DISTANT VIKINGS: A MANIFESTO

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ABSTRACT
This paper addresses some contemporary challenges in approaching the Viking Age, specifically the need for new interpretive models that we can bring to bear on its material culture, ideally drawn from cross-cultural, comparative analyses across time and place. A range of potential case studies is presented here from the island states of Oceania, across the broad socio-cultural networks of the Pacific. By looking at familiar Scandinavian sites and finds through a different lens, we can view them afresh and arrive at new understandings of this critical period of Northern history by comparison with these ‘distant Vikings’.

INTRODUCTION
The Viking Age of northern Europe (c. AD 750-1050) has captured the popular and academic imagination like few other periods of the prehistoric past, the subject of countless books, exhibitions, movies and television dramas. In Scandinavia, this has traditionally been seen as a time of transition from ‘tribes’ to ‘states’, giving rise to the Nordic nations that we still recognise today. The Vikings themselves tend to be perceived as an exciting blend of piratical raiders, explorers, globalising traders and craftsmen, with a dazzling material culture, vigorous art and enduringly evocative poetry. These are all truths with modification - sound up to a point, but very selectively so, and filtered through at least two centuries of romanticising stereotype. This distorting lens has affected our view of everything about the early medieval North.

The academic literature on the Vikings is a vast field, but there are, of course, reliable syntheses of the current state of the art (Brink & Price 2008 remains a standard work; see also Hedeager 2011 and Williams et al. 2014 among others). In recent years, these have been usefully nuanced by an emphasis on pluralism and a retreat from monolithic models of a single ‘Viking world’ (Eriksen et al. 2015), a move away from the traditional Viking ‘expansion’ to the subtler concept of a diaspora (Jesch 2015), and attempts to cross disciplinary borders within early medieval research (Cambridge & Hawkes 2017). The permeable geographical frontiers of the Scandinavians’ world have also been broadened, by looking at what was happening at a distance around them (Sindbæk & Trakadas 2014, a particularly important work). At a more personal level, the Viking Age of Scandinavia has become engendered as never before, with a focus on all members of society (Coleman & Løkka 2014 is the latest general publication in this area).

However, despite these solid foundations, the entire field of Viking studies remains an essentially introspective endeavour, locked into its chronological strictures and spatially bounded in the world with which the Scandinavians engaged. Many current studies also continue to play into paradigms fixed nearly a century ago: we still read of ‘eastern’ and ‘western’ Viking Ages that are largely relics of the Cold War and its barriers to scholarly interaction, and so on. For decades now there have been few major shifts in the basic interpretive framework and theoretical arenas within which the late Scandinavian Iron Age is studied. Whereas global, cross-cultural, multi-period and interdisciplinary approaches have proved very successful in the study of early prehistory across Europe, with widespread employment of anthropological and ethnoarchaeological analogies, such comparative methods are largely unknown in early medieval research.

In the light of this situation, this piece is offered as a position paper, a manifesto, setting out some possible strategies for revitalising the study of a critically important period of European history. With a view to future research projects now in the planning stages or beginning to get underway, the ultimate aims are to seek fundamentally new interpretational models for the social structuring, and developing consolidation, of power and its embedded ritual dimensions in late Iron Age Scandinavia - the very transformations that give rise to the concept of a Viking Age at all.

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of two such different ancient culture areas, so definitively unconnected by geography and ethnicity? The answers to these questions will be explored below, but it may come as a surprise to discover that this connection has been made before. In fact, within Oceanic research, there is an eighty-year heritage of precisely such comparisons with the maritime cultures of the Vikings, but strangely they have never been reciprocated within Scandinavian academia. As far as I am aware, this paper is thus the first to take up these connections, to treat them seriously and explore them in depth from a theoretically aware perspective originating in Europe. Despite the obvious distance and superficial differences, genuine contextualised comparisons with these ‘distant Vikings’ reveal deep structural connections to the early medieval North, with the potential for real breakthroughs in interpretation.

POLYNESIA AND THE ‘VIKINGS OF THE SUNRISE’

The Oceanic connection to Viking studies is worth brief expansion here. Remarkably, the first-ever synthesis of Polynesian archaeology was actually titled *Vikings of the Sunrise* (Buck 1938, reissued in 1959 as *Vikings of the Pacific*) (Fig. 1). Buck was then Director of the influential Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, an institution that remains still today one of the primary centres for Polynesian archaeology, and it must be emphasised that this comparison was a mainstream view. Although he published under his Western name, he was, in fact, part Māori and more often known as Te Rangi Hīroa; it is thus important to note that this ‘Viking’ perspective was first promoted by an indigenous Polynesian.

There was an obvious element of romanticism in this view, both in its cliché of the early medieval Scandinavians as proud and intrepid seafarers, and also in its politicised perspective on Polynesian culture (Buck’s racial views were of his time but sharply at odds with today’s perspectives). In a Viking context, this has antecedents in the National Romantic movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with their well-documented focus on the early medieval North and negative effects on scholarship. However, just as a vital component of any work on the Viking Age must be a confrontation with the legacies of stereotyping and political appropriation, as the image of the ‘Nordic’ past has been proactively altered over time, the same is true of Pacific studies, and
trail towards an alternative - what has been termed ‘Project New Oceania’ - was blazed by many Pacific scholars, but none more so than the Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau’ofa (1939-2009) (Fig. 2), based at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. In a series of influential essays from the early 1990s onwards - ‘Pasts to Remember’, ‘The Ocean in Us’ and many more (collected as We Are the Ocean, Hau’ofa 2008) - he charted the colonial ‘belittlement’ that had marginalised the indigenous cultures of the Pacific by placing them at a European periphery, rather than acknowledging that in their own context the islands were anything but ‘remote, isolated and dependant’ (Hau’ofa 2008, xivff). His concern was particularly that the outsiders had ‘shrunk … the world of Islanders’ not only by literally restricting travel across the ocean that connected them but also by redirecting those connections towards the West at the expense of traditional links between Pacific communities. Rather than a barrier, in Hau’ofa’s view, the ocean was instead a highway, across which people travelled unhindered by the artificial boundaries of European maps. In his famous phrase, Oceania was not made up of islands in a sea - an expanse of nothingness dotted with ‘tiny spaces’ - but was instead more properly to be understood from the perspective of the people who lived there as ‘our sea of islands’ (2008 [1993], 27-40): the sea as cultural medium.

Many of Hau’ofa’s descriptions could be applied to the Viking-age Scandinavians without modification, and as we shall see below, they link closely with innovations in Viking studies. The Vikings are still seen in some research traditions as part of a remote European periphery, relegated to a historical role as violent catalysts and rarely actors in their own right. Hau’ofa also extended his thinking beyond the strictly human world and into the realm of cosmology, myths and religion, laying great emphasis on the intricate mental universe of the Polynesians. Both the skaldic and saga traditions of Scandinavia, and the ancestral tales of Polynesia, also operate by incorporating continuously generated external stories into larger, ongoing narratives, and here too there are many, many parallels in the ‘new’ archaeology of the Viking mind.

Significantly, the Viking comparison survived postcolonial deconstruction and continued in Oceanic interpretations, and its viability can be judged from the fact that it was still being activated by indigenous scholars nearly fifty years later. In 1997 the artist and native historian Herb Kawainui Kāne published the short but influential popular work Ancient Hawaii, in many ways the culmination of his long contribution to the so-called Renaissance of Hawaiian traditional culture that had begun in the 1970s. Kāne’s standing as a po’okea or indigenous traditional ‘champion’ (no mere honorific) is relevant here because of his conclusion that the closest global cultural parallel to the pre-contact social and military structures of the Hawaiians were those of the Vikings (Kāne 1997, 9, and in many interviews).

Beyond the literal and metaphorical heritage of Viking-Pacific comparisons, it may also be noted that the current state of research in the region is running along a closely parallel track to that of Scandinavia. The island cultures of Oceania have been freighted with centuries of colonial occupation and influence, and the discipline of anthropology has always been problematically entangled with the Pacific experience as seen from the West. The this decolonising process has long been incorporated into contemporary research.
PEOPLE, PLACE AND THE COGNITIVE LANDSCAPES OF POWER IN LATE IRON AGE SCANDINAVIA

The debate on power, economy and state formation has a long pedigree in Viking studies, dating at least back to the 1980s (e.g. Hodges 1982; Hodges & Whitehouse 1983; Renfrew & Cherry 1986; Fabech & Ringtved 1991; Mortensen & Rasmussen 1991), and continuing to the present century (e.g. McCormick 2001; Wickham 2005; Sindbæk 2005; Hodges 2012; Skre 2012; 2017a; 2017b; Myhre 2015). This research laid clear emphasis on local or regional centres such as Tisso in Denmark and Borg on Lofoten, alongside the growing national centres at sites such as Jelling, Lejre, Borre, Avaldsnes, and Gamla Uppsala (Figs. 3 & 4). This work has been supported in turn with new research into early medieval towns and trade, not just at the major urban centres such as Ribe, Birka, Hedeby and Kaupang but also at the expanding networks of entrepôt and beach markets that formed the finer strands in the web of the late Iron Age economy, with access to new technologies and novelties (e.g. Sindbæk 2007).

However, while the dispersed, heterogeneous societies of the North have finally been acknowledged for the complex systems that they were, there is still little sense in which their study has been integrated into the wider debate on how such cultures operate. There is no doubt that much of the Scandinavian impact on the wider world was destabilising, expressed through the application of eco-
That these cognitive resonances extended far beyond ostensibly ‘religious’ places has long been known, and has been explored extensively in the work of Stefan Brink and others (Brink 1997; 2001; 2004; 2014; Nordeide & Brink 2013; Vikstrand 2001; Ljungkvist 2006). From the evidence of place names and other sources, it seems that the settled landscape was in some way divided into areas of special focus, ranging from the residences of the elites, the locations of military retinues, places under the control of various functionaries and the like, all alongside the more recognisable dwellings of the agrarian population. This, in turn, was overlaid, or perhaps meshed with, a landscape of theophoric names that appear to have dedicated parts of the landscape to particular divinities.

The picture is a compelling one, and clearly represents deep, underlying structures of social-political organisation together with their ideological and ritual underpinnings. However, this is also largely theoretical. A crucial question concerns what such landscapes actually looked like - how did they work? How did people live in and use them? The numerous -lund place-names are a case in point, clearly referring to sacred groves and often combined with a theophoric element linking them to a god, but we have little idea of what really went on there. When we do catch archaeological glimpses of such activity, as at the eponymous Lunda in Swedish Södermanland (Andersson et al. 2004; Andersson & Skyllberg 2008), for example, what we see is more puzzling than illuminat-
individual rites, are all there to be revealed (Andrén et al. 2001-2011; Lund 2009; Price 2010; 2012; 2014a). These and other new perspectives have gradually been effecting a substantial change in our understanding of the Viking Age, a process that I have charted in a series of works over the last decade or so (Price 2005; 2015a; 2015b). However, while there is general consensus as to the intricacy and importance of the interconnections of networked power, iconographic legitimation, state formation, ritual (including burial) and landscape as a palette for political memory, there is no real agenda for how to proceed, or for integrating the component case studies into a coherent, regionally sensitive and dynamic whole.

The potential for a more comparative archaeology of the Viking Age gained new impetus in 2016, with the publication of an important volume framing Comparative Perspectives on Past Colonisation, Maritime Interaction and Cultural Integration (Melheim et al. 2016). It includes several papers on the Vikings (Kristiansen 2016; Glørstad & Melheim 2016; cf. Sahlins 2004); among them my own comparative studies of pirate paradigms (Price 2016; cf. Price 2014b). The closing paper of the collection, by a

5. A reconstruction of the Viking-age magnate complex at Tissø on Sjælland, Denmark, with the enclosed ritual structure adjacent to the hall; note the fenced boundaries and the organisation of space on either side. Image, with permission: Arkikon, National Museum of Denmark & Naturpark Åmosen.

...ing: a wooded hillside - presumably the ‘grove’ of the place-name - was found to be strewn with objects but without any discernible patterning or associated structural remains. Cremated bones of humans and animals, fragments of beads, jewellery, and especially iron slag bore witness to frequent depositions at the site over extended periods of time in the later Iron Age, and for the first time provided an insight into the rituals that might actually have taken place at sites of this kind - though they bore no relationship to the abstract ‘worship’ and ‘offerings’ that had previously been assumed.

Furthermore, there are clearly hierarchies of function, appearance, construction and use between the sites, but little attempt has been made to understand them. Interestingly, relative terminologies and descriptions of cult sites, and their specific relationships to power are to be found in the medieval sources - but they have largely been either ignored completely or else dismissed due to the late date and uncertain reliability of the texts. The context and nature of fertility rituals, dedications before battle, seasonal observations, trading offerings, and the difference between community rituals and simpler but nonetheless important individual rites, are all there to be revealed (Andrén et al. 2001-2011; Lund 2009; Price 2010; 2012; 2014a).

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THEORISING ‘DISTANT VIKINGS’

In seeking to go further, it is clear that both theoretical and methodological frameworks need to be established, with a critical awareness of their potential benefits and the possible pitfalls to be avoided. A number of paradigms offer useful ways forward, some of them currently employed within Viking studies in a more confined context, and others situated in more general archaeological or social science discourse.

The notion of the ‘maritime cultural landscape’ was first articulated by Westerdahl in 1992, broadening what had previously been relegated to ‘marine archaeology’ into a larger, maritime arena of activity encompassing cognitive, ritual, symbolic and ideological aspects as well as the merely functional and socio-political. In archaeological terms, this meant that the maritime cultural landscape in practice extended far inland, to sites of transit, repair, supply, in fact to any aspect of the resulting ‘mariculture’. This has been taken up enthusiastically in studies of maritime societies, including that of the Vikings (e.g. Crumlin-Pedersen 1991; Hines et al. 2004; Bentley et al. 2007; Anderson et al. 2010; Klein et al. 2014). The central role of seafaring and navigation is key to such comparisons, in the sense that the world is seen to revolve around the ship, rather than the ship moving through the world. It has been argued that Hau’ofa’s ‘sea of islands’ and its attendant world-views are actually entirely current for the Viking Age, especially in the West, where ocean sailing cannot purely be coast-bound (DeAngelo 2016). The same scholar has even gone so far as to equate the descriptions of travel and maritime reckoning contained in the ninth-century account of the Norwegian Ohthere (Bately & Englert 2007) with the etak stellar navigation system of the western Pacific (Lewis 1972).

By extension, both the Viking world and the extended horizons of Oceania share a common motor in the role played by migration, movement and maritime cultural encounter over large distances - indeed both regions owe their particular historical trajectories to the consequences of exactly these factors. This naturally adds another dimension to the potential for comparative analysis, especially as the theoretical aspects of these kinds of interaction have been studied in far greater depth in the Pacific. By way of example, one can take the work of the pioneering Australian historian Greg Dining, in his exploration of what he termed the ‘in-between spaces’, the liminal zones where the first encounters played out. For Dining in his Oceanic context, this was developed most fully in the concept of the ‘beach’, meant both figuratively and at times literally (e.g. 1980; 1998; 2004). It need hardly be said that this is also a powerful symbol, and analytical tool, for the Viking raids and their shipborne landfalls. In the same context, we might also consider the notion of ‘archipelagic’ socio-political phenomena as suggested by Linden (2016), which while coined for the Bell Beaker culture of Neolithic Europe again finds a useful parallel in the leap-frogging insular colonialism of the Viking Age, and of course, the successive phases of Pacific settlement.

In particular, the Pacific offers an opportunity to more deeply explore migration as a political safety valve in a strongly competitive culture - arguably the key ingredient of Viking-age societies and the centuries of cultural development that lay behind them. In this context, studies of island cultures are particularly important from a theoretical perspective (e.g. Rainbird 2007; Kirch & Rallu 2007; Kirch 2009), and the Lapita expansion is especially relevant (e.g. Sand & Bedford 2010 with refs.). As Matthew Spriggs put it in 2016:

[...] the Lapita expansion represents a rather fluid but highly competitive situation. Exploration was purposeful and systematic, based on effective navigational knowledge and technology. The goals could have been explicitly to find [locations] offering easy subsistence, exchangeable products [...] and a basis for would-be leaders to establish themselves independently. But mounting such expeditions would have been expensive in terms of labour, the skills to build the canoes, the navigational skills to reach and return from new islands, and provisioning of new colonies. [...] this provides a classic constriction point or bottleneck allowing for some concentration of political power. (Spriggs 2016b, 486)

He could easily be writing of the Vikings, in every respect, prompting the interesting question as to whether there was ever what we could call a Scandinavian ‘super-community’ across the diaspora, to use a phrase sometimes employed for the Lapita.

Similarly, the entangled nature of cultural encounters has been a major focus of postcolonial Pacific research
(e.g. Thomas 1991; 1997; 2010; V. Smith 2010; Matsuda 2012). Very similar patterns of exchange, colonialism and violence played out across the Pacific as in the Viking world, and it is clear that they were not unidirectional. In Oceania as in the Eurasian North, interactions between indigenous peoples and outsiders created new identities that can be traced not only in texts but also through their mediation in material culture, images and symbolic behaviour. It would be interesting to illuminate the mechanisms by which this occurred, in the context of the new socio-political constructs that characterised the Viking Age in Scandinavia.

In directly comparative archaeological studies, a major body of work has been developed on the political economy in prehistory. In particular the work of Timothy Earle and his collaborators has engaged with key themes of relevance for the pursuit of ‘distant Vikings’: the notion of chiefdoms as regional polities of widely varying scale; the dynamics of their creation and subsistence; and the different trajectories by which they arguably developed into states, encompassing everything from a high degree of centralisation to fragmented and unstable competitive entities (Earle 1991; 1997; 2002; Earle & Kristiansen 2010; Earle & Spriggs 2015; Carneiro et al. 2017). In all this work there is an emphasis on sources of social power located in economics, ideology and force, employed as tools of chiefly strategies. Earle includes several Scandinavian case studies deriving from the Bronze Age, building on decades of research on the prehistory of Europe at this time (e.g. Kristiansen 1998; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005, and many other papers). Other scholars have applied the same methods to different research areas, such as chiefdoms in the Philippines (e.g. Junker 2000). In the last five years or so, this has developed into something of a call to action for comparative analysis, gaining initial impetus from an edited collection (M. Smith 2012) that sets out clear guidelines for the paths forward.

Such comparisons also provide an opportunity to consider the Viking Age in the light of other postulated prehistoric world systems, most notably that sometimes proposed for the Bronze Age (e.g. Sherratt 1993; Ratnagar 2001; Wilkinson et al. 2011; Vandkilde 2016). Here we see ‘macroregional phases of conjuncture’ when ‘the social climate appears “extra hot”, foreign impulses are actively and creatively incorporated and identities rapidly and profoundly change’ (Vandkilde 2007, 16-17, on Bronze Age ‘globalisation’). This matches the formative processes that would result in the Viking Age, when ‘during a relatively short period of time a new ritual universe and a new cosmology were established’ (Hedeager 2000, 51). These transformations are central to the notion of a comparative Viking archaeology, and beg the natural questions as to whether the Viking Age really was a transcultural phenomenon, and if so, what were its carriers? Was there ever a ‘design system’ behind their expansion, however indirect?

Matthew Spriggs again gets to the point:

One value of a comparative archaeology of such macroregional phases of conjuncture is that it will allow us to examine what happens when one or more parameters are different. How does this alter the trajectory of change? Do technologies of travel matter? Does it matter if movement is by land or river, as opposed to over open sea or by coasting? Does the type of subsistence economy make a difference? When does the degree of centralization of political power affect outcomes? These are all questions we can examine if we lift our archaeological gaze from our narrow regional and temporal specialisms and [...] scan wide and previously uncharted horizons. (2016b, 496)

Each of the above approaches holds great potential for Viking studies, but must also be treated with critical caution. Needless to say, there is no way that we can simply take interpretative models applied to other times and places, and project them wholesale onto the Viking Age. Instead, these ideas can be used to construct new cables of arguments, rigorously tested and theoretically debated in a Scandinavian context.

In particular, it is clear that the political economy concept, with its focus on modes of production, is heavily reliant on Marxist perspectives. The essence of the current debate has been usefully summarised by Furholt (2017), emphasising this field as a subject of urgent and topical concern. Here, the notion of a top-down narrative, driven by essentialising concepts of historical materialism and unidirectional scales of political organisation, is contrasted with what is seen as a bottom-up, socially and culturally embedded movement. However, just as with the overt Marxism of many studies of the political economy, the ‘new’ comparative archaeology of complex societies tends to consciously set itself apart from postmodern approaches and advocates a ‘scientific’ and systemic perspective (in M. Smith’s afterword to his 2012 collection,
In the same passages, the prehistoric divide from the European Middle Ages is also similarly emphasised, with an appeal to look to earlier data rather than to the medieval nation states as historians have done. While all this work is both productive and inspirational, in the context of a cross-cultural, comparative and diachronic archaeology of the Viking Age, its adopted theoretical positions pose problems.

While many of these paradigms have ultimately evolved from deeply processual perspectives on the past, in the context of the Viking Age (not least against the background of my own work mentioned above) they can be viably combined with a greater emphasis on cognition and the unique world-views of pre-Christian Scandinavia, starkly contrasting with those of the surrounding cultures. This interplay of ritual and power is also a characteristic of the Oceanic island polities, and while the era of simplistic socio-political classification has passed, these cultures still reward close study with their detailed resolution of data.

It is of course vital to avoid superficiality, of the kind that privileges fortuitous similarities and rejects anomalies in an endless chain of coincidence without a meaningful conclusion (there has been considerable debate on this topic in Oceanic archaeology; Spriggs 2008a; 2008b; Ravn 2011). In fact, difference and similarity form the very textures of complexity and can be fruitfully explored as such. If one avoids the easy binaries of many postcolonial studies (because even the notion of hybridity assumes that there were originally ‘pure’ cultures that did not, in fact, exist), then the layering of culture histories can be revealed and compared. Oceanic comparisons, with different resolutions in their source material, can thus usefully be employed to illuminate the interculturalism that seems to have been a hallmark of the Viking Age and its transformations. As the Scandinavian diaspora slowly came into being, it is the ‘in-betweenness’ of its changing identities that needs to be brought out, rather than arbitrary notions of the Hiberno-Norse, Anglo-Scandinavians and so on.

It is also often overlooked that many of the most commonly employed anthropological frameworks for understanding developing power structures (chiefdoms, ‘big men’ and so on) actually derive from Pacific case studies. However, it is clearly no longer defensible to mine Oceania for analogies, without more deeply exploring the archaeological evidence and cultural sequences of the areas in question (cf. Spriggs 2016b, 485). In comparing Scandinavia with well-documented areas such as Oceania, we therefore have a rare opportunity to gauge the current limitations of our interpretive frameworks. Equally, it is important to note that the archaeological record of the Scandinavian Iron Age is in many ways far more complete than that of the Pacific, and the chance to test these ideas in practice works through mutual feedback across the comparisons. The big exception is the organic record, so rich in Polynesia and so very limited in Scandinavia. An Oceanic focus makes it possible to release the fixation on metal luxuries, and to discover new media for the manifestation of power in the Viking Age.

The success of such an endeavour will require an interdisciplinary team of cross-cultural specialists, familiarising themselves with the relevant fields of comparative study. Up to a point, part of this work can only be undertaken on the ground, not only through archive study but also through experiential explorations of the monumental, socio-political and sacred landscapes of Scandinavia and the Pacific - in a sense, a diachronic Area Studies perspective but applied to the past and practised in the field with theoretical sensitivity. In the context of Pacific archaeologies in particular, indigenous Islander perspectives should not only be sought out but in fact must be central in understanding the world-views and socio-political structures that the monuments embody.

By way of an initial inroad and example, we can consider how some of these comparative investigations might be pursued in a brief case study, located on the ‘Big Island’ of Hawai‘i within specific chronological and social parameters. In the course of two visits by the author and Dr John Ljungkvist in 2013 and 2017, some 28 sacred sites, settlements and landscapes of cultural meaning were studied across the length and breadth of the island, supported by a review of museum collections both there and on O‘ahu (a list of the sites and monuments can be found below in the Appendix). This short overview can serve as a test of potential and the viability for a deeper Oceanic study, not least in Hawaii.

EXPLORING HAWAI‘I IN THE TIME OF KAMEHAMEHA THE GREAT

The prehistory of the Hawaiian Islands has generated the best corpus of academic published work in the Pacific, from deep-time surveys (e.g. Bayman & Dye 2013) to...
nuanced social histories (e.g. Kirch 2012). This, in turn, is supplemented by useful overviews of the islands’ archaeology (e.g. Kirch 1985; 1996), down to detailed explorations of individual valley communities (e.g. Kirch 2014).

We can concentrate here on sites associated with the rise and reign of King Kamehameha I, who unified the Hawaiian islands in the decades following European contact with Cook’s arrival in 1778 (Kamakau 1992, 92-200; Desha 2000). Here as elsewhere, it is necessary to go beyond a traditional focus on historical events and the personal biographies of individuals, and instead to address generalising models of comparison that can be used to trace longer-term trajectories.

The growth of the Hawaiian state has been the subject of extensive research as a kind of test case for the agency of elites, which in part prompted our selection of Hawai‘i for a pilot study of potential in the ‘Distant Vikings’ concept. One of the leading archaeologists of Hawaiian culture is Patrick Vinton Kirch, whose many publications since the early 1980s have shaped this field of research, especially the role of divine kingship in the development of Hawai‘i’s political structures as a so-called archaic state (e.g. Kirch 2010). The image, status and nature of the king are central to any reading of Hawaiian political culture. Another relevant recent work (Graeber & Sahlins 2017) uses an anthropological dialogue to articulate case studies in hierarchical polities with cosmic underpinnings, the essence of divine kingship and its analogues in societies that do not readily distinguish between secular and spiritual power. By what mechanism can rulers come to be viewed as gods (or their delegates), as ancestors, heroes and other meta-human beings? In both Polynesian and Viking examples, even relatively egalitarian cultures can prove to encode quite explicit structures of control in their religious ideologies. Hospitality and the duties of the host are common to all these environments, but in circumstances where certain individuals of power can also possess attributes of alienation, setting them apart as eternal guests from somewhere else. Óðinn’s role as the god of outcasts, strangers and wanderers - as well as kings and elites - is relevant here, for example.

On Hawai‘i, there have been assumptions of strong links between population size and degrees of political centralisation. The emergence of the state there has also been explored by Robert Hommon (2013, ch. 14), drawing on his earlier work over many years and a wide range of comparative studies across other Polynesian cultures. Hommon’s model is innovative and significantly moves the field forwards, focussing on the interactions of ecological conditions, periodic food shortages and military aspirations across the islands’ chiefdoms. This work also includes a superb summary of political lineages on the different islands, covering all extant knowledge of the earliest kings in a manner directly comparable with the Norse and Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies.

In a comparative Viking context, a useful set of questions might concern the ways in which Kamehameha articulated his ambitions in material form, how this played out in relation to existing structures both on Hawai‘i and on the neighbouring islands (which he sought to conquer), and on the ideological and ritual overtones of the process. In essence, this concerns the domestic manipulation of external cultural contacts, filtered through local agendas, spiritual beliefs and world-views (interestingly, historians of religion have already begun to look at this - e.g. Schjødt 2017). By extension, one can consider the respective roles of the individual and the collective in these processes. Kamehameha’s early adoption of European firearms, marine tactics and military discipline is a case in point, deliberately filtered through an indigenous worldview that subverted and altered them to his own socio-political ends (though with limits, cf. D’Arcy 2003).

Material culture, both in portable form and as encoded in the built environment, was critical to this work - and especially in relation to the divine sanction of power (cf. Hooper 2006). The basic Hawaiian settlement form was the open village, comprised of thatched and woven huts and other structures with foundations of lava and basalt that appear visually very similar to the stone house foundations familiar from Viking sites. These settlements also included a very broad range of features including fish ponds, weirs and traps, boat houses (another point of resonance with Scandinavia) and extensive agricultural systems. Around the settlements, the Hawaiian landscape held two main sacred monument types, consisting of temples (heiau) and shrines, together with sacred stones (pōhaku). The heiau came in several forms, dedicated to specific gods and with contingent rituals. The most important types included the heiau ho‘ōla for healing ceremonies, the heiau ko’a for fishing rituals, and most prominent of all, the luakini heiau or war temples with human sacrifices (Figs. 6 & 7). A further special class of place, the pu‘uhonua, served as bounded sanctuaries where kapu-breakers (see below) were inviolate and could per-
Fig. 6. The main stone enclosure of the luakini heiau (sacrificial war temple) at Mo’okini, in Kohala, the largest of its kind on Hawai’i. Overlooking the north coast, this was the site of thousands of human offerings and a major centre of ritualised political power. Photo: N. Price.

Fig. 7. The massive interior of the Mo’okini heiau, a complete world constructed in stone. Ritual enclosures and screened areas can be seen inside. Although its kapu has been lifted, like the other heiau of the islands the site is an active sacred place today. Photo: N. Price.
Fig. 8. Part of the Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau sanctuary complex in Kona, Hawai‘i, showing the reconstructed heiau with its images and figures, and the massive stone enclosure of the ritual precinct. The site continues for hundreds of metres, comprising sacred pools, fishponds, temples, settlements and boat houses. Photo: N. Price.

Fig. 9. What has been lost: cultic images at the Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau enclosure, reconstructed after sketches drawn by early European visitors and on the basis of archaeological finds elsewhere in the islands. Still under kapu, the site offers a vivid glimpse of a sacred space in operation. Photo: N. Price.
supernatural beings but actually inscribed them into the landscape. Access to and control of these places was (and still is) manifested in the concept of *kapu*, one of the roots from which the word ‘taboo’ derives. A form of mental barrier that constricted the movement, presence and actions of different social classes, *kapu* was signalled through the use of fences, walls and monumental wooden figures. However, the true power of *kapu* lay in the extreme force of its cognitive agency, perpetuated - and occasionally renegotiated - through oral culture. In differing ways, all Hawaiian places of power were subject to *kapu*, its maintenance and even the re-assimilation of those who had been socially ostracised through its transgression. Through the vector of monumentality, the land itself was transformed into a ritual map of Hawaii’s socio-political geography. The possibility of distinguishing such a fine grain of variety in the Viking-age landscape is one of the great potential gains of such comparisons.

On Hawai‘i, the relationship between island kings and the volcano goddess Pelehonuamea was of central importance in the process of state formation. Eruptions, and the casualties thereof, were politically manipulated to appear as expressions of her divine favour, and even taken as catalysts for war (one may make an interesting parallel with the growing field of study around the so-called ‘Dust Veil’ of AD 536 and its role in the eventual rise of the Viking militarised polities (Price & Gräslund 2016; see also J. Moreland, this volume)).

By comparison, this opens up a largely unexplored horizon in Viking studies: the possibility that the monumental landscapes of Scandinavia were not *manifestations* of power and ideology, but created as proactive acts in their negotiation. In the great cemeteries such as Valsgärde and Gamla Uppsala in Sweden, and on the larger magnate farms, it may be that continuity of purpose was a form of material genealogy in its own right. In Hawaii as a whole, the successive turns of fortune between the warring kings were deliberately marked in monuments - cycles of abandonment and memorialisation inscribed in the landscape, emphasising the need to examine each site individually, as the result of individual (or collective, focused) action. Kamehameha’s construction of Pu‘ukoholā is a case in point, founded to both commemorate and precipitate the destruction of his rival, Keōua (Figs. 11 & 12). The landscapes of Hawai‘i, in particular, the changes made by Kamehameha during his rise to power, also bring out a concept that is not of-

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**Fig. 10.** Bounded space, restricted access: looking between the uprights of the outer enclosure at Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau, into an area accessible only to ritual specialists. Photo: N. Price.
Fig. 11. Kamehameha’s great complex of sacrificial war temples in Kohala, Hawai‘i, constructed on ancient foundations in fulfillment of a prophecy of victory. The Pu‘ukoholā heiau crests the skyline, seen from the earlier Mailekini temple; both sites probably still contain the bones of war offerings and are strictly regulated today by kapu. Photo: N. Price.

Fig. 12. The third component of the Pu‘ukoholā complex in Kohala. In the foreground is the Kikiako‘i stone against which the king rested while overseeing sacrifices, offered to the shark gods at the underwater Hale o Kapuni heiau platform immediately offshore. Photo: N. Price.
ten applied to Scandinavia, but which could profitably be developed: the notion of militarised zones, expressed not in a conventional fashion through fortifications and defences, but as nexuses of power and challenge articulated through monuments.

As Kamehameha extended his rule across the islands over many years of conquest (the reason why his home island of Hawai‘i ultimately gave its name to the whole archipelago), these structures of ritualised power expressed in monumental landscapes followed with him. This too has been archaeologically explored, as in the landmark collaboration between Kirch and Sahlins (1992) in their study of the Anahulu valley on O‘ahu, which has been a great inspiration for our own work.

The resulting intersections of demographic factors, (in)equality, predation, surplus, and competition have much to contribute to the early medieval world. It also became clear in the case study that the sheer scale and regionality of the islands, each with their own traditions, offers useful parallels to the fragmented nature of the Scandinavian polities at the start of the Viking Age. Given the complexity of the Hawaiian state, with its systems of class and taxation, it may be that we have seriously under-estimated the sophistication of early Scandinavian social structures. Similarly, Kamehameha’s adoption of aspects of Christianity while retaining the essence of his traditional beliefs, extended throughout society, also has many parallels with the situation in, for example, tenth-century Denmark - outmoded beliefs still nonetheless in the service of and benefitting the same apex families. The Hawaiian system of royal control also involved a shift from a notion of collective descent to land ownership based upon links to actual, or assumed, individual ancestors, often articulated through material monuments in the landscape (cf. Price 2010 for Scandinavia).

**A COMPARATIVE PROGRAMME IN OUTLINE**

In pursuing these distant Vikings, one could obviously begin with the general background of comparative data from throughout Scandinavia. However, in terms of specific studies it would clearly be relevant to explore the monumental landscapes, sacred sites and power centres of Gamla Uppsala, Valsgärde, Vendel and Ultuna in Sweden (to take just one focused case study area, comparable to that of Hawai‘i), with extensions to other sites noted above such as Lejre, Avaldsnes and, across the North Sea, Sutton Hoo (Carver 2017).

Oceania, in general, is well served both by synthetic histories (e.g. Fischer 2013) and archaeological overviews (as we have seen, e.g. Lilley 2005; Kirch 2017), but within the region there are several study areas of special interest. The Hawaiian Islands have already been mentioned, with their superb corpus of published data. Hawaii also merits special study due to the controversies surrounding its interpretation as a case of primary state formation, developing in literal isolation from the rest of the world: is such a thing possible, and if so, what can it tell us? Beyond Hawai‘i itself, the other islands in the archipelago also offer considerable potential for comparative study. On O‘ahu, the sites of interest include fortifications at Nu‘uanu Pali, Ulupō heiau, Pu‘uomahuka luakini heiau, Kāneʻaki luakini heiau and the Māhāka Valley settlements, Ke-āwā heiau ho‘ōla, and the Kūkaniloko royal birthing grounds and pōhaku. Maui is also rich in monuments that would be helpful to compare in detail with the Scandinavian scene, including the massive Pi‘ilanihale heiau (the largest in the islands), Halekē‘ī-Pihana luakini heiau, the Keoneʻoʻio archaeological district and La Pérouse Bay. As we have seen, the confluence of ritual, power and landscape is especially tangible in the archaeology of the islands.

Turning to the Central and South Pacific, the islands around Tahiti are home to some of the most spectacular temple complexes in Polynesia - in particular the great marae of Taputapuatea on Ra‘iatea, a World Heritage site and one of the best preserved in the Pacific, as well as in its surrounding sacred complexes (Wallin 1993 and later papers). The neighbouring islands in the Society group also have remains of relevance. Several islands to the west are also viable for targeted research in a comparative Viking context, including Tonga, Fiji and especially Samoa (Martinsson-Wallin 2016; Martinsson-Wallin & Thomas 2014). Here too there are major sacred complexes and landscapes with subtle differences to those of the Society Islands, and the Lapita heartland of Vanuatu offers still wider potential.

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is a special case, due not only to its well-known isolation and environmental vulnerability but also of course for its unique monumental architecture and the famous stone moai statues on their ahu platforms. As on Hawaii, here one would have the chance to investigate costly signalling and landscape
To end on a personal note, I have never been primarily an artefact-focused archaeologist, though of course I am experienced in the analysis of material culture and especially that of ancient Scandinavia. Instead, my work has long been characterised by an attempt at what social theorists such as Boyd have termed deep generalisation, the ability to seek out the connections that build the complexity into complex systems and to grasp their interplay. In addition, I am simply curious about the past: I want to know how its societies and communities worked, and why - a task that I believe requires creativity to complete. Again, social theorists have articulated these kinds of approaches as ‘sensemaking’, the ability to generate insights into decisions and strategies - something which applies as equally to the distant past as to the present.

If we are to make sense of the late Iron Age Scandinavians, in all their gendered, multicultural and pluralistic variety over such great spans of time and space, then we would do well to turn our faces to the ocean of Epeli Hau’ofa and to Te Rangi Hīroa’s ‘Vikings of the Sunrise’ (with all their complications). In the process, we might find that those distant Vikings were close by after all.

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APPENDIX 1. SUMMARY OF SITES AND MONUMENTS IN THE PRELIMINARY CASE STUDY OF HAWAI‘I

The following sites were reviewed by the author and John Ljungkvist in July 2017. Sites marked (*) were also visited in 2013, reconsidered in 2017 for comparison.

Luakini heiau (sacrificial war temples)
- Mo‘okini, in Kohala: a two-phase site dating to the earliest settlement of Hawai‘i and situated at the north point of the island, refurbished in the eleventh century AD as the largest war temple and the site of tens of thousands of human sacrifices; a monumental complex of key importance in a comparative project
- Pu‘ukoholā, Mailekini and Hale o Kapuni, a tripartite site of heiau in Kohala where Kamehameha established the most important war temples of his reign, and the place where his ritual dominion of the islands was confirmed; Hale o Kapuni is an underwater temple platform dedicated to the shark gods, with attendant features such as the Kikiako‘i stone from where the sacrifices were directed (*)
- Hikiau at Kealakekua Bay, Kona, where Cook was declared a god in 1779, and a critical site in the cult of Lono; also an associated sacred pool for the training of priests (*)
- Ahu‘ena in Kailua-Kona, Kamehameha’s family war temple at his primary residence, and the seat of the war god (*)

Heiau (temples)
- Pu‘uoina and Maka‘ōpio at each end of the Kaloko-Honokōhau complex in Kona, associated with the fishing installations and settlement (*)
- Kāne‘ele‘ele at Punalu‘u in Ka‘u, a fishing shrine connected to the beaches
- Kalalea at Ka Lae in Ka‘u, a critical fishing shrine for the island’s spiritual health and the fertility of the sea

Sacred sites, objects and landscapes
- Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau sanctuaries, royal enclosure and heiau in Kona, the most extensive and important sacred site in the kapu system, associated with numerous rulers and chiefs (*)
- The ‘Kamehameha Rock’ in Kohala, one of several pōhaku stones involved the ceremonies confirming the king’s sacred right to power
- The Pali Kapu o Keōua royal burial cliffs at Kealakekua Bay, Kona (*)
- Waiānuenue Falls, Hilo, locus of legends around the god Māui and the possible burial site of Kamehameha’s father
- Pōhaku Naha and Pinao in Hilo, sacred stones linked to royal power
- Ka Wa’a o Māui, a riverine sacred stone in Hilo linked to legends around the god Māui
- Kilauea caldera and the Halema‘uma‘u crater in Ka‘ū, home of the volcano goddess Pelehonuamea and a critical site for all royal ideologies in Hawai‘i (*)
- Kauluowahinekapu in Ka‘ū, ‘ledge of the sacred women’ and steam vent sacrificial site to the volcano (*)
- Ka Lae in Ka‘ū, the island’s south point and the well of souls on their journey to the next world

Settlement sites and resource exploitation
- Pelekané village, serving the Pu‘ukoholā heiau in Kohala (*)
- Lapakahī ahupa‘a settlement district and Koai‘e village in Kohala, the most extensive domestic architectural remains in the islands (*)
- ‘A‘i‘ōpio fish traps, boathouses and house ruins, Kaloko-Honokōhau in Kona, a major system of resource control, and the possible burial site of Kamehameha (*)
- Ka‘awaloa village site at Kealakekua Bay, Kona, seat of numerous chiefs and the location of Cook’s death in 1779 (*)
- Punalu‘u black sand fishponds in Ka‘ū, and important resource area
- Canoe mooring stones and fishing resources at Ka Lae in Ka‘u, site of the first landfall in Hawai‘i

In addition, on both the 2013 and 2017 visits, we examined the excellent royal artefactual collections of the Hulihe‘e palace in Kailua-Kona, including the personal effects of Kamehameha, and the extensive collections of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu - undoubtedly the finest assemblage of Hawaiian material anywhere, and with comparative holdings extending across Oceania.


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