



THE RUNESTONE



Rolf Krake and his berserks leap over the fire in King Adils' court-yard.

Drawings by Lorenz Frølich,
1852.

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 Ásatrú Free Assembly and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$3.00 per year. Write Stephen A. McNallen, 1766 East Avenue, Turlock, California 95380.

Please make checks payable to "Viking Brotherhood" as we are still involved in the paperwork which will officially change our name to "Ásatrú Free Assembly."

NORSE NOTES

This Júl (Yule) issue of *The Runestone* is sent to you in best wishes of this holy season, and in hopes that you will be able to celebrate this ancient festival of our faith in suitable manner, and surrounded with your kith and kin.

It is also being sent to you a little early, in anticipation of postal jams, and to give you hints on how to carry out your celebrations more effectively. Thus, our more or less usual Júl article is included for your benefit.

Our recent classified ad in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine--a periodical devoted to the soldier of fortune, the military man, and the adventurer (of both the real and vicarious variety) has resulted in a veritable flood of inquiries to *The Runestone* from readers of that magazine who are interested in the warrior aspect of our religion. We are quite optimistic about the outcome of this. More and more people who have never heard of the Ásatrú Free Assembly are becoming acquainted with us and our endeavor can only profit as a result of this attention.

A JULFEST GREETING

One Thousand Eighthundred Years Ago

on a runestone

in Stensstad, Telemarken, Norway

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I l g i n g O d h n h a l a r

I c h g i n g O d i n h e i l l i g e n

I WENT TO SANCTIFY ODIN

A Happy Jul to You All

The following article is taken from an upcoming book on the rituals of Ásatrú. The Frey-Blót mentioned here is not to be found in this issue of *The Runestone*, so use your ingenuity, and develop your own ceremony! It's not that hard.

JÚL

Júl, or "Yule" is possible the most important of the three Norse seasonal festivals. It is held in honor of the returning sun, which begins its southward trek at the winter solstice and bears the promise of returning light and warmth. No matter that springtime is months away--the spell of winter is being steadily undone and the cycle of life continues!

The god who is honored at Júl is Frey, the god of fertility.

In Ásatrú as it is practiced today, observance of the Júl festival begins at sundown on December 20th, the winter solstice or date on which the return of the sun actually begins, and continues for twelve days, until sundown on January 1st. This period from the solstice until the beginning of the new year is set aside for luxurious relaxation after the year's toils, for thanksgiving for the harvest and prosperity, and for the hope of future plenty and joy in the year to come. As the sun seems to hold still and cease turning in its course for twelve days, so too should all turning activity cease--be it unnecessary spinning, grinding, travel by wheeled vehicle, and the rest. Work which must not be immediately done during this period, work not essential or not related to the Júl observations themselves, is put aside.

Like the other great seasonal festivals of Ásatrú, Júl is not one simple ritual or one feast, but a prolonged period devoted to such activities. A Frey-Blót with suitable additions should mark the evening of December 20th (technically part of the day of December 21st) and each evening after that, and each sacrifice should be followed by a feast. The days should be spent in taking care of such obligations and tasks as must be performed, and in games and visiting with kinsmen.

In the old days a festival of this sort presented no great difficulties. Today, though, not everyone will be able to devote twelve rather continuous days to such feasting. The majority of people, especially in an urban setting, will have to go to their jobs during this period. Other obligations outside the family will tend to draw people away from this great clan festival--and these distractions should be minimized. Those who cannot be present for all of the activities which are to be held should attend as many of them as they possibly can.

Júl is a holy period at which the clan or extended family is regarded with great honor and respect. Ideally, Júl celebrations should be conducted on a clan basis, but in the generation in which this is written, the blood-related clan, the members of which follow the religion of Ásatrú, is likely to be small indeed. To add to the atmosphere, then, and to keep festivities lively, followers of Ásatrú will wish to band together to celebrate Júl, freely crossing clan ties. This provides the advantage of letting our co-religionists get to know each other better and produces a feeling of cultural support more easily found when with numbers of like-minded people.

Still, the fact that most of us will have clan members outside our faith means that we will have outside clan obligations during the Júl season. These should be honored as much as possible without seriously interfering with the rites

and significance of Jól in Ásatrú. Time should be spent visiting those members of our family who are not in attendance at Jól festivities, for the feeling of family closeness and love among kin which is a part of our own religion is also felt by Christians at this time of the year, and we should share such sentiments with all our clan--not merely those who believe as we do. Many will wish to share "Mother Night", or Christmas Eve, with non-pagan relatives. (Mother Night marks the beginning of our own Norse year.)

Jól cards, in the place of the traditional Christmas cards of the season, are appropriate for us of Ásatrú. Other familiar seasonal customs may be suitably modified--after all, so many of these practices had their origin in Paganism! One can erect a Jól tree, for example, decorating it with sunwheels (☉) and miniature boats, the animal symbolic of Frey. Pagan Jól carols can and should be devised. Wreaths and boughs of evergreen--symbols of Life--are in keeping with the spirit of the season. The little straw goat found as a common Christmas motif in present-day Scandinavia is a reminder of Thor, whose chariot was pulled by goats.

Always we must remember that the clan includes those members who have died and gone on into the other world, as well as those alive and present with us, and that Jól is for them, too. In the old days, tables of food were set aside for these kinsmen and beds were prepared for their ease. Something along these lines should be done in modern-day Jól celebrations as well. It could be a full observation of the old ways if such is practical, but limited means will force most of us to resort to cups of mead and perhaps small cakes. These "offerings", which serve the purpose of making us mindful of the dead of our clan and prompting us to meditation on this subject, should be poured out as a libation upon the ground, an offering to Frigga as Mother Earth, when they have served their purpose.

Two other Jól customs deserve special notice. The Jól boar, symbol of Frey, was supposedly led through the hall during the merrymaking and those who wished to do so would place their hands on it and swear solemn oaths (a practice guaranteed to make people aware of their actions while under the influence of mead!). This is comparable to today's practice of New Year's resolutions. In any case, revival of this ancient Norse custom would not be likely outside of an agrarian or rural situation.

The Jól log is a reminder that the season of Jól is one of fire, of the sun, and that we long for a return of light and warmth. Whereas the fires of other Northern European festivals are generally in the form of huge outdoor bonfires, the fire aspect of Jól is indoors and is identified with the roaring fires of the convivial feast. The Jól log was traditionally of oak but other woods will do just as well, and the scarcity of oak trees makes their use today almost sacrilegious anyway--if we chop them all down for Jól logs, there obviously won't be any more oak trees. A small bit of the Jól log should be preserved and kept in the home, for--so the tradition goes--it will protect the house from fire and from lightning. This piece of the Jól log is then used to help kindle next year's Jól log when it is brought in and placed on the fire.

In order to make the standard Frey-Blót (the version found elsewhere in this series of rituals) completely adapted for use at the blóts conducted during the Jól season, the following paragraphs should be added to the ceremony immediately before the sacrifice is offered to the god:

"Mighty Frey, God of the Vanir, we honor you in this season of Jól. As we speak to you, the Northlands are shrouded in ice and wintery cold, sharp and crisp, beneath which Mother Earth sleeps. Chill is the night and brisk the day, and life hides in stillness. Yet, as we gather in our halls for warmth and cheer we know that this is the time of the turning sun, and all Nature will awake as that fertility which you manifest again shows itself invincible despite the blasts of winter. Truly, Frey, we know that the fecundity and life of spring is moons in the future--yet also we know that the sun is in the turning-time, and that the eternal cycle of the seasons will again bring forth that life and increase which are your domain.

"Frey, great Vane, in this season we are especially mindful of three things--the return of the sun, the time-transcending cycle of the clan, and the return of life and plenty because of your presence. In this coming year, Frey, we hope for plenty, for fertility, and for peace among kin as we pause in meditation--

[Here all remain in brief silent contemplation or meditation. At the end of this short period, the gothi calls out--]

"Hail, the turning sun! Hail, the continuing clan! Hail, Frey, bringer of prosperity and all manner of delight!"

In addition to this, the gothi will insert the following material in the blót which is performed on the evening of December 24th:

"This is the night called by our ancestors Mother Night, for from it springs the new-born year. The old year is ending and the new one begins. At this momentous point in the cycle of the seasons, let us give thought to the year which is finishing and to how we may better fare in the year which is beginning. More than this, though, rather than merely giving thought, let us feel the turn of the seasons in our innermost beings."

-Stephen A. McNallen

* * * * *

PRAYER

The Son of Earth
Rides through the Air.
Fire flashes from His upraised hand:
Water pours from His chariot wheels.

The Corn is Thor's sister: the Rain God must care
For His kin is in the Cornfield as he flies through the air.

Pour forth, Thor, thy storms.

Let Earth give birth once more.
Bless us, Oh As! Raise up
With your rain the grain!
Let the sweet seed breed in the soil,
Greedy drinking the sinking rain,
Flooding in mud like blood,
Slowly flowing to grow
Full-breasted food for the brood of her nest.

Pour forth thy storm, Thor, cover the Earth
That our Ever-Young Mother once more may give birth.

-Paul Edwin Zimmer 1977

THE KEEPING AND BEARING OF ARMS

Few things are so associated with the Viking as his weapons, and weapons were in fact nearly universal during the Viking Age. Practically all men carried weapons, not only the devotees of the war god, Odin, but men who followed Thor or the various fertility gods and goddesses, as well. The phenomenon of "arms and the Viking" deserves our study because, despite the gap of a thousand years or more which separates us from the era of the sea-kings, the ownership and bearing of personal weapons is a matter of great controversy, one with far-reaching implications.

Our tradition is one of the ownership of weapons, and much of the *Edda* can be interpreted in that context. Particularly relevant is the verse from the *Havamal* which reads,

A wayfarer should not walk unarmed,
But have his weapons to hand;
He never knows when he may need a spear,
Or what menace meet on the road.

In a similar vein, the valkyrie Brynhild advises Sigurd to exercise the right of self-defense when she tells him,

If strife thou raisest
With a man right high of heart,
Better fight a-field
Than burn in the fire
Within thy hall fair to behold.

The above counsel is directed to mankind at large. The cult of Odin, of the professional warrior and adventurer, can even more easily justify the possession of weaponry, for how else can he pursue his religious customs? Are they all to join the military or become policemen if they are to take their beliefs literally? That would be expecting a bit too much. My own experience taught me that most places in the Army are not truly suitable for those of the warrior orientation.

The remarks of Oswald Spengler, philosopher, are pertinent to this discussion. He said that "Genuine property consists of that which has grown to be an intrinsic part of a person: the weapons of a Germanic warrior, which he takes into the grave with him...something whose value to its owner cannot be expressed in money, but consists in a bond, the destruction of which attacks his very existence." Many people today feel that way about their firearms, and react strongly against the implied threats of those who would license, confiscate, or forbid the purchase of his accustomed weaponry.

It can be argued that swords and spears are fundamentally different from pistols and rifles. Though all these weapons serve similar functions psychologically and in actuality, it is true that firearms have a greater capability to kill or wound, since they can inflict damage at a distance and do so repeatedly in a matter of seconds, striking widely separated targets with deadly result.

Just like a bow and arrow.

The bow is every bit as deadly as many firearms and has the advantage of perfect silence. Its one drawback (no pun intended) is the difficulty in concealing it, but that will not deter those who are determined to disarm the American people, should they ever take notice of the bow and decide that it constitutes a public menace.

Where can such a trend stop? Considering the close range at which most acts of violence involving firearms are committed--a matter of a few feet--what is to prevent the do-gooders from confiscating everything with a sharp edge or point, to include any weapons such as our Viking forefathers might have owned in ages long past?

From the preceding paragraphs, we conclude that all personal weapons (as opposed to mass weapons like artillery, bombs, and gas) constitute a continuum--that they cannot be artificially separated into airtight compartments. An attack on one is an attack on all; an attempt to remove pistols or rifles from the American scene opens the door to forbidding the ownership of any other sort of weapon which "They"--the government, the Establishment, the "majority" or whoever--decides should be outlawed.

The personal firearm is a direct descendent of the personal weapons of the Viking Age. The rifle or pistol is the modern equivalent of the sword, axe, spear or bow. It is the defender of the owner's life and property and of his loved ones, and it is a constant threat to the would-be tyrant of any political persuasion. In our opinion, then, any attempt to disarm the American citizen who also happens to be an Odinst is a violation of his religious right to own arms. Any such law is an evil law, and our obligation to our religion carries the greater force.

This is not an invitation to unbridled violence. A few facts from St. ablin-Kaminski's book *The Saga Mind* are recalled. The family sagas tell us of most of the acts of violence in the Viking colony of Iceland over a period of about a hundred years. During that span 297 such acts are recorded, not all of which were killings, for an average of about three violent acts per year. This is in a population of up to 40,000 people, with each adult male carrying at least one weapon. Remember that a man was adult at perhaps the age of twelve, and that the heroic ethic and the code of vengeance was the prevailing public philosophy. Can any of our urban jungles match such a low per-capita violence rate?

Though there are many factors which might produce such surprising results, (lack of coercive government and lack of crowding being two such factors), it is apparent that the availability of weapons is not necessarily closely related to the rate of violence in a society. In fact, one could make the heretical proposition that, as science fiction author Robert Heinlein puts it, "An armed society is a polite society" and that, contrary to stereotypes, the rate of violence in a society could be greatly reduced by arming everyone! Probably some statistical justification for such a statement could be produced, but we'll tackle that subject some other day.

Responsibility is necessary in dealing with personal weapons, as in fact it is necessary in everything that a person does. It is all the more necessary in connection with firearms because, up to a point, firearms make the evasion of responsibility easier. Any weapon which kills at a distance removes one to some degree from the reality of the act of killing, making it seem tidy and impersonal and so very, very simple. Killing in the old days not only was uglier and more personal in respect to the person being killed, it was also pretty damned dangerous for the person who was attempting to do the killing. Standing off at three hundred meters with a rifle may or may not be dangerous, according to the situation--but then sword, axe and bow can also be used from ambush and can be aimed at the back in dishonorable slaying, so the firearm has no monopoly here. All who follow the warrior ethic, and all who use firearms, should not only be well trained in the safe use of these weapons, but should have given long and careful thought to the ethics of bearing and using them.

In summary, then, the following points are made: 1) Our religion involves personal weapons, and advocates their availability. 2) The firearm is the lineal descendent of the sword, axe, and bow, and is equivalent to these weapons for scriptural purposes. 3) Any infringement of the rights of a follower of our religion to own these personal weapons is a direct attack upon the practice of our religion and is to be strenuously resisted by all means.

Should the day come that any law is passed depriving us of our right to keep arms, I stand ready to assist any of my religious kinsmen by testimony, by research, by aiding in the procurement of legal advice, and by other means which may help that individual to preserve his rights to religious expression. Only by such action can we preserve our liberty. Let notice be served to all potential tyrants that our will and our determination will not be found lacking.

-Stephen A. McAllen

*****BOOK REVIEW*****

Circle Magick Songs by Jim Allan and Selena Fox

Synchronicity served me well on this small volume. I was looking for ideas on the use of music and dance in ritual with the goal of incorporating these elements into some of our own rituals, when *Circle Magick Songs* arrived in the mail. I've found the information therein to be really first quality and oriented toward practice rather than theory. Essays are included on song and dance, on the use of the dulcimer, and on modal tuning of the guitar, a technique which gives a more mysterious, more ancient sound than the standard method of tuning. After this introductory information there follows eleven "Songs of Magick" and sixteen "Songs of Wicca." While most of these are not directly useful to our own purposes, several of the Wiccan songs we could be quite comfortable with, such as the "Circle Round" and "The Dancers." Others could provide fine inspirations for songs of *Asatru*.

Other songs in the collection diverge widely from our own world-view, particularly "The Warrior", which denigrates the Way of the Warrior. Circle is a very eclectic pagan group with strong Celtic and Wiccan leanings, and like most pagan groups outside our own, tend toward the pacifistic. Their value in relation to us lies in some of the very fine work they have done relating to the fertility cult, the following of the Vanir rather than the Aesir. The Lord and Lady of Wicca bear a most striking resemblance to Frey and Freya, and I personally suspect there is one Hel of a lot more Norse influence in the witch cult than is generally acknowledged. All this is fine so long as we of *Asatru* remember that the ancient fertility cult members were also warriors (remember the boar helmets?). The old Celts were hardly a bunch of mellow fellows with never a violent thought, either!

But back to Circle. The techniques employed in *Circle Magick Songs*--dance, music, and chanting--are deeply rooted in the heritage of practically all pagan peoples, including our own. To ignore these instruments of ritual is to cut ourselves off from our psychic roots.

Circle also puts out some excellent notecards for correspondence and greetings, done up in a general Celtic-Wiccan style. These sell at \$2.00 for ten 4-3/4" x 5-3/4" (folded size) cards with envelopes.

Circle Magick Songs, 30 pages, is available from them at Box 9013, Madison, Wisconsin, 53715.

Dear Steve:

The runes have the following meanings, gathered from life-long research:

1. A rune is the letter of a sound.
2. A rune might be a syllable connected to the rune name.
3. The full rune name was very seldom used in inscriptions.
4. Some runes were combined into so-called bind-runes, or are numbers.
5. A rune is a symbol of a man or woman in worship (or meditation). Every rune and its effect upon the worshipper is different!
6. Runes are also divinely inspired poetry, for instance the *Kalevala* of Finland is a rune, also each chapter is called a rune.
7. The highest understanding of a rune is the force or the forces of divinity in our soul, a fact very few people may reach. From such, miracles may occur.
8. An even higher and greater understanding of a rune, was the force of nature, which brought on the last Ice Age, for instance, the Fimbul-winter, which our ancestors called *Fimbultys = tys = ↑*.

About ideas of rune magic I would be very careful. Those who acquired any real divinity do know, it is only proper to use magic for the advancement of your own divinity or divine intelligence, not for messing around in other minds.

To change the original rune names may prevent deciphering of ancient inscriptions, because some of these runes were carved as syllables, or even as rune names. Please, always include the original sounds of the names. ↑ = lagu; but its name was also lögr = law! Or possibly any other word derived from it! (Raunen= Whispering.)

Odin lives!

-Erich Stirnemann

Dear Mr. Stirnemann:

Thank you for your extensive comments upon the article "Scandinavia's Runes" which appeared in the last issue of *The Runestone*. Perhaps I should have printed the older Germanic *futhark* instead of the later Danish runes with my article. There are, of course, many different *futharks* from which to choose, but in any serious work on rune meanings or meditations, I would think the older runes would be more appropriate. I have taken the liberty of adding the meaning of the rune names to the chart you sent me, as given in *Runes* by R. W. V. Elliott.

As well as studying the linguistic roots of the rune names, I would recommend both active and passive meditation upon the meanings of these names. That is, one could meditate on the name in an active effort to discover deeper significances and implications, or one could hold the rune in mind and see what sort of images emerge from the unconscious mind. Like you, I have a deep respect for rune-magic, and feel it must never be used for unworthy purposes, for, as you put it, messing around with other minds.

Perhaps some of our other readers will take up this matter, sharing runic knowledge with us, or asking questions. It would be interesting to see a running discussion of the runes, to pool our knowledge about this relatively obscure yet highly important subject--and perhaps even to stir up a bit of controversy.

-Stephen A. McAllen



1.	2.	3.
f ƒ cattle	ƒ	ƒ fé
u 𐌺 aurochs	𐌺	𐌺 úr
þ 𐐃 giant, demon	𐐃	𐐃
a ʀ god	ʀ	ʀ ʀ áss
r R(R) riding	𐌹	R reid
k <(ΛY) torch	<	Y kaum
g, J X gift	X	
w P(P) joy	P	
h H(H) hail	H	HH* hagall
n ʒ need, constraint	ʒ	ʒ nauð
i ice		iss
j (h) S year	h	* ʒ ár
h ʒ yaw	ʒ	
p ʁ protection	ʁ	perth - meaning apparently now lost
z Y sun	Y	ʒN söl
s S(R) sun	S	ʒ tǫr
t ʀ tiw (Tyr)	ʀ	ʒ bjarkam
b, ʒ ʒ(Bʒ) birch twig	ʒ	
e M horse	M	ʒ ʒ Y madr
m ʒ(Pʒ) man	ʒ	ʒ logr
l ʀ water	ʀ	
z <(ʒ S) Ing	ʒ	
o ʒ inherited property or possession	ʒ	
d, ʒ (ʒʒ) day	ʒ	
r	ʒ	ʒ yr

Above, left to right, we have: 1. The older Germanic runes. Runes in parentheses are from the bracteat of Vadstena. 2. Futhark, or runic alphabet, of the clasp of Charnay. This futhark was in use among the Alemanni. 3. Futhark of the younger Norse inscriptions.

Alternatives to the names of the runes given here in English are common, for at least some of the runes.

Dear Runestone Readers,

I seem to have run out of programmed material for this issue, so instead of leaving you with a blank page, I'd like to talk (or write) a bit about where we've been during the last year and about where 1978 will be taking us. Such thoughts are appropriate for the last issue of The Runestone for 1977, and may prove useful to us.

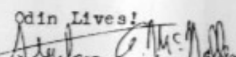
This last year was a very significant one for us, and I feel it will be recognized in years to come as a turning point in the history of our organization and of the movement of which we are a part. In Berkeley, our monthly meetings bloomed and later turned into regular religious ceremonies rather than merely discussion sessions. We held a couple of public events and received widespread publicity as a result. The format of The Runestone was significantly upgraded, and the contents steadily improved. Finally, in the last two months of 1977 our numerical strength began a steady rise. All of this activity has been accompanied by an ever-maturing conception of our role as indicated by our name change from "Viking Brotherhood" to "Asatru Free Assembly".

The year to come portends even greater accomplishments. I expect three major announcements to hit the pages of the next issue. One of these will be a correspondence course for gothar - or, for that matter, for people who wish to take it to further their knowledge of Asatru. The other two I will save as surprises. Our numbers will double this next year, not that we're into a numbers thing for its own sake, but it is essential that we reach more people with our message.

Even as the sun begins its triumphant return at this season of the year, so will our faith return, shining, to thaw the spiritual chill that has gripped the West and held its people in thralldom. Join with us in this historical and holy endeavor!

Thank you for your support in 1977. We hope you'll be with us in 1978, and onward!

Blessings of this season be with all of you. Be with the gods and goddesses of our faith, and rejoice in life.

Odin Lives!

 Stephen A. McAllen

NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE RUNESTONE

<i>The Prose Edda</i> translated by Jean I. Young	\$3.00 each (paper)
<i>The Elder Edda</i> translated by Taylor & Auden	2.00 each (paper)
<i>Text of Odin-Blót</i>	.20 each
Leaflet "What is the Norse Religion?"	.05 each*

*single copies free