

Völva Stav Manual

By Kari C. Tauring

Völva Stav Manual

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Key Terms

Völva – (Old Norse) staff or wand carrier. One proficient in the skills of Old Norse spiritual traditions of seidr consciousness, healing, journey and work on the web of wyrd. Ceremonialist and wise woman/man of Old Norse traditions.

Stav – (Norwegian, pron. stahv) staff, any vertical line, rods in the eyes, ski poles.

Staving – (coined by Kari Tauring, 2003) the act of using the staff for rhythm in song, ceremony and to attain a seidr state. Stavers are those who do staving.

Tein - (Norwegian, pron. taayn) a sucker from a tree, a wand or switch, a cross stick for use in rhythm.

Seiðr – (seidr or seith, Old Norse) a state of heightened consciousness where unity of being is achieved and where the web of wyrd (the web of unity of all things) is perceived.

Ørlög - (oorlog, Old Norse) the accumulation of an individuals ancestral “karma”, DNA, inherited conditions, actions, beliefs and traditions which creates potential for the individual. Individuals create oorlog for themselves and their children through their actions, beliefs, and even nutrition and health choices.

Web of Wyrd – the inter-connected energy of life through time and space. Something like “chi lines” and “ley lines” combined. Also, individual strands of oorlog in a perceivable pattern of connectivity. Moving our bodies in unison with the energy of the web of wyrd generates power and purpose.

Preface

This manual is meant to accompany and enhance the study of runes, Norse myths and folklore and is a tool to bring ancient Norse traditions into your modern life. This manual assumes that you have studied these things. It is a method and template for aligning with the world tree. You may begin it as a light-hearted exercise program or a simple rhythm-making technique, and it will quickly usher you into deep healing and transformation that can be quite intense. It stems from a culturally specific ancestor tradition. Connecting with primal energies, ancestor spirits, and the deified energies of our deep past is a calling that will change you. It is a living pathway that changes as you follow it. But there it is. This is a time of great change. Go with it!

Völva is a word reclaimed from Old Norse meaning staff or wand carrier. While most of sources identify women as practitioners of this art, many men are drawn to this pathway as well. It is deeply intuitive, asks you to see the gestalt (the whole picture) and integrates the female and male aspects of our bodies, minds, and spirits. The call to integrate men's and women's magical traditions was felt by Odin and is being felt by many men today. *Völva kona* refers to female and *Völva mannen* to male practitioners. I will be using the pronoun "she" to talk about the *Völva*. Please assume inclusiveness.

If you have not already experienced these paradigm changes, this "foot in each world" phenomenon, it will begin to manifest for you through the practice of *Völva Stav*. I strongly urge you to find others to practice this pathway with you. The *Völvas* of old did not join communities or take leadership roles in the mundane world. This kept them from skewing their perception of the *web of wyrd*. But they did meet with one another to share practices and support one another in this difficult path.

Through these decades of deep scholarship, practice, and performance of the songs, dances, stories and traditions of my folk soul I have healed the broken tradition of the *Völva*, the staff carrier, for myself. *Völva Stav* is the living expression of this deep root. This manual is the beginning record of this tradition.

Brief Auto-biography

Many people have asked me, “How did you come to know all of this? How did you come to express it as you do?” This is my answer.

Oorlog stems from our parents, their parents, it is our cultural heritage. My heritage is pretty typical of many Americans. I am half Norwegian and six other things; Latvian, Luxembourgian, Scots-Irish, English, French-Canadian and Native American. As with immigrants everywhere, I was told we were half Norwegian and half German or sometimes simply “Heinz-57.” It wasn’t until I did a family tree project in junior high that I discovered “six other things.” Mysteriously, these formerly un-known parts craved expression in me very early in my life. As a young girl I gravitated to the Celtic music, literature and lore and felt my Scots-Irish and English blood surface while dancing the reels taught me in the fourth grade. My violin somehow knew the old Irish songs. When canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area with my family, I sang the songs of the Voyageur in the French-Canadian tongue. My long brown hair rested neatly in braids down my back while my skin darkened in the sun reflecting off the water. I called to a loon and he answered me. I slept on a glacier boulder and watched the Northern Lights, knowing that somewhere deep in me I belong to this land. As my Junior High project revealed, this was my father’s mother: Scots-Irish, English, French-Canadian, and “some kind of Indian.” This is oorlog expressing itself through music, nature, and spontaneous inclination.

The Tauring name comes from Taurins, Latvian for butterfly. My father’s grandpa came from Latvia with his wife who was from Luxembourg. Not Germans at all! I began to look into my Baltic heritage and realized how it connected to my love of amber, honey bees, and horses. These were the three major exports from Latvia to the rest of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Latvians were famous for these things. Grandpa’s mother was a Luxembourgian housemaid who made great social advancement in Latvia only to be driven out by a changing political climate, losing several children on her way to America. This set on a path of most exquisite pain and disappointment. This part of my oorlog expressed itself in the dysfunctions perpetuated by alcoholism and abuse. Through my own father’s choices to change this oorlog, I have only residual behavioral presentations of this dysfunction. For this I am ever grateful to him and to my mother who supported his path. This is oorlog expressing itself as inherited cultural grief and the act of healing it.

Because of the alcoholism in my father’s family and given the strong matri-focal nature of my mother’s side, we were raised to think of ourselves as Norwegian Americans. My grandmother taught us hymns and prayers in Norwegian and we went to the Nordic Fest in our “bunads.” We identified Lutheranism and lefse as the expression of our Norwegian American folk soul. Yet, I always felt a little detached from being Norwegian. Perhaps it was my brown hair and eyes in the middle of blonde haired and blue eyed sisters, perhaps it was my secret dislike of potato lefse, something I wouldn’t admit until I was in my twenties. This is the mitochondrial strain of oorlog, the deepest part of women’s heritage from their mothers mothers mothers...

As a young girl I was obsessed with the origins of god, the universe and everything. I was physically expressive of my emotions. My mother channeled this into music right away. I revealed to my maternal grandmother that I felt uncomfortable praying in church because my body wanted to jump up and dance and sing all the time. She led me to the painting of Jesus praying at Gethsemane hanging in her living room explaining that Jesus always went into nature when he really needed to talk to God the most. She encouraged me to pray in nature. It became my habit to pray in a particular willow tree. I opened up to the energy of nature and heard my prayers flowing with my environment. I heard nature in my body as it vibrated in synch and I knew that was what Jesus must have felt. From the time I was in second grade until I turned 13, I prayed with nature in a most free and open way.

When I turned 13 I had my first experience with a god from another culture coming in while I was praying with my body. I was with my Spanish club visiting the pyramids outside of Mexico City. I sat alone on top of the pyramid of the sun at *Teotihuacán* gazing across the Avenue of the Dead towards the pyramid of the moon. It was so beautiful. I opened my body to the environment and felt the familiar essence of Jesus in my heart space. Then I felt the wholly un-familiar presence of Choc Mol, the God who receives human hearts as sacrifice. I felt my own person recede and there was a sort of conversation between Jesus and Choc Mol taking place with my heart space as the vessel. I wasn't afraid but it was a bit freaky. It had never occurred to me that the line "you shall have no other gods before me" meant that there were other gods to have.

This experience set me on a new path of occult research and deeper questioning. I found many books to help train my psychic and emotional bodies so that I could protect myself from invasion by "other" energies. I always had the guidance of Jesus in my heart space so I plunged ahead fearlessly. While a student at Wayzata High School, I made a project of re-aligning my world view from a Roman 12 month to an Earth-Based 13 moon calendar. I created a calendar with art work and began to track time by moon cycles. As I did this, I realized that my own menstrual cycles were aligned with the moon. The next step was to observe how living with this awareness kept me separate from the rest of the society. It was astonishing and powerful. I read Starhawk's book, The Spiral Dance and was set on a path of viewing the divine through my own female body.

As a Lutheran, we didn't really have female representations of deity, or saints or angels for that matter. I needed guidance from the feminine divine, a role model. So I went to the Catholic Church across the street from my childhood home where a statue of Mary was in an outdoor alcove. I crossed myself in front of her and felt her presence enter my body. It was a similar process as Choc Mol, but a wholly different feeling. My body tingled with the knowledge that Jesus is my brother and I am his sister and this is our mother. This is my Mother God. Mother Mary guided me to explore all of the women of the Bible and began showing me how the sainted women of my heritage were once Goddesses in those lands.

This new path led me to my life long study of the “cultural layering” that happened in my heritage as one group of people migrated and conquered, taking over the holy places of the indigenous people they came in contact with. Guided by professors and inspired by colleagues at Luther College (Decorah, Iowa in 1984 - 87), I produced papers, songs, and artwork on the theme of cultural layering and the revelation of the feminine divine in history, nature and my own life. The story of human migration sometimes went smoothly and sometimes not. It got me thinking of my own heritage in a new way. I am the sum-total of the blood and traditions of my ancestors as they conquered and were conquered. I began a process of peeling away the layers of what it means to be Norwegian and six other things, to be an American. This is ancestral and tribal oorlog revealing itself.

Self as the product of generations of tradition, cultural layering and family of origin interpretations of this phenomenon awoke in me a need to seek the truth and meaning of my own traditions, values, and artistic expression. Maintaining a 13 moon yearly calendar throughout these years caused deep evaluation of personal bio-rhythms and the calendars of our culture, the school calendar, the tax calendar, the church calendar, and the astrological calendar.

I married in 1986 and moved to St. Paul, MN after my husband graduated from Luther in 1987. Transferring to University of St. Thomas (BA and MA), I immersed in traditional, and folk spiritual and philosophical studies and worked as a Singer/Songwriter with the group Rose Absolute. Personal layers of self and universal layers of being and reality began to fling themselves around as my artistic expression took greater risks, seeking equilibrium. St. Thomas gave me many opportunities to train my spiritual skills with Native American studies (sweat lodge and medicine wheel), Dream work, and heart centered prayer. I met a few more people who were living “with one foot in each world,” trying to draw the sacred and mundane closer together.

I was living the reconstructed world view of my collective heritage. The safety of an Institution of Higher Learning allowed me to plunge into the cognitive dissonance of clashing cultural paradigms. My marriage and educational community kept me from feeling completely isolated. Martial Arts (which I had been practicing since High School) kept me grounded and energetically clear during these years. The phenomenon of living in several realities at once has been described by Native writers such as Jamie Sams, being in the Western World but not of the Western World. Her writings and the shared experiences of others doing this “re-adjustment” work helped me stay “sane” as I confronted the deep wounds and ancestral grief of my own broken heritage.

Finally, in a linguistics class, Dr. Luanne Dummer introduced me to the runes, the rune alphabet of my pre-Christian Scandinavian ancestors. This is what finally shook my Nordic oorlog, my DNA, genetic code, ancestor memory and changed my life path. No wonder I didn't like potato lefse, my ancestral connections pre-date Columbus! Through the runes, Norse myths, and the practice of Earth based spirituality I came into deep communion with my pre-Christian European heritage. This is continental oorlog, the accumulation of oorlog of an entire continent to which I am connected. At this point I

searched for how my personal oorlog connected to the *Web of Wyrd* of the land and people.

During the years 1988 to 1993 I continued the process of aligning my world view with the lessons of the runes and the ancestral karma they shook up in me. I continued time-keeping with a 13 moon year cycle and began to base my life work on the solar quarters and cross quarters, the yearly cycle of the agrarian past. Living a life based on ritual interactions with nature, people, my dream time reality, and inter-dimensional reality while integrating the rune shapes, sounds, and meanings over the course of five years set me up to fail at living in the “regular” world. I separated from my husband in 1992.

In 1993 I toured Cornwall, England on a spiritual quest to meet with my Celtic ancestors of my paternal grandmother, the English who conquered the Scots who pushed out the Irish. Visiting holy places I ritually connected my oorlog to the web of wyrd of this ancestral home. When I returned I began to work as an energy healer, musician and writer as well as working a few “straight” jobs. I struggled to balance my Earth based world view in an Industrial culture. I took great comfort in the large community of Earth-based Spiritual traditions in the Twin Cities area.

I met my new husband in 1994 and we had our first son in 1995. Growing a child was profound. It caused me to declare what I truly believe, what I practice, what I will hand down to my son as the traditions of our family. In 1997 our second son arrived. From 1999 to 2006 I poured my creative expression into creating large scale ritual shows based on the Solstices and Equinoxes. This series, called *Discovering Origins/Building Traditions*, gave me a way to teach my children what I believe, create inter-generational community, and reveal my understanding of cultural layering on these astronomical days. Between mothering, doing these shows and teaching runes, dream work and energy healing I kept very busy!

It was in 2003 that my Nordic Roots began to crave artistic expression. Using the staff for rhythm to integrate my oorlog became *Völva Stav*, the ultimate artistic tool for expressing my ethnic spiritual experience. Through song, dance, and ritual pageantry, my Norwegian side gained full expression from the deep root to the living folk soul of my immigrant ancestors. I began to study and perform the music, dance, and stories in a whole new way and by 2006, my Nordic path became my exclusive study, practice, and artistic expression. I wrote my rune book in 2007 and produced two cds and now this manual to help illuminate and express the indigenous European traditions that most Americans carry within their own oorlog.

In 2009 my ancestors contrived to have me participate in a Norwegian reality show called “*Alt for Norge*” where I was able to weave my oorlog back into the web of my mitochondrial homeland. I was able to do ritual throughout the country and even row a sacred Viking ship beneath the steeple of the church where my great grandmother was baptized. It was an exquisite and profound time for me to heal oorlog at “ground zero.”

For so many Americans, and as I discovered, even for those still in the homeland, the deep root traditions have been lost to memory and lost their expression. Being cut off from our indigenous heritage by war, Christianization, and oppression has left its mark as the Western mind gives over our most sacred rites of passage and ritual expressions to corporate interests. European Americans have come to think of themselves as “some kind of white.” It is my mission to reveal and help people peel away cultural layering, open them up to their deep European heritage, and help them heal the broken threads and dysfunctions that come with the trauma of separating from indigenous ways. Healing oorlog is the most important part of Völva Stav.

Introduction

Some Cultural Layers

As we look at the modern traditions of our indigenous European folk soul, we can find their roots in our deep history. Pre-historic art and iconography left to us by our ancestors 25,000 years ago can tell us so much about the values and traditions of our heritage. The relief-sculpture of the Venus of Laussel shows us the connection of the womb and the horn, the sacred cow and nature spirituality. Thirteen lines etched on her horn indicate an understanding of the moon tides to our human cycles. The use of the cow horn in ritual continued into the Viking era. As glass blowing was introduced, drinking vessels of glass were made in the shape of the horn. As we read the stories, it is always the head woman of the household who blessed and passed the horn from one guest to the next. Cows were connected to the female principal into the immigrant era. In Norway women owned the cows and the upper mountain farms. Men did not milk the cows and upon their arrival in America, were very embarrassed to take on this role.

Bronze Age archeology throughout Scandinavia (1300 BCE) has uncovered graves of staff carriers. The rich grave finds tell us that the staff carriers were well respected and high ranking in Bronze Age culture. Rock paintings and bog finds attest to the use of tones through gold and bronze horns and ritual dance. One of the most ancient continuous practices in Scandinavia is Halling dance, men's competitive dancing in Norway. Some of the acrobatic moves such as *krukinger* (hooked dance) and *nakkespretten* (neck springs) are directly depicted in Bronze Age art and were practiced by men and women at that time. The apron tradition in the mid 18th Century ACE *bunad* (folk dress) and the string skirts of Bronze Age women may serve similar functions, telling others the details of women's status and home district.

The stories of the staff carriers are preserved in the poems of the Eddas and Sagas (the earliest written stories of our ancestors) such as the Voluspa, the prophecy of the staff carrier. Spa is prophecy in Old Norse. This poem is the story of Odin's oorlog and the potential of the future based on his oorlog. The Havamal, the "words" or "speech" of the High One (Odin) describes the foundation of ethics and cultural behavior as well as exploring the use of magic and runes. The development of Odin through the literature is a model of the development of our own spiritual potential. Both of these poems are essential works in Norse spiritual tradition and should be studied by everyone interested in this pursuit.

The legendary and historical Sagas are full of stories about the staff carriers. Perhaps the most vivid and complete is from Erik the Red's Saga where the seer Thorbjorg is described. Thorbjorg of Greenland, the youngest of nine sisters who were all "seers," travelled from farmstead to farmstead during the winter months in order to prophecy for the people. At this particular farm, Thorbjorg looked among the women for one who could sing the ceremonial songs, *vardlokkr* (warding calls that lure in the spirits). The only one who knew the songs was Gudrid who had learned them as a young girl. She was hesitant to sing them, however, because she was now a Christian and thought it would be

inappropriate. Thorbjorg assured her that the songs and the purpose of the ritual were not incompatible with her new religion. And indeed, Gudrid's songs were the most beautiful and affective vardlokker that anyone in the company had ever heard. This is a message I have taken to heart.

While the roots of the Völva tradition are pre-Christian, the practice, as illustrated by Gudrid and Thorbjorg, is not anti-Christian. Conversion to Christianity in Scandinavia came to many in the form of politics. Dealing with Christian kings from continental Europe influenced *Jarls* (nobles) to convert for political gain. Yet many, especially in the far North where Continental influence was minimal, maintained loyalty to the old religion. Many of the *Thrall* (slave) cast were early Irish converts imported through Viking raids. Some Thralls simply took on the religion of those whom they served. For the *Karl* (free man) most conversions were "by the sword." As in other cultures, Christian converters brutalized those who maintained indigenous practices. This is part of the inherited cultural grief of our European folk soul.

Yet, there were also conversions that were soulful and inspired. The message of compassion, forgiveness, and faith within the stories of Jesus likely resonated with many of our ancestors. As I am fond of saying, "Jesus didn't invent compassion, he embodied it." Those who brutalize in his name are not, in my opinion, Christians. My own grandparents and many of the immigrants who came to this country drew great strength from Christianity during difficult and frightening times. Interestingly, it is this model of forgiveness and compassion that can actually be used to heal our oorlog and the cultural trauma that oppressions cause. While we can not change our oorlog to "not include" the oppressor, we can change our emotional responses to the cultural trauma and heal it. This allows us to claim the deep parts of our heritage without fear, collect the messages of our recent ancestral traditions without reproach, and create a whole and complete cultural heritage for our children.

Other clues to the staff carrier tradition have been maintained in the folk songs and stories. Medieval rune ballads and nature mystical ballads carry important information about the cosmological affect of music, rhythm, and dance. Lokking, kveding, and lalling, traditional forms of song in Scandinavia, hint at their ancient origins through word choices, meter, nature tonality, and their affect on the listener. My first encounter with the staff carrier came from a children's song "Kjerringa med Staven," the dear lady with a staff, played and sung in pols rhythm (the rhythm of the pulse). In this Immigrant Era song the staff carrier lives outside of the community, creates porridge for birthing mothers, talks to a hare (a form of Frigg, goddess of child birth), and fights a mountain troll. In the end verse she finds an ally, a Karl (free man), to help her maintain the old ways. Norwegian children all over the world sing and dance to this little song, never guessing that it describes the Völva.

While this is a culturally-specific system, it is important to the global expression of mass cultural and Earth healing that are happening now. As global awareness of the Earth Mother increases, individual humans must also increase their awareness. Earth is undergoing changes, increasing in vibration measured in hertz, warming up, and shifting

polarity. We too must change and increase our vibration level. This requires individuals to do their own spiritual work rather than relying on a hierarchy or priesthood to do it for us. This too is the essence of the system of Völva Stav. You must take up the staff for yourself, tune into the rhythm of your heart, and heal the oorlog of your own ancestral heritage. We can not see the unity of humanity until we are fully expressing our own individual songs. There is no one else who can fit into our spot in the unity of all. For Völva Stav to work, you must feel ready, willing, able, and deserving to be just who you are. And just who you are starts deep in your heritage, in your unique indigenous expression, and goes all the way back to the first humans, our first ancestors.

Doing the practice of Völva Stav on your own will be rewarding, but finding others to stav with you will be inspiring. Magic happens in a circle of stavers. A weave and tapestry of sound and rhythm develops. It is organic and changes with the energy of the group. It is like no other group endeavor you will ever have tried! You will also benefit greatly from hearing other's stories. Help one another heal and support each other in emotional maturity. The goal is to know, understand, and align the vibrations of self and Earth. Organisms are constantly evolving, changing, erupting, and shifting. You will find this in your own rhythm, song, and experience of the nine worlds (the inter-dimensional worlds of Yggdrasil, the world tree).

Völva Stav opens you up to genetic memory, the memories of our ancestors, to Earth-memory and to the memories of all creatures who inhabit this living globe. This organism, of which we are a part, is inter-dimensional. Cultures across the globe have systems describing our multi-dimensional universe and the body/mind/spirit complex we exist in. In Norse tradition, our body/mind/spirit complex is connected inter-dimensionally by energetic grid work known as the web of wyrd. All beings live within this energetic web work. Disturbing the web causes discomfort and forces the whole organism to adjust. Some times these adjustments are healing and sometimes they are harming. Being aware of our energetic, inter-dimensional complex is the goal of Völva Stav. This state of awareness is called seidr in Norse tradition.

As an Indo-European tradition, some of the missing links and broken threads of Norse tradition can be teased out through the systems left to us by our deep ancestors of the Indus Valley such as Aryurvedic medicine, astrology, and mythos of the Sanskrit tradition. Science and other global mystery traditions can also help illuminate and flesh out the cryptic and fragmented system of the Völva, such as the concept of the body as a battery, string theory, and observer-affected reality. For me, outside influences have been integrated if they can hang on the hooks of my Norwegian American traditions. Ultimately, I include material that I have found useful to my own spiritual growth and healing path. The hallmark of Norse tradition is verification by utility.

Norse Cosmology and the Voluspa

Völva Stav engages the body, mind, and spirit in journeying, healing, and counseling, and in performing ritual and ceremony. In contrast to modern Western medical and spiritual tradition, with Völva Stav, body, mind, and spirit are not distinct and disconnected from

one another. They are instead complex components weaving in and out of each other and co-existing in all dimensions. The Völva works to perceive this totality in self and others and to see the weave of inter-dimensional reality, the web of *wyrd*. When she perceives this weave it is called attaining a state of *seidr*. She may then speak prophetically, (*spa* or *spae* in Old Norse) or use *seidr* consciousness to join with, journey on and potentially manipulate the web of *wyrd*.

Most of what we know about Norse cosmology comes from the *Voluspa Edda*. Please read several versions and translations for yourself. The *Voluspa*, literally meaning “prophecy of the Völva”, is the first poem in the 11th Century ACE poetic *Edda*. In it, Odin, chief god of the *Aesir*, asks the Völva to read his *oorlog* and predict the web of *wyrd* that unfolds from his choice-making from the beginning to the end of time. Odin’s *oorlog* is the sum total of his actions, decisions, and emotional attachments throughout his many incarnations and manifestations. This is what modern Völvás do for themselves and others: they guide, help heal, and create functional and healthy futures.

Theologically speaking, creation stories world wide describe how unified consciousness explodes into individuation. The process of life, then, is to understand our individual piece and fit it back into the unity of being. In the story of Odin, there is a sense of a once unified mind that goes through the stages of finding himself, gaining knowledge of the whole, and finally coming into re-unification with everything, creating an Allfather. Does it stop there? No. Again the unified consciousness desires the experience of individuation and the process continues *ad infinitum*. Religious and spiritual traditions model this as humanity goes through the stages of animism, pantheism, dualism, and monotheism, which in its truest form is animism, the recognition of deity in all matter.

Völva Stav is based on the Indo-European cosmology of the world tree, the axis mundi called *miötrvið* by the seer in the beginning of the *Voluspa*. She then calls it an ash named *Yggdrasil*. Ygg (Odin) and drasil (steed) create the name Odin’s terrible horse as a kenning (clever name) for the tree. It is called *Yggdrasil’s Ash*, the human rider of Odin’s horse. Ash (Askr) is the name of the first man created by Odin. The tree is called by many other names throughout the Sagas including *Laerad* (from *Grimnismal*), and *Aurglasir* and *Vedurglasir* and *Mimir’s Tree* (from *Fjolsvinsmal*). Other names for the world tree are *Irminsul*, the world pillar from Anglo-Saxon tradition and *Sampo*, the world pole from the Finno-Ugric tradition. Other Indo-European traditions have a world tree including the Celtic *Crann Bethadh* (Tree of Life) and the Hebrew *Etz haChayim* (Tree of Life).

The world tree is the support structure for the inter-dimensional worlds of our universe. Staff carriers who have perceived and remembered their experiences with *gand-reið* “wand riding” through the world tree has its oldest written record in the *Voluspa*. As with many world tree cosmologies, there are three worlds beneath the tree, three worlds in the middle, and three worlds at the branches (or underworlds, middle earths, and heavens). As we compile the information about creation from the written material we can see that it describes many epochs of the creative process.

The Völva “remembers” that in the beginning was only the gaping void, *Ginungagap*. The world of ice called *Niflheim* and the world of fire called *Muspelheim*, surround the gap. The interactions of the two worlds created *Hvergelmir*, the roiling cauldron within the void. Hvergelmir is the source of all rivers. The interaction of the elements ice and fire within Ginungagap causes Hvergelmir to roil and creates a third element called *hrim* (Old Norse), *rime* (Old English), or hoarfrost, a thick malleable frost. These three elements combine to create everything else. If you have an outdoor fire pit in the freezing cold of winter, you will see for yourself how the heat of the fire reaches for the cold and the cold grows fingers of ice as it reaches for the fire. These fingers are that third element. In my experience, the tap root of the world tree is in Hvergelmir, and all of creation is returning to it.

Around the rim of Ginungagap wanders *Auðumbla* (Audumbla) the sacred world cow. She has many names in Indo-European mythology. In the Vedas, Audumbla is called Aditi, and belongs to the fifth original race of creatures. She is also known as the heavenly Go and Vac the melodious cow. In Egypt she is Nut and Hathor with the sun Ra between her horns. In the Celtic lands she is the Sid Zebu, who came from the stars and created the Milky Way and now lives on Earth as a blessing and gift. The cow has been represented in our earliest artwork in the caves of Laussel, Dordogne, and Mira. For 20,000 years, Europeans have honored the cow and her offspring. *Fehu*, domestic cattle, is the first rune of the Norse rune alphabet. *Uruz* is the second letter meaning wild ox. In fact, most Indo-European alphabets start with a first letter that means ox or cow. Some of the most ancient offspring of the cow in Scandinavia were the Huldre, cow tailed “fairy” women and men.

Ymir, a hermaphroditic and oozing creative force, was created from the “quick-drops” when the icy waters of Hvergelmir enter Ginnungagap and meet the floes from Muspelheim. Ymir found sustenance by sucking at the teats of Audumbla. Ymir birthed a man and a maid from his/her arm pit, an example of unification splitting into duality. These beings were potentially Mimir and Bestla. From his feet sprang Thrudgelmir a three headed son. Jötuns (the giants) were produced from Water, Ice and Fire. Audumbla found nourishment by licking the icy rime that circled the gaping void. As she licked, she uncovered a being that had formed in the ice. It was Buri, a humanoid creature who came alive and intermarried with a Jötun. Buri’s son Bor mated with Bestla, and from their union began the line of “hero gods,” the Aesir. The three brothers Odin, Vili and Ve are their descendants and are the chieftains of the Aesir who eventually live in Asgard. In proto-Norse, these three are called *Wod* (Odin) which means inspiration. *Wili* (Vili) means will, or the ability to evaluate potential and take action towards it. *We* (Ve), means holy place, the understanding of the divinity that resides inside us and in the world.

As the story continues, Odin, Vili, and Ve kill the giant Ymir. In mythological terms, this is an act of destruction overthrowing chaotic and random creation which in turn causes the need for conscious creation. It is the end of one epoch and the beginning of a new one. A great flood of blood issues forth from Ymir, and the three god brothers create earth and sky from Ymir’s corpse. The corpse has filled the gaping void and the upper

worlds rise from it in a cone shape. As they walk along the new worlds the three brothers find drift wood washed up on the shore. They create humans, a man called Ask from the ash and a woman called Embla from the elm. They endow them with gifts of breath, will, and holiness which we will discuss at length in the next section. After Ymir was slain, his body became soil and his bones the rocks. The interaction of death and the new order creates potential for new life. Dwarves, other kinds of Jötuns, and many other creatures begin to populate the new worlds.

While Jötuns lived all over the new creation, they were relegated to Jötunheim in later times. The fire giant Surt became the ruler of Muspelheim, the world of fire. Hela, daughter of the fire giant Loki, became the ruler of Niflheim, the ice world. Light elves and dark elves took their places in Ljosalfheim (light elves home) and Svartalfheim (dark elves home). In folk memory, the alfar (the Elven race) came from the stars and seeded themselves amongst the creatures of Earth. They intermarried with Jötuns and other creatures. The ancient race of Norns (similar to the Fates in Greek mythology) came into being. Deities called the Vanir found a world to inhabit called Vanaheim.

The world tree grows from the center of Ginungagap. It has three great roots drinking from three great wellsprings. All three wells exist in the lower realms and connect at the source. On the edge of Niflheim the icy realm is Hvergelmir, the roiling cauldron and the source of all cold rivers. Hvergelmir roils because it sits between the ice and fire. Mimir's brunn (well) is named for the giant Mimir, Odin's uncle. His name means pondering. In the lore, this well sits on top of Ginungagap where Ymir's body has filled in the void. Yet we must understand that the void is and always exists. The void is pure potential.

The third root drinks from the wellspring Urd's brunn named for *Urd* who tends the root there. Ur as a prefix means primal or first. Urd's well contains the oorlog, the primal-law of every living thing. Urd means the past, the ancient story, and the accumulation of everything that has existed before the present moment. *Verdandi* means the present moment. She holds the void steady at the moment of creation, holding the space of Ginungagap. Skuld means necessity. She constricts potential until the most necessary course shows itself. I believe that these are names of offices rather than persons or specific deities. Urd is the office of past tending. Verdandi is the office of present holding. Skuld is the office of future inspiring. Skuld is also the leader of the Valkyries, the battle maidens. These offices are held by Norns, a mixed group of female deities who are called the sisters of dire need. Hela is also a Norn in my experience. She holds the dark space between crone and maiden. This "faceless" space is essential to the re-birthing process.

The Völva tells Odin about the things he did as Har (the lowest king). First he tortures and burns the visiting Vanir lady, Gullveig, who emerges alive and unharmed three times. Then he refuses to pay the Vanir for this offense, throwing his spear over the assembly and starting the first war in the world. These, along with the slaying of the great progenitor Ymir, are perhaps the deepest wounds in his oorlog. Odin must use the god Heimdal to negotiate for him as no one trusts Odin's word. There are various other "personality traits" that rise from these wounds in his oorlog, manifesting as

dysfunctional behaviors. It could be argued that these behaviors only seem dysfunctional through a prudish Christian lens, but there are countless ways in which the character of Odin defies even his own standards as set down in the Havamal.

The Völva describes Odin's many trials in order to gain wisdom and knowledge. As mentioned, Yggdrasil is a kenning for the world tree meaning "Odin's terrible steed." It is a reference to the story of Odin's self sacrifice by hanging from the world tree in order to "grasp" the runes, the sacred symbols of nature energy. He hangs on the world tree for 9 days and nights, neither eating nor drinking. After this ordeal he grasps 18 runes and their charms. Scholars debate over whether he hung by his neck looking up into the branches of the tree or by his foot, looking down into the roots. My answer is "yes." As one who sits out beneath my own representation of the world tree, looking into the wells gives you both the roots and their mirror image, the branches. All the rune shapes can be found in a single tree. As a rune caster, I am often asked about the significance of rune reversals. I always ask "are you looking up in the branches or down in the well? Where are you on the tree?" Ecstatic dance is another way to achieve the feeling of falling upwards into the branches of the tree. Norse tradition is alive with tunes and dances to achieve this end.

Of numerological significance is that Odin hung for nine days, perhaps one day for each world. This is the way we get to know the totality of the universe, by visiting each world and contemplating them from the center. 18 runes (their charms) could be two from each world. As one who has traveled in each world, I can attest to the use of two runes marking the passage way back to center from each world I have visited. Of note to me is that there are 18 runes in the 24 letter Elder Futhark alphabet whose designs are based on a stav (vertical line).

The numerology and cosmology of three lower worlds, three middle worlds, and three upper worlds creates the sacred geometry of the Valknut Triquetra. This symbol of three interlacing triangles can be found on the Stora Hammer Stone and other artifacts from the Old Norse world. I have used it in many ways. It represents the three wells, the nine worlds, the three norms and the nine original mothers. It represents the key tone, the sympathetic tone and the overtone (more on this in the voice user section). This symbol has a wide variety of use and interpretation in the sacred geometry of Norse cosmology.



Valknut (also known as Hrungir's Heart)

In another sacrificial ordeal, Odin goes to Mimir's well for a drink from the Gjallerhorn. This is Heimdal's horn which will be blown to signal the end of the epoch, called Ragnarok (doom of the gods). Drinking from this horn of the waters of Mimir required a sacrifice. Odin's price was one of his eyes. In exchange he gains the ability to ponder and remember the deep stories and magic. In order to awaken the internal "third eye," he must give over part of his external vision. Finally, Odin must learn women's traditional magic. He learns *seidr* (the skill of the Völva) from the goddesses Freyja (Queen of the

Vanir) and Frigg (his wife, Queen of the Aesir). Where once he had disrespected the Vanir women's magic (as Har when he tries to kill Gullveig) Odin himself must become a Völva. I see this as oorlog correcting itself. Through it he gains the use of the full brain. Male/female, left/right, yin/yang must all be in a balance for the whole person to emerge.

After the seer in the Voluspa finishes telling Odin's oorlog, she begins to prophesy. Ragnarok, the doom of the gods, is the time when the world tree must turn itself upside down. The world tree is like a sand timer. When the sand has run out, it must re-start itself again by turning over. The poles reverse, weather patterns become unstable and the world is covered in winter for "three years." The state of Odin's oorlog at the time of this prophesy determined the probable actions of men and gods at this time of inevitable change. Feudal wars and annihilation prevail. The combination of science and global prophecies would indicate that we are on the threshold of this change in epoch right now. As a living tradition, we must take another look at the prophesy and see how far our tribal karma has corrected itself, how healed Odin has become. Can the gods negotiate and repair relationships, keeping a balance so that Ragnarok may be more gentle? I believe it is possible and in this belief lies my sense of urgency to promote the healing of Inherited Cultural Grief for all of humanity.

In the Voluspa, the under-worlds open up, and the upper-worlds begin to crumble. The roots become the branches, the branches become the roots. The vessel of the universe breaks apart. Like a bonsai, the pot in which the tree grows is our universe. The tree's three roots connect to three water sources which feed and nourish the tree. Nidhögg, the great water dragon and other serpents gnaw on the roots to keep them from bursting out of the pot. Four deer and a goat nip and nibble on the leaves and branches, keeping the tree from becoming top heavy and toppling out of the pot. Jörmungand (Earth wand), the equatorial snake has enveloped the world and held it tight.

There is no way to stop the natural process of Ragnarok and one day the tree out grows the pot which cracks and breaks. The tree falls head-long into a new pot, a new multi-verse, a larger Ginungagap. This is the end of time and the beginning of a new order. The humans who survive are called Líf and Lífthrasir (Life and Lifegiver). They have been kept safe within Mimir's grove surrounding the trunk of the tree at its base. The deities Balder, Hoder and Nanna also live here and are preserved from destruction as the new world begins to grow in its new vessel. Bergelmir survives and becomes the new tone, sounding to create new life the universe.

When an hour glass is tipped over the least disturbed part is at the center. The balance is in the middle. Finding this balance is what we must do and align our bodies with the world tree itself. We must balance in the tree trunk space so that we may ride out the global changes that are bound to come as Earth re-starts her clock. This alignment is precisely the goal of Völva Stav. Now you must begin to see how the world tree is imagery for your own multi-dimensional body.

Völva Stav Manual

Tools and Tasks

The main tools in the technique of Völva Stav are the body, breath/voice, and rhythm of stav and tein, described in each section below. Always begin each exercise by stretching out your body. You must keep your body in good condition as it is the filter for all the information you will receive spiritually. Proper sleep, nutrition, and exercise will help you get the most out of your body and voice. As you practice Völva Stav you will begin to crave balance in all things. The point of the practice is to achieve balance and gain awareness of the present moment, then to shift our consciousness in order to perceive the subtle energy of the web of wyrd. This is called a state of seidr consciousness. From this state of consciousness we are able to perceive oorlog, the web of wyrd and send out our hugin and munin or hamr into any of the nine worlds (as described in the next section). From this state we are able to use the energy generated in Völva Stav to send healing or do other work.

As you begin your practice I expect you will create extensive margin notes, recording your own experiences, visualizations, and emotional responses. The exercises in this section can and should be done daily. They form the basis of all other techniques. Eventually you will do them all together - breath, voice, stav, and tein - rather than as separate exercises. Unification of these methods is the goal. They represent the unification of the principals of Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld.

Other tools include spindles, looms, runes, churns, the tools of every day women's work. There are many examples in the lore about women creating magical clothing, imbued with protection through chants to the rhythm of the spinning or weaving. It was so prominent a magic that early Christian laws directly forbade this fusion of spiritual and mundane tasks. Churning, spinning and stitching spells and charms abound in folk songs and stories. Since these laws have no grounding in the actual teachings of Jesus, many women and men today are re-claiming the sacred nature of their traditional work. In the end notes I have included a description of a long distance healing session using spindle and stav performed in one of my work shops.

Völva Stav can be performed while sitting or standing. We all have different physical abilities and Völva Stav accommodates them all. If you are standing to practice, the horse-back riding stance of martial arts is your position to keep your spine and roots limber (explained below). If you are sitting or in a wheel chair, you want to work on flexibility of your spine and the openness of your pelvic girdle so that your diaphragm is free to expand and contract. Maintain foot contact with the ground or floor (even through foot rests) by visualizing the roots of the tree extending from the foot penetrating all material objects. If possible, keep knee joints and ankle joints at right angles for maximum energy transference. As will be explained in the related sections below, your external stav (staff) can be as small as a tooth pick. You can even do without external stav and tein if you don't have the use of your hands because your spine is the ultimate stav!

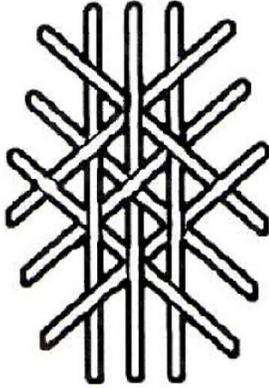
Part One - Aligning with the World Tree

Every journey starts with the basic alignment of our spine with the trunk and with our feet rooted in the well springs from which we draw energy. The energy of the world tree and her three wells is ancient, raw in many cases, and quite powerful. This is an intense exercise. You will be unlocking ancient memories, tribal and family karma, and pulling up energy. Go only as far or as deeply as you feel comfortable. If something feels wrong, stop and evaluate it, journal about it, dream about it, and then move deeper into it.

This first exercise puts your grounding cord or tap root in Hvergelmir, locating that well in the center of Ginungagap. In the lore, it is Mimir's well that sits on top of where "Ginungagap once was." Yet time and time again, I have found Hvergelmir located in the center of the ever present void. Perhaps I was given this template because of our proximity to the end of this epoch and the beginning of the new one. The positions of the worlds and wells have changed over these several thousand years and the changes are accelerating. Perhaps my personal oorlog demands this configuration. Yours may not. In the past five years of teaching this method and template, a certain group verification of my personal gnosis has taken place. Ultimately you must be comfortable with your own visualizations and experiences. Again I ask you to go slowly, take notes, and make changes where you are led to make changes. Then, share your information for the benefit of unified understanding!

Some ancient symbols to use for visualizing your alignment with the world tree are:

Web of Wyrd/Nine Stavs



The Caduceus



Exercise for Aligning with the World Tree

Standing position: Feet should be shoulder width apart. Take a look at the web of wyrd/nine stavs graphic. Imagine your spine in line with the center stav and your feet and shoulders in line with the left and right stavs. Do not lock your joints; knees, ankles, hips, shoulders, and arms should be loose and free to move or sway as the energy flows.

Seated position (if you are unable to stand): Feet should maintain a connection to the floor. Try to keep ankles, knees, and hips at right angles, the base of the spine at a right angle to the chair. This keeps the flow of energy from being blocked and gives your diaphragm the room to expand with your breath.

Breathe in deeply and exhale fully. Feel your feet sink into the floor. Feel the bottom of your feet where they touch the floor. Imagine a root extending from each foot and moving down through the floor, through the layers of the Earth.

Move your less dominant foot just slightly (for right handed people it would be your left foot – henceforth, left handed folks should reverse concepts). Feel the root extending out from the ball of your foot, sinking into the floor or the grass where you stand, sinking down through the layers of the Earth until it touches a spring-fed pool. Feel the warm, damp silt, layer upon layer as your root sinks deeper into the well spring. This silt is the oorlog, the layers of primal law, all of the circumstances, choices, and actions that came before you. Your layer is on top, then your parent's layers and their parent's layers, all the way to the beginning of time.

The deeper this root goes, the colder the energy gets. Follow the root as far as you can until you come to the ice world of Niflheim. Through the yin of ice the oorlog of the universe is stored. Urd is here, boring a sample of the ice to read the oorlog of the universe. Slowly bring the energy of Urd's information up your root, feel it getting warmer, melting the ice core into the pool. Where the surface of the pool surrounds your root, feel the tension of water's surface. This is the place of Verdandi, the still point, the present moment. From here you can feel the past and see potential in the reflection of the pool. Breathe into the present moment and let your ego, your fears, and your expectations dissolve as you exhale.

As the energy tickles the bottom of your foot, look to see the third sister, Skuld, whose need fire shows us true need and best direction for our oorlog to take as we act and create our layer in the well. This combined energy flows up your leg slowly until it meets the perineum, the point between the eliminative and creative organs. This is an energetic transfer point for our body and the body of the tree.

Let your consciousness cross to the opposite leg. Feel it move down the inside of your dominant leg in a slowly. Let it sink. Keep your knees loose and bounce just a little. Imagine the root extending from this foot that sinks down until it touches water, the well of Mimir. Let this root rest on the pool surface. As your root begins to sink into the well of pondering, the context and depth of understanding of your oorlog becomes clearer. Odin's eye is in this well. Mimir's head peers out of it. Let your yang root sink below the surface enough to pull the wisdom that belongs to you. As you sink this root deeper, the energy becomes warmer and connects to the fires of Muspelheim, the yang and active principal.

Now feel the heat rising up the root. Feel the root touching the well of Mimir. Feel it rising up your toes, ankle, shin, calf, knee, thigh, and again connect to the perineum.

Now squeeze your buttocks together while breathing in. And release. Feel the power point of the perineum, the point between your reproductive and eliminative organs. It is from this point that the third root extends. If you are standing, bounce slightly, as though you are sitting on horseback (in Martial Arts it is called horseback riding stance). If you are sitting, imagine you are sitting on a fence post or pole. The root from your perineum moves down and touches the floor. This is the third root, the third leg of a three legged stool. These are the three points creating a plane of existence, a sacred triangulation.

Sink your perineum root through the layers of floor of the Earth body, let it sink deeper. Imagine a lozenge shaped blackness surrounded by ice on one side (your yin foot rests here) and fire on the other (your yang foot rests here). This space is called Ginungagap, the gaping void. Feel your perineum root search for nourishment. Breathe in deeply. As you exhale, feel the root move into the gaping void. It touches steam, rime, and water. This water is roiling and boiling as the worlds of ice and fire collide. This is the primordial well of creation, Hvergelmir, the place of the primordial snake,

Nidhögg. This is the snake that gnaws and trims our tap root. This is the depository of the dead that would be re-born; this is the void of everything and nothing at once.

Bring the energy of your tap root slowly up to touch the perineum again. Your three roots are aligned with the roots of the world tree. The yin and negative charge of ice, Urd's well, the yang and positive charge of fire and Mimir's well, and the emptiness of all potential in the center, Hvergelmir. These three roots create a pyramid. The spine is like a flag pole extending from the top of this pyramid.

Squeeze your buttocks together again. Feel the three roots connected at the point of the perineum. Bring the energy from each root up your spine now. The tap root energy moves up the center of your spine like a straw. It nourishes each vertebra, mixing with the synovial fluid, replenishing your marrow. It rises slowly to rest at the occipital ridge. The energy from your left and right roots begins to travel up the spine in a braid or spiral around your core root. They snake up the core like the snakes of the caduceus. They cross at the energetic points called chakras in Hindu tradition. Your spine and the trunk of the world tree are unified through this braid of energy from the roots. Breathe in as the spirals move up your spine. Ice and fire combine to create the malleable frost, the element of creation caused by the movement and interaction of ice and fire. As the spiral moves up your spine, feel how it affects your stomach, diaphragm, heart, and throat. Let the movement of this root energy move the energy in those spaces.

These energies meet at the base of your skull where the spine and skull connect. This is the place where the branches begin to grow. Let the tip of your tongue rest between your two front teeth. The little bump between them is the energy transfer point on the top of your tree. It is the mirror of the perineum. The three middle worlds exist between these two points.

Feel the energy from the perennial root, Hvergelmir moving up into your reptilian brain, the oldest part of your brain. Here the ancestor memory is stored. It moves up through the third eye place, the center of the pineal gland where meditation and spiritual enlightenment happen. It moves up and over your skull like a sprinkling shower.

Feel the energy of Urd's well running up the right side of your brain, the second oldest part of your brain complex. It engages the ancient centers of

right brain function, allows ancestor memory to play out in dreams. It shows us the gestalt, the whole picture of things, the fullness of the web of wyrd. It is the second branch of the tree.

Feel the energy of Mimir running up the left side of your brain where pondering, thought, and linear linking are engaged. The fire of invention, speech, mathematics, and the great “ah ha” moments are generated here. The left and right brain are connected by the corpus callosum, the latest development of the human brain. These branches of the tree create a network of communication that allows us to engage our whole brain at once. They are nourished by the spray of Hvergelmir and join in the sprinkling of the energy of creation. Feel your scalp tingle as the rain of energy drops gently on your head.

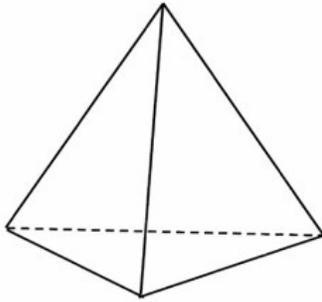
Jut your chin up to the sky, open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue. Let the combined energy of the wells sprinkle into your mouth. Rest the tip of your tongue between your two front teeth and breathe in through your nose. Breathe in the waters of the wells as the branches shake above you.

Now stretch your arms, palms up, to catch some of this energized rain. Breathe in deeply. Fill your palms. Let the energy run down your arms and trunk. Feel it running down your legs, through the roots of your feet and back into the wells. You are a complete circuit of this energy, you are the world tree.

Lower your arms, roll your shoulders, and move your body parts. If your eyes are closed, open them, and feel yourself fully in the present moment. Breathe slowly, and know that you are aligned.

Further Notes:

You have created many sacred triangulations. The three points of connection to the three wells is a three sided pyramid, a tetrahedron.



The three points of the pelvic girdle (perineum and both hips), the pelvic bone to the shoulders, and the base of the skull to the left and right brains are some other triangulations. In geometry, three points always creates a plane. By anchoring into triangulations this way, you create for yourself a stable plane of existence.

The Tap Root – Hvergelmir

In the lore, the tap root is pictured going through Mimir's well which surrounds the base of the tree. In my practice, I have found that the grounding cord or root goes straight through the gaping void of creation called Ginungagap and into the roiling and unsettled well Hvergelmir. Hvergelmir is guarded by Nidgahog the water dragon who, as mentioned earlier, gnaws at the root. In Hindu tradition, the energy of the spine is kundalini, a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. As we raise our kundalini, the serpent uncoils and spirals up the spine triggering the spin of seven chakras or wheels of energy at specific points along the spine. Norse tradition, being Indo-European, has many similarities to it's grandparent from the Indus Valley. I feel the tap root surge more like a straw, straight up the center of the spine.

The Yin Root – Urd's Well

In the lore, Urd's well is pictured as warm and in the south above Muspelheim. In my practice I have found that this well has shifted to the North and is now cooling off over Niffelheim. I believe that this indicates the coming of *fimbulwinter*, the three year ice age preceding Ragnarok. For this practice, Urd's rune is *Isa*, the ice rune, the straight line. A core sample of a glacier contains the history of the world. She is the vessel of the primal patterns of all things. Verdandi relates to the rune *Hagal*, hail storm that happens when the ice of the past and the fire of the future come together. We must wait in the present moment, in the threshold, as hail clears the way for the new beginning. If we would stay still during the course of the present, allowing things to unfold, we would have the power to act only out of necessity. This is the third sister, Skuld, whose rune is *Nauthiz*, the need fire. She heats up and expands the core of Urd's ice. The need fire of the future and the ice of past come together to create the dynamic present moment as hail. This, to me, is the "hvíta auri," the white gravel that nourishes the root of the tree running through Urd's well. This is another sacred triangulation in Norse spiritual tradition.

The Yang Root – Mimir’s Well

Again, the lore puts this well around the tree trunk, but I have been experiencing it over Muspelheim, the fiery world. Its waters are heating up and Odin’s eye is cooking. Mimir’s name means pondering and relates to insight and wisdom. This is why we plant our stronger, yang, out-going energy into this well. Action should always be contemplated and pondered so our actions are wise. As we connect to this well we are able to pull in the pondering and remembering needed to create actions free from mistakes of the past. Living with one foot in this well creates the condition of introspection and heightened consciousness. There is no room for ego or self-deception here.

As you begin to journey through the nine worlds, this configuration of roots, spine and branches will anchor you in the physical and provide a road map to the multi-dimensional universe of the nine worlds of the tree, even creating physical locations in the body for each of the nine worlds. These points of internal contact connect to their external locations creating solidity within the fluidity of the space/time continuum. Aryurvedic medicine, teaches that each organ is ruled by a planet and corresponding deity. Chinese medicine is similar. The body is a roadmap for the universe in many traditions. Assigning worlds to specific places in our bodies is fine, but do not expect them to remain fixed and stagnant. The Nine worlds are dynamic through time and space and should be visualized in an orbiting spiral, not a line with a beginning and end, not a chart with unchangeable points. Rhythm, chant, and movement give us the ability to stay solid and grounded through the flux of an ever evolving universe.

One can also ground through just the Norns, left foot in the essence of Urd, right foot in the essence of Skuld, and straddling and grounding in the essence of Verdandi. Imagine the mirror image of the tetrahedron. Verdandi is at the top of the pyramid. A core runs through it and at the other end of the grounding root and sharing the Hagal rune, is Hela, the goddess who is half crone and half maiden, the dark side of the moon. Other configurations can be explored once the basic alignment exercise is immediate and natural for you.

Part Two - Voice User

We are alive because we are breathing. Breath (Onde) moves energy. As the sagas relate, Völvas use breath and wind to generate the power of their spells and wisdom speaking. Sound on breath is the definition of voice user. The vocalization of breath is a key element of Völva Stav (See the notes on runes in Utgard Vaettir).

When we were born we breathed a unique tone, the key note of our existence. The vibration of this tone keeps our unique material together. The key note causes a sympathetic tone to begin vibrating. This is the sound of our selves connected to the web of wyrd in our own unique way. As these two tones vibrate, a third tone manifests called an overtone. This is the note that carries us to further consciousness. Creating these three tones with other voice users is a profound experience.

Yngona Desmond describes the three tones of creation in Ginungagap represented by the three ancient beings called Aurgelmir, Thrudgelmir, and Bergelmir. They are three sound chambers representing body/mind, soul, and spirit and are represented by three triangles, the valknut again. They are the collective sound from which the oscillating lines of sound vibration that created the universe emerged. Bergelmir will be the end note at Ragnarok and the key note to start the new world as the tree emerges from the ruins of the old one.

Vocalization is the sound vibration of your own body, your resonant chambers. Adding your vocalized resonance to the web of wyrd creates a sympathetic resonance with the web itself. This sympathetic resonance helps create the meditative state that allows a Völva to perceive the web more clearly and align with it vibrationally. Shifting vocalizations can then change the vibration of the web. As we journey to other worlds, the vibration and vocalization will shift along with the staff rhythm. Each world has a resonance, a tone, a vibration that is unique. While our vocalizations shift to match the world we are entering, so we may also learn to shift vocalizations in order to call a specific world into proximity.

The most important thing in becoming a voice user is to separate this idea from “singer.” Judging what comes out of our mouths as sounding nice or good or bad or out of key short circuits the energy of the whole process. In Völva Stav, the ego must be an integrated part of your whole being. It can erupt when you are “trying to sing well” or paying too much attention to your rhythm and it will mess you up fast! The tree sort of spits you out when you start to shift from unified body alignment to me-centered consciousness.

Exercises for Voice Users

1. *Stretch out your neck, mouth, and tongue. Make a wide open, surprised faces. Scrunch your face closed for a few seconds, then open it wide again. Stick your tongue out as far as you can and say ah.*
2. *Empty your lungs completely until you are compelled to inhale. You may even push on your diaphragm to empty it out. Now inhale so fully that there is no room for more air and release it slowly until you are completely empty again. The diaphragm is like a bellows pump for your lungs. Now experiment with breathing. Breathe fast in a rhythm, through your teeth, in a noisy way.*
3. *Breathe on a vowel sound for A, E, I, O, and U. The Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Ooo vowels are the same in Spanish, Norwegian, and Hopi. These sounds are considered by many cultures to be the first sounds of nature. Vowels connect us to the spirit world, according to ancient teaching. Begin with these long drawn out vowels. Say/sing them on the in-breath and the out-breath.*
4. *Add the consonant m to the beginning of each vowel. Consonants place us in the physical world. Begin with M, one of the first consonant sounds babies around the world make. Mah, meh, mi, moh, moo...variations of these combinations mean mother in languages around the globe. Do this with other consonants.*
5. *Play with the sounds of the runes and notice the vowel and consonant placement and the rhythms each one requires in syllables. Isa, nauthiz/neid, hagal/hagalaz.*

- Do this with each rune as a daily practice. Draw a rune at random in the morning, and play it on your breath before you begin your day. Play it again before bed time. Translate your name into runes, breathing and singing the rune rhythm of your name is very powerful.*
6. *Call (lokk) the directions: Nordri (North), Austri (East), Sudri (South), Vestri (West). Stand in each of the directions as you call them. Sing their names. It will sound differently each time you do this because our voice use becomes part of the environment we are in. Don't shift to the next direction until you feel the presence of the direction you are calling. Do this indoors, outside, with others, by yourself, with stav and tein, without. Listen to the differences.*
 7. *Call (lokk) with animal sounds. Hiss like snake. Sound the caw of crow. Cackle like hen. Growl like bear or snort like pig. This is extremely important as every Völva must learn to communicate with the animals in every world. Begin to imitate all the sounds you hear in nature, water falls, rivers, brooks, wind in the leaves, roaring wind, breezes. This art of imitation is an ancient tradition. There are many songs and ballads in Scandinavia based on the imitation of nature's songs.*
 8. *With another voice user, play with your tones. The first voice finds a key note. The second voice plays around that note until an overtone is heard.*
 9. *Have one voice user on the left side of a seated person and one on the right. Play with the tones as in #8 and allow the listener to journey to these tones. Be sure to discuss where and how the vibrations affected you!*
 10. *Get a tuner and tune into it on a specific note. Feel where that note resonates in your body/chakra system. Create a series of tones/notes to achieve a specific affect. This is very advanced work. Don't get hung up on it and let it wreck your spontaneity and creative process.*

Listening

One of the keys to becoming an affective voice user is listening. Listen to the sounds you are making, feel the vibrations each sound makes in your body and in the environment. If you are out side, listen for the responses to your lokkr from nature. There will be birds and small animals even in a city who respond to your voice use. I have often sung with crows, wood peckers and squirrels in my Minneapolis back yard.

Good listening is especially important in a group setting. As you sing and stav with a group of people you will begin to play with/off of each other. It is a subtle and unconscious thing and should not be forced. Listening to one another while allowing yourself to play is what draws together separate lines of wyrd into a weave or web that can then support your ride/journey.

Using words in the ancient language (Old Norse) calls our ancestors close to us, engages genetic memory, and is alluring to the spirit world of our folk way. One way to begin is by choosing a few lines from the Eddas (start with the Voluspa). Learn them in Old Norse. Memorize them and speak them/sing them/lokk them.

Lokkr are tunes to call, seduce or entice. Kulokk lures the cows back home to the barn. There are Huldrelokk that call the fairy folk to meet us (or us to them if they are singing!), Vardlokker are warding songs such as Komme Alle (Tauring 2003). Wyrldokker are songs that call the threads of the wyrd close to us, create sympathetic resonance with the web of wyrd and can change the web through vibration.

In Völva Stav, each staff carrier learns to use her voice, to lokk (call) the spirit world. This gives each staff carrier complete functional independence to create the seidr state, to perceive the web of wyrd, to journey, divine, heal, communicate with animals and spirits and live in unity with the world tree. As we learn from modern quantum physics, sound is one thing that travels inter-dimensionally. Vocalizing causes our entire body to vibrate. So to use our own voices to call our guides, add prayers to the well, and communicate with the beings we encounter is essential in Völva Stav.



Part Three - Taking Up the Stav

Stav (pronounced stahv) in Norwegian means any vertical line. Some of the first graffiti in our human ancestry was straight, vertical lines representing ourselves, humans. We stand upright and are alive. If we are horizontal we are either asleep or dead. The walking stick, ski poles, the timber used in stav churches, stripes in a weave, the mast of a ship, the rods in our eyes, and the vertical line in rune markings are all stav. The rune isa, ice, is a stav.

The use of a wooden stick connects us directly to the nature of the tree. The sound of wood on wood is soothing and familiar in an ancient way. Your staff might be from a sacred tree in your garden or woodland, it might be a mop handle. Different types of wood, different lengths and thicknesses will sound slightly different. As you play with staving you may want to try a variety of trees, lengths, and circumferences.

If you are standing, your stav should be long enough so that you may keep your spine straight while using it. It should be light enough so your arm does not strain to lift it and thin enough for your hand to grasp it around comfortably. If you are sitting, the stav should not be taller than your shoulder. If you are unable to grasp a larger stav, you may use a wooden spoon or knitting needle! Remember, the spine is your great stav, the trunk of your tree. You are a stable plane of existence.

Now it is time to place the fourth point in our sacred geometry intentionally with the external stav. Before you begin, stretch your hands, arms, back, legs. Get loosened up. Tight muscles trap energy. Stretch out again after you have finished a session. Our bodies are the real tools here so we must keep them limber, loose, and strong.

Exercises for Adding Stav

Create your alignment with the world tree through your sacred triangles, your three legged stool, your pelvic girdle, and the crown of your body. Become the tree.

Grasp your stav lightly between your thumb and pointer finger. This is the ice rune Isa. Remember the connection of this rune with Urd. The world Niflheim is the ice world spreading around the northern edge of Ginungagap. Gently and without force, begin rhythm by dropping the tip to the ground and letting it “bounce” back. Ice gives us the stability of water in a frozen state. It creates stability in rhythm. It causes us to listen with the inner ear as it relaxes our bodies. Listen to the sound and feel the vibration of the wood in your hand and on the floor or on the Earth where you are standing. Feel the vibration under your feet and up your legs. Let your body bounce and sway with the motion of the stav. This is your hobby horse and you are riding the world tree. As you breathe in, feel the energy rise from your roots. Begin a slow steady stav rhythm. As you breathe out, feel the tension of the mundane world release into the ether. Breathe in time with your stav. In for a count and out for the same count.

Now add intention to your breath. Allow an audible sigh to escape with the exhale. Let the sigh become a tone, a rune name...Isa. Breathe in li – exhale – saaah. Do this until the vocalization changes. Don't force a vocalization. Allow it to come and go from your being, never judging it, always pondering it. You will feel the energy rise and fall in a natural way. When you feel finished with the exercise and cease the rhythm, hold on lightly to the stav and let your body, mind, and spirit mingle in unity. Maintain your visual of the three cornered stool, your root system, and check to be sure you are grounded in it.

Use the voice user exercises and play with this. You may want to stav along to some music or a song you want to sing or even set a metronome and stav to the click. Remember, however, that as you use it to journey, the tempo and duration of rhythm will become organic, shifting and changing with your journey. So don't get stuck on the idea that you have to “be in time.”



Part Four - Adding Tein -

Tein (pronounced tay-n) in Norwegian is a root sucker or off shoot from a stump of a tree or at the base of the tree trunk. A tein was used to carve runes on, as a wand in healing and in martial arts. It also means a rod or the spindle of a hand spinner or the rod of the drop spindle. It is the cross-stick for creating further rhythm. (If using a wooden spoon for a stav, use a pencil for your tein.) Other names for it are tipper, cross stick, or ganda (ON wand). For a regular stav, use a tein that is the length of the forearm or elbow to finger tip (about the size of a wooden spoon). Hold your stav in your in-coming (weaker) hand, left for right handed users. Hold the tein in the stronger, out-going energy hand. You will use the tein to direct energy, draw boundaries or send healing energy accumulated through your rhythm and chant. Cross the stav with the tein and you have created the rune Nauthiz or Neid, the need fire rune, the rune of Skuld. It relates to the world Muspelheim, the world of fire running on the Southern expanse of Ginungagap.

In creating the need fire rune we are calling on the power of Skuld. The steady rhythm of the stav is the base and the counter rhythm of tein taps out what is becoming of necessity

to the rhythm. Combining the ice and fire runes in rhythm with breath and voice while straddling Ginungagap creates a powerful circuit of creative energy, with the völvá as the conduit. This is how we connect to and follow the web of wyrd. Energy runs through and is grounded through the body as we are aligned physically with the world tree. The individual völvá controls the ebb and flow of her energy because it is she who starts and stops the rhythm.

Exercises for Adding Tein

Before you begin, stretch your hands, arms, back, legs. Get loosened up. Hold your stav and tein without gripping tightly. A loose grip and flexible joints means that energy will not get stuck in your body but flow freely. As you stand in alignment with the world tree, your three roots firm, begin to tap your stav with your tein. With the stav resting on the floor, tap up and down the stav and notice the subtle differences in the sound. Now tap with the stav off the floor, up and down the stav. If there are any knots or curves in the stav, see how you can play with them. Lift the stav up and tap up and down the length of it, listening for the differences in the sounds and vibrations through your arms and down your body

Now start a slow and easy beat with the stav as the one and tein taps as 2, 3, and 4 count. Inhale for four counts and exhale for the same. Chant Nauthiz, Neid on the beats. Experiment with pronunciations. Add in isa. Switch to ice and need fire in English and see how that affects your body. Let the rhythm and breath determine the tempo. It should flow freely. Now mix it up a bit with the stav and tein taking turns at making rhythm along with the chant.

Keep track of where your mind wanders as you relax into the rhythm. Follow the visual of your roots and spine/trunk and feel your branches, your hair and arms. When you feel it is time to stop the exercise, strike the stav on the floor three times and give a little yip. This lets the environment know that you are releasing communion with it. It lets others you are staving with know that you are leaving the weave. Be sure to breathe into your physical surroundings.

An Advanced Stav and Tein exercise

The pols (pulse) rhythm in Scandinavian music and dance tradition is very ancient. It literally means the pulse and begins with stav on the one, tein on the two, stav on the three. Repeating this rhythm takes practice. Always keep track of the one and resist the impulse to count it as “three, one, two, three”. Beat, tip, beat, beat, tip, beat is a magical rhythm that awakens the Nordic soul in a deep way. This rhythm takes concentration to maintain, especially while singing. You can find pols tunes on the internet or on Nordic Roots cds to practice this rhythm.

Further Notes:

One of my first Völvá Stav students made the observation that this was a very powerful and independent way to journey. Rather than being drummed out by another while in a

passive state, one is in control of one's journey through the action of staving. It gives the practitioner the freedom to go wherever she needs to go regardless of where the rest of the group is going, to start and stop her journey at her own will, and to send the creative energy she gathers up herself to anything or anyone she desires. It is this spirit of independence that resonates with my Scandinavian heritage and the Midwestern mindset.

There are those who have shown up in my classes and call themselves "rhythmically challenged." They soon discover that in staving, there is no right or wrong rhythm for either the individual or the group as a whole. Staving creates a sort of fabric or weave of independent rhythms. If someone starts to shift their rhythm, the whole group balances it out. It is a phenomenon that occurs whether there are two or twenty stavers in the circle. The technique is simultaneously receptive and directive, yin and yang, individual and group-minded, the very essence of balance.



Gifu/Gebo



Manaz, Mannaheim

The runes for this aspect of Völva Stav are Gifu and Manaz. Gifu is two stavs of equal length bound at the middle and means a balance in giving and receiving. Gifu with self is the first task of the Völva. We must be in balance with ourselves, meeting our own needs so that we come into community in a balanced way. Balance between those stavers in the circle is achieved because each staver is balancing themselves out. Manaz is gifu on stilts. We achieve true community when we are balance with self and other. We are able to raise it to the next level where we can give to others in need (healing, information, etc.) from a place of fulfillment.

Putting It Together

The system of Völva Stav asks each staver to balance willingness and willfulness, the true essence of the gift of Vili/Hoenir. We can not force the rhythms. We can not force our breath. We can not force vocalization. We must allow ourselves to be in the flow of these things, force our will to become willing. There is bravery and great power in willingness. We must be like the tree, strong in our roots but flexible in branches, able to sway in the wind without breaking. Willfulness is rigid and can break. It robs you of the gift of balance and the fun of the improvisational process. Willingness is the place of strength because you are able to participate in process. It's easier once you get the hang of letting go. Letting go of expected outcomes and rigid formula is the hallmark of Völva Stav.

Some lovely runes to balance will and to visualize the alignment of the tree further are:



Algiz/Ehol



Eiwaz (elder Futhark) or



(younger Futhark)

Algiz/Ehol is the elk whose willingness to sacrifice some of its community for human survival during the Ice Age resulted in humans helping the Elk community survive. We gathered sedge grasses and stored food for the elk and they gave us meat and skin and bone. Eiwaz the Yew Tree, is the world tree symbol. It teaches us to be strong and flexible, bend without breaking, move in the wind, stand as tall as we are deep. These lessons will become apparent as you work with Völva Stav. Algiz reversed is the shape for the world tree/Yew tree during the Viking Era. A trunk and three roots.

Norse Metaphysics

Body, Mind, Spirit

As you become proficient in Völva Stav, you will no longer feel as though you have “one foot in each world.” Rather, you will exist consciously in all worlds at once because the focus is on alignment with all worlds. While this manual teaches you to ground into the three wells of the world tree in a specific manner, it is a starting point only. There are similarities to other spiritual and cultural systems, but Norse metaphysics are unique, and therefore it is often misunderstood in post-Christian interpretation.

To be clear and affective using Völva Stav, you must develop a deep understanding and vocabulary for Norse metaphysics. You must feel the words as you learn them. The exercises relating to this section in Appendix One can be intense, and you may want to wait until you are well grounded in your practice before doing them. It is recommended that you first become adept at the Alignment, Voice User, Stav, and Tein exercises. To begin the work of the Völva in earnest, you must be able to perform all of these exercises smoothly and at will. Then, you will be able to build on them as the groundwork for your own ritual and journey. Take notes every time you use these techniques. Your notes are the basis for your personal practice and a living record of your journey. You are writing your own saga. You will discover things that no other Völva has discovered because your personal strand of oorlog is unique to you. Share your findings, discuss them, and research the images that come to you. This is the heart of a living tradition.

Nordic healing traditions understand the body-mind-soul complex as it is connected to the whole Earth’s body, mind and spirit. Norwegians even into the immigrant era still considered all three aspects of the total human being when diagnosing and healing illness. Kathleen Stokker in her book, Rituals and Remedies, documents the healers “svartebok” or black book of spells and remedies which include herbal and physical remedies as well as spell songs written to the spiritual entities attacking the person, and poems and prayers to invoke the healing spirits. In the Christian era the trinities of Mary, Joseph and Jesus or the Father, Son and Holy Ghost were evoked. Svarteboks were passed down by families in the Midwest and Norway.

Body Complex:

As described previously, the gods Wod, Vili, and Ve (also known as Odin, Hœnir, and Lóðurr, found the ash and elm trees lying on the beach and carved the humans Ask and Embla (ash and elm) out of them. These first human forms were then given the gifts of flesh, mind and spirit by the three gods who carved them.

Mott – the atoms, molecules, cells, and DNA that create the flesh and bone structure. Flesh and bone holds the spirit and mind complexes together in the physical world we live in. As we have learned, ice and fire are the first elements of creation. Ice holds the patterns for all creation within its crystalline structure, and fire releases those patterns. From the combination of ice and fire come rime, water, air, and Ymir’s gift of earth, stone and wood. From the elements we have come and to the elements our bodies return.

Megin – (pronounced main) is Old Norse for might and ability. It translates spiritually to the energy that holds matter together. Megin belongs to both the body and spirit realms. All matter has megin holding its atoms together. In Eastern tradition this is called chi force. Even rocks have chi force holding their atomic structures together. In this way, all of nature is alive and malleable. Animals can generate more megin through proper nutrition and exercise. Megin can diminish with disease or unhealthy living. At death our mott returns to the soil, and our megin returns to the pool of universal energy or chi force.

Onde – is breath and conscious use of breath. Odin gave the gift *onde* to humans. Inspiration, breath, animation, changed us from trees to animals and is the key difference between animate and inanimate objects. It is this animating force working with the megin that allows plants and animals to grow. Through *Onde* we can generate more Megin whereas a rock has a set amount of Megin that vibrates at a lower rate and is diminished with the affects of the environment. The practice of *Völva Stav* generates more Megin through deliberate use of *Onde*.

Mind Complex:

Odr – the gift of Vili (Hoenir) translates to consciousness and the understanding of our human condition, our ability to think. Vili means will, free will. This is the thing that changes us from animal to human. In a way, this is the gift of Eve in the Old Testament Hebrew Bible. It is the knowledge of the difference between good and evil. It can also be looked at as the fracturing of the unified mind, the separation of ego, the beginning of “I and thou”, that thing that caused Eve to cover herself with fig leaves. It is the thing that makes us human and gives us true free will as opposed to managing on instinct. To me this represented by the rune Thurs or Thurisaz, the point at which we shift from primal energy to conscious being. The next lesson, then, is to balance willfulness with willingness, an extreme act of maturity that uplifts humanity to its divine potential. It is interesting that Hoenir is predicted to survive Ragnarok. Perhaps in the near future, humans will value the quiet deliberation of our souls over the rash judgments and willful impositions of the mind.

Hugin and Munin – (pronounced hoogin and moonin) Thought and Memory

These aspects must work together or there is no true intelligence. They could be represented in the myths by Hoener and Mimir. In the *Voluspa*, to end the war between the Aesir and Vanir, hostages were exchanged. Hoenir and Mimir were sent to the Vanir. When paired the two were wise but alone, Hoenir was silent. The Vanir cut off Mimir’s head and sent it back. Odin preserved it in order to communicate with Mimir. Hoenir has joined Mimir there.

In *Völva Stav* I describe Hugin as left brain thought and Munin as right brain memory. We have the ability to project thought and memory while journeying. In the myths, Odin sends his two ravens (called by those names) out into the worlds to gather information for him. They come to rest on either side of his high seat, placed in the center of the upper worlds (at the area of the pineal gland on the brain map). Each *Völva* may see her thought

and memory fare forth in different forms, birds, animals, or insects. Memory begins in the occipital ridge where the reptilian brain carries the memories of human existence. It moves up the right brain and joins with the left brain which organizes time and memory in a linear, categorized way. These two must work together. The corpus callosum acts as the bridge between the two. When the two brain halves are working in tandem at the same vibration, the pineal gland resting in the “third eye space” between our seeing eyes activates. The pineal gland releases the chemicals allowing for mystical experience and the understanding of our place in the unified world. Enlightenment flows from this third eye space as Hugin and Munin manifest.

Spirit:

Hamr – (pronounced haahmer) is the subtle body, the shade or the astral body and is the gift of Ve. Ve in Old Norse means sacred or holy space. This is the idea of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. The divine spirit lives within us and we have a divine spirit emanating from us. This is the key to understanding that we are children of the divine. It is the final evolution of humanity. We must use *onde* to align our *odr* with our *ve*. The combination of personal *hamr* and group soul *hamingja* connected to the web of *wyrd* creates our immortal soul complex.

In shape shifting and some forms of astral travel, it is the *hamr* we use. A *Völva* might send her *hamr* out in animal form to journey for her in other realms. The *hamr* may be projected as charisma to entrance a crowd of people. It may be pulled in for protection while out-sitting in the woods or repelling unwanted attention in a public place. Another’s *hamr* is sometimes seen in animal form, color combinations, or felt as heat or cold by *Völv*as in healing sessions. The *megin*, *countenance*, and *hamr* combine to create the aura.

In Eastern medicine, the *hamr* or astral body of the human connects like an umbilical cord to the Earth’s *hamr* in the spleen. This organ destroys old blood cells containing the ancestral patterns of DNA. It is where our ancestor essences reside. Before a trip to Norway I had some extensive body work done concentrating on the spleen. The *oorlog* I was to adjust for my ancestors manifested through this work and I was able to accomplish my mission in the homeland.

La or Lett - An aspect of the spirit body which translates to charisma and physical warmth or spark, countenance and spiritual purpose.

Oorlog – is both physical as in DNA and genetic material as well as the spiritual and emotional accumulation of our ancestors. Their actions, thoughts, emotions and spiritual essences contribute to our strand of *oorlog*. Our personal strand of *oorlog* is also affected by our environment, astrological charts and level of healing we need. Our *oorlog* strand is what connects us to and creates our portion of the web of *wyrd*. In the *Voluspa*, the seer relates that the Norns score runes in our bones that are clues to understanding our *oorlog*. While we can not change the history of our *oorlog*, we can change our emotional response to the history, thus affecting our perception of what we need. Our need

determines how we choose to act. Our actions create the “future” of our oorlog strand which is the basis for our own children’s oorlog.

Hamingja – (pronounced hamingya) The Hamingja is an extremely important concept in Norse metaphysics. Hamingja is the accumulation of the oorlog and the collective consciousness of your family and ancestors. All they have ever done, gone through and felt throughout the ages has culminated in you. You exist because of them. Your personal destiny (the likelihood of your choices), the kind and amount of luck you will have, and the work you need to accomplish in this life to heal and repair deep tribal karma, ancestor karma, and family of origin issues is all based on the collective group soul, your hamingja. The hamingja is the manifestation of the wyrd of your family and ancestral line.

It has been said in many cultures that “blood is thicker than water.” In Norse tradition, a person’s bloodline often took precedence over their marriage ties because the group soul had a strong pattern of karma to resolve. According to tradition a person could be adopted into the clan or family soul group. These people don’t share the bloodline but have become part of the group soul complex are integral to playing out the group soul karma. The most striking example of this is Odin’s oath to Loki (they were ritual blood brothers). When we bear children, they inherit the oorlog of both the father and mother, the Hamingja of both family lines. For this reason it is important to teach our young children to take great care when mixing their wyrd with others. Choose mates and friends carefully as they either add to or deplete our luck and affect your destiny.

Again the spleen works with hamingja. This organ is like a field in which all of your ancestors mix and mingle. The choices we make in this life can either strengthen or weaken our family hamingja. In *Völva Stav*, we can strengthen our hamingja by shifting the emotional responses to the choice making of our ancestors.

Integration of body, mind, spirit

Norse Tradition and Brain Functions

These brain correspondences to the nine worlds are just suggestions of how to think of them. You may find other, different correspondences that work for you. That’s great. Keep notes and share them so we can all benefit!

At the top of our spine, beneath the occipital ridge, is the reptilian brain. This is the oldest part of our brain system and stores deep ancestral memory. I call this Jötunic part of the brain, housing primal energies and triggering action devoid of thought or consideration. Heart beats, breathing, and other thought-free functions occur here. Memories or triggers from this brain area must flow to the right brain and then the left brain in order for actions to be well thought out rather than going straight into the amygdala. *Volva Stav* teaches us to ground and center our energy and work through the whole brain.

The right brain is the second oldest part of our brains. It gives us gestalt or whole world view. The right brain controls the left side of the body and is related to the well of wyrd

in this system. It is the incoming information, the oldest layers, the way to see the whole picture. The right brain is engaged in divination, seidr work, and intuitive processes. It is yin, receptive. The Norn Urd relates to the flow from reptilian to right brain function. It can be said that the right brain is more Vanic. The Vanir were interested in god/goddess pairing, agricultural/gatherer, and intuitive magical. The goddesses of the Vanir taught Odin of the Aesir their women's magic. This was a most important evolution for Odin as he was incomplete without learning his feminine side.

The left brain, newer to our evolution, controls linear thought, sees things in lists and laws rather than waves and possibilities. The left brain controls the right side of the body and at the height of functioning connects to Mimir's well. The left brain, thought, must be immersed in the pondering of Mimir if wisdom is to be achieved. The Aesir model right brain activity through their propensity for legalism and hierarchy. By going to Mimir's well for a drink, Odin brings wisdom and deepens integration of brain functions to the Aesir. Compassionate justice, process orientation, and emotional intelligence are the result. Fundamentalism is the product of un-integrated left brain thinking.

The corpus callosum is the latest piece of brain evolution. It is the filament between the lobes that allows us to utilize and incorporate both halves of the brain. The corpus callosum represents the various bridges linking the worlds together. It is the corpus callosum we traverse as we explore the internal worlds of the brain, connecting them to the inter-dimensional worlds of the world tree. This is key to our next evolutionary piece, to gain access to more parts of our brain and be able to utilize it all together, allowing it all to vibrate at the same rate which engages the pineal gland. The pineal gland releases the chemicals allowing us to have ecstatic experience and heightened consciousness. This is modeled in Odin's achievement as Allfather.



Daeg is a rune for the use of the whole brain. Imagine thought starting in the lower right, crossing up and left, down and across to the upper right, making a complete circuit through the whole brain. The x in the center, then, becomes the pineal gland. The third eye or pineal gland is the seat of enlightenment that occurs when the entire brain is fully engaged. This is the top of the trunk of the world tree. This is where Odin has his high seat. This is the balance of brain, body, and tree that we are striving to create that we may be the Ash riders of Yggdrasil.

The Emotional body – Enmeshed with the mind/body/spirit complex, the emotional body extends from the core of the physical body to the length of the arms extended. This is the area of the aura (energy field) that we call personal space. When we feel loving, we invite people into this area for hugs or closeness. When we are experiencing anger or irritation, we want people to stay out of this area. We hold them at an arms length.

The spirit communicates through the emotional body and the emotional body communicates through the physical body. Emotional upsets manifest in physical symptoms. Stress can cause acne or ulcers, for example. Our spirit is affected by the state

of the physical body, chemical input and sensory perceptions which cause emotional imbalance.

The emotional body can be cleared and cleaned with the smoke of cedar or herbs such as sage or wormwood. Smoke is one of the things quantum physics has found that travels inter-dimensionally, along with sound vibration. This is why incense/smoke and chant/tone has been used in spiritual ritual since the dawn of time. The emotional response to sensory input is also affected by our will. This is one way to change ourlog, by changing our emotional responses to past events, thereby creating new pathways for future action. In Völva Stav, we generate energy in the emotional body through the vibrations of our rhythm. Keeping our emotional body clear and balanced is what allows us to walk the path of our spiritual purpose.

Emotions have been discussed in the lore, especially in the Havamal. The emphasis there is on level headedness and refraining from too much drink so that your emotional body doesn't get control of you. Emotions are an essential tool for humans to use in accessing their world and a key for the Völva when exploring inter-dimensionally, doing healing work on self and others, and perceiving and acting in a state of seidr. I will elaborate further on this below.

The Web of Wyrd – (pronounced weird) is the energetic web, the lines of fate, the chi lines or ley lines that grid the earth energy and connect the inter-dimensional worlds (the nine worlds of the tree). These same chi lines grid our many bodies together inter-dimensionally and to the Earth plane. They are also time lines that connect past events to future potential events. They carry the records, emotional responses, actions, and outcomes of every living thing. They are the strings of quantum physics “string theory” that can be perceived through the state of seidr. These lines of access have been pictured in this diagram which should be seen in multi-dimensions.

Every rune can be found in the pattern of the nine stavs. As you go throughout your day, check your posture against this grid. I visualize the three vertical lines going through my three roots. The asterisk shapes at the third eye, heart and womb (tan tein in Tai Chi tradition). Use a mirror to move your body in various postures that line up with this grid work and feel the different energy as you connect. Use this pattern in meditation and allow the rune shapes to come up through it. Find the triangulations and then extend a fourth point. Take notes on your observations. It is said that this is the grid-work or road map through the nine worlds. The practice of Hafskjold Stav (also Ice and Fire Stav) uses this design in its teachings today.

Past Present and Necessity

In Norse tradition we do not talk about past, present and future in the same fated way as the Greek moirés. Past, as we have learned, is Urd, primal law such as the cycle of sun spot activity, gravity, and polarity, as well as the shifts and changes these things must go through. Urd is all the things that have happened and the choices our ancestors have made which are fixed and unmovable happenings. Yet while the past is fixed, there is a

malleable quality we bring through our will and emotional body while in a state of seidr. We can change our responses to the events of the past. We have the choice to remove emotional chains around the past and thereby change it for ourselves and our children.

Verdandi means the present, the still point of now. The void of the present moment contains all potential, and is the moment wherein we may change the emotional body around past actions and act in a new line of oorlog. Staying poised in the present moment allows us to see true need before we act. Staying present in our daily tasks is what allows us to maintain alignment with the world tree and keeps us near to the state of seidr consciousness. Peeling bushels full of apples, spinning, churning, raking, washing the dishes, these mundane tasks our ancestors did on a daily basis are perfect meditation tools. While there are times for “utsetti” sitting out in meditation, it is within the rhythms of daily work that Völva Stav gets its strength.

Skuld means necessity not future. There are certain fixed things in our universe. The sun will rise, the day will dawn and work must get done. Yet as individuals with the gifts of Wod, Vili, and Ve, our perceptions and emotional responses to things are our own. Norse people believe in free will and are very attached to our individual power to create our own futures. Völva Stav teaches us how to stay in the threshold of Verdandi until Skuld makes our best course of action known to us.

As Völva, we seek to repair and heal broken lines of oorlog in order to co-create the future through our choice making. This is especially important when dealing with persons in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. To stav into the moment of trauma and sing healing runes into that point changes the emotional body’s response to the trauma. Through this process we can create functional and healed oorlog for the future. I will give examples of this healing in the next sections.

The Emotional Body and Memories

In Völva Stav we are dealing with the memories of our ancestral folkways. The memories may be from our DNA, our Reptilian Brain, ancestor memory, tribal memory, memory of historical trauma, past life memory or dream recall. They may have been stored in our physical bodies and released as emotion. Again, these memories come to us as facts. Emotion is the gel that holds memories together. There is no room for judging the validity of memories or their emotional content. We need not even distinguish what kind of memory it is. The important thing is to deal with the emotional content of the memories as that is where the life of the memory exists. The emotion is the power point. We are learning to trust our gut feelings, intuitions, and sudden insights. Emotions are the carriers of this information.

Our own memories - We may see something that triggers a memory. The emotions of that memory rise up. Sometimes they spill out and we react to the situation in an “irrational” way. As we begin allowing ourselves to have emotional responses without our emotions “having us” we can trace our emotional response back to the original source.

An example of this is a woman who was attacked as a little girl by a man with a scar on his left cheek. Many years later she was gardening with her husband who got a smear of mud on his left cheek in the same place as her attacker’s scar. It triggered memory and the emotions of the attack, causing her to scream and lash out at her husband. After a few minutes she was able to separate the memory of the attack from the reality of the situation. She was then able to work with the suppressed memory and unresolved emotions of a childhood trauma.

Reptilian Brain Memory - For example seeing a tiger in a cage at the zoo may trigger extreme emotional response from the deep recesses of our tribal memory stored in the reptilian brain. The reality of the situation has not traveled through the whole brain allowing us to see the cage and understand that we are safe. Rather, our emotional response to the memory of danger is so strong that the signals go straight to the amygdala, triggering the fight or flight mechanism. These deep memory responses are often called “irrational fears.” It is true that we have not been able to use the full rational capacity of our brains in these situations, but these emotional responses should not be dismissed as “simply irrational.” Staying into the situation and allowing the emotion to ride on the rhythm may reveal the fullness of a memory that needs to be healed.

Historical or Potential Past-life Memory - There are emotional pockets that have been trapped in historical events that are released as we “re-live” the history. Our subtle body perceives these emotions and our minds want to integrate them and own them. In these cases we need not “own” an emotional response or a memory.

An example of this is when I was in grade school. We had begun studying the events of Pompeii. As I gazed at the photo of the archeological dig, my heart rate increased, my breathing became shallow and labored and a cold dread enveloped me. While the school nurse called it the flu, I understood that it was directly related to the experience at

Pompeii. I am less inclined to believe that I was re-living a past life memory than experiencing the release of historical emotion related to the uncovering of the archeology.

The affect of archeology on global consciousness is well attested to. Opening up King Tut's tomb unleashed a powerful emotional response that sparked new spiritual expressions and even influenced fashion.

Ancestor Memory – Healing our oorlog means healing our ancestors as well. I was waiting for my husband to help me repair a bit of foundation on our house. He told me where the tools were but I felt nervous about doing it myself. I decided to try anyway. The caulk was runny and got all over my hands. I felt frustrated and concerned about toxicity. I went to the basement to wash my hands and began to scrub them with a brush. As I scrubbed I began to cry. I felt shameful. Now, I knew this was unrelated to the circumstances of repairing the basement so I allowed the tears to come. Part of my brain began to take notes. I cried and scrubbed my hands harder, until they were sore and red.

Suddenly, an ancestor came through and began to speak through me. "I didn't mean to. It wasn't my fault. I'm just a little boy and it feels so icky." He was getting his hands scrubbed to bleeding for touching something he was told not to.

When I understood this, I let the emotion shift and became the loving parent. I stopped the scrubbing and began to smooth my hands with lotion saying "it's ok now. You are a good boy. It's ok. I love you and there is no one who can hurt you now." I felt his being inside me relax. Warmth spread over me, contentment and relief. I began to rock, grounding and aligning with the World Tree. I began to hum a lullaby. I felt my ancestor move through my legs and into the roots of the tree where this once fractured part of his soul could join the rest of him in wholeness.

By doing this, I have added his healing to my own oorlog. By helping my ancestor retrieve a part of his fractured self through memory, emotion, and healing. This strengthens the web for my own children.

Random Emotions From Others - With the emotional body we are able pick up emotional content from others in the room with us. The ability to distinguish between your own emotions and those belonging to others is essential. Persons unaware of the difference can become very confused and are constantly seeking the reason for their confusion from within themselves.

An Example of this is when I was on jury duty, stuck in a room full of strangers. Suddenly I became irritated. The irritation did not seem to come from me as previously I was feeling relaxed and perhaps a little bored. Looking around the room I spotted someone acting in an irritated or agitated manner. This confirmed that I wasn't the irritated person. I used the world tree alignment to ground and center and began breathing out the irritation. I brought my hamr, subtle body, away from my physical and shifted it into a blue orb. The orb encompassed my body and shielded me from other people's leaky emotions.

Good emotional boundaries are essential for every practicing Völva. As we stav, we release emotional energy from our physical bodies, from dreams, and from ancestor memories. It is essential that we understand what emotions are and how to sort them out. Emotions can be responses to physical and spiritual phenomena and are there to help us make decisions. When we are using our whole brain, we are able to process our emotions and wait to act until we have come to a balance of reason and emotion.

In healing Inherited Cultural Grief I use a tool called the Flower Wheel (see Appendix 2). Emotions are facts. They are as factual as any other of our senses, sight, smell, touch or taste. They must be respected and allowed to exist. When an emotion rises up in you, do not judge it as good or bad, valid or invalid. It is real and there is no reason to attach judgment to it. You may want to explore the emotion. Find out what kind it is, what caused it to grow where it did, what uses it may have. Or, you may just want to observe it and allow it to move through.

Some emotions are aggregates or complexes. Anger, for example, is a complex emotion built by other emotions such as fear, embarrassment, or irritation. Complex emotions can also occur with a sudden shift from one emotional state to another such as relaxed to startled. Your mind will want to attach the emotion to something. When you have an emotion, take note of it. If there are many or aggregates of them, write them down.

When memories and attached emotional responses rise up, write them down. Write as much as you want but let it flow freely. Don't try to force details (like dates or names) as these things are really of least importance. Write the emotions surrounding the memory using one word at a time, pulling apart aggregate emotions to get to the essence of the power point. Do not try to attach them to anything, allow them to be factual and singular.

Stav and sing the story you have remembered. Feel the emotions come out on your breath as you use your voice. Let the emotion words flow out of you until the event takes on a life outside of you. Now speak to the person around whom the event centered, sing them a song or let them speak or sing through you. When you have finished doing ritual for them, ground and center in the world tree.

The World of Spirit Beings

Ancestors

Norse tradition is an ancestor tradition. First of all spirits living with us, in our homes, in our very bodies, are our ancestors, family members, parents, grand parents, aunts and uncles, cousins...etc. who have passed from Midgard (the Earth plane). They have provided the oorlog for us. They may show up in dreams or as feelings and thoughts when we look at their photos, prepare their recipes, sing the songs they taught us, pray their prayers. In Norse tradition, we believe that our ancestors, whose summation created us, live within the nine worlds in one of the many halls of the dead. We believe in reincarnation in terms of an ancestor being re-born into the clan. It was common for a family name to carry on not just as a way of honoring the dead but because we believe

that ancestor has returned into our family. Begin with your ancestors. Set up an ancestor altar. If you know where your ancestors are buried, tend their graves and make offerings to honor those who came before us and whose oorlog we carry. Völva may work with individual ancestors to carry out tasks of healing or realizing oorlog or repairing oorlog through soul retrieval, the reclamation of fractured soul parts due to trauma.

In the ancient days, tribal, clan and family hamingja was easier to understand and identify. There were elaborate rituals to include non blood related persons into a family or clan. These days the living memory of tribal, clan and family association are much harder to determine. What's more, modern humans have separated their own souls from their bodies, let alone a family soul from their own soul essence. There are many people walking around with fractured and fragmented souls. Healing our personal oorlog means finding those fragments as well as helping our ancestors reconstruct their soul groups. If you do not know who your ancestors or family were, set up an altar and invite them to come to you one by one. Trust your intuitive process in discovering who they were/are.

The female line was considered the most important family line to follow. Mitochondria is passed down only through the mother. The only unbroken line of mitochondria comes through mothers and daughters. Having no daughters of my own, my mother's mitochondria will only pass to my nieces. This creates a great desire in me to foster them in the oorlog of our mothers, a thing that occurred frequently for our ancestors. The most ancient burial sites are matrilineal, dna testing reveals this. In many cultures even today you are classified as what ever race or religion your mother was. Hebrew culture was extreme in their early observance of this. Seed that fell to the "foreign woman" was considered wasted. In my own quest for understanding my oorlog, I honored and healed my patrilineal ancestry first. Then I did what was for me the bigger work of clearing the mother line. This is something you will want to explore for yourself.

Exercise to Contact An Ancestor

Align your body with the tree. Begin to stav a rhythm. You may wish to close your eyes in order to let the visualizations come. Begin to vocalize the word (I will use mother here, it could also be father, grand mother or great grand etc.) in all of its forms. Mother, mama, ma, mater, mum...let the rhythm, song, and visualization flow freely. Ask her to reveal herself to you. When you have finished your session, write down the key words, thoughts, feelings, or action information you received. Place it on your ancestor altar and fill a horn. Say the words you wrote down and hail your ancestor. Drink from the horn. You may wish to pour some drink from the horn into a bowl on the altar to share the drink with your ancestor. Keep track of dreams and other co-incidental experiences during the time you are working with this ancestor.

Example of healing deep past dysfunction for an ancestor:

I have a grand aunt who died many years ago. She had been abused and did some abusing. She was mentally unable to care for or protect herself and unable to understand the destruction and dysfunction of her actions. This caused her soul to fracture. She came to me as I was sitting out, to ask for help. Her need was to use my physical body to grieve the actions she now understood and to repent them. In this way she was able to ask for

forgiveness for things she had done. I began to stav and sing her name. She came into my body, wept and grieved and confessed her wrong doings. I began to talk with her about her mental condition, gave her forgiveness, and allowed her to hear me say that things were done to her that were not right. I praised her name for being brave enough to address these things. I made promises and oaths that these behaviors would not be perpetuated in my urlag. I fed our Hamingja a bucket of corn and watched it gain strength. After this ritual, my mother had a dream of this aunt moving her old clothes out of the cupboard at the old farm house. I knew she had healed and moved on.

Vaettir – (vayteer) are spirits of place.

Hus Vaettir - spirits of the house, called nisse or naren came to the New World with the immigrant families in steamer trunks and cedar chests. Michelle Mays, a Cherokee singer and story teller, told me that the Cherokee had to add words into their language to describe the new creatures that came with the immigrants from Scandinavia. They live in chests and trunks, or move into closets and kitchen cupboards. They usually love the family soul dearly and assist the family in keeping an orderly home and keeping the traditions of the family. There are nisse who have been with the same family line for hundreds of generations. People make little houses for them on a shelf and lay offerings of pennies or candy to them. Honoring the spirits of the home in is a wonderful way to start working with the unseen spiritual realms. You can attract a house vaettir to your home in this way.

You can tell when a home has active spirit because it feels strong, stands up straight, has a welcoming and warm feeling. When the spirit has left the house it seems grey and dull, sagging and sad. When we first bought our house it was a very sad place. It stands up taller now! One year I put a wood stove in my house. The following birthday I was given a little red and black ringed snake card a neighbor made for me. It curled around a long stick and I put it in a wine bottle as a standard by my wood stove. Then out of the blue I was looking up some Baltic deities and there was Aspeline, the black and red ringed snake goddess whose domain is the corner behind the wood stove.

Inngard Vaettir - spirits dwelling inside the farmstead boundary. Through our stories and songs I can name some of the creatures my Norwegian ancestors honored. Nisse dwell in the barn and out-buildings. They helped keep the farms clean and running smoothly. There were nature spirits of the wells, stones, soil and fence-line shrubbery whose various names have been preserved in folk material. Baltic and Eastern European traditions held on to the variety of names and songs for farmstead vaettir. In the urban environment, the Inngard Vaettir may appear as school mascots. Hints of them may occur in street names. Sometimes there is a neighborhood that has become run down or crime ridden. Here the Vaettir may have departed but may be enticed back through offerings, celebrations like parades or masked revelry, and children singing.

When treated with ceremony and dignity, Vaettir keep the community together. When ignored or disregarded, they can cause trouble or leave altogether. When they leave, things begin to break down. They are the spirit of the place.

Huldre are folk who live inngard by invitation. Some huldra (females) married human men and adhered to the laws of inngard. Some huldu (males) and nisse became helpers on the farm in exchange for the comforts of food and bed. The huldre are an ancient race under the protection of the Vanir gods. They can be dangerous as they don't feel the need to adhere to human laws or customs.

Plants and Animals

The practice of gardening and herbalism will help you understand and communicate with the world of plants. Keeping a garden whether in pots on an apartment deck or an acreage in the country will help you begin to communicate with inngard vaettir. Völva who are healers use medicinal herbs but also maintain plant allies. Teinseid has been described by Shaun Brassfield-Thorpe (Introduction to Runelore Vol. 1-3, 2000) as “shamanic intimacy” with plants. Through this process, the plant tells the Völva what parts and preparations to make with it.

Animals may come to you on the physical plane while you are staying outside. They may come to you while journeying and in the dream time. As discussed, some animals may be your fylgia or spirit animal. Some may represent your family fylgia, kin fetch, or hamingja. Some may simply be messengers from ancestors or deities. It's always best to listen to them and journal, contemplate their messages.

Utgard Vaettir - spirits dwelling outside the boundaries of the farmstead. The landvaettir are the collective soul of the place or the over-lighting devas as author Michelle Small-Wright describes them. They may be the collective consciousness of the individual souls of the plants, animals, water, soil and rocks. Vikings took the dragons off their prows when entering friendly shores so as not to upset or affront the landvaettir. Today, many Scandinavian households keep the tradition of honoring the land vaettir with blots or other ceremonies where meade or other food and drink is offered.

There is a ritual called utiseti, out sitting, in order to shift consciousness and contact nature's spirits. This is an important ritual for Völvas to do. City dwellers should look for wilder places within the boundaries of the city. Begin connecting with the landvaettir through finding a special tree or grove of trees, rock structure or other natural land feature. Do blots and sing galdr in this place. (These rituals are expounded on in sections below).

Eventually a Völva in training must go far out into nature. The nature entities are powerful and must be experienced. Nykkens and fossegrimin are water spirits who can teach a Völva many things but are always dangerous. Some Huldre stayed wild and are always curious when humans enter their domain. Other elemental beings of rocks, ice and fire appear as trolls or other spirits. While the great nature entities can be quite harsh and fierce, others who have passed through other lifetimes and life forms have a deep loving nature within the raw power of their antiquity. One such being who I have worked with is the giantess Gjalp who guarded the Vimur (river of menses) and connected women to the essential elements of this sacred process. She and her sister Griep were crushed by Thor.

As I understand it, they split into myriad pieces and landed in the hearts of Völvas and the Sheila 'na gig of Celtic lands, women who marked the rivers with their sacred blood in order to heal women's ways.

In the Norns and in the runes are representations of this deep natural energy. If a person would become truly adept at "reading the runes" they must touch deeply the primal energy that the runes represent. Runes are nature energies that were first expressed in sound, whether imitative or descriptive. They were represented in Germanic culture by scriptural markings which eventually became the rune alphabet. Nature magical songs in the Finno-Ugric language are called runos, such as the Kalevala. The songs nature teaches us hold the deep runos. There are runes in the wind, waves, and the sound of the long grasses. The sea gulls cry runes and all of nature expresses them. Heimdallr is the god who, in the "Song of Rig" teaches the runes of nature to the most evolved of his human off-spring. Heimdallr could hear the wool grow on a sheep and see in all the nine worlds at once. Other than the Norns, Heimdallr has inspired my rune work the most.

Both words come from the Sanskrit root word "ru" meaning whisper, secret or mystery. Rudra is the howler sky-god of Hindu tradition. He howls and roars the secrets of nature. Odin, whose name means inspiration and frenzy, gave a shrieking cry when finally he "grasped the runes". Rune galdr, the "singing" of runes for spiritual ends, comes from the root gala which means "to crow." The ancient poems that deal with magic are often written in galdrlag, the meter of magical poetry. Medieval Scandinavian runarvisa (rune songs) explain the concept of gaining rune magic and power over nature through the music nature teaches us to play. The sacred bond between music and the nature spirits is a constant theme in Immigrant Era folk visa.

If you are using rune songs and symbols to journey it is most important that the symbol has deep meaning for you, that you have an intimate understanding of it. To learn the runes, the gods, the wights and nature entities, the corresponding songs of all of this is part of the training of Völva Stav (see Voice User).

Continental Vaettir – this is the collective consciousness of all who have lived and died in a particular area of the Earth Mother. I feel it is my duty to honor the spirits of Minnesota in the way that my Native ancestor of this land honored them, through tobacco ties and offerings of corn meal. The oldest Native populations of any region can help you figure out who lived in your area first and what ceremony would honor them best.

Growing up in Minnesota, it was natural for me to connect with the spirits of the trees, streams, and lakes where I was raised. It has been essential for me as a Völva to deepen my understanding of and respect the spirits of the land on this continent by learning their native names. Living on the border of Ojibwe and Dakota territories I have learned stories and songs that are pleasing to the ancestors and spirits of this land. Participating in the ceremonies of this place has been a gift to me that has deepened my ability to practice my Indo-European traditions.

When I do ceremony here in Minnesota I offer mead or ale to the old gods, tobacco or corn to the land vaettir and coffee or milk to my most recent ancestors. These are the things that most please the spirits of my environment and the grandparents with whom I work. As I travel doing the work of Völva I try to connect with people and traditions in the lands I visit. The more I understand the specific place, the better I can blend my Norse traditions peacefully along side the environmental spirits and ancestors of each place I hold ceremony, especially in the United States where the diversity of spirit is represented in every community. In developing relationships with vaettir, I recommend caution and assistance from others who have spent time cultivating these relationships.

Start with your ancestor altar, the pebble that starts the rings in the pond. Extend your attention to your household vaettir, then your gardens, and then your outer environment. Continue your explorations of the spiritual world, but always return to your core, the first pebble, your ancestors.

Journeying with Völva Stav

You will have noticed that through practice of alignment using voice and stav, you have already begun to achieve a state of seidr. Journey requires this state of consciousness. It is difficult to describe how it feels to enter into this state and as I question my students, I find that they are all sensing different things in different parts of their bodies.

When we begin to journey, the first thing is declaring the intention. If we are seeking specific information, wishing to meet ancestors, healing personal oorlog, or sending healing to a friend, we need to have a use and purpose to our journey. Next we begin to stav a rhythm and start singing the vardlokkr, inviting the worlds into alignment. We visualize and sing our bodies into alignment feeling solid with the rhythm and grounded in the tree. At this point my eyes are usually closed and visuals begin to play out like a movie in my third eye space (forehead between my eyebrows). The vibrations of stav, tein and voice engage all parts of your brain, encouraging unity of vibration. This is what causes the seidr state to engage fully.

There is a quieting to the energy. The forehead or scalp may begin to tingle and breath becomes deeper and slower. Very often I am given songs to sing when in this state. This is the point at which fylgia or disr present them selves. If I am looking into the web for someone else, it is at this time that I may receive the information they need. As stav and breath/tone and vision continue, the rhythm will ebb and flow with the shifting energy. You may experience a point where tein stops and stav becomes infrequent.

When I am ready to return to “Midgard Consciousness” my breath begins to speed up a bit and I use the tein to sound the patterns for my return. The use of voice, stav and tein to build the energy up again helps maintain the connection to our physical bodies. In Appendix One there are exercises to get you started. I have also re-printed a journey song written in 2005 for you to follow as you wish.

You will journey and travel as you and your guides see fit. That is the main point of this manual. Pick up a staff and start doing the work. Keep track of your work and set goals for personal healing. Find others who are interested in doing this work and go for it. It will evolve for you, change and shift. You may ground through the tree in a completely different way after a year or two of working this program. Excellent! This manual is a map but this is your trip.

Using Völva Stav in a Healing Session

You will find so many uses for Völva Stav in your healing practice. Here is just one example of a healing ritual performed at the end of one of my work shops.

We begin by stretching out. This is no passive journey work. In my sessions we begin with breath, complete and deep. I teach the rune Isa, ice with our staving, Nauthiz the need fire by adding tein. We sing the invocation, Komme Alle (Tauring 2005). Then it's time to do some work. On this particular day, an advanced student came with a healing request. Her friend in Michigan was rushing to complete some tasks and broke her foot.

Karin pulled a rune from the basket to guide the healing intention and energy. It was Hagalaz, hail storm, the rune that starts the middle aett of the Elder Futhark. Following this rune are Isa and Nauthiz. We began by talking about the abrasive clearing and cleaning properties of Hagalaz, hail storm. Then we began to stav the rhythm of the rune and play with the stresses on the word. HAGalaz, haGAlaz, hagalAZ, staving and playing. Some of us played with the vowels long and lovely. Some of us sang the assonance of the consonant breath, summoning the winds (haaa, ga, lasssssz)

Someone started with Isa and another Nauthiz, we played in this way until I was summoned to the table in the middle. The other four women continued to play while I searched for a good vessel to put the magic into from among the tools on the table.

I spied the drop spindle and tried a few things. The women were building up a nice eye of the storm for me. I struck an archers pose and wouldn't you know, I was pointing right at Michigan when I began to unwind the already spun thread. Karin was to the right of me, in the SW corner. I was facing south with my front body, my right hand held the spindle and I pointed between the heads of the women in the NE and East. On this continent, indigenous peoples often put the doorways in this direction, where the pattern keepers live, the web weavers/frith holders of the circle.

As the women worked the wind circle, I sucked it up through the straw in my spine and sent it out through the wool thread. I felt it land in the recipient's lap and coil up like a cat. Round and round her it went, soft and fluffy.

Then I called out her name and said, "Embrace the void that Hagal has left. Do not move, be as ice. Do not spark the need fire until you are absolutely sure you are on the path you have been born to walk." I heard ladies calling out "Embrace the Void", and "Hagalaz", and it sounded for everything like a Swedish Heathen Baptist summoning of the Spirit!

I started winding the thread back in along with my breath and we all sucked in deep and long and exhaled with intentions for her healing, clear path, and doing without doing. I rolled the yarn back to the spindle and the core energy came back in. I stopped at the fulcrum, the point of the spin where the un-spun wool meets the tight spin.

Women were just breathing now. I found the spot and splayed the wool through my fingers. With my right hand on the spindle's stav, I summoned the core of the energy up through my feet, my spine the spindle the thread spiral and into the small hole between spun and un-spun universe.

I spoke our intention to the recipient again, into the un-spun side of the hole and began to spin her new thread. The energy of the spun line flowed up and gathered with the un-spun intention.

When the inches of new thread were done, I unwrapped a few inches of the spun and broke the line. I tied that end in first. Then I tied in the new end. Then I tied a knot in the middle. I rolled it in my palms and blew on it saying encouraging things to her from us, then held it out in my left palm. The four women of the circle placed their hands around like a great round Yurt of working women's palms. Oh the tingles!

We received emails from her immediately asking what we had done. Karin will send the healing knots to her in the mail and it's up to her to do the rest.

Living as a Völva

This is a culturally specific system and an ancestor tradition. You need to explore your own varied Nordic heritage and connect to it through the gods and goddesses, myths, traditions, folk songs, dances, foods, art forms and the old languages of traditional culture. Incorporate these things into your life.

In the lore many of the Völvas tended to live utgard, outside of the community. For me it is essential that I do not join a kindred or make an oath to a specific group. In this way I can stay outside and impartial as members of the larger community seek my advice. There is historical precedence for Völvas to commit to a specific chieftain. This is a personal choice and you may wish to find a Heathen practice group or kindred. Either way, however, it is essential for Völvas to get together to share practices and perceptions. There is some evidence of educational institutions for Völvas in the ancient past. It is my experience that only when we meet as seidr workers and healers to share our ways can we be truthful to the creation of our tradition. What's more, Völva Stav works best in groups of three or more who come together to create the fabric of sound that vibrates the web of wyrd.

Völvas are wise persons, learned. Study all the Indo-European traditions, Scandinavian, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic. They are parts of the whole picture. Finnish and Sami tribes lived in close contact and shared much with the Indo-European tribes. They too should be studied and investigated. Nordic culture groups are wonderful and help move cultural

study into community building. On-line groups are fine but also get in touch with dance groups, language groups and heritage foundations. Learn to sing in the language of your heritage, learn to dance the folk dances. These things will bring you into the living folk soul!

Follow the yearly ritual cycle of nature. As seasons change and ritual work shifts to accommodate, do personal and group ritual around the sacred year. Personal ritual and ceremony includes blot (offering with horn), sweat ceremony (sauna or pirtz), moon time rituals for women, ritual foods prepared and eaten at specific times of the year (such as sun wheel cookies at Jule). Getting into the mindset of our ancestors means living closer to nature and closer to the cycles of the year. We are a nature spiritual and ancestral tradition.

The question of “creating ritual space” has come up often as we reconstruct ancient ways. In my opinion, the mindset of my ancestors was that everything we do and are is infused with sacred nature so there is no reason to “draw a circle” or declare sacred space. There is no distinction in the ancient mind between sacred and mundane. The use of vardlokker is less about creating space for ritual than calling the spirits into the ritual. Evidence of creating an altar or ve to honor ancestors or land wights abounds even into the Immigrant era. Often there was a special sacred tree planted on the farm that would receive the offerings and concentrate the energy of prayers.

Ritual Drink

Indo-European tradition has always practiced ritual with sacred drink. From soma in Hindu tradition to mead in the Germanic tradition, to the cup of coffee always at the ready for guests who may appear in the kitchens of Scandinavians across the Midwest, sharing a drink that was special, time consuming to make or expensive to purchase is an on-going tradition. Many a tea-totaling farm wife would make herbal wines for use in medicine or “incase the pastor stops by.” The liquid of sacred drink connects us to the wells at the roots of the tree. Special drinks bind us together in a communion of being and can create obligations and promises between neighbors, friends, and family. Drinks that are fermented to an alcoholic state are said to come from the gods and can alter our reality. The Havamal (Odin’s advice column) is full of warnings about excessive drink. If alcohol is used, it should be reserved for special occasions and rituals such as the blot. I have begun using home brewed Kombucha, a non-alcoholic, fermented tea called *kvass* in Russia where it was developed. The drink is alive and interactive, ritually prepared, and has potential health benefits. In the healing of inherited cultural grief, one of the major dysfunctions is alcoholism. Kombucha gives us a wonderful alternative!

Horn Ritual



Get yourself a drinking horn. The horn is a symbol of the wells of the tree, the womb of the mother, and the sacred cow who kept us alive on milk, butter, and cheese during the dark cold times, the sacred cow that migrated with us from the Indus Valley and the fifth sacred race from the Milky Way. Using the cow horn as a vessel connects us to the most ancient icon of indigenous European traditions. For your first use of the horn, stand as the Venus of Laussel (from the cave cave sculpture). Hold the horn in your right hand and place your left hand on your belly. A circuit is created from the incoming left side to the out going right side and back into your root system. As thirteen staves were etched into her horn, thirteen moons we must attend to. Dedicate your horn to ritual use, fill it with healing liquid and offer it to yourself and your disr at each new moon to prepare you for the growth of the month. Drink your prayers and pour them into the Earth.

When you speak prayers with a horn, you add your words to the well. Never speak anything you do not mean, never use the horn to curse or promise something you can not accomplish. Never let another speak into your horn un-checked. The work of keeping the horn pure is the office of Valkyrie. As Völva you must be familiar with this role. In a large gathering, the Valkyrie carries the horn from one person to the next, hearing their prayers and correcting or eliminating anything that issues from their mouths that she deems unfit to enter the well. Völva are generally solitary practitioners. When you take up the horn you will feel the presence of a Valkyrie, for me this is often Skuld.

As a solitary practitioner I developed my horn rituals with my disr as they directed and as need dictated. Requirements shift and change within the ebb and flow of my ritual life. The Horn is the Womb is the Well and the Norms and Valkyries who protect the integrity of the flow are present at all times when the Horn is raised whether in private or in public.

In my personal practice there are four who guard the well, Urd, Verthandi, Skuld and Hela. They are the four faces of the goddess and a complete cycle. These four stand at my left foot, perineum, right foot and grounding point (extending from the perineum to what ever well I am rooting in) consecutively. They form a horn for me, a three sided pyramid, the Valknut reconfigured inter-dimensionally. This configuration happens any time I raise a horn in ceremony.

Blot and Sumble

Blot (pronounced bloat) means blood and indicates sacrifice. In ancient times the blood of the sacrificed animal is mixed with the mead and passed around or sometimes sprinkled on the attendees. At a recent blot in Michigan the blood of the ram and ewe sacrificed was caught in a bowl. The gythia (priestess) went around the circle putting a finger print of blood on the forehead of each participant in a blessing. Modern Heathens often use a sacrifice of a hand made object, food or home brew as the “blot.” There are some others who use the term *Faining*, as there is not a “real blood” sacrifice being done. Some Heathens use the term blot for any ritual with the horn dedicated to a god or goddess.

A Formal Sumble (sometimes spelled Symbel) is a ritual consisting of three rounds. The first round honors the old gods or your special patron. The woman in the role of Valkyrie fills the horn with sacred drink (mead, cider, ale, herbal preparations et cetera), and brings it from person to person in the assembly. Each one holds the horn and speaks prayers into it saying “Hail” when they are finished speaking. The assembly repeats the hail as the worshipper drinks from the horn and hands it back to the Valkyrie who offers it to the next person. When the round is finished, the rest of the liquid is poured into a bowl on the altar. The horn is filled again for the next round which is to honor the ancestors. Some Asatru may ladle some from the bowl into the horn as well.

The ancestor round is a time to recollect the oorlog that created you, praise the worthy deeds of the past generations and seek healing for the traumas or ill deeds done. The third round is personal and community oriented, designed to give words to the good works you or others have done. Saying aloud what you are proud of is very important because you are voicing the oorlog for your children, the next generation. Give thanks to your community members and the good works of others. Hail, drink, and pour the last horn into the bowl.

Once the ritual is finished, the Valkyrie takes up the altar bowl and with cedar or other sprigs of herbs sprinkles liquid from the bowl, blessing each member of the assembly, sometimes she will bless the altar and the four directions as well. The ritual closes as the rest of the contents of the bowl are poured into the Earth. From the well our oorlog rises and to the well it does return. In the lore it is the goddess Fulla who hears the oaths and toasts. A Mimirfull is a toast to the memory of someone, a Bragifull is a boast or toast to a job well done.

An Oath done over a horn in a sumble must have been discussed and arbitrated before it is spoken. The oath must be reasonable and achievable and there must be a consequence if the oath is not fulfilled. Whether you practice solitary or in a group, you must be very cautious with your words.

When I am invited to a group blot, I configure my energetic horn and decide whether to add or mix my oorlog with the assembly. When there is an assembly of folk newly met, it is up to the host and the Valkyrie to fully explain the rules of the ritual. There are some folk who won't allow certain gods from the Norse pantheon or from other cultures to be

hailed. Most people rightly do not allow mean spirited talk in their ritual or oaths that have not been discussed.

There are many reasons why I would not participate in a blot. When in the capacity of Volva, performing and doing work shops, I won't stay up too late. I really need my rest so that my mind and voice are clear. If I do not know the assembled folk, I may only choose to participate in the first round which gives me a good understanding of the energy of the assembly and my own energy level. If the blot is for a specific kindred or group of which I am not a member, my participation is contingent on personal invitation.

When I design a blot with another group, the laws of the ritual are fully fleshed out in advance. Those laws are the oorlog of the ritual. The laws of the ritual must be explained by the host or Valkyrie before the horn is even filled. If the laws of the ritual are broken (which can happen if the planning wasn't fully fleshed out or not fully understood) then the women who carry the Horn and are the FrithWomb of the assembly must address it and decide if the oorlog can be repaired or if the well itself is closed.

Kissing the horn rather than drinking out of it is a practice that we have in the Midwest which allows participation and commitment to the common oorlog without consumption of liquid. This is important due to the varied relationships people have with alcohol.

When I was in Norway last May participating in the reality show "Alt for Norge," I was filmed doing a horn blot with the other contestants. Only the host and I knew what it meant. The tv producers didn't know there were rules so it was all pretty random. I was able to step up to the horn as Valkyrie for myself, do my three rounds at once, model the behavior I wanted them to emulate, and leave at peace. The host, Georg Hanson, appreciated this and the rest of the feast went just fine. The authenticity of this moment was not left out in the editing because authenticity makes good tv.

Sweat and Bath Ritual

From historical evidence we know that Northern Europeans were very meticulous groomers, keeping ears free of wax, beards trimmed and neat, and nails clean and polished. Grooming kits were often included in grave finds as old as the Bronze Age. Bathing rituals did undergo scrutiny and suspicion during the Christian era as Europeans switched from a body/soul/mind integrated mindset – the body being the vessels of godly inheritance - to the idea of body as a necessary evil to hold the soul. By the time Europeans began to settle in the Americas they were so far removed from bathing ritual that the Native peoples could barely stand the smell of them.

Sweat rituals were kept alive into modern times in Baltic, Finnish, Russian and Sami culture. In Iceland, the sweat was replaced by the sulfur baths (Sturlebaths). The Finns in Minnesota kept the sauna rituals alive. The Native sweat ritual was also saved from destruction and is practiced in many areas. In 1987 I was invited into the sweat lodge ceremonies of some Lakota women on the Wilder Nature Reserve.

I participated in Sami sweat in 2009 led by Lee Hilfiger, a Sami/Finnish elder in Wisconsin. It is done in three rounds that curiously mirror the blot ritual. The first round honors the gods, the second honors the ancestors, and the third round is for the living community members. In between rounds one leaves the heat to douse with cold water and whisk with birch bundles.

Even as a young girl, I intuitively practiced three basic rounds in sweat ritual. I tend to roll in the snow between rounds during winter months and plunge into the cold lake in summertime. You find that by the third round, your body has reached a state of equilibrium rarely achieved through any other means. In my twenties I began using the sacred water in the sauna to draw runes on the cedar planks and count the breaths in *galdr* as the image evaporates. Often by the second round I could feel the very real presence of spirit beings or ancestors.

In Finish and Baltic tradition, the fire is a goddess and the steam is an animated spirit. I have begun using the horn to honor the fire, then the steam, then the ancestors. As we breathe the steam we are breathing in divinity. Again, smoke and steam travel inter-dimensionally (as well as sound). When our pores open and release toxins, we can have visions, hear the voices of the gods or ancestors, and feel our inter-dimensional bodies come into alignment. The shock of the cold between rounds clears our minds, snaps us into the most amazing sense of present moment. This is the moment when realizations and inspirations occur and are understood (the *rune kenaz*).

Using the birch switches to slap the skin increases circulation and everywhere in the Northern Hemisphere, Birch is a goddess figure. A Votic women's ritual whisking of the bride before her sauna song provides instructions for creating the birch twig switches used to slap at the skin for circulation, exfoliation, and healing. Birch oil is antiseptic and restorative. In this Votic song we find instructions for four rounds of sweat with the magical waters from four different sources giving the bride wisdom from the sea water, luck from the spring water etc.

I am still researching the lost threads of sweat rituals in the Germanic and Scandinavian tradition. In my Scandinavian grandmother's household the adage "cleanliness is next to godliness" was everywhere apparent. As the *Völva* and witches were demonized, they were pictured as dirty with homes full of cob webs and bats. I suspect that the reality was much different. As modern practitioners we can piece these things together and create wonderful, meaningful ritual for ourselves, our families, and our communities.

When doing sweat, always stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water to wash the toxins out of you internally. Having a massage and seeing a chiropractor are wonderful ways of keeping your bodies aligned and tuned up. As *Völva* we must keep our physical bodies clear, clean, purified and fortified.

Nutrition and Folk Foods

Good nutrition is important for life vitality and spiritual endurance. Eating food we have grown ourselves creates an intimate and internal bond with our land *vaettir*. Praying over

our food infuses it with intention, honors it and the source of life, and grounds and centers our bodies to receive the maximum benefit of our food and drink. Certain foods are the domain of certain deities. It is best to research these and thank those patrons directly.

There is a theory of “indigenous food” diet. Research what foods your most ancient ancestors ate and begin to experiment with them in your own diet. Some researchers believe that our bodies are genetically keyed into the foods of our ancestors. The use of potatoes, tomatoes, and other night shade vegetables has become common place in European cultures, though they are indigenous only to the Americas. These are the first foods to be eliminated from the diets of many Scandinavians with arthritis. It is an interesting thing to explore.

Recipes that have been handed down in families tie the oorlog of that family together. Exploring these recipes and historical cook books can tell us volumes about our ancestors. What foods were ritualized at what times of year and why always have their roots in the pre-Christian culture. An example of this is sun-wheel cookies at Juletide. The herbs and healing preparations are not far behind the dinner recipes. Check the libraries and church cook books for what information they can reveal.

Dance, music, song and language

This is a place where there is both deep loss and great salvation in Norse tradition. Ritual song and dance was made illegal with the coming Christianity, as were runes and runelore. Yet they were preserved in folk songs, dances and nursery rhymes. Ironically, the folk traditions were saved in Norway by the church itself as the Nazi invasion sought to oppress the folk ways.

The language in the songs is the next level of discovery. An Anishinabe elder once said that if you don't have the language and the songs you can't do the ceremonies. Folk songs and dances throughout Norway reveal the specific personality of the district from which they come. The dialects, rhythms, and tunes from one side of the fjord to the other are unique to that small area. German folk songs trace the development of the language and the people from the earliest works to the most recent. Old Norse, the grandmother of all Scandinavian languages, is the language of the lore. Listen to tapes or on-line recordings of how to pronounce the words, names, and concepts in your stav practice. These are important things, flavors of the folk soul that a staff carrier will want to immerse herself in. The language, tunes, and rhythms shake our genetic memory and tie us to the mother-land through the mother-tongue.

As a rhythm system, stav can accompany the traditional folk songs and dances to add depth and dimension to both the song and dance as it deepens stav practice. Seek out recordings, performers, and dance groups who are working to preserve the folk material and work with them if you can. Since my practice of Völva began with the folk material, I have been able to let my genetic memory flow through time and space with the music and language. The immigrant material has been grounding and fertile for the deep root of my practice.

Sleep and Dream Time

Our bodies and minds work best when we are well rested. Dreaming is a major tool for the work of Völva. Being asleep removes our ego and judgment from the flow of imagery our subconscious mind or our patron spirit guides want us to experience. Your sleep space should be clean, free of distraction and protected energetically. Try to keep electronics away from your bed area as they emit energy that can disturb and affect the web of wyrd and your own chi. Völva Stav, meditation and sleep are all ways to change the electric impulses of our brains, slow them down and align the mind complex with the bodies and soul complexes that create our total being.

Keep a dream diary. Twenty five years of keeping a dream journal has given me insight and understanding to the patterns of symbolism in my life. The same characters and situations that arise over and over again have made their way into the awake-time. Learning to recognize dream levels from daily drama to prophetic revelation is very important. By doing dream work you will soon come to recognize and identify the energy of symbols or characters (spirit guides, disr, deities) as they appear in dreams or while journeying.

Our ancestors reckoned the day from sunset to sunset. In this way we can prepare for the next days work by first dreaming it. Rest and dream time, then the awake and action oriented time, followed again by rest, reflection, and preparation is the natural cycle of Daeg for our ancestors. As you begin viewing the world in this way, you become closer to the mind set of the ancients whose arts we are taking up.

Rune Postures and Martial Arts

In my twenties, I found it completely natural to begin seeing the rune shapes in the way I held my body or manipulated my hands. I was studying Eastern martial arts and found the rune shapes within many of the stances and within the forms. Others have found this as well. There are books on “rune yoga” and even a full martial arts system coming out of Norway that uses the Younger Futhark runes as postures for martial arts (Hafskjold Stav). You may wish to seek out an existing tradition or just begin playing with it on your own. Using our body, stav, and tein to create the shapes of the runes is extremely instructive. Take some time each day to stretch and move your body. Begin seeing the rune shapes in your movements. Add to your movements the breath and sound of the rune shapes you make. Because the runes are integrated with nature, when we integrate our bodies with the runes we can access further the secrets of nature and more fully align with the Earth and the world tree.

Threshold Times and Utsetti

Often you will find wise women standing in the threshold between the kitchen and the dining or living room. The threshold is a pregnant place, neither here nor there, full of potential and possibility. It represents Ginungagap. It’s a great place to pause and think.

There are obvious transitional times within the cycles of the day, month, and year. Being aware of and connected to these cycles helps us flow emotionally and physically with them. This keeps us close to the center of the world tree, balanced within the movement of the planets and the orbits of the nine worlds. Doing ritual at these times increases our awareness, aligns our bodies with the cycles, and honors change. It can be simple as a prayer or song or as elaborate as a parade.

Solstices and Equinoxes are threshold times. During these transitional times the other worlds of the tree come closer or spiral farther away. At Midsummer, Vanaheim and Ljosalfheim are closer to Midgard than during Midwinter. So it is a great time to do ritual for/with the Vanir and the Alfar. During the cold months, the Wild Hunt takes place. Odin rides out with the Valkyrie to collect souls that won't make it through the winter.

Moon phases have always provided potent times for doing specific ritual or spell work. Using the waxing moon to draw things to you and the waning moon for diminishing energy is common. Mani, the moon god, is master of calculations and can be entreated to assist in the use of intuitive geometry in Earth works and other uses.

Sunrise and sunset have been honored with prayer, ritual, and song in nearly every culture. The Balts still sing the morning and evening songs to Saule the sun goddess. Singing galdr at sunset holds a special power. One staff carrier, Yngona Desmond, recommends you place your staff on the ground and look East between your legs to see magically. I love to hang upside down and look at the tree branches as though they were roots. It gives a new view to the runes I find there.

Utsetti is the ritual of sitting out. It is the ritual of vision quest. In the Voluspa this is where Odin has found the seer, sitting out with her staff. It is one of the most important rituals to come to as a Völva because it tests us in so many ways. To be alone in the wild places, to sit in meditation and contemplation, to lean on our staves as our bodies undergo the transformations that the elements and lack of food, water and sleep put us through is essential to the advancement of our practices. As understood in the lore, a Völva will prepare for several days, cleansing the body. When she is ready, she will go out to an isolated area, a cave or bare cabin or tent in the woods. There she will fast, chant, and pray. In these modern times it is difficult to find such a place to go. There are silence retreat centers which could work. If you are lucky enough to have land in a remote area you can begin working up to an out-sit.

For me, the Equinoxes have been the best times, threshold times, to practice utsetti. I usually do a colon and liver cleanse while doing Spring and Fall house cleaning. After a few days of this I am ready to retreat. Sometimes I am able to go away to the woods but sometimes I am only able to out-sit in my Minneapolis back yard. If this is the case, I sit under my usual tree and tune in to all the noises of the neighborhood. The sounds become the song of the web in this area. In these cases I am only able to sit for a few hours with cloak and stav. The balance achieved through even minor observance of utsetti and other ritual at the Equinoxes is essential to my sanity through the rest of the year. Utsetti is an essential part of our deep tradition that we must reclaim. I hope to lead some Völva Stav

retreats at our family land in the next few years where more extensive out-sitting may be able to happen.

As you work with Völva Stav your bodies will align and the spirit world aligns with our daily existence, the mundane and the sacred lose distinction. This is the ultimate goal for the modern human who would follow their ancestral folk ways. Finding our path back to an integrated body, mind and spirit connection with self and the world is, I believe, the only way we can heal our broken world. Hearing nature is the only way we will stop abusing her. Remembering our ancestor's pain is the only way we can stop perpetuating it on ourselves and others. Living in the joy of our unique oorlog and how it connects us to our specific ancestral folk way allows us to connect to the unity of humanity as one large and beautiful family. This manual is a tool to finding this path. You must write your own chapter and share it in order to make the book of humanity complete.

Pick up your stav and begin your journey!

Apendix One

Exercise for Mott and Megin

Relax your body and close your eyes. Begin to breathe deeply. Draw your attention to your toes. Tighten the muscles in your toes and feet. Feel the muscles constrict. Breathe in. As you release your breath, release the tension in your toes. Feel the tingle of megin as they relax.

Now move up your calves, tighten them with the inhale, hold it, then release and let go. Move up the rest of your body, torso, shoulders, arms and fingers, neck and face. Now tighten up your entire body with the inhale and hold it as long as you can. On the release, feel the energy. This is the interplay of mott, megin and onde.

Exercise for Hugin and Munin

Begin by aligning with the tree. This may be done while staving or as a quiet relaxation. Sink your roots into the three wells. Allow the energy to rise up your roots and spiral up your spine. When the energy reaches the back of your skull, focus it on your right brain. This is the place of deep memory, the whole view of things. Feel the energy begin to take shape. See it in your mind's eye. This is your munin. Feel your munin lift to your skull, your scalp. What is forming? A bird, animal, insect? Let it lift off your head and rest on your right shoulder.

Now breathe into your roots again and spiral that energy into the base of your skull. Let it pool up in your left brain, let it form. Allow the energy of your left brain to take shape. See it in your mind's eye. Let it rise to the skull, the scalp. What is forming? Let it lift off your head and rest on your left shoulder. This is your hugin.

Stay balanced and still as you get used to the feeling of thought and memory resting outside of your head. These are your creatures, your thought and memory. You may summon them up to fare forth for you into the nine worlds. Breathe with them, greet them, ask them their other names.

Now they are moving back onto your head and dissolving into the energy of your inhale. Inhale deeply, and feel them dissolve like water, refreshing your brain, bathing your brain in the newness of their beings. As you exhale, mistaken thoughts and old useless thought-patterns leave with your breath. As you inhale, the alert and pondering energy of hugin and munin integrate. Exhale useless or old thoughts, inhale wisdom.

Let your energy move down your spine and connect to your roots. Feel your body solid and supple like a tree. Open your eyes and become aware of your surroundings in a new and refreshed way.

Exercise for Connecting Hamr and Hamingja

Align with the world tree. As you stav, feel the vibrations through your body. Breathe into the mott and megin, and feel the energy generate throughout your bodies. Build up the rhythm, and let your voice soar. When you have reached a peak, slow to a stop and grasp your stav and tein together. Feel the hairs on your skin moving. Feel the energy of your hamr floating a few inches above your skin. Let your hamr disconnect from the shell of your mott and accumulate in the belly area where the stav and tein are resting. Let the energy begin to take form.

Ask your hamr to take the shape of your kin fygla. Wait and breathe while this formation is taking place. If you are moved to begin staving again, do so. It will be a new rhythm for you. Start slowly, and allow the vision of your hamr to direct the rhythm of the stav and tein. As the bird, animal, or insect begins to form, sing into it. Use your voice to give vibration to the hamr. The vibration of voice and stav gives the hamr solidity. When the hamr is solid, you may ask it questions or follow it on a journey. What does it want you to do? What do you want to do?

When you are ready, see yourself embrace your hamingja. As you do, it begins to dissolve back into energy. The energy accumulates at the belly, and you begin to stav and breathe it in. The energy reintegrates with your body, and you can feel it tickle your skin. Come into your present awareness and ground your roots and trunk. Breathe into the presence of your surroundings. You may feel it throughout the day, hovering a few inches from your body.

Again I stress, take notes after doing these exercises. Research the creature you see. With hamingja, it will be an animal that is sacred to your family line. It may appear on a family crest or have predominance in paintings or decorations in your family home. It may come in the form of preference in pets or farm animals. Look for symbols of your hamingja everywhere. By the same token, be careful not to assume that an animal form, even if taken by a known ancestor, is representative of the hamingja.

You will want to do this exercise for your hamr only, asking your hamr to take other shapes. Ask your hamr to take a native shape, a shape that you will always recognize as your hamr, a starting point for shape shifting. Record your dreams and track your hamr as it begins to manifest in the dream time. Other exercises for hamr include allowing your hamr to cloak you entirely while you are walking in a public place. See how affective it can be. People will not see you. Ask your hamr to shine like gold, attracting attention and see how people react to you. These are important ways to “play” with your energy body so you can control your hamr like a new found muscle.

The Journey, (Tauring 2005)

Eagle, hawk, and cock I see
perched up in the branches three
Four winds, journey deer, move across the crown
(Astri, Vestri, Sudri, Nordri)
Ratatosk, journey squirrel, I am moving down
(chick, chick, chick, chick-chreeeee)
Nine worlds, three wells, the journey has begun
Nine worlds, three wells, breathe as we go down

1st Stage

Alfheim – Vanneheim – ancient elves and gods
Worlds, I see them, two of nine across
Alfheim – Vannehiem – Freyja bless my passing
Skirt the river Ifling

Midgard, human home another of the nine
Asgard, Odin’s land, bless me as I ride
Urdarbrunner, first well, guarded by the Norns
Urdarbrunner, well of fate, Urd, Verdandi, Skuld

Ride away, ride away, North we go and all
(Rida, Rida, Rida, Riii, Nordri alle com mit mir)

2nd Stage

Down and down and deeper still, to the Northern land we ride
Muspelheim, the seeds of all, primordial the fiery tide
Niflheim and Hel’s domain, water raging, Hvergelmir
Worlds collide, sparks and steam, the source of rivers flowing clean
Who guards the wellspring of creation? Nidhögg the Water Dragon!
(Nidhögg, Ginungagap – Astri, Astri, Rida vi, Astri, Astri com mit mir)

3rd Stage

East the path that Odin took, riding through the worlds again
To the world of Nidavelier, through the world of Svartalfheim
In Svartalfheim the dark elves dwell, but Jötunheim contains the well
Cross the river deadly cold, river Ifling never froze
(Cross the Ifling, deadly cold, river Ifling never froze)

Jötunheim, the giant’s land, rock and frost, the bane of man
Down and down the root we go, beneath the world the sacred well
Mimir guards the water there, water Etn primordial!

4th Stage – at Mimirbrunner

Mimir wisest of them all, drinking freely from the well

Your name means ponder, seeing, gaze
Your name in our own tongues we praise
(Remembering, pondering, seeing knowing)

Mimir wisest of them all, drinking from the Gjallerhorn
Memory of all that's known, ponder, seeing, gazing shown
Wisdom seekers at your well, sing your praise, ask to gaze
Odin's eye looks back at us, reflections of the ancient days
Look, see, remember
Look, see, remember
Look, see, remember

5th Stage

(change to pols rhythm, then vowel sounds chant – ah, eh, ee, oh, ooo)

I see, I know, I remember, many thanks
I see, I know, I remember, many thanks (manga takk)

Pull yourselves from Mimir' well, horses ready to return
Bring with you the wisdom piece, remembering the knowledge learned
Prepare for change for as we go, wisdom is transforming you
Share with us what you do know, that we all may learn it too

I see, I know, I remember, many thanks
I see, I know, I remember, many thanks (tusen takk)

Back up through the worlds we ride, Mannaheim our human home
We are changed, all life renewed, through the wisdom that was shown

Songs and Chants

The following songs and chants were written specifically for Völva Stav or are traditional songs incorporated into Völva Stav.

Komme Alle, Norse invocation or Vardlokker, (Tauring, 2003)

Komme, komme alle. Alle sangen eohl.

Gifu, gifu, mannaheim. Komme, komme alle.

Come, come everyone. Everyone sing ehol.

Gifu, gifu, manaheim. Come, come everyone.

Austri, Vestri, Sudri, Nordri – Velkommen, alle sammen.

Riding Out

This children's song in Norwegian and Swedish has many versions. This one comes from Ross Sutter, written down phonetically.

Ride, Ride Ranke, hesten heiter blanke. Var skal du rida?

Jok skal vood og fria, tilen liten viga?

Riding, riding, riding, on your white horse striding. Where will you go riding?

In the deep woods hiding? Or the green field gliding?

Rida, rida, rida vi! Rida, rida, com mit mir!

Riding, riding, riding we, riding, riding come with me.

How do we honor you? (Tauring, 2004)

This is a group song in three parts for honoring trees and the stavs they give us.

1. Take up a branch that freely fell, ask it nice and listen well

Take it with you if it is pleased, work it with your hands and feet.

Carve it here, adorn it there, stav it on the threshing floor.

Listen to the song it sings, share your song within the ring.

2.

Call:

Echo tree

Echo tree

Echo tree

Response:

up and down my spine

my spine is mine

my wooden horse

All: Through the worlds I safely ride

Call: (kinds of trees, ie,. Oak is here...) Response: Above

3. Up and down and up my spine, roots in deep and branches high.

Chants:

Austri Vestri Sudri Nordri

(East west south north, Old Norse - also names of the four dwarves that hold up the world)

Urdu, Verdandi, Skuldu

(the three Norns)

Ah, Eh, Eee, Oh, Ooo

(primary vowel sounds, these are the same in Spanish, Norwegian, Hopi – they are considered the first sounds of nature)

“I’m ready, I’m willing, I’m able, I am deserving” repeat

Any of the Runes may be used in chant, but please know what you are singing about and how you are using them!

Norse Disr Chant, arranged for rhythm (Tauring, 2003)

Nerthus, Summa, Freya, Frigg

Hulda, Skadi, Pertcha, Hnoss

Ingun, Gulvieg, Lucia

Sunna, Ranna, Neidda,

Holle, Nanna, Thorgerd, Sif

Mardoll, Edda, Hela, Urd

Gefion, Eir, Sjofn, Lofn

Var, Vor, Syn og Saga

Snotra, Lin, Fulla, Gna

Nanna, Sigyn, Iduna

Gjalp og Greip og Bestla mor

Komme Alle, Alt for Jord

Elder Futhark:

							
F	U	Th	A	R	K	G	W/V
							
H	N	I	J/Y	Ei/ae	P	Z	S
							
T	B	E	M	L	Ing	D	O

Glossary:

Audumbla – This is the name Scandinavian mythology gave to the cow that wandered the plains in the earliest moments of creation. Ymir the giant drank from her milk and her sweet breath and licks at the salt uncovered the first man of the Aesir, Buri. Named Aditi in East Indian traditions, Hathor in Egyptian myth, the sacred cow is central to all Indo-European mythology including parts of Africa such as Tanzania. It is from the udders of the cosmic cow that our very galaxy, the Milky Way, was poured forth into creation.

Galdr – Galder derives from the same stem as gala “to crow” and galen “mad”. Galdralag is the poetic meter of galdr, spell/songs used to influence or direct energy (on the battle field or in healing). There are many examples from the eddas, sagas, and rune stones.

Gand-reið – Old Norse – wand riding. Faring forth or journeying. The Völva’s stav has been referred to as a gand and those of the elf kin who practiced this form of magic were called gand-alf.

Heimdall – An ancient god, said to have been born of nine giant women including Gjalp and Greip. He is described in the Rigsthula (The Lay of Rig) as fathering children among the human race. Great-grandmother births Thrall, Grandmother births Karl, Mother births Jarl and Jarl becomes a King, being tutored in magic and runes by Heimdall himself. I believe these describe epochs in the evolution of human consciousness as divinity is infused with our humanity. The seer in the Voluspa begins by asking for silence among Heimdall’s kin (which includes all living things). Heimdall guards the rainbow bridge connecting Asgard and Midgard. When the time of Ragnarok begins, he blows the Gjallerhorn (Resounding horn) to warn of the impending battles.

Huldre - plural n. hool'dr. – Huldra (female form) Mythological women of Scandinavia often having tails of a cow or cat, animals sacred to the Vanir goddess Freya. The women are reputed to have sexual appetites to match their patron and are said to lure human men into swamps and woods. They are credited with passing herding, churning and spinning/weaving techniques to human women and have been lumped into the general category of "Troll". Male form is huldu. Huldu gained the reputation of hard working and not that good looking. They were often lumped into the farm helper category with nisse.

Huldre Lokk - Lokking literally means calling with enticement and allure. Huldrelokk calls the huldre (cow-tailed fairy women). Lokking is used to call in the disr (ancestors), or naturae (land spirits). Vardlokker are calls for warding and enticing spiritual beings into the ritual. Wyrldokker are calls that penetrate through the dimensions of the world tree and affect the web of wyrd (like fate lines and ley lines).

Indus Valley – The flood plain region of northern India to the “fertile crescent” between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern day Iraq to the Anatolian peninsula. The Indo-European language family originates in this area which was home to one of the first

known “sedentary” cultures. It is here that the story of the Garden of Eden was originated. Weather changes causing flooding and drought and population expansion caused a clash between Aryan-Iranian nomadic culture and the settled agricultural communities of the Indus Valley resulting in the Indo-European migrations.

Nine Worlds – The three lower worlds are Niflheim, the world of ice and frost, Muspellheim, the world of fire, and Helheim the world between these two. Jotunheim, Midgard, and Svartalfheim are the three middle worlds. Vanaheim, Ljosalfheim and Asgard are the three upper worlds. These worlds orbit the world tree and come into close contact with one another throughout the cycles of their orbits. There are bridges connecting these worlds to one another and to Midgard, the world of humans.

Norns – The collective name for the race of women, especially the three sisters, Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld whose individual names indicate fate, being, and necessity respectively. Skuld is counted among the Valkyrie. They are older than the Aesir and the Vanir. They live by the well-spring of the second root of the world tree. Pouring water from the spring named Urdsbrunner onto the root, they keep the tree alive. The cosmic tree is the cosmos and the three sisters are the rune users who keep the cosmic balance in alignment. It is through these three that we really start to understand the astrological, cosmological, and scientific nature of what the runes are all about.

Odin – Woden, Wotan, and over 50 kennings (clever nick names). The Aesir god who changes and grows in the mythologies. As a co-creator he joins with his brothers to build worlds from the body of Ymir the progenitor giant they slew. He became the warrior god and chief of the Aesir, receiving dead warriors in his hall. Driven by the desire to be an All Father, he becomes the magician god, dying on the world tree to gain the insight of the runes, sacrificing his eye for a drink out of the well of wisdom and finally emasculating himself to learn women’s magic from Freya and his wife Frigg.

Ørlög, (oorlog)- Old Norse meaning ancient or primeval law. Alternate spellings are oorlag and urlag. DNA, environment, activities and beliefs of our ancestors creates our oorlog which form layers in the well of wyrd. The three Norns who guard, use, and direct oorlog are Urðr (Urd) meaning "That Which Is", Verðandi (Verdandi), "That Which Is Becoming" and Skuld "That Which is Necessary.” They score oorlog in our bones when we are created.

Runes – Scriptural representations of the Norse magical alphabet, the oldest known Germanic alphabet in Europe of Indo-European root dating to at least 200 ACE. It is called the FUTHARK for the first of its 24 letters F, U, TH, A, R and K. The shapes, sounds, and meanings represent elemental natural forces, deities, and concepts. Deep in tribal history, the Finno-Ugric tribes developed runos (nature magical and epic songs) while the Germanic and Scandinavian tribes developed the inscription process. During the Viking-era (700 – 1060’s ACE) the “younger futhark” was slimmed to 16 letters in Scandinavia while the Anglo-Saxons added to it creating a 33 rune alphabet. As it was mostly used for magical purposes, inscriptions, healing spells, etc. its use was banned by

the Christian church in the 1600s along with fiddles and some folk songs relating to magical practice.

Seið – Old Norse, alternative spellings *seidr*, *seith*, *seithr* is a state of being in heightened consciousness in order to perceive the web of *wyrd*. In this state a practitioner is able to communicate with nature entities, plants, animals, ancestors and send her *hamr*, *haminga* or other aspects of herself between the nine worlds.

Stav – means vertical line in Norwegian and refers to the staff and the vertical line in runes. The rune *isa* or *ice* is represented by one vertical line.

Tein – (*tayn*) in Norwegian a root sucker or thin rod used for hand spinning, rune carving, in martial arts, as a wand for healing and as a cross stick for making rhythm. The rune *nauthiz* is represented by the vertical line with a cross line and it means *need fire*. Ice and fire were the elements that created the world in Norse cosmology. By using *stav* and *tein* to strike rhythm, we insert ourselves in the process of creation. *Teinseið* is the practice of herbalism through plant communication.

Thorbjorg – a *Völva* from *Eric the Red's Saga* (originally written in the 13th Century CE). She performs a *Seið* ritual after *Gudrid* (a Christian woman) sings the *wyrdlokk*. *Thorbjorg* was the last of nine sisters who were all *volu*. It's possible that *Gudrid* had to sing because the sister who sang was now gone. All of the women in the village participated in this ritual, encircling *Thorbjorg* who sat on a high seat to receive the messages of the spirits called in through *Gudrid's* songs.

Tvuru – the top portion of a spruce tree cut and shaped into a stirring stick specifically for making *Rømmegrøt*, sour cream porridge given as bed food (*sengmat*) to new mothers and set out for the *norns* at the birth-time (*ornegraut*).

Vanir – The *Vanir* gods were the agricultural deities of early Scandinavia possibly pre-dating the *Aesir*. They were creative and pro-creative without taboos on sexuality, magical shape shifters, and lovers of gold. *Gullveig* (gold lover) was a *Vanir* lady persecuted by the *Aesir* (*Odin's* clan of deities). This started an un-winnable war. *Frejya* and *Freyr* were the twin children of *Njord*, *Vanir* chief, and potentially *Nerthus*, the Earth Mother worshiped in during the Bronze Age. The twins, along with *Njord*, were sent as hostages to the *Aesir* to keep the peace treaty. The *Aesir* sent *Mimir* and *Hod*.

Völva – Old Norse, meaning staff or wand carrier. *Völvas* were mostly *kona* (women), but there were some *manner* (men) who practiced *völva*. From the Icelandic sagas (13th Century ACE), *volva kona* are described as “shamanistic” healers, teachers, wise women, magicians, and ceremonial leaders. *Viti hon ganda*, from the *Voluspa Edda* (12th C) means “witty her magic wand.” In modern times, women world wide have been reclaiming this title and reconstructing the broken lines of Scandinavian women's spiritual traditions. The *völva* can be found in immigrant era songs and traditions in the *Kjerringa Med Staven* (dear lady with a *stav*) and *jordmor* (earth mother) or *doktor*

gamla (old lady doctor) who were the midwives and healers 16th – 20th C (see Kathleen Stokker, “Remedies and Rituals” 2007).

World Tree, Cosmic Tree – In Old Norse, *miötvíð*, the World Ash, Yggdrasil (Odin’s terrible steed), Irminsul the world pole was used, axis mundi, the Shaman’s pole, the stav, the broomstick, distaff, “Hobby Horse” are all names for the tree that runs through the center of the universe and connects all the worlds inter-dimensionally. The tree’s roots represent the under worlds and the branches represent the heavens. Our mundane reality is somewhere in the middle of the trunk (see nine worlds).

Wyrd – (or Web of Wyrd), the energetic ley lines of the Earth body and every thing on it. These energy lines contain information (the oorlag of things and beings) and connect all living things throughout the nine worlds. They originate in and eventually terminate in the Well of Wyrd, Urd’s well. The use of sound vibration can make the lines manifest, also using divining rods or other subtle energy work in a state of seid consciousness allows us to see and potentially change the web.

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Other Resources

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Vikinganswerlady.com

Northvegr.org

<http://web.me.com/wyrteacher/Widsith/Welcome.html>

shamanism.dk/welcome.html

hrafnar.org

<http://www.aswynn.co.uk/>

<http://www.vinlandsvolva.com/yngonadesmond.html>

iceandfire.uk

Voluspa Studies Yahoo Group, led by William Reaves

Wealthau Yahoo Group for women practicing Fornseid, led by Yngona Desmond

Countless songs from the Scandinavian middle ages through the immigrant era including nature mystical ballads, huldre lokk, medieval rune songs, folk songs, and interpretations of various rune stones found on-line and passed through oral tradition.

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