

Ways of the Ásatrú



Beliefs of the Modern, Northern Heathens

By

Michael J. Smith

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Author's Note: The Old Norse/Scandinavian letter "þ" is pronounced like in "thin" but with a more pronounced "t" sound and the letter "ð" is pronounced harder, like in "the".

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Preface:

..."Heed my words, my children, and the gods of antiquity will be the gods of the future."

--*The Odin Brotherhood*, by Dr. Mark L. Mirabello

There are two issues which I would like to bring to the reader's attention concerning this book. The first would be that this book should **not**, by any means, be considered an **absolute** authority on Ásatrú. The reader is encouraged to read other books, do research, and explore their own hearts to find their own religious and spiritual truths. The main reason for that would be because of the second issue I have to briefly make note of.

The second would be that regardless of all, Ásatrú is chiefly a religion of the individuals' spiritual path. Although there is a strong sense of community that is encouraged, it is up to the individual to find what rings true to them for their own spiritual health. Ásatrú itself is a religion of fairly broad guidelines. It is up to the individual to decide where within those broad guidelines they lay in what they believe.

So please, dear reader, I will be bold in giving you a set of "rules" for those who decide to research or become Ásatrú. Rule # 1 is: Be your own scholar. Ásatrú is a religion with homework. This extends to not just contemporary writers but, to authors in the fields of linguistics, history, archeology, and other scholarly fields of study. All can help you in your spiritual quest. Rule # 2 is: Always get different perspectives. This is a religion that has its roots in the past, but is (and must be!) evolved within modern context. And it must and will evolve as the future unfolds.

This book has been screaming to come out of my head for quite some time. Folks over the years have asked me, "Why don't you write a book or something?" My response was usually a humorous, "Don't you think I drive enough Ásatrú folks nuts already?" Then I started thinking about it more seriously as my 12th anniversary of becoming Ásatrú came closer, and figured it was time to unleash my brain upon the masses. I only hope it helps some folks on their travels. As I know, just writing it has helped my own. Also, the fact that every time there's a good beginner book out, it goes out-of-print. This way, by self-publishing, it won't go out-of-print.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the folks who kept pushing me to do it and whom I've found their friendships and debates helpful. I'd like to thank all of Raven Kindred North, Vingolf Fellowship, Medoburg Kindred, Tim McKinney (co-founder of Athelingulf Fellowship), and the countless individual Ásatrú folks who I've harassed, infuriated, and got into huge debates with over countless thoughts, theories, and beliefs. Without challenge, the mind never evolves and grows.

But most of all, I want to thank my beautiful wife, Catheryn, my precious daughter, Freyjadis, and my strong son, Tiarnan, for being my highest inspirations.

With Honor,
--Michael J. Smith



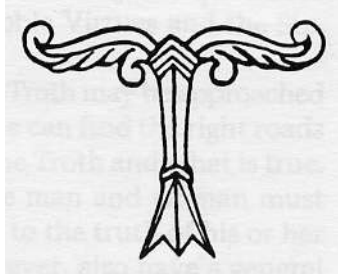
Introduction:

"Heathenry, if understood correctly, meets the needs of each individual as he himself makes them for himself. He and he alone, is responsible. He and he alone, knows what suits him on his state of consciousness. Help and advice is given, but no commandments exist."

--*Óðsmál*, by Goðrún Dimmblá

Today, there seems to be a vastly growing movement for people to go back to their roots. People are seeking for something more holistic and "native" to something within their spirits. They are looking for something ancestral and something which can be a part of their everyday lives. More and more people are finding that they are dissatisfied with the mainstream religions that the populous offers. Instead, they are seeking out religions that were more prevalent in centuries past. They are looking for something closer to nature, more diverse, and less dogmatic and strict. They also seem to be looking for something less centralized and freer towards personal interpretation.

One of these religions is Ásatrú. This Icelandic termed word is a combination of Ása-, "of the gods," and -trú, which can be translated to mean "true or loyal to". So thus, Ásatrú means roughly, "True or loyal to the gods". The referenced gods are the gods of the Northern Europeans. These are the gods featured in the myths and folklore of the Germanic peoples and are also featured in works and recordings of the Prose and Poetic Eddas. The Eddic gods are known by many deviations of names, dependant upon region, but for the context of this book I shall try to stay with the Icelandic/Scandinavian names because of the wealth of information present from those regions, and to keep a workable context to prevent confusion as best I can.



Chapter 1:
The Tenets of Ásatrú

This is the most difficult chapter to write concerning Ásatrú. This is difficult because there is no absolute authority or head of Ásatrú to determine who is or isn't Ásatrú. Nor does anyone seem to want anything even vaguely resembling any central authority or representatives. The belief specifics, and even the holidays, that are celebrated by adherents of Ásatrú are as diverse today as they were by our ancestors in the past. And even today, the beliefs have their similarities and differences depending upon the region and group of Ásatrú folks you encounter, just as it did a thousand years ago or more. Different groups use different holiday schedules and use different ritualistic structures to worship, or give honor to, our deities.

Although in many ways different, it is also truly amazing and awe-inspiring to see that they all still seem to keep some sort of similar outline that is the same regardless of even what country you are in. I've said many times, "Ásatrú is the most organized, unorganized religion on the Earth.", and this statement seems to hold true the more people of this religion I meet, regardless of where they are from.

But, none-the-less, I will state four general tenets of what makes a person Ásatrú;

One, the Æsir and Vanir are the principle deities of Ásatrú.

Two, the gods and goddesses are worshipped in the form of rituals called Blóts and Sumbles.

Three, there is an element of ancestral worship.

And four, there is an adherence to a belief of personal honor and/or Right Action.

The following chapters in this book will follow roughly along the ideas and order of these tenets. Of course, the ideas contained within this book are ultimately derived from resources, years of experience, and insights of the author. The main accomplishment of this work is to give a general or starter guideline for the newcomer to Ásatrú to begin their religious path as quickly as possible while they embark upon their own years of research. Remember, research is an intricate part of the spiritual path itself. And the reader is encouraged to use this work as merely a general guideline to use as a starting point.

We are at a critical time in our religion's development. There is not a lot of surviving lore. But, it is we who will be the base of this religious movement. And it is we who will be the pioneers and new roots of this religion, and folk, we call Ásatrú. It is we who, over the next one hundred years or so, will create, develop, and solidify the new culture of our new community. We need to keep THAT in focus. We need to grow, evolve, and develop this religion as a community for not only us, but for our children and their children to come. It is we who may one day be the ancestors that are given a toast to, at some blót or sumble in the future. We need to make sure that we DESERVE such a high possible honor, right now.





Chapter 2:

The Nature of Divinity and Deity in Ásatrú

Polytheism: n. the doctrine of, or belief in, many gods or more gods than one.

Ásatrú is a polytheist religion which anthropomorphizes its deities. What this means, is that we believe in multiple, individual gods and goddesses that appear or have the attributes of human beings. One of the largest and most important concepts of religion is the nature of divinity and deity. Within the Ásatrú religion, there is a wide road of generally accepted ideas and philosophies of the nature of divinity and deity. Within the context of this chapter, I will discuss five major viewpoints.

The first idea of the divine and deity is the belief that the gods and goddesses are actual, living beings. These beings were created by the unfolding universe. In this thought they too grow, mature, gain wisdom, and die as does everything else in the universe. They are divine in the aspect of them having a longer life span, more power, greater intellect, and that they are our creators and ancestors. Our gods are only immortal in relation to our own life span. They are not omniscient, or all knowing. In this, our gods can understand us better in that they too must struggle to enforce their wills and desires within their own existences. In that, the differences between a god and a mortal is merely by degree. A god's fundamental nature is similar to mankind's. The extreme position in this idea could encompass taking the lore as pure, actual fact. This is the thought of the strictest polytheists.

The second concept of divinity and deity which I will discuss is the idea of the gods being a manifestation of forces of nature. In this concept, the gods and goddesses of our folk are seen as being the personified greatness of the natural world. The myths and lore are symbolic teachings in which the forces of nature are personified into entities in order to help with understanding.

Although more pantheistic in nature, this is where the religious or philosophical belief adheres to the thought that it is the universe itself and all of the creation within it which are divine. In this strict case, divinity itself is not conscious, but a type of power which permeates, and is central, in all things. Often, the concept of pantheism is confused with polytheism, even amongst many learned persons. For the sake of this work, I am keeping in strict with definitions. In the light of accepting this concept, the myths and lore would be thought of as being highly symbolic.

The archetype is the third concept in which we will discuss. It is based strongly on the works of Professor Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist who wrote many essays and works in the 1900's. In his works, an archetype was like a psychological "well" of conscious and unconscious memory in which new life, enthusiasm, and energy for the soul and willpower of the individual, group, or peoples could be found. In his famous essay, "Wotan" he writes;

"...We must go back to the age of myths, which did not explain everything in terms of man in his limited capacities, but sought the deeper cause in the psyche and its autonomous powers. Man's earliest intuitions personified these powers as gods and described them in the myths with great care and circumstantially according to their various characters. This could be done the more readily on account of the firmly established primordial types or images which are innate in the unconsciousness of many races, and exercise a direct influence upon them. Because the behavior of a race takes on its specific character from its underlying images, we can speak of an archetype, Wotan, as an autonomous psychic factor. Wotan produces effects in the collective life of a people and thereby reveals his own nature. For Wotan has a peculiar biology of his own, quite apart from the nature of man."

One should note that Jung's use of the word, "race" was quite different than the modern usage. When Jung was writing, "race" denoted what we would consider being a specific ethnicity (i.e. the Irish race, the Roman race, or the race of the Franks).

There is a fourth concept of the nature of divinity and deity within Ásatrú in which I will explain as being the patterns of the evolution and deification of the self. In this concept it is the self which is divine, and the gods and goddesses are an internal function of every human being. In this concept and viewpoint, the gods and goddesses are a part of the self and are also patterns for which one is to emulate in order to gain in the evolution of the self.

The gods and goddesses in this thought exist as models for determining what is ideal and what is inferior in the human condition and psyche. In the gods, we are to see ourselves in both strengths and weaknesses. This is because the gods are, literally ourselves, in this philosophic concept. Myths and lore are believed to be codes for learning about ourselves and how to improve the self, in this concept of divinity and deity. In these thoughts, the gods, goddess, and other beings illustrate the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious forces of the self.

The fifth, and final, concept of divinity and deity in which I will discuss is the intricate combinations of the already explained concepts. In this thought pattern, the idea is that the nature of divinity and deity is not to be defined so strictly. It adheres to the philosophy that the nature of the divine is multi-natured to begin with. Within this concept, the idea that a deity could encompass existing as an actual conscious being, a manifestation of nature, an archetype, and as also a piece of every individual worshipper is acceptable in a vast array of degrees.

The myths and lore are accepted as spiritual truths in which some are to be taken literally, some symbolically, and some as teachings for the evolution and discovery of the self. Deities are not only internal, but also external. They are not only subjective, but also objective. The one thought process which must be foremost in accepting this philosophy of the nature of divinity and deity is, to accept the overriding idea that there is no such thing as contradiction.



Chapter 3: *The Deities of Ásatrú*

This chapter, *The Deities of Ásatrú*, will consist of a list of many gods and goddesses of our religion. I will give a brief description of the deity and briefly explain what they are well known for. References can be found in the books of the bibliography, although one can get the most information by reading the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*. The last paragraph of each deity will consist of my own thought or personal gnosis on the deity, if I have any. This last paragraph of course, is subjective and my own, and should not be taken as absolute fact, by any means. Other peoples' thoughts, experiences, and feelings will differ.

I will cover approximately 28 gods and 26 goddesses. (Yes, that's 54 deities.) These are not ALL of them. One must remember that our religion has had its variants according to tribe and region. Some goddesses and some gods were only known in some regions and not others. There were even gods and goddesses only known in one or two small regions, or were a single tribes' personal god or goddess in some cases. Unfortunately, one should note that there is very little surviving lore concerning the goddesses.

Also, an important thing to note is that although our gods may be known to have certain strong attributes, they are not as singularly defined as being only "a god of..." this or that. All the gods and goddesses are complex and can serve many functions than just the few they are better known for.

The Gods

Óðinn is one of the chief gods of the Æsir. And he is the son of Bor and Bestla. He is a god who encompasses many functions and powers. He is a god of the storm winds, god of the runes, a war god, god of the battle-slain, and a god of wisdom.

He is well known for many things; for defeating the giant Ymir and making Miðgarð from Ymir's body parts with his brothers Villi and Vé, for making human beings with his two brothers, for hanging on Yggdrasil (the world tree that holds the cosmos together) to conceive the runes, for stealing the mead of poetry, for singing magic chants and using herbs to revive the severed head of his uncle Mímir to gain wisdom, for giving up an eye to Mímir for a drink from the Well of Wisdom which Mímir guards, and for many other deeds and adventures described in the Eddas. Óðinn is also known for his pair of ravens.

Hugin and Munin (thought and memory) travel the worlds to tell him news of happenings. He also owns two wolves named Geri and Freki (greedy and ravenous) who are by his sides.

My brief insights on Óðinn are that he can be a harsh, demanding god. He is very much "the ends justify the means" type of god, in my opinion, and does what needs to be done, regardless of the friends or enemies he makes in the process. This is because he has "higher" mission(s). Óðinn's main concern is Ragnarök. His mission is to stall it while preparations are made and he can set into motions his own plan involving it. That is one of the highest Óðinnic mysteries. Óðinn is also, overall, definitely the god of self-evolution.

I see Óðinn as looking about 50-ish; though by no means giving the physical weakening of that age of man, and his build is large and strong. Strong, not in the sense of lifting weights strong, but in the strength of one who's worked harsh, almost inhuman labor his whole life. He wears a dark blue tunic with a dark gray, hooded cloak. His breeches are usually black as the night sky. He has a long gray-white beard. His right eye is missing and horribly scarred, like it was ripped out by a clawed hand. The left one is a dark, blue-gray color. To me, he also appears to have a lot of scarring on his throat, as if he were hung violently, the rough ropes having had ripped and cut into the skin of his throat. Óðinn's voice always sounds deep and a bit raspy, but always firm and commanding, in my experiences.

Bor is the father of Óðinn, and the son of Buri. Unfortunately, all that is known of this deity is that he married Bestla, the daughter of Bolthorn. His sons, Óðinn, Villi, and Vé both defeated Ymir and helped make the worlds from the body parts of Ymir. His sons also created human beings. Bor is never mentioned as doing anything else and unfortunately is never spoken of again in the lore.

Buri is the androgynous god whom gave birth to Bor. Buri is said, in the Eddas, to have been brought forth from when the cosmic bovine, Auðhumbla, licked the salty rime-ice to free him. Unfortunately, again, we have nothing in the lore that tells us anything about Buri or anything else that he has done.

Vili is the brother of Vé and Óðinn, who helped defeat Ymir. Although there is no direct evidence, Vili is usually associated with the name Hoenir whom is said to be one of the three brothers who helped create human beings. He is credited with giving human beings their senses or mind. If this is taken as true, then another thing he is known for is that he was one of the hostages (along with Mímir) which the Æsir gave to the Vanir after their great war. Nothing is further said of him, but one may correspond this with the idea that he still dwells in Vanaheim.

Vé is the brother of both Óðinn and Vili. He also helped defeat Ymir. Although there is no direct evidence, he is usually associated with the name Lóður whom is said to have given human beings "blooming hue" or hair and complexion, etc. Other-wise, there is nothing in the lore about him, except a passage in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskingla* which states that for a time while Óðinn was away, he and Villi took rulership of Ásgarð. But, Óðinn soon returned and re-gained his rulership.

Bragi is one of the Æsir and the god of poetry. He is said to have been born from the sexual union of Óðinn and the giantess, Gunnlod. He is also seen in my references to be the one who welcomes slain warriors into Valhalla in several lays of the *Poetic Edda*. An interesting thing to note is that Óðinn supposedly carved runes upon Bragi's tongue. His wife is said to be Iðun.

Personal insights I have on Bragi is that he is also the god of history, music, and ancient rituals. I, personally see Bragi as being old with a long white beard. I see him as wearing a grey cloak with gold trim, black pants, and a red tunic with gold trim. Bragi, in my experience, also wears a gold torc around his neck and carries a golden harp.

Þórr, of the Æsir, is the son of Óðinn and Jorð. He is the god of thunder, lightning, storms, fertility, and warriors. Þórr is best known as "the defender of Miðgarð" and a friend of mankind. He wields the mighty, magic war hammer called Mjöllnir, and wears a belt and gloves that increase his strength. The Eddas describe him as driving a chariot pulled by two goats named Tanngnost and Tanngrísni (Tooth-gnasher and Gap-tooth).

Þórr is known for accomplishing many great deeds. Foremost, he is known as the adversary of Jörmungand, the Miðgarð Serpent, and the killer of giants. Some of them are known to be Thrym, Hymir, Geirröd, Hrungnir, Thjazi, Thrivaldi, Leikin, Starkad, and Gjálp. But the lists of giants he has killed is extensively more in closer examination of the lore.

Þórr is said, in the Eddas, to have three children. His two sons, Magni and Móði, were born from his union with Járnsaxa. Þórr's daughter, Þrúd, was with his wife the goddess Sif.

My personal insights on Þórr are pretty much the same as he is described in the Eddas. I get the sense that he is the type of god who believes in the "spirit of the law" more than the "letter of the law" when it comes to right and wrong. He is the god of the common man, in that he has fertility aspects for the crops of the farmer, strength and skill for the hard work of the blacksmith, and the heroic/adventurer aspects for the warrior.

In description, I see him as having fiery red hair, a red beard, and a massively built body structure. Þórr wears iron gloves and a large belt which increase his strength, magically. I see his eyes as a light, fury blue. Sometimes I also see him as wearing a red tunic, chain-mail shirt, and dark brown pants, and brown boots. And his war hammer is always by his side.

Mímir is usually referred to as an etin or giant, although he is the uncle of Óðinn by way of his sister, Bestla. In the lore he was sent as a hostage exchange, along with Hoenir, to the Vanir. Unfortunately for him, Hoenir's great wisdom wavered whenever Mímir was not by his side. So the Vanir, believing they had gotten the worst end of the deal (for they had exchanged Njörð and Freyr) so they killed Mímir, severed his head, and sent it to the Æsir. Óðinn was said to have chanted runic galðr and used herbs to preserve and re-animate his head.

Mímir is the guardian of the Well of Knowledge. For a drink from this well, Mímir demanded that Óðinn sacrifice an eye. One should also note that there doesn't seem to have been any cults or worshippers of Mímir.

My personal insights on Mímir are that his well is a well of knowledge and memory. Through drinking from his well, the consumer gains not only knowledge of the past and present, but also gains some knowledge of wyrd itself. This, in effect would also be a well of ancestral knowledge.

I see Mímir as having light-bluish skin and a pure white beard and long white hair pulled back in a large braid. Mímir's eyes are bloodshot and the eternal deepness of his vast wisdom and knowledge were hidden behind them. But, many times, I have also seen his eyes as being sewn shut. His skin is also wrinkled from the herbs and magic that preserves his life. Mímir's head radiates a white aura as it floats above the pool of the waters of wisdom and knowledge.

Loki, although allowed in Ásgarð and was often found among the Æsir, is an Etin. He is the son of the giantess, Laufey and the giant, Farbauti. Through sexual relations with the giantess Angrboða, were produced three of his six known children. With the giantess, he produced Fenrir the wolf whom is prophesized to swallow Óðinn at Ragnarök. Also, his children are the world serpent known as Jörmungand, and the goddess of death, who rules Niflhel (sometimes called simply Hel), named Hel or Hella. Sleipnir, Óðinn's faithful steed, was born from Loki from a stallion that helped to build Ásgarð's walls. His wife, named Sigyn, gave birth to his other two children named Narvi and Vali.

When Loki was captured, for his hand in helping bring about the death of Baldr, his son Vali was changed into a wolf, which in turn killed and pulled out the entrails of his other son, Narvi. Narvi's entrails were turned into the chains which are told to hold him tied to a boulder until Ragnarök.

Loki's character in our myths is an interesting one, indeed. He is prevalent in the Scandinavian folklore. In the earlier myths, he is a friend to the Æsir. He seems especially close to both Óðinn and Þórr, in the earlier myths, being their companion in many of the stories told to us. But, as the myths move forward, he takes on a more evil or jealous personality from the simple mischievous one he exemplifies in the earlier myths. Eventually, this escalates to his killing one of the gods, and insulting the rest of them. This, of course, leads to his own punishment and imprisonment.

Personally, I see Loki as being the mischief-maker that "went bad" as his anger increased. His anger at the Æsir seems to have increased once the gods began to make him suffer the consequences of his actions, and started to make him keep his word instead of letting him con his way out of it. From that time onward, is when he starts to become what some may refer to as evil and vengeful. I believe that this is because Loki cannot see the consequences of his actions in the long term and also because he does not see himself as being responsible for the outcomes of his actions.

Loki, in my experiences, has red or black, wild hair and a tight, black goatee. His eyes are ruby colored. Loki's clothing has many times been green and yellow. He is exceedingly handsome and youthful. Loki also seems to be very vain in his appearances and looks.

Baldr is one of the Æsir and the son of Óðinn and Frigg, and the husband of Nanna. By Nanna, he has a son named Forseti. Baldr is told to us by the Eddas that he is the most beautiful and best loved of all the gods. His appearance is told to us by Snorri as being so fair and so brilliant that all light flashes from him. Baldr is told to us to be the kindest and one of the wisest of the Æsir.

The biggest myth told to us about Baldr are his own dreams of his death, and his eventual death at the hands of Höð the Blind, by throwing a mistletoe twig, guided by Loki. We are also told of his funeral, the death of his wife Nanna when she threw herself onto his pyre, and how the gods tried to get everything in the worlds to weep for him for Hella to release him from Hel. Of course, not all wept, because Loki disguised himself as a giantess and would not weep. So Hella kept her new addition to the realm of the dead.

I personally see Baldr to appear as being very handsome and a prime, young man. I see his hair as being short as well as his beard, and both brown colored. Baldr, in my dealings, is usually wearing either a brown tunic with yellow trim, or leather armor and sword. His eyes, a dark brown, are capable to being very kind or fierce.

Forseti is the son of Baldr and Nanna (I pertain him to be one of the Æsir), who owns a hall called Glitnir. The Eddas explain that all legal disputes that he oversees are always reconciled and that his court is the best court known to gods and men.

Among the Frisian traditions, it is said that Forseti wields a golden battle-axe and gave them their code of laws on the island of Helgoland. But other than these tales, nothing else is known of Forseti.

Unfortunately, I have no personal insights on Forseti other than what is found in the lore.

Hermóð, sometimes referred to as "The Bold", is one of the sons of Óðinn and a member of the god-tribe of the Æsir. Nothing is known of him except that it was he who traveled to Hel, upon the back of Sleipnir, to petition Hella to release Baldr back from the realm of the dead. There are no other references concerning this god, whose name could be translated to "war-spirit" as suggested by Andy Orchard in his *Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend*.

Hermóð, I see as a strong warrior/shaman. He readily travels to the realms of death, not only because of his knowledge, but also honor bond to try to bring back his brother. I personally envision Hermóð as having strange, black eyes without a trace of white nor color. His face seems blank and his light brown hair and short beard contrast his extremely white complexion. He wears a dark forest green tunic and pants and dark brown leather armor. Small bones and animal skulls hang from short cords.

Máni, the moon god, who is pursued by the sky wolf Hati, is more largely a figure of folklore. In the *Poetic Edda*, he is the son of Mundilfari and the brother of Sunna (Sól). In the *Prose Edda*, it is said that Moon (Máni) took from earth two children named Bil and Hjúki from their father, Viðfinn. In Nordic/Germanic mythology and belief the moon was masculine or male. And interesting surviving folklore illustrating this is the "man-in-the-moon" that many people of English descent may have heard.

Máni, in my dreams, has a pearl-white complexion, silvery-grey eyes, and long white hair braided with many silver rings. He seems to me to be an albino. Although slender and tall, he is well defined and muscular. I see Máni wearing only a long loincloth of white with purple designs on it that reaches almost to his knees. Máni, silent and quiet, seems to also have an extreme caring for small children. I would even go as far as to associate him as a patron of abused children in my own unsubstantiated personal gnosis.

Njörð, who is the father of Frey and Freyja, is one of the Vanir. He was sent as hostage, along with his son, Frey. Njörð is the god of the sea winds, coastal oceans, commerce, prosperity, and fishing. His abode is called Nóatún. It is said that he took his sister, Nerþus, as wife as was allowed in the customs of the Vanir. From that union, came forth Frey and Freyja. He later, after being brought to Ásgarð, took Skaði as his wife but they seem to dislike each other's favorite abodes and take turns living from between the two homes.

There are many place names named after Njörð, like Njarðarlög (bath of Njörð) which is now named Tysnesøen, in Norway. He was a popular god in the lands of Norway and Iceland.

Njörð is exceedingly handsome wearing a sea-green tunic, sandals, and has long green-tinted hair, and a long beard and mustache in my visions. He is definitely now, as he was in the past, a god of prosperity and travel. One of the most impressive god-posts I have ever seen was of Njörð, carved by Allshergoði Jörmunder Ingi of the Ásatrúarmenn Felág in Iceland, while I was visiting in March of 2000.

Týr is of the tribe of the Æsir, and he is associated with battle and law. Only two major tales are known of him. One involves the loss of his right hand to the jaws of the Fenrir (Fenris) wolf. When the gods tried to trick Fenrir into being bound, Týr placed his hand into the wolf's mouth as collateral in case the gods did not free the wolf. The gods tricked the wolf into bondage, and the mighty Týr lost his right hand by being bitten off. Thus, why the folklore of the right wrist being called "the wolf's joint" persists to this day. The other tale involved his and Þórr's journey to his father's house to receive a giant cauldron for Ægir to brew mead for the gods.

Týr's father is somewhat disputed in the lore, while in the poem *Hymiskvida* of the *Poetic Edda*, it is said to be Hymir... Snorri notes that Óðinn is his father elsewhere in the *Prose Edda*. Týr is also said in the *Poetic Edda* to have had a wife and son, although there is no other lore to name them.

In modern context, Týr's function has become strongly that of law and order, especially in context of the Þing. Other associations have been made linking Týr with the Old Saxons' Irminsúl Pillar which was cut down by the forces of Charlemagne. He is also venerated as a sword god, much like the Anglo-Saxon Saxnot. Another fairly modern myth or folktale is that Attila the Hun was successful because he had found a sword that was blessed by Týr.

I have seen Týr as being an older gentleman of about late forties with long white hair and a long white beard, and missing his right hand. He is seen in battle helm and armor; he carries his great sword in his left, and binds his shield to his right wrist which is always bandaged and bloody.

Frey is of the Vanir tribe of gods. He is the son of Njörð and the twin brother of Freyja. Frey is also the ruler of Ljósálfheim, which was given to him as a "tooth-gift". Among his prized possessions are the ship, Skíðblaðnir, and a golden-bristled boar called Gullinborsti. He is known most for many things, giving Skírnir his magic sword to woo his wife Gerð, for defeating the giant Beli with only a stag antler, and also for his prophesized battle (and loss) against the fire-giant, Surt.

Snorri Sturluson, in the *Prose Edda*, describes Frey thus; "Frey is an exceedingly famous god; he decides when the sun shall shine or the rain come down, and along with that the fruitfulness of the earth, and he is good to invoke for peace and plenty."

Frey, from my experiences is very natural, very primal, yet noble and strong. I see him as a young man in his prime, muscular, and has curly brown hair and a beard. He wears a tunic made from the skin of a stag, and boots of leather. He carries a stag's antler for a weapon and a simple dagger. His skin is tanned, and his eyes a light brown. But even through this simple style clothing one can feel an incredible aura of nobility and kingship. It's almost overwhelming. One of the best, condensed, informative books you can buy on Frey was written by Ann Gróa Sheffield called, *Frey, God of the World*, published by Medoburg Kindred.

Heimdall is the watchman of the northern gods and guardian of the bridge, Bifröst. His hearing and sight are said by Snorri to be exquisite. In the *Poetic Edda*, he is twice depicted as a progenitor of mankind both in the *Völuspá*, and in *Rígsþula*. He is an enigmatic figure of which we cannot be entirely sure, by way of literary lore, whether he is considered of the Æsir or the Vanir because references to both tribes are given of him. Heimdall is, told to us by Snorri, to be born of Óðinn and nine mothers who are also sisters. He bears the Gjallarhorn, which he is prophesized to blow when Ragnarök approaches. He also owns a great horse named Gulltopp.

Heimdall is known also for his battle with Loki, as a seal for the necklace Brísingamen that was stolen from the goddess, Freyja. It was he, who suggested Þórr dress as Freyja to retrieve the stolen war hammer, Mjöllnir. Some of his titles and names include Vindhlér, Gullintanni, and Hallinskídi. Also of note, is that an old kenning for a sword is "the head of Heimdall" and another for the head is "the sword of Heimdall".

My personal description of Heimdall would be that he is tall and wears white plate armor. His teeth are gold, his hair is white, and his face seems rough.

Höð is one of the Æsir tribe of gods and one of the sons of Óðinn. He is described as being blind and is the direct killer of Balder by throwing a sprig of mistletoe at him, guided by Loki. In turn, Höð is killed in vengeance by Váli, and joins his brother, Balder in Hel. But, in the *Poetic Edda*, Höð returns with Balder to rule over the new worlds after the prophesized Ragnarök, together.

Víðar is of the Æsir tribe of gods and the prophesized slayer of the wolf Fenrir and the avenger of his father, Óðinn. His mother is the giantess, Gríð. In the *Prose Edda*, it says; "Vidár is the name of one of them, the silent god. He has a stout shoe and is almost as strong as Þórr. The gods rely greatly on him in all difficult situations."

Ull is the son of Sif and a frost etin and the step-son of Þórr. He is a great archer, a god of duels, and a great warrior. He lives in a forest of yew trees called Ýdal. Oaths are made holy when sworn by his oath-ring in the *Atlakviða* of the *Poetic Edda*. Although there are scant amounts of lore, there are a large number of place names rooted in his cult, by the name-base of Ullin.

I believe him to have light blue toned skin, white hair and beard, and ice blue eyes. Another interesting personal gnosis of mine is that although he is a god of winter, he and Balder (who is very much associated with summer) had a strong friendship.

Meili is said to be the brother of Þórr, according to the *Hárbardsljód* of the *Poetic Edda*. Other than that, there is no other mention of Meili. Perhaps he is a god whom we have lost tales of.

Váli is the son of Óðinn and the giantess, Rind. He is bold in battle and a very good shot. Váli was said to have slain Höð at only one day old, before he was cleaned or had his hair combed. He is prophesized to be one of the surviving gods after Ragnarök.

Óð, whose name has been translated by Andy Orchard in *Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend* as being "Frenzy", is the mysterious, missing traveler-husband of Freyja and the father of their daughter Hnoss. It was for her missing husband, Óð, which made Freyja cry tears of red gold and amber across the lands she searched. Snorri Sturluson associates him with the Æsir.

Magni, one of the Æsir and son of Þórr and the giantess Járnsaxa, at three years old was strong enough to lift the leg of the dead Hrungrir off from his father when no one else could. He, and his brother Móði, are prophesized in the *Poetic Edda* to survive Ragnarök and inherit the mighty hammer Mjöllnir from their dead father. He is mentioned in the skaldic poem *Þórsdrápa* and in the eddic poems *Hárbardsljód* and *Vafthrúdnismál*.

In my experiences and meditations, I see Magni as being young, and a medium body frame. He has fiery light blue eyes like his father and golden blond hair.

Móði is the brother of Magni, the son of Járnsaxa and the god Þórr, and one of the Æsir. His name has been translated by many scholars as "Might". Not much is said about this son of Þórr, but he is mentioned in *Vafthrúdnismál* and *Hymiskvida*. Móði, with his brother Magni, is prophesized to jointly inherit Mjöllnir from his deceased father.

In my own meditations, Móði looks very much like his brother except his hair is a dark red and his body build seemed larger than Magni's.

Skírnir is Frey's servant and his name translates to "Bright One", according to Andy Orchard's *Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend*. He serves as a go-between in Frey's wooing of Gerð and receives Frey's sword as reward for doing so. Skírnir is also whom Óðinn sends to Svartálfheim (dark-álf home/dwarf-home) to receive the magical fetter, Gleipnir to bind the wolf Fenrir. Both these myths are recounted in the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*.

Kvasir was a being created by the spittle of the Æsir and Vanir when they made peace after the Great War between the two tribes of gods. Snorri described him as, "...so wise that no one was able to ask him any question to which he did not know the answer; he traveled widely throughout the world, teaching folk wisdom."

Kvasir is an interesting in that he is dead, and from the shedding of his blood by the dwarfs Fjalar and Galar, the mead of poetry was made. Another thought of note is that in some passages, he is described as of the Æsir and others as of the Vanir. Kennings for both poetry and mead are described as "Kvasir's blood" or "the blood of Kvasir".

Ægir, although always named as of giant-kind, is often associated with being on the side of the Æsir and Vanir. He is described in the *Poetic Edda* as being one of the greatest brewers and hosted the gods often to feasts in his hall. Ægir is also the husband of the sea giantess, Rán and has nine daughters. He is mentioned greatly in *Lokensenna*.

Ægir has, in my dreams, a long green tinted beard flows like smooth seaweed. His ancient, dark green eyes are hypnotizing in his gaze. The green and sand-colored tunic he wore was decorated with sea shells and speckles of gold. Ægir's hands seemed claw-like to me and constantly clutching convulsively, as if grasping for all greedily. Ægir's long white hair is bound into a braided ponytail by dark seaweed. Another piece of personal unsubstantiated gnosis is that he seems very picky about mead-brewing and I've referred to the feeling of having a back-seat brewer with you when you call for his brewing skills.



The Goddesses

Frigg, is the wife of Óðinn and the mother of Baldr. She's the daughter of Fjörgvin, as told to us by Snorri's *Prose Edda*. She is mentioned in *Lokensenna* by Óðinn as knowing the fates of all gods and men, but says nothing and keeps silent. Frigg owns a dwelling called Fensalir in Ásgarð.

Frigg has many instances in myth and legend where she takes a prominent role. In the myth of Baldr, it is she who makes all of creation, except the mistletoe, promise to not harm her beloved son. It is also she, who makes Hermóð go to Hel to ask for Baldr to be allowed to come back to the living. Frigg is the patroness whom tricked Óðinn into renaming and assuring victory to the Lombards according to the eight-century Latin account of Paulus Diaconus.

In modern, contemporary myth and belief, Frigg has been seen as the patroness of the household and the family. She is a patroness of marriage, domestic affairs (which can include wars!), wisdom, womanhood, and childbirth. It is interesting to note that in the *Volsung Saga*, it is Frigg, who hears and answers the prayers of Renir and his wife. She in turn, goes to Óðinn and they send them a magical golden apple which helps Renir and his wife conceive Volsung.

In my personal gnosis, Frigga is often a tall, beautiful woman wearing either a stunning white gown with gold and jewelry, or as wearing a long evergreen-colored tunic with a dark brown apron, belted with gold where a large ring of keys are hung. Her hair is a light brown, braided and tied in the back with a gold head ring.

Gefjon, whose name is translated to "the giving one" by Andy Orchard in his *Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend*, is one of the goddesses of the Æsir. In the *Gylfaginning* of the *Prose Edda*, Snorri wrote how the king of Sweden, Gylfi, gave a beggar-woman the promise to give her all the land she could plow in one day using four oxen for the entertainment she has given him. What he didn't realize was this was the goddess Gefjon, and she yoked four giant oxen from giantland who were her sons. It plowed so deep and hard that it pulled loose the land which became Zealand. Also, in the *Prose Edda*, it is written that;

"The fourth is Gefjon; she is a virgin, and women who die unmarried serve her."

Eir, is a very mysterious goddess of the Norse. She is only mentioned in the *Prose Edda* as simply being, "the best of physicians" and nothing else is said of her. So, thus, Eir is considered a goddess of healing. Eir, in that context, is also considered as being one of the goddesses of the Æsir tribe.

Eir, in my personal insights is very much a goddess of healing and rejuvenation. Although many may disagree, I seem to associate her with the rune, Berkano because of her healing qualities. I also see her as having long blonde hair, blue eyes, and carrying a birch staff, wearing a white tunic. In my own dreams and personal gnosis, I see her as having a strong association with snakes and bumble bees.

Sunna, who is sometimes called Sól, is the sister of Máni and the daughter of Mundilfari. She is the goddess who drives the chariot holding the sun and is chased by the sky-wolf, Sköll. Sköll is prophesized to devour Sunna and the sun but not before the sun gives birth to a new sun. The horses that

pull the chariot are called Árvak and Alsvið (Early-waker and All-strong). It is said in the *Prose Edda* that under the shoulder-blades of these horses are two bellows to cool them called Iron-cold.

Sunna, in modern day, has been a good recipient of honoring and toasts in Ásatrú. She is often wished good tidings and safe return during the winter solstice (the longest night of the year) during the holiday of Yule-tide. I personally, see her as being dressed in yellow and gold, shining brightly.

Nanna, was the wife of Baldr and died of grief when he died. She is said to be the mother of Forseti and the daughter of Nep in the *Prose Edda*.

Iðun, is the keeper of the golden apples of youth and the wife of Bragi. In the poem called *Haustlög* composed by Thjóðólfr of Hvin in the tenth century (and retold in Snorri's *Prose Edda*), it is recounted how the giant Thjazi stole Iðun and the apples and was eventually killed by the gods during his pursuit of her (changed into a nut) and Loki who were trying to escape.

Iðun, in my own unsubstantiated personal gnosis, is extremely beautiful and attractive, showing the immense beauty held by the essence of youth itself. She is a shimmering blonde, with long hair combed straight, and strangely attractive golden eyes. Also the rosy colored cheeks of youth are an attribute of her. She has a love of white flowers which many times she wears in her hair, along with a white dress.

Nerþus, is a goddess not found in the lore of the Eddas, but in the account of the *Germania* of Tacitus. According to Tacitus, Nerþus was worshipped by the Germanic tribes of the Reudigni, Aviones, Anglii, Varini, Eudoses, Suarines, and Nuitones. Nerþus was driven in a wagon or chariot drawn by cows. Once the celebration was finished, the wagon and goddess were washed in a sacred lake by slaves, then the slaves were drowned.

In this modern day, there is a prevailing belief that she was associated with islands, lakes, ponds, swamps, and bogs. Also, that her name is associated with the same roots as Njörð, so many have associated her as being one of the Vanir and the sister/-former wife of Njörð. It is said in many sources that the Vanir allowed brother/sister marriage unions before their truce with the Æsir. So thus, some modern Ásatrú people believe her to be the mother of Frey and Freyja. There are also a number of Ásatrú who have connected the "bog people" as studied by P.V. Glob in his book, *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved*. Nerþus is also heavily associated with fertility and connected with the actual earth itself.

I see Nerþus as being of healthy proportions. Her skin is a light brown with a light bronze twinge to it. Her hair is a very dark, brown with some dirty blonde streaks and it sparkles with speckles of minerals from the earth. And she has black eyes. She has torque made of solid, dark carved amber around her neck and wears a chain of a dark gold around her waist. She is, of course an arousing figure to say the least.

Sága is mentioned in the *Prose Edda* as being one of Frigg's handmaidens or sisters. She lives in a large estate called Sökkvabekk. Other than mentioning that Óðinn drinks with her in Sökkvabekk in the *Grímnismál* of the *Poetic Edda*, there is no other literary information on this goddess. Many attribute her to the Ásynjur or female Æsir. Andy Orchard and Edred Thorsson both translate the meaning of Sága's name to be "seeress" or "speaker of prophecy". She's also been associated with knowledge of the past.

Fulla is one of the goddesses of the Æsir tribe of gods and a handmaiden or sister of Frigg. She is mentioned in both the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. Some scholars have tried to associate Fulla with the goddess mentioned in the Merseburg charm named Volla. The *Prose Edda* says of Fulla;

"The fifth is Fulla; she, too, is a virgin and wears her hair loose and a golden band around her head. She carries Frigg's little box and looks after her shoes and knows her secrets."

Hnoss is the daughter of Freyja and Óð. Hnoss is said to be so fair that her name is the root of anything thought precious and beautiful. Her name roughly translates to "treasure".

In my dreams, Hnoss is a beautiful, young lady with golden, sparkling hair and blue eyes. She looks very much like her mother, Freyja. Hnoss also seems to often sit by Heimdall, enjoying his quiet company.

Skaði is actually of the Etin-kind who married the Vanic god, Njörð. She is mentioned throughout the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. Skaði was also the daughter of Thjazi, whom the gods slew. Because of this, Skaði demanded wergild consisting of someone making her laugh, and to pick a husband among the gods. Loki was successful in making her laugh by tying a goat's beard to his genitals and the gods made her choose a husband by their feet. Of which, she picked Njörð who had the most beautiful feet. They switch homes, spending half their time by the sea, and the other in the mountains.

Skaði is the goddess of winter, darkness, hunting, and revenge. She is also an archer, and the inventor of the snowshoe. She is a goddess of winter for the obvious reasons of her birth, love for winter. She is a goddess of revenge, in that she sought revenge for her father's death and that she was the one who suggested Loki's punishment for killing Balder by tying him up with the intestines of his son, and personally put the acidic, venomous serpent over his head.

In my visions, Skaði (being very beautiful), from my insight, looks much like Ull, in that her skin is blue, but of a darker blue. She has long, white, braided hair in which she wears a silver ring set with a blue gem. And her eyes are silver colored. Skaði wears clothing of white fur, but is more scantily clad because of her relevance for the cold and because of her heritage. She wears snowshoes, and carries a bow and a sword. Also, she is always accompanied by three wolf-like hunting dogs, which all have silver collars.

Sjöfn, is said in the *Prose Edda* to be the goddess who is much concerned with turning the minds of people to love.

Unfortunately, that is the only literary reference we see of her. I personally have no thought-provoking or challenging interpretation which would run contrary.

Lofn is a goddess ascribed as being gentle and good to invoke because she can give permission for banned or forbidden lovers to be married. As such, that the word "permission" itself (in Icelandic, lof) is derived from her name.

One contemporary writer, Edred Thorsson, in his book *Northern Magic* also ascribed Lofn as also being a goddess of sexual indulgence which may be thought of as being forbidden by cultural customs.

Þrúð is the daughter of Þórr, sister of Magni and Móði, and may be the very figure that the dwarf Alvis wished to wed in the poem *Alvíssmál* in the *Poetic Edda*.

Any Orchard, a scholar of both Exeter College in Oxford, England and at Queen's College in Cambridge, England translates her name as meaning, "power".

Vár is a goddess described by Snorri Sturluson as;

"She hears people's oaths and in private contracts men and women make between them. So contracts are called vórar; she likewise punishes those who break them."

Also, to compliment this, one should note that she is invoked as part of the marriage ceremony in the eddic poem *Thrymskvida*. She is definitely a goddess of honesty and truth.

Freyja is a goddess of the Vanir, the sister of Frey, and the daughter of Njörð. Her husband is named Óð and her daughter is Hnoss. Freyja's name roughly translates to "Lady". Throughout both the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* she is described as being a goddess of love, sex, warrior-spirit, and magic. Freyja taught Óðinn the finer points of Seiðr, and is holder of the necklace Brísingamen, and owns a magical falcon cloak. She has a hall named Folkvang and another named Sessrúmnir, collects half the battle-slain, and owns a chariot pulled by two large cats.

Freyja, as I have seen her, is most stunningly beautiful. She has light blue eyes, long blonde hair, and her skin gives the radiance and smoothness of fine silk. Brísingamen is made of gold and amber, with interlocking rings signifying the cycles of not only nature, but the cycles of magic, and mystery. An aura of gold surrounds her. Her clothing is usually elegant, but sensual and shows the contours and curves of her body. Other times, I have seen her wearing armor of one sort or another.

Vör is a goddess, who in the *Prose Edda* is said, "... she is so wise and searching that nothing can be concealed from her. It is a proverb that a woman becomes aware of what she gets to know."

Modern connotations of Vör could be that she is a goddess of intuition and instinctual knowledge.

Snotra, being one of the mentioned Ásynjur by Snorri's account, is only mentioned as being wise and gentle in manners. Men and women who exhibit self-control are said to be called "snotr", which translated roughly to the word, "prudent".

Some Ásatru have associated Snotra as being a type of goddess of intelligence.

Syn of the Æsir is a guardian goddess. She guards the door of the hall and bars it from those who are not permitted to enter. Syn also appoints defending counsel at trials in cases she wished to refute. Thus, she is a goddess of denial of accusations and defense.

Óstara, or Éostre, is an old Anglo-Saxon, continental Germanic goddess of the spring and dawn who seems to have received a tight following among the Ásatrú folk, even though there is no existence of her in Scandinavia. As said, she is a goddess of the spring, rebirth, and fertility.

Modern Ásatrú people have not only embraced Óstara fully, but also some indicate that as she rides her chariot to bring forth Spring, it is Þórr in lead ahead, who kills all the remaining thurses (giants) who try to block her path to clear her way.

I personally, see Óstara as being a young woman wearing a spring dress of white and yellow, with light brown hair full of various light-colored flowers. I envision her chariot as being pastel-colored and being pulled by many little colorful birds and rabbits. And as she rides forth, flower and plants bud as she passes.

Hlín is the goddess who Frigg asks to protect some favorites from danger. Unfortunately, this is all we know of her.

Gná, who is another goddess who makes up the Ásynjur, is the one whom Frigg trusts on errands most important. She has a horse named Hoof-Flourisher that runs in the air and over the seas.

Sif is the wife of Þórr, the mother of Þrúð. She is also the mother of Ull, from mating with his father, an ice giant before marrying Þórr. She is said to be the embodiment of the fertile earth, this being exemplified by her golden hair, of which was to symbolize the golden grain fields. There is a myth that Loki once cropped her hair off to stubble. This would leave one to think of the harvesting of grains. Eventually Thor, in his rage, found out it was Loki and forced him into replacing it. In order to save his life, Loki had dwarves forge Sif new hair made from the finest gold strands. Sif is also associated with seið-work, although lightly. In the *Prose Edda*, Snorri describes how Thor found a spae-woman. A spae-woman is another name for a seeress or seið-worker. So this would put her into the power structures of Gefjon, and Freyja.

I have envisioned Sif as having golden blonde hair that was the length of her body and blue eyes. She is usually wearing either a green or white gown, in my dreams. Also, that she seems to always have flowers in her hair.

Rán is of etin, or giant-kind, but seems to be on the side of the gods and goddesses. She is mentioned in the *Poetic Edda* as snaring drowned men in her nets. Rán is the wife of Ægir and mother to the nine wave sisters.

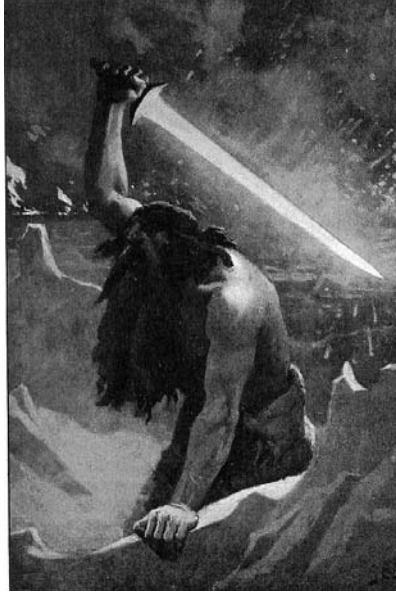
Rán appears to me with a dark beauty, that is as hypnotizing as the sparkling of the waves in the night. Her black hair flows like the waves across her always naked body. And Ran's black eyes tantalize one's desire. Her skin has a light green tinge to it, and the smoothness of water itself.

Hel, sometimes referred to as Hella, is the goddess of the underworld (Niflhel) and guardian of the dead. She is also the daughter of Loki. It was she, who received Baldr into the realms of the dead and set a great feast for him.

In modern context, Hel may be considered a goddess of the eternal peace of death among some Ásatrú folks. I believe we must remember the cycle of things, for there to be life there must be death, in order for life to be reborn. In that sometimes she is described as being half black and half white. Many people associate the white as being life and the black as death. But, personally, I ascribe to the idea that the white is death, like the bleached bones of a corpse, and the black is life, much like the black, fertile earth from which life springs forth.

Hel, is described in the lore as being sometimes half beautiful and half a rotting corpse. I believe this to be that sometimes, to those worthy, she appears beautiful. And to others, she may appear a corpse of death. This, I believe, shows her dual nature. To me, Hel's dark beauty is as captivating as that of all the other goddesses. Her raven black, long hair is as soft as a whisper, and her eyes are a green and catlike. Though her skin shows the paleness of death, it is of a smooth, white, almost marble or porcelain quality that has a strange beauty to it.

Nehellenia, is another goddess whom is not found in Scandinavian references. She was a goddess that is found in Holland and her center of worship seems to have been in Walcheren. Nehellenia was a goddess associated with apples, dogs, and ships. Nehellenia is another goddess that seems to be gaining popularity amongst some Ásatrú people.



Chapter 4: *Other Divine/Semi-Divine Beings*

There are a variety of what could be considered divine, or semi-divine beings within the context of the Ásatrú religion and folk. Some of these beings were worshipped (meaning, "to give honor to") and others were not, according to many historical or linguistic records. But, none-the-less, they are important in the overall system of belief in that they give us keys into many of the symbols and mystical spiritualism that encompassed the ancestors' worlds. Regardless of the nature of divinity you adhere to, which were discussed earlier, these other beings give us gateways into many mysteries. Some are what one may call malevolent towards mankind and to the tribes of gods, others neutral, and others are beneficial towards the realms and aims of the Æsir and Vanir. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the basic natures of some of these entities.

The Jotuns

"Jotun" in its modern usage in Ásatrú, is a general term for the giant-kind whom are descended from Ymir. They symbolically and mystically embody the proto-forces of the universe before the coming of the gods and are generally the chaotic forces of nature in its harshest forms. The Jotuns can be categorized further into three classes according to their general nature, which are diverse. These classes are Rises, Jotuns (proper), and Thurses. Although in some areas of mythology and poetics they may blur a bit at times, they are still fairly distinct.

The Rises are typically the types of giants which are thought of as being of great size and have sometimes engendered themselves with humans and other entities. They are considered to be not very intelligent, slothful, and sometimes are beneficial to mankind on a one-on-one basis. They are sometimes said to dwell in, or become, parts of mountains and rocky hills. An example would be the not-so-bright giants of folklore who sometimes befriend children in various tales, or are the bad guys who are outwitted by the youngsters.

The Jotuns (proper) are non-evolving entities who are ancient, wise, intelligent, and are overall neutral entities in the war between consciousness and unconsciousness, symbolically. Some Jotuns side with the Æsir and Vanir, while others side with the Thurses. They are non-evolving in that they have acted as they have throughout aeons and ageless time. Some examples of Etins would be Mímir, Skaði, Thjazi, and Thrym. Mímir and Skaði are beneficial to the goals of the gods. Skaði has even reached to a point where she is even worshipped as a goddess and if one were to ask Mímir for wisdom in a toast, virtually no participant in ritual would even flinch. Jotuns of a beneficial nature are taken as mates by the gods commonly. Thjazi, and Thrym, are prime examples of Jotuns who are against the workings of the Æsir and Vanir.

The Thurses are thought of as being immensely powerful, insanely violent, non-intelligent (one could say stupid), and relatively unconscious (or non-thinking) beings in the multiverse. They are the antagonists and enemies of the gods and that of existence itself. Thurses can be further subdivided into Rime-Thurses and Fire-Thurses. The Rime-Thurses are of the essences of chaotic ice and the Fire-Thurses of the essences of chaotic fire, symbolically. These beings are never, ever worshipped. They are the devourers of all life and seek only to destroy. A perfect example of a Fire-Thurse would be Surtr "the Black (or Scorched) One" who is prophesized to lead the sons of Muspellheim to enflame the multiverse and destroy all.

The Dísir

The dísir are female ancestral spirits. They were often worshipped in the autumn or late winter during a festival or holiday called dísablót. According to *Heiðreks Saga*, it was a woman who smeared sacrificial blood upon the altar late at night for dísablót. Also, there is a reference in chapter 5 of *Víga-Glúms Saga* which tells that most often it was a celebration of the family, relatives, and close friends.

Often times, they are regarded as guardian spirits who fulfill a tutelary goddess niche. But, a reference in *Njál's Saga*, the story of Thiðrandi is given where some of his ancestral dísir are unhappy with his conversion to Christianity, so they kill him.

The Álfar

The Álfar come in several different types. They are the Ljósálfar (Light-Alfs), the Dökkálfar (Dark-Alfs), and there are the Svartálfar (Black-Alfs). I will attempt to make the distinctions clear based upon my readings and other literary evidence. There is also proof of a festival or holiday called Álfablót which occurred in the autumn.

The Ljósálfar are those who inhabit Ljósálfheim, which is said to be ruled by the Vanic god, Freyr. Most modern Ásatrú just refer to it as Álfheim. The Ljósálfar are thought of as being divine/semi-divine spirits of the air and brightness. They are described as being very bright and beautiful. It is an extreme rarity that human beings would encounter them.

The Dökkálfar, or Dark-Alfs, are what most modern Ásatrú are thinking of when they refer to the "Alfar". Sometimes referred to as Mound-Alfs, the dökkálfar are divine/semi-divine which were once either male ancestral spirits or wild beings which live in wood and stone in Miðgarð. The male ancestral spirits are humans who, after being put into their mound, became attached to the land, or the people nearby and have turned into protective spirits. The wild Dökkálfar who live in stones and trees or other wooden structures seem to be something akin to the Landvittar. Those are the Alfs in which may sometimes be hostile to humans and inflict them with Alf-shot and make them mysteriously sick when offended. These types of Álfar are described as being either darkened in skin or pale like the dead.

The Svartálfar, or Dvergar, are what people commonly refer to as Dwarves. They dwell in Svartálfheim and are great craftsmen and smiths. They are described as being dark in complexion and will even turn to stone if exposed to sunlight as told to us in the eddic poem, *Alvíssmál*. They are the beings which created many magical items for the gods and men of Miðgarð. Another thing to mention is that there are human beings which are said to have turned into Svartálfar, like Reginn of the *Volsung Saga*.

The Landvættir

The Landvættir are land- or earth-spirits associated with nature. They are the dwellers of our forests, woods, and swamps, etc. They hold the luck and fertility of the land and often times can help or harm it. In *Egil's Saga*, Egil curses the Landvættir until they drive out the Jarl of Norway at the time, Eirík Blood-Axe. They are sometimes referred to as Landálfar and helps to further thin the line distinguishing between them and the Dökkálfar.

The Landvættir are also noted as being great fighters against those who would ravage the land and such is mentioned as occurring in the *Saga of Óláf Tryggvasson* and in *Landnámabók* Icelandic law contained a provision that dragonhead carvings had to be removed when approaching the coast so that the Landvættir would not be frightened away, bringing ill luck for the whole community.

The Tomten

Tomten are a type of house-ghost or house-wight whose name means roughly, "homestead man". They are similar to the Norwegian Napfhans and the Kobolds of Germany. Known by other names such as Gardvord ("farm guardian"), and Tunkall ("yard fellow"), they associate themselves with either a home itself or a specific family that catch their fancy. A happy Tomte will help with the housework, guard and protect the home, and bring luck to the family. Unhappy Tomten tend to hide objects, and play tricks.

One of the most important times to give attention to a Tomte of the home is during Yule-Tide, in which they expect, in many stories, tales, and folklore, that they receive a bowl of porridge or oatmeal with a good-sized pat of butter.

The oldest literary reference, given by Reimund Kvideland and Henning Sehmsdorf, to the farm sprite is found in a version of the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvasson* (twelfth century), in which one is referred to as Armaður ("hearth man").



Chapter 5: *Ancestors and Ancestor-Worship*

The Ásatrú religion is sometimes referred to as an ancestral religion. Much like other religions of the world, like Shintoism and many Native American religions, memories and deeds of our ancestors are sacred. They are honored for being the roots of our family tree. In pre-Christian, Nordic/Germanic cultures, there was an overriding belief in two main aspects of the Ancestors and Ancestor-Worship.

One, was that the Gods and Goddesses are also our ancestors. Óðinn, Hoenir (Villi), and Lóður (Vé) were said in our myths to have created the human race by shaping them from trees. Then, in *Rígsþula*, the god Ríg (associated to be Heimdall), helps boost mankind's lineage by his divine intervention. Also, of note, would be that in many sagas and histories of royal families, the root ancestor is said to have been a god, like Óðinn or Frey (Ingvi), for example.

The second aspect was the belief that children were the ancestors of old and that one could be reborn into your family lineage. There are several references in the sagas (*Gautreks Saga* and in the *Flateyjarbók*, for example) and poems within the *Poetic Edda* (like *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, for example) as reference points in this belief. It was also believed that one's ancestors could help bring luck and prosperity to the living and even give advice. The act of sitting on a mound to gain insight and inspiration was due to this belief. The noted mythologist, H.R. Ellis-Davidson wrote extensively on death, the afterlife, and concepts of ancestor worship from the Nordic/Germanic point of view, in her book, *The Road to Hel*.

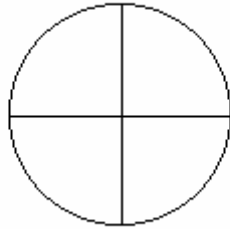
Ancestor-Worship can encompass as little as finding out one's ancestral heritage and family lineage, to keeping family heirlooms and photographs on display, to performing active rituals in their honor. A symbolic statue depicting or representing your family line on the home altar, or keeping a family banner, or even finding out what your family's heraldic arms were would be good examples also. Clannish tartans is another realm of Genealogy in which someone of Northern English, Scottish, or Irish ancestry may divulge into.



Chapter 6:
Blóts, Fórnrs, Feasts, and Sumbles

In this chapter, we will explore the holidays and major ritual types of the Ásatrú folk. In these holidays and rituals, it is important to keep within the mindset that one is not appeasing the gods by buying them off, but rather one is giving honor to them by bestowing or sharing gifts with them. In ancient times, the giving of a gift was a sign of friendship, trust, respect, and kinship. It not only had a mundane element, but also a magical significance where as, when one gives a gift to another and a gift is returned (either immediately or shortly after) there is an exchange of might and main or hamingja/luck. To not return a gift means a decrease in one's personal hamingja or luck.

There were several hátíðir (holidays/celebrations) observed by our ancient ancestors. Although many varied from region to region, there is a modern grouping of commonly celebrated hátíðir among the Ásatrú folk. There are eight main hátíðir that a majority of Ásatrú groups seem to follow. These are Yuletide, Disablót, Óstara blót, Walburga's Night/May Day, Miðsummer blót, Þing's Tide, Freyfaxi blót/Harvest blót, and Álfblót. There is also a ninth that some celebrate called either Ancestor blót or Einjerher blót. Some of these hátíðir are from times past, while some are completely modern. The Greater Hátíðir are Yuletide and Miðsummer blót which fall on the winter and summer solstices, respectively. The traditional Nordic sentiments recognized primarily two distinct seasons, winter and summer, which is why Yuletide and Miðsummer blót are considered the Greater Hátíðir. Although today, we modern Ásatrú see the other two periods of transition, autumn and spring. Below is a brief description of each hátíð (or holiday). Following will be a general explanation and outline for the rituals known in Ásatrú as blóts, fórnrs, feasts, and sumbles. In the Appendix, one can find some examples of actual sample rituals for these hátíðir.



Ásatrú Hátíðir

Yuletide: is a traditional, ancient holiday that was among the Scandinavians and Northern European peoples. Sometimes called Jóltime, it began on the Winter Solstice (usually falling around Dec. 21st) and lasted for 12 nights. This Greater Hátíð celebrates all the gods and goddesses of our religion, although some emphases were historically put on Óðinn, Þórr, Njörð, and Freyr. The reason for all of the gods and goddesses being worshipped together is due to a myth given to us by Saxo Grammaticus' *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*. In the myth, Saxo describes how a wizard/god named Mithotyn usurped Óðinn's chiefdom of the Æsir while he was away traveling. Mithotyn institutionalized the notion of sacrifice to individual gods rather than ever sacrificing to the collective as a whole. Óðinn, of course, returned and regained his power and re-installed collective sacrifice. Yuletide is briefly mentioned in the *Saga of Hákon the Good*, in *Heimskringla* and in *Heiðrek Saga*. Boar (pork) was traditionally sacrificed and eaten, wishes for the New Year were made, and the traditions of the Yule tree were held. Christianity later adopted many of these customs because the people would not stop them, even after conversions. The hearth with a Yule log was kept burning all night for the Solstice, which is the longest night of the year. Great merriment and joy is prevalent on these 12 nights, where gods, ancestors, and the like are believed to be able to visit our world more easily. There is much folklore in that folks would stay in after dark for fear that the Wild Hunt would chase down and steal an individual outside at night.

Dísablót: is also an old, traditional hátíð which is in honor of the Dísir. As mentioned in a previous chapter, they were often worshipped in the autumn or late winter during a festival or holiday called dísablót. According to *Heiðreks Saga*, it was a woman who smeared sacrificial blood upon the altar late at night for dísablót. Also, there is a reference in chapter 5 of *Víga-Glúms Saga* which tells that most often it was a celebration of the family, relatives, and close friends. Many Ásatrú folk celebrate this hátíð, near the end of winter, in February.

Óstara blót: is a traditional, hátíð followed by modern Ásatrú. Originally an Anglo-Saxon holiday, it was quickly adopted by the Ásatrú folk along with its patroness, Óstara. This hátíð is documented in the Anglo-Saxon heathen calendar published by The Venerable Bede in his 8th century, *De Temporum Ratione* ("Of Times and Seasons") under the section called, *De Mensibus Anglorum* ("The Months of the English"). This holiday occurs on the Vernal Equinox, in March, and is a celebration of the coming of spring and growth. Customs include egg painting and egg hunts, which were later adopted by Christianity since the practices could not be stopped.

Walburga's Night/May Day: is a modern hátíð based upon folklore and folk customs of Northern Europe. It was originally called (in German) Walburgisnacht. This was a night where, in folklore, witches, pagans, and magic permeated the air before the brighter festivals of May Day occurred. Although Walburga was believed to be a goddess of magic in pagan belief, there is only one documented reference to her, which is on a clay tablet called an ostrakon from the Elephantine in Upper Egypt. The tablet is dated from the 2nd century and is housed in the State Museum of Berlin. There is the name of a Prefect and lists of references. One such reference concerns, "Waluburg Se(m)noni sibylla" or Walburga sibyl (seeress) of the Semnones. The Semnones were a Germanic tribe also referenced by Tacitus in his *Germania*. The Christian church tried to subvert the celebrations, but finding they could not, merely canonized Walburga into a fictional womanly saint. Some Ásatrú have associated Walburga with the goddess Freyja in modern aspects, so they honor her on this holiday night with elements of runic magic and seiðr along with sometimes Óðinn in his more magical/runic aspects. This hátíð is observed on April

30th at night. Then, in the morning, May Day folk customs are observed, like the Maypole's fertility dance, and merriment and fun.

Miðsummer blót: a traditional, Greater Hátíð, is the honoring of summer and all of the gods and goddesses collectively. Again, this is because of the reason for all of the gods and goddesses to be worshipped together due to a myth given to us by Saxo Grammaticus' *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*. Great bonfires, feasts, and games were held all over Northern Europe. We know of this hátíð through the collections of folklorists, edicts by church officials disallowing its observances, and writings of Christian writers describing the events. The *Acts* of St. Vincent written in the fourth century describes how pagans in Aquitaine, France celebrated a holiday by rolling a burning wheel. Although Miðsummer was not specified, about a thousand years later it appeared in the writings of a monk of Winchcombe, near Gloucestershire. He referred to the burning wheel custom ascribing it to Miðsummer's Eve which occurred near their celebration of the Feast of St John the Baptist. Then, in the book, *The Popish Kingdom*, by the Protestant writer Thomas Naogeorgus (in 1570), the ancient pagan celebration is described and some customs observed in detail and explained that it was once done all over Europe. Also, the 11th-century Anglo-Saxon medical text, *Lacnunga*, often marks Miðsummer as the time to collect certain herbs. Occurring on the Summer Solstice (around June 21st), it is the longest day of the year, and is sometimes associated with the myth of the death of the Nordic god, Balder. But, as previously said, it is often ascribed to being a hátíð in which all the gods and goddesses are honored. Some modern customs include the burning of a sun-wheel or a wagon wheel, jumping through bonfires for luck, poetry/lore games, dramatic plays (or Mummer's Plays), Morris or sword dancing, and reading *Baldur's Draumar* from the *Poetic Edda*.

Ping's Tide: is a modern holiday based upon old heathen, Icelandic influences concerning their Alþingi which was held in August. This hátíð is religious in the sense that modern Ásatrú have associated it with the god, Týr, being a god of law, order, self-sacrifice, and community. Many groups use this hátíð as a time to honor Týr, a time to make large, group internal decisions, and a time to settle disputes.

Freyfaxi blót: Sometimes referred to as Harvest blót, this modern hátíð is in honor of Frey, a god of fertility, agriculture, and harvest. It occurs during the Autumn Equinox (around Sept. 23rd) and is named after a horse of the same name kept by a Freysgoði named Hrafnkell. This horse, Freyfaxi, was given to the god Frey. Hrafnkell declared death upon any who tried to ride the horse. This is recounted in the *Saga of Hrafnkell Freysgoði*. During this time, it is said that there were horse fighting tournaments and festivals for the harvest time. In modern context, it is a time to appreciate the harvest and the workers of the fields which bring the food we eat to our tables. Some customs include the mock sacrifice and eating of a bread horse, eating foods from a nearby farm, and the laying down of weapons outside in honor of Frey as a god of frith.

Álfablót: is a traditional hátíð found in literary sources in honor of the Álfar. As recounted in a previous chapter, this celebration occurs in the late autumn according to literary sources. Many Ásatrú folks hold Álfablót in October, sometimes referring it as Winter's Nights. The earliest reference to Álfablót occurs in *Austfararvisur* ("Verses on a Journey East") written by the poet Sighvat Þórðarson to describe his journeys to West Gautland in the autumn of 1080. Many stanzas of this poem describe how he was barred entry from the homes of heathens because of the sacrifices going on. In *Kormáks Saga*, there is a description of advice given to a man Kormák injured by a witch-woman concerning an Álfablót sacrifice to help his wounds heal. Some modern customs include the burning of grain, and lighting bonfires in their honor.

Some American Ásatrú folks have added another newly created, modern hátíð in November called **Einjerher blót**, in which a ritual is performed in honor of the Fallen Slain or veterans of U.S. Wars or Conflicts. Others have created a hátíð in November to commemorate their own ancestors, calling it simply, **Ancestor blót**. In this new, modern holiday participants honor and talk about their direct ancestors on a more personal level.

An example of a basic outline of an Ásatrú hátíð goes something like this;

- A. Discussions/Activities
- B. Helga
 - 1. Calling of the Folk
 - 2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

- C. Blót
 - 1. Declaration of Hátíð
 - 2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods
 - 3. Meditation/Reading
 - 4. Sanctifying of the Sacrifice
 - 5. Sacrifice
 - 6. Rauð/Blessings to the Folk
- D. Fórn (can be in addition to, or in place of Blót)
 - 1. Declaration of Hátíð * (If not already done.)
 - 2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods*
 - 3. Meditation/Reading*
 - 4. Presentation of Fórn
 - 5. Giving of Fórn
- E. Veizla
 - 1. Calling of the Folk
 - 2. Seating & Serving of the Folk
 - 3. Hosts' Toast
- F. Sumble
 - 1. Calling of the Folk/Seating
 - 2. Declaration of Sacred Time
 - 3. Rounds
 - 4. Ending of Rounds
 - 5. Closing Declaration

Blót and Fórn

Blót literally means, "blood", and survives in the modern Icelandic word, "blóð" and the modern German, "blüt". Another related modern word is "blessing" (Anglo-Saxon, "blétsung") which originally meant, "to sprinkle with blood". The blót, in ancient times, was the main form of communal worshipping ritual. It was also a source for the sacred, communal feast, or Veizla. Animal sacrifice was the mainstay in a society in which farming and animal husbandry were commonplace. The origin of the word, "sacrifice" is derived from Latin, meaning, "to make sacred." The literary and archeological evidence for animal sacrifice is extensive to say the least, with the exception that the actual ritual of it itself was not ever noted. Several sagas give accounts, the *Heimskringla*, portions of the *Poetic Edda* mentions sacrifice, and many observers from Ibn Fadlan in his manuscript concerning the Rus, to Tacitus' *Germania*, to Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*.

In a traditional blót, the sacred beast (be it a fowl, goat, pig, etc.) is presented to the participants where as folks have a chance to lay a hand on the animal and thank it for its death and the nourishment the folk will receive from it. Also, messages to the gods may be asked to be relayed. It is critical that the animal is treated with the utter most respect and reverence. In its life, it should have been pampered and treated as a sacred gift to the gods. During this time, people should act calm and reserved. There should be no shouting, yelling, nor fast/aggressive movements because all will alarm the sacred animal and cause it to panic. The slaying must be quick, clean, and with as minimal suffering as possible for the sacred beast. The common-most methods are by bleeding. A clean cut is made where the jaw line and throat meet, thus severing the main arteries and veins of the neck, causing a fast and non-excessively suffering death. The blood is caught in a hlautbolli. It is then sprinkled upon the gathered folk using a twig of evergreen or some other tree. The remaining is used to rauð, or "redden" the outdoor altar, also known as a harrow or hörgr by pouring it upon the surface. In some traditions or customs, the carcass is beheaded after bleeding and the head is placed atop of a short pole or stick with the mouth opened. In some traditions (like Anglo-Saxon, or amongst the Þeodish), the spirit/soul of the beast exist through the opened mouth to tell the gods if the sacrifice was done properly, with respect, and seriousness. The sacred carcass is then butchered and the feast is prepared from it.

Any parts not used in food preparation, or portions of the sacrificial animal left uneaten should be disposed of by either throwing it into a sacred well, or immolated in a bale-fire. Portions should NOT be "saved for lunch tomorrow".

A VERY important aspect to keep in mind is that a fouled-up blót WILL be rejected by the gods, causing ill-luck upon the gathered folk. One should approach this type of ritual with reverence, respect, and honor. Various books on animal husbandry and butchering can be found and should be referenced. If possible, an experienced person in the slaying of animals should be sought for to gain insight and practical methodology.

Fórn is a sacrifice of a votive or materialistic nature. The word still survives in modern Icelandic as a noun and a verb ("Fórn"-feminine noun, "Fórna"-verb) meaning, "sacrifice" or "to sacrifice". The literary sources to support votive/material sacrifice is as extensive as that of animal sacrifice. The same sources can be utilized along with archeological evidence unearthed all over Northern Europe in bogs, lakes, and mounds. Sacrificed material wealth encompassed anything from food items, to jewelry, to statuary, or even weaponry. In the giving of fórn, the object(s) should be destroyed or rendered useless by mankind. Various ways of doing so would be by immolation, shattering, bending, or immersion/burying. In many instances, fórn can either be done in place of actual blót proper, or as a supplement to blót proper. What is sometimes called a "mock sacrifice" where a representation of an animal (made of straw, wood, or even bread/pastry dough) is sacrificed, would fall into the realm of fórn. Again, as with blót, there is no recording of any of the prayers or words spoken during this form of ritual.

****In some Ásatrú groups, where animal sacrifice is not an option, due to land/area restrictions, they have utilized a form of blót where the blood of a sacrifice is replaced with sanctified mead, which is passed from person to person to give toasts to the gods. This kind of "mini-sumble" version is utilized in several groups. For this kind of ritual, the outline would be;

A. Discussions/Activities

B. Blót

1. Declaration of Hátið
2. Invocation
3. Meditation/Reading
4. Mini-Sumble (3 Rounds)
5. Devocation (Wassail to the Gods)
6. Libation of Mead

Feasts or Veizla

The word used to describe a feast of importance was, "veizla". Veizla could be done alone in honor of a particular person, guest, to celebrate an event, or it could be in honor of a god or goddess. But, it always followed when either a blót or a fórn was performed. In the case of a blót, the meat of the sacrificed animal was always used as the main course. In elder days, the hosts of the veizla always sat at the head of the table (or at the head table), before the guests and other participants. Often times, the host offers a toast to the health and well-being of his/her guests at some point during the eating and merriment. An example of a toast could be, "I ask all who have gathered here, to join me in this feast! May we always be strong in body, spirit, and mind. And let all those who should try to harm us, be cast aside!" It must be remembered that by partaking of the feast and consuming the flesh of the slain sacred animal, that you are also taking in a portion of the power and essence of not only the animal itself, but also of the powers/essences of the gods who have exchanged such with the sacred sacrifice. Some customs associated with veizla are leaving a portion of the feast outside for consumption by land-spirits, and sometimes even creating a place setting for the ancestors to "sit and take their share" of the festivities.



Sumble

The sumble is an event that follows the veizla at all hátiðir. It is as much of a holy event as the blót or fórn. The Roman historian, Tacitus, refers to such a ritual in his *Germania* remarking how amazed he was that these Germanic tribesmen would lay out the most personal of things before everyone. Other references of sumble are numerous. *Beowulf*, *Heimskringla*, and the *Saga of the Jomsvikings*, are just a few examples.

A sumble is, in its most basic form, rounds of sacred toasts and drinking. The toasts, boasts, and oaths said in sumble go directly into the Well of Wyrd and are heard by the gods. It should always be taken seriously, because by participating in a sumble, one is affecting the luck and wyrd of everyone present for good or ill.

Sumbles, in literary evidence, were always contained within a hall or enclosure. This was because the containing of the sacred event is, in a holy way, separated from our normal, everyday life and occurs in a metaphysical concept of altered space and time. In this way, we are connected with our ancestors on multiple levels.

There are basically three “official” positions within a sumble other than a participant. They are what we will call Sumble-Drighthen, Thule, and Valkyrie.

The Sumble-Drighthen is the person whom is in charge of the sumble. He/she declares the opening of the sumble, the beginnings of the rounds, and also the ending of the rounds is solely determined by the Sumble-Drighthen.

The Thule guards the luck of the hall/group. It is the Thule’s duty to speak up and challenge any boast or oath which may be dangerous to the luck of the group or offensive to the gods. Dangerous boasts/oaths would entail someone possibly falsifying a deed they did not do, or bragging about something they intend to do which may be unattainable. If a participant is challenged by the Thule, they do have a chance to re-affirm their boast/oath and may call upon someone present to “speak for them” as support. No one should be offended if this occurs. The Thule is warding the luck and örlög of the group/hall. If the challenged participant does not fulfill his/her boast/oath, then in effect, the gods have been notified and the group is saying, “We gave him the chance to back out before it was too late. So if he fails, the consequences are all on him, not us.”

The Valkyrie, preferably a woman, blesses the drink and pours at least the first horn-full. This is because it was believed that women had a magical healing and/or nourishing property to them. Tacitus in *Germania* noted the reverence that the early Germanic Tribes had for their women. This is also why it was such a big deal in the sagas for the lady of the hall to pour a guest a drink, personally. This proclaimed, “This person is important, full of luck, and highly respected.”

Sometimes, sumbles are dedicated in specific ways for the contents of their rounds. The most common are that the 1st round is to gods and wights, the 2nd round to heroes and ancestors, and the 3rd is usually an “open” round for boasts, personal toasts, or oaths. Further rounds may continue, going into feats of poetry, song, and the like. But, it is important to be sure that the overall atmosphere of the sumble always stays sacred and does not turn into “just a party”.

At the end of each round, the remaining of the holy drink is poured into a hlautbolli. Then, some is taken back from the hlautbolli and ladled into the drinking horn, the horn is then re-filled with more blessed drink, and the next round commences. This is how the gods share drink with us and help to give their divine inspiration.

Improper etiquette at a sumble would be to not listen intently when others have the drinking horn, interrupting or making comments, shouting loudly, and starting side conversations. It is EXTREMELY improper to become intoxicated at sumble.

Proper etiquette at sumble would be to listen intently to each toast and to say, “Hail.” when the person drinks in the might and main of the toast. If one has a cold, does not drink alcohol, or for some other reason cannot communally drink from the same horn as others, they should instead kiss the side of the horn. It will not be seen as strange or odd, in any way, to the other participants.

Sumble Outline

A. Calling of the Folk & Seating

The Valkyrie seats the guests. The Thule greets them all.

B. Declaration of Sacred Time

The Sumble-Drighthen says, “We are rightly gathered and now wend our way into the sacred and timeless realms unseen and share together in our elder traditions. Take heed in thy words with wisdom, for our gods hear them, and you all now speak into the Well of Urð. Grow and gain in wisdom as a word leads to other words and a deed leads to other deeds.”

The Valkyrie then holds up the mead container high and blesses it in the names of the Dísir and Nornir. She then pours it into the drinking horn and hands it to the Sumble-Drighthen saying, “The holy mead is blessed by the Dísir and Nornir.”

C. Rounds

D. Ending of Rounds

The Sumble-Drighthen speaks, “I call the rounds ended. Let us wend our way back to our stead, back to our time, and go forth with mighty moods and great deeds. Now are Hárr’s sayings said in Hárr’s Hall, helpful to the sons of men, but of no help to etins’ sons! Hail the one who speaks them; hail the one who knows them! Gain the one who gets them, hail those who hear them!”

E. Libation of the Holy Mead.

The Valkyrie pours the contents of the hlautbolli into the earth while saying, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”



Chapter 7: *Daily Devotions and Rites of Passage*

Many people connect with the divinity of our gods in different ways. Some feel confident and are perfectly happy doing so only during *hátíðir*. Others like to let divine connection occur randomly, while still others like to make a willed, conscious effort daily. Although none of these occurred in ancient times as far as we know, it is a justifiable modern practice. The author, personally, believes strongly in the theory that daily devotions help to foster an awareness of the divine and cultivates knowledge of the holy in everyday life. We must remember that religion being separated from secular, everyday life is a development of the modern age. Our ancestors saw no difference or separation.

Greeting Sunna

Waking with the rising sun, or greeting the sun in the morning after waking, is a great way to start off the day and invigorate the spirit. Stand straight, legs together, with your arms raised in a “V” shape, so that your body forms the rune, *elhaz*. Facing the east, towards the rising sun, one can recite an appropriate passage from the *Sigrífumál* from the *Poetic Edda*:

“Hail to the day, hail to the sons of day,
hail to night and its daughters.
Gaze upon us gently, and grant us sitting here,
your blessings and victory.

Hail to the gods, hail to the goddesses,
hail to the all-giving earth!
Wisdom and lore, as long as we stand,
grant us, with healing hands! Hail Sunna!”

Washing Prayer

Some folks like to encompass a short invocation when they first wash their face and hands in the morning. Essentially one is symbolically washing away any residual ill from the previous day/night. One example is to use cold water, rub your hands underneath, and splash some upon your face while saying:

“By the sacrificed blood of Ymir, I wash away all ill will, all ill thought, and all ill luck in both body and spirit.”

Hammer Donning

A popular ritualistic daily devotion that some *Ásatrú* folks enjoy is the donning of their *Þórr*’s hammer necklace. Some like to say a short prayer of sorts like:

“By the might of Mjöllnir, ward me, great Ása-Þórr, from harm.”

Meditation

Another aspect of daily devotion is meditation. This could be either of an active sort like reading from the *Hávamál* of the *Poetic Edda* or an inactive type, like sitting while thinking of a rune, an aspect of a god or goddess, or even nothing at all! Many times this helps one to focus, to disintegrate the stress from the day, or even just to relish in a calm moment from our hectic, busy schedules. One will find that after only a few days, the effects of meditation can be experienced with one finding better patience, calmness, clarity, and focus throughout the day.

The reader is, of course, encouraged to think up other personal methods or habits of a daily religious nature, because it only helps further your well-being and spiritual growth.

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are one of the most important elements of a culture or peoples. Unfortunately, especially in the United States, this practice has been stopped, to the ill luck of many. Today, instead of our children participating in a learning experience about themselves, they are forced into an unguided stumble into adulthood. Instead of the experience of learning to hunt, they learn to binge drink. Instead of forming strong bonds and relationships with family and community, they join gangs of trouble-makers. Instead of self-appreciation and confidence, they are forever engulfed in a whirlwind of self-doubt and low self-esteem. Instead of loving themselves and seeing opportunity, they walk in an antisocial cloud of hate and depression. There were sociological reasons for these rites of ascension. And our general society is now reaping the blacken grain infested with rye-rot. But, we can change this.

Naming

When a child is born, our ancestors considered that it did not yet have a soul or a place in the family *örlög* until nine days later when it was named. By naming the newborn and sprinkling it with water, its personal being was tied into the *hamingja* and luck of the family, clan, and tribe or community. The sprinkling of water was called, “*Ausa Vatni*” which originated long before the coming of Christianity. One may choose to call forth various gods and goddess and the norms to recognize and bless the child being named. Such ceremonies are expressed in various sagas like *Egil’s Saga*, *Njal’s Saga*, and *Eyrbyggja Saga* to name a few. There were traditions of naming children after dead relatives to help bring about that ancestor’s luck. In modern day, there is a growing trend to bring back some of the older, heathen names into family lines once again.

Rites of Adulthood

Rites of Adulthood among many cultures always seemed to follow a similar general pattern. Unfortunately, nothing was written concerning rituals of womanhood, so what we have is based upon the male perspective. The author sincerely hopes (and is entirely confident) that the women of *Ásatrú* will correct this. The male counterparts of rites of adulthood seemed to follow tightly with various warrior cults of Northern Europe. These can be summarized as:

1. The desire to participate in the ritual, and the participant expecting something to occur.
2. Isolation, vigils, fasting or abstinence, and time for reflection.
3. Noise of one sort or another.
4. Real or symbolic drink or potions.
5. Threats or frightening happenings, usually staged and not real danger.
6. A symbolic death and resurrection.
7. New acceptance into the desired group and the giving of an item.
8. All of the events are always kept secret from the participant and any future participants.

An example would be from *Hrólfs Kraka Saga* where a youth had to kill a “monster” figure that was set up in the king’s hall then drink its blood. Afterwards, the youth was considered a man and a warrior. Similar such elements can be created for our youth of today. Other suggestions have been to send off the soon-to-be adults off into the woods to fend for themselves for a time. The key is to be sure that the activity teaches the youth something about themselves and helps to bind them with their community in some way.

Marriage

The elements of marriage in literary sources are pretty scarce. We know marriage itself was sacred and important. But, the exact details of the ceremonies are lost. Some elements can be found hidden within *Þrmskviða* of the *Poetic Edda*. Below, is the ritual developed by the author and his betrothed utilizing some of these elements.

[The participants and spectators of the wedding are situated around the altar. The groom’s family and 2nd (Best Man) on one far side, and the bride’s family and her 2nd (Maid of Honor) on the opposite side. The officiator (Goði) is behind the altar in the center.]

[Best Man and Maid of Honor are to both walk to the center, stand before the Goði.]

Goði: "Why have you come before our community and the gods?"

Both Best Man & Maid of Honor: "We are here to see to the marriage of [insert groom’s name] and [insert bride’s name]."

Goði says to Best Man: "Why should [bride’s name] marry [groom’s name]?"

[Best Man answers of his own accord, speaking upon why he thinks groom is a good person, deeds groom has done or accomplishments...etc.]

Goði says to Maid of Honor: "Why should [groom’s name] marry [bride’s name]?"

[Maid of Honor answers of her own accord, speaking upon why she thinks bride is a good person, deeds bride has done or accomplishments...etc.]

Goði says: "These are all good reasons, reasons enough for them to come forward to our community and our gods for their blessings. Bring them forward."

[Best Man & Maid of Honor both walk back and bring bride and groom both in front of the altar.]

Goði says: "Are you both here to be married before the Æsir, the Vanir, and our community?"

Groom and Bride answer: "Yes."

Goði says: "As our community and our gods & goddesses are important to us, so are our families. Do the families of [groom] and [bride] agree to this wedding?"

Families merely nod approval, or say simply, "Yes."

Goði then picks up Mjöllnir representation, holds it high and says: "Mighty Þórr, Warder of Miðgarð, we call upon you to bless this union with fertility & happiness. We ask you to protect & bless this new family, great red beard!"

[Goði then waves hammer over the couple's heads.]

Goði then says: "Into Miðgarð we call upon Vár and Sjöfn, goddesses of oaths and love, we also ask you to witness these oaths in this union of marriage!"

Goði picks up the horn and oath ring and says: "Know this: that his horn's tip falls into the Well of Wyrd, where your oaths will be sunk into eternity. Know this: that this oath ring lays your oaths and binds them together within you both. The Æsir, the Vanir and our community, await."

Groom and Bride take the horn and oath ring together. Groom speaks his oath to Bride and drinks from the horn. Bride speaks her oath to Groom and drinks from the horn. They hand them back to the goði.

Goði pours left over contents into the blot bowl. Goði asks for the rings. Both Maid of Honor and Best Man hand the goði the rings.

Goði holds the rings up and says: "Let these rings be a symbol of the oath and the love you both have for each other. A ring is forever in cycle and forever continuous, as should be your love for each other." Goði then hands Groom and Bride the rings.

Groom says: "[insert bride's name], my beloved, I give you this ring as a symbol of our love."

Bride says: "[insert groom's name], my beloved, I give you this ring as a symbol of our love."

They kiss.

Goði says: "The Æsir and the Vanir, the gods and goddesses of our folk, and our community have born witness to the oaths of this union. May your marriage be full of many blessings."

Goði hands the blot bowl to Bride & Groom and they empty the bowl's contents into the bare ground.

Funerals

In the days of yore, our ancestors were either buried in a mound, or burned on a pyre. Other than the extremely elaborate funerals conducted for chieftains and nobility (Like in *Beowulf* or the manuscript of Ibn Fadlan's time with the Rus), there are no real literary explanations for the commoner's funeral. So, it is up to the deceased family and friends to create a funeral for them in their honor. Something to keep in mind is that in our beliefs, a portion of the deceased can be reborn into future generations. H.R. Ellis-Davidson's *The Road to Hel*, although out-of-print, is a treasure chest of information. Elements one should keep in mind are to have grave goods for the deceased, a good pair of new shoes for traveling, and what were known as "Hel-cakes" (small cupcake-like food) for the journey into the afterlife. There should always be a sumble consisting of mostly toasts in the memory of the deceased. Folks who are present should tell stories, tales, and the deeds of the deceased. To be remembered is the greatest testament for our dead. In the *Hávamál*, it is said,

"Cattle die and kinsman die,
You will also one day die,
But the one thing that never dies,
is the glory of the great dead."



Chapter 8: *Living Trú*

Ásatrú folks have a saying, “We are our deeds.” We are not just a resurged, reconstructed religion of arm-chair philosophers and home academics, but a religion of action and reputation. There are moral and ethical teachings in which all Ásatrú people are expected to act by. Whether this is implied, or said outright. One obvious tool is contained within the *Poetic Edda*. It is a poem called the *Hávamál*. This poem gives good advice and elements of wisdom and common sense in which moral and ethical teachings can be easily derived. Also the sagas of the Icelanders give us an understanding of many issues and wisdoms reflective of those times. Another indispensable book is literally called, *We Are Our Deeds: The Elder Heathenry Its Ethic and Thew* and it is written by a contemporary writer named Eric Wóðening of the Theodish. Although geared towards general Germanic Heathenry, again it’s a must have in the author’s opinion.

Of course, one should participate in at least the Greater Hátíðir, but just going to a blót or fórn is not enough. Ásatrú is a religion which should be life altering! Consider the two following quotes:

“The Norse ideal was a man of open, generous disposition, a man imbued with qualities of compassion and kindness, not ruthless but firm and fair, even-tempered but capable of passion, physically accomplished and strong in fight, but not a bully.”

--Magnus Magnusson

“To do what lay before him openly and like a man, without fear of either foes, friends, nor fate... to be free and daring in all his deeds; to be gentle and generous to his friends and kinsmen, to be stern and grim to his foes, but even towards them to fulfill all bounden duties... to be no truce-breaker, nor tale-bearer, nor back-biter. To utter nothing against any man that he would not dare tell him to his face. To turn no man from his door who sought food or shelter, even though he were a foe.”

--George Dasent

There are some folks amongst the community which will give one a list, of one sort or another, to “checklist” your actions to scale their honorability. As the *Cliff’s Notes* never got you an “A+” in High School or College, nor will they help you in something as important as your religion and spirituality. Actually, the phrase should be, “...nor will they help you in something as important as your LIFE.” Always think strongly upon your actions and their repercussions before you do them. This will lead you to honor and good reputation.

Honor, unfortunately, is often a very misinterpreted concept. Many times, the newcomer will have a strange concept of honor made up of a combination of romanticized medieval chivalry, bad samurai films, and an over-inflated ego. This is somewhat expected when someone is new to any religion or

concept of correct conduct. The definition of honor given by *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* is:

Hon-or (on'ər) n. 1. honesty, fairness, or integrity in one's beliefs and actions: "a man of honor." 2. a source of credit or distinction: "to be an honor to one's family." 3. high respect, as for worth, merit or rank: "to be held in honor."

The combination of living a good life, respect for others, thinking and being responsible for your own actions, and thinking upon the two quotes I gave will definitely help you on your way to gaining and keeping honor and respect amongst your peers.

All of this combined with honoring the gods, your ancestors, and abiding by right action is the pinnacle of respectable behavior among the Ásatrú folk. But, more importantly, not only will it gain you respect from the community but it will also help you gain true respect for yourself and for life itself.

Another thing to keep in mind, especially for a religion in which the vast majority consists of converts, is to learn to think like a heathen. There are many concepts that have been ingrained to us from birth through parents, teachers, peers, society, and even commercialism and marketing (!) that have radically altered the thinking of mainstream America. I am not implying that everyone starts thinking like a 9th century Viking raider, there are some concepts that should stay in the 9th century! What I am relaying is that many core, basic concepts in which we derive much of our thought processes are taken from the philosophies of other religions and other cultures mixed with a healthy dose of modern commercialism and pop-culture. These, as our current society is only showing us all too well, are unhealthy.

Some of the concepts that the newcomer to Ásatrú should think heavily upon would be:

- A. The natures and concepts of "Good & "Evil".
- B. The natures and concepts of "Community".
- C. The natures and concepts of "Self-Responsibility".

These are only a few examples. One great book that would help to gain a personal insight on the Ásatrú world-view would be through the reading of James C. Russell's *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*. By reading this book, along with (if possible) *The Culture of the Teutons* by Vilhelm Gronbech, one can see the differences and similarities enough to be able to concern further root concepts.

The only other thing that can be done, to bring our religion into full-swing of influence is through the teaching of our children. And at that, observing them, the first generation of "born Ásatrú", we will only learn even more.



Afterword:

I hope this has helped the reader as a basic guide into the religion of the Ásatrú folk. I have intentionally mentioned and recommended materials within the text to illustrate the importance of them, and to also foster the reader to go read them. One will also notice there are no footnotes indicating page numbers and the like. Again, done on purpose, go read the whole book! Don't worry, you'll find the concept, theory, and/or reference, I promise!

Something I have left out of this work is the matters of Rune and Seiðr magic. These are subjects beyond the scope of this book, of which I will eventually write upon in the future. Magic is not an absolute element of religion in the case of Ásatrú. There are many who practice it, many who do not, there are many who believe in it, and many who do not.

Also, I will say again to go out and *do*. One needs more than book knowledge. One needs experience, not only with the gods but also with the community. Get involved, write articles, and support Ásatrú publications. Visit the people, go to the gatherings, and see what community is really about!

With Honor,
--Mike Smith

Appendix A: *Ritual Regalia*

There are certain tools that are used for ritual in the Ásatrú religion. The symbolic, as well as the metaphysical, aspects of them help to aid the temper, mood, and holiness of a blót, förn, or sumble. There are other things which one can substitute in the case of unavailability which can work well. But, I do highly suggest slowly acquiring such ritual regalia within reason. Often enough, the acquisition, search, creating, and/or decorating of these regalia can be a religious experience in, and of, itself! I will try to keep this list as basic as possible.

The Harrow- A harrow, or altar, is traditionally kept outside and was made up of stone or heaped stones. But, in this modern era, sometimes privacy in better kept indoors or sometimes weather does not permit outside use. Many Ásatrú folks use an altar made of wood, like a small cabinet or table of waist height. If it has draws or other space, this works wonderfully as doubling as a place to store various other holy relics.

The Hammer- A hammer is used as a representation of the holy hammer of Þórr, Mjöllnir. Representing the primal powers of both primordial fire & primordial ice, it is used in hallowing and blessing objects and sometimes people. It should have an iron or steel, symmetrical head with a wooden handle. I, personally, bought a small, hand-held sledge-hammer and decorated it by carving runes upon the handle, and adding a leather strap to the butt-end.

The Drinking Horn- The drinking horn is used to consume the holy mead, ale, or beer used in ritual sumble. The horn becomes a symbol of the Well of Wyrð when in use. When drinking from, or kissing the side of, the horn one is consuming (or sharing) in the power that the gods have instilled within the liquid. Horns can be obtained through some leather suppliers, medieval reenactment catalogs, and many times at Ásatrú gatherings.

The Hlautbolli- The hlautbolli, or blót-bowl, is used to catch blood from a sacrifice, or to contain mead from a sumble until it is poured upon the earth or a harrow. I would suggest it be made out of a natural material such as wood or stone.

The Hlautreinar-The hlautreinar are the sacrificial twigs or aspergills which are used to sprinkle the hlaut (sacrificial blood) onto blessed items or people. Usually it is made from freshly cut pine/coniferous tree branches.

The Oath Ring- An oath ring is used to declare or swear oaths upon of a most serious nature.

The Glóðker- A glóðker is a small fire-pot used to burn incense or to keep a small need-fire, or a flame via flammable liquid. It is symbolic of the original flames of creation and the flame of the souls of our ancestors.

The Sax- The sax, or scam sax, is the sacrificial knife used for literal blót of an animal. It can also be utilized for runic carving purposes. It is very important to keep this item very sharp and clean.

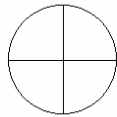
There are other objects and tools in which one may use in ritual such as candles, statues, and other items to symbolize various things. These are more of a personal nature to the Ásatrú individual. There are some individuals who utilize ritual dress during rituals. These folks wear reproductions of Viking Age tunics and the like in order to help set the mood or sometimes for fun. Others see it as a way to get in touch with our ancestors from back in that age. Of course, there are others who dress just respectably and cleanly for ritual in modern era clothing. Neither is better than the other.

Appendix B: Holy Symbols

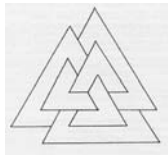
In this appendix, I will attempt to explain briefly some of the symbols of the Ásatrú folk that are sometimes used in religious context. These symbols pre-date much farther than many will realize and I will admit that some of these symbols may shock one at first, but patience is a necessity in explanation. These symbols are not runes. Runes are entirely different in their content, meaning, and context.



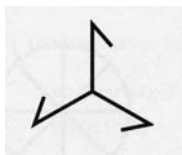
The hammer of Þórr, otherwise known as Mjöllnir, is the ultimate symbol of warding and protection. Most of the Ásatrú folk wear a representation of the hammer. In elder days, during the conversions of Christianity, folks wore the hammer, instead of the cross, to show their loyalty as it is today in the modern era.



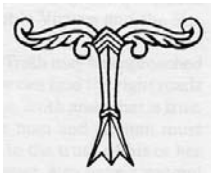
The Sun-wheel is a symbol that corresponds with the holy year, and the sun's power of weal. It is one of the oldest known Northern European solar symbols.



The Valknut, or “knot of the slain”, is a symbol of the cult of Óðinn. It signifies the god's power to fetter and unfetter the soul, the workings of *wyrd*, and *örlög*. The vaulknot can also symbolize the three levels of self-evolution and dozens of other things. The realm of the symbology of the vaulknot is immense. A great book on the subject was written by a member of the Eormensyl Hall of the Rune Gild named Valgard. The booklet is called, *Valknutr: 9 Lays of Power*. It is also a sign of Óðinnic sacrifice.



The Trefot, or Triskelion, is a symbol of the three-fold pattern of the realms of being. This encompasses the realms of Ásgarð, Miðgarð, and Hel. It may also be representative of the evolution of man in the *Rígsþula* of the *Poetic Edda*. Many Ásatrú folk associate this symbol with the god, Heimdall.



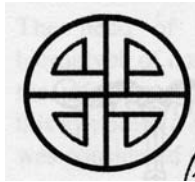
The Irminsúl is a symbol of the great pillar axis of the worlds, according to Saxon lore, with its apex at the North Star. It was also a symbol of cosmic order. Originally linked to an Old Saxon god, Irmin, in modern times, it has been associated as being a symbol of Týr among the Ásatrú.



The Ægishjálmar, or “Helm of Awe”, is a magical symbol which is still used in Icelandic magic. Its power is to cause paralyzing fear in the hearts of your enemies. Mentioned in the *Volsung Saga*, the wyrm, Fafnir possessed it until it was defeated by Sigurð.



The Swastika, or Flyfot, was a solar symbol of might, main, and dynamic will. One of the world’s oldest and holiest symbols, the swastika appears in many cultures from Native Americans to Asians. Both Hinduism and Buddhism employ this holy symbol in their religions also. The swastika is also associated with the god, Þórr as it being his whirling hammer. This symbol is one of luck and good fortune whether in a clock-wise or anti-clock-wise direction. Many Ásatrú folks do not use this symbol because of the distress it puts many people into because of the misuse of it by the National Socialist Worker’s Party in the 1930’s-1940’s and by modern Neo-Nazis today. Others hope to reclaim it through education of the symbol.



The Shield-Knot is a strong symbol of protection that is still used today to mark off archeological digs and historical cultural sites in Scandinavia. This symbol not only encompasses a sun-wheel, but also a swastika within its core.

These are the major, and most common, symbols within the Ásatrú religion. There are many more which one can find through searching archeological digs and other academic studies.

Appendix C: *Sample Hátið Rituals*

Here are a few sample rituals for the person new to Ásatrú to be able to get an idea of what a ritual will consist of. Of course, variances will occur and the reader is encouraged to make their own alterations of the template. In these examples, the “Goði” would be the person running the ritual, or the main facilitator. Multiple “parts” may be divided and distributed among multiple people, if you like. Please refer to chapter 6 concerning the Ásatrú Hátiðir, blóts, and förn. I will give a sample for each of the eight main hátið and also a sample for an Ancestor Blót. Some will be blóts proper, some will be förn, and one or two will show an example of both. Sometimes I will give a suggestion, or ideas for förn. These are only to stimulate ideas. Freyfaxi blót, for example, here is given in a blót proper. It very well could be done in a förn style.

Another nice suggestion would be that after the goði gives the förn or sacrifice, there is a time when individuals may step forward with a sacrificed item, declare it such and why, and give it to flame, lake, etc. before moving on to the next part. If possible, always orientate the altar towards the North. If one is outside, stake out the ritual area with wooden pegs and string or yarn made of natural materials. I would also, personally suggest using the color red for the string. Also, when the “goði” is invoking or calling the gods, he/she should stand facing the north with arms raised in a “V” to create the shape of the rune, elhaz with their body. Decoration only adds to the mood and overall experience, so hang those banners and decorate to the season/holiday! Also, it is best for a group of folks to enact some events exactly the same each year to form new traditions! Another avenue to explore is the use of background music.

Yuletide

Because Yule (or Jól) is 12 nights long, beginning with the night of the Winter Solstice, this Greater Hátið ritual will actually consist of three rituals to be held during the twelve nights. They are Mother Night, Middle-Night, and 12th Night. Some groups do all three rituals in the same night or space it over a weekend.

Mother Night (The Journey of Sunna): This is the longest night of the year, where Sunna takes her longest journey with the wolf, Sköll close behind her trying to devour her. The Ásatrú sacrifice for her safe return. This ritual is to be conducted at sunset.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Förn

1. Declaration of Hátið

The Goði says, “We now enter the Yuletide of our folk! Hail to Mother Night! From the year’s dark end comes a brighter beginning! Hail to these days and nights, for the gods and our ancestors hear us more clearly through the mists of Life, Death, and Time. From across the Bifröst Bridge into the realms of Ásgarð, Vanaheim, and Hel we hail!

2. Invocation

The Goði says, “Glorious goddess Sunna! Upon this night of your lowest stead, we gather to wish you great luck and frith for your longest journey. May the jaws of Sköll never find their desire! May mighty Ása- Þórr clear your path, and the loyal Heimdall guard your way! Hail Sunna!”

<<< Goði, or designate, then either lights the Yule-log (or bonfire) or the Yule-candle>>>

The Goði says, “By this flame, we hold and protect Sunna’s light, hail to Sunna.”

(This candle or fire should be kept lit all night until dawn.)

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps selected verses of *The Völuspá* which speak of the impending doom of the earth.>>

4. Presentation of Förn

The Goði says, “Hail to Sunna! We give to you this sacrifice for might, main, and luck! Hail to your journey! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!”

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the förn and utter well wishes to Sunna. (A suggested förn could be a straw Sunwheel, Swastika or a Yule-goat, as a symbol of the sun or season).>>

5. Giving of Förn

The Goði says, “Sunna! Accept this gift!” then sacrifices the förn

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

At this point, the Yule-log, or Yule candle, should be kept going all night until dawn. Be sure to do this safely! The förn should be followed by the veizla and then sumble. Come dawn, the folk should gather in the first morning light and all recite the “Greeting Sunna”, given in chapter 7, together.

Middle-Night (Honoring of the Gods): The gods, as a whole, should be honored during this Yuletide hátíð.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)

2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Blót

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “We again gather during the Yuletide on this Middle-Night, to give honor and sacrifice to the gods and goddesses of our folk! We also give honor and sacrifice to our great ancestors, whose blood runs through our veins! The great wheel of our year turns, the Wild Hunt is at its peak, and our ancestors continue to, and have been, visiting us in the nights of this tide.”

2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods

The Goði says, “From across the Bifröst Bridge, lend us your might and main in Miðgarð, great gods and goddesses all! We call upon you to witness this blót! Come from Ásgarð to our realm and take your seats of honor! Hail the Gods! Hail the Goddesses!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps selected verses of *The Hávamál*>>

4. Sanctifying of Sacrifice

The sacrificial animal is brought forth, with reverence. The Goði then holds high a representation of Mjöllnir and says, “By the primordial essences of Fire & Ice, mighty Ása-Þórr, hallow and bless this sacred beast!” Then pass the hammer’s head over the sacrificial animal.

At this point, the Goði says, “May any who desire to wish our warded traveler well, you may do so now.”

The assembled folk, one at a time, may step forward and lay a hand on the animal and say a few words, thank it for its sacrifice, or to wish it a good journey. It may be asked to deliver a message. But such should NEVER be DEMANDED.

5. Sacrifice

In a gentle fashion, any handlers should step forward and assist. The Goði then steps forward and appropriately sacrifices (the usual method being by bleeding) the animal after saying, “Great Gods of Ásgarð, accept our gift.” Another person, preferably a woman, should hold the hlautbolli to catch the sacrificial blood.

6. Rauð/Blessings to the Folk

The Goði then takes the hlautteinar, drips them into the hlautbolli, and sprinkles the folk lightly while saying, “May the blessings of the gods be upon you.” The hlautbolli is then handed to the Goði and it is held high over the harrow and the assembled folk say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods.” The Goði then pours the contents onto the harrow, if it is an outdoor stone type. If it is a temporary or movable altar, a designated ground space should be chosen. The assembled folk may then cheer loudly.

The folk should then prepare the veizla from the sacrificial animal, hold the feast, and then sumble accordingly, as usual protocol suggests.

12th Night-(The New Year!): On this last night of Yuletide, the three main gods associated with Yule by our ancestors are honored (Óðinn, Þórr, and Frey), wishes and oaths are made; and the Yule-wreath is burned. Before the ritual, people should write a short, simple wish they have for the coming year in runes on a piece of ribbon and tie it to the Yule-wreath. This ritual is more appropriate and impressive at night, in my opinion, with a bonfire used as the Need-Fire.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Fórn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “We now end the Yuletide of our folk! From across the Bifröst Bridge into the realms of Ásgarð, Vanaheim, and Hel we hail! The Wild Hunt is at its last night, Sunna and the sun are at full strength once again, and our folk are revitalized for the coming year! We now bring forth and hail the New Year!”

2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods

The Goði says, “By the gallop of the horse, the bristles of the boar, and the charge of the chariot, we call the Jólnar forth! Mighty Óðinn, master of inspiration and magic! Red Þórr, warder of Miðgarð and friend of mankind! Ingvi-Frey, god of wealth, fertility, and frith! We honor you all on this 12th Night! Come and be honored by your folk! Hail Óðinn! Hail Þórr! Hail Frey!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps selected verses of *The Völuspá* where it describes the coming of the new earth.>>

4. Presentation of Fórn

The Goði says, “Hail to Óðinn, Þórr, and Frey! We give to you this sacrifice for might, main, and luck! Hail to your strengths! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!”

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the Yule-wreath and give honor to a god or goddess, give a boast, or lay an oath. >>

5. Giving of Fórn

The Goði says, “Mighty Óðinn, Red Þórr, and Ingvi-Frey hear these words and let words turn to deeds! Accept this gift!” then places the fórn (the Yule-wreath) into the bonfire.

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

Based upon the flames of the Yule-wreath, the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. Veizla and then sumble should follow.

Dísablót

Dísablót is an old, traditional hátíð which is in honor of the Dísir. As mentioned in previous chapters, they were often worshipped in the autumn or late winter. Most Ásatrú celebrate it in mid-February. This is when the female ancestral, or tutelary, spirits are worshipped.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Fórn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “We remember on this day/night our bonds with our elder kin, the Dísir. Dísablót reminds us of both the nurturing care and the harsh vengeance of our female ancestral spirits. Let us not forget, and learn, from the folly of Thiðrandi!”

2. Invocation

The Goði says, “Tonight (Today) we call forth from the dead, and our own blood, the holy dísir of our folk, tribes, and families! Come and honor us with your presence among us! Mighty mothers of old, we turn our thoughts, words, deeds, and hearts towards you all! Hail the Dísir!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps selected sections from *Njal’s Saga* telling the story of Thiðrandi. >>

4. Presentation of Fórn

The Goði says, “Hail to the Dísir! We give to you this sacrifice for might, main, and luck! Hail to your powers and influence! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!”

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the fórn (perhaps a straw bull or material object like an amber necklace, etc.) and give honor to the dísir. >>

5. Giving of Fórn

The Goði says, “Great Mothers of old, beloved dísir, hear these words and let words turn to deeds! Accept this gift!” then places the fórn into the bonfire.

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

Based upon the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. Veizla and then stumble should follow.

Óstara blót

This holiday occurs on the Vernal Equinox, in March, and is a celebration of the coming of spring and growth. Customs include egg painting and egg hunts, which were later adopted by Christianity since the practices could not be stopped.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)

2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Fórn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “On the day of spring, we give honor to the goddess, Óstara. May Þórr ward her way, beating back the rime thurses, for she brings forth the spring and light. ”

2. Invocation

The Goði says, “Holy Óstara, daughter of Delling, lady of white and golden light, and mistress of the dawn and spring. Come forth from the east, bringing sweet spring and life with you. Hail Óstara!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps having everyone paint eggs or speak about the coming of spring. Athelingulf Fellowship passes around a wooden egg and everyone paints something onto it.>>

4. Presentation of Fórn

The Goði says, “Hail to Óstara! We sacrifice this to you for your help with bringing forth the springtide! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!”

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the fórn (perhaps a paper maché rabbit or hare or material objects, etc.) and give honor to Óstara. >>

5. Giving of Fórn

The Goði says, “Beautiful Óstara, goddess of the coming spring, please accept this gift!” then places the fórn into the bonfire.

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

Based upon the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. Veizla and then stumble should follow.

Walburga's Night/May Day

As said before, some Ásatrú have associated Walburga with the goddess Freyja in modern aspects, so they honor her and Óðinn with elements of runic magic and seiðr. This hátíð is observed on April 30th at night. Then, in the morning, May Day folk customs are observed, like the Maypole's fertility dance, with merriment and fun. This example ritual's structure is a bit different than the usual. But, of course, one may utilize the former structures or create one. In this hátíð, one utilizes a Vitki (rune-worker) or Seiðkóna (Seið-worker) instead of the "Goði" role.

Walburga's Night- A night of magic and mystery.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Vitki says, "By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!" then lights the bonfire and glóðker.

B. Working & Fórn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

Vitki says, "We stand in a night between the worlds. We wend the worlds and seek the mysteries of both the subjective and objective realms of being. We strengthen our hamingja, our might and main, and our spirits."

2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods

Everyone chants the names of the elder FUTHARK runes, "Fehu, Uruz, Purisaz, Ansuz, Raiðo, Kenaz, Gebo, Wunjo, Hagalaz, Nauðiz, Isa, Jera, Eihwaz, Perþro, Elhaz, Sowilo, Tiwaz, Berkano, Ehwaz, Mannaz, Laguz, Ingwaz, Dagaz, Oþala."

Vitki says, "Upon this night we stand within the gates of the here and there, seeing the ends of the dark-tide. The Galdrafaðir, Óðinn, shows us to the Lady Walburga and the mysteries of the multiverse. Hear us, Óðinn and Freyja! We call for you to be with us on this night of magic, might, and main! Hail Óðinn! Hail Freyja!"

The Vitki says, "Let the flames of Walburga's fires ignite within us! And may our hamingja, our might and main, be rejuvenated! May it increase our sight along the wondrous wending roads of the gods."

The participants then begin to dance/move around the bonfire for luck and might. At times, to increase their hamingja, they may leap over or through the flames. When folks feel they have entered a trance-like, or state of energy, they may sit back. Once all have sat down, they pass wooden tines to each other.

3. Working

The participants then carve a rune or multiple runes upon their tines. The Vitki recites the portion of the *Hávamál* concerning Óðinn's ordeal from the *Poetic Edda*, then joins them. When all are finished they all chant the ALU runic formula nine times. (I would suggest utilizing Edred Thorsson's book & tape, *Rune-Song* or the more basic, *FUTHARK* to help prepare.)

4. Presentation of Fórn/Giving of Fórn

The Vitki says, "Hail to the gods and goddesses of magic and luck! We give to you this sacrifice for might, main, and luck! Hail to your powers and influence! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!"

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and may say something relevant then drop their carved tine into the fire. >>

5. Closing

The Vitki recites;

“Runes wilt thou find and read the staves, very strong staves, very stalwart staves, which the mighty teal colored and the magical gods made and Hropt of the gods carved them. Óðinn among the Æsir, and for the Ljósálfar, Dáin, Dvalinn for the Svartálfar, Ásviðh for the Etins, I carves some for myself. Knowest how to write, knowest how to read? Knowest how to redden, knowest how to bring about? Knowest how to bid, knowest how to bless? Knowest how to send forth, knowest how to put to sleep?” All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.” Based upon the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. Veizla and then stumble should follow. Also, if felt appropriate, having a Seið-worker perform a service to the community gathered would be appropriate later in the evening.

May-Day- The day arrives with the light and joy of life. One may do a blót or förn, though it isn't absolutely necessary. But something that *should* happen is... the group should have a lot of fun. A Maypole should be set up and danced around. Field games and contests should be played and other entertaining enjoyments should be indulged in to celebrate Life & Light. Have a BBQ, enjoy the outside!

Miðsummer Blót

Miðsummer Blót is a traditional, Greater Hátíð, (during the Summer Solstice, around June 21st) which honors the summer and all of the gods and goddesses collectively. Again, this is because of the reason that all of the gods and goddesses should be worshipped together is due to a myth given to us by Saxo Grammaticus' *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*. Great bonfires, feasts, and games should occur!

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Blót

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “We gather at this noon-tide of Miðsummer, to give honor and sacrifice to the gods and goddesses of our folk! We also give honor and sacrifice to our great ancestors, whose blood runs through our veins! The great wheel of our year turns, the sun is at its peak, and our ancestors continue to give us great wisdom.”

2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods

The Goði says, “From across the Bifröst Bridge, lend us your might and main in Miðgarð, great gods and goddesses all! We call upon you to witness this blót! Come from Ásgarð to our realm and take your seats of honor! Hail the Gods! Hail the Goddesses!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps selected verses from the *Poetic Edda*, which gives one a sense or inspiration of strength and happiness.>>>

4. Sanctifying of Sacrifice

The sacrificial animal is brought forth, with reverence. The Goði then holds high a representation of Mjöllnir and says, “By the primordial essences of Fire & Ice, mighty Ása-Þórr, hallow and bless this sacred beast!” Then pass the hammer's head over the sacrificial animal.

At this point, the Goði says, “May any who desire to wish our warded traveler well, you may do so now.” The assembled folk, one at a time, may step forward and lay a hand on the animal and say a few words, thank it for its sacrifice, or to wish it a good journey. It may be asked to deliver a message. But such should NEVER be DEMANDED.

5. Sacrifice

In a gentle fashion, any handlers should step forward and assist. The Goði then steps forward and appropriately sacrifices (the usual method being by bleeding) the animal after saying, “Great Gods of Ásgarð, accept our gift.” Another person, preferably a woman, should hold the hlautbolli to catch the sacrificial blood.

6. Rauð/Blessings to the Folk

The Goði then takes the hlautteinar, drips them into the hlautbolli, and sprinkles the folk lightly while saying, “May the blessings of the gods be upon you.” The hlautbolli is then handed to the Goði and it is held high over the harrow and the assembled folk say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods.” The Goði then pours the contents onto the harrow, if it is an outdoor stone type. If it is a temporary or movable altar, a designated ground space should be chosen. The assembled folk may then cheer loudly.

The folk should then prepare the veizla from the sacrificial animal.

Baldur’s Dirge- This should be done at sunset. Gather the folk together by a fire, and all sit around. Someone should read, *Baldur’s Draumar* from the *Poetic Edda*. Once read, place a straw representation of Baldr in his funeral boat upon the fire. All should wish him well journey. Then, as this more informal fórn burns, all should contemplate life and lust-for-life to bring things into perspective. Then, the festivities should begin again. The veizla and then sumble accordingly, as usual protocol suggests should be held.

Ping’s Tide

Ping’s Tide is a modern holiday based upon old heathen, Icelandic influences concerning their Alþingi which was held in August. Many groups use this hátíð as a time to honor Týr (being a god of law, order, self-sacrifice, and community), a time to make large, group internal decisions, and a time to settle disputes.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, “By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!” then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Fórn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, “By the strength, might, and main of Týr, we all gather here as men and women, gods and goddesses to hold our holy Ping’s Tide. We look out for our community, our innangarðs, and the folk.”

2. Invocation

The Goði stands in the shape of the Tiwaz rune and says, “Great One-Handed God, valiant Týr, we ask you to come forth from your stronghold within the Irminsúl! God of war, god of justice, lord of law hear us! Hail Týr!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps reading from the *Prose Edda* the myth of the binding of Fenrir/Fenris.>>

4. Presentation of Fórn

The Goði says, “Valiant, courageous Týr! We sacrifice this to you for your help with bringing forthright justice and fair law upon our tribe (kindred/fellowship/etc.)! Help and watch over this Ping with approval! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!”

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the fórn (perhaps a wooden Irminsúl or material object(s) like a sword, etc.) and give honor to Týr. >>

5. Giving of Fórn

The Goði says, “Týr! Accept this gift!” then sacrifices the fórn

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

At this point, the Ping should commence. I would recommend Jesse Byock’s book, *Viking Age Iceland*. First, the Lawspeaker (or appointed lawspeaker for that time) should begin by reciting the law of your group, tribe, kindred, fellowship, etc. This can be the bylaws, Statement of Principles, or even the group’s creed, etc. Any suggested changes for the group should be suggested, debated upon, and then voted on. Then any personal grievances should be brought forth and resolved. Once all business is finished the Lawspeaker should call the Ping ended. If agreed, the Lawspeaker says, “By might, right action, and the wisdom of Týr, this Ping is now ended! Let us all leave with pure hearts and conscious!”

Veizla and sumble should follow, as usual.

Freyfaxi/Harvest Blót

Freyfaxi blót is sometimes referred to as Harvest blót, this modern hátíð is in honor of Freyr, a god of fertility, agriculture, and harvest. It occurs during the Autumn Equinox (around Sept. 23rd) and is named after a horse of the same name kept by a Freysgoði named Hrafnkell. At this hátíð, it is important to keep all weapons, or edged blades, out of the vé (roped off enclosure) unless this is a blót proper. Then, the only edged blade should be for the sacrifice itself (I would suggest using possibly a very sharp sickle.). Otherwise, keep a small table outside the vé for persons to leave their weapons, etc. Suggestions I have is to try to have as much as the food eaten come from a local farm, or farmer's market, as you can. (It is even better if folks attending made or grew it themselves.) Perhaps brewing beer (or mead) or making bread could also be a fun activity.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, "By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!" then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Blót

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, "We gather on this Freyfaxi and Harvest, to give honor and sacrifice to Ingvi-Freyr! Now, we reap what we have sown. The bounties of life and deeds are here for us to take. We give thanks and contemplate our nourishments and hard works."

2. Invocation/Calling of the Gods

The Goði (if possible holding deer antlers in his/her hands) says, "From across Ginnungagap, into Vanaheim and Ljósálfheim we call the Lord of the Ljósálfar! Come Ingvi-Freyr, take your seat of honor and join us in our harvest! We thank you for the bounty! Hail Freyr!"

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps reading *Skírnismál* from the *Poetic Edda*, which can be considered a mythical symbolism of the frozen earth being warmed, worked, and sown with the seeds in agriculture.>>

4. Sanctifying of Sacrifice

The sacrificial animal is brought forth, with reverence. The Goði then holds high a representation of Mjöllnir and says, "By the primordial essences of Fire & Ice, mighty Ása-Þórr, hallow and bless this sacred beast!" Then pass the hammer's head over the sacrificial animal.

At this point, the Goði says, "May any who desire to wish our warded traveler well, you may do so now."

The assembled folk, one at a time, may step forward and lay a hand on the animal and say a few words, thank it for its sacrifice, or to wish it a good journey. It may be asked to deliver a message to Freyr. But, such should NEVER be DEMANDED.

5. Sacrifice

In a gentle fashion, any handlers should step forward and assist. The Goði then steps forward and appropriately sacrifices (the usual method being by bleeding) the animal after saying, "Lord of the Ljósálfar! Mighty Ingvi-Freyr, accept our gift!" Another person, preferably a woman, should hold the hlautbolli to catch the sacrificial blood.

6. Rauð/Blessings to the Folk

The Goði then takes the hlautteinar, drips them into the hlautbolli, and sprinkles the folk lightly while saying, "May the blessings of Ingvi-Freyr be upon you." The hlautbolli is then handed to the Goði and it is held high over the harrow and the assembled folk say, "From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods." The Goði then pours the contents onto the harrow, if it is an outdoor stone type. If it is a temporary or movable altar, a designated ground space should be chosen. The assembled folk may then cheer loudly.

The folk should then prepare the veizla from the sacrificial animal.

Álfablót

Álfablót occurs around mid-October. The earliest reference to Álfablót occurs in *Austfararvisur* ("Verses on a Journey East") written by the poet Sighvat Þórdarson to describe his journeys to West Gautland in the autumn of 1080. Traditionally, it was a very private ceremony of the household or stead. Some good events could be bonfires, riddles, and making various crafts.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, "By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!" then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Förn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, "We remember on this day/night our bonds with our elder kin, the Álfar. Be they the bright Ljósálfar above, the Dökkálfar below, or the Svartálfar of the deep below. They bring us strength, wisdom, and some of our ancestral bindings."

2. Invocation

The Goði says, "Great fathers of old, we call you from bright Ljósálfheim, from the ancient mounds here in Miðgarð, and from the depths of Svartálfheim! Be you the craftsmen of the gods; our ancient ancestors of stone, wood, and earth; or of the fair ones above come and take your seats of honor this day/night!"

3. Meditation/Reading

<<Here insert either an appropriate guided meditation or perhaps a reading of *Alvissmál* or a folk-tale/myth concerning the Álfar.>>

4. Presentation of Förn

The Goði says, "Hail to the Ljósálfar! Hail to the Dökkálfar! Hail to the Svartálfar! We give to you all this sacrifice for might, main, creativity, and luck! Hail to your powers, skills, and influence! Let all who wish well come forward and speak!"

<<At this point, participants may walk forward and lay a hand on the förn (a nice traditional offering could be a large wooden bowl of whole grains) and give honor to the various types of Álfar. >>

5. Giving of Förn

The Goði says, "Great Álfar of our folk! Please, hear these words and let words turn to deeds! Accept this gift!" then places the förn into the bonfire.

All say, "From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift."

Based upon the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. *Veizla* and then *sumble* should follow.

Ancestor Blót

This is a modern, created a hátíð by Ásatrú folks, which takes place in November, to commemorate their own ancestors. In this new, modern holiday participants honor and talk about their direct ancestors on a more personal level. Suggestions would be for people to bring personal family items, pictures, and tales of their direct ancestors.

A. Helga

1. Calling of the Folk (A blowing horn is blown 3 times.)
2. Lighting of the Need-Fire

The Goði says, "By the holy gods of our folk, we kindle the fires of creation! Let fire be quickened by flame and may the sacred flame of our folk, which forever burns, radiate in Miðgarð!" then lights the bonfire, candle, or glóðker.

B. Förn

1. Declaration of Hátíð

The Goði says, "We remember on this day/night our ancestors of blood, culture, and spirit! Our own bloodlines are a link to our past but also our path to the future. We are a piece of our ancestors reborn. We are forever linked."

2. Invocation

The Goði says, “Honorable ancestors, we call you to join us here in Miðgarð from the realms of Hel, the halls of Ásgarð, and from within our own blood! Your ascendants call for you come and take your seats of honor this day/night! Grant us your wisdom and luck!”

3. Meditation/Reading

<<At this time, people should take turns showing what they have brought (items) in honor of their ancestors. They should talk briefly about their ancestors mentioning some of their names, their deeds, and their accomplishments. >>

4. Presentation of Fórn

The Goði says, “Hail to our Ancestors! Let all who bring gifts come forward.”

<<Everyone should have brought something small to give as a personal fórn to their ancestors. At this point, participants may walk forward, presenting what they have brought. And each should take turns stating what they have brought.>>

5. Giving of Fórn

The Goði says, “Ancestors of our blood, culture, and spirits, your ascendants honor you, and hold you dear. Accept these gifts, with honor!” then everyone places their personal fórn into the bonfire.

All say, “From the gods, to the earth, to us... from us, to the earth, to the gods. A gift for a gift.”

Based upon the flames of the bonfire, and any omens prophecies may be derived. Veizla and then sumble should follow.

That is the end of the examples of various blóts and fórn. I hope they were helpful.

Appendix D:
The Beginner's Booklist

Here are my personal top twelve books that one must have, in no particular order. Some, yes, are out-of-print but you can begin your search in used book stores, library sales, and even e-bay to acquire these treasures. I'll only list the book title, author's name, ISBN number, and my own comments. For the publisher, etc. go look it up in the bibliography! (I worked REALLY hard on the bibliography!)

1. Ways of the Ásatrú: Beliefs of the Northern, Modern Heathens by Michael J. Smith (No ISBN #, privately published)

Of course I'm going to suggest my own book! It was good, wasn't it?

2. The Poetic Edda transl. by Carolyne Larrington ISBN# 0-19-282383-3

This is a decent translation which doesn't get too into poetics to sacrifice literal translation or vice versa. Other translators are Lee M. Hollander and Patricia Terry.

3. Edda by Snorri Sturluson, transl. by Anthony Faulkes ISBN# 0-460-87616-3

This is actually a translation of the *Prose Edda* of Snorri. I pick this translation because it's the only one I know of which has all three sections, most translations only have the *Gyfaginning* and not the *Skaldskaparmal* or the *Hattatal*. One should remember that this book was written by Snorri mainly as an instruction booklet of Icelandic poetry and prose. Its accuracy in mythology can be argumentative at times.

4. Nordic Religions in the Viking Age by Thomas A. DuBois ISBN# 0-8122-3511-8

Thomas DuBois writes this book to show partially how all the peoples of the Scandinavian Peninsula, including the Finnish and Sámi, interacted and influenced each other. He goes into many concepts and writes about the intercultural dimensions of the Viking Age. A much needed study.

5. The Road to Hel by H.R. Ellis (I don't have an ISBN in my copy, here's the Library of Congress catalog card number: 68-23286)

This book is sadly, out-of-print! It is THE BOOK to have on the Old Norse concepts of the dead, afterlife, and its place in Old Norse literature. Seek this book, pay lots of money for it! It is well worth each and every dollar it takes for you to get it!

6. Gods and Myths of Northern Europe by H.R. Ellis-Davidson ISBN# 0-14-013627-4

H.R. Ellis-Davidson is indispensable. Grab any book you can from her. But if I only had to pick two of her books, this is the other one of them.

7. Myth and Religion of the North by E.O.G. Turville-Petre ISBN# 0-8371-7420-1

This book is a must-have. Turville-Petre goes deep into religious beliefs of ancient Scandinavia. It is a clear, concise, and extensive study done expertly.

8. The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity by James C. Russell ISBN# 0-19-510466-8

Russell argues that, instead of a light degree of influence on medieval Christianity by the Germanic tribes, there was a fundamental Germanic reinterpretation of Christianity. He used modern developments in the fields of psychology, sociobiology, and anthropology to back it all up. Russell does an incredibly convincing job at that! This book is great to read from a heathen point-of-view.

9. We Are Our Deeds by Eric Wóðening ISBN# 1-929340-00-1

The back cover says it best, "Good and evil. Right and wrong. Law and sin. All these words can be found in the ancient Germanic languages and all of them are still used today. But what did they originally mean? In *We Are Our Deeds*, these words are traced back to their original meanings and significances, revealing the sophisticated system of ethics possessed by the ancient Germanic tribes." This is a must-have.

10. The Well and the Tree by Paul C. Bauschatz ISBN# 0-87023-352-1

If you're looking for a deep understanding of the symbols and concepts of Yggdrasil, the Well of Urð, wyrd, örlög, and the Germanic/Nordic concepts of time... this is THE BOOK. It is completely out-of-print. So, look for it while you quest for *Road to Hel*.

11. A Book of Troth by Edred Thorsson ISBN# 0-87542-777-4

Currently out-of-print from the original publishers, Llewellyn, but is in a 2nd edition and revised from Runa-Raven Press. It was one of the first decent beginner books on Ásatrú by the founder of the original Ring of Troth (which later he left, and it became "The Troth") and the Rune-Gild. It has some extremely light wiccan-ish influence, but considering it was written in the mid-to-late 1980's, it was very cutting edge and a definite leap into the more traditional/academic mindset. It was definitely a pioneering work.

12. The Way of the Heathen by Gárman Lord ISBN# 1-929340-01-X

This is a handbook of Þeoðish belief (an Anglo-Saxon "cousin" of Ásatrú), but Gárman raises some very good questions, considerations, thoughts, and ideas that could benefit the Ásatrú folk because we would have many of the same questions and considerations.

***Books I would absolutely NOT RECOMMEND are ANYTHING by the authors D.J. Conway (*Norse Magic*), Ed Fitch (*The Rites of Odin*), and Ralph Blum (*The Book of Runes*). Their books are complete crap and it makes one wonder if they even bothered to read any of the books in their own bibliographies.

Appendix E:
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About the Author:



The author, with his family.

Mike Smith has been a member of the Ásatrú community for over 12 years. He is founder and Jarl of the Úlfar aff Jera Þjóð in New Hampshire. Many of Mike's articles have been found consistently in Ásatrú publications such as Marklander, Lina, and The Runestone. He has been a guest speaker/lecturer at many large Ásatrú and pan-pagan events. In 2002, he was also a special guest speaker on Norse Mythology at Leicester High School in Massachusetts.

Currently, the avid mead-brewer, martial artist, husband, and father of two, is in the process of writing numerous books on Ásatrú, Runes, and he is also working on the development of an Ásatrú/Northern-European-based martial art.

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