

УДК 94(368):(470.2)

**BJARMALAND – THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY
OF THE VIKINGS IN NORTHERN RUSSIA.**

**A DESCRIPTION OF THE VIKINGS, THE BJARMIAN, THE AREA
AROUND THE DELTA OF NORTHERN DVINA AND THE WEALTH
OF NATURE IN THE RUSSIAN FORESTS IN THE YEARS 890-1250**

Christensen C.S.

The Vikings' rise in Northern Russia is a chapter in European history that is yet to be written. Political, linguistic and mental barriers have meant that this period of Northern Russia's great expansion was sadly neglected by historians. But after 1990, with the opening of Russia's archives for western researches, we can finally begin collecting the small pieces for a jigsaw puzzle of the Vikings' journey in the area of the Kola Peninsula. Recent archaeological finds help us to support the theory that the Viking voyages in the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean have had greater significance and extent than previously thought. This article will shed new light on Bjarmaland, the Bjarmians and why the Vikings for many centuries pilgrimage to the area where Arkhangelsk is today. Were they in the area at all? And how there still are traces in our modern society of this era. Furthermore, the trade connections between Vikings, Bjarmians and Russians will be put into a larger perspective and the Vikings' trade routes in both Eastern and Western Europe will be described.

Keywords: Bjarmaland, Vikings, White Sea, Northern Dvina, Kola Peninsula, Arctic Ocean, Ohthere of Hålogaland, Bjarmians, Russian language, Perm, Skiringssal, Hedeby, Finno-Ugric peoples, Falcons, Krasnoborsk, Arkhangelsk, Salekhard, Omsk.

**БЪЯРМАЛАНД – ЗАБЫТАЯ ИСТОРИЯ ВИКИНГОВ
НА СЕВЕРЕ РОССИИ. ОПИСАНИЕ ВИКИНГОВ, БЪЯРМИЙЦЕВ,
ОБЛАСТИ ВОКРУГ ДЕЛЬТЫ СЕВЕРНОЙ ДВИНЫ И БОГАТСТВ
ПРИРОДЫ В РУССКИХ ЛЕСАХ В 890-1250 ГГ.**

Христенсен К.С.

Появление викингов на севере России – еще не написанная глава в европейской истории. Политические, языковые и ментальные барьеры привели к тому, что этот период расцвета севера России, к сожалению, пренебрегался историками. Но после 1990 г., в связи с открытием российских архивов для западных исследователей, наконец, появилась возможность начать собирать небольшие фрагменты головоломки походов викингов в район Кольского полуострова. Недавние археологические находки помогают подтвердить теорию о том, что путешествия викингов по Белому морю и Северному Ледовитому океану имели большее значение и масштабы, чем это считалось ранее. Данная статья проливает новый свет на Бьярмаланд, бьярмийцев и на то, почему викинги на протяжении многих веков совершали паломничество в район, где сегодня находится Архангельск. И были ли они вообще в этом районе? И каким образом в этих местах до сих пор сохранились следы той эпохи. Кроме того, торговые связи между викингами, бьярмианцами и русскими будут рассмотрены в более широкой перспективе, также как и торговые пути викингов в Восточной и Западной Европе.

Ключевые слова: Бьярмаланд, викинги, Белое море, Северная Двина, Кольский полуостров, Северный Ледовитый океан, Охта Хогаланда, бьярмийцы, русский язык, Пермь, Скирингссал, Хедебю, финно-угорские народы, соколы, Красноборск, Архангельск, Салехард, Омск.

Prologue

While the Vikings' expansion into the West has been thoroughly explored, so that it eventually has some startling archaeological finds, much new knowledge has emerged in recent decades about their travels in Eastern Europe and their role in the

many landmark events surrounding Russia's birth that led to the division of Europe into a real Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Many archaeological excavations indicate that the Scandinavians even reached very far on their expeditions and trade trips in the East, all the way to the border with Asia in the Ural Mountains. The research in this scientific field leaves much to be desired. The dissemination of this new knowledge about the Vikings' movement and significance in the Slav countries and territories is still flawed even in the Scandinavian countries. And this fact even though by 2020, the number of Scandinavian finds in Russia and surrounding states will exceed the number of Scandinavian finds in Western Europe by far. A difference that would have been significantly greater if not many archaeological materials had been lost during some of the most devastating wars in world history from the Mongol storms of the 1200s and 1300s, the Napoleonic wars of the 1800s and the two world wars of the 1900s.

The Scandinavians and the East Slavic people have been in contact with each other long before the Nordic countries and Russia developed into truly independent states. During the 700s, the Vikings penetrated the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. From here, they entered via the waterways to Ladoga Lake and Onega Lake. The trip then proceeded to the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Northern Europe and the Kola Peninsula were then covered by large forests, bogs and swamps. Traveling over land was both time consuming and dangerous. By contrast, with their fast vessels and eminent sea knowledge the seafaring Vikings were able to travel large distances in very short time.

When the Vikings came to the lands of the slaves it was to trade, plunder or submit new land. They appeared at one and the same time as merchants, robbers and colonists, and were first and foremost seeking to obtain wealth from nature, women or slaves, which they could sell at the trading places in Hedeby, Ribe in Denmark, Birka in Sweden, Kaupang (Skiringssal) in Norway, London, Gotland and Bornholm. In Eastern Europe Vikings were known as Varangians. Varangians as concept are a term akin to or overlapping with the term varjager, "the sworn", (Ukrainian and Russian: Varjahy/Varjagi), who were the men who traded east and south on the

Russian rivers or looted as Vikings. Archaeological finds on Gotland of foreign coins indicate that the island was the centre of this trade and that the trade was significant. Examples of runes have been found in Hagia Sofia in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) engraved by Varangians [9, p. 222-224].

One of the ways to avoid the looting was to pay the uninvited guests some form of tax or mortgage, so they stayed away for a while. The first accounts of Varangians/Vikings trips to Russian territories where the high taxes were levied were around 860, according to Russian chronicles. Likewise, in the first Danish history book from 1200, known as “Gesta Danorum” (“Deeds of the Danes”), the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (1160-1220) reports on similar accounts of the taxation of the Danish kings among the Slavic people. Initially, the Nordic fighters made only brief raids against their eastern neighbours, but over time their stay was of longer duration. Thus, there are several traces of the Vikings in the area between Ladoga and Ural. Here you will find weapons, jewellery, amulets, kitchenware, utensils and coins, among other things. Furthermore, entire trading stations and settlements with burial sites in the Ladoga area have been uncovered. Around the year 890, in his *Voyage of Othere*, Chieftain Ohthere of Hålogaland described his journey and his arrival to Bjarmia or Bjarmaland [9, p. 225; 10, s. 20-21, 377].

Bjarmaland – an introduction

In the case of Bjarmaland it is difficult to decide, where to draw the line between sources and research. Since the earliest literary reference in the 9th century the name Bjarmaland appears regularly in writing. There is no problem in classifying the earliest Scandinavian texts as sources, but texts written after the 14th century pose to some extent a problem of interpretation. The problem arises with a break in the tradition. Strictly speaking the sources about the Bjarmians end around the middle of the 13th century. The later Scandinavian saga tradition (after the 13th century) is already far removed from historical fact. However, those texts that mention Bjarmaland are closely related to earlier, more realistic texts and the 14th century Scandinavian texts that follow the saga tradition can still be treated as sources. After about 1400 there is over a century of silence about Bjarmaland. Towards the middle

of the 16th century Bjarmaland again appears in writing, but the question remains whether after this relatively long silent period this word still had the same meaning as before [13, p. 45-46].

Bjarmia aka Bjarmaland is a relatively unknown historical area that is repeatedly mentioned in the Scandinavian sagas. According to some historians, it could possibly be located somewhere in the northernmost top end of Eastern Europe, in the present-day Arkhangelsk Oblast. For the first time the mysterious realm was recorded in the story about traveling of the Viking Chieftain Ohthere of Hålogaland (870-890). According to Ohthere's words, Hålogaland was the most northern region of Norway subordinated to it. He wanted to explore which lands were located beyond neighboring Lapland and found the people of Bjarmia. Unlike nomadic Lapps, those were domiciled and rich. Moreover, he wrote in his *Voyage of Othere*, that the Bjarmians could bind people with their looks and words and drive them insane and taking weird actions [8, s. 20-22].

Although many sources keep a detailed of the Scandinavian expeditions to Bjarmaland from 890 until at least 1200, historians still cannot come to a consensus which area in the upper northwest corner of Russia that represented the country of extremely natural wealth. However, the most possible and widespread version is that the Scandinavian sagas describe the basin of the river of Northern Dvina. And travels up the course of the river until the settlement of Kholmogory around 80 kilometers South of present-day Arkhangelsk. Other researches base their theories on the ethnonym *Bjarmia*, which the Vikings attributed to the local people. Peoples, that related to the legendary tribes of Finno-Ugric peoples in the area from the present-day Finland to the Ural Mountains, around 2,800 kilometers eastwards. In the case, that the word *Bjarmia* is a derivative from Perm the Great, several linguists assume that Bjarmaland could be located on the shores of the river Northern Dvina, the shores of the White Sea and on the Kola Peninsula [15, s. 63-65].

The place-name Bjarmaland was also used later both by the German historian Adam of Bremen (11th century) and the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) in *Bósa saga ok Herrauds*, reporting about its rivers flowing out to Gandvik (White Sea

in Old Norse) and Vina (Northern Dvina in Old Norse). However, it is not clear if they reference the same Bjarmaland as was mentioned in the *Voyage of Ohthere*, however. The name of the Bjarmian god *Jómali* is so close to the word for “god” in most Finnish languages that Bjarmians were likely a Finnish group. In fact, languages belonging to other language groups have never been suggested within serious research. Furthermore, the name *Permian* is already found in the oldest document of the Rus', known as the *Nestor's Chronicle* (1000-1100). The names of other Uralic tribes are also listed including some Samoyedic peoples as well as the Veps, Cheremis, Mordvin and Chudes [1, s. 293-294].

In print on a map you first meet the place name Bjarmia or Bjarmaland in the 1500s. In 1539 the Swedish ecclesiastic and Archbishop of Uppsala Olaus Magnus (1490-1557) published the *Carta marina et descriptio septentrionalium terrarum* (“Marine map and description of the Northern Lands”). It was the first map of Scandinavia and neighbour areas in history. The map had been eight to ten years underway and in the upper right corner of the map, the place name of Bjarmia was printed, on a spot that is supposed to be the nowadays Kola Peninsula. Bjarmia or Bjarmaland was a territory in Northern Russia mentioned in the Norse sagas since the Viking Age and in geographical accounts until the 1500s. In history research the place name Bjarmaland is usually seen to have referred to the southern shores of the White Sea and the basin of the Northern Dvina river as well as some of the surrounding areas. Especially, down the course of the Northern Dvina. Today, the territories of Bjarmaland comprise a part of the Arkhangelsk Oblast as well as the Kola Peninsula [4. s. 22-24].

In 1584 the most important harbour city of the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean, Arkhangelsk, at the beginning named Novo-Kholmogory, was founded. In the 1500s the leading trade centre in Bjarmaland was the Kholmogory settlement, first mentioned around 1335 in a document from the court of Moscow's grand prince Ivan Kalita, located near the southern shore of the Northern Dvina around eighty kilometres up the river course. Therefore, the place name is Novo-Kholmogory. In 1583 growing trade with western Europe led Ivan IV (the Terrible) (1530-1584) to

establish Novo-Kholmogory near the mouth of Northern Dvina. The later Arkhangelsk got its name from the nearby Archangel Michael Monastery. A Monastery established by the Novgorodians, a Russian people, in the 1100s. As the early as 1138 a document from Novgorod referred to Kholmogory. Arkhangel's largest historical landmark is the old, fortress-like trade centre Gostini Dvor (1668), a mighty building 400 meters long and located along the river as a monument to the city's heyday as a trading town [6, p. 1-2].

Source one: The Vikings sagas and other written sources

What can the written sources we have available reveal about Bjarmaland? To begin with, it is important to notice that the viewpoint of the sources is Scandinavian. Therefore, Bjarmaland and Bjarmians often are not addressed directly, but rather information concerning them appears in the texts as a side product of accounts of Scandinavians and especially their expeditions. Today Arkhangelsk is a thriving trading town with around 350,000 inhabitants. However, thousand years before on the northern shore of Northern Dvina Viking ships were either anchored in the basin or on its way down the course of the river with destinations as Novgorod (in old Norse, Holmgard), Kiev in Rus or Perm at the borders of Ural. At the border there was a small trading centre, where the Vikings were to be seen around the small tents of the Bjarmians. And there where heard conversations in Old Russian, Old Norse, in Uralic, Sami, in Finnish and other Ugric tongues. This above mentioned picture of the Kola Peninsula and the shores of the White Sea and Northern Dvina in the 11th century must of course be substantiated. Were the Vikings visiting the region at all from 890 until 1250? Where is the evidence for the trade centres and the influence of the Vikings in the area? [2, p. 11-13; 12, s. 37-38]. To uncover the evidence of the Vikings presence in north-western Russia, one must find some obvious evidence that it took place. One fact is that the Vikings, who travelled across the White Sea travelled deep into present-day Russia along the rivers Onega, Northern Dvina and Mesen. Even as remote, as via the rivers Pechora, Ob and Irtysh in north-western Siberia. The presence of the Vikings for hundreds of years in Bjarmaland is

supported by three elements: written sources, archaeological finds as well as place names and loanwords from Old Norse in the Russian language.

The first source we will look at are the Norse sagas and the travel reports from as well Scandinavian historians as international historians of the time of the Vikings and from 1200s. Before we take a closer look at the Viking's own travel stories, there is a story by the Persian author, medicine and geographer, Sharaf al-Zaman al-Marwazi (1056-1124), which is very interesting. In Islamic writing sources from around the year 1000 onwards details about the different people living in northern and north-western Russia are very interesting. In a report from the above-mentioned Persian author and geographer, a special description of a coastal people living at the shores of the White Sea, is very likely to be a description of the Vikings [5, p. 160].

In the source of Sharaf al-Zaman al-Marwazi it appears that this special coastal people have very strange habits and behaviour. They were sailing constantly at sea, but one of their special habits is that every time the two of their ships met, or if they met a foreign ship, they tugged the ships at each other and took out their swords. After that, everyone started breaking loose with each other with clubs and swords. And this without enmity between them or any crime. It was simply their habits and rules. Who were this coastal people? The local Sami people had neither ship nor swords. And the same was the case with Finno-Ugric people of the area. However, it totally fits to description of the Vikings [5, p. 161].

This theory is supported by other accounts, such as sources written by the Persian astronomer, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973-1050), who lived in the present-day Uzbekistan, writes in his teaching books that high up north you could meet Finno-Ugric peoples and Varangians. In Nestor's Chronicle from around the year 1100, you will find evidence for the settlements for Varangians, too.

With other words, the appearance of Varangians and Vikings are not without teams. In the Viking sagas and poetry, the famous Icelandic skald, Glumr Geirason (d. 970) around 965 made a poem about the high North:

Eastward the bold-spoken king
intrepidly stained his sword red,

north of the burning town;
there I saw the Bjarmas run.
For the master of the body-guard good spear-weather
was given on this journey,
on Vina's bank; the fame
of a young noble travelled far.

This was substantiated in the oldest Danish Chronicle, *Chronicon Roskildense* from 1138, where the famous Danish legendary Viking hero and king, Ragnar Lodbrok fought against the Bjarmians in the late 800s. Here the Danish Viking fought successfully the tribes in Bjarmaland, a land of permanent frozen soil, snow and a country hidden by vast forests and an infinite number of animals with fur. But unsuccessfully the dangers of this godforsaken country, especially, dysentery, called bloody diarrhea, and high fever killed many a brave Danish Viking. However, among historians Ragnar Lodbrok is a rather dubious figure in Scandinavian history and is considered more of a myth like British King Artur than to a real person [7, p. 135-139].

Though, the first real appearance of the place-name Bjarmaland appeared in the Voyages of Ohthere in the year 890, almost 100 years before. Even if Ohthere of Hålogaland was perhaps not the first Norwegian to reach the White Sea, his voyage is in any case a remarkable exploring expedition. Whereby both the North Cape and the White Sea became known, even in the literature of Europe, nearly seven hundred years before Richard Chancellor reached the Dvina in the ship "Edward Buonaventura" in 1553, from which time the discovery of this sea has usually been reckoned [7, p. 135-138].

In Ohthere of Hålogand's time, or soon after, the Norwegian Viking chieftain asserted his sovereignty over all the Lapps as far as the White Sea, and in the *Historia Norwegiæ* it is said that Hålogaland reached to Bjarmaland. The headland Vegistafr is mentioned in the *Historia Norwegiæ*, in the laws, and elsewhere, as the boundary of the kingdom of Norway towards the Bjarmas (Beormas). This may have been on the south side of the Kola Peninsula by the river Varzuga, already mentioned, or by

the river Umba. After Ohthere of Hålogaland's time the Norwegian and Danish Vikings more frequently undertook expeditions, doubtless for the most part of a military character, to the White Sea and Bjarmaland. We hear about several of them in the sagas [3, p. 385].

Eric Bloodaxe (885-954) marched northward about 920 into Finnmark and as far as Bjarmaland, and there fought a great battle and gained the victory. Erik's primary goals in the journey were women, gold and goods. When the ship was full of all three parts he returned home. His son, Harold Greycloak (935-970), went northward to Bjarmaland one summer about 965 with his army, and there ravaged the country and had a great fight with the Bjarmians on "Vinu bakka" (the river bank of the Northern Dvina (Vina)), in which King Harold was victorious and slew many men. And then laid the country waste far and wide, and took a vast amount of plunder. At that time, then, the Vikings must have reached the Dvina and discovered the east side of the White Sea, which was still unknown to Ohthere of Hålogaland. They had thus proved it to be a gulf of the sea. The Bjarmians probably lived along the whole of its south side as far as the Dvina, and the name of "Bjarmaland" was now extended to the east side also, and thus became the designation of the country round the White Sea. As a people of strange race of whom they knew little, the Vikings regarded the Lapps as skilled in magic. But it was natural, that the still less known and more distant Bjarmians gradually acquired an even greater reputation for magic, and in these regions stories of trolls and giants were located. The Polar Sea was early called "Hafsbotn," later "Trollebotten" and the White Sea was given the name of "Gandvik", to which a similar meaning is attributed, since it is supposed to be connected with "gand" (the magic of the Lapps). But the name evidently originated in a popular-etymological corruption of a Karelian name [3, p. 386; 11, s. 180-181].

The Icelandic historian, poet and politician Snorri Sturlason (1179-1241) included in his work *Heimskringla* (published in 1230) in the Saga of St. Olaf a legend from Norrland in present-day Norway about an expedition to Bjarmaland, supposed to have been undertaken in 1026 by chief Thorir Hund (990-1030), in

company with the two hirdmen and allied Karle of Langøya and his brother Gunnstein from Hålogaland, men of the king's bodyguard.

The tale may be an indication that at that time more peaceful relations had been established between the Norlanders and the Bjarmians. They went in two vessels, Thorir Hund in a great long ship with eighty men and the two brothers from Vesterålen in a smaller long ship with about five-and-twenty. When they came to Bjarmaland, they put in at the market-town; the market began, and all those who had wares to exchange received full value. Thorir Hund got a great quantity of skins, squirrel, beaver and sable. Karle of Langøya also had many wares with him, for which he bought large quantities of furs. But when the market was concluded there, they came down the river Vina; and then they declared the truce with the people of the country at an end. When they were out of the river, they held a council of war, and Thorir Hund proposed that they should plunder a sanctuary of the Bjarmians' god Jomale, with grave mounds, which he knew to be in a wood in that part of the country.

They did so by night, found much silver and gold, and when the Bjarmians pursued them, they escaped through Thorir Hund's magical arts, which made them invisible. Both ships then sailed back over Gandvik. As the nights were still light they sailed day and night until one evening they lay to off some islands, took their sails down and anchored to wait for the tide to go down, since there was a strong tide-rip (whirlpool) in front of them. This was probably off "Sviatoi Nos" (the sacred promontory), where Russian authorities speak of a strong current and whirlpool. Here there was a dispute between the brothers and Thorir Hund, who demanded the booty as a recompense for their having escaped without loss of life owing to his magical arts. But when the tide turned, the brothers hoisted sail and went on, and Thorir Hund followed. When they came to land at "Geirsver" (Gjesvær, a fishing station on the north-west side of Magerö) – where it is told that there was "the first quay as one sails from the North" (i.e., east from Bjarmaland) – the quarrel began again, and Thorir Hund suddenly ran his spear through Karle of Langøya, so that he died on the spot. Gunnstein of Hålogaland escaped with difficulty in the smaller and lighter

vessel, but was pursued by Thore, and finally had to land and take to flight with all his men at Lenvik, near Malangen fjord, leaving his ship and cargo [2, p. 19-21; 7, p. 139-141].

Source two: Viking archaeological sites in the cultural landscape

The tundra and taiga between the Northern Dvina area and Ural are rich in animals. Especially on fur animals, such as black and white fox, mink, ermine, weasels and sable. Big money could be made from the fur sale. The fur of the animals was very shiny and because of the strong cold it was particularly soft and could be sold to kings and rulers throughout Europe. Furthermore, the standard of the quality of the coat was so high that it could be used to pay taxes. Travelers in these inconveniences of Russia had sailed long before the Vikings on trade routes along the major rivers such as Volga, Kama and Ob. It was very normal to exchange skins and fur for gold and silver.

More normal Arctic commodity groups such as animal skins, bird feathers, whale bones and whale and seal skin, both used for ropes, were in great demand. Whale teeth were in great demand. Furthermore, there was a whole special product group: mammoth teeth. According to the myths, they lay in piles around the countryside. The Mammoth was extinct 3,000 years before the Viking visited northern Siberia. However, the area was very untouched by the human hand. Similarly, the trips to the Russian tundra took place before Greenland had been discovered around 982 by chieftain Erik the Red (950-1003), therefore walrus teeth were very coveted items for the Vikings. The need was therefore met by buying and catching walruses in the Arctic around present-day Norway and Northern Russia [13, p. 48-50].

For Nordic people and for people in the Baltic Sea region the golden amber has always played a mysterious and important role. And there was a lot of amber in the area around Bjarmaland. The Vikings were interested in acquiring as much amber as possible. Especially for carving figures that could then be sold to the rest of Europe and Arabia.

When Ohthere of Hålogaland went to Bjarmaland it was primarily for the walrus. The oldest objects in Western Europe made of walrus teeth are from the late 800s. The Vikings earned a lot of money by selling their goods in Hedeby and London. In addition to the products of the local animal species in preserved or cut form, there was a whole other product that was a completely different perspective – the gyrfalcons. The gyrfalcon has long associated with humans, primarily for hunting and in the art of falconry. The Gyrfalcons were in very great demand by rulers throughout Europe, Arabia and the Orient. With the immigration of the Slavic people and especially the Russians in the 1100s and 1200s, the new peoples took over completely fur trade and trade in falcons in the area around Bjarmaland.

In the beginning, the meetings with the local people were marked by the Vikings lust to plunder and fight. Gradually, however, the contact with Bjarmaland's local population became more peaceful as the trade came to dominate the relationship. Furthermore, it is also suspected that the Vikings built trading places down the Northern Dvina's course. When the trade was over, the various goods were loaded onto the Viking's characteristic ships. In order to secure the load against the sea lakes, the goods were secured and covered with ox hides that could withstand the cold water of the Arctic Ocean. In addition, the crew could also crawl under the ox hides. Around the year 1,000, the Vikings lay in shuttles between the Arkhangelsk area and Hedeby, Skiringssal at present-day Larvik and London. The great wealth of travel to the White Sea brought was also used to contact important people, such as Alfred the Great (848-899) of England.

In 1989, an unusually impressive silver treasure was found by local farm workers near the mouth of Dvina, right next to present-day Arkhangelsk. It was probably buried in the beginning of the 12th century and contained articles that may have been up to two hundred years old at that time. Most of the findings comprised a total of 1.6 kilograms of silver, largely in the form of coins. Jewelry and pieces of jewelry come from Russia or neighboring areas. The majority of the coins were German, but the hoard also included a smaller number of English, Bohemian,

Hungarian, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian coins. It may be a treasure belonging to the society outlined by the Norse source material [16, p. 18-20].

Generally, such finds, whether from Scandinavia, the Baltic area or Russia, are closely tied to well-established agricultural societies with considerable trade activity, especially with Vikings. This finding is supported by a later find at the village of Nikolskoye. More than 800 Frisian coins that are more than 1000 years old have been found here. Frisia, located on the west coast of Jutland and Schleswig, housed around the year 1000, some of the most important chiefs of the Viking kingdom. The German medieval chronicler and priest Adam of Bremen (1040-1085) wrote about dangerous journeys to Bjarmaland. However, the ships were filled with goods and women went they anchored on the shores of the North Sea, in Friesland again.

Two other silver treasures have been found in the area. At the shore of Northern Dvina, near the rural locality of Krasnoborsk, around 500 kilometres southeast of Arkhangelsk, a silver treasure with around 40 silver western European coin from the 11th century have been found. The treasure is a typical Viking site. Furthermore, in the hamlet of Blagoveshchenskoye at the shores of the river Vaga, 500 kilometres south of Arkhangelsk, the archaeologists have found a silver and gold treasure of coins from all over Europe. The coins can be dated back the 900s and the 1000s. According to the archaeologists it is very conceivable that this is a silver treasure from the Viking age [16, p. 18-20].

The White Sea is only ice-free four months a year, from June to September. With the Vikings' good sense of location and seaworthiness, it was something they calculated in their travels in the area. Viking ships were fast, but weather conditions and the problems with sea's whirlpools and currents made the journey dangerous and unpredictable. Therefore, some of the Vikings chose to settle down or just winter camp on the banks of Northern Dvina, waiting for the coming of spring. Sometimes the winter camps turned into actual settlements. The houses the Vikings lived in have all disappeared due to the rather harsh climate in the area. But the Vikings left behind buildings in the countryside – burial mounds. The archaeologists have found more than 700 graves in the area at the river Vega's tributary in Northern Dvina around

280 kilometres south of Arkhangelsk. The burial mounds are all from the 900s until the 1100s. The Vikings mounds are all identical to the other places in Russia, where you know for sure that the Vikings lived and traded [15, s. 75].

However, it is not only in the area called Bjarmaland that the remains of the Vikings have been found. On the Vaygach Island near the Kara Sea, many objects from the 900s until the 1100s from the Viking world have been found. Among them there are jewellery, pearls and bracelets that are believed to come from around Novgorod, Ural and the river Ob. Moreover, these findings are substantiated by the findings of the archaeologists in the 1990s in the nearby river Pechora's delta. Two cities with a fortress and regular buildings were excavated here. More than 2,000 objects have been excavated. Several of them related to Viking's everyday life. The archaeological sites have functioned as a trade settlement from 500 until 1200. Cities and fortresses indicate that they are built by a tribe that was more advanced than the native locals. A more warlike people, like the Vikings [15, s. 74-77].

In the museum in the western Siberian city of Salekhard, in the Priuralsky district, you can look at typical oval Scandinavian fibulae made of bronze from the 900s. Fibulae originally served a practical function, to fasten clothing, such as cloaks and woollen shirts. Up the river Ob's course, several fibulae and typical Scandinavian silver bowls have been found. And scattered around the area from Omsk to Perm, different kind of Scandinavian and western European swords with Viking and Nordic ornaments have been seen [16, p. 21].

The researchers have so far not been able to explain how these objects came to West Siberia. But together with the other finds and traces in the areas after the Vikings, they must be considered as a strong testimony that the Vikings have been in Siberia and have dealt with the local population groups. An important argument for the presence of the Vikings was that their long ships were fast and seaworthy and that the northern seaway was well functioning before and even after the Viking era, linking Western Siberia with Western European trading centers.

Source three: place-names and loan words of the Old Norse in the Russian language

As the Vikings traded and plundered all the way to Ural and Western Siberia, the Scandinavians must have left traces in the form of loanwords and place names in the Russian landscape. According to linguists, the Russian words «устье» (Old Norse ‘us’) – mouth and «холм» (Old Norse ‘holm’) – a small hill are both of Scandinavian origin. The Russian word «усть(е)» is used in several place names like Ust-Kara, Ust-Tsilma and Ust-Izhma. Similarly, Russian «нос» (Old Norse ‘nose’) – peninsula, and Russian «тиун» (Old Norse ‘thiun’) – judge should also be of Scandinavian origin [16, p. 22].

Several place names in northern Russia should have roots in the Old Norse language. The name of the largest city on the Kola Peninsula, Murmansk, was supposed to come from the word ‘man’ from the North (murman in Russian). Likewise, the place name Kholmogory should mean Holmgård in Old Norse. And Arkhangelsk was originally called Novy-Kholmogory (‘Ny Holmgård’ in Old Norse). The fact is also that there are many place names throughout the Northern Russian region that cannot be traced back to a Finno-Ugric language or the Russian language. Other examples are lake Vygozero (in Old Norse ‘Vigsø’) near the shores of the White Sea and Olavgora (in Old Norse Olavs bjerg) mountain of Olav near the shore of the White Sea, too [16, p. 22].

Another interesting place name is Kharlov in Russian. The river Harlovka (Kharlovka) and small cities with the syllable Harlovo (Kharlovo) should be a derivation of the Old Norse name of Harald. And the above-mentioned word ‘nos’ («нос») is a part of the place names Kanin Nos, Nelmin Nos and Svjatoy Nos at the shore of the lake Baikal [16, p. 22].

In the autonomous region of the Komi Republic, you will find the Old Norse word ‘gård’ – ‘gort’, meaning farm in several place names such as Kamgort, Hvidgort, Rasgort and Kargort. Further North, in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, you will find the Old Norse ‘høj’ – ‘hoj’ meaning hill. Paj-Hoj (Paj-Khoj), Paz-Hoj (Paz-Khoj) and Anahoj. From the White Sea to the Ural Mountains and from the Kola

Peninsula to the Perm area, there are other endings on town units that could originate from Old Nordisk. Also, in other local languages such as the Komi language spoken in the Komi region have borrowed words [16, p. 23].

London, Hedeby, Skiringsal (Kaupang pr. Larvik), Hålogaland (Borg i Lofoten), Kholmogory, Perm and the Russian River System

The Vikings' reputation in popular culture as bloodthirsty savages is a little too nuanced. The people of the Viking Age lived by farming, but could also find the way to the Viking, which was the term of the time to go out and plunder. On their travels, the Vikings traded with the locals, but the same Vikings could find another place to storm land, rob themselves of theft and take slaves home. The fact that they had oars on the ships meant that they could quickly sail ashore and quickly get back from there even under adverse sailing conditions, which was essential for today's characteristic hit and run attacks. So, the Vikings could be peaceful traders one day and then turn into brutal pirates the next.

The researchers thus have evidence that the Norwegians of the Viking Age were well-travelled. In addition, the Vikings may have been in more places than there is evidence for. For example, it is possible that our ancestors sailed down the west coast of Africa, as scientists know that the Vikings have sailed down the Spanish Peninsula and into the Mediterranean. It is also possible that the Vikings have been elsewhere along the coasts of North America than just at L'Anse aux Meadow on Newfoundland, where archaeologists found remains from a Viking settlement in 1960 [14, p. 110-111].

Sun, moon and stars usually gave the Vikings a good understanding of where to go and whether they were on the right course. But in fog and in cloudy weather you do not see the celestial bodies, and a few degrees deviation from the planned course can, in the long distances, cause you not to hit the planned target and maybe not hit the land at all. The Vikings therefore also kept an eye on what was on land as they sailed along the coasts. For example, a rock with a shape or hilltop could show where you were if you knew the route [15, s. 64].

At sea the Vikings used wildlife as landmarks. Birdlife thus served as a guide for the Vikings, because some birds only fly out at a certain distance from islands. If you had long passed the Faroe Islands and saw a certain terrestrial bird, it could for example be a sign that you were near Iceland. Whales prefer to stay where the fish are, namely at the transition from greater to lower depths. The Vikings knew where the whales typically lived and could then use that information to figure out where they themselves were in relation to, say, Iceland.

Therefore, an argument that the Vikings have visited, plundered and traded with the peoples along the shores of the Arctic Ocean and associated rivers such as Northern Dvina, Pechora, Vaga, Ob, Yenisey is that it is a part of the Vikings trade routes. The Scandinavians had a very expanded system of trade routes and very important trade settlement. In Denmark it was Hedeby and Ribe. In Sweden it was Birka and in Norway, it was Skiringsal and Borg in Hålogaland. On the British Isles it was London. In other words, the Vikings were good organized in trade and business. Therefore, they always needed new markets and need to expand either in the Baltic Sea or the Atlantic Ocean. Also, the fact that the Viking preferred land areas in cold atmosphere like Greenland, Northern Canada, Svalbard Isles and Iceland makes it really true that they have sought new markets north of Russia [14, p. 111-112].

As a new ship technology, the sail allowed for trade or for Viking, as the people of the Viking Age said at in the Viking Era. However, what were the reasons for all this travelling of the Vikings. Why the Vikings' travels became so very extensive? Well, the researchers have three reasons: 1) the Vikings chased recognition and respect for their trips and trade journeys, because it earned prestige at home. 2) Coincidences meant that the Vikings found new land and new trademarks and they named the new countries for example Iceland and Greenland and 3) A population pressure in the Scandinavian countries meant that the Vikings were seeking new land could cultivate abroad.

Conclusion

Bjarmaland is and will always be a mythological land. The fact is that the Vikings and other Scandinavians from the 800s until 1250 have visited the northern regions of present-day Russia. Written sources, archaeological finds and Nordic place names show that the Norwegians regularly visited the northernmost regions of Russia from the Kola Peninsula to the rivers Ob and Yenisey in Siberia for hundreds of years. Although the written sources are old and not written by today's historians, it must be noted that the place name Bjarmaland as well as the White Sea and Northern Dvina appear in many independent sources.

Also, it is worth noting that the descriptions that the trade areas closely match today's descriptions of the coasts along the White Sea and the delta of Northern Dvina delta and course. Furthermore, it was not only on actual looting, but also to trade and collect taxes. It was furs, skins, walrus tusks and precious metals that led them to travel the northern artifacts of northern Russia. In addition to adventurous and wanted to win honor and fame in home Scandinavia. Excavations of both commercial sites and burial mounds in large numbers show that the Vikings were at least wintering in the cold regions of the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean.

It is also quite conceivable that the Vikings, the local Bjarmians and eventually the Russians from the 1100s or 1200s have had a much larger relationship than first assumed. Vikings from all over Scandinavia have been everywhere in what is geographically called European Russia – from Belarus and to the edge of the Ural Mountains. However, it is still hard to place this find historically until further research is completed, there are at least two possible interpretations. It may be a treasure belonging to the society outlined by the Norse source material.

Generally, such finds, whether from Scandinavia, the Baltic area, or Russia, are closely tied to well-established agricultural societies with considerable trade activity, or a coincidence in history. The facts, on the other hand, are that the Nordic small communities have gradually disappeared in the northern artistic regions. Here one could imagine that climate change, the invasion of other tribes and a change in the Vikings' own way of life are the cause.

Bibliography:

1. Adam af Bremen. De hamburgske ærkebispers historie og Nordens beskrivelse. København, 1968.
2. Bagge S. The Old Norse Kings. Sagas and European Latin Historiography in *JPEG // Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. 2016. Vol. 115. No. 1. P. 1-38.
3. Blom G.A. The participation of the kings in the Early Norwegian Sailing to Bjarmeland (Kola Peninsula and Russian Waters), and the development of a royal policy concerning the Northern Waters in the Middle Ages // *Arctic*. 1984. Vol. 37. No. 4. P. 385-388
4. Den oldengelske Krønike i Udvalg / Translated by T. Dahl. København, 1936.
5. Franklin S., Shepard J. The emergence of Rus 750-1200. London, 1998.
6. Lukin Y.F. City of Archangel Michael // *Arctic and North*. 2013. No. 10. P. 1-19
7. Nansen F. In Northern Mists: Arctic exploration in Early Times. Cambridge, 2012. Vol 2.
8. Ottar og Wulfstan, to rejsebeskrivelse fra vikingetiden / Translated by N. Lund. Roskilde, 1983.
9. Parker P. The Northmen's fury: A history of the Viking world. London, 2014
10. Saxo Grammaticus: Saxos Danmarkshistorie / Translated by Peter Zeeberg. København, 2000.
11. Sturlason S. Heimskringla. Norges Kongesagaer / Translated by J.V. Jensen and H. Kyrre. København, 1948. T. 1-3.
12. Vasaru M.K. Bjarmaland. University of Oulu, 2016.
13. Vasaru M.K. Bjarmaland and the interaction in the North of Europe from the Viking Age until the Early Middle Ages // *Journal of Northern Studies*. 2012. Vol. 6. No. 2. P. 37-58.
14. Winroth A. The age of the Vikings. Princeton, New Jersey. 2014.
15. Wolder F. Vikingerne ved Ruslands Vugge. Hasselager, 2016.

16. Wolder S. De glemte vikinger – de nåede også Ural og Sibirien // Siden Saxo. 2009. No. 3. P. 14-23.

Data about the author:

Christensen Carsten Sander – Doctor of History (PhD), curator of Billund Museum (Billund, Denmark).

Сведения об авторе:

Христенсен Карстен Сандер – доктор истории (PhD), куратор Музея Биллунда (Биллунд, Дания).

E-mail: csc@billund.dk.