

TRANSCRIPT

An Undeceptions podcast.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

For a particular generation, pretty much everything they know about the Vikings is summed up in one movie, *How to Train Your Dragon*. It's the adventures of Hiccup and his Viking village, as they battle an infestation of smouldering beasts.

TAPE: *How to Train Your Dragon*

Hiccup:

You see most places have mice or mosquitoes. We have dragons. Most people would leave, not us. We're Vikings. We have stubbornness issues. My name's Hiccup. Great name, I know, but it's not the worst. Parents believe a hideous name will frighten off gnomes and trolls, like our charming Viking demeanour wouldn't do that.

Other Viking:

Morning!

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

It's good fun for kids, for sure, and it picks up on one of the persistent images in pop culture, one that's been around for centuries actually, and continues in some of the recent Vikings series. There's Vikings, there's Vikings: Valhalla, which is somehow different, my daughter tells me, and there's The Last Kingdom. In all of these, the Vikings are bold seafarers from the frozen North, who for some reason, woke up one day around 793 and decided to sweep down on the warmer lands of England and Europe, and plunder and pillage, with battles axes in one hand, terrified women in the other, and double horned helmets on their heads, to boot. But not much of that is correct, it turns out, including the helmets. The National Museum of Denmark has only one preserved helmet from the Viking age, and there's no horns to be found.

So, let's prepare ourselves for a few undeceptions, as we launch our longship onto the seas of uncertainty and discover over two in depth episodes, what we can say with some confidence about the Vikings. Their origins, exploits, culture, religion, and perhaps the best kept Viking secret, their eventual decision, and it was their decision, to become Christians.

I'm John Dickson and this is Undeceptions.

Undeceptions is brought to you by Zondervan's new book, *Four Views on Heaven*, edited by Michael Wittmer. Each episode, we explore some aspect of life, faith, history, science, culture, or ethics, that's either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten. And with the help of people who know what they're talking about, we're trying to undeceive ourselves and let the truth out.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The so-called Viking age begins roughly in the eighth century AD, and ends in the 12th century, let's say the 400-year period from 750 to 1150. That said, way back in the first century, the Roman author, Pliny the Elder, mentions a land in the far away Northwest that he calls Scandinavia, basically Denmark and Norway. The word itself may mean dangerous land on the water, so perhaps there was already a sense, 700 years before our actual Vikings, that you don't mess with those Northern seafaring people.

As for the word Viking itself, again I'm sorry, we're not totally sure. It might just derive from a place named Vik. It could be the old English word wick, which means an armed camp, or as quite a few experts reckon, it might be from the old Icelandic word, Vik, meaning a bay or creek. Whatever it's etymology, the word comes to have a distinct connotation and we've got a longboat full of experts for this episode, and they broadly agree, Viking means something like pirate.

INTERVIEW BEGINS

Soren Sindbaek:

I guess like any historical expression like that, it's something that we've constructed to make sense of the past. But if you go back to the word Viking, it means very mainly a pirate, quite simply. And to me [crosstalk 00:04:56]

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's Professor Soren Michael Sindbaek, of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies he's at Aarhus University. I caught up with him in Denmark on my first step in the journey to understand the Vikings. Soren specializes in urban archaeology, focusing on how cities all over the world were connected to each other in the Viking age, and how that began to change things for Europe and way beyond.

Soren Sindbaek:

To me, this is an age which in Northern Europe... Which is the era we're talking about when we're dealing with the Viking age... In Northern Europe is characterized by a lot of cultural and economic, and all sorts of transformations that basically have to do with what happened when sailing ships became a major thing in societies. Sailing ships are one of those things that societies either have, or don't have, and if they have them, they have them all over because it's such an investment for a traditional society to maintain that knowledge and all that technology. That's what happens in the Viking age, that people in the north of Europe is taking over that technology, and bang, lots of things happens.

NEXT INTERVIEW BEGINS

John Dickson:

Hello, Sarah.

Sarah Croix:

Hello.

John Dickson:

Am I parked correctly?

Sarah Croix:

Perfectly.

John Dickson:

Okay.

Sarah Croix:

As long as you're not on the cycle path behind you, it's fine.

John Dickson:

Is that okay? Yeah, no, the cycle path-

Buff Dickson:

You are a bit on the cycle path.

John Dickson:

Am I? Okay.

Buff Dickson:

Hang on, this is the footpath. That's the cycle...

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Welcome aboard our second expert, Assistant Professor Sarah Croix, one of Soren's colleagues at Aarhus University. I met her at her home where my darling buff took issue with my parking. Anyway, Sarah's done a ton of interesting research, including an analysis of a wonderful archaeological find that depicts a female warrior on a piece of jewellery, but that's getting ahead of myself. She offers some more nuance on the term Viking.

Sarah Croix:

We connect them primarily with Scandinavia as their homelands, but the activities that we connect with them to place primarily outside of Scandinavia. So, it's the raiding, it's the trading, it's all that, it's this expansion seawards from Scandinavia. It's not an ethnic term. It's not an identity as such so it shouldn't be equated with Scandinavians, like not everyone living in Scandinavia in this period that we call the Viking age, where Vikings engaged in those activities.

Sarah Croix:

It covers a lot of the aspects. It's a seaborne activity that involves plundering. Well, I mean, we find the term in some late Viking age runestones, where it's used to describe an activity so that you're going on viking, which means basically an expedition. That expedition can have civil purposes, seemingly, it's to gain something.

John Dickson:

And it was always positive for the Vikings, an expedition, whereas those maybe who were on the receiving end of plundering-

Sarah Croix:

Of course.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

So, the nation state, as we understand it nowadays, was not a thing back in this period, and wouldn't be for centuries. The big political reality in Viking times was the Carolingian Empire. That's the massive European Empire, basically all of Western Europe, conquered by Charlemagne and his successors from about 760, right through to the late ninth century. One of the key unifying factors in this Carolingian Empire was of course, Christianity. Charlemagne himself had received a blessing from the Pope and he was declared to be the holy Roman emperor. He was thought to be a new Constantine, helping to expand Christianity throughout the world.

By contrast the ethnic groups that made up the Vikings, as we've come to call them, were more tribal in nature. Small regional groups would give their loyalty to particular leaders. So, you'd think of yourself as a follower of Olaf or Sven or [Knut 00:09:16], but they did speak the same language, Old Norse. And they shared a lot of cultural elements like costume, art and religion. They also shared a love of plundering.

NEXT INTERVIEW BEGINS

John Dickson:

So just tell me the timeframe we normally think of as Old Norse culture.

Michael Drout:

The Viking age is usually said to have started in 793, when a Viking fleet came and sacked the monastery of Lindisfarne, an undefended and incredibly rich monastery and shrine to St. Cuthbert, off the Northeast coast of England. And that's usually thought to be the start of the Viking age.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Welcome aboard our third expert, Professor Michael Drout. Michael is both professor of English and director of the Centre for the Study of the Medieval at Wheaton College in Massachusetts, not to be confused with the Christian liberal arts college of the same name, over in Chicago. Michael is an author

and editor specializing in Anglo Saxon and medieval literature. He's done this great audio course on the Viking age, which I've done and thoroughly recommend, it's in the Modern Scholar series. I caught up with him in Massachusetts, where he talked me through the significance of the first great Viking raid on England. They chose a pretty soft target, the monastery of Lindisfarne.

TAPE: VIKINGS TV Series

I don't understand, why would they leave such treasures unprotected? Is there some spell or some magic which protects them?

It appears not.

Perhaps they think their God protects them.

This is their God and he's dead, he's nailed to a cross.

He cannot protect anyone. He's not alive like Odin, Thor or Frey.

What use is he then?

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's from the show Vikings, which has our Scandinavian adventurers bursting onto the international scene with the destruction of Lindisfarne. The fact is archaeological evidence tells us the Vikings were trading and raiding long before 793. I mean way over in the East, in Estonia, they found the remains of some Scandinavian men who'd all met violent ends, sometime in the middle of the 700s, and they were buried in formal fashion, inside their boat. There were also some eighth century graves back in Norway that contain objects which had obviously come from the British Isles. So, stuff was going on before Lindisfarne in 793, even if the Lindisfarne raid really was a dramatic escalation.

Michael Drout:

But there really had been this period of almost 250 years where nobody was attacking England, so this was quite a surprise. So that's usually considered the Viking age, like when I do it in round numbers, within the context of Anglo-Saxon, let's just say it's 800 to 900 is its peak. But you usually would say the Viking age goes from the 750s or so, though there's no records or written stuff for the earliest part of it, and continues, fizzles out around 1200.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

So, our pirates are trading and raiding all around the Baltic Sea, and they're in contact with the Irish and English all around the 700s. By the 830s, Viking longships are pillaging down the Western coast of Europe. In 841 they pop over to Dublin and establish a permanent camp there, which is why lots of place names in Ireland are Viking words. In the 850s some of them raid France and Spain, and left us further evidence. In the 860s, some Viking communities head East and settled down in Russia. And in the 870s, famously, they're even able to found permanent colonies in England.

The Vikings got around and did a lot, and yet somehow, they still kept their home base of Denmark strong. I travelled from Aarhus via Sarah's home in the countryside, and onto one of the most important

medieval cities in Denmark, the oldest we know of, Ribe on the West coast. I wanted to meet the man in charge of the wonderful Ribe museum.

John Dickson:

Well, I'm here at the amazing museum of Southwest Jutland, and I'm trying to find Morten Sovso, I'm sure I'm not pronouncing that correctly. But ... 6B. 6A ... 6C, come on, Dickson. Aha, all right. Mask on. Morten, John Dickson.

Morten Sovso:

Yeah, you're welcome.

John Dickson:

Ah, thank you so much.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

That's our fourth crew member Morten Sovso. Morten is a medieval archaeologist based in Ribe on the West coast of Denmark. He's the head curator of archaeology at the Museum of Southwest Jutland.

Morten Sovso:

Some political events also happened, which had a lot of effect on the Viking attacks because in the eighth, ninth century, the Kingdom of Denmark was very strong and we can see that even the Franks, they didn't dare to attack us, and when they tried, they got beat up. Quite contrary to the state of affairs today, the Danish kingdom was actually very strong in the eighth and ninth century.

But in the middle of the ninth century, some pretenders to the throne clashed in a giant battle and they almost killed each other, all of them, so the entire Royal lineage was more or less wiped out. And from the second half of the ninth century, there was no control with what's going on in Denmark, so every aristocrat, he can put together his own fleet and try his luck. And then we see a lot of uncontrolled rape and pillaging also happening in the British Isles, and Vikings actually coming both from Southern Scandinavia and from Norway, and also from Sweden. They are actually gathering up and are creating this great heathen army that you can read about, that was a menace in the British Isles.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The development of such large-scale threat was a gradual process. Scandinavia was made up of many small, independently minded tribal groups with their own customs, fenced in by natural barriers like forests, mountains, and waterways. But as their history progressed, these people groups were unified under stronger and stronger military leaders. I asked Sarah Croix about it. How were they organized and ruled? Because they weren't one ethnicity, as you've said, they weren't one nation state, I guess until Harald. But originally how were they organized? Are there chieftains and...

Sarah Croix:

I think you should probably think of it more as polities, like entities, groups of population, which are following chieftains, which are settled in territories and who control those territories can be flexible, so the boundaries can be flexible as well. We know already in the early ninth century, there were kings of the Danes and that's an important precision that they were kings over people, not over a country or a territory. Which of course include some kind of territorial dimension, but it's mostly being the king of people, being recognized by those people as their kings.

Soren Sindbaek:

There are a lot of Scandinavians. Today it's very fashionable to mention that this was probably a polyglot and Polytechnic society, and like any real [maritime 00:18:08] society, of course it was. One of the things that happens when you start sailing about, is that well, strange connections are being made. Today we've got DNA that shows you that people got around like we always expected them to, but now we can see the actual trace of well, Celtic mothers coming to Norway, or Norwegians ending up in the British Isles and all that.

Soren Sindbaek:

But one thing that always impressed me was if you look at place names in sort of Atlantic Europe, along the coast of, well the British Isles, and even down to continental Europe, there's this fringe of Scandinavian place names along the coast that shows you that connectivity. The lingua franca for that was a Scandinavian language. You can't say that it was Norwegian or Danish or Swedish, because those have sort of split out since that. But it was the Norse language and those people who spoke that language, which made the Viking age, the Viking age. There were all sorts of people on board those ships and all sorts of people involved in the encounters and conflicts.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

During the early 700s, we're getting the creation of towns and increasing centralization of power among chieftains, increased productivity and trade. It all sounds pretty successful, so what prompted the explosion in Viking raids? Soren Sindbaek.

Soren Sindbaek:

Well, that's one of the million-dollar questions. But when we ask a question like that, we always need to remember that what we're asking in a historical or ecological setting, is what caused something to happen right there, right then? It's not enough to say, "Well, ships caused it because people became more mobile," but there was a constellation of things which came out right at that time for this change to happen.

If we go back a few centuries before, we know that in the first century AD, the Romans were quite interested in that expeditions to Scandinavia. What they found at that time was an area that... Well, basically they couldn't find somebody to trade with, so they decided to keep it on their horizon. But when we get to the eighth century, it's a completely changed world. For one thing, well Anglo-Saxons have come to the British Isles, they're very interested in [crosstalk 00:20:31].

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Okay, one day we're going to do a whole episode on the Anglo-Saxons, the Venerable Bede, Albert the Great, King Athelstan, and all of that. All we need to know for now is that Germanic tribes migrated to Britain, peacefully or otherwise, around the year 500, give or take, and they mixed with the local British residents to form what we call the Anglo-Saxons. They ended up converting to Christianity around the year 600, and then flourishing under the influence of the monasteries and churches and semi stable kingdoms, like Essex, Wessex, Mercia and so on. Anglo Saxon traders and missionaries had their eyes fixed on the North of Europe. The traders wanted riches; the missionaries wanted souls.

Soren Sindbaek:

They're very interested in their close cousins on the continental side. There's a lot of traffic on the North Sea developing between the Christians in England, and the continent. To some extent, I think that was the traffic that spilled over. We can see all the Anglo-Saxon missionaries had a lot of interest in going East. And well, first to the old Saxons that are in their books, but also to other people there. They were there before the Scandinavians took off sailing, and what was there [crosstalk 00:21:51].

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

We're going to hear a lot more about the missionaries who ventured into the dangerous North, mostly in part two of this Viking special, next episode. But there is an important point to make here. A popular perception of the Viking conversion, if people even think about the Vikings becoming Christians, is that Christianity must have been imposed on them from above. The story is more complicated than that. Missionaries were trying to reach the North before the Vikings set sail to England and Europe, and they kept coming back.

Soren Sindbaek:

What was there with them were these special places that we call [emporia 00:22:26]. Historic psychologists today call emporia trading places that were like small towns, but they were there specifically to facilitate the sea traffic. And to map the spread of emporia from first in the channel area, places like South Hampton or London, and then onto the North Sea area where [Liebe 00:22:51] and Denmark comes up around 700. And then onto the real Scandinavian world of Norway, Sweden, where things start happening when places like Birke in Sweden in the late eight century, that's almost like mapping the emergence of the Viking age.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Sarah Croix and Morten Sovso are both archaeologists who have done a lot of work in Ribe, the great Viking trading town and the oldest town in Denmark. It was in a place like this that Vikings heard about the Christian God, from daring missionaries, and saw with their own eyes some of the riches of a flourishing England and Southern Europe. Add to this the political unrest in Denmark just mentioned with the death of many of the royals, and you end up with a lot of restless warriors willing to try their luck in those other lands. But what made the Vikings think they could conquer these foreign places?

Sarah Croix:

We have knowledge of some very strong political entities in the continental region, well the Carolingian Empire, which I don't believe would have been perceived as a particularly weak or vulnerable target which could easily be taken. I'm also been wondering whether it was a matter of just knowing the possibilities, because throughout already the seventh, and especially in the eighth century, trading contacts between South and Scandinavia, especially through Ribe, begin to extend towards the North Sea region and then connected to well, the British Isles. But also, to the Rhineland and all those monasteries in the [inaudible 00:24:46] Rhineland, which were controlling a lot of production and who were also trading their goods, or getting other people to trade for them.

So, I was just wondering if, through those contacts, if the knowledge also spread that there were those places, the monasteries. Not necessarily those of the Rhineland, maybe the more isolated one in the British Isles, which were places of great wealth, extremely valuable, small, portable wealth that you can just easily take in a bag...

John Dickson:

And not well defended.

Sarah Croix:

And not well defended. Exactly. So, I'm just thinking that some opportunists would have thought that this is actually very easy. That's easy money. Well, we basically have the boats, and we're developing the technology of sailing. We don't know exactly when, but probably in the course of the eighth century. And well on the one hand, they had the tool, sailing ships and yeah, the possibility of probably earning some relatively easy money. It seems that it just took off, in a way.

Morten Sovso:

I think it was a mixture of motives. Of course, it was a way to make some money or make a fortune for yourself, and you could ask why didn't they do it in the eighth century and so on? But generally, the eighth century was quite peaceful in Northern Europe, and this is perhaps a bit unsubstantiated, but have you heard about a climate phenomenon known as the Late Antique Little Ice Age, what happened after a massive volcanic eruption in AD 536? What seems to have happened in Northern Europe was that we actually had some very bad years and a lot of people died from famine, perhaps also from this Justinian plague, which also was a phenomenon in the 540s.

It seems that the population numbers in Denmark dropped to a real minimum and for a long period after that, there was enough room for everybody. We see a growing population and an expansion during the seventh and eighth century, and perhaps during the ninth century, they have sort of filled out the frameworks of the landscapes of Denmark, but they are still having a lot of new babies and so on, so perhaps there was a population surplus, perhaps there wasn't enough land for everybody any longer. So, during the ninth century, there might have been a lot of young men who weren't able to take over daddy's farmstead so they had to find something for themselves.

That, I think is also a motive, that we have more young men who are looking for something to do, I think that's a reason why we see the Viking raiding taking place from the ninth century and onwards. But you

have to see it also in the light of all the political events happening in the Viking homelands, because they were, of course also being affected by also the warriors that returned with fortunes and new customs, and so on. So, this Viking raiding also brought back a lot of cultural impulses from the places that they visited.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

And Michael Drout says these communal experiences resulted in the creation of highly effective military tactics.

Michael Drout:

Part of it is that they somehow formed these incredibly strong social teams, if you want to look at it that way. One of the side evidence pieces for that is when we find Viking hoards, everything is chopped into bits. So, they might have stolen a beautiful gem encrusted cross, it is hacked apart into pieces and the gems are pride off and so forth. It seems to be that, this is totally what my students would call wacky Drout theory, but wacky Drout theory is this is a way of keeping absolute peace among this band of highly aggressive, violent people, heavily armed, everybody gets the same amount. They didn't need to do that, except that this creates unit cohesion.

I think the Vikings, they fought in small teams, so when you see a depiction of this, or when you read the Anglo-Saxon material where the Vikings are beating them, it seems they've lined up and formed a shield wall, right? I think the Vikings fought in these little units of say, four people. Two of them probably's whole job was to hold a shield and make sure the legs didn't get cut off the people in there. And then someone who's standing behind that... So, two people with shields, two people with swords or axes, and then one person with a long spear or a pole arm, fighting over the top. If you've tried to fight that with a shield wall or with everybody run down the hill going, "Aah..." It looks so good in the Lord of the Rings when they do it, but you're going to lose, and I think that that small unit tactics. And then the other thing, that I've gotten this from Tom Shippey, is that when you read between the lines in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Vikings didn't [crosstalk 00:30:35].

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Professor Thomas Shippey is a British scholar of middle and old English literature, and an expert on JRR Tolkien, to boot. His expertise on ancient documents like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, helped colour in what we know of Viking raids in England.

Michael Drout:

The Vikings didn't bring provisions with them. They were smash and grab, and they were also smash, steel horses, and then they would have outright that would go up the side of either side of the river, looting and stealing and getting their provisions that way, while the ships stayed going up the middle of the river. So, I think it was really sophisticated tactics, unit cohesion, and then this, whether you want to call it an ideology or just a culture of that they really did believe it's okay to die, as long as you do it in a cool way. As long as you're not running away.

Michael Drout:

And I mean, think about it, that's how we motivate our own troops to this day, unit cohesion and the ideal that... I don't think we tell our soldiers like, "Oh, don't worry, if you get killed, you're going to be in heaven." We show them, "We're going to remember your name forever. We're going to carve it into stone. We're going to have services and we're going to never forget." I mean, I know it's really powerful to young men, to know that they won't be forgotten as long as they stick with their mates. I think that's what...

The Vikings came from a very flat society. Not that there weren't kings and nobles and a lot of slaves and thralls and so forth, but it didn't have the many, many steps of ranks and so forth, that their opponents had. So, the Vikings quickly learned, just kill the officer and then everybody run away. But if you kill the Viking leader, there was just a bunch of other people like, "Well, we're still going to fight."

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Just to clarify, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a year-by-year history gathered together in the ninth century, then copied, expanded, and distributed throughout the monasteries of England. Plenty of things are omitted, and it's all pretty one sided, but the Chronicle gives us tons of information, some of which we can concretely verify. For example, the Chronicle for the years 865 to 874 speak of a great Viking army in East Anglia, that apparently in the country, instead of just raiding and then leaving. And the locations of the battle camps are actually given, sure enough archaeologists have found those spots and the camp in Torksey, in Lincolnshire, covers 55 hectares, or more than 100 American football fields. The Chronicle wasn't inflating the numbers when it spoke of this enormous Viking army.

Anyway, there's another source on the Viking side, sort of. The Icelandic sagas are an amazing collection of oral stories that were eventually written down in the 1200s and later. The sagas tell the tales of famous families and heroes, as well as settlements and voyages, and famous blood feuds. The dragons that occasionally appear probably aren't totally historical, but some of the events are likely actual remembered events. So, the historian has to do her best, weighing legend and history.

Sarah Croix:

Well, it's clearly something in between to me. Especially when you work with the Viking age, as a discipline, it's really one that forces you to work with any kind of sources you have available because it's on this tipping point between prehistory and history. Like a society with some form of literacy, the runic alphabet, but which is not used to write texts yet.

John Dickson:

So, we don't have letters between chieftains or anything like that, do we?

Sarah Croix:

No. It's just on the verge of two things, which means that, well, you have to use whatever you can, as sources.

Michael Drout:

Then the other sources we have is other people talking about the Vikings.

John Dickson:

Right, yes. Like Parisians going, "Oh, God help us from the Vikings," or something like that, right?

Michael Drout:

Yes, like suddenly 40 ships showed up and they burned everything and they stole all the stuff. I mean-

John Dickson:

And we have sort of primary sources that a historian likes?

Michael Drout:

Absolutely. We have Arabic chronicles, for example, because remember the Muslims had expanded into Spain and some Vikings sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar and started trying to sack the Mediterranean. They got as far as the city of Luna in Italy, a small, walled city that, according to the records, they thought was Rome. So, they thought they'd sacked Rome and they were like, "It wasn't really that hard," as they sailed away.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

These plunderings and sackings brought enormous wealth to the Vikings. Sometimes in Viking settlements, we find beautiful coins from faraway places, or lovely Roman glass goblets, which Viking elites filled with their wine. Then there's the Cuerdale Hoard. In 1840 workers repairing the embankment on the River Ribble in Northwest England, uncovered a Viking war chest containing nearly 8,000 gold and silver coins, and a thousand pieces of silver, so there's ingots, ornaments and silver arm bands. You'll be pleased to know that the workers were allowed to keep one coin each, before Queen Victoria snapped it up and passed it on, eventually to the British Museum. You can check it out next time you're there. But not everything archaeologists dig up is made of the shiny stuff.

Soren Sindbaek:

Well, I think the Viking archaeology has so many aspects, the first thing that really kicked people's imagination off were the Viking ship burials. The most famous example is the Oseberg ship, which was found early in the 20th century, in Norway, almost fully preserved wooden vessel with lavish grave goods. Oseberg is like the Tutankhamun of Viking archaeology. But that in a sense, well it entrenched people's ideas about Vikings as these seaborne warriors, but what I think was important of those discoveries and the graves more generally, was that it showed people that this was not what they considered barbarians to be, this was a rich, visual culture.

There is so much artwork in the Oseberg grave and some of the early archaeologists from those generations, talk about how those discoveries make historians or the general population in Western Europe, see Scandinavia differently. So instead of seeing the Scandinavian past as this handed down image of barbarians, almost skin [inaudible 00:37:57], hunters and gatherers, it made them aware that

no, this was a different part of the culturally sophisticated world of the early Middle Ages. That was one important bit.

Then the next major discovery was in Denmark in the 1930s. That was what we call the geometric ring fortresses. The first to be found was the fortress Trelleborg on the island Zealand. I think it was 1934 when it was realized that this earthwork, which was on a field somewhere, was not part of something medieval, but went back to the 10th century. What was spectacular about it was that it was a very sizeable monument. It was more than 160 meters in diameter, it was painstakingly geometrically designed, so with perfectly round ramparts and a system of these square blocks of houses. It looked, well, like some version of a Roman fortress.

This came as such a shock to historians and archaeologists at the time, because that was not all how you had imagined Vikings or the Viking age. It was so organized and it took most of the 20th century actually to really grasp what that story was about. How could you reconcile these stories about boat crews raiding the coast of Western Europe, with something that was so organized? And eventually I think we have managed to make that reconciliation, and see how the military and the political side of the Viking age was just as sophisticated and complex, the artistic side. There are still discoveries being made within that field. For many years, we thought that they were [inaudible 00:39:55] just four of these fortresses, that had taken care of one region of the Danish kingdom each, and then just six years ago, I and some colleagues actually discovered a new fortress just South of Copenhagen, which has changed, again a lot of ideas about how this worked and how it fits into the political history of the Viking age. So, archaeology keeps changing [inaudible 00:40:27], and well, I think these are some of the most spectacular discoveries.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Archaeology is a powerful tool in the search for the true history of the Vikings, but let's get back to the sagas because they continue to capture the public's imagination. Apart from anything, if you like the Lord of the Rings, that whole vibe comes from the sagas. Tolkien loved the sagas and based his imaginative world on them. Some of the most important sagas were written down by Snorri Sturluson. I know this sounds like a Disney character, but Snorri was a real Icelandic poet, scholar and politician who lived and worked in the 1200s, so well into Iceland's Christian era. Snorri's works, like the important Prose Edda, weave legend and history into an epic hold that has to be taken with a grain or two of North Sea salt.

Sarah Croix:

For the later Icelandic sources, it's more delicate, I'd say. To me, they're an inspiration more than... Well, they offer the reflection of medieval Icelanders on their past. And that, if this is your research question, if you're interested in knowing how did Icelanders perceive their own past, what was the memory of it and how did they understand it? Then it's a fascinating source. For me, working with South Scandinavia in the eighth, nine, 10th century, to me the distance is a bit too big. So as an inspiration, I have in the back of my head, yes, but I don't think I would... For some questions, they're very relevant, excellent sources, less so for others.

John Dickson:

Understood.

Sarah Croix:

But that applies to all sources.

John Dickson:

Of course, of course.

Sarah Croix:

They're only good if the question is.

Soren Sindbaek:

We have all these wonderful tales and stories from the Middle Ages, certainly the best remembered are the Icelandic sagas, which have such vivid descriptions of the Viking age.

John Dickson:

Is this Snorri?

Soren Sindbaek:

It's Snorri, but not just Snorri. It was a whole culture, a literary culture that evolved in the 12th, 13th, 14th century in Iceland, with vernacular literature, that very much looked back to the Viking age. The Icelanders at that time, weren't too keen to talk about contemporary events, but they were very keen to relate their stories about, especially the pagan past. And there's lots in those stories which, well, has been genuinely passed down either quite accurately at some times in the poetry. The skalding verses that were great poems composed by famous skalds or poets, and which were orally transmitted generation to generation because they had rhymes and some-

John Dickson:

Jokes?

Soren Sindbaek:

Yeah. People regard them today as pretty accurate. And based on them, the tales sort of, well kept a certain shape, but we can also say, of course, that lots were left out, lots were added to them. So, we have these tales and I think on a global scale, that's what really still fires people imagination about the Vikings. But we need, of course, archaeology today to get a more nuanced picture, and that's what still is evolving a lot. We have the sagas, we've had them for centuries, but archaeology over the course of the last century, has told such a new story and is still bringing up surprises.

Morten Sovso:

There are some ways that you can actually try and confirm or find other evidence to substantiate what is being said in the sagas, and that's all the archaeological finds. Of course, most of them are mute, but if you find a piece of jewellery which has a depiction of a person or a figure that seems to be something

from the sagas or, of something from the life of Odin and Thor, and so on, and if you find many of these objects within a given region and so on, then some patterns start to appear.

Morten Sovso:

Also in recent years, quite a lot of pagan temples have actually been found in Scandinavia, so we can actually see that the ritual feasting and the offering and so on, that is being described in the sagas, actually took place. What we are hearing about in the sagas seems to be confirmed by the archaeological evidence. So, I think the general trend is that some decades ago the scholarship was very critical towards many of the sagas, but it has turned around in recent decades. Now it seems more this, as if we are actually confirming what we read in the sagas.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

But what are we to make of the heroes of the sagas? Ragnar Lothbrok, Ragnar Hairy-Pants, true story, Iva the boneless, Erik Bloodaxe? Or the gods, Odin, Thor, and beautiful Freya? All of that after the break,

AD BREAK: ZONDERVAN

This episode is sponsored by Zondervan's new book, *Four Views of Heaven*, edited by Michael Wittmer. If I asked you, what do you think heaven will look like? I reckon you've maybe got a picture already in your mind. It's coloured by popular culture. It's harps and angels and floating around on clouds. But what if I asked you, what will you do in heaven? Will you be able to play your guitar in heaven? Will you be able to go fishing in heaven? These are practical questions; the thing is even Christians don't often have clear answers to what heaven will be like and what we'll do in heaven. We fluff around the edges, muddle things up and splutter something about hope and being with God, and all that. That's why a book like *Four Views of Heaven* exists, because the fact is, the Christian vision of heaven is a little blurry.

And true to the title, there are four different views, not all of them I agree with, but it's worth understanding them. In one view, our destiny is to leave Earth and live forever in heaven, where we rest, worship and serve God. In another, we're saved to live forever with Jesus, on a fully restored planet, able to play guitar and all that. In another view, sort of in between those first two, there's a kind of heaven meets Earth reality. And then there's the classic Catholic view of actually seeing God face to face for eternity. But I'm telling you, a book like this sets up the arguments, the debates, in a brilliant way. Please go out and get it. *Four Views of Heaven*, edited by Michael Wittmer. It's available to order at Amazon, of course, or head to Zondervan.com for details.

AD BREAK: ANGLICAN AID

In Tanzania, people living with a disability suffer discrimination and social isolation. They also have trouble finding employment and education opportunities. Nearly half of people living with a disability in Tanzania, can't read or write. In some cases, they're even denied medical care or access to services that offer food and shelter. Anglican Aid is changing this by supporting the Karagwe Disability Program in the Kagera Region of Tanzania. The program offers dedicated medical care and rehabilitation to people living with disabilities, as well as giving them access to education and a pathway to employment. It's fantastic.

You can help Anglican Aid support the life changing work of the Karagwe Disability Program by visiting anglicanaid.org.au. That's anglicanaid.org.au. Thanks so much.

EPIISODE CONTINUES**TAPE: VIKINGS TV SERIES**

Sailing South by Southeast, we come upon the mouth of the sea, the gateway to Paris. Several rivers empty themselves into the sea and the reefs and mudflats are dangerous, but here is the entrance, the entrance to paradise.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The TV series, *Vikings*, tells the little-known story of the Viking attack on the city of Paris in 845. The series purports to take us into the mysterious world of Ragnar Lothbrok, a Viking warrior and farmer, so the publicity says, who yearns to explore and raid the distant shores across the ocean. That fits with the fact that a Viking army did indeed sail up the Seine to Paris, and committed atrocities along the way like hanging a hundred or so Frankish men by the river as a kind of calling card. The old cliche of the Vikings as vengeful murderers is sometimes right.

Soren Sindbaek:

Well, there is a truth in it. See, one indication that this is so is actually the memory that the Icelanders built up in the sagas. Anyone who've read Egil's saga or Njáll's saga, will recognize this picture. Mind you, this is a picture built up by people looking back on what they saw as their pagan past, so there are deliberately portraying these ancestors as bad asses, but [crosstalk 00:50:50].

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Njál's saga, by the way, is an anonymous saga probably written in the 13th century. It tells of a series of rollicking Viking blood feuds back in the 900s.

Soren Sindbaek:

But some of the values that are projected in the sagas are quite likely to be true, in part because the warrior mentality that they express, and especially the male code of honour, was true to an extent for most societies in Western and Northern Europe at the time. But at least for much of the Viking age, remember this was a society which was not tempered by Christian ideology, the way that Western rulers and well, Westerners in general, had accepted Christianity.

John Dickson:

The Sermon on the Mount hadn't quite made it to Denmark in the ninth century.

Soren Sindbaek:

Nope, exactly.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Hey, just to be clear, the Vikings weren't the only violent people in the Middle Ages. The Christian lands didn't extol the ethic of vengeance and blood feud that was central to Viking law, but they certainly did get involved in the so-called plundering economy.

Sarah Croix:

I think it's largely correct because that's just what you did back then. They were described this way already in their own time, especially on the continent and British Isles, by those on the receiving end. But then again, this plundering economy, this way of collecting tributes from other populations using violence, it's not unique to them, there were plenty of other groups throughout early medieval Europe who were doing just the same thing. When you read about the Saxon Wars, Charlemagne's campaign towards the Saxons, it also seems to have been extremely gruesome. So, I don't think they were necessarily enjoying violence as such, more than the others.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The sagas contain much more than stories drenched in the blood of Viking victims. In collections like Snorri's Prose Edda, we learn about mysterious warriors, male and female, as well as the weird and wonderful world of the Norse gods. What can we tell from the archaeological record and from any reliable elements of literary record, about pre-Christian religion?

Soren Sindbaek:

This is something that we've learned quite a lot about in recent years. When I was a student, some 25 years ago, it was still believed that there had been no temples, for instance, that all religious practice was something about going out into the grooves and sacrificing, or making sacrifices in water and all. But then since the early 2000s, we've started to find what must be temple buildings. And we now have, well, a little handful of them, where special practices very clearly took place. We now can see that there wasn't that sort of institutionalized religion. And another thing which has appeared in very recent time is the evidence that comes up from private metal detecting. In the UK and in Denmark, there's quite a liberal law for private metal detecting, and in Denmark in particular, that has led to literally hundreds of thousands of artifact finds, things that were kicking about in the plow soil and were not helping anyone. So, it's not like we're looting stuff, it's things that have become lost and detached at some point and now it's retrieved.

From that evidence, we find hundreds of amulets and religious objects that tells us a story that we didn't know about, about the personal religion of people, not just what happened in the halls of the great chieftains, but much more diverse practices. We find amulets that clearly speak to our idea about Vikingness, if you will. I still find it quite striking that these are people who find it natural to use a sword or spear, or an axe as a miniature amulet because that's the stuff that protects us. But there are other things as well, there are wheels which may be related to cults, and there are these extraordinary images of men and women in special situations, as one colleague has expressed it, people who seem to be aging in rituals. It's a little unclear whether they're actually deities or they are ritual performers, but perhaps ritual performers are how you imagine the deities, so it could be both at the time. These are, well quite

striking and thought-provoking figures. The best-known today is what we call the Valkyries because they show people in a female dress, but carrying weapons.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

The Valkyries, potent harmonies of womanly beauty and warlike ferocity, suitable inspiration for the wild music of Richard Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries. They're featured in countless pieces of art, from paintings to poetry, and they've even made key character status in Marvel's Thor: Ragnarök, which is a movie, right? So, what are the Valkyries? The Icelandic sagas describe them as female war demons, whose job in part, is to take the best fallen warriors to Valhalla, the feasting hall of the God Odin, the All-Father. Sarah Croix was involved in the analysis of an important piece of jewellery, a pendant uncovered in Ribe. It depicts a woman wearing weapons and Armor, but Sarah's published research is hesitant to see this as evidence of the famous shield maidens we see on Netflix.

John Dickson:

So, our warrior woman on the pendant isn't necessarily an earthly female warrior, but am I right that there is evidence of female warriors in grave sites?

Sarah Croix:

Yeah. The conclusion was that, well, they don't have to refer to mythological figures like to those mythological Valkyries, but it can actually refer to real life people doing extraordinary things. Like women dressing as warriors in a ritual context, are normal people doing extraordinary things. Well, normal and normal. So, it's more, in this context, it can be real life.

John Dickson:

Yes. A ritual-

Sarah Croix:

But transgressing something that would have seen as a norm, does it make sense?

John Dickson:

It does, because I mean, in ancient Rome, they had Saturnalia where they transgressed the norms.

Sarah Croix:

Exactly. I mean, transgressing norms is quite well documented, like ritual device. Going back to old ritual theory and so on, if your point is to achieve a transformation of the world through the ritual, then transgressing the order and then putting the order back into place, following ritual theory, it's just like textbook. So that's maybe a way of explaining this seemingly transgressive behaviour.

John Dickson:

Yeah. So, the women soldiers in graves, are they real women soldiers or are they being buried in a ritual fashion?

Sarah Croix:

Yeah. I think both are possible. I will not exclude the fact that some women may have been active on the battlefield in the Viking age, theoretically it's entirely possible, and I don't see why not. If that is necessarily what the graves are showing us, I'm not quite sure, for, well a bunch of reasons. The first is, to me, that this question needs to be applied to the male graves being buried with weapons as well. Does the weapon necessarily make the warrior? It's a burial ritual representative context where someone is being commemorated where this person's status is being crystallized through all the things that are being done and all the objects that are being put down in the grave, so it's a construction.

As such, it doesn't have to fit what the person was in life. You also have examples at [Bieka 01:00:43] itself, where now the very famous armed female grave has been found, being buried with adult sized weapons, which they would never have been able to even lift. So maybe they were, but there could also be other reasons for inhuming someone in this way. Again, I think something that's really important to emphasize in that discussion, is that there are a bunch of examples of biologically female graves being buried with weapons and I think they're extremely interesting. But they are a very little, marginal portion of the buried population we have overall for Viking age, Scandinavia. I'm more than happy to see them as very exceptional individuals, and it's also fascinating to look at the exceptional, but this also, what they are, it doesn't necessarily say much about how it was to be a woman in the Viking age overall, because we're talking about the 0.1% of a population there.

TAPE: VIKINGS TV SERIES

So many women. Who would've thought they're as brave as the men?

Sometimes they are much braver than the men, and the most fierce, her name is Lagertha.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Lagertha was one of the legendary shield maidens from another of the 13th century Icelandic sagas, the saga of Ragnar Lothbrok. And she's a key character in the Netflix Viking series, we just heard a scene I remember well, from season four. Actually, I asked Sarah straight up what she thought of these recent Viking series. She said she really tried to like them, but just couldn't, there are just too many modern projections onto this historical landscape. And one of them seems to be those legions of female Viking warriors, such a bummer, I wish I hadn't asked the question.

But what about religion proper? Soren Sindbaek and the others I spoke with, are a little wary of the accounts of Viking religion in these sagas. The sagas, remember, were written down in the later Christian era and that might have coloured the retelling. One of the interesting things these scholars point out is that it may be better to relate Viking religion to the earlier Greek and Roman religious outlooks.

Soren Sindbaek:

I think that's where we need to start our imagination. That's quite different from what tradition has had, because we need to remember that our tradition, our sources for Viking age religion, has been handed down from a Christian tradition, and their idea about cults and ritual was a very different one. They were aware of church ceremonies and sometimes also of processions and religious feasts, but not of that kind

of liminal craziness, almost, that occurs in this old pagan tradition. I wouldn't be surprised, well, if we could trace it, that there was certainly a core evolution, but also a direct connection between the kind of feasts we see in pagan Greece and Rome, and what we find in the Viking world.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Morten Sovso agrees.

Morten Sovso:

On a structural level, of course, it's a pantheon of gods, it's actually influenced by the Roman gods, they go back to the Germanic times and so on. So that's sort of the basic concept and of course, very different from monotheism, which was to follow. We don't even know if actually there might be some regional differences in the religious practice because some gods might have been more worshiped in some regions than others. There might have been some kings who worshiped one Norse god more than others, and so on. There are a few signs of that, but it's very, very difficult to say anything about it. But I'm a bit positive if we look at the huge material for metal detecting, because I think that gives us some patterns of what at least found its way into the artwork of the period.

But of course, all these thousands of finds, they need to be processed and so on, and that's not really happening at the moment, but I think that over time we will be able to learn some more about it. But it's very difficult to give a clear and concise description about what religions was like for a Viking. There might have been huge differences and there's also, of course there's the official pantheon of gods, the Odin and Thor and so on, but then of course there's all the elves, and so all the small people that people believed in, and who lived out in the villages or had a coexistence with people, the sort of folk religion. Out in the individual farmsteads and so on, they believed that there were small people living underground and they put out food for them and so on. Just the way as it has been going on right up until the early 20th century in most parts of Denmark, out in rural areas.

John Dickson:

Like tooth fairies and elves all that sort of thing?

Morten Sovso:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's the same phenomenon and you can actually still find it in parts of Europe and so on. But this sort of folk belief has been probably the most important thing to most people.

TAPE: THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEXT FILM

Lars:

Hey there, elf. It's me, Lars. I really messed up and I just wanted to come up here to ask of you guys for any help you can give me. I don't know how I'm going to fix things with Sigrit but I have to try. Okay, have a good lunch or whatever you're doing in there. Goodbye.

Never understood why half this country still believes in elves.

I know, but Sigrit swears by them.

Iceland continues to have one foot in the dark ages, huh?

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Fans of Will Ferrell, like Producer Kaley, will recognize his appearance as Lars Eriksson in the movie Eurovision Song Contest, as he pleads with Icelandic elves for help. It might all seem like just a prop for gags at Iceland's expense, but the movie manages to get at a whole side of Viking belief, its folk religion that appears in the sagas. And right alongside the elves and dwarves are the more famous members of Norse mythology.

Michael Drout:

Most of what we know and almost everything that you or I have in the back of our heads about Old Norse religion, whether that's Ragnarök or the gods with Odin and Freya and Loki and so forth, comes through ...

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Ragnarök is the Armageddon of Viking religion. It's the final battle where everyone turns up, ice giants, the All-Father, Odin, Freya, the goddess of love and war, and Loki, the quixotic shapeshifter.

Michael Drout:

... and so forth, comes through one person in one set of texts, and that's Snorri Sturluson, the great Icelandic writer. The problem with Snorri, for the purposes of understanding the Viking religion, is that Snorri was a complete devout, believing Christian, so he didn't believe any of this Old Norse religion was true. In fact he euhemerizes it in really, sometimes funny ways, like so the gods are known as the Aesir, and Snorri says that's because they came from Asia and they were actually just great chieftains. Though there's now a new theory that says that, that actually kind of might be right in that it may be a very vague memory of when the Huns came out, colonized parts and left ruling peoples there, and that this is a vague memory of that. So maybe the Aesir really did come from Asia.

John Dickson:

So do we think Snorri got Viking religion right, or are you saying we don't trust him?

Michael Drout:

We can't entirely trust him because one, he knew stuff about Ancient Rome or Ancient Greece, so he's creating a pantheon because he thinks you need a pantheon in the same sort of way. And two [crosstalk 01:09:56].

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

So it's all pretty complicated. Some of the religious stuff in Snorri must be historical, everyone agrees with that, but some of it is likely skewed, either by Snorri's Christian perspective or, as it turns out, by his

own deep knowledge of the Ancient Greek and Roman pantheon, that dysfunctional family of the gods. Snorri also left out stuff that archaeology has now revealed.

Michael Drout:

And two, he leaves out a lot of things that he would find offensive. The reason that we think that is that the archaeology suggests that Old Norse religion was highly focused around very bloody sacrifices, tortures, hanging people from trees, hanging animals-

John Dickson:

Oh, human sacrifice?

Michael Drout:

Humans, animals, everything, but yes, we have skeletal remains, people broken over a stone or people thrown in a grave with a giant stone thrown in on top of them. We have [Sutton 01:10:56] who in England, you have hanging victim that were buried in that cemetery. And you have Christian historians who are just at the edge of where they'd be able to hear... Adam of Bremen, for example, talks about this going and seeing this hideous giant tree with corpses of people and animals hung all around it. So Odin is the God of hanging. We get some parts that he hung himself, but it seems that they hung and tortured a lot of captured people and animals for the gods, that way. And Snorri doesn't want to talk about that.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

These were some of the bits of Norse religion that seemed to have embarrassed Snorri. Now it's important to point out that Vikings didn't have a clear set of beliefs, nothing like the Apostles' Creed for Christians, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and so on. The Vikings had more of a world view that encompassed both the earthly and spiritual realms, essentially everything will end at Ragnarök and some things will then be reborn. Every outcome along the way to that apocalypse, is already predetermined by fate. We can't change outcomes, all we can do is act honourably, in the Viking sense of honour, as we walk the path of our fate. And if you wrong the gods along the way, whether deliberately or accidentally, you just placate them as best you can with a sacrifice, like hanging an animal from a tree in homage to Odin.

Michael Drout:

Odin's very weird. He's the father god, he's the most important god and it doesn't seem that he had, as nearly as good a cult as other ones. Everybody loves Thor, right? Thor's your guy, he'll support you, people like Freyr and Freya because they'll make the fields fertile or you can get a kid from them. One of the things that we know is that Old Norse culture, from their laws and from some bits in the text, was exceedingly hostile to anything that even hinted at same sex relations. Saying that about someone, if you said that about someone, they're allowed to kill you back, that's how serious that is. And yet Odin has sex with everything and everyone in any possible way, and it's also, there's this... Like Old Norse magic is called seithr and Snorri in other places says manly men don't do seithr, but Odin does.

Michael Drout:

So Odin is in this really weird position of he's... And I think part of it, and this is the famous line, and I think it's [Eiríksmál 01:13:50] where a dead king comes to Valhalla and they're like, "Why is he coming up here so soon?" It's like, "Oh, Odin had him killed so he could come up here." "Why?" And it says, "Because Odin doesn't know the hour in which the gray wolf will come."

So the other thing about... Odin knows there's an apocalypse coming from the prophecies, and he's building his zombie army to protect against that. So that's why, if you're a great champion, he might strike you down right in the middle of the flight because, oh, I need that guy up here in Valhalla right now. But that meant that Odin was not a really trustworthy god to have as a protector, because if you were doing really well, he might just jerk the rug out from under you at any moment. So that's what's going on with Odin. He's the big one, but people don't worship him nearly as much, except possibly in times of like extremists. Like things are going really bad, we need to go make a sacrifice to Odin here.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

There's one kind of sacrifice I really wanted to get to the bottom off, so I saved up that question for professor Sindbaek. Does the archaeological records support the idea one often reads, that Viking religion was very focused on sacrifices, blood sacrifices? One even hears of human sacrifices, but animal sacrifices. Tell me what the record tells us.

Soren Sindbaek:

I think, yes is the short answer to that. We find obviously evidence of animal sacrifice in this shape of skeletons, quite simply. There's a famous find from the chieftain's farm Hofstadir in Iceland, of a cache of cattle skulls, cattle that had all been decapitated in a very striking way where we can see from the traces on the bones that, well, they were knocked out with a blow to the forehead and then their head was chopped off with a sword while the cattle was still standing. So you'd have a fountain of blood coming forth from the body.

We have pictorial representations of sacrifices. I think the single most striking representation is probably a fragment of tapestry found in [inaudible 01:16:24] which shows a tree with a whole host of people hanging from the leaves. So this is not something that was invented by Christian authors, this was something which was very much part of that religion.

John Dickson:

And that's humans, is it? Or just animals?

Soren Sindbaek:

That's humans, that's humans in that tree. And it's not the only representation of its kind, there's another famous picture carved in a mountain in Sweden in [inaudible 01:16:52] which shows a version of the legend of Sigurd where we also see, well, decapitated person lying on the rock. But what we have to remember, I think, when we're talking about sacrifice like that, is that in a pagan ritual like that, whenever we have mentions of rituals and [blót 01:17:14] as it's called in the Norse sources, there is a mix of social gathering, feasts and religious cults, which is quite self-evident when you think about it.

People come together, somebody has to host the party, it's a great honour to be hosting guests. They have to be fed, the gods have to be fed. So it's what the anthropologists in the old days would call a total social event, it's everything in one pot. So sacrifice is also feast, and I think that's the part which can sometimes be difficult for the Christian authors to quite understand. But I think perhaps today, when we think about folk feasts today, like our Christmas traditions have a lot that would make sense to people in the Viking age. We get together, we have a great feast with family and it's all in order of the gods.

JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL

Sacrifice was central to Viking religion, and you heard it from professor Sindbaek, this involved human sacrifice. It all raises the question that sent me to Scandinavia in the first place, and we answer it in our next episode. How on Earth did these fearsome northerners who thought it was good to do vengeance and pleasing to the gods to sacrifice even their fellow human beings, end up embracing that Middle Eastern message of love and the end of sacrifice? How did the Vikings become Christians?

EPIISODE ENDS**JOHN DICKSON EDITORIAL**

We've got tons more Viking content that we couldn't even squeeze into a double episode. I accidentally returned from the US and Scandinavia with about five hours of recorded material. Producer Kaley and director Mark just rolled their eyes. But if you want to hear some of that bonus content and tons of other extras, we're starting a new service at Undeceptions.com. You can become one of our Undeceivers and get access to uncut interviews, like my 80-minute conversation with the great Tim Keller, or another couple of interviews we've got on Scandinavian religion after the Vikings. You'll also be invited to a private Facebook group where I'll be answering more listener questions, doing a few live Q and A's here and there, and where you'll get the inside running on where we're up to, plus invitations to special events and a whole lot more. Man, I'm exhausted and pumped.

Just go to Undeceptions.com and click on the big link, become an Undeceiver. It'll set you back just \$5 Aussie a month, about \$3.50 for my American listeners. And all of it goes back into the show so we can keep bringing you this kind of content. Along with the donations, thanks to all those who click that other happy button. This is how we're going to keep Undeceptions thriving. While you're there, you'll also links to Laurel Moffatt's new podcast, *Small Wonders*, and Michael Jensen and Megan Powell du Toit's excellent, *With All Due Respect*, both part of the growing Undeceptions network. All the buttons you need to subscribe are right there next to the podcast logos. Next episode. Well, I already just told you that, the conversion of the Vikings, how on Earth? See ya.

John Dickson:

Undeceptions is hosted by me, John Dickson produced by Kaley Payne and directed by Mark Hairy-Pants Hadley. Editing by Richard Hamwi, social media by Sophie Hawkshaw. Special thanks to our series sponsor Zondervan, for making this undeception possible. Undeceptions is the flagship podcast of Undeceptions.com, letting the truth out. An Undeceptions podcast.