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VIKINGS

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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Historical **2nd** Edition Reference

Vikings

Campaign Sourcebook



TSR, Inc.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Historical 2nd Edition Reference

Vikings

Campaign Sourcebook

by David "Zeb" Cook

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A Few Wrong Thoughts

Most of us are raised believing a lurid, though quite colorful, picture of the fierce Viking. This is primarily thanks to Wagner, comics, Hollywood, and Bullfinch's Mythology. While rooted somewhere in a grain of truth, our popular image of Vikings has become little more than a cartoon—literally so through such strips as *Hagar the Horrible*, *Prince Valiant*, and *Bugs Bunny* forays into opera. Before going any further, it is best to put to rest some of the misconceptions:

Vikings loot and pillage. No one can deny the Vikings did loot and pillage, but not every Norseman was a ravening warrior who lived to kill and destroy. The people of Scandinavia included kings, earls, farmers, shipwrights, poets, smiths, priests, merchants, and artists. In fact, the word "Viking" only applies to those Northmen who made a habit of raiding—"to go a-viking" was an expression that described their voyages. For this book, Viking refers to all the people of Scandinavia.

Vikings are bloodthirsty pagans. At the start of the great Viking age (around A.D. 800), there is no question the Vikings were a pagan people. Before the end of their time, however, the Viking nations had converted to Christianity. The pagan ways were repressed or, in some cases, added to the Christian tradition. Bloodthirsty, well . . .

Vikings are ignorant savages. While those victims of the Viking raids saw them as savage, the Vikings developed an impressive culture. Sagas and poems still remind us of their achievements. They were among the first to practice fledgling democracy. Their ships were built with an eye for beauty and were technologically superior to anything on the seas at the time. They founded cities, ruled in foreign lands and undertook dangerous sea voyages few others would dare.

Vikings wear horned helmets. Sorry, they never did.

About This Book

This sourcebook is more than just a setting for Vikings in a fantasy campaign; it is a passport into the real world of the Vikings. With the material here, DMs and players have a unique opportunity to try a new role-playing experience—historical fantasy adventuring.

Historical fantasy adventuring is just that—an opportunity for campaigns and adventurers to role-play in the real worlds and lands of history. In this sourcebook, players are carried back to tenth century Scandinavia. There players can assume roles as Norsemen of various stripes—fighting men, explorers, and *skalds*, or bards. With the *Vikings* sourcebook, players can adventure in a "real" fantasy world—the world as the Vikings themselves believed it.

In addition to warriors and *skalds*, players can become rune-casters, berserkers, or one of the ominous troll-born. Their encounters will range beyond history to include clever giants, magical dwarves, beautiful valkyries, murderous berserkers, foul sea ogresses, treacherous sorcerers, and mythic dragons. They can sail to lands beyond the real world—Mirkwood, that separates the world of men from the gods; Jotunheim, home of the giants; or even to the lands of the gods themselves. Wondrous treasures might be theirs for the taking.

Finally, the *Vikings* sourcebook can be used to recreate a Viking setting in other campaign worlds. Details on placing and adapting Viking culture and beliefs to the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, GREYHAWK®, and DRAGONLANCE® campaigns is given. Instructions on adapting the *Vikings* sourcebook to the DM's personal campaign is also provided.



How to Get Started

For those unfamiliar with Viking history (approximately from A.D. 800 to A.D. 1100), a brief overview of the time period, describing major personalities, events, and trends is given in the first chapter, *A Mini-Course in Viking History*. Players already familiar with the time period can skip this section if they want. This section is not intended to create experts in the Viking age, only provide a general background of the period.

Before proceeding further, the DM should decide what type of campaign he wishes to play. The material in this book is written with a historical fantasy campaign in mind — a campaign set in Scandinavia but filled with magic, giants, ogres and trolls. If the DM intends to use the setting in his own campaign world, he should make notes or changes as needed when he reads.

After choosing his campaign, the DM can read through the remaining material. The chapters can be read in whatever order the DM desires. Player character information and most game rules are in the first part of the book. Facts and details about the Viking way of life and their world, both real and legendary, form the second section of the book. Some players may want to learn about the character classes immediately; others may want first to gain more background on the Viking age. Players are encouraged to read the sections that most interest them in whatever order they desire.

There is a pull-out map to be used by the players, showing a stylized (and in places incorrect) Viking view of the world.

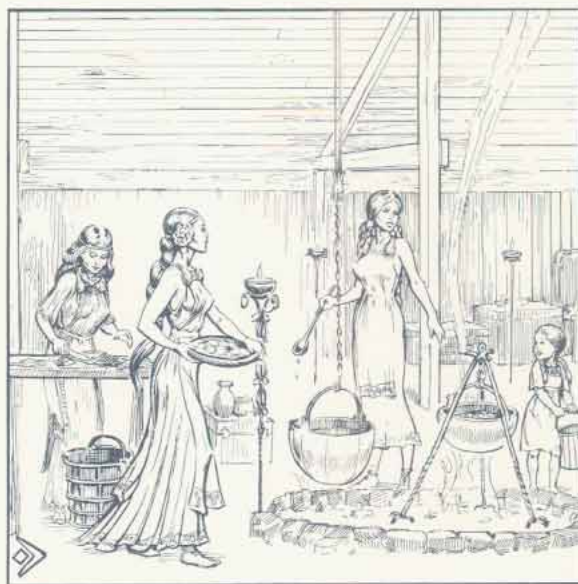
Before beginning a Viking campaign, the DM should read through all the material presented here at least once. When he is ready to begin a campaign, he should use this book as a resource, just as he would any other rulebook or gazetteer. The maps provided in the book provide the campaign base and larger area maps of the true world. The DM can expand

on these as the campaign grows.

The Viking Campaign Sourcebook and AD&D® 2nd Edition Rules

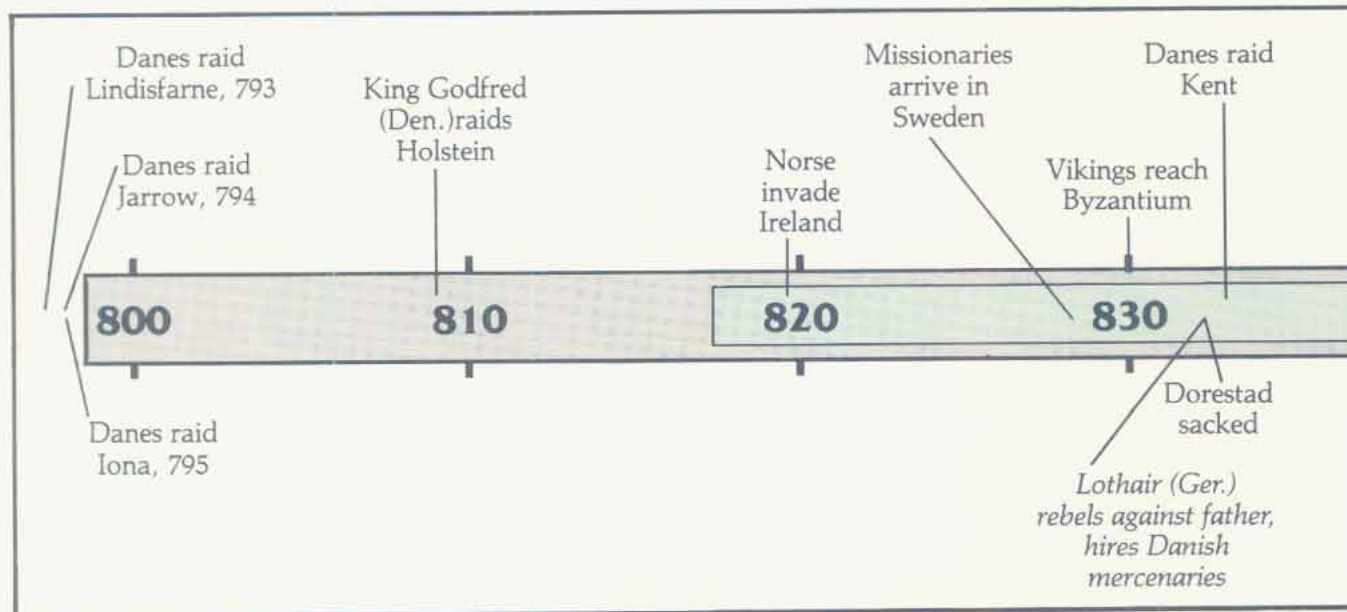
This sourcebook is meant to be used with the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules. However, the AD&D rules reflect the “realities” of a fantasy world, not the real world. Therefore, changes, exceptions, and prohibitions exist in these rules that do not apply to a normal fantasy campaign. (For example, priests are not allowed as player characters in this sourcebook.) When playing in a Viking setting, the rule changes given here should be used. These changes ensure the style and mood of the campaign will match the Nordic setting. If there are contradictions, the rules found in this sourcebook take precedence.

Not all campaigns will use the historical setting given here. In this case, certain rules presented in this sourcebook may not apply or may need modification.





A Mini-Course of Viking History



789: And in (King Beorhtric's) days there came for the first time three ships of Northmen, from Horthaland: and the reeve rode thither and tried to compel them to go to the royal manor, for he did not know what they were, and they slew him. These were the first ships of the Danes to come to England.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicles

So came, in blood and violence, the first notice of a new force to Northern Europe—the Vikings. During the next three centuries, the sailors from Scandinavia would make their mark raiding, conquering, exploring, and settling from as far east as Constantinople to as far west as Vinland.

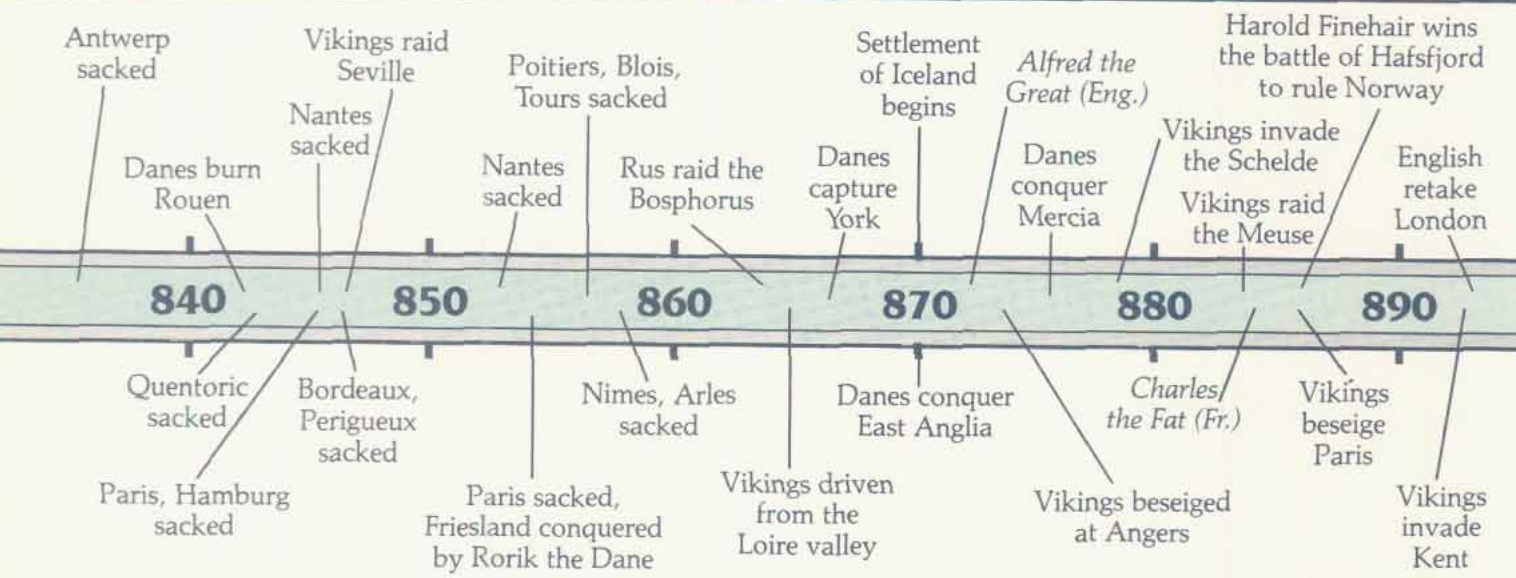
The Beginning

This chapter provides a brief overview of the Viking period. It is a game overview, and does not take the place of historical refer-

ences! Players and DMs who want to learn more about the Vikings and their times are encouraged to pick up some of the books listed at the end of this chapter.

Although the Norsemen lived in the rocky and cold lands of Scandinavia for millennia, it was not until the early 800s that they made their presence known to the world. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, raiders in long wooden ships descended upon the coasts of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France. Their first notoriety came from a series of raids, primarily targeting the rich monasteries at Lindisfarne, Iona, and Jarrow. Soon they were raiding cities all along the coast and well inland.

The raiders came from several northern lands—Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Though they called themselves Vikings, they were referred to by the rest of the world as Nordmanni (Frankish), Dene, Dani (both Anglo-Saxon), Ascommani (Germanic), Finn-gaill, Dubh-gaill, Lochlannach (all Irish), al-



Madjus (Arabic), Rus (Slavic), Rhos (Greek), and Ruotsi (Finnish).

The world the Vikings found on their early raids was a divided and weak one. Few lands had rulers strong enough to organize defenses against the sudden Viking raids. Most found it easier to suffer through these attacks or pay off the Vikings in hopes they would not return. Such payments seldom worked; they had quite the opposite effect, encouraging the Vikings to come back for more "protection money."

England was not yet a unified country. The land was divided between the kings of Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, and others. Struggling against each other for control of all England, these feudal lords were ill-prepared to face a threat from overseas.

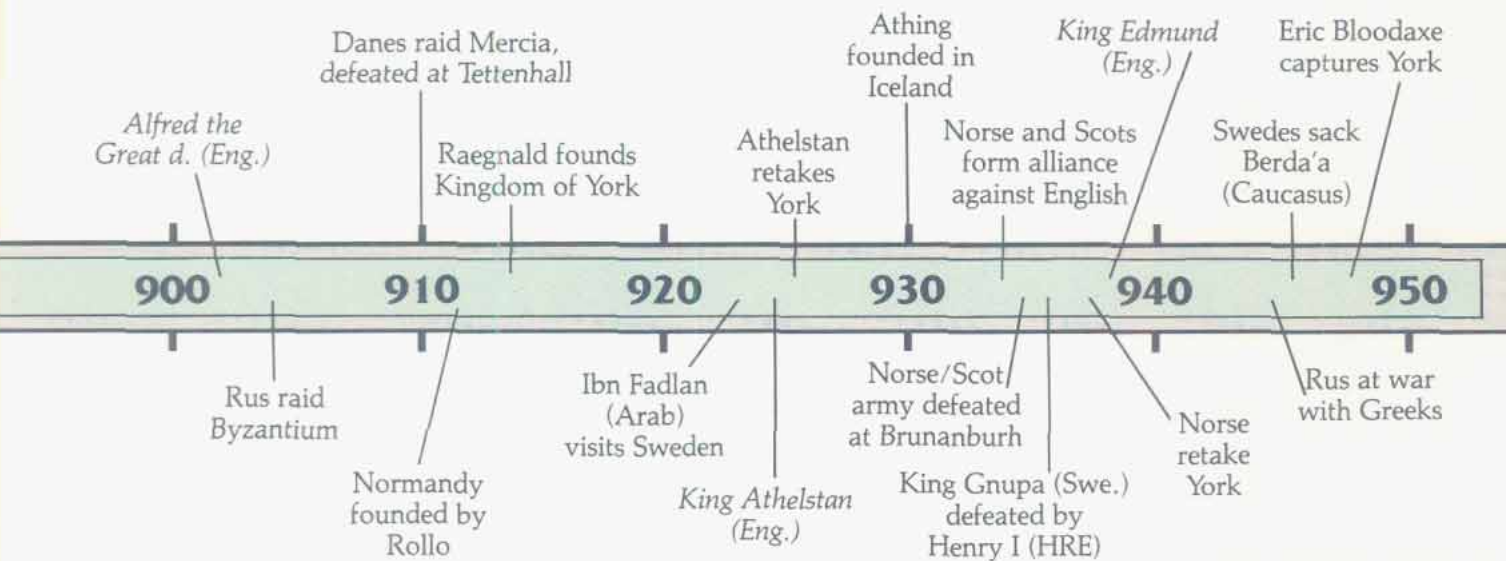
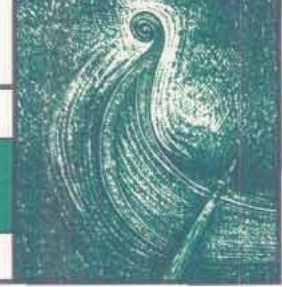
Ireland was even more disorganized than its neighbor. The island, once the center for Christian learning in the north, was divided between a score of petty kings. These kings

were too weak individually and too distrustful of each other to form an effective defense against the Viking invaders.

Scotland was no better, perhaps even worse. Divided between a host of chieftains, Scotland's best defense was its own poverty. With little worth taking, the Vikings headed their ships toward more profitable shores.

Charlemagne's Frankish Empire (modern France and Germany) at first profited from the emperor's strong and vigorous rule. Coastal defenses were built and, under the control of a strong government, were ready to drive away any attackers. With Charlemagne's death in 814, the Frankish Empire gradually began to decline. Split between warring sons, the empire turned on itself, leaving the coasts vulnerable to attack. By 835 the Danes were raiding cities that only decades before had driven back their ferocious attacks.

To the east, there was no organized rule.



The Finns and Slavs, though stubborn, were easy targets for Viking raiders. Without strong rulers, these lands soon fell under the sway of Viking adventurers who eventually settled to found their own empires.

Far to the south were the lands of Byzantium. Once the greatest empire of the world, the lords of Constantinople had lost much of their lands to the expanding Moslem nations to the south. Africa and much of the Middle East had been lost to the Arabs. Slavs threatened Byzantium from the north. Efforts were made to regain the old borders of the empire and mercenaries were always needed to fight in places like the Balkans, Italy, and the Persian borders. The Vikings filled this need quite nicely.

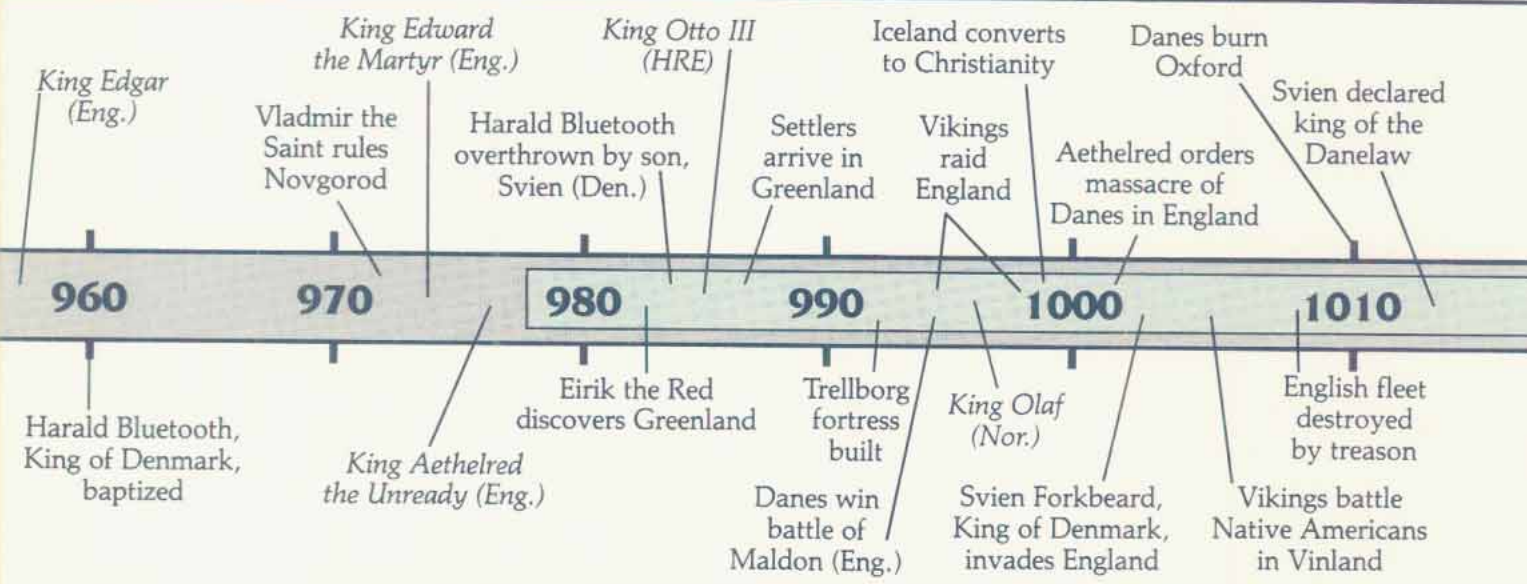
Lastly, there were the Arabs. The collected Moslem states stretched from Spain to the Caucasus, and were by far one of the most dynamic empires of the age. Although separated by vast gulfs of land and culture, even the ca-

liphates and emirates of the south heard the accents of Viking travelers.

The Raiders

After making their first bloody raids on the coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the Vikings lapsed into a period of relative quiet that lasted for several decades. The Danes launched a few attempts on Charlemagne's lands, only to be defeated and driven back. Occasional raids were launched against England and the Frankish lands, but these were small and isolated. Only Ireland experienced what lay in store when Norse Vikings invaded their lands. The Irish kings were split, some siding with the invaders, others taking arms against them. In a short while, however, the Norse founded Dublin and proclaimed their own king.

Then, beginning in the 830s, the situation changed for the rest of the north. Raiders sud-



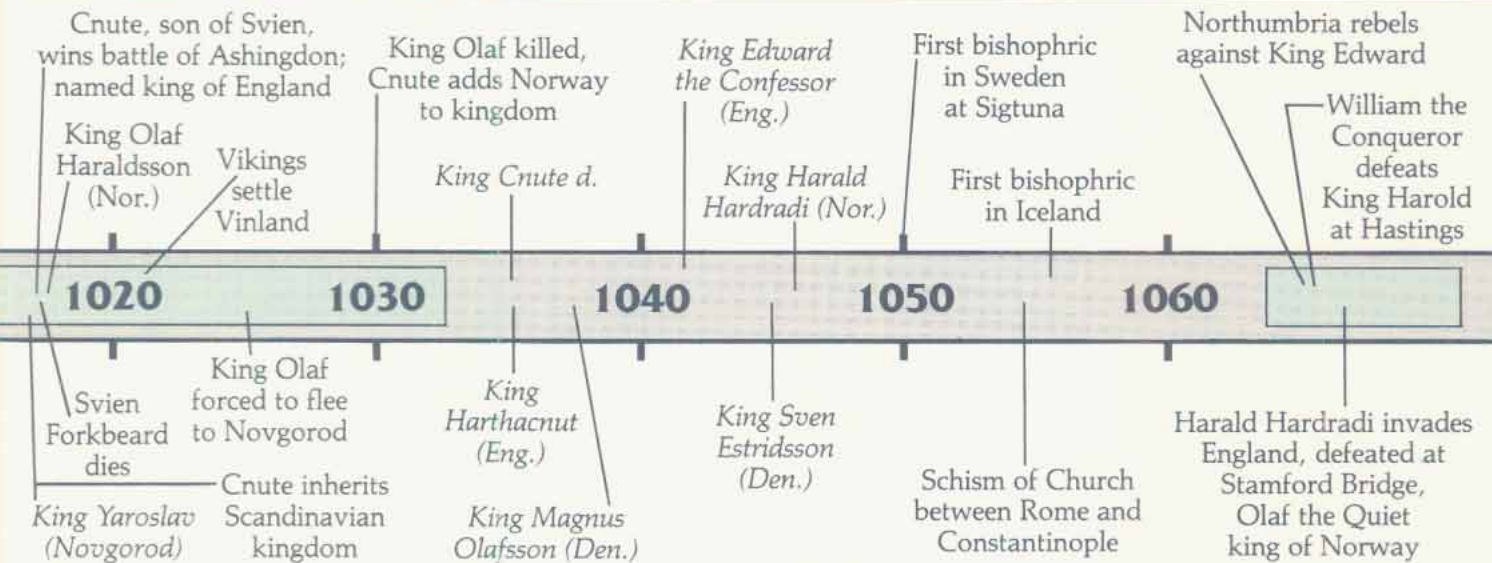
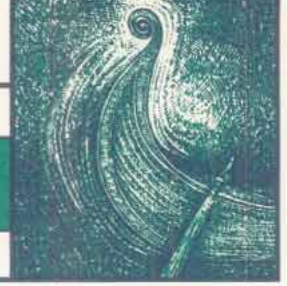
denly started appearing along the coasts of the north every year. Dorestad, Sheppey, Connaught, Kent, Antwerp, Rouen, Paris, Hamburg, and a host of other cities and villages were pillaged annually. The words of a Frankish monk, "From the wrath of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us," became a familiar plea. By 860, the Viking raiders often wintered over at towns they had seized from their enemies.

In 865, the Viking terror entered a new stage. That year, the Viking warlords Halfdan, Urri, and the intriguingly named Ivar the Boneless landed in England at East Anglia. According to legend they came to seek revenge for the death of their father, Ragnar Lodbrok (Hairy-Breeks), who was cast into a pit of vipers by the king of Northumbria. Whatever their reason, the three brothers did more than just raid; after looting the region, the Vikings captured York and conquered Northumbria and Mercia. The Norsemen were there to stay.

The Conquerors

During the last half of the 9th Century, raiding was steadily being replaced by conquest. For the Danes, England was the prime target. Northumbria and East Anglia remained under Viking rule to become the Danelaw. (Traces of this conquest, particularly in names, still remain in Great Britain today.) The kings of Wessex, though slowly uniting the rest of England, were unable to drive out the invaders. Indeed, the Wessex kings were forced to pay vast sums to the Vikings simply to keep their own lands safe. This extortion became known as the *Danegeld*, and with each year the price grew. The English kings had the choice to pay or suffer. Most chose to pay.

England was not the only target of conquest, however. Norse Vikings continued their claims in Ireland and even expanded into parts of Wales and Scotland. In the Frankish lands, the Danes sailed up rivers to capture



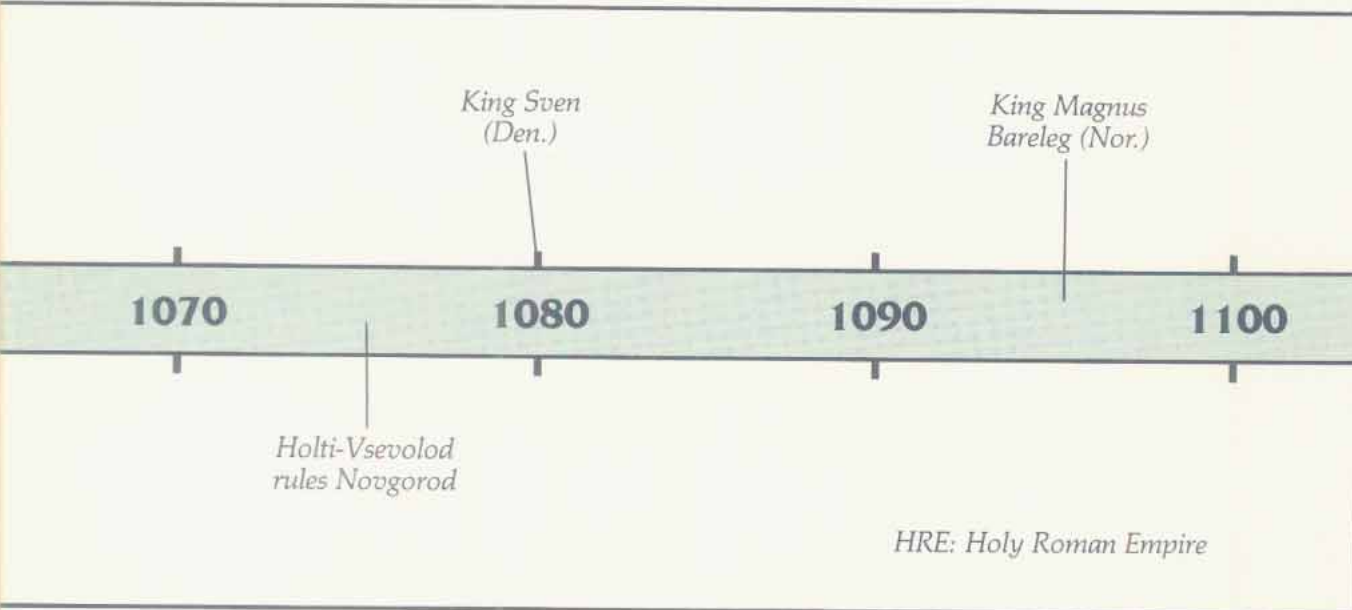
Paris and other cities. Gradually they came to control the lower Seine valley—Rouen, Bayeux, and other towns in the region. Finally, in 911, the Frankish emperors ceded these areas to a Viking called Rollo (possibly a Norse named Gange-Rolf) and Normandy was founded.

Meanwhile, in the east, Swedish Vikings were not just seizing lands, they were founding new empires. The first settlements were along the coasts of Finland and the Baltic, but the adventurous sailors soon turned their ships up the great rivers of Gardariki (as the lands of Russia were called). From Staraja Lagoda (near Leningrad) and passing through a series of rivers and lakes, the Vikings reached Novgorod. Here they set themselves up as rulers. Others sailed down the Dvina, then hauled their ships to the Dneiper to install themselves at Kiev. With time, these merchants-turned-conquerors became known as the Rus (from which comes the name “Russia”).

Their ships sailed on the Baltic and Black Seas. Traveling down the great Volga river, the Rus even sailed the Caspian Sea, there to trade with Arab lands. They grew so powerful and bold as to sail to the Bosphorus and threaten the once-invincible empire of Byzantium!

The Explorers

While some took land through conquest, other Vikings discovered new lands to settle. North of Scotland, longships beached at the Orkney and Shetland Islands. Further out, the Vikings settled the bleak Faeroes, displacing the few Irish monks they found there. Then, around 860, the Norse stumbled across a large island far out in the ocean. Forced to winter over in this land, one settler named it Iceland, a name it has born ever since. For a decade or more, there was little interest in this new island.



Around 870, the situation changed and settlement of Iceland began in earnest. It might have been nobles disgruntled with King Harald Finehair's relentless unification of Norway. Perhaps it was overcrowded farmers searching for new pastures. Whatever the reasons, ship after ship of settlers from Norway, the Orkneys, Shetland, Scotland and Ireland sailed to the Icelandic shore, there to create a new nation without kings or princes.

A Pause

Sometime around the middle of the 10th century, relative peace settled over the north. The Norsemen seemed satisfied with what they held. The great conquests and fearful raids slackened as the Vikings concentrated on ruling their new lands. New ideas, particularly Christianity, were beginning to take hold on the pagan Scandinavian shores. This peacefulness did not last, however, and in the

latter part of the century, from about 980 or so, life once again grew exciting.

Resurgence

It was almost as if the Vikings, having paused to catch their breath, were now refreshed and ready to strike out again. New waves of invaders struggled for control of England. At the same time, the Irish, under the leadership of the formidable High King Brian Boru, began the long struggle to drive out the Norse invaders. Although the grip of the Vikings would be broken at the Battle of Clontarf (1014), the task would not be complete for over 100 years.

In England, the struggle went the opposite way. First Harald Bluetooth, King of Denmark, then his son Svien Forkbeard secured the Scandinavian grip over the Danelaw. Finally, Svien's son Cnute seized the ultimate prize at the battle of Ashington and became



the King of England. Shortly thereafter Cnute added Denmark, then Norway to his list of possessions. It seemed that all of Scandinavia and England would be united in a single empire.

Meanwhile, the hardy Icelanders surged outward once more. Banished from Iceland for three years, Eirik the Red sailed for a new land that a sailor named Gunn-bjorn had found by accident over 60 years before. He named the place Greenland, since "... men would be much more tempted to go there if it had an attractive name." By the mid 980s settlers were arriving on this new shore.

It was one of these settlers who made the next discovery of a land even further to the west. Blown off course, Bjarni Herjolfsson sighted a strange shore. Realizing it wasn't Greenland (his true destination), he turned away and never went ashore. That task was left to Leif Ericsson, a.k.a. Leif the Lucky. Like his father Eirik before him, Leif assembled a group of settlers and set out for this new world. There he discovered and may have settled Vinland, battling the Skraelings (Indians) for a foothold in the new world.

Collapse

By this time, though, the Viking age was drawing to a close. With his death, King Cnute's Scandinavian empire crumbled, once again dividing into separate countries. Christianity was taking hold in the North. Christian slaughtered Christian in the ruins of the Frankish Empire; the Normans forsook their Viking ancestry and denied harbor and safety to the raiders. The colonies of Greenland and Vinland proved to be too far, too isolated. The tiny Viking colony in Vinland died out, but the settlements in Greenland stubbornly clung on to the present day.

Finally, in 1066, the last great act rang down the close of the Viking age. In that year, the Norwegian king Harald Hardradi (Hardruler) mustered up an army to reclaim the English

Viking Targets

The Vikings were rapacious raiders who struck throughout the world. The following is a partial list of their targets.

Aix	Limerick
Algeciras	Lindisfarne
Angers	London
Angouleme	Luna
Antwerp	Maastricht
Arles	Melun
Armagh	Nantes
Bayeux	Narbonne
Beauvais	Nimes
Berda'a	Noirmoutier
Blois	Orleans
Bonn	Oxford
Bordeaux	Pampalona
Bourges	Paris
Canterbury	Perigueux
Chartes	Pisa
Chester	Poiters
Chippenham	Quentoric
Cirencester	Quentoric
Cologne	Rochester
Constantinople	Rouen
Dorestad	Roussillon
Dorset	Seville
Evreux	Snottingham
Gloucester	Tamworth
Holstein	Toulouse
Iona	Tours
Jarrow	Trier
La Rochelle	Ulster
Le Mans	Utrecht
Leicester	Valence
Lichfield	Wareham
Liege	Waterford
	York



throne. Once again Viking invaders landed in Northumbria to stake their claim to England. This time, however, the Saxons were prepared. King Harold II assembled an army and met his Norwegian counterpart at the little village of Stamford Bridge outside York.

"King Harold has already declared how much of England he is prepared to grant him (Harald Hardradi): seven feet of ground or as much more as he is taller than other men."

Or so says King Harald's Saga.

The battle was fought, but did not go as Harald Hardradi hoped. Arnor the Earl's-Poet had this to say:

*It was an evil moment
When Norway's king lay fallen;
Gold inlaid weapons
Brought death to Norway's leader.
All King Harald's warriors
Preferred to die beside him,
Sharing their brave king's fate
Rather than beg for mercy.*

Harald Hardradi had lost and the Vikings would threaten England no more.

In a final ironic touch, King Harold of England would soon meet his own death on the battlefield at Hastings, brought down by Duke William of Normandy. With the last of the Saxon kings gone, William the Conqueror was proclaimed King of the English. Thus, the descendants of the Vikings succeeded where the Vikings themselves had failed.

The Timeline

The timeline given in this chapter provides indications for specific events of Viking history or the surrounding lands. These events are both those that were important to the Viking age and others that can be used as background for campaigns and adventures. For example,

any of the various dates given for cities sacked can be turned into a raid the characters participate in or defend against. Ibn Fadlan's visit to Sweden could be an opportunity for travel or intrigue involving the player characters.

The highlighted sections of the timeline indicate suggested dates within the Viking age for a campaign setting. The long period from 830 to about 950, for example, was a particularly active time, filled with conquest and exploration. The 30 years that immediately followed this, on the other hand, were a relatively quiet period of Viking history and are probably less suited to adventuring play.

Suggested Reading

Much more can and has been said about the Vikings than these few pages allow space for. Not only are there many well-written and entertaining histories written by everyone from wargamers to archaeologists, but the descendants of the Vikings themselves left behind a rich collection of work. These are the *sagas*, entertaining epics filled with heroism, battles, murders, revenge, magic, and even ghosts. Written in a clear, direct style, many of these sagas have been translated into English and are easily found at specialty book stores.

Listed here are a few of the many titles to choose from. Not all are necessarily still in print, but might be found in libraries and used book stores.

Brent, Peter; *The Viking Saga*; This book is a good starting place for the general reader, detailing the major events and accomplishments of the Viking Age.

Graham-Campbell, James; *The Viking World*; Filled with color pictures, maps, drawings, and diagrams, this book describes the life and times of the Vikings based on archaeological evidence.

Heath, Ian; *The Vikings*; One of the Osprey Elite Series, this slim book is intended primarily for wargamers. It gives a brief introduction



to the history of the period, then focuses on the arms, armor, battles, and tactics of the warriors. Useful color plates are the highlight of the volume.

Jones, Gwyn; *A History of the Vikings*; Filled with information, this book is just what it says, a history of the Viking age written for those with a serious, somewhat scholarly interest in the period.

Pollington, Stephen; *The Warrior's Way*; This large and colorful book focuses on a single event, the Battle of Maldon, using it as a springboard to describe life in Viking-age England.

Simpson, Jacqueline; *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*; This provides a clear, nuts-and-bolts account of many of the little details of Viking life. Topics such as dress, food, daily work, family, the arts, and society are all covered here.

The following books are examples of the many sagas and tales written by Scandinavian writers of the Middle Ages, shortly after the close of the Viking age. Some purport to be family histories, others are the tales of heroes. All those listed are translated into English and should be available with a little searching.

Sagas are a worthwhile source of inspiration (even for non-Viking campaigns). While generally written in a clear, straight-forward style, inexperienced readers can become confused by the abundance of names and events. It is suggested that readers first tackle a general history of the period before launching into longer sagas.

Egil's Saga; This is the story of Egil Skallagrímsson, warrior-poet, and his family's bloody feud with the king of Norway. It is filled with battles, revenge, politics, and magic, and presents a rich picture of life at the height of the Viking age.

Gongu-Hrolf's Saga; Although it may be difficult to find, this slim book is filled with

ideas for adventures. Helpful dwarfs, vicious berserkers, troll-born, ghosts, magical swords, healing salves, and powerful spells are all found in its pages.

King Harald's Saga; Telling the story of Harald Hardradi, the last great warrior-king of Norway, this saga ranges from his flight from Norway through his years as a general in Constantinople and Sicily to the defeat of the Norse at Stamford Bridge in England.

Njal's Saga; This saga of Iceland describes the course of a 50 year blood-feud to its tragic end—the burning of Njal and his family, trapped in their house.

Seven Viking Romances; In a change from historical sagas, these seven short tales are filled with magic and wonder. Characters like Arrow-Odd, Thorstein Mansion-Might, Ufkel the Wizard, Stunt-Bosi, and Asmund Berserks-Killer adventure as far as Hunland, Permia, and Giantland.

The Vinland Sagas; These short sagas tell the stories of Eirik the Red and Leif the Lucky and their discoveries and settlements of Greenland and Vinland in North America.

In addition to these titles, there are numerous other sagas translated into English. Some may be easily found, others are more difficult. These titles include the *Laxdaela Saga*, *Orkneyinga Saga*, *The Saga of the Jomsvikings*, *Hrafnkel's Saga*, *Eyrbyggja Saga*, and *Grettir's Saga*.

Finally, those interested in the mythology of Scandinavia might want to read *Gods and Myths of the Viking Age* or the slim *Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson*.

At the first mention of a Viking campaign, most characters envision bands of unruly, barbaric, and savage warriors, setting out on bloodthirsty raids to loot and pillage. Vikings are imagined as lewd, crude, and uneducated, swilling mead from drinking horns and pounding the tables with their knives—the medieval equivalent of outlaw bikers.

Some of them probably were—some but hardly all. The heroes of the Viking sagas were a colorful and varied lot. Of course there were warriors—many of them—but their temperaments ranged from wild and savage to wise and educated. There were heroes who were more than just simple warriors. There were also wild berserkers, wise runecasters, educated skalds, and the dangerous trollborn. Each of these types had a place in Viking legend and can be a player character role.

The information in this chapter is divided into two sections. The first part presents information on old and new character races and classes. The second section has rules for creating special background information pertinent to a Viking campaign.

Races in a Viking Campaign

The historical fantasy world of the Vikings was a much different place from a standard fantasy realm. While the Norsemen had no doubt that dwarves and elves existed, such creatures were not a part of their daily lives. Instead, theirs was a world of men, though darker creatures lurked around the shadowed fringes.

For player characters, the Viking world offers a limited selection of races. By far and away, the majority of characters will be human. Beyond this, a few characters may be one of the trollborn, a mixture of men and monstrous troll. Such men are rare and feared.

Humans

The bulk of characters encountered in a Viking campaign are human. However, Norse

belief allows for many differences between men. Some men and women have special talents that separate them from ordinary people. These talents are known as Gifts—a boon or curse bestowed by the *Norns* (Fates) at the moment of birth. For some, the Norns have woven a lucky thread in life; others are born without luck. Once these gifts are determined, there is little a man can do to change them.

Not all gifts are bestowed by the gods, however. Some are the result of the deeds of fathers, grandfathers, even ancestors. A hero may inherit a fine piece of land or find himself the target of a blood feud. Unlike the gifts of the gods, though, these can be gained or lost by the character's bold (or craven) actions.

If a player chooses for his character to be human, he can check to see if his character has a Gift. The check is made by rolling 1d20 and finding the result on Table 1: Character Gifts. No player is required to make this check. However, once the player makes the die roll he must accept the result, whether it is for good or ill. Not all results are desirable, and some players may choose to not make the roll rather than risk an unpleasant result. If the player refuses to check for a Gift, he cannot make the attempt in the future.

Table 1: Character Gifts

Die Roll	Gift
1	Bad Luck
2	Blood feud
3	Family Outlawed
4	Ugly
5-12	No Gift
13	Courage
14	Good Luck
15	Handsome
16	Inheritance
17	Rune Lore
18	Second Sight
19	Seer
20	Title



Explanation of Character Gifts:

1. Bad Luck. The Norns have drawn the skien of the character's life and he is destined to be unlucky. Neither the character nor the gods can change this fact. This does not mean the character cannot achieve great deeds. It does mean that someday, luck will be against the character and he will die.

In game terms, bad luck causes the player character to suffer a -1 penalty on all die rolls made with a single type of die. The type of die affected can be a d6, d8, d10, or d20. The penalty comes into effect any time the character attempts an action using the chosen die, or anytime the DM uses that die to determine some random event that affects the ill-fated character only. It does not apply to THAC0 and damage rolls made by others when attacking the player character, but does apply to the unlucky character's attacks.

For example, Jon has chosen a d10 as the die for his unlucky character, Asmund Berserks-Killer. Asmund and his friends encounter a pack of werewolves in the night. The -1 modifier is **not** used when rolling for the group's surprise or initiative since the outcome affects more than just Asmund. If Asmund encountered the werewolves when alone, the -1 modifier would be used, reflecting Asmund's bad luck.

In all cases the -1 modifier is considered a penalty to the unlucky character. In the above example, the penalty is added to Asmund's initiative, since this is a worse result for him. Even with bad luck, a die roll can never be modified below 1.

2. Blood Feud. The character's family is currently involved in a blood feud with an NPC family. The DM should provide the name and some background about the NPC family. Encounters with the feuding NPCs are automatically hostile (although they may not immediately attack). In addition, the NPC family may raid or murder the player character's family. Typical causes of blood feuds include revenge for the murder of a kinsman,

revenge for the theft of property, or avenging an old insult. A blood feud can only be ended if both sides agree to a settlement or one of the feuding families is wiped out.

3. Outlawed. The player character's father (typically) and all his kin have been declared outlaws by a local king or earl. The DM should determine what province or land this applies to. The player character is a condemned criminal in this land and will be slain on sight if found by the noble's men.

4. Ugly. The player character is particularly disfigured in some noticeable way. The character suffers a -2 on his Charisma and gains an uncomplimentary nickname.

5-12. No Gift.

13. Courage. The player character is noted for his pluck. He gains a +1 on all saving throws vs. fear-based attacks.

14. Good Luck. The player character is fated by the Norns to be lucky through all his life. The character gains a +1 to all rolls of a single die type, chosen by the player. The affected die can be a d6, d8, d10, or d20. Just as with bad luck, the modifier is only applied in situations that affect the lucky character only, never to group situations.

15. Handsome. The gods have given the character exceptional charm and good looks. The character gains a +1 to his Charisma.

16. Inheritance. The character begins with a small bequest from his late father. The player can either choose to have a small farmstead (which can be used as a base for adventuring), a *knaar* (a small merchant ship), or five times the normal starting money allowed his character type.

17. Rune Lore. The character can use one rune, (DM's choice), regardless of class.

18. Second Sight. The character has the gift of *second sight*. This power is explained in Chapter 4: Rune Magic.

19. Seer. The character has the gift of prophecy, both a boon and curse granted by the gods. Once per day the character can attempt a prediction just as if he were able to cast a *divination* spell. However, unless the character is a



runecaster or sorcerer, the chance of a successful prediction is never greater than 60%.

20. Title. The character is the son of an earl, nobleman or chieftain. (The order of precedence generally follows king, earl, nobleman, chieftain, freeman, farmer, and thrall. All other characters are assumed to be the children of freemen or farmers. Player characters never begin as thralls.) During his lifetime, the character can make one claim upon his father for a ship and men to go raiding, assuming the character has not broken with his family. The size and quality of the ship and the number of men received will depend on the reputation and level of the character. A character will never receive less than 10 normal men and a *knaar* (a small merchant ship) or more than 60 normal men and a longship.

The Trollborn

The trollborn are a feared and respected people. Their blood is half human, half troll. (The trolls of the Viking world are far different from those found in the *Monstrous Compendium*!) The trollborn are noted for their strength and cunning. Some become fearsome warriors, while others excel in sorcery. Ugly, powerful, and ill-tempered, they are easily identified from the common human stock.

The trollborn are not properly a race like elves, giants, or dwarves. Others consider them human—or mostly human. Although trollblood may have been in a family for generations, only those of the first generation are considered trollborn. All others are merely humans, although their troll ancestry may taint them in the eyes of others.

The trollborn are easily identified. They are almost universally larger than normal men, usually much stockier and more muscular. Some may grow as tall as seven feet in height. They are seldom handsome and are often quite ugly. Their temperaments range from bad to worse, although they do have their good moods and senses of humor.

The trollborn have no definite tendencies in

lifestyle, most often living as other men. Some prefer the isolated surroundings of deep woods. Others gain a reputation as kings' champions. Not a few live on rocky islands, practicing sorcerous arts. No matter where they live, the trollborn tend to be secretive and individualistic, rarely bowing to authority. The fearsome reputation of their kind causes common folk to deal with them respectfully or not at all.

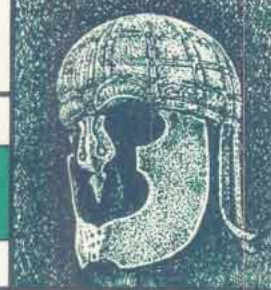
Due to their blood, trollborn characters gain a +1 to Strength, Constitution, and Intelligence. However, they suffer a -1 to Wisdom and a -2 on Charisma. The trollborn can be fighters, rangers, berserkers, runecasters, or sorcerers (15th level maximum in these classes). The trollborn have infravision (60' range). The trollborn are not born with Gifts and cannot roll on the Gifts Table for special powers.

Character Classes

Like character races, the classes available in a Viking campaign are both a mixture of existing character classes (as described in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*) and new character classes described here. Because of the differences between a standard AD&D campaign and one set in the Viking world, not all character classes are available to players. These additions and exclusions are necessary to create the appropriate mood for the world described in the Norse sagas.

Classes from the *Players Handbook*

In addition to the unique character classes described in this book, players can also choose from some of the character classes found in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. However, not all the standard character classes are available in a "pure" Viking campaign, and other classes may have special restrictions. These changes and restrictions are listed below, and are also found in the Player Information section at the end of the book. Note that these changes only apply



to campaigns set in the historical fantasy world of the Vikings and not necessarily to campaigns set in a "standard" fantasy world (such as the *Forgotten Realms* campaign). It is possible to have "disallowed" character classes in a campaign, but only if special considerations are met. For example, a paladin player character could join the campaign as a foreigner, not as a Viking paladin.

The following chart lists which character classes are available to Viking characters and which classes are not.

Classes Allowed	Classes Not Allowed
Fighter	Paladin
Ranger	Cleric
Thief	Druid
Bard	Wizard
Specialist Mage	

New Character Classes

In addition to the character classes that already exist, the Viking world has two new character classes. These classes recreate some of the unique personalities described in the legends and sagas of Scandinavia. These new classes are **berserker** and **runecaster**.

Warriors

In a historical Viking setting, warriors are the most commonly encountered group of characters. In the legends of the Norsemen, freedmen of all stations were commonly part-time raiders and so were skilled with the sword, spear, and sometimes bow. In addition, the sagas tell tales of exceptional warriors, men noted for their courage, skills, cunning, and even mystical powers.

In a Viking campaign, the Warrior group includes fighters, rangers, berserkers, and runecasters. These last two are unique to the Viking world and should only be used in such settings. At the other extreme, paladins are not appropriate to a Viking campaign and should not be used without special considerations. Descriptions of how each warrior class

fits into the campaign and any pertinent changes that must be made are given here.

Fighters

Of the three types of warriors, fighters certainly present the fewest problems. In a Viking campaign, the bulk of player characters should be fighters. Vikings were known for their warlike spirit and ferocity. Any player character with appropriate ability scores can choose to be a Viking fighter.

All fighters must initially be proficient with either the broadsword, axe, or spear. Additional weapon proficiencies can be chosen as the player prefers (provided the weapon is available in that time period and place). Upon attaining 9th level, the Viking fighter can attract a body of warriors. However, instead of using the tables found in the *Player's Handbook*, the number and types of followers attracted are listed below.

To use the tables, roll once to determine the lieutenant, once for the regular troops who come to serve and once to determine the type of special guard who attends the character.

Table 2: Norse Followers

Die Roll	Leader Type
01-05	5th level trollborn sorcerer, chain mail, <i>dagger</i> +1
06-15	5th level trollborn runecaster, chain mail, <i>sword</i> +1
16-35	5th level human fighter, chain mail, <i>battle axe</i> +2
36-45	6th level human berserker, shield, sword, battle axe
46-60	6th level human fighter, chain mail, <i>shield</i> +1, <i>spear</i> +1
61-75	6th level trollborn fighter, <i>shield</i> +1, <i>battle axe</i> +2
76-85	6th level human runecaster, chain mail +1, <i>spear</i> +1
86-95	7th level human fighter, chain mail +1, <i>shield</i> +1, <i>battle axe</i> +2
96-99	7th level trollborn fighter, ring mail +1, <i>cloak of protection</i>
00	DM's choice



Die Roll Troop Type

- 01-25 60 infantry w/leather armor, shield, and sword; 20 archers w/leather armor and shortbow; 20 infantry w/chain mail and battle axe
- 26-50 50 infantry w/leather armor and spear; 50 infantry w/chain mail and battle axe
- 51-75 40 infantry w/studded leather, shield and sword; 20 infantry w/chain mail and sword; 10 cavalry w/chain mail and spear; 10 archers w/leather armor and shortbow
- 76-95 70 infantry w/studded leather, shield, and sword; 10 1st level berserkers w/battle axe; 10 infantry w/chain mail, shield, sword and spear
- 96-00 DM's option (100 men total)

Die Roll Elite Troop Type

- 01-30 20 2nd level berserkers w/shield and battle axe
- 31-60 20 3rd level fighters w/chain mail,

shield, and sword

- 61-90 5 3rd level trollborn runecasters w/chain mail and halberd
- 91-99 2 4th level sorcerers w/longship
- 00 DM's option

Paladins

Although the people of the age certainly believed in the virtues of bravery, honesty, charity, and goodness, the character class of the paladin is not found in the Viking world. The unique blending of ideals and religious fervor so necessary in the paladin class never found expression among the agnostic Norsemen. Because of this, true Viking characters cannot be paladins.

However, paladins can exist in the game, albeit under exceptionally rare circumstances. Paladins can only come from foreign lands and can never be natives of Scandinavia. Typically, a paladin would be a particularly de-



vout Saxon, a peer of Charlemagne's realms, or a knight of Spain. Like all foreigners, paladins will encounter difficulties and prejudices when dealing with the people of Scandinavia.

Language. The paladin cannot choose Old Norse as his native tongue. Instead, his first language must be the tongue and dialect of his homeland. While the character can learn Old Norse (which was spoken by all of Scandinavia), his speech will always be marked, to a greater or lesser degree, by a noticeable accent.

Religion. Much of Scandinavia was pagan throughout the Viking period. However, adherence to any deity's belief was loose, at best. Although they were not religious fanatics, some people may not care for the faith espoused by the paladin. The paladin may have a difficult time finding a church or follower of his own religion.

Land and Property. Foreigners were not allowed to hold land. They were never considered landholders and so did not get the rights (or duties) of this class.

Slavery. Since the paladin is a foreigner, he can be captured and sold as a slave, should anyone want to try.

Law. As a foreigner, the paladin is not fully protected by the customary laws and legal proceedings of the Vikings. The characters are, of course, expected to abide by local law and custom, but do not have the same rights as Vikings. The amount of rights and protection a foreigner receives depends on his stature, the offense committed, and who among the Vikings are his friends and enemies.

For example, Count Ercangar, a paladin from the Frankish court (modern-day France), is the guest of Kveld-Ulf, a chieftain in Norway. While traveling, the count is attacked by retainers of Harek, who has a feud with Kveld-Ulf. The count wins the battle, killing several men. Harek is naturally unhappy and takes his case to King Harald Finehair, ruler of Norway. Unfortunately for Count Ercangar, King Harald has his own reasons to dislike

Kveld-Ulf, the count's host, so the king quickly finds the count guilty of murder. However, because he is a nobleman of great valor, King Harald only demands a heavy weregeld (a payment made to compensate for the deaths).

Rangers

The Scandinavians were primarily a rural people, freeborn farmers and sailors. Therefore, the tracking and woods-lore skills of a ranger are known and useful to the people of the land. However, true rangers, with their knowledge of secret powers, are rare. Indeed, their magical abilities would make rangers feared by common folk who have little use or love for the dangerous magical arts.

In the Viking campaign, rangers, like paladins, are outsiders. They are Lapps, Karelians, Kvenir, or other people more skilled in the mystical arts. Only rarely are Norsemen rangers, those few taught their secret magical arts by Lapp wizards.

In a Viking campaign, most ranger abilities remain unchanged. Only the class ability to attract followers is different. Instead of using Table 19: Ranger's Followers in the *Player's Handbook*, rangers should determine their followers exactly as a fighter would, using Table 2: Norse Followers.

Berserkers

Ability Requirements: Strength 14
Constitution 14
Charisma 13

Prime Requisites: Strength, Constitution
Allowed Races: Human, Trollborn

One of the character classes unique to a Viking campaign is the berserker. Berserkers are fearsome warriors who, in the heat of battle, tap powerful but dangerously unpredictable battle lusts. These wild passions liken them to savage beasts; indeed, the most powerful berserkers can actually shapechange into animal form.



Old Icelandic sagas have many mysterious references to berserkers. The most heroic of all these was probably Bodvar Biarki, one of the great champions of King Hrolf of Denmark. Powerful and fearless, Bodvar Biarki could become a magical bear-spirit to fight at the head of King Hrolf's armies.

Berserkers are members of the warrior group. They share with the fighter, paladin and ranger the common features of the warrior group—hit dice, weapons, armor, and attacks per round. They advance in level at the same rate as a paladin or ranger. Their principle attributes are Strength, Constitution and Charisma. A berserker can be good, neutral, or evil, but must be chaotic in alignment. While they are often loyal, trustworthy, and noble, berserkers have a wild and willful nature that leaves them always unpredictable.

A berserker who has Strength and Constitution of 16 or greater gains a 10% bonus to all experience points earned.

A berserker can use any arms or armor available to him (provided the item exists in the setting). However, although he can use any weapon, he does not begin with as many weapon proficiencies as a normal warrior. Instead of 4 initial weapon proficiencies, the berserker has only 2. Thereafter, weapon proficiencies are gained at the normal rate. Berserkers cannot use proficiency slots for purely missile weapons. For example, a berserker can be proficient in spear, since it can be used in melee, but cannot spend slots to learn short-bow or sling. It is not in their savage natures to fight at a distance.

All berserkers have the ability to "go berserk," to enter into a wild frenzy that increases their effectiveness in battle. The frenzy is not automatic; the character cannot turn it on at will. A berserker must spend one round working himself into a frenzy, during which he can take no other action. (The sagas describe berserkers biting their shields and howling like wild animals.) At the end of the round, the berserker makes a saving throw vs. death

magic. If the save is successful, the character reaches the berserk state. If failed, the character has not managed to reach the wild mental state needed to go berserk. He can continue making attempts for up to ten consecutive rounds. At the end of the tenth round, the character automatically succeeds. The berserk state has several benefits:

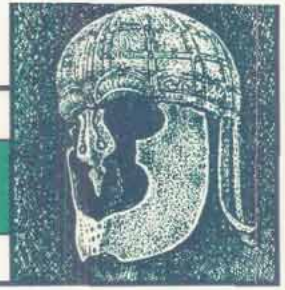
Strength. The berserker's Strength increases by 2 points to a maximum of 19. Over 18, percentile Strengths increase by one category for every extra point, thus only character's with an 18 (91) or greater Strength can attain 19. The character gains all bonuses (THAC0, damage, weight allowance, etc.) for his increased Strength.

Hit Points. The berserker instantly gains two additional hit points for every level. The hit points gained do not heal existing wounds; they are simply added to the character's current total. These additional hit points can cause the character's total to exceed the normal maximum the character is allowed.

Armor Class. The berserker's base armor class improves by 1 for every level of the character, to a maximum of AC 0. This adjustment is to the character's normal unarmored rating. A 5th level berserker fighting without armor would have an armor class of 5. This armor class adjustment can be combined with modifications for Dexterity, magical items, spells, and shields. This bonus does not apply if the character is wearing armor. In this case, the armor's AC is used, not that created by the berserk fury. A 10th level berserker in chain mail would still have an AC of 5 when he entered into his berserk rage. Note that a berserker is not prevented from wearing armor, either in normal combat or when berserk, but wearing armor negates this benefit.

Charms. While berserk, the character gains a +2 to all saving throws vs. charms or mental-based attacks.

In addition to the benefits, the berserk fury has several special limitations and consequences. Many of these reflect the savage and



unpredictable nature of berserkers.

Single-Mindedness. Once a character goes berserk, he must enter melee combat with the enemy. Though the berserker can pick and choose his targets, he cannot hang back from battle. If he does, the berserk fury leaves him within two rounds.

Once in combat, a berserk character cannot change opponents until the current foe is either slain or flees and cannot be pursued. For example, Agnar the Berserk is at the forefront of the battle, fighting the standard-bearer of the Saxons. Suddenly, one of Agnar's companions calls out for aid. Although Agnar is close at hand, he cannot break off to help his friend since all his effort is focused on defeating the standard-bearer. Agnar's only options are to quickly defeat his opponent or retreat from battle (which has its own consequences). The restriction on changing opponents applies only after the berserker has actually entered into combat. If not actually engaged in melee, the character can move and attack whomever he chooses.

Retreat. Once a berserker has entered his battle fury, he cannot retreat from combat without breaking the delicate psychological state that generates his power. If the berserk character withdraws from combat, routs, or is forced to retreat, the berserk fury immediately ends.

Loss of Powers. As soon as the berserk rage ends, all powers gained (increased Strength, hit points, armor class and charm resistance) vanish. All damage suffered is taken from the temporary hit points first. Only after all these hit points are lost does the character suffer actual wounds.

Exhaustion. Going berserk is a voluntary action; the player can choose to end it at any time. (It can also fail involuntarily should the character fail to enter combat or retreat from battle.) However, berserking can be physically draining. The character can only remain berserk for a number of rounds equal to his Constitution. If he has not ended the rage be-

fore this time, it instantly ceases.

As soon as the character stops being berserk, he must make another saving throw vs. death. If the saving throw is successful, the character is unaffected by his fury. Should he fail the saving throw, the berserker is immediately drained and exhausted. The character's Strength is reduced by 5 (from its normal non-berserk state) and remains reduced until the character has time to rest. Strength recovers at the rate of 1 point per turn of rest. The character cannot again attempt to go berserk until his Strength has returned to its normal level.

The berserker character also gains other abilities as he increases in level. It is these abilities that truly inspire supernatural dread in simple folk, for they are beyond normal explanation. They are as follows:

A berserker can shape-change into a wolf at fourth level. He can use this power once per week. The berserker's hit points, THAC0, number of attacks, and saving throws remain unchanged. However, the berserker gains the movement, armor class, and damage of a wolf (MV 18, AC 7, Damage 2-5). The character receives no bonuses for Strength and cannot go berserk while in wolf form. The character can understand human speech, but cannot communicate back without magical means. He can understand and speak the language of wolves while shapechanged. This knowledge is lost upon transforming back.

The berserker's shape change is not lycanthropy; it is a power bestowed upon him by a totem animal. His bite has no special power, he does not heal damage when changing form, the moon has no effect and he is vulnerable to normal weapons. The transformation takes one round to effect and the berserker's clothes and gear are not transformed with him.

The berserker can shapechange into a cave bear at 7th level. The berserker can assume bear form (and change back again) once per week. Like the wolf form, this is a totem ability reflecting the berserker's increased power; no disease is transmitted, the moon does not



force changes, and no special immunities or healing are gained. While in bear form, the berserker retains his hit points, THAC0 and saving throws. In bear form, the berserker moves 12, has an armor class of 6, and can make 3 attacks per round. These attacks do 1d6/1d6/1d8 points of damage. If either paw hits with a roll of 18 or better, the berserker can hug for an additional 2d12 points of damage.

Berserkers attract followers upon attaining 9th level. Those willing to serve the berserker are few, but noteworthy. The berserker will attract 1d4 + 1 heroes. Roll on the leaders section of Table 2: Norse Followers. These followers are fanatically loyal to the berserker, willing to stand by him even to the death.

The berserker can shape-journey (*hamfarir*) at 12th level. A shape-journey is when the character sends his spirit out into the world in the form of an animal, typically a raven, wolf, bear, or bull (but never as a horse). To shape-journey, the berserker must place himself in a deep trance. During the shape-journey he cannot be disturbed and is not aware of events around him. One turn after entering the trance, the berserker's spirit form appears within 100 yards of the character. After this, the spirit form can move any distance from the character. This spirit form is always that of an animal. Typical spirit forms are listed below.

Berserker Hamfarir Summary

Form	MV	#AT	Dam.
Bear	12	3	1d6/1d6/1d8
Bull	15	2	1d8/1d8
Falcon	36	3	1/1/1
Raven, huge	18	1	1d4 + 2
Wolf	18	1	2d4

The spirit form is an actual physical presence. The shape created can only be detected as magical by those with *true seeing* or second sight. The spirit form has the hit points, saving throws, and THAC0 of the berserker. Its armor

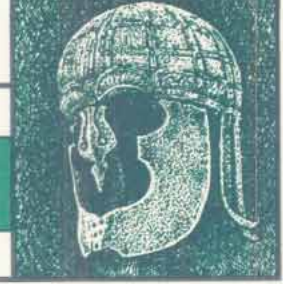
class is equal to that of the character if he were berserk and unarmored. The spirit form also shares the berserker's +2 saving throw bonus vs. mental attacks. The berserker sees, hears, feels, and senses normally through the spirit form. Damage suffered by the spirit form is done to the berserker, as are all magical attacks (charms, etc.). The spirit form cannot naturally communicate with other humans (or trollborn) but does understand the speech of similar animals and can speak to them.

The spirit form can only be created once per day. The spirit form remains for a number of turns equal to the berserker's wisdom. The spirit form and the berserker are inexorably linked. Any damage taken by the spirit form is transferred to the berserker as soon as the trance ends. If the spirit form is slain, the berserker dies. The character can voluntarily end the trance at any time and it automatically ends if the character is shaken, attacked, or roughly disturbed.

Creating the spirit form is even more draining than berserking. At the end of the trance, the character must make a saving throw vs. death with a -4 penalty to his roll. If successful, he has avoided any weakening effects. If failed, the berserker's Strength and Wisdom are reduced by half. Lost points are regained at the rate of 1 per hour of rest. Strength is regained first, then Wisdom. Characters are not required to rest immediately, but do not regain any points until they do so.

Berserkers gain experience according to the guidelines given in the *Player's Handbook* for the warrior group. In addition to the experience awards already listed, berserkers can earn an individual experience point award for initiating combat. This award is worth 200 experience points. The berserker character must be the one who leads his side into battle before the foes attack. Furthermore, the award is not given if it was clear from the start of the encounter that both sides intended to fight.

For example, an evil troll has been terrorizing the king's mead hall and has driven every-



one away. The group, including Kveld-Ulf the Berserker, spends the night in the hall so that when the monster appears, they can slay it. The troll appears at the door and Kveld-Ulf leads the attack. Since combat was inevitable, Kveld-Ulf will not gain the experience award in this case.

However, if the same group were facing a company of trolls, things would be different. The trolls outnumber Kveld-Ulf's group and are well-armed. The Viking group leader is uncertain if they should fight, talk, or retreat. Fed up with the indecision, Kveld-Ulf gives a bloodthirsty shout and charges the monster! In this case, Kveld-Ulf would earn the experience award.

Runecasters

Ability Requirements: Strength 11
Intelligence 14
Wisdom 15

Prime Requisites: Intelligence, Wisdom
Races Allowed: Human, trollborn

Runecasters are rare and fearsome warriors. Although skilled in battle, their formidable power springs from their understanding of runes, ancient formulae that tap mystical powers. This combination of sword and magic makes them powerful allies and dangerous foes.

Though they are infrequent, warriors with the power to write magical runes do appear in the old Icelandic tales. Perhaps the most famous runecaster was Egil Skallagrimsson, hero of *Egil's Saga*. Descendant of the famous berserker Kveld-Ulf, Egil was a strong and hot-tempered man, skilled in runes and poetry.

Although they possess magical abilities, runecasters are members of the warrior group. They fight and save like warriors. Experience is earned as a warrior and they advance in levels as a ranger or paladin. They are allowed to use all those magical items

normally available to warriors. However, the runecaster never gains any bonus hit points normally due for high Constitution scores.

Runecasters possess the knowledge of runes, magical words that when used properly generate or release special powers. Although they seem like spells (because they have magical effects), runes are very different. The source of all runes is the god Odin. Runes must be learned, but are not memorized and forgotten like spells. There is no limit to the number of times a rune can be used in a single day. However, runes are difficult and complicated. Casting a rune is time-consuming and may result in nothing but failure. Lastly, a character's selection of runes is severely limited. Complete information on runes, how they are used, and what they do is found in Chapter 4: Rune Magic.

In addition to his fighting ability, a first level runecaster begins the game knowing two runes. These runes are assigned by the DM and are never chosen by the player. No check is made to see if the character can learn these runes; it is assumed he has mastered that complicated art. Within the limits of rune-casting and the runes available, the character can use his knowledge at any time he feels appropriate. Thereafter, each time the character advances in level, he has the opportunity to *attempt* to learn a new rune. Success is not automatic and a character can only make the attempt when he reaches a new level. The chance to learn the rune is based on the character's Intelligence. It is the same as that needed to learn a new spell. If the check is succeeded, the character can add the rune to his list of those already known. If it is failed, the character can never learn that particular rune, regardless of how high in level he rises.

As with the initial runes, the DM has final say over the knowledge gained. He may allow the player to pick the desired rune or offer the character a limited selection. Furthermore, the DM can either allow the rune to leap unbid-



den into the character's mind without prior experience or study; or he can require the character to find someone who will teach him the difficult art of forming the rune. There are no books of rune magic to study from!

As noted before, a character can only learn a new rune when he rises in level. Unlike spells (which can be learned anytime the character discovers a new one), a character cannot try to "learn" a rune simply because he has seen it. Runecasting is a mystical art; it cannot simply be memorized by rote. Even if the character knows of the rune's existence, he must wait for a new level before attempting to understand its intricacies.

Because of their more ominous reputations, runecasters do not attract large bodies of followers. Upon attaining 9th level, the reputation of the runecaster is such that a certain number of men will follow his banner. Like the fighter, he determines those who stand by him using the Norse Followers Table. Unlike the fighter, he only attracts half the number listed (fractions rounded up). Those who do attend him are no less loyal for all this.

Wizard

Although magic and wondrous events abound in the sagas and romances of the Viking age, the style of magic is seldom like that found in the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules. The Vikings operated by different understandings of magic. Runes and supernatural agencies played an important part, while the stereotypical robed wizard was seldom seen. Organized wizard colleges, guilds, magical supply shops, and other conventions sometimes assumed in an AD&D campaign simply did not exist. Likewise, scrolls, spellbooks, and other such written material were not native to Scandinavia. Runic writing was used for memorial markers and runecasting, both of which involved the invoking of special divine power.

However, a few wizards did exist. Like the paladin, these sorcerors were always for-

eigners. Those wanting to learn the magical arts often went to the Lapps, Finns, Scots, or Irish to learn their secrets. Upon return, such sorcerors were viewed with suspicion and fear. Thus, wizards must either come from or have studied extensively in foreign lands—particularly Finland, Lapland, the Hebrides, Miklagard (Constantinople), or Araby. Not surprisingly, wizards of all stripes often had a very low status.

Not all types of magic were known, either. In AD&D game terms, only certain specialist mages are allowed. Those specialist mages that can appear are listed below:

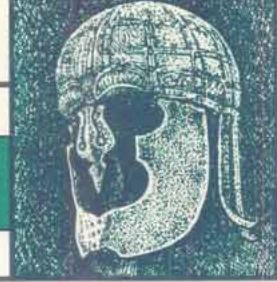
- Conjurer
- Diviner
- Enchanter
- Illusionist
- Necromancer

For those DM's striving for an "authentic" fantasy campaign, it is strongly recommended that all wizard characters, both player and NPC, be kept to a minimum. Of the few that do appear, the majority of these should be Diviners or Necromancers. Specialist mages should automatically suffer a -2 on all encounter reactions with those aware of the character's reputation.

Furthermore, spells of Alteration, Invocation, and Evocation are almost completely nonexistent. The few wizards that do appear use subtle methods, not the powerful and flashy damage-causing spells.

Priests

Like the wizard, the standard AD&D game interpretation of the priest is poorly suited to the world of the Vikings. The powers wielded by AD&D game priest characters bear little resemblance to those described in Scandinavian tales. Therefore, priest characters (especially Christian priests), though retaining their spell-casting abilities, must be carefully adjudicated by the DM.



Player-character priests who follow Norse deities must consult the *Legends and Lore* tome for available spell spheres.

Of course, this does not mean there were no priests during the Viking age. Historically speaking, both followers of pagan beliefs and the expanding Christian influence were found. Among the Vikings, however, religion was often viewed as a personal matter. The gods were viewed as patron deities, to be dealt with by each man on his own. More often than not, each man was his own priest.

In those cases where a man was given the title of priest, the job was as much political as religious (if not more so). For example, in Iceland, the priests (*godir* or *godar*) functioned as chieftains. They ruled over districts, kept households of warriors, judged the court cases of those living in their district, and attended the *Athing* (national assembly), in addition to seeing that the proper rituals were performed and the sacred grounds protected. The position of *godi* was not one a character could simply choose. Instead the *godi* received his title by right of his bloodline, the respect of his neighbors, and the wealth he possessed. A poor man claiming to be the *godi* is as likely as a hobo announcing himself Emperor of the World.

Rogues

The Vikings were not all heroic warriors and bloodthirsty berserkers. The tales are filled with accounts of murder and theft, along with more noble descriptions of famed poets accompanying kings into battle. Thus, both thief and bard characters are perfectly acceptable in a Viking campaign.

Thief

As noted above, not every Viking was honest and true. Viking thieves, while not common, can and did exist—although not without modification to reflect the time period.

The greatest difference between standard

AD&D® game thief characters and those found in the Viking campaign are the abilities to open locks and find and remove traps. Viking thieves do not gain these powers because the characters would not have had experience with these items. Locks were rare, and even those that existed were simple and primitive affairs. Likewise, the practice of trapping chests or treasures was unknown, so again there was no opportunity to learn the craft.

To compensate for the loss of these abilities, Viking thieves instead gain the ability to *open barred doors*. While locks were rare, barring doors was not. With this ability, the thief can use a number of tricks and tools (such as thin pieces of wood or a sword blade) to silently lift or slide the bar out of place—when the thief is on the wrong side of the door! This is not a Strength-based rating; it is a percentage chance (that can be improved) like other thief abilities. All Viking thieves begin with a base 10% chance of success in this area. A high Dexterity does not improve this skill.

Bards

Known to the Vikings as *skalds*, bards were respected and honored members of the community. As stated before, the Vikings were not all uncouth barbarians. They placed great store in poets, developing poetry to a fine art. It was common for kings and nobles to support and protect skalds—and the poets were naturally expected to sing their lord's praises!

Skalds were poets and storytellers. They entertained by reciting verses, often composed on the spot. Without a written language (runes were not used to write down poetry), the skalds memorized their work and passed it on by reciting it to others. Their poems are filled with fanciful allusions known as *kennings*, a poetic description of a person or thing. For example, an axe would be called a "wood-griever" or "wound-wolf," while a warrior might be an "enemy of trolls," "painter of the wolf's tooth," or "feeder of ravens." The skald's audience was expected to know



these kennings, and their complexity and word-play would add to the beauty and skill of the poem.

If proficiencies are used in the campaign, all skald characters must reserve one slot for Poetry (Slots: 1, Relevant Ability: Intelligence; Check Modifier: -2). Whenever the skald attempts to entertain, he must make a poetry proficiency check to see if he can master the difficult kennings.

Of course, poetry was not the only form of entertainment. Musical instruments were known, but were not valued as highly as the spoken word. Harping, in particular, was a popular entertainment.

Before a Viking skald can gain the use of magical spells (as described in the *Player's Handbook*) he must first have the opportunity to learn this art. This can only be done in a foreign land (such as Ireland), since the Vikings did not have these magical traditions. New player characters have not yet had the opportunity to travel, and so cannot begin knowing any spells.

Other Details

Of course, a race and class are far from all that define a player character or NPC. Other features—sex, name, age, homeland, and social status—are nearly or equally as important. Since a Viking campaign is not the standard fantasy world, the differences and effects of all these choices need to be considered.

Sex

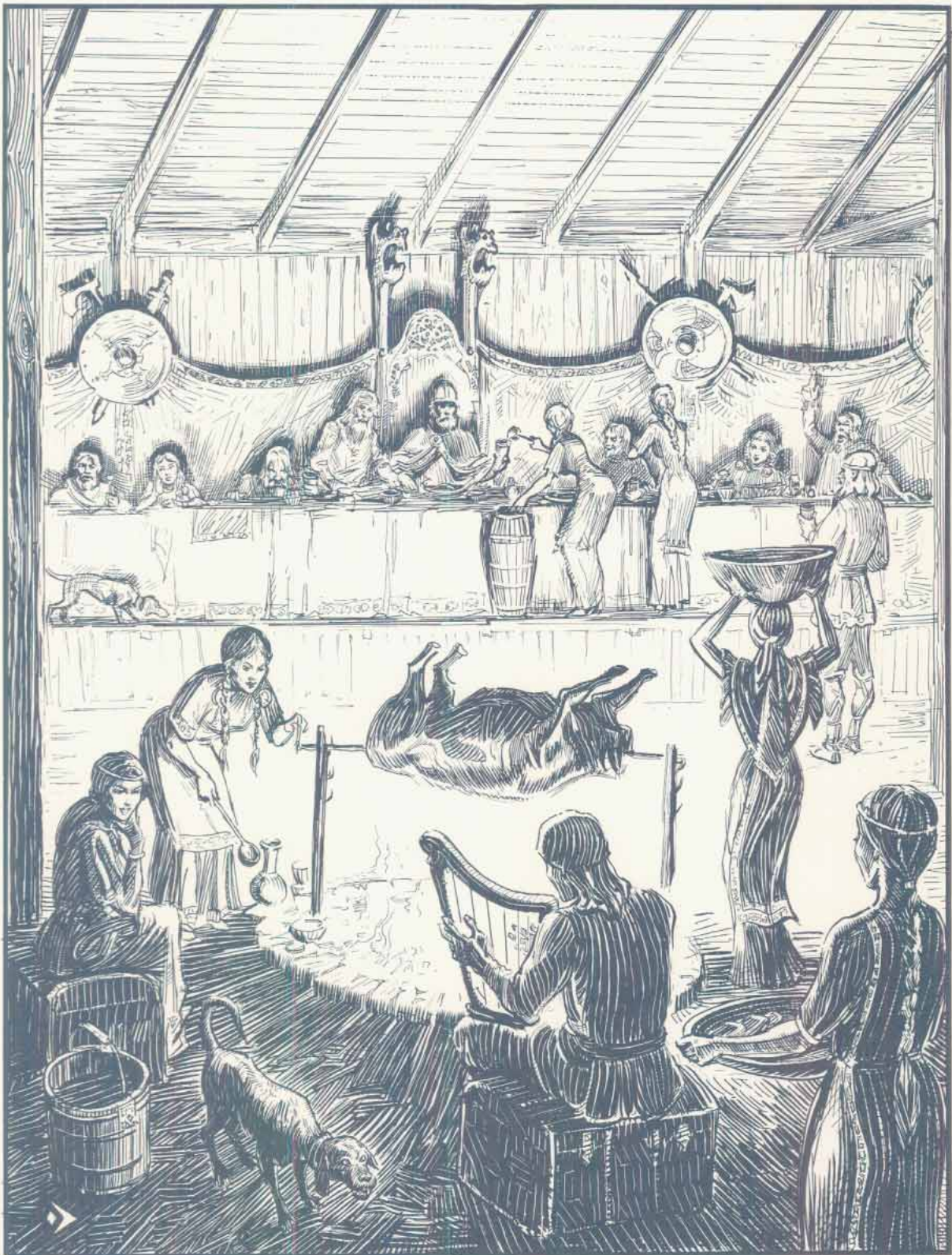
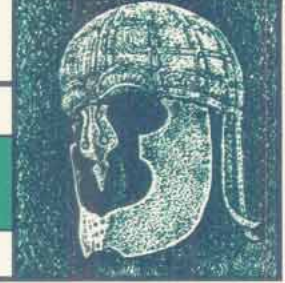
The first impression most players will have concerning Viking characters is that it is a world of men. Bold Viking *men* stand at the prow of their ships, *men* fight in battles, *men* explore the world. Meanwhile, women stay home to sew, weave, and tend the farm. Indeed, women are often imagined as virtual servants of their husbands and fathers.

As with all things, part of this picture is cor-

Colorful Kennings

When running skald characters, players and DMs may want to brighten the characters' stories with poetic expressions appropriate to the class. The kennings (word-plays) below may be just what's needed to add that bardic touch.

Arrows—wound-bees
Axe—wound-wolf, wound-griever
Battle—clash of the valkyrie, game of iron, storm, storm of metal
Beer—pool of malt, sea of the horn
Blacksmith—pole of iron
Blood—arrow-dew, milk of corpses, river of swords
Drinking horn—auroch's spear
Eagle—battle-crane, vulture of battle
Earth—fjord of the heather
Farm land—sorrow of oxen
Fire—terror of the birch
Generous—hostile to gold
Gold—arm-fire, fire of the wave, Frodi's flour, moon of the sea, river-fire
Head—helmet-crag
Hearth-stone—table of fire
Hot iron—gold of the fire
King—giver of rings, land-demander
Man—Odin's oak, shield-wood, tree of gold
Poetry—giant's drink, mead of Odin, Odin's theft
Sea—belt of the earth, plain of seals
Shield—spear-cloud
Ship—sea-king's horse, sea-king's ski, sea-steed
Silver—snow
Sky—wind-bowl
Snake—thong of the heather, valley-fish
Spear—flying thorn
Sword—glory of battle, hilt-wand, war-flame, wound-engraver, wound-snake
Warrior—enemy of trolls, painter of the wolf's tooth, rouser of the valkyrie, spear-shaker, wolf-feeder
Wife—goddess of the needle, pourer of beer
Wind—enemy of the sail, wave-troubler
Winter—death of snakes
Wolf—horse of the giantess
Woman—goddess of the arm





rect and part is just fancy. It is true that men did all the things mentioned above. There are few accounts of women warriors or explorers—but in the Viking world these things were not impossible! Aud the Deep-Minded, queen of Dublin, moved her entire household to Iceland after the death of her husband. There she claimed and ran an estate large enough to support 80 farmers. In Scandinavia, women had far more rights and responsibilities than neighboring England or the Frankish Empire.

Under Viking tradition, women had many rights. They could own property and inherit lands. Women were expected to manage everything in the household, and wives often supervised the estates while the husband was gone. With such a warlike people, there were many widows who kept the family farms and made them prosper. A woman had the right to divorce her husband. (He, of course, also had the same right.)

Women served as priestesses to pagan gods and were frequently skilled in magic. Though they were not allowed to file lawsuits or take part in the *thing* (the governing assembly), their influence over the men handling such matters was great. Many sagas tell of blood-feuds stirred up or sustained by the urgings of a woman. A woman might even work deadly revenge on the slayer of a kinsman.

Still, women warriors were rare, and truly exceptional. There is no doubt that by custom, women stayed home and saw to the households and property. For female player characters in a Viking campaign, this means that though their presence as adventurers (especially warriors) is recognized as their right, it might raise more than a few eyebrows. Those more traditionally-minded may view it as improper or unseemly, while the broad-minded are apt to consider it unusual but not necessarily inappropriate.

The female player character is likely to have problems when dealing with NPCs from other lands, where the rights of women are not as well established. Frankish nobles may have a

hard time accepting terms from a woman warrior, and Moorish knights are apt to find the whole situation intolerable.

In the end, players and DMs should never shy from playing a female character—especially not on the basis of “it’s not a woman’s role.” Instead, they should consider the special considerations and social obstacles that might arise as challenges and opportunities to have true role-playing encounters.

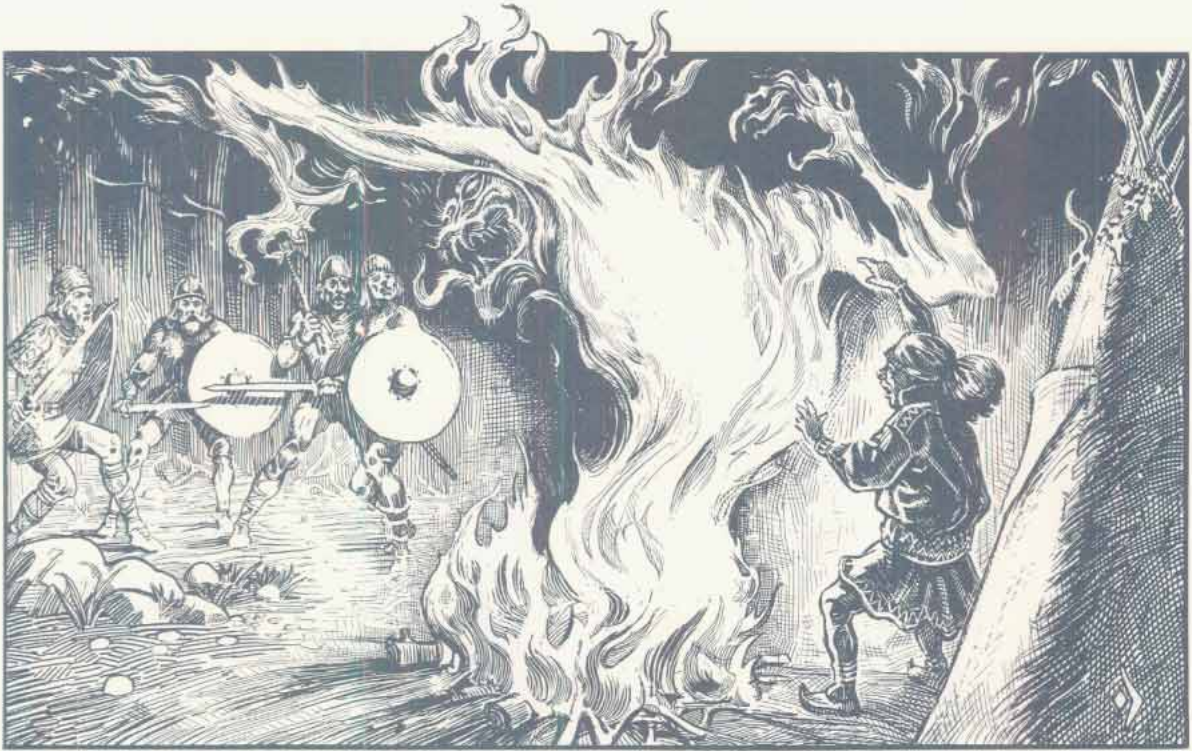
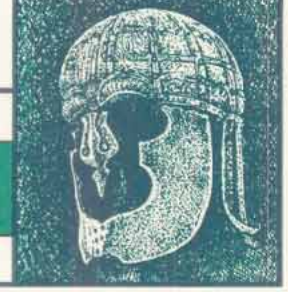
Names

Once a character has chosen a particular sex, a name can be chosen appropriate to that sex. Of course, players and DMs can choose whatever name they wish, but some of the Viking feel will be lost if “Fred the Viking” is used. The Viking campaign will be much more convincing if characters have authentic Viking-sounding names. To do that, though, it helps to know how Vikings were named.

Scandinavians of the time went by only one name, a personal name. Surnames were very rarely used. Of course, problems arose; how did one tell the three Thorolfs of the village apart or whether someone meant the Thorolf living in Trondlag or the Thorolf in Hordaland? This problem was solved in several ways.

The most common was to add a patronymic—“father’s name”—to the end of the name. Thus, Thorolf, son of Harald, became Thorolf Haraldsson. This type of nickname could be made by adding “son” or “sson” to the father’s name. (Women tended not to carry their father’s name.) On occasion, the person was indicated by his home, i.e., Thorolf of Trollwood, but place names like this were not as common.

Another popular method of naming was to give the person a descriptive nickname based on some quality or deed. Judging from nicknames, Vikings apparently had quite a sense of humor. Besides obvious nicknames like “the Short” or “the Tall,” less complimentary ones like “Snake-in-the-Eye” or “the Braggart”



also appeared. Furthermore, nicknames were sometimes ironic, entirely opposite from the truth—Thorolf the Short could actually be quite tall!

As is true with all nicknames, the person bearing the moniker generally has little choice in what he is called. His friends (he hopes!) and companions give him the nickname that suits him best. Players may also take this approach, letting their characters earn their nicknames during the course of the campaign.

Age

Players and DMs can choose whatever age they desire for their characters. Traditionally, a Viking youth was considered an adult at the age of twelve, although it was common for him to remain at home for a few more years. In *The Saga of the Jomsvikings*, Vagn Akason, who had killed three men by the age of nine, joined the warrior brotherhood (the Jomsvikings) at the age of twelve.

Players are not required to begin their char-

acters at such an early age. However, characters who leave home after age eighteen have certainly earned the uncomplimentary nickname "Coal-Chewer!"

Homeland

Another important part of each character's background is where he hails from. Though all were considered Vikings, there was no great bond between Danes, Swedes, or any of the other Viking nations. Giving each character a home province adds to the role-playing interaction.

Unless several separate groups are going to be playing in the same campaign world, the DM should probably assume that all characters start from the same general region. This is certainly true with beginning characters. It is not likely that a group of beginning heroes happens to include a Dane from Jutland, an Icelander, two Swedes, and a Rus. Where did they all meet and how did they get together? The mixing of nationalities should wait until



Viking Names

To assist players and DM's in naming their characters, lists of names (divided by sex) and nicknames are presented here. The DM can photocopy these lists for use in his campaign.

Men's Names

Aella	Fjolmod
Agdi	Fjolvar
Agnar	Fjori
Alrek	Franmar
An	Freki
Angantyr	Fridleif
Aran	Frithjof
Armod	Frodi
Arnfinn	Frosti
Arngrim	Fyri
Asmund	Gardar
Atli	Gauk
Auda	Gauti
Bard	Gautreik
Barri	Geirmund
Beiti	Geirrod
Bild	Geirthjof
Bjarkmar	Gilling
Borgar	Gjuki
Bosi	Glammar
Brand	Gothorm
Brynjolf	Granmar
Budli	Grettir
Bui	Grim
Drott	Grimhild
Eddval	Gripir
Egil	Grundi
Einar	Gudmund
Eirik	Gunnar
Eitil	Gunnbjorn
Erp	Gust
Eylimi	Guthorm
Eyolf	Hadding
Eystein	Haeming
Fafnir	Hafgrim
Finnbogi	Hagal

Hak	Hunthjof	Snidil
Haki	Hymling	Snorri
Hakon	Idmund	Sorkvir
Halfdan	Illugi	Sorli
Hamal	Imsigull	Soti
Hamdir	Ingjald	Starkad
Harald	Ivar	Steinthor
Harek	Jarnskeggi	Storvirk
Hauk	Jokul	Styr
Havard	Jormunrek	Svafnir
Hedin	Ketil	Svafrlami
Heidrek	Kjar	Svart
Heimir	Knui	Svidi
Helgi	Kol	Svip
Herbjorn	Krabbi	Thjodrek
Herthjof	Kraki	Thord
Hervard	Leif	Thorfinn
Hildigrim	Melnir	Thorgeir
Hjalm-Gunnar	Neri	Thorir
Hjalmar	Odd	Thormod
Hjalprek	Olaf	Thorstein
Hjorleif	Olvir	Thrand
Hjorolf	Orkning	Thvari
Hjorvard	Orr	Tind
Hlodvard	Otrygg	Toki
Hlodver	Ottar	Tryfing
Hlothver	Raevil	Ulf
Hodbrodd	Raknar	Ulfhedin
Hogni	Ref	Vidgrip
Hoketil	Rennir	Vignir
Holmgeir	Rodstaff	Vikar
Hosvir	Rolf	Visin
Hraerek	Runolf	Volund
Hrafknel	Saemund	Yngvi
Hrani	Sigmund	
Hreggvid	Sigurd	
Hring	Sinfjotli	
Hroar	Sirnir	
Hrodmar	Sjolf	
Hroi	Skuli	
Hrolf	Skuma	
Hrollaug	Slagfid	
Hrosskel	Smid	
Hrotti	Snaeulf	
Hunding	Snaevar	



Women's Names

Aesa	Hrafnhild
Alfhild	Hrodrglod
Alof	Ingibjorg
Arnora	Ingigerd
Asa	Isgerd
Aslaug	Kara
Aud	Kolfrosta
Bekkhild	Kostbera
Bera	Lofnheid
Bestla	Lofthaena
Bodvild	Lyngheid
Borghild	Nauma
Borgny	Oddrun
Brynhild	Olvor
Busla	Ragnhild
Dagmaer	Saereid
Dagny	Sigrid
Edda	Sigrinn
Edny	Silksif
Eyfura	Sinrjod
Fjotra	Skjalf
Freydis	Svanhvit
Galumvor	Swanhild
Geirrid	Sylgja
Gjaflaug	Thjodhild
Grimhild	Thorgerd
Groa	Thorunn
Gudrid	Throa
Gudrun	Thurid
Gullrond	Tofa
Halldis	Unn
Hallfrid	Vaetild
Hallveig	Yrsa
Hekja (Scot)	
Helga	
Herborg	
Herkja	
Hervor	
Hildigunn	
Hildirid	
Hjordis	
Hjotra	
Hleid	

Nicknames

Absent-Minded	Old
Arrow-Odd	One-Hand
Bag-Nose	Peaceful
Bare-Legs	Peacock
Belly-Shaker	Pilgrim
Berserks-Killer	Pin-Leg
Black	Powerful
Blind	Proud
Blood-Axe	Prow-Gleam
Bold	Red
Brave	Serpent-Tongue
Breast Rope	Showy
Bull-Bear	Silk-Beard
Buttered-Bread	Skinflint
Crow	Skull-Splitter
Deep-Minded	Sleekstone-Eye
Dueller	Smooth-Tongue
Easterner	Snake-in-the-Eye
Fair	Southerner
Feeble	Stout
Fetter-Hound	Stubborn
Finehair	Tit-Bit
Fish-Hook	Unruly
Flat-Nose	Wealthy
Flayer	Wartooth
Fosterer	Whelp
Good	White
Gossip	Wry-Mouth
Grey-Cloak	Wry-Neck
Hairy-Breeks	Xxx's-Bane
Hairy-Cheek	Xxx's-Killer
Hard-Mouth	Yeoman
Horse-Head	
Hot-Head	
Hunter	
Keen-Eyed	
Lean	
Little	
Long-Leg	
Lucky	
Mansion-Might	
Night-Sun	
Noisy	



the characters reach higher levels when reasonable explanations can be provided. A henchman from the Hebrides (Scotland) may become a player character (to replace a fallen warrior) or a new player may join the group while they are exploring in Iceland.

When beginning a Viking campaign, the DM may want to allow initial player characters to be from one or two of the following lands:

Danelaw (England, after 865)
Denmark
Faroe Islands
Hebrides
Iceland (after 870)
Ireland (after 820)
Norway
Orkney Islands
Rus (after 870)
Sweden

Once a starting land has been chosen, the DM should select a province or region in the land. Player characters will come from households in this general area. For example, the DM chooses Norway as the starting land. Looking at the map of Scandinavia provided, he decides to start the characters in a small village on the coast in the province of Stad. Therefore, it is reasonable for the initial characters to hail from Stad, More, Gaulardale, Orland, or other nearby districts. Thereafter the characters are assumed to have family and kin in these regions.

Social Class

Although the bulk of the Vikings were free farmers, not everyone was of equal rank. There were chieftains, kings, princes, and slaves in addition to the freemen. For game purposes, everyone is assumed to be the son or daughter of a free farmer of modest means—neither poor nor overly rich (unless the character has benefited from a Gift during character generation). Player characters never

begin as slaves (since this makes adventuring difficult) and only those who have the appropriate Gift are the sons of chieftains, godar, or princes.

Proficiencies

If the optional proficiency system is used in the DM's campaign, player characters are allowed their proficiencies freely according to the AD&D® game rules. The following proficiencies are not available, for cultural or historical reasons:

heraldry
riding, airborne
spellcraft
forgery
charioteering

Languages

During the Viking age, all Scandinavian cultures spoke essentially the same language—Old Norse. Thus, for Viking characters, this serves as the common tongue. In addition, the languages of surrounding lands may be useful to the player characters. Characters with the opportunity to learn additional languages can use the simplified list below:

Gaelic (Ireland)
Saxon (England)
Slavic (Russia)
French (Franks)
Latin (the Church)
Arabic (Moors)
Greek (Byzantium)

As noted, this list is simplified, ignoring several languages and all dialects. Those who want to introduce more native tongues into their game can find more information in most libraries. Be aware, however, that too many languages can "spoil the soup," adding unnecessary complication to the experience of role-playing.

Rune Magic

*He who would read the sacred runes
given by the gods,
that Odin set down
and the sage stained with color,
is well advised to waste no words.*

— *Sayings of the High One*

Nordic magic can be roughly divided into two different groups. There is the normal type of magic, reflected by the wizards and spells of the AD&D® game system, practiced by or learned from foreigners. The second type is rune magic, peculiar to the Nordic lands. Rune magic is vastly different from the normal AD&D game system of memorization and spells.

What Are Runes?

Runes are an ancient form of writing used throughout Scandinavia. The stick-like letters are easily carved with a knife, a tool every man and woman commonly carried. A piece of wood, shaved flat on one side, commonly served as a "tablet." Runes were carved into wood and stone, and used for things such as charms, contracts, boundary markers, and memorial stones.

Thus the Vikings had their own written language and were not illiterate. However, runic script had its limitations. Most important (and what made the Scandinavians seem illiterate) was that only short messages could be written using this method. Paper, parchment, and hides were not used, and boards were just not practical for writing books. Thus, Viking literature was all oral and not written down until after the Viking age. Without a collection of books, it was easy for later historians to assume the Vikings were illiterate.

Magic Runes

While runic script was used for messages, the Vikings also believed in special runes that could be used to create potent magical effects and charms. This was, however, a difficult



process, since such runes were highly secret and hard to master. Not everyone could use magical runes, only those who had taken the time to master this difficult art. This is because magical runes were ancient secrets that came from Odin. Even Odin suffered trying to learn the secret words, as this ancient text indicates:

*I know that I hung on a high windy tree for
nine long nights;
I had a spear wound—that was my work—I
struck myself . . .
They brought me no bread, no horn to drink
from . . .
Crying aloud, I seized the runes; finally I
fell . . .
Thus I learned the secret lore, prospered and
waxed in wisdom . . .*

— *Sayings of the High One*

If the leader of the Aesir had to undergo such



suffering, how could mortals expect the runes to come easily to them?

Runes are gained through insight, instruction, and reward. The character who is taught how to form a magical rune most probably learned it from one who already knows, who in turn learned it from another, and another before him, and so on until the beginning of time. Sometimes a character, after much contemplation, suddenly “sees” the pattern needed to create a specific rune. The rarest of all is to acquire a rune as a gift from the gods. A bird may whisper the secret of the rune to the character or he may even hear it in the voice of a waterfall.

Although runes have magical powers, they are not like standard AD&D® game spells. Runes are not memorized daily, to be cast and then lost. There is no limit to the number of times runes can be used in a single day. They do not have varying verbal, material, and somatic components, nor do they have casting times that modify initiative.

Learning Runes

Like spells, runes must be learned before they can be used. After a rune has been found (by whatever means), the character must check to see if he can learn it. This check uses the *Chance to Learn Spell* percentage given for the character’s Intelligence score. If the check is successful, the character can add that rune to the list of those he already knows. If the check is failed, the character cannot learn that rune. Increasing in level does not allow another check; however, if the character’s Intelligence improves, he can make another attempt provided he still has access to the rune (through an instructor or other method).

Although runes are a written type of magic, a character cannot learn how to use a rune just by studying one. There is much more to creating runes than writing them. The character must have a living example of the rune—either insight, instructor, or intervention—as

explained above.

First-level runecasters start the campaign knowing two runes. It is assumed the character successfully learned these runes and no check is necessary. The initial runes are assigned by the DM.

Using Runes

Once the character learns how to fashion a magical rune, he can attempt to use it. Of course, since the character is manipulating magic, this is neither a simple nor easy task. Even though the character “knows” how to use a given rune, it must be recreated with each use. What the character knows are the principles and steps for creating the desired rune, but each time he uses the rune, it takes a different form affected by the factors of the moment. It could be the time, place, motives, or people involved that alter the rune. Perhaps the most important part in using a rune is to deduce the the correct form needed.

This slow process is known as *shaping*, and is divided into three steps—planning, carving, and activating. Each attempt to shape a rune begins with a full turn of contemplation during which the character must remain undisturbed. At the end of that time, the character can proceed to the second step.

Carving a rune requires only three things—the rune as planned out in the character’s mind, something to carve it with, and something to carve it on. Magical runes must be carved to be effective; written with paper and inks they have no power. The carving tool and surface can be whatever is at hand (although some runes may have restrictions), but must be known during the planning stage. A character cannot plan a rune and then look around for the materials to carve it. There must be no delay between the planning and the carving of a rune.

Typical surfaces for carving runes include boards, blades, drinking horns, and stones. The most common carving implement is a



knife, although any other hard, pointed tool can be used.

The third step in shaping a rune is activating it. This must be done within two rounds of the carving for the rune to be effective. The activation can be either a poem spoken over the runes (to charge them with power) or anointing the runes with beer or spit. The exact method is generally unimportant to the play of the campaign.

All told, the process of shaping a rune takes 15 + 1d20 minutes. Upon completing the last step, either the player or the DM makes a Wisdom check for the character. If the Wisdom check is successful, the rune works as intended. The player can make checks for those runes where the outcome is obvious. The DM should make checks for situations where the success of the rune cannot be determined immediately, such as a rune against poison carved on a drinking horn. After the rune has served its purpose, it is merely a carved pattern. Runes cannot be reused.

Rune Descriptions

Unlike spells, magical runes do not have levels. Most can be learned by any runecaster, no matter what his level. However, some runes can only be attempted after mastering simpler ones. In these cases, the rune or runes that must be known are listed in the description of the particular rune.

Ale-Rune

This rune detects the presence of poison and protects against poisoning, after a fashion. Once shaped, the rune must also be carved on the rim of a cup or horn. The two runes must then be touched to each other. The effectiveness of the rune is not permanent; it is only useful for a single drinking session, although the cup may be refilled many times. If during this time the drink contained is poisoned, the cup shatters when the runecaster touches it. Once the cup is broken, the *ale-rune* is obviously cancelled.

Beast-Rune

This rune allows the runecaster to understand the speech of a particular animal. When shaped, the rune must name the particular animal it is intended to affect. A type of animal ("any bear") is not sufficient; an exact identification must be provided ("the bear that lives in the big cave at the mouth of Flossi's stream"). Once the rune is carved, the caster can converse with that animal as if by normal speech, both man and animal understanding each other. Speaking animals are typically friendly, even helpful; perhaps the novelty of speaking humans intrigues them.

Berserk-Rune

This rune, carved onto the haft of an axe or shaft of a spear, can be used to incite berserk frenzy. Since the name of the person and the instance of battle must be included in the shaping of the rune, the berserk-rune is generally only effective in set-piece battles or duels where the runecaster has time to prepare. Once the rune is shaped, the user of the weapon gains +2 to his hit points and +1 to his damage and THAC0 (but no other berserker powers). The berserk-rune does not convey all the powers allowed the berserker character. The state lasts until the character is slain, uses another weapon, retreats, or is out of combat for more than two rounds.

Catch-Rune

This rune must be tooled onto the palms of a pair of leather gloves. When the rune is shaped, the wearer, place, and time must be specified (i.e. "these gloves are for Halfdan the Seal-Hunter in the battle against the English we are about to fight"). The gloves are effective for one day. When worn, the named character can try to catch any weapon thrown at him—spears, axes, knives, etc.—by making a saving throw vs. death. If successful, he catches the weapon and suffers no damage



from that attack. If the attempt fails but the attack succeeds, the character suffers one extra point of damage from the attempt. The rune is not effective against arrows or thrown boulders and the like.

Change-Rune

This rune allows the runecaster to assume the form of a natural animal. When shaping the rune, the runecaster must specify what creature he will become. The rune is then carved on a bone, feather, or hide of that creature. Upon completion, the character assumes the form of the animal. His clothing and equipment do not transform with him. The character has the armor class, movement, attacks and damage of the creature but retains his own hit points, THACO, and saving throws. He does not gain any special abilities the creature might possess (poisons, bear hugs, etc.). The change lasts for 1d6 hours or until the character sleeps or goes unconscious, although the caster can end it earlier if he wishes.

Charm-Rune

This rune, when correctly shaped, functions as a powerful love charm. It is, however, dangerous to use. Each charm rune must be shaped with a particular pair of lovers in mind and then carved onto a plank. The plank must then be placed underneath the mattress of the victim. After each night spent sleeping over the rune, the victim must make a saving throw vs. petrification. If the saving throw is successful, the rune has no effect that day. If the saving throw is failed, the victim is charmed. He or she views the runecaster (or whomever the runecaster has designated) most favorably. Indeed, the victim behaves if in love. (Note that this does not give the runecaster or any other absolute control over the charmed person!) The charm effect only remains in effect so long as the plank with the rune remains in place beneath the mattress.

Charm-runes are dangerous to use for a variety of reasons. First, unlike many other runes, a misshapen or poorly carved charm-rune is not just ineffective; it gains the power to harm, assuming the properties of a disease-rune. Second, unless natural instincts overrule it, the charm-rune is only effective so long as it remains in place. It is reasonable to assume that sooner or later the rune will be discovered. The charmed person (and his or her kin) is apt to take a dim view of such a magical seduction. Finally, unquestioning love may not always be the bliss the character imagined; it can easily yield to other emotions, particularly jealousy.

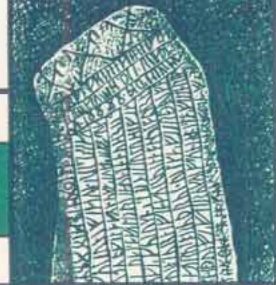
Dead-Rune

This dark and potent rune allows the runecaster to converse with those departed. When shaping the rune, the runecaster must know the name of the specific individual he seeks. The rune is then carved on a pole and driven into the earth of the grave mound or cast into the sea for those unburied. The mound then opens (or a hall appears in the waters) revealing the dead spirit seated at his high seat. The runecaster can pose up to three questions to the spirit. Although the summoned spirit cannot lie, it typically answers in riddles and poems (frequently loaded with kennings). The spirit will invite the character to enter, but anyone foolish enough to do so is lost forever.

The dead-rune has a significant risk in that not all spirits are cooperative or helpless. Each time it is used to summon a new spirit, there is a 10% chance the runecaster has contacted one of the uneasy dead. The summoning frees such spirits from their mounds and they take on physical form. Spirits released in this manner are equal in all respects to wights.

Disease-Rune

This rune is very similar to the charm-rune. When shaped, the victim must be named and the rune carved on a plank. This is then placed



beneath the mattress of the victim. Each morning thereafter, the victim must make a saving throw vs. death. If successful, the rune has no effect. If failed, the victim weakens, losing a point of Constitution per day. This process continues until the victim's Constitution reaches 0 and the character dies. Constitution lost in this fashion cannot be regained until the rune is discovered and destroyed.

Fortune-Rune

Used by seers, the fortune-rune allows the caster to predict the fate of others. Each rune must be fashioned for a particular person and carved into wood. It is then typically cast on the floor, burnt, or handled by the seeker. If the rune is shaped successfully, a general indication of the character's fate in life is given. This can be as broad or precise as the DM desires. Of course, once a prediction is made the DM should make efforts to see that what has been foretold comes true.

The Vikings strongly believed that the fate of a person was fixed from his birth and there was little he could do to change it. (Arrow-Odd, who was fated to be killed at home by the skull of his own horse, killed and buried the animal, then sailed away vowing never to return. Although he lived for three hundred years, Arrow-Odd finally did meet the fate the seer had described for him.)

Fortune-runes are useful in describing the general life of the character, his luck in a coming battle, the dangers of undertaking a long voyage, and other large-scale events. They are useless for determining the outcome of small details and events, such as whether a monster lurks behind the door. Such hazards of life are left for the characters to face on their own.

Help-Rune

This valuable rune can be fashioned to cure diseases, including most of those caused by magical means (unless otherwise specified). It

has no effect on illness caused by *disease-runes*. When shaped the caster must know the name and symptoms of the sufferer. The rune is then carved on a plank and placed under the ailing person's pillow. Each morning the patient makes a saving throw vs. death. If successful, the disease lessens and one of the symptoms vanishes. (Fever abate, pox heal, aches depart, etc.) When all symptoms are gone, the person is cured. The rune is then ineffective.

Iron-Can't-Bite-Rune

This potent rune is much valued by warriors of all types and is frequently used by raiders and berserkers. The rune is shaped for a particular person and carved onto a wooden amulet. The charm must be donned as soon as it is carved. (It is not possible to stockpile prepared amulets.) This must be worn around the neck at all times. Thereafter, the wearer suffers one point less damage from all attacks made with weapons. (An axe blow that does six points of damage would only cause five to a character so protected.) The rune is effective as long as the character wears the amulet or until the character's hit points are reduced to 0. If the rune is removed for any reason, its power is broken. Certain magical devices may also negate the effectiveness of the rune. A character can only use one of these runes at a time.

Limb-Rune

This useful rune can be used to heal injuries, particularly those suffered in battle. To be effective, the rune is shaped with the injured person's name and then carved onto the branch of a living tree. Blood from the wounded person must be touched to the carved letters. If the runecasting is successful, the injured person heals 1d10 points of damage.

Alternately, limb-runes can be used to speed the process of natural healing. The



process for shaping the rune is the same as above, but the rune is carved on the inside of a piece of bark stripped from a living tree and placed against the wounded character's skin. Thereafter, the character heals at twice his normal rate. When used in this fashion, the rune remains effective until the character has made a complete recovery. Only one *limb-rune* per character can be used at a time.

Lore-Rune

This is a potent and dangerous rune, great in both its rewards and its risks. It allows the runecaster to seek the answer to a single question. The runecaster formulates his question in the form of magical runes and carves these on a stone. If the rune is successfully shaped, an answer to the question will come to the character in a dream in 1d6 nights. Like most prophetic answers, the vision will be couched in strange and mysterious terms for the runecaster to puzzle out.

The risk comes if the rune is fashioned wrong. Then, instead of a prophetic dream, the runecaster suffers six visits by a *gast* (see *Monsters*), appearing once each night.

Luck-Rune

This rune, carved on a stick or other wooden object, gives a single person luck for one day. The shaping of the rune requires the name particular person to be protected. He must then carry the rune with him for it to be effective. If the rune is successfully shaped, the recipient gains the benefits of *Good Luck* as described in the "Gifts" section of Chapter 2. If the rune is badly formed, the *Bad Luck* effect is instead triggered. The runecaster decides the type of die to be affected at the time of shaping the rune.

Good luck remains in effect from sunrise to sunset, provided the character keeps the rune on his person all that time. Bad luck has the same duration, but remains in effect even if the rune is discarded. A character can have no

more than one *luck-rune* in operation at a single time. All others he might try to carry are instantly negated.

Nið-Rune

A *nið-rune* (pronounced roughly *nith*) is a highly charged and emotional rune to use, since it is a grave insult to the person named in the rune. (*Nið* implies shaming and disgrace and among the Vikings is associated with traitors, particularly a man who kills his own blood-kin. Such criminals are named *niðingr* and can be killed on sight by any man.) A *nið-rune* delivers a powerful curse.

To fashion this rune, the runecaster must name a particular person to be affected and fashion with the runes the wrongs that person has committed against the runecaster to justify the curse. A *nið-rune* carved without good cause automatically fails (with the consequences given below). The rune is carved on a pole, set in the ground, and topped with an animal's skull. The pole must be on the property of the person being cursed.

The type of curse delivered depends on the imagination and desires of the runecaster. Typical curses inflict madness, misfortune, bad luck, illness, poor harvests, harsh winters, bad hunting, or evil weather. The curse can never directly cause the death of the victim. For example, the runecaster cannot will a fatal illness on the victim or cause his ship to sink in mid-ocean. However, he could reduce the victim to feeble weakness (making him easy to kill) or request a terrible storm (that might sink the ship of anyone foolish enough to sail).

If the rune is fashioned successfully, the victim is allowed a saving throw vs. death to resist the effects of the curse. If the save is failed, the curse takes hold. If the save is successful, the curse is negated.

There are several risks involved in using this spell. First, it is difficult to fashion, so the shaping check is made with a -1. Second, for





the nið-rune to have effect it must be placed where it can be found. Since the runes clearly identify the runecaster and his intended victim, either the victim or his relatives might discover the pole and then take vengeance on the character. A nið-rune is a grave insult and will not be dismissed lightly, unless the target is a coward. Finally, a poorly fashioned rune will rebound on the runecaster. If the character errs in shaping the rune, the curse (or something similar to it) effects the runecaster. Like the potential victim, the player character is allowed a saving throw to avoid the effect.

The curse remains in effect until either the conditions of the curse are fulfilled, the nið-rune is negated, or the two parties arrive at some kind of reconciliation. This last can be done by arbitrating a settlement at the local thing (a law-assembly, see Chapter 7).

Quench-Rune

This rune allows the caster to extinguish any single fire. When shaped, the name of the place to be affected must be worked into the rune, which can then be carved on any available piece of wood. The wood is thrown into the fire and consumed to activate the rune. If the rune is shaped successfully, a conflagration up to the size of a single building can be extinguished. Only one fire can be extinguished per rune.

Sea-Rune

For the Vikings, the sea-rune is one of the most prized and practical of all runes. With it, the chances of a safe voyage are improved greatly, no small thing for sailors of the stormy northern seas. Since the rune is most effective if shaped and carved when the ship is built, wise shipwrights seek out the most skillful runecaster they can find. The runecaster shapes the rune and then carves it on the prow, rudder, and oars of the ship. The rune remains in effect until any of these items are broken or lost. A rune shaped during the

building of the ship gains a +5% bonus to later seaworthiness checks.

Once the *sea-rune* is carved (assuming it was successful), the ship has better chances of surviving any storm. In dangerous seas, the vessel handles as if the wind and waves were one category less. (Strong winds are treated as favorable, storms as strong winds, gales as storms, and the northern equivalent of hurricane is a gale.) The ship gains a +10% bonus to all seaworthiness checks (possibly 15% if the rune was fashioned when the ship was built). Multiple sets of *sea-runes* on a single ship are not allowed.

If a *sea-rune* is negated because of a broken or lost oar, the rune can be repaired by any runecaster who knows how to shape a *sea-rune*. He can examine the runes already on the ship and carve a new one. A check for the work must still be made. The bonus for the initial carving of the rune is lost, however, since the replacement oar was not fashioned when the ship was built. If the prow or rudder is broken, the *sea-rune* is permanently destroyed. The ship is then considered ill-fated and cannot have another rune placed on it.

Shield-Rune

Like the *sea-rune*, this rune is highly desired by all warriors. To be used, the rune must be shaped for a particular warrior and then carved on the inside of his shield. Thereafter, the warrior gains a +1 to all his saving throws when carrying the shield. The *shield-rune* is only effective for the named warrior; should another use his shield, it functions as a normal shield with no special bonus.

The *shield-rune* remains in effect until the character is defeated in a duel or runs from a battle. If either event occurs, the rune is immediately negated.

Shout-Rune

This peculiar rune can be used to free others, or sometimes oneself, from bonds and fet-



ters. It can also open locks. To use, the runecaster names the person to be freed or the item to be opened and carves the rune on the bonds themselves. He then shouts to activate the rune. This unties knots, opens locks, breaks fetters, and undoes any other restraints.

Sight-Runes

This rune is carved on a piece of wood and must be shaped for a particular individual. Once activated, the runecaster can look at the named person with the power of second sight (see Second Sight in this chapter). Because second sight allows one to see many things hidden or from the other world, this rune is often used to help predict the fortunes of others. A single sight rune is effective for one reading.

Speech-Runes

This rune is shaped for a particular person, then carved on an amulet for the person to wear. The rune is effective for twelve hours after the carving. During that time, the rune prevents enemies of the wearer from speaking evil of him. Those attempting to defame, denigrate, or spread lies about the protected person must make a saving throw vs. spell to do so. Furthermore, the spell prevents others from casting runes (particularly the *nið-rune* on the protected person unless, again, a saving throw vs. magic is made).

While it at first seems inconsequential, this rune is of great importance. The honor of one's reputation was of no small significance among the Vikings. A man's standing could easily be destroyed by slander and innuendo, particularly in the court or at the thing (the assembly). The *speech-rune*, wisely used, could prevent such a downfall.

Strength-Runes

The strength-rune does just as its name implies: it increases the strength of the recipient. When shaping the rune, the runecaster must

include the name of the strengthened person and then carve the rune on a piece of wood or stone. This is driven into the earth and touched by the named person. Thereafter, for 1d4 hours, that character's Strength is increased by 1d3 points (or 10% if over 18). The character receives all appropriate adjustments to THAC0 and damage for his enhanced Strength.

Triumph-Runes

This is a powerful and much desired rune, because it improves a warrior's skill in battle. The rune must be shaped for a particular warrior and a particular battle or setting. ("Give victory to Sigurd Hairy-Cheek today against the Wends.") It is then scratched onto the warrior's sword hilt and blade (spear shaft and blade, or any other appropriate combination). The warrior gains a +1 to his THAC0 and damage rolls. The rune lasts until the warrior loses the weapon or changes to another weapon, retreats or is defeated in the battle, or the battle ends. The rune-carved blade is the equivalent of a magical weapon for fighting creatures that can only be hit with +1 weapons. The *triumph-rune* cannot be combined with other runes that increase the THAC0 or damage rolls of the character, nor can it be applied to magical weapons.

Water-Runes

This practical rune is often used by sailors to protect against the risk of drowning. The rune is shaped with the person's name and then carved onto a piece of wood. This is set adrift on the ocean. Thereafter, the person has limited protection against drowning in the following ways: He can hold his breath for twice as long as normal. The character is automatically considered proficient in swimming. When swimming long distances (such as to shore after a shipwreck), the character gains a +1 to all required Constitution checks. The character does not suffer from exposure to icy



waters and suffers -1 point of damage that might be caused by drowning or similar water-based attacks (although these are very, very infrequent in the Viking world).

Creating Other Runes

Unlike magical spells, which are formulae that can be researched and created by player characters, runes are secrets with divine powers. The powers of runes have existed since the beginning of the world. Runecasters do not create runes, they simply discover what has always been. A runecaster cannot choose to research a new type of rune and add it to his collection; this is simply not possible.

This does not mean new runes cannot be added to the campaign, however. The DM can create new runes as he desires, perhaps in response to the wishes of the players. He can then introduce these runes into his game however he sees fit. An old hermit in the mountains, through hardship and deprivation, may have seen a vision of the new rune. An animal (who, since they are part of the earth, are often wiser in these things than humans) may know the secret. Likewise dwarves, whose knowledge of the old magic is far greater, could know the rune. The only limitation is the DM's imagination.

Second Sight

Second sight gives people the ability to see things beyond the ken of normal folk. It manifests in two ways.

The first, and simpler, power of second sight is to see those things that are hidden by supernatural means. A person gifted with second sight can see invisible things without difficulty. This primarily means the character can see spirits and hidden creatures.

The second power is the ability to see things that are to be. This prophetic ability of second sight mostly involves people. With second sight the seer can see a person's luck, and omens of the future.

Second sight can also be used to see events that will occur. For example, in Iceland there was an old wise woman with the sight who regularly foretold when the merchant ships would be arriving for the season.

What is seen by second sight will happen, no matter what measures are taken to avoid it. While most things seen by second sight come to pass relatively quickly, it is not unknown for the prediction to be fulfilled years later.

Second sight does have its limitations. Attempts to use second sight only succeed 50% of the time, and even then may not reveal anything interesting or extraordinary. Most importantly, this ability cannot be used to predict the outcome of actions. A character with second sight cannot look at a chest and say that opening it would be bad, since this requires an action that may or may not happen (Upon hearing the prediction, nobody opens the chest and thus makes the prediction untrue). Characters cannot use it to foretell the outcome of a fight or a battle, although the seer could say whether one fighter or commander's luck was good or bad. An event that depends on the specific actions of people, particularly player characters, cannot be determined through second sight.

As a last caution, the DM must remember that he is in charge whenever a character has a vision through second sight. If the DM has no idea what vision would be appropriate, then none need occur.

Some DM's may object to the gifted character's ability to constantly see invisible objects. Most of the invisible things seen are creatures from the other world—dwarves, huldre, tomke, nisse, and an assorted collection of sprites and fairies. Seeing such invisible creatures is no great blessing since they take a greater interest in those who can see them. The attentions of spirits are seldom desirable; those with second sight are often mad or touched in the brain by their own power.

... And Monsters

*From Ymir's blood fell drops of poison which
grew and formed into a giant.
All our kinsmen were so created and that's
why we're far too fierce.*

The Lay of Vathrudnir

The lands of Vikings were home to more than just human beings. Many people are familiar with tales of giants, trolls, ogres, dwarves, elves, even dragons; but how many know of the nisse, kabbelgatt, skogsrå, fossegrim, sjörå, or a horde of other creatures, good and ill, that lurked in the dark corners of the world? These creatures and many more formed part of the Viking world.

The Role of Monsters

Before throwing dragons, trolls, giants, and whatever left and right at player characters, take a little time and consider the place of monsters in the Viking campaign. The view the Vikings had of the world is much different from that found in the typical AD&D® campaign. A carefully built campaign should reflect these differences.

Although the Vikings believed in the creatures described here, monsters were not a common part of everyday life. The world is human-based and human-centered. Even the trollborn are part human in nature, difficult to single out by appearance alone. There are no dwarven citadels or elven villages. Halflings, gnomes, dwarves, and elves do not roam the streets of towns and cities. Humans, humans and more humans make up the fabric of daily life.

Because strange and nonhuman creatures are rarely every seen, humans have two dominant reactions. The first is fear. It does not matter how beneficial or helpful the creature might be, it will be viewed with suspicion and terror. Such beings have powers beyond normal men and temperaments that are difficult to predict. The wisest way to deal with such creatures is to avoid or appease them.

The second reaction, which combines with the first, is awe. These strange creatures are otherworldly. They know more about the workings of the earth and the gods than normal men. Therefore, their appearance among the world of men always has significance. Worse still, interference with such creatures can bring down greater woes, even the ire of the gods, whose ways are unfathomable.

Only the greatest of heroes (or fools) can treat supernatural creatures with casual disregard. For all others, the news that a linnorm has been seen at the ferry or that a spöke is terrorizing the neighbors is a matter of great and serious importance.

Existing Creatures

The AD&D game system, with its plethora of monsters, has tapped the rich veins of Scandinavian folklore more than once in its search for new foes. A few creatures appear under the guise of a different name (more common in English). Rather than create a new batch of monsters who differ only from creatures already described in some minor detail (an AC of 6 instead of 5), it is simpler to give these creatures an appropriate name change (if any) and note any modifications to their appearance or behavior. This approach is not practical for all monsters, however. In some cases, the Scandinavian name for a creature has been borrowed, but the description of the monster is vastly different from Scandinavian legend. This is most obvious in the cases of giants, dwarves, elves, and trolls.

The "unchanged" monsters are listed in this section, organized alphabetically according to their Scandinavian name. The standard AD&D game creature is identified in parentheses after the Viking name. For convenience, those creatures that can be used unchanged from the *Monstrous Compendiums* are listed on page 44 under Existing Monsters.

After this section are special entries for gi-



ants, dwarves, and trolls. These creatures, so central to Viking myth, require special treatment and are dealt with individually.

Existing Monsters

Badger	Owl, giant
Bear	Raven
Boar, wild	Roc
Dog, war	Snake
Dog, wild	Squid, giant
Dolphin	Squid, kraken
Eagle, giant	Swanmay
Eagle, wild	Turtle, giant sea
Fish, g. pike	Vulture, common
Hawk, small	Vulture, giant
Hawk, large	Weasel, wild
Korred*	Whales
Leprechaun*	Wolves
Owl, common	Wolverine, normal

*Found in British Isles only

Gast (Spectre)

The gast (not to be confused with the *Monstrous Compendium* ghost) is a fearful undead being that lurks in the wilderness. Unlike many other undead, the gast is the spirit of an unknown person now forced to haunt the world. It is similar to the spectre, except that it can take on solid form and can become invisible at will. When solid, the gast can make its body incredibly heavy, more than a man can lift. One of its common tricks is to invisibly sit itself on the back of a horse or wagon, slowing movement to a crawl.

Gengångar (Zombie)

Kjartan went straight into the living-room and saw Thorodd and the other dead people sitting by the fire as usual.
Eyrbygg ja Saga

The gengångar is the spirit of a person whose affairs are left unfinished. Like the haunt, it will return in an attempt to complete

its affairs. However, in its appearance and abilities, it is more like a zombie and has the same statistics as these. The gengångar is not overly horrid in appearance, although its body reflects the means by which it died. Drowned men appear dripping wet and those who die in battle often sport fresh wounds. The gengångar is not necessarily malevolent or evil; its behavior is influenced by what remains undone. A gengångar may appear briefly to announce its own death, deliver a message, see that its property is divided properly, or even take revenge on a slayer. The gengångar can speak and often arrives as a guest at a banquet.

The most important feature of the gengångar is that it cannot be destroyed by normal means. A gengångar can be defeated and its body destroyed, but this only delays the creature. By the next night, the body will have reformed and it will return. The gengångar can only be permanently laid to rest when its mission is completed or if it is been put down by the proper rituals. These rituals include holding a "door court," an informal trial that banishes the spirit, or an exorcism (if those haunted are Christian in belief).

Hamhleyppa (Werewolf)

Hamhleyppa (literally "shape-leaper") are werewolves and werebears, the only types of lycanthropes encountered in Scandinavian realms. These creatures have the same abilities and statistics as the lycanthropes listed in the *Monstrous Compendium*. However, in the Viking world lycanthropy is not a disease. All lycanthropes encountered are "true" lycanthropes. Those attacked by a hamhleyppa are not subject to lycanthropy.

Furthermore, the method of changing form is different. The Viking lycanthrope cannot assume a new form at will. The Viking lycanthrope changes form by donning the skin of the creature he will become. As soon as this is



done, the lycanthrope assumes his animal form. Once donned, the skin cannot be removed until the next sunrise or sunset. If this skin is lost or destroyed, the lycanthrope can no longer change its shape. Because of the vulnerability of this change, lycanthropes try to keep their identities a well-hidden secret.

Havmand (Merman)

The havmand is found in the ocean, usually near rocky coasts where sailing is particularly treacherous. The havmand has the same abilities as the merman, and is generally the same in appearance, although the havmand is typically bearded. The havmand is a neutral good creature. It seldom causes harm to humans. Those blessed with good fortune or respect for the sea may be rewarded by the havmand, either by seeing that the fishermen's nets are always full or, less frequently, appearing to sailors to warn them of approaching storms. Like all creatures of the sea, the havmand is able to *predict weather* at will.

Linnorm (Dragon)

Fafnir went up on to Gnita Heath and, making a lair there, turned himself into a dragon and lay down on the gold.
The Prose Edda

Linnorm (literally "heath snake") is a term used to group several kinds of dragons, both of land and sea. The most famous of these are certainly Fafnir, slain by the great hero Sigurd; the Miðgarðsormr (Midgard Serpent), child of Loki who's body encircles the entire world ocean (Uthaf); and Niðhoggr ("Corpse-Tearer") who torments the bodies of the dead. However, these three are the truly exceptional of their kind, and have attained a sort of monstrous godhood.

Other, less tremendous dragons did exist. Red and black dragons can be used from the AD&D® *Monstrous Compendiums*. Both have a frequency of Very Rare and, even then,

tend to be found only in non-Viking lands, particularly England and the Empire of the Franks.

The linnorm more often encountered (as often as these very rare creatures can be found) in Viking lands is literally a giant serpent. These creatures are nearly identical to red dragons in power. They have the same statistics as red dragons described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. However, such linnorm are not restricted to the color red and have no wings, although they are excellent swimmers. They often appear in shimmering rainbow hues or gleaming scales. They can swim at speeds up to 24 and commonly live at the bottom of lakes, rivers, and fjords, although they can be encountered nearly anywhere. (There are no reports of linnorm in Iceland.) Like other dragons, these linnorm guard fabulous treasures.

No matter what type or color, all linnorm and dragons are evil. These creatures are not and never have been friends to man or virtually any other creature. It is sometimes thought that a dwarf or giant, through greed and miserliness, can be changed into a dragon. Indeed, this was the case with Fafnir.

Nökk (Nixie)

The nökk is a water spirit similar to the nixie. It has the same statistics as the nixie, but its behavior and powers are different. The nökk is a solitary being, there seldom being more than one to a body of water or stretch of river. Each individual possess the power to charm its victims, although the victim is allowed a saving throw vs. spell with a +2 to the roll. The nökk also possesses the power to shapechange into a horse and will often use this form to lure the unwary onto its back. Once mounted the nökk attempts to carry its victim below the waters, there to drown or enslave the unfortunate person.

Another significant power of the nökk is its fine musical skill. The nökk is an expert with





instruments. It is said that many a skilled bard learned at the feet of a nökk, after presenting the proper gift to the creature. So talented is the nökk in music that it can cast a charm with it's playing. Those who fail to save vs. paralyzation are drawn into uncontrollable dancing which must be sustained until the music stops playing.

The nökk is also known by other names, depending on where it lives. The fossegrim (waterfall goblin) dwells behind the roaring falls so common in the mountainous country. Strömkarl is a name for those nökk found in rivers. Those who favor the horse form are known as bäckahäst.

Those nökk encountered are always male. Unlike nixies, nökk tend to be true neutral in nature. They do not stray far from their waters.

Nisse (Brownie)

This creature is known as a *nisse* or sometimes a *tomte*. He can usually be identified by his red cap. Wise farmers leave this little creature alone, hoping that he will bring the homestead good luck. The nisse possesses one power. If pleased or offended, the nisse can change a man's luck. He can bestow good or bad luck (explained under Gifts in Chapter 3) or he can take these away. Nisse seldom make physical attacks, the threat of bad luck usually being sufficient to protect them. So long as he is treated well and respected, the nisse improves the fortunes of the farmer and his family. If harassed or bothered too much, a nisse will simply leave the farm, after he has caused some mischief.

Some nisse do not attach themselves to a farm but are instead found on ships. These nisse are known as kabbalgatt. Others are found in villages where their influence is limited to the house only, not the farm. These are known as gardsvor. All serve the same function as farm nisse, bringing good fortune to their charge and seeing to little details. They can be offended as

easily as their rural cousins.

There are no nisse in Iceland.

Pukje (Goblin)

The pukje is a small, malicious creature of the deep woods. Although seldom seen, he is identical in appearance and abilities to the AD&D® *Monstrous Compendium* goblin. All pukje are capable with magic, however, able to cast spells as if they were 4th level wizards. The pukje seldom bands together and then only in small parties of his kind. These groups live in homes dug into mountainsides and cleverly disguised with magic. Travelers sometimes spy the lights of these homes when the pukje forget to close the door.

Pukje and dverge are often mistaken for each other and the two may have a common ancestry. Unlike dwarves and goblins, there is no overt hatred between the pukje and the dverge. Indeed, pukje treasure often includes a few items made by the cunning dverge.

Sending (Revenant)

The sending is a powerful type of undead invoked by certain evil wizards. These wizards dispatch their sendings out into the world to carry out their wicked commands. Sendings have the same abilities and powers as revenants. However, where the revenant seeks revenge on its killer, the sending's target is whomever its evil master commands it to attack. Thus the sending's paralytic power is effective against whomever tries to oppose it, not just a single person (as is the case with a revenant).

The process of creating a sending is an evil and dark secret. Those wizards capable of this deed have independently researched the necessary spell or spells to perform the task. Player characters will never find this spell written in spellbooks or on scrolls.



Skogsrå (Nymph)

The skogsrå is a wild and dangerous, yet potentially helpful, type of nymph. In appearance, it is similar to other nymphs, taking the form of a beautiful maiden. The skogsrå lives in the deep forest where hunters sometimes travel. Unlike the nymph, the skogsrå does not have the power to blind or kill. Instead, it can charm males if it so desires. Those so enchanted are led into the deepest parts of the forest and are seldom seen again. Fortunately, the skogsrå reserves this punishment for those who displease her.

The skogsrå can also polymorph herself to appear as a man's wife or lover. She takes great interest in men and sometimes even visits hunters in their own domain for her pleasure. If not displeased, she can bestow the gift of hunting skill on her paramour. As long as he remains silent, the hunter will always have success in the hunt. He will always come across game and enjoys a +1 to his THACO when hunting. (This does not apply to combat.) Should a man foolishly boast of his fortune or reveal his tryst, he will be cursed with bad luck. Little game will he ever find and he will suffer a -1 on his THACO when hunting.

Skogsrå are neutral and even sometimes evil. While they may reward those they like, it is dangerous to seek these creatures out. Few can say what pleases such creatures. They can be angered by the slightest thing, so much so that only a fool or a hero would welcome the attentions of their kind.

Sjörå (Merman)

The sjörå are a type of merfolk, although those encountered are almost always female. Unlike mermaids, sjörå can be found in almost any body of water, fresh or salt. Sjörå choose to have little traffic with humans, but on occasion make their presence known. Those sailors and fishermen who treat them with kindness and respect are apt to be rewarded. A sjörå knows of impending storms

and can warn sailors to shore. Like the skogsrå, the sjörå can grant sailors success at fishing, guaranteeing they will have a good catch whenever they cast their nets in the sjörå's waters.

Spöke (Poltergeist)

The spöke is a type of undead similar to the poltergeist. Like that spirit, it causes disturbances and harrasses those who dwell within its haunts. The spöke is normally invisible, but can assume a physical form—a ghost-like, intangible outline of the person it was in life. The spöke is distinguished from other undead by its activity (going bump in the night) and because it is the spirit of a person known to the household. The spöke's hauntings are not random; often it returns to right a wrong, finish something left undone, deliver a message, or harass those whom it hated in life.

Svipa (Ghost)

This type of undead is most frequently encountered in Iceland. It is similar to the ghost in abilities and powers. Unlike most ghosts, whose identities are known, the svipa is a mysterious undead, unknown to those who live in the region it haunts. The svipa lurks in lonely regions, particularly at crossroads (a common place to bury potentially dangerous dead). The svipa is only active at night and seeks to cause harm to those who wander within its range.

New Monsters

Not every creature of Scandinavian legend has an equivalent in the AD&D® *Monstrous Compendium*. The following creatures, though occasionally sharing the names of standard AD&D game creatures, have no parallel in the *Monstrous Compendiums*. Now, you get to see what they're really like!



Dwarves and Elves

The dwarfs had first emerged and come to life in Ymir's flesh, and at that time were maggots. But by the decree of the gods they acquired human understanding and the appearance of men, although they lived in the earth and rocks.

The Prose Edda

The dwarves and elves of Viking myth, legend, and folktale are a far different breed from those presented in the AD&D® rules. In the Viking imagination, dwarves and elves are more or less lumped together. The words are used somewhat interchangeably to indicate any of a variety of strange beings with supernatural powers. Thus, dwarf refers to many types of humanoid earth or woodland creatures.

In a Viking campaign, the words dwarf and elf can refer to any number of beings—usually an AD&D® dwarf, elf, or drow. Ignoring their differences in appearance, all dwarves and elves are considered to be more or less the same type of being. Known by a variety of names (alfr, dvergar, dock-alfar, and more) they are highly magical and mysterious creatures. Some live on the surface and are considered fair, others live underground and are called dark. All are older than mankind, having lived since the beginning of the world.

In game terms, a dwarf or elf can be any number of different beings, depending on its behavior and appearance. Regardless of its name and appearance, the dwarf or elf has the spell-casting abilities of a 4th to 11th level wizard (1d8 +3). (Viking dwarves are hardly strangers to magic!) Furthermore, all dwarves and elves can fight and use armor without restriction.

Dwarves or elves can never be player characters, although in very rare circumstances a dwarf might join a party. These NPCs will never remain for more than a single adventure, however. Dwarves are seldom concerned in the affairs of men.

As a rule, these beings are a secretive and mysterious lot. They live in the world of spirits and gods, and therefore have little communion with the world of men. Their desires and goals are not those of humanity. They are seldom susceptible to bribes of gold or jewels. Instead they may seek marriage or affairs with humans and sometimes take children to raise as their own. Dwarves of all types are usually neutral or neutral evil in alignment.

One of the most feared traits of such creatures is *bertagning* ("taking into the mountain"), the habit of luring or stealing men, women, and children away from their homes. Men lost in the forests are often lured into mountain halls by bright lights and feasting, sometimes by the allure of a seductive spirit. Women are sometimes tricked into marrying a dwarf or elf. Infants are stolen from their cradles, sometimes replaced by an elf-child (changeling) or a wooden doll. Those taken are either never seen again or disappear for years, only to return dazed and slightly mad from their experience. Very rarely, a few return blessed with strange powers and good fortune.

Dverge

The dverge is the closest in appearance to the dwarf described in the *Monstrous Compendium*, except for their crow's feet. They are usually short and skinny, often grotesque in appearance. A few can pass for normal, though stunted, men. Some sport wild beards.

In addition to their considerable magical ability, the dverge are the finest of all craftsmen for making magical devices. They typically have and use magical devices—fine weapons, clothes that make the wearer invisible, and statuettes that come to life are favorite items.

The dverge are almost never encountered. Most meetings are with travelers lost in the deep mountains. Dverge are never found in Iceland and rarely in other lands of Scandina-



via, although they are more common to eastern lands such as Karelia, Permian, and Gardariki. These beings usually live underground and are sensitive to sunlight, which causes them to have a -1 penalty on all die rolls when in the sun. Many dverge live in the otherworldly realms of Niflheim and all have the power to cross from the normal world to the otherworld.

Dock-Alfar

The dock-alfar, or dark elves, are similar to drow in abilities and appearance. They live beneath the earth and shun the light. Unlike drow, the dock-alfar are not quite as malicious or evil. They are neutral to evil in behavior, in general preferring to remain out of human affairs. They do not use javelins or crossbows of any type, carry adamantite maces, use poison, or have any of the cultural particulars of drow. The dock-alfar live in underground communities organized much like normal human communities. Like the dverge, dock-alfar tend to only be encountered in the loneliest of mountain regions. So infrequently are they seen that humans consider them more legend than fact. The dock-alfar are never found outside Norway and Sweden.

Huldre

The huldufolk ("hidden people") are quite similar to elves as described in the AD&D® *Monstrous Compendium*, and the ability scores of elves can be used. They are also known as the alfar, huldre, vattar, underground folk, or people of the mounds. Unlike elves, the huldufolk can become invisible at will or polymorph themselves into copies of humans, including people known to the characters. Such a transformation is never perfect, however. There is always a distinguishing feature to reveal the huldufolk's true identity, be it a cow's tail, merging eyebrows, or a ridge instead of a dimple under the lip. Like the dverge, the huldufolk are accomplished in

making all manner of magical things, including swords, armor, rings, and horns.

Most huldufolk, as one of their other names implies, live in the numerous mounds and barrows found near farms and homesteads. Although their choice of domicile suggests it, the huldufolk are not undead creatures. Instead their homes are magical realms reached only by entering these mounds. Others live just beyond the realm of men, in invisible lands at the edges of farmsteads. There they have their own farms and houses, often in imitation of their human neighbors. The huldufolk possess the ability to pass from one realm to the other and can take those they choose into this realm. Those with second sight can see into this realm when the huldufolk are passing from one to the other.

For the most part, huldufolk remain distant from the affairs of men. If they are spoken of with respect and undisturbed, they can be good neighbors, performing little services for the farm when no one is around. They may bring back cows that have strayed or help a little in the harvest. On the other hand, if treated disrespectfully or bothered, the huldufolk use their powers to cause havoc and suffering for their human neighbors. Huldufolk tend to be neutral or chaotic good.

Like all of their kind, the huldufolk cannot be held to human standards. They have their own reasons and motives for doing things. Male and female huldre are fascinated with humans of the opposite sex and will sometimes use their powers to trick humans into becoming their paramours. Those so romanced are typically taken back to the huldufolk's realm to live. There time passes much differently, such that years may pass outside for a single night within the mound. There is no set pace; the time variation is different on each occurrence. Sometimes a day is a month, sometimes it is a year. As stated earlier, those who return from *bertagning* are never the same. Some gain the power of second sight or good fortune, while others are simply mad for



the rest of their days.

The huldufolk are found throughout nearly all the lands settled by the Vikings. Some say these beings lived there first; others maintain the huldre followed their neighbors to these new lands.

Maahiset

This type of dwarf is identical in appearance to the standard AD&D® game dwarf, although its dress is simpler and more barbaric. Like the dverge, the maahiset lives underground and is seldom found on the surface. It seldom carries weapons and typically wears rustic clothing. The maahiset are all elementalists, especially fond of earth-based spells. As a rule, they are suspicious of strangers. The maahiset are found only in Karelia, Tafestaland, and Permia.

Dwarf Names	Fjalar	Nði
Ai	Frosti	Nyr
Alberich	Fundin	Nyrað
Alf	Galar	Oin
Althjóf	Gannðalf	Onar
Alvis	Ginnar	Ori
Andvari	Gloin	Raðsvið
Austri	Har	Regin
Báfur	Haur	Rekk
Bifur	Heptifili	Skafið
Bömbör	Hleðjolf	Skirvir
Brokk	Hugstari	Suðri
Dain	Ingi	Sviar
Dolghvari	Iwaldi	Thekk
Dori	Kili	Thjodrorir
Draupnir	Lit	Thorin
Duf	Mjóðvitnir	Throin
Durin	Moðsognir	Thror
Dvalin	Mondul	Vali
Eikinskjalði	Náin	Vestri
Eitri	Nár	Vig
Fal	Niði	Vinnðalf
Fið	Niping	Virvir
Fili	Norðri	Vit
	Nori	Volund

Giants

Odin said: Hail, Vafthrudnir! I am here in your hall to see what you look like, I have come to find out if they call you wise rightly or wrongly, giant.

The Lay of Vafthrudnir

The giants of Norse belief are some of the best known of all the strange and wondrous creatures in their mythology. It was a giant who built the wall around Asgard, land of the gods. It was the giant Utgard-Loki who tricked the gods Thor and Loki in contests of strength. It is the giant Surt, lord of Muspelheim, who will destroy the earth in the last battle, Ragnarok.

Norse giants come in a broad range of guises from the cunning and clever to the brutish and stupid. Although similar in many ways to the giants presented in the AD&D *Monstrous Compendiums*, even the least of the Norse giants is greater than his AD&D game cousin.

In the Viking age, few giants, if any, lived in Scandinavian realms. Once they were populous and lived throughout the land. Many landmarks—a precariously balanced boulder, an oddly shaped mountain peak, or a curiously shaped lake—were created (usually accidentally) or placed by giants. With the rise of men, however, the giant population dwindled and their race retreated. Of those on earth (Midgard), most dwell in fabled lands far to the east beyond Permia. This land is known by many names—Jotunheim, Giantland, and the Glasir Plains. Others live far north in the frozen wastes, in places like Svalbard and Groenland. In mythical lands, giants abounded, again to the east of Asgard and to the south in Muspelheim.

As a rule, giants share the worst characteristics of humans. They are deceitful, often cunning, greedy, malicious, jealous, and violent. Some are quite clever and skilled in magical arts. All giants are evil, though they may be neutral, chaotic, or even lawful.



Giant Names

(Fem. indicates giantess)

Aegir	Hymir
Allvaldi	Idi
Alsvið	Im
Angrbotha (fem.)	Lodin
Arinnesia (fem.)	Menja (fem.)
Aurgelmir	Mimir
Aurnir	Mogthrasir
Beli	Muspell
Bergelmir	Neri
Bestla (fem.)	Norvi
Bolthorn	Nott (fem.)
Eggther	Rind (fem.)
Egil	Skrogg
Fenja (fem.)	Skrymir
Fjalar	Skuld
Fornjotr	Suttung
Gerd (fem.)	Svarang
Gunnlod (fem.)	Thiassi
Gymir	Thjazi
Hati	Thrudgelmir
Hildir	Thrym
Hlebard	Ulf
Hrimgerd (fem.)	Utgard-Loki
Hrimgrimnir	Vafthrudnir
Hrungnir	Verdandi
Hrym	Ylfing
	Ymir

Cliff Giants

The cliff giants are one of the more common types of giant, frequently encountered in the lands to the east. Cliff giants have the same statistics and abilities as AD&D® game stone giants. In appearance, however, they stand 25' to 30' tall, have long hair and thick beards, and indeed look much like their Viking counterparts. They are also very intelligent (10-12). Some cliff giants serve under powerful chieftains of their kind, staying at his hall as retainers. Others live with their families on farms far from other lands. Cliff giants tend to

be devious and suspicious of strangers. They are seldom openly hostile, but will sometimes attempt to trick or ambush humans who enter their territory. In general, cliff giants are neutral evil.

Frost Giants

Frost giants live in the uncharted frozen lands north of Scandinavia and in the cold entrances to Niflheim. Frost giants are identical in ability and general appearance to those described in the AD&D *Monstrous Compendium*, although they stand 25' to 30' tall. They are much more intelligent than their AD&D game cousins, with intelligence scores from 12 to 15. The frost giants of Viking myth do not have shamans or witchdoctors, but 20% of their kind are mages up to 10th level in ability.

The frost giants live in cold and dimly lit longhouses. Their groupings are tribal, usually consisting of a jarl (chieftain), his men, and their families. The giant jarl in turn owes his allegiance to the jNten Fornjotr or Thrym, both kings. Because the frost giants live in distant, icy lands, they seldom become involved in the affairs of men. However, they have more than once boiled out of Niflheim and threatened the safety of Asgard and the other realms.

Jöten

These giants are among the most powerful and wisest of their kind. Most are nearly as old as the beginning of the world. They have near godlike powers and abilities. Because of their mythical background, the jöten are only found in the legendary lands of the other realms—Niflheim, Muspel, and Jotunheim.

In appearance, the jöten are truly majestic. They have the general appearance of storm giants from the AD&D *Monstrous Compendium*, but easily stand 75 to 100 feet tall. The abilities of each of these giants are unique, but are similar to those for Surt and Thrym presented in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Legends and*



Lore rulebook. It is doubtful that even the most heroic of player characters would ever encounter one of these giants.

Kalevanpojat

These giants, found only in the regions of Karelia, Tafestaland, and Permia, are a bane to the farmers who have settled there. In appearance the kalevanpojat look like hill giants. They have the same ability scores as these creatures. However, the kalevanpojat can *transmute rock to mud* and *transmute earth to stones*, each three times per day. (The latter power has the same range and area of effect as *transmute rock to mud*. It changes earth into small boulder-sized rocks.)

The kalevanpojat live at the edges of the wilderness in simple log houses hidden well away from strangers. They enjoy their solitude and will use their powers to plague settlers who expand into giant territory. Dry land becomes inexplicably swampy, no matter how many times it is drained. Good fields fill and refill with stones, making plowing impossible. The kalevanpojat are neutral evil in alignment.

Thursir

These ill-tempered brutes are enlarged versions of the AD&D® game hill giants. They have the general abilities of the hill giant, although they can *cause disease or madness* up to three times per day. Their appearance is not quite so primitive as the hill giant. Thursir stand about 20 to 25' tall. Their hair and beards are wild and unkempt and their ears are noticeably large. They dress in crude, rustic clothing, often heavily patched, and fight with cudgels fashioned from trees.

The thursir have lived for as long as the jöten. However, they are not nearly so blessed with intellectual ability or power as their brother giants. The thursir tend to be slow-witted and easily tricked or enraged. They live by themselves in wildernesses just beyond the

range of civilization. They are most common on the fringes of Karelia and the heart of Tafestaland and Permia.

Sea Giants

These special giants dwell below the waves. They are similar in size, appearance and abilities to AD&D game cloud giants. Sea giants can breathe in air or water equally well and swim or walk at the same movement rate. They can *predict weather* at will. They do not have priests among their number, although they can be 9th level wizards. They fight with their hands or spears, on those rare occasions when they give battle.

Sea giants are believed to dwell in halls beneath the waves. This is only supposition, since their homes have never been visited by man. They dress in ordinary clothing, draped in seaweed and often adorned with treasures from the ocean floor. Their hair is normally a pale blond-green.

Sea giants have little interest in the affairs of men or anything else that occurs on land. They also tend not to involve themselves with the fleets of fishermen and Vikings that ply the waves. However, the sea giants have been known to make rare appearances at the surface. Sometimes they warn of impending storms, particularly if the captain is blessed with good luck or the ship is protected by runes. For the unlucky and the disrespectful, the sea giants appear by seizing the gunwales and dragging the vessel down.

Because there is so little contact between man and sea giant, it is almost impossible to say what the motives of these beings are. They are neutral evil in alignment, although, as has been noted, they are known to perform helpful acts for a lucky few.

Trolls

The most common creature found throughout the Viking lands are trolls, but they are far different creatures from those described in the



AD&D® *Monstrous Compendium*. Trolls of Scandinavia range from hideously ugly, huge, and hulking to human in size and appearance. Yet even these normal-seeming trolls are very different from humans.

Scandinavian trolls have the same statistics as ogres as defined in the AD&D *Monstrous Compendium*. They **are not** the creatures described as trolls in those products. Most importantly, the trolls of Scandinavia do not regenerate damage.

However, like most other creatures of the region, the Scandinavian troll is highly skilled in magic. Of those encountered, 50% are highly intelligent wizards of 5th to 13th level. This in particular makes them cunning and dangerous, since they have little love of mankind who has usurped their position on the Earth.

In appearance, the troll varies greatly. Those found in Norway, the British Isles, and distant eastern lands are commonly huge and ugly. As such, they look like ogres although they dress better, wearing the clothes of their region (not crude skins or furs). They fight with the same kinds of weapons and armor as their human neighbors, although these are scaled for their larger size.

In Sweden and parts of Denmark, the troll looks almost human, like one of the troll-born. They tend to be somewhat bigger than humans, though not remarkably so. These trolls are not particularly ugly and a few can even be described as handsome. However, they are still trolls, and therefore dangerous to humans.

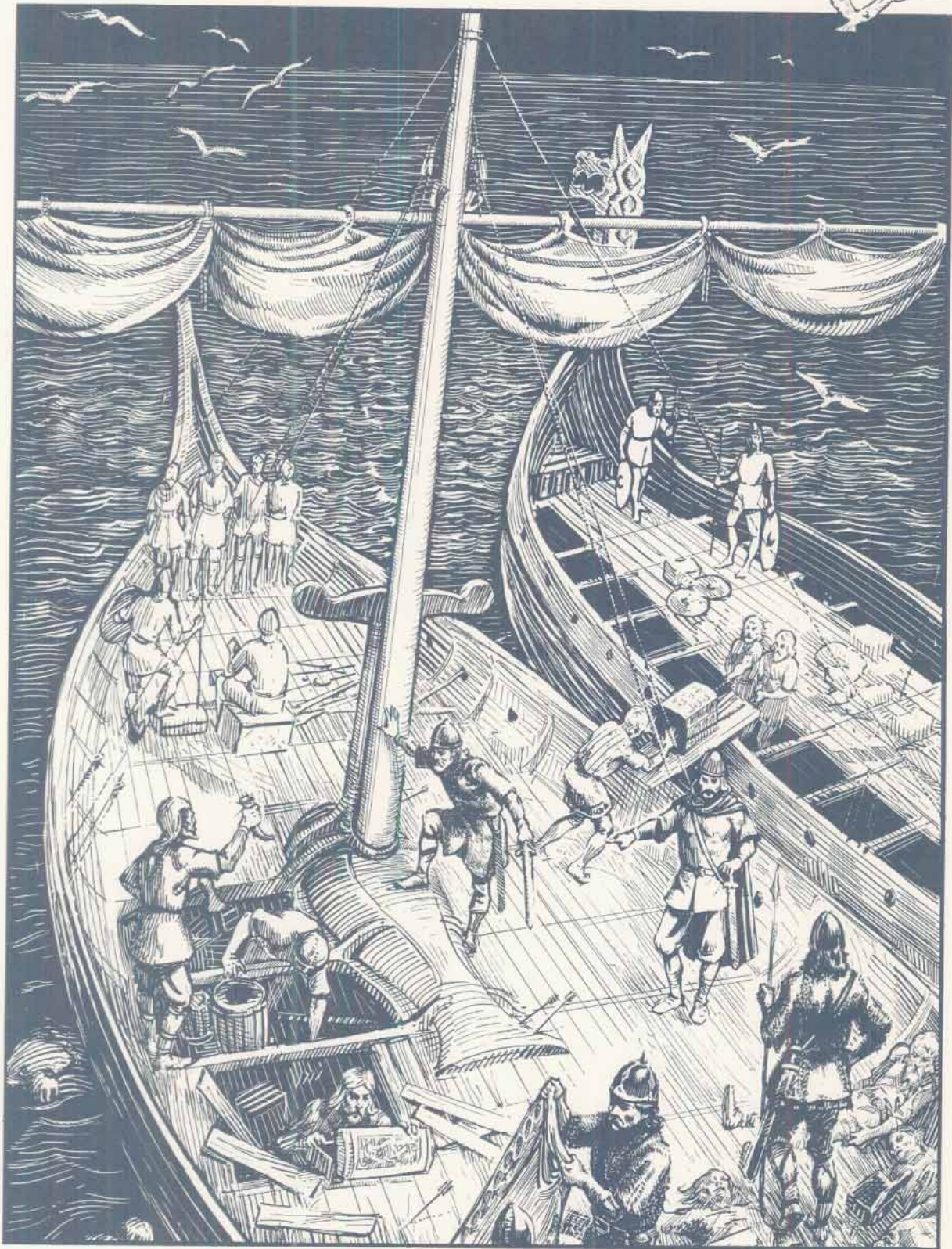
Trolls are not social creatures. Each family (for trolls have wives and children, too) lives more or less by itself. Their homes are found in deep woods, rocky sea-cliffs, high mountains, and deserted heaths. A troll will sometimes seek out a human mate, although why they feel the need is a secret only they know. A few troll wizards have been known to ally themselves with particularly cruel or evil kings and chieftains. Their magical skill is a

great asset on the battlefield.

Trow

The trow is a sea-troll, most often found around the Orkney and Shetland islands. It is neither a handsome nor friendly creature. It has the abilities and general appearance of an ogre, but it can function equally well on land and sea. The trow can breathe air or water and swims at the same speed it can move on land. The trow hate humans, especially those who venture into their fishing territory. It typically attacks by overturning the fisherman's boat and then drowning the crew. Trow homes are usually found in the rocky cliffs along the sea-shore.





Equipment and Treasure

Though the Vikings did quite a lot of raiding and pillaging, they also settled and colonized various areas. As an outgrowth of this cultural maturation, they discovered the necessity of commerce. The reasoning goes something like this: I have expanded to nearly the limit of my ability to travel. In the course of my exploration, I have encountered other people with things I would like to have. Some of these people I have been able to beat into submission, forcing them to give me the things I want. Others I have not. I have also discovered that there are people who may be able to beat me into submission to get things they want. Perhaps there is another way to do things . . .

This line of reasoning leads to commerce. Commerce, in time, leads to . . .

Money

The people of the Viking age used many different ways to settle business transactions—so many, in fact, that it could become quite confusing in a campaign. For simplicity, these are reduced to three methods: debts of honor, barter (what we call “swapping” or “trading”), and cash.

A debt of honor is fairly simple and straight-forward: I do something for you, and someday you will repay me in kind. This concept applies to all games and all cultures. Obviously, this type of arrangement is only made between people who trust each other or have no other choice. Players can work this however they want.

For barter the Vikings had a variety of useful goods that could be exchanged. These included cattle, sheep, land, ships, fish, and a whole variety of other goods. Bartering relies on the intrinsic skill of the buyer and seller, so there is no absolute value for a cow, for example. However, the following relationships can be used as a guideline.

Trade Good	Approximate Cash Value
6 yds. of Icelandic cloth	1 oz. of silver
1 slave	10 oz. of silver

Finally, the Vikings also used silver for trade. Mints were established by kings in Scandinavia, England, and Ireland and these produced a variety of silver pennies and half-pennies. Although by tradition these coins were all supposed to be the same size and weight, in actual practice they varied greatly. Silver dirhams from Arabia weighed more than local coins. The same mint might lower the weight of its own coins if the king needed money. Scoundrels and thieves would “shave” silver coins, literally cutting away a bit of the precious metal to melt down and thus lowering the value of the coin.

Because of all this, the only way to use coins was to weigh them and price everything to according to weight, not number of coins. Merchants carried collapsible scales for just this purpose. Paying by weight had the additional advantage that a man or woman could wear their wealth as silver jewelry. Men and women commonly wore silver armbands, often in the pattern of coiled snakes or dragons. Then, when money was needed, a portion of the armband could be cut off and weighed as payment. These armbands and other silver ornaments were called *hack-silver*, since they were literally chopped to pieces. The same fate was in store for silver coins that were too large.

For convenience to players and DM's alike, the Scandinavian monetary system is somewhat standardized here. While the weights, coins and equivalents given here are not perfectly historical, they are close enough to keep the feel of the Viking age. Certainly it will be far easier for players and DM's if they do not have to calculate everything according to the price of a sheep or cow! Table 3: Viking Weights lists the different names for weights and their modern equivalents. Table 4: Viking Coins gives the types of Viking coins, the av-



average weight for buying items, and the approximate AD&D® game equivalent. The equivalent allows the DM to convert the prices of items listed in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* into prices usable in a Viking campaign. Finally, Table 5: Coin/Weight Conversions lists the number of available coins needed to equal the Viking weights already given.

Table 3: Viking Weights and Coins

Viking Weight	Modern Equivalent
Pennigar	$\frac{1}{30}$ oz.
Otrogar	$\frac{1}{3}$ oz.
Ore	1 ounce
Mark	8 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb.)

Table 4: Viking Coins

Coin Type	Average Weight	Game Equivalent*
Half-Penny (xP)	$\frac{1}{40}$ oz.	5 CP
Silver Penny (P)	$\frac{1}{20}$ oz.	1 SP
Arab Dirham	$\frac{1}{10}$ oz.	2 SP

* The gold piece, electrum piece, and platinum piece have no equivalent coins in the Viking age. They convert to silver penny as follows: 1 EP = 5 P; 1 GP = 10 P; and 1 PP = 50 P.

Table 5: Approx. Coin/Weight Conversion

	Pen.	Otr.	Ore	Mark
Half-penny	1	12	40	320
Penny	$\frac{1}{2}$	6	20	160
Arab Dirham	$\frac{1}{4}$	3	10	80

Because coins could vary greatly in weight (either from manufacture or fraud), the DM can vary the coin/weight conversions by as much as 25% any time he so desires. ("Well, these pennies are little light. It's going to take 25 of them to make an ore.") This can affect

the prices listed below.

Available Equipment

As noted above, the Viking age is technologically and culturally different from the standard AD&D fantasy campaign. Not every item on the Weapon and Equipment lists will be available. Some of it had not yet been invented in the times of the Vikings. Others were beyond the resources of the Vikings or their neighbors. Some items can be found, but they are extremely rare.

In addition, the equipment lists in the *Player's Handbook* do not include some items peculiar to the Viking age, particularly the varieties of ships the Scandinavian craftsmen built.

The two tables below reflect these differences. Table 6: Equipment Adjustments lists those items not found or rarely found in a Viking campaign. This table is for use with the equipment lists presented in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. Price adjustments are marked for some items, using Viking weights (and equivalent silver penny costs). Any item marked N/A is not available for use in the campaign. (The DM may want to photocopy the lists in the *Players Handbook* and mark the changes on these copies.) The second list presents new items that can be bought in a Viking campaign.

Calculating the cost (in Viking terms) of any item not listed below is relatively simple. For expensive items, divide the gp cost by 16. The result is the equivalent number of marks for the item. Prices listed in silver pieces can be converted directly to silver pennies, one for one.



Table 6: Equipment Adjustments

Clothing

Item	Cost
Silk jacket	10 Marks(1,600 P)
Toga	N/A

Daily Food and Lodging

Item	Cost
City rooms	N/A*
Common wine (pitcher)	1 Otrogar (6 P)
Inn lodging	N/A*

Household Provisioning

Item	Cost
Figs (per lb.)	1 Mark (160 P)
Raisins (per lb.)	1 Mark (160 P)
Salted herring (per 100)	1 Otrogar (6 P)
Spice, exotic (per lb.)	5 Marks (800 P)
Rare (per lb.)	3 Marks (480 P)
Uncommon (per lb.)	1 Mark (160 P)
Tun of good wine (250 gal.)	4 Marks (640 P)

Tack and Harness

Item	Cost
Barding, half padded	N/A*
half scale	N/A*
all other types	N/A
Yoke, horse	N/A

Transport

Item	Cost
Canoe (all types)	N/A
Caravel	N/A
Carriage (all types)	N/A
Chariot (all types)	N/A
Cog	N/A
Drakkar	1,500 Marks (240,000 P)
Dromond	N/A*
Galleon	N/A
Great galley	N/A
Knarr	100 Marks (16,000 P)
Longship (large)	150 Marks (24,000 P)
Oar	1 Otrogar (6P)

Sail	10 Marks (1600 P)
Sedan chair	N/A

Miscellaneous Equipment

Item	Cost
Block and tackle	N/A
Chain (any, per ft.)	1 Mark (160 P)
Glass bottle	4 Ore (80 P)
Lantern (any)	N/A
Lock, good	N/A
Poor	6 Marks (960 P)
Magnifying glass	N/A
Merchant's scale	1 Ore (20 P)
Oil, greek fire	N/A*
Paper	N/A
Papyrus	N/A
Parchment	N/A*
Rope, hemp (50 feet)	1 Ore (20 P)
silk	N/A
Spyglass	N/A
Thieve's picks	N/A**
Water clock	N/A
Writing ink	N/A*

Animals

Item	Cost
Camel	N/A
Elephant	N/A
Horse, draft	N/A
heavy war	N/A
Hunting cat	N/A
Peacock	N/A
Pigeon, homing	N/A

Weapons

Item	Cost
Arquebus	N/A
Blowgun	N/A
Bow, composite	
long bow	N/A
Crossbow (any)	N/A
Lance, heavy horse	N/A
Jousting	N/A
Mancatcher	N/A



Polearm, awl pike	N/A
Bec de corbin	N/A
Bill-guisarme	N/A
Fauchard-fork	N/A
Glaive-guisarme	N/A
Guisarme-voulge	N/A
Hook fauchard	N/A
Lucerne hammer	N/A
Ranseur	N/A
Scourge	N/A
Staff sling	N/A
Sword, khopesh	N/A
Scimitar	N/A*
Two-handed	N/A

Armor

Item	Cost
Banded mail	N/A
Brigandine	N/A
Bronze plate mail	N/A
Field plate	N/A
Full plate	N/A
Helmet, great helm	N/A
Plate mail	N/A
Ring mail	N/A
Scale mail	N/A*
Splint mail	N/A

* These items are not available in Scandinavian lands. City rooms and inns may be found in large trading centers or cities of the Frankish and Byzantine empires. Dromonds, scale mail, horse barding, and scimitars may be found in Byzantine or Arab lands; Greek fire was a secret of the Byzantines. Writing ink and parchment can be found at centers of learning, such as monasteries or courts outside Scandinavia.

** With locks uncommon, there is no developed art for picking locks. The DM can allow a collection of small saws and blades useful for breaking and entering. Still, such a kit would not be found in Scandinavian lands.

Table 7: New Equipment

Item	Cost
Bearing dial	1 P
Cauldron and tripod	1 Ore (20 P)
Comb	1 Ore (20 p)
Ships	
Faering	5 Marks (800 P)
Longship, small	100 Marks (16,000 P)
Sexaering	10 Marks (1600 P)
Skates	1 Otrogar (6 P)
Skis	1 Otrogar (6 P)
Sleigh	10 Marks (1600 P)
Wagon	15 Marks (2400 P)

Equipment Descriptions

Bearing Dial: This simple device looks something like a top, and is an important aid for navigation. It is a flat wooden disk with a handle on the bottom and a pin and pointer on the top. Around the edge of the dial are markings for the different directions. To use the bearing dial, the captain would take a sighting on the rising sun (or North Star at night), aligning the east marking on the dial to his sighting. He can then set the pointer to any other direction and thus show his new heading. While a seemingly simple device, the bearing dial was a great advance in ocean navigation at the time.

Comb: Combs were valuable trade items and gifts, simply because they were hard to make. The teeth were carved from a thin piece of wood, whalebone or other material. This sheet was then mounted between two other pieces of wood, ivory, amber, antler, or other ornamental material to make the handle. Combs were often elaborately decorated with silver or gold fittings. These were treasures in their own right.

Faering: The faering was a small (20' by 4'), sleek, sturdy boat fitted with four oars. It carried no sail. The ship could carry a crew of four to six and their gear. In the hands of good oarsmen, the faering could make speeds up to



200 feet per round. The faering was sometimes used as a ship's boat, towed behind the longship.

Longship, small: This ship was similar to its larger cousin, differing only in the overall length and slightly narrower beam. The small long ship was an average of 60 feet in length. It had the same speed and performance as its slightly larger brother, but oars were limited to about 16 to a side. The standard crew was 30 sailors, but it could carry a maximum of 75 to 100. Cargo capacity was limited to 30 tons.

Sexaering: The sexaering was a small fishing boat, approximately 40 feet long. The vessel was fitted with six oars and a small mast. It normally carried six to 10 comfortably, but could load up to 30 sailors if needed. It can travel 60 feet per round, either rowed or sailed. The cargo capacity was about two tons. The sexaering was a common working ship found on the coasts. Although relatively seaworthy, sailors did not sail it out into the open seas.

Skates: Viking skates were simple but practical affairs made of a bone blade fastened to a leather shoe. Just like the ones today, they allowed one to move across frozen water at normal movement speed (or greater). Skates must be removed when not on ice, however.

Skis: Viking skis, unlike the slick, highly refined and expensive downhill skis of today, were more along the lines of today's snowshoes or cross-country skis. Speeding downhill was unknown to the Norsemen. In general, their skis were broader and the bindings were loose. A single pole was used, carried like a high-wire artist. To climb the slopes, seal-skins were tied to the bottom of the skis, giving the climbers traction. No lift tickets here!

Skis allow a character to move across snow with greater ease. On level ground and small slopes, the skier can travel at his normal movement rate. Going up slopes is done at half the normal rate. For long distance travel, a skier can move as fast and far as a normal

walking man. (Hills and valleys tend to cancel each other out.)

Sleigh: This is another important item for winter travel, since a man on skis cannot haul much. A small sleigh could carry up to 300 pounds. The sleigh could be pulled at half normal movement rate by one reindeer or two men wearing snowshoes or skis. Dog teams were not used by Vikings.

Wagon: Viking wagons were small and often highly ornamented. They were mainly used for ceremonial purposes and as means of transport for well-bred women. They were only effective where there were roads, an uncommon feature in the rugged mountain lands of Scandinavia. Most often hitched to an ox, a wagon can carry up to 500 pounds and move at the beast's normal movement rate.

Treasure

Since the Vikings did not have a coin-based economy, the treasure hoards characters may find in their adventures are seldom going to be convenient stacks of gold and silver. A certain portion of a treasure will be silver pennies and dirhams, but in a large hoard the bulk of the treasure will be items valued for their craftsmanship as much as their material. Jewelry, goldwork, woodcarvings, silversmithing, and glassware all represent sources of treasure in the Viking age.

The list below gives some indication of the variety of forms such treasures can take. No monetary value is assigned to any of these objects, since 1) it is impossible to know how valuable these items really were, and 2) the value of similar items can vary greatly depending on the skill of the craftsman. The items listed here are representative of actual finds from Viking hoards and burial mounds. This list could be expanded by many items, since many things did not survive burial. These include fine cloths and tapestries, furs, walrus ivory, and wood carvings. Furthermore, there were items taken from other



lands. Crucifixes, reliquaries, chalices, book-mounts, crozier-heads, and much more were looted from the west.

Amber beads and pendants from Wendland
Bone comb-case
Braided gold neck rings
Braided silver arm rings
Carolingian gold coins converted to pendants
Carved jet pendants from England
Carved wood horse collars with gilt-bronze fittings
Carved wooden chest
Gilt-bronze and silver caskets
Gilt-bronze, chased bridle mounts
Gold and walrus ivory casket
Gold arm rings
Gold disks (bracteates)
Gold filigree brooches
Gold rings
Gold spurs
Gold pendants
Multi-colored glass beads from Rhineland
Necklace of crystal and carnelian
Necklace of crystal beads set in silver
Painted woodcarvings
Rheinish glassware
Sheets of embossed gold foil
Silver and cloisonne enamel brooch
Silver bowls
Silver cauldron
Silver cloak pin
Silver engraved cup
Silver filigree brooches
Silver rings
Silver Thor's hammer pendant
Silver-inlaid axe head
Spear head decorated with silver
Sword hilt decorated with silver
Walrus ivory gaming pieces

The DM is encouraged to use his imagination in creating a treasure hoard. For example, the player characters might discover a troll's hoard (worth 720 GP in standard AD&D® game terms) that contains the follow-

ing when converted to terms suitable to a Viking campaign:

500 dirhams (1,000 P)
One gold armband (2,000 P)
Four silver brooches weighing 5 ore each (100 P each)
One small gold and silver casket set with garnets (4,000 P)
This certainly makes for a more colorful treasure hoard!

Magical Items

I've a sword called Tyrfing, made by dwarves, who swore it could bite anything, even iron and rock.

Arrow-Odd

Viking lore is filled with all manner of magical items, from dwarf-forged swords to silken shirts with magical powers. Many saga heroes carry weapons that can "bite through iron" and wear armor that "no iron can bite." Other, even more fantastic treasures can be had by those bold enough or worthy of such rewards.

Still, the number of magical items in a Viking campaign is probably nothing like that found in the typical AD&D game world. The player characters (or NPCs) are not going to be carrying bundles of scrolls, potions, wands, and miscellaneous items. Most magical items will be weapons and armor, with just a sprinkling of other items. This mix reflects the warrior culture of the period.

Existing Items

Not all magical items listed in the *AD&D Dungeon Master's Guide* are appropriate to a Viking setting. Including the vast array of tomes, wands, scrolls, dusts, decanters, and the like only detracts from the unique campaign world of Viking fantasy.

Table 8: Viking Magical Items should be used instead of Table 88: Magical Items (from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) when determin-



ing the general type of magical item found. The table here has important differences, particularly in the absence of certain categories of items (such as scrolls).

Table 8: Viking Magical Items

d100 Roll	Category
01-05	Potions and Oils
06	Rings
07-10	Staves
11-12	Misc. Magic: Jewels & Jewelry
13-18	Misc. Magic: Cloaks & Robes
19-20	Misc. Magic: Boots & Gloves
21-22	Misc. Magic: Girdles & Helms
23-25	Misc. Magic: Household Items
26-30	Misc. Magic: Musical Instruments
31-35	Viking Items
36-55	Armor and Shields
56-99	Weapons
00	Special

Even within these tables, not all magical items are available. Table 9: Unavailable Magical Items lists those things not found in a Viking campaign. Although the list of excluded items may seem restrictive to a fantasy game, players must accept certain limitations on their characters' magical power. The Viking realm is a world of men and women who most often stand or fall by their own abilities.

Because an item is excluded by Table 9 (or Table 8 above) does not mean it can never appear in play. However, before it is introduced into the campaign, the DM must think of a clear explanation for why and how the item got to where it is. For example, a *ring of djinni summoning* just might be found — if the player characters were adventuring somewhere in the region of the Caspian Sea and had come across the treasure of an Arab wizard. (Elementals are far more common to the mythology of southern lands.)

A number of magical items are usable by

priests only. However, the DM can allow certain items to be used by any character. For example, a runecaster might discover and learn the use of a *staff of curing*. In this case, the ability to use the item is rationalized as a gift from the gods.

Table 9: Unavailable Magical Items

Potions and Oils

Animal Control
Climbing
Diminution
Dragon Control
ESP
Giant Control
Human Control
Levitation
Oil of Elemental Invulnerability
Oil of Etherealness
Oil of Impact
Plant Control
Polymorph Self
Rainbow Hues
Treasure Finding
Undead Control

Rings

Blinking
Chameleon Power
Djinni Summoning
Elemental Command
Feather Falling
Human Influence
Mammal Control
Mind Shielding
Shooting Stars
Telekinesis
Water Walking
Wizardry
X-Ray Vision



Staves

Command
Magi
Power
Swarming Insects

Jewels and Jewelry

Amulets (all)
Medallions (all)
Phylacteries (all)
Scarab versus Golems
Talisman of the Sphere
Talisman of Zagy

Cloaks and Robes

Cloak of Arachnida
Cloak of Displacement
Cloak of the Bat
Cloak of the Manta Ray
Robe of Eyes
Robe of Scintillating Colors
Robe of Stars

Boots, Bracers, and Gloves

Boots of Levitation
Boots of Varied Tracks
Boots, Winged
Bracers of Brachiation
Slippers of Spider Climbing

Girdles, Hats, and Helms

Girdle of Femininity/Masculinity
Helm of Brilliance
Helm of Telepathy
Helm of Teleportation
Helm of Underwater Action

Household Items

Braziers (all)
Mirrors (all)
Rugs (all)

Musical Instruments

Chimes (all)
Horn of Bubbles
Horn of the Tritons
Lyre of Building
Pipes (all)

Armor and Shields

Only armor types available to the Viking campaign can be found. Thus, there is no magical plate mail, field plate, etc.

Weapons

Crossbows (all)
Nets (all)
Scimitar of Speed
Tridents (all)
Sword of the Planes

New Magical Items

The new magical items listed below are only part of the strange and wondrous things described in sagas and legends. In particular, there are numerous dwarven-made items not included here, since these devices were the property of the gods. Player characters have no business using godly items, however, if necessary, descriptions of these can be found in the *Legends and Lore* volume. DM's Note: Runes inscribed on magical items are re-useable, unlike those inscribed by runecasters. This reflects the eldritch, nonhuman nature of Viking magical items.



Table 10: Viking Magical Items

d20 Roll	Item
1	Bottomless Drinking Horn
2	Cloak of Dryness
3	Cloak of Fire Resistance
4	Feathered Cloak
5-6	Gusir's Gifts
7	Helm of Terror
8	Mirror of Transformation
9-10	Necklace of Protection
11-12	Reed-Stalk Spear
13	Riding Stick
14	Ring of Money
15-16	Silken Shirt of Invulnerability
17-18	Sleep-Thorn
19-20	Stone Arrows

Magical Item Descriptions

Bottomless Drinking Horn: This device is a large, fine-looking drinking horn with silver-work around the rim. Runes are etched on the inside. Upon uttering these runes, the horn fills with mead or beer, as the owner chooses. It remains filled but not overflowing, no matter how much is drunk, until the owner gives the command once again. At that point, the horn can be emptied as a normal cup.

Cloak of Dryness: This long woolen cloak is of exquisite manufacture. Its magical property is such that anyone wearing it will not become wet or cold, no matter what the condition. Even if thrown into the sea, the adventurer will remain warm and dry. The cloak offers no protection against magical cold, however.

Cloak of Fire Resistance: This long, sooty, black garment appears to be nothing more than a scorched woolen cloak. However, when worn, it confers all the protection of a *ring of fire resistance*. The cloak has no other protective powers.

Feathered Cloak: This cloak is made from falcon feathers fixed together to form a long, flowing garment. Aside from its extraordi-

nary material, it has no special powers until the command word is spoken. When activated, the cloak molds to the wearer's body and shapechanges its owner (and all his possessions) into a falcon. The character has a flying speed of 33, maneuverability class B. The feathered cloak functions for 2d12 turns and then immediately shuts down for one turn. After this pause, it can be activated again.

Gusir's Gifts: Gusir's gifts are magical arrows found in bundles of 1d3. They are fine-looking examples of the fletcher's craft with golden feathers and wonderfully wrought shafts. If detections are made, they appear to be +1 arrows and do give this bonus to attacks. However, after hitting their target, the arrows magically streak back to their owner, returning to the quiver where they can be used again. Each arrow possesses only 1d4 charges, however. Each shot with the arrow costs a charge and when all the charges are spent, the arrows lose their magical properties.

The arrows are called Gusir's Gifts because they were once the property of King Gusir of Lapland. He, in turn, got these arrows from the cunning dwarves who made them.

Helm of Terror: This powerful magical item is one of the most famous of all treasures. According to the *Prose Edda*, it originally belonged to Hriedmar, to whom the gods were forced to pay a ransom of gold. Hriedmar in turn was killed by his sons, Fafnir and Regin, who both wanted the gold. Fafnir subsequently drove away his brother. He then took the shape of a dragon and guarded his treasure. Regin tricked the hero Sigurd into killing Fafnir, planning to take the treasure for himself. Before he could betray Sigurd, however, the hero became aware of the plan and killed Regin. Thus, the *helm of terror* made its way into the lands of men.

The *helm of terror* is an awe-inspiring item. Upon command, it can *cause fear* in all who see it (90' radius), with a -2 on the saving throw. It gives the wearer a +1 bonus to his



armor class. Upon uttering a second command word, the wearer can become invisible. There is no limit to the number of times per day these powers can be exercised.

However, the helm of terror was part of a cursed treasure and as such carries a little bit of that evil with it. So long as a person owns the helm, whether it is with him or not, the character suffers from *bad luck* as defined in Chapter 2.

Mirror of Transformation: This mirror looks like a highly polished piece of silver. Persons looking into it will see nothing unusual. In truth, it has two functions. First, if the command word is spoken when a person is gazing into the mirror, that person can be polymorphed as the owner of the mirror desires. Note that the owner of the mirror is not necessarily the person looking into the mirror. If a second command word is spoken, all those gazing at the mirror must make a saving throw vs. death or be permanently blinded. Those who make the saving throw are unaffected. Only one function of the mirror can operate at any given time.

Necklace of Protection: This necklace, made of silver, crystals, and beads, confers the same benefit as a *ring of protection* +1.

Reed-Stalk Spear: This magical weapon appears to be nothing more than a harmless and flimsy reed, such as could be found in any marsh. In actuality, it is a *spear* +1, causing 1d6 +1 points of damage per attack. The *reed stalk spear* can be thrown twice the distance of a normal spear.

Riding Stick: This magical item appears to be nothing more than a crooked stick. The stick has several powers. If used as a weapon, it is equal to a *club* +2. Straddled and activated by a command word, the *riding stick* carries the character along at a movement rate of 32. It can maintain this speed for 1d6 turns, after which a full turn must pass before it can be activated again. The character does not fly, but skims just above the ground. It cannot be used to cross large bodies of water, although rivers and

streams are passable. Upon another command word, the stick confers *invisibility* upon anyone touching it. This power only works so long as the character holds the stick and it is not used for any other purpose. The latter two uses of the stick require one charge each. When found, the stick contains 3d10 charges. The stick cannot be recharged, and when all charges are spent it becomes a *club* +2.

Ring of Money: This gold ring is a very valuable magical item, a treasure beyond all worth. Each evening, after being worn for a full day, the ring creates 1d8 nonmagical copies of itself. Each copy is worth 1 ore (20 P). There is a 5% chance with each use that the ring will fail. When this happens, the *ring of money* loses all magical properties, although it still has a value of 1 ore itself.

Silken Shirt of Invulnerability: This magical item can be found in a variety of fabrics and styles, ranging from simple woolen cloth to lustrous silk trimmed with gold. The powers of these shirts can vary greatly and when found, the DM should roll on the table below to determine the item's exact nature.

1-3	+1 protection
4-6	AC 4
7	Immunity to poison
8	Immunity to fire and cold
9	Immunity to missile weapons
10	Immunity to drowning

Immunity to fire and cold applies only to natural sources (flaming buildings and arctic cold included). The character suffers no damage from these. For magical attacks, the character suffers half or no damage, depending on his saving throw. *Immunity to drowning* means that character can stay at the surface of a body of water indefinitely; the shirt will keep him afloat so long as the character is not carrying more than his maximum weight limit. Of course, if the character were trapped in a sealed barrel with no access to air, the shirt would be of little value.



Sleep-thorn: This magical item appears to be the thorn of a plant about three inches long. It is dry and smooth to the touch, giving no indication of its venomous capabilities. When pricked by the thorn, the victim must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation. If it fails, the character falls into a deep slumber. He will not awaken unless attacked or roused by another person. Noises, even those of battle, will not rouse the victim.

A small number of these thorns (5%) are even more extreme. Any character affected by these falls into a state of suspended animation. The victim (and his gear) does not age or change in any way. When pricked by one of these, the victim can only be awakened by either a specific circumstance defined by the person using the *sleep-thorn*, or a *wish* spell. (In some versions of the Volsung saga, Odin is said to have used one of these *sleep-thorns* to punish the valkyrie Brynhild, decreeing that she could only be awakened by a man who knew no fear.)

Each thorn can only be used once.

Stone Arrows: These weapons are identical to normal arrows, except they are made of stone. They are normally found in bundles of 1d3. Each arrow can only be used once. They can be shot from any normal bow. When used, the archer whispers the name of his target to the arrow and then fires the shot. The arrow flies as a +5 *arrow* toward the target named and ignores all range modifiers. If the arrow hits, it causes 3d6 + 5 points of damage. Regardless of whether the arrow hits or misses, it shatters at the end of its flight.

Viking Swords

In addition to magical powers, weapons, especially swords, had names and histories of importance. These often explained the nature of the sword's power or affected its career in some way. Below are some examples of magical swords from myth and legend.

Gram—Sigurd's sword, made by Regin from the shattered pieces of the sword Odin gave to Sigmund, Sigurd's father.

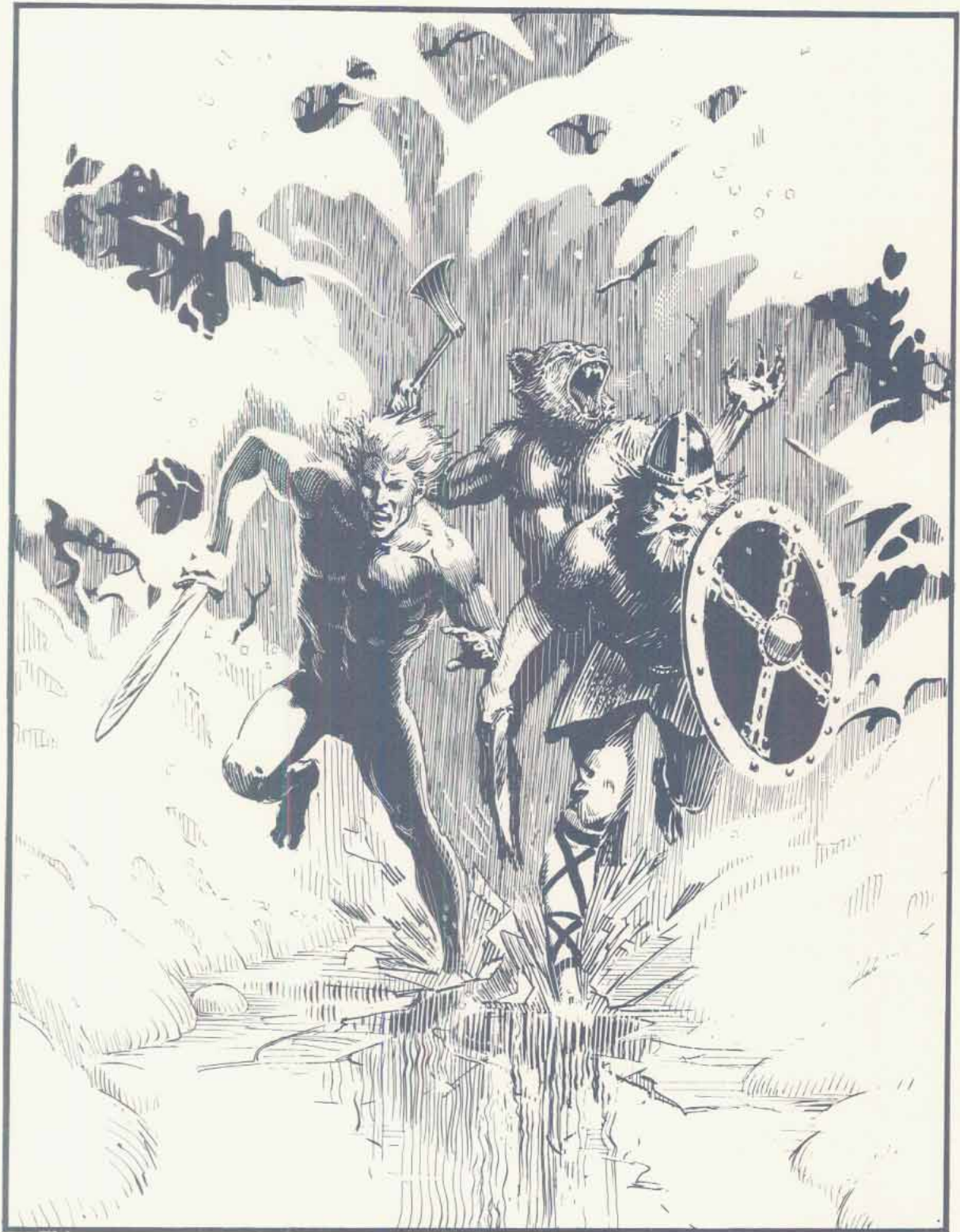
Hrotti—Fafnir's sword which became part of his treasure hoard. It passed into the hands of Sigurd when he killed Fafnir.

Mimming—Sword made by the giant Mimir.

Refil—Regin's sword, which he used to kill his father.

Snidil—The finest of weapons, it belonged to Sirnir, who had many adventures in the East.

Tyrfing—Made by the dwarves, it was stolen by King Svafrlami who lost it to Angrim. Angrim gave it to his son, Angantyr, who died on Samso. The dwarves supposedly cursed the sword so that it would bring death to its owner.



The Viking Culture

The age of the Vikings was a vastly different world from those generally portrayed in the AD&D® rules set. Many of the common pieces of equipment and nonmagical devices found in a standard fantasy world simply were not available in either the Norse lands or anywhere in Europe. With the decline of the great empires of Rome and Byzantium, many scientific and technological wonders disappeared into the bleak maw of the Dark Ages.

It is a common mistake to equate lack of technology with barbarism. Failure to build the printing press does not make a people illiterate savages. The lack of technology needed to build one does not mean they are primitive. Many people only look at the lack of crafts, machines, and sciences and from these decide the Vikings were coarse ruffians who lived only to loot and pillage.

Viking culture was primitive, but not always barbaric. It was shaped by the land and needs of the people. The Vikings were masters at crafts important to their lifestyle, using the materials they had commonly available. That they lacked centers of pottery-making or book-writing does not imply backwardness, only that the resources needed were not available.

Up to now, with chapters describing raids and warfare, warriors, monsters, and magical weapons, readers can be forgiven if they assume the Vikings and their kin were barbaric savages who lived for nothing but blood and warfare. The Vikings did raid and conquer; it is pointless to deny this. However, by focusing so much on their violent exploits, it is easy to lose sight of the gentle and sophisticated aspects of Viking life.

Besides being warriors, the Vikings were also farmers, explorers, statesmen, judges, poets, craftsmen, merchants, and artisans. Not everyone who took to the longships was a Viking; not every Viking was uncouth. Kings and chieftains included skalds among their crews, even as they sailed into battle, to see and report on their glories. (Making the skalds the news reporters of the Viking age.)

DMs preparing a Viking campaign should read through this chapter carefully, since the information here is important when creating a fully realized world. Details of dress, food, shelter, home life, customs, and law are described in basic detail here. Unfortunately, this single chapter cannot adequately cover every detail of Viking culture. Numerous books, for every age and degree of seriousness, have been published describing the Vikings and their way of life. DMs are encouraged to check a local library or bookstore for additional background material. A list of suggested titles was given at the end of Chapter 2.

Ivar's Year

To best illustrate what Viking life was like, this section follows a year in the life of Ivar Olafsson. Ivar is a young fighter and this year, A.D. 841, marks his first voyage overseas. Naturally he has much to be excited about and more to learn. While not everything that happens to Ivar would really happen in the span of a single year, his adventures will serve to illustrate many important points of Viking life and culture. As Ivar's adventures unfold, explanations and game information are given in the screened sections of the text.

Spring

Ivar is the third son of a minor *hersir* (nobleman) named Olaf of Sogn. His two older brothers, Halfdan and Egil, have already been to Dublin and Hedeby several times. Ivar, at 16, has been asking for permission to go on a voyage for several years. As the spring arrives, his father Olaf agrees to let the youth go abroad.

However, there are conditions and complications that must be dealt with before Ivar can leave. Olaf won't let any of his sons leave for several months. Worse still, Ivar has a reputation as a "coal-chewer." Halfdan, Ivar's oldest brother, refuses to take Ivar raiding. Since



Olaf can only outfit a single ship, Ivar won't be joining any raids this year.

The arrival of spring always brings plans for the new year. After spending most of their winter living at home, the Norsemen needed new supplies for their farms and households. These would include wheat, honey, cloth, and a whole host of small necessities. To pay for their goods, the Vikings took the stocks of furs, seal-skins, walrus-ivory, fish, and wood carvings they amassed during the winter months, loaded these on ships, and sailed overseas. Their goals were trade centers—towns such as Hedeby in Denmark or Dublin in Ireland. These towns had large markets where merchants came from all over to buy and sell goods.

At 16, Ivar may seem quite young to go sailing away. However, tradition holds that a boy becomes a man at age 12. In the *Saga of the Jomsvikings* one of the heroes joins this fighting fraternity at that age; he is noted as being too violent to stay at home. Still, it was much more common for a youth to remain at home until he was 16 or 18, when he was mature enough to go viking (the term for raiding). As in Ivar's case, a youth would travel under the protection of an older brother, father, uncle, or other relation.

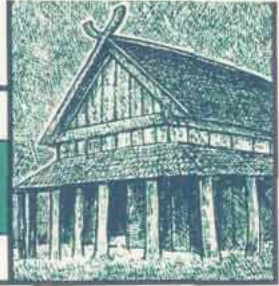
Olaf's insistence on waiting for several months is based on practicality. During winter, early spring, and late fall the North Sea is far too stormy for safe sailing. The brothers must wait until the sailing weather improves. Second, the ship must be outfitted for the voyage. Also, there is much work to do around the farm. Winter damage to the fences and barns must be repaired. Fields must be plowed and planted with the seed set aside from last year's harvest. This takes a lot of work, most of which is done by the thralls, but the family must stay and supervise the tasks.

Halfdan's attitude is a bigger problem. A "coal-chewer" is a derogatory reference to a lazy boy who'd rather sit by the hearth (the coals) than go out to do the work that needs doing. Apparently, Ivar has not been the most industrious lad up to now. However, since Halfdan is the captain, there is little Ivar can do.

As mentioned, Olaf is a minor hersir. He maintains a modest *hird* (household) of 50 *huskarlar* (men-at-arms). For the voyage, Olaf has given Halfdan 30 *huskarlar*. Neighbors, looking to make a little profit on the voyage, have offered another 10 warriors. This gives Halfdan just enough to crew a small longship. Olaf, although he has a *knaar*, can't afford to release any more of his *huskarlar*, nor will the neighbors send more men to sail under Ivar. Thus, only one ship is going this year.

Sure enough, Halfdan sails without Ivar. Not surprisingly, the would-be warrior is in a foul mood and has few kind thoughts for his brother. A few days later, two young neighbors, Thorir and Einar, arrive at the farm. They are a rough and unpopular pair, boastful of their own abilities. They challenge several other youths to a ball game. The challenge is taken up, and on the first day Thorir and Einar break the arm of one of the players. On the second day, they almost kill another player and their boasting grows even worse. Finally, on the third day, they try Ivar. In defense, Ivar cracks a stone over Thorir's head and kills him. Einar returns to his own home and tells what has happened. Only after some difficulty does Olaf negotiate a settlement.

Ivar has now gained a small reputation that stands him in good stead when a duelist from Sweden arrives. Finding some small offense, the duelist challenges Olaf to a *holmganga*, or duel. Olaf of Sogn is getting old and knows he could lose. Seeing the chance for fame, Ivar offers to fight in Olaf's stead. Since there is no one else, Olaf reluctantly agrees. After a fierce



exchange of blows, Ivar prevails and kills the duelist. Pleased with his son, Olaf arranges a ship for Ivar. He will get to go abroad after all.

After Halfdan leaves, things get very exciting for Ivar. When the two neighbors, Thorir and Egil, arrive, Olaf treats them well even though they are not well-liked. Hospitality was important to the Vikings, living on isolated farms as they did. Olaf would welcome visitors into his house and might even order a feast in their honor. In this case, Thorir and Egil did not warrant such treatment.

Ball games (which somehow involved bats and balls and may have been like field hockey) were only one of many games and entertainments of the Vikings. Wrestling and swimming contests (where the swimmers usually tried to drown each other) were popular. Feats of agility, such as walking the length of a ship by stepping from oar to oar, were ascribed to folk heroes. Skiing, skating, and tests of strength were common contests. One of the most popular sports was horse fighting, pitting two fierce stallions against each other.

When Ivar kills Thorir, he has committed a crime, even though his cause may have been justified. Unless some kind of settlement is quickly reached, there will be a blood feud between Ivar's family and Thorir's. This settlement is called a *weregild*, a payment of cash (or goods) to atone for the crime. Normally, a third person negotiates the settlement, but in this case, Olaf takes it on himself. He is a *hersir*, which gives him greater influence in the proceedings. Once the terms are agreed and the payment is made, the case is settled and no blood feud occurs.

The duelist is another way to decide a case. If a man were offended, he could seek justice by demanding the *holmganga* (literally "island-going"). The two parties would row out to an island, often the site of many

duels. There they would lay out a white cloth as the dueling ground. Before the duel began, the two established the conditions — what was to be forfeited by the loser. This was often half the other man's property. It was not necessary to fight to the death because a man could surrender once blood stained the cloth. The winner of the duel claimed the prize. If one of the duelists was killed, the winner usually had to offer no compensation to the family.

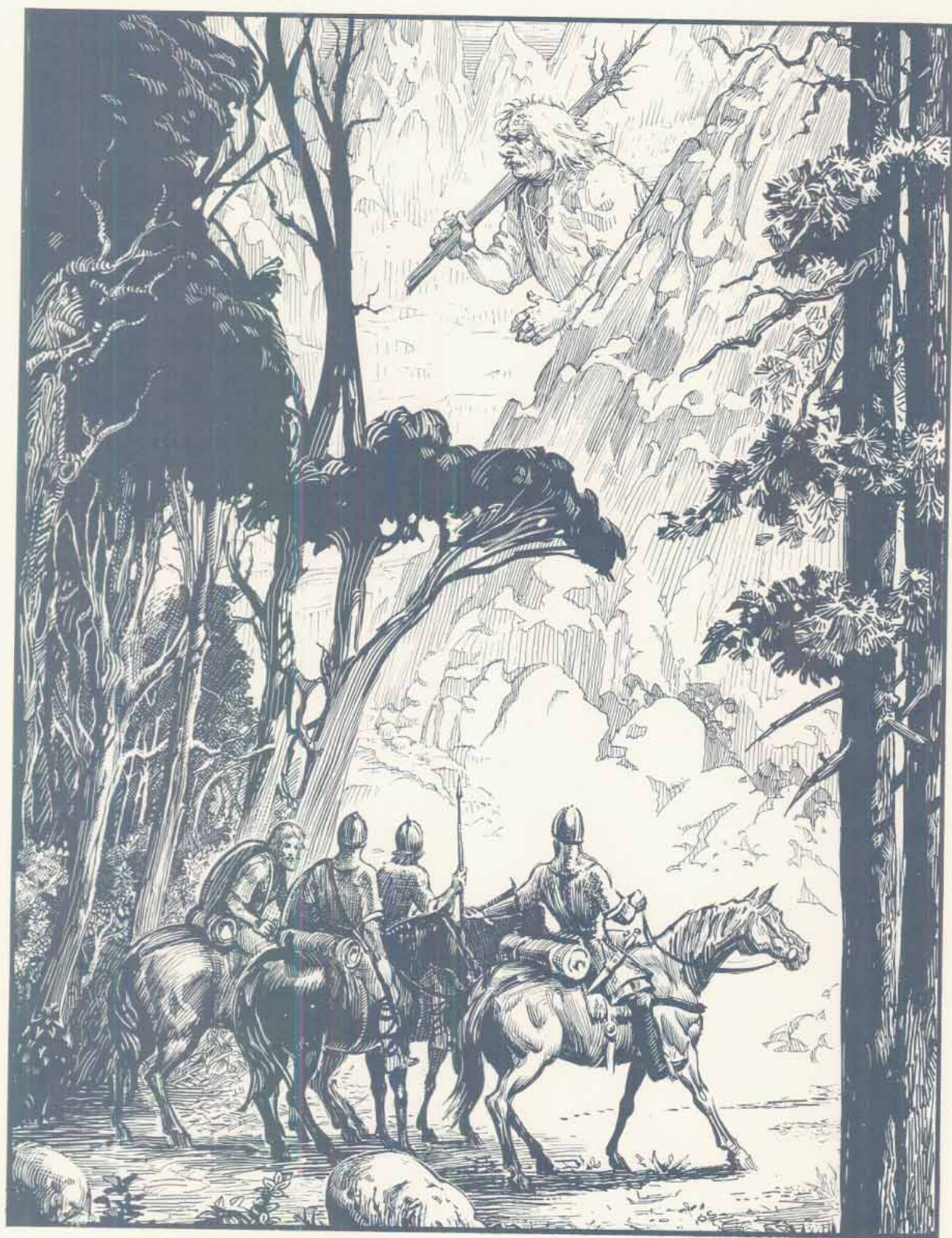
Particularly fierce and daring fighters occasionally worked as "hired guns." These men, like the duelist above, would pick a fight and hope to win property from it, either for themselves or a sponsor. Such duelists were seldom popular.

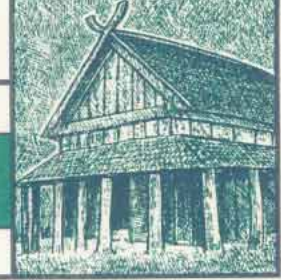
With his success in the duel, Ivar has gone a long way toward changing his "coal-chewer" image. The neighbors are now more confident in the youth's ability. Ivar and his friends form a *dreng*, a brotherhood of young men sworn to each other (similar to a street gang today). With his friends and the *huskarlar* Olaf sends with him, Ivar has enough crew to outfit a ship.

Summer

After an exciting spring, Ivar has his *knaar* and is ready to sail. Olaf provides a small cargo of trade goods. Among the crew is Hrolf, Ivar's foster-father. When wind and tide are right, Ivar sets sail for Denmark.

After several days of sailing along the coast, one of the crew spots a longship headed in their direction. One of Ivar's fellow *drengs* who has the *second sight* says the approaching ship has no luck. Encouraged by this, and since they are slower than the warship, Ivar brings the *knaar* about and orders his men to get ready to fight. The battle at first looks hopeless, but the *dreng's* prediction holds true. Ivar and his crew prevail, taking a number of prisoners.





After the battle, Ivar puts in at the nearest island to bury his dead and get oaths from his prisoners. After this is done, Ivar divides his crew between the two ships and takes them both to Hedeby.

Luck is not good at Hedeby. Ivar does not get much for his cargo and so decides to sell the knaar. He doesn't have enough crew for both ships anyway. Although Hedeby is an exciting place, it quickly proves too much for Ivar. With a fully crewed longship under his command, Ivar announces he plans to go raiding along the coast of England. The crew agree that this is a fine idea.

As Ivar leaves Sogn, Olaf made sure there was someone with experience to watch over him. That individual is Hrolf, Ivar's foster-father. It was common practice to send a boy off to a distant relative, retainer, or tenant-farmer. There, under the tutelage of his foster-father, the boy was raised. "One fourth depends on fostering," went an old proverb. When the boy came of age, he returned home to his true family, although he might also take to sea and begin his own career right then.

In leaving Sogn, Ivar followed the coast, using the sheltered passage between the coast and the outlying islands. While safer from storms, the many channels and fjords provided a haven for pirates. A knaar would be a perfect target for a longship full of them.

As the two ships neared each other, both sides would prepare for battle. The warriors' shields were fitted into special racks on the sides of the ship, that way increasing protection by raising the height of the gunwale. Archers on both sides would pelt each other with arrows, although these seldom caused much damage. The fiercest and most heroic warriors, berserkers and the like, took positions at the bow. Eventually the two ships would come alongside each other and the real battle would begin.

Those in the bow (which was somewhat higher than the rest of the ship) often tried to leap the gap and board the enemy vessel. Once on deck they would fight their way to the stern, where the captain made his last stand.

Sea battles were fierce and dangerous. It was easy to fall overboard, where a man in armor would quickly sink and drown. Fortunately, battles were seldom fought to the last man. More often than not, one side surrendered long before casualties became too great.

Of course, winning a sea battle meant something had to be done with the captured crew. In Ivar's case, he added them to his own men by having the prisoners swear an oath. Vikings treated oaths seriously, although they were just as human as anyone else. A typical oath in this case would be to swear loyalty and forswear any possible lawsuits or blood-feuds in exchange for a place on the crew and a share of the profits. Those who refused the oath might either be killed (especially if they were particularly defiant) or stranded on the island.

The other matter was to bury the dead. Whenever possible slain friends were properly buried, in part to prevent their spirits from haunting the earth. The dead were placed in grave mounds, not necessarily very big ones, along with some of their possessions. Typical grave goods included weapons, shields, and jewelry. An important man's grave might also include horses, dogs, household items, even entire ships. In the pre-Christian period such burials might include slaves sacrificed to accompany their master. Such elaborate burials would be marked by a large mound, or a ring of standing boulders in the rough outline of a ship. Often a wooden stake was set in the top of the mound, carved with runes giving the names of both the deceased and those who buried him.



Trading towns like Hedeby, Kaupang, and Birka were major centers. The town would be impressive to a farmboy, although it was nothing more than a collection of simple one-story houses surrounded by gardens and linked by planked streets. An earth rampart and wooden palisade surrounded the town to protect it from raiders. Here, merchants from Frisia, Wendland, Saxland, and beyond came to buy and sell. Christian missionaries sought new converts. Gaels, Scots, and Slavs passed through the slave markets. There was even the occasional traveler from Arabia. By the mid-season, though, many of the merchants would have already finished their business and started for home.

Fall

Striking out across the open sea, Ivar and his men make good time for England. Sighting the coast, they prowl along it until they come upon a small village. Their supplies are starting to run low, so Ivar decides to make a raid. Landing on a beach just out of sight, the crew surprise the villagers. The battle is swift and one-sided. Ivar's men work quickly, before the local militia can muster and arrive.

Loaded with booty, Ivar proceeds up the coast, making several more raids. Along the way he meets Halfdan, his brother, also raiding the coast. Ivar, having long since forgiven his brother, joins forces with him. Together they continue going north, but luck gradually goes against them. Finally, Halfdan proposes they sail for home.

Turning their ships back out onto the ocean, the two vessels become separated by a storm. After several harrowing days, Ivar finally sights land. Struggling with his damaged ship along the coast, Ivar learns he has been blown to the Orkneys. There Ivar and his crew are taken in by a prosperous farmer and invited to

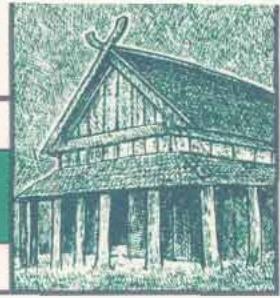
remain for the winter. Ivar and some of his crew remain, while the remainder of his men go to their relatives on other islands throughout the Orkneys. They all agree to return here in the spring.

Life aboard a longship was far from pleasant. There was precious little space for the crew and cargo. When working the oars, the men sat on their chests. When under sail, there was little to do. Meals at sea were most often eaten cold, and whenever possible the ship was beached for the night so the crew could sleep on shore. When crossing the open sea, the men raised awnings for shelter from the sun, wind, and rain. They would spend most of their time lolling on deck, waiting for their boredom to end.

Thus, land and the prospect of a raid was a welcome relief. Raiding was a legitimate and honored activity among the Norsemen. The loot brought back increased not only a man's wealth but his honor as a brave and worthy man. Often raids were a necessity as supplies started to run low. This type of raid was known as a *sandhogge*.

The preferred targets of a raid were obviously the places that had money. Poor villages had little to offer but livestock, grain, and slaves. Much more desirable were the places of wealth. Along the east coast of England, these targets of opportunity were mainly monasteries. Jarrow, Lindisfarne, Whitby and others were targets of repeated raids.

Those raided were not defenseless, however. While few could withstand a sudden Viking attack, given enough time local lords did strike back. Raiders learned not to tarry long, lest the lord and his local militia arrive to drive them into the sea. Furthermore, after a few attacks along the coast, the raiders were likely to find villages deserted or on the alert. This was a signal it was time to move on.



The voyage home required more open-sea sailing. The Vikings had no maps or charts to follow. They navigated using the knowledge of currents, winds, bearing, latitude, and landmarks. For example, the instructions to reach Greenland were to sail due west from a certain point on the Norwegian coast, past the Shetlands so these islands were barely visible in good weather, past the Faroes so only the top half of the cliffs could be seen on the horizon, and past Iceland, out of sight of land but within range of the shorebirds. By using methods like these, along with a few simple devices, the Norsemen learned to traverse the waves.

Of course, their fragile ships were still easy victims to all manner of disasters. Storms and bad winds regularly blew ships off course. Greenland and Vinland were discovered this way. Others were driven back by unfavorable winds. Many more disappeared on the ocean, never to be seen again.

These accidents of sailing give strength to another important need for hospitality. Forced to remain ashore when the oceans grew bad, a captain and his crew needed a place to stay. Displays of generosity only served to increase a man's honor. It was common for a man to act as host for an entire winter, until the weather was once again safe for sailing.

Winter

Winter comes quickly in the Orkneys. There is much to be done before the weather closes in, so Ivar and his men help where they can. Except for a little bit of hunting and fishing on good days, there is nothing to do when the icy cold and snow finally settle over the islands. The men pass the days fixing tools and ship fittings, making wood carvings, tanning hides, and playing games. Everyone,

even the household slaves, lives in the longhouse where it is almost comfortable and warm. Ivar can only wonder if his brother Halfdan made it home safely.

Finally the weather breaks and spring arrives. Messengers are dispatched to the other farms and Ivar's crew is reassembled. Generous gifts are exchanged between Ivar and his host. Eager to return home, Ivar Olafsson sets sail for Norway.

Winter was a time to rest and endure although there was a flurry of activity as final preparations were made before the ground froze and the weather closed in. Peat was cut for the fires, while others scoured the beaches for driftwood. On the Orkneys, there were precious few trees and most timber had to be imported from elsewhere. The last of the hay was brought in from the fields. After this, the fences to the fields were opened so the animals could graze on the stubble. Livestock was butchered and the meat was smoked, pickled, salted, or dried. Fish were dried on racks in the weak sun and cold, salty wind. Fishermen kept a watchful eye for whales, a good source of meat, oil, and bone.

There were some tasks best done in winter, however. Trapping was one of these. Beaver, marten, fox, sable and squirrel were all valuable trade goods. On the Orkneys, seals and possibly walrus would be the hunters' game. Winter was the best time to lay in a stock of furs for sale the next spring. Seal and walrus skin ropes were made in the idle hours.

Games and poetry were the only pastimes. If the weather was good, skiing and skating races might be held. Indoors, board games, perhaps even chess, were popular. Riddling and poetry contests tested a person's wit with words, while storytelling and epic poems passed the long hours.

The houses of the Vikings were long lodges, built of wood or earth. Solid stone



buildings were almost unknown. When stone was used, it was to make walls or foundations of stacked flagstones or slate. On the Orkneys, the long house was most likely made of turf and stone since wood was very scarce.

During cold winter nights, everyone lived in the same house, almost the same room. In this way they conserved both heat and fuel. Beds were made of thick blankets, eiderdown quilts, and possibly even furs. The slaves, if they stayed in the longhouse, slept in a group on the dirt floor, probably huddled near the fire for warmth.

Like hospitality, gift-giving was another important demonstration of a man's virtue and honor. It was customary for the host and guest to exchange gifts. The measure of the gift was a measure of the man, and also a mark of the friendship between the host and his guest. Common gifts included fine cloaks, weapons, armor, furs, or jewelry. A truly generous man might even go so far as to give a ship to a boon companion. Such a gift would certainly enhance the giver's reputation far and wide.

Social Rankings

Like nearly all medieval cultures, the Vikings were highly class-oriented. Not everyone was born equal; some individuals were clearly superior to others. Viking society generally divides into four classes: slave, freeman, nobleman, and king. Each class had a different set of rights and responsibilities.

Thrall

At the bottom rung of the social ladder was the *thrall* or slave. The Vikings did practice slavery, although not to its cruellest extremes. Chieftains, earls, and even freemen counted thralls as part of their property. A wealthy landowner might have 30 or more thralls to

work his land. Even a small property, it was felt, should have at least three thralls.

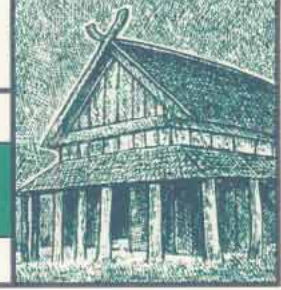
Thralls did much of the heavy farm work. The men spaded fields, herded cattle, watched sheep, tended pigs, spread manure, dug peat, built walls, and harvested crops. Women churned butter, milked cows, ground wheat, and cooked meals.

Thralls were not without some rights, though these were few. Thralls' lives were counted as no more than those of cattle, according to law. If they were killed, the master could not pursue a blood feud nor demand a repayment equal to that of a freeman. Thralls could not inherit or leave property to their children.

Still, the thrall was not without some protection. In some places, a man who killed another's thrall was subject to banishment for a period of years. If he was wounded, the thrall was entitled to a third of the compensation paid his master. (As lands became more Christian, it became a crime to sell a Christian thrall.) In general, thralls were allowed to own a little property and livestock and even engage in business. Thralls were generally well-treated, although their lives were not easy.

Thrallry was not inescapable. The law allowed several ways for a thrall to gain his freedom. First and foremost, he could be freed by his master, usually for loyal service or some particular deed. The master, in the presence of witnesses, could free a thrall, perhaps with a small legal ceremony. Another person could buy a thrall's freedom, paying the master an agreed price. Finally, a thrall could buy his freedom. With the money he earned, the thrall organized a feast with meats and beer for his master. During the feasting he presented the master with a set amount of silver (about six ore) and so bought his freedom.

A freed thrall still did not have the full rights of a freeman. Typically he was entitled to half any inheritance that was his due (the rest going to his former master or the one who



had bought his freedom) or received only half the compensation from any lawsuit. These restrictions lasted only throughout the ex-thrall's life; his sons were treated as freemen and received all the rights of that class.

Freeman

"We shall never submit to anyone at all, nor ever cleave to any servitude, nor accept favors from anyone. That favor pleases us best which we win for ourselves with arms and toil of battles."

Norse reply to an emissary of the Franks

The largest social class are the free farmers, the *karlykn* or freemen. Unlike the lands of the Franks and the Saxons, the farmers of Scandinavia were truly free. Their farmland was owned outright. Earls and kings had no claim on a man's land. (Elsewhere a peasant farmer's land belonged to a nobleman.)

A freeman enjoyed full protection under the law, although lawsuits at this time depended on power and alliances. Most *karlykn* were farmers. Others were retainers, smiths, warriors, merchants, shipwrights, skalds, woodcarvers, and any number of other trades.

All player characters begin the game as sons and daughters of *bondi*, unless the DM chooses otherwise. Bondi were independent farmers, not hired hands. These landowners had among the highest rights of all freemen.

Another important group of freemen were the *huskarlar* or house-carls. These men served as retainers to a nobleman, forming his *hird* or household. These men served as his bodyguard and the core of any army the noble might need to raise. Player characters may aspire to become part of a nobleman's *hird* or gain one for themselves.

Although a *bondi* or other freeman was not tied to a particular nobleman, he usually allied himself to a local earl or king. The noble assisted in lawsuits and protection. The freeman served in the noble's army and paid tax-

es. If the freeman became unhappy, he could switch his allegiance to another nobleman. Of course, this might anger his old ally and so it was an action not lightly taken.

Nobles

Above the freemen were the men of authority — local chieftains and earls. These were the men who kept *huskarlar*. They were the commanders in battles, had influence on the selection of the local lawspeakers, collected tribute, tended the king's estates, and enforced the king's decrees.

There were general types of nobles. The lesser, sometimes called chieftains, were the *hersar* (sing. *hersir*) or "landed men." They received their authority (along with a grant of land) from the king. Unlike nobles of other lands, the position of *hersir* was not hereditary. The king gave the title. Once given, it could not be taken away, but the title did not necessarily pass on to the son at death. The king had to confirm the transfer, again by making a grant of land.

The second noble was the *jarl* or "earl." Second only to the king, the jarls had a great deal of power and authority. Many were independent of the local kings and did as they pleased. They kept large numbers of *huskarlar*, collected tribute of their own, and ruled over districts. It was only gradually that the jarls submitted to the authority of the kings.

Iceland was unique in that it had neither *hersar* or jarls. No noblemen settled on this island and the freemen who came there did not want them. Instead the Icelanders chose 36 *goði* (which roughly means "priest") to act as chieftains. These men had both religious and secular duties but mostly the latter.

The number of *hersar*, jarls, and *goði* was never large. In all of Norway there were perhaps no more than 100 *hersar* and about 16 earls (at their largest numbers). Sweden had numbers probably similar to Norway. Denmark was hardly large enough to have equal



numbers of nobles to Norway. Iceland, with its 36 *godis*, was not over-populated with nobles. The smaller islands of Orkney had at most only a few *hersar* and an earl. The Faeroes and Shetlands had even fewer nobles.

Player characters who aspire to the ranks of *hersar* and *jarls* will not find abundant opportunities. The player character will have to be extraordinary in deed and character to attain entrance into these ranks.

Kings

The highest levels of Viking society were the kings or *konungr*. The title of king was both hereditary and democratic at the same time. Kingship descended from father to son (or illegitimate son or even brother), but the freemen voted for their choice of king. Thus, if there were three sons and a brother of the late king, all were candidates to become the new king. Since the freemen had the final say, the choosing of a king was always a highly charged and political affair. As in most things, the title went to the strongest, most cunning, or most popular. The system also encouraged a king's sons to battle or murder each other. After all, if the other contenders were eliminated, the choice of king was greatly simplified.

The idea of one king to all of Scandinavia was foreign to the Vikings. Much of the region was divided between kings, earls, and chieftains, all of whom ruled over separate districts. In Norway, things changed around 890 when Harald Finehair established himself as King of Norway. Thereafter, the Norse recognized a sole king over all the other nobles. Sweden had its own king during this time, and the process of unifying Denmark had already been completed. For the centuries that passed, however, these kings and various pretenders and earls contended with each other, keeping warfare and intrigue alive.

The king's most important function was to oversee the protection and honor of his subjects. Whether elected or hereditary, the king

was still subject to the pleasure of his subjects. The king was their leader in war. He was the grand judge for disputes that could not be settled any other way. He collected tribute from neighbors.

Player characters can never hope to become kings (unless something truly extraordinary occurs in the campaign). However, they can fill many roles in either the service or defiance of a king.

The Warrior's Way

The warrior was a central part of the Viking culture. One of the ways a man earned respect was through his sword. Combat was not the only way, but it was perhaps the easiest. It did not require special study, inborn talents, or even a heavy investment for equipment. Anyone with a club could become a brave warrior. Most, though, preferred a stout shield and a good sword.

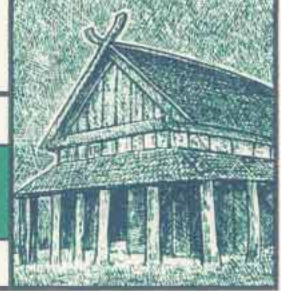
A warrior could follow his occupation in a variety of different ways: as a farmer(!), a duelist, a *huscarl*, or a society-member.

In a sense, every farmer was a warrior. The home had to be defended in times of trouble, so every farmer was a part-time fighter. Farmers, however, did not have much occasion to practice their fighting skills, so they were far from being highly-trained killing machines.

A talented, if unethical, warrior could make his living as a duelist (as described earlier). This, however, was not a way to gain friends or to ensure a long life.

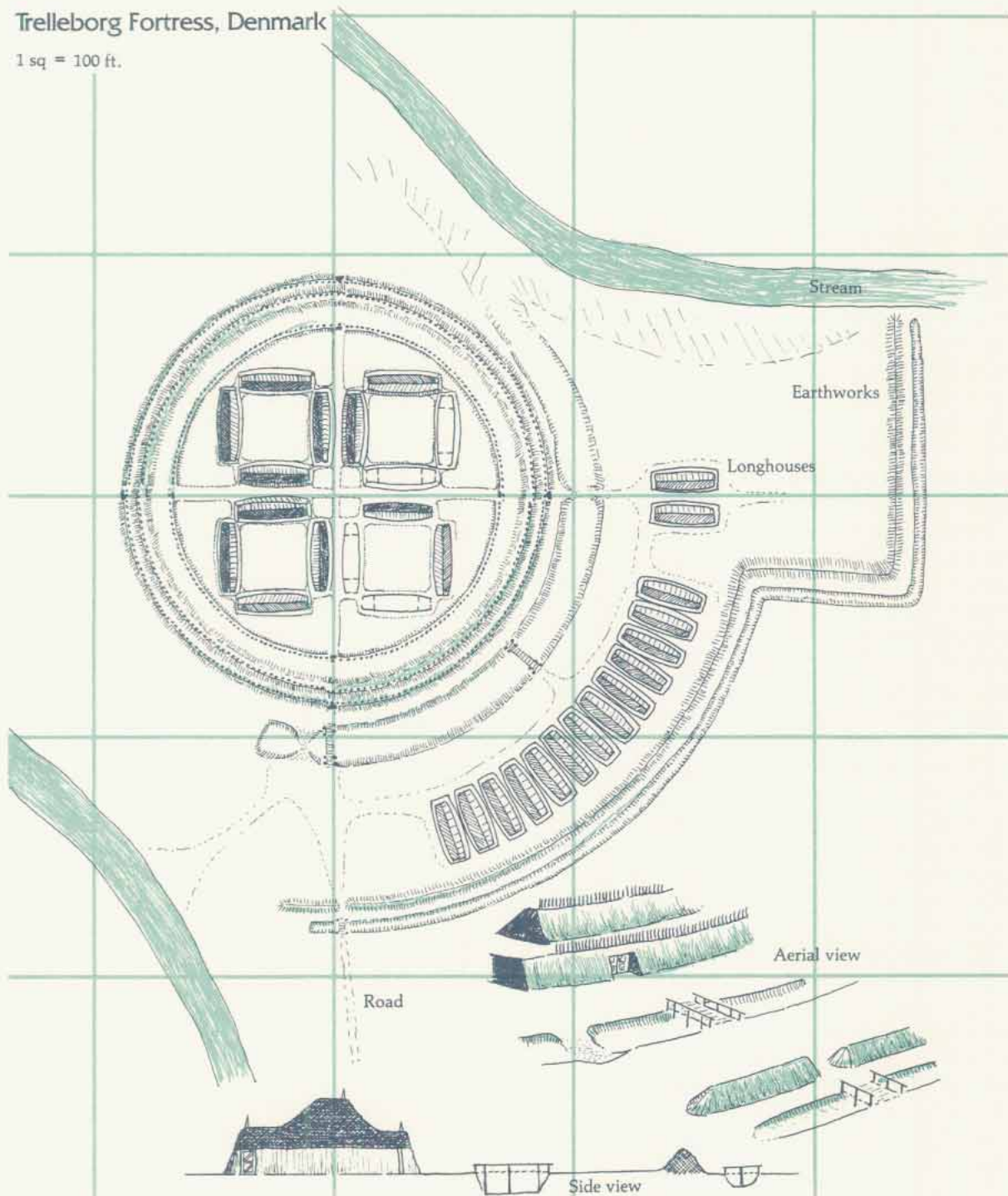
Third, a fighter could seek to become a *huscarl*. This would ensure that he was fed and housed. However, at that point the fighter was no longer his own man. Now he was subject to the edicts and commands of his lord.

A final choice was to become a member of a warrior society. These quasi-military groups organized warriors under a strict set of laws. Home was a military camp, normally a carefully laid out set of longhouses surrounded by



Trelleborg Fortress, Denmark

1 sq = 100 ft.





an earthen rampart. During the tenth century, the Danish kings built a series of permanent fortresses. These fortresses were carefully laid out camps with barracks and defenses. Trelleborg is the most famous of these fortifications.

Of the warrior societies, the most famous (and probably least accurately documented) of all these groups were the redoubtable Jomsvikings of Jomsberg. Their laws were strict. No man under 18 or over 50 could join them; every man had to avenge his fellows like a brother; they must never speak or act in fear; all loot was to be brought to the commander for division; no woman could enter the camp nor could a man be gone for more than three nights; and no man was to create trouble among his fellows. No one could join their society unless a member spoke up for the applicant.

Supposedly the Jomsvikings were mercenaries, feared throughout Scandinavia. They fought bravely in many battles, but finally picked the losing side. Captured, they were given the chance to betray their code, but in truly heroic Viking fashion (at least in the sagas!) refused to do so. As a consequence many of them were executed, and (according to the sagas) they faced their deaths bravely.

While it is unlikely that anything quite like the Jomsvikings ever existed, warrior societies are useful for a fantasy campaign. Player characters could form the nucleus of a society, gradually expanding as they gained henchmen and followers. Perhaps, in time, they could come to rival the glory of the Jomsvikings.

The tools of the warrior's trade were his weapons. The Vikings favored a small selection: broadsword, spear, battleaxe, halberd, shortbow, and darts. They also used a weapon called a *seax*, a cross between an axe and a heavy-bladed knife. Skill with the spear was greatly prized, and it is said there were men who could throw two spears at once, one with each hand!

For protection, leather or padded armor was most common. Many warriors could not

afford any better. Added to this was a large, round, wooden shield, usually brightly painted with a large metal boss in the center. Late in the Viking age, some warrior adopted the curved triangular shield. Both would count as large shields.

Those who could afford better armor wore a *byrnie*. This was a long chain mail tunic that reached to about mid-calf or the knee. The sleeves were short. The helmet was a simple conical dome, sometimes fitted with a face mask and nose guard. A few even had cheek protectors. Helmets were often elaborately decorated with bands of chased silver and brass. Wearing it, a warrior would look quite fierce.

Scale mail was the rarest of all. Only a few well-traveled warriors had this fine armor. It was not made in any land close to the Vikings but came from distant Miklagard (Constantinople). Only truly wealthy warriors or former members of the Varangian Guard, the Byzantine Emperor's elite troop of Rus and Viking warriors, might possibly have such a fine suit of armor.

Viking Women

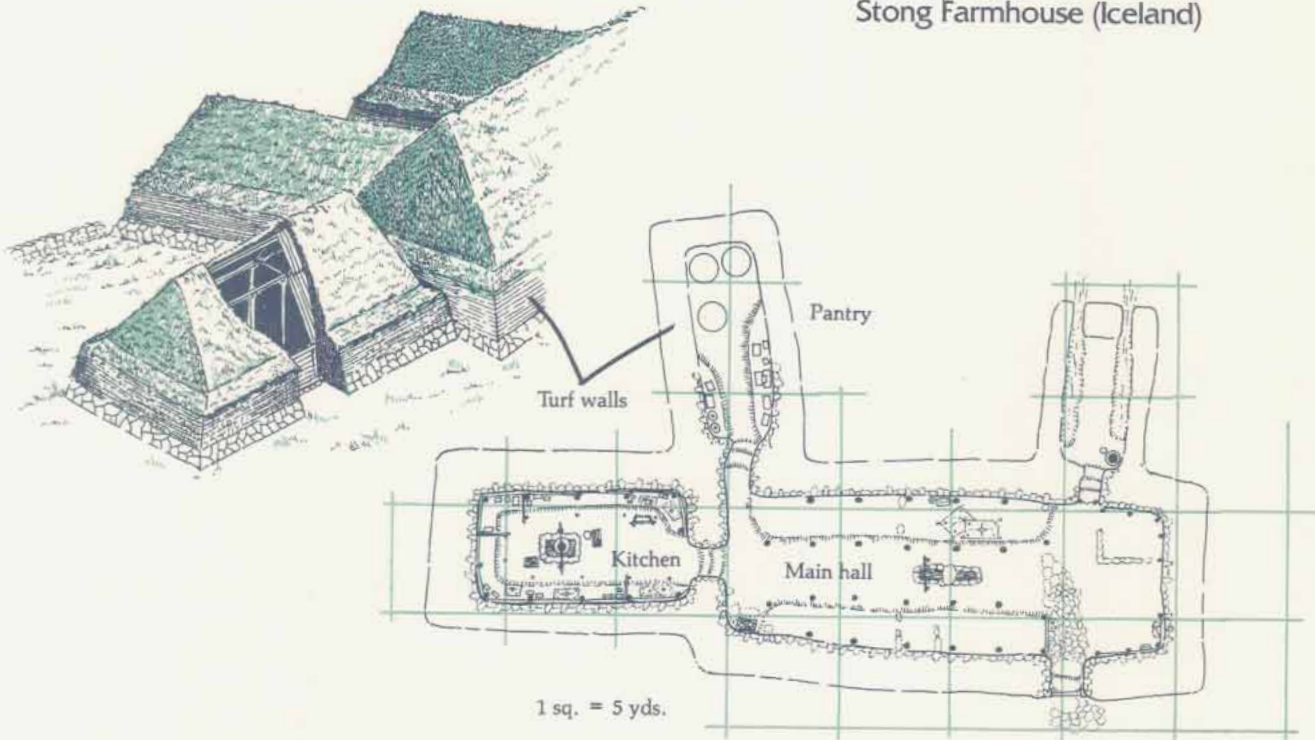
The place of women in virtually any European medieval society was not a desirable one. Their world was male-dominated. This is an inescapable fact. In the Viking world, however, they had many more rights than elsewhere.

Among a woman's important rights was control of property. A woman could inherit lands either from her father or husband, if no male heirs survived. She kept her own name and never broke ties to her family. She might even side with her family against her own husband. A woman could not take part in a lawsuit, although a man could represent her cause at the assembly.

Many sagas and historians note the outspoken and independent behavior of Viking women. It appears they had little hesitation



Stong Farmhouse (Iceland)



about speaking their minds or interfering in politics and blood-feuds. Indeed, this gave rise to the proverb, "Cold are the counsels of women," as a way of warning.

As time went on and Christianity spread through the north, the role of women deteriorated. Their independence gradually decreased and they became more subservient to their husbands.

Female Adventurers

To most minds of the age, a woman's work was as nursemaid, weaver, embroiderer, and cook — i.e., to see to the household. Maidens learned the necessary skills they would need after marriage. A wife might manage the farm while her husband was gone raiding, but this was uncommon. Often a brother or son would see to this task.

However, women in positions of power and war were not altogether unknown. Aud the

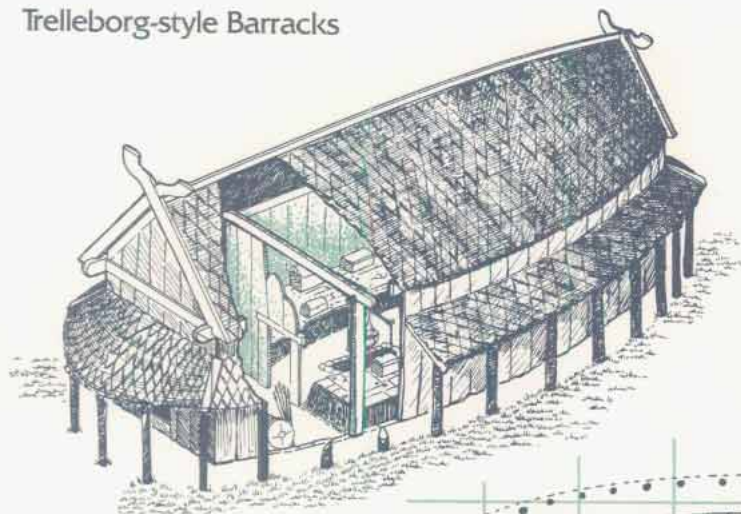
Deep-Minded was queen of Ireland after her husband died and it was under her guidance that the entire household left for Iceland. For a time there was a band of Irish Vikings led by a leader only known as "the red girl." Best known of all were the mythical valkyries, the "choosers of the slain." The valkyries, lesser gods, were warrior maidens who plucked heroes from the battlefield and carried them to Valhalla, Odin's hall in Asgard. There are also legends of warrior-queens, both in England and Scandinavia.

Female warrior characters are going to cause two reactions in male NPCs. The first is surprise and scorn. The NPC will have a hard time accepting the female character, since a woman's place is at home. It is not that she is not necessarily capable, but that she is "not supposed" to be sailing on raids or battling monsters. Certainly this attitude will make things more difficult for the female character.

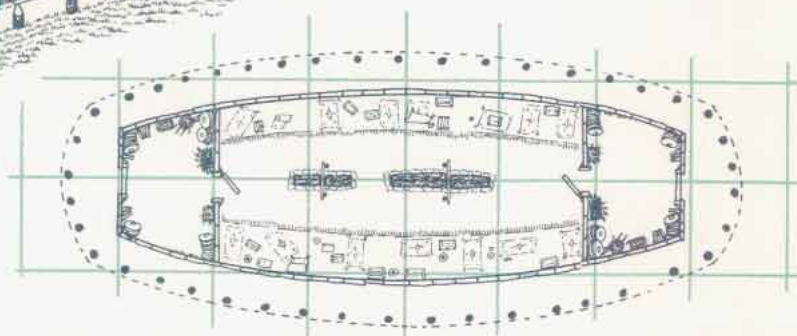
The second reaction is much more to the



Trelleborg-style Barracks



Lapp Hut



1 sq. = 5 yds.

player character's advantage. NPCs will also view female warriors with a certain amount of superstitious awe. The only warrior women most NPCs are likely to know of are the valkyries. These maidens are the agents of Odin, leader of the gods. A certain amount of inference is therefore bound to happen.

Female characters are not limited to warriors, of course, and other roles are less unusual. The sagas make mention of several wizardesses, some favorably. While awe-inspiring simply for their abilities, a wizardess would still be a rare occurrence. The same applies to the other classes.

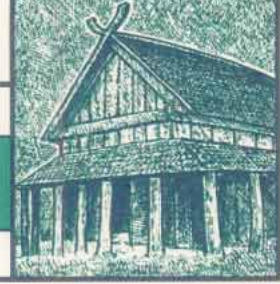
Houses and Farms

The center of Viking life was the farm. There were no large cities in Scandinavia, hardly any throughout all of western Europe. The people lived in small villages or farm communities far from one another. These

were usually along the coast, since most of the people were both Vikings and fishermen.

The center of the farm was the house. In Scandinavia proper it was made of wood and usually roofed with shingles or thatch. In lands where wood was scarce, such as Iceland, houses were built from sod along the same lines.

The typical wealthy man's longhouse was about 30 yards long and 8 yards wide. Running the length of the inside walls were raised platforms. These were used for seating and sleeping. During the day, tables could be set up on trestles. Chairs and chests were also used as seats. Besides the chests there was little other storage space. Weapons, tools, and supplies would be hung on the walls, posts, and rafters. The central floor was dirt, strewn with straw or sweet-smelling grasses. A fire pit filled the center of the hall, providing warmth and light. Wood or peat was used for the fire and was kept stacked nearby. Cooking was often done in a side room.



If privacy was needed, sections of the hall could be closed off with simple curtains. Usually the master and mistress had a large bed at one end of the hall. In some houses, this bed was actually transformed into a closet with doors that could be closed and shut from the inside. Other blankets and pillows were packed away during the day and the space used for other purposes.

A poor man's or a thrall's hut was much smaller and meaner. Generally made of wood or turf with a thatched roof, it was about 3 to 5 yards long and rectangular in shape. The furnishings were few, if any, and the space was very cramped.

Other buildings to complete the farm include barns, workshops, thrall huts, boat houses, saunas, fish-drying sheds, and grain stores. Most of these are simple buildings. The grain store, however, would be built on stilts with a ladder to the door. This was necessary to keep vermin (including bears) out.

In addition to the main farm, there was another, isolated building in the high meadows, the *seder*. During the summer the livestock were kept at these meadows to graze on the mountain grasses. Usually a bondmaid or servant lived in the *seder* and tended the herd. These lonely cabins were prime targets of bandits and huldafolk, so regular visits were made to ensure that all was well.

Food and Drink

Since the Vikings were farmers, they grew, fished, or caught most of their food. Except in times of hardship, only wine and spices were imported. Meat, fish, dairy products, bread, and vegetables were the daily fare.

Meat was lamb, beef, pork, goose, venison, rabbit, and whatever else could be brought down in the hunt. Meats were boiled in cauldrons, roasted on spits, surrounded with hot stones and covered with dirt, or broiled by hot stones in wood-lined pits. Meat could also be eaten dried, salted, pickled, smoked or

raw. Fish, of which there was plenty, was cooked in much the same way. It could be flavored with mustard, juniper, cumin, horseradish, or other simple seasonings. Exotic spices such as pepper were very rare.

Milk was churned into butter and pressed into cheese. Curds and whey were common. Milk was a common drink.

Breads were flat, unleavened, and made of barley, rye, or peas. The poor ate bread made from the husks of these grains. Breads would probably include a fair amount of grit from the grinding stone along with other strange substances, like pine bark and ashes.

Vegetables were not common. Peas and beans were grown in gardens, along with kale. Other greens were gathered from the wild. Fruits were picked from the wild. These included berries, apples, and other orchard fruit.

The main drink was either mead, an alcoholic brew made from honey, or beer. Wine was a great rarity. Whatever they had, the Vikings seemed to be able to drink immense amounts from wooden cups or drinking horns.

Trade

Raiding and warfare were not the sole occupations of the Vikings. Indeed as time passed, prime raiding targets became places for settlement and trade. In the early part of the Viking age, Vikings relentlessly struck at the English, French, and German coasts. Gradually these raids became less frequent as the Vikings settled in these regions and discovered the more profitable advantages of trade.

Trade was vital for the Vikings because their own homeland was poor in many necessary goods and skills. Trade was conducted for both useful and luxury goods.

Fortunately, although poor in some things, the Scandinavians had many desirable resources to trade. These included thralls, iron, horn, furs, walrus ivory, honey, ropes, fish,



and timber. What they wanted in exchange were silver, glassware, swords, woolens, salt, spices, silk, and wine.

Trading goods were normally carried by ship to market towns such as Hedeby. This sea trade only encouraged piracy, which was always a hazard. Storms and misfortunes at sea added to the cost of shipping goods. Once at market, the goods were usually sold to a middleman who in turn sold the goods to merchants from the rest of Europe.

The Vikings, perhaps not content to rely on these trading towns, developed new trade routes in the wake of their raids. Some sailed with goods up the Rhine, but the greatest adventure was in Russia. Several major trade routes crossed the whole of Russia from the Baltic to the Black Sea. One involved sailing down the Dvina River, hauling goods and boats overland to the Dnieper River, and sailing to Gnezdovo or Kiev. The adventurous could from there continue their voyage for six weeks all the way to the Black Sea and fabled Miklagard, as Constantinople was called. A second river route started at the end of the Gulf of Finland, sailed up the Neva to Lake Ladoga, then down the Volchov to Novgorod. From here a Viking could continue down the Lovat, and once again drag his ships overland to the Dnieper. The third great route began like the second in the Gulf of Finland. From there the intrepid Viking could either choose to go to Novgorod or Lake Onega. Once again, an overland portage was required, this time to reach the great Volga. This mighty river carried the Vikings all the way to the Caspian Sea. Here they met with Arab traders from Baghdad and caravans traveling the 5,000 mile Silk Road from China.

These were not rare voyages. The Vikings plied these rivers enough to found towns and states. Indeed Rus and Viking fleets threatened Constantinople and raided ports on the Caspian Sea!

Thralls were normally taken in raids. Thus, in the early part of their expansion, Vikings

had Celts, Gaels, Saxons, Franks, and Wends as thralls. They also did not neglect their own people. Danes took Norwegians as thralls, Norwegians took Danes. As a general rule, the people one didn't take as thralls were people of the same district or region. Raiding nearby districts resulted in blood feuds and lawsuits and generally did not make for good neighbors. Not everyone captured in raids was taken back to tend the farm. The Vikings sold more of their thralls than they actually kept. The major market towns of Hedeby and Birka had thrall markets where the Vikings brought their goods to sell to Western and Arab merchants. Thralls sold by the Vikings were taken south to the Moslem lands on the Mediterranean.

As the western nations became Christianized, the source of thralls shifted east. These countries refused to sell Christian thralls to the Arabs, but had no similar qualms about pagans. Slavs from Gardariki (Russia) and other pagans from the Baltic were now the targets of Viking raids. Christian thralls were kept to work the Norse farms.

Law

For all their warlike behavior, the Vikings were a very legal-minded people. Although they had a king and nobles, the people founded semi-democratic assemblies virtually everywhere they went. These assemblies existed to hear and settle disputes between men and to pass laws concerning the governing of the district.

An assembly was known as a *thing*. The thing was an assembly of freemen. Jealous of their rights, the people enforced special laws restricting hersar and jarls from these assemblies. The things existed to hear lawsuits brought by one man against another. After listening to arguments and witnesses from both sides, the assembly made a judgement on the case.

Of course, the whole procedure and functioning of things was much more complicated



than this. Although the thing existed to settle matters in a given region, a difficult case could be sent to a different thing for settlement (much like a change in jurisdiction in the courts today). Special things existed to settle differences between men of different districts.

The things were held at a permanent assembly place. This was sacred ground. When the thing was in session, drawing weapons was forbidden. The thing met at certain times of the year, often in conjunction with festivals. Men of the district would travel to the thing and set up tents at specific places, often handed down from father to son. A thing would last several days, during which cases would be presented and judged upon. It would also, quite naturally, be a time for meeting old friends and feasting. Of course, it was also a time to meet old and new enemies, hence the restrictions on weapons and fighting.

The leader of the thing was the lawspeaker. He was responsible for seeing that the rules and procedures were followed, and had great influence at the thing. The lawspeaker was chosen by the freemen in attendance. The position went to people of importance and standing.

All manner of cases could be heard at a thing. Any dispute between two people was likely to be presented. These included arguments over property lines, divisions of inheritance, killings, thefts, insults, and divorce settlements. A woman could not bring a case to the thing, although any man — husband, brother, son, or father — could represent her in the issue.

Cases were settled by the vote of the thing. In theory, both sides presented their arguments and witnesses. The freemen of the thing then deliberated for a day or two and finally reached a decision. However, since it was often impractical for the entire assembly to work out an agreement, cases were usually assigned to three judges chosen by the assembly and approved by those involved. These judges would decide the terms of the settlement and present their decision to the defend-

ant and plaintiff. If either side refused the settlement, he was considered an outlaw.

Unlike modern courts, the thing seldom tried to punish the guilty. Nor were there any prisons to send the criminal away to. Instead, the assembly's goal was to reach a settlement between the two parties, ensuring peace in the neighborhood. Settlements usually required payment for damages and fines on the person voted to be in the wrong. Indeed, many court cases were brought in the hope of winning a judgement and increasing one's own wealth!

A thing might best be compared to a political convention of today, rather than a courtroom. The object was to get the freemen of the assembly, or the judges, to vote for your side (rather like getting delegates to vote for your candidate). This involved a lot of persuading, negotiating, and private conversations among the tents of the freemen. Like a political contest, a more popular and powerful man had greater influence on the outcome. (Remember that reaching a settlement, not justice, was the issue.) Friendships were often made or broken at the thing.

In cases of killing, peace could be made (at least on the surface) by reaching a settlement and paying a *weregild*, a "man-price." The amounts paid were set by tradition and law and varied according to the relationship of the slain person to the complainant. Of course, men of power and influence could demand (and often get) more than the customary amounts.

It was not necessary to bring every case before the thing. A settlement could be reached outside the assembly at any time. For example, Thorolf has accidentally killed Bjorn's youngest son. Rather than wait for the next thing, letting the bad blood between them grow, Thorolf wants to make peace quickly. Therefore, he asks Snorri, his friend, to approach Bjorn about a settlement. After some negotiation on both sides an agreement is reached. Thorolf pays the settlement and the issue is dropped.



Again, the choice of negotiator was a careful and political thing. Ideally the person chosen should favor your side and be powerful enough to persuade the other to accept the terms. It helps if the mediator is on friendly terms with the other party, too. Of course, this is not always possible. If the injured party was a very powerful man, a wise decision would be to let him fix his own terms. This show of generosity and humility could go a long way toward soothing feelings.

If the injured party did not accept the terms of a settlement, then a blood-feud could result. At that point it was war between the two families. It was not necessary to kill the guilty person to gain revenge. Any member of his family was generally sufficient (although women were seldom targets of such feuds). This killing would naturally lead to a counter-attack and it would continue back and forth until either everyone on one side was dead or a settlement was finally reached.

If a man refused to honor the terms of a judgement reached by the thing, or if he had committed too terrible a crime to be settled, i.e., treason or kin-slaying, he was outlawed, banished either for three years or life. The outlaw was allowed a reasonable amount of time to leave the land, usually long enough to return home and outfit a ship, although this could be extended if the sailing season was bad. After this period, the criminal was never to return (unless the sentence was only for three years). If discovered in the country, he could be killed without fear of a blood-feud or weregild. Of course, friends could be expected to shelter an outlaw, even though this in turn would bring the law down on the friend.

Religion

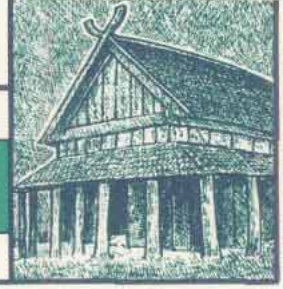
"Thorolf threw overboard the high-seat pillars . . . and declared that he would settle at any place in Iceland where Thor chose to send the pillars ashore."

Eyrbyggja Saga

The Many Names of Odin

With the variety of people and practices, nothing about religion was straightforward or clear cut. The following list shows just how varied even the names of the gods could be.

Allfod - All-Father
Baleyg - Flame-eyed One
Biflindi - Spear Shaker
Bileyg - One-Eyed
Bolverk - Worker of Evil
Farmagud - God of Cargoes
Farmatyr - God of Cargoes
Fjolnir - Much-Knowing
Fjolsvid - Very Wise One
Grani - Horsehair
Grim - Masked One
Grimnir - Masked One
Hangagud - God of the Hanged
Haptagud - God of the Gods
Har - High One
Harbard - Greybearded One
Helblindi - One Who Blinds with Death
Herjan - Raider
Herteit - Glad of War
Hjalmberi - Helmeted One
Hnikar - Spear Thruster
Hnikud - Spear Thruster
Jalk - Gelding
Jafhnar - Just as High
Omi - One Whose Speech Resounds
Oski - Fulfiller of Desire
Sanngetal - One Who Guesses Correctly
Sidhott - Deep-Hooded One
Sidskegg - Long-Bearded One
Sigfod - Father of Battle
Svipall - Changeable One
Thekk - Pleasant One
Thridi - Third
Thund - Thin One
Vak - Alert One
Veratyr - God of Men
Vidrir - Ruler of Weather
Ygg - Terrible One



Nordic religion and its practices is a particularly mysterious subject. The Vikings left little in the way of chronicles of their religious rites and with the rise of Christianity the old ways were suppressed. At the same time, later poets left behind rich descriptions of the adventures and foibles of the gods. The result is an interesting paradox — more is known about the Nordic gods than how these gods were actually worshipped.

The Norse gods, always popular in AD&D® campaigns, are not described here. Complete details on these powers can be found in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Legends and Lore* rulebook. DMs who want to have the gods take an active and involved role in the campaign world should look to this rulebook for information.

Few men worshipped a single god only. There is an occasional note that a warrior was a man of Thor, but common-sense people worshipped a variety of gods depending on the need and situation. AD&D game players should use the areas of control listed in the *Legends and Lore* rulebook to determine which would be most appropriate.

There were few proper temples to the gods in Scandinavia. However, there were many sacred sites out-of-doors. These included mountains, islands, fields, rocks, and groves. Ceremonies would sometimes be conducted at

these sites and other times at a farmhouse which also doubled as a local temple.

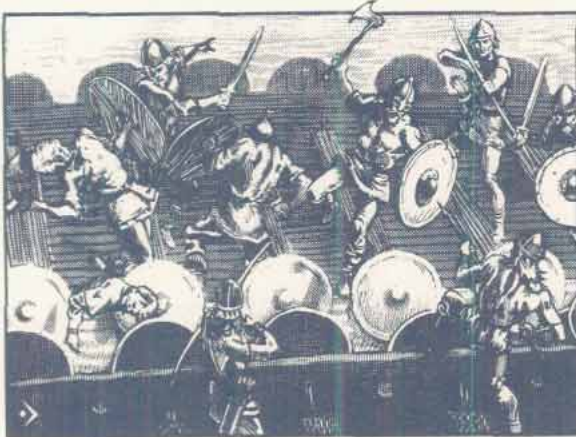
There were generally three main ceremonies each year: one in the spring, one at mid-summer, and one in the fall. These ceremonies were marked by sacrifices of animals (and sometimes humans) and ritual feasting. All were intended to ensure fertility for the farm. Sometimes the summer festival included prayers for victory in war and raiding. Oracles were consulted and offerings to the gods were made. Each festival lasted several days.

At home, each family usually had a small number of wooden statues or rune-carved posts, the high-seat pillars, that represented the gods. Prayers and offerings were left for these whenever the need arose. There is no evidence that there were formal rites for these.

Finally, of course, the wise man took care to see that his neighbors — his invisible ones — were placated. This included leaving small bowls of food for the nisse and avoiding things that might offend the huldafolk and other spirits. Since in a fantasy campaign these creatures are real, player characters must devise their own methods for dealing with otherworldly neighbors.

Judging from the sagas, not all Vikings were a fiercely devout group. Many saga heroes loudly proclaimed they had no need for gods and then set out to prove their point. Egil Skallagrimsson, mourning the loss of his son, blamed Odin for his grief and wished he could take vengeance on the sea gods. Worship was something like a bargain. In exchange for devotions, the gods were supposed to give something in return. If they did not, the pact was broken.

This does not mean, however, that Vikings were atheists. They had a rich web of superstition and belief. It is just that, unlike many other religions, the Norsemen did not create religious institutions like the Church or the temples of Rome. In general each man was responsible for his own faith in the gods.



In the Viking setting, as in any other AD&D® game milieu, the player characters are going to travel to strange lands and distant settings. This chapter provides a brief description of the many lands, both real and imaginary, that make up the world of a Viking campaign. The places described in this chapter can be found on the players' map (the large map sheet bound in the back of this book) or on the detailed maps included in this book.

Astute players will notice the fold-up map is not an accurate representation of the world. It is not meant to be. Instead, it is a map of the world as the Vikings might have envisioned it, had they made maps. Scandinavia and its coastlines, areas best known to the Vikings, are almost correct. As one moves farther from this center, the map becomes less and less accurate, reflecting the increasing lack of first-hand knowledge the Vikings had of these distant lands. Ultimately, those countries at the outermost edges are lands of fantasy and wonder, home to giants and other mythical beasts.

The fold-out map is based in part on a map "discovered" in 1965. This map was presented as a copy made around 1440 of an older map, now lost. The map was unique, showing Iceland, Greenland, and parts of Vinland, something never before seen on a medieval map. The discovery was quickly dubbed the "Vinland Map" and a great deal of scholarship was spent arguing for its authenticity. Unfortunately, tests showed the map was a forgery made no earlier than 1917. Still, the map contains many features thought to have existed during the Viking age and is perfectly suitable for play.

The Making of the World

There are several Viking legends that explain the existence of the world, but the most popular tells of the life and death of the giant Ymir. Before the creation of the Earth (known as Midgard, the Middle World), several other

realms were created. First of these was Niflheim, a realm of cold and darkness. Nine worlds were supposed to form Niflheim, and it was here many of the dead were sent. Second came Muspellheim, a land of heat and fire. This is the home of the giant Surt (or Surtur) who will destroy Midgard at Ragnarok.

At the boundary of the two worlds, where heat met ice, was a warm river. From this was born the giant Ymir or Aurgelmir. From other ice were born other giants and from one of these giants was born Odin, leader of the Aesir. Odin and his brothers slew Ymir, and from the giant's body made the world.

"... from his blood the sea and lakes, from his flesh the earth, from his bones the mountain; rocks and pebbles they made from his teeth and jaws and those bones that were broken."

The Prose Edda

Ymir's skull became the sky, supported by four dwarves, one for each direction. The sparks blowing up from Muspellheim became the sun and stars. With Ymir's eyebrows, the gods built a wall to the keep the giants out of Midgard and the giant's brains became the clouds. Thus was the earth created.

The World According to Rolf

In a corner of the player's map is an inset showing a map of the entire world—at least the way the Vikings understood it. This map is the "scientific" view of the world, as opposed to the mythical understanding of the globe. All the same it has many mythical elements and can be seen as one map of Midgard, the Middle World of men.

The world is seen as a flat disk, surrounded by the great world ocean, Uthaf. Beyond the edge of this ocean lived the Midgardsormr, the Midgard Serpent, a beast so large it could encircle the world. Beyond that no one knew what lay, although legends said Muspellheim and Niflheim lay beyond.



At the center of the world is Jerusalem, reflecting Christian belief. The continents were divided into three—Europe (the smallest), Africa, and Asia (the largest). Greenland was thought to connect in the far north to Europe, while Vinland did the same with Africa. The river Tanais was the Don and divided Europe from Asia.

The Lands of the Vikings

Africa: Of the entire continent of Africa, the Vikings had knowledge of only the smallest portion—the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. With its warm temperature and bright sun, the few explorers who traveled so far often believed they were nearing the fabled land of Muspellheim.

Araby: Although never visited, the Vikings were familiar with the lands of Arabia through their contact with Arab merchants. Viking fleets sailed on the Caspian and traded with merchants from Baghdad. The main trading centers in this region were Itil (at the mouth of the Volga) and Gurgan (at the southern end of the Caspian). Here Vikings sold furs and slaves for silk, spices, and silver from Arabia, India, and China.

Byzantium: The great empire of Byzantium was known to the Vikings. Their own name for the capital Constantinople was Miklagard ("the Great City"). More than once, Viking ships sailed and raided on the Black Sea only to be defeated by either bad luck or the mysterious Greek fire. Eventually trade treaties were formed between the Rus of Kiev and the Byzantines. From about 980 on, Viking mercenaries formed the elite bodyguard of the Byzantine emperor, the Varangian Guard.

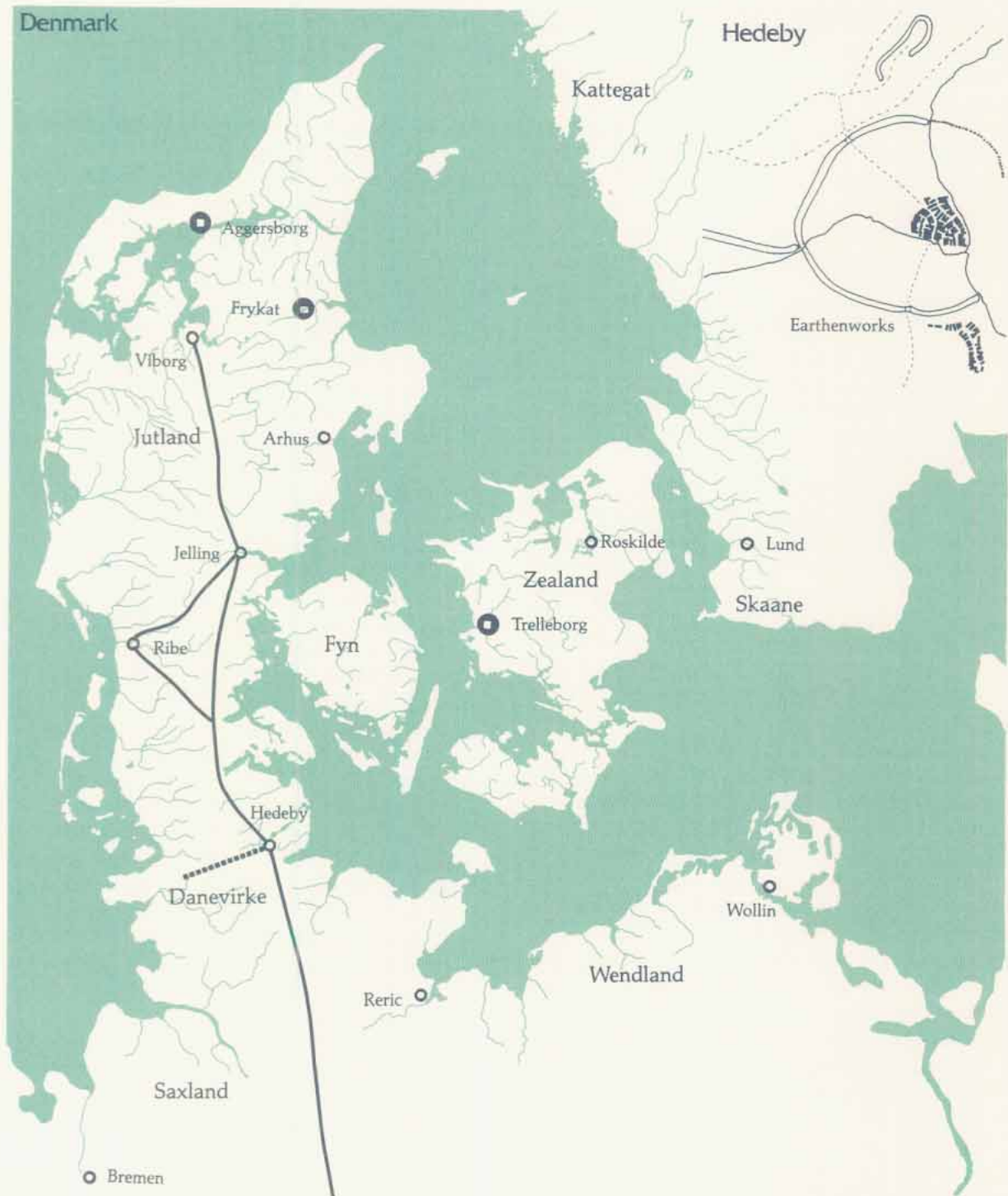
Denmark: This small land is one of the three countries that make up Scandinavia. During the Viking age, Denmark included the southeastern coast of Sweden—Halland, Skane, and Blekinge. Sometimes Danish rule extended to the Vik, now Oslofjord in Norway. To the south of Denmark were the Wends.

Denmark was a low-lying flat land of bogs, heaths, and sand dunes, although parts were covered with forests of beech and oak. Everywhere was close to the coast, causing one chronicler to note the Danes "live in the sea."

At the base of the peninsula is Hedeby, one of the most important trading centers in Scandinavia. Here Franks and Germans met to buy the goods of Norsemen. The town was protected by an earthen rampart. Not far from it was the Danevirke, an earthen fortification that separates Denmark from its southern neighbors. Other towns include Viborg, Ribe (another trading center), Schleswig, Arhus, and Jelling (where the king resided). From the beginning of the Viking age, Denmark was under the rule of a single king. Late in the Viking age these kings built several fortresses at Aggersborg, Trelleborg, Fyk, and other places.

England: England was known to the Vikings well before the start of the Viking Age. At the beginning of the Age, England was under the rule of a number of petty Saxon kings and nobles and the land was divided into a number of different kingdoms; Mercia, East Anglia, Northumbria, and Wessex were the most prominent. Gradually the lords of Wessex (in the south) brought the other kingdoms under its control, though not without warfare and struggle.

England was the target of both raids and conquest. Rich monasteries at Jarrow, Lindisfarne, and Whitby were choice targets of raids, along with a number of cities. More important, however, was conquest. The Danelaw came to be the name for those lands controlled by Viking kings or adventurers. The exact boundaries varied with the fortunes of war, but usually included Northumbria and East Anglia. In the Danelaw, Viking settlers established their own laws and traditions. Outside of it, English kings exercised their rule. York, in Northumbria, was the center of Viking rule.





The Faeroes: These islands are steep, treeless hills rising from the ocean. Known from the beginning of the Viking age, the Faroes were first home to Irish monks who lived on these bleak islands. The Norsemen colonized these islands during the early 800s, driving the hermits away. Buildings were made of turf and field stone. Crops grew poorly, but sheep and cattle were raised. The hardy settlers also relied on fishing, game birds, and whaling. During August, the men would drive the whales ashore and slaughter them for their meat and bone.

Frankland: Also known as the Empire of the Franks or the Frankish Empire, Frankland (now modern France, the Low Countries, and parts of Germany) was, at the start of the age, the most powerful kingdom of northern Europe. Charlemagne the Great, who led his empire to its pinnacle of power and learning, was still alive. However, he died near the beginning of the Viking age, and within only a short time, his great empire fell into decline as his heirs squabbled and fought for control of the land.

Still, Frankland was an impressive place to the Vikings. For the first few decades of the period, Viking raiders were effectively stopped by a system of fortresses and watchtowers set up by Charlemagne. These allowed the local lords to quickly strike at raiders. When the system collapsed, the rich lands of Frankland were ripe for plunder.

Because of large rivers like the Loire and Seine, the Vikings were able to strike at more than just coastal towns. Their raids went as far inland as Paris (then only a small city on an island) and Orleans. The local lords, too busy fighting each other, could not prevent the Vikings from plundering. Instead, they used the same solution as the English and paid the Vikings vast sums to go home.

As with England, the Vikings began settlement of Frankland. They became so numerous and powerful that eventually the emperor was forced to grant them land in exchange for

peace. This land became Normandy. Ironically, it was the Normans who would bring about the end of the Viking age.

Gardariki: Meaning "land of fortified towns," Gardariki was the Viking name for modern Russia and surrounding lands. Although most of the population was Slavic, Swedish princes established themselves in Holmgadr (Novgorod), Aldeigjuborg (Staraja Ladoga), Gnezdovo, Chernigov, and Kiev. There they became known as the Rus. It was through Kiev that trade with the Byzantines passed.

Gardariki was also a land of wonder and mystery. Little explored, it was rumored to be filled with monsters, giants, and horrible creatures. Undead spirits lurked in the vast wilderness, along with evil trolls and sorcerers.

Groenland: Discovered in the early 900s, Groenland (Greenland) was not settled until sometime around 985 when Eirik the Red led an expedition there. Named Groenland for its vast meadows (it was somewhat warmer then), the island did eventually support two main areas of settlement, the Eastern Settlement around Brattahild, and the Western Settlement at Godthab fjord. These were the only areas with adequate grazing land for farmers. Without trees, buildings were made of turf and stone. Life was hard and relied on imports from Iceland and further east. In exchange, the Greenlanders sold wool, seal hides, furs, walrus ivory, and fierce falcons.

Groenland was also a land of fierce frost giants and other icy terrors. At its furthest reaches it was thought to give entrance to the cold, dark land of Niflheim.

Helluland: Meaning Slabland, this region is believed to be Baffin Island today. It took its name from the huge slabs of stone that formed the land. It was little visited or explored, since apparently nothing but foxes lived there. Of course, so far north, it too was also home to frost giants and other evil, cold-loving creatures.



Ireland: Ireland was well known to the Vikings, since they ruled over parts of the island and founded many settlements there. Most important of these were Dublin and Waterford, centers of Viking power on the island. The Vikings invaded Ireland in the early 800s, but never fully conquered the island. Wars between the Vikings and Irish Kings were common, though the kings were far from united. Some sided with the Vikings, others against them.

Ireland was noted as a source of slaves in addition to other trade goods. It is also a good market for mercenaries in the near-constant wars with and between the Irish.

Isaland: Isaland, or Iceland, was settled by Vikings from Norway, the Shetlands, Orkneys, the Faeroes, and British Isles. The first voyages were around 860, when a few Irish monks were found living there in solitude. Serious colonization began in 870 and lasted for about 60 years.

Iceland seems a harsh and forbidding climate. The land is mostly meadow with only small areas of forest. Volcanic vents and lava fields make the going rugged, and glaciers dominate the center of the island. Herding and some crops were the principal ways of life on the island. The people lived on scattered farms and there were no towns of consequence. Aside from the farms, the only other sites of importance were the *things*, the assembly grounds.

Iceland had no king or single ruler. The farmers were independent freemen. Governing was conducted by the *thing* and the 36 *goði* of the land. For convenience, the island was divided into four quarters, one for each direction. Each quarter had its own assembly and, in turn, was divided into three districts. Three *goði* controlled different areas of each district. Thus, there was a clear chain of command for settling disputes and passing laws.

The Icelanders were noted for many goods, particularly their fine woolen cloth. This was one of their principal exports, along with

seals, eider-down, and hides. They imported lumber, grain, and luxury goods. As a people, they were fiercely independent; many were outlaws from Norway, having incurred the wrath of the king there. These men brought their families to join them in Iceland.

Although it was a harsh life there, the island was also noted for its skalds. All of what was later written down came from the Icelanders. They had a great love of words.

Karelia: This eastern land is now part of modern Finland and Russia. It is a land of forests, lakes, and bogs. The native Finns there had their own kings, although large parts of the land were subject to Swedish kings who crossed the Baltic and settled on Karelia's shores.

The Finns were noted for their powers of sorcery. Many a Norse wizard learned his arts from a Finnish tutor. Inland the country was overrun with giants and trolls, some of whom had their own kingdoms. Karelia was also a good source of timber and furs.

Kurland: This region lies along the southern coast of the Baltic. Although there is a large native population there, it has been heavily colonized by the Swedes, since the Dvina river, an important trade route to Kiev, passes through the land. The trading towns of Grobin and Truso were once of particular importance, although these towns declined early in the Viking age.

Kurland was seldom the target of raiders, since there was little wealth in the land. The most useful things that could be taken from it were slaves and amber. The amber was carved into figurines and used for jewelry. Slaves from the region, since they were pagan, were sold in the markets of Hedeby (which would not accept Christians as slaves).

Markland: This is the second of three lands discovered beyond Groenland. The name means "forest-land" and was probably the coast of Labrador or Newfoundland. It was rich in timber, but the forests were filled with hostile *skraelingar* ("wretches," a contemptu-



ous name for the Indians there) and giants. Little effort was made to settle this land, although ships sometimes sailed there from Groenland to gather timber.

Norway: One of the lands of Scandinavia, Norway is a narrow strip of mountainous land. The coastline is a jagged series of fjords, waterways that cut like gashes through the steep slopes. It is along these fjords that most of the people lived, making use of the cramped farmlands. This rugged land is one wing of the Viking homeland.

Norway divides into several regions. In the south, around modern Oslo, is the fjord known as the Vikin, possible source of the Viking name. The Vikin was home to the kings of Norway. Here was the best farmland in the country and it was a close connection to the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden. At its mouth was the town of Kaupang, an important trading center. Dividing the Vikin from western Norway is a range of jagged mountains. Low passes reach to Trondelag, but voyages along the coast were much more practical.

The Norway peninsula, which stretches down from the Vikin, is a rugged region, almost inaccessible by land. Here there are many isolated valleys almost completely independent of all others. Bergen, on the coast, was a small center of trade and the starting point for many voyages west. Finally, north of Bergen along the coast was the Trondelag region. This was another region with sizeable farms and good communication. Passes led to the Vikin and Sweden. It was the seat of many important jarls.

North of Norway is Lapland. Although independent, the Lapps were required to pay tribute to the earls of Trondelag. The Lapps were well-known for their skill in sorcery, although they could seldom withstand the Vikings in battle.

Orkney Islands: These islands, just off the coast of Scotland, were settled early in (or perhaps before) the Viking age. The islands

were well-sited for the Vikings, close to Caithness (northern Scotland) and only a short voyage across the north sea to Norway. Travelers from Iceland, Ireland, and the Faeroes often wintered over at the Orkneys when storms were too fierce to venture on the open sea.

The islands, like many in the north, were relatively treeless. Houses were made of turf and stone and the men lived by herding, fishing, and raising crops of barley and other hardy grains. Trade was in these goods, especially malt (roasted barley) sent to Iceland.

The Orkney islands were ruled by hereditary earls. While supposedly subject to the Norwegian king, the earls of Orkney ruled pretty much as they pleased, since there was little the Norwegian lord could do to them. The earls had close, though not always friendly, ties to the lords of Scotland, particularly those of Caithness.

Permia: This is a cold and snowy land of mystery and monsters, sometimes called *Bjarmaland*. Reached by making the dangerous voyage around the north of Norway, Permia was a hostile land. Its kings and nobles were wizards, while giants and monsters roamed its forests. Still, the people there had great treasures. Large numbers of valuable furs came out of Permia's dark woods. Greater still, there was said to be a mound deep in the forest where the people left offerings to the dead—a handful of silver for every man who passed away. Getting these treasures, however, was not easy, since the Permians hated the Norse and would attack them on sight. Although not nearly as well armed and armored, the Permian wizards presented a great threat to any raiding party.

Saxland: This land lay just south of Denmark and was part of the Frankish empire. Its most important town was Bremen, a trading center on the coast. This made it a rich target for raiders. Knowing this, the Saxons fortified the town with earthworks and palisades.

The Saxons were noted as merchants. They



formed the bulk of those traders who came to Hedeby, bringing glassware and other goods up the Weser to sell in Denmark.

Scotland: North of Northumbria were the wild and untamed people of Scotland. The Scots were a mixture of many people—Picts, Celts, and Norse. The fiercely independent Scottish kings often faced their Saxon counterparts in border battles. For these wars the Scots sometimes formed alliances with their Norse neighbors in Northumbria, Ireland, and the Orkneys. At other times they hired Norse mercenaries. Although there were some raids on the Scottish coast, the land was poor and not a very good target. Only a few monasteries, Iona for one, founded by Irish monks on the Hebrides, were popular raiding targets.

Sweden: This is the third nation that forms Scandinavia. Sweden roughly divides into three parts. The southern section is mostly low-lying plains, rich with rivers, lakes, and forests and known as Gotaland. Cut off from the North Sea by the Danes and Norse, the Vikings of Gotaland turned their attention to the Baltic and the lands of the east. Thus, Swedish settlements are found in Finland and Russia. The middle section was likewise an area of forest and plains and is known as Svealand. This was the center of Swedish power. Swedish kings resided in Uppsala, while nearby Birka was a vital trade center throughout Scandinavia. Finally in the north is Norrland. Although little populated, it was an important source of resources—furs, timber, and iron all came from its woods.

Svealand was under the control of a single king from the start of the Viking age. As in Norway, this king had to be approved by the people and assemblies handled much of the day to day affairs.

Tafestaland: Another part of Finland and Russia, little was known of this region. Like the other areas of the north, it was rich in furs and timber. It was also rich in giants, trolls, and magical wonders.

Vinland: Meaning perhaps “grassland” or “land of vines,” the Vinland explored by Lief Ericsson and others is now believed to be Newfoundland and parts of the coast further south. A small settlement was established on the shore, but was attacked by skraelingar. It did not thrive and was eventually abandoned or wiped out. The stories of this land describe it as filled with riches, although giants and hostile skraelingar abound. Ultimately, Vinland proved too far from civilization for proper settlement.

Wendland: Located southeast of Denmark is the land of the Wends. These Germanic people lived just beyond the borders of the Frankish empire. Like the Saxons, the Wends traded with the Vikings. Danish and Swedish settlements are found along the coast. The principal trading center was Wolin, at the mouth of the Oder, another important river route. The city was the clearing point for trade into central Europe.

The Wends and Vikings did not always live in peaceful harmony. Raiding went back and forth on both sides, although the Vikings with their ships held the advantage. In Denmark, the Danevirke and Hedeby were fortified for this reason, although the trade town was sacked by the Wends near the very end of the Viking age.

Imaginary Lands

In addition to the real lands the Vikings traveled to or heard about, the Vikings included a number of purely imaginary places in their view of the world and universe. Some are places of celestial importance, Asgard and Niflheim in particular.

The lands are not described here in detail. Those that relate to the gods are given cursory descriptions, since it is unlikely player characters will ever adventure there. DMs seeking further details on these lands should look to *Legends and Lore* or any number of good books of Norse mythology. (Those who want



to go "straight to the source" should read a translation of *The Prose Edda*.) For other lands, little or no details exist. DMs can fill out these countries with whatever seems most appropriate.

Imaginary lands, being imaginary, have no place on any map. At best, there are vague indications of where these lands can be found ("east beyond Permia") but not even anything as good as sailing directions exists. Player characters reach these lands by crossing over some invisible border between the real world and the Other Worlds. The border may be marked by a fierce storm that blows the ship off course or a broad swath of trackless forest. The Other Worlds can exist anywhere, even among the farmer's lands. A sudden look to the left or flicker in the moonlight may be all that's needed to reveal this hidden realm.

Alfheim: Virtually nothing is known of this land, the home of the elves. It might be part of Asgard, but is more likely close to it.

Asgard: Asgard is the home of the Aesir, the 12 principal gods of the Vikings. It is said to be above or in the middle of Midgard, the world of men. It is described as a plain marked by rivers and guarded by cliffs. Twelve palatial halls, homes of the gods, exist there. In addition, there are lesser halls for their followers. The most famous of these, Valhalla, is Odin's hall for the fallen warriors he has chosen. On the day of the final battle, Ragnarok, these men will fight (and lose) in the war against the giants.

Geirrodargardar: Meaning "Geirrodstown," this is the capital of Risaland, or Giantland. The king lives here along with his retainers.

Glasisvellir: Known as the Glasir Plains in English, this country is ruled by giants. It is found somewhere east of Permia. Although it has its own king, Glasisvellir is forced to pay tribute to the giant king of Risaland. A great river, Herma, separates the two lands. The king of Glasisvellir is always called Godmund, regardless of his true name.

Grundir: This earldom lies between Risaland and Jotunheim. Its ruler is Earl Agdi and he makes his residence at Gnipaland. The earl is said to be a powerful sorcerer. His retainers are not men but great trolls, much to be feared.

Jotunheim: This is another of the celestial realms, the home of the jotens, the great giants of folklore. It is a wild and wooded place, somewhere east of Asgard. The giants of this land are hostile to the inhabitants of Asgard.

Mirkwood: This is a vast forest that lies just to the south of settled lands. It is semi-mythical, since it might lie south of Midgard as a whole. It might also describe the vast forests that covered Germany. Mirkwood separates Muspellheim from the rest of the world. Mirkwood has earned its name; it is a dark place filled with serpents, trolls, and giants. Few venture there who do not need to.

Muspellheim: Muspellheim is a mythical land of fire and heat to the south. It is from here that fire giants come. The sons of Muspel will someday assault Asgard and bring about the end of the world. It is quite possible that Muspellheim grew from early reports of the desert lands of Arabia and Africa.

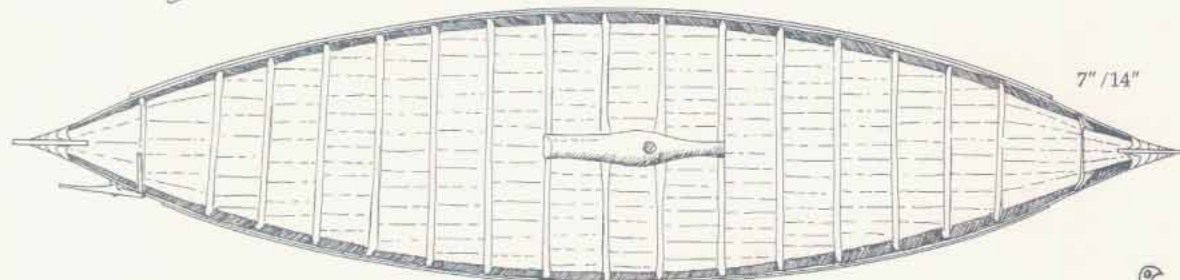
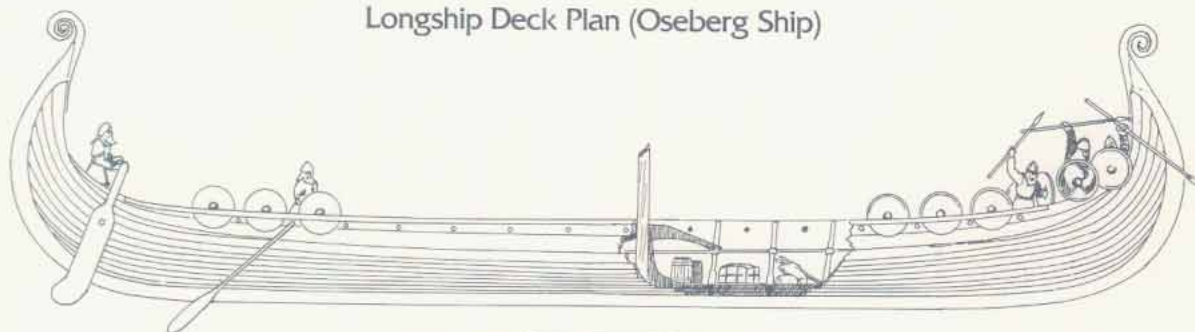
Niflheim: This is the last of the celestial realms, the land of the dead. It is described as being to the north of Midgard, across the ocean, and underground. It is made up of nine different worlds. Here all dead but those chosen by Odin are sent. Niflheim is a cold and dark place. Its halls have rafters coiled with venomous serpents and agonies await those who are sent here.

Noatown: It is unknown where this town lies. Although it is ruled by a king, Noatown is known for its fierce amazons.

Risaland: Located to the east of Permia is Risaland, or Giantland. This is a powerful kingdom ruled by giants. The capital is Geirrodgardar. Beyond Risaland lay Jotunheim.



Longship Deck Plan (Oseberg Ship)

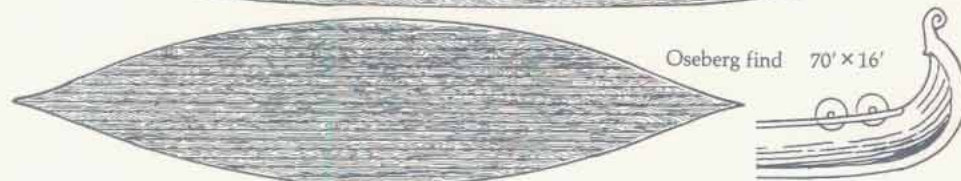


Comparative Ship Sizes (based on actual excavations)



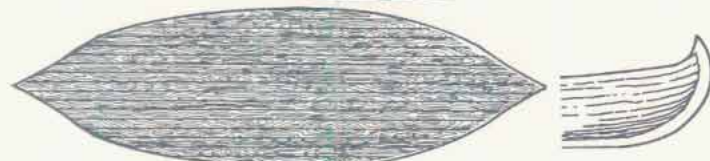
Skudlev find 92' x 15'

9 1/4" / 18 1/2"



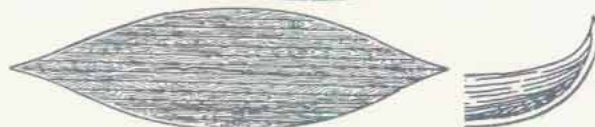
Oseberg find 70' x 16'

7" / 14"



Ocean-going Knarr (Skudlev find) 53' x 15'

5 5/16" / 10 5/8"



Coastal Knarr (Skudlev find) 43' x 10'

4 5/16" / 8 5/8"

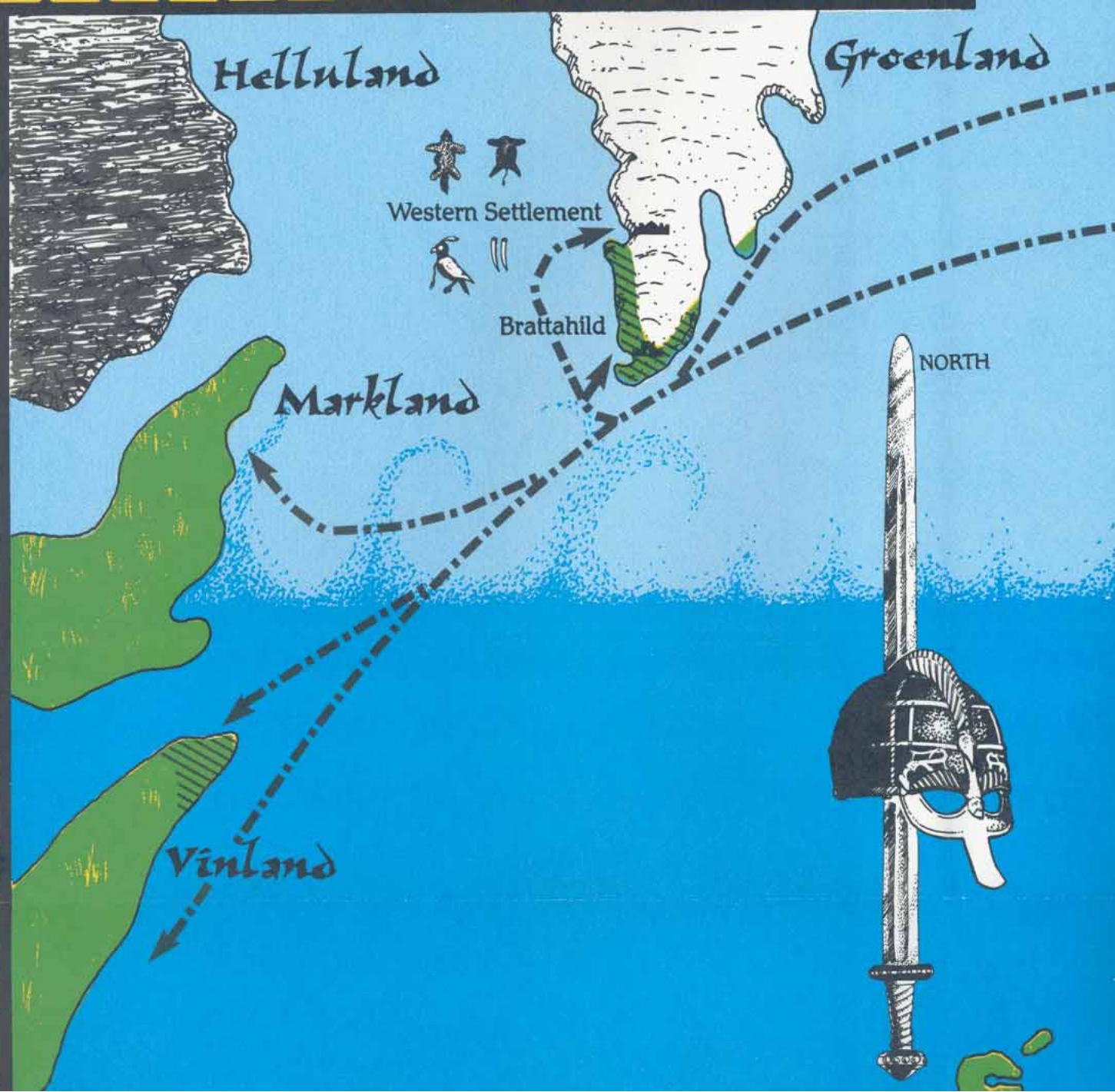


Saexring 39' x 8'

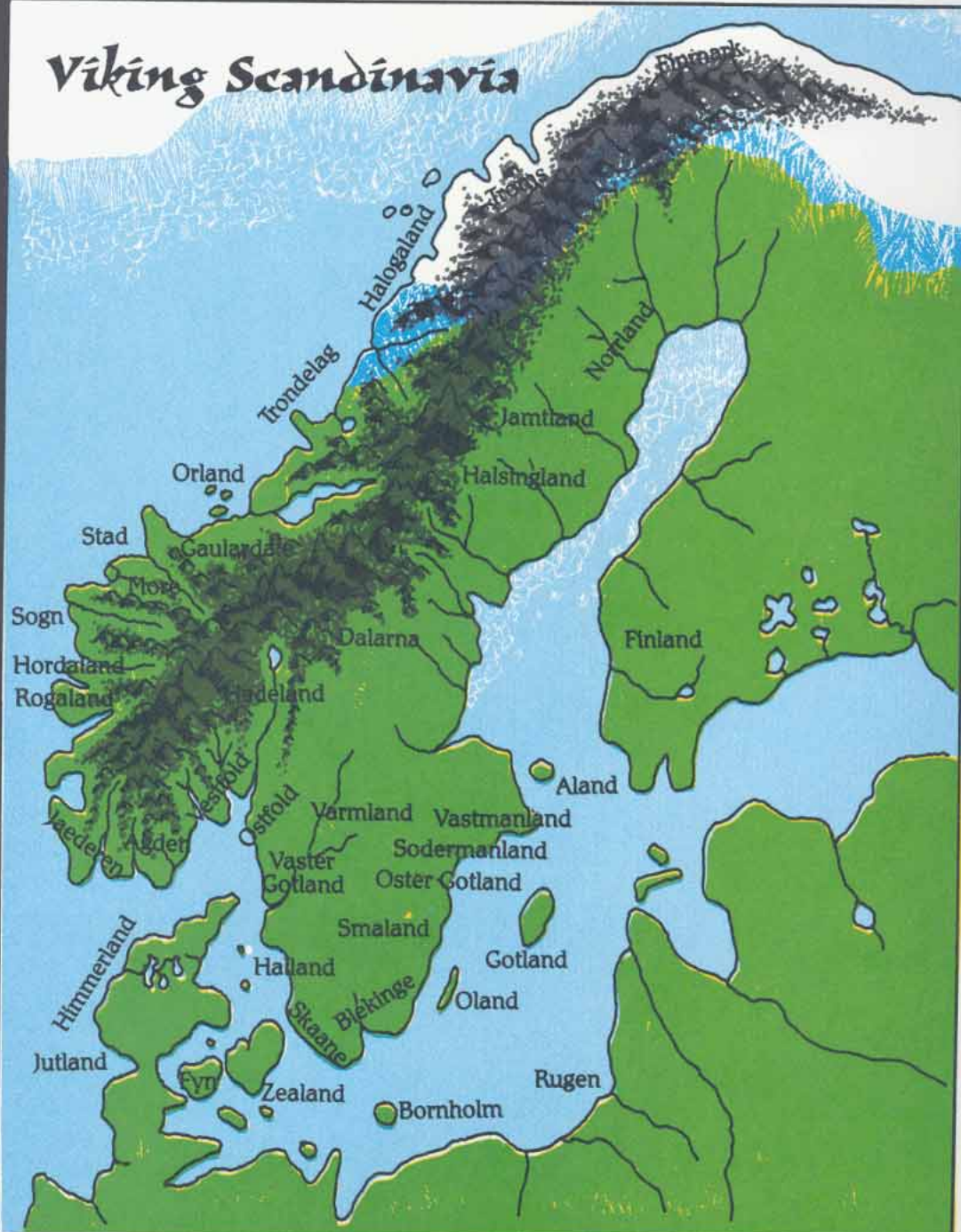
3 5/16" / 7 3/4"

For use with miniatures, enlarge these deck plans on a photocopier. Listed beside each deck are two lengths for 1" = 10' and 1" = 5' scales.

Viking lands and settlements Known sea routes Known river routes Cities and towns		Glass Gold Hides Honey Ivory (walrus)		Jewelry Salt Silk Silver Slaves		Spices Wheat Weapons Wine	
Amber Cloth Falcons	Fish Furs						



Viking Scandinavia



The Known World

"On little shores and little seas
live people of little sense;
everyone has equal wisdom
where the world is half as wide."

Sayings of the High One





lagnae Insulae

England

Brittany

Normandy

Nantes

Noirmoutier

Aquitaine

Bordeaux

Moors

Seville

Cadiz

Dublin

Cork

Wareham

London

Antwerp

Quentovic

Rouen

Paris

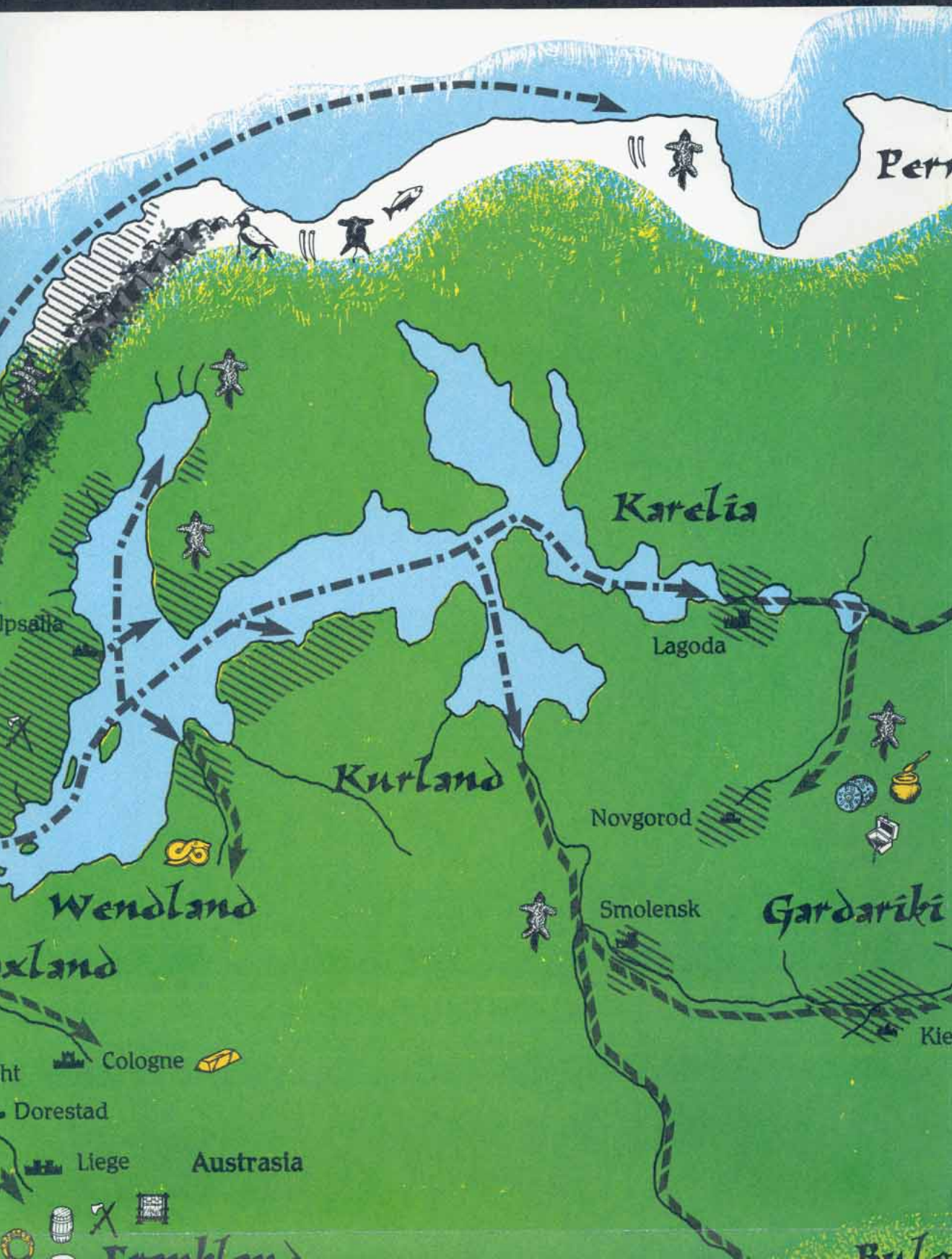
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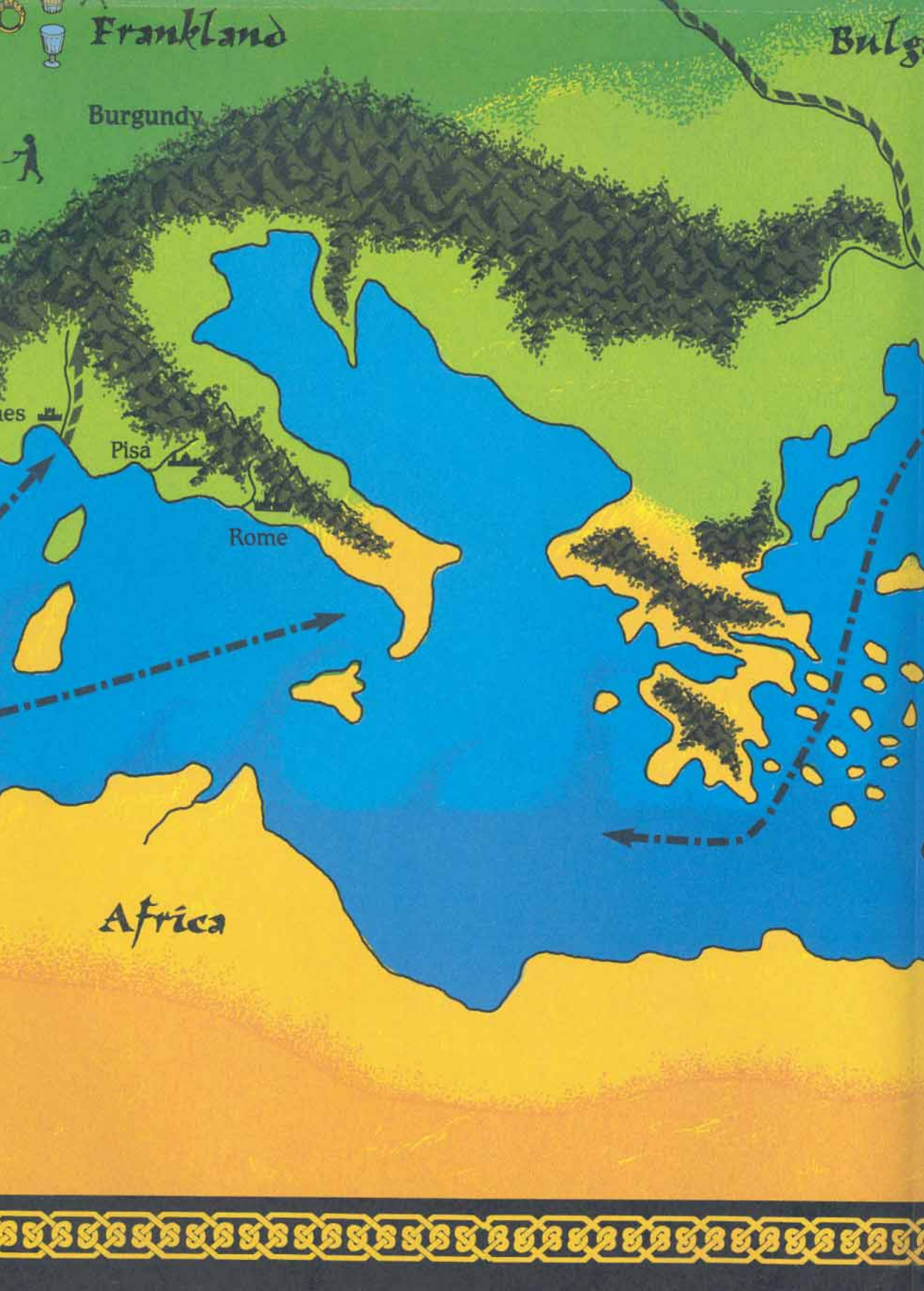
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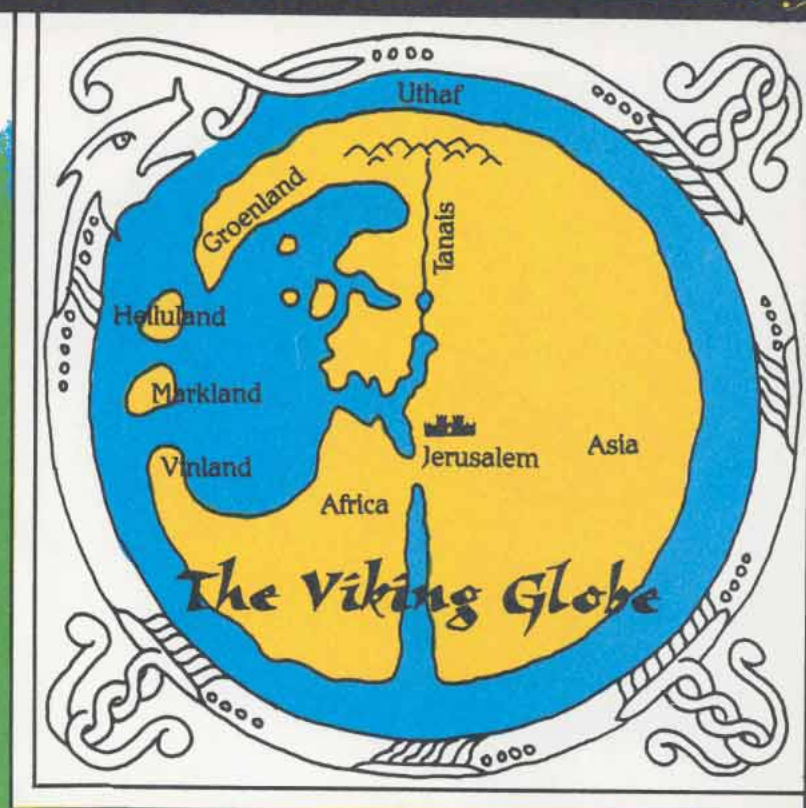
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Tafestaland





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