

- 1 **Dommasnes, Liv Heila**
 - “Women, Kinship, and the Basis of Power in Norwegian Viking Age,” 1998
 - Viking society emphasized men
 - seafarers, robbers, warriors, traders, farmers, craftsmen, kings, slaves
 - What about women and children?
- 2 **Main question: How is our knowledge about the past structured?**
 - In archeology, W/Ch not supposed to be visible
 - Not in public sphere
 - Public sphere interested Victorians, and Scandinavian men in archeology and nation-forming
- 3 **But there are written materials that are about women in this time period**
 - But few archeologists include them
 - Focused on changes of Viking society to early Christianity
- 4 **Viking society**
 - Hierarchical, with women in families, loyalty, protector/avenger of family honor
 - Could own property, vote in assembly
 - Come economic freedom in marriage
 - dowry would be hers
 - Iceland: some were chieftains
 - Daughters could inherit (smaller share of moveable property)
- 5 **So picture we have is the ideal and ideological**
 - Author’s research shows that Viking Age: women had high status
 - Grave goods for rich women go back to Iron Age
 - High amount of imported goods
 - Perhaps men being away gave women economic power
- 6 **One archeologist found more females than males in burial**
 - Female graves had more variation in goods
 - Women had more in early period than in later Iron age period
 - Men had more, but women given more equipment the older they were
- 7 **Kinship and power in Norse society**
 - Power in family rather than in the individual
 - Family made alliances and unions
 - Marriage: women still kept dowry and had rights of property disposal
- 8 **Graves Sites**
 - Women buried in large mound sites
 - More men in burials

- But a woman who took good care of property while men were away were recognized and honored
- Graves found are those in charge of property
- Only women-specific grave goods were textile tools

9 **Power and authority**

- Power over people, property, over forces outside immediate environment
- Material and economic conditions were important

10 **Power implies influence as well as authority**

- Women always had influence
- Icelandic sagas: women had religious authority
- Men probably had more power over people
- But women had power in domestic sphere

11 **Asks if women specialized in cloth production for sale and created own economic base.**

- Hence involved in international trade, and therefore concentration of female graves was understandable

12 **Religious authority**

- Pre-Viking Iron Age: fertility cults
 - but maintained privately (individual farmsteads)
- Viking period: warrior cult
- As fertility cult lost dominant position, one foundation of women's power and authority disappeared.

13 **But more investigations are needed before**

- Women are then relegated to 'domestic' sphere and lack of power
- Need to look at period before Viking Age as well to answer gender questions