



THE



RUNESTONE



THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient, yet ever new, religion known as Asatru. It is dedicated to that religion and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

THE RUNESTONE is the official journal of the Asatru Free Assembly and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$7 per year (U.S. and Canada) and \$12 per year for overseas airmail. Write to: AFA, P.O.Box 1754, Breckenridge, TX 76024. Please make checks payable to the Asatru Free Assembly.

EDITOR: Stephen A. McNallen PRODUCTION: Maddy Hutter ©1985
CALLIGRAPHY: Mari Funai

CALENDAR

October 8 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ERIK THE RED. Everyone knows that Erik's son, Leif, discovered America, but the old sire himself is even more honored by us of Asatru, for he clung to his belief in Thor despite the defection of his son and the conversion of his own wife, who refused to live with her heathen husband. Nevertheless, he allowed her to build a small church in the Greenland colony - so long as it was situated so he could not see it from the house!

You can celebrate this day by pausing in memory of Erik, drinking a toast in his honor, and praising Thor for such stalwarts.

October 9 - LEIF ERIKSON DAY. This is a holiday in the United States, declared by President Johnson in the mid 1960's. Some (all too few) cities have Scandinavian-oriented celebrations on this date.

One could serve our cause this day by resolving to tell three other people that this is, in fact, Leif Erikson Day, thus making the public more aware of our Nordic heritage. Better yet, remind a lot of people by writing a letter to the local newspaper!

October 12 - WINTER NIGHTS. In the old Icelandic calendar, winter begins on the Saturday between October 11th and 17th. Winter Nights celebrates the bounty of the harvest and is held in honor of the goddess Freya and the disir. These latter beings are sometimes viewed as tutelary fertility spirits, and sometimes as the female ancestors.

This day can be observed by giving honor to Freya and pouring a libation of ale, milk, or mead onto the earth as an offering to the disir.

November 11 - FEAST OF THE EINHERJAR. The chosen heroes who sit in Odin's hall are the einherjar. Today we honor those dead kin who gave their lives for family and folk.

If you have friends or relatives who died in battle, visit their graves today. If that is not possible, offer a libation in their memory.

ALTHING SIX

Each Althing is memorable for some unique reason. Last year we broke all attendance records, for example. This year we had a good turnout, too, but the real keyword was participation. More people did more to make this one a success than at any of the previous ones.

Increased participation started two weeks before the Althing, when a half a dozen of us got together to clean up our rather trashed site, and continued through the event itself and the final departure. Rituals clicked better because people were more involved, and folks just plain took the initiative at everything from handing out free bookmarks to building a huge Thor's hammer which we burned by the lakeside. Motivation was apparent everywhere - these Asafolk want to make a difference!

Twenty-some Althing attendees showed up the day before we were even scheduled to occupy the site, so getting acquainted was no problem. We were set up early thanks to so many willing hands, and Friday afternoon we slipped into the agenda with presentations by Cheryl Follette and David James from Connecticut, who spoke about the heathen roots of stave churches and about the contrasts between Wicca and Asatru, respectively. With mead and cookies around the fire that night, we were off to a good start.

Saturday, folks continued to arrive. Our opening ritual included passing from hand to hand a small rock from Thingvellir in Iceland, for which Redbeard had fashioned a beautiful wooden base. We moved straightaway into a demonstration of Klima, the Nordic martial art, and soon Greg Rowe had a crowd of us punching and kicking

and blocking, all the while aware that this was a fighting style for our Folk, rather than an Asian form imported for our somewhat imperfect consumption. After working up an appetite we ate lunch and prepared for a relaxing meditation by Ariel of Freya's Folk. This year it dealt with Skadi, and visions of a Nordic huntress on skis insulated us from the warm Texas sun. We could have used Her influence later, as we hurled spears and sweated through Ragnar's Revenge during the Viking games!

Other deities were invoked as Maddy and I were wed by Thorsteinn in a rite that must be some sort of a first for Texas. We quaffed our customary bridal ale, then adjourned for more celebrating, a fine feast, and an offering to Thor in the form of a huge burning hammer which lit up the darkening sky and shone on the evening waters. Hail Hardy, Hammer-Bringer!

The next morning began with Klima for the hard-core and coffee for the rest followed by the second annual Volksmarsch and rounds of Leaping Lizard and St.Pauli Girl. Several Warrior Guild members were initiated, then we settled down to a series of guild presentations including the new Sewing Guild and a proposal by Cheryl for a Parenting Guild. Old Norse sounded through the grove as Thorsteinn offered a blót to Thor, and consecrated mead gave Hammer-Wielder's blessing to us. After this, it was time to ponder the situation of women in Asatru - why there weren't more of them, and what could be done about it! Our panel of Mike Murray, Caroline Webber, Ariel, and Thorsteinn kicked off the discussion, and it continued on its own momentum as more ideas were put forth. You can expect good things

to come from this talk.

Another feast to fill the stomach and a sumbel to fill the spirit, and the day was over. The closing ritual the next morning ended the Althing, with the power of the R rune invoked to cement our experiences and dispatch us homeward in safety. We bade farewell to our kin knowing that much had been accomplished, and aware that Asatru is fortunate indeed to have the devotion of such as they!

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FOLK MOOT 85

In June, Arizona Kindred hosted the Odinist Fellowship's third annual Folk Moot at a scenic mountain campground near Payson, Arizona. We attended, and we're really glad we did! Why? There are lots of reasons, but take for example the Viking Games: Chip and Redbeard ran us through a series of events that would gladden the heart of any Norseman - axe-throwing, archery, spear-hurling, caber toss, and that special invention called the "Pillage and Cut". But it wasn't all games; there were presentations by the Warrior Guild (Maddy and I got our Pathfinder patches awarded there), Brewing Guild, and the Amerysk Folkbond. We gave a talk on the meaning of myth. Thorsteinn performed a blót to Balder as we celebrated Midsummer. Kirby Wise, maker of armor, forged word-sword as he sang around the campfire songs that he had composed in devotion to the Gods. Else Christensen inspired us with her own untiring loyalty to the cause that fires all our lives.

We met lots of good people and old friendships were renewed and deepened as we gathered to honor our Gods and ancestors. Our thanks to kinsman Mike Murray and to all the fine people who made it happen and who made us feel so very welcome!

Poster Contest Results!

A couple of issues back we asked you to send us drawings suitable for posters advertising the AFA. You responded - and here are the winners:

FIRST PLACE - C. Dean Andersson wins "Tough Torvald" to wear around his neck (or wherever) for his striking raido rune bordered with the futhark, stark black on white.

SECOND PLACE - Bob Stine also employed a runic theme, blazoning "Religion of the Runes" diagonally above a drawing of a woman invoking the Gods in a stone circle, or alternatively, above a shield-bedecked ship. We couldn't decide which we liked best! For his efforts Bob will get a copy of The Vikings by Brønsted.

THIRD PLACE - Skjold Skull depicted the slogan "For Future, Past and Present - Asatru" cast against tall buildings, pointing up to the freedom of the sky beyond. His entry earns him a copy of our ritual book, volume one.

NOTICE - The AFA now has available for distribution white copies of various posters promoting Asatru. These will be offered at no charge to subscribers who would like to get colored copies made up to post in their own area. All posters feature the AFA home kindred address in Texas, but Asafolk who want to develop a group in their location could easily change the address. See the order form mailed with this issue.



THE ROLE OF THE GERMANIC CHIEF: FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Two issues ago, we looked at the functioning of the thing or assembly of free warriors in Germanic tribal society. In the last RUNESTONE we examined the role of the council of noblemen (more or less) who advised the chief. Now it is time to consider the third major component in the natural society of our ancestors - the chief or king himself.

Roman chroniclers, notably Tacitus, reveal three types of rulers among the Germanic tribes:

The dux (as the Romans called him) was chosen in wartime only and his duties were limited to military ones. He was elected because of his valor and capability as a war leader, and any warrior was theoretically eligible. Some tribes had no leader at all in peacetime - the Franks of the 4th century or the Saxons in the 8th, are examples (the Saxon war leader, however was chosen by lot rather than by election from among the leading men).

The rex, on the other hand, was chosen for life from among royal stock. His duties were both civil and military, but his power should not be overestimated, as we shall later see. The proposals of the rex to the assembly could be either accepted or rejected and leadership brought with it no formal deference or privileged treatment. If he was to rule, it would have to be by wisdom, not authority.

A third class of leader was made up of not one but two chiefs who shared command in military matters. Like the dux, their influence was limited to war-making, and, as in the case of the dux, this system does not occur in tribes that had a royal clan. There is no known case where this twin leadership was overthrown by a single tyrannical war chief, and it may have been set up precisely for that reason.

Thus we have the three kinds of chiefs or prototypical kings known to us from the earliest recorded history of our people. The idea of the leader or ruler was to change in the following centuries, especially after Northern Europe fell under the foreign ideology of Christianity, which saw these things in a very different light indeed. It would be appropriate to compare, for a moment, the differences between the leadership role in Asatru and Christianity. The latter belief system, being somewhat puritanical, insisted that the ruler should be the legitimate offspring of the former leader, but even in heathen tribes which had a royal line, legitimacy in itself was not considered relevant. Similarly, primogenitur (the practice of making the firstborn the heir) was characteristic of the Christian system. Perhaps more important than these matters of procedure was the fact that the king in Christian society was not a king unless he had the approval of the Church, whereas in Asatru, the people chose the person who was to hold the position. One very significant departure was that the Christian monarch was obliged to "punish wickedness", while the ruler under our native religion had no such interventionist, Fallwellian duty to control the minds and the minute behavior of the free folk.

The king in Nordic society was directly or indirectly chosen by the people, and his selection at the very least had to be ratified by the members of the various regional assemblies. Soon after his election he had to travel about the land for this process of approval, and oaths were sworn between him and the local leaders, speaking for the freemen in their area. These oaths established a two-way contract between the leader and the led. As one early text put it, "the yeomen had great strength and great support to offer the king, power to maintain his dignity; and in return the king was to provide princely service and leadership in difficulties and battles." It was a bargain struck in mutual respect between two dominant forces in Germanic society, the chief and the warriors.

This balance of powers, this decentralization of control, forms the major theme in the history of kingship among our ancestors. To a large extent, the story of government among our Folk in the period under discussion is an account of how the yeomen sought to limit the power of rulers. St. Rimbart commented on the Swedes that "it is the custom among them that all public business depends more on the unanimous will of the people than on the royal power".

In earlier times, loyalty to the king as an individual was the duty only of his personal retainers. Disloyalty to the king himself, then, was a crime for very few people. This attitude can only discourage the development of tyranny. At the same time it was recognized that he was a special kind of human being - because of his descent (in tribes that had royal clans), because of the awe and loyalty associated with his office, and because of his role as a mediator between the Gods and the people. Nevertheless he was just as subject to law as was the least of his fellows.

Several things encouraged the growth in kingly power that eventually crushed the rights of the free peasantry and of the nobles. Christianity, with its Eastern Mediterranean concepts of strict authority from above, was one such influence. Another, for some tribes, was contact with the Roman Empire, which demanded chiefs to assume roles they had never needed before, as intermediaries and decision-makers. Education in the Roman world infected even the German nobility with authoritarian yearnings; Maroboduus returned to rule the Marcomanni by imposing his authority in ways most un-Nordic, even to the point of maintaining a standing army.

Royal power also grew through the increase of bureaucracy - a lesson Americans should remember in our own day. The right of the king to call out a levy of fighters and to exact tribute necessitated local officers who could act as his representatives. Houses about the countryside were allotted to the monarch, administered by royal stewards and stocked with provender marked for his use. Finally, the idea of fixed national boundaries (the idea that the nation was geography rather than Folk) led to the concept that everything belonged to the king unless it specifically belonged to someone else. The peace of the realm was also considered to be his property - so the king got a share of all fines levied!

These later developments were a far cry from the proposal that a chief was first among equals, chosen or ratified by yeomen jealous of their rights, and whose power was limited by the thing. Yes, our forebears were influenced and contaminated by alien beliefs - as we are today.

"We live in a society that has, by and large, abdicated or even forgotten what it means to be free. We must look to the organic ways of our ancestors to regain our freedoms, but we must not do so naively. We are colonized by the churches, the televisions, and the shopping malls. Regaining the natural world-view of our Folk will not be an easy task.

But do it we must. Duty to our Gods demands that the freedom-loving order made up of thing, council of nobles, and chief be restored for those who wish to live in harmony with our innate folkways. Only then can the spirit of our ancestors and the might of our Gods manifest in their full glory.

@ Stephen A. McNallen

1986 ASATRU CALENDAR

Our fourth calendar is in production now and is scheduled for availability no later than November 1, 1985.

Saga characters form the theme this year, and twelve stalwarts, male and female, from our heroic past will be described and illustrated.

As usual, our calendar will offer information of importance to our Folk: moons, seasonal festivals, days of remembrance and more. This item is our most popular and advance orders are recommended. \$6.00 from the AFA. Please add 10% postage.



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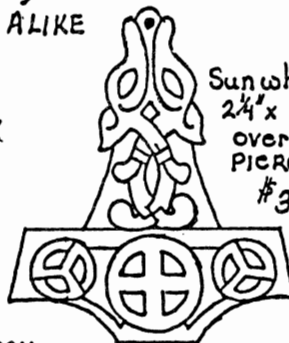


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• ASATRU •

PAGAN BUT NOT PRIMITIVE

The historian H.R. (Hilda) Ellis Davidson has probably written as extensively and with as much objectivity about the northern Gods as any modern non-Scandinavian writer. Yet this redoubtable woman concluded (for print at least) that these religious concepts were essentially for another time and had lost their relevance to our present world. The final sentences in her fine book on pagan Scandinavia recalls that the priest of the new faith (Christianity) would brook no rivals and banished the old Gods. She concludes the book with a panegyric "The work of the northern gods was done." Her perception of Odinism is probably much as the person who hears of it, but dismisses it as a looking backward to a more simple and primitive time; a reaction to the complexity of the modern world which is romantic but escapist. Unquestionably Asatru is pagan, but is it primitive and irrelevant to today's world?

There are, in my judgement, at least two solid reasons to refute that. First, while one's religious sense is a very personal thing, it is not something which exists in a social vacuum. One could hardly believe the weather is entirely the product of sorcery, then make a living as a meteorologist. A religion is a statement of one's aspirations, both individual and collective. The values and priorities of a religion say much about what sort of a world we want to exist around us and how society should function. If personal liberty, freedom of thought and action and a healthy, unfettered enjoyment of life are important to you, then those values are better served by the northern Gods than by any other. There are really only two ways for a society to be governed: through the fear and repression of an authoritarian, all-powerful central oligarchy or by a process which activates the self-interest and aggressiveness of individuals in a free, intensely competitive, life-exalting society. In either system it is inevitable that the devious and dishonorable will sometimes rise to power and wealth. Neither system can guarantee against that. In free societies which value courage and honor and the individual taking the fulfillment of his life into his own hands, however, the great bulk of the members share in the prosperity of the group. Systems dominated by the all-powerful state which profess to redistribute wealth on some vague premise of "equality" (rather than equity) inevitably fetter excellence, blunt initiative and quash the joy of living. Free societies are a rare phenomenon and in historic times, came into being and persisted only in northern Europe and in the lands colonized by the people of the northern Gods. The roots of these free societies long antedate the coming of Christianity and drew their inspiration from the northern Gods.

The other reason I disagree with those who would see Asatru and the northern Gods as "primitive" and out-dated is simply historical fact. 4,000 years ago we can find evidences of an institutional religion rising in Egypt. It was characterized by a wrathful, remote pantheon of gods represented in the temporal world by a god/emperor with absolute power exercised through a small and exclusive priest caste. It was a religious form evolved to deal with the change in man's survival mode from hunting-and-gathering to settled farming and domesticating of animals in the great self-renewing riverine areas. It appears in the Tigris-Euphrates valley and the Indus and reached its full flower 2,500 years ago in China under the Chin dynasty. It may have been carried over the Bering land bridge in embryonic form to emerge much later in the Mayan and Incan

cultures. In each case it required of its subjects mindless obedience, unquestioning surrender to the all-powerful god/emperor and nearly total dependence on the state for sustenance. There is little to distinguish the current USSR oligarchy of China under Mao Tse Tung from these state-serving, dusty systems. It is no accident that these same ancient Egyptians and Chinese invented bureaucracies where only the god/emperor had the power of affirmative decision. Even the small priest/bureaucracy could only deny, prevent, chastise or delay. The roots of such state-centered systems are nearly as old as farming and may reach back 8,000 years.

At a significantly later time, the former hunter cultures which had flowed into Northern Europe after the glaciers retreated turned to a different kind of survival. They had no self-regenerating farm land, silted over each year by flood, and found that the slash and burn methods could not support them solely as static farmers. They retained a part of their nomadic hunting and herding past and joined it with farming and fishing. The Celtic and Germanic people who entered the Iron Age late, but successfully, owed no allegiance to an all-powerful god/emperor for their survival. They wrung it out of the land and the sea and the forest with their own hands. It's not surprising that they evolved a very different religious sense. Primal forces were recognized but not anthropomorphized. The seasons, the sun and moon had no human face, but were rather represented with symbols like the wheel, the boat or the wagon. Their pantheon of Gods was probably evolved from actual individuals or composites who, better than most, lived their lives as others aspired to do. They had faces, names and were archmodels, paradigms - not remote, unapproachable god/emperors. These Gods were admired but not coddled, prized but not feared.

These two irreconcilable concepts confronted each other at the end of the Roman period and, on the surface, the northern Gods yielded to the state-serving, authoritarian religions of the East. This occurred for a number of reasons, not the least being the corrupting drive for power and the wealth of kings. Probably more than any other reason, it happened because the new priests came armed with a rigid, unyielding structure demanding surrender to central authority in the form of the written word. The northern Gods, without such a cadre of zealots whose fulltime task it was to harangue and press for compliance, were poorly defended. The shamans of the northern Gods performed religious ritual because they were a bit more adept, sensitive or skillful, but they were just leaders within the community who lived the remainder of their lives much as everyone else. The written word in the hands of the priest bureaucracy prevailed, demonstrating that indeed the "pen is mightier than the sword" - if your aim is to pen sheep.

The ancient religions of the East, cluttered with the tumuli of long dead god/emperors, seemed to banish the northern Gods, but it was a shallow victory. The Aesir and Vanir did not yield to the church; rather it had to yield to them in the end. Isn't it a wonderful coincidence that Jesus was found to have been born at the winter solstice and rose from his tomb at the vernal equinox, that Lent coincides with much older celebrations of spring or that the cult of Mary evolved only after the church found that its single wrathful and remote male God would not satisfy its "converts"? Could it have been Odin and Frey and Thor prodding Martin Luther to cast off the yoke of the East?

Is Asatru primitive? I think not. Mindless submission to the state, yielding to a total dependency on some remote oligarchy or being herded about by a priest bureaucracy smacks of ancient fears of unknown and unknowable powers - the mark of the truly primitive. Courage to challenge these powers, to live honorably in reflection of those who before did so with shining excellence, to be individually productive and to experience the joy of living rather than the

abasing fear of death - these mark the modern man. The northern Gods are younger, more vital and more rooted in the modern world than those of the East and were only approaching their full powers in the Viking Age. Odinism or Asatru is indeed pagan in that it rejects the institutionalized, monolithic state-serving precepts of the East. It is not primitive or simple-minded or irrelevant. The work of the northern Gods is not done. It has just begun.

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GUILDS

Cheryl Follette wants to start a PARENTING GUILD for Asatru parents and children. This would include a newsletter for children, with special inserts for parents on how best to make use of the presented material. If you are interested, write to her at P.O.Box 1182, New Haven, CT 06505.

THE NORSE CULTURE AND SAGA GUILD is an undertaking of member and gothi Thorsteinn Thorarinsson. This new group will be devoted to the furtherance and appreciation of Norse culture, language, art, crafts, and the sagas within the framework of Asatru. Contact him at 2922 S. Marvin Ave., Tucson, AZ 85730

THE EDDIC GUILD received a donation of \$300 from (enthusiastic!) member Paal Filssunu for the dissemination of Hollander's Poetic Edda upon its reprinting. Here's a horn in toast to you, worthy Paal! Others wishing to help spread our sacred literature can reach the guild through Maddy at the AFA.

Caroline, representing the SEWING GUILD, brought a huge banner to the Althing. It depicted the **R** rune in red trimmed with gold on a white background. A beautifully carved pole to hang it from, complete with dragon heads, was made by Redbeard for the occasion. The guild, depending on the number of available hands (literally) may contract with individuals to make tunics and uniforms for the Nordic martial art of Klima. For information, write: Caroline Webber, 3501 Bernard St., #2A Bakersfield, CA 93306.

Other guilds active in the AFA are:

THE ARTISTS GUILD
Skjold Skull, c/o S. Bernard, 21 North St., Burlington, VT 05401

THE BREWING GUILD
Jace Crouch, 7860 W. Jefferson Rd., Rural Route #1, Elwell, MI 48832

THE WARRIOR GUILD
John Parmenter, Tyr rune Services, . Int'l. Contract Station, #28, P.O.Box 335566 611 Garland Drive, Denver, CO 80233

THE COMPUTER/SHAMANISM GUILD
Richard Simmons, c/o the AFA, P.O.Box 1754, Breckenridge, TX 76024

THE AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY GUILD
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THE AMERYSK FOLKBOND
Paal Filssunu, P.O. Box 2305, Ventnor, NJ 08406

THE WRITERS GUILD
Matt Phipps, 78 Flagg St., West Hartford CT 06107

THE ADVERTISING GUILD
Wyatt Kalderberg, 3125 19th St, Suite 297, Bakersfield, CA 93301

FREYA'S FOLK

SAGA WOMEN

As I write the title to this article, I'm forced to pause by its weightiness. I have not even begun to review the names and characters of the ancient females still living in the literature of our people, but already I am moved by a certain image of strength, steadfastness and determination. Were the women of the sagas really such powerful, perhaps intimidating, figures, or do I simply attach to them the mood of their era?

Anyone looking to the sagas to find some sexually egalitarian paradise with males and females happily and successfully changing roles is surely going to be disappointed (and probably is in the wrong religion!). Males dominate the action. The sagas detail, as you all most certainly know, lengthy excursions overseas and protracted internecine struggles. In neither of these areas are women very high profile. The domain of females is directed towards the family and household; the men reach out in exploration or warfare. But, importantly, males and females retain their own status within these roles which were, emphatically, not restrictive. In Graenlendinga Saga Freydis Eirik's-daughter organized an expedition to Vinland and no one thought it improper. Thorgerd Thorstein's daughter (Laxdaela Saga), travelled to Norway, somewhat against her son's wishes, after the death of her husband. In the same saga, Unn the Deep-Minded (don't let anyone tell you the Vikings didn't like intelligent women) maintained her authority over a large and powerful family deciding only at her death who should inherit and administer her land and property.

Women were not perceived in any limited sense as being "chattels" or "sex-objects". In descriptive passages introducing women, appearance is mentioned only in passing, along with other characteristics:

"Jorunn was a good-looking, imperious woman of exceptional intelligence; she was considered the best match in all the west fjords." (Laxdaela Saga)

I did notice one woman named solely in terms of a physical feature - Thorbjorg the Ship-Breasted - but I expect she was exceptional!

Modern day perils to a woman seeking remarriage, such as age or children, did not deter men in saga times. Women were sought after if they had appropriate family background, good sense and strong character in addition to personal attractiveness. Also interesting is the amount of freedom of choice given to women. Although unmarried women were approached through their father, in almost every case I read, the father left the decision of whom to marry up to the prospective bride. She understood the general rules and could be trusted to choose well.

Yet females were not placed on any false pedestals of virtue. Rannveig, wife of Bjarni, in Hrafnkel's Saga, is pictured as manipulating and illogical when she taunts her husband into battling Thorstein-the Staff-Struck and then resents him for risking his life! Hallgerd, married to Gunnar in Njal's Saga epitomizes deadly meanness as she refuses to give up two locks of her hair to be plaited into a bow string to be used against enemies at that moment besieging her husband. Freydis, mentioned earlier, although admirable for her courage in facing Skraelings, (She seized a sword from a dead man, exposed a breast from her bodice, and slapped her sword upon it, terrifying away her attackers!) behaved monstrously while in Vinland. She killed five women with whom she was feuding, singlehandedly, when her men were unwilling to do the job.

The societal rules of behavior affected women but they were not judged within a rigid, sex-related set of expectations. In spite of this, it is interesting to see that sexual identity was crucial to the men and women of this time. Wearing clothes suitable for the opposite sex was, by itself, grounds for divorce - a clear indication that sexual ambivalence was strongly discouraged. (Laxdaela Saga).

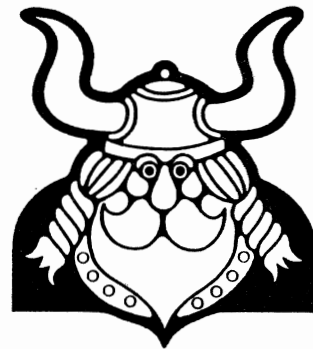
Saga women had their own area of sovereignty but their influence spilled over into other concerns in lesser or greater amounts depending on the woman. Just as in all our lives today, men and women rubbed along together doing some things better than each other some of the time. At the heart of their actions and perceptions lay a foundation of values: courage, honor, duty, generosity, hospitality, intelligence. Women, and men, were praised who showed these virtues; those who demonstrated their opposites were scorned. In short, men and women were judged by what they were, and were permitted whatever greatness they could forge for themselves.

Who could ask for more?

• Maddy Hutter

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notes on the poem:

WHEN LARS INGERSON DID CHALLENGE HELL

This is the story, told to advanced Klimakjeri - practitioners of the Norse martial art of Klima - of Lars Ingeron, a Viking freedom fighter. He made a preemptive strike against a Moorish fleet at Algeciras, which was preparing to attack into the west coast of France, then sailed north to sack churches to liberate Bretons. There was a later raid against Algeciras, a natural launching point for Africans trying to colonize Europe. At Tours, our oral history in Klima says, remaining pagan Franks had appealed before the Moorish drive across the Pyrenees for help against the encroaching clergy and the Moors. Lars, being both priest and warrior, having access to a ley line from Carnac to Westmanneyar, knew of the danger and the plea without the usual message-by-ship delay. This story was given to show Nordic courage, arrogance, and sassiness as Lars, when threatened with Hell, sees it as one more tyrant, one more realm to challenge. History of this era was written by Christians and, on the other side of the water, by Moslems. The legend was that, after Lars' era, what was set down in bok was destroyed by King Olaf (later sainted) and that the techniques could be handed down in small groups. Teachers were called Kommandantur, successors being called Ergbe. In the 19th century, this changed to leaders who would name themselves by their personal characteristics.

Thus, the first man I know of in modern times who became Thor's Hammer (the Rank of Mjollnir), called himself Ragnjar Mattli. He was from the region of Baku Inari, a tracker, partner of the hunt, and he taught 1897 to 1923. He lived much before and after. I was told that his name was fashioned from the name Ragnarok; that once, in fighting, a student of his had observed that in his grave determination he had become the principle of destruction, which is one of the marks of a Mjollniri man. His pseudonym was said to mean, "he who comes from the End of Things".

This above, and what follows, were taught me by my instructor, Kommandantur Johannes Kantala, Mjollniri, during his brief years in America. The descriptions are his; the poetry is mine. The story is Lars, whom I came to know through Johannes. My writing this may be foolish; Johannes told me that Klima had never been described in any literature because 1) that would violate the principle of austerity, 2) it would identify practitioners, whom, as he predicted, would be as vulnerable in the coming world as in the medieval world, and also 3) since Norsefolk, in their tradition of exploration are eager to embrace the "new" (even when, as he said, that begets trouble, like mideastern salvation cults) and reluctant to claim their own folkways. He told me not to bother publishing Klima because, other than the soft-style offshoot in Iceland no one would believe it and it wasn't "event time" yet. Event time, he taught, was when things fell into history, only by dire necessity, only when too late.

Here then, is the brief story of Lars Ingeron's encounters:



When LARS INGERSON did CHALLENGE HELL

FROM BERGEN SET LARS INGERSON,
FOR PLUNDER-LANDS TO BE WON,
EYES GRAY AS NORTH SEA LIGHT,
STEERED BY STAR, CRYSTAL, AND BIGHT.

RED HAIR CAPPED THE WARRIOR AT HIS PROW,
WHICH SETTLED FOR LONG ON THE ONLY COAST,
HARD AND RUGGED AS THE INTENTION IN HIS VOW,
MADE TO THOR; A KLIMAKJERI DOES NOT BOAST.

THOR'S MAN, THEY CALLED THIS FREEDOM FIGHTER,
WHO WOULD EXPEL THE BLACKCLOTH LANDBENIGHTER.

THUS, IN THE WILDNESS OF THE ISLE OF FIRE,
HE DID THE BENGTA SCIAMACHEN ATOP A BASALT SPIRE,
FOR SIX YEARS AND USED FALCHION AND LANCE,
FOR THE DAY HE SAW HE'D FACE THE MOORS IN FRANCE;
HE ATE MOSS, RAW SHARK, AND WENT BERSEKE-SEEKING,
THESE TO STORE, FOR USE IN WAR, IN BLOOD-SEEKING.

FROM SIX YEARS' MEDITATION,
SHARPENED HIS SISU,
HONED HIS ART IN STRAIN AND CONTEMPLATION,
NAKED IN SNOW OR DEW.
THEN THOR DID TELL THE THIRTEENTH KOMERADE IN
OUR STYLE,

"THY SEVENTH YEAR IS MINE, YOUR DRAGONSHIP,
YOU SAIL!

HEAR YOUR CELTIC COUSINS, THROUGH THE LEY
LINE THEY WAIL!"

AND HE LEFT VESTMANNEYAR, THAT RUGGED ISLE.

GAUL AND BRITON WERE SEDUCED TO SHEEPISH PRAISE,
A PROMISED PARADISE HELD OUT BY AN EXECUTIONER'S CROSS,
THE OLD WAYS OF COURAGE AND HONOR, GONE IN THE ROMAN DROSS;
PRIDEFUL PREDATORS, CELTS, REDUCED TO THE SERF WHO PRAYS.

THE CIRCLE WAS CAST ON EACH SHIP; RUNES WERE LAID,
TO KNOW WHO FIRST WOULD LEAD THE FILE OF SIX THE VICTORY-WAY,
DAWN SURPRISED THE BLUEMEN AND THE MOOR,
SEVERED THE ARM ARE IT COULD POWER THE OAR.
AT ALGECIRAS THEY KNEW THE BITE OF NORDIC STEEL,
THE GAUL-BOUND FLEET IN BLOOD WAS SEALED.
NEXT TURNED LARS THE POINT OF POWER, BEARING NORTH
WHERE CROWS OF DOOM,
SURLED CELTIC WAVES, EMBRACED THE TOMB
OF THE LEVANT, ADDING TITHING TO FILL THEIR WORTH.
HE TOOK MUCH HAWK-FALLEN GOLD, HOSTAGES, AND A PRIEST,
WHO SPOKE TO THOR'S OWN LARS CONCERNING HELL,
A LORD OF DARKNESS AND TORTURE HE MUST QUELL;
LARS WEARIED QUICKLY, AND RAGNAR THE SHARP RELEASED,
THE CROW'S DOUBLE-SELF TO WANDER THE LAND OF MISTS.
NEVER HAD LARS SHOWN A WARRIOR'S FAILING,
HE'D FOUGHT TURK, TARTAR, MOOR AND SKRAELLING;
YET HERE, A PRIEST OF DEATHCULT TOLD OF A FIERY REALM,
HUNGER HAD NO HOLD,
LARS' SISU LET HIM BEFRIEND THE COLD
AND NOW HE LEARNS OF AN UNCONQUERED LAND THAT
ONLY HE COULD QUEST.
HOSTAGE SPOKE OF WEAK AND SICKLY RITES,
TO SIP A BLOOD-FULL CHALICE,
SICKLY MORSE A CAKE OF FLESH CONTRITE!
FORTHRIGHT, HE SOUGHT THE WAY TO THAT DARK PALACE!
SERVING THE GODS, IN THE SERVICE OF LIFE,
THE KLIMAKJERER'S PLEASURE;
HE'D RAID THIS HOUSE OF DEATH, NO THOUGHT OF
TREASURE,
SEEK THIS HELL, CHALLENGE ITS LORD,
TO STAND BEFORE RAGNAR, HIS VIKING-SWORD.

From: Hakonsonar saga Gotha, in the
Heimskringla of Snorri Sturluson,
Icelandic, c. 1230.

ASATRU VERSUS CHRISTIANITY IN NORWAY

INTRODUCTION

Hakon, the son of King Harald Fairhair, became ruler of Norway when his father died in c. 950. He was in England at the time, aged fifteen, and was converted to Christianity and adopted as a foster son by the English King Athelstan. Hakon immediately returned to Norway and took possession of the Vik district in the southern region (around modern Oslo). Hakon returned the land ownership titles to his subjects that his father had taken away, made many good and fair laws, and set up a watchpost and beacon communication system throughout the mountain and fjord terrain of his country. He also led his forces on successful raids in Denmark and Sweden, and defended his kingdom from all foreign invasions. Because of these accomplishments Hakon was well respected and immensely popular with the Norwegian people. However, he also began a policy of mass conversion to Christianity, even using force at times against those of his subjects who were still heathen.

1.

King Hakon was a Christian man when he came to Norway. But the land was all heathen and much idol worship was there. As there were many great chieftains and as he thought that he needed their help and the people's friendship, he chose the plan of practicing Christianity in secret. He kept the Sundays and the fasting of Fridays. He had it made in the laws that Yule feasting was to be at the same time as is the custom with the Christian men. At that time, all were to have ale for the feasting or pay fines, and they had to celebrate the holy days as long as the ale lasted. Before this, Yule had been done on the midwinter night, and for three nights long. It was his thought that when he had well established himself, and had all of the land under his authority, that he would have the Gospel preached. He first went in this manner, that he persuaded those who were the most dear to him to become Christian. Because of this, and his popularity, many men allowed themselves to have baptism, and some stopped making the sacrifices.

When King Hakon thought that he had the backing of men with enough power to maintain Christianity, he sent to England for a bishop and other priests. When they came to Norway, King Hakon let it be known that he would have the Gospel preached in all of the land. But the men of Moerr and Raumsdalr referred the matter to the men of Thrandheim to decide. At this time, King Hakon had churches consecrated, and he appointed priests for them. When he came to Thrandheim, he called an assembly (thing) with the farming men, and pressed them to accept Christianity. They answered, "We wish to refer this to the Frosta Assembly and we wish that all should come there who are from the districts around Thrandheimfjord. We will then decide about this difficult matter."

2.

Earl Sigurth of Hlathir was a strong heathen worshipper, as his father had been. He kept all of the sacrifice feasts there in Thrandheim on behalf of the King. It was the custom that when the sacrifice was made, all of the farming men came to the heathen temple, and they brought food that they needed for as long as the feast lasted with them. At this feast all took part in the ale drinking. All kinds of livestock were killed in it, and horses too. All of the blood from them was called the sacrifice blood (hlaut). The bowl that had the blood in it was called the sacrifice bowl (hlautbolli). The twigs were called the sacrifice twigs (hlautteinn)*. These were made like brushes, and they were used to cover the idols' bases with the blood, and also the temple walls both inside and outside. The men there were to be sprinkled with the blood, and the animals' meat was boiled and served at the feast. Fires were lit in the center of the temple floor and kettles were hung over them. The sacrifice bowl was carried around the fire, and he who gave the feast and who was the chieftain blessed the bowl and the sacrifice meat.

First Othin's toast was drunk. This was for power and victory to the king. Then Njorth's and Frey's for good harvests and peace. After this many men drank a toast to the king. Some drank toasts also in honor of their dead kinfolk. This was called memorials (minni). Sigurth was a man with an open mind. He did what gave him great fame - he gave a great sacrifice feast at Hlathir, and he paid for it all himself.

3.

King Hakon came to the Frosta Assembly, and a large number of farmers came to it. When they met, King Hakon gave a speech.

He said, "It is my wish and request, to both freeholders and husbandmen, of both high and low birth, and to all of the people, men both young and old, rich and poor, and the women besides the men, that all allow themselves to be baptized and have faith in one God, and in Christ, Maria's son. Also that you end all of the heathen idol worship, and keep holy each seventh day, not working, and fast each seventh day!"

But when the king said this to the people, then there was a great murmuring. The farming men said, "The king wishes to take away our work, and we can not till the soil in this way."

And the working men and the thralls said, "We can not work unless we have food!" They said, too, that "It is King Hakon's mistake, as it was his father's and their kinsmen's, that we are short of food, even though we are generous in gold giving!"

Asbjorn of Methalus in Gaulardal then stood up to reply to what the king had said, and he spoke as follows:

"It was our thought, King Hakon," he said, "the time you first came to our Assembly here in the Thrandheim District, and when we chose you as the king and got back from you the titles to our fathers' lands, that heaven itself had come down to earth! But now we do not know what to think. Have we got back our freedom, or are you going to make us thralls again? This is a strange idea that we should end our fathers' faith that they had before us. They were better men than we are, and their faith has done us good. We have trusted you so much that we have allowed you to have your way in all of the laws and rules

of our land. Now it is our wish, and all of the farming men are in agreement, to obey the laws you have made for us here at the Frosta Assembly and that we agreed to. We all wish to follow you, and to have you for our king for as long as one of us farmers here now at the Assembly is living, if you, sire, will be moderate and ask us for only what we can give to you and what is reasonable. But if you wish to continue this so dominantly and come against us with power and force, then all of us have decided to leave you and chose another king - one who will allow us to be free to have the faith that we wish to have. Now you, sire, will chose one of these two courses before the end of the Assembly."

The farming men made a loud cheer to this speaking, and said, "This is what we wish!"

4.

When it was quiet again, Earl Sigurth gave this reply:

"It is King Hakon's wish to agree with you, and not to allow anything to be between him and your friendship."

They replied, "It is our wish that the king makes a sacrifice to bring us good crops and peace, as his father did."

After this, Earl Sigurth spoke with the king and warned him, "You should not completely refuse to do what the farming men wish. Nothing else will do, as you heard yourself. This is the chieftains' wish and strong demand, and thus that of all the people. Soon we will make some method, sire, to accomplish this."

5.

In the fall, at the winter's beginning, there was a sacrifice and feast at Hlathir, and the king came to it. Before this, if he was at a place where a heathen sacrifice was made, he would eat separately in a little house, with a few of his men. But the farmers said of this practice, that, "He does not sit in his high seat when there is good happiness among his people." The Earl said to him that he should not refuse to take the place of honor, so it happened that the king sat in his high seat.

When the first bowl was served, Earl Sigurth made a toast, and dedicated the horn to Othin, and drank to the king. The king took the horn from him and made the cross sign over it.

Then Karr of Gryting asked, "Why did the king do that? Does he not wish to drink from the sacrifice bowl?"

Earl Sigurth answered, "The king did as all do, who believe in their own power and might, and dedicated his horn to Thor. He made the hammer sign over it before he drank."

The men said nothing further about it that evening.

The next day, when the people were seated at the table, the farmers crowded around the king. They said, "Now you must eat the horse meat!" The king would not do it. Then they bid him, "Drink its broth!" He refused.

Then they urged him, "Eat its drippings!" He would not do that also, and they almost attacked him.

Earl Sigurth said, "I will help you to reach an agreement! Stop your commotion!" And he bid the king, "Hold your mouth open over the kettle handle, where the steam has settled, so that the handle is greasy from it."

Then the king went up to it, and he put a linen cloth over the handle, and he held his mouth open over it. Then he returned to his high seat. But neither side was satisfied with this.

6.

The next winter, the Yule feast was made for the king at Maerin. And when the Yule time came, the eight chieftains who had the most part in the sacrifices for all the Thrandheim district came to a meeting among themselves. Four of them were from the outer Thrandheim district. These were Karr of Grything, Asbjorn of Methalhus, Thorberg of Varnes, and Orm of Ljoxa. Four others were from the inner Thrandheim district. These were Blotolf of Olveshaug, Narfi of Staf in Veradal, Thrandhaki of Eggja, and Thorir Beard of Husaboe on Innarey. These eight men agreed that the four from the outer parts were to destroy Christianity, and the four from the inner parts were to force the king to make sacrifice. The men from the outer parts sailed in four ships to Moerr, and killed three priests and burned three churches. Then they came back. And when King Hakon and Earl Sigurth came to Maerin with their men, the farmers were there in large numbers. The first day at the feast they crowded around him and demanded, "Sacrifice, or else we will force you to!" Then Earl Sigurth came in between them, and King Hakon finally ate some pieces of horse liver. Then he drank all of the toasts that the farming men poured for him and he did not make the cross sign. And when the feast was ended, the king and the earl then went to Hlathir. The king was much angered, and he went from the Thrandheim district right away.

He said, "I will come back again some time, and with more men. Then I will repay the Thrandheim people the ill that they have given me!"

Earl Sigurth bid the king, "Do not be hard on them for this. It is not good for you to make quick revenge vows, nor to hurry people of your kingdom. Especially in the Thrandheim district, as this has the richest land."

The king was so angry that no one dared to speak with him. He went away from the Thrandheim district, and south to Moerr where he lived there over the winter and the spring.

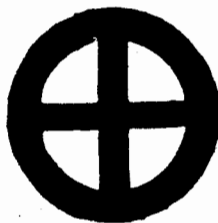
Epilogue

The folk of Thrandheim were eventually reconciled with King Hakon. As long as he left their religion alone, the people supported him. When an invasion by the Danes (in c.955) threatened Norway, the warriors from Thrandheim were among the first to loyally join their sovereign in defending their country.

Hakon ruled for over a quarter of a century, but was finally killed in another battle against the Danes (in c.975). Many parts of Norway remained unconverted for over a century afterwards, and many parts of Sweden for over a century after that.

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INTRODUCING.... A Bold New Concept

Euhemerism in Asatru

In Odinism there seems to be a general tendency to Euhemerize the High One. Two recent articles in The Runestone (nr. 51, p.3) and Vor Tru (nr. 15, p:11) have again brought this to our attention. This whole subject, I agree with Athanaric, should not be made the focus of a dogma of any kind -- but I do think it should be discussed for its various implications.

From the esoteric standpoint, and from the general scholarly view as well, the idea of Euhemerism -- the notion that Odinn was a historical human being deified by his followers and descendants is impotent and unlikely. The whole concept is one that spiritually weakens the position of Asatru and exposes our theology to ridicule in many scholarly circles.

Our Indo-European ancestors were highly capable of abstract thought -- and of abstract theology. The name *Wod-an-az ('master of inspired mental activity') is essentially a deification of a psychic concept -- *wōd (Old Norse odr). In a theological sense, to reduce this elegant abstract, which reflects a level of intellectual superiority over many other theologies, to a historical level seems unwise.

In the history of religion, Euhemerism is invoked when those hearing the tales of the Gods are either no longer impressed with, or believe in, the objective numinous reality of the Gods (as was the case with Euhemerus himself in 4th century B.C.E. Greece) or when there is an actual effort to denigrate the Gods (as with the monk Saxo Grammaticus). Saxo wanted to show an evolutionary trend based on classical models in which the giants were overcome by the Ases - human magicians who could dupe the giants - who were in turn overcome by Christians. We will not consider Saxo's methods or motivations here. Historically, Euhemerism seems to be the humanizing of the numinous in periods when man has lost, or is losing, access to the spiritual realms.

The most often quoted author with regard to Norse Euhemerism is Snorri -- usually extracted from the 'Prolog' to the Edda. See also his introductory chapters in the Ynglinga saga. In it we read that the Aesir are actually Trojans who escaped the fall of Troy (see Homer's Iliad) and who came North from their Trojan homeland in Asia Minor. This 'Trojan Saga' was a standard, virtually obligatory convention for medieval writers. It is a tradition that stems from the Romans' desire to connect themselves more firmly with the Greek national epics of Homer. This was done by Virgil in the Aeneid. In this epic poem we learn how the Trojan Aeneas escapes the fall of Troy and eventually founds the city of Rome. The true Roman national myth of Romulus and Remus and the rape of the Sabine women continued to exist also. In the Middle Ages many myths were manufactured to connect various national groups to Troy in imitation of the Aeneid (which was the most widely read text, besides the Bible, in the ancient and medieval world). Paris was founded by the Trojans, etc.. All of this was part of a convention whereby one national group could gain prestige by attaching itself to this international tradition -- the Romans from the Greeks, and from the Romans to the rest of Europe as Christianity progressed.

It is beyond most reasonable doubt that Snorri is following general medieval convention in his 'Prolog' to the Edda and elsewhere. The 'Prolog' seems to be an inorganic appendage to the work as a whole -- a sort of obligatory med-

ieval explanation of the origin of the Aesir. Certainly, nowhere in the Elder Edda or in any fragment of pre-Christian poetry do we find any evidence for the Trojan Saga of the Aesir. In short, the 'historical' evidence for Odinn as magician/chieftain rests on a Christian/medieval tradition which runs counter to that of the pre-Christian age.

Was Odinn ever a man? The theological approach to the recent articles has been to declare that Odin was both a God and a man (where have we heard this before?). This seems like an intriguing solution, and there is a fair amount of hard evidence that points in this direction. But it is substantially different than one might at first expect. The problem with the question: "Was Odinn ever a man?" is with the verb. Odinn was not; Odinn is. The second problem is with the number: a man. This puts Odinn, or some essential and unique aspect of him, into an isolated historical position. Once a God has become a man and that man dies, the relevance of that God is apt to recede into an almost infinitesimal historical category. The God becomes a prisoner of his unique manifestation.

It would be more meaningful to ask if men are ever Odinn? The historical answer to this is yes, men have been Odinn in the past. As most Odinists know, the High One is called by many names. Each name expresses an aspect or function of the God. In the runic corpus we see several examples of the runemasters taking on magical/functional personas that are very similar or identical to those expressed by Odinic epithets or Odinsheiti. When, for example, we read on the 6th century Jarsberg stone from central Sweden: Ubaz haitē, Hrabanaz haitē. . . (The Malicious-One I am called, Raven I am called. . .) we are very much reminded of the 'Grimnismal' (stanza 47 and following) which give a catalog of Odinic names and which begin: Hetomk Grimmir, hetomk Gangleri. . . (I am called the Masked-One, I am called the Way-Weary-One. . .). Here we see the very archaic practice of a shamanistic assumption of a god-form by the runemaster. The functional forms he assumes correspond to the willed direction of his operation. This was a practice carried out by the members of an entire inter-tribal network of runesters over a period of several centuries. Odinn may never have been a man, but men have become Odinn many times -- and can do so again.

The main problem with Euhemerism seems to be the tendency to reduce the timeless God (or some essential aspect of him) to a unique, isolated historical form. Therefore, once this momentary aspect is gone -- we have lost something essential about the God. In some ways Euhemerism is almost the 'Jesusizing' of Odinn. In any event, what do we, as Odinists, gain by a historical, humanized Odinn? Nothing, as far as I can see -- he is dead: "of what gain is a good man dead?" (Havamal 71). It seems wisest to keep the Gods as timeless living entities -- as present today as they were yesterday if we will but open our eye.

@ Edred Thorsson

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Announcements

WODEN VISIONS

POSTAGE - Reality has forced us to start charging for postage (10% of orders) on our materials. We do our best to spare our readers such burdens, but we've found we can dodge fiscal facts only so long!

TEXAS GATHERINGS - Starting with Yule, we will be hosting regular gatherings about four times a year here in Texas. If you're in or near the Lone Star State you will be getting a notice. If you live farther afield but would like in on one of these quarterly celebrations, drop us a line and we'll put you on our list.

LAND OF OUR OWN! Searching for an Althing site each year has made us aware how much we need our own land. We are actively looking for 10-20 acres to serve as a permanent Althing location and as a sort of meditation retreat that can serve as the nucleus of a future community. We plan to have this acreage by next Spring, finances permitting. Contributions will be gratefully accepted!

CORRESPONDENCE NEEDED - One of our readers would like to correspond with others. His name is Clifford E. Birmingham, and his address is 06341, Florida State Prison, Q-3-W-6, P.O. Box 747, Starke, FL 32091. This is a good chance to help a kinsman learn more about Asatru.

CALLIGRAPHER ON BOARD - Professional calligrapher Mari Funai will be contributing her fine work to our publication. Welcome to our volunteer staff, Mari! We'll be glad to put your art to work around here.

A MAINE COMMUNITY? - One of our members has 43 wooded acres in Maine and is considering starting a community there. All he needs are willing people! If you would like to be involved in such a project you can write to "Frank" c/o the AFA and we'll forward it on to him.



In early 1983, an allegedly 'born again' Texas millionaire, a cretinous Christian, took a hammer and went out to the parking lot of his mansion and smashed up over a million dollars worth of art objects he had intended to donate to museums. Thor, where is your hammer? Where is the hammer to defend man's creative spirit, the art impulse in the human being? That spirit and its creations are part of the real religion of evolutioning life and man. "Thor, where is your hammer?" I asked again in despair as I listened to Christian crazies raging against "humanism" on the radio and television.

When I shut the radio off, I tuned in to other, inner stations. Inner antennae felt out fragments of an eternal continuity. New and different radio waves bathed me.

I closed my eyes and read in the runes within me of Woden's fury, der wutende Wotan, Welten Wandler, Welten Walter. I knew that Woden would on one day blow his three horns and Christianity's crazy Trinity would come crumbling down. I watched Thor stick it to Christianity with his mjollnir, administering a true coup de grace, the greatest grace Christianity had ever had, finally finishing it off.

After telling many tales of woe, Earth will again tell tales of Old Woden and of new worlds. Out of the ruins, read in the runes within you, of a new and everlasting Midgard.

The Renaissance survived art-destroying Svanorola. Humanity will survive religion- and art-destroying Christianity. Let organized religions' iconoclasting crazies try to smash as much life and art as they can, calling all but their craziness "pagan". The Gods will put the fragments back together again.



MOOT POINT



Heilsa Steve and Maddy:

. . . On my way home from the Folk Moot, I journeyed north to the Grand Canyon. I hadn't been there in a while, and I went directly to Mather Point. It rained furiously all the way up and back, but when I stepped out on to the edge the rain stopped. I wanted to view the Valhalla Plateau on the north rim. From Mather Point the clouds parted - seemingly at my wish to cast sunlight upon first Wotan's Throne, then Thor's Castle, Freya's Castle, Sigurd's Castle, Baldur's Throne, etc.. All of the place names were shining in the sun.

I turned toward a place named Thor's Hammer, and, raising my own hammer, thanked the Gods for revealing their various abodes to me. Some people standing nearby asked what I was doing, and were enthralled as I pointed out the shrines of the Gods that Nertha created, and some foresighted man had named. An incredible experience! Some day a delegation should helicopter to the north rim to consecrate that soil with an offering of mead and thereby make it a holy place to Ameryk Asatru.

Well, I'll write again soon - Hail Gods and Heroes!

Redbeard

Heilsa Steve and Maddy!

. . . I put the "Thor Worshippers have more Fun" Sticker on my car. The Christians in Rhode Island aren't thrilled - I could care less. The area I live in is very puritanical and our paganism isn't accepted too well - but it has unearthed a few people who have an interest but were afraid to speak out! Now they come here and find out about a heritage that isn't overfilled with dogma. It makes me feel proud to know that by holding on to my beliefs I helped some others throw off the "Christian threat" long enough to see a different kind of light.

Hail Odin!

Agnes K.

At least in Rhode Island they understand the bumper sticker! Here in Texas they get ignored, but the neighbors know we're "into something". They made the mistake of asking, and got the whole story. Our cover is blown, as they say, but the locals don't seem hostile about it. We have to get the word out about Asatru, one way or another!

Dear Maddy:

Thank you for the extraordinary package of materials on Asatru. I say "Maddy" because you have been very informal and friendly in your responses and "thank you" because these materials are obviously a labor of love and personal conviction. Their modest cost could in no way compensate those who wrote and assembled them. I am overwhelmed with the content and insights in these and am trying to sort out the remarkable sense of meeting much of my own thinking, much more elegantly costumed, snapped into a smart line and marched back to me in a sensible, non-dogmatic four-abreast series of essays. Quite remarkable indeed.

In trying to lay a groundwork for learning about Asatru, I've been digging about in both the texts you recommended and others (including some from my own library). On the remote chance that several of these books may have escaped your attention, I've included several excerpts which struck me as particularly relevant to a newcomer to Asatru. Perhaps you will find some use for them along the way.

Thank you for the material and powerful, if yet unfocused, inner responses it has generated. Even if I have to hang on a tree for nine days and sleep with four dwarfs, I'm going to sort all this out and find the primal meaning which is obviously there.

Sincerely,

Ed N.

Glad you liked our material! But don't look through your address book for dwarfs just yet - there is an easier way. Here's a subscription form. . .

Dear Maddy,

I have been reading the Runestone for a year now and this is as good a time as any to request information in AFA. It is a pleasure to know that there are people who are honoring the heritage I grew up in without Christian overtones. I was especially pleased and felt more comfortable after reading Alice Rhoades' letter in Freya's Folk in the last Runestone. I sometimes fear a tendency to Viking macho. (Macho is not the same thing as strength, fortitude, honor, justice, etc.) Perhaps I had not read enough but it seemed to unbalance in favor of the male. Alice's letter set my mind at rest that this is not the rule. (I hope) If I wanted that I could go back to Christianity and, as Alice said, the Dianics can give me the other imbalance. I do not see this in our heritage. One of the things I admired in Edred Thorsson's book was his marvellous consciousness and sensitivity which was not any way exclusive:

I think as I read these many books and journals on our heritage that our ancestors spent these last few hundred years with set grim faces and never once cracked a smile. Come now--any people who could send Thor off dressed as a bride to steal back his hammer, or appreciate how Loki made Skadi laugh, have got to have a sense of humor. They weren't all Norwegian Bachelor Farmers! Our people are too often made to look strong, noble and dull! (Like the Romans in those horrid Latin books that we had to read in school.) If Radbod wanted to go with his ancestors then I want to go where there is fine laughter. . .

May the Gods and Goddesses bless you and your work and give you what you need.

Mari F.

What we need is (among other things) more women, and men, who strive for the balance you've just described! Some ideas on how to correct the false "males only" stereotype emerged from Althing Six, and we're looking forward to putting them to work.

Dear Mr. McNallen;

I have tried to accept many beliefs of the Christian persuasion, but for some reason that I cannot fathom, these do not hold any answers, or truths for me. I have spoken to some of my family members, especially my Grandfather, who was born in Copenhagen, and lived there until he was 11 years old, about this incredible dilemma that I have been facing concerning my beliefs.

It seems that he wholeheartedly believes that it may be for me to return to the old ways of our ancestors, and I must add that it appears to me that he may be right. It is a fervent belief of my Grandfather that there is something that is passed on from generation to generation of men who are truly Northmen by blood, that does not permit a complete breakaway. My Grandfather and my mother both say that it is the Allfather that is responsible for this; that he fully intends to keep all Northmen linked, that this had been ordained many centuries ago, when Odhinn foresaw the turns the world would take. Is this also the view of Asatru? I do not know. All I know is that there is undeniably something going on inside me, and that the prospect of returning to the ways and beliefs of the ancients has created an excitement that I have not ever before experienced. It is a burning desire. That is as close to explaining the feeling as I can get. . .

Very Sincerely,

Jay B.

It sounds as though your grandfather has an understanding - perhaps intuitive or perhaps from some obscure written or oral tradition - of one of the key concepts in Asatru. We believe that certain spiritual qualities, sometimes called the "hamingja-fylgja complex", are added to by each of us during our lifetimes and then passed on to our descendants. It's heartening to find someone outside our AFA-folk who understands! Welcome back to the faith of your forebears, Jay!

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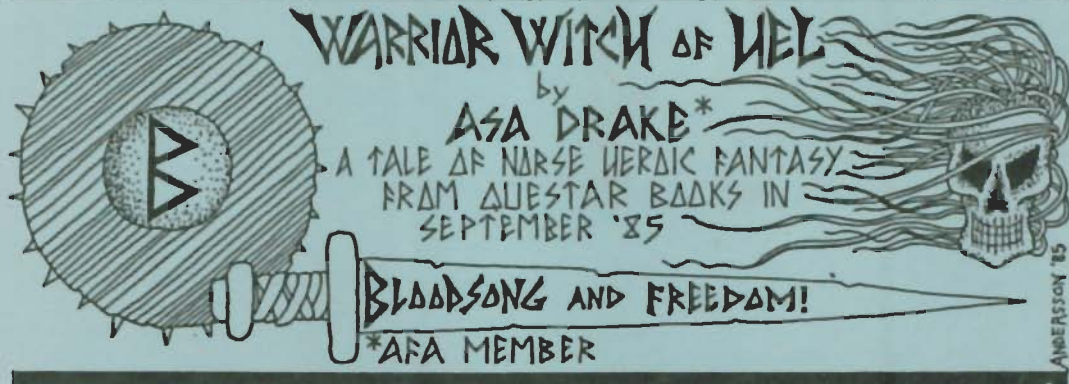
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The Bard, a hereditary Welsh journal of Celtic Paganism, is published quarterly, coinciding with Celtic Festivals, by the Anrwn Temple of Gwynfyd. Subscription rate is \$9/year (first class postage) for U.S. and Canada; \$12/year foreign (airmail). Single issues/samples are \$3.50. Foreign payments must be made in U.S. funds or by international money order. Make any check/money order payable to: R.A. DeVowle. Mail to: Anrwn Temple of Gwynfyd, 5102 N. 16th Dr., Lot #3, Phoenix, AZ 85015 USA



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