



THE  RUNESTONE



"ON THE VIKING PATH"

- Hans Strangess

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of 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 publication 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 the Ásatrú Free Assembly, 1766 East Avenue, Turlock, CA 95380. Please make checks payable to "Ásatrú Free Assembly."

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Calendar

September through November 1979

September 21 - This is the Autumn Equinox, the time when the day and night are of equal length and we hasten our slide into the long nights and cold weather of winter. One of the great Pagan holy days, it is particularly important in Celtic traditions.

October 8 - This is a Day of Remembrance honoring Erik the Red, father of Leif Erikson. Erik was the temperamental and violent patriarch who clung to the religion of his ancestors despite the defection of his son and the conversion of his wife. The latter cut off her husband's conjugal rights because of his allegiance to Ásatrú, despite his tolerance in permitting a small church to be built on his land--with the provision that he couldn't see it from the house! Erik lived and died a Pagan.

October 9 - In the mid 1960's this date was declared Leif Erikson Day, a secular holiday in the United States marked in many areas by celebrations and parades on a Viking theme.

October 13 - Winter Nights is one of the great seasonal festivals of Ásatrú. This is a holiday in thanksgiving for the harvest and honors the goddess Freya and those female tutelary beings known as the *disir*, all of which were concerned with fertility and increase. Winter Nights marks the first day of winter in the old Norse calendar, and always falls on Saturday in the week of October 11-17.

November 11 - The Feast of the Einherjar is a day honoring those who have given their lives in battle for clan and people. The Einherjar are Odin's heroes, plucked from the battlefield by the Valkyries, who feast in Valhalla and await Ragnarök. This is a good day to pause in contemplation of what we owe to those who gave their all. Do something nice for a veteran today!



Announcements

SPECIAL THANKS for Cathy Steiner, who gave us the drawing of Odin mounted on Sleipnir that appeared on our cover in the last issue. She has indicated that she may do another one for us in the future--and we certainly hope so!

CHUCK HAYES, our Vietnam veteran who has been unjustly confined in a State hospital for what are essentially political and religious reasons, is due to be released soon and may be a free man by the time you read these words. Our thanks to all our subscribers who have supported him with letters, cards and reading material; they've helped him through a rough time. Our kind of people have to stick together...

RUNE MAGIC is the name of a book by Carlyle A. Pushong which can be bought from
Regency Press Limited
43 New Oxford Street
London W CIA 1BH
England

The price is \$6, postpaid. We've ordered a copy ourselves and fully expect it to be worthwhile.

MAGICKAL CHILDE, formerly the Warlock Shop, is an occult supply house which has just published a new 48-page tabloid format catalog. Although mostly oriented toward the occult, ceremonial magic, and Wicca, they do have items which might interest specifically Norse Pagans--a runic divination set and a wide selection of jewelry and general Pagan merchandise. For a copy of this catalog send \$2 to Abrahamadabra, Inc., 37 West 19th St., New York, NY 10011.

PEOPLE OF THE LORD AND LADY is our special interest focus dealing with Frey, Freya, Nerthus and Njörd--gods and goddesses of fertility, love, growth and joy. As you'll notice, we're adding several pages to this and future issues of *The Runestone*, and this new space will be largely dedicated to these deities, known as the Vanir. Over the next few issues we hope that these Vanir pages will in time make up a virtual handbook, a more or less definitive statement, of what the Vanir-faith is all about.

HELGE MÖLLER, who has been our Danish correspondent for the past year or so, wishes us to let our readers know that she has been incapacitated by an injury for several months now. As a result of this injury she has been unable to answer much of the correspondence from our readers, and for this she extends her apologies. She will perhaps be able to catch up on this at a later time, as circumstances permit. We wish her a speedy and complete recovery.

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SKEPPSLAG NEWS AND CONTACTS

The San Francisco Bay Area Skeppslag met on July 27 and showed a film titled *Vikings: Life and Conquest*, produced by Encyclopedia Britannica. Other regular meetings are scheduled, and interested persons living in or near the Bay Area are invited to attend.

In the San Diego area, Shawn O'Riley leads our local skeppslag. His address is 1808 - 3rd Ave., Apt. 12, San Diego, CA 92101.

Continued

Isaac Moll, our gothi for the State of Washington, has been on the road lately but expects to be resettled by early fall. Until he gets a new permanent address, he can be reached c/o Virginia Calvert, P.O. Box 608, Soap Lake, WA 98851.

A new skeppslag has been formed--in Canada! Jeffrey Redmond is a relatively new member of the Asatru Free Assembly, but he has had considerable scholastic training as a graduate student in Scandinavian Studies at UCLA. His address is 1664 W. Tyrie Drive, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada N7V 3P7.

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An
ASATRUARATAL

(list of those faithful to the AEsir)

is now being compiled. This is intended to serve as a register of all asatruarar, both individuals and groups. It is hoped that this listing will help promote intercommunication and fellowship within Asatru, based upon mutual interests, etc. All those appearing on the register will receive a free copy. To appear on the Asatruaratal send the following information: 1) name, 2) address, 3) Asatru- affiliations, 4) special interests and/or talents pertaining to Asatru, etc. -- to:

Edred Thorsson
1602 Grayford
Austin, TX 78704

Editor--This is the first in a series of four articles by Jeffrey R. Redmond dealing with the runes.

Rune Power!

A thousand years ago, all of Western Civilization knew, and feared, the onslaught of fierce pagans from the northern lands. These attacking barbarians were known as Norsemen, and came from the Scandinavian lands of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. They are better known by their own term, for those who went out sea voyaging in their swift sailing ships, as Vikings.

To the victims of their raids, they were regarded as coldblooded horrible murderers, without any human characteristics. But among themselves, they were considered (and expected) to have every degree of awareness of social customs and responsibilities. Most Norsemen were farmers, fishermen, and traders, who travelled to new lands to settle. They developed a high degree of culture complete with laws, religion, crafts and poetry.

One of their most remarkable achievements was the adaptation and application of a written alphabet, with symbols for letters called runes. There were sixteen letters in the Viking runic alphabet, and they were adapted and evolved from a much older Germanic one, which had twenty-four runes. Each rune had a special name, and symbolized an important aspect of life. Each rune had a very strong magical power, and when engraved upon a weapon, household utensil, or piece of jewelry, could do much good. A shield would stop every enemy blow, a plow would ensure a bountiful crop, a weaving loom would produce the best of cloth, and a bracelet would ward off all evil spirits, when the magic runes were applied.

In Viking society there was a social class system of various groups. A chieftain ruled over a district, subject to its laws, and commanded his body of land-owning warriors. Each of these fighting men had their own farms and dwellings, and usually had thralls (slaves), captured on raids, to do the work for them. A special group of pagan priests officiated at all religious rites, and it was they who possessed all knowledge of writing the runic symbols, and of the secret powers hidden in each one. These priests also evoked the deities to come to everyone's aid, and give them all good fortune in their lives. Worship ceremonies often involved animal, and even human, sacrifices to gain the gods' favor.

The Viking ships were built by families of craftsmen, and if the chieftain had enough wealth to buy one, he could call upon his men to accompany him as crew. By venturing out on sea-raiding voyages, great wealth and fame could be gained, if one was lucky enough. The poorest Norseman could become the richest. He could return home to purchase the best farm, the fattest cows, the ship of his own, or the legal dowry for the beautiful Viking maid he'd always dreamed of. He could even voyage to new lands and settle there himself as a chieftain, if he could get other men to follow him.

Many Vikings were very successful with their raiding expeditions, and they travelled from Russia to North America, from the Arctic to North Africa, and everywhere in Europe, on these raids. For hundreds of years they attacked and conquered at will, ending their expansions only when they'd had their fill of plunder, and couldn't carry any more. What made them successful? What power enabled a group of poor ignorant farmers to suddenly become fearless sea voyagers? To daringly sail out across vast stormy oceans, to distant unknown shores? Was there really magic power in their runic symbols? Perhaps.....

The original knowledge of the runes came from the chief god Othinn (Odin), who underwent great ordeal in gaining their use. He spent nine cold, windy days and nights bound to the Tree of Knowledge. Othinn prevailed, and became all-knowing and all powerful, and passed the rune knowledge on to man as a gesture of his good will. They were arranged in a certain order, and in Latin equivalents spell out *FUTHORKHNIASBTLNR*. The alphabet is termed "Futhork" for short.

Skilled runemasters carved inscriptions on sacred stones throughout Scandinavia, and many of these are still visible today. The inscriptions tell of people's names, places to which they went, and things they did. Each runic symbol used in spelling out a man's name (Eirikr, Thorliefr, etc.), or a woman's name (Helga, Thorhilda, etc.) would evoke certain powers each could have. A great psychological boost could be given to anyone armed and protected by these mystical charms, especially if engraved on worn pieces of jewelry.

Anyone with the name Eirikr in runes would gain power from the sacred Yew tree, from the Asgarth heaven, good fortune in journeying, and protection from wearing an amulet bearing just the name alone. Sailing right across the North Atlantic ocean, a Viking named Eirikr the Red discovered Greenland in 986 C.E., and his son Leifr Eiriksson discovered America in 1003 C.E. (He landed at Newfoundland in Canada, and named it Wineland after the tasty wine berries there).

Perhaps magic rune power aided them along.....

ODINISM AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE WEST

by

George P. Saunders

If we are to deal effectively with the damage done to the soul of Western Man by Christianity, then we must understand how this creed operates, and the techniques it uses. There are a number of ways in which Christianity produces its converts and only by understanding these themes can there be hope for the triumph of Odinism.

Guilt in all its forms is one of the cornerstones of Judeo-Christian belief. Man as a creature of Yahweh or Jehova has, through innate perversity, defied his Creator. The analogy of the Frankensteinian monster gone berserk is carefully implanted in the pages of Genesis. The ultimate effect of these feelings is a sense of guilt for BEING HUMAN! This guilt extends to those unable to receive the message of the Bible, be they infants or aboriginals. The effect such a vicious line can have on the mentally unprepared is a tragic commentary on this "merciful" religion. A sense of guilt is further heightened by the major emphasis of the New Testament, the message being that the Hebrew Jesus died for all our "sins" (whatever they happen to be).

Once a weakened individual feels guilty enough, he is ripe for the major step--the surrender of his will. Biblical scriptures constantly demand that the believer abandon his will to "the Lord," to follow "God's plan." Even a cursory examination of the literature offered by Christian propagandists reveals a paucity of creativity--it abounds with rote recitations of arcane passages from the Bible; perhaps these quotes are intended to produce some occult vibration in the mind of the reader. The message, however, is clear; do not think, do not question, and become a slave. One indication of the effect it has is the pacifism demonstrated by the followers of Jesus. It would be difficult to conceive of a more supine, escapist approach to the problems of life, but it is one admirably suited

to those bereft of their forefathers' dignity of spirit. Although many fanatical Christians become violent when it is convenient, nevertheless significant portions of our people actually are taken in by pacifist propaganda. Many practices of these devotees, including begging for favors, using religion as an emotional crutch and barrier to interaction with others, and trances produced by the "holy" spirit are all connected to a surrender of Will so base as to be unthinkable to a believer in the Norse Gods. The practices mentioned are a grim reminder once again that the freedoms we cherish are part of our heritage handed us from our Northern European ancestors, certainly not from the Middle East.

As if all of the foregoing weren't enough, the Bible has included an even more formidable force--fear. If one has the temerity to refuse to believe in Yahweh, then eternal doom is the result. For centuries raw terror has been used to bludgeon people to accept a message that otherwise common sense would reject.

Elaborate conceptions of the Christian concept of Hell have been formulated from Medieval times, but they all agree on the pain and agony experienced by those consigned to the nether regions. The idea of eternal punishment is essentially Hebraic in the scope of the revenge exacted when compared to the miniscule offenses necessary to produce the punishment.

The deadly effect of adopting the maxims of Christianity is the denigration of the experiences of this life. The most terrifying result of a concentration on the hereafter instead of the here and now is abandoning our responsibility to our planet and its welfare. In a brilliant passage from John Collis' book *THE TRIUMPH OF THE TREE*, he analyzes the result of fanatical monotheism: "Whereas under polytheism the gods were intimately connected with the earth, and stimulated veneration for it, under monotheism deity was extracted from the earth. God was promoted to higher regions. He went completely out of sight. It became possible to fear God without fearing Nature--nay, to love God (whatever was meant) and to hate his creations." Although Collis is not an Odinist, his meaning is clear. In our time we have seen the catastrophe produced by a belief in the worthlessness of this life so that it becomes possible to pillage our resources, defile our water and air and pollute what is left for all who will follow, all to achieve a place in Heaven--the ultimate greed. Should this attitude continue, our planet will be unable to withstand the ravages of mankind. Christians can while away their hours contemplating dreams of revenge for those who offend them, ignore Jesus and his manic disciples, and take his name in vain every chance they get, and leave behind as their legacy a burned out cinder, devoid of life.

There are other grim consequences for ignoring reality in today's world. Pacifism and concentrating on the "next" world are symptomatic of a social apathy which has already crippled us. Despite formidable threats to the survival of the West, the destruction of our environment, and a society which ignores these threats, believers in Jesus can only think to quote the Bible and hope for a seat in the bleachers while "evildoers" are obliterated during Armageddon.

It is clear that since our people were converted to Christ-worship, their spirit has been damaged. What makes the situation so perilous is that our present high technological level with its mass media can bring us to the brink of disaster. In times long past individual Christians had varying interpretations of their religion, ones which often left their basic natures intact. Today we face the prospect that combined with world government and loss of our freedoms, a mass mind could be formulated, spurred on by the full weight of twentieth century technology. Should this occur then much of what Judeo-Christians conceive as desirable will be incorporated into this mass morality. At that point our people are doomed. This must not happen.

Despite fearful persecutions and virtual oblivion, Odinism is once again a viable force in Midgard. At the Eleventh Hour the beliefs which gave our ancestors the strength to forever make their mark in History have arisen anew. Once more, against all odds we raise our hearts to Odin, Father of Battles. Prepared for the onslaught, our Gods not forsaken, we can be victorious. For the sake of our children we dare not fail.

VIKING EXHIBIT ON TAP FOR 1980

New York, June 20, 1979 (U.P.) The Vikings, the largest and most comprehensive exhibition ever organized on the storied seafaring people of ancient Scandinavia, will open at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in October 1980. The objects in the exhibition will be drawn from museums and other collections in Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

On view will be major archaeological finds, such as the only surviving Viking helmet from Norway, exquisite gold and silver jewelry, delicately ornamented objects of gilt-bronze, and carvings in stone, wood, bone and other materials. These objects will be organized to reveal aspects of Viking religion and way of life as well as to show the Vikings as warriors, traders and explorers of Europe and the north Atlantic.

Before it is shown in New York, the exhibition will be seen at the British Museum, London, beginning Feb. 14, 1980.

This news item is of special interest to our readers in New York, of course. But why let it stop there? We at *The Runestone* propose that a coordinated effort be made to influence the powers-that-be to make this a traveling exhibition in the style of the recent King Tut treasures. Consider for a moment all of the publicity spinoff that, for many months, popularized and promoted anything related to Egyptology--and consider how nice it would be to have that kind of publicity working for our favorite ancient culture!

The Asatrú Free Assembly proposes the creation of a committee--a front group, if you will--to be known tentatively as the Committee for the Viking Exhibit. We'll work on a city-by-city level. For example, in San Francisco we will organize to bring the exhibit to the DeYoung Museum. If you want to bring this collection of Viking artifacts to your area, and if you're willing to "beat the drum" by contacting local officials, write us and we will tell you how to proceed. We can't do the work for you, but we will help you and suggest techniques. We stand ready, willing and able to cooperate with our co-religionists or with people who would like to see this exhibit in their area out of more general historical interests. The next move is yours! Write us today, and save yourself a ticket to New York!

notice!

In response to repeated requests, *The Runestone* will accept paid advertising, effective with our next issue. Rates will be as follows: One Inch - 50¢; ½ page - \$2; 1/3 page - \$2.65; ¼ page - \$4; Full Page - \$8. Naturally, we reserve the right to reject any ad for any reason.

Ed.- John Yeowell is the able and dedicated leader of the Odinist Committee, which publishes the excellent Raven Banner. The address for those wishing to contact them is: 10 Trinity Green
London, E1
England

THE LORD OF THE VIKINGS

by

John Yeowell

The festival of Ragnar Lodbrok was inaugurated several years ago by the Asatrú Free Assembly (then the Viking Brotherhood). Since that time the commemoration has been adopted by other branches of the Asatrú community in different parts of the world. But who is Ragnar and why do Odinists and Asatrú pay so much attention to someone who passed into shadow more than a thousand years ago?

Ragnar Lodbrok is the prototype of Vikings, combining the audacity and contempt of danger and death which all true Vikings sought to emulate. Various origins--Swedish, Danish, Norwegian--have been claimed for him but the most likely one is that he was the son of Sigurd Ring, although Saxo Grammaticus makes him the son of Siward, King of Zeeland, whose lands were threatened by Ring, King of Jutland. Saxo describes a Thing held in Zeeland to seek an answer to the dispute. The elders were divided between a choice of shame and fear. They did not wish to forsake Siward and were unwilling to defy Ring. In this dilemma Ragnar, still a mere youth, suggested that they should pretend to favour Ring but watch for a chance to overthrow him for (he said) cunning was needed to trap a fox. The young Ragnar's wit was greatly admired and his advice was taken. But Ragnar's claim to immortality lies elsewhere.

Ragnar was a bold and dashing adventurer, a seafarer, a man of reckless daring and the winner of battles. He blazed the trail and founded settlements but he left it to others, especially to his own sons, to consolidate and to expand them. He was the peerless man of action who demonstrated by his life the Odinist principle that we must do things as well as think about doing them. As a leader he was a man of an original mind, for it is said that he raised an army by asking each father to give him the son he considered the most worthless and each master the thrall of least use. With this motley legion Ragnar invaded the island of Britain and, according to Saxo, killed the Celtic king of Britain and the rulers of Scotland, Pictland and the Hebrides.

During Ragnar's absence trouble arose at home, probably as a result of his father's death, and a certain Harald assumed power there. Ragnar returned, routed the usurper and punished the disaffected. Evidently he thus became a king in the homeland and he is next heard of invading Sweden with a large army which was, however, not used because it was agreed that Ragnar's claim should be settled by the ordeal of personal combat with Starkad who, in accordance with custom, was assisted by his seven sons. Ragnar was joined by three of his sons and the four defeated the eight.

As a Viking Ragnar ranged far afield. He is said to have cruised in the Baltic, landed in Russia and made the long overland journey by boat along the Russian rivers to the Black Sea. His reputation travelled ahead of him. The Emperor in Constantinople soon experienced at close hand the recklessness of Ragnar's swordsmen and Ragnar became a terror in the Hellespont. Returning through Russia he penetrated far into the North, into Finland, before returning to Britain to subdue Northumbria and founding what proved to be a dynasty of Asatrú rulers in that British province. He harried in Scotland, the Hebrides and Ireland and is reputed to have initiated Viking rule in Dublin itself. All these exploits of Ragnar can only be properly appreciated when we consider the immense distances, the hazardous voyages and the unbeaten paths that were traversed.

One of the most authentic of Ragnar's numerous exploits took place in the year 845 C.E., when he ascended the Seine river with a fleet of a hundred and twenty longships and assaulted the walls of the city of Paris. He gained much booty from the Christian stronghold but the city was saved from capture by a dense mist which threw the invaders into confusion. Ragnar also braved the Bay of Biscay and led his ships up the Loire and sacked Nantes and Tours and up the Garonne to destroy Bordeaux and Toulouse. France remembered Ragnar and his Vikings for many years to come.

The famous exploit that led to Ragnar assuming the nickname "Lodbrok" (which means "Hairy Breeks") shows him as a romantic character in search of love. He is said to have fallen in love with Thora, a daughter of the Swedish king who remained single because no warrior had been found who was able to kill the brood of gigantic, deadly serpents which surrounded her house. Ragnar, always quick to assume the initiative, dressed himself in clothes stuffed with hair and wound thick woolen cloth around his legs. It was the winter season and when he entered the river the water froze to his costume which thus became impervious to the poisonous fangs of the snakes. Ragnar killed them and won his bride. The epithet thus won befitted the swift daring of Ragnar's character as it also resembled the feathered legs of an eagle.

Ragnar's old enemy Harald later resumed plotting against Ragnar in Denmark with the help of the Christian King of France, Louis the Pious. A condition made by Louis and accepted by the traitorous Harald was that the Danes should become Christians. But Ragnar returned and, amidst great rejoicing, restored the ancient religion of Asatru. Saxo clearly indicates that the horrible death which shortly afterwards overtook Ragnar was a judgment upon him for thus plunging Denmark again "into pagan darkness". But Saxo was a Christian priest and his judgment was meant primarily to put fear of hellfire into wavering Christian converts.

When he crossed the North Sea for the last time Ragnar was an old man. Another king, Ella, appears to have gained a brief ascendancy in Northumbria and Ragnar set out from Denmark with only two ships to reassert his authority in northern Britain. The ships were wrecked in a tempestuous storm and some of Ragnar's small army were thrown up on the coast of Northumbria. In spite of this catastrophe the Vikings put up a desperate fight until they were overpowered and brought before King Ella who, recognising the great Ragnar as one of his captives, had the Viking leader thrown into a pit of serpents. In Saxo's picturesque words "his guilty limbs were given to serpents to devour....and a snake, like a deadly executioner, beset his very heart."

It was Ragnar's contempt for death that had made his name immortal and revered amongst Odinists. For instead of showing signs of fear he sang an exultant song proclaiming his deeds as a Viking, recounting the fifty battles that he had fought and opening his arms wide to face the fate decreed by the Norms which no man can escape:

*Cease my strain! I hear them call
Who bid me hence to Odin's hall!
High-seated in their blest abodes
I soon shall quaff the drink of gods.
The hours of life have glided by--
I fall! But laughing will I die!*

For his unconquerable courage the Valkyries bore him aloft to join the Einheriar in Valhalla. And the sagas say that when the time comes for that mighty band of warriors to fight for the gods in the last great battle of Ragnarok they will march to the field of combat under the leadership of Ragnar Lodbrok. Today we who are followers of the same holy religion that was professed by Ragnar see him as an inspiration to us to follow his example, to do that which we know to be right and to stand fast in the faith of the Aesir as Odinists and Asatru!



MOOT POINT

Edmonton, Alta
June 12, 1979

Dear Steve,

...I was wondering if you have any use for information on herbs and the naturopathic way of living because I am somewhat of an expert in wilderness survival, having tested my theories on my own person before passing them on to anyone else, (experience is a great teacher).

Our ancestors were able to survive in the wilds and had a goodly knowledge of herbs and spices. I believe it would not be amiss if the modern Norseman had once again the knowledge that was passed from one generation to the next in ancient times. I use no man-made drugs of any kind and am well and fit. The hardiness of the Norse was legendary. Perhaps part of that legend had its roots in the dried apples, onions and garlic that was stowed in wooden kegs on long sea voyages. Both onions and garlic have a high vitamin C content and are also thought to contain organic minerals such as aluminum, manganese, copper, zinc, sulfur, iron, calcium and florine, all necessary to good health--also they have an antiseptic factor called crotonaldehyde. It also has a profound effect on ulcers and virulent sores, is benevolent in side effects and has no drug reaction of any kind. Quite interesting, is it not, one can see why the men of the North were so resilient as they lived close to nature, in harmony with her, not striving to change or overcome her as we are constantly trying to do.

Also they did not have our modern bad habits such as the consumption of sugar and smoking 2-3 packs of cigarettes a day--such habits can kill one as surely as the stroke of a war axe.

I truly believe that in order to get back to the ways of our forefathers we must also go back to nature and the land, to learn once again what they know, and, in so doing we will perhaps come closer to a belief and a way of life that will not die in the race of man so long as there is one warrior left to give it life.

Until I hear from you again,
May the gods smile on you,
May your sword be ever sharp,
May your friends be ever true,
And may you have a straight path to your foes.
Praise be to Odin!

-H.S.

Sweden

Destruction of ancient memorials, runestones to the stonebreaker, new roads through delicate ancient districts.... What to do to stop the authorities' neglect in Sweden and how come they don't care more for things that ought to be holy, at least for peoples of Germanic descent? What "mystical powers" are ruling us? Do nordic men and women have nothing to "leave words about" any more?

Questions like these express some of the spirit of ORMKNÖSVIKINGARNA, the only publicly active group with connection to Asatru--at least in Stockholm--if you ignore the sejd- and mysticism-oriented circles around the "Eddic-wisdom-publication" GIMLE, which are closely allied with KLUBB KAMELEN--an occult club with increased number of Old Scandinavian features on the program.

The Biological Museum in Stockholm is built like an Asa-temple in Old Norse style. Could a campaign for its transformation to "godho?" do something to unite the Asatru people here? To mingle our culture with animals, so to speak, degrading it to the animal stage--is this a conscious insult? The removal of Bengt Erland Fogelberg's statues of Odin, Tor and Balder from the Royal Castle to the shame corner of the Historical Museum and profaning cash-box chink there close to unique Gotlandish picture-stones are other signs of the same hostile atmosphere. Antiquarian research--regarded as futile as it is by the establishment--seems to be placed on the Superannuation List--to the extent it can't be utilized as a measure against unemployment.

On the whole it has been hard to gain a hearing for our message in Sweden. Fresh capacities from the national "slough" have sniffed at Asatru from a "Blood and Soil" (Blut und Boden) and Wagnerian angle. And there is of course BALDERSGILLET.

Magnus says that people in Uppsala want to build houses on the fields around the famous gravemounds, where the center of ancient Sweden, not to say ancient Midgard, is supposed to have been; with the greatest of Asa-temples beside the residence of the kings which one believes are buried in the mounds: Adils, Aun and Egil. This is a great threat against Midgard which must be averted, because Gamla Uppsala is indeed holy ground to us. Maybe the only way of rousing an opinion is to get help from abroad. Midgardsfriends in all countries, unite to stop this menace!

-Gudrik

England

I thought that it was time the editor of "The Runestone" received a newsletter from England with some information about what is going on regarding the faith here. Especially as Einar Priestbani, the respected head Goði in Vinland, has had to cancel his plan to visit us whereupon he would have caught up on the latest moves. As the appointed British correspondent for "The Runestone" and occasional writer for Bill Marlowe's "White Paper" magazine in Maryland, I have contributed to U.S. quarterlies on and off for quite a while. But it is not always easy to bridge the gap of 4000 miles and 200 years between the almost monolingual cousins unless I delve deep

into our 1000-year vintage mutual interest which brings into play, "onto my home pitch," so to speak. America's readers have always provided the confusing mélange of highly advanced academics like Anderson, Kerr, Magoun and Bruce Dickens (That I have to go and study at the British Museum Library!) down to warm beginners whom I do my best not to mislead with my modest offerings... Odinism seems to be experiencing a startling revival in Vinland--as much of my letter-writing and custom these days involves answering U.S. correspondence; on a smaller scale, (because of the size of the country), it is much the same here. New names and faces with Odinist interests and requirements keep popping up all over the land! more than ever before, considering I do not advertise or proselytise apart from the activities of my Viking battle group.

We are now into the show season which means warmer weather--or reasonably so for England. Porvörðr has been growing from strength to strength with good youthful fighting material and solid Pagan religious members swelling its ranks. Although still quite small (some 30 firm members) it is a happy ship, free of the groaning dissent and mischief that shudder the structure of the supposedly 200 strong Norse Film and Pageant Society... Unfortunately, that Society is doing its best to make everybody in the pageant game unhappy this year by monopolizing the great Isle of Man Millennium Festival which celebrates 1000 years of Norse parliament! They have greedily taken over the whole Viking Show arrangements on the Island and effectively banned all other Viking enthusiasts from sharing the Manx men's original programme and generous offer of half-paid travel and board expenses for "Viking" visitors--but you will be able to read all about that in the next "Raven Banner," if you subscribe to the main Odinist organ from this country. If you don't and you would like to get a copy--send to the Editor, 10 Trinity Green, London E.1, England. As I live in London, I am mainly involved with the activities in the South of England and there are Pageants and battles going on all over the place right now... Plenty of chance to wave the banner of the Pagan Faith and meet the right kind of people whom one can introduce into Asatru. When Steve McNallen first asked me to report for "The Runestone," I admitted that I could not supply him news about the Odin Guard due to an estrangement with that Society. I am glad to say that it is now over due to internal reforms, and the "Sword of Asgard," (The fighting Arm of the O.G.), now under the bright leadership of a fine fellow warrior, Ken Bamford (Kenneth Scar-Arm,) contacts me on a regular basis. An all-round improvement that will no doubt benefit Odinist public relations.

The 1066 A.D. Society has taken upon itself the task of being Vbland of the 100 or so Mediaeval Societies scattered about the U.K....groups of pure pagan Celts like the tough rawboned "Gallowglassers," to the refined jousting teams such as the "Mediaeval Combat Society,"... As one who attended the first "stormy" Association meeting, it seems to me that our "smiths" have a mighty welding task ahead! But needless to say, many of the 1066 a.d. boys are staunch Heathens and wearers of Thor's Hammer, so they'll not give up the giant task easily... After all, imagine such a giant show weapon in our hands! That can advertise the call to Asatru and its values....

Due to unsuitable political attention focussing upon a section of the religion that has a predominant percentage of right wing members, one gemoot of the Odinists in East London has closed down but the members remain steadfast and have asked me, as an experienced Goði, to take them into my Goðord; which will soon be in a position to do so as I am about to erect the first (to my knowledge) new Pagan Hof as a Norse style wooden temple specifically for worship and Viking recreation in England. Apart from the fact that I need it badly for my own Thorguard members and their meetings, rituals, etc., the Hof will be a handy place of worship for any visiting Odinist coming to London. (It will accomodate approximately five people for sleeping), consisting of shield-lined timber walls, meadbench, firepit, altar, hinged board beds,

permanent idols and Hognr utensils. We also have the use of an oak-tree surrounded sacred grove for outdoor Enveitan within easy motoring distance of the small temple site. This is on private grounds with access at all hours. It backs onto Epping Forest in the land of the East Saxons where many a fugitive Viking must have got lost in the wars with Alfred the Great.

Should anyone from the States be visiting London, I'd be glad to meet them and offer my group's humble outdoor Lunder or indoor Hof for their Blöt usage and would do my best to arrange their meeting up with other prominent Odinisists in the area. Although it is always wise to give me plenty of warning of any such arrivals as I am always busy with the production of Viking war equipment and Odinisist artifacts. I know at least three U.S. Asatrú followers who are planning to drop in during their trip to the Isle of Man celebrations and I hope they are the first of many....

May Þór guard your house and hearth....

Farr Heill,

P. Seymour
Porvorðsgöti
95 Dartford Avenue
London N9, England

Switzerland

Le 1er juillet 1979

Dear Friend,

Thank you for the insertion of the information about the cessation of SKULD in the last issue of The Runestone.

As I promised, I will naturally keep you informed about interesting news concerning the revival of Asatrú here. But, presently, nothing. The French-speaking men are more oriented toward the Celtic things; for example, there was recently formed a cultural Front of Liberation of the Gauls, with participation of druidic groups, etc. I was invited to participate as delegate from Switzerland to the official assembly of constitution, last week, but I had too much work and it was not possible for me to travel to France this day.

This is only an example of the major Celtic orientation of French, Swiss, etc. But I have not lost the hope to start a nordic-pagan group, with Asatrú presented as an ideal hyperborean spirituality, by recruiting only a small number of really interested persons. The best would be perhaps to write a sort of manifesto describing our positions, similar to your leaflet "What is the Norse Religion?". I will think about this.

I hope to hear from you soon again. May our powerful Gods bless all your enterprises! Best regards to you and to your family.

GLÖTRE A NOS DIEUX ET A NOS HEROS!

Jean-Francois Mayer
1, Rue Faucigny
Case postale 83
CH-1700 FRIBOURG 5

PEOPLE OF THE LORD AND LADY

An Introduction

We are followers of the Vanir--that family of Northern gods and goddesses responsible for fertility, prosperity, love, and the continuance of the clan. Principally, we honor the masculine deity Frey and the feminine deity Freya, twin givers of life and abundance dating from the pagan period of Scandinavia. Their names translate respectively as "Lord" and "Lady" and they represent the archtypal male and female forces of the cosmos. Ours is a festive religion rejoicing in the good things of life--love, material well-being, sensuality, and the flow of Nature. By revering Frey and Freya and working in cooperation with them we strive to harmonize ourselves with the turning seasons and the holy drama of birth, death, and rebirth that goes on continually around us.

Our goal is the celebration of life in a relinking with Nature, and the restoration of the ancient values and world-view of our forebearers. In addition to the Noble Virtues of the old Norse faith--courage, truth, honor and other values--we hope to promote an active concern for the natural environment. The Earth has been sorely wounded by those who no longer revered her as our mother and goddess, and we would redress those hurts and restore her to health. This is fundamentally a religious problem and the solution must begin to be found not in repressive legislation but within each of us, in our way of looking at the world around us.

Beginning with this number of *The Runestone* we are devoting several pages in each issue to the Norse gods and goddesses known as the Vanir--chiefly, Frey, Freya, Njörd, and Nerthus. In time these pages will constitute the definitive literature for a special interest focus within the Asatrú Free Assembly dedicated to the Vanir-faith and known as People of the Lord and Lady. At one time we had planned to compose and publish a separate booklet on P.O.L.L., but we decided instead upon the present approach because it leaves more room for flexibility and change, requires less capital expenditure, and helps keep the P.O.L.L. firmly under the overall umbrella of the Asatrú Free Assembly. Of course, if you're reading this several years after the fact, you may be reading these pages as a bound handbook of the revived worship of the Vanir, while those of us in the "present" will be exposed to it a bit at a time, as it grows and matures into a more stable (but hopefully not ossified) form.

Let's begin by stating what P.O.L.L. is. We are a special interest focus (not really a "group" yet) within the Asatrú Free Assembly dedicated to the Vanir--deities of growth, love, fertility, prosperity, and joy. We are an integral part of the AFA. Our role is not in opposition to the family of gods known as the Aesir. More correctly, P.O.L.L. is complementary to the better-known Aesir-worship. Our fundamental values differ not so much in identity as they do in emphasis.

What do we believe? In what areas do our interests lie?

P.O.L.L. believes fervently that modern man needs to regain a religious attitude toward Nature, to re-link ourselves with the cycles of the natural world and to make respect for the environment a personal religious duty rather than something dictated by law. At the same time, we are not anti-technological. Properly applied, technology can help solve the problems we have created for ourselves. We don't want to live in the Stone Age any more than we want to live in the poisoned cesspool that our planet is becoming.

P.O.L.L. celebrates divinity manifesting in both male and female polarities. We honor men as reflections of Frey ("Lord" in Old Norse), and women as reflections of Freya ("Lady" in the old tongue). We exhort womankind to strength and self-reliance in the best traditions of the women from Norse history, who were hardly shrinking violets. At the same time, we do not condone the androgynous, asexual school of thought espoused by some, for these are refutations of our polarity, of our relationships with Frey and Freya.

P.O.L.L. is heavily wrapped up in the clan concept--in the chain of generations extending into the "past" and into the "future." We believe, in accordance with our ancient beliefs, that there are heavy spiritual implications to the idea of the hereditary clan. A special link connects us to our ancestors and to our descendants, a link which involves genetic memory, the concept of rebirth within the clan, and perhaps other metaphysical aspects of which we are now ignorant.

P.O.L.L. and the Vanir-faith rejects--as does all of Asatrú!--the concept of original sin and the spiritual masochism so popular in some faiths.

All of this represents a part of our ancient religion which has been neglected in some quarters, and we hope to restore this lost balance so that all of Asatrú can further advance and prosper. Ours is a very broad and rich tradition, capable of expressions to meet many varying personal needs and emphases. From our own personal experience, an awakening to the richness of the Vanir aspect has brought a heightened awareness of the joy of life and has vastly benefitted our comprehension and appreciation for Asatrú in all its aspects, Vanir and Aesir alike. This way lies spiritual adventure!

There are many other things we will be discussing in these pages--sex, the kinship group, original sin and the lack of it, the native beliefs of our ancestors as opposed to the artificial values impressed on them from outside. Read on, and join with us in the adventure of re-linking, of finding that which we always were, and which we will be again.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The gods and goddesses of ancient Scandinavia consisted of two distinct families or tribes of deities, The Aesir and the Vanir. The Aesir included Odin, Thor and other mighty beings, and it is they who usually come to mind when the ancient faith of the Northlands is mentioned. They tend to be forceful and even violent entities--gods appropriate for the warrior, the aristocrat, and the movers and shakers. On the other hand, the Vanir are the deities of growth, love, fertility, and prosperity. This neat division into two different groups is by no means absolute, though, for Thor of the Aesir has a secondary fertility role, and the symbol of Frey of the Vanir has frequently been found on weapons and armor dating from the heathen period. So there was considerable overlapping of functions. Still, this general division into two broad categories is useful and essentially correct.

Scholars at one time thought that these two families of gods belonged to different peoples. The theory was that the fertility religion of the Vanir was the faith of the earliest settlers of what is now Scandinavia, and that the Aesir-faith was brought into the area by Indo-European invaders only a few thousand years ago. This would explain the very different emphasis in the two cults, and the myths of conflict between the Aesir and Vanir in dim prehistory. More recent

study, particularly that of the renowned comparatist Georges Dumézil, indicates otherwise. It now seems that both Aesir and Vanir have deep roots in Indo-European religion and that other traces of this dual pantheon can be found in ancient Rome and India and indeed throughout the Indo-European world. These facts are important because they stress what many of us have long felt--that, although the ways of the gods of frenzy and force on one hand and the gods of increase and love on the other seem to be contradictory and antagonistic, this is only an illusion. In actuality they are complementary aspects balancing a greater whole. The old myths recognized this truth, for they made the Aesir and the Vanir compatible allies with many ties and shared functions to bind them into a harmonious unity.

Even though there is no real hostility between the two great families of gods and goddesses, people in the old days found that often they would be more strongly attracted to the worship of one group or the other, due to personal temperament and inclination. This is so even today, among those who follow the old faith. One purpose in writing this article was to provide a basic and definitive source of information for those who feel an affinity for the Vanir and who wish to pursue further the study of the old Vanir-faith.

The religion of old Scandinavia--called Asatrú, and including both the Aesir and the Vanir cults--was thriving throughout the early Pagan period and into the Viking Age (about 793 C.E. to 1066 C.E.). But then the Northlands were converted to Christianity, despite the stalwart struggle of many who wished to keep the faith of their forefathers. Followers of the old gods and goddesses who would not convert were killed, maimed, or exiled. The repression was tremendous, and partly successful--our knowledge of pre-Christian religion is forever impaired because so much was destroyed. But all vestiges of the old religion, and the impulses which had made that religion relevant to the people, could not be crushed.

Devotion to the Vanir proved to be more enduring than that of the Aesir. Odin was the god of the rulers, and the rulers were highly visible--they were the first to be converted or killed. Thor was the god most frequently placed in opposition to Christ, so his devotees too were visible and thus vulnerable. The Vanir, though, were more deeply rooted in the psychic world of the farmer who lived by the cycle of the seasons and the Rhythms of Nature. The religious revolution took time to reach the peasant's level, and open Vanir worship continued for quite a while after the temples of the Aesir had been desecrated and destroyed. Just as guerrilla fighters make use of isolated and remote areas for their operations against distant authority, so Frey and Freya survived via a sort of spiritual guerilla warfare in the places where the power of the Church could not easily reach. When the religious Establishment extended its control to even these remote areas, the old beliefs simply went underground in the form of folk traditions. The old gods and goddesses were largely crushed from the people's conscious awareness, but they were always just below the surface in what Jungian psychologists would call the collective unconscious, waiting for release. Tyrants may kill any form of open religious expression, but they cannot kill the impulses which were responsible for that expression unless they change the very nature of the people themselves. So, remains of the old Vanir worship have persisted right down to the present--often incorporated into official Christianity. The pagan lustrations of the fields now became the *bleating* of the fields, but the essence behind the labels remained the same. Even now we speak of Mother Earth--a decidedly non-Christian term, yet one so embedded in our collective unconscious that a thousand years of Christianity have not been able to erase it from common usage.

But things are changing. At last the time has come for the return of the Vanir from their long exile. The alien belief of Christianity has proven itself unable to meet the desires and needs of the Northern European soul, and we stand on the verge of a spiritual rebirth. Our instincts and emotions, so long repressed

by a moral code not in harmony with our innermost selves, are ready for freedom and rebalancing. Nature, bruised and beaten by those who had no reverence for her, needs the succoring of us, her children, if we are to avoid Terricide. The world calls out in travail, and our people who have slumbered so long will awaken to the rediscovery of the old gods and goddesses who will teach us joy, love, fulfillment, and awareness of ourselves and Nature of which we are a part.

A WOMAN'S PLACE.....

There are few religions in the world today which offer women a full participation in spiritual life as co-equal partners in divinity. Asatru in general, but particularly the Vanir-faith, is one such religion.

The great monotheistic religions, and especially those based on the Old Testament--Christianity, Judaism and Islam--have a rather poor record in regard to women. While, to be fair, they have not been entirely anti-female, there is a strong tendency in these religions to regard women as inferior to men, as blemished creatures which are somehow less true expressions of the godhead than their male companions. Gratian, in the 12th century, went so far as to say that "Man, but not woman, is made in the image of God. It is plain from this that woman should be subject to their husbands, and should be as slaves." No less an authority than Saint Paul wrote that man reflects God's glory, while woman is but the reflection of man's glory. The result of this unfair attitude is still with us today--it is only in the last few years that women have been considered for the clergy in any major Christian denomination; Judaism and Islam have been even more recalcitrant in this regard.

Why have women been treated as second-class worshippers by Establishment religion?

The most important reason lies in the simple fact that these religions do not have a goddess! Although the God of these faiths is usually admitted to be a purely spiritual being and thus sexless, in actual practice he is habitually thought of as being male. Since the concept of the deity was solely masculine, women were by implication not like God. The purest spark of divinity was forever denied them.

Another reason for women's lowly status can be found in Old Testament lore. Serious doubt existed as to whether women had souls--after all, God had breathed a soul into Adam in the Genesis account of creation, but not into Eve. As silly as this may sound even to devout Christians today, it was a matter of official argument among the Church fathers as recently as the sixth century. Similarly, Paul refers to the Genesis account when he wrote that "Man did not come from woman; no, woman came from man [by way of Adam's rib]; and man was not created for the sake of woman, but woman was created for the sake of man." The skeptic can try to dismiss this as primitive mythologizing, but even the informed agnostic must admit that myths offer insight into the psychology of any people.

Contrast all this with the attitude toward women found in many pagan religions, and specifically in the pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia. Just as man was a reflection of the male deity, so a woman was a reflection of the great and holy goddess. Women and men were equally expressions of divinity. The religious system was much more balanced, more holistic. After all, as occultist Dion Fortune once remarked, a religion without a goddess is half way to atheism!

The Norse myth about the creation of human life leaves no room for the abuses encouraged by the Genesis story. According to the *Edda*,

"As the sons of Bor [Odin, Hoernir, Lóðurr] strolled along the deep sea strand they stumbled across two logs of driftwood and picked them up and whittled them into humankind. The first son gave them soul and life; the second, understanding and the power to feel; the third, form and the faculties of speech, hearing and sight. They gave them clothing and called them by their names, the man Ash and the woman Elm. These two brought to birth all mankind who were given a dwelling place in Midgard."

Regardless of how one interprets these lines, it is clear that life--or spirit, or soul--was bestowed equally on male and female, not merely on the man. And it is also clear that Embla was not created secondarily, from Ask's side, nor simply to please him, in the manner that Eve was formed to solve Adam's loneliness. Although man and woman were made as a complementary pair, and it is reasonable that the fulfillment of one should be in the other, neither one was meant to enslave the other nor to be subservient to the other.

The ultimate proof of this theological viewpoint lies in how it affected the lot of women in Norse society. And the truth is far different from the over-worked stereotypes crammed into our heads in movies and popular fiction, where Vikings are crude, inconsiderate barbarians and their women are rather dumb but statuesque sex objects. In reality the Viking woman enjoyed legal rights similar to those of her male counterparts. She could divorce her husband, own property, and receive an inheritance. The household was her private domain and she ruled it absolutely; the keys she wore at her waist were the symbol of her domestic authority. Shrinking violet? Helpless? Pliable? Let anyone who believes this make a study of the sagas. The strong and forceful women found therein were fitting mates for their strong and forceful men.

Asatru, and especially the Vanir-faith, is strongly in favor of women's rights. As Snorri Sturluson had Odin say in *The Prose Edda*, "Not less holy are the Asynjur, the goddesses, and they are of no less authority [than the gods]." This does not necessarily mean that we accept the more radical feminist arguments which often seem to originate from a hatred of men more than a desire for equality, but it does mean that women are accepted as partners with equal rights. It also means that men who follow our faith are secure enough in their masculinity not to be threatened by women who are other than dependent and helpless.

Freya and Frey resolve the bitter fighting between the sexes that has become so prominent in the last few years, combining the best parts of tradition and of the women's movement. Men and women are seen as vessels and reflections of Freya and Frey respectively, and the proper relationship between the two is the joyful celebration of each other's indwelling divinity.

A "woman's place"? If a woman hasn't found her place in the Establishment religions, we invite her into sistership with Freya and our other goddesses, of the Vanir and Aesir alike!



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NEWS

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