Slaves in the Viking Age: Functions, Social Roles and Regional Diversity

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Summary

Slavery in the Viking Age was a common practice throughout Scandinavia and the Scandinavian diaspora with the use of slaves socially, culturally, and economically, depending on the region in which they existed. Their different functions and roles—such as concubines, domestic and agricultural labourers, captives, rebels, and sacrificial victims—addressed different societal demands. In this thesis, such functions and roles are analyzed through the examination of the evidence from three related regions, namely Northwestern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia. These regional examinations rely on Viking Age written texts and archaeological evidence, as well as other sources that pertain to the period, such as the saga materials. Textual sources from Northwestern Europe, such as the Annals of Ulster and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, provide a Christian perspective on the Scandinavian raids and settlements in the region. The Arab writers, such as Ibn Fadlān and Ibn Rusta, provide information about the Eastern Vikings known as Rūs and their interactions with slaves. Finally, saga materials, such as Rígsþula, Laxdœla saga, and Landnámabók, along with the law codes from the end of the Viking Age—Grágás and Gulathing and Frostathing laws—provide information on Scandinavian slave practices.

Previously, general studies of slaves in the Viking Age have been shaped by written evidence however by incorporating archaeological evidence, this thesis will allow for a more nuanced analysis of the social functions and roles of slaves in this period. The archaeological sites of Ballateare, on the Isle of Man, Lejre in Denmark, and Birka within Sweden are a few of the sites that are discussed and compared to the contemporary literary texts written by non-Scandinavian authors as well as later Scandinavian texts: I also compare the evidence of slaves and the social functions and roles of slavery inside Scandinavia with those within Scandinavian communities in other regions. The inclusion of archaeological materials, specifically the so-called “master and slave” burials, assists in further defining the function of slaves in the Viking Age. Such comparative analysis of different types of evidence and throughout different regions of Viking Age Europe provides an understanding that the discussion of slaves in the Viking Age cannot be limited to one specific social role or function defined by slavery as a social institution, but rather should be focused on a more nuanced relationship between this social class and the region and time periods to which they existed in.
Foreword

When I first began my BA degree at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, I never would have dreamed that I would come all the way to the University of Oslo to complete an MA degree. This seven-year journey has been long, demanding and transformative. When I first began studying history I was fascinated with the Greeks, then the Romans, and finally began to truly become enthralled with medieval history. The communities that were built and the focus of religion in the period intrigued me. It was not until my fourth year of my bachelor’s degree that I finally landed on the study of Scandinavia. My interests in the field were furthered through the archaeological studies and the amazing finds that spanned across Europe and even into Canada. Scandinavia, Norway specifically has also played an important part in my life, as my grandfather is Norwegian and was always informing our family of the “Strong Viking history.” I believe that all of this allowed me to uproot my life and come to a country where I did not know the language, or any of the people and follow the history.

Throughout this entire journey it was tough to finally choose on a topic that included my interests, both historically and archaeologically. Social and cultural history has always been interesting to me, and once I started reading about the relationship between masters and slaves in the Viking Age, I knew the topic was something that I wanted to discover further: who these people were, and what was the purpose of their different functions throughout societies. The work of my advisor Prof. Ildar Garipzanov throughout this entire process has been extraordinary and I will be forever grateful for the discussions, advice and critiques that he gave me throughout the entire process.

I would also like to thank the rest of the professors at the University of Oslo that I have encountered throughout my journey. Many of you taught me instrumental information that I will use for many years to come. I would also like to thank the professors at Mount Royal University who helped me realize my true passions in history and archaeology. I would also like to thank Susanne Frantzen for helping me with my Old Norse translations. Furthermore, I would like to thank my Mom, Charlene Haga, Dad, Alex Burdz, and Stepmom, Tenille Burdz, for their amazing support throughout this entire process and especially during the editing and proofreading stage, which aided me more than they could know! Finally, I would like to thank my Stepdad, George Michalopoulos, Grandma and Grandpa, my brother, Stephan Haga, and my best friend Feben Abera, for their wonderful and unwavering support throughout these entire two years and all the previous ones. And finally, to all people I met along the way and made living in Oslo such an amazing experience, thank you.

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Introduction

i.a Scope of Analysis

The institution of slavery was of paramount significance for the maintenance of social order because it provided the foundation against which varying degrees of power holding and freedom could be defined. Perceptions of power and powerlessness were so central to the social order of these societies that they even shaped the way in which individuals perceived one another, in both a physical and a psychological sense. Within these societies social order was based upon an intensely patriarchal system, which defined power through a medium of Winnable and losable attributes.¹

This quote from David Wyatt explains the intrinsic values in which slavery was upheld during the Viking Age, c. 750-1100. Like in many societies that utilized slavery throughout history, it specifies that by implementing control on the lower status social group by a higher status group, the group that is the controllers will be forced to a set societal claims upon each of the lower layers of society. By controlling the “power and powerlessness” of individuals, the people in these more powerful positions impose freedom and “unfreedom” on them as a consequential result.² This further increases the stratification between the different layers of society, which includes putting a hierarchy within the class containing slaves. Slavery was used in many societies across Europe within the Viking Age, however Scandinavians were one of the first to encourage the slave trade and further spread its use throughout the geographical areas they came in contact with, specifically Northwestern Europe, particularly the British Isles and France, Eastern Europe and within Scandinavia itself. Scandinavian social attributes pertaining to cultural and material customs were incorporated into each of these regions with the introduction of slavery.

Slavery was part of the social, economic and ritual life in each of the regions, with many of them even practicing slavery before the Viking Age. However, it was the increase of warfare in many regions that came in contact with Scandinavian settlers and raiders, which perpetuated the growth of the slave trade, and in turn, encouraged the economic supply and demand of slaves across Europe. The social institution of slavery in Scandinavian societies assisted Scandinavian raiders and settlers in the suppression

¹ David Wyatt, Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain, 800-1200 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 241-242.
² Unfreedom will be defined later within the terminology section of the Introduction based on a source from Alice Rio.
of the peoples they conquered. Slaves and the function of a slave within these societies allowed for the success of the Scandinavians during the Viking Age, making slaves a fundamental position within Scandinavian societies.

Slavery changed vastly from the time of the Roman Empire up until the Viking Age with the concept of a ‘slave society’, where slaves were subjected completely to the wills of their masters and made up the vast majority of the population, which concluded by the late antique period. The changes that followed encouraged the development of a further stratified social system for slaves in many of these societies. The original Roman model of a ‘slave society’ became a new social structure for slaves within communities. Many characteristics from the Roman model of slavery spread throughout Europe, such as the construct of unfreedom, but it was not as linear of a practice as what was seen in Rome. Many societies throughout Europe practiced different types of slavery; and as Scandinavians came in contact with these societies through settlement, trade, or war, these influences affected the types of slavery practices within Scandinavian society. Slavery held an important purpose within the Viking Age, and throughout many regions in which Scandinavians became heavily integrated. Comparing the information about many of the regions in which Scandinavians maintained an influential position within social, cultural and economic life will help understand how each of the regions encouraged a specific attitude on slaves’ social positions and functions at the time.

All regions provide different examples through written and archaeological evidence to help build an understanding of the unfree people in Scandinavian societies. Archaeological evidence, through the analysis of graves and coins, allow for individual and community relationships in regards to slavery to be determined. Specifically looking at the analysis of graves, which include DNA and isotopic analysis, and the inspection of grave goods, burial styles, and the studying of human remains, will help to understand many of the cultural and ritualistic roles of slavery. The analysis of coins and the circulation of these coins in certain regions help identify the range of trade routes, and can connect these specific societies to one another. The analysis of written evidence, both contemporary and other sources, which date into the twelfth and up to the fourteenth centuries, provide immeasurable amounts of information. These sources will help reinforce the information gathered from the

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archaeological evidence and create a comprehensive understanding of the social functions of slaves within the social spheres of society. Ultimately, the evidence will show the necessity of slaves within Scandinavian societies based on the different roles that slavery played within each region that Scandinavians assimilated into, and throughout the entire Viking Age.

i.b Method

This thesis will be organized through the analysis of the regional characteristics of slavery throughout Northwestern Europe, Eastern Europe and lastly Scandinavia. Each of the chapters will be set up in chronological order in which the written sources will be followed by the archaeological evidence. Each chapter will discuss and analyze the evidence provided, as well as reference the preceding chapter or chapters for further clarification on the Scandinavian assimilation into communities. At the end of the last chapter there will be a comparison of the materials from all chapters and I will discuss the underlying connections seen within all the evidence provided. The evidence, analysis and discussion will show the significance of slaves in the cultural, social, economic and ritualistic life of each society discussed.

Analyzing the evidence regionally will provide a more cohesive picture of each of the societies, prior to the imposing influences of Scandinavian society and assist in understanding how the native peoples in each of the regions were able to incorporate their own societal customs into the societies in which Scandinavians connected with. Scandinavian influence was as extensive as their settlements throughout Northwestern and Eastern Europe during the Viking Age. Determining the differences between the influence that came from Scandinavians exclusively, and elements that originated from the native populations can be difficult; incorporating relevant written evidence will help bring more definitive reasoning in relation to these influences. Slavery was used throughout each of these regions, and it is known that slavery was practiced in the British Isles before the Scandinavians began settling. This discussion is not trying to prove that Scandinavians enforced slavery in each of these areas, but rather that they imposed a new type of slavery in some of these areas that had not been there before. Like the Romans developed a slave society, the Scandinavians developed a set of ritualistic, cultural, and economic social functions for their slaves, within the different societies, which is evident in the parallels that can be found throughout all the regions.
Within the Scandinavian societies, it is important to look at the different functions slaves and slavery as a whole held throughout the region and period. A lot can change in a couple hundred years, and this can be said about slavery. Slavery stayed in Europe until the high Middle Ages, which adapted to serfdom, and is quite different from the type of slavery that took place throughout the Viking Age. Each of the regions within this analysis had a different overall demand for slaves, and their function within society would result in specific demands on slaves that could fulfill these specific roles within each of the different societies.

The use of both archaeological and written materials will allow for a more nuanced picture of slavery as a whole, and some of the individual functions within each of the specific areas of analysis. It is hard to fully understand a complete society by looking at just the written materials, especially from the Viking Age. Many of the writings come from foreign sources or from later periods, which is why the use of archaeological evidence can help support and fill in gaps where the written sources are lacking. This information will also be supporting the chronological assessment of the materials. The Scandinavians expanded to different regions at different times, and the type of societies that followed them in their expansion to new regions and new settlements would be relative to the time in which they travelled to these new areas. Thus the function of a slave could be confined by a certain region or time rather than in all areas of influence and throughout the entire period.

It is also important to note that the different functions of slaves can be distinguished within the gender of the individual. In the context of analysis, the terms male and female will be based on the biological sex of the physiological structures determined by the archaeological remains. It will also be based on the sex stated within the written texts, as there is no way to confirm or deny gender in the literature. Judith Jesch’s interpretations of burial goods will help give appropriate observations on the interpretations of burial goods in relation to sex. It is important to note that within the archaeological evidence, grave goods are not just indicators of the sex of the remains, but of their status as well. The different functions of slaves are dependent on region and time, thus a difference in gendered slave responsibilities can differ depending on the different spheres in which they inhabit.

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6 Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991) 13-22; she deems that the burials items are usually everyday items, thus could relate to the status of the individual and not just the sex.
The goal of this thesis is to compare the archaeological and contemporary literary evidence provided by foreign authors and later authors, which will help in the comparison of contemporary materials from the later evidence in regards to the Scandinavian saga materials. This will allow for a further comparison of the Scandinavian evidence to the areas connected with the Scandinavian diaspora. Thus my thesis statement is: by defining the function of slaves within each of the societies that Scandinavians controlled or were a part of, allows for an understanding of one of the largest social layers within each of the communities. This will result in the determination that each slave played an integral function in the social composition of their own communities, which creates a disjointed collaboration of peoples, as seen in the written sources and archaeological materials. Defining the function of slaves within each of the societies they interact with will help discover the importance of individual slaves, or the different occupations that they held within their social layer, both regionally and chronologically.

i.c Archaeological Evidence

Through the analysis of the archaeological record, determining specific items or burial rituals that relate solely to slaves is hard to achieve. This is why it is integral to the understanding of Scandinavian societies that no two burials can be directly correlated, as the ritual, remains, and items within the graves are never alike. Inconsistences seen within the burial practices help define the phrase “deviant burials” which categorizes burials that are described as uncommon or “non-normal” burial practices. The definition of a deviant burial would encompass the burials that include what has been determined to be slave sacrifice burials, as it is not suggested to be a common practice throughout the Viking Age or commonly seen in one specific region. This is a practice seen sporadically throughout different regions and is dated to different parts of the Viking Age, which make their analysis even more valuable in regard to the functions of the slaves. It is important to use overarching criteria within this category to differentiate between a double burial that contains kin relationships, namely husband, wife, or child, thus having the same status, and burials that contain slaves, which would have markers that determine one of the individuals as having a lesser status. More often than not, the second type of burial is categorized with one of the individuals being surrounded by burial items that relate to their daily lives, or their wealth, and the other having no grave goods associated with the remains and the remains in a contorted position, which

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can be a signifier of a violent death. Based on these interpretations it can be assumed that graves that will be relevant to this analysis will be burials that contain at least two individuals’ remains, lack of artefacts in relation to the determined slave’s remains, and the violent manner of death or mutilation, such as decapitation, of the said individual. Slaves did not get their own graves, as Dagfinn Skre notes, slaves would not own any possessions because they were a possession themselves, a creature, rather than a man.

The incorporation of archaeological evidence, which will be obtained from reports on burial sites listed below, will give insight to the status, wealth, and gender of the individuals included in the practice, which in turn will help establish a sense of ritual from what remains within the graves. From these burials, scientists are able to test the bones using isotope analysis to help corroborate the assigned status, which is normally based on the artefacts buried within the grave. Furthermore, the analysis of the remains from these burials can utilize DNA analysis, which can assist in determining the sex and where the individuals within the graves possibly originated. The combination of these types of analysis while accompanied with the condition of the remains, the artefacts found and the style of the burial, gives some suggestion as to the people that are within the burial.

The archaeological record also produces information that connects these different regions based on the coins that are found throughout each area. The slave trade was an integral part of the economic success of the Scandinavians and the hoards found in Eastern and Northwestern Europe provides connections between these areas and Scandinavia, providing a further connection between each region. Specifically focusing on the literature that discusses Islamic dirhams shows the extent in which Scandinavians were able to extend their trade routes and can further pinpoint the slave trade routes. It is important to note that there is no direct correlation between slaves and the hoards of dirhams, however this will be further discussed within Chapter Two.

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i.c.1 Northwestern Europe

The site of Ballateare on the Isle of Man, where Scandinavians settled in the ninth century, is one of the few sites that are found within the British Isles.¹³ The Isle of Man was a strategic settlement opportunity because of its close proximity to Dublin and Northern England as both were preferred areas of raiding for the Scandinavians in the period. The capturing and selling of slaves in Ireland peaked in the ninth and tenth centuries as slaves were shipped over to the Isle of Man, which is supported by the grave at Ballateare.¹⁴ The grave mound contained the remains of a male and many grave goods, and near the top of the mound, buried not very deep were the remains of a female that seems to have died in a violent way.¹⁵ This site symbolizes the extent to which Scandinavian traditions expanded across to the peoples that they came in contact with.

i.c.2 Eastern Europe

There are no specific burials within Eastern Europe that can be determined as a slave and master burial. Because of this, I focused more on the evidence related to material culture that connected Scandinavians with the peoples within the region and solidifies the trade routes between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Dirhams were the most important part of the archaeological evidence from the area, which connects, as previously stated, Scandinavia and Northwestern Europe with Eastern Europe.

i.c.3 Denmark

The sites found within Denmark, namely Lejre, Gerdrup and Stengade cemetery on Langeland, are all found within close proximity to one another. Lejre and Gerdrup are on the island of Sjælland, which is just northwest of Langeland. Lejre was the site of a royal residence and is found at the bottom of the Roskilde Fjord.¹⁶ This site contains fifty-five burials that have been dated to the Viking Age; one of the graves is a double burial containing two men, one of which is decapitated.¹⁷ The same type of burial is found at the cemetery on Langeland, with a younger male buried with an older male. The latter was believed to have died in a violent manner based on the way the body is positioned in the

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Finally, the site of Gerdrup contains a burial of a female with a male who died most likely from hanging accompanying the burial of the female. The female’s cause of death is impossible to be determined, and the grave goods within the burial relate more to the female’s remains, rather than the males. These three different sites in Denmark provide substantial evidence for slave burials with their masters.

i.c.4 Sweden

The cemeteries on the island of Björkö at the site of Birka in Sweden, an important trading centre in the eighth and ninth century, provides evidence of the sacrifice of slaves. There are five different cemeteries on the island containing around 4,500-5,000 burials, of which 1,100 have been excavated. The second largest cemetery, south of Borg, encompasses the area southeast of the island, which includes the area of the fort. The burial of Borgvallen 1997 has been found within this cemetery, which contains the remains of two males, one of which has been interpreted as a human sacrifice.

There is also the possibility of other sacrificial burials at the site of Birka. There are also sites of human sacrifice seen in the southeastern region of Scandinavia, specifically within Sweden.

i.c.5 Norway

Within Norway, the site at Flakstad on the Lofoten Islands displays archaeological evidence from excavations, which show the possibility of double or triple burials that contain slaves. The remains of ten individuals excavated from the site were dated to the Viking Age based on stable isotopes, which also allowed the archeologists to determine the individual’s status based on their diet, and where the individual originated from, with analysis of the mitochondrial DNA. This site is the only known site with this type of deviant burial within Norway.

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18 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 72.
19 Gardela, “Buried with Honour and Stoned to Death?” 341.
20 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 72.
25 Gräsland, “Birka IV,” 60.
26 Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 533, 534, 538.
Written Sources

Surviving written Viking Age materials that refer to slavery provide only a partial view on the entire conversation about the daily function and societal roles of slaves. Much of the information contained within these sources pertains to the discussion of the treatment, political or economic standings of certain individuals, or a specific function the slave would perform. Certain primary sources hold more information than others with many documents originating from Scandinavia, Northwestern Europe and writers from the Middle East.\(^{27}\)

Saga materials, despite their dating being considerably later than the time period in question, is vital to the analysis of slavery in the Viking Age, with the relevant sagas written in the thirteenth century. It is claimed by Peter Orton in *Pagan Myth and Religion* that societies within Scandinavia passed down and maintained the histories orally through many generations until they were written down in the thirteenth century.\(^{28}\) This claim on the nature of the oral history of the sagas, allows for the theory that many of the writings contain cultural stereotypes heavily introduced into the pagan themes within the materials. This is seen with the implementation of Christian elements, which hinders some of the original themes and thus the interpretation of the texts.\(^{29}\) Another issue worth mentioning is the fact that the manuscripts of these texts were initially written in the thirteenth century; what remains today are copies of copies of manuscripts that may contain errors and misinterpretations of the texts, especially as language developed further and from scribal errors.\(^{30}\) However, Jón Karl Helgason, and initially from Hermann Pálsson, claim that the tradition of telling stories in Icelandic homes, was continued later with the tradition that came from reading to guests in their homes.\(^{31}\) It cannot be pure coincidence that ties can be found between the saga literature, foreign accounts and the archaeological evidence in relation to slavery. Before the saga literature was written down, “we may suppose that semi-public readings of family sagas and various forms of non-secular literature were a favorite pastime

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\(^{27}\) The use of primary sources in their original language is important for the integrity of the analysis. I will use Old Norse sources, in which I will personally translate them to English in order to maintain the integrity of the text. This I will do wherever applicable. Therefore, I will include both the Old Norse text, as well as my translations within this thesis. As for the Arabic, Celtic and Old English sources, I will be using sources materials that are already translated into English, as I have no previous experience with any of these languages.


\(^{30}\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 178, 179.

on Icelandic farms in this period.” Based on these three scholars’ interpretations, the dating of these saga materials can be debated based on the oral culture that flourished before the writing down of these sagas. The dating of the sagas are after the Viking Age, scholars like Helgason, Pálsson, and Orton provide example of evidence that these sources were derived from earlier then the manuscripts.

Foreign accounts are some of the most well documented materials in relation to the Viking Age and provide some of the most important contemporary sources of the period. Specific Arab travellers encountered the Rūs, who were thought to be Scandinavian people that lived throughout specific regions of Eastern Europe, frequently in the Viking Age and wrote multiple reports on these people from the period. The most famous of the Arab writers is Ibn Fadlān who recounts his journey from Baghdad to Bulghar, along the Volga River from 921-922. Other foreign accounts come from the earlier travels of Ibn Khurradādbih (c. 830) and the later journeys of Ibn Rusta (903-913), Masʿūdī (943) and Miskawayh (943). These accounts allow for a detailed perspective of the Scandinavian expansion from the ninth to the tenth centuries. The different writers discuss the trade routes of the Rūs, what they were trading, including the trading of slaves, and the treatment of slaves. The Arab accounts also refer to attacks and raids by the Rūs on Bardha’a. However, out of all the documents the most important is Ibn Fadlān’s recounting of the funeral of a Rūs chieftain, which includes the sacrifice of a slave girl.

Other foreign accounts come from Northwestern Europe, specifically the Annals of Ulster from Ireland, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and the Domesday Book, from England, and The Annals of St. Bertin from Frankia. These documents are important as they give detailed information about the raiding and trading that took place throughout Northwestern Europe and the people that were brought into slavery through this economic process. Their perspective on the Scandinavians in this region is quite different from the Arab writers and brings different perspectives and understandings of the social perceptions of slavery at the time.

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While these foreign accounts are beneficial as evidence that is written in the period that they are referring to, biases of these foreign writers could be implemented onto the texts. These personal interpretations can be influential to the perceptions of the information that they are recounting in their texts. This could be seen in Islamic traditions being incorporated into the traveller’s texts, which can influence their meaning and importance. Furthermore, with foreign accounts, many of the writers did not know the language of the peoples that they were encountering; when writing about rituals or customs of these groups they are writing based on what they saw, or based on the information that was communicated to them through an interpreter. This is seen in Ibn Fadlān’s texts on the Rūs chieftain’s funeral, in which he had an interpreter convey to him what was being said during the ceremony. 34 This allows for the interpreter and Ibn Fadlān to put their own connotations on the funeral, which could create some confusion of what actually happened in the funerary ritual. Despite these issues that come with foreign contemporary texts, the sources hold significant value as to what transpired in the Viking Age. Many of these sources support later written materials and archaeological evidence, which help compliment the missing knowledge that scholars encounter from the period.

From the saga materials many texts are of importance to the discussion on slavery. Beginning with the poem Rígsþula, there is debate on the dating of the poem; however Frederic Amory’s analysis of the poem dated it to the tenth century, based on the details within the creation of the social classes and the connection to the god Heimdall. 35 This includes the race of thralls, otherwise known as slaves, making the social structure of the Scandinavians to be born from the gods. The imagery of slaves is also talked about in the Icelandic family saga of Egil’s Saga, which dates to the fourteenth century. 36 Specifically Chapters Eighty-Two and Eighty-Three speak to the ways in which slaves were perceived in the period. 37

Other primary sources that mention slavery are Ynglinga saga within Heimskringla and Landnámabók. 38 Heimskringla is first seen in a manuscript from around 1270; however, it is

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34 Fadlān, Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness, 52, 53.
37 Egil’s Saga, 168-174.
only a fragment and the full text is preserved in a seventeenth-century manuscript.\textsuperscript{39} The same date matches for Óláfr saga helga, which is found within \textit{Heimskringla} and contains an analysis of the treatment of slaves by a slave owner.\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Landnámabók}, which is dated to around the twelfth or thirteenth century, discusses slave revolts, which can be interpreted as hostility of slaves in their role and function within society.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{Laxdæla Saga} within the \textit{Saga of the Icelanders} contains a conversation between a man and a slave merchant.\textsuperscript{42} This saga source is also one of the earliest known sources, and is assumed to date to the mid-thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{43} Finally, the law codes from the late Viking Age, around the turn of the twelfth century, the \textit{Grágás} from Iceland, as well as the \textit{Gulathing} and \textit{Frostathing Laws} from Norway, provide consequences for the maltreatment and murder of slaves and information on how slaves could obtain their freedom.\textsuperscript{44} Also provided within \textit{Grágás} is a definition of who a slave was, as defined by the laws.\textsuperscript{45}

The ceremonial practices in reference to slaves are also talked about in two important documents. The first being from the legendary \textit{Saga of the Volsungs}, which speaks of the sacrifice of eight male and five female slaves with the death of Brynhild, and the second which is \textit{Hárbarðsljóð}, found in the \textit{Codex Regius} of the \textit{Poetic Edda}, and speaks to where the slaves go in the afterlife, as told through an argument between Odin and Thor.\textsuperscript{46} The \textit{Saga of the Volsungs} is a little more difficult to date; manuscripts that contain this story are dated to the earliest of the fourteenth century but are interpreted to be compiled around c. 1260-1270, as it was part of the \textit{Codex Regius} manuscript.\textsuperscript{47} Information within the legendary saga, such as the destruction of the Burgundians by the Huns in 437, leads to the possibility of the saga being dated earlier.\textsuperscript{48} R. G. Finch theorizes that the saga might be a compilation of both

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{Heimskringla}, 1: xiii.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Snorri Sturlson, “Olaf saga helga,” in \textit{Heimskringla}, translated by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes (Exter: Short Run Press, 2014), 2: 3-278. Specifically, chapter twenty-three speaks to this case.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Einar Ol. Sveinsson, \textit{Dating the Icelandic Sagas} (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1958), 3: 3; Karras, \textit{Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia}, 183.
\item \textsuperscript{42} “Hoskuld Buys a Slave Woman” in \textit{Laxdæla saga}, chapter 12, accessed November 2, 2018, http://sagadb.org/laxdaela_saga.is.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Sveinsson, \textit{Dating the Icelandic Sagas}, 3: 12, Found in the D, manuscript.
\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I}, 258.
\item \textsuperscript{48} “Introduction,” in \textit{The Saga of the Volsungs}, xxxii.
\end{thebibliography}
myth and history.⁴⁹ Hárbarðsljóð, also in the Codex Regius from the Poetic Edda, is dated in a complete manuscript from 1643, however it contained five pieces of parchment that were dated to the thirteenth century.⁵⁰

All these saga materials provide a vast overview of the perceptions of how slaves interacted within different levels of society and how they responded to their own roles in these positions. Each of these sources provides a specific type of knowledge on slaves in the period, including information of slaves in the laws, slaves as a commodity and in relation to the economy of the Scandinavians, and the roles of slaves in the cultural practices of the peoples. Using these primary source materials while referencing the archaeological evidence that scholars have obtained from the time will result in a cohesive picture of the functions of slaves based on the evidence that will be discussed more thoroughly throughout this thesis. These saga materials can be connected to the material evidence that is found in burials with that of the written evidence brought forth within these specific sagas, which along with the foreign contemporary accounts, supports my argument on the importance of slaves in the Viking Age.

In making the decision of which sources to use, even though they pertain to human sacrifice, sources that discuss human sacrifice in relation to the Norse gods, such as Odin, were eliminated. While the sacrifice of humans to the gods is seen throughout the saga material as well as in foreign accounts, it does not pertain to slavery specifically. The status of the person or people that were sacrificed is debated, as claimed in specific saga materials, which allude to the status of the sacrificial victim to be dependent on how vital the sacrifice was to the outcome of the ritual.⁵¹ While a debate can be made to compare the sacrifice of people to the gods and to their masters, it is not one that will be discussed within this analysis.

i.e Modern Historiography

One of the biggest issues encountered while writing this thesis is that many of the theories and other literature previously written on this topic is found in either one of the Scandinavian

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⁵¹ “Odin and Human Sacrifice: The death of King Vikar,” in The Viking Age: A Reader, ed. Angus Somerville and R. Andrew McDonald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 98-99. This text shows that the people within the literature believed that sacrificing their King would be the most symbolic of a sacrifice to give to Odin.
languages or French. My inability to read the earlier literature has restricted me to the examination of the twentieth century materials and has made me more reliant on other scholar’s interpretations of these earlier texts in order to get an understanding of much of the work that was done on this topic leading up to this point. Nonetheless, much of the literature that was written in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century incorporates much of the earlier literature in a comparative manner that allows for a wide-reaching understanding of slavery as debated throughout the periods. While it is my goal to look at these specific regions and time periods and compare them, I will inevitably be excluding some important sites or written materials that others would have deemed relevant to the topic. My selectivity in certain areas is done in order to obtain a broad understanding of slavery within all of the reaches of the Scandinavian expansion.

Extensive research on slavery in the Viking Age comes from two areas: the laws of the time, which is deemed to be a justified perspective of what society was, and the saga materials presented as a depiction of slavery at the time, even if some of the scholars classified them as legend, I consider certain validity with the saga, and justify my rational within Chapter Four. 52 Laws studied on their own only give a representation of slaves from the viewpoint of the lawmakers or people of a higher status in society, which does not incorporate information about slaves from all levels of society that would have interacted with them. 53 Using only saga literature can also be problematic when analyzing slaves, as the representations of slaves and their function within society follow a stereotypical persona such as that depicted in the poem Rigspula.

This concept is seen in the works of Peter Foote and David M. Wilson’s The Viking Achievement: The Society and Culture of Early Medieval Scandinavia, written in 1970, who uses Rigspula and the law codes from the Viking Age as the main source of their analysis. 54 This type of comparative analysis binds all slaves into the imagery that derives from the description of slaves from the poem. It is also problematic as the authors claim that “Conditions of life must generally have been such as to make it impossible to ignore the existence of the class within Scandinavian society,” however they add that “The glimpses we

53 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 10.
have of the recognition … reinforce the impression that slaves existed in large numbers”. These statements point out that it would be hard to ignore slaves, especially since there would have been so many of them within society. Overall, the general history that this book contains is well composed consisting of both archaeological and textual analysis of the Scandinavian societies, however they did not apply this same interdisciplinary analysis to slavery. This is why I decided to incorporate the perspectives that come from these two forms of source materials, laws and saga literature as Foote and Wilson did, and integrate them with the works of foreign writers and the archaeological evidence. The collaboration of these sources to define the function of slaves and the role of slavery throughout Northwestern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia, has rarely been attempted, outside the work of Ruth Mazo Karras, who focuses specifically on Scandinavia, and will be discussed later, in Viking Age literature.

Other literature that focuses on slavery, as a whole, tends to omit Scandinavian slavery, or only use it briefly, when attempting to make a point in relation to other regions of analysis. The work of William D. Phillips Jr.’s *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*, written in 1985, is one of these examples. Phillips tends to look at the specific style of slavery, which is seen as a more classic form of slavery. He defines slavery as “the role of the master in regard to his slaves… [Is the key to] understanding position of slaves as property.” He is also heavily reliant on the works of Moses I. Finely, who follows the same Marxist approach to slavery, deeming that the necessity of slavery was dependent on “the way slaves are used within society and the way society uses slaves”, which follows the economic construct that slavery was a necessity for the prevalence of the economy in which it was being used in. Phillips’ use of seeing slavery in this form is problematic as he deems that a slave society, which is no longer in use after antiquity, is a continual phenomenon in the medieval and later periods. He also focuses on slavery as an agrarian phenomenon within Europe, and not necessarily seen in other spheres of society, which makes his analysis fit only an economic perspective on slavery.

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55 Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, 68, 69.
56 William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1985), 4. This book neglects to look at slavery in regards to Scandinavia unless it is related to the Mediterranean.
57 Phillips Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*, 5.
58 Phillips Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*, 9.
Ruth Mazo Karras’s work *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, written in 1988, incorporates all the preceding discussions on slavery, including Foote and Wilson, throughout Scandinavia and combines the information into her own analysis on a comparison of the different Scandinavian countries uses of slaves and slavery. Her analysis of each of the Scandinavian countries individually, allows for a better understanding of the differences that were seen in the use of slaves within the social, economic and cultural contexts of the Viking Age and onwards.\(^{59}\) She defines slavery as a “conceptual category, a way of labeling and classifying people. The law may express the classification but the conceptualization of the social order, not the legal status, creates the slave.” She continues by saying, “Slavery is not primarily a social or an economic system because slaves can serve a wide variety of social and economic functions, even within the same society.”\(^{60}\) Her definition of slavery coincides with the perceptions I also maintain, that slaves contributed to numerous different spheres within each community they were a part of. We cannot confine their function solely to an economic, cultural, or social aspect, as slavery was instrumental in all aspects of society, as will be seen in the evidence provided within this thesis. Much of the work done previous to Karras relates to slavery as an economic function, or approached slavery as a class system. This results in a focus on the previous scholars to look at the work slaves did, the treatment of slaves and how they earned their freedom.\(^{61}\) While, these are important features in understanding slavery during the period, she states that, “Slavery is not an economic system, not a means of organization of labour"\(^{62}\) and that the “economic component of slavery – direct exploitation – complements a legal definition of a slave as a rightless person and a sociological definition of the slave as an outsider.”\(^{63}\) While her analysis of slaves as “rightless” people falls in line with my own, her claim that slavery is not an economic system is questionable as the function of slaves as a commodity within the slave trade, became a favorable element for the success of the Scandinavian raiders and traders in the Viking Age.

There is substantial information about the economic role that the slave trade held in Dublin and with the Rūs in Bulghar, and how this contributed to the success of the expansion of Scandinavian influence. This is further supported by the finding of coin hoards across these same areas of expansion. These coin hoards can be interpreted as evidence of the increased

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\(^{59}\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 1.

\(^{60}\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 6.

\(^{61}\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 3.


\(^{63}\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 11.
trading that took place within the region, which would have supported the strong role of slavery as an economic factor in the period. The coin hoards cannot be explicitly connected to slaves, however the places in which they were found connect the regions that participated highly in the slave trade. This will be further discussed within Chapter Two. It can be argued, however, that overlooking this concept in relation to slavery within Scandinavian society, shifts the focus from the outward expansion that made the Scandinavians legendary explorers and travelers, and also dismisses the reliance on trade for these people in their economic and political pursuits across Europe.

Within the written record, Judith Jesch discusses certain social roles that slaves held, such as concubine and their relation to female slaves rather than male, and is one of the more common occupations for female slaves held throughout the areas of Scandinavian influence. This specific function of slaves can also be argued to be a role that increased in areas where the slave trade was more frequent. This is in agreement with the vital work done in relation to slavery in Scandinavia by Thorir Jonsson Hraundal in his work, *New Perspectives on Eastern Viking/Rus in Arabic Sources* (2014). This publication provides invaluable information about the Rūs peoples of Eastern Europe by defining who these people were and their importance to the Scandinavian expansion into Eastern Europe through the analysis of the Arabic sources. He defines the Rūs in reference to the ‘Volga-Caspian Rūs’, as a “homonymous group (or groups) of people in a much more easterly region” in relation to Arabic sources. He claims that there are two different groups of the Rūs peoples: the Kievan Rūs, who were typically comprised of the Slavic peoples who maintained certain Scandinavian features that were lost in the tenth century, and the Volga-Caspian Rūs who were typically Scandinavian merchants and warriors, who disappear or assimilate into the local populations by the early eleventh century. Overall, Hraundal offers insight into the Rūs that is not seen before in secondary literature. The same level of support comes from that of David A.E. Pelteret and Poul Holm in regards to their works on England and Dublin respectively. They give detailed accounts of not only the slavery but also the slave trade and the importance of it to the Scandinavian peoples.

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64 Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*; Ruth Mazo Karras also has a work that pertains explicitly to women and concubinage in the Viking Age; Ruth Mazo Karras, “Concubinage and Slavery in the Viking Age,” in *Scandinavian Studies* 62 (1990): 141-162.


The most recent work on early medieval slavery comes from Alice Rio’s *Slavery After Rome, 500-1000*, (2017), which looks at early medieval slavery in a broad interpretation of the different factors and reasons behind the need for slavery, beginning after the Roman period and into the medieval period. She uses the term “unfreedom” and references to its persistence in many geographical areas within Europe.  

It is important to note that she disassociates the terms of slave and serf in regards to late slavery. Her approach to slavery as an ever-developing notion of the status of production and reproduction, and she introduces the concept of the functionality of slavery, namely the role and function of slaves in the society as a whole, and not just a basis of the “static and elitist representation of ‘culture’.”

Rio’s definition of slavery has many similarities to that of the earlier work of Karras, by defining slavery as dependent on the region, period, and the role that the slave held within the society. She goes on to explain that a better overall term when studying slavery throughout time would be “unfree”, meaning that the role of a slave in the medieval period cannot be directly correlated to that of the specific mode of production in which the slave is a part of. In analyzing both Karras’s and Rio’s definitions, the similarities seen are notable; however, Rio analyzes materials in a way which offers a new interpretation of slavery, looking at when, where, and why “unfreedom” dominated within societies. Rio criticizes Karras by claiming that the latter focuses too much on “laws as cultural construction, as opposed to actual social relation”. She goes on further to explain that laws only show a specific point of view that might not be shared by the majority in the region and the period, which she calls an “elitist representation of culture”. Both of the scholars contribute important arguments to the discussion on slavery, their concepts allowing for a deeper understanding on the ever-changing and developing notions of slaves based on the societies’ cultural, social and economic needs.

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i.f Terminology

As previously discussed, slavery has a wide range of definitions based on the correlation of the word to the context of the situation. Slaves are often compared within the economic sphere of a society, as seen in the slave trade and the role slaves have in production, particularly agriculture. Slavery, as defined by Rio, is a form of “unfreedom”, which includes the later forms of slavery, such as serfdom and debt bondage.\(^{75}\) Slaves are also classified as “the legal property of another or others and is bound to absolute obedience, a human chattel” and used in places where efficient production is necessary.\(^{76}\) The definition includes the concept of chattel slavery, which classifies the individual as an item rather than a person, and is vastly different from the other forms of slavery that are encountered in the period.\(^{77}\) Chattel slavery is a more classic definition of slavery, which is more often seen in southern Europe and usually related to the Muslims, Slavic and Bulghar peoples.\(^{78}\) More often the type of slavery that was practiced in Scandinavia and the British Isles would have been classified under the “unfreedom” definition.

Throughout primary sources, specifically the saga materials and the law codes, slavery is referred to using different terminologies. The most common of all the words is “thrall”, which is \textit{þræll} in Old Norse. Ruth Mazo Karras in \textit{Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia} asserts, “the way the thralls appear in law and saga [is what] makes it clear to us that our term \textit{slave} is applicable to them.”\(^{79}\) Her analysis on the terminologies for slaves is based on the influence from the Latin language on the Scandinavian language, which equates the Latin word \textit{servus} to that of a claim, or a claimed person. This could mean that slaves may not have classified themselves to be enslaved, but rather more comparable to the free.\(^{80}\) This is further evident by Karras’s definition of \textit{servus} as the general word for a servant in the medieval period, as based on the analysis of the word from the Bible’s Old Norse translations, which states that it does not pertain to serfs.\(^{81}\) Another common word in reference to a slave would be \textit{ambátt}. This is often translated as a female version of a thrall, which can include concubine, and is speculated to have derived from or in association with

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\(^{75}\) Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 10.
\(^{78}\) Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 1.
\(^{79}\) Karras, \textit{Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia}, 41.
\(^{80}\) Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 15.
\(^{81}\) Karras, \textit{Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia}, 42.
the Celtic word *ambactus*, which means ‘slave’ or ‘dependent’. Karras believes that there is the possibility that the word was incorporated into Old Norse, based on the women that would have been captured in raids and used the word rather than thrall to describe themselves.\(^8^2\) Karras provides ample support in correlation of *þræll* to that of *servus* and *ambát* to the Celtic word *ambactus*. She uses these words as a supplement to the knowledge of slaves in the Viking Age and provides geographical support by incorporating Celtic influence on the language of the Scandinavians.

Lastly, my own definitions of the terms ‘slave’ and ‘slavery’ are integral to this discussion. By analyzing the works of the other scholars, as previously discussed, Rio’s definition of slaves as unfree individuals and that slavery is the social and economic status of “unfreedom”, results in the definition of slaves as unfree individuals within Scandinavian societies. The function of slavery is dynamic and dependent on the region and time in which slavery is being analyzed; there cannot be a true definition of slavery, but rather a consensus that slaves are unfree individuals within the lowest social layer of society. The term slave unifies the different functions that slavery upheld within the Viking Age, and gives different responsibilities and roles to each of the slaves within the social layer. The status of slave can also be further stratified, as the positions within their unfree status were subject to the job or role each of the slaves performed for their masters. A role can be defined as “a person’s or thing’s characteristic or expected function.”\(^8^3\) It is an individual’s specific contribution to society as a whole. A role is a static ideology that is consistent whereas the individual is dynamic and ever changing. The role of slavery can be seen as the consistent work of unfree labourers, whereas the role of individual slaves cannot be determined as easily, which makes focusing on individual’s social status more appropriate. Throughout this thesis, slaves will be analyzed individually as well as within their social layer, in order to determine the best perceptions of the unfree peoples as a whole, rather than singularly.

**i.g Overview**

The thesis chapters will be organized regionally, which will allow me to analyze each of the regions respectively. Each of the chapters will follow a chronological timeline focusing on contemporary evidence, written materials followed by archaeological evidence first, followed

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\(^8^2\) Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 43.

by the information gained from modern scholarship, and an analysis of this information. The primary evidence will then be discussed in relation to each other and the work that comes from the analysis of previous scholarship. Chapters Two, Three and Four will also contain sections of analysis that will compare the previous chapters to the new information introduced.

Chapter One will begin with the analysis of Northwestern Europe and open up the discussion of the expansion of Scandinavians into Christian lands and the evidence of slavery from the contemporary sources. The *Annals of Ulster* provides accounts of the Scandinavian raids that took place in Ireland, and the slave trading. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and *Domesday Book*, provides evidence of slavery within Anglo-Saxon England, and the uses of slaves following the incursion of the Scandinavians and the loss of complete control of Danelaw back to the Anglo-Saxon’s. Finally, the *Annals of St. Bertin* from the Franks provides information about the Scandinavians that came into Frankia and took people captive. The information will be followed by an analysis of a grave from the Isle of Man in which a slave girl was sacrificed with her master, and the different coins that are found within the archaeological record, providing connections with other Scandinavian territories and the slave trade.

The second chapter will be based on all the information that comes from Eastern Europe. Again, it begins with the contemporary sources of the Arab writers, in chronological order, which will be discussed in relation to all accounts of slaves or slavery. Many of these sources reference the slave trade, treatment and practices that involve slaves, including a chieftain’s funeral, which contains the sacrifice of a slave. This will precede the archaeological evidence that comes from the analysis of the dirham hoards that have been found all around the region and connect Eastern Europe with the other areas that were part of the Scandinavian trade routes. Other archaeological evidence including the evidence of material culture will further draw connections between the peoples found in Eastern Europe and that of the Scandinavian communities. Finally, connections will be drawn between the evidence produced in the first and second chapters showing the similarities that are found in the social identity and function of slaves.

Lastly, the analysis of Scandinavia itself will be separated into two chapters. Chapter Three will look at the contemporary evidence that comes from the region, being the law codes and
the archaeological evidence. Each of the law codes from Iceland and Norway from the period will be analyzed and discussed, supplying information about slaves and slavery that cannot be understood just from the archaeological record and writings from foreign sources alone. This will be followed by the archaeological evidence of slave burials, or rather burials containing sacrificed slaves and their masters in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, which will then all be compared to one another and the law codes.

The final chapter will discuss slavery in Scandinavia in a sense of remembrance. Since these sources are dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, they cannot be classified as a contemporary source, even though I accept the oral history that would allow for an earlier date of these saga materials. It is important to use dates of the manuscripts that remain, which classify the documents under the influence of later perspectives and ideals, which will be discussed within the chapter. Classifying these sagas as a remembrance allows me to understand the materials as best as I able within a Viking Age context and in relation to the other evidence that will be suggested within the previous chapter. This will allow for a discussion of the connections between the materials and evidence gathered within Scandinavia, and the other regions of analysis, which will conclude the chapter.

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study, aiming to determine the true nature of the perceptions and functions of slaves and slavery within the social structure of Scandinavian societies. By looking at the information from written and archaeological materials it will generate my own conceptions of the different characteristics of slaves, which will be dependent on the region and time in which the information comes from. There will be unifying factors, which will be analyzed to determine if they are a consequence of Scandinavian cultural influence, rather than coincidence. Overall, the analysis of slaves and slavery in the Viking Age will show that Scandinavians played an influential role within many regions. The individual functions of slaves and slavery were fundamental to the successful expansion of Scandinavia during the Viking Age however the social role of slaves cannot be defined in a coherent community of slaves, but a dynamic community within Scandinavian societies.
1 Northwestern Europe

Viking Age Scandinavian raiders and explorers travelled all across Northwestern Europe, especially the British Isles, consisting of the modern-day areas of the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, Shetland and Orkney Islands and within Frankia. The Scandinavians first landed in Anglo-Saxon England on its Northern shores and attacked the Northumbria monastery at Lindisfarne in 793. In the following years of the Lindisfarne raid, Scandinavian warriors and settlers alike began to frequent the English shores of Wessex, Northumbria and East Anglia. But it was not until around 835 that the raids became more frequent. In 867, the Scandinavian expansion took hold of York creating a stronghold of Scandinavian influence in England taking root in Northumbria, and allowing for this area to be used as a base for their power throughout all of their raids and settlement of East Anglia, Mercia, and Wessex until 954.\(^{84}\)

The same expansion of Scandinavian influence was seen in Ireland where the first raid was documented in the *Annals of Ulster* in 795, at Rechru.\(^{85}\) In the early ninth century, the raids of the Scandinavians were continual and focused in the northern and western coasts of Ireland; however, there was a lull in raiding between 812 and 821, at which time raiding for slaves in Ireland commenced.\(^{86}\) This continued, and the Scandinavians made themselves a permanent presence in Ireland from the middle of the ninth century and onward.\(^{87}\) In the latter half of the ninth century and early tenth century, the Scandinavians fought for control of Dublin with the Irish provincial kings.\(^{88}\) In the second Viking Age in Ireland, beginning in 914, the Scandinavians were able to regain Dublin and maintain their hold until the middle of the tenth century when the Scandinavians were pushed out of Ireland once again.\(^{89}\)

The expansion onto the Isle of Man was first seen with the evidence of notable pagan burials that are dated to the last quarter of the ninth century. It is debated that the Scandinavian explorers may have been on the Isle earlier based on its strategic placement to Dublin and


\(^{86}\) Ó Corráin, “The Vikings in Ireland,” 429.

\(^{87}\) Ó Corráin, “The Vikings in Ireland,” 430.

\(^{88}\) Ó Corráin, “The Vikings in Ireland,” 431.

\(^{89}\) Ó Corráin, “The Vikings in Ireland,” 432, 433.
Northern England, which were both points of interest, especially for the slave trade, to the Scandinavians in the ninth century. It has been interpreted from the inscriptions that are found on the Isle that these explorers who settled on the isle were not at arms with local people. It is also assumed that after the first attempt of Scandinavians to settle in Dublin, many of the peoples may have come over to the Isle of Man, and helped with the settlement there as a result. Overall, much of the information that remains from the Isle of Man connects to the information that is drawn from other parts of the British Isles, and from the archaeological evidence that is dated to more recent years.

1.1 Written Sources

The contemporary source materials that come from the British Isles and Frankia are reliant on the annals and surveys recorded from the period. The *Annals of Ulster*, the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*, the *Domesday Book*, as well as the Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin*, provide many different examples in which the Scandinavians came into Irish and Anglo-Saxon communities, raiding and settling the land for their own, and the raids throughout the British Isles never ceasing during the Viking Age. Additionally, the information that comes from these annals provides vital details of the initial incursion, raids, settlements, and the integration of the Scandinavians into local societies. This helps understand the different social conceptions that would exist between the pagan Scandinavians and the Christian Anglo-Saxons. Finally, the information about raids supports the notions of the taking of captives for the slave trade, which was especially lucrative in Dublin during the Viking Age, and the functions the slaves, played within each of these communities.

1.1.1 Annals of Ulster

The *Annals of Ulster* describes the years from 431 to 1131. The text survived in many manuscripts that have been compiled by numerous scribes up until the sixteenth century. The complete chronicles consist of four different manuscripts, which complete each of the missing manuscripts information and dates, resulting in an eclectic version of the

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91 Wilson, “The Isle of Man,” 387.
92 Wilson, “The Isle of Man,” 388.
This text is vital because Dublin was one of the most important slave-trading centres in the west in the ninth and tenth centuries. There are twenty-three entries between 821 and 1032 which record the taking of prisoners, which Poul Holm claims is an indication of deliberate action by the Scandinavians in order to meet their needs for slaves in all of their settled areas.

Throughout the entire Annals of Ulster, there are many different terms that can be used to describe the Scandinavians that came into Ireland. The most common are the words “heathen” and “foreigner”. Other terms are “Norsemen”, “Danes”, “Norse-Irish”, and “Foreign-Irish”. “Heathen” is used eighty-five times throughout the Viking Age related entries, and “foreigner” is used in one hundred and sixty-three entries. The other terms, which specify the origin for these raiding parties, could mean that there was communication between the peoples, and the Irish could tell the difference between the raiding parties that came from the Norwegian and the Danish armies. Furthermore, this could be an acknowledgement of the possible cultural differences for the Scandinavians that settled in Ireland, and gained a dual title. In total, there are nineteen references to the “Northmen”, which include the date in which they first arrived in Ireland, 839, four entries referencing “Danes” and three mentioning the “Norse-Irish”. There is also a distinction between peoples that are called “fair foreigners” and “dark foreigners”. Eric Christiansen, in The Norsemen in the Viking Age, discusses the different terms that would be used for each of the different Scandinavian peoples based on “Religion, Otherness, Whence, and Function.”

It is important to differentiate between the terms used between the raiding and settling parties that came into Ireland, as it shows certain Scandinavian groups are more interrelated to Ireland than others. It is notable that the main raiders were Norwegians and Danes, as discussed within the texts. It is also important to analyze the distinct terms used by the authors or scribes that wrote these texts, as their interpretation of the peoples that attempted to gain control in Anglo-Saxon territories, allowed raiding and capturing of individuals, which altered the power and control in the region in favor of Scandinavian influence.

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95 The Annals of Ulster, vii-xii.
96 Holm, “The Slave Trade in Dublin,” 318.
97 The Annals of Ulster, 255-537.
Within the Viking Age entries, there is only one account that uses the word slave, U989.3, which means the third entry of the year 989, which states: “Glún Iarn, king of the foreigners, was killed when drunk by his own slave.” This entry indicates that slaves were not so happy with their masters, and could retaliate against them if they were willing too. One of the downsides to the lack of information from this account is that it does not relay the consequences of the action of the slave in the murder of his master. Otherwise, much of the accounts speak to the ‘heathens’ and the damage that they inflicted throughout Ireland. Nevertheless, the taking of captives is often recorded in the text. This is specifically seen in entry U821.3 that states: “Étar was plundered by the heathens, and they carried off a great number of women into captivity.” This account alludes to the possibility that women were a key reason for the plunder in Étar. The references to the plundering done by the ‘heathen armies’, can include the plundering of peoples as well as material items. While the information within the annals does not provide ample examples of the slave trade in Ireland, when paralleled with the other sources within this analysis and the archeological evidence will help to further understand the extent in which captives were taken and sold into the slave trade in Ireland and surrounding areas.

Some of the accounts of slavery within the *Annals of Ulster* provide information about the movement of the slave raiders and traders, but it does not fully answer the questions of who these slaves were before, and where they may have gone after being sold into slavery by their captors. Specifically, U871.2 tells of Amlaib and Ímar, whom David Pelteret claims are Ólafr “the White” and Ivarr “the Boneless”, returning to Ireland from England with “a great prey of Angles and Britons and Picts.” This entry shows how the Scandinavian raiders would take anyone that they came across on the mainland as a captive and allows for the further interpretation that the Scandinavians would be likely to trade people from England as slaves in Ireland, which is seen frequently in written materials.

Throughout the document, the term captive is used five times in relation to taking peoples with the majority of the entries occurring between 830 and 840. Two of the entries state that there were either “great numbers taken” or “very many taken” the first from U831.7 and the

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100 *The Annals of Ulster*, 421.
101 More will be said about this entry in relation to Scandinavia in Chapter Four.
second from U836.7.\textsuperscript{105} Whereas two entries specified the people that were taken: in U832.4 “Ailill son of Colgu was taken” and in U840.1 “bishops and priests and scholars were taken captive”.\textsuperscript{106} The last note on people being taken captive comes from U948.1 where it states, “sixteen hundred were also killed or taken captive.”\textsuperscript{107} These entries provide little information about where the people were taken too, or what later became of them, but it does show scholars that the taking of people was a common occurrence and when it occurred in large numbers, it was often recorded.

These recordings exhibit that slaves were often a prize of warfare in Ireland and the singular account shows that slaves did sometimes rebel against their masters. This can also be seen in saga literature, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Nevertheless, the lack of the word “slave” within the text, demonstrate that the Scandinavians often took people captive during the raids, rather than pushing them into slavery as soon as they were captured. The Scandinavians could have also exported these captives to other regions to be bought and sold as slaves, which also clarifies way the word is rarely seen within the text. Thus, this would further support the notion that the Scandinavian raiders used Ireland as a place to capture new people in order to maintain the slave trade in other regions, which they occupied.

\textit{1.1.2 Anglo-Saxon Chronicles}

The Anglo-Saxons leading up to 1154 wrote the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicles} at the beginning of the settlements in modern-day England and Wales.\textsuperscript{108} This source contains information about the coinage, commerce, laws, liberty, religion, and many other facts from the periods. The \textit{Chronicles} are a compilation of annals; nine of the manuscripts remain, of which the oldest manuscript is dated to the time of King Alfred ‘the Great’.\textsuperscript{109} The chronicles also record the history during the Danish incursions and the conquest of the Anglo-Saxon countries by the Normans, which lead part of the country to be renamed as Danelaw.\textsuperscript{110}

While the mention of captives or taking hostages is not specifically said throughout the \textit{Chronicles}, it is noted that when the Danes seized part of the country, they also took the

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{The Annals of Ulster}, 287, 293.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{The Annals of Ulster}, 289, 299.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{The Annals of Ulster}, 393.
\textsuperscript{110} “The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,” para. 10.
English people captive.\textsuperscript{111} It can also be assumed that with Scandinavians in control of many areas within England, they would continue with their normal routines with regards to raiding and plundering, which involved the taking of peoples and using or selling them as slaves. This source helps to provide the context for the Scandinavian settlements occurring in England during the Viking Age. It will also help to justify some of the archaeological evidence in regards to slavery in the British Isles, and the control in which the Scandinavians had on the populations.

1.1.3 \textit{Domesday Book}

The \textit{Domesday Book} is a survey of England from 1086 to 1087, which was written after the conclusion of the Danish laws that governed the area of Danelaw. The book was used to understand the wealth in the country after the Norman Conquest had ended twenty years prior and provides information about the current landowners were, the number of villagers, farming equipment and in particular, slaves.\textsuperscript{112} Within the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicles}, the collection of this information about the lands and the material wealth in each region was completed so the Anglo-Saxon king could understand the economic status of the region.\textsuperscript{113} This book is important to slavery during the period, as it provided valuable information on two subjects, the first: it confirms the notion that slavery continued after the decline of Scandinavian power within the region, and the second: the author of the book differentiates between female and male slaves. While slavery was recognized to have been a practice before Scandinavians came into the region, the increase in the trading of slaves was widely acknowledged because of their raiding tactics. The escalation of violence in the region further increased the supply of slaves.

The recording of the slaves within the book is quite extensive, and many of the farms, owned by both lords and the church, maintained slaves. Most often the references towards slaves within the book is assumed to be indicative of males, as other entries specifically state the number of female slaves.\textsuperscript{114} It can be assumed that the separation of the male and female slaves was done based on the difference in the role that each held such as agricultural as


\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Domesday Book}, 448. An example of this is seen in Gloucestershire in which in Berkeley there are nine slaves, and the Berewicks that pertain to Berkeley have fifteen female slaves. Seen in multiple places throughout the book: 452: Bentry Hundred, 453: Bagstone Hundred, are a few examples.
compared to domestic work. The continual use of slaves in Anglo-Saxon England after the assimilation of the Scandinavians within the region can provide connections between the previous interests of the ruling Scandinavian powers, which were transferred to the Anglo-Saxon’s once again. However, slavery was used before and after the introduction of the Scandinavian slave trade, which Alice Rio and David A. E. Pelteret discuss in detail.\textsuperscript{115} The Anglo-Saxons used slavery and Rio remarks that fewer slaves are “recorded for 1086 than for 1066.”\textsuperscript{116} Pelteret claims that slaves made up about thirteen percent of the population in the Essex area, which was one of the lower counts of slaves in 1086.\textsuperscript{117} But, in 1086 he also claims that the number of slaves had declined by twenty-five percent throughout all of England, even though they were part of the majority class in the time consisting of about ten to twenty-five percent of the population depending on the area.\textsuperscript{118} Pelteret provides the argument that Scandinavians would have freed their slaves, based on the “drop in their numbers in Essex over the twenty years preceding \textit{Domesday Book},” which would have been and economic choice in encouraging the increase of wealth from tenant farmers, or hired labourers.\textsuperscript{119} It can also be debated that the decrease in slavery was based on the export of the slaves from the land that was now obtained by the Scandinavian landowners, who supplied their own workers from the settlers that came into the region, rather than just the freeing of the slaves.

With this information discussed from the \textit{Domesday Book}, it can be seen that the Scandinavians that came into the area, settled and asserted their control in the region and made changes to the function of slavery. The exact reasoning for the decrease in slavery in the region cannot be attested to anything in particular, but a debate for the changing of control from the Anglo-Saxons to the Scandinavians, would also thus change the social layers. And based on the raiding and warfare tactics used throughout the region, it is a fair assumption that slaves could have been incorporated into the Scandinavian slave trade to make room for the incoming Scandinavian settlers. However, after the assimilation of the Scandinavians into the Anglo-Saxon communities there was an obvious further decline of slavery and eventually the introduction of serfdom in the fourteenth century, which overtook the use of slaves. The information provided from the \textit{Domesday Book} indicates that slavery

\textsuperscript{117} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Early Mediaeval England}, 204.
\textsuperscript{118} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Early Mediaeval England}, 205, 233.
\textsuperscript{119} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Early Mediaeval England}, 234.
under Scandinavian rule changed from what it was under Anglo-Saxon control. The exact way it changed is up for debate however; the decrease in slaves from the information in Essex could be seen as a change to the social function of slaves. Whether they were put back into the slave trade and exported to other regions of Scandinavian control or freed, shows that the status of slaves was changeable under Scandinavian regulation. We might not know where the slaves came from, what they did and where they went, but it does provide evidence for the function as agricultural and domestic labourers for lords, churches and king lands. The inclusion of slaves within the book also provides evidence that slaves were part of the property of the landowners, which classified them as part of the wealth of the landowners, similar to the farm equipment and animals that were also included in the count of the demesne.

1.1.4 Frankish Annals: The Annals of St. Bertin

The Frankish annals provide valuable information about the Scandinavian incursion throughout the Carolingian world, specifically The Annals of St. Bertin that recorded information between 830 and 882. The annals give a year-by-year account of the dealings that occurred within Frankia during the period. Throughout its recordings, it notes multiple instances of Danish peoples coming into Frankia, including one of the first incursions from 834, in which the Danes came to Frisia and then went to Utrecht leading to the “emporium” otherwise known as Dorestad, where they raided and plundered, took captives and “burned the surrounding region”. It was also recorded that later in 841, Danish “pirates” attacked, and plundered Rouen, and took monks and the rest of the population captive. The annals go on to tell of the Danes continuing down the Seine and “laid waste [to] all the monasteries and other places along the banks…” Another account comes from 863 when the Danish sailed towards Cologne and again attacked Dorestad, where they killed and captured many Frisian traders. In Frankia, the word “captive” is used more often when referencing the taking of peoples during raids or plundering parties.

When discussing these accounts it can be hard to determine whether or not the people that were captured by the Scandinavian raiders and warriors were released, held for ransom or if they were forced into slavery. Rio points out that the texts that speak to the capture of peoples

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often focus on those that were taken in large quantities, people of a particular or higher status, or religious captives.\footnote{\textit{Rio, Slavery After Rome}, 20.} She also considers that the trading of Christian slaves to non-Christians would have been more prominent within the historical record. This fact put a lot of emphasis on the church regaining Christian captives and paying ransoms.\footnote{\textit{Rio, Slavery After Rome}, 21.} This claim led to the idea that the Christian communities would regain many of the captives, however the documents do not attest to the ransoming of these peoples that were taken by the Danes, and an assumption based on the evidence that comes from the raids in Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland, show the incorporation of these people into the slave trade if no ransom was paid. The taking of peoples was not as common in Frankia as it was in the other regions of Northwestern Europe, but evidence from this text alludes to the fact that the capturing of peoples did occurred within the region; however the extent is just still not completely determinable.\footnote{\textit{Rio, Slavery After Rome}, 27-28.}

In 866, the use of the word slave is seen within the annals in reference to the attack from the Northmen who had advanced to Melun along the Seine. Here, King Charles made an accord with the Northmen and in exchange for the peace, “…any slaves who had been carried off by the Northmen and escaped from them after the agreement was made were either handed back or ransomed at a price set by the Northmen.”\footnote{\textit{The Annals of St. Bertin}, 129-130.} This excerpt shows that the captives, who were noted in the earlier raids in the annals, were forced into becoming slaves, rather than hostages, which the Northmen were more likely to ransom. Even though the Northmen gave the slaves back, it is noted that they were capturing people along the Seine for the purpose of putting them into slavery. The term slave is used again in 869 in reference to the capture of Roland, the archbishop of Arles, by the Saracens. Within this entry, the Saracens defeated Roland and his men within the fort and demanded ransom for their captive. “It was settled that 150 lb[s] of silver, 150 cloaks, 150 swords and 150 slaves would be paid for his ransom.” The exchange of the archbishop for the 150 slaves, among other items, shows that even though the Franks were Christians, they still gave into sending 150 people, even if they were already slaves, to the Saracens for the life of one man. In the end, the archbishop died in the possession of the Saracens, but they still received their slaves, silver, cloaks and swords.\footnote{\textit{The Annals of St. Bertin}, 163.}
This excerpt documents the exact opposite response the Christians were attempting to enforce with non-Christians.

Throughout this text, the Danes or the Northmen would capture people from all over Frankia and would either ransom them back to the crown, or it is suggested that they would take them as slaves. The example of the Saracens shows the importance of slavery in Middle Eastern society, as Christians were willing to give Christian people to the Saracens, who are Muslims, which is against the claims and alleged practices of the church. Slaves were taken by the Scandinavian raiders and plunderers in which they could benefit from either in the exchange with the Franks or in the slave trade that existed in Anglo-Saxon England, Ireland or even in the eastern area in which the Rūs inhabited.

1.2 Slavery within Archaeological Evidence

1.2.1 Ballateare Man: Isle of Man

![Figure 1: Archaeological sites on the Isle of Man from the Viking Age.](image)

Figure 1: Archaeological sites on the Isle of Man from the Viking Age.

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The archaeological evidence from the region that proves the most valuable to this analysis is seen at the site of Ballateare on the northwest coast of the Isle of Man (Figure 1: Map of the Isle of Man). The burial mounds that are found on the isle are speculated to have been from the first wave of Scandinavian settlers. Gerhard Bersu first investigated the area in three excavations between 1944 and 1946. The burial mound that was found at Ballateare is twelve meters in diameter and three meters in height.

Bersu determined that the burial was that of a young man, believed to be between twenty and twenty-five years old. He had been wearing a cloak, inferred because of the bronzed ringed pin that remained on his left shoulder. Along with the pin, a knife was found on the chest on the male’s body, a broken throwing spear, and a purposely broken sword with silver detailing within a scabbard. It was determined that the sword that was included within the burial was made in Norway based on the decoration and form, which is comparable to a sword that was found at Birka. However, the buckle and strap-mount that is on the scabbard is connected to the insular form of decoration, which connects it to the British Isles. The combination of decoration techniques from both Scandinavia and British Isles shows the intertwined cultures of the Scandinavians and the peoples that lived on the Isle of Man.

The grave also contained two thrusting spears beside the coffin, which were pointing to the base of the coffin, and the remains of a shield, where the boss was heavily damaged by two noticeable markings. Otherwise, there are remnants of wood and leather found within the grave. Bersu interpreted the burial to have initially been a hole that was dug for a coffin, which was then filled and a mound was then built on top of the grave. Interestingly, the grass that was used to cover the mound was tested by Bersu and was found to have come from the dead individual’s farmstead, which consisted of about 500m² of grass for the

131 Cubbon, “The archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man,” 16.
132 Cubbon, “The archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man,” 16; Leszek Gardela, “Viking Death Rituals on the Isle of Man,” in Viking Myths and Rituals on the Isle of Man, ed. Leszek Gardela and Carolyne Larrington (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 2014), 31, 32: Leszek Gardela claims that the male was believed to be between 18 and 30 at the time of death.
135 Wilson, The Vikings in the Isle of Man, 30, 31. One of the spears is also connected to Norwegian types, whereas the other two in the burial follow the same decoration found within the region of the Irish Sea.
137 Cubbon, “The archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man,” 16.
purpose of covering the mound. Bersu also believed the mound to have contained a wooden marker, or a memorial post, on the top of the mound. Within the mound itself, archaeologists found near the top, a layer of cremated animal bones that have been identified as cattle, horse, sheep and dog remains. Within the same layer the remains of a younger female, between twenty and thirty years old, was also found.

Archaeologists have interpreted all of the contents of the mound to be sacrificed possessions of the dead man for his funeral ritual. The female has been interpreted as a sacrificed slave, due to the fact that the back of her skull was cut off by a sharp object (Figure 2: Image of the damage to female’s skull). The remains of the woman were not as well preserved as the rest of the items within the burial; however, the cause of death is easily determined. The fact that the back of her skull has a large piece missing indicates a violent death, which is one of the main criteria when determining a sacrificial victim. David M. Wilson infers that the woman who had been sacrificed “between twelve and seventy-two hours before the mound was completed,” based on the fact that “rigor mortis had already set in – her arms were in a raised position” which would have forced the arms to remain in that position after burial. Wilson also claims that there was a lack of regard for the burial that the woman received (no coffin and lack of items accompanying the body), testifies to her being a slave and the little honor they would have had for her in death. Leszek Gardela interpreted the object that sliced the back of the female’s skull to have been a sword, and Else Roesdahl has interpreted this burial to be that of a chieftain, based on the number of objects included within the burial.

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139 Wilson, _The Vikings in the Isle of Man_, 32.
140 Wilson, _The Vikings in the Isle of Man_, 33.
Figure 2: Skull of a young woman from the Ballateare burial, which displays the missing part of the skull from being cut.\textsuperscript{143}

It is evident from the archaeological excavations on the Isle of Man that there is a multitude of different burial practices used throughout the sites on the isle.\textsuperscript{144} The burials all utilized different practices that relate to the body and the rituals that can be observed from the archaeological evidence, such as the grave goods.\textsuperscript{145} Many of the graves that are found on the isle are dated between the late ninth and early tenth centuries. It is believed that the Scandinavians came to the Isle of Man from settlements in Scandinavia, Ireland, and England.\textsuperscript{146} The contemporary source materials that are found in the region, as previously discussed, further recognize this. The archaeological evidence that comes from this site also displays the integration of the Scandinavian roles of the slaves with the Christian populations that would have lived on the isle at the time. The sacrifice of the slave at Ballateare exhibits the sacrifice of wealth by the master, making the function of the slave in this instance that of a commodity, like the animals that were sacrificed (whose bones were found in the same layer of the mound). This type of burial is referred to as a deviant burial as compared to the other burials that are found on the isle. However, a similar style of burial can be found at sites throughout Scandinavia and is also referenced in the written materials from Eastern Europe, which will be further discussed in later chapters.

\textsuperscript{143} Reproduced After: Cubbon, “The archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man,” 15.
\textsuperscript{144} Gardela, “Viking Death Rituals on the Isle of Man,” 30.
\textsuperscript{146} Roesdahl, The Vikings, 217.
The burial at Ballateare is one of the best-preserved graves that include a slave sacrifice in the British Isles. The sacrifice of people in the British Isles is not as common in comparison to the other regions this thesis will analyze. Prior to the arrival of the Scandinavians, the people that lived within the vicinity were likely Christians and did not believe in the sacrifice of other individuals in death. The site is dated to the late ninth or early tenth century, which would make the man within the burial one of the first Scandinavian settlers on the Isle of Man.\textsuperscript{147} This site is extremely important in the analysis of slave burials in the region, and allows for parallels to be drawn to other Scandinavian rituals in areas of Scandinavian diaspora.

1.3 Comparative Analysis

In the tenth century, the Scandinavians gained control in many of the regions of Northwestern Europe including control of Danelaw, which consisted of the areas of the southern regions of Northumbria, East Anglia, and the eastern half of Mercia. In the late ninth century, the Scandinavians began to settle in Ireland and, like in York, began to use it as a stronghold for further raid campaigns that continued within the area.\textsuperscript{148} With the expansion of the Scandinavian territories, the Scandinavian raiding and settling parties that were engaged in the tenth and the eleventh centuries threatened the entire region.\textsuperscript{149} The continual threat of these raiders coming into the area and taking captives was only further encouraged with the ability to trade high numbers of captives as slaves in markets in Eastern Europe and the Middle East and back in Scandinavia. The conflicts that continued between the Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Franks and the Scandinavians just made it easier to obtain people in the region.

1.3.1 The Slave Trade

The expansion of the Scandinavians into Northwestern Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries, allowed for influence from Scandinavian culture onto the Anglo-Saxon’s, Irish, and vice versa. This influence is seen in the Old English language, which initially used the Old English word \textit{þeow} when referring to slaves but in many texts from the tenth century and onwards prefers the word \textit{þræll} instead.\textsuperscript{150} It is widely accepted that the Scandinavian explorers that came to the England territories captured and forced many people into slavery

\textsuperscript{147} Wilson, \textit{The Vikings in the Isle of Man}, 35.
\textsuperscript{148} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Mediaeval England}, 71.
\textsuperscript{149} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Mediaeval England}, 71, 72.
\textsuperscript{150} Pelteret, \textit{Slavery in Mediaeval England}, 41, 46.
through the many wars that they waged. The Scandinavians that came into England and the other surrounding areas seemed eager to fulfill the rest of the world’s demand for slaves by actively encouraging the slave trade. Pelteret discusses the importance of the slave trade in Dublin, which he claims included the trading of the “English, Britons, and Picts, [who] were brought by them [Scandinavians] to Ireland, in captivity.”

The majority of the records that pertain to the British Isles claim the Scandinavians interactions with the people within the societies relate mostly to the trading of slaves away from the British Isles. While it is discussed thoroughly in the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of St. Bertin*, the capturing of women, men and children was done throughout the areas of Ireland, England, Scotland and Frankia, the sources do not discuss where these people were taken and what they were traded for. Throughout much of the different contemporary historical records from the period, there is no definitive consensus on where the slaves were traded. Whether they were selling the slaves at ports within the British Isles to other Anglo-Saxons, by being taken to Danelaw, or out of Northwestern Europe to Scandinavia or Eastern Europe, are all common interpretations of the Scandinavian slave trade. It is widely accepted that within the British Isles, York and Dublin were major hubs of the slave trade.

The slave trade in Ireland reached its climax in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Poul Holm proposes that the capturing of slaves was important, as people were comparable to portable wealth, and before the founding of Dublin, as a base for their activity, the capturing of people was an important part of the earlier raids. Before the Scandinavians had even come to Ireland, the kings in the Dublin area were practicing slavery within their war tactics from the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Holm claims that this was done as a way of retaliating against the opposition, or to show off their military strength in comparison. Furthermore, within twenty-three of the annals that discuss the actions of the Scandinavian raider, dated between 821 and 1032, record the taking of prisoners because of the needs of their slave trading. Within the earlier parts of the annals, dating between 820 and 830, they discuss the raids in the sense of the basic tendencies, with the quick capturing of peoples and then leaving the area. Once the Scandinavians had obtained influence in Ireland, as a result of the regional

151 Pelteret, *Slavery in Mediaeval England*, 70.
153 Pelteret, *Slavery in Mediaeval England*, 76.
155 Holm, “The Slave Trade of Dublin 9th-12th c.,” 317.
156 Holm, “The Slave Trade of Dublin 9th-12th c.,” 318.
kings using them as mercenaries during their first stint of control of the Dublin area, they
went around the east coast of Ireland, from “Dublin west to Kildare and north to Armagh”
raiding and capturing people for slavery.157

Through the analysis of the contemporary sources in comparison to the modern histography,
it is assumed by Rio, Pelteret and Holm that the Anglo-Saxons participated in slave trading as
much as their Scandinavian counterparts. Based on the information that comes from the
contemporary source materials and the arguments made on the topic, I agree with this
assumption. Within Anglo-Saxon England itself, Bristol and London were both mentioned as
slave trade centres.158 York is known to be the main city that was taken over by the Danes in
the north and acted in the exportation of slaves to Scandinavia, which was recurrent until the
middle of the tenth century.159 The Scandinavians gaining such a powerful foothold in the
region allowed for the further expansion of the slave trade within the period.

Ransoming was another way in, which the Scandinavian raiders were able to obtain wealth
from the British Isles. This was done through the capturing of people from wealthy families
or persons of a higher status and ensuring there safe return for a price. This was a frequent
consequence of the warfare life-style that the Scandinavian explorers had in the region. Alice
Rio claims that it had “clear advantages for them [the Scandinavian raiders], but it would
only have been worthwhile if their human chattel could not be sold for considerably more
elsewhere.”160 They would not have to travel long distances, and inevitably ransoming would
save the raiders time and effort. The tactic of ransoming captives escalated in the Viking Age,
influenced by the larger market opportunities, especially with Christians, and the increased
prices that could be acquired for the captives. It is also believed that the method of ransoming
was probably more common in England than that of Ireland based on the economic
development of each of the areas.161 While the act of ransoming does not directly correlate to
slavery, it shows that the taking of captives could result in two outcomes: being ransomed
back to kin, or to be put into slavery, which is understandable as either way the
Scandinavians would benefit economically from either.

158 Pelteret, Slavery in Mediaeval England, 76.
159 Pelteret, Slavery in Mediaeval England, 77.
160 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 32.
161 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 33.
The slave trade within the British Isles was vastly important for the expansion of the Scandinavian settlements in the region and as a form of power and control that they exercised within the region. The forcing of people into slavery, through raiding or warfare, enforces the construct of the power that the Scandinavian raiders and warriors had in the area. This is further explored with the use of the slaves in the settled regions, such as the example of the burial that is found on the Isle of Man. It would be unlikely, based on the needs of the land and the number of people on the land, that there would have been a high population of slaves on the Isle of Man. Rather it is likely that the raiders would have taken their wealth and went to the isle, possibly after realizing the amount of heavy resistance in the Irish kingdoms and Anglo-Saxon regions, and wanting to settle somewhere with their new found wealth in a more static location.

1.3.2 Regional Analysis of Slavery

Slavery in Ireland had been a vital part of the petty kingdoms for many years before the introduction of the Scandinavians into the region. The enslaving of the Celtic peoples of Ireland was not an occurrence that began with the Scandinavian conquests. It is also seen in the hagiographies of Saint Patrick from the fifth century, who was captured by Irish raiders from England, and that of Saint Findan from the ninth century, who was captured by Scandinavians in two instances. Patrick also believed that the selling of Christians was a religious problem, long before the church deemed it to be, and should not be done, even if Christians did it. There is no direct way of knowing if in the ninth and tenth century there was an increase of taking Anglo-Saxon slaves, in comparison to what was happening in Ireland and Wales previously.

David A.E. Pelteret reviews Anglo-Saxon slavery in many contemporary written accounts, noting, “slavery and the recruitment of slaves was an integral part of Anglo-Saxon society.” Alice Rio discusses the necessity of slaves in the households that persisted into the tenth and eleventh centuries. She discusses the treatment of the slaves by the Anglo-Saxons and in many circumstances, the cruelty in the punishment. Rio supplies a valuable excerpt from Wulfstan of Winchester’s *Sermo Lupi*, in which the slaves rebelled against their

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162 Rio, *Slavery After Rome*, 141.
masters and went to join the Viking armies. In this text, Rio discusses the inverts to the proper hierarchies, in which the freed or escaped slaves were likely to return to the Scandinavian armies and rape the wife and daughter of their old master and then take him as a slave. This perception that slaves left the Anglo-Saxons behind in order to become a new man within the society of the Scandinavian raiders, shows that outsiders coming into Viking warrior communities did not result in them needing to be slaves again, but rather they could make a new name for themselves within their new societies. Whether the slaves in Anglo-Saxon England would be taken for slaves in the Scandinavian societies, incorporated as warriors, or even possibly killed with the rest of the undesirable peoples by the Scandinavian raiding parties, seems to be source dependent and relative to the area in which the Scandinavians were in.

The presence of slaves in other areas, such as the Isle of Man is more dependent on the information that comes from the archaeological evidence that is found in the region. Archaeologists have found many signs of the co-existence of the people that originally lived on the isle and the incorporation of the Scandinavian explorers that would have ventured over. Personal items, Viking Age carved stones, and even two tenth century longhouses have been found on the Isle of Man. The written literature of the period relating to the Isle of Man is limited to what is found in the Annals of Ulster. Dirk H. Steinforth translates the entry from 798, in which it states that the heathens, the Scandinavian raiders, have burned ‘Inis Patraicc’ which translated as St. Patrick’s Isle, which is by the town of Peel on the Isle of Man. This excerpt from the Annals of Ulster provides evidence of Scandinavians in the area quite early. While this passage from the annals does not provide any evidence of slaves, it gives indication of the early raids in the area. Ultimately, there is minimal evidence, that I have analyzed, that connects the Isle of Man with the other areas within Northwestern Europe. However, this does not mean that the information gained from these other areas cannot be utilized for comparison to the archaeological evidence found on the Isle of Man.

Not much is known about the social structure on the Isle of Man other then what can be determined from the archaeological evidence. Often from many of the burials archaeologists

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169 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 170.
can determine the differences based on wealthy burials, which would have been the landowners and warriors, in comparison to those of farmers, or other lower statuses. It can be assumed like in many of the other areas that the Scandinavians settled in, that they would have brought their families and slaves to help work and maintain the land. David A. Wilson claims that the people that would have owned the land before the Scandinavian raiders and settlers came to the isles would have most likely been reduced in their social status or became slaves, which was the most common reality in the region. This speculative theory from Wilson provides some insight into the possibility of how Scandinavians became incorporated into the culture and social structure that already existed on the isle. His theory of the region would, however, be similar to what happened when Scandinavians gained control in Ireland and England, therefore it is a valid assumption that the same would have happened on the Isle of Man.

1.4 Connections to the Contemporary Written Materials

Judith Jesch claims that while the annals that make up the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles are important in learning about the campaigns of the Scandinavians in England and the resistance that came from the Anglo-Saxons, it is important to understand the settlements attempted by the Scandinavians; it is still a “sketchy record for the history of the period as a whole.” These annals only give a partial history of the settlements that the Scandinavians attempted within the region and the warfare that followed. Jesch reasons that the gap of knowledge that these chronicles contain, in relation to the activity leading up to 850, overlook certain concepts and severely focuses on the military and political history of the Scandinavian people that came to England, rather than their cultural and social histories. The information from these chronicles that historians have about slaves from these areas only attests to the capture or trading of slaves. For this reason we have to rely on the archaeological evidence from the period to understand the Scandinavian influence with relation to slavery within the British Isles.

The information that has been gathered within this thesis in the regional perspective of Northwestern Europe, displays a more distinct version of slavery. Slaves in Irish, Anglo-Saxon and Frankish societies functioned as a commodity rather than being part of any

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172 Wilson, The Vikings in the Isle of Man, 89.
173 Jesch, Women in the Viking Age, 96.
societal role. It is seen through the substantial or considerable focus on the slave trade in the area, which marks the trade of humans as a cost-benefit that comes from the heavy warfare seen in the region. Even when the people were taken as captives and ransomed, the price of a human was deemed on a monetary scale. Furthermore, the burial from the Isle of Man shows that the male destroyed his weaponry, killed his cattle, and sacrificed the grass from his own land for his grave. In addition to these items, the inclusion of the woman, who was placed with the other livestock, would be classified as equivalent to cattle rather than human. The social function of slaves in this region is dependent on the economic variable of the area.

Alice Rio comments that the slavery seen in many contemporary written sources shows “enslavement as a symbol of the victory of the stronger party and of its new political domination over the defeated.”174 This includes the information that comes from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and the Annals of Ulster. Both of these texts provide invaluable information about the actions of the Scandinavian raiders and explorers and the people that they came in contact with. There is a consistent lack of information with regards to slaves outside of their function within slave trading in the contemporary evidence. It is not until the Domesday Book that historians are able to understand with a little more evidence, about slaves in the region and the number of each sex within the social status. It is understandable why the early scribes did not include this information, as a slave’s function was ultimately to serve their master. Nevertheless, this lack of information still allows for a coherent image of slaves and slavery within the region, as the focus of slaves relates to their economic benefit within the society, as the texts do not mention the individual social roles of slaves.

The information that we gain from Northwestern Europe is from the perspective of Christians and the evidence that remains from the archaeological evidence. Unfortunately, what can be determined from the contemporary sources is very limited, and the information about slaves in the region is only characterized within one grave. The information that was discussed within this chapter will be used in the following chapters and many parallels can be drawn between the slave trade in these regions and the evidence that comes from Eastern Europe. Also, the Ballateare man has equivalents within Scandinavia and the contemporary literature from the Rūs. The region is one that Scandinavians were assimilated within; many of their

social, cultural, and economic systems were already in place, including some of the functions of slaves.

1.5 Conclusion

Slavery in Northwestern Europe is often attributed to the Scandinavians as a direct result of the warfare that came with the growing Scandinavian influence and control in the area. Although slavery was already found in the region it was not, on the same scale. The increased violence from the raiding and settling of Scandinavians in the regions, especially the British Isles, increased opportunities for taking captives in the area which was heavily recorded in the different annals from the region. The viewpoint from the Christian contemporary writers focused on the slave trading specifically rather than other information about slaves, such as treatment or any other function they may have had within society. Furthermore, the contemporary literature does not provide any parallels to the burial that was found on the Isle of Man, leading assumptions to be drawn from the site itself, and comparable sites outside the region, which will be seen in later chapters. Ultimately, the area was exploited to fulfill the growing demand for slaves, which is seen within other areas of the region, such as Dublin and York, and to external regions such as in Eastern Europe. The function of slaves in Northwestern Europe was as commodities within the Scandinavian slave trade. Throughout the Viking Age, the literary evidence to support any other societal roles of slaves is more difficult to define, and thus the support of the parallels that can be drawn from the other regions of analysis help round out the definition of the function of slaves in Northwestern Europe.
2 Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe is a vast area, consisting of the regions east of Germany and south of the Baltic Sea down into the Black Sea, and the western part of Russia. This area is full of rivers that connect the Baltic Sea to both the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The raiders and traders used the Volga River in order to travel from Scandinavia down into Eastern Europe, through what is called the Volga-Baltic waterway allowing for the further expansion of the Scandinavian trade systems. Scholars are able to draw parallels between the peoples that lived in Eastern Europe, specifically the Rūs, by understanding the expansion of the Scandinavians. Much of the information that we have around the Scandinavian communities and people that lived in the region comes from the invaluable written works of foreign writers, such as Ibn Fadlān and other Arab writers. The analysis of these writers’ works in association with the archaeological materials that come from the hoards, and associated grave goods found in the region, provide ample evidence to assist in understanding the functions slaves held in the Eastern European communities. Based on the information that will be presented within this chapter, it is determined that most commonly, slaves functioned in direct correlation to the exchange of wealth and commodities. Their roles within Eastern Europe are not completely different from that of the other areas influenced by the Scandinavians, but rather functioned within the system of slavery in a way that was imperative to the success of the slave trade and the economic growth that occurred within these communities, and back in Scandinavia.

2.1 Written Sources

2.1.1 Sources from Foreign Writers

The foreign accounts that will be analyzed within this section focus on two specific peoples in relation to Scandinavians, the Rūs and the Saqāliba. The origin of the peoples who are defined as Rūs has already been discussed within the introduction based on material from Thorir Jonsson Hraundal.175 The term Saqāliba, which has not been discussed previously, is initially thought to derive from the Greek term sklavenoi, which means ‘Slav’ or ‘Slavic’ and could relate to anyone that was living within Northern Europe.176 Hraundal uses Michael De

Goeje, who initially translated the texts and claims that he “…chose Slav as the appropriate orthographical representation of Saqalibah yet retaining the semantic connotations of the term as employed, he believed, by the Arabic writers and not what the modern term ‘Slav’ conveys.”

From the information gathered, I will follow the claim that the Saqāliba and the Rūs peoples are two different groups of people that lived in two separate areas of Northern and Eastern Europe respectively. This is further justified in the fact that the Rūs would often raid the Saqāliba and used the items obtained from the raids as a means of subsistence.

In making the connection between Eastern Europe and the foreign writers, it is impossible to do so without commenting on the Normanist debate revolving around the question of where the Rūs people derive from. In order for a comparison to be made between the slave roles in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, I will agree with the common assumption that the Rūs were Scandinavians, particularly from eastern Sweden. It is discussed previously that there are seemingly two different versions of the Rūs and thus, there is a distinction between the groups. Both groups maintained Scandinavian influence in their cultures until the tenth and eleventh centuries, which evident in the comparative roles of the slaves that are seen in these regions. Generally, the Scandinavians that entered Eastern Europe and settled brought many of their own traditions and ideals, which can be dated from before the middle of the ninth century. The people that the Scandinavians would have been interacting with would have been influenced by certain aspects of their ideas and traditions within the societies, and vice versa. Ultimately, there is an undeniable correlation between the Rūs and that of the Scandinavian peoples. The eventual opening of these areas for the exchange of material items and ideologies from the Middle East up to Scandinavia, allowed for the growth, both economically and socially, which allowed for the integration of the Scandinavian ideologies into the other communities that existed in the region at the time.

### 2.1.1.1 Ibn Khurradadhbih (c. 830)

Writing in the ninth century, Ibn Khurradadhbih recorded some of the earliest trade information of the peoples within Europe, China, and the Middle East. Within his texts,

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177 Hraundal, “The Rus in Arabic Sources,” 64, 65. He claims that the term is to represent a “particular linguistic group of the Indo-European languages” and the term ‘Saqāliba’ ultimately “having a more or less generic connotation”.
178 Hraundal, “The Rus in Arabic Sources,” 73.
Ibn Khurradādhbih discusses the trade routes of the Rūs specifically. He determines that the Rūs are one of the Saqāliba people who journeys from “the land of the Slavs [Saqalb] to the eastern Mediterranean.” His recounting of the routes used by the Rūs gives details how they travelled between Byzantine lands back to their Slavic territories, as well as the way in which they travelled down to Baghdad to sell their merchandise.\textsuperscript{180} Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone present the idea that the Rūs, or Swedish Vikings, followed the routes between Constantinople through the Dnieper River to the Black Sea, or following the Volga River through to the Caspian Sea leading to Baghdad, however, this is speculated.\textsuperscript{181}

While Ibn Khurradādhbih’s writings do not give any insight onto slavery specifically, his knowledge of the trade routes, help define the later trade that allowed slaves from the Scandinavian slave trade and the Islamic silver to flow within the region. His detailed account of the trade routes also shows how initially the routes were used for the trading of furs and swords, rather than slaves, which is seen more frequently in the tenth century.\textsuperscript{182} Furthermore, his description of the slave routes show the cultivated relationships that the Rūs had with their neighbouring societies, which allowed for an unhindered expansion of the Rūs early on.

### 2.1.1.2 Ibn Rusta (903-913)

Ibn Rusta wrote about the Rūs from 903-913 in a seven-volume encyclopedia, of which only one volume survives.\textsuperscript{183} Within his description of the Rūs, he notes that they are always clean, and that “They treat their slaves well and dress them suitably because for them they are an article of trade.”\textsuperscript{184} Ibn Rusta also discusses how the Rūs are great fighters with “great stamina and endurance,” and because of this they are able to “slaughter their enemy” and “take the women and enslave them.” Furthermore, he claims that when their “leading man dies, they dig a hole as big as a house... [and] They bury his favorite women with him while she is still alive, shutting her inside the tomb and there she dies.”\textsuperscript{185} Ibn Rusta’s description of the inclusion of the sacrifice of a female slave with a chief follows many of the same conceptions that come in Ibn Fadlān’s text, which will be discussed in the following section.

\textsuperscript{180} Khurradādhbih, “Ibn Khurradādhbih on the routes of the Rādhānīya and the Rūs,” 112.
\textsuperscript{182} Khurradādhbih, “Ibn Khurradādhbih on the routes of the Rādhānīya and the Rūs,” 112.
\textsuperscript{184} Rusta, “Ibn Rusta on the Rūs 903-913,” 126.
2.1.1.3 Ibn Fadlān (921-922)

Ibn Fadlān’s account is the most detailed out of all of the Arabic writers. His works have given scholars much information about the Rūs and their ways of life, which is vital to the understandings of the people at the time. Within his text that he wrote on his travels from Baghdad up to Bulghar along the Volga River from 921-922, he provided information about the travel routes, the customs of the people that they interacted with along the way, and the social, economic, and political attributes to the societies. Initially, Ibn Fadlān’s travels up north were a request by the king of the Saqāliba for money to build a fortress against foreign invaders, and instruct his peoples about the Muslim faith and laws. Nevertheless, during his travels he discovered that the different peoples he encountered were far more interesting, rather than the requests of the Saqāliba king.

One of the detailed accounts from Ibn Fadlān’s travels is his description of a pagan burial rite. Included in the account is the description of the specific rituals pertaining to the death of freeman comprising of other men lamenting over his death, and slaves that would come to the tent and “weep continually as they strike their sides and any uncovered parts of their bodies with the straps, until their bodies are marked as if by the blows of a whip.” Ibn Fadlān states that the slaves are wearing “plaited leather thongs” which would indicate that they were hitting their entire bodies. The self-abuse of the slaves that Ibn Fadlān saw could be related to the religious act of self-flagellation, which is observed in both Christian and certain Islamic faiths as a way of repaying the penance to the dead man. It is possible that the slaves are doing this as a way of repaying the dead man. It could also be interpreted that the dead man is the master of the slaves that are beating themselves, which could support the notion of repayment of the slaves to their master upon his death. Unfortunately, Ibn Fadlān does not state whether or not they are, thus this is just a speculated opinion.

Slaves are also used in the burial rituals. When a rich man dies, he would make large preparations and sacrifices. When visiting the King of the Saqāliba, Ibn Fadlān, saw this type of a funeral for a chieftain of the Rūs. This section of Ibn Fadlān’s book allows for

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When the chieftain dies, his family asks which of the slave girls and boys will die with him. The slave that offers cannot take it back, and usually, a slave girl offers. The slave girl that offered to die was placed with two other slave girls who will take care of her, including washing. The others prepare the dead man, including clothes and other items he will need. The slave girl will drink [alcohol] and would be happy every day. The “Angel of Death” will prepare the deathbed with quilts and cushions, and she will be the one that will kill the slave girl. [Ibn Fadlān describes her] “I myself saw her: a gloomy, corpulent woman, neither young or old.” They then place the body of the chieftain inside the pavilion on the ship on the quilt and place alcohol and food around him. They also include the sacrifice of a dog, two horses, two cows, a cock and a hen. They also place his weapons around the man.

The slave girl that is to be sacrificed has intercourse with all the owners of the pavilions and they tell her, “Tell your master that I have done this purely out of love for you.” On Friday there is an evening prayer and a “door-frame” like structure is constructed and the slave girl places her feet on the hand of men and they lift her over the frame three times. The first time she says, “‘Behold, I see my father and my mother,’” the second, ‘Behold, I see all of my dead kindred, seated,’ and the third, ‘Behold, I see my master, seated in Paradise. Paradise is beautiful and verdant. His men accompany him and his male slaves. He summons me, so bring me to him.’” After she cuts off the head of a hen and it is put on the ship. She is then lead to the ship and she removes the two bracelets she was wearing and gives them to the “Angel of Death” and then removes her two anklets and gives them to the slave girls that cared for her. These other slave girls were the daughters of the “Angel of Death.” They lifted her onto the ship and men came over with shields and sticks and handed her a cup of alcohol and she chanted and drank, “Thereby she bids her female companions farewell,” and she drank another cup and entered the pavilion where her master lays, she only put her head inside, but the “Angel of Death” pulled her in and the men began to bang their shields with the sticks so that the screams of the girl would not be heard by the other slave girls who would offer this when their masters die. Six more men enter the pavilion and have intercourse with the slave girl and then they lay her beside her master and hold her down and the “Angel of Death” places a rope around her neck and two men pull on it, she then takes a broad-bladed dagger and thrust it in and out between her ribs, until she dies. Then the chieftain’s next of kin lights the wood under the ship on fire, and then other people come forward and also put sticks onto the wood, and eventually, the whole thing goes up in flames. [Ibn Fadlān] asks one of the Rūsiyyah why they set it on fire and they say they burn them so that they can “enter Paradise immediately” and is taken with the wind within the hour.189

Within this translation, James E. Montgomery makes critiques throughout his analysis of the text in regard to the historical reliability of the sacrifice and how often this type of burial would have occurred. Concerning this style of burial, it is a combination of both a ship burial and a cremation burial, which connected with Scandinavian burial rites and is seen throughout the Scandinavian region. Montgomery claims that the practice of sacrificing slaves for their masters, must have been a more commonly seen in what Montgomery calls Russia, or the Volga River area. It can be interpreted from the image that Ibn Fadlān created in regards to the Rūsi that slaves were readily available and the sacrifice of them would not

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seem like an expense, but rather common practice.\(^{190}\) The sacrifice of a slave in a ritualistic burial for the master can be categorized in the same way as the horses, dogs, cows and other animals that were placed within the burial. These items play a distinct role in the afterlife in which the Rūs believed were necessary for their chieftain in death.

A few terms within Ibn Fadlān’s description of the funeral need to be discussed further. The term “Angel of Death” is used to describe the women that would kill the slave girl and assists in orchestrating the entire burial rite. Ibn Fadlān has described her as “a gloomy, corpulent women, neither young or old.”\(^{191}\) The role of this woman seems similar to that of a shaman or a magical woman and Ibn Fadlān’s text creates a connection between the slave girls that offer themselves to be sacrificed as the “Angel of Death’s” daughters, biological or not is unknown.\(^{192}\) Her role is vital to the ritual as a whole, but the term “Angel of Death” is debated in its origin, whether it was a term used by the Rūs, or if Ibn Fadlān created it based on his own opinions of what he was witnessing. Montgomery discusses that rather the phrase is influenced by Ibn Fadlān’s ideas through his Islamic faith.\(^{193}\) This seems to be more likely as he probably would have been making comparisons of what he was seeing to what he already knows in regards to death rituals from his own faith.

The other term that needs to be examined is Ibn Fadlān’s use of the word ‘Paradise’ in regards to the part of the ceremony where the girl is being raised over a doorframe like structure, in which she claims to see her “master, seated in Paradise. Paradise is beautiful and verdant.”\(^{194}\) This description of Paradise has no correlation to any of the Scandinavian conceptions of the afterlife. The afterlife for many of the Scandinavian faith consists of the two death realms Valhalla and Hel. Hel can be described as a “world of mists and shadows”, making a description of a “paradise’ contradictory to the Scandinavian perceptions of their death realms.\(^{195}\) It is believed that the female slave’s description of also seeing her mother and her father in the death realm, in what we could then assume to be Valhalla, is actually where chieftains and warriors would go in death, and this conflicts with the concept that women can enter Valhalla.\(^{196}\) It is believed that Ibn Fadlān put his own words in here when

\(^{196}\) Roesdahl, The Vikings, 67.
describing the realms of the afterlife. The ‘Paradise’ that he is describing is more in line with the concept of the Muslim ‘Paradise’, which is where in death they will be reunited with significant others, parents and children.\textsuperscript{197} It can be debated if Ibn Fadlān’s perceptions of the practice and using his own connotations on the words for the afterlife were done in a way to properly comprehend what exactly the afterlife was for these peoples, and the best comparison he had was that from his own faith.\textsuperscript{198} This will be further discussed in relation to Scandinavian sources in Chapter Four.

This account is the only full retelling of a death ritual that comes from the Rūs. Because of this, scholars are more inclined to depend on Ibn Fadlān’s interpretation of the ritual. Ruth Mazo Karras claims that because of the inability for Ibn Fadlān to understand what was being said directly leads too much of what he ended up recording to be based on the understandings of his interpreter or his own imagination.\textsuperscript{199} While this is a valid opinion on the interpretation of the sources, it is a common practice with all foreign contemporary sources to read them with some speculation. The fact that this source has many defining factors that connect archaeological sites to the type of burial Ibn Fadlān describes, I feel more inclined to trust his account, even if he used comparisons with his own faith in order to better understand the ritual.

Within Ibn Fadlān’s book, he also tells of the Rūs and their slave trading practices. In one specific recounting, he says that the Rūs, who came to trade on the Volga River, have built large wooden houses on the banks of the river, and ten or twenty people live in each house. He goes on to say that the men that come to trade slaves have raised platforms where they sit and show off their “beautiful slave girls, for sale to the merchants”. Ibn Fadlān subsequently explains “each of the men has sex with his slave, while his companions look on. Sometimes a whole group of them gather together in this way, in full view of one another.” Furthermore, even if a merchant comes over to buy a slave girl the intercourse will continue, “…until he [the man selling the slaves] has satisfied himself.”\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{197} Montgomery, “Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah,” 18.
\textsuperscript{198} Montgomery, “Ibn Fadlān and the Rūsiyyah,” 18.
\textsuperscript{199} Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 71.
The uses of slaves are frequent in Ibn Fadlān’s book. He also speaks of a slave girl carrying around a washing basin for her master and all his men to clean themselves. This is further seen in relation to the King of the Rūs and his men:

He [Ibn Fadlān] said: One of the customs of the King of the Rūs is that in his palace he keeps company with four hundred of his bravest and most trusted companions; they die when he dies and they offer their lives to protect him. Each of them has a slave-girl who waits on him, washes his head and prepares his food and drink, and another with whom he has coitus. These four hundred <men> sit below his throne, which is huge and is studded with precious stones. On his throne there sit forty slave-girls who belong to his bed. Sometimes he has coitus with one of them in the presence of those companions whom we have mentioned. He does not come down from his throne. When he wants to satisfy an urge, he satisfies it in a salver.

This excerpt shows that the access to female slaves by the Rūs was endless and a cost most wealthy men can bare for themselves and their men. The ways in which female slaves are used in these examples show the callousness that the owners had for the women. They were seen rather as a commodity in which they can use for their own pleasure at the woman’s expense. The lack of self-control of the men also portrays a men-dominated society in which women seem to be more of an instrument within the social levels, including female slaves. For example, it is seen in the use of slaves as concubines, which gave them a particular function in these Eastern European societies, which will be further investigated in the chapter.

Finally, Ibn Fadlān gives some insight into the welfare of slaves. If they become ill, the treatment is similar to that of the customs of free men, they would put them in a tent far from everyone else with bread and water and will leave them until they either recover and return to the community or die. The biggest difference between the death of a slave or a freeman is that if a freeman dies they would burn him, whereas if it is a slave they would “leave him where he is, and the dogs and birds of prey will devour him.” The lack of care that is given for a slave that dies shows that there was a probable lack of care for slaves in life. It can be assumed that in societies where slaves were so common, the death of one slave would not be so detrimental to society, but rather a loss of commodity in which the masters would not be wanting to make any of their other property ill, or waste any money on the funeral of a person that held no particular high position in society. From Ibn Fadlān’s accounts the roles of slaves

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seem to be more expendable than some of the accounts that will follow from the saga materials.

2.1.1.4 Masʿūdī (943)

Within Masʿūdī’s description of the Saqāliba people, he distinguishes between the different layers and groupings. He says that the Sarbīn people are a Saqāliba people that are feared for far too many reasons, and have certain customs of burning themselves alive when their king or chieftain dies. He states that the sacrifice, or immolation, that is done by the Saqāliba, Rūs and Khazars, correlates to an eastern cultural tradition rather than a western tradition. This concept intertwines to that which is discussed previously in Ibn Fadlān’s account of the Rūs. Furthermore, Masʿūdī specifies that the Saqāliba is not one group of people, but rather “comprise of many different peoples and are very far-flung.” This again correlates to the notions that Hraundal suggests of the Rūs being influenced by the different neighbouring cultures. As I previously discussed, the Saqāliba people are considered to be Slavs and distinctly different from the Rūs, the connections that Masʿūdī gives allows for the inference that the Saqāliba were one of the peoples with which the Rūs shared cultural rituals. Additionally, the extensive area that the Saqāliba people maintain is believed to be just east of the Volga Bulghars, which he claimed would be a “ten days’ march from the lands of the Pečenegs [north].” This would further justify that the peoples living in this area would most likely exchange cultural traits along with goods, as they were close in proximity to one another.

2.1.1.5 Miskawayh (943)

Miskawayh account focuses on a Rūs raid at Bardha’a, in Azerbaijan, in which they “attacked and occupied… and took its inhabitants captive.” Once the Rūs had entered and conquered the city, they killed many of the people that remained in the city; however they also “took captive over 10,000 men and boys with their womenfolk, wives and their daughters.” Miskawayh then describes that the men were forced to ransom themselves for twenty dirhams each, whereas the women and children remained captives in the fortress of

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206 Masʿūdī, “Masʿūdī on the Saqāliba 943,” 141.
209 Miskawayh, “Miskawayh on the Rūs raid on Bardha’a 943,” 148.
Shahristān within the city.\textsuperscript{210} It is made clear here by Miskawayh that the Rūs did not want any grown men to be slaves, but rather bartering items for wealth or they would kill them. In contrast, women and young boys were kept and “raped and enslaved.”\textsuperscript{211} Later in the description, Marzubān was defeating the Rūs,\textsuperscript{212} and many of the Rūs were dying from an epidemic. Many of the Rūs warriors were buried with their “arms [weapons], clothes, and equipment, along with his wife or another of his women, and his slave, if he happened to be fond of him, as was their custom.” Afterwards, they left the fortress with the women and children that they had captured and headed back to their homelands.\textsuperscript{213}

This description from Miskawayh gives us a detailed account of the raiding practices done by the Rūs. The details provided in the ways in which they took captives and ransomed off the unwanted captives, concur with the common notions of how the Scandinavians acted when raiding new regions. These actions were also seen in the raiding that took place in Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Similarly, the mention that when the Rūs warriors were dying from illness their burial ritual would include the sacrifice of a slave if “they were fond of them” follows many of the notions in which were previously discussed in regards to Ibn Fadlān’s account. This account helps justify many of the perceptions that were given by Ibn Fadlān and the other Arab writers in understanding the roles of slaves in the Eastern European context of the Rūs.

### 2.2 Archaeological Evidence

Within the discussion of the archaeological evidence, it is important that I note specifically why I chose not to discuss any slave burials in Eastern Europe. Slave burials in the region lack evidence to validate this claim to the type of burials in English literature and archaeological materials, hence the use of dirhams and other material culture evidence, to support the role of slaves in the region. The lack of resources can be further understood in this manner with the accounts from the foreign contemporary writers, which claim slaves could either not be given a burial after death or left to the animals and elements, or they were placed in cremation burials, which often leave little evidence. Thus, it is important to look at

\textsuperscript{210} Miskawayh, “Miskawayh on the Rūs raid on Bardha’a 943,” 148, 149.
\textsuperscript{211} Miskawayh, “Miskawayh on the Rūs raid on Bardha’a 943,” 149.
\textsuperscript{212} Miskawayh, “Miskawayh on the Rūs raid on Bardha’a 943,” 149-151. Marzubān Ibn Muhammad was one of the first Muslim commanders to come to the aid of the city of Bardha’a. He fought with 30,000 men initially, but after several failed sieges the Rūs became ill on the fruit from the area and Marzubān was finally able to conquer back the city from the Rūs.
\textsuperscript{213} Miskawayh, “Miskawayh on the Rūs raid on Bardha’a 943,” 151.
other items that could have been interpreted in direct correlation to the slave trade in the Viking Age. In Eastern Europe and the Middle East, many dirhams, which are silver Islamic coins that are found commonly in eastern and northern Europe, are found as a common currency. The Volga region in which the Rūs inhabited is one of the largest regions in which these hoards can be found along with “Scandinavian male and female artefacts [from the]… 9th - 10th centuries.”

2.2.1 Dirhams and Slavery

Dirhams were the way in which much of the monetary wealth was exchanged within the slave trade in Eastern Europe. Marek Jankowiak defines a dirham in this period to be a “good quality silver coins weighing on average 2.9g.” Within the ninth and the tenth centuries, the trade of slaves helped stimulate the growth of the economy in the east, which was supplemented by the incoming slaves that the Scandinavians brought from the British Isles. It was also common in the region to trade Slavic people within Eastern Europe, referring to the Saqāliba people. The importance of these coins is like that of every other coin that is found in situ, because it can be dated, which will help define the periods in which trade between the regions of Eastern Europe and the surrounding areas, such as Scandinavia, was more common, while giving insight into the people that would be involved within the trading transactions. The majority of the hoards throughout these regions have been dated between 770 and 890, with the highest number of hoards to be found in Eastern Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, fifty-one and seventy-seven, respectively.

The dirham hoards have been documented in large quantities, the largest of which comes from the Russian region, followed by Sweden, and the largest within Norway is in Kaupang. The hoards in the Volga River region that have been published are not as accessible as compared to the information that comes from the study from Kaupang. Christoph Kilger and Mark Blackburn’s analysis of dirham hoards shows the extent in which dirhams spread across the entire region of analysis, and the five biggest sites, outside of

215 Androshchuk, Vikings in the East, 21.
217 Jankowiak, ”Dirhams for slaves,” 1.
218 Christoph Kilger, ”Kaupang from Afar: Aspects for the Interpretation of Dirham Finds in Northern and Eastern Europe between the Late 8th and Early 10th Centuries,” in Means of Exchange: Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age, ed. Dagfinn Skre, Vol. 2 (Aarhus: Aarhus Université Press, 2008), 209.
219 Kilger, ”Kaupang from Afar,” 200, 203.
Eastern Europe, to be included in the regions of this analysis. The collection of dirhams that are found in Sweden directly correlate to the dirhams from the Volga Bulghars, which makes up 1.8% of the total dirhams found. A map of all the dirham hoards that can be found within the ninth and tenth century (Figure 3: Dirham hoards) follows this paragraph. The fact that dirhams have been found across Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and into the British Isles, proves the extent in which trade in Eastern Europe expanded. Many of the hoards that have been found in Eastern Europe can be linked to Scandinavian settled areas. The climax of the dirhams in Eastern Europe seems to be from 950 to 959, in which there was one hundred and twenty hoards found. Gotland, the island just off the main coast of Sweden, is one of the regions in which dirhams were found throughout the ninth and the tenth centuries.

The minting of the coins has been credited to the mints in Baghdad and surrounding areas in the ninth and the tenth centuries. The coins have been attributed to the Samanid emirate, which was recognized as the Persians. Jankowiak also discusses the fact that in the ninth century the Khazars, a people that were frequently in contact with the Rūs, often made imitations and in the tenth century, it was attributed to the Volga-Bulghars. These imitations were “poor copies of the original” but the “silver content… was not inferior”. The biggest question is how can dirhams, which can be used to pay for an endless amount of trade items, be able to solely classify and legitimate the slave trade that was conducted between the people in Scandinavia and that in Eastern Europe? Through the comparison of the written source materials that come from the foreign writers, the Scandinavians came to the Volga region and were paid in dirhams for slaves and furs. It can be interpreted that there is a direct correlation between slaves and dirhams as seen in Eastern Europe. The extent in which slaves and dirhams can draw parallels is hard to define based on the lack of directly correlating evidence; however there is no evidence to the contrary that says dirhams were not used for trade of slaves in the regions in which hoards appear.

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221 Kilger, “Kaupang from Afar,” 203-204.
222 Kilger within his analysis provides a very detailed list of all the dirham hoards found in each region, which includes the total amount found in the regions. See Kilger, “Kaupang from Afar,” 247-252.
225 Jankowiak, “Dirhams for slaves,” 4. Also can be seen in the discussion previously had with Ibn Fadlān and Ibn Rusta’s texts.
2.2.2 Other Archaeological Evidence

In the upper Volga River area, there is a town called Jaroslavl’ in which the archaeological complex Timerëvo can be found. This site consists of about five to six hectares and includes about fifty buildings that follow the construction techniques that the Scandinavians followed, along with a hoard of Islamic coins dating to 864/5. This site exhibits a wide range of cultures based on the objects that are found, which leads to the interpretation of the site as a trading centre. The discovery of many different objects that can be linked to other cultures is a common finding at many of the archaeological sites along the Volga River.

Frequent finds along the Volga River and other nearby regions, including along the Desna River that leads to Kiev, correlate frequently to Scandinavian material culture. The site of Šestovycja also maintains many burials and artefacts that associate with cultural and burial traditions found in Scandinavia, and even more specifically east-central Sweden. This is

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227 Androshchuk, Vikings in the East, 21.
228 Androshchuk, Vikings in the East, 22.
229 Androshchuk, Vikings in the East, 22, 24.
230 Androshchuk, Vikings in the East, 27.
important to note because many of the slave sacrificial burials found in Scandinavia are found in eastern Sweden, which will be further discussed in the following chapter. By looking at the artefacts that are found in the graves and the ability to match them with the material items that come from Scandinavia, show that there was a flow of items between the communities in Scandinavia and those in Eastern Europe. Thus, the flow of culture, ritual and societal roles could have followed with the exchange of material items.

Mound burials are frequently found in Eastern Europe and modern day Russia. These mounds often follow the same characteristics of the mounds found in Sweden. This is also the case with the style in which the chamber grave was constructed, thus giving more evidence to support a heavy Scandinavian influence on the Rūs. The differences in the type of burials throughout the region of the Rūs, which also maintained Scandinavian influence, do not maintain a more standardized burial method. Due to the many different burial techniques, it can be difficult to determine what is classified as deviant or not. Thus, I focus on a deviant burial, to mean a burial that contains a sacrificed slave, which is a rare find, as previously discussed.

Additionally, in understanding the correlation between the Rūs and the Scandinavians, it is important to understand the flow of material items in the region. Fedir Androshchuk looks at the typology of oval brooches, which are distinctively a Scandinavian accessory, and the decoration of the hilt on swords to help pinpoint these direct characteristics, to determine the extent of Scandinavian immigration. Oval brooches are found in certain cemeteries, along with the swords, but he deems these individual graves pertain to a certain social status. Even though there is some evidence of an exchange of material culture, “No scholar now thinks – as was indeed the case before – that these archaeological cultures reflect only ethnic unities of one and the same sort.” Thus the flow of material culture, like many other aspects of culture, is not dependent on the development of one society, but rather the growth and integration of multiple aspects of multiple societies.

In conclusion, the archaeological evidence that has been interpreted here is based more often on the information that comes from burials and mounds in which artefacts link the Scandinavian and Eastern European cultures together. Understanding that the Scandinavians

231 Androshchuk, *Vikings in the East*, 34, 35.
played an important role in the material culture that is left behind in Eastern Europe, allows for identifying facts that show the comparison between the information that comes from the trade of material goods and that of the slave trade networks that were functioning in the area. Chattel slavery allowed for the import of slaves from other areas in which Scandinavians settled, and allowed for the people that they captured in these new areas to be added to their ever-growing slave trade. Thus, slaves fulfilling the economic development of these Scandinavian societies, and furthering their success in the ever-changing world in the Viking Age.

2.3 Comparative Analysis

Slavery in Eastern Europe was reliant on the slave trade that took place around the Volga River with the Rūs and the further transporting of these people into the Middle East, during the early Viking Age. Much of the written materials from foreign writers and the archaeological evidence that remains from the region show that the functions of slaves in the Eastern European societies were classified as a commodity. The Scandinavians were not the only ones that were interested in the buying and selling of people, but rather their slave trading tactics allowed for an increase to their own economy from their raiding and settling patterns that took place in Eastern Europe, which is similar to that of the patterns from Northwestern Europe. The use of slaves to gain monetary wealth and further the exchange routes seem to have been the main practice of the peoples that lived within the area. It is seen through the artefacts that are found in the region of the Volga River, and the claims made by Hraundal, that the Rūs had ties to Scandinavia and that the Volga-Caspian Rūs were likely a community that integrated with Scandinavians, which would include the combination of customs.

The trading of Slavic slaves was frequently recorded within the Islamic texts and they are commonly recorded to appear in palaces, specifically, the men as guards and the women, and eunuchs in harems and working with high-ranking individuals.233 The need for the same type of slaves was also seen in Italy. The slaves were transported through Spain, in which the slaves came from the Muslims or Bulghars.234 The demand for slaves in Muslim countries and Southern Europe was high, and allowed for chattel slavery to expand quickly in these

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regions because of it. This shows the extent to which the peoples in Eastern Europe were able to expand their trading systems.

Regardless of where the slaves originated from, their role within Eastern Europe is more specific through the comparisons of the archaeological and contemporary written material. Firstly, slaves were a commodity to be bought and sold in order to gain a profit for the masters, who were often part of the large slave trade that connected Northwestern Europe, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe. Secondly, the slave trade allowed for an economic increase of each of the societies that took part in the capturing and selling of peoples, either from the British Isles or the Slavic people in Eastern Europe. It allowed for the flow of wealth from Eastern Europe into Scandinavia, as seen in the hoards of dirhams. Thus making the identity and function of slaves within society as an interdisciplinary role more often than not. Like the flow of material objects, slaves can be compared to a material object in Eastern Europe. By analyzing the trading and the movement of these people, historians and archaeologists alike are able to understand the identity of these people within the societies that ruled them, and the role they held within their social level.

2.4 Connection between Eastern Europe and Northwestern Europe

Much of the information that is gathered from Eastern Europe can be linked to the British Isles. The slave trade in both of the areas was a large part of the economies, and a possible connection can be made between the people that were taken in Northwestern Europe and could have been sold in Eastern Europe. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was very common for the Scandinavian raiders to capture and take people away from the British Isles to sell and trade them. This is discussed in the contemporary materials, especially with the fear of the Christians being sold to ‘heathens’ or Muslims. This fear allows for an interpretation that the people could have been taken from the slave trading cities of Dublin and York, and taken to the Volga River region to be traded with the Rūs. Because of the finds of dirham hoards within Anglo-Saxon England specifically, the exchange of dirhams could have been used in the trading of slaves. David A. E. Pelteret claims “it was the explosive expansion of Islam in the eighth and ninth centuries that simulated the slave trade and created a demand that the Scandinavians proved very willing to meet.”235 Alice Rio’s analysis of the Eastern European slave trade deemed it to be a better trading ground for slaves as they would

often fetch a higher profit there than within Europe. This means that the slave trade was about the number of people that are being sold, over anything else.\textsuperscript{236} This would then make the focus for many of the slave traders to travel eastward rather than to the rest of Europe, for the higher profit margins.\textsuperscript{237}

Alice Rio draws many similarities between the Byzantium Empire and Ireland. She sees the unfreedom of slaves at the household level is relative to the different levels of the slaves. Slaves maintained a multitude of different functions in society, “chattels, whether as trophies or commodities,” developed a distinction of unfreedom, which “in places characterized either by tremendous wealth and economic complexity or, on the contrary, by a low level of material differentiation.”\textsuperscript{238} She states that “slave status as a tool of domination had the further use of helping to establish the relative positions of various members of a lord’s household hierarchically in relation to each other, as well as to express the different symbolic terms under which they could fulfill otherwise relatively undifferentiated practical roles.”\textsuperscript{239} Her analysis of the societal roles that slaves would be classified in was dependent on the occupation in which the slave fulfilled for their master, and the master would use the duties of a slave as a way to express power. This can be seen in Eastern Europe, with the control of the slave merchants over their slaves, which equated each of them to a monetary value and nothing more.

Many parallels can be drawn between the British Isles and that of Eastern Europe in the development of the slave trade. The context of how slave trading came about differs regionally; however it was a necessity of life for the peoples that were living in the area. The Scandinavians became very interested in slave raiding and trading in the eighth century through to the eleventh century, which coincides with the desire for slaves in the Middle East and Africa. The slave markets were large and the conflicts between the Anglo-Saxons in England and the various Irish kings with the Scandinavian raiders resulted in amplified warfare, increasing the capture of people for slavery as an outcome. Rio claims that many of the people that were captured from England, Wales, and Ireland, went either to Scandinavia to work in domestic and farm settings or were sent to the “Muslim world.”\textsuperscript{240} This would

\textsuperscript{236} Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 25.  
\textsuperscript{238} Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 144.  
\textsuperscript{239} Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 145.  
\textsuperscript{240} Rio, \textit{Slavery After Rome}, 29.
have allowed for the expansion of the slave trade to not only take place at the big trading centres, such as Dublin and York, but also would allow for the increase in the economic benefits of selling the slaves in Eastern Europe where they could gain a higher price. Ultimately, the information that I have compiled in this chapter and the previous chapter, finds direct method comparatives in the ways people were captured and incorporated into the slave trade. The people that were taken fell into the function of a commodity and their life, was deemed at a price that benefited their master. Based on the contemporary sources, the Arab writers give detailed information about the types of people the masters were, how the slaves were treated and the different functions they maintained within each of the regions. This, in comparison to the contemporary sources from Northwestern Europe only give us information about the capturing of people and the consequence of slavery after the control of England returned to the Anglo-Saxon’s.

The burial of the man at the site of Ballateare on the Isle of Man also connects the funerary rituals practiced in both the British Isles and the information that comes from the written source from Ibn Fadlān. Much of the remains within the burial can be linked to the ritual that Ibn Fadlān witnessed, including the sacrifice of a dog, horses, cows and the human sacrifice of a female slave. Along with the construction of a mound, and a wooden postmarking. There are a few differences, which include the site of Ballateare not including a ship burial; rather, the body is placed inside of a coffin. Also, the burial was not a cremation burial, but rather inhumation burial, before the mound was erected. The fact that the burial is an inhumation rather than a cremation could be related to the differences that come from the inclusion of the other cultural norms, such as Christianity, which often used coffins. As well with the Isle of Man being completely surrounded by water, it may have been more practical not to use a boat within the burial, as the people living on the Isle would be dependent on the use of boats in order to trade and obtain goods from nearby communities on Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England.

Differences in the type of slave sacrifices can also be seen. From the site of Ballateare, it can be interpreted that the female slave would have been equivalent to that of the cattle and other livestock that was included within the burial, especially since the remains are found in the same layer, and not next to the remains of the other individual. This in comparison to the description of the funeral from Ibn Fadlān seemingly depicts the slave girl gaining status to that equivalent to the chieftain that she is dying for, rather than just a slave. The removal of
her slave markers, bracelets and anklets, could show the increase of status as a wife or companion rather than servant. This difference in the burial techniques do follow the assumption of deviant burials, but in regards to the other burials that will be analyzed within this thesis, the burying of the other individual on a different layer than the master is not seen.

Karras also makes a claim for the possibility that this funerary practice can draw a connection between a slave sacrifice to their masters and that of a suttee burial. Suttee burials are when the wife sacrifices herself to be buried alongside her husband. Within Ibn Fadlân’s description, he referred to the master as “husband” and this reference could mean that the sacrificed slave girl was considered the “wife”. This could lead to the interpretation that there is a connection between the sacrifice of a woman to fulfill the role of a wife in the afterlife, rather than that of the slave. Karras alludes that the sacrifice of a woman was to give the dead chieftain a companion in the afterlife, rather than a servant. Karras also asserts that the importance that scholars give to his account is not valid based on the inconsistencies and lack of evidence that comes from the text. This, however, is her interpretation based on the text alone. Ibn Fadlân’s account has helped provide context to many archaeological sites of double burials where one of the individuals seems to have died in a violent way. Karras’s analysis, while influential in understanding the context of why slaves were sacrificed, restrains the significance of the text that maintains some of the same themes that other Arab writers found within their travels to the Rūs, both before and after Ibn Fadlân.

This recounting of the funeral generates many questions, and forces scholars to discuss the relevance and function of the slave within the whole of the ritual. The slave, as Karras describes, may be fulfilling the role of the spouse in the afterlife, which would signify a status change for the slave women from a slave to that of a similar rank of that of the chieftain. The additional amount of care that went into the final days of the slave woman’s life can be compared to be treating her like royalty, ensuring she is well fed, continually drinking alcohol, and clean. In comparison, Montgomery states that this ritual cannot be directly linked to that of purely Scandinavian influence based on the interpretations of “the ‘Angel of Death,’ the ritual intercourse, and the wary and naked kindler of the pyre”. While these are valid concerns, I believe that Hraundal provides good reasoning as to who the Rūs that lived in the area that Ibn Fadlân visited were. His composition of who exactly

these people were is based on the fact that the culture in which these people originated, is only a portion of who these people were. It is also the influence that they obtained from the other surrounding societies that developed the Rūs further away from their initial Scandinavian lifestyles, which is something seen in all areas that the Scandinavians settled. This fact does not make them irrelevant for the discussion of slavery in Scandinavia society. Ibn Fadlān’s own interpretations on the ritual is a common mistake of the people who write about civilizations that are not their own. While his interpretations can leave scholars with more questions than answers, the conclusions that can be drawn from his account to that of Scandinavian archaeological sites prove that there are similarities that cannot be denied in the rituals.

2.5 Conclusion

Within Eastern Europe slaves were used in many different ways based on the archaeological and written evidence that has been analyzed and discussed throughout this chapter. The slave trade was the main topic of analysis in Eastern Europe, as many of the slaves entered the area from foreign lands in which the Scandinavians raided. Rio notes that this occurrence was called the ‘Viking effect’, in which the escalation and opening of trading networks that the Scandinavians began in the British Isles and Eastern Europe, based on their raiding, allowed for the further development of the “political practices” that were emerging throughout Europe. She goes on further to say that the “least developed polities of North-Western Europe” were the main contributors to the slave trade during the Viking Age.

The slave trade functioned as a valuable part of the economic development for the masters in Eastern Europe and the function of slaves could be further defined as concubines, sacrificial and ritualistic participants, and commodities. Their functions are clearly defined throughout the contemporary written materials that came from the Arab writers, which gave important information about the slaves that were found in the Rūs communities. The information that we were able to obtain from the analysis of these texts, supplemented by the other scholars used throughout this chapter, find commonalities between the Rūs and the Scandinavians, which connect the cultures and find associations in the societal roles that the peoples held within each of the levels of the communities. Finally, the archaeological evidence that comes from the dirham hoards allows for the understanding of the extent in which the trade

243 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 38.
244 Rio, Slavery After Rome, 39.
networks, including the possibility of the trading of slaves, expanded throughout the areas in which the Scandinavians settled, including the British Isles, which is confirmed by many of the primary source materials that speak to the capturing of people to be used as slaves.
3 Scandinavia

Slavery in Scandinavia was very different from the type of slavery seen in the other regions discussed within this thesis. Ample evidence has been provided to support the theory that with Northwestern and Eastern Europe slaves’ main societal role was to function as a commodity, while slavery within Scandinavia cannot be defined with such a coherent picture. The function of slaves was regionally dependent within Scandinavia itself, but parallels can be seen in the functions of slaves within many of the regions. This chapter will discuss slavery in the context of the law codes that originated in the Viking Age from two different areas of Norway and Iceland and provide evidence of master and slave burials, which are found frequently throughout the entire region. The lack of unanimity in the treatment and punishment of slaves found within the archaeological record creates a different image from that of Northwestern and Eastern Europe. Constructing a direct connection between slaves, as a commodity is further supplemented from the Scandinavian slave trade within the regions. The law codes discussed in this chapter will provide an understanding of the evidence into some of the more common governing principles for slaves, focusing on the injuring or death of the slaves at the hand of another. The laws in comparison to the archaeological evidence provides indications about the function of slaves and how these functions are incorporated into the funerary rituals and the death of their master. This chapter will work to understand the contemporary Scandinavian societal norms that are seen in the archaeological record and the law codes.

3.1 Laws

3.1.1 Grágás

The Grágás, also referred to as the “Free State Laws” by tenth century Norwegian settlers in Iceland, are the Icelandic laws that originated in the early twelfth century, c. 1120. These law codes were based on the Gulathing law code, whose manuscripts date back to the first half of the thirteenth century, from the western coast of Norway. The Lawspeaker, who was the head of the general assembly or the “Thing”, created many of these laws at each

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246 Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I, 1; Sandvik and Sigurdsson, “Laws,” 231; the dating of the Gulathing laws will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.
One of the duties of the Lawspeaker was to “recite the laws at the General Assembly over every three summers,” this was done in order to maintain the knowledge of the laws among all the people in Iceland. The oldest texts of these laws come from the Codex Regius, the first part of which was written in 1260, and the second part in 1280. It is unknown who exactly wrote the laws, but the incorporation of the Norwegian legal norms into these early Icelandic laws was a crucial part of their creation.

The law codes K≠111 and 112, are the two main sections that provide the laws pertaining to slaves. The categories containing laws that concern slaves are as follows: if someone kills a man’s slave; if a slave forfeits immunity; if a man who kills a slave forfeits immunity in certain circumstances; the full outlawry for a man who kills a slave defending his master; if a man kills his own slave; giving another man’s slave blows or beatings; if slaves of different owners fight or kill each other and if a slave may kill on account of his wife.

Before discussing what the specific laws are, it is important to define the term ‘slave’ in regards to the law codes of the time. The translators of the *Grágás* laws gave a definition of what a slave is based on the different law codes presented about slaves, it follows:

A slave was his master’s property. If the latter killed him outside lent he was not answerable at law (though he doubtless would be to the Church). The slave’s legal responsibility was consequentially diminished. He had, however, a certain right to personal compensation, the right to kill on the account of his wife, the possibility of acquiring some means, and of punishment by outlawry. His freedom could be given to him or bought for him; certain ties remain between the freedman and the freedom-giver. He was not fully free until he had been “led into the law”.

The use of male pronouns within the definition recognizes slaves more commonly as males and is further justified in the texts by the use of the word bondwoman rather than slave when referring to female slaves and the role they would fulfill.

Law codes pertaining to bondwomen are in regards to the wife of a slave, which state that the husband has the right to kill on her behalf, even though she is a bondwoman. This is an
important law because freemen do not have this right. It is also stated in the laws that “It is lawful for a man to buy a bondwoman as a bedfellow for twelve ounce-units without prior leave.” These laws in regards to female slaves specifically do not mean that women did not have any other roles in society, but rather satisfy the necessity to lay out certain rules based on certain characteristics that were relevant to societal norms.

Many of the laws pertain to the abuse and the death of slaves. K≠111 specifically states, “Servant killings are if a man kills another man’s slave or bondwoman and the penalty is lesser outlawry.” This means that if a slave of one man kills another man’s slave they will be called to the assembly. However, the law states that if the person who kills the slave is “a rightful assembly participant… he is not under penalty, but he must pay for the slave.” The law continues to say “Men have the right to avenge the slave at the place of action where he is killed but not afterwards”; if the master of a slave feels like avenging his slave he has every right to do so. The immunity of a slave is dependent on the actions of the slave. Within the law codes it says “A slave forfeits his immunity if he says something to a man which between free men requires full [or partial] personal compensation…” This follows that if a slave forfeits their immunity before he is killed, the master has no right to avenge the slave after death. Thus, there are repercussions to the actions and the words that slaves do and say in their daily lives.

Section K≠111 declares that it is punishable by death if a slave kills a man, even if he is protecting his master. It follows that “If a master kills his own slave he is under no penalty unless he kills him in an established holy season or in Lent.” However, even if the master kills during this holy season, there is no legal consequence for the murder, but rather is against the teachings of the church. In addition, this section states that if another man that is not the master gives the slave a “blemishing blow” the master can take “six ounce-units and the slave three”, whereas if they wound or cripple the slave, they have to pay the price of the slave to the master. Finally, the law states that if slaves fight to the death, the master of the slave who killed the other can let the winning slave be prosecuted for the murder, or pay for the value of the slave which is set by the neighbours “by oath on a book.” It continues that if

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253 *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*, 173.
255 *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I*, 172.
one of the slaves ends up harming one other by a “crippling beating”, the owners share responsibility of both the healthy slave and the crippled slave.\textsuperscript{256}

These law codes are seemingly made in order to protect the livelihoods of the masters. If a slave is killed or injured, the work that they would normally do would become stalled, and thus compensation would be the only reasonable outcome. The work slaves provided for their masters was important to the success of the farms and damage to anything that hindered the outcome of the success of the master could be detrimental to the family. Setting fixed amounts on certain damages or death to a master’s property ensures that a replacement can be made quickly so loss of work does not occur. These laws do not provide legal protection for slaves within Scandinavian society and alludes to the lack of consideration for slaves held by the rest of society to be very low, classified similar to the farmer’s livestock rather than a human. It is also important to note that these law codes would be likely to have Christian influence within them, which is why a focus on a repayment or wergild would be paid for harm to slaves. While evidence from the laws does support this claim, as will be discussed below, slaves were held in regard different from what the \textit{Grágás} specifically claim.

\subsection{3.1.2 Early Norwegian Laws}

Two of the most important Norwegian laws are the \textit{Gulathing} and the \textit{Frostathing} Laws; each which were developed in the territory they governed, and produced within the same time period. The \textit{Gulathing} laws were used in the west coast and interior regions of Norway, whereas the \textit{Frostathing} laws governed the region of the Trondheim fjord.\textsuperscript{257} The \textit{Gulathing} and \textit{Frostathing} law codes manuscripts that scholars have today only date back to the first half of the thirteenth century, which is slightly problematic, as it is strongly considered that the \textit{Gulathing} laws were the inspiration for the first laws that were introduced in Iceland from the tenth century. The fact that the \textit{Gulathing} laws were the inspiration for the first laws that were introduced in Iceland is based on the information found within \textit{Íslendingabók} from c. 1125, states the use of these laws being the foundation for the \textit{Grágás}, the laws of the “Free State”.\textsuperscript{258} Correspondingly, based on the information that comes from \textit{Heimskringla}, the establishment of the codes date to c. 930.\textsuperscript{259} Ultimately the dating of the codes have been deemed to date to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{256} \textit{Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I}, 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{257} Sandvik and Sigurdsson, “Laws,” 223.
  \item \textsuperscript{258} Sandvik and Sigurdsson, “Laws,” 224, 225; Ari Þorgilsson Fröði, \textit{Ares Isländerbuch}, ed. Wolfgang Golther (Halle (Saale): Niemeyer, 1923), 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{259} Sandvik and Sigurdsson, “Laws,” 231.
\end{itemize}
the time of Haakon the Good, c. 935-961, which would date these codes to the tenth century.  

Referring back to the original law codes in Norway, many of these early laws pertain to the roles and the punishments of thralls, which is already discussed to be the Old Norse term for slave, throughout these regions. Thralls are mentioned in many different sections of each of the law codes, including the laws on personal rights, merchant laws, theft and coast defence in the Gulathing law, and church law, miscellaneous provisions, and merchant law in the Frostathing law code. Some of the most important examples of the laws that pertain to the thralls in the Gulathing law codes portray the thralls, or slaves, as the lowest part of the social strata of Scandinavian society. In many of the references to thralls in relation to theft or murder, the thralls are more likely to be punished with death or outlawry, meaning they are no longer under the protection of the law. Some of the laws within the Gulathing code protect some thralls against extreme cruelty by their masters, stating that if a man kills his thrall, he will be classified as a murderer unless he reports the murder of the thrall, and if a man kills another man’s thrall, compensation is to be paid for the thrall, depending on the people he reports the murder to. Furthermore, the same type of law exists if a thrall is “accused of manslaying, his master shall refute the charge on his behalf with such an oath as [he would have to take] in his own defense. And if the oath fails the master himself becomes liable to outlawry.” The only way for the thrall to avoid death would be through their master taking an oath, which may have to be supported by other witnesses, that the thrall did not commit the crime, otherwise both the master and the thrall are deemed outside the law, as the master is liable for their property.

The law codes also give information on the differing punishment of thralls that are deemed as “native”, someone that is of Scandinavian descent and born within the country, and “alien”, someone from a different country, and is not born in the land they now work in. The difference in punishment for alien thralls as compared to native thralls show a lighter hand when it comes to people not knowing the ways of the new societies they are a part of. It

260 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 7.
261 For this section of the text I will use the word thrall, as it is the used to define slaves specifically within the Gulathing and Frostathing Law codes. At the end of this section I will return to using the term slave.
262 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 146; specifically the laws state that if a thrall harms a free man that the owner of the thrall will reimburse the wounded man, “or send the thrall into outlawry.”
264 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 133-134.
allows alien thralls second chances, whereas native thralls should know better. It can also be interpreted that a native thrall deemed as a lower expense, and thus a reduced commodity than that of the alien thralls. For example, “If a thrall of native birth steals, let his head be stricken off, or let his master clear him with a sixfold oath.”

A “sixfold oath” is one that is taken by six men of the same rank as the master. However, “If an alien thrall or the son of an alien [thrall] steals, he shall be flogged, and let his master have him flogged within five days; if that is not done, the thrall shall have him again, but he shall have him flogged thoroughly.” Slaves that would have been imported into new lands would more likely have a higher cost to them as compared to native thralls as they would lack knowledge of the common language, and there would have been an increased fee is importing the labour to bring these slaves to Norway. This could also mean that there was a higher regard for these alien thralls rather, and they were possibly more sought out after in the Gulathing law code region.

Another important section of the law codes addresses how a woman’s status would be affected by her choice to lay with a thrall. It is stated that if a well-born woman lies with a thrall, she will lose her status and be classified as a bondwoman until she can pay the king’s garth, or cloisters, and obtain her status back. In regards to the bearing of thrall children the laws state that if a woman bares a child with a thrall she will have to pay the king a fine, and the child will remain with the mother, based on the church laws. This again, is similar to the laws seen in the Gulathing code, however it does not state the removal of her initial status, in which she has to pay back, but rather a fine for bearing a child of lesser status into her own. This shows the association with a thrall can easily change the position or status of a woman and any subsequent child with a thrall in the Viking Age.

Within the codes there are two laws that do provide valuable information about material items that the thralls would have had, and one of the ways that they could obtain freedom, other than buying themselves out of it. The law codes state that a thrall can have one material item that they are allowed to bargain for and that is their own knife. This is important because in many of the archaeological sites that will be discussed later in this chapter, the

265 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 167.
266 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 54.
267 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 167.
268 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 143.
269 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 225, 226.
270 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 76.
finding of only a single knife in a burial is a major signifier of a thrall or slave burial. Lastly, the changing of a thrall to a free man can be obtained if the thrall is able to kill an enemy in battle. 271 If a thrall joins a battle or war, they are proving themselves a worthy member of society with the act of killing hostile forces and displaying the courage and bravery of a freeman.

Within the Frostathing law code from the modern day Trøndelag region, many of the laws maintain the same ideologies of the Gulathing law, however there are a few differences that are important to introduce. One such difference can be seen in the law for the killing of a thrall, “If a man kills his thrall, he shall report the deed on the same day; he is then held answerable to no one but God; but if he fails to do this, he is a murderer.” There was no accountability for the murder of thralls within the law, but rather the murderer would have to answer to the Church, and God. This compares well with the laws about chattel, which state, “If chattel destroys chattel, horn beast or hoof beast or thrall, half the value shall be paid [in reparation].”272 This associate the lives of thralls more with the livestock that they would be most likely are caring for, with the death of a thrall being the equivalent to the death of an animal. Thus the construct of murder is not applicable to the death of thralls, unless the murderer hides their actions.

While the Frostathing law code seem to be harsher on thralls, they lay out the responsibilities of masters, including differing laws for native and alien thralls, whereas the Gulathing law code do not. The Frostathing law states the responsibilities of the masters to native thralls comprise the maintaining of the thrall, as well as ensuring that any punishment that the thrall deserves based on the laws is handled by the master, including the flogging of a thrall that runs away. However, if an alien thrall has a charge placed against him, the thrall is surrendered to the prosecutor, whom can torture him “till he speaks the truth”, but without making him unable to work and if the native thrall runs away, he will be castrated.273 These statements lay out the rules and responsibilities of the masters to the thralls for their day-to-day life. However, both of the law codes fail to mention the master’s responsibility with regards to housing, clothing, and food for the slaves; resulting in a lack of information on the fundamental conditions that the slaves would have faced.

271 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 198.
272 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 289.
273 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 358.
These law codes give ample information that is hardly seen in other texts in regards to the treatment and the status of the slaves or thralls in Viking Age Scandinavia. Laurence M. Larson states “There is no need in a survey of this sort to discuss the status of the slave, since he had no place or membership in the social body.” He continues by saying that, “thralldom was a very important factor in the social and economic arrangements of the time.” These two statements seem to contradict themselves, however Larson seems to believe that slaves are one coherent social body, and the status of a slave does not seem to be something that is stratified even within the slave status. Slaves were an important part of Scandinavian society, and the functions of the slaves were dependent on the region in which the slaves resided. These functions made slavery different within Scandinavian societies as compared to other societies as the functions of slaves cannot be defined as one specific social role, but rather they had multiple. These law codes portray a specific representation of slaves as a monetary outcome; however this does not give much information about the social function of these individuals. Furthermore, slaves and slavery played a vital role within Scandinavian societies as they allowed for economic development, which can be linked to the increase of slavery in the Viking Age. The function of slaves based on the information that is given in the law codes is very economic focused, which hinders the perception of them in any other regard.

3.2 Archaeological Evidence

The archaeological evidence of slave and master burials is more frequent within Scandinavia as compared to the other areas of analysis. These types of known deviant burials are specifically seen at two sites in Denmark, one particular site in central-eastern Sweden, throughout the southeastern region of Sweden, and one site in Norway. Each of these sites display similar characteristics to one another, but differ from the burials that are surrounding each of the sites.

Kristina Jennbert discusses the importance of burials in the archaeological record. She claims that “graves are one of the best-known archaeological sources, and generations of archaeologists have used them in chronological and spatial analysis, as well as in analysis of wealth, social status, and gender.” She continues by affirming that by archaeologists

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274 The Earliest Norwegian Laws, 13.
analyzing graves, it allows them to understand a “grave language” which gives a personal identity to each of the individuals, including the social, cultural and religious aspects of their lives. This impression is frequent when analyzing burials, however she asserts that the items that are included in the graves are provided by the relatives or kin groups, and it is rather how these groups perceived the individuals and what they think the dead might want to accompany them in death, rather than what the individual may have wanted within their grave, thus creating a social identity of the individuals based on how the living perceived them. This concept could also be applied to master and slave burials; the inclusion of slaves could be based on the perceived needs of the master after their death and a symbol of wealth, increasing the status of the master by including the slave within their burial.

Evidence of the exchange of different burial practices and rituals between societies connects the regions Scandinavian settled in based on the different burial types that can be found throughout the region, such as inhumation, cremation, mound and coffin burials. Karras suggests that in Denmark because the burials lack some of the more expensive grave goods that can be found in other similar styles of burials in other regions of Scandinavia, the inclusion of the slave as the “most valuable grave-good in each of them.” Nevertheless, there is a still difference in the types of burials, which differentiate the status of the individuals, and further emphasizes the deviant burials in the region.

3.2.1 Denmark
3.2.1.1 Lejre

The site of Lejre, which, according to legend was the place of the first Danish Dynasty, the Scyldings, is found at the end of the Roskilde Fjord on Sjælland, and is classified as a sanctuary, or vé. The site is mentioned in many of the medieval sources, as well as in the chronicle from Thietmar of Merseburg, a German cleric, who wrote in 1016 that Lejre “was the “capital” of the kingdom (caput regni) and that human and animal sacrifices took place here every nine years.” Within Lejre there are two separate sites that were the focus of the archaeological excavations by Harald Andersen in 1944: Gammel Lejre, which was excavated in 1945, and the “foreland between the Lejre and Kornerup rivers, which was

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277 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 72.
279 Christensen, “Lejre Beyond Legend,” 164. The original texts are in Latin, and I rely on Christensen’s translation as a result.
excavated between 1944 and 1968. During these excavations, Andersen and his team found a Viking Age cemetery, where fifty-five of the burials were excavated. Within these fifty-five burials some were “richly furnished”, including Grave 55, a male grave that also contained a beheaded man, determined by Andersen to be that of a sacrificed slave. The decapitated male was on top of the other male’s body, and it was determined that the male was between thirty-five and forty-five years old at death. He did not have any grave goods associated with his remains, which supports the notion that he was of lower status.

Furthermore, the position in which his body was placed within the burial indicates, according to Leszek Gardela, the possibility that the hands and legs of the male were bound (Figure 4: Burial at Lejre). The male that was buried twenty centimetres under the older male, was twenty-five to forty years old when he died and his grave contained many items, including an iron knife, whetstone, a decorated bronze buckle and an ornamented belt end. Gardela concluded that both of the men would have been buried at the same time, and argued that the male on the top was a slave who was ceremonially killed to serve his master in the afterlife. Overall, this site is not like the other ones in the area.

Figure 4: Burial at Lejre. The upper, older male is depicted on the left; the lower, younger male is depicted on the right.

280 Christensen, “Lejre Beyond Legend,” 166; Based on the information from Tom Christensen, the site of Lejre has been excavated multiple times between 1850 and 1988.
281 Christensen, “Lejre Beyond Legend,” 166.
284 Reproduced After: Gardela, “The Headless Norseman,” Fig. 2, 110.
This burial displays important characteristics that would pertain to the interpretation of this double burial being a master and slave burial and shows another function of slaves within society. It can be determined that the younger male’s burial contained more material wealth than the older male, based on the grave goods. The violent death of the older male also allows for the interpretation of a slave being sacrificed to their master. The sacrifice of the older male was done as a supplementary addition to the burial, which equates him more similarly to the other material items that were included in the grave. But, it is important to note that the older male was buried underneath the younger male, and thus there is a differentiation in the status, that the funerary practice wanted to be determinable between the individuals. The rest of the burials all follow much of the same burial techniques within the region and the surrounding areas, making this burial divergent from the rest. It is important to note that not the entire site has been excavated, and only forty-nine of the fifty-five burials were inhumations and able to be analyzed properly by Andersen and his team.

3.2.1.2 Gerdrup Village

This site is also found on the Sjælland, another important burial site from the Viking age. Danish archaeologists excavated the area in 1981 finding a burial mound that contained the remains of a male and female; however, unlike the previous burial, the body of the female sustained violent treatment with two boulders placed on her chest and her right leg.\footnote{Gardeła, “Buried with Honour and Stoned to Death?” 339.} This double burial is a deviant burial as compared to the other graves that are found in the surrounding area, but with similar characteristics found in other grave locations in Denmark, Sweden and Iceland. It was determined by the archaeologists that the male died by hanging, but the female’s death was unable to be determined.\footnote{Gardeła, “Buried with Honour and Stoned to Death?” 341.} The grave goods pertained mostly to the female, which included a knife, bone needle-case, and a spear pointing downward. The male had only a knife found within his burial, which was commonly associated with slaves as it was their only personal item in life, which can be linked with the corresponding legal norms from the \textit{Gulathing} law code.\footnote{Gardeła, “Buried with Honour and Stoned to Death?” 342.}

Gardeła has also inferred the possibility of interpreting these burials with a focus on religious or ritualistic perspectives. Using the above grave as an example of this inference, based on the position of the bodies and how each died, the stones could have been used to keep the
spirits of the dead from attacking the living. However, this concept is up for interpretation, and I believe based on each of the individuals having different causes of death, and the violent death of the male, this could be interpreted as the female to be the master and the male as the slave. The further interpretation of this burial is notable in the other archaeological sites from Scandinavia, which show the differences between burial of masters and slaves are quite different amongst themselves.

### 3.2.1.3 Stengade Cemetery

The last important known slave burial site in Denmark comes from Stengade Cemetery on the island of Langeland. Grave F II from Stengade II is one of the most used examples of a decapitation burial from the Viking Age. At this site, which has been discussed in many publications from 1936 to 2009, a single burial out of the other eighty-three appears to match the characteristics of a slave and master deviant burial. This burial consisted of a chamber grave lined with wooden planks and containing the remains of two males lying beside one another. The male in the southern portion of the chamber was determined to be about twenty-five years old, while the man in the northern area of the chamber was determined to be between thirty and thirty-five years of age. Further analysis of the position of the bodies allowed for archaeologists to determine that the older male’s legs were positioned in an unnatural position, with the hands placed on top of one another on his hips, suggesting the possibility that his hands and legs were bound together with an organic material (Figure 5: Burial from Stengade II). Furthermore, the head of the older man had been severed from the rest of the body, and placed above the remains of the right clavicle. Gardela suggests that the younger male was most likely part of the higher social classes based on his height of 193 cm, as compared to the older male at 173 cm. His analysis is useful, as the higher classes would have access to proper nutrition throughout their entire lives, which would allow them to grow fully as compared to the lower classes. This is further supported by the rare spearhead that comes from the grave. Conclusively, the ways in which the males have been treated in death and violent death of the older male signify a master and slave burial.

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288 Gardela, “Buried with Honour and Stoned to Death?” 343.
3.2.2 Sweden

3.2.2.1 Birka

In Sweden, Birka is one of the largest archaeological sites from the Viking Age, containing two burials that fit the criterion for master and slave burials, one of which was found at the cemetery on the island of Björkö. The first burial is grave A129, otherwise known as the “elk-man” and the second being a double burial of two women.293 The burial of the “elk-man” was discovered in the “Black Earth at the site of Birka”, which was excavated in 1988 and found near the town wall, buried underneath a longhouse.294 Within the burial the remains of two males were found, one of which was determined to be between forty and fifty years of age, with the grave goods to be associated with this individual. The grave goods consisted of many weapons made of iron and bronze, flint, glass beads, and amber.295 This burial was called the “elk-man” because of the fact that there was “an unworked elk antler that was placed just next to his head.” Next to the older male, the remains of a younger, decapitated male were found in an unnatural position who was determined to be between twenty and thirty years old. All together the elements within the grave, and the inclusion of a

decapitated individual, has led to the determination that ritualistic elements were likely incorporated into the burial. 296

This burial at Birka is different from the other burials that I have analyzed thus far. Unlike the other burials, it was not found within a cemetery, but rather underneath a Viking Age structure. It can be assumed that there are several possibilities from the placement of the burial: the first was that he was buried there before the building was erected, the second was that the bodies were purposely put underneath the floor of the longhouse, or it was purposely built overtop of the burial based on the importance and the roles in which the dead maintained in life. L. Holmquist Olausson determined that the grave is dated between the Vendel and the Viking Age, which would be between the second parts of the eighth to the first part of the ninth century. 297 Nevertheless, it can be determined based on the lack of grave goods for the younger male, and his violent death, that he was most likely a slave that was sacrificed among the other items that were included in his master’s burial.

The second burial at Birka is of two women, in which one of the women is buried in a normal position and the second on top of the first in a crouched position. 298 This burial has been further analyzed by Anne-Sophie Gräslund’s study of the Birka burials, and she alludes to the possibility that the woman buried in the crouched position was buried alive. This grave, Bj. 516 + 632, does however pose a few problems. Gräslund determined that this grave, even though it looks like a double burial, is more likely a secondary burial; however she is unable to determine the difference in time from when the crouched female was buried, after the first female. 299

The inability to determine whether the burial was a secondary or a double burial, due to the lack of analysis of the layers of soil, and because it was a chamber burial, allows for a further interpretation. Taking into consideration the text from Ibn Fadlān on the female slave sacrifice, the chieftain was buried first while they prepared the rest of the burial ceremony, and the grave was then reopened and the slave was placed on the ship for the cremation part of the ritual. The reopening of high status graves can also be used in the discussion of this

298 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 73.
burial information. This possible burial scenario could allow for the explanation of the position of the second females remains as a slave buried with her mistress and allows for a further interpretation of the burial that has been not completely explained by previous scholarship.  

3.2.2.2 Burials in Southeastern Sweden

Throughout the southeastern region of Sweden there are multiple instances of burials that contain what have been determined to be sacrificed individuals. In this region there seems to be a higher amount of sacrificial victims in the graves that were analyzed by archaeologists, specifically the area of southwestern Scania. It is noted that in this region the best example of this is from the remains of “an individual whose head had been cut off had been placed in the fill of an inhumation burial where the burial in the bottom of the pit had been equipped with, among other things, a pair of spurs.” Furthermore within the region, the five burials, which are found from Lockarp cemetery, that contain sacrifices were all burials of males, all four out of the five burials were found in the same grave grouping. All together there were twenty burials that fit the classification of human sacrifice in the region, six of which were cremations that were used as fill, and the rest were inhumations of secondary or partial remains. Unlike the finds in other areas of Scandinavia, the majority of the remains are partial remains, or just the craniums. Fredrik Svanberg acknowledges that the majority of the burials do not have any excessive amounts of burial items, but rather the most common items of a knife, or a knife and pottery, or a knife and whetstone, or nothing at all. Four of the other burials contained other items, which included jewellery items, or multiple weapons.

3.2.3 Norway

3.2.3.1 Flakstad on the Lofoten Islands

In Norway, archaeological evidence of slaves as burial gifts is not as common as it is in other countries; however, the site of Flakstad on the Lofoten Islands in Northern Norway, contains evidence based on DNA, that slaves were seen as burial gifts during the Viking Age. From the graves that were discovered at the site, ten of them could be analyzed. The analyses were

300 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 73.
301 Fredrik Svanberg, Death rituals in South-east Scandinavia AD 800-1000: Decolonizing the Viking Age 2 (Malmö, Sweden: Daleke Grafiska AB, 2003), 87-88.
302 Svanberg, Death rituals in South-east Scandinavia, 92-93.
303 Svanberg, Death rituals in South-east Scandinavia, 93.
304 Svanberg, Death rituals in South-east Scandinavia, 94.
based on the examination of stable isotopes, which allowed for a determination of the different strata of society, as well as mitochondrial DNA analysis.\textsuperscript{305}

Elise Naumann, Maja Krewińska, Anders Götherström and Gunilla Eriksson’s study claim that double burials were frequent in the Viking Age, and that inhumation burials are usually found poorly preserved, thus making it hard to determine the social status of the individuals based on the remains, and the artefacts a more difficult feat. From the ten inhumation Viking Age burials that were found at the site, three were single burials, two were double burials and one was a triple burial. In the double and triple burials one of the remains is completely intact; however for the other one or two individuals, only “post cranial” remains are found, meaning everything but the head of the bodies.\textsuperscript{306} Because of this, the binding of the hands and feet, and the lack of grave goods relating to the individual, it was determined that these remains were that of slaves. The team classified these graves based on the graves containing decapitated individuals; however from the osteological analysis provided by the team, showed no signs of decapitation. It can be debated if decapitation occurred after death, and poor preservation can be to blame for the inability to confirm this occurring in the three separate burials.\textsuperscript{307}

This is why the team determined that further analysis of the carbon isotopes, which distinguished a diet that was based more on marine life as compared to land animals, and nitrogen isotopes, which fractionate for every level of the food chain, together could help understand the amount of protein that was ingested by the individuals.\textsuperscript{308} The scientists tested the teeth and the bones, as teeth give information about diet when the individual was a child, and the bones give dietary information about the last five to twenty years of life.\textsuperscript{309} It has been determined that marine life have a longer food chain and thus the isotope levels will be a lot lower than in land animals. As well, it is believed that the lower social classes would have ingested more marine animals, as they were more accessible in the area. After the analysis of the remains of five individuals of the ten, based on the isotope analysis they all maintained an equivalent diet with the same amount of proteins, and the mitochondrial DNA, which follows the maternal lineages to determine if individuals are related, proving that the

\textsuperscript{305} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 533.
\textsuperscript{306} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 533.
\textsuperscript{307} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 534.
\textsuperscript{308} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 534-535.
\textsuperscript{309} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 535.
remains in the double and triple burials were not related.\textsuperscript{310} Even though the analysis was inconclusive to support their hypothesis, based on the physical evidence of the decapitations, and lack of higher status grave goods, it can be concluded that these people were mostly slaves that were sacrificed to their masters in death.\textsuperscript{311} However, the same diet for all the remains within the grave could be based on the fact that this region is surrounded by water and marine life would have been a more common food source compared to the minimal amount of land animals that can be found in the area. Consequently, the diet would have been the same for all the individuals in the area; so focusing on the physical evidence of the burials is necessary to further differentiate status of the individuals. This site provides ample evidence of slave burials in Norway, and gives some information about the daily lives of slaves, such as diet, that is not seen in the other archaeological studies discussed.

### 3.3 Comparative Analysis

The information presented within this chapter focuses on the contemporary literature and archaeological evidence that is found in Scandinavia that portrays two different types of functions for slaves in the period. The law codes discuss slaves within an economic function, in which harm or death of them is something that is compensated with money, as their roles with domestic and agricultural work was fundamental to their masters. It focuses on the control of the peoples as a whole and does not allow for any individual interpretation of slaves; whereas the archaeological evidence portrays slaves within the focus of funerary rituals. Again, the sacrifice of a slave is something that is seen as the destruction of wealth, and the addition of a slave is similar to the inclusion of the material items that are found within the burial. This ideology of slaves again connects them to monetary wealth, but it also can signify a role within the afterlife. The different burials can show the use of the people as companions, in which they may have gained an elevated status, or a servant in the afterlife. There are few parallels between the evidence from the law codes and that of the archaeological evidence discussed and no way of knowing if any of these slaves were natives or aliens unless further scientific analysis is done to the remains, and the cause of death does not seem accidental, but rather deliberate. It can be determined that these burials would of most likely occurred outside the law, or prior to the writing of these law codes that contained Christian influence.

\textsuperscript{310} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 538.
\textsuperscript{311} Naumann et al., “Slaves as burial gifts in Viking Age Norway?” 538-539.
As already stated there are many different types of graves found in Scandinavia that have a correlation to the burial practices found in other regions that Scandinavians came in contact with. The grave goods that were included in these graves were personal items, beads and gems, which show a relationship to higher trade communities. Trading was a very integral part of Scandinavian communities, which included the trading of slaves. The trading of slaves is seen in the law codes that stated the differences in the laws based on native and alien slaves, and the children of slaves. Children of slaves were also slaves, and native slaves had more rights than alien slaves. From this it can also be interpreted that alien slaves were more valuable in Scandinavia as they were not punished to the same extent as native slaves.

It is discussed by Karras that in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, large farms like what were found in England, France and other larger kingdoms in the Viking Age would contain farms that were owned by church and the king, which would have been most likely worked by slaves. Karras continues to infer that agrarian slavery was likely used in smaller farms, and slaves were also commonly used for domestic work, which is justified by the terminology of bryti, meaning male steward, seta, meaning female housemaid, and deigia, meaning baker or dairymaid. This allows for the interpretation based on the archaeological evidence of Viking Age farming communities that separate slave dwellings from the main family home were not common, which made it likely that the family would of shared their home with the slaves. While slaves in Scandinavia seem to have it better than in the other regions of this analysis, it cannot be overstated that they were still deemed property and part of their master’s wealth. They may have maintained more liberties in which they could get some retribution if harmed, more often it went to their masters, who ultimately had control of the life and death of slaves.

This paints a different picture of how slaves were perceived in Scandinavia as compared to the chattel slaves that they were in the other regions of this analysis. One other consideration that has to be made about the early raids that have been made on areas that came in contact with the Scandinavian warriors is based on concepts discussed by Ben Raffield, Neil Price

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312 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 70.
313 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 79.
314 Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 76-77, 82, 84. Karras does point out that in Denmark there were finds of what are called “sunken huts” which were believed to be slave homes based on evidence in Óláfr Tryggvason’s saga, however this is very much speculated as it was believed that the houses were small and hard to keep warm.
and Mark Collard, by comparing the sex ratios between males and females in Scandinavian societies. The notion that male and female relationships were part of the motivating factor that encouraged raids during the period, which would increase the competition between the males, and thus further increase the social stratification.\textsuperscript{315} This construct leads to the increase of taking of female slaves for what Karras deemed “sexual access” rather than making them wives.\textsuperscript{316} Thus, Karras and Raffield and others, claim the role of concubine became an important factor in Scandinavian societies. However, the role of a concubine, as laid out by Karras is dependent on the status of the male that owned her. Karras states “concubines had a particle relationship, but no formal status or rights in a relationship.”\textsuperscript{317} It is important to note that concubines are different from the polygamous relationships that also occurred in the period. With both of these roles being filled by women, Raffield and others claim that even if it happened rarely, it would still increase the male competition for wives, especially in the lower levels of society.\textsuperscript{318} This increase in competition is seen in many societies that allowed for polygamy and concubine relationships, for males to obtain wives, they would need to obtain a certain level of wealth in order to pay the “bride price” which is described in the Grágás law codes.\textsuperscript{319} Furthermore, the “bride price” did not have to pay for concubine and slaves, because they were deemed to be the “family property.”\textsuperscript{320}

Nevertheless, it does not mean that societies with a higher male ratio result in these societies being more violent as compared to other societies.\textsuperscript{321} Thus, it does not mean that the competition is violent between the males, but rather it could be seen as a social status competition, where the younger males take advantage of their youth and being able to raid and fight in order to gain the wealth that they would need later in life. This would include obtaining slaves that would uphold specific roles within the community. Which provides possible reasoning as to why slave raiding in the British Isles really became a popular activity for the Scandinavians, but this will be discussed more in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{317} Karras, “Concubinage and Slavery in the Viking Age,” 143.
\textsuperscript{318} Raffield, et al., “Male Based Operational Sex Ratios,” 318; \textit{Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I}, 114.
\textsuperscript{319} Raffield, et al., “Male Based Operational Sex Ratios,” 319.
3.4 Conclusion

Overall, the contemporary evidence of slavery in Scandinavia shows that the function of slaves within their social status to be different than that of Northwestern and Eastern Europe. In all of the social spheres slaves are seen as the lowest level of society and deemed to be property; however a difference can be seen between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, where slaves are not so heavily focused on as being comparable to livestock. Rather, there are Scandinavian laws that provide evidence of the control that was imposed upon this specific stratum of society. Slaves were recognized to be at the mercy of their masters first, the law second and if they fell outside the law then there was nothing to protect them. This could result in the murder of slaves without any repayment, as any law did not govern them. Slaves were kept under these severe laws as they were of value and were important to the economic success of Scandinavia in the period. These laws also allowed for masters to do whatever they wanted with the slaves, which included the sacrifice of them. Within the archaeological evidence, the information that comes from the position of the bodies and the ways in which the slaves were killed, can allow for the questioning of whether or not the slaves truly wanted to die and serve their masters forever in the afterlife, as the source from Ibn Fadlān alludes in the previous chapter, or not. Nevertheless, the information that is found in Scandinavia law codes and the archaeological evidence about the functions of slaves within society, provides a less streamlined analysis on the societal roles of slaves, but rather opened up interpretation to see slaves more individually rather than a coherent status. This will be further discussed in relation to the saga materials in the next chapter, which lead to similar conclusions.
4 Remembering Slavery in Scandinavia

The written materials that recount Viking Age Scandinavia, such as the Icelandic sagas, were written in the thirteenth century, and do not make them contemporary sources. The decision to separate the contemporary sources, such as the laws and the archaeological evidence, to the materials that are dated to a period after the Viking Age, was done to allow for an analysis that did not include the interpretations of the latter authors onto the contemporary sources. As will be discussed within this chapter, other scholars propose that the sagas can be dated earlier than the thirteenth century, based on the oral traditions that were active within Scandinavia.\(^{322}\) I concur with the scholars that claim the sagas can be dated earlier, and I will discuss dating in relation to each of the sagas as a result. The information that comes from these texts of the legendary and family sagas provides vital evidence about early Scandinavian traditions that were imperative to the development of the Scandinavian societies. The presented saga materials were chosen because they provide examples of the different levels of societies and the different functions certain social statuses contributed to Scandinavian communities. Some of the evidence provided from the saga materials comes from legendary or epic sagas that are fictitious in origin, but with the integration and support of the archaeological evidence and law codes provided in the previous chapter, it will help define the societal roles of slaves based on the collaboration of all the evidence provided.

4.1 Saga Materials

4.1.1 Rígsþula

Rígsþula is a poem that tells the origin story of the social classes. The dating of the poem is debated, and is either the tenth century, or c. 1200-1250.\(^{323}\) The later date would support the poem to be interpreted with Christian ideologies and to be containing the societal norms of the thirteenth century based on the interpretations of the poem. Frederic Amory makes a convincing case for the poem based on the archaeological evidence from Birger Nerman, as well as the etymology of specific words, such as “kahr” meaning “scion” or “descendent”, which is a term often seen in the skaldic poems from the tenth and eleventh centuries. This evidence presented by Nerman, lead to the conclusion that the poem has come from the

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\(^{322}\) This will be further discussed in within the chapter.

\(^{323}\) Amory, “The Historical Worth of Rígsþula,” 3.
earlier part of the tenth century. The character Ríg has been interpreted to represent Heimdall who is determined to be the creator of the different social classes, which are detailed within the poem. Heimdall being the creator of the different social classes assumes that Scandinavian social structure originates from the gods. The belief that the social status is god given can be interpreted to be a Christian inclusion, which is also a claim that nobility are given their status because god decided it so; however this concept could also apply to the lower classes if the latter is correct for Viking Age Scandinavia. The poem maintains a strong analysis of the social structure of the Scandinavian communities that followed the Old Norse religion.

The poem contains descriptions of how each of the classes came to be and how within the first meeting Ríg lies with Great-grandmother, and created thrall. In the following quote the characteristics of the thrall is described:

“jóð ól Ædda,
jósu vatni,
hórvi svartan
hétu Írael.
Vas þar á þöndum
hrokkít skinn,
kropnir knuar,
- - - -
fingr dignir,
f ælligt andlit,
lútr hryggr,
langir hælar.”

The poem follows with a description of the type of women that would associate with them, for example, guengilbeina meaning bondwomen, another word for a female slave, would be an acceptable match for thrall. The poem continues, with the thrall and the bondwomen bearing sons and they would be called, “Hræimr ok Fjósír, Klúrr ok Klæggí, Kæsír, Fúlnír, Drumbr, Digraldi, Drottr ok Hósvir. Lútr ok Þæggjaldí...” and their daughters they would be call “Drumba ok Kumba, Ókkvinkalfa ok Arinníja, Ysja ok Ambótt, Ækintfjasna,

324 Amory, “The Historical Worth of Rígsþula,” 6, 12.
327 “Rígsþula,” 156. The names translate as: “Crier and Cowherder, Boor and Horsefly, Lewd and Stinky, Log, Stout, Clumsy and Grey (darker coloured), Lout and Leggy.” And the daughter’s names are translated as: “Loggy and Lumpy, Thick-Calves and Bird-Nose, Bustle-About and Bondwoman, Stumpy, Tattered and Crane-Legged.” My own translation.
Tǫtrughypja ok Trǫnubęina.” This section of the poem ends by saying “þaðan eru komnar þræla ættir” meaning “then comes the descendants of thralls.”

The poem symbolizes the creation of the different layers of society that are based on the names such as ‘thrall’ or ‘jarl’. The different names that are used in each of the different social layers would be distinguishers for the function each of the individuals would fulfill within the social hierarchy. For example, the names that the children of thrall have would pertain to the societal functions that include hard labourers. In contrast, the names that the children of the Jarl have, such as Noble, Boy, and Kin would represent a class of men that are strong in sports, and learned in both weaponry, and the care of animals, because they are able to gain this type of knowledge from their social position. Based on the interpretations of the names, the distinguishing characteristics would not only be seen in the names of the children and the jobs, but also based on the physical attributes of the individuals that would develop from their function. More often slaves are described to be “darker” and ugly in appearance, and to be lacking in intellect in comparison to the other social groups.

The poem itself represents the visualization of the different layers of society and how they came to be. The social hierarchy being god given also establishes a personal attitude to each of the classes, which is carried throughout much of the saga literature and follows the same themes developed within this incomplete poem. The overall themes that follow chronologically in the different saga materials create parallels to the archaeological evidence that further display the social stratification of slaves as compared to the functions and societal roles of the other social classes.

4.1.2 Saga of the Volsungs

The Saga of the Volsungs is classified as a heroic poem based on the life of Sigurðr or Sigurd, who is known for slaying Fafnir, the dragon. This story also includes the complicated love story of Brynhild and Sigurd, which concludes with the murder of Sigurd and the resulting suicide of Brynhild. The ceremony that took place in Chapter Thirty-Three of the saga portrays a ritual that can create a connection with the archaeological materials, both seen in Scandinavia and within the other regions of analysis, which also supports interpretations of

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328 “Rígsþula,” 156; my own translation: “That comes the race of thralls.”
329 My own translation.
330 “Rígsþula,” in The Viking Age: A Reader, ed. Angus A. Somerville and R. Andrew McDonald (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 27.
the burials similar to this. The following excerpt from the saga is the final request of Brynhild
in regards to Sigurd’s death, and the ceremony that took place:

Now I pray to thee, Gunnar, a final request. Let one great funeral be raised on level
ground for us, me and Sigurd and those who were to be killed with him. Let there be
tents covered in mans red blood and burn there, on my other side, the Hunnish king and
on the other side of him my men, two at his head, two at his feet, and two hawks. Then
that will be equal dealings. Lay there between us a drawn sword as before, when we
shared one bed, and we were called man and wife. And the door will not fall on his
heels if I follow him, and if leading five female slaves and eight servants who my father
gave me, and they will burn there those to be killed with Sigurd. And I would say more
if I was not wounded, but now the wound hisses, and the wound is open, and I spoke the
truth. Sigurd’s dead body was prepared in the ancient custom, and a great pyre was
built. And when it was properly kindled, the dead body of Sigurd Fáfnisbane was laid
down on it, and his three year old son, who Brynhildr killed, and Guttorm. And when the
fire was all smoke, Brynhild went out on it and said to her maids to take the gold that
she wants to give them. And after that, Brynhild died and burned there with Sigurd, and
so ended their time.332

This section of the poem uses slaves, referred to as an ambátt in the poem, as a sacrificial part
of the death of Sigurd.333 While this “heroic legend” is classified as a myth rather then a
historical account, the information within the poem provides an interpretation of ritualistic
practices at the time. In regards to the date of the saga, the Codex Regius manuscript contains
the most intact version of the text; however the material within the saga corresponds with
evidence about the destruction of the Burgundians by the Huns in 437.334 Furthermore, the
story of Sigurd Fáfnisbane is carved into the Rasmund Stone at Södermanland, in Sweden
that has been dated to 1030, which are a few hundreds of years earlier than that of the text
within the Codex Regius.335 Both of these examples provide evidence to say that this saga can
be dated much earlier than scholars claim.

331 “Chapter 33,” in The Saga of the Volsungs, 60, 61.
332 My own translation.
333 “ambátt” is the Old Norse word for a female slave, as discussed within the Introduction - Terminology.
335 Klaus Düwel, “On the Sigurd representations in Great Britain and Scandinavia,” in Languages and Cultures: Studies in
Torfi H. Tulinius asserts that based on the language used within this saga, there is a connection between the “orality and the literature” meaning the story most likely originated in what Tulinius calls an “oral performance”, and it could have been a “form of aristocratic entertainment” long before it was written down. Christopher Abram argues that scholars interpret the rune stone based on the later knowledge of myths from the written sources in the thirteenth century. He continues by claiming; there is no way to know if the carver would have recognized the myth in its entirety therefore it cannot be assumed that there is a connection between the saga materials that remain today and what was part of the oral traditions at the time. Furthermore, it can be interpreted based on vocabulary that the texts can be dated to an earlier period, just like the saga manuscripts that change and alter through the different re-writes by different scribes. The remaining parts of the earliest manuscripts that survive today contain information that is different from the later manuscripts and can be interpreted as further proof that before the written tradition began in Scandinavia the existence of an oral tradition was highly probable. That fact that there are differences within the stories can be dependent on the region and time in which the sagas were recorded could perhaps be directly correlated to the issues that stem from the earliest manuscripts of the sagas that are no longer in existence today. Scholars today also have to trust the writers and scribes that worked with these sagas, such as Snorri Sturluson who worked to create an eclectic version of the sagas based on the different oral traditions from all the areas that he obtained the information from. While scholars interpret connections within the manuscripts, I believe that Tulinius’s argument on the oral traditions provide reasonable claims against the notion of Abrams. Furthermore, the dating of the Rasmund stone in Sweden, and other stones that are found within Sweden’s eastern coast, illustrates the possibility that the story would have traveled through oral history not only chronologically, but also regionally. While the dating of this text is debated, its origins can be linked to the Viking Age because of this stone. This allows for this material, even though it is classified as a legendary saga, to be taken into consideration when interpreting the ritualistic behaviours that are seen within the saga and can support other evidence about the treatment and perceptions of slaves and their roles within the Viking Age.

338 Sveinsson, Dating the Icelandic sagas, 19-20.
4.1.3 Poetic Edda: Hárbarðsljóð

Hárbarðsljóð is a poem that is only found in the Codex Regius manuscript of the Poetic Edda. It is the story of Thor and a ferryman named Hárbarðr, or Harbard that Thor encounters when he travels from the Eastern Land of the Jötunheim, the world of the giants, back to Asgard. The conversation between Thor and Harbard is interpreted to be a competition between the two, as Harbard seems to question the strength and the power of Thor and mocks him. In the end, Harbard denies Thor transit on the ferry across to Asgard, but not before he ridicules Thor, not only on his appearance but also on his lack of skills in comparison to that of Odin. 339 One part of the poem in particular led to a comparison of the people that followed Odin as compared to those who followed Thor into battle after death. The passage follows:

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'Vask á Vallandi ok vigum flygðak,
attak jófrum, en aldri sættak;
(Oðinn á jarfa, þás i val falla,
ën Þórr á þrálakyn).’ 340

"In Valland I was, and wars I raised,
Princes I angered, and peace brought never;
The nobles who fall in the fight hath Odin,
And Thor hath the race of the thralls." 342
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This section of the poem explains what happens to men when they die. After the death of a man they will be summoned to battle, and the men will be separated depending on the lives these men had in life. It asserts that Odin will command all the men of noble birth and Thor will command the “race of thralls”. The poem continues with Thor claiming that Harbard is an unfair judge of the characters of men. His perceptions of which “race” of men would be commanded by either Odin or Thor, in the battles after death is one sided. Here race has been interpreted to mean social status rather than a way to categorize people based on physical traits. It is important to note that, as discussed in Rígsþula, the social statuses were also distinguished by their looks. Regardless, what becomes clear is that Harbard believes that Thor might be powerful, but Thor is a coward since he is disguised and unwilling to disclose his identity, in fear of the Jötunn who would retaliate against Thor’s actions. Consequently,

340 “Hárbarðsljóð,” 84.
342 “Harbathsljoth,” 129.
this is why Harbard claims that Thor would be likely to command an army of thralls, who are weak and scared men, just as Thor was acting.

This section of the poem can be interpreted in a few different ways based on the context of it. One interpretation is that Thor has his own realm for the dead that only thralls can enter, and the other is that Thor is the leader of the thralls when it comes to leading them into battle. This is supported by the belief that many farmers and seafarers, or other people of lower status, which would include slaves, would pray to Thor for good crops and safe travels. While both provide a possible connection between Thor and the race of thralls, I believe that even though the poem mythical, the people in Viking society believed that in death, thralls would be with the Æsir in Valhalla. This can then be interpreted that even if they were not a part of the warrior society, they could be in the place where Odin’s nobles would also be. This shows that slaves were assumed to be a part of the afterlife in the Old Norse beliefs and further supports the concept of the sacrifice of slaves when their masters die in order to assist them in their afterlife.

4.1.4 Egil’s Saga

Egil’s Saga is an Icelandic family saga that tells the history of Egil Skallagrímssonar and his kin. This text is believed to have originated in the fourteenth century, chiefly from the Módruvallabók manuscript. However, Einar Ól. Sveinsson asserts with an analysis from the other manuscripts from the time, such as θ, that the family saga can be dated to c. 1250. It focuses primarily on Egil and the relationships that he had with his allies and enemies. Two particular chapters within the saga, Chapter Eighty-Two and Eighty-Three, discuss a specific thrall, Thrandr or Thrand. Thrand was described as, “hann var allra manna mestr ok sterkastr” which translates as “he was tallest and strongest of all men.” Further into Chapter Eighty-Three, Thrand displays courage when confronted by another man, Þorsteinn, or Thorstein, who had claimed that Thrand was letting the cattle graze on his land rather than Thrand’s masters, Steinar’s land. In the end Thorstein kills Thrand as Thrand goes to put on his shoes, because of Thrand’s arrogant claim that he was stronger and more courageous than Thorstein. Later in the chapter Steinar attempted to summon Thorstein for killing two of his thralls, the second being Thrand, because Thorstein did not reimburse Steinar for the

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343 Egil’s Saga, ix.
344 Sveinsson, Dating the Icelandic saga, 19.
345 Egil’s Saga, 169.
346 Egil’s Saga, 170.
thralls that he had killed.\textsuperscript{347} In the end, it is debt is settled at the Thing.

This section of \textit{Egil's Saga} discusses two important aspects of the roles of slaves in Scandinavia through the eyes of the fourteenth century writer. First: the description of slaves from \textit{Rígsþula} is not a consensus on this category of people that slaves pertain to specifically, as they are not all docile and stupid, but rather they can be strong and brave in certain situations. Second: the way in which the owners of slaves need to be reimbursed, as related in the \textit{Grágás}, and within Chapter Eighty-Three shows the laws in practice, and the view of slaves as property.\textsuperscript{348} These stories from the Icelandic family sagas portray how slaves were sold, treated, and seen by the other members of the society. Even though the text is dated much later than the Viking Age, it provides important information on the way society functioned and perceptions of slaves within a Scandinavian point of view, as compared to the other documents from foreign accounts, which contain external bias.

\textbf{4.1.5 Heimskringla}

\textbf{4.1.5.1 Ynglinga Saga}

In many chapters of the \textit{Ynglinga saga}, slaves are recognized and incorporated into the stories. Specifically Chapter Eighteen tells the story of the kingdom of the son of King Dyggvi, Dagr who was declared to be a wise man and had a bird that he could speak with. A farmer, Vörvi, killed the king’s sparrow, which made the king seek out revenge on whomever killed the bird.\textsuperscript{349} They raided, killed and captured many people, and continued further inland where they came to a river crossing, either Skjótansvǫtn or Vápnavað.\textsuperscript{350} At this spot a slave came out to the place where the army was crossing the river and threw a pitchfork, which hit the king on the head and killed him.\textsuperscript{351}

The other important chapter is Twenty-Six, which recounts a slave revolt. This chapter follows Tunni, a slave who had been a working as the treasurer to King Áni ‘the Old’, but, when Egill became king he treated Tunni equivalent to his other slaves, whom Tunni deemed to be a lower status level than him, which resulted in him to become angry and run away

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{347} \textit{Egil's Saga}, 171. Stanza 15 – 19; this will be further discussed in the comparison section of the chapter in regards to the law codes.
\item \textsuperscript{348} \textit{Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás I}, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{349} Sturluson, “Ynglinga Saga,” 20.
\item \textsuperscript{350} Sturluson, “Ynglinga Saga,” 20, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Sturluson, “Ynglinga Saga,” 21.
\end{itemize}
from Egill. Many other slaves followed him, and Tunni and his men began raiding and killing people, causing King Egill to gather reinforcements from Denmark who eventually defeated Tunni and his band of slaves. His anger against King Egill shows that even though he was a slave, being classified along the same social layer as the slaves that did hard labourers frustrated Tunni. The story of Tunni shows that slaves can obtain a higher position based on their social role within a smaller communities social role for slaves.

These two accounts show two different perceptions of slaves. Again the descriptions of these slaves have similar qualities to that of Thrand from Egil’s Saga and show more courage than the description of slaves from Rígsþula. The unknown slave that killed King Dagr single handedly took down a foreign king who was raiding his country, and Tunni was able to command his own army against his former owner and the king. This revolt lead by Tunni portrays a want and need for the slaves to be free and doing everything in their power to gain this freedom. Tunni’s story also provides an example of further stratification among the social layers of slaves. Even though he perceived himself as higher in status, that did not lead Tunni to believe that the lower ranks of slaves could not contribute to the rebellion against King Egill. The stories of these two slaves shows that the people within the social category of slave or thrall, did not all belong under the same perceptions of weak, “dark” and stupid people, like the description from Rígsþula, but could be smart, brave, and strong. Tunni was depicted as a slave that had ambitions and goals. The saga does not say what happened to the slaves after Tunni’s army was disbanded, but it can be assumed that many of them were most likely killed, or were put back into slavery by King Egill’s army. In conclusion, this story gives evidence of the attempt by slaves to change the perceptions of their roles during the period. Many of the sources provided, show similar instances of rebellion against their master, which occurred because of discord between the two groups. However, there are sources which display more caring relationships between masters and slaves, as seen in the sagas of slaves sacrificing their lives for their masters, their good treatment and the ability to purchase their freedom, as seen in the next provided saga.

4.1.5.2 Óláfr saga helga

This passage from Óláfr saga helga is one example of the treatment of slaves during the Viking Age, ending in 1177.\(^{354}\) The dating of the version of the saga, Separate Saga of St. Ólár, dates c. 1250-1300, which is notably a few centuries after the Viking Age, and after the death of St. Olaf.\(^{355}\) However, Snorri Sturluson is believed to have written this text, which would have to make the dates between 1178/9-1241.\(^{356}\) Diana Whaley also asserts that much of the other thirteenth and fourteenth century sources use information that is found within this saga, which solidifies the date of this saga to an earlier date.\(^{357}\) The earliest manuscript, Kringla remains, and dates to 1270.\(^{358}\) The dating of the text is noted to be later than the period that it is referencing to, this is the same problem that can be seen in the other saga materials. This does not mean that the information within the saga is incorrect or unreliable, but rather enforces a sense of skepticism when analyzing the documents. Óláfr saga helga follows the life of Óláfr Haraldson, born c. 995, including his reigning in Norway, and his death at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030.\(^{359}\) Slaves or thralls are mentioned a few times in this saga, the most notable of which occurs in Chapter Twenty-Three, which discusses the treatment of slaves by a Norwegian landowner, Erlingr.\(^{360}\) The passage follows:

‘Erlingr hafði jafnan heima 30 þræla, ok umfram annat man; hann ætlaði þrælum sínum dagsverk, ok gafl þeim stundir síban ok lof til at hverr er sér vildi vinna um rökkr eða um nætr; hann gafl þeim aðkloð at sá sér korni ok fúra ávöxtinn til fjær sér; hann lagði á hvæn þeirra verð ok lausn; leystu margir sík hín fyrstu misseri eða önmur, en allir, þeir er nökkrur þríðjaðar var yfir, leystu sík á 3 vetrum. Með þvi fæ keypti Erlingr sér annat man; en leyssingum sínum visaði hann sumum í sildfiski en sumum til annarra féfangs; sumir ruddu markir ok gerðu þar bú í; öllum kom hann til nökkurs þroska.’\(^{361}\)

Erlingr always had 30 thralls with him, as well as the other household thralls; He planned the work for the thralls days, and gave them time and praise for work to those who wanted to work for themselves around that for oneself like to work around dusk or around the night; He gave them arid land to sow themselves corn and to produce crops to fund oneself; he gave a price on each, for their liberation; Many freed themselves the first season or two seasons, and all that were profitable, were able to free themselves around the third winter. Therefore with the money Erlingr bought for himself other household thralls; and some of his freedman he put in the herring fishery and some of them in other profitable jobs; some cleared forests and made farms there; he helped all come to maturity.\(^{362}\)


\(^{356}\) Whaley, Heimskringla, 9.

\(^{357}\) Whaley, Heimskringla, 14.


\(^{359}\) Sturluson, “Óláfr saga helga,” vii.

\(^{360}\) Sturluson, “Óláfr saga helga,” 18.


\(^{362}\) Sturluson, “Óláfr saga helga,” 18; My own translation, with consultation from citation.
This saga demonstrates that thralls were not only able to work for their own freedom but their previous owners were inclined to assist the newly freed men to find further employment so that they did not become destitute. This excerpt demonstrates that the functions and social status of a slave can be changed and may depend on the slave’s relationship to their master. This fluidity in their social status can allow for social mobility and eventual land ownership, which can be gained along with their freedom.

4.1.6 Landnámabók

Landnámabók refers to the settlement of Iceland and provides an example of a slave revolt that took place in the early years of the settlement. The earliest manuscript comes from the Sturlubók compiled by Sturla Thordarson and is connected to another copy of the manuscript AM 107 fol., and is dated 1275-1280. In total, there are five remaining versions of the manuscript that date from 1275 to the late seventeenth century.

The text begins in 874, when two foster brothers, Ingolf and Hjorleif, were separated when they settled in Iceland. Hjorleif settled on the west coast, and began to sow the land, which was hard work for his slaves since he only had one ox. This extra work upset the slaves, and a slave named Dufthak encouraged the other slaves to kill the ox and blame a brown bear for it, so that when Hjorleif and his men went in search of the bear, the slaves attack them. Dufthak’s plans succeed, and they killed Hjorleif and all of his men. The slaves took all their masters possessions including the women and resettled on the southwestern side of the island. During this time, Ingolf sent out two slaves, Vifil and Karli who discovered what happened in Hjorleifshofdi; when they returned and told Ingolf he killed the slaves that had slain his foster brother and his men.

This account of the revolt and murder by the slaves can be seen as a consequence of having many slaves and not enough masters or leaders to ensure control of them. This can be compared to the revolts led by Tunni in the Ynglinga saga; while Dufthak and his followers were not as successful, their revolt shows that not all slaves were submissive to their masters. These slaves maintained personal ideologies and had the courage to act on them, even if it

involved murder. From this saga, it can be interpreted that there was inability for the masters to remain in control of their slaves, which would discourage the notion of one masters owning a high numbers of slaves; thus further protecting themselves, and discouraging resistance. Also, it should be noted that in Scandinavian societies many of the slaves would have had access to weapons, which included their knives, and even if they had good relationships with their owners there could be dangerous consequences to the master in the event of a disagreement. It is even noted that the reprisal for a slave hurting or killing their owner was implied rather than written into law. This made revolts and murders by slaves deemed as internal acts based on the kin groups that remained in control of the slaves, as the slaves were seen as part of the property.\textsuperscript{367} This source provides insight into reactions of slaves based on the work that was expected of them. It shows that sometimes slaves held aversion for the work that was expected of them and would revolt as a result.

4.1.7 Saga of the Icelanders: Laxdœla saga

The Laxdœla saga is one of the sagas from the Icelanders. The earliest known manuscript comes from the mid-thirteenth century but the content within is associated with the early Icelandic settlements. This saga discusses the lives of the early Icelandic settlers from Norway, through the establishment of the early families, and a connection between Iceland and that of the Irish and Scottish people. The most important mention of a slave in this saga comes about the slave woman that Hoskuld buys in Norway from a man named Gilli ‘the Russian’.\textsuperscript{368} Hoskuld proposed to Gilli that he wants to buy a slave woman, and Gilli shows him twelve women to choose from. Hoskuld chooses a woman who is described as “ill-clad” but “fair to look upon”.\textsuperscript{369} Gilli tells Hoskuld that she is worth three pieces of silver as compared to one piece of silver for the each of the rest of the women, because she is a mute.\textsuperscript{370} The higher value of this slave women because of her lack of speech, could be related to the fact that she could not argue or fight with her master or would be less likely to run away as her inability to speak could hinder her. Hoskuld still purchased her and took her to bed with him before returning back to Iceland.\textsuperscript{371} This slave woman ended up being the mistress of Hoskuld and bore him a son, Olaf.\textsuperscript{372} She continued to be mute until Olaf was

\textsuperscript{367} Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 123.
\textsuperscript{369} “Laxdœla saga,” 23.
\textsuperscript{370} “Laxdœla saga,” 23-24.
\textsuperscript{371} “Laxdœla saga,” 24.
\textsuperscript{372} “Laxdœla saga,” 26-27.
four years old, when Hoskuld discovered she could speak.373 She informed him her name was Melkorka and she was the daughter of Myrkjartan, an Irish King. She claimed that she was taken captive when she was fifteen years old and had been a slave ever since.374 Their son, Olaf, became known as Olaf ‘the Peacock’ and went to Ireland and found Melkorka’s father but returned to Iceland.375 In the end, Olaf married Thorgerd, who was the daughter of Egil Skallagrímsson, and after the death of his foster father and biological father he became one of the wealthiest landowners in Iceland.376

This story of a slave woman, even if she was of a noble birth, becoming linked to a high member of Icelandic society, displays the ability for slaves to gain prominent and high status connections, through kinship. Her graciousness is remarked in her actions even before Hoskuld discovers her nobility. This verifies that her true status cannot be hidden underneath the term of slave. Furthermore, this saga connects the slave raiding that was occurring in Ireland and the slave trading that was happening in Norway. It is also important to take note of the slave merchant Gilli ‘the Russian’ opening up the discussion of the importance of the east and their connection to the slave trade that is seen earlier in the discussion of the Muslim writers.

This story provides information about the type of early society that existed in Iceland and adds justification to the use of slave women as concubines and to bear children. It also shows that some of these children did not have to follow in their mother’s footsteps by becoming slaves themselves, but rather could make something of themselves within the social hierarchy. The authenticity of this account is highly debated, specifically in regards to the imagery of Melkorka, an Irish princess, which is also often debated. For the sake of this discussion her status before becoming a slave is a minor detail. It is important to note that she was not ransomed back to her father, even though she was of a high status, but rather she was still able to gain a higher status again in the Scandinavian social structure. What is more important from this source is the success of a woman and her child that came out of slavery.

375 “Laxdœla saga,” 77-80.
376 “Laxdœla saga,” 71-73.
4.2 Comparative Analysis

The analysis of all the saga materials, provide different perspectives of the types of lives slaves had within Scandinavia. The *Ynglinga saga* and *Landnámaðbók*, show instances in which the slave’s revolt against their masters because of work or the social position the master puts them. Each of these texts provides examples of different slaves, Dufthak, Tunni, and the other unnamed slave, who killed their masters in an act of resistance and to gain their freedom. These three slaves went against the stereotypes of slaves during the Viking Age.\footnote{Slave revolts are mostly restricted to Iceland during the Viking Age, within the texts.} This revolt by the slaves, especially Tunni’s revolt that was on such a large scale, was a revolt against the stratification that is seen in Scandinavian societies. Karras asserts that the revolts that took place with Tunni and Dufthak were not factual.\footnote{Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 125.} While the factuality of these sources is debatable, it is difficult to disagree or agree with her. As with all the saga materials, they were written hundreds of years after the events recorded took place. It is assumed that the writers would have recorded these events, even if they were only partially correct, based on the oral histories that remained within the region. The integrity and factuality of these sources is important as, like any legendary texts, they tell versions of stories that have a moral; in this case, that slaves, even though they are a lower class, are a dangerous threat to the constraints of society.

Within *Egil’s saga*, Thrand portrays a slave that is very different than the one that is described within *Rígsþula*. The image of slaves in the mythical poem shows people that are broken and dirty from their work, their skin darkened from being in the sun, and dimwitted. Thrand is the opposite of this; he is tall, blonde, strong and witty. The perception of this type of a person being a slave breaks many of the stereotypes, and would not complement the slave names from the poem. Thrand shows that slaves can take many forms and it is not just a god given right for strong, tall, and smart men to be within the higher social classes. There can also be a debate for a chronological change in the perceptions of slaves in the period. The writing of these documents date to a Christian society, which could change the construct and image of who slaves were, which was initially based on a creation story that can be connected to the Old Norse religion. Lastly, Thrand’s bravery against Thorstein, even though Thorstein does kill Thrand, displays the lack of cowardice that is commonly noted for slaves in Scandinavia. This can be aligned with the instance of the slave killing the king in the
Ynglinga saga. The evidence from this saga allows the role of Thrand to alter the basic idea of the identity of slaves and their function in society, even if his work was to watch the livestock.

The story of Hárbardsljóð speaks to the association of the roles of people in life and which god they would become associated with in death. Within this poem, slaves are associated with Thor and nobles with Odin. Harbard claims within the poem, that only slaves would follow Thor because they are both cowards; however it is believed that Harbard is actually Odin in disguise. This social association is only seen within this poem and nowhere else in saga literature.\textsuperscript{379} Thus, there can be speculation in regards to the materials discussed within it. Furthermore, the perception that slaves as cowards is something I have debated based on the previous analysis on Thrand and the unnamed slave that killed the king. It cannot be claimed that one social grouping is more courageous then another based on stereotypes that come from literature, but rather can be argued that it is dependent on the individual and their own views on their function or duties within society.

As for Melkorka, her story began with being taken as part of the slave raiding process that was seen throughout the British Isles, and turning her into a commodity in which she was bought and sold. As seen in the discussion of the text previously, she was sold to Hoskuld, who made her, his concubine and had travelled to Denmark within the Scandinavian slave trade. The role of concubine is seen in the Viking Age as a common role for women, as sexual partners, or to give their masters children.\textsuperscript{380} Women that fell into this social layer could have been held in high regard, as Melkorka was, and given higher respect than that of slaves that performed hard labour. Following the birth of Melkorka and Hoskuld’s son Olaf, it is said in many of the law codes throughout Scandinavia that children that are born of a slave and of a free person, are free as well; this is seen within the Laxdaela saga.\textsuperscript{381} Also, because Hoskuld decided, once knowing that Melkorka was an Irish princess, to free her, he also freed his son Olaf, which allowed him to inherit part of Hoskuld’s wealth when he died. Karras does point out that this example of a concubine is rare, as it was more common that the women that fulfilled the role of concubine were not usually Irish royalty. Nevertheless,

\textsuperscript{379} Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 210.
\textsuperscript{380} Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 73.
\textsuperscript{381} Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia, 74.
Melkorka’s status eventually became that of a free woman who was able to obtain her own land with a son that rose high in Icelandic society.

As for the slaves from the account of Erlingr, as seen in Óláfr saga helga, it is shown that slaves were able to work for their freedom. This is seen in many other instances within the saga literature, specifically in the Landnámabók, and the freeing of Vifil and Karli, for their help in enacting their master’s revenge on Hjorleif’s killers. Their ability to gain freedom is verified in the law codes as mentioned in the previous chapter. Slaves’ having the capability to work for their freedom provides evidence that slave’s social status was not static, but rather dynamic and it had the ability to change based on the willingness of the slave. Their functions within society were dependent on their masters, and the slaves own ambitions. Slaves also had the ability to become landowners, which could have led to them gaining a higher social status based on their own success. This is most commonly seen in Iceland in the latter half of the Viking Age, and this allowed freed slaves to no longer be held by the social constraints of the social roles of slaves. This further encourages a fragmented perspective of slaves.

Finally, the analysis of Brynhild’s suicide displays different ideologies on the social roles of slaves in Scandinavia. In comparison to the other saga literature analyzed, the funeral of Brynhild and Sigurd is one of the only examples in which slaves is specifically stated to be sacrificed to their masters in death. In total, five female and eight male servants were killed and put on the funerary pyre with Brynhild and Sigurd among others. While the saga does not indicate as to why Brynhild requested such a multitude of people to be killed and burned with them, it can be assumed that these slaves are the people she wanted to accompany her and Sigurd in the afterlife. The sacrifice of Brynhild’s slaves shows the amount of wealth she is willing to consume in death. It can also be interpreted that she wanted everything that she had in life to follow her in death, which included the slaves and her son. While as previously stated the historical importance of this saga is debatable, I think the act of Brynhild sacrificing herself among her slaves, could be classified as a legend in which the role of women and people in service to masters have a duty to follow them into death.  

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382 This notion is also classified as suttee funerary ritual, which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.
4.3 Comparison between the Saga Materials and the Contemporary Literature

The saga materials provide plenty of contextual evidence for some of the literary and archaeological evidence that can be found in Scandinavia. Beginning with the law codes from Scandinavia, parallels can be drawn to understand the roles the slaves held in the saga materials, including the legal repercussions of killing slaves, as seen in *Egil’s saga*. In this analysis I use law codes as an all-inclusive term of the *Grágás*, *Gulathing* and *Frostathing* law codes. The law codes state that if a freeman kills another man’s slave, the freeman has to pay compensation for the killing. In *Egil’s saga*, Thorstein does not want to pay compensation for the murder of Thrand and the lawmaker is invoked to settle the business. In this saga, the role of slaves within society falls into that of a commodity and the compensation is used to pay for a replacement slave for the work Thrand was doing. The law codes also speak to what happens if a slave kills a freeman. This law code could be applied in relation to the examples of the unnamed slave killing the King, the consequences of Tunni’s rebellion and Dufthak and the other slaves murdering and stealing from their master. The law codes state that these men would be punishable by death; however, the unnamed slave might have a right to partial freedom if the king was an enemy king, and the killing of him would give the slave immediate freedom, if the act occurred under the region in which the *Gulathing* law codes were in place. Also, it is notable that if Tunni and his army, and Dufthak would have just run away rather than running away and murdering their masters or other people, they would have just been castrated or flogged, depending on if the *Frostathing* or *Gulathing* law codes their act fell under.

For the slaves that were given freedom by Erlingr in *Óláfr saga Helga*, there are some laws that pertain to slaves that are given freedom. In *Grágás*, if a slave gains his freedom they must maintain some ties to the “freedom-giver”, the one the slave pays for their freedom, until they fulfill all the duties that the laws require for the newly freedman to be truly deemed a freeman. This means that the freed slaves are still partially accountable to their old masters until they hold the freedom ale feast. This law would also be upheld for the Vifil and Karli who were freed in *Landnámabók*.

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383 See quote in *Grágás* section of Chapter 3, page 2.
The example of Melkorka and her son Olaf can also be tied to the law codes. The majority of the laws are against women who lay with thralls and bear children, rather than men who lay with slaves, as concubines were common amongst slaves. The *Grágás* state that it is lawful for a man to purchase a slave women as a “bedfellow”. The laws do state that it is more common that children born of a slave and a non-slave will obtain free status, as stated previously, which is why Olaf was able to rise through the layers of society, and not become a slave as his mother was.

Finally, there are similarities between the saga evidence and the slave burials seen throughout Scandinavia. While none of the burials that have been excavated match the scale of the burial of Brynhild and Sigurd, it shows that this action was used in death rituals throughout Scandinavia. It should be noted that double burials can often be interpreted as a suttee, which is a when a wife dies from grief of the death of her husband. This interpretation is seen throughout some of the saga materials, including the death of Baldr and the consequential death of Nanna from the grief of his death. Nevertheless, the funerary practices used in the *Saga of the Volsungs*, can help explain some of the burials that archaeologists find throughout Scandinavia.

Social reality is the concept of a social group that perceives reality based on a shared group of beliefs. Which can be applied to the roles of a slave as discussed. As the slave’s function is dependent on the region and time period that they lived in, it can also be assumed to be dependent on the needs of the slave’s master, such as concubine, sacrifice, or labourer. This can alter the perceptions of the sagas, foreign materials, and law codes, as people that would not have known the reality of the slaves, but rather would look at it from the master’s perspective, as it would have been written. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the materials are wrong for the perceptions on slavery, however scholars must interpret these sources based on the society of the region and time period. For example, in Christian societies they would want to depreciate the severity of slaves as it goes against the Christian ideologies, whereas people in Eastern Europe might embellish, as it would increase the records of their own individual wealth.

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384 See Chapter 3, page 3, for reference.
386 Spartacean, *Women in the Viking Age*, 80. This story is from *Gylfaginning*.
Throughout all the evidence from these sources, a chronological timeline can be made with regards to changes in the functions of slaves within Scandinavia. It is seen in the earlier periods, that the slaves were classified as a commodity, which is paralleled to the other regions of this analysis; however the functions and societal roles seem to change as Christianity became more dominant within Scandinavia, making sacrificial burials less likely to happen, as it would go against the Christian faith. These chronological changes are also seen in the law codes, in the responsibility for the masters to be more sympathetic to their slaves, and that if a master kills their slaves to account for the death not only to the community but also to the church.

Altogether the information that is obtained from the literary sources, even though they are written after the Viking Age, and helps provide context to the laws and the archaeological evidence. These stories are important in understanding Viking Age Scandinavia as much of the contemporary evidence is. Slave roles cannot just be determined from the archaeological evidence or through the analysis of the law codes. The legitimacy of the sagas will always be uncertain, but the information within helps provide basic moral predispositions of the people, even if they were inferred by the writers in the thirteenth centuries and onwards.

### 4.4 Connections between Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Northwestern Europe

Throughout this analysis, connections can be drawn between all the areas that Scandinavians settled. The archaeological evidence shows similarities, as well as the contemporary evidence, which can be further justified with the incorporation of the saga materials discussed in this chapter. The *Saga of the Volsungs* maintains many connections to Ibn Fadlān’s account of the chieftain burial in Eastern Europe that is connected to the archaeological evidence of the burials that follow similar burial styles within Scandinavia. The association between the written literatures is interesting as unlike some of the other accounts by Arab writers it is unlikely that the writers of this saga heard of the practices of the Rūs, leading one to infer that there was a cultural connection in the ritualistic practices for funerals. Correlating evidence between the nature of where the ritual derived from, allows for the conclusion that the practice would have derived from Scandinavia and was assimilated into the cultural practices of the Rūs. The discovery of the majority of the graves within
Scandinavia to be nearer to Eastern Europe, such as those in southeastern Sweden and Denmark, rather than Norway or Iceland, shows the possibility that the sacrifice of slaves was a common practice in that specific region as the flow of cultural ideologies was more accessible in the region.

A further similarity is seen within the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Ynglinga saga*. Section U989.3 of the *Annals of Ulster* account that a “king of the foreigners was killed…by his own slave.” The parallel to the saga also states that an unnamed slave killed the king. The coincidence of the two accounts could be problematic, as they could be relating to the same event, but both accounts seem to have occurred in different regions, and contain different details within the stories. Nevertheless, both examples show that slaves were willing to risk their lives to kill for their masters, or their masters if they felt it suited their interests.

Within the *Domesday Book*, a multitude of slaves that were used and incorporated into the farms within Anglo-Saxon England is documented even after, the return of control of Danelaw to the Anglo-Saxons. Based on the survey, a connection can be made between the high number of slaves working in the agrarian society in Anglo-Saxon England and that of Scandinavia, with the example of Erlingr and his farm from *Óláfr saga helga*. It was known that slavery was used before the Scandinavians came to the region, and I have argued that the Scandinavian slave trade further encouraged the practice of slavery in the region. Furthermore, the information from *Óláfr saga helga* shows that slaves were used on larger scale farms, which is comparable to what took place in England. However, there is a difference between the agrarian slaves within each region, as Scandinavia slaves were able to work for their freedom, and there is no mention of this in relation to Anglo-Saxon England, unless they were initially captives. I believe that while the *Domesday Book* text, documents a decline in slavery while under Scandinavian control, it could have been the result of the increased settlement of Scandinavians in the region and the export of slave labourers as a result.

A connection can be seen between the raiding that took place in the British Isles, specifically Ireland and the capturing of slaves, and taking them to be sold in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe by merchants. The example of Melkorka also shows a connection between all the

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388 See Chapter One, Page Three, for reference.
areas of analysis, as she was and Irish slave, sold by a Russian, and purchased by a Scandinavian. This story from the Laxdœla saga helps provide an image of the extent in which slavery affected peoples across Scandinavia and its diaspora. Furthermore, the information from the saga provides parallels between the Arab accounts, Ibn Fadlān specifically; in relation to the way merchants act when selling slaves. Ibn Fadlān’s account speaks to the treatment of women within the slave market in Eastern Europe, which can be similar to how the transaction between Gilli and Hoskuld can be perceived. Together the sources actually create a fuller image of the entire life of a slave from being captured, exported, sold, and within their new social role as a slave, and eventually freedom. Further equivalents can be seen between the texts from Miskawayh in relation to a Scandinavian perspective of the raiding and capturing of peoples, which is something that is missed in the contemporary documents from Northwestern Europe; however together they create a more complete study of the raiding and capturing process. Through the analysis of the information in regards to each of the regions separately first, and then assembling the information from the texts, allows for similarities between the texts easier to see. Throughout all the regions that were analyzed slavery and the social roles and functions of these individuals is dependent on the region, however the assimilation of Scandinavian ideals on slavery are discoverable in all analyzed areas.

4.5 Conclusion

All the information gathered from the saga materials help to provide contextual evidence in relation to the contemporary interpretations of the possible accurate assumptions of what slaves did within Scandinavian society. Throughout Scandinavia, comparisons within literature develop the idea of the slave roles as a commodity, similar to what is seen in Northwestern and Eastern Europe, and however the function of slavery within Scandinavia showed a different societal role which the individual slaves fulfilled in life and death. This is seen within the story of Brynhild’s suicide, and within the archaeological evidence that is found throughout Scandinavia, along with Northwestern and Eastern Europe. The support from the saga materials helps to better understand the role of concubines, agrarian labourers, settlers, and lawbreakers. Each of these roles displayed a new function, which slaves maintained within Scandinavian society, which were deemed important enough to record. Slaves are the lowest class within any society and are often removed from the written record because of the perceived lack of relevance to the economic and political successes of growing
nations. The societal role within Scandinavia of slaves was fundamental to the success of the expansion of Scandinavia, and the stories from the saga literature help validate this claim.
5 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have compared the contemporary evidence from archaeological and written materials, the saga materials, and law codes to assist in understanding the function of slaves within Scandinavia and societies influenced by the introduction of the Scandinavian slave trade. Slaves were a large majority of the population’s social structure during the Viking Age and each slave fulfilled an essential function within the social spheres of their communities. Slaves should be seen as a dynamic social group whose functions and roles were dependent on the region and time in which they existed throughout the Viking Age within these Scandinavian societies. Through the use of multiple source materials, we can witness the evolution of slaves from sacrificial victims, concubines, rebels, warriors, agrarian workers, captives and commodities within the slave trade to people capable of gaining their freedom and even becoming landowners nearing the end of the period. The success of Scandinavia can be correlated to the success of the slave trade and function of slaves within Scandinavia and its diaspora.

In the first chapter, I evaluated all the available source materials originating from Northwestern Europe, specifically Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England, the Isle of Man and Frankia. Throughout the entire region, contemporary documents recorded the patterns of the Scandinavian peoples as they raided and gained a foothold within the region. The Annals of Ulster, Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and The Annals of St. Bertin, provide evidence of the development of the slave trade in the region through the capture of peoples during the raids that occurred throughout the entire area. The Domesday Book, provided evidence of slavery after the control of Danelaw reverted back to the Anglo-Saxon’s, confirming that the practice of slavery was maintained throughout the region. Following the contemporary literature was the analysis of the archaeological evidence in which the burial of the Ballateare Man on the Isle of Man, introduced the idea of sacrificial burials between master and slave. The existence of other burials appearing sacrificial in nature based on the position of the body also support the notion that slaves were seen as a commodity in Northwestern Europe.

Raids were common practice throughout this region in the Viking Age, and many people were taken from the Northwestern Europe, such as the Irish, Picts, and Anglo-Saxon, which is seen from the contemporary literature. Slaves within this area, were scarcely documented
unless in relation to people being taken from different regions, and not much could be said in regards to the society’s attempts at rescuing these people, unless the person was of a higher status. Northwestern Europe helped fulfill the supply for the Scandinavian slave trade, as the demand was high in Eastern Europe. The role of slavery in Scandinavian societies within Northwestern Europe show parallels to both Scandinavia and Eastern Europe with the ownership and exportation of slaves by merchants being a perception of wealth within both of these societies.

Chapter Two contains information from foreign sources, specifically Arab writers including Ibn Fadlān, Ibn Khurraḍāḥbīḥ, Ibn Rusta, Masʿūdī, and Miskawayh, who all gave important details on the different treatments, occupations and perceptions, of the slave trade in Eastern Europe and with the Rūs peoples. Ibn Fadlān’s account of a chieftain’s funeral, in which the sacrifice of a slave girl is described in detail is of particular importance, as this is the only written work that actually claims to have witnessed this ritual, rather than just an interpretation from the archaeological record. Analysis of both the contemporary and archaeological sources, provide evidence that slaves in Eastern Europe were seen as commodities and an indication of the master’s or traders’ economic wealth and nothing more. Much of the evidence comes from the dirham hoards found in mass quantities all across the region, which connects the Rūs and Scandinavians through material culture, found at the sites. These two groups of people share many similarities within their cultural practices, including their treatment and use of slaves. It is apparent that in this region chattel slavery was more common than in Northwestern Europe and Scandinavia. The differences that are seen within this region as compared to the other regions creates a slightly more extreme version of the slave trade, which is classified as chattel slavery, and the inclusion of the written works from foreign authors also help identify the functions of slaves as concubines, sacrifices, and commodities more often than any other. The function of the slave was based on the individual slave, and the goals of the merchants that sold them and often the slaves were not seen as humans but more similar to cattle.

Slavery within Scandinavia itself was perceived differently than the other regions of analysis. Within Chapter Three, slavery in Scandinavia was discussed based on the law codes and the

389 However, in regards to the slave girl that was sacrificed within Ibn Fadlān’s account, it could be analyzed that she was sacrificed to be a companion for the dead chieftain, which would have elevated her status, which could have been symbolized with the removal of her bracelets and anklets, which could have been the markers of her status.
archaeological evidence specific to the area of analysis. The law codes discussed, the Grágás and Gulathing and Frostathing, come from different regions: Iceland, the Southwest coast of Norway, and the Trøndelag region of Norway, respectively. These law codes governed the slaves and their treatment with different codes from different regions containing many of the same laws with respect to the harming or death of a slave. Several of the law codes also refer to monetary reimbursement to masters upon the injury or death of their slaves, putting additional emphasis on the idea that slaves were part of the economic welfare of their masters. The analysis of the archaeological evidence produced from across Scandinavia provides information about the function in which slaves held in singular master and slave relationships.

The burials discovered on the Isle of Man, the sites of Lejre, Gerdrup Village, and Stengade Cemetery in Denmark, Birka and different sites across southeastern Sweden, and at Flakstad in Norway, all produce evidence of master and slave burials. These sites support the notion that slaves were taken with their masters in death to serve them in the afterlife like the rest of the items that can be found in the burial. This interpretation is based on the analysis of the remains of the individual that was deemed to be from a lower status than the other individual in the grave, and the violent fashion in which the individual was killed, in all but one case, by decapitation. All these sites show a similar funerary ritual, which is also seen on the Isle of Man, and the literature that comes from Ibn Fadlān’s account from the Rūs in Eastern Europe. These connections provide information about the exchange not just of material culture through trade, but also the trade of social ideologies and cultural aspects that were also integrated into the outlying Scandinavian societies. The information in this chapter shows a more stratified structure of the roles of slaves as compared to Northwestern and Eastern Europe, which focused more heavily on the slave trade.

The final chapter on slavery in Scandinavia focuses more on slavery from the viewpoints of the literature from the region written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Chapter Four takes eight different accounts on slavery from the saga literature and analyzes the information. Unlike the other sources that were discussed in other chapters, these materials provide information about individual slaves and their contributions to slavery in Scandinavia while other sources depict slaves as a commodity that come from the result of raiding and settlement in new regions, and a tool of the slave trade. The analysis of the saga materials presents a new image of slaves in which they can be strong, smart, brave, rebellious,
independent and strong willed, which is in stark contrast to some of the early sources such as Rígsþula where slaves are portrayed as stupid, ugly, and cowardly peoples. However examples from Egil’s Saga, Ynglinga saga, Landnâmabók, and Laxdœla saga, provides depictions of slaves that did not pertain to one distinct image. Furthermore, the information that comes from Óláfr saga helga, provides insight into the wanting of slaves to obtain their freedom from their owners and not just passive individuals within society. From the Saga of the Volsungs, specifically the death of Brynhild, gives information about slaves that were sacrificed alongside their masters, Brynhild and Sigurd, and burnt with them on their funerary pyre. This is the only written source that depicts slaves being sacrificed to their masters within Scandinavia. Hárbarðsljóð demonstrates that slaves were incorporated into the Norse belief system based on the conversation between Thor and Odin. These sagas give a significant amount of information about slavery in specific individual circumstances, rather than in broad perspectives, unlike the information that comes from other regions. Overall, the information that is gained from this chapter allows for specific individual social roles and functions to be determined based on the information within the sagas that further supports the information analyzed in the previous chapter.

Reliability of contemporary and saga materials was also addressed within this thesis. Much of the information used in this analysis came from sources that were written from foreign authors or by people that lived in the regions centuries after the said events happened. As a result there could be misinterpretations of the practices and the reasoning as to why things happened within each of the regions, specifically the function of slaves. The accounts that came from the foreign sources, scholars believe that Arab writers attempted to record the events as close to reality as they could, however the possible misconceptions of certain events, such as who the “Angel of Death” from Ibn Fadlān’s account was, and the reference to a paradise, could have been written that way to allow a comparison to something the Arab people they understand from their own religion. It is also possible that the Rūs word for “paradise” could not be properly translated to Arabic, and thus the translator had to use the equivalent. This does not mean the event did not happen, and a few differences in interpretation is not enough to dismiss the source completely as many of the points within the source help bring understanding to burials across the regions of analysis, and can be related to some of the other Scandinavian literature.
This leads to the discussion of the reliability of the saga materials. These written works come from a period in which Christianity was the most common religion and some of the works were not even written in the same region in which the events took place. However, the sagas used within the thesis fall into different categories: legendary, family or sagas of Icelanders and king sagas. Each of these sagas provides different insights into slavery in Scandinavia. The legendary sagas, *Rígsþula* and *Saga of the Volsungs*, provide evidence about the perception of slaves from additional layers of society, while the suicide of Brynhild portrays information about a high level member of society’s funerary ritual. Even though these sagas are considered to be more similar to folklore or legend, the excerpt of Brynhild’s suicide, which included the sacrifice of eight slaves, allows for comparisons to be made between the story and that of Ibn Fadlān’s account. The relevance of these sagas, is also incorporated into the other saga literature, the imagery of slaves in *Rígsþula* is described to be very different from what is seen in the other family and king sagas, which shows that the perceptions of this level of society is not as one sided as some of these sagas make them out to be. Scholars will always question the reliability of saga materials, the dating of which is only part of the possible unreliability of these sources. As discussed within the Introduction, the legendary sagas follow more of the same concepts of mythological or folklore history, and still provide information about the perceptions of different social classes of Scandinavians to one another. The information that is analyzed from the kings saga, *Óláfr saga helga*, is focused on the life of St. Olaf, however, the inclusion of his visit to a large farm on Iceland with thirty thralls has no benefit to the kings story, so the inclusion of it must have been important. The same goes for the information that was analyzed from *Heimskringla*, with the revolt and slave killing of a king, it would not of been included if it was not important or common. Finally, the information that comes from the Icelandic family sagas shows the early stages of Iceland. The stories, as stated in regards to the dating, would have been part of the oral tradition that was eventually turned into written literature in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Similar to the issues with manuscripts and the rewriting of information, the stories can change slightly through the adding, removing, and altering of “words, sentences, verses or even passages… would [or could] be different from another.”

Throughout this entire thesis many questions about slavery and slaves were raised, analyzed and discussed throughout the different regions influenced by Scandinavians and

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390 Helgason, “Continuity?” 66.
encompassing the entire Viking Age. The information provided throughout each of the chapters worked to show the importance of slaves within each of the Scandinavian societies that traversed Europe. In all of the regions analyzed it can be seen that slavery was a necessity for the success of the Scandinavian expansion in the period. The economic growth through monetary wealth that can be connected to the slave trade was encouraged by the demand that came from Eastern Europe, which is supported by the raids that took place in Northwestern Europe. The establishment of Scandinavian control in Anglo-Saxon England shows firsthand the economic and political gains that came from the period. The settlements especially in Northwestern Europe in places like Anglo-Saxon England, Dublin, and the Isle of Man, show the extent in which Scandinavians were able to obtain control in regions outside of Scandinavia itself. The initial gain of power and control in these new regions can be linked to their raiding tactics, but were maintained because of the Scandinavians ability to maintain control in the region by imposing slavery on the captured peoples. These areas provide much information about slavery itself, the raids, and the trading and the maintaining of slavery in the region after the removal of Scandinavian control in the region, which was Danelaw.

The slave trade remained a prominent practice in Eastern Europe for many years after Scandinavians lost some of their foothold within Northwestern Europe. The Rūs continued trading with the peoples in the Middle East, and raids continued from other Scandinavian groups to help sustain the supply of slaves. It is seen that within Scandinavian societies, that Dublin and the area of the Volga River in Eastern Europe, were the main hubs form the slave trade, through monetary evidence and the written accounts of this. Slaves here were traded down into the Middle East from the Volga region, and from Dublin many slaves were traded to Anglo-Saxon England, or to Southwestern Europe. The slave trade allowed for an economic boom for Scandinavian societies.

The Rūs in Eastern Europe also display differences in treatments between the slaves in regions outside the direct sphere of Scandinavia, and the sphere of Scandinavian influence. Based on the written evidence it can be seen that slaves in Eastern Europe were classified as chattel slaves, which associates them more with livestock rather than people. From the written literature of the foreign accounts the warriors and raiders would claim the people they captured as property and the plunders of war, which is also seen within the different chronicles from Ireland and England.
The written evidence and archaeological findings of master and slave burials prove to not only be deviant burials within Scandinavia, but within all the reaches of Scandinavian influenced societies within this analysis. From the analysis of the archaeological evidence, slaves played a specific role in funerary rituals in Southeastern Sweden and Denmark most commonly, with a few examples from Norway and outlying areas. We were able to determine this practice was more common in the Southeastern region, which connects to the Rūs clearly, which explains the use of a slave sacrifice in the Rūs chieftain burial from Ibn Fadlān’s account. Furthermore, it can be theorized that the Scandinavians that were on the Isle of Man could have come from Denmark or Sweden rather than other regions based on their use of slaves in their burial practices. The role of slaves within the funerary rituals that are seen within Scandinavian culture was dependent on the region that the slaves were sacrificed, as to if they would be servants to their masters again in the afterlife, or if they would gain status from their sacrifice as a companion to their dead master. From this analysis slaves were included in the lives and in the deaths of their masters.

Slavery was used in many respects within each of the regions that Scandinavians controlled and were assimilated into. Throughout the entirety of the Viking Age, slavery was extensively used within the cultural, economic and ritualistic spheres of each of the societies in Northwestern and Eastern Europe and Scandinavia itself. The contemporary evidence of the archaeological materials and the written literature was integral to understanding the societal needs of slaves and slavery in the period. Slavery was implemented in each area as a result of the increase in warfare that allowed for the increased ability to gain captives in Northwestern Europe and the distributed of the peoples through the ever-growing slave trade. Slaves used by Scandinavians did not have specific duties within the entire region, but rather responsibilities that were culturally dependent. Slavery in Northwestern and Eastern Europe followed a more specific role as an economic boost most commonly, whereas in Scandinavia it fulfilled roles in more than one societal sphere.

The function of slaves and slavery within the Scandinavian societies was dependent on the region and the time period. Defining slaves by having only one specific function is not possible within the Viking Age nor can they be defined under a certain race, gender, religion, or any other cultural signifier. Slaves were people that were commonly captured in the wars and raids that took place in Northwestern Europe and certain areas of Eastern Europe, and
were then used as tools of economic gain for the Scandinavian traders in the markets of Dublin and along the Volga River. People could have been captured, or incorporated into the slave trade within Scandinavia, in which they would have also been traded in the larger trading centres such as Kaupang in Norway, or Birka in Sweden. These people would then work as domestic and agrarian labourers, become concubines or take part in ritualistic practices, and eventually, within some regions, were able to pay their way out of slavery and become freemen. Slaves did not have one function within Scandinavian society, but rather performed many duties throughout the regions for their masters. Throughout the entire Viking Age it is seen that the function of slaves did become dependent on other social factors, such as the introduction of Christianity in Scandinavian communities, or the assimilation of Scandinavians into regions that had a higher influence from other communities. This could alter the social roles of slaves, which is seen in the decrease in the number of slaves near the end of the Viking Age within Northwestern Europe. As a consequence the decrease in slave to master sacrifices could be determined and seen based on the lack of burials from sites after the Viking Age. Slaves were part of the largest social group of Scandinavian society and use of them as a commodity was their ultimate function; however, slavery had many different facets based on the historical and archaeological evidence, which shows individuals who rebelled, or were integral parts of the funerary rituals that brought their masters to the afterlife. The function of a slave was dynamic within society; the only constant was that slavery was invaluable to the success of the Scandinavians during the Viking Age.
Bibliography


