

# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

„Tolkien and the Viking Heritage“

verfasst von

Sophie Hinger

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 190 344 313

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch UF Geschichte,  
Sozialkunde, Politische Bildung

Betreut von:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Werner Huber



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to say thank you to all those people without whom the writing of this thesis would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Werner Huber for agreeing to supervise my diploma thesis and accepting the topic. I am thankful for his support during the writing process and his valuable feedback.

I would also like to thank Prof. Christina Lee of the University of Nottingham for giving me the idea for thesis with her interesting lecture on the Viking World.

Thank you to my mum for lending me her flip chart to organise my thoughts and for proofreading this thesis. Thank you to both my parents for supporting me throughout my studies and allowing me the time I needed to finish them. I also owe them my gratitude for introducing me to Tolkien's books at an early age and thus kindling my enthusiasm for them. Special thanks to my sister, brother and cousins for never letting this enthusiasm weaken. Thank you for showing me that I can still enjoy *The Lord of the Rings* after writing this thesis.

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. J.R.R. Tolkien .....	5
2.1.1. Biography .....	5
2.1.2. Middle-earth .....	6
2.1.3. <i>The Hobbit</i> and <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> .....	8
2.1.4. Mythology and History .....	9
2.3. The Film Adaptations .....	11
2.4. The Vikings .....	13
2.4.1. Their Origins .....	13
2.4.2. The Vikings in England .....	14
2.4.3. A Growing Interest in Vikings .....	15
<b>3. Mythology and Literature .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1. Norse Mythology .....	16
3.1.1. Overview .....	16
3.1.2. Sources .....	18
3.2. Parallels with Norse Mythology in Tolkien's Legendarium .....	21
3.3. Remembering the Past in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> (Book) .....	24
3.3.1. Oral Tradition .....	24
3.3.2. Poetry .....	25
3.4. Remembering the Past in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> (Film) .....	30
<b>4. History .....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1. Historical Events as Source of Inspiration .....	34
4.2. Languages .....	40
4.3. Runes .....	44
<b>5. Social System .....</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1. Political Organisation .....	46
5.2. Women's Roles in Society .....	48
5.2.1. Viking Women and Their Representation in Old Norse Literature ...	48
5.2.2. Representation of Women in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> .....	49

<b>6. Art and Archaeology .....</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1. Burial Customs .....	51
6.1.1. Viking Burial Customs .....	51
6.1.2. Burial Customs in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> .....	53
6.2. Viking Art .....	57
6.3. Architecture .....	59
6.3.1. Viking Houses and Settlement Structure .....	59
6.3.2. The Viking Hall in Archaeology and Literature .....	60
6.3.3. Settlement Structure and Houses in Rohan .....	63
6.3.4. The Golden Hall Meduseld in Book and Film .....	64
6.4. Arms and Armour .....	71
6.4.1. Viking Arms and Armour .....	71
6.4.2. Arms and Armour in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> (Book) .....	74
6.4.3. Arms and Armour in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> (Film) .....	77
6.5. Viking and Rohirrim Physical Appearance and Clothing .....	83
<b>7. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>8. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>9. Table of Figures .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>10. Appendix .....</b>	<b>97</b>
Abstract (English) .....	97
Deutsche Zusammenfassung (German Abstract) .....	98
Curriculum Vitae .....	99

## **1. Introduction**

*The Oxford Companion to English Literature* calls J.R.R Tolkien “the greatest influence within the fantasy genre” (Birch 360). His *The Lord of the Rings* can be seen as the first epic fantasy novel and the foundation stone for modern fantasy literature. Many fantasy novels followed it, but *The Lord of the Rings* still is unique and differs from its successors. The reason for its uniqueness is Tolkien’s wish to create a mythology rather than a fantasy. He wanted to write a mythology for England and therefore created Middle-earth as a mythological version of Europe rather than creating a new and separate world as many fantasy authors after him did. For this reason he had to create a world as realistic as possible and similar to cultures that had a rich mythological tradition.

Two cultures which fulfil these requirements are the cultures of the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, both being Germanic peoples. The Anglo-Saxons are an important part of English history, while Viking culture has widely influenced Northern European culture and history. Norse mythology is still fascinating for many people today. Much has already been written about the influence of Norse mythology on *The Lord of the Rings* (e.g. DuBois&Scott; Burns *Realms*). Less research has so far been done about how other aspects of the culture and history of the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons influenced Tolkien’s writing. This thesis will take a step in that direction. The Germanic influence is most prominent in the depiction of the people of Rohan. So far some scholars have compared them to ‘Anglo Saxons on horseback’ (Bueno&Jorge; Drout; Honegger). There are, however, several similarities between the Rohirrim and the Vikings that support the assumption that Viking culture also played a role in the creation of the people of Rohan. These similarities can, for example, be found in burial customs, the representation of women and historical events. The Germanic, and especially Viking, influence on *The Lord of the Rings* is, however, not only restricted to the people of Rohan. It can also be seen in the general treatment of mythology and poetry and in parallels between some characters in Norse sagas and *The Lord of the Rings*, as for example Odin and Gandalf.

Peter Jackson’s film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* of 2001, 2002, and 2003 was a worldwide success. As Tolkien’s novel differs from other fantasy

novels, Jackson's films differ from other films of this genre. Jackson and his crew have several times expressed the wish to make historically realistic films rather than pure fantasy films. Jackson "wanted Middle-earth to be as realistic as possible" (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:10:16ff.), and Andrew Lesnie, Director of Photography, said that the creators of the films "wanted everything to feel like it was real and believable and the whole story might be a pre-history of what exists in human mythology at the moment" (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:02:45ff.). To achieve this effect both writers and conceptual designers tried to stick as closely as possible to Tolkien's description of people and places (Sibley 15), although the storylines in the films differ to some extent from the original novel (see Beranek). Where Tolkien's description did not suffice for the creation of sets and costumes they turned to archaeology as a source of inspiration. As Tolkien's work was inspired and influenced by Viking culture and heritage, this can also be found in the film adaptations. It can most prominently be seen in the set designs of Rohan and the costumes of the Rohirrim.

This thesis analyses the ways in which Tolkien and Jackson used Viking heritage as a source of inspiration for their work. Special attention will be given to the question whether their treatment and use of Viking material differ. The question will be tried to answer whether the use of Viking material helped them to achieve their goal to create a realistic and believable fantasy world. To do this, it analyses four aspects of Viking culture and their reflection in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and the film adaptations by Peter Jackson. The first aspect, Mythology and Literature, focuses on the rich mythology and oral tradition of the Vikings and their influence on *The Lord of the Rings*. The second aspect, History, draws parallels between the history of the Vikings and *The Lord of the Rings*, including language, runes and historical events. The chapter on the social system focuses on parallels between the political organisation and the role of women in Viking society and the societies depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. The chapter on 'Art and Archaeology' compares the architecture and burial customs in *The Lord of the Rings* to those of the Vikings and the costumes and set designs of the film adaptation to archaeological findings of Viking houses, burials and weaponry. First, however, background information on Tolkien, the Vikings and the film adaptation will be given.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. J.R.R. Tolkien**

#### **2.1.1. Biography**

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in South Africa in 1892. He moved to England at the age of three and was raised and remained a Catholic for his entire life. Already at an early age he showed an interest in fairy stories and languages. During his school years he studied Latin, Welsh, Old English, Old Norse and Gothic. He started to write poetry and became interested in Norse mythology. In 1911 he began to study philology at Oxford University. In 1916 he married Edith Mary Bratt, with whom he had three sons and a daughter. After he finished his studies with First Class Honours in English Language and Literature he served in WWI. After the war he worked for the New English Dictionary and two years later, in 1920, he was appointed Reader in English Literature at Leeds University. During his time at Leeds University he founded the Viking Club for undergraduates who were interested in Old Norse sagas (Bramlett 92). In 1925 he got a position as Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, where he remained until his retirement in 1959. He died in 1973 at the age of 81 and is buried in Oxford (Bramlett 2-24).

Tolkien published many works of scholarship, such as *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922), a translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1925), his renowned paper *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics* (1937) and *On Fairy-Stories* (1939), which is often thought to be Tolkien's most influential non-fictional work (Bramlett 106-118). Tolkien also wrote poetry, parts of which he incorporated into his novels. However, many scholars think that Tolkien was a much better prose-writer than poet (Bramlett 88-90). One specific collection of poems has to be mentioned here. The *Songs for Philologists* is a collection of songs and poems in Old and Modern English, Latin, Gothic and Icelandic. It was created by Tolkien and his colleague Eric V. Gordon during their activities at the Viking Club at Leeds University. Unfortunately, only a few copies have survived, which makes it Tolkien's rarest publication (Bramlett 92).



Tolkien's work related to Middle-earth started during his time at Oxford, where he had his first ideas for the *Book of Lost Tales*, a collection of stories about the early history of Middle-earth (Bramlett 7). He spent almost his entire adult life on writing *The Silmarillion*, which was only finished and published after his death by his son Christopher. It is a collection of stories that describe the history of Tolkien's fantasy world Arda, of which Middle-earth is a part, and was considered by Tolkien his most important work (Bramlett 76-87). In a letter to his publisher Stanley Unwin in 1945 he wrote that his "only real desire is to publish 'The Silmarillion'" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #98 to Unwin). *The Hobbit* was published in September 1937 and after its success Tolkien was asked by his publishers to write another book about Hobbits. After the *Silmarillion* had been rejected by the publisher, he started writing *The Lord of the Rings* in December 1937. He finished writing in 1948. However, *The Fellowship of the Ring* was not published until July 1954. *The Two Towers* followed in November and *The Return of the King* was published in October 1955 (Bramlett 57-61). After Tolkien's death his son Christopher edited and published several of his father's Middle-earth related works, including *The Silmarillion* (1977), *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* (1980) and *The Book of Lost Tales Parts I and II* (1983 and 1984) (Bramlett 208-211).

### 2.1.2. Middle-earth

Middle-earth is a continent of Tolkien's fictional world Arda. He invented a history for his world, which is divided into different ages. The events at the end of *The Lord of the Rings* mark the beginning of the fourth age. During the first age the Elves came to Middle-earth from the east, left it for Valinor in the west and then came back to Middle-earth to fight evil. The first age ended when that part of Middle-earth that is called Beleriand sank into the sea. The second age was the age of the island Númenor, a Middle-earth version of Atlantis, which was inhabited by Men. The second age ended with the sinking of Númenor. At the beginning of the third age Sauron was defeated and the kingdom of Gondor and Arnor was founded. It declined in the course of the third age and was renewed at the end when Sauron was defeated again.

Middle-earth has different climatic zones, similar to the European climate, from an arctic climate in the north to a Mediterranean climate in the south (Whyn Fonstad 183). The Misty Mountains, which stretch from the North to the northern borders of Rohan in the south, divide Middle-earth into Eriador in the west and Rhovanion in the east. To the west of Middle-earth lies the sea, to the south are the lands called Haradwaith and to the east the lands of Rhûn (Whyn Fonstad 52-53).

During the third age Middle-earth is inhabited by several different peoples. The immortal Elves have, compared to the ages before, diminished and only live in rather remote areas such as Rivendell, Lothlórien, the Grey Havens and in the northern parts of the big forest called Mirkwood. The Hobbits live in the Shire in the middle of Eriador. They are “little people, smaller than Dwarves” (*FOTR* 2) and enjoy a quiet life. Dwarves are “a tough [...] race, secretive, laborious [...] lovers of stone, of gems, of things that take shape under the hands of the craftsman” (*ROTK* 1488) and they live in the mountains. There are dwarf settlements in the Blue Mountains, east of the Shire, and in the Grey Mountains to the north of Rhovanion. There is a Dwarven kingdom at the mountain Erebor, which was destroyed by the dragon Smaug and re-established during the events in *The Hobbit*.

Other peoples of Middle-earth are Ents and giant Eagles. Ents are a people that live in the forest of Fangorn. They look like walking trees and most of them are several thousand years old. There are no young Ents, as the Ent-wives have disappeared. The Eagles live in the Misty Mountains and sometimes help Men, Elves and Dwarves in their fight against evil. They are involved in the Battle of the Five Armies in *The Hobbit* and the battle at the black gate in *The Lord of the Rings*. Their leader is called Gwaihir.

Most parts of Middle-earth are inhabited by Men. The biggest kingdom is the kingdom of Gondor and Arnor. At the end of the third age however, only Gondor, the southern part, still exists. After the death of the last king of Gondor, it is ruled by a steward. The descendants of the king live as rangers in Arnor and are called the Dúnedain. At the time of the events in *The Lord of the Rings* their leader is Aragorn. North of Gondor lies the kingdom of Rohan, whose people

are called the Rohirrim. It is ruled by king Théoden during the events depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. There are also Men living in the towns of Bree, Esgaroth and Dale, in Dunland, north of Rohan, and in the Drúadan Forest. Haradwaith and Rhûn are also inhabited by Men and they fight on Sauron's side in the War of the Ring.

Another people fighting on Sauron's side are the Orcs. They serve as villains in all of Tolkien's Middle-earth-related work. Other creatures of more or less evil nature in Middle-earth are Trolls, Spiders and Balrogs. Middle-earth is inhabited by all kinds of animals.

### 2.1.3. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*

*The Hobbit* tells the story of the Hobbit Bilbo who joins thirteen dwarves on their quest to defeat the dragon Smaug and regain the former dwarf kingdom of Erebor. They are accompanied by the wizard Gandalf. On their journey Bilbo finds a ring which makes its wearer invisible. In the end the dragon is defeated by the Men of Esgaroth. With the help of the Elves of Mirkwood and an army of Dwarves from the Grey Mountains the Orcs, who came to take Erebor, are defeated as well and the Dwarven Kingdom of Erebor is re-established. The story ends with Bilbo returning to the Shire, taking the ring with him.

*The Lord of the Rings* is the story of Bilbo's nephew Frodo, who inherits the ring and has to take it to Mordor to throw it into a volcano, because only thus the evil Sauron, who plans to conquer Middle-earth, can be defeated. Frodo is accompanied by his Hobbit friends Sam, Merry and Pippin, the Men Aragorn and Boromir, the Dwarf Gimli, the Elf Legolas and the wizard Gandalf. At first they travel together, but after Boromir's death they split up. While Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas hunt the Orcs who have captured Merry and Pippin, Frodo and Sam continue their journey to Mordor. Merry and Pippin are saved from the Orcs by a group of Rohirrim and escape into Fangorn where they are found by the Ent Treebeard. Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas meet Gandalf, whom they presumed dead. Together they help the Rohirrim to fight the wizard Saruman. They are later reunited with Merry and Pippin, only to split up again, to take different roads to the capital of Gondor, Minas Tirith, to help the people of Gondor fight Sauron's armies. Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas take the Paths of the

Dead, Pippin travels with Gandalf and Merry rides with the host of the Rohirrim. Minas Tirith is saved and Frodo manages, with the help of Gollum, to destroy the ring. The book ends with Aragorn becoming king of Gondor and Arnor, the Hobbits saving the Shire from Saruman and Frodo and Bilbo's departure to the West.

#### 2.1.4. Mythology and History

"History became legend. Legend became myth" (*LotR* I, Disc 1, 00:05:22ff.). Although this quote is taken from Jackson's film adaption and does not occur in the novel, it is still significant for Tolkien's work on Middle-earth. History, legend and myth play an important role in the creation of his fictional world. They do not only serve as a source of inspiration, but are also incorporated into Middle-earth, which has a rich mythology, many legends and a long history. Mythology, legends and history are all encountered by the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and to some extent also in *The Hobbit*.

Tolkien stated that he wanted to create a mythology for England. In a 1956 letter to a reader he wrote that he had "set [himself] a task [...]: being precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #180 to Thompson). The Oxford English Dictionary defines mythology as "[a] body of myths, esp. that relating to a particular person, or belonging to the religious literature or tradition of a country or people" ("Mythology," *OED*). Myth is defined as "[a] purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions, or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena" ("Myth," *OED*). From the point of view of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, the events described in first part of *The Silmarillion* can be considered myths. These myths are about the creation of Arda and the first war between the Elves and their enemies. Although there are still some people living at the time of events depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* who remember this war, Galadriel being one of them, for most characters these events have turned into stories or even religious beliefs. From a 20<sup>th</sup>-century point of view all of the stories in Tolkien's work can be considered mythological. For a 20<sup>th</sup>-century reader the War of the Ring is as mythological as the first war of the Elves was for Frodo.

‘Legend’ and ‘Myth’ are often used synonymously, but the Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘legend’ as “[a]n unauthentic or non-historical story, esp. one handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical” (“Legend,” *OED*). Therefore, the term legend is here used as a story that includes more historical truth than a myth. Tolkien’s works are full of legends. Each people have their own, which are often recited in songs and poems. How some of these legends were inspired by Norse mythology and how their existence supports the argument that the culture of the Rohirrim is much inspired by Viking culture will be discussed in chapter 3.

‘History’ can be defined as a “narrative of past events [...]” or “[t]he aggregate of past events in general” (“History,” *OED*). History differs from legend and myth insofar as there is usually proof for historical events. The evidence for historical events can be taken from a range of sources, ranging from written accounts to archaeology. Tolkien’s work includes many references to history and historical writings. The characters “use words – folklore and proverbs, song, oral traditions of epic poetry, and written chronicles – to know, remember, and understand their world” (Sabo 91). One of the historical writings referred to in the *Lord of the Rings* is the Red Book of Westmarch, which is written by Bilbo, Frodo and Sam to record the events of the War of the Ring. The characters also encounter archaeological sites such as ruins of castles or ancient burial mounds (Sabo 91-92).

However, Tolkien did not only create a world with its own history, in doing this he also took some of his inspiration from history. Much has been written about the influence of mythology on Tolkien’s work, with a strong focus on Norse and Anglo-Saxon myths (Fisher; DuBois&Mellor; Gough). Mythology and history can, however, not be seen as two strictly separate entities. The sagas and myths of the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons are part of their history and may reflect the historical situation and cultural circumstances of these people. Tolkien also took some of his inspiration from archaeology (Sabo 91-109).

### 2.3. The Film Adaptations

In the second half of the 1990s New Zealand director and producer Peter Jackson started his project to turn Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* into a film. He had always felt that it would be impossible to put the entire story into one film, but the production studio Miramax, which was Jackson's first choice, wanted to produce only one film. Luckily, New Line Cinema agreed to finance the production of three films (Sibley 12).

The pre-production work for the films started two years before principal photography. In 1997 Peter Jackson began writing the script together with Fran Walsh. They were supported by Philippa Boyens. Although *The Lord of the Rings* clearly belongs to the genre of Fantasy, the three writers agreed that they were not so much dealing with a work of fantasy, but rather a 'pre-history' and that this should also be conveyed through the films (Sibley 15).

The films were shot and produced entirely in New Zealand. The New Zealand Special Effects Studio Weta Workshop, with its head and founder Richard Taylor, was hired for production design. Weta Workshop was responsible for masks, make-up-effects, creatures, armours, weapons and the creation of miniatures, including towers, cities and landscapes. Weta Digital was responsible for special effects. The staff of Weta studied several historical epochs to gain enough knowledge for the realistic creation of Middle-earth. 148 employees of Weta Workshop and 200 of Weta Digital started working on *The Lord of the Rings* at the end of 1997 (Russell, *Gefährten* 8-9).

Weta worked closely together with the conceptual designers Alan Lee and John Howe, who joined the project in 1997 as well. Both had illustrated some editions of Tolkien's books, and Peter Jackson asked them to join the project and help create the looks of Middle-earth on film. They created drawings of costumes, scenes, locations and landscapes, which were then transformed into miniatures or models by Weta (Russell 8-9). Alan Lee had worked on film projects before, *Erik the Viking* (1989) and *Legend* (1985) (Sibley 24). He said that he took the inspiration for his Middle-earth drawings mostly from the books and from Norse mythology, which he said had fascinated him from early childhood on (Russell, *Gefährten* 10). Lee was responsible for the poetic side of the design, the

beautiful scenes and landscapes, while John Howe focused more on the dramatic (Russell, *Gefährten* 9). Howe had expert knowledge of the Middle Ages, which was very much appreciated by Richard Taylor and Weta Workshop (Sibley 27). While Lee stayed in New Zealand for the entire production of the film, John Howe left after the work on the design was finished. Paul Lasaine joined the design team to help with film-related designs, like colours, proportions and camera angle (Russell, *Gefährten* 11).

Principal photography began in October 1999. All three films were shot simultaneously and it took over a year to finish filming. The last scene was filmed in December 2000 (Servos, "Hintergrund"). "The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring" premiered on 9 December 2001. "The Two Towers" followed in December 2002 and "The Return of the King" in December 2003. Each film was also released as a Special Edition DVD with additional scenes and a documentary about the production process and filming. Peter Jackson later produced and directed the film adaptation of *The Hobbit*, which is also divided into three films. "An Unexpected Journey" was released in December 2012 and "The Desolation of Smaug" followed in December 2013. "The Battle of the Five Armies" is to be released in December 2014.

## 2.4. The Vikings

### 2.4.1. Their Origins

The term 'Viking' is used to refer to a raiding or trading Scandinavian coming to Europe between the 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century. This time span is, therefore, called the Viking Age. The Vikings, however, did not call themselves Vikings. Although the first use of the word 'Viking' is documented in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in England, these people were more commonly called 'Northmen', 'Danes', or 'pagans' by their contemporaries. In Old Scandinavian the word 'Viking' (masc. *víkingr* and fem. *víking*) means 'sea warrior' or 'military expedition'. How this meaning came to be extended to refer to all Scandinavians who left their homelands to raid, trade or settle somewhere else, has been debated among scholars without a consensus. The term 'Viking' started to be used frequently in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the interest in the Vikings started to grow (Brink *Vikings* 5-6). As this thesis does not only deal with the historically correct version of Vikings but also with the image people had of them during Tolkien's time and today, it will follow the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition by referring to all the Scandinavians who came to Europe during the Viking Age as 'Vikings'.

The Vikings started to leave their homelands during the last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The attack on the monastery of Lindisfarne in 793 has later been decided to be used to mark the beginning of the Viking Age. The end of the Viking Age is traditionally given as 1066, the Battle of Stamford Bridge, where a large army of Northmen was defeated by the English king Harold. During this period the Vikings travelled to trade, raid and settle as far west as the American coast and as far east as the Caspian Sea. They had a great impact on European culture, especially on the British Isles, where they settled in great numbers (Brink, *Vikings* 4-5). They "create[d] an international network connecting cultures over four continents, where artistic, religious and political ideas met" ("The BP exhibition: Vikings life and legend"). There are no written sources by the Vikings themselves and only few contemporary accounts. Much of our understanding of Viking culture has been influenced by the descriptions of others, especially the people of the countries they were raiding, and by later



sources such as the Norse sagas, which came to be written down only at the end of the Viking era or even later (Downham 341-343).

#### 2.4.2. The Vikings in England

Before the Viking Age, aristocratic families of western Europe, including England, were already in close contact with noble families from southern Scandinavia and there may have been kinship relationships between Scandinavia and East Anglia in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hedeager 12-13). In the late 8<sup>th</sup> century the Vikings came to England during hit-and-run raids on the northern English coast. Later they started to conquer territory in northern and eastern England and at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the so called Danelaw, a territory controlled by Vikings, was created. A peace treaty between the Wessex King Alfred and the Viking leader Guthrum, defined the borders of the Danelaw as “running along the rivers Thames and Lea, then in a straight line to Bedford, and up the River Ouse to Watling Street” (Hadley, *Creation* 375). According to the British Museum, this border “may have been more of a ‘legal fiction’ than a real border, but it does seem to roughly mark the southern limits of significant Scandinavian settlement in Britain” (“Vikings Live: Old Norse Origins”). Nevertheless, about half of England was controlled by the Vikings.

Viking settlers brought their culture with them to their new homes, including their mythology and beliefs (Burns, *Realms* 26). There is a debate about the amount of Viking settlers and the extent of their impact on Anglo-Saxon culture, but it has recently been discovered that the density of settlement was higher than had been thought before (Richards 371). Evidence for an impact of Viking culture on England can not only be found in the English language, especially in place names, where many have their origin in Old Scandinavian (Fellows-Jensen 391-400), but can also be seen in archaeological excavations, such as Viking cemeteries (Richards 368-369). It can be claimed that in the Danelaw areas Vikings and Anglo-Saxons interacted and even intermingled in a way that led to the creation of an Anglo-Scandinavian culture with its own identity (Downham 346; Richards 372).

### 2.4.3. A Growing Interest in Vikings

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the English started to become increasingly interested in their Teutonic roots, which included the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. The Teutonic roots were set apart from the Celtic and Roman roots. The North was idealised and the South (including the Celts) rejected (Burns, *Realms* 15). The English even preferred the Vikings to the Anglo-Saxons, probably because they were the last to arrive in England and therefore “the least adulterated from the northern cultures” (Burns, *Realms* 16). This growing interest in their Teutonic roots led to an increase in literature dealing with Norse culture and mythology. This trend was picked up Tolkien in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although Tolkien hardly ever used the term ‘Viking’, when talking about his inspirational sources, but mostly referred to Anglo-Saxons, it can, and will, be assumed that he knew about Viking influence on Anglo-Saxon culture and that therefore ‘Anglo-Saxon’ includes ‘Viking’ or ‘Norse’ to some extent. Tolkien’s work was so to speak influenced by the Vikings via the Anglo-Saxons.

The interest in the Vikings did not stop in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, archaeologists are still interested in Viking excavations and some major findings have been made in recent years. In 1997, for example, the longest Viking warship so far found was excavated at Roskilde in Denmark (“The Vikings are coming...”). In 2007 a large hoard of Viking objects was found near Harrogate in England (“Vale of York Hoard”). The interest in Vikings is especially strong in England. The academic centre for Viking studies is the University of Nottingham with the Centre for the Study of the Viking Age, which offers a BA and MA course in Viking Studies (“CSVA Related Courses”). A further sign of the popularity of the Vikings is the exhibition “The BP exhibition: Vikings life and legend” in the British Museum, which was open from March to June 2014 and displayed, among other objects, the Roskilde warship and the Vale of York hoard (“The BP exhibition: Vikings life and legend”). The corresponding film “Vikings Live from the British Museum” was screened in cinemas all over the UK and in selected cinemas worldwide (“Vikings Live from the British Museum”).

### **3. Mythology and Literature**

#### **3.1. Norse Mythology**

##### **3.1.1. Overview**

Most of the basic concepts and characters of Norse mythology are well known today, thanks to a wide range of books, films and music about Norse gods and sagas. Most people know about the thunder god Thor, the All-Father Odin, the treacherous Loki or the world tree Yggdrasil. However, the representation in popular culture does usually only scratch the surface of Norse mythology that is multifaceted and complex. This chapter will introduce some of the gods of this mythology and discuss the religious aspects of it.

The Old Norse pantheon includes many different gods and goddesses. Some of them are only known to us because of one story while others feature in many different stories. It has to be kept in mind that only because one god or goddesses is known to us better, it does not necessarily mean that he or she must have been more important to the Vikings. It has to be assumed that only a small part of narratives of Norse mythology have been passed down to us and that some gods or goddesses may not even be known to us at all (Schjødtt 219).

The god that we know most about is Odin. He has many different traits. He is depicted as the god of knowledge, wisdom and poetry, a leader, the king among the gods, a magician and a wanderer of the worlds. He often wanders the world of Men disguised as an old one-eyed man (Schjødtt 219-220). He has two ravens, Thought and Memory, who collect news from the nine worlds (Brown 10). Odin also welcomes all warriors who die in battle to Valhalla to prepare for Ragnarök. This is the finale battle between gods and giants, which will destroy the world (Schjødtt 220).

Although we know most about Odin, the most popular god was probably Thor, especially in Iceland (Brown 10). Thor, who is depicted as Odin's son, is a fighting god. He fights giants with his hammer Mjöltnir and is an opponent of Loki. However, he is also depicted as a god of fertility, as he controls thunder and rain. The most ambiguous figure in the Norse pantheon is Loki, the trickster god.

He helps the gods in many situations, but he is also responsible for the death of Baldr, which marks the beginning of Ragnarök. In the finale battle he leads an army of giants against the gods (Schjødtt 220-221). Besides several other gods, such as Freyr and Freyja, the gods of wealth and fertility, and Heimdallr, the guardian of Bifröst, the bridge which connects the worlds of gods and Men (Schjødtt 221), the mythology of the Vikings features several other supernatural beings, such as dwarfs, elves, Norns, trolls and shapeshifters.

In Viking society there was no clear cut distinction between religion and mythology. Hultgård states that the religion of the Vikings can be defined as a “non-doctrinal community religion” (212) and that in these religions “myths are the foremost verbal expression of religion because they convey the world-view, ideas, emotions and values of a specific culture” (213-214). Furthermore, religion and social community were not separate either (Raudvere 235). Individual gods were worshipped by a community or individuals, but in addition the “belief in divine and other supernatural beings permeated most aspects of human life” (Hultgård 213).

What is most important to remember is that Viking society was an oral society. The mythological and religious stories were “passed around and kept alive by word of mouth as part of a long-standing tradition of orally transmitted narratives” (Abram 11). They were only written down after the Vikings’ conversion to Christianity in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. When confronted with written sources of Norse mythology, it has to be kept in mind that written narratives are not the same as their orally transmitted predecessors. “Translating a mythic narrative into a different form will inevitably alter it” (Abram 1). This is even more problematic when the authors of the manuscripts have a different religious background than the people who were part of the oral culture, as it is the case with Norse mythology. The Norse myths may have been altered by Christian scribes to make them more acceptable for a Christian audience (Burns, *Gods* 163-164). There are several different textual sources of Norse mythology. These will be presented in the following chapter.

### 3.1.2. Sources

The most famous written source of Norse mythology is Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, also called *Snorra Edda* or *Younger Edda*. Snorri Sturluson was an Icelandic chieftain of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He was the first to write down Norse myths in a systematic way. His *Edda*, presumably written around 1225 (Abram 25) includes most of the Norse myths that are known to us today and is sometimes referred to as "a textbook on mythology", as it is the only source consisting of coherent prose narratives (Brown 3). There are two other works also attributed to Snorri. *Heimskringla* is the history of the Norwegian kings from mythological times (Odin is said to have been involved in the foundation of Norway) to 1117 (Brown 4). *Egil's Saga* is the story of several generations of an Icelandic family and is often referred to as the first Icelandic saga (Brown 4).

An Icelandic saga is "a specific type of long epic prose narrative written in Old Norse in medieval Iceland at some time after 1150, at least partly based on indigenous oral tradition and primarily dealing with the legendary past of the Scandinavian people" (Lönroth 304). There are many different types of Icelandic sagas. The three most important ones are the mythical-heroic sagas, the sagas of kings and the sagas of Icelanders. The mythological-heroic sagas deal mostly with traditional legends and heroes from before the Viking Age and have therefore been classified as fiction with the aim to entertain. The sagas of Icelanders and sagas of kings are more often referred to as historiography as they are about events and people from the Viking Age. This categorisation is, however, problematic, because none of the three genres is a reliable historical source and all of them were intended by their writers to be entertaining (Lönroth 305). The mythological-heroic sagas are sometimes subdivided into adventure tales and heroic tales. While adventure tales generally end with the "felicitous conclusion of the hero's quest", the hero usually dies in the heroic legends (Mitchell 319).

The prose sources of the Vikings were compiled after the end of the Viking Age. This is a little different with poetry. Although they have also been written down only after the end of the Viking Age, it can be assumed that they are more closely based on the oral tradition. There are two different genres of Viking

poetry, Eddic and Skaldic poetry. Eddic poetry refers to verse that relates to a whole myth and tells it in a narrative way (Abram 16). It takes its name from the Codex Regius, also referred to as *Poetic Edda* to distinguish it from Snorri's *Prose Edda*. The Codex Regius is a manuscript of a collection of twenty-nine poems of mythical and heroic legendary content. It was written around 1270, but there must have existed earlier versions, as Snorri cites some of the poems in his *Prose Edda* (Jesch 293-294). It can be assumed that the poems in the *Codex Regius* have their origins in the oral tradition and have only been collected rather than created by the writers of the manuscripts (Gunnell 299). There are two different types of poems in the *Poetic Edda* that differ in content and form. There are the mythological poems, which deal with the Norse gods and heroes that have business with the gods and are written in dialogue or monologue form. The heroic lays are about Germanic heroes and are written in a narrative style from a third-person perspective (Gunnell 301).

Skaldic poems have a very specific and fixed metre and it is therefore assumed that their written forms are very close to their oral versions from the Viking Age. Their name derives from the Old Norse word 'skald', which means poet. Skaldic poems were composed and performed in an oral context, usually at the courts of kings and chieftains, as most of them are about the deeds of famous kings (Jesch 295). The poems do not tell full mythological stories, but take knowledge of Norse mythology for granted. The references to mythology could not be understood today if it were not for Snorri's *Prose Edda* or the *Poetic Edda*. Furthermore, skaldic poetry "favours hidden meaning over explicit meaning" and it can be assumed that the contemporary audience of skaldic poetry was familiar with the mythology and that they "seem to have taken pleasure [...] in untangling" the poem's meaning (Abram 13).

The only forms of written evidence that can definitely be dated back to the Viking Age, or even earlier times, are runic inscriptions, which in most cases are also written in verse. Runic inscriptions in verse form can be found on artefacts, such as for example on a fifth-century drinking horn, explaining who made that specific artefact (Jesch 291). It was also a common habit to erect rune stones to honour the dead and the inscriptions on these stones often take the form of poems (Jesch 292). These runestones can be found all over the Viking world

and commemorate the deeds of people abroad or at home. They usually also contain information about who erected the stone (Graham-Campbell 164-166).

Viking society was an oral one and their legends were handed down from one generation to the next. Jesch argues that especially the runic inscriptions in verse form are a signs that the Vikings were “a culture whose habit of thinking was poetical” (292). This argument can further be supported by the fact that most of the written literary sources that have their origin in the Viking Age take a poetic form. Viking society can therefore be characterised as a society with a strong oral tradition that often takes the form of poetry. In Chapter 3.3. it will be discussed how this characterisation is also applicable for the societies in *The Lord of the Rings*. To complete the picture of the Viking influence on Tolkien’s writing Chapter 3.2. will first give an overview of parallels between Norse mythology and the world of Middle-earth in terms of characters and storyline.

### 3.2. Parallels with Norse Mythology in Tolkien's Legendarium

Tolkien's writings were influenced by Norse mythology to a large extent. He himself states that his tales "derived from [...] epic, mythology, and fairy-story" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #25 to the editor of the 'Observer'). An inquiry into Tolkien's sources would not be complete without mentioning *Beowulf*, which Tolkien called one of his "most valued sources" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #25 to the editor of the 'Observer'). It is the oldest Anglo-Saxon epic poem and is set in Scandinavia. Tolley provides a detailed overview of the parallels between *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings*, especially mentioning the confrontation of Théoden and Gandalf in the hall of Edoras and the similarity between Gríma Wormtounge and *Beowulf's* Unferth (38-62). He argues that "the books [*The Lord of the Rings*] could not have been written, the films [*The Lord of the Rings*] made, without the great Old English poem named *Beowulf*" (39).

This could also be said about Snorri's *Edda*. Tolkien liked this particular work so much that he even suggested a curriculum change for English major studies at Oxford University. Instead of Shakespeare, he wanted students to read Snorri Sturluson, preferably in the Old Norse original (Brown ix). It is therefore not surprising how much of Norse mythology can be discovered in Middle-earth. Even the name Middle-earth is borrowed from Norse mythology, where 'miðgarðr' (Old Norse for 'Middle-earth') is the name for the world inhabited by Men (Gilliver, Marshall and Weiner 163).

Another obvious example are the Dwarves. Their names in *The Hobbit* are all taken from Snorri's *Edda* (Carpenter/Tolkien, #25 to the editor of the 'Observer') and the story about how they were created also resembles the one from the *Edda*. Snorri writes that the Dwarves "quickened in the earth" and "by the degree of the gods [...] acquired human understanding" (Brown x). Tolkien's Dwarves were created by the Vala Aule in secret under the mountains of Middle-earth and were later given life by Eru (S 53-58). The Dwarves in Norse mythology are mainly known as craftsmen, who created some of the most valued possessions of the gods, such as Thor's hammer Mjölnir and Freyja's collar (Raudvere 237). Tolkien's Dwarves are also renowned craftsmen and have created for example the famous sword Narsil, which later becomes



Aragorn's sword Andúril (S 457) and the necklace Nauglamír, which plays an important role in the events of the First Age of Middle-earth (S 153).

Norse mythology also influenced the creation of Gandalf. Although Gandalf is the name of a dwarf in Snorri's *Edda*, Tolkien's famous wizard is largely based on Odin. Tolkien calls him an "Odinic wanderer" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #107 to Unwin) and he does share several characteristics with the Norse god. Like Odin he travels the lands in the shape of an old man with a staff and a wide-brimmed hat. They are both known for their wisdom and give counsel to kings and other leaders on a regular basis. Odin's horse Sleipnir can be found again in Gandalf's steed Shadowfax, and both characters can converse with birds (Brown xi).

In his letters Tolkien mentions several other specific influences of Norse mythology on his books. He states that his creation of the dragon Smaug owes much to the dragon Fafnir in his Norse version of the Sigurd-story (Carpenter/Tolkien, #122 to Mitchison) and the final battle in *The Silmarillion* to the Norse vision of Ragnarök (Carpenter/Tolkien, #131 to Waldman). In his analysis of the Ragnarök vision in Tolkien's work Dimond goes even further and claims that the end of the Third Age was also influenced by the Norse Ragnarök. The passing of the Elves resembles the death of the gods in Ragnarök and the following rise of mankind as leaders and inhabitants of Middle-earth can be compared to the rise of Christianity, which he sees as the new world order that will rise after the fall of the Norse Gods (179-189).

Although Tolkien was fascinated by the world of the Norse gods, he still remained a faithful Christian. He knew that his work "needed to be acceptable to a Christian audience" (Burns *Gods* 164). Burns gives an interesting example of how Tolkien managed to do this, by comparing the gods or Valar of Tolkien's world to the Norse gods. She argues that several of the Valar can be linked to the Gods of Asgard, but that Tolkien "Christianized" them by "introduce[ing] more kindly personalities and a higher moral tone" (*Gods* 168). Gough also claims that especially the first part of *The Silmarillion* was only on the surface influenced by Norse mythology, but is Christian at its core (1-8).

Nevertheless, Tolkien's creation is deeply influenced by Norse mythology. Tolkien was free to rely on Norse mythology when writing *The Lord of the Rings*, because, as he himself stated, "the Third Age was not a Christian world" (Carpenter/Tolkien, #165 the Houghton Mifflin Co.), but rather, same as most of the Viking Age, a pre-Christian era, which would be Christianized only later.

### 3.3. Remembering the Past in *The Lord of the Rings* (Book)

#### 3.3.1. Oral Tradition

In *The Lord of the Rings* there are many references to written works, such as, for example, Gandalf's letter to Frodo (*FOTR* 222) or the archives in Gondor where Gandalf searches "among [...] hoarded scrolls and books" (*FOTR* 328) for clues about the ring. The Red Book of Westmarch is an account of the events of the War of the Ring, written by Bilbo and Frodo and in the end handed down to Sam (*ROTK* 1344).

There are, however, also many references to societies who only pass on their history and legends in an oral tradition. Particularly the Rohirrim are depicted as an oral society who do not have written accounts of their history. Aragorn says of them that

They are proud and wilful, but they are true-hearted, generous in thought and deed; bold but not cruel; wise but not unlearned, *writing no books but singing many songs*, after the manner of the children of Men before the Dark Years (*TT* 560; emphasis added).

Arriving at Edoras Aragorn tells his companions about the history of Rohan. He says that the Rohirrim have lived in their land for five hundred years and that the building of the Golden Hall "is but a memory of song" (*TT* 662).

The Rohirrim themselves often mention these orally transmitted stories when interacting with other characters. When Aragorn mentions Lothlórien to Éomer during their first encounter he is surprised that one of the legends is actually true and that "[t]here is a Lady in the Golden Wood, *as old tales tell*" (*TT* 562; emphasis added). When hearing about Hobbits he exclaims, "But they are only a little people in *old songs* and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in *legends* or on the green earth in the daylight?" (*TT* 565; emphasis added). And when he hears about Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli chasing the orcs, he says that "[t]his deed of the three friends should be *sung* in many a hall" (*TT* 567; emphasis added).

One of the stories that have turned from history into legend in the memory of the Rohirrim is the legend of the Paths of the Dead. The Paths of the Dead are a mountain pass that leads from Rohan to southern Gondor and is inhabited by

the ghosts of men who once swore an oath to Gondor to support it against Sauron. They did not keep their oath and were therefore cursed. The Rohirrim, however, do not know who the dead are, but they are afraid of them and do not like to talk about them. When Merry asks Théoden what the Paths of the Dead are, he answers that “no man knows” what lies beyond the door of Dimholt, which marks the beginning of the Paths, but that “ancient legend, now seldom spoke, has somewhat to report” (*ROTK* 1043). He tells Merry that the legends tell of dead men sometimes haunting the people living close to the mountains (*ROTK* 1043). No one has tried to enter the Paths “since Baldor, son of Brego [the second king of Rohan], passed the Door and was never seen among men again” (*ROTK* 1043). Legends furthermore tell that the first king of Rohan met an old man at the Door of Dimholt, who told him that no one would be allowed to enter the Door “until the time comes” (*ROTK* 1044).

The legend of the Paths of the Dead does not only show how the society of the Rohirrim resembles Viking society in their treatment and transmission of legends, but also shows some characteristics from northern mythology. The image of the Dead has been claimed to be inspired by the image of the Wild Hunt from northern European folklore (“Paths of the Dead”). Burns argues that doors that are guarded by a guardian are a common feature in Norse mythology and that the Door of Dimholt and his aged guardian, who warns the king of Rohan not to enter, is inspired by that (*Realms* 60).

The people of Rohan are the one culture of Middle-earth where the influence of Viking culture can be seen most clearly. As has been established so far, they are a society that relies on oral tradition and has a rich corpus of legends. There are also many references to songs, which imply that their oral tradition often takes the form of poetry.

### 3.3.2. Poetry

It has been established earlier that the Vikings were “a culture whose habit of thinking was poetical” (Jesch 292). The same can be said about many societies in *The Lord of the Rings*, not only the Rohirrim. There are several instances where characters recite or create poetry spontaneously. In the Mines of Moria Gimli remembers a song about the Dwarven kingdom of Moria before its fall

(*FOTR* 411-413). During the battle of the Pelennor fields, after the death of Théoden, Éomer comes up with a few lines of poetry (*ROTK* 1109). The characters do not only recite poems that have been known for a long time, but some also compose poems with legendary material, such as Bilbo the Lay of Eärendil (*FOTR* 304-308). Bilbo is also known to collect and translate poetry (*FOTR* 243), similar to the medieval authors of Norse poetry.

Some of the poems in *The Lord of the Rings* resemble poems that have been passed down by Vikings and transferred into written form after the Viking age, as, for example, in the *Poetic Edda*. They do not have the same form, as there are no skaldic poems in *The Lord of the Rings*, but the topics they deal with are very similar. Vikings had poems and songs of mythological nature, like the mythological poems in the *Poetic Edda* and poems about the deeds of kings and heroes, as in the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda*. The Icelandic sagas are written in prose, but the topics they deal with can be categorised similar to those in the *Poetic Edda*. In addition to mythological and heroic poetry the Vikings also had poems inscribed on objects and rune stones. On the following pages, several poems from *The Lord of the Rings* will be analysed and related to the categories of Viking poetry.

The song of the Entwives (*TT* 621-622) is probably the best example of a mythological poem. It is “an Elvish song that spoke of” (*TT* 621) the disappearance of the female Ents. It is sung to Merry and Pippin by Treebeard. Like the mythological poems in the *Poetic Edda* it is written in dialogue form, between an Ent and an Entwife, and it deals with events that happened ages before the events depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. It is not created by the protagonists, the Ents, themselves, but by the Elves. Merry and Pippin therefore meet characters out of legends, although, admittedly, they did not know these legends beforehand.

The song of Nimrodel (*FOTR* 442-443) can be seen as a mix of a mythological poem and a heroic lay. It is sung by Legolas in Lothlórien and tells the story of Nimrodel, “[a]n Elven-maid [...] of old” (442), “who bore the same name as the stream beside which she lived long ago” (441). This aspect is typical for mythological poems. However, the song also includes the story of Amroth, King

of Lothlórien and betrothed to Nimrodel, who promises Nimrodel to sail with her away from Middle-earth, but is separated from her and in the end drowns in the sea south of Gondor, close to the peninsula that is called Dol Amroth. This makes it a heroic poem or rather a saga in verse, as it tells the story of a hero who dies in the end, like the heroes in the heroic Icelandic sagas. Legolas says that the song he had sung is only part of a much longer song, which “tells how sorrow came upon Lothlórien [...] when the Dwarves awakened evil in the mountains” (443). It therefore also resembles sagas which tell the stories of a people.

Another poem with mythological and heroic aspects is the song of Beren and Lúthien (*FOTR* 250-252). It tells how the mortal Beren and the Elf Lúthien met for the first time. This song is, in contrast to the Nimrodel song, not connected to a place, but to a people. Aragorn explains that from Lúthien “the lineage of the Elf-lords of old descended among Men” (*FOTR* 253). He is one of those descendants. Beside this mythological aspect, it also tells the story of the heroic quest to regain the Silmarils.

A poem connected with Beren and Lúthien is the poem about Eärendil, which Bilbo composes in Rivendell (*FOTR* 304-308). Eärendil is Beren and Lúthien’s grandson-in-law. It is a very mythological poem, as it is, on the one hand, the story of a star, the Silmaril with which Eärendil sails the sky, and, on the other hand, the story of the origins of a people, as he is father to Elrond and Elros, the first king of Númenor. The story of Eärendil was greatly influenced by Norse mythology. It is the equivalent of the Norse saga of Aurvandil and the Icelandic saga of Orentil from the *Prose Edda* (Bramlett 77).

The most typical heroic lay in *The Lord of the Rings* is the lay of The Fall of Gil-galad (*FOTR* 242-243). Sam recites a part of it and Aragorn explains what it is about and that “Bilbo must have translated it” as it is originally in “an ancient tongue” (243). It tells the story of the Elven-king Gil-galad, “the last whose realm was fair and free” (242), and the fight against Sauron during the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, at which end he dies, like the heroes in the heroic Icelandic sagas, “for into darkness fell his star/in Mordor where the shadows are” (243).

The poems and songs discussed above already existed during the time of the events depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* and were only recited by the characters. They dealt with events that happened long before most of them were born. There are, however, also poems that deal with the events depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. Bolintineanu argues that the characters “enact legends by performing in the fictional present deeds that will provide legendary material for the future” (265). This legendary material is often turned into songs and poems.

After the presumed death of the wizard Gandalf the Elves of Lothlórien create and sing a song about him, but the content of that song is not given. Frodo then makes his own song about Gandalf that recounts the wizard’s greatest deeds and resembles a heroic lay. In the end the hero dies: “He stood upon the bridge alone/and Fire and Shadow both defied;/his staff was broken on the stone,/in Khazad-dûm his wisdom died”. Although it is not written on a rune stone, it serves to remember the dead (*FOTR* 467-468).

The events around the battle against Sauron also inspire songs, mainly for the people of Rohan. The ride of the Rohirrim to aid the city of Minas Tirith is one of those events, “with which the songs of Rohan were busy for many long lives of men thereafter” (*ROTK* 1051). It tells how the Rohirrim rode for five days led by their king Théoden and ends with “hoofbeats afar/sank into silence: so *the songs tell us*” (1051; emphasis added). The second event that inspired a song is the actual battle of the Pelennor fields. The fallen were buried on the fields and “long afterward a maker in Rohan” creates a “song of the Mounds of Mundburg”, which mentions many of the fallen leaders of the battle (*ROTK* 1111-1112).

There is also one example of an inscription on a stone to remember the dead. It is not in runes, like the Viking memorial stones, but it is written in verse. For Théoden’s horse Snowmane “they dug a grave and set up a stone upon which was carved in the tongues of Gondor and the Mark: Faithful servant yet master’s bane,/Lightfoot’s foal, swift Snowmane” (*ROTK* 1106).

Inscriptions on objects are mentioned, as, for example, on Aragorn’s sword on whose blade “was written many runes” (*FOTR* 360). The most famous example

of inscriptions on objects, however, is of course the Ring on which is written: “One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them/One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them” (*FOTR* 66). This inscription is in verse and it states what the object is and its purpose, as Viking inscriptions often do.

Not all poetry in *The Lord of the Rings* can be matched with Viking poetry. There are, for example, several travelling songs and prophecies that do not have Viking equivalents. One poem which shows not the Viking but the Old English inspiration is the Lament of the Rohirrim:

Where now the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?  
Where is the helm and the hauberk, and the bright hair flowing?  
Where is the hand on the harpstring, and the red fire flowing? [...]  
They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow;  
The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.  
(TT 662-663)

This poem is greatly inspired by the Old English poem *The Wanderer*:

‘Where is the horse now, where the hero gone?  
Where is the bounteous lord, and where the benches  
For feasting? Where are all the joys of the hall?  
Alas for the bright cup, the armoured warrior,  
The glory of the prince. That time is over,  
Passed into night as it had never been. (Hamer 181)

Esteliel argues that this poem is a “depiction of the Anglo-Saxon warrior ideal” (1). It is therefore not Viking. Its influence on a poem of Rohan rather supports the argument that Tolkien intended the people of Rohan to be Anglo-Saxon.

The people of Middle-earth often express their legends and history in poetic form, as did the Vikings. Several of the poems in *The Lord of the Rings* can be categorised in a similar way to Viking poetry and there are also several instances that support the argument that “the habit of thinking” among several societies of Middle-earth “is poetical”, as was the culture of the Vikings, according to Jesch (292). A special example of such a society are the people of Rohan, who have many legends that are passed down orally from generation to generation and also put their deeds into songs.



### 3.4. Remembering the Past in *The Lord of the Rings* (Film)

As in the book, there are also several references to written texts in the films. Gandalf searches the archives of Minas Tirith (*LotR* I, Disc 1, 00:31:55ff.) and the Red Book of Westmarch features several times. There are also references to orally transmitted history and legends, but they differ from the ones in the books to a large extent. One major change occurs within the culture of the Rohirrim. When Éomer is banished, he is presented with a written order signed by Théoden. This contradicts the notion of the Rohirrim being a completely oral society, at least in the extended film version as this scene is not in the original cinema version.

In the films the people of Rohan do not make any references to orally transmitted legends. When Éomer is asked about the two Hobbits, for example, he does not know what they are and Aragorn has to explain to him that they would only be children in his eyes (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:32:58ff.). Lothlórien is not even mentioned to Éomer in the films. Some other characters, however, mention legends and stories that are presumably transmitted in an oral fashion. When entering the woods of Lothlórien, Gimli warns Frodo that “*they say* a great sorceress lives in these woods” (*LotR* I, Disc 2, 00:42:42ff. emphasis added). It is not clear to whom he refers, but there are apparently some legends about Galadriel known to him. In Fangorn Merry tells Pippin that “*folk used to say* that there was something in the water that makes the trees come alive” (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:27:34ff. emphasis added). He refers to folk in the Shire, telling stories about the Old Forest. As neither the Hobbits nor the Dwarves are presented as illiterate societies, these references to the oral tradition differ from those in the books. They are not embedded in a larger corpus of legends.

In the films there is a shift from the Rohirrim to the Hobbits as a society with orally transmitted stories. This is shown in Sam’s speech at the end of the second film, when he says “It’s like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo” (*LotR* II, Disc 2, 01:31:40ff.). This sequence is based on a dialogue from the book, where Sam also talks about “brave things in the old tales and songs” (*TT* 931). The difference to the book is that in the film these stories are presented as stories told by Hobbit parents to their children. Sam says “Those were the stories that

stayed with you, that meant something. Even if you were too small to understand” (*LotR* II, Disc 2, 01:32:24ff.). The notion of bedtime stories is further emphasised a few scenes later when Sam wonders about his and Frodo’s future appearance in stories.

I wonder if we will ever be put into songs or tales. I wonder if people will ever say, ‘Let’s hear about Frodo and the ring.’ And they’ll say, ‘Yes! That’s one of my favourite stories.’ [...] ‘Frodo was really courageous, *wasn’t he, Dad?*’ ‘Yes, my boy.’  
(*LotR* II, Disc 2, 01:40:24ff. emphasis added).

So, although the Hobbits are a, at least partly, literate society, they also have stories that are passed down from generation to generation orally, at least to little children.

The Paths of the Dead feature in the film, but, again, they are not represented as a Rohirric legend. Éomer only says that “none who venture there ever return” and that “that mountain is evil” (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:31:52ff.). He presents this as a fact and not as a legend. The origins of the Dead are explained to Gimli (and the audience) by Legolas. The Paths of the Dead are not, as in the book, presented as legends come real, but as history.

In the film the peoples of Middle-earth are not presented as societies who put their stories into poetry to such a large extent as in the book. Nevertheless, some of the poems in the books also made it into the films. Their function, however, often differs from their function in the book. For example, in *LotR* I (Disc 1, 01:05:16ff.) Aragorn sings a song in Elvish and then explains to the Hobbits that this was the Lay of Lúthien. He does not explain the context of this song and only tells them that it is about an Elf who “gave her love to Beren” and then died (*LotR* I, Disc 1, 01:05:38ff.). In the films it only serves to introduce Aragon and Arwen’s love story and does not resemble any form of Viking poetry.

The lament for Gandalf is only sung by the Elves and its lyrics are not given, as Legolas says, “I have not the heart to tell you”, (*LotR* I, Disc 2, 00:49:50ff.) when the Hobbits ask him for a translation. Frodo does not make up a song about Gandalf but, as in the book, Sam creates a stanza about his fireworks (*LotR* I, Disc 2, 00:50:10ff.). Although it is only part of a song, it can be compared to heroic lays of Viking poetry.

The song of the Entwines also appears in the film, but it has a purpose and context different from the book. Treebeard sings, “Beneath the roof of sleeping leaves and the dreams of trees unfold [...] Come back to me, and say my land is best” (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:56:54ff.). These are nearly the exact words from the book, but while in the book Treebeard explains the context of the missing Entwines to Merry and Pippin, in the film he presents the poem as his own composition and the Entwines are not mentioned at all. Rather than explaining a legend of the Ents, the poem serves to bore Merry and Pippin and emphasise Treebeard’s un-hastiness.

The Lament of the Rohirrim also features in the films. Different from the book, it is not sung by Aragorn, but by Théoden at the eve of battle. The lyrics, however, still resemble the Old English poem *The Wanderer*:

Where is the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?  
They have passed like rain on the mountains. Like wind in the meadow.  
The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into Shadow.  
(*LotR* II, Disc 2, 00:52:34ff.)

For people who know the Old English poem, this scene serves to emphasise the Anglo-Saxon background of the Rohirrim. For those who do not, it only serves to emphasise Théoden’s loss of hope.

It is mentioned in the book that on Aragorn’s sword there are runes, but it does not say what they say. In the films they had, of course, to mean something. On the pommel of Andúril there are Elvish runes which say (translated into English) “Narsil is my name, a mighty sword; Telchar made me in Nogrod” (C. Smith 29). These runes survived the re-forging from the pieces of Narsil. On Andúril’s blade it says in Dwarf runes, “Sun/I am Andúril who was Narsil the sword of Elendil. Let the thralls of Mordor flee me./Moon” (C. Smith 206).

To conclude, there are several references to tales, songs and stories in the film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*. It also succeeds in creating the feeling of the characters being in a story and their adventures being turned into stories. The oral tradition of the Rohirrim, however, is not emphasised and their illiteracy even contradicted. The storytelling tradition of the Hobbits, on the other hand, is greatly emphasised. The poems and songs in the films often have a very

different function from that in the books and there are hardly any parallels to Viking poetry to be found. Inscriptions on objects, especially swords, feature more prominently in the films.

## **4. History**

### **4.1. Historical Events as Source of Inspiration**

In a letter Tolkien once referred to *The Lord of the Rings* as being a work about a “period of history” (Carpenter/Tolkien, #114 to Brogan). It is therefore not surprising that Tolkien’s legendarium is not only influenced by how stories about events in the past were passed on, as discussed in the previous chapter, but was also inspired by historical events from the real world. This chapter will analyse which aspects of Viking history inspired the history of the Rohirrim and their connection to Gondor.

First, however, the geography of Middle-earth has to be considered, as history is almost always connected to questions of land. Burns argues that Tolkien based Middle-earth’s topography on Northern Europe and Scandinavia, because England lacked all the settings that he needed for creating its mythology.

Such an act of geological revision served Tolkien in more than one way. It not only gave him a larger stage for his expansive and expanding tale, but also diminished that pluralism which was in some ways so troubling to Tolkien, that sense that England has been peopled by foreign imports brought from other shores. In Tolkien’s Middle-earth the reverse occurs; Middle-earth has reached outward to other shores and attached onto itself land formations that (in our reality) are divided from Britain by sea – so creating a unified land mass and greatly increasing the feeling that Tolkien’s races rightly belong to a single, connected world (*Realms* 26).

If this idea is expanded from land formations to political countries parallels can be found in Europe. The Shire, with its green hills and peaceful inhabitants, is an (idealised) image of the English countryside. Gondor, with its cities, castles and knights, shows all the signs of a typical medieval country. Its southern territories lie in a Mediterranean climate while in its north there are the White Mountains. Gondor can therefore be seen as the Middle-earth equivalent of medieval kingdoms in Northern Italy, France and the alpine regions. Following this scheme, the northern parts of Middle-earth would then be Scandinavia.

The ancestors of the Rohirrim are referred to as “Northmen” (*UT* 287) and lived in the North of Middle-earth. This is a clear parallel to the Vikings, who also came from the North to settle in southern regions. The ancestors of the Rohirrim,

the Éothéod, had settled in the north of Middle-earth, after they had been cast from their homelands east of Mirkwood by the Wainriders. The Wainriders troubled Gondor for several decades during the Third Age, and the Éothéod often supported the armies of Gondor in their battles against them (*UT* 287-295).

In the year 2509 of the Third Age another enemy, the Balchoth, threatened Gondor. Cirion, who was steward of Gondor, remembered the Éothéod in the North and “he determined to send messengers to them” to ask them for help (*UT* 296). One of the messengers reached the king of the Éothéod, Eorl the Young, who decided to ride south to help Gondor. With the help of the Éothéod the Balchoth were defeated in the Battle on the Field of Celebrant (*UT* 297-299). This part of the history of the Rohirrim has often been connected to the legends around how the Anglo-Saxons came to England. “The foundation legend of the English [...] is that they came from northern Germany and Denmark in 449 at the invitation of the British king, King Vortigern of Kent, to act as mercenaries” (Tolley 41). Like the Éothéod, the Anglo-Saxons came to aid another people.

However, there is a significant difference between the Anglo-Saxons and the Éothéod. Both were given land as a reward, but the Anglo-Saxons “in their greed [...] seized Kent for themselves and, subsequently, the whole of England, driving the British out” (Tolley 41). This is clearly not what the Éothéod did with the land that was given to them. The way how the Éothéod received Rohan rather resembles the creation of Normandy.

The Vikings attacked and settled in parts of Normandy during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In 911 the Frankish King Charles the Simple therefore negotiated terms with Rollo, the Viking chief, and granted him the territory that was already under Viking rule. There is no written evidence of the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, only an account by Dudo of Saint Quentin, written a hundred years later. According to him the terms of the treaty were that the Vikings should defend their land and thus protect the Frankish realm from further attacks. They should also become Christians (Renaud 453-454). Although the Vikings did not come to Normandy with the intention to help, they received it on similar terms as the Éothéod received Rohan.

After the battle on the Field of Celebrant Cirion and Eorl meet at the mountain Halfirien, which was a holy place for the people of Gondor, and Cirion offers the northern part of his realm to the Éothéod.

To Eorl I will give in free gift all the great land of Calenardhon from Anduin to Isen. There, if he will, he shall be king, and his heirs after him, [...] No bond shall be laid upon them other than their own laws and will, save in this only: they shall live in perpetual friendship with Gondor and its enemies shall be their enemies while both realms endure. But the same bond shall be laid also on the people of Gondor (*UT* 303).

Like the Vikings in Normandy, the settlement of the Éothéod in the land that they later call Rohan serves to protect the northern borders of Gondor from its enemies. In Middle-earth these enemies are the Balchoth and the Wainriders, while the Vikings in Normandy protected the Frankish realm from attacks by other Vikings. Above it has been established that Gondor can be seen as the Middle-earth counterpart to medieval France. Therefore, it makes sense to consider Rohan as Middle-earth's counterpart to Normandy.

The treaty between Gondor and the Éothéod is sealed with two oaths, sworn by Eorl and Cirion at the mound of Elendil. Eorl "take[s] his spear from his esquire" and sets it "upright in the ground". He casts his sword in the air and "laid the blade upon the mound, but with his hand still upon the hilts" (*UT* 304) before he vows:

I vow in my own name and on behalf of the Éothéod of the North that between us and the Great People of the West there shall be friendship for ever: their enemies shall be our enemies, their need shall be our need, and whatsoever evil, or threat, or assault may come upon them we will aid them to the utmost end of our strength (*UT* 305-305).

Afterwards Cirion speaks a similar vow while laying "his hand upon the tomb and his right hand [holding] up the white wand of the Stewards" (*UT* 305). He concludes his oath with the words

This oath shall stand in memory of the glory of the Land of the Star, and of the faith of Elendil the Faithful, in the keeping of those who sit upon the thrones of the West and the One who is above all thrones for ever [sic] (*UT* 305).

Swearing oaths to support a contract was typical for the legal system of the Vikings and other Germanic societies. Several references to oaths can be found in the Icelandic sagas and the *Poetic Edda*. There is a reference to peace

treaties between King Alfred and the Vikings that were confirmed by an oath in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Treaties between the Vikings (Rus) and the Byzantine Empire were also often supported by oaths (Stein-Wilkeshuis 157-162).

The two oaths spoken by Cirion and Eorl resemble oaths sworn by Vikings in several aspects. The oaths of the Vikings were often sworn on objects “that were probably more or less dependent on the situation” (Stein-Wilkeshuis 168). These objects were often shields, swords or other weapons. Rings also play an important role in oath-swearing in Viking culture (Stein-Wilkeshuis 163-164). Cirion and Eorl do not swear their oaths on a ring, but obviously the Ring is an important, if not the most important, feature in *The Lord of the Rings*. Neither Cirion nor Eorl swear on their weapons or mention them in any way in their oaths, but both use them in their performance. Cirion has one hand on the staff of the Stewards of Gondor and Eorl puts the blade of his sword on the tomb of Elendil.

To go to a sacred place to swear an oath is also typical for Viking societies. Cirion and Eorl go to the place where Elendil is buried, which only the Stewards of Gondor know. Cirion tells Eorl that he has brought him there “so that the oaths here taken may seem of deepest solemnity to ourselves and to our heirs upon either side” (*UT* 304). The hill topped by Elendil’s tomb later became “a hallowed place of both peoples”. One oath sworn by the Vikings to confirm a treaty between them and the Byzantine Empire was taken on “a hill on which there was a statue of Perun (a god)”. Vikings who were already Christianised took their oaths in chapels (Stein-Wilkeshuis 161).

Often a reference to what would happen if the oath was broken was included in the oath. The main consequence of breaking an oath was being cursed by the gods. If anyone “violates the terms [...] he shall merit death by his own weapons, and be accursed of God and of Perun because he violated his oath” (Stein-Wilkeshuis 161). Eorl also includes a line for the consequences in his oath: “This oath shall descend to my heirs [...] and let them keep it in faith unbroken, lest the Shadow fall upon them and they become accursed” (*UT* 305).



In Viking oaths the invocation of the gods was very common (Stein-Wilkeshuis 164), and Cirion also refers to the gods and “the One who is above all thrones” in his oath (*UT* 305). As most of the Viking oaths that we know of accompanied peace treaties the pledge for everlasting peace and friendship is very common. One of the oaths by the Rus includes the line: “So be it that the Great Prince Igor shall rightly maintain these friendly relations and that they may never be interrupted, as long as the sun shines and the world endures henceforth and forevermore” (Stein-Wilkeshuis 161). Eorl swears that “there shall be friendship for ever [sic]” (*UT* 304).

There is no evidence that Rollo swore an oath when he received Normandy. Another difference between the Vikings of Normandy and the people of Rohan is their cultural and political development after they settled in their new land. The Vikings in Normandy integrated themselves into already existing legal systems and took over most aspects of the Carolingian system. Only where the Carolingian system did not provide regulations, such as for maritime organisation, Scandinavian law was applied (Renaud 455). Although the Viking influence on Normandy can still be felt today, the Normans quickly adopted French customs and language (Renaud 457). The Rohirrim, on the other hand, kept their identity and culture. During the time depicted in *The Lord of the Rings* they are still very different from their southern neighbours. They have, for example, not become literate. The treaty between Cirion and Eorl states that “no bond shall be laid upon them other than their own laws and will” (*UT* 303), so it can be assumed that the Éothéod brought their legal system with them rather than adopting the law of Gondor. Faramir tells Frodo and Sam that the Rohirrim “hold to by ways of their own fathers” (*TT* 887).

In this aspect Rohan resembles more the Danelaw in England than Normandy. As the name Danelaw suggests, it was the region of England in which the law of the Danes – the Vikings – was in force. An English law code from the 10<sup>th</sup> century states that “there should be in force among the Danes [...] such good laws as they best decide on” (Hadley *Creation* 376). The big difference between the Danelaw and Rohan is that the Vikings took their land by force and were in the end driven out again. In this aspect the Vikings of the Danelaw show similarities to the Wainriders and Balchoth of Middle-earth. They attack the

northern borders of Gondor and settle in territories that had previously been under the control of Gondor. There are also references to raids into Gondor territory (*UT* 291). The Vikings in England were defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, and the Balchoth were driven out of Gondor at the Battle on the Field of Celebrant. Due to the fact that the Wainriders and Balchoth came from the East and travelled in large wagons, they have also been compared to ancient people of the East, like the Scythians (Moehn). It is probably more plausible that the Wainriders were inspired by Asian nomadic tribes than by Vikings.

The events from Middle-earth's history cannot be matched one to one with real historical events. Tolkien rather takes aspects from several such events and integrates them into the history of his fictional world. This makes Middle-earth a place with a plausible history. The events in Middle-earth seem real to readers because they know of similar events in the real world. In the creation of the history of the Rohirrim Tolkien is greatly inspired by Viking history, which evokes a feeling of northernness in the reader and relates the people of Rohan to the Vikings.

The film adaptation is based on *The Lord of the Rings* and does not include material from the *Unfinished Tales*. It is therefore not surprising that there are hardly any references to the origins of the Rohirrim. The only hint to their history is Saruman's speech to the Dunlendings, where he accuses the Rohirrim of driving the Dunlendings from their homelands (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:20:43ff.). This accusation is not entirely false, as the Dunlendings did inhabit the land of Calenardhon before the Rohirrim settled there and were partly driven out by them (*UT* 370-371), but this is not explained in the films. There are no parallels to historical events from Viking history to be found in the films. Cirion and Eorl's oath is not mentioned. However, there is a reference to another oath, namely the oath that was sworn to Isildur, in the films called the last king of Gondor, by the people of the mountains. The mountain clans broke their oaths and were therefore cursed and started to haunt the Paths of the Dead (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:42:46ff.).

## 4.2. Languages

Languages are an important part of Tolkien's legendarium. He started to invent languages at an early age (Hostetter 332) and created languages for several peoples of Middle-earth (*ROTK* 1480-1488). Flieger states that

However idly Tolkien may have begun his invention of languages as a hobby, he came to regard it, as his concept of mythology grew, [...] as the index of a world, the agent and reflection of his spiritual and cultural attitudes and the repository of its myth and history. (67)

They became "both the bed-rock and the atmosphere of his world" (Flieger 73). The several different languages spoken by different peoples help to make Middle-earth a place which seems real and plausible to the reader. This is furthermore supported by the historical nature of Tolkien's fictional languages. They are related to one another like real languages and some have common ancestors. Due to sound changes the languages spoken in the First Age differ from those in the Third Age (Hostetter 333-334).

Tolkien's best known and most developed fictional languages are his Elven languages, Quenya and Sindarin. Quenya is based mainly on Finnish and Sindarin on Welsh. However, the real languages influenced the fictional languages more in structural, phonological and phonetic aspects than in lexical ways, although some words are similar (Hostetter 335). Other languages, of which only a few words and sentences are recorded, are Khuzdul, the secret language of the Dwarves, and Adunaic, the language of the Númenorians, which both have a Semitic structure (Hostetter 341-342). Taliska, the language of the First Men, resembles real ancient languages, such as early Gothic and Germanic, as well as some of the fictional languages and could therefore be intended as a "bridge, within the fiction, between the ancient languages of Middle-earth [...] and the Indo-European tongues of history" (Hostetter 342).

The language most often spoken in *The Lord of the Rings* is the Common Speech. In Appendix F, Tolkien writes that he has translated the Common Speech, spoken by the Hobbits, into Modern English (*ROTK* 1489). The various dialects of the Common Speech and the languages related to it are "turned into forms related to English" (1493). The dialect that the Dwarves speak is

“represented by a partially anglicized form of Old Norse, mostly seen in personal names” (Hostetter 342).

The speech of the Rohirrim is represented as Old English. The Old English word for ‘horse’ is ‘eoh’. ‘éo-’ appears in several names in Rohan, such as Éomer, Éowyn, Éomund and Eothain. Éothéod combines ‘éo’ with ‘theod’ ‘nation, people’, creating the meaning ‘horse-people’. The name of the capital of Rohan, Edoras, derives from the Old English word ‘edor’, meaning ‘house’. The Golden Hall, Meduseld, simply means ‘mead-hall’ (Tinkler 165-167). In the book there are only a few phrases spoken in the language of the Rohirrim. When Théoden rids himself of Wormtounge’s ill counsel, Éomer cries “Westu Théoden hál!” (*TT* 676), which is Old English and means “Be thou healthy, Théoden!” (Tinkler 169).

Shippey argues that “all the names given to the Riders and their horses and their weapons are pure Anglo-Saxon, and [...] pure Mercian, not West Saxon” (*Tolkien* 92). Old English was, however, closely linked to Old Norse. “There is more Norse in even modern English than people realize, and even more in Northern dialects, in which Tolkien took a keen interest” (Shippey, *Tolkien* xii). Apart from the influence of Old Norse on the languages of Middle-earth via Old English, Tolkien’s own word creations were sometimes directly inspired by Old Norse, especially when Old English did not suffice to create the meaning he wanted. One example for this is the word Warg, which is “a linguistic cross between the Old Norse ‘vargr’ and the Old English ‘wearh’ (Shippey, *Road* 74). ‘Vargr’ means both ‘outcast’ and ‘wolf’. ‘Wearh’ means ‘outcast’ or ‘outlaw’. There is also the Old English verb ‘awyrgan’, which means ‘to condemn’ and ‘to strangle’ (Shippey, *Tolkien* 30). Tolkien combines the Old Norse and the Old English words to create a “vividly imagined monstrous wolf with supernatural (or at least preternatural) powers” (Gilliver, Marshall and Weiner 207). Other word creations by Tolkien that derive from Old Norse are, for example, ‘daymeal’ (Old Norse ‘dag-mál’) (Gilliver, Marshall and Weiner 101) and ‘Elvenhome’ (English equivalent to Old Norse ‘Álfheimar’) (Gilliver, Marshall and Weiner 118).

Although the language of the Rohirrim resembles Old English (or is represented as Old English), the influence their language had on the naming of the land

resembles the Old Norse influence on place names in northern England. The Vikings who settled in England named and re-named the places they lived in and a lot of these Scandinavian place names still exist today. The suffix ‘-by’, in place names like Linby, Dalby and Wetherby, for example, derives from the Old Norse word ‘bý’ meaning ‘settlement’ (Fellows-Jensen 391-392). For some of the place names only Old Norse versions are recorded, others have earlier Old English versions. Bleasby in Nottinghamshire is made up of the word ‘Blesi’, which is an Old Norse personal name, and ‘bý’. However, there is also an earlier version recorded, namely ‘Blisetune’, derived from the Old English word ‘tūn’, which also means ‘settlement’ (Baker, slide 21).

When the Rohirrim settled in their newly given land the names of places “were named anew by the Éothéod, being alterations of the older names to fit their own tongue, or translations of them, or names of their own making” (*UT* 318). The land Calenardhon was named Riddermark by the Éothéod. The Elves called it Rochand, which later turned into Rohan (*UT* 318-319). The river Angren turned into Isen and the fortress Angrenost into Isengard (*UT* 318). The mountain on which Cirion and Eorl took their oaths was called Amon Anwar, ‘Hill of Awe’ in the speech of Gondor. It remained a sacred place for Gondor and the Rohirrim even when the tomb of Elendil was removed and a beacon was set on the hill (*UT* 310). The mountain and the wood around it, the Wood of Anwar, were re-named by the Rohirrim. “The Hill they named the Halfirien, and the Wood the Firienholt” (*UT* 306). Halfirien means Holy Mountain (*UT* 310), and Firienholt is a word recorded in Anglo-Saxon poetry as ‘firgenholt’, meaning ‘mountain wood’ (*UT* 318). The different parts of Rohan are called West- and Eastemnet (see Shippey 92-93 for etymological background), Eastfold and Westfold. There are two counties in Norway today that are called Vestfold and Østfold, deriving their name from the region west and east of a fjord.

Tolkien’s invented languages are also used in the film adaptation. The Elvish language is used most frequently but there are also several references to the language of the Rohirrim. Rohan is called ‘Riddermark’ by Éomer and Théoden several times. At the feast after the battle of Helm’s Deep, Éowyn offers Aragorn a cup with the words “Westú Aragorn hál” (*LotR* III, Disc 2, 00:19:04ff.). This is an Old English line taken one-to-one from Tolkien’s novel and

represents the language of the Rohirrim. In a scene that does not feature in the book, Éowyn sings a lament in Old English at her cousin Théodred's funeral:

Bealocwealm hafath fréone frecan forth onsended  
 Giedd sculon singan gléomenn sorgiende  
 on Meduselde thæt he ma no wære  
 his dryhtne dierest and maga deorost.

An evil death has sent forth the noble warrior.  
 A song shall sing sorrowing minstrels  
 in Meduseld, that he was of men  
 dearest to his lord and bravest of kinsmen. (Adams 32)

The first line clearly resembles lines 2265-2266 of *Beowulf*. "Bealocwelm hafað fela feorhcynna forð onsended", which translates to "Baleful death has many of my living kin sent forth" ("Funeral of Théodred"). There are no subtitles when the Rohirrim speak their own language, as there are no translations in the books, which serves to present them as a people speaking a language that is not understood by the other characters in the films, and thus setting them apart from the other cultures of Middle-earth.

### 4.3. Runes

The word 'rune' derives from the Germanic word 'rūnō', which means 'mystery, secret' (Smith A. 579). The Oxford Dictionary defines 'rune' as a "letter or character of the earliest Teutonic alphabet, which was most extensively used (in various forms) by the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons" ("rune." *OED*). The Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian runic alphabet both derive from the Common Germanic *futhorc*, named after the first six letters of the alphabet. The Elder *futhorc*, as it is also called, consisted of twenty-four runes and was used by various Germanic tribes (Smith A. 579).

As the languages changed, so did the runic alphabets. The Scandinavians dropped several letters, which resulted in an alphabet consisting of only sixteen different characters. There are two different, but similar, versions, the Danish *futhorc* and the Swedish-Norwegian *futhorc* (Elliot 21-22). Scandinavian runes could be reversed or inverted and were often ligatured (two or more runes combined on a single staff) (H. Williams 282). The Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* consisted of twenty-eight letters and it is assumed that the Anglo-Saxons brought their runic alphabet with them when they settled in England (Elliot 34). When the Vikings came to England, they brought their alphabet with them, and there are some runic inscriptions that use Scandinavian runes but are written in English (Page 194-199).

Tolkien uses runes extensively in his works. In the preface to *The Hobbit* he writes that the runes of the Dwarves "are in this book represented by English runes" (H 1). The runes on the map of Erebor carried by Thorin in *The Hobbit* can, with a few exceptions, all be found with the same values in the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* (Smith A. 579). Later, Tolkien invented his own runic alphabets, the Angerthas Daeron and the Angerthas Moria. Both of these alphabets include letters from the Germanic *futhorc*, therefore including Scandinavian as well as Anglo-Saxon runes, but their values are changed. Their shape is based on "phonological relationships between the sounds that they represent" (Smith A. 580).

Tolkien's runes can, for example, be found on the map of Erebor in *The Hobbit* (xviii-xix), on Balin's grave in Moria (*FOTR* 416), and on objects such as swords

(*FOTR* 360). These uses are similar to the manifold purposes of real runes. They were used on tombstones, memorial stones, on everyday objects like spoons and on sacred objects like Christian fonts (Elliot 25-27). They played an important part in rituals and were often linked to magic (Elliot 62). Tolkien's runes also often have magical attributes, as can be seen in the moon-letters on Thrór's map, which can only be read when the light of the moon in a certain shape shines on them (*H* 50). The runes on the western gates of Moria, although they do not resemble the Germanic runes, as they are Elvish runes, can also only be seen in moonlight and protect the gate from unwanted visitors who do not know the password (*FOTR* 397-401).

In his film adaptation Peter Jackson makes use of Tolkien's runes whenever they also appear in the book. There are elvish runes on the doors of Moria and Dwarf runes written on Balin's grave. The chronicle of the Dwarves found in Balin's grave chamber is also written in runes. In addition to that, there are runes on the walls of this chamber which are not mentioned in the book (*LotR* I, Disc 2, 00:24:12ff.). There are runes on all the swords of the main characters, as for example Angerthas Daerion runes on Aragorn's sword Andúril (Smith C. 206).



## **5. Social System**

### **5.1. Political Organisation**

The influence of Norse culture on *The Lord of the Rings* is also evident as regards the representation of political structures. At the end of the Viking Age kingdoms were created that led to the establishment of the modern Scandinavian states. Before that it is assumed that the political organisation of Scandinavia was similar to that of early Anglo-Saxon England with small kingdoms or lordships, ruled by a king or leader. These small kingdoms were later unified into the major kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden (Brink, *Law* 23-24.). One of the most famous Viking kings was Cnut, who styled himself “king of all England, and Denmark, and the Norwegians, and part of the Swedes” (Lund, *Cnut* 665).

Rohan has been ruled by a king since the days of Eorl the Young. A society ruled by a king is of course nothing typically Viking. The Rohirrim do, however, resemble the Vikings in one aspect of kingship. In Old Norse the titles of a person usually followed the proper name. King Harald was for example called Haraldr konungr and Queen Christina Krístina drottning (Bayldon 91). The same is true for Théoden. He is never addressed, and only a few times referred to, as King Théoden, but always as Théoden King. At Edoras a door ward says that “it is the will of Théoden King” that only those who speak the tongue of Rohan should enter the gates (*TT* 663). Éomer tells Aragorn that he serves “only the Lord of the Mark, Théoden King son of Thengel” (*TT* 563) and when the king comes to Dunharrow he is greeted with “Théoden King! Théoden King! The King of the Mark returns!” (*ROTK* 1037). In the film adaptation he is addressed with “Théoden King” by one of his captains (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:30:33ff.).

Another, earlier form of government was the Thing, the assembly of all the free men in a community. At a Thing meeting people first and foremost discussed legal affairs. Different to the beliefs of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, a Thing was not an institution of an egalitarian society, but a hierarchical one and was controlled by a king or chieftain (Brink, *Law* 24). Thing assemblies were held at special places, of which some have been identified from rune stones and place names. Some have even been reconstructed through archaeological excavations (Brink,

*Law* 26-27). In Anglo-Saxon England there was an institution called a folkmoot or folkmote, which had about the same function as a Thing (Gilliver, Marshall and Weiner 167).

This type of government is not represented in the society of the Rohirrim, but with the Ents of Fangorn. Treebeard tells Merry and Pippin “Entmoot? [...] It is not a place, it is a gathering of Ents – which does not often happen nowadays. But I have managed to make a fair number promise to come. We shall meet in the place where we have always met: Derndingle” (*TT* 623-624). In the German translation the Entmoot is called an Enttthing, probably because German readers would be more familiar with Thing than Moot. At the Entmoot the Ents discuss whether they should intervene in the war between Rohan and Saruman and eventually decide to march on Isengard (*TT* 632). The society of the Ents is not a hierarchical one. The Entmoot, therefore, resembles a non-hierarchical Thing or Moot as it was imagined in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and not one held by a chieftain, as it was in reality. This is not surprising taking into account that *The Lord of the Rings* was written in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Treebeard is the oldest of the Ents (*TT* 651) and if someone could be called a leader of the Ents it would be him. The Entmoot was summoned by Treebeard, making it historically more accurate. Like a Thing or Moot the Entmoot is always held at the same place. Derndingle is described as “a great dingle, almost as round as a bowl, very wide and deep” and crowned with “an impenetrable wall of dark evergreen trees” and “three very tall and beautiful silver-birches [...] at the bottom of the bowl” (*TT* 625). In the film adaptation the Entmoot takes place on a small meadow in the middle of which there is a large standing stone, which marks the place as something special (*LotR* II, Disc 2, 00:44:32ff.). Unlike in the book, the Ents do not decide to go to war, but are only persuaded to do so with a trick by Pippin.

Like so many other aspects of Rohirrim culture, their political system was also partly influenced by the Vikings. The fact that they are ruled by a king is not a feature exclusively typical of Viking society, but the form of address - putting the title after the proper name - is. With the Entmoot Tolkien also managed to include the second form of government often associated with Vikings in his book. Both features were also included in the film adaptation.

## 5.2. Women's Roles in Society

### 5.2.1. Viking Women and Their Representation in Old Norse Literature

Viking society was a patriarchal society in which women did not have the same rights as men. They were not allowed to take action in politics and had only few possibilities to control large properties. However, some women did have political and economic influence, either through their husbands or as widows (Magnúsdóttir 41). Some of the greatest graves of the Viking age were burial sites for women. The famous Oseberg ship burial is the final resting place of two women, one in her twenties and one around fifty. It is most probably a royal grave, but who the two women were exactly is not known. Those burials are indicators that women of high status were treated with generosity, at least in death. Rune stone inscriptions give insight into the social status of women. They show that women could be individual land owners and wealthy enough to fund, for example, the building of bridges. However, it seems that female babies were more often victims of infanticide than male babies (Hall 34-35).

As for fighting, there are some isolated cases of Viking women who fought alongside men in battles. However, these cases were not the rule. Viking women did accompany their relatives on expeditions that were aimed at colonial settlement, but they were hardly ever armed. They could, however, be involved in defending their farms when attacked (Jochens 108-109). Old Norse sagas and poetry feature several fighting women. The book *Old Norse Images of Women* by Jochens gives an overview of female representations in Old Norse literature and mythology, ranging from fertility goddesses to warrior women. Relevant for the analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* are the so called shield maidens or valkyries, both terms being used synonymously in the sagas and poems. They could be supernatural beings or female human warriors. Jochens refers to the latter as maiden warriors (97), to the females in the mythological poems as valkyries and the ones in the heroic lays as shield maidens (90). As in *The Lord of the Rings* Éowyn, who is clearly human, refers to herself as a shield maiden, this term will be used here to refer to both supernatural and human female warriors.

### 5.2.2. Representation of Women in *The Lord of the Rings*

In *The Lord of the Rings* there are only four women whose names are known and who play a more or less important part in the story. The most important female character is Éowyn of Rohan, who is the niece of Théoden and sister to Éomer. In her creation Tolkien was obviously inspired by Old Norse shield maidens. Éowyn has been trained to fight, which seems not to be unusual for women in Rohan, and she is entrusted with the leadership of Rohan when Théoden and Éomer ride to war. For this she receives arms from Théoden. “Éowyn knelt before him [Théoden] and received from him a sword and a fair corslet” (TT 683) and when she watches the army leave “the sword was set upright before her, and her hands were laid upon the hilt. She was clad now in mail and shone like silver in the sun” (TT 683-684). At the Muster of Rohan she is described as having “long braided hair gleaming in the twilight, yet she wore a helm and was clad to the waist like a warrior and girded with a sword” (ROTK 1041). These descriptions echo the descriptions of Old Norse shield maidens like Brynhild who “had a sword in her hand and a helmet on her head and was in mail” and who says of herself: “I am a shield maiden. I wear a helmet and ride with the warrior kings” (Byok 75). Éowyn refers to herself as a shield maiden when she complains to Aragorn that she is not allowed to go into battle (ROTK 1026) and when she teases Faramir that he had “tamed a wild shieldmaiden of the North” (ROTK 1264). Donovan argues that the descriptions of Éowyn do not only emphasise her readiness to fight but also her beauty, which is also a feature of Old Norse valkyries and shield maidens (123-124).

Éowyn wants to ride with the host of the Rohirrim and “whish[es] to face peril and battle” (ROTK 1026). To do so, she masks herself as the male warrior Dernhelm. In Old Norse literature Hervör and Thorbjörg also disguise themselves as men to fight in battle or rule their kingdoms (Wallace 25-26). Different to the Old Norse shield maidens, who have to disguise their female identity in order to be able to fight, Éowyn does not disguise her female identity but her identity as the niece of Théoden, who was supposed to stay behind to rule the kingdom in his stead. Wallace argues that “in Old Norse sagas there is a sense that a female warrior is abnormal [...] because she has usurped a male role” (34), but this is not the case in *The Lord of the Rings*. Different from the

Old Norse shield maidens Éowyn is accepted as such and entrusted with a huge responsibility, because “[s]he is fearless and high-hearted. All love her” (*TT* 683). While the Old Norse “valkyrie’s will often results in tragedy, death and destruction” (Donovan 123), Éowyn’s disobedience leads to a great victory, as she defeats the Captain of the Nazgûl (*ROTK* 1100-1102). The fact that she is a woman plays an important role in her victory as “no living man may hinder” the Witch King (*ROTK* 1101). Her identity as a woman is only revealed when she takes off her helmet, similar to Brynhildr, who is mistaken for a man by Sigurd, until she takes off her helmet (Wallace 25). One thing the Old Norse shield maidens have in common is that in the end they are forced to give up their arms, settle down and marry. Éowyn in the end also gives up her fighting ambitions and marries Faramir. Tolkien has often been criticised for Éowyn’s return to a typical female gender role. Wallace, however, claims that there is a crucial difference between the Old Norse shield maidens’ and Éowyn’s return to female gender roles. Unlike the Old Norse shield maidens Éowyn is not forced to give up her arms or marry Faramir, but does so out of free will (41). She says, “I will be a shieldmaiden no longer [...], nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren” (*ROTK* 1264). This is a choice that is not only made by Éowyn but by many characters all over Middle-earth. After the war there is a need for healing. Éowyn’s choice only exemplifies the beginning of a new age (Wallace 41-42). Tolkien modelled Éowyn after Old Norse shield maidens, but he changed her character and story slightly, thus creating a figure that fitted well into his fictional medieval world and is at the same time very modern and emancipated.

In the film adaptation Éowyn’s characterisation is similar to that of the book. However, she is not often seen in armour, only when she disguises her features to ride with the host to Minas Tirith. Unlike in the book, Merry recognises her at once. She is not officially given arms by Théoden, but he entrusts her with ruling Rohan in his absence. She is seen to wield a sword and explains to Aragorn that the women of Rohan know that they can die upon the sword, even if they cannot wield one. Unlike in the book Éowyn’s status as a warrior is, at the beginning, not much appreciated, as Éomer tells her, “War is the province of Men, Éowyn” (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:33:56ff.). The reasons behind her choice to lay down her arms are not explained.

## **6. Art and Archaeology**

### **6.1. Burial Customs**

#### **6.1.1. Viking Burial Customs**

The way in which the Vikings buried their dead differs depending on location and time. Scandinavian burial traditions can be found across the Viking world, but local variations are evident. Cremations, inhumations, chamber burials, grave mounds and the use of ships in graves can be found all over the Viking world with local preferences of one or the other (Price 257-258). Grave goods, the position of the body and the composition of cemeteries vary as well (Price 260).

The most common burial tradition was cremation. The ashes of the dead were buried either in unmarked graves or under mounds. Looking at the size of settlements and number of burials it has to be assumed that not every person was buried in a formal grave (Price 259). In most cases of cremation the bones were cleaned and laid back on top of the remains of the pyre together with the grave goods. Sometimes the grave goods were burned together with the corpse. Grave goods included everyday artefacts such as cooking and sewing tools, jewellery, weapons, furniture, horse equipment, food and drink and textiles (Price 260).

Inhumations were rarer than cremation. The dead were buried in a container and a mound was erected above the grave. Like cremations they were also accompanied by a wide range of grave goods and sometimes animal or even human offerings (Price 261-262). In high-status inhumations the dead were not buried in a coffin, but placed in an underground chamber. Chamber burials already existed before the Viking Age, but in the ninth and tenth centuries they reached their peak (Price 263).

Burial mounds can be found all over the Norse world. They vary in shapes and sizes. Some are only small humps in the ground, while others are up to ten metres high. Most of them have a circular shape, but oval, rectangular and triangular mounds can also be found. Most graves were unmarked, but some

were topped by wooden poles or stones, on which the dead persons' names were written. Viking sagas frequently mention cremation burials in mounds and the resulting landmarks "played a part in the cognitive landscape of the community". There are several stories that feature the living dead still residing in their grave mounds (Price 260-261).

Burial mounds occur in various constellations. There are single burials, burials in small groups and cemeteries of varying sizes. The burial constellations reflect the settlement pattern of the area and are always close to inhabited areas. Large cemeteries can, for example, be found close to urban centres such as Birka (Figure 1) and Hedeby.



**Figure 1:** Burial mounds at Birka, Sweden

The mound cemetery at Heath Wood in England is the largest cemetery of this kind outside Scandinavia. In addition to cemeteries, some mass graves have been found, such as, for example, the mass grave at Repton in Derbyshire. They are usually interpreted as graves for the dead after a battle (Price 262-263).

Ships played an important role in Viking life and were also often part of their funeral tradition. The dead were either buried under a boat or laid into a boat, which was then covered by a mound. The most famous ship burial is that at Oseberg in Norway. Ship cremations did not occur as often as recent films may want us to believe. There is only the travel account of the Arab traveller Ibn Fadhlān, who reports a funeral where a ship is burned, and the remains of a cremated ship in Brittany. The meaning of ship burials is debated among scholars, but most agree that they are meant to serve as transport to the afterlife (Price 264-265). Viking funerals were often accompanied by rituals and celebrations, including feasts and drinking, that could last several days (Price 267).

As the Vikings were a Germanic people, their burial customs have to be seen in a Germanic context. Burial mounds were not only typical for the Vikings, but did also occur with other Germanic and Celtic tribes. Hadley discusses burial practices in the Danelaw and argues that it is difficult to differentiate between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon burials because of the variety of burial practices in England and Scandinavia (*Lordship* 120). Halsall claims that the differences between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon burial practices were not greater than the variations in mortuary behaviour in the respective cultures (261). The most famous Anglo-Saxon burial site, the Sutton Hoo ship burial, shows similarities to ship burials from Sweden from before the Viking Age (Hedeager 12).

#### 6.1.2. Burial Customs in *The Lord of the Rings*

In *The Lord of the Rings* many people die and are buried in various fashions. There are burial mounds in Rohan and in the Old Forest at the Barrow-downs. Boromir is given a ship burial and Denethor burns himself alive. All these burial traditions resemble Viking burial customs to some extent.

Closest related to Viking burial customs are the burial practices of the Rohirrim. There are two types of burials in *The Lord of the Rings*, royal burials and burials of battle casualties. The characters first encounter burial mounds on their way to Edoras, where “at the foot of the walled hill the way ran under the shadow of many mounds, high and green” (*TT* 662). Gandalf explains that these are “the great barrows where the sires of Théoden sleep” (*TT* 662). There are nine mounds on the west side and seven on the east side for the two lines of the Kings of Rohan (*ROTK* 1279). These burial mounds also feature in the film adaptation (Figure 2)



**Figure 2:** The Burials mounds at Edoras in the film adaptation

with the minor difference that they are not as high as they are described in the book. They are only about two metres high; definitely not tall enough to cast large shadows (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:22:29ff.). In the book the western slopes of



the mounds are covered with white flowers (*TT* 662), while in the films they cover the whole mound (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:22:29ff.).

The actual funeral customs of the Rohirrim are presented in book and film as well. The book features the funeral of Théoden, while the extended version of the film adaptation shows the funeral of his son Théodred. Théoden's funeral took three days to prepare, after which "he was laid in a house of stone with his arms and many fair things that he had possessed, and over him was raised a great mound, covered with green turves of grass and of white evermind" (*ROTK* 1278). This resembles a chamber burial with typical grave goods. The funeral is accompanied by feasts and rituals. The Riders of the King's House sing a song about Théoden, while riding around the barrow on white horses (*ROTK* 1278). When Théoden's body arrives in Edoras there "was held the highest feast" (*ROTK* 1278), and after the funeral "folk gathered to the Golden Hall for the great feast" (*ROTK* 1279).

Théoden's funeral does not feature in the film, but his son Théodred's does. In the book Théodred wishes to be buried on the site of the battle where he fell (*UT* 359). In the films he is brought back to Edoras where he dies. He is then buried in one of the mounds on the way to Edoras. Different than at Théoden's funeral in the book, the mound is not raised over him, but his body carried into the grave chamber on a bier. He is buried in his armour and with his sword. Other grave goods are not seen. There are no feasts and only Éowyn's lament could be seen as some kind of ritual (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:21:34ff.). Therefore it has to be concluded that the funeral in the book resembles Viking funeral practices to a large extent, while the funeral in the film only shows a few Viking characteristics.

Beside the royal burials, the Rohirrim erect several burial mounds for their fallen after battles. The fallen of the battle against the Orcs on the edge of Fangorn are buried in a mound with spears planted around it (*TT* 573). After the battle of Helm's Deep "two mounds were raised, and beneath them were laid all the Riders of the Mark who fell in the defence, those of the East Dales upon one side, on those of Westfold upon the other". Háma, captain of the King's guard, is given a grave of his own (*TT* 711). On their way to Isengard the characters

encounter “a mound [...] ringed with many stones, and set about with many spears” on a small island in the Fords of the Isen. In this mound “lie all the Men of the Mark that fell near this place”, and Éomer says, “when their spears have rotted and rusted, long still may their mound stand and guard the Ford of the Isen” (*TT* 719). These burials do not only resemble Viking mass graves, they also show that burial mounds were important landmarks like Viking Age burial mounds.

The burial mounds of Rohan are not the only burial mounds in the books. On their way to Bree the four Hobbits come across the Barrow-downs, “hills [that] were crowned with green mounds” (*FOTR* 179). During the night the Hobbits are captured by a Barrow-wight and find themselves in a burial chamber, surrounded by grave goods. They are laid “on their backs, [...] clad in white” and “[a]bout them were many treasures”. “Swords lay by their sides, and shields were at their feet. But across their three necks lay one long naked sword” (*FOTR* 183). They are rescued by Tom Bombadil and take four knives from the barrow with them (*FOTR* 190). The Barrow-downs episodes seem to be inspired by Old Norse stories of the living dead residing in burials and the stories about swords taken from graves.

There is one cremation in *The Lord of the Rings*, which, however, only remotely resembles Viking cremations. During the siege of Minas Tirith Denethor despairs and orders his servants to erect a pyre for him and his son Faramir. He says he does not want a tomb. “No long slow sleep of death embalmed. We will burn like the heathen kings before ever a ship sailed hither from the West” (*ROTK* 1079). In the films he gives a similar order saying, “No tomb for Denethor and Faramir. No long, slow sleep of death embalmed. We shall burn, like the heathen kings of old. Bring wood and oil” (*LotR* III, Disc 2, 00:13:15ff.). Although it is not clear what ‘heathen’ in a Middle-earth context exactly means, it clearly marks funeral pyres as traditions of pre-historic cultures.

The burial of Boromir is the only burial in *The Lord of the Rings* including a ship. Boromir is laid in the middle of one of the Elven boats, together with several objects. “His helm they sat beside him, and across his lap they laid the cloven horn and the hilt and shards of his sword; beneath his feet they put the swords

of his enemies" (*TT* 542). The boat is drawn into the middle of the river. Aragorn and Legolas sing laments for Boromir while the boat floats down the river (*TT* 543-544). In the film adaptation Boromir's body is also sent down the river Anduin in a boat, but there are no songs sung for him (*LotR* I, Disc 2, 01:28:30ff.). Boromir's burial resembles the burial of Scyld in *Beowulf*, who is laid into a ship together with treasures and weapons and is pushed out to the sea (lines 26-52). This funeral also resembles the popular depiction of Viking funerals where the dead were pushed out onto the water on a boat which was then set afire. There are, however, no accounts or archaeological findings that prove the existence of such funerary practices.

## 6.2. Viking Art

Archaeological objects from the Viking Age are very often ornamented in art styles that were typical for the period and region of the Vikings and are therefore classified as Viking art. The sets and costumes in the film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* are also decorated and ornamented. These ornamentations will be read against Viking art below when the sets and costumes in the films are read against Viking architecture and weaponry.

Viking art is part of the European Germanic animal ornament tradition. Wilson claims that from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when this artistic style emerged, “until the end of the Viking Age and beyond Scandinavian artists were obsessed by a convoluted animal ornament which had its roots in Roman art and embellished objects of everyday use, particularly jewellery and weapons” (323). The 7<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of a distinctly Viking art with very little foreign influence (Wilson 323).

Viking art can be subdivided into six different styles. One distinctive feature that they all share is the ‘gripping-beast’ motif. Its main features are its claws that grip the frame or parts of the animal’s body. The ‘gripping-beast’ first occurs in the Broa or Oseberg style of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries and was further developed in the styles that followed. It shaped Viking art for one and a half centuries and variations of it can even be found in Scandinavian Art of later centuries (Graham-Campbell 136).

Viking art styles can be ordered according to an approximate time line. From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries the Oseberg or Broa style, named after a grave at Broa and the famous ship burial at Oseberg, dominates Viking art (Wilson 324-325). The main object found at Broa is a gilded bronze bridle with animal ornaments. The Oseberg ship burial contained many wood carvings also featuring animal ornaments and the ‘gripping-beast’ (Graham-Campbell 132-134).

The Oseberg/Broa style is followed by the Borre style, which lasted from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. Its most important feature is the ribbon plait pattern (Figure 3). Objects with Borre style ornamentation have been found in nearly all

Viking colonies (Wilson 325-326). The Jellinge style is closely related and partly contemporary with the Borre style. Objects in this style often feature animals with ribbon-like bodies with their heads in profile (Wilson 328). Borre and Jellinge styles are both known for their metalwork (Graham-Campbell 140-143).

In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the Mammen style developed, which was also widespread in the Viking world. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century it merged with the Ringerike style. Mammen and Ringerike styles are often seen in runestones and feature several depictions of animals and leaf patterns (Wilson 329-332). The Ringerike style was introduced to England with Knut in 1016 and shows similarities to the Anglo-Saxon Winchester style (Wilson 333).

The last art style of the Viking Age is called Urnes style after a stave church at Urnes in Norway (Figure 4). Typical motifs of the Urnes style are snake-like animals, standing quadrupeds and interlacing ribbons.



**Figure 4:** Wood carvings at the Urnes stave church



**Figure 3:** Ribbon plait pattern on a wooden plate, Isle of Man

Although named after the woodcarving at the church at Urnes, Urnes style ornamentation is most commonly found on Swedish runestones (Wilson 334-337). At the end of the Viking age the Romanesque art was introduced to the north of Europe and Viking art ceased to be used. However, some features of Viking art, such as the ribbon plait pattern and the occasional gripping-beast, found their way into Scandinavian Romanesque and lived on in Scandinavian folk art (Graham-Campbell 152-153).

### 6.3. Architecture

#### 6.3.1. Viking Houses and Settlement Structure

Viking society in Scandinavia was a rural society. During the Viking age, there existed only four towns in which only 1-2 per cent of the population lived. These towns were Birka in Sweden and Ribe, Kaupang and Hedeby in the Danish kingdom. Due to their role as centres of trade, craftsmanship and administration, these towns played an important role in the development of the Scandinavian kingdoms at the end of the Viking age (Skre 83-84). However, as most people during the Viking Age lived in rural areas, farms will be the main focus of this chapter.

Farms in the Viking age varied in size, which shows the social differences among the landowning population. Small farms were made up of two or three buildings. Large farms consisted of five to seven considerably larger buildings. The groupings of farms differed depending on the region. Farms could be grouped into villages or spread throughout the landscape (Fallgren 69-70). When Viking society changed from a clan-based tribal society to more hierarchical chiefdoms in the early AD centuries, this was also represented in architecture. Before that, settlements consisted of farms with houses of approximately the same size. After that, one farm, owned by the chieftain, stood out larger with larger buildings (Hall 15). These buildings are often referred to as halls and will be discussed in Chapter 6.3.2.

The most common type of farmhouse in Scandinavia before the Viking Age was the three-aisled longhouse. In these houses both humans and animals lived together in separate compartments. The roof was supported by two rows of paired posts which created the effect of a nave and aisles. These longhouses could vary in length but were usually about five metres wide (Hall 40-41). They were made of wood. The walls could be wattle and daub and the roofs were thatched with straw, turf or wood, depending on local conditions and the natural environment (Fallgren 67).

Three-aisled longhouses also existed during the Viking age. However, people often no longer shared a house with their animals (Hall 41). At the end of the 9<sup>th</sup>

or the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the 'Trelleborg'-style longhouse came into fashion. These houses only had two pairs of supporting posts which created a more spacious interior. They were usually bigger than previous types and may have had upper floors. They were most common on large aristocratic farms. In Viking longhouses a "large rectangular hearth occupied a central position". It was used for cooking and warming the house. People slept on benches within the aisles (Hall 41). One-aisled houses with roof-supporting walls started to replace the three-aisled houses from the beginning of the Viking age onward, but only at the end of that period did three-aisled houses go out of fashion in all regions of the Viking world (Fallgren 67-68).

### 6.3.2. The Viking Hall in Archaeology and Literature

Hall defines 'halls' as "large timber buildings that formed the setting for impressive displays of power, wealth, influence and prestige at aristocratic residences" (15). Across the Viking world archaeologists have discovered a few longhouses that are big enough to deserve to be called halls. The earliest hall has been excavated at Gudme in Denmark. This enormous building from c. 250 AD was over 47 metres long and about 10 metres wide. Eight pairs of posts supported the roof. The hall was part of a larger settlement and between 200 and 500 AD several buildings were built and rebuilt on the same spot (Hall 15-16).

The remains of other large halls have been excavated at Lejre, Denmark, which was the centre of the Danish kingdom. From 1986 to 1988 the archaeologist Tom Christensen excavated the remains of two buildings built on almost the same spot. One dated from the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century and the other from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century. The 9<sup>th</sup>-century building was about 48 metres long and the remains of roof-supporting posts and a hearth in the centre have been found (Christensen *Beyond* 169-174). In 2004/2005 a third building was discovered about 500 hundred metres from the first site. It was built on a hill and has been identified by some scholars as the model for the hall Heorot in *Beowulf* (Niles 42-43). Christensen claims that because a large number of cooking stones have been found at Lejre, the hall buildings must have been "linked to events involving more people than the residents of the settlement" (*Roskilde* 123).

The largest single building from Viking-age Scandinavia has been excavated at Borg on the Lofoten Islands. It was built before the Viking age in the 7<sup>th</sup> century but continued to be in use until the mid 10<sup>th</sup>-century. The house was about 80 metres long and between 7.5 and 9 metres wide. It consisted of four rooms, of which one could have been used as a ceremonial hall. The largest room was the byre. Imported luxury goods have been found on the site, which shows the high status of the residents. A reconstruction of the hall can be visited today (Hall 43).

A reconstruction of a Viking longhouse can also be found at Trelleborg on the Danish island of Zealand (Figure 5). It is based on excavations and pictures and carvings of Viking-age houses. The house was erected in one of the circular fortresses built during the reign of King Harald in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Lund *Danish* 161-



**Figure 5:** Reconstruction of a Viking longhouse, Trelleborg, Denmark

162). The inside of the Trelleborg house follows the pattern of the posts that had been excavated and has a high open roof with only few sources of natural light. Light was provided by the hearth and lamps or candles. There may have been textile wall hangings to brighten up the atmosphere (Hall 42).

Although the halls varied in size, they had several features in common. They were all built of wood and other natural resources. The roof was supported by wooden posts and there was always a hearth, which was usually placed in the centre of the hall or the main room. Hall suggests that the head of every household of a hall possessed a high seat. These seats “may have had high backs which were adorned with elaborately carved terminals, for instance in the form of animal heads” (41). Halls were used as living spaces, but also for feasting and ceremonial purposes.

Mead-halls have played an important role in the social life of the Germanic peoples of the European north. Therefore it is not surprising that they also



feature prominently in literature. There is no contemporary written Viking literature and it is difficult to say what role halls played in the oral literary tradition of the Vikings. However, the concept of Valhalla, the hall of the fallen warriors, provides a strong argument for the concept of a hall being very prominent in the literary consciousness of the Vikings. Halls feature very prominently in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The most famous one is obviously Heorot, the hall of the Danish king Hrothgar in *Beowulf*. In the Old English poem *The Wanderer* a discarded warrior mourns the loss of the hall-life (lines 92-94). The Anglo-Saxons also projected hall-life into foreign settings, such as in the poems *Judith*, *Exodus* and *Genesis B*, whose protagonists originally came from regions where halls did not exist (Donoghue 40-46).

The functions of halls in literature, which allow careful conclusions about their usage in real life, are manifold. People use the hall for sleeping, which becomes obvious in *Beowulf* when the warriors are kept from sleeping in the hall by the monster Grendel (Donoghue 29-30). Halls also provide the locations for feasts. In *The Wanderer* the narrator misses “the benches for feasting” (Hamer 181). There is a feast in *Beowulf* when Beowulf comes to Heorot to defeat Grendel (490-498). Pollington argues that Heorot “functioned as a communal dining room for large, festive gatherings and meals” (24). As there were often guests at feasts, the mead-hall was connected to the concept of hospitality. It was customary to share food and drink with travellers (Pollington 24). In halls visitors were also received formally. The lord usually had a special seat from which he often presented gifts to his visitors (Pollington 26-27).

Regarding appearance, the halls in literature cannot be seen as authentic representations of real halls. Pollington argues that “[t]he image of the hall was, then, very much the image of ‘the good life’ in Anglo-Saxon thinking, the idealised epicentre of social and political life” (29). It can be assumed that the descriptions of the halls are often exaggerated. There is no proof from archaeology that any real hall was ever adorned with gold like Heorot. However, the basic features of the halls “should ring true to the [...] Anglo-Saxon audience” (Donoghue 31). The following chapters will analyse how the houses in Rohan, especially the Golden Hall Meduseld, resemble the houses and halls

in literature and archaeology, and in how far these representations “ring true” to 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century audiences.

### 6.3.3. Settlement Structure and Houses in Rohan

Most of the people of Rohan live in small villages or farms across the country. On their way to Minas Tirith the host of Rohan pass “through the hamlets of Underharrow and Upbourn” (*ROTK* 1051). In the film adaptation a small village consisting of a few wooden houses is seen to be attacked and burned down by Dunlendings (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:21:04ff.). There are only a few towns and fortresses. The fortresses, like Helm’s Deep and Dunharrow, however, were not built by the people of Rohan but by the Men of Gondor or the Púkel men. The first capital of Rohan was Aldburg, built by Eorl. It was the home of Éomer during the events described in *The Lord of the Rings* (*UT* 367).

The only town in Rohan which is described in detail is the capital Edoras. It is built on a hill and “a dike and mighty wall and thorny fence encircle it” (*TT* 661). On their way through Edoras Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and Gandalf pass “many houses built of wood and many dark doors” (*TT* 665). The material used for the construction of the houses is therefore the same that was used by the Vikings. However, other aspects of the town are clearly not Viking. The Vikings, for example, did not build roads with stone surfaces, while in Edoras there is “a broad path, paved with hewn stones” (*TT* 665).

A drawing by Alan Lee served as the model for Edoras in the film adaptation. The set for Edoras was built on a hill close to Christchurch (Figure 6). They built the Golden Hall and



**Figure 6:** Edoras in the film adaptation

the buildings close to the hill top. The wall and the other buildings were added digitally (Russell, *Türme* 70). The houses in Edoras are made of wood and thatched with straw. Some are built on top of stone foundations. Most of the

houses have carved wooden gable decorations in the form of horses' heads (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:13:06ff.). These look very similar to the gable decoration of the reconstruction of the Trelleborg house (Figure 5). Nørlund argues that the roof of the Trelleborg house is based on a picture of a house of the Trelleborg type on a casket from the Viking period. The purlins of the house on the casket project from the gables and are shaped like animals' heads. The ones on the Trelleborg house have not been carved (23-24). As wood carving was popular during the Viking age, it can safely be assumed that Viking houses might have had carved gable decorations. Gable decoration was, however, not only typical for Scandinavia. Wooden horses' heads as gable decorations were popular in later times in several parts of Europe, especially Northern Germany, Eastern European countries and parts of Austria, Bavaria and Switzerland. There are, however, none in England (Wolfram 24-65).

Other than the construction of the houses, which show some Viking features, the organisation, structure and layout of Edoras do not resemble any known Viking settlements. At first sight it would seem to resemble an English hillfort, but Senk argues otherwise. She compares Edoras to three hill-top settlements from the Hallstatt period and comes to the conclusion that the Edoras of the film adaptation resembles these in several features. Like Edoras they are built on exposed locations, are fortified and there are burial mounds close to the settlements (Senk 69-80). The construction of the houses, their decoration and ornamentation and the art styles did not play a role in her comparison.

#### 6.3.4. The Golden Hall Meduseld in Book and Film

Meduseld is the great hall in Edoras and the seat of the kings of Rohan. It is situated on the hill-top in the middle of Edoras and it resembles Viking halls in architecture as well as function. The name Meduseld is Old English and means simply mead-house (Tinkler 167). Tolkien took his inspiration for the Golden Hall mainly from works of literature, i.e. *Beowulf*, while the creators of the films also used archaeological findings as models.

One of Tolkien's sources of inspiration was the Old English poem *Beowulf* with the great hall Heorot. Legolas is the first to see Edoras and describes it to his companions:

Within there rise the roofs of houses; and in the midst, set upon a green terrace, there stands aloft a great hall of Men. And it seems to my eyes that it is thatched with gold. The light of it shines far over the land. Golden, too, are the posts of its doors (*TT* 661).

Heorot is described as a “timbered hall, splendid and decked with gold” (Swanton 49). The line “The light of it shines far over the land” could be a direct translation of line 311 of *Beowulf* “*lixe se leoma ofer landa fela*” (Swanton 48).

The description of the interior of the Golden Hall resembles a Viking hall in several ways.

The hall was long and wide and filled with shadows and half lights; *mighty pillars* upheld its lofty roof. But here and there bright sunbeams fell in glimmerings shafts from the eastern windows, high under the deep eaves. Through the louver in the roof, above the thin wisps of issuing smoke, the sky was pale and blue. [...] the floor was paved with stones of many hues; branching runes and strange devices intertwined beneath their feet. [...] the pillars were richly carved, gleaming dully with gold and half-seen colours. Many woven cloths were hung upon the walls, and over their wide spaces marched figures of ancient legend. [...] Now the four companions went forward, past the clear wood-fire burning upon the *long hearth in the midst of the hall*. [...] At the far end of the house, beyond the hearth and facing north towards the doors, was a dais with three steps; and in the middle of the dais was a *great gilded chair* (*TT* 668; emphasis added).

Like in a Viking hall the roof of Golden Hall is upheld by pillars and there is a hearth in the middle of the hall. The wall trappings are a reference to the large corpus of legends of the people of Rohan. It is not unlikely that there had been wall hangings in Viking halls (Hall 42). Great chairs may have also been part of the furniture in Viking halls (Hall 41).

Although Meduseld shows certain features of a real Viking hall, Drout claims that Tolkien’s description is based on literary descriptions of halls and not on archaeological findings. He argues that the description of Meduseld is based on the description of a hall in William Morris’ *The House of the Wolfings* “even down to specific details and words” (Drout, *Rohirrim* 256).

As to the house within, two rows of pillars went down it endlong, fashioned of the mightiest trees that might be found [...] so that it was like a church of later days that has nave and aisles: windows there were above the aisles, and a passage underneath the said windows in their roofs. In the aisles were the sleeping-places of the Folk, and down the nave under the crown roof were three hearths for the fires, and above

each hearth a luffer or smoke-bearer to draw the smoke up when the fires were lighted. Forsooth on a bright winter afternoon it was strange to see three columns of smoke wavering up to the dimness of the mighty roof, and one maybe smitten athwart by the sunbeams (Morris 6).

At first sight, there are hardly any similarities between the two descriptions, but looking at them more closely there are some similar words and expressions in both texts. The word louver, or more archaic luffer, is used in both texts and in both halls the image of the sunbeams shining through the smoke from the hearth(s) is evoked.



**Figure 7:** The Golden Hall Meduseld

The Golden Hall in the film adaptation (Figure 7) is very closely based on Tolkien's description. However, Tolkien did not describe it in enough detail for the set creators not to have to look for other inspirational sources. Conceptual designer Alan Lee said that the buildings of Rohan are very similar to people's imagination of medieval northern European houses. He says that for the creation of the Golden Hall he wanted to rely as closely on Tolkien's description as possible. He had done drawings of Heorot for a book and states that his drawings of Meduseld show similarities to these illustrations (Russel, *Türme* 72-73).

The set for Edoras, including the Golden Hall, was built in real size on a hill in New Zealand. All the scenes outside the Golden Hall were shot there. The hill was on DOC (Department of Conservation) land. Hence, the filmmakers had to

leave the place in the same state as they had found it and could not change the land in any way. As they could not just “dynamite the top of the hill off”, the Golden Hall had to fit the structure of the hill (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, “Designing Middle-earth”, 00:18:22ff.). This may have been more work for the builders but it helped to create a realistic image of the Rohirrim. Like medieval cultures, they had to fit their buildings to the environment.

The roof of the hall was thatched with wheat to create the image of a golden roof. Like many other buildings in Edoras the Golden Hall also has gable decorations in the form of wooden horses’ heads. As horses are very important for the Rohirrim the image of the horse was integrated into several designs for to the sets and costumes of the Rohirrim. Another image that features often is the golden sun which is also an emblem of Rohan. In general, the ornamentation of the Golden Hall is deeply inspired by Viking Art. Animal ornamentation is a common feature in the decoration of the Golden Hall. The pillars in front of the gate are decorated with golden animals with intertwining bodies,



**Figure 8:** Entrance to Meduseld details

similar to gripping beasts (Figure 8). There are leaf patterns between the animals and the ornamentation is carved into the wooden pillars. All this makes it resemble the woodcarvings on the doors of the Urnes stave church (Figure 4). Other parts of the entrance to the Golden Hall are decorated in ribbon plait patterns, typical for the Borre style. Woodward and Kourelis claim that the ornamentation of the Golden Hall is Celtic (205). In her study on Celtic archaeology in *The Lord of the Rings* film, Senk, however, argues that the ornamentations on the houses in Edoras do not show any Celtic features, but are typical for the Vikings (82-83).

The interior set of the Golden Hall was built in a studio. In its creation the filmmakers relied closely on Tolkien’s description. It is a wide and long hall and there are richly carved pillars upholding the roof. Different from most Viking halls, which had only two rows of pillars, the Golden Hall has four. However, the image of aisles and a nave was still achieved. The floor is paved with stones in

different colours, and there is a large hearth in the middle. Théoden's throne is set on a dais with three steps. All this led Alan Lee to say: "it felt just like a real Viking or Anglo-Saxon mead hall" (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:24:50ff.).

The wall hangings with the legendary images were created, but in the end not used in the film. When the people of Edoras make ready to leave the city for Helm's Deep, some wall hangings are seen in the background, lying ready to be packed away (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:30:48ff.). The details of the ornaments and woodcarvings in the hall are again inspired by Viking art. Théoden's throne has a high back and is richly carved with horse heads as armrests, similar to Hall's description of what a Viking chieftain's chair could have looked like (41).

Both in the books and in the films, the Golden Hall has functions similar to those of a Viking hall. First and foremost, it serves as a royal audience chamber where visitors are received and state affairs are discussed. Théoden receives Gandalf and his companions in the Golden Hall. In the film it is shown to be the place where he is counselled by Gríma and where he receives the news of his son's injury and death. In the films the discussions about Rohan's war plans are always held in the Golden Hall. It is the place where Théoden decides to seek refuge in Helm's Deep (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:24:16ff.) and where he receives the news of Gondor's beacons, while looking at maps and being surrounded by the captains of his army (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:04:47ff.). In the book the Golden Hall does not feature that often.

Kightley argues that the chapter 'The King of the Golden Hall', in which Gandalf and his friends arrive at Edoras, is deeply inspired by Beowulf's arrival at Heorot. However, Tolkien does not portray Meduseld as a second Heorot, but rather contrasts the two halls (123). While Heorot is a place of hospitality (Kightley 126), the visitors of Meduseld are not received kindly. This impression is also conveyed in the films. When Gandalf, Legolas, Aragorn and Gimli enter the Golden Hall for the first time "its interior is [...] seen in diffuse light [...] with horizontal shafts coming from small windows in the clerestory" (Woodward and Kourelis 205). This is a similar image to the one Tolkien evokes with his description of "shadows and half lights" (*TT* 668). Both images emphasise that



there is something wrong with the court of Rohan and that visitors are not welcome there. Meduseld becomes a hospitable place again, when Saruman's influence is lifted from Théoden. At Isengard he invites Merry and Pippin to his hall (*TT* 729), demonstrating that Meduseld has again become a place where visitors are welcome.

Viking halls were also used for sleeping and eating. In the books there is no reference to where the characters sleep while they are in Edoras. Before they leave for Helm's Deep the characters sit down for a meal. "At the king's board sat Éomer and the four guests, and there also waiting upon the king was the lady Éowyn" (*TT* 680). This also shows that Meduseld has become a place of hospitality again. In the films the Golden Hall has adjoining chambers where the characters sleep. There is Théodred's bedchamber (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:23:21ff.) and a room where the companions sleep on their way back from Isengard and Pippin has his encounter with the Palantír. Éowyn, however, is seen sleeping in the middle of the great hall beside the hearth (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 00:26:20ff.). The hall is also used for eating, which is shown by the meal the two children who warn the king of the raiding Dunlendings receive (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:23:58ff.).

In book and film the Golden Hall is the location for feasts, which were an important part of Viking culture. An Old Norse law states that "a bereaved heir might not take possession of his inheritance until he had organised a memorial feast, at which he must be seated on the dais (at the foot of the high seat) until he had raised the cup of memorial ale [...] and formally commemorated his forbear" (Pollington 26). After Théoden's funeral, which has already been preceded by a three-day long feast (*ROTK* 1278), Éomer does exactly that.

When the burial was over [...] folk gathered to the Golden Hall for the great feast and put away sorrow. [...] And when the time came that in the custom of the Mark they should drink to the memory of the kings, Éowyn Lady of Rohan came forth [...] and she bore a filled cup to Éomer. Then a minstrel and loremaster stood up and named all the names of the Lords of the Mark in their order [...]. And when Théoden was named Éomer drained the cup. Then Éowyn bade those that served to fill the cups, and all there assembled rose and drank to the new king, crying 'Hail, Éomer, King of the Mark!' (*ROTK* 1279).



Éomer does not seat himself in the great chair, but only after commemorating Théoden is he officially proclaimed the new king. In the films there is no memorial feast for Théoden, but a different feast takes place in the Golden Hall. After the battle of Helm's Deep, Théoden hosts a memorial ceremony for the "victorious dead" of the battle, which is followed by a feast that includes plenty of drinking (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 00:17:55ff.).

The description of the Golden Hall in the books is based more on literary descriptions of Viking halls than on actual archaeological findings. The filmmakers closely followed Tolkien's descriptions and relied on Viking art styles and archaeology for details that were not mentioned by Tolkien. While it does not feature that often in the books, the film clearly presents the Golden Hall as the place where the political and social court life of Rohan is centred. Tolkien's description of Meduseld must seem familiar to his readers (at least to those familiar with *Beowulf* or Old Norse literature) in a similar way as the description of Heorot must have seemed familiar to an Anglo-Saxon audience of *Beowulf*. Due to the popularity of Vikings in popular media, it can be assumed that the audience of the film trilogy recognised the Viking features in the film and that the culture of the Rohirrim therefore feels "like it was real and believable", as Andrew Lesnie, Director of Photography, said they wanted it to be (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:02:43ff.).

## 6.4. Arms and Armour

### 6.4.1. Viking Arms and Armour

We know about Viking weapons and armour from numerous sources. Chronicles, poetry and archaeology all give insights into the wide range of Viking weaponry. Written sources and depictions only provide information about which weapons the Vikings used, but many weapons have been excavated in the last centuries, which make detailed descriptions of Viking weaponry possible. Vikings fought with swords, axes, spears, lances and bows and wooden shields (Pedersen 204).

The most expensive and prestigious weapon of the Viking age was without a doubt the sword. At the beginning of the Viking age swords from the Migration period were still in use and at the end of the Viking age swords of the types typical for the Middle Ages started to be used (Oakeshott 3). The Viking-age sword was usually double-edged and about 90 centimetres long. A characteristic feature is the so-called fuller<sup>1</sup>, a broad shallow groove on the blade indented to reduce weight (Pedersen 204). At the beginning of the Viking age, blades were quite heavy and clumsy. At the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century a new blade-form emerged. These blades were a little longer but “they tapered elegantly towards a moderately sharp point” (Oakeshott 7). Oakeshott classifies nine types of Viking swords, based on the different shapes of their hilts. Types I to IV have a straight lower guard, while the lower guards of types V to IX are curved to varying extent. The pommels also come in different forms (3-5).

Viking swords were often decorated with ornaments. They were “most often decorated with silver and copper inlay forming geometric patterns, animal motifs and in some cases even Christian symbols” (Pedersen 204). Oakeshott claims that the decoration was wrought by the smith and not by a jeweller and that “the simplicity of the ornament is well-matched to the grim dignity of the sword’s shape” (5). On several swords there are inscriptions on the blade. These are usually names, and Oakeshott argues that it is the name of the maker of the sword and not the owner. The most common inscription is Ulfberth, a name

---

<sup>1</sup> For a nomenclature of Viking-age swords, see Oakeshott page ii.

which, due to the number of swords found, is assumed to refer to more than one person, maybe a company (7-8).

Swords were not only tools for fighting, but they were an important part of Viking culture and a warrior's lifestyle.

The sword was so closely associated with much of what was most significant in a man's life – family ties, loyalty, valour in the excitement of combat, and at last funeral rites. A man never parted from it; he carried it in the king's hall and on all social occasions. It hung at his back when he was at table and by his bed when he slept. (Oakeshott 7)

The importance of the sword for Viking warriors can be seen in the many references to swords in Viking poetry and literature. In skaldic poetry there are numerous phrases that replace the word 'sword'. These kennings include for example 'War Snake', 'Widow-Maker', 'Odin's flame' and 'Hard-Edged survivor of the Fies'. The most frequently used phrase is 'Ancient Heirloom'. This phrase describes the tradition of passing swords on from one generation to the next. Sometimes swords were even taken out of burials to be used again and several swords made during the Viking age were still in active use in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Swords were so important to Viking warriors that they sometimes even had personal names. References to those names can be found in poems and sagas but also in wills (Oakeshott 2).

Other common weapons of the Vikings were the axe and the spear. They were widely used in battle. A lot of axe-heads of varying forms and sizes have been found, mostly in burials. Most of them are plain and made of iron. Some have copper or silver and very rarely gold decoration (Pedersen 206). Although axes and spears were not as highly esteemed as swords there were also kennings for them. An axe could, for example, be called 'witch of the shield'. A spear would for example be referred to as 'the flying dragon of the fight' (Oakeshott 10). Spear heads have also been recovered from burials, but also from settlements and weapon deposits. The heads were made of iron and were often pattern-welded. Some have elaborate geometric or vegetal/zoomorphic designs on the socket. The shafts were approximately two metres long and often made of ash. Bows and arrows were also used by the Vikings and both iron arrowheads and wooden longbows have been recovered (Pedersen 206).

The Vikings used wooden shields for defence, but only a few complete shields have survived. Viking shields were circular, made of parallel wooden boards and were held on an iron grip in the centre. An iron boss over the hole in the centre protected the hand (Hall 68). They were approximately a metre in diameter and could be covered in leather and painted in different colours (Pedersen 207). Other protective gear could include leather body protectors or, for those who could afford it, chain mails (Hall 68).

Vikings did not wear horned helmets. Depictions of Vikings wearing horned helmets have to be seen in a ceremonial context (Graham-Campbell 178-179). There are several representations of Viking warriors wearing conical, pointed helmets with a nose guard, mostly from the late Viking age (Hall 68). It can therefore be assumed that Vikings did wear helmets, although only very few have been recovered (Pedersen 207). Most



**Figure 9:** Gjermundbu helmet

ordinary Viking warriors could have worn hard leather skull caps, but none of those have survived. Only wealthy and successful warriors would have worn iron helmets (Hall 7). The only complete Viking age helmet found so far is the Gjermundbu helmet found in a cremation burial in Norway (Figure 9). It is a simple iron cap with eye-guards and has small rings at its edge, which suggest that the neck was protected by a cover of chain mail (Pedersen 207). Steuer categorises this helmet as a 'Nordischer Kammhelm' (northern crested helmet), which shows the following features:

Das tragende Gerüst besteht aus drei gleichmäßig breiten Bändern aus Eisenblech, die einen Stirnreif, ein Scheitelband und ein Band von Ohr zu Ohr bilden. [...] An das Gerüst sind ein Gesichtsschutz, ein Visier, und ein Halsschutz [...] angehängt. [...] Besetzt sind die Helme mit einem kennzeichnenden Augenbogenbeschlag sowie mit einem Kamm (200).

Helmets of this type were popular before the Viking age and several have been recovered in England and Scandinavia. The most famous are probably the helmets from the Sutton Hoo burial in England and a helmet from a 7<sup>th</sup>-century ship burial in Vendel, Sweden. The Sutton Hoo helmet might have come from Scandinavia originally (Steuer 200).

#### 6.4.2. Arms and Armour in *The Lord of the Rings* (Book)

The characters in *The Lord of the Rings* are equipped with several different weapons. The most common are sword, axe, bow and spear. When the Fellowship sets out from Rivendell all weapons but the spear are represented.

Aragorn had Andúril but no other weapon [...]. Boromir had a long sword, in fashion like Andúril but of less lineage, and he bore also a shield and his war-horn. [...] Gimli the dwarf alone wore openly a short shirt of steel-rings [...] and in his belt was a broad-bladed axe. Legolas had a bow and a quiver, and at his belt a long white knife. The younger hobbits wore the swords that they had taken from the barrow; but Frodo took only Sting [...]. Gandalf bore his staff, but girt at his side was the elven-sword Glamdring (*FOTR* 363-364).

Spears are used by the people of Rohan and the cave troll that stabs Frodo in the Mines of Moria (*FOTR* 424).

Each tribe of Middle-earth favours particular weapons. Like in many other aspects, the Rohirrim are the people that resemble the Vikings most in this respect. The typical weapons of a Rohirrim are sword, spear and sometimes a bow. When Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas encounter the Rohirrim for the first time they are face to face with well-equipped warriors. “A thicket of spears was pointed towards the strangers; and some of the horsemen had bows in hand [...]. Then one rode forward [...]; from his helm as a crest a white horsetail flowed” (*TT* 561). Éomer later dismounts and draws his sword (*TT* 561-562). As a people who fight mostly on horseback, the spear seems to be their favourite weapon for battle. Éowyn beholds “the glitter of their spears” (*TT* 658) when the host of Rohan leave for Helm’s Deep and Théoden’s “spear was shivered as he threw down” (*ROTK* 1099) a chieftain of Sauron’s army. The Rohirrim’s “knighthood with long spears” is described as more skilled than that of Sauron’s army (*ROTK* 1099). The sword is, however, the weapon with the most important symbolic function. This can be seen in the case of Éomer, who is given back his sword when freed from prison and offers it to Théoden as a sign of fealty (*TT* 675). Théoden then receives his own sword, which had been hidden by Gríma (*TT* 676). This can be interpreted as a metaphor for regaining control over his kingdom.

Rohirrim armour also resembles Viking armour. Before the battle of Helm's Deep Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and Gandalf are equipped with typical Rohan armour. Aragorn and Legolas are "arrayed [...] in shining mail. Helms too they chose, and round shields: their bosses were overlaid with gold and set with gems, green and red and white". Gimli "chose a cap of iron and leather [...] and a small shield he also took. It bore the running horse, white upon green, that was the Emblem of the house of Eorl" (*TT* 682). Before Merry sets off to Gondor with the army of the Rohirrim he is also given Rohirric arms and armour. He receives "a small helm, a round shield" and a "jerkin of leather, a belt, and a knife". The shield also bears the coats of the House of Eorl (*ROTK* 1049-1050).

Like the Vikings the Rohirrim fight with swords, spears and bows and protect themselves with round shields that are painted in different colours. Most of them seem to wear helmets, which cannot be said about the Vikings. Except for the shields, the arms and armour of the people of Rohan are not described in detail. Further resemblances to Viking weaponry can therefore not be ascertained.

The function and symbolic meaning of weapons, especially swords, however, clearly resembles the function of sword in Old Norse literature. Many famous swords in Old Norse sagas are taken out of burial mounds, for example in "The Saga of Grettir the Strong", where Grettir breaks into the mound of Thorfinn's father and takes his sword. The sword Skofung was buried with his owner, the legendary Danish King Hrolf Kraki. It is later recovered by an Icelander and features in several different sagas belonging to different owners (Whetter and McDonald 16-17). Similarly, the four Hobbits each take a sword from the barrow in which they were captured (*FOTR* 190).

There are famous swords with personal names in *The Lord of the Rings*, as there are in Norse literature. Most of them could be considered 'ancient heirlooms'. There is Gandalf's sword Glamdring, of which Elrond says in *The Hobbit* that it was "made in Gondolin for the Goblin-wars" and "the king of Gondolin once wore" it (49). Éomer's sword is called Gúthwinë (*TT* 696). Frodo's sword is Sting. It is given its name by Bilbo, who passes it on to Frodo in Rivendell. While swords like Andúril or Glamdring already have famous histories, the history of Sting only unfolds during the events in *The Hobbit* and

*The Lord of the Rings*. It is an example of how a sword becomes an ancient heirloom with a famous history (Whetter and McDonald 15).

In Middle-earth there are several swords which clearly have magic properties. Swords like Glamdring and Sting glow when Orks are close. Swords that shine of their own accord do not often occur in Norse literature, but there are several which are described as shining in the sun and there are many light-related kennings for swords. Whetter and McDonald argue that “these kennings and descriptions of gleaming, flashing swords [...] have been adapted into mystical Middle-earth swords that physically glow when enemies are near or that shine in battle” (21). Although it does not gleam, Merry’s blade from the Barrow-downs, with which he wounds the king of the Nazgûl, also seems to have magic qualities. It was forged in the old kingdom of Arnor for the war against the Witch King (King of the Nazgûl) and “no other blade [...] would have dealt that foe a wound so bitter” (*ROTK* 1105). Similar to Beowulf’s sword, which melts after he kills Grendel’s dam and decapitates Grendel (lines 1605-1617), Merry’s blade “wriathed and withered and was consumed” after he stabs the Witch King (*ROTK* 1105). The motif of a blade destroying itself also occurs with the Witch King’s blade after he stabs Frodo (*FOTR* 185) and the sword Frodo uses to fight the Barrow-wight (*FOTR* 259).

The most famous sword is, undoubtedly, Aragorn’s Andúril, which was reforged out of the shards of Narsil. Narsil was Elendil’s sword and “has been treasured by his heirs when all other heirlooms were lost” (*FOTR* 322). Andúril can be seen as “representative of kingship and the virtues associated with it” (Brisbois 98). When introducing himself to Éomer, Aragorn also presents his sword, showing that the sword is connected to him and his claim to the throne of Gondor (*TT* 564). The importance of Andúril can furthermore be seen in Aragorn’s reluctance to hand it over to the guards of the Golden Hall (*TT* 666). In this sense it shows parallels to King Arthur’s Excalibur. Whetter and McDonald claim that in the same way that Excalibur “marks Arthur’s reign”, Narsil-Andúril “defines the Third Age, for it is used by Isildur to hew the finger with the One Ring from Sauron, thus closing the Second Age, while reforging the blade heralds the destruction of the Ring, the dissolution of Sauron, and the return of Aragorn [...] as king, thus closing the Third Age” (23-24). Narsil-Andúril

also shows parallels to Sigurd's sword Gram from the Saga of the Volsungs, which was shattered by his father. Aragorn and Sigurd both receive the reforged sword from their foster fathers, Regin and Elrond (Brisbois 100). Therefore, "Narsil-Andúril combines the characteristics of a famous sword of Norse myth – Gram – with that most famous of medieval swords, Excalibur" (Whetter and McDonald 24).

#### 6.4.3. Arms and Armour in *The Lord of the Rings* (Film)

In the film adaptation arms and armour of the different peoples are quite similar to those described in the books. The one exception are the crossbows used by the Uruk-hai at the Battle of Helm's Deep (*LotR* II, Disc 2, 01:02:06ff.), which they do not have in the book. The symbolic function of the swords is also emphasised in the film, especially with Andúril and Sting. Frodo uses Sting to frighten Gollum, saying that he has seen it before, namely in the hands of Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, showing that Sting already has its own history (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:10:19ff.). Andúril is, similar to the books, a symbol of Aragorn's kingship. However, he does not have it from the beginning of the journey, but receives it from Elrond in Rohan before he goes to the Paths of the Dead (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 01:37:14ff.). The handing over of the swords serves to symbolise that Aragorn accepts his faith to become king of Gondor.

The armour and weapons in the films were all created by Weta, mostly based on the designs of Alan Lee and John Howe. Their aim was to "eschew the literally 'fantastic' pieces found in most 'sword and sorcery' (and previous Tolkien) movies and create 'real' arms and armour for the 'reel' world Jackson envisioned" (Woosnam-Savage 139). Richard Taylor, head of Weta Workshop, claimed that they drew "on some of the best design-elements from armour and weapons throughout our own time whilst avoiding the trap of producing what fits people's perceptions of 'classic historic armour'" (Woosnam-Savage 155). The arms and armour of the Rohirrim are, as in the book, mostly based on Viking weaponry. Dan Hennah, Supervising Art Director, says that they thought of the Rohirrim "as Vikings of the Plains [...], Vikings without ships, but with horses instead" (*LotR* II Anhänge, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:12:27ff.). Weta workshop used chainmail and leather and many different fabrics for the armour



of the Rohirrim, creating a “more northern European Celtic Viking type of armour to distinguish them away from the rest of Middle-earth” (*LotR* II *Anhänge*, Disc 3, “Weta Workshop”, 00:08:06ff.).

The weapons used by the Rohirrim are the same as those used by the Vikings. When they attack the Orks that have captured Merry and Pippin, they fight with swords and spear. Some of them also wield axes and shoot with bows and arrows. Many of the riders carry round shields (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 00:29:45ff.). At the Battle of Minas Tirith Éomer shoots the captain of the Oliphaunt riders with a spear (*LotR* III, Disc 2, 00:32:33ff.). The sword, however, still seems to be the most important weapon, at least in a symbolic way. When Théoden is released from Saruman’s spell he is handed his sword, which can be seen as a symbol for regaining his kingship (*LotR* II, Disc 1, 01:18:54ff.).

The armour and weapons of the Rohirrim also resemble Viking weapons in the details of construction. The royal guards wear “a wide round shield [...], its wooden face clad in green leather and emblazoned with the etched crest of Rohan, a rayed golden Sun” (“The Lord of the Rings: Rohirrim Royal Guard’s Miniature Shield”). Théoden’s shield can be



**Figure 10:** Éowyn’s shield, reconstruction

seen hanging from his saddle when he gives the speech before the Rohirrim enter the battle at Minas Tirith. It is richly decorated in green, red and gold (*LotR* III, Disc 2, 00:24:14ff.). Different from the other Rohirric shields, it has an oval shape (Smith 107). It can clearly be seen that the shield Éowyn carries when fighting the Witch King is constructed of parallel wooden boards (*LotR* III, Disc 2, 00:37:03ff.) (Figure 10), in the manner that Hall describes the construction of Viking shields (68). All Rohirric shields have an iron boss in the centre to protect the hand, similar to those of Viking shields. The ornamentation on the shields of the Rohirrim, however, cannot be identified as Viking.

The swords of the Rohirrim were greatly influenced by Viking swords. An employee of Weta explains that, as there was “a Norse influence to the design [...], a lot of the sword design is an extrapolation of Viking broad swords and things like that” (*LotR II Anhänge*, Disc 3, “Weta Workshop”, 00:17:11ff.).

Théoden’s sword is a double-edged, one-handed sword which is about 92 centimetres long (Smith 106). It has a straight blade with a fuller. The hilt does not directly correspond to one of Oakeshott’s nine sword types. The round pommel broadens from the hilt, has a straight middle with a slightly dome-shaped end. The lower guard has a round shape bending strongly towards the blade. It has the shape of two horse heads whose noses touch in the middle. Pommel and lower guard are golden. The grip is covered in red leather. Pommel and lower guard show s-shaped ornamentations, typical for Rohan, as they are often used in the decoration of sets in Rohan and the costumes of the Rohirrim. The blade does not have any decoration.

Éowyn’s sword (Figure 11) also is a double-edged, one-handed sword of about the same length as Théoden’s (Smith 111). The



**Figure 11:** Éowyn’s sword

fuller runs about three-quarters along the length of the blade. The blade and fuller broaden below the hilt. There is no decoration on the blade. The hilt bears similarities to type VII of Oakeshott’s sword classification. The lower guard is slightly curved and the pommel has a straight base and a dome-shaped top. The overall shape of the pommel is oval. The ends of the lower guard are shaped like horses’ heads and curve onto the blade. The pommel and lower guard are golden. The hilt is covered in brown leather and has a raised middle section with two bronze rings. The pommel is decorated with ornamentation in the shape of horses’ heads.

Éomer’s sword (Figure 14) is a double-edged one-handed sword of the same length as most other swords of the Rohirrim (Smith 109). The blade has a

double fuller, running nearly to its tip. The shape of the hilt resembles Oakeshott's sword type VII. The lower guard is slightly curved and ends in horses' heads that rear on either side of the blade. The pommel has a straight base and a dome-shaped top and is also decorated with horses' heads. Guard and pommel are golden and the grip is covered in red leather. Beside the horses' heads only few spiral ornaments can be found on the hilt and there are no decorations on the blade.

John Howe explains that he and Alan Lee relied strongly on archaeology when creating the helmets of the Rohirrim. Their main source of inspiration were the findings of the Sutton Hoo ship burial. He says that especially with Théoden's helmet "it feels like it could go into an exhibit with the work of Sutton Hoo" (*LotR II Anhänge*, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:13:39ff.). Interestingly, while they talk about their inspiration from Sutton Hoo, the picture of a helmet from the Vendel grave in Uppland, Sweden, is shown (Figure 12) (*LotR II Anhänge*, Disc 3, "Designing Middle-earth", 00:13:35ff.). It can therefore be assumed that Sutton Hoo was not the only source of inspiration, but that rather the whole range of northern crested helmets was considered.



**Figure 12:** Vendel helmet

The Royal Guard of Rohan wear "a helmet featuring a visor with cut-outs for the eyes, cheek-plates and a tall metal crest of a horse's head from which flowed a mane of horsehair" (Smith 101). The basic form of the helmet is round. It has a chain aventail to protect the neck. Typical for a northern crested helmet, it has a strip which goes from ear to ear. There are ornamentations on the cheek-plates and the visor that show features of Viking art styles. The colours of the helmet are green, red and golden.

Éowyn's helmet (Figure 13) does not have a strip from ear to ear, but a crest



**Figure 13:** Éowyn's helmet

which ends in a horse's head on her forehead. Its basic form is round. It has a visor which serves as a nose guard at the same time. The cheek-plates are connected to the visor. There is a chain aventail to protect the neck. There are spiraliform ornamentations on a broad strip around the base of the helmet and on the visor. Senk identifies this art style as Celtic (89). On the front of the helmet as well as on the cheek-plates there are ornamentations of interlacing ribbons and knots, which resemble Viking art. The colours of the helmet are bronze and golden.

Théoden's helmet, which has a round basic form, can also be classified as a crested helmet. It features a strip from ear to ear and a crest strip on which a crest in the shape of a horse's head is placed. The nose is protected by a nose guard and it has cheek-plates. The helmet has the colours bronze, red and golden and is richly decorated. The ornamentations do not resemble any Viking art style in particular but are clearly inspired by it.

Éomer's golden and silver helmet (Figure 14) features a strip from ear to ear and a crest which ends in a horse's head that serves as a nose guard. It has long cheek-plates that are smaller at the top to leave room for the eyes and broaden at the cheeks. There is a crest of white horsehair flowing from the helmet's top. The neck is protected by leather. The front of the helmet is decorated with sun symbols. On the strip around the base of the helmet and on the strip that goes from ear to ear there are ribbon-plait ornamentations which strongly resemble those of the Borre style.



**Figure 14:** Éomer's sword and helmet

Horses were an important, if not the most important, part of Rohirric culture and warfare. Vikings only rarely fought on horseback. If they moved on horseback they usually dismounted for battle. They did, however, equip themselves with horses whenever possible for additional carrying capacity and speed (G. Williams 197). As only very little horse equipment has survived from the Viking age, parallels to Rohirric riding equipment cannot be drawn. Saddles, bridles and head protection for horses are, however, often richly decorated with ribbon-plait patterns, ornamentations in spiraliform and intertwining knots. The bridles of Aragorn's and Éowyn's horses have brooches at the ends of their browbands, which look very much like a Viking brooch from Norway in the Jellinge style (Graham-Campbell 143).

## 6.5. Viking and Rohirrim Physical Appearance and Clothing

The Rohirrim in the *Lord of the Rings* are described by Faramir as “tall men and fair women; valiant both alike, golden-haired, bright-eyed, and strong” (*TT* 887). There are only very few written sources that describe what the people of the Viking age looked like, but Faramir’s description fits the common image of northern warriors and how they are depicted in popular culture. The film adaptation stuck closely to the description in the book. The Rohirrim in the films all have long blond hair.

There are more sources concerning Viking clothing. There are representations of clothing on carvings and there are a few remnants found in burials. This is enough to allow some broad generalisations about Viking costume. The most common fabrics were wool and linen. Men often wore long-sleeved undershirts of linen or wool that reached down to their knees. Over that they could wear a tunic or kirtle. They could also wear knee-length trousers and an upper-garment (Hall 36-37). It was not unusual for men to wear jewellery. From the evidence of burials it can be assumed that men’s clothing was far more spectacular than that of women’s and that men wore more jewellery than women (Larsson 182).

Women usually wore long-sleeved underdresses of ankle-length which were slightly longer at the back. Over that they could wear so-called pinafore dresses, “a calf-length garment wrapped around the body below the armpits and held over each shoulder by a strap that was fastened above each breast by a pin, most characteristically in the form of an oval [...] brooch” (Hall 37). The basic form of the garments did not vary within the social spectrum. Wealth was marked by the quality of the cloth and the decorative elements (Hall 36-37).

In *The Lord of the Rings* books there are no specific descriptions of clothing. The only references to fashion are remarks like Éowyn being “clad in white” (*TT* 669). It is therefore not possible to identify any parallels to Viking clothing. For the film adaptation it was, of course, necessary to have detailed designs. The people of Rohan are usually clad in wool and linen. The dominant colours are brown, green and black. The clothing of the men of Rohan does show some similarities with descriptions of Viking clothing. They are shown to wear tunic-like garments of knee-length and trousers. They are, however, not shown to



wear any jewellery or richly decorated clothing. This is even true of members of the royal family, as can be seen with Éomer's plain clothing at the feast after the battle of Helm's Deep (*LotR* III, Disc 1, 00:18:32ff.).

The only exception is Théoden's clothing (Figure 15). He wears a richly decorated outfit in the colours green and red that is made up of a long-sleeved red undergarment over which he wears a black sleeveless tunic. On some occasions he wears a dark brown tunic that reaches down to just below his knees. The outfit is completed by a long red and green cloak that is fastened with a silver brooch below the throat. His dress is richly decorated with golden ornamentations. His brown tunic has a hem of golden intertwining laces. It is decorated with a strip of a golden ornamentation pattern in s-form that ends in small spirals. The black tunic has a



**Figure 15:** Théoden's dress

richly decorated collar. The decoration goes down onto his chest. It is made up of a golden pattern that frames brown horse heads. The ornamentations on Théoden's dress seem to be inspired by Viking art, although they cannot be attributed to one specific art style.

Women's clothing of Rohan does not show any particular similarities with Viking women's clothing. They do not wear the typical pinafore dresses with brooches, but rather simple dresses similar to tunics. Éowyn is seen to wear several different dresses, some of which are of more exclusive cloth and colour and are richly decorated. The only thing that some of the dresses seem to have in common with Viking fashion is that they are longer at the back. Especially the sleeves that widen at the elbow are rather a medieval feature.

All in all, the clothing of the civilian population of Rohan does not show any particular similarities with Viking fashion, except for the materials used. These were, however, not only restricted to the Vikings. The fashion of the Rohirrim can therefore rather be classified as medieval, not typical of any specific place or time.

## **7. Conclusion**

*The Lord of the Rings*, in both book and film adaptation, was influenced by several aspects of Viking culture. The richness of Norse mythology influenced Tolkien greatly in terms of characters and storylines, but he also created whole societies that are similar to the Vikings in their treatment of legends and poetry. The legends of the different peoples of Middle-earth are often passed on from generation to generation orally and in the form of poems. Old Norse as a language had some influence on the fictive languages of Middle-earth, and the runic alphabets in *The Lord of the Rings* are similar to Viking runic alphabets. Viking influence, however, can most prominently be seen in the society of the people of Rohan, who are an illiterate people and have a rich oral tradition. Several events in their history show similarities to events in Viking history, and their political system is partly influenced by Viking political organisation. The only female character, Éowyn, shows several characteristics of a Norse shieldmaiden, and the burial customs of the Rohirrim strongly resemble those of the Vikings. Meduseld, the Golden Hall, was clearly inspired by Viking mead halls, especially Heorot in *Beowulf*. The sets of Rohan in the film adaptation were based on archaeological findings of Viking settlements and are decorated with ornaments echoing Viking art styles. The arms and armours used by the Rohirrim resemble those of the Vikings. In the book the Rohirrim carry the same types of weapons as the Vikings. In the films the weapons resemble Viking weapons even in the details of construction. They fight with swords that are very similar to Viking swords. Their shields are round wooden shields decorated in different colours and with different emblems. Their helmets are fashioned after northern crested helmets and show resemblances with various such helmets found in archaeological excavations as, for example, the Gjermundbu helmet or the Vendel helmet. Some ornamentations on the helmets show features of Viking art styles.

Although both Tolkien and Jackson were inspired by Viking culture, there are many differences in the type of sources they used and how they integrated them into their work. While Tolkien used mainly written sources like sagas and poetry, the filmmakers relied, in addition to Tolkien's description, mostly on archaeological findings. Their choice of sources goes hand in hand with the way



they incorporated Viking culture into their work. The Viking inspiration in the books can mainly be seen in the narrative techniques used by Tolkien, such as the heavy use of poetry, the references to history, the representation of the Rohirrim as a people with an oral tradition and the incorporation of legends. As films are visual media the parallels between Viking culture and the film adaptations is almost entirely restricted to costumes and set designs. Viking customs and habits are only hinted at in the films. This can, for example, be seen in the representation of burial customs. While the books often include detailed descriptions of Viking-like mortuary traditions, the films only scratch the surface. The history of the Rohirrim does not feature at all in the films, and their oral tradition is not emphasised. Poems and legends do feature in the films, but they hardly show any resemblance to Viking poetry. The only place where Viking customs feature more prominently in the films than in the book is the Golden Hall Meduseld. Tolkien's description of it is based on literary descriptions of Viking halls, especially on Heorot. However, the Golden Hall only features in one chapter. In the films more action takes place in the Golden Hall, and its different functions, which are very similar to the functions of a Viking mead hall, are shown.

Another difference between the book and the film adaptation is that the influence of Viking culture on the films is restricted to the Rohirrim. Only where passages by Tolkien that were influenced by Viking culture were taken over into the film, such as the Entmoot or Boromir's ship burial, can Viking traces be found outside Rohirric culture. In the books the Viking influence can also be found with other peoples, as seen in the poems and legends. However, as the Vikings were not the only culture that passed on their legends and mythology in oral tradition and in the form of poetry, the general influence on Tolkien's writing cannot be identified as specifically Viking but is more generally Germanic and Northern European. Jackson's Rohirrim are therefore more Viking-like than the Rohirrim in the books. Except for the Anglo-Saxon Sutton Hoo ship burial and Tolkien's descriptions of places and people, the filmmakers only used Viking material as inspiration for the Rohirrim. There is a reason behind that. Tolkien wrote first and foremost for an English audience, while the films were released worldwide. People all over the world are probably more familiar with the Vikings

than with any other Germanic tribe, while English readers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century probably also knew about the Anglo-Saxons.

Woodward and Kourelis argue that Tolkien's "novels lack architectural specificity" while the films are filled with "architectural associations" (190). This is definitely the case, but there is, of course, a reason behind that. Tolkien's aim was to write a mythology for England and being too specific in the description of architecture would have been counterproductive. He had other means, as mentioned above, to create a realistic world and at the same time preserve its mythological tone. The filmmakers' aim was to create a realistic fantasy world instead of a mythology and they tried to achieve this, among other things, with architectural associations. According to Woodward and Kourelis these associations are so prominent that even "contemporary North Americans, generally unschooled in the subtleties of European architectural history, can apprehend" them (213). This might be a bit prejudiced, but considering the culture and architecture of the Rohirrim, there is some truth in it. The Vikings are so widely known that most people worldwide would understand the references to them and view the Rohirrim as a people to be located in a Northern European background. Woodward and Kourelis, furthermore, claim that the architectural references in the films are so strong that they leave no room for the audience to fantasise (190-91). As the filmmakers did not want to create a typical fantasy film but rather a "pre-history" (Sibley 15), this is probably exactly what they wanted.

Tolkien may not have achieved his aim to provide a mythology for England similar to that of the Vikings, as his book is still primarily seen as a fantasy novel, but due to the historical references and parallels to European cultures, it differs from fantasy novels that followed it. Although several of them, as for example Christopher Paolini's *Eragon*, are inspired by Tolkien's writing, they often lack specific historical or cultural references and include more fantastic elements, such as magic or fantasy animals, thus making them more fantastic and less imaginable than *The Lord of the Rings*. Jackson's film adaptation, however, has even been classified by some as a "historical film" (Noble 226). By incorporating Germanic, and especially Viking, features into their book and films, Tolkien and Jackson managed to create a fantasy world that is imaginable and in itself

believable and realistic. There are, for example, several burials in *The Lord of the Rings* as they were also common in Viking cultures. Burial mounds can be found all over Northern Europe and the burial mounds of Middle-earth thus create the image of a northern culture. This is especially the case with Rohan, where burial mounds are very common. The image of the mead hall has the same effect. It is a typical building of the Germanic tribes, to most people known through the Vikings, and evokes the image of a northern society. The history of the Rohirrim seems plausible to readers because they know of events in the real world similar to those of Rohirric history. By relying on Viking models, the filmmakers succeeded in creating armour and weapons that seem familiar to the audience and feel historically correct and northern, but are at the same time typically Rohirric. However, neither in the books nor the films are the people of Rohan Vikings – or Anglo-Saxon as some people have claimed. Tolkien and Jackson only incorporated Viking – or more widely Germanic - characteristics into Rohirric culture to create the plausible and authentic image of a new race. This serves to distinguish the people of Rohan from the other cultures of Middle-earth and emphasises their northern background.

## **8. Bibliography**

- Abram, Christopher. *Myths of the Pagan North: The Gods of the Norsemen*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- Adams, Dough. "The Music of *The Lord of the Rings* Films. Part II. The Two Towers. The Annotated Score." 2006. 28 April 2014.  
<<http://www.angelfire.com/film/rings/ttt.pdf>>
- Baker, John. "Linguistic Traces: The Signposts to Viking Activity in England." PowerPoint slides. Lecture winter term 2012. University of Nottingham.
- Bayldon, George. *An Elementary Grammar of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1870.
- Beranek, Birgit-Ann. "One Ring to rule them all" – Tolkien on Screen: An Analysis of Peter Jackson's Adaptation of "The Lord of the Rings". Wien: Universität Wien, 2013.
- Birch, Dinah (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Oxford: OUP, 2009.
- Bogstad, Janice M. and Philip E. Kaveny (eds.). *Picturing Tolkien: Essays on Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" Film Trilogy*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011.
- Bolintineanu, Alexandra. "On the Borders of Old Stories: Enacting the Past in *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings*". *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*. Ed. Jane Chance. Kentucky: UP Kentucky, 2004. 263-74.
- Brisbois, Michael J. "The Blade Against the Burden: The Iconography of the Sword in *The Lord of the Rings*." *Mythlore* 27.1/2 (2008): 93-103.
- Bramlett, Perry C. *I Am in Fact a Hobbit: An Introduction to the Life and Work of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Macon: Mercer UP, 2003.
- Brink, Stefan. "Who Were the Vikings?" *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 4-7.
- , "Law and Society: Politics and Legal Customs in Viking Scandinavia." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 23-31.
- Brink, Stefan, and Neil Price (ed). *The Viking World*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Brown, Nancy Marie. *Song of the Vikings: Snorri and the Making of Norse Myths*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Bueno Alonso and Luis Jorge. "'Eotheid' Anglo-Saxons of the Plains. Rohan as the Old English Culture in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*". *Anuario de Investigación en Literatura Infantil y Juvenil* 2 (2004): 21-35.
- Burns, Marjorie. *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle Earth*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- , "Norse and Christian Gods: The integrative theology of J.R.R. Tolkien." *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A reader*. Ed. Jane Chance. Kentucky: UP Kentucky, 2004. 163-78.
- Byok, Jesse L. *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Carpenter, Humphrey, and Christopher Tolkien (eds.). *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981. 19 March 2014.  
<[http://85.17.122.176/bookreader.php/139008/The\\_Letters\\_of\\_J.R.R.Tolkien.pdf](http://85.17.122.176/bookreader.php/139008/The_Letters_of_J.R.R.Tolkien.pdf)>
- Chance, Jane (ed.). *Tolkien the Medievalist*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- , *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A reader*. Kentucky: UP Kentucky, 2004.

- Christensen, Tom. "Lejre Beyond Legend. The Archaeological Evidence." *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 10 (1991): 163-85.
- , "Lejre and Roskilde." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 121-25.
- "CSVA Related Courses". UoN Centre for the Study of the Viking Age. 17 September 2014.  
<<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/csva/courses/index.aspx>>
- Donoghue, Daniel. *Old English Literature: A Short Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2004.
- Donovan, Leslie A. "The Valkyrie Reflex in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: Galadriel, Shelob, Éowyn, and Arwen." *Tolkien the Medievalist*. Ed. Jane Chance. London: Routledge, 2003. 106-32.
- Downham, Clare. "Vikings in England." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 341-49.
- Drout, Michael D.C. (ed.) *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- , "The Rohirrim, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Problem of Appendix F. Ambiguity, Analogy and Reference in Tolkien's Books and Jackson's Films." *Picturing Tolkien: Essays on Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" Film Trilogy*. Eds. Janice M. Bogstad and Philip E. Kaveny. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011. 248-63.
- DuBois, Tom and Scott Mellor. 2002. "The Nordic Roots of Tolkien's Middle Earth." *Scandinavian Review*. 90.1 (2002): 35-40.
- Elliot, Ralph W.V. *Runes: An Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1959.
- Esteliel. "Exile, Wyrd and the Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ideal in *The Wanderer* and Tolkien's *Quenta Silmarillion*." *The Silmarillion Writers' Guild Reference Library*. 22 April 2014.  
<<http://www.silmarillionwritersguild.org/reference/references/silmarillion-and-wanderer.php>>
- Fallgren, Jan-Henrik. "Farm and Village in the Viking Age." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 67-76.
- Fellows-Jensen, Gillian. "Scandinavian Place Names in the British Isles." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 391-400.
- Fisher, Jason (ed.). *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011.
- Flieger, Verlyn. *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 2004.
- "Funeral of Théodred: Also Known as Lament for Théodred". *A Magpie's Nest*. 28 April 2014.  
<[http://www.amagpiesnest.com/source\\_songs/TTT/SSfuneral\\_of\\_theodr ed.htm](http://www.amagpiesnest.com/source_songs/TTT/SSfuneral_of_theodr ed.htm)>
- Gilliver, Peter, Jeremy Marshall and Edmund Weiner. *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Gough, John. "Tolkien's Creation Myth in *The Silmarillion*: Northern or Not?" *Children's Literature in Education* 30.1 (1999): 1-8.
- Graham-Campbell, James. *Das Leben der Wikinger. Krieger, Händler und Entdecker*. London: Universitas, 1993.
- Gunnell, Terry. "The Performance of the Poetic Edda." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 299-303.

- Hadley, Dawn M. "Hamlet and the Prince of Denmark. Lordship in the Danelaw c. 860-957." *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Studies in the Early Middle Ages Vol. 2. Ed. Dawn M. Hadly and Julian D. Richards. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000. 107-132.
- "The Creation of the Danelaw." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 375-78.
- Hadly, Dawn M. and Julian D. Richards (eds.). *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Studies in the Early Middle Ages Vol. 2. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000.
- Hall, Richard. *Exploring the World of the Vikings*. London: Thames&Hudson, 2007.
- Halsall, Guy. "The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence Reconsidered." *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Studies in the Early Middle Ages Vol. 2. Ed. Dawn M. Hadly and Julian D. Richards. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000. 259-76.
- Hamer, Richard. *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*. London: Faber&Faber, 1970.
- Hedeager, Lotte. "Scandinavia Before the Viking Age." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 11-22.
- "History." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- Honegger, Thomas. "The Rohirrim: 'Anglo-Saxons on Horseback'? An Inquiry into Tolkien's Use of Sources". *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources: Critical Essays*. Ed. Jason Fisher. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. 116-132.
- Hostetter, Carl F. "Languages Invented by Tolkien." *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. Ed. Michael D.C. Drout. New York: Routledge, 2007. 332-43.
- Hultgård, Ander. "The Religion of the Vikings." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 212-18.
- Isaacs, Neil D. (ed.). *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings"*. Notre Dame: UP of Notre Dame, 1969.
- Jesch, Judith. "Poetry in the Viking Age." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 291-98.
- Jochens, Jenny. *Old Norse Images of Women*. Philadelphia: UP Pennsylvania, 1996.
- Kightley, Michael R. "Heorot or Meduseld? Tolkien's Use of *Beowulf* in 'The King of the Golden Hall'." *Mythlore* 93/94 (2006): 120-35.
- Larsson, Annika. "Viking Age Textiles." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 181-85.
- "Legend." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- Lönnroth, Lars. "The Icelandic Sagas." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 304-10.
- Lund, Niels. "The Danish Empire and the End of the Viking Age." *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. Ed. Peter Swayer. Oxford: OUP, 1997. 156-81.
- "Cnut the Great and His Empire." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 665-67.
- Magnúsdóttir, Auður G. "Women and Sexual Politics." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 40-48.

- Mathijis, Ernest and Murray Pomerance (eds.). *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings"*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
- Mitchell, Stephen. "The Heroic and Legendary Sagas." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 319-22.
- Moehn, Andreas. "The History of the Men of Darkness in Rhún and Harad." Lalaith's Middle-earth Science Pages. 24 April 2014.  
<[http://lalaith.vpsurf.de/Tolkien/Men\\_of\\_Darkness.html](http://lalaith.vpsurf.de/Tolkien/Men_of_Darkness.html)>
- Morris, William. *The Collected Works of William Morris. Vol. XIV. The House of the Wolfings. The Story of the Glittering Plain*. 1910-1915. London: Routledge, 1992.
- "Myth." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- "Mythology." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- Niles, John D. "Beowulf's Great Hall." *History today* 56.10 (2006): 40-44.
- Noble, Vergil E. "When the Legend Becomes Fact: Reconciling Hollywood Realism and Archaeological Realities." *Box Office Archaeology: Refining Hollywood's Portrayals of the Past*. Ed. Julie M. Schablitsky. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007. 223-45.
- Nørlund, Poul. *Trelleborg*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag, 1948. 24 May 2014  
<[http://www.archeurope.com/\\_texts/00027.pdf](http://www.archeurope.com/_texts/00027.pdf)>)
- Oakeshott, Ewart. "Introduction to the Viking Sword." *Swords of the Viking Age*. Ed. Ian G. Peirce and Ewart Oakeshott. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002. 1-14.
- Page, R.I. *An Introduction to English Runes*. London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1973.
- "Paths of the Dead" *lotr.wikia.com*. 2 April 2014.  
<[http://lotr.wikia.com/wiki/Paths\\_of\\_the\\_Dead](http://lotr.wikia.com/wiki/Paths_of_the_Dead)>
- Pedersen, Anne. "Viking Weaponry." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 204-11.
- Peirce, Ian G. and Ewart Oakeshott. *Swords of the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002.
- Pollington, Stephen. "The Mead-hall Community." *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011): 19-33.
- Price, Neil. "Dying and the Dead: Viking Age Mortuary Behaviour." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 257-73.
- Raudvere, Catharina. "Popular Religion in the Viking Age." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 235-43.
- Renaud, Jean. "The Duchy of Normandy." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 453-57.
- Richards, Julian D. "Viking Settlement in England." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 368-74.
- Russell, Gary. *Der Herr der Ringe. Die Gefährten. Die Erschaffung eines Filmkunstwerkes*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002.
- *Der Herr der Ringe. Die zwei Türme. Die Erschaffung eines Filmkunstwerkes*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2003.
- Sabo, Deborah. "Archaeology and the Sense of History in J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth." *Mythlore* 26 (2007): 91-112.
- Schablitsky, Julie M. (ed.) *Box Office Archaeology: Refining Hollywood's Portrayals of the Past*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007.
- Schjødt, Jens Peter. "The Old Norse Gods." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 219-22.

- Senk, Olivia. "Keltische Archäologie in der Verfilmung ‚Der Herr der Ringe-Trilogie‘". Diplomarbeit. Wien, 2012.
- Servos, Stefan. "Hintergrund." *herr-der-ringe-film-de*. 2001. 24 March 2014. <<http://www.herr-der-ringe-film.de/v3/de/filme/filmtrilogie/film-infos.php>>
- Shippey, Tom A. *J.R.R. Tolkien. Author of a Century*. London: HarperCollins, 2000.
- . *The Road to Middle-earth*. London: HarperCollins, 2005.
- Sibley, Brian. *The Lord of the Rings. Official Movie Guide*. London: HarperCollins, 2001.
- Skre, Dagfinn. "The Development of Urbanism in Scandinavia." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 83-93.
- Smith, Arden R. "Runes." *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. Ed. Michael D.C. Drout. New York: Routledge, 2007. 579-80.
- Smith, Chris. *The Lord of the Rings. Weapons and Warfare: An Illustrated Guide to the Battles, Armies and Armour of Middle-earth*. London: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Stein-Wilkeshuis, Martina. "Scandinavians Swearing Oaths in Tenth-Century Russia: Pagans and Christians." *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002): 155-68.
- Steuer, Heiko. "Helm und Ringschwert. Prunkbewaffnung und Rangabzeichen germanischer Krieger. Eine Übersicht." *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6 (1987): 189-236.
- Swanton, Michael (ed.). *Beowulf*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1978.
- Sawyer, Peter (ed.). *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. Oxford: OUP, 1997.
- "The BP exhibition: Vikings life and legend". *The British Museum*. 17 September 2014. <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/past\\_exhibitions/2014/vikings/about.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2014/vikings/about.aspx)>
- "The Lord of the Rings: Rohirrim Royal Guard's Miniature Shield". *wetanz.com*. Weta Workshop. 6 June 2014. <<http://www.wetanz.com/rohirrim-royal-guard-s-miniature-shield/>>
- "The Vikings are coming...: British Museum launches The BP Exhibition Vikings: life and legend". *The British Museum*. 17 September 2014. <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/about\\_us/news\\_and\\_press/press\\_releases/2013/vikings\\_life\\_and\\_legend.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2013/vikings_life_and_legend.aspx)>
- Tinkler, John. "Old English in Rohan". *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings"*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs. Notre Dame: UP of Notre Dame, 1969. 164-69.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. 1937. London: Harper Collins, 2011.
- . *The Lord of the Rings. The Fellowship of the Ring*. 1954. London: Harper Collins, 2007.
- . *The Lord of the Rings. The Two Towers*. 1954. London: Harper Collins, 2007.
- . *The Lord of the Rings. The Return of the King*. 1955. London: Harper Collins, 2007.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. Ed. by Christopher Tolkien. *The Silmarillion*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977.
- . *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980.



- Tolley, Clive. "Old English Influence in *The Lord of the Rings*." *Beowulf and Other Stories: A New Introduction to Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures*. Ed. Joe Allard and Richard North. Harlow: Pearson, 2007. 38-62.
- "Vale of York Hoard". The British Museum. 17 September 2014.  
<[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/pe/v/vale\\_of\\_york\\_hoard.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe/v/vale_of_york_hoard.aspx)>
- "Vikings Live from the British Museum". *The British Museum*. 17 September 2014.  
<[http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/exhibitions/vikings/vikings\\_live.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/vikings/vikings_live.aspx)>
- "Vikings Live: Old Norse Origins". *The British Museum*. 17 September 2014.  
<[http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/past\\_exhibitions/2014/vikings/vikings\\_live/old\\_norse\\_origins.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2014/vikings/vikings_live/old_norse_origins.aspx)>
- Wallace, Anna. "A Wild Shieldmaiden of the North: Éowyn of Rohan and Old Norse literature." *Philament* 17 (2011): 23-45. 14 June 2014.  
<[http://sydney.edu.au/arts/publications/philament/issue17\\_pdfs/wallace.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/publications/philament/issue17_pdfs/wallace.pdf)>
- Whetter K.S. and R. Andrew McDonald. "'In the Hilt is Fame': Resonances of Medieval Swords and Sword-lore in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*." *Mythlore* 25.1/2 (2006): 5-28.
- Whyn Fonstad, Karen. *Historischer Atlas von Mitteleuropa*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994.
- Williams, Gareth. "Raiding and Warfare." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 193-203.
- Williams, Henrik. "Runes." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 281-90.
- Wilson, David M. "The Development of Viking Art." *The Viking World*. Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. London: Routledge, 2012. 323-38.
- Woodward, Steven and Kostis Kourelis. "Urban Legend: Architecture in *The Lord of the Rings*." *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings"*. Ed. Ernest Mathijs and Murray Pomerance. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 189-214.
- Wolfram, Richard. *Die gekreuzten Pferdeköpfe als Giebelzeichen*. Wien: Schendl, 1968.
- Woosnam-Savage, Robert C. "The Matériel of Middle-earth: Arms and Armour in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* Motion Picture Trilogy." *Picturing Tolkien: Essays on Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" Film Trilogy*. Eds. Janice M. Bogstad and Philip E. Kaveny. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011. 139-67.

## Films

- Jackson, Peter. *Der Herr der Ringe. Die Gefährten. Special Extended DVD Edition*. Hamburg: Warner Home Video, 2002.
- Jackson, Peter. *Der Herr der Ringe. Die zwei Türme. Special Extended DVD Edition*. Hamburg: Warner Home Video, 2003.
- Jackson, Peter. *Der Herr der Ringe. Die Rückkehr des Königs. Special Extended DVD Edition*. Hamburg: Warner Home Video, 2004.

### Abbreviations

The abbreviations used in the text refer to the books and films mentioned in the bibliography.

*FOTR* – The Fellowship of the Ring

*TT* – The Two Towers

*ROTK* – The Return of the King

*H* – The Hobbit

*S* – The Silmarillion

*UT* – Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth

*LotR I* – The Fellowship of the Ring - film adaptation

*LotR II* – The Two Towers - film adaptation

*LotR III* – The Return of the King - film adaptation

## **9. Table of Figures**

**Figure 1:** Burial mounds at Birka, Sweden: Sieglinde Hinger.

**Figure 2:** The Burials mounds at Edoras in the film adaptation:  
[http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v702/OldTomBombadil/LOTR%20movie/Simbelmyne\\_Mounds.jpg](http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v702/OldTomBombadil/LOTR%20movie/Simbelmyne_Mounds.jpg) (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 3:** Ribbon plait pattern on a wooden plate, Isle of Man: Graham-Campbell 140.

**Figure 4:** Wood carvings at the Urnes stave church:  
<http://www.warehamforge.ca/rivendale/urnes.jpg> (21<sup>st</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 5:** Reconstruction of a Viking longhouse, Trelleborg, Denmark:  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LONG\\_HOUSE\\_AT\\_TRELLEBORG,\\_DENMARK.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LONG_HOUSE_AT_TRELLEBORG,_DENMARK.jpg) (21<sup>st</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 6:** Edoras in the film adaptation: <http://bplusmovieblog.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/the-lord-of-the-rings-the-two-towers-567.png> (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 7:** The Golden Hall Meduseld: [http://img4.wikia.nocookie.net/\\_\\_cb20121021060229/lotr/images/8/8c/Golden\\_Hall\\_of\\_Meduseld.png](http://img4.wikia.nocookie.net/__cb20121021060229/lotr/images/8/8c/Golden_Hall_of_Meduseld.png) (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 8:** Entrance to Meduseld details: [http://middleearthdecor.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/edoras\\_details.jpg](http://middleearthdecor.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/edoras_details.jpg) (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 9:** Gjermundbu helmet: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Hjelm\\_av\\_jern\\_fra\\_vikingtid\\_fra\\_Gjermundbu.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Hjelm_av_jern_fra_vikingtid_fra_Gjermundbu.jpg) (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 10:** Éowyn's shield, reconstruction: [http://www.yourprops.com/movieprops/original/yp4f92ea6d4e5e82\\_51888706/Lord-of-the-Rings-Trilogy-Eowyn-s-Shield-2.jpg](http://www.yourprops.com/movieprops/original/yp4f92ea6d4e5e82_51888706/Lord-of-the-Rings-Trilogy-Eowyn-s-Shield-2.jpg) (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 11:** Éowyn's sword: <http://www.hand-tools.com/product-detail.php?prodnum=BRK-UC1423> (9<sup>th</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 12:** Vendel helmet: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/439030663644151581/> (9<sup>th</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 13:** Éowyn's helmet: <https://fireden.net/4chan/images.4chan.org/vg/src/1393883155787.jpg> (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 14:** Éomer's sword and helmet: [http://s734.photobucket.com/user/Vagrant\\_1184/media/EomerHelmet2.jpg.html](http://s734.photobucket.com/user/Vagrant_1184/media/EomerHelmet2.jpg.html) (9<sup>th</sup> June 2014).

**Figure 15:** Théoden's dress: <http://www.theargonath.cc/characters/theoden/pictures/theoden21.jpg> (23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014).

## **10. Appendix**

### **Abstract (English)**

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has greatly influenced the fantasy genre. The film adaptations by Peter Jackson were a worldwide success. Both Jackson and Tolkien wanted to create a world that was plausible and in itself believable. Tolkien wanted to create a 'mythology' and Jackson a 'historical' film. To achieve their aim they took inspiration from the mythology and culture of the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons, both being Germanic peoples.

This thesis analyses different aspects of Vikings culture and their influence on *The Lord of the Rings* the books and films. The first part argues that Tolkien was deeply inspired by Norse Mythology in terms of characters and storyline. Parallels are drawn between the poetry and legend of the Vikings and the poems in *The Lord of the Rings*, and between the oral tradition of the Vikings and that of the Rohirrim. The second part compares historical aspects, such as historical events, languages and runes, of the Vikings to those of cultures in *The Lord of the Rings*, especially to the culture of the Rohirrim. The third part analyses the social system of the Vikings and compares it to societies in *The Lord of the Rings*, especially regarding the role of women and the Moot. The fourth part deals with Viking archaeological findings and their reflection in *The Lord of the Rings*. The burial customs, housing and weaponry of the Vikings are compared to those of the Rohirrim. Special attention is given to the sets and costumes of the film adaptation.

It is concluded that Tolkien and Jackson succeeded in creating a plausible and believable fantasy world by taking inspiration from real cultures. The subtle references to the Vikings and other Germanic tribes evoke an image of a northern society. The Rohirrim are not Vikings or Anglo-Saxons, but a new race that is distinguished from other societies in Middle-earth because of their northern feature.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung (German Abstract)

J.R.R. Tolkiens *Der Herr der Ringe* hat das Fantasygenre weitgehend geprägt. Die darauf basierenden Filme von Peter Jackson waren ein weltweiter Erfolg. Tolkiens Ziel war es, eine Mythologie, ähnlich der der Wikinger, zu erschaffen. Angelehnt daran wollte Jackson keinen reinen Fantasyfilm sondern einen ‚geschichtlichen‘ Film drehen. Beide versuchten eine gut vorstellbare und historisch glaubwürdige Fantasiewelt zu erschaffen. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, ließen sich beide von der Mythologie und Kultur der Germanischen Völker, besonders der Angelsachsen und der Wikinger, inspirieren.

Diese Diplomarbeit analysiert verschiedene Teilaspekte der Kultur der Wikinger und deren Einfluss auf *Der Herr der Ringe*. Der erste Teil argumentiert, dass Tolkien sich in Bezug auf Charaktere und Handlung von den Legenden der Wikinger inspirieren ließ. Zusätzlich werden Parallelen zwischen den Gedichten der Wikinger und den Gedichten in *Der Herr der Ringe* gezogen und die Tradition der mündlichen Überlieferung der Wikinger mit jener der Rohirrim verglichen. Im zweiten Teil werden geschichtliche Aspekte, wie historische Ereignisse, Sprachen und Runen der Wikinger mit jenen einiger Kulturen in *Der Herr der Ringe*, speziell der Rohirrim, verglichen. Der dritte Teil analysiert das Gesellschaftssystem der Wikinger und vergleicht es mit Gesellschaften in *Der Herr der Ringe*, mit besonderem Augenmerk auf die Rolle der Frau und das Thing. Der vierte Teil befasst sich mit archäologischen Funden. Die Bestattungssitten, Behausungen und Kriegsausrüstung der Wikinger werden mit jenen in *Der Herr der Ringe*, vor allem jenen der Rohirrim, verglichen. Hier wird besonderes Augenmerk auf die Kostüme und Filmkulissen gelegt.

Zusammenfassend wird argumentiert, dass es sowohl J.R.R. Tolkien als auch Peter Jackson gelungen ist, eine plausible und vorstellbare Fantasiewelt zu erschaffen, in dem sie sich von realen Kulturen inspirieren ließen. Die subtilen Hinweise auf die Wikinger und andere germanische Stämme erwecken in den Lesern und dem Filmpublikum das Bild einer nordischen Gesellschaft. Die Rohirrim sind keine Wikinger oder Angelsachsen, sondern ein eigenständiges Volk, das sich durch die nordischen Elemente von den anderen Völkern in Mittelerde unterscheidet.

## Curriculum Vitae

### **Persönliche Daten**

Name: Sophie Hinger  
Geburtsdatum: 17. April 1990  
Geburtsort: Wien  
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

### **Schul- und Universitätsausbildung**

2012 ERASMUS Semester, University of Nottingham  
seit 2009 Studium UF Englisch und Geschichte, Universität Wien  
2008 Matura in Englisch, Deutsch, Mathematik, Geschichte  
und Philosophie/Psychologie mit Auszeichnung  
2000 – 2008 BG/BRG 21 „Bertha von Suttner“, Wien  
1996 – 2000 VS Schillgasse, 1210 Wien

### **Weitere berufsrelevante Ausbildungen und Erfahrungen**

2014 Prüfung zur Wintersportwochenbegleitlehrerin  
2013 JugendleiterInnen Ausbildung der Pfadfinder und  
Pfadfinderinnen Österreich (Instruktorin)  
seit 2010 Leitung einer Pfadfindergruppe,  
WiWö (Altersstufe 6 – 10)  
2009 IELTS 7.5, UCD  
2008 – 2009 Au-pair in Irland  
seit 2007 Nachhilfelehrerin Englisch und Mathematik