

Het volgende fragment komt uit het boek Femina geschreven door Janina Ramirez, 2022.

Vikings

Although the saying goes that history is written by the victors, in the case of the historical reputation of the Vikings, history was written by the victims. British monks could record their accounts of the raids, but the Vikings were an orally literate society and didn't write down their own histories, stories, traditions, laws and ideas. They did have rune script, but this was only used for inscriptions rather than for extensive passages of texts. It was not until the start of the second millennium, when Christianity was spreading through Denmark, Sweden, Norway and up to Iceland, that the Scandinavian people began using writing as a means of documenting and recording. Preserving older accounts of their eight-, ninth-, and tenth-century predecessors has left behind a version of their past filtered through the moral prism of Christianity. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century authors like Snorri Sturluson, who provided the earliest surviving account of Viking mythology, would have had different religious views to the ancestors they wrote about.

Texts can prove unreliable when trying to access historical facts about the Viking Age, but 4. Rather than dirty, violent and barbaric, finds from burials consistently show that Viking people were fastidious about their appearance. Tweezers, combs and ear scoops for removing wax were frequently placed in graves. The importance of washing regularly is even preserved in the Old Norse term for Saturday – 'laugardagr' or 'bathing day'. When Viking individuals arrived in new locations or met with people from other cultures, to most they would have appeared well-groomed, well-travelled and exotic. This was reinforced by the fashions both men and women favoured.

Grave goods indicate that men and women decked themselves in beads and jewels from across the known world. Finds such as a bronze Buddha made in Kashmir and an Egyptian baptismal spoon were transported to and buried in the cosmopolitan trading hub of Helgo, near Stockholm. We can deduce that the foreign materials and ideas they encountered on their travels were prized, displayed and treasured. These archaeological discoveries present a Viking world which was curious, wide-reaching and powerful.