

Vikings

Mission accomplishment through optimal path selection

by Joseph Miranda

Decision Game's *Vikings* provides the player with a challenge in accomplishing multiple objectives in a limited amount of time. The wargame is set in the era of the late Dark Ages with the player taking the role of a great Viking leader conducting a combination of ocean going and land operations for an exercise in joint expeditionary warfare. The game system controls various hostile forces.

Vikings is played in missions called *Sagas*, based on Viking legends. A central game system is with the quest markers. These markers represent elements of the Viking mythos, which provide objectives on the map, such as the fabled port of Jomsborg, the Niflung Hoard, and the Silk Road. The dilemma is that the quests are placed randomly at locations across the map, and the map stretches from Vinland across the Atlantic to Miklagard (Constantinople) and points east. Since an individual Saga can require you to discover from one to three Quests, you may have to head out in separate directions. Meantime, the hourglass is running.

The player expends gold to recruit Jarls (leaders), troops, and ships. You form these units into forces and sail them to the quest markers dispersed across the map. Terrain evaluation is based on a Viking view of the world, one of vast oceans and inland river routes. Given that naval movement is faster (up to 3 spaces per turn) than land movement (one space), the rivers (blue lines) become highways and ships are



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the only way across the seas (white lines/spaces).

Your start point in Scandinavia is something of a central position, providing access to the North Sea, the Baltic, and the English Channel. But traveling to further lands means an extended voyage. Let us say that one Quest is in Vinland to the west and a second in Kiev to the east. The way the game works is that you can move only one force per turn. When going for multiple objectives, it means you will need to divide your force into different expeditions, one per quest. It comes down to force management.

Now, you can affect the map geography. This is done by building settlements, representing Viking colonies. Settlements act as forward operations bases, allowing you to deploy reinforcements in distant lands as well as providing safe havens for an expedition at the end of a saga. On top of this, by expending gold, you can speed up your movement as your warriors become more motivated! All of this adds a simple but effective logistics angle to the game. You trade resources for space, time, and combat power.

There is another aspect to map geography.



There are several special locations on the map. One type is the trade center (Frankrike) where you can acquire extra gold. Another is the warrior kingdom (Kazars) where you can recruit an elite Varangian warrior unit. There are reasons to go to various places on the map, and you have to consider how they will facilitate the accomplishment of your mission across stormy seas and often hostile lands.

