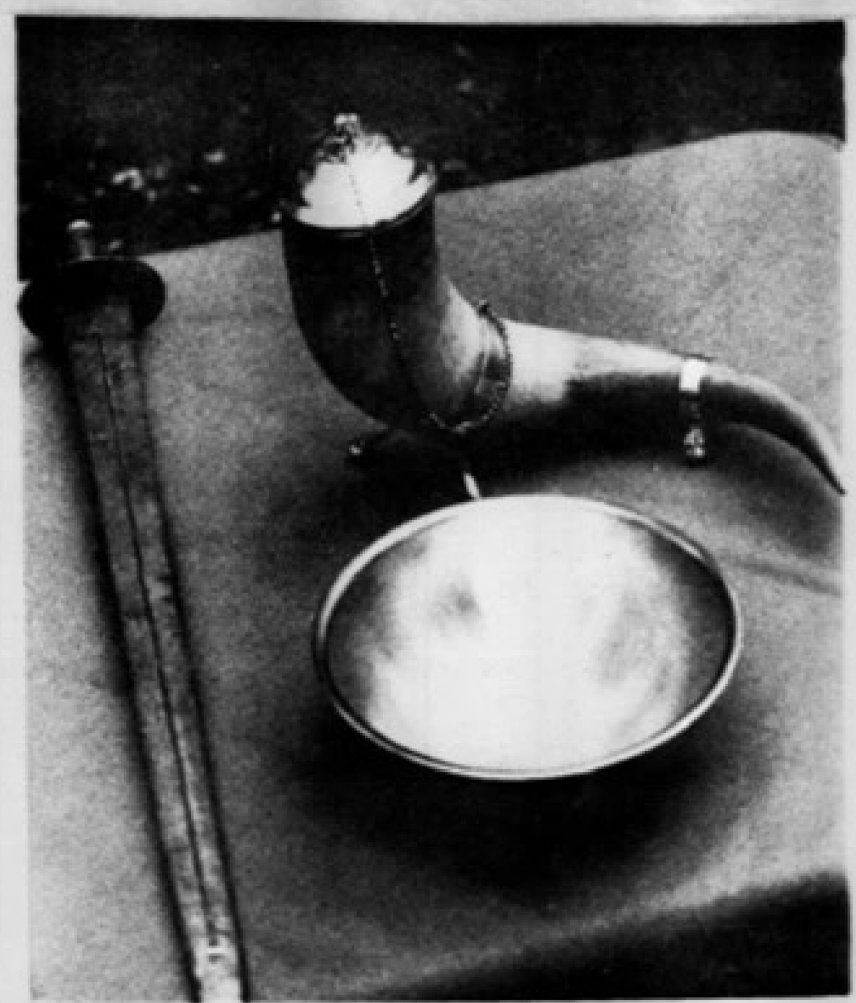




THE RUNESTONE



THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the pagan Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the revival of the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

THE RUNESTONE is the official publication of the Viking Brotherhood and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$3.00 per year. Write Stephen A. McNallen, 2021 Channing Way, Apt. 8, Berkeley, CA 94704. Please make checks payable to "Viking Brotherhood".

NORSE NOTES

This issue of *The Runestone* is reaching you a couple of weeks late for a very special reason--we wanted to include news concerning our *Odin-Blót* and other important events of great significance.

The Viking Brotherhood is now represented on the Berkeley Area Interfaith Council. More importantly, two new *gothar* were consecrated. Jim Davis is now authorized to conduct rituals in Los Angeles, and Shawn O'Riley is authorized to do so in San Diego. We are indeed growing!

The Viking Brotherhood is issuing a complete handbook on the Norse Religion, in installments. The first such installment is the text of the *Odin-Blót*, which is available at this time for 20¢. Other installments include the *Thor-Blót*, *Frey-Blót*, and essays titled "The Viking Brotherhood" and "Gods and Worlds: Another Look at Reality". These have been completed in draft form and will be available by the time the next issue of *The Runestone* is ready. A number of other essays will be included, along with a full array of rituals, to complete the handbook.

* * * * *

The following pagans are looking for contacts in their areas:

Clarke Dunlop
3825 Bluff Place, No. 10
Point Fermin, CA 90731

Patricia L. Potter
81 Stein Avenue
Wallington, NJ 07057

Isaac Moll
c/o Virginia L. Calvert
P.O. Box 608
Soap Lake, WA 98851

Michael Hayden
919 Ave. C,
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

ODIN-BLÓT!

On March 20, 1977 C.E., the Berkeley skeppslag performed what was--so far as we know--the first public ritual honoring Odin in the United States. At any rate, it was certainly the first performance of the newly-devised *Odin-Blót*, or sacrifice to Odin.

We of the Viking Brotherhood decided that while blood sacrifice may or may not be "wrong", it is not necessary, it is impractical, and could be taken by the uninformed to indicate appeasement or subservience to our gods. What is sacrificed in the new *Odin-Blót* is the human efforts and the devotion of the participants. Aside from the lack of blood, though, the ceremony is as faithful as possible to the ancient ritual: the god is invoked, the spiritual sacrifice takes place, and mead rather than blood is poured into the sacrificial bowl and sprinkled about by the use of an evergreen bough to bless the people assembled.

The ceremony was advertised in advance by posters, and press releases were issued. Notices were sent to Scandinavian fraternal and social organizations as well.

Press coverage of this event to date has consisted of a large feature article in the *Berkeley Gazette*, another article in *Vestkusten*, and several blurbs in other publications. Two other articles are pending at this writing. We estimate that several thousand people who had never heard of our organization prior to this event are now aware of our existence.

About seventy-five people were present at the *Blót*, including visitors from Los Angeles and San Diego.

The Berkeley skeppslag plans to perform this sacrifice on a regular basis from now on, to provide a firm ritual base for local Odinist activities and to allow frequent opportunities for Odinists to get together socially.

NEW GOTHAR COMMISSIONED

Shortly after the *Odin-Blót* on March 20, two new *gothar* were commissioned to serve the fledgeling Odinist communities in southern California. These new *gothar* are Jim Davis, who will represent the Viking Brotherhood in Los Angeles, and Shawn O'Riley, who will serve in San Diego. Both men have repeatedly and over a period of time demonstrated their knowledge, competence, and their desire to serve as *gothar*.

The ceremony of commissioning was serious without being overly formal, consisting of brief talks to the candidates stressing the importance of their new role and its responsibilities, followed by an oath sworn on the sword and an oath to the drinking of mead from a common horn. Stephen McNallen, *gothi* of the Berkeley skeppslag, administered the rite.

We have the utmost confidence in these men, and know that they will serve the growing Odinist cause well in their respective areas.

THE NORSE FILM AND PAGEANT SOCIETY

If you've ever wanted to don the garb of the Viking Age and participate in spectacular battles, or sit around a banquet table with your fellow warriors drinking horns of mead, or generally had the urge to get some practical experience in how the Vikings' lifestyle really felt--well, now you can!

The Norse Film and Pageant Society is an English-based group, with a "Vinland Fylking" responsible for the U.S., which does exactly this sort of thing. NFPS's purpose, apart from providing culturally-oriented and educational fun for its members, is to recreate battles for pageants, public events of all sorts, or even, should the opportunity arise, for movies. Other activities include feasts, camping trips, or whatever else the imagination and ambition of the members can produce.

Now, please note: NFPS is not an Odinist religious group. It is a society quite similar to the Society for Creative Anachronism and other medievalist-oriented organizations. On the other hand, I would imagine many Odinists would be interested in its activities. You can be a combatant or a non-combatant, man or woman, so long as you're eighteen years old or older.

I personally was attracted to the NFPS because it specializes in the Viking era and because it is remarkably free of bureaucracy and general nonsense. Moreover, NFPS is a relatively new group, and it's fun getting in on the ground floor of such things--more chance to innovate.

NFPS members make their own equipment or purchase it through suppliers. Basic costumes can be easily made, and weapons, helms, and the like can be obtained from very excellent smiths for reasonable fees. Armor had best be sturdy; weapons practice is done with axe-handles or similar pieces of wood, and mock battle and demonstration work is done with bare steel! Thanks to common sense safety rules and practice, injuries are kept to a minimum.

I am in the process of organizing a *sveitar*, or basic local group of NFPS, here in Berkeley, and you may want to do the same in your area.

If NFPS interests you, write to:

Vinland Fylking, N.F.P.S.
c/o Howard Major, Jr.
1223 Westfall Ave.
San Antonio, Texas 78210

Howard (AKA Hereward of Vinland) will be more than glad to provide you with information and application blanks.

WHICH FUTURE?

An issue of *Penthouse* magazine some while back featured an excellent interview with Gene Roddenberry, the TV personality made famous by the *Star Trek* series. At one point, when asked what sort of a future he predicted for the human race, Roddenberry's comments were relevant to our Odinist religion. He believes that the organism which will replace man in the evolutionary sequence is already here among us--the socio-organism, the collective body of which we are (according to Roddenberry and other such theorists) each merely cells. As he says, "In Red China they are teaching the very lessons that our bodies have taught to their cells--that we can no longer exist for ourselves. We must exist for the whole. But you can see the same thing in the United States. People now live the corporate morality. If I join a corporation, my duty is to the corporation. If the corporation says lie, cheat, steal, move here, do that, I must do it because my duty is to the whole." He foresees "a time in which the independent individual will have totally vanished and this planet will be inhabited by totally specialized cells who function as part of these giant, living things."

Now Roddenberry, as revealed by the rest of the interview, is an intelligent and thoughtful individual. Nor is this particular view of the future unique--the Jesuit paleontologist-philosopher Teilhard de Chardin shared these ideas, along with many mystics and political philosophers. These ideas cannot be lightly dismissed. Too many fields of thought, from the biological to the religious to the political, have arrived at a similar prognosis for mankind. It seems that there is either an evolutionary thrust in this direction, or, what I consider more likely, there is a concerted effort being made to impose this future on the human race.

Perhaps we should take all of this in the most literal sense possible and consider that there might come a stage where the group rather than the individual is the center of consciousness and of volition, via a mind-link of which telepathy is only a rudimentary form. Should this occur--and it is predicted by some--then humanity will have ceased to exist.

It is our clear duty as Odinists to oppose this annihilation of human freedom. All that we oppose in our religious life--egalitarianism, suppression of healthy self-interest, meekness, tyrannical political structures, the dissolution of self by drugs or mysticism--all of these things are instrumental to the formation of this super-entity, this mass mind foreseen by these visionaries. In opposing these leveling beliefs, we are fighting the manipulators who would supplant the human species with the monster.

The burden is upon us. Please do not consider all this to be merely an exercise in speculative thinking. Each and every one of us, in our own way, in our daily life and in the constant exercise of our religion, must strive to defeat those forces which would destroy us. More positively, we must each fight without ceasing for the preservation of our freedom, our independence, and the continued existence of our species.

ODINISM AND ECONOMICS

More than a few utopian economic schemes have been devised by those who claim to speak for Odinism, for the Western cultural tradition, for the Indo-European peoples, and the like. The people who make these proposals have many things in common. Odinism is the religion indigenous to Northern Europe. The Western cultural tradition springs largely from the Northern Europeans. The Indo-European peoples are the people of Northern Europe. All these categories deal with the same basic cultural material, but are splintered into scores of sects divided on almost everything else. Exponents of each orientation--religious, cultural, and ethnic, claim priority for their particular way of assembling and interpreting the facts.

In this article I would like to take one of these interpretations, namely, the religious one, and plead its supremacy as a valid way of formulating an economic system which is in accordance with the basic cultural values of our people.

Religion is a basic, primordial force. The old idea of the rationalists who wrote off religion as a primitive attempt to explain the universe, as a superstition of no value, and as something which could be banished by education, is dead in the light of today's knowledge. Psychology, at least in the Jungian school, has discovered the amazing depth and content of the collective unconscious. Symbols which once were thought to be nothing but primitive creations are now found to be vital, recurring entities somehow tied in with man's essential being. No longer are symbols, especially the great archetypes, merely artificial and external to man. They are more real than ever before.

Religion, springing as it does from the depths of the human mind, is no longer an artificial construction which can be swept away. It relates to our very being and to our genetic makeup, according to Jung himself. Religion deals with the basic archetypal symbols to be found in the collective unconscious and thus takes primacy over other forms of expression.

This is not to say that folkways such as economic systems, forms of government, and the like are not also closely associated with the unconscious of a people. These, however, are open to outside influences which do not touch the depths of the psyche. The great archetypes and other religious manifestations which are indeed of the collective unconscious of a people (as opposed to those externals which may be importations from another culture) ride undisturbed beneath the surface, much as a submarine is spared the changes of the weather on the surface of the sea.

If, then, we read arightly the religion of a people, we have a key to other facts of their natural culture--to include economics, the subject of this article. It is my desire here to study the religion of the people of ancient Scandinavia to indicate their "true" or "natural" economic traits, and to draw examples from history.

Where, then, are we to seek our data? Our information on the pagan period of our people, the time before their conquest by the alien teachings of Christianity, is limited. We have some early information from the writings of Julius Caesar and from Tacitus, but between that era and the age of the Vikings we have very little. Beginning about the ninth century, non-Christian Northern Europeans--the Vikings--were again on history's stage, and the greater bulk of our knowledge of Germanic heathendom comes from that era. Some of the later evidence surely

has some Christian influence, but a careful study of the material available to us should enable us to separate the wheat from the chaff. Therefore I propose to use the Viking Age as the source for my inquiries. Some may argue that this choice represents too small a base, that it is biased by the turmoil, the sociological stress of the age. I reject this; turmoil and war have always been a factor among us--whether it was directed inwardly or outwardly. The great folk wanderings of the Migration Age, and the wanderings across the plains of Asia before that, all had elements similar in essence to the Viking Age. During the Viking Age as well as in the Continental phase of Northern European paganism, the agricultural and pastoral life continued alongside the warrior ethic and the life of the raider. We draw our heritage from both sources, without strain or contradiction. The two aspects are complementary.

One characteristic of our people which seems to spring from their deepest religious instincts is their individualism and self-assertion. Unlike most peoples, they did not consider themselves to be the slaves of their gods, but rather considered the gods to be their friends or their kin--after all, was not Odin called All Father? This concept of Odin as the celestial father must be put in the context of the Norse family to be properly understood. A manly obstreperousness was considered preferable in a small child to submissiveness; it showed that the child had a will and spirit of his own. One can conclude that an analogous relationship was valid between the human and the divine. H. R. Ellis Davidson expressed another angle of this same trait when she remarked that the worship of Thor was well suited to the man who was not used to too much direction from above. We who are indoctrinated in the values of the Judeo-Christians often forget that the very Semitic word for "worship" is related to the word meaning "slave", and it is sometimes hard for us to realize that our own ancestors had a radically different concept, one which did not smother liberty.

Historically, this religious principle was best expressed by a meeting between the Vikings of Hrolf the Ganger and an emissary of the Franks. The latter asked who they were, and they replied, "We are Danes, carried hither from Denmark. We come to conquer France." Asked under what name their leader acted, the Danes replied, "Under none, for we are all of equal authority." They are later asked by the Franks, "Will you bow the neck to Charles, king of France, and turn to his service and receive from him all possible favors?" They replied, "We shall never submit to anyone at all, nor ever cleave to any servitude, nor accept favors from anyone. That favor pleases us best which we win for ourselves with arms and toil of battles."

This was the ideal. It was not always observed, for eventually Rollo gave in to the king of France (had he been softened by Christianity in the meantime?) and "put his hands between the king's hands, which not his father nor his grandfather nor his great-grandfather had ever done to anybody." The Norseman refused, however, to kiss the king's foot but finally agreed to have his representative do so. Instead of groveling before the king, however, this son of Odin reached down, grabbed the king's foot, and elevated it to his mouth, dumping the French monarch on his royal dignity!

It was this same love of independence and hatred of domination which caused many jarls and independent freemen to flee Norway rather than submit themselves to Harald Finehair when he consolidated his control over that country. The government which these refugees then set up in Iceland could well serve us all as a model form which epitomized this particular pagan value. The essence of the Icelandic free state was so individualistic that there was no sovereign as such, nor was there a standing army, executive branch, or a bureaucracy. All these

traits endured only so long as paganism remained the religion of the people. The conversion to Christianity brought about changes in attitude which destroyed all that.

Still another link between Scandinavian paganism and this spirit of liberty is evidenced by the resistance offered to Olaf Tryggvason in his efforts to forcibly Christianize Norway. Opposition to Olaf, the saga account makes clear, was based both on religious grounds and on the fact that he was behaving the tyrant in other ways, seeking to break the power of the landed men of the country.

It is a commonly cited fact that the key military weakness of the Vikings was their inability to follow orders blindly, and this fault probably lost them many battles. On the other hand, their urge to prove themselves by individual battle prowess accounted for staggering sums of casualties among their enemies!

Another basic trait of our Norse ancestors, and one which seems in contradiction to their marked sense of liberty and individualism, is their sense of kinship among members of the clan, or extended family. The family was the basic unit of Norse society. Things which could be done with impunity to an outsider became great crimes if perpetrated against a fellow family member. The lowest approbation was reserved for the man or woman who deserted a kinsman in time of need. Decisions were made in regard to the family as a whole rather than in regard to the individual, and there was a certain degree of subordination of personal interests for the group of which one was a part. At the same time, this was not necessarily the smothering, spineless conformity that one might expect to find, as is shown by the aforementioned stubbornness expected in (especially) the male child. A sort of balance seems to have been sought, and usually found.

This kinship bond could be either natural or artificial--one could either be born into the kin group or accepted into it in a rite of blood-brotherhood. Both types of kinship were sanctified by the mythology of the Norse religion--the first type by the family organization of the gods, and the second by the blood-brotherhood shared by Odin and Loki (a feature which probably saved Loki a lot of harsh treatment).

What were the beliefs of the Norsemen concerning human differences, "equality" and egalitarianism? From the Eddas as well as from historical sources, it seems that great differences in human capabilities and qualities were recognized. The Lay of Rig in the Poetic Edda clearly reinforces a class system of the thrall, freeman, and aristocrat; those who preach a classless society will have to look elsewhere than in the Norse religion to justify their cause. Differences in personal qualities were clearly recognized, else the constant exhortations to courage, to nobility, and to greatness would have been pointless. From the reply of Hrolf's Vikings to the Frank emissary, "We are all equal," it is indicated that insofar as authority went, no one commanded total obedience. Because of the context, this cannot be taken as egalitarianism as it is known today.

While the Vikings were hardly egalitarian, at the same time they were not totally class conscious. A verse in the Eddas warns us that there is no man so bad that no good can be found in him, and none so great that he is without fault. Viking chieftains who earned a reputation for haughtiness and who did not give a man due respect were not well thought of, and the son of the aristocrat was not above taking his turn at the oar along with his followers. Thralls, who often were prisoners taken in war, were considered to be little more than animals, but the relationship between the free farmers and the wealthier landed men was more

complex. Mutual respect was required, and the power of the aristocrats was carefully circumscribed by law and custom.

Yet another Viking trait, one shared by other Germanic cousins, was loyalty to one's chieftain or war leader. This loyalty has been used by some to verify what they call a "leader principle", with the implication that a leader's word is absolute law and that, in effect, this leader principle confers dictatorial powers. Two things must be remembered in any discussion of this subject. For one thing, rulership was by the consent of those who were ruled. Kingship was not automatically conferred on the sons of kings, even though in early Germanic society the number of candidates was more or less limited. Leadership was reserved for those who were capable and trusted, descent aside. Without the approval of the freemen, no one could lead. Such a system works well on a local level, or when a tribe is relatively small. Could the leader of a modern nation be so chosen? I doubt it.

As another factor, one finds upon close examination that loyalty to a chosen leader was due largely to the importance attached to one's oath, and a reluctance to break that oath even to forswear commitment to a leader who has, in one's opinion, proven unworthy. It would be an error to view Germanic/Norse loyalty as mere slavishness. History is full of examples in the Viking Age where an emergent leader was voted out of power--or, more likely, merely defied or disobeyed--when he proved incapable. Such lack of a controlled and disciplined force in military affairs probably cost the Vikings any number of battles. Individual prowess and heroism was still the order of the day.

The religion of the Norsemen was closely tied to nature, as was their daily life. The turning of the seasons was celebrated by great religious festivals. The gods were, on one level of reality, personifications of the natural forces which surrounded man. An affinity developed between man and the soil which is perhaps hard for urban, rootless man to understand, and man, the earth, and the ancestors were all parts of the milieu which was the world.

What sort of an economy, what sort of a lifestyle, what form of government can we find which is consistent with these deepest-rooted values, these eternal truths of our people? Having somewhat defined these values, we will compare these with existing political and economic forms in our next issue.



ON INDIVIDUALITY

The idea is often encountered, when reading books on Eastern or occult philosophy, that the concept of discrete individuality is invalid. The opinion is offered that the "I" is ever changing and fluid; that, for example, we have nothing in common with the entity that we were at the age of seven except continuity, more or less, of memory. The very substance of our physical body has cycled in that intervening period due to the death and replacement of individual body cells. We are, by this way of looking at man, serial creatures to whom the label of a permanent individuality cannot be applied.

Completely aside from any idea of a non-material individual spiritual essence, I wish to challenge such an idea. I maintain that the genetic pattern of each individual provides that essence which establishes the uniqueness and individuality of each person. What a person does with that genotype determines how he uses his "destiny". In fact, might we not here have a workable definition of destiny as the genotypic possibility which the individual can either fulfill or not? There is no supernatural punishment for failing to fulfill this destiny, no bad karma. Free will is supreme within the outlines of one's potential. However, one who blatantly goes against his own dispositions (read: fails to fulfill his destiny) might turn out a bit neurotic.

This view of man, based on biology rather than abstract philosophical speculation, allows man the individuality that some other systems of thought would deny him. It is a view which should be used to oppose the anti-individualists, for if we can be convinced that we have no individuality we can be persuaded to embrace slavery.



BOOK REVIEW - *HAMMER OF THE NORTH* by Magnus Magnusson

Hammer of the North is a beautiful book for two reasons: most obviously for the most breathtaking photography I have ever found in a book about the Vikings, but, more importantly, for the remarkable text in which Magnusson manages to so very successfully capture the spirit, the very *feeling*, of the Viking outlook.

So many books about the culture and mythology of the North end up giving an almost rote recitation of the principal myths and the usual descriptions of the gods and goddesses and their functions. Though Magnusson does not ignore this information, and in fact expands upon it with the necessary historical context, a very great part of his book deals with *how* the Norsemen worshipped and the spirit of the heroic concept of life. Moreover, he does this from a wholly sympathetic viewpoint to the extent that one almost questions if he might not be an Odinist in disguise.

One of the darker areas into which Magnusson sheds light is the realm of human sacrifice in the ancient religion of the North. He cites evidence at some length which confirms what many of us already knew or suspected--namely, that human sacrifices were, more often than not, capital punishment meted out to criminals whose offences warranted death.

We highly recommend this book; it's 128 pages of great material.

You can perhaps find it at your library or at a local bookstore, or you can order it directly from the publisher, G. P. Putnam's Sons, at 200 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

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Stephen A. McNallen
2021 Channing Way, Apt. 8
Berkeley, CA 94706



Oceano Americana
P.O. Box 667
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