In Heide 2005 I argued that Old Norse viking f. and vikingr m. belong to the same root as vika f. 'nautical distance unit', originally 'the distance between two shifts of rowers' (from the root *wik- 'receding'). The feminine viking, which may be compared to Modern English -ing derivations like running or cycling, would then literally mean 'shifting', and originally refer to the shifting of rowers on sea-voyages. From this word denoting an activity, the masculine vikingr referring to a person performing this activity could be derived. I also argued that Old Frisian forms like witzing indicate that a word "Viking" existed in the Frisian-English proto-language before the migration to England in the mid-5th century, because the palatalization of k before front vowels is that old. (The modern English form is a late borrowing.) In that case, the word Viking originated in a pre-sail culture, which fits the 'rower shifting' etymology. A long-distance sea-journey undertaken by rowing would be dominated by the shifting of rowers. Therefore possibly it could be referred to as "shifting", like "fishing" in Scandinavia is referred to as "rowing", because in pre-engine times, a fishing trip would be dominated by rowing.

Here I would like to add a point to this reasoning. The terms Russia
and Russian originally did not refer to Russia's Slavic people, but to the Scandinavian ruling class of the oldest Russian state (cf. Melberg 1951: 195 ff.), in the oldest Russian sources called rus. Thomsen's (1877: 92 ff.) etymology of this word is generally accepted by serious scholars: Rus is a borrowing from Old Swedish through Finnic, cf. Modern Finnish Ruotsi 'Sweden'. The origin is the Swedish genitive röþs', in the borrowing process separated from compounds and made into a word of its own. The dental (þ) is reflected in the Finnic forms, and according to Melberg (1951: 196, referring to Jacobsohn 1918: 309-12), the "early Russian form seems to have been ruts- and not rus-, to judge from the testimony of Finno-Ugrian tongues that must have adopted the word directly or indirectly from Russian — the Zyrian röts and Votiak dzuts".

The nominative of the Swedish röþs is röber m., which has a basic sense 'rowing' (derived from the verb röa 'to row'), and the derived senses 'warlike sea journey', 'fleet of conscripted warships' (= OSw leþunger, ON leidangr), and 'the coast areas that fit out the conscripted warships' (cf. present day Roslagen in Uppland. After Söderwall 1884: 263). People associated with röber / Röber could be called röbskarlar, röbsmæn, röbsbyggjare etc. (Thomsen 1877: 96, Granlund 1969), literally 'men of rowing' ('... of the sea journey districts'). The semantic development of röber is parallel to what I suggested for viking:

1. The original meaning is 'rowing',
2. from this meaning a secondary meaning 'warlike sea journey' is derived, and
3. a word for 'sea-farer' is formed. ²

The differences are that in the first stage, viking would not literally mean 'rowing', but 'shifting at rowing', and that in stage 3, the word for sea-farer is formed in a different way. From the feminine viking is formed a masculine vikingr instead of *viking(ar)karl or the like. (But the masculine with the sense 'pirate' is derived from the feminine with the sense 'warlike sea-journey', cf. Heide 2005: 45-46.) A fourth step is also parallel: Both rus and vikingr came to be the neighbouring

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¹ I mark the vowel length, like in standardized Old Norse, although it was not done in Old Swedish.

² Norwegian has a development parallel to this: Ror m. (< ródr), originally 'rowing', has a secondary meaning 'fishing, fishery' — which is a peaceful sea journey, in contrast to the Old Swedish version — and from this sense, a term for people performing fishing is formed: Rorsfolk n. pl., rorskar, rorsmann m. sg. (Aasen 1873: 612).
peoples’ term for the Scandinavians that came to them across oceans in ships. The term *vikinger / wicing / witzing* seems to be a North Sea word; Old Swedish has no example of it referring to Vikings going east from Sweden (cf. Hellberg 1980: 54 ff., 80). The explanation for this is probably that the Vikings of the east were called *röpskarlar, röpsmaen / *ruots- / *ruts.*

Conclusion: If we accept the ‘rower shifting’ etymology for *viking(r)*, the development is parallel in eastern and western Europe. Then *Viking* as well as *rus* originally means ‘man of rowing’ or ‘man of rowing journeys’. In the west, it is on phonological grounds possible to date the feminine *viking* (*wïking[ô]*) to the 5th century or earlier, and in that way connect it with pre-sail sea-faring technology. In the case of the eastern *röpr*, we can go straight to this dating, because the essential meaning ‘rowing’ indicates that it was in pre-sail times that *röpr* became a word for ‘sea-journey’. (Later rowing on the Russian rivers could hardly generate such a semantic development in the Swedish homeland.) The phonology of the root *ruots-* in the different Finnic languages suggests an equally early dating of the borrowing from Swedish (Melnikova and Petrukhin, 1990–91: 207).

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