

by Gernot Köpke

A Feast for ODIN

The Almanac to the game



*“The sun goes out, the country sinks into the sea,
the sunny stars plunge from the sky.
Blaze buffeted the nourisher of life;
high heat rises skyward.”*

Völuspá,
the opening poem of the Edda saga

The Almanac is an alphabetical reference intended to provide historical background to some of the terms used in the game. It also provides clarifications on how in-game concepts relate to the game's theme.

A

ALTHING:

The meeting of all people, “*Althing*” is the oldest form of parliament still in existence. Founded in 930 in Iceland, it convened each year for two weeks around midsummer’s day. Initially, it was a kind of federal union of regional “*Godendoms*” with 39 “*Goden*”-delegates constituting a free state. When, in the year 1000, different laws for Christians and Non-Christians were to be enacted, Thorgeirr said: “*It will come to pass that if we tear the law in half, we will also tear the peace in half.*” Monk Ari the Bookman, in the Book of Icelanders (around 1125), further wrote: “*He ended his speech in such a way that all sides agreed there should only be a single law for all people. It was further made law that all people should be Christians and that non-Christians should allow themselves to be baptized.*” In that way, Christianity came to Iceland.

AMBER FIGURE:



Amber is the fossilised, yellow-brown resin of a long extinct type of pine. The Viking Age Scandinavians used the “burning stone” as fuel, finding it along the coasts of the North and Baltic Seas. According to contemporary reports from New Jersey, 19th century workers in clay pits found amber in such large quantities, they collected it as fuel and burned it on winter days in barrels to keep warm (today, this would be regarded as having ‘money to burn’ as the current market value of amber is around several thousand dollars per kilogram). Amber was one of the main exports of the “Varangians.” Spindles, board game pieces, dice, valuable jewelry and supposedly magical amulets could be produced from the easily worked material.

AXE:



Weapon and tool in one. In the game it is a special tile, which can either be forged with ore as a “throwing axe” or be captured. Due to its length, this melee weapon, increasingly popular in the 11th century, was wielded with both hands. The long-bladed, often ornate “*Breiðöx*” had little in common with the simpler axes, which many farmers used in raids. A Thing law describes how injustice is done to the King by “*men declaring wood axes to be valid weapons.*” Norwegian graves suggest an increasing use of axes over time; their frequency as a burial object is roughly that of swords and spears. Generally, axes were used in the Viking Age as both weapon and tool.

This also applies to the “*Skeggöx*,” a type of bardiche common since the 8th century. It was extended at its base, so that the fighters could hook into the shield of their opponents and tear away the coverage, or pull an enemy ship closer. Some bardiches were used as long distance weapons, by throwing them from some distance into enemy troops. The bardiche could also be used peacefully for the trimming of planks and beams. The shape of the blade of the bardiche has survived until today in a Carpenter’s hatchet. “*The axe at home oft saves the carpenter,*” from ‘*Wilhelm Tell*’, a drama written by the famous German poet, philosopher, historian, and playwright Friedrich Schiller in 1804.

B

BAFFIN ISLAND:



Today, about 14,000 people, mostly Inuit, live in six coastal settlements on the fifth largest island of the world. The Arctic island is part of the Canadian territory “*Nunavut*,” with special rights for the Inuit. In the game, only the southern part of the island is depicted on the exploration board. It is assumed that this is the land of flat stones, the “*Helluland*,” mentioned in both the Greenland and the Eric sagas: “*Then they made landfall, and rowed in boats along this land, and explored it. They found many large, flat stones. The stones were so large that two men stretched out could lie on it on their back, heel to heel. Arctic foxes were in abundance. They gave a name to the land and called it Helluland.*”

According to current knowledge, this very rugged island was only occasionally visited by the Vikings and never settled. A stone house that was used as a temporary trading post for trade with Inuit nomads has been archaeologically discovered. Hides and fur of native species such as caribou (the North American reindeer), polar bear, Arctic fox and ermine would have been commodities, as would be products from sealing and whaling. Of special interest was the tusk of the narwhal: the “*Ainkhürn*” could be up to three meters long and weigh eight to ten kilograms. The so-called “unicorn” was extremely popular in Europe.

BEANS:



Beans were an important, high-protein food, that was helpful in surviving the long, dark winter. Dried, beans could be stored for years. In the game you get these orange goods tiles during harvest and at the weekly market. This is not the first time that beans have played a role in a game by Uwe Rosenberg. His numerous variations on beans, such as garden, wax or green bean, made the inventor of the card game “*Bohnanza*”, published by Rio Grande Games/Amigo, very popular. It was followed by numerous yearly expansions, by Amigo and Lookout Games, with funny names like Al Cabohne (“*Bohne*” is the German word for bean), High Bohn, and Ladybean: Some like it hot.

BEAR ISLAND:

“*An island lay to the south-east from this country. On this island, they found bears, and so they called the island Bjarney. They called the main land on which the forest was located, Markland.*” *Eric saga, Hauksbook-version (before 1338)*



One name - many islands. The precise location of the island “*Bjarney*,” discovered in 1010 by Thorfinn Karlsefnis and his group of settlers, is unknown, although it is believed to be somewhere near Labrador. It is confusing that the same saga also speaks of other islands, such as “*Bear Islands*” that settlers of “*Vinland*” (Greenland) sailed to on their way to “*Helluland*.” (It seems bears were common.) Because of this uncertainty, Uwe chose to design the exploration board after

the barren island of “*Björnøya*,” another “Bear Island” located between Norway and Spitsbergen, assuming that it was known by the Scandinavians of the Viking Age. (Incidentally: the Norwegian Polar Explorer Roald Amundsen died in 1928, when his plane was lost near this Bear Island. He had gone to try and rescue the Italian Umberto Nobile, whose airship had crashed on an ice floe. Amundsen’s plane has never been found to date. Nobile, on the other hand, was rescued.)

BELT:



During the Viking Age, simple belt buckles, belt ends, and also rich studded belts were all in use. According to the Edda saga, Thor owned “*meginjörð*,” a belt that gave him even more strength. He demonstrated his power by easily lifting the heaviest weights, like a modern weightlifter.

BERSERKER:

One of the numerous occupation cards in the game. According to the sagas, these warriors, equally feared on both the battlefield and in the “*Holmgang*,” worked themselves into a frenzied bloodlust before battle. Well trained, they fought in the front lines without regard for safety. Their frenzied adrenaline rush, brought about by warrior cries, made them insensitive to pain and wounds. It is possible that some kind of illness or drugs were involved. On ships they were arranged in the bow, the most dangerous place in combat.

*“The Berserk shouted
the fight got started
the Wolf-furs howled
and shook the iron.”
Poem on Harald Fairhair (after 872)*

BJARNI HERJULFSSON:



The explorer of Canada, according to the Greendland saga. He was the descendant of a family with trading relationships extending to Northern Germany. On the way from Iceland to Greenland in 986, the crew of his ship got lost in fog and discovered a wooded coastal area - either Newfoundland or more likely Labrador. The men did not enter the country, but spoke of it later in Greenland. Leif Erikson learned of this and undertook a successful search around the year 1000.

BLACKSMITH’S HAMMER:



The trademark tool of a smith, one of the oldest professions of mankind. Burials with forging tools were quite common. According to the sagas, Thor’s

hammer “*Mjölmir*” was forged of iron by two dwarves: “The Crusher” always hit its target, after which it would magically return to its thrower. Each throw was said to be preceded by thunder and lightning (appropriate for a thunder god).

BOARD GAME:

*“They played ‘Hnefatafl’ in their garden
with enthusiasm,
for lack of nothing,
not even of gold.”
Edda song Völuspá*

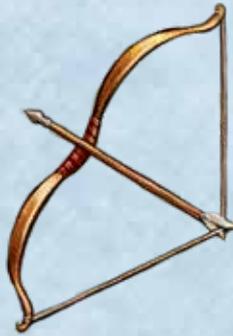
The board game “*Hnefatafl*,” similar to chess or checkers, was played with very valuable, ornate figures. The Vikings spread it from Greenland up to Ukraine. The object of the game was to demonstrate one’s cleverness (or the opposite). Anyone up for a game?

http://boardspace.net/english/about_tablut.html

BONUS:

The term “Bonus” was chosen to emphasise its function in the game. Thematically, the expansion of your own possessions and the enlargement of your area of influence provides new tribute from tenants and income from the work of your family (or clan) and slaves (called “*thrall*”).

BOW AND ARROW:



In the game they are used to get hides or game meat by hunting game. The arrows were given a “mark of ownership” at the end by gluing feathers with resin or birch pitch (the “ancient hot glue”). The bows were probably made from the wood of the region. King Eric Bloodaxe was called “Elm tendons stretcher” and, in Hedeby, five arc fragments of yew and two of elm and hazel were found. Different arrowhead shapes had

varying purposes. Piston arrows, for example, were suitable for a hunt that protected the fur. Longbows were less hunting weapons than long range weapons. They became more important in the later Middle Ages, such as the English longbow in 1415 at the Battle of Agincourt. Until then, bows were mostly used at the beginning of a battle, before hand to hand combat began. Fire arrows were also used. Sending an arrow from farm to farm was used to mobilize for a campaign. For this purpose, the “*Frostating law*” regulated the right to resistance: “*No man may raid another man, neither the king, nor any other. But if the king does so, then a war arrow is to be transmitted – loosed to all eight districts. The farmers then rally against the king and kill him if they can. If the king should escape, he may never return to the country. If any farmer does not wish to rally against the king, he must pay three marks.*”

BUILDING RESOURCES:



Material for the construction of buildings and ships. In Scandinavia, there was an abundance of wood, clay, ore and stone. The Norwegian settlers of the North Atlantic islands, however, had to cope partly without forests and ore deposits. They imported timber and ore and made do with flotsam, or used beams made of whale bone and sod, while gradually increasing the construction of stone houses.



CABBAGE:



“*Kálgardr*” is the Old Norse term for a fenced cabbage or kitchen garden. In the old Norwegian laws, penalties existed for entering foreign gardens and stealing cabbage, angelica or onions. If someone stole so much that its worth could be

estimated in money, he was regarded as a thief and could be punished on the spot. Field cabbage, black mustard and many turnip varieties originate from wild cabbage and differ from today's well-known types of head cabbage.

Pot **Cabbage Recipe:**

(for 4 people)

1000 g white cabbage (chopped), 250 g tart apples (sliced thinly), pepper, caraway, ½ l "Skyr" (sour milk with salt), 2 tablespoons butter

Melt butter in an ovenproof dish, layer white cabbage with caraway, pepper, apple slices and sour milk and cook until soft, about one hour in the oven at medium heat.

CATTLE:



Working in the fields was exhausting. Attaching oxen to your plough was very helpful. In the game, cattle are obtained at the livestock market as a red animal tile, to then be used as a valuable trading commodity or to produce milk. Cattle were seldom sacrificed at the feast. And if so, then generally before winter to conserve fodder. While today's cows weigh 500-600 kilograms and produce thousands of liters of milk each year, the cow of the Viking Age weighed only 200 kilograms, producing approximately 500 liters per year. Cattle also supplied fertilizer and burning material. When slaughtered, their meat was eaten, and their skin was made into leather (the skin of young animals would be made into hide). The horn was turned into a drinking horn or other useful items. The North Swedish "Fjäll" cattle (living in the mountains) is an old domestic cattle breed, which existed in the Viking Age. Its ears, area around the eyes, and the head of its snout are black. Today, Icelandic cattle are closest to the old breeds as direct descendant of the first settlers' animals. However, they now vary more in color and pattern.

CHEST:



Storage place for everyday things and valuables – represented in the game as a blue luxury good. Wood boxes and chests were commonly found in excavations, as well as fittings and locks. An unusual discovery in Hedeby is explained as follows: The chest was stolen and its lock broken to obtain the goods therein. Then the perpetrator used stones to weigh down the chest so it would sink in the harbor basin. Chests were even used on ships. Ship chests included not only supplies and personal possessions, but were also used as a rowing bench and could, after a successful viking raid, become a treasure chest.

CLOAKPIN:



8000 years ago, bronze cloakpins had already been replaced by the fibula as a robe fastener, but they remained as a functional accessory until the Viking Age. In the game, you can find such a needle on the exploration board on Newfoundland - a tribute to the impressive married hobby archaeologists Anne-Stine and Helge Ingstad, who discovered in 1961 traces of a Viking settlement at the northern tip in "L'anse aux

Meadows," which locals had interpreted incorrectly as an overgrown Indian camp. Where generations of children played, they found a significant, rusty cloakpin. In 1978, UNESCO added the site to the World Heritage List.

CLOTHING:



The overriding principle of clothing was expediency. The foot was protected with a simple leather shoe. The men wore usually a tunic, a belt and pants that were either loose or drawn up at the feet. The women wore a sort of hanging dress and a skirt-like pinafore dress, which was fastened with fibulas. A loosely thrown rectangular blanket served as a cloak, unless a tailored robe was available. In some women's graves, narrow bands that were worn around the forehead or served as edging of a cap have been found. Similar remains of bands near the forehead have also been found in men's graves. Preserved remains of silk indicate that these may have been part of hats.

CRAFT:



For the various craft activities, there were rarely specific professions such as blacksmith, mason, carpenter or boatbuilder. However, this changed gradually with the emergence of "Kaupangs" and cities.

CRUCIFIX:



This special, artistic variant of the Cross rarely showed Jesus suffering on the cross before 1200. Crucifixes were often part of the plunder gained by raids. In Birka, even pagan dead were buried with jewelry-like grave goods featuring Christian symbols such as silver crosses and crucifixes.



DICE:

The Vikings greatly enjoyed board and dice games. Their six-sided dice were made of whalebone, antler, bone, horn or even jet (guaranteed to result in poor rolls).

DRINKING HORN:

"The king took them and they were decorated with gold. These were magnificent treasures. King Olaf had two horns, which were called the 'horned', but although these were very good, those who Gudmund had sent him were better [...] The king let the horns [...] be blessed by the bishop."

Stories from the Norns -Gest (14th century).



Horns were usually made of cow horn and filled with beer, mead and probably (imported) wine. But drinking horns were not everyday objects like the simple clay mug. The horn had to be drank completely at once, because it could not be set down, although sometimes it was passed around. The common beverage had an important social function, but it also showed rank differences. Using an alarm horn, which

had a mouthpiece made of metal, they could give signals on military expeditions. Heimdallr, the guardian of Asgard, possessed “Gjallarhorn,” the “resounding horn.”

DYEING:

The Scandinavians loved colorful clothing. Dyeing in the Middle Ages was a very dirty business. Dyers were considered to be impure, because they had to handle foul-smelling substances such as urine. Animal fibers such as silk and wool were easier to work with and could be dyed more intensely than plant fibers like linen, hemp and nettle. Therefore, it must be assumed that while the Scandinavians wore colorful wool clothing, their linen undergarments were likely pale or natural colored. Generally, the staining of clothing during the Viking Age was hard work. Even at that time it was possible to dye all colors of the rainbow with native plants without difficulty.



EMIGRATION:



Resettlements often bear significant risks, but were often required when faced with the threat of overpopulation. Reasons for emigration were always substantial and often varied. Political discontent with the establishment of a Kingdom in Norway, previously made up of many small farmer republics and the rule of Harald Fairhair (around the year 872) was such a reason, resulting in the settlement of numerous North Atlantic islands by Norwegian emigrants. Personal reasons might also have been important: Little to no arable land due to lack of inheritance, the desire for a new beginning - or banishment, as in

the case of the Eric the Red's father, who had committed murder and sailed away to Iceland. Eric himself also killed a man and went into exile for three years, probably to Greenland. Upon his return in 986, he convinced many Icelanders to return with him to a “green country,” as he called today’s “Greenland,” although only 14 of the 25 colonist ships arrived at their destination. Years later, around 1010, the people attempting the colonization of Newfoundland hoped for better living conditions. The attempt failed, and the 160 Greenland Vikings and their leader, Thorfinn Karlsefni, returned home. This was the last of the Viking emigration efforts we know of today.

ENGLISH CROWN, THE:



The English crown was claimed by Æthelred the Unready by paying enormous amounts of silver, the so-called Danegeld. The crown stayed unattainable for the Norwegians after an

unsuccessful invasion in 1066. With the death of Harald the Hard and the routing of his forces, the classic Viking Age came to an end. Three weeks later the Normans along with William the Conqueror succeeded at the Battle of Hastings to win the crown.

ERIC I. BLOODAXE:



Eric (885-954) was the second King of Norway (933-935). The eldest son of Harald Fairhair, he executed almost all his brothers (there were about eight) – even though his father had designated him, against inheritance law, to be the universal heir and successor. Only Eric’s successor, Håkon the Good, one of his youngest brothers, who was raised at the English Royal household, survived. (That was good luck for Håkon.)

ERIK THE RED:



The seafarer Erik Thorvaldsson (950-1003) was called “the Red,” because he had red hair and blood stained hands. Erik was banished from Iceland for three years in 982 for murder. According to the Erik saga he spent that time exploring the country to the West (Greenland), sighted by Gunnbjörn Úlfsson in 900. Snøbjörn Galte Holmsteinsson had previously tried to settle there in 978, albeit unsuccessfully. Erik’s ship’s crew discovered some fertile, grass-covered plains and rich fishing grounds. In 986, Erik left with 25 ships and many settlers to the country he advertised as “green land;” 14 ships arrived and about 700 people settled in two climatically favourable fjords in the South and West. The settlements have been called “Eystríbygd” and “Vestríbygd.” In the western settlement, Erik established his farm “Brattahlíð.” While Erik’s son, Leif Eriksson, discovered “Vinland” around 1000, Erik was not there, having been persuaded to stay at home with a broken leg suffered when falling off his horse. In 1002 new settlers introduced an epidemic, which Erik fell victim to. Nevertheless, the settlements on Greenland grew to more than 3,000 inhabitants.

EXPLORATIONS:

For the Norwegians, new discoveries usually happened by chance – for example, when the ship’s crew strayed in severe weather. What is classified a “discovery” seems to be a matter of opinion: for some the mere sighting is sufficient, for others, it is necessary to enter the land, explore it and even colonize it. There is also the subjective question of who discovered what. The Inuit already knew of North America and the Irish monks knew of the North Atlantic Islands. Both appear irrelevant enough from a European or (colonial) historic perspective. The same goes of the question of whether any Inuit discovered Europe. Also, the performance of discovery in historical treatises is often reduced to a single person – a “discoverer” – despite it always being a result of team effort (Edmund Hillary, is well known as the first climber of the Mount Everest, but few know of his companion, Sherpa Tenzing Norgay).

F

FAEROE ISLANDS:



In the game, the exploration board shows only the middle of the 18-island archipelago. The Faeroe Islands are located halfway between Scotland and Iceland. Today, nearly 50,000 Faeroes live on “Føreyjar” (the “sheep island”). Despite being of Danish reign, they consider themselves to be an independent nation descended from Norwegian

settlers and have their own language. Faeroese originated from Old Norse. The ongoing independence is seen in the “Løgting,” the parliament in existence since the end of the 9th century, the independent republic of free settlers that existed until 1035, and the islands are self-governed today. The Irish monk Brendan, who in the 6th century went in search for a promised spiritual land, called the weather-exposed islands a “Paradise for birds.” When Norwegians arrived in 825 to settle, Celtic women and slaves in tow, Irish monk hermits already lived on the islands. According to the Færeyinga saga, the wish for emigration led a man named Grímur Kamban to become the first Norwegian on the barren islands. Cultivating grain was impossible due to insufficient fertile soil and the steep slopes. Most people lived in coastal areas, where harvesting fish and hunting sea birds was possible, along with raising sheep. The house walls were usually made of stone and sod on the treeless islands. The roofs were covered with birch bark and sod. Grass roofs are very common even today and are experiencing a renaissance of sorts thanks to the increasing ecological awareness of people.

FAILURE:

Failures are a part of life and teach us how to do better next time, like the gods did after “ragnarök.” In the game, the things that help foster success, like weapons and building materials, increase symbolically with failure. In the case of snares, whaling and pillaging, the action potential is refunded: one may imagine that failures often end actions earlier at a reduced expense. Technically, it is important that failures have little negative impact on the game.

(See page 18 where Uwe comments on the rules of the game).

FARM PRODUCTS:

In Frisian and English ports, Norwegian merchants traded honey, wax, and stockfish for scythes, sickles, and ploughs (a concept the Vikings were only just becoming familiar with). In the game, ‘farm products’ is a collective term for orange goods tiles showing peas, flax, beans, grain, cabbage and fruits. It’s true: Norwegian settlers actually deliberately planted fruit trees.



FARMER’S MARKET:

In the game, a distinction is made between cattle markets and weekly markets. People generally knew farmer’s markets in the Viking Age. Weekly markets were held often close to

shore, near a port, with a variety of market stalls. Animals would also be sold. The wandering Skald appeared already in the Viking Age at the markets. That the Vikings in 845, during the lightning-fast raid on Hamburg, sacked the predecessor of today’s famous fish market, is unsurprising. (Fish is one thing the Norsemen could never have enough of.)

FEAST:



Stew was very popular as an ordinary meal. Everyone ate from the same pot with a spoon that made the rounds. Flat bread was used to capture any spills. However much more elaborate meals were dished out for celebrations. Because it was also a question of prestige, the Jarl would not skimp on the banquet, and they were offered all sorts of food, sometimes heavily spiced. In the Edda saga, there are detailed descriptions of boozy parties and their consequences on the following day. Eating and drinking was also an act of sacrificing. The difference between celebrating and sacrificing rested in whom the food and drink were dedicated to. In the saga of Haakon the Good in the 10th century, a ritual drinking during a great sacrificing festival is described:

“It was old custom that, when a sacrificing would take place, all farmers would come to where the temple stood, bring their supplies, and use them as long as the party continued. At this party, all people would participate in drinking sprees. There, all kinds of livestock were slaughtered – even horses. All the blood that you obtained was called sacrificial blood, [...] the meat would be cooked to cater all people. On the ground in the middle of the temple there would be a fire with boilers on it. You would circulate a full cup around the fire and the leader who hosted the banquet would consecrate the cup and all of the sacrificial food. First, the Odin Cup would be passed – to drink to the victory and power of your king. Then the Njörd Cup and Frey Cup for good harvest and peace. [...] People also drank cups to their relatives, who had been buried in the hills, and they were called remembrance drinks.”

FIBULA:



The metallic cloakpin, a kind of oversized safety pin, fell out of fashion with the rising of buttons in the 14th century. The shell fibula was very common in the Viking Age. It was used to fasten an apron on both sides, below the shoulder, and was usually made of copper or brass, and rarely gold. The needle was made of iron or steel. There were completely smooth pieces of jewelry, but mostly the fibulae were artfully decorated, with crouching animals or climbing plants, for example. As a status symbol, they were often added to the graves of females.

FISHING:

Archaeological finds of fish bones, nets, fish traps and fishing rods show that the fish-rich waters of Northern Europe had

been intensively fished. Salmon was chased with jagged spears. Other fish were caught in the winter through holes in the ice. On Greenland, ditches were dug where fish were caught at low tide. The fish were cooked and roasted, or toasted and grilled on long iron forks. Fish and meat were cooked in clay packs between hot stones. The most common “canned fish” was stockfish, a popular export.

Recipe: Fried Pickle Herring:

(for 4 persons)

1 kg fresh herring (complete), salt, butter, thyme
 Remove the innards, wash thoroughly, and drain.
 Then sprinkle with salt and leave for two hours.
 Skewer a piece of herring onto a stick and hang it to dry eight hours in the sun. Then rub the fish inside and out with thyme. Finally, fry in a pan with butter until golden brown.



FLATKAKA:

Norwegian relative of Swedish crispbread. The baked bread, made in long-stemmed pans from water and grain flour, was long-lasting. It was used as supply in winter and on ships. Milled pine bark, added to the bread and eaten along with other travel food such as stockfish and pickled cabbage, provided important vitamins and ensured that scurvy, a sailor disease, remained unknown to the Vikings.

FLAX:



In the game, an orange goods tile that can be obtained either by harvest or at the weekly market and can be worked into linen. The fast-growing

field plant had many uses and was a popular commodity. It is pulled out with the roots from the soil, so that the fibers are not destroyed. The flax fiber is naturally bacteria-resistant, tear-resistant, and somewhat anti-static, making it dirt resistant. It was used for textile manufacturing. Around 40% of the textile finds of the Viking Age are made of flax. Flax straw is ten times more water absorbent than ordinary straw, making it an ideal litter for horses. Bread can be baked from flax seed, and the plant’s high oil content makes it excellent animal fodder.

FLÓKI VILGERDARSON:



Lack of hay in the Icelandic winter resulted in his family’s sheep dying of starvation (before 870). So the first colonization attempt failed and the Norwegian pioneers returned home.

FRUITS:



Apples, pears and other cultivated fruits flourished even in northern Europe thanks to a optimal climate from 900 on. Wild fruits and berries from the forests enriched summer meals, and were – as cultivated fruits – dried and used as winter and ship supplies. The apples of Idun

were of particular importance in Norse mythology (lat. “Iduna” means “rejuvenation”). These golden apples gave the Æsir their immortality.

FUR:



Hide with a particular abundance of animal hair. Furriers processed hides into fur garments. Fur capes offered excellent protection from the cold. Furs were more prevalent in the early Viking Age than in the late Viking Age, largely due to climate changes. Rich people wore cat, fox, marten, or sable, where poorer people wore reindeer hides instead.

“*Thorir Hund had exercised the Sami routes in these two years, had been in the mountains two winters and got to earn a lot of money. He ran all kinds of trade in the Samen. He commissioned twelve furs from reindeer skin, with magic that allowed no weapons to penetrate them, much less than through a coat of mail.*” **Olaf saga**

In the Carolingian age, fur had a low status throughout Europe, but quickly became a luxury item in the 11th century.



GAME MEAT:



Venison consisted mainly of pig (wild boar) and deer, which also includes moose and reindeer. Ultimately, however, nearly every form of wildlife was hunted.

GLASS BEADS:



The oldest jewelry of mankind. Glass beads were usually spherical or barrel-shaped and had a hole for stringing. They were often found as burial objects during excavations in the Swedish town of Birka. Most of the approximately 4,500 artifacts were part of a neck or fibula chain. In the game, beads are also represented as a chain. Blue and clear beads were often coated with silver or gold foil.

GOBLET:



An ornate drinking vessel denoting prestige similar to the drinking-horn. Often used for ceremonial purposes. Occasionally sourced from plunder. Called a chalice under certain circumstances.

GOLD BROOCH:



Jewelry fibula attached to clothing, usually as jewelry worn on the chest. The gold treasure of “Hiddensee” near the German Baltic Sea island of “Rügen” consists of jewelry probably stemming from Harald Bluetooth – including a filigreed, ornate, circular gold brooch. The finders claimed to have found it on the Baltic Sea coast (1873).

Flotsam and jetsam belongs to the finder, while a hoard found inland would have been awarded to the land owner.

GRAIN:



Barley was mainly used as flour for bread, in particular flatkaka. Germinated barley served as malt for the brewing of beer.

Oats and rye were also extensively grown. Imported wheat and spelt, however, were rare and expensive. Oats was used as feed for horses and oxen, and combined with salt water and cooked into a kind of porridge. The daily “Havregröt” tasted bland, but it was not without its charm. It was made tastier on festive occasions and in wealthier households with milk (soured milk), cream, butter, nuts, herbs and/or dried fruit. It was almost the first muesli. In difficult times, various wild plants (not all of which tasted good) were added to the mix to ‘stretch’ it.

Oatmeal Porridge recipe for die-hard Vikings:

(for 4 persons)

1 liter of water

Pinch of salt

125 g oatmeal or oat flakes

½ litre “Skyr” (salted, soured, milk)

Boil the salted water and add the oats. Simmer for 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve in bowls with the Skyr.

GREENLAND:



The largest island in the world, with massive glaciers. Today, the island is inhabited by 56,000 people and is an autonomous, non-EU part of Denmark. Traces of the Scandinavians in the innermost and warmest fjord systems are still clearly visible (in South and West Greenland). Large ruined complexes

of courtyards, stables, storerooms and other buildings of sandstone and granite blocks identify the settlement founded in the year 986 by settlers following Erik the Red (it was previously discovered by Gunnbjörn Úlfsson around 876-932). Spread over several hundred plots, about 5,000-6,000 Scandinavians lived on the island at the settlement’s height, until sometime in the 15th-16th century when it completely disappeared from the “radar of history” for reasons unknown. The change from the Medieval Warm Period (11th-14th century) to the so-called “Little Ice Age” (15th -19th century) with a temperature difference of 2-4 degrees was probably the main reason. During the Medieval Warm Period, for example, the sea ice withdrew from the North Atlantic to the north and the land glaciers partially disappeared. This warming allowed the colonization of Iceland and coastal areas of Greenland. The Polar Sea was navigable in both directions. This effect was reversed later. During those 500 years, people lived by animal husbandry, fishing and the hunting of seals, whales, and walrus. Missing things like wood, ore and tools were

received in exchange for Greenland falcons, tusks (from narwhals), hide, fur, skin and bones, which were traded for with the Inuit or hunted in the northern fishing area of Disco Bay (even in those days, a voyage from Iceland to Greenland took only four days). For the 14th century, it has recently been demonstrated that seal meat accounted for 50-80 percent of the diet. Around 1000, Christianity came to Greenland thanks to Leif Erikson, who had been baptised in Norway. Leif’s mother, Thjodhild, built a church whose remains were rediscovered in the 20th century. However, his father Eric refused to abandon his beloved ancient gods.

GRÍMUR KAMBAN:



The first Nordic settler on the Faeroe Islands (according to Færeyinga saga). He is said to have settled on the central island “Eysturoy” in 825 with a group of settlers. Kamban’s grandson Tórolvur got the nickname “smör” (butter). Muppet-show fans will remember the singing cook: “Smörrebröd, Smörrebröd, Römpöpömpöm”. Tórolvur disagreed with the assertion by Flóki Vilgerðarson that Iceland would consist only of ice, and said, alluding to possible cattle husbandry, that butter would drip from every blade of grass.

GUNNBJÖRN ÚLFSSON:



The Icelandic sagas tell of how the Norwegian’s sailing ship went off course on their way to Iceland. The crew saw some islands near the coast of Greenland. Because Greenland is geologically and culturally attributed to North America, this can be considered the first known European sighting of America – sometime at the beginning of the 10th century! Both Snøbjørn Galte Holmsteinsson (978) and a few years later

Erik the Red used his descriptions to guide their voyages of discovery to the West. The highest mountain in Greenland was named in his honour: “Gunnbjörn Fjeld” (3700 m).

h

HACKSILVER:

As the word implies, this refers to hacked pieces of silver. Traders saw no issue with chopping a silver coin, silver bullion, jewelry or silverware into smaller pieces, if all they needed was only a small piece of silver to purchase a particular product. Often originating from raids and long-distance trade, the hacksilver of the Viking Age generally replaced the more cumbersome bartering in Northern Europe (although in Iceland, for example, the fulled wool “wadmal” remained a popular exchange currency up until the 16th century). In 995, the first known Danish silver coin was minted and it was followed by a transition to coinage, which in Denmark was linked to the price of silver until the 19th century. (By comparison, the US dollar was linked, until 1971, to the price of gold.)

HARALD HARDRADA:



The King of Norway from 1047. Harald “Hardråde” (1015-1066) died after an eventful life that had even led him to be a bodyguard of the eastern emperor to Byzantium, while trying to win the crown of England. He and 300 ships landed in England in the late summer. South of

York (at Stamford Bridge), he was fatally hit by an arrow. Only a few Vikings survived and returned to their homeland. This and the simultaneous destruction of Hedeby sealed the end of the Viking Age. Three weeks later, the Normans, led by William the Conqueror, defeated the last king of the Anglo-Saxons and thus ushered in the High Middle Ages (about 1050-1250). The history of the struggle of Britain was represented pictorially on the famous "Bayeux" tapestry and explained in writing.

HELMET:



Who has not seen comic book hero or the cartoon character with their stereotypical Viking horn helmets? However, the rather rare discovery of horned helmets and statuettes from the Nordic Bronze Age (2500-4000 years ago) show that they are more accurately ritual objects. Their current popularity is due to the German composer

Richard Wagner (1813-1883). He had horns added to the helmets of the Valkyries for his four-part opera "The Ring of the Nibelung." The deeper purpose of two drinking horns on a helmet will remain his secret. Nothing is more lethal than a sword stroke that is led by two horns right to the head. Helmets were always smooth and without resistance, to allow weapons to slip away. In contrast, the Vendel era helmet, known in Sweden from 550 to 800, is historically accurate. However, it appeared in only one grave site in Norway. It was made of iron, with neck protection made from a sort of chain mail.

HIDE:



Animal skin with hair. If the skin has a lot of hair it is called fur.

The flesh side of tanned skin is called the leather side. In the leather trade, the skin of some young animals is also known as fur: lambskin, for example. The fur and leather trade was very important, particularly for the Sami people. Animal skins were often used as a wall decoration. In the game, you can get fur by hunting, and you can turn it into clothing along with linen.

HIGH SEAT:

Throne-like seat belonging to the man of the house. It was equipped with a large back, sometimes with steps, and was a symbol of power and prestige. Its ornate design seems to have been part of an ancestor cult.

"At that time, it was the custom that an heir's meal should be hosted after the death of kings or Jarls. Then the host would be designated the heir, who would sit on stage in front of the high chair, until the vow cup was brought to him. He would rise to receive the vow cup, take a vow and then drink the cup. He would then sit upon the high chair, which had belonged to his father. With this he would have taken over the entire heritage of the dead."

Ynglinga saga

HOME BOARD:

Abstracted depiction of a settlement area of a clan (or tribe) in the Norwegian homeland. On it you symbolically place your possessions, which reflect the prestige of the clan in the game. The matching discovery boards symbolize newly discovered and used territory, which does not necessarily have to be colonized.



HORSESHOE:



In ancient times, easily-worn and fragile "Hippo sandals" were used, but by the late Celtic period nailed horseshoes became popular. By the early Middle Ages, around 600, archaeological horseshoe finds became more numerous. Stirrups and spurs, basic requirements that made horse to horse combat possible, also appeared in graves. The protection that horseshoes offered was not only helpful for transportation but also during war, when the horses would be asked to perform above and beyond their natural limits.

HOUSEBUILDING:



On their journeys, the Vikings had tents to sleep in overnight. When settling down, wooden houses were built in groups together – depending on the region and the available building resources, clay, turf and stone houses were also built. Stables were located either in the longhouse or were specially built, like barns, sheds, workshops and boathouses. The most common building types were the gap timber house with pillars and filled walls, and the blockhouse with horizontally stacked timbers. Nails could also be made of hard oak. The roofs were covered with turf, thatch or reed. They could almost reach to the ground. In the house center was a stove whose smoke was used to smoke meat and fish tied to roof beams before escaping through roof openings. Windows did not become common until the late Viking Age.

HUNT:



In the barren areas of northern Europe, especially in the polar regions where animal husbandry was limited and farming impossible, hunting and trapping played a major role.

"So high, the path seems to go on forever. Through ups and downs I hunt and the way seems endless." Excerpt from the song "Hunting high and low" from the Norwegian pop band "a-ha"

Small game was mainly caught in traps, while deer, bears and boars were hunted with dogs and killed with spears and bows and arrows. Seal, walrus and whale were killed with the

help of boats and spears, and fish were caught with either net or trap. (The Scandinavians incidentally also collected mussels and bird eggs.)

HUNTING GAME:

In the game there is an action space where you can obtain game meat and hide, supported by wood and bow and arrow. It can be assumed that there existed hunting blinds, tracking,

and hunting with dogs during the Viking Age. Pigs (wild boar) were hunted with throwing spears, deer with a bow and arrow or spear (in Norway, archery and javelin were also considered sports – even ball games are said to have existed).

I

ICELAND:



The island was discovered before the year 860 by Naddod, and later circumnavigated and explored by Gardar Svavarsson. After a first unsuccessful attempt by Flóki Vilgerdason, Iceland was permanently settled by 870 by Ingólfur Arnarson. As on the Faeroe Islands, a few Spanish monks were

already living on the island. Approximately 20,000-30,000 settlers left their ancient homeland to start a new life in Iceland. Although the interior of the island was uninhabitable and large areas were covered by glaciers and lava fields, there were some birch forests, vast grassy plains, and valleys in coastal areas, mainly in the west and south-west. These were suitable for breeding sheep and cattle. The Iceland horses also felt quite comfortable here. The “Settlers Republic” lasted until 1262. After decades of civil war-like feuds, it came to a close thanks to an annexation agreement with Norway. The Althing, founded in 930, is the oldest existing parliament in the world.

INCOME:



The term ‘income’ was chosen to emphasise the function in the game. Thematically, the expansion of ownership or the increase of influence area leads to increased revenue. Tenants paid cash taxes and the growing clan achieved more sales revenue from the work of the family, and of the slaves and thrall.

INGÓLFUR ARNARSON:



Founder of Iceland’s modern capital of Reykjavik (874). He was the first permanent resident and West Scandinavian colonizer. On his landing in 870, he tossed his high seat into the sea and, in traditional religious custom, went to settle wherever it washed up: When the high seat was found after four years, he moved to the new location (compare Ask and Embla). A true traditionalist!

J

JARL:

Title of the chief of a fjord, later used to refer to members of the Royal Council and leaders of a warrior group - comparable to a duke. “Jarldom” was used to refer to a small kingdom and its associated territory. The “Heimskringla” reports that Harald Fairhair, the first king of Norway, appointed a Jarl to each district, who should uphold the laws and collect taxes for the king. One third of the tax was retained by the Jarl. Each Jarl had four “Hersir.” The Jarl had to provide the king 60 warriors, and each Hersir had to provide 20 warriors, for a total of 140 warriors.

JEWELRY:



Humans have been using items of great beauty to increase their attractiveness for 100,000 years. During the Viking Age, even shells were in high demand – vikings’ appetite for jewelry was insatiable. They rolled wire, poured gold brooches, shaped colorful glass beads for necklaces, cut amber figures, and forged rings, belt buckles, and pendants made from melted silver. Jewelry was more than just a display of status and wealth: both men and women wore jewelry to emphasize their personality. They also served the functional purpose of always having trade goods on hand: silver bangles were broken into pieces in order to pay hacksilver. Odin’s wife, Frigg, was so attached to her jewelry box that she dedicated a servant to its guard. In the game, jewelry is sold through long-distance trade, raiding, pillaging, or forging blue luxury goods tiles.

K

KARL:

Every free-born man was named Karl. A Karl had the right to own land, to bear weapons, to trade and to participate in the Thing. When he acquired enough wealth and fame, he could achieve the status of a Jarl. On the other hand, a Jarl who did not comply with his obligations (preservation of security, prosperity and honour in his area) could quickly lose his title. (So in the game, make sure to always offer enough food at the feast.) However, Karl is also a common German first name.

KNARR:



The name from the “creaky” branch used at the stern to help steer. “Knarren” is the German word for creaking. This slow merchant ship was designed for reliability and high freight volumes: a shipwreck found in Hedeby shows that an enormous load of 60 tonnes was possible. This sailing ship had only a few rudder positions for manoeuvring. It was the best available type of ship for the open sea. The knarr carried out long-distance trade and supplied the Scandinavian islands with necessary goods in barter for their products.

L

LABRADOR:



The Eric saga tells about the group led by Thorfinn Karlsefni (to 1010): “*Then they sailed with northerly winds two half days, and then the country appeared in front of them, and on it a large forest and many wild animals.*” Leif Erikson had already discovered this “Markland” or “woodland” by 1000. There is no known Norse settlement. The area, now part of Canada, was repeatedly visited by the Greenlanders, if for no other reason than to source wood and repair ships.

LANCE:

A ranged weapon that gained special significance to the Vikings in naval combat, and when implementing a Shield Wall. In a variant of the “*Skjaldborg*” (Old Norse) the shield bearers would stand so close together that their shields overlapped to form a double layer, while lancers in the second row knelt and stabbed the legs of their opponents. To effectively stab, the blades were stronger and heavier than a javelin. Due to its weight, it effectively tore down the shield of an opponent when thrown. Ideal during battles against another Shield Wall.

LAYING A TRAP:



In addition to laying snares for small fur bearing animals, the Viking Age Scandinavians also laid large pit traps. These were excavated with wooden shovels. Branches were cut with a hand axe to camouflage the trap. To get unharmed fur, special

flat, ovoid arrows were used. Thereafter, the skin was pulled over the ears of the animal (even today, we still speak of ‘pulling the wool over one’s eyes’, albeit not as literally as the Vikings). In the game, a successful snare laying action gets you fur and your well-built snare ‘back’. If you fail, as a consolation prize you get a wood and a snare.

LEIF ERIKSON:



According to the Greenland and Erik Sagas, in the year 1000, Vikings discovered Vinland (probably today’s Newfoundland) under the leadership of the son of Eric the Red. They also explored the mainland of Labrador and Baffin Island – first sighted in 986 by Bjarni Herjulfsson’s crew - with a ship acquired from Herjulfsson. Oh well. And who gets all the fame now? Leif definitely deserved his nickname: “the lucky one.”

LINEN:



A material made of flax used for clothing and sails. The cloth was often used for undergarments.

The English word “shirt” was derived from the Icelandic word “*skyrt*” for an undershirt. Linen can absorb up to 35 percent water, eventually it evaporates. Linen thus has a cooling effect and, if it stays dry, is still warm. Skirts were also made of linen. Both men and women wore skirts. For men, they grew shorter during the Viking Age; for women, the length remained the same. According to the Olaf saga, linen was also ideal for preserving meat: “*wrap it in a sheet and add leeks and other herbs to it so that it does not rot, and put it into your chest.*”

LØGTING:

The Parliament of the Faeroe Islands, which still meets today. It rose no later than 900 and was suspended only from 1816 to 1852. The “*Løgting*” was, in the Viking Age, a plenary of all large-scale farmers, a rudimentary democratic self-government. The chairman had no voting rights and had to proclaim the laws as they passed. Nothing was written down – the chairman was the “walking memory” of the Thing. He was required to remember all decisions and would recite them if necessary.

LONG SWORD:



The Viking weapon with the greatest prestige was usually double-edged and 70-80 centimeters long. The best long swords were given names like “*Fetbreiður*” (“wide foot”) and “*Kvernbit*” (“millstone biter”).

The (Nibelungen) story of the Norns-Gest (14th century) tells, “*Regin forged for Sigurd a sword called Gram. It was so sharp that he kept it in the Rhine and let drift one flake of wool that was cut through. Then Sigurd split Regin’s anvil with the sword.*”

The single-edged sword was called “long seax.” Swords were worn mostly on the left on one’s belt, baldric, or shoulder strap. The scabbard consisted of two leather-covered pieces of wood. The handle was usually decorated. Occasionally recovered engravings reveal that the ironwork was often imported from the Frankish Empire, where the production technology was probably sourced. The West Frankish King Charles the Bald (823-877), grandson of Charlemagne, ordered under threat of death an explicit sword-export ban to the Vikings. Whether the arms embargo worked is not known, but the quality of domestically-forged swords rose. The effect of poor-quality bog iron is described by the Olaf saga (around 1230) where King Olaf “*saw that the swords cut badly. Then he cried out: Why do you deliver such blunt blows: I see that none of them intersect anymore. One man replied: Our swords have become blunt and badly bruised.*” Swords have also been used symbolically in courtship, official invocations, or later in coronation ceremonies (starting in the 13th century).

LONG-DISTANCE TRADE:



At the beginning of the Middle Ages, a flourishing long-distance trade developed. In the North Atlantic area, it was conducted primarily with the “*knarr*”. While in the Eastern Europe river-system, the Varangians used smaller, more agile vessels such as the “*Karfi*.” On board of merchant ships were a skipper, a cook, a rowing team, a pilot, a translator, and sometimes passengers. Spring was for preparations, summer for the voyage, and winter the return home. Specific destinations included rich and cosmopolitan Byzantium, and the end points of the great Silk Road trade route, such as Bulgar on the

Volga, not far from the present-day Kazan, where many silver hoards have been discovered buried in the surrounding countryside. From the Arabs and Byzantines, jewelry, silk, spices, wine, and silver coins were procured. In return they brought, among other things, furs, antlers, slaves, wax, amber, and honey to the Orient. Long-distance trade was already, during the Viking Age, a luxury business for well-connected people. Conversely, Arab and Jewish long-distance traders found their way to the few larger commercial centers such as Birka, Ribe, Hedeby, York and Dublin “on the edge of the world.”



LONGHOUSE:



The building tile of the same name in the game represents the main house of a farm. Some longhouses from the early Viking Age had external walls of piled up stones with a width of up to three meters. There were areas for living and sleeping, washing, cooking and, depending on the size, also for supplies or animals. Window openings were rare. This led to the fire in the house being good not only for heating and light, but also lung diseases. Excavations have revealed houses or buildings with floor plans from 4x10 to 9x83 meters - a mirror image of wealth and prestige. The open air museum, Borg (Lofoten, north Norway), features a magnificently reconstructed 83-meter longhouse. Consider: the indoor proportions almost reach the length of a football field and the width of a soccer kick-off circle. The walls were made of typical blockhouse planks or they were filled with planks, clay, or wattle between posts set into the ground. Sometimes, to provide additional protection from the wind, a stone or sod wall was built as well. In Iceland almost everything was built with earth, stone, peat, and sod due to the scarcity of timber.

LONGSHIP:

“Jarl Erling had a ship with 32 rowing benches and corresponding shipping space. On this he went on ‘Viking’ or he used it for organising the levy. In that case, there were 240 men or more on board.”
Olaf-Saga



The “langskip” were equipped with a folding mast. These fast warships were well manageable by a rudder at the stern and had wide square sails able to rotate in the wind. The light-weight “herskip” had a special, raised, bow which allowed a kind of gliding on the water once they reached a certain speed. Together with overlapping three centimeter thin planks (not unlike roof shingles), which let air under the ship, this resulted in top sailing speeds of 20 knots (37 km/hr), as proven by later experiments. The narrow longships had, thanks to their form, enough buoyancy to be safely fully immersed in high waves either at the bow or stern. Classic longships were up to 30 meters long, about four meters wide and had room for around 100 warriors. The vessels could be transported cross-country if needed and, thanks to a low draft of about 1.5 meters, could also be used on rivers. The bow was often decorated with a carved, fearsome figure, intended to keep away the evil spirits of the enemy.

“Helgi did let a dragon head be made for the stem of their vessel, well fitted above the waterline. To do so he used the money, that Ingibjörg, the daughter of Gudmund, gave him, but he hid some of it in the Dragon’s neck.”
History of Nornen-Gest (14th century)

MEAD:



The “Mjöd” was drunk while warm, the same as imported wine and cheaper beer. The wine was created by spontaneous fermentation of water and honey. When made with cherries, fermented mead is often called “Viking Blood” or “Odin’s Blood” – furnished with a spice mix, it’s called “Dragon’s Blood.” Recent archaeological findings suggest that wealthy people sometimes could afford a drinking horn of mead - albeit more rarely than the stereotype suggests. The Germans used the “gift of the Æsir,” a strong drink, at cultic feasts. Frankish Emperor Charlemagne (748-814) decreed that in every model farm, bee keeping and mead production should be established. In mythology, two dwarves brewed mead from honey and the blood of the Vanir Kvasir that gave anyone who drank it the gift of poetry. Kvasir was a sage created by the saliva of the the Æsir and Vanir. They spit in a jar to seal the end of their conflict. Everyone who met Kvasir interrupted their activities in order to listen to him. Kvasir’s end came when the aforementioned dwarves killed him to gain his wisdom.

MILK:



Cattle, sheep and goats provided milk for butter, cheese, cream, sour milk, buttermilk, curd, a kind of yogurt, and skyr. Skyr is a salted sour milk, which was probably used on ships because of its long shelf life. Milk and water were the main drinks of the Scandinavians (not mead or beer).

MOOSE:



In the game, the moose was chosen to mark the starting player. Moose lived as a solitary animal in forests, where the smaller reindeer would group in herds in open lowland areas. The Scandinavians hunted both species of deer. With a height at the shoulder of 1.4 to 2.3 meters and an average weight of 650 kilograms, a moose was a big prize. Moose antlers were a coveted commodity.

MOUNTAIN STRIPS:

In the game, the oblong strips are filled with wood, stone, ore and silver. They symbolize the mostly mountainous hinterland of a coastal settlement where the settlers obtained their materials. These were used for the construction of buildings and ships, or were basic raw materials for the manufacturing of various products – in the game, these products include rune stones, chests and blue forged goods. Moreover, in the summer, trees would be felled in the mountains to produce charcoal for metal extraction.



N

NADDOD:



Discoverer of Iceland. He and his crew lost their way in a storm before 860 on a trip from Norway to the Faeroe Islands. Naddod saw a coast. Upon making landfall, they climbed a mountain and saw only an uninhabited country. When they set sail again in the fall, it began to snow heavily. That's why they called the land "snow country."

NAVIGATION:

"From Hearnar of Norway you should sail right-west to Hvarf on Greenland, and thereby you should sail as far north of Shetland, and know that these can only be seen when the visibility is very good, and as far south of the Faeroes that the sea reaches to the middle of the mountains, and as far south of Iceland, that one notices there the birds and whales."

Handwriting of Haukr Erlendsson (before 1334).

Since the seafarers navigated on the open sea by the sun, moon and stars, it was more a matter of luck and a good deal of experience, whether they arrived directly at the desired target. Fish and bird migrations may have helped the "Kendtmann" (Lore) to find out where to go to. Water coloration could show a current, and with a fine nose it was possible to smell land when it was nearby. If sustained good weather was expected, they could set off onto the open sea, using landmarks for safer coastal navigation. Only good weather allowed a good view of the distance. It is possible that ravens were of use by releasing them to seek out land. But the unpredictable Atlantic weather, with its storms and monstrous waves, could quickly upset the best-laid plans. In fog, the Vikings became disoriented quickly and could no longer find their way. The resulting odysseys could also lead to new discoveries.

NEWFOUNDLAND:



A North American island in the far estuary of the Saint Lawrence River. Unproven theories suggest that Brendan arrived there first. What is certain is that Leif Erikson was there in 1000. The northern tip was settled by Vikings, as demonstrated by an uncovered cloak pin. Presumably it was "Vinland," which was settled,

according to the sagas, between 1010-1013. Later chronicles speak of trade relations lasting until the 14th century.

NORN:

Island-Scandinavian language, rooted in Old Norse, that was spoken until the 18th century on the Shetland and Orkney Islands. It influenced the local Scottish dialects, as well as Scottish English. Today's Faroese is similar to Norn. (Incidentally, in Norse mythology, Norns were also three supernatural female figures who saw or interpreted the past, present and future.)

NORSEMEN:

Formerly the word "Norðmenn" or Normans was used for all Scandinavians. But Normans are strictly speaking inhabitants of northern France. They are descended from raiding Danes, who settled, war-weary, in Normandy after negotiations in

911 to protect the Frankish Empire from attacks from other Vikings. They merged with the local Franks: "*We have fought enough and defeated the Franks. Now, we would rather rest and enjoy the fruits of the land in peace. Liber II. Rollo.*" They accepted Christianity and established a strict Duchy. In the 11th-13th century they extended their dominion to Brittany, England, the majority of Ireland, Wales, southern Italy, and Sicily. They founded the crusader state of Antioch in 1098.

O

OCCUPATIONS:



In the game, they are a category of action spaces. The spaces allow, in addition to placing three or four Viking figures, the drawing or playing of occupation cards. A wide variety of cards is a characteristic sign of many games by Uwe Rosenberg since the successful medieval-themed board game "Agricola." The partly historical, partly invented occupation titles should make it clear to players how the card effects are thematically represented in the Viking era. In reality, the people of the early middle ages were rarely as specialised as the cards suggest, except those of the somewhat unique Kaupang settlements. Various and complementary talents were needed in the clan to avoid distress.

ODIN:

Chief god of Norse mythology. According to the Edda saga, the father of all gods had magical powers and an eight-legged horse. He rode on "Sleipnir" across the night sky. His brothers were Hœnir, who gave comprehension to Ask and Embla, the first human couple - and Lóðurr, who gave hearing and seeing to the people. Together the three killed the ice giant Ymir, and created the world of Midgard and the first humans. Odin was one-eyed: because he wanted to drink from the fountain of wisdom, the guard demanded one of his eyes (good thing he didn't want to drink from the fountain of cleverness). Odin's ravens, Hugin ("thought") and Munin ("memory"), were constantly travelling about for Odin to tell him of the events on Earth. In the game, Hugin and Munin are shown on the gold brooch. Odin had female bodyguards - the Valkyries. In the Germanic mythology, these were his own daughters. Their task was to carry fallen Vikings from the battlefield to Valhalla. (A precursor to the Red Cross?)

OIL:



Fish oil is derived from the fat of whales and seals, the so-called "blubber." It was used as lamp oil, lubricating oil and for tanning. The Sami people, natives of northern Scandinavia, used this oil to make very soft, well insulated, and washable leather from deer skin, for fine robes or gloves. In the game, the general term "oil" has been selected because other types of oil were used too. From flaxseed, you can also produce the less tasty linseed oil. One can use it to produce natural soap that cleans wood and stone very well. Linseed oil soap removes dirt and provides a thin, dirt-repellent film of oil. Recent studies on painted bedposts and ship stems suggest that there existed a paint based on linseed oil. The Icelandic name for Saturday, the "laugardagur" or "bath day," is evidence of the active use of soap. The Anglo-Saxon chronicler Wallingford scoffed at the cleanliness of the Danes, which he

regarded as vain and therefore sinful. (Today Norway and oil are associated together because of a completely different reason. Norway owns over fifty percent of the remaining Western European oil reserves. But this is a different game.)

OLD NORDIC:

Language of the Scandinavians during the Viking Age. In Norway, people spoke Old West Norse—as did they on the settled islands of the North Atlantic and parts of Ireland, Scotland and England (near York). In Denmark, Sweden and Gotland, Old East Norse was spoken in various dialects. The language is still quite close to its Germanic roots, and traces of it still linger in modern English. Window, for example, is based on an Old Norse word ‘vindauga’, which means wind eye or wind hole. Despite the beginnings of linguistic fragmentation in Northern Europe, people of the Viking Age did not generally have a problem understanding each other.

ORE:



Iron was primarily produced from lower quality bog ore, which greatly affected the quality of swords. To produce iron, much coal was needed. The Norwegian “Mösstrand” was a center of iron surface mining with more than 160 huts (10 x 4 meters squared). Iron ingots, later manufactured from high-quality Swedish underground mining ore, were not known in the Viking Age. (By the way: the ox blood red color of many Scandinavian homes, which protects against damp weather, is a by-product of the great iron production of Swedish mines from the 16th century that helped Sweden become such a powerful nation.)

ORKNEY ISLANDS:

The “Orkneyjar” (“seal islands”) were settled in 780 by the Norwegians. The archipelago of about 70 islands was inhabited by Christianised Picts at that time. The “Orkneyinga” saga tells the story of the first Norwegian Jarls. So in 876 Harald Fairhair enthroned Røgnvald Eysteinnsson from More in Norway as a Jarl, after the islands had been under Viking control for decades. The Old Norse language, Norn, died out on the Orkney Islands in the 18th century. About 20,000 people live there today, three-quarters of them on the largest island – the “mainland”. Together with the Shetlands, about 100 kilometers away, the Orkneys were referred to by the Vikings as “Northern Islands” (“Norðreyjar”). Both groups of islands are now Scottish, but were Norwegian until 1469.

P

PEAS:



In the Viking Age, these protein-rich, but presumably grey peas were harvested fully ripe and then dried. Bread from the flour of peas was already known in the Swedish Iron Age. In Germany, peas and lentils, in addition to grain, were the most important staple food of the first sedentary farmers.

PILLAGING:

*“My mother said,
I deserve a warship
Soon with vigorous men,
To commit robbery as Vikings.
Standing as I ought to at the stem,
Navigating boldly the sea keel:
Heroes like in port
I dig at the men.”*
Egil Saga

After initial successes with smaller raids, the Vikings also launched large-scale raids along large rivers deep into the European hinterland. The Norwegians focused on Ireland, Scotland, and northern England, while the Danes concentrated on south and middle England, as well as the weakened Frankish Empire. Eyewitness Regino, later abbot of Prüm in the Eifel region, wrote in 907: “*The Vikings sailed the Rhine with their ships down from the north. On their journey, they left a trail of destruction. Cologne, Bonn, Zülpich, Jülich, Neuss and the palatinate Aachen burned to the ground. With a large number of foot soldiers and horsemen, the Norsemen had appeared. With them, they moved into the hinterland and overcame the Eifel mountains.*” The “Varangians” from the Swedish area turned east. They took advantage of the branched river system of the Dnieper and Volga, to travel around Eastern Europe. Finally, via the Black and Caspian Seas, they attacked Baku, and from 860 on, launched three unsuccessful attacks on Byzantium.

PLUNDERING:



Collection of cash (“Danegeld”) or natural resources under duress via threat of burning the region down. A fire chief was responsible for the destruction (lighting the fires instead of putting them out, as in Fahrenheit 451, a dystopian novel by Ray Bradbury). Plundering was a common way of funding war, especially in the Thirty Years’ War between 1618 and 1648, an extremely destructive and deadly period in European history when on average two out of every five Germans died.

R

RAIDING:

The inhabitants of Scandinavia probably heard of stories from traders about poorly guarded riches. Loose groups of sailors embarked on targeted looting raids to launch sudden attacks on vulnerable coastal communities, before quickly retreating with their loot. (Are Vikings the creators of pooling transportation to head to work?) The relatively weak associations of about 60 Vikings avoided skirmishes as much as possible. The first historically recorded victim of “Strandhögg” (as this form of attack was called) in 793 was the significant monastery on the island of Lindisfarne off the north-east coast of England. Alcuin, English scholar at the court of Charlemagne, reports: “*Such a horror had never been seen by Britain. The Church of St. Cuthbert is stained with the blood of the priests of God and all its treasures were stolen.*” At first, the raids of the Vikings were directed only at remote monasteries. When the well-defended empire of

Charlemagne dissolved in 830, raids against commercial centers began. In 885, the Vikings even used 700 ships to carry out a major attack on Paris. Citizens took refuge on a small island in the Seine (and doused the enemies with hot pitch). They steadfastly defended themselves for a year. Finally, outside help arrived, saving them from pillage.

ROBES:

Magnificent or historical clothing worn for ceremonial occasions. The clothing of the early Middle Ages consisted mostly of wool, linen, or hemp. In some cases silk was used. There were also overcoats which were made of valuable fur. The garments of the Sami people, designed mostly in blue and red, were very popular. Color was a mark of fashion even in the Viking Age. However, no archaeological proof has been found that women preferred to wear red and men blue, as suggested by modern pink/blue convention. It is said that the cloak of Odin was blue. (The old Swedish word for cloak is, by the way “mantol”, very similar to the German word “Mantel” and the French word “manteau.”)



ROUND SHIELD:



A defense weapon. Usually crafted from basswood or plank wood plate, they were about a meter in diameter, and often wore out quickly in combat. They were covered with leather and reinforced with iron at the edge. In order to pass arms inspection, they needed at least three metal cross strips.

Unpainted shields were called “white shields.” Their placement at the top of the mast was considered a peace sign. War shields were generally painted red and hanged on the tailboard.

*“What is the animal,
that protects the brave?
It has a bloody hump,
hides people,
defends from spears,
preserves life,
one takes his whole life
in his hand.
King Heidrek,
can you guess it?
Heidrek:
Good is thy riddle,
Gestumblindi,
and here is your answer:
It is the shield: It is often bloody
in the battles, and shields those
who handle it skilfully.”
Heiðreks riddle, Saga of King Hervör and Heidrich
(13th century)*

RUNE STONE:



High, upright stone with a runic inscription commemorating a deceased or person killed in combat. Occasionally a signpost at a cross-roads or main hub, or a monument that boasted of

achievements not only in the manner of ancestors but also for propaganda purposes. Sweden had the most widespread remembrance culture with thousands of stone finds that testify to historical events and trips to distant lands: “*Thorolf, a henchman of Sven, built this stone in memory of his comrade Erik, who was killed when the warriors besieged Hedeby, and he was helmsman, a well-born warrior.*” (around 1010).

S

SAGAS:

The Norse goddess of poetry called “Saga.” Reports and stories from the Viking Age are called “sagas.” They act mostly as the story of a person or family, and tell of events and gods. However, they also portray the image of a Viking upper class. They were written, of course, at a later time, but the poems contained therein are certainly very old. They were often contemporary and are a valuable source. The Scandinavians had plenty of time to tell each other stories around the fire during the long nights of winter. Based on those Skald-supported oral traditions, they were gradually written down in the 12th century, mainly in Iceland by the Benedictine and Augustinian monks. The best known family sagas include the Egils Saga and Njal saga. In the “Saga of the people on Eyr,” supernatural events are portrayed. The “Edda” is a collection of gods and heroes songs. It is about the beginning and end of the Nordic world in which so-called “maxim poetry” was intended to teach proper behaviour in everyday life. The most famous collection is called “Heimskringla” and tells the story of the Norwegian kings. It was written in 1230. Even though no author is named, it is believed that the Skald, historian, and politician Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) wrote many parts. His most important work is the Prose Edda (or “Snorra Edda”), a poetic theory manual for Skalds with quotes from other works, some of which are now lost. The scientific and philological collection is an important source of interpretation of Nordic myths and religious conceptual worlds; other works of that age are too sparse to be considered reliable. The variety of evidence for diverse perspectives suggests that there was a high religious tolerance, as is still the case in Scandinavia today.

SAILING:



The open sea was dangerous and navigation was unreliable. Therefore, the Vikings sailed and rowed along the coasts if possible. They used landmarks and sea-marks to orient themselves and sailed usually in the daytime and in good weather. At night, they sought a protective cove. The Vikings invented maneuverable longships that almost “flew” up to 20 knots over the water thanks to their shallow draft. They used them in shallow waters and could follow rivers far into the hinterland. Several action spaces on the game board are devoted to sailing.

SALT MEAT:



Preserved meat. Sheep, cattle and horses were shepherded for their wool, milk, and labor and transportation capabilities. They were slaughtered only for special occasions.

Pigs and poultry were kept mainly for meat consumption. At the beginning of winter, animals were slaughtered if one could not (or did not want to) feed them. The meat was preserved by drying, kippering, or preserving. Salt, leeks, and spices were used for pickling. Salt meat was often used to supply ships.

SEAX:

Single edged weapon of the Viking Age. The short seax was used as a fighting knife in addition to a long sword.

SHED:



Who does not know the shed from Astrid Lindgren's world-famous children's stories about Michel (in Sweden called Emil) from Lönneberga?

Whenever Michel would misbehave, he was either locked in the shed, or hide himself there so as not to run into his infuriated father. Lucky for him, the door could be locked from the inside, too! During his stays in the shed, he whiled away the time by carving wooden figures. In the game, the shed is a good storage place for wood and stone.

SHEEP:



Available at the cattle market in the game. The red animal tiles can be used as a valuable trade commodity and for the production of wool (rarely are they eaten at the feast).

Sheep provided milk, meat, fur, bone, horn, tallow oil for the lamp, and, not least of all, wool for clothing and sails. Sheep and goat herding was a task for adolescents. It was necessary to keep the animals from cultivated crops and to protect them from possible dangers. The Norwegian settlers took an old Nordic, and rather small, sheep breed with them on their trips to spread the breed to other places. Especially interesting was the use of their water-repellent outer coat for the production of "wadmál."

SHETLAND:



In the game, you can explore the sub-Arctic Archipelago and claim the topographically simplified exploration board of the same name. Located 170 kilometers north-east from the Scottish mainland, the "woollen cloth Islands" ("Hjaltland") were inhabited by Norwegians in 700.

What happened to the Picts living there remains unknown. The Old Norse language, Norn, became extinct in the 18th century. Today about 22,000 people live on the islands. Along with the Orkneys, about 100 kilometers away, Shetland is referred to as "Norðreyjar" ("Northern Islands"). From the 9th century until 1469, it was a Norwegian 'Jarldom'. The area from the Hebrides to the Isle of Man was called the "Southern Islands."

SHIPBUILDING:

The Vikings built the various types of vessels by oral tradition from memory - either under a canopy or in the open air. They hewed the components from selected tree trunks with special axes. The carpenter always followed the vein of wood, which made the parts much stronger and more resilient. The planks were split from the trunk and then smoothed. The finished vessel was well balanced and increased the maximum speed

of different types of boats, which is why Viking ships are still considered the best ships of their time. In addition to the types of vessels that are in the game, Karfi (see long-distance trade) and Škuta were also important in the Viking Age. Viking ships were "double-pointed" – bow and stern were equal. The "Färö-boat," derived from the Viking ship, is a special type of boat of lightweight construction, which is due to the constant lack of wood on the Faeroe Islands. On the maintenance of ships:

"Take two or three hundred cubits wadmál with you on board, which may serve to repair the sail, when it becomes necessary, many needles and enough threads or sail bands; it seems unimportant to mention such a thing, but so often the need for it arises. You always need nails on board with you – squared flat ship nails and hangnails that suit your ship. Bring gaffs, carpenter hatchets, chisels, drills and all the other tools that are needed to repair the ship."

King Mirror (13th century).

SILK:



Available in the game by long-distance trade, but also by raiding and pillaging. The only truly endless natural fiber

in the world is obtained from the cocoon of the silkworm. Silk was a popular luxury good. It was found in small fragments in 45 graves from Birka, suggesting its use primarily as ornamental trim. The silk trade (mainly of the Varangians) took place along the Volga and Dnieper rivers, and across the Caspian and Black Seas to Persia and to the Byzantine Empire, which began silk production independent from China in 550. Even brocade found its way to Scandinavia: a solid, heavy and patterned fabric of silk, that gold or silver threads were woven into.

SILVER:

Rich silver deposits existed in the Southwest of England and Central Europe, but not in Northern Europe. Silver came north by payment of Danegeld (extortion, essentially), raiding, and trading. The corrosion-resistant metal was easy to melt and process. It was used for the production of high-quality metal equipment and jewelry, as well as a device for beating silver coins. In the game, silver is shorthand for both hacksilver as well as later silver coin currency.

SILVER COINS:



There was a period of overlap after coins had begun circulating, that Norsemen still paid with hacksilver. There were silver dinar with the image of Charlemagne, Arab dirham (up to 100 million Arabic coins were taken to the north by the Vikings), or, thanks to the tribute extorted in England (Danegeld), more and more Anglo-Saxon coins. Only in 1150 did a complete switch from a 'silver weight exchange economy' to a 'coin currency economy' take place in Sweden. The folding scales for hacksilver were no longer used. In their place were silver coins, whose value remained coupled to the value of silver – for example: the so-called Silver Standard in Denmark until the 19th century. From 997 on, Denmark minted its own silver coins and gradually displaced the Arab and European coins (perhaps even earlier in York). Recovered coins often show evidence of being picked at by the Vikings using a 'counterfeit money tester' (a simple knife), so that their authenticity and purity could be detected.

SILVER HOARD:



Whether acquired through trade, pillaging, sacking, ransom, or tribute, the Vikings buried – just like a squirrel – some of their treasures and weapons. If everything was not transportable at once, they would

hoard the spoils of a raid nearby – preferably close to the homeland. Hundreds of these hiding places have been found in Britain and northern Europe, mostly consisting of silver coins, bullion, hacksilver, and jewelry hack fragments. Even today, from time to time, a small Viking treasure is discovered.

SILVERWARE:



In the game, you can obtain blue luxury goods by long-distance trade, raid, and pillaging, and by melting it you can turn it into

jewelry. In the early Middle Ages, silverware was dismantled into hacksilver and was part of every silver hoard. In the late Middle Ages, it became a feature of fine tableware.

SKIN AND BONES:



Robust ship's ropes were made from whale skin. The bones were used, similar to antler or horn, in different ways: as knives, handles, combs, sculpted art work, shovels, hairpins, shells, game pieces, ice skates, flutes, or even as a kind of ironing board for wrinkle-free

clothes drying. Together with the whalebone board, smoothing stones of glass were found, used to deliberately rub creases into clothes (a precursor of the flat iron). Beams were made from the long rib bones of whales. The rigid, yet flexible whalebone from the whales of Greenland was also used for basket making, and then corsets, beginning in the 17th century. The Vikings, however, preferred filling their stomachs to squeezing them away. The handle of the popular short sword seax, and even chain jewelry, was manufactured from the bones of other whale species. In the game, “skin and bones” tiles are obtained by choosing the “whaling” action.

SMITHY:

Most were built on the edge of Viking settlements, as they were considered to be a fire hazard. In addition to processing iron, which was quite difficult, blacksmiths would also work with cast bronze and lead, which were relatively easy to work with. Smiths were highly regarded in the Viking Age.

SNØBJØRN GALTE HOLMSTEINSSON:



Unnoticed by world history, a small group of settlers, led by the Norwegian Galte, were the first to land in America in 978 (actually Greenland). Galte was killed during an argument, resulting in a failed attempt to colonize Greenland. Eight years later, Erik the Red and his settlers succeeded where Galte failed.

SPEAR:



In the game, the throwing spear has barbs for whaling, so that the prey does not escape. The spears were furnished with a swing strap to increase their range and penetration. They were also used in combat by cavalry units. At the start of a battle, it was the custom to hurl the spear above the enemy army, shouting the words “Odin has you all.” While Thor was known for his hammer, “Mjolnir,” Odin was known for his spear, “Gungnir.”

Spears were simple, easily manufactured weapons, which cost remarkably little. Some were elaborately decorated. The blade was long, up to a half meter. Short spears had a long, sword-like tip, which allowed it to also be used in a sword-like fashion.

SPICES:



The excessive use of expensive, imported spices like pepper in order to flaunt ones riches at feasts was already a bad habit in the early Middle Ages. Herbs were plentiful in nature, and all were used to season food. Not only today's classics such as dill, watercress, chives, garlic, ramson, parsley and especially onion, but also garlic mustard, angelica, wild oregano or wild thyme. Spices were used also to preserve, such as leek for salt meat. Sometimes the spices were intended to distract from the salty taste or whitewash the treacherous coloring that would develop on slightly tainted meat. For this reason saffron, imported by long-distance trade, was used in large quantities.

STABLES:



Livestock was either housed in a divided stable area within a residential building, where up to 20 animals could be accommodated, or in stables separated from the main house. This became increasingly true in the late Viking Age. It was not uncommon for large farms to have stables that could accommodate up to 100 animals. The Norsemen deliberately built twisted passages in the barns so that the cold could not reach the animals. The main wife was the keeper of the keys to the stables, worn along with other keys on a ring on her belt. (Another of these keys was for the treasure chest.)

STOCKFISH:



Drying fish like cod, pollock, and haddock allowed them to be preserved for several years. Temperature and mold were no longer a threat once the fish were dried. The headless, gutted fish were tied together in pairs for several weeks on drying racks on the coast, where they received the salt of the cold sea air. This allowed them to lose seventy percent of their moisture without compromising their nutritional content. These vitamin rich fish were commonly used to supply ships, as they were considered to be as good as five fresh fish, and could therefore easily be transported far inland. The monopoly trade in the “poor man's food” made the Hanseatic city of Lübeck rich in the 14th and 15th centuries. You can learn how stockfish production and fish trading grew to an even larger scale by the 19th century by visiting the idyllic little museum-

village of “Nusfjord” in Lofoten, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Nowadays “törrfisk”-chunks are still available as a snack in small bags, but at high prices due to the overfishing of cod. The Norwegian dried fish specialty, “lutefisk” (“lye fish”), is only slightly steamed and traditionally served with pea puree. (In Italy, incidentally, an unyielding man is called “uno stoccafisso,” which naturally can’t be referring to any Norwegians.)

STONE HOUSE:



Apart from using dry stone walls to break the wind, buildings in Scandinavia were usually built out of wood. This changed the Norwegian settlement area and expanded into the timber-poor North Atlantic islands. In Greenland, you can still view the ruins of hundreds of stone house.

STONES:

One thing the Scandinavians never lacked were stones. Stones were used for the production of smoke holes, graves, and runestones – Christianization led to the construction of stone crosses. Meat was stewed on cooking stones. Grain was milled with stone hand mills, introducing small stone chips into the food. These wore away tooth enamel and promoted cavities. Special types of rock were mined for whetstone-production and for soapstone cooking implements – both coveted exports. Dry stone walls were to break the wind in front of the house and, in the North Atlantic islands (particularly Greenland), the houses were partially or entirely built of stone. According to the sagas, the walls of the gods’ castle Asgard were built by the stonemason “Hrimthur.”

WORD:

See long sword.



THING:

According to old Germanic law, it is a People’s Court and Assembly. In Switzerland, it is still in use today. Originally an assembly of all free men, it changed by 930, due to the increase in population, to a representative thing with delegates of the different groups. In Norway and its settlements, a thing-order, similar to a code of laws, regulated living together and fixed thing penalties. There were regional and supra-regional things in Norway, but also in the freshly settled North Atlantic islands: the “Lögting” was founded on the Faeroe Islands in 900 (pausing from 1816-1852). The Icelandic “Althing” has met intermittently since 930. The “Tynvaal” on the Isle of Man has met continuously since 976. The things met again in the summer of each year, often at Midsummer (as an annual general meeting). There was also the “allmannathing,” where all free peasants would be obliged to participate. There were thematically relevant thing gatherings (such as for the election of a king, for processes, foreclosures, and manslaughter) and organisational things (about calls for weapons, ships’ crews, or just for entertainment).

THING PENALTY:

A punishment could be very different in the Viking Age. Capital crimes could be punished by being enslaved (“thrall”) for a period of time. Erik the Red and his father were each exiled

for three years for murder. In the game a thing penalty is a punishment for neglecting the care of your family or for holding too meagre a feast which causes a dramatic loss of reputation.

THINGSTEAD:



In the game, it is a central place where your figures start. Often a hill or places with distinctive landmarks such as rocks or trees (preferably oak and limes). Located between four volcanoes in Iceland. Many Central European cities used to have a village, judicial or dance linden in their center. This place was mostly used as a thingstead, but could also be used as a meeting place for the village court, message exchange, or a place to go looking for a wife. In early May, dances were often held there.

THRALL:

The Old Norse word means slave, but also generally landless, unfree people or serfs, in contrast to Karl (free peasant) and Jarl (Earl). Usually, prisoners of war were part of the booty and were sold as slaves (Dublin was an important trading center) or taken home. Those who could not pay their debts had to enter the service of the other until the debt was paid. In Iceland, the children of freed men were completely free. Where in Norway, they would only be free after four generations. For the operation of a Scandinavian farm, extensive labor was required, the hardest of which was delegated to the thrall. Women were often entrusted with household tasks such as churning, cooking, or weaving. Males raked dung, chopped wood, and herded livestock. People captured on raids were also sold to the Orient. A slave was a living possession with virtually no rights. At any time the owner had say of whether they lived or died. Thrall had to keep their hair short, could not own, inherit, or bequeath anything, or make any transactions. A marriage among slaves was considered invalid. (It did not help that Lofn, one of the handmaidens of Odin’s wife, had the task to combine loving women and men when it was forbidden.) Because of their favorable geographical location (close to large non-Christian nations), the Scandinavians had a practical monopoly on the slave trade. Slavery was only abolished in Norway in the 12th century - a direct result of Christianization.

TRADE:

“One summer it happened that a seagoing vessel came from Iceland, that belonged to Icelanders. The ship was loaded with cloaks that were to be sold, and the Icelanders navigated their ship to ‘Hardanger’, because they heard that the most people would be found there.”

Saga of Harald Greycloak

Newly risen trading sites like Birka and Hedeby show the increasing exchange of goods driven by long-distance trade, as well as the increasing use of foldable scales and the pervasive use of hacksilver as an exchange currency. Cargo ships like the knarr supplied the Scandinavian Islands. Their owners did a brisk trade, for example with linen from “Friesland” (a region of the German North Sea), wine from the Rhineland, longswords from France, tin from England, elk antlers from Norway, iron from Sweden, fur from Bjarmaland, robes from the area of Sami people, soapstone from the Shetland Islands, wadmal from Iceland, as well as tusk from Greenland. Trade with Christian merchants was predicated on the Scandinavian merchants either being Christians or having at least received

the “*Primsigning*.” This sign of the cross on a forehead was a ritual of preparation for baptism, which was accompanied by a supposedly explicit rejection of the old gods:

“The men who wore the sign of the cross had free handling with Christians and pagans and committed to the faith they liked.”

Egil Saga

TREASURE CHEST:



Banded with iron and secured with a lock, a chest to store valuable things like the “*Viking*” loot or parts of a silver hoard paid as Danegeld. In the game, a blue luxury good available by long-distance trade, raiding or pillaging.



VIKING:

Pillaging in remote coastal areas can not be clearly distinguished from commercial voyages, because if there was an opportunity, the merchants, too, would be plundered. And when pillaging was not worth it, there was always simple trading. “*Bjorn was a great navigator, skilled as a Viking and as a trader,*” tells the Egil saga. These Viking voyages were either individual, private pillaging enterprises, or those of merged interests. These voyages, however, were not always linked to robbery.

VIKING AGE:

The time between the raid on Lindisfarne in 793 and the unsuccessful battle for the crown of England in 1066 is known commonly as the Viking Age. One can divide the era of Norse sailors in three phases. The first phase began in 793. The raids were limited to the summer months, after which the Vikings returned back home. The second phase began in 843. The Vikings no longer returned home, but wintered locally. Groups joined together to form associations, came overland, and sailed along the rivers. The start of the third phase began in the year 876, when the first immigration of Vikings to England started, which, years later, resulted in a division of the land among the followers. This “Danelaw” ranged from York to London and brought enormous tributes: the so-called Danegeld.

VIKINGS:

Today, many people equate Vikings with a tribe, nation, or people. A concept that any early Middle Ages Norseman would reject – they did not just go ‘viking’. The Old Norse verb “viking” means “to be on the prowl,” but could also refer to a trading expedition. “*Vikingr*” were opportunity robbers and, later, professional looters. The sea warriors were only a small percentage of a population that was 95 percent farmers and fishermen. Europeans who witnessed a raid or a pillage by Old Norse speaking men from the North made no distinction of where the pirates came from, whether from Norway, Sweden, or Denmark. All were Vikings. However, Frisians called the attackers “*Dani*,” knowing well who they had to ward off, and Finns and Slavs called the Swedish tribes “Varangians” or “*Rus*” (“rowers”), from which the word Russia was created.

VINLAND:

The “vine country” discovered by Leif Erikson during a discovery voyage in the year 1000 (probably Newfoundland): “*So Tykir spoke first for a longer time in German, rolling his eyes in many ways, grinning, but they did not understand what he said. As time passed, he spoke Nordic: [...], I can report some news: I have found vines and grapes. ‘Is that true, my foster father?’ asked Leifr. ‘Certainly that’s true’, he said, ‘because I was born where there was a lack of neither vines nor of grapes’.*”

Some more far-fetched theories suggest that this is not about wild vines with barely edible grapes, that grew along trees, but about wild berries, like blueberries, or a reinterpretation of pastures. A permanent settlement of the auspicious country by a group of settlers linked to Thorfinn Karlsefni failed due to hostilities with the numerically superior natives, although what has been written about Vinland sounded very promising:

“The nature of the country was, as it appeared to them, so good that cattle would need no food in the winter; there was no frost in winter and the grass grew only slightly. Day and night were of similar length, unlike in Greenland or Iceland. The sun was at the sky during the short winter days of 9 o’clock in the morning to 4 o’clock in the afternoon.”
Greenland saga (12th century)



WEAPONS:



In the game, a collective term for the fighting weapon (the long sword), the hunting weapons (spear, bow and arrow), and the fur-saving method of trapping. The importance of weapons is evidenced by how often they were found in graves.

“A man takes his wealth, his weapons, and that which he held valuable, with him.”

Adam of Bremen (around 1075)

WHALE MEAT:



A single whale could supply an entire village community for a long time. The carcass was fully utilized. Meat that could not be eaten in time was smoked, salted, or cured by air-drying. Thousands of gallons of lamp oil were produced using whale oil.

The bones were often used as a building material. In the game, a successful whaling nets you the commodities of whale meat, oil and skin and bones.

WHALING:

We instantly remember the whaling narrative Moby Dick and the harpooner Queequeg. The Scandinavians did not yet know such modern harpoons and hunting methods. Initially, only beached whales were recovered. On the Faeroe Islands, the whales were sometimes driven into shore by ships. Even today, boats and weighted ropes are used to force whales into one of the numerous coves, where they are cornered and quickly killed – an old traditional social event called “*grindadráp*.” Scandinavian cave paintings tell of the millennia-old fjord and coastal hunting tradition of the Sami people, which the Norwegians probably took over at some point. Further details

are only known about the Inuit: traditionally, they hunted the whales from kayaks using throwing spears. Early in the 20th century, the hunt for marine mammals culminated in an industrial mass killing with dynamite tipped harpoons.

WHALING BOAT:

The “Kvalsund Færing” (7th century) was rowed by two people and had a rudder. The “Feræðr bát” (“Faroese boat”) was 9.55 meters long and 1.5 meters wide. The “sexæring” was for three rowers. Both of these were using in seal hunting. It is unknown which boats were used for whaling. On the Faeroe Islands, whales were also forced to the beach, where they were killed with spears.

WOOD:

Ubiquitous building resource for shipbuilding and construction. Material for weapons, tools and other trades as well as raw material for charcoal. Everything the forest provided was used, including oaks, lime trees, ash trees, beeches and maple trees. With increasing proximity to the North Pole, there were mainly spruce, pine and birch forests - occasionally also alders and willows. Iceland was forested in the Viking Age, “*from the mountain to the coast*”. The birch

trees were cut down for building materials and firewood, and the sheep made sure that the trees could not grow. Erosion did the rest. Thanks to reforestation efforts launched in 1940, today the island is again forest-poor (instead of barren as was the case up to then). In the Fjord settlement area of Greenland, very small trees now grow again. Harbingers of a global warming onset by humanity? Most of the wood procured by the island Norwegians was flotsam. The institution of “warec” (seaweed in French: “varech”) regulated the exploitation rights to flotsam: everything that the sea washed up on shore belonged to the landowner. That included shipwrecks (Old Norse “hvrac”) and beached whales.

WOOL:



Soft hair of a hide, especially that of sheep. The sheep were sheared and the dirt plucked from the wool, resulting in raw wool. This was soaked overnight, rinsed, combed and dried. Yarn was then spun with a drop spindle (preferably during a long winter). Yarn was the base for ropes, knitting wool, and wool cloth, especially for the heavy wadmal.



NOTES FROM THE DESIGNER:

Although there were large differences in law, religion and society in the various Scandinavian countries, these were sometimes “unified” for readability, and not to mutate into a scientific tome. There was never any such thing as a universal “Viking culture.” The primary sources of the Viking period come from Runic inscriptions, archaeology, and contemporary literature, the latter of which was written by Arab travellers and Germanic chroniclers such as Adam of Bremen. Because of the scarcity of source material, much information comes from Iceland and the Iceland-sagas. Due to the thematic focus of the game, sources from the Norwegian Vikings were preferred. In the absence of such sources, general sources from Scandinavia or even the early Middle Ages in Northern and Central Europe were used. The texts were compiled by me after predominantly Internet-based research. The source material is just as diverse when consulting Wikipedia, which often cites newspaper articles and numerous blogs from fans of the Viking Age. A truly detailed reproduction would be far too extensive. Nevertheless, a special thanks to Dr. Reinhard Hennig; he is probably the most knowledgeable expert on the matter, and research of the Viking Age owes him a great debt.

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