

Research Support Fund Report – 20th Viking Congress

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Reception room at Oslo City Hall.

Thanks to the support of the Viking Society's Research Support Fund, I was able to attend and present at the 20th Viking Congress held in Norway in August 2026. I joined up with the congress in Oslo on 12 August. On day one of the Oslo conference, audiences were treated to papers on numismatics and the Viking Age economy – a highlight being the announcement of the discovery of a new emporium site in the Baltic. Another panel focused on gender, with papers covering women in the sagas, gender roles in viking camps, and the estates owned by Ragna, a powerful woman in Orkney. The Northern Isles were a consistent feature of the papers on day one, with several speakers returning to the perennial questions about the relationship between Scandinavians and the Picts in northern Scotland.

My own paper looked at the Northern Isles in a slightly different way. I examined the contexts in which *Orkneyinga saga* (or the *Saga of the Earls of Orkney*) was composed, considering what impact the prospect of an Icelandic earldom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had on the composition of the text.

On day two, the morning's papers focused on Scandinavian burial practices across the viking diaspora. After lunch, there was a focus on military themes. Speakers presented on Viking Age beacons, forts, and camps. The final session of the day featured talks on treaties, legal logic, genealogy, and manuscript compilation. In the opening session of speakers focused on resource exploitation and trade. In the second session, attention turned to the landscape of Viking Age Uppsala and large-scale trends in grave goods from across the viking diaspora. The final session of the conference focused on modern interactions with the Viking Age. Presenters investigated how vikings are represented on social media, what the vikings mean to the public, and how museums present material to visitors.



The Stave Church from Gol at the Norsk Folkemuseum.

However, the congress was not all about the papers! At the end of day one, members of the congress were invited to the Oslo City Hall for a reception with the mayor of Oslo. This was followed by a guided tour around the building and its artwork. After the end of the congress on day three, delegates were taken on a tour behind the scenes of the new Museum of the Viking Age, which is still under development. Though many of the objects were not yet in place, the Oseberg, Gokstad, and Tune ships were all in situ. Each ship will be at the centre of a themed gallery: one on shipbuilding, one on funerary customs, and another on navigation. The directors of the project were keen to emphasise the work that often goes on behind the scenes at museums. In the new museum, visitors will be able to see conservators working on new finds from the Viking Age. It will even have a CT scanner! The Museum of the Viking Age is due to open next year and, when it does, it will be magnificent. My time at the congress ended with a trip to the Norsk Folkemuseum, which houses a medieval stave church from Buskerund county.



Me speaking at the Viking Congress (photo by Chris Cooijmans).

I am very grateful for the support provided by the Viking Society for Northern Research. Without funding from the Research Support Fund, I would not have been able to attend the Viking Congress, which, as I hope you have gathered, I enjoyed immensely. The congress has helped me make connections with other participants, receive feedback on my own research, and identify future opportunities for collaboration. I am hugely thankful to the Viking Society for making all of this possible.