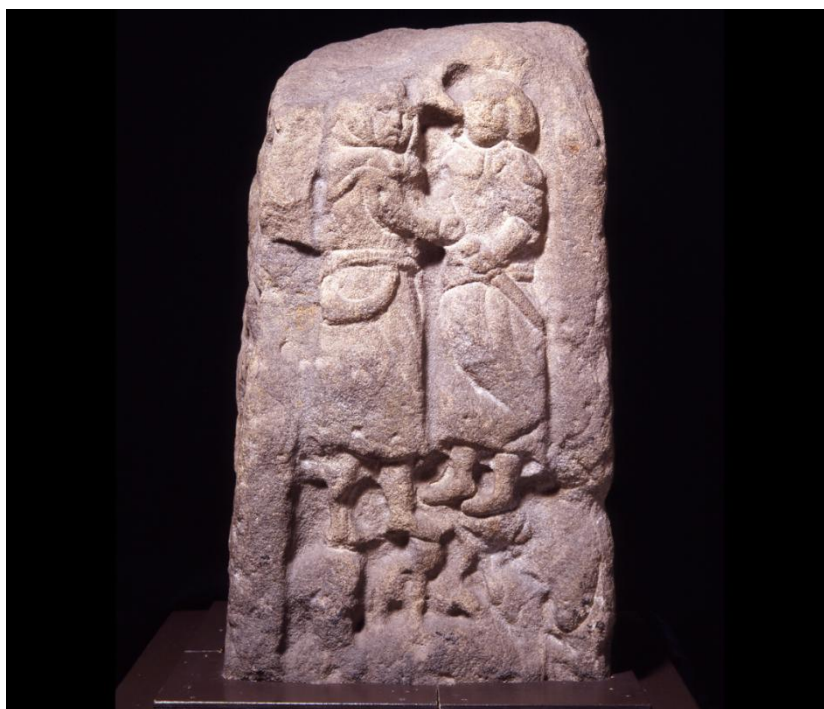


Viking Society for Northern Research – Research Support Fund Report
Jake Stattel (University of Cambridge) – 20th Viking Congress (Oslo, August 2026)

Thanks to the support of the VSNR, I was able to attend and present at my first Viking Congress, a major interdisciplinary conference on Viking Studies held every four years alternatively in Scandinavia or the British Isles and Ireland. The 20th Congress in 2026 was held in Oslo and other locations in Norway, organised by the University of Oslo. See [here](#) for full details on this year's programme, as well as the history of the Congress. Oslo was a particularly fitting setting which allowed for a sneak peak into the new [Museum of the Viking Age](#) set to open next year.



1. In this Anglo-Scandinavian cross shaft carving, two men clasp hands, one carrying a horn while the other keeps his hand on his sword. Might they be making a legal agreement? 'Bishophill Cross', c. 850–900, St Mary Bishophill Junior, York. Yorkshire Museum, YORYM: 1979.53. Photograph: York Museums Trust, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

My presentation '**Treaties and Legal Thinking across the Viking Diaspora**' was selected as a paper for the Congress, where I aimed to bring a legal history perspective to the conference's wide selection of talks emphasising the many global interconnections of the Vikings. This paper was part of my ongoing postdoctoral research project *Law in the Viking Diaspora*, which seeks to bring new insights into legal practice among Viking-Age Scandinavians by drawing from a wide range of contemporary records from across this global network. Legal customs regulated these societies and shaped daily life, but 'Viking law' is difficult to see within the period due to our earliest surviving Scandinavian legislation and narrative sources dating to much later. We may gain new information by instead looking more widely to additional contemporary records which reveal legal aspects of Vikings, even if written down by outside societies that interacted with them, both peacefully and not. An important thrust of my postgraduate work was on seeing Scandinavian law within England

(see the article '[Legal Culture in the Danelaw](#)'), and we may gain an even greater perspective by looking across the entirety of the Viking diaspora. An important initial step in this direction was made in this 'Treaties and Legal Thinking' paper where I discussed the legal details we might be able to learn from peace-treaties concluded between Viking military groups and polities such as Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Byzantine Empire. This comparative analysis explored the pattern of semi-formalised legal arrangements seen across the Viking World. Cross-cultural agreements with mutual legal protocols may have been critical for Scandinavians groups interacting with outsiders (and among themselves), not only for ending armed hostility, but also for facilitating trade and relations across a frontier. Such a moment of agreement might be encapsulated by the **sculpture above**. Presenting this ongoing research at the Viking Congress was exceptionally valuable for gathering feedback and advice from the world's leading experts as I continue with this project.

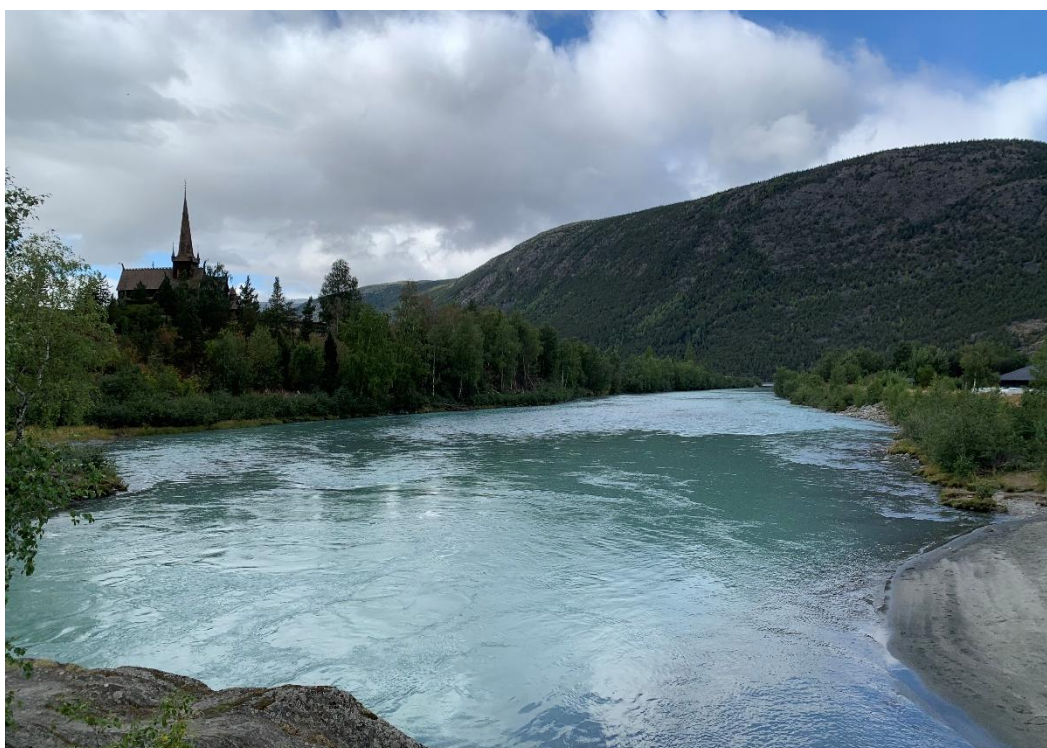
The Viking Congress also included two multiple-day excursions throughout Norway to see relevant Viking sites first-hand, including: burial mounds, runestones, iron-production sites, whetstone quarries, falcon and reindeer trapping sites, stave churches, and newly discovered Viking-Age settlements. This was all within astoundingly beautiful landscapes and gave me a much more tangible sense of the realities of daily life in the Viking Age, from farming and manufacturing to travel across vast distances of land and water. Particular highlights for me included:



2. The Thing mound at Dale-Gudbrand's farm in Hundorp, the site of a notable episode in the *Heimskringla* involving Olaf II (St. Olaf Haraldsson) attacking an idol to Thor and forcefully converting the locals to Christianity. Illustration on right: 'King Olav Speaks to the Farmers at the Assembly at Hundorp' (1898) — Halfdan Egedius, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.



3. View of the Slidrefjorden valley from the [Einang runestone](#) within the Gardberg Iron-Age and Viking-Age burial site



4. [Lom Stave Church](#) (c. 1170) and the River Otta, Fossbergom

I am extremely grateful to the organisers of the Congress at the University of Oslo, as well as to the many experts who guided us through Norway's Viking heritage. The VSNR's support in combination with other funding allowed me have this insightful and enriching experience, for which I am very thankful. I am continuing to engage with Viking scholarship in the Nordic countries and add further global perspectives to my own research, now as an International Visiting Researcher at Uppsala University's [Centre for the World in the Viking Age](#) under the direction of Neil Price.