

Arts Magicae

# Ultima Thule



## Mythic Scandinavia

by Paul Williams

# Ultima Thule

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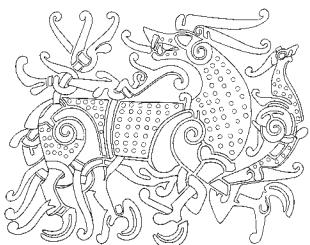
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### About the Author

**Paul Williams** is a 29-year-old computer network engineer from England. Although he holds no university degrees, he has a great interest in philosophy, mythology, and history, especially concerning Ancient Egypt. This is his first major work and, if he gets his own way, not his last. He is a 15-year gaming veteran gamer, and prefers to be known as Wiggy.

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## The Beginning

When the universe began, there was only a chasm, of such immense size that even the gods would become dizzy looking into it, known as the Ginnugagap (Open Void). It was here that Yggdrasil (the World Tree) would lay down its roots.



Prior to Midgard (middle land), the land of men, Nifleheim was born. It was a bleak land, a world of perpetual fog, snow, and ice. Yet even Nifleheim was not the first land, for Muspellheim was old when Nifleheim was newborn. Muspellheim was the opposite of its colder neighbor, a realm of fire so intense that none not born there, whether man or god, could survive it for long.

It was in the gap between these lands that all life was to be formed, for there the heat of Muspellheim melted the snows of Nifleheim. The melted water vapor rose into the air and fell as dew that formed Ymir, a giant who spanned the Ginnugagap. A cow named Audumla was also formed from the dew, and from her teats ran four rivers of milk that sustained Ymir. After a time, other beings formed from the dew, and Ymir married one of these to become the progenitor of the race of frost giants.

Audumla ate only the salty frost that she licked from stones exposed by the melting ice. One day as Audumla licked at the stones, the hair of a man appeared where her tongue had rested. By the end of a second day of licking, a man's head had emerged from the stone. On the third day, the complete likeness of a man had grown from the stone, and he was known as Buri. Buri and his giantess bride had a son named Bor, who in turn had three sons, Odin, Vili, and Ve.

When they had grown, the sons of Bor slew the giant Ymir and the rush of his blood drowned all the giants except Bergelmi and his wife, who escaped in a boat to a land they would name Jotunheim.

In the middle of the Ginnugagap, the sons of Bor threw Ymir's body, creating the lands of men and the gods. The earth was formed from his flesh, the mountains from his bones, the rocks from his teeth, the forests from his hair, the sea from his blood, and the heavens from Ymir's skull, positioning four dwarves (who sprang full-formed from the giant's flesh) named Nordi (North), Austri (East), Suthri (South), and Vestri (West) at its corners to hold it in place. Sparks from Muspellheim were placed within the skull and they became the stars.

Other powers soon came into being. Odin took a giant named Day and gave him a horse known as Skinfaxi (Shining Mane) to ride across the sky. Light from the horse's mane would fall upon the worlds to be known as sunlight. Day's mother, Night, was given a horse named Rimfaxi (Frosty Mane); the light from Rimfaxi's mane was called moonlight, and the spittle that came from his mouth fell upon the earth to form dew. At first the course of Skinfaxi and Rimfaxi through the sky was erratic, but in a later day the giants charged two horrible wolves, Skoll and Hati, with chasing the sun and moon until the end of time, and this kept the wondrous horses from changing their courses or stopping in place.

The World Tree grew up to unite the many lands within its branches and roots, but no one saw its birth.

After some time had passed, the sons of Bor found two trees and shaped them into humans. Odin gave them life, Vili gave them the power to move and the gift of knowledge, and Ve gave them speech and the senses. The newly created humans were given clothes, and the man was called Ask (Ash), while the woman was called Embla (Elm); the parents of mankind.

## Overview

The lands we know as Scandinavia were a cypher to Europeans until some time after their Christianization in the 9th through 11th centuries. Many early writers ignored them, and those who did make reference to them called them collectively **Ultima Thule**,

the furthest extremity of the world, a region of little interest except to mark the unexplored northern limit of maps.

The Vikings have long held a fascination for modern man. Their exploits as raiders and settlers are well known, but the early Norse left few written records, and so most accounts of them come from their victims or those further afield with whom they traded, and are thus understandably biased or vague, especially with regard to their home life and native customs.

By the 13th century, when written records became more plentiful, Scandinavia had been Christianized and much of the pagan culture prevalent in the Viking Age had disappeared, but there were still those who practiced pagan rituals in secret or in the hinterlands, and those who believed monstrous otherworldly creatures continued to interact with mankind. And while the Norse had generally stopped raiding, they were still a force to be reckoned with in other respects.

The aim of *Ultima Thule* is two-fold: to present Mythic Scandinavia, a land of rune magic, monstrous trolls, and great adventure; and to tell the true story of the Norse culture.

Throughout *Ultima Thule* some terms in Icelandic (the nearest living language to Old Norse) are used for flavor, but the English equivalents are given in parentheses. Many spellings have been simplified for convenience. Explanations for terms in **bold print** appear in the Glossary, beginning on page 133.



## Aura Interactions

The runic magic of the Norse drew its power from the magic and faerie realms, and was affected very strongly by the divine power of the Church. Instead of the normal Realm Interaction Table, Norse magicians (including Finnish wind wizards) use the following:

### Norse Aura Interaction Table

Magical	+(aura)
Divine	-(3 x aura)
Faerie	+(aura)
Infernal	-(aura)



# Chapter 2

# Mythic Scandinavia

## The Lands of Scandinavia

Scandinavia, although inhabited for millennia, has a comparatively short recorded history. Indeed, despite some contact with the Roman Empire and its successors, Norse history does not begin in any great detail until the emergence of the Vikings in the 8th century.

### Norway

The name Norway means “the north way,” a reference to the ease with which one could travel north and south along the western coast, compared to the difficulty of overland travel into the country’s interior.

Norway stretched some 1,000 miles from Lindesnes in the south to Nordkapp (North Cape) in the extreme north, forming a narrow strip to the west of the Jotunheim and Kjolen (Keel) Mountains, shrinking from barely 250 miles across in the south, to roughly 50 miles wide in the north, with long fjords stretching almost to the Swedish border. Much of the country lay above the Arctic Circle.

The barrier mountains stood as much as 8,000 feet above sea level and were perma-

nently capped with ice and snow. They began only 10 miles inland of the southwestern coast, and were clearly visible from sea.

Norway’s coast was protected from the fury of the North Atlantic by a line of small islands and rocks. The largest of these islands were inhabited. Fertile soil in Norway was in short supply, being found only along the coast and rivers, in the flatlands around Trondheim. Elsewhere, large areas of bogland, forest, and mountainous terrain made farming extremely hard. In the north, evergreen forest predominated, but as one moved further south hard woods became more common.

Norway’s climate was surprisingly mild for its location. In the summer months, the villages in the extreme north enjoyed temperatures similar to those of lowland Scotland, and the summer day could be as much as two months long (causing Sun duration Hermetic spells to have surprisingly long life spans). Even Norwegian winters were warmer than those in other Arctic countries, because of warm, southwesterly winds blowing in from the Atlantic. In the mountain interior, however, winter temperatures rarely rose above freezing and icy winds blew year round.

The vast majority of the Norwegian population lived along the coast or in the hospitable areas of the south. Norway had one large town, central Trondheim, situated on a fertile plain, and at times laid claim to the region surrounding Oslo in the south, which usually was Danish territory.

## Norwegian Towns

**Trondheim:** Trondheim was founded in 997, and was the center of the lands ruled by the jarls of Lade. Trondheim was the base of missionary work in Norway, and became the see of an archbishopric in 1152. Through its growth and power it became the political capital of Norway, although it was replaced as the trade capital in the 12th century by Bergen, a city closer to northern European markets. Its location was still ideal, however, for merchants wishing to reach Iceland, Greenland, and other Atlantic islands.

**Oslo:** The town of Oslo was founded in 1050 by Harald Hardrade as a naval base for operations in southern Scandinavia and northern Europe, and became an important fortress town. As the Viking Era ended, its harbor was put to use for the Norwegian fishing fleet. A bishopric was founded at Oslo in 1100.

**Bergen:** Bergen was founded in 1075 in Byfjord, near an existing settlement. It

began as an agricultural town, housing communities of fishermen and shepherds. Rapid development in the 12th century saw Bergen grow into a city, one of the most important centers of international trade for Norway. The city was granted a bishopric in 1158, and then became an important spiritual center as well.

## Norwegian History

Southern and central Norway was first unified in 875 by Harald Finehair, the king of Vestfold. Harald was followed by his son, the sinisterly named Erik Bloodaxe, who was ousted because of his cruel nature and the harshness of his rule. Erik left for greener pastures, and for a while was king of York, England. The new Norwegian monarch was Erik's brother, Haakon, who had been brought up by the English king Athelstan. Although a Christian, Haakon allowed the Norwegians to maintain their old religion





and was a cautious ruler. Unfortunately family history returned to haunt Haakon and he was slain fighting an alliance of Erik Bloodaxe's son, Harald Graycloak, and the Danes.

For the next decade southern Norway fell under Danish rule as Harald became ruler. Northern Trøndel attacked the south in 970, killing Harald, and placing Jarl Haakon (who still submitted to Danish overlordship) in power.

In 995, Olaf Tryggvason, a descendant of Harald Finehair, returned home from lucrative raids on England to become king following Jarl Haakon's death. Olaf was a Christian and set up an active missionary program. In part because he was an unpopular ruler, an alliance of Norwegian, Danish and Swedish noblemen killed Olaf, and Svein Forkbeard, a Dane, then ruled Norway.

In 1015 Olaf Haraldsson, another descendent of Harald Finehair, became king and began expanding the kingdom, forging

inland, and also tightening the Viking grip on Orkney and the Shetlands. Olaf also added extra impetus to the conversion program, and the Christianization of the upper echelons of Norwegian society was completed within a few decades. In the 1020s Olaf Haraldsson fell out of grace with the powerful northern nobles and the country was invaded by Canute the Great, forcing him to flee the country. Olaf returned with an army in 1030, but was defeated in battle by a Norwegian army and shortly after was declared a saint.

While Canute the Great was ruling England, his illegitimate son Svein and Svein's English mother assumed power in Norway, on Canute's behalf. In 1035 their unpopular rule was ended by St. Olaf's son Magnus the Good. Magnus proved a competent leader and following the death of Harde-Canute he also became king of Denmark. In 1044 his father's half-brother, Harald Hardrade, returned home from Russia and

## Kings of Norway

Harald I "Finehair"	872 - 930	Haakon Magnusson	1093 - 1095
Erik "Bloodaxe"	930 - 934	Magnus III "Barefoot"	1095 - 1103
Haakon "the Kind"	934 - 961	Olaf Magnusson	1103 - 1105
Harald II "Graycloak"	961 - 970	Eystein I Magnusson	1103 - 1123
Jarl Haakon	970 - 995	Sigurd "the Crusader"	1103 - 1130
Olaf Tryggvason	995 - 1000	Magnus IV "the Blind"	1130 - 1135
Jarls Erik & Svein (brothers)	1000 - 1016	Harald IV "the Fish"	1130 - 1136
Olaf II Haraldsson (St. Olaf)	1016 - 1028	Inge I "the Hunchback"	1136 - 1161
Jarl Haakon	1028 - 1029	Eystein II Haraldsson	1142 - 1157
Canute "the Great"	1029 - 1030	Haakon II "Broad-Shouldered"	1157 - 1162
Svein Alfivason	1030 - 1035	Magnus V Erlingsson	1161 - 1184
Magnus "the Good"	1035 - 1047	Sverre "the Mysterious"	1177 - 1202
Harald Hardrade (Hard Ruler)	1047 - 1066	Haakon III Sverresson	1202 - 1217
Magnus II Haraldsson	1066 - 1069	Haakon IV "the Mighty"	1217 - "present"
Olav III "the Righteous"	1069 - 1093		

demanded a share of the throne. Magnus agreed and Harald became sole ruler when Magnus died without issue. Harald is most famous for his unsuccessful invasion of England of 1066, the virtual end of the Viking Age.

In 1130, Norway was thrown into civil war following the death of Sigurd the Crusader, with the contenders for the throne backed by the now-strong Church on the one side and the populace on the other. In 1177 a populist claimant, Sverri, arrived from the Faeroes, claiming to have been chosen as king by God, but his opponent, Harald Gille, proved his right by walking on hot coals. The civil war was renewed less than a decade later when Sverri was recognized king by the Thing of Trondelag.

The civil war finally ended in 1217 when the mother of Sverri's grandson, Haakon Haakonsson, carried a piece of hot iron for nine paces to prove her son's worth. Now unified under the 16-year-old Haakon IV, Norway has put aside its internal strife and begun to form a powerful state, both culturally and economically. Increasing trade with the cities of coastal Germany is bringing short-term economic gains, but the political ties that accompany this trade may eventually threaten Norwegian political and economic independence.

## Sweden

The kingdom of Sweden consisted of three regions. Norrland covered the northern half of the country and was dotted with small lakes and drained by numerous rivers. The ground was covered with pine and spruce forests that extended into the mountains that formed the border with Norway. The mountain slopes were covered by small glaciers. Svealand formed the country's central lowlands. Götaland covered the south and was essentially a large, low-lying plateau, the western and southern coasts of which were controlled by the Danes (the line marking the border being called "the Danemark"; hence, Denmark). Two large islands in the Baltic Sea, Gotland and Öland, were sparsely inhabited.

The climate varied, but Sweden's winters were normally below freezing, and its summers cool but pleasant. The northern temperature was always several degrees lower than that of the south. Rain and snow was generally heavy, varying between 16 and 26 inches per year, heaviest in the uplands.

Sweden has one town of international note, Uppsala in Svealand, and a number of smaller population centers such as Lödöse and Skara in Götaland, and Sigtuna in Svealand. Stockholm is little more than a village in 1220.



## Kings of Sweden

Olaf "Tax-King"	994 - 1022	Sverket I "the Elder"	1130 - 1156
Anund Jakob	1022 - 1050	Eric "the Saint"	1156 - 1160
Emund "the Old"	1050 - 1060	Carl VII	1160 - 1167
Steinkel Sinlaw (civil war)	1060 - 1066	Canute Ericsson	1167 - 1196
Inge Stenkilsson	1080 - 1110	Sverker II "the Younger"	1196 - 1208
Filipius	1110 - 1118	(civil war)	
Inge Halstensson	1118 - 1130	Eric Knutsson	1210 - 1216
Ragnvald Knaphövde	1130 - ?	John I Sverkersson	1216 - "present"



## Swedish Towns

**Uppsala:** Uppsala has been the spiritual and educational capital of Sweden since the early Viking Age. The temple was described by Adam of Bremen (see “The Old Faith” on page 47) during his travels through Sweden and formed the center of pagan resistance to the advance of Christianity. By the end of the 11th century its power as a pagan religious center had declined and the temple was demolished. Uppsala was made a bishopric in 1164. The prestige of the city was increased by the presence of Saint Erik, who founded one of the ruling dynasties.

In 1220 Uppsala remains a Christian stronghold infiltrated by pagan beliefs. Many of the locals are Christians by baptism, but still hold ties to the old faith.



## Swedish History

In Sweden two rival tribes, the Svear (after whom the country is named, and who originally settled in Svealand in the east) and the Gotar (who inhabited Götaland in the south) settled the country. Each of the Swedish tribes had a single king. He was seen as a figurehead with little actual authority but a strong ritual association with the pagan cultic practices at Uppsala, the capital from the 9th century.

Although the names of several kings from the 9th century are known, the extent of their power remains unknown, and little reliable history can be determined during the Viking Age. From as early as the 9th century the Svear were exacting tribute from the tribes in Finland and northern Russia.

German missionaries arrived in Sweden to convert the populace in the late 9th century. At this same time Skåne, the southern part of Sweden, was conquered by the Danes and became part of their kingdom. Constant military pressure from Denmark and Norway in the 10th century forced the Swedes to unify under one ruler, Olaf Skottkonung (Tax-King), in 994, but a single ruler did not mean a united country, and many petty kings still had control over small sections of the country. Olaf was a Christian, although much of the population, especially the Svear, still practiced the old faith at that time.

By 1020 the Christian faith had begun to spread throughout the populace, but did not become the state religion until late in the 11th century, with the pagan temple at Uppsala being destroyed in 1080 (but see “The Temple at Uppsala” on page 47). After 1060 Sweden was weakened by internal disputes between rival dynasties and the Landthings became the most powerful institutions in the land. Rulership by the kings was only fully restored in 1120.

At the start of the 13th century Sweden is a land of two peoples; Christian kings rule the country, but many of the rural areas still practice the old ways. The current king, John Sverkersson, is in some ways the puppet of the powerful jarl Ulf Fasi.

# Denmark

The smallest Scandinavian kingdom, but also the most powerful at times, was Denmark, consisting of: the main peninsula, Jutland, bordering the Holy Roman Empire; some 400 islands, including Zealand, Fuenen, Lolland, Falster, More, Als, and Bornholm, all at the strategic straits between the North and Baltic Seas; and at times considerable portions of the northern Scandinavian peninsula immediately south of Norway and Sweden.

All of Denmark was lowland, although the eastern half of Jutland was typically hilly, traversed by deep valleys forming the fjord-like Jutland Inlets. Northern Jutland featured wide plains, while large areas of open moorland could be found in the west before one came to the sandy and flat west coast. Southern Denmark had little forested area, the Viking Age taking its toll on its few forests.

Denmark's climate was temperate, with mild winters and warm summers. Rainfall

varied from 20 inches per year in the lower areas through to over 40 inches in the highlands. The rain tended to be heaviest in the late summer and autumn. Fog was especially common in the western half of the country.

Denmark was Scandinavia's gateway to the rest of Europe, and Danes had more political and cultural contact with the rest of the world than Norwegians and especially Swedes. European influences often reached Denmark first before spreading to the rest of Scandinavia.

Denmark's southern border was marked by the Danevirke, an earthenwork wall and series of fortifications (see "The Danevirke" on page 60). Constructed early in the Viking Era and improved in later years, the wall stretched some 25 miles from Hedeby to the Rivers Rheide and Treene.

The main towns in southern Denmark were Århus, Lund, Roskilde, Veborg, Ribe, and Schlesweig, as well as Oslo and Skara on the main Scandinavian peninsula. Hedeby had had its heyday and was all but abandoned by 1220.



## Kings of Denmark

Gorm "the Old"	? - 940	Olaf I Hunger	1086 - 1095
Harald "Bluethooth"	940 - 985	Eirik I Ejegod	1095 - 1103
Svein I "Forkbeard"	985 - 1014	Niels	1103 - 1134
Harald II Sveinsson	1014 - 1018	Eirik II Emune	1134 - 1137
Canute I "the Great"	1018 - 1035 (ruled England 1017 - 1035) (ruled Norway 1029 - 1030)	Eirik III "the Lamb" Olaf II Svein	1137 - 1146 1140 - 1143 1146 - 1157
Harde-Canute	1035 - 1042 (ruled England 1040 - 1042)	Canute III	1146 - 1157
Magnus "the Good"	1042 - 1047	Valdemar I "the Great"	1154 - 1182
Svein II Estridsson	1047 - 1076	Canute IV	1182 - 1202
Harald III	1076 - 1080	Valdemar II Sejr	1202 - "present"
Canute II "the Saint"	1080 - 1086		



## Danish Towns

**Ribe:** Established as a bishopric in 948 by Harald Bluetooth, Ribe is a center of Danish trade, peopled by fearless sailors who are actively recruited by seafaring magi who can cope with the high incidence of the Berserk Virtue among the population. The fierce independence of Ribe has kept the encroachments of German traders at bay.

Members of the Order of Hermes have attempted to establish covenants in Ribe on more than one occasion, but each has met with disaster of one kind or another and been abandoned. Many suspect the secretive Order of Odin (see page 57) to be behind the “accidents.”

**Lund:** Situated to the south of Sweden, Lund was founded by the Danish king Canute the Great as the capital of Danish territory in Skåne. Lund was granted a bishopric in 1060, and in 1103 was granted the archbishopric for all of Scandinavia. In the early 13th century, Lund is an important center for Christian learning, having a cathedral and six monasteries within a day’s ride.

**Borglum:** The original inhabitants of Borglum were slaughtered by Svein Forkbeard in 987 when they refused to convert to Christianity, and the area was resettled from Christian parts of the country.

Borglum is now one of the most loyal towns in Denmark, and one of the most fervent in its faith. The people of Borglum are required to search their city for heretics and pagans, a duty passed from generation to generation. A church is built into each of the city gates, and visitors must attend Mass before proceeding into the town. Horses and livestock are not allowed into the town; stables and stockyards are provided outside its walls.

**Århus:** Århus was made a bishopric in 950 and served as a base from which Frankish missionaries spread the word of God to the Danes. In 985 King Svein Forkbeard granted the cathedral of Århus jurisdiction over the city.

For a short while, priests from Århus rode the waves with Viking raiders, but the bishop declared the murder and pillage of fellow

Christians to be against the law of God and man. Århus still produces great sailors, many of whom are recruited by German traders.

**Malmo:** The land on which the quiet village of Malmo stood was bought from Denmark in 1203, and imported masons and laborers converted it and its moderately good harbor into a safe port from which to trade with southern Sweden.

## Danish History

The erection of fortified buildings and the start of urban development around the end of the 8th century marks the beginning of Viking history in Denmark and shows the existence of a strong, central authority. In the early 9th century the Danes had many border disputes with their southern neighbors, including the great Christian Emperor Charlemagne. Although not converted themselves until much later, Horik the Older and Horik the Younger, two kings, allowed the Christians to build a church within Denmark so they could practice their faith.

During the reign of Harald Bluetooth in the mid-10th century, Denmark subjugated Norway, and Christianity was officially introduced to Denmark as a recognized religion. His son, Svein Forkbeard, ousted him from the throne and for a single year was king of Denmark, Norway, and England, before he died to be replaced by his son Canute the Great, who was already sole king of England, and who then governed Norway and parts of Sweden.

By 1042 the situation had begun to change, and Magnus the Good, a Norwegian, gained control of the throne following the death of Harde-Canute. During this period the Wends attacked Denmark and Magnus had to ask his uncle, Harald Hardrade, for aid, giving him part of the throne in exchange.

Between 1074 and 1134 Denmark's history was dominated by King Svein II and his sons' attempts to reunify the kingdom. The period was marked by power struggles and various kings accepted land from the Holy Roman Emperor. In 1104 Christianity

became the national church, with Pope Urban II granting Denmark recognition as an independent province under the rule of Lund.

Valdemar I defeated his rivals in 1157 and unified the country. Under his guidance a strong army was formed and an effective government established. Valdemar II expanded Denmark to include the Baltic and Slavonic lands to the east, as well as many towns of northern Germany. Holy crusades were declared against the Wends and Denmark gained Pomerania and Estonia (although actual control of Estonia reached just as far as Danish troops could march from their coastal forts). German weakness saw the Holy Roman Emperor grant Denmark full control over the Slav lands north of the Elbe in 1214. As most of these gains were made at the expense of Germany, there would be considerable enmity between the two nations for decades. Denmark then turned its expansionist eyes toward northern Russia.

was so common in Viking raids, but instead left the island, never to return. By 930, the land was fully settled, mostly with Norwegians.

The early settlers discovered the hard way that it was an unforgiving country. However, the area around Reykjavik (Bay of Smoke; named for the steam rising from numerous hot springs), which was first settled by Ingolf, offered reasonable living conditions.

Around the year 900, Ingolf's son, Thorsteinn, and other local chieftains organized the Kjalarnes **Thing**. As had been the tradition in Norway, the Thing was a public meeting open to all men of free birth, and was responsible for making laws, and resolving legal disputes. As Iceland's population grew, the nation was divided into four districts, each with its own **Landthing** and three or four smaller, local **Things**, and a national **Allthing** was established (see "The Thing" on page 33). The leaders of these gatherings



## Iceland

Situated just south of the Arctic Circle and 600 miles west of the Norwegian coast was the island of Iceland. Volcanic in origin, Iceland's terrain consisted of lava desert some 1800 feet above sea level, ice fields, glaciers and icy lakes. Iceland was a country of ice and fire, with over 200 active volcanoes, along with geysers and pools of mud heated to boiling by underground heat. Only a tiny fraction of the land was arable, and in 1200 several settlements in the west were abandoned after a nearby volcano erupted.

## Icelandic History

In 870 A.D. the first Vikings, Norwegians led by a man named Ingolf, landed on Iceland. Although they thought it new-found land, they soon discovered Irish monks already living on the island, although their presence was limited to a few monasteries. The monks weren't slaughtered, as





were known as **gothar** (singular: **gothi**), and were the heads of local chieftain families. It is important to note that these families did not rule in the same way as the nobles had back in Norway; the class boundaries in Iceland, although present, were much more relaxed and less formal. Each Icelandic landholder had to pledge himself to one of the gothar, but not necessarily the one closest to his home, so a gothi's political power depended on his personal prestige.

In the year 1000, the Allthing accepted Christianity on behalf of the country. The decision was not taken lightly, and there was pressure from the Norwegian king, Olaf Tryggvason, who threatened Icelanders living in Norway. To speed the process of conversion, some concessions were granted. Christian authorities turned a blind eye to infanticide, the eating of horsemeat, and the continued (private) worship of the old gods. The first Icelandic bishop was Isleif, who was consecrated in 1056 in the German town of Bremen.

Iceland was an island physically, but it could not remain so politically forever. From the early 11th century onward, treaties were signed with the Norwegian kings, and between 1262 and 1264 the Icelanders acknowledged the supremacy of Norway and thus became liable to taxation, ending the independence of this Viking colony.

## Greenland

To the west of Iceland was Greenland, in an area known as the White Sea. Straddling the Arctic Circle, much of the island's surface was covered in glaciers hundreds of feet deep. Only along the western coast were there areas suitable for habitation.

The coastline was shaped by fjords, similar to those of Norway, with many offshore islands. Ice sheets moved ever forward towards the coast, with mountains of ice falling into the sea to become icebergs. Shallow-rooted trees were found on the southern coasts, and other native vegetation consists mainly of grasses, mosses, and lichen.

## Greenlandic History

Greenland, although settled in a number of places by the Norse, was never a major colony, mainly because of its harsh weather and distance from the rest of the Scandinavian world. The first Icelandic settlers, under the leadership of Erik the Red (who had rediscovered the land during a three-year exile from Iceland for murder; the original discovery was almost 100 years earlier by a sailor named Gunnbjorn, blown off-course by a violent storm) landed in Greenland's southwest around 985. There, the land was fairly useful pasture, although it did not lie far from the inland ice sheets. Erik said that he named the country "Greenland" because it would encourage settlers to make their homes there, but this was not entirely boastful, as Greenland was at least as comfortable a land as northernmost Norway.

Christianity was introduced to Greenland shortly after the year 1000, although little is known of how well it flourished in the early days. Several churches, some with large graveyards, certainly stood proud in the settlements. In 1125 a bishop was appointed to the land, and his seat was but a few miles from the site of Erik's original stead.

Greenland remained independent until 1261, when the populace accepted Norwegian rule.

## The Westernmost Islands

Shortly after the foundation of the settlements on Greenland, a ship coming to Greenland from Iceland was blown off-course, and when it finally returned to port its commander, one Byarni Herjolfsson, described islands to the west of Greenland. In 992, Leif the Lucky, son of Erik the Red, made his own journey westward and returned with tales of lands that grew more hospitable as one sailed south: Helluland (Stone Land), Markland (Forest Land), and Vinland (Wine Land).

Other Greenlanders made trips west: some returned claiming to have had encoun-

ters with hostile natives they called Skraelings, others claimed to have established temporary fishing camps on the more comfortable islands. Those who never returned from those westward journeys were assumed to have either died in encounters with Skraelings, continued exploring further south and west, or to have established permanent colonies. Whatever the answer, by the mid-11th century those voyages of exploration ceased.

## The Vikings in England

England is situated only 30 or so miles from the European continent at its closest point, and has been subject to many invasions in its past. The Viking influence in England was to shape its history for two centuries. What first began as isolated raids against remote monasteries, including the

first recorded Viking raid, an attack on the monastery on Lindisfarne Island, soon became a full-scale invasion.

In 865, the Great Army from Denmark, Ireland, and the Continent landed in East Anglia. Over the next 15 years the Army traveled through England, taking kingdom after kingdom. In 871, the Vikings turned their attention on Wessex and after nine great battles, in which nine earls and a king were killed, peace was made. In 874, Wessex again became the target of the invaders, but no ground could be gained and peace was made with King Alfred.

In 877, the Vikings made another attack on Wessex, and this time they succeeded in forcing Alfred into hiding in the marshes. Twelve months later he returned with an army and the Vikings were defeated. The Dane leader, Guthrum, agreed to be baptized along with 30 of his nobles and Alfred acted as Guthrum's godfather. After nearly two decades the Norse held three of the four





British kingdoms. Guthrum's last act before he died was to agree on a boundary between the English and Danish lands. The Danish portion became known as the Danelaw (because the Danes could make their own laws) and the English were required to pay regular tribute. Alfred's children slowly pushed northwards and in 920 succeeded in retaking Northumbria. Further advances were made, and by 954 England had a single king ruling a single kingdom, and he was English.

In 980, the Vikings returned, raiding the south and west coasts. The armies of the Norse looted England for many years before Svein Forkbeard succeeded in becoming king. His son, Canute the Great, ruled England, Norway, and Denmark for a brief period of time. In 1018, the situation was so stable in England, although it had a foreign ruler, that Canute's army was disbanded.

The English regained control of the country in 1042 when Edward the Confessor took the throne, following the death of the last Danish king. The last Norwegian attack on England, and one that sounded the death knell for the Viking Age, was the attempt by Harald Hardrade to conquer England in 1066. His army was met by the army of the English king, Harald Godwinsson, at Stamford Bridge, and was decisively beaten. Unfortunately for the English, William, Duke of Normandy, invaded only three weeks later and the beleaguered English army was crushed near Hastings.

The English were not happy under Norman rule, and asked the Danish king, Canute, for help. Three fleets landed over a period of six years but no inroads were made into England. The last attempt was in 1086, but the plan was aborted when Canute faced problems on his southern border. This was the last war fleet ever mustered by the Vikings, and it failed to leave harbor.

While the Norse occupation of England was over, the Viking influence was lasting. The majority of forts built by Alfred to guard against the Norse grew into towns, and more positively, hundreds of Scandinavian names and loan-words were added to the English language.

## Ireland

Ireland was a large island west of England and Scotland. It was inhabited by Celts and, although the Romans knew of its existence, superstitious belief that it was the end of the world prevented them from invading. When the Vikings arrived in 795, Ireland was a land of petty kingdoms that were constantly at war with each other.

The Viking Age in Ireland fell into four periods. The first, from 795 to 830, involved roaming bands of Vikings carrying out raids against isolated monasteries. Although the first attacks began in the northwest, by 820 the Vikings had attacked communities on all of the coasts. Ireland's monasteries were the richest targets the Norse could find in this period.

The second phase saw huge areas of Ireland plundered by large bands of Vikings. The Norse began settling at this time, building forts so they could raid safely throughout the surrounding land. The Vikings found themselves fighting alongside Irish kings in petty wars and many second-generation Viking children had Celtic names. Assistance in war was not the only Viking strength that the Irish sought; they also had plenty of boats and were respected traders. Within a generation the Norse had gone from raiders to semi-settled merchants and mercenaries. By 853 the main kings in Ireland were of Viking stock, and the names of three of the four quarters of the country had been changed to Viking variants (Ulaid to Ulster, Mumu to Munster, Lagin to Leinster; only the western quarter, Connachta, remained sufficiently Viking-free to retain its original name), but by 902 most had been ousted.

From 916 to 980, fresh waves of invaders arrived, mainly from England and the Isle of Man. By 917, the Viking base at Dublin had been re-established and the Vikings were once more in control of the country. At the Battle of Tara in 980, the Vikings' supremacy was smashed by an Irish coalition. After that, the Vikings in Ireland paid tribute to Irish kings.

The fourth and final phase, between 980 and 1170, saw the remaining Vikings fully integrated into Irish culture. Although many still had Norse names, they were more Celtic than Norse. In 1170 the Normans, descendants of another Viking colony, conquered the island.

## Scotland

There is no doubt that the Vikings reached Scotland. What written history survives from that period pays little attention to the Norse on the mainland and concentrates on their exploits on various offshore islands, such as their raid on the island monastery of Iona in 795, to which they returned in 802, and again in 806, forcing many of the monks to build a new monastery in Ireland.

In 866, central Scotland was attacked and many prisoners were taken away to become thralls, while the rest of Scotland was placed under tribute. In 870-1 the Siege of Dumbarton saw the end of the Britons' rule in

Strathclyde (southwest Scotland). Some Norse settled and intermarried with the native Scots, and several clans were later to have names of Norse-Scots descent. This was especially common in the north of Scotland and on the western isles.

After Norwegians took control of the major islands, Danes invading from England began competing with them for plunder. By the late 10th century, native Scottish kings were driving the Norsemen from the country; details of Scottish history after that point can be found in the *Lion of the North* sourcebook.



## The Orkneys, Faeroes, and Man

The Isle of Man is located in the Irish Sea between England, Ireland, and Scotland. At the end of the 8th century, the isle was invaded and later settled by the Vikings. From there the Norse launched raids against the nearby coasts. At its height, the Kingdom

## Earls of Orkney

Sigurd Eysteinsson	875 - 901	Thorfinn "the Mighty"	1045 - 1065
Turf-Einar Rognvaldsson	901 - 932	Paul, Erland	1065 - 1098
Thorfinn "Skullsplitter"	932 - 963	Sigurd (son of Magnus)	1098 - 1103
(sons of Thorfinn)	963 - 976	Hakon, Magnus	
Hlodvir Thorfinnsson	976 - 980	(sons of Paul & Erland)	1103 - 1117
Sigurd "the Stout"	980 - 1014	Hakon	1117 - 1123
Sumarlidi, Brusi, Einar Wrymouth		Paul	1123 - 1136
(sons of Sigurd)	1014 - 1017	Rognvald Kolsson	1136 - 1158
Olaf Haraldson (king of Norway)	1017	Harald Maddaderson	1158 - 1206
Brusi, Thorfinn	1017 - 1035	David Haraldson	1206 - 1214
Thorfinn, Rognvald	1035 - 1045	Jon Haraldson	1206 - "present"



of Man covered most of the western isles and a few isolated peninsulas on the Scottish mainland. Norse was the native language of the rulers of the island, but many of the farmers spoke a heavily accented version of Gaelic. (For more on the Isle of Man, see the *Ars Magica* supplement *The Fallen Angel*.)

The Orkneys are a cluster of some 70 islands off the north coast of Scotland. During the second half of the 9th century the natives were subdued by Norsemen from Norway, and a dynasty was founded. During the Viking Age, the culture and language of the Orkneys and the Shetlands (which lie further north) were thoroughly Norse. The islands were used as the base for many raids against the British Isles, and King Harald Finehair had to sail there to chastise the Viking inhabitants, who were raiding Norway. The Vikings from the Orkneys and the Shetlands became wealthy through their raiding, and treasure caches were believed to be buried on them. The islands remained politically part of Norway even after the Vikings ceased raiding.

The Faeroe Islands, situated roughly halfway between Scotland and Iceland, were colonized by Grim Kamban during the reign of Harald Finehair. According to legend, a colony of Irish monks were living there, but left when the Vikings arrived. Sigmund Brestisson brought Christianity to the islands shortly after Iceland was converted, although he had to battle Thrandr of Götu, a powerful vitki, in order to do so. As many of the settlers were Norwegian, the island was placed under Norwegian dominance.

## Kings of Man and the Isles

Godred Crovan (civil war)	1079 - 1095
Magnus "Barelegs" (king of Norway) (civil war)	1098 - 1103
Olaf I	1113 - 1153
Godred II	1153 - 1187
Reginald I	1187 - "present"

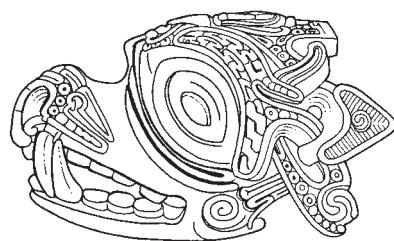
## Normandy

In 911, a Viking named Hrolf led a massive Viking raid into West Frankia that was only halted when the West Frankish king made Hrolf ("Rollo" in West Frankish) a grant of land around the mouth of the Seine; the Franks had learned that the best way to ward off raids was to set up rival bands of Vikings against each other. Unlike Viking leaders elsewhere, Rollo managed to consolidate his power. The rich and fertile lands of the region attracted other Scandinavian settlers to Rollo's *Terra Normannorum* (the land of the Northmen); Normandy.

The existing governmental framework that Rollo and his descendants inherited caused the decline of Viking culture there. Many Vikings converted to Christianity, West Frankish was chosen as the primary language of the area, and within a few generations it was hard to find any Norman who spoke Norse; no king after Rollo had a Scandinavian name.

In 1002, King Athelred of England married Emma, sister of Richard II, Rollo's great-grandson, strengthening ties between the Norse in Normandy and England. By 1006, Richard II was referred to as Duke of Normandy. In 1020, the Normans expanded their sphere of influence into southern Italy, becoming rulers there and in Sicily by mid-century.

In 1066, William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, defeated an English army at Hastings and became King of England. William was a French-Norman, all links with his Scandinavian heritage having effectively disappeared. By 1204, Normandy was conquered by King Phillip Augustus of France, ending the Viking presence in France.



# Finland

Although not technically a Scandinavian country, Finland was a frontier country from which Norwegian, Swedish and Russian kings often exacted tribute, and which was home to the wind wizards who often roamed the mountainous lands of Scandinavia.

Two thirds of Finland was covered by trees, mainly pine and spruce. Over 60,000 lakes littered the land and they accounted for one tenth of the country's area. Much of Finland was low-lying, but the terrain was rugged outside of the forested areas. In the north, mountains formed a natural border with Norway, and the largest numbers of wind wizards lived there.

The northernmost regions of Finland, Norway, and Russia were inhabited by the Sami, a people who lived by fishing and hunting migrating herds of reindeer, a practice that forced a nomadic lifestyle on them. They had a good deal of contact with their neighbors, the Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns, mainly for trade, although some Sami tribes, known as *siidas*, paid tribute to Norwegian and Swedish jarls. Furs were especially valued among the Sami. Siidas owned land on which they had sole rights — outsiders were treated well but had to remember that the lands didn't belong to the kings who ruled the rest of Scandinavia.

Ottar, who served at the court of Alfred the Great, the English king who liberated his country from the Danes, was a Sami and he wrote a great deal about his native lands. He also boasted that he owned 800 reindeer, several of which were decoy animals used to lure wild reindeer away from their herds so that they could be caught.

Among the Sami's natural talents were hunting, skiing, the herding of reindeer (including training decoys), and a wide knowledge of their local area. The Sami didn't practice the rune magic of the Norse, nor the wind magic of the Finns, but instead had their own tribal shamans (see page 64).

Christian missionaries who entered the lands of the Sami rarely took the time to learn their language, and they were rarely made welcome by the Sami.

# The Baltic Lands

Before the recorded history of the Vikings, trade was being conducted between Scandinavians and the people of the Baltic coast, valuable for its own products and as a gateway to the interior of eastern Europe. Eventually military campaigns were launched against native tribes by the Scandinavians, and sometime after 850 the Swedes defeated the native Courlanders, forcing them to pay tribute to the Svear. Trade towns grew up in the areas where Norsemen frequented, stretching from Germany, through Poland and Russia to Latvia.

In 983 the Slavs and Danes, once enemies, allied against the Germans who had begun to expand both north and east, threatening both nations. Their armies met in battle, and the outcome was a decisive German victory. However, a link between the two peoples had been established and marriages took place between Scandinavian kings and the daughters of West Slav princes.

In the early 11th century peaceful relations between Scandinavia and the Baltic lands suffered as the Slavs expanded into Scandinavian territory. During the reign of Magnus the Good of Norway, a Slav expedition was stopped by force. Legend states that the king was aided by his dead father St. Olaf.

Immediately after the turn of the 13th century King Valdemar II of Denmark expanded his country's realm to include the Baltic and Slavonic lands to the east. The Wends who inhabited the area were pagans and crusades were called against them. With the help of the military order the Knights of the Sword, and the support of the bishop of Riga, Vladimir seized Pomerania and Estonia, the Holy Roman emperor granting Denmark full control over the Slav lands north of the Elbe in 1214.





## Russia

Western Russia was home to many peoples including the Finns, Slavs, and Bulgars. Scandinavians traded with the local inhabitants from the middle of the 8th century, and in 859 Vikings (likely from Denmark) attacked northwest Russia and forced the inhabitants to pay tribute. By 862 the Vikings were overthrown, but the locals, deciding that they could not effectively rule themselves, invited a group of Scandinavians known as the Rus from Sweden to rule them and protect them from other Vikings.

The Rus organized systems to collect the region's natural wealth, eventually establishing trading posts which grew to become towns and small cities. The large rivers of the

Baltic coast and eastern Europe gave the Vikings easy access through the core of eastern Europe. By the middle of the 9th century the Vikings were trading with Constantinople. Viking mercenaries (under the name Varangians) were prized in Constantinople, and a unit served there from the middle of the century. In 988, Grand Prince Vladimir converted to Orthodox Christianity and married the sister of the Byzantine emperor, cementing an alliance between the two powers that was to last for centuries.

Rus power in Russia lasted until the early 12th century, by which time the Scandinavian Rus had lost their Viking roots and considered themselves Russians. A more detailed history of the Rus can be found in *The Dragon and the Bear*, the Novgorod Tribunal sourcebook.

## Timeline of the Norse

710 Willibrord unsuccessfully attempts to convert the Danes.

737 The main wall of the Danevirke is constructed across the southern Danish border.

792 Churches in Kent, England are required to contribute money to stop pagan seamen invading.

793 The first Viking raid is recorded at Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast of England. The massacre of the monks and the pillaging of the monastery sets the tone for encounters for the next three centuries.

795 The Vikings sail around Scotland to raid monasteries on the islands Skye and Iona. Raithlin, in northern Ireland, is also raided. The Faeroes are settled.

799 The first Viking raid in mainland Europe occurs at Sainte-Philibert, an island monastery on the island of Noirmoutier off the coast of Frankia.

800 Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, fortifies the north coast of the Seine estuary against pirates.

820 Viking fleet attacks Flanders and the Seine estuary but is repelled. Aquitaine sacked by the same Vikings.

823 Archbishop Ebo leads a mission to convert the Danes but meets with little success.

825 The Viking tribe known as the Rus settle Tmutorokan, the Crimean area on the Black Sea's shores.

838 The Vikings aid the Britons of Cornwall, England against the West Saxons.

841 After the death of King Louis, one of Charlemagne's sons, Frankia is plunged into civil war. The churches and towns of the Seine valley are raided by Vikings.

845 An attack on Paris is halted when the king agrees to pay the Vikings 7,000 pounds of silver. Rather than halting the attacks, this payment only encourages more Vikings to attack, realizing that great wealth is to be had. Norwegians raid the coasts of southern Spain and Danes sack Hamburg.

## Timeline of the Norse (cont.)

859 The Rhone valley is plundered by Vikings heading for the Mediterranean. A permanent base is established in southern France. A Viking fleet attacks Nakur on the North African coast.

862 Charles, king of West Frankia, defends the heart of his kingdom. Bridges are constructed across the Rivers Loire and Seine to stop ships, and monasteries are fortified.

865 The Great Army lands in England.

866 Vikings in Ireland lose their mobility as they form permanent settlements. York is occupied by the Great Army.

870 After a four-month siege the Vikings take Dumbarton, the capital of the British kingdom of Strathclyde. Many thralls are captured and returned to the Vikings' homeland. The Great Army conquers Northumbria and East Anglia, effectively dismembering the kingdom of Mercia. The Vikings take control of Eoforwic (Yarvic to the Norse; now York), one of England's major cities. Norwegians begin settling Iceland.

871 The Great Army attempts to invade Wessex but is thwarted by King Athelred and his brother Alfred.

875 The Vikings in Wessex withdraw to Gloucestershire and exchange hostages with King Alfred.

876 King Alfred forced to hide in the marshes of Somerset.

878 Alfred seizes London, ending the Viking dominance in the south of the country. Guthrum, the Viking leader, and 30 nobles accept baptism.

879 Several Viking armies land on the Continent, concentrating their attacks on Flanders. Guthrum and Alfred define a border between English and Danish territory, that becomes known as the Danelaw.

881 Vikings launch major incursion up the Rhine to attack Cologne and Trier.

885 The Great Army in England splits. A small portion settles in East Anglia, while the majority moves to Europe. Vikings besiege Paris. Defenses hold out, but Vikings move inland and spend two winters raiding the heart of West Frankia.

892 Plague decimates the Great Army in Europe.

896 The Viking armies leave southern Europe, after failing to gain substantial amounts of land.

900 King Olaf of Sweden conquers Denmark and holds it for 36 years.

902 The Dublin Vikings are defeated and expelled.

911 The king of West Frankia grants land in the lower Seine valley to the Viking leader Rollo, hoping that the gift would stop Vikings from raiding further up the river; the Duchy of Normandy is created.

918 The Danes of the Danelaw recognize King Alfred as their ruler.

921 Vikings are allowed to settle near Nantes, on the condition that they protect the Loire. The colony lasts for 16 years before it is abandoned.

936 Denmark is freed from Swedish rule by the German ruler Henry the Fowler.

945 English and Danes from the Danelaw fight against Norwegians from Ireland.

952 The last Norse king of Northumbria, Erik Bloodaxe, is slain; England reunited under one ruler.

983 Germans driven out of Denmark by Svein Forkbeard.

## Timeline of the Norse (cont.)

985 Settlement of Greenland by Erik the Red.

991 England raided by Svein Forkbeard. Svein returns in 994 and 1006 and extorts over 60,000 pounds of silver.

1000 Iceland accepts Christianity.

1001 Leif Eriksson (the Lucky) explores Vinland.

1002 King Athelred orders the death of all Danes in England.

1012 An army led by Thorkell takes Canterbury and is paid 48,000 pounds of silver in tribute.

1013 England conquered by Svein Forkbeard, who dies early the next year. The English king, Athelred, forced into exile in Normandy.

1014 The Battle of Clontarf ends Viking dominance in Ireland. Athelred returns from exile following the death of Svein Forkbeard and forces Sven's son to return to Denmark.

1015 King Canute arrives in England to retake the lands formerly held by the Vikings.

1016 Canute recognized as the king of England following the death of Athelred. Canute rules alongside Athelred's son Edmund Ironside; upon Edmund's death becomes sole ruler. A tribute of 82,000 pounds of silver is paid to Canute.

1042 The English choose Edward the Confessor, son of Athelred, as their king following the death of King Harde-Canute.

1053 Pope Leo IX gives the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen authority over Norway, Iceland, and Greenland, as well as the lands of the Danes and Svear.

1066 Edward the Confessor dies childless; Harald Godwinsson is his successor. Norwegian king Harald Hardrade invades northern England but is defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Three weeks later William of Normandy invades southern England and the English are defeated at the Battle of Hastings. Rebellious English nobles ask Danish king Svein Estridsson for aid.

1069 Svein arrives in England but is defeated.

1080 Pagan temple at Uppsala destroyed.

1127 The fur trade from Norway is so bountiful the English church forbids abbesses and nuns from wearing garments more precious than lamb's wool or the fur of black cats.

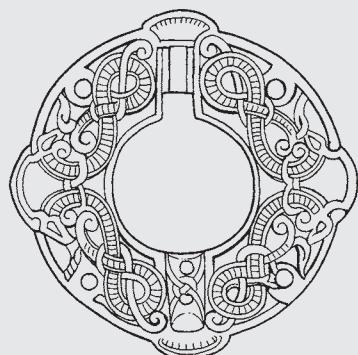
1130 Norway thrown into civil war. Sverri arrives from the Faeroes in 1177, claiming to have been chosen as king by God, whereas his opponents, and the archbishop of Norway, insist that only the Church can give legitimacy to a king, and back Harald Gille. Iceland affected by the war, as many leading Icelanders have political and financial interests in the outcome. Gille eventually wins.

1184 Norwegian civil war renewed when Sverri recognized king in Trondelag.

1185 Pomerania submits to Danish rule.

1202 Valdemar II granted the title "king of the Danes and the Slavs" by Frederick II.

1217 Norwegian civil war ends when Sverri's grandson, Haakon Haakonsson, recognized king throughout Norway.



# Mythic Realms

In Norse pagan belief, alongside the mundane kingdoms of Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes were a host of mythic realms inhabited by gods, giants, and monstrous creatures (see the Norse Bestiary, beginning on page 115), all of which were as real to the Northmen as the mundane kingdoms to the west, south, and east of Scandinavia.

In reality, these lands are located within Arcadia (the Realm of Faerie), accessible to dwellers in Midgard (the mundane world of men) through a number of faerie regios located in isolated Scandinavian locales. If one can find the secret location of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, any of these realms can be accessed, as its twisted roots and branches extend into all the mythological Norse lands.

Surrounding Midgard are Asgard (home of the Aesir gods), Vanaheim (home of the Vanir gods), Alfheim (home of the light elves), Nifleheim (land of ice), Jotunheim (land of giants), Muspellheim (land of the fire), and Svartalfheim (land of the dark elves). Despite the physical differences and internal distances between these lands, all are located in a portion of Arcadia dominated by the powerful faerie beings who are the Norse deities, an area that can be called Norse Arcadia. Other regions within the Realm of Faerie can be reached from Norse Arcadia, most easily Slavic Arcadia (see *The Dragon and The Bear*, Slavic Faerie, page 82) which has its own world tree with roots and branches intertwined with those of Yggdrasil.

## Alfheim

The home of the **ljossalfar** (light elves) is unknown to mankind, for none that have set out to visit it have ever returned. The light elves very rarely enter the realm of men, preferring their own company. Alfheim borders on Asgard, and some of the Vanir gods live in great halls here.

## Asgard

After Odin and his brothers had slain Ymir and created the worlds from his remains, Odin chose a stony mountain top upon which he built his stead, Gladsheim (Radiant Home). Instead of roof tiles, Odin placed golden shields that reflect sunlight and make the palace visible for many leagues. A temple called *Valaskjalf* (Hall of the Slain) houses Odin's throne, Lidskialf, from which he can see everything that occurs in the realm of men.

Within his stead is Odin's drinking hall, **Valhalla**; it is said that the 540 doors of the hall can each accommodate 800 men passing through side by side. In Valhalla dwell the **einherjar**, warriors chosen to fight alongside the gods at **Ragnarök** and delivered to Odin by the **valkyries**. Those destined to reside there are visited before a battle by a valkyrie who assures them of their place at Odin's table if they fight well before dying. The less valiant among the slain are claimed by Freyja to dwell in *Folkvangr* (Field of the Host). Much of the day of the einherjar is spent eating meat from the ever-regenerating boar Saehrimnir, drinking mead that flows continuously from the udder of the goat Heidrun, and fighting each other to the death. Each morning the dead return to life and the routine starts again.

Along with numerous lesser buildings and dwellings, there are 12 great halls in Asgard that house the Aesir and some of the Vanir. The most important apart from Gladsheim and Folkvangr are *Breidablik* (Gleaming Far and Wide), the home of Baldur, called the Peace Stead; *Bilskinir* (Winding House), Thor's manse; *Himingjorg* (Mount of Heaven), Heimdall's home; *Fensalir* (Hall of Mists), Frigga's dwelling; *Glitnir* (Radiant Place), the hall of Forseti; *Noatun* (Ship Yard), Njord's hall; *Ydalir* (Yew Dales), abode of Ullr; and *Sokkvabekk* (Sunken Bank), home of Saga, goddess of battles and storytellers.

Surrounding Asgard is a great wall, impregnable by the enemies of the Aesir, the





giants. Connecting Asgard to Midgard is **Bifröst** (Quivering Roadway), mundanely known as the rainbow, a bridge that can only be traversed by the gods and their steeds (with Thor dismounting to walk across, as his thunderous chariot might otherwise destroy the bridge).

## Iarnwood

In the easternmost extremes of Norse Arcadia is the foul and twisted forest known as Iarnwood (Iron Wood). Within the forest, from which no normal animals are ever seen to emerge, live trolls, orms, and other fantastic beasts. In the heart of the forest lives a hag of great age who is said to own the wolves Skoll and Hati who chase the sun and the moon across the sky. The hag is the mother of Hela, Jörmungandr, and Fenrir by way of her liaison with Loki.



## Jotunheim

Jotunheim is the fearsome land of the giants, situated some distance east of Asgard. While giants in general can run the gamut from nice to nasty, the giants who founded countries in this hostile mountainous region had been exiled from other giant kingdoms dotted around Norse Arcadia for atrocious acts of violence and cruelty. Still, beauty can exist even within the heart of ugliness, and many of the gods took beautiful Jotunheim giantesses as brides. Thor regularly travels here to test his strength.

## Muspellheim

In the furthest southern reaches of Norse Arcadia lies the fiery land of Muspellheim, home to a race of fire giants. Prophecy states

that, at the end of time, the fire giants will swarm across Midgard, burning all as they go, and that their entrance into Asgard will shatter Bifrost, signaling the end of the Norse world, Ragnarök.

The fringes of this land are intolerably hot and dangerous to man, and as one advances into the land the fires and other hazards become fiercer until even the gods cannot survive it. A giant with a flaming sword is always present at the borders of Muspellheim to meet interlopers, no matter how they have enter the realm.

## Myrkwood

In southern Norse Arcadia lies the great, dark forest known as Myrkwood. Within its depths live giant spiders, spidermen, swan maidens, and dark elves. In drinking halls at night, skalds tell tales of the horrors that lie in wait for unwary travelers or over-brave adventurers.

## Nifleheim

Nifleheim is a cold and desolate land at the northern fringes of Norse Arcadia, ruled by Hela, a half-living, half-dead daughter of Loki. Those dead souls not claimed by Odin or Freyja are sent here for eternity. Condemned here automatically are the wicked (murderers, oath-breakers), and those who die of old age or disease. (A third resting place for the dead was the undersea realm of Ran, goddess of the violent seas, where dwelt all those who drowned.)

The entrance to Nifleheim is through the *Gnipahellir* (Cliff Cave), which is guarded by Garm, Hela's faithful hound, whose task is not to stop mortal's from entering, but to stop the dead from escaping. A long and winding tunnel leads from the cave down to the *Nastrand* (Beach of Corpses), a cold, bleak expanse of sand made from the powdered bones of the nameless dead who reside in the realm. Impossibly tall black cliffs flank the beach.

Hela's domain within Nifleheim is the hall *Eljudnir* (Damp with Sleet), with walls woven of snakes and poison dripping from the roof. Within are her two servants, Ganglati (a man) and Ganglot (a woman); both names mean Slow-Moving.

## Outer Ocean

Far to the west of the inhabited lands of Norse Arcadia lies the great Outer Ocean. It was into here that Odin threw Loki's offspring Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent. Food was so plentiful in the ocean that the serpent grew to such a size that it encircled the world, its back rising out of the water in humps to form a ring of islands around the ocean, its mouth clamped onto its own tail to complete the circle. No mortal sailor in his right mind enters these waters.





## Svartalfheim

This is home to the **svartalfar** (dark elves), and is also known as Nithavellir (Home of the Dwarves). The elves who inhabit this land guard its location zealously and no man has ever visited it to tell of its landscape or inhabitants. Rumor places it near Alfheim, home of the svartalfar's eternal enemies. Whereas the light elves shun mankind, the svartalfar take great delight in making men's lives miserable, and can often be found lurking in abandoned buildings or in mountain passes.

## Trollheim

South of Jotunheim lie the Trollheim Mountains, the breeding ground for the fierce race of trolls that terrorize rural villages



throughout Midgard. While not all trolls are evil or destructive, the vast majority enjoy nothing better than eating travelers and their horses. Thor often visits Trollheim to fight these foul beasts, but sane men give the area a wide berth.

## Yggdrasil, the World Tree

Yggdrasil is the World Tree, a primeval ash with roots and branches that touch all worlds. In Nifleheim a dragon, *Nidhogg* (Striker that Destroys) gnaws at an exposed root.

Under the root in Jotunheim is Mimir's Well, the waters of which give wisdom. The severed head of the giant Mimir guards the well and none may drink from the water without first making a personal sacrifice. It was here that Odin sacrificed his eye for the right to drink.

The third great root runs under Asgard, and Wyrd's Brook (the stream of Fate) runs nearby. Beside this stream is the home of the Norns: Urd (Past), Verdandi (Present), and Skuld (Future), who are responsible for watering Yggdrasil's roots and for determining the fate of every man born. The Norns never speak to each other but each instinctively knows what each of the others are thinking. One is sad, one is happy, and the other indifferent, and these personalities reflect the destinies they weave for men.

Four harts, Dain, Davalin, Durathor, and Duneyr, nibble Yggdrasil's buds. Where they do, its bark is rotting. An eagle named Hraesvelgr (Corpse-Eater), who is wise in many things, lives in the top-most branches and sees all that occurs in the world. The flapping of his wings causes the world's winds. On its head sits a hawk known as Vethrfolnir (Weather-Bleached) who sees what the eagle misses. A squirrel named Rata-Tosk (Gnaw Tooth) runs between the dragon and the eagle, spreading discord by telling each what the other has said about him.

It was from the trunk of Yggdrasil that Odin was hanged in order to gain the secret of the runes.

# Chapter 3

## Norse Society & Culture

### Rig the Walker

*Ages after the world's creation, one of the gods, Heimdall, in the guise of the mortal Rig the Walker, descended to Midgard and traveled among the people he found there. The first he discovered were a married couple who lived in a small, rude hut. Nine months after Heimdall left, they had a son whom they named Thrael (thrall: slave). Their son had a stooped back, hairy arms, and a weathered face. One day a woman walked to their house and they married. Her name was Thir (servant), and their children were destined for a life of labor and menial work.*

*Next, Heimdall encountered a well-dressed couple who lived in a modest hall. Once again, nine months after Heimdall left they had a son, whom they named Karl (carl: freeman). He had a good complexion, and was gifted with the ability to tame oxen and make houses. His bride, Snör, traveled to his house on a cart.*

*Finally, Heimdall visited the home of a wealthy couple living in an opulent hall. Their son was namedarl (jarl: earl), and was fair in appearance, with fierce eyes. He became a great warrior and owned much land, upon which he hunted and swam. He was also a generous man and gave many gifts away. His wife, Erna, was slender, with beautifully white skin. The last of their children was named Konrungr (konung: king).*

### Social Class

Norse society was split into four distinct classes: thrall, carl, jarl, and the konung. A Norseman or woman was born into a class, and, with rare exceptions, died in that same class, having lived a life constrained by class expectations and responsibilities.

### Thralls

The Norse practiced slavery, although never to the extent of the Romans at the height of the Empire. In many cases, thralls were captured in Viking raids in the early part of the Viking Age. Their descendants were born into slavery and so it continued for centuries. Yet foreigners were not the only thralls in Scandinavia; certain crimes were punishable by the guilty party being sold into slavery.

It is likely that, in the early years of Viking expansion, many raids were conducted purely to gain thralls. As the years passed and the Norse turned from raiding to trading, thralls were often used not only as cargo handlers but as a tradable commodity. Ibn Fadlan, an Arab traveler who reached Denmark, commented that slave women were used sexually on ships during long voyages.

The Roman Catholic Church was opposed to slavery, especially when Christians





were the slaves of Christians and, upon conversion, many pagan chieftains freed their Christian thralls as an act of piety and humbleness before God. Although the Church couldn't stamp out slavery, in later periods the trade in Christian slaves became a crime.

Wealthy landowners and noblemen had many slaves to work their land, and even the smallest free hold had at least one thrall to perform menial chores. Heavy labor was the standard duty of most farm thralls; they herded cattle, tended pigs, cut wood, spread manure on fields, and were responsible for harvesting crops. Female slaves (*ambatt*) were responsible for churning milk, milking cows, and cooking meals for the landowners. Thralls with valued skills, such as carpenters and metalworkers, enjoyed a better life, as did beautiful women, who were often kept purely for show.



In early Viking history, a thrall was little more valuable than a cow, and if one was killed the owner expected compensation equal to the slave's value at the time. No vengeance was ever carried out on behalf of a thrall, even a valued one. No thrall owned land, nor could they leave property to their children, although certain personal possessions could be passed down.

As the centuries passed, and as the Church's influence grew, thralls gained limited protections and rights. A man who killed a thrall in Christian Scandinavia could be found guilty of murder, as if he had killed a carl. A thrall could even expect compensation if he was injured, although his master kept the largest portion for himself. Thralls could even own property, although it never amounted to more than a small farm and some livestock. They could conduct trade as well, buying and selling wares as a carl would. But for all the improvements in the life of thralls under Christian rule, their lives were still hard, and there was no great likelihood of being freed.

In rare circumstances, a thrall was buried with his master. Usually the thrall had little choice about this, and was ritually slain before being buried. In the Christian era, this custom almost ceased, although a few areas of Scandinavia still practiced thrall burials. A male could be buried with a male or female slave, as could a woman; the choice seems to have been a personal one rather than a religious one.

Thralls could be given their freedom outright by their masters, or by being permitted to work elsewhere (in addition to their normal duties) to earn money in order to buy their freedom. A freed slave was not accorded the rights of a carl, but his lot in life was much improved. By law, he was entitled to half of any inheritance due him, and received half of any compensation awarded him for wrongdoings, his former master being entitled to the remaining half.

In some areas a freed thrall could become a carl after living in the area for many years, while other areas only gave the status of carl to his children or his children's children.

# Carls

The carls, or free men, formed the largest class in Norse society. Unlike serfs in other European countries, carls were truly free: they owned their land outright and, in theory if not in practice, owed allegiance to no one. They were afforded full protection under the law, although wealthier carls could afford a better degree of protection.

Many were farmers who owned their own land, others were smiths, warriors, merchants, skalds, and craftsmen. The **tinglith** or **huscarl** (housecarls) were free men who formed a nobleman's personal bodyguard and the core of his army.

In general, a carl owed his greatest loyalty to his family, especially his immediate family, including parents, grandparents, children, and siblings. Cousins and more distant relatives weren't always included in the list of close family, although they were expected to help pay any fines that might be imposed on a family member. Relatives beyond second cousin were only rarely called upon for assistance.

Most carls were allied to individual noblemen, paying rent and providing armed service when called for, in exchange for aid in legal cases and protection if their lands were threatened. A carl was entitled to change his allegiance to another lord, but they rarely did so as recriminations were likely.

Carls were legally entitled to carry weapons, although the law restricted the circumstances under which they could be used. Carls were legally obligated to answer their king's call to arms and had to obey his orders.

A carl was allowed to express his views at **Things**, public meetings that helped decide legal matters in various regions. Those carls who had more wealth and powerful allies had control over the votes of others and could pressure weaker groups into submission. Many carls sought to achieve administrative posts in order to increase their social standing.

Carls could obtain wealth in several different ways. Aside from piracy and raiding, which were all but forgotten in the Christian

era, a carl could trade, emigrate to new territories where there was available land, or join a nobleman's household.

A carl who had riches from sources other than land-owning was called a **haul**. The term was applied arbitrarily, and carls or bönder could also be considered hauld if they were wealthy enough.

The **bönder** (singular: bönde), farmers who owned large tracts of land, were semi-independent of noble authority. Their riches and land-holdings could equal those of landed noblemen, and they were often powerful enough to resist measures taken against them by these nobles. Although most carls owned farms, bönder possessed so many that they leased them to other carls. Both bönder and haulds enjoyed more freedoms than other carls, and while some did ally themselves with kings or noblemen, it was because of the political benefits of the move, not some legal necessity.



# Nobles

There were two types of noblemen in Scandinavia: **hersar** (singular: hersir) or landed men, and jarls, a term that became "earl" in English when adopted by that country.

Hersar received their authority from their king, as well as a land grant. The position was not technically hereditary: the inheritance of the title came only upon the agreement of the king. Whoever was awarded the title after the death of the original holder, whether son or complete stranger, was also awarded a land grant. Normally, this was the same land the hersir already owned, thus re-confirming the title, but favored inheritors could receive additional land grants, increasing their holdings. While the king gave a hersir his power, he could not take it away.

The hersar were expected to lead men in battle, collect tributes due the konung (including the guest tax when a king visited the region), enforce his royal decrees, and influence the choosing of local lawspeakers.



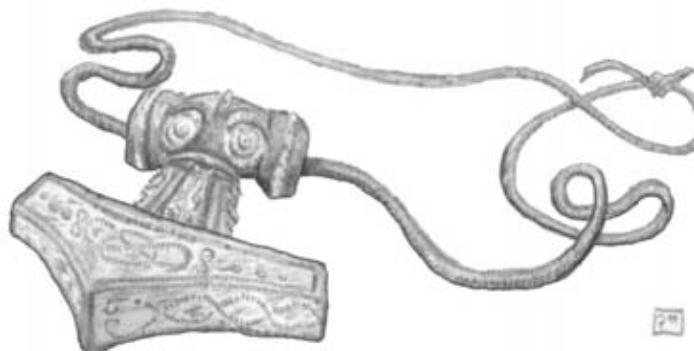
Whereas hersar were local powers, jarls were second only in power to kings. They wielded great power and authority, and controlled huge geographical areas. In the Viking Age, many jarls were independent of kings, but in Christian times they fell increasingly under royal power, as much for their own welfare as out of loyalty to the crown.

Jarls kept large households and ruled large districts. They had dozens of huscarls at their disposal and could, in times of need, raise large armies from among their dependents. Indeed, they were sworn to protect those who had sworn allegiance to them. Jarls were rarely granted control of cities or towns, as these lucrative tax sources were reserved for the king and his favorites.

Retainers who left their families to permanently live with and work for a noble become part of the lord's **hird** (household staff, or, quite literally, "herd"); see page 31.

At the height of the Viking Age, Norway had around 100 hersar and 16 jarls. Sweden had similar numbers and Denmark, being far smaller than the other Scandinavian countries, although it had the greatest population, had much fewer. The colonies of Orkney and the Isle of Man had only a single jarl each, and perhaps a dozen hersar. On the Isle of Man, the jarl titled himself king and had the full authority of the position. The Shetlands were ruled by a few hersar and a single jarl.

When Iceland was settled no noble families went there, so instead a council of 36 gothar was chosen to act as rulers and emissaries for the people. This tradition remained in force even after Christianity reached the island.



## Konungr

The konungr, or kings, were powerful men but their positions weren't always secure. The title was hereditary but was not always passed to the eldest son; when a king died, his male offspring met to decide who would become the next sovereign. Any claimant to the throne had to be closely descended from a king. A losing claimant was often forced into exile. In some cases, no single person could be decided upon and the kingdom was split under dual rulership. This result, although fairly common, was not always popular and civil war often ensued. Once declared, the king still had to be recognized by the Things around the country, and sometimes rival claims were supported by different provinces.

Denmark was the first Scandinavian country to be unified under a single king in the dim past, followed, in 890, by Norway under Harald Finehair; Sweden was the last to unify, in 994 under Olaf Skottkonung, although it would be centuries before the claims of the many rival minor kings were settled.

Upon the Church's entry into Scandinavian politics insistence was made that illegitimate sons could not inherit the throne. This was only slowly adopted however, and by 1220 it is not yet a law in any Scandinavian country. The Church was not always neutral in its support of claimants and used the ceremony of coronation to strengthen one rival's claim over another. Likewise, Church officials could hinder a claimant by refusing to perform the coronation ritual, which sometimes resulted in a Scandinavian king being crowned by a German or English archbishop.

### *The Life of a King*

Konungr kept great wealth around them and had many skalds to sing their praises. These songs were not hollow boasts, for a king was expected to lead his men from the

front in battle, often leading to short-lived kings.

Upon death, a king hoped to go to Valhalla and spend eternity with men of similar social status. In pagan times, kings were buried in large mounds along with ornately carved weapons and precious artifacts. Many mounds were warded with magical traps and in some cases a **hagbui** (grave undead; see page 121) was placed within the mound.

In Christian times, kings were no longer protected by hagbui; the sanctity of a Christian burial was considered sufficient. A burial mound full of grave goods was replaced by a simple interment, followed by the erection of a rune-carved memorial stone in the graveyard, at a prominent location (such as a bridge or crossroads), or as part of the walls of a church.

A king was considered the supreme military commander of his country, charged with protecting all his subjects. He was also head of state, and negotiated treaties and maintained relations with other countries. Many important decisions were made at the *Things*, but the king always had the final word.

One power that was completely in the king's hands was that of raising armies in times of invasion. Kings and lesser nobles possessed personal armies, collectively known as **liths**, bound together by mutual loyalty to their rulers. During wars, the king's lith would form the heart of the army, supplemented by levies from the affected areas.

The king's trusted advisors were usually chosen from the lith. A king's advisors were usually few in number, and thus had greater influence on his decisions. They were allowed to act as his emissaries in foreign countries, and often spoke with his authority at official functions.

Scandinavian kings had no official royal palaces; they spent their time traveling between the numerous estates they controlled, collecting tribute and keeping an eye on local rulers. Konungr expected to be feted at the homes of local rulers (a guest tax collected by the local hersir from the surrounding countryside paying for the festivities), and it was part of their responsibility to guarantee

the king's comfort and safety within the lands he'd granted them.

A king's income came from a wide variety of sources: from the taxes levied on goods, the revenue from minted coins (kings taxed each coin), and through raiding. Although piracy was officially a thing of the past in Christian Scandinavia, Norse ships in the Mediterranean were often given or sold licenses to raid Saracen vessels.

## The Hird

Although not a social class per se, the hird was an important part of Norse culture. The hird was the household staff of a jarl or king, and acted as the administrators and bureaucracy of a Scandinavian kingdom. The hird had many roles, its members performing such tasks as supervising stewards of estates, ensuring that dues and taxes were collected, seeing that districts maintained local roads and bridges, publishing new laws and ensuring that they were obeyed, confiscating the property of outlaws, and mobilizing levies during war. Not all of the hird held positions vital to the running of the country; some held the posts of marshal or butler, while others were responsible for holding the lights at ceremonies. Often the real work behind these titles was performed by thralls.

While many members of the hird traveled with the king, others held permanent posts in a district. Those with permanent posts could appoint assistants, known as *lensmenn*. Normally both the hird and lensmenn were chosen from leading families; lensmenn from wealthy families of a given district, and hirdsmenn from the wealthiest families in the land. In the Christian era, bishops were often found in the hirds of kings.

The king was always in contact with his hird via messengers, although once per year, normally at Yuletide, the entire hird gathered at the lord's hall. New members could be appointed at any time by the king or jarl, but the hird could veto the decision.





# Personal Virtues

A number of personality traits can be called typical of the average Norseman, although individual Norsemen were likely to be as variable in these respects as any other men.

## Honor

*Cattle die, kindred die,  
Every man is mortal;  
But the good name never dies  
Of one who has done well.  
Cattle die, kindred die,  
Every man is mortal;  
But I know one thing that never dies:  
The glory of the great dead.*

— from the *Havamal*



A man's deeds and his good name were his life. A Norseman who gave his word was expected to keep it. Oathbreakers and liars were particularly disliked by the Norse, and people who demonstrated such traits were shown little respect. Oathbreakers were frequently the subject of insults and physical attacks, and were likely to be outlawed for life. Honor could be gained as well as lost, but when a man finally left the mortal world, his name would endure if he had been honorable.

## Loyalty

A Norseman's loyalties were to his family and clan, then his local lord, and finally to the king of his country. The highest form of loyalty a man could display was to swear obedience to his lord and become a huscarl. In return for a roof over his head, food, and gifts, the huscarl swore to do anything his lord asked, even to die for him.

## Courage

The archetypal Viking was a fierce and courageous man, willing to fight any fair fight without flinching, and even to display his courage by making dangerous excursions into uncharted waters.

## Hospitality

*Fire is needed by the newcomer  
Whose knees are frozen numb;  
Meat and clean linen a man needs  
Who has fared across the fells.  
Water, too, that he may wash before eating,  
Handcloths and a hearty welcome,  
Courteous words, then courteous silence  
That he may tell his tale.*

— From the *Havamal*

The Vikings were far from welcome in the countries of northern Europe, but in their own countries they greatly respected strangers

who came to their doors. A traveler who arrived at a Norseman's house could reasonably expect to be greeted cordially and invited in for food and shelter. The safety of the guest was also the host's responsibility. The visitor had certain obligations himself; he was expected to tell his host if he was an outlaw or was involved in a blood feud, and he was to leave any weapons at the door, although he could carry a knife to eat with.

A host wasn't supposed to ask his guest the reason for his travels, but tradition dictated that the guest would divulge this on his own during the meal, unless he had something to hide.

*The tactful guest will take his leave  
Early, not linger long:  
He starts to stink  
Who outstays his welcome  
In a hall that is not his own.*

— From the *Havamal*

A guest was generally entitled to stay with his host for as long as he wished, but protocol dictated that he should not remain for too long, three days being an acceptable maximum, lest he offend his host's generosity.

## Insults and Boasts

Among the Norse, often an insult caused more harm than a sword blow. Minor barbs were treated with some degree of leniency, but to be accused of treachery to one's lord, cowardice, dishonor, or being *argr* (being the passive partner in a homosexual relationship, implying passivity in other realms, such as combat) often led to bloodshed. Such insults usually couldn't be settled peacefully at Things.

The proud retelling of one's own deeds was a normal form of introduction, but idle boasts and lies were not tolerated by the Norse. Exaggeration was generally accepted so long as the speaker did not go to far. Great respect could be gained by boasting in the proper circumstances, such as when meeting a jarl, and skalds sang the praises of the greatest heroes, so spreading their renown.

## The Thing

The Norse had a sophisticated legal process, that changed very little over the centuries. The law courts were held at specially consecrated areas known as Things. Most Things occurred around large outcroppings of rock upon which the assembled crowds could sit and talk. Because of the sacred nature of the Thing no weapons (besides eating knives) were allowed within its precincts.

The Thing was not a permanent assembly; it met at certain times of the year, often in conjunction with holy days of the pagan calendar, and all carls within the area were free to attend and make their voices heard. Each district had a local Thing, provinces (three in Denmark, four in Iceland, five in Norway, 16 in Sweden) had larger Landthings, while Iceland and Greenland were small enough in population to each have a national Allthing that was convened annually. The Landthing had the power to change laws, and while a king could influence the assembly, kings were elected and ruled by consent, and thus if a king wanted to alter existing laws or rights, he needed to court the powerful men in each Landthing throughout the country. As Christianity (and its support of strong rulers who weren't beholden to the people) grew in strength in the Northlands, the Landthings grew weaker.

The Things were semi-democratic assemblies that could pass laws and make judgements on matters within their districts. A man from a different district was free to attend a Thing in another area if he had a grievance against an individual or family who dwelt there. Carls were very proud of their independent status, and while hersar and jarls could attend, they were not allowed to dominate the proceedings unless they had specific business there.

The leader of a Thing was known as the Lawspeaker and he was elected by the carls in attendance. His task was to make sure that the laws were made known to the assembly at the start of the Thing and that the proceedings were in accordance with those laws. The Lawspeaker was expected to remember at least one third of the laws of the country.





While officially, the position held little weight outside of the Thing, especially as a new Lawspeaker could be elected at each gathering, in practice certain respected men would be elected Lawspeaker repeatedly, gaining a certain amount of prestige throughout the community even away from the Things.

Cases that were heard at the Thing ranged from inheritance claims, through to murder, theft, and rape. Divorces, although possible without resorting to a Thing, were often announced there, mainly to quickly settle the division of property and to let others in the district know what had happened. Women couldn't bring cases before the Thing, nor could they vote, although male representatives, family members or friends, could speak for them.

Cases were decided by a jury of community members who were versed in the laws of the land. Both sides of a case presented arguments to the jury and also produced character wit-

nesses. Both sides used persuasion and negotiation as well as facts to convince the jury that their story was true, and witnesses were rarely cross-examined. Reputation and power could weigh as heavily as truth in a decision.

The size of the jury depended on the seriousness of the matter to be discussed: a typical theft case might only involve three jury members, while a case of treason could call for 24 or even 36 jurors.

The jury's job was to help both parties reach an agreement as to what a suitable punishment would be. Minor offenses, theft, or insults could be settled by small fines, but serious offenses against other men were often punished by outlawing the guilty party. Treason was punishable by death.

If a man was killed, his family would be entitled to compensation called **weregeld** (man-price). The weregeld was the value placed on a man's life based on his social class, influence, and holdings.



## Holmganga

Another way of settling an issue, before it was outlawed by the Church, was the **holmganga** (island-promenade), a lawful duel that took place on a small island or a secluded inland place.

Any weapons were allowed, but the most common were sword and shield. A square two paces on a side was marked with a white cloth and ash posts were used to mark corners.

Both men entered the square and fought until blood was first spilled on the cloth, or a combatant placed a foot out of bounds, in which case the unblooded man or the man still within would be declared victorious. A man who moved both feet outside of the square was treated as if he had fled like a coward. Women, the old, and the infirm were allowed to appoint champions to fight in their places, although tradition decreed that the champion had to be a family member.

A Norseman outlawed by the Thing could be banished for a period of from three years to life. He was given enough time to return home to collect his belongings and find a ship that would take him to another district or country (depending on the jurisdiction of the Thing). An outlaw discovered in the area after that time could be slain without incurring a weregeld obligation, and retribution from the outlaw's family was itself illegal.

Out-of-court settlements were legal in Scandinavia, and were often preferred to waiting until the next Thing would sit. In such cases, one party hired a negotiator to speak to the other party. The negotiator needed to be an influential man, and it also helped if he was friendly with the other party as this eased the process along. The injured

party was quite within its rights to refuse to settle, but doing so often resulted in blood feuds between the families involved.

Once a case was settled, a party refusing to pay fines or weregeld was branded an outlaw.

The Thing normally lasted for several days and was an excuse for other festivities. A market often built up around the Thing and all manner of goods were available, especially food and drink. In pagan times an animal would be sacrificed to mark the opening of the Thing, but Christian priests eventually banned that practice. The Thing was often the only time that clans got to meet and talk, but it was also a time to encounter old enemies, and the time was often fraught with tension if warring families turned up. Marriages were often arranged at a Thing and many young girls could be found at their father's sides for the purpose. Sporting events were also common at Things.



## Weregeld

A man's weregeld was directly related to his social class. The table below shows approximate weregeld values with 1 mark equivalent to 240 silver pfennings. Weregelds for individuals within a given class were sometimes negotiable.

### Status

Konung (king)	100 marks
Jarl (earl)	60 marks
Hersar (noble)	40 marks
Gothi (chieftain)	20 marks
Bryti (steward)	16 marks
Landsmathr (commander)	8 marks
Odalsböndi (hereditary landowner)	6 marks
Smithr (craftsman)	6 marks
Böndi (landowner)	4 marks
Carl (free farmer)	4 marks
Leysingi (freed slave)	2 marks
Thrall (slave)	what the owner paid

### Weregeld

A married woman or widow had a weregeld equal to her husband's, while unmarried women were worth half their father's value.



## Recreation

The Norse loved sports, and men and boys often relaxed by participating in sporting events. All of these sports had lessons to teach, mainly concerning the art of warfare.

### Glima Wrestling

Wrestling was a popular sport and all classes of society practiced it. Women also took part before the advent of Christianity, although only against other women. At the Thing, watching wrestling contests was a source of great amusement. Glima wrestling was not so much a contest of strength as of technique and balance; the idea was to bring an opponent to the floor, often by using quick, sudden moves and tricks with the feet.

Boys began instruction in wrestling around age 8, and continued until old age prohibited their participation. Competitions



were arranged between different districts and the events were split into different classes based on weight and skill.

### Archery

Archery was used in combat, hunting, and sport. Typical contests involved archers firing at stationary butts at various ranges. In battle there were no specifically-tasked archers who stayed in that role throughout a battle; those with bows and arrows loosed a few shafts before the two sides closed to hand-to-hand range, and then joined in the melee with hand weapons.

### Javelin Throwing

Practice with the javelin began at an early age and was deemed vital to a boy's education. Contests were held at Things in which distance and accuracy were both judged. In battle, javelins were often launched before the main armies clashed. Two things were important when throwing a javelin: the ability to hit a target, and the ability to throw the javelin over the thrower's own lines. In order to maximize effectiveness, Norsemen trained to be able to throw with either arm.

### Swimming

Living so intimately with the sea, Scandinavians found swimming to be a normal part of life. Children learned to swim at early ages and some carried weights on their backs to strengthen their strokes. Swimming competitions were very popular, especially between crewmen on ships.

Three common types of swimming contest were water wrestling, where the idea was to keep an opponent's head under water until he surrendered; distance swimming, where the swimmers swam out to sea, the winner being the last one to turn back to shore; and regular swimming races.

## Knattleikr

Knattleikr (“ball game”) was a sport played by both adults and children. The game involved one team hitting a wooden ball with a bat, the other team trying to catch it, and a full-contact struggle for the ball thereafter.

## Storytelling

Instead of committing history and stories to writing, the pre-Christian Norse made use of skalds, poets and taletellers who kept alive the deeds of men and gods in their songs and stories. Skalds made use of mnemonics to remember lengthy stories, and while folk tales changed over the years as memories dulled, the skaldic verses remained accurate to the original. Skalds also made use of *kenning*s, poetic and inspiring alternatives for a word. For instance, warriors were referred to as “feeders of ravens,” gold as “Sif’s hair” (a reference to the story of Loki procuring a golden wig for Sif to replace the hair he had burned in a prank), and poetry as “dwarf’s drink” for example. The words produced subsidiary mental images in the minds of listener and teller, enhancing the enjoyment of the story, and making it easier to remember for both.

Many kings and rulers kept skalds at their courts who often held positions of great trust and respect. Amongst their duties was the singing of the king’s praises and keeping his memory alive after death. Improvisation was a valued gift, as a skald would often be present at great events to record the deed.

Around fires in darkened great halls skalds told their stories, keeping alive deeds and legends. At Things they recounted similar stories, often recalling sections of the law and giving examples based on true cases.

## Family and the Clan

Many Norse settlements were comprised of nothing more than small villages or farmsteads, often separated from their neighbors by leagues of rough terrain. As a result, Norsemen had closer loyalties to family and clan than to jarl, konung, or country.

Until the arrival of Christianity, illegitimate children were accepted as part of the family proper and were given full rights to inherit land and titles.

Clans were groups of families tied together by blood or by marriage, forming an extended family unit. A crime committed by a single clan member cast shame on every clan member, no matter how tenuous the relationship between them.

The clan had some highly useful benefits. If a *were*geld (see page 35) had to be paid, every clan member was expected to contribute to the sum. The exact amount owed by any family member was governed by a sys-

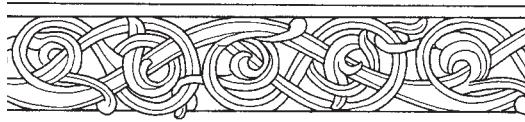


## The Origin of Poetry

It is said that poetry, like so many other things, was a gift from the gods. Legend says that when the Aesir and Vanir declared a truce after their war both sides spat into a cauldron. From this a man, Kvasir, was formed and was so wise that there was no question he could not answer.

He traveled across the world to teach wisdom and came upon the abode of two dwarves, Fjalar and Galar. They invited him into their house, saying they wished to speak in private, and then slew him, pouring his blood into two pots and a kettle. They mixed honey with his blood and created mead.

When eventually asked, the dwarves lied to the gods and told them that Kvasir had suddenly died because he knew that there was no one who could compete with him. Odin eventually acquired the mead and gave it to mankind. According to legend, whoever drinks mead gains the power of poetry.





tem of shares: the murderer paid the largest share to the victim's immediate heirs, his brothers paid a brother's share to the victim's brothers, and so on. Arguments over who should pay what were common, and in some cases led to bad blood between families within clans. If a clan member was murdered and vengeance was sought the entire clan was expected to help in whatever way it could. The men often formed posses to find and dispatch their own justice to the offender before he could be brought before the Thing. A large clan could dominate a local Thing and would become a separate power unto itself, even rivalling that of a jarl or konung.

## The Blood Feud

Sometimes a dispute between two individuals or families escalated into a blood feud — a rivalry that led to looting, bloodshed, and even murder.

Tradition provided a set of unwritten rules governing blood feuds. In a few rare cases entire clans were obliterated through blood feuds, as they could last for generations, since each generation was expected to continue the feud until it was settled. Most blood feuds eventually ended when one side accepted a weregeld offer, while others died down to sporadic assaults and public insults (which sometimes rekindled old fires).

Woman and children were generally exempt from blood feuds, being unable to defend themselves against armed men, and the practice was officially banned by both pagan and Christian authorities.

## Women in Norse Society

The Norse were a gregarious people and lived in large family groups, with parents, grandparents, wife, and children all sharing a common longhouse. While the man of the family was responsible for maintaining the farm, his wife was responsible for the storage

of the food, especially during the harsh winters, and was also expected to know about medicinal herbs and chirurgy. When the man went away his wife ran the farm, and some became very powerful through their ability to manage land and businesses. Whereas a man was known for his brave deeds, a woman was praised for her ability to run a good home; that a woman wore the keys to the food chests was a show of the power she held within her household.

Off the farm on which they lived women has few responsibilities, and they were forbidden to carry weapons, or to become merchants or crafters. Although there was no law against it, only one woman, Gunborga, ever became a vitki.

Women were accorded protection under the law: Although they could not originate lawsuits at a Thing, they could have a man, relative or not, speak for them. A single woman's class was the same as her father's, while a married woman was in the same class as her husband, but even a woman classed as a jarl or konungr didn't have the power that went with the title, although some strong women did wield considerable power in the name of a male relative (such as a son of high rank during his minority).

When Christianity reached Scandinavia it attracted many female followers. Mary, mother of Christ, and other female saints took the place of the pagan goddesses in a woman's prayers.

Sexual crimes, committed by either a man or woman, were harshly punished. In 11th century Denmark, Adam of Bremen remarked that a man was killed and a woman sold into slavery for sex crimes, and the rape of virgins was a capital offence and quickly punished. Although adultery was a crime, a man could have relations with mistresses before the Christian era as long as the liaisons were openly acknowledged and with single women; secret affairs and affairs with married women were forbidden.

In pagan Scandinavia, unwanted children were left in the wilderness to die. The Church banned this practice, except in the case of deformed babies, but the old custom

was still carried out, especially in rural areas where the hold of the Church was weak. Children were given toys that reflected the world into which they would grow: toy ships and weapons for boys, miniature looms and cooking utensils for girls. Childhood ended early in the Norse lands, and from an early age children were taught skills which would be useful to them in their adult life.

## Marriage

A Norse girl could expect to marry between the ages of 12 and 15. Marriage was a joining of two families, often for political or financial reasons, and the young girl was given little choice in who her husband was to be. From the day she married, she was expected to be able to run a household, and so much of a girl's youth was spent learning the domestic arts. After marriage, a woman retained her own name.

On the day of her marriage, a woman brought a dowry to her new house. A typical dowry contained practical items such as a spinning wheel or a loom. Women from wealthier families often brought silver or gold, and the dowry of women from rich families included livestock or land. Throughout her married life the dowry remained the property of the woman, never becoming part of her husband's possessions. Her children, though, could inherit the dowry as part of their inheritances, and if they died childless, that property would then revert back to their father as the next of kin (called "reverse inheritance").

A certain portion of the possessions a man brought into a marriage were his dower, and while his wife could not inherit this property on the husband's death except through reverse inheritance, in a divorce, the wife kept the dower and the dowry as long as she was found blameless in the matter. As with the dowry, the dower was negotiated between the families as the marriage contract was drawn up, and it usually included the

same mix of practical items and land as the dowry.

Although married into a new family, a woman remained part of her own family, and if her husband mistreated her or failed to provide for her, she could return to her parents, taking the dowry (and sometimes the dower) with her if she was not at fault.

Before the arrival of Christianity in Scandinavia, divorce simply required one party calling witnesses to his or her home and stating that he or she wished to divorce. Under Church law however, marriage was for life and divorce was expressly forbidden, unless incest could be proven, in which case the marriage was annulled as having been illegal in the first place.

The Church did not require that a couple be married on church grounds or by a priest in order to be recognized as a married couple; any permanent, monogamous, and consensual relationship could be accepted as a marriage with all of the rights and restrictions of a more formal bond. The Church tried to enforce the rule that illegitimate children could not inherit property or position, but with many Norwegian and Danish kings having been illegitimate themselves, this law was hard to enforce. As a matter of course, illegitimate children were allowed to inherit but only if they were acknowledged by their parents and only if the relationship was not defined as incestuous.



## Incest

Until 1215, the Church disallowed marriages between kin closer than seven degrees of relationship, a measure of consanguinity that would include sixth cousins, for example. A prohibition that extensive proved unworkable for obvious reasons, and in 1215 it was reduced to the fourth degree, with marriage to third cousins (which would still be invalid by this measure) permissible with special dispensation from the Church.



## Fostering

Fostering was designed to spread influence and tie families together. Two families exchanged sons and raised the fostered child as their own, although they still had allegiance to their real families. A fostered son could marry one of his foster parent's daughters, and often this provided for a strong marriage, as the couple already knew each other. There was often considerable deliberation and politicking behind fostering decisions, much like those surrounding arranged marriages.

In the Christian era, fostering was still a common practice, especially between noble families, as a means of keeping peace between neighboring countries.

## Naming

Scandinavians had no family names. Every child was given a first name only. Most added the suffix "sson" or "sdottir" to

## Typical Male Names

Aki, Alf, Alfgeir, Amundi, Ari, Armod, Arnfinn, Arnlaug, Arnor, Aslak, Bardi, Bergthor, Bersi, Bodvar, Bork, Botolf, Bjarni, Bjorn, Brand, Bui, Canute, Carl, Egil, Einar, Eindridi, Eirik, Eldgrim, Erlend, Eyjolf, Eystein, Eyvind, Finn, Finnbogi, Fridgeir, Gardi, Geir, Geirmund, Geirstein, Gest, Gizur, Glum, Grani, Grim, Gudmund, Gunnar, Gunnbjorn, Gunnlaug, Halfgrim, Hakon, Hall, Halldor, Harald, Harek, Hastein, Hauk, Havard, Hallfred, Halfdan, Hedin, Helgi, Herjolf, Hjalti, Hogni, Hord, Hrafn, Hring, Hroald, Hrut, Illugi, Ingi, Inghjald, Ingolf, Isleif, Ivar, Kalf, Kari, Karlsefni, Ketil, Kolbein, Knut, Kol, Lambi, Leif, Ljot, Ljotolf, Lodin, Odd, Ofeig, Ogmund, Olaf, Olvir, Onund, Otkel, Orm, Otrygg, Ottar, Ozur, Ragnar, Rognvald, Runolf, Sam, Sighvat, Sigurd, Sigtrygg, Sigmund, Skapti, Snorri, Solumund, Solvi, Starad, Stein, Steinkel, Steinþor, Strykar, Sturla, Sumarlidi, Svein, Thjodolf, Thjostolf, Thorarin, Thorbjorn, Thorbrand, Thord, Thorfinn, Thorgeir, Thorgest, Thorgils, Thorgrim, Thorhall, Thorkel, Thormod, Thorir, Thorstein, Thorvald, Thrand, Thrain, Tost, Ulf, Uni, Vagn, Valgard, Vandrad, Vestein, Vermund, Vigfus, Yngvar

## Typical Female Names

Alfdis, Arnorna, Asa, Asgerd, Asleif, Asta, Astrid, Aud, Bera, Bergljot, Bergthora, Dotta, Freydis, Gjarlaug, Gudrid, Grima, Grimhild, Groa, Gudrid, Gudrun, Gunnhild, Gyda, Halldis, Hallfrid, Hallgerd, Hallveig, Helga, Herdis, Hild, Hildigunn, Hlif, Hrefna, Hrodny, Ingisbjorg, Ingigerd, Ingirid, Ingunn, Jorunn, Katla, Ragna, Ragnhild, Rannveig, Saeunn, Sugrid, Svala, Thjodhild, Thora, Thorborg, Thordis, Thorfianna, Thorgerd, Thorgunna, Thorhalla, Thorhild, Thorkatla, Thorunn, Thurid, Thyra, Unn, Valgerd, Vigdis

their father's name and used that patronym as a surname, so Olaf, son of Ingvar, would be addressed as Olaf Ingvarsson and his sister Gerda as Gerda Ingvarsottir. In small communities this was normally enough differentiation, although in large towns confusion could still arise. Others were differentiated by their occupation. While the names of many of the gods could be part of a mortal's name, it should be noted that Odin, king of the gods, was not often used in personal names, whereas Thor's name was used with some frequency, even in women's names.

People of renown, or those who traveled to other parts of the Scandinavian world, sometimes added the place of their birth or fame to their name. Some Norsemen were best known by nicknames describing personality or physical traits. Not all nicknames were complimentary, and the person generally had little choice about the nickname given him by others.

# Daily Life

## The Home

The center of Norse family life on farms and in villages was the stead, a longhouse typically some 40 paces in length and 10 paces wide. It was constructed of wood or turf with a roof of shingle or thatch; stone buildings were a rarity among the Norse. Inside, the roof was supported by twin rows of wooden pillars from which weapons and tools were hung. The Scandinavians didn't use cupboards or closets, but kept their possessions in sturdy wooden chests, which served as chairs, and also allowed a person to quickly gather his valuables in the event of fire or attack. When traveling abroad a man had only to pick up his chest and he had everything he needed: clothes, small weapons,

jewelry, and treasured gifts. Food was often kept locked in chests at one end of the hall, and the mistress of the household carried the keys on her person.

The floor of the stead was dirt, covered with straw, and sometimes scented to mask unpleasant odors. In the center of the hall was a large stone-lined fire pit, used for cooking, heating, and illumination. Not every stead had a chimney hole, and the interior of most steads was filled with smoke. Wood and peat for the fire were kept indoors to keep them dry.

Along one long wall of the house, normally that wall opposite the door, was a wooden bench that extended for the length of the house. This area was used for eating and general seating, and also served as a sleeping platform. The master of the house and his wife had a section at one end of the platform, and they had a wooden bed which could be lifted and used as storage space. The other sleeping areas were generally wooden frames filled with sleeping furs. Brothers and





sisters generally shared a sleeping area until they reached puberty. It was not unusual in large families to find brothers sharing a single bed, and sisters another. The sleeping areas could be sectioned off with curtains if more privacy was desired.

Thralls either slept on the floor of their master's stead, or were given their own huts. These were cramped wooden or turf affairs with thatched roofs. They had little room for furniture, and even less for personal belongings.

A stead often had other buildings associated with it: barns for the animals, workshops, boat houses, saunas, fish-smoking huts, and grain stores.

## Cleanliness

When at home, the Norse took regular baths. Often these were little more than quick dips in nearby seas or rivers, but they also made great use of saunas — steam baths that had not been used in western Europe since the collapse of the Roman Empire.

At minimum, a sauna consisted of a small wooden hut containing a barrel of water. A thrall brought red-hot stones in and dropped them into the water. The resulting steam filled the room, and the temperature soon became high enough to make a naked man sweat. A soapstone (a smooth-textured stone soft enough to carve with knives when first quarried, but which then slowly hardened on exposure to air) was used to remove the sweat and with it the top layer of skin and dirt.

Large Scandinavian steads had associated saunas. In small communities there could be communal saunas. With the coming of Christianity, the stigma of nakedness stopped men and women from sharing saunas at the same time.

Men often wore beards and these needed regular trimming to stop them becoming unkempt. A man with a fully-grown beard could use scissors to keep it neat, but those who had no wish to cultivate facial hair rubbed a soapstone over their faces each morning to remove the stubble. Beardlessness came with a stigma of youth among warriors

during the Viking Age, but this opinion was less common in Christian Scandinavia.

In Scandinavia, garbage heaps, often found outside of windows in other European countries, were located away from the main houses and placed downwind so that no smells invaded the home. Likewise, the latrine was often a separate building, with a large bowl buried in the ground. When it was full, thralls disposed of the contents in a pit, which was then back-filled.

Clothes were regularly washed in running streams or rivers, and pairs of rocks were used to rub the clothes together. Soapstone was sometimes used on delicate fabrics or difficult-to-remove stains.

## Food

A wide variety of foodstuffs was available for consumption in the Norse lands, ranging from meat and dairy products to home-grown vegetables and fruit. The Norse normally ate twice a day: once in the morning, some two hours after work has begun, and after the working day had ended.

The Norsemen enjoyed several different alcoholic beverages. Beer was extremely common and, like other European beers, it came in a range of strengths: the strongest generally reserved for nobles, and the weakest for thralls. A wealthy family often hired a professional brewer to make beer for them, and a good brewer could gain a reputation for his skill. Mead was a drink made from fermented honey, and it was both sweet and potent. Carls as well as nobles could often afford to brew mead, and it was drunk almost as often as beer, although not in such great quantities. Björr was a form of wine made from fermented fruit. It was generally reserved for special occasions, as its production was both lengthy and delicate — not every brewer could produce good björr. Wine was produced by the Norse, although wines from France, Germany, and other parts of Europe were regularly imported by merchants.

Fresh meat available in Scandinavia included lamb, beef, pork, venison, rabbit,

bear, squirrel, walrus, and a variety of birds. Scandinavians preserved meats for transportation or storage over long winters by salting, smoking, drying, and pickling. A variety of herbs and spices, including salt imported from France and spices from as far afield as Constantinople, were used in the process. Meat was cooked by boiling or roasting on spits, as well as by being placed in a wood-lined pit and cooked by stones heated in a fire.

The Norse did not grow many vegetables, as the Scandinavian soil and geography prohibited it. Beans and peas were exceptions, and wild fruits, berries, and nuts were used to supplement the diet. Apples were sometimes grown in orchards.

Dairy products (from both cow and goat milk) included milk, butter, curds and whey, and cheese. Although beer flowed in most Norse homes, milk was a popular drink, even among hardened warriors and nobles. Chickens were kept for meat and eggs.

Norse bread was made from wheat, and was cooked on large open fires. The bread was generally flat, and contained small amounts of grit picked up during the grinding process.

Fish was a major part of the Scandinavian diet, and a wide variety of fish and sea mammals were caught off the coasts, including cod, herring, seal, and whale. Salmon and trout swam in the rivers and fishing (using spear or hook and line) was a favorite pastime of boys and grown men (nets were used for non-recreational fishing). Fish was normally eaten boiled or smoked, but dried cod and salted herring were the largest exports of Scandinavia to the rest of Europe in the 13th century.



## Clothing

The most stylish of Scandinavian clothing was also practical. The simplest garments could be transformed into works of great beauty by the addition of metal ornaments, fur trim, or elaborate embroidery that was different from district to district and which could be used to identify one's home region.

Footwear consisted of shoes, or ankle- or knee-high boots. The most common material for a shoe's upper was goat-skin, and the sole,





normally thick leather, was separate and stitched to the upper. A strap held the shoe to the foot. The strap could have a buckle, depending on the wealth of the owner, and wrapped around the entire foot, rather than being a part of the shoe itself.

Most clothes were made of wool or linen, although other fabrics were sometimes imported. Silk was a rare commodity in Scandinavia and only the wealthy could afford to purchase it from merchants who had traveled to Constantinople. Fur was used for cloaks or trim. Clothes were often dyed with natural dyes, walnut being a favorite as brown was a popular color. Blues and greens were also used, but mainly for small garments and trim.

Men wore trousers in ankle-, mid-calf- and knee-lengths. Short trousers were worn with stockings or hose so that no skin was exposed to the elements. The bottoms of trousers were often held tight to the leg by leather straps. A man's tunic or shirt could be worn baggy or tight, depending on his preference, and was tied around the waist by a leather belt, often with a metal buckle. A cloak, usually made from a heavy material, was worn fastened on the right shoulder by a brooch. This allowed the sword arm to be kept free and available for use.

Women wore straight-cut ankle-length dresses of wool or linen. During the Viking Age the garment was fastened by metal brooches on each shoulder, but in Christian times the tendency was for straps to be buckled onto the dress. A long, tight shift was worn under the dress.

Caps and hats for casual wear, rather than for combat, were made of wool or leather lined with fur, and both sexes wore them.



## Money

Norse trade was based primarily around a barter system. Coins were used in large market towns, but the majority of the population lived in rural areas, and had little need of coin-commerce. The first Scandinavian country to mint its own coins was Denmark, and Danish coins were used as early as the 8th century in Ribe (in southwestern Denmark).

During the Viking Age local minting of coins was a sporadic affair, and coins minted by Arabs, Anglo-Saxons, and Byzantines were often in wider circulation throughout Scandinavia than local issues. Norway and Denmark had their own coins by the start of the 13th century, but in Sweden local coins were only minted for a short period in the late 10th century and foreign issues were the only coin option there in all other time periods. Silver armbands or neck jewelry, or pieces cut from their ends, could provide small change.

The only coin commonly minted was the silver **pfenning** (penny), but there were other units used only for accounting: the mark, equal to 240 pfennings, as well as the less common artogar (10 pfennings) and eyrir (30 pfennings).

## Trade

Within Scandinavia, the professional manufacture of goods began in the 10th century, at roughly the same time that market towns began to grow and prosper. At that time common people could afford professionally-made items as easily as they could local items. As the heyday of Vikings raiders passed, Scandinavian traders took over the same sea routes, traveling not only to the distant corners of the Norse world, but to every part of Europe and even to northern Africa.

Frequently imported items included swords and mail from the Frankish empire, wine, grain, silk from the East, furs, spices and salt, glassware and pottery. Locally, Scandinavians could trade for leather wares, textiles, foodstuffs, and forged iron tools. Within reason, Scandinavian merchants could acquire any product manufactured in Europe or the distant East.

Scandinavia exported a wide range of products, such as furs, hides, Baltic amber, walrus ivory, hawks and falcons, whetstones, butter, fish oil, timber, cloth, horses, cattle, iron and copper, but most importantly dried or salted fish.

## Ships

Standard Norse ship construction followed a set pattern for both warships and cargo ships. First, a keel was laid, across which were placed wooden ribs which would strengthen the ship by joining its sides together across the middle. Curved planks of wood ran from bow to stern, each overlapping its neighbor with the gaps between them stuffed with animal hair to make them watertight. Where possible, the planks were cut from naturally curved trees so they didn't have to be



## Sample Scandinavian Ships

The following ships represent those commonly found amongst Norse communities, whether they be commoners or nobility. (For more on *Ars Magica* sailing rules, see The Mythic Seas supplement.)

### Byrding

The name *byrding* translates as “carrier,” an apt description of the vessels use. There were four distinct types of *byrding* used; the *smabyrding* (small carrier), the *letbyrding* (light carrier), the *vistbyrding* (private carrier), and the *havsbyrding* (sea carrier). The ships had approximate cargo capacities of 11, 20, 8, and 38 tons respectively. The first three were primarily designed for river and coastal use, while the *havsbyrding* was sturdy enough to survive the open seas. Other mercantile vessels were the *busse* and *knarr*.

#### Smabyrding

The *smabyrding* was the small Scandinavian carrier designed for river and coastal areas, as described above.

**Hull Size:** 2

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-5/Swamped)

**Material:** Planks (Soak: 7)

**Crew Size:** 10

**Propulsion:** Oars (Speed: 3)

**Secondary:** Sails (Speed: 2)

**Steering:** Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

**Total Tonnage:** 15

**Cargo Capacity:** 11

#### Busse

The *busse* was larger than the *havsbyrding* but smaller than the *knarr*. It used sails as its primary mode of transport and was slow under oar. It was used for mercantile activities as its lack of speed under oar made it unsuitable for support work for warships. The oars were primarily used for maneuvering in harbors.

**Hull Size:** 4

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-2/-3/-5/Swamped)

**Material:** Planks (Soak: 7)

**Crew Size:** 40

**Propulsion:** Sails (Speed: 5)

**Secondary:** Oars (Speed: 1)

**Steering:** Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

**Total Tonnage:** 61

**Cargo Capacity:** 50

#### Knarr

The *knarr* began life during the Viking Age as a warship but was replaced by the longship and reduced to the status of a mercantile vessel. Although slower than longships, it could carry more cargo.

**Hull Size:** 3

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-3/-5/Swamped)

**Material:** Planks (Soak: 7)

**Crew Size:** 20

**Propulsion:** Sail (Speed: 4)

**Secondary:** Oars (Speed: 3)

**Steering:** Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

**Total Tonnage:** 32

**Cargo Capacity:** 24



forced into place. The planks were lashed together (instead of being nailed), and this flexible construction allowed a Viking ship to bend in rough seas instead of breaking during storms. Sometimes the stem-post of a warship was carved into a dragon head or other image, but this was not common practice.

A Viking ship was steered with a large oar attached to the right (starboard: "steer board") side of the stern; a single man could steer the ship under normal conditions. Power came from square-cut sails and from oars pulled by crewmen in shifts. The mast could be lowered and raised for safety during storms, and to allow ships to approach vessels with less visibility. To secure the ship at night, large iron anchors were dropped overboard.

Cargo ships were higher at the gunwale and wider than warships. Few merchant ships used oars, except for navigation in narrow channels, relying on sail for power.

A typical Viking vessel could attain speeds of 6 to 9 knots and the standard method of travel was to follow the coastline during the day and camp ashore at night. When sailing out to sea, Norsemen used an acute sense of time and speed, knowledge of the habits of sea-birds, the shape of waves, and the position of the sun and stars to navigate.

As the Viking Age came to an end, dragonships gave way to ships sporting bigger holds, as well as requiring cheaper building materials. Where once ships were a symbol of power and status, they became tools of trade.

## Sample Scandinavian Ships (cont.)

### Longships

The longship is the vessel most commonly associated with the Norse. Sleek, fast, and maneuverable, these ships haunted the coasts of northern Europe for over 200 years.

#### Snekke

The *snekke* was the smallest of longships, starting at 50 feet in length. Poorer nobles, such as hersar, often used these as their main sea-going ships.

##### Hull Size: 3

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-3/-5/Swamped)

Material: Planks (Soak: 7)

Crew Size: 50

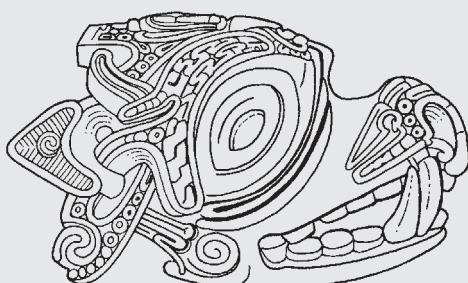
Propulsion: Sails (Speed: 4)

Secondary: Oars (Speed: 4)

Steering: Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

Total Tonnage: 25

Cargo Capacity: 5



#### Drakkar (dragon)

The name *drakkar* arose from the carved prows of these ships. Tradition dictates that these ships must be over 75 feet in length to acquire the name. They were often owned by hersar, powerful landowners, and poor nobles.

##### Hull Size: 4

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-2/-3/-5/Swamped)

Material: Planks (Soak: 7)

Crew Size: 100

Propulsion: Sails (Speed: 5)

Secondary: Oars (Speed: 4)

Steering: Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

Total Tonnage: 40

Cargo Capacity: 5

#### Skeid

The *skeid* was the largest warships, 125-150 feet in length, and generally with a crew of some 200 men. Ships of this size were expensive to build and crew, and were generally the property of konungr and rich jarls.

##### Hull Size: 4

(Seaworthiness: OK/-1/-2/-3/-5/Swamped)

Material: Planks (Soak: 7)

Crew Size: 200

Propulsion: Sails (Speed: 5)

Secondary: Oars (Speed: 4)

Steering: Steering Oar (Maneuver: +2)

Total Tonnage: 70

Cargo Capacity: 10

# Religion

In the 13th century, Mythic Scandinavia was an area torn between two religions. The Roman Catholic Church had made deep inroads into the region, and had succeeded in converting the kings, many nobles, and most of the town populations, but had little impact among the average rural carls. The old religion, officially declared devil-worship by the Church, was still widely practiced in the countryside, and some noblemen (even Christians) continued to participate in major pagan festivals.

## The Old Faith

Although by the 13th century the Church had stripped away much of the power of the old faith in urban areas, the old gods remained potent in the harsh lands of the interior and in Sweden, where the vitki still wielded great power and were treated with respect.

In pagan Scandinavia, the gods were part of daily life, responsible for the election of kings, success in war, and bountiful harvests. The gods were honored in both public ceremonies and through private worship.

## Public Ceremonies

Public ceremonies were performed to benefit the community as a whole, and most were related to agriculture. Called **blötar** (strengthening), singular **blöt**, and performed by the leading vitki in each district, they were occasions for a community to gather and feast in the presence of the gods, renewing the contracts made with the gods granting prosperity and victory to the faithful.

Public **blötar** tended to be dedicated to all holy beings instead of to individual deities. However, some deities could be singled out at

specific times due to the boons they offered. The public rite was also an opportunity for divination, with the sacrificed animal the means by which future knowledge could be obtained.

Areas with large populations maintained temples for conducting the public ceremonies, but as Christianity came to the Northlands, these practices were driven underground, to be performed in private homes by the head of each household. Groves in forests and mounds with supernatural significance were also suitable locations for a **blöt**. In some rituals the attendees wore animal masks or dressed as animals, possibly indicating a token sacrifice when no actual animals could be sacrificed on the stone altars.

### *The Temple at Uppsala*

Uppsala was home to the largest pagan temple in Scandinavia, where giant statues of Odin, Thor, and Freyr stood in a wooden structure, next to a grove of ash trees. Odin was depicted as the god of war, and was shown with weapons; Freyr, as god of fertility, shown with an enormous phallus; and Thor, as protector of the masses, was shown with his hammer, Mjollnir. Every ninth Yule a huge ceremony took place there and, as Adam of Bremen stated, "nine males from every species on Earth" were sacrificed, left to hang in the adjacent sacred grove.

Before Christianity became Sweden's official religion, all Swedes were required to attend the nine-year ritual, although Christians could buy the right not to attend, and in reality only those pagans living locally actually attended. Under Christian kings attendance at the ceremonies dropped considerably, the fee for non-attendance was eliminated, and by 1080 the temple was destroyed and a Christian church was constructed atop its ruins.

Unbeknownst to the Christians, this did not stop the pagan ceremonies at Uppsala. The power of the place could not be so easily dismissed, and a faerie regio sprang up on the spot, within which an echo of the pagan temple still stood, occupying the same ground as the Christian church. The faerie regio could only be entered at one point, through a remnant of the





sacred grove of trees in a Christian cemetery adjacent to the church, and only at Yuletime.

On dusk of the first night of Yule, the faerie aura of the first level of the regio increases to 5, overcoming the level 4 Dominion aura of the cemetery, and allowing pagans to enter the regio (the base ease factor to enter the regio is  $(2 \times \text{the regio's aura of 5}) + 6$ , or a total of 16 on a stress die roll, but pagans have a +5 on their roll). At the dawn after the 13th day of Yule, the faerie aura weakens to 3, trapping within the regio any who had not left in a timely fashion.

Every ninth Yule, at the time of the major sacrifice in the sacred grove, the bonus pagans receive to enter the regio increases to +10.



## The Major Blötar

### Yule

Celebrated at the winter solstice, Yule lasted 13 nights, the march-space between one year and another, the border where the worlds overlapped. All that happened between the first sunset and the last dawn of Yule was mightier than at any other time of the year. Yule was particularly the time to swear oaths on the praise cup, or the holy boar, an animal sacrificed to Freyr (or Freyja). While all oaths were holy (see "Honor" on page 32), those spoken on Yule nights were the holiest of all.

Odin was the most important of the Yule gods, and it was at this time that the lord of the gods traveled on his eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, across Midgard, delivering gifts to warriors who had impressed him over the year, sometimes dropping the gifts through the chimney hole in a stead's roof. In imitation, a lord would often invite his dependents to his hall to reward them for their loyalty and hard work over the past year, and exchanging gifts was common at Yuletime among all classes. Skadi and Ullr, as deities of snow and ice, also had important functions at Yule.

The Church adopted the Yule tradition, merging it with the celebration of Christ's birthday, and replacing the Odin story with that of the three wise men as an explanation for the custom of gift-giving.

### Thorri

Held near the end of January, Thorri was a lesser blöt celebrating the fact that the nights were getting shorter again. Ritual dramas portraying how Thor defeated various frost giants were appropriate at this time of year, symbolizing the retreat of winter.

## Disablöt

Held in early February, this ceremony was in honor of the *disir*, all the goddesses, including local deities and the Norns. In Sweden, it took the form of a large fair; the first public gathering of the year. It was associated with the breaking of the first furrow, and a sacrifice to ensure the safety of livestock. The story of Freyr winning the hand of the giantess Gerdr was appropriate at this time of year, a metaphor for the melting of the frozen Earth and the triumph of the sun.

## Sigrblöt

This spring festival, held around the end of April, celebrated beginnings: the blessing of crops being planted in the fields and of any venture embarked upon, including raids, wars, and trading expeditions. Sigrblöt meant “victory-sacrifice.”

## Midsummer

There was often a blöt held at midsummer, though it was by no means standard across Scandinavia. There was always a fire lit at this time, and it was a powerful time for divination, particularly with regards to love. Blötar dedicated to Freyja were most appropriate at a midsummer festival.

## Hlafblöt

Hlafblöt (loaf-feast) fell at the beginning of August, and celebrated the first harvest. In Iceland, this was the time for fairs, and horse fights were held, identifying this feast-day with Freyr, whose sacred animal was the horse. The story of Loki cropping Sif's hair was an appropriate metaphor for the harvest, and could be reenacted as ritual drama at the festival.

## Winternights (Alfablöt or Freysblöt)

This feast marked the end of harvest and the change from summer into winter. It was held in the middle of October, and was a time specifically dedicated to the family; strangers at the house were not made welcome during this holiday. Alfablöt (elf-feast) indicates the importance of the land spirits at this time and the dead were believed to walk during the night of the feast. Winternights was primarily a blöt asking for plenty in the next year's harvest.



## Essential Blöt Elements

**The Drinking of Ale or Mead.** A *brage* (praise) cup was first hallowed to the gods and then passed among all the collected worshippers to share, each making a *sumbel* (toast) to the gods. The participants would drink toasts to Odin (for victory and power to the king), Njord (for safe conduct on the seas), and then to Freyr (to ask for fertility and peace, as well as to any other god from whom a particular boon was desired). The drink was brewed specifically for the blöt, and blessed in the name of the gods by the godar. During some rites, a second *minni* (remembrance) cup was also used, in praise of lost friends or ancestors.

**The Sacrifice.** Three animals were singled out as suitable for sacrifice: boars, bulls, and stallions. The animal was ritually slaughtered by the vitki, and the blood was sprinkled over worshippers, or smeared upon the walls of the temple or the roots of a holy tree.

**The Feast.** The meat of the sacrificed animal was either cooked in a cauldron or roasted on a fire, then shared amongst the worshippers. Thus the sacrifice was shared between the gods and men; blood for the gods, meat for the men.

**The Drama.** Myths were commonly reenacted at blötar. The choice of story portrayed depended on the time of year and the purpose of the sacrifice.



## Personal Worship

In addition to public rituals, a family or individual is often dedicated to a single deity. The most popular gods for this were Odin, Thor, and Freyr: Odin being the god of those who ruled, Thor of those who toiled, and Freyr of the land itself. The cults of the various gods had their own blötar, attended only by those who wished to honor that particular god. However, worship of the gods wasn't restricted to their dedicated followers; most would pray to Thor for protection, for example. Even after accepting Christianity, many Scandinavians still prayed to Thor during a thunderstorm or bad weather, to Odin just before a battle, or to Freyr at harvest time, something which seemed perfectly natural to the Northmen, but which infuriated many Churchmen.

Common sacrifices included weapons, especially spear and arrow heads, as well as swords. Given that a sword was an expensive piece of equipment, the sacrifices were not made lightly or simply to appease gods, but more likely for special favors.



Worship of the old powers was seen as a form of friendship: an individual had certain rights and could call upon the gods; in return, they are able to call upon him. In one story, a Norseman dedicated to Odin withdrew his support for Odin after he lost his son in a boating accident, considering the death of his son a breach of friendship on the part of the god.

### Cult of Odin

The cult of Odin was part of the sacred kingship. Most kings claimed descent from Odin All-Father, and sacrifices were made to him in the main by the rulers of men. It was the duty of men to declare war on behalf of their people, thus Odin was also the god of war. The spear was the most potent symbol of Odin's worship and aged warriors kept a spear as a symbol of their dedication to Odin in hopes that this would enable them to enter Valhalla upon death despite their infirmity.

The spear was also the way that sacrifices were dispatched to Odin; tied to a tree and pierced with a spear in imitation of Odin's own sacrifice on Yggdrasil. Odin's cult was perhaps the only one that utilized human sacrifice with any regularity. The sacrifices were prisoners taken in battle, chosen by the casting of lots. They were hanged from ash trees and pierced with spears. Criminals also went to the tree, often sacrificed for luck in battle.

The bersarkr was the ultimate symbol of the Odin cult. Immune to pain in battle and utterly fearless, they represented the most fearsome side of the All-Father.

### Cult of Thor

Thor was worshipped by the ordinary men of the community in his guise of friend of mankind, sworn to protect worshippers from harm; his symbol, the hammer, was a ubiquitous talisman among the pagan Norse, used on boundary stones, at the birth of a child, at weddings, and on stones to commemorate the dead. Thor's image was carved

on the pillars next to the highseat of houses, and he was prayed to for good weather, good fortune, and protection. The blow of a hammer on an anvil was used to seal oaths, and he presided over the Thing in pagan times; even in Christian times the Thing was traditionally opened on a Thursday — Thor's day.

## Cult of Freyr

Freyr symbolized fertility, and a number of wild or powerful animals were sacred to him, including horses and boars. Sacred white horses were kept for Freyr, horse fights were dedicated to him, and horses were sacrificed to him. As one of the Vanir gods, he was often worshipped at mounds, suggesting some association with the alfar and the dead. During festivals, his image was taken around a community's farmland in a wagon to grant it fertility. The vitkir who accompanied the wagon in pagan times dressed as women and acted in an effeminate manner, and this form of blessing was also associated with Freyr's mother, the earth goddess Nerthus. Freyr was also a battlegod to some extent; the Swedes bore his boar symbol on their shields and helmets.

## Goddess Cults

The cults of the goddesses cannot be ignored. The Great Goddess, the Earth Mother, called variously Nerthus, Jord, and Frigga (all three possibly the same person) was an object of veneration, but her worship was often secret and restricted to women. As queen of heaven, she saw all, and her worshippers could have the gift of prophecy. The sagas tell of shrines in deep woods and wagons carrying her image as in the worship of Freyr.

Freyja, the sister of Freyr, was most often seen as looking up from the underworld rather than down from heaven. Her followers practiced *seithr*, the "unclean" magic of women (see page 63).

## The Gods of the Norse

As well as the most prominent gods mentioned above, the Norse pantheon included many other deities divided into two communities: the Aesir (and the *Asyniur*, their wives) and the Vanir (the *Van*, gods, and *Vana*, goddesses).

The Vanir were a race of gods living among mortal men in Scandinavia before the Aesir. Following the ill treatment of one of their number at the hands of the Aesir, a war broke out between the two divine groups. The war ended inconclusively with an armistice and the exchange of hostages.

Listed on the following pages are descriptions of the most important Norse gods; there were almost as many more again not mentioned, minor gods who had few devotees and little interaction with the mortal world even before the arrival of Christianity to the Northlands.



## The Seekers and the Norse Gods

The members of the Order of Hermes known as Seekers speculate among themselves that many Norse gods were of the race known to them as Old Ones. The stories of the Norse gods seem to be about beings who once walked the Earth, creatures of awesome power and knowledge.

Two Seekers, Alphonus and Tabitha, both of House Ex Miscellanea, entered Scandinavia in the summer of 1210 posing as Christian monks to avoid suspicion. The pair traveled through the Christian areas into the hinterlands, where dwelt the Norse who still followed the old faith. They intently absorbed information from any source they could find, often spending days listening to the tales of skalds who retold the old legends. The two Seekers roved Scandinavia searching for the most elusive of all materials in their quest: proof. They uncovered little, often finding it hard to differentiate between fact and myth.

Many Seekers firmly believe that there are still Old Ones who have not disappeared from the world, and the stories of Odin donning a disguise and walking among mortal men causes great excitement to them, despite the fact that there are no reports of the All-Father on Earth since Christian churches began dotting the countryside.



**Baldur:** Hailed as the most beautiful of the gods, Baldur, the son of Odin and Frigga, was also the god of justice. In response to a vision in which Baldur was slain, his mother extracted a promise from all things on Earth, both living and unliving, that they would not harm her son. Only mistletoe was excluded, as Frigga thought it too insignificant to be dangerous. One day the other gods took to throwing things at Baldur to test his invulnerability, and Loki gave a spear of mistletoe to the blind god Hodur to throw. The spear struck and killed Baldur.

Baldur had a chance at resurrection if only everything on Earth, living and unliving, wept for Baldur, but despite almost universal despair, the giantess Thaukt (actually Loki in disguise) refused to weep, so Baldur was destined to remain in Eljudnir until the end of the world.

At Baldur's funeral, Odin placed his magical ring Draupnir on the pyre and whispered the word "Rebirth" into his ear, symbolizing what was to come after Ragnarök (see "The End," on page 131).

Baldur possessed a magical boat known as *Hringhorn* (Curved Prow).

**Bragi:** Bragi was the god of poetry, the son of Odin and a giantess named Gunlod. In Valhalla, Bragi was the chief skald, and had runes cut into his tongue to increase his already exceptional talent.



**Eir:** In Asgard and Midgard there was no better physician than Eir. In Mythic Scandinavia, Eir was the patron of female healers, for it was she who taught man how to heal himself.

**Forseti:** Forseti, the son of Baldur, was the dispenser of justice.

**Freyja:** "Freyja" meant "Lady," and she governed love and marriage; the female counterpart to her brother Freyr. Courting couples, or those wishing happy marriages, asked for her blessing. Although generally associated with life, she also carries an aspect of war within her, and Odin gave half of the dead souls that he received into her care.

Freyja possessed several magical items including Valhamr, a magical cloak of feathers that enabled the wearer to fly between worlds, and Brisingamen, a beautiful necklace crafted by dwarven artisans, that had no positive powers but seemed to attract attention and trouble to its wearer. Her chariot was drawn by two huge cats.

She, along with Freyr and Njord, was a Vanir hostage among the Aesir.

**Freyr:** Freyr (lord), the son of Njord and brother of Freyja, was the god of fertility and lived in Alfheim, from where he rarely ventured. At some pagan wedding ceremonies Freyr was represented by a giant wooden phallus placed in the room to bless the couple with fertility. Freyr was ruler of the Vanir before becoming hostage to the peace with the Aesir. Odin gave him an *aett* of runes for himself.

Freyr had a magical boat, Skidbladnir, which could shrink to such a small size that it could be carried by a single man, and yet when fully grown it could hold all the gods. It was capable of sailing on water, air, and dry land.

Freyr also had two boars, Gullinbursti and Slidrugtanni, that could be eaten one day and be fully restored by the next.

**Frigga:** Odin's wife Frigga was the mother of Baldur, Hodur, Hermod, and Tyr. She was the goddess of the sky (and sometimes the earth), the household, and of married love, in which guise she was often prayed to by women for fertility.

**Heimdall:** Heimdall was entrusted with watching over Bifrost. When the fire giants approach at Ragnarök his duty is to blow the Giallar Horn, warning the gods of the impending doom.

Heimdall could see for hundreds of miles perfectly in light or dark, could hear grass growing, and never needed sleep.

Aside from his magical horn, Heimdall also possessed a magic sword, Höfud.

**Hela:** A child of Loki by the giantess Angurboda, and sister to the Fenris Wolf and the Midgard Serpent, Hela was banished from Asgard by Odin and became ruler of Nifleheim, a frozen wasteland and domain of the dead unclaimed by Odin or the other gods.

One half of her face and body was that of a beautiful woman, while the other was a decaying corpse.

**Hodur:** Hodur was the blind brother of Baldur. He was the god of winter and lived near Nifleheim. It was he who was tricked by Loki into throwing the mistletoe spear that killed his brother.

**Hoerir:** A brother of Odin, after the war against the Vanir, he was sent to Vanaheim as a hostage. The Vanir thought him slow-witted, and therefore a poor hostage compared to the valuable gods they had sent to Asgard, and therefore they beheaded Mimir (the other hostage).

**Idunn:** Idunn was the goddess of youth and grew golden acorns that kept the gods from aging as long as they ate them regularly.

**Loki:** The half-giant father of the Fenris Wolf, the Midgard Serpent, and the queen of the underworld, Loki was a trickster god who delighted in causing mischief and strife.

After Baldur's death, Loki was taken to Nifleheim and chained on a ledge where a serpent dripped stinging poison on his face until Ragnarök, when he would break his chains and get his revenge against the gods, especially Heimdall, who had always witnessed his mischief and informed the gods of his misdeeds.

**Mimir:** Mimir was a giant, and Odin's uncle. He was one of the hostages to the Vanir after their war against the Aesir, and was eventually beheaded, his head brought back to Asgard as a protest. Odin restored Mimir's head to life and placed it in a well under one of the roots of Yggdrasil, where he could be consulted by anyone willing to pay the price of an eye to receive knowledge.

**Njord:** A giant and ruler of the wind and sea, after the war with the Aesir, the Vanir sent him to Asgard as a hostage. He was the father of Freyr and Freyja.

**Odin:** Odin was the chief god of the Aesir, the god of cunning, wisdom, and the valiant dead. He was also the patron of noblemen and warriors, and had little concern for those of lower station.

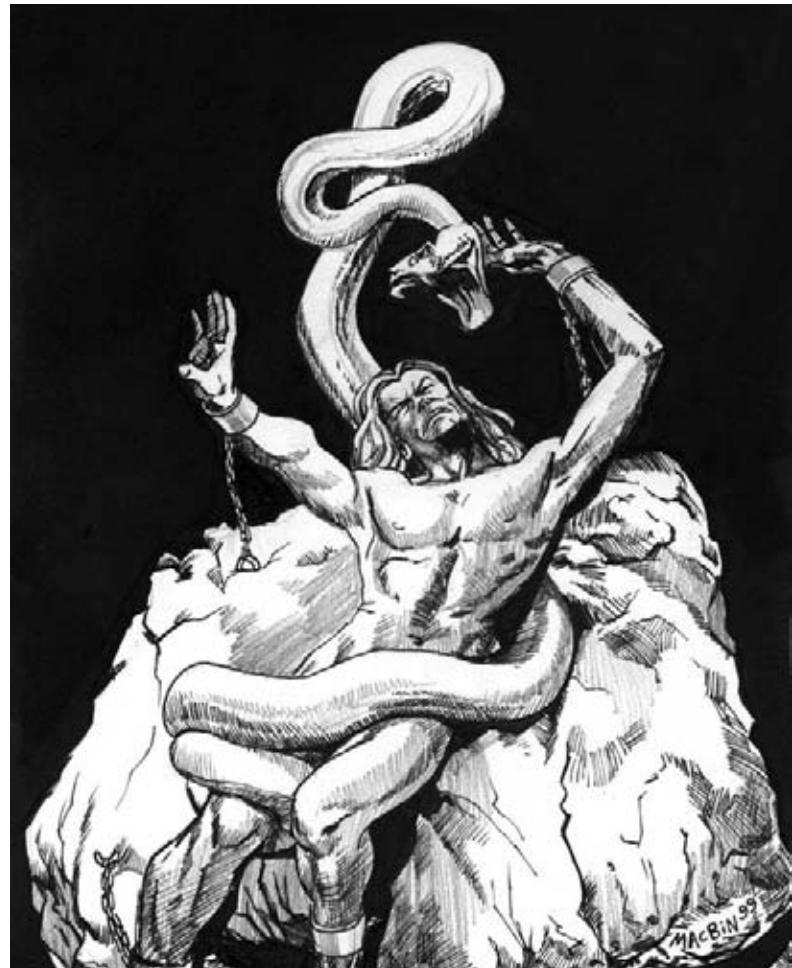
Although worshipped by warriors, he was also feared by them as he was known to strike

warriors down in their prime in order to stock his great hall, Valhalla, with soldiers for Ragnarök.

Odin gained a number of gifts through sacrifice: for the wisdom of Mimir's well, he lost an eye; and for the knowledge of the magical runes, he sacrificed himself to himself by impaling his own body with a spear to hang for nine days from Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

Odin delighted in mixing with mortals while in disguise, although he was often recognized for who he really was. Many mortal kings claimed descent from Odin.

Odin had two ravens, *Hugin* (thought) and *Munin* (memory), that flew around the world and reported all they saw and heard to him. His horse, Sleipnir, had eight legs and was the fastest steed in existence, capable of traveling through air and even to the underworld. Each of Sleipner's teeth had a different rune engraved upon it. Amongst Odin's other animal companions were two wolves, *Freki* (Gluttonous) and *Geri* (Greedy), who sat next to his throne.





Odin possessed Gungnir, a spear that never missed its target, and Draupnir, a magic arm ring that formed nine non-magical gold duplicates of itself every night. He also had a magic whetstone that could make weapons dangerously sharp.

**Sif:** Sif was the wife of Thor and was a giantess. Sif was the goddesses of crops, as befits her status as the wife of the god of farmers.

She wore a wig of pure gold following one of Loki's pranks which resulted in her real hair being burnt off.

**Thor:** Thor was the son of Odin and a loud god who embodied bravery, strength, and vigor. These attributes were balanced by stupidity, bluster, and sheer brutality.

Thor was the god of thunder, thralls, and the working man, and was also responsible for farmers and fishermen, who often prayed to him for a good harvest or catch. The striking of a hammer on an anvil sealed marriages, burials, and civil contracts, the hammer symbolizing

Thor's magic hammer *Mjollnir* (Crusher), which never missed its target and returned to his hand when thrown.

Whereas Odin was mostly worshipped by the elite, and even then rarely in ceremonies, Thor was at the center of a widespread cult. Thor's worshippers often wore small hammer amulets hung from thongs, and when Christianity arrived in Scandinavia the amulet makers had little trouble modifying their molds to make crucifixes.

Thor's other magic items of note were his belt, *Megingjardir*, which gave him strength enough to wield his hammer, the iron glove he wore to catch it in red-hot flight, and his chariot, which caused the sound of thunder when it moved. Two goats, *Toothgnasher* and *Gaptooth*, pulled it and Thor killed and ate them every night. Come the morning, the goats were fully restored and ready to pull his chariot again.

Thor was a great enemy of the giants and had many adventures in *Jotunheim*. Strangely, he was married to Sif, herself a giantess.

**Tyr:** Tyr was the god of truth and war. When the Fenris Wolf was being bound with a magical chain, called *Gleipnir* (made from the noise a cat makes when it moves, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain, the sinew of a bear, the breath of a fish, and the spittle of a bird), Fenrir suspected a trap and demanded that a god place his hand in his mouth to prove there was no trickery. Only Tyr was brave enough, and when Fenrir found he was trapped, he bit off Tyr's right hand. Tyr often supported the peasants to help them get justice in an unfair world.

**Ullr:** Ullr was the god of archery and of hunting, and was very popular during autumn when warriors hunted food for the coming winter months. The rune *Yr* represented his yew bow. Warriors taking part in duels often asked him for aid.

**Vidar:** The silent son of Odin, he was rarely worshipped openly. He lived away from the other gods, but always kept a horse saddled so that he could speed to avenge his father's death at *Ragnarök*, using a great leather boot crafted from the scraps of leather left on the floors of cobblers throughout Mythic Scandinavia. In the reborn world afterward, he will be known as a god of vengeance.



# Christianity

Christianity came slowly to Scandinavia, beginning in the 9th century. Many settlers who left Scandinavia for distant colonies converted to Christianity, some to keep the peace with their new neighbors, but others because they were genuinely interested in the new faith. When these settlers returned to the old country to visit relatives they brought news of the Bible and the stories it contained. Some were liked so much that they were incorporated into Norse mythology. As missionary activity began in earnest in the early 10th century the Church reversed this, using Norse stories to show that Christ, known as the **Hvitachrist** (White Christ), had much in common with the Norse heroes and gods. The story of Thor fishing for Jörmungandr was compared to the Old Testament verse (Job 41:1) describing the difficulty of drawing Leviathan out of the ocean with a hook.

Before Scandinavia was united under a simple trio of kings, missionaries were faced with a difficult task: converting a people was difficult unless its ruler converted first, and with each fjord ruled by a different king the task was daunting. Furthermore, some unconverted kings threatened violence against Christians.

When the Scandinavian countries united under single rulers, missionaries found their jobs easier. Many lands surrounding Scandinavia were already ruled by Christians, and they took it upon themselves to war against pagan neighbors. Once the Scandinavian kings converted, peace was made, although not always successfully.

The newly-converted kings wanted their subjects to be Christians, and so many noblemen were baptized. Likewise, the jarls wanted loyal Christian subjects, but the masses proved harder to convert.

The first known Christian missionary in Scandinavia was Willibord, who tried in vain to convert the Danish king Ongendus at the beginning of the 8th century.

The first Scandinavian king to be converted was the exiled Danish king Harald Klak in 826 in Mainz. His conversion was carried

out by Ebo, the archbishop of Reims who had been allowed to preach in Denmark since 823 as part of the political support given Harald by the Frankish emperor, Louis the Pious. Ansgar, a priest, traveled to Denmark and was active there until Harald was exiled. Ansgar was zealous in his duties, and this caused a pagan backlash on more than one occasion. The first ruling king to be converted was the Dane Harald Bluetooth, around 960 by the priest Poppe.

The first churches in Denmark were erected around 870 in Hedeby and Ribe. By 948 there were bishops of Hedeby, Ribe, and Århus. From there, Christianity spread north and eastward into Norway and Sweden.

The conversion of Norway began when Harald Finehair sent his son Haakon to be fostered by the Christian English king, Athelstan in the late 9th century. In 995, King Olaf Tryggvasson began a crusade of conversion and brought English bishops to Norway to



## The Bible and the Myths

In its quest to convert the pagan Norse, the Church made great use of Norse legends, interpreting them to reflect Bible stories and show that many of their gods were the same as Jesus and God himself.

The story of Odin's trial on the branches of Yggdrasil draws a striking similarity to the story of the Crucifixion. Both victims were gods who sacrificed themselves; one for power and the other to redeem mankind. Thor's hammer resembled the early Christian cross, a fact the Church used to convert the common man who followed Thor. Did Jesus not provide for his followers as Thor gave the farmers good crops? Balder, the beautiful god who was slain by treachery, was resurrected after Ragnarök, to live again in an ideal world. Jesus himself rose after being condemned to death by the Romans before ascending to Heaven. Ragnarök was equated to the final battle of Armageddon, where the Devil (Jörmungandr, the World Serpent) would be defeated, leaving the survivors to live without fear or sin in a perfect world.

Even the mythical places of the Norse had counterparts in Christian mythos. Nifleheim, the bleak land of the dead for murderers, adulterers, and thieves ruled by Hela, paralleled Christian Hell, where sinners spent eternity in torment. Valhalla, where the Norse went upon receiving a good death to be well fed and watered, was akin to Heaven's palace, where bliss awaited those who died a Christian death. (Christianity also appealed to Norse women, since Valhalla had been closed to them, but Heaven was open to all.)



help. Although many noblemen were baptized, resistance came from the common people. Slow expansion followed and by the early 13th century most coastal areas had been successfully converted, leaving only the rougher and almost impassable interior pagan.

Little is known about the conversion of the Swedes, and in Mythic Scandinavia Sweden is still largely a pagan country in the 13th century, with only the larger towns being areas of Christian worship.

### *The Effects of Christianity*

Christianity and the Norse beliefs were not just different religions, they were based on completely different cultures, so when the Norse changed religions, their lifestyles were changed as well.

The most sweeping change wrought by the Church was the introduction of writing into the everyday life of Scandinavians. Although runic writing had been used for official messages, magic, and account-keeping, virtually all of the culture and mythology of the Norse was passed on through a rich oral

tradition. The Church introduced the idea of recording tales on parchment. Of course, pagan knowledge was not recorded, except in Iceland. There the skalds used the new Latin alphabet to record their heritage, assuring Church authorities that the work merely consisted of entertaining stories, not the material of a living religion. At first Latin letters didn't replace runes, as runic inscriptions were still used for centuries on monuments and grave stones, and in decoration, but everyday writing soon exclusively used the Latin alphabet.

The Church also brought formal education with it; young men could be sent to Church schools where they would learn the word of God, and how to read and write the Latin tongue.

The Church also brought its own laws: the eating of horsemeat was forbidden; polygamy and extra-marital affairs became crimes; marriage was changed from a sacramental arrangement between two families to a consensual relationship between two people; sex was forbidden on the nights before Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, as well as before feast days and festivals; unmarried woman gained new inheritance rights; and revenge became a crime against God.

Converted kings and nobles could expect support from other Christian nations when warring against heathens in or outside of their lands, as well as receiving aid from the Church for such endeavors. Trade relations often depended on the Norse ruler being a Christian, as the Church did not approve of trade with pagans.

Many noblemen found their power weakened by the new faith. The Church preferred strong kings over powerful aristocracies, and it threw its support behind the three rulers of Scandinavia. The jarls, once semi-independent authorities, were made to pay homage to a Church-supported king. Worse, many noblemen had been the high priests of cults within their regions, but as the old faith was stamped out their power weakened. That said, the Christian kings were not in full control of the country and, fearful of an uprising against them, allowed sacrifices to the old gods to continue in private despite Church prohibitions.

Similarly, vitki were banned from using their pagan magics on pain of public flogging, but many Christian noblemen kept them



handy as advisors, and as magical aides in case the power of the Christian god failed.

The common man received less material aid than noblemen when converting to Christianity, but missionaries also gave him hope, telling him that all men were equal, and that by living a good life he could reach Heaven. Slaves were freed and prisoners redeemed, allowing them to attain a better afterlife than their pagan gods would have granted them.

## The Order of Odin

Members of the Order of Hermes in southern and central Europe, having little contact with Norse wizards, have deduced that there exists an organization dubbed the Order of Odin, which is responsible for attacks on magi, the burning of homes and laboratories, and the use of subtle magic, all designed to convince Hermetic magi not to settle in Norse-dominanted parts of Europe. Although interrogations of various Scandinavians have revealed nothing about this Order, this has been interpreted to mean powerful spells have been used to hide or erase the information hidden in their minds.

In fact, there is no Order of Odin; while some vitkir may form small gatherings similar in purpose to Hermetic covenants, those are the exceptions rather than the norm, and there is no overarching organization linking these gatherings. In most cases, a Norse wizard allies himself to a patron, whether it be a noble or a small fishing village in the frozen north, and it is to his patron that a wizard owes his loyalty.

Some magi living in tribunals close to Scandinavia (and Sinus Wodinis, the House Bjornaer covenant in southern Norway) know the truth behind the Order of Odin, but their words carry little weight within the Order of Hermes. Any magus who proclaims disbelief in the existence of the Order of Odin is branded either a traitor allied with the Norsemen against the Order of Hermes, or a magically-controlled dupe. Members of the Order of Hermes have been enjoined to avoid contact with the Norse lands in order to avoid provoking a potentially dangerous conflict.

## Order of Odin Alternatives

Some storyguides may want to explore other answers to the Order of Odin question. Some possibilities are:

- The Order of Odin once did exist, but is no longer a factor in Scandinavia's magic circles as a result of the conversion of many of its members to Christianity, the encroachment of Hermetic magi on its borders, or some unknown menace or disaster. Could the Order then have been the reason for the sudden appearance of Viking raiders in the late 8th century, and for their unparalleled success over the next two centuries? And was the Order of Odin involved in the Schism War that began just as some members of the Order of Hermes were advocating an assault on Scandinavia?
- The Order of Odin does exist, and takes extreme measures to hide itself from the Order of Hermes. What do they have to hide, and how do they do it?
- The Order of Odin never existed but some members of the Order of Hermes who know the truth created and maintained the lie for their own purposes. Which Hermetic magi are behind it then, and what reasons could they have for such a deception?
- The Order of Odin never existed but some Scandinavians started the rumor in order to keep Hermetic magi out of the Northlands. Who would most want to keep the Order of Hermes at bay: the Church, local rulers, or the vitkir?
- The Order of Odin never existed and it is a combination of other mundane forces that are keeping the Order of Hermes out of Scandinavia: prejudice, paranoia, climatic difficulties, the region's isolation from southern European politics and culture, a lack of recruits because of the local preference for magic based in its cultural heritage, and so on.
- The Order of Odin didn't exist in the past, but the encroachments of the Order of Hermes have convinced some vitki to create their own organization for protection. How can this fledgling order hope to survive in the face of the established and powerful enemy approaching from the south? And is this new order behind the troubles besetting Sinus Wodinis (as described on page 62 of *The Mythic Seas*)?



# Warfare

## Organizational Structure

Scandinavian kings and noblemen possessed armies comprised of two types of soldier: the *hird*, or professional soldiers who formed the noblemen's permanent retinues; and the *carls* who took up arms in times of need.

All free men capable of bearing weapons were obligated to aid in the defense of their liege and home areas. When a prearranged signal (for example, the blowing of a horn or the lighting of a beacon fire) was seen or heard, the men rushed to their homes to retrieve weapons and shield, and then mustered at their lord's hall to await instructions. For overseas campaigns this levy system was rarely used, instead professional sol-

diers made up the majority of armies, although some carls might volunteer for service.

The lowest form of professional warrior were the *gestr*, who were little more than hired thugs who performed menial tasks such as policing the lord's villages and running errands. The *dreng* were professional soldiers, loyal to their lord, and housed in special accommodations provided for their use. Dreng who proved their worthiness could become members of the *tinglith*, or personal guard, or rise to the rank of *thegn*, commanders of the dreng. Lords that owned ships had *liths*, professional sailors who manned his warships, commanded by a *lithsmathr*. They were counted as members of the lord's *hird*.

There were also three types of specialist warrior; the *bersarkr*, *ulfednar*, and *svinfylking*. The *bersarkr* ("bear-shirts") were fierce warriors, dedicated to their lord and to Odin, and capable of literally going berserk in combat. They nor-



mally fought in groups. The ulfednar (wolf-warriors) had similar attributes as the bersarkr (and were also dedicated to Odin), but did not enter such a battle rage and generally fought alone. Many of these warriors were rumored to be able to assume the form of wolves. The svinfylking (boar-warriors) were trained to fight in a wedge formation reminiscent of a boar's head and often acted as scouts. Although the svinfylking were not dedicated as a group to Freyr, some would ask for his blessing before battle.

When there were no wars to fight, the members of the hird patrolled their master's land watching for bandits or attackers, kept the peace in villages, and trained new recruits. More lucrative duties included body-guard duty to their master, or escorting him or his family members on journeys.

## Weapons and Armor

Carls had the right and obligation to possess weapons, typically swords, axes, spears, javelins, bows and arrows, and slings and stones. Armor usually consisted of shields, leather clothing, or, for the wealthy or professional soldier, either scale or chainmail. Not all carls could afford the best weapons and armor, and possession of quality weapons was often a sign of wealth, rather than combat skill or experience.

The most expensive weapon a Norseman could own was a sword, especially since they have little use outside of war. Standard Norse swords were one-handed slashing weapons, constructed of iron, with broad double-edged blades. Ornately engraved blades and hilts were the property of wealthy men, and such swords were used as status symbols as well as weapons of war. The scabbard was constructed of either wood or leather, and was lined with wool. A leather strap hung from the right shoulder to hold the scabbard at the left side of the waist. Kings often rewarded their followers with swords, and fathers passed them on to their sons. Long knives and cheap single-edged swords were used by common carls.

Battle axes were cheaper alternatives to swords, but just as effective in battle. The major difference between swords and axes was that an axe was liable to break more easily. The Norse

axe was long-hafted with a large iron head. Just as with swords, the wealthy sometimes had axes with engraved and decorated heads. Hatchets were used for throwing and in melee.

Javelins were widely used, especially by poorer carls. On rare occasions the heads were engraved but they were not status symbols. They were meant to be thrown at enemies as a secondary weapon, but some Vikings used heavier spears in melee.

When hunting, nobles preferred bows and arrows. Norse bows were constructed from yew and averaged one and a half paces in length. The arrows had wooden shafts topped with iron heads. In combat, bows would be used before the two sides closed with hand weapons.

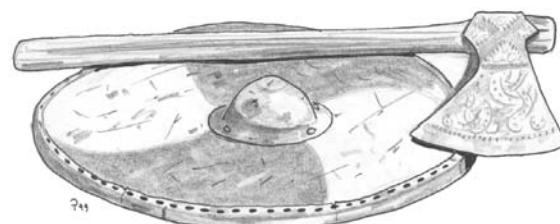
Norse shields were round, wooden with metal rims, and generally protected from chin to knee. A metal boss adorned the shield's center. Shields were often brightly painted.

Armor was an expensive and rare commodity, often imported and rarely buried with the deceased. Chain and scale mail were the most common types, covering the torso, arms, and the top of the thighs in a single coat. Helmets were round, metal, and often adorned with nose or eye-nose guards. Neck guards were occasionally placed on the back. Helmets with antlers tied to them could be worn during rituals, but were too clumsy for use in combat. Some Norsemen might tie ravens' wings to the sides of the helmets to signify a link to Odin.



## Fortifications

Compared to the rest of Europe, Norse settlements were almost devoid of fortifications. Market towns and harbors were protected by low ramparts, circular or semi-circular in shape, built using fill from the excavation of exterior ditches. Wooden palisades ran along the tops of the ramparts. Timber-lined gateways completed the structures. If an area was attacked, men and





animals could be taken inside the rampart and the gates closed. Independent fortified buildings and castles were unheard of until the late 12th century, and were rare in the 13th.

Fjords, beaches, and narrow river channels were strategically blocked with underwater wooden stakes or large stones to prevent landings by enemy forces. Some river channels were permanently blocked in this way, and pilots had to know their way through the defenses or risk running aground.

## The Danevirke

One exception to the rule of minimal fortifications was the Danevirke. Started in the mid-8th century, the Danevirke stretched across the southern border of Denmark from Hedeby to the Rivers Rheide and Treene. This effectively protected the southeast of the country, and natural swampy ground to the southwest provided adequate protection for the rest of the border.

The earliest Danevirke was a large earthen rampart fronted with timber. Along the top ran a wooden palisade, which gave the defenders protection from arrows and spears. Initially the wall was only 4 miles long, but over the centuries was extended until it reached a length of some 25 miles. Where the ground was firm, a ditch ran in front of the rampart, acting as a dry moat. In later periods the wall was fortified with stone and bricks.

The wall was not impregnable and in 974 warfare broke out between the Danes and the German Empire. The wall fell to the invaders and German troops were garrisoned at the border. Only in 983 was the wall recaptured.

Although there is no firm historical reason for the building of the fortification, the Danish king at the time was a fierce opponent of Christianity and also had trouble with the Saxons living in northern Germany. In the late 8th century Charlemagne had conquered the Saxons and border disputes arose with the Danes. It was also at this time that the Danes began raiding the Frankish coast, adding to the tensions already present.

## Battles

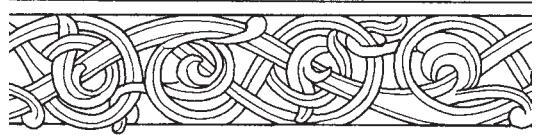
Before the start of any battle, the leaders of Norse armies made speeches designed to inspire their men to acts of bravery and personal sacrifice. Following the speech came a series of insults between the two armies, the content and nature of which were dictated by custom and tradition. The rattling of weapons against shields and fierce battle cries were also used to demoralize the opposition.

Most battles began with a hail of arrows and thrown javelins, to be followed by a charge, accompanied by battle cries. The initial clash often resulted in both armies passing deep into each other's ranks before fighting actually began. Horns were used to direct the forces once battle had begun, as shouted orders would have been unintelligible.

Cavalry was a new addition to the 12th-century Scandinavian army, and was most popular in Denmark and Sweden where the terrain was more amenable to horse tactics. When used, Norse cavalry was often kept in reserve to support weak parts of the line, or to outflank enemies. Only the wealthy could afford professional cavalry (often German mercenaries), and they were usually only seen as a part of a king's elite force of huscarls.

The svinfylking formed their boar-head battle formation with two champions fighting at the snout, and leading the formation into battle. The formation was designed to punch through enemy ranks, lead by the champions, and then break apart to engage in single combat.

Whoever was leading the attack rode at the front of the army accompanied by his most loyal and trusted huscarls. His position in battle was marked by his battle standard, which was carried by a huscarl who had proven himself courageous and fiercely loyal in battle. The standard bearer's job was vital, for if the standard fell the army would fear that its leader was dead or captured, and might withdraw from the field.



# Chapter 4

# Character Creation

## Characters

Creating a Norse character is no different than making a regular **Ars Magica** character. Hermetic magi do not dwell in the frozen lands of the Norse, but there are native magicians who wield strange powers. As well, there are companion and grog professions unique to the Northlands. Examples of Norse characters can be found at the end of the chapter.

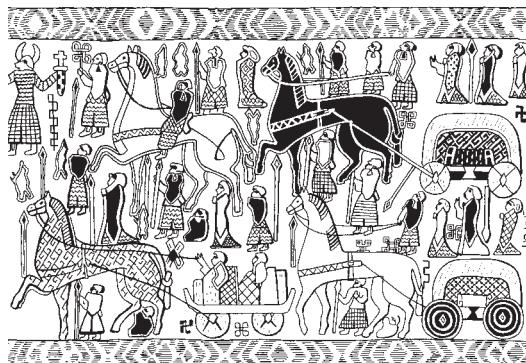
There are three ways to set up a Norse saga. The players can create normal **Ars Magica** characters who interact with an environment that is strange to most members of the Order of Hermes. They can create Norse characters who take on roles equivalent to magi, companions, and grogs, but all with a distinctive Norse flavor. Finally, they can create Norse characters for use in a Hermetic covenant somewhere in the rest of Mythic Europe.

If taking the first option, it must be remembered that, while the characters in standard Hermetic sagas begin at a covenant, tied to each other by common bonds, in Scandinavia there are no covenants in which Hermetic magicians live, work, and study. A Norse saga focuses on settlements of mundane people as the hub of player activity, and most characters, whether they are magi, companions, or grogs, should begin the game working for someone, as Norse society is based on people living in communities and supporting each other.

If the second option is picked, native Norse characters can fill the magus, companion,

ion, and grog roles. The magus is replaced by a Norse vitki or Finnish wind wizard who, while less powerful, will receive much more respect in Norse society than a magus would elsewhere in Mythic Europe. Companions represent people who have made names for themselves, whether that be as skalds, important warriors (huscarls), or even as the jarl's favorite juggler. Lastly, there are the grogs: professional warriors (dreng), carl farmers, a craftsman's apprentices, or, rarely, thralls. Even a huscarl could be a grog, accepting a position of willing servitude because of loyalty to a lord.

The third option will perhaps be the least confusing to the average player, but will also make less use of the opportunities presented by the Norse culture and political situation. If a mixed Norse/Hermetic covenant is being assembled, Norse vitkir and Finnish wind wizards can take mystic companion slots. (Mystic companions can occupy either a player's companion or magus slot, at the troupe's option. A more complete discussion can be found in *Hedge Magic*, pages 31 - 32)





# Norse Spell Casters

## Vitkir

The vitkir practice magic based on the runes and claim that the chief Norse god, Odin, gave them the runes in return for service and sacrifice. In Norse society the vitki is part priest, part judge, part mediator, part counselor, and part warrior. A vitki wields more subtle magic than a Hermetic magus, designed to help people directly rather than by means of external magical effects. Peasants who have problems with their private lives or with their businesses consult vitkir for help, but few peasants would be brave enough to consult magi.

To make a vitki character follow the character generation steps given in the *Ars Magica* Fourth Edition rulebook, substituting the changed sections below where necessary.



## Starting Abilities

A vitki begins play with the following basic Abilities: Speak (Western or Eastern) Norse 5, Scribe Runes 3, Legend Lore 2, Area Lore 2, Rune Casting 4, Rune Scripts 1, Rune Bindings 1, and Theology (Norse) 3.

Starting Experience: Age + 5, with five additional experience points which must be spent on Abilities that involve social interaction

Unlike a Hermetic magus, a vitki is brought up to represent his people and to deal with those of greater and lesser station with equal ease.

## Starting Magic

A Norse vitki does not use magic like Hermetic magus, but instead taps into the mystic power of the ancient runes, which were first used by the god Odin. Each vitki starts with the knowledge of all 24 runes at a rudimentary level; a score of 0 with each rune. The vitki has 50 points to spend on learning more about specific runes and these are spent in a manner similar to that of magi purchasing their Arts (see ArM4 page 60).

For further information on the runes and how to use them, see the Performing Norse Magic and Runes and Their Powers chapters. Descriptions of the magical abilities of a vitki are detailed below in the “New Abilities” section beginning on page 69.

## Virtues and Flaws

Not all the standard *Ars Magica* Virtues and Flaws are open to a vitki, while some work in different ways.

## Required Virtue

**Patron** (variable): Whether it be a powerful jarl, a clan chief’s warband, or a small fishing village, the vitki has attached himself to an individual or community that provides him with the basics of life (food, shelter, and

warmth) in return for favors and aid in times of need. It is the vitki's lot in life to aid those in need, and his apprenticeship has prepared him for such service. The vitki is generally regarded as a counsellor to his patron and may be called upon to give advice or help pass judgement at a Thing.

Unlike the Patron Virtue on ArM4 page 44, the cost of a vitki's patron depends on its size and status, as shown below.

**+1 Virtue:** The vitki is part of a small village community, and while he has limited resources at his disposal and lives a simple life, he has little actual work to do aside from watching over the locals.

**+2 Virtue:** The vitki is associated with a large village, a minor noble, or a merchant. His tasks include managing daily affairs and acting on behalf of his patron, but he has his own dwelling and a small income for his troubles.

**+3 Virtue:** A powerful noble, an extremely wealthy merchant, or a small town has taken in the vitki. In return for wealth, comfortable living conditions, and the occasional rest period, the vitki is heavily involved in the day-to-day affairs of his patron and is often involved in several tasks at once.

## Forbidden Virtues and Flaws

- Beginning Vis (ArM4 40)
- Diabolic Upbringing (ArM4 49)
- Educated (ArM4 41)
- Feral Upbringing (ArM4 49)
- Further Education (ArM4 41)
- Indulgences (ArM4 43)
- Lycanthrope (ArM4 49)
- Relic (ArM4 45)
- Sense Holiness/Unholiness (ArM4 42)
- Simple-Minded (ArM4 48)
- Troupe Upbringing (ArM4 42)
- Weak-Willed (ArM4 48)

Due to the nature of vitkir, they may take the -1 Flaw: Magical Air (ArM4 47), normally only available to companions and grogs. Unlike a Hermetic magus, a vitki has no Gift forming the seat of his power, just knowledge of how to manipulate the runes.

## Seithkona

*Loddfafnir, listen to my counsel;  
You will fare well if you follow it,  
It will help you much  
If you heed it.  
Shun a woman, wise in magic,  
Her bed and her embraces;  
If she cast a spell  
You will care no longer  
To meet and speak with men,  
Desire no food,  
Desire no pleasure  
In sorrow fall asleep.*

— From the *Havamal*

The seithkonur (singular seithkona) practice **seithr:** witchcraft. They are almost exclusively female; the rare male practitioners are called seithmathr and must be Transvestites (a -2 Flaw; see WGRE, page 66). Seithr is seen as unclean magic by the Norse: while rune-use was a gift of the god Odin, seithr was taught to women by Gullveig ("Goldbranch"), a goddess (some say giantess) so wicked that she introduced greed to the gods, sparking the war between the Aesir and the Vanir. The Aesir eventually had her burned three times, but she was so evil that the clean flames would not consume her flesh.

Despite this appalling reputation, the seithkonur are consulted more frequently by the Norse than any other magical practitioners; despite the fact that they are forced to keep their powers a secret from the authorities, somehow the common folk seem to know where to find them when a need develops, and they maintain the seithkonur's secret out of self-interest.

In most respects, the seithkonur are identical to the cunning-folk of *Hedge Magic*, and their magic is a consequence of a long association with faeries (the landvaettir). Instead of the Visions Exceptional Ability, a seithkona makes use of a *fylgia*, an animal spirit that tends to attach itself to certain families. She





can borrow the shape of her fylgja and, while her body goes into a sleep-like state, she can travel abroad in spiritual form. This ability is covered by the Exceptional Talent Hamfarir, detailed on page 73. The fylgja can also come to the seithkona in dreams to warn her of danger. In this respect they grant the witch the Talent of Premonitions — see “Changed Virtues,” page 71. However, they also possess a Bad Reputation as witches, which begins at a level of 2.

Many seithkona have preserved the knowledge of the rituals of worship associated with the Vanir, and may be priestesses of Freyja. A seithkona often has the Skinchanger Virtue, and is able to take the physical form of her fylgja (the Hamfarir Ability allows her only to borrow the fylgja’s spiritual form).

Starting Abilities include: Chirurgy 2, Craft Charm 2, Craft Bane 2, Faerie Lore 3, Faerie Sight 2, Folk Magic 4, Herbalism 4, Hamfarir 2, Premonitions 1

Seithkonur have a minimum age of 20, and receive age + 10 experience points

## Fylgjur

The *fylgjur* (singular: *fylgja*) are animal spirits that attach themselves to certain humans. They are closely tied with the pagan Norse concept of the soul, and can be inherited from an ancestor just as any other trait might be passed on.

*Fylgjur* are, for the most part, invisible and immaterial. Those who can see them (characters with Second Sight or Faerie Sight, for example) say that they always take the form of an animal, and they are attracted to persons who have characteristics of that animal. The *fylgjur* of seithkonur are most often falcons, cats, and hares — the animals associated with the goddess Freyja.

*Fylgjur* usually have Magic Mights of about 10, and rarely have any significant powers. They are roughly as intelligent as children, but have little ability to interact with the physical world. They are also unable

to speak. The only people who can feel them (should the *fylgjur* wish it) are those to whom they have attached themselves, which, in game terms, are represented by two Virtues: Hamfarir (page 73) and Premonitions (page 71).

## Shamans

Norse shamans are normally found among the isolated settlements of northern Norway and Sweden, where the old ways are still firmly entrenched and the Church fears to tread. Here shamans are the spiritual leaders of the northern Sami and spokesmen with the spirit world.

A player who wishes to create a Norse shaman character should use the rules presented in the *Ars Magica* supplement *The Dragon and the Bear*. There are no changes required for Norse shamans.

Characters who can shapechange, normally found in shamanic tribes across the world, are less common in Norse society, where only the vitki and bersarkr are attributed with shapeshifting powers. A player wishing to run a shapechanger should choose one of those professions for his character.

## Wind Wizards

Another possible magic-using character type is the Finnish wind wizard, an outsider to both Norse and mainland European society. Details about this character type are found in the Other Magic Systems chapter, beginning on page 107.



# Norse Grogs and Companions

## Companion Social Class Virtues and Flaws

Below is a list of the companion social classes that are available to beginning Norse companions. Unless otherwise stated, all equipment or Virtues and Flaws associated with a social class remain the same as on ArM4 pages 38 and 39.

Most of the social classes linked to Flaws in the *Ars Magica* rulebook are not suitable for Norse characters, as to be outlawed from one's family left a person on his own in a culture where friends and family were highly prized. Although many Norse heroes were outlaws, they were also very powerful and had many allies and friends. Normally they lived short but exciting lives. A companion could be an outlaw in another province, being sheltered by a local nobleman, but this requires some careful thought as the character's life could become difficult if he moves from his sanctuary.

**Thrall/Ambatt** (-2): You are a slave, and as such you are another man's property. You have few rights, being unable to own land. Should you be caught lawbreaking, you will be beaten, maimed, or killed.

**Leysingi** (-1): You are a freed slave, although still dependent on your former owner and family for a number of generations. You cannot institute legal proceedings against your former owner, and if you win money in a court case you owe a portion to him. This is the equivalent of the Obligations Flaw.

**Wanderer** (-1): You are not tied to any liege or community, and as such you have no rights according to most Scandinavian laws. Since horses are rare in Scandinavia, the wanderer does not begin the saga with one, although he does possess a pair of skis.

**Carl** (0): The standard freeman of Norse society. Most Norsemen are farmers, but many have trades which enable them to work around the farm repairing fences and plows, and the like.

**Böndi** (0): You are a free man, and either you or your family own a farm. Because of this you have an Obligation (equivalent to the Flaw) to spend either the harvest or the sowing season helping your family work the land. This Virtue is the same as the Prosperous Peasant Virtue, except that your yearly income amounts to only 250 pfenning.

**Mendicant** (+1): As the Church continues to push into the heartland of Scandinavia, more and more mendicants are moving among the population, spreading the word of God. There is no difference between the mendicants in Scandinavia and those found elsewhere.





**Smithr (+1):** You have a reputation as a craftsman. You are considered to be part of the carl class, but command a great deal of respect because of your talents. Accomplished blacksmiths and ship-builders are especially honored, though other trades of note are rune-carvers (making memorial stones), masons, and woodcarvers — basically any manual trade. You begin play with the Reputation “Skilled” at level 2, but you had better have the skill to back this up or it will quickly be lost.

**Odalsböndi (+1):** Also called a *hauldr* in Norway. You are a landowner with hereditary right to your land. You rarely have the obligations of a böndi because you have a number of tenant farmers and/or slaves to do much of the work. Odal rights are fiercely maintained as they distinguish a family claim, and cannot be usurped by jarls or the konung. Equivalent to the Prosperous Peasant Virtue.

**Skald (+2):** Skalds are the poets and storytellers of the Norse and respected members of a community. Their ability to memorize thousands of lines of poetry is legendary, and they can recite long passages at will.

A skald character gains the new Virtue Audio Eidetic Memory (see page 73) as part of being a skald. He also begins the game with an automatic level in Storytelling, representing a small repertoire of tales. If the character has any Play (Instrument) skill, he begins the game with an appropriate instrument.

**Landsmathr (+2):** As one of the landsmenn you are a part of the lowest rank of the ruling class. You must be able to maintain and field 40 armed men in the levy. This position is not hereditary, but is gained through an oath of loyalty to the king. This Virtue is similar to the Lesser Noble Virtue.

**Butescarl (+2):** A mercenary leader paid by a town so that its citizens do not have to take part in the king's host. This is the equivalent of the Mercenary Virtue.

**Styrimathr (+2):** You are captain of a ship. You have little actual wealth, as it is tied up in your ship, although with it you have the potential to gain money through trade or piracy. You may choose either a Snekke or Smabyrding (see pages 45 - 46) as your beginning ship. You have a crew of 8 to 12, all of whom are sailors, not soldiers, and who must be paid for their services. You must hire a separate fighting force to protect your possessions. Your social rank is that of carl.

**Bryti (+3):** You are a steward of the royal estates. You receive a wage of 40 pfennig a month, and wield the authority of the king in most matters (as the Temporal Influence Virtue). You are often looked upon as a neutral, mediating in disputes.

**Gothi (+3):** You are a chieftain; the leader of a district. This contains at least one major settlement, and probably several smaller ones. In pagan lands, you are responsible for conducting the public rituals of the local gods. Your position is not hereditary, but you are elected into the office for life. You do not own the land that you oversee, but have possession of a large family farm, which generates about 500 pfennig per year. You must perform the duties of a magistrate quarterly at the Thing.



**Hersar** (+4): You possess a lordship at the king's pleasure. The lands you own are yours by grant from the king, and are handed back upon your death for redistribution. Apart from that, you have all the benefits and obligations of the Landed Knight Virtue.

**Lesser Jarl** (+5): You are a fully independent lord, holder of a hereditary title. You, your family, and other jarls are the ruling powers in the region in which you live. You effectively have the Landed Knight Virtue, but are awarded greater respect than a hersar.

## Grog Status Virtues and Flaws

Most grogs are carls at the lower end of the social class. Because thralls were forbidden to carry weapons, it is unlikely that any grog will be from that class. Unlike other sagas, Norse grogs are not necessarily the lower end of the pecking order, used only as muscle for the magi and to do their physical labor for them; Norse grogs are members of the same community as the other characters and can hold important positions within a jarl's retinue. Of course, the vast majority of grogs are merely farmers who take up arms when their jarl calls them for war.

**Gestr** (-1): Part of a lord's retinue (along with the hird). As one of the gestir you have special quarters and your own leader. You act as a policeman for your lord, run errands for him, and do other menial tasks. You have a Bad Reputation as a "Hired Sword," gaining none of the usual special benefits associated with being a member of the retinue of a lord.

**Dreng** (0): The equivalent of the Standard Grog Virtue, the dreng refers to a young warrior. You are a member of the hird, and have taken an oath of loyalty to a lord. In peace time you act as an official for your lord, forming embassies, exacting tribute, recovering dues, and acting as a messenger. You have a spear, an iron cap, and a shield given to you by your lord.

**Lithsmann** (0): You are a professional member of your lord's hird. Your primary duty is to man your lord's ships.

**Lithsmathr** (+1): You are the commander of the fighting contingent of a ship (the equivalent of the Grog Leader Virtue), and a highly respected member of the lord's hird.

**Tinglith** (+1): You are a member of your lord's personal guard — the equivalent of the Custos Virtue. This is also known by the Saxon term huscarl.

**Thegn** (+1): You are a leader of men in the dreng — the equivalent to the Grog Leader Virtue, but applied only to soldiers.

**Bersarkr** (+1): You are known as a feared warrior and distinguish yourself in battle by your berserk fury, during which you roar loudly, bite your shield, and become virtually invulnerable. You do not wear armor other than a bear skin, and have the benefits of the Tough Virtue as well. You have the Reputation "Fearsome" beginning at a score of 1. However, though feared, you are considered somewhat unreliable. Bersarkr usually travel in bands of up to 12, but sometimes wander alone. You must have one of the following Virtues or Flaws to justify your reputation: Shapeshifter, Berserk, Fury, or Lycanthrope.

**Ulfednar** (+1): You are a feared warrior famed for your ferocity. You are distinguished by wearing a wolf skin (*vargstakk*) over a mail shirt (which you gain for free) in battle. Unlike a bersarkr, as an ulfednar you fight alone. It is likely that you have the Shapeshifter Virtue, though even if you do not you will be treated by others as if you do (Reputation as a "Werewolf" at an initial score of 1). You have the Long-Winded Virtue.

**Svinfylking** (+1): You are one of the boar-warriors, a group of fighters known for their wedge formation in battle, with two champions at the *rami*, or snout, of the wedge. You are trained in the skills of disguise and escape, and make a superlative scout. Rolls involving Rogue and Survival Skills in selected areas receive a +3 modifier. Examples might include wilderness survival in a particular terrain, stealth, and disguising yourself at a moment's notice.





# Abilities

## Changed Abilities

Some standard Abilities are not particularly well suited to a Norse campaign; the changes needed to bring them into line are explained below.

**Storytelling:** Skalds can use Storytelling in a manner similar to Lectio, the written text replaced with memorized stories. Skalds may teach Abilities (but not those connected to the usage of magical runes) using the same rules as learning from Lectio but substituting Storytelling for that skill. The skald employs a well-known tale to teach others, both by example and by practice of the knowledge sought. The quality of a character-created story is determined by using Communication + Storytelling as the required roll. To accommodate this, a new Speciality of Teaching is available to characters with this Skill.

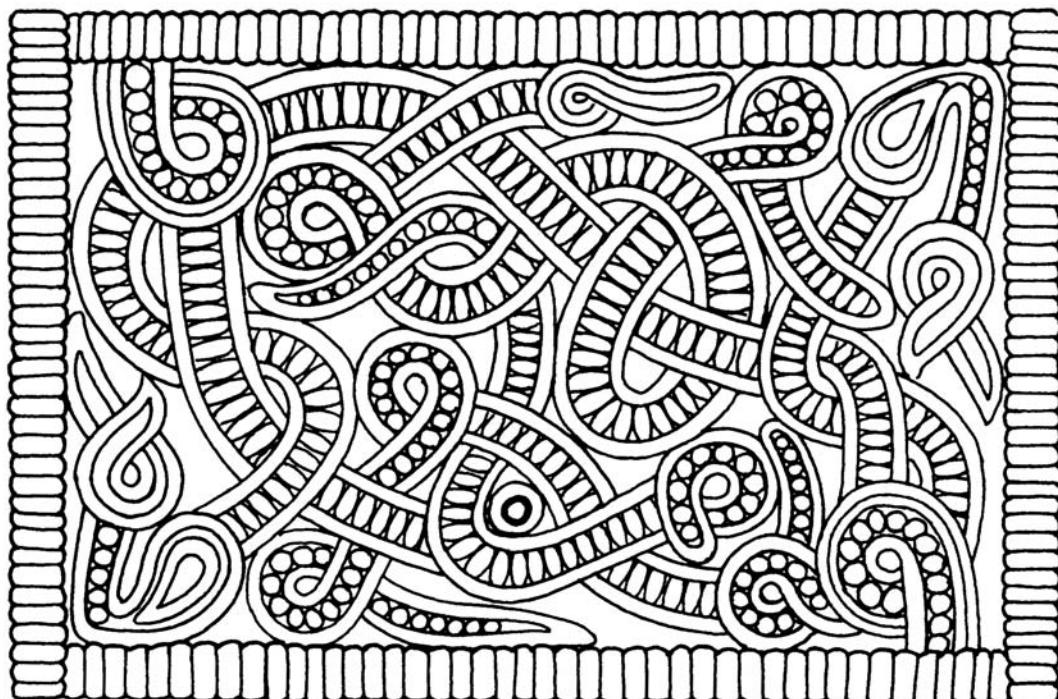
Vitkir and Finnish wind wizards with the Storytelling skill can use it to teach magical Abilities, such as Rune Casting and Rune

Binding, using the same rules as Lectio, but substituting Storytelling skill.

**Speak (Language):** There are two languages spoken in Mythic Scandinavia: the Norwegians speak Western Norse, and the Danish and Swedish speak Eastern Norse. Both languages evolved from a common tongue, Old Norse, and a speaker of one language can be considered to have fluency in the other at half his normal level (rounding fractions up). Finnish and Sami are separate and unrelated languages.

**Scribe Runes:** This Ability is a necessary part of any runic spell-casting. A non-vitki character with this Ability cannot perform feats of magic, but can simply write down sentences using the runic script common throughout Mythic Scandinavia. The Vikings had an oral tradition for much of their history, and books are unlikely to be written in runes.

**Lectio:** There are virtually no books written in Norse runes. However, with the coming of the Church, books written in Latin have made their way to many of the large towns and cities and it is now possible to study these at several monasteries around Mythic Scandinavia. Books in Arabic and Greek are also available in the larger cities, having been imported from Byzantium (Miklagard) and the Holy Land.



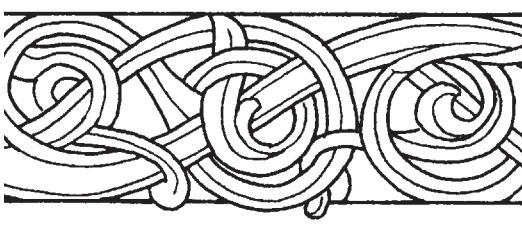
# New Abilities

## Exceptional Talent

**Shapechanging:** All vitki can purchase the Exceptional Talent Shapechange, but they cannot assume any form they wish. Instead, they must be limited to the following animal shapes: raven, bear, wolf, and horse.

While in an animal form the vitki retains his own memories and personality traits, although he does gain an extra Personality Trait of level 3 with the name of the animal form. (Thus, a vitki who has changed to a bear form will have the personality trait "Bear" at level 3.) A vitki may not speak in animal form except in the animal's natural tongue. He may not make use of runes, nor may he use non-natural skills (Climbing and Athletics, for example, are usable but Etiquette and Boating are not).

The table in the insert shows the length of time a character may remain in shapechanged form, based on a Stamina + Shapechange roll. Under normal circumstances a simple die is rolled and the Normal column is used, but under difficult circumstances a stress die is rolled, using the Under Stress column to determine the results. The character may choose to revert back to his human form at any time he wishes prior to the maximum time allowed in the beast form. Characters cannot change from one animal form to another without first reverting back to their original human form.



## Shapechange Duration

Normal N/A	Under Stress Botch	Duration
Less than 5	Less than 8	The character may not change shape again until the next sunset or sunrise, whichever comes first
6 - 8	9 - 11	The character may not change shape until the next scene in the story
9 - 14	12 - 17	One hour
15 - 20	18 - 23	One day
21 or more	24 or more	One week
		One month





## Academic Knowledge

**Norse Law:** The Norse system of civil law bears little resemblance to that of the rest of Europe, which follows the Roman system (though Church law applies regularly in Christian Scandinavia). A character with knowledge of Norse law understands such things as the rights of slaves, the payment of weregeld, how much is an appropriate fine, and how to administer a Thing. Jarls are expected to have a knowledge of the law, as are most vitki. Vitki (and other characters with the storyguide's permission) are allowed to take this Ability without the Virtue Educated. *Specialties: weregeld, thralls, contests.* (Intelligence)

## Arcane Knowledges

**Rune Casting:** Every vitki has the ability to divine the future using the runes without casting a spell, but the answers divined are often vague or couched in riddles. The user picks a certain number of runes from a face-down rune set of carved rune stones or chips and lays them out in a specific pattern upon a white cloth laid on the bare earth, and then interprets the message vouchsafed him from Odin.

To successfully read the meaning, the vitki must make a Perception + Rune Casting roll against an ease factor determined by using the examples in the Divination Virtue on ArM4 page 45. A botched roll results in the vitki completely misinterpreting the answer. (Perception)

**Rune Script:** The easiest way to invoke the power of multiple runes is to make a rune script. This involves writing a group of runes onto a piece of bark, a leaf, or similar perishable material, to invoke their power. See "Rune Scripts" on page 81 for more details. (Intelligence)

**Rune Binding:** A way to make semi-permanent magic items using the runes is to create a rune binding. A rune binding is either a physical object designed to resemble certain runes or a pattern carved into an object. See "Rune Bindings" on page 83 for more details. (Intelligence)

## Casual Knowledge

**Theology (Norse):** The study of the Norse gods and their roles in the lives of men, from legends relating to specific gods, to rituals involved in worshipping them, and their particular strengths and weaknesses are covered by this knowledge. There are no written texts on the gods, all knowledge being passed on by word of mouth. *Specialties: particular god or goddess.* (Intelligence)

## Wilderness Skill

**Skiing:** The snowy winters of Scandinavia make travel by foot hard. To get around the Norse use skis; a large ski on the right foot, and a smaller ski on the left, used to propel the skier forward, much like an ice skater or skateboarder. *Specialties: speed, avoiding hazards, grace.* (Dexterity)

## Forbidden Abilities

The following abilities cannot be learned by starting Norse characters. Some can be picked up during a campaign, given favorable circumstances.

**Certámen** (ArM 55)

**Enigmatic Wisdom** (ArM4 58)

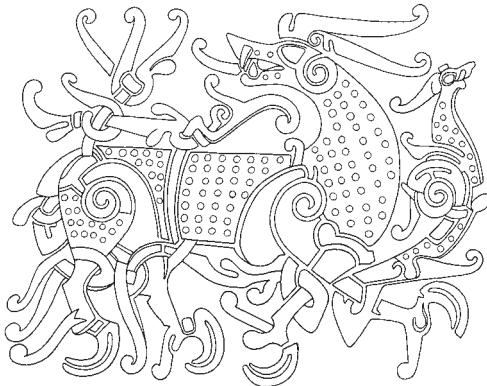
**Finesse** (ArM4 53)

**Magic Theory** (ArM4 58)

(— does not cover rune magic)

**Penetration** (ArM4 53)

**Parma Magica** (ArM4 55)



## Rare Abilities

The following abilities are rare among Norse characters, unless they've spent a great deal of time abroad or in a Church school in one of Scandinavia's growing cities.

### Artes Liberales (ArM4 57)

**Chirurgy** (ArM4 56): Not rare in Mythic Scandinavia, but normally performed by women; men using this Ability may be subjected to ridicule by other Northmen

**Civil and Canon Law** (ArM4 57): Rare amongst non-clergy or non-noble characters

### Medicine (ArM4 58)

### Philosophiae (ArM4 58)

**Pick Locks** (ArM4 55): Locks are rare in Scandinavia, with many doors secured simply be a drop bar; a new speciality of this skill is the ability to open such bars

**Theology** (ArM4 58): Although Christian Scandinavians may possess this skill, it is still rare among the population

whether first or second hand, with the culture of the Arabs, who invented the process. (ArM4 40)

**Premonitions:** To the Norse, one's *fylgja* is responsible for warning against danger. Someone fortunate enough to be in touch with her *fylgja* knows how to heed its warnings. This is the equivalent of the Premonitions Virtue on page 42 of ArM4, manifested differently in the Northlands.

There are three ways that a person might receive a warning from her *fylgja*. The first is that it might appear to her in a dream involving a particular animal indicating that her *fylgja* is trying to tell her something. *Fylgjur* might also appear during the day in the form of animals that no one else can see, occasionally in a situation resembling in a symbolic way the dangerous event. The final way that a *fylgja* might help its owner with a warning is to get under her feet and trip her up. Should a person stumble for no apparent reason, her *fylgja* may be trying to tell her something. This last is the only way that a *fylgja* can affect the physical world. (ArM4 42)



## Changed Virtues

### Variable Virtues

**Faerie Blood:** The sidhe and goblins described on ArM4 page 39 should be replaced by ljossalfar and svartalfar.

**Magic Item:** The magic items described on ArM4 page 40 are based on the Hermetic system; Norse characters can have rune bindings instead. The cost of the binding is given in the insert to the right. Rune bindings for non-vitki characters should be created by the storyguide (keeping the exact level of the particular runes secret) from a description by the player. The minimum cost for this Virtue is 1 point.

### +1 General Virtues

**Alchemy:** Alchemy cannot be learned by Norse characters who have not had contact,

## Magic Item Cost

Number of Runes	Virtue Points
2	+0
3	+1
4	+2
5	+3

Uses per Day	Virtue Points
1	-1
2	0
3	+1
6	+2
12	+3
24	+4
50	+5
Continuous	+6

**Levels of Power:** Every 5 points invested into a rune increases the cost by 1 Virtue point. No bindings purchased through this method may contain level 1 runes.

**Duration:** A character may increase the lifespan of the rune binding (beyond a base of two years) by purchasing extra years at the cost of 1 Virtue point per year.



## +3/+5 General Virtue

**Troll Blood** (formerly Giant Blood): Norse giants are fierce creatures, rarely seen by men and feared by the gods. It is very unlikely that any human has actually ever bred with one. Trolls, on the other hand, are more common than giants, and having troll blood is a trait of several Norse heroes.

Some troll-born characters (known as troll-men) are also known for their strange magical abilities. A companion or magus with Troll Blood also has the +2 Virtue Latent Magic Ability for no cost. The character may choose the nature of his latent power with the approval of the storyguide.

All other benefits and penalties remain the same as for Giant Blood. New Cost: +3 (groggs), +4 (companions), +6 (magi) (ArM4 45)

## +1 Hermetic Virtues

**Deft Rune** (formerly Deft Art): You are particularly skilled at using a particular rune. When using that rune (either singly or in a script or binding) your botch dice are reduced by one (to a minimum of one die) and all penalties to your casting rolls are halved. Only vitki characters may have this Virtue. (ArM4 34)

**Extra Chants** (formerly Extra Arts): The wind wizard begins the game with 5 extra points to distribute between his Chants. This Virtue may be taken more than once. (ArM4 34)

**Fast Caster**: You can create a rune script quicker than normal. Rather than using the standard creation times for a rune script, you have a natural flair for quick but accurate runes, and can perform the task in half the normal time, rounding down. When creating a single rune, the vitki may add +3 to any fast cast roll. New cost: +2 (ArM4 34)

## +4 Hermetic Virtues

**Magical Affinity**: Affinity With (specific) Chant: This allows a wind wizard to develop an affinity to one of the four Chants he uses to perform magic. The character develops a Talent in the Affinity which begins at level 1 and can be increased with experience points. (ArM4 34)

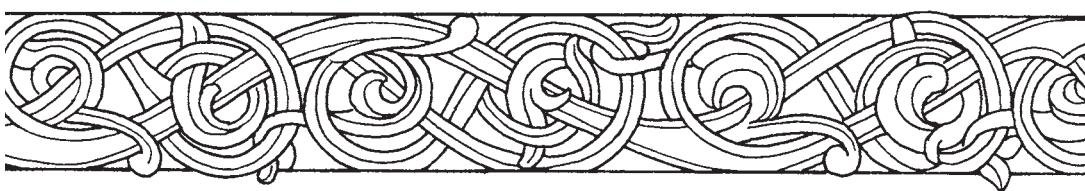
## Changed Flaws

### -1 General Flaw

**Missing Eye**: Along with the penalties described on ArM4 page 47, a Norse character having only one eye, especially a vitki or bersarkr, is likely to be thought of by pagans as being devoutly dedicated to the god Odin, who plucked out his own eye in return for a drink from Mimir's Well. If the character lost an eye by accident, he will have the reputation "Blessed by Odin" (Pagan Norsemen) 2. If he removed his own eye as a sign of his loyalty to Odin, he will have the reputation "Dedicated to Odin" (Pagan Norsemen) 2, and will be expected to be brave, loyal, and wise at all times. (ArM4 47)

### -2 Hermetic Flaw

**Short-Lived Runes**: Your rune bindings do not last as long as normal, and function at one magnitude of Iss lower than normal. So, a rune binding with an Iss 20 rune in it lasts for only the duration of a normal Iss 15-level rune, one season rather than one year.



# New Virtues and Flaws

## +2 Virtue

**Hamfarir:** Hamfarir literally means “shape-faring,” or “going abroad in the shape of another.” All seithkonur, and a few others, have the ability to borrow their fylgja’s body and travel around in it. Possession of this Virtue grants the character an Exceptional Talent, Hamfarir, at a score of 1, which can be increased in the usual way.

The process of transferring the mind into the fylgja requires an Intelligence + Hamfarir roll of 9+. If this roll is successful, the seithkona’s body lapses into a trance, while her mind wanders in fylgja form. In this shape she is immaterial and invisible, and can move at incredible speeds, managing up to a day’s travel in a single hour (as a guide she can move nine times faster than the animal type of her fylgja). However, if she wishes to be able to see anything of the physical world, she must travel at a more moderate pace. While in this form her presence can be felt by those with Magic Sensitivity, and she can only be seen by those succeeding at Second Sight rolls. Intélego Mentem magic can also reveal her presence, while other Mentem magics can affect her as they would any other spirits.

While in this spiritual state, the seithkona can spy upon the physical world, able to hear and see everything that goes on. While in the form of her fylgja, the seithkona has no difficulty understanding speech in languages she herself understands. She can also borrow the fylgja’s spirit ability to understand any spoken language, but the level of fluency achieved is the equivalent of a Speak Languages Knowledge of level 3. She cannot read writing in this form except in languages in which she is already literate, as fylgja do not themselves understand writing. A seithkona in the shape of a fylgja cannot affect

the material world in any way, nor can she be affected by the physical world.

A seithkona in fylgja form can attempt to enter the dreams of a sleeping person. This requires a Int + Hamfarir roll, resisted by the Stamina +3 of her target. If the seithkona successfully enters another’s dreams, she can give that person a vivid dream in which an animal speaks to him in her voice, a dream he will remember when he wakes.

The hamfaring seithkona can remain out of her body a number of hours equal to her Hamfarir score. If unable to return in this time, her body starts to lose fatigue levels at the rate of one every 20 minutes. Should she fall unconscious in this way, she immediately loses control of the fylgja and returns to her body, but loses a point of Stamina permanently. In this situation, her fylgja remains wherever she left it; if it is trapped and she cannot free it, then she loses the ability to use both her Hamfarir and Premonitions until it is freed.

**Runic Affinity:** You have a special affinity with one specific rune and gain a new Talent: (Specific Rune) Affinity. All rolls involving that rune are made with a bonus equal to your score in the Affinity. The Affinity skill begins at level 1. This Virtue may be taken more than once for different runes. Only vitki characters may choose this Virtue.

## +3 Virtues

**Audio Eidetic Memory:** Similar to Visual Eidetic Memory (ArM4 45), you have an excellent memory for words and noises and can memorize thousands of lines of prose. When trying to recall a general conversation or other noise, the character gains a +3 bonus. More exact details can be remembered on a similar roll but with a +6 bonus.

**Exceptional Talent: Shapechanging:** The ability to change from human form into that of another creature. Gives the character the Shapechange talent at level 1. Only vitki and characters with the Latent Magic Virtue may take this Virtue. The exact description of this skill is detailed above, at page 69.





**Raven of Odin** (Hrafn Odin): You have made a name for yourself for your wisdom, advice, and sense of justice, and have been chosen as a Raven of Odin. Like the quaesitor in the Order of Hermes, you are awarded special privileges, such as free board at the homes of noblemen, the right to question a

## Hogni Steinthorsson, Vitki (Sample Magical Character)

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 1, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Age:** 26

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 2

**Virtues and Flaws:** Patron (Jarl Togsvig) +3, Raven of Odin +3, Temporal Influence +2, Deft Rune (Bjarkan) +1, Higher Purpose (prove that Odin is more powerful than the Christian god) +1, Dark Secret (has slept with lord's eldest daughter) -1, Expenses (being blackmailed) -1, Low Self-Esteem -1, Tormenting Master -1, Curse of Venus -2, Plagued by Angel -4

**Personality Traits:** Charming +2, Thoughtful +1, Persuasive +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawling (fist)	-2	-2	-2	0	-2

**Soak:** +2

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Area Lore 2, Charm 2, Etiquette 3, Folk Ken 2, Guile 1, Intrigue 1, Legend Lore 3, Norse Law 2, Rune Binding 2, Rune Casting 4, Rune Script 2, Scribe Latin 2, Scribe Runes 3, Speak Western Norse 5, Theology (Norse) 1

**Magical Arts:** Bjarkan 6, Iss 3, Tyr 4, Ur 3, Jera 2, Mathr 2, Yngvi 1

**Equipment:** Fur cloak, bag of rune stones, sharp knife

**Encumbrance:** -0.5

*Hogni serves Jarl Togsvig as his advisor and have done so for several years. Hogni's magical talents rest with aiding the jarl's warriors, both with healing and with increasing their combat prowess. When not working for the jarl, he aids the villagers. After the last Yule feast, he spent the night with Jarl Togsvig's eldest daughter. Although he thought he wasn't seen, he is being blackmailed by an unknown person. Since a priest of the Hvitachrist moved into the neighboring village, Hogni has found himself tormented by one of his bound spirits. Friendly to most, Hogni has a distrust of the Finn who aids his lord on occasion.*

nobleman's decisions, and protection from the law for minor infractions, but you're expected to be able to deal with legal matters and give advice when called upon.

With the coming of the Catholic Church, Christian priests are beginning to fill the roles traditionally held by vitkir and there are fewer hrafn than in centuries past. The privileges of hrafn have also been degraded.

Most who take this position add the suffix "the Raven" (Hrafn) to their first names, denoting their status to others. Ravens whose given first name is Hrafn generally avoid using the suffix. This Virtue is only open to vitkir.

### Variable Flaw

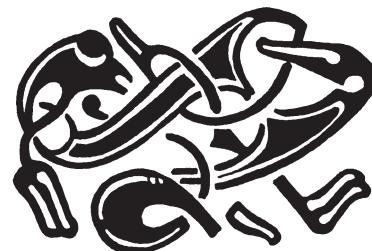
**Blood Feud:** Your family is involved in a blood feud. The opposing family or families are roughly equal in strength to your family and its allies. The cost of this Flaw depends on the nature of the feud:

- 1 Blood has not yet been spilled
- 2 A few deaths have occurred
- 3 The feud is a full-fledged bloodbath
- 1 (additional) The feud is fuelled by supernatural powers

You are likely to be attacked or ambushed by opposing clansmen, and your family expects you to join raids against its enemies.

### -1 Flaw

**Forbidden Rune:** Through some quirk of fate, you are absolutely unable to learn one specific rune. This Flaw can be taken more than once, and is only open to vitki.



# Jarl Togsvig's Lands

The lands of Jarl Togsvig and the sample characters in this section can be used as the basis for a saga, or merely as somewhere a troupe can visit on their travels.

Jarl Togsvig's lands consist of his personal stead and three fishing villages nestled on the sides of a fjord. A total of just over 1,000 people swear allegiance to Togsvig, paying taxes and supplying men for the army as required.

## *The Jarl's Family*

Jarl Togsvig's family has ruled the lands around his home fjord for many generations and he is proud to say that his great-great-great-grandfather fought at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, the last great Viking raid into Europe (albeit one in which the Vikings were defeated). Togsvig is still active, although he is now in his 50th year. Once a good warrior, he contents himself with running his demesne, hunting, and teaching his sons the arts of war and politics.

Togsvig is married to Ragnhild, the daughter of a local hersar and now Togsvig's vassal. Ragnhild is considerably younger than her husband, having just reached her late-30s. The couple have been married for 20 years and have four children: sons Thorbjorn (19) and Rolf (14), and daughters Astrid (16) and Ingrid (11). Thorbjorn is the designated heir, and has spent the last three years at school in Trondheim, learning how to read



and write, as well as other subjects. Astrid, who has reached the age of consent, has yet to marry and this is causing her father some heartache.

Unbeknownst to Togsvig, Astrid has been cavorting with his vitki, Hogni. Were this to become common knowledge, one of



## Mika Hakinnen, Finnish Wind Wizard (Sample Magical Character)

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per +1, Pre -1, Com 0, Str , Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik +2

**Age:** 23

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Ways of the Mountains +4, Faerie Friend (air spirit) +2, Secret Hiding Place +1, Special Circumstance (whistling) +1, Susceptibility to Divine -4, Common Fear (buildings) -2, Sheltered Upbringing -2, Outsider -2

**Personality Traits:** Distant +1, Flighty +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawling (fist)	-1	-2	-2	0	-2

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Climb 2, Craft (Knot Tying) 5, Faerie Lore 1, Hunt 1, Jotunheim Mountain Lore 2, Legend Lore 2, Play Flute 2, Speak Finnish 5, Speak Western Norse 3, Survival 1, Swim 1, Weather Sense 3

**Chants:** Summon 3, Insight 3, Control 7, Remove 4

**Equipment:** Flute, warm robe, six knotted ropes (three with 6 knots, one with 5 knots, one with 3 knots, and one with 2 knots)

**Encumbrance:** 0

*Born in Finland, Mika traveled through Scandinavia until he reached the Jotunheim Mountains. The mountains are some of the wildest terrain he's ever encountered and he feels at home camped under the stars. The local lord, Jarl Togsvig, has asked for his aid on several occasions and he maintains good relations with the jarl and his people. Because of his dislike of buildings and his upbringing, he has located a cave high in the mountains that he calls home. He is very much the outsider, and is likely to remain that way in the close-knit Nordic community, although Eindridi the skald has made attempts to get to know him.*

## Vandrard the Unruly, Bersarkr

(Sample Companion)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre +1, Com 0, Str +2, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Age:** 22

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Faerie Friend +2, Reserves of Strength +2, Berserk +1, Large +1, Tough +1, Weakness (alcohol) -1, Social Handicap -1, Fury (insults to your lord) -3, Sense of Doom (die fighting a giant) -3

**Personality Traits:** Angry +2, Brave +3, Loyal +3, Anti-Social +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat	Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Axe/Round Shield	+5	+6	+7	+8	+5	Throwing Axe	+3	+3	+2	+7	+3
Axe	+3	+4	+3	+8	+4	Brawling (fist)	+3	+3	+1	+3	+4

**Soak:** +8

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Brawl 3, Carouse 2, Jarl Togsvig's Court Lore 1, Faerie Lore 1, Leadership 1, Shield & Weapon 4, Single Weapon 3, Skiing 2, Speak Western Norse 5, Survival 2, Swim 1, Thrown Weapon 3

**Equipment:** Full fur armor, one-handed axe, throwing axe, round shield

**Encumbrance:** -0.5

*Vandrard's purpose in life is to die in battle. He has dedicated himself to Odin and Jarl Togsvig and is determined to serve both faithfully and without question. His unruly nature and foul social habits mean he does not have many friends, but he is happy drinking and preparing his weapons for the next fight. He has a little respect for Bodvar, but he is only half the man Vandrard is. Since Hogni prophesied your death at the hands of a giant he has listened more intently to Eindridi's stories.*

## Eindridi Oddsson, Skald

(Sample Companion)

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +2, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik -1

**Age:** 25

**Size:** -1

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Skald +2, Famous +2, Cautious with Storytelling +1, Free Expression +1, Troupe Upbringing +1, Mimicry +1, Small-Frame -2, Noncombatant -3, Arthritis -3

**Reputation:** Excellent Storyteller 4 (Jarl Togsvig's lands)

**Personality Traits:** Inventive +2, Brave -1, Dependable +1, Smooth Talker +1

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawling (fist)	+3	+2	+3	+0	+2

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Awareness 1, Carouse 2, Charm 2, Etiquette 2, Faerie Lore 2, Folk Ken 3, Guile 2, Legend Lore 2, Mimicry 3, Scribe Runes 3, Sing 2, Speak Western Norse 5, Storytelling 4

**Equipment:** Half fur armor

**Encumbrance:** 0

*Eindridi has been trained in the ways of the skald by his father, also a skald, and has spent many years memorizing poems and stories. His tales always attract a good audience and only last year Jarl Togsvig appointed Eindridi to his hall. Since then he's had the jarl's protection and has been rewarded well for his talents. He has been trying to get close to Mika the Finn to learn the stories of his people, but has had little success.*

two outcomes is likely. The jarl could demand Hogni marry her, but as Astrid would be of more use married to some nobleman to forge an alliance this is unlikely. A more likely outcome is that Hogni will be punished, possibly by branding, and Astrid sent to a monastery. One member of the hird has discovered the affair, and has decided to make a little extra money by blackmailing Hogni.

## The Jarl's Stead

The jarl's longhouse is similar in design to the smaller houses of carls, but on a larger scale. Much of the area is given over to a feasting hall, where the jarl, his family, and the dreng eat their meals. As is common in Scandinavia, his tinglith, his advisors, and his skald also make the common area their bedroom, having sleeping spaces along the walls with storage space underneath. Personal space is a rare commodity in such tight-knit communities, and this keeps them close to their lord in case of trouble or if he should wish to speak to them.

At the back of the hall are the rooms of Togsvig and Ragnhild, and his three children (Thorbjorn being in far-off Trondheim). In most carls' houses, everyone sleeps in one area divided only by blankets or drapes, but Togsvig is wealthy enough to have a little privacy. Other rooms include the treasury, a storeroom, and the rooms of the jarl's most trusted bodyguards.

Outside the main hall are several other buildings, notably the storage hut, the food store, the animal house, several workshops, the vitki's house, and the thralls' hut. Although Togsvig pays lip-service to the Hvitachrist, he still believes in the power of the old gods and maintains a number of non-Christian thralls. He maintains a boat house on the fjord housing a snekke and a knarr. Fields, maintained by the slaves, contain barley, flax, wheat, rye, and vegetables. Other necessary foodstuffs (especially fish) are gathered from the local villages, although fresh meat comes from hunting or from the jarl's stocks of cows.

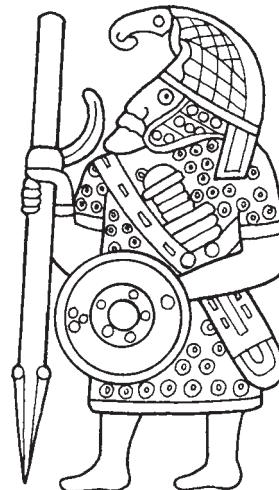
Among the craftsmen who live at the stead are a carpenter, a blacksmith, and a potter. There is also a longhouse for the 70 members of the jarl's dreng, who eat in the main hall, but have their own quarters for sleeping, to differentiate them from the tinglith.

## Adventures on Jarl Togsvig's Lands

**A Quiet Affair:** Hogni, the vitki, has finally had enough of being blackmailed for his "little mistake" and hires the troupe to subtly uncover the blackmailer and persuade him to keep quiet for free. Hogni has little material wealth, but can offer rune magic as payment. The blackmailer, a member of the hird, can be someone as lowly as a minor advisor or soldier, or as powerful as the jarl's senior tinglith.

**Infestation:** A troll has wandered into the jarl's lands and has made its home in the nearby forest. The area peasants are afraid to work the fields, and with harvest due soon Togsvig sends members of his hird to deal with the creature. For experienced parties, the troll could be capable of using magic.

**A Mysterious Illness:** Togsvig has been cursed with an illness by a vitki of one of his enemies. As the curse strengthens, the jarl grows weaker, and he is now near death. His wife orders members of his hird to find the culprit and force him to reverse his magic.



## Bodoar Åkisson, Huscarl

(Sample Grog)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre +1, Com 0, Str +2, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Age:** 19

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Trusted Dreng +1, Temporal Influence +2, Dependent (young daughter) -1, Hatred (wife's killer) -1, Lost Love (wife) -1

**Personality Traits:** Brave +2, Loyal +3, Cruel +1, Protective +1

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat	Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Longsword /Round Shield	+4	+6	+8	+6	+3	Brawling (fist)	+1	+1	+0	+2	+1
Throwing axe	+1	+2	+0	+6	+1						

**Soak:** +7

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** (Area) Lore 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Carouse 2, Jarl Togsvig's Dreng Lore 2, Folk Ken 1,

Hunt 1, Intrigue 1, Ride 1, Shield & Weapon 4, Skiing 1, Speak Western Norse 4, Swim 1, Thrown Weapons 2

**Equipment:** Half leather scale, longsword, throwing axe, round shield

**Encumbrance:** -2

*Bodvar's father was a member of Jarl Togsvig's hird and he knew that he too would take his place beside his jarl as a warrior. When he was 16 he married a local girl but she was killed during a raid by a rival hersar. Bodvar has spent the last three years planning the hersar's death in his mind. Bodvar is trusted by Jarl Togsvig and can speak his mind freely to him. Wary of upsetting Vandrand, he rarely speaks to him. Bodvar has been consulting with Hogni about the guilt he feels over his wife's death.*

## Fridgeir Finnbogisson, Farmer

(Sample Grog)

**Characteristics:** Int +1, Per +1, Pre +1, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +2, Dex 0, Qik 0

**Age:** 20

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Standard Dreng 0, Animal Companion (dog) +1, Close Family Ties +1, Weather Sense +1, Poor Hearing -1, Poor -2

**Personality Traits:** Brave +1, Proud +1, Pragmatic +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Short Spear	+7	+3	+4	+4	+4
Brawling (fist)	+1	+1	+1	+1	+3

**Soak:** +5

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 3, (Area) Lore 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Bargain 2, Brawl 1, Carouse 1, Charm 1, Craft Woodworking 3, Hunt 2, Single Weapon 3, Skiing 2, Speak Western Norse 4, Wagoneering 1

**Equipment:** Half heavy leather, short spear, dog

**Encumbrance:** -1

*Fridgeir owns a small farm on Jarl Togsvig's lands which barely keeps him and his family alive. He spends more time with his dog than he does his wife, although he loves her dearly, and this is the source of gossip. Once or twice he's been called up to fight when his lands were raided, and he keeps his trusty spear handy. Not a true warrior, he has few dealings with the members of the jarl's hird.*

# Chapter 5

# Norse Magic

## Runic Magic

There are three basic ways that Norse vitki use runic magic: single runes, rune scripts, and rune bindings. Although casting a single rune is relatively simple, its power has great limitations, especially in duration. Rune scripts and rune bindings are where the real strength of the vitkir lies, as they can be extremely complex and powerful.

To form and activate a rune the vitki needs something upon which to carve or scribe the rune, and knowledge of what it will do when activated.

Single runes can be created on almost any surface (even scratched into shifting sand), but rune scripts and bindings require materials with some permanence. A script can be drawn on something as impermanent as leaves or bark because its magic is limited in duration; yet a binding can last for many years if the material is enduring.

Each vitki will have his own style of carving and his own ritual incantations to make the rune power manifest itself. Many of these styles are passed from master to apprentice in a line dating back to the beginning of the Viking Age. Still, all users of a particular rune for a particular purpose will follow similar patterns.





## Single Runes

Most single runes cannot be used to phenomenal effect on their own, inevitably needing the Dagr (growth), Nauthr (delay) or Iss (preservation) runes to give them more power. For instance, without Iss a hailstorm summoned with the Hagall rune would last but a single round, assuming there was already suitable cloud cover in place. If Nauthr was used in conjunction with Hagall then the hail would be “encouraged” to fall for a longer time, running a more natural course.

Carving a single rune takes one round and it takes effect during the Magic phase of combat. A rune’s effects last for either one round (normally the round following for Attribute modifiers or protection) or for an instant (for damage-causing effects). The time between casting and using can be altered slightly, as shown on the insert below. The delay does not increase the duration of the effect, only the time before the power is actually activated. This is useful for carving runes for the use of other people who need them in the near future, such as a carl asking for help increasing his Etiquette when he presents

himself before the local jarl in a few minutes’ time.

Five rounds is the longest a single rune’s power can be held before it dissipates, released or not, and once the rune has been scribed with a specific time delay in place, that delay cannot be altered.

The default range of a single rune’s power is Personal, and increases to range also increase the complexity of casting the rune, as shown in the insert below.

Runic effects that are centered on an individual, but which affect others around him (for example, improving a speaker’s Oration), have an area of effect of 5 paces.

To craft a single rune a vitki rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Scribe Runes + (Specific) Rune Lore + aura. The ease factor is equal to the level of effect required plus modifiers for increased range or delayed activation, or others the storyguide may specify.

## Boosting Runes

In order to break down an opponent’s magic resistance, a vitki may try to boost his runic effect, hoping to overload the defending magic. When using a single rune the vitki may increase the ease factor by as much as he wishes. If the vitki fails to carve the rune successfully, he automatically takes non-Soakable damage equal to the difference being the attempted pease factor and the power level of the intended effect (with 25 being the maximum effect level). If the roll is successful, the rune’s increased power level is used to defeat the opponent’s magic resistance score.

If the runic effect manages to break through an opponent’s defenses, the damage done, penalty caused, or other effect occurs at the intended casting level, not at the boosted level.

The levels of rune scripts and rune bindings can be boosted in the same way, with the reminder that the levels have to be boosted when the script or binding is created, not when it’s used.

## Carving Single Runes

Time Delay	Increase in Level
1 round	+2
2 rounds	+5
3 rounds	+7
4 rounds	+10
5 rounds	+15

Range	Increase to Ease Factor
Personal	no increase
Touch	+2
Reach	+5
Near	+10
Far	+15

## Rune Scripts

A rune script is the combination of two or more runes in a semi-permanent form, dedicated to a single specific purpose and event. The more specific the defined purpose of the script, the better the chance of it working. Uses such as “To protect me from harm in my next fight” are too vague, whereas “To protect me from harm in the battle against Jarl Togsvig near Oslo on Thursday” would work. As a general guideline, the definition of the script should include proper nouns in place of pronouns, should be of a form that a stranger could fully understand the particulars of the phrase, and should have direct links to the rune being used (that is, a script containing the Reith rune should contain the word “journey” or “trip” somewhere in its defining phrase if used for that purpose).

In addition, most vitki are careful when creating rune scripts for others to ensure that the other party will not abuse or misdirect the power. A warrior making a dubious request for bonuses to his strength, fitness, and ability to absorb damage because he is looking for a friend lost in the woods would probably be refused, whereas one wanting improved eyesight and the ability to withstand the cold might receive aid from a vitki.

Even with effective wording, rune scripts last until either a single task is completed (a battle, a journey, a drinking contest) or a week has passed (for long journeys or sieges), whichever is sooner. Adding the Yr rune to the script can extend its duration by one day per point of the Yr rune modifier. The Iss and Nauthr runes cannot be used to extend the life of rune scripts (but see “Rune Bindings” below). Unless otherwise stated, the power of a script is constantly in effect.

As a gift from Odin, once the magic of a script has worked, the material the script was written on must be destroyed and Odin thanked for his help. Any vitki who fails to thank Odin receives a -1 penalty, cumulative, on all future rune magic attempts until he thanks Odin in an appropriate manner. Non-vitki who use a script written by some-

one else and neglect to thank Odin afterward suffer a -1 to all rolls for the following three hours, and the vitki suffers his normal -1 penalty unless he then retrieves and destroys the script properly. For this reason, vitki are careful in choosing those for whom they craft rune scripts, and will even risk the anger of their patron jarl or konung to refuse a request for a script if it is likely the enchantment will not be properly disposed of.

The magic in a lost or stolen script begins to fade immediately after it leaves the control of its creator or intended user, and disappears completely within an hour. Still, many users of rune scripts insist that their name be included in the enchantment to ensure that it can’t be used by another, even for a short period. If a rune script is destroyed before its magic is activated, the energy dissipates harmlessly.

In theory, scripts can contain any number of runes, but common practice is to use an odd number greater than one. In game terms, the most runes a vitki can use in a script is double his Rune Script score.

Creating a rune script is not as simple as crafting a single rune, and it takes time equal to the total level of the script in minutes. The range of a script’s power is severely limited, either to the person carrying the script, or to a well-defined area of limited size (a few hundred square leagues at the very most). Runic effects that affect other people *through* the user have a range of 5 paces from the carrier, as with single runes.

Scripts designed to affect persons, buildings, or constructs can either be placed on



### Rune Script Range Modifiers

Range	Increase to Ease Factor
5 paces or less	no modifier
Tens of paces	+2
Hundreds of paces	+5
5 or less miles	+10
Tens of miles	+15
Hundreds of miles	+20

## Examples of Rune Scripts

**T**he army of Jarl Togsvig is on the march, descending on the lands where a vitki lives. The vitki roughly knows the route they will take through the mountains and decides to delay them with a storm until his own lord's army is ready to fight.

**Script Purpose:** “To delay the army of Jarl Togsvig by storms in the Jotunheim Mountains until Freyrsday.”

**Rune Script:** Hagall 10 (hail) + Dagr 10 (growth) + Nauthr 5 (delay) = 25

With Hagall, the vitki wants to cause a storm that is too dangerous to travel through — he is not particularly interested in harming the jarl as he is not a violent man. Dagr gives him a fast, but not supernaturally fast, forming storm intended to look like a natural weather occurrence. Nauthr is needed to keep the storm from fading like a natural storm. Although the vitki could have used Iss to make the storm last a week, most vitki would consider such an act almost blasphemous. This rune script should be created and hidden in the area the storm will cover.

**H**alfdan Troll-Fearer has to visit a friend near Stavanger, but does not relish traveling through troll-infested country. He wants a vitki to give him protection for his journey.

**Script Purpose:** “To aid Halfdan Troll-Fearer on his journey to his friend's house in Stavanger, and protect him from trolls along his route.”

**Script:** Ior 10 (horse) + Ur 10 (auroch) + Thurs 10 (thorn bush) = 30

Ior gives a moderate increase in movement allowance to reduce Halfdan's time in troll country. Ur gives him a little more bravery for his journey, and Thurs grants him a Soak bonus of 10. Note that the wording of this script's purpose means that these bonuses will not apply against any other threats Halfdan might face on the trip, but a more vague wording might not have worked at all.

This script would be carried in a secure place or worn in a secure manner by Halfdan throughout his journey.

**Y**oung Leif Broken-Nose has been invited to a feast at his lord's court and he knows that there will be many unattached women present. Being single, he asks a vitki to help him find a suitable wife.

**Script Purpose:** “So that Leif Broken-Nose may attract the eye of a suitable girl at Jarl Eirik's feast this coming Wodensday.”

**Script:** Gipt 10 (gift) + Kaun 5 (sight) + Mathr 10 (mankind) = 25

Gipt gives a bonus to forming a relationship and ensures that Leif has a chance of making a permanent bond with a woman — it would be used if Leif tries to arrange to meet the woman on another occasion, making her more inclined to accept by adding to Leif's Charm score. Kaun gives him a better chance to see beyond the woman's beauty and note her true self by granting a small bonus to his Perception skill. Mathr gives a bonus to his communication rolls to help him say the right thing and avoid embarrassment.

Leif would carry this script on him at the feast but had best keep it out of sight, lest the woman suspect trickery.

**W**hile traveling to court, the vitki Thorbjorn hears rumors that the area where he lives is being attacked by trolls. He decides to use a rune script to protect his home from damage.

**Script Purpose:** “To protect the home of Thorbjorn the vitki, which lies on the edge of Oslofjord, from physical harm while he is away at court.”

**Script:** Thurs 10 (thorn) + Othal 10 (property) + range modifier of +15 = 35

Thurs gives the house additional armor to withstand the attacks of the trolls. The house is only worth a few dozen pennies, so the Othal rune is not very high. The range modifier is +15 because Thorbjorn's house is some 20 miles from his current location. Because it is ranged, Thorbjorn need only carry this rune script himself, or even bury it in a safe place, rather than placing it in his home.

them or within a few paces. However, if the script is designed to affect a remote target, the Mathr (mankind) rune must be added for humans, the Othal (property) rune for inanimate objects (including land), the Fe (fertility) rune for tame or domesticated animals, and the Ur (auroch) rune if the target is a wild animal.

The ease factor when creating a rune script is increased by an amount dependent on the range of the target at the time of casting (see the insert on page 81).

Whereas Hermetic magi require arcane connections to remotely target spells, vitkiri need only know the exact name or location of the target, or an extremely accurate description, for their spells to work.

To craft a rune script, the vitki rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Scribe Runes + total of (Specific) Rune Lores involved + Rune Script + aura. The ease factor of the roll is equal to the sum of the difficulties of the runic effects plus any modifiers, such as for range.

Should a botch occur, the vitki must roll botch dice equal to the number of runes in the script, plus any additional dice for auras.

## Rune Bindings

Rune bindings are the most powerful of runic enchantments. They are basically rune scripts that need no specific operating conditions when created, and that can last for many years if created well.

The maximum number of runes that may be bound into a rune binding is equal to one more than the caster's Rune Binding score.

The Iss level of a binding determines its creation time and initial duration. Adding a nYr rune to a binding extends the duration by an amount dependent on the Yr level. A binding without the Iss rune lasts for only a day and its duration cannot be extended by the addition of the Yr rune.

Spending more time creating a rune binding than the minimum requirement con-

fers a bonus to the casting roll: for every time interval above the required creation time a bonus of +3 to the casting roll is gained. Thus if a vitki created a binding with Iss 10 (minimum creation time one week), but spent a season crafting it, it would still only last one month but he would receive a +6 bonus to the casting roll.

Better-made enchantments generally last longer as well. For every 5 whole points the casting roll is over the ease factor of the binding, the binding lasts for an additional period of time equal to the creation time or the duration dictated by the Iss level, whichever is lower.

After a binding's duration ends the material on which it is written crumbles to dust (if the binding occupies only a small part of a large surface, only the area immediately under the runes is destroyed — merely enough to completely efface the runes from the surface).

Most rune bindings can be used a limited number of times per day, and the higher



## Rune Binding Duration Table

Iss/Yr Level	Creation Time	Duration	Extension
0	1 hour	1 day	—
5	1 day	1 week	1 hour
10	1 week	1 month	1 day
15	1 month	1 season	1 week
20	1 season	1 year	1 month
25	1 year	10 years	1 season





the number of uses the higher the ease factor when casting, as shown on the Frequency of Use Table below. For effects that produce bonuses or penalties to Attributes or Abilities the power lasts for 10 minutes each time it is activated. Certain uses (such as aiding pregnancy and childbirth) must be used throughout an extended period, and thus they require continuous use. Other effects created by a rune binding (such as a large fire, a storm, or even a disease) last until they naturally fade, and require only a single activation.

A rune binding is an extremely personal item and can only be used by the person or object for whom it was made, unless the vitki who manufactured it left those details deliberately vague. Likewise, the binding only works when worn, carried, or placed inside by the intended target — rune bindings cannot be remotely targeted.

To create a rune binding roll a stress die + Intelligence + Scribe Runes + total of (specific) Rune Lores involved + Rune Binding + aura. The ease factor is the sum of the difficulties of all of the runic effects plus modifiers such as those for frequency of use.

A caster who fails a binding roll may try again to create the same binding immediately thereafter with a non-cumulative +3 bonus. On a botch, the vitki rolls a number of botch dice equal to the number of runes bound.

## Frequency of Use Table

Uses per Day	Ease Factor Modifier
1	0
2	+1
3	+2
6	+3
12	+4
24	+5
50	+6
Unlimited	+10
Continuous	+15

## Learning & Teaching Runes

*Know how to cut them  
Know how to read them  
Know how to stain them  
Know how to prove them  
Know how to evoke them  
Know how to sacrifice them  
Know how to send them  
Know how to slay them.*

— From the *Havamal*

The runes are items of power and their knowledge cannot be gained from reading musty tomes. There are only three known methods of increasing knowledge of the runes.

The first is use; a vitki who successfully uses the runes during the course of a story may spend experience points to increase his knowledge of them. Only one experience point may be spent on a given rune per story. Vitkir cannot practice with runes in order to increase their rune levels.

Secondly, knowledge of the runes can be increased through private study with another vitki, who has reached at least level 5 in the appropriate Rune Lore and has a rating higher than the student. Most vitkir will only teach another vitki their runes in return for similar knowledge.

To learn from a teacher takes one season, regardless of the experience or quality of the teacher. Unlike learning Hermetic Arts through Disputatio, the lessons are based on knowledge and not a question-and-answer arrangement. The student must still generate a Study Total equal to the tutor's Communication + Storytelling + the student's Intelligence + 6. The experience gained equals the Study Total. The maximum gain in one season is three full levels. The increase may not bring the student's score to a higher value than that of the tutor, and only

one pupil per season can be instructed by that tutor.

The third, and final, method is to use the substance known to Hermetic magi as vis and to vitkir as *makt* (see page 114). Although vitkir have few other uses for vis, they know that it contains power that can enable them to achieve knowledge of the runes.

Vitkir gather vis from faerie sites or from the corpses of supernatural creatures. Vitkir cannot detect vis through magic, nor do they harvest it as Hermetic magi do. However, unlike Cunning Folk, the vitkir can use raw vis, a point that may bring them into conflict with Hermetic magi who hear of this practice. In order to locate vis, the vitki must roll a quality die + Perception + Legend Lore + Magic Might (of the creature) if the vis comes from a creature, or + Perception + Faerie Lore + magical/faerie aura if the area is a faerie haunt. The ease factor of either roll is 24+.

The number of pawns gathered is based on a roll of (Perception + Faerie Lore + faerie aura)/5 pawns per season for searching a faerie area, and as many pawns as the corpse contains if it comes from a creature. Vis from faerie sites is inevitably in the form of herbs, while vis from creatures may involve any part of the carcass.

Once the vitki has enough vis at hand, he brews it into a potion that also includes mead and some of the vitki's own blood. Any type of vis can be used for this purpose, as vitkir do not differentiate between the various forms, and a maximum of five pawns can be used. During the brewing phase, which takes one week and requires the vitki to be continually present, the essence from the vis seeps into the liquid, imbuing it with power. The potion is then drunk in seclusion and the imbibers falls into a trance-like state, during which he is aware of his surroundings but may take no actions without ruining the potion's effects. The effects last for one week, and while in this state the vitki witnesses visions of the rune and its many uses. Once awakened, the vitki spends the rest of the season con-

templating these revelations to increase his knowledge.

The amount of experience a vitki learns from this process is the total of a stress die + the number of pawns in the potion + the aura bonus of the area in which the potion was brewed. That experience is then applied as experience to the appropriate Rune Lore; a maximum of three whole levels can be gained by this method, so any excess points are lost.

## Learning Through Sacrifice

A special situation arises when a vitki has learned all the runes of a particular aett to level 2 or greater. There exists an optional dedication ritual that can boost the power of such a vitki, but the ritual has its risks. If successful, the vitki gains a deeper understanding of the runes within that aett and their interrelationship, giving him a bonus on rune castings containing only runes from that aett.

The vitki must reenact the ritual sacrifice of Odin by being hanged from an ash tree by his neck and stabbed in the side



## Vitki's Summary of Formulae

### Casting single rune

Intelligence + Scribe Runes + (specific) Rune Lore + Aura + any modifiers + stress die (ease factor: level of effect required + modifiers)

### Casting rune script

Intelligence + Scribe Runes + total of (specific) Rune Lores involved + Rune Script + Aura + any modifiers + stress die (ease factor: sum of difficulty of all runic effects + modifiers)

### Casting rune binding

Intelligence + Scribe Runes + total of (specific) Rune Lores involved + Rune Binding + Aura + any modifiers + stress die (ease factor: sum of difficulty of all runic effects + modifiers)



with a spear (automatically placing him at Light Wounds). Because the ritual isn't supposed to kill the vitki, he first imbibes a potion (the preparation of which is a quest in itself) which places him into a coma. During the nine-day ritual the vitki then needs little air, water, and food, but his wound will not heal at all during this time.

As he is defenseless, loyal guards are normally placed around the sacrificial

## Vis Potion

In recent times young vitkir, eager for power, have created a potion to boost the chances in learning the sacred magic. The potion includes makt (vis) and a liberal sprinkling of other materials including human blood (a small quantity), mead, and a variety of plants and herbs. Properly brewing the potion requires a roll of Intelligence + Alchemy + faerie aura of 9+. The brewing process takes one complete season, during which the procedure must be supervised by the vitki.

When drunk, the potion gives a bonus to the sacrifice roll of +1 for every five whole levels of the brewing roll. One pawn of raw vis will be consumed for every five levels of the potion, requiring the vitki to guess the strength of his brew before the roll is made, and include what he thinks is a sufficient amount of vis. If there is insufficient vis for the potion's level, the strength of the potion drops to a level appropriate to the amount of vis expended; if there is too much vis, the excess is lost.

For example, if a vitki brewed a potion with five pawns of vis in it, that quantity of vis would be enough to power a level-25 potion. If he only rolled a total of 20, the extra pawn invested would be wasted and the potion would remain at level 20. If he rolled well and scored 36, the potion would be only level 25, as that is the maximum level possible for the amount of vis invested.

There is no easy road to power with the runes, and using a vis potion has a major drawback. Once the ritual is complete the vitki must roll as many botch dice as his potion gave bonuses. Any botches result in permanent physical or mental flaws, the severity of which is equal to the number of botches rolled. This is in addition to the potential penalties for botching the ritual itself.

place. If the vitki's body is moved or wounded, or has magic cast on it, the ritual is disrupted and he must make a stressed Stamina roll of 9+ to avoid taking two Body levels of non-Soakable damage. If the roll botches, the vitki also suffers permanent mental damage, such as gaining a delusion or compulsion.

After nine days the vitki awakens in a disoriented state that lasts for a simple die worth of days, and had better have a loyal follower to cut him down or he will soon die of asphyxiation. The vitki will be extremely tired, hungry, thirsty, and will still be wounded; he takes four automatic Fatigue levels after undergoing the ritual.

In order to actually learn the secret while on the tree, the vitki must roll a stress die + Intelligence + Stamina + the sum of the scores in the eight runes in the aett against an ease factor of 35+.

The potion that preserves the vitki's body and prepares him for the mystical insights he seeks contains several ingredients that are extremely hard to acquire. There is no set list of ingredients; each vitki must undertake a quest to discover the formula for himself. Such a quest typically involving visiting the alfar or dverge, or even magic-using trolls or giants, for mystical insights. The list should include such mythical ingredients as the breath of a fish, stubble from a woman's face, a liar's promise, or the ears of a bird. A period from a few seasons to a few years is typical for such a quest, but the vitki doesn't have to repeat this quest if he decides to undertake the ritual a second or further time.

If the vitki successfully completes the dedication rite, he gains the Virtue Special Circumstances (Knowledge of [Name's] Aett), which confers a +3 bonus to any rune script or binding constructed using runes solely from that aett. Naturally, this advantage can only be gained three times; once for each aett.

If the roll fails, the vitki learns no knowledge and has performed the sacrifice

for nothing. A botch can spell disaster for a vitki; the vitki suffers a massive shock as he perceives knowledge he wasn't ready for and suffers a Mental Flaw as a result. The specific Flaw should be decided between the storyguide and the player, but should generally be worth no more than 3 points (Delusion, Compulsion, Fears, and Terrors fit well).

This ritual can only be attempted at Yuletime, the traditional time for oath-taking, with the vitki hanging himself from the tree just before the end of the old year so that he hangs upon the tree over the changing of the years.

If the vitki succeeds in performing the ritual once and attempts it a second or third time, he must make a pledge of his loyalty to Odin, who grants the knowledge of the runes. Exactly what the pledge involves is up to the individual vitki, but could consist of branding a single rune into flesh, the removal of an eye, or similar disfigurement. A vitki who fails to perform an appropriate sacrifice (one involving little or no *real* sacrifice) suffers a -5 penalty to the roll to learn the new knowledge, an additional two botch dice for his insult, and the character becomes chronically unlucky, a condition that can be reduced in severity when the appropriate sacrifice is made, but can never be completely alleviated.

One way for the vitki to pledge himself to Odin without immediate pain or disfigurement is to take a blood oath of service. A blood oath to Odin is not a commitment a vitki should take lightly; essentially, the vitki sheds one Wound level of his own blood at a blöt and makes a solemn oath to Odin, promising the god one unlimited favor which will be called due in the future. Usually this involves a near-suicidally heroic quest (on a level with Beowulf's pursuit of Grendel's mother, for instance). The favor is absolutely non-negotiable; if the character does not immediately set off to do Odin's bidding when asked, he dies on the spot, to find himself at Odin's mercy in the afterlife.

## Apprentices

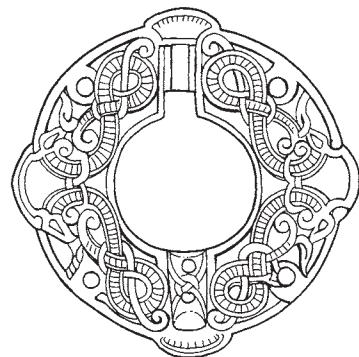
Rune crafting cannot be learned by everyone. When he searches for an apprentice, a vitki looks for strength of will, an eagerness to learn, a cautious attitude to power, and the ability to communicate easily with others. Those sought out to begin rune training are normally aged between 5 and 10, for at this age they have not grown set in their ways, nor have their minds been dulled with age.

In order to train a *laering* (apprentice), a vitki must have a minimum of 5 in the Scribe Runes, Rune Script, and Rune Binding Abilities, he must know at least three runes at level 5 or higher, and he must have the Storytelling Skill at 1 or greater.

The vitki must dedicate one season per year to training his *laering*, and each year the *laering* gains 4 experience points towards his vitki abilities. If the master is particularly generous, he may spend more time teaching his *laering*; for every extra season spent this way, the *laering* gains an extra 3 experience points to place amongst his vitki abilities.

The apprentice vitki can spend his points in any way he desires, with the understanding that he won't complete his apprenticeship until he has reached the minimum Ability levels for a starting vitki (see page 62), and with the restriction that he can only raise rune scores above 0 for runes that his master has at level 5 or more.

The *laering* will also travel with his master learning the arts of communication, negotiation, and social interaction that will form a major part of his life once he is released from apprenticeship (gaining 5 experience points to spend on these Abilities).





# Chapter 6

## Runes & Their Power

### Runic Power

*Wounded I hung on a wind-swept gallows  
For nine long nights,  
Pierced with a spear, pledged to Odin  
Offered, myself to myself.  
The wisest know not from whence spring  
The roots of that ancient beam.  
They gave me no bread,  
They gave me no mead.  
I looked down;  
With a loud cry,  
I took up the runes,  
from that tree I fell.*

— From the *Havamal*

### Rune Effects Table

Level	Magnitude	Monetary Amounts	Creature Size
5	1	1-10 pfennings	-4 or -3
10	2	10-100 pfennings	-2 or -1
15	3	100-1,000 pfennings	0 or +1
20	4	1,000-10,000 pfennings	+2 or +3
25	5	10,000-100,000 pfennings	+4 or +5

Many runes have standardized effects. This table lists common runic statistics based on the levels at which they are cast. Magnitude is often used as a bonus to Attribute or Ability rolls. Monetary Amount comes into play in conjunction with runes concerned with wealth. Creature Size sometimes determines how powerful a rune must be to affect a certain animal or beast.

One of Odin's gifts to mankind were the 24 runic letters known as the Futhark (after the word spelled by the first six – see appendix page 130), which could be used by the average man in monumental inscriptions, business correspondence, or in decorating objects, and by the initiated (vitkir, singular: vitki) to perform magical feats. In order to penetrate the mystery of the runes, Odin used his own spear to impale himself on the World Tree, Yggdrasil, hanging for nine days until the secrets revealed themselves to him. The sacrifice was painful, even for a god, and reenacting the sacrifice can give the vitki additional insight into rune use (see "Learning Through Sacrifice" on page 85).

### Using the Runes

Each rune has multiple powers associated with it, but each inscription of a rune can only be used to generate a single effect that is declared when the rune is created; to invoke two powers of a single rune, it must be employed multiple times in a rune script or binding.

A number of effects are common to a number of runes, and those are summarized on the Rune Effects Table. The most frequent use of individual runes is to give a bonus to some roll equal to the magnitude of the rune, that is, one fifth the level at which the rune was cast, rounded down.

The power level of the rune measures how difficult it is to create, as well as the amount of power contained within the rune.

Adding a second runic enchantment to an already increased Ability or Attribute cannot double a runic effect. Thus, if a vitki has a rune binding that increases his Strength, no other enchantment can add to this, although a second runic enchantment will work if it is of higher level than the original by replacing the original. The same applies to Attributes and Abilities that add to a single die roll; if a vitki has bonuses to his Perception Attribute and his Awareness Ability, only the highest bonus applies to a roll that uses Perception + Awareness.

## Lasting Effects

It must be noted that certain effects induced by runes do not wear off after a rune's power fades. A man and woman who become lovers after certain runes aid their relationship do not become strangers when the runes fade. Their minds are no longer swayed by the runes, but will still be affected by the confidences exchanged, the memories acquired, and the strength of the relationship formed. They may have to deal with the fact that one partner might not have the glib tongue he once displayed or some other change, but they may still weather that storm.

Likewise, a couple split by an Iss rune do not go immediately back to loving each other once the rune fades; it has done its job of influencing their minds. There is always a chance that they will reconcile through natural means, of course.

Someone physically or mentally damaged by a rune's power remains hurt until healed, either by more runic magic or naturally through time, while wounds healed by a rune remain healed and do not start bleeding once the rune ceases working. Of course, in this case the rune's effects need to last until the wound is fully healed.

Runes can also cause permanent side effects without this being part of their power. A skald who impresses a jarl through poetry, aided by a rune of communication, may find himself gaining a permanent reputation boost from a temporary runic effect, an increase he could then lose depending on his natural ability to impress his listeners unaided.

## Rune Descriptions

Below are the descriptions of the runes and the powers that they access. This is not an exhaustive list, and vitki players are encouraged to find new uses for the runes, within the limits of their power range. The storyguide has the final decision on an effect's exact power level and whether a given rune can impart a particular power.

Players and storyguide must remember that the runes invoke subtle powers, not the spectacular effects of Hermetic magic, and they generally cannot go against the laws of nature.

The runes are split into three groups known as **aetts**, each dedicated to a different god and containing eight runes. The majority of runic effects are beneficial, and these are created by scribing the rune in the upright position shown in the tables on pages 91 and 130. Some negative effects can be generated by scribing the rune in an inverted, or "trolled," orientation.

While all the runes are useful in certain situations, a number of them (including Iss, Nauthr, Dagr, and Yr) are of particular importance, as they are necessary for the crafting of effective rune scripts and bindings.



## Freyr's Aett

### Fe (FAY): Cattle

This rune means wealth earned through expenditure of energy, in terms of cattle as well as movable wealth. Fe is the rune of Freyr, the god of fertility, in itself a form of wealth.

**Upright:** There are two ways to profit through use of this rune: by using other abilities to either take or win the money, or through investment or chance finding. The Rune Effects Table on page 88 shows the size of monetary rewards that can be gained or found using the Fe rune.

The wealth granted by this rune can be in money or cattle, but not in lands or goods such as weapons: the Othal rune covers them. Unless Dagr is used in conjunction with Fe in a binding,



wealth gained by way of this rune is fleeting: almost as quickly as the caster gains his wealth he will either lose it or find it necessary to spend it.

When trying to *detect* wealth, a bonus equal to Fe's magnitude can be added to Perception rolls, and can be added to Communication, Presence, Area Lore, or Legend Lore rolls (for discovering information about treasure) at the storyguide's discretion.

Fe's magnitude can be added to rolls involving gaining wealth that do not involve physical combat, including rolls involving

gambling, bargaining, or charming someone, if monetary gain is the objective. The bonus can also be applied to rolls involving domesticated animals, including Animal Ken and Animal Handling.

At level 15 or above, Fe can be used to speak with domesticated animals. Each invocation of the rune can be used for only one of the three types of beast: land, air, and sea.

When Fe is used to remotely target an animal, the Size of the animal that can be affected is determined by the Rune Effects Table.

## Example Powers

- A vitki is being chased through dense undergrowth by hostile guards and needs to escape. A movement rune would be useful, as would one that affects the guards' Perception, but he doesn't have high scores in such runes. The vitki realizes that the Thurs rune (which he is skilled with) represents a thorn bush, and the player asks his storyguide if he can use the rune to make a passage appear through a nearby hedge.

The storyguide decides that the interpretation of the rune's association with the desired result (a thorn bush rune to part a thorn bush) is strong, and doesn't contravene the stated powers of the rune, nor is it a particularly showy effect. He sets the difficulty level at 15, as the hedge is fairly thick, and states that the hedge will part for one round, giving the vitki just enough time to nip through if his casting is successful.

- A vitki is leading an attack on the lair of a troll that has been troubling villagers in the area. He plans to capture the troll and bring it back to the village, so the locals can see it being killed. He organizes the grogs and gives them a large fishing net for this task.

The player knows that the chance of the grogs actually working together to catch the beast is fair, but not spectacular. If the vitki had skill with the Mathr rune, which aids people working together toward a common goal, he could use that, but since he doesn't, he must adapt his known runes to fit the situation. He decides to invoke the Reith rune in a script and then give the grogs a plan of action to follow, asking the storyguide to allow them a bonus on their attack rolls with the net as they know what to do and when.

Reith does deal with planning and strategy, but the description doesn't mention granting bonuses to combat rolls. The storyguide can either disallow the use of the rune, saying that combat bonuses do not fall in Reith's sphere of influence, or he can allow the planning bonus to aid the grogs so long as they are carrying out the proposed action exactly as planned, in which case a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude would be appropriate.

- A vitki in combat wants to scare off his opponents by using the Kaun rune to create a large fireball. Kaun does cover fire and heat, but the effect isn't in keeping with the rune's general subtlety; the storyguide rules that the rune cannot perform such magic.

However, he does suggest that the vitki can ignite nearby dry brush and attempt to scare his foes by making the fire spread towards them, ignoring the wind direction. Of course, this would require multiple castings of the rune and possibly even a script, especially if the fire is to continue spreading against the wind for more than one round.

- At the start of a battle a vitki is asked to give combat bonuses to his fellow warriors. Not having specialized in combat runes, he realizes that the bows of most of the warriors are made of yew wood, and the player asks the storyguide if the vitki can use the Yr rune (which represents a yew tree) to aid them. The storyguide rules that the connection is strong, but reminds the player that the vitki will either have to cast an individual Yr rune for every archer, or create a script of binding with an area of effect large enough to encompass all the vitki's allies, but not so large as to also grant bonuses to those of his enemies who also carry yew bows.

Fe also means something fought for, rather than gained, and indicates a triumph over opposition, and Fe's magnitude can be added as a bonus on a single die roll to overcome an opponent, whether it be a man, group, or natural obstacle.

Women trying to become pregnant sometimes invoke Fe as a fertility charm, as a family is itself a form of spiritual wealth. Men hoping to impregnate women can also employ the rune.

**Trolled:** When used in a trolled position, Fe indicates the loss of wealth. A

bonus equal to Fe's magnitude can be added to rolls involving bargaining, law (when the potential punishment is a fine), or even hexing (if the target is cattle or other animal wealth).

Fe can also mean emotional turmoil and a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude can be given to a target's rolls affecting communication. If combined with a preservation rune (such as Iss), the long-term effects can break up marriages or life-long friendships.



## Runic Power Summary

### Freyr's Aett

Rune	Meaning	Areas of Power
Fe (ᚠ)	Cattle	wealth, domesticated animals, triumphing over opposition, fertility, discord
Ur (ᚢ)	Auroch	protection, strength, endurance, wild animals, challenges, bravery, willpower, health, unexpected events, aging
Thurs (ᚦ)	Thorn Bush	luck, defense, plants, anger, lust, offense
Ass (ᚦ)	Mouth	communication, teaching, travel, honesty, perception, divination
Reith (ᚱ)	Cart Wheel	travel, communication
Kaun (ᚻ)	Torch	perception, heat, light, aging
Gipt (ᚻ)	Gift	peace, love, aid, personal sacrifice
Vend (ᚩ)	Joy	happiness, cooperation, relationships

### Heimdall's Aett

Rune	Meaning	Areas of Power
Hagall (ᚫ)	Hail	causing damage, movement, changing minds, illness, weather control
Nauthr (ᚾ)	Necessity	enduring hardships, endurance, wealth, relationships, delaying runic effects, slowing natural effects
Iss (ᛁ)	Ice	cold, rune binding, relationships

Jera (ᛖ)	Harvest	harvests, justice, marriage, warriors
Yr (ᛖ)	Yew Tree	patience, extending runic effects, warriors, communicating with the dead
Perta (ᛚ)	Dice Cup	childbirth, gambling, hidden things, illness, detecting poison, concealment
Ihwar (ᛖ)	Elk	magic protection, defense, self-sacrifice, hunting, harmony, discord
Sól (ᛖ)	The Sun	light, heat, health, triumphing over evil/good

### Tyr's Aett

Rune	Meaning	Areas of Power
Tyr (ᛏ)	The God Tyr	danger, business, competitions, honesty, injustice
Bjarkan (ᛒ)	Birch Tree	health, youth, children, childbirth, illness, infertility
Ior (ᛘ)	Horse	horses, travel, loyalty, weakness
Mathr (ᛘ)	Mankind	communication, duty, inventiveness, cooperation, affecting remote targets, cruelty, foreign lands
Lög (ᛚ)	Water	water, ships, movement, hidden senses, seduction, mutability
Yngvi (ᛟ)	The God Yngvi	childbirth, fertility, family, security, extended tasks
Dagr (ᛞ)	Day	growth, speed, light, time
Othal (ᛟ)	A Possession	family, inheritance, protecting goods, curses, acting alone



## Ur (OOR): Auroch

The auroch is a large and powerful breed of cattle that roams Mythic Scandinavia. These beasts stand as tall as men, and symbolize stamina and strength (including strength of will). Successfully hunting an auroch made a boy into a man, and so Ur also encompasses manhood and male sexuality, as well as major changes in a person's life.

**Upright:** The Ur rune is a powerful protective device and gives aid against magic and Abilities designed to affect the target's mind or emotions. The value of the magic resistance against mind-affecting magic is the level of the Ur spell cast. Spells and enchantments with a level lower than that of the rune cast simply do not work. Ur's magnitude can be used as a bonus to resist Charm and other appropriate Abilities.

The magnitude of the Ur rune can be added as a bonus to someone's Strength or Stamina Attribute, or to the Bravery Personality Trait.



A magnitude bonus can be applied to rolls involving wild animals. At level 15 or above, Ur can be used to speak with wild or magical animals. Each invocation of the rune can be used for only one of the three types of beast: land, air, and sea. When Ur is used to remotely target an animal, the Size of the animal that can be affected is determined by the Rune Effects Table on page 88.

In its aspect of vitality, the Ur rune can be used to resist the effects of natural aging. It cannot be used to slow aging; it just helps the user better weather its effects. If the rune has been worn for at least a year (as part of a rune binding) the power of the rune can be used to offset any one specific affliction (with the exception of Decrepitude points) the character may have that deals with his physical well-being, reducing it in intensity by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude.

When used in a rune script or binding the Ur rune can also provide a bonus equal to its magnitude to resist maladies. It can also be used, alone or in a script, to remove a number of Fatigue levels equal to the rune's magnitude – 2.

A bonus equal to Ur's magnitude can be applied to one die roll involving a challenge that leads to a major change in life, such as winning a girl's heart, convincing a jarl to let a person become his huscarl, or fighting a first combat to the death.

The willpower aspect of Ur allows difficult tasks to be achieved through guts and sheer determination; lost Confidence points equal to the magnitude of the rune – 1 can be restored through use of Ur, although no permanent change in a character's Confidence level can be made through this magic.

**Trolled:** When trolled, Ur indicates a lack of willpower, as well as ailing health. Although it cannot be used to kill outright, a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude can be applied to a victim's chance of resisting the ravages of diseases. Ur can also be used to remove Confidence points from a victim, leaving him unwilling to take risks to complete a job.

Sudden and unexpected turns of events also fall within Ur's realm, and it can be used to give a penalty equal to its magnitude to die rolls for activities at which the victim would normally expect to succeed.

## Thurs (THURZ): Thorn Bush

The Thurs rune is a symbol of protection and represents the thorn bush, a plant with the potential to cause great damage if handled incorrectly. Thurs is also a rune of luck, both good and bad. Thor, the thunder god, is also tied to this rune, as he was the protector of the common man. Anger and lust are also aspects of Thurs. Thurs is also one of the few runes capable of inflicting harm by itself.

**Upright:** Thurs can be used to simulate the Virtue Luck, by granting the target a bonus equal to the magnitude of the Thurs rune to any rolls during a round. However, the Fates must be balanced, and within one day equal penalties must be taken on similar rolls.

Defensively, the power level of the rune can be used as a Soak bonus for people or an armor bonus for a building.

Thurs can also temporarily blunt the weapons of an enemy, giving him a combat penalty equal to Thurs' magnitude. Unless the weapon can be seen by the vitki at the time the Thurs rune is cast, an Othal (property) rune must be used in conjunction with Thurs for this purpose.

When used by a commoner when dealing with a senior or authoritative figure, Thurs can be used to give its user a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude on a roll involving communication with that person, such as leadership, Charm, Folk Ken, or even Disputatio die rolls.

Thurs' magnitude can be used as a bonus to rolls involving any plants.

**Trolled:** Offensively, the energy of Thurs can be harnessed to damage an opponent, causing damage equal to its power level at a range of 10 paces. When used successfully, a wound similar in nature to that caused by a spear appears on the victim. The wound can be Soaked by armor, and heals exactly as a normal wound would.

When bound or scripted into a weapon, the weapon becomes enchanted with a damage bonus equal to Thurs' magnitude.

Thurs can increase one's Angry or Lustful Personality Trait by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude. While this may sound

unpleasant, many Bersarkr carried trolled Thurs runes to enable them to enter a berserk state more easily. The increase to the Lustful Personality Trait could be used (carefully) to save a person's love life or to start one.

When used by a commoner when dealing with a senior or authoritative figure, the reverse of Thurs can be used to give its user a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude on a roll involving communication with that person.

## Ass (AHSS): Mouth

Ass represents speech. The Vikings had an oral culture, and the ability to speak clearly and to be understood was vital for recounting historical deeds and great tales. Odin, the chief god, is said to have invented poetry, and many skalds carried a non-magical Ass rune with them as a token of thanks to Odin.

**Upright:** Ass can be used to benefit speech, by adding a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude to die rolls involving communication, knowledge, teaching, or reasoning, noting that the person attempting the communicating, such as a teacher lecturing a student, must be the one in possession of the rune. The bonus can also be added to rolls involving a spoken test of some sort. Ass would not be useful on Lectio rolls, as that form of



## Ass Rune Divination

Level of Ass Rune	Knowledge Gained
5	None
10	Target creature's elemental tie (earth, fire, magic)
15	Target creature's exact species (human, svartalfar)
20	Target creature's common name (as opposed to its true name)
25	A secret about the target creature. In order to know any secrets, the creature's common name must first be deduced by some means.



teaching is centered on texts, not the spoken word.

With this rune invoked, a student can determine the level of a potential teacher's instructional abilities, such as *Disputatio* or *Storytelling* (of a skald or vitki).

*Ass* symbolizes wisdom and when using it illusions equal to or lower in power than the rune's power level can be seen as illusions; the user cannot dispel the illusion, but he will know that what he's seeing is in some way unreal.

*Ass* is also a rune of limited divination, especially regarding names. This rune can be used to determine certain basic facts about a target. (If the target has a *Might* score, then the level of the rune plus a stress die must be higher than that *Might* before any knowledge can be gained.) The insert on page 93 shows what information is gained.

Finally, *Ass* is linked to the female seers known as *volva* (see page 123). The grave marker of a *volva* will feature no writing except a single *Ass* rune, and her spirit can be summoned from the grave through use of the rune.

**Trolled:** When used trolled, *Ass* can symbolize lies, cheating, and misinformation, adding a bonus equal to its magnitude to *Communication* or *Guile* (for example) when trying to lie to another person.

*Ass* can be used to cause a journey with a specific purpose to be a wasted one, by applying a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude to rolls concerning that purpose or the travel itself.

## *Reith (RAYTH): Cart Wheel*

*Reith* symbolizes a cart wheel and governs travel in general, whether by cart, horse, or on foot. *Reith* also implies the delivery of messages. As journeys require planning, this rune is allied with the principles of planning, thought, and strategy.

**Upright:** A bonus equal to this rune's magnitude can be added to *Ride* or *Wagoneering* rolls, to avoid trouble on journeys, or to grant a swift journey by increasing a base movement rate. A bonus equal to *Reith*'s magnitude can also be used to aid *Track* and *Area Lore* rolls.

*Reith* allows a *vitki* to add its magnitude to *Scribe* rolls and rolls which imply counsel to others, whether this be by improving the *Communication Attribute* or Abilities such as *Folk Ken*, *Leadership*, or *Charm*.

**Trolled:** When used in reverse, *Reith* provides a penalty equal to its magnitude to travel-based rolls, especially *Ride* and *Wagoneering*, although it applies equally to *Area Lore* and *Athletics* (when used for running or other travel-like purposes).

*Reith* can be invoked to cause a target to move more slowly, subtracting a magnitude penalty from the victim's base movement rate.

When used to thwart negotiations it causes the victim to become closed to the ideas of others, forcing upon him a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude on *Communication* rolls.

## *Kaun (KOWN): Torch*

*Kaun* represents the light and heat of a torch, and the principle of sight, not just of the eyes but of the mind's ability to understand and reason. As animals are afraid of fire, *Kaun* provides some degree of protection from predators.

**Upright:** A modifier equal to *Kaun*'s magnitude can be added to Perception-based rolls, and to rolls involving problem-solving or remembering forgotten facts.

*Kaun* can also be used to penetrate illusions with levels less than or equal to the Power level of the rune.

In its aspects of sight and the power of the mind, *Kaun* can be used to resist some

## Kaun Rune Illumination

Level	Brightness
5	Candle
10	Torch
15	Lantern
20	Twilight
25	Daylight

specific effects of natural aging, helping the user better weather its effects. If the rune has been worn for at least a year (as part of a rune binding) the power of the rune can be used to offset any one sight-affecting affliction the character may have, or any affliction affecting understanding or reasoning capabilities, reducing it in intensity by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude.

Kaun can be used to resist the effects of cold, a bonus equal to its magnitude being added to Natural Resistance or double that as a bonus to Soak cold-based attacks. The doubled magnitude can also be applied as a bonus to Soak against attacks by wild animals.

The Kaun rune itself can be made to glow in a radius of paces equal to the rune's level, and a brightness as shown on the table on page 94.

**Trolled:** The reversed Kaun can be used to lower a victim's Perception-based rolls by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude. The rune cannot create cold-based effects, but it can lower a victim's tolerance to them by reducing Natural Resistance and Soak totals by the magnitude penalty in cold conditions, or against cold-based attacks.

A trolled Kaun rune can be used to darken an area as much as the upright rune would brighten it; that is, at level 10 it can counteract light equivalent to that produced by a single torch, which will completely blot out a torch or candle's light, but will have little effect on a sunny day.

## Gipt (GIPT): Gift

In Norse society accepting a gift placed one under certain obligations to the giver. Often a gift was met with a similar gift, so that neither party was in debt to the other. The Gipt rune is also linked to partnerships, including love. Because of Gipt's shape, it has no trolled form.

**Upright:** As gifts are often exchanged to seal peace agreements, a vitki using the Gipt rune can influence matters at a Thing or negotiating table where peace is the general goal. A modifier equal to the rune's magni-

tude can be added to any Ability or Attribute that aids in achieving this aim. If one side is being deliberately greedy in seeking terms for peace the rune will give them no aid; the outcome must be fair to both parties to ensure that true peace is achieved.

In its aspect of love, Gipt often refers to new relationships rather than existing ones, and a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude can be used to aid rolls involving courting a person. Aside from directly influencing that person, it can be used to influence his or her guardian concerning the relationship.

Gipt can be used to extract aid from another, but only if he owes the user a favor or a debt of gratitude. A modifier equal to the rune's magnitude can be used to influence any Ability or Attribute used for this purpose, with Presence, Communication, and Diplomacy often high on the list.

A vitki making a personal sacrifice can call upon Gipt to make the sacrifice less painful. Details would vary depending on the nature of the sacrifice. For example, a vitki who willingly throws himself in front of a sword blow aimed for a colleague could use Gipt to increase his Soak score by double the rune's magnitude. Gipt cannot be used to any effect during ritual self-sacrifices, such as those used by vitkir to gain extra powers.



## Vend (VEND): Joy

Vend is a rune of happiness and joy, and has links to the concept of a reward, both physical and emotional. Cooperation with others also falls under Vend's purview.

**Upright:** Vend can be used to aid rolls involving happiness and joy, by giving a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls covering storytelling, killing monsters terrorizing villages, or courting young men or women. The rune's power can be used to offset negative emotions, including any brought on by magical forces.

People sharing the burden of a task receive a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude with two limits: the number of people who can receive a bonus is equal to the vitki's Vend



Rune Lore score, and the rune must be cast at 5 levels per person involved. Vend can also be used in conjunction with other runes to impart bonuses from those other runes on two people who are co-operating without having to cast the runes in question multiple times.

**Trolled:** The negative aspect of Vend implies a breakdown in partnerships. Relationships affected by a trolled Vend are more likely to fail, and a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude is applied to rolls for communications and social interaction. As with the positive aspect of Vend, the number of people in a relationship that can be affected is governed by inscribing a Vend rune at 5 levels per person, with a limit in people equal to the vitki's Vend Rune Lore score.

## Heimdall's Åett

### Hagall (HAH-gall): Hail

Hagall represents the cruel side of Nature, from sudden disrupting weather to illness. A rune associated with suffering and hardship, even Hagall's upright form can inflict great harm upon its victims. Although Hagall can be trolled, its negative effects were rarely employed by vitkir. There is no trolled form of Hagall.

**Upright:** Hagall is one of the few runes capable of hurting an opponent. If used to cause direct harm it can inflict damage equal to its power level at a range of 10 paces. The damage is similar in nature to being struck by a large hailstone or other blunt object, and can be Soaked by armor.

When bound or scripted into a blunt weapon, the weapon becomes enchanted with a damage bonus equal to Hagall's magnitude.

With Hagall a vitki can cause an attacker to move slower as if fighting a punishing wind, effectively reducing his opponent's Initiative roll by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude. The same penalty can be applied to movement rates in general.

Reflecting the changeability of weather, a bonus equal to Hagall's magnitude can be

applied to rolls involving changing a person's mind about an issue, whether by adding to Attributes or Abilities (normally Social ones).

In a rune script or binding, Hagall can be used to cause illness. Each week a victim is under the effects of an illness brought about by Hagall (beginning seven days after casting) he must make a Stamina roll with an ease factor equal to the rune's power level - 5; success results in the disease being shaken off, failure results in the loss of a Fatigue level which cannot be recovered until the disease is cured. A botch costs the victim a Body level, which also cannot be healed until the disease runs its course.

Although most vitkir are reluctant to dabble with the weather, Hagall can be used to summon a hailstorm that slows movement and causes damage each round equal to a simple die plus the rune's magnitude to all exposed creatures within its area (armor and hard cover protect as normal). While hail will fall throughout the storm's normal extent, *damaging* hail will only fall in an area 10 paces in diameter multiplied by the vitki's Hagall rune score.

Without an accompanying Dagr rune the sky must already be suitably overcast before casting, and without Iss the storm only lasts as long as a natural hailstorm, normally from a few minutes to an hour. If the Hagall rune is used on its own, the storm lasts only one round.

### Nauthr (now-THER): Necessity

Nauthr means hardship, trouble, and unforeseen adversity, but also gives strength of will and the ability to endure at a task. Nauthr can also be used to delay the end of a natural event or magical effect. Nauthr cannot be trolled.

**Upright:** A bonus equal to Nauthr's magnitude can be applied to rolls involving enduring hardship, including resisting torture or overcoming illness. As overcoming a hardship often takes time, Nauthr can be applied to Patient, Cautious, or similar Personality Trait rolls as well.

Long and arduous tasks can be very tiring and often a person will give up. With Nauthr the target receives a number of Confidence Points equal to one less than the rune's magnitude to aid him in tasks at which he has failed at least twice in succession. A bonus equal to the magnitude can also be added to combat rolls against exceptionally persistent foes.

When used to affect money matters rolls involving trade can be affected by a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude.

Relationships that are having trouble getting started can be aided by Nauthr's power, a bonus equal to the magnitude being added to rolls such as Charm, Presence, and Diplomacy.

When added to other runes in a binding or script, or cast on a script or binding that is already in force, Nauthr delays the ending of that effect by an amount starting at 25% of the normal time at level 5, with that delay doubling for every 5-point increase in level (that is, +50% at level 10, +100% at level 15, and so on). Along with extending the duration of a magical effect, this also changes the way in which the effect disappears; where normally a magical effect disappears in an instant once its duration is exceeded, under the influence of Nauthr, the effect gradually fades over the course of its extended lifespan, becoming less and less potent as time goes by until the effect finally shrinks to nothing.

Natural events already in place can be extended using a single Nauthr rune; no rune script is necessary. This is one of the very few cases where a single rune's power lasts more than one round. Nauthr could be used to delay death by extending the time a patient has before making a survival roll when Incapacitated, or how long a storm lasts before fading, but it could not affect movement rates (for that, see the Hagall rune on page 96).

Nauthr can be used to cause a penalty (equal its magnitude) to any roll that the target has already failed once and is attempting a second time. Its delaying effects can be used to extend recovery times, or the duration of hostile weather or negative emotions.

## Iss (EES): *Ice*

Iss means "ice" and symbolizes not only physical ice, and its hidden dangers of being slippery and weak, but also cold emotions. Iss can be used to calm down an emotional situation, and can be taken to an extreme to destroy existing relations. The most useful power of Iss is that of preserving an existing effect and it is vital for rune bindings. Iss has no trolled form.

**Upright:** Iss can be used to create ice (if the temperature is already below freezing) which causes all who tread upon it to make a Dexterity + Athletics roll with an ease factor equal to half the rune's power level to avoid slipping. Iss also protects one from cold, allowing the vitki to either add a bonus equal to its magnitude to Natural Resistance rolls, or use the magnitude to help Soak cold-based damage.





The Iss rune determines the amount of time that a rune binding may last. (For further details see the section on Rune Bindings on page 83.) Iss can also be used to extend the duration of an existing magical effect by the same amounts as Nauthr can *delay* the end of an effect, but in the case of an Iss extension there is no gradual fading of the effect; it stays at full potency for its entire extended duration. For this purpose, treat the level of Iss as one magnitude lower than that at which it is actually cast (that is, casting Iss at level 10 on an existing binding will only extend its duration by 25 percent, the same amount as a Nauthr rune cast at level 5).

Iss can also be used to cool a relationship by giving the victim a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude to social rolls involving his partner. Using multiple Iss runes to have more than one party in a relationship cool to the others will undoubtedly speed up the process of cooling or ending a relationship. Relationships ended through Iss use require great effort to rekindle.

Conversely, in a confrontational situation Iss can be used to reduce tension, counteracting the effects of Traits such as Bad-Tempered or Ill-Mannered, or magical effects causing emotions to flare. Too much cooling of passions, of course, could have long-lasting effects.

## Jera Harvest Protection

Level	Size of Field
5	House garden, up to 5 acres
10	Individual stead fields, up to 30 acres
15	Small village fields, up to 200 acres
20	Large village fields, up to 1,000 acres
25	Town fields, up to 5,000 acres

## Jera (YEA-rah): Harvest

Jera signifies the harvest, and while this implies autumn it can also mean the bounty of nature all year round. The rune is also associated with justice, and through this legal documents and contracts, including marriage contracts. There is no trolled form of Jera.

**Upright:** Jera can be used to secure a good harvest with few crops lost to bad weather and disease. A rune binding is needed as the power must be present from planting through to harvest. Normally the binding is carved into a wood or stone marker that is placed in the fields to be affected.

A bonus equal to Jera's magnitude can be used on rolls to correctly administer justice, whether the just result is good or bad for the user. When dealing with legal documents of any type a vitki can use that bonus as a modifier to die rolls.

Jera's magnitude can also be used as a bonus to rolls involving a married couple, such as Communication, Charm, or Carouse. A rune involving cooperation is needed to affect both parties. Jera cannot be used to harm a marriage.

Warriors directly tied to jarls or konungar, such as huscarls, can use a bonus equal to Jera's magnitude on their combat rolls when acting in the direct interest of their lord.

## Yr (EAR): Yew Tree

The planting of a yew tree in a graveyard was a pre-Christian custom, the tree symbolizing rebirth, it being an evergreen. The rune, although primarily associated with death, is also linked to endurance, and contains powerful magic for extending the duration of a runic enchantment. Yr also contains protective magic. There is no trolled form of Yr.

**Upright:** When involved in a task that requires patience or endurance, the vitki may invoke the rune to gain a bonus to his next die roll equal to the rune's magnitude.

Yr can be used to increase the duration of a rune binding or script when it is originally created, beyond the limits set by the Iss rune in the binding. (For more details, see "Rune Bindings" on page 83.)

Warriors can use Yr in two ways to try to avoid death: they can add the level of the rune to Soak rolls, or they can apply a bonus to recovery rolls equal to the rune's magnitude.

Yr can be used to communicate with the deceased. In order to do so, the vitki must be within a few feet of the target's grave or body and he must know the target's name. The number of questions that may be asked of the spirit is equal to the magnitude of the rune. The spirit retains its own memories and personality, and can only answer questions from its personal knowledge. It is not bound to tell the truth. Any vitki can only successfully summon a particular shade a single time. The spirits of people who have received full Christian burials cannot be summoned by Yr.

The Yr rune is closely associated with death and although it contains no powers that can instantly slay foes, it can certainly contribute to a victim's demise. A vitki can use Yr to apply a penalty equal to its magnitude to an opponent's combat or recovery rolls, or to rolls involving an element of deadly risk such as climbing a tall cliff.

In conjunction with the Mathr and Perta runes, Yr can be used to divine the lifespan allotted to a Norseman by the Norns. At level 20, Yr can measure a life to within a decade, and at level 25 to within a year. While accident or action can end a person's life before his appointed time, only god-level magic can extend a person's life past this figure once it is magically revealed. For this reason, few vitkir are willing to employ Yr in this manner, and some powerful people have killed vitkir in order to prevent such a determination being made. Storyguides should dissuade player character vitkir from abusing this power.

## Perta (PER-tah): Dice Cup

The Perta rune represents a dice cup: chance and fate. The rune is also strongly tied to the idea of secrets; divination can be enhanced through this rune. One of life's great secrets, and a process intimately linked with chance and fate, is the process of pregnancy, and Perta can be used to aid this process. There is no trolled form of Perta.

**Upright:** A bonus equal to the Perta rune's magnitude can be added to gambling and other gaming rolls, and to rolls involving a degree of luck (as opposed to skill). Perta can also be used to give the vitki a hunch, by subtracting the rune's power from 20 and having the vitki make an Intelligence roll against this ease factor; on a successful roll the storyguide can give the player a hint, clue, or some minor help.

Perta's magnitude can be added to rolls to detect hidden things or to discover information, including any divination spells.

A little known power of Perta is that of detecting poison. When carved onto a drinking cup, the rune can detect poison in the vessel. If the vessel contains any poison, it immediately shatters. At level 10 Perta can be used to detect naturally tainted liquids (such as spoiled wine), at level 15 it can detect herbal poisons, at level 20 animal poisons, and at level 25 magical poisons.



## Perta's Effects on Pregnancy/Childbirth

Level	Effect
5	Eases pain
10	Removes pain
15	Painless birth, and healthy baby (no physical Flaws over -4)
20	Painless birth, and healthy baby (no physical Flaws over -2)
25	Painless birth, and healthy baby (no physical Flaws)



Perta can be used to ease childbirth and grant a healthy child. The rune must be in place for the entire pregnancy to guarantee a healthy child. The table on page 99 shows the effects depending on the rune's power.

The rune can also be used to conceal facts or to make secrets harder to uncover by subtracting Perta's magnitude from Legend Lore, Perception, or even Charm rolls, depending on how the target is trying to uncover information. Perta can also penalize Gambling rolls.

Perta can be used to create a deadly illness that cannot be overcome naturally. Each week, the victim must make a Stamina roll of ease factor equal to the rune's level or lose a Fatigue level. When there are no Fatigue levels left the victim falls into a coma. Each week thereafter that the victim fails the roll he loses a Body level. When all the Body levels are gone the victim dies. Obviously a rune binding will be required for this power to have any effect.



## Ihwar (ih-WORE): Elk

Ihwar represents the antlers of the elk, and is thus strongly tied to animals and can help in hunts. It also symbolizes a hand warding off harm and as such is a powerful protective rune. Self-sacrifice is a trait to which Ihwar has ties, and bersarkr, among others, can be aided by the rune's powers. Ihwar is also a harmonic rune, reducing discord in gatherings of people.

**Upright:** The Ihwar rune can be employed to grant a bonus to existing magic protection equal to three times its magnitude. If there is no magic resistance already in place, the rune grants protection equal to its level multiplied by 1.5.

A spell effect directed at a vitki can be reflected to strike its caster through the power of Ihwar. In order to be effective, the incoming spell must be lower in level than Ihwar, and the spell's caster must be in sight of the rune user. The spell's caster is entitled to a Stamina + Concentration roll of ease factor 9+ to avoid the backlash. If two vitki activated Ihwar to this purpose, a spell reflected by one and then by the other will then dissipate without effect.

In combat situations, a bonus equal to Ihwar's magnitude can be added to Soak. Bersarkr entering battle may use Ihwar as a bonus to any one combat total in a round.

A person making a supreme self-sacrifice (defined as a person risking almost certain injury or death for another when no reward is involved) can add Ihwar's magnitude to any suitable roll.

With regard to hunting, Ihwar grants a magnitude bonus to rolls involving hunting, tracking, or similar ventures involving animals. Training animals is not covered by Ihwar. When fighting an animal, whether mundane or magical, the target may add the rune's magnitude to his Attack rolls.

The harmony aspect of Ihwar grants bonuses to Communication, Etiquette, and Diplomacy rolls, decreasing the chance of an accidental blunder causing a scene. Anyone wishing to create a disturbance can be afflict-

ed with a penalty on Attack rolls or social abilities used to disrupt a proceeding.

**Trolled:** Just as the upright Ihwar rune can grant protection, when trolled Ihwar can remove it. A penalty equal to the rune's magnitude can be applied to a victim's Soak roll. Alternatively, half the rune's level can be subtracted from the target's current magical protection score, including the Might score of a magical creature. Of course, the rune has to first overcome the existing magical protection before it can have its effect.

Disharmony also comes from a trolled Ihwar rune; it can be used to reduce Presence, Manipulation, and any positive Social Ability by an amount equal to its magnitude. An area cursed with a trolled Ihwar rune, such as a jarl's hall, is likely to be a place of frequent arguments and fights.

## Sól (SOHL): *The Sun*

Sól is a symbol of victory, a sign of light overcoming darkness, and good defeating evil. Sól symbolizes a lightning bolt as well as the sun's rays, and it thus has associations with Thor, the thunder god. There is no trolled form of Sól.

**Upright:** A bonus equal to Sól's magnitude can be added to rolls used for the explicit purpose of good triumphing over evil, whether that be in combat or diplomatic situations.

The sun can symbolize health and energy, and Sól can be used to aid recovery rolls and to resist Fatigue loss, the rune's magnitude being used as a bonus. This bonus can also be added to a target's Strength Attribute.

As a rune associated with the sun, Sól can be made to glow brightly, much as does Kaun, as per the table on page 94.

With sunlight comes heat, and Sól can be used to melt through snow and ice a half-inch thick at level 5, a few inches at level 10, a pace at level 15, a few paces at level 20, and up to 10 paces at level 25. Without Iss, the ice or snow refreezes naturally, while with Iss it stays melted until the rune's power fades.

Sól can also protect the user from fire, a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude being

applied to Natural Resistance rolls involving heat, or a bonus equal to the rune's level being added to the invoker's Soak score when resisting fire damage.

Sól is generally used by vitkir to overcome the forces of evil, but there are some who have used this rune to combat the forces of good despite the social consequences. When used in this manner the rune's magnitude can be added to any single roll when evil has a chance to triumph over good. The determinations of "good" and "evil" are left to the storyguide's discretion. Any vitki seen using this power gains the reputation "Evil" at level 2 among the witnesses of the community of non-evil vitkir.

## Tyr's Aett

### Tyr (TEER): *The God Tyr*

The Norse god Tyr was a god of both truth and battle. He was also associated with sacrifice, as he allowed his hand to be bitten off by the Fenris Wolf so that the wolf was bound.

**Upright:** When used as a rune of battle Tyr favors warriors who put themselves into danger beyond that faced by most of their comrades, whether that be because of bravery, berserk fury, or a suicidal impulse. Warriors in such situations may add the rune's magnitude to any combat total (although a bersarkr will refrain from using the bonus on defense or Soak rolls).

Tyr also protects those who volunteer for quests. During the quest the wearer may add a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude to any roll which actively aids the quest. Those who undertake quests often face difficulties that cause them to give up, but Tyr's magnitude can be added to strength of will rolls when trying to resist such problems.

Because of its association with truth, the Tyr rune's magnitude can be added to business transaction rolls (such as Bargaining) as long as the user is being truthful in the bargaining. In legal proceedings, the bonus can be applied to rolls designed to discover the truth, whether that is helpful or damaging to the user's case.





**Trolled:** When competing against other people (including in combat), Tyr can be used to give a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude to an opponent's die rolls.

## Bjarkan Rune Effects

Level	Healing Possible
5	Stop bleeding (+1 to bind wounds)
10	Heal one Body level, detect disease or poison in body
15	Heal two Body Levels, slow the progress of disease or poison (only in conjunction with Nauthr)
20	Heal three Body Levels, neutralize poison, cure disease
25	Heal four Body Levels, reattach severed (but still present) limb (only in conjunction with Iss)



A trolled Tyr rune can cause injustice, resulting in a penalty equal to the rune's magnitude on rolls that involve the law, including communication skills used during legal disputes.

## Bjarkan (BYAR-kan): Birch Tree

Bjarkan is a powerful rune of healing, and a rune of children and youth. Bjarkan has no trolled form.

**Upright:** Bjarkan can grant a bonus equal to its magnitude to a target's recovery rolls. Linked with both health and children is the concept of a painless birth and healthy child. Bjarkan can provide the same benefits as the Perta rune in this regard. The rune needs to be in effect for the duration of the recovery or pregnancy. It can also enhance the sexual pleasure of one or both partners in a sexual relationship.

Any roll affecting a child can be modified with the rune's magnitude as a bonus (upright) or penalty (trolled).

Bjarkan can be used to maintain the appearance of youth. If the rune has been worn for at least a year (as part of a rune binding) the power of the rune can be used to offset any one specific affliction the character may have that affects his youthful appearance, reducing it in intensity by an amount equal to the rune's magnitude.

Bjarkan can magically heal wounds, cure diseases, and neutralize poisons, as per the table above.

Bjarkan can be used to create a debilitating (but not deadly) illness in a person. Each week the victim must make a Stamina roll of ease 9+ or lose a Fatigue level. This continues until he loses all of his Fatigue levels and falls into a coma or until he recovers by rolling 15+. When in a coma the victim must continue to make Stamina rolls until the roll is 15+. No further levels are lost for rolls below this but a Decrepitude point is gained if the roll is botched. Because of the potentially long duration a rune binding is required.

At level 10 Bjarkan can prevent the pregnancy of a woman, although it cannot be used to end an existing pregnancy. To be fully effective at preventing pregnancy, the rune must be continually worn.

## Ior (YOR): Horse

Ior represents the horse, a beast noted for its stamina, speed, and strength, as well as travel and the partnership between rider and horse.

**Upright:** The rune gives a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls involving horses, from Animal Handling or Ride rolls to Evaluate rolls when choosing a horse to purchase. Ior also gives a bonus equal to its magnitude to movement allowance and to rolls that involve a journey, including Wagoneering and Area Lore.

The rune can provide a bonus to rolls involving trust, loyalty, and faithfulness for a close couple (horse and rider, brother and sister, husband and wife, and so on). The Vend rune isn't needed to grant them both the bonus, as Ior deals specifically with partnerships, not individuals.

**Trotted:** Ior can be trotted to produce weakness in opponents, applying a penalty equal to its magnitude to a victim's Strength or Stamina score.

Ior can also reduce movement rates or make Ability rolls such as Athletics, Boating, Wagoneering, or Horsemanship more difficult by an amount equal to its magnitude.

## Mathr (math-ER): Mankind

The Mathr rune refers to mankind, and covers some acts that are typically human in nature: cooperation with others, inventive thinking, and duty. Mathr is vital for using a rune script against a remote human target.

**Upright:** This rune grants a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls involving communication with other humans, including communicating with large numbers, such as giving speeches. At level 15 Mathr can be used to provide a score of 2 in the language of a foreigner if it is unknown to the vitki. At level 20, the score rises to 4. The vitki retains no knowledge of the language once the rune has exhausted its power.

Mathr also deals with foreign places, and its magnitude can be used as a bonus to Area Lore rolls or rolls involving foreign customs, such as Etiquette, Theology, or even

Bargaining. If the vitki possess no ability in the skill required he still receives the bonus but is also subject to the standard penalties on page 51 of ArM4.

A character may use Mathr to grant a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls involving a duty he has been given. For instance, a guard might increase his Perception or Awareness to spot intruders, or his Stamina to avoid falling asleep. A ship's steersman could improve his Boating score to avoid hitting rocks. Only one Attribute or Ability may be chosen per use of the rune.

With its ties to inventiveness, Mathr's magnitude can be added to rolls to create a mundane item. The bonus does not apply to copying an existing item or copying from plans; the work must be the craftsman's own, even though he may have created similar pieces before.

When two or more people are working together toward a common goal, Mathr can provide a bonus equal to its magnitude to a roll on which they fully cooperate. The number of people who can benefit is equal to the vitki's Mathr Rune Lore score, and the task to be augmented must be detailed when the rune is created. When used to help people cooperate through a different rune (such as Jera for aiding a married couple), the Mathr rune must be inscribed at a level of 5 per person involved.

With this rune the vitki can even attempt Knowledges in which he has no score, although he has a +5 Ease factor and 5 extra botch dice if he does.

A rune script designed to affect a remote human target must have Mathr in it. The level of the rune required is governed by the social level of the target (or the highest social class if more than one person is to be affected).



## Mathr Remote Targeting

Level	Social Class Affected
5	Thrall, Leysingi
10	Carl, Smithr, Böndi
15	Odalsböndi, Huscarl, Bryti
20	Landsmathr, Gothi, Hersar
25	Jarl, Konung



**Trolled:** One power of the trolled Mathr rune is a bonus that can be gained for rolls involving cruelty to fellow humans. The rune's magnitude is added to physical torture rolls or those inflicting emotional trauma on the subject. The Cruel Personality Trait can also be increased through this rune.

### Lög (log-ER): Water

Lög is the rune of water, a substance important to the Norse because their boats floated upon it, the spring thaw brought floods from the mountains, and in water lurked monsters that couldn't be seen from the surface. Lög includes aspects of mutability and fluidity. Lög is the rune most often associated with women, and it can backfire if used by a man.

**Upright:** The Lög rune can be used to guide the user toward a body of water, the size of which is determined by the rune's power level: a sea at level 5, a lake at 10, a river at 15, a barrel or small stream at 20, and a cupful at 25. If used as a single rune, the vitki receives only a vague impression of the direction and distance of the water. As part of a longer-lasting enchantment, the vitki feels the rune gently pulling him toward the water.

## Lög Mutability Effects

Level	Changes
5	Slightly weaken or strengthen inanimate object
10	Weaken by half or strengthen by double inanimate object
15	Change solid to liquid; reform inanimate object by 50% (dimensions, weight, shape)
20	Remake inanimate object completely
25	Change living creature into inanimate object (without killing)

When attached to a ship's hull, whether as a rune script or a rune binding, Lög grants a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls that involve avoiding shipwrecks. It can also be used to grant a ship's hull extra armor equal to the power level of the rune. Because the wood that the script is carved into must be destroyed after use, small wooden panels containing the script or binding are often affixed to the ship instead of having the runes carved directly into the hull.

Lög can grant a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls involving direct contact with water: Swim, Hunt (fishing), even Legend Lore or Area Lore Abilities if a body of water is the subject of the Ability's use. Indirect connections to water (such as most Abilities used by a sailor in a boat that is on water) don't gain the bonus.

Lög is also concerned with hidden senses, and grants a bonus equal to its magnitude to rolls involving non-standard senses such as Second Sight and Sense Holiness/Unholiness.

The rune's aspect of mutability allows the vitki to modify solid objects. At low levels the change is hardly noticeable but at higher levels extreme changes are possible. The area affected is normally restricted to the size and weight of a large person (1 cubic pace or around 450 pounds). Consult the insert to the left for exact details on what can be altered. The change lasts only as long as the enchantment.

**Trolled:** Movement in water can be slow work and Lög has the ability to slow a person's movement. A penalty equal to its magnitude can be applied to someone's movement allowance or to rolls involving Ride or Wagoneering. In combat, the penalty can be applied to a target's Initiative roll.

A bonus equal to Lög's magnitude can be added to attempts to seduce women by increasing Presence, Communication, Charm, Folk Ken, or other related Abilities. It also gives an equal number of botch dice if the attempt goes wrong. Other non-combat rolls used when dealing with women (such as Bargain and Etiquette) can also benefit from the bonus.

## Yngvi (UHNG-vee): The God Yngvi

The shape of Yngvi sums up its meaning: completion. Yngvi was an early fertility god whose role was usurped by Freyr. As such, Yngvi can stand for the success of a pregnancy, health, and a safe, secure home. Yngvi cannot be trolled.

**Upright:** Women hoping to become pregnant wear Yngvi as a fertility charm, and during childbirth the rune can be used to ease pain just as the Perta rune does. Yngvi has no effect on the health of the child delivered, but it doesn't have to be worn for the entire pregnancy in order to be used to banish the pain of childbirth.

Yngvi can be used as a bonus to any social rolls involving the user's family. A bonus equal to the rune's magnitude can be added to an Attribute, such as Communication or Presence, or to an Ability, such as Folk Ken or Carouse.

Yngvi can be inscribed onto a dwelling in the form of a binding or script, granting that home (of whatever form) a bonus equal to the rune's power level to Soak. The power level of the rune determines the size of building that can be affected by the binding or script, but multiple castings can be used to cover larger structures.

The concept of returning home safely is also in Yngvi's purview. When returning from a journey, Yngvi can be used to aid rolls to get home safely, such as Ride or Wagoneering, but not combat totals.

A bonus equal to the rune's magnitude can also be used to augment rolls that conclude an extended task. Examples of such tasks are haggling, diplomatic talks, or even combat. To count as an extended task, the event must have taken longer than average for events of its kind (in the storyguide's estimation).

## Dagr (DAG-er): Day

Dagr means day, and was thus equated with the sun, light, and life, especially in the long, cold winters, as well as the concept of time. The sun causes things to grow, and so Dagr can cause the growth of men, beasts, and plants. There is no trolled form of Dagr.

**Upright:** Dagr can be used to speed time as it relates to a specific event. Events that are

going to happen naturally, such as a storm that is already building, happen in a reduced time: 80% of normal at level 5, 60% at level 10, 40% at level 15, 20% at level 20, and within a few minutes or seconds at level 25. Events that will happen naturally, but not within the lifetime of the vitki, such as a stone wall turning to sand, can be made to occur in a fixed time: one year at level 5, one season at level 10, one month at level 15, one week at level 20 and one day at level 25.

The Dagr rune itself can be made to glow in a radius in paces equal to the rune's level, and a brightness as shown on the Kaun table on page 94.

One of Dagr's major powers is that of growth, and it can be used to cause a man, beast, or plant to increase in size. The rune cannot be used on its own for this purpose, as the target needs to be clearly defined by the Mathr rune for people, the Ur rune for animals, or the Thurs rune for plants. Dagr will cause living creatures to grow up to +1 Size per 5 levels of the rune. Plants grow +25% of normal size at level 5, with that growth level doubling for every 5-point increase in level (that is, +50% at level 10, +100% at level 15, and so on); unlike Jera, Dagr targets individual plants not entire fields.

Animals and people that gain Size also gain the side-effects that go with it: increased Soak and damage, and additional Body and Fatigue levels, as well as negative modifiers to Defense and to certain Ability rolls, such as Contortions or Social Abilities. The change in Size lasts as long as the runic enchantment and takes one round per 5 levels of power.



## Yngvi's Home Protection

Level	Size of Structure
5	Small, two-room house
10	Average house
15	Large stead (including out-buildings)
20	Jarl's stead
25	Small fortress



## Othal (OTH-all): A Possession

Othal represents property or possessions, especially those that have been in a family for some time (inherited property). Family characteristics that can be inherited are also Othal's province; cattle and coin, though, are covered by Fe.

**Upright:** With this rune, a vitki can cause a target's Virtues to be passed on to his grandchildren. An amount of Virtue points equal to the rune's magnitude (ignoring positive or negative signs) can be passed on. This rune must be activated during the entire time that the target's daughter (-in-law) is pregnant and can only be used in this way once per grandchild.

Othal's magnitude can be used as a bonus to rolls involving defending the vitki's family. A home protected by this rune has its Soak increased by an amount equal to the power level of the rune. Likewise, a man defending

his family or home from attackers may use Othal's magnitude to add to any of his Combat Totals.

The rune can be used to gain a good inheritance or secure a good job, each with a value equal to 10 times that in the Monetary Amounts column of the Rune Effects Table on page 88. Othal doesn't guarantee instant access (the inheritance will occur only at its natural time, and may come in stages in the form of multiple small inheritances), nor a lasting success (a business may collapse). For the most part, the inheritance will be in the form of land or goods, not coin or cattle.

Othal can also be used to protect grave goods, providing a bonus equal to the rune's magnitude to traps or other protections in non-Christian burial chambers.

**Trolled:** A very powerful curse can be formed from Othal, increasing a victim's botch dice for an upcoming roll. The number of dice is increased by the rune's magnitude. Obviously, a vitki cannot necessarily determine when an opponent will botch a roll, and so this works best in a rune binding or a rune script.

Othal can be used to pass a subject's Flaws onto another generation in the same manner as Virtues for the upright rune. If both Flaws and Virtues are to be inherited (either in one binding or two), the total value of the Flaw and Virtue points (ignoring positive and negative signs) cannot be more than the rune's magnitude; thus a +2 Virtue and a -1 Flaw would total 3, not 1, and would require casting Othal at at least level 15 (magnitude 3).

Not all of Othal's trolled aspects are negative for the target. One of a trolled Othal's more positive powers is to grant bonuses to those acting alone on a task and for his own reasons — he cannot be aiding a group while working individually. A bonus equal to the rune's magnitude can be added to any Ability used.



## The Gods and the Runes

Mortals and dwarves were not the only creatures who utilized runes. The gods often used them to perform wonders beyond those which mortals could reach, and at least one mythical beast had them carved into its body. For example, Odin used the power of the runes to restore a severed head to life, Bragi had runes carved into his tongue to give him gifted speech, and Sleipner had eight runes carved onto its teeth to enable it to fly and perform other feats.

No mortal can use runes that have been carved into their flesh, as runes must be burnt or broken after their power runs its course. There is a sole exception to this: good warriors often lived to old age and feared a "straw death," dying in their beds of old age, from whence they would pass to Nifleheim, not Valhalla where dwelt those who died bravely in battle as young men. A vitki could carve a Tyr rune into the chest of such a man on his death bed to trick the valkyries and grant him passage to Valhalla.

The power of resurrection was unknown to all but the gods. Necromancers (who were not vitkir but a separate magical tradition) had the power to reanimate corpses, but these were twisted parodies of the former self, used as servants or tomb guardians.

# Chapter 7

# Other Magic Systems



## Finnish Wind Wizards

Within the land of a thousand lakes to the east of Swede, lives a breed of magicians who have complete dominance over the air and the weather. Their reputation is known throughout Scandinavia but even the fact of their existence is limited to all but a few astute scholars in other lands.

Making a Finnish wind wizard character is not that different from making a standard Hermetic magus, although he may substitute for a companion at the storyguide's discretion. Follow the character generation steps given in the **Ars Magica** Fourth Edition rulebook, substituting the changed sections below where necessary.

### Starting Abilities

A wind wizard begins play with the following basic Abilities: Speak Finnish 5, Play (Flute or Pipes) 2, Craft (Knot Tying) 3, Weather Sense 3, Survival 1, (Area) Lore 2

Starting Experience: Age + 5





## Virtues and Flaws

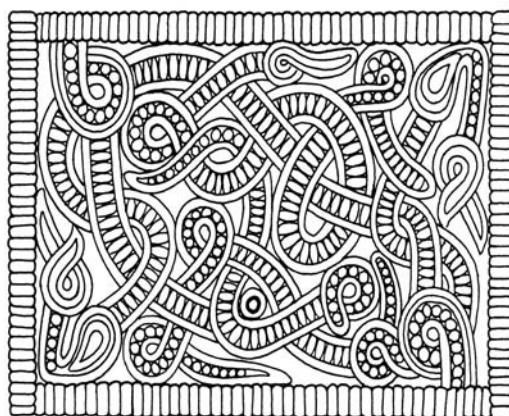
Not all of the standard *Ars Magica* Virtues and Flaws are open to the Finnish wind wizards.

### Forbidden Virtues and Flaws

- Alchemy (ArM4 40)
- Beginning Vis (ArM4 40)
- Diabolic Upbringing (ArM4 49)
- Educated (ArM4 41)
- Feral Upbringing (ArM4 49)
- Further Education (ArM4 41)
- Indulgences (ArM4 43)
- Lycanthrope (ArM4 49)
- Magic Item (ArM 40)
- Poor Memory (ArM4 50)
- Relic (ArM4 45)
- Sense Holiness/Unholiness (ArM4 42)
- Skinchanger (ArM4 44)
- Troupe Upbringing (ArM4 42)
- Simple-Minded (ArM4 48)
- Veteran (ArM4 42)
- Weak-Willed (ArM4 48)

## Starting Magic

Finnish wind wizards do not use formula-based magic like Hermetic magi. Instead, their magic system is based upon the use of four magical aptitudes and the untying of magically-charged knots.



The four magical aptitudes are collectively known as Chants among the Finns and each represents a clearly-defined area of their magic, not unlike the Hermetic Arts. The four Chants are:

**The Summoning Chant (Summon):** Gives the wind wizard the ability to bring forth winds from still air, to call lightning from a storm, and to make rain fall where there was none. It is similar to Creo Auram, and uses the guidelines on ArM4 117 to determine allowable effects and their ease factors.

**The Insightful Chant (Insight):** Gives the wind wizard knowledge of the air that surrounds him, whether it is harmful, and whether it is natural in nature. At higher levels the magician can communicate with the air. The Chant is similar to Intélego Auram, and uses the guidelines on ArM4 119 to determine allowable effects and their ease factors.

**The Controlling Chant (Control):** Through use of this Chant, the wind wizard can shape weather and wind to produce unusual effects. The wind can be warped to form a protective shield or become powerful enough to cause the magician to fly through the air. It is similar to Rego Auram, and uses the guidelines on ArM4 121 to determine allowable effects and their ease factors.

**The Removing Chant (Remove):** Causes existing weather conditions to be reduced in potency or dissipate, depending on the strength of the Chant used. Natural weather phenomenon and magically-created effects are both susceptible to this chant. The Removal Chant is similar to Perdo Auram, and uses the guidelines on ArM4 120 to determine allowable effects and their ease factors.

A Hermetic magus attacked by a wind wizard's Chants can use his *Parma Magica* in his defense, gaining an Auram Form bonus.

A starting wind wizard has a total of 50 experience points to divide between the four Chants. Normal experience points cannot be spent on these during character generation.

## Tying Knots

The knots used by a wind wizard are more than the simple knots created by sailors or rug-makers. Each knot takes hours to tie in a complex pattern, all the while accompanied by the recital of lengthy liturgies that infuse the knot with magical power. The maximum number of knots that can be created in a single week is Dexterity + Craft (Knot Tying) + Aura.

Along with tying the knots, the wind wizard must decide how to *distribute* them. While he can choose to put fewer knots on a rope, the maximum number of knots that can be tied into a single length of rope is equal to twice the wind wizard's Craft (Knot Tying) Ability.

## Casting A Spell

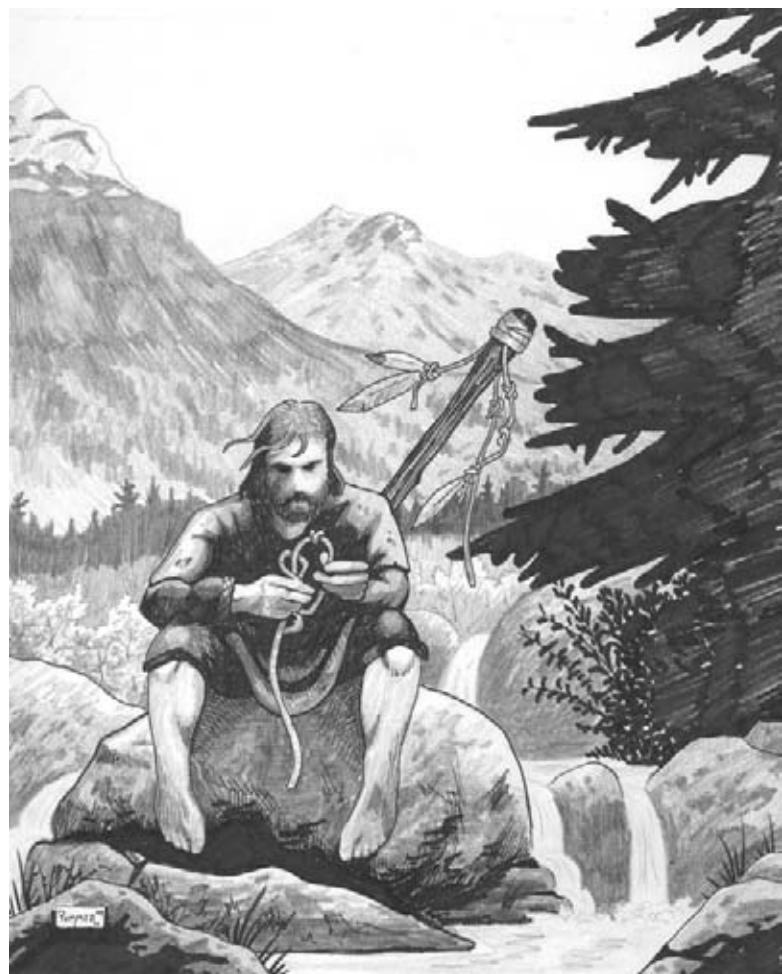
When casting a spell, a wind wizard must undo as many knots as the spell's magnitude, so a Level 25 spell requires the untying of five knots. Each knot must come from the same length of rope, although not every knot on a given piece has to be used. Extra knots can be untied to boost the magical power of the spell and help to guarantee that a given effect can be created.

Untying the knots makes available the raw power stored within them, power which he must mold to his purpose by singing one of the four casting Chants as his hands work the knots. To cast a wind spell, the wind wizard rolls a stress die + Communication + (appropriate) Chant + 5 per extra knot untied (to boost the casting total), against the ease factor of the desired effect (see "Starting Magic," above).

In order to extend the range, duration, or target of a spell, the wind wizard may undo one extra knot per effect per level of rating increase. This must be done for each parameter separately, so a magician wishing to increase the range of a 2nd magnitude spell from a base range of Reach to Near (a single rating difference), and a base duration of Momentary to Sun (an increase of two ratings) would have to expend three additional knots: one knot for the range increase and two for the duration change.

## Exempla Gratia

If the Finnish wind wizard Yngvi has a length of rope with seven knots on it, he may cast a single magnitude-7 (Level 35 in Hermetic terms) spell, or he may cast a 5th magnitude spell and use the remaining two knots to boost his casting total. He cannot cast two 4th magnitude spells from this length of rope, as that would require a total of eight knots on the piece of rope, nor can he cast a 7th magnitude spell and add a knot from another rope to boost his casting total.





## Spell-Casting Speed

The speed at which spell knots can be untied is governed by the Quickness of the wind wizard, as shown on the table below. Until the last knot is untied a spell is not considered cast. Fast-casting a wind wizard spell isn't possible: the knots must be untied one by one and human co-ordination, rather than magical ability, governs the speed.



## Wind Wizard Casting Speed

Quickness	Knots Untied per Round
+5 or greater	4
+4	3
+3	2
+2 to -2	1
-3 to -4	1 every 2 rounds
-5 or worse	1 every 3 rounds

## Wind Wizard Summary of Formulae

### Knots Tied Per Week

Dexterity + Craft (Knot Tying) + Aura

### Casting a Wind Spell

Communication + (appropriate) Chant + 5 per extra knot untied + stress die (ease factor: desired spell level)

### Maximum Knots Per Rope

2 x Craft (Knot Tying) Ability

## The Price of Failure

If a wind wizard fails when attempting to cast a spell, there is no effect save for the loss of a Fatigue level and the expenditure of the knots required to cast the spell.

If the wizard botches his roll, then a variety of effects can happen: along with the loss of Fatigue and knots, a hostile air elemental could be summoned; the spell could work but at a greatly reduced or dangerously increased power; or a different weather condition altogether could be produced.

## Learning the Chants

A wind wizard who wishes to increase his knowledge of the chants can do so through three methods.

He can seek out other wind wizards and ask them to instruct him in the chants. This is not as easy as it might sound, as there are few wind wizards left in the world (possibly as few as 50), and many live in isolated mountain ranges where their magic can be used without interruption.

The second method is to contact the spirits of the air and ask for instruction. Although wind wizards can easily contact these spirits, they are not always friendly, and even the friendly ones generally ask for favors first. The nature of the favor can range from a simple request ("Bring me a plant from the top of Mount Olaf") to the more dangerous and complex ("Bring me the head of the witch who lives in Iarnwood"). The exact knowledge passed on by benevolent spirits is left to the storyguide's discretion, but should bear some relation to the favor requested.

The last method is slow but is generally easy to accomplish: knowledge through experience. When a character receives experience points, he may spend them on increasing his Chants. The usual restrictions to spending experience apply.

# Dwarven Magic

Deep within the bowels of Nithavellir the ancient race of **dverge** (dwarves) practice their unusual form of magic, worked entirely through magical items.

Dwarven magical items are rarely seen in Christian Mythic Scandinavia as the dwarves now have few encounters with Norse heroes, having withdrawn into their dark realm. Many dwarven items are only known to mortals through legend, as they were created for the gods.

There are two distinct types of Dwarven magical artifacts; lesser and greater items. The differences are quite clear, at least in dwarven eyes, although some users feel that some of the lesser items are more useful than certain greater items. Greater items are reserved solely for the gods and are never given to mortals. In the Christian Era only a handful of dwarves have retained the ability to create greater items.

## Finding Lesser Items

Lesser items are more common than greater items, although they are still rare in mortal hands. There are only two real methods of gaining such an item: a mortal can be given one by a dwarf, or he can search out a dwarf and ask for one to be crafted.

Legend has it that mortals who are sought out by dwarves and given magical items are destined to lead heroic but ultimately unhappy lives. Such encounters generally take place in isolated lands, far away from prying eyes, and often when the mortal least expects it. The dwarf generally approaches the mortal openly and presents the item to him, while also telling him of the great destiny that lies before him (but failing to mention any curses or unhappiness that might be associated with the item).

Characters with the +4 Virtue Destiny (ArM4 page 45) are good examples of the

types of mortal who receive such items. Lesser items should only be given to a character after great forethought and only if it will lead to the character's destiny and, ultimately, his downfall.

Characters who seek out dwarves for their magic are often frustrated by failure. Nithavellir can be reached from the mortal realms, but the road is difficult and dangerous. Once must first find a passage from Mythic Scandinavia to the faerie realms under which Nithavellir rests. The easiest places to find such doorways are in inhospitable mountainous lands or by entering into the earth through natural caves. Whatever route is taken, the road will be full of dangerous encounters, for dwarves do not like their tranquillity being disturbed by greedy mortals.



## Known Greater Items

*The following greater items are those that are known to mortals, primarily through ancient myths and legends. Specific powers are only listed where they are known, as are the dwarves who created the item.*

**Sif's hair:** A golden wig given to Sif after Loki burned off her real hair. The golden strands grow as normal hair. Created by the sons of Ivaldi.

**Gungnir:** Odin's spear which never misses its target. Created by the sons of Ivaldi.

**Draupnir:** Odin's golden arm ring from which eight non-magical duplicates fall every night. Created by Eitri and Brokk.

**Mjollnir:** Thor's hammer which never misses its target when thrown, returns to his hand afterward, can never be broken, and can shrink to make it concealable. The hammer does have a small flaw: the handle is very short, requiring great strength to wield. Created by Eitri and Brokk.

**Gullinbursti:** Although a living creature, the golden boar of Freyr ("Golden Bristles") can run over air and water all day and night without tiring, and its hide shines as brightly as the sun. Created by Eitri and Brokk.

**Skidbladnir:** Freyr's boat, which is large enough to hold all of the gods and their weapons, but can be folded like a cloth when not in use. As soon as the sail is hoisted a breeze rises to propel it. Created by the sons of Ivaldi.



Once a hero reaches the dwarven realms he still has to locate a dwarf who will construct an item for him. A mortal who merely asks what items the dwarves have for sale will be expelled from Nithavellir by powerful magic (often to a land far from his home), and will never be able to find the way back. Particularly insistent or obnoxious mortals will also be cursed with a -1 or -2 General Flaw.

If the adventurer locates a willing dwarf, he must tell him what he wishes created and why, for dwarves do not spend their valuable

time creating magical items for just anyone. A mortal who needs the item to aid in a quest is more likely to receive aid than one who merely wishes an item because of the prestige it will bring.

The actual creation of a dwarven magic item is, to mortal eyes at least, surprisingly simple. The main components required are a forge and a lump of a single substance which forms the major part of the item to be constructed. For example, the Cloak of Shadows (see insert) would need a bundle of cloth. The dwarven artificer then places

## Examples of Lesser Items

*The following lesser items are typical examples of those created by dwarves.*

**Boots of Faerie Footprints:** What appear to be normal fur boots contain magic capable of changing the prints they leave behind. Some boots can only switch to a single type of print (usually bear, wolf, deer, or moose, although rabbit and arctic fox prints have been known), but others can leave any sort of animal print, the wearer needing only say the name of the creature whose tracks he wishes to leave.

**Cloak of Shadows:** This dull cloak allows the wearer to become one with the shadows. Upon speaking a word of power the wearer becomes a mere darkened form, able to flit across any surface and through the tiniest of cracks.

A person in shadow form may see and hear, but not touch, any material object. The shadowy person is not invisible, but assumes the appearance of the shadow of any object located nearby. Thus, in a darkened, jumbled area, a person in shadow form can go completely unnoticed. In open spaces, such an apparition can be spotted on a Perception + Awareness simple die roll of 6+. The user of the cloak may materialize at any time, but cannot resume shadow form until after the next sundown.

**Cloth of the Feast:** This linen tablecloth can produce a Norse feast, complete with mead, fish, meat, and wine from Byzantium. The cloth can feed up to 20 people each day.

**Freyja's Acorn:** If planted, this normal-looking acorn grows into a weather-proof wooden house, capable of housing 10 people with room to lie down. Although it has no fireplace, the house remains at a comfortable temperature, regardless of the outside climate. The house remains until the next Freyrsday, at which point it reverts to acorn form and cannot be used until a full lunar cycle has passed.

**Questing Sword:** These swords are designed to kill one specific type of creature, generally orms, giants, or trolls, and confer upon the wielder a +3 bonus to his Attack score and a +10 Damage bonus when facing that creature. So dedicated to their goal are they, that if the user hears rumors of one of these creatures while in the sword's presence, he must make a Stamina + Concentration roll of ease factor 9+ or be forced by the sword to immediately set off in search of the monster so that he can vanquish it. Should he actually encounter one of these beasts, the ease factor increases to 15+.

An attempt to break free of the sword's influence (as above) can be made every sunset or sunrise while hunting the creature, and every round while fighting it. The wielder is then free of the sword's control until the next rumor or sighting (which could be mere instants during combat).

**Ring of Plenty:** This plain gold finger ring, valued at 100 pfennings, creates a non-magical duplicate of itself every Wodensday in a manner similar to Odin's magical arm ring Draupnir.

the item in the forge and begins to pump the bellows, reciting ancient litanies of enchantment as he does so. After a pre-set time, calculated with painstaking accuracy by the dwarf using charts and strange instruments, he apparently simply ceases his work and removes the completed item from the forge. This description is obviously very simplified, but the exact mechanics are irrelevant as no mortal can recreate such a procedure.

## Payment

Once the item has been created, the mortal must pay for it. The payment required is stated by its creator *after* its creation, and the mortal has only two choices: accept the price or refuse; dwarves do not haggle over their labors and despise mortals who attempt to do so. If the mortal refuses to pay the price, the matter is closed and the dwarf will store the item away for another day. Under no circumstances will the dwarf deal with that mortal again.

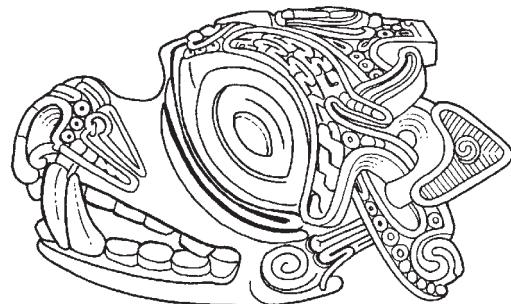
Mortals who accept the price may find that there is more to it than meets the ear. Dwarves do not ask for bags of gold in payment, instead they want more obscure items such as "the edge of your sight," "a bit of your luck," or "your good name." Such prices sound simple and mundane but have hidden costs that are not revealed to the player until the transaction has been agreed to and completed.

## Inheriting a Lesser Item

A lesser item's magic will last either for the lifetime of the original recipient or forever, at the whim of the dwarf who made it.

In the case of a permanently enchanted item, it cannot be used by anyone after the original owner's death until the new owner is visited by the dwarf (either in person or in a vivid dream) and offered the same deal (that is, the loss of "the tint of

your hair" or "your fondest dream"). If he accepts, the item now functions as designed for *his* lifetime, as the same price as the previous recipient paid. If the newcomer refuses to accept the deal, the item either loses all magical powers forever, or, again at the whim of its creator, it can disappear, only to lie waiting somewhere else for another foolhardy would-be-owner to come across it.



## Example Prices for Dwarven Items

**Two of the mortal's toes:** The dwarf takes the mortal's big toes, leaving him unable to walk properly (-1 Dexterity or the Flaw Lame).

**The mortal's heart's desire:** The dwarf does not take the item of the mortal's desire, but instead removes the mortal's desire for that object (-1 Stamina or a suitable Flaw).

**Two of the mortal's fingers:** The dwarf takes the mortal's thumbs, leaving him unable to hold items properly (-1 Dexterity or a suitable Flaw).

**The color of the mortal's eyes:** Leaves the character with white eyes (-1 Perception or a suitable flaw, such as Blind, plus the Disfigurement Flaw).

**Seven years of service:** The mortal is required to work the dwarf's bellows for seven years, becoming progressively more dwarf-like in appearance over time.



# Hermetic Magic

There are a few aspects of Hermetic magic's (and magi's) interactions with Norse rune magic and the Northlands that should be mentioned here.

## Parma Magica

A member of the Order of Hermes attacked by runic magic may use his Parma Magica to defend himself, gaining Art bonuses only against runic effects that are obviously related to a specific Form (such as gaining a Mentem bonus against spells designed to affect the magus's mind). If the attack doesn't have an obvious analogy in a Hermetic Art a magus may only use his Parma Magica multiplied by 5 in his defense. Magi always get an Auram Form bonus when facing the spells of Finnish wind wizards.

## Sun Duration Spells

Hermetic spells with a sun duration last until the sun next rises or sets, but in the most northerly reaches of Mythic Scandinavia (above the Arctic Circle, beginning more than 100 leagues north of Trondheim), the sun can remain in the sky, bobbing just above the horizon, for days, weeks, or even months at a time. While this happens only at the height of summer, and the most extreme of these prolonged days

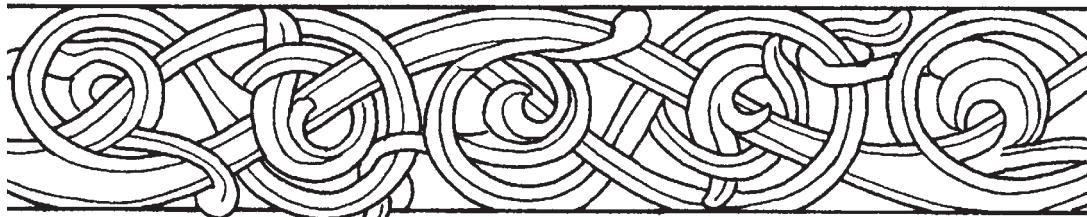
occur only at the most extreme latitudes, Hermetic magi may hear exaggerated rumors of a far-off land where their powers will be increased many times, thus prompting them to journey to the strange, cold land of the Sami.

## Vis in Scandinavia

The substance known to Hermetic magi as vis exists in Mythic Scandinavia, although in much smaller quantities than elsewhere in Mythic Europe. Known to vitkir as *makt* (power), it can only be found in the corpses of supernatural creatures, and in areas known to be frequented by faeries, although these places are becoming increasingly rare as the Dominion spreads over the Northlands.

Although some of the mundane Scandinavian creatures contain amounts of *makt*, vitkir cannot sense it and do not utilize it. As far as they are concerned, *makt* is either the remnant of the magic that created various races or a gift from benevolent faeries, and thus is found in trolls and giants, but not badgers or bears. Those vitkir who travel beyond the lands of Scandinavia make no effort to collect vis from sources outside of their traditional ones.

To vitkir, the amount of *makt* in Scandinavia, although declining, has always been low and they see no crisis in the situation. Some Hermetic magi who visited Scandinavia reported the same low vis volumes, leading some to the conclusion that the Order of Odin was harvesting it on a large scale for the use of the Norse wizards.



# Chapter 8

# Norse Bestiary

Norse mythology is filled with creatures and beasts, magical and mundane, not all of whom are unfriendly to mankind. This bestiary gives descriptions and statistics for a selection of creatures that Norse adventurers can expect to hear of or encounter on their travels.

## Alfar

All alfar are highly magical faerie beings. The ljossalfar (light elves) do not visit the realm of mortal men, preferring to stay in Alfheim and enjoy their lives. Only once, for the funeral of Baldur, did large numbers of ljossalfar leave their homeland, for Baldur was loved by their species. Ljossalfar magic is based on the runes, and all are proficient in a dozen or so runes. A typical ljossalfar resembles a tall but thin human of exceptional beauty, with pale skin and golden hair; they are described as being “as fair as the sun to gaze upon.” They are allied with the Seelie Court, and other varieties of faeries found in Seelie places can be found in Alfheim. Freyr is the divine ruler of the ljossalfar.

The svartalfar (dark elves) do not dwell far from their home: Svartalfheim. A few live in Myrkwood and other places inhospitable to mortals. They shun sunlight and some are turned to stone by the rays of the sun. They are generally short and ugly, with black skin and hair. Allied with the Unseelie Court, their lands are home to goblins and other malevolent faerie creatures. They too are skilled in the use of runic magic. Although the svartalfar have no patron god, they can gain some aid from Loki, imprisoned as he is in their underground realm.

The ljossalfar and svartalfar detest each other, warring whenever possible. Only at Baldur’s funeral did they stand side by side in peace, and even the svartalfar wept for Baldur when he died.

## Auroch

Aurochs are giant cattle that roam Mythic Scandinavia. Their strength and stamina are legendary among the Norse and the second rune of the Futhark, Ur, is named after them. During the Viking Age a young man would prove himself an adult by hunting and slaying a bull auroch. In Christian times the practice is less often followed, generally reserved for backwards areas still untouched by the full force of Christianity.

A typical auroch stands approximately six feet tall at the shoulder, and presents a fearsome sight. The bull auroch is a generally docile creature unless its herd is in danger, when it turns into a fearsome beast. An angered auroch can kill a man with little effort.



## Auroch

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per -1, Str +6, Sta +8, Dex 0, Qik -1

**Size:** +3

**Personality Traits:** Protective +2, Docile +1

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Horns	+5	+4	-4	+11	+8
Trample	+3	+2	-4	+21	+8

**Soak:** +15

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:** Ferocity (protecting the herd) 4, Awareness (smell intruder) 2

**Vis:** 2 pawns of Animál vis in their horns.



## Draugr

The draugr are a form of Norse undead that inhabit areas of Midgard renowned for their evil nature: barrows, battlefields and the like. They are normally the bodies of those who have dabbled in necromancy or have been cursed by Odin, Freyja, and Hela to live an eternity of torment, forbidden to enter the Norse afterworld.

## Draugr

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per 0, Pre -6, Com -3, Str +6, Sta +10, Dex -1, Qik -1

**Magic Might:** 20

**Size:** +2

**Personality Traits:** Evil +3, Cruel +1, Destructive +2

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Claws	+7	+5	-3	+17	N/A

**Soak:** +15

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*The Indomitable Mind*, Me, 0 points: The draugr's willpower is completely unnatural, making it immune to all Mentem spells and any powers which duplicate their effects.

*Tireless Spirit*, ReCo 30, 0 points: A draugr cannot tire, nor can it ever be knocked unconscious.

*Skin that Resists the Razor*, MuCo 35, 0 points: The draugr's dead and hardened skin is highly resistant to the effects of piercing and cutting weapons. Weapons affected by this power still do damage but have an effective damage modifier of zero. Crushing weapons act normally.

*Stink*, CrAu 10: Like *Stench of the Twenty Corpses*, ArM4 p. 118.

*Voice that Saps the Will*, MuMe 30, 2 points: The draugr has a hideous weapon: a voice that can sap the will to resist of those who listen to it. Anyone who hears the draugr's spoken enticements for three or more rounds must make a Stamina roll of 9+. Each round after the third, the ease factor increases by 1. If the roll is successful the victim is unaffected. If the roll is failed, the target will be at -3 on all rolls for the remainder of the scene. A botch will send the target into a catatonic state cured only by the *Return of Mental Lucidity* spell (or similar magic) cast at a level equal to the draugr's Might. This power only affects those who can understand the monster's speech, which is likely to be in the Norse tongue.

**Vis:** 4 pawns of Perdo vis in its arms.

The skin of a draugr is black-blue in color, as if it has bruises covering its entire body. Much of the skin is often missing, revealing taut muscles. In some cases yellow streaks of fat can be seen exuding between the muscles.

Draugr have the same intelligence they possessed in life, which can make them dangerous foes. Their undead status gives them superhuman strength and unlimited endurance. Although capable of using weapons, they prefer to use their natural weapons, including sharp claws and wrestling/crushing techniques. They possess a wide variety of supernatural powers which they use to great effect.

Not all draugr can be slain by normal weapons; legend has it that some can only be killed by a hero challenging one to a holmganga and then wrestling the foul creature to death. Luckily, draugr are exceptionally rare in Christian Scandinavia.

## Dverge

In Norse mythology the word alfar is used to describe three different groups: the light and dark elves (see page 115), and the dverge, or dwarves.

The dverge are the alfar most commonly encountered by humans. They are the dwarves of legend who created such magical artifacts as Thor's hammer Mjollnir and Odin's spear Gungnir.

The dverge sprang into existence in the body of the slain giant Ymir just as maggots spontaneously appear in spoiled meat. Because of their heritage they are condemned to live under the earth, never to see the light of day. Dverge resemble short, deformed humans with long beards. When working, they wear long aprons that reach the floor, intentionally hiding their feet from view. It is rumored that their feet are those of crows.

The greatest artificers known, the dverge produce magic items of legendary status, as well as more mundane items. Some of their creations are cursed, bringing ruin and despair to the wielders. For more information on dverge-made magic items, see "Dwarven Magic" on page 111.

## Faeries in General

There are a variety of faeries living within Mythic Scandinavia and in nearby Norse Arcadia. Most rarely venture forth from their sanctuaries, but a sample of several of the faeries most commonly encountered is given below. No statistics are given for them due to their wide range of powers and the fact that they avoid contact whenever possible.

## Nykr

These fresh-water faeries reside in rivers, lakes, and small ponds. The nykr are roughly human in size, with bodies that are half-human and half-fish, and both sexes are represented (nykr meaning “nude”). They can shapechange to human form to travel on land but leave distinctive, wet footprints when they do so. The females are often extremely attractive and attempt to lure men into their abodes for their amusement by promising them sexual favors.

A few of the nykr are related to the kelpie (see *Faeries Revised Edition*, page 101) and can transform into black or gray horses. These malevolent faeries lure humans onto their backs and then ride at full gallop over the edges of cliffs or into deep water, where the hapless victims often drown.

A nykr can be pacified by offering a black lamb as a sacrifice. If the nykr appreciates the sacrifice it may agree to instruct a human in the playing of musical instruments, or teach him stories of distant lands. It is said that some of the greatest skalds learned their art from these creatures, but it is also believed by some that these skalds lost their souls as a result. The music of a nykr is said to be able to charm humans, as per the Virtue Enchanting Music.

## Havmand

Off the coast of Mythic Scandinavia live creatures known as havmand (mermaids). Their homes are typically in areas of the coasts that human ships have trouble reaching. The havmand live at the bottom of the sea in caves where the water is held at bay by magic. Humans brave enough to swim into the dark waters the havmand call home may find the entrance to one of their homes. Such visitors are well treated and are asked to participate in games of chance or riddles. Havmand are fond of wine, and visitors bringing wine are treated as honored guests.

The appearance of the havmand varies from beautiful women with golden hair to ugly men with tusks and seaweed for hair. Whatever their appearance, the havmand have webbing between their fingers and their feet are similar to those of ducks. Their skin is generally green and made up of tiny scales.

Havmand are seldom hostile to humans. Those fishermen who respect the sea or make sacrifices to the havmand often find their nets full of fish. When their own food supplies are low though, havmand will cut the nets of human fishermen. Occasionally a havmand will rescue a human from drowning for reasons known only to itself.



## Nisse

Nisse are similar to the faerie creatures called brownies and can be recognized by their red caps (not to be confused with the malicious faeries of Scotland). Nisse live on farms, where they help by performing minor chores and bringing good luck to the farmer and his family. The nisse dislike being pestered, preferring to complete their tasks alone. Nisse who are persistently interrupted leave the farm never to return. Leaving a set of clothes for nisse also causes them to leave, although not through displeasure; so valued are the clothes that the nisse leaves to show his fine adornments to others of his kind. In return for their help, the nisse help themselves to small



items from the farm, normally a few drops of milk from a cow's teats or the odd vegetable.

A variety of nisse, known as kabbelgatt, make their homes not on farms but on ships. They bring good luck and help with small tasks, such as mending small rips in sails or replacing worn out nails.

## Swan Maidens

Swan maidens are magical women who spend much of their lives as beautiful white swans. When they wish to resemble humans they shed their magical cloaks of swan feathers. Their cloaks are highly treasured and they guard them well, for a mortal man who takes a swan maiden's cloak gains complete control over her.

Swan maidens enjoy bathing naked under full moons, and this is one of the times when they must change into human form. It is said that a man who sees a naked swan maiden must marry her within one month or become cursed with impotency for the rest of his life.

## Cliff Giant

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per -1, Pre +2, Com -2, Str +7, Sta +6, Dex -2, Qik -2

**Magic Might:** 20

**Size:** +3

**Personality Traits:** Devious +2, Suspicious +3

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Sword	+8	+7	+3	+22	+3
Brawling (fist)	+7	+3	+2	+12	+3

**Soak:** +20

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Stone Control*, various Terram, variable points; Cliff giants have limited powers over earth and stone. They can cast any Terram spell at a cost of 1 Might per 5 spell levels. However, their powers are quite weak and they cannot increase the Range or Duration, nor can they cast spells over level 25.

**Vis:** 10 pawns of Corpus vis in body, 3 pawns of Terram vis in bones

## Giants in General

Within Norse mythology giants are amongst the oldest creatures in existence, and there are several lands inhabited purely by giants. Indeed, a giant was the father of the first gods, and the body of a giant forms the earth on which mankind lives.

The gods have long dealt with the giants, and not always on good terms. A giant built the strong walls which defend Asgard (although he was tricked out of his proper payment for the work), and a giant, Utgard-Loki, tricked Thor and Loki in several competitions. The giant Thrym tricked the gods into handing over Freyja to be his wife and was killed by Thor for his efforts. At Ragnarök the fire giant Surt will lead a host of fire giants to destroy Midgard while the frost giants will disembark from the ship Naglfar.

Although giants are few in number on Earth itself, they exist in large numbers in Muspellheim, Jotunheim, and Nifleheim. Each of the different types of giant are explained in more detail below.

**Note:** Due to the great size of giants, they receive the +3 High Ground melee modifier when attacking normal humans.

## Cliff Giant

Cliff giants are the smallest and most commonly encountered giants in Midgard, making their homes in the mountains of Mythic Scandinavia, as well as on the outskirts of the various giant lands. Many of the cliff giants live in communities similar to the Norsemen of the Viking Age and they resemble large Norsemen, with long hair and bushy beards.

In general, cliff giants are suspicious of humans and do not have much contact with them. Humans foolish enough to enter an area inhabited by them are liable to be ambushed and slain.

## Frost Giant

The frost giants of Mythic Scandinavia are descendants of the first giant, Ymir (known to the frost giants as Aurgelmir). They wander the frozen northern wastes of Nifleheim and only approach human-inhabited areas during the worst of winters. Travelers to Nifleheim have reported seeing frost giants there. The seer Haid prophesized that at Ragnarök a ship called Naglfar, constructed of the finger and toe nails of the dead, will sail to Asgard and the frost giants on board will attack the gods.

Most frost giants resemble tall humans with white hair and frosty beards. The statistics to the right are for a small frost giant, typical of those who still come to Midgard during bad winters to seek adventure and to fight against human heroes.

## Fire Giant

The fire giants of Muspellheim, also referred to as the sons of Muspel, live in the fiery lands south of Midgard. Small giants, such as the one detailed to the right, are likely to be encountered near the border; as one goes deeper in the land the fires grow hotter and the giants grow more powerful. Surt, the leader of the fire giants, guards the main gates to Muspellheim and all who wish to enter encounter him, no matter how they try to enter the realm.

At Ragnarök, Surt will lead his giants from their fiery land over the Bifrost Bridge, shattering it as they pass, and on to the gates of Asgard. Then he will turn his powers against the world of men and the entire globe will be consumed in flames.

Fire giants are generally taller than frost giants and resemble humans with fiery red hair and beards. Their skin is bronze in color and hot to the touch. Prolonged contact can cause damage at the rate of +5 damage per round.

## Frost Giant

**Characteristics:** Int -2, Per -2, Pre +3, Com 0, Str +10, Sta +9, Dex -3, Qik -3

**Magic Might:** 35

**Size:** +4

**Personality Traits:** Belligerent +4, Cold-Hearted +3

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Axe/Club	+10	+9	+2	+25	+5
Brawling (fist)	+9	+5	+1	+15	+5

**Soak:** +30, immune to cold, +25% damage from fire

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Cloak of Snows*, CrAu 40, 0 points: Frost giants are almost always surrounded by swirling snow or sleet driven by mighty winds, even when they are in lowland regions. This makes fighting them difficult (-2 to offensive and defensive scores, and one extra botch die). This power only works when the temperature is near or below freezing.

**Vis:** 16 pawns of Corpus vis in body.

## Fire Giant

**Characteristics:** Int -1, Per -2, Pre +4, Com +1, Str +12, Sta +10, Dex -3, Qik -3

**Magic Might:** 50

**Size:** +5

**Personality Traits:** Bad Tempered +2

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fiery Sword	+10	+9	+2	+31	+6
Brawling (fist)	+9	+5	+1	+21	+6

**Soak:** +35, +25% damage from water, immune to fire

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0/0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0/0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Fire Control*, various Ignem, variable points: Fire giants wield a wide variety of powers connected to the element of fire. A fire giant can use any Ignem spell it desires, at a cost of 1 Might per 5 levels of spell. Range and duration can be increased by expending an extra 1 Might per 5 spell levels (as with vis). Perdo Ignem spells that produce cold can be cast, but most fire giants are loathe to do so.

**Vis:** 14 pawns of Ignem vis in body.



## Jotun

The Jotun are the inhabitants of Jotunheim, the land of giants found to the east of Midgard. They are some of the oldest and most powerful giants in the world. The gods themselves fight the Jotun and are not always victorious. The wives of many of the gods are Jotun.

These giants are monstrous beings, generally averaging 90 feet tall and striking terror

into mortals. Their powers are capable of destroying humans with little effort. For these reasons, and the fact that these giants rarely leave their homeland, statistics have not been included.

The *Lion of the North* sourcebook lists statistics for highland giants on page 125; a jotun's characteristics are higher than these. Jotun dislike meddling mortals, and it is quite likely that any character who annoys one of these giants will meet a swift end.

## Hagbui

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str +7, Sta +10, Dex -3, Qik -1

**Magic Might:** 10

**Size:** +2

**Personality Traits:** Angry +2, Grudging of Treasure +5

Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam
Claw	+4	+1	—	+12*
Bite	+3	0	—	+12

\* Two attacks

**Soak:** +15

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

**Undead:** The hagbui does not tire, nor can it be knocked unconscious.

*Along with its greatly augmented Strength, Size, and Stamina, the hagbui may have one or more of the following powers. Each power after the first adds 2 to the Magic Might of the hagbui. Each time the hagbui successfully uses a power, it loses one point of Stamina.*

**Rock Swimming, MuCo 40:** The hagbui may "swim" through stone or earth. It must make a Stamina roll of 15+ to enter or leave the earth (one try per round). It moves at half walking speed.

**Fall of Darkness, PeIg 30:** The hagbui creates a circle of darkness 20 paces in diameter. No light may enter or exist in this circle.

**Fearful Aura, ReMe 20:** The hagbui may attempt to panic one opponent a round. If the panic is not successfully resisted, the target will flee in terror until out of sight of the hagbui.

**Wind Raising, ReAu 20:** The hagbui can raise gale-force winds but may not change their direction once they are raised.

**Curse:** The creature may use the Curse Extraordinary Talent, with a skill level of 5.

**Confuse, ReMe 15:** Like *Confusion of the Numb Will*. The hagbui may attempt to confuse one opponent a round.

**Mist Raising, CrAu 10:** The hagbui can raise a thick mist, which resists being pushed by the wind. The mist smells of corpses.

**Dull Weapon, PeTe 5:** The hagbui may reduce the damage bonus of any single sharpened weapon (edged or pointed) to zero.

**Geas:** The creature may use the Geas Extraordinary Talent, with a skill level of 5.

**Second Sight:** The creature may use the Second Sight Extraordinary Talent, with a skill level of 5.

**Shapeshifting:** The creature may use the Shape Shifter Extraordinary Talent, with a skill level of 5.

*The following powers are permanent effects upon the hagbui that have them, and thus don't cause the loss of Stamina that the above powers do.*

**Reanimation, CrCo 45:** The hagbui heals one body level per round, even after "death." A method of permanently killing the creature exists but varies from creature to creature (for example: burning, dismemberment, drowning). Unless the creature's body is treated in the appropriate way, it continues to heal.

**Skin that Resists the Razor, MuCo 35, 0 points:** The hagbui's skin is highly resistant to the effects of piercing and cutting weapons. Weapons affected by this power still do damage but have an effective damage modifier of zero. Crushing weapons act normally.

**Stink, CrAu 10:** Like *Stench of the Twenty Corpses* ArM4 118.

**Vis:** 5 pawns of Corpus vis in one organ (for example: heart, liver, stomach).

## Other Giants

Another type of giant, very rarely encountered by men or gods, is the sea giant. This species lives in the depths of the ocean and the only one known by name is Aegir, whose powers are so great that he is worshipped as a sea god. Nine sea-giantesses, all sisters, are the mothers of Heimdall.

Clay giants are mentioned in passing several times in the Norse sagas, but there is very little reliable information on them.

## Hagbui (Barrow-Dweller)

In pagan Scandinavia (and areas where the Northmen had settled), kings and warlords were often buried with special grave guardians, the specially prepared and sacrificed body of a thrall who returned from the dead as terrifying hagbui. In appearance, a hagbui is a disgusting, bloated corpse, its skin tough and black, its fingernails long and claw-like. The mission given to each hagbui is to prevent any of the deceased's grave goods from being stolen, and if that's not possible, to retrieve any stolen items, tasks it will relentlessly perform until destroyed.

## Huldafolk

The *huldafolk* (hidden people) are not a single breed, their name being a collective term for the non-alfar creatures that live in Alfheim and Svartalfheim. Their number includes all manner of air sprites, tree spirits, earth spirits, and low faeries. They are referred to as hidden because they generally avoid human contact, although sometimes their innate curiosity gets the better of them. Certain areas have long been associated with these mysterious creatures, such as faerie mounds, burial barrows, and isolated glades where they can frolic and dance in peace. Some dwell near farms and perform useful tasks, such as leading lost cows home or driving away wolves and foxes; so long as they are left to their own devices they cause no damage.

Nearly all huldafolk are curious about humans and human ways. Sexes are hard to differentiate in huldafolk, but they seem to have sexual natures for some are attracted to male humans and others to females. Some merely enjoy watching their chosen humans as they perform their daily tasks, but some go a step further, luring their chosen humans through portals into Arcadia itself. Those taken are sometimes released, although the strange distortion of time in faerie land means that they could return days, years, or centuries after they are taken. Irrespective of how much time has passed, those who do return are never the same: some gain strange magical abilities, other are struck dumb so they can never describe what they witnessed, while yet others are simply driven insane.

A few varieties of huldafolk are detailed in the first edition of the *Faeries* sourcebook (Dames Vertes on page 58, Dominae Albae on page 59, and The Host on page 73), but there are countless other faerie types represented in this category.

## Orm

The dragons of Scandinavia are known as orms, and they are predominantly flightless snake- or worm-like creatures. Descendants of the Vikings living in England refer to them as wyrms. Orms are black in color, with wet, glistening scales. They have no legs, and only a few have wings with which to fly. Their breath is highly dangerous as each can breathe forth some deadly material, such as fire, venom, or acid. Orms can swim and breathe underwater, as well as on land.

Two other dragons living in the lands of the Norse are simply monstrous in size and powers, and no mortal has ever seen them. The first is Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, a child of Loki that was thrown into the sea by Odin when it was still young, but which has now grown so that it surrounds the world, the spines on its back rising from the waters to form a ring of islands encircling the world ocean. When Ragnarök comes, Jörmungandr will swim ashore, spewing foul



## Trow

**Characteristics:** Int -1, Per -2, Pre 0, Com -2, Str +2, Sta +4,

Dex 0, Qik 0

**Faerie Might:** 15

**Size:** +1

**Personality Traits:** +3 Solitary

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Single Weapon (club)	+5	+4	+3	+10	+6
Brawling (fist)	+4	+3	+1	+6	+7

**Soak:** +9

**Fatigue levels:** 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Control of Ymir's Bones*, various Terram, variable points: A trow can use spontaneous Terram magic at will, at a cost of 1 Might per 5 levels of the spell. It adds +15 to the totals if it uses a Fatigue level; the total is halved if it does not expend Fatigue.

## Orm

**Characteristics:** Cun -1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +5, Sta +4,

Dex +2, Qik +1

**Magic Might:** 15

**Size:** +4

**Personality Traits:** Evil +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Bite	+8	+10	+0	+22	+1

**Soak:** +20

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Breath of Muspel*, CrIg 25, 3 points: The breath of an orm is similar to the Hermetic spell *Arc of Fiery Ribbons* ArM4 135.

*Breath of Jörmungandr*, PeCo 40, 5 points: When an orm breathes forth poison, noxious green vapor cloud rolls forth, 10 paces long by 3 paces wide. Those caught within the poison cloud take +20 damage. Armor gives only half-protection against this attack.

*Breath of Dissolving Fluid*, PeAq 20, 3 points: The acid breath of an orm is sprayed out at an individual target. Target's may attempt to dodge with a roll of Quickness – Encumbrance of difficulty 10+. The acid causes +15 damage and each hit reduces an armor's protection rating by 5 points. The damage is permanent but can be repaired. Soft materials (such as clothing, but not armor) decay within a round when touched by the fluid unless they are quickly doused with water.

**Vis:** 10 pawns of Animál vis in body, 5 pawns of Perdo vis in fangs.

poison across the world. Thor will battle him and slay him, but will be killed in turn by Jörmungandr's dying breath.

The second major dragon is Nidhogg, the black dragon that sits beneath Yggdrasil and gnaws at the roots. Until Ragnarök, Nidhogg cannot sever the roots but when he does so the tree will shake and all mankind will know that the end is near.

## Troll

Trolls are gigantic, malicious earth faeries, ranging from six to ten feet tall. They are broad-shouldered and hairless, with huge hands and deeply-sculpted faces. Their skin is generally green or gray in color, and has the texture of weathered rock. Trolls dwell underground, in deep caves or tunnels that they excavate themselves. Not all trolls are hideous monsters; some can pass as humans, albeit tall ones, and they are sometimes helpful to farmers who live near their homes, protecting them as if the farm was a part of the troll's territory.

Trolls have a reputation for stupidity and hostility. A troll can be easily tricked, if the trickster can remain alive long enough to actually speak to the troll. They are fiercely territorial, and view the entire mountain range in which they live as their home. Travelers are frequently set upon with barrages of stones thrown from high places.

Tales from outside of Mythic Scandinavia state that trolls turn to stone if exposed to sunlight, but while most trolls dislike bright light they neither fear it nor are they affected by it.

Some humans have mated with trolls, although it is unlikely that this was a mutual agreement, and have produced offspring. These troll-born are generally human in appearance, aside from being universally over six and a half feet tall. Because of the troll heritage, many troll-born possess strange, magical powers.

The majority of trolls dwell in Trollheim, to the south of Jotunheim, and in the dark and foreboding Myrkwood. Travelers to these places have reported trolls over 18 feet tall, but their accounts cannot be confirmed.

## Trow

The trow are cousins to the trolls: smaller in size, more furtive in nature, just as ugly, and of slightly less obnoxious disposition. Trow can have one head or two, and are restricted in sunlight; if daybreak finds a trow above ground, it cannot return to its underground home until nightfall. Trow sometimes take whole communities under their care, but demand grain, animals, or spouses in return. Some who live in trow-inhabited areas consider it lucky to hear a trow speak, but unlucky to actually see one. Most Norsemen consider trow as wicked as trolls, perhaps unjustly.

While most trow are solitary, certain leaders, called *kunal trow* (sometimes translated “king trow”), can organize small numbers of normal trow into communities. It is these *kunal trow* who are most likely to “adopt” human communities.

## Volva

There exists within the Norse lands a form of seeress known as the volva. While the vast majority of these women are of the living world, a few are spirits and can only be contacted through summoning ceremonies held at specific pagan grave sites. Although the gifts of these spirit prophets are powerful, they are not without a price.

To find a pagan burial site with a volva dwelling within it, a vitki must roll a quality die + Intelligence + Legend Lore against an ease factor of 18+. (If the vitki happens to know of a site that definitely contains a volva, he can avoid the roll.)

To summon a volva a vitki must locate a grave marker engraved solely with the Ass rune, for it is this marker that is the volva’s link to the material world. Songs of summoning must then be sung in a pre-determined order. These songs are almost forgotten in Christian Scandinavia and only vitkir with Legend Lore 4 or higher know them by heart. Other vitkir must roll a quality die + Intelligence + Legend Lore + against an ease factor of 12+ to know them and the order in which they must be sung. After the

## Kunal Trow

**Characteristics:** Int +3, Per -2, Pre +2, Com -2, Str +2,

Sta +4, Dex 0, Qik 0

**Faerie Might:** 25

**Size:** +2

**Personality Traits:** Leader +3, Territorial +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Single Weapon (club)	+4	+5	+3	+8	+4
Brawling (fist)	+4	+3	+1	+6	+7

**Soak:** +9

**Fatigue levels:** 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Control of Ymir’s Bones*, various Terram, variable points: A *kunal trow* can use spontaneous Terram magic at will, at a cost of 1 Might per 5 levels of the spell. It adds +25 to the totals if it uses a Fatigue level; the total is halved if it does not expend Fatigue.

## Troll

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per -1, Pre -2, Com -2, Str +6, Sta +4,

Dex -1, Qik -2

**Magic Might:** 20

**Size:** +2

**Personality Traits:** Aggressive +2, Territorial +2

Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Club	+3	+6	+1	+11	+4
Brawl	+1	+2	+1	+6	+4

**Soak:** +15

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers:**

*Control of Ymir’s Bones*, various Terram, variable points: Around 50 percent of trolls can use magic to some degree. Being creatures of the earth, they are proficient in magic involving earth and stone. A troll that can cast spells involving Terram can do so at a cost of 1 Might per 5 levels of the spell. Most trolls can only wield magic up to level 25, but a small minority can use their magic to any level.

*Gift of the Magic Arts*, various, variable points: Around one in 100 trolls has formidable magical powers. These trolls often ally themselves to the forces of darkness or hire themselves out as mercenaries to mortals of dubious character. While they don’t study the Hermetic Arts, trolls gifted in this way can approximate the effects of any Hermetic spell at the cost of 1 Might per 5 spell levels. They cannot cast spells over level 25.

**Vis:** 5 pawns of Corpus vis in body.



songs have been sung the vitki must face north and inscribe an Ass rune on the grave itself.

To determine if the incantation has worked, the vitki rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Sing + Ass Lore + Norse Theology with an ease factor of 21+. On a botch the vitki has made a terrible blunder, awakening a draugr from its centuries-long sleep.

Assuming the ritual is successful, the spirit of the volva will rise from her grave the following round. A volva resembles a pale Norse woman, wrapped in a white funeral shroud, her figure continually shimmering and fading in and out of view, its link to the material world being weak. The figure stands over its grave and cannot move from that spot. The voice of the volva is a whisper, barely audible above background noise.

A vitki may ask a volva any one question regarding the near future (a number of years distant equal to the vitki's Stamina, with a minimum of one). The answer of a volva is nearly always correct, but may be veiled by riddles or ambiguous meanings. The storyguide should make a Divination roll (using the volva's Divination of 5 and Perception of 4), using the examples in the Divination Virtue on ArM4 page 45 to determine the ease factor.

After answering one question the volva attempts to return to her slumber. Only through a contested battle of wills can a vitki force a volva to remain and answer further questions. Each time the vitki attempts such a feat he must make a successful Stamina + Concentration roll against the volva's Stamina of 5 and Concentration of 4. If the vitki wins the volva remains to answer one more question, otherwise she returns to her grave. Each successive attempt gives the vitki a -1 penalty to his roll — a volva can only be kept in the material world for so long.

When the volva finally returns to her grave the vitki must make a stressed Stamina + Concentration roll to remember the information the volva has given him. The ease factor of the roll is 9+. If he fails the information is forgotten. Should the vitki botch the roll then he will remember incorrect information.



## Valkyries

The valkyries are Odin's handmaids, serving food and drink to the warriors at Odin's feast table in Valhalla, and selecting warriors to die in battle, the most valiant of whom are chosen by the valkyries to reside in Valhalla. Because of this second function, they have the power to swing the course of the conflict to one side or the other.

A warrior visited by a valkyrie is assured an afterlife in Valhalla, whether he desires it or not. In Christian times the valkyries have been sent less frequently to choose fallen warriors. Some vitki speculate that this is because fewer warriors are of the old faith, while others have deduced that Valhalla is now almost full and that Ragnarök cannot be far off.

Some valkyries have names no different than normal Norsewomen, but most have names highlighting their status as divine warrior maidens and minor death goddesses: Hlökk (Din of Battle), Guth (Conflict), Randgrith (Shield-Destroyer).

# Chapter 9

# Adventure Seeds

The following are story ideas for use in locations throughout Mythic Scandinavia. The first, "The Covenant of Heorot," works best as a starting place for Hermetic characters wanting to explore the Northlands. It might be the home covenant of the characters, or just the furthest bastion of the Order of Hermes. The second, "Things Best Forgotten," can be used by either Hermetic or vitki characters living in region. The final three, "Strangers in a Strange Land," "The Hvitachrist Cometh," and "The Summer Pasture" assume the heroes are Norse characters.

Note: a Norse-flavored scenario, "The Golden Ship," can be found in the first edition *Faeries* sourcebook.

## The Covenant of Heorot

Although nominally part of the Novgorod Tribunal, the only Hermetic presence in the whole of Scandinavia is Sinus Wodinis on the southern coast of Norway and that was thought destroyed until recently (see *The Mythic Seas*, page 62, for more details).

However, just after the meeting of the Rhine Tribunal in 1214 A.D., three magi decided to establish a covenant on the island of Zealand, in the Kingdom of

Denmark. They chose as their site the ruined town of Lethra, abandoned at some time during the 6th century. Lethra was once the royal seat of the Danish kings, and it used to be a thriving town near the middle of the island, just south of the Isefjord. The main covenant building has been erected in the middle of Lethra, at the site of the king's own hall, and takes its name from it: Heorot.

Heorot was the hall of the semi-legendary King Hrothgar in the 6th century, and it was during his reign that the hero Beowulf's epic battle with the monster Grendel took place. The hall burned down only some 15 years after Grendel's defeat, and the proto-Danish kingdom disintegrated, not to become unified again for centuries.

The magus Signum Irruptus of House Criamon had visited the region, and discovered a magical aura at the site of Heorot. At the Rhine Tribunal of 1214 A.D. he met Theoderich of House Jerbiton, to whom he mentioned his plan to found a covenant on Zealand. The third magus on the expedition to Zealand was Pancrestis of Bonisagus, a close friend of Theoderich. The three magi contracted laborers from Århus on the Danish mainland to reconstruct Heorot according to Signum's mystic vision of what the great feast hall had been like. They also built laboratories and houses for the covenfolk and grogs they brought with them. All three magi are reasonably powerful: Signum is the eldest, at nearly 80



## Covenant of Heorot Story Ideas

- The Covenant of Heorot has only existed for six years, and has yet to attend a tribunal and become officially recognized. However, the magi are unwilling to travel a thousand or more miles to Three Lakes Covenant, the seat of the Novgorod Tribunal (see *The Dragon and the Bear*), under whose jurisdiction they officially fall. Instead, they intended to be present at the meeting of the Rhine Tribunal, from whence all three members originate.

This is likely to cause a number of political quandaries: While Hermetic Law provides that magi cannot appeal to tribunals other than their own, border covenants have changed tribunals before. What would be required for that to take place in this case? And would those requirements set a precedent for future Scandinavian covenants?

- In the tale of Beowulf, the hero tracked the fearsome mother of Grendel to her underwater lair in the swamps. It is written that he swam down to the bottom of a mere, which took him a day to do, and on the way down was attacked by fearsome water serpents. In her hall, amid the wondrous treasures gathered there, Beowulf slew the she-troll. That treasure is still there somewhere.

In addition to the problem of locating the treasure, there is also the problem of Grendel's troll kin to contend with, the leader of the troll band being magically powerful.

- One day Pancrestis might get his wish and finally meet a vitki. What might result from such a meeting? Driven by the need to prove himself in the eyes of his house, the magus might be willing to offer the wizard protection in the Order in return for knowledge. However, it is likely that rune magic and Hermetic magic are completely incompatible.

If others should find out that Pancrestis has offered protection to a member of the dreaded Order of Odin, which has been accused of the destruction of several starting covenants, Pancrestis could soon find himself on the wrong side of a Wizard's March.

years old, and the other two are only a decade or so younger.

It was not long before they discovered why it was that Hrothgar's descendants never rebuilt Heorot; the marsh around the Isefjord is still haunted by monsters, descendants of the fearful Grendel. Fortunately for the covenant of Heorot these trolls are not as near-invincible as their forebears, but they still pose a powerful threat to the covenant.

Signum Irruptus of House Criamon, the leader of the covenant, is a Seeker, a member of the sect within the Order of Hermes that seeks out the Old Ones, god-like beings who were believed to be the originators of Hermetic magic. Signum believes that Beowulf and Grendel were Old Ones, the last ever to walk the Earth, carrying out an age-old feud that can be found in many ancient myths: Sun-Hero versus Night-Monster. Signum is therefore fascinated by the trolls who haunt the marshes of Zealand, but this fascination is dangerous, having resulted in the loss of 14 grogs and Signum's own left arm. Still, he is determined to examine a live troll.

Theoderich of Ausberg, a member of House Jerbiton, is a historian and a necromancer. He raises the ghosts of dead men to question them about the past. Heorot has provided him with a wealth of information, for most Danes of Beowulf's time were pagans and thus had no Christian burial to protect their spirits from his magic. Theoderich is still searching for the body of King Hrothgar.

Pancrestis of House Bonisagus was eager to come to Denmark to search for evidence of the existence of the Order of Odin. He had heard tales about rune magic and shapeshifting, and followed these stories to Denmark. He has become disillusioned with his mission; he saw it as a chance to make a major breakthrough in Hermetic magic (the integration of another system of magic) but has failed to find a single example of such a wizard. Pancrestis' search has not been far-reaching, though. He has failed to penetrate Scandinavia beyond its most southerly towns due to his great fear of the wilderness.

# Things Best Forgotten

There are many things in Scandinavia that should be left where they lie, and draugr are no exception. Often found haunting tombs, they are creatures of pure evil and wield superhuman powers.

One such abomination is the draugr of the former necromancer Helga Helsdottir, who lies entombed in a burial mound in the midst of a large forest. Amongst Helga's followers there was a powerful vitki, corrupted by power and Helga's dark magics. When Helga was entombed, he placed a warding on the

tomb that would cease during the Fimbulvintr so that she could fight against the gods and their warriors.

The current winter is particularly bad, so bad in fact that Helga's tomb has opened prematurely. After centuries of sleep, Helga is now awake and wishes to re-establish herself as a power in the area, so she has begun recruiting a band of followers: trolls, cruel humans, and dark faeries. Her presence will upset the natural balance and, being so close to the characters' home, will bring her into conflict with them as her followers raid nearby settlements.

The location of Helga's tomb is all but forgotten now, but diligent research may turn up some clues that allow the characters to locate it and defeat the draugr.





## Strangers in a Strange Land

A small band of Hermetic magi have been spotted in a large town situated near the characters' home. Although not causing any direct trouble, their presence is worrying to certain vitkiri and action needs to be taken to ensure the Hermetics learn nothing that could bring the Order of Hermes to Scandinavia in force.

The characters are approached by agents of a powerful vitki and asked to follow the magi and report back on their actions. On no account are they to reveal any magic to them, no matter what the circumstances; discretion must be paramount in the investigators' work.

The Hermetic magi number only three and are being cautious in their dealings with the Norse, knowing the legends of the Order of Odin and having no wish to anger the local wizards. They know they are taking a risk being in Scandinavia, and face punishment by the quaeitors if their presence is revealed. One of their number speaks passable Norse.

What is the Hermetics' reason for being in Scandinavia? Can the Norse characters befriend them and learn their secrets? How do the vitki retaliate if attacked by Hermetic magic?

## The Hvitachrist Cometh

A small village in the interior of Scandinavia has been visited by a Christian priest who swears that he will cleanse the people of their pagan ways and baptize them into God's family. The local jarl still follows the old ways and approaches the heroes to get rid of the priest, but in such a way that he will not return with armed men or be physically harmed. The jarl has no love for the servants of the Hvitachrist, but he

will not condone cold-blooded murder or the consequences it could bring.

The priest, Father Gustav, is a Norseman by birth, and was raised as a Christian in a southern city. He is a wily, educated man, knowing many of the Norse myths, and is quite adept at recasting them as Christian tales. His goal is to save the villagers' souls at all costs.

Can the characters better the priests' words in open debate? Will a show of magic convince the villagers that the old gods are still powerful? What will be the result if characters openly use "black magic" in front of the priest?

## The Summer Pastures

While resting up in the summer months at some place other than their home, the troupe is visited by a small group of farmers from the local village. They wish to see the vitki, explaining to any grogs that they are on an important mission from the village leader.

Once introduced to the vitki, they explain that someone has been stealing their cattle from the mountainside summer pastures over the past few weeks. No matter how well they tried to defend the area, cattle were always found to be missing the next morning, and the guards had been beaten up. So far two guards have suffered broken legs from falling into ditches that they swear weren't there earlier, and one was clubbed senseless and had some ribs broken. The wounded guards have no idea who attacked them, but do remember being hit by several foes armed with large, blunt objects. The farmers are under the opinion that evil faeries are doing this, and they'd like some expert help.

The attacks only occur at night and then only when the sky is clouded over. The farmers will only mention this if specifically questioned about the time of the attacks; otherwise they assumed that the vitki already knows this (he is a wizard).

The area of the summer pastures looks a little unusual in that it is dotted with similarly-sized pits. These are the effects of *Pit of the Gaping Earth* spells. There is no magical trace to be found, as the faeries that caused them used their natural powers to produce the holes (see "Trow," on pages 122 and 123).

Careful examination of the ground shows cattle tracks interspersed with human-sized footprints all around the area. However, the earth along all the main tracks away from the area is extremely rough, and it will require a Perception + Hunt roll of ease 5+ to determine that the paths were not cut up by cattle hooves, nor by human feet — the trow used their Terram powers to cover their tracks.

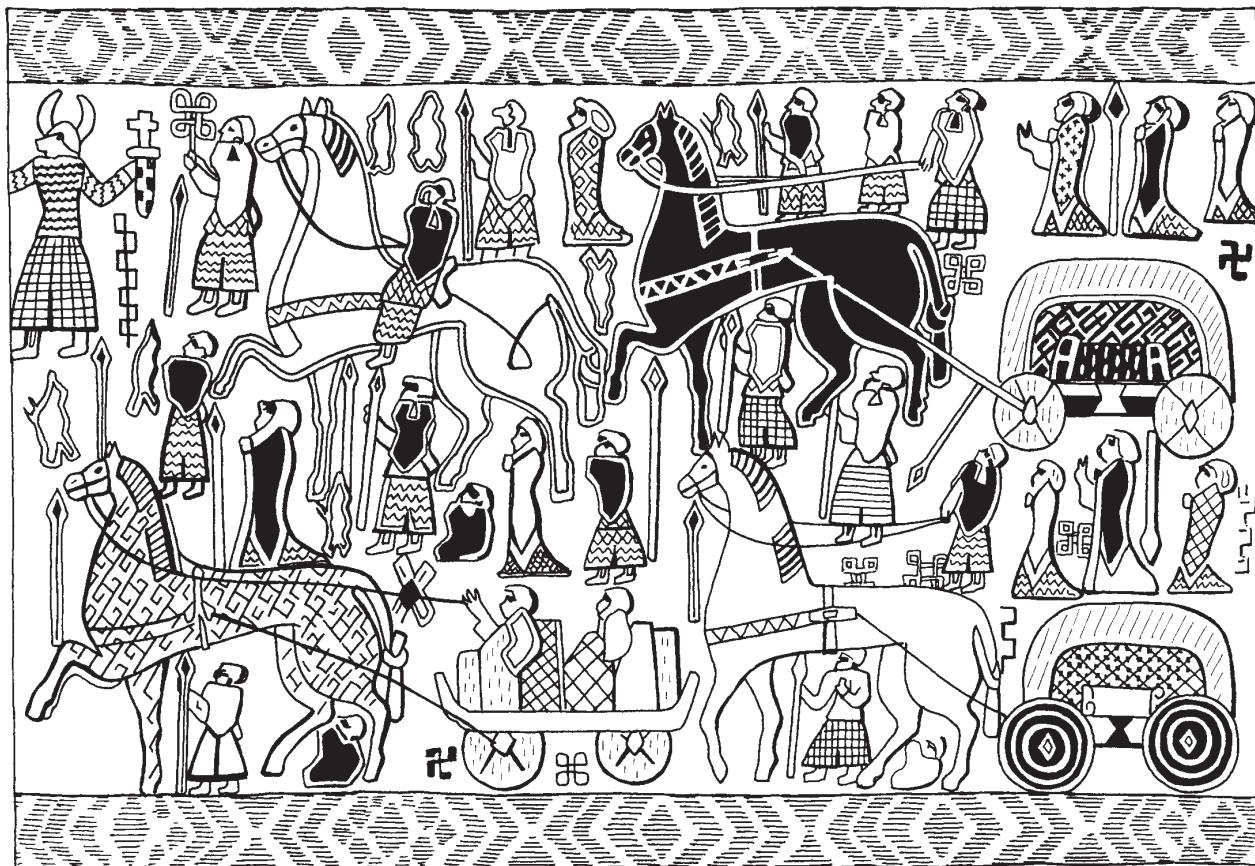
If the troupe elects to wait for an attack, they will have to wait for three nights before the conditions are right for the trow to attack. They can hurry this up by using magic to create clouds over the moon if they so wish.

Once the conditions are right, a band of seven normal trow and one kusal trow launches a raid (see page 123 for stats). Any guards that can be seen by the light of campfires or such like

will be targets for *Pit of the Gaping Earth* spells, one per guard. If the guards appear heavily armed, then the trow follow up with an *Earth's Carbuncle* spell after the guards have fallen into pits. This magical attack will take most characters out of the fight for several rounds. The trow only want cattle, and will not kill the guards unless forced, for they consider themselves part of the same community as the villagers (and therefore entitled to some cows on occasion).

Four trow will try to keep the troupe busy by using their earth powers (*Rampart of Protecting Earth*, and so on) and by feigning melee attacks, while the others try to lead the cattle off.

If the heroes manage to capture a trow, they can force him to cooperate by threatening to hold him above ground until daybreak. He will explain the trows' "right" to take the cattle, and will claim that they have paid for this right by protecting the cattle and villagers during the summers on the mountain slopes. If pressed, the villagers will admit that their cattle have been remarkably free of predators during the summers. An arrangement can certainly be worked out.





# Appendix 1

# Runes

The table displayed here lists the twenty-four Nordic runes and their corresponding translations in English, along with a pronunciation guide. These may be used to enhance any campaign, or as a reference for the “Norse Magic” and “Runes & Their Power” chapters. See pages 89 - 106 for more information on their powers, including the runic power summary table on page 91.



## Nordic Runes

Rune	Name	Sound	Meaning
ᚠ	Fe	FAY	cattle
ᚢ	Ur	OOR	auroch
ᚦ	Thurs	THURZ	thorn bush
ᚦ	Ass	AHSS	mouth
ᚱ	Reith	RAYTH	cart wheel
ᚴ	Kaun	KOWN	torch
ᚫ	Gipt	GIPT	gift
ᚢ	Vend	VEND	joy
ᚦ	Hagall	HAG-gall	hail
ᚾ	Nauthr	now-THER	necessity
ᛁ	Iss	EES	ice
ᛇ	Jera	YEA-rah	harvest
ᛇ	Yr	EAR	yew tree
ᛖ	Perta	PER-tah	dice cup
ᛖ	Ihwar	ih-WORE	elk
ᛖ	Sól	SOHL	the sun
ᛏ	Tyr	TEER	the god Tyr
ᛗ	Bjarkan	BYAR-kan	birch tree
ᛘ	Ior	YOR	horse
ᛘ	Mathr	math-ER	mankind
ᛚ	Lög	log-ER	water
ᛞ	Yngvi	UHNG-vee	the god Yngvi
ᛟ	Othal	OTH-all	a possession
ᛞ	Dagr	DAG-er	day

# Appendix 2

# The End

## The End

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From the beginning of their reign the gods knew that their world was limited and that one day they would perish in a mighty battle, known as Ragnarök.

It came to pass that Odin grew concerned about Ragnarök and decided to visit the greatest seer on Midgard, an old woman known as Haid. To gain her favor Odin bade his valkyries send her gifts of magic, including treasure-spells, sticks carved with runes, and divination rods. He then went to Haid, outside of her cave overlooking the land of the Danes, and asked her to tell him of the final great battle that would take place on the Plains of Vigrid, and of what would become of the gods.

Haid consulted her runes and began her tale of destruction and sacrifice. She told Odin that the final days would begin with the Fimbulvintr, an endless season of increasing cold, darkness, and death. The Fimbulvintr would last three years: the Winter of Winds, when the sun would give no heat and the beasts of man would die as his crops withered; the Winter of the Sword, when brother would kill brother, and sister kill sister; and the Winter of the Wolf, when the wolf Skoll would devour the sun, his brother Hati the moon, their blood quenching the stars and plunging the world into darkness. In Iarnwood, the hag of the forest would breed foul children from Fenrir, the Fenris Wolf, feeding them on the flesh of the unburied dead.

Earthquakes would shatter the world and thousands more would die.

In Jotunheim, the red cock Fialar would crow, rousing the giants to actions. Over Asgard the golden cock Gullinkambir would also sound, rousing the champions in Valhalla. Fenrir would slip his bonds and Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, would swim ashore, flooding the coasts with monstrous waves. The ship Naglfar, built from the untrimmed nails of dead men and manned by frost giants, would set sail under the command of the frost giant Hymir.

Over Asgard the sky would split open and the fire giants would descend, lead by Surt with his fiery sword. Bifrost would shatter under the weight of the fire giants, its pieces falling to Midgard. Loki would break free from his prison and join Hymir to lead the frost giants. Garm, the hell-hound, would howl from Gnipahellir (Cliff Cave).

Heimdall would blow the Giallar Horn, summoning the gods to don their armor and fight. Odin himself would travel to Mimir's Well one last time, seeking the wisdom to win the battle, but hearing only how to wage a stalemate. Yggdrasil would shake, and everything on earth and in heaven would be afraid.

On the Plain of Vigrid, Odin would meet the Fenris Wolf and be devoured. Mighty Thor, strongest of all the gods, would fight and slay Jörmungandr, but the poison of the Midgard Serpent, being lethal to all, would fell Thor before he could take nine steps. Freyr would fight Surt and be slain in a combat he could have won had he not given away his magic sword.





Garm would break free and strike at Tyr, the two foes slaying each other although Tyr might have survived if he had not lost his sword hand to Fenrir.

Vidar would avenge his father's death by stepping on the Fenris Wolf's lower jaw, using the great boot made from the scraps of leather put aside by generations of cobblers and brought to him by his father's ravens. With great strength, he would pull the wolf's jaws apart until Fenrir was split asunder. Loki and Heimdall would die at each other's hands. Surt, the greatest of the fire giants, would burn Midgard and all would be destroyed.

But Haid's prophecy did not end at the world's destruction. Time would pass and a new earth would rise from the sea, a green and plentiful land unspoiled by man. On Ida's Plain, where glorious Asgard once stood proud, Vidar and Vali, the only sons of Odin to survive the great battle, would be joined by two of Thor's sons, Magni and Modi, who would bring with them

their father's hammer, Mjollnir, a weapon they would use to slay the last of the monsters and giants. The earth would open, and Baldur would step forth, released from Nifleheim and lead by his blind brother Hodur.

Life would come again to Midgard. A man and a woman, Lif (Life) and Lifthradir (Eager for Life), would emerge from the cave that sheltered them from Surt's conflagration. Eventually they would have such a multitude of children that Midgard would be populated once more.

A new Asgard would be built, known to men as Gem Lea (Lee of Fire), a place where there was always plenty of drink in the hall Kolnir (Never Cold). Vidar would break his silence to bring the memory of the Aesir and Vanir to life. Men would mingle with the gods, and a new sun and moon, daughters of the old, would shine upon a new world.

***The end is a new beginning.***



# Glossary

*Aesir* (AS-eyr): The greater portion of the Norse gods (female: *Asyniur*). See also *Vanir*.

*Aett* (EIGHT): A group of eight runes. There are three aetts, each assigned to a different god.

*Alfheim* (ALF-hem): The home of the ljossalfar, “light elves.”

*Allfoth* (AL-foth): “All-Father”; a common title for Odin.

*Allthing* (AL-thing): The basic form of Icelandic government, a national assembly where all free men could voice their opinions.

*Argr* (ARE-ger): The passive partner in a homosexual relationship. Often used as an insult, even Odin being called argr after “submitting” in order to gain the wisdom of the runes.

*Asgard* (AS-guard): Home of the Aesir gods.

*Bersarkr* (BEAR-sark): “Bear shirt” or “bare shirt”; berserker. Fierce warriors who fought in groups.

*Bifröst* (BYE-frost): “Quivering Roadway”; the rainbow bridge that led from Midgard to Asgard.

*Björr* (b-YUR): A strong wine made from fermented fruit

*Blöt* (b-LUT): “Strengthening”; an animal prepared for sacrifice, intended to increase the strength of the gods. Plural: *Blötar*.

*Bönder* (BUN-der): Farmers wealthy enough to be semi-independent of noble rule. Singular: *böndi*.

*Bryti* (BRIT-ee): A steward of the royal estates.

*Butescarl* (BUTS-carl): A mercenary leader hired by a town so that its citizens do not have to take part in the king’s host.

*Doomsmenn* (DOOMS-men): A juror at an Allthing.

*Draugr* (DROW-gur): A malevolent form of undead, often associated with drownings.

*Dreng* (DRENG): A young warrior, generally a member of the hird. A position of some responsibility, the dreng acted as an official for the lord, forming embassies, exacting tribute, recovering dues, and delivering messages.

*Dverge* (DVERGE): Dwarves, found in the land Nithavellir near or in Svartalfheim.

*Einherjar* (ain-HER-yar): “Belonging to an Army”; The dead warriors chosen by the valkyries to fight at Ragnarök on the side of the gods.

*Felag* (FYEA-lag): A fellowship of men owing mutual obligations to each other, whether the joint owners of a ship or a band of warriors. A band of grogs in Scandinavia is likely to carry this title, rather than the more common turb used by Hermetic magi.

*Imbulvintr* (FIMBUHL-vinter): “Terrible Winter”; the three-year snowfall that will precede Ragnarök.

*Fylgjur* (FEEL-gyur): A spirit animal used by seithkonur. Singular: *Fylgja* (FEEL-gya).

*Gestr* (GUEST-er): Part of a lord’s retinue. The lord’s police force, who also ran errands for him, and did other menial tasks. See also *Hird*.

*Glima* (GLIMMER): A form of wrestling.





**Gothi** (goh-THEE): An Icelandic chieftain. The leader of a political district. Plural: *Gothar* (goh-THAR).

**Hagbui** (HAG-buh-ee): An undead monster used to guard treasure or tombs.

**Hamfarir** (HAHM-far-ear): “Shape-faring”; a form of shapechanging performed by seithkonur.

**Hauldr** (HAHL-der): A land-owner with hereditary rights to his land. The same as an Odalsböndi.

**Havamal** (HOW-va-mal): “The Speech of the High One”; an ancient poem, attributed to Odin, designed to teach moral and social lessons.

**Heregeld** (HAIRAY-gehld): A land tax used in Viking-Age England to help pay for the army and mercenaries.

**Hersar** (HAIR-sar): A non-hereditary noble title, below that of jarl, granted by a king. Normally given to the largest landholder in an area. Equivalent to a baron in other countries.

**Hird** (HERD): A nobleman’s retinue. Members of the hird were called hirdsmenn. See also *Dreng*, *Gestr*, *Lithsmathr*, and *Tinglith*.

**Holmganga** (HULM-gangeh): “Island Promenade”; a formal duel, fought to the first blood within a specially marked area.

**Hrafn** (huh-RAY-fen): “Raven”; title used by vitkir renowned for their wisdom, after the two ravens who sat on Odin’s shoulders.

**Hvitachrist** (HVITE-kreyest): “White Christ”; early Scandinavian name for Jesus Christ.

**Jarl** (YARL): A lord who does not have to answer to a king (although he may for political or economic reasons). Jarls were stronger during the Viking Age than in Christian Scandinavia.

**Jörmungandr** (YORM-UN-garnder): The Midgard Serpent. A giant serpent that encircled the Earth. This is one of Loki’s children.

**Jotunheim** (YOT-UN-hem): “Giant Land”; the homeland of the giants. Also a mountain range in western Norway.

**Knattleikr** (NAHT-LAY-kir): A ball game.

**Konungr** (KOHN-unger): King.

**Laering** (LYE-ring): An apprentice, especially to a vitkir.

**Landaurar** (LAND-a-uh-rar): A tax paid by Icelanders who visited Norway. The money helped support the king in times of war and gave Icelanders full personal rights in Norway.

**Landsmathr** (LANDS-mah-thur): The lowest rank of the Norse ruling class, between hersar and odalsböndi. This position is gained through an oath of loyalty to the king. Singular: *Landsmenn* (LANDS-men).

**Landthing** (LAND-thing): “Land Thing”; a greater Thing that generally covered a number of districts. Usually attended by selected representatives from each local Thing (although any who wanted to attend could), and powerful enough to challenge the king’s authority. Also called *Lögthing* (Law Thing).

**Landvaettir** (land-VAY-tear): Collective Norse name for faeries and their ilk.

**Leding** (LEEDing): A 13th century Danish military organization, that required the population of Denmark to furnish fighting ships and provide crews for them. It was based on land holdings.

**Leysingi** (leh-SING-eh): A freed slave. Ex-slaves had fewer rights than born freeman.

**Lith** (LITH): “Crew”; collective name for a group of warriors, especially those serving a lord. Since Scandinavian geography made it easier to travel by sea than by land for any but the smallest of distances, the warriors would also likely form a ship’s crew.

**Lithsmathr** (LITHS-mah-thur): “Crewmaster”; a professional soldier and member of a king’s hird. In charge of the warriors on a ship.

**Ljossalfar** (LOSS-ALF-ar): “Light Elves”; the inhabitants of Alfheim.

**Makt** (MACKEd): “Power”; vis.

**Midgard** (MID-guard): “The Middle Realm”; between Asgard and Nifleheim (heaven and hell), the realm of men.

**Muspellheim** (MUS-pel-hem): A fiery realm in the extreme south of Norse Arcadia. Home to a race of fire giants.

**Myrkwood** (MURK-wood): “Black Forest”; a location in both Norse Arcadia and in Germany south of Denmark.

*Naglfar (NAHGEL-far)*: “Nail-Farer”; a ship constructed of the finger and toe nails of dead men that will sail at Ragnarök.

*Niflheim (NIFFLE-hem)*: “Land of Darkness”; the cold and desolate abode of the dead in the extreme north of Norse Arcadia. Ruled by Hela, the half-living, half-dead child of Loki.

*Nithavellir (NITH-a-vell-er)*: The land of the dverge, near or in Svartalfheim.

*Ódals (O-dals)*: Hereditary land, such as farms.

*Odalsböndi (ODALS-bond-ee)*: A land-owner with hereditary rights to his land. Also called a hauldr in Norway.

*Odin (O-din)*: The father of the gods and creator of mankind. Also known by a plethora of other titles.

*Pfenning (pFEN-ning)*: The penny of Scandinavia.

*Ragnarök (RAG-NAR-auk)*: “Destruction of the Powers”; the great battle between the gods and the giants that will end the world some time in the future.

*Seithr (SAYTH-er)*: Female magic, as practiced by seithkonur. Singular: seithkona. A male practitioner of this art was known as a *seithmæthr*.

*Skald (SCALD)*: An historian and storyteller.

*Smithr (SMITH-er)*: A craftsman, from which the English “smith” is derived. All craftsmen are referred to by this title, whether workers in metals, wood, leather, or other materials.

*Styrimæthr (STEE-ri-mah-thur)*: A ship’s captain.

*Svartalfar (SVART-ALF-ar)*: “Dark Elves”; an underground-dwelling race rarely seen by men.

*Svartalfheim (SVART-ALF-hem)*: Home of the dark elves.

*Svinfylking (SVIN-FEEL-king)*: One of the boar-warriors; a group of fighters known for their wedge formation in battle, with two champions at the *rami* (RAM-ee), or snout, of the wedge.

*Thegn (the-EN)*: A leader among the hird. Equivalent to a sergeant or captain.

*Thing (THING)*: “Assembly”; a district meeting open to all free men, where disputes were settled, marriages and divorces were announced, and political decisions were made. See also *Landthing* and *Allthing*.

*Thrall (THRALL)*: “Slave”; Increasingly rare as Christian influence grew. Female: *Ambatt (AHM-baht)*.

*Tinglith (THING-lith)*: A member of a lord’s personal guard. Also known by the Saxon term *huscarl* (housecarl).

*Ulfednar (UL-fed-nar)*: Akin to the bersarkr, the ulfednar wore wolf skins and fought alone.

*Ultima Thule (UL-ti-ma THOO-lee)*: “Utmost North”; a term used by Classical writers and the Order of Hermes for Scandinavia. *Thule* itself may once have referred to an island in the North Atlantic, such as one of the Faeroes or Shetlands, or even Iceland. (“Scandinavia” was derived from the area of Skåne in southern Sweden sometimes held by Denmark.)

*Valhalla (VAHL-HAUL-a)*: Odin’s drinking hall, home to the einherjar, warriors chosen to fight alongside the gods at Ragnarök.

*Valkyrie (VAHL-kere-ee)*: Odin’s shield maidens. Women who invisibly roamed battlefields choosing the worthy from among the slain to reside in Valhalla.

*Vanaheim (VAH-NAH-hem)*: The home of the Vanir gods.

*Vanir (va-NEAR)*: The lesser and earlier pantheon of Norse gods. See also *Aesir*.

*Viking (VYE-king)*: Term used beginning in 9th century England to describe Scandinavian pirates. The most popular explanation for the term is that it meant “to go raiding.” Another possibility is that it referred to the inhabitants of Viken, in Oslo Fjord, implying that the men of that area were especially active in England.

*Vitkír (VIT-kear)*: A magician who uses the runes.

*Volva (VOL-vah)*: A seeress, sometimes living but often a spirit in nature.

*Weregeld (WEER-gehld)*: “Man Price”; a sum paid to the family of a murdered man by the guilty party.

*Yggdrasil (IG-drah-zill)*: “Terrible One’s Steed”; the tree of the universe, with roots and branches that touched all worlds. Odin hanged himself from the tree to gain the wisdom of the runes (“Terrible One” being one of his names, and “steed” used in the same sense as “gallows”).

*Ymir (YUH-mere)*: The first frost giant, from whose body the world was created.





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