peace or negotiate with the empire. In the entry for 826, there is mention of an assembly of European leaders to which the Danish kings sent envoys "to make peace and clinch an alliance." At the same time, King Heriold, his wife, and a large group of Danes were baptized and were given gifts from the empire. However, in 827, Heriold was ousted from his position as ruler and exiled.[118] In 828, the empire and Danish met to maintain peace and discuss Heriold's exile. During this episode, Heriold attacked the Danes on his own, and the sons of Godofrid retaliated by attacking and ravaging the Frankish camps. Instead of letting the warfare continue, they pause, and as the text says, "Then they deliberated how to ward off revenge for this action. They dispatched an embassy to the emperor and explained that need had compelled them against their will to do this, that they were ready to give satisfaction, and that it was entirely up to the emperor how amends should be made in order to preserve peace between the two parties."[119]

The author makes an interesting judgment in assuming the Danes sent the clarification for their actions when they ascribe it to wanting to avoid revenge. It is not entirely clear where the author would have gotten the information for the annals, but either way, it implies that this was perhaps not viewed as an honorable action. The annals portray them as simply trying to

[118] *Ibid* 122.
[119] *Ibid* 123.

avoid the consequences of an attack that went past simple self-defense. It could be viewed this way but even in this take, it shows a level of political intelligence that the Danes must have had. This instance and the other instances that were recorded by the annals demonstrate their capability to initiate and maintain peace when it suited their best interests. While they were not afraid to resort to warfare, they were not simply prone to violence at all times especially when it may not serve them well in the long run.

In addition, the annals mention multiple times the use of oaths and gifts to instigate and promote peace; this cultural characteristic is one explicitly mentioned by Tacitus when describing the Germans so it is likely this trait directly originated from the Scandinavians' ancestry.[120] These ceremonial-like actions were fulfilled by both parties such as King Hemming's envoys sending gifts in his name and Charlemagne presenting Heriold with presents in response to his baptism.[121] These were not people unfamiliar with the Christian customs of the mainland and used them to their advantage in their foreign diplomacy. Given that the ninth century was too early for the large-scale conversion to Christianity that occurred in Scandinavia (starting around the tenth century), it is possible that this was a baptism done in good will, used to improve relations with the empire. The additional baptism of his wife and the large group of Danes he brought with him likely would have only furthered the impression of benevolence and perhaps helped legitimize his conversion in the eyes of the Catholic leaders. With a singular conversion, one man could be led astray but, in this case, it appeared like he was creating a small community of Christians that Heriold endorsed.

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[120] Tacitus, 42.
[121] *Carolingian Chronicles,* 94, 119.

The Royal Frankish Annals offer a small goldmine of information on the actions, policies, and worldviews of the Danes from the perspective of Christian Europeans who often found themselves at odds with the Germanic Scandinavians. While Europe faced the immediate boundaries of the far north, they were not the only Medieval powers to encounter the people and culture. Only a century later in 921 and 922 did a group of Arabic diplomats and religious leaders travel to the court of the Volga Bulghars located in modern-day eastern Russia at the request of the Bulghar king to assist in the proper conversion of his kingdom to Islam.[122] Ahmad ibn Fadlan was the author and one of the educated members of the group who recorded the events of their travels over the three-hundred twenty-five days and around three thousand miles it took to arrive at the Bulghar court.[123] During his travels, he encountered the Viking Rūs and witnessed the ceremonial burial of an important member of the community, likely a chief or lord, and described the proceedings in a fair amount of detail. He also offered reports he had witnessed on the cleaning and grooming habits of the group, their basic appearance, and the intersection of their trade and religion. All of this is written from an Islamic Arab's point of view so while there are passages that hold an air of judgment, much of it is reported impartially.

Despite the effort that seems to have been put in to remain unbiased, it is important to remember that ibn Fadlan's socialization in the Islamic Arabic world touches his writing, much like the Catholic background of the *Royal Frankish Annals'* author is influenced by Christianity. While it is unfortunate that there are no substantive historical records written by the

[122] Abu Zayd al-Sirafi and Ahmad Ibn Fadlan. *Two Arabic Travel Books: Accounts of China and India and Mission to the Volga*. Trans. by Tim Mackintosh-Smith and James E. Montgomery. New York: New York University Press, 2014, 167.
[123] *Ibid* 167-168.

Scandinavians themselves from this era, using primary sources from authors of different backgrounds allows the reader to view the Scandinavians from different lenses. A Muslim author may emphasize different aspects of the culture that a Christian one would not deem significant and vice versa. Another note is that this account is written quite informally, using a conversational style in the original Arabic.[124] Perhaps the intended audience was not the scholars or government officials of the Islamic world like the annals might have been but the educated, everyday reader. There certainly are not many explicit condemnations of the religious or cultural customs of the Rūs but there seems to be some judgment when discussing their grooming habits, alcohol consumption, and sexual immodesty.[125] However, most of the report details an elaborate burial that ibn Fadlan witnessed, and his tone remains impartial.

Ibn Fadlan shows a personal interest in the Rūs' burial rites which perhaps is why he chose to spend so much time in his account of this event: "I was told that they set fire to their chieftains when they die. Sometimes they do more, so I was very keen to verify this. Then I learned of the death of an important man."[126] Presumably, after learning of this death, he asks more questions about the rite and then attends the funeral himself because he immediately launches into an explanation of the proceedings and the rituals that must take place. He even includes an exchange he had with one of the Rūs that condemns his own culture's burial practice as an Arab and rather than meeting the comment with contempt, he is curious and allows the man to explain:

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[124] *Ibid* 171.
[125] *Ibid* 243, 245.
[126] *Ibid* 245.

> One of the Rūsiyyah was standing beside me. I heard him speaking to the interpreter who was with me. I asked him what he had said, and he replied, "He said, 'You Arabs, you are a lot of fools!'" "Why is that?" "Because you purposefully take your nearest and dearest and those whom you hold in the highest esteem and put them in the ground, where they are eaten by vermin and worms. We, on the other hand, cremate them there and then, so that they enter the Garden on the spot." I asked about this and he said, "My lord feels such great love for him that he has sent the wind to take him [the dead chief] away within an hour."[127]

ibn Fadlan's willing nature to learn about other non-Islamic cultures even when it is at his expense remains useful to us today when examining what kind of people the Viking Rūs were and perhaps some traits that were common to Scandinavians in general.

Ibn Fadlan begins by describing their appearance as tall and fair with a ruddy complexion and tattoos that cover the whole body up to the neck. They always carry axes, swords, and daggers with them. [128] The women would wear metal boxes tied at the chest with rings attached that would display their husbands' social and financial standing. The metal could be made with iron, silver, brass, or gold, and "when a man has amassed ten thousand dirhams, he has a neck ring made for his wife…For every subsequent ten thousand, he gives a neck ring to his wife."[129] Their business was important to them and tied up in religious rituals as well. They prayed to a god for good trading with an offering of bread, meat, onions, milk, and alcohol to an idol carved into a piece of wood. Ibn Fadlan makes an amusing aside that dogs would come and eat the offering overnight, but the traders believed the god ate it.[130] This belief, though, possibly stems from the days of the Ancient Germans, when they used sticks from fruit

[127] *Ibid* 253.
[128] *Ibid* 241.
[129] *Ibid* 241.
[130] *Ibid* 243, 245.

trees to cast lots and divine the future.[131] Tacitus also records them providing sacrifices to their gods, such as described in this ritual, though in those days they consecrated small groves of trees rather than creating physical representations of their gods.[132] The Rūs created idols at this point but given their wooden construction, perhaps trees remained important to them due to their past divinity.

Likely the most offensive of their customs to ibn Fadlan was the Rūs' cleaning and grooming habits with him calling them, "the filthiest of all God's creatures."[133] Compared to the level of cleanliness a Muslim must follow through to remain holy, they were not clean; here, however, he is more concerned with their ritual impurity. He notes that they all washed their face and hair every day using the same water and basin and did not wash after eating or intercourse.[134] He also found their lack of modesty distasteful as they did not bother with privacy with it came to defecation, urination, or sexual acts with the female slaves.[135] They seemed to be very communal in general; when they moved somewhere new, they would build large houses that would sleep ten to twenty.[136] The only time one would become isolated was if they were sick. They would be set up in a tent separate from the rest with food and water, only to return when they recovered.[137] Ibn Fadlan also briefly describes the king of the Rūs keeping four hundred retainers with him in his palace who would all die when he did as well as forty concubines for himself and two female slaves for each of his retainers.[138] This is clearly a trait

[131] Tacitus, 39.
[132] *Ibid* 39.
[133] Abu Zayd al-Sirafi and Ahmad Ibn Fadlan, 243.
[134] *Ibid* 243
[135] *Ibid* 243.
[136] *Ibid* 243.
[137] *Ibid* 245.
[138] *Ibid* 253.

inherited from the Ancient Germans that the Anglo-Saxons retained as well. The lord-retainer relationship would have suited a man of status such as the king and with four-hundred retainers, he was well served; additionally, the lord would have been expected to take care of his retainers which seems to have been fulfilled by the distribution of slaves for each of his men. Among all the cultural traits of the Rūs, this lord-retainer relationship is the most strikingly Germanic and also shows the shared ancestry with the Anglo-Saxons.

The funeral is the most detailed of the various customs ibn Fadlan recorded and depicts one of the chiefs' burial ceremonies. The chief is placed on a large boat, along with a female slave, alcohol, fruit, basil, his weapons, and a variety of animals to be burned as a sacrifice and honor.[139] The chief is prepared with funeral garments by an old woman called the Angel of Death and rested on cushions in the boat.[140] The slave sacrificed for the dead chief would be a volunteer from the slaves that the chief owned and usually was female.[141] After completing a ritual, the Angel of Death then killed her on the boat. Afterward, the chief's nearest male relative lit the boat on fire until it turned to ash.[142]

From the brief glimpse of the Viking Rūs society that ibn Fadlan provides, it seems that community is a very important value to them. According to Muslim standards, they lack almost all privacy even in matters that ibn Fadlan considered to be immorally public. From bathing to intercourse to sleeping, the Rūs did everything in the public eye and perhaps considered it a way to remain trustworthy with one another. After all, if one decided he wanted to sleep in

[139] *Ibid* 247, 249.
[140] *Ibid* 247, 249.
[141] *Ibid* 247.
[142] *Ibid* 251, 253.

private, it could imply he does not trust the other members of the community or there is a reason the community should not trust him. Additionally, it seems the only time when it is acceptable to remain private is when a member has fallen ill. They must remain in the tent separate from the camp until they either die or recover. This could also indicate that privacy is a weakness; if there is a reason one is seeking privacy, it is because they have something to hide.

The funeral exhibits this need for community as well. The chief requires that a companion goes with him to the "Garden", and they also must be a volunteer. Ibn Fadlan mentions that the king, likely the most important man in the culture, must take all his retainers with him when he dies and, as the text explains, "sacrifice themselves to protect him."[143] As far as the community's idea of the "Garden" goes, the slave who volunteered for sacrifice chants in front of those present three refrains as she is lifted above the crowd three times:

> Look, I see my father and mother. Look, I see all my dead kindred, seated. Look, I see my master, seated in the Garden. The Garden is beautiful and dark green. He is with his men and his retainers. He summons me. Go to him.[144]

The community that a person surrounded themselves with while living follows them to the afterlife. It is possible that personal renown would have been important to the Rūs; having gained a following while alive would guarantee a community after death.

The *Royal Frankish Annals* and ibn Fadlan's travel logs give an idea of what kind of people the Scandinavians were from outside perspectives. Brutish but diplomatic, individualistic but communal, it is obvious their culture holds a sophisticated, complex social structure

[143] *Ibid* 253.
[144] *Ibid* 249.

regardless of an outsider's opinion on their state of morality or salvation. However as previously mentioned, these records only show a brief glimpse of two groups of Scandinavians who were far removed from each other geographically and in time; we can only conjecture the possible similarities between the two of them and when trying to generalize all the ancient Scandinavians. As they were not a literate culture until later, the Scandinavians relied on an oral tradition and are not able to directly defend their sense of self as a culture during the Viking Age in their own literature. Once they did begin to write in the late eleventh century, they recorded myths, histories, and poetry that were passed down through an oral tradition of storytelling and recitation that retained many of the strict poetic forms and structures found today.

Skaldic poetry is a form of verse passed down orally, allowing us to glimpse what the Scandinavians thought of themselves. They are usually linked to a specific moment and context in history and because of this most scholars agree that the skaldic verses were composed before their first documentation in written literature.[145] In addition, they were not anonymous in the slightest with poets being attributed to lines from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries.[146] It also appears that they were used to provide credibility to the historians who later wrote down the historical sagas; today they are preserved due to the practice of quoting the skaldic verses in the sagas to act as source material of what is being described or

[145] Judith Jesch, "Skaldic Verse and Viking Semantics," *Viking Revaluations: Viking Society Centenary Symposium, 14–15 May 1992* (1993): 160.
[146] Heather O'Donoghue, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Short Introduction*, Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2004, 63.

repurposed as a literary tool in a separate context of which the verses would have originally been written in.[147]

The Skaldic verses required an intricate structure that showcased the poet's verbal flexibility and refinement of the art and allowed for them to be retained orally relatively intact. If they had been passed down imperfectly, the internal form and structure of the poem would have been ruined. Heather O'Donoghue explains the complex pattern succinctly: they consisted of eight short lines with six syllables per line and always ended on an unstressed syllable. The odd lines would have two alliterating syllables with the alliteration being continued by one syllable in each of the next even lines. There was also a pattern of internal rhymes and assonance with odd lines having two assonating syllables and even lines containing two rhyming syllables. In my ear this creates a tug-of-war effect; the odd lines have the strongest alliteration but weakest rhyme while the even lines only continue the previous alliteration but contain true rhyme. All the while the syllables remain steady with six per line and the verse is limited to eight lines.[148]

The dating of the verses is important for determining the social context of the poem. The majority are dated before 1100,[149] with the Skaldic praise poems being more specific to the tenth and eleventh-century Norwegian courts.[150] However, it is not necessarily important for our purposes for them to be historically accurate. It is much more telling to know what the Scandinavians would write of themselves, whether to praise or condemn, rather than what they

[147] *Ibid* 69.
[148] *Ibid* 64.
[149] Jesch, 160.
[150] O'Donoghue, 86.

might have done in truth. It gives insight into their values, sense of morality, and worldview, especially regarding the contents, literary devices, and motifs of the praise poems. They provide more context as to what the kings and jarls of that time would have found laudable and worthy of oral documentation, and perhaps by extension, Scandinavian society.

The contents of skaldic poetry are much like a riddle; they consist of metaphorical phrases called kennings in which the listener is given a base word which is then related to a modifier to glean the meaning, or the referent, of the expression.[151] That is, the referent is found when a relationship is established among the kenning's components, much like a riddle.[152] They are notoriously difficult for a modern audience to understand as they must have relied on many cultural associations to be understood and are not straightforward. They do have some common characteristics and tropes that could reveal something of the worldview of their skalds and audience. For example, when looking at the Skaldic Project's database of skaldic verse, the most common kennings have to do with men (1541 tokens), battle (600), gold (413), chieftains/rulers of some kind (373), ships (346), swords (301), women (274), the Christian heaven (246), the sea (233), shields (212), and ravens/eagles (102).[153] The vast majority of kennings referring to something else have less than one hundred occurrences in the database. These referents all seem to correspond very closely with the traditional view of the Viking lifestyle, especially with battle tokens being the second most used referents in the skaldic verse. Gold, chieftains, swords, shields, and ravens or eagles are all reminiscent of the

[151] John Lindow, "Riddles, kennings, and the complexity of skaldic poetry." *Scandinavian Studies* 47, no. 3 (1975): 311.
[152] *Ibid* 312.
[153] *The Skaldic Project*, https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=skaldic.

common tropes used in Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, likely stemming from their shared Germanic ancestry. While swords and shields are tied closely with battle, gold is likely related to the cultural prestige placed on wealth, gift-giving, and the booty a chief would distribute to his retainers after a successful raid or battle. The Scandinavians were also no stranger to the beasts of battle in their storytelling, as the ravens and eagle referents are also very high in usage. The high quantity of sea and ship tokens seems to be more specific to the Scandinavians and it only further emphasizes the importance of their sea-faring lifestyle to their cultural identity.

However, the representations of the occurrences of certain kennings are difficult to parse as oftentimes, many of these elements can be present in just a few words of a line. To begin, take the line *veitandi baugs* 'to the giver of the ring'.[154] It is a relatively simple kenning whose referent would be 'generous man,' similar to calling a chief *sinces brytta* or 'giver of treasure' in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Take another example that uses beast of battle imagery as a referent for a male warrior: *vitrir vargfœðandi* or 'the wise wolf-feeders,' referring to the image of the victors feeding the wolves the dead of the losing side that remains on the battlefield.[155] Many battle kennings were more complex, often using vivid and diverse imagery and would call on serpents and mythological figures in their usage. For example, *hrælinns hljómr* 'of the noise of the corpse-serpent' uses snake imagery in corpse-snake to refer to a sword; with this referent established, the whole kenning can mean the noise of the sword which more clearly refers to a battle.[156] Another example of a mythological figure is regn rýgjar rógskýja 'the rain of the troll-woman of strife-clouds.' First 'strife-clouds' must be established as shields, which leads

[154] Kálfr Hallsson, "Kátrínardrápa 11," *The Skaldic Project*, https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=298&v=i.
[155] Kálfr Hallsson, "Kátrínardrápa 15," *The Skaldic Project*, https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=302&v=i.
[156] Hallar-Steinn, "Rekstefja 5," *The Skaldic Project*, https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=3017&v=i.

to 'the troll-woman of shields' referring to an ax. Finally, 'the rain of the ax' can be understood as a battle, the final referent in this kenning.[157]

While skaldic verses are ambiguous, their popular referents give an idea of what was important to the Scandinavians from their perspective. Heroism in battle, wealth from raids, and life on the sea are how their poets chose to praise their lords. This was the ideal, Scandinavian man, one that the Anglo-Saxons would have seen leading the *mycel here* on the battlefields and admired. The similarity in heroic ideals between the two cultures would have only increased the sentiment as well because while at this time Scandinavians still strived to meet this ideal and spend eternity in paradise, a Christian Anglo-Saxon had to justify their heroic violence as service to a pacifist God. The English were able to accommodate this cognitive dissonance, but it is easy to imagine that seeing someone freely living up to your ideal, without any consequence, would have been attractive.

Scandinavian Colonization and Immigration

Thus far I have investigated outside perspectives on the culture, society, and history of the mainland Scandinavians in addition to piecing together some inferences on how they view themselves in what has remained of their skaldic poetry. However, some scholars argue that it is more useful to consider the exact origins of who was a part of the Great Army rather than assuming all members were traveling directly from the Scandinavian lands. Shane McLeod has thoroughly investigated the evidence surrounding the Great Army while looking at the issue

[157] Arnórr jarlaskáld þórðarson, "Magnússdrápa 12." *The Skaldic Project*, https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=1583&v=i

through the lens of migration theory.[158] Using this more novel approach in Anglo-Saxon studies, he concluded that it is more likely the members making up the great army had originated in Ireland and Northern Francia rather than having migrated directly from Scandinavia.[159] This does not mean that the settlers were not from Scandinavia; his argument stems from one tenet of migration theory that claims "migrants are more likely to be people who have migrated previously."[160] Scandinavians who had already migrated at least once, to Ireland and Northern Francia in this case, were more likely candidates to later join the Great Army in England. For this reason, investigating the Great Army itself will lend a more specific idea of who later would settle and form the land of the Danes within England, the Danelaw, and how they might have influenced the region's culture and their reputations in the eyes of the native Anglo-Saxons.

As McLeod claimed, Scandinavians who had first migrated and lived in Frisia, located in medieval Northern Francia and modern northern Holland and parts of northwestern Germany, were likely to have made up one of the demographics of the Great Army in England.[161] Unfortunately, very little written evidence is available that directly connects Frisian-Scandinavians with the Great Army, unlike Irish-Scandinavians who are commonly featured in the Irish Annals.[162] McLeod supports this theory from the remaining evidence of Frankish

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[158] Shane McLeod, *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England: The Viking 'Great Army' and Early Settlers, c. 865-900.* For an introduction to migration theory, see also David Anthony. 'Migration in archeology: The baby and the bathwater,' *American anthropologist* 92, no. 4 (1990): 895-914; David Anthony, 'Prehistoric Migration as Social Process,' *BAR International Series* 664 (1997): 21-32; Ernest Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration,' *Journal of the statistical society of London* 48, no. 2 (1885): 167-235; Ernest Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration: Second Paper,' *Journal of the royal statistical society* 52, no. 2 (1889): 241-305.
[159] McLeod, 109-173, 281.
[160] *Ibid* 51. McLeod's summary of migration theory tenets has been adapted from David Anthony's works 'Migration in Archaeology: The baby and the bathwater,' *American anthropologist* 92, no. 4, 895-914 and 'Prehistoric Migration as Social Process,' *BAR International Series* 664, 21-32.
[161] McLeod, 132.
[162] *Ibid* 132.

potters and moneyers that survive in the area of Danish settlement before 900. He posits that these masters of their trade would not have joined the Great Army spontaneously; it is more likely that they would have joined the Scandinavians living in the area who were preparing to migrate once again to England for conquest and spoils.[163] Unfortunately, the lack of direct written evidence of Frisian Scandinavians does not allow for much if any analysis of the character of this group of Vikings. It is possible that there could be connections drawn between the Scandinavian kingdoms of Denmark that were discussed previously from the *Royal Frankish Annals* and any Scandinavian settlements in Northern Francia; being located geographically near each other and by extension, the same opposing kingdoms and empires may force the communities to adopt similar political policies and cultures. However, it would be difficult to even make speculations on their character.

It is clear they were likely a mobile group and comfortable with adapting to a new language and culture if they had done it at least once and planned to do it again. They would likely have shown the same ambitious characteristics as the other Scandinavians, as the opportunity for plundering and war spoils would have been a tempting benefit to joining the Great Army. In addition, they likely would have had decent relations with the local Frisians. Perhaps not so far as friendly, but if McLeod is correct in his claim that the Frankish specialists came to England due to a Scandinavian presence in Frisia, then they would have had daily contact with each other and the ability to communicate.

[163] *Ibid* 132, 170-171.

To be clear, this basic analysis is speculation on the attributes of an immigrant based on previous examples of Scandinavian character seen thus far. However, like immigrants even nowadays, they were likely holding onto their cultural practices and ideals more intentionally than those remaining in Scandinavia, because, without the cooperation of the community, cultural maintenance is much more difficult. Perhaps in a foreign land, the only connection to home a Scandinavian may have was the belief in a heroic ideal; this would have given them the bold character that is so often memorialized in annals recording dealings with this group of people. Though it is difficult to ascertain much of the specific traits of Frisian-Scandinavians, more clarity is offered on the character of these migrant warriors in the Irish Scandinavians, as the annalists provided no shortage of material on the Viking activity that harassed the Irish counties.

The *Annals of Ulster* are a compilation of yearly records depicting Irish history from 431 AD to 1588.[164] It is one of the principal sources of historical information in the realm of Irish studies due to its continual updates for over a thousand years, the superlative reproduction retaining original spellings of the Irish language throughout its history, and its use of *Anno Domini* (AD) when recording a year's entry making the text accessible to modern readers.[165] For our purposes, it follows the string of Viking activity that occurred in Ireland starting with occasional raids in 794 lasting to around 830, when a more permanent Scandinavian presence began to show up on the island. From there almost every entry until the expulsion of the

[164] Daniel McCarthy, 'The Original Compilation of the Annals of Ulster,' *Studia Celtica* 38 (2004): 70.
[165] *Ibid* 69.

"gentiles"[166] in 901 contains a brief record of the significant Scandinavian activity that occurred. The annals set the context for the warriors who later would arrive in the Great Army, as there are a few documented characters who started their careers in Ireland. Additionally, it serves as an arena for comparison; while in Ireland, the same warriors who later served in the Great Army, never gained the same foothold as they did in England. Establishing strongholds like the Danelaw, a kingdom-sized colony fully administered by Scandinavians, was never achieved in Ireland; Viking towns and overrun estates were probably the closest equivalents. So, it seems that Ireland may have served as a training ground for the soldiers that would later conquer so much of England and honed the fierce persona that an Anglo-Saxon would have faced on the battlefield. The most prominent figure mentioned was the Viking leader Ivar, or Imhar as written in the annals, who would later show up in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as one of the Scandinavian leaders heading the invasion of England, and representing the Irish-Scandinavian presence within the Great Army.[167] While Scandinavian activity had a resurgence starting from around 914, to keep with a timeline that roughly follows when the Great Army in England would have been active, I chose to stop the analysis in 901 with their expulsion from Ireland.

Like in the Royal Frankish Annals, most records indicate the various, significant raids the Scandinavians inflicted on the Irish monasteries and other religious sites that offered quick riches. It is telling that the first record of their activity did not actually occur within Ireland; the

[166] Original term in annals, *genti,* which is often also translated as 'heathen' or 'pagan.' See Nichole Sterling's, 'Who's that Viking? Identifying Vikings in the Annals of Ulster,' GMP Epistemologies Conference (2004): 1, file:///C:/Users/amand/Downloads/Whos_that_Viking_Identifying_Vikings_in.pdf

[167] There is some debate on the validity of this claim. For a discussion, see Clare Downham, 'Ívarr and his Dynasty,' *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland the Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2008, pp. 1-11.

entry for 793 simply writes, “Devastation of all the islands of Britain by Gentiles,”[168] which likely references the brutal attack on the holy island of Lindisfarne in England marking the historical start of the Viking Age in England and apparently establishing the Scandinavian threat in the English and perhaps the Irish rulers’ political consciousness. Only a year later, does the annalist begin recording the long string of raids that began occurring with the arrival of the Vikings in Ireland.

From 794 to around 830, the stark records depict occasional but significant raids that drop off after 812 and pick up again in 820.[169] In the entry for 824, the language used suggests a more permanent presence by the Viking Scandinavians at this point; it records a plundering that occurred that year, followed by “a victory in Magh-inis by the Ulidians over Gentiles, in which a great many were slain. A victory over the Osraighi by Gentiles.”[170] In previous records, particularly entries 805 and 810-812, there are mentions of “slaughters” both on the parts of the Scandinavians and the Irish, however a “victory” “over Gentiles” implies a more traditional battle rather than the quick and brutal raids that seemed to be the norm early on. A victory implies that the conflict was anticipated on both sides while a slaughter could be reduced to something quick and unexpected. In 824, the Ulidians defeated the Norsemen but later that year, they have their own victory over the Osraighi. From this point on, referencing victories, defeats, and battles become commonplace in the entries, indicating that the presence of Viking armies was more permanent.

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[168] *Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster. Otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat; A chronicle of Irish Affairs from AD 431, to AD 1540.* Trans. by William M. Hennessy. Dublin: Alexander Thom & Co., 1887, 275.
[169] *Ibid* 275-313.
[170] *Ibid* 321.

This supposed intensified presence within Ireland is further supported by the entry in 836, twelve years later, which reads, "A fleet of three score ships of the Norsemen upon the Boyne. Another fleet of three score ships on the Abhainn-Liphè. These two fleets afterward plundered Magh-Liphè and Magh-Bredh, between churches, and forts, and houses."[171] This is the first record to make mention of the size of a raiding fleet, perhaps indicating that it was unusually large for what was common in those types of attacks. Despite it appearing like a raid of the two regions referenced, the entries follow with:

> A victory by the men of Bregh, over the Foreigners, at Deoninne in Mughdorna-Bregh, when six score of them were slain. The battle [was gained] by Foreigners, at Inbher-na-mbarc, over the Ui-Neill from the Sinainn to the sea, where a slaughter was made that has not been reckoned; but the chief Kings escaped.[172]

Based on the text, one cannot be certain that the annalist is referring to the same group of foreigners but within the context and location names, it appears to be so. In this case, these two fleets acted more like an army staying for a longer time than a small group, looking to hit and run a village or monastery. This manner of raiding seems like a precursor of how the Great Army would later act in their conquest of England.

Just two years later in 838 did "an expedition of Foreigners on Loch-Echach" arrive "from which they destroyed the territories and churches of the North of Ireland"[173] seemingly coming in a larger group with the intent to conquer and steal for a longer period. They stay in the area until at least 840 as the entry for 839 records their continuous plundering in the Loch-Echach area and 840 simply states that the Scandinavians remained there still. It is unclear what

[171] *Ibid* 339.
[172] *Ibid* 339.
[173] *Ibid* 343.

kind of political relationship the group here had with other powers in the area; was it the unofficial territory of a conquering group or did the rulers of the area face a struggle for power during that time (unlike the Danelaw which had been officially established in the Treaty of Wedmore with the West Saxon King Alfred)? However, it appears this area was a kind of basic settlement from which the small army could coordinate attacks and recover. In addition, the next year's entry, 841, mentions "Gentiles on Dubhlinn still" implying a similar situation in this area. The annals do not record the Scandinavians arriving in Dubhlinn before this record but write, "The plundering of Biror and Saighir by Gentiles from Dubhlinn," which indicates the Scandinavians had settled there long enough to establish some sort of identity as being from Dubhlinn.

848 appears to mark a turning point for the Scandinavians within Ireland as a new group of Vikings "came to exercise power over the Foreigners who were before them…"[174] This group was made up of followers of the "King of the Foreigners"[175] and just two years later, the group had been divided into what the annals call the Black and White Foreigners. Though both groups were Scandinavians, they had continuous conflict until the arrival of Amhlaim, one of the Scandinavian kings, to which "the Foreigners of Ireland submitted to him."[176] Later the kings, Imhar or Ívarr and Auisle would arrive (around 861-862)[177] and all three commanded the Irish Vikings jointly. Perhaps in response to the increased power that came with the arrival of kings and subsequent unity, the Irish held an assembly in 858 among the nobles of all Ireland to

[174] *Ibid* 357.
[175] *Ibid*. 357.
[176] *Ibid* 363.
[177] *Ibid* 371, 373.

"[establish] peace and concord."[178] Given the history of endless tribal wars among the multitudes of Irish nobles, it is significant that at this time they would decide to attempt working together. With the Scandinavians under a single power, they conceivably could achieve more than simply plundering wealthy properties; given the propensity for colonization that the Great Army had in England in 865 only a few years later, it is very possible that the Irish rulers recognized this threat and decided it was worth establishing alliances. The Scandinavians in their individual character seemed to function well within small raiding groups that did not need to follow the mandates of a faraway ruler, however, these Irish anxieties demonstrate that once a king banded them together, they created a force that transcended the power of old family feuds and made establishing peace among the Irish preferable.

While the three kings reigned over the Scandinavians in Ireland, they established brief alliances with Irish nobles a multitude of times. In 849, a year after the arrival of the White Foreigners, it notes that "Cinaedh, son of Conaing, King of Cianachta, turned against Maelsechnaill, through the assistance of the Foreigners…"[179] In 860, they worked with Aedh son of Niall against Meath, joined by Flann son of Conaing in 861.[180] Interestingly, a year later the Foreigners "plundered the land of Flann son of Conaing, to with, Amhlaim, and Imhar, and Auisle; and Lorcan son of Cathal, King of Meath, was with them thereat."[181] It seems they had no qualms about switching to the side that best suited them, fighting against Flann, their previous ally, with Lorcan the king of Meath, which had been previously plundered by them.

[178] *Ibid* 369.
[179] *Ibid* 359.
[180] *Ibid* 371.
[181] *Ibid* 373.

Aedh son of Niall, seeming to have more sensibility about trusting them again is not recorded working with them again but actively fighting them; in 865, when two of the kings, Amhlaim and Auisle left for plundering in Pictland, Aedh "plundered all the fortresses of the Foreigners…so that he carried off their spoils, and their flocks and herds, to his camp, after a battle."[182] Again, in 867, Aedh is recorded having won a battle over the Foreigners, in addition to other Irish nobles which included Flann son of Conaing. It is unclear if the Foreigners were working with the other Irishmen or if they were all caught up in the battle, but it is possible that Flann had once again been allied with the Scandinavians despite their previous betrayal.

Along with their activities in Ireland, The *Annals of Ulster* includes clues supporting the involvement of Irish Scandinavians in the Great Army's conquest of England. In the 865 entry, the same year that the Great Army invaded England, it records, "Amplaiph and Auisle went into Fortrenn [Pictland], with the Foreigners of Ireland and Alba, when they plundered all Pictland and brought away their pledges."[183] Pictland is located in modern-day Scotland where the Viking Age Scandinavians were also actively present in conjunction with those further south in England.[184] Given that this marks a known migration of Irish Scandinavians to Great Britain, it is possible that the members of this army would have joined the Great Army. They would have had experience living and working in a similar position and adapting to a different culture, though Irish culture at the time would have been a bit more unfamiliar than Anglo-Saxon due to

[182] *Ibid* 375, 377.
[183] *Ibid* 375.
[184] See Clare Downham, 'North Britain,' 137-175.

its Celtic background rather than Germanic. Likely the transition in England would have been easier than navigating Irish society due to their similar cultural dynamics.

Other clues are the entries for 869 and 870, in which a siege against Ail-Cluathe, a city in Scotland, took place and lasted four months until the fortress fell and was plundered.[185] This was followed by Amhlaim and Imhar coming back to Dublin from Alba with "two hundred ships; and a great multitude of men, English, Britons, and Picts, were brought by them to Ireland, in captivity."[186] While the presence of Britons and Picts is to be expected given the recorded activity of the kings' army in Scotland, the English also being present indicates that this group could have contributed to the efforts of the Great Army.

Following Mcleod's argument that the Great Army in England likely consisted of a certain percentage of Irish and Frisian Scandinavians, this would mean that those soldiers likely had previous experience under the command of a king, rather than just a lord, and would have known what it was like to live in a foreign culture and adjust accordingly. They would have been able to use that knowledge not only for their contribution to the Great Army's efforts but also during their settlement in England. Their ease of acculturation and navigating the host society can be seen in their alliances with nobles in Ireland, despite them ending sourly, the relationship with Frankish tradespeople that is hinted at, and the diplomatic intelligence of the Scandinavians of the mainland has already been previously discussed and affirmed. In other words, they knew how to use the people around them to their benefit. As will be later seen during the settlement and establishment of the area known as the Danelaw, they were able to

[185] *Annala Uladh,* 383.
[186] *Ibid* 385.

firmly integrate themselves into Anglo-Saxon society by adapting to local customs, such as adopting the use of coins, converting to Christianity, and retaining the same political system (i.e., a monarchy) throughout the change. All the while, they were able to gain the fascination and admiration of the very same people they conquered, providing avenues of influence in language, customs, and fashion that reflected what the Anglo-Saxons may have perceived as their Germanic past. This easy flexibility to adapt and influence situations to their benefit was one of the most important qualities of the soldiers and later settlers to go beyond simply finding a place to fit, but truly becoming a culture of prestige, nostalgia, and revival to the local Anglo-Saxons.

Identity in the Danelaw

The Danelaw was a region that consisted of Northumbria, East Anglia, and parts of Mercia and defined the area that was occupied and administered by Scandinavian settlers and aristocrats. However, D.M. Hadley notes that the term 'Danelaw' has not been found recorded earlier than 1008 and is used much more frequently during the eleventh and twelfth centuries to refer to the Danish legal tradition found there.[187] That is to say that during the ninth and tenth centuries, this area was not necessarily categorized by Scandinavian influence like it was a few hundred years later. This does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons did not recognize the general Danish-ness of the region, as King Edgar seems to when he directly refers to the Danes and their "good laws" in 962 and might "imply that society was divided into distinctive 'ethnic'

[187] Dawn Hadley, "The Scandinavian Impact," *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure, C. 800-1100*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000, 299.

groups which could be identified in objective, legal terms."[188] If the Danelaw had any objective Scandinavian identity that was consciously recognized by the Anglo-Saxons of that time, it would be in the legal sense and less so in the cultural.

The idea of 'Scandinavianness' regarding the Danelaw was also a fluid concept. It was "noticeably often commented upon in England in the context of the new threat from Scandinavia in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries"[189] and usually referred to recent arrivals from Scandinavia who might feasibly be going back.[190] In 950, for instance, the Scandinavians who had arrived with the *mycel hæþen here,* the Great Heathen Army, in 865 would have been dead with their descendants having lived their entire lives in England. They would not have identified as Scandinavian in the same way as a recent arrival, such as a merchant, would have. Therefore, Hadley coined the label Anglo-Scandinavian to describe the region of the Danelaw and its people that encompasses their Scandinavian history but also considers the cultural blending that occurred between the native Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavian settlers that ultimately created something unprecedented in both cultures.[191]

Archeology and Anglo-Scandinavian Identity

The way we esteem our things forms a great part of our social identity. Objects in our daily life take on social agency because of the intention, whatever that intention may be, that

[188] *Ibid* 301.
[189] *Ibid* 303.
[190] Susan Reynolds, 'What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons,"?' *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 4, (1985): 409.
[191] Hadley, 307.

humans place on art, materials, and even animals. Alfred Gell explains this phenomenon in which there are agents (human or nonhuman) that cause intentional events in the natural world outside of the interference of the universe. In the case of nonhuman agents, such as material objects, agency must be placed on them by humans and therefore require the term secondary agents because they cannot gain agency from within themselves.[192] The argument that material objects can contribute to and even form social identity hinges on the idea that they can contain social agency when a person bestows some intention on the object. For example, an activist at a protest might carry a sign with a slogan; the person themself may not be saying anything but the intention behind holding the sign with a specific slogan on it betrays something of the identity of that person. The sign cannot give a complete picture of who this person is, however in the time and place of the protest, it demonstrates what the person believes. It carries the intention of the person as a secondary social agent.

It follows then that artifacts found in the time and place of the Danelaw may contain some intention left behind by the creator and/or owner that can give us clues to how the Anglo-Scandinavians identified themselves. In Wobst's 1977 article, he states "Crucially, the form, decoration, and distribution of artifacts can be studied to reveal social and cultural values. Through their diverse styles and appearances, artifacts act as a non-verbal means of communication and serve to reflect certain affiliations, such as age, culture, gender, and ethnic, social, and political allegiances.[193] Investigating the material culture of the Anglo-Scandinavians can reveal something about their beliefs, how they might have viewed their Germanic, Anglo-

[192] Alfred Gell, *Art and agency: An anthropological theory,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, 16-17.
[193] Martin Wobst, "Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange," *For the Director: Research essays in honor of James B. Griffin,* Edited C. Cleland Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977: 317-334.

Saxon, and Scandinavian background, and how they formed their identity in the wake of these influences.

The difficulty in studying Anglo-Scandinavian culture lies in the similarity of the cultures fusing. The Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians had relatively similar material cultures which makes them difficult points of reference when attempting to distinguish a newer, distinct culture like the Anglo-Scandinavian. With this in mind, Jane Kershaw was able to conduct an extensive study of Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Anglo-Scandinavian brooches because of their unique distinctiveness between the two mother cultures. These brooches were a staple in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian women's wear and, unlike other components of women's dress such as shawls, outerwear, dresses, and undertunics which were similar among both cultures, the design elements of Scandinavian brooches were foreign to the Anglo-Saxons.[194] As Kershaw describes,

> The fantastic beasts and complex geometric schemes familiar to Scandinavian art were far removed from the semi-naturalistic animal and foliate patterns of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon Trewhiddle and Winchester styles and may have been difficult to reproduce by craftsmen trained in insular traditions. Via their distinct forms and new art styles, Scandinavian brooches were therefore well placed to articulate social differences and mark out a distinct Scandinavian cultural affiliation.[195]

In addition, women's culture is particularly significant when discussing the formation and continuation of cultural identity due to their role in retaining familial connections, personal history, social customs, and cultural practices.[196] Their position in society as the caretakers of

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[194] Anne Hedeager Krag, 'Dragtudviklingen fra 8.-10. Årh. E. Kr. i Sydskandinavien – med Udgangspunkt i Skålformede Spænder,' *LAG 5* (1995): 56; Gale Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England,* Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004, 148-51, 156-9, 212-26.

[195] Jane Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England,* 229.

[196] Jane Kershaw, "Women as bearers of cultural tradition in Viking-Age England." *Vikings Across Boundaries: Viking-Age Transformation, Volume II.* Abington, Oxon: Routledge, 2021, 101. See also Donna R. Gabaccia*, From*

children places them as the main avenues of cultural transmission. Perhaps most importantly, it is due to this role that the mother's cultural background is passed down more strongly than the father's.[197] Because of this Kershaw argues that "the presence in the Danelaw of a substantial population of Scandinavian women was critical to the continuity of Scandinavian identities in England."[198]

Figure 2: Anglo-Saxon Trewhiddle Style Brooch, early 9th century, Pentney Hoard in Norfolk; © The Trustees of the British Museum, Asset Num. 1306890001. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Kershaw found that Anglo-Scandinavian brooches blended features found in both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon brooches. This usually was demonstrated by the face of the

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the Other Side. Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820-1990, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 63–64; Christiane Harzig, "Women migrants as global and local agents: new research strategies on gender and migration," *Sharpe, Pamela (ed) Women, Gender, and Labour Migration: Historical and Global Perspectives*, London: Routledge, 2001, 22.

[197] Kalra et al., *Diaspora and Hybridity,* London: Sage, 2005, 57.

[198] Kershaw, "Women as bearers of cultural tradition in Viking-Age England," 100.

brooch appearing more Scandinavian in design, featuring a Scandinavian motif for example, while the form of the brooch, such as how it fastened to the clothes, was Anglo-Saxon in nature.[199]

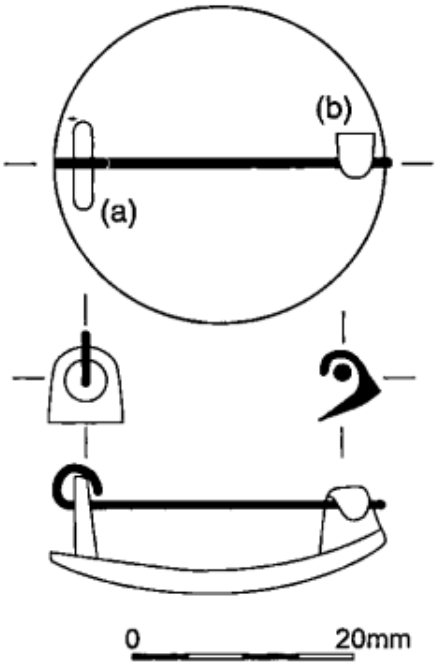

Fig. 2.14 Anglo-Scandinavian disc brooch: form and fittings
a) Single, transverse pin-lug of Anglo-Saxon type
b) Hooked catchplate, at a right angle to the brooch rim, of Scandinavian form.

Figure 3: Anglo-Scandinavian disc brooch form. Adapted from Jane Kershaw, Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England, 39.

It seems that Anglo-Scandinavian women wanted a brooch that looked Scandinavian but would suit the indigenous Anglo-Saxon style of fastening them. This statement is a generalization as there were many other variations of Anglo-Scandinavian brooches but the fact remains that any new adaptation of the stable Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian brooch forms created within the

[199] Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England*, 39.

Danelaw would be considered an Anglo-Scandinavian manifestation.[200] In addition, creating a brooch that closely complements the native styling of clothing, further implies that these brooches were made in the Danelaw, for wearers living in the Danelaw rather than being exported elsewhere. A significant change from Scandinavian brooches is the removal of attachment loops, small hoops to which the wearer could hang chains or cords with small tools attached at the ends. Kershaw points out that brooches with these attachment loops could be found in England, but they were considered a Scandinavian style, as the brooch itself was foreign.[201] This indicates "the existence of two, distinct female costume traditions within the Danelaw and, in turn, at least two groups of wearers." [202]

[200] *Ibid* 39.
[201] *Ibid* 162-163.
[202] *Ibid* 178.

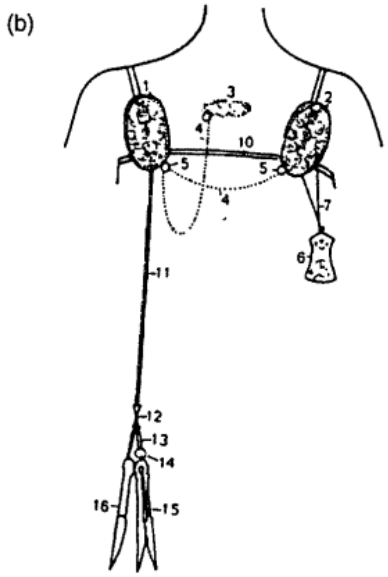

Fig. 5.5 Birka grave 464, a) brooch and accessory finds; b) reconstructed costume (after Hägg 1974, figs. 32, 33). 1–2: Oval brooches; 3: Equal-armed brooch; 4: Silver chain; 5: Oval brooch suspension loops; 6: Needle holder; 7: Leather band; 8: Beaded necklace; 9: Leather band; 10: Dress ties; 11: Bronze chain; 12: X-shaped link with traces of leather; 13: Leather band; 14: Suspension ring for shears; 15: Shears; 16: Knife.

Figure 4: Use of attachment loops on brooches; Adapted from Jane Kershaw, Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England, 166.

In addition, it appears that certain Scandinavian brooch trends were in style longer in the Danelaw when compared to their use in Scandinavia, indicating that Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian brooches may have "served as mnemonic devices, fostering links to the Scandinavian homelands and preserving a Scandinavian identity within a new society."[203]

Kershaw concludes that retaining the 'Scandinavianness' of brooches hints at the fundamental importance of Danelaw inhabitants' Scandinavian origins and this intention would have been understood by the wearers. She also states that the evident vogue of Scandinavian styles was likely due to a "Scandinavian fashion-setting elite group" on top of a large immigrant

[203] *Ibid* 156.

population that would have been able to popularize the aristocracy's fashions. The elitism present in the incorporated Scandinavian design elements likely would have been beneficial in climbing the Anglo-Scandinavian social ladder.[204] Given that the Danelaw was a country of immigrants with influence, it is no surprise that they would remain more conservative of the things closest to their identity. The application of strong Scandinavian influence indicates that by maintaining close ties with their cultural ideals, whether that be a Germanic hero or a hometown fashion, this conservatism would have been much more strongly enforced, though perhaps subconsciously. The Anglo-Saxons living in the Danelaw would have also faced the brunt of this sentiment and given that they also had some ancient connections with this newly revitalized Germanic culture in their living literature, it is no surprise that they also would have wanted to jump on board with the trend.

The unique blending of Scandinavian customs into Anglo-Saxon ones within the Danelaw can also be seen in the dual-currency system that operated within the region throughout the period of Scandinavian settlement. Individual coin and bullion finds as well as the discovery of Scandinavian hordes, such as the Flusco Pike, Vale of York, Furness, Cumbria, Silverdale, Lancashire, and Bedale, North Yorkshire hordes, have allowed researchers to gain a clearer picture of the currency timeline in Viking Age England in addition to the variety of currency in common use.[205] During the Viking Age period, two currencies divided Northern Europe in which

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[204] *Ibid* 248.

[205] Gareth Williams, "Coins and Currency in Viking England, AD 865-954." *Early Medieval Monetary History: Studies in Memory of Mark Blackburn,* Edited by Naismith, Rory, Martin Allen, and Elina Screen. Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014, 15; See also Gareth Williams, "The Northern hoards revisited: Hoards and silver economy in the northern Danelaw in the early tenth century," *Early Medieval Art and Archaeology in the Northern World: Studies in Honour of James Graham-Campbell,* Edited by A. Reynolds and L. Webster. Leiden, 2013; Mark Blackburn, "Supplements to the articles 2011," *VCCBI*, 371–90 (2011): 376–384; Dot Boughton, Gareth Williams and Barry Ager, "Viking hoards: buried wealth of the Norse North-West," *Current Archaeology, 264 (2012):* 26–31; Gareth

the northern and eastern regions used weighed silver, and the western zone used silver coins.[206] When the Scandinavians arrived in England, it is clear that Anglo-Scandinavian coins were minted and contributed to a robust coin economy in the region, especially in urban areas, while bullion continued to be used by Scandinavian settlers in rural parts.[207] Rather than the Scandinavians abandoning their use of weight-based bullion in exchange for issuing coins in the Anglo-Saxon custom, new data has determined that both were used at the same time in the rural Danelaw for several decades.[208] This system allowed for choice among currencies; a Scandinavian settler could decide whether to continue using their more familiar weight-based system or switch to the English coins already in use. Despite bullion being more Scandinavian, Guthrum, the Great Army leader, created some of the first coin issues in his Christian name after he was designated ruler of East Anglia under his Treaty of Wedmore with King Alfred in 878. [209] At this time, though, there would have been a great diversity in coins, such as the pre-Viking coins in circulation (i.e., the Lunettes coins of Mercia and Wessex and the *stycas* of Northumbria), the coins under the new Scandinavian administration, and the introduction of a bullion economy.[210]

Williams, "Viking Hoards from Yorkshire, c.866–954: A survey," *A Riverine Site Near York: A Possible Viking Camp, and Other Related Papers*, ed. G. Williams, London: British Museum, 2020.

[206] Jane Kershaw, "An early medieval dual-currency economy: Bullion and coin in the Danelaw," *Antiquity* 91, no. 355 (2017): 174.

[207] *Ibid* 175, 184.

[208] *Ibid* 174.

[209] Michael Dolley, *Viking Coins of the Danelaw and Dublin*, London: British Museum, 1965, 16; Mark Blackburn, "Presidential address 2004. Currency under the Vikings. Part 1: Guthrum and the earliest Danelaw coinages." *Brit Numis J* 75 (2005): 23–25.

[210] Williams, "Coins and Currency in Viking England, AD 865-954," 21. See also James Graham-Campbell and Nicholas Brooks, 'Reflections on the Viking-Age silver hoard from Croydon, Surrey,' Communities and Warfare, 700-1400, London: Hambledon Press, 2000; Mark Blackburn, "Viking winter camp at Torksey, 872–3," *Viking Coinage and Currency in the British Isles* 221 (2011): 64; Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards, "The winter camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire," *The Antiquaries Journal* 96, (2016): 23-67.

The great variety of options shows the cultural turmoil that must have been going on at that time. Evidence of hoard finds seems to point out that all these currencies were in use in an area, with rural areas favoring bullion and cities preferring coins. While a coin economy eventually won the most favor, it seems that Anglo-Saxons must have had to adjust to a bullion system. Merchants that wanted to stay in business would have had to learn to accept and trade with all types including the new weigh-system and the more familiar, but new issue coins. Speculating on Anglo-Saxon sentiments towards changes in their economy is difficult but it seems like bullion would have died out much faster if the English did not use it in addition to the Scandinavians. Additionally, Guthrum issued new coins as part of his reign in the Danelaw so the Scandinavians as a political entity would not have had issues with changing to a coin system. It implies that there must have been English that adopted the weight-based system, especially in the less cosmopolitan areas of the countryside, showing another manifestation of Scandinavian influence on the daily lives of the Anglo-Saxons.

Based on the two archeological cases, the arrival of the Scandinavian settlers sparked changes in the daily lives of the Anglo-Saxons they were in regular contact with. In both cases, there are adaptations accommodating both the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons which allow Scandinavian culture to pervade Anglo-Saxon culture without undermining the natural function of the indigenous society. The brooches played a role in appearing Scandinavian while being made to suit the Anglo-Saxon style of wearing clothes. The native Anglo-Saxon culture formed the foundation of fashion choices in the Danelaw, however, the population desired to incorporate design elements from the new culture. The imitation of the Scandinavian “look” implies a level of admiration for them, while the seamless blending of the brooches into the

original Anglo-Saxon style of wearing brooches demonstrates the cultural blending that was naturally occurring in the area. Whether subconscious or not, the inclusion of a historical opponent's fashion within one's own is significant because of the role of cultural dress in distinguishing ethnic groups. As previously mentioned, there was not much variation in styles of dress between the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon cultures, likely due to their similar origins and relatively close proximity. Therefore, the choice to incorporate one of the few elements of distinct design, the brooch, into the Anglo-Saxon wardrobe points to a culture that esteemed Scandinavian fashion. It adds another element to the Germanic nostalgia present at the time; choosing to dress like a Scandinavian situates you closer to them in the sociological hierarchy and claims to those who recognize it that you align yourself with their values.

On the other hand, the introduction of a dual-currency system starting with Guthrum within the Danelaw shows a different facet of cultural exchange than the blending that occurred in the case of the brooches. Here two systems of currency were in common use throughout the Danelaw rather than one being chosen over the other. As previously discussed, the Scandinavians like most of northern Europe used a weight-based system of silver bullion while the English used issued coins. With the settlement of the Scandinavians in the region, the use of hack-silver and ingots was introduced but without undermining the use of Anglo-Saxon-style coins. Silver bullion was more commonly used in rural areas, likely Scandinavian settlements, rather than coins and indicates that the settlers were more comfortable using their traditional methods of weighing payment. Coins remained the primary source of currency within urban areas, such as York, and since these cultural centers were likely more cosmopolitan, the population would have had more contact with the English system of currency

and learned to adapt fairly quickly. However, there is evidence that both currencies were used in rural and urban spaces and provided a true choice in the matter of which could be used.

In this dual type of economy, both cultures in contact would have had to adapt to each other. As was previously mentioned, Guthrum was one of the first Scandinavian rulers over the Danelaw and issued his own coins, literally putting his face and name on the economy despite using the native style of currency. One can speculate as to why he chose to do this rather than implementing a perfectly functional system with which he was familiar. In comparison with the Anglo-Saxons, the Scandinavians were a worldly group that regularly engaged in trade all over Europe and Asia Minor, with much of their silver originating from the Middle East.[211] They would have been familiar with coin-based systems of currency and if one was choosing to be a pirate as their career, it would be to their detriment to discriminate against currency of any form or fashion. In this sense, Guthrum may have felt completely confident with using multiple systems of currency and chose instead to appeal to the native Anglo-Saxon population with familiar-looking coins. In addition, rather than his Scandinavian name, he chose to mint them under his Christian name, Æthelstan, as one of the conditions under the Treaty of Wedmore was to be baptized and renamed. This decision likely would have further legitimized his rule over the Anglo-Saxons, as it gave the appearance of a familiar, Christian king rather than a foreign, pagan usurper.

In the case of the dual-currency system, both cultures adapted to each other rather than engage in pure blending as can be seen in other elements of Danelaw society. It shows

[211] Kershaw, "An early medieval dual-currency economy: bullion and coin in the Danelaw," 174.

something of the acceptance the Anglo-Saxons were willing to give to foreigners in positions of power as much as the flexibility the Scandinavians exhibited to retain the advantage. In addition, the Anglo-Saxon fashion that incorporated Scandinavian design elements and the burgeoning existence of a distinct Anglo-Scandinavian style once the Scandinavians gained a foothold demonstrates the admiration the natives held for the new arrivals. It points toward a revivalist mindset of the Germanic among the population, particularly in the Danelaw.

The Old English and Old Norse Languages in Contact

Language, in many ways, can construct facets of one's identity. From gender performance to nationalism to ethnicity, language choices can determine how one wishes others to perceive them in any given situation, location, or circumstance. With the arrival and settlement of the Scandinavians in primarily Old English language communities, the choices made can reflect how the two groups viewed each other socially and ethnically. Due to the similar linguistic origins of Old English and Old Norse in North-Western Germanic,[212] these early communities were functionally bilingual; the two languages, given an expected period of adjustment, were mutually intelligible and the two groups could be expected to communicate effectively.[213] This element of familiarity likely lent a hand in cementing the linguistic legacy Old Norse left on English's development.

[212] Roger Lass, *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 11-12.
[213] Matthew Townend*, Language and History in Viking Age England,* Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002; Lass, 187.

Surviving in England until it died out in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries,[214] the remnants of Old Norse's contact with English can still be found in the modern-day language in the form of place names, certain grammatical structures, and loan words. Old Norse is by no means the only significant influence on English; the Normans who arrived in 1066 brought along their French and the religious and intellectual influence of Latin left English seemingly devoid of much of its original Germanic flavor. However, while French ended up being the catalyst of a revival of English language and identity in the thirteenth century,[215] Old Norse influence was integrated into the language with apparent ease and even eagerness in some cases. Investigating the context of this influence provides clues as to how the Anglo-Scandinavians within the Danelaw might have identified themselves, how Anglo-Saxons would have viewed the language and culture, and how Scandinavians themselves integrated into English society.

The origins of Old English and Old Norse lie in Proto-Indo-European, more specifically as members of the Germanic family. Like the other Germanic languages, they descend from Proto-Germanic and are further classified into sub-branches; the first linguistic split from Proto-Germanic created the East Germanic and Northwest Germanic families and later Northwest was split into North Germanic and West Germanic, leaving the East, West, and North Germanic families.[216] Old English is classified as West Germanic and while Old Norse is considered North

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[214] Matthew Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts: Latin, Norse, and French,' *The Oxford History of English*, Edited by Lynda Mugglestone. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 81.

[215] Beginning approximately with King Henry III (reigned 1216-1272), anti-French sentiment grew due to the great mass of immigration he encouraged from France and other parts of Europe. This was only exacerbated by the Hundred Year's War with France (1337-1453) and culminated in the establishment of English as the official language of legal proceedings in 1362, firmly ousting French. For more discussion, see Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language, 6th ed*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 1993, 127-128, 143-144.

[216] Lass, 13-14.

Germanic they are more closely related to each other than, for example, Gothic of the East Germanic branch due to its initial split from Proto-Germanic. Old English and Old Norse would have been forced to definitively split at the beginning of the Germanic Age of Migration in the fifth century, when the Anglo-Saxons invaded and settled England, isolating themselves for around three to four hundred years from neighboring contact with other Germanic languages.

In the transition from their Northwest Germanic ancestor to a distinctive Old English and Old Norse, the two languages went through several sound changes that reveal the depth of both their similarities and differences. Their phonologies also demonstrate why the two languages were likely to be mutually intelligible at the time of the English Viking Age, forming bilingual communities. Beginning with vocalic changes, below are the Germanic vowels that would have been the sound system the two languages descended from:[217]

Table 11 Germanic Vowels

Short Vowels	*a*	*e*	*i*		*u*
Long Vowels	*ǣ*	*ē*	*ī*	*ō*	*ū*
Diphthongs	*ai*	*au*	*eu*		

Matthew Townend breaks down the major sound changes that characterize Old English, starting with breaking.[218] Breaking occurred when the introduction of back glide vowels caused front vowels preceding specific velar consonants (*h*, *h* + consonant, *r* + consonant (short vowels only), and *l* + consonant (in certain cases)) to become diphthongs (*i* > *io*, *e* > *eo*, *æ* > *ea*). Palatal

[217] Adapted from Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England,* 33.
[218] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England,* 33-34.

diphthongization: when occurring after *g*, *c*, or *sc* (palatal consonants), *e* > *ie* and *æ* > *ea*.[219] The *i*-mutation caused the raising of front vowels and back vowels to be fronted when preceding *i* or *j*, so short *æ* > *e*, long and short *a* > *æ*, *o* > *æ*/*e*, and *u* > *y*.[220] Back mutation caused short front vowels to become diphthongs when followed by a single consonant and a back vowel, so *i* > *io/eo* and *e* > *eo*.[221] Anglian smoothing refers to the systematic monophthongization of diphthongs when used before consonants *c, g, h, rc, rg, rh, lc, lg,* and *lh* in Anglian.[222] Unstable *i* refers to the West Saxon development of the diphthong *ie* becoming the 'unstable *i*' which was later rounded to *y*.[223] Late West Saxon Smoothing caused *ea* > *e* (long and short) when preceding *c*, *g*, and *h* and following *c*, *g*, and *sc*.[224] Finally, labialization and delabialization refer to the late West Saxon vowel change of *i* > *y* when collocated with labial consonants and *y* > *i* with palatal consonants.[225] These changes result in the following vowel system for Old English:[226]

Table 12 Old English Vowels

Short Vowels	*a*	*æ*	*e*	*i*	*o*	*u*	*y*
Long Vowels	*ā*	*ǣ*	*ē*	*ī*	*ō*	*ū*	*ȳ*
Short Diphthongs	*ea*	*eo*	*ie*				

[219] *Ibid* 34.
[220] *Ibid* 34.
[221] *Ibid* 34.
[222] *Ibid* 34.
[223] *Ibid* 34.
[224] *Ibid* 34.
[225] *Ibid* 34-35.
[226] Adapted from *ibid* 35.

Long Diphthongs	*ēa*	*ēo*	*īe*				

Old Norse also experienced vocalic sound changes that characterized the language. To begin, *a*-umlaut: the phenomenon of *i* lowering to *e* when *a, o,* or *æ* are present in the subsequent syllable.[227] *I*-umlaut, similar to *i*-mutation in Old English causes the raising of front vowels and back vowels to be fronted when preceding *i* or *j*, with some differences: *a* > *e*, *á* > *æ*, *o* > *ø*, *ó* > *œ*, and *au* > *ey*.[228] Labial umlaut rounds long and short unrounded vowels when *u* or *w* occurs in the subsequent syllable, so *a* > *ǫ*, *e* > *ø*, *i* > *y*, and *ei* > *ey*. Townend notes that despite this change being dated to the Viking Age or earlier, it does not seem to appear in English sources of Norse loans.[229] This means that Old English preserved a more archaic form of Norse sounds which may indicate the conservative nature of the Scandinavian settlers in the use of their culture and language. It could also simply indicate the isolation they experienced from the Norse-speaking communities in Scandinavia, which would have been more current in linguistic changes. Next, in a process called fracture, *e* > *ea* when the following syllable contains *a* or *u*, unless "preceded by *w*, *l*, or *r* or followed by *h*."[230] Finally, during the ninth and tenth centuries, diphthongs began to shift the stress from the first element of words to the second creating rising diphthongs as opposed to falling ones.[231] In a note unrelated to vowels but still affecting the language's development: due to Germanic languages' characteristic stress

[227] *Ibid* 35.
[228] *Ibid* 35.
[229] *Ibid* 35-36.
[230] *Ibid* 36.
[231] *Ibid* 36.

remaining on the first syllable, unaccented syllables began to see losses, ranging from the disappearance of final consonants, diphthongs being monophthongized, long vowels becoming short, and "the centralization and disappearance of short vowels," "lead[ing] to the loss of many inflexional distinctions."[232] With these changes the Old Norse vowel system looks like this:[233]

Table 13 Old Norse Vowels

Short Vowels	*a*	*e*	*i*	*o*	*u*	*y*	*ø*	*ǫ*	
Long Vowels	*á*	*é*	*í*	*ó*	*ú*	*ý*	*œ*	*ǭ*	*æ*
Diphthongs	*au*	*ei*	*ey*						
	ja	*já*	*jó*	*jú*	*jǫ*				

In terms of consonantal changes, there were fewer between the two languages and both often experienced the same change.[234] Old English experienced the palatalization and assibilation of *k* and *g*, the most characteristic consonantal development for Old English between the two languages. This series of developments left certain words with these phonemes changed such that *k* > /*tʃ*/, *g* > /*dʒ*/, and *sk* > /*ʃ*/.[235] Old Norse experienced more distinctive changes. Sharpening refers to the doubling of glides, which in this case manifests as *jj* > *ggj* and *ww* > *ggv*.[236] Other changes that only occurred in Old Norse were the losses of */j/*

[232] *Ibid* 36-37.
[233] Adapted from *ibid* 36.
[234] *Ibid* 38.
[235] *Ibid* 39.
[236] *Ibid* 40.

and */w/. /j/* was lost in all positions except preceding back vowels and */w/* was only found before non-rounded vowels or *r* when it preceded a non-rounded vowel.[237] Old Norse's consonants also experienced many assimilations which included the following changes: *mp > pp, nk > kk, nt > tt, rd > dd, rn > nn, ht > tt, ðl > ll/dt, ðt > tt, lþ > ll* (regressive), and *nþ > nn* (regressive).[238]

As mentioned previously, most consonantal developments in Old Norse and Old English occurred in both languages. Rhotacism is such an example and refers to the change of Germanic *z* > *r*. However, in early Norse, this manifested as a different /r/ phoneme than Germanic /r/. While still changing from *z* > *r*, the r itself was represented by its own distinct rune. In later Norse and Old English, the two *r*'s are used indistinguishably, "completing" the rhotacization process.[239] The loss of nasals occurred in both languages but looks slightly different in each; this occurs in Old English before *f*, *þ*, and *s* along with the vowel before becoming longer. In Old Norse, this only occurs before *s*.[240] Gemination or the doubling of consonants occurred, though it manifested differently in both languages. Old English saw the doubling of all consonants except *r* when positioned between a short vowel and *j* and additionally between a short vowel and *r* or *l*. Old Norse was more conservative, only doubling *g* and *k* when "between a short vowel and following j, and sometimes between a short vowel and following *w*.[241] In a development called Germanic *ð* > *d*, Old English changes *ð* to *d* in all

[237] *Ibid* 40.
[238] *Ibid* 40.
[239] *Ibid* 39.
[240] *Ibid* 39.
[241] *Ibid* 38.

environments whereas this occurs in Norse only when following *l* or *n*.[242] Various examples of metathesis exist in both languages; Old English experienced *r*-metathesis, also found very rarely in Old Norse and *s*-metathesis. However, both languages experienced *l*-metathesis with the same conditions in which, *fl* > *lf*, *sl* > *ls*, and *þl/dl* > *ld*.[243] Lastly, both Old English and Old Norse lost many consonants found in final, unaccented syllables. This occurred on a greater scale in Old Norse than in Old English, such as in the loss of final *-n* in infinitives (OE *beran*, ON *bera* ('to bear'). Interestingly, Townend notes that the OE Northumbrian dialect, one of the kingdoms within the Danelaw, "does show this loss, thus rendering it in this respect similar to Old Norse."[244]

Despite the long gap of silence between the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, the two languages did not through a change large enough to render each language unintelligible from the other. Matthew Townend completed a comprehensive survey of Anglo-Saxon and Norse sources to determine how the Danelaw, and the Anglo-Saxons in general, communicated with each other when Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon historical sources generally do not mention the use of interpreters between the two groups.[245] He concluded that the regions in which the two languages were in daily contact would have functioned as a bilingual society; not however in the sense that most individuals were fluent in both Old English and Old Norse, but that both languages were similar enough to be mutually intelligible with sufficient practice and would not require the mastery of whichever is the foreign language.[246] He demonstrates

[242] *Ibid* 38-39.
[243] *Ibid* 39.
[244] *Ibid* 40.
[245] *Ibid* 182.
[246] *Ibid* 185.

this with an in-depth analysis of the phonetic correspondence; that is, certain sounds that follow a pattern of change among cognates of the two languages. These correspondences were general, meaning that while some were highly regular, there were also exceptions in the transfer between the two languages. The changes are as follows:[247]

Table 14 OE and ON Phonetic Correspondences

Old English	Old Norse
d	*ð*
/j/	*/g/*
/dʒ/	*/g/*
/tʃ/	*/k/*
/ʃ/	*/sk/*
æ	*a*
ǣ, ē	*á*
ā	*ei*
ēa	*au*

Other correspondences include OE r-metathesis, ON loss of initial /w/, i-mutation in both languages, ON a-umlaut, ON fracture, and ON rising diphthongs, all of which have been previously discussed.[248]

[247] *Ibid* 61-62.
[248] *Ibid* 61-63.

A brief discussion on some of the characteristic grammatical and syntactical features of Old English and Old Norse will also be beneficial for a better understanding of how an exchange in these two languages might have sounded. While the sound systems of the two are very similar and generally have a predictable correspondence, the minutiae of grammar and sentence structure may have posed problems with precise communication. Both are inflectional languages and rely on noun declensions rather than word order, like in modern English, to determine the function of a word in the sentence. Despite this, they both tended to have a certain word; components of both languages had certain positions in a sentence they tended to appear. This could be switched around to create a literary effect as well.

To give a brief idea of the inflections, the two languages' noun declensions can be seen in the charts below:[249]

Table 15 Strong Masculine Noun Cases

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-/-e	Sing. Nom.	-r
Sing. Gen.	-es	Sing. Gen.	-s/-ar
Sing. Acc.	-/-e	Sing. Acc.	-
Sing. Dat.	-e	Sing. Dat.	-(i)
Sing. Inst.	-e	N/A	N/A
Plural Nom.	-as	Plural Nom.	-ar/-ir
Plural Gen.	-a	Plural Gen.	-a

[249] Adapted from Samuel Moore and Thomas A. Knott, *The Elements of Old English: Elementary grammar, reference grammar, and reading selections*, 10th Ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 20, 23, 26, 29; Michael Barnes and Anthony Faulkes, *A New Introduction to Old Norse*, London: University College London, 1999, 29-30.

Plural Acc.	-as	Plural Acc.	-a/-i/-u
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

Table 16 Weak Masculine Noun Cases

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-a	Sing. Nom.	-i
Sing. Gen.	-an	Sing. Gen.	-a
Sing. Acc.	-an	Sing. Acc.	-a
Sing. Dat.	-an	Sing. Dat.	-a
Sing. Inst.	-an	N/A	N/A
Plural Nom.	-an	Plural Nom.	-ar
Plural Gen.	-ena	Plural Gen.	-a
Plural Acc.	-an	Plural Acc.	-a
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

Table 17 Strong Feminine Noun Cases

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-u/-	Sing. Nom.	-
Sing. Gen.	-e	Sing. Gen.	-ar
Sing. Acc.	-e	Sing. Acc.	-
Sing. Dat.	-e	Sing. Dat.	-
Sing. Inst.	-e	N/A	N/A
Plural Nom.	-a/-e	Plural Nom.	-ar/-ir

Plural Gen.	-a/-ena	Plural Gen.	-a
Plural Acc.	-a/-e	Plural Acc.	-ar/-ir
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

Table 18 Weak Feminine Noun Declensions

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-e	Sing. Nom.	-a
Sing. Gen.	-an	Sing. Gen.	-u
Sing. Acc.	-an	Sing. Acc.	-u
Sing. Dat.	-an	Sing. Dat.	-u
Sing. Inst.	-an	N/A	N/A
Plural Nom.	-an	Plural Nom.	-ur
Plural Gen.	-ena	Plural Gen.	-na
Plural Acc.	-an	Plural Acc.	-ur
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

Table 19 Strong Neuter Noun Declensions

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-/-e	Sing. Nom.	-
Sing. Gen.	-es	Sing. Gen.	-s
Sing. Acc.	-/-e	Sing. Acc.	-
Sing. Dat.	-e	Sing. Dat.	-i
Sing. Inst.	-e	N/A	N/A

Plural Nom.	-u	Plural Nom.	-
Plural Gen.	-a	Plural Gen.	-a
Plural Acc.	-u	Plural Acc.	-
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

Table 20 Weak Neuter Noun Declensions

Old English	Endings	Old Norse	Endings
Sing. Nom.	-e	Sing. Nom.	-a
Sing. Gen.	-an	Sing. Gen.	-a
Sing. Acc.	-e	Sing. Acc.	-a
Sing. Dat.	-an	Sing. Dat.	-a
Sing. Inst.	-an	N/A	N/A
Plural Nom.	-an	Plural Nom.	-u
Plural Gen.	-ena	Plural Gen.	-na
Plural Acc.	-an	Plural Acc.	-u
Plural Dat.	-um	Plural Dat.	-um
Plural Inst.	-um	N/A	N/A

They declined according to number, gender, and case in both languages. Old English and Old Norse both used feminine, neuter, and masculine genders and had various forms that denoted singularity and plurality. The cases were similar as well with one difference; Old English and Old Norse both marked the nominative, genitive, accusative, and dative cases while Old English retained the use of the instrumental case. While not wildly different in structure and sound

(notice that the plural dative ending is the same for both languages in all declensions), an inflectional language would have relied on these endings to provide the precise meaning of an utterance. One may have been able to work out the subject of a conversation, but if it were more complicated, with multiple parties involved, there would be communication issues. Maybe Gunnhildr is telling her Anglo-Saxon neighbor a story about a wolf that chased a cow as a warning to watch out for it. Did the wolf chase the cow or did the cow chase the wolf?

Old Norse:

Úlfr elti kú!

Ulf-r	el-ti	ku
Wolf-M.NOM.SG	chase-3SG.PST	cow.M.ACC.SG

‘A wolf chased the cow!’

Old English:

Wulf ēhte þone cū!

Wulf	eht-e	þone	cu
Wolf.M.NOM.SG	chase-3SG.PAST	the.ART.DEF	cow.M.ACC.SG

‘A wolf chased the cow!’

Notice the slight differences between the nominative cases and the past tense. It would have been helpful that the accusative case remained the same between both languages, but the grammatical elements are not quite the same. Context clues would clear up many communication issues, but the fact remains that the precision of the conversation is lost in the differences in cases.

Syntax is also one area in which communication errors may cause confusion. Linguistic syntax in a general sense refers to the word order preferred by a language to make grammatical sentences. Both Old English and Old Norse had relatively more freedom in their word order than Modern English due to the presence of cases, but they did have recognizable tendencies in syntax. Old English generally held a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) and SVO word order. In addition, the language was usually pre-modifying, meaning modifiers such as adjectives and numbers would be positioned before the modified word, and prepositional. [250] However, there are cases in which post-modification and postpositions occur.[251] Old Norse had a general structure of SVO; however, its syntactical rules are generous, producing and allowing cases in which other sequences also occurred.[252] While generally similar to each other, certain minor differences in syntax could have caused some of the original meaning of an utterance to be lost between an Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian speaker. For example, in Old Norse, certain words such as adverbs and conjunctions are represented by the same word and change meaning depending on where the verb falls in the sentence.[253] In the example below, *gekk* ('went') is required in the first verb position in the first sentence to make s*íðan* mean 'then' thereby making the sentence independent; "Then he went to mass" can function as a complete sentence on its own. However, *gekk* in the second verb position, as in the second example, causes s*íðan* to mean 'since,' making the phrase a dependent clause.

Síðan gekk hann til messu.

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[250] Lass, 222.
[251] *Ibid* 222.
[252] Jens Haugan, *Old Norse Word Order and Information Structure*, Doctoral Thesis. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000, 47.
[253] Barnes and Faulkes, 223.

[Then went he to mass.]

Then he went to mass.

Síðan hann gekk til messu…

[Since he went to mass…]

Since he went to mass…

Both the examples of distinct noun declensions and syntax rules point to the issue of precise communication between the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians. It seems clear that in general, the two groups would have little issue communicating with one another; however, despite being considered a 'bilingual' society, perfect, fluent conversation was likely not what was happening. A better picture of what an OE and ON conversation would have sounded like during the years of first-generation Scandinavian settlers would consist of sentences using the most basic or simplified structures, perhaps gaining more complexity as both parties grew more familiar with each other's languages, repetition of the most important subjects of the conversation, and excessive gesturing and use of body language.[254] Despite the difficulties, communication was possible and made the integration of Old Norse into Anglo-Saxon society even more seamless.

[254] This image of OE-ON conversations is one I gleaned from my own experience learning a very closely related language to one of my own. I am an L2 speaker of Spanish and recently began a course in Portuguese intended for speakers of a Romance language. Portuguese has a very close relationship with Spanish, both genetically and geographically, and I would consider it a decent comparison to the relationship of Old English and Old Norse. The first exercise consisted of the instructor giving a five-minute speech about himself in Portuguese and asking us to try and understand as much as possible. Despite having never studied an ounce of Portuguese, I was able to understand around 90% of what he said as he spoke slowly and clearly, often repeated important phrases, and used very strong body language to clarify what he meant. All of this is to say that if an Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian speaker *wanted* to be understood by the other party, it would have been very possible to do so.

Given the close relationship between the two languages and their common usage within England, it is no surprise that the Scandinavians left a wealth of placenames behind. With around 1,400 known place names of Norse origin within the region of the Danelaw, the presence of Scandinavian settlers remains explicitly clear.[255] The abundance of settlements with Old Norse elements at the very least points toward the lasting influence the language and culture left on the Anglo-Saxon community and at a more speculative level perhaps provides some clues into how the local population viewed the new arrivals and how that view changed over the span of generations. It is important to note that place-names cannot provide absolute evidence on where exactly the Scandinavians had settled and the density of their population but for the purpose of better understanding the language of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, they provide an extra source of evidence.

The most common element in Scandinavianized place names is the addition of the suffix *-by* which means *farm* or *town* in Old Norse, occurring in around six hundred places. [256] Despite being one of the more common elements, *-by* is almost exclusively found in the previous territory of the Danelaw. There are also around three hundred instances of both *-thorpe* and *-thwaite* meaning *village* and *clearing* and around one hundred instances of *-toft* meaning *homestead*. Examples include *Whitby, Rugby, Althorp, Linthorp, Cowperthwaite, Satterthwaite, Eastoft,* and *Lowestoft*.[257] Even in the Danelaw, it is important to note that of the place names that survived to be recorded in the Domesday Book, less than a third contained some element

[255] Baugh and Cable, 95.
[256] *Ibid* 94-95; Gillian Fellows-Jensen, 'Scandinavian Place Names in the British Isles,' *The Viking World* (2008): 391.
[257] Baugh and Cable, 94-95.

of Old Norse.[258] Those that contained Scandinavian influence would have undergone one of three types of Old Norse adaptations. Hybrid names consist of both Old Norse and Old English elements. [259] Simplex names are usually instances of Old Norse cognates replacing the original English word.[260] Finally, there could also be simplex compound names where the English is transcribed into Old Norse according to phonetic correspondences, but the true meaning of the original word is lost.[261] Given the regularity of these rules regarding place name adaptation, it continues to show the linguistic awareness that the Scandinavians must have had. The ability to recognize cognates and make accurate phonetic correspondences between Old Norse and the native English further supports the theory of a capable, bilingual society in which both parties could expect to understand and be understood.

Looking at another cultural and linguistic invasion in England can shed more light on the significance of hundreds of Scandinavian place-names. With the Norman-French invasion in 1066, came the use of Norman French side-by-side with English. Most scholars are of the position that it was the language of the aristocracy centered in urban areas and this can be seen in the language of food in modern English; *venison*, *beef*, *poultry*, and *mutton* all replace their English equivalents (*deer*, *cow*, *bird*, and *sheep*) in the context of dining.[262] However recent work has shown that French was not exclusive to the upper classes and did influence the language of the lower and rural classes to a degree.[263] Despite its prestige, French never left a

[258] Fellows-Jensen, 391.
[259] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England,* 54.
[260] *Ibid* 54.
[261] *Ibid* 54.
[262] Baugh and Cable, 167.
[263] David Trotter, "Why Are There so Few French Place-Names in England?: An analysis of Anglo-Norman elements in English place-names as a result of the Norman Conquest." *English Today* 30, no. 2 (2014): 39. See also cited William Rothwell, 'Anglo-French in rural England in the later thirteenth century: Walter of Bibbesworth's Tretiz and

great influence on place-names in England.[264] David Trotter's investigation on the topic could only yield so much given the scant amount of evidence available for analysis; he infers that the lack of French place-names is due to the Normans being satisfied with how places had been called prior to their arrival. However, he discovered that "there are numerous examples of Anglo-French elements not in place-names (i.e., settlements) but in field-names, the most local, and probably the least well-documented type of toponym,"[265] providing support to his theory of French influence reaching far beyond the urban aristocrats and deep into the countryside.

The invasion and settlement of the Norman French and their language is not completely comparable to the Viking Wars and their colonization; however, it points to the broader prestige value of Old Norse and Scandinavian culture given that French was seemingly idealized only to a certain extent. The lack of wider influence beyond the circles of those for which French was useful points to apathy in the Anglo-Saxon culture at all social levels towards the language and culture. That is not to say that French held no social value, as the field names and French influence on English's higher-class registers may suggest. Those of the lower class who named their plots of land with French elements, whether they wanted to follow an aristocratic trend or were associated with a French landowner, likely would have had social benefits from

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the Agricultural Treatises,' *Vox romanica* 67 (2008): 100–132; William Rothwell, 'Soil and toil: English and French in the English countryside during the later Middle Ages,' *English Studies* 90, no. 4, 379–402.; William Rothwell, 'Language and society in post-Conquest England: farming and fishing,' *Modern Language Review* 107, no. 2 (2009): 389–407; David Trotter, S. Dörr, and T. Städtler, 'L'anglo-normand dans le Middle English Dictionary.' *Ki bien voldreit raisun entendre: Mélanges en l'honneur du 70e anniversaire de Frankwalt Möhren, edd. Stephen Dörr and Thomas Städtler* (2012): 323–337; David Totter, C. Lange, B. Weber, and C. Wolf, 'Saunz desbriser de hay ou de clos: clos(e) in Anglo-French and in English,' *Communicative Spaces: Variation, Contact, and Change: Papers in Honour of Ursula Schaefer, edd. Claudia Lange, Beatrix Weber, and Göran Wolf* (2012): 197–214; David Trotter, 'L'anglo-normand à la campagn,' *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 156, no. 2 (2012): 1113–1131.

[264] Trotter, 'Why Are There so Few French Place-Names in England?' 40.

[265] *Ibid* 41.

knowing and using French. However, its lack of permanence indicates that French did not hold the same 'homely' or familiar feeling that a Scandinavian name might have.

While place names can make room for inference on the nature and scale of Scandinavian settlement in England, they can only go so far in support of arguments that attempt to establish the nature of identity, prestige, and cultural values of a group of people. In the case of Old English and Old Norse, a significant number of loanwords were introduced to English from the colonizers, beginning with loans filling lexical gaps in Old English vocabulary (such as sailing or business-related terminology) to words of daily life eventually ousting perfectly suitable English cognates. These loans, their categories, and the timing of their appearance in medieval documents shed some light on the relationship between the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons at the time.

The earliest borrowing from Old Norse usually lay in the realm of Scandinavian culture. Seafaring, law, and administration terminology were the most common categories of loanword transference,[266] likely to fill in the gaps in Old English vocabulary to speak about the unfamiliar. Examples include *cnearr* (small warship), *dreng* (warrior), *lagu* (law), *fēolaga* (fellow), and *husting* (weekly assembly for civil matters).[267] Given the nature of the Scandinavians' conquest and settlement, it is no surprise that words such as these were adopted early on in their vocabulary. Of these categories, administrative and legal terms are of significant interest, and

[266] Baugh and Cable, 95; Gerry Knowles, *A Cultural History of the English Language*, London: Routledge, 1997, 40.
[267] Baugh and Cable, 95; John Geipel, *The Viking legacy: The Scandinavian influence on the English and Gaelic languages*, David & Charles, 1971, 62-64; Knowles, 40; Henry Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, 82.

they tended to replace perfectly acceptable Old English words or introduce new legal concepts that are indicative of the rulership the Norse had in the Danelaw and later during Knut's reign.

The modern English word *law* has a particularly telling backstory of its introduction to English, the first documented proponent of its use, and its eventual expulsion of the traditional Old English words that expressed the concept. *Lagu*, the anglicized Old English form of Old Norse *lög*, is first documented in King Edgar's *Wihtbordesstan* law, dated 962, around eighty years after the establishment and settlement of the Danelaw. This law was the first to use Scandinavian terminology liberally and the content of the law itself is directed at the Danelaw as well as the English.[268] Edgar himself seemed to be an admirer of the Scandinavian ways as the law itself allows the Danes to choose their own secular laws as they please.[269] Even the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* notes that his only sin was loving foreign (i.e., Scandinavian) culture too much.[270] Edgar's decision to use *lagu* and other Scandinavian legal terms attest to this love and perhaps a wider acceptance of Scandinavian influence.

For whatever reason the change began occurring, in this case, it was likely not due to a lexical gap. Old English had four primary words used to illustrate different aspects of law: *æ* or *æw*, *gemet*, *riht*, and *regol*. Before the introduction of the all-encompassing word for law, lagu, Old English used several different words to illustrate different aspects of law. The most common were æ or æw, gemet, riht, and regol. *Æ* or *æw* tended to be used the most in the traditional sense of *law*; that is in the sense of biblical law, law codified in the Roman style, and

[268] Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century,* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999, 319.
[269] *Ibid* 318.
[270] ASC 959.

the king's law. It could be used to refer to secular law but tended to have divine connotations leftover from its Germanic root.[271] *Gemet* also was used for law in a more idiomatic sense. It had the sense of what was proper and more literally referred to 'proper measure' (coincidentally it was also the name of a tool for measuring). It was commonly used as a component in compounds such as the word '*rihtgemet'* meaning 'proper measure' or 'true measure' and '*ungemet'* meaning 'excess' and 'superfluity.' *Riht* tends to hold connotations of justice and law in the way they are moral in their essence. It can refer to what is 'true' and 'correct' and can also mean 'straight,' 'direct,' and 'genuine.' This word speaks of the law when the law itself is just and moral or at least when the speaker believes it is. Like *gemet*, this word is used in many compounds such as *rihtcyning* meaning 'lawful king', and *rihtæw* meaning 'lawful wedlock' or 'lawful wife'. *Regol* refers to law in the sense that Modern English 'rule' might refer to it. It is used to talk about principles and codes that can be written down but it does not necessarily require them to be just or moral. Oftentimes it is used to refer to the regulations of the church as in *regollīf* meaning 'life following ecclesiastical rules' and *regolweard* which means 'regulator' but can also be used to refer to an abbot or provost.

Perhaps the diversity of English senses of law was too troublesome and invited the loanword *lagu* to provide an all-encompassing word with all matters of law, religious and secular, courtly and customary. It could also indicate that King Edgar only wanted to emphasize his appreciation of the Scandinavian legal system. It is impossible to be entirely clear why the change took place, but it left a significant impact on the English language and remained the

[271] Dennis Howard Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 31-32.

primary word to express the general concept of law. Though many of these early loans that first appeared during the Old English era did not survive the arrival of French and the shift to the Middle English period, they show the impact of Scandinavian cultural and political dominance over the Anglo-Saxons at the time.

Many of the more common loans that would later be identified as derived from Old Norse would not show up in a document until the late twelfth century, in the *Ormulum*, Orm's eponymous work.[272] Many words of Norse origin appear for the first time, in this work of homilies, not as specialized vocabulary for a new culture, but as common words of daily life.[273] Likely written in southern Lincolnshire, one of the regions of dense Scandinavian settlement,[274] the work seems intentional in its use of Norse words. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, French was introduced as an aristocratic language, with which Orm seems familiar given his use of French orthography. However, he notably lacks the use of French vocabulary of the upper class.[275] Orm intended his work to be read aloud to the common people, which as Townend puts it, "may permit us to glimpse a sociolinguistic situation in which literate readers were familiar with French spelling, but illiterate listeners were ignorant of French words." The implication is apparent: by this point in time, the influence of Old Norse had become so integrated into the regional language of Lincoln (and could reasonably be extrapolated to other areas of the North and East of England which held dense Scandinavian populations) that it was considered the language of the 'lay people.' It was what was expected to be familiar to the least

[272] Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts: Latin, Norse, and French,' 99-100.
[273] *Ibid* 100.
[274] Knowles, 35.
[275] Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts: Latin, Norse, and French,' 100.

educated populations, emphasizing the depth at which Old Norse influence seeped into the consciousness of the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavian descendants of the area.

Orm also chose to use a new set of pronouns introduced to English from Old Norse, the third person plural pronouns *they*, *their*, and *them* instead of the Old English, *hīe*, *hiera*, and *him*.[276] These loans are arguably the most important loans from Old Norse given the constant, daily use of pronouns and their status as core vocabulary: words that are some of the most used in the language and notoriously resistant to change. Despite this pronoun change originating among the Northumbrian English, where most of the Danelaw was located, ultimately these forms were the ones to survive even to modern-day English. This change presents a strong case for the widespread familiarity and by extension the associated prestige, of Old Norse vocabulary in the centuries following the arrival of the Scandinavian colonizers. In addition, other form words were introduced such as *both*, *same*, *though*, *are* (Northern OE *we aron*), *hence*, and *whence*.[277] Vocabulary of daily usage includes *band*, *birth*, *bull*, *dirt*, *egg*, *guess*, *leg*, *root*, *sister*, *sky*, and *want*.[278] The simple nature of these words indicates that these were not specialized terms or words that did not previously exist in the English language. These are all terms that eventually were favored over their Old English companions and ultimately allowed the language to become more Scandinavian in nature.

When discussing the sociolinguistic implications of two groups in contact, perhaps the related origins of the two languages and mutual intelligibility require a different treatment of

[276] Baugh and Cable, 99; Townend, 'Contacts and Conflicts: Latin, Norse, and French,' 100; Knowles, 43; Loyn, 82.
[277] Baugh and Cable, 98-99.
[278] *Ibid* 96.

the languages. As evidence of his argument for mutual intelligibility, Townend notes the lack of historical records mentioning any kind of difficulty in understanding or the use of employing an interpreter, despite there being records of their utilization for other languages the Anglo-Saxons contacted.[279] Jonathan Hall argues in his treatise on ancient Greek dialects that claiming lack of evidence as evidence in regard to intelligibility "is an argument from silence,"[280] however given the demonstrated relationship between the two languages and the relative ease a native speaker of both would be able to at least basically communicate with each other, one could conclude that a lack of mention is due to a lack of issues.

A bilingual society in which the speakers themselves only need to speak one language fluently sparks intriguing implications in how Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons mark their ethnic identity, especially in a cross-cultural community. As Kimberly A. Noels puts it, "increasingly scholars in both social psychology and sociolinguistics are drawing on notions of the self and identity to account for language practices and/or suggest how language practices constitute the self and identity,"[281] which suggests that the use of one language or the other by an individual may cause language to be a stronger marker of self and identity than a multilingual society with speakers using more than one language. A speaker of Old Norse immediately would give themself away as being part of the Scandinavian group and would then be assigned all the other cultural markers that Anglo-Saxons, and the Scandinavians themselves, had predetermined and vice versa. If this particularly strong marker of identity was placed on the

[279] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England,* 182.
[280] Jonathan M. Hall, "Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 8, no. 2 (1998): 172-73.
[281] Kimberly A. Noels, "Language variation and ethnic identity: A social psychological perspective," *Language & Communication* 35 (2014): 89.

two languages at that time, the acceptance of Old Norse influence on the language of daily life implies that Anglo-Saxons must have had some level of positive association with the language, and by extension, the culture and people, of the Scandinavians whether consciously or not. If this prestige value was attached to Old Norse, it would explain the volume of concepts, loan words, and borrowed core words that were used alongside of and eventually ousted their Old English counterparts.

Conclusions

The perception of Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, and how they viewed each other, is something that seems to still be up for debate. Angelika Lutz has pointed out that many scholars of this period interpret the loanwords of daily life, such as *egg*, *die*, and *take* to indicate that the relationship between the two cultures was on relatively equal terms.[282] Matthew Townend, who conducted the analysis on the bilingualism of the Danelaw, is in the field, also arguing that if Old Norse were of greater prestige there would have been many more unnecessary loans and the language would not have died out.[283] However, on the contrary, this casual category of Old Norse loans did not begin appearing in documents until the early Middle English Period in the 12th century, making the death of Old Norse in the British Isles a slow one. In addition, Lutz argues that one can see the administrative, legal, and frankly dominating nature of Old Norse loans in the earlier Old English texts that were later ousted by equivalent

[282] Angelika Lutz, "Language Contact and Prestige," *Anglia* 131, no. 4 (2013): 566.
[283] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England,* 204.

French terms, supporting "the existence of an Anglo-Danish ruling class."[284] Lutz largely supports her position on the basis of Scandinavian dominance as the ruling class of their respective governments, whether those are the various cities in the Danelaw or Knut's reign over all of England. I agree that their political dominance likely played a significant role in cementing the prestige that was placed on their language and culture. However, I do not believe that this implicit admiration solely came from the establishment of a Scandinavian aristocratic class. As discussed previously, the acceptance of Norse influence affected even daily rituals and objects, such as fashion and currency not to mention the integration of Old Norse language in both urban and rural settlements. While the upper class may have been dominated by Scandinavian political figures, it does not mean that there were not plenty of peasant settlers who migrated with their families. Thinking back to Kershaw's investigation of women's brooches in the Scandinavian style, the aristocracy may direct the fashion and culture and establish prestige value but the laypeople who choose to adopt those trends for themselves truly cement those influences as something prestigious, something that will bring about social ascension for themselves.

While we can theorize more confidently about these perceptions of prestige, culture, and language today due to archeological and textual evidence that remains, speculations of other underlying forces that facilitate cultural influence and blending are more difficult to determine with any kind of certainty. However, it remains beneficial to use what scant evidence is available and try to explain. In this case, I have argued that the Germanic origins of the Anglo-

[284] Lutz, 567-568.

Saxons and Scandinavians also contributed significantly to the easy acceptance the English people seemed to have in accepting cultural markers (i.e., personal items, language, legal terminology, etc.) that ultimately came from their own conquerors, especially when compared with the Norman French government that came to power in 1066 and did not have nearly the same level and reach of influence.

As demonstrated by the Anglo-Saxons' stylistic choices in their literature, both secular and religious, the English may have adopted Christianity before their Scandinavian counterparts but in many ways, they still retained many Germanic values in their heroic ideals, lord-retainer relationships, and certain archetypes of storytelling that shaped their worldview (e.g., the beasts of battle, a heroic Jesus, etc.). These elements, especially more material ones such as the lord-retainer relationship and gift-giving, could be seen in Tacitus' and Julius Caesar's descriptions of the Ancient Germans, leading me to think that despite hundreds of years of relative isolation from the continent and conversion to Christianity, these old values were passed down without fail throughout the generations. The most interesting case of Anglo-Saxon literature was *The Battle of Maldon*, a poem depicting the historical battle in Essex that took place in 991, almost one hundred fifty years after the arrival of the Scandinavians. Anglo-Saxon society was well-acquainted by that point with Scandinavian society, one that still practiced and idealized many of the old Germanic values. The depiction of Byrhtnoth, then makes the poem so interesting, as the way the poet decided to memorialize a real man was in the archetype of the Germanic hero. The poet was explicitly quite hateful to the Scandinavians as they were the opposing side in the battle, but it is quite interesting to see how they still wrote Byrhtnoth as if he was a Scandinavian man. Of course, the Norsemen themselves were not perfectly preserved

time capsules of Germanic society, however, they had the advantage of practicing their traditional religion until around the tenth century, when Christianity began to arrive in Scandinavia. This can be clearly seen in the Frankish, Irish, and English annals as well as inferred from the remains of skaldic poetry. What is most significant is how it is possible the Anglo-Saxons would have seen the Scandinavian invaders as the idealized versions of themselves. The Anglo-Saxon histories were aware that they arrived in Britain by way of Hengist and Horsa, Germanic mercenaries who served as the catalysts of the Anglo-Saxon invasions of the predominantly Celtic isles at that time. However, after centuries of following a comparatively pacifist religion, their daily lives no longer looked like that of fearsome, ambitious warriors.

The Great Army was depicted by the English scholars as notoriously tricky, and it took years before an English power became strong enough to finally subdue them. An Anglo-Saxon of the time would have had to face their fearsome strength and complete lack of respect for the sanctity of treaties sworn on Christian relics, but at the same time, they fulfilled the romanticized role of a Germanic warrior, one the Anglo-Saxons would have liked to have claimed for themselves. While the Anglo-Saxon did not feel compelled to die a heroic death as their God provided an alternative for salvation, the Scandinavian could only claim a seat in paradise by death on the battlefield. Their motivation for battle fulfilled the idealized battle-deaths the Anglo-Saxons wrote of in their heroic poetry and their blasé attitudes towards peace was something an Anglo-Saxon would have to justify within their religion. In other words, the Scandinavian warrior represented the ideal version of the Anglo-Saxon, without having to make justifications as serving a pacifist God.

This resurgence of Germanic idealism can be likened to a revival in which the values and cultural elements of a perceived golden age in the past are revitalized. This is seen materially, in the Anglo-Scandinavian brooches that emulate the Scandinavian look and the introduction of a weight-based currency system alongside contributing to the Anglo-Saxon coin economy, linguistically, in the level of influence to which English allowed itself to be subjected, and in popular literature, with historical Anglo-Saxon poetry retaining Germanic elements and later even attributing them to historical events and figures long after the arrival of the Scandinavians might have encouraged the decline of those tropes. It is because of this that I argue a certain Germanic nostalgia was a significant factor, if not the root, of the Anglo-Saxons placing prestige on the domineering culture and allowing the cultural blending to take place to the extent that it did.

While this conclusion is only a change in perspective on the cultural context of this time, it is important to consider the implications of the personal experiences that resulted from common Germanic origins in this field of study. Although a nuance like this probably would have only been subconscious in the minds of the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, humans have a propensity for recognizing their own; patterns and cultural markers passed down under the guise of Christianity were likely to have surfaced when faced with the unapologetic Scandinavians still living out the heroic ideal of the two groups. Given that much of the past research seems to provide only a cursory overview of the common origins of the two groups before moving on, it seems that the Ancient Germans may demand more attention even in the Middle Ages when one is trying to parse the interpersonal relations and contextual experiences of the people in this place and time. It would be worth considering this as a significant factor in

research moving forward in order to provide a complete picture of the cultural and linguistic landscape of the Danelaw.

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