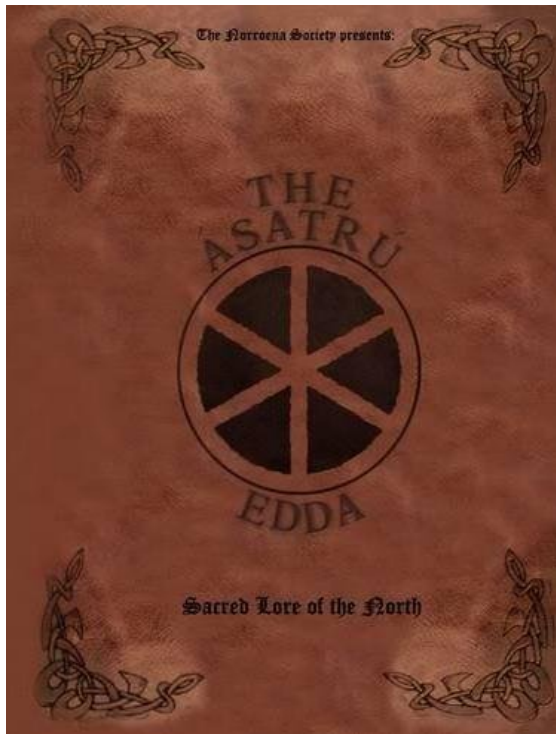


INTRODUCTION

In the age of innocence, the age of peace and plenty, when our ancestors lived without vice or villainy, there came the first lore. The Gods sent to their prot?g?s a divine teacher, an immortal among mortals, who would bring all the necessary implements to build a culture and a civilization. At first the lore was simple and direct; telling of the creation of worlds, of mankind, and the Gods' conflict with the powers of Chaos. As time passed, more and more stories developed detailing the complex and beautiful natures of these benevolent deities, the Aesir and Vanir, while explaining their relations to one another and their dealings with the world.



At the core of this very ancient tradition, reaching back many thousands of years, lies the epic chain of events, beginning with Ginnungagap and ending with Ragnarok and the subsequent renewal. The chain is a sacred institution that lies within the cultural and religious expressions of the people of the North that has existed since the time of the earliest Indo-Europeans. The idea of cohesion, so important in many hierologies, resounds in the tales of the ?satr? pantheon as part of the necessary logic behind the sk?ldic heritage. As new stories would arise, new episodes would be added to the epic as they fit into the chronological order of events. At the same time, local customs and beliefs could form that would not be deemed appropriate for the greater body of lore, and so would remain within the town or community it developed in. Eventually,

the stories would be recorded, although in a severely corrupted form, in a treatise that would forever label them as Edda. Although the text was composed three hundred years after Iceland's conversion to Christianity, for those who honor the ancient deities, this would become a holy term.

The most commonly accepted definition of Edda comes from the Old Norse language, where it means 'Great?Grandmother', representing the idea of elders telling the sacred tales to their descendants. In ancient times, these were told as part of an oral tradition, where storytellers would pass the narratives down through the generations. To know and understand the lore was a sacred responsibility, one that gave its keepers prominent positions within their tribes or clans. The diligence with which this duty was upheld is evidenced by the survival of the customs themselves, which evolved over centuries, embodying the cultural manifestations of the folk will. The pre-Christian poems of what would be known as the Poetic, or Elder Edda, along with those of the elaborate and enigmatic skaldic discipline, would act as the primary representatives of this ancient

inheritance.

Then, in the midst of this cultural evolution, there came a foreign invader upon Northern soil. Christianity began its campaign of forced conversion that would take centuries to complete, while the old ways started fading out early on. It was only by chance that the fragments of ?sotr? lore were able to survive as a product of church propaganda. In order to convince the masses to convert, Christian leaders had to explain why these people had been worshipping "false gods" for millennia. To the uneducated peasants the answer was easy - their ancestors had been tricked by demons into deifying them, causing the folk to turn away from the "true faith". However, the learned nobility had established their lineage through the pantheon, and valued their familial relationship with the Gods as part of their royal heritage. The nobles were, by far, the most important part of the church's conversion tactics, for they would convert their subjects to the new faith, and they could make war if they were not pleased. Therefore, a more appropriate response was needed for their concerns, which would have to coincide with that given to the lower classes.

Thus, the euhemerist movement began. The Christian clergy told the heathen nobles that their Gods and Goddesses were actually human kings and queens who had achieved such repute among their people, they were eventually elevated to divine status. An elaborate doctrine was created to back up this claim, including the complete reformation of the old lore to fit this new idea. The Teutonic deities became heroic Trojans, and a false etymological relationship between "Asia" and "Aesir" was developed. In the end, this plan would backfire, since the actual recording of the traditions themselves would be valued most, while lies about human Aesir from Troy would be all but forgotten.

Many years later, during the Germanic Renaissance of the late 19th century, scholars all over Europe would collect, translate, and piece together the fragments as best they could, in order to form a coherent system of lore from Northern Europe. During this era, modern mythological research was born. Although often falsely classified as "Norse", these stories represent an ancient body of religious beliefs that were once celebrated from Austria to Iceland, and beyond. The most prominent scholar of this Renaissance was, without a doubt, Jacob Grimm, the German linguist who gathered popular traditions and stories remaining from the North's heathen past, and meticulously researched every detail, pioneering the field of investigating these customs in his work *Deutsche Mythologie* ("Teutonic Mythology"). Following Grimm was Swedish poet and author Dr. Viktor Rydberg, whose *Unders?knigar i Germanisk Mythologi* ("Researches Into Germanic Mythology") and *F?dernas Gudasaga* ("Our Fathers' Godsaga") would be the most thorough, yet most underrated texts ever written on the ancient ways. These latter books have served as a template for the present volume.

Shortly thereafter, in Australia, 1936, Alexander Rud Mills established the Anglecyn Church of Odin, officially heralding the rebirth of the ?sotr? or Odinist religion. At the time, it seemed as though this new awakening of an old path would be quite prolific. However, with the coming of World War II and false allegations made by an overly paranoid Australian government, many of the early Odinists were led to concentration camps, and the light of Odinn would remain dim for the time being.

It would not be until the late 1960s, when Danish born Else Christensen, inspired by Mills' work, would relight the flame of ?sotr? among the Gods' descendants in America and Canada. Her group, the Odinist Fellowship, worked diligently in spreading the word that the old faith was indeed born again, this time for good. Earning the name "Folksmother", Else was a true force to be reckoned with, for her strong will and life-long dedication to Odinic beliefs would help set the stage for many to follow in her footsteps. Although still facing persecution (in her 80s Else was falsely imprisoned and deported from the U.S. due to her success with the Odinist Fellowship), these defenders of the faith will always be remembered and honored within the ?sotr? Nation.

From there, the message grew like wildfire, with organizations cropping up all over the Western world, and individuals finding the path on a daily basis. In America, there would be the Asatr? Free Assembly (to become the Asatr? Folk Assembly) and the Asatr? Alliance, from England The Odinic Rite would spread across the globe, whereas the ?sotr?arfelag in Iceland would become the first nationally recognized ?sotr? organization in modern times.

To this day, the faith still faces opposition from those who would make false accusations based on outdated misconceptions. In spite of this, the religious revival continues to evolve and move forward in ever more positive directions. The celebration of European ethnicity may seem threatening to some, but should be recognized as the beautiful and uplifting experience we ?sotr?ar know it to be. The ?sotr? religion is, by all means, an esoteric belief system, only because it embodies the cultural values of the peoples of the North. In this way, it is no different than other ethnic religions found in India, Japan, Africa, Native America, and elsewhere.

Our people were great explorers and adventurers who tread upon almost every land on earth. Their admiration and desire to learn of other cultures was a staple of their way of life, exemplified by certain rites of passage where youths would set off to see the world. Long before such tolerance and acceptance of others became a trend of modern society, Northern sailors traveled from one end of the globe to the other, without leaving any trace of imposition or disrespect towards those they encountered. Archaeological evidence shows them to have been peaceful traders among the nations they fared, though their fierce defense of their homelands was legendary. ?sotr?ar today would emulate our ancestors' attitudes in honoring other peoples, while at the same time demanding that our way of life is not devalued or attacked simply because of its place of origin.

As more and more people answer the call of their ancestral Gods and Goddesses, more projects, institutions, and groups will arise. Everywhere the faith is practiced, believers seek legitimacy and recognition within the countries they reside, which has proven to be no easy feat. Many forces have opposed this religion since the first Christian set foot on Teutonic soil. Yet, this is the true testament to the power and strength of the folk will, and of the customs themselves. Without forced conversions, without exorbitant amounts of funds and resources to advertise and campaign with, without the backing of mainstream society, ?sotr? has survived, and now thrives once again. The voice of Odin's Nation will

be heard, and the Gods and Goddesses of our folk will be honored among all the nations of the West, taking their rightful place as our divine patrons.

As stated, the academia began the Odinic revival in the late 19th century. Some claim that certain secret societies at the time were practicing ?sotr? customs in Germany and elsewhere, which included many of these intellectuals. While we greatly value the contributions made by mainstream scholars over the past 120 years, the time has come for this movement to break away from our dependence upon these institutions. No longer should outsiders be allowed to dictate the shape of the lore or the beliefs we adhere to, when in many cases these do not reflect the best interests of the ?sotr? nation. Among the folk are those who can and will create texts by and for members of the faith, manifesting every cultural aspect that would be used in its celebration. As the necessity for the work of mainstream academia wanes, it is up to the community at large to seek out texts and materials that reflect the needs and values of ?sotr? religion. Not that we would discourteously reject any attempts to aid us in our revival, nor would we ignore good information when it presents itself, no matter who wrote it. It is the strong reliance upon non-?sotr? scholars that holds us back from achieving our maximum potential. ?sotr? is one of the only religions in the world that finds members placing academics outside the community upon a pedestal, according them the same prominence as religious leaders. As if adopted into some sort of pantheon or canon, these scholars' writings have become gospel to many.

It is time to begin a new era, where traditions can be coalesced as part of the evolution of the religious movement, rather than merely co-opted from the work of outsiders. This is a part of our sacred heritage, and as such must be expressed in a body of lore that comes from the nation itself. The first thing that must be done is to accept that it can be done, is being done by ?sotr? all over the world.

One of the most beautiful aspects of Odinic beliefs is the lack of a sanctified dogma, which has come to be greatly valued among believers. There are no sects to represent various interpretations or differences in viewpoints, and it is widely accepted that no two ?sotr?ar will think alike. While we appreciate these differences, there is little tolerance towards those who would place negative, disrespectful, or immoral connotations upon the practice of the religion. For the most part, however, our take on the customs will differ, and few of us would have it any other way.

It is in following with the spirit of this idea that The ?sotr? Edda was written. The purpose of such a massive undertaking, which is the culmination of over ten years of work, and thirty years of combined research between several scholars, is not to develop a strict authority on what ?sotr? lore should and should not be. Although it was put together to be a sacred text, rather than just another "mythology" book, the sanctity of the work is in re-establishing holy storytelling traditions in the form of the Teutonic epic. Like a great puzzle, the fragments of lore have been pieced together, cleansed of Christian elements, and presented as a source for ?sotr?ar to enjoy as part of our legacy.

Before the age of Bibles and Korans, tales of the worlds religions were shared over

hearths or near children's beds. The lore was not a concrete rule of divine law that had to be maintained, word for word, at all costs. Rather, it was a vibrant, fluid development that constantly changed and evolved, while keeping in line with what had come before. Although the stories themselves are sacred, what's more important are the lessons one walks away with, the true inspirations of the Gods and Goddesses. The inspiration is the holy experience in reading or hearing the lore, and remains so to this day. Our connection to the divine should not be considered any less potent than it was among our ancestors, so we should not shy away from contributing to the traditions now. In fact, it should be considered our duty to do so. The 'satr' Edda is an attempt to live up to this obligation. The idea is to try to keep the heathen customs intact, never harming that which we are confident is part of the ancient ways, then building upon them, filling in gaps when needed, using in-depth research and logical conclusions to do so.

There will be those who will scoff at this, who will claim that the sources we have are enough. Why? Because they are old? Because they came from Iceland or Scandinavia or Germany? When the Christians changed the lore to fit their purposes, they did so on a whim, without any regard for the importance it held as part of Northern European heritage. It was demonized and mutilated to coincide with an evangelical agenda to rob the heathen Teutons of their past, and to degrade the legacy of their forefathers. Well, now we take it back! Now we reclaim our ethnic birthright, now we call out to the heavens, to the 'satr' martyrs who died by Christian swords, and let them know that they did not die in vain, that their children's children's children woke up and took back what is rightfully ours.

However, we are the only ones who can do this. The power is in our hands. Only we can choose what customs we will hand down to our descendants. Only we can decide what stories we will tell, what rites we will practice. At least now we have the choice, we are no longer imprisoned by a tarnished and confused inheritance from those of a religion completely and utterly opposed to our own. Only by accepting the power within ourselves, to take our destiny within our own hands, can we truly take our rightful place as the children of Odinn.