



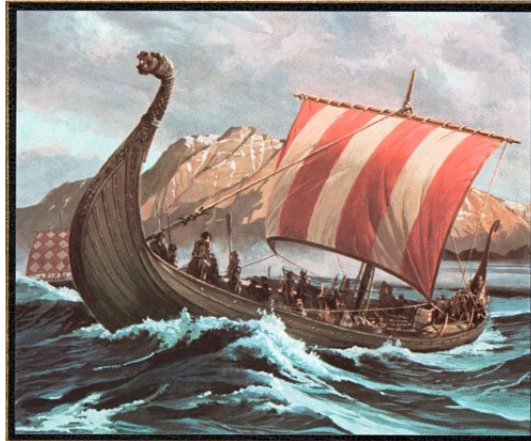
The settlement

The settlement of Iceland by the Vikings started in 874 and was largely over by 930 AD. But there are some literary evidence that monks called Papar from a Hiberno-Scottish mission may have settled in Iceland before the arrival of the Norse. The monks are believed to have left Iceland soon after the heathen Vikings arrived. Iceland was the last European country to be settled.



The script Landnámabók claims that the first Norseman to rest his feet on Icelandic soil was a viking by the name of Naddoddr. Naddoddr stayed for only a short period of time, but gave the country a name: Snæland (Land of Snow). He was followed by a Swedish sailor, Garðar Svavarsson, who was the first to stay over winter. At some time around 860 AD, a storm pushed his ship far to the north until he reached the eastern coast of Iceland. He named the island Garðarshólmur. The first Scandinavian who deliberately sailed to Garðarshólmi was Flóki Vilgerðarson, also known as Hrafna-Flóki (Raven-Flóki). It was a cold winter, and when he spotted some drift ice in the fjords he gave the island its current name, Ísland (Iceland).

The first settler in Iceland is considered to have been a Norwegian chieftain named Ingólfur Arnarson. According to the story, he threw two carved pillars overboard as he neared land, vowing to settle wherever they landed. He then sailed along the coast until the pillars were found in the southwestern peninsula, in a place he named Reykjavík (Cove of Smoke). This place would eventually become the capital and the largest city of modern Iceland. Ingólfur was followed by many more Norse chieftains, their families and slaves who settled all the inhabitable areas of the island in the next decades.



These people were primarily of Norwegian, Irish and Scottish origin. It was the love of freedom and adventure that inspired many vikings to make their homes in Iceland in the ninth century AD. Icelanders are of Scandinavian origin, with some early mixing of Celtic blood. Freedom and respect for the individual are still at the heart of twentieth century Iceland.

The Althingi, Iceland's present-day parliament, is the world's oldest existing national assembly. It was founded at Thingvellir (Parliament Plains) in 930 AD, the country's democratic system of government was completely unique in its day.

The Sagas

