

## Introduction to Heathenism (Germanic Neo-Paganism)

The Neo-pagan movement includes many different groups. Witchcraft, or Wicca, as mentioned earlier, is probably the most common and the most eclectic of these groups, drawing as it does upon most of the world's indigenous religions. Celtic Druidism is probably second in terms of its familiarity and popularity. Druidism draws upon the religious traditions of the Celtic peoples - essentially England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and Brittany. There is quite a bit of overlap between Wicca and Druidism, largely because of the appeal of Celtic mythology to Wiccan groups, and they have a parallel eight seasonal festival calendar, among other things. Witchcraft and Druidism are not the only groups within the broader Neo-pagan movement, however. There is also a strong Northern European paganism movement, called variously Heathenism, The Northern Way, Norse or Germanic Neo-Paganism, Odinism, and Ásatrú.

Odinism and Ásatrú are different branches of the Germanic Neo-pagan movement. Although very similar in many regards, particularly in terms of theology and ritual, they are very different in terms of their historic roots, and in terms of their contemporary philosophies. This is a vital point to remember, as you will see. Although it is important to draw a picture of both of these versions of Germanic Neo-paganism, it is Ásatrú (which means 'true to the Aesir,' or 'true to the gods,' rather than Odinism, that will be our primary focus. We will be looking at historical influences on both groups, and then shifting to a look at the organization and rituals of Ásatrú only.

## Historical Influences and Precursors

Both Odinism and Ásatrú draw upon the history and traditions of the Germanic peoples - primarily those of Scandinavia, Germany, and Iceland. "Germanic" simply means those people

who spoke languages within the same "group," and who lived historically in the Northern European region. As with Wicca and Druidism, Germanic Neo-paganism has distinct historical influences which effected the rise and spread of the movement.

### Pre-Christian Germanic Religion and Culture

The historical influence that both Odinism and Ásatrú share is the actual religion, literature and culture of the pre-Christian germanic peoples of Northern Europe. A rich body of poetry and prose about the mythology of goddesses and gods of germanic peoples has been preserved, primarily in Christian sources but in apparently relatively unbiased form nonetheless. The primary pieces of this literature are the Eddas, written by Snorri Sturlusson of Iceland in the eleventh century, plus the Icelandic sagas, (mostly multi-generational family stories stretching back into pre-Christian times), and the occasional travellers accounts of those who visited pre-Christian Northern Europe. The Eddas, which include the Elder Edda (poetic Edda) and the Younger Edda (prose Edda) tell the stories of men and women, kings and queens, spirits, giants, and gods and goddesses, how they lived, fought, loved, and died. They also include a fair amount of detail about worldview and practices, and have provided a good source of information for the reconstruction of germanic religion and culture in the contemporary context.

According to these sources, the pre-Christian germanic peoples lived very close to the land. They were farmers, and hunters, and warriors - probably in that order. Warriors owed military service to their carl or clan leader, except during planting and harvest seasons. Their primary unit of social organization was the family or clan, and the head of a family was responsible not simply for their material and military well being, but their religious well being as well. Religious life seems to have been fully integrated into everyday life, and the gods and goddesses, and the other spiritual beings believed in by Northern European pre-Christian

peoples, were understood to interact with humans on a regular, personal basis. Worship of these figures consisted of acknowledgement of, loyalty to, and requests for aid from them. Honour was a central concern for both individuals, clans, and apparently the spirits, gods and goddesses as well.

As with the practice of paleo-Celtic spirituality, the practice of the old Germanic religions was outlawed once Christianity became established in Northern Europe. The conversion process did not go smoothly or quickly, however, and several of the stories and poems that survive, such as The History of Olaf Tryggvason, tell of "heathen" northerners who refused to convert. Some contemporary Odinists and Ásatrúars, for example, hold a remembrance festival on January 9th in honour of Raud the Strong, "a Norwegian chieftain whom Olaf Tryggvason killed for refusing to convert. The end of a metal horn was put down Raud's throat; a poisonous snake was then put into the horn and the other end heated to drive it along..."<sup>i</sup> Also commemorated is the memory of Queen Sigrid of Sweden, whom Olaf Tryggvason wished to marry. When she refused to convert to Christianity, he slapped her across the face and called her a "heathen bitch."<sup>ii</sup> She subsequently raised an alliance that overthrew him. Because of this clearly violent contact between Christianity and the religions of Northern Europe, the best records available on these religions are the Icelandic ones, for Iceland does not seem to have suffered the same degree of violence and hostility in the conversion process. This is why the most common names for deities, rituals, etc. are the Icelandic, and to some extent the Scandinavian forms, and the practice of worship in the contemporary Germanic Neo-paganism context is often collectively called "Norse" paganism.

### Odinism

Although the pre-Christian Germanic religion and culture is an historical source for both Odinism and Ásatrú, other sources for the two varieties of Germanic Neo-paganism begin to diverge at this point. For Odinism, the next major historical influence was the period of strong social turmoil in Germany in the period between the first and second world wars (1917-1939). Germany at this time was suffering from massive inflation and severe social upheaval, and partly as a result of this a German youth movement took form. Some of these homeless youth began to make sacrifices to Wotan, the German name for the god Odin. According to sociologist Jeffrey Kaplan, this interest of the German youth in pre-Christian Germanic religion may have been seriously intended, or may have been a joke. If seriously intended, it may have stemmed from the interest in the magical and occult that grew up in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and in which Aleister Crowley and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn were a part. Either way, it linked in with the growing interest in the esoteric and occult that characterized the budding Nazi party. The primary symbol of the Nazi party is, of course, the swastika, a pre-Christian Germanic symbol representing the god Thor's hammer, and the wheel of the sun. Hitler's interest in these religious traditions seems to have been primarily an interest in finding a spiritual framework for his philosophical message of racism that could be based in something that was exclusively Northern European. This revival of Germanic paganism within the Nazi context then spread to other countries as well.

#### Alexander Rud Mills and Else Christensen

It was this link between the religions of pale-Germanic peoples and the Nazi party that lead to the third contributing influence in the growth of contemporary Odinism. In 1930, an Australian Nazi sympathizer named Alexander Rud Mills published a book titled The Odinist Religion: Overcoming Jewish Christianity. In this book, Mills argues that Northern Europe was

the true birth place of all civilization, and further argues that a world conspiracy of Jews, Christians and Freemasons have attempted to destroy the white race. He calls for a return to the religion of pre-Christian Germanic peoples, and argues that the pre-Christian era in Northern Europe represented a Golden Age. Mills then went on to publish a number of other pamphlets arguing similar ideas. None of his work was widely read, and might have had no impact at all except that a woman named Else Christensen discovered his writings in the 1960's, and went on to link them with her own right wing, racist philosophies, which in turn led her to found the Odinist Fellowship in 1971. Else Christensen's organization was primarily influential among the white supremacist crowd in the United States, and sociologist Jeffrey Kaplan suggests that knowledge of Mills' writings, as filtered through the Odinist Fellowship, is something that distinguishes Odinists from Ásatrúars.<sup>iii</sup>

As is clear from these historical sources, Odinism is a branch of the Germanic Neopaganist movement that is oriented to a racist, white supremacist philosophy. Contemporary Odinist groups argue that they are not racist, however, but are instead racialist. The distinction is meant to imply that Odinists are not prejudiced against people of non-white Northern European ancestry, but simply that they feel each racial group should practice a form of spirituality that is native to them and their ancestors. As one contemporary Odinist group puts it,

Why are we Odhinnists?... Firstly, it is our birthright, it is the philosophy of our ancestors who grew and evolved with it over many thousands of years. Their blood still runs in our veins and so does the spirit of Odhinnism. Odhinnism is not something we have to search out and discover in some far off exotic land, all we need to do is look inward and reawaken it within ourselves... It would be wrong to say that Odhinnism is for everyone, of course its not, but if only people

would take the time to look to their own spiritual heritage many would find the answer they are looking for."<sup>iv</sup>

Odinists seem genuinely unable to understand why anyone not from a Northern European background would want to practice a religion that originated in that context. Similarly, they would not want to practice a religion that originated elsewhere, including Christianity. Despite this distinction between "racist" and "racialist," however, there are clear racist overtones to most contemporary Odinist groups in the United States. This is not the case in all countries - particularly Iceland and England - but a basic and defining difference between American Odinism and American Ásatrú is the issue of racism.

### Ásatrú

The historical influences on Ásatrú are really very different from the right wing racist influences on the Odinist movement. While Odinism undeniably came first in the context of both global and American Germanic Neo-paganism, the historical factors influencing the rise of Ásatrú are much more benign than those influencing Odinism.

### Norse Mythology

In addition to the pre-Christian Germanic influence itself, the primary historical source for contemporary Ásatrú seems to have been the storybook adaptations of Norse mythology that were popular in the 1950's and 1960's as gifts for young boys. One of the most influential of contemporary Ásatrúar is a man named Kveldúlf Gundarsson, who completed his Ph.D. degree at Cambridge University on the subject of "The Cult of Odhinn, God of Death." Gundarsson traces his interest in Germanic paganism back to a book on Norse mythology he received at the age of six. Largely due to the popularity of these books, the images of Norse deities provided a pool of ideas for those who later became interested in the Neo-pagan movement.

## The Neo-Pagan Movement

Another important historical source for the Ásatrú movement is the existence of the broader Neo-pagan movement itself. Jeffrey Kaplan suggests that a number of Ásatrúar became interested in Germanic Neo-paganism following contact with other branches of the Neo-pagan movement. Whether this contact be with a Wiccan group, an Odinist group, or a Crowleyan magical group, once they became interested in Neo-paganism generally, they soon adopted the Ásatrú version of Germanic Neo-paganism. Most of those who have come to the movement in this way suggest that it is the philosophy, and ethics, of the movement that appeal to them, even though this philosophical and ethical system sets them quite apart from other aspects of the broader Neo-pagan movement.

## A Wind through the World Tree

A another historical influence on contemporary Norse Ásatrú is something that one prominent Ásatrúar has referred to as a wind through the world tree.<sup>v</sup> In 1972, an American named Stephen McNallen founded an organization named the Viking Brotherhood, which was dedicated to:

preserving, promoting, and practising the Norse religion as it was epitomized during the Viking Age, and to furthering the moral and ethical values of courage, individualism, and independence which characterized the Viking way of life.<sup>vi</sup>

The Viking Brotherhood later changed its name to the Ásatrú Free Assembly. While the Viking Brotherhood/Ásatrú Free Assembly were being organized, two other Ásatrú organizations sprang into being. These were The Committee for the Restoration of the Odinic Rite, founded by John Yeowell in April 1973 in England, and the Ásatrúarmenn, founded in May 1973 by Svienbjörn Beinteinsson in Iceland. According to McNallen's account, the founders of these groups did not

know each other, and in fact did not learn of each other's existence for several years, making this "a significant synchronistic event." This may be part of a "myth of Asatrú," however, for another Asatrúar suggests that "The people who were connected with the now-defunct Ásatrú Free Assembly like to give the impression that everyone in the world started around 1972 or so, but this is certainly not the case."<sup>vii</sup> We will discuss the Ásatrú Free Assembly in more detail below, when we discuss the organization of contemporary Ásatrú.

### Icelandic Asatrú

Although we are focusing on North American Germanic Neo-paganism, a brief discussion of the Icelandic group Ásatrúarmenn is important, for this group is the final "historical" factor contributing to the contemporary Ásatrú movement. As mentioned earlier in connection to Odinism, the issue of race is a very touchy issue within the context of Germanic Neo-paganism. The Ásatrúarmenn has therefore become an "ideological model" for many contemporary Ásatrúar wanting to distance themselves from Odinists and certain Ásatrúar with racist tendencies. Icelandic Ásatrú avoids all the German/Neo-Nazi overtones of other Germanic Neo-pagan groups. In the United States today, it is predominantly Icelandic Ásatrú that is therefore practised by "mainstream" Ásatrúar.

### Worldview

The worldview of contemporary Germanic Neo-pagans is animistic, pantheistic, or panentheistic. As we have previously stressed, no generalization about any kind of contemporary Neo-paganism holds true for every practitioner, and similar to the worldview of Celtic Neo-pagans, the worldview of Germanic Neo-pagans is diverse. Animism, as mentioned in Chapter Two with regards to Celtic Neo-paganism, is the belief that everything in the universe is alive - the rocks, the trees, the lakes, are all spiritual entities, and communication with these



spirits is possible. Many Germanic Neo-Pagans are animists. Ásatrú contains a belief in a class of supernatural beings called the landsvaettir or land spirits, who are clearly associated with natural objects such as trees and fields. Respect for the landsvaettir is extremely important within Ásatrú belief and ritual structure, and ritual offerings are made to them just as they are made to the gods and goddesses.

Pantheism, as mentioned in Chapter Two, is the belief that the world itself, or the entire universe, is God. Within the Germanic Neo-pagan context, this is rarely conceptualized in terms of the Gaia thesis, as it is in other forms of contemporary Neo-paganism, (although Ásatrúar Diana Paxson comes close in her article "Hail Earth that Givest to All..." that is included in the book of readings, and on the course website. Instead, it almost approaches a kind of monistic pantheism, as articulated by Stephen McNallen, founder of the A.F.A. He expressed this worldview as follows:

We believe in an underlying all-pervading divine energy or essence which is generally hidden from us because it surpasses our direct understanding. We further believe that this spiritual reality is interdependent with us - that we affect it, and it affects us. We believe that this underlying divinity expresses itself in the forms of the Gods and Goddesses. Stories about these deities are like a sort of code, the mysterious "language" through which the divine reality speaks to us.<sup>viii</sup>

McNallen's view of the divine has been shaped by Jungian psychology and the concepts of archetypes. For McNallen, both gods and goddesses, and men and women, are mutually dependent upon one another for existence, and consequently participate in the same divine reality.

Panentheism, as mentioned previously, is the belief that the gods, plural, can be found all throughout the world and nature. Belief in deities of storms, deities of lakes, deities of natural functions such as sex, or birth, or death, is panentheistic. The majority of Germanic Neo-pagans are both animists and panentheists, given the structure of their theology. Ásatrúar believe in two sets of deities, called the Aesir and the Vanir, as well as land spirits, and giants (who are gods in their own right), and ancestor spirits. The Aesir are gods of the upper worlds - of lightning, and thunder, and hunting, and war, and healing, etc. The Vanir are gods of the land - of spring, and winter, and fertility, etc. This means that many Germanic Neo-pagans are panentheists, for their gods are both in, and above or outside, of nature.

It is within the context of the animism/pantheism/panentheism of Germanic Neo-pagans that Ásatrú "magic" must be placed. Unlike the majority of Wiccans, who understand magic to be the result the spiritual connectedness of all things (and hence the ability to effect one "part" of the whole through enacting a magical spell or ritual), and unlike the Celtic Neo-pagan view of magic which sees magic as an effect of inborn psychic or spiritual powers that have been trained and disciplined, Germanic Neo-pagans view magic more as the result of asking for aid from divine or spiritual forces. In order to accomplish "magic" within this context, one must ask a spirit, an ancestor, or a god for help. Magic, and "miracle," are therefore fairly interchangeable, if one understands "miracle" as divine action in the world. The Ásatrú practice of Seidhr, for example, a form of prophetic trance, is accomplished through divine possession of the seer. Other forms of "magic" practised by Germanic Neo-pagans include reading Runes to predict the future. This oracular power is also dependant on divine aid, however, according to most Germanic Neo-pagans.

Another aspect of contemporary Germanic Neo-pagan worldview, similar to both that of Wiccans and Celtic Neo-pagans, is that it is nature based. We have already mentioned the Germanic Neo-pagan belief in the landsvaettir, and other aspects of their worldview are oriented around nature also. As Ásatrúar Diana Paxson states, Ásatrú beliefs are:

characteristic of a worldview which is very aware of the need to work with the cycles of nature and in which "nature" include[s] the spiritual world. The Gods do not exist in some distant heaven, but are at home and active in our lives. We sense Freyja in the scent of a rose, hear the voice of Odin in the whispering of the leaves. We salute Hugin and Munin whenever we see the ravens fly. Those who follow an Earth-religion live in a world of connections, rich in symbols, in which the conscious and unconscious minds communicate through visions and dreams. In this view, men do not seek to escape to heaven, but to understand and enjoy this world. It is a worldview whose faith can be described as an Earth-Religion because it is grounded in Midgard.<sup>ix</sup>

For contemporary Ásatrúar, nature, and the consequent attempt to protect nature from exploitation, are therefore central concerns. Although not as active in environmentalism as some Wiccans and Celtic Neo-pagans, Germanic Neo-pagans do nevertheless consider themselves to be an earth-based religion with concern for the environment, and this environmental emphasis appears to be growing even stronger in recent years. Given that the primary symbol of the world is a tree, the environmentalism of Germanic Neo-pagans tends to focus around attempts to preserve forest regions in their wild state, or alternately to restore woodlands to a wild state.

The worldview of contemporary Germanic Neo-pagans is also a "multiversal" one: "that is, it recognizes a multitude of levels of being or worlds, which make up the whole world

('universe')."<sup>x</sup> According to pre-Christian Germanic worldview, the world that we live in, the everyday world of the earth, is but one of nine worlds that exist. Each of these worlds, which are understood more as states or planes of existence rather than physical places, is situated somewhere on the World Tree, known as Yggdrasil. Our world is the world of Midgard - the middle world. Other worlds are "higher" than ours on the world tree, others are "beneath" ours on the world tree. Alternately, some are "farther" from the world tree, while others are "closer" to the world tree. It is possible to move from level to level or world to world, especially for the gods and goddesses.

The nine worlds of existence are:

Asgard: home of the Aesir Gods and Goddesses, including Odin. Asgard is also the home of the Vanir gods and goddesses, after the peace which unites these two sets of deities.

Vanaheim: traditional home of the Vanir Gods and Goddesses, including Frey and Freya, before the peace with the Aesir.

Ljossalfheim: Home of the Light Alfs, or "light elves." Frey is their leader.

Svartalfheim: Home of the Svart Alfs, or "dark elves," also known as dwarves.

Midgard: Home of Humans, and other spirits.

Muspellheim: The Fire World, where fire giants (or fire gods) live.

Joutunheim: Home of the Etins and Jotnar (giants).

Niefelheim: The Ice/Fog World. This is the gate to the land of the Dead, and the goddess of the dead, Hel, lives here.

Helheim: the land of the dead.

Finally, the worldview of contemporary Germanic Neo-pagans is cyclical. Drawing upon pre-Christian Germanic sources, the worldview of Ásatrú and Odinism views the world as inevitably heading towards a final cosmic battle between the forces of order (the gods and goddesses) and the forces of chaos (the giants.) This final battle is called Ragnarok. The

universe will be destroyed at Ragnarok, and a new universe created. This cycle will repeat endlessly. Although this is not a cyclicity of human life (few Ásatrú believe in reincarnation), it is nonetheless a cyclic view of the universe itself, for only in the struggle between order and chaos is change possible, and only in destruction is new life possible. Life and death, creation and destruction, are all part of the inter-connectedness of life and the universe.

The interconnectedness of the universe within contemporary Germanic Neo-pagan worldview can also be seen in the image of the world tree itself. Yggdrasil is pictured as a giant tree, "continually being gnawed at and nibbled away by the various creatures inhabiting its roots, trunk, or branches. The tree, however, is not only continually renewing itself but also nourishes those who devour it. The World Tree... is a `memorable image of perpetual movement, destruction, and renewal.'"<sup>xi</sup> These two symbols, therefore - Ragnarok, and Yggdrasil, summarize the cyclical view of the universe held by Germanic Neo-pagans.

### Ethics

The ethical code of contemporary Ásatrúar is based upon something called The Nine Noble Virtues, drawn from a book of the poetic Edda called The Hávamál. The Hávamál is in verse, and is quite long, but a number of virtues, and a number of vices, are outlined in it. The British group called the Committee for the Restoration of the Odinic Rite drew up a list of nine virtues based on this text, which has been adopted whole-heartedly, with minor variations, by Odinists and Ásatrúar alike. This ethical code places its greatest emphasis on being true to oneself, true to one's family and extended family; and true to the gods. It can therefore be categorized as a "tribalist" ethical system, for it is concerned more with behaviour within the tribe, or group, than with all encompassing, universally applicable ethical codes. Even the gods and goddesses are held to this code, (although they have been known to try to step outside of it

on occasion.) According to the Odinic Rite, one true to the gods and goddesses of the North must:

do what lies before him without fear of either foes, friends or Norns. He must hold his own counsel, speak his mind and seek fame without respect of persons; be free, independent and daring in his actions; act with gentleness and generosity towards friends and kinsmen but be stern and grim to his enemies (but even towards the latter to feel bound to fulfil necessary duties); be as forgiving to some as he is unyielding and unforgiving to others. He should be neither trucebreaker nor oathbreaker and utter nothing against any person that he would not say to his face.<sup>xii</sup>

Based upon this kind of ethical stance, therefore, the nine noble virtues are understood to be:

**Courage**: The first noble virtue is to exhibit courage in all forms, especially in standing up for what you believe in. Always act to defend what you believe to be right, regardless of obstacles and opposition.

**Truth**: The second noble virtue is to be honest in all dealings, and with all people, including yourself. Never lie, even if lying is easier than truth-telling.

**Honour**: The third noble virtue is to hold true to your word. Keep all promises, and act on your convictions, even if others think you should not.

**Troth**: The fourth noble virtue is loyalty. Be true to your self, your family, your friends, and the gods and goddesses.

**Self-Discipline**: The fifth noble virtue is self control. Rule your actions by the strength of your convictions. Don't be swayed by your own or another's rationalizations for wrong action.

**Hospitality**: The sixth noble virtue is sharing. Always be generous to your family, your friends, and the gods and goddesses. Share your gifts, your protection, your loyalty, and your possessions with others.

**Industriousness**: The seventh noble virtue is to work with dedication and commitment. Don't be half-hearted in your efforts, dedicate yourself to your pursuits, and learn and grow from them.

**Self-Reliance**: The eighth noble virtue is self-reliance. Trust in yourself and your own resources, and rely upon others as rarely as you can.

**Perseverance**: The ninth noble virtue is perseverance. Be stubborn. Don't give up until you have accomplished what you set out to do, and have accomplished it well.

### Theology

Given the animistic/pantheistic/panentheistic worldview of contemporary Germanic Neopaganism, it follows that the theology of Ásatrú should be focused around deities that have close connections to nature. Like the Celtic Neo-pagan pantheon, however, the Germanic Neo-pagan pantheon are also connected to aspects of culture also. Where Celtic deities were often associated with arts, poetry, literature, and scholarship in addition to their ties to nature, Norse deities tend to be associated with more with fundamental aspects: peace, love, order, war, wisdom, etc. The gods and goddesses of the polytheistic contemporary Ásatrú movement are the gods and goddesses of pre-Christian Northern Europe. Interesting, many contemporary Ásatrúar stress the value of a polytheistic belief system for understanding ourselves and our world in a way that monotheism does not allow. This argument is often phrased in response to both Christian monotheism, with a single, all-perfect God, and in response to the Wiccan idea that all gods and goddesses are really just aspects or manifestations of an 'all-in-one' Female and 'all-in-one' Male deity. According to this view, the polytheistic pantheon of contemporary Germanic

Neo-paganism is made up of individuals as unique, multi-faceted, and imperfect, as humans themselves, and this complexity in turn mirrors the reality of existence. As one Ásatrúar puts it,

To simplify everything is not to feel much of the world, it is to shut down much of ourselves in the name of not mattering, or worse as not meaning anything, because we say it's 'just the same as this.' To say that one concept is just a smaller part of the 'all-being' concept is just a fancy way of disregarding it, putting it up on the back shelf of ourselves. Monotheism, as reflected in the 'all-is-one' tenet, is a great way to escape the world as it really is. Polytheism, on the other hand, especially the type found in the North, is a spiritual system of facing the world as it is. It celebrates differences that are strengths. And it gives those of us drawn to its pantheon, a chance to complete ourselves through contemplation of and connection to its complex and plentiful archetypes.<sup>xiii</sup>

There is a fairly wide range of opinion among contemporary Ásatrúar as to how one should conceive of these Northern European deities. The author of the above quote, Trudi James, seems to suggest that the polytheistic pantheon, while not reducible to a single monotheistic entity, is best understood as a collection of embodied archetypes. These archetypes are "real" in the sense that they represent genuine aspects of human consciousness, and genuine reflections of reality, but the question of whether they are also "real" in the sense of individually existing entities is unclear. While almost all Ásatrúar argue strongly that the Norse gods are real in some sense, therefore, some go further and suggest this labelling of the Norse deities as archetypes is equally reductionistic as those who wish to suggest that the deities are just "reflections" of a larger, monotheistic God. As one contemporary Ásatrúar expressed this view:



Some religions do indeed teach that all deities are one; Ásatrú, however, does not. The gods are distinct individuals and exist independently of their worshippers' minds. (A Hindu might call Odin an emanation of the Brahman; a Wiccan might call him an aspect of the Father God; and a Jungian psychologist might call him a Norse version of the Wise Old Man archetype. To an Ásatrúar, Odin is ODIN: as unique an individual as his followers, not an aspect of any other god, and definitely not "all in the mind".)<sup>xiv</sup>

Whether one conceives of the Norse gods as individual entities or as archetypal representations of human life, for contemporary Ásatrúar the connection felt to these deities is a very deep and personal one. Many Ásatrúar swear an oath of loyalty to one or more particular deities. Some have direct, immediate and personal experience of contact with these deities. These points of contact resemble to relationship between the gods and the pre-Christian Northern Europeans as recorded in the Eddas and Sagas, a meeting of near equals who give loyalty and trust in exchange for loyalty and trust. The gods and goddesses are understood to care about, and watch over, all humanity, but especially those who are sworn to their service.

The gods and goddesses of contemporary Ásatrú include the Aesir and the Vanir. It has been suggested that this dual pantheon was the result of the meeting between migrating Indo-European tribes, who worshipped an essentially "sky-god" pantheon of deities, and the indigenous peoples of Northern Europe, who worshipped an essentially neolithic pantheon of nature deities.

Norse mythology tells of the battles between the Aesir and the Vanir, and also of the peace that united these two sets of deities into one whole. While Ásatrú means "true to the Aesir," Ásatrúar actually worship both the Aesir and the Vanir.

## The Aesir

Although there are too many deities within the Aesir pantheon to discuss them all, some of the most frequently worshipped Aesir deities within contemporary Germanic Neo-paganism include:

Odin: Called the all-father, and also called Odin One Eye, for he gave up one of his eyes to drink from the fountain of wisdom. He also hung for nine days on the world tree, Yggdrasil, in order to claim knowledge of the runes. Because of this, he is known as the god of wisdom, magic, and poetry, as well as war and battle. He is the father of the other gods and goddesses of the Aesir. He is sometimes also called "strife-stirrer," for Odin apparently likes to keep life interesting by mixing things up a bit, and then watching to see how people deal with the turmoil.

Frigg: Called the Silent All-Knowing Goddess, Frigg is goddess of marriage, family, fibre arts (weaving, spinning, etc.), and childbirth. She is married to Odin.

Thor: Called the thunderer, he wields the magic hammer Mjolnir. He is the god of war, strength, and the working class. He defends against chaos, and is often depicted as a warrior fighting from a chariot, slaying the Etins or giants, the forces of chaos, with his hammer. Most contemporary Ásatrúar wear a "hammer of Thor" as a sign of their faith.

Sif: Called the beautiful, or the golden-haired. Sif is goddess of the harvest, and of beauty, and of vanity. She is the wife of Thor.

Idunn: Goddess of youth and of sustenance, Idunn keeps the life-sustaining apples of the gods.

Eir: Goddess of healing and health, physician to the gods and goddesses.

Bragi: God of poetry, song, praise.

Baldur: Called "the beautiful." Baldur is the god of hope, sunlight, spring, and joy, who was killed through misplaced trust in Loki. He resides in Helheim, land of the dead.

Heimdall: Father of humanity. Guardian of the rainbow bridge that leads to Asgard. God of security and protection.

Loki: Called "the Trickster." Loki is blood brother to Odin, god of wit, creativity, cunning, and mischief. Even more so than this blood brother Odin, Loki likes to stir things up, and causes havoc for havoc's sake. Usually, however, the strife he causes has a reason, even if that reason is an uncomfortable one for those affected.

Tyr: Called "the Skyfather." Tyr is the god of justice, loyalty, sky, and war.

### The Vanir

The Vanir deities are more closely connected to nature, seasons, and crops than the Aesir.

The Vanir deities include:

Njord: The father of the Vanir gods and goddesses, he is the god of winds and the sea, and of safe harbours, both literally and metaphorically.

Skadi: Called "the Huntress." She is the Goddess of War, winter, hunting, and independence. She is Njord's wife.

Freya: Goddess of love, lust, war, Seidhr and magic, and death. She is the daughter of Njord and the sister of Frey.

Frey: Called "lord of the land." God of spring, harvest, fertility, and farmers, agriculture, prosperity and peace.

### Supernatural Beings

In addition to the Aesir and the Vanir deities, pre-Christian Northern European peoples also believed in and respected a variety of other spiritual or non-human beings. These included the landsvaettir or land spirits; the Disir, female house spirits and/or ancestors, who watch over particular families and homes; the Valkyries, female spirits who collect the souls of those who

died in battle and take them to Valhalla (Odin's hall for the heroically slain); the Alfs, both light and dark, above ground and below ground spirits of crafts and making; the Etins and Jotnar, giants and representatives of chaos and change; and the Norns or fates, who sit at the foot of the world tree, and spin out, in connection to the actions of all living beings, the fates or "wyrd" of everyone. They are called Urd, Verhandi, and Skuld, and can be understood as "past," "present," or "future," or alternately as "past," "becoming," and "unfolding." Like their pre-Christian Northern European counter-parts, contemporary Germanic Neo-pagans do not believe that everything in life is predetermined by the Norns, but they do believe that sometimes only heroic struggle can change the fate they have woven for you. Each individual is responsible for meeting their fate fairly, and acting with honour.

### Organization

The primary unit of organization within contemporary Germanic Neo-paganism is the Kindred. A kindred is a group of Germanic Neo-pagans who have recognized among themselves a kind of ritual kindred tie. They are an extended "fictive" family, united by oaths of loyalty, and with a common symbol to represent their ties. They meet regularly to worship the gods and hold ritual and business meetings. Depending upon the size of the Kindred, they can be divided into smaller units, called Hearths and Garths. A hearth is the smallest unit, it can have as few as two members, who get together to worship, study, and practice Neo-pagan (or "heathen" - a preferred term for many Germanic Neo-pagans) ways together. Often, a hearth will be made up solely of the members of a single family, with the head of the family acting as spiritual leader. A Garth is larger than a hearth, having at least three members, one of whom must be a recognized religious specialist - someone who has completed a program of study, or an apprenticeship, and has been recognized and acknowledged by the kindred as a holy man or woman. Not all Kindreds are big

enough to warrant having Hearths and Garths within them. Others are large enough that they split into separate Kindreds, united through alliance but otherwise unconnected.

The religious specialists within Germanic Neo-paganism are called Gothar or Godhar. A female gatherer is called a Gydhia and a male gatherer is called a Godhi. The gothar are the ritual and kindred-community leaders, the teachers of the sagas, the rune-lore, languages, etc., and the "parents" of the hearth, garth, or kindred members. This model of religious leadership is based on that of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples, where the head of a family, household, or clan would be not only the material and military leaders, but the spiritual leaders also. There are formal training programs available to become a gydhia/godhi, or one can enter an apprenticeship with an already recognized gothar. Alternate forms of religious leadership within Germanic Neo-paganism, established and trained by a group called The Troth, or The Ring of Troth, are Elders and Godwo/men. The role of godwoman or godman is similar, in terms of duties and training, to that of the Gothar. The role of Elder has a much more elaborate training regimen, including specialization in at least nine areas of study, everything from the Eddas and Sagas, to brewing, metal-work, martial arts to runes.

The meetings of Germanic Neo-pagans are called moots, things, and althings. A moot is a meeting for a religious purpose - a blot, a sumbel, an adoption, a naming ceremony, a wedding, etc. A thing is a regional meeting of the various smaller units of a kindred. An althing is a meeting of "all the folk" - in other words, every Germanic Neo-pagan in the country. Before each meeting, the grounds on which they are to be held are consecrated to the gods. The gydhia/godhi would bless the site by swinging her or his hammer towards each of the four directions, and asking Thor to bless the place and to drive out all "wights of woe." Then the gods and goddesses relevant to the meeting would be invoked. To date, the only "Althings" that

have been held in North America have been sponsored by the Ásatrú Alliance, and they should more properly be called Ásatrú Alliance Things, for they are by invitation only, and only members of the Alliance can vote at them. In 1997, however, the Irminsul Aettir, an Asatrú group emphasizing Icelandic Asatrú, sponsored a national Althing, which was open to anyone who wished to attend. Moots, things, and althings are religious meetings, but they are also business meetings, and much of the policy is determined at them, and officers invested in their ranks.

### Ritual Tools

In order to hold regular rituals, the Gothar, Godwo/man or Elder must have certain ritual tools. These include the Bowl, the Troth ring, and the Hammer. The Bowl (or Bowli), symbolized by the "perth" rune ( , symbolic of fertility and magic), is understood to contain the magical energies of the kindred membership, the power of the gods, and luck of the tribe. It is used to hold offerings to the gods and goddesses.

The Troth Ring, which can be made of silver, gold, or some other metal, is worn on the wrist by the Godhi/Gydhia. It is brought to all meetings of the hearth, garth, or kindred, and is symbolic of unbroken promises. It is the object that kindred members swear their oaths over. It is also the object that witness the oath of a new member to the kindred. This oath, called the profession or adoption ritual, is where the new member swears on the Troth Ring to be true to the Aesir and the Vanir and to the members of the kindred. It is held in the presence of the gothar and the other kindred, hearth, or garth members.

The Hammer is a symbolic representation of Thor's magic hammer Mjolnir. According to the Norse myths, Thor used his hammer not just to slay the forces of chaos, but to bless: he blessed Baldur's funeral pyre, he blessed brides, babies, and the people with it. For

contemporary Ásatrúar, it is used in blessing rituals and in banishing rituals. The hammer can be made of any suitable substance such as wood or metal. Most Ásatrúar also wear a miniature Thor's hammer on a chain around their necks.

### Varieties of Germanic Neo-paganism

There are four basic "types" of Germanic Neo-paganism in contemporary North America. The first type is Odinist. Odinist groups differ from Ásatrú groups in their emphasis on Odin more than any other Norse deity, and in their emphasis on a racist/racialist philosophy. In connection to this first point, stress is placed on Odin as the symbolic representation of a cosmic male deity principle. Thus, one Odinist group states:

The Great Spirit itself is considered an all encompassing and somewhat abstract ideal, which only manifests through other forms... To the Odhinnist the prime manifestation is Odhinn. Odhinn represents the All father aspect of the great Spirit, the name being derived from the old Norse word Óhd meaning inspiration and to an Odhinnist is seen as the source of all inspiration.<sup>xv</sup>

This stress on Odin sets Odinists apart from the very polytheistic Ásatrúar.

In connection to the second point, this philosophy assumes that certain forms of religion are "genetically" appropriate for certain races of people: that religious archetypes, and religious patterns of behaviour, can be passed down from parent to child, and that therefore the religion of Germanic Neo-paganism is appropriate to all Northern European peoples, but inappropriate to people of other geographic and/or racial groups. This view often (but not always) leads to political activism to promote the "white race." The Odinist Fellowship states:

The most distinguishable feature of Odinism is that for the first time a religion has declared itself founded upon the concept of race, with its correlation to culture

and civilization. Without race there is nothing; therefore our first duty is a study of race and the significance of Aryan people to world history."<sup>xvi</sup>

The second type of Germanic Neo-pagan group is what has been called Folkish Ásatrú. Folkish Ásatrú groups differ from Odinist groups in that they place no particular emphasis on Odin, and they do not have an explicit racist/racialist agenda. However, they do still have racist overtones, stressing the "genetically-inherited" archetype argument, suggesting that Germanic Neo-paganism is appropriate only for those of a Northern European ancestry. Stephen McNallen's group the Ásatrú Free Assembly, founded in 1973, had hints of this philosophy within it. The A.F.A. disbanded in the 1980's, to be followed by two different groups - the Ring of Troth and the Ásatrú Alliance. The Ásatrú Alliance continued this "racialist" or "folkish" (i.e., confined to the "folk") thread (still much, much less dominant than the Odinist position, however,) while the Ring of Troth rejected it entirely. Then recently, Stephen McNallen started a new group, called the Ásatrú Folk Assembly, which stresses this racialist emphasis somewhat more strongly.

The third type of Germanic Neo-paganism is Ásatrú. Ásatrú is based on the Icelandic model of religion, ritual, and culture as outlined in the Eddas and the Sagas. It rejects the racist/racialist stance of the Odinists and the Folkish Ásatrú groups, and takes as its defining characteristic the simple expression of faith in the Aesir and the Vanir. Anyone who feels called to this faith is therefore welcome. It follows a fairly strict Icelandic model, and does not encourage the 'mix-and-match' approach to spirituality found in other types of Neo-paganism. The most influential representative of Icelandic Ásatrú is the group called Irmisul Aettir. The Aettir, following the Icelandic model, is not organized as a kindred (although "aettir" means "extended family") with hearths and garths, but is instead organized on a Godhordh model. A



godhordh is similar to a community ministry. The gydhia/godhi is responsible for the spiritual and social well-being of the entire community, not just for the people in his or her small religious group. This means that the Aettir puts more stress on the individual religious specialist, and his or her training, than on the fictive-kin group as the primary religious unit. It also means that it is much less insular or isolationist than other Germanic Neo-pagan groups, for the Aettir gothar minister to the community at large through public rune-casting, healing, and rituals.

The fourth type of Germanic Neo-paganism is what is sometimes called general Germanic Neo-paganism. This type is more eclectic than Odinism or Ásatrú. It draws upon the myths, rituals, histories, and cultures of all Germanic peoples, and does not base its religious rituals or organization solely on the Icelandic model. The best representative of this type of Germanic Neo-paganism is the group called The Troth or The Ring of Troth. The Ring of Troth is run by a group of Elders collectively known as the High Rede. The Rede is made up of not only Ásatrúar, but also Norse Wiccans, Druids, and others. Since witches can choose to call their Goddess and God by any names, the witches within the Ring of Troth simply focus on Germanic mythology. Similarly, druids within the ArnDraoich Fein are encouraged to choose a pantheon and stick to it, and so the druids within the Ring of Troth would be those who chose the Norse pantheon as the focus of their ritual and worship. The RoT also uses German rather than Icelandic terminology, and has adopted a different set of terms denoting religious specialists (Godwo/man and Elder). Although the Ring of Troth used to be "Ásatrú" therefore, it is now much more eclectic and all encompassing. Another general Germanic group is the American Vinland Association. This group is explicitly "Norse Wiccan," but has a number of Ásatrú members.

Rituals: Blots and Sumbels

There are two main rituals within contemporary Germanic Neo-paganism. These are called blots and sumbels, and are usually held together. A blot is a sacrifice to the gods and goddesses. In pre-Christian times, this sacrifice was usually a blood sacrifice, with the meat of the slaughtered animal subsequently being shared out among the worshippers. Today, it is usually an offering of alcohol - beer or mead - or possibly juice. The offering is dedicated to the gods and goddesses, and then shared among the members of the group. According to one source, Germanic Neo-pagans who live in rural areas and who raise animals as livestock that are normally killed for food purposes still practice animal sacrifice - again, as a way of ritually sharing food with the gods, not as animal abuse. A blot is often dedicated to a single god or goddess, depending upon the time of year, or the reason for the ritual.

A sumbel (which means "ale-gathering") is a form of ritualized toasting. It usually consists of three rounds of drinking alcohol (beer or mead). The order of these three rounds of toasts vary. In one variety, the first is dedicated to the gods, beginning with Odin and any other deities that it seems appropriate to honour (one source recommends spilling a few drops in Loki's name, to ward off 'nasty surprises.' The second is in honour of the ancestors and other honourable dead, and the third is open, and may be offered to any deity, spiritual entity, or person that would be appropriate to the ritual. Other variations found in historical texts include offering toasts first to Odin for victory, second to Freyr and Njord for peace and plentiful harvests, and third to Bragi, god of poetry; or first to all the gods, second to Odin, and third to Freya. When sumbel is practised, a drinking horn is usually passed from person to person, and each person makes a toast before taking a drink. In other contexts, each person has his or her own drinking horn, and drinks at the end of each person's toast. Blots and sumbels are held as often as the kindred meets for religious reasons.

## Seidhr

In addition to blots and sumbels, Ásatrú practice several other types of religious ritual. Three of these, called Galdr, Seidhr, and making Taufr, are becoming increasingly widespread. Seidhr is a form of shamanic possession. The Eddas and the Icelandic sagas tell of men, women and gods who practised it. In one text, Odin is said to practice Seidhr, giving him the power to predict the future and influence the present. Odin learned Seidhr from Freya, one of the Vanir deities, suggesting that the practice stretched back to paleolithic times. In the contemporary Germanic Neo-pagan context, the ritual is practised mainly by women, who enter an altered state of consciousness and commune with the spirits or gods, and thereby gain the power to prophesy and heal. This ritual form is particularly being revived by a group called Hrafnar (The Ravens), who perform it for large and small groups of interested Germanic Neo-pagans.<sup>xvii</sup> The ritual begins with a purification ritual using burning herbs, and by "hallowing" the space in which the ritual will be performed (by waving a ritual hammer at the four directions, and calling on Thor to bless the site). The gods and goddesses associated with Seidhr are then invoked, words from the Hávamál are recited, and a strong drum beat taken up. Participants then begin to chant, and to dance to the rhythm, building up energy and focus, and the seeress, called the Völva or the Seidhkona, sings songs of power unique to herself. The drum beat then slows, and the seeress and all of the participants gradually enter a light trance.

Once the trance state has been attained, the group practices a directed visualization. One participant, called the Guide, tells the participants to picture a forest, with a path leading down through the trees, and at the end of the path, the world tree Yggdrasil. The seeress and the participants climb down the world tree `til they reach the gate to the underworld land of the dead (Helheim), where the participants stop, and the seeress passes through the gate. At this point, the

seeress enters a deeper trance. Some seeresses begin to see spirits immediately upon passing the gate. Others require a question to spark their visions. Once the seeress has passed the gate and entered a deep trance, she uses ritual language taken from the Voluspá (one of the Icelandic texts), and says,

The gate is passed, the seidhkona (seeress) waits. Is there one here who would ask a question?

A question is then asked by one of the participants. The question should be well thought out ahead of time, and be about a meaningful issue that could not be answered in some mundane way. The greater the need of the querant for an answer, the stronger the vision of the seeress will be. Once the question has been asked, the Guide speaks the ritual words:

Speak now, seeress, `til said thou has. Answer the asker `til all he knows..."

The seeress then answers the question based upon the vision she receives. This cycle of question asking and ritual invoking continues until everyone has asked their question, or until the Guide determines that the seeress is too tired to continue. Then the Guide tells the seeress to return through the gate, and then directs all the participants to climb back up the world tree and re-enter the world. Once everyone has returned to their waking state, food and drink are shared, to replenish lost energy.

### Galdr

The second ritual, known as Galdr, is also known as "rune chanting." The runic alphabet, called the Futhark alphabet, is understood to have magical and mystical significance. Runes are used for the purposes of divination, and also to aid in mediation and in altering one's consciousness to prepare for Seidhr. Each rune, or "letter," has a meaning attached. There are several varieties of the runic alphabet: one has sixteen letters, another has twenty-four and is

referred to as the "Elder Futhark." The first three letters of the Elder Futhark are ( ), pronounced "fehu," which correlates to the english letter "F" and means "cattle," and symbolizes prosperity; ( ), pronounced "uruz," which correlates to the english letter "U" and means "aurochs" or "Ox," and symbolizes passion and instinct; and ( ), pronounced "thurisaz," which correlates to the english "TH" and means "giant," and symbolizes hardship and introspection. By chanting the names of all twenty-four runes, and focusing your attention on what each rune stands for, you can raise magical energy. Sets of rune stones can now be purchased in speciality shops, although Germanic Neo-pagans prefer to make their own.

### Making Taufr

Making Taufr, the third kind of ritual, is also connected to the runic alphabet. Taufr has the same goal as Galdr, except that instead of chanting the names of all the runes, you choose one or more that are significant to your purposes, and you carve them into talismans. Making a talisman with a runic symbol allows you to do three things: to motivate your own will towards the goal you seek; to offer a prayer to the gods and goddesses for aid in the goal you seek, and to communicate to others the goal you seek. Making taufr is therefore a aid to meditation, a spiritual prayer, and a means of communication to your fellow Germanic Neo-pagans. Taufr are now available in gift shops specializing in "new age" jewellery. Again, however, Germanic Neo-pagans prefer to make their own.

### Seasonal Festivals

In addition to the rituals of blots, sumbels, seidhr, Galdr, and making Taufr, Germanic Neo-pagans also celebrate a number of seasonal rituals. These are similar to those of other Neo-pagan groups. The festivals of the Germanic Neo-pagan calendar include:

Yule (Dec. 21 (Mother Night) - Jan 1). Yule is a celebration that takes place over twelve nights. The first night, called "mother night," and is dedicated to the worship of Frigg and the disir. The whole Yule celebration is the celebration of the gods and goddesses and other spiritual beings, who are understood to be closest to Midgard at this time of year. The dead return to earth to share the feasts of the living, and elves, trolls, and spirits wander the world, and must be invited into the house or chased away, depending upon their intention. Food and drink must be left outside for the spirits who do not get invited into the house. Yule is celebrated with pine and holly, and with the burning of the Yule log. Oaths are sworn at this time over boar-shaped loaves of bread, a remnant of the time when the oaths would be sworn over a boar consecrated to Frey and Freya

Disting/Disablot (Jan 31/Feb 1). Also called the Charming of the Plow, Disting means "thing of the Goddesses." It is the feast of new beginnings, and the time when the first ritual furrows were ploughed in the earth.

Ostara, (Mar. 21). Ostara is the goddess of spring, and this festival is a fertility festival dedicated to her. It is celebrated with painting and hunting for eggs that are "brought" by the Easter Hare, sacred to Ostara.

Maitag/Merry-Moon (April 30/May 1). Celebrated with the "fairy fire," this festival is similar to our halloween - tricks and games are played, bonfires lit, and the fairies or elves are believed to come out to play. This festival is dedicated to Frey, God of fertility.

Midsummer (June 21). Midsummer is a festival of the sun, a celebration of summer and life, and a celebration of bold action and daring spirits. The traditional Icelandic things were held at this time, so it is also a time of judgement and justice.

Loaf-Feast/Freyfaxi (July 31/Aug. 1). This festival is in honour of the marriage of Thor to Sif, and represents a harvest festival celebrating the first sheaves of grain. All the gods and goddesses are understood to be present at this festival, and marriages, and oaths of binding (blood brotherhood, for example) are held at this time.

Fallfest/Winter Finding (autumn equinox Sept. 21). This is a festival dedicated to the Vanir deities. It is a harvest festival, and gives thanks for a good harvest and requests aid in ensuring a good harvest the following year.

Dieses/Winternight (15th/31st of October). This festival is held on the full moon in October - somewhere between the 15th and the 31st of the month. Winternight marks the end of harvest and the beginning of winter. The ancestral spirits (disir) are honoured at this festival. The last of the harvest is offered to the disir and the landsvaettir and the gods and goddesses, and ties of friendship and family are celebrated.

Numerous other minor festivals are also held, but these differ from group to group.

#### Endnotes

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- i "Lesser Feasts; Days of Remembrance." <http://www.netusa.net/~jmr/kg/trways.html> Accessed July 7, 1997.
- ii Paxson, Diana. "Hail Earth that Givest to All...". Mountain Thunder 6 (Autumn 1992). <http://vinland.org/heathen/mt/earth.html> Accessed June 23, 1997.
- iii Jeffrey Kaplan. "The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions," in Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft. James R. Lewis, ed. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, 193-236.
- iv "Why are we Odhinnist's?" <http://www.personal.u-net.com/~midgard/whybe.html> Accessed July 7, 1997
- v Margot Adler (1986: 274) is citing Asatrú Free Assembly founder Stephen McNallen here.
- vi Melton, J. Gordon. The Encyclopedia of American Religions, 1st ed. Detroit: Gale Research Co, 1988, 754-755, quoted in Kaplan 1996, p. 200. The founding date of the Viking Brotherhood is alternately given as 1971 in Kaplan and 1972 in Flowers 1981, p. 282. However, all sources agree that this movement originated within a few months of the Icelandic and the British groups, making 1972 seem a more feasible date.
- vii Laeknir Eirarson. "Personal communication." July 8, 1997.
- viii Quoted in Adler 1986, p. 276.
- ix Paxson 1992, p. 5.
- x Flowers, Stephen E. "Revival of Germanic Religion in Contemporary Anglo-American Culture." Mankind Quarterly 21(3) Spring 1981:279-294, p. 289.
- xi Harvey, Graham. "Heathenism: A North European Pagan Tradition," in Paganism Today. Charlotte Hardman and Graham Harvey, eds. London/San Francisco: Thorsons, 1996, 49-64,p. 50.
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- xiii James, Trudi. "Polytheism." Mountain Thunder 9 (Summer 1993). Reprinted on the Mountain Thunder website. <http://vinland.org/heathen/mt/polytheism.html> Accessed July 7, 1997.
- xiv Nordén, Ingeborg S. "Ingeborg's Unofficial Asatrú FAQ." <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/9048/ingeborgfaq.html> Copyright 1996. Accessed July 7, 1997, p. 2.
- xv "What is Odhinnism?" <http://www.personal.u-net.com/~midgard/odhinf.htm#jade> Accessed July 7, 1997.
- xvi Quoted in Adler 1986, p. 278.
- xvii Paxson, Diana. "The Return of the Völva: Recovering the Practice of Seidh." Mountain Thunder Summer 1993. Reprinted on the Hrafnar homepage. <Http://vinland.org/heathen/hrafnar/seidh.html> Accessed July 7, 1997, p. 1. The subsequent description of the contemporary Seidhr ritual is taken from this article.



