

Index of Papers on Norse (Nordic, Germanic) Mythology
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Nordic Myth Papers - 2006

Title: Ancient Skies of Northern Europe: Stars, Constellations, and the Moon in Nordic Mythology

Author: Timothy J. Stephany

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Filename: Article01-NightSky.pdf

Abstract: Nordic mythology from 13th century Iceland contains descriptions that provide traditional depictions of the night sky, constellations, and the Moon. These were not only incorporated within the mythology but also formed the basis for their gods: Odin was a god whose eyes were the Sun and Moon, and Heimdall was a god of the Moon. Images that can be seen on the Moon's face establish the proof of this: the image of two swans said to swim within the Well of Fate and the profile of a face said to have sliced into Heimdall, are both visible. Further to be seen are Mimir, Hiuki and Bil, Heiddraupnir's skull and Moongarm. The mythology also contains reference to the twin stars Castor and Pollux, known as Thiassi's Eyes, and Venus, known as Aurvandil's Toe, Earandel.

Keywords: Constellations of Northern Europe, Stars, Sun, Moon, Venus, Morning Star, Milky Way, World Tree, Yggdrasill, Heimdall, Odin, Freyia, Humbli, Lothar, Grytha, Mimir's Well, Well of Fate, two swans, eagle, Hiuki and Bil, Heiddraupnir's skull, Moongarm, Fenrir, Thiassi's Eyes, Aurvandil's Toe, Dain, Dvalin, Duneyr, Durathror, Ratatosk, Vedrfolnir, Nidhogg.

Title: The Nordic Otherworld: Interpreting the Tangvide and Ardre Stones

Author: Timothy J. Stephany

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Filename: Article02-Stones.pdf

The Tängvide and Ardre memorial stones give us a pictorial glimpse of the Nordic Otherworld during the Scandinavian's Viking Age. Often incorrectly interpreted in the past the stones show similar scenes of a fallen leader astride an eight-legged horse that may be either Odin's horse or the horse of death. Also depicted are human sacrifices made at his funeral feast. Horse, mound, and sacrificed figures are being led by a winged spirit (possibly the leader's fylgia). On the Ardre stone the area before the mound is taken up by a procession of his relatives, leading his horse to his new home, while the winged spirit is bringing along a suttee victim as well. The Tängvide stone depicts a popular image of the Otherworld: a woman greeting the fallen warrior with a full drinking horn.

Keywords: Tangvide stone, Ardre stone, fylgia, horse of death, Sleipnir, otherworld, underworld, Valkyries.

Title: Odin and his Brothers: Common Threads of the Odinic Tradition

Author: Timothy J. Stephany

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Filename: Article03-Odin.pdf

Abstract: Within the Poetic Edda Odin, Lodur (Loki) and Haenir are responsible for the creation of humanity in Nordic mythology. Odin can be seen in an early form as a god of the sky, Loki as a god of fire, and Haenir as a god of water. These gods of creation can be connected to Syrian myth in the case of Vili and Ve (Eilli and Ea) and to Indian myth in the case of Loki and Haenir (Agni and Soma). These associations are reinforced through parallels relating specifically to similarities of the myth of the mead of poetry with that of the soma in the case of the Indian and in the Baldric tradition in the case of the Syrian. There is some potential of establishing a latest possible date for the origin of the myth, as well as an original form of the myth, when common details are identified.

Keywords: Odin, Lodur, Haenir, Loki, Vili, Ve, Eilli, Ea, Agni, Soma, Indra, wind, fire, water, Vrtra, Ymir, Travstr, Vindr, eagle, Purusa, Sleipnir, Prthivi, Freyia, Frigg.

Title: Brother Gods of Light and Darkness: Origins of the Baldr Myth

Author: Timothy J. Stephany

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Filename: Article04-Baldr.pdf

Abstract: Baldr is a god of light and his adversary Hod is associated with darkness. Their story of fratricide is present in four forms in Northern Europe; however in only the Eddas is Loki made responsible for the deed, so his presence must be a late addition. The gods' names are common throughout Europe and western Asia and down in the Middle East. The evidence points to an agricultural myth that arose during the Neolithic in Syria then moved into Europe as the knowledge of agriculture spread northward. Balder corresponds to the Syrian sky god Bel and Baldr's wife Nanna is equivalent to the Syrian goddess Inanna, who's descent into the underworld is similar to that of Baldr and also Idunn. Condensing it into a simple naturalistic explanation: the two brothers of Summer (Baldr) and Winter (Hod) fought over the Earth (Nanna) and Winter was always vanquished upon Summer's return. The Norse myth of Baldr's death may be a combination of two independent stories attested in Beowulf.

Keywords: Baldr, Balder, Hod, Loki, Nanna, Bel, Inanna, Herebeald, Haethcyn, Beowulf, Saxo, Cain, Abel, Beltane, alcis, antlers, Ishtar, Dumuzzi, Enki, Grendel, Berutha, Bertha, Orvendil, Morning Star, Erentel, Frigg, Fensalir, ignis fatuus.

Title: Lady of the Elves: The Great Germanic Goddess

Author: Timothy J. Stephany

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Filename: Article05-Lady.pdf

Abstract: The prominent goddess of Europe was known in Germany as Berchta and Holda, who appear as goddesses of the bright and the gloomy. These pairings might be represented as Berchta and Holda, Frigg and Hel, and Freyia and Hyndla. The bright goddess arose as a goddess of the sun and sky and the gloomy one appeared as

representative of the earth and underworld, but with Berchta and Holda they encompass both aspects and were largely interchangeable. She received the souls of the dead who rode along the path of the Milky Way in a wagon to the underworld. As 'lady of the elves' or 'queen of the fairies' the huldren, elves, and dwarfs, thought to be spirits of the dead, would appear with her on earth from time to time. The goddess held her position until the appearance of the sky god, which subsequently caused her to take on the role of an earth and fertility goddess. The necklace of Freyia may have initially arisen from either the view that vegetation was the clothing or girdle of the earth or as the rainbow.

Keywords: Berchta, Holda, Frigg, Hel, Freyia, Hyndla, huldren, Grimm, Huldra, Thorgerd, Irpa, Holle, Vroneldenstraet, Milky Way, Sun, Valkyries, spinning, weaving, lady of the elves, queen of the fairies, Freyia's Necklace, Heimdall, Loki, rainbow, thunderstorm, Lauma's girdle.

Title: The Lineage of Norse Mythology

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Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article06-Traditions.pdf

Abstract: Several traditions are represented in Norse mythology as recorded in the Eddas. The earliest were Bertha, Heimdall, and Lodur (Heimdallic tradition). Then there arrived the god of light Baldr and the god of darkness Hod from Syria (Baldric tradition). Nanna came with the Baldr myth, but the identical goddess Idunn had already made her way into another tradition. Next came the gods of the sky represented by Tyr (Tyrpic tradition) and Thor (Thorric tradition). After this Odin (Odinic tradition) made his way into different regions, taking over for Tyr as the most important god. Then the trinity gods adapted though time into the Vanir Freyia, Frey and Od and as the Aesir Frigg, Fricco <Friggo> and Odin. Meanwhile in the north, the god Niord was introduced and became the father of Frey and Freyia. Then there was a final combination of the Aesir with the Vanir that is thought to have occurred during the Migration Age. The indigenous gods Forseti, Ull and Skadi lingered around, each adopted into one of the other traditions.

Keywords: Bertha, Heimdall, Lodur, Heimdallic, Balder, Baldr, Hod, Nanna, Idunn, Baldric, Tyr, Tyrpic, Thor, Thorric, Odin, Odinic, Frigg, Vanir, Frey, Freyia, Od, Aesir, Fricco, Foreseti, Ull, Skadi, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jove, Minerva, Dis Pater, Sol, Luna, Vulcan, Hercules, Caesar, Tacitus.

Title: Odin, the Well, and the Mead: The Theft of the Drink of the Gods

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Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article07-Mimir.pdf

Abstract: The two principle myths from the Odinic tradition are the Mead of Poetry and the Well of Mimir, which are also related to the theft of the soma from Indian mythology. The drink attained is one of inspiration encompassing immortality, poetry and wisdom. The basic elements being the creation of the liquid, its theft with the killing of its source, then going to a giant who is beheaded and the secret of the liquid is revealed. This is also associated with the explanation that the eagle brought this drink of the gods down to mankind. The basic purpose of the myth was to explain the Moon. In myth the round shape of the Moon is explained as being Odin's eye; the phases are either a well, a bowl,

or a drinking horn; while images on it are seen as Mimir with his drinking horn, Heiddraupnir's Skull, or Dadhyanc's horse head. The liquid revealed is a real intoxicating drink in the Indian tradition, while in the Nordic it appears only as a metaphor for inspiration, albeit a mead. At some point then this mythical drink was equated with intoxicating drinks.

Keywords: Odin, Mead of Poetry, Well of Mimir, Soma, India, Moon, Odin's eye, Indra, eagle, soma bowl, Mimir, drinking horn, Heiddraupnir's skull, Dadhyanc, Suttung, Gilling, Gunnlod, Rati, Baugi, Fialar, Ymir, Yama, Vafthrudnir, Midvidnir, Mim, Kvasir, Tvastr, Hnitbiorg.

Title: Reconstructing Rig: The Missing Page of Rigsthula

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Filename: Article08-Rig.pdf

Abstract: In the Norse poem "Rigsthula" Heimdall plays the role of progenitor of mankind's three classes under the name of Rig. In Saxo Heimdall (Humbli) is the father of Dan and Angul, the first of the line of the Danes and Angles. In Snorri Rig is used as the name of a king who was father of Danp, Danp himself (the father of Dan), but Rig was also Dygvi the father of Dag. The basic intent of the poem establishes the line of descent of the Daglings. The account of Dag in Heimskringla thus might be used to continue the story of Kon in "Rigsthula". The reference to Danp and Dan, the use of the name Rig, and an equivalence between King Dag in "Ynglinga Saga" and the figure of Kon, who both understand the language of birds, attest to their similarity. Dag is considered the first of the line of the Daglings: a Swedish line from Domar that became combined with that of the Danish king Danp.

Keywords: Rigsthula, Heimdall, Humbli, Dan, Danes, Angul, Angles, Rig, Dag, Heimskringla, Kon, Danp, Ynglinga Saga, Dagling.

Title: Thor and Tyr: Revealing the Indo-European Sky God

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Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article09-Tyr.pdf

Abstract: The Norse god Thor is a god of thunder and Tyr is a god of the sky, yet both appear to be linked back to the original Indo-European sky god Tiwaz (who also led to the thunder gods Zeus and Jupiter and the Indian sky god Dyaus). Thor's hammer and wagon relate to his role as god of thunderstorms, wherein he did battle with trolls and fought back the frost giants to drive back the winter. There is also an association between the thunder god and the elves, who were thought to reside within mountains, as was the wind. In this relation to the elves, Thor is also connected with the goddess Bertha through the giantess Grid (Brid/Brith) and the giantess Iarnsaxa. Tyr himself is the same as Dyaus, who was consort of Prithvi, a goddess also equivalent to Bertha. Tyr's single hand may be a reference to the Sun as a shield, while his adversary, the dog Garm, may appear upon the Moon. The contest between the sky god and a serpent or wolf might imply some distant connection, but specific details that would link the gods together are otherwise lacking within the mythology.

Keywords: Tyr, Thor, thunder, Tiwaz, Zeus, Dyaus, Grid, Iarnsaxa, Prithvi, Garm, Moon, Bertha, wolf, sky, goats, chariot, wagon, copper kettles, hammer, one hand, Miollnir, elf, elves, Midgard Serpent, Iormundgand, huldre, huldren, dwarfs, Bertha, Berchta, Ull, Sif.

Nordic Myth Papers - 2007

Title: "The Thunderstorm" and "The Morning Star": Rediscovering Two German Myths

Completed: 6/2/07

Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article10-TwoMyths.pdf

Abstract: The Norse myth of Freyia's Necklace and the Grendel episode in Beowulf are variations on original naturalistic Germanic myths. The first explains the sequence of a thunderstorm and the second explains the Morning Star. Each exists in only a single reliable telling but enough ancillary evidence exists to be able to identify their original inspirations. In the case of Freyia's Necklace the characters of the Sun (Freyia), Moon/Water (Heimdall) and Fire/Lightning (Loki) contend, while in the case of the story of Grendel the poem is too far removed to provide every episode that must have comprised an original myth. That it involved the Sun and her child the Morning Star is sure, but whether the character of Beowulf was originally represented by the Moon, the thunderstorm or a bear-hero cannot be resolved. Assuming that the myth was exclusively related to heavenly bodies the Moon would be the obvious hero, so if this is correct the myth would have involved Bertha, Orvendil and Heimdall or a proto-Heimdall. An illustrative recreation of the myth can be generated to show how the story as originally told could have eventually led to its subsequent forms today.

Keywords: Freyia's Necklace, Grendel, Beowulf, Sun, Freyia, Moon, Heimdall, Fire, Loki, Orvendil, Bertha, Berchta, bear, Grendel's mother, fens, fen hall, Freyia, Frigg, Hrolf Kraki, Saxo, Anglo-Saxon, Morning Star, Venus, Aurvandil's Toe, Bjarkarimur, golden hilt, Bear's Son tale.

Title: Source of the Primeval Giant: Recreating the Mimir Myth

Completed: 6/2/07

Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article11-MimirMyth.pdf

Abstract: The giant Mimir/Mim might be equated with Brimir, who himself is seemingly identical with Ymir. The giants Ymir, Mimir and perhaps even Hymir would then be variants on the primal giant, the first mortal being, and the first forger of swords. Then killed so as to form the world he became king of the underworld where he drinks mead and sits under a tree, which recalls both the Moon and the night sky. That the giants of Creation and of the Soma are distinct in Indian tradition suggests that if Mimir/Mim and Ymir/Brimir were identical it must have been well before the Odinic and Indian traditions split. The myth of Mimir, which has not survived as a single work in Norse myth, can be suggested from bits and pieces and from matters relating to the primal giant. An illustrative recreation of the myth can be generated to show how the story as told could have eventually led to its subsequent forms known today.

Keywords: Mimir, Mim, giant, Brimir, Ymir, Hymir, Moon, mead, stars, Mimir's well, Odin, Mead of Poetry, Soma, Kvasir, Vafthrudnir, Urd's well, Well of Fate, Gerd, Gymir, Manu, Mannus, Thuisto, Dis Pater.

Title: Yggdrasill and Ymir's Skull: The Cosmologies of Nordic Myth

Completed: 10/26/07

Published: 1/27/08

Filename: Article12-Cosmology.pdf

Abstract: The several traditions of Norse myth each contain cosmologies that arise from a past understanding of the universe. Although, set like moving targets, changing through time with changes in thinking and experience as well as communications with other societies, the different cosmologies are similar in terms of how closely they relate, but may also pick up various descriptions and assemble them differently. However, it is not sure when the traditions might have brought in new stories or adapted through time. The Vanaric and the Odinic traditions are closely related and so share some similarities. For the same reason, the Tyrpic would match the Thorric to some degree. The Well of Urd, closely related to Mimir's well, would appear to include Yggdrasill and its constellations. The Baldric itself is entirely unknown, despite the significance of the story of the death of Balder in Norse myth, but if it can be traced back to the Syrian then it can be reconstructed somewhat.

Keywords: cosmology, Yggdrawill, Ymir's skull, Well of Urd, Mimir's well, Well of Mimir, Balder, Midgard, Utgard, Asgard, Hel, Underworld, Niflheim, Muspell, World Tree, Brimir, Loki, Skadi, Skatha, Lugh, Sigyn, Bertha, Heimdall, Erentel, Morning Star, Sol, Luna, Vulcan, Beowulf, Voluspa, Odin, Havamal, Mimameid, Berchta, Aurvandil's Toe.