

Wittenberg History Journal

Spring 2018



NEW PERSPECTIVES ON MEMORY, RELIGION, TRADE,
AND THE VIKING PRESENCE

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New Perspectives On Memory, Religion, Trade, and The Viking Presence

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The Hartje Paper

The Martha and Robert G. Hartje Award is presented annually to a senior in the spring semester. The History Department determines the three or four finalists who then write a 600 to 800 word narrative essay on an historical event or figure. The finalists must have at least a 2.7 grade point average and have completed at least six history courses. The winner is awarded \$500 at a spring semester History Department colloquium and the winner paper is included in the *History Journal*. This year's Hartje Award was presented to Keri Heath.

On the Cover

A sword from the late Viking Age has been discovered in a burial in Langeid, a village in southern Norway
(Ellen C. Holthe, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo)

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Dedication

The editors of the History Journal would like to dedicate this issue to Dr. Raffensperger, who is always pushing us to examine what we know a step further in order to advance our scholarship in more nuanced ways. Without his dedication and hard work, the papers in this journal would never have been written. Thank you.

The Influence of Sherman on American War Making

Nicholas Carr

“War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices to-day than any of you to secure peace.” These are the words of General William Tecumseh Sherman, one of the leading Union figures of the American Civil War. General Sherman is a controversial figure in American history, a man who did much to hasten the end of the war, but who employed ruthless and destructive methods in order to attain this goal. Sherman was something of a conflicted person, a leader of war who professed almost pacifistic ideals for peace, a man who decried the hellish nature of war but who contributed to this nature through his own stratagems while in command. This duality of peace and destruction within Sherman assisted him in achieving success with his plans, and has impacted American military theory up to the current day. Sherman was the first American to practice the strategies he used, and following his successes such strategies would later become staples of American war making.

The Civil War was the United States’ first true total war. The first time that America had, in its totality, been required to commit such an extensive amount of manpower and resources and effort into a conflict. As well, no other war has caused such devastation to the United States, with hundreds of thousands of dead, large swathes of land despoiled, and entire cities burned or battered. Even the Second World War, undoubtedly the most terrible conflict in all the history of mankind, required a relatively and comparatively minor sacrifice of American blood. Sherman was well aware both of the total nature of the Civil War and also of the vast

cost it was inflicting upon the American people. It was these that convinced him to embark upon what he referred to as “hard war” in which he set his army upon the South with the goal of destroying not the Confederate armies, but the Southern people’s capacity and willpower to wage war. To this end he had his soldiers destroy telegraph wires and railways, burn factories and farms and homes, steal food and resources, and more. His methods left much of the South in utter ruin, intentionally leaving many tens of thousands of Southerners as refugees for whom life was unbearably difficult in the days following the passage of his army. However Sherman knew that these methods were necessary to ensure the defeat of the Confederacy, and that by inflicting pain in the short term he was ultimately sparing greater pain spread over the long term. This sort of thinking can be seen in many future American wars, most notably in the Second World War, in which America practiced Sherman’s style of warfare against countries in a manner that culminated in the atomic bombs. While vast numbers of people died and much damage was done, ultimately the war was ended sooner as a result.

Despite the brutality of Sherman’s war making upon the South, it was also characterized by more humane elements that set it as more than simple savagery. This is primarily seen in how while Sherman’s army terrorized the property and material wealth of the South, there were relatively few deaths inflicted. The civilian population may have been left poor and extremely uncomfortable, but they themselves were left untouched. In fact, when he burned the city of Atlanta, Sherman went out of his way to warn the population to evacuate, and in fact used his army to assist the process in order to ensure minimal damage to

the people. Even the material damage, while extensive, was largely confined to targets that could contribute some kind of practical value to the Confederate war effort. As well, once people surrendered to his army, he would go out of his way to show leniency, such as in Savannah where he enforced protection of the citizens and their property after they agreed to surrender bloodlessly. In Iraq, Vietnam, and in the aftermath of WWII this can be seen as well, with America attempting to rebuild and help the people in opposing nations once they had agreed to submit to American force of arms.

Sherman's tactics during his campaigns in the Civil War have impacted American Military theory ever since. He was the first American military leader to practice such a style of total war that targeted an opponent logistically, economically, and psychologically as well as militarily. Sherman's policies characterize the mindset of the American military ever after, do what has to be done, even if such requires brutality, in the name of achieving peace sooner and with as little loss of life as possible.

Vikings and the Fur Trade: Exchange and Autonomy beyond Western Europe

Isabella Herman

Introduction

Trade within the Viking world is often ambiguous at best and near impossible to decipher at its worst. Raiding and trading can be applied to the exact same activity depending upon the perspective from which the story is told. With the addition of scholarly phrases such as “misappropriation of wealth” as a stand in for stealing it can be difficult to discern what activities fell under which categories. Trading furs, coins, and other goods could turn into plunder if the terms were not agreeable to both parties or the focus of the narrative wanted to frame the Viking negatively. Within the Viking world, furs are an excellent method by which to examine the ways Vikings interacted with each other and those outside of Scandinavia such as the Franks and the Arabs. Many furs originated from Rus’, yet because modern Viking scholarship focuses mostly on Scandinavia and interactions with the British Isles and modern-day France and Germany, Rus’ is often forgone in the discussion. Therefore, it is important to reinsert Rus’ back into the discussion of the Viking fur trade in order to show the connections the Vikings had outside of western Europe.

Often the common narrative proposed by modern European scholars frames the Vikings as a spontaneous occurrence with little context and reason for their appearance within the sources. Gwyn Jones is a perfect example of such scholarship. According to him the first Viking raid in 793 came “as a bolt from the blue” to not only the people at Lindisfarne but also those charged with chronicling the events such as Alcuin. Within a span of five years the Vikings enter the narrative and swiftly plunder all along the British Isles.¹

It can be seen that the Vikings were in fact interacting with and part of the lives and cultures of western Europeans long before the Viking age began. During the late Roman period Scandinavians from modern day Denmark and Sweden were serving in the imperial army.² There is evidence of Roman swords, pottery, and other material culture that point to Roman-Scandinavian ties predating the eighth century.³ As the Viking Age progresses ties of trade begin to evolve. The Viking economy as it relates to Europe, and specifically the economy of Viking Rus’ is often overlooked as a significant actor within the greater medieval economy. Yet, evidence shows that not only were the Rus’ members of the economy by exchanging goods from abroad, they were active participants. Viking Rus’ used their geographic position and natural resources as a method of creating significant and independent ties to western Europe and the Arab world via long-distance trade. This can be seen through the use of furs as a form of tribute or tax, products of long-distance trade, and establishment of individual trading posts.

The medieval European economy is often discussed in terms of continental western Europe and places where western traders could easily access and sell their goods such as Birka or Constantinople. This is most clearly seen in Michael McCormick’s monolithic *Origins of the European Economy*.⁴ McCormick attempts to map how the European world emerged from Roman antiquity and transitioned into the economy of the Carolingian empire. His focus is on the Mediterranean Sea and the economies that emerged as a result of it by the beginning of the tenth century. Apart from one

chapter, most mentions of Rus' or eastern Europe are made in passing, and often in relation to Slavic groups and their interactions with western trading centers. This aids in creating the image of the "northern arc" which was a "web of exchange" that linked the Frankish empire in the west with the Muslim caliphate in the east. Due to the northern arc's notoriety as a land corridor it, according to McCormick, calls for the "least comment."⁵

The one chapter that McCormick devotes to trade between the Arab and Byzantine world and western Europe is framed in terms of the Carolingian empire and the difficulties placed upon merchants arriving over the Alps from the Arab peninsula.⁶ He continues framing trade from Russian posts such as Staraiia Ladoga and Beloozero in terms of a northern route the Franks were able to take in order for their goods to reach a final destination of modern day Iraq and Iran.⁷ Although the Arab world was vital in its role in establishing economic ties with Rus', it is also overlooked in favor of how these ties benefited the Carolingian empire.

Historiography

Gwyn Jones, a prominent Viking historian, tends to mitigate Rus' in favor of Scandinavia. In reference to Rus' interactions with Byzantium and the Arab caliphate he says the two powers never interacted with Rus' "save the occasional excesses of [their] impudence."⁸ This seems to imply that Rus' was isolated from the rest of the world unless they were acting particularly savage, a view he articulates earlier on in his work. He goes on to mention important routes from Lake Ladoga but claims these connections were made as a result of "Swedish and Finish initiative" rather than any sort of mutual creation of economic ties.

Janet Martin published *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: The Fur Trade and its Significance for Medieval Russia* two years after Jones published *A History of the Vikings*. Martin is a key voice in the discussion of the fur trade in Rus' because she desires to "substantiate the existence of a relationship" between political and economic factors in Rus' and their connection abroad.⁹ Instead of mitigating the role of Rus' in trade, Martin strives to demonstrate how the fur trade had a "considerable impact on the political development of the region."¹⁰ This is where my

work with the fur trade began. Her work aided me in finding a wide variety of primary sources that give details about the fur trade in Rus' and how it connected abroad.

The foundation upon which many modern studies of Rus' are built stem from the work of Thomas S. Noonan. He was a professor of Russian history at the University of Minnesota where he strived to have a balanced curriculum during a time of high tensions with the Soviet Union.¹¹ From there Noonan utilized literary, archeological, and numismatic sources to create a history of Russia. As a result of his desire to incorporate many types of evidence into his histories there are many opportunities to follow in his footsteps in any number of fields. Within the context of Viking Rus' Noonan frames the Viking settlement as having happened before the Viking age by "several hundred years."¹² He also supports the idea the Staraiia Ladoga was independently trading with both Scandinavia and the Arab world by tracing archeological numismatic evidence in the form of dirhams.¹³

Although many students and scholars alike wish to focus on Scandinavia when discussing the Viking economy, it is important to recognize the simultaneously vast array and narrow sliver of scholarship currently produced on Rus'. Therefore, whenever possible it is important to incorporate Rus' into Viking discussions because it offers a new perspective and offers a counterbalance to many western European centric sources.

Primary source discussion

Rus' did not exist in a vacuum from the rest of Europe and the world. In fact, we see that the Rusians were trading with a wide variety of people over a long period of time. Two great examples of this come from Arab sources. Mas' ūdī was an important Arab historian who chronicled the types of furs that were traded along the Volga river in 956. Mas' ūdī notes that: "pelts of black foxes were exported from Burtās [Turkish people along the Don river.]" He goes on further to say that black furs were often exported north and then on to the Franks and Spain. This means that as early as the mid tenth century we are already seeing the reaches of the fur trade extending into Europe and beyond.¹⁴ Superficially, this may seem to support the theory of the "northern route" as a method of transferring

goods from the Arab world to the Carolingian empire during the ninth and tenth century. However, with additional evidence it is seen that the trading posts acted as independent centers of economic exchange, not simply stops along a larger route.

The reverse can also be seen when merchants from Rus' went to market. They brought highly sought after and valuable goods such as sable and black fox furs to Turkic markets, according to Ibn Fadlan.¹⁵ Additionally, we see a scholar from Al-Andalus, Abū Hāmid al-Gharnātī, in the late eleventh century traveling along the Mediterranean and into the land of the Khazars, Turks, and Arabs. Here he extols the beaver furs from Arū, which is the region of the northern Volga River.¹⁶ This is showing the independent interactions of Arabs and Rus' rather than portraying Rus' as a stopping point along a longer route to western Europe and the Franks. Furthermore, these entries span about a century giving credence to established trading routes and purposeful interactions rather than happenstance. Mas'ūdī's entry in combination with Abū Hāmid create an image of an intentional connection between Rus' and the Arab world that spans and evolves over at least a century.

Furs became a luxury and highly sought-after item in the Arab world during the ninth and tenth century.¹⁷ As a result, Arab sources supply a large portion of primary evidence relating to the fur trade with Rus'. However, that is not the only primary source containing information about the fur trade during the Viking age. The Icelandic sagas provide information on both trade routes in general and the fur trade specifically.

After Scandinavians settled in Rus' they maintained ties back to Scandinavia as seen by the stays of Olaf Trygvason, St Olaf, and Harald of Norway's stay in Rusian courts.¹⁸ This connection between Rus' and Scandinavia was forged independently of other connections between the Franks and Muslims. In addition to these political ties there are trade ties seen during the tenth and eleventh centuries with Viking ships sailing to Novgorod.¹⁹ The sagas, specifically *Heimskringla*, make several mentions of merchants and Rus'. In one instance ships from Sweden were found to be sailing from Gotland to Ladoga during the summer months.²⁰ In addition we see Rusian merchants in

Norway because Sigvat, a bard, is able to inquire as to the health of Magnus Olafson who had been living in the court of Yaroslav.²¹

By the tenth century Scandinavian merchants were traveling to Novgorod to purchase silver coins, Byzantine, and Arab goods along with Rusian jewelry.²² In return Scandinavians brought products from all over Europe that could be used in daily life in Rus' such as wool, pottery, salt, and weapons. Scandinavian merchants were also willing to travel long distances, including to Rus', in order to obtain furs. This shows that the Rus' were facilitating trade and had buyers of fur come to Rus' for the purchase of furs, not just Byzantine and Arab products. The *Saga of St. Olaf* has several other mentions of specifically trading with Rus'. Tore went to Bjarmaland and bought furs including those of sable and fox.²³ Although the precise location of Bjarmia has not been confirmed it is seen in this tale that Scandinavian merchants were willing to travel great distances to trade. That means the fur trade between Rus' and Scandinavia is well within the realm of possibility in eleventh century Europe.

The sagas serve two purposes. First, the sagas substantiate the existence of independent connections and trade routes between Scandinavia and Rus'. Secondly, pertaining specifically to the fur trade, we see through the sagas that Rus' was an independent agent actively participating in the trade route. They facilitated trade of their own domestic goods, furs among other things, in addition to selling some Arab goods as a way to obtain items that were more useful for day-to-day life in Rus'.

The third literary source in which trade is clearly outlined is the *Povst' Vremennykh Let* (PVL) or Russian Primary Chronicle. A trade route was clearly outlined in the PVL as a method of transporting goods from Rome, the Greeks, through Constantinople, and up the Volga.²⁴ From the perspective of Rus', furs and trade are often seen as methods of collecting or paying taxes and tribute. Within the early days of the Scandinavian settlement, Igor sends a Greek envoy home with "furs, slaves, and wax" after creating a treaty.²⁵ Olga refuses a tribute of "honey and furs" in favor of birds with flammable cloth that aided in burning a Derevlian camp.²⁶ In addition, after Olga refuses the betrothal of the Greek Emperor she offers to send him furs only

on the condition that he spend as much time in Rus' with her as she had with him in Constantinople. The use of furs as a tool in negotiations shows its value in medieval Rus'. Without furs as a natural resource, Rus' would lose a part of their agency and ability to trade independently with Franks, Greeks, and Arabs alike. However, because furs were so prevalent from the ninth throughout the twelfth century we instead see Rus' manipulating their natural resources to their own benefit.

Although literary sources comprise a bulk of the information known about the fur trade, archaeology serves as another type of evidence to support its existence and success. Direct archeological evidence is difficult to obtain simply because fur and various textiles will naturally decay. However, in lieu of having archeological evidence of fur there are tangential objects that can be used instead. There are clasps for the bags that held the fur, evidence of trading posts, routes, and potentially of the traders themselves. There are also a multitude of numismatics evidence which is outside the scope of this paper.²⁷ Merchants traveled to Rus' in order to buy and sell goods since these markets held valuable items acquired from long-distance trade with Europe, Scandinavia, and the caliphate. As a result of these proxy examples of material evidence, a picture of the fur route begins to emerge with Rus' at the epicenter.

In addition, osteological remains of wild animals used for their fur exist in some small rural trading pockets. A great quantity of the animal remains found at Minino are from the fur trade rather than domesticated animals. The bones constitute a large portion of the overall materials excavated from Minino.²⁸ This leads one to believe that trapping and the fur trade were central to this particular rural settlement. When this evidence is found in the same layer as coins and other markers of exchange and commerce it becomes difficult to dismiss rural settlements as participants in long-distance trade independent from urban centers such as Novgorod.²⁹

As a result of furs being traded both to and from Rus', these trading posts became the middleman in deals between Scandinavians and Byzantines or Muslims. Coins from the caliphate found their way into Scandinavian cities like Birka

and Hedby via Rusian routes. It is important to note that Rus' was not simply another stop on the route from one place to another but rather facilitators of trade with each group independently. There were obviously easier ways to exchange goods from the caliphate to the continent. Yet, it was as a result of specific connections that we see traders routing themselves through Novgorod, Staraiia Ladoga, and Beloozero. These connections were created as a result of favorable political ties with individuals present at each of the locations independent on each other.³⁰

Secondary Source Discussion

The problem faced by scholars examining trade in medieval Rus' is the common perception that trade was engaged by a select few in urban settlements while individuals in more rural settlements were isolated from trade.³¹ In Jämtland, rural settings were found to be centers of economic ties without being dependent upon larger urban settings to support them economically or politically.³² Taking the conclusions of the case and applying them to other areas we can see that in the western Viking world it is possible for a rural area to be removed from urban settings but still engage in buying and selling goods, transactions, and using metal as a means of monetary exchange. Furthermore, the individuals participating in this type of trade were not local elite who formed a monopoly on the trade but rather what moderns would understand to be a middle class. Connections to rural settlements were often framed in terms of natural goods being exchanged as a form of tax collection.³³ Primary source evidence from both the PVL and Ibn Fadlan confirm that furs were used for this purpose. Therefore, long-distance trade automatically excluded peoples not within the urban city network. Yet, the Jämtland case in addition to archeological finds of rural graves with women's metal ornaments and various imported goods points to evidence of the fur trade in these isolated areas.³⁴ Other examples include rural settlements along the Volga River where excavations have uncovered dirhams, denarii, and balance-weights.³⁵ This points to these rural Volga River settlements engaging with long-distance trade independently of the urban centers. Two settlements worthy of note are

Beloozero and Minino.

Beloozero is the region surrounding Lake Beloe, part of the Volga and Northern Dvina river systems. Beloozero most prominently enters the narrative in the PVL under the year 1071 in which pelts are contentiously collected as a tax payment.³⁶ Archeological evidence has uncovered tools used for hunting as well as an unusually high concentration of beaver bones. These deposits were dispersed evenly among the layers meaning that these goods were persistent at this site over a period of time.³⁷ This coupled with the metal ornaments and imports mentioned early and also western European coins create a picture of high levels of trade in this very isolated region. This means that Beloozero was a rural community in Rus' that actively engaged with trade not only with Scandinavians but also other western Europeans.

This is seen even more at the Minino sites; located off Lake Kubenskoe in the same river system as Beloozero. The excavation of Minino has uncovered material evidence only available to the people of Minino through long-distance trade. Materials found include glass beads rivaling the number found at Birka, Byzantine glass vessels, balance weights, pottery of Kievan and Bulgarian origin, western European coins from Frisia and Germany, and everyday items such as jewelry, combs, and knives.³⁸ The evidence can be found in layers that begin in the eleventh century and span through the thirteenth century.³⁹ The composition and quantity of material evidence, points overwhelmingly to foreign origins, meaning that these items could not have been deposited in Minino coincidentally.⁴⁰ Instead, the material evidence present shows that the people of Minino were creating economic ties outside of Rus' and served as a center of trade between Byzantine and western European merchants. The tradesmen who settled Minino were a result of the fur trade. The bones of wild animals compose around 75 percent of the total animal bones uncovered. Most of these animals were fur-bearing animals such as beaver, squirrel, and marten with a significant uptick in squirrel bones towards the thirteenth century as a result of overhunting animals with more valuable furs.⁴¹ This shows that Minino was an important link in the system of medieval trade because they were

not only hosting a wide variety of imported goods but were also a source of unique exports in the form of furs. In addition, because the goods are found over a long period of time it can be concluded that Minino existed as a trading center for enough time to become a well-known trading post.

It is suggested that in order to become an established trading post institutionalized protection had to exist for the all parties. Otherwise, without this protection neither party would feel comfortable enough bringing valuable goods through uncertain terrain.⁴² Although, in some ways it was because of the uncertain terrain that trade was possible. Being off the tradition path of trade routes offered some protection to those willing to bring their wears to market. It is upon these protections and feelings of mutual safety that trade in Rus' was able to persist in small groupings like Beloozero and Minino over a long period of time. These small rural trading centers served as an important link politically and economically between Scandinavians, Arabs, Franks, and other Europeans. Without these small trading posts valuable items may have never been traded or would have been forced to be routed through larger urban settlements. However, that is not to discount the more urban settlements like Birka and Novgorod. These larger urban settlements are important for trade because they serve as hubs for a large group of people rather than a small but dedicated group of merchants that would make the journey to places like Staraiia Ladoga year after year.

Furthering the connection between rural settlements and long-distance trade, archeological evidence at Birka shows connections to sites such as Staraiia Ladoga.⁴³ Another point of discussion that is important to mention is ties between Birka and Staraiia Ladoga during the late eighth and early ninth century. There have been dirhams found in the early layers at both locations that show a progression of goods from one location to another. Arab dirhams have been found in a route to Birka while Frankish coins have been found in bottom layers at Staraiia Ladoga. This would seem like evidence to support the northern route theory proposed by McCormick and many others. However, finding coins that link these two locations is secondary to the fact that these two locations were originally linked in order to exchange raw material goods such as furs, walrus

tusks, amber, and slaves.⁴⁴ This goes to disprove the existence of the northern route since both locations traded with the other for the explicit purpose of using the materials each had to offer rather than using the locations as simply a point of exchange to get their goods to either the Franks or the Arabs.⁴⁵ Although larger settlements such as Novgorod and Kiev are important when discussing trade in Rus', within the scope of this paper they are too vast of locations to properly discuss fully.

Conclusion

The idea of the northern route is shaped by a limited view of Rus'. Rather than looking at individual settlements some scholars saw patterns of goods moving from east to west via Rus' and assumed Rus' was simply another stop of the trade route rather than a hub. Yet in Beloozero, Minino, and Staraja Ladoga evidence shows that the tradesmen and merchants at each of these settlements were in fact facilitators of their own long-distance trade. These trade connections opened up other opportunities to form political ties.

For modern scholars the presence of individual independent trading posts in medieval Rus' points to greater participation in the European economy than is often recognized. Scholars wish to ascribe both specific settlements in Rus' and Rus' as whole to being influenced by either the Scandinavians, the Franks, or the Arabs depending upon the source. But rather Rus' served as an independent player in long-distance trade for their own economic benefit and were not acted upon by outside pressures. Although we see evidence of furs being used to pay or collect taxes and tribute this was in fact a very small portion of the role of furs. Instead furs served as a means in which to place Rus' within the middle of trade between the Arab world and western Europe, both of which had a high demand for furs. Furthermore, merchants in Rus' used the coins, beads, weaponry, and other items received in trade from one region to engage with trade from another region. In this way they became a hub of the trade using their own resources to facilitate more trade rather than a thoroughfare between two powers.

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Christianization and Conversion In The Danelaw

Grace A. Huffman

In the ninth and tenth centuries on the isle of Britain there was a unique and short-lived experience of religious and cultural intermingling called the Danelaw. The Danelaw was not as cut and dry of a region in organization and leadership as Mercia or Wessex was in their day, but it did have its own geographical parameters and laws. The Danelaw is a term that was used legally in contemporary times and now is used by historians to talk about this cultural experience under Viking leadership. The actual word simply means, 'the law of the Danes'.¹ The first usage of the term was in legal records, within the law code VI Æthelred from 1008, but that is not when the region began to form.² The law of the Danes first came to England when the Great Heathen Army arrived from the peninsula that is now Denmark. These raiding Vikings came from the regions, which are now Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. They won many battles against the splintered English kingdoms and gained territory but there were many different goals in the Viking leadership on what to do next. The Viking army eventually split up, one group went north to farm, another to France and the last one to follow Guthrum against King Alfred in the south. In 886 King Alfred and Guthrum came to a peace treaty that solidified the borders where the army held power and of what is today called the Danelaw.³ The borders encompassed, "settlements in Northumbria, East Anglia, the Five Boroughs...and the south-east Midlands."⁴ This is a large portion of the middle of the east coast of England. It was not ruled by Guthrum alone and was by no means a country in definition, but these lands became united by the laws and culture of the "Danes", a Danelaw.⁵ Vikings and long-time

Englishmen working side-by-side, farming and living now occupied this newly legalized area. The full extent that they interacted with each other is not clear but there was enough contact to cause changes that can be seen in hindsight.

The Danelaw was unique in culture as well as organization and history. These few years created a mixing of peoples that affected the religion and culture of England forever. Christianity before the Danelaw's time had been solidified in people's lives for generations but that was not the case for the new settlers from Scandinavia. Living together side by side, suddenly, caused some unique interactions. The settlers had come from many different regions in Scandinavia to live and farm, but they shared a common Norse religion. Norse culture and English Christian culture were quite different from each other. The less established pagan religiosity that the settlers had come from in Scandinavia was in many ways a stark contrast to early Christianity with the pope, local religious leadership, and tradition rooted in daily activity and piety. Assimilation and conversion to Christianity did eventually occur for the pagan settlers, but how did this happen? Their own religion and culture had also been solidified by generations through their ancestry and it would not have easily disappeared from their hearts and minds just from a move. Thus, when trying to answer the question of Christianization and conversion in the Danelaw a complex series of events presents itself. Beginning with the conversion of the Scandinavian leaders for political purposes, then the creation of a positive view of Christianity for the common settlers due to religious parallels and finally acceptance of Christian practices, know as Christianization, occurred

all before the end of the Danelaw. Christianization is acceptance of the Christian way of living that occurs in the community that surrounds them. Conversion is an actual change in practices so that a person begins to follow the way of life that Christianization caused them to accept in others. The issue of the settler's story of assimilation into a Christian culture is that true conversion of the heart and daily practices could not occur until the institution of real Church authority in the Danelaw. The Scandinavians who stayed in England did accept Christian practices and their leaders did convert but conversion in the average settlers, rather than mere Christianization, could not occur until there was a powerful entity such as the Christian Church overseeing the practices of the people. The Danelaw became the perfect setting for Christianization, but not conversion.

The differences between conversion and Christianization are not as slight or unimportant as it could seem. When discussing people's identity and their religion, all the details are important, especially conversion versus Christianization. The introduction, "Networks of Conversion, Cultural Osmosis and Identities in the Viking Age," for a collection of papers titled *Conversion and Identity in the Viking Age*, points to the difficulty differentiating between converting to a religion spiritually and embracing the religion culturally.⁶ There is a similar idea when discussing the Danelaw itself in a paper by Lesley Abrams presented at the Thirteenth Viking Congress, a meeting of scholars to annually discuss new findings in the field. The paper, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," shows that without truly defining these two terms the point of the changes the Scandinavian settlers went through cannot be demonstrated fully.⁷ The difference is important because research seems to suggest that Christianization occurred while conversion needed a more centralized environment to happen. Christianization in the Danelaw was the "cultural osmosis" or religious syncretism of the pagan way of life with the English Christians.⁸ Conversion construed as being the actual practice of transitioning to being Christian in daily practice and identity. The clearest examples of conversion are the Viking leaders. They converted but it was for political and economic reasons, such as King Guthred's conversion.⁹ These types of conversions did not necessarily mean that the average pagan subject followed their leaders like sheep and converted, but it did set an example and even a precedent for future

leaders and subjects. The leader's conversion gave a precursor to lower parts of society seeing Christianity in a better light, as the convert himself is the symbol of the region and he has the most weight with the people. The lowest parts of the Danelaw's society's process would take much longer with a Christianization of culture before true conversion could happen. Ildar Garipzanov illustrates the many steps for a large-scale conversion; leaders converting, then their subjects following with the Christianization of the original culture, which in this case was pagan.¹⁰ The settlers had to become comfortable with Christianity and a merging of traditions had to occur before they would uproot their own beliefs and practices of their ancestors. For this "cultural osmosis" to occur it required pagan practices to be melded with Christian ones, Viking leaders to convert to the Christian God, and an absence of strict doctrine through lack strong of overarching religious leadership in the Danelaw. These things occurring together in the Danelaw caused a "receptive environment for Christianity" and for conversion to later occur as well.¹¹

The Scandinavians who came over to settle in the Danelaw would have brought over their pagan religion with them. Christianity would not be practiced widely in their homelands until the end of the tenth century.¹² The pagan religion, generally called the Nordic religion, that they brought with them was polytheistic, communal, centered around rituals, supernatural, and hardly demanding in lifestyle.¹³ Some examples of their many gods are Thor, Odin, Frey, Bregi, Loki, etc. These gods were not unanimous or civil to each other in Nordic mythology. Worshipers followed those that related to them the best in their own lifestyle or within a specific moment of need.¹⁴ The gods were not meant to be worshiped equally or all at once or even mimicked. This religion was very localized with specific cults of ancestors, god worship and religious sites with local religious importance.¹⁵ Their practices were very communal; it brought everyone together for festivals and religious days. The local sites were important to a specific geographically close community and most of the people in it would all worship one locally revered god or ancestors. Worship was a joint effort centered on a day with certain activities such as; feasts, sacrifices, story telling, and calls for divine intervention for the community.¹⁶ Another aspect of Nordic religion is the level of supernatural beings in everyday life. These could be dead or living human or non-human types or even

just pieces of the land. The beings had to be contended with and always had a connection to daily human lives.¹⁷ Level of religious activity in a person was the doorway into affecting change or their own purpose on these beings, not a goal or requirement of society. Overall this was not a religion that required dogmatic theology, heartfelt devotion or even autonomy to only Nordic gods. It was more of a social entity that penetrated Scandinavian culture more than the soul.¹⁸ The shape of these practices, connection to community and land allowed for the Christianization of the immigrants in England. They were away from their local cult support that was left at home and this opened them to other religious culture.

The studies surrounding Viking religious culture and Christianization agree on the Nordic religion being a free religion that would have been flexible enough to accept Christian ideas and activities easily. In this research, time and again authors come to the see Christianization of the Scandinavians surrounded by Christianity as a probable conclusion caused by the open culture of the Nordic religion. The Christianization began in the Danelaw by leaving their roots back in Scandinavia. Picking up and leaving this entire foundation would have especially shook them as they settled in England, an identified and solid Christian community. They were away from their sites, festivals, and religious leaders. They did not have any doctrine or religious books to harden them against a different religion.¹⁹ In going against a very well defined religion such as Christianity, that has hard and fast doctrine, it is likely that early Nordic peoples in England would have tried to test God against Thor or Odin. These comparisons and challenges led to even more contact than living in the same community provides. Comparison causes discussion and interaction that can make waves in a once religiously united community. Even only a few years after the treaty between King Alfred and Guthrum there is a letter from the archbishop of Reims who is thanking King Alfred for his appointment of a bishop of Canterbury. Canterbury is in Wessex, at this time under King Alfred, but is close to the border to the Danelaw. In the letter the archbishop is clearly concerned about the pagan influence on the Christians to the point of citing new practices occurring that he deems contrary to the accepted theology.²⁰ Now that there was more knowledge passing between the two groups it allowed for similarities to become evident and syncretism to occur, "The very exclusivity of native religions

(Christianity) could spawn interest in comparing neighboring cults. That such awareness of other religions eventually led to a convergence of religious outlook."²¹ Similarities begin to take shape and over time the differences seem less important to the less indoctrinated pagans. Seeing the religions as not being that different from each other bridges the gap between them causing acceptance, causing Christianization and an easier step to take to conversion.

Some of the religious similarities are even simple enough for modern Christians to grasp. On top of these similarities there were natural proclivities of the Nordic religious culture that lent themselves to acceptance of Christian culture as Thomas A. DuBois says in his book, "similarities may emerge between religious polities that appear at first mutually exclusive or even openly antagonistic toward one another."²² In his book, *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*, he goes into a list of examples of parallels between the two religions and how Christian culture could have been easily accepted because of them. One of the first things that opened them up initially was the overall Nordic acceptance of other faiths.²³ Many even accepted the Christian God as another god to add to their own and switched around loyalties just as they did with their own gods, "a tradition of comparison, in which the Christian Lord appears at first as just one deity of the sky, vying with others for the best."²⁴ Another example is the Nordic belief in the abilities of spirits and ancestors, which lends to an acceptance of Christian guardian angles. There also was an easy comparison to the cult of the saints that spoke to the loss of their ancestors when they moved away.²⁵ The cult of saints' traditions were so similar to different pagan practices that there was little change through assimilation. Both have ties to relic like objects and have local groups with special followings. DuBois illustrates the connection of this to the larger point of Christianization and not conversion in the Danelaw, "the unofficial assimilation of native cults into the community of saints may have eased the process of Christianization for many."²⁶ Joining this with their local loyalty proclivities would have created a plausible need to be a part of the English local traditions or at least seeing the good in them. Another easy acceptance would have been the idea of Christ rising from the dead because in Nordic religious legends rising from the dead occurs often. Having the similarities would have led to comfort with Christianity and even merging of religious ideas for

the Nordic settlers, drawing back to Garipzanov, “The package of religious ideas transmitted in this way must have been eclectic to say the least, and it could easily have been blended with local religious ideas.”²⁷ This mixing is evidenced by a lot of unique material pieces showing both religious traditions from the Danelaw period.

The architectural and artistic evidence left behind on stone crosses, churches, and material evidence shows the syncretism of religious ideas; pagan myths are mixed in Christian art, Christ is shown next to Thor, the hammer next to the cross. The Middleton Cross is an example of this merging. The Middleton Cross, a stone sculpture found in Yorkshire, England is a Christian cross with the Scandinavian knot design, a warrior with Viking garb and a beast on the back in a similar Scandinavian design. Just as there are parallels in Nordic religion and Christianity and comparisons occurred, the stone sculptures in the Danelaw show that these things were actually used for Christianization. Hadley describes Richard Bailey arguing for Christianization evidence through the pagan scenes on stone sculpture, “could be interpreted as Christian teaching and art ‘being presented in Scandinavian terms,’ in which parallels were drawn between Christian themes and Scandinavian mythology and pagan beliefs.” Even in jewelry and clothing there is evidence of cultural mixing. In Gabor Thomas’ analysis of the metalwork from the Danelaw he concludes that it, “may represent a case of the selective use of material culture to facilitate the process of cultural ingratiation.” The things that were left behind indicate that the process of Christianization was occurring in the Danelaw. The leadership converting also used these pieces of art and sculpture, if only for political reasons it still affected the Danelaw’s ecclesiastical position and their cultural setup which all spurred the Christianization of the pagan people.

When Lesley Abrams remarks about the impact of leadership conversion on the people she grasps the importance and connection, “conversion involved leaders, while Christianization was about the people they led.”²⁸ To even create the Danelaw a conversion of leadership had to occur. In 878 after being defeated by King Alfred, King Guthrum had to receive baptism as a Christian with a new name. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recounts the event, “After three weeks came Godrum (Guthrum), one of thirty of the most worthy men, and the king received him at baptism there.”²⁹ His baptism

not only meant that the Danelaw was literally solidified legally with a conversion but that Guthrum and his men set a precedent that other pagan leaders like him could use Christianity for political purposes. In a way it also meant that a pagan or Christian identity did not define this new region under the law of the Danes. Converted members of the Danelaw with political position used their conversion to grasp the Church’s influence in England, which allowed for the Church to gain its own power back as well. A perfect example of a leader conversion coupled with the Church’s influence on political power within the Danelaw is Guthred. As it is cited in *The History of St. Cuthbert*, Guthred is chosen by God as a slave in the army of the Danes and is crowned and “redeemed” by an abbot after following Cuthbert’s orders from beyond the grave.³⁰ While the circumstances seem unlikely there was a King Guthred ruling over the Northumbria region of the Danelaw and he did give rights and land to the Church during his reign, specifically to St. Cuthbert’s followers. His own crowning has a mixture of Christian and pagan elements of kingship garments involved. Everything about Guthred suggests him playing both sides. Many suggest that he did this to gain political authority and authenticity in English society.³¹ The Church would have supported the pagan leadership, using them and converting them only on the surface because this way the bishops could get back into the Danelaw region. This relationship was supported on both sides as Julia Barrow says in her paper “Ecclesiastical Institutions in the Danelaw”,

“They (bishops) were politically and ecclesiastically influential only where they held estates. The archbishops of York needed the support of Scandinavian political leaders to obtain or preserve endowments; in return, presumably, they offered to urge their flock to accept the new political framework.”³²

This mutually beneficial transaction between cultures would not have existed under the same society as what was previously in Mercia or Wessex. The pagan outlook and fractured leadership led to changes in the ecclesiastical makeup and a breakdown of society within the Danelaw. All of this created an environment that caused Christianization to flourish for the pagan settlers as their leaders utilized the tool of Church authority in English lands.

Before Church authority was shaken by the Viking attacks and subsequent possession of English land there was a complete hierarchy of archbishops,

bishops and their jurisdictions. A lot of the time there was a struggle for power between the Archbishoprics of York and Canterbury. Each one vying for the right to oversee more Christian souls, money and land than the other in England's eastern kingdoms. The way to gain authority was from royal appointment of lands and money, known as patronage. Just before and during the wars prior to the creation of the Danelaw, the English kings were trying to lessen the power of the Church in their kingdoms and to take back territory. There was less patronage from the Christian born English kings than might be expected. Politically it was about the power and money, not the religious fervor. This power struggle easily continued into the Danelaw period under pagan rule. It is generally seen as a sort of tug of war between keeping the Church's power in check while trying to also use their pull with the people to the leader's benefit. As discussed earlier Scandinavian leadership used conversion and the pull of the Church to enhance their own authority and solidify their position with the Christian population so they gave patronage, often more than the English kings did, and their own conversion for support but it came with a price. Gale Owens discusses the limitations on Church law that would likely have occurred under Scandinavian leadership, even if they converted, "They would accept baptism, Christian funerals and religious art; but where ecclesiastical law forbade them to marry a kinswoman or demanded dues they were unwilling to pay, some doubtless ignored it."³³ On a more specific organizational level within the Church there was also an amount of disruption alongside the political disruptions. The changes in organization were important to the new pagan population's assimilation. Lesley Abrams draws attention to the need of understanding the changes, "the acceptance of baptism was at least intended to impose requirements and prohibitions even on new converts and to constitute a more substantial change...it follows that conversion should have required the support of clergy."³⁴ If people do not know how to actually become an active converted Christian due to a lack of clergy or organization of churchmen then pagans would have a hard time doing more than Christianizing before the institutionalized religion returned.

In 886 the Danelaw's ecclesiastical sanctioned areas were the dioceses of York, Lindsey, Leicester, Elmham, and *Dummoc*, also parts of London and Linchfield.³⁵ The largest disruption from the change of power was the movement of jurisdiction to a smaller

number of dioceses. This was caused by less initial endowments to the Church and less students of the Church in these areas. With less money and students there were less bishops and priests being trained so there were less men to oversee churches or dioceses which caused less dioceses over much bigger regions, such as York.³⁶ York was especially connected to the new leadership as evidenced by the minting of coins there with the names of saints during the Danelaw period.³⁷ The remaining dioceses did enjoy this time since there was more power, wealth and land for the few bishops left in the Danelaw, but this meant that those that stayed mainly stayed for land. Julia Barrow concludes this in her discussion of the changes that occurred in the Church during this time, "Overall, it is evident that in the tenth century the major preoccupation of bishops in the Danelaw area was the acquisition of land."³⁸ The bishops needed Scandinavian support to get what they wanted so this created a Church atmosphere of using the new leadership and the lack of bishops to increase jurisdiction for themselves. This just caused larger dioceses over more land and less control over the churches within it. A far away bishop or archbishop does not understand or concern themselves with the affairs of smaller unknown churches with pagan settlers to convert.

Other issues occurred with the new system of ecclesiastical institutions in the Danelaw. D.M. Hadley in *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure c. 800-1100*, she claims that these larger institutions would become socially irrelevant to their wide geography of authority, thus becoming not able to connect to the churches who need them the most for converting. The smaller churches call for conversion of the pagans would have fallen on deaf ears with bishops who were far away and only cared about land. New churches and new priests to fill the empty bishoprics where not created for these new populations, this was not the concern, power was. Hadley remarks on how empty positions would have caused a large issue with conversion, "it makes it difficult to envisage how the church managed to deal with the Scandinavian settlers and their paganism, since both the bishops and religious communities...were responsible for both providing pastoral care and training new recruits to the religious life." The lack of bishops and its effects on the conversion of the new settlers was even noticed by the pope himself. A letter written from Pope Formosus to the bishops of England a few years

after the creation of the Danelaw illustrates this, “As soon as the death of the brother is announced to him, who, bearing the rule of the chief see, is set over the rest of the bishops among you, a canonical election is to be made and another to be consecrated and to succeed.” In the beginning of the letter Formosus also mentions the issue of pagan rites proliferating areas of England without much reaction, much like what the Archbishop of Reims was concerned about in his letter in 890. Another part of the Formosus’ letter is the proclamation of the dioceses of Canterbury as the head of English Church authority over York. This part of the letter could have been later altered by bishops in Canterbury trying to claim rights over York or it could signify Rome’s observance of the Danelaw’s bishops becoming too involved in Scandinavian affairs and seeking power. Either way, the pope is clearly concerned about how the lack of bishops is resulting in a lack of leadership throughout the Danelaw causing pagan settlers to not come into the Christian fold while under their jurisdiction.

Many see the ecclesiastical activity within the Danelaw to be next to nothing due to primary source evidence. Due to the disruption of the Great Heathen Army there were many Christian patrons and priests who left their parishes and many bishops in the cities who were killed or ran away to be a bishop without a bishopric. Those priests that stayed in their parishes were disconnected from the Church authority and had no one to help them with pagans and how to convert them. On a local level the priests would have had little guidance so that there was no united front of Christian leadership to convert the new pagan masses. Instead the average local Christians could Christianize the pagan settlers without dogmatic theological rules, which were generally supported by the Church authority, to get in the way. Comparisons, familiarity and acceptance of ideas and culture could occur among the settlers because there was no authority forcing them to do anything they did not want to do. This allowed for the settlers to ease into acceptance of the religion that was new to them. A strong centralized Church forcing their hand on a hardheaded culture such as the Vikings so would have slowed down initial Christianization, a lack of this strong Church authority really helped Christianization and later conversion. The conclusion to be made of Church authority in the Danelaw was that there was a connection to the new leadership with wider reaching dioceses but less bishops which

all caused a limited impact on actual conversion of the pagans but allowed for a flexibility that caused Christianization instead.

Around 918 King Edward the Elder brought much of Scandinavian owned lands under his rule.³⁹ Before his death he started the unification of England under one king which his son, Æthelstan later held as his title, King of the English. They began a line of Christian kings with one kingdom and one way of organizing the Church in England causing a push for everyone to be English and Christian identifiers. With better organization in the Church started by a Christian-born ruler with a connection to the pope, bishops could be trained, and positions filled, so pagan conversion could be focused on. Under the new rule everyone was to be English and Christian identifiers, not just sympathizers. King Æthelstan was a devout Christian who gave his sister in marriage to one of the last kings of York, Sihtric, who Æthelstan would have made receive baptism.⁴⁰ Unified rule under a Christian who sought out conversion, and not just Christianization of the pagans, would have caused true conversion of the common settlers. In *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely* there is a mention of a group of pagans who had not only converted and accepted baptism but also gave land to the Church in the late-tenth-century.⁴¹ This means that there were converts who were Christians and active in the church only a few decades after unification. Around the 950s there is even a mixed-race Danish and Anglo-Saxon, bishop with high royal favor, Archbishop of York Oscytel.⁴² This means that there was a mixed-race interaction to create a child that was legitimate enough and had enough wealth to be educated and was an active Christian enough that he became a clergy member and eventually an archbishop. A Christian king with power over these settlers, now children of the settlers, could push actual conversion to the people and not just the leadership or elite. Lesley Abrams has illustrated these points so profoundly in two different papers in two different books that her summation is perfect,

“We should at least consider whether the revival of ecclesiastical life in Danelaw kingdoms had to wait for the reassertion of the English rule; this might, in turn, suggest that much of the Scandinavian population within these kingdoms might not have been brought into the Christian fold until after they lost their political independence.”⁴³

Scandinavians coming over to England and creating such a large change in set-up and population diversity is something that can never be fully understood; however, the change of the settlers from pagan to Christian is one change that has shed some light on it from study and primary sources. Christianization of culture occurred first for the pagan population. They accepted the old society's ways that now surrounded them as their home and foundation of ancestral local communities were no longer beneath them. The parallels between the two religions and daily lives made this acceptance much easier and more likely. The conversion of leadership also allowed for a positive view of the religion, but the new organization of Church institutions did not facilitate true conversion into Christianity. The lack of bishops and clergy kept the pagans who were accepting Christian culture not in the church and still pagans in practice. Once unification of England and the Church was back under a Christian ruler then conversion became essential once again to bishops. The Vikings came and those who stayed accepted the English and Christian way of life as being culturally appropriate but did not convert until centralized rule forced the mass conversion which was helped on by the initial Christianization from the Danelaw's free culture of religious mixing.

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²⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 96.

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Vikings in al-Andalus

Madison Krstich

The history of the Vikings is rich and far-reaching, yet the information available to and written by scholars is often deceptively brief which belies just how great their impact. One such instance occurs in *The Historical Atlas of the Vikings*. Author John Haywood condenses information on Vikings in Iberia into two pages. He writes that Vikings attacked Spain in the ninth century before sailing further into the Mediterranean.¹ At the time, modern-day Spain and Portugal did not exist – a handful of Christian kingdoms and more politically dominant Muslim caliphates comprised the landscape of the Iberian Peninsula, referred to then as al-Andalus. Haywood then makes the claim that the raiding of the Iberian Peninsula and the greater Mediterranean region cost too much in lives and resources, so the Vikings would only rarely raid Spain in the future.² Part of this brevity could be explained by the unavailability of or inaccessibility of information. Whatever the reason, it is quite evident that the presence of Viking raiders in Iberia was established early.

The Vikings are often viewed as pillagers and marauders based upon documentation about them in many accounts. However, far from randomly expanding and attacking, the Vikings often left their homeland in search of material gain, an increase in reputation and new places to settle. Often, the determining factors were the economic or political situation that attracted the attention of the Vikings.

It seems as though the economic and political situation in al-Andalus attracted the Vikings, even as the political climate gradually changed enough to discourage raiding. Both Latin and Arabic sources offer information in favor of this possibility, even though the two types are different in style and intent, and archaeological evidence is nonexistent. Historian Ann Christy notes that, aside from fortifications that

may have been a response to Viking activity, there is no physical evidence of Viking raids or settlement in al-Andalus.³ In addition, there is little archaeological data with which to determine the wealth of cities and mosques in al-Andalus⁴ – this would have been the biggest attraction for Vikings searching either for plunder or trading opportunities.

The information available to scholars today, as well as the documentation of Viking exploits elsewhere in medieval Europe, presents an interesting prospect. It is this prospect and patterns of activity elsewhere that favors the possibility of Viking raiders being present in the Iberian Peninsula. The Vikings likely possessed knowledge of al-Andalus because of its dealings with other states, like the Franks, in medieval Europe. If the Vikings possessed the knowledge of a region that was ripe with wealth and was politically vulnerable, the parts of their history that are available indicate the likelihood that they then would have charted a course for al-Andalus because of the opportunities for material gain that the region represented – natural resources facilitated by easy travel, material goods, and slaves. While this argument would present the easiest case scenario, the historical record is not complete, nor is it in agreement across traditions. As a result, this discrepancy makes the question of Viking presence in Iberia difficult to establish with any real definitiveness.

It is worth noting that there are perceptible differences between Islamic primary sources and Christian primary sources in both style, intent, and accessibility. The first centuries of Islamic thought were chronicled through an oral tradition known as *hadith*, a collection of anecdotes or narratives prefaced by an *isnad*, or chain of oral sources. It is this tradition that inspired the primary sources which inform today's historian about al-Andalus. As opposed to the Christian sources from the same time, it is sometimes beneficial

to trace the origins of the Islamic sources making it easier to determine the accuracy and potential bias of a given account. The Islamic sources from which these accounts received their information varied – war reports, correspondence between monarchs, old stories and oral traditions, and even the author’s personal experiences could be cited.⁵ Largely regarded as primary sources, or based on primary sources, the Islamic tradition is largely accepted as “the record” on al-Andalus. Because these sources drew on previous compilations of information, sometimes from other parts of the Islamic world, opinions from outside al-Andalus and many different motives may exist in one source.⁶ Thus these amalgamated sources are often the best, if not the only, record available. Frequently this amalgamation is a result of lost copies or mistranslations, both of which preclude historians’ access to the earlier works cited in one source. Because few or no original sources have survived, historians are limited in their ability to establish the authenticity of the information provided. Other factors which impact the survival of such records include, but are not limited to geography, religion, and politics.

While the Muslim sources might be the best record historians have regarding the presence of the Vikings in Iberia, they are few in number and total record. The survival rate of Islamic sources in their entirety compared to those of Christian sources is very low – later medieval conquests, conversions, and expulsions ensured that many non-Latin sources in the Iberian Peninsula would disappear.⁷ To compound the issue, the sources that offer information on Vikings in al-Andalus are set down much later after the event described.⁸ This is because the information on the Vikings in those sources are derived from earlier accounts that either no longer exist in their entirety or no longer exist at all. Thus, historians cannot assess the original documents for veracity or “absent” information in subsequent accounts.

A final hurdle that appears in the study of these sources is a language barrier. Most of these compiled accounts were penned in Arabic, which according to historian Ann Christys might prove “A bridge too far for scholars of the Viking Age.”⁹ In the academic field devoted to the Viking Age, where a significant amount of emphasis rests on Scandinavia and Western Europe, translations of Islamic sources into languages like English or even Spanish are few in number.¹⁰ The lack of readily available translators familiar with

or interested in translating Arabic at the time and a language that appears somewhat removed from the modern-day study of the Vikings also contribute to the difficulty of translation.

Difficulties with the Islamic tradition often cause historians to examine the Christian account of events of the time. While Christian sources on al-Andalus and the Vikings do not present the same problems as Islamic sources, they still have complications. In the case of Christian sources, entries are brief and very concise, which may reflect attitudes at the time that the end of the world was near.¹¹ Authors of the medieval era often expressed this attitude in their writing, particularly following a disastrous natural event or heavy loss in battle – losses to “heathen” Vikings were doubly bad. Compared to the Islamic sources, the intent of the Christian sources is clearer. Most were written specifically under commission by a patron, and as such sources may have a political agenda that mixed historical details with fictional stories via addition, omission, and perhaps invention.¹² As such, there is no foolproof way to distinguish the factual details from the embellished ones in the Christian tradition. Furthermore, Christian sources generally only focus on one specific area or family. Thus, the patronage of a wealthy Christian often colored the early records or accounts for a number of reasons. The interest in the Iberian Peninsula does not appear to have been of great concern to the Christians at the time and so, as a result, most of the general history written about al-Andalus as one region was authored by Islamic scholars.¹³

It is important to note that Christian and Islamic sources do have one significant concern in common. There is not enough archaeological data with which to corroborate the narratives offered by the primary sources available. For example, the only information on the size, layout, and affluence of the city of Cordoba – the seat of government for the caliphate of the same name in al-Andalus – exists only in Islamic primary sources. Ann Christys points out that the description of the mosque built in Cordoba includes details that were also used to describe the mosque in Damascus, the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate.¹⁴ Perhaps the similarity in each description could be construed as simple elaboration where there was less information than desirable on the later mosque built in Cordoba. However, this cannot be proved or disproved because succeeding generations of residents,

rapid development and a lack of earlier excavations make it difficult for any future archaeology to find anything.¹⁵ Thus, in the absence of archaeological evidence historians are forced to rely on other sources to inform their opinions about significant historical events.

Even though several possible reasons for the Viking presence in al-Andalus are clearly surmised, there is evidence that al-Andalus was part of the wider political scene of medieval Europe, which may have roused the Vikings' awareness of them. This possibility is one that lends credibility to the belief that the Vikings had an early presence in Iberia because it is consistent with other places and reasons where historians document that the Vikings exerted their influence. The more traditional focus of Viking scholars is on Western medieval Europe, from which many sources originate that offer details on interactions between al-Andalus and Western kingdoms like those of the Franks. For example, John Wreglesworth writes that the Franks were involved in the affairs of al-Andalus between 796-798 CE – Frankish rulers Charlemagne and Louis negotiated with al-Andalus and Christian Spain.¹⁶ The Christian ruler of Asturia, King Alfonso, dispatched an embassy to Toulouse, which Wreglesworth places around 795 CE, a time when the Asturian kingdom experienced frequent attacks from forces of al-Andalus.¹⁷ This involvement occurs a hundred years before the first recording of Viking activity in al-Andalus, indicating that al-Andalus was a part of the larger political world – a world that clearly included the Vikings.

That others' presence is noted in al-Andalus indicates that the Iberian region was not cut off from the influence of outsiders. But, the Christian Franks did not limit their peaceful dealings to Christian Spain alone. Recorded in the year 847 in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, "Envoys of 'Abd al-Rahman king of the Saracens came from Cordoba in Spain to Charles to seek a peace and draw up a formal treaty."¹⁸ And in the year 858, "A certain monk...returned from Cordoba in Spain bearing with him the bodies of the blessed martyrs George the Deacon and Aurelius."¹⁹ The monk had to have gained access to these martyrs' remains and passage into and out of Cordoba in some way. This serves as another example of the Franks negotiating with those in power in al-Andalus. But the Franks were not the only ones interacting with al-Andalus.

Additionally, there is also evidence of a

relationship between al-Andalus and the Eastern European medieval world. For example, the scholar Istakhri – whose name is indicative of Persian origin – compiled the "Book of Roads and Kingdoms" around 951. In this work, Istakhri describes the land of the Khazars, a semi-nomadic people who settled territories along the Volga and Don rivers and near the Khazar (Caspian) Sea.²⁰ He notes the presence of Christians, Muslims and Jews in Khazar lands, going on to say that the societies' slaves are "idol worshippers" because the three monotheistic religions are prohibited from enslaving one another.²¹ This source establishes that the wider medieval Islamic world was familiar with eastern Europe even if it does not specifically name with which peoples.

As another example, The Khazar correspondence establishes a relationship more specifically between al-Andalus and the Khazars. The correspondence is an exchange of letters between Cordoban statesman Hasdai ibn Shaprut and King Joseph of Khazaria. The letter from Hasdai, penned by his secretary, has been confirmed as authentic – the mention of a diplomatic visit from the Khazars in 954 and the fact that Hasdai served the Caliph Abd-al Rahman until his death in 961 places the time of the letter's creation between 954 and 961.²² While the authenticity of King Joseph's reply has been debated, it is the authentic letter from the Cordoban Caliphate to the Khazars that demonstrates al-Andalus' knowledge of the world beyond its borders. And the states of eastern Europe with which al-Andalus interacted were tied through trade to the Vikings. As an example, the Khazars settled land that would have put them on the route to the Byzantine Empire and the greater Islamic world, both of whom traded with Vikings. Word of al-Andalus may have reached Viking raiders through trade in Eastern Europe.

The trade routes established in the region appear well documented and involve some cordiality. The relationship between Christian Spain and Islamic al-Andalus is more complicated. There is a possibility Christian Spain and Islamic al-Andalus worked together on occasion, an example being the 713 Treaty of Tudmir – recorded in the Latin *Chronicle of 754* – in which the Umayyad invaders of al-Andalus promised freedom of worship and protection of the peaceful to Theodimir, described as a descendant of Visigothic ruler Witiza.²³ This indicates not only political changes due to conquests but the granting of "privileges" or

“rights” to the vanquished.

However, historians like Ann Christys point out that there is no firm evidence for the genuineness of the treaty.²⁴ Other more verifiable examples of compromise and statesmanship between Christian and Muslim governments in al-Andalus appear non-existent. The lack of cohesive diplomacy and collaboration between the two sides may have provided another layer of “common knowledge” to which the Vikings might have had access – this may be yet another reason Viking raiders might set their eye on al-Andalus. The region was divided along faith traditions and a distrust or dislike sprung from that reality.

In her own research, Christys observes that Christians living in al-Andalus did not lose their voice completely and several Latin accounts of their perceptions of al-Andalus have survived.²⁵ Thus, there is evidence of a cohesiveness, even if it was on the surface because these accounts are not entirely negative. Furthermore, she argues that the author of the *Chronicle of 754* expressed a typical Christian worldview – defeats at the hands of the Arabs were a punishment, a disaster the Christians of Spain had brought on themselves.²⁶ These early encounters were not unique in their outcome, nor were the sentiments about the wrath of God. Regardless of Christian expression, one thing remained consistent: the Christians did not accept being a conquered people well.

Christian Spain reacted negatively to Islamic dominance in later instances as well. For example, the Frankish retrieval of martyrs’ remains as recorded in the *Annals of St-Bertin* were in response to the execution of forty-eight Christians in Cordoba for either blasphemy or apostasy from Islam.²⁷ As a much later example of more blatant criticism, a Mozarabic (Arabic-Speaking) priest would pen “The False Teachings of Islam,” and argue, “Your religion triumphed by the sword and coercion on the earth.”²⁸ This resistance would continue throughout the Islamic occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. This serves as yet another example of a politically divided al-Andalus, which might have been seen as an opportunity by Viking raiders.

Division along faith traditions in the Iberian region presented a perceived weakness based on the structure of the different religious groups and how they interacted with each other. Not only did Christian kingdoms exist beside Muslim caliphates in al-Andalus, but their societies in the region were not homogenous;

evidence suggests that different ethnic and religious groups existed throughout the Iberian Peninsula regardless of whether the government in any given area was controlled by Christians or Muslims. For example, the local Caliphate of Córdoba (c. 750–1031 CE) began as a part of the larger Umayyad Caliphate (dissolved 750 CE), which encompassed many lands. This was reflected by the inhabitants and administrators of the Cordoban Caliphate – Egyptians, Syrians, and Berbers are mentioned as separate ethnicities in Islamic primary sources. Additionally, Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived together in al-Andalus for centuries. In the Caliphate of Cordoba, Jewish and Christian citizens enjoyed special protected status as *dhimmi* or “People of the Book” – although that protection did not necessarily equate to egalitarianism or impartiality.²⁹ In spite of generally accepted laws that allowed for difference of faith or ethnicity, the national identity was far from coalescing. Rather than raise tolerance, the different ethnic and religious groups that existed in the Caliphate of Cordoba created internal instability. This tension is documented by historians.

According to Hispanist Gabriel Jackson, twenty years rarely passed without a major military conflict or revolt.³⁰ As an example, chronicler ‘Arīb ibn Sa’d offers short entries on what appears to be a year-round three-year campaign by cavalry leader Lubd idn Muhammad. In the chronicler’s account, ibn Muhammad trekked through al-Andalus, capturing forts exhausting his army and forcing some of them to pay tribute.³¹ The date of the capturing of the several forts, and therefore the existence of the forts, is recorded as occurring between 903 and 905 CE. Although no physical remains of these fortresses have been unearthed, the written source indicates at the least that fortifications functioned to keep order and prevent or impede internal insurrections – perhaps they could also guard against attacks from Viking raiders.

Such instability in the region would have presented an attractive perception of a region that was self-absorbed in local power struggles and thus was less vigilant to the outside attack. This condition was one that precipitated a Viking attack or expansion in other areas of the medieval world.

Perhaps the best source to shed light on the Vikings’ knowledge of the Iberian Peninsula is Ibn Dihyah’s account of the Cordoban envoy al-Ghazal’s journey to a Viking court. This account occurs during the time of known Viking activity in al-Andalus and

Christian Spain. The authenticity of the account has been questioned, with historians suggesting that it is a later fabrication based on al-Ghazal's recorded mission to Constantinople.³²

But, according to Allen in his monograph of the account, "Scandinavian and English specialists of the Viking period are in general agreement in accepting the validity of the report of al-Ghazal's embassy to the north."³³ Rather than the authenticity of the source, the location of the "great island in the ocean with flowing streams" is debated more strenuously.³⁴

Ibn Diyah constructed his account in the twelfth or thirteenth century from anecdotes of a ninth century Cordoban vizier who had cited al-Ghazal himself as his source of information.³⁵ In the source, Viking envoys came to 'Abd al-Rahman to ask for peace following a retreat from Seville and the loss of the commander of the Viking fleet.³⁶ Al-Ghazal, an ambassador in possession of "keenness of mind, quickness of wit, skill in repartee, courage and perseverance" was selected to journey with the Viking envoys to their king's court.³⁷ He spent twenty months in the Viking court entertaining the king and queen, accompanied by an interpreter, before returning to Cordoba.³⁸ Although there is no information to follow up on how well al-Ghazal was received or the political ramifications of such a visit, this diplomatic record indicates the Vikings were conscious of the system that governed al-Andalus. Also, this record cannot positively refute the suggestion that the Vikings knew of al-Andalus before the Moors knew of the Vikings.³⁹ Given the time constraint introduced by the first recorded Viking raid (844), and the suggested time frame of al-Ghazal's journey (844-845), the Vikings likely had prior knowledge of the terrain and politics of al-Andalus. This prior knowledge likely shaped their decision to raid al-Andalus. The Vikings planned an attack that indicated a familiarity with the landscape, the people, the wealth and the internal governing policies in place.

Several natural characteristics of al-Andalus may have helped create an attractive image for potential raiders or settlers of a land wealthy in resources. Food was one such resource and a highly prized one. According to Hispanist Gabriel Jackson, wheat was the basic food crop in al-Andalus and it was common for a grain surplus to occur.⁴⁰ Archaeology in the form of a soil analysis of Galicia in Northern Iberia supports the idea that the land was ideal for agriculture.⁴¹ The

area also cultivated several exportable goods. For example, olive oil, wine, and figs were noted as exports from Sagunto since at least the third century BC.⁴² Iberia produced significant food sources consistently compared to other areas less able to produce these commodities and it formed the backbone of al-Andalus' economy. In fact, under the rule of the Moors, cultivation of crops like olives was more extensive than at any other point in Iberian history.⁴³ This agricultural system contributed to the foundation of trade, the basis of the rest of the economy in al-Andalus.

Ibn Khurradadhbih, author of the earliest surviving Arabic book of administrative geography, offers a terse note on the exports of al-Andalus and the Western Mediterranean:

The goods that are exported... are Saqalib eunuchs and Roman, Frankish and Langobard slaves, and Roman and Andalusian slave girls, and beaver pelts and other furs, aromatics such as storax, and drugs such as mastic. From the sea floor near France comes the substance called *bussadh*, commonly known as coral.⁴⁴

In addition to drawing the attention of Viking raiders and settlers, natural features of al-Andalus may have facilitated their goals. The western coast of al-Andalus was indented with creeks, bays, and inlets to the heart of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus water travel played an important role in the life of the region for friend and foe alike. Raiders with advanced maritime capability, like the Vikings, could navigate rivers like the Guadalquivir in small vessels in order to reach major cities like Cordoba.⁴⁵ The ease with which one could travel into areas of relative wealth and exit quickly was likely not lost on groups seeking to plunder.

Al-Andalus was likely known because it was situated on a prime trade route. Therefore, travelers from the north or east would sail past al-Andalus on their way to the Mediterranean – the Vikings may have done just that. This possibility is substantiated by a little archaeological data to corroborate that idea in the form of rune stones, or raised stones with runic inscriptions attributed to the Vikings. Two such stones exist in the Mediterranean, one in Florence, Italy and one in Pireus, Greece. However, neither have been dated to

the time of the first recorded raids by Vikings on al-Andalus. The Italian rune stone is dated between 1200–1300 CE, and offers no insight into its purpose or origin other than the inscription, “Andres made me.”⁴⁶ The Greek rune stone does not have a confirmed date, although its partial inscription appears to commemorate “Valiant men.”⁴⁷ Perhaps those honored with the inscription were a part of a raiding expedition or a trading caravan. The ease of accessing the interior of the country for the Vikings and its position on the way to the greater Mediterranean region would have made al-Andalus appealing as a possible territory for exploitation. Thus geography, political differences to outside regions and perceived wealth all likely contributed to the attraction of the Iberian Peninsula.

It is likely that the Vikings’ introduction to the manufactured lure of al-Andalus may have begun with Islamic sources like *Futuh*, authored by an Egyptian scholar named Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam (d. 871 CE). The account credits a coastal garrison commander, Tariq ibn ‘Amr, with crossing from Tangier into Spain and beginning the Moorish conquest of al-Andalus at 711 CE.⁴⁸ This process lasted several years. After the conquest, al-Andalus was initially considered a province of the Umayyad Caliphate – its power base rested in Syria, with Damascus serving as the capital. The most striking part of this excerpt from *Futuh* is the amount of detail paid to items looted during the conquest. For example, Tariq ibn ‘Amr argues with a nephew of the Christian ruler Rodrigo over a debt payment – as payment, Tariq ibn ‘Amr tore off the leg of a table, “Adorned with gold and jewels, the like of which had never been seen.”⁴⁹ Other details include the seizure of carpets woven with gold thread and gold chains strung with rubies pearls and topaz.⁵⁰

In addition to the anecdote about the table, there are other details of wealth unimaginable in al-Hakam’s account. In another section of the account, Islamic invaders drained a bathing pool to find a cache of silver vessels.⁵¹ Whether or not these descriptions are objectively true, stories of the spoils obtained in al-Andalus may have reached the Vikings because Al-Hakam’s work stands as an example of the kind of circulatory information that would create a motive for raiders to train their sights on al-Andalus.

Due to the language barrier, it is likely that Viking envoys and informers throughout the continent would not have been able to read Arabic. But, they still could have gleaned information by word-of-mouth.

Loot featured in other non-Islamic accounts, like the ninth century Frankish Annals of St-Bertin. According to that source, in the year 838 a fleet of Saracens – the term used to refer to Muslims – attacked Marseilles and “carried off all the nuns...all the males, both clergy and laymen...and took away with them en masse the treasures of Christ’s churches.”⁵² This indicates that there is more than one possible draw in al-Andalus other than the presence of valuable decorative and trade goods.

Riches in the form of gold, jewels, silver and crops aside, another possible economic draw was slavery. In his piece, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era,” author Fynn-Paul introduces the idea that medieval Europe was a slaving zone, a geographical area that fed the market demand of another society for slaves.⁵³ Fynn-Paul writes, “The eighth and ninth centuries were thus even more difficult for western Europeans than has been realized... demand for non-Islamic slaves encouraged non-Christians on all Latin Christendom, including Slavs, Arabs and Scandinavians, to raid the lands of their Christian neighbors in search of valuable human plunder.”⁵⁴ Geographic location would have made al-Andalus a good gateway through which transport of non-Islamic slaves to the Islamic world could occur. Other historians support this idea of a unidirectional slave trade, with the Islamic world importing the majority of the slaves processed through al-Andalus.

Academics like Daniel Eisenberg posit that slavery was solely “an Andalusian phenomenon. The early Christian states could not afford to buy slaves.”⁵⁵ This supports Fynn-Paul’s idea that the demand was made for non-Islamic slaves by Islamic masters and mistresses. However, it is also acknowledged that scant information exists on the presence of slavery in al-Andalus.⁵⁶ Most of the evidence for this institution is from the eleventh century CE or later.⁵⁷ The information available does not shed light on the ethnic or religious identities of those enslaved.. However, Ibn Hawqal, successor to Istakhri and next compiler of “The Book of Roads and Kingdom,” offers more detail when he writes in 988 that al-Andalus was well-known for its export of “slaves, boys and girls captured in France and Galicia, as well as eunuchs.”⁵⁸ This is corroborated by Khurradadhbih’s note on exports of the Western Mediterranean.⁵⁹ At best, the role of a slave trade in attracting Viking raiders to al-Andalus is

speculative. That speculation might have been just one of many reasons the Vikings traveled to the Iberian Peninsula.

When the Viking raids in the Iberian Peninsula first occurred in the ninth century, sources had much more to say on the topic than on diplomatic proceedings. The ninth century Frankish Annals of St-Bertin noted, “The Northmen...got to the south-western part of Spain, where they fought long and bitterly with the Saracens.”⁶⁰ Thus the record indicates that these raids were not limited to one time, nor one place in al-Andalus. The chronicler Ibn Hayyan, credited with writing the most complete and reliable history of al-Andalus available to historians,⁶¹ offered a detailed account of a Viking attack on Seville in 844. Referring to the Vikings in his account as *majus* – often used as a blanket term for any group of non-Muslims and meaning “fire worshippers”⁶² – Hayyan writes that Vikings arrived, “ship after ship,” and occupied Seville for seven days.⁶³ They killed the male inhabitants of Seville and enslaved women and children until reinforcements from the Caliphate of Cordoba arrived to fight them.⁶⁴ According to Hayyan, more than a thousand *majus* were killed and thirty of their ships destroyed in the final standoff with Islamic forces meant to drive them from Seville and the larger al-Andalus.⁶⁵ Although Hayyan’s account is seen as the most reliable, no archaeological evidence – in this case, data could take the form of remains of ships or a mass grave – exists that can corroborate the event.

The sources available to today’s historian along with what little archaeological evidence exists paint a shadowy yet complex picture of al-Andalus during the period of time in medieval history known as the Viking Age. In many accounts, more questions are presented than proofs. However, one thing is certain: Viking raiders obtained knowledge of the internal and external strife that both Christian and Muslim territories faced in al-Andalus, they might have perceived the first hint of opportunity. Sources – accounts like that of al-Ghazal’s diplomatic visit to a Viking court – establish that the Vikings were aware of al-Andalus. Further investigation may have led them to discover that al-Andalus was ripe in natural resources, material goods, and slaves. Other sources detailing Viking raids on the peninsula and the rune stone in modern-day Italy may be seen as a confirmation that the Vikings did indeed take advantage of the situation

in al-Andalus. Although the material whys of their voyages are speculative at best, it is safe to say that al-Andalus presented itself as an attractive target for seekers of wealth.

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A Habit of Forgetting: The Italian Continuation and Evolution of Condemnations of Memory

Gil Rutledge

The study of history and the concept of memory are inexorably linked. While it may seem comforting to believe that historic events occurred exactly as we have learned them, this is rarely (if ever) the case. History as we know it is subject to a myriad of factors which can shroud the truth and preclude us from ever truly grasping the full extent of what happened. In addition to many of the other factors, which serve to perplex and stymie the modern scholar, is the crucial and often overlooked practice of *damnatio memoriae*, which sought deliberately to erase certain people or events from memory. The practice, which is extremely varied in its use and is evident in a multiplicity of cultures, both past and present, is one which is both incredibly important to understand and rather difficult to evaluate, for a variety of reasons. Yet the sheer importance of the punishment, as well as the impact it continues to have to this day, requires a closer examination of one of antiquity's oldest and most pervasive retribution.

One cannot truly understand the debilitating effects of the practice without first understanding the extreme importance that was placed on memory by many of the cultures of the past, which sought to be remembered long after their death. Such a desire is reflected in some of the great building projects in human history, such as the pyramids in Egypt or ziggurats in South America. More to the point, an understanding of this extreme desire to be remembered is what gave rise to the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, which so often served to spite despised rulers or cultures, posthumously, thereby either erasing their memory or damaging it

considerably. (Examples of this may be seen in Figures 1 and 2).¹ This notion of a fluid collective memory, while not something, which is often considered, is a construct that lives on even today. Such a notion of fluid memory is not entirely dissimilar to the concept of historiography, which similarly exhibits shifts in cultural and societal memory, though certainly most historians are not actively seeking to irrevocably alter or cover up portions of this landscape.

While the considerable emphasis placed by these cultures on memory may seem alien to modern readers, many of the very same factors remain motivators in the modern world. Statues, monuments and buildings are constantly being constructed in the pursuit of a continued memory, even if we do not attribute some of the same religious or philosophical elements to our desire.² As such, it is perhaps no surprise that *damnatio memoriae* remains pervasive even to this day, with notable examples such as the infamous 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad and the far more recent controversy concerning confederate monuments serving as prime examples of contested memory in the modern era.³ It is also important to note the symbolic significance these and other besieged items had acquired, particularly in cases involving religion, such as the iconoclast movements which sought the destruction of eastern (and purportedly idolatrous) icons, both in the Byzantine period and before.⁴

Though perhaps the most famous instances of *damnatio memoriae* took place in ancient Egypt with numerous defaced stela or monuments illus-

trating a desire to reform the collective memory, the practice predates even this. *Damnatio memoriae* can be traced even to the earliest periods of Mesopotamia, though irrefutable evidence of the punishment is not as common as in later periods, due largely to difficulties distinguishing between incidental and intentional damage to artifacts (as evidenced in Figures 3 and 4).⁵ The incredible longevity and widespread nature of the punishment creates extreme difficulty in sufficiently explaining the global phenomenon. Since its ancient inception, *damnatio memoriae* has been employed by a wide variety of cultures, for a variety of reasons. While religious and political factors certainly seem to be the most frequent motivators for a purge of memory to be invoked, the punishment is far too widespread to be so simply labelled. With each iteration of the age-old punishment, whether employed in a different society or even in a different era in the same society, differs from the next, either in scope, method or purpose.

Yet there are numerous instances wherein it is clear that a culture is adapting elements of another's employment of the practice, which can be found throughout the ancient and early Mediterranean world. This can be seen in the widespread custom of various Mesopotamian conquerors to destroy the royal statues of their newly conquered.⁶ This cultural appropriation of the practice is important both in explaining the widespread nature of the punishment and in allowing for comparisons to be reasonably made within the immense scope of the practice. In identifying cultures that serve as pseudo inheritors of *damnatio memoriae*, it is possible to create direct links to those from whom they borrowed, allowing for the massive practice to be better, even if only regionally, understood. Perhaps no better example of such a cultural continuation exists than in the case of Rome and its self-proclaimed successor, the Renaissance capital of Florence. In examining the Italian continuation of these two cultures, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the evolutionary nature of the punishment, as well as understanding the profound importance given to memory by each.

Difficulties Inherent to the Study

Yet before undertaking such a venture, there are multiplicities of issues that must be addressed in the hazardous, yet important, study of *damnatio memoriae*, which is fraught with difficulty. Perhaps chief among these difficulties is that acts of *damnatio memoriae* can

be inherently difficult to detect, whether it be intentionally subtle (as with the later, domestic Florentine examples of the punishment) or indistinguishable as intentional or incidental damage.⁷ Further, incidents of *damnatio memoriae* are rarely identified as such, making it difficult at times to identify the practice in action. Another point of difficulty is the nature of the punishment itself, which tended to be extralegal rather than officially sanctioned, though elements, at least, had legal roots, particularly in Rome. Despite these considerable difficulties, it is imperative that historians understand the practice, lest they unwittingly propagate messages contrived by the authors of the effacing practice.⁸

A final, yet fundamental issue with the study of *damnatio memoriae* comes from the term itself, which is, in its most common usage, at least, a modern construct. There is some debate amongst scholars whether the term originally detailed a specific (and rarely employed) Roman law that was then erroneously expanded or whether it is purely a modern invention, though certainly historians such as Tacitus had used approximations of the term.⁹ Yet regardless of the specific origins of the modern terminology, historian Friedrich Vittinghoff has roundly been credited with pointing out its anachronistic nature.¹⁰ Such a discovery is incredibly important and requires consideration as to how to properly address and define such memory-conscious punishments, so as to clearly and credibly articulate the findings of such a study.

One solution, put forth by historian Tracey Robey in the face of this dilemma seems particularly apt, as Robey suggests shifting the focus from the anachronistic '*damnatio memoriae*' to the considerably more open, and perhaps, applicable, term 'condemnation of memory.'¹¹ While this terminology is far more in keeping with the intended results of *damnatio memoriae*, it is also imperative to note that it also includes a wider range of punitive measures (such as razing houses, exile, or bodily mutilation) than does the former, though each of these newly incorporated punishments is very much in keeping with the goal of destroying or distorting one's memory, whether posthumously or otherwise. It is only after thusly acknowledging the difficulties and potential pitfalls of such an examination that one may credibly examine the varied effects and utilization of condemnation of memory in Rome and its Florentine successor.

Condemnations of Memory in Rome

Rome, which had been similarly influenced in this arena by the Greeks before them, employed a wide range of punishments aimed at condemnation of memory. Such ‘memory sanctions,’ to borrow Roman historian Harriet Flower’s useful phrase, were employed both officially and informally, though usually to devastating effect regardless.¹² A prominent variety of this came in the form of razing enemies’ houses to the ground, which served both to symbolically destroy their power while also delivering considerable financial and practical ruin.¹³ Numerous instances of such politically motivated razing can be seen throughout Roman history, perhaps most notably in the case of Cicero (who had himself been a practitioner of condemnation of memory), who, on his return from exile, recounted the events, which led to the burning of his house.¹⁴ He bemoaned being “treated like an actual traitor and claimed that he felt the eyes of all of Rome on the lot where his domicile once stood.”¹⁵ Such an impassioned and desperate appeal testifies to the effectiveness of such a punishment, seldom used though it was (with only nine officially sanctioned cases documented in the republic).¹⁶

There is no shortage of other Roman examples of condemnation of memory, as even a legendary account of three early Roman traitors who received memory sanctions came to be canonized into accepted early Roman history, though many scholars dismiss this as simply being a construct of later imperial values.¹⁷ Still, the pervasive nature of the punishment is remarkable, and indicates how intrinsically incorporated into Roman culture such memory sanctions were. So, too, does the relative frequency with which such punitive measures emerge, particularly after the death of those who are being condemned. Despite the success of measures such as razing houses or exiling criminals, condemnation of memory was predominantly a posthumous affair in Rome, as evidenced by the destruction or erasure of numerous imperial statues or stelas.

These imperial examples are extremely pervasive, though never fully effective, and also often indicative of the battle for memory that was being waged between one emperor and the next. As one emperor, particularly one from a new family, ascended to the throne, it often proved beneficial to cast him in a benevolent and capable light, which was often accomplished by denigrating him who had come before.¹⁸

Thus, the denunciation of several emperors as tyrants was either initiated or encouraged by their successors, representing a very real application and understanding of the contested memory, which so defined Rome (though certainly other factors helped to shape the images of these so-called tyrants). Among the most prominent examples of such dismissal as tyrants were those of emperors Nero and Domitian, whose names were erased from a number of monuments throughout the empire, though neither was entirely expunged from the record, due largely to the very same diligent and pervasive nature of Roman writing which had made such an expulsion from the record so appealing in the first place. These variously erased plaques perfectly embody the widely held notions of *damnatio memoriae*, and thus certainly are also indicative of condemnation of memory. (Erased inscriptions such as those in Figures 5 and 6 illustrate such condemnation).¹⁹ Interestingly, there are also numerous instances of lesser-known emperors who seem to have been more effectively condemned than were these two, as evidenced by emperors Galbo, Otho and Vitellius. (This is particularly evident in the Vitellius examples of Figures 7 and 8).²⁰

Fortunately, various accounts of these imperial denunciations survive today, including a notably vivid excerpt by Roman biographer Suetonius, who thus recalled the reactions to Domitian’s assassination:

The people received the news of his death with indifference, but the soldiers were greatly grieved and at once attempted to call him the Deified Domitian... The senators on the contrary were so overjoyed... they did not refrain from assailing the dead emperor with the most insulting and stinging kind of outcries... Finally they passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him should be obliterated.²¹

Such a clear incident of condemnation of memory is striking and was clearly carried out by the masses (as shown by Figure 9), even if some traces remain.²² The Domitian example is mirrored in many ways by the plight of Nero, whose senatorial designation of *hostis* (loosely, ‘an enemy of the state’) necessitated similar posthumous sanctions against his inscriptions and monuments.²³ The impact of these dramatic condemnations of memory could be seen in a multiplicity of ways, from the immediate mutilation of their statues

and stelas to even the manner in which they were referenced by biographers such as the aforementioned Suetonius. As noted by prominent Roman art historian Eric Varner, “like his unflattering portrayal of Caligula, Suetonius’ physical depiction of Nero was profoundly affected by Nero’s *damnatio* and the ensuing defamation of his memory.”²⁴ Thus, these tyrants serve as reminders of both the immediacy and far-reaching nature of any such memory sanctions, which manifested themselves in a wide variety of ways, in both material and textual culture.

Despite the profound significance that was attributed to such textual erasures, similar, if not greater, significance could be found in the veneration or destruction of Roman portraits, particularly imperial portraiture. For the Romans, these imperial portraits served as the foremost and most prevalent means of continued veneration, which explains their tendency to be mutilated or destroyed upon the subject’s posthumous fall from grace, however long after death that fall should occur. Such was the tremendous symbolic significance of these portraits that strict laws were enacted regarding the deference they be shown, and destruction or mutilation of these portraits came to substitute in many cases for physical corpse abuse, which also, though far more rarely occurred. As such, portrait mutilations (such as those exhibited in Figures 10 and 11 of Domitian) were particularly profound.²⁵

Yet not all instances of Roman condemnation were quite so destructive as to completely destroy the portrait, and in fact, most were not. Rather than completely destroying some of these imperial portraits of tyrants, there are several incidents of sculptors simply ‘recycling’ such portraits and crafting them into the likeness of someone else. (This is wonderfully evidenced by Figure 12, a reworked Caligula portrait).²⁶ This tendency to reuse previous material was one which was born largely out of a desire to preserve the costly marble of a statue while also refashioning it into a more ‘useful’ image (which was similarly exhibited in private portraits). So prevalent, in fact, were such ‘recycled figures,’ that more recycled portraits of Caligula have survived than those, which were not altered. Similarly is this the case for many of the tyrants who followed him, as unmolested or slightly altered instances of portraits of Nero (as in Figure 13) or Domitian are less evident than their recycled likenesses (as in Figures 14 and 15). Once again, these posthumous changes

are highly reflective of the changing societal perceptions upon which they were based, as the emperors in question would not be able to be thusly attacked had they not originally been viewed favorably, resulting in the proliferation of the portraits which were ultimately to be maimed. As such, these recycled portraits allow insight into three distinct points of societal reflection; the era in which the original emperors were revered (as with Nero in Figure 13), the time they fell out of favor, and the veneration of new emperors (Domitian, in the aforementioned example).²⁷

Yet it must be noted that condemnations of memory were not reserved for emperors, as is evidenced by the posthumous sanctions imposed upon the treasonous senator Piso, who is described as “cheating justice by taking his own life before the formal condemnation that awaited him.” Yet even this did not dissuade the senate from posthumously imposing six penalties upon him, including prohibiting public mourning by the women of his family and mandating all statues or portraits of him be taken down, though interestingly Tacitus only recounts two of the six penalties in his account. It is certainly unsurprising, given the importance which memory had in Roman culture, particularly for the ruling class, that such a punitive measure would appeal to so many in the battle for Rome’s collective memory. It is similarly unsurprising then, that such a punishment would be employed nearly exclusively upon said ruling class, be they emperors or would-be usurpers or enemies.²⁸

Condemnations of Memory in Florence

Having acquired what will have to pass for a suitable understanding of the varied Roman examples of condemnation of memory, it is now possible to look to the Florentines for a comparison. It is perhaps of little surprise that the Renaissance culture of Florence was similarly obsessed with the idea of memory, particularly given their recovery of classic sources that gave the era its name. Similarly unsurprising is the fact that the people who saw themselves as the heir to the Roman legacy would, at times, consciously model their actions after the Romans, as seems to have been the case during points of Florence’s similarly long and varied use of condemnation of memory. Intriguingly, Florence’s history of condemnation of memory seems to evolve over time, and be very specialized in terms of which punishments tended to result from which crimes.²⁹

Among the earliest examples of Florentine condemnations of memory are repeated instances of political enemies' houses being razed to the ground, had been exhibited in both Greece and Rome before them.³⁰ In the Florentine example, such violent acts were the results of bitter factionalized rifts which emerged in the city, first between the Papal Guelfs and the Imperial Ghibellines, who "levelled 103 Guelf palaces, 580 houses, and 85 defensive towers, among many other shops and castles outside the city."³¹ Just as was the case in Rome, such a demolition would be economically crippling to the Guelfs, though the persecution of an entire group is somewhat different than the typical Roman example. Despite this critical setback, the Guelfs would ultimately regain power in Florence in 1289, enacting posthumous retribution on many of their persecutors in the process.³² The Guelfs themselves similarly became factionalized between the papal supporting Black Guelfs and the White Guelfs, ultimately leading to the 1302 creation of Florence's most famous exile, Dante Alighieri.³³ (Figure 16 is a picture of Dante's sentence).³⁴ While it is unclear whether Dante's house was immediately razed during this initial expulsion (as the poet was offered numerous opportunities to return, provided he forfeit his honor), exile, such as that which Dante received, clearly falls into the category of condemnation of memory, as it was implemented for many of the same reasons, namely to curtail one's influence, and tended to be implemented concurrently with more traditionally accepted means of *damnatio memoriae*.³⁵ While Dante served his lifetime ban away from the city which he so loved, he was uniquely able to enact revenge on Boniface VIII, the pope he blamed for his misfortune, by immortalizing him as a wicked figure in hell at various points in his *Divine Comedy*, thereby enacting his own, and arguably more effective, condemnation of memory of the man who he felt had wronged him.³⁶

Despite the rather unique nature of Dante's literary retribution, the fate of exile was rather common in Florence, and throughout Renaissance Italy, with towns such as Pisa and Lucca in particular serving as harbors for such forced emigres.³⁷ The Florentine employment of the practice was particularly debilitating due to the intense emphasis placed on community and Florentine identity by its citizens.³⁸ The loss of this community and identity was strongly felt and bemoaned by exiles, particularly Dante in his most

enduring work.³⁹ The punishment, typically reserved for those who had somehow endeavored to tilt the political or social balance of the city, also served to diminish a family or faction's presence or power in the city. This is particularly true in the rare but debilitating instances wherein an entire family, or all the men in the family, were exiled, thereby eliminating the traditional familial footholds through which a city presence could be retained.⁴⁰ As such, the practice was one, which was extremely effective, particularly at eliminating a transgressor's political, economic and social standing in Florence, which was rarely recovered. So common were the exiles of this period that emblematic pictures began to emerge of their wandering class as, evidenced by Figure 17.⁴¹ Indeed, exiles seemed to become something of sympathetic figures for many of their Renaissance counterparts, as evidenced by Franciabigio's "The Triumph of Cicero," which provided a Roman example of the redemption so many Florentines craved (Figure 18).⁴²

Yet even despite the vicious nature of the factionary conflicts between Guelfs and Ghibellines (or even between Guelfs and other Guelfs), this pervasive early form of condemnation of memory was not the most vitriolic, as would be proved by the cruel fate of some of the supporters of the Duke of Athens in a singularly violent incident in 1343. This duke, Walter of Brienne, had been asked by leading Florentines to restore order in 1342, before being proclaimed *signore* for life by members of the Florentine lower class.⁴³ Soon thereafter, the duke boldly initiated a *damnatio memoriae* against symbols associated with the Florentine republic, which he replaced with images of his own house, inciting widespread public rage that would lead to his deposition in 1343, which he was fortunate to escape with his life.⁴⁴ Some of his supporters were considerably less fortunate in this regard, as tragically evidenced by Guglielmo d'Asciesi and his son Gabriello, who were murdered along with 'a number of other [ducal] assistants.' Both were offered by the duke in feeble attempts to placate the crowd, and each was brutally dismembered before some amongst the frenzied crowd "ate their flesh raw."⁴⁵ While this flirtation with cannibalism was the only documented account of such an extreme posthumous condemnation in Florence, both it and the corpse mutilation, which preceded it have roots in the Roman practice, where each was exhibited (although rarely) in the Empire.⁴⁶ In fact, some later

Florentine corpse mutilations, or *poena post mortem*, to use the technical term, so closely mirrored accounts of infamous Roman bodily mutilations that it has been suggested they may have been consciously reflecting their cultural predecessors.⁴⁷ It has also been suggested that violence such as this was mirrored by Florence's later tendency to execute rather than exile political dissidents, though certainly both punishments served as effective condemnations of memory.⁴⁸

One final note on this vicious and unprecedented (in Florence, at least) exhibit on the condemnation of the duke's memory in Florence is that a year after this event the Florentine government commissioned a defamatory painting, a *pittura infamante* (an example of which is shown in Figure 19) of the duke and his supporters.⁴⁹ Interestingly, even the *pittura infamante* in the Duke of Athens example was later changed, as the portrayal of the mobs' brutal actions were later painted out, suggesting Florentine shame about the events of that day, as well as showing the multiplicity of alterations that could be made to such a legacy-cementing painting.⁵⁰ While creating such a reminder of the hated duke may seem contrary to the goals of condemning memory, it was not atypical and suggests a possible emphasis on the revulsion or distortion of one's memory rather than a complete erasure.⁵¹ Another example of this conflict between continuing to proliferate and shame one's memory or the desire to expunge someone altogether comes in the fate of Niccolo Piccinino, whose Luccan War exploits were originally commemorated with a *pittura infamante* before being 'depainted', suggesting a shift in condemnatory practice over time.⁵²

While this gruesome incident and the similarly violent (though not cannibalistic) cases of treason-based *poena post mortem* which were to follow represented a fundamental shift in the condemnation of memory in Florence, they were not indicative of the final form which would emerge under the Medici dukes. This final form shifted the condemnation from a contentious and public ordeal to a far quieter, less perceptible condemnation, which tended to be launched in protection of princely honor rather than to suppress political rivals.⁵³ Such quiet offensives have been frequently suspected, and at times identified by art historians, who have been perplexed by the complete absence of portraiture for important figures, most frequently Medici daughters who were accused of bringing shame to the family.⁵⁴ These have typically manifest-

ed themselves either by repainting these women into other figures (much like the re-appropriated Roman statues) or by painting them out of portraits entirely. The recycling, or at times, renaming, of these paintings is highly reminiscent of the practice in Rome, even if it was being employed for vastly different purposes.⁵⁵ The quieter nature of this final wave of Florentine condemnation represents a fundamental shift in the tone of the practice, likely due to a fear of attracting attention to any perceived familial dishonor, though it is possible that a growing public distaste for such condemnation played a role as well.⁵⁶

Considerations of Italian Societies Outside of Florence

Due to the unique nature of Rome's splitting into various Italian polities upon its fall, rather than giving rise to one specific 'heir,' it is useful, where possible, to examine the Renaissance Florentine condemnation of memory in relation to those of its rival city-states. It seems Florence tended to be somewhat more subdued in its employment of memory sanctions than did the other city-states claiming to be heirs to (and continuations of) Rome. While the early practice of razing rivals' buildings is mirrored by the Venetians, the later, more violent condemnations were seen more commonly in other, non-republican portions of Italy. Finally, the decline of public condemnations in favor of the more quiet and complete variety under the Medici dukes did not see a similar decline in other regions, such as the kingdom of Naples. While most Renaissance Florentines would likely attribute these differences to the validity of the Florentine claim as cultural heirs of Rome, it is in fact far more illustrative of a crucial point that has already been expressed. By its very nature, the practice of condemnation of memory is highly various, both between disparate cultures and even during various points in a single culture's history, as is particularly evident in Florence.⁵⁷

Conclusions and Analysis

As such, any comparison of the practice between cultures must be conducted with extreme caution, even in linked examples such as that of Florence and Rome. Yet despite these difficulties, the evaluation of the divergent and similar means through which Florence and Rome enacted condemnation of memory is not without merit. Many of the Florentine practices are reflective of their predecessor, likely at times

even consciously so. Just as these echoes are reminiscent of Rome's earlier continuation and tweaks to the Greek precedent, so too do the Florentine echoes shift at times away from their predecessor. While key similarities emerge between the non-contemporary Italian cultural hubs, a plethora of factors, from geographic shifts to the sheer amount of time involved in such a study, as well as the inherent tendency of the practice to change over time to suit the highly various desires of those calling for a purge in memory, prevent there from being any clear and irrefutable sense of kindred or continuity between the founders of the Renaissance and the classical civilization they so sought to emulate (at least, not beyond those which have already been explained). While such a result may not be entirely satisfactory, it is eminently understandable, given the wide variety of factors involved.

Therein lies one of the most fundamental difficulties in the analysis of the condemnation of memory, or *damnatio memoriae*, as it has been colloquially named. The incredible breadth of the subject defies any quick or simple characterizations, requiring instead a level of alertness and insight into the confluence of ways in which it has been variously employed over time. A continued point of scholarly intrigue in the study of *damnatio memoriae* is whether or not the practice is somewhat paradoxical, that by so deliberately (and often, obviously) seeking someone's removal from collective memory that instead the opposite occurs, and people are reminded of the person whose absence has been so emphasized.⁵⁸ According to memory historian Charles Hedrick, there is a fundamental distinction which must be made between *damnatio memoriae* and *abolitio memoriae*, which would seek to completely eliminate a person's memory rather than distorting or damning it, as tends to be the case in such Roman affairs. For Hedrick, "the *damnatio memoriae* did not negate historical traces, but created gestures that served to *dishonor* the record of the person and so, in an oblique way, to confirm memory."⁵⁹ Certainly these and other seemingly paradoxical events would seem to support such a claim, such as the ancient Greek habit of razing homes, presumably to destroy the memory or authority of the owner, tended to be commemorated by inscribed stelae, which explained what had precipitated this violence and the aforementioned creation of *pittura infamante* to discredit the duke of Athens rather than seek to destroy his memory entirely.⁶⁰

Yet even here the answer is not quite so simple, as once again the vast scope and utility of condemnation of memory defies a simple blanket definition. While certainly the aforementioned examples could serve to remind people of the transgressors who had earned the condemnation of memory, often this was done deliberately; in order for these unfortunate victims to serve as grim examples of criminals who violated whichever laws they had, while simultaneously shaming their memory.⁶¹ Further, while these instances leave clear traces of evidence behind, many other examples have been far more carefully concealed, as is the case with the subtle later 'depaintings' that were characteristic of the late period of condemnation of memory in Florence. In instances such as this, complete abolition of memory was indeed sought, for a variety of reasons. Thus, condemnation of memory has been employed in order to both preserve and damn memories, and at times to obliterate them altogether. Which of these methods was employed was dependent entirely on the desires of those seeking the condemnation, and what their goals were for the long-term effects of such a subversive action.

Regardless of the individual factors, which have motivated people to condemn memory, it cannot be argued the indelible effect that such condemnations have had over time. As was noted as early as the fourth century by a Roman Imperial biographer:

It is uncommon and difficult to give an unbiased account of those men who have come to be characterized as tyrants because of the victory of others, and furthermore, scarcely anything about these men is accurately preserved in monuments or histories. For indeed, in the first place, great events which accrued to their honor are misrepresented by historians, and then other events are suppressed, and finally no great diligence is given to recounting their ancestry or life.⁶²

While this author is clearly speaking specifically to the plight of Roman tyrants, the same sentiments could be applied to all the victims of condemnations of memory, and it is for just such a reason that the study is important. In attempting to identify and correct as many historic falsehoods as we can, it is possible to finally shed light on those who have for so long been denounced,

and in so doing provide a rehabilitation of sorts for those condemned.

While there have been numerous (and variously successful) such attempts to rehabilitate the memories of those afflicted, many remain, at least to a degree, under the influence of the punitive measures which were taken against them so long ago. Caligula, Nero and Domitian continue to be viewed as tyrants, emperors such as Galbo, Otho and Vitellius remain lesser known (no doubt in part due to the pejorative measures taken against them), and an unknown host remains either undetected or completely forgotten due to condemnations of memory. This is the exact reason for which such a study of these condemning practices is critical, as without being properly informed of the highly various and at times difficult to detect means which have been employed to alter collective memory it would be all too easy to continue to propagate such condemnatory narratives. While it is incredibly unlikely that all, or even most, of these attempted subversions may be uncovered, it is imperative to at least be aware of such potential dangers in historic inquiry. In so doing, it may be possible to more clearly discern the hazy line between memory and history.

Appendix



Figure 1 (May, 114) Akkadian Statue From Ninevah.



Figure 2 (Ibid) Side view.

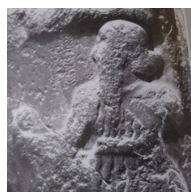


Figure 3 (May, 112) Victory Stela of Sargon, difficulty assessing intentional or natural damage.



Figure 4 (May, 113) Headless statue at Assur, same premise, though more likely deliberate.

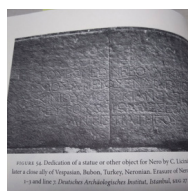


Figure 5 (Flower, 218) Repeated Erasure of Nero's Name.

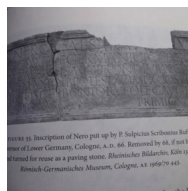


Figure 6 (Flower, 219) Nero Inscription as Paving Stone.

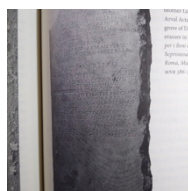


Figure 7 (Flower, 227) Erasure of Vitellius' Name (seen in blank box midway through writing).

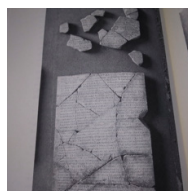


Figure 8 (Flower, 226) Destruction of Vitellius tablet

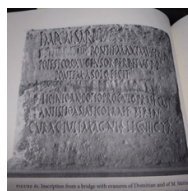


Figure 9 (Flower, 238) Inscription Erasure of Domitian (above) and M. Mettius Rufus (below)



Figure 10 (Varner, 163) Mutilated Body of Domitian Portrait (Front)



Figure 11 (Varner, 163) Mutilated Body of Domitian Portrait (Side)

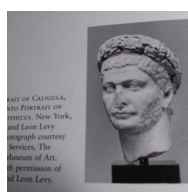


Figure 12 (Varner, 12) Caligula Portrait Reworked into Claudius Gothicus

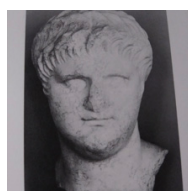


Figure 13 (Varner, 17) Rare unmolested Nero portrait



Figure 14 (Varner, 141) Nero Portrait Reworked into Domitian

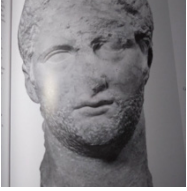


Figure 15 (Varner, 147) Nero Portrait Reworked into Gallienus

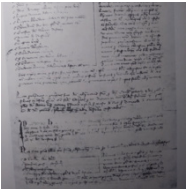


Figure 16 (Starn, Fig. 9) Picture of Dante's sentence



Figure 17 (Starn, Fig. 1) Figure of Exile. Inscription Reads "Driven into exile, I leave sweet home and hearth behind."



Figure 18 (Starn, Fig. 10) "Triumph of Cicero." Roman example of redemption from exile.



Figure 19 (Web) Pittura Infamante Example. Indicative of defamatory nature of such images.

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