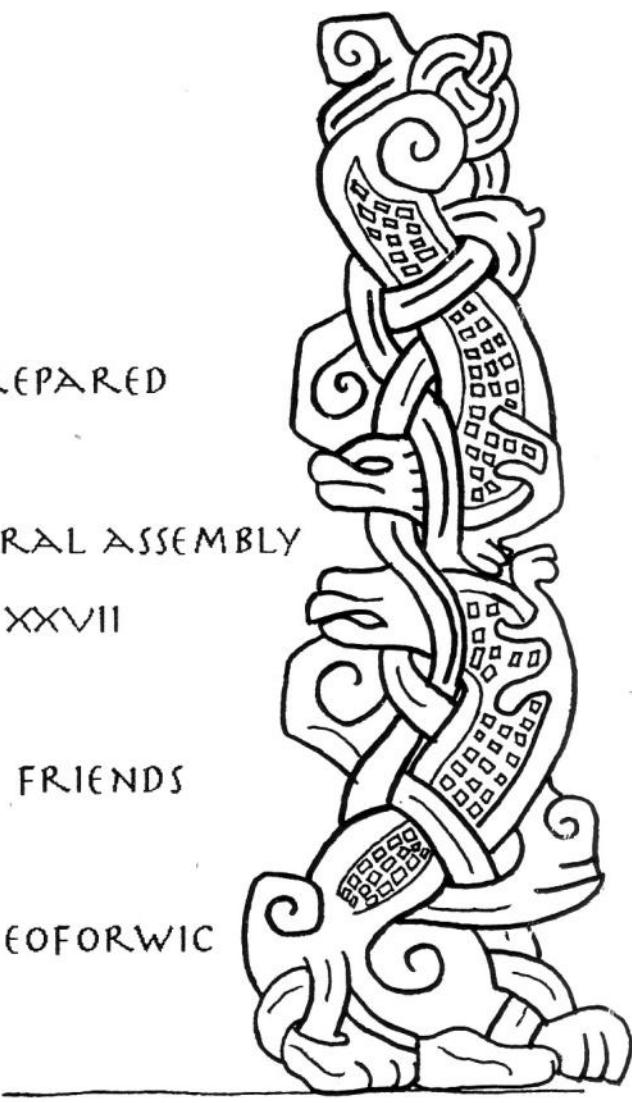
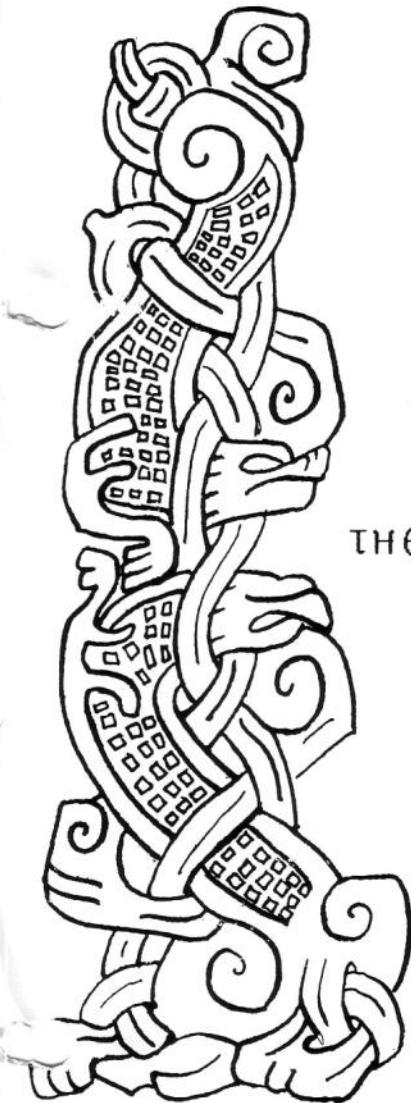
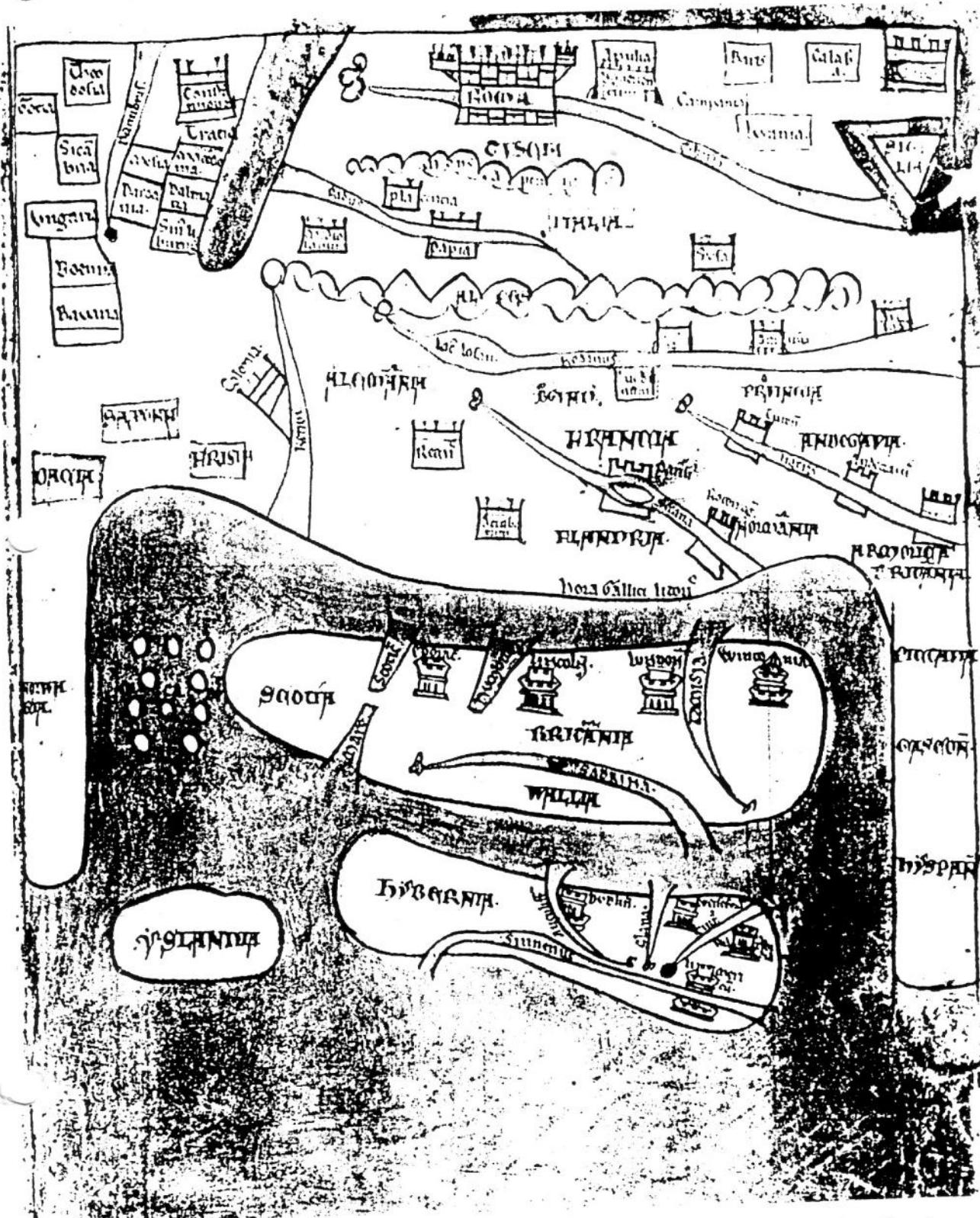


• ALPINGBOK •

HANDBOOK PREPARED
FOR
THE ICELANDIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 11, A.S. XXVII
BY
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
OF
THE CANTON OF EOFORWIC



— Map of Western Europe circa 1000,
prepared in Anglo-Saxon England.
Earliest map to name Iceland.



MENU - ICELANDIC ALTHING

* ROAST EGGS
* FLATBREADS, SKYR, CHEESES
FILLED BREADS (FISH)
MARINATED FISH (SWEET/SOUR)

* SAUSAGES
* CABBAGE WITH APPLE

* A FISH SOUP
* A DISH OF LENTILS

* BREADS, BUTTERS
SALTED BIRDS
ROASTED PORK
* BAKED ONIONS AND GARLIC

* FRUMENTY WITH SOFT FRUITS
* ROAST APPLES

* DENOTES MEAT-FREE DISHES

ALTHINGBÓK -- TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| Preface | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 2 |
| A. Capsule History of Iceland | Vychata Igoravich | 3 |
| B. The Physical World | | |
| 1. Natural Resources | Vychata Igoravich | 4 |
| 2. Transportation | | |
| Icelandic Ponies | Anthea Lovatte | 5 |
| 3. Weapons and Armour | | |
| Iron and the Norse | Sylard of Eagleshaven | 6 |
| 4. Clothing | | |
| "What Shall I Wear to the Althing?" | Hannorah O'Neill | 11 |
| Men's Clothing | Catherine de Guise | 19 |
| Women's Clothing | Rigunth af Bern | 21 |
| Special Clothing Bibliography | Rigunth af Bern | 22 |
| C. Society | | |
| 1. Economy and Money | Austrechilde von Mondsee | 23 |
| Iceland, Economics, and Everyday Things | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 24 |
| Money and Monetary Equivalents | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 25 |
| 2. The General Assembly and Law | | |
| 3. Literacy and Language | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 27 |
| Rune Wisdom | Rigunth af Bern | 29 |
| The Language of Iceland in 992 | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 31 |
| 4. Notes on Combat from the Sources | | |
| 5. Entertainment | Raffe Scholemastre | 32 |
| Norse Games in Play Prior to 1000 AD | Brynhildr Kormaksdottir | 34 |
| Danzeikar, or Egill Shakes a Leg | Brynhildr Kormaksdottir | 35 |
| Viking Musical Culture | Lino da Napoli | 36 |
| Oðin's Treasure | | |
| 6. Religion | compiled by Gaerwen of Trafford | |
| Pagan Myths and Legends | Vychata Igoravich | 38 |
| Thinking Pagan | Rigunth af Bern | 40 |
| Notes on Early Christianity | | 43 |
| D. Outline of Assembly Events and Activities | | |
| 1. Event Flyer | | 45 |
| 2. Regulations and Suggestions | | 49 |
| 3. Original A&S Handbook Outline | | 51 |
| E. Roleplaying at this Event | | |
| 1. Women in the Saga Age | Brynhildr Kormaksdottir | 53 |
| 2. Icelandic Name Construction | Rigunth af Bern | 59 |
| 3. Reckoning | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 63 |
| 4. Current Events in Iceland and Abroad | Francis of Skye, Gaerwen of Trafford, Vychata Igoravich | 63 |
| 5. Northern Climes News | Francis & Gaerwen | 65 |
| 6. General Assembly--Our Reconstruction | Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir | 67 |

- BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES AT BACK -

PREFACE

-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

Hail to hosts! A guest is in the hall,
where shall he sit down?
To please him, quickly give him a place
in front of the blazing fire.

This event is an experiment, and I will explain the philosophy behind it, so our guests will understand and, we hope, enjoy it all the more.

I have long felt that an Icelandic Assembly would be a good theme for an event, because SCA folk behave at events just as Icelanders behaved at assemblies -- we greet friends we have missed, enter into agreements, tell stories, hope to be the best dressed, feast and drink, and perform ceremonies designed to hold our community together.

We have two types of SCA events, and I will call them "Anno Societatis" and "theme" events. The former draw mainly on SCA culture and take place in the Current Middle Ages we have made our home. "Theme" events are rare, as they are harder to prepare, and take as their setting a time and place from the historical Middle Ages. Eoforwic is among the cantons which have held a few theme events, notably a Celtic and an Italian Renaissance event, which have been successful because the organizers gave them a distinctive flavour from the theme period. I hope the Icelandic General Assembly will fit into this tradition.

It seems that the best theme event happens when the guests know in advance how to participate. Another recreation group in Toronto, the University Medieval & Renaissance Association, prepares its guests by giving them a handbook full of facts a person from the period would know, songs he would sing and current events he would discuss, etc. I felt this might increase the fun a guest would have at the Assembly. You will now have a chance to test my theory by reading our offering here and attending the event on July 11th!

I have expanded on the idea of recreating the year 992 in Iceland by asking everyone to get more involved. Some contributed articles to this book. Some will demonstrate period arts and sciences at the event. Merchants will be there to sell authentic wares. Many guests will be involved in legal cases about land disputes, nicknames, bride thefts, and even the odd homicide! If you have creations which would look good on display, please bring them and set them up where your persona would have left them for a moment while watching a wrestling match or bargaining with a Norwegian trader over some silk. Hear the words of Æthelwin, our Anglo-Saxon missionary, as he describes the benefits of following this new god. These are some ways to add atmosphere and fill our event with stories for many a long and cold winter night to come.

I hope our book will also be another resource for newcomers to the SCA who are working on Icelandic or Viking personae. It is also true that other potential autocrats thinking about theme events will find the work here useful.

This book was compiled in Lady Rigunth af Bern's scriptorium and with her help and encouragement, and I hope to increase her good reputation by my words here, thus partially compensating her for her great contribution to this event. Without Rigunth, many projects would be yet incomplete for lack of a driving force behind them.

Countess Brynhildr Kormaksdottir cast the runes for us, and she say they augur well for good weather and increase in fame for all. We hope our guests will be well pleased with our hospitality.

ICELAND: HISTORICAL SKETCH

-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

THE SETTLEMENT PERIOD 870-930

The Scandinavians first discovered Iceland (unintentionally) sometime around the year 860. There are reports of at least two separate expeditions having happened upon the island after being blown off course in storms: one led by Naddod the Viking (a Norwegian), and another by Gardar Svavarsson (a Swede). However, there is also evidence that Iceladn was first discovered, and even temporarily settled by Irish priests in the late 700's.

Floki Vilgordarson seems to have been one of the first to set out for Iceland intentionally. He spent a season fishing and sealing, but was unprepared for the length of the winter, and retreated the following summer. However, Floki was soon followed by Ingulf Arnarson and his household, who, around 870, arrived to establish a permanent settlement.

It should be remembered that this was a period of general Scandinavian expansion, and Vikings were testing their strength in all directions. This is especially true in Norway where overpopulation was straining the limited resources, and a new overlord, Harald Fairhair, was calling himself a king a putting a further strain on everyone else's resources, not to mention their patience. Unfortunately for the proud and independent Norse chieftains, the time had come to learn patience (at least as regarded Harald Fairhair) or enjoy their independence elsewhere. Luckily, there was Iceland.

Unlike any of the other areas "settled" by the Scandinavians (England, Russia, Normandy), there was nobody in Iceland to oppose them. Therefore, settlement followed a very different pattern. It could not possibly have been preceded by raids. There was no need to find leaders, or to coordinate an invasion. There was no need for strongholds or towns. Individual households could arrive one by one, stake out reasonable boundaries, and take up the land for themselves, after coming to some agreement with their neighbors, assuming they had any. Established settlers would often invite friends or relatives from Norway to take up suitable land nearby. Not all settlers came directly from Norway, however. There were Norse immigrants from Scotland, Faroes, and Ireland, along with many Celtic slaves and concubines. Although there were Christians among them, the early settlers were still very much pagan, and temples and holy places were reserved for the traditional gods: Thor, Frey, eventually, odin, and occasionally Njord, Balder, and Tyr.

THE COMMONWEALTH PERIOD

By 930, Iceland was fully settled. That is to say, although the population was still to increase, the boundaries were more or less staked out, and everyone knew who owned what to whom (most of the time). However, it was also becoming clear that some form of general government would be necessary to maintain the peace in this otherwise idyllic and pastoral community. Thus, in 930, the first 36 chieftains were chosen to be given legislative and judicial power over the land. They in turn sent Ulfjot of Lon to Norway to research law, and to him was given the job of creating the Icelandic legal system. When he returned he established the Althing (the annual national assembly), and the office of lawspeaker was created. The establishment of a national assembly and a legal system seems all the more remarkable, even improbable, when we consider that there was no executive arm to back it up. Everyone participated in the assembly voluntarily, and the participants themselves executed the assembly's will. As Hermann Palsson describes it, Icelandic society was basically a peaceful farmers' union, with no monarch, army, or royalty; therefore all recognized the law as supremely important.

Icelanders were quite active throughout the Commonwealth period. The year 965 saw governmental reforms, with three more chieftains added to the assembly, the creation of the Logretta (a legislative body of 142 men), and the creation of the North, South, East, and West

Quarters as judicial districts. by 986, colonists from Norway and Iceland were following Eirik the Red from Iceland out to the newly-discovered Greenland.

Towards the turn of the millenium, activity by the Christians began to increase. Conversions were peaceful at first, but in the last decade of the tenth century, Christian and pagan rivalry was beginning to intensify at the Althing. This seems to have been heading towards a civil/religious war until all parties heeded a decision by the pagan lawspeaker that Iceland was to become Christian and thereby preserve the peace. By 1016, practice of heathen customs was officially banned. The rest of the century was a time of relative peace and prosperity. However, as the Church and its bishops gained wealth and power, the structure of Icelandic society became unbalanced. With the members of the Assembly no longer on an equal footing, and with bishops flouting the law altogether (as they needed only obey God) the authority of the Althing diminished and the law became unenforceable.

The thirteenth century was a period of relative chaos, until finally in 1262, the Icelanders submitted themselves to the king of Norway. This ameliorated nothing. And from 1354 on, the island was placed into the "care" of a governor, whose office was granted by the king of Norway to the highest bidder who would then try to profit from his investment by whatever means he saw fit. The island suffered over 600 years of malign misrule, first under the Norse, and then the Danes (interspersed with periods of plague and famine). Iceland finally achieved independence from Denmark in 1944.

GEOGRAPHY OF ICELAND

--VYCHATA IGORAVITCH

Iceland is a large volcanic island in the northern Atlantic Ocean, situated north and west of Britain, and just south of the Arctic Circle. Its total landmass covers some 40,000 square miles (roughly equivalent to the area of the state of Virginia.) Much of the land is rough and mountainous, the average elevation ranging from 600 to 3000 feet, the highest peak attaining 6950 feet. There are nearly 100 active volcanoes. The current population is 250,000 persons; there being some 70,000 by the year 1000. The current form of government is a liberal democracy; the form of government in the year 1000 could be thought of as a direct democracy.

Formed and continually reformed by volcanic activity, the island continues to be the most volcanic place on Earth. One-third of all surface lava which has appeared on the planet in the last five hundred years has appeared in Iceland, with new flows about every five years. The mountainous, rugged landscape has also been shaped by considerable glacial activity, and the island is still home to the largest glacier in Europe. The land is cut by many rivers and small lakes and by hundreds of spectacular waterfalls.

Despite the high latitude, temperatures are mitigated by the Gulf Stream, and winters are actually warmer than those experienced in most of Canada. Today, the temperatures average -1° C in January and 11° C in July. There was, however, a general warm period in earlier times that lasted through the Viking Age until about 1100. Currently, only 1% of the land is arable, and a further 20% is suitable for grazing. Because of the higher temperatures, the early Icelanders may have had more arable land available to them. However, Iceland has always been largely uninhabitable, with over 70% of its landmass covered in glaciers or lava flows, especially in the interior. Most habitable land is located near the coasts.

The mainstays of early Icelandic agriculture were cattle and sheep. Cattle, and their milk, were necessary for daily subsistence, and sheep provided the Icelanders' chief export: a woolen cloth called wadmal. The Icelanders did not begin any significant export of fish (cod, salmon,

herring, trout) until the late Middle Ages. They have always needed to import some necessities and most luxury goods.

Despite a long period of decline and economic instability after Saga Age, Iceland today is a materially and culturally rich country. The literacy rate is 100%, and they publish 20 times as many books per capita as the United States. Personal income is relatively high, and the life expectancy is the 2nd highest in the world.

THE PONIES OF ICELAND

-- ANTHEA LOVATTE

One of the most enduring legacies left to us by the early Norse are the tough ponies they bred, among them the Fjord and Westlands of Norway, the Shetland of Scotland and the Icelandic. The Fjords have been bred for over 2,000 years and remains of the ancestors of Shetland ponies have been found dating back to the Bronze Age (2500 B.C.).

The modern day Icelandic pony is descended from ponies first brought to Iceland by Norse settlers from Norway in the 800's for use as riding and draught stock and for meat. Later, ponies were imported from the Norse colonies of Scotland and the Isle of Man. Additional importation of stock was banned in 1200 and not lifted until 1900 which allowed the breed to develop in virtual isolation and consolidate those features which make it unique.

Averaging 12.1 hands in height (a horse or pony is measured from the ground to the top of the shoulders, known as the withers, in hands, a hand equaling 4 inches), the Icelandic pony is usually gray or dun, although other colours are seen. It is stocky and short bodied with a short thick neck and a large head, and has the typically heavy mane and tail of a Northern European horse. Like its forebears, the Fjord and Shetland ponies, the Icelandic pony is tough and hardy. It is noted for its excellent eyesight and keen homing instinct. Unlike other horses, it is a good swimmer and is not distressed by long sea voyages. Today, there are two types, a lighter riding pony and a heavier draft pony.

The most unique feature of the Icelandic pony is its brisk, smooth, ambling gait known as a "tolt", which can get up to the speed of a canter. A favourite demonstration at horse shows by Icelandic pony owners is to ride their ponies at a fast "tolt" with a glass of champagne balanced in the palm of their hand without spilling a drop.

Since the 1950's, the breeding of Icelandic ponies has been very carefully managed to maintain the breed's special qualities. They are allowed to roam freely in herds across Iceland in a semi-wild state. In 1982, there were over 35,000 ponies. Studs have been established in Canada and the United States to promote the breed. They can be seen at the Royal Winter Fair in November in Toronto, a living testimony to the good husbandry of the early Norse.

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IRON AND THE NORSE

-- SYLARD OF EAGLESHAVEN

Utilizing the popular books available on the Norse, hard information on such a specialized topic is hard to come by. Knowledge of traditional blacksmithing practices serves as a filter to interpret what information is available. Examination of the existing artifacts can give some clues as to methods. Artifact evidence is uneven at best, iron was always quite expensive, and because it can easily be reworked into new objects, it was commonly recycled. On top of this, any iron objects buried rapidly corroded.

Study of ironsmithing from any period is difficult, in large part because of the secretive nature of the blacksmith himself. Knowledge of the 'art and mystery of the blacksmith' was held within the trade, often within families. Training was passed down verbally during apprenticeship. Even up to the modern age, this information was never written down. Fortunately, the tools and techniques of the blacksmith have remained relatively unchanged through the centuries. Before the industrial revolution, there are two major technological innovations that affect iron working, the invention of the catalan foundry furnace in the 700's,(discussed below), and the development of heavy water powered machinery in the early Middle Ages.

Materials: The Foundry

The largest difference between modern smithing and the practice of the Norse blacksmith is the type of raw material he worked with. The basic ferrous metal used by the Norse smith was wrought iron. Wrought iron is essentially pure elemental iron, with only small amounts of carbon and impurities. Its production from raw ore is very labour intensive, and thus this material is no longer manufactured in the modern western world, (and has not been in significant production for 80 years). As a material it is ideally suited to forging operations, with a fibrous grain that results in flexibility, and working temperatures 'in the reds' (13-1400° F). Although its work ability and relative rust resistance make it a good material for structural and general use objects, it is too soft for use for cutting edges or high impact tools and weapons.

Understanding how this iron was produced from ores is necessary, as it reflects on the position of the smith and his material in Norse society. In the Viking age, metallic iron came from one of three sources. Nickel-iron meteors are an extremely pure source of metal, but are also extremely rare. Ore bearing rock was processed into iron bars, but with the primitive technologies available, only very rich ores located close to the surface were useful. The ore was usually refined into iron billets or rods at, or close to, the mine site. In fact the most primitive of furnaces used for this purpose employed the winds sweeping up from the valleys towards the hilltop mines to provide the air blast for the fire. The quality of the resulting iron varied widely, and those regions that produced a high quality metal were able to export their product widely. The third source is bog iron, and this was the source most commonly utilized by the Norse.

The geography of Scandinavia, (as is the case with much of Canada), provides the physical conditions necessary for the formation of bog iron. First one needs a base layer of iron rich rock. Ground water percolating up through this rock will dissolve iron salts. The water then must collect in stagnant pools on the surface, rich in vegetation. As the plants in the bog decay, they create a mild carbonic acid in the water. This acid fixes out the metallic iron, which gradually is deposited in a layer of reddish sludge on the bottom. This layer can be dug out in much the same manner as peat is. Because only the iron is filtered out, the resulting ore is quite rich and pure. If the ecology of the bog is not destroyed, a new layer can be dug out about every 20 years.

Regardless of the source of the iron ore, the next step in the process is smelting in some kind of foundry furnace. Iron is relatively reactive with oxygen, especially in the presence of water, and quickly forms a red oxide (rust). The element is so reactive in fact, that it almost never occurs naturally in its metallic form. (Curiously, Disko Island, off Greenland, is one of the few places on the earth's surface where pure metallic iron occurs naturally. Volcanic action has spewed up huge masses of iron from deep down in the molten core. This treasure trove was within the range of Norse expansion westward. Did they know of it?) In the case of bog iron, there is a rough conversion of 5 units of ore to yield one unit of wrought iron by weight (depending on the purity of the ore). Essentially the process involves heating a mass of ore to around 2000° F for a number of hours. At this temperature, the extra oxygen in the iron oxide is driven off as carbon dioxide, and the metallic iron collects together in a spongy mass called the bloom. The bloom is then removed from the fire, and hammered (or wrought) to squeeze out impurities. As the slag is forced out, the bloom is repeatedly stretched out, folded, and rewelded into a solid block. (Notice the similarity to the process of pattern welding.) It is this folding that gives the resulting wrought iron the fibrous texture that makes it so flexible when it is forged. It is the residue of the glassy slag, remaining in microscopic layers, that gives the material its rust resistance.

The simplest type of furnace for this process is the bowl furnace. This type was widely used during the Norse period, with remains being found at sites such as York, Dublin, and throughout Scandinavia. A bowl furnace is a circular pit cut in the ground, about 36" across and 18" deep. A charcoal fire filled this depression, and was pre heated for up to 24 hours before the ore was added. The ore was covered with a layer of fuel, and heated for another 12 hours. Obviously the fire would need to be attended constantly, with a huge amount of charcoal being added to maintain the fire. The preferred woods for charcoal were oak or ash, and charcoal burning was a separate trade. Bellows would be used throughout the firing to create the required temperatures. The iron in the ore mass is not actually melted, but is brought up to a yellow heat. At this point the ore would be stirred and the small flakes of metal would stick together to create the bloom. Once the bloom was formed, the fire was allowed to die out, and was broken down to remove the bloom. Using a bowl furnace, the yield would be a bloom weighing about 50 lbs.

The 'high tech' method during the Norse period was use of the Catalan furnace. This furnace was developed by the Moors in Spain during the 700's. The fire was enclosed in a beehive shaped chamber, made of clay formed over a bent willow framework. The interior measured about 36" x 24", with an opening at the front to allow the fire to be fed and the ore manipulated. Air from the bellows entered through a nozzle in the rear wall, set a few inches above the furnace floor. The draft was further increased by the addition of a chimney stack 3 to 4 ft tall. The furnace was charged with the ore mass against the rear wall, charcoal at the front, and an insulating layer of damp ash on the top. Once lit, fresh fuel was added through the front. Because the fire was now enclosed, there was a concentration of heat within the furnace. Once brought up to temperature, the bloom would be fused in 5 to 6 hours. As well, the yields from this type of furnace were much larger, the bloom produced weighing as much as 350 lbs per firing. By the 800's the innovation had reached Germany and Denmark, where the design was further refined by increasing the height of the stack, which also increased the yields. There is some evidence that the catalan furnace was used throughout Norse Scandinavia, but the simpler bowl furnace seems to have been the standard type.

In either method, further refining of the bloom by hammering, (as described above), was done in a fresh forging fire (as described below). The last step would be cutting the iron block into thick bars, which could be further drawn out into rods. The characteristics of the iron produced in different firings could vary widely. At forging temperatures, iron can absorb carbon from the fire. Depending on the amount of carbon absorbed, the resulting alloy can be increasingly hard. At

amounts of 1 to 2 % carbon, differing grades of steel are produced. Over 4 % carbon and the material produced is cast iron, which is too brittle to be hammer formed. To the Norse, the production of cast iron represented a spoiled batch of metal, and the metal would be reprocessed. If steel resulted, it was highly prized for use in weapons. This variation in type of metal was not really controlled and certainly not understood.

It is important to realize that the foundry worker and the blacksmith worked in isolation from each other and held to their own trade secrets. The iron produced by the foundry was exported often long distances to the hands of the blacksmith. A standard form for these billets of iron was in the shape of axe heads, but often the material had already been worked into bars.

Tools: The Forge

The Norse custom of burying everyday possessions with the body has been of immense help in understanding the day to day life of the time. There have been several such graves found that belong to men who were blacksmiths in life. One such grave, at Bygland, Morgedal, Norway, dates to the 10th century, and thus fits fairly well to the time and culture of the people who settled Iceland. In the grave the following iron working tools were found:

- anvil
- 2 pair tongs
- 2 light hammers (one obviously for riveting, the other for planishing)
- 3 heavy hammers (seem to be about 750, 1000, and 1500 gm)
- 4 fullers (tools for grooving)
- nail header
- 2 files
- 2 chisels (one for punching round holes, one straight for cutting)
- ash shovel

What is remarkable about this grouping of tools, when you look at them, is how nearly identical they are to a similar selection from a modern blacksmith's shop. The major difference is in the anvil. A Norse metal anvil is typically a cube about 4 inches on a side, weighing about 20 lbs. Usually the side opposite the face was drawn out to a spike to allow the anvil to be mounted in a stump. When a horn was present, it was usually a blunt cone only a few inches long. Use of such small anvils makes the accomplishments of the Norse smiths even more remarkable. The reason that anvils were so small is obvious to anyone who has tried to forge heavy bar. In a world with only muscle power to drive the hammer, there is a limit to how large an object can be shaped. The raw cost of a large mass of iron would also be a factor. One of the easiest ways around these limitations in the Norse period was not to use an iron anvil at all. A large, flat, piece of granite was probably the most common working surface.

The forge itself was fired with hardwood charcoal. (Coal did not come into use in Europe until the charcoal burners had laid waste to the forests, hundreds of years latter.) It had a flat bed, often of clay, that was bounded at the back or one side by a flat stone, laid on edge. This stone had a hole drilled through it, 2 or 3 inches from the bottom edge. The nozzle of the bellows fed the air blast through this opening. In use, the charcoal would be heaped up against the stone. Ash would fall to the bottom of the fire, collecting in the space below the level of the air hole.

The wood carvings on the 12th century stave church at Hylestad, Norway, portray a Norse smith in action. Again the source is very close to the Icelandic. (In fact, the carvings are the only contemporary depiction of a Norse smith in action I am aware of.) The forge depicted is of the type described above. The anvil is slightly larger, but of the same simple block pattern. The bellows

shown is fairly small, at least by modern standards. It has two air chambers, each about 12" long, linked together by a double barreled air nozzle. Each chamber is pumped independently, and would have its own pair of one way valves, one to let air in, another to let it into the nozzle. In use, one chamber would be drawn up to fill it while the other was pushed down to force air into the fire. The bellows, and thus the forge itself is set at a height about 24" off the ground. The apprentice pumping the bellows would have most likely rocked from side to side so that his body weight could do the work. With the proper timing of the action of the two chambers, it would be possible to maintain a continuous blast of air.

Status: The Role of the Blacksmith

"Fine bread always for the smith,
And dainty morsels for the hammerer." - old Finnish proverb

Throughout human history, the iron worker has had a curious position in society. On one hand the value of what he produced made him essential to the community, on the other the mysterious nature of his trade set him apart. The legendary figure of the smith is one of heroic proportions and god like powers. It is not by chance that the most enduring symbol of the Viking Age is the Hammer of Thor, itself a blacksmith's tool. The blacksmith formed iron in an almost elemental fashion, employing the fires of creation, and working his material in a rapid and direct fashion with deceptive ease. Depending on how the metal was handled, it could be left so flexible it could be bent in two, or the same bar could be made so brittle it would shatter if dropped. He produced items as common as nails, or as refined as pattern welded swords that seemed to have serpents crawling down the blade. Up in the hills, the dwarf-like foundry workers toiled unseen, transforming raw ore into objects of wonder.

One good indicator of the position of the smith in Norse society is the richness of their graves. Those that have been found are amongst the richest of any but the royal burials. The grave listed above also contained 4 swords, 7 axes, 4 spears, 2 sets of shield fittings, and 9 knives. Despite the expense of iron as a material, its strength and utility led it to be fashioned into a wide range of goods. Although the primary building material of the Norse world was wood, what held it together (literally) was iron, in the form of nails and rivets. Every longship, for example, required several hundred rivets and washers to fit, to hold the planks together. The Norse shod their horses, although this was a smaller portion of the smith's trade than it was to become in latter centuries. Every household would have a selection of cooking forks, fry irons, cauldron chains and hooks. The cooking cauldrons themselves were formed of iron sheets labouriously hammered out from bar. The other craftsmen relied on the cutting tools the blacksmith produced. The grave finds indicate that almost every Norse man, woman and child carried a small knife. These were often plain iron, and typically were single edged and about 4" long. At the other end of complexity were the weapons and armour required in a violent world. Swords particularly, often pattern welded, represented the highest level of skill.

As in modern times, the individual smith exhibited a range of skill and technical ability. There was specialization within the trade, not every smith was a sword maker. It is not uncommon to find some of the basic tools of the jeweler in a blacksmith's hands. The forge provided a fire both large and hot enough to melt large masses of silver for forming into smaller ingots. Finely crafted iron objects, especially weapons, were sometimes inlaid with copper or precious metals. Towns that developed as trade and manufacturing centres such as Helgo and Birka held communities of smiths who produced large quantities of goods such as knives, padlocks and axes for export. In the cramped confines of Norse towns, with their all wood buildings, the forges were often situated outside the walls. The smith himself, however, was a central figure in the

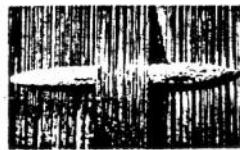
community, valued because of his importance and respected because of the mystery surrounding his craft.

A note on the demonstration:

At the upcoming Icelandic General Assembly, Breneth of the Silver Fells and I will be setting up and running a Norse period forge. The general size and layout of our planned forge is similar to the one that was constructed in L'anse aux Meadows Newfoundland during the 1050's. The basic tools will be modern, rather than reproductions of actual artifacts, but as discussed above, the difference is slight. The anvil will be a cube of mild steel, about 4" on the side, in most respects similar to the iron anvils then in use. (Although at L'anse aux Meadows a flat rock was used.) The forge will fire charcoal (bought commercially) and along with the bellows, will be a duplicate of the type described above. We will be forging out two rods of wrought iron, gathered as scrap. Each bar is about 3/4" diameter and about 14" long. Our object is to rough forge two short swords. One of these swords will be raffled off on the evening of the Assembly. Tickets will be \$5.00 each, and proceeds will be used to defray the cost of the demonstration. This is a rather ambitious undertaking, entering into the realm of experimental archeology.

Don't leave your weapons lying about
behind your back in a field;
you never know when you may need
all of a sudden your spear.

--Havamal



"WHAT SHALL I WEAR TO THE ALTHING?"

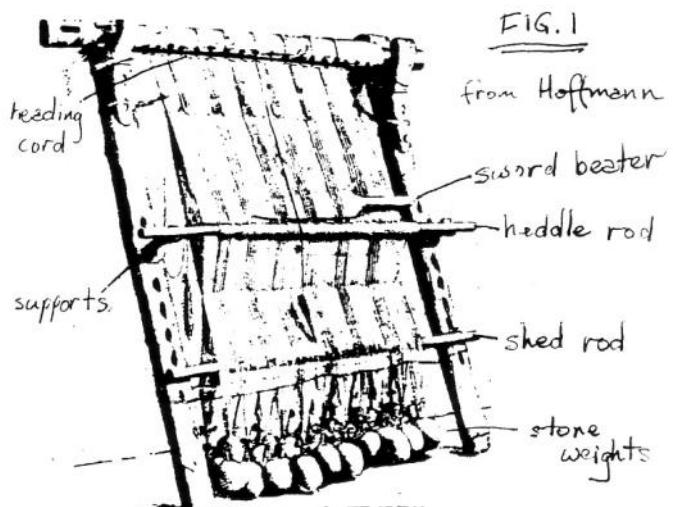
This paper is intended to address the fabrics an Icelandic woman might use in making clothing for herself and her family, with an eye to the principle textile tool, the warp-weighted loom. It can be used as a supplemental guide when shopping for fabrics in modern times if one is concerned with obtaining material most like that available in the early Middle Ages. It may also provide some picture of what Viking Age Icelandic women did with most of their "spare" time, between all the spinning needed for all the weaving. While some of the terminology may be obscure, it will make sense to a weaver. If you're not a weaver, ask one. Or feel free to contact the author. Or skip straight to the part about fabrics. Or look at the pictures!

The focus here is on wool as the primary textile source. Certainly linen was imported from the flax fields of Norway, Sweden and the Continent. Some silks and fine linens were ferried through British and Irish trade routes to Iceland as well, though Iceland had a reputation for strong conservatism. Due to the climate and soil conditions, Iceland could not yield its own linen, yet offered an adequate home for the sturdy breeds of sheep still known there today. These breeds come in a range of natural colours, and many natural dye sources were there as well. These factors, combined with the isolation and therefore forced independence, fostered a very strong indigenous weaving tradition, carried out by the women rather than "professional" male weavers as in medieval Europe; in the Viking Age, Iceland's greatest export was a wool cloth known as wadmal, which was itself counted as currency on the island. Further, the ideal tool for making wadmal is the warp-weighted loom.

THE LOOM

These looms are not small items. Made from pine or some birch, the existing ones (post 18th century) range from 196 cm-240 cm. Heddle rod supports jut out about a foot from the uprights as these lean against a supporting wall. The beam at the top (from which will depend the fabric and heavy stones) is often a tree trunk more than 15 cm thick, through which one must drill suspension holes every 2 or 3 cm. Given the close living quarters of the Iceland settlers, one cannot believe the loom would be left

on display unless it was being worked; it was not a piece of

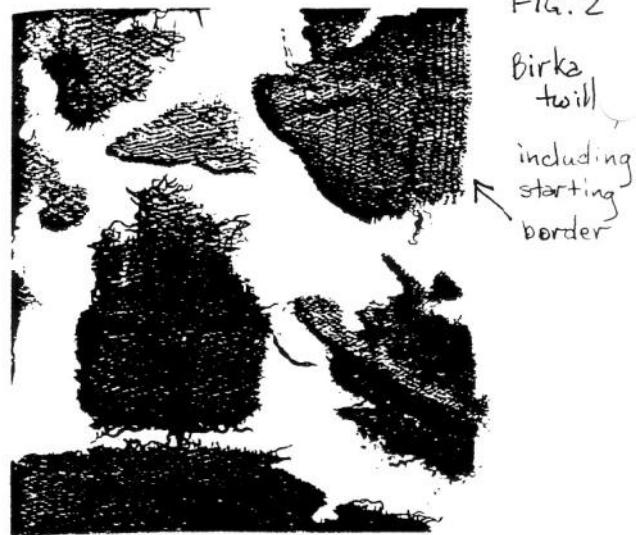


furniture or sculpture, but would be disassembled when not in use. And primitive as we may judge it, this loom was the production tool of all Icelandic textiles (minus knitting, of course) until the introduction of the horizontal loom there in the 18th century.

One potentially awkward part of the loom (to reproduce and to use) is the weights of stone or fired clay. These have been part of archaeological finds from Bronze Age British Isles and Denmark; from Iron Age Great Britain, France, Germany, Roumania, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Scandinavia, Finland, the Baltic countries; and from Iceland and Greenland in historic times. Stjernquist documented round, large loom weights as common in the Viking Age and the Middle Ages. Even the great warrior camp at Trelleborg had loom weights at its gates. All have one or more holes, in centre or at top. Small weights (from Greece) weigh as little as 100 gm; others range to more than a kilogram. Most fall between 500-700 gm. Though clay weights dominate across Europe, stone weights were the most frequent type in Scandinavia, in varied shapes, due to the great amount of soapstone there; some were of slate or limestone, also easily worked.

One of the unique characteristics of fabric from a warp-weighted loom is the existence of at least three selvedges, or finished edges. When you buy fabric from the bolt, you have two. The intrinsic construction of fabric on this loom provides a third edge at the start of the "web". This was done in one of two ways: a tablet-woven band, or a "heading cord".

Tablet-weaving, or card-weaving, is a method for producing narrow bands, such as is seen for trim, straps, belts, etc. The weaver controls a series of tablets with 2-4 holes, turning thread by turning the cards, to twist the yarn into a solid piece of fabric held together with a weft thread. While this had decorative applications in the late Viking Age, it was used as the starting border on textiles as far back as the Bronze Age. A famous Norse find contained a prepared warp (series of long threads ready for weaving) that had been started this way but never weaved. It dates to the 3-5th centuries. The band was not flashy, merely functional, and this style of tablet-border did have a minor resurgence in the Viking and Middle Ages. These borders typically were quite narrow. The Gokstad ship, for instance, carried a cloth with a band of only 3 cards. Of two textiles in Birka graves with borders, the bands



are less than an inch wide. However, this practice of weaving a narrow band to start the fabric, making its long wefts become the eventual long warps of the complete cloth, died out in favour of another system. This "heading cord" system employed one or two heavy cords at the top of the loom, with the warp threads secured to them. It was simple, saved time and money, and the resulting cloth is in no way inferior. Of all the cloth dug up at Birka, only two had borders. All the rest of that 9-10th century site have heading cord starts. By Iceland's settlement, heading cords were the method in use, and this was directly prescribed for wadmal production by Thing law.

This is not to discourage experiments with tablet-borders, by any means! For reconstruction's sake, we have existing fabrics with starting borders from prehistory including tabby, 2/2 twill, chevron twill, lozenge twill, plus soumak tapestry on tabby ground. In contrast, there are heading cord fabrics of tabby, 2/2 twill, patterned tapestry, loose rosepath, and patterned double-cloth.

Iceland had specific regulations on weaving, in light of its trade in the wadmal. Because of this, we have written directions for its production, so clear that it can be successfully reproduced, even to museum standards.

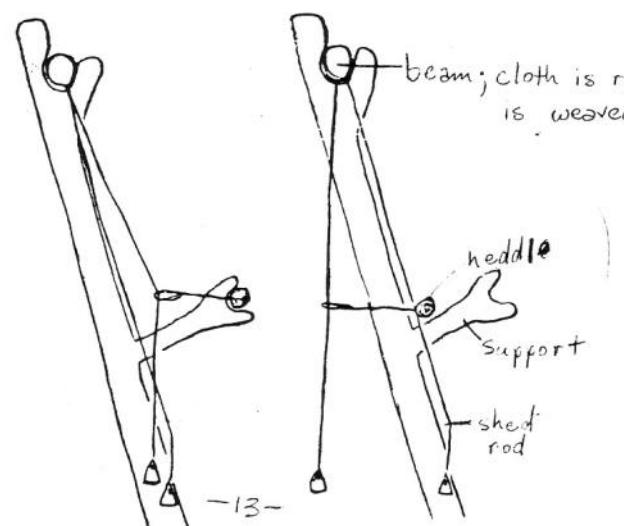
Hoffmann's experiments taught to use linen for warp, never cotton. Cotton creeps up during the weaving process and shows in the weft as a "louse". Historically, wadmal was made with fine 2-ply wool yarn in the warp, and sometimes the same in the weft. This is a notable difference from most historic fabrics which contained singles yarn (a single strand) in both warp and weft.

In Iceland, the method to start was to use two balls of yarn to prepare the warp around the heading cord, and never to use a tablet-woven band. Some early sources imply using the loom itself as the warping board, the tool to measure the warp threads in advance of "dressing" them on the loom. This method was standard by 1200 CE, but how much before that is unclear.

FIG. 3

"steds" in the loom;
the method to open
the warp threads
to insert the
weft threads.

from Jenkins



Hoffmann instructs: After the warp ends are measured (include the porrey cross, however you measure the warp), clip the ends furthest from the cross and carry to the loom. Place shed rod on heddle-rod supports. Spread warp across leash string and sew or lash to beam (depending on system of holes in beam). Secure the weights. When all weights are in place, move the shed rod to its proper place. Chain a cotton or linen spacing cord through the warp ends (doubled ends in front of the shed rod), starting on the right; then tie the ends of the cord to each upright. Knit the heddle strings for the warp ends. (In her experiment, 1954, she used one contiguous string for heddle cord. I would recommend mercerized heavy twist for that, or possibly even seine twine.)

Once the weaving begins, the weft is inserted in a butterfly skein, like tapestry. This method is strictly historic; in current practice those few still using this loom for coverlets use large distinctive skeins rather than the butterfly. Likewise, no pin beater is used, but only fingers. In Iceland of the 10th century, pin beaters of whalebone or wood were definitely in use, particularly for fine fabrics. They were still in use in the 17th century.

As the weaving progresses, the sword beater (shaped like a martial sword but made of wood, iron or whalebone, refer to Figure I) is brought up sharply in the web to push the weft in, but not after every pick or row of thread. Rather, it is used after completing 2-7 rows (depending on how fine the thread is), and these have been lightly laid in with the fingers or pin beater. The sword-beating is done after the shed had been closed with the heddle rod placed in the crotches of the supports. Modernly, weaving progresses only with a temple in constant use, to regulate the selvedge width. No historic temples survive, but then, they would have been made entirely of wood, so who can say they were not used?

After about 1 ft is weaved, either move the heddle supports down to accommodate a better shed, or else roll up the beam. To roll up the beam: remove heddle supports, then put spokes in the holes of the beam, then roll the cloth (much effort!). The spacing cord must be repositioned lower on the warp after rolling the web. Then all the weights must be repositioned, after warp threads are combed out with fingers. If a weft-faced fabric is desired, keep warp tension extreme; however, fine cloth is obtainable from heavy weights.

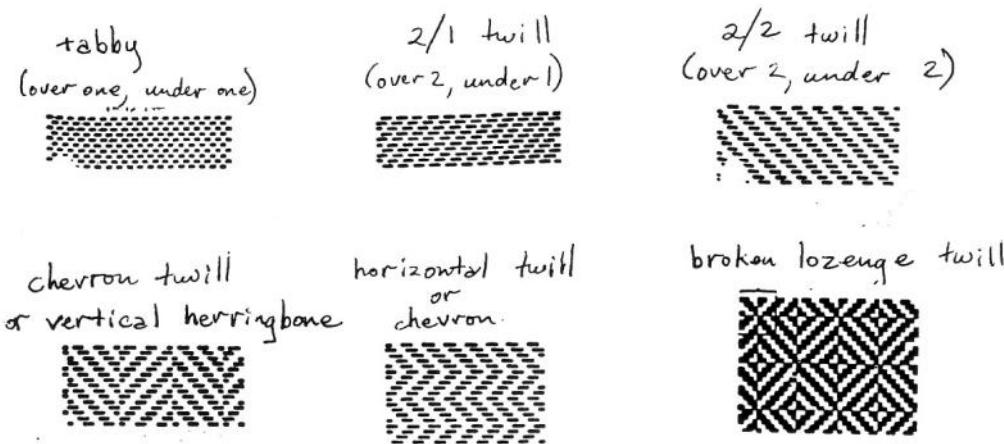
If all that seems daunting, the Búalög (the Icelandic weaving regulations) says a woman can (or should be able to) weave 3 and 2/3 ells per day or so. Other later sources list as little as 1 ell to as much as 5 ells per day.

FABRICS

Okay, so what's an ell?

That depends on what country your persona is from. However, since we will all be Icelandic for the day at the Althing Event, we will use the Icelandic ell. It was a length measure, roughly equal to 55.6 cm or just under 22". There was also the "old 'law ell'" [Hoffmann] which was a little shorter: 49.143 cm. Currency wadmal was standardized very early on, at always two ells in width. Oddly, this would closely correspond to the Norse ell of about 45". Bear in mind that a good deal of the wadmal for export was sent to Norway, whether it stayed there or was shipped to the Continent.

FIG. 4 FABRIC CONSTRUCTIONS TO SHOP FOR



Wadmal is, by definition, a twill. That is to say, a fabric with an angle in the threads which may or may not change direction (see the figures). Tabby weaving is the simple over/under we all learn in grade school. Twill requires a slightly more complex loom (at least two more sticks somewhere) or else a lot more patience. Tabby remains in Neolithic finds. Twill had been around for a long time before the Althing of 992. Even the intricate broken lozenge twill was available by the Roman era. By the time in question, weavers were uniformly producing lozenges, diamond twills, and herringbone, as well as tabby. Long warps of up to 20 ells were being woven in this time period, ideally for shipping to trade ports. Wadmal itself was produced in various grades, from plain wrapping fabric (for transportation--think of movers' quilts) to fine gauze garments. From a 10th century woman's grave in Snaehvammur, Iceland, came a high quality wool twill in lozenge twill, fabric so fine it had 30 warp threads per cm by 12 weft threads per cm. The prestigious "Frisian" cloth from 9th century Birka in standard lozenge ranged from 35-60 threads per cm in warp, half or less in weft; two of these have starting borders of tablet weaving preserved. Further

FIG. 5

very fine
lozenge twill

from
Snækvammur
Iceland.

More than
30 handspun
threads per
centimetre.



wadmal examples: from Bergþórshvoll, Iceland: 6 warps x 4-5 picks/cm up to 11-13e x 14p/cm; fine wadmal from Reykjjasel: 18e x 12p/cm. And consider from the Oseberg burial: broken lozenge in wool, set about 50 warp threads x 22 weft threads/cm.

In all the better wadmals, the thread count is similar in warp/weft. Apparently, in Icelandic craft schools today, wadmal is 14-15 threads per cm, but can go as high as 20.

The surviving examples of twill are almost all 2/2. There are examples of 2/1 twill from as far back as the 7th century, but NEVER with a starting border, and not mentioned at all in Icelandic sources. This denim-style twill CAN be weaved on a warp-weighted loom, but it appears it almost never was. This poses no problem for the S.C.A. shopper, as most fabrics in stores these days are also even-weave, that is, over two/under two.

If I may deviate from the topic for just a moment, I would like to reiterate something I've put in other articles and mentioned in my lectures. This concerns laundry. When you buy fabric, you are justified in considering how well it will hold up to repeated washings, especially if you intend to wear the stuff to camping events or Pennsic. Contrary to some myths, clean clothes are authentic! If natural fibres--especially wool--are not laundered regularly, build-up of dirt, sweat, food grease, etc will rot the fibres. It is easier to launder than to darn or patch. And yes, they had noses. Don't forget: the word for Saturday comes from the Norse for "bath day".

CLOTHING

Though I am not known as a costume expert, anyone who studies textiles as much as I gets a lessonful on period clothing. To that end, I will share some of my research on garment construction and style for this era and area. Some of this is only now becoming available to researchers who speak English. Though it may seem new (i.e. weird/stupid), it is the new wave in thinking in historical textiles. Bear with me.

Don't be afraid to get fancy in making clothes for the Althing. The Althing was the annual get-together, definitely a place to wear the latest fashions, and fashion was starting to get elegant. Clothes from Hedeby in the same decade incorporated

tucks, darts, gores, and multi-piece construction. The Vikings in Jorvik were using linen tape like bias; Hedeby women had wool gowns with french seams. Consider having everything lined, with that viking predilection for conspicuous consumption, (they used silk in Birka). Keep in mind, however, there are no known full-silk garments from Norse sites except for three taffeta caps from Jorvik, Lincoln and Dublin. Body-hugging tunics were the "in" thing, laced up the sides or sewn up at the cuffs every time you put it on.

The Oseberg smocks (for women) had oval or boat-neck necklines; Birka gowns were found with round or key-hole necklines. Pleated linen was imported by Sweden for undergowns; Norway and Iceland had non-pleated linen undergowns for both men and women. Birka at the 10th century stratum yielded smocks closed at the throat with 1" round brooch.

boatneck



boatneck



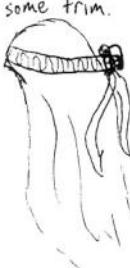
keyhole neck

In the 10th century, there arose a new style, superceding the old style of woman's "apron" (which never was a tabard style). The new fashion for women was a full-length long-sleeved overgown; for men it was shorter, perhaps knee-length. For the wealthy, it could be in 2/2 twill wool in bright colours. Gowns from Birka and Hedeby evidence elaborate pieced construction of this overgown, especially to gore a flared hem down from waist. (Its centre panel can be confused on the picture stones as the tabard apron we see at our events. Textile experts, however, are disputing this interpretation. See Compleat Anachronist #59 for a very good interpretation. And pattern for making it right.) Embellishments could include embroidery, applique, silk trimming, tablet-woven trim, or tablet-woven trim on top of silk strips. Archaeology says bead festoons across a woman's chest (between the tortoise brooches) were more common than beaded necklaces. The beaded torcs might be more for the men.

Concerning the head: These are Christian times! Cover your head or offend your God! And here's tips on how:

The knotted head-scarf has come under attack by experts as well. The most convincing graphic we have of a knotted kerchief comes from the Oseberg tapestries--yet the two bodies within wore veils, secured by knotted tablet-woven bands. A clue! If you want to be leading-edge in the fashion department, switch to the veil, and use a metal-thread trim for the tie-band if you can. Even the 1960's hippie look of a braid head-band is arguably more authentic than a knotted kerchief--unless you're being a slave persona for the day. Guys: don't want a veil? Fine. Use a floppy or pointed hat (yes, those Paddington Bear hats are just fine for the working class), or a helm, or a fur cap, or even a linen cap. Something! Besides, it's even less fashionable to go bare-headed in 1992 than it was in 992, what with those UV-ray warnings....

tie the veil on
with some trim.



Remember that the mantle for women was an Eastern influence, directly imported from Byzantium. So it's okay, if you're just visiting Iceland from Birka...I guess. (Foreigners!) Overtunics had replaced the old aprons. Everywhere. (Unless you're really old and you don't want to wear what these young kids are wearing....) Men, if you're anywhere near noble you've got your legs covered. If not in linen (cotton?) trousers, then in light cotton leggings at least to the knee. (Bare-legged laurel?--peasant!) And nobody goes barefoot. #1: this is Iceland! #2: this is a public campground with stones and bottle-caps!

And while Iceland was known for its sober conservative ways, with rank came colour; with nobility came more linen, more embroidery, more jewelry (the third brooch on the undergown neck). A lady doesn't wear a pouch, she has a basket, a husband or a servant. A lady wears a weaved or sprang belt; leather belts are for swords. And only slaves wear white.

So maybe you haven't yet decided what you'll wear to the Althing. But you should be better-prepared to tackle the fabric stores! Happy shopping....

[For those interested, at the Althing event, I will have a warp-weighted loom set up, emulating a Norse tapestry, done in tabby with a heading cord start. The pattern I'll be using won't be the original, but from a picture stone from Gotland. The same will be at the Orangeville Medieval Faire. All are welcome to stop by and comment on the tapestry, this article, the weather.... NJS]

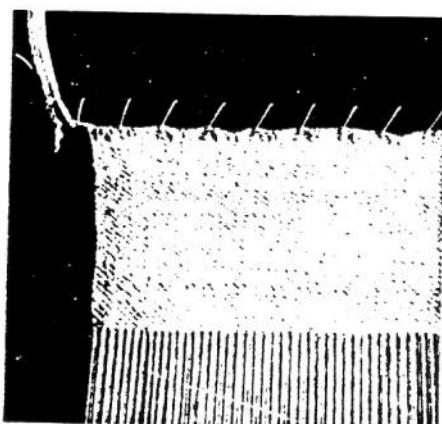


Fig. 98. Detail of Fig. 60. Weaving of wadmal on the Icelandic loom. NMI, 1963. Left selavage and heading.

MEN'S CLOTHING IN 10TH CENTURY ICELAND

-- CATHERINE DE GUISE

The following patterns are for an outfit which may be suitable for a 10th century Icelander. As there are few sources of information, be advised that much of the following is conjecture based on earlier or later garments.

Much of the textiles used were textured-twills being popular. Plain weaves (tabby) were also used. Multiple colours were used in the same fabric (checks and plaids). Linen, silk, and wool were all used. Preferred textures seem to be smooth or fuzzy, but not nubbly. According to Lady Thorhalla Carlsdottir, yellow, green, blue, purple, red, and violet are all plausible textile colours.

Men wore pants, baggy or tight, footed or footless, with a tunic over the top. It is assumed that men wore two shirts, a close fitting under-shirt and a loose over-shirt.

There are also what appear to be lower leg wrappings which would be cross-gartered and protect the lower pant leg.

Measurements Required:

Shoulder to shoulder -----

Knee to shoulder

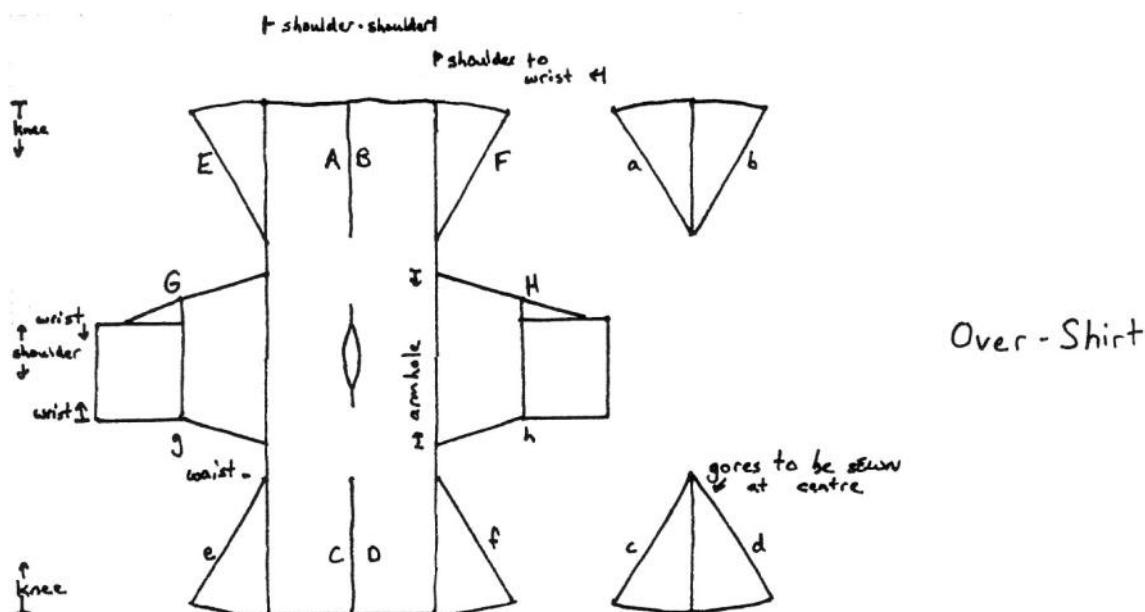
Wrist + 5 cm

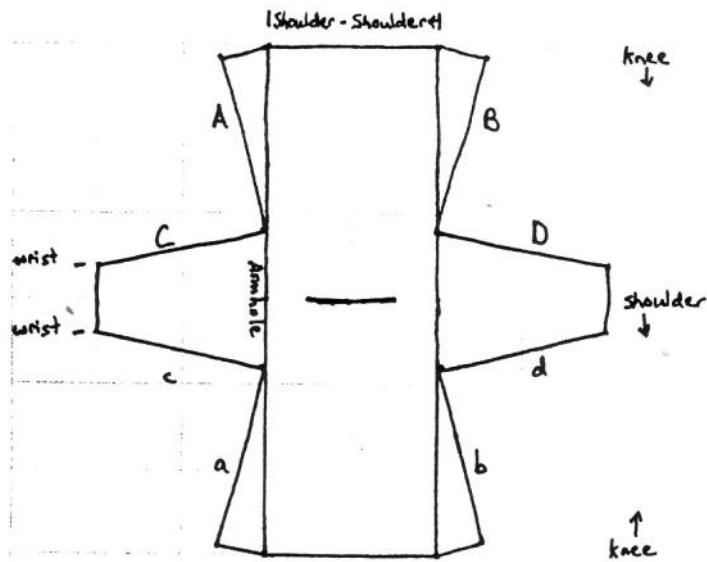
Wrist +
Armhole

Ammone Plant length

Pant length
Ankle (or desired fullness)

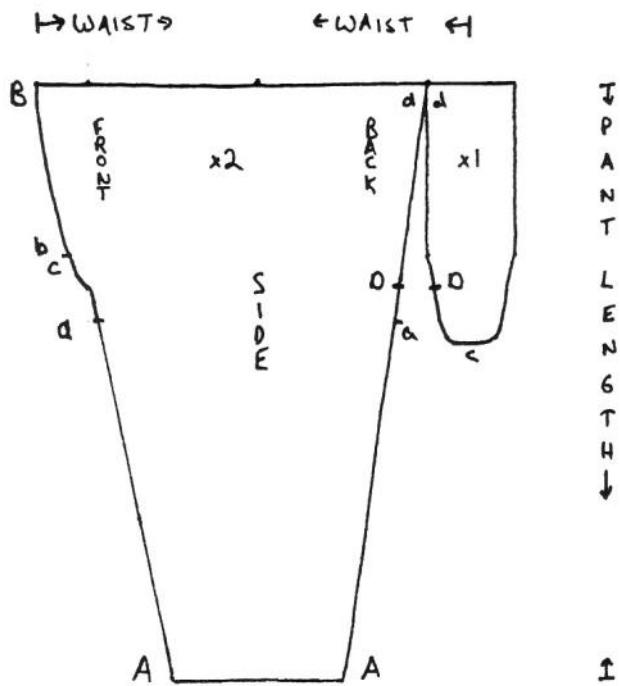
Ankle Weight





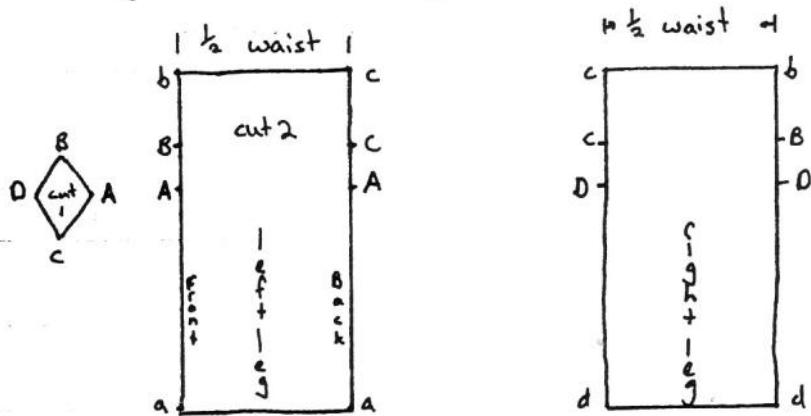
Under-Shirt

sewing - match
 A to a
 B to b
 etc.



attach A to A
 a to a
 sew from A to a
 etc...

or if you want something easier



a 1" fold top edge in and sew it down 1" from top. Leave a 1" gap to allow for drawstring. Run a drawstring through to pull pants shirt.

WOMEN'S CLOTHES FOR THE ALTHING--PRACTICAL NOTES.

-- RIGUNTH AF BERN

From the preceding articles, you should have a fair idea of the general look and feel of Icelandic women's clothes. This will give you a brief overview of how to obtain this look.

- 1.) Undertunic: The pattern given for the men's undertunic will work quite well for women as well; you need only lengthen it.
- 2.) Overtunic (optional): Use a slightly larger version of the undertunic version. Do not use the men's overtunic in this case; you will end up with a much larger skirt than you need. If you do like more swing to your skirts, make the gores larger.
- 3.) Apron: If you wear this with the other two layers, you may be too warm in July. If this is a concern to you, either wear just the two tunics or the apron and an undertunic.

There are two ways to do the apron:

- 1.) Typical SCA "tabard" style: Determine how wide you wish the tabard to be by measuring across your chest. Likewise, measure from about an inch below your collarbone to about halfway down your shin for the length. Cut two pieces in these dimensions. For the straps, prepare two finished strips of fabric about one inch wide, and sew on the back tabard piece. If you have tortoiseshell brooches or other appropriate pins, you need not attach the front piece. If, however, you want a more permanent piece, go ahead and sew down the straps in front as well. The tabard should fit 1-2" below the collarbone in front and at about the top of the shoulderblades in back.
- 2.) Wrap style:
This requires a bit less work, but more fiddling around to get the right fit. You need a finished piece of fabric that will wrap all the way around you and overlap from shoulderblade to shoulderblade (if you want it to overlap in the back) or from bra strap to bra strap (if you want it overlapping in front), plus the strips of fabric mentioned above. Fiddle around with the position of the straps; when you get the right look, pin them down and sew

them on. It's a good idea to tack down the overlap at the top as well, so that you'll always get the desired fit.

Both of these styles can then be trimmed (at top, bottom, or both). Besides the brooches, you may add a belt (over or under the apron--both have been hypothesized.) From either the belt or your brooches, you may hang keys or cosmetic implements, or add a festooning of beads (quartz, amethyst, amber, etc.) between the brooches. For headgear, you can add a veil held on by a tablet-woven fillet or a simple close-fitting coif of linen. If you do not wish to wear headgear, you can wear a fillet alone and/or knot or braid your hair.

A SHORT CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY ON EARLY-PERIOD COSTUME:

-- RIGUNTH AF BERN

Krupp, Christina and Priest-Dorman, Carolyn A., *Women's Garb in Northern Europe. 450-1000 C.E.* Compleat Anachronist #59, January 1992. ****

This is about the most definitive recent work on early women's garb. The authors draw on a great deal of German archaeological research to present some new views; however, the authors repeatedly stress that much of the work in this field is, at this point, conjecture. The emphasis here is on practical recreation of early clothing, but the authors strive to back up everything they say with actual evidence. From the directions given, it is clear that the authors have tried to make replicas of many of these outfits themselves, which is a great help to others trying to do the same. The bibliography to be found in the back is extensive.

Owen-Crocker, Gale R. *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*. Manchester, 1986. ****

An extensive overview of costume in England before the Norman invasion, this book draws on both archaeology and manuscript evidence for men's and women's costume. Lots of excellent line drawings of jewellery and of manuscript illustrations. The approach is critical, with an eye towards finding the best answer based on all available evidence. No instructions on how to construct the costumes, but an incredible wealth of material on accessories. This book would also be useful to those interested in Frankish or Viking costume.

Paxson, Diana L. *Germanic Costume from the Early Iron Age to the Viking Era* Greyhaven Costume Series #3, 1991. ***

Another overview aimed at an SCA audience, this survey is broader than the Krupp work, but not so well documented; it also tends to rely on out of date research for some sections. Still, this is a good, useful work, especially for the Viking era, where the author provides a series of conjectured line drawings based on existing art. The instructions in the back will be very useful to the beginner in making these costumes.

Boucher, François, *20000 Years of Fashion* Paris, 1983. **1/2

As one might expect in a work of this size, the early periods get short shrift. But what is there is good, limited as it is to a focus on the Franks. Useful pictures of existing clothing items, art, and manuscript evidence. One of the better general overviews.

Köhler, Carl. *A History of Costume*. New York, 1928, 1963. *1/2

Good sections on Byzantine, Iron Age, and eleventh-twelfth century costume, but almost nothing in between. The pictures of early textiles and shoes make it worth a quick once-over, however.

Wilcox, R. Turner. *The Mode in Costume* New York, 1958. *

This work is almost useless for early periods, with the exception of the short section on the Byzantines.

ICELAND, ECONOMICS, AND EVERYDAY THINGS

--AUSTRECHILD VON MONDSEE

After the Viking expansions, most economies in Europe did not begin to stabilize and expand until about 950 CE. At this point in time, most of Norway and some of England was ruled by the Danes, with Germany being the main competitor in the Scandinavian economy. There was much trade from Venice and Frisia through these sources, who also traded their own goods, especially from the Rhein regions. The main competition for the German merchants were the Anglo-Saxons¹. To add to the confusion, the differing patterns of religious belief prevalent in the Middle East, Byzantium, and Italy led to much confusion and hindrance of trade.

All of this leads one to wonder what an Icelandic persona would use and be attired in. Although Iceland's inherent separation from mainland Europe meant that it remained a fairly self-sufficient country, there were some foreign products that arrived there with reasonable consistency. It is those common products for which I shall provide an Icelandic point of view on their history and availability.

As far as most Icelandic merchants would have been concerned, the northern mainland merchants were responsible for much of the trade, and brought most of their goods from Italy, along with some of their aforementioned local products. In the resulting confusion of the great battles of Emperor Otto II of Germany in the south and the Viking raids in the north, many trading regulations and tariffs had been discarded; the organization of the Danish territories also aided commerce in Scandinavia by stabilizing it. Links with Ireland, Scotland, and England has also been established.

It seems that German traders, especially, had no qualms about trading with pagan countries², and brought luxury items from Venice. In fact, in 991 CE -- a mere year before the Althing -- Venetian merchants had obtained a papal bull which made it illegal to detain a Venetian ship for more than three days. Trade with Venice was soon a dominant factor on the Continent, and despite the "sin" of profit-making, merchants engaged in it all the way along the trading routes.

The origins of many other things rested in Moslem Spain and Byzantium. Spain, at this time, was at a trading peak, and accessed the European market through Tripoli and Venice. Byzantium was also a strong trading nation, but the government imposed so many tariffs on their merchants as to make them nearly incapable of competition. Most Byzantine goods were available through Greek ports and Central European centres of trade.

Because of this vast network of exchange, the basic principle governing imports to Iceland was the "trickle-down" effect; i.e., the least perishable goods were usually the ones acquired in Iceland. A list would essentially include:

Silver³ from sundry mainland sources; some gold from Spain and Byzantium, though the problem with debased bars still existed; glass, mostly in beaded form (Viking) or as bottles and flasks (German); linen and silk from Italy; dyes and pigments from the Middle East and Russia⁴, although most colours could be found within Iceland itself; and perhaps some wooden articles and swords, again from Germany and perhaps England and France. It is, however, reasonable to assume that the odd cargo of a rarer imports arrived, as well as smaller or more delicate items that merchants purchased and later resold.

In conclusion, despite the unspectacular list of foreign merchandise, the main factor in

Icelandic consumption was conspicuousness, so imported commodities were not just for use but for show, and the more difficult the procurement the better. Although distant, Iceland was by no means cut off from Europe and its trading patterns -- albeit complex -- provided the Icelandic people with what was needed and desired. Iceland benefited from its neighbours' trading power and, on the whole, had a regular and steady trade with Europe.

Bibliography

1. *Medieval Commerce* by Adelson, Howard L. Van Nostrand Anvil Book #60. pub. D. Van Nostrand (Canada) Ltd. c. 1962 Howard L. Adelson.
2. *The Making of the Middle Ages* by Southern, R.W. pub. New Haven Yale University Press (1959)
3. *The Carolingians and the Written Word* by McKitterick, Rosamond pub. Cambridge University Press c. 1989 Cambridge University Press

Notes

1. *Medieval Commerce*, page 65.
2. *Medieval Commerce*, page 63.
3. Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir can elaborate on the importance of silver in Icelandic currency.
4. *The Carolingians and the Written Word* pages 41 to 46. It is reasonable to assume that the sources for various raw organic and mineral materials would remain the same over the intervening century-and-some-years between the fall of the Empire and the 992 CE date for the Icelandic Althing event.

MONEY AND MONETARY EQUIVALENTS IN ICELAND CIRCA 1000 C.E. -- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSOTTIR

Silver:

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1 ortug | 1/3 oz (9 gm) |
| 1 ounce | 27 gm |
| Pennyweight | 1/10 oz. (3 gm.) |

These weights were also used for gold, though gold was rare.

Mark: 8 oz. silver (c. 200 grams, almost 1/2 lb.)

Cloth Values:

- a). Ell 49 cm or 19.4 inches of undyed homespun woollen cloth, a standard monetary unit
- b). ounce unit 6 ells long, 2 ells broad = one ounce unit
18 ells or 3 ounce-units = 1 oz. silver (3 to 1)

There were also "trade cloaks", pre-made cloaks with an agreed-upon value.

Cow:

2 1/2 oz. silver or
20 ounce-units (120 ells) of homespun

Lawspeakers were customarily paid 240 ells of cloth after each general assembly.

A standard fine (say, for giving someone a nickname they didn't like) was 3 marks or 24 legal ounce-units of cloth. One-half of such a fine went to the prosecutor, the remainder to the lawspeaker.

Personal compensation:

Free people: 48 oz. units
Slaves: 3 oz. units.

Other "objects of value" could also be used to pay fines or compensation, but they would first have to be assessed by a "legal valuer."

Examples of rates of pay for household men in Iceland, 1000 C.E.

"A man may choose to enter a household at midsummer and do other work up to then if he wishes. If he does farm work, he is not to take more pay than half a mark in six-ell ounce-units before midsummer, and from midsummer he is to work for his householder right on to winter and do whatever he wants of him except shepherding. He is to make one mountain-trip for sheep-gathering and take part in slaughtering and go on journeys with the master of the house and spread dung in spring and repair homefield walling. He shall do that to earn his food.

There is no punishment either if household men take two ounce-units as pay (for the last half of October). If a man looks after cattle, one ell is to pay for tending a cow or a four-winter-old ox, and two younger cattle count the same as one cow; six ells for thirty full-grown sheep and one ounce-unit for forty lambs; six ells of homespun for catering for ten people.

A householder may choose to give a man something over and above this. If he is summoned for doing so, it is not counted as a gift if a verdict is given that it was a private prearrangement."

Facts drawn from *Laws of Early Iceland: Gragas I.* University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies Vol. III, 1980.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: THE TRUE FACTS

-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

As mentioned in the short history article earlier, Icelanders adopted an assembly system around 930 to help themselves govern their kingless nation, for as Thorgeir Ljosawater-Priest told the people on the occasion of the conversion to Christianity at the end of the 10th century, "it seems to me that an impossible situation arises if we do not all have one and same law. If the laws are divided the peace will be divided...". Njal Thorgeirsson himself, a man of great renown, also said it, a few years before: "with laws shall our land be built up but with lawlessness laid waste". This shows how great a respect Icelanders traditionally had for their legal system.

In our period, there were four local district or "Quarter" Courts for minor cases held in spring or fall; any disputes which were broader in scope or more difficult to resolve were then brought to the General Assembly for resolution. This Assembly went on for two weeks during "Sun Month" in late June and early July. Icelanders had little work to do on their farms at this time

of year; after the assembly came "Hay-Making" month, a time of renewed activity on the farm.

Any man or woman who owned property or at least dairy cattle was important enough to have a "say" at the Assembly. A householder could bring his or her own case, or if the case was particularly difficult or against a more powerful opponent, they could assign it to another person such as their chieftain, by simply shaking hands on the deal. In that case, however, the outcome of the case rested entirely in the hands of the person to whom it was assigned -- the originator had no more say in it.

The General Assembly was presided over by a Lawspeaker, who recited one-third of the law each year and gave wise counsel to those who were bringing cases or attempting to settle them. These people, besides having good memories, typically were good diplomats and arbitrators who could defuse strong feelings and help people arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to their troubles.

The actual judging of a case was given to a panel of up to 36 judges, some chosen by each side in a given dispute. The facts of a case were seldom in question, as it was required both legally and socially for say a killer to announce his killing. Instead the judges decided how good the killer's motives were, that is how justified the killing was, and helped to arrive at a decision about how much compensation was due to injured parties (that is, the dead person's other family members). This also involved an assessment of the dead man's worth in silver (free men could be valued at up to 48 oz-units of silver, whereas a slave would be worth only 3). Judges were not always necessary in a small case, for example a man pushing another man may be fined 3 marks which could be summarily decided upon by the Lawspeaker himself.

The Assembly had legislative powers in that folk (especially the Lawspeaker) could decide what the law was on a given issue. It also had judicial power. However, the Assembly itself could not enforce its decisions -- that was work performed by the "plaintiff" and the community. Often a plaintiff would ask his chieftain for help in enforcing a ruling.

It is spoken that "if men meet as they travel and one man makes an assault on another, the penalty is lesser outlawry. There are five assaults deemed such by law: If a man cuts at a man, or thrusts at him, or shoots or throws at him, or strikes at him. The sixth assault deemed such by law occurs when a man falls another, and the penalty for that is outlawry. It is a fall if a man goes down on one knee or hand, and especially if he falls further than this. The seventh assault is when one man shakes another...the eighth is when a man wrests something from another's grasp...the ninth is if a man throttles someone; the penalty is outlawry."

These injuries are assessed like major wounds: cutting out a man's tongue, poking out a man's eyes, knocking out a man's teeth, cutting off a man's nose or ears (and by cutting is meant when gristle or bone is reached), castrating a man, striking a shame-stroke across someone's buttocks.

There are six women a man has the right to kill for. One is a man's wife; two, a man's daughter; three, a man's mother; four is his sister; five is the foster-daughter a man has brought up; six is the foster-mother who has brought a man up.

It is prescribed that there shall be no such thing as accidents.

Whenever a man goes to wrestle of his own accord or to play a game, let him stay no longer at it than he pleases. Then he is responsible for himself as long as any harm he gets was not intended by his opponent; but if he gets lasting injury or death, it is assessed as if it were not a game.

If a man pulls someone towards him, the penalty is a fine of three marks. If he then pushes him away, he is fined another three marks. But if he does both, that makes two cases, and five neighbours are to be called at the assembly. If a man pushes someone against stock or stone... or wherever he pushes him into water or urine or food or dirt, the penalty in every case is outlawry even if the man does not fall, and nine neighbors of the man prosecuted are to be called at the assembly.

If a man pulls the hat off someone's head, the penalty is a fine of three marks. If there is a chinstrap on the hat and he pulls it off forwards, the penalty is lesser outlawry. But if a chinstrap keeps the hat on and he pulls it back off his head, that is throttling and he has the right to kill in retaliation and the penalty is outlawry."

Notes:

Full Outlawry cast a man out of society, confiscating his property and his rights. He could be killed with impunity. Occasionally this sentence was mitigated by allowing passage from the country for the outlaw.

Lesser Outlaws paid a "life-ring" (a mark in legal tender, 1/8 of which (i.e. one ounce) was called the "sustenance pledge") to a chieftain (or waived it if the chieftain could take an ox or cow from the estate.) The outlaw forfeited his other property and was banished from Iceland for three years (starting within three years of the sentencing). Many will recall that Eirik the Red spent his three years' outlawry exploring Greenland.

Notice which crimes are punishable by outlawry as compared with lesser outlawry. Often crimes are not rated in the order a modern person would expect. The operative principle is not the sanctity of life, but the preservation of dignity: If an attack maintains the honour and dignity of its intended victim (e.g. striking with a sword), lesser outlawry is prescribed, whereas if it infringes on this dignity (e.g. pushing him to the ground) the sentence will be full outlawry.

All Laws taken from *Laws of Early Iceland: Gragas I*, University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies, Vol III, 1980.

RUNE WISDOM

-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

Although Icelanders in 992 were not, strictly speaking, a literate people, there is no doubt that many, if not most, of them knew their "furthark"; there is even an Old Norse poem extant to help in memorizing it, much as children now might sing an alphabet song.

Throughout the Viking period, the "younger" furthark was in use; I have written it out here, together with the names of the runes and the sound each one represents. (I have left out the sounds for the vowels, since they were ambiguous even in period.)

| | |
|---|-------------|
| ᚠ | fé (F) |
| ᚢ | úr |
| ᚦ | purs. (TH) |
| ᚧ | óss |
| ᚱ | reið (R) |
| ᚲ | Kaun (K) |
| ᛗ | hagall (H) |
| ᚾ | nauð (N) |
| ᛁ | ís |
| ᛏ | ár |
| ᛖ | sol (S) |
| ᛏ | Týr (T) |
| ᛖ | bjarkan (B) |
| ᛘ | maðr (M) |
| ᛚ | logr (L) |
| ᛑ | yr (R) |

Since this furthark has only sixteen characters, plainly there are some runes that represent more than one sound. Particularly you should remember that voiced consonants, such as (d), (g), and (b) are ignored in favour of their unvoiced counterparts, for example (t), (k) and (p). (R) is represented by two symbols because one always came at the end of the nominative (subject) form of a name; this was the rune named "yr".

(U) was substituted for (au) and (w); (i) for (aei) and (j); these are just a sample of the wide spectrum of vowels represented by each rune. There was little agreement between sources in period as to how a given word was "spelled".

A word or two and runic equivalent:

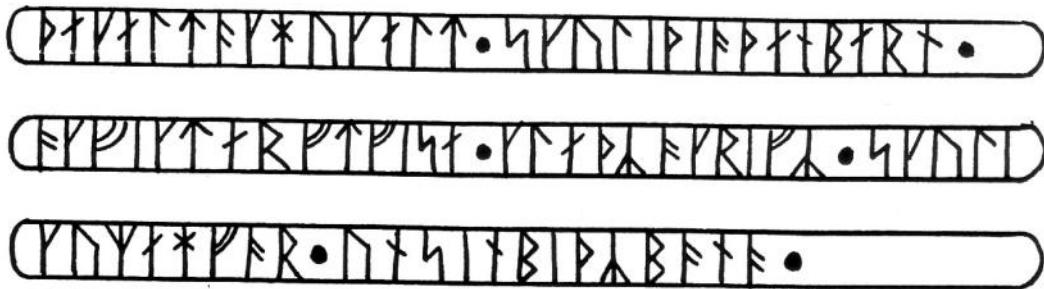
| |
|--------------------|
| TANMORKU= Danmorku |
| TRUTIN =Drottin |

It is clear that "spelling" was a concept unknown to Vikings. One did not have to know how to write in the traditional sense before one could use runes; they were phonetic sounds which allowed the writer to say a word aloud and carve the appropriate symbols in his material to represent what he has heard! An SCA rune-writer can thus use runes in a very authentic manner simply by sounding out his text as he writes.

There are some rules in addition which will allow us to achieve a more period effect in our runic inscriptions. In period, no one used a double rune, even when the given rune ended one word and began the next; the rune for "N" was often omitted before a consonant (this was also sometimes true for "M"). Also, spaces were omitted between words and only occurred between phrases as punctuation. An English writer also has to decide what to do with such troublesome sounds as "ch" -- I use "h" and hope my reader will be able to sound it out. In any case, runes were meant in many cases to be cryptic and secretive.

Here is an example of an Old Norse verse (from the "Sayings of the High One") and one way of rendering into runes. Remember, there is no "right way" to do this!

Pagalt ok hugalt skyli Þjóðans barn
 ok vígtjarft resa;
 glaðr ok reiðr skyli gumna hvern,
 unz sinn býr bana.



And the English translation:

Silent and thoughtful a king's son should be
 and bold in battle:
 merry and glad each man should be
 until the day he dies.

Runes were normally written between two lines, which could be straight, or more likely made into a serpent or some other undulating shape so as to fit continuously on the surface of a stone or piece of wood.

Which brings us to the final question: When did 10th century Scandinavians use runes? We have some examples and some stories to help us out here. It is recorded in *Egil's Saga* that Egil made up a poem about his lost son which his daughter promised to carve in runes on a log: this would have occurred in Iceland late in the 10th century, probably a few years before our Althing, as Egil died around 990. King Harald Bluetooth carved famous runestones in Denmark around 980 to mark his parents' grave and record his life's achievements. More common folk used runestones to mark property boundaries, to note the spot where a river could be forded (they called these stones "bridges"), or, much as King Harald used them, as a status symbol which recorded the deaths of kin, who were often men who died abroad, in order to increase the fame of the family. These stones also often established lines of inheritance of money or property so there could be no argument later.

There are also many instances of an item with the owner's or maker's name and/or inscription carved on it. This does not include items that appear to have a mystical purpose; I have addressed only the most practical uses of runes, since I feel these are the most useful in the SCA. I hope some good "roleplaying" ideas can be found here.

Furthark and related rules taken from:

E.V. Gorden, *An Introduction to Old Norse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed. 1957.

THE LANGUAGE OF ICELAND IN 992

-- RIGUNTH AF BERN

Old Icelandic (or Old Norse--a term which also includes the dialects of the other Norse lands, but which usually signifies the Icelandic variant) is in the North Germanic branch of the Indo European language group. That is, Old Norse is the parent of the modern Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic languages; it is also related more distantly to the West Germanic languages (High and Low German, Dutch, English, Flemish, Yiddish, Frisian, and Afrikaans) and to the extinct East Germanic grouping (Gothic, Burgundian). Modern Icelandic is a direct descendant of Old Icelandic without much of the borrowing which characterize the English, French

and German languages; in other words, modern Icelandic is a lot closer to Old Icelandic than modern English is to Old English.

The three branches of the Germanic language tree are thought to have diverged around 100 AD, when the first period of Germanic migrations began. Linguists divide Old Norse into three eras: Primitive Norse (100-700 AD), Viking Norse (700-1100 AD.) and Literary Old Norse (1100-1500). Surviving fragments of the first two stages exist mostly in runic inscriptions, whereas the final stage is represented by a wealth of manuscript evidence (writing in the vernacular began in 1117-8 in Iceland). Our year of 992 falls towards the end of the second period. It might also be noted that by 1000 AD, the West Norse (Icelandic and Norwegian) and East Norse (Danish and Swedish) branches began to show distinctive differences. Thus, an Icelander would probably be able to understand a Norwegian the best, whereas a Swede or a Dane might cause him some difficulties. The first Norse settler, a Norwegian, came to Iceland in 874. Out of the 400 settlers named in the *Landnamabok*, two-thirds of them are Norwegians, about 115 are from the British Isles, a few Swedes and Danes, and an occasional Anglo-Saxon. This breakdown is similar in reference to foreigners dealt with in the sagas, with the most references to Norwegians followed by those to inhabitants of Britain and Ireland.

How to pronounce Old Norse words: It's easiest if you know a bit of German (even easier if you know Swedish or Norwegian). However, most of us aren't so lucky. The following guide is probably not linguistically perfect (if you're really interested, I've given you my references at the end) but should allow you to at least get your name and the Icelandic place-names fairly correctly:

a = as in asp
á = as in father
e = as in set, also sometimes as in ten
é = as "e", except longer : "ehh"
æ = same as Anglo-Saxon æ (*Æthelstan*, etc.)
i = as in the French *fini*
í = as in green
o = as in doe, sometimes as in not
ó = as in "o", except longer, sometimes as in broad
u = as in droop, but shorter
ú = as in droop
y = as in the French *tu*
ý = as in the French *pur*
œ = as in French *œur*
au = as in the "o" in broad + the "u" sound above
ei = as in the "e" in ten + the "i" above
ey = as in the "e" in ten + the "y" above

A caveat: Many times you will see the letter "d" in Norse names. More often than not, this is because most typewriters have no ð or key. The "d" should be pronounced "eth" or "th".

d,t,l,n are pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the teeth, not against the gums as in English
l = as above if initially or beside d,n,r or an unaccented vowel; otherwise as in people.
f = initially or beside an unvoiced consonant as in fat; otherwise like English v.
fn is a nasalized sound.
v = approximately like English v
p = like English, except when followed by s or t, then like English f.
r is trilled. Do not turn r's at the end of words (ie Sigríðr) into another whole syllable.
s as in blast.
ð or þ can be either "th" as in then or as in thin.
z = ts
j = y
hj = as in hue
hl,hn, hr = "h" is silent
hv = sort of like German "ach"
k = as in English

HOW TO GREET YOUR CHIEFTAIN:

Ek heilsa Solvi. (Ragnari, Gunthari, Tarveri), godi minum.
"I greet Solvi (Ragnar, Gunthar, Tarver), my chieftain."

Your chieftain may respond:

Ek heilsa manni minum or Ek heilsa konu minni.
"I greet my man" or "I greet my woman."

Gordon, E. *An Introduction to Old Norse*, 2nd ed. Oxford, 1957.

Valfels, S. and Cathey, J. E. *Old Icelandic: An Introductory Course*. Oxford, 1981.

COMBAT IDEAS FROM THE SOURCES

-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

I am aware of two types of combat in particular besides normal practice and training, which have always been done, which may prove useful to SCA fighters desiring to roleplay at the Assembly or another early period event.

1. Holmganga

Literally this means "island-going". The historical site of the General Assembly in Iceland, Thingvellir, had an island in a river which could be reached on foot. Often duels which arose when disputes had not found a satisfactory conclusion at law would be fought on this island in full view of all. Any other fighting on the Assembly Ground after the Assembly was formally begun would be paid for with double compensation. I have read of a three-shield limit being placed on a formal duel which it may be possible to imitate in SCA fighting.

2. "One-on-One"

This style of fighting was engaged in between two people when they did not want to kill each other immediately, but desired to talk to each other during the fight to see if some type of settlement might be reached before a death resulted. Each opponent would take his best shot in turn, and between the blows the two fighters would exchange a few comments or try to negotiate a good conclusion to their dispute. If that talking went well, blows would be pulled and eventually the fight might end peacefully. If it did no good, then death for one of the disputants would surely result. For more information on this delicate and subtle art, please read William Miller's *Bloodtaking & Peacemaking* (see bibliography), or any English translation of the story of Thorstein Staffstruck.

The latter type of fighting resembles SCA fighting in that SCA combatants must often speak to each other in the midst of combat.

It must be said that the rest of the community rarely stood idly by when a fight was witnessed. Except in the case of a formal, announced duel or holmganga, the witnesses, especially female relatives, were socially required to try to stop the fighting by separating the opponents, throwing blankets or cloaks over their weapons, etc. The community had a great stake in restoring peace. This might be another interesting twist for SCA folk to try out.

NORSE GAMES IN PLAY PRIOR TO 1000 AD

--RAFFE SCHOLEMAYSTRE

Two simple base games that were played by the Norse and the Saxons were *Morris* and *Hnefatafl*. Each of these games have a number of variations that have been found in graves or other digs dating before 1000 AD.

HNEFATAFL-TYPE GAMES:

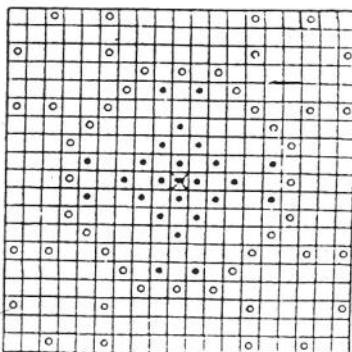
Hnefatafl and its variants were the most popular board games of northern Europe. It is mentioned in the Icelandic sagas and in Celtic manuscripts. Remains of boards of *Hnefatafl* and smaller variants date from 400-900 AD.

These games are all attacker/defender games. The defenders consist of a King and his defenders. His goal is to get to the edge of the board without being surrounded by the attackers. If the King has an opening to the side of the board, he must warn the attacker. The goal of the attacker is to surround the defender and capture the king; this is done by surrounding him on all four orthogonal sides (or three sides and the throne). These games may be played with dice; with odd rolls, the player misses a turn.

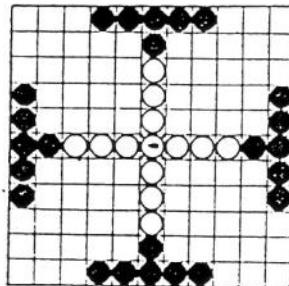
The pieces are set up before the game begins as shown below. The stones are moved alternately; the King's forces move first in *Hnefatafl*, but in all the other variants the attacker moves first. All pieces move orthogonally, like the rook in chess, and not diagonally.

All stones except the king are captured when surrounded on both sides by the opponent's stones. However, one may move a stone between two opposing stones without capture. The throne is the centre square and only the king may occupy or pass over it.

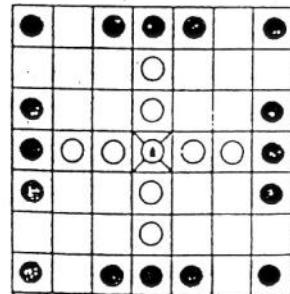
In Norse *Hnefatafl* (Anglo-Saxon name *Alea Evangelii*) the board is 19 x 19 cells; 18 x 18 if played with pegs on the intersections of the grid. The attacker has 48 stones while the defender has 24 guards and the king. In the Irish *Fitchneal* the board is 7 x 7, with 16 attackers and 8 defending guards and the king. In the Welsh *Tawlbyund*, the board is 11 x 11 with 24 attackers in a defending force of 12 and the king.



Hnefatafl



Tawlbyund



Fitchneal

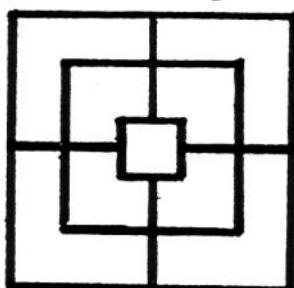
MORRIS-TYPE GAMES:

There are many variations of Morris, the most common being *Nine Men's Morris*. In this version, each of two players has nine pieces, hence the name of the game. The other variations are named similarly (3, 5, and 12 being the other versions).

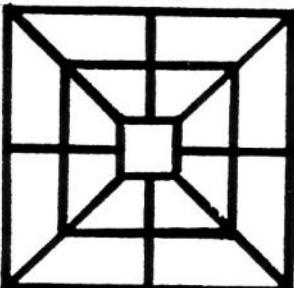
The object of each of these games is to reduce the other player to two pieces. The pieces are removed by making a new mill, which is a line of three along the marked lines.

The game begins with each player alternately placing a stone on the board, trying to build a mill. When one player is successful, he removes an opposing stone of his choice. He may not break an existing mill unless he has no choice. When all stones have been played, play continues with each player moving a piece one intersection per turn, attempting to create a new mill. In order to recreate a mill, at least two of the stones must change position; I prefer all three. If a player cannot move, he must remove one piece; if he cannot, he loses. Another optional rule is that when reduced to three stones, the weakened player may jump sides to any open space.

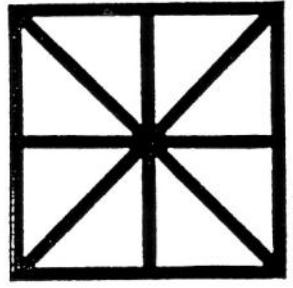
The variations of this game are played as above, with the players moving and making mills along the marked lines. The optional jumping rule does not apply to Three Men's Morris.



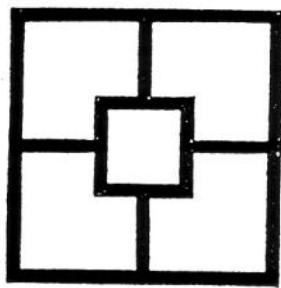
9 Men's Morris



12 Men's Morris



3 Men's Morris



5 Men's Morris

CONSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS:

I have an embroidered pouch with Twelve Men's Morris on one side and Fitchneal on the other; stones are stored inside. Other boards can be made of leather or canvas; wood with pits bored into it may also be used; of course, you can always just draw the game on the ground. Marbles, glass beads, shells, stones, or pegs will do for these games. For Hnefatafl you need a distinct King piece.

Don't be hungry when you ride to the Thing.
be clean though your clothes be poor;
you will not be shamed by shoes and breeches,
nor by your horse, though he be no prize.

-- Havamai

DANZLEIKAR, OR EGILL SHAKES A LEG

--BRYNHILDR KORMAKSDOTTIR

Did Vikings dance at revels?

Well, in the Current Middle Ages they certainly do, and we are just as likely as not to see them dancing a *volta* or an *allemande* (with a Cavalier-dressed partner, say) or jigging and reeling (Markland Militia style) to the accompaniment of a ceilidh band. And why not? Anachronism is the name of the game, after all, and almost any kind of dancing is fun. But how about back in the real Middle Ages?

We read in *Sturlunga Saga* of sumptuous wedding held at Reykjahólar (Iceland) in the year 1119:

Thar var nú glamur ok glethi mikil ok skemtun góð, ok margs konar leikar, baðhi danzleikar, gílmur ok sagna skemtun.

(There was noise and great merriment, good entertainment, and many kinds of games: dance-games, wrestling, and the telling of stories.)

Songs for these "danzleikar" are also mentioned in other early sources. In *Jóns saga byskups*, it is said that dancing songs were sung in Iceland before Jón's term as bishop (which began in 1106); elsewhere in *Sturlunga Saga*, an escaping outlaw is said to have sung to himself the dance refrain,

*Mínar eru sorgir
Thungar sem bly,*

"my sorrows are heavy as lead." Since (1) these sagas' Thirteenth-Century editors seem to remember that "danzleikar" are a new thing in Iceland (presumably brought in from elsewhere), and (2) the rhythm and poetic form (lack of alliteration) of "Mínar eru sorgir . ." is conspicuously Romance rather than Germanic, it is only natural for us to suspect that the dances referred to in these sources are fairly recent Continental imports. "Dance" is, after all, a Continental word. (But we will never know for sure; perhaps the Scandinavians danced anciently, too, using a word for it which we no longer have.)

As far as the Continental dance-songs which may have served as the prototypes for Scandinavian danzleikar, we have plenty of examples: Provençal *ballades* and Old French *ballades*, for instance, both of which were clearly danced, too. ("Ballad" comes from a word meaning "dance," by the way.) The Danish ballads of the later Middle Ages, of which there are many preserved (the classic collection is Grundtvig's *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, which inspired Francis James Child's similar

collection of the English ballad corpus), provide many interior hints as to how ballad dancing/danzleikar may have been done: Danish refrains often tell us that "Knight So-and-So led the dance," holding a ring or glass in his free hand — which scene is preserved in several Danish medieval church frescoes. The frustrating thing about the Danish ballads, though, as marvelous as they are, is that they are not as ancient as we might want; we have to go elsewhere for texts and steps for early danzleikar.

We have Hulda Garborg, an enterprising Norwegian of some seventy years ago, to thank for what is known today as *songdans* in Norway, which she singlehandedly reconstructed from traditional remnants from the (folkloristically very conservative) Faeroe Islands and then plugged into the existing pan-Scandinavian ballad tradition. *Songdans* is enthusiastically danced today at Norwegian folk festivals, and Garborg's revival has rekindled interest in Iceland and the Faeroes for whatever local traditions which have managed to hang on, such that a casual drop-in at a student party in either place might see a few ring-dances danced in the course of the evening. (To confuse the matter, Icelandic has preserved the word "dansleikur" to refer to any dance gathering, whatever the music.) Garborg's reconstructed *songdans* step, which is really just a more sprightly version of what she found in the Faeroes, is as follows:

1. side step left
2. bring right foot to meet left
3. side step left
4. lift right knee quite high, foot flexed
5. side step right
6. lift left knee high, foot flexed;
and repeat from the beginning.

This sequence "feels right": it reflects not only (1) the Faeroese tradition (in which the same things are done without lifting the knees); but also (2) the medieval bransle (it stews down to "double left, single right") and (3) folk dance traditions from elsewhere in Europe. (It is very similar to the *hora, horos*, or *ora* of the eastern Mediterranean, in its simplest form.)

The following three songs, all Scandinavian ballads of unknown age, fit nicely with and have a tradition of being used with Garborg-style or Faeroese-style dancing. I have taught the refrains successfully to non-Scandinavian speakers. All of them tell stories which are specifically from the Northern, non-French, tradition. Steps are indicated by number under the text or over the notes. (If these scare you away, hang in there — I present another option at the end of the article.)

Dvergemøy (Or Sjúrdarkvæði.) Fra færøisk ved Hulda Garborg.

Gra-ne bar gul-lec av hei-e. Gra-ne bar

gull av hei-e; Si-gurd sving-a sver-det i vrei-de.

VIKING MUSICAL CULTURE

--BRYNHILDR KORMAKSDOTTIR

by Brynhildr Kormáksdóttir

What is it, I used to ask myself, that particularly thrills (or chills) the modern ear about early polyphony? Why did my undergraduate roommates insist that my record of "Notre Dame Organa"—twelfth-century church music—be reserved "for Halloween, because it gives us the creeps"?

Well, the answer, as some of you probably already know, is twofold. First, primitive harmony "breaks the rules" of most mainstream music since the Renaissance, because it uses parallel fourths, fifths and octaves; and second, it does not use the third, the interval which is most familiar to most of our ears.

Primitive harmony is not restricted to medieval music. It is also widely known in folk or ethnic music. (Think of the Indian sitar music one used to hear in the sixties.) An example closer to home for most of us would be the following fragment of British folk song, obviously relatively modern because of its subject matter, but completely "primitive" in harmonic style.

Byker Hill

By-Her Hill and Wal-Her Shore,
Col-her lads for - ev - er - more,
Col-her lads for - ev - er - more.
(as sung by The Young Tradition, on Leader Records)

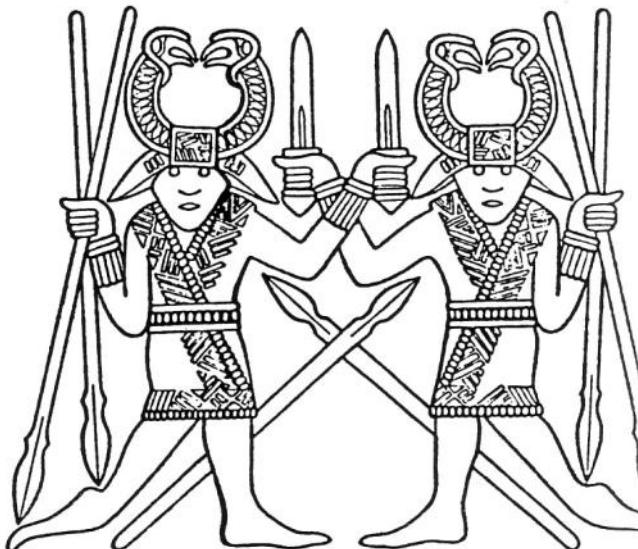
Iceland, which has proven to be incredibly conservative in cultural matters—consider, for instance, that the language has hardly changed since the Viking Age—preserves even today a folk song tradition using this "primitive" harmonic style. It is called *tvisöngur*—two-part singing. Three well-known examples from this tradition are printed below. In all cases, the tune may well be ancient—perhaps dating back as far as the Viking Age—whereas the words are nineteenth-century. The words for this type of song, however, tend to be deliberately archaic, harking back to early Scandinavian traditions, especially the first example below. There is also a setting, incidentally, without harmony, which has been made in Iceland (I don't know how recently) for the beginning of the ancient prophetic poem *Voluspa*—"A'r vas alda/pars Ymir byggð i"—

which is very much in the style of these melodies (and which is played on the xylophone on Icelandic radio before the news comes on), which could have *tvisöngur*-style harmony attached to it, should a person feel inclined to do so.

Note the following:

1. For richest harmony, try to get two octaves on each part: (for example, have soprano and tenor sing the top part, in different octaves; alto and bass can sing the bottom). This makes for not only the parallel fifths which are obvious, but also parallel fourths and octaves, which gives the music its full "eerie medieval" effect.
2. No, it is not a mistake that in all three of these songs the F-notes tend to be natural in the top part and sharped in the bottom part. (And you thought Charles Ives invented that—part singing in two different keys at once!)
3. Real Icelanders, particularly when drunk (and as you can guess, these songs crop up most when the singers have descended, or ascended, to that condition), tend to punch the final note with a sort of grunt or bellow—similar to, but not the same as, the way British and Irish singers sometimes speak, rather than sing the final word.

Good Luck! And try it on some evenings other than Halloween!



Dancing warriors as GUNNAH and SIGURD, visualized from a piece of the helmet from Sutton Hoo. British M.

©1977, Bellerophon Books

ODIN'S TREASURE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SKALDIC VERSE
LINO DA NAPOLI

This is a short and practical outline of Viking verse and skaldic practice in the Viking Age. Because the topic is so general, it will be at best a sketch. However, it will give you a sense of what was done, in general, and why. Looking at the translations offered here as examples of surviving pieces may also provide an insight into what the Vikings felt were fit topics to write about (or embroider on).

Each person sought to maintain his honour and increase his fame in his dealings with the people in his surroundings. He had at his disposal the various tools of battle, oration and gift exchange in order to demonstrate his superiority. But the deed lasts only as long as it is remembered.

This is the skald's part: he evokes the glories of the past, commemorates the present, and projects the hero's fame into the future. He can praise the free-handed generosity of a chieftain or foster a long-lived memory of an individual's perfidy. Remember, as you read it, it is one thousand years after many of the depicted lives, and we see again the considered praise of a worthy recipient or the hero's hard-bitten joke in the face of death through the skald's eyes. At the Althing, you will have the chance to be the creator, the recorder of events that others will remember down through the years.

But how to go about the writing?

There were two main verse forms. The structure and use of the poetry determines which type you should use. You can play on a tradition and borrow "typical" forms and sayings to give your creations an authentic ring. You may need to read a little among the translations of the sagas to familiarize yourself with the most common of them, but the effect produced is worth the effort.

We can say some quite specific things about the verse forms. Old Norse verse was set up in groups of lines (normally four). The Norse poets tended to think in terms of half-lines, but it is often easier for us to look at the full line.

The rhythm of this poetry is highly formalized. There is a regular alternation of strong and weak metrical "pulses", which are described as lifting and sinking, respectively. The placement of the pulses changed in a limited number of ways for variety, as well as for reasons which are tied directly to the building blocks of the Old Norse language. Since most of us will be trying to create English imitations of the Icelandic models, we will not need to get into more detail on this subject.

The half-lines of verse that I mentioned earlier are tied in pairs by a formally patterned alliteration. To recreate the effect of the old verse you will need to use a close repetition of the same letter or sound in accented words. The closely repeated letters and sounds were called "staves". The first half-line usually had one or two alliterations, but the second had only one, and it typically appeared in the first accented syllable.

The most popular of the skaldic forms was known as *drottvaer*. Typically, the stanza contains four lines (or eight half-lines). Each line contains alliteration that connects a stressed initial sound in the second half. This creates rhythms and underscores them in many cases. The last word of each line always had the form "sink, lift" in the original models.

Egil's praise-poem for King Eirik is a fine example of the *drottvaer* form. The English translation used here preserves many of the characteristics of the original Icelandic:

By sun and moon
I journeyed west,
My sea-borne tune
From Odin's breast,
My song-ship packed
With poet's art:
Its word-keel cracked
The frozen heart.

It has a refrain, which is typical of the genre known as the *draps*--a eulogy of a king or a great man. It remains unusual amongst its kind, since Egil did not particularly like Eirik, but was trying to save his head by composing a verse that would increase the King's fame.

Aside from the strongly formal *dróttkvæter*, which was often used in praise-poems, there was another less thoroughly structured type called *ljóðaháttur*. It allowed more variation in the placement of stress, while still maintaining a high degree of alliteration. In this form, translated as "song-measure", the first and third line match the pattern of the *dróttkvæter*. These alternate with the second and fourth line, which contain three internal stresses only. Here is an example from Egil's poem written about his recently dead son which evokes that pattern:

My mouth strains
To move the tongue,
To weigh and wing
The choice word:
Not easy to breathe
Odin's inspiration
In my heart's hinterland,
Little hope there.

The English cannot, of course, transmit or reproduce the counted syllables or internal rhymes that are possible in a language built upon endings to show case and number.

There is a final tool or two that come in handy for our purposes. Most Norse poets used special names for even common things, and these *heiði* were quite different from the vocabulary used in prose. Furthermore, they used elliptical structures known as *kennings*, which compressed a lot of meaning and emotional load into a short phrase. Their use was a sign of wit, since they suggest, rather than spell out meaning, and their combination often helped to underscore a theme while supporting a pattern of alliteration.

Here is a very short list of common kennings found in Norse poems:

sword: fire of Odinn
battle: din of swords
shield: slain-board of Odinn
raven: seagull of Odinn
head: support of the helmet.

Kennings divide into two kinds: first, a "classic" kenning, which uses a base word that refers to something that the subject obviously is not. For example, a raven is not a seagull, but they are both birds; a sword is not a flame, but they both flash brightly. The other kind tells a sort of laconic but often droll truth: a head is a support for a helmet, even if we can think of other uses for it.

By combining some of the techniques which you have seen here, you ought to be able to recreate the "feel" of Norse verse at the Althing. It is something that Vikings appreciated and valued rather highly, along with skill at arms. However, if you don't think that you have great "word-luck", you can still show your support for those who stand and try their skill at poetry. Everyone benefits when this activity is attempted and encouraged--who knows, as they say in the poem, "cattle die and kinsmen die..." but you can live on in verse, whether as author or subject.

Happy is the man who hears of himself
well-meant words of praise:
it's hard to know what may be hidden
in another man's mind.

-- Havamal

NORSE GODS

--COMPILED BY GAERWEN OF TRAFFORD

ODIN

Odin, the central god in Asgard (the home of the gods), is the god of universal wisdom and victory. He is an all-pervading spirit of the universe and a personification of the air. He relinquished one eye in order to gain wisdom by drinking from Mimir's (memory's) spring. This gave him knowledge and insight to the future but it also saddened and oppressed him, for now he knew the transitory nature of things and the doomed fate of the gods, and so he ever wore a melancholy and contemplative expression. He gathers knowledge from the two ravens who sit on his shoulders, Hugin (thought) and Munin (memory). They fly every morning to gather information and return every evening to whisper it in Odin's ear. From his throne, Hlidskialf, which is the highest seat in the land, Odin can see all happenings.

Odin was given the title of creator and all gods were supposed to be descended from him. This can be easily seen, as he had several wives and many progeny:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Jord (Erda) | A personification of the primitive earth, daughter of Night or of the giantess Fiorgyn. She bore Odin a son, Thor, the god of thunder. |
| Frigga | Another personification of the primitive world, she bore a son, Balder, the gentle god of spring; his twin Hodur, god of darkness; and Hermod and Tyr. |
| Rinda | A personification of the hard and frozen earth, she reluctantly yields to Odin's warm embrace, and finally gives birth to a son, Vali, the emblem of vegetation. |
| Saga or Laga | The goddess of history. Odin would sit in her crystal hall, Sokvabek, beneath a cool, ever-flowing river, to drink its waters and listen to her songs about olden times and vanished races. |
| Grid | Mother of Vidar |
| Gunlod | Mother of Bragi. |
| Skaldi | Goddess of winter who later marries Niord. She is the mother of Saeming, the first king of Norway. |

There are also nine beautiful giantesses--Gialp, Greip, Egia, Augeia, Ulfrun, Augialfa, Sindur, Atla, and Iarnsaxa, -- who simultaneously bore Heimdall.

Odin is viewed as a tall, vigorous man of fifty years with dark curly hair, or long gray beard and bald head. On his muscular body, he wears a suit of gray with a blue hood and over that is draped a wide blue mantle flecked with gray, which symbolizes sky and fleecy clouds.

Among his possessions are: his steed Sleipnir, a fleet eight-footed horse; his goat, Heidrun, who supplied heavenly mead, the drink of the gods; his spear, Gungnir, so sacred that the oaths sworn on its point could never be broken; and his ring, Draupnir, worn on either finger or arm, an emblem of fruitfulness.

Within Asgard, Odin has three dwellings: Gladsheim (meeting place), where he occupies one of the twelve seats of council; Valaskialf, where his throne is placed; and Glasir, a grove of trees with leaves of shimmering gold and red.

FRIGGA

Frigga, the queen of the gods, is a personification of the primitive world. She is the goddess of atmosphere, specifically the clouds; goddess of childbirth; and patroness of housewives; she was often shown with her keys, the distinctive symbol of Northern housewives. Frigga was pictured as a tall, beautiful and stately woman crowned with heron plumes, the symbol of silence or forgetfulness. She was clothed in pure-white robes or dark garments, chosen according to her variable moods; at her waist was a golden girdle. She is very fond of dress.

She was also considered goddess of conjugal and motherly love and was especially worshiped by married lovers and tender parents. She would invite all husbands and wives who had led virtuous lives on earth to her palace, Fenslair (the hall of mists or sea), so that they might enjoy each other's company even after death and never be called upon to part again.

Frigga was the only other person allowed to sit on Odin's throne Hlidskialf. She, like Odin, possessed the knowledge of the future, but no one could ever prevail upon her to reveal it, thus proving that Northern women could keep a secret inviolate. Much of her knowledge was garnered through a multitude of special female attendants.

THOR

Thor is best known as the thunderer. In Sweden, Thor is known for wearing a broad-brimmed hat, which was to simulate the appearance of storm clouds. The rumble and roar of the thunder were attributed to the rolling of his chariot, which was drawn by two goats, Tanngniost (tooth cracker) and Tangrisnr (tooth gnasher) from whose teeth and hooves sparks constantly flew.

Thor is best known for his size and strength. He is represented as a man in his prime, tall and well formed with muscular limbs and bristling red hair and beard. He is almost always shown with his hammer.

Thor's hammer, Miolnir (the crusher), possesses the wonderful property of always returning to his hand, however far away he might hurl it. Thor's hammer was considered so sacred by the ancient Northern people that they were wont to make the sign of the hammer to ward off all evil influences and to secure many blessings. In spite of his redoubtable hammer, Thor was never considered as an injurious storm god, as he was said to have used it only against ice giants and rocky walls, reducing the latter to powder to fertilize the earth and make it yield plentiful fruit to farmers.

Thor was twice married, first to Iarnsaxa (iron stone), a giantess who bore him two sons, Magni (strength) and Modi (courage), and then to Sif (the golden-haired), who bore him Lorrude and a daughter, Thrud. Sif had a magnificent head of long golden hair which covered her from head to foot like a brilliant veil; as she, too, was a symbol of earth, her hair was said to represent the long grass or the golden grain.

Thor, also considered the patron of thralls and peasants, was given the realm of Thrudvang or Thrudheim, where he built a wonderful palace called Bilskirnir (lightning) for the accommodation of the thralls, who after death were welcomed to his home, where they were treated as well as their masters in Valhalla.

TYR

Tyr is known as the god of martial honour, courage, and war. His name is synonymous with bravery and he is considered the patron god of the sword. It was deemed essential to engrave the sign or rune representing him upon the blade of every sword, if one desired victory.

Tyr was often spoken of and represented as one-armed, for like Odin, who was one-eyed, Tyr had no more use of an extra weapon-arm than the sky had for two suns. This also signified that he could grant victory to only one side in battle; or alternately to signify that a sword had but one blade.

BRAGI

Bragi is the god of poetry and music. He is reputed to be able to charm the world with his songs and his magic golden harp.

One would think, as he was called the fair and immaculate god and because he was wedded to Idun, the goddess of immortal youth, that he would be a young man; but in art, Bragi is generally represented as an elderly man with long white hair and beard, holding his golden harp.

FREY

Frey belongs to a race of divinities of air and water and was the god of sunshine, warm summer showers, fruitfulness, peace and prosperity, and patron of horses and horsemen.

Though no weapons were allowed in his temples, his symbol is a sword; one of his possessions is a sword which had the power of fighting successfully and of its own accord as soon as it was drawn from its sheath.

He wed Gerda, a personification of the Northern Lights of earth, daughter of frost giant Gymir and Angurboda. His attendants were the elves and fairies, for he lived in Alfheim, home of the Light Elves.

FREYA

Freya is the goddess of beauty and love. She was the most beautiful and beloved of all the goddesses, but surprisingly was not soft and pleasure-loving only, but also had very martial tastes, often leading the Valkyrs down to the battle field and claiming one-half of the heroes slain. These she welcomed to her palace of Sessrymnir (the

roomy-seated) where also all pure maidens and faithful wives were welcomed, that they might enjoy the company of their lovers and husbands after death.

Freya is represented in corselet and helmet and carrying shield and spear, with only the lower part of her body being clad in the usual flowing feminine garb. She was so beautiful, with her golden hair and blue eyes, that all the gods tried in turn to make her their wife, but supposedly only Odur, a symbol of the summer sun and the emblem of passion or the intoxicating pleasures of love, won her as his wife. But as personification of the earth, she is said to have married Odin (the sky), Frey (the fruitful rain), etc. until it seems that she had loved and married all the gods in turn. She bore two daughters, Hnoss and Gersemi, so beautiful that all things lovely and precious were called by their names.

THE NORMS-- URD, VERDANDI, AND SKULD

These three sister goddesses of fate had the power of divination, qualities the Norse attributed only to females. Their principal occupations were to weave the web of fate, and to daily sprinkle the sacred tree Yggdrasil with water from the Urdar fountain and to put fresh clay around its roots that it might remain fresh and ever green.

Urd is the personification of the past. She appears old and decrepit, continually looking backward, as if absorbed in contemplating past events and people. Verdandi appears young, active, and fearless, looking straight ahead as the personification of the present. Skuld, the personification of the future, is generally represented as closely veiled, with her head turned in the direction opposite that of Urd, and holding an unopened book or scroll.

VALKYRS

The Shield Maidens, usually nine in number, had the duty to choose and transport the honourable slain mortals to reside in Valhalla. Their kiss could also snatch dying Vikings from sinking ships.

As Battle Maidens, the Valkyrs appeared young and beautiful, with dazzling white arms and flowing golden hair. They wore helmets of silver of gold, blood red corselets, carried glittering spears and shields, and rode white steeds. Yet these goddesses had a gentler side, for they shed their armour for white robes to serve the slain nobles during feasts at Valhalla.

HEL

Hel is the parti-coloured goddess of death. Born of Loki and the giantess Angurboda (the anguish-boding), Hel is one of Loki's terrible brood. Her siblings are Iormungandr the serpent and Fenris the terrible wolf. These three are the symbols of pain, sin, and death. Odin gave Hel power of the nine worlds of Niflheim, situated under the earth, a region which could only be entered after a painful journey over the roughest of roads in the cold, dark regions of the extreme north. In her hall of misery, Elvidner, she receives not only perjurers and criminals but those who died without shedding blood or of old age or disease. The innocent she treated kindly--they lived in a state of negative bliss--but she saved her horrors for those whose lives had been criminal or impure.

Of her, it is known that her dish was Hunger; her knife, Greed; her bed, Sorrow; her curtains, Conflagration; her man's name was Idleness and her maid was Sloth. She also possessed a three-legged steed and a great cauldron, Hvergelmir, where she boiled the bones of the dead.

AEGIR

Aegir, a sea god, belonged to an older race of gods, his siblings being Kari (the air), Loki (the fire) and Ran (the robber). His was a malevolent tyranny. He could stir up and quiet the great tempests which swept over the deep, but took fiendish delight in pursuing and overturning ships and dragging them down to the bottom of the ocean.

He was represented as a gaunt old man with a long white beard and hair and clawlike fingers. His sister and mate, Ran, was as cruel and insatiable as her husband. Her favourite pastime was lurking near dangerous cliffs, to which she enticed mariners. There, she broke their vessels on jagged cliffs, spread her net, entangled the men, and calmly drew them down into her cheerless realm. She was also thus known as a goddess of death; also who perished at sea she entertained. It is interesting to note that she had an affection for gold, and all sailors thus carried gold to please her in case they drowned.

The marriage of Aegir and Ran produced nine beautiful daughters, the waves or billow maidens, who had

snowy arms and bosoms, long golden hair, deep blue eyes, and willowy, sensuous forms. Their moods represented the various states of the ocean waves.

LOKI

Loki is the personification of mischief and evil. In the beginning, Loki was only considered the personification of the hearth fire and of the spirit of life, but gradually, he became "god and devil" combined. Loki makes fun of everything until at last his love of mischief leads him entirely astray; he loses all good and becomes utterly selfish and malevolent—a liar, and the embodiment of all evil in the seductive and seemingly beautiful form in which it glides about throughout the world.

Loki's first wife was Glut (glow) who bore him two daughters, Eisa (embers) and Einmyria (ashes); the second was the giantess Angurboda, who bore him three monsters, Hel, Iormungandr, and Fenris; a repentance occurs with his third wife, Sigyn, who is his faithful, loving, and devoted wife and bore him two sons, Narve and Vali.

Source: Guerber, H.A. *Myths of the Northern Lands: Narrated with Special Reference to Literature and Art*. Singing Tree Press, Detroit, 1970.

THINKING PAGAN

-- VYCHATA IGORAVICH

As is frequently lamented by those interested, there are no written sources of pagan practices and beliefs, no equivalent of the Bible for the Norse Pantheon. In short, no one can know exactly what the rituals and celebrations were, nor even the names and functions of all the various deities. However, there are enough indirect references in sagas and other works that we can begin to piece together some of the details, and perhaps more importantly, we can get an idea of how people approached the supernatural. We can try to develop an understanding of how the pagan mind worked. If we cannot know exactly what the Norse believed, we might still be able to come to grips with why they believed it. In this article, we will look at several examples from a single source, *The Book of Settlements* or *Landnamabok* in the hope of revealing the approach to religion taken by some "typical" Icelandic settlers. Our translation is from the University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies volumes.

One of the first things we should bear in mind is that religion, for the Norse pagan, is a highly individualistic thing, and that what works for one person, may not for another. We see, for example, that "Thorstein Red-Nose was a great sacrificer. He used to make sacrifices to the waterfall and all the left-overs had to be thrown into it." [*Landnamabok*, p. 134.] Notice that Thorstein is not sacrificing to Thor or one of the named gods, but rather to a waterfall (presumably on his own property). Also note that he was sacrificing things that he would have thrown out anyway. Evidently the waterfall makes no great demands on Thorstein, but he does feel it necessary to pay his respects. (In exchange for this he was apparently given the power to know what would happen to his flocks and was therefore able to take precautions concerning their welfare).

On the other hand we have the example of "Hall the Godless, son of Helgi the Godless. Father and son believed in their own strength and refused to hold sacrifices." [22] Apparently they suffered no ill effects and no one really faulted them for this. However, in the case of Hjorleif, being godless did not pay off. His traveling companion Ingolf, upon sighting Iceland, threw overboard his highseat pillars (a common practice for new arrivals seeking an omen that would tell them where to settle). Hjorleif drifted west and trusted to his own luck to find a place. In the end his place was not very good, and he was killed by his own slaves. Upon discovering him, Ingolf moralized: "It's a sad end for a warrior, to be killed by slaves; but in my experience, this is what always happens to people who won't hold sacrifices." [20]. Clearly, if you are not going to follow the omens of the gods, you had better be very certain (as with Helgi and Hall) that your

strength is sufficient.

Think back to Thorstein's waterfall for a moment. Paying one's respects to a waterfall is not as silly as it may sound. There was and is clearly a sense of awe surrounding places of natural splendour, and in period they were often deemed to be holy. Thorolf Mostur-Beard threw his highseat pillars overboard and promised to dedicate his entire land claim to Thor. He had an image of Thor carved on the pillars and considered it as if Thor himself were guiding him to his settling place. [45] "Thorolf took possession of land between Staf River and Thors River, and called it Thorsness. He held the mountain on that headland so sacred that he called it Helgafell (Holy Fell) and no one was allowed even to look at it unless he'd washed himself first. So holy was that mountain, no living creature there, man or beast, could be harmed until they left of their own accord. Thorolf and his kinsmen all believed that they would go into the mountain when they died."

Evidently it was Thorstein and Thorolf themselves who decided what was holy on their own property, and how that holiness was to be respected. And clearly, trouble could result when it was not. Thorolf's property was also the site for the district assembly, and it was generally agreed that no one could desecrate the site by relieving himself there. When Thorgrim Kjallaksson and his brother-in-law Asgeir refused to respect this, the ensuing fight between them and the Thorsnessings resulted in several slain. Furthermore the assembly had to be moved, since "the field was considered to be defiled by the spilling of blood in enmity." [46] The site was moved, and it "became a very sacred place too, and Thor's Boulder that was used for the killing of those who were to be sacrificed, still stands there. Beside it is the court circle where people were sentenced to be sacrificed." [46]

It is not clear what crimes exactly were punishable by execution (presumably this punishment would apply to lesser members of society: slaves for example). Again we see the sort of practicality demonstrated by Thorstein. If you were going to sentence someone to death, you might as well kill two birds with one stone, so to speak, and offer the slain as a sacrifice. In an extreme case of such practicality, Thorkel Moon, a very holy man, while lying on his death-bed, "had himself carried out to a shaft of sunlight, and gave himself carried out to the god who created the sun." [22] No great loss on his part, but a beautiful gesture nonetheless, and one that would certainly cause him to be remembered and well-thought-of after his departure.

Not all sacrifices were merely tokens, however. It is evident that if you really wanted something, or if you required specific information, or a divination of the future, then you had to pay for it. Hallstein, for example, "held sacrifices so that Thor would send him high-seat pillars. Then a tree was washed ashore on his land..." [62] Two opposed parties could apparently engage in competing sacrifices. Vebjorn was attempting to improve the prospects of his sea-voyaging. "Then Vebjorn held a great sacrifice, but said that Earl Hakon, too, was holding sacrifices to bring them bad luck." [71] Apparently Hakon's efforts managed to undo any effects of Vebjorn's sacrifice, because he was ship-wrecked very shortly after. This was really too bad, because Vebjorn had one of a series of Norse names containing the element "ve" which meant temple or holy place. Other examples are Vestein, Vethorm, Vemund, Vegest, Vethorn and Vedis. [71].

Then we have Helgi the Lean, whose "faith was very much mixed: he believed in Christ but invoked Thor when it came to voyages and difficult times." [97] Obviously a cautious man could not afford to put all his eggs in one basket, the wrath of God notwithstanding. What we must understand is that the Norse pagans lived in a very large and imposing world. The earth and the sky and the water were all animated, very much alive, and not about to consult you to see if you approved of their doings. It was necessary, if a person were to gain any advantage whatsoever, to consult them. The local waterfall was well worth appeasing. Obviously a place of

power and mystery, sacrificing to it might never have a discernible effect, but who knows what might have happened had you not done so. How might Hjorleif's fate have been different had he only bothered to sacrifice to Thor before taking action?

Now, how can you improve your luck at the upcoming Althing? The world, as we know, is a chaotic place, but the deep-minded can often read the signs that allow us to make some sense of it all. If you can, or if you know someone who can, cast the runes, or read entrails, then obviously you have an advantage. But even these advantages can be double-edged. The gods do not give up their wisdom for nothing. Prepare a sacrifice, or one may be taken from you that you did not expect. Be aware of what around you may be holy. The water in the stream does not flow for your benefit, although you may benefit from it. Respect that. A particularly imposing tree, rock, or any odd feature in the surface of the land may well have something holy about it, or be housing spirits that could be of benefit or harm. No need to insult them in case they are there. On the battlefield, trust in your own strength if you want to, but don't go crying to Thor if you lose. Remember, things may happen by chance, but nothing is insignificant. If you drop a piece of food so that it cannot be eaten, then make use of it by throwing it on the fire and dedicating it to a local spirit, an ancestor, or whatever cause seems good. Maybe you were intended to drop that food and someone or something is testing you. And if you are being pressured by Christians to undergo their conversion, be cautious. Look for a sign of Christ's power first. Thor has saved many a ship at sea, but what of Christ?

NOTES ON EARLY CHRISTIANITY FOR ICELANDIC PERSONAE IN 992 -- RIGUNTH AF BERN

At the Althing this year, you are sure to see a missionary from England endeavouring to win converts to Christianity. You may meet Icelanders who have converted, and may even be persuaded to do so yourself. It is thus appropriate to provide a few facts about early Christianity and clear up some misconceptions before the event.

You should view religion, whether pagan or Christian or whatever, as a part of your persona. Thus, it is completely possible for Christians to portray pagans, pagans to portray Jews, and so on. However, care should be taken that a balanced and medieval view is presented and that stereotypes are avoided. Think as your persona would have thought; don't refuse to portray an Icelandic convert just because modern Christianity bothers you.

This brings up another point. Certain aspects of Christianity (in particular) offend some in the 20th century. You should be aware that many of these, such as an insistence on the Christian religion as the "one true faith", are out of place in a portrayal of tenth century Iceland. The typical convert to Christianity in the early Middle Ages was attracted to Christianity because of the luck or patronage he or she felt the Christian God could bring. Thus, those who portray such converts should generally view their relationship with God similarly to how Norse pagans would view their relationship with the Norse gods--i.e., as a mutually beneficial arrangement, whereby the gods give gifts in return for honour, worship, and respect. An early convert cannot be expected to know high Christian theology; even the missionary himself may not be totally conversant on these points. Recent converts also may be expected to "hedge their bets"--such as wearing both cross and pagan amulet. More advanced converts might be expected to know the outlines of Biblical stories, especially the Easter story. Furthermore, bear in mind that any Christian in Iceland is a part of a minority; thus, arrogance should be avoided--unless one wishes to invite the consequences.

You may have noticed that this vision of Christianity is quite different than the one we're used to. Prof. Goering at U of T refers, in fact, to two "Christian conversions of Europe". The first, which started with Constantine's conversion in the fourth century and includes the

conversion of Iceland in the year 1000, was an outward acceptance of the forms of Christianity, while the bases of belief did not change. In other words, Christians in the early Middle Ages, while they wholly accepted the Christian religion, still viewed their relationship with God as a pagan would have--as a mutually beneficial relationship, as I mentioned earlier. Theology was yet in its infancy. The concepts of personal salvation and grace were not yet developed, though the idea of sin was further along. The idea of regular confession of sins would not be widely applied until the thirteenth century. Transubstantiation (the idea that the communion wafer actually physically becomes the body of Christ) also was first defined around this time. Especial veneration of the Virgin Mary also began in the 11th-12th century.

What we consider "medieval" Catholicism was a product of the "second conversion of Europe", which began in the late eleventh century. This "conversion" was a transformation of the mode of Christian belief to an internal, rather than external view. A Christian of the later Middle Ages did not need proof of God's good will to believe--faith enough was alone. This is partially why the importance of relics began to decline in the later Middle Ages; the presence of a physical remnant of a saint to perform a miracle became secondary to having faith that the saint would intercede. The more outward form of Christianity was not replaced by the internal form; rather, the two forms combined in various ratios in each individual. Today, we still have many examples of people for whom ritual and objects are more significant than knowing the tenets of the faith.

Religion is touchy for us in the 20th century. It was not so in the tenth century. Whatever faith you choose to portray, get into it. Engage in a lively dispute or two if you feel the urge--but beware lest you run afoul of the Icelandic idea of honour and insult someone or damage their reputation--you could find yourself hauled before the Lawspeaker!

Give your friends gifts -- they're as happy as you are
to wear new clothes and weapons:
frequent giving makes friendships last
if the exchange is equal.

-- Havamal



THE YEAR IS 992.

Good men and true, gather together at Eoforwic's ICELANDIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

July 11, A.S. XXVII at Albion Hills Campground, Bolton, Ontario

The General Assembly, or Althing, was the most important occasion of the year for Icelanders, a time to resolve disputes, arrange marriages, fight duels, and reaffirm friendships.

A special effort is underway in Eoforwic to give this event the true feel of the heroic Saga Age. Master Sylard of Eagleshaven will be demonstrating the operation of a period forge during the day, and there will be numerous other scenes from Norse daily life, including wool dyeing, spinning, weaving on a warp-weighted loom, shoemaking, and of course, cooking! Also from Master Sylard, a special cast pewter feast token is included in the fee as a memento of this event.

Guests may choose to belong to one of four districts, each with its own chieftain. Certain legal disputes have arisen between these districts, and they will go to court to hear the Lawspeaker's decision. Individuals will also have an opportunity to bring cases and receive wise counsel.

During the feast, we encourage skalds to display their bardic skills. Each skald should recite a poem to increase the honour and fame of another feast guest. Recipients of such poem-gifts should reward their skalds appropriately! (Remember, there is a law against composing poems about unmarried girls -- it could compromise their marriage prospects.)

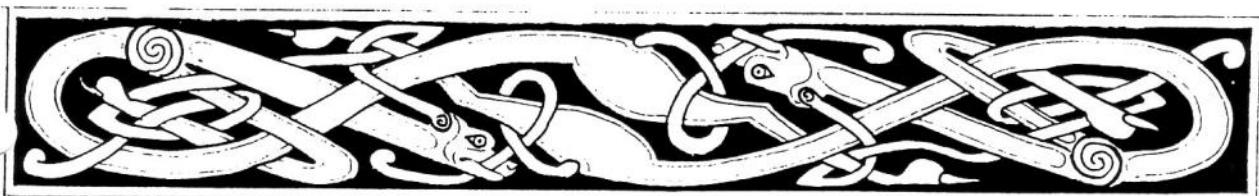
- Also:
- merchants are welcome (please call to reserve space)
 - warlord tourney, games, and contests of strength
 - Norse feast for up to 200 guests; cash bar opens 2:00 p.m.
 - dancing (circle and "solo" dances especially featured)
 - A certain Anglo-Saxon missionary will do his best to save your soul -- at his own risk!
 - "Post-Revel" begins at 10:00 p.m. -- save up those horned helmets and naughty Viking verses, and go berserk!

Fees: Children under 12 are 1/2-price, babes-in-arms are free.
All fees in Canadian funds. American funds accepted at par.

Before June 15th: Site fee: \$5.00 Feast fee: \$ 9.00
On/After June 15th: Site fee: \$6.00 Feast fee: \$10.00

You will also pay a \$2.00 day fee to the campground when you arrive (if not camping)

Our fees include a Norse arts and sciences handbook produced by the canton, and a pewter feast token made by Master Sylard.





Camping:

Although this is a one-day event, campsites are available for your convenience on Friday and/or Saturday. These sites are not part of the event and are public. If you wish to camp, add \$2.50/ person to the fees above.. No camping reservations accepted after June 15! Some camping may still be available after that date, but those interested will have to contact Albion Hills. (416) 880-4855.

A small amount of "period" camping is available on Saturday evening for truly crazed enthusiasts. Please call the autocrat immediately if you are interested in this!

Reservations: Make cheques payable to "SCA -- Canton of Eoforwic".

The Norse handbook will be sent to confirm pre-registration -- please include your address with your reservation. The handbook will also be available at the feetaker's booth for those who register at the event.

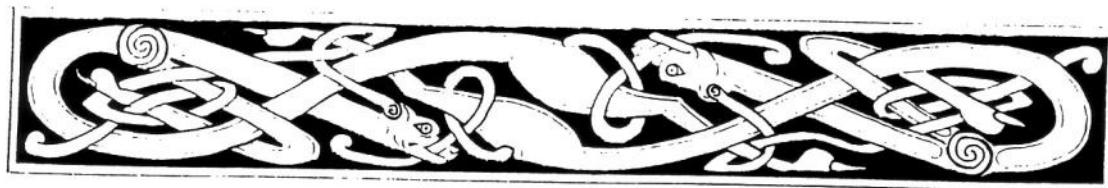
Autocrat: Lady Sigridr Rognvaldsdottir m.k.a. Susan Bridges
#218, 20 St. Patrick Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2Y4
(416) 351-9336; answering machine available

Feetaker: Lady Rigunth af Bern m.k.a. Susan Carroll-Clark
25 Wood St. #701, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2P9
(416) 408-4256; answering machine available
No calls after 12:00 a.m. Eastern, please.

There is no rain site. Event begins 9:00 a.m. BYOB permitted for those of legal age. Please note any dietary restrictions with your reservation.

- If you are a merchant, please call to arrange a blanket site, as the space available is not unlimited. Keep in mind that the actual event area can only be reached on foot (a wooden wagon will be available).
- Anyone interested in demonstrating a Norse activity should call to arrange space.
- Again, the "period" encampment is small; please call the autocrat and discuss it with her if you think you would like to participate. All equipment must be carried in for period camping. All other camping is mundane.

ANOTHER GREAT EOFORWIC THEME EVENT!



• WHEN YOU RESERVE, PLEASE INDICATE WHICH CHIEFTAIN YOU WISH TO FOLLOW.



GUNTHAR THIDREKSSON
SUNNLENDINGAR GODI



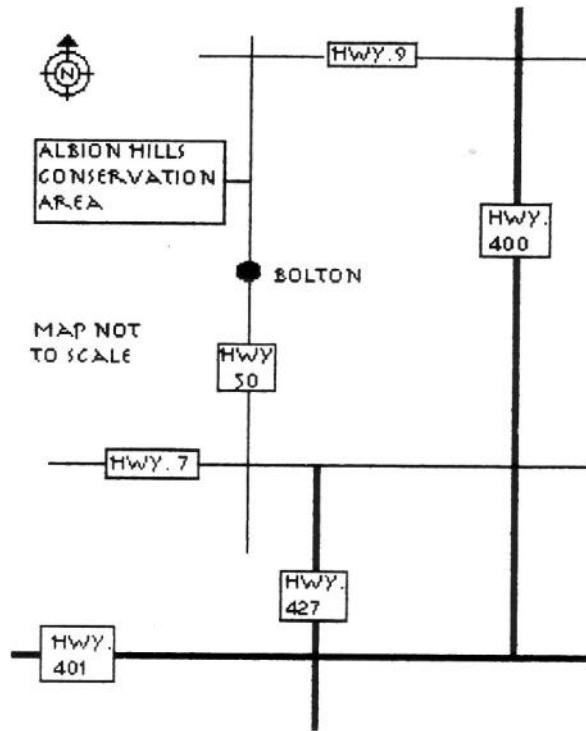
TARVER THREE-BEARDS
NORDLENDINGAR GODI



RAGNAR THORBERGSSON
VESTFIRDINGAR GODI



SOLVI FINNSSON
AUSTFIRDINGAR GODI



Directions:

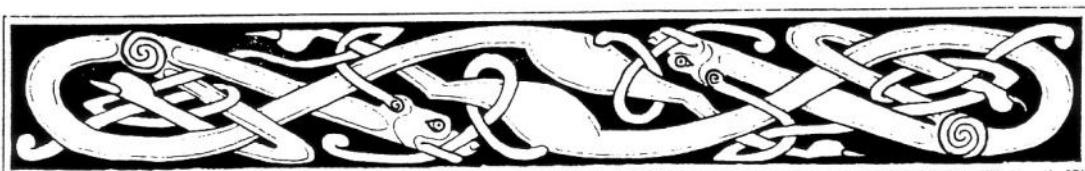
Site is about 1/2 hour north of Toronto. In all cases, take your best route to Hwy. 401; get off at Hwy. 427 north. When Hwy. 427 ends, follow route signs to Hwy. 50. Follow Hwy. 50 north. Albion Hills Conservation Area is 5 miles north of Bolton; entrance is on your left. If you reach Palgrave, you've gone too far. SCA signs will be posted.

GO and Grey Coach buses also pass the site at certain times of day. Please call their offices for information.

LAWSPeAKERS.

GRIMWULF THE HAIRY(CAST VS. NORTH)

ROBERT OF TWO CLIFFS (WEST VS. SOUTH)



REGULATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS EVENT
-- SIGRIDR Rognvaldsdottir

PLEASE READ!!!

The Conservation Authority is making an exception for our group in renting us the wonderful site you will enjoy visiting during this event. In return, we must demonstrate that we are responsible and thoughtful people by carefully following some rules and regulations which have been laid down as follows (many of which are similar to the rules governing camping at the Orangeville Medieval Fair, for example).

1. Day-site guests who are not camping must leave the campground at 10:00 p.m. This modifies the event flier where it says that "non-period" behaviour such as horned helmets, Monty Python, etc. should be saved until 10:00 -- instead let's just save it until after dark.
2. No "excessive noise" at any time. Very quiet after 11:00 p.m. for you campers. Our event site itself is isolated from the rest of the campground, but most people will be pitching their tents in the normal, mundane campground and must be particularly careful to be considerate about their neighbours.
3. Please don't bring any animals. The campground requires them to be on a leash 2 metres long at most but the autocrat would prefer that there be none at all.
4. Plastic bags will be provided for you at the feast. Please do not wash your dishes in the creek or at the bath house.
5. As usual in the SCA, please leave your campsite in as good or better condition than it was in when you arrived. Then we will be able to use this site again in the future.
6. ALCOHOL may be consumed anywhere on the *private event site*. Alcohol consumption is also allowed IN YOUR TENT in the public, mundane camping area. You may not carry a drink from the event site to your mundane campsite. You may not carry a drink from one tent to the next in the mundane campsite. Please follow this rule carefully!!
7. No SCA fighting outside of official lists. No practising in the mundane camping area!!

INFRACTION of the alcohol or noise policies will result in your removal from the site by the camp authorities. Outside the private event site it is not an official SCA event and the SCA is not responsible for anything done in the mundane camp area.

Remember that you represent our Society at all times and use common sense and discretion. Also employ all the other safe camping practices we have all learned at Pennsic.

Other suggestions:

These are not rules, but will add to the atmosphere if you care to add them to your roleplaying repertoire for the day, or if you care to try something a bit different:

1. Suppress your colourful heraldic displays -- they are a high or late medieval phenomenon.
2. If you are a "crowned head", we invite you to come to the event "incognito" for a day of relaxation free from the cares of state. Leave your hat at home if you wish. So far as we know,

no royalty ever set foot in Iceland during this period.

3. Guests should bring normal feast gear and drinking vessels. Beer will be sold from kegs only. Guests may also want to bring an old carpet or other floor covering to sit on during the day or at the feast. We will be supplying some but we may need more.

4. Bowing, curtseying and reverencing all and sundry has a very late period "feel" to it, as does kissing hands, which I believe a Viking might easily have taken amiss! At the Assembly, practise taking note of others' social space to show your great respect and regard for their dignity and stature in the community. Give small gifts to those with whom you want good ongoing relations. When a deal is made or an oath or vow given, shake hands on it just as modern people would.

5. Try replacing "m'lord" and "m'lady" with a moderate use of first names or patronymics in the case of family members -- "you Thorkelssons", for example. Remember that excessive use of a person's name, especially in a very intimate way ("my Thora") would sound sarcastic to a Norse person, as would excessive compliments. Avoid insincerity if you don't mean to sound that way!

For human beings the best things are fire.
 and the sight of the sun.
and to be granted good health
 and to live a blameless life.

-- Havamal

Original idea for this book: can easily be adapted to other periods.

Outline for A & S Handbook, Icelandic Althing 992 A.D.

- A. Introduction: Capsule History of Iceland
- B. The Physical World
 - 1. Natural Resources
 - a. Geography and Maps
 - b. Resources: Building materials, fuel, metals, plants and animals, growing season
 - c. Imports: Necessities and Luxuries
 - d. Exports (Production)
 - 2. Clothing
 - a. Textiles and Dyes
 - b. Underclothes
 - c. Patterns - Women
 - d. Patterns - Men
 - e. Outer Clothes
 - 3. Accessories
 - a. Tools & Utensils (carried)
 - b. Jewelry
 - c. Headdresses
 - d. Shoes
 - 4. Weapons & Armour
 - 5. Food
 - a. General Diet, Customs, Methods, Cookware
 - b. Recipes
 - 6. Travel and Transportation
 - 7. Shelter
 - a. Farmstead
 - b. The Home
 - i. Layout
 - ii. Furnishings
 - iii. Specific Items (e.g., warp-weighted loom, high seat pillars, etc.)
 - c. Boathouse
 - d. Ships (of relevance to personae)
 - e. Drinking Hall
 - f. Tents

C. Society

1. Economy & Money
2. Law
 - a. The General Assembly or Althing
3. Language & Writing
4. Art (styles, meaning, purpose, uses)
5. Family; Social Structure; Customs
 - a. Gift-Exchange, Honour, Obligation
 - b. Sexual Mores
 - c. The Importance of Genealogy
 - d. Place of Children, {etc.}
6. Warfare
 - a. hand-to-hand combat and tactics; the duel
 - b. battle strategy
7. Entertainment
 - a. Games and contests
 - b. Music and Dance
 - c. Poetry, Story-telling (the oral tradition)
8. Religion
 - a. Myths & Legends
 - b. Known religious practices pre-1000 A.D.
 - c. Extent of Christianity in Scandinavia ca. 992

D. Outline of Icelandic General Assembly agenda/activities

E. Roleplaying at This Event

1. Icelandic Name Construction
2. Professions, Occupations, & Skills
3. Measuring Time, Age, Distance, Navigation, etc.
4. Daily/Monthly/Yearly Routines
5. Current Events and Politics in Iceland and Abroad

F. Historical Sources

1. Primary Sources: Literature, Art, and Archaeology
 - a. Validity of Saga Sources
 - b. Value of various sources to S.C.A. researchers
2. Bibliography and Other Resources

WOMEN IN THE SAGA AGE

--JARLA BRYNHILDR KORMAKSDOTTIR

Some of you may have heard our sagas divided into types: family sagas; kings' sagas of Norway and Sweden; sagas of old time. I like all of these kinds of tales, but I like the tales of old time best; I take comfort in the fact that they say that king Sverrir of Norway does too. Notwithstanding this, there are some folk who refuse to listen to these sagas of old time (fornaldar sogur); they call them "lying sagas", since they tell of times so far back that one cannot be sure of the truth of them. And so they call Volsunga saga a Lying Saga, since there is a dragon in it; they call Orvar-Odd's saga a Lying Saga, since the hero lives for hundreds of years, longer than men commonly do; and they call Hervarar saga a Lying Saga, since cursed swords such as the shield-maid Hervor bore are no longer found among us. But they do not call Grettir's saga a Lying Saga, even though there is a ghost in it; they do not call Njal's saga a Lying Saga, but I who come from Laxardal myself can tell you that there is plenty of nonsense in it. The teller of Laxdaela saga would have us believe that my kinsman Gellir Thorkelsson found the Apostle Peter at home in Rome when he went there for pilgrimage; and that one of Helgi Hardbeinsson's slayers owned a coat of plate mail, which I can assure you is untrue; and that Gellir's mother, Gudrun Osvifrsdottir, went about in French bliauts, which is laughable.

I have been asked to say something about our Northern women: both their outward deeds and their moods. I will begin with outward deeds and skills, and I hope you will forgive me if I illustrate first with a verse by a man: it will help me show what I mean to say from the start, namely, that anything a man of our people can do, we women can do (and have done) also. (Short of fathering children, of course.) The skald here is Rognvaldr kali, the Orkney jarl; he brags of his skills, of which there are nine:

Skills I have, four plus five:
I'm a fearsome chess-foe, clearly;
runes I can write full fitly;
I can row and pull a bowstring;
a harper deft, a handcrafter,
a hero at book-looking am I;
on skis I stride the woods-ways
in skaldcraft I am well-skilled.

Now I do not count myself rare or strange among our Northern women; but of these nine skills of jarl Rognvaldr, there is only one that I have never done, and that is play a harp. (Yes, I have rowed a longship -- the Fydraca, under captain Atli.) I am not much at the chessboard or at hnefatafl (in Rognvaldr's poem it is hard to tell which game he is talking of); but let you doubt the skill of our women at such games, I will remind you of a scene from Hervarar saga:

The band of sea-raiders under captain Hervardr found winter quarters with a mainland king named Gudmundr, who held court in a place called Grund, in Glasivellir, surrounded by pomp and riches. He fed them well, and heard their tales gladly, as did his son, Hofundr. The winter passed quickly enough for the men; perhaps more slowly for young Hervardr, who kept apart, brooding.

It was still in the dark of the winter, late one afternoon, that Gudmundr the king sat at the game-board with Gisli, a man of his hira, and tried his luck at hnefatafl. Hervardr stood by, leaning against a pillar, slim and long-legged, distant-eyed, his thoughts his own.

King Gudmundr's rough voice rang out in the hall now and then, shouting. He cursed himself, cursed Gisli, cursed the weather that kept them all indoors, cursed the game.

"I think," spoke up a voice finally, after this had gone on for some time -- a dry, husky voice, seldom heard, but familiar enough to the sea-rovers -- "I think, my lord, that you should plan your attacks wth more precision. There lies your chief fault."

The king looked up at Hervardr with surprise. "And you can tell me how to do better, I suppose? Just what else is amiss, then?"

Hervardr leaned his long sword, Tyrfingr, against the pillar, and approached the table. "Allow me, my lord, to advise you," he said, with a rare smile. "First I would change places with Gisli. You should defend the hnefi, instead of attacking him."

"Oh, I should, should I? I'll never worsen the odds that much. I'm losing as it is."

"Make no mistake, my lord; the hnefi is far from powerless. I always play with hnefi, when I can." Hervardr skinned back lips to show teeth; his handsome, beardless face took on a hunted look. "He is a wolf at bay," he went on, "but he is also a wolf to be feared. And his warriors, their teeth can be long too."

"Done, then," said Gudmundr, giving Hervardr an odd glance; and it was not long before things went better for him in the game, with Hervardr's help.

But then a curious man of Gudmundr's following spied the sword Tyrfingr where it rested unattended, and he picked it up, and drew the blade forth from the sheath, to admire it: there came a flash like the sun from the drawn sword, and the intruder stood amazed. But Hervardr was at his side in two strides, and wrested the blade from the man, and slew him in one stroke. Hervardr stood over the body then, and his breath came out in a long hissing sound; and then he stalked out the door and into the snow, trailing blood from the hanging blade.

Gudmundr's men were on their feet in a moment.

"Will not one go after that man?" cried out Einarr, the king's steward.

"That is not a man", said Gudmundr. "Open your eyes. There is no honour to be gotten out of that one's death." He grinned into his yellow beard. "If she is the one I have heard of, she is of high blood, out of Sweden and Gardariki. The man who slew her could live to regret it. Her name is Hervor; her father was Angant'yr the berserker."

Gudmundr's men looked on one another in wonder, and the face of Hofundr the king's son shone like a candle, for he had long been drawn to Hervardr the young sea-king; and now he saw that something might be done about it.

(And as those of you who have heard Hervor's full tale already know, something was eventually done about it; but it was not a happy union. As the skald of old says of Hervor, she was

Better suited for battle
than for lovers' banter,
or for sitting on bench
as a seemly bride.

But I would have you take this portion of Hervor's tale as illustrating what I intended, namely: that women can be masters at the gaming board.)

Jarl Rognvaldr did not list his skill with a sword among his nine feats; doubtless he thought it too commonplace to mention. Among our women it is not so commonplace a skill; but neither is it so rare as you might think. Allow me to illustrate with the tale of Broka-Auðr (Auðr in Breeches); it is one of the tales we tell in Laxardal. (You can find it in chapter 35 of Laxdaela saga.)

Now Auðr owned her own farm, called Holl, at Saurboer in Breidafjordr, which is the next fjord over from Hvammsfjordr, where we of Laxardal have our steadings; and because of the close dealings we have had with that kin, I can confirm Auðr's story as true.

She lived with her two brothers, Knutr and Thorkell Hvelpr; and her husband, Thordr Ingunnarson. Now this Thordr, Audr's husband, came of skalds and seid-makers (magic-workers) on both sides: his father was Glumr Geirason, who was king Haraldr Greycloak of Norway's skald; and his mother Ingunn had given him her name (Ingunnarson) rather than Glumr's as is customary in such families, where women are held in higher honour than in families where there are no skalds or seid-makers. In any case, considering Thordr's upbringing, he should have known better than what he did.

Like many men before and after him, Thordr fell in love with Gudrun Osvifrsdottir. It happened as they rode together to the Althing one summer. Gudrun returned his love, and clever as she was, she came up with a scheme to get Audr out of the way so that she and Thordr could be married.

Now we have laws in Iceland regarding the wearing of clothing appropriate to one's gender, as any lawspeaker can tell you; but only rarely do we appeal to them. What Gudrun said to Thordr on that long ride was this: "Is it true, Thordr, that your wife Audr goes around in breeches all the time, with gussets in the crotch and lacings all the way down her legs?" "Not that I have noticed," was Thordr's reply. "Then why do they call her Breeches-Aud?" insisted Gudrun; and their talk went on from there. And this accusation did, in fact, lead to Audr's divorce from Thordr at that very Althing, without Audr even being there to defend herself or say the truth of the matter.

Now Audr lost little property in the separation; the farm at Saurboer was hers, as I have said. But she had lost honour, as anyone could see. She regained it in two ways. First, she made sure that folk heard and remembered her epigram about the suddenness of it all:

Well to be ware of it,
when one's been cast off!

Second, she bode her time until the following summer, when Thordr was comfortably settled with Gudrun his new wife at Laugar. One night, when Gudrun was away, Audr rode on horseback to Laugar -- definitely wearing breeches on this occasion, and bearing a sword at her side, as the teller of Laxdaela saga informs us -- and found Thordr in bed asleep. Mind you, it was dark in the room, and Thordr might wake at any moment. Audr's self-appointed task was not to slay him then and there (that would be easy!), but to leave him alive with diminished honour, just as he had done to her. And this Audr did, crippling his sword-arm and gashing him across the nipples, all in one thrust; she also stuck the sword into the bed-frame on Thordr's left side, pinning the wounded man down until she had time to get away. You could call this a lucky stab in the dark, but I would rather call it uncommon skill!

You may be sure that we of Laxardal talked of this perfect revenge of Audr's for many months, and that she came out of the episode with more honour than before. As the saga tells, Audr became in after years a great friend of the folk of Hjardarholz in Laxardal, and I can attest to this, since I come from Hjardarholz myself. Of our folk, Audr was particularly close to Thorgerdr Egilsdottir (of whom I will tell you more later), and also Thorgerdr's ill-fated son, Kjartan the fair; she offered him shelter in Suarboer on his doomed flight from the malice of Gudrun Osvifrsdottir - whom he, also, had once been unwise enough to love.

Very well then, I hear you saying: are there no tales of sword-wielding women that last longer than this one? There are, in fact, plenty of them in the Lying Sagas, the sagas of olden times. I have spoken already of Hervor Angant'yr's daughter, who was a shield-maid and a sea-king too; and there are shield-maids in Orvar-Odds saga; and you probably know that Volsunga saga tells of Brynhildr the Valkyrie (for whom I am named), who loved Sigurd the Volsung. Altogether there are far more lengthy accounts of warrior-women in the tales of our ancestors than in our newer tales, which leads me to suspect that the women of those days were more warlike than women are now.

But I can think of at least one warlike woman of not too long ago -- and I am not thinking of Leifr's sister Freydis from the westward voyages, for she proved nothing but that one can easily slay numbers of defenceless folk with an axe. I am thinking of Jorunn the Skald-Maid, who was employed at the courts of kings Haraldr Fairhair and Halfdan the Black of Norway. There are some who call her Jorunn the Shield-Maid as well, and though we have no specific list of her exploits, there is good reason for this. Many of you know that if a person is numbered among the skalds of a king of Norway, it means more than that he or she must be ready to come forth with a few staves on feast-days. A king's skald of Norway must ever be at the king's elbow to note his deeds and put them into songs and poetry to ensure his lasting fame. It is told in many places how king Olaf the Fat (or the Holy, as the case may be) kept his skalds close by him at Stiklarstadir where he fell, and how Thormodr his skald died there too, pierced by an arrow. We can assume, I think, even though we have no tales of Jorunn's deeds in the shield-wall in the service of Haraldr and Halfdan, that she most likely acquitted herself well there. She certainly knew the language of battle, and described what she saw with accuracy and colour. Here is one of her accounts of the kin-strife between those two kings, and Haraldr's other son Eirikr Blood-Axe:

Red with blood of wretches
were royal prince's weapons.
Hirdmen angered Haraldr.
Houses fell a-flaming.
O Halfdan, Haraldr heard
of hard deeds, did Fairhair:
dastardly seemed your doings,
and dark, to kingly swordsman.

(And in fact it was the work of two skalds, Gutthormr sindri and Jorunn herself, that Haraldr and Halfdan, father and son, were eventually reconciled, after this strife that Jorunn speaks of in this stanza.)

Before I completely leave Rognvaldr's list of polite accomplishments for vikings, I should mention knowledge of the runes. Rognvaldr tells us: "I hardly ever forget my runes." Any runemaster or mistress can tell you that there is more to the rune-rows than what the jarl claims in his poem, namely, just knowing what they look like. Most men and women among us can use the runes on that simple level, to send messages carved on scraps of wood, much as they do in Bergen in Orway: "I love you more than you know," or "Don't forget to bring home two codfish from the harbour tonight."

The next level is harder, involving the use of runes for divination. While men can certainly do this, it is my experience that women tend to do it better; we have always had more women with prophetic skills among us than men. (You may remember Heldr from Orvar-Odds saga, or Thorbjorg from the Greenland sagas.) What we do is carve the runes on sticks and cast them down -- my uncle Snorri calls it fella blotspan, in your tongue they call it "letting the chips fall where they may" -- and reading the results. I should say here that I have seen many non-Northern folk use little round clay runes for divination, mistakenly thinking it is one of our traditions; it may well work for them, but I have never seen my folk do it.)

The third level on which we use runes is the hardest to do, and I do not know much about it; it is the use of runes for dark seidr, for cursing, as in the runes Egill Skallagrimsson set on the pole (jidstong) against Eiridr Blood-Axe and Gunnhildr the witch. It was an evil act that he did, an act of nid, and those who perform acts of nid run the risk of being called nidingr, , which is our worst insult, as you may know and I will explain later. Egill got away with it; but my advice to you is, do not try it at home.

In my final remarks on the outward attributes of our women, I should mention the obvious domestic skills that anyone, man or woman, ought to know for running a homestead: the proper care of livestock; how to ride a horse; how hay is put up for the winter; how to milk your cows and

goats; how to slaughter your animals and prepare their flesh for long storage (by drying, smoking, or pickling); how to dry fish; how to preserve hakarl; how to shear sheep; how to grow grain; how to brew ale; how to tan skins; how to make shoes; how to make cheese and butter and skyr and m'ysa and sour milk; how to roast and bake; how to spin and weave and sew and make felt; and how to work metal, to fashion knives and ornaments. But these skills I suspect some of you could tell me more about than I could tell you!

Now I will speak of our inward selves, of our moods: what I say here will apply equally to men and women. First and foremost, it is of utmost importance to us what people think of our deeds, now and later. As the old lay says,

Cattle die, kinsmen die,
one's own self dies;
I know one thing that never dies,
each dead man's reputation.

Many of you probably think that our warriors all expect to feast in Valhalla with Odinn the All-father after they die; but this is a new belief, and no more certain nor universal than the old beliefs that say that we all go to Freyja or to the Kisir or that we feast with the fair folk and our ancestors under the barrow-hills. Besides, all the tales I know of him show Odinn as a trickster and a thief -- did he not steal the mead of poetry from Vanir, the old earth-goddesses and gods?, and many of us suspect that his Valhalla is probably a sham. (My uncle Snorri may have done us all a disservice in his Edda, where he writes more about Odinn and his kin (the Aesir) than he does about the old gods. I find that strangers who read Snorri's book take him as far too great an authority on these matters. Uncle Snorri is a Christian -- what does he know of these things, after all?)

What many of us say is that we "trust in nothing but our own might and strength." (You may have heard this before.) We have no idea what happens after death; we know of no one who has returned from there; and most of us think that our best and only sure immortality is the one in the old lay, namely, what is said about us after we die. This is why we are all obsessed with maintaining our honour; keeping whatever oaths we may take; telling the truth; showing generosity, and meeting our fate, however evil it may be, with a level head and a calm heart.

Then we need not fear what will be said of us when we are gone.

There is no denying that sometimes we are doomed to suffer strange and unjust turns of fate. Now some who follow Hvita-Kistr, like my uncle Snorri, will tell you that evil things happen to us because of our own faults and nature; but most of us do not believe that. Most of us believe that evil things may happen to us utterly at random: what is important is not what happens, but how we take it.

Allow me to present a counter-example. I do not mean to insult Finns, but they are a strange and sometimes inscrutable people. Now Kullervo the Finn suffered as bad a fate as any evil demons could have devised for him -- assuming the existence of such evil demons, which question I prefer to leave undetermined. Kullervo's parents were slain in family feuds, and he was sent into thraldom; , Kullervo was sent to watch cattle, and because of the ill-will his new master's lady bore him, he was given to take into the wilds a loaf of bread with a stone inside. When he went to cut the loaf, his knife snapped on the stone; and this knife was the only thing in this world that he had from his dead father.

Now, none of our own folk would have "lost it" the way he did! We have always in mind that what we do will be remembered, and that our kin will have to live with it. some of us send our lives planning what our last words will be, so that we leave a good lasting impression. (Here is where such famous parting shots come from as "I see that broadbladed spears are coming into fashion", or "Gunnar may not be at home, but his halberd is." One of our great Northern skalds

had the satisfaction -- even though he died in his bed, which many consider a fate to be avoided -- of replying memorably to a friend who had said, "You are looking far better, today, sir." The skald answered with nothing but the truth: "Quite the contrary!" and died on the spot.

What we all aspire to be remembered as can be summed up in one word: skorungr. Many times in the sagas it is said of men or women, "He or she was a great skorungr." A skorungr is a mover and shaker, a great leader, a person of high honour, generosity, cleverness, diplomacy, and great deeds; a person one can be proud to own as an ancestor. A skorungr should, as I have said, show a level head and a calm heart when faced with tragic events; or, second best, he or she should make an effort towards a stiff upper lip, even when it is hard. I can think of a story told of Egill Skallagrimsson that shows us much in this regard.

Egill's two sons Bodvarr and Gunnarr had both recently died. Egil took up the drowned body of his son Bodvarr and laid it in the barrow out on Digranes next to the body of Skallagrimr, Egill's own father; then he rode home to Borg and shut himself in his bed-closet. No one dared to speak with him, and he would take no food or drink. Three days later, Egill's wife Asgerdr sent a rider to our folk in Hjardarholt and asked if Thorgrethr could come home; her father was acting in a way that might bring shame on him later. (We do not find suicide honourable, or "death from grief", as some folk call it.) Now listen to what Thorgrethr did!

Upon arriving, she came straight into the kitchen; her mother asked her if she had had any supper. Thorgrethr replied loudly, "I have had no supper, and I will have none until I sup with Freyja. I will follow my father's example. I do not want to live longer than he, or than my brothers." Then she went to her father's lock-bed and called out, "Let me in, father, that we may travel the same road." He let her in and she lay down.

After a while he asked her, "Aren't you chewing something?" "I'm chewing seaweed, because it might make me ill," she said. "Is it bad for you?" Egill asked her. "Terrible," she said; "do you want some?" "What can it hurt?" said Egill. In a little while, she called to Asgerdr to bring her some water to drink. Egill said, "That's what happens when you eat seaweed; the more you eat, the thirstier you get." "Do you want to drink, father?" asked Thorgrethr. He took the horn from her and took a big gulp; then Thorgrethr said, "here is the wreck of our plans, father; that isn't water, it's milk." Egill was so angry that he bit a chunk out of the rim of the horn; but the fact remained that his fast was at an end, and he must seek some other way over his grief.

Thorgrethr, knowing her father to be the greatest skald alive, then suggested to him that he compose a poem on the loss of his sons. This was an acceptable way out: everyone would remember the poem; Egill would not lose face; and Thorgrethr would be remembered as a clever and dutiful daughter. It was a good ending all around, and any of you who has ever suffered a loss the like of Egill's would be well advised to hear his poem, for it is the best in our language on this subject. It is called "Sonatorrek", and some of you may already know it.

Each of us in the North, then, would want to be known as a skorungr after we die; and we would want it to be said of us that we bore our fate with grace, however ill it might be.

What would we not want to be known as? A nidingr, or worse, an outlaw. A nidingr is one who has lost all honour; whose deeds have been evil; who has shown miserliness or unreasoning malice; who has murdered another, perhaps (murder, as opposed to a slaying with cause); who has told lies, or thieved; who has practiced evil sorcery; or any number of other dishonourable acts, some of which you might question the evil of; but I cannot propose to change our codes from what they are. The worst fate anyone can suffer is to be declared guilty of the acts of a nidingr; one might then be made outlaw and denied hospitality anywhere. Most outlaws die soon after their outcasting; we are a sociable folk, and to be cast out of the company of those we love is like death. But even outlaws may make a good ending. I think of Grettir the Strong and Gisli the dreamer, both wretched outcasts; but they bore their outlawry with such bravery and gallantry that (even though they both died) grand tales were told of them later.

After all, what more could one ask of life, than to have grand tales told of us, or, as a skald you may know of has said, to do deeds of song, whether or not there be any to sing them after us?

And that is all I have to say.

NORSE NAMES

--RIGUNTH AF BERN

Like most other Germanic names, Norse personal names usually consist of two elements (though you will see examples in which one element stands alone). The names on the list below are taken from saga sources. If none of them suits you, you can create new names by combining elements from two names. Do note, however, that certain elements seem to be restricted to either males or females. Also, the "r" found at the end of the nominative form of Norse names has been left off.

A personal name may be enough for purposes of our one-day event. However, Icelanders usually added a patronymic (a surname based on the father's name). For men, the patronymic was usually formed by adding -sson to the father's name; for women, by adding -sdottir to the father's name. (These practices are still followed in Iceland to this day!)

Nicknames were also common. Sigríðr tells me that it was against the law to give someone a nickname they did not like. (though, like many things, it was done behind the target's back). These nicknames were usually based on personal appearance ("Fair-hair"), other attributes ("the Deep-Minded", "the Blind", "the Mighty") or occupation ("the Priest"). Use your imagination!

Finally, Icelanders might be identified by the place from which they came. Here are a few places: Thrihyrning, Hof, Mosfell, Modruvellir, Hlidarend, Knafahills, Thvattriver, Heydales, Grjotriver, Thjorsriverdale, Mork, Hoskuldstead, Bersastead, Ossaby, Keldur, Kringlumire, Kalfafell, Bergthorsknell, Hjardaholt, Sunnudale, Helgafell.

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| Men's names | Bjornolf | Fridmund | Haleyg | Hrein |
| | Blaeng | Frodi | Half | Hrifla |
| Aevar | Bodmod | Galm | Halfdan | Hroald |
| Aki | Bodolf | Glati | Halfidi | Hroar |
| Alf | Bodvar | Gamli | Hall | Hrodgeir |
| Alfarin | Bolli | Gardar | Hallad | Hrodmar |
| Alfgeir | Bolverk | Gaut | Hallbjorn | Hroi |
| Alrek | Bork | Gautrek | Halldor | Hrolf |
| Amund | Botolf | Geir | Hallfred | Hrolleif |
| An | Bragi | Geiri | Halli | Hromund |
| Ari | Brand | Geirmund | Hallkel | Hrosskel |
| Arinbjorn | Breid | Geirolf | Hallorm | Hrut |
| Armod | Bresi | Gerirraud | Hallstein | Hundi |
| Amald | Broddi | Geirrod | Hallvard | Hundolf |
| Arnfinn | Brondolf | Geirthjolf | Hamal | Hvarf |
| Arngeir | Bruni | Gellir | Hamund | Hvati |
| Arngrim | Brynjolf | Gest | Harald | Illugi |
| Arni | Dadi | Gilli | Hardref | Ingimund |
| Arnel | Dag | Gils | Harek | Ingjald |
| Arnlaug | Darri | Gisli | Harri | Ingolf |
| Armod | Drafdrift | Gizur | Hastein | Iselef |
| Arnor | Dufan | Gjafvald | Havar | Isof |
| Arnstien | Dufnall | Gljomal | Hedin | Isrod |
| Asbjorn | Dufniall | Glum | Hegg | Ivar |
| Asgeir | Dufthak | Gnup | Helgi | Jokul |
| Asi | Dyri | Gollnir | Herfinn | Jolgeir |
| Ask | Edmund | Gorm | Hergils | Jon |
| Askel | Egil | Goti | Herjolf | Jora |
| Aslak | Eid | Grani | Hermund | Jorund |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Asmund | Eilif | Grenjad | Herraud | Jostein |
| Asolf | Einar | Grettir | Herstein | Kadal |
| Asvald | Eindridi | Gris | Hildir | Kalf |
| Atli | Eirik | Grim | Hjallkar | Kali |
| Aud | Eldgrim | Grimkel | Hjallmolf | Kalman |
| Audolf | Erlend | Grjotgard | Hjalti | Kar |
| Audun | Erp | Gudlaug | Hjor | Kari |
| Avaldi | Eyfrod | Gudleif | Hjorleif | Karl |
| Avang | Eyjolf | Gudmund | Hjort | Karli |
| Balki | Eylaug | Gunnar | Hlenni | Kaun |
| Bard | Eystein | Gunnbjorn | Hnaki | Ketil |
| Bardi | Eyvind | Gunnlaug | Hoggvandil | Ketilbjorn |
| Barek | Faxi | Gunnleif | Hogni | Kjallak |
| Beinir | Finn | Gunnstein | Holmkell | Kjaran |
| Bekan | Finnbogi | Gunnvald | Holmstein | Kjartan |
| Berg | Finngeir | Guthorm | Holti | Kjotvit |
| Berghor | Finni | Gyrd | Hord | Klaeng |
| Bersi | Finnvard | Gyrth | Hoskuldr | Klaufi |
| Bjalfi | Floki | Hadd | Hraerek | Klepp |
| Bjarnhedin | Flosi | Haering | Hrafn | Kleppjam |
| Bjarni | Forni | Hafgrim | Hrafinkel | Knuk |
| Bjartmar | Freystein | Hafthor | Hrafsi | Knor |
| Bjolan | Freyvid | Hafur | Hrani | Knott |
| Bjolf | Fridgeir | Haki | Hrapp | Kodran |
| BjorgolfBjorn | Fridleif | Hakon | Hreidar | Kol |
| Kolbein | Oleif | Skum | Thjostar | Vestar |
| Kolbjorn | Olmod | Smid | Thjostolf | Vestein |
| Kolfinna | Olvir | Smidkel | Thorarin | VEstlidid |
| Kolgrim | Ongul | Snaebjorn | Throberg | Vestmann |
| Koll | Onund | Snallstein | Thorbrand | Vethrom |
| Kolli | Orlyg | Snorri | Thord | Vethorn |
| Kolskegg | Oraekja | Snort | Thorfinn | Veturlidi |
| Kollsvein | Orm | Sokki | Thorgaut | Vitar |
| Konal | Orn | Sokkolf | Thorgeir | Vifil |
| Kori | Ornolf | Solgi | Thorgest | Vigbjod |
| Kormak | Ospak | Solmund | Thorgils | Vigfus |
| Krok | Osvald | Solvar | Thorgrim | Vigsterk |
| Krum | Pal | Solvi | Thorhadd | Vilbald |
| Kugaldi | Petur | Soti | Thorhalli | Vilgeir |
| Kveldulf | Osvif | Soxolf | Thorir | Yngvar |
| Kvist | Otrygg | Starkad | Thorkel | |
| Kylan | Ottar | Starri | Thorlak | <u>Women's names:</u> |
| Lambi | Ozur | Stein | Thorleif | |
| Leidolf | Radorm | Steinar | Thorleik | Aegileif |
| Leif | Ragi | Steinbjorn | Thorljot | Aegissida |
| Ljot | Ragnar | Steinfinn | Thormod | Aesa |
| Ljotolf | Rau | Steingrim | Thorodd | Aldis |
| Lodhott | Ref | Steini | Thorolf | Alfdis |
| Lodin | Reist | Steinkel | Thororm | Alof |
| Lodmund | Rodrek | Steinmod | Thorstein | Arnbjorg |
| Loft | Rognvald | Steinolf | Thorvald | Arndis |
| Lopt | Rongud | Steinrod | Thorvard | Ameid |
| Lyting | Runolf | Steinthor | Thorvid | Amgerd |
| Magnus | Saeling | Steinunn | Thrain | Arngunn |
| Mani | Saeming | Storolf | Thrand | Arnkatla |
| Mar | Saemund | Sturla | Thrasir | Arnleif |
| Markus | Sam | Stuf | Throst | Arnora |

Women's Names

| | | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Meldun | Saxi | Styr | Tind | Amthrud |
| Melpatrek | Sigfast | Styrbjorn | Tjorfi | Asa |
| Modolf | Sigfus | Styrkar | Torrad | Asborg |
| Mord | Sighvat | Styrmir | Tyrfing | Asdis |
| Mottul | Sigmund | Sulki | Ulg | Asgerd |
| Myrkjartan | Sigtrygg | Sumarlidi | Ulfar | Ashild |
| Naddodd | Sigurd | Surt | Ulfhedin | Asny |
| Nagli | Sigvald | Svan | Ulfkel; | Asta |
| Narfi | Slakkagrim | Svardkel | Uni | Astrid |
| Nattfari | Skamkel | Svarthofdi | Vadi | Asvor |
| Nefstein | Skapti | Svein | Valbrand | Aud |
| Njal | Skati | Svainbjorn | Valgard | Bera |
| Oblaud | Skefil | Svainung | Vali | Bergdis |
| Odd | Skeggi | Sverting | Valthjof | Bergthora |
| Oddbjorg | Skidi | Tanni | Vapni | Bergljot |
| Oddbjorn | Skjaldbjorn | Teit | Vebjorn | Birma |
| Oddgeir | Skjalg | Thangbrand | Vefrod | Bjargey |
| Oddleif | Skjoldolf | Thengil | Vegest | Bjollok |
| Oddmar | Skolm | Thidrandi | Vekell | Bot |
| Ofeig | Skorri | Thjodar | Veleif | Bryngerd |
| Ogmund | Skuli | Thjodolf | Vemund | Dagrun |
| Olaf | Skuta | Thjodrek | Vermun | Dalla |

Womens Names

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| Dotta | Hrodry | Svanlaug | Bladder-Bald | the Evil |
| Dyrfinna | Hungerd | Thjodgerd | Bladder-Pate | the Fair |
| Eimy | Idunn | Thjodhild | Blaze | Fair-Cheek |
| Elin | Ingibjorg | Thora | the Bleater | Falling-Beam |
| Ellisif | Ingigerd | Thorarna | the Blind | teh Farmer |
| Eyja | Ingihild | Thorbjorg | Blind-Snout | the Fast Sailing |
| Finna | Ingrid | Thordis | Blue-Cheek | Fiddle |
| Fjorleif | Ingunn | Thorelf | Blue-Tooth | Fine-Hair |
| Freygerd | Ingvild | Thorey | the Boiler | Fire |
| Fridgerd | Issgerd | Thorgeir | Bound-Foot | the Fish-Driver |
| Geirbjorg | Jamgerd | Thorgerd | Bow-Bender (f) | Fishing-Hook |
| Geirhild | Jodis | Thorhild | Braggart | Flap |
| Geirny | Jofrid | Thorkatla | the Brave | Flask-Back |
| Geirrid | Jora | Thorlaug | Bride (m) | Flask Beard |
| Gerd | Joreid | Thorljet | Bristle-Beard | Flat Nose |
| Gjaflaug | Kadlin | Thorodda | Broad-Beard | Fly |
| Glaedir | Kjalvor | Thorny | Broad-Sole | Foal-Brow |
| Grelod | Kjolvor | Thorunn | Brook | the Foolish |
| Grima | Kolfinna | Thorve | Brow | Foul-Fart |
| Gro | Kolgrima | Thorvor | Buck-Bottom | Fox |
| Groa | Kormlod | Thraslaug | Butter | Fox-Beard |
| Gudbjorg | Lekny | Thurid | Butter-Box | the Frenzied |
| Gudlaug | Lina | Ulfheid | of the Cargo Hold | Frey's-Priest |
| Gudleif | Ljotunn | Ulfhild | Cart | Finge |
| Gudny | Ljufa | Ulfrun | Cat | Fur |
| Gudrid | Ljufvina | Una | Cheek-Wound | the Generous |
| Gudrun | Lophaena | Unn | Children- | Giant- |
| Gunnhild | Maeva | Valdis | the Child-Sparer | Gimlet- |
| Gunnvor | Melkorka | Valgerd | the Christian | the Gleeful |
| Gyda | Mjoll | Vedis | the Clanger | Globe |
| Gyrid | Moeid | Velaug | Club-Foot | the Godless |
| Hafthora | Nidbjorg | Veny | the Clumsy | Gold-Beard |
| Halfkatla | Oddfrid | Vigdis | Coal-Beard | the Gold-Bearer |
| Halla | Oddlaug | Vilborg | Coal-Brow Poet | Gold-Luck |
| Hallbera | Oddny | Yngvild | Cock | the Greyish |

Nick Names

Women's names

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Hallbjorg | Ondott | Yr | Cod-Biter | Gruel- |
| Halldis | Ormchild | | Cormorant | Grunt-Sow |
| Halldora | Osk | <u>Nicknames</u> | Crop | Hag-Nose |
| Halfred | Otkatla | | Crow- | Hairy-Cheek |
| Hallfrid | Ragna | Adder-Tongue | the Dane | the Halogalander |
| Hallgerd | Ragnhild | Ale-Lover | Dangle-Beard | the Handsome |
| Hallveig | Rafarta | All-Men's-Sister | the Deep-Minded | Hard-Grip |
| Heid | Rannveig | Autumn-Dusk | Deer | the Hard Sailing |
| Helga | Reginleif | the Bald | Dove-Nose | Hart |
| Herdis | Rjupa | Ball | the Dream- | the Hasty |
| Herrid | Saechild | the Barra-Woman | Interpreter | Haven-Key |
| Herthrud | Saeunn | Basket-Back | Drum-Leg | Hawk-Nose |
| Hervor | Salbjorg | Beard- | Dueler- | the Hebridean |
| Hild | Salgerd | Beetle | Eagle | Hell-Skin |
| Hildigunn | Signy | the Bent | the Easterner | Helmet |
| Hlif | Sigrid | Berserks'-Killer | the Easterners'- | Hoary-Head |
| Hrafna | Solvor | the Big | Terror | Hog- |
| Hrafnhild | Steinunn | the Black | Ellida-Shield | Hogs-Head |
| Hrefna | Swana | Black-Troll | the Erect | the Holy |

Nicknames:

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Hollow-Throat | Peak | Slouch | Whey-Horn | |
| Hook | Poem-Piece | Smith's Bellows | the White | |
| Hom-Breaker | Poet- | Snare | White-Cloud | |
| Horse | Pole | the Sound-Filler | White-Leg | |
| Horse-Fly | Prick | Snow-Rim | Wisdom- | |
| the Horse-Gelder | the Priest | Snow-Shoe | Wisdom-Slope | |
| Horse-head | the Prophetess | Spark | the Wise | |
| House-Long | Prow-grim | Sparrow | the Witch-breaker | |
| Ill-Luck | the Ptarmigan | Spine | Word-Master | |
| Ironside | Raven- | Splint-Brow | the Young | |
| Island-Sun | the red | Sow-Thistle | | |
| Killer- | Red-Beard | the Squint-Eyed | | |
| Knee | Red-Cloak | Staff | | |
| Knob | Red-Nose | Star | | |
| Knob-Buttocks | Ring | the Stick-Gazer | Moor-Man | Ship-Cheek |
| Kveld-Ulf ("evening wolf") | Ring-Scatterer | the Stoopling | Moor-Widow | Turf- |
| Lamb | Rock-Man | the Stout | the Mound-Breaker | Twist-Breeks |
| the Lame | the Rotten | Strike-Pate | Muscle | twist-Foot |
| the Lawspeaker | Rudder- | the Striker | Nanny-Goat | the Unfree |
| the Lean | the Rushing | the Strong | Neck | the Unwashed |
| the Learned | Sacrifice- | the Strong Striker | Ness- | Wake |
| Leather-Neck | the Sage | the Stutterer | Nose | Wand |
| the Left-Handed | the Salmoner | the Swaggerer | the Old | War-Tooth |
| the Limerick-Farer | Sand-Leg | Swamp- | One-Hand | the Wealthy |
| Line | Scales-Clatterer | Tangle-Weed | the Open-Handed | Weapon |
| Ling-Back | Scar-Leg | the Tearer | Ore- | Wether- |
| Loki | the Scorcher | Tent-Pitcher | the Orra-Poet | Whale-Belly |
| Long-Chin | Scot-Pate | Thin-Hair | Oxen- | Whale-Cinch |
| Long-Head | the Sea-Farer | the Thinner | Oxen-Goad | Whale-Fringe |
| Long-Neck | Seal | Thistle | the Peacock | Whale-Side |
| the Marshal | the Second-Sighted | Tin- | | |
| Mice- | Shaft | Tip-Bar | | |
| the Middling | Shaggy-Head | the Tit | | |
| Midfjord | the Shape-Changer | Tongue- | | |
| the Mighty | the Sharp | Tongue-Priest | | |
| Mocker | Shell-Piece | the Tribute-Trader | | |
| Moon | Shield- | Troll | | |
| | Ship-Breast (f) | Troll-Burster | | |

RECKONING

-- SIGRIDR RGNVALDSDOTTIR

Icelanders knew of two seasons, summer, which began on Thursday, April 9 - 15th, and winter (Thursday October 10-16th each year). After the middle of the 10th century, an intercalary week was introduced, an extra seven days in the middle of each seventh year to even things up.

A person reckoned his age by the number of winters he had passed. Therefore, by our measurements, an Icelander could be several months wrong about his age. Certainly this method must have been sufficient in an era long before voting age and mandatory retirement.

According to the earliest Icelandic laws, there was a certain time of day when the chieftain had to arrive and set up the awning over his booth at the Althing, and this description may be indicative of the ways Icelanders had of measuring the time of day.

"The sun is "shaft-high" when a man standing on the shore where land and sea meet, with the tide half out, can look out to sea -- assuming clear weather-- as the sun is sinking and visualize a spear, of such a length that one could reach up to the socket [and viewed as it were at a distance of 9 paces] with the point touching the bottom of the sun and the butt of the shaft touching the sea."

CURRENT EVENTS CIRCA 992

VYCHATA, GAERWEN, FRANCIS AND RIGUNTH

- Battle of Maldon 991--new viking activity in Britain (had begun slowly through 980's)
 - poem composed shortly after battle
 - no detailed historical accuracy, but general events and people must have been real or poet would not have been taken seriously.
 - unfortunate engagement for Byrtnoth, ealdorman of Essex, at the head of a local levy against a band of vikings, part of a larger, mainly Norwegian army under the leadership of Olaf Tryggvason, who later became King of Norway.
 - the vikings had sailed up the estuary of the river Blackwater, then called the Pante, in Essex, to a small island called Northey near the village of Maldon, evidently planning to use the island as their base for raids on the neighbouring countryside.
 - Olaf had 93 ships with him to raid southeast England.
- Olaf took the first of a regular series of payments called "Danegeld" from the English--10,000 pounds in silver coin minted especially for the occasion. With the prospect of much more to come, Olaf is definitely a good man to be acquainted with. Svein Forkbeard expected to join with Olaf soon.
- 985-6: Eirik the Red colonized Greenland. Trade goods from there are already coming through Iceland: furs, hides, ropes, cables, oil, woolens, sea ivory, white bears, falcons, foxes--in exchange for grains, raw/wrought iron, timber, garments, and luxuries.

Kings and Notables:

- Otto III is King of Germany under regency of his mother, Theophano. His father Otto II had beaten Harald Bluetooth in battle in 974.
- Earl Hakon the Mighty ruler of Norway 975-995
- Æthelred II (*Unraed*) King of England 978-1016
- Harald Bluetooth, King of Denmark, converted by a missionary from Germany in 960, killed in a rebellion led by his son Svein Forkbeard in 986.
- as early as 991, Æthelric of Bocking in Essex, apparently of Scandinavian descent, was suspected of supporting Svein and accused of treachery
- 991--dispute between Duke Richard the Fearless of Normandy and Æthelred over Norman harbouring of Danish ships resolved by papal treaty. The Normans, just a few generations ago Vikings themselves, will continue to be accused by the English of collaborating with the Danes in future years.

In Iceland

- Thorgeir Ljosawater-Priest Lawspeaker 985-1001
- Conversions to Christianity on the increase, especially to facilitate commerce with Christian countries (at this point, almost everywhere but Iceland).

Always as a young man I traveled alone,
and I would lose my way:
I felt I was rich if I made a friend--
no man by himself is happy.

-- Havamal

Circulation
30,000

THE NORTHERN CLIMES
ICELAND'S COMPREHENSIVE NEWSPAPER

JULY 10, 992
Page One

NEW LAND SITED

News comes to us from the town of Herjolfsnes in Greenland that Bjarni Herjolfsson has discovered a new land to the west.

After spending a few years in Norway, Bjarni returned to Iceland only to find that his father, Herjolf, had gone with Erik "the Red" Leifson to Greenland. Bjarni followed after him but, caught in dense fog and driven off course by a stiff north wind, he travelled for days without knowing where he was. Eventually, he found himself off the coast of a most inhospitable land, heavily forested and mountainous so he turned back and finally found Greenland and his father.

Whether this sighting is reliable or not, his reports seem to suggest that there is no value in pursuing any further explorations of the land. Certainly, resources could be better used in developing Greenland.

GUARD YOUR IDOLS

Protect your idols the Christians are coming. Following in the footsteps of the fanatic, Thorvald, a new zealot has appeared to attempt again to convert Iceland to Christianity. The priest Stefni, recently arrived from Norway, has been preaching in the Skogahverfi marketplaces.

It is less than a decade since Thorvald and a saxon priest called Fridrek, caused a furor with this new religion when they attempted to convert the populace to Christianity. Though they did succeed in baptizing a few noble Jarls, both were soon banished when they murdered several of their enemies. Stefni, a new emissary, seems again to be stirring up discord.

Christianity, a Southern religion, purports to simplify worship. While we sacrifice to our many gods, they worship only one. To complicate matters,

this one god is comprised of three divinities! - A godly father, a mortal son who was crucified and was to have been the "saviour of all mankind", and a "holy ghost". Despite numerous heated debates, it is unclear where each god's responsibilities lie, how mankind was saved by a mortal son, and the function of the holy ghost.

Reports are becoming more widespread that our youths are being converted, and that our idols are being burned. While we hope this fad religion is short-lived, conversion to Christianity has been taking place in Denmark for thirty years, first under King Harald Bluetooth, who died seven years ago, and currently under his son Sven Forked-beard. In Norway, conversions are also rumoured, whereas the English, Rus, Germans and Normans have been following Christianity for many years now.

GREENLAND: THE NEW FRONTIER

Erik "the Red" Leifson announced in a recent press conference that Greenland is ready for further settlement. The first colony, established in 986, has thrived under his personal care, and is now accepting new pioneers.

Expelled from Norway, Erik emigrated to Iceland where he ran into further "misfortunes" and was driven to continue his journey westward where he made the exciting discovery of Greenland in 982.

Though his first colonization effort in 986 was not entirely successful (of 25 ships, only 14 arrived intact), he claims there are many exciting trade possibilities in this new land". Export opportunities exist in furs, hides, ropes, cables, oil, woolens, sea ivory, falcons, foxes and white bears.

*Continued on
Page Two*

THE NORTHERN CLIMES

ICELAND'S COMPREHENSIVE NEWSPAPER

JULY 10, 992
Page Two

*Continued from
Page One*

GREENLAND: THE NEW FRONTIER

And for those tired of fish, Erik tells us that Greenland teems with Caribou and is a perfect haven for your sheep.

For those with established businesses in Iceland, Erik is eagerly looking for dealers to supply corn, raw iron, wrought iron, timber, garments and miscellaneous luxuries for re-sale in Greenland to be ready upon his next sailing.

So don't miss this exciting new growth opportunity, contact Erik Leifson at Your Ship Has Come Inn this spring or at his farm Brattahlid, at the mouth of Erik's Fjord in Greenland.

NEWS IN BRIEF

GERMANY

The child-King, Emperor Otto III was slightly injured in a hunting accident near Mainz. His mother, the Regent Theophano, says he is fine and will be attending state dinners again by late fall. Otto is still

three years from ascending his throne. In the interim, extra care is being taken to prevent a second uprising of the Slavs who killed his father, Otto II, in 983.

ANGLIA

King Ethelred announced new heavier tributes from Denmark. The tributes date back to Alfred the Great's conquest of Denmark in 878, but Ethelred has more than tripled them in the last three years.

DENMARK

In a related story, there is widespread rumour that Sven Forked-beard, King of Denmark, has adopted the new policy of conscription and may try to rid his country of this tribute burden. He hopes to have his army ready to attack Ethelred within two years.

Sven Forked-beard has announced the death of his nephew in a raid on the Norman town Noirmoutier and of a

second noble at Valencia in Cordoba. Raids, however, will continue along the Norman coast, the Emirate of Cordoba, and into the Mediterranean.

SWEDEN

King Rurik revealed that a new trade route has been opened down the Volga and into the Caspian. There, Sweden has engaged in some goods exchanges with merchants of the Khazar Empire. It is expected that we may soon have ready access to Arab silver and spices, as well as the already steady supply of jewellery and slaves.

HERE AT HOME

Efforts continue to ensure that there can never be a repeat of the great famine of 975, where nearly one fifth of our population succumbed to starvation after a disastrous growing season. Stronger trade links have been established with Norway, Ireland, and the English Isles and

promises of support have been given for times of great need.

Stats Iceland released figures today that show a gradual cooling trend in our region. Average temperatures have dropped by more than four degrees while rainfall has increased.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Just a reminder that tomorrow the annual Althing commences. Make sure your witnesses are prepared and available when your case comes to be tried. The Chieftains are gathering in the same locations as last year. There should be no problems for the merchants this year as the sheep byres have been moved to the far side of the meadow.

*Recorded this day by
Lord Francis of Skye
and
Lady Gaerwen of
Trafford*

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY -- OUR "RECONSTRUCTION"
-- SIGRIDR ROGNVALDSDOTTIR

At our event, we have simplified the structure of the assembly, since there are fewer than 70,000 of us (the population of Iceland around 1000)!

We have four districts, but only four chieftains will be represented out of a total of 36 to 39 in period. Judges will not be used -- all cases will be arbitrated and decided by our two Lawspeakers (we need two to replace the highly esteemed Thorgeir Ljosawater-Priest, our historical Lawspeakers mentioned earlier), Grimwulf the Hairy and Robert of Two Cliffs.

As an assembly participant, you may want to bring a dispute before the Lawspeaker for your district. There will be time set aside after each of the two large district disputes for small individual cases, so feel free to come up with one if you are so inclined. Alternatively, you may wish to get involved in one of our larger cases, and if so you should contact the chieftain of your choice, preferably before the day of the event, although he may be grateful for your help even if you ask him on the very day itself.

How to bring a case:

1. Get together with the other people involved in the "dispute" to work out details, whether it be a bride-theft, property dispute, killing, or other offence against dignity.
2. On the day of the event (or before!), go to your Lawspeaker to get his counsel on how and when to bring your case. Register it with the "court reporter" [he will be standing at the entrance to the court circle to take your names].
3. Make sure you have any witnesses or neighbours the Lawspeaker may advise you to call up when your case is brought.
4. When your case is announced, enter the grounds and present it, plaintiff first and then defendant in turn. Speak loudly so that all men may hear you. The Lawspeaker will attempt to reach a decision in the case, but he will need the agreement of both sides if it is to be a good ending to dispute (he may or may not obtain this!).

There are many examples of cases, both successful and unsuccessful, being brought to assemblies in the sagas. Njal's Saga in particular can be a good source of ideas about cases.

Cut trees when the wind blows. sail in fair weather:
talk with maidens in the dark-- the day has many eyes.
Ask speed of a ship, protection from a shield
keenness from a sword, from a maiden kisses.

NOTICE:

-- Havamai

"Builders who make buildings from Norwegian timber or bridges over rivers or lakes where fish run that can be netted or who build booths at the General Assembly, may choose to take day wages for outfield haymaking. They must, however, have found themselves legal domicile in the moving days, even if they disregard it." [taken from the Laws of Early Iceland: Gragas I].

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The longboat at sea
St. Ives, Feb 28/87

