

# WIR RANSTIIT

SUMMER 1973 - - - THE RUNESTONE - - - VOLUME 2 NO 2



Tim Beane

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the old Norse religion and is dedicated to revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the revival of the values of courage, freedom and personal independence which are associated with it. The Runestone is the official publication of the Viking Brotherhood and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$2.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada, \$3.00 per year overseas. Write THE RUNESTONE, Box 2552, Wichita Falls Texas 76307.

!!!!!!!!!!!! NOTICE !!!!!!!!!!!!!

We at The Runestone thought we would remind you that Edison Marshall's book THE VIKING has been reprinted in the paperback form by Avon Books, The Hearst Corporation, 959 Eighth Ave, New York, NY

GET OUT THERE AND BUY ----- PAGANS

ODIN LIVES! bumper stickers are back in sale for \$4 a piece.

The THOR'S hammer's are at the moment are difficult to get our jeweler has moved. But he left the equipment with the Runestone and will be in production again very soon. To those who ordered before I am sorry for the delay but the hammers miss cast three times. In the future there will be no more delays.

A SPECIAL THANKS FOR TIM HEERS'S ILLUSTRATION OF THE COVER AND THROUGH OUT THE ISSUE.

The Editor

#### A Viking Prayer

Included in this issue of The Runestone is a Viking prayer. We have no way of knowing how closely it may resemble any prayer actually uttered by a grizzled Norseman preparing to do battle, but this is not really relevant. The important thing is that it expresses in highest form the beauty of the Norse religion - in it is found the simplicity, the bravery, and the self-reliance which made the Viking way great.

In it you will find no appeal to a higher being for safety or for victory. This alone makes the Viking prayer unique, at least as compared to anything extant today. Christian prayers are usually full of breast beatings, the repressed fears of hell or of temporal failure, and the terrors of death - there is none of this in our prayer. The Viking must overcome his fear of death by his own sheer strength, not by leaning on Christian anasthetics. We ask no favors of our gods, for this would make us dependent on them and indebted to them, and such is the anathema of freedom and the Norse religion. About the closest thing to the Norse prayer which comes to mind is an anecdote told about General George Patton. It was a well known fact that the general prayed before going into battle, and it was once asked of him if it was for victory that he prayed. He replied "No, I prayed that I might try my best," or words to that effect. Even this valorous kind of prayer falls short of the spirit found in the Viking Prayer.

It is true that at times the Vikings would petition their gods, in much the Christian manner. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this is in the true pagan tradition, as most of our records were taken down by Christians or at least partly - Christianized Scandinavians. One report of praying (petitioning) pagans deals with merchants praying to pray for good business. Surely this is indefensible, but it must be recognized that merchants are not warrior's and cannot be expected to live by a warrior's standards.

It would be easy for us to cast blame on our predecessors, but perhaps it is easier in this day and time to see just what we have lost. Our ancestors were brave men and true, but philosophical abstractions just were not their horn of mead. They could not force the monster that Christianity would become, or shry the form that the Frost Giants of collectivism would take in their assault on the individualism of the Vikings of today. We have no such excuse, and thus our responsibility is all the greater. Perhaps in some small way the Viking prayer will help us to fulfill that responsibility.

© And father ODIN, watch me as  
I carry on this fight, but do not risk me  
or grant strength to my arm, nor speed  
to my wound-maker, for the fight must  
be mine. I do not bend my knee to you,

As the Christians do to their god, but  
I cry out in joy to you as a battle-  
friend. If you hear me, salute me when  
I fall in the fray, and have your Vikings  
bear me to Valhalla and prepare for me a  
mead horn. The spirit of your mighty sons must  
be kept alive, that men might be free, and it is for  
this that I fight!

#### Heroes and Heroism

Heroism is a word which is bounced about a lot when talking about our religious ancestors, and perhaps it is time that we got down to defining what it is we are talking about. What is heroism, anyway? What makes a man a hero? Are heroes relevant or even desirable in a society like that which we have today? What about present-day heroes?

The dictionary isn't much help when we try to get a precise definition of a hero. Webster's gives a great number of meanings for the word, so many that it is pointless to list them all here. Suffice to say that a great number of meanings of "heroism" are possible. Yet this is ducking the point - what we want to know about Viking heroes. After all, the Greeks had heroes and countries today have what are called heroes, too. What is the difference?

Broadly speaking, a hero is one who displays great courage, ability, strength and the like. The soldier, the astronaut, the poet - all of these can be, and often have been, the heroes of their respective audiences. But all this is still much too imprecise for our purpose and again we must ask, "What about Viking heroism?" Sure, the Vikings valued courage, ability, and strength, but so have a great many other peoples throughout history. What sets us apart?

Edith Hamilton, the popular writer on mythology, seems to have the answer, and the answer is to be found in the Norse gods. You see, the Norse gods are in many respects different from the gods of most other peoples in that they are so humans-like. True, they are larger than-life, but they differ from mortal men more in sheer magnitude than they do in essence. They bicker and quarrel, drink mead, make love, and in general behave quite a lot like super-humans rather than superhumans. And herein lies the key - they are not invincible. They can be defeated and outsmarted, and in fact the prophecy of the seeress states that some bleak day they will be defeated in thunderous battle with evil monsters. It is this very vulnerability that makes them heroic. No immortal god, no invincible Olympian deity who can never know defeat or death can ever be a hero in the Norse sense of the term, because he can never know courage or perseverance - he has no need of these. What glory is there to battle if you are taking no risk of death or injury? What thrill can struggle hold for the unbeatable? He who knows no danger knows no valor.

A great responsibility is ours, a great load has been placed on us - namely, to insure that the spirit of heroism in its purest and finest form does not disappear under the assaults of its enemies. This times imperil its survival as they have never done before, and our task is clear. We are not alone, though, as there are many outside our religion who feel as we do and who would not see the spirit of the heroes vanish. Nevertheless, we must become the seedbed and spiritual source of such a revival, as it seems no one else will. The hero - brave in battle; true to his word, noble of character must not disappear from this beleaguered world. We must carry on that heritage handed us by those who have gone before us. Remember, the Vikings provided the basis for what later became chivalry.



#### LETTERS TO ODIN

Dear ODIN,

Can you believe it? Someone who doesn't know the way we think accused us of worshipping you! I wonder what sort of person it takes to demean their god by worshipping him, thus making him into nothing more than a keeper of slaves. Or maybe a keeper of sheep would be a better analogy (don't the followers of one god even take pride in calling their god a shepherd in their fables? What a low opinion they must have of him, or of themselves, or both). We Vikings will never make you into such a lowly sort, Odin. It's not that we deny your greatness at all, but to worship you, to grovel on bended knee to you, would insult you and shame us, and destroy the very things in which we believe. No problem though - we Norsemen don't grease our knees.

Dear ODIN,

They were putting out the line the other day that pagan myths were far out and silly, totally unbelievable, and patently non-real. They said that any reasonable person will stick to the good old and sane Christian faith. But I couldn't find anyone who could explain to me why angels were real but Valkyries were impossible, or how Jesus drove out demons but THOR couldn't have killed trolls because there aren't any such creatures. Or why warriors don't go to Valhalla but saints go to heaven, or why you are myth but their god is for real.

#### A DEFINITION OF MYTH -- ANYONE'S RELIGION OTHER THAN YOUR OWN?

Pagans -- find others with your interest and start your own SIEPPSLAG. Write The Runestone for more information on the organization of the skeppslag and also for the formal rituals of PAGAN holiday.

Like his gods, the Horseman knows that it is his mortality which gives him the opportunity to be heroic. It is from this knowledge of the laissez-faire relationship between the modern Viking and his gods stems - if the Viking was under the protection of his gods, he could hardly be a hero.

This last statement perhaps shows why heroes in the Viking tradition are rare today. Men may accomplish great deeds of daring and bravery - after praying to their god for victory. They promise to do if it is their god's will. Should they be victorious, they give all of the credit and glory to their god, whose simple instrument they are. They proclaim that he is on their side and are confident that because of this they will conquer. What they have done, tragically, is to lower their status to that of mere things - to that of tools to be used by their god. No, the true heroic tradition is not to be found here.

Indeed, we seem to be living in a non (or anti!) heroic age. "Society" or "heredity" are assumed the total shapers of man's destiny and man is viewed as a helpless creature tossed about by forces beyond his comprehension and - oh, how I hate the phrase! - "Born into a world he never made." Having despaired because he was denied the privilege to choose his world before he was born into it, he lacks the sheer guts to make it over according to his desires once he has arrived. Instead of the builders and shapers, we seem to have an inordinate supply of crybabies who throw up their hands to "fate". Where are the men who declared defiantly that they were the masters of their fate and the captains of their souls? Movies and novels now have confused and catatonic anti-heroes rather than heroes, though there are some brilliant exceptions. But all in all heroes are losing ground. The anti-heroes have even enlisted science on their side with the work of behaviorist psychologists such as B.F. Skinner who declares that all we do is nothing more than a set of responses like those which motivated Pavlov's dogs. Freedom thus becomes an illusion and Skinner tells us there is no "autonomous man" within us who possesses free will. Since either blame or credit then becomes impossible, there can be no such thing as heroism. Skinner's theories assure a lot that they shouldn't, and overlook a wealth of data which would disprove him, but many people can be expected to be swayed by writing such as his.

One reason why heroism seems to be on the decline may lay in the egalitarian spirit and the ultrademocratization of our age. The masses, jealous of their newly-won status, do not want to see heroes because the existence of heroes implies that someone is actually better than another - and a thought like that they can't stand. As a result, they chop down heroes at every opportunity.

Where can heroism be found today? In the profession of arms, of course, and on the athletic field. These two are obvious and are more highly revered than others. Yet there is room for heroics in our daily lives, too - and each of us must seek it out as best we can. Even relatively mundane things can be done in a heroic fashion, though every person must try to add to his life those not so mundane features which will make life more exciting, more challenging - not heroic.

## Modern Witch Cults and the Horse Religion



The Runestone, as most of our readers have noticed, advertises largely in publication dealing with the psychic and with the various pagan and witch cults which have grown prominent during the last few years. One might well ask, then, what is the relationship of our revived Horse religion to those groups which it seems to resemble and in whose publications it advertises. In this article, we will compare the similarities and differences to be found between ourselves and the witchcraft movement of today.

First let us take the similarities. To begin with, both the Horse religion and the religion of the witches is non-Christian. This in itself is a strong identifying factor in many places of the world. What is "worse", we don't fit into Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Shinto, or any of the other accepted "major religions of mankind". According to adherents of some other creeds, we don't even officially exist. After all, doesn't everybody know that heathens don't have a religion?

In addition to being non-Christian, our two groups share a common history of persecution and violent repression. Murdered pagans, burned groves, and destroyed traditions mark the inroads of the cross into our territories. This, too, is a page of history that doesn't officially exist - the Church of the One True God can obviously not commit an evil act (act if there was anything wrong with burning heretics!).

Today, both of our religions are minority religions generally considered on the outer fringes of plausibility. Heaven and Hell are realities, but the idea of Valhalla or of benevolent witches is just too, too much.

As a last point of similarity, both witchcraft and the Horse religion admit to the existence of omens, psychic ability, and magic as a part of life.

But there are also differences between the Way of WICCA and the VIKING. A very basic one is that the witch cults are primarily esoteric, ours is mainly exoteric. Ours is or a hush-hush fraternity, are not hidden by symbolism least not to the depth that



pronounced difference and the Way of the is that the witch cults are not a secret society and our true doctrines or allegory, or at is found in the witch

Related to this is the different outlook we have on psychic phenomena. Though the Horsemen recognized the existence of such things, and despite the fact that they played an active and important part in his life, there was no conscious attempt to manipulate or to direct such forces. There were, to be sure, wise

men and women to whom one could go if it was necessary to see the future or to have an omen interpreted, but the Norsemen as a whole were not interested in developing such talents. In fact, many acts of magic were considered demeaning, something to be avoided by the warrior. In most other surviving pagan religions, much emphasis is placed on the acquisition of paranormal powers and on the working of magic, and such matters actually seem to dominate the whole of the religion.

There are profound philosophical differences between our way and the way of most of those who are a part of the occult resurgence. We are individualists, while mysticisms often deny that individuality, considering it an illusion. For this reason they tend to abhor violence, whereas we can be extremely violent and consider a death by fighting to be the best possible way to die.

Despite these differences, the various similarities - beings a minority, non-Christian religion - make it profitable for us to advertise in publications dealing with the occult and with witchcraft, because it is here that we may find large numbers of people who have become alienated from Christianity. Nevertheless, we must remember that we are different in many respects, with our own goals, ideas and identity which separate us from all others in the field.



Much of antiquity has been irrevocably lost, as any historian or archaeologist will readily agree. It is only in comparatively recent times that we have begun to realize just how far-flung were the adventuring expeditions of the Vikings. Saga accounts which describe what could only be a series of voyages to North America have been verified by remains found on that continent, and the possibility of Norse runestones as far afield as Oklahoma raise exciting questions. The theory that the feathered serpent god of the Incas, Quetzalcoatl, was a Viking is not a new one. Admittedly this is one heck of a long way from Scandinavia, but wait there is more! A recent article in Pate discusses reports of old ships, apparently of Viking and Spanish origin, which have been seen buried in the sand of the Imperial Valley in California. The idea of finding ships stranded in the desert is not so wacky as it might sound at first, since the Imperial Valley is located below sea level and until comparatively recent times the area was an inland arm of the sea.

That some of the ships that have been seen are of Viking origin is evidenced by the descriptions brought back by witnesses who have seen these mysterious hulks, now so far from their natural element. One Mrs. Botts of Julian, California, saw one of these vessels in what is not Desert State Park and, after carefully committing its appearance to memory, returned to the Julian public library and studied all the pictures of ships available there. It was her verdict that the ship, with its long, carved prow and places for shields along the gunwales was indeed a Viking Ship. Unfortunately, the artifact was buried in the Long Beach earthquake of March, 1933.

Around 1930 a man named Santiago Socia saw what may have been the same vessel, and said that carved into the rock near the ship was writing which was neither English nor Spanish. His description is quite similar to that of Mrs. Botts and others who have seen this and similar maritime artifacts in the area.

The traditions of several Indian tribes may corroborate these accounts, which by themselves would seem a little incredible. To quote the article, "Several Arizona tribes declare that a band of tall red-bearded white men, fierce fighters with spears and battle axes and protected by metal shirts" invaded them and forced them to mine gold and silver for them. They had arrived in a ship which sailed up a large river in the area, but were never to return to their home - they were gradually isolated and killed by the Indians. And to this day there are Indians in western Arizona who have blue eyes, red hair and light skin - the genetic remains of Northmen?

On the island of Tiburon in the Gulf of California live the last of the once-great tribe of the Seri. They, too, have a tradition of tall, fair men with white hair who came in a "long boat with a head like a snake" and eventually intermarried with the local population. The hereditary results are visible today in the few hundred surviving Seri.

What are we to make of all this? There is indeed fascinating evidence of a circumstantial nature to indicate that the sons of the Northland travelled much farther than scholars give them credit, and left their calling cards, which are still evident. Here is where the pedant must stop and the dreamer commence - what sights did these chronic wanderers see? What adventures what epic dramas were enacted under skies which had never seen the progeny of ODIN? How did they meet their end? How far from their home these hardy seamen carried their culture, their religion, their very world!

It is a pity that no records of these events survived years - if indeed, they were even set down. Surely a more rousing and thought provoking saga would be hard to find.

----- NOTICE -----

If anyone of our subscribers would like to contribute to The Runestone in the form of writings, illustrations and poetry. Please feel free to send your material to us. We will consider all manuscripts and drawings. The Editor and Illustrator is running out of ideas and would appreciate any help that can be offer. Again we reserve the right not to accept any manuscript that does not suit our purpose.



### The Midgard Serpent - Myth or Fact?

The very title of this article is unusual and provoking, for even among Viking enthusiasts surely few would hold to the Midgard Serpent, that ocean-dwelling denizen who was Thor's special antagonist, as being a real creature. Yet there are some interesting facts which should be mentioned in this regard, facts which may make the old myths seem a bit more alive and relevant - and a bit more literal.

Thor had several adventures in which the Midgard Serpent figured, probably the best known of which is related by Snorri. Thor, it is said, went disguised as a youth to visit the giant Hymir. As Hymir was a sea-giant, the god offered to go fishing with him, an offer which the giant accepted providing that Thor supplied the bait. The thunder-god complied by selecting the largest ox from among Hymir's private herd and decapitating it, the resulting head to be the bait. Venting far from shore they began to fish, and the ox-head was taken by the Midgard Serpent. Thor then threw off his disguise as a youth and exerted his godhood, hauling the Serpent out of the water and growing until his feet pierced the bottom of the boat and he was standing on the sea bottom. Hymir panicked and cut the fishing line just as Thor was preparing to deliver the Midgard Serpent a death blow with his hammer. The escape of the evil Serpent so angered Thor that he struck Hymir instead and angrily waded to shore.

The Eddic account is somewhat different, and has Thor and Tyre visit the giant, but, as there was nothing in the house to eat, they went fishing for food. The story follows much as in Snorri's account, but the line was not cut by the giant, though the Serpent manages to survive.

Several stone carvings depict this famous fishing trip. One such stone, now in the wall of Gosforth church, Cumberland, shows Thor with raised hammer and the giant, but the has not yet been taken by the World Serpent. Another in Altuna, Sweden, shows the Serpent on the line and Thor in the boat, one foot sticking through its bottom. In Hordern church, Denmark, a stone is more complete as it shows Hymir about to cut the fishing line on which the Serpent is caught.

All a ver charming storys, you may say, but what have they to do with reality? The old accounts may be valuable for exemplifying heroes and the Viking virtues, but that doesn't mean there were ever any World Serpents. Does it?



I would like to submit the theory, which may or may not be original, that the Midgard Serpent was none other than one of the species of "sea monsters" or "sea serpents" which have allegedly been seen by sailors down through the centuries and which are still being spotted today. Hundreds of such reports exist, most by veteran seamen who were thoroughly familiar with the oceans and not easily fooled by mundane phenomena.

Strangely enough, a large number of accounts of sea serpents come from Scandinavian waters. In his Mythical Monsters (published in 1886) Charles Gould comments that "The coast of Norway, deeply indented by fjords, the channels of which, for a certain breadth, have a depth equal to that of the sea outside, seldom less than four hundred fathoms, and corresponding in some degree with the height of the precipitous cliffs which endorse them, abounding in all kinds of fish, ... appears, until within the last thirty years, to have been peculiarly the favourite haunt of the serpent." He goes on to relate the opinion of the Pontoppidan, the Bishop of Bergen, who wrote the Natural History of Norway in 1755. Pontoppidan discounted all the stories of sea serpents until he heard "evidence from credible and experienced fishermen and sailors in Norway, of which there are hundreds, who can testify that they have annually seen them." Traders from the North thought it most strange even to be asked if such creatures existed, as they took them quite for granted. In fact, they regularly carried quantities of castor with them on voyages, as the monsters seemed to abhor the substance.



The historian Olaus Magnus describes the Norwegian sea serpent as being two hundred feet long and twenty feet in circumference, with a two foot tall mane. It was a scaly monster with fiery eyes, which showed its displeasure by snatching men from the decks of ships. A neighboring serpent in the Baltic Sea was described as being only when provoked.

In central Sweden there is a lake called Storsjön which is supposedly distinguished by having its own lake serpent. In the town of Östersund, situated on the Eastern shore of the lake, there is a local museum which displays large steel traps which were used in the late 1800's in an attempt to trap the monster. The creature's heyday was in the period between 1820 and 1898, though he is still sometimes reported. According to the museum's curator, the head of the animal "is said to be round and smooth like that of a dog, with great eyes... the extremities are described as short, stumpy legs or feet, possibly big clumsy fins, possibly long, webbed hind legs. It has great fins on the back of the head, possibly ears, described as little sails, which can be laid tight on the neck".

There is, of course, the celebrated entity which is supposed to inhabit the depths of Loch Ness in Scotland - and many other accounts of unknown-serpent-like life forms abound. We really know very little about our seas or the denizens to be found in their depths. The coming of heavy surface traffic and especially the noisy screw propelled ships of modern era, along with the pollutants we pour into the oceans, could understandably make any such creatures shy and hard to observe.

Was there ever (or is there now) a Midgard Serpent? It would be impossible to prove, perhaps, but the answer just might be "Yes!" So the next time someone tries to explain to you that the Norse religion is just a set of fantastic myths, devoid of truth, don't believe it. It ain't necessarily so.

#####

#### Fantasy Literature and the Viking

There is genre of literature of which all Norse enthusiasts should be aware - in fact, I'd wager many of them already are. But for those who haven't got the word yet, we've put together this article. The genre, of course, is fantasy literature - that literature which is today characterized by "sorcery and swordplay", adventure epics in which magic is a reality and heroes go on mighty quests, defeating villain and monster alike to attain the hidden treasure hoard or the voluptuous heroine. If all this sounds a lot like the old sagas, it should, because the sagas helped to inspire the modern efforts of fantasy writers. Those who know the field trace a direct line of descent from the old Nordic writings, as well as the heroic books and stories of other peoples (the Greeks, the Persians, the Welsh, the Celts, and others), through more recent authors (William Morris, 1834-96 and E.R. Eddison, born in 1882) to the contributions of the present (Pritz Leiber and L.Sprague de Camp). In the works of these different story tellers, over a span of many centuries, the same kind of story comes through with a free play given to the imagination. No "psychological" novel here, no anti-hero who stumbles from one page to another never quite sure where he's going or why!

Many of the modern fantasy writers acknowledge their debt to the Norsemen in their stories. The name of characters and of countries and descriptions of physique and culture, often have a distinctive Viking ring to them - as distinctive as sword of helm. Robert E. Howard's famous Conan is a barbarian from the Northlands who worships - or at least uses as an expletive - a god called Cron, a wise warrior-god whose heroes sit around feasting and fighting in their afterlife. In one episode, as I remember, Conan runs across a party of sea-pirates who could only be modeled on Vikings. Conan is a Cimmerian, not a Viking, but there is a Vikingsque thread running through the Conan stories, even when it is only an esthetic one.

Gardner Fox's Kothas is another barbarian from the North, a wandering adventurer-mercenary whose exploits make fine reading.

We're not always made out as the good guys, however. In R.E.Howard's Bran Mak Morn we are the villains - but rather worthy ones, I think.

All in all, it is fair to say that the Vikings have had a tremendous influence in the field of fantasy literature, both directly and indirectly. No doubt such literature would still exist, had there been no Vikings but it would be much different from what it is today. This contribution in one of which we can all be proud, for it is one of the ways that Norse culture has influenced the world and still, after almost a thousand years, continues to affect our ideas, our culture, and our values today. When tales of greatness and swashbuckling adventure lose their appeal and find no resonance in our people's hearts, then we know that our future is indeed a bleak one.

So I urge you - for your own enjoyment and for the furtherance of all in which we believe - try some fantasy literature. You'll not regret it.

ADS====ADS====ADVERTISEMENT====ADS====ADS

Green Egg is published 8 times per year, and a subscription is \$5 per year. GE is a broad-spectrum publication of the pagan movement Write:  
The Church of All Worlds  
P.O. Box 2953  
St. Louis, Miss.63130

Send for The Silver Ankh, a newsletter of the old Religion. \$1 for their introductory issue.  
The Silver Ankh  
565 Howard Drive N.E.  
Sierra Vista, Ariz 85635

We have learned of another group of followers of the old Norse gods  
The Odinist Movement  
Box 731  
Adelaide St.  
Toronto 210  
Ontario Canada

A fine publication, known formerly as The Waxing Moon, which survives by donation rather than by set fee.  
The Crystal Well  
Box 18351  
Philadelphia, Penn 19120

A new publication of the occult is The New Broom from Dallas. Write  
The New Broom  
Box 1646  
Dallas, Tex 75221

And last but not least is a Occult Shop in New York. These people are selling The Runestone in their For catalogs Write:  
The Warlock Shop  
300 Henry St.  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

=====  
The unwise man thinks that he ay will live,  
if from fighting he flees;  
but the ails and aches of old age dog him  
though spears have spared him.

Cattle die, kinsfolk die,  
oneself dies the same.  
I know one thing only which never dies -  
the renown of the noble dead.

Verses from the EDDAS

THIRD CLASS



MIR RNNSTNY  
THE RUNESTONE  
P. O. BOX 31023  
EL PASO, TEXAS 79931



THIRD CLASS

THIRD CLASS