

**Title: Conversations**

**Subtitle: Norse**

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Quote:

History:

Asatru is frequently regarded as one of the Neopagan family of religions, along with Celtic Druidism, and re-creations of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and other ancient religions. However, many Asatruers prefer the term "Heathen" to "Neopagan" and look at Asatru as "not just a branch on the Neopagan tree" but as a separate tree. Unlike many other religions, which evolved into many different traditions, the reconstruction of Asatru has been based on historical record; it has been maintained as closely as possible to the original Norse people.

Some sources state that Asatru or Ásatrú is an Icelandic word, derived from the Old Norse Asetro. Others state that it is a Norse word. It was "first seen in 1885 in the book "Fjallkonan". The next recorded instance was in "Heiðinn siður á Íslandi" (Reykjavík, 1945)." The title means "Heathen traditions in Iceland."

In Scandinavia the religion is called Forn Siðr (which means the Ancient Custom) (the Old custom), Nordisk sed (Nordic custom), or Hedensk sed (Pagan custom). The religion is lost in antiquity. At its peak, it covered all of Northern Europe. In 1000 CE, the second last Norse culture to convert to Christianity. Their prime motivation for conversion was ruled by a Pagan king until 1085 CE.

Icelandic poet Gothi Sveinbjorn Beinteinsson promoted government recognition of Asatru as a legitimate religion; this status was granted in 1972. Since the early 1970s, there has been a period of rapid growth in the former Norse countries, in Europe and North America.

It is not unknown for otherwise decent religions to become corrupted by anti-semitic, and homophobic beliefs. For example, the Christian Identity movement is the Christian religion which has adsorbed such beliefs. During the early 20th century, the National Socialist Party in Germany under Adolf Hitler attempted to pervade the religion onto the Nazi racist beliefs. This blasphemy died by the end of World War II, but some neo-Nazi groups -- largely in the U.S. -- are now attempting to continue this activity. This activity is in no way related to the restoration of Asatru as a legitimate religion. Asatru has a very strong anti-racist, anti-Nazi stance among national Asatru groups in the United States. This is also found in almost all Asatru groups in English speaking countries. A clear rejection of racism is written into their constitutions. Unfortunately, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have mistakenly accused the entire religion of racism.

Many people are exposed to the name "Asatru" through role playing games.

Ascension. Unfortunately, the Asatru of these games bear little resemblance

#### Asatru Beliefs:

Asatru is a polytheistic religion. There are three races of Deities in the religion regarded as living beings who are involved in human life: The Aesir: The Asgardian or clan, representing Kingship, order, craft, etc.

The Vanir: These represent the fertility of the earth and forces of nature, but are not part of the clan.

The Jotnar: These are giants who are in a constant state of war with the Gods, representing chaos and destruction. At the battle of Ragnarok, many of the Gods will die and be reborn.

Specific Gods: Some of the more important are: Thor is the Thunderer, God of the divine Hammer. His chariot racing across the sky generates thunder. Thor is named after him.

Odin is the one-eyed God; he gave up one of his eyes in order to drink from the Well of Mimir. He is a magician and wise one. He learned the secrets of the runes (Norse) by hanging himself on the tree Yggdrasil for nine nights.

Frey is the God of Yule (born on the Winter Solstice, typically December 21st) and plenty who brings fertility and prosperity. His father was Njord.

Specific Goddesses: Some important ones are: Freya (aka Freyja) is the Goddess of love and sexuality, and perhaps a dozen other attributes. She leads the Valkyries who slay soldiers to Valhalla (Odin's great hall).

Frigg is Odin's wife. Her name has been secularized to a slang term which means intercourse. She is the patroness of the household and of married women.

Skadi is the Goddess of independence, death, hunting and skiing. Scandi is the English word shadow, skullduggery and shade came from her name.

Ostara, is a Goddess of fertility who is celebrated at the time of the Spring Equinox by the Saxons as Eostre, the Goddess of Spring, from whom we have derived the word Easter. Ostara's symbols are the hare and the egg.

Other Entities Other Deities are Aegir, Balder, Bragi, Forseti, Heimdall, and Vithar. They also honor the Landvaettir (land spirits) of the forest, earth and water.

Life Values: They follow the Nine Noble Virtues: Courage, Truth, Honor, Hospitality, Industriousness, Self-Reliance and Perseverance. The family is highly honored. They reject any form of discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, or "other divisive criteria".

Origins: Humanity is literally descended from the Gods. Three brothers, Ask and Embla, were created from two trees and gave them the names Ask and Embla. One deity established the social classes.

Od: This is the gift of ecstasy provided to humans by the Gods. It is what separates humans from other animals, and is our eternal link with the Gods.

Creation Story: A poem Voluspa (Prophecy of the Seeress) contains an account of the creation of the universe. Between Muspelheim (The Land of Fire) and Niflheim the land of ice, a space called Ginnungigap. The fire and ice moved towards each other; when they met, the universe came into being. Odin, Vili and Ve later created the world from the

had slain.

After death: Those who die in battle will be carried to Valhalla by the V Särimner (a pig that is daily slaughtered and resurrected) with the Gods. evil and treacherous lives go to Hifhel, a place of torment. The remainder calmness and peace, and is unrelated to the Christian Hell.

#### Asatru Rituals and Practices:

Their local religious communities are called Kindreds, Hearths, or Garths. priestesses are Gythia

The Blot: (pronounced "bloats") This is their most common religious ritual. Gods. In olden days, as with almost all ancient religions, an animal was and then slaughtered. This was not seen as a bribe or as a method of carrying animal. It is simply the way in which the ancient Norse shared their Gods. Currently, the animal sacrifice has been replaced by the offer of blood. Afterwards, those present are either sprinkled with the liquid, or drink it.

The Sumbel: This is a ritual drinking celebration, in which a horn filled with mead is passed around the group. Each person delivers a greeting; a toast to the Gods, ancient history, or a story, song or poem. He or she then drinks from the horn.

Profession or Adoption: This is the act of making a commitment to Asatru faiths, by solemnly giving an oath of allegiance and kinship to the Gods Vanir. It is a simple ceremony usually done in the presence of a Gothi or Kindred, Hearth or Garth. It is taken on an oath ring or some other sacred object.

#### Seasonal Days of Celebration

In common with most Neo-Pagan faiths, their main holy days are:

Summer Finding, at the spring equinox, typically March 21. This is dedicated to Frey.

Winter Finding, at the fall equinox, typically September 21

Midsummer, at the summer solstice, typically June 21

Yule, which starts on the winter solstice (typically December 21) on the 12th and lasts for 12 days or more. This is the most important day of the year. Many Norse people have been absorbed by the Christian celebration of Christmas: evergreen trees, Yule log, etc.

Many also celebrate days between the solstices and equinoxes. Various traditions observe them on different dates:

The Charming of the Plow on February 1st weekend, a celebration of Frey.

Merry-Moon on May 1st weekend, celebration of spring dedicated to Njord.

Harvest or Freyfaxi on August 1st weekend, the first harvest and celebration of Frey.

Fogmoon on November 1st weekend, a celebration of war-dead and Ragnarok, dedicated to Frey and Freya.

Einherjar is held on November 11 and coincides with Armistice or Veterans Day. It is a day when warriors who have been killed in battle and have joined Odon's warriors in Valhalla are honored. On the 9th of each month to honor Norse heroes. Other groups hold rituals for the dead.

days are celebrated at other times during the year by different traditions