

= Viking metal =

Viking metal is a style of heavy metal music with origins in black metal and Nordic folk music , characterized by a lyrical and thematic focus on Norse mythology , Norse paganism , and the Viking Age . Viking metal is quite diverse as a musical style , to the point where some scholars consider it more of a term than a genre , but it is typically manifested as black metal with influences from Nordic folk music . Some common traits include a slow @-@ paced and heavy riffing style , anthemic choruses , use of both clean and harsh vocals , a frequent reliance on folk instrumentation , and often the use of keyboards for atmospheric effect . Viking metal developed in the 1980s through the mid @-@ 1990s as a rejection of Satanism and the occult , instead embracing the Vikings and paganism as the leaders of opposition to Christianity . It is similar , in lyrics , sound , and thematic imagery , to pagan metal , but pagan metal has a broader mythological focus and utilizes folk instrumentation more extensively . Most Viking metal bands originate from the Nordic countries , and nearly all bands claim that their members descend , directly or indirectly , from Vikings . Many scholars view Viking metal and the related black , pagan , and folk metal genres as part of broader neopaganist and neo @-@ völkisch movements as well as part of a global movement of renewed interest in , and celebration of , local and regional ethnicities .

Though artists such as Led Zeppelin , Yngwie Malmsteen , Heavy Load , and Manowar have previously dealt with Viking themes , Bathory , from Sweden , is generally credited with pioneering the style with its albums Blood Fire Death (1988) and Hammerheart (1990) , which launched a renewed interest in the Viking Age among heavy metal musicians . Enslaved , from Norway , followed up on this burgeoning Viking trend with Hordanes Land (1993) and Vikingligr Veldi (1994) . Burzum , Emperor , Einherjer , and Helheim , among others , helped further develop the genre in the early through mid @-@ 1990s . Through the work of artists such as the German project Falkenbach , Viking metal soon spread from the Nordic countries to other nations with Viking history or an even broader Germanic heritage , and has since influenced musicians across the globe . The death metal bands Unleashed and Amon Amarth , which emerged during the early 1990s , also adopted Viking themes , broadening the style from its primarily black metal origin .

= = Characteristics = =

= = = Sonic traits = = =

AllMusic identifies Viking metal as a nickname for the 1990s Norwegian black metal scene , which the site describes as " noisy , chaotic , and often augmented by sorrowful keyboard melodies . " Journalist Johannes Jonsson described the style as " slow black metal with influences from Nordic folk music . " Lecturer Ross Hagen identifies Viking metal as a subgenre of black metal , albeit one that abandoned black metal 's Satanic imagery . Cosmo Lee of Stylus , described Viking metal as running the gamut from " folk to black to death metal " . Deena Weinstein mentions that Viking metal bands typically rely extensively on keyboards , which are often played at a " swift , galloping pace . " Also according to Weinstein , Viking metal bands often add " local cultural flourishes " such as traditional instruments and ethnic melodies . Aaron Patrick Mulvany considers it a category of folk metal , but with considerably less usage of " non @-@ standard instruments " . Steven P. Ashby and John Schofield also note the similarity to folk metal , but likewise also note that Viking metal uses folk instruments less commonly than folk metal . For vocals , Viking metal incorporates both singing and the typical black metal death growls .

Scholar Imke von Helden acknowledges that " There are difficulties in defining [Viking metal] , because the definition ? apart from certain elements like anthem @-@ like choruses ? is not based entirely on musical features and overlaps with other metal genres . The music derives from the also Scandinavian @-@ coined genres of black and death metal . " Some bands , such as Unleashed and Amon Amarth , play death metal , but incorporate Viking themes and thus are labeled under the genre . Scholar Heather O 'Donoghue also notes how Viking metal is defined more by its thematic

material than musical qualities . She writes that " Viking metal draws on Norse themes not in a strictly musical sense ? the work of groups such as Bathory is not by any means a mock @-@ up of medieval music . Rather , it is in the band names , album titles , artwork of album covers and , especially , in the song lyrics that Viking themes are so evident . " Irina @-@ Maria Manea in " Primal Roots : Ancestry and Race in Extreme Music Discourses " considers Viking metal , and the closely related style pagan metal , more of a term or " etiquette " than a musical style . She elaborates that " Viking and Pagan Metal are more likely lyrical subgenres distinguished primarily by their content and less by sound characteristics , which is why categorizations may come out as controversial . " Ashby and Schofield also consider Viking metal more of a cross @-@ genre term than a descriptor of a certain sound . They write that " The term ' Viking metal ' is one of many that falls within a complex web of genres and subgenres , the precise form of which is constantly shifting , as trends and fads emerge and fade . " They note further on that from its origins in black metal , Viking metal " has diversified (at least in aural terms) , and now covers a range of styles that run the gamut between black metal and what one might justifiably term classic rock . "

In the essay " Scandinavian Heavy Metal as an Intertextual Play with Norse Mythology " , scholar Anna G. Piotrowska analyzed the music of the Viking metal bands Bathory and Týr . Starting with the album Blood Fire Death , one of the first definitive Viking metal releases , the band Bathory incorporated a diverse range of sonic elements . While still retaining the noise and chaos of previous recordings , the band took a more sorrowful and melodic approach , working in ballads based on Germanic and Norse folklore. shanty @-@ like melodies and folk music elements such as bourdon sounds , Jew 's harps , and fifes were introduced . Bathory also added in natural found sounds , such as ocean waves , thunder , and wild animal sounds , in a style similar to that of musique concrète . Instruments were sometimes used to create onomatopoeic effects such as drum sounds imitating thunder or a sledgehammer . Bathory 's song structure typically of this era featured multi @-@ sectional formal structures , and usually followed a pattern of three instrumental sections - introduction , bridge , and finale - and two vocal sections - stanza and refrain .

The Faroese band Týr , though consisting of a typical rock band lineup with electric instruments , makes extensive use of traditional Faroese music in its song composition . Faroese ballads typically involve unusual time signatures , most commonly 74 or the alternative rhythms 128 or 98 . In an attempt to replicate these uneven signatures , Týr often places the accent on the weak beat of the bar . In songs based on old Faroese ballads , Týr will usually play in harmonic or melodic minor scale or else in mixolydian mode .

= = = Thematic and lyrical focus = = =

Thematically , Viking metal draws extensively on elements of black metal , but uses pagan and Norse lyrics and imagery instead of those of an anti @-@ Christian or Satanic nature . Viking metal combines the symbolism common in black and death metal , especially the exultation of violence and virility through weapons and battlefields , with a common interest in ancestral roots , especially a pre @-@ Christian heritage , expressed through Viking mythology and imagery of northern landscapes . However , some bands such as Sorhin keep the Satanic elements of black metal but sonically are influenced from more recent folk tunes . Visual media such as album art , band photos , website design , and merchandise all highlight the dark and violent outlook of Viking metal lyrics and themes . Authors Simon Trafford and Aleks Pluskowski note that the album sleeves on works by Viking metal artists are frequently decorated with Viking Age archeological finds : Thor 's hammers are especially common , but other artifacts such as Oseberg posts and even the Sutton Hoo helmet have appeared . Some bands incorporate far more ancient , pre @-@ medieval imagery , such as the Finnish band Moonsorrow 's use of prehistoric rock carvings and megaliths . Other Finnish bands , such as Ensiferum , Turisas , and Korpiklaani , focus on Sami traditions and shamanism , further stretching the definition of Viking metal .

While many bands rely on Viking @-@ related visuals or other ancestral images to aid their musical character , others do not . For instance , the members of Týr , from the Faroe Islands , do not wear Viking costumes on stage , and thus , apart from its lyrical content and heavily folk @-@ influenced

music , the band is otherwise virtually indistinguishable from other heavy metal bands .

In his thesis paper " ' Reawakening Pride Once Lost ' : Indigeneity and European Folk Metal " , Aaron Patrick Mulvany says that while much of the thematic history of heavy metal uses parodies of the occult in an incongruous fashion , Viking metal bands use " a very specific mythology which controls not only textual choices , but also the imagery used on albums and frequently the kind of music composed . " Deena Weinstein comments that despite a whole pantheon of Norse gods to choose from , Viking metal bands typically focus on Odin , the god of war , and Thor , " whose hammer , ' the hammer of the gods ' , defended the Pagans against the Christians . " Alcohol , particularly mead , is also a common lyrical focus. von Helden identifies two main trajectories that Viking metal bands take toward their subject matter . The first trajectory is one of romanticism and escapist ideas , where bands cultivate an image of strength and barbarism and quote passages from various poems and sagas . The second trajectory emphasizes historical accuracy , typically relying on Norse mythology as the sole focus of lyricism and identity . Trafford and Pluskowski find that many Viking metal bands identify first with local roots ? for instance , Moonsorrow with Finland or Einherjer with Norway ? and perhaps a northern European identity second .

While many songs are composed in English , Viking metal bands often write lyrics in various other languages , usually of the North Germanic family : Norwegian , Old Norse , Swedish , Danish and , less commonly , Icelandic , Faroese , and the non @-@ Germanic Finnish language . Other European languages , such as German , Old High German , Latin , Dutch , or Sami languages are sometimes used . In 2013 , The Wall Street Journal published an article which examined how heavy metal fans around the world learn languages such as Norwegian or Finnish in order to understand the lyrics of their favorite bands . It reported that " A band of young metal heads ? spanning Romania to Singapore ? have taken up a Northern European language in order to better appreciate or even mimic their favorite metal bands . "

= = = = Paganism and opposition to Christianity = = = =

According to Trafford and Pluskowski , the imagery in Viking metal draws not only from material culture left from Viking Age , but also " encompasses the broad semiotic system favored by many black and death metal bands , not least of all the exultation of violence and hyper @-@ masculinity expressed through weapons and battlefields . " However , in Viking metal this semiotic system is melded with an interest in ancestral roots , specifically a pre @-@ Christian heritage , " expressed visually through Viking mythology and the aesthetics of northern landscapes . " Trafford and Pluskowski further explain that extreme and obsessive loathing of Christianity had long remained the norm of black and death metal bands , but in the 1990s Bathory and many other bands began turning away from Satanism as the primary opposition to Christianity , instead placing their faith in the Vikings and Odin . Many artists claim affiliation to Ásatrú , treating Christianity as a foreign influence that was forcibly imposed , and therefore as a wrong to be righted . Trafford and Pluskowski state that some members of the scene were motivated to act , citing the church burnings by black metal musician Varg Vikernes as an example . They admit that while most bands or individuals did not go that far , an undercurrent of racism , nationalism , and anti @-@ Semitism continues to permeate parts of the black metal scene . On the other hand , Trafford and Pluskowski note that many Viking metal artists , including bands such as Enslaved and Einherjer , simply express interest in Vikings and Norse mythology and entirely reject the Satanic inclination of black metal , writing almost exclusively on Norse themes , without any racist or anti @-@ Semitic undertones . Hoad considers Viking metal both pre @-@ Christian and post @-@ apocalyptic ? it looks to a pre @-@ Christian past and imagines a post @-@ Christian future . While opposition to Christianity drove the formation of Viking metal , some bands that play , or have played , Viking metal , such as Slechtvalk , Drottnar , and Holy Blood , subscribe to Christian beliefs .

Writing for Thrash Hits.com , David Keevill argues that the explicitly anti @-@ Christian attitude of most Viking metal artists is an anachronistic view of the Viking Age . Keevill explains that " while bands have used [Viking mythology] as the basis for their musical existence ... the historical reality of the Viking Age (late 8th century to the 11th century) is a chequered backdrop of a multitude of

belief systems and disparate political mechanisms . " As an historical example , he cites the raid on Lindisfarne in 793 , an event considered the beginning of the Viking Age and celebrated by the band Enslaved in its song " 793 (Slaget Om Lindisfarne) " . He contends that this attack was merely an opportunistic raid , not a concerted attack on the growing power of Christianity . Likewise , he clarifies that the terms " heathen " and " pagan " historically did not necessarily mean " anti @-@ Christian , " but that the persons in question did not fit under a denominational label . Furthermore , Norse religion and Christianity intermingled and influenced each other throughout the era , and Christianity was often imposed through monarchical regimes such as Harald Klak and Harald Bluetooth or conversion movements such as those initiated by Ansgar . Keevill concludes his article by stating , " It 's not that bands like Amon Amarth shouldn 't flout their Norse heritage , the bellicose nature of the ancestors or the kind of practices that would have taken place in far flung tribal societies , it 's just that ruling out the presence of an overbearing Christian influence on the Viking Age is incredibly close @-@ minded . "

= = = Relationship to pagan metal = = =

Weinstein considers Viking metal the progenitor of the pagan metal genre , citing Bathory 's Hammerheart as the first pagan metal recording . She writes how " it is fitting that pagan metal began with Viking metal , given that the Vikings were Europe 's last Pagans , converted slowly and with reluctance to Christianity . " von Helden also notes similarities between Viking metal and pagan metal , but also highlights some key differences . " [Pagan metal] deals mainly with Pagan religions and lies in a broader context where not only Old Norse mythology is dealt with , but also Celtic myths and history , fairy tales and other elements of folklore . Traditional instruments like the violin or flute are used more often in pagan than in Viking metal music . " Irina @-@ Maria Manea explains that " the idea of incorporating and then revering exclusively national or regional myths , stories , and tales first gained ground in the work of artists such as Adorned Brood , Falkenbach , Black Messiah , Enslaved or Einherjer , but the musical phenomenon is far from being merely European , but a global trend artistically expressing its affinity for an ethnically colored spectrum . " Ashby and Schofield likewise consider Viking , pagan , and folk metal part of an " interesting trend within cultural heritage towards not only a wider acceptance as heritage of the ordinary and the everyday alongside the nationally significant and the iconic , but a willingness and impetus to explore heritage 's outer reaches , the marginal areas in which definitions of cultural heritage and heritage communities start to fragment and become increasingly contested . "

= = = Masculinity = = =

Catherine Hoad in " ' Hold the Heathen Hammer High ' : Viking Metal from the Local to the Global " points out that the Viking image in popular understanding is that of hyper @-@ masculinity , and thus Viking metal is inherently patriarchal . Hoad does acknowledge that some bands include female members , such as Kivimetsän Druidi , Storm , and Irminsul , and that female fans comprise a substantial part of Viking metal 's audience . However , she stresses that women " do remain largely subordinate within the Viking metal scene , " and are rarely present in the production of Viking metal music . She considers Viking metal a form of " nation @-@ building , " and while women may participate in the nation building process , it is still controlled by men . Irina @-@ Manea likewise notes that within Viking metal , " themes in the spectrum of war and masculinity are almost a rule . "

Gry Mørk explains that in songs such as Burzum 's " Musstad " link manliness with Norse tradition and gender ideals , and that the Viking male thus represents traditional masculinity . Most of the Norse references in black metal are heroic , masculine , and militaristic in theme - Mjölner , Odin , the iron cross , and berserkers and einherjar . Conversely , Jesus , though a male figure , is seen in songs such as " Jesu død " by Burzum as cold , dark , and life @-@ extinguishing . Christianity is viewed as stigmatizing and suppressing the natural " dark " sides of men , and so , from the perspective of black metal , true masculinity is achieved through exploring the dark sides of man 's nature - warfare and killing . Mørk highlights the thesis of cultural historian Nina Witoszecz that within

Norway , images of nature are often symbolic with cultural affiliation to Norway . Witoszecz traces the roots of this ideal to Tacitus 's German @-@ heathen identity narrative which romanticized the Germanic people as superior through their connection with nature , and whose brutality and belligerence opposed the apathetic and decadent Roman elite . Mørk concludes that Norse imagery therefore is used within black metal to build a view of natural and authentic masculinity to counter the oppressive force of the Judeo @-@ Christian tradition .

= = Influence from sea shanties and popular media = = =

Aaron Patrick Mulvany stated that " Viking metal ... is much less concerned with traditional aural materials like instruments and melodies . Instead , Viking bands limit themselves mainly to the use of Norse mythology as a textual source , which they often augment with stylized shanty @-@ like melodies that are meant to evoke apropos images " . Mulvany elaborated to say that

Although the majority of Viking metal bands ... limit themselves primarily to textual borrowings , many others can be additionally classified as musically evocative of the Vikings . Unlike folk metal bands drawing from other mythologies , bands using Norse mythology as text have no musical @-@ historical examples to augment their illusion . This has led to the creation of an ahistorical ' Viking music ' that is used in tandem with the metal style to conjure up appropriate images .

According to Mulvany , Viking metal draws heavily on sea shanties and media images of pirates and Vikings , an influence evident in two basic forms of the genre . The first type " is largely stepwise in motion with many repeated note figures " , is frequently in minor key , and is primarily sung in unison . The second type uses an " arching ascent @-@ descent structure " and is less dependent on lyrics , making it " more evocative of rolling waves on the open sea " . Mulvany explains that the heavy sea shanty influence results from media stereotyping in which certain aural associations are equated with " images of sailors , sea @-@ borne marauders , and Vikings " , and that " though rooted in traditional sea shanties , these aural images have been perpetuated through the media of pirate movies and television shows , and they have been extended ? by association ? to Vikings " . Ashby and Schofield agree with Mulvany that musically , Viking metal bands generally are unconnected with a real Viking past , but instead connote a broader sense of the maritime . They stipulate that " Presumably this conflation of maritime contexts is a knowing one , but one nonetheless felt to be somehow evocative . "

Keith Fay of the folk metal band Cruachan has also noted the influence of sea shanties on Viking metal , though rather disparagingly . In an interview with Terrorizer , he stated that " There is no real defined ' Viking music ' , so all these Nordic bands use ' sea shanty ' type tunes to match their music . A lot of these bands , especially the bigger ones , are called folk metal but they don 't really understand what real folk music is ; though I know this is not true for all of them . "

= = History = =

= = Precursors : 1970s to mid @-@ 1980s = = =

The use of Viking themes and imagery in hard rock and heavy metal music predates the advent of Viking metal . For instance , the lyrics to Led Zeppelin 's " Immigrant Song " (1970) and " No Quarter " (1973) feature allusions to Viking voyages , violence , and exploration . The Swedish band Heavy Load often wrote Viking @-@ themed songs , such as the 1978 song " Son of the Northern Light " , and Eduardo Rivadavia of AllMusic writes that the 1983 song " Stronger than Evil " establishes a case for Heavy Load as the first Viking metal group . Swedish neoclassical metal guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen sometimes featured themes of hyper @-@ masculinity , heroic warriors , and Vikings ; for example , on his 1985 album *Marching Out* . The German band Grave Digger and American band Manowar , both of which formed in 1980 , drew upon Norse myth as envisioned in Richard Wagner 's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* . Manowar in particular adopted Viking imagery much more heavily than other bands . Trafford and Pluskowski write that Manowar , " champions of the

furry loincloth " , " were widely ridiculed even within heavy metal , but won a sizeable ? and fanatical ? following . " However , Trafford and Pluskowski stipulate that while Manowar adopted Viking imagery , it did not embrace it . They explain that " in any case , the Manowar version of the Vikings owes as much to Conan the Barbarian as it does to history , saga , or Edda : What matters to Manowar is untamed masculinity , and the Vikings are for them merely the archetypal barbarian males . " Unlike the later Viking metal bands , Manowar did not bother with the historicity of popular Viking image , and did not in any way identify with the Vikings , religiously or racially .

= = = Viking metal : Late @-@ 1980s to present = = =

= = = Bathory = = =

The roots of Viking metal proper are generally cited to be later in the Scandinavian metal scene , particularly the death and black metal scenes of the late 1980s . Inspired by the Viking themes used by Manowar , some bands identified with the Vikings with far more totality than Manowar . At the forefront of this movement stood the Swedish band Bathory . Its first album Bathory was released in 1984 and is " regarded by many as the first black metal record " . The band 's fourth album Blood Fire Death , released in 1988 , includes two early examples of Viking metal ? the songs " A Fine Day to Die " and " Blood Fire Death " . Eduardo Rivadavia of AllMusic describes this as " possibly the first true example " of Viking metal . The cover to Blood Fire Death even features Asgårdsreien , a painting by Norwegian artist Peter Nicolai Arbo which depicts Norse god Odin on a Wild Hunt . Bathory followed up on this Viking theme in 1990 with the release of Hammerheart , a concept album fully devoted to Vikings . Like its predecessor , this album also features a Viking @-@ themed painting , this time The Funeral of a Viking by Sir Frank Dicksee . Following up this release were 1991 's Twilight of the Gods , titled after Wagner 's opera of the same name , and Blood on Ice , recorded in 1988 ? 1989 but released in 1996 . Rivadavia cites Hammerheart as a landmark album that " formally introduced " to the metal world the " archetypal Viking metal album " . Through this album , writes Rivadavia , Quorthon , the band 's founder , " became a standard @-@ bearer for an entire generation of disenfranchised Norse @-@ descended teens " , and the album 's " well @-@ thought @-@ out words and overall scope and vision engendered a deep @-@ seated anti @-@ Christian sentiment within the region 's extreme metal scene " that culminated in the violence and hate crimes committed by members of the Norwegian black metal community in the early 1990s . Quorthon later explained , in the liner notes to Blood on Ice , that his shift to Viking themes was an intentional move away from Satanism :

I came to the personal conclusion that this whole Satanic bit was a fake : a hoax created by another hoax ? the Christian church , the very institution they were attempting to attack using Satanic lyrics in the first place . Since I am an avid fan of history , the natural step would be to find something in history that could replace a thing like the dark side of life . And what could be more simple and natural than to pick up on the Viking era ? Being Swedish and all , having a personal relation to , and linked by blood to , that era at the same time as it was an internationally infamous moment in history , I sensed that here I might just have something . Especially well suited was it since it was an era that reached its peak just before the Christian circus came around northern Europe and Sweden in the tenth century , establishing itself as the dictatorial way of life and death . And so that Satan and hell type of soup was changed for proud and strong nordsmen , shiny blades of broadswords , dragon ships and party- ' til @-@ you @-@ puke type of living up there in the great halls

The characteristics of Bathory 's Viking metal music featured Wagnerian " lengthy epics , ostentatious arrangements , chorused vocals , and ambient keyboards " . Mulvany notes that the 90s releases by Bathory marked the beginnings of a Viking @-@ themed trend initially slow , even confusing , in formation . For example , in 1994 , the Austrian black metal band Abigor , on its album Nachthymnen , incorporated themes of Vikings and Germanic paganism , but stated about the first track on the album that " this vision should not be seen as a part of the upcoming Viking trend . " According to Mulvany , " The Viking trend presaged by Abigor was actually taking place around

them , and it remains more ' true ' to how black metal is often defined than the folk influenced metal that followed . Its folk elements are predominantly textual or musically evocative rather than musically @-@ historically accurate . "

== == Enslaved == ==

Enslaved , from Norway , formed in 1991 , which Mulvany cites as " probably the first truly ' Viking ' metal band " . In the German edition of Metal Hammer , Robert Müller cites the 1993 EP by the band , Hordanes Land , as the first true Viking metal release . Its debut album , Vikingligr Veldi , arrived in 1994 , with " many melodies being borrowed from ethnic Scandinavian folk music to lend additional authenticity to the vicious , fast @-@ paced black metal " . Inspired by Bathory , Enslaved set out to " create Viking metal devoted to retelling Norway 's legends and traditions of old ? not attacking Christianity by means of its own creation : Satan . " Its second album Frost , also released in 1994 , served as " an important release for the extreme music subgenre of Viking metal " . Eld , released in 1997 , was described in an AllMusic review as featuring all the hallmarks of Enslaved : " Viking themes , razor sharp guitars , blastbeat drums , and an ear for orchestration resulting in complex structures , bountiful harmonies and time changes . " The reviewer also noted that " Among the countless bands who were inspired by Bathory 's seminal Viking metal , arguably none were as true to its gospel as Norway 's Enslaved , whose utmost commitment even extended to donning vintage Norse armor and outfits on @-@ stage " .

== == Burzum == ==

Ideologically , the one @-@ man project Burzum by Varg Vikernes helped inspire the Viking metal scene through Vikernes ' strong racist , nationalistic , and anti @-@ Judeo @-@ Christian beliefs and longing to return to paganism . Trafford and Pluskowski opine that Vikernes 's beliefs , which had culminated in the burning of several churches , including the twelfth @-@ century Fantoft Stave Church in Bergen , revealed the confused nature of ideas about Vikings in the Norwegian black metal scene . They note that " His tastes seem originally not for the unmediated medieval itself as for J. R. R. Tolkien : he adopted the name ' Count Grishnackh , ' based upon an orc in The Lord of the Rings , and named his band Burzum after a Tolkenian word for ' darkness . ' " They postulate that only in retrospect did Vikernes " cloak his actions in an Oðinic garb and claim the motivation of an attempt to restore Norse paganism for his church burning . " While in prison , Vikernes released the book Vargsmål , which Trafford and Pluskowski call an echoing of the Hávamál , though with " an eye on Mein Kampf . " They further opine that " proving both that it is not just the early medieval past to which he looks for inspiration , and that he will use any historical weapon at his disposal to offend Norwegian liberal opinion , it is notable that he has recently added the name Quisling to his own , and is even attempting to claim some sort of kinship to the wartime collaborator . " Vikernes himself has connected the church burnings to an idea of resurgent Viking paganism . He stated that the first burning , that of Fantoft Church on June 6 , 1992 , was thought by many to be related to Satanism , since the burning occurred on the sixth day of the week , on day six of the sixth month and was thus a reference to the number of the beast . But Vikernes contends that the date June 6 was really picked because the first recorded Viking raid , that upon Lindesfarne , occurred , according to Vikernes , on June 6 , 793 .

== == Other pioneers == ==

Besides Bathory , Enslaved , and Burzum , several other artists are credited as pioneers of the style . The original bassist for Emperor , Håvard Ellefsen , also known as Mortiis , was according to AllMusic , " an indispensable force in the genesis of Norway 's epic Viking metal sound . " Despite Ellefsen 's short tenure in the band , it was his musical interests that catalyzed the band to mix chaotic black metal with synthesizer melodies based on Norwegian folk music .

Helheim was another major pioneer in the early scene . The webzine Laut.de states that Helheim

emerged on the scene before other bands such as Einherjer and Thyrfing , when even Enslaved was in its infancy . According to the site , not only was Helheim one of the first bands to meld black metal with Viking themed @-@ music , but one of the first to include stylistically unconventional instruments such as horns and violins . Robert Müller considers the song " Galder " , the final track from Helheim 's 1995 debut album Jormundgand , the death blow to Viking metal emerging as a concrete genre , since the ambitious track even went beyond compatibility with heavy metal .

Other highly influential Viking metal bands are Borknagar , Darkwoods My Betrothed , Einherjer , Ensiferum , Moonsorrow , Thyrfing , and Windir . Trafford and Pluskowski call Einherjer , Moonsorrow , Thyrfing , and Windir , the " most influential " Viking metal bands and write that , apart from Enslaved , the album covers of Einherjer give that band the most " Viking " feel of all , due to the prevalence of Viking artifacts . They elaborate that Einherjer 's artwork spans the full chronology of Viking art : 8th and 9th century Oseberg to 11th and 12th century Urnes . Writing for AllMusic , Craig Harris stated that Darkwoods My Betrothed " combine songs about ancestors and Norse gods with electrifying , to power @-@ driven , arrangements , creating a new style of music , that they call , ' Viking metal . ' "

= = = Amon Amarth and Unleashed = = =

Amon Amarth and Unleashed sonically play death metal but incorporate Viking lyrical themes and thus are considered to have broadened the scope of Viking metal . Florian Heesch in " Metal for Nordic Men : Amon Amarth 's Representations of Vikings " writes that " While receptions of Norse myths where mostly important in black metal , especially the Norwegian black metal of the early 1990s , and the younger pagan metal , bands as the Swedish Unleashed made the topic fit into death metal before Amon Amarth appeared . " Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind in Lords of Chaos consider Unleashed as setting a precedent for many of the coming black metal bands , as , similar to Bathory 's rejection of common black metal imagery , the band rejected the common death metal themes of gore and , like Bathory , instead focused on pre @-@ Christian Swedish heathenism , particularly the Viking Age and old Norse religion . Both Amon Amarth and Unleashed , however , resist the Viking metal label . Johan Hegg of Amon Amarth stated that " It 's weird to label a band after the lyrical content because , in that case , Iron Maiden is a Viking metal band , Black Sabbath is a Viking metal band , Led Zeppelin is a Viking metal band . " Johnny Hedlund of Unleashed maintains that the band has always played and always will play death metal , commenting that " The Viking lyrics you will find on about three to five songs on every Unleashed album from 1991 and on . I don 't think that fact alone re @-@ defines our style in some way . "

= = = Spread outside the Nordic countries = = =

According to Trafford and Pluskowski , practically all Viking metal bands claim Viking ancestry , and after its inception in Scandinavia , Viking metal spread to areas historically settled by Vikings , including England , Russia , and Normandy . Viking metal bands have even formed in the United States and Canada , with their members claiming Viking descent either directly from Scandinavia or through England . Some members of the Viking metal scene believe that it is impossible for someone to be a Viking unless they themselves are of northern European descent . However , the scene also spread to other parts of Northern Europe in areas united by a common Germanic heritage , such as Austria , Germany , and the Netherlands . Trafford and Pluskowski cite the Austrian band Valhalla , which makes extensive use of Viking iconography , including horned helmets . Another Austrian example is Amestigon , which on the cover of its promotional album Remembering Ancient Origins depicts a wood carved scene of Sigurd killing Regin , a panel held in Hylestad stave church .

One of the first non @-@ Nordic Viking metal bands was the German project Falkenbach . Formed in 1989 and primarily the work of front @-@ man Vratyas Vakyas , Falkenbach performs a mixture of black metal and folk music , with lyrics drawing from Western and Northern European mythologies , religions , and folk traditions . The Dutch bands Heidevolk , Slechtvalk , and Fenris have also been

labeled as Viking metal , though Heidevolk 's former vocalist Joris Boghtdrincker claims that Heidevolk has never tried to " play the Viking card or the Pan @-@ Germanic card , " instead choosing to write about local Dutch history .

Hoad finds the issue of national and racial identity central to Viking metal . For instance , she writes that when Trafford and Pluskowski claim that Manowar could not claim religious or racial identity with the Vikings when the band had a lead singer with the " ' less than wholly Scandinavian name of Joey di Maio ' , [Trafford and Pluskowski] are approaching a more complex and racially @-@ charged issue than their offhandedness would suggest . " Hoad states that Viking imagery may be readily appropriated , the definition of a " true " Viking is quite rigid , a rigidity with which non @-@ Nordic , and especially non @-@ White , musicians must contend with . As an example , she cites the Brazilian band Viking Throne , which claims legitimacy through European ancestry and historical references to explorations of South America by Nordic countries . The front @-@ man , Count Nidhogg , extols that " Some people understand perfectly that it doesn 't matter where you live , what 's really important is your heritage and ancestry . Even living in a South American country as Brazil we all have European blood . " Hoad argues that Viking Throne illustrates the cultural importance of claiming Viking ancestry , a culture that operates on largely geographic lines . In contrast to Viking Throne , she cites the band Slechtvalk , which is well known for its brand of Christian Viking metal , but yet goes largely without comment from the scene regarding its authenticity . Hoad speculates that the European ethnicity of the band is enough to compensate for its otherwise counter @-@ intuitive music .

= = = = Influence on pagan metal = = = =

Weinstein comments that " Viking metal has travelled further than any Viking ship . Self @-@ defined pagan metal bands who describe their music as Viking metal can be found in the United States , Brazil and Uruguay , among other places . " She cites the sensationalism of the early Norwegian black metal scene for some of this popularity , but considers the genre 's greatest influence to be " the inspiration it has given to others to explore their own roots . " This impact was particularly strong in the Baltic states , where Viking metal influenced the development of a distinct pagan metal scene known as " Baltic war metal . " Weinstein considers the Lithuanian band Obtest the prime example of this style . Formed as a black metal band in 1993 with Lithuanian lyrics , the band 's 1997 album T?kstantmetis birthed the war metal scene . Weinstein highlights a comment by scholar Michael F. Strmiska that despite the claim that Scandinavia was home to the last pagans in Europe , " A point of particular pride is the knowledge that Lithuania was the last country in all of Europe to officially abandon its native Pagan traditions and convert to Christianity in 1387 . " Another Baltic band influenced by Viking metal is the Latvian project Skyforger , which composes its lyrics in the Latvian language . A final example by Weinstein of the influence of Viking metal on pagan metal is the National Socialist black metal band Graveland from Poland , which on its second album , Thousand Swords , released in 1995 , featured a variety of folk styles mixed in with the band 's black metal sound , and introduced lyrics about Polish history and Slavic gods . Trafford and Pluskowski note as a contrast to Viking metal the emergence of Celtic metal in Ireland , France , and even Germany , a style which they state sounds essentially like Viking metal , apart from the addition of harps , but with lyrics celebrating Celtic gods and myths .