

# Trade and Agriculture



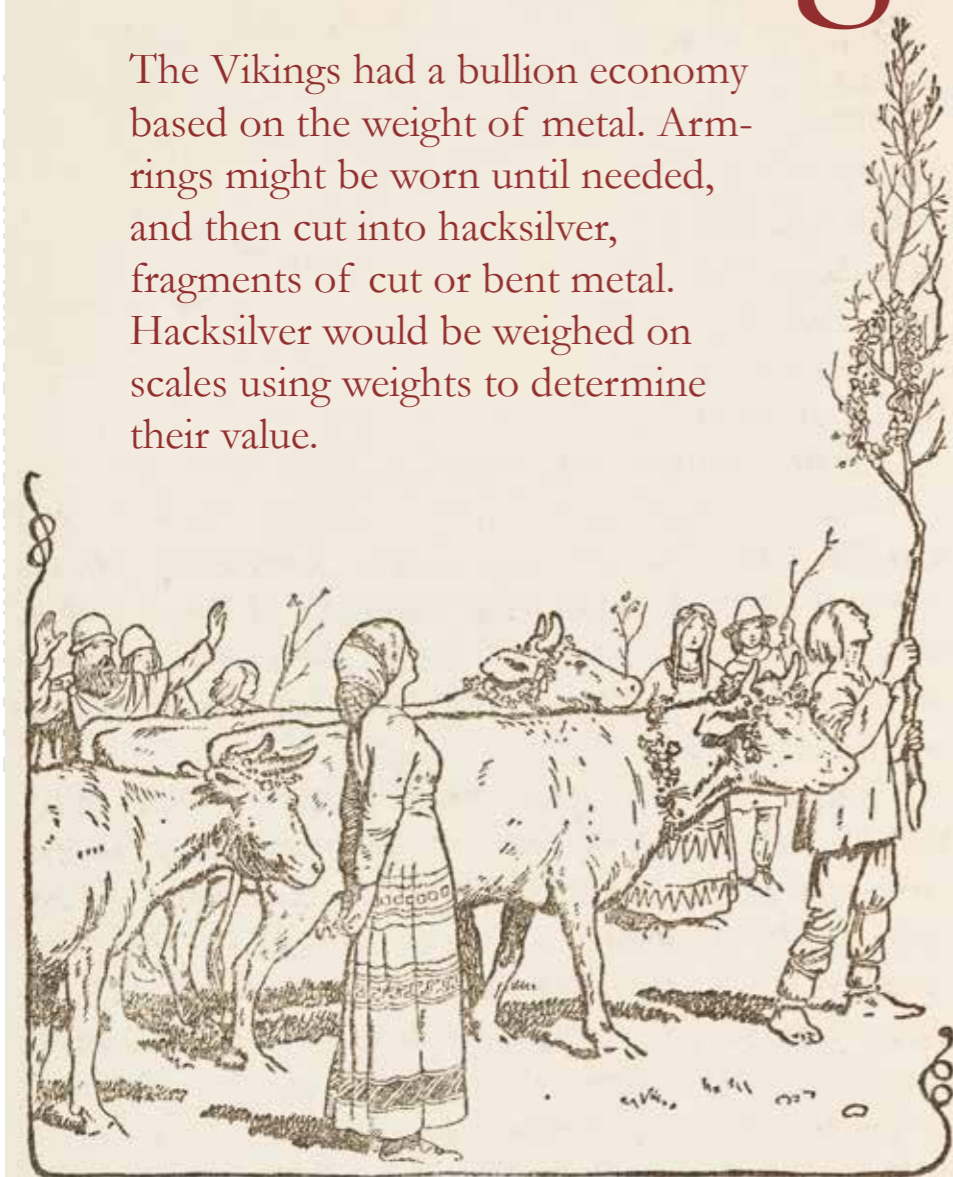
Vikings examine their treasure. Genevra Snedden, *Leif and Thorkel: Two Norse Boys of Long Ago* illustrated by M. Meredith Williams (London 1922). Eirikur Benedikz Icelandic Collection Juvenile PS3537.N43.

The Vikings had a bullion economy based on the weight of metal. Arm-rings might be worn until needed, and then cut into hacksilver, fragments of cut or bent metal. Hacksilver would be weighed on scales using weights to determine their value.

The Anglo-Saxons, like most of the rest of Europe, had a monetary economy, using coins instead of weighing out silver or gold. When Vikings traded with people who used coins, as in the Danelaw, they created a dual-currency economy where bullion and coins were both used, and coins could be cut up into halves or quarters to pay for goods. Eventually, the Viking kings began minting their own coins, imitating the coins they encountered while trading. In both cases, forgery was an issue. Coins and hackgold might be forged or debased metal passed off as pure. Viking coins found in England come from as far afield as the Middle East, illustrating the range of trading contacts that the Vikings had.

In their homelands, Vikings were farmers first, and warriors second.

Those that travelled abroad to raid and trade would often return to their farms in the autumn for the harvest, while many that stayed in the East Midlands brought their families with them. Only the wealthiest could afford to be full-time warriors and have others run their farms for them. The Vikings who settled in the East Midlands remained both warriors and farmers; Denby, 'Dane's farm/settlement', which is formed of Old English and Old Norse elements, suggests that a Viking took control of an existing Anglo-Saxon farm. Gunthorpe, 'Gunnhild's outlying farm/settlement', shows that Viking women could own farms in their own right too.



An imaginative recreation of an agricultural ceremony in Viking times. Genevra Snedden, *Leif and Thorkel: Two Norse Boys of Long Ago* illustrated by M. Meredith Williams (London 1922). Eirikur Benedikz Icelandic Collection Juvenile PS3537.N43.



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