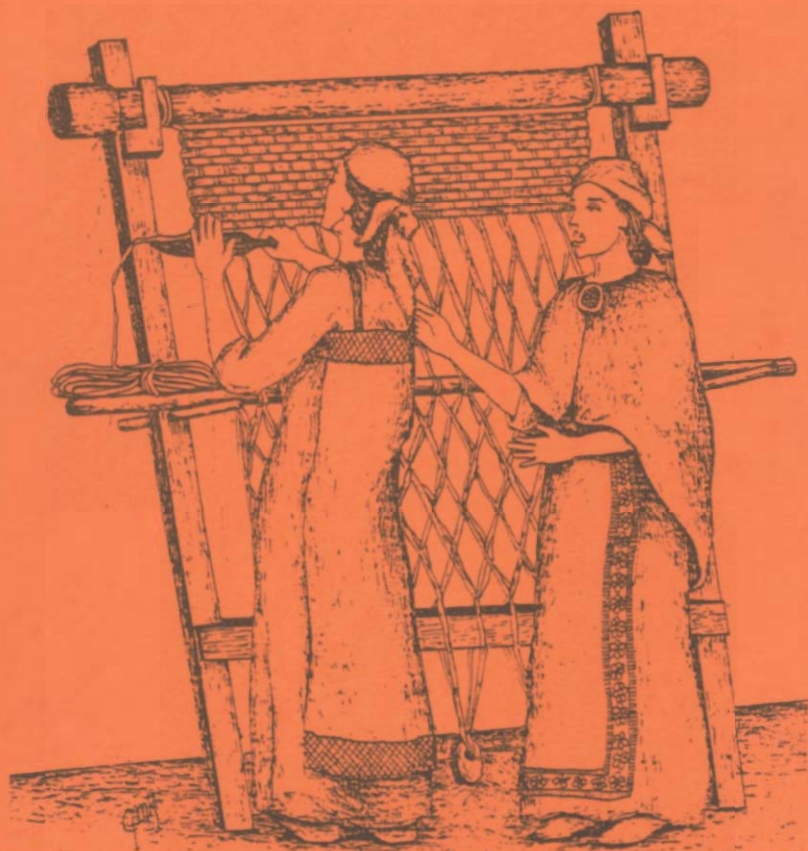


THE

RUNESTONE



THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient Norse religion, known as Odinism or Ásatrú. It is dedicated to that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

THE RUNESTONE is the official journal of the Ásatrú Free Assembly and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$5.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada, and \$6.00 per year overseas (airmail). Write to Ásatrú Free Assembly, 3400 Village Avenue, Denair, CA 95316. Please make checks payable to Ásatrú Free Assembly.

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June-August

June 8 - Lindisfarne Day. On this day in the year 793 C.E. three Viking ships swept down on the isle of Lindisfarne off the Northumbrian coast and "officially" began the Viking Age. The repercussions of this raid, which essentially was a resupply operation, brought the North into sharp confrontation with Christendom. Although of course a violent act, it was no more cruel or violent than the age in which it occurred, and we celebrate it as a long-deserved retribution against an aggressive, alien system.

June 22 - Summer Solstice. Here we mark the beginning of the Sun's long decline, which will not be complete for half a year, at the Winter Solstice, or Yule. This is one of the most important seasonal events of the year and is celebrated by Pagans of every persuasion.

July 29 - Olaf the Lawbreaker, known to history as Saint Olaf of Norway, was killed at the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 C.E. on this date. Olaf acquired a reputation for killing, torturing, maiming and exiling his fellow Norwegians who would not convert to Christianity, and for carrying an army with him about the countryside in violation of the law, to help him accomplish these deeds.

July 31 - Froði. Now a celebration of Frey in the restored Vanir-faith, this date has long been sacred in Celtic religion as Lughnasadh. Others know it as Lammas. Still another name for it is the Feast of Bread, since up until recent times it has been the custom in some places to bake a huge loaf in the shape of a man which is then divided into pieces and scattered in the field. Supposedly this represents the sacrifice of the divine priest-king for fertility. Although this custom is not a part of Ásatrú, it is interesting to note that Olaf the Lawbreaker died so close to this date. Could this have been Fate's way of telling us that it still had power over Olaf, and that--for the good of his people--it was better that he perished, rather than live? Certainly he had done enough damage.

August 9 - On this arbitrarily chosen date we honor Radbod, a king of Frisia who died in 719 C.E. Radbod was one of the early targets for Christian conversion efforts. Just before his baptism ceremony, he asked the clergy what fate had befallen his ancestors who had died loyal to Ásatrú. The missionary replied that Radbod's forefathers were burning in hell--to which Radbod replied, "Then I will, rather live there with my ancestors than go to heaven with a parcel of beggars." The baptism was cancelled, the churches were burned, and Frisia remained free.

August 29 - Freyfaxi. The last Saturday in August has been newly set aside to mark the approximate time of an ancient harvest festival sacred to the fertility god Frey. This feast day was characterized by the symbol of the stallion, representing Frey's virility and power.

Announcements

CHILDREN OF THE EARTH has a new address -- P.O. Box 584, Petersberg, WV. C.O.T.E. is the newsletter for Pagan kids and parents that we reviewed in the last issue.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL PAN PAGAN FESTIVAL sponsored by the Midwest Pagan Council will be held August 6th near Buchanan, Michigan. Information and registration forms may be obtained from Pan Pagan Registration Committee, P.O. Box 613, Richton Park, IL 60471.

A KINDRED of the AFA is forming in Carson City, Nevada. Anyone in the area who wishes to contact them may write to The Runestone, ATTN: C.C. Kindred, and that letter will be forwarded to them.

WOMEN! We need more submissions BY and ABOUT women for The Runestone. Let us hear from you! Talk to us about our goddesses, or what Asatru means to you as a woman. Articles, poems, and artwork -- we need it all. Help us develop this important part of our religion!

WOLF COATS, the newsletter of the Varangian Guard, is now being published by two hardy volunteers who have taken this load upon themselves. Our sincere thanks to Don and Paul.

Wolf Coats is broadening its perspective slightly, too, as is the Varangian Guard. More and more of us are realizing that troubled times may well hit this country, and that those who fight on their own soil to protect family and home are also warriors and in need of the warrior arts. So domestic survival is now a topic we explore, along with the showier, more exotic aspects of the Warrior's Way.

THE ALTHING -- Planning proceeds apace for this important event. See our Althing update and the registration form. We encourage you to sign up as soon as possible, rather than waiting till the last minute.



Announcing - GUILDS!

The AFA includes many people with many different interests. Whatever your hobby or pastime, though, we want to give you a chance to meet other Odinists who share that particular enthusiasm. To that end, we have organized a network of guilds within the AFA.

Guilds are run as informally as possible. They may or may not charge dues or publish their own specialized newsletter. If they charge dues, they must spend those dues in service to the members--that is, they cannot become profit-making institutions.

What kind of guilds would we like to see? Subjects that come to mind range from space exploration to organic gardening, from nudism to backpacking. How about a guild of Odinist-inclined Mensans, or Odinist science-fiction readers?

Write and tell us if you want to start a guild. We'll publicize it in The Runestone and advise you in getting it going. As guild organizer you'll be responsible for continuing contact with prospective members, putting out the newsletter, if any (we don't insist on them, but we encourage them), and collecting dues. In return, you can be relatively autonomous and can enjoy contact with like-minded Odinists.

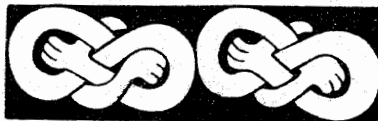
Right now we have a Martial Arts Guild developing. It's run by

Greg Steiner
1120 Doreen, #1
Waterloo, IOWA, 50701

Greg is interested in developing a martial art which reflects Northern European values, in both its physical and spiritual aspects. He's looking into pankraton, the ancient Greek fighting art, as well as other sources. Nor is he neglecting the Northern equivalent of Chi. This guild holds great promise for innovative research and will enrich the heritage of Asatrú. We invite all interested people to contact Greg on this.

Another guild I'd greatly like to see organized would be a skaldic guild. While this guild might involve itself to some extent in modern verse forms, it would primarily practice the old skaldic art, complete with kennings, alliteration and proper meter. If anyone out there really wants to help revive and practice skaldic poetry, write me and I will do what I can to help you meet others who are interested, and generally get started.

The next move is yours. What guild would you like to help create?



MOVIE REVIEW

EXCALIBUR

Just when I thought I had this issue ready to be typed, I went to see *EXCALIBUR*. When I left the movie theater, I knew that this issue of *The Runestone* would be incomplete without telling you what I had seen.

Excalibur may be the most important movie ever made.

The Christian elements in the story of King Arthur and his magical sword *Excalibur*, are superficial window-dressing for a Pagan theme that drives through to the unconscious like an axe reaves a shield. The secret of the Grail as presented in *Excalibur* is a secret that Lord Summerisle of *The Wicker Man* knew; it is the essence of sacred kingship. Other symbolism will be recognized by all *Asatrúrarar*--a mystic vision while hanging from a tree is perhaps the most obvious but there are others, like the women escorting Arthur to Avalon. We know their names, I'd wager.

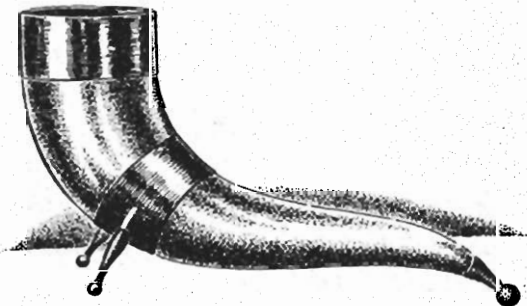
Much of the symbolism is derived from Celtic sources, and significant use is made of ancient dolmens and standing stones. It is here, not in some chapel, that Arthur goes for aid before his final battle.

Arthur is a powerful image of the king and folk-warrior. He IS his land! And deep within the Jungian unconscious of the British peoples, he slumbers-- ready to come again when he is needed, and when he is called. Likewise, his sword waits in the lake for the "once and future king"--he who embodies the time transcending archetype--to wield it.

The music helps turn the key in the door to the racial unconscious. Wagner pervades the movie and echoes in your mind long after you've left the dark sanctum of the theater and are again in the bright light of consensual reality. Only Wagner can convey the power of this mythos.

This is not a movie for those who don't like to see graphic depiction of sex and violence. There is plenty of both, but it seems appropriate and even necessary. Remember, this isn't any mundane tale we're telling!

Our cousins in England need the spiritual regeneration of Arthur--of *Excalibur*. The woes that afflict our own society are theirs, as well. The recent riot in Brixton portend a strife to come which will make all our present problems seem insignificant, and now is the time for us to arm ourselves with the spiritual power of the (thoroughly non-Christian!) Grail, and the might of *Excalibur*, that we may defend our homelands, folkways, and our very essence against intruders who would overwhelm us. This movie, in its own way, will help accomplish this.





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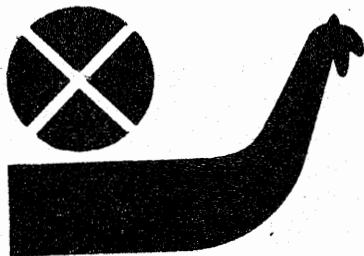
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3400 Village Avenue

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A VIKING SHIP IN DISTRESS

by

Goði on the Road - Isaac Moll

I recently made a trip to Chicago to attend a Wiccaning at the Temple of the Starkeepers whom I had met at Pan Pagan Festival. Ever since the first time I read about The Raven, I had wondered what happened to it and where it is kept.

The Raven is the famous replica of the Gokstad ship that sailed across the Atlantic in 1893 by Magnus Anderson. She made a twenty-eight day passage from Bergen to Newfoundland. Then on to Chicago for the 1904 Worlds Fair.

The elasticity of The Raven showed a gunwale twisting out of line by as much as 6 inches, yet was safe, fast and water-tight. With her mighty keel and flexible frame The Raven was an inspired combination of strength and elasticity. She was steered by a side rudder fastened to the starboard quarter, an effective feature claimed by Magnus Anderson to be one of the greatest proofs of Northern shipbuilding skills and seamanship. On his Atlantic crossing he found it most satisfactory in every way, and decidedly superior to a rudder on the sternpost, and manageable by a single member of the crew in any weather with the help of a small line. Her hull was of imported Canadian oak, with mast, oars and planking made of pine.

Now, for years I have heard of conflicting reports as to her disposition and exact location. The Raven now sits in Lincoln Park Zoo, not far from the entrance, on a path that leads to the right alongside a duck pond. At her prow is a small pillar with a bust of Magnus Anderson. Covering her length is a roof with a 10-foot fence, with barbed wire in the top. At first sight she looks like the pictures of the Godstad ship. As we made our way closer, a feeling of sadness came over us.

Standing on her starboard (right) side we could see that a piece of the bottom of the rudder had been broken off. The dragon head and tail were gone. Scattered about on the ground, broken and faded, were the shields. One could see where they had been on the gunwale by the faded spots. On the port (left) side, lying down alongside her is the massive pine mast and spars, gray and cracked from age and neglect. At her port bow were the pine planks. At first it was hard to tell what they were. They too were gray with age and cracked. On the same side at the stern were the oars; some were broken in half, again gray with age and neglect. I was able to look into one of the oar posts, and was able to see one of the ribs spattered with pigeon droppings from the birds lurking in the rafters. I spent some time studying the hull. As far as I could see, only a few strakes were split near the port bow. The hull was in good shape. Along with a paint and calking job she looks seaworthy. Attached to the fence is a sign that reads, "Being restored by the Viking Ship Restoration Committee, 518 Davis St., Evanston, IL, 60201."

Now, from the people I spoke with about The Raven, nothing has been done, and she's been sitting there for over five years. It is a shame that not enough of our people care about their ancestral heritage to take care of this fine relic of our culture.

In this and other writings, the present author begs the reader's indulgence as to several unorthodox views that he holds, such as that Wöden spent an earthly incarnation, circa 100 B.C., as an ancient Germanic redeemer-priest-king, that sometime during his youth, as a mercenary soldier in the North-Italian Alps he was inspired by local models to devise the runes, and that that accomplishment alone would have sufficed to distinguish the career of any other man. The author is an Anglo-Saxon heathen priest.

Negau Specimen "B":

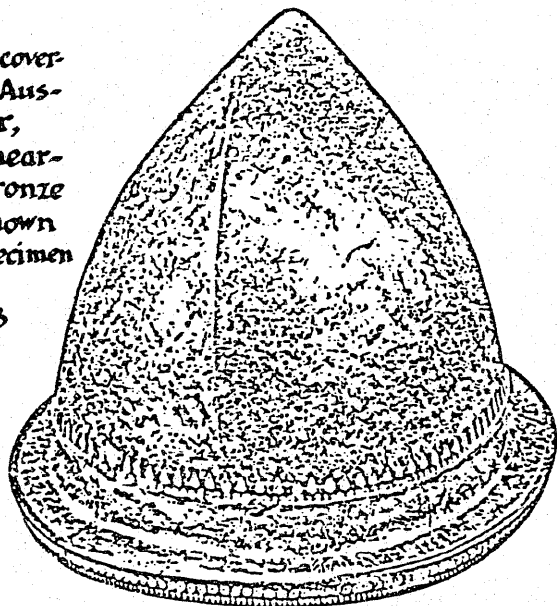
FLASHES FROM AN ANCIENT HELMET

© Garman Lord 1980

A Discovery:

In 1812, a trove was discovered at Negau, near the Austro-Yugoslav frontier, among which were unearthed twenty-six ancient bronze helmets, of which the one shown here is an example, this specimen being designated "Negau Helmet B." Why helmet B ended up where it did, or who wore it, or who put it there, or when, are not known, although various scholars have dated its provenance anywhere in a range from zero to 600 B. C.

The reason the helmet caught this writer's eye is because it was probably worn by some ancient "Alpengermanen" mercenary soldier. An ancient German mercenary in the North Italian Alps from the above era is someone we would surely wish to talk to, if only we could. For it is that milieu that your author has been most narrowly considering as a possible point of origin for the runes.



Negau Specimen "B"

Literate Germans Before the Runes?

Of course, no Alpengerman could be literate in runic if runic had not been invented yet — though he might well have been literate in some other alphabet picked up during his tour of duty. Surely Wöden was literate in the alpha-

bet upon which he modelled the runes of the futhork, and perhaps also the language for which that alphabet was used. If so, one would certainly wish to have him about to talk to now, since no one can read any of those languages today.

But fortunately, we can read prehistoric German. And we can also know that at least one other ancient German soldier was literate in SOME language. He is the same one as has left us his hat, "helmet B," and we might well wish that he had also left his calling-card. The reason we know this is because if you examine "helmet B" closely, you will note that he wrote something on the brim of it. What he wrote appears to be:

⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔⚔

Yes, of course, and "gesundheit" to you, too! All kidding aside, this is surely a lucky find, for what we might hope to learn from it. For one thing, the script is not runic. If our friend who owned this helmet was really an ancient German, then one would think it should be, unless it is the case that the runes hadn't been invented yet. No, the script is clearly North-Italic, and written retrograde. The helmet too may be of North-Italic make. And yet, when one tackles a transliteration of the inscription, the language proves to be just as clearly German! The man who thus inscribed his headgear was a heathen German, and either wrote it himself or dictated it to some scribe, over whose handiwork he kept a watchful eye. Exactly what this inscription might say is not clear, but a transliteration of the first fourteen characters yields: HARI XASTI / TEIVA, which probably breaks up into two words at the point where I have inserted a slash. I make a reasonable translation of this out to be:

Other interpretations might be possible, of course, but at least some parts of the picture seem clear. That's a heathen German for you, alright, and probably one who was religiously savvy and literate as well, and pre-runic.

{ for the sake of
in the name of
on behalf of
[take your pick] } THE TIEU HĒREQĀEST
(god) (war-ghost)

A Very Unscientific Opinion...

What a pity we can't nail down the date of this piece! Ah--- but who's to stop a wight like me from trying? What's to lose?

I decided, being a pretty fair dowser, to try to witch it out. I had never, at the

time, tried anything like that, but I had read here and there that it could be done. Nor had I, at the time, any idea of the age of the piece; for no good reason I supposed it to go back to around the time of Christ, or a little later.

Clearing my head of all that, I devised a range-dowsing scheme of tens, hundreds, thousands, etc., and set to work over the photo with a bob, asking how old was the inscription on the helmet. Without a moment's hesitation, I got an answer that was strong and unexpectedly precise; "Two thousand two hundred and eighty-one and three quarter years old," declared the bob matter-of-factly. I'm afraid I know too little about how the Church reckons its calendar, so I just did a simple subtraction and called it midsummer, 301 B.C.

In my mind's eye a fascinating scene unfolds. I see a man in his late twenties sitting there, a bit apart from his friends, on a rock-outcrop by a wooded stream, dressed, or better, partially dressed, in outlandish clothing. He stands about five-ten and would go some twelve stone, and has long red-blond hair. His face is long, and hard but humorous, and he is very intelligent. He sits with his helmet on one knee, clamped there by the other knee and his free arm. In his other hand, he works with a slender sharp instrument; no common knife, but something specially made for the purpose, and is, with loving care, inscribing magic into a possession of which he is very proud. And then the picture fades. But the helmet, and perhaps the magic, remain.

A Hatful of Learning

A lot of lore must have gone into that simple act. This is no rude attempt to write German in alphabetical letters, but an educated attempt, and one with presumably some sort of history behind it. Experiments in writing German are a background against which the sudden achievement of the *subapik* stands out in lonely splendor, at the same time as they remind us that that achievement did not come to pass in a vacuum.

Our literate *Alpengerman* presumably spoke and wrote *North-Italic*, and could apparantly make do with writing German. He may also have known something about prehistoric rock-carvings in his homeland, and about casting sorts with them and with letters, and no doubt a great lot more lore besides that we would hardly suspect. But pulling all this together into one comprehensive system was a task destined to be deferred to another day, and the coming into this *middangþyd*-world of his wisdom-god.

~ ~ ~

~ Sapman Lond

BOOKS



BOOK REVIEW
TALKIN' ABOUT TOLKIEN

In exploring a downtown bookstore I have come across a stimulating, not so new book by literary critic--a young college professor in his thirties--Robley Evans. (J. R. R. TOLKIEN, by Robley Evans, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1972).

The book is a critical appreciation of J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Ring, Silmarillion, etc.*)

Evans introduces Tolkien as a "Renaissance man" with an "essentially christian vision of the universe," yet the book is dotted with a surprising amount of ambivalence by the author's subconscious perception.

Evans seems to be torn between his own overlay of cultural structure (and underlying editorial expectations, no doubt) requiring a dutifully christian interpretation of Tolkien's work--and a deep, instinctual, almost ancestral perception of things to which Evans must respond (albeit timidly) in loyalty to his inner honesty.

The author does carry his christian interpretation of Tolkien all the way to the required conclusion, but the gems of Evans' true self--the inner core of the man--keep breaking up on the surface like bubbles in a slowly boiling pot of barley. Rather, if the pot of barley is the alleged "christian universality" of Tolkien, the bursting bubbles then are the ever present past--the undismissible Nordic spirit ever so quick to arise--contemptuous of lids--at the right stimula.

I am not so sure that Evans was fully conscious of his ambivalence, but the "bubbles" are there, and are many. And he must have had some difficulty in fitting too tight a suit on the too large and restless world of Tolkien.

The result is a fascinating reading often enveloping in one awkward embrace--with Evans' ancestral genuinity always on the way-- the "Renaissance man" Tolkien (as opposed to a Renaissance "notwithstanding christianity") and Tolkien as we see it ourselves; a fantasist of a facet of that Nordic folklore that nourishes our present.

How countless many are there unconsciously just like us under the skin--or just between the lines!

Robert T. Redy

RAGNARR LOTHBROK

by

Jeffrey R. Redmond

In early Scandinavian history there were two Viking heroes, in two different periods, with the name Ragnarr. The first earned the nickname of "Shaggy Breeches" by wearing such clothing to fight and kill a huge snake. He was a king of Denmark in the early 700's, and had succeeded to this at the death of his father Sigurthr, who had earlier won a great battle at Bravellir, in Sweden. Ragnarr was succeeded in turn by his two sons Eirikr and Agnarr.

The second Ragnarr was a Danish chieftain who led an attack on Paris in the year 845 at the bidding of King Horikr of Denmark, the son of King Gothfrithr. (They built the Danevirke fortifications in southern Denmark against the Emperor Charlemagne). This Ragnarr was killed at York, in England, when King Aella of Northumbria had him thrown into a snakepit in the year 860. His sons, including Ivarr "the Boneless," avenged their father's death by killing Aella and conquering his lands in 867.

The first Ragnarr was more legendary, and the second more historical, however the latter one is also termed "Shaggy Breeches," and it may be that he purposely adopted the nickname from his predecessor to further enhance his own prestige. There is great confusion in trying to calculate the exploits of a single Viking who lived for over 150 years, and yet the name of a Viking named Ragnarr is definitely mentioned in the old recordings, and in different sources, between the years 700 and 860. So two such similarly named Danes probably existed in actuality.

The excerpt below from the older Ragnarr story gives the account of his unusual attire.

From *Ragnars Saga Lothbróks*, Icelandic, c 1200

RAGNARR AND THE SNAKE (c. 730)

Harrauthr was the name of a wealthy and powerful Jarl in Gautland.¹ He was married and had a daughter named Thora. She was the fairest of women, and very well mannered in all of the abilities that are better to have than not. She was called Borghart because she surpassed all of the other women in beauty, as the deer does of all the other beasts. The Jarl loved his daughter dearly. He had a dwelling built for her not far from the great hall, with a wall of wood stakes all around it. He made it his custom to send his daughter something for her entertainment every day.

It is told that one day he sent her a little snake, very fair to look at, and this worm seemed to her to be very pretty.² She put it in her chest, and gave it gold to lie upon. Soon after the snake was put there, it began to grow greatly, and the gold under it also increased. Soon it happened that the creature no longer had enough room inside of the chest, and laid encircled around the outside of it. And soon after that there was not even enough room in the dwelling and it laid around the outside of the house, so that its head and tail touched. At the same time it became very difficult to deal with, and none dared to enter the house for fear of the snake, except the man who brought it food. And by then it ate an entire ox at every meal.

The Jarl suffered greatly from this, and he swore an oath. "I will give my daughter to any man who will kill the snake, whoever he is, and he will have the gold that is beneath it as her dowry!"

This news was told far and wide, but no one dared to fight the great serpent.

In that time Sigurthr (Hringr) ruled over Denmark. He was a mighty Konungr (king), and was very famous because of the battle he had fought with Haraldr Wartooth (Hilditonn) at Bravelljr. For Haraldr had fallen before him, as was known throughout the Northlands.³ Sigurthr had a son named Ragnarr, who was a big man, fair in appearance and sharp-witted, large hearted towards his men, but grim towards his enemies. When he was old enough he gathered men and ships and became so great a warrior that his match was hard to find. He heard about what Jarl Herrauthr had promised, but he paid it no attention, and acted as if he did not even know about it. He had clothing made for himself of a strange kind. They were shaggy breeches (lothbroekr) and a shaggy fir cloak, and when they were ready, he had them boiled in pitch. After that, he put them away and kept them.

One summer he led his men to Gautland, and they stayed in a hidden inlet not far from the hall of the Jarl. When Ragnarr had been there for one night, he woke up early the following morning. He got up and put on his clothes that have been told about before. He took his spear in his hand and left the ship by himself, and went out to where there was sand. There he rolled all around in the sand. Before he went away, he took the nail out of the shaft of his spear. Then he went away from the ships, and came to the gate of the Jarl's dwelling, early in the morning, when all of the men were still sleeping.

He went up to the dwelling, and when he came within the wood wall where the serpent was, he struck at it with his spear and quickly pulled his weapon back again. Again he struck. At this thrust the spear struck the serpent's back. The snake twisted about so quickly that the point was loosened from the shaft, and so great was the noise of the monster's death cries, that the whole dwelling shook. Then Ragnarr turned to leave, and a spurt of the serpent's blood struck him between the shoulders, but it did him no harm, because the clothing protected him well, that he had made before.

The folk who were inside of the dwelling were awakened by the loud noise, and they came outside. Thora saw a big man going away. She asked him what name he was called by, and whom he wanted to see. He paused on his way and spoke this verse:

"In my fifteenth year, lovely woman,
I risked my life and slew this fiend.
Whatever evil may come, I shall not die
From a stroke of this coiled and twisted snake!"

Then he went away and spoke no more to her. The spear remained in the wound it had caused, and he carried the shaft away with him.

When she had heard his verse, she understood what he had spoken about his age and his journey there, and she began to think about who he was. She was not sure if he was a man or not, for his size seemed to her to be so big for his age, that it fit what was told of the race of giants. She went into her dwelling again and slept, and when folk appeared later that morning, they saw that the serpent was dead, and had been killed by a great spear that was still in the wound. The Jarl had it taken away, but it was so huge that the men found it very difficult to do this.

Now the Jarl remembered what he had spoken about the man who would kill the serpent, but he did not know whether a man had done it or not. He took counsel with his friends and his daughter, to know how he might search for him. And it seemed likely to them, that the man would see to the obtaining of the reward that he had earned, himself.

His daughter advised him, "Call together many men to a Thing, and bid all who would not bring the anger of the Jarl upon themselves to come there, if in any way they can. And if any of them admits to the killing of the serpent, he is to bring with him the shaft that fits the spear."

That seemed a good idea to the Jarl, and he bade that a Thing be held.

When the chosen day came, he was there with many of the other chieftains, and there was a large group of men gathered together. It was told on board Ragnarr's ships, that a Thing had been called, and he went ashore to it, with nearly all of his men. When they arrived, they placed themselves a little ways apart from the others, for Ragnarr saw that a larger number of men had come than what was usual. Then the Jarl rose up and asked for silence.

He spoke. "I thank those who have so well responded to my message." And then he told them of what had happened. First he spoke about what he had promised to the man who would kill the serpent.

And then he said, "The snake is now dead, and the man who has done that great deed has left his spear in the wound! If any of those who have come to this Thing has the shaft belonging to that spear, let him show it, and so make good his claim! I shall then fulfill all I have said, whether he is of low or high birth!"

At the end of his speech he had the spear carried around before each man at the Thing. And he asked which man it was that acknowledged the deed, and had done it, to tell him of it. And so it was done, but no one was found who had the spear.

Then they came to the place where Ragnarr was, and showed him the spear.

He said, "I have the shaft of it." And the two fitted together perfectly. From this the men knew that he must have been the one who had killed the serpent, and from that deed he became very famous throughout the Northlands. Ragnarr then asked for Thora, the Jarl's daughter, in marriage. Her father agreed to it, and a great feast was prepared, with the most joy that was to be had in that land. At this feast Ragnarr wedded Thora, and when it was over, he returned to his land, with his wife, and loved her dearly.

- NOTES: 1) Gothland in Sweden.
 2) The Vikings were fascinated by snakes, and used them in almost all of their artwork designs.
 3) Sigurthr was Harald's nephew. After his victory, c. 700, fought near modern Noreköping in Sweden, Sigurthr took over those lands ruled by his slain uncle.



RÚNA

The program offered by the Institute for Runic Studies, Asatrú (IRSA) is now ready for distribution to members. Those interested in enrolling in the IRSA may write to us for application forms, and for further information concerning our outline of runic studies and our plans for the future. The work of the *Rúnagildi* (the "Inner Ring") has, however, been postponed for approximately one year. This is due to the fact that the gild-drighten (Edred) will be in Europe for the next twelve months or so. The gild will be accepting requests for applications, and will continue to process them during this time. In any case it would probably be ideal if one completed the IRSA program before taking up the more practical gild-work.

ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS OF THE RUNE-CULT IN EUROPE

A cultus involving secret lore and initiatory mysteries existed in the North since Neolithic times. Through the centuries a system of elaborate graphic symbology was also developed in conjunction with the cultus. However, the exact symbolic content and use of these signs must forever remain clouded behind the deep mists of time. But we can say with no little conviction that these were the nights in which the cult of the mysteries--the gild of the runes--began to take shape. The glyphs were eventually systematized and used by members of a virtually pan-Germanic traditional network of "wise ones." Much of the content of these traditions stemmed directly from the Indo-European traditions, as tempered by local indigenous populations.

Perhaps a historical digression is in order here. It must be clear what is meant by "Indo-European," "Germanic," and "indigenous populations." From the time of the recession of the ice sheets (between ca. 10,000 and 7,000 B.C.E. in the twilight of the Ice Age, the region of what is now northern Germany, Denmark, and southern Norway and Sweden was populated with tribes belonging to the great Old European Culture. This Old European Culture, which has its reflections on a global scale as the Megalith Culture, was generally characterized by an agricultural economy based upon large sedentary aggregates of population, an egalitarian political system, with matrilineal (but not necessarily matriarchal) traditions, and a Goddess-centered religion. These cultures seem to have been peace-loving, since no weapons are found in their graves. In the third millennium B.C.E. the region began being invaded by a warlike people from the east and south-east. These were the Indo-European speaking, horse breeding warriors who were to fundamentally and forever re-shape the region. These people had a highly mobile, horse-dominated, pastoral, semi-nomadic culture. They would settle for a short period, building semi-subterranean houses, and burying their dead in mounds; but then move on into new territory--or at least send out expeditions into new lands. Their political structure was a simple and highly flexible hierarchical aristocracy. They were patriarchal and patrilineal. War was their greatest obvious skill, however they had developed methods of infiltration into, and assimilation of indigenous populations which were very effective. It seems that their normal invasion pattern involved a spear-head of young warriors led by experienced war-lords, who would establish themselves as minor rulers in neighboring foreign territories. This would often involve them in war

but the locals were rarely a match for horse-drawn war chariots. But their aim was not the destruction of the indigenous group, but rather their assimilation. Indo-European cultural features (i.e., language, religion, political and clan structure, and technology) became the superstructure of the new synthetic culture, however a great deal of the indigenous people's values, lore and ways were incorporated--especially when the culture had once and for all become sedentary. In the region of northern Germany and southern Scandinavia this Indo-European/Old European synthesis gave rise to what is called "Germanic Culture."

The myth of the first war between the AEsir and the Vanir, and its peaceful solution in ultimate assimilation under the hegemony of the AEsir (we never hear anything about the Vanir who were not taken into the AEsir camp as hostages). This pattern is a usual one for the Indo-European peoples when they came into contact with native populations, in Europe, that is. Another example of this is the historicized myth of the Rape of the Sabine Women by the Romans recorded by Livy.

But what has this got to do with runes? In the first place, there is nothing which does not have to do with runes, but more specifically, the rich graphic symbolism (especially found in rock-carvings) and the cultic dynamism found in the period during and immediately after this cultural assimilation indeed seems to be the age in which the foundations of the runic cult were laid.

In the Germanic Bronze Age (ca. 1500-500 B.C.E.), the northern tribes began to flourish in their now already ancient homeland. Linguistically, these tribes were still virtually monolingual (a language called Early Proto-Germanic by linguists), with any existing dialects readily mutually intelligible. The religious symbology was probably also closely related, and of course continued to be so throughout the paleo-pagan period. Bronze Age rock-carvings found mainly in Sweden and Norway already show a spear-god (Woden), a hammer-god (þórr), a ski-god (Ullr), etc. Besides a mythic material, largely inherited from Indo-European archetypes, there also developed a unique Germanic system of holy signs. The degree to which these signs (sometimes called pre-runic signs) were actually systematized at that time is difficult to tell since they do seem to belong to a single formal tradition, and given the remarkable cultural unity (religious as well as linguistic), it would seem highly probable that the signs represent an esoteric, magical system of signs used by clan members trained in the traditional secrets as a means to communicate the depths of the secrets to one another and between humanity and the gods. There is nothing unusual in this, or in the fact that it was an inter-tribal tradition--similar patterns are found in Asia and Africa.

Without going into too many details in this format, it can be said that long before the advent of the rune-stave systems as outlined in the last "Runa," there was a well developed network of intra-Germanic tradition which preserved esoteric lore in some systematic way. Without the entry of the rune-staves and the concept of writing into the system, this most ancient "pre-runic system" would have remained almost invisible. But as the staves came into use, beginning in the 2nd century C.E., a pattern began to emerge.

This event was much like the infusion of a dye into organic tissue--elaborate, previously hidden patterns emerge and are recorded forever. The level of complexity inherent in the runic system, and the level of continuity and integrity maintained by it over the centuries make this possible. We can trace much of the work of this guild of runemasters because we at least have a fraction of the physical results of their work--the runic inscriptions. Therefore, technical aspects of their religious symbolism and magical import may be studied--although this requires extensive training.

On the other hand, the nature of the gild itself and its organization remained almost totally hidden--or has been fancifully reconstructed on the model of modern occult schools! What is clear is that the runes and their lore constituted a vast system which had to be learned and therefore also taught--taught by a master (i.e., one skilled in the art) and learned by an apprentice (i.e., one with the will and ability to learn the art). This teaching and learning process is of course the pattern seen later in all medieval guild systems. However, it must be remembered that the gild was originally an Asatrú sacrificial association. That is, it had a sacred purpose. The religio-magical gild was then the model for the later developing craft guilds. The medieval free masons were an example of this type of guild.

These archaic gilds did not have centers of teaching or universities (which were originally also organized like guilds) nor did they maintain a complex initiatory system of "grades," etc. None of this would have been practical in the clano-centric social structure of the Germanic peoples in the Bronze and Iron Ages, and continuing through the Viking Age. The ancient rune-gild was indeed a phantomic, and hidden "order" in more than one way. It was maintained by two types of institutions in which its masters participated, 1) the local clanic wise one(s), to whom the younger members eager after the secrets of the world could go for instruction, and 2) the wandering wise ones, who not only as magicians, but also as poets, singers of songs, and tellers of tales easily got free passage between tribal groups. These two types, and a true master would have to be both at one time or another, mutually supported one another in an organic system which was at once conservative, dynamic, and open to new concepts--once they were re-shaped along the lines of the tradition.

This then was the general shape of the ancient rune-gild by the late Roman and early Migration Ages (ca. 150-400 C.E.). This formulation, as well as each of its further evolutionary stages, has much to teach us in our re-formulation of the work today. We must both be able to skillfully ascertain what the actual historical nature of the ancient forms were, and at the same time maintain the spirit and skills of adaptation to new situations which lie at the heart of the Germanic genius.



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MOOT POINT

LETTERS

Dear Friend in Asatrú,

I was interested to read the letter of Jace Crouch in the last issue of The Runestone, it's good to see that my intervention provoked some interesting reactions. Of course, I know that the Norse Religion is not only preserved in the Eddas! As all our friends, I have of course in my library the *Germania* by Tacitus, etc. But I am not sure that we can be confident in such sources as classical writers, because they had perhaps not always the best comprehension of the people they described. More important, another thing: they described ceremonies, etc., related to such or such tribe, but it's not sure that all this was common to all the Germano-Nordic people! We must remember that Pagan customs, although having an obvious "common link," are characterized by the fact that they are very local; such "liturgical" act is performed in such town, such mountain, etc., but it's not necessarily "universally" performed (how difficult to explain these questions in English!!! I don't know if you do understand me right?). We have the risk that we take one element in Tacitus, another in the Eddas, another yet more in such archaeological discoveries, and that we make with all this an hypothetical reconstitution, a sort of melting pot of customs related to very diverse tribes.

In fact, I can see that all I write here is in the same spirit as Jace Crouch and that we agree on the whole essential things. If one of these days you write to Jace Crouch, please, transmit to him my congratulations for his letter and say to him that I did appreciate it very much; it's a very good point of view--and he is right when saying that we could take several lessons from the "Druidic" movements of the past century. The instauration of ceremonies for Asatrú is something we must prepare particularly carefully; it must be impressive for those who attend, give them a strong "influx" of the spirit of Asatrú, and for this each attitude, each position during the ceremony must have a signification, in order that the persons attending can feel that a sacred act is performed. In this way, the "religious" feeling is something of the highest importance. I give to you an example: 1½ years ago, I tried to begin in Lyon (in fact, it was of course not in the town, but on a very isolated place in nature, 30 km from the town) some ceremonies of Asatrú inspiration with a small group of friends (all between 20 and 25 years of age)--some searching their way in the Norse religion, others in the Celtic past. But I must admit that it was not a great success, because the persons attending were more animated by a search for "folkloristic" attitudes, than by a religious quest! The result was a very good and friendly night (that's of course also a good and important thing), but, spiritually and liturgically speaking, a disaster (a grandiloquent and artificial ceremony etc.!) However, I must say that we had last June a quite good Summer Solstice ceremony--but we were only two! I have not enough experience for giving an authorized opinion regarding the ceremonies, but I mean that an important point is that we must not use too much words, readings, or such (otherwise, it will soon turn into a protestant preaching! and I think that there is a tendency to this, because of the Anglo-Saxon "milieu" where many Asatrú people are working); a few words, well selected,

but significant acts; we must find again the sense of the ritual action. And, of course, the feeling or rite must not only be present in our ceremonies, but also in our daily life (when eating, when performing some acts, etc.); our whole life would be sacralized. It's perhaps the most difficult, because we each have our background and this "sacralization" would probably appear quite artificial. However, would it not be possible that children of Asatrúarar go better and more deeply in this way, as they have the possibility to be educated in the spirit of Asatrú?

Best greetings to you and your family and your group! May the Gods bless you and help you in any way and at any time!

GLOIRE A NOS DIEUX ET A NOUS HEROS!

Jean-François Mayer
B.P. 4
69411 Lyon Cedex 3
FRANCE

Greetings Steve,

We were introduced to each other some years ago at John Yeowel's house...

Anyway, upon Pete's recommendation I write to you now. He informed us in close detail of his visit to the U.S.A. in 1980 and that it was suggested that a return visit might be made this year including myself and a number of other fellow Odinists. Other than informing me of the prospect Pete has not been too forthcoming in giving further details. He did, however, suggest that there might be some financial assistance in terms of travel expenditure and personally being one of the growing number of unemployed in this country, I could only consider such a venture under those circumstances. I am proud, even pig-headed, and do not see why fellow Odinists should subsidise a visit of such magnitude, but unfortunately I have no choice in the matter. Thus, I would humbly ask exactly what you have in mind.

Part reason of such a visit, suggests Pete, is that I might sell some of my wood carvings and thus he suggested I send the enclosed sheet with the hope that you might include it, along with an additional descriptive sheet, informing such people I might meet of the prospect of such purchases. In reality the sheet is not particularly sensible as its main content is rather large and bulky furniture and hardly likely to fit in a suitcase, however, if any firm orders should arise from your publication I would of course arrange suitable export. What is perhaps more realistic as requested might be the inclusion of a description of works I can and have undertaken of more logical transport size, also possibly with the hope again of receiving firm orders in advance. Thus might I suggest the inclusion of the following list as a guideline to our fellow Odinists: works I have already completed that can be adapted upon request.

I have completed the following works and sold them...Several of the diety figure Thor; 9" high. The same applying to the God Frey; both as can be witnessed in any historical book as archaeological finds. The same applying to three boar crests for helmets and a Gryphon, a more singular English legendary motif. I have also completed a commission for a family commemorating the hallowing of one of their children, this shows the mother and father and older son, holding the new-born babe on a shield offering it to their personal family symbol in the Haegel rune X, which we in the Odin Guard interpret as a life rune imposed on a death rune. This rune in turn has a wreath of oak leaves, the whole thing itself

is carved into about an 1½" timber with a frame and Sun-Wheel at the crest. Any such family ceremonies can be undertaken. I have also carved a deep glassed frame surrounding a carved heraldic shield painted in timber for an individual as can be seen on the enclosed sheet. Other outstanding works currently unsold include a Saxon warrior about 12" high holding a short sword and pointing to the AESir, perhaps a partner to this is a Saxon lady of similar size, both are human in design yet I like to think of them as Frey and Freya. I am also engaged in carving a Medieval joust, this is about 3'0" long, 15" high and 4" deep and includes two Knights in Joust, including tilt and background tents of the period. Another aspect that might interest your readers is purely heraldry. Assuming they are of English stock and know a location in England in which their ancestors lived, a heraldic device can be traced and painted, or even carved to be brought on the hopeful journey. On the whole, given the reference of any decent book, I can carve and reproduce almost anything that has been discovered of Nordic origin if such a request were made.

I must apologise for the length of this letter but would ask you to give it your consideration. I am mainly interested in what terms such a visit might be undertaken, plus of course some possible carving sales, thus I would be very grateful for any information you might be able to give. A visit of this nature excites me greatly.

Well, Steve, I will leave you to ponder on this letter and eagerly await some response. Until then,

Farr Heill.

Alan Axe
33, The Paddocks
Burwell, Cambs., ENGLAND



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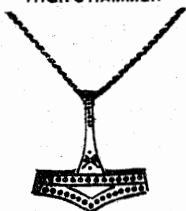
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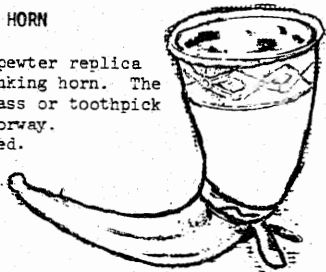
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ALTHING UPDATE

A schedule of events has begun to emerge from our planning for the Althing. So far, something like the following is expected:

FRIDAY, August 28th — Setting up after 5PM, followed by an evening of socializing and celebration.

SATURDAY, August 29th — Opening ceremony, women's mysteries, men's mysteries, runes, the business session for AFA members, and, in the evening, a ritual in honor of Frey to celebrate the harvest, followed by a full-fledged Viking feast.

SUNDAY, August 30 — Wicca and the Vanir-faith, re-linking (with nature, with our ancestors, and with our gods, by means of guided visualization), social issues, a rite to Nerthus for healing the Earth, and a ceremony of reconciliation between the Celtic and Scandinavian/Germanic families of the Northern peoples, followed by an evening of music and merriment. Viking games like varpa, stangstorting, and axe-throwing throughout the day (and probably Saturday, as well).

MONDAY, August 31 — Most of the day for recovery, wrapping-up, and socializing before the closing ritual in the early afternoon.

Participants will be on their own for food, except for the feast on Saturday night. We hope to have several food concessions on hand, though. Free camping is available at the site.

Concessions, craft sales, and the like are encouraged with the understanding that we wish to create a specifically Northern European atmosphere at our Althing. Food concessions, as noted above, should do well.

Additional classes and workshops are being planned, as well!

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