

Amma:

Wisdom from the Sagas



By: Michael J. Smith

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Amma: *Wisdom from the Sagas*

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By:

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Radical Heathenry*

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Introduction:

“Mímir advised him in all things. But when Hoenir was present at the meetings or assemblies without having Mímir at his side and was asked for his opinion on a difficult matter, he would always answer in the same way, saying, ‘Let others decide.’ Then the Vanir suspected that the Æsir had defrauded them in the exchange of hostages. Then they seized Mímir and beheaded him and sent the head to the Æsir. Óðinn took it and embalmed it with herbs so that it would not rot, and spoke charms over it, giving it magic power so that it would answer him and tell him many occult things.”

--*Heimskringla*, Saga of the Ynglings (Ch. 4, pg 8)

“Amma” means, “Grandmother” just as “Edda” means “Great-Grandmother”. As “Edda” gave us poetry from our oral traditions, myths, and legends developed from countless centuries ago, *Amma* will give the more recent wisdom of the sagas from a few hundred years ago. It will include mostly direct quotes from various sagas in which a character either says something profound, or paraphrases/quotes an old saying that is not found in the *Hávamál*. Also included will be references for a variety of subjects of heathen interest.

This is meant to be a work to help fellow heathens have a quick reference of wisdom and evidence for some practices. The Wisdom section is what the author believes to be a good supplement to the ancient philosophical and practical thinking from the *Hávamál* of the *Poetic Edda*. Other sections will contain quotes and passages of a particular interest to heathens.

As far as how what sagas were chosen to be included and which ones did not, it was entirely dependent on merely which ones were existent in the author’s personal library. This, by no means, indicates any method of approval or disapproval of any particular saga or work. It was just plainly, the available source material.

Decisions as to what quotes went into what sections was the most difficult aspect of this work in many ways. Some quotes screamed to be within a particular section while others did not quite fit any, but the author felt them important. Some could have even been placed in more than one section.

Note: The quotes are only in quotations if a character actually said what is written. The author’s comments will be in italics, if any were felt needed.

Óðinn til megin ok mátt!
Freyr til árs ok friðar!

With Honor,
--Mike “VinterúlfR” Smith
Úlfar aff Jera Þjóð

Section 1: Wisdom

“Night slayings are murder.” –footnote: *Heimskringla*, St. Ólaf’s Saga

Hidden, or secret slayings, in Scandinavian laws and society were always seen as dishonorable and called murder instead of manslaughter. Thus the reference to “night” since night’s darkness hides actions at times. The Old Norse was, “Náttvíg eru morðvig.”

Eyrbyggja Saga

“... and many a fair skin hides a foul mind.” – Ch 16, pg 46

“Good,” he said, “that shows it’s not always best to walk behind.” -- Ch 44, pg 117

Snorri states this after a man of his, the first to get killed, dies. The man was lagging behind in the back of the group because he was afraid of dying. This illustrated that cowardice often is the reason why some people die in battle or conflict.

The Saga of the Jómsvikings

The end is told by the saying, “one man can’t stand up against many.” – Ch 21, pg 104

The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki

“Men must try, if they are to advance. Without effort, no one learns which way luck will turn.” – Ch 4, pg 26

“Do not envy others and avoid arrogance, for such conduct diminishes one’s fame. Defend yourself if you are attacked. It is becoming to be humble, yet at the same time you must make a bold showing if put to a test.” – Ch 14, pg 26

“As the old saying goes,” said her mother, “out of every trouble comes some gain.” – Ch 17, pg 35

Hjalti answered, “It is not possible to bend fate (úrð), nor can one stand against nature.” - Ch 33, pg 77

The Saga of the Volsungs

“...the eye takes pleasure while it yet beholds.” – Ch 5, pg 41

Signy says this meaning that she wishes her brothers to still live. But this was actually a rouse to buy time for her to help them escape.

“Such pain would seem trifling to a Volsung.” – Ch 7, pg 43

“The drink is mixed with treachery.” – Ch10, pg 51

“Now it was as they say: no one is able against many.” –Ch 11, pg 53

“Many a man lives where there is little hope...” – Ch 12, pg 53

“This helm of terror you speak of gives victory to few, because each man who finds himself in company with many others must at one time discover that no one is the boldest of all.” – Ch 18, pg 64

“When men come to battle, a fearless heart serves a man better than a sharp sword.” – Ch 19, pg 65

“I suspect a wolf where I see a wolf’s ears.” – Ch 20, pg 66

Brynhild answered: “It is right to do your bidding and to give you good advice, because you seek it wisely.” Then she said: “Do well by your kinsmen and take little revenge for their wrongdoings. Endure with patience and you will win long-lasting praise. Beware of ill dealings, both of a maid’s love and a man’s wife; ill often arises from these. Control your temper with foolish men at crowded gatherings, for they frequently speak worse than they know. When you are called a coward, people may think that you are rightly named so. Kill the man another day, rewarding him for his malicious words.”

“If you travel a road where evil creatures dwell, be wary. Although caught by nightfall, do not take shelter near the road, for foul beings who bewilder men often live there.”

“Even if you see beautiful women at a feast, do not let them entice you so that they interfere with your sleep or distress your mind. Do not allure them with kisses and other tenderness. And if you hear foolish words from drunken men, do not dispute with those who are drunk on wine and have lost their wits. To many men such things bring much grief or even death.”

“It is better to fight with your enemies than to be burned at home. And do not swear a false oath, because hard vengeance follows the breaking of truce. Do the right thing by dead men, be they dead by disease, by drowning, or by a weapon. Prepare their bodies with care. And do not trust any man, even though he is young, whose father or brother, or close kinsman has been killed by you: often a wolf lies in a young son. Beware of the wiles of friends....” –Ch 22, pg 71

Njal’s Saga

“Nothing venture, nothing won...” – Ch 5, pg 46

“Far from home is far from joy, as the saying goes,” replied Hrut. – Ch 6, pg 48

“The nose is next to the eyes, brother...” – Ch 12, pg 62

“You are certainly not learning from another man’s lesson, as the saying goes,” – Ch 13, pg 64

“Warning wards off blame.” – Ch 41, pg 109

“It is said that the hand is soon sorry that it struck.” – Ch 42, pg 112

“... for evil plans have evil consequences.” – Ch 45, pg 118

“... on the principle that the ears fit best where they grow.” – Ch 51, pg 130

“Never kill more than once in the same family; and never break any settlement which good men make between you and others – particularly if you have disregarded the first of the warnings.” – Ch 55, pg 135

Hildigunn said, “Gunnar may often be difficult to provoke; but he hits very hard when he has to.” – Ch 58, pg 142

“It is proof of the saying that the hand is soon sorry that it struck...” – Ch 99, pg 215

“A tree does not fall at the first stroke, as the saying goes.” – Ch 103, pg 224

“... the nose is next to the eyes, as the saying goes.” – Ch 112, pg 234

“Cold are the council of women.” – Ch 116, pg 240

“Well and good,” said Skarp-Hedin, “for death is a debit we all have to pay.” – Ch 119, pg 246

“Now the old saying is proved that the hand is soon sorry that it struck.” – Ch 131, pg 280

“No tree falls at the first stroke, my friend.” – Ch 138, pg 292

“One’s back is bare without a brother.” – Ch 152, pg 338

Orkneyinga Saga

“The the old saying is true,” said the Earl, “Many a trap for the unwary!” – Ch 30, pg 73

“... the old saying that the king has many ears doesn’t apply in this case.” – Ch 67, pg 128

“This bears out again the old saying,” answered Ragna, “No man knows all.” – Ch 81, pg 149

So the old saying was once again borne out, “Evil beware evil.” – Ch 82, pg 150

“Still they say you never catch a bird without a shot...” – Ch 86, pg 168

(Seven Viking Romances) Halfdan Eysteinnsson

“The old saying is true,” she replied, “A hard choice makes for harsh terms...” – Ch 3, pg 173

(Saga of the Icelanders) Egil’s Saga

“This is a case where the saying applies that you can tell anything to a friend,” said Egil. – Ch 56, pg 93

“But I must do as the old saying has it; tend the oak if you want to live under it.” – Ch 69, pg 131

Vatnsdaela Saga

“... as the saying goes that bad counsel turns out badly.” – Ch 3, pg 191

Laxdaela Saga

“It’s true enough as they say, when one wolf hunts for another he may eat the prey.” – Ch 23, pg 315

“... that a bird in the hand was better than two in the bush.” – Ch24, pg 315

He was extremely pleased at the news and said, “Kjartan has proved the truth of the saying, ‘Festivals are a time of fortune.’ ” – Ch 40, pg 351

Hrafnkels Saga Freysgoða

“Now do as I say, because there is an old saying that, ‘He who gives warning is not at fault.’ Now you know what I have stated.” – Ch 4, pg 440

“But we have the belief that nothing goes well for people when the words of an oath come down on them.” – Ch5, pg 442

“Who dares, wins.” – Ch 9, pg 449

People talked much about how his arrogance had been deflated, and many remembered the old proverb, “Brief is the life of excess.” --Ch 11, pg 454

The woman started speaking as she came in: “It’s true what they said in the old days that, ‘the older you get, the wetter you become.’” –Ch 14, pg 457

This is in reference to how a man becomes more cowardly in old age. Though we must remember that in this instance the male being spoken to is being incited to a violent act in which is against his better judgement.

Gisli Sursson’s Saga

Thorkel answered, “A wise man does all things in moderation....” – Ch 15, pg 519

“A gift always looks to be repaid.” – Ch 15, pg 520

Then Eyjolf said, “The old saying is true, ‘the treachery of a friend is worse than that of a foe.’” – Ch32, pg 548

Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue

She often cast her eyes in Gunnlaug’s direction , and so it was proved that, as the saying goes, “If a woman loves a man, her eyes won’t hide it.” – Ch 11, pg 583

Section 2: Rituals & Holidays

Ynglinga Saga

All he spoke was in rimes, as is now the case in what is called skaldship. He and his temple priests are called songsmiths, because that art began with them in the northlands. – Ch 6, pg 10

A sacrifice was to be made for a good season at the beginning of winter, and one in midwinter for good crops, and a third one in the summer, for victory. – Ch 8, pg 12

He prepared a sacrifice, offering up a boar to Freyr, to find out what had happened, and received the answer that his sparrow had been killed at Vorvi. – Ch 18, pg 21

One time King Athils attended the sacrifice to the Dísir and rode his horse about the hall of the goddesses. The horse stumbles and fell, and the king was thrown. His head struck a rock so that his skull broke, and his brain spilled on the rock and he died. – Ch 29, pg 33

Great sacrifices were held there and many kings came to attend them. They were held in midwinter. – Ch 34, pg 36

In the spring following, King Granmar went to Uppsala, in order to sacrifice, as was the custom toward the beginning of summer, that this peace might last. – Ch 38, pg 41

Hálfðanar Saga Svarta

During Yulrtide King Halfdan was being entertained in Heithmork. – Ch 5, pg 54

Hákonar Saga Góða

He had it established in the laws that the Yule celebration was to take place at the same time as is the custom with the Christians. And at that time everyone was to have ale for the celebration from a measure of grain, or else pay fines, and had to keep the holidays while the ale lasted. Before that, Yule was celebrated on midwinter night and for the duration of three nights. – Ch 13, pg 106

Sigurth, earl of Hlathir, was a most ardent heathen worshipper, as had been his father. Earl Sigurth maintained all sacrificial feasts there in Trondheim on the king's behalf. It was ancient custom that when sacrifice was to be made, all farmers were to come to the heathen temple and bring along with them the food they needed while the feast lasted. At this feast all were to take part in the drinking of ale. Also all kinds of livestock were killed in connection with it, horses also; and all the blood from them was called hlaut [sacrificial blood], and hlautbolli, the vessel holding that blood; and hlautteinar, the sacrificial twigs [aspargills]. These were fashioned like sprinklers, and with them were to

be smeared all over with blood the pedestals of the idols and also the walls of the temple within and without; and likewise the men present were to be sprinkled with blood. But the meat of the animals was to be boiled and to serve as food at the banquet. Fires were to be lighted in the middle of the temple floor, and kettles hung over them. The sacrificial beaker was to be borne around the fire, and he who made the feast and was chieftain, was to bless the beaker as well as all the sacrificial meat. Óðinn's toast was to be drunk first—that was for victory and power to the king—then Njörð's and Frey's, for good harvests and peace. Following that many used to drink a beaker to the king. Men drank toasts also in memory of departed kinsfolk—that was called minni [memorial toast]. – Ch 14, pg 107

Óláfs Saga Helga

At the time when heathendom still prevailed in Sweden, it was an old custom there that the main sacrifices were held at Uppsala in the month of Góí. Sacrifices were to be made at that time for peace and victory for the king, and people from all over Sweden were to resort there. At that place and time also was to be the assembly of all Swedes, and there was also a market and a fair which lasted a week. – Ch 77, pg 315

That fall, information reached King Óláf that the farmers in their inner reaches of Trondheimfjord had had great feasts at the beginning of winter, with much drinking. The King was told that all toasts were brought to the Æsir, following old heathen custom. He was told that cattle and horses had been slaughtered and the pedestals [of the idols] reddened with their blood and that the sacrifices were being performed for the purpose of improving the harvests. And the report was further that everybody considered it clear that the gods had become angered because the people of Hálogaland had let themselves be baptized. – Ch 107, pg 365

“To tell the truth, sire, if you want the facts, in the interior of Trondheim District nearly all the people are pure heathen in their belief, even though some few there were baptized. It is their custom to perform a sacrifice in the fall to welcome winter, a second at midwinter, and a third in summer to welcome its arrival.” -- Ch 109, pg 367

While heathendom still prevailed he was accustomed to have three sacrifices made every year, one at the beginning of winter, one in midwinter, and the third at the beginning of summer. – Ch 117, pg 377

The Saga of the Jómsvikings

Thereupon the earl went up on the island of Primsiged, and away to the forest, and fell to his knees and prayed, looking northward. And in his prayer he called upon his patron goddess Thorgerd Holgabrúd. But she would not hear his prayer and was wroth. He offered to make her many a sacrifice, but she refused each one, and he thought his case desperate. In the end he offered her a human sacrifice, but she would not have it. At last he offered her his own seven-year-old son; and that she accepted. Then the earl put the boy in the hands of his slave Skopti and Skopti slew him. – Ch 21, pg 100

The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki

Vogg told them that King Adils was so devoted a heathen sacrificer, “That his like can not be found. He sacrifices to a boar, and I scarcely understand that such a monster can exist.” -- Ch 28, pg 63

Orkneyinga Saga

Being a great man for worship, Thorri would hold a sacrificial feast at midwinter every year. – Ch 1, pg 23

Egil’s Saga

Bard had prepared a feast for him because a sacrifice was being made to the dísir. – Ch 44, pg 67

Vatnsdaela Saga

They remained there that winter up to Yuletide, and the hospitality was warm and friendly. – Ch 7, pg 199

Ingjald and his men prepared a magic rite in the old heathen fashion, so that men could examine what the fates (norns) had in store for them. – Ch 10, pg 24

“...Ljot, his mother, will now be sacrificing to celebrate the beginning of summer, as is her custom in accordance with their faith.” -- Ch 25, pg 227

Thorstein said, “It must have been Hrolleif and his sacrificial garments that you saw...” - Ch 26, pg 228

In the saga, the person saw someone dressed as a poor man but a red sleeve of fine tunic peaked from underneath.

The weather was especially harsh that autumn, with long spells of heavy frost and cold. The heathen men said it was hardly surprising that the weather should be bad. “It’s because of the new King and his new religion, that the gods have grown angry.” -- Ch 40, pg 348

The upshot of it was that they were betrothed and the date of the wedding set for the Winter Nights. – Ch 43, pg 356

Gisli Surrsson's Saga

Summer drew to a close and the Winter's Nights began. In those days it was custom to celebrate the coming of winter by holding feasts and a Winter's Night sacrifice. – Ch 10, pg 512

Thorgrim decided to hold a feast at the end of autumn to celebrate the coming of Winter's Nights. There was to be a sacrifice to Frey and he invited his brother, Bork, Eyjolf Thordarson, and many other men of distinction. – Ch 15, pg 579

Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue

Earl Sigurd held a great Yule feast during the winter. – Ch 8, pg 576

Eirik the Red's Saga

Eirik accepted this. Preparations for a Yule feast began, which proved to be so bountiful that men could scarcely recall having seen its like. – Ch 7, pg 665

The Tale of Halldor Snorrason II

When Yule came, as is the custom there, forfeits were listed for breaches in etiquette. – Ch 2, pg 687

Section 3: Hof's & Holy Places

Ynglinga Saga

Óðinn settles by Lake Logrin, at a place which formerly was called Sigtúnir. There he erected a large temple and made sacrifices according to the custom of the Æsir. – Ch 5, pg 10

Freyr erected a great temple at Uppsala and made his chief residence there directing to it all tribute due to him, both lands and chattles. – Ch 10, pg 13

Eyrbyggja Saga

Thorolf established a great farm at Hofsvag which he called Hofstad, and had a large temple built there with its door in one of the side walls near the gable. Just inside the door stood the high-seat pillars with so-called holy nails fixed in them, and beyond that point the whole building was considered a sanctuary. Inside the main temple was a structure built much like the choir in churches nowadays, and in the middle a raised platform like an altar. On this platform lay a solid ring weighing twenty ounces, upon which people had to swear all their oaths. It was the business of the temple priest to wear this ring on his arm at every public meeting. There was a sacrificial bowl on the platform too, with a sacrificial twig shaped like a priest's aspergillum for the blood of animals killed as offerings to the gods to be sprinkled from the bowl. Inside the choir-like part of the building the figures of gods were arranged in a circle right around the platform. – Ch 4, pg 29

The circle where the court used to sentence people to be sacrificed can still be seen, with Þórr's Stone inside it on which the victims' backs were broken and you can still see the blood on the stone. – Ch 10, pg 37

Egil's Saga

Odd was chieftain of Borgarfjord on the south side of Hvita then. He was the góði of the temple to which everyone living south of Skardsheidi paid tribute. – Ch 87, pg 180

Vatnsdæla Saga

“It is not our custom to carry weapons into the temple, and you are exposing yourself to the wrath of the gods, and this is intolerable unless some amends are made.” -- Ch 17, pg 215

This is in reference to a temple dedicated to Freyr.

Laxdaela Saga

He erected a temple in the hayfield nearby, the remains of which can still be seen. The site is called Trollaskeid and is now on the public road. – Ch 19, pg 303

Hrafinkel's Saga

When Hrafinkel had taken the land at Adalbol, he held great sacrifices, and had a great temple built. Hrafinkel loved no other god more than Frey and he dedicated half of all his best livestock to him. – Ch 2, pg 439

Section 4: Death Rites

Ynglinga Saga

Thus, he ordered that all the dead were to be burned on a pyre together with their possessions, saying that everyone would arrive in Valhöll with such wealth as he had with him on his pyre and that he would also enjoy the use of what he himself had hidden in the ground. His ashes were to be carried out to sea or buried in the ground. For notable men burial mounds were to be thrown up as memorials. But for all men who had shown great manly qualities memorial stones were to be erected; and this custom continued for a long time thereafter. – Ch 8, pg 12

Óðinn was burned after his death, and this burning on the pyre of his body took place with great splendor. It was people's belief that the higher the smoke rose into the sky, the more elevated in heaven would be he who was cremated; and therefore a man was considered the nobler, the more possessions burned with him. – Ch 9, pg 13

When all the Swedes knew that Freyr was dead but that good seasons and peace still prevailed, they believed this would be the case so long as Freyr was in Sweden; and so they would not burn him and called him the God of the World and sacrificed to him even after for good harvests and peace. – Ch 10, pg 14

Eyrbyggja Saga

Bjorn the Easterner was the first of these settlers to die, and a burial mound was raised over him at Borgarlaek. – Ch 7, pg 32

Orkneyinga Saga

Einar had a burial mound built for Halfdan... -- Ch 8, pg 31

Egil's Saga

Thorolf's body was prepared according to the prevailing custom for men of high birth and they raised a burial stone in his memory. – Ch 22, pg 36

He picked up his body and washed it, then dressed the corpse according to custom. They dug a grave there and buried Thorolf in it with his full weaponry and armor. Egil clasped a gold ring on to each of his arms before he left him, then they piled rocks over the grave and sprinkled it with earth. – Ch 55, pg 89

He called the poem, The Loss of my Sons. After that Egil held a funeral feast according to ancient custom. – Ch 79, pg 158

Laxdaela Saga

Afterwards, the brothers discussed among themselves the holding of a memorial feast, a custom which had become fashionable at the time. – Ch 26, pg 319

Gisli Sursson's Saga

When they decked out Vestein's body according to the ways of the time, Thorgrim went to Gisli and said, "It is a custom to tie Hel-shoes to the men that they may wear them on their journey to Valhalla, and I will do that for Vestein." -- Ch 14, pg 516

They laid Thorgrim out in a boat and raised the mound in accordance with the old ways. – Ch 17, pg 523

Section 5: General Customs

Ynglingas Saga

It was custom at that time, when a funeral feast was prepared to honor a [departed] king or earl, that the one who prepared the feast and was to be inducted into the inheritance, was to sit on the step before the high-seat until the beaker called the bragafull was brought in; and then he was to stand up to receive it and make a vow, then quaff the breaker, whereupon he was to be inducted in the high-seat which his father had occupied. Then he had come into the rightful inheritance to succeed him. – Ch 36, pg 39

It was the custom of those kings who resided in their own lands or sat at the banquets they had arranged, that in the evening, when beakers were passed around, two and two were to drink together in couples, one man and one woman, as far as possible, and those left over were to drink [together] by themselves. Otherwise it was Viking law that at banquets all were to drink together. – Ch 37, pg 40

Hálfðanar Saga Svarta

Queen Ragnhild bore a son. He was sprinkled with water and named Harold.
– Ch 7, pg 57

There are many references to this type of heathen style granting of a name. This practice called, “Ausa Vatni” was long in practice before the coming of Christianity.

Haralds Saga Hárfagna

It was custom to choose most carefully the persons who were to sprinkle with water and to give a name to the children of noble birth. – Ch 37, pg 91

Eyrbyggja Saga

At Winter Eves (Vetrnætr) it was custom of the Breidavik people to hold ball games just below Oxl Mountain, south of Korr, and the place is still known as the Leikskalar Fields.
– Ch 43, pg 111

It was the ideal place to make a stand because of the stones lying everywhere, and there they braced themselves for the fight. As Snorri and his men were coming up the scree, Steinthor cast a spear over them for good luck, according to ancient custom. – Ch 44, pg 117

This mimicks Óðinn himself. It is said he threw his spear over the host of Vanir during their war shouting, “Óðinn has you all!”

The Saga of the Jómsvikings

The first evening, both brides wore their head coverings low over their faces; but the morning after, both brides were gay and had their faces uncovered. – Ch 17, pg 83

Njal's Saga

“It is not surprising that Skarp-Hedin is so formidable, since the saying goes that one-fourth comes from the foster-father.” -- Ch 42, pg 111

Orkneyinga Saga

“A deed like this can only bring fame to the man who carries it out. Show yourself a man of spirit and you can have my clothes according to the old laws and customs.” -- Ch 50, pg 94

He was keen on the old practices and had spent many a night in the open with the spirits. Svein was Earl Paul's forecandleman. – Ch 65, pg 120

She was in her finest clothes with her hair falling loose as is customary with virgins... --Ch 86, pg 165

Saga of King Gautrek

They tried divination to find out when the wind would be favorable and were told that Óðinn expected a human sacrifice from the army, the victim to be chosen by lots. – Ch7, pg 155

He would never accept a gift, being too mean to give anything in return. – Ch 9, pg 161

Egil and Asmund (Seven Viking Romances)

Then their men arrived on the scene and pleaded with them to be reconciled. So they shook hands and each agreed to become the other's sworn blood-brother according to ancient custom. – Ch 4, pg 232

Egil's Saga

One autumn Bjorgalf and his son invited a lot of people to a feast, and they were the most noble of all those present. According to custom, they cast lots every evening to decide which pairs would sit together and share the drinking horns. – Ch 7, pg 14

Kveldulf said, “You have spoken well, because old men have said that a man’s death would be avenged if he dropped face down, and vengeance taken on the man whose feet he fell...” -- Ch 24, pg 40

What Egil said was law too, under the ancient custom that every man had the right to challenge another to a duel, whether to prosecute a case or defend it. – Ch 66, pg 128

... and the sword, “Slicer” tied to his right hand. It was ancient custom among duellers to have their swords at hand to have them ready when they wanted them instead of needing to draw them during the fight. – Ch 66, pg 128

Einar stayed three nights waiting for him, it was not custom to stay more than three nights on a visit. – Ch 81, pg 167

Vatnsdaela Saga

“It is custom of leaders to spare the lives of those who voluntarily place themselves at their mercy.” -- Ch 5, pg 196

He set out carrying fire, in accordance with the old custom, and laid claim to the land. – Ch 10, pg 204

Berg said that he would not accept money as compensation and would only settle the case if Jokul were to crawl under three arches of roused turf, as was the custom after serious offenses... -- Ch 33, pg 241

This is in reference to trial by ordeal. If the arches fell as he walked, he was guilty.

Laxdaela Saga

Thorkel maintained that it was all his by right and offered to undergo an ordeal to prove it, according to the custom of the time. – Ch 18, pg 299

Before he left, his mother Melkorka handed Olaf a heavy gold arm ring saying, “This treasure my father gave me when I cut my first tooth, and he’ll surely, recognize it when he sees it again.” -- Ch 20, pg 305

A son was born to Thorleik and his wife, sprinkled with water and given the name Bolli...” -- Ch 25, pg 318

Gisli Sursson’s Saga

This seemed good counsel to them, so they walked out to Eyrarhvalsoddi and scored out a long strip of turf, making sure that both ends were still attached to the ground. Then they propped up the arch of raised turf with a damascened spear so long-shafted that a man could stretch out his arm and touch the rivets. All four of them had to go under it,

Thorgrim, Gisli, Thorkel, and Vestein. Then they drew blood and let it drip down on to the soil beneath the turf strip and stirred it together – the soil and the blood. Then they fell to their knees and swore an oath each would avenge the other as if they were brothers, and they called on all the gods as their witnesses. – Ch 6, pg 506

A ritual of blood-brotherhood given with some detail.

At that time, whoever drew a weapon from a death wound was obliged to take revenge, and when the weapon was thus left in the fatal wound it was called secret manslaughter rather than murder. – Ch 13, pg 515

He was sprinkled with water and at first named Thorgrim after his father. –Ch 18, pg 523

The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue

When the country was completely heathen, it was something of a custom for poor men with many dependants in their families to have their children exposed. Even so, it was always considered a bad thing to do. – Ch 3, pg 563

Contrary to what Christians would like you to believe, this was obviously an extremely rare instance as referenced here. People still didn't like it, Heathen or Christian.

The Tale of Halldor Snorrason II

Thorir came to speak to the King saying, “As you know, I am an old man, and get tired quickly. I do not think I am capable of following the customs of the King’s men, such as drinking toasts and such related things.” -- Ch 2, pg 687

Section 6: Blasphemy & Sacrilege

Njal's Saga

At the Althing that summer, Hjalti Skeggjason was outlawed for blaspheming the gods. – Ch 104, pg 224

Egil's Saga

Because Eyvind had committed murder in a sacred place he was declared a defiler and had to go into outlawry at once. – Ch 49, pg 79

Laxdaela Saga

At the Althing that same summer Hjalti Skeggjason was sentenced to outlawry for blasphemy. – Ch 41, pg 353

This is a second reference to the same event in a different saga. Hjalti must have done a good job at blaspheming the gods. Since trial and persecution of this crime seemed rare, it must have had to do with the level of the crime and the effects in which it may have had on the luck of all around the defendant.

Afterword:

The author sincerely hopes that this work, along with the previous works written, will help our community to better understand many of the heathen thinking processes in which our ancestors possessed. Also, is the hope that light may be shed on many practices which can be used in this Reawakening as revived customs and a living part of our very beings.

Through the examination of the available texts, we can reformulate true, revitalized customs and practices for ourselves tempered with wisdom and understanding. The author believes that this is the next step: in culture and practice, in which we must take in order to continue to evolve and to better understand the WHATs and WHYs of the things we do in a religious context today in the modern world.

Appendix I: Translations Used

- *Byock, Jesse L. tr. *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990.
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- *Magnusson, Magnus and Pálsson, Hermann. tr. *Njal's Saga*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1960.
- *Pálsson, Hermann & Edwards, Paul. tr. *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1989.
- *Pálsson, Hermann & Edwards, Paul. tr. *Seven Viking Romances*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1985. (Arrow-Odd, King Gautrek, Halfdan Eysteinnsson, Bosi and Herraud, Egil and Asmund, Thorstein Mansion-Might, and Helgi Thorisson.)
- *Pálsson, Hermann & Edwards, Paul. tr. *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1981.
- *Sturluson, Snorri. *Heimskringla*, tr. Lee M. Hollander. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964.
- *Thorsson, Örnólfur. ed. *The Sagas of the Icelanders*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2000. (Egil's Saga, Vatnsdæla Saga, Laxdæla Saga, Bolli Bollason's Tale, The Saga of Hrafnkel Freyr's Godi, The Saga of the Confederates, Gisli Sursson's Saga, The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue, The Saga of Ref the Sly, The Saga of the Greenlanders, Eirik the Red's Saga, The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Struck, The Tale of Hallor Snorrason II, The Tale of Sarcastic Halli, The Tale of Thorstein Shiver, The Tale of Audun from the West Fjords, and The Tale of the Story-wise Icelander.)

About the Author:



Mike Smith has been a member of the Ásatrú and heathen community since 1989. He was the founder of Athelingúlf Fellowship which evolved into the Úlfar aff Jera Þjóð, of which he serves as Jarl. Many of Mike's articles have been found consistently in Ásatrú publications such as *Marklander*, *Lina*, *Vor Trú*, *Idunna*, *Modern Ásatrú*, and *The Runestone*. He has been a guest speaker/lecturer at many large Ásatrú and pan-pagan events. In 2002, he was a special guest speaker on Norse Mythology at Leicester High School in Massachusetts. In 2003, he released a free basic, beginner book on Ásatrú called, *Ways of the Ásatrú: Beliefs of the Modern, Northern Heathens*. Then in 2004 he released the booklet, *Think Again! Thinking Like A Heathen in the Modern Era*. In 2005 he released, *Amma: Wisdom from the Sagas*.

Currently, the avid mead-brewer, martial artist, husband, and father of two, is in the process of writing numerous books on Heathenism, Runes, and he is also studying German longsword swordplay.

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