

Sources of the Viking Age

800 -1050 AD



Snorri Sturluson:

Icelandic Christian author who lived from 1179-1241 AD, credited with writing down many tales and poems which he claimed were historically accurate.



Adam of Bremen:

Christian monk in Germany during the late 11th century. He focused on currying favor but also wanted to convert the "heathens of the northern islands".



Ibn Fadlan:

Islamic missionary who wrote about his travels and met a group of 'Russiyah' in the Balymer Complex in what is now Russia in the early 900s.



Most sources from the Viking Age are filled with holes, poorly preserved, date from long after the Viking Age ended and Christianity was the dominant religion, and were written by the enemies of the Vikings or those trying to convert them. These sources are still often what influences and informs modern depictions of the Vikings.

Amazons and Men with the Heads of Dogs:

Adam of Bremen claimed that a tribe of warrior women lived in the northern islands that gave birth to only deformed men with the head of a dog on their chest.



Snorri Sturluson trusted the writings of the past without being critical of their origins. He is a valid source as long as this is kept in mind.

Snorri's Attitude Towards The Eddas:

Snorri attempted to preserve the tales from early Norse paganism while still conforming to his Christian beliefs. This led to some things being presented differently or gaps being filled in in a way which led the tales to become embedded with Christian parallels and ideals.



Ibn Fadlan described a Viking ship burial in Russia which involved rape and the sacrifice of animals and a human. Scholars do not agree on whether Fadlan's account is accurate, but it does not match most accounts from Scandinavia.

Much of what Ibn Fadlan wrote has survived and is drawn on for modern depictions of the Vikings despite his unreliability.

The Temple at Uppsala:

Adam of Bremen claimed that a gold-adorned temple existed at "Ubsola" where ritual sacrifices of humans and animals occurred regularly. In an attempt to euhemerize them, Snorri Sturluson claimed in Heimskringla that the gods had chosen to make their home at Uppsala, and tied them to kings of the past. Archaeology has only confirmed that a feasting hall of some description existed.



Adam of Bremen's sources were mostly sailors' rumors and hearsay from aged Christian men. His writings are very unreliable and biased against the Norse.



Norge

Sverige

Suomi

Danmark

Sources:

- "Myths of the Pagan North" by Christopher Abram
- "Descriptio insularum aquilonis" by Adam of Bremen
- "The Viking Age: A Reader" from University of Toronto
- "Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness" translation by Paul Lunde
- Kelsey Chisamore, Linseed Studio, Anbiluru Adaleru noun project countries

Adam of Bremen

Ibn Fadlan