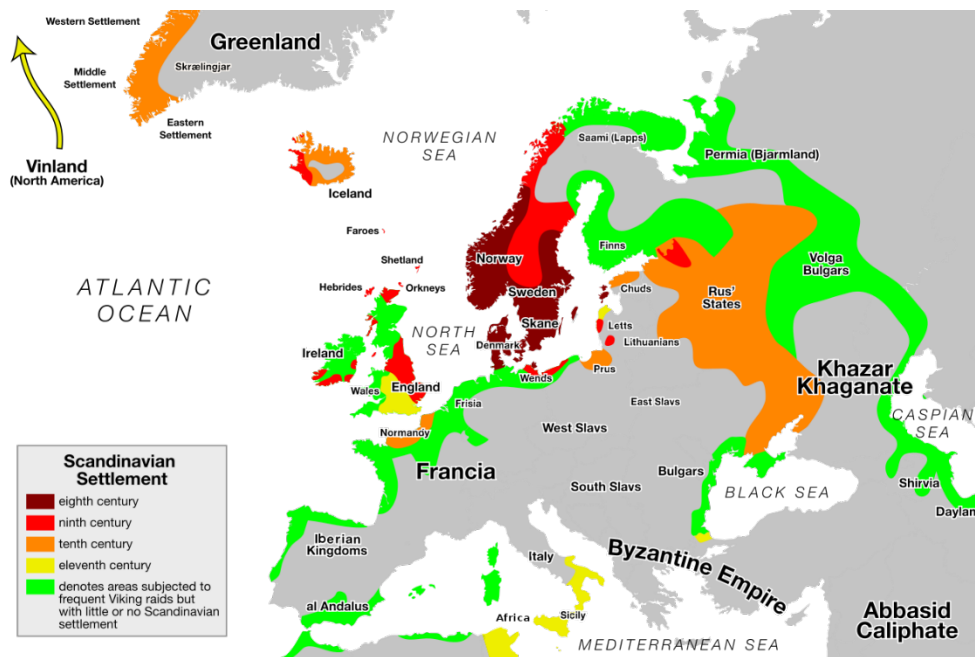


COINS USED BY RUS'/VARANGIANS DURING THE VIKING AGE

The Viking Age began in 793 AD and came to an end in 1066 AD. The Vikings were Scandinavians, who came from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. When we mention the Vikings, we refer to those people who expanded into the western part of Europe, who are Norwegians and Danes. In our case we discuss the Rus' who migrated to the East, the Swedes.

At the beginning of the Viking Age, Russia did not yet exist as the name of the territory. So, Thomas S. Noonan defined an entire area situated between Arctic and Black seas and from Poland to the Urals as 'European Russia'¹.



(Map by Max Naylor; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/Viking_Expansion.svg)

In the territory of European Russia, a lot of different objects were found. Some towns became places to being researched, as they were important centers of trading with neighbors or with merchants from far South-East, like Islamic merchants. Through the trading

¹ Noonan, "Scandinavians in European Russia": 134.

connections, a lot of Arabic silver coins can be found in this area. The Arabic coins were also found in other Scandinavian states, even in one of the ports of Norway. Most of Sweden imported a lot of Arabic coins, much more than Norway and Denmark².

| | Arabic coins | Anglo-Saxon coins | Frank and Germanic coins |
|---------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Norway | 400 | 2.600 | 2.500 |
| Sweden | 52.000 | 30.000 | 58.500 |
| Denmark | 3.500 | 5.300 | 9.000 |

Swedish population had more trading than raiding activity. Raiding was not present there because of the absence of the monasteries.

The expansion of the Swedes began much earlier than the beginning of the Viking Age. The Rus' had also other names: before becoming Rus' they were called Scandinavians. When they began to serve in the military of the Byzantine empire, they also got another name, which is Varangian.

These Scandinavians, before the beginning of the Viking Age, in 750 AD were established at Staraja Ladoga, on the River Lovat, called Aldeigjuborg in the Old Norse language. It became the Finnish market center; it had a commanding position on the river routes to get an easy access for trading. Arab merchants began to meet these Scandinavians at the end of the eighth century.

In the middle of the eighth century, some hoards of Islamic *dirhams* had been deposited in Ladoga. In the meantime, a small *dirham* hoard was found in Gotland. Ladoga already became a key town with the emerging trade routes, which led from the Baltic, across European Russia to the lower Volga, and from there to modern Iran and Mesopotamia. The rivers Dvina, Dnieper, Lovat and Volga were excellent river systems used to navigate on the long distance. Over the course of the ninth century Ladoga and Scandinavian trade grew a lot together. In and around the town more *dirham* hoards were deposited³. By following numismatic records, the coin evidence suggests that the eastern trade began in the 780s.

Until 940 the trade grew moderately. During the 940s and 950s the eastern trade reached its peak, especially when an enormous increase in *dirham* imports has been noted. For example, a hoard from the Murom region of the upper Volga probably contained around 20,000 *dirhams*⁴. Around 30% of all the *dirhams* in these two decades were imported to European Russia and the Baltic⁵. During the 940s a huge influx of new dirhams was evident in European Russia, and then in the 950s it became notable in the Baltic. The greatest success of the eastern trade of the Viking Age was in the middle of the tenth century. At the most prosperous time of the commerce with central Asia, the trading system began to expand and to become much more successful in the trading stations with the main routes.

2 Boyer, *Les Vikings*. Некрасов М.Ю., переводсфранц, 2011; Оформление, ООО "Издательство "Евразия", 2019: 134; from Foote, Peter G.; Wilson, David Mackenzie, *The Viking achievement*: 198.

3 Noonan. "Scandinavians in European Russia": 142.

4 Noonan. "Scandinavians in European Russia": 147.

5 Noonan. "Scandinavians in European Russia": 152.

According to Kovalev's numismatic research, during Grand Princess Olga's ruling (945-960 AD) many Byzantine coins, *miliarisia*, and Near Eastern *dirhams*, minted in Syria, Egypt, Crete and upper Mesopotamia, were brought to the Northern lands not as a result of trade, but of martial activities of Rus' mercenaries enrolled in Byzantine armies during the war against the Arabs in 950s and 960s⁶. At that time, the Rus' and Byzantine empires were at peace. The chronology of the *miliarisia*, discovered in the Northern lands, correspond with the period of the Rus' activity as mercenaries for the Byzantine empire. The majority of *miliarisia* and *dirhams* were carried to the main Rus' base – Sweden.

In the eleventh century the Viking warriors continued to join the Varangian guard at Constantinople. But the Scandinavians merchants were mostly gone. The Islamic world's silver mines began to be empty between 965 and 1015, because Scandinavians abandoned the trade routes with the East. When Vladimir the Great died, his sons continued to compete for ruling the great Kievan Rus. At the end of the conflict became a ruler Yaroslav the Wise, from 1019 AD to 1054 AD. According to Barraclough, the civil war between Yaroslav and his brothers were also written in the sagas. There is a *Tale of Eymund Hring's Son*⁷, where it is told that Eymund, the protagonist of such tale, travels to Russia with his men to offer to Yaroslav a military service, in exchange for silver, beaver pelts, and sable furs. But when came the matter of payment, Yaroslav couldn't fulfill Eymund's and his men's wishes:

When payday came, King Eymund went to find King Yaroslav and said: 'We have stayed here in your kingdom for a while, lord. You must decide now whether our bargain is to continue any longer, or whether you now want us to part company so that we can go look for another ruler. They pay has been slow in coming.' The king answered: 'I don't think I need as much support from your troops as I did before. We'd lose a lot of money if we gave as much pay as you're asking for'⁸.

When Yaroslav was reigning, Kievan Rus was the highest point of its power. When the wise Gran Prince died, hard struggle for power began, and the state split apart. The trade-routes, which were sustaining Kievan Rus, started to fragment⁹. After 1066, when the Viking Age was ended, some warriors still came to work at the Byzantine emperor's Varangian guard, but these warriors were mostly exiled Anglo-Saxons¹⁰.

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6 Kovalev. "Rus' mercenaries in the Byzantine-Arab wars of the 950s-960s: the numismatic evidence", p. 186.

7 Eleanor R. Barraclough. *Beyond the Northlands*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2016: 185.

8 S. Nordal, ed., *Eymundarþáttrhrings*, in *Flateyjarbók*, vol. 2 (1945): 206.

9 Eleanor R. Barraclough. *Beyond the Northlands*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2016: 191.

10 John Haywood. *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1995: 104.

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