

SAGA LARP

SETTING DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

Saga Larp Campaign is based around a group of Skyldings, who were whisked away in their largest longhouse, when their home, the port town of Skyldingheim, was attacked by an ancient rival, known as the Wylfings.

Skyldingheim was built on the six great hills that surround the Harbour of Hringr. The Skyldings are fierce, proud and honourable Norse, with the reputation for being excellent sailors, crafters, merchants, warriors, storytellers, healers, hunters, mystics, and wanderers, in all things respecting the gods and the traditions of their ancestors.

The story of Saga will feature a great journey across the nine Norse realms, beyond the lands they know which will test their strength of body, will, and spirit in a quest to find their way home.

A NOTE ON SETTING

There are many books and resources out there, fictional and non-fictional, that explore about Norse culture. This is a setting inspired by the bits that we love about Norse culture. There are some things that we have written from scratch, others that we have taken from known mythology and made our own. Our intention is to create a rich world which we tell a collective story which is not historically accurate but rather coolthentic. We would encourage our players to read other sources for inspiration if they wish to, but to keep in mind that it will need to fit the culture that we have written here.

HISTORY OF SKYLDINGHEIM

THE ORIGINS

Myrra Skyldasdotter, born from the seed of Bragi, is regarded as the Mother of Skyldingheim.

Her mother, Skylda Svataalisdotter, was a traveller, born out of time. It is now known that she was born in the present day, and travelled back into the past alongside her bloodbrother Wylf Arnvisson, in the boat called Mystrider. They were taken in by the gods, to live out the rest of their youngling years on Asgard.

Following a dispute over a shared lover in Bragi, the bard of Valhalla, Wylf left Asgard under a cloud of anger and bitterness. He founded his own clan, who called themselves the Wylfings, in the Harbour of Hringr which was named Wylfheim. Months later Skylda followed him, and gave birth to Myrra. She named Wylf guardian of her daughter but soon after both mother and babe were cast out of Wylfheim.

Instead Skylda sought out a village of humans on Alfheim, and found a second guardian and community to raise her child. When Myrra grew up she too had 'strange tides in her blood' as her mother did.

THE CLASH WITH THE WYLFINGS

When Myrra came of age she dedicated her life to the gods and became a Godi to the goddess Frigg. It was said that she had prophetic dreams, that there was a place where she was meant to be, the place of her true guardian. When she set out for Midgard, the village who raised her followed.

When they sailed into the Harbour they were met with some resistance but then when Wylf recognised who was leading them, and he welcomed his long lost daughter in. Myrra and her clan, who started calling themselves the Skyldings settled in their new home, making uneasy friends with the Wylfings.

Myrra found she had a sister, Arnvi, who was her guardian's heir.

On midsummers day, an alliance bond between the Skyldings and the Wylfings was to be sworn. When the celebration was at its height, Arnvi finally made an appearance. She accused Brandr the bear, one of Myrra's big supporters, of murder, and demanded that he be handed over to be executed. Brandr swore it wasn't him and Myrra refused her sister. But unlike the Skyldings the Wylfings were prepared and primed by Arnvi - and at the refusal of handing over the murderer they struck quick and fast, slaughtering the entire host of Skyldings... all except Inga, best friend to Myrra and a godi of Hel. She was left because the wylfings didn't want to have to bury these dead enemies.

As Myrra lay bleeding her hearts blood into Inga's lap, Inga called on her goddess - and for the first time in Inga's life her goddess came. Inga made a bargain with Hel - reject all these souls, let the Skyldings live again, and she would give her entire line of descendants to be Hel's personal warriors in Hel. Each member of her line would never live to see adulthood. Hel took the bargain and the host of Skyldings awoke. Myrra breathed a breath again only to find her dearest friend dead at her feet. She vowed to raise Inga's young daughter as her own - not knowing that she would not live too much longer until she served Hel alongside her Mother.

Myrra and the Skyldings withdrew to come up with a plan to take Wylfheim that they now considered their rightful place. Myrra went to the elves and made an alliance bond with Triandel of Clan Daga to procure a song - a powerful one to change the course of history and curse the Wylfings.

A great battle was fought, and the Skyldings won, but not without great bloodshed. Wylf died in his bed, without seeing his bloodsister Skylda one last time. Afterwards, Myrra could not forgive her sister Arnvi for what she had done, and so she banished her and her Wylfings from this place. Thus began the bitter hate between the two clans. Myrra renamed the place of her birth Skyldingheim.

For many generations the rivalry with the Wylfings continued. Fifty years ago it came to a head when the Wylfings invaded Skyldingheim itself. The battle raged for months, them attacking Skyldingheim and Skyldings sending Svinfylking to infiltrate their town. A ceasefire was finally called and an alliance bond struck. Elsa Brynasdotter, daughter to the Jarl, was sent to the Wylfings and in exchange Varri Ionasson, Prince of their tribe, came to reside in Skyldingheim.

THE MIST

In the last twenty years the town has been plagued by a thick mist that comes down without warning and shrouds the town. By the time it lifts some folk from the town are gone. The Mist is now known to be the same that plagued the Skogr on Niflheim generations ago.

Over the years, it has taken over a hundred members of the town, from young children to the elderly, vanished without a trace, or at least that what it had seemed. It is now known that those missing people were deposited on other worlds.

The Mist originates on Niflheim at a great prison that was built by the Vanir to house monsters who upset the balance of the nine worlds. The mist is designed to keep those magical prisoners in the prison, should they try to escape.

Twenty years ago the elves, led by Navarre, tried to break into the prison. This damaged the original purpose of the mists, and they started to seep out of niflheim and into the other nine realms, picking up anyone with magic and depositing them to other places across the known worlds.

RECENT LEADERSHIP

Four years ago Jarl Erik Eliasson was taken by the Mist. He was five years into his reign and immensely popular due to a succession of lucrative, glorious vikings to the east. A Thing was held soon after, and Torunn Sivsdotter was chosen to take his place. Erik was rescued from being held captive by the Wylfings on Jotunnheim. He is a shell of the vili he once was, and has SLAVE scarred across his forehead.

Torun grew up in Clan Aldrnari, and is the first from that clan to rule as Jarl in living memory of Skyldingheim. Little is remarked on about her childhood except that she was a child who kept to herself but after coming of age as a Drift of Loki at 16 years old she embarked on a solo journey and did not return until her twentyfourth year with a daughter Hillevi in tow. It is now known that the Skylding who returned was not the same who left, but Tallulah the Margygur who had stolen Torunn's visage.

Tallulah was from a different time. She was a Margygur, merfolk, who served the Vanir when they still walked the nine worlds. One day she was sent after the fire giant, Surtr, who was opposing everything that the Vanir stood for. She chased him around the nine realms, and as she chased him she grew to love him. Eventually she joined his side against the Vanir. When they were defeated, her and her daughter were thrown into the prison on Niflheim. And there they stayed for many generations, until the prison walls were weakened by the elves.

As they were escaping, they came across Torunn and her young daughter Hillievi. Tallulah subdued the humans, and reflected their faces for her and her daughter. But Torunn tapped into the magic of Frigg's eye, and compelled the margygur to deliver her daughter home to skyldingheim. She did this, but soon tried to get rid of the real Hillievi - who was instead hidden in Clan Vidir until the reckoning happened many years later.

Jarl Torunn, or Tallulah, was known to be a charismatic, discerning woman and is one of the most popular Jarls in recent decades winning a landslide vote at the Thing. Her few rivals whisper her ascent to power is attributed to the powerful magic of her daughter. However, their voices were drowned in those of her fervent followers who believed that she would lead the Skyldings to glory. She expounded that the future of the Skyldings lies in travelling where no other Norse have been willing to go before, to the West. She commissioned a new longship from Helga Snorasdotter that is meant to be the fastest in Skylding history, and was set to embark on the autumn viking. But that was not to be.

THE LAST STAND OF SKYLDINGHEIM

For the years she had been gone, Elsa Brynasdotter was nurturing a bitter hatred for being given away by her family. She became union bonded to Hakon, who became the Jarl of the Wylfings, and was mother to Geir Elsasson who took his guardian's place when the former died. Elsa became responsible for bringing the power of the Jotunn magic to the wylfings. This power enabled the Wylfings to make a decisive strike on Skyldingheim, burning their boats and mounting an attack on the celebratory feast which was meant to be the night before the viking set sail.

In the stand against the Wylfings, Tallulah, known as Jarl Torunn at the time, fell while working a bog magic to protect the Skyldings. As she fell she was transformed into an egg, hinting at her true nature. This sacrifice allowed some of the Skyldings to make their escape into Elivagar, which transformed itself into a ship again and whisked those inside away through the mists.

Olga Solveigsdotter, heir to Clan Myrr, was one who was left behind. The Mist had tried to grab hold of her for a second but when it cleared the longhouse and most of the heroes of Skyldingheim were gone. She strode out onto the field and confronted Elsa directly, working a great piece of ancient magic she stopped the slaughter of her people. She pronounced that in exchange for surrender and service that as long as a Skylding was within the bounds of their land that no Wylfing could harm them. This has been enforced, and Olga was unanimously voted the Jarl of Skyldingheim by those who had been left behind. She appears to cooperate with Elsa and the Wylfings, but says this is for the good of her people. She keeps her bearskin Jordis Sigthruorsdotter and her adviser Varri Ionasson close, and three appear to have more free reign than the rest of the Skyldings.

The Skyldings who were inside Elivagar landed on Alfheim. Later that day they elected Niklas Tainasson as the new Jarl, though he had only been Skati of Clan Ingjald for mere hours. He has led the Skyldings of Elivagar ever since.

THE CLANS

STRUCTURE

There were five great clans that make up Skyldingheim, numbering roughly two hundred members each, based on five of the six great hills that surround the Harbour of Hringr. Each Clan has a longhouse at its peak, used for clan gatherings, celebrations, and, in times of great cold or conflict, for shelter. Each bonded family within the clan has its own boer (house) where the family sleep communally.

Each Clan has a Skati who is leader of the clan. This is an inherited title, the eldest bonded child of the previous Skati (regardless of gender) taking their place when they die. If the current Skati is female, her eldest birthchild is her heir. If the Skati is male, then the oldest child to which he is Guardian to is his heir. In the case of any disputes over inheritance, a vote is called of all members of the clan who have come of age. The Skati is responsible for overseeing the wealth and wellbeing of the Clan, arbitrating disputes within the Clan, and taking care of the enchanted items held by the Clan.

Every ten years the Skyldings call a Thing to decide who of the Skati will be their new Jarl. Each Skati form the eligible candidates, and Skyldings who have passed through the Adult coming of age ceremony are granted a vote. There is no restriction of gender to become Jarl. When a Jarl is elected, their heir takes their place as the Skati of their clan. While a Jarl is considered of Skyldingheim rather than tied to a specific clan, unofficially they remain close to the clan they once were part of - and after the ten years is up they often return to reside with their clan.

While the five clans each vie for domination over certain resources, ultimately they work together for the benefit of the town.

VALKA AND ELIVAGAR

On the sixth great hill stands the great longhouse Elivagar. Stories say that it was built from the ship that sailed down the famous river Elivagar and bought the ancestors of Clan Skogr to Skyldingheim. This is where the Jarl and their bonded family reside.

The Huskarl (house keeper) at Elivagar is Valka, whose family does not belong to a clan but has been tied to the Jarl's household as long as anyone can remember. She has no children and is not known to have been bonded to anyone.

It is known that Valka was once Thrudr, daughter of Thor, and first of the Valkyries. She fell in love with a human called Elivagar and when the human warrior died and she was sent to collect her soul, instead of ferrying it to the afterlife she kept the spirit of her lover. For this Odin kicked her out of Valhalla and stripped her of her memories. Thrudr found herself on Niflheim, and with the last dregs of her memories she found a new vessel for the spirit of Elivagar, a longship built by the humans of clan Skogr.

As the Mists started to descend on their ancestral lands, the one known as Valka navigated for them down the river to Midgard, and Skyldingheim. From the timbers of the longship, a longhouse was built as a gift to Skyldingheim, within it was housed the spirit of Elivagar. Valka stayed on to serve as Huskarl to whoever took up the torc of the Jarl.

CLAN MYRR

Clan Myrr were the original Skyldings, descendants of the humans who followed Myrra Skyldasdotter, and fought against the Wylfings for the right to call the Harbour of Hringr home.

The Myrr have a reputation for having their eyes in the stars and being dreamers. Some say that they should have their feet planted more firmly on the ground and while others say that all the best visionaries come from Myrr, depending on who you're talking to. The Myrr Longhouse is decorated with mementos collected from all the places that clanspeople have travelled to over the generations.

Four years ago when the Skyldings fled in Elivagar, the clan was led by Skati Solveig Karisdotter, a famous explorer and Skald whom even other Skald's write epics about. She came from a long line of expert navigators and explorers and was said to have 'strange tides in her blood' and spent most of her adult life exploring before her guardian died and she took on his mantle. Every now and then she disappeared on a voyage and her daughter Olga took care of much of the leadership within the clan.

In the journey between Midgard and Alfheim, her vordr was killed by a curse from a Wylfing Godi, and she contracted a disease known as Vathlauss sorrow which was deadly without a great magic (which the Skyldings did not have within their power at the time). Solveig perished with her clan and loved ones around her, and her daughter Vinsenja took her place as Skati of the clan. Solveig's death was later avenged on Jotunnheim by the bloodeagling of Thrain, the godi who had cast the curse.

The other clanmate who has made his name famous, or infamous, of late is the beautiful Gunarr Sanasson. A notorious heartbreaker he is said to weave enchantments over his lovers that leave them forever pining after him. Some call him ruthless and heartless, while others say his heart was stolen long ago when he was a lover scorned and he has vowed to find her and take his revenge. Whether there is truth in that, it is known as a powerful Seidr who has taken many lovers and who has bound many a magical being to do his bidding.

It is now known that Gunnar is the vessel of a spirit Danyr who is seeking his true love, Tara. Both spirits are now within the bodies of Skyldings, Tara is within Ulfric Angbodasson, current Skati of Clan Vidir.

The Clan symbol is three stars.

◁LAN INGJALD▷

Clan Ingjald is said to have made its name on the corpses of its enemies. Some say that Thor's madness runs deep in their blood, that one of their ancestors was cursed with rage unquenched. In reality they pride themselves on being practical and strong in both body and mind and fiercely loyal.

Asger Brennasson, it is told, fought a giant to retrieve his bonded daughter Inga Gerdasdotter, spilling much of his blood before the giant was overcome. Inga had been taken by the fearsome firegiant on the eve of her initiation as Jarl. Upon returning home they found her place taken by her jealous sister, Erika Gerdasdotter (having made a pact with the king of the fire giants, Surtr himself). Asger flew into a rage and fought Erika and four of her Bjornstokum, leaving his blood spilt across Elivagar. However, when he slew Erika, Inga cursed him for this, disowning him as Guardian. She fought one-on-one with Asger, and took his life with a fell blow. Inga's descendants formed Clan Ingjald.

Four years ago the Skati of Ingjald was Haskell Nannasson. He was different from his forebears in that he is not a great warrior but a great peacemaker and philosopher. When he was a young man on his first Viking, he was gravely wounded. As he lay dying, he talked of a being who entered his vision and promised him life. It is now known that the being was a sprite who served the four stags of Vanaheim. In return he swore a blood oath to never raise a weapon again. For this he was healed. The being told him they would return for him one day. He called this day his spiritual awakening, and ever since he was raised to the position of Skati he has been speaking of making peace with the ancient rivals, the Wylfings. This has caused much tension between his supporters and critics.

In the last stand of Skyldingheim, Haskell was taken by the mist. He was discovered on Vanaheim, but his mind and memories had been taken, and so he was a mumbling shell of who he once was. He was used as a vessel by Durathror, the Spring stag, to carry a message to the Skyldings, which helped them rescue, and restore the stag to their rightful place. In the journey between Jotunnheim and Asgard, Haskell was taken by the mist again.

On alfheim, Niklas Tainasson, who was before a humble Svinfylking, took Haskell's place as Skati. But within hours he was then elected to Jarl, so his daughter Idunn Solveigsdotter took his place leading the clan.

The popular ditty, sung by the Ingjald longhouse fire by the cheeky young Skald Eysta Gyrsdotter, is about her friend Helga Snorasdotter who is building the greatest ship that the Skyldings have ever seen. While the song is in jest, Helga is known for her visionary techniques in boatbuilding, and was chosen to build the finest longship for Jarl Torrun. The ship was burned by the Wylfings, but Helga went on to create an even greater, if much smaller, boat - which was named Mystrider. Mystrider was enchanted to be linked to Elivagar and be able to travel between worlds.

The Clan Symbol is a bloody hand.

CLAN VIDIR

There is a tale from the time of the ancestors which talks of the great sea serpent Hafgugr plaguing the town. Each summer she would come and demand a payment of three children to be sacrificed to her or she would swallow every fishing vessel whole and cause a great wave to engulf the town. The town saw her might and so bent to her demand. The children's names were all written onto a stone and placed in a large bowl. The Jarl decreed that whomever was drawn would be sacrificed, no exceptions.

Fearing the loss of their son should he be drawn, Embla Akasdotter and Vidir Akasson worked in secret to enchant a great net to capture Hafgugr, and a spear to slay the beast. The net took three years to enchant, but was not quite finished when the third draw was made. To their horror, their son Fangr was drawn, doomed to be sacrificed to the insatiable beast. The night before the sacrifice was to be made, Embla and Vidir snuck to the docks with the nearly completed net and the spear, stole a boat, and set the great net across the harbour. When dawn came, and the beast neared the harbour, Vidir drew up the net, capturing Hafgugr in the harbour. Embla sailed out and fought with Hafgugr, and Vidir released the sprites in the net to harry the beast. Embla eventually slew the thrashing beast, but in its death-throws the net gave out, and Vidir was torn from the cliff, his body dashed against the rocks below.

In honour of the great deed the Jarl ordered that a longhouse be built where Embla and her son would live and from them grew Clan Vidir.

Four years ago, Bjarke Ionasson ruled as Skati of Clan Vidir. When his mother died, as well as his older brother, he retired from the Ulfhednar to take her place. The story goes that he fought a great Lindwurm, which swallowed him whole and there he would have stayed had not his bloodsworn sister Ylva Sigrunsdotter slain the worm, splitting its belly and setting her friend free. She also retired from the Ulfhednar to support her blood brother in his ascent to power. Many saw her as the power behind the Skati.

In the fires of Muspelheim she was revealed to be bound to Surtr, the king of the fire giants, and branded a traitor, having also spread some of her power amongst the skyldings. In the aftermath of her death, Bjarke challenged Jarl Niklas to one-on-one combat, and when he was refused, he left Elivagar and the Skyldings.

Through a spirit quest it was later revealed that Ylva was responsible for the deaths of the old Skati Iona and her eldest son who would have taken her place. Her grandson, Ulfric, took up his rightful place as Skati of the clan, but he is also known to be bound to Surtr. It is rumoured that the only thing tempering that is a spirit he has inside him, which is a concern to some of the community.

Ida Astridsdotter has been named his heir. She is known for her keen mind, but follows in her gods path as a trickster, so whether she is trustworthy remains to be seen.

The Clan Symbol is a fish.

CLAN SKOGR

The Skogr were a community of humans that lived on the outskirts of Niflheim by the river Elivagar, fishing in ice and hunting seals and bears. One day an adventurous skylding Gyr Nidasson paddled upstream further than any had ventured before and came to the village. He returned home with stories of a peaceful, hardy people who live in a harsh environment. He established a trade route with these people, and went to live with the Skogr as part of an alliance bond.

His counterpart, Elya Frigasdotter who came to live in skyldingheim was a great hunter who inspired many of the more eager adventurers by her stories of the magical creatures that dwell in her homeland. Elya was one of the first who carried the blood of the Varg to dwell in Skyldingheim. She found an order of elite hunters and scouts that grew into the Ulfhednar.

After many years of alliance, there came a mass exodus where the whole tribe of Skogr showed up on the shores of the Skyldings. They spoke of the mists decending and carrying away their people never to be seen again. Their Godi and Seidr had tried in vain to hold this terror at bay but were ineffectual. So they had dismantled their longhouse to build a great ship that could carry them all safely to their allies shore. With them they brought a wealth of pelts, and rich metals which they had mined from the mountains of Niflheim. Valka was the one who navigated their longship for them.

Skati Brunhild Myssasdotter leads Clan Skogr. A powerful, scarred warrior, she is still in the prime of her fighting life, and many feel that she is young to take up the reigns Skati. Her mother died in childbirth and her Guardian Bran Lyansson, the previous Skati, died on a battlefield, bleeding out in his daughter's arms. Brunhild has no children and no siblings. She named her bloodbrother Kastr Fyrrasson as her heir, and this choice has thrown up much controversy because of the bloodline that Kastr carries. It is said that his family was cursed by a powerful Seidr many generations ago to have ill luck follow them until they make right the great wrong they had done her. No one outside of the family knows what this was, but many a ghost story has been told to Skogr children by clever Skalds by the longhouse fire. It is now known that he carries the blood of Inga, one of the first Skyldings who made a pact with Hel for the lives of the Skyldings. Kastr was left behind in Skyldingheim, so the Ulfhednar Narla Hallasastor has been named Brunhild's heir.

Ola Lovissasson has come into notoreity of late for his astute bargaining skills and growing wealth. Said to be a man of many faces, other traders talk of being swindled out of their own goods by just one conversation with Ola. He set up trade deals that supply the Jarl with fine goods and spices from the east. Ola was close in Jarl Torrun's favour and many aspiring merchants seek to gain an apprenticeship with Ola. He birthed one son, Gothar Olsson, who is said to have the tides of many seas in him, and has followed in his mother's path, being an able navigator and trader. Gothar had also caught the eye of the Jarl of late, and became one of her lovers, but they were not able to be union bonded before she died. Both Ola and Gothar were left behind in Skyldingheim.

The clan symbol is a ship.

CLAN ALDRNARI

Aldyra Bjornasdotter, originally of Clan Vidir, was a celebrated runesmith and quickly had the Skalds singing her praise for the powerful, ingenious weapons she crafted. They said she must have the blood

of a dwarf to craft such masterpieces. She wanted to sell her wares for a hefty price or favour, rather than giving freely to the clan as was customary, and the Skati Kyrrn Lonasson soon became fed up with her resistance to his desires. He coveted a magical sword, one that he knew only she could make. The more he offered her in return the more she refused, so he tricked her into an Alliance Bond with the Skogr Skati's youngest son Forsyr Inanasson. She moved to live with her new clan, and as part of the bond conditions she set to making Kyrrn a great and magical sword, like no other that had been made before. When it was finished he came to collect, but she refused to give up the greatest treasure she had ever made. When he forced the issue, she beheaded him in one great stroke of the sword and thus broke the alliance. She was tossed out of the clan, becoming clanless, but many of the Skogr and Vidir, and others who felt rejected by their clan, rallied with her, and the Jarl (keen to be in the graces of Aldyra herself) granted them a home as a new clan Aldrnari.

Because of this checkered past Clan Aldrnari has suffered a bad reputation over the years, as murderers and cheats, but the truth is they pride themselves on knowing what they want and not taking second best. When Torunn Sivsdotter, now known as Tallulah, returned from her travels and took the seat of Skati, she changed this perception with her charm, astute bargaining and eventual ascent to the Jarl's seat.

After Torunn won the vote at the Thing and filled the empty seat of Jarl, Hillevi Torunnsdotter took her place as Skati of Aldrnari. She inherited her mother's charm and charisma, but unlike her mother, Hillevi is a powerful Seidr. She has always been a supporter of her mother and has helped Clan Aldrnari rise to the highest standing amongst the Skyldings. She is young and handsome and many men vie to be taken as one of her lovers. One of her lovers is Svinfylking Bjanc Karlsson, whom she appointed as her advisory Boarskin, choosing to dismiss the previous one who had served her mother for many years. Bjanc is young and ambitious, and Hillevi's rivals thought he lacked the wisdom that time provides.

It is now known that Hillievi was in truth the child of Tallulah and Surtr, born many years ago in the time of the Vanir. This all was revealed on Alfheim, and the real Hillievi came forward. The Skati was given a new name, Elsker, and she chose Hillievi as her heir. But in an effort to conceive through the means of her mother's people, Elsker transformed into a cocoon, and Hillievi took her place as Skati. Hillievi's time as Skati was fractious and fraught, without the full support of the clan. It came to a head on Asgard, and Hillievi stepped down from the position, and the Seidr Baelog Elsasson took her place.

Another of Elsker's lovers that has risen to notoriety is Anr Tygrassson who is a talented healer and herbalist in the clan. He has set up a training school for those who wish to learn the science of healing, and his methods for rehabilitating warriors who have been severely wounded on vikings are quickly becoming popular. He has shared this secret with a number of healers on the viking, and the results are plain to see that they are indeed gifted with superior skill.

The Clan symbol is an Anvil.

CLAN SOKNAKARL

On Alfheim there were a number of Skylding, and other humans who had been lost in the mist, and ended up there. They were led by a folk hero known as Elrik the green, who was originally named Haf Halleveigsastir, born to Clan Aldrnari in Skyldingheim.

When Elrik found themselves on Alfheim, they were captured by the elf Navarre who did experiments on them before they were able to escape. This began a lifelong hatred of the elves and everything they stood for. So Elrik gave themselves a new name, and gathered others who believed in their freedom from the elves. They called themselves the Soknakarl.

Elrik was eventually captured, and was to be executed for their crimes, and as a symbol to their people. The Skyldings of Elivagar, who had recently landed on Alfheim, rescued Elrik - who was reunited with friend they thought they would never see again. But they would not abandon their people, and so they made an alliance bond with Jarl Niklas Tainasson to create a Clan Soknakarl. The Runesmith Tallak Signesson joined the new clan as part of the alliance bond.

The clan is known to be good scouts, and gather informants whenever Elivagar lands. Elrik is a stalwart supporter of Niklas, and bloodthirsty when it comes to the elves.

The symbol for the clan is a broken chain.

PEOPLE OF NOTE

PRESENT AND RECENT PAST

An up to date people of note will be released closer to the game in the People of Skyldingheim document.

HISTORICAL

Jorgi Hannasson (Deceased 9 generations ago) - Skald - The old survivor who witnessed the brave stand of The Vaskyr Svinfylking, all stories of which are based on his account.

Forsyr Inanasson (Deceased 10 generations ago) - Son of the Skati - Son of Skati for Clan Skogr, and was alliance bonded with Clan Vidir with Aldyra Bjornasdotter, soon after which the alliance was broken by the infamous crafter, and Clan Aldrnari was founded.

Aldyra Bjornasdotter (Deceased 10 generations ago) - Founder of Clan Aldrnari - A celebrated Runesmith who slew Skati Kyrrn Lonasson rather than hand over her masterpiece, and was granted her own clan by the Jarl. Now resides her afterlife on Helgafjell.

Kyrrn Lonasson (Deceased 11 generations ago) - Once Skati of Clan Vidir - Was covetous of Aldyra Bjornasdotter's crafts, and was slain for his greed.

Elya Frigasdotter (Deceased around 12 generations ago) - Founder of the Ulfhednar - Was exchanged in an alliance bond with the Skogr, she was a great hunter of magical creatures. Known to be a Vargblooded. Now resides her afterlife on Helgafjell.

Gyr Nidasson (Deceased around 12 generations ago) - Discoverer of the Skogr - Famous explorer, who travelled up Elivagar to discover the Skogr, and eventually joined them in an alliance bond.

Fangr Emblasson (Deceased around 14 generations ago) - Son of the founder of Clan Vidir, was one of the children to be sacrificed to the great serpent Hafgufur before his parents trapped and slew the monster. His revenant was woken by Freyja and Freyr when they disturbed his tumuli in Skyldingheim. When they repayed the debt to his descendants he returned to the afterlife.

Embla Akasdotter (Deceased around 15 generations ago) - Founder of Clan Vidir - Trapped and slew great seas serpent Hafgufur, to save son Fangr from being sacrificed. Was granted own clan in return for actions. Now resides her afterlife on Helgafjell.

Vidir Akasson (Deceased around 17 generations ago) - Guardian of Clan Vidir - Was slain while trapping from great sea serpent Hafgufur, to prevent son Fangr Emblasjon being sacrificed.

Inga Gerdasdotter (Deceased around 18 generations ago) - Founder of Clan Ingjald - Once the Jarl of the Skyldings, she returned to find her sister Erika having usurped her. After a bloody struggle, where she had to slay her Guardian Asger Brennasson. Now resides her afterlife on Helgafjell.

Asger Brennasson (Deceased around 20 generations ago) - Guardian to Clan Ingjald - Guardian to the founder of Clan Ingjald, Inga Gerdasdotter, he famously slew a giant to rescue his daughter, and then was killed by that same daughter for slaying her sister.

Erika Gerdasdotter (Deceased around 20 Generations ago) - Jarl - Usurper of the seat from sister Inga, killed by Inga's Guardian Asger Brennasson. Known now to be a surtrbound. Resides her afterlife with her sister on Helgafjell.

Myrra Skyldasdotter (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - Founder of Skyldingheim - Said to be of the seed of Bragi, she was a talented Godi who had prophetic dreams which lead her to the harbour of Hringr. Resides her afterlife on Helgafjell, with her mother.

Inga (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - A godi to the goddess Hel and close friend of Myrra. She sacrificed herself to her goddess to bring all the skyldings back to life.

Brandr "The Bear" (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - Founder of the Bearskins - Myrra's close friend, and the first Bjornstokum.

Arnvi "The winter wolf" (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - Heir to the Wylfings, Wylf's daughter and Myrra's sister. She was the one who lead the Wylfings to lose their home and was banished from the Harbour of Hringr.

Skylda "of the runes" Svaatalisdotter (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - Mother to Myrra Skyldasdotter - a child of prophecy from the future, she is the child of Elivagar Skyldings, but was the mother to their founder. Time is woven in a great circle.

Wylf "The White Wolf" Arnvisson (Deceased around 25 generations ago) - The founder of the Wylfings - Also from the present but founder in the past.

BIRTH AND FAMILY

People that wish to birth children seek out traits from a variety of lovers. Diversity in lovers is prized, and care is usually taken to offset traits between lovers to ensure the child is balanced and well-rounded. A child's temperament is further improved by the sharing of feeding between lactating females during the first few years of life.

The mother's role is a right and a choice with moderate responsibility to the child, consisting of birthing the child, choosing a guardian, and moderate responsibility to breastfeed young children of the clan. Mothers choose the degree to which they work with the guardian and elders looking after the child.

Upon birth, the mother asks a close Vili or Omnispirit relative or associate that the mother believes will be a suitable guardian for the child, and if the person agrees they join in the Bond of Kinship and act as a guardian.

The guardian's role is a privilege with high responsibility. They are the carer and mentor to the child until the child first comes of age. They are responsible for the day-to-day wellbeing of the child, including seeking out lactating mothers for the child in the first few years of life, making food, providing shelter and warmth, protecting the child, bringing the child to elders and other children for lessons and socialisation, and introducing the child to Skylding life as they age.

While all children are bonded to their birth mother, they are seen as a child of the clan as a whole. Children reside with the guardian and those they are Union bonded to, or sometimes with the mother for a time (or together if the mother and guardian happen to share a union bond), often living in boers with other guardians and children. If the mother has several children, it is not uncommon for them to have different bonded guardians. This sometimes results in different siblings having little to do with each other, except belonging to the same clan and sharing a Kinship Bond.

All children are naturally bonded to their birth-mother. They take a matronymic at their coming of age ceremony when their gender is affirmed. Before then they use a matronymic of Mother's name followed by Barn.

Example

Elsa Frejasdotter has three children, Arne, Astrid and Lovisa. Before they are sixteen they are referred to as Arne Elsasbarn, Astrid Elsasbarn and Lovisa Elsasbarn.

At their respective coming of age ceremonies Arne takes the matronymic Elsasson, Astrid takes the matronymic Elsasdotter and Lovisa takes the matronymic Elsasastir.

If the child's mother is Omnispirit, then they take their name as the matronymic, and they are still called 'Mother'.

One week after the birth of the child the clan holds a Kinship ceremony. The ceremony is led by a Godi chosen by the mother, who becomes that child's personal Godi for their childhood leading up to the first coming of age ceremony.

The **kinship ceremony** involves:

- Bonding the child to the Mother.
- Bonding the child to the Guardian. The Guardian is a Vili or Omnispirit Skylding chosen by the mother to be the role model to the child. They are rarely the child's biological father (as this is impossible to identify). Generally, the Guardian role is given to the mother's Guardian, a sibling, or a friend. The person must be willing to take responsibility for the child.
- Bonding to siblings - these are both other children bonded to the mother and guardian. If a sibling is absent a special ceremony is held at a later date.
- The child receives its first tattoo of Frigg's eye.
- Naming: their first name.

All children must have a mother and guardian bonded to them during this first ceremony.

At the kinship ceremony, the Guardian's blood is used to tattoo Frigg's Eye onto the child, so that she may watch over them. Frigg provides the Skyldings with advanced healing and immunity to most illnesses.

COMING OF AGE

CHILDREN

Children are under the care of their mother and guardian. The mother's siblings also take an active role in day-to-day child-raising tasks. Clan Elders take a role in teaching children. Between the ages of ten and eleven, the child is introduced to a number of [Godi](#), and over the next few years they are mentored by them.

YOUNGLINGS

When a child reaches their sixteenth year, they enter into the **Coming of Age ceremony** held every spring. By this stage, the child, their kin, and a Godi have usually come to an agreement about the child's spiritual path. The ceremony involves, but is not limited to, a trial, receiving the start of their tattoo, and taking their matronymic based on the gender they identify with. The ceremony finishes with a massive feast. After this point, they are considered **Younglings**.

At their sixteenth year's coming of age ceremony a child must chose which path of the god or goddess they will follow and receive a tattoo of an animal built upon the Eye of Frigg which imbues them with enhanced abilities blessed by that deity. The six paths are:

The Way of Odin - Knowledge and wisdom - Symbolised by a Raven

The Prides of Freyja - Cunning and charisma - Symbolised by a Cat

The Fists of Thor - Strength and protection - Symbolised by a Bear

The Followers of Eir - Nurturing and Death - Symbolised by a Reindeer

The Drifts of Loki - Intuition and Subtlety - Symbolised by a Wolf

The Scourges of Hel - Secrecy and logic - Symbolised by a Serpent

ADULTHOOD

When a Youngling reaches their twenty-fifth year, they enter into the Coming of Age ceremony again. This time, they set off alone in the woods, will also have a task specific to their chosen spiritual path, and if they return their tattoo is expanded. After this point, they are considered **Adults**.

On their twenty-fifth year coming of age their tattoo is enclosed in a circle to symbolise their passage into adulthood.

Over the course of a lifetime many Skyldings add to their tattoo, or gain new ones, to mark bondings, great battles, deaths of close ones, spiritual awakenings, or any other significant changes that shape who they are. Any embellishments are by personal choice in consultation with their Godi.

Please note: It is recommended that your tattoo be featured prominently so that you may be identified as a follower of that path. We suggest the arm or chest as good place to have it so that it will last the length of a weekend. While tattoos are a significant part of the culture, we recognise not all are comfortable with paint on their skin. If you do not wish to represent your tattoo through body paint, it is requested you feature the animal motif prominently in your costume so that you can be easily identified as a member of that path.

ELDERSHIP

A final coming of age ceremony is held for parents (mothers and guardians) of children that complete the Adulthood ceremony. After this final ceremony, they are considered Elders.

GENDER

While Skyldings believe there are distinct genders, this is not a barrier to most activities. Behaviours such as teaching children, farming, fighting, arguing, civic duties, expression of emotion, crafting, cleaning, creative pursuits, sexuality, and other day-to-day activities are all ways in which Skyldings can express themselves. Gender does play a part in mental and spiritual well-being, and in some ceremonies.

SPIRIT OF VE: FEMININITY

Experienced by Skyldings gifted with this spirit, is centred around the feeling of being like the seasons: strong, dynamic, cyclical, nurturing, and destructive. Ve Skyldings are considered to be life-creators and life-removers. Their mental and spiritual well-being may be in jeopardy if they are stagnant year to year. Ve Skyldings attain spiritual and mental balance, and show their gender, by nurturing new life, either through motherhood, animal husbandry, or horticulture, and by taking life, either through warfare, butchery, fishing, or other means. Ve Skyldings are always considered clean. Omnispirit Skyldings gifted with the Spirit of Ve show their gender in the same way as all Skyldings gifted with the Spirit of Ve. Though they cannot give birth, they can, if they choose, be guardian to a child.

BODY OF VILI: MASCULINITY

Experienced by Skyldings gifted with this spirit, is centred around the feeling of growing like a tree: strong, flexible, nurturing, thriving, and collective. Vili Skyldings are considered to have 'sap' that must be allowed to flow on a regular basis, in the form of blood, sweat, and tears. Their mental and spiritual well-being may be in jeopardy if they are brittle, inflexible, spread themselves too thin, grow too fast, fail to nurture those around them, or are isolated from the rest of the community. Vili Skyldings attain spiritual and mental balance, and show their gender, through guardianship, collaboration, stability of purpose, and by 'sapping' themselves regularly by sweating (often in tents), bleeding (often in battle or in ritual), or crying (in joy or sorrow).

Unclean Vili Skyldings are not allowed to prepare food, heal the sick, be near pregnant people or newborn children, care for the dead, or make love. They can become clean again through shedding blood, sweat or tears, or conduct rituals conducted by a Godi. Omnispirit Skyldings gifted with the Body of Vili show their gender in the same way as all Vili Skyldings, though they are never unclean, and those that give birth are the mother (never the guardian) to the children they birth, though may be guardian to other children.

LIFE OF ODIN: OMNISPIRIT

Experienced by Skyldings gifted with both Ve and Vili (Omnispirited), the one opposite of their birth sex (OmniVe and OmniVili), or neither (which can be a source of a spiritual seeking or a comfortable state). These Skyldings are believed to be lucky to be around. Omnispirit Skyldings are always considered clean. Offspring influenced by Omnispirit lovers are more likely to thrive.

At their first coming of age ceremony Omnispirit Skyldings are offered a choice in what bonds they take in their future life. Either they can continue on as all other Skyldings to have Union, Blood, and Alliance bonds, or they can choose instead to bond themselves to the Disir of Skyldingheim itself. If they choose this option they cannot enter any other bonds, but their connection to the Disir gives them a spiritual connection to Odin (see the facet Breath of Odin in rules document). Kinship bonds are still held and entered into by those in a Disir bond.

Breaking this bond with the Disir is akin to renouncing your clan and choosing to leave behind your home. As such, very few Skyldings in history have ever attempted this, and all left the town soon afterwards.

Omnispirit who do not choose a Disir bond at their first coming of age ceremony can do so later in life if they chose so, but must first break any union and blood bonds they have. OmniVe and OmniVili Skyldings chose the degree to which they embrace their connection to Odin or to Ve/Vili. Omnispirit with both aspects may feel the connection to one, two, or all three aspects equally or of differing strength, and these connections can be stable over the lift time or change in strength. Omnispirit with neither Ve nor Vili can find a connection with Odin or avoid it, and some seek to find the gift of Ve or Vili over their lifetime. Omnispirit Skyldings have several options when choosing a Matronymic at their first coming of age ceremony, some going with "son" or "dotter" for those with a strong connection to Vili or Ve, respectively, or "ástir" for those that feel both Ve and Vili equally, or that have neither within them.

Children: Skylding's gender is considered a gift given by the ancestors in the mid-teens, and often follows one's birth sex (e.g. male or female). It is formally stated at the coming of age ceremony when they are sixteen. Before this point children are encouraged to explore and play with the different aspects of themselves, get a sense for which gift they might get, and consult with a Godi before their gender is affirmed. Children are not considered to be of any gender, use the Matronymic of "barn," only taking up the Matronymic of "son" or "dotter" at their first coming of age ceremony based on their gender of Vili or Ve respectively. Children are all referred to as barn or child, wear the same clothes and hair styles, same types of toys, and are taught the same things irrespective of their birth sex or the inclinations of which gender they might be gifted with.

HOW GENDER WAS CREATED

After slaying Ymir and the creating of the worlds from the body of the giant, Odin and their siblings, Villi and Ve set out to create their own little people, after the fashion of the elves of the Vanir on alfheim and the dwarves, born from the blood and bone of Ymir, given the gift of reason by the gods,

and now residing on svartalfheim. The three siblings encountered two elm logs by the sea, and Villi set about carving one into a male shape and the other into a female shape, inspired by the appearance of the Aesir, and strong like the forest around them. Ve drew in spirit from the surrounds, wild like the seasons, and imbued the wooden carvings with it. Lastly, Odin breathed life into each. Their names were Ask and Embla, and they were the first humans.

Ask and Embla lived long, and had many children. In their old age, after many years of toil and hardship, their children still struggled to flourish. Nearing their death, Ask and Embla sought to help their children, and both parted with Odin's breath of life, sending it to seek out their offspring to bring them luck. In his dying moment, Ask let his spirit back to his surroundings, and drew deep on the gifts of Villi so that this aspect could

help all future humans flourish. Embla let go of her physical form, and embraced the gifts of Ve, so that all humans could be emboldened on the power of this aspect.

From then on, all Skyldings receive the gift from the ancestors of either Spirit of Ve or Body of Vili in the lead up to their first coming of age ceremony. Some also receive the possibility of connecting to the Life of Odin. Because of this possibility, all Skylding children wait until their first coming of age ceremony before being given their gender, as this gives time to see within whom the Life of Odin runs. Omnispirit Skyldings are always considered 'clean.' Though it is the ancestors that gift gender, it is the Godi that help people identify what gift they received due to the connection the gift has to the gods.

Omnispirit humans are often offered food and shelter wherever they go, for their possible connection to Odin is a third key to humanity's power. Omnispirit Skyldings have, throughout their life, a choice to hold a Disir bonding ceremony between themselves, the town, and Odin (though they do not necessarily take Odin as their spiritual path). When this is done it is to the exclusion of union or blood bonds with other Skyldings. While other Skyldings take union-bonds to increase their power, either by fortifying their genders aspect or combining both genders aspects, the whole of Skyldingheim offers those Omnispirit who chose a Disir bond with this link, and through them receive the gifts of Odin in return. As such, Disir-bonded Omnispirit Skyldings never take a union-bond. Likewise, while other Skyldings take blood-bonds to pass their power between them, Disir bonded Omnispirit Skyldings hold that link with all Skyldingheim already. Only once in the history of the town has a Disir bonded Omnispirit Skylding taken a blood-bond with a foreigner, and that act broke the bond she had with the town, and for this she was banished and her name intentionally forgotten.

The Disir bond makes Omnispirit Skyldings lucky and able to bestow the Breath of Odin onto others, which aids those who need a healer (see rules document).

Please Note:

Your real-world gender identity, gender expression, and real-world biological sex do not limit what you can play within the game.

All three genders are intended to be distinct from real-world genders, and have been constructed to provide a simple, playable, and (hopefully) interesting gender experience that differs from our real-world lives.

Our intent is to make a world free from real-world gender dynamics, and if these OOC experiences take a dominant position in the game it undermines these concepts.

The use of a binary biological sex (female, male) is for simplicity, but if you would like to play an Intersex Skylding, you may do so either as Ve, Vili, or Omnispirit, depending on how you would like your character to be Intersex and what story you would like to tell.

Some of our inspiration for these genders is drawn from real-world genders, usually from non-contemporary-western cultures, some of it is inspired by Norse mythology, and some is constructed entirely new.

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

When a Skylding dies, proper burial rites must be performed before the next sunset by a Godi. The rite includes a tumuli of stones built around the body, along with symbolic possessions which loved ones place to represent their life. **Runes** are painted on the tumuli to send the spirit to the afterlife. It is widely known that if the proper rites are not followed the body of the deceased rises again as a Draugr. If a tumuli cannot be built then a **funeral pyre** is used instead.

Those who have a proper burial are said to go to the afterlife befitting their role in society. There are four places that the Godi talk of: Valhalla, ([external link](#)) Folkvangr, ([external link](#)) Hel, ([external link](#)) and Helgafjell. ([external link](#)) None are seen as bad outcome if one's spirit rests in a place it is happy.

A few months ago, the Skyldings travelling in Elivagar visited all 4 afterlives.

On Asgard, they found that the gods were asleep, and there were shapechangers that had taken their place, controlled by the elves. The hall of Valhalla and Folkvangr was indeed one hall, and contained spirits of their loved ones.

On the mountain of Helgafjell, they discovered the founders of their clans, and Skylda of the runes residing their, and they were gifted things that helped protect the gods.

In Hel, they found refuge with the goddess, the only one of the gods still awake. They also discovered that if you die with the mark of Hel, that is where you go, but you will be challenged upon entry.

Please note: Death is permanent. Once all healing methods have failed, and a player-character is dying, they can stay bleeding out until they have passed on their final words to those nearby. Once they have died (with or without their last words) they must report to a GM.

BONDING

People can enter into a Bond, where they acknowledge each other as kin. There are several types. A bonding ceremony is always conducted with a Godi present.

A bonded family are those who live together and are tied by union and kinships bonds. Sometimes Blood Bonded Skyldings also live within a wider bonded family, or take up a role within the bonded family of their deceased Blood Bonder.

No bonds include any provision for sexual exclusivity, due to the expectation that a female would seek multiple partners when wishing to conceive a child, and the frequent use of sex as a social pleasure throughout Skylding society. Sex is usually politely initiated by Ve, younger, or omnispirit Skyldings, in that order, and any youngling, adult, or elder who is approached has a right to politely accept or decline.

If you wish to act out an IC kiss, stand close (as per personal comfort level) and link little fingers. If you wish to engage sexual activity, sit facing each other and play a hand-and-knee-clapping game between those involved.

*Please Note: **Sexual violence** is not part of this game. For story purposes, consider it that the gods rip any mortal that does such a deed out of time and space, such that they never existed and the act never took place. For game purposes, roleplaying sexual violence is considered a **significant breach of the code of ethics**, and anyone involved this type of roleplay is to report to the **GMs** for further instruction.*

*Also: **Prostitution** is not something that happens in Skylding society, and is not a theme that we are including in our game.*

KINSHIP BONDS

Kinship bonds are a bonding with the mother, a male guardian she has chosen for the child, and siblings of new-born, usually held within a week of birth. Omnispirit Skyldings can be guardians, female (feminine or omnispirit) Skyldings can be mothers, and all Skyldings can be siblings.

BLOOD BONDS

Blood Bonds are performed by comrades-in-arms, each taking responsibility for any obligations of the other in the event of death. Those who are united by a blood bond are considered siblings, akin to kinship bonds. Omnispirit Skyldings who enter a Disir Bond forgo the ability to enter into these bonds, and must break all past Blood Bonds.

ALLIANCE BONDS

Alliance bonds happen between Clans within or outside of the Town as they build political ties to each other, usually with one member from each Clan bonding to the other Clan. The process of alliance bonding is that the two members performing the bond exchange places and move to live with the opposite clan. These people are now considered to be of that new clan, while still maintaining their kinship and union bonds to those of their original clan. This is to foster closer relations between the bonds and while both those members live the two clans are considered allies. When two clans are allied, they offer a portion of their spoils in vikings to the other clan, in good faith that the other clan will do the same. An alliance may also be struck with further conditions, but all alliance bonds include an exchange of goods.

UNION BONDS

Union bonds are bondings between people as an agreement to mutual aid and support, often involving living together and helping each other with their duties. It is usually expected there is a relationship of a romantic/intimate nature involved, but not always. People who have been union bonded are expected to live in the same house, and act as a single economic unit. Union bonds are not restricted by gender e.g. two Ve Skyldings can be union bonded. Omnispirit Skyldings who enter a Disir Bond forgo the ability to enter into these bonds, and must break all past Union Bonds.

Disir Bonds are bonds between omnispirit Skyldings and the Disir of the town, and through the Disir creating a link with Odin. This bond is the link which allows the spirit of Odin to flow into humanity, and as such the choice to take up this bond is a significant one. Omnispirit Skyldings that choose this bond renounce all former bonds and cannot take up future Alliance, Blood, or Union bonds.

BREAKING BONDS

Breaking a Bond is a serious deal. Where they are Kinship bond, the split is usually dramatic and after a major interpersonal crisis, and spiritual guides are needed to perform rituals and provide help to ensure the welfare of all involved.

When Alliance bonds are broken, the new member of the family (and therefore clan) is cast out. They might be able to bond back to their old clan, but sometimes they cannot, usually when the breaking of the Alliance involves a large political backlash. In this case, they become Clan-less, and are essentially banished from the town.

Unions and Blood Bonds can be broken if the relationship falls apart, and is usually resolved between those involved. In the event that that one party does not agree, the leaving party has the right to enforce the break. The Clan's Skati must be informed of the situation, after which point should the person refusing to accept the break initiate conversation with the leaver, or meet with the leaver when they are alone, then this is considered an initiation of violence, and the leaver is entitled to retaliate in any way they deem fit without violating the laws of the town, or to bring a grievance to the Skati.

Breaking a Disir bond is akin to renouncing your clan and choosing to leave behind your home. Disir are mighty entities and their response to severing a bond with them can be varied and at times terrible.

BEARSKINS, BOARSKINS AND WOLFSKINS

BJORNSTOKUM (BEARSKINS)

The Bearskins are an elite group of warriors sworn to personally serve and protect the Jarl. Like godi they are bloodsworn to their duty for life giving up all other bonds to clan and kin. As each new Jarl is elected their Blood Bond oath is renewed. Those that wish to join the Bearskins make their intention known before their coming of age ceremony when they are sixteen. An additional secret trial is undertaken, known only to those who are already within the order. If they emerge with their life they are granted a bear's pelt and join the Bearskins. The Jarl uses Bearskins both as bodyguards and representatives where they cannot be.

The most famous Bearskin was Dagmar Eydisdotter who gave her life to save Jarl Erik Eliasson. They were on a raid when the Mist started rolling into the battlefield as fast as they could retreat to their longships. Jarl Erik was wounded and was not going to make it safely so Dagmar carried him to the longship and pushed it out into the ebbing tide, just as the Mist engulfed her. As they drifted out to sea, the Mist lifted and she was gone. On Alfheim she was reunited with the bearskins, and later it was discovered that she was a Valkyrie. She led the mission to rescue Jarl Erik Eliasson.

The leader of the Bjornstokum for Jarl Niklas Tainsson is Sigbrandr Valdisson, he is known as a stalwart pillar of the community, who always puts what is best for the Skyldings first. He leads Hildr Ilmrson, who is known as the most scholarly of the bearskins, and Bjorn Otavasson, who it is now known has a great destiny foretold by the Norns themselves.

SVINFYLKING (BOARSKINS)

While all Skyldings are taught some form of martial arts, the Svinfylking, or Boarskins, are an order that has dedicated their life to the arts of war. They are the battle strategists, elite warriors and battlefield commanders. Every Skati has a Svin bloodsworn to them, who leads their vikings and oversees the training of their warriors.

There have been many famous Svin over the generations, but none more so than those known by Skalds as The Vaskyr, who held a large foreign army at bay for days so the rest of the forces could get away. The only one who survived was the Skald Jorgi Hannasson who had stayed behind with them to witness their brave sacrifice.

The Svinfylking are lead by the most worthy warrior known as The Drengr, and every year there is a tournament for all Svins to see who proves themselves most worthy. The tournament involves tests of the mind and body. For the last ten years the position of Drengr has been held by Destina Magnhilasdotter of Clan Skogr. She is a seasoned veteran of many vikings and has a death count in the hundreds. The Drengr traditionally is an honoured advisor of the Jarl, however Destina is known to be an outspoken opponent of Jarl Torunn's plan to viking West, and so she has fallen out of favour in the past year.

On Jotunheim Destina stepped down from the position, and shortly after she died at the hands of the Jotunbound. The position is now held dually by the twins Freyja and Freyr Eirsastir. They are known as brave, and somewhat reckless warriors - and they do everything together, including being dual guardians to their children. They also carry the blood of the reindeer varg in their veins.

The other notable Svinfylking who serve amongst the Elivagar Skyldings are:

Ola Idunnson, Valkyrie slayer almost as famous as his mother Idunn Karasdotter, Jurgen Tainasson, brother to the Jarl who was recovered from the mists on Jotunheim, Od Gudrinsson, an excentric old veteran, and Halfdan Ingersson, a well travelled stoic warrior.

ULFHEDNAR (WOLFSKINS)

The call of the wild and the scent of the hunt is the domain of the Ulfhednar, or Wolfskins. Founded by Elya Frigasdotter of the Skogr, the Ulfhednar are a company of elite hunters who dedicate their

lives to learning the craft of the forest, tracking, trapping and hunting wild animals for food and skins, and surviving in the wilderness. Any expedition into the inland territory of the Norse would be foolish not to include an Ulf. The Claw is the leader of the Ulf, and if they do not return to Skyldingheim within the space of one year then a new head is chosen by a secret ceremony conducted deep in the forest clad mountains that shadow the Harbour of Hringr, attended only by Ulf and selected Godi.

Most Ulfhednar work in groups of two or three, spending much of their lives in the forest. It is not unknown for them to have few bonds, as much of their life is spent alone rather than integrated into society, and they are more likely to bond to those they travel with. It is not unknown for them to be gone for months or sometimes years at a time, and at times never returning. The greatest achievement for an Ulf is for them to encounter and slay a magical creature, but in the forests around Skyldingheim none of these beasts have been seen for many generations. Sometimes a more adventurous Skald will attach themselves to an Ulf and travel with them on the hope that there will be daring exploits for them to immortalise in song.

The most famous Ulf was one Idunn Karasdotter, known through the words of her union-partner Skald Vyra Fredisdotter. Idunn and Vyra travelled to the cold North and encountered a great ogre who was terrorising a village. The two snuck into the village and Vyra rallied the folk's spirits to fight off the attack. After wounding the beast, Idunn tracked the ogre back to its lair, trapping and slaying it. It is now known that Vyra carried a ring that had Idunn's spirit inside, but she has now been released on Asgard to join the hallowed hall of Odin and Freyja.

Up until recently The Claw was Garryn Balliasson, a seasoned hunter decorated with scars from his adventures. He has served as the Claw for over twenty years, and all Ulf almost worship him for his prowess in the hunt. However, nearly a couple of years ago he went on an expedition with his son Ragnar Jarasson. They were captured by the Jotunnbound, Ragnar escaped, and eventually led to his guardian's release, after he was cured from an affliction of being a monster amongst in the Nightmare Grove in Utgardr, on Jotunnheim.

By the time Garryn was recovered, the Ulfhednar had chosen another Claw in Narla Hallastir, the champion of the Wild Hunt. They are known for their astute mind, and their markship. The other notable wolfskins amongst the Skyldings are Torgar Valkasson, an astute tracker and herbalist and Von Runasson, known for his affinity with animals.

LAW

All Skyldings are expected to serve their clan to the best of their abilities, and laws are built around when this does not happen.

Any interpersonal disputes are expected to be worked out with each other, or with the aid of a Godi. When an agreement cannot be met they bring it to their Skati to mediate. A Skati's word is final, and both parties are expected to comply with their ruling. If the dispute is between members of different clans it is brought before the Jarl at a monthly meeting for a final ruling.

Murder is considered any act of initiating violence that results in the death of a Skylding, without the sanction of the Jarl. Self defence against someone that attacks you is accepted, but must be declared to the first Skylding met, or, if the neighbours are sympathetic to the deceased, you may pass at most two boers (houses) without mentioning the deed, but never a third. It is known that the gods watch over murderers, and curse their souls to wander the earth eternally should they not disclose the deed. The risk of Draugr resulting from unclaimed deaths also ensures most deaths are declared. The punishment for murder is generally execution, but some Jarls banish those found guilty instead.

Failing to ensure proper burial rites are performed is also a crime, though punished less harshly than murder. Usually, the guilty party is made to stay out all night for a week, with fear of Draugr making this a significant punishment. This crime includes failing to inform Godi and Seidr about a dead person.

Theft is the taking of any property belonging to another Skylding. If caught with stolen goods, the thief is punished. First offenses are generally punished with running a gauntlet, second by whipping, third loss of a hand, fourth loss of an eye, and fifth loss of a foot. It is rare that unsuccessful thieves continue in the trade for long.

HOSPITALITY

It is known through all Norse lands that it is foolish to withhold hospitality to a traveller in need of shelter and food. Many tales of the gods talk of them visiting humans in mortal form, and therefore to disrespect a guest could be to disrespect a god. Likewise, any traveller could be disir bonded in their clan or town, and thus fortunate to those they visit.

It is customary to offer guests either food or a gift. In exchange the guests offer a story or song, or complete a task for the household (such as collecting firewood, hunting for food, or another favour that is asked of them by the host). Once this task is complete that person is treated as a temporary member of the clan until the sunset of the next day.

To betray this trust is highly dishonourable and suitable punishment is meted out by the Skati. In essence, if someone breaks this trust, it is a statement that they do not wish to be a member of the clan, and thus do not want to be protected by or responsible for its laws.

STORYTELLING

The Skyldings follow an oral tradition, with the epics of their ancestors handed down through generations of stories by the fire. Fortune favours the bold and the highest achievement for a Skylding is to have their story told, sung or rhymed by a Skald.

Skalds are the poets, musicians, and storytellers. They are held in extreme favour and privilege in the community, and often find themselves with more friends and favours than they know what to do with.

The study of runes is the domain of scholarly Skalds, Godi, some Seidr who use them to channel magic, and runesmiths. While this isn't an uncommon skill, it is a knowledge that requires many years of dedication. Runes are known to have some inherent magical force and are seen as a link to the divine.

HRUTAR

There is an elite order of Skalds known as the Hrutar or Ramskins who beat the war drums in battle. The war drum holds a special significance in Skylding battles. Symbolising the 'heartbeat' of the clans it is known to somehow activate the blood used in the tattoos of all Skyldings who can hear it, and imbues them with the will to carry on.

It was always a mystery why the origin of the Hrutar was not known. This was discovered when a spirit quest was conducted on the cursed drum that was traded to the Skyldings by a dwarf. The founder of the Hrutar, was an arrogant Skald who was cursed into obscurity for their pride. Their drum was also cursed, to cast a curse upon the one who carries them, and must be willingly take to be traded away.

The most notable Ramskins amongst the Skyldings are: Svaatali Tovesdotter, known for her healing hands and beautiful singing voice, also as the mother of Skylda; Arnvi Synsdotter, known for her quick wit and steady hand on the drum, also as the mother of Wylf; Hillievi Torunnsdotter, who was the Skati of Clan Aldrnari for a time, known for her epic storytelling.

VIKINGS

A viking is a journey for the purposes of raiding or trading. Skyldings are great explorers, travelling further east than some Norse would dare to go. While they are known and sometimes feared in the places they go, they also at times establish peaceful trade routes, learn local languages and bond with foreigners.

Skyldings often bring back people from the countries they have raided as slaves. Slaves are treated as indentured who serve their master for five years then they are alliance bonded into society and considered a Skylding (their former clan is considered to be just them, so the bond is one way). Children born to slave mothers are raised as Skyldings, and the mother chooses a Skylding to be a guardian for the child. No player can play a slave or former slave, but could have a connection with a slave non-player character.

MYSTICAL CREATURES

Many mystical creatures have cross paths with the Skyldings who are travelling in Elivagar, here is what is known about them.

AESIR

The gods who inhabit Asgard, worshipped by Norse humans, most notably the Skyldings, as they are the chosen of the gods. The Aesir have gone into the great slumber, only to be woken when the time for Ragnarok comes.

DRAUGR

Draugr are dead who rise once again when the proper funeral rites are not observed. They are known to be crazy and bloodthirsty, and often pursue and torment those who wronged them in life. They are dangerous and very hard to kill, which is why funeral rites are fastidiously followed to prevent them from rising.

DREAMSPIRIT

Creatures of the spirit realm, they draw their victims into the dreams, where they are known to impersonate entities close to the victim. With aid of dream crystal they can enter the physical realm. They can be harmed by dream swords and be captured in dream catchers. When they do not wear the visage of loved ones, they are dressed in rags, with white swirls upon their faces.

DISIR

Disir are guardian spirits of whole clans and tribes, that watch over the spiritual welfare of whole groups of Norse and protect them from unknown magical adversaries.

The disir of Skyldingheim was shattered and lost, only recently discovered to be possessing Aelfhun the seer. The disir bonded of the Skyldings now hold part of the disir inside them, but it has yet to be restored.

Disir take on the character of their community, but a creatures of spirit and have swirls of differing colours upon their skin.

DWARVES

Very little is known about the dwarves who inhabit Svartalfheim. Only one dwarf has ever been met by the Skyldings in their travels of the worlds, which is Frengrig. It is known that dwarves craft children, rather than give birth to them.

ELVES

Elves are the inhabitants of Alfheim. They are identified by pointy ears and golden skin.

They worship the god Freyr, and draw on power from that god. They are ruled by The Council of Ljosalfar, but it is clear that the word of the High Councillor Triandel is law. Their demonstrated abilities include cursing enemies to become fascinated with other objects or people, and having spell singers who sing great magical rituals.

The most notable elf that the Skyldings have encountered is Triandel, who is responsible for the deaths of the Elivagar skyldings and the enslaving of the Valkyrie. Navarre, her brother, also wields power and serves his sister loyally controls a prision on alfheim know as The House of Shadows. Malendis was a scholar who worked for Triandel, but then turned on her at the battle on Vanaheim. It has now been revealed that Malendis was once a Skati in her own right, but her clan lost a civil war long ago. She is now Triandel and Navarre's chained slave. There was also a third clan, led by an elf known as Gildor, but it was destroyed in the war.

The three elves, Triandel, Navarre and Malendis, share a past and seem to be immortal. The Skyldings suspect that they stole and ate apples from the goddess Idunn's tree, but they do now know the full extent of what this means.

ELFSWORN

Humans who serve the elves. They are characterised by golden swirls on their skin. They are unswervingly faithful to their elvish masters, to the point of worship. They seem to make up a large part of the villages on Alfheim.

JOTUNN

Ice giants who primarily inhabit Jotunnheim. Enemies of the Aesir. Most of them appear to also be in a great slumber, awaiting ragnarok.

JOTUNNBOUND

Human servants of the Ice giants, who draw on their power. Characterised by blue lines on their face. The Jotunnbound who inhabited Utgardr, which the Skyldings defeated, appeared to worship to the Jotunn Utgardr-Loki. They wore Horizontal blue lines across their cheeks.

There is a sub-type of the Jotunnbound of Utgardr known as the Grimmer who are elite warriors who possess formidable martial powers. They are characterised with more ice markings on their arms. They were led by Svell, who escaped from the raising of Utgardr, when the rest of the leaders were slain.

The Wylfings have also been revealed to now be Jotunnbound, they wear vertical lines on their faces. As the raising of Utgardr did not wipe them out, it is believed that their power is tied to a different Jotunn.

MARAS

A race and family of shapeshifters, who recently were impersonating the aesir gods on Asgard. Most were slaughtered by Hillievi Torunnsdotter, wielding Mjolnir, but a few escaped, after it was revealed they were not the true gods.

MIST WRAITHS

Beings made of mist, who hail from Niflheim. The mist wraiths were created by the vanir as prison guards of Stytha Austrvegr Forath, the mist prison. Their role is catch any prisoners who escape and return them to the prison. They are seemingly immortal, but the Drifts of Loki possess rings that allow their wearers to harm them and control them.

REVENANT

A Revenant is a ghost of a Vordr that lingers after the death of their person, usually after improper burial. They tend to haunt the area where their person died, and can possess those who enter their territory. Godi are the only ones able to see and communicate with them as well as exorcise them from someone's body they have possessed.

SPRITES

Sprites are elemental nature spirits. They are incorporeal, and are either fire, water, earth or air spirits, but this does not seem to make a difference to their abilities. They are malevolent or benevolent, and manifest or hidden. Seidr can either use their energy to power spells or bind them to their will.

The more powerful sprites are corporeal but have advanced abilities and cultures. The most is known about the Margygur.

Margygur - Merfolk who are know to be able to prophesy the future

Ith - earth beings

Njordling - air beings

Logia - fire beings

SURTR AND SUTRBOUND

Surtr is the Jarl of the fire giants who live on Muspelheim. He appears to be a shadow of himself, possibly a result of his war with the Vanir long ago. The Sutrbound are human who serve him, who

have willingly entered into his service. His objectives seem to be spreading chaos and conflict. Both recent Skati of Clan Vidir were found to be Sutrbound, along with others.

THE FOUR STAGS

The four stags are servants of the Vanir who were left to rule Vanaheim after the Aesir-Vanir war. They represent the seasons, and the four elements. Each in takes they turn to be the leader while during their season. They also reign over the elemental sprites: Dain, Summer/fire; Dvalinn, Autumn/air; Duneyrr, Winter/water; Durathror, Spring/earth. For a long time Durathror was locked in the mist prison on Niflheim, and Duneyrr ruled under the influence of the Jotunnbound, who wanted eternal winter to spread throughout the worlds. But balance was restored by the Skylding.

Durathror also presides over the wild hunt, which is contest that happens every spring. The reigning champion is Narla Hallastir, who received the blessing from the stags when they won.

VAETTIR

Vaettir are nature spirits, that inhabit the wild places. They are invisible to all, except to those they choose to reveal themselves to. Godi are known to capture their essence to fuel rituals and potions.

VALKYRIE

Valkyrie are demigoddesses who guide the dead to their afterlife. They do not appear for everyone, but after great battles some people have seen these figures descend to guide the spirits of the fallen. They are known to be immune to the weapons of war, and have a penchant for falling in love with humans. The Valkyrie on Asgard are currently bound to Triandel the elf's will.

VANIR

Ancient nature and fertility gods. They seem to have all but disappeared from their home on Vanaheim, after they lost the war against the Aesir, and alliance bonded Freyja, Freyr and Njordr to the Aesir pantheon. They built the prison Stytha Austrvegr Forath, to house monsters who upset the balance of the nine worlds.

VARG AND VARGBLOODED

Part human, part animal, they were once servants of the Vanir, before being enslaved by the Jotunnbound. They are mostly peaceful, depending on their animal affinity, and tend to stick to their own kind out of preference. They have an ability to astral project themselves onto midgard in full animal form, and also provide great conduits for gods to possess.

When a Varg mates with a human, their child is known as a Vargblooded. They appear human, but once they come of age, at night they are transformed into a Varg, taking on their animal characteristics. Humans can inherit this trait through the female line, and there are a number of Skylding who carry the vargblood, and have so in secret for a long time.

The vargblooded who are known amongst the Elivagar Skyldings are Brunhilda Myssadotter, Eyvaldr Odasson, and Freyja and Freyr Eirsastir.

VODR

Vodr are guardian spirits that a Godi binds to a Skylding with the first naming ceremony, bound to the baby through Friggs eye.

It is said they watch over the spiritual welfare of Skyldings and protects against possession. Vodr can be damaged or lost, a connection that can only be repaired by a Godi. A Vodr can also be killed from a curse, in which case it can never be restored. This leaves a Skylding vulnerable to disease.

MAGIC

Magic is woven into the fabric of Skylding life, and those who practice it are known as Seidr. To be a Seidr is to work the primal forces of nature to your will, and channel the power of your ancestors. A Seidr's magic is quicker than that of the Godi and used for different things, such as bolstering their allies, cursing their enemies, and warding places or buildings. However, they work with Godi during burial rites.

Unlike Godi, Seidr do not live apart from society, they can bond and belong to a clan, and rise to positions of leadership. Seidrs have no group organisation, but rather work alongside others in the community.

The notable seidr's amongst the Elivagar skyldings all claim heritage to the founders of the clans. The some of the most notable amongst them are Einarr Valdisson, Oda Ranylysdotter, Baelog Elsasson, Ida Astridsdotter, Idunnn Solveigsdotter, Eyvaldr Odasson, Stigandr Jordisson, Sibbe Isiastir.

Runesmiths are those that can channel magic into artefacts, usually weapons, by inscribing runes onto them. Most enchantments that they provide are single use, so Runesmiths are kept very busy in times of conflict or change. The most notable runesmith amongst the skyldings is Tallak Signeson, also a seidr, who is known as an experimenter and a font of knowledge when it comes to smithing.

Herbalist use Vaettir essence, and herbs to produce potions that also have magical affects. The most notable herbalist amongst the Skyldings is Sigrunn Gunhildedotter, also a seidr, who is known for her experimental potions that often have unexpected consequences, such as turning the body of the imbiber into a giant for a time.

More information will be found about specific magic for Seidr, Runesmiths, and Herbalist under the rules section.

RELIGION

Religion is practiced both personally and clan wide. Every Skylding child is taught to respect their ancestors in everyday activities, while clan wide ceremonies call the blessing of the gods and goddesses to preside over births, deaths, bondings, and disputes.

Skyldings follow the the Norse Pantheon, with 7 deities being particularly prominent within the worship: Frigg, Odin, Freyja, Thor, Eir, Loki, and Hel. Bragi is considered an ancestor of all Skyldings, and it has recently been found that he is not a god, but a famous bard who is living in Valhalla.

Connection with the gods and goddesses is the domain of the Godi and connection with the ancestors power is the domain of the Seidr, while the stories and legends of both is the domain of the Skalds within Skylding society

Please note: All real world (out of character) knowledge of these gods can be considered canon, if there are stories that contradict each other that is because different stories are told by different Skalds about the Norse deities. The links above are a good start when researching the gods.

Godi are the shamans, those who have chosen to dedicate their lives to the divine, forsaking all other bonds. Most Godi chose this path when they undergo the coming of age ceremonies at sixteen or twentyfive, but it is not unheard of for older Skyldings to feel the call of the gods after living a 'worldly' life. Once they chose this path they are inducted as an acolyte to an older Godi for one year. That Godi's role is to show them what life is like serving the gods and to test their faith. If their feet remain on the path once the year is up they take up the mysteries through an ancient and secret Stjarna (Ritual of the Stars).

The Godi's role within society is to act as a personal spiritual advisor to members as well as preside over ceremonies, bless harvests and vikings, and act as the link to the divine for the tribe. They are the ones who are given the sacred rituals and ink to tattoo people into their spiritual path. Godi are expected to embody aspects of their chosen god or goddess, for example you will often see Prides of Freyja Godi's fighting on the field of battle or Drifts of Loki Godi playing games by the fire.

The Godis live apart from the clans on the main hill where the Jarl resides.

The Godi of the Skyldings residing in Elivagar are: Elvr Astridastir, Godi of Odin; Yngvild Vigidisdotter, Godi of Hel; Sigthrudor Baradotter, Godi of Thor; Eydis Gullsdottir, Godi of Loki; Letta Signisdotter, Godi of Freyja.

There are two acolytes: Firnen Astrithastir, chosen of Frigg, and Valrun Jordisdotter, blessed by Bragi.

Erik "Blizzard" Elsasson, Godi of Freyja, went missing after the last stand on Asgard, Eyja Fjorleifsastir, Godi of Eir, has since been lost in the mist.

WIKIPEDIA SUMMARIES ON MENTIONED LINKS:

FRIGG

In Germanic mythology, **Frigg** (Old Norse), **Frija** (Old High German), **Frea** (Langobardic), and **Frige** (Old English) is a goddess. In nearly all sources, she is described as the wife of the god Odin. In Old High German and Old Norse sources, she is also connected with the goddess Fulla. The English weekday name Friday (etymologically Old English "Frīge's day") bears her name.

Frigg is described as a goddess associated with foreknowledge and wisdom in Norse mythology, the northernmost branch of Germanic mythology and most extensively attested. Frigg is the wife of the major god Odin and dwells in the wetland halls of Fensalir, is famous for her foreknowledge, is associated with the goddesses Fulla, Lofn, Hlín, and Gná, and is ambiguously associated with the

Earth, otherwise personified as an apparently separate entity Jörð (Old Norse "Earth"). The children of Frigg and Odin include the gleaming god Baldr. Due to significant thematic overlap, scholars have proposed a particular connection to the goddess Freyja.

ODIN

In Germanic mythology, **Odin** (from Old Norse *Óðinn*) is a widely revered god. In Norse mythology, from which stems most of the information about the god, Odin is associated with wisdom, healing, death, royalty, the gallows, knowledge, battle, sorcery, poetry, frenzy, and the runic alphabet, and is the husband of the goddess Frigg. In wider Germanic mythology and paganism, Odin was known in Old English as **Wōden**, in Old Saxon as **Wōdan**, and in Old High German as **Wuotan** or **Wōtan**, all stemming from the reconstructed Proto-Germanic theonym ***wōđanaz**.

Odin is a prominently mentioned god throughout the recorded history of the Germanic peoples, from the Roman occupation of regions of Germania through the tribal expansions of the Migration Period and the Viking Age. In the modern period, Odin continued to be acknowledged in the rural folklore of Germanic Europe. References to Odin appear in place names throughout regions historically inhabited by the ancient Germanic peoples, and the day of the week Wednesday bears his name in many Germanic languages, including English.

In Old English texts, Odin holds a particular place as a euhemerized ancestral figure among royalty, and he is frequently referred to as a founding figure among various other Germanic peoples, including the Langobards. Forms of his name appear frequently throughout the Germanic record, though narratives regarding Odin are mainly found in Old Norse works recorded in Iceland, primarily around the 13th century. These texts make up the bulk of modern understanding of Norse mythology.

In Old Norse texts, Odin is depicted as one-eyed and long-bearded, frequently wielding a spear named Gungnir, and wearing a cloak and a broad hat. He is often accompanied by his animal companions and familiars—the wolves Geri and Freki and the ravens Huginn and Muninn, who bring him information from all over Midgard—and rides the flying, eight-legged steed Sleipnir across the sky and into the underworld. Odin is attested as having many sons, most famously the gods Thor (with Jörð) and Baldr (with Frigg), and is known by hundreds of names. In these texts, he frequently seeks greater knowledge, at times in disguise (most famously by obtaining the Mead of Poetry), makes wagers with his wife Frigg over the outcome of exploits, and takes part in both the creation of the world by way of slaying the primordial being Ymir and the gift of life to the first two humans Ask and Embla. Odin has a particular association with Yule, and mankind's knowledge of both the runes and poetry is also attributed to him, giving Odin aspects of the culture hero.

In Old Norse texts, female beings associated with the battlefield—the valkyries—are associated with the god and Odin oversees Valhalla, where he receives half of those who die in battle, the einherjar. The other half are chosen by the goddess Freyja for her afterlife location, Fólkvangr. Odin consults the disembodied, herb-embalmed head of the wise being Mímir for advice, and during the foretold events of Ragnarök, Odin is told to lead the einherjar into battle before being consumed by the monstrous wolf Fenrir. In later folklore, Odin appears as a leader of the Wild Hunt, a ghostly procession of the dead through the winter sky. He is associated with charms and other forms of magic, particularly in Old English and Old Norse texts.

Odin is a frequent subject of study in Germanic studies, and numerous theories have been put forward regarding his development. Some of these focus on Odin's particular relation to other figures; for example, the fact that Freyja's husband Óðr appears to be something of an etymological doublet of the god, whereas Odin's wife Frigg is in many ways similar to Freyja, and that Odin has a

particular relation to the figure of Loki. Other approaches focus on Odin's place in the historical record, a frequent question being whether the figure of Odin derives from Proto-Indo-European religion, or whether he developed later in Germanic society. In the modern period, Odin has inspired numerous works of poetry, music, and other forms of media. He is venerated in most forms of the new religious movement Heathenry, together with other gods venerated by the ancient Germanic peoples; some branches focus particularly on him.

FREYJA

In Norse mythology, **Freyja** (/ˈfreɪjə/; Old Norse for "(the) Lady") is a goddess associated with love, sex, beauty, fertility, gold, seiðr, war, and death. Freyja is the owner of the necklace Brísingamen, rides a chariot pulled by two cats, keeps the boar Hildisvíni by her side, possesses a cloak of falcon feathers, and, by her husband Óðr, is the mother of two daughters, Hnoss and Gersemi. Along with her brother Freyr (Old Norse "(the) Lord"), her father Njörðr, and her mother (Njörðr's sister, unnamed in sources), she is a member of the Vanir. Stemming from Old Norse *Freyja*, modern forms of the name include **Freya**, **Freyia**, and **Freja**.

Freyja rules over her heavenly afterlife field Fólkvangr and there receives half of those that die in battle, whereas the other half go to the god Odin's hall, Valhalla. Within Fólkvangr is her hall, Sessrúmnir. Freyja assists other deities by allowing them to use her feathered cloak, is invoked in matters of fertility and love, and is frequently sought after by powerful jötnar who wish to make her their wife. Freyja's husband, the god Óðr, is frequently absent. She cries tears of red gold for him, and searches for him under assumed names. Freyja has numerous names, including *Gefn*, *Hörn*, *Mardöll*, *Sýr*, *Valfreyja*, and *Vanadís*.

Freyja is attested in the *Poetic Edda*, compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources; in the *Prose Edda* and *Heimskringla*, composed by Snorri Sturluson in the 13th century; in several Sagas of Icelanders; in the short story *Sörla þáttur*; in the poetry of skalds; and into the modern age in Scandinavian folklore.

Scholars have debated whether Freyja and the goddess Frigg ultimately stem from a single goddess common among the Germanic peoples; connected her connection to the valkyries, female battlefield choosers of the slain; and analyzed her relation to other goddesses and figures in Germanic mythology, including the thrice-burnt and thrice-reborn Gullveig/Heiðr, the goddesses Gefjon, Skaði, Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr and Irpa, Menglöð, and the 1st century CE "Isis" of the Suebi. Freyja's name appears in numerous place names in Scandinavia, with a high concentration in southern Sweden. Various plants in Scandinavia once bore her name, but it was replaced with the name of the Virgin Mary during the process of Christianization. Rural Scandinavians continued to acknowledge Freyja as a supernatural figure into the 19th century, and Freyja has inspired various works of art.

THOR

In Norse mythology, **Thor** (/θɔːr/; from Old Norse *Þórr*) is the hammer-wielding Æsir god of thunder, lightning, storms, oak trees, strength, hallowing, fertility, the protection of mankind and of the fortress of Asgard. The son of Odin All-Father and Jörð (the personification of Earth), he is physically the strongest of the Æsir. The cognate deity in wider Germanic mythology and paganism was known in Old English as *þunor* (*Thunor*) and in Old High German as *Donar* (runic *þonar* 𐀓𐀆𐀗𐀚), stemming from a Common Germanic **þunraz*, meaning "thunder".

Thor is a prominently mentioned god throughout the recorded history of the Germanic peoples, from the Roman occupation of regions of Germania, to the tribal expansions of the Migration Period, to his high popularity during the Viking Age, when, in the face of the process of the Christianization of Scandinavia, emblems of his hammer, Mjölmir, were worn and Norse pagan personal names containing the name of the god bear witness to his popularity.

Into the modern period, Thor continued to be acknowledged in rural folklore throughout Germanic regions. Thor is frequently referred to in place names, the day of the week Thursday ("Thor's day" derived from Old English *Þūnresdæg* - "Thunor's day"; originally *Þorsdagr* in Old Norse) bears his name, and names stemming from the pagan period containing his own continue to be used today.

In Norse mythology, largely recorded in Iceland from traditional material stemming from Scandinavia, numerous tales and information about Thor are provided. In these sources, Thor bears at least fourteen names, is the husband of the golden-haired goddess Sif, is the lover of the jötunn Járnsaxa, and is generally described as fierce eyed, red haired and red bearded. With Sif, Thor fathered the goddess (and possible Valkyrie) Þrúðr; with Járnsaxa, he fathered Magni; with a mother whose name is not recorded, he fathered Móði, and he is the stepfather of the god Ullr. By way of Odin, Thor has numerous brothers, including Baldr. Thor has two servants, Þjálfi and Röskva, rides in a cart or chariot pulled by two goats, Tanngrisnir and Tanngrjóstr (that he eats and resurrects), and is ascribed three dwellings (Bilskirnir, Þrúðheimr, and Þrúðvangr). Thor wields the mountain-crushing hammer, Mjölmir, wears the belt Megingjörð and the iron gloves Járngreipr, and owns the staff Gríðarvölr. Thor's exploits, including his relentless slaughter of his foes and fierce battles with the monstrous serpent Jörmungandr—and their foretold mutual deaths during the events of Ragnarök—are recorded throughout sources for Norse mythology.

Thor has inspired numerous works of art and references to Thor appear in modern popular culture. Like other Germanic deities, veneration of Thor is revived in the modern period in Heathenry.

EIR

In Norse mythology, **Eir** (Old Norse "help, mercy") is a goddess and/or valkyrie associated with medical skill. Eir is attested in the *Poetic Edda*, compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources; the *Prose Edda*, written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson; and in skaldic poetry, including a runic inscription from Bergen, Norway from around 1300. Scholars have theorized about whether these three sources refer to the same figure, and debate whether Eir may have been originally a healing goddess and/or a valkyrie. In addition, Eir has been theorized as a form of the goddess Frigg and has been compared to the Greek goddess Hygieia.

LOKI

Loki (Old Norse ['loki], Modern Icelandic ['lɔ:ki], often Anglicized as /'loʊki/) is a god in Norse mythology. Loki is in some sources the son of Fárbauti and Laufey, and the brother of Helblindi and Byleistr. By the jötunn Angrboða, Loki is the father of Hel, the wolf Fenrir, and the world serpent Jörmungandr. By his wife Sigyn, Loki is the father of Narfi and/or Nari. By the stallion Svaðilfari, Loki is the mother—giving birth in the form of a mare—to the eight-legged horse Sleipnir. In addition, Loki is referred to as the father of Váli in *Prose Edda*, though this source also refers to Odin as the father of Váli twice, and Váli is found mentioned as a Son of Loki only once.

Loki's relation with the gods varies by source; Loki sometimes assists the gods and sometimes behaves in a malicious manner towards them. Loki is a shape shifter and in separate incidents he appears in the form of a salmon, a mare, a fly, and possibly an elderly woman named Þökk (Old Norse 'thanks'). Loki's positive relations with the gods end with his role in engineering the death of the god Baldr and Loki is eventually bound by Váli with the entrails of one of his sons. In both the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*, the goddess Skaði is responsible for placing a serpent above him while he is bound. The serpent drips venom from above him that Sigyn collects into a bowl; however, she must empty the bowl when it is full, and the venom that drips in the meantime causes Loki to writhe in pain, thereby causing earthquakes. With the onset of Ragnarök, Loki is foretold to slip free from his bonds and to fight against the gods among the forces of the jötnar, at which time he will encounter the god Heimdallr and the two will slay each other.

Loki is referred to in the *Poetic Edda*, compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources; the *Prose Edda* and *Heimskringla*, written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson; the Norwegian Rune Poems, in the poetry of skalds, and in Scandinavian folklore. Loki may be depicted on the Snaftun Stone, the Kirkby Stephen Stone, and the Gosforth Cross. Loki's origins and role in Norse mythology, which some scholars have described as that of a trickster god, have been much debated by scholars. Loki has been depicted in or is referenced in a variety of media in modern popular culture.

HEL

In Norse mythology, **Hel** is a being who presides over a realm of the same name, where she receives a portion of the dead. Hel is attested in the *Poetic Edda*, compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources, and the *Prose Edda*, written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson. In addition, she is mentioned in poems recorded in *Heimskringla* and *Egils saga* that date from the 9th and 10th centuries, respectively. An episode in the Latin work *Gesta Danorum*, written in the 12th century by Saxo Grammaticus, is generally considered to refer to Hel, and Hel may appear on various Migration Period bracteates.

In the *Poetic Edda*, *Prose Edda*, and *Heimskringla*, Hel is referred to as a daughter of Loki, and to "go to Hel" is to die. In the *Prose Edda* book *Gylfaginning*, Hel is described as having been appointed by the god Odin as ruler of a realm of the same name, located in Niflheim. In the same source, her appearance is described as half blue and half Caucasoid-flesh-coloured, and further as having a gloomy, downcast appearance. The *Prose Edda* details that Hel rules over vast mansions with many servants in her underworld realm and plays a key role in the attempted resurrection of the god Baldr.

Scholarly theories have been proposed about Hel's potential connections to figures appearing in the 11th century *Old English Gospel of Nicodemus* and Old Norse *Bartholomeus saga postola*, that she may have been considered a goddess with potential Indo-European parallels in Bhavani, Kali, and Mahakali or that Hel may have become a being only as a late personification of the location of the same name.

BRAGI

Bragi is the skaldic god of poetry in Norse mythology. *Bragi* is generally associated with *bragr*, the Norse word for poetry. The name of the god may have been derived from *bragr*, or the term *bragr* may have been formed to describe 'what Bragi does'. A connection between the name Bragi and Old English *brego* 'chieftain' has been suggested but is generally now discounted. A connection between Bragi and the *bragarfull* 'promise cup' is sometimes suggested, as *bragafull*, an alternate form of the

word, might be translated as 'Bragi's cup'. See **Bragarfull**. That Bragi is Odin's son is clearly mentioned only here and in some versions of a list of the sons of Odin (see **Sons of Odin**). But "wish-son" in stanza 16 of the *Lokasenna* could mean "Odin's son" and is translated by Hollander as *Odin's kin*. Bragi's mother is possibly the giantess Gunnlod. If Bragi's mother is [Frigg](#), then Frigg is somewhat dismissive of Bragi in the *Lokasenna* in stanza 27 when Frigg complains that if she had a son in Ægir's hall as brave as Baldr then Loki would have to fight for his life.

ELIVAGAR

In Norse mythology, **Elivagar** (*Ice Waves*) are rivers that existed in Ginnungagap at the beginning of the world. The Prose Edda relates:

The streams called Ice-waves, those which were so long come from the fountain-heads that the yeasty venom upon them had hardened like the slag that runs out of the fire,-these then became ice; and when the ice halted and ceased to run, then it froze over above. But the drizzling rain that rose from the venom congealed to rime, and the rime increased, frost over frost, each over the other, even into Ginnungagap, the Yawning Void. *Gylfaginning* 5.

The eleven rivers traditionally associated with the Elivagar include the Svöl, Gunnthrá, Fjörm, Fimbulthul, Slidr, Hríð, Sylgr, Ylgr, Víð, Leiptr and Gjöll (which flows closest to the gate of Hel and is spanned by the bridge Gjallarbrú), although many other additional rivers are mentioned by name in both Eddas.

The Elivagar also figure in the origin of Ymir, the first giant. According to *Vafthrúdnismál*, Ymir was formed from the poison that dripped from the rivers.

In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri expands upon this notion considerably. As quoted above, when the venomous yeast from the Elivagar froze to ice and overspread its banks it fell as rain through the mild air of Ginnungagap. The rime, infused with the cold of Niflheim from which the Elivagar find their source in the wellspring Hvergelmir, began to fill the void. It then combined with the life-giving fire and heat of Muspelheim, melting and dripping and giving form to Ymir, progenitor of the rime giants or frost giants.

Elsewhere, *Gylfaginning* says that, "So many serpents are in Hvergelmir with Nídhögg that no tongue can tell them." These serpents are presumably the source of the venom or poison referred to in the myth.

A reference to the river Leiptr appears in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, where the Valkyrie Sigrún puts a curse on her brother Dagr for having murdered her husband Helgi Hundingsbane despite his having sworn a holy oath of allegiance to Helgi on the "bright water of Leiptr" (*ljósa Leiftrar vatni*):

LINDWORM

Lindworm (cognate with Old Norse *linnormr* 'ensnaring snake', Norwegian *linnorm* 'dragon', Swedish *lindorm*, Danish *lindorm* 'serpent', German *Lindwurm* 'dragon'), is either a dragon or serpent monster. In British heraldry, *lindworm* is a technical term for a wingless serpentine monster with two clawed arms in the upper body. In Norwegian heraldry a *lindorm* is the same as the wyvern in British heraldry.

A lindworm's appearance can vary from country to country and from tale to tale, but the most common depiction of lindworm is a wingless lindworm with a serpentine body, a dragon-like head, scaled or reptilian skin and two clawed arms in the upper body. The most common depiction of lindworms implies that such lindworms do not walk on their two limbs like a wyvern, but move like a mole lizard: they slither like a snake but they also use their arms to move themselves.

NIFLHEIM

Niflheim (or **Niflheimr**) ("Mist Home", the "Abode of Mist" or "Mist World", or probably *world of the darkness* according to the Oxford English Dictionary) is one of the Nine Worlds and is a location in Norse mythology which sometimes overlaps with the notions of Niflhel and Hel. The name *Niflheimr* only appears in two extant sources: *Gylfaginning* and the much-debated *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Niflheim was primarily a realm of primordial ice and cold, with the frozen rivers of Elivagar and the well of Hvergelmir, from which come all the rivers. According to *Gylfaginning*, Niflheim was one of the two primordial realms, the other one being Muspelheim, the realm of fire. Between these two realms of cold and heat, creation began when its waters mixed with the heat of Muspelheim to form a "creating steam". Later, it became the abode of Hel, a goddess daughter of Loki, and the afterlife for her subjects, those who did not die a heroic or notable death.

TUMULUS

A **tumulus** (plural **tumuli**) is a mound of earth and stones raised over a grave or graves. Tumuli are also known as **barrows**, **burial mounds** or **kurgans**, and may be found throughout much of the world. A cairn, which is a mound of stones built for various purposes, may also originally have been a tumulus.

Tumuli are often categorised according to their external apparent shape. In this respect, a long barrow is a long tumulus, usually constructed on top of several burials, such as passage graves. A round barrow is a round tumulus, also commonly constructed on top of burials. The internal structure and architecture of both long and round barrows has a broad range, the categorization only refers to the external apparent shape.

The method of inhumation may involve a dolmen, a cist, a mortuary enclosure, a mortuary house, or a chamber tomb. Examples of barrows include Duggleby Howe and Maeshowe.

The word *tumulus* is Latin for 'mound' or 'small hill', which is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root **teuh-* with extended zero grade **tum-*, 'to bulge, swell' also found in *tumor*, *thumb*, *thigh*, and *thousand*.

HELGAFJELL

Helgafjell, the "holy mountain" was one idea of the afterlife which appears in West Norse sources. This mountain could be a mountain formation in the vicinity, and it was so sacred that people could not look in its direction without washing their face first. In the holy mountain, the members of the Norse clans would lead lives similar to the ones they had lived in the world of the living. Some

psychic people could look into the mountain and what they saw was not intimidating, but instead it was a scene with a warm hearth, drinking and talking

HEL

In Norse mythology, **Hel** (or **Helheim**), the location, shares a name with Hel, a goddess and the daughter of Loki who rules the location. In late Icelandic sources, varying descriptions of Hel are given and various figures are described as being buried with items that will facilitate their journey to Hel after their death. In the *Poetic Edda*, Brynhildr's trip to Hel after her death is described and Odin, while alive, also visits Hel upon his horse Sleipnir. In Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, Baldr goes to Hel on his death and subsequently Hermóðr uses Sleipnir to attempt to retrieve him.

Hel's realm, the dreary subterranean abode ruled by its eponymous blue and black giantess Hel. The realm was a shore made of corpses called Náströnd within Hel. Her realm is separated from the world of the living by a rapid river across which leads the Gjallarbrú that the dead have to pass. The gates are heavy, and close behind those who pass it and will never return again. Hel is the final destination of those who do not die in battle, but of old age or disease. There is reason to assume that the ideas of Hel are coloured by Christian influences which taught that there was a realm of punishment in contrast to paradise. The word *Helviti*, which still is the name of Hell in modern Scandinavian languages, means "Hel's punishment". It is not certain that the notion of Hel was very dark and dreary to pagan Scandinavians. In *Baldrs draumar*, we learn that Hel had decorated a lavish feasting table when she waited for Baldr to enter her halls. Still, it was probably not a very attractive destination, as the sagas tell of warriors who cut themselves with spears before dying in order to trick Hel into thinking that they had died heroic deaths in battle.

VALHALLA

Valhalla is an afterlife destination where half of those who die in battle gather as einherjar, a retinue gathered for one sole purpose: to remain fit for battle in preparation for the last great battle, during Ragnarök. In opposition to Hel's realm, which was a subterranean realm of the dead, it appears that Valhalla was located somewhere in the heavens. Odin's kingdom was primarily an abode for men, and the women who live there are the valkyries who gather the fallen warriors on the battle field and bring them to Odin's hall where they pour mead for them.

There is little information on where women went, but both Helgafjell and Hel's realm must have been open for women and the lavish gifts that could be bestowed on dead women show that they were understood to have an afterlife as well.

In Norse mythology, **Valhalla** (from Old Norse *Valhöll* "hall of the slain") is a majestic, enormous hall located in Asgard, ruled over by the god Odin. Chosen by Odin, half of those who die in combat travel to Valhalla upon death, led by valkyries, while the other half go to the goddess Freyja's field Fólkvangr. In Valhalla, the dead join the masses of those who have died in combat known as Einherjar and various legendary Germanic heroes and kings, as they prepare to aid Odin during the events of Ragnarök. Before the hall stands the golden tree Glasir, and the hall's ceiling is thatched with golden shields. Various creatures live around Valhalla, such as the stag Eikþyrnir and the goat Heiðrún, both described as standing atop Valhalla and consuming the foliage of the tree Læraðr.

Valhalla is attested in the *Poetic Edda*, compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources, the *Prose Edda* (written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* (also written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson) and in stanzas of an anonymous 10th century poem commemorating the death of Eric Bloodaxe known as *Eiríksmál* as compiled in *Fagrskinna*. Valhalla has inspired various works of art, publication titles, and elements of popular culture, and has become a term synonymous with a martial (or otherwise) hall of the chosen dead.

FOLKVANGR

Fólkvangr is an afterlife field ruled over by the goddess Freyja, who chooses half of those who die in battle to reside with her there. According to the *Poetic Edda* poem *Grímnismál*:

Fólkvang is the ninth, there Freyja directs
the sittings in the hall.
She half the fallen chooses each day,
but Odin th' other half.