I would like to dedicate this thesis by offering special thanks to all the local Heathens in Hawai‘i both past and present who have allowed me into their homes in pursuit of my goals. Some have passed into the next world. I will not ever be able to repay them for the kindness that they have shown to me, not just for their openness about their Faith, but the openness of their hearts. I cannot thank them enough for their patience, candor, and goodwill. There are many things that I had to unlearn, and they were ever patient in explaining their worldview (sometimes many, many times). E.S. Craighill Handy explains;

The sincere student who desires to understand the inner meaning of any religion must be capable of a certain degree of self-surrender and adaptation. The day is rapidly passing, it is to be hoped, in which the study of religious beliefs as purely objective phenomena, capable of explanation in the light of reason alone, will continue to be an accredited academic method of interpreting any of the manifestations of worship. Religion, essentially an expression of a subjective reaction to the experience, if it is to be truly interpreted, requires the mystical and intuitional equally as much as the logical faculty of the mind.

Thank you to B.K., Ben-Ji, Donut-Witch, Hammer-Man, Honey-Bee, Joker, Rusty, Siege, Witch-Doctor, all the rest, and most of all Justin-Time.

Deyr fé,
deyja frændur,
deyr sjálfur íð sama;
en orðstír
deyr aldrégi
hveim er sér góðan getur.

Cattle die,
kinsmen die,
you yourself die;
One thing now
that never dies
the fame of a dead man’s deeds.

~The Prose Edda: Havamal, 76.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a special thanks to all of my mentors. I could not have completed this thesis without their support, patience, and grace. Dr. Ramda Lam’s foresight and expertise into indigenous Faiths was invaluable in working with the Vikings. Dr. Marie Alohalani Brown’s incredible aid in communicating both Folkways, and their importance to a burgeoning people, can’t be overstated. Dr. Abbie Neves’ comprehension of both military and veteran culture was instrumental in relating to a group in which 100% of the informants were military, military family members, or veterans. Last but not lease, I would like to especially thank Dr. Helen Baroni, for not just her incalculably contributory knowledge of New Religious Movements, but for her tireless perseverance in aiding me to complete this work. I cannot thank you all enough. I would also like make an apology ahead of time for any coarse vulgarisms. I am transcribing verbatim the dialogue of sailors and soldiers, whose colorful turns of phrases and word choices may seem crass. Yet this is how they talk, and I feel that their language speaks to their blue-collar character. This is an integral aspect of their identity, and out of respect for them, I will include it. Note, however, that there is one word I will not use, which will be referenced in Chapter 3.
Ásatrú Heathenry is a steadily growing New Religious Movement (NRM) in the United States. This Neo-pagan Faith is a reconstructed return to the pre-Christian practices of the Viking Age. Few scholars have studied the religion, and no one has previously studied it in the military population within the geographical margins of Hawai`i. This study argues that the geographical isolation of the 50th State impacts the social structure of the local Ásatrú Heathen community. Moreover, this study contends that Ásatrú conversion bears distinctive motives resembling those of military enlistees and that Ásatrú’s ethical paradigms mirror the ethos favored by military service-people. With this strong military connection, the Ásatrú Heathens in Hawai`i also present a unique voice offering insight into the growth of the religion. In this research study, hermeneutical, ethnographic, and etymological methodologies are employed to better represent the varied practices found in the Ásatrú Heathens practitioner’s reconstruction of this ancient tradition. These practices are especially important to the Ásatrú in Hawai`i, who are forced to recreate the religion within the confines of their small military family units.
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PREFACE: TALKING TO THE HEATHENS

“Dost know how to write, dost know how to read, dost know how to paint, Dost know how to prove, dost know how to ask, dost know how to offer…”
~The Prose Edda: Havamal, 143.

The military may be the best agency for exposure to varied faiths and religions. Despite background creeds, beliefs, dogmas, or philosophies, each service-person is expected to perform the same function regardless of what they hold to be true. As a conservative Pentecostal Christian from Pittsburgh, I was quickly un-indoctrinated out of my preconceived notions of the religious world upon joining the U.S. Navy in 1997.

During my 14-year term of service, I broke bread with Atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Peyote Cultists, Rastafarians, and Satanists – not to be confused with Luciferians, a Scientologist, and a Jedi. However, one of the most forthcoming and faithful folks I had the honor of serving with were the Ásatrúar Heathens – those that still hold true to a Norse Paradigm. The Ásatrú Heathens were, to a one of them, dependable, hard-working, and most of all disciplined; far more disciplined than even the strict standards set by the military.

Much more than these characteristics, however, was their candor. Although considered a derogatory term by much of society, the Ásatrú refer to themselves as Heathens. Heathens regard truth as one of their core tenets, or Nine Noble Virtues (NNV), colloquially the NNV by contemporary Heathens, and none of my friends amongst the Heathen community had any objections to sharing their Faith. Even when I was invited to witness a ritual, they were extremely forthcoming about the rules involved. For example, at a funeral, I was not allowed to participate because I had not known the departed. I could only watch from afar. I was told this from the beginning, and I understood. This openness was greatly appreciated. There was no proselytization, no great secrets that I had to pay extra for. If there was knowledge not meant for
me, I was told so. If there was something ahead of time that might be of interest to me, they called me and let me know.

Despite leaving the military in 2011, I have kept contact with many of them. One of the great hindrances of military service is that individuals are forever coming and going. To keep contact with shipmates is harder than most civilians realize. It is no small show of camaraderie that these Heathens still yet keep these ties of kinship.

It is also no small show of camaraderie that the new Heathens in the military stationed in Hawai`i were so open to sharing their Faith with me. Community seems to be at the heart of the Heathen Faith, which made it easier for me to gain informants because there were always circles of Heathens in the military who know somebody, who knows somebody else, who has a guy who has questions. These new individuals, much like those who served with me all those years ago, have that sense of openness and honesty.

To this extent, I feel it important to explore their Faith with all the honesty and candor that the practitioners have extended to me over the years. I present the knowledge they shared with great humility and respect. As their religion grows slowly and steadily in Hawai`i, I wish them all gangi þér vel.¹

So What?

Several scholars have studied Asatru in recent years, including Stephanie Von Shnurbein, Jennifer Snook, and Jefferson Forrest Calico. Among them, I find Calico’s coverage of the religion especially edifying. His dissertation Ásatrú In America: A New American Religion provides an invaluable overview of the practitioner, despite being somewhat limited in his access

¹ Icelandic for Good Luck, though none of my informants spoke Icelandic, all enjoyed hearing it spoken.
due to his outsider status amongst the Heathens. Ásatrú remains a vastly unexplored religion throughout the United States, especially in Hawai`i. My research study attempts to fill the gaps by approaching the two traditions from two as yet unexplored directions.

The first reason that my study differs from that of other scholars is that I focused my research exclusively on military or military-related individuals. For a myriad of reasons, that I will explore later, the Armed Services promotes a unique lifestyle attractive to the warrior-minded Ásatrúar, and vice-versa. The link between the Ásatrú and the military is distinctive enough to question it alongside other NRMs in the same role. Could American Zen Buddhism and the military form the same relationship? Wiccan? Rastafarianism? I would say not. I argue, in fact, that the conversion or “Call-to-Arms” of the Ásatrú religion distinctly reflects similar motives espoused by many who enlisted in the military, and further that Ásatrú’s very paradigms mirror the warrior ethos favored by military service-people. This will be further explored in Chapter 4.

The second difference distinguishing my research from that of others before me is that my sample base is localized in a way that no other scholar has yet attempted or explored. All of my informants are located in Hawai`i. This element of the study, while seemingly limiting, offers a unique opportunity for examining the patterns of growth of the Heathen community within a specific geographical region. Hawai`i’s distance from the rest of the continental United States isolates the local Heathens into family-orientated worship, well-removed from the larger Heathen communities in the continental United States. I posit this isolation is paramount to the integral family-based structure that characterizes the local Viking community. More on this isolation and

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its importance to the success of the Heathens located in Hawai`i will be further explored in Chapter 5.

In this study, I used the small handful of scholars who have written on Ásatrú as a resource for my approach. More importantly, however, was in-depth conversations with local Heathen groups and individuals, which provided the primary basis for this study. Although I was worried that as an outsider, my presence would prove intrusive, it was the Heathens themselves that encouraged my participation and allowed me access to military bases for which as a veteran I had no clearance. I also relied heavily on good dealings with them and their families to ensure no boundaries were crossed. Intensive parameters of confidentiality and strict adherence to my approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance ensured that propriety was upheld on my end. This propriety was of the highest importance to the military folk and would serve me well in maintaining an open dialogue with my informants.

In Chapter 1: Who are the Heathens?, I will explain the origins of Ásatrú Heathenry as a New Religious Movement (NRM), separate from the Nordic methodology upon which it is predicated. I will define working definitions, especially the varied terms practitioners use to define themselves. I will explicate my methodologies; ethnographical, hermeneutical, and etymological. I will also describe my attempts at quantifying Hawai`i’s role in the success of Ásatrú and the difficulties faced in doing so.

In Chapter 2: Context, Caricatures, Denominations, and Mythology, I will explain important misconceptions about the Viking culture, and highlight the reasoning for these misconceptions. These Viking ideals are important to the Ásatrú practitioners, as they are reconstructing their religion around these very ideals. I will explore the different “denominations” of the Vikings, and give a quick synopsis of important cosmological dynamics
at play in the religion, all of which stem from the mythology surrounding it. Again, this mythology is important as the group uses it to rebuild their own religion.

In Chapter 3: Racism, Fanboy Ásatrú, and Genesis Amnesia, I will present and explain the racist overtones of some Heathens – a very vocal minority and a subset of the Religion. I will offer more information on the three Ásatrú religious orientations – Universalists, Triibalists, and Volkish perspectives. I will also explore their importance, as well as how they fit within the Jarnsaxa scale (See Appendix A). Finally, I will use David Chidester’s 3 x 3 model of religious world-view\(^3\) to highlight the stark contrast between these differing orientations.

In Chapter 4: The Military Connection, I will explore the connection between Heathenry and the military and offer five reasons why the military lifestyle supports the ideals of Ásatrúar Heathens, including the conversion to the religion as a response to the 9/11 events, the NNVs and military core values, blue-collar sensibilities, themes of joining and acceptance, and importance of family.

In Chapter 5: Folkways and Pursuit of The Sacred, I will offer parallels between Ho'omana Hawai'i and Ásatrú Heathenism. I will do so by using sacred concepts found in both religions and the etymology and definitions of the words to better formulate Folkways. In this study, Folkways are the key to understanding Ásatrú Heathenry today, but also its origins and its growth. For purposes of this study, it is most important in deciding whether or not the sense of place and culture Hawai‘i offers plays a role in the growth of local Heathenry.

\(^{3}\) David Chidester. Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the People’s Temple and Jonestown. Revised edition, (Indiana University Press, 2003). 51-128
CHAPTER 1: WHO ARE THE HEATHENS?

“Tell your secret to one person, never to two – everyone knows, if three people know.”

~The Poetic Edda

In this chapter, I will explain the origins of Ásatrú as a NRM, define working definitions, and explicate my methodologies. I will also describe my attempts at quantifying Hawai‘i’s role in the success of Ásatrú and the difficulties faced in doing so.

Nihilistic deities demanding death and destruction, dragon-faced fleets of ships full of furious berserkers wielding war hammers and horned helmets – razing villages, burning churches; these prolific imageries are often supplementary to the Vikings image. Despite such seemingly obvious associations, the true culture of the Norse was far more varied and richer than these overly violent caricatures. In truth, the Scandinavian tribes of the Vikinger age between the 8th and 11th century C.E. were farmers trying to do the best they could despite the hard climes. The Ásatrú today are much the same, they just wish to live their lives as quietly and as well as they can.

Ásatrú at heart is a NRM that was reconstructed in 1970’s Iceland –but the movement continues to slowly and steadily grow in the United States. Though some of my informants claim that the Faith⁴ is far older – derived from well before the Viking Age, and that the modern practices were inherited through familial lineage down through the centuries.

Contemporary practitioners represent a small but growing population here in Hawai‘i. The numbers, based on interviews with locals, posit that there are over 80 people across the Hawaiian Islands at any given time. The difficulty to ascertain definitive numbers will be explored later in the chapter. Of these supposed 80 + individuals, I had dealings with 21. These men and women served as my informants for this study. As Jefferson F. Calico writes in his

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⁴ My informants placed much stress on the word Faith and capitalize it when using it as a synonym of their religion, thus I will too.
dissertation Ásatrú In America: A New American Religion “The movement seems to be gaining rather than losing momentum and is now transitioning from a small, nebulous, and fractious network into a real movement…”5

A Reconstructed Religion: A New Religious Movement

The Ásatrú and Odinist Heathens still practice veneration of the old Viking Gods. According to Jefferson Forrest Calico concerning the Ásatrú, “In their eyes, the old gods have stirred, becoming active again after a dormancy of almost a thousand years and calling their people back to the old ways.”6 The Old Ways referenced by Calico remain nebulous and difficult to explain since the Ásatrú relies only on piecemeal texts written well after the end of the Viking Age.7 Scholars have shown that the contemporary incarnation of the Faith was reinvented in 1970’s Iceland due to Else Christensen, Alexander Rud Mills, and the newsletter – The Odinist. (These ugly and overtly racist reinventions will be explained in Chapter 3). Yet credible, citable evidence of individual devotees and their scripture was not so readily available8. As one of my informants so eloquently clarified when asked about the true ramifications of the early framework understood thusly, he replied, “How the Hell do we know?” What we have of Ásatrú today is a reconstruction of the Viking paradigm transmogrified into modern practices. As it is a reconstructed religion, it is hard to truly know for sure what historically mattered and to whom. Stephen A McNallen of the Ásatrú Alliance offers:

Ásatrú is thousands of years old. Its beginnings are lost in prehistory, but it is older than Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or most other religions. The spiritual impulses it expresses are as ancient as the European peoples themselves…9

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5 Calico Ásatrú In America: A New American Religion, 16.
6 Ibid, 25.
7 This excludes the claims of familial lineage as proposed by some of my informants. One of which proposes that the oral traditions of the religion were passed down through the centuries.
8 Like the aforementioned lineage, though there is little citable evidence.
While this is fanciful, and a little condescending of all other religions, it does not provide a scholar such as myself with much more information than what insiders of the Faith maintain. Namely that the Ásatrú Heathenry practiced today is exactly like the Old-Faith indigenous religion practiced by Viking Age Tribes in pre-Christian Scandinavia. The Heathens I studied were Ásatrúar Heathens – those that still hold true to a Norse paradigm. They venerate the Norse Gods such as; Odin, Thor, and others found in Scandinavian mythologies. These practitioners hold themselves to principles set by a supposed Viking ideal, and live their lives in accordance with the Heathen mindset of, 'What would Odin do?'

**Methodology: Chicken Wings and Dictionaries**

The question remains; How does one study a religious tradition with such limited primary and secondary sources? There were three major methodological approaches employed in this research. First and foremost, I used an ethnographical approach, which seemed the most applicable as my research dealt with the Faith ‘on the ground.’ Secondly, I applied a hermeneutical approach for examining the Eddas and Sagas texts that the practitioners themselves used. Finally, I utilized an etymological approach, exploring certain important words, names, concepts, poetic devices, etc.

**Inclusion Criteria**

My informants needed to fit within certain parameters to participate in my study. They had to be practitioners of the Viking Heathen community, which included the denominations of Ásatrúar, Vanatrúar, Rökkatrutrúar, Distrúar, Jotunrúar or others. This omitted any Hellenistic Heathens (Greco-Roman) Bulga Heathens (Russian Deities) or Neo-Druid Heathens (Celtic). I should point out, however, that I did not encounter any Heathens who were not Viking Heathens. It was also important that all of the informants I interviewed were over 18 years of age. One
aspect of the religion is the significance of family. I understood this importance and respected the informants enough not to ‘mess’ with their children. All of the informants were military or military-related and the only children I met in the community were toddlers, none more than 3 years of age, which were unsuitable for interviewing in any case.

**Institutional Review Board Approval and Informed Consent**

The student researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program training for exempt research personnel (See Appendix B). Approval by the University of Hawai‘i Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to any data collection (See Appendix C). Informed consent was obtained from all of the key informants which included; the purpose of the study, activities and time commitment, potential benefits and risks of participating in the study, methods used to protect privacy and confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study, and the opportunity to ask questions (See Appendix D).

**Ethnographical Approach**

The ethnographical approach consisted of interviews through phone, text, and in-person meetings, as well as participant observation thorough attending their ‘religious services,’ visiting their ‘temples’ and observances of their rites. For the in-person interviews, I very informally met with them and their families. Of the 21 local Heathens I met throughout this undertaking; I went to get chicken wings with them well over 30 times. A local favorite was Buffalo Wild Wings – and most of them enjoyed them extra spicy.

**Interview Questions.** The interviews consisted usually of these seven questions, although the interviews were very informal:

1. What experiences led you to Heathenism? Is it different from your upbringing? How have you balanced the two paradigms?
2. Describe the proselytization, if any, which led you to Northern Heathenism. Proselytization refers to members of the tradition approaching you or publishing materials online or in print media to attract new members.

3. Can you offer any delineation between Ásatrúar, Odinism, Heathenism, and Wiccan? Where do you draw the line between one and the other?

4. How would you define your Faith within these parameters?

5. Can you tell me about Folkways? How are they important in your socio-religious identity?

6. What are your experiences as a Viking in Hawai`i? If you have spent any time on the Mainland, are the experiences as a Viking there different? How?

7. Are you familiar with the Jarnsaxa Scale? (See Appendix A). The 3 Orientations of Ásatrúar (Traditionalist/ Tribalist/ Universalists)? Where do you feel that you might fall within these categories?

**Hermeneutical Approach**

The hermeneutical approach was of special interest to me as a religious studies scholar. The rich Viking mythology served as a guide in constructing a Viking religious identity. There are numerous texts such as Prose Edda, the Havamal, the Elder Eddas, and even the writings of the High-One, the supposed words of Odin All-Father himself. These writings are the basis of knowledge that most scholars today use when investigating the Viking paradigms. However, most of the Ásatrú practitioners used no such standard. Many openly acknowledged that they use the texts, which are as full of contradictions as any book of religious understandings. B.M. Edda of the Odinist Fellowship U.K. said “The Eddas do, indeed, contain contradictions and, no doubt, errors, and they must be examined critically and objectively.”\(^{10}\) In reference to the validity and usefulness of these texts, Stephen McNallen simply says “No. There are written sources which are useful to us because they contain much of our sacred lore in the form of myths and examples of right conduct, but we do not accept them as infallible or inspired documents.”\(^{11}\) One of my

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informants, when asked about the same thing, merely offered that the texts were “useful, but not scripture.”

I suppose that this makes sense when one considers that the chief chronicler of these tomes, Snorri Sturluson, was probably a Christian. After all, traditionally the Scandinavians used Skalds, Norse poets, who recorded the tales and “kept them alive by recitation and training of new Skalds.” Most of those afore-mentioned texts such as the Prose Edda, the Havamal, the Elder Eddas, and The Writings of the High-One, were recorded by Snorri Sturluson. Yet what he chronicled in the Eddas was *written* between 1200 and 1240 C.E., well after the Viking Age ended. There is also strong evidence that while Sturluson chronicled many tales in these texts, his Christian perspective skewed the tales, and “His representation of the death and the afterlife seems particularly influenced by the Christian idea of heaven and an underground hell.”

This inconsistency between the texts and actual practice was the hardest aspect of their Faith for me to grasp and thus was the primary reason for the use of a hermeneutical approach in order to understand the true meaning. My informants knew that the texts were important, and that they were used to reconstruct their Faith – but they also kept them at a distance as they knew that their Faith was a reconstruction of ideas that were probably misinterpreted. When asked about this apparent cognitive dissonance one of my informants replied “Why do you quote the bible? Do you believe in all of it?”

As far as Hermeneutics, which deals with interpretation and meaning, the texts are important, but not the most important aspect. Far more important is the practitioner’s interpretations of the character of the Gods, and their actions. Therefore, the next question I asked the informants was directed at their social norms. With no discernable texts to illustrate

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13 Ibid, 14.
how to construct rules, regulations, or procedures, how then did contemporary practitioners construct order? The informants described to me that the rules and commandments are not as significant in their belief narratives as they are in other religious traditions. Rather, trying to be the best a person one can be is what truly maintains order. As B.M. Edda of the Odinist Fellowship U.K again explains “Odinist ethics are not expressed in terms of prohibitions and commandments but in terms of the positive virtues, which all Odinists should aspire to practise.”

McNallen makes a similar statement when he offers that “In no case are good and evil dictated to us by the edicts of an alien, authoritarian deity, as in the Middle East. We are expected to use our freedom, responsibility, and awareness of duty to serve the highest and best ends.”

**Etymological Approach**

It must be stated again that there is an underlying contempt for the Abrahamic Faiths, i.e. The three Tribes of the Book which will be further explored in Chapter 3. Ultimately, the texts and interpretation of the texts represent critical tools, integral to an outsider hoping to construct a complete picture of the Faith, but it is not the primary means for practitioners employ. Far more imperative for gaining understanding of the Faith and terminology is an etymological approach.

Etymology is “the study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history” may seem very similar to hermeneutics “the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of literary texts.” In the Viking paradigm, both deal primarily with certain archaic terms. Yet while the Heathens may not fully depend on the validity of texts that were translated time and time again by scholars, they can put full trust in a certain

16 The Tribes of the Book: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is a term used by my informants in reference to the Abrahamic Faiths. The Informant was unaware that Islam itself called the Abrahamic Faiths by the same nick-name.
religious term’s significance if they know what it means and why it was important. During every meeting, the Heathens would explore the origins of their words and terms. This almost seemed a form of devotion in itself. They would take a term, a name, or a concept and discuss it at great lengths to better understand the etymological significance and hermeneutical meaning. For a group that is continually reinventing their Faith, words and terms serve as material culture. Like songs, stories, or histories or other intangible phenomena, important words and their definitions can be shared, negated, or even celebrated. Defining these words in a modern context, as well as understanding their historical usage, proves invaluable, and is almost a form of devotion in itself.¹⁷ Yet with so many words to choose from, many working definitions are in order.

**Working Definitions: Pagan, Heathen, or What?** Heathens, Pagans, Vikings, Old-Faith, and Ásatrúar are all some of the transposable names my informants use for themselves, although Heathen seems to be the most commonly used by Ásatrú practitioners here in Hawai`i. It is important to denote what the word Heathen means and to an extent some of the other terms that are interchangeable with it. Trying to rightly define certain concepts and terms proved difficult due to my limited understanding. At first, I erroneously presumed these concepts and terms to be universally understood in a common context. However, in dealing with my informants, I realized their interpretations varied greatly from my own. Thusly, I had to redefine these words in a way that both met my academic needs and respected the Ásatrú community. This is especially important in the context of how the terms *Orientations* and *Folkway* will be addressed.

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¹⁷ Though none of my informants spoke Icelandic, many took time to seek out the translation of a certain God’s name, and used the translation in reconstructing the identity of the God. An example of this is Mjölnir – Thor’s Hammer, which most readily translates into Meal or oatmeal. Thus, Thor was a God of farming more so than of warfare.
Defining a catch-all term for the varied practitioners of Northern Paganisms proved extremely problematic. There is a bevy of appellations to choose from, with minute differences between them including; Ásatrú, Heathen, Odinist, Old Faith, Pagan, Wotanist, and Viking. Faith is an individual experience, so each of my informants had a different way to interpret what these said names meant.

*Heathen* seemed the most consistent preference of a descriptive term, which was used by all of the informants. Heathen means “from the Heather”\(^{18}\) and carried connotations such as ‘Rural’, ‘Old-ways’, and ‘Faith of the Folk.’ Heathen! would be loudly stated to identify oneself before an assemblage of other practitioners, followed by pounding the table with a closed fist, i.e. proudly declaring ‘My name is Donut-Witch, and I am a Heathen!’ while pounding one’s fist on the table. Calico also utilized this term to define his group and he defined Heathen as;

A term that is used to signify all those who follow the Northern gods, a person who practices contemporary Norse/Germanic Paganism. It functions as an umbrella term that includes all the different subsets of Paganism that take their inspiration from northern European sources. Within the modern Ásatrú movement, the term carries none of the derogatory implications often associated with it in the broader culture. In this study, it is used almost synonymously with “Ásatrú.”\(^{19}\)

The term Pagan likewise shares similar roots. It derives from the Latin word *paganus*, which means from the country. Villain comes from the same root word for *villa*, again denoting a rural lifestyle well removed from the metropolitan disarray of big Grecian and Roman cities. The term Viking is no different. Joseph Shipley’s Dictionary of Word Origins offers that the term Viking stems from the Anglo Saxon word *wic* meaning camp, which itself derives from the Latin word *vicus*, village or from the camp, and similar related terms, including villain.

However, only the English word villain retains scornful implications.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{18}\) Calluna vulgaris - a low-growing perennial shrub found widely in Europe

\(^{19}\) Ibid, 230.

Pagan, Heathen, and Viking were all used by my informants. One of my informants defined Pagan as a “true over-all umbrella term describing a general belief in the old gods.” That would include the afore-mentioned Hellenistic, Bulga, and Neo-Druid deities. Although Pagan was used less often, I surmise that this was a means to distinguish themselves from Neo-Pagans and Wiccans. None of my informants described themselves as Neo-pagans. There is something of cognitive dissonance between their knowledge of “reconstructing an ancient religion” and them being simply pagans within a new religion. Many of them expressively dismiss Wiccans—despite the group falling under the aegis of that group. One of my informants espoused that “Wicca may claim us, but we don’t claim them.” This may extend from their blue-collar, on the ground identity, which will be further explored in Chapter 4.

The other important term practitioners use for identifying themselves is Ásatrúar. This term is a modern conceit that literally translates into the “troth of the Æsir” or Faith of the Æs gods. The Æs Gods were the primary pantheon of the Scandinavian peoples. Odin, Thor, Loki, Freyja, and others fill these ranks, although there are divisions exist amongst this pantheon, the afore-mentioned Ásatrúar, Vanatrúar, Rökkatrúar, Distrúar, and Jotunrúar. These refer to the differing ‘denominations’ among the Heathens- denoting Faith in the different families of Norse Gods and Monsters. There are some orthodox circles within the community, if such a thing can be said, that will not allow Rökkatrúar or Jotunrúar to participate in their rituals. One of my informants, explained it as “Just because somebody believes in one god, doesn’t make him a Christian.” I will further discuss these distinctions in Chapter 5, as Hawai`ian Ásatrúar are unique in their approach to these distinctions. There are also distinctions between the Teutonic

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21 Ibid, 228.
variation of the Faith and the Norse interpretation, the breaks that arose in each, as well as the pivotal differences between Odinism and Wotanism. However, the most appropriate term I heard used was simply Viking. This catch-all term encompasses all the different families, all the family divisions, separates it from the other Pagan groups, dismisses the Wicca connection, and is almost completely interchangeable with Heathens. Therefore, in this paper, the terms Heathen and Viking will be used interchangeably. One other term of great importance is orientation a word regarding a certain standpoint of who is allowed to participate in the Viking religion, which accounts for so much of the ugliness plaguing the Faith as a whole. These three orientations or branches of Viking Heathenism consist of Volkish, Triibalism, and Universalist. There is no shortage of arguments over how these three avenues are to be defined, each of which will be further explained later.

I had originally heard the term Schism used to denote division between such branches, a technical term which may mean a break or a rupture, but the term orientation is safer and more accurate in that it encompasses a certain alignment. For simplicity’s sake, the Universalist espouses the view that anyone can be a Viking Heathen, the Triibalist limits the community to those of Celtic or Norse descent or anyone indoctrinated into the Faith, and the Volkish maintain that only people of true Northern European descent can be Ásatrú. This last group contains a vocal minority, that neo-Nazi voice so often associated with the religion. More explanations of these orientations will be described in Chapter 3.

A Heathen may agree with certain aspects of the Volkish or Triibalist but yet will align with the Universalist. For instance, one informant allowed that he understood the reasoning behind the Volkish’s disapproval of the Universalist perspective. “There have to be rules, it isn’t

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22 According to my informants, Odinist and Wotanist are both racist subgroups of the Volkish orientation, but Wotanists focuses on the German interpretation of Odin, and thus is more intrinsically tied to neo-Nazi groups.
some free-for-all in which you can do whatever you want, we’re not Wiccans, remember?”

However, while the informant understood the disapproval, he openly opposed that reasoning as too xenophobic. “Hospitality is one of our NNV, and our doors are open to all. If someone is led to us, then let them come, regardless of who and what they are at first.” For my purposes, and with the agreement of my informants, orientations will serve me best in highlighting the differences in belief structures amongst the heathen community. Again, in Chapter 3 I will devote more time to exploring the Volkish, Tribalist, and Universalist orientations.

The hardest word to define was Folkway. All of my informants were able to share their meaning of the term with me, and I am indebted to them for their input. Yet these definitions did not contain the full breadth of scope to serve the purpose of my study. Folkway must carry gravity far beyond the Heathen context if it is to translate into the Hawai`ian paradigm as well. I felt that this was instrumental in establishing why the Åsatrúar did so well in Hawai`i.

I broke the word Folkway down etymologically to find a definition with such import. The word way stems from the;

“Old English weg "road, path; course of travel; room, space, freedom of movement;" also, figuratively, "course of life" especially, in plural, "habits of life" as regards moral, ethical, or spiritual choices, from Proto-Germanic *wega "course of travel, way" (source also of Old Saxon, Dutch weg, Old Norse vegr, Old Frisian weij, Old High German weg, German weg, Gothic wigs "way"), from PIE root *wegh "to go, move, transport in a vehicle."”

Likewise, the word folk stems from the;

Old English fólcc "common people, laity; men; people, nation, tribe; multitude; troop, army," from Proto-Germanic *fúlca (source also of Old Saxon fólcc, Old Frisian folk, Middle Dutch volc, Dutch vólk, Old High German fólcc, German Volk "people"). Perhaps originally "host of warriors:" Compare Old Norse folk "people," also "army, detachment."...

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The word *way* has multiple definitions, each of which is important to the Heathens. It can not only be defined as a means to travel, but also follow or transport. The word *folk* means not only people, but a host, armies, or even nation. These characterizations of the terms, with the added explanations of *folk* to mean ancestors of my informants, allow for a working definition that had the required scope for my study. Therefore, my working definition of the term *Folkway* is “The paths that lead us to the Hosts of our ancestors,” and at the same time *Folkway* is defined as “The means by which we transport the ancestors within us.”

**Challenges Faced: Rum Balls and Death-Metal**

There were many challenges in working with the local Vikings, doubly so in quantifying the role of Hawaii’s geographically isolated location in the success of Ásatrúar. However, these challenges were important, as each provided an opportunity for a greater understanding of the practitioners and their religious outlooks. Most of these difficulties lie in the Heathen’s insular approaches to the religion or just how “quiet” they are about it all. A lack of proselytization is one example. A seeming lack of material culture is another. Still another difficulty and the one I felt bears the most attention, is how tight-knit their community is.

The delineations of the words *conversion* and *proselytization* proved difficult. Local informants had much to say on the Heathen’s *lack* of conversion. One informant said of conversion, “Why bother? If you want it [the Heathen Faith] you’ll find it. We’re not going to come passing out pamphlets. We don’t need your money like Jesus does.” Another informant called conversion “A moot conceit. In our context it’s Mickey-Mouse, ineffectual and worthless… If you don’t want to be there [in the Heathen Faith] the gods don’t want you there…” Even the high ranking members of the communities at large similarly claim the Heathen’s lack of conversion as one of their primary tenets. As Karl Siegfried, Goethe of the
Thor’s Oak Kindred Chicago said in a 2018 interview “There was no conversion process, as there often is in the Abrahamic Faith traditions.” I disagree with the usage of the term conversion in these settings, as I feel that they are conflating proselytization with conversion. There is most certainly a conversion that takes place within practitioners, who were not born and raised in the Faith.

Many of the informants reported experiencing visions of the Æs deities. They highlighted their new understanding of self and began implementing a new cosmological understanding of both self and the universe. Despite Karl Siegfried’s use of the words “less a sense of coming into a new belief system than having a sensation that this is what I already was,” his testimony suggests that he experienced a paradigm shift, which is the hallmark of conversion. To this, I posit that it is more accurate to say that the Heathens’ lack a system of active proselytization, not a conversion process. This avoidance of proselytization is a key factor in the growth of numbers in the military that I will explore more of in Chapters 4.

As previously stated about the hermeneutical approach, while there are some texts to peruse, these texts are not as important as they are in some other faiths as they are not treated as sacred. In fact, finding any sacred material culture proved a difficult prospect. There were examples, of course, such as sub-genres of Viking music – Folk, Folk-metal, and Scandinavian Death-Metal all of which were played during get-togethers. There were the sweets – rum balls, and homemade honey-wine mead that were made and offered up to the Gods. There were even supposedly temples scattered across the island of Oahu, the largest being on Hickam Air Force

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26 It is important to note that none of my Informants actually listened to either Scandinavian Death metal or Scandinavian Black metal, though all knew of it. They did enjoy the Viking Folk Music and Folk Metal, however, bands such as Finn Troll, Danheim, and Amon Amarth were all mentioned by name.
Base and smaller ones existing in Wahiawa and Kaneohe. Yet the rum balls, mead, and music are not necessarily integral to the religion. They appear to be a part of the background; the rum balls may be offered up to Odin at first, but practitioners munch on them as casually as potato chips at a football game. Some of the mead may be offered as a sacrifice to the Æs Gods in a Blut, but the rest is then quickly imbibed by every one of age with no ceremony involved. They pay little heed to the music nor sing at their services; music functions merely as background. The aforementioned temples proved to be smallish shrines in the corner of a family room, many without effigies, candles, or any implements at all, save for a plate with rum balls or a place where rum balls were previously set. This to me seemed like a strange contradiction; if the Faith was reconstructed; would not each material component of the Faith be important in rebuilding an authentic religious identity? One of my informants answered this query with “How the hell do we know?” The importance appears to lie in an individual’s relationship to the Faith, not the substantial trappings of the ‘Church.’

The greatest challenge was in how quiet my informants were about the Faith. None ‘advertised’ their depth of commitment, so it was hard to gauge. Most often, when I met a new informant, it was via a phone call from an informant telling me that another informant decided ‘I was okay’ and would permit me to contact them. We met for chicken wings. It was and is a slow process. I am still meeting new informants to this day. With every new informant, it seemed as if I was again under scrutiny – though I found their honesty refreshing. Once, when I asked directly whether or not I was being tested, one of my informants happily replied, “Always!”

With each meeting, I was groomed towards greater inclusion. I have only begun to truly work with Hawai’i’s Ásatrú community, and each time I feel a little more is revealed. I have yet

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27 A few of my informants and I shared similar Protestant backgrounds, hence I immediately grasped the “feel” of his statement.
to attend a Blut – but what I have learned is that the largest groups on Oahu, the Hawai‘i Kindred on Hickam, with reportedly over 70 members, all seemingly military, rarely meet as a whole. If the examples of my informants are any indication, then most of them practice devotion alone in their own homes or small groups of family and friends.

One example of communal devotion was outreach projects in which I was sometimes invited to participate, such as the Pearl Harbor Bike-Trail Clean Up. There were a few scattered Ásatrúar that volunteered with me. None of them wore T-shirts advertising their religious affiliation the way many religious groups do. There were no buttons, no ball-caps, no fliers or banners. There seemed to be no organization at all, it was more akin to a group that decided to clean up on a whim. Though spontaneous and without ceremony, it was informative, and the Heathens were very forthcoming about the whole affair. This was to be the norm for every interaction I have had with them – very straightforward.

What I found was a sense of independence in each member that was hard to explain. When I was younger and went to Church, I felt like a member of the Church. Even going to other Churches, I still saw how the community was a tight-knit group of practitioners united under one banner. With the Ásatrú community, even in the group projects, there was a sense that each practitioner was his or her church, and that each had all the strength and devotion he or she needed to thrive. It should also be noted that all of my practitioners were military. That in and of itself brought new problems in organizing any interaction. There were always deployments, work-related emergencies, lack of base access or clearance issues, last minute changes to locations that would prevent me from getting to some services, or even simple trust issues, which will be explored further in Chapter 4.
The last issue remained in whether or not the military Ásatrú community in Hawai`i reflected the whole Ásatrú community in Hawai`i. Out of the 21 informants I had contact with, all of them were either serving in the Armed Forces or had familial relations to service-people. I met no Vikings who were civilians. I wondered if my focus group was too focused to form any hypothesis about the role of Hawai`i and the Vikings.
"There is nothing but good to be told of [Balder]. He is the best of them, and everyone sings his praises...He is the wisest of gods, and the sweetest-spoken, and the most merciful."

~The Poetic Edda

In this chapter, I will explain important misconceptions about the ideal Vikings – ideals important to the NRM, explore the different caricatures, denominations of the Vikings, and give a quick synopsis of important cosmological dynamics at play in the religion.

If the Heathens today are reconstructing an indigenous religion, long since over-written by Christianity, it is important to understand what they are using as a basis to reconstruct it. I highlight this exploration as carving pieces of a puzzle for lack of a better metaphor. To this end, it is important to see the full picture of the puzzle they strive to build; that of the ideal Viking. But the modern interpretation of a Viking – those violent tribes-people of post-iron-age Scandinavia – all fall short of a proper picture. In reality, the tribes had numerous belief systems and a variegated collection of pantheons; unfortunately, only a smattering of accurate historical information remains regarding their beliefs and practices. As will be shown – they had forms of religious practices that easily fall within the category of asceticism – something that few outsiders fully appreciate.

To this end, I will reexamine misapprehensions of the ideal Viking – to better reflect the picture sought after by my informants. I will next roughly explain the different factions or ‘denominations’ involved in the modern understandings of Vikings – denominations based on the different pantheons venerated. Finally, I will highlight some key components of the Norse Cosmological cycle – components the modern practitioners use to construct a world-view – information that the long-ago Vikings needed to create a picture of their world.
Some might argue that the following information only matters in a historical context, that of the long antiquated Viking mythology. Yet to the modern practitioners, there is no such delineation – they believe that they practice what the Vikings of old practiced. As one of my informants cited, “The hardest part is proving it.”

Rethinking the Caricatures

Nihilistic deities demanding death and destruction, dragon-faced fleets of ships full of furious beings wielding war hammers and horned helmets, razing villages, burning churches; These prolific imageries are often associated with the Vikings. Despite these seemingly obvious associations, the true culture of the Norse was far more varied, and richer than these overly simplistic and violent caricatures. Even the term ‘Vikings’ may be a misnomer when describing the region’s peoples. What many purport to be the Viking paradigm is in reality a sweeping view of the culture of various Scandinavian tribes. The raiding and pillaging so often attributed to such tribes leaves little room for exploring their other roles.

I will present sections of the Norse texts, collected in the Havamal,\textsuperscript{28} that openly denounce the pursuit of wealth and instead focuses on home and family. I will showcase that they had resources and time enough for some to pursue a deeply religious, ascetic lifestyle. I also utilize the findings of Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson (1914 - 2006), an archeologist, folklorist, and perhaps the greatest voice in proving the extent to which Vikings were prolific traders, affluent merchants, and high-yield agriculturalists.

The Sayings of the High One

In numerous instances in the Havamal, Odin the All-Father explicitly discourages the pursuit of wealth. In one verse he says “Generous and brave men live the best, seldom they

\textsuperscript{28} Havamal - The Sayings of the High One - Viking Texts with words attributed to Odin himself, Trans. by Carolyne Larrington.
harbor sorrow; the miser always worries…”

Another of Odin’s witticisms focuses on strengthening the wit instead of the purse. “A better burden can no man bear on the way than his mother wit; 'tis the refuge of the poor, and richer it seems than wealth in a world untried.”

Still, another reads “A greedy man, if he be not mindful, eats to his own life's hurt.” Another proof that these words focus on not worrying about money illustrates that there were probably some who did not have to worry overly much about such things. Odin also comments on sharing wealth and promotes generosity through his own words of advice when he said, “With raiment and arms shall friends gladden each other, so has one proved oneself; for friends last longest, if fate be fair who give and give again.”

However, the most expressive proof of discouraging material wealth was when he offered “A farm of your own is better, even if small, everyone’s someone at home.” A farm and home in this statement refers to the farming lifestyle of many original Vikings, far removed from the blatant hostility of the caricatures.

If most inter-tribal warfare erupted over limited resources, such as the three Tribes of the Book arguing over a well in the desert, then the lush and fertile farm-scape of the north should be an indication of how little war would mean to the northern tribes. In *The Road to Hel*, Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson uses an archeological dig site to illustrate the importance of a farmer’s tools and everyday implements when she writes:

> Not only the princely dead but men and women throughout the country were provided with both personal possessions and all the familiar objects of daily life, so that farming implements, smiths’ tools, kitchen objects and all necessary for spinning and weaving and the work of the house were placed in the grave…

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29 Ibid, 48.
30 Ibid, 49.
31 Ibid, 52.
32 Ibid, 60.
33 Ibid, 48.
34 A witticism I heard echoed in both my informants and Dr. Ramdas Lam.
35 Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson *The Road To Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943) 10.
She also writes of the importance of farms in Viking texts when she explains that the stories’ “Background is that of farmstead, pasture and dairy.”  

She also stated that the Vikings were:  

*Farmers and good family men,* returning to the land after a few years of raiding… [The Vikings] were opportunists, excelling in rapid attacks from the sea and escaping before any force could be organized to oppose them. [The Vikings had] a love of fine clothes, well-groomed hair and showy ornaments, and also [had] admiration for generosity and hospitality.

With this is an admittance of the Vikings’ combatant ethos, in the form of raiding, it also naysays the flagrant misrepresentations of them as overly violent barbarians. While war was and is an ugly truth of the human condition, to focus on petulant squabbles over the Northern Tribes’ vast resources seem to be an unfairly biased attribute placed upon them by outsiders. The Vikings would always return home to their farms, an overlooked aspect of their life. Trading was also important to the Vikings. Historian Scott Michael Rank highlights the extensive trade routes used by the Vikings on his website when he writes;  

Viking traders went west as far as Newfoundland in the New World, and East as far as the Volga River, down to Constantinople. When the Vikings left their homelands in the beginning of the Viking Age in the 1790s, they didn’t just go to raid and loot. Many of them set out to discover or open new trade routes, to establish a more secure foundation of future income. In general, the men of Sweden went East to Russia while Norwegians and the Danes went to the west to Ireland and Scotland, England and France. All along the way they traded the goods of the north such as fur, amber, iron and walrus tusks for goods they needed from other places.

Textual evidence thus supports the significance of trading and farming for Viking culture, and the belief that Odin himself openly discouraged the pursuit of excessive material wealth and

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37 Ibid, 6.
39 They also traded slaves; I would be remiss as a scholar if I left this out.
explicitly encouraged generosity. But more can be said about their rich religious practices, the asceticism of Odin, both in name and practices, important knowledge for practitioners wishing to reconstruct it.

Odin’s many names provide further indication of the ascetic nature of the Viking religious practices.⁴⁰ In the Grimnisimal or the sayings of Grim – one of the many names of Odin – by one name he has never been known since he went among the people. Grim itself means Masked One and is a reference to Odin’s secret wanderings. Other names used to highlight the mendicancy of Odin include Masked, Masked One, Wanderer, Helm-wearer, Broadbeard, and Broadhat, the last three of which were used to hide his visage, and Reiðartýr – one who rides or travels. Other names include Sviðurr (Wise-one) Vakr (Wakeful one), Veratýr (God of Being), Svölnir (Cooler – or one who cools disputes), and Hroptr (Sage). It takes no stretch of the imagination to see how these epithets highlight the role of Odin as a dispenser of truth and well-being. Perhaps the most telling of his many names is that of Saðr (Truth-teller or Sooth-sayer). While I am loathe to outright claim Odin All-Father to be a Saddhu, as this term would have little bearing on the Viking mindset, the fact that it bears such strong similarities does allow for some thought.

To my informants, one of the most celebrated of the All-Father’s practices is his mono-diet. In the Grimnisimal, it reads “Geri and Freki he satiates, the glorious Father of Hosts, trained in battle; but on wine alone the weapon-magnificent Odin always lives.”⁴¹ Geri and Freki are Odin’s pet wolves, whose High German names mean gluttonous, hungry, greedy, or ravenous. My informants translate this to mean not that Odin feeds his pet wolves, but that he literally ‘feeds his hunger’ or he makes himself hungrier by not eating at all.

⁴⁰ Also known as Kennings, poetic devices used to draw attention to certain traits.
⁴¹ Larrington 19.
Viking Affluence Allows for the Promotion of Ascetics

The Northern Tribes had ample time to pursue more than just physical matters, and to form a complex interconnected model of themselves, the after-life, and the Norse cosmology, which illustrates just how spiritual the lives of these Northern Tribesmen were. Hilda Ellis Roderick Davidson presents an amenable exploration of what constitutes this Viking spiritual identity. While the word *soul* can be used to refer to it, the Viking conception of the spiritual differs extensively from the Western Christian sense of the term. For the sake of brevity, Davidson’s conceptions of the *soul* can be divided into three distinct components – *Hamingja*, *Hamr*, and *Fylgja* – reminiscent of the subtle body, and a fourth component, that of the *Hamr*, that blurs the line between subtle and fleshly bodies.\(^{42}\) The All-Father was infamous for his ability to transcend the limitations of this *hamr* to achieve great works of what outsiders call magic. More explanations of these spiritual components will follow when I explain important cosmological factors of the religion. In *Increased Affluence Explains the Emergence of Ascetic Wisdoms and Moralizing Religions*, the authors illustrate that:

> These doctrines all emphasized the value of ‘personal transcendence’ that is, the notion that human existence has a purpose, distinct from material success, that lies in a moral existence and in the control of one’s own material desires, through moderation (in food, sex, ambition, etc.), asceticism (fasting, abstinence, detachment), and compassion (helping, suffering with others).\(^{43}\)

This provides additional evidence that Viking practiced a form of asceticism, valuing detachment from material excess, compassion, generosity, and spiritual components that extend beyond mortal life. For modern Heathens, it is imperative to refute the caricatures. As my informants mentioned earlier, the Three Tribes of the Book arose out of a clash over resources “Three

\(^{42}\) Davidson 1968, pg. 125.

\(^{43}\) Nicolas Baumard, Alexandre Hya, Ian Morris, and Pascal Boyer *Increased Affluence Explains the Emergence of Ascetic Wisdoms and Moralizing Religions* Current Biology 25, 10–15, January 5, 2015 (Elsevier Ltd.).
people fighting over a well in the Desert.” The Northern Tribes, however, did not live in the desert and had plenty of wells.

**Reasoning Behind the Caricatures**

It is also just as important to understand where such caricatures were first derived. According to Renee Watkins;

A thousand years ago, the Norsemen or Vikings – Danes, Norwegians and Swedes – were terrorizing the greater part of Europe. Their earliest activities were chiefly limited to raiding and destroying, occupations for which their mastery of the sea admirably suited them.  

While there is ample proof of the Viking’s deeply spiritual-religious practices, the historical focus seems to remain based solely on their warring and pillaging. As stated in Chapter 1, etymologically, the terms Vikings, Pagan, Heathen, and Villain all share roots denoting a rural lifestyle well removed from the metropolitan disarray of big Grecian and Roman cities. While scholars currently debate whether or not the term Vikings correctly applies to all Norse settlers or refers instead to Norse raiders, my informants amongst the local Viking community have no problem with any of the contested terms. For them, Viking, Heathen, and Pagan still convey the gravity of millennial-old rural practices, although the term Villain still gives them pause. They do not generally contest the accuracy of martial terminology in reference to the ancient Viking community, as many modern practitioners sadly admit to the blood-shed caused by their forebearers. There were indeed skirmishes between early Northern Tribesman and the early Christian Church. In Northern England, Ireland, and Scotland, battles were waged by Viking Tribesman seeking to expand their influence. The sacred halls of the New Roman God

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Christ-Jesus⁴⁶ seemed easy pickings by the over-zealous Vikings. These soft-priests of a new god were not armed and had plenty of wealth. As stated above, war was and is an ugly facet of the human experience. Blood was shed for petty reasons, and the community of Northmen that raided these churches committed heinous crimes. The Archbishop Alcuin of York remarked on these crimes when he said of the 793 C.E. sacking of Lindisfame;

Lo, it is nearly 350 years that we and our fathers have inhabited this most lovely land, and never before has such a terror appeared as we have not now suffered from a pagan race, nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea could be made. Behold the church of St Cuthbert spattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments.⁴⁷

Yet the winners write the books. The early Church certainly lost the battle, but it won the war because they recorded all their experiences in writing. The Northern Tribes passed things down through oral tradition, and thus transmitted their religion with skalds through Viking poets and storytellers. For the Archbishop Alcuin of York to put his experiences in writing, effectively carved the Viking’s bloody ways in stone for generations to come. This struggle did not end there, however, as that same early Church would eventually supplant the earlier local religion altogether. By the end of the 10th Century, the varied Tribes of the North were now unified by the Christian faith, at least nominally. As such, the oral tales of their gods were overshadowed by that self-same new Roman God Christ Jesus.

The chief chronicler of these tales was Snorri Sturluson (1179 - 1241), an Icelandic historian, poet, and politician and himself a Christian. Though he lived almost two hundred years after the Viking Age ended, he would attempt a codification of the Northern Tribes’ religion into the mythology that still informs our understanding of it today. He also omitted many ugly and

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⁴⁶ One of my informants gleefully respects the Jesus as a new cultish and heathen deity of the Roman Church in reference to early Christianity.
uncouth aspects of the religion, found today only in oral storytelling amongst modern practitioners⁴⁸ and put a decidedly Christian spin on the whole of his writings. Another chronicler, Ahmad Ibn Fadlan (870-960), had previously painted them as dirty barbarians at the beginning of the Viking Era, due to his limited understanding of their Viking ways.⁴⁹ Of course, his biases were likewise steeped in the influence of his Moslem upbringing.

The influence of the earlier chroniclers’ biases extends into even modern Northern folklore. In Jacqueline Simpson’s *Scandinavian Folktales*, she offers that “a troll is a huge malevolent giant and it may be a Saint’s power to destroy him.” She continues that “giants and trolls are motivated by their hatred for men, whom they wish to drown or crush, but they are always thwarted by luck, by human cunning, or by God’s providence.”⁵⁰ It is important to note that the majority of the Norse Gods either descended from the Trolls/Giants (known as Jotnar) or are Trolls/Giants themselves. That the power of a Christian saint, luck, mortal cunning, or the divine will of the Christian God is enough to undo the power of the Old Gods shows how effective the Christian Church can be in winning the culture wars.

All these biases came through in multiple sources, first recorded by early Moslem explorers, then by early Christian victims and later Christian chroniclers, and eventually by their own people, who would relegate their Old Gods to the status of mindless trolls. It forever tarnishes the deeply reverential and spiritual Northern Tribes as nothing but warring and pillaging pirates. They would remain bloodied caricatures to most everyone but their own.

⁴⁸ One of my informants regaled me of a particularly base tale in which Loki convinced Thor of being pregnant, whilst Loki had sexual relations with Thor’s wife.
⁴⁹ “They are the filthiest of God’s creatures. They neither cleanse themselves after either defecation or urination, nor do they perform the necessary ablutions after major ritual impurity, nor do they wash their hands after eating. Indeed, they are like stray asses.” Pg. 38 2012 Paul Lunde (Trans.)
However, informants claim that a few pockets of indigenous communities survived in the North that still practiced the old ways in secret. If a religion is called heathen or pagan by dint of its status as a rural practice, it only stands to reason that it can exist quietly in the overlooked wild places. There, far from the looming gothic churches of the Christ-God, deep in secluded northern glens and in country farmsteads, the Northern people would chant the many names of Odin the All-Father, king of the Æs Gods.

**Denominations: So Many Families of Gods**

As previously stated, the term Ásatrúar is a modern conceit that translates into the “troth of the Æsir” or Faith of the Æs gods, yet this term references only the Æs Gods. Many practitioners within the Viking Heathen community actually venerate different families or lineages of deities, including Vanatrúar that call upon the Van gods, Distrúar on the Dis, Jotunrúar the Jotun, etc. Rökkatrúar, however, revere a special set of deities, especially in Hawai’i, as will be highlighted shortly.

The Æs were the Gods of Men and things that men might control, including Thor god of farming (despite his simplistic depiction as a warrior-god in the Marvel comics), Saga the god of poetry, Ullr the God of skiing- all associated with everyday aspects of Scandinavian life. The Vanir were Gods of nature that found outside the jurisdictions of men. Ran was the Goddess of drowning, Elle was the Goddess of old age, Frey and Freyja were god and goddess of the seasons, Summer and Spring respectively. It is important to understand that these two families of Gods married and intermingled with each other. Frey and Freyja were brought into the Æs after a lengthy war, reflecting that Summer and Spring were instrumental forces in agriculture. Another

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51 Again, I cannot prove or disprove these claims.
of the Van, Njord the God of the Sea, was brought into the Æs as humanity took to the waters for fishing and exploring.

Incidentally, this marriage of wildly different families highlights two important themes my informants stress. First, the intermarriage between deities in the Æs and Van pantheons proves the Greenness of the indigenous Religion, since the Vikings understood that they needed to work cooperatively with Nature to be successful. Second this marriage expressively refutes the Volkish orientation to war exclusivity and promotes their own Universalist view. Just as deities from the two different families deriving from starkly contrasting worlds still joined together to promote peace, different types of Heathen come together to form a single community.

Of the Jotnar, the Dis, and the Rökkr, the Jotnar comprise the category of giants, some of which included Loki, Skadi-Goddess of the North, and Ran the Goddess of drowning. While some of these giants are numbered amongst the Æs, others were mortal enemies of the Æs. The Dis encompass the ancient female Goddesses of fate, such as the Norns and the Valkyries that were never ritually venerated. As my informants explained them to me, “They aren’t to be talked about, let alone invoked.” The Rökkr deities, however, are of great importance in conceptualizing how easily such denominations are blurred in the Heathen religion. Loki was counted amongst the Æs, though he was Jotnar, and is one of the Rök.

**Rökkr: The Twilight Gods**

To begin with, time should be taken to understand who and what the Rökkr Gods are. The Rökkr are twilight Gods, distinct from other gods in appearance, lifestyle, and sometimes even mentality. Abby Helasdottir, a believer from New Zealand, coined this term that includes the group of Norse Chaos Deities, Hela, Loki, Angrboda, Fenris, and Jormundgand among others. Raven Kaldera, a modern practitioner of the Faith, who gained a bad reputation amongst Orthodox Odinists, offers a concise definition of the Rökkr Gods:
Those who identify as Rökkatru do not see ‘dark’ as bad, nor ‘underworld gods’ as evil. …death is not evil; it is part of life. So is rot and decay, and loss, and the passing of all things. So is chaos, so is randomness, so is the destructive parts of Nature that we humans find inconvenient. All these things are sacred and so are the Rökkr.\textsuperscript{52}

Rökkr is an Old Norse word coming from one of the root words for Ragnarok – Ragna and rökkr. Ragnarok means to conjure Fate or to hasten judgment. In this, it has become synonymous with Twilight, referring specifically to the last days of the Norse pantheon, the literal \textit{Twilight of the Gods}. All of those aforementioned Gods and Goddesses, Hela, Loki, Angrboda, Fenris, and Jormundgand play a special role in the End-times of the Norse mythological cycle. Perhaps this is why so few of the Orthodox Odinists frown on those who venerate these Deities.

Loki and Angrboda are the parents of most of the Rökkr deities. Loki the Norse Gods of mischief according to the main sources, is a Jotun, or a giant. His mother was Faurbauti, a lightning Giant and his father Njal (needle) or Laufey (leafy). Both of his father’s suggest that he was a pine-tree deity who mixed with the lightning that was his mother, indicating that Loki was a Deity of Fire instead of a simple mischief-maker. Loki’s penchant for causing massive bouts of chaos likewise supports this. Loki’s other names include Horse-Mother, Wolf-Father, Fire-Hair, Lie-Smith, and Disgrace-of-Gods\textsuperscript{53} It should also be mentioned that even at the most diverse modern Festivals where practitioners invoke a wide spectrum of Norse Gods, it is strictly verboten to hail Loki. According to the Guidelines of the Troth (the Truth), a modern Ásatrú assemblage;

The Troth does its best to embrace and bring together as much of this diversity as possible in a group where everyone still talks to each other. People who are closely involved with Loki are welcome as Troth members, but hailing Loki at our Trothmoot blots, Trothmoot Grand Sumbel and certain TKP-sponsored events is not allowed.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53}Larrington, 47.
Angrboda gave birth to three of Loki’s Rökkr children, Hela, Fenrir, and Jormundgand. Her name, which translates as “Distress-Bringer,”\(^55\) appears perfectly fitting when one realizes what destruction her offspring will bring to the whole of the Norse paradigm. Hel becomes the queen of Hela-Heim, the land of the dead that died neither in child-birth nor glorious battle. Fenrir is the Great wolf that will destroy the moon, the sun, and eat Odin All-Father at the end of time. Jormundgand is the Great Worm, which wraps around the earth and will thrash and destroy all land in the Last days. I draw attention to the Rök since one of my informants was a Rökkatrúar,\(^56\) who explained to me how little this mattered to his fellow Ásatrúar here in Hawai`i.

**Cosmology and Mythology: The World Tree, the Nine Worlds, and the Soul**

It is no easy task to attempt a quick synopsis of the mythology used to reconstruct the modern Viking religion. It encompasses a grand sweeping cosmos with numerous afterlives, multiple planes, worlds, or realms of existence, a four-fold soul, and a world tree that binds them all together.

**The World Tree and The Nine Worlds**

To begin, one must understand the importance of Yggdrasill, the World Ash, that serves as the Axis Mundi, connecting the nine realms of the Norse cosmos, separate but interconnected levels of reality through which the soul can journey. Odin the All-Father rode up and down the branches of the tree in his journeys. The *Dictionary of Folklore, Religion, and Legend* describes Yggdrasill as the “World Tree, an evergreen ash which overshadows the whole world, its roots

\(^55\) McCoy, 2016, 72.
\(^56\) The informant’s Fulltrui was Loki, something usually frowned upon by most of the Kindred I have had contact with.
and branches bind together heaven and hell”\textsuperscript{57} In *Primal Myths: Creation Myths Around the World*, the Soothsayings of the Vala reads, “Nine Worlds I remember, nine in the Tree, the glorious Fate Tree...”\textsuperscript{58} Yggdrasill and the nine realms provide an important clue in piecing together the Norse conceptualization of the afterlife.

Yggdrasill allowed an individual to move between the Nine Worlds, just as Odin did by riding his horse Sleipnir along its trunk. Yggdrasil was eternal and survived even Ragnarok.\textsuperscript{59} Any attempt to conceptually visualize the nine realms is complicated by the numerous different names for each one; the existing sources provide only vague hints for compiling a definitive cosmic map. The Prose Edda lists nine realms in several poems. In no certain order, these include; Asgarðr, the home of the Æsir Norse Gods, ruled by Odin, Álfheimr, the home of the Light Elves, Svartálfaheimr, home of the Dark Elves or dwarves, Midgard, home of mortals, Útgarðr, home of the giants, Vanaheimr, home of the Vanir Gods of nature, Niflheim, the primal world of frost, Muspelheim, primal world of fire, and Helheim, home of the dead. Valhalla, the halls of the brave dead, sits within the bounds of Asgarðr. In the Vafþrúðnismál, Snurlson mentions the Nine Worlds and those who travel between them. Vafthrudnir the shaman, the narrator of the Vafþrúðnismál sings, “Of the secrets of the giants and of all the gods, I can tell truly, for I have been into every world; Nine Worlds I have travelled through to Mist-hell, there men die down out of Hell.”\textsuperscript{60} In these realms exist gods of men (the Æsir), gods of nature (the Vanir), light elves, dark elves, the brave dead who died in combat, the dead who died from other

\textsuperscript{57} Maria Leach Ed. *Funk and Wagnealls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend.* Vol 2. (1959 New York) 1190,  
\textsuperscript{58} Barbara C. Sprout “Primal Myths: Creation Myths Around the World” (1979, New York), 174.  
\textsuperscript{59} Dougherty, 32.  
\textsuperscript{60} Larrington, 44.
means, giants, and living men. Yggdrasill binds all these beings together, encompassing all these worlds, and one finds in their names a mapping of the Norse afterlife.

The words Heim and Hel were explored previously, but not the word gard. The name Midgard translates into the middle-gard, Asgarðr means gard of the Æsir (the Norse Gods), Útgarðr the outer-gard. Gard incorporates a plethora of etymological ramifications. Garður can mean garden as in a walled enclosure, guarded as in protected space, as well as warren, warded, or even war. Thus Midgard, the realm of Men is the middle-garden, a protected place for man. Asgarðr is protected for the Gods. Out-world is the realm of the Jotun, giants who were at war with Gods and Men. These important terms will be explored more deeply in Chapter 5.

The realms were each connected to each other, but few could travel through them freely. Those who died could journey to their new homes – those who died in battle were chosen by Odin and taken to the covered and protected halls of the brave in Valhalla, a home also guarded by the Æsir, while those who died by means other than battle were relegated to the home of the shrouded, or covered, in Helaheim. All the realms hung on the World Tree, including the afterlives, were guarded and secreted away from the eyes of men. Shamans occasionally ventured through these realms by choice, such as Vafþrúðn, Vafthrudnir, and Odin, but eventually, all souls must make the journey to their assigned afterlife. Understanding the components of the Viking soul is therefore the critical step in grasping the tradition.

**The Conception of the Soul**

Trying to comprehend the varied concepts that make up the Viking spiritual identity is perhaps the most difficult task that modern Norse scholars have undertaken. As Davidson so clearly states, “It would seem as though the problem as to what part of man gives him

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61 Sharpley 335-336.
consciousness and individuality...is difficult to trace out sufficiently clearly to receive any impression of a consistent whole, as usual, we are limited to isolated fragments here and there, often misunderstood and imperfectly remembered. Or, as an erudite Ásatrú ally of mine remarked concerning the conception of the Norse soul, “How the hell would we know, we weren’t there.” Davidson remains the expert on this subject and provides a persuasive exploration of what constitutes a Viking spiritual identity. The word soul can be used, but no explanations can quite parallel that of the soul found in the Western Christian sense of the term. For the sake of brevity, Davidson’s conceptions of the soul can be divided into three distinct components reminiscent of the subtle body, and a fourth component, that of the hamr, that blurs the line between subtle and fleshly bodies.

The hamr can be translated as shape/form/appearance and constitutes the outward body. Yet this too has a subtle element to it. The hamr can be magically manipulated to serve different ends. As stated about Odin, “…It so happened that he knew those arts by which he could change his appearance and his shape in whatever way he chose.” Odin could change his hamr, as could his chosen berserkr (bear-shirts, known as the berserkers in the modern lexicon). Many magical tales of were-animals and lycanthropy abound in the context of Hamr, enough so that a magical art known as sjónhverfing or ‘deceiving the eyes’ can be identified.

The three subtle conceptions of the Norse soul are the Hugr (mind or emotions), Fylgja (Follower, or Fetch—an animal attendant spirit), and the Hamingja (Luck to be reincarnated). The Hugr can be loosely translated to mean ‘thought’ or ‘mind.’ It corresponds to someone’s personality or inner self. The Hugr may remain with its body, but certain events such as death, unconsciousness, ecstatic trances, or even sleep, might allow a person’s Hugr to explore other

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62 Davidson, (1943) 121.
63 Davidson (1943) 121.
realms. Some individuals, such as Shamans, can send their *Hugr* out at will. When Odin’s two pet ravens, Huginn and Muninn, ‘Thought’ and ‘Memory,’ are viewed in this context, it allows for a more thorough understanding. His ravens would fly through the realms each day, and come back to him at night, whispering secrets of all that they had seen.

These ravens, however, should not be confused with the *Fylgja* (Follower, or Fetch—an animal attendant spirit). The *Fylgja* is an animal that each soul has, akin to the witch’s familiars in European folktales. In dreams, the *Fylgja* could appear to the self and others, but only those with the second sight could see them upon waking. The *Fylgja* acted independently, but would still act on behalf of its ‘owner.’ Davidson defines it best as “the conception of an animal form closely connected with an individual which is visible to others in dreams, and, to those who have the power of second sight, in waking life also.”

The last and most nebulous of subtle soul conceptions is that of the *Hamingja*. Davidson defines the *Hamingja* as an;

Abstract conception, that of something belonging to an outstanding person which is partly a matter of character and partly of personality, and partly something more than either—that strange quality of ‘luck’ or luck-lessness’ which attaches itself to certain individuals more than others.

This concept can be very loosely translated into, luck, potentiality, or fate, and represents the part of a soul that can be reincarnated, left behind to dwell on Midgard after death, leave a person who does not respect it or even be loaned out to another individual. It is closely associated with families. As Davidson describes it;

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64 Ibid, 128.
65 Ibid, 133.
The Hamingja of a man may be proved by his success in battle. In Vatnsdæla Saga Ketill tells his son that he intends to teach him the laws of warriors ‘you are now at an age to prove what Hamingja will be granted to you. Now it is Hamingja which will decide.’

Since it is usually handed down upon a mortal’s death, it generally remains within the family; it is usually connected with names. Thus, one bestows the name of a respected father or grandfather, hoping the child will automatically inherit that patron’s Hamingja. An individual could also loan out their Hamingja to others. The Hamingja therefore can be seen as the part of the soul that can most truly be considered infinite. It is the part that reincarnates through the family, and in some cases, remains behind of Midgard after death. In the Eyrbgjga Saga, a family descended from Thorolf Mostrarskegg had buried his entire clan in a certain mound near his home of Helfagell. Besides this choice of afterlife, one may select Helheim, reincarnation in the familial line, or joining a favored deity in their halls, assuming the god approves. There is also the special half of the combat-slain destined for Valhalla that is claimed by his wife Frigga for unknown reasons. Davidson again proves to be the expert when she says, “There is no consistent picture in Norse literary traditions of the fate of the Dead… to oversimplify the position would be to falsify it.”

Odin plays an important role into all of my informants’ practice, enough so that many of them used the term Odinists in describing themselves.

**Odin: The All-Father**

Odin was the king of the Æs gods, and as stated earlier, played multiple functions, including being identified as the god of war, cheating, poetry, death, magic, and more. One testament to his critical role within the tradition was that “Odin’s verses included a great deal of

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66 Ibid, 132.
68 Davidson, (1943) 97.
wisdom on various subjects…for having a successful life, or having it cut short by enemies.”

Odin created mankind and also ensured its eventual fate. Aska and Embla were the first mortals, driftwood from Yggdrasill itself, “Found on the seashore, wanting power, with fate unwoven.”

Odin would later empower these two entities with ‘Spirit, mind, blood and aspect fair,’ which would raise these pieces of wood and elevate them to the status of creatures woven to fate; a fate that included death. Odin later sacrificed his eye to drink from the well of Mimir, the well of wisdom that provided water to the whole of Yggdrasill. The most famous of all Odin’s exploits came in the form of his self-sacrifice to himself. He killed himself and offered his sacrifice to himself in an attempt to gain the power of prophecy in the form of runes, and thus comprehend the eschatological end of all worlds. In the Havamal or the Sayings of the High Ones, Odin tells his story of his self-sacrifice to himself;

I know I hung on that windy tree nine whole days and nights, stabbed with a spear, offered to Odin, myself to mine own self given, high on that Tree of which none hath heard from what roots it rises to heaven. None refreshed me ever with food or drink, I peered right down in the deep; crying aloud I lifted the Runes then back I fell from thence…I grew and waxed in wisdom; word following word, I found my words, deed following deed, I wrought deeds. Hidden Runes shalt thou seek and interpreted signs, many symbols of might and power, graved by the Utterer of gods. For gods graved Odin… and I, of myself, graved some for the sons of men.

But like the Nature of the Universe itself, Odin rose again from his own destruction.

Cyclical and Linear Nature

While the Prose Edda, the Havamal, and the Elder Eddas, may not be taken as scripture, they remain a prominent component of the Faith. An informant pointed out two particular lines that allowed for a greater understanding of the Ásatrú paradigm. There is a special mention of a

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69 Ibid, 151.
70 Sprout, 176.
71 The correlations between Jesus (the Logos) and Odin’s sacrifice (word following word) are not lost on any of my informants.
72 Larrington, 32.
game of checkers at the beginning of the Norse creation cycle. According to the translation by Sprouse, “Gathered the gods on the fields of labour: they set on high their courts and temple… they played at tables in court, were joyous…” Tables in this context meant games of checkers or chess enjoyed by men and Gods alike in the Norse world. This description of a Golden Age is mentioned again in the later stanzas of the Seeress’ Prophecy; “There will be found again in the grass, the wonderful golden chequers, those which they possessed in the bygone days.”

Ásatrú may only be a reconstructed remnant of the religious tradition of a once far-ranging people, but that remnant will grow again through the determination of its devotees. This can be witnessed in Yggdrasil, the World Tree, the Axis Mundi of the Viking Cosmos. Yggdrasil held together with the cosmos, and from its boughs Odin Alfadur hanged himself to understand the inner workings of fate. He thereby learned that he and all the gods would die. Yet the death would not matter in the realm of mortals, who would continue to persevere as always. During the Ragnorak, the world of the gods will fall, but man and his ilk will continue to prosper. As the translations show, “Yggdrasil was eternal and survived even Ragnarok.”

My informant likened the cyclical and linear nature of the Ásatrú Faith to that golden chess set and Yggdrasil. Though the Gods, or what we know of them, may fall, the cosmos will continue to thrive, and the world will turn again for the better. The Viking paradigm may have been overwritten by Christianity, but it has come again and is now meant for mortals. Mortals that just want to live a good life. The golden chess set of the Gods, abandoned after the Ragnorak, was left behind for mortals. My informants use this image to show the success of their religion, especially as seen by growing numbers of practioners. Calico’s findings seem to agree,
and he concludes that “The movement seems to be gaining rather than losing momentum and is now transitioning from a small, nebulous, and fractious network into a real movement…”  

In fact, throughout my research, the Hawai`i Kindred have been contacted by Kindred in Oregon. The communication between the two will hopefully increase not only the numbers but also expand the role local Ásatrúar community plays with the mainland branches. In what follows, I will explain that much of the popular depiction of the diverse far northern tribes (Vikings) is misinterpreted, if not downright incorrect. Some Vikings lived and practiced their Faith in ways that exemplify religious or ethical austerity. Evidence demonstrates that these tribes had both time and resources enough for those who wished to pursue a life of spiritual introspection, and even extreme asceticism. I will focus not only on this evidence, but also on the means making such practice possible and sought after by certain religious tribes of the far north.

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76 Calico, 16.
CHAPTER 3: GENESIS AMNESIA, RACISM, AND FANBOY ÁSATRÚ

In Swithiod are many great domains, and many races of men, and many kinds of languages. There are giants, and there are dwarfs, and there are also blue men, and there are any kinds of stranger creatures.

~The Ynglinga Saga

In this chapter, I will explain the racist overtones of the groups within the movement, which is a vocal minority. I will also offer more information on the three orientations, their importance, and how they fit within the Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A). I will apply Chidester’s 3 x 3 model of religious world-view to highlight the stark contrast between the differing orientations.

None of my informants identified with the Volkish orientation. All regarded themselves as Universalists. Yet many of them were quick in explaining that there was and is a racist voice within their community. The one thing I could always count on when meeting new informants was that the first thing they addressed was their open-mindedness and anti-racist stance. Few of them could pin-point just when and where the racism derived. This chapter highlights some of the origins of the racist rhetoric that plagues the group. Only a small minority within the global community espouses this rhetoric, but it is such a vocal one that I would be remiss if I did not address it early, much like my informants. Also, both local Hawai`ian and military culture play a particular role in combatting the racist voice of Heathenism. I will begin by delineating the racist origins in the early development of modern Ásatrú, separate from claims of older familial ties. I will then explore the three orientations, and even propose a new one to showcase the Heathen gregariousness, which I dubbed Fanboy Ásatrú. This fourth orientation is born from the pop-culture Viking understanding, as realized through comic-books and mass media. I will explain the Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A), how it is used within the community, and where Hawai`ian Ásatrúar fall within its strictures. Lastly, I will use Chidester’s 3 x 3 model of

77 The term community in this statement refers to the Global Community- not a local one, as informants were quick to point out. I have yet to meet or even hear of any Hawaii-based Ásatrúar who fell below a 3 on the Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A).
religious world-views to illustrate how greatly the orientations differ, almost resembling the three distinct religions, and not just alternative denominations within a single tradition.

**Genesis Amnesia and Racism**

Genesis Amnesia is an anthropological term coined by Pierre Bordieu in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. He states, “It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know.”

Bordieu applied this term for his work in Algeria, and others apply it to their work in Orientalism. It is fitting that while my informants are aware of the racism within their community, they do not know *how* racism became entwined with Heathenry. To my informants, Neo-Nazi undertones represent an ugly blemish on the face of their Faith, and they do not include it as part of their origin story. The true origin story, however, does bear such racist qualities. Interest in Viking mythology and its shamanistic practices were prevalent in the Theosophical Society, and rumors abound that Hitler and his Thule Society summoned the Norse gods in their own rituals during World War 2. The group as a whole expresses disinterest in the veracity of these conjectures, but they do show that interest in traditional/ancient indigenous Scandinavian religion persisted through the years. The first modern example of the religion in an institutional capacity with government recognition was the Ásatråarfélágid (Icelandic for Ásatrá Society), which emerged in Iceland in 1973. Yet even in this case, one finds no mention of racist rhetoric.

Danish-born Else Christensen (1913 - 2005) developed the first reincarnation of Viking Heathenry in the United States, based on inspiration from Australian-born Alexander Rud Mills (1885 - 1964), a Nazi-sympathizer and strong proponent of Anti-Abrahamic Nordic radicalism.

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79 An obvious paraphrasing but colorful enough that one of my informants requested I use it.
80 A German occultist group created after WWI.
The title of his most popular book, *The Odinist Religion: Overcoming Jewish Christianity*, indicates his views. Christensen (1913 - 2005) was a Swedish political activist in the late 1960s. While researching political activism, she had a reawakening of Faith after reading the works of Mills. Else Christensen began publishing her newsletter – *The Odinist* in 1969. Christensen migrated to England and then Canada, with her beliefs and newsletters in tow. In this way, the ugliest facet of the Faith, the Neo-Nazi, and Anti-Semitic tirade of a certain small Ásatrú populace traveled across the Atlantic from Europe. But separate from all of this, on the first day of Summer, 1973, the Ásatrúarfélagit was founded in Iceland.

My patrons among the Ásatrú community had no knowledge of any information regarding the Odinist newsletter, Christensen, or Mills; all they knew was the reconstruction of Traditional Vikinger Faith and practices. When I asked about the Faith’s beginnings, they spoke only of their pre-Christian origins in the 8th and 11th century C.E., as if that could answer any questions. Many laid claims of familial ties to the religion far older than the Viking Age itself.

Thus, while Mills and Christensen may have been the catalysts, they certainly are not the enduring voice of the contemporary movement. Ásatrú in the United States quickly outgrew the Anti-Semitic political associations of their progenitors, and Genesis Amnesia came into play. Although my informants understood the implications of Racism and addressed the issue upfront, they omitted the racist history of the modern movement to focus on a more important facet of the Faith, rebuilding it from scratch from ancient roots. My informants and the Ásatrú as a whole are rebuilding their Faith with the remnants of Teutonic/Scandinavian Paganisms in Pre-Christian Northern Europe, without drawing on the Icelandic Ásatrúarfélagit. Calico stresses that Ásatrúar Heathenry is a thus a Reconstructionist religion, as are other forms of contemporary Paganism that are “specifically tied to a particular historical-cultural tradition and seek to
recreate that culture’s religious practice with a degree of historical accuracy.” Yet historical accuracy itself may lead to some racist underpinnings depending on the inclinations of the contemporary interpreters.

**The Norse Paradigm and the Three Abrahamic Faiths**

The old Faiths fell away eventually as the Norse converted to Christianity. As Calico indicates, “From approximately 688 to 1100 C.E., the pre-Christian Pagan religions of these areas gradually ceased to be practiced as the tribes converted to Christianity.” Chapter 2 highlighted some aspects of the Christian reinterpretation of the Viking Faith into the violent caricature prolific today. It would be intellectual laziness to call that the end of the story, as there was ugliness on both sides.

One of my informants offered one hypothesis that might merit consideration since Norse and Christian religious paradigms bled into each other. He posited that the Viking Age was a relatively short period in history following the Germanic Iron Age, roughly 800-1100 when Northern European and Scandinavian tribes explored the waterways for trading and raiding, colonizing and conquering. During this time, the wide-ranging and seafaring Scandinavians would be exposed to new cultures, new customs, and new religions. To them, the whole world was being revealed. At the same time however, Christians were slowly integrating themselves into the lands that the Norse called home.

While the Christianization of cultures was wide-spread during that time period, it would engender unforeseen hindrances to the continuous preservation of pre-Christian Norse

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81 Calico, 42.
82 Stephen McNallen, Valguard Murray, Frazier Glenn Cross, and more to be discussed below are all contemporary voices who utilize the historical clashes of Vikings and Abrahamic Faiths to promote their racist agenda.
83 Calico, 21.
84 He also stressed that these stated that these were not his views, that he was neither a Volkish nor a Tribalist, and had no racist leanings whatsoever, but this was simply an idea he had about the Christian/Heathen schism.
understandings, one of which would be the eradication of Viking oral traditions. During the Viking Age, Skalds (Norse poets) would memorize the Eddas and chant them for audiences. These skalds orally transmitted the original tales and “kept them alive by recitation and training of new Skalds”85 Oral traditions were the norm, until much later when Snorri Snurlson chronicled the many tales in pen and ink from his Christian perspective, destroying the original understanding through omissions and alterations of the mythology.

While this idea may just be conjecture, negative rhetoric regarding all three People of the Book within parts of the Ásatrú community still stands, and sometimes includes the racist ugliness so often associated with the Ásatrúar. There are all too real neo-Nazi skinheads who quote the Prose Edda as so much dogma to bolster their tired rhetoric of racial purity. These voices represent the worst opinions of the Volkish orientation. I again must stress that none of my informants voiced anti-Semitic, anti-Abrahamic, anti-Christian, anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, or anti-any People of the Book. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge the existence of this rhetoric in the wider Heathen community, where members of the extreme Volkish orientations also employ explicitly racist language.

The racist extreme within the Volkish orientations reflects the sentiments expressed by Else Christensen and Alexander Rud Mills. One of the worst proponents was Frazier Glenn Cross, once a Christian leader of the KKK, who converted to Ásatrú while serving time in prison for his crimes.86 He stated;

Odinism! This was the religion for a strong heroic people, the Germanic people, from whose loins we all descended, be we German, English, Scott, Irish, or Scandinavian, in whole or in part.87 Odin! Odin! Odin! Was the battle cry of our ancestors; their light eyes

85 Dougherty, 13.
86 Cross killed a 14-year-old boy, the boy’s grandfather, and a 53 year-old woman in a Kansas City Jewish Community Center.
ablaze with the glare of the predator, as they swept over and conquered the decadent multi-racial Roman Empire. / And Valhalla does not accept N*****. 88 There’s a sign over the pearly gates there which reads, ‘Whites only.’ 89

Another vocal proponent of racist propaganda under the aegis of Ásatrú was Valgard Murray, who was formerly affiliated with white supremacy groups within the Ásatrú Alliance and worked with Else Christensen. He “…maintains that Ásatrúar is…an ethnic religion that is suitable only for those of Northern European ancestry,” 90 a position that remains the focal point of the whole Volkish orientation. Stephen A. McNallen is another such voice. He wrote;

Ásatrú, as practiced by the Norse peoples, had so much in common with the religion of the other Germanic tribes, Ásatrú is for all European peoples, whether or not their heritage is specifically Scandinavian … [it] is better suited to us than is some other creed which started in the Middle East among people who are essentially different from us. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are alien religions which do not truly speak to our souls. 91

Perhaps the worst is David Lane, infamous for coining his 14 words, 92 “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” There is a bevy of other similar statements, usually made by like-minded individuals. Yet for every piece of racially prejudiced bombast spouted by a few xenophobes, entire Ásatrú assemblies stand ready to castigate it.

“Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, the high priest of the Ásatrúarfélagið openly condemned the racists. ‘I think it’s obscene,’ the high priest, Hilmar Hilmarsson, said of the way white supremacists are coopting Norse symbols like Thor’s hammer because they believe the Vikings were a pure white race…’We are absolutely horrified.’” 93 Another group, the Troth, one of the strongest supporters of the Universalist Orientation, stresses the universalist nature of Ásatrú and avows that choosing

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88 I cannot, will not, use this terminology.
90 Calico, 26.
92 These 14 words are infamous amongst the Hawai`i-based community, especially among those in the Volkish orientation, who denounce it as blatant racism.
to follow the path is based on a “religious choice that can be made by anyone who feels drawn to the movement.” This undercuts the sickening ethnocentric drivel spouted by some of the racist founders. “The Troth welcomes the involvement of racial and ethnic minorities, LGBT persons, as well as those on the theological margins of Ásatrú, such as Neo-pagans.” As they in the Troth said, “I believe that Odinism is the innate religion and spiritual inheritance of the indigenous peoples of northern Europe, and their brothers, sisters, and descendants in all lands and times.”

The Three Orientations

As seen above, some of the more vocal adherents of the Faith called into question what constitutes a Viking. Members fulminated over issues related to hereditary affiliations, allowance for non-tribal practices, and clan-based prerequisites since the movement’s inception, due to identity politics and other partisan trappings. Thus far, Ásatrú practitioners divide themselves along three major orientations, drawing party lines based on their conclusions regarding who they welcome into the fold: The Universalists believe that anybody can join Ásatrú; the Volkish argue that only people of Northern European descent can be Ásatrú (and are often labeled as racists); and the Triiballists think that anyone can become Ásatrú if they are adopted into a tribe, swear an oath, and practice the Faith. These three Orientations are the markers at the forefront of all debates I have been witnessed, or have ever heard about, within the Ásatrú community.

Universalist Ásatrú

Those of the Universalist Ásatrú orientation believe that anyone of any ethnic background can become Ásatrú. Individuals of Asian, Hispanic, African, Irish, and mixed descent are eligible– the only criterion being that they follow the NNV and take responsibility for their own actions. This allows for more people to come to the Old Norse Religion. However,

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many other Ásatrú argue against the Universalist position, saying they are too open-ended. Volkish and Tribalist Ásatrú believe that more measures should be essential in determining who qualifies to become Ásatrú. As one of my Informants explained it, “There have to be rules, it isn’t some free-for-all in which you can do whatever you want, we’re not Wiccans, remember?” This comment about Wiccans merits special attention, given that Ásatrú Faith is often classified into the same category as Wicca or other fringe nature religions. I heard it remarked that Ásatrú was simply a gang of Viking imitators, ‘Ren Faire Junkies.’ I have also heard them dismiss the Faith as ‘just another frenzied group of Wiccans.’ Indeed, Ásatrú does fall under the aegis of Wicca in a lot of circles, whether the Heathen wills it or not.

**Folkish or Volkish Ásatrú**

Those of the Folkish or Volkish Ásatrú orientation hold that Ásatrú is an ethnic religion that should be mainly practiced by those with a Northern European heritage. Ethnic religions connect the practitioner to the landscape’s ancestors, customs, and traditions. Stephen MacNallen of the Tribal Alliance is one of the loudest voices of this camp. He proposes that;

> Because we are more like our ancestors than we are like anyone else. We inherited not only their general physical appearance, but also their predominantly mental, emotional, and spiritual traits. We think and feel more like they did; our basic needs are most like theirs.\(^{95}\)

This group is the most likely to claim the Scandinavian Folkways as a foundation of the Heathen paradigm. Yet it is in this paradigm of Folkways where racism can raise its ugly head.

As Stephanie Von Shnurbein offers in her entry *Contested Fields I: Race and Ethnicity*, “Only racial-religious groups with an outspokenly white supremacist or Aryanist agenda, such as Vigrid in Norway, the Armanen-Orden in Germany, or the ones investigated by Gardell claim

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that Ásatrú is a religion based mainly or even exclusively on race.”

All of the horribly misanthropic individuals mentioned above fall into these categories.

Maintaining the Heathen identity, be it religious or ethnic, is at the heart of this conflict, although it can be argued that many among the Volkish disagree with the racist slant. Some few Volkish Ásatrú argue that they are not ‘white supremacists,’ but that they believe that every Folk should worship its own ancestors. Many cite Japanese Shinto as an example of ethnic religion. Another is the Hawai‘ian renaissance of indigenous Folkish religions. All these are similar to the Volkish quest for a Folkway. I wonder if such claims would work for any indigenous religion worldwide. Could anyone of any descent lay claim to such a rich and varied practice? Ethnic authenticity is at the heart of the Volkish orientation, and I can offer no easy answers.

One example of this quest for authenticity centers around the Hawai‘ian concept of ‘Aumākua (ancestral guardian). When meeting with some of my informants, a local waiter explained that his ‘Aumākua was a skip-jack tuna. His only evidence for claiming this lineage was that he was born in April. This apparent misconception of the Hawai‘ian term, or cultural appropriation, might serve as a local illustration for what those Volkish Heathen, who are not racists but are leery of ‘just anyone’ claiming the Faith, may mean.

Triibalist Ásatrú

The Triibalist Ásatrú is the third orientation that currently exists in the Heathen community and strives to maintain a safe middle ground. Little has been written about the term, and I have heard varied rules concerning who falls under its umbrella. Although some may still

97 Shinto also includes its own divide between the Universalist and racist/ultranationalist orientations. The former is associate more with Shinto as a green form of spirituality and the latter stress the ethnic basis of the religion.
98 The spelling stems from the supposed Celtic word for Tribe, Triib. When asked what kind of Celtic, I was met with confusion. Treabhchas is the Irish Gaelic, Treubh the Scot-Gaelic, and Llwyth the Welsh.
consider themselves Volkish, the Triibalists are very accepting of non-white Heathens in their ranks. This self-description of Volkish stems from their belief in a prerequisite of deep acceptance of Norse Culture, anything otherwise is just a shallow adoption of Ásatrú, which explains their reluctance to accept Universalists. To become a Triibalist Ásatrú you either must have Norse/Germanic descent or you must be adopted and ‘oathed’ into the community. They see this membership criterion as similar to that of Judaism, into which one is either automatically born via bloodline, or must be accepted and converted into the community by a Rabbi.

Many Triibalist Ásatrú offer arguments against racist delineations, highlighting that there were many variations of the Viking peoples mentioned in the Eddas. They showcase the unification by marriage of disparate families of Viking Gods and Monsters (Æsir, Vanir, and the Jotuns) as proof of this. Many also claim that Norse slaves from Celtic, Slavic, and even Middle Eastern lands would eventually come to the Faith. They utilize as proof the text *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North*, a chronicle of a Muslim who participated in an indigenous Viking lifestyle.

As the Triibalists fall into the median ground between the two extremes of the Universalists and Volkist, they are perhaps the most apprehensive about being labeled Wiccan or Neo-Pagan. One of my informants, who claimed the Universalist Orientation, but espoused a Triibalist understanding, maintained that “Wicca may claim Ásatrú, but Ásatrú don’t claim Wicca.”

Wicca’s open and inclusive ‘Free for all’ approach to membership allows members who worship of any and all interpretations of the gods. Even among the Universalist, however,

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99 On the other hand, many Triibalist Heathen regard Celtic ancestry as sufficient grounds for inclusion. I wonder if my Irish genealogy served me in my research?
100 “Free for all” is used by one of my informants to illustrate the difference between the two Faiths.
there is still the importance that only the Viking gods are venerated. But modern pop-culture interpretations of the Viking gods and their popularity in mass-media may allow for new practitioners to come to the Faith. In addition to the already accepted delineations of the Ásatrú community into three orientations, I can offer a new perspective on a new Orientation that may eventually emerge.

**Fanboy Ásatrú**

In *Reconsidering Heathenry – The Construction of an Ethnic Folkway as Religio-ethnic Identity*, Jennifer Snook highlights the selective nature of Ásatrú when she explains;

> Where one stands in regard to the politically charged notion of racial and ethnic belonging has real consequences. In most cases, member’s racial ideology earns them a position in the innangard (within the community) or the utgard (outside the enclosure) or particular kindreds or organizations, defining who will be accepted as legitimate or labeled a troublemaker or poseur.\(^{101}\)

Troublemaker and poseur are harsh words. But like the aforementioned waiter who claimed skip-jack tuna as a spiritual forbear, it is easy to understand why so many fervent practitioners of a Faith would use such harsh terms. This vulnerability to charges of misappropriating a culture lies at the heart of the Universalist debate. As my contact in the community said, “There have to be rules, it isn’t some free-for-all in which you can do whatever you want, we’re not Wiccans, remember?” The Wiccan debate opens up the heart of the matter. While Wiccans have multiple means to construct their own religious identity, the Heathens rely exclusively on the Norse paradigm. That delineation marks a sharp contrast between a Wiccan, who can select from a wide range of mythologies, and an Ásatrú Heathen. The Ásatrúar Heathens took what they had left of Viking culture and created a lifestyle. This is the major distinction between most Wiccans and the Ásatrúar. The Ásatrúar attempt to maintain a traditional Viking perspective.

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utilization of Norse trappings and texts and the veneration of Viking Gods is the clear line in the sand, even among the Universalists.

Another potential paradigm stemming from these Viking trappings, that I call Fanboy Ásatrú, likewise promotes the same understanding of a strictly Viking culture but steers well clear of the ‘come-as-you-are’ style of Wicca and Neo-Paganism. Initially, I myself struggled to objectively view the Ásatrú Faith after a lifetime of enjoying Marvel-Comics. Marvel Comics and related movies make use of Viking lore to recreate the Viking Mythos just as much as the Ásatrú heathen community does. With Chris Hemsworth as Thor, Tom Hiddleston as Loki, Idris Elba as Heimdallr, and Sir Anthony Hopkins as Odin, all of the Old Gods are now becoming household names again. If an individual were to come to the Ásatrú Faith thusly, they would occupy a gray area between the Universalists and the Wiccans. Fanboy Ásatrú may grow out of individuals occupying this gray area. One of my contacts within the local Heathen community mused about this concept, “Some kid, from say, Haiti or something…he really likes the Thor movie and decides that Thor is now his new deity. While he can pray to Thor all he wants, he’s missing the point of some of the NNV – that of Self-Reliance.”

While it is true that Self-Reliance may be a virtue overlooked by the young adherent of the Faith, it doesn’t negate the fact that this figurative kid from Haiti is devoting himself to Thor and Thor alone, a devotion that is predicated on a Scandinavian foundation. That automatically ensures that he doesn’t fall into the category of Wiccans. Although many of the community may balk at the idea of Comic Books serving as the establishment of a person’s spiritual groundwork-Jediasm, Whovians, even the sheer presence of Harry Potter in so many avenues of the modern consensus, deem it otherwise. In *Alternative Spiritualities, New Religions, and the Reenchantment of the West*, Christopher Partridge offers “it is not simply that there is a lack of
consensus about what is deviant, but rather that beliefs once considered deviant are now acceptable even respectable.”

The Orientation of Fanboy Ásatrú might be the least favored bastard step-children of the Ásatrú community, but their statements are true of all Ásatrú. As Calico writes about the Faith, “In their eyes, the old Gods have stirred, becoming active again after a dormancy of almost a thousand years and calling their people back to the old ways.” If Sir Anthony Hopkins is the Fanboy Heathen’s portrait of Odin, does this make that Odin any less real to them? If the great weakness of the Universalist Orientation is that anyone of any ethnic background can become Ásatrú, and the only criterion requires that they follow the NNV and take responsibility for their actions, then there is no feasible reason why a comic-reading fanboy who feels ostracized by society can’t hear the Gods calling him back to the old ways through popular media. Yet the compensator for this ostracization would be well worth it. Lorne Dawson, channeling Christopher Partridge in his chapter The Meaning and Significance of New Religious Movements, explains;

There are certain developments in contemporary popular culture, discussing the attention given to such themes as UFOs and alien abduction, magic and paganism, vampirism, and the fight between supernatural forces of evil and good in general.

The compensator for the Fanboy Ásatrúar is a manifest fight between those forces of good and evil, led by the Viking bravado and villain trouncing of Hollywood heroes. Jedis and Whovians and Harry Potter’s continued popularity reflect this as well. Dawson, however,

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103 Calico, 25.
104 Stark and Bainbridge use the term Compensator to denote certain supernatural promises that religion offers, such as immortality, triumph over evil, etc. that real life cannot provide.
105 Dawson, 125.
proposes a similar component in NRM’s that is as applicable to the Ásatrú as a whole, Universalist especially, as it might be to the burgeoning Fanboy Heathens. Dawson claims that;

Radical religious commitments in particular, like those associated with joining many NRM’s are presumed to reflect a desire to turn back the clock, to recreate within the movement and society itself the normative clarity and close social relations that are identified, rightly or wrongly, with a bygone era. ¹⁰⁶

What era could be more bygone than the Viking Age, when Gods of thunder were prayed to and brave women and men seized their destiny? If Self-reliance is a pivotal component of self-actualization and creation of reconstructed identity, then this theoretical growing number of Fanboy Heathens would epitomize this self-reliance in a manner far greater than the Ásatrú Heathenry proper would realize.

These Fanboys would reconstruct their religious identity out of a piece of media (the movie) that itself was reconstructed out of a comic book that was reconstructed from reconstructed texts (in the form of the Prose Edda). Snorri Sturluson, the chronicler of the Scandinavian mythos, recreated them through his Christian leanings. Traditionally the Scandinavians used Skalds (Norse poets) who recorded the tales and “kept them alive by recitation and training of new Skalds.”

Through such varied means of disseminating and receiving a traditional Viking perspective, the Fanboy Heathens would have as great a claim to the identity as more mainstream Heathens, regardless of the source material. To again focus on Snook’s exclusivity proposal (and ignoring the Racist components), there remains the question of what “earns them a position in the innangard (within the community) or the utgard (outside the enclosure) … defining who will be accepted as legitimate or labeled a troublemaker or poseur. Poseur may be a harsh term that

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 119.
many in the Heathen community could apply to the Fanboy schism. Yet the Fanboy’s assertion to a Universalist Ásatró identity would be just as warranted and just as hard-earned.

The creation of a Fanboy’s religious identity could generate backlash from the Ásatró as a whole, perhaps even from the Universalist. This would then push the Universalist farther down that imaginary spectrum towards the Triibalist. If the Fanboy Ásatróar were so marginalized on the imaginary Orientation spectrum as to be unacceptable to Universalists, then they would find themselves at odds with everyone in the community. I also feel that the Heathen community proper would potentially generate a backlash for such obvious ostracism The orthodox Heathens could potentially be stigmatized for their unfair treatment of their own… a stigma that would continue to grow as the Universalists amongst their numbers grow increasingly Triibalists to better distinguish themselves from the Fanboys. For the present, this remains conjecture.

The Jarnsaxa Scale

The ongoing question of authenticity, whether racial or religious, is the source of much polarization in the Heathen Faith. As already expressed under the three Orientations and the theoretical Fanboy Asatrú, what the community defines as a Viking Heather remains a question with no foreseeable resolution. It is only natural that members of the Faith themselves would eventually find a way to codify the disparate paradigms, as they have attempted to do with the Scale of Racial and Cultural Tolerances in Ásatró by Jarnsaxa Thorskon. The Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A) serves an important purpose as a straightforward means for practitioners to identify and quickly explain their positionality along a spectrum, arrayed in a sliding scale from Levels 1 to 6, where Level 1 is the most open and inclusive position and Level 6 the most limited and xenophobic. While typically left unsaid, one can generally assume that levels 1 and 2 are
Universalist, 3 and 4 Tribalist, and 5 and 6 are Volkish. In addition, the two levels associated with each orientation highlight competing themes that exist within each one. For instance, Level 5 represents a Volkish dialogue that opposes a racist agenda, while Level 6 blatantly espouses “anti-lesser race” rhetoric, and could be read as Neo-Nazi dialogue. I will offer a synopsis of each level below.\footnote{It is important to note that none of my informants identified themselves below level 2. Some understood the sentiments expressed at level 4 or even 5, but none agreed with them.}

Level 1: Ásatrú is an open religion that anyone can join. Ásatrú welcomes people of all races, and those who believe otherwise should be denounced to clearly distinguish them as inauthentic Ásatrúar. A practitioner at this level will only worship alongside others at this level, making them among the most exclusive in their definition of an authentic Viking Heathen.

Level 2: Anyone who wants to become Ásatrúar can join, regardless of racial or cultural history. Individuals have the freedom to choose any religion, and those at level 2 will defend and uphold that right. They will worship with anyone.

Level 3: Just as the Æs and Van Gods intermarried, so did the Asatrúar’s Viking ancestors with people of other racial, cultural and ethnic groups. While it may be more unusual for those of non-Northern European heritage to be Ásatrúar, it is not impossible. They accept that the Viking Deities will call upon whomever they choose and therefore will worship alongside anyone thus called.

Level 4: Only those of Northern European background can truly follow the path of Ásatrú. This doesn’t mean that other races are ‘less than’ those of Teutonic heritage, only different. All races and ethnic groups are equal, and the Faiths of non-Northern European heritage are just as important as Ásatrú. However, all non-Viking ethnic paths are as closed to

\footnote{These descriptions are paraphrasing derived both from Calico’s description (Pg. 238-239) and the Jarnsaxa Scale itself. (See Appendix A).}
me as Ásatrú is to them. It is important to follow the path of your own cultural and ethnic heritage. There is respect for the validity of various paths. They will worship with anyone.

Level 5: Only those of Northern European heritage can be Ásatrú, and the Northern European races should separate from other races. This does not imply that people of other races are "lesser," only different, but there is an obligation to keep the Northern European blood pure in honor of Viking Gods. There may be merit in working with people of other races if they also value the same separation of racial, ethnic, and religious groups. They will only worship alongside those who are also of Teutonic heritage.

Level 6: Only those of Northern European heritage can be Ásatrú and the European races are superior to all other races and ethnic groups. Aryans are the only true humans, and as such have an obligation to keep the racial and ethnic blood pure. If the only way to achieve this is to rid the world of the lesser races, then so be it. They will only worship with other Aryans.

**Chidester’s Model Applied to the Three Ásatrú Orientations: A 3x 3x3 World View**

I cannot definitively dispute the claims of antiquity that some of my informants advocate, but I can appreciate that at heart Ásatrú Heathenism is a NRM. In this regard, there are certain techniques and models advantageous for understanding NRM’s that proved useful in this work, including David Chidester’s 3 x 3 Religious World View Model.¹⁰⁹ Chidester explains the model as follows; “Classifications of persons and orientation in space and time…provide the basic lineaments of any religious world-view. Religion is about being human in a human place, oriented in space and time…”¹¹⁰ Chidester’s Religious World View Model explains some of the cosmological understandings of a NRM by setting parameters about Time, Space, and Personhood in varying degrees of consequence. When Chidester’s 3x3 Model and Classifications

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¹⁰⁹ This term was coined by Helen Baroni, Ph.D.
¹¹⁰ Chidester, xviii.
are applied to the three Ásatrú Orientations, Universalist, Triibalist, and Folkish, it creates a 3x3x3 Viking World View. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3).

**Universalist 3 x 3 Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONS</th>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;All Pantheons - But the Norse is the most important</td>
<td>Cosmic Space&lt;br&gt;The Nine-Worlds that make up the Cosmos, and Yggdrasil - the Axis Mundi</td>
<td>Cosmic Time&lt;br&gt;Chaos-sets from the Beginning to the End Times. Cyclical and Linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Beings</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mortals, Elves, Dwarves, Ancestors, Etc.</td>
<td>Geographic Space&lt;br&gt;Midgard - The Realm of Men</td>
<td>Historical Time&lt;br&gt;The long-shape past time of the Ancestors, and Now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;The unfortunate dead, the Giants who will ride with Loki during the Ragnarok</td>
<td>Body space&lt;br&gt;Maintaining health, brushing teeth and hair, bathing daily. &quot;An ounce of Prevention is worth a pound of Cure.&quot;</td>
<td>Body Time&lt;br&gt;The limited amount of time one has to cement their deeds and reputation</td>
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**Triibalist 3 x 3 Model**

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<th>PERSONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Norse Pantheon</td>
<td>Cosmic Space&lt;br&gt;The Nine-Worlds that make up the Cosmos, and Yggdrasil - the Axis Mundi</td>
<td>Cosmic Time&lt;br&gt;Chaos-sets from the Beginning to the End Times. Cyclical and Linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Beings</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mortals, Elves, Dwarves, Ancestors, Etc.</td>
<td>Geographic Space&lt;br&gt;Midgard - The Realm of Men</td>
<td>Historical Time&lt;br&gt;The long-shape past time of the Ancestors, and Now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;The unfortunate dead, the Giants who will ride with Loki during the Ragnarok</td>
<td>Body space&lt;br&gt;Maintaining health, brushing teeth and hair, bathing daily. &quot;An ounce of Prevention is worth a pound of Cure.&quot;</td>
<td>Body Time&lt;br&gt;The limited amount of time one has to cement their deeds and reputation</td>
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**Folkish 3 x 3 Model**

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<th>PERSONS</th>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Superhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Norse Pantheon</td>
<td>Cosmic Space&lt;br&gt;The Nine-Worlds that make up the Cosmos, and Yggdrasil - the Axis Mundi</td>
<td>Cosmic Time&lt;br&gt;Chaos-sets from the Beginning to the End Times. Cyclical and Linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Beings</strong>&lt;br&gt;Elves, Dwarves, Ancestors</td>
<td>Geographic Space&lt;br&gt;Midgard - Scandinavia and Germanic Lands **</td>
<td>Historical Time&lt;br&gt;The long-shape past time of the Ancestors until Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subhuman Persons</strong>&lt;br&gt;Non-Aryans **&lt;br&gt;The 3-Tribes&lt;br&gt;The unfortunate Dead &amp; the Giants who will ride with Loki during the Ragnarok</td>
<td>Body Space&lt;br&gt;Maintaining health, brushing teeth and hair, bathing daily. &quot;An ounce of Prevention is worth a pound of Cure.&quot; Only fellow Aryans are suitable for breeding, to promote the future of a pure-Aryan Race.</td>
<td>Body Time&lt;br&gt;The limited amount of time one has to cement their deeds and reputation</td>
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*Represents the Volkish Orientation that fall into level 6 of the Jarnasaxa Scale<br>**Represents those of the Volkish Orientation that fall into the level 6 who also tout neo-Nazi ideologies.
I will showcase each Orientation by category and then explain the differences. In many cases, Space and Time differ little between orientations, especially between Universalist and Triibalists. The Volkish Orientation varies the most markedly, but only believers at Level 6 of the Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A) display a significant degree of variance. There could be an argument as well, for even broader categories of Level 6 – the most extreme neo-Nazis of this level expressing the most anti-Abrahamic position.

**Classification of Persons**

The classification of Persons recognizes the categories of Superhuman Persons, Human Beings, and Subhuman Persons. This classification has the greatest variance between the three orientations. Universalists and Triibalist are similar in outlook as far as the persons classification.

**Superhuman Persons Category.** In the Superhuman Persons category, Universalists place importance on all the world’s pantheons, if only to recognize their relevance for peoples of a different faith. Amongst the Triibalist, only the Norse pantheon has any real importance. For the Volkish, the Norse pantheon again has prominence, but some circles limit the Norse pantheon to venerate only Odin and Wotan (Odin’s Germanic name).

**Human Beings Category.** The Human Beings category includes all humans, but also extends to encompass Dwarves, Alfar, and Ancestors. These views are shared among the Universalists and the Triibalists. In the Volkish orientation however, only some mortals count as human. For those of the Volkish orientation on Level 6 of the Jarnsaxa Scale (See Appendix A),

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111 When asked about the Other Pantheons and whether or not they should count, an informant explained to me that these “Other gods matter to the others, and as such are important to them.”

112 Though the Dwarves (Nidvelim, Nibelung, or Svartalfs- varying terms for an underground race, not Subhuman however) and Alfar (the Elves) all dwell in their own separate realms (Nidavellheim and ALfheim respectively), they still are bound to fight in the final battle of Ragnorak like all mortals beings, and will ultimately perish.
only Aryans count as humans – again, this represents the overtly racist minority within the Volkish minority.

**Subhuman Persons Category.** The Subhuman Persons category includes those who died and weren’t eligible for an afterlife in Valhalla.\(^{113}\) In also includes the Jotnar (giants), Loki (despite his being counted in the Æs), and the majority of the Rökkr.\(^ {114}\) For some Volkish, the subhuman category includes non-Aryans and those of the Three Tribes of the Book.

**Classification of Space**

The classification of Space includes the categories of Cosmic Space, Geographic Space, and Body Space. The classification of Space has some similarities and some variation between the three orientations.

**Cosmic Space Category.** The Cosmic Space category refers to the whole makeup of the Universe. This would encompass the Nine Worlds, including Midgarðr and Yggdrasil, the World Tree. This doesn’t change through the Orientations.

**Geographic Space Category.** The Geographic Space category refers to Midgarðr / Mannheim, though with special attention focused on the Northern European and Celtic Lands for the Triibalists, and limited still again by the Volkish to include only Scandinavia and other Germanic Lands.

**Body Space Category.** For Vikings, Body Space encompasses all religious and ethical aspects of an individual’s use of their body especially the human frame and hygiene, of great importance in all three orientations. Chidester extends Body Space through one’s sexual activities and one’s possessions.\(^ {115}\) While not overtly stated, the Volkish orientation would

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\(^ {113}\) Anyone who died in means other than battle or child-birth.

\(^ {114}\) A separate set of Chidester’s 3 x 3 models might be made, for each denomination involved- i.e. the Ásatrú, The Vanatru, the Distru, the Jotuntru, and the Rökkatru. For the sake of brevity, I will pursue this task another time.

\(^ {115}\) Chidester, 97.
diverge significantly from the other two orientations in the Body Space category. Sexual proclivities mark a sharp contrast in the Volkish, as their emphasis on the reproduction of a ‘pure’ race would limit suitable partners.

Perhaps the most important universal healing practice undertaken by believers of all three orientations was simple cleanliness. Ahmad Ibn Fadlan recounted how the Vikings would wash their faces and arms in warm water. Hot water baths can be seen in unearthed Viking settlements. There are numerous stories of how Viking women would wash their husband’s hair often. Even in the Havamal, the doctrines of Odin All-Father cite that a man should be washed and fed and dressed in clean clothes before he goes anywhere. Among the practices falling within the category of Body Space, Ásatrúar regard the imperative that men take care of themselves as primary, and self-reliance is elevated as one of the NNV of the heathen community. As the old adage goes, ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,’ rendering a pragmatic approach to health as essential.

Classification of Time

The classification of Time encompasses the categories of Cosmic Time, Historical Time, and Body Time. The Time category changes little between the three orientations, but an understanding of Time is nevertheless important in understanding the Heathens’ worldview.

**Cosmic Time Category.** For all three orientations, Cosmic Time is both linear and cyclical, as evidenced in the account of golden chess-set. Each Heathen is destined to participate at the end of the cycle, either in this life or the next. The Viking soul is regarded as

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116 *Meat and clean linen a man needs, Who has fared across the fells, Water, too, that he may wash before eating, Handcloth’s and a hearty welcome,* From the Havamal 8-9, Larrington.
117 More of the NNV will be touched upon in Chapter 4.
118 See Chapter 2 for more on the chess-set.
part of Cosmic Time, and much like the world-tree, the soul is eternal, surviving even the final war. This war brings about the beginning of the new world when it concludes.

**Historical Time Category.** The Historical Time category mirrors the Cosmic Time category. All three orientations understand Historical Time to end in the 11th Century with Christianization of the culture, now being reconstructed in the modern era to emulate pre-Christian patterns.

**Body Time Category.** Of greatest importance to practitioners is the Body Time category, which includes all individual use of time for religious practice, including building one’s reputation, or Name. Chidester explains that Body Time is linked to “the rhythms of waking and sleeping, the alternations of ritual, work, and leisure, and most fundamental processes of life and death identified with the body.” The Heathen mentality, based on the ideals of the perfect Viking, would value all of Chidester’s examples above as viable means to promote spirituality in life rendering one stoic enough to be remembered long after one’s death.

“Live a good life, so you’ll be remembered” could be understood as fatalistic, but to the heathens, with their understanding of a cyclical and linear cosmic time, a reputation carries through all three of the time categories – Cosmic, Historic, and Body Time, with Body Time intrinsically linking all three. Odin in the Havamal exemplifies this concept, “Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself die; One thing now that never dies the fame of a dead man’s deeds.” Vikings regard reputation as an integral factor in a Heathen’s actions. It is interesting, then, that those of the racist Volkish fringe don’t have any fear of their reputation being stained.

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119 I have since learned of a new interpretation of the historical time model, where in the past is manifested in the wells beneath Yggdrasil, which feeds the trunk (the present) which is released as dew in the boughs of the great tree (the future). This dew then drips into the well, thus the past feeds the future which feeds the past. With such implications, the end of the Historical Age may not be an end, but simply another beginning.

120 Chidester, 121.

121 Larrington, 76.
Conclusion

As Jennifer Snook cites in *Reconsidering Heathenry – The Construction of an Ethnic Folkway as Religio-ethnic Identity*, “Race generally is felt by American Heathens to be a complex, nagging, and lingering problem that created disquiet in the community since its inception in the 1970’s.”\(^{122}\) Many of the outside religion professionals I have met automatically assumed that my work within the Heathen community was meant to focus on the *racism* involved. There was no shortage of articles in popular media that focused primarily on the racist, neo-Nazi, Anti-Semitic, and other ugly aspects. These sources were written by persons both from within and without the community. In this regard, Snook’s article was one of the most significant pieces I read, as she is both a scholar and practitioner who has denounced the majority of the Faith as fundamentally racist. While her article is significant in that it is very scholarly and well written, it didn’t offer anything that I hadn’t already heard in previous scholarship. For this research study, I focused on what is happening here in Hawai’i. My informants had their own voice on the matter that didn’t reflect the racism and vehemently opposed it at every turn.

One of my informants offered me a piece of advice concerning the issue of racism in Ásatrú; “Of course there are assholes; there are assholes no matter where you go. The Nazis are worse assholes than most, sure, but they believe what they believe. It’s not for us to judge them by their beliefs, but for the actions. If they act on it, then the law will deal with it, Gods willing. Beliefs-Wise, it is for none to judge but the Alfarù."\(^{123}\) He’ll get them for cowardice in the end. They’ll get it in the end.” He continued, “In the meantime, worry about your world, not the assholes that move about in it.” This last statement reveals a very unique standpoint in the Ásatrú Paradigm. When he said, ‘your world,’ he seems to stress that every individual practitioner

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\(^{122}\) Snook, 57.

\(^{123}\) All-Father, a kenning for Odin.
expresses their own acts of devotion and ethical conduct without focusing on the behavior of others. While there may be a world in which all the practitioners participate, there is also a privatized, almost ascetic world of worship that each devotee oversees for him or herself. For a Faith that claims descent from Iron Age farmers that were just trying to live their lives in whatever means served them best all those years ago, this makes sense. This concept of ‘living one’s best’ may also explain why so many of my informants serve or served in the Military, the primary focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: THE MILITARY CONNECTION

Every man must plough his own furrow.
~The Vapnfröðinga Saga

In this chapter, I will explore the connection between Heathenry and the Military, and offer five reasons why the military lifestyle supports the ideals of Ásatrú Heathens.

As of 2013, roughly 0.3 percent of the U.S. population identifies as neo-pagan, a catch-all term for modern interpretations of indigenous European religions before the advent of Abrahamic faiths taking hold in Europe. Within that 0.3 percent, an even smaller populace – just 7,878 people according to one census – practice Ásatrú or Odinist Heathenry. As of March 2014, the number of Military personnel in Hawai`i was 49,023 servicemen and women. Based on those estimates, assuming that similar patterns hold within the military, that would mean 1,471 of those Service-members in Hawai`i would likely self-identify as some sort of neo-pagan. Yet all the military members whom I have met practice a form of neo-paganism/Heathenry in Hawai`i were Ásatrúar. I have met no neopagans identifying with Hellenistic, Bulga-Rus, or neo-Druid practice. Nor have I heard of any such practitioners in the neo-pagan community in Hawai`i.

While the survey numbers dated from 2013 and 2014, it should also be noted that the religion is growing fast. According to Calico, “The movement seems to be gaining rather than losing momentum and is now transitioning from a small, nebulous, and fractious network into a real movement.” Since I began spending time with my informants, I have seen more and more Ásatrúar practitioners being stationed in Hawai`i, with more coming all the time. Between January and March of 2020, five more Ásatrúar individuals approached my informants,

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126 Calico, 16.
interested in my research. What about military service makes it so inviting that one would see so many Vikings serving?

I argue that five primary reasons explain why Vikings are so prolific in the U.S. Military. The first relates to their response to the 9/11 tragedy, since a significant number of Heathens joined the Armed services after that fateful day. Next, I will examine the NNVs as ideals which can be easily integrated into a military mindset. I then showcase the blue-collar sensibility that can be found in both the military, especially the lower ranks, and Heathenry. I will also highlight the themes of joining and acceptance, two themes that promote Heathenry in the military, especially for younger Armed-service people fresh from boot-camp. My last piece of evidence derives from the importance placed on family, a somewhat overlooked factor in existing scholarly literature, that carries much gravitas in both communities. Stark and Bainbridge’s work on NRMs will aid in illuminating these reasons for the easy fit between military life and Heathen belief and practice.

Stark and Bainbridge on Characteristics of a Sect

In the *Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*, Stark and Bainbridge highlight six criteria in determining a sect’s identity as such when it emerges out of an existing church. When Heathenry is seen alongside Christian norms, it might be viewed as a splinter movement departing from the dominant religious here in the United States. While I am not arguing that Heathenry is actually a sect of Christianity, Stark and Bainbridge’s definitional description of sectarian movements provides insight into the mental processes of some Heathens before their defecting from their prior faith or the dominant culture.

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127 This is based strictly on my own observation, and feedback from my informants.
128 Again, I am not claiming that Heathenry is a sect, as it doesn’t derive from any Christian body, but many of the practitioners defected from the Christian Churches prior to their Heathen awakening (their world).
Stark and Bainbridge cite the definitional criteria of a sect as;

1. Separateness from the general society and withdrawal from or defiance of the world and its institutions and values.
2. Exclusiveness both in attitude and social structures.
3. Emphasis upon a conversion experience prior to membership.
4. Voluntary joining.
5. A spirit of regeneration.
6. An attitude of ethical austerity – often of an ascetic nature.\footnote{Bainbridge, Rodney Stark and William Sims. *The Future of Religion; Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation.* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 21. Stark and Bainbridge may see use this to define a cult, but alternative religion is more appropriate for the modern Heathens.}

Heathenry meets all of these conditions in teachings and practice, and I will justify each of them in the order of their relative importance from lowest to highest.

**Attitude of Ethical Austerity**

The sixth and final component as presented by Stark and Bainbridge is that of *an attitude of ethical austerity – often of an ascetic nature*. The NNV of the Ásatrú provide compelling evidence of this component, promoting values compatible with asceticism. I won’t touch overmuch on the NNV here, as they will have their own section below. While few unifying factors can unite the varied orientations, the NNV serve as one tool that unites all segments of the community. Also, Odin the All-Father can be seen as an Ascetic par excellence (as shown in Chapter 2).

**Exclusiveness in Attitude and Social Structures**

The second component of sects presented by Stark and Bainbridge is that of exclusiveness both in attitude and social structures. This is one of the grey areas of Heathenry and the rise of the orientations within the community. What constitutes a Viking? Would worship of the Æsir Gods be enough to label oneself a Heathen? These are questions that the...
Vikings of today ask themselves. Exclusivity by blood and ethnicity are ugly aspects that cause conflict between members of the Heathens as explored in Chapter 3.

**Separateness – Heathenry as a Response to 9/11**

The first characteristic of a Sect presented by Stark and Bainbridge is *Separateness from the general society and withdrawal from or defiance of the world and its institutions and values*. This separateness from the general society can be witnessed by the fact that so many informants left the American norm of Christian affiliation, at least nominal affiliation, after 9/11. Tired of the dualistic conflict of Christianity and Islam, they forswore the Abrahamic faiths altogether and chose a tradition that spoke more to their immediate lifestyles, that of a new religion and a life in the military.

In defiance of the Abrahamic traditions, they chose an older, pagan Faith that focused on self-reliance, as opposed to praying to an antiquated Abrahamic deity that required his followers to kill each other. One of my informants explained; “So after 9/11 it just made more sense. I mean, here’s these two tribes, both from the Book\(^{130}\), and they’re not only killing each other, but they’re killing innocent people who aren’t even involved. I don’t pretend to [know] Jesus,\(^{131}\) but I’m pretty sure that’s not what he had in mind. But yeah, watching the footage afterward, it just kind of numbed me a bit. This can’t be what religion is supposed to do. Later, I was in a bookstore, I picked up a book on Norse Mythology, I read about Odin, and it just kinda clicked.” Still another informant claimed that he went Heathen “Especially after that September 11\(^{th}\) Bullshit [that] year…Those Christians and Moslems really need to figure their shit out…” A

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\(^{130}\) The Three Tribes of the Book: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

\(^{131}\) I don’t know why Jesus was used as a verb in this context, I theorize that my informant meant *Jesus* as in *interacting with* or *praying to Jesus*. 
particularly telling description of the 9/11 event by an informant was; “A bunch of assholes arguing, and innocent lives were caught in the middle. No God should condone that.”

Stephen MacNallen of the Tribal Alliance, an outspoken advocate of Volkish Heathenry expressed a similar sentiment when he argued;

Ásatrú – is better suited to us than is some other creed which started in the Middle East among people who are essentially different from us. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are alien religions which do not truly speak to our souls. 132

Despite the blatantly racist discourse McNallen otherwise engages in, some of his sentiment rang true for my informants.133 At least three of my informants who admitted they were nominally Christian before 9/11, needed answers in its wake. The answers provided by Heathenism served as some of the compensators that counterbalanced the dissonance caused by denouncing of a former faith.134 When they couldn’t rectify the horrors of 9/11 with the Abrahamic faiths, they turned to Heathenry. This tradition valued self-reliance rather than dependence on outside help provided by an impersonal god as well as a warrior-aesthetic that spoke to them on an immediate visceral level. At the same time, many of them joined the military to better fulfill these values. Again, all of the Heathens that I know are military or military-related, more than half of my informants joined soon after 9/11, and almost a third135 placed special significance on the role 9/11 played for their eventual turn to Heathenry. There is another factor at play within this component, that of a Spirit of Regeneration.

133 Again, my informants stressed that none of them share McNallen’s ideologies in the least, and all openly denounce his racist attitude.
134 Stark and Bainbridge particularly employ the term compensator pertaining to alternative traditions that they refer to as sects and cults, but they use it in their definition of religion in general, in The Future of Religion, pp. 5-8.
135 There were seven of the 21 informants who claimed some Christian understandings before 9/11 (though there was no talk of denominations), which placed significance on disenchantment with the Abrahamic religions, as well as the reawakened realization of a Viking spirituality after 9/11.
My Heathen informants grew up in a world of institutions and values determined by Christianity. The first dissatisfaction they expressed was with the three Tribes of the Book, as described above. The second represents a spiritual re-awakening of the self that also plays a role in the military. These two factors exist simultaneously in my informants who stated; “9/11 woke me up and set me on my path to be a Viking and join, sure, but I was always a Viking, I just had to realize it.” My informants used declarations such as “it just kinda clicked” or “a moment where things just clicked” or “a realization that this is what I already was.” The reawakening of a spiritual warrior lineage that a member has always been a part of coincides with the fifth criterion described by Stark and Bainbridge, an emphasis on a spirit of regeneration.

The spirit of regeneration is important due to the inclination of all my informants to highlight a sudden realization that they belonged to/within this millennia-old warrior-faith. For my informants, the regeneration refers to a resurgence of the original Faith’s power, an original Faith that waiting within them to be reborn – Heathenry. That rebirth manifested itself largely as a result of witnessing 9/11 and their subsequent enlisting in the military.

These components also exhibit an element of self-reliance, since the reawakening is predicated upon not only one’s awakening but the personal strength to change one’s worldview. This is an integral part of a Heathen’s spiritual development and an important factor in the military. It is also one of the NNV’s of Heathenism.

The Nine Noble Virtues. Factors such as the three orientations, the varied denominations based on pantheon, and all the myriad interpretations of Odin’s names suggest the many divergences within the Ásatrú fold; there are few unifying factors upon which all Heathens can agree. One such factor that they do agree on is the NNV, which plays a definitional role for Heathen identity. With no reasonable facsimile found in the mythology or lore, the NNVs
nonetheless serve as one such unifying tool that all Heathens can rally behind. So important are
the NNV that one of the prerequisites for an aspiring Tribalist not of Northern European blood
to gain admittance is to be ‘oathed’ or ‘blooded’ into Ásatrú by the recitation of them. In no
certain order, these values are;

1. Courage
2. Truth
3. Honor
4. Fidelity
5. Discipline
6. Hospitality
7. Industriousness
8. Self-reliance
9. Perseverance

No matter which orientation, denomination, variation, or interpretation of Ásatrú
Heathenry an informant represented, all could boast to a strong adherence to these pivotal core
values. Many of the Ásatrú I met recited the NNV’s like a mantra, going into detail about why
the world would be a better place if everyone embodied these bearings. Each Heathen could also
regale me with stories of Norse deities exemplifying these qualities, although my research found
no discernable historical mention of the NNVs before modern times. The community created
these values out of whole cloth as a modern conceit and adopted them as a common basis for the
tradition. Practitioners manifest their importance in the integral status that they accord them.

One of my informants would use Heimdellr, Æsir God of Vigilance, to highlight how the
God would never leave his post. He used this as evidence for the importance of discipline in the
military ranks. Just as Heimdellr was always at his post, so too, did my informant vigilantly
patrol his spaces maintaining constant observance. Another informant would illustrate with a
smile on his face how Loki would ‘canoodle’ his way out of tight situations because he was the
most industrious of the Gods. Still, another would comment on Odin’s self-slaying on the
World-Tree Yggdrasil as a testament to self-reliance, perseverance, and sacrifice for the greater good. The true import of their tales may have escaped me, but they clarified for me how these traits shaped those individual practitioners’ lives and the critical status of the values for their understanding of Ásatrú. The NNVs motivate them to better serve the world around them. The informant who favored Heimdallr was protective of everyone he knew and abstained from alcohol at all times to ensure everyone else’s safety. The informant who favored Loki would handle tense situations with a smile and quickly deescalated potentially violent circumstances with self-deprecating jokes. If the informant who favored Odin were to start a project, then he would finish it no matter the cost, often working well over 16 hours or more to ensure its completion. His grit was a testament to grim perseverance and self-reliance.

I find some small correlations between these aspects of my informant Ásatrúar and certain ascetic practices from various religious traditions. The self-prohibition of alcohol, self-deprecation, the grim work ethic may not express these traits as extremely as one finds in some monastic devotional practices, but they illustrate a level of ethical devotion not often witnessed in secular lifestyles. More important for purposes of this analysis, however, is similar thematic nature of the set of core values that each branch of the Military defines for their members as the basis of appropriate behavior. The Core Values of the Navy and Marines promote honor, courage, and commitment. For the Air Force, the mission statement includes integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. Likewise, the Army boasts LDRSHIP: an acronym which stands for: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

I feel that within this pervasive similarity lies a clue explaining why so many Ásatrúar eventually find their way into the military – or vice-versa, why so many military members find
their way into Heathenry. Stark and Bainbridge’s sixth component of a sect, the “attitude of ethical austerity – often of an ascetic nature.” Both the military and Ásatrú represent compatible ideals of austerity and asceticism, but also convey the ‘on the ground’ and ‘pragmatic’ approach to the religion. I would argue that this corresponds with the Blue-Collar appeal of both military service and Heathenry.

B.M. Edda, in All about Qdinism: Your questions Answered, wrote that “Odinism [is] the common property of farmers and peasants, soldiers and sailors, housewives and fishwives. Odinism is for all our folk.” All of these classes of people represent the worker-class of Norse society. The last statement of “All our folk” highlights the appeal of a dyed-in-the-wool blue-collar sensibility, free from the class-based bias placed on other religions.

**Blue Collars and Deck Plates.** Demographically and by observation, Heathenry is a very blue-collar religion. Though the Hawai’i community requires no formal ritual for joining Ásatrú other than the commitment to behave according to the NNV one places on oneself, the community needs and expects hard workers. Like Edda’s aforementioned farmers, peasants, soldiers, sailors, housewives, and fishwives, Ásatrúar are on the ground, actively accomplishing their goals. I witnessed this in the informant who venerated Odin by working 16 hours a day or more to ensure completion of a goal, saying that hard-work is the hallmark of the Faith.

None of the Ásatrúar Heathens I met sought remuneration from other members or donations from outsiders to support communal activities and practice, although they engage in communal gatherings and participate in communal charitable work. What they need, they accomplish with their own assets and hard work. Calico explains it thusly:

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136 Stark and Bainbridge, 21.
138 ‘On the deckplates’ is Navy jargon for being outside on the ship deck, away from the floors of the ship designated for offices and staterooms and the like. It refers specifically to enlisted personnel.
All held jobs outside the movement and pursued Ásatrú in their spare time. Generally speaking, the Ásatrú movement suffers from a lack of financial resources, a situation exacerbated by its relatively small numbers, the socioeconomic level of adherents, many of whom are working class Americans, and the decentralized nature of the movement which prevents financial resources from being concentrated.\footnote{Calico, 31.}

All but one of my informants served in the lower ranks of the military (E-1 to E-6, out of the 10 total ranks extending up to E-9) and their family, and I met with only one E-7, who took a leadership role as the head of the Kindred group in Mililani. None of my informants came from money, and few had any resources to spare. All of my informants, served as technical support or mechanical M.O.S (military occupational specialty), as engineers, mechanics, electronic repair, or similar occupational specialties.\footnote{MOS is an Army and Marine acronym meaning “Military Occupational Specialties” a ‘job’ within the military. The navy equivalent is Rating, and the Air Force AFSC.} I encountered no practitioners who were Commissioned Officers, nor anyone of rank higher than E-7. Indeed, Master Sergeant Matt Walters, who became the first officially recognized Heathen in the military when the Air Force allowed him to put Heathen on his dog-tags, is also an E-7. Yet these remain the highest-ranking individuals I have discovered in Hawai`i. Military Heathen’s lack of high rank places them, and by extension Heathenry as a whole, “on the Deck-plates,” as it were, to quote one of my Navy informants.

I do not use these examples to disparage high ranking military leadership within the Heathen community, but to illustrate that the heart of the religion is comprised of blue-collar positions, removed from the trappings of financial wealth, and that members express pride to have blue-collar roots and to serve among lower-ranking Service-people. These traits also aid in the conversion and retention of like-minded individuals.
Voluntary Joining, Acceptance, and Conversion

Heathens rarely engage in active recruiting or proselytization, and applying these terms proves difficult without context, which Geertz would call “thick description.” A professor once voiced in a religion class that “America isn’t a nation of joiners.” That remains true for the Heathens as well as the military. In components numbers 3 and 4, Stark and Bainbridge indicate that sectarian groups place “emphasis upon a conversion experience prior to membership and voluntary joining. As previously stated, many of those who entered military service and joined Heathenry did so because of a reawakening of their spiritual heritage after witnessing 9/11.

I asked many of my informants who had previously been affiliated with other Faiths about their subsequent conversion process into Heathenry, especially concerning methods of proselytization. None of the Ásatríar Heathens I know said they were actively recruited into the Faith. All were raised in a Christian denomination of some kind; none said they grew up in agnostic or atheist households.\(^{141}\) Karl Siegfried, Goethe\(^{142}\) of Thor’s Oak Kindred in Chicago, conveyed a similar observation in a 2018 interview;

There was no conversion process, as there often is in the Abrahamic Faith traditions. Instead, there was a realization and recognition that this modern religion with ancient roots was the right thing for me. As with many Heathens, it was less a sense of coming into a new belief system than having a sensation that this is what I already was.\(^{143}\)

His last statement, of “this is what I already was” rang true for other Ásatríú that I have met. All had a story, in some cases mystical in nature, of how they were called to the Faith; some amongst them even claimed they experienced supernatural visions of the Æsir Gods. As explored earlier, this also mirrors their decision to join the military. As typical Americans who aren’t “joiners,”

\(^{141}\) Only three of the number admitted to being nominally Christian prior to Heathenry, the rest claimed that they had ‘Some church or other growing up.’ None seemed keen on sharing further.
\(^{142}\) Goethe is a title for a Heathen priest. I have yet to meet anyone in Hawaii who fits this position, but one of my informants is attempting to fill the role.
Ásatrúar informants said that their decision wasn’t a choice, but a realization about their self-understanding in response to 9/11; they saw themselves as warriors. Out of respect for their Faith, I highlight their belief that this was an awakening as opposed to conversion, although as a student of the academic study of religion, I must disagree. They did convert, albeit self-convert, even if they were not proselytized to Heathenry, and they did sign up for the Armed Services, which actively recruits and socializes new recruits into military culture. The conversion process remains equally critical for NRMs, which likewise employ socialization processes for new members, even those who self-converted before joining. One of my informants walked me through the processes of a new recruit (to the military and Ásatrúar) that encapsulates the conversion process. The following is a fairly lengthy summary of a trusted informant explaining how the typical military conversion to Ásatrú works;

“Consider this kid. He grew up in the bible-belt, the rust-belt. Blue-collar kid. Dad was mechanic, Mom was a truck-driver, factory town, Sunday School, hard-winters, summers in the lake. That kind of town. He is young, eager to discover himself and the world around him. He wants to fight the good fight. He joins the service, now he’s a new recruit- a booter, fresh from basic training. He is at a new command; he’s still a booter, so he gets assigned K.P. Duty, chipping paint, mopping the floor, booter stuff. He is still an E-1 or an E-3, of low rank, so his finances aren’t that stable, and he must become pragmatic in his approach to money. He learns quick how to survive on Cup-O-Noodles if he wants something besides Army Chow for every meal. He’s alone out there. Few friends yet in his new unit. He meets some people. Hard-workers like him. They give no pretenses about who they are. Vikings. They don’t have pamphlets; they don’t collect dues. They worship Odin and Thor. No commitment, no judgement besides what is placed on oneself. Integrity is what you do when no one is around. He remembers Sunday School. Not the same they say. The rest of his unit approves. The Vikings are a good crowd they say. Hard workers, dependable. He gets invited to lunch with them every now and again. They have a barbeque, he’s underage so they won’t let him drink. Soon the kid starts adopting the NNV’s. Not because of the Vikings, but because of himself. He picks up a book of Mythology. It speaks to him. Thor, Loki, Odin, they make more sense than Noah or Moses or those other guys. He asks about their services. Why? They ask. Not unless you’re serious. We aren’t here to recruit you. You do this, you do it for you. He chews on it for a while. After a while he either says yea or nay. Either way doesn’t matter. What matters is that he’s a good kid. Hard-working,
dependable. If he does choose, it’s because he understands that everything he did up to that point was to get him there. Everything he is, he already was. A Viking. hard-working and dependable.”

**Importance of Family.** There remains one vital component that binds all Ásatrúar Heathens together. Although I didn’t seek it out, I discovered it wherever I looked. It is also reflected in my informant’s above speech. This is the bond of the family. That recruit may be thousands of miles away from his parents, spouse, children, or siblings, but what if he isn’t married, or is on deployment well away from any family? Few realize the threat of loneliness that affects so many Service-members. The above story offered instances when the Heathen community served as a proxy family to the theoretical recruit. They kept him out of trouble and prevented underage drinking. They were honest with him about their inclinations and prevented any hasty decisions about joining. They also opened the door inviting the recruit to get-togethers outside of a work environment. In the Heathen gatherings I have witnessed, this circle of friends and family meet informally at varying times and places, often with chicken wings. This circle of friends and family is a Kindred, and it is the heart of all Heathen communities, and domesticity is of the gravest importance. Calico likewise observed;

They [Ásatrú] believe that families are the best context for raising strong, mature, and skillful children….the nuclear family model no longer supports that value system…giving way to a culture in which children are neglected for reasons of work, entertainment, and convenience.

**Spirit of Regeneration**

Sparks and Bainbridge’s fifth component, *a spirit of regeneration*, not only reflects a new regeneration of spirituality but a return to domestic values of home, hearth, and kinship. Even

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144 A lengthy interview from an Army informant half paraphrased and half verbatim.
145 Though I am utilizing factual information that others provide, I also have to admit some biases from my own time serving in the U.S. Navy for 14 years.
146 Calico, 128.
McNallen, despite some of his harmful rhetoric, emphasizes the importance of such close ties as he describes the community as ‘loyalty to kin.’ Every Ásatrú Heathen I met in the military had a strong relationship with his family, calling them first thing upon pulling into a foreign port. There were always care-packages, gifts, and the all-coveted letter from a loved-one. The Ásatrú were a tight-knit community, which extends to each other and those closest to community members. It should be noted that my number one informant in the community lives with his mother and two sisters in a one-room apartment. Though these were obviously tight living conditions, which would have been awkward for anyone else, he and his family were happy and extremely productive. They enjoyed picnics every weekend, and camping and outdoor activities whenever possible. The whole of the Heathen community was invited to these functions, and despite my lack of Heathen inclinations, I was invited as well. It was this group that recommended contact with the largest circle of Kindred on the Island of Oahu.

The Hawai`i chapter of Ásatrú and Odinists on Hickam Air Force Base, unsurprisingly, is called the Hawai`i Kindred. Their varied members meet together as a whole very infrequently (I have yet to see a full gathering of their numbers), but individuals of the community boast that they have over 80 members, with upwards of 10 families at any given time.\footnote{With military members deploying, coming home, transferring to different commands, and discernable lack of communication between these families, I cannot say for certain whether these numbers are an exaggeration or justified. I always give my informants the benefit of the doubt.}

\[\text{We are a small heathen community on the island of Oahu. Our goal is to provide a safe, open, supportive community for the local Heathen population. We are a family friendly and open group. We follow the Nine Noble Virtues and respect all other cultures and religions. Bad mouthing, condemning and judging other religions will not be tolerated, however, educated discussion is welcome.}\text{\footnote{Since beginning this project, the Facebook information has changed, and I was referred to the Mililani group who now serve as my informants. This was the norm however, as numbers are always changing. It was originally accessed in November of 2017, with the URL \url{https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&mid=1bJb9fSzHPu3FqX9jRW4tAoAsR8&ll=-5.704472522246697\%2C93.27392600000007&z=1} \& \url{http://www.facebook.com/hawaiikindred.}}\]

\[\text{147\footnote{With military members deploying, coming home, transferring to different commands, and discernable lack of communication between these families, I cannot say for certain whether these numbers are an exaggeration or justified. I always give my informants the benefit of the doubt.} \& 148\footnote{Since beginning this project, the Facebook information has changed, and I was referred to the Mililani group who now serve as my informants. This was the norm however, as numbers are always changing. It was originally accessed in November of 2017, with the URL \url{https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&mid=1bJb9fSzHPu3FqX9jRW4tAoAsR8&ll=-5.704472522246697\%2C93.27392600000007&z=1} \& \url{http://www.facebook.com/hawaiikindred.}}\]
This statement advertises this community as family-friendly, safe, open, and supportive while indicating that they regard Volkish views as problematic, but it could provide a potential haven for lonely married or single recruits. That hypothetical recruit would find a surrogate family in this kindred. To a new Service-member, that is a boon. Conversion to Heathenry is an extension of this boon, a simple adopting of the ideals of the community, ideals such as the NNVs, blue-collar sensibilities on the deck plate, and the importance of family.

**Conclusion – The Uniformed Code of Military Justice**

The varied core values of the service branches are taught in boot camp. These values are the hallmark of a good soldier, sailor, blue-collar engineer, or any segment of the Military that the Heathens occupy. These values along with the NNV are powerful in that there is no dogma to memorize, only virtues to be embodied. My informants stressed acceptance of responsibility for their actions. In the bureaucratic and organizational arena of the military, holding oneself accountable for one’s actions – failures as well as successes – is the benchmark of their Faith.

It should come as little surprise then that such accountability also includes explicit standards of equality more-so than outside groups, based on military codes of conduct. The Military enforces its strict guidelines concerning racism, hate-speech, or connections to assemblages that advocate such ideologies. I know from my own time in the Service that each command has an EO Officer (equal opportunity) to ensure observance of equality. The *USN/USMC Commander’s Quick Reference Legal Handbook: Section XV: Ethics and Standards of Conduct* states, “Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or handicap.”

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One of my higher-ranking informants also sent me Articles from the UCMJ admonishing involvement with racist activity.\textsuperscript{150} These Articles stated;

\begin{quote}
Service-members can be disciplined or discharged for actively advocating for or participating in supremacist, extremist or criminal gang ideology or causes…Groups that advocate illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity or national origin are forbidden to military troops. So are groups that advocate the use of force, violence or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

While Heathenry may thrive in the Armed Services, they represent a poor place for the promulgation of racism.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{150}UCMJ: Uniform Code of Military Justice.
\textsuperscript{151}My informant didn’t specify which section of the UCMJ the articles were to be found in, as this interview was done in a hurry over text GIVE date of interview. He later emailed the quotation to me DATE. As a civilian, I do not have search clearance to the UCMJ.
\end{footnotesize}
CHAPTER 5: FOLKWAYS AND PURSUIT OF THE SACRED

Dost know how to write, dost know how to read, dost know how to paint, dost know how to prove, dost know how to ask, dost know how to offer.

~The Havamal

In this chapter, I will explore the parallels of Ho'omana Hawai'i and Ásatrú Heathenism. I will do so using concepts of the sacred in both religions to better formulate Folkways. I will also examine whether Hawai'i plays a significant role in the growth of local Heathenry.

The aim behind so much of the etymology thus far has been to more fully grasp the individual components of a modern Viking spirituality. Each of my informants must reconstruct their spirituality with whatever means at their disposal. This includes defining some terms not easily translated into English. The search for the meaning of the Sacred in the Ásatrú context, through those terms, but also ideas and even certain circumstances poses challenges. It is difficult for outsiders and Vikings themselves, who do not speak the language to read the original text and must depend on the chronicling of Christian scholars centuries after the fact. My informants could offer many examples of the Sacred, through Norse terms, ideas, and circumstances, yet none could offer a sufficient working definition of sacred itself. Nor can I. Their spirituality, however, thrives on facing such hindrances and then overcoming them. It would be a disservice to them if I surrendered so easily.

If a working definition of Sacred cannot be achieved, the Heathen’s understanding of their own spirituality might suffice as a place-holder until one is achieved. This spirituality depends upon a recreation of an ancient Viking spirituality utilizing modern interpretations of key concepts. The greenness of the religion, as witnessed in the marriage of the Vanir and Æsir Gods suggests one such interpretation. The cosmology of the Viking universe, including the World Tree, the nine realms, the varied afterlives, and humanity’s place within all of them provides another. Believers’ interpretations are used to recreate a link between what the modern
Heathen’s search for and what the ancient Vikings knew to be true. I refer to these associations as Folkways.

Folkways serve as a powerful tool in constructing Asatru Spirituality. Based on my informants’ terminology, Folkways as defined in this work are, “The paths that lead us to the Hosts of our ancestors,” and “the means by which we transport the ancestors within us.” More than anything else explored thus far, Folkways permit a Heathen to build an authentic spiritual reality compatible with the ideals of their Viking ancestors. An understanding of their Folkways is thus the ultimate goal of every interview, every article read, and every chapter of this thesis. Heathens use Folkways to construct their understanding of the sacred, even when they can’t adequately express a definition of sacred.

What follows, then, is an effort at complicating a shallow grasp of the idea of the sacred within a Viking context by exploring the uses of related Hawai`ian terms as a gateway. The analysis includes the occasional juxtaposing of Norse concepts to comparable Hawai`ian terminology. Hawai`ian spirituality employs several key terms that highlight aspects of the world that deal with the sacred according to a Hawai`ian worldview. Likewise, the Norse had a plethora of terms marking an object, place, time, or circumstance as something akin to sacred, but no single word encompasses them all. The purpose for using Hawai`ian terms is to better clarify the Norse concepts and as a means to more fully realize what the concept of Sacred might be for the Vikings. There is a correlation between the Hawai`ian concept of mana and Hamingja. Dr. Marie Alohalani Brown notes that “mana is broadly related to power, although power is inadequate to capture fully the nuances of this complex concept” as it is “simultaneously a capacity, a potential to effect positive or negative change; it can be spiritual, intellectual, or

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152 A definition created together with my informants.
physical; it powers and empowers; it is intangible but its manifestations are tangible; it can be embedded in or transferred to something else; it is intrinsic but it can be increased or diminished; and it grants authority and defines status.” Much like mana, for example, the term Hamingja has too much gravitas to be simplistically defined, and too many varied interpretations to be readily described. Yet gaining a grasp of the significance of Hamingja is integral in understanding the Viking Spirituality.

Accurate modern translations of these concepts prove imperative in pursuing concepts of the Viking Sacred. One must also be mindful that much like the Hawai`ians, the Norse maintained an extensive oral tradition. They transmitted their stories through tales told and retold by families down through generations. Although modern Asatru was reconstructed in the 1970s, the modern focus falls on ancient legacies of storytelling. However, unlike the tales of the Hawai`ians, Norse tales weren’t recorded with nearly the same amount of attention to preserving the inherited chants. Viking skalds retold the old stories and reformed them to match their immediate audience. For this reason, it was doubly important to find similar terms within the stories and texts both to find key facets that are repeated with any assurance of importance. Some of these critical terms, then, are Garðr, Hel, Kennings, and Blut.

**Garðr and Hōʻiu**

Hōʻiu is one of several Hawai`ian words for something akin to Sacred. It means to consecrate or to make sacred. It is different from other terms for sacred as it is an action, a verb, and denotes intent, and is thus analogous to a similar Viking term Garðr, which roughly means to protect, or to wall-in. It is also similar to Hel, which will be explored later. An understanding

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of Garðr as sacred can be gleaned in the stories where it is found, or in this world, wherever it is found in the universe. The Norse cosmology comprises nine different worlds that hang from Yggdrasil, the World Tree, including Asgard, the home of the Æsir Norse Gods, Álfheimr, the home of the Light Elves, Svartálfheimr, the home of the Dark Elves or dwarves, Midgarðr, the home of mortals, Útgarðr, the home of the giants, Vanheimr, the home of the Vanir Gods of nature, Niflheim, the primal world of frost, Muspelheim, the primal world of fire, and Helheim, the home of the dead. Six of these nine realms are called heimr, literally home, but only three realms are dubbed Garðr. The names of these realms aren’t that far off from English and can be translated easily.

Asgard, home of the Æsir Pantheon, is ruled by Odin and surrounded and protected by a wall built by giants yet capable of keeping giants out. Within its precincts lies Valhalla, the halls of the honorable dead handpicked by Odin himself.

Utgarðr, home of the giants called Jotnar, where Loki reigns as king, is sometimes known as Jotun-heim. Loki numbered as one of the wisest of all Ymir’s descendants. When the Æsir Gods would travel through his realms, they were at the mercy of his tricks; many lessons in humility were learned through hard experience in this realm.

Midgarðr, home of mortals, is also called Mannheim, literally Man Home. The Gods built Midgarðr from the Corpse of Ymir, the firstborn entity in creation. Ymir was the progenitor of the Gods and giants alike. On Midgarðr, the bones of Ymir became the mountains, his blood the sea, his brains the clouds, his skull the sky. His eyes became the sun and moon, and his eyelashes and hair became the trees. The first man and woman on Midgarðr, Ask and Embla, were created from these trees. Midgarðr comprised the whole of the visible reality witnessed by the Vikings.
This realm was made Garðr due to the attention it was given by the Æs, who constructed it from the corpse of their father, for mortals, who likewise were built from the remains of Ymir.

The keyword in the names of these realms is Garðr. The word encompasses a range of etymological ramifications denoting protection or status of some type. Many English words can be traced to this term. Garðr can mean a garden within a walled enclosure. It can indicate guarded as in protected. Other common English derivations include warren, warded, and even war. These variations express intent and action. Again, something must happen to ensure a consecrated separateness. When applied to Asgarðr, home of the Æsir, it includes all their sacred halls as well as the halls of the honorable dead and would translate into Garden of the Æs Gods. It is a sacred realm, and mortals can only enter by special circumstances after death when brought through the walls by divine intervention. The Valkyries hand-selected a few humans made worthy by death by warfare or childbirth. Here, certain deaths were made Hō‘iu through death and by the attention of the Valkyries.

Utgarðr likewise means the Outer-Garden and remains far removed from mortal reckoning. It was a wild place, sacred in its wildness, and set aside due to its primal energy. Even Thor Odinson was overcome on his journeys through it.

Midgarðr, however, bears the most mention. Its name translates into the middle garden, situated in the very middle of Yggdrasill the World Tree. Its location was a protected space, built from the corpse of Ymir, and meant to protect mortals. Odin and the other Æsir sanctified it by their intention and its ultimate purpose. The Norse regarded the physical reality of the Earth that they walked upon as a sacred realm. The gods set it aside for them, and they were made from its living elements. That this world was consecrated for its inhabitants is why the term Garðr is so

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155 Shipley, 335-336
fitting a translation for Sacred. The advent of something set aside, like the consecration of a Garðr, enables that thing to exist as Sacred. This Sacred was not only separate but sometimes hidden from mortal eyes.

**Hel and Laahia**

Laahia is another Hawai`ian term for something akin to sacred that means to be set apart for something special.\(^{156}\) The chief difference lies in Hōʻiu is to make something sacred, but laahia separates something due to its inherently sacred quality. With this in mind, the term Hel is remarkably close to laahia in scope. Much as Garðr means to dictate sacredness (usually in the form of sacred places), Hel also manifests in relationship with place-settings. However, while Garðr means guarded or warded, Hel means covered, shrouded, held, or separated.

The nine realms of the Viking Cosmos mentioned above were connected to each other, but few could travel through them freely. The easiest way to travel through these realms was after death when the newly deceased could travel to their new homes. Those who died in battle or childbirth and not chosen by Odin were relegated to the home of the shrouded or covered in Helheim. Those dead who lived a pious life in service to their Fulltrúi\(^{157}\) could be invited to serve in the Halls of their Æsir patron. Those special few who died in battle or childbirth and then especially chosen by Odin were taken to the covered and protected halls of the brave in Valhalla. All realms hung on the Yggdrasill the World Tree including the afterlives, which were guarded and secreted away from the eyes of men. It was Helheim that Snorri Sturluson chronicled, reshaping it as an afterlife particularly overladen by the Christian vision of an underground hell of torment. What Sturlson chronicled in the Eddas between 1200 and 1240 C.E., he recorded


\(^{157}\) Fulltrúi is “a patron god or goddess with whom the worshipper was particularly close”. McCoy. 112
well after the Viking Age ended. All that remains unchanged of the earlier understanding of Hela-Heim was its name and the related concept of the *Hel* or *covered* home. It had been the dwelling place of Hela, whose name itself means *covered*, and the vast majority of deceased mortals. Her face, half-skull and half-beautiful young maiden, attests that one sees only a portion of something’s true nature since a part of her was always covered with flesh while her other half bore testimony of the grave. The Icelandic word *Hela* or *Hylja*, denotes *cover, hide, or conceal*. The English words *Hall, Helmet, Held,* and *Hold* derive from this same root.\(^{158}\) For this reason, the aforementioned mortals who lived a virtuous life in devotion to their chosen Deity would be brought into that Deity’s Hall, but these realms can only be traversed after a mortal’s death.

The most recognized of Halls in the Norse afterlife realms is Valhalla, rendered either as *Val–Halla*, the Hall of the Valorous, or *Fall–Halla*, the Hall of the Fell (Dead), depending on personal choice in the matter.\(^{159}\) It is also referred to as Gladsheim, literally the Home of the Glad. Sturluson would take great pains to ensure that this realm is regarded as analogous with the Christian Heaven. He describes it thusly in the Grimnisal;

> Gladsheim a fifth is called, there gold bright Valhall extends out widely: there Odin chooses every day those dead in combat, It’s very easy to recognize for those who come to Odin, to see how his hall’s arranged; spear shafts the building has for rafters… it’s roofed with shields, mail-coats are strewn on the benches. It’s very easy to recognize for those who come to Odin, to see how his hall’s arranged, a wolf hangs west of the door, and an eagle hovers above.\(^{160}\)

Like the exclusive Halls of one’s chosen deity and Hela’s covered realms, Valhalla is difficult to enter, let alone see. These realms of the dead are all sacred and thus set apart for some later time, far more sacred than this mortal lifetime. How then, does this sacredness manifest?

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\(^{158}\) Shipley, 179-181.

\(^{159}\) No few of my informants choose, depending on context, between translations at will.

\(^{160}\) Larrington, 49-50
Ahmad ibn Fadlan, an Arab chronicler, recorded much of what we know about the Norse in 921 C.E. Though his Muslim interpretations were just as biased as Sturlson’s, he did report what he saw to be religious practices. During his travels, he recorded a prayer uttered by a slave girl about to be sacrificed, which expresses the sense of how this world can be seen;

Lo, There do I see my Father, and Lo, there do I see my Mother, and Lo, There do I see my Brothers and my Sisters, and Lo, There do I see my people back to the beginning, and Lo they do call to me, and bid me take my place among them in the halls of Valhalla, Where the brave will live forever.\textsuperscript{161}

The sacred remains separated – the other-world – and can be witnessed only upon death. While this grimness may have negative overtones today, to the Norse it represented a doorway opening onto a new beginning. Posthumous existence provided mortals the chance to see the Sacred in a way denied during life. While Norse descriptions might not sound very heavenly in a modern Christian sense (despite Sturlson’s efforts), the witnessing of deceased family members and an invitation to eternity might seem glorious to a Viking. Ellison records a similar outlook in her translation of the death-song of Ragnarr Loðbrók;

It gladdens me ever to know that Balder’s Father [Odin] makes ready the benches for a banquet. Soon we shall be drinking the ale from the curved horns. The champion who comes to Fjölnir’s dwelling does not lament his death. I shall not come into Viðrir’s [Odin’s] hall with words of fear on my lips The Æsir will welcome me; death comes without lamenting …I am eager to depart. The disir (Valkyries) summon me home, they whom Othin [Odin] has sent to me from the halls of the Lord of hosts. Gladly shall I drink ale in the high-seat with the Æsir. The days of my life are ended. I die with a laugh.\textsuperscript{162}

Vikings understood the afterlife as covered, veiled, a hall far removed from the normal and mundane world. The Christians would later take the word \textit{Hel} and twist it into a place of torment

\textsuperscript{161} Paul Lunde (Trans.) \textit{Ahmad ibn Fadlan Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North}. (2012 New York) 42
\textsuperscript{162} Davidson (1943) 74.
and misery. The Sacredness of Death as described by one informant is “like holding something tight in your hand. When you die you get to open up and see the surprise.”

**Kennings and Kino Lau**

Kino Lau refers to the many forms or bodies that a Hawai‘ian deity might take or with which it is associated, and speaks to their varied connections with elements within the environment. A Hawai‘ian deity’s “function, realm, or name” may be reflected in their kino lau. The volcanic deity Pele is a good example. Pele’s “function is to create land, her realm is the volcano, and lava is one of her kino lau. *Pele* means *lava* – Pele *is* the lava and she also controls it.” Many of the Æs gods could change their forms, and Odin in particular was a master of shape-shifting, referred to as sjónhverfing or ‘deceiving the eyes.’ Many of the Gods, particularly among the Vanir Pantheon (gods of nature versus the Æs Gods of Men) had strong ties to the elements as well. However, these shapeshifting or elemental ties were nowhere near as intrinsic to the Viking Gods as they were to the Hawai‘ians. Just because Njord was a god of the ocean, didn’t mean that he personified the ocean and all of its manifestations. Nevertheless, one aspect of the Viking Gods, divine Kennings, approaches Kino-Lau in its depth of meaning. Much like naming, divine Kennings highlights the different forms by which Æsir deities present their Sacredness.

In modern usage, Kennings function as literary devices/riddles/epithets used in poetry. Whale-road, for example, is a kenning for the ocean, Blood-snake for a sword, and Sleep-Joy for night. Vikings employed kennings to highlight different aspects of their Gods. They sometimes

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165 Ibid.
called Loki Wolf-Rather due to his fathering of the Fenris wolf, a Rökkr (twilight) monster-god that will eventually destroy armies in the final battle. When manifesting as wolf-father, Loki should be feared. When Heathens style Loki as Horse-Mother, due to his mothering of Sleipnir, Odin’s eight-legged steed, they indicate his perverse aspect, which is not respected. An informant reported that Loki is also known as Lie-Smith, a God of deceit, and Loki Fire-Hair, a God of destruction, depending on his stage of life. This particular informant venerated Loki Rökkr-God in all his differing aspects, by calling on his different kennings.¹⁶⁶

More than any other Æsir deity, Odin inspires many names. Odin All-Father was the King of the Æs-Gods of the Northern Tribes and is associated with wisdom, healing, death, royalty, the gallows, knowledge, war, battle, victory, sorcery, poetry, frenzy, the runic alphabet, and sometimes cheating. His ravens represent thought and memory, and his wolves denote hunger and starvation. From his throne, he could see over the whole of the world, but he would leave it to walk disguised on the earth below. He spawned countless names with these disguises, and each one highlighted different attributes of his character. In the Grimnisimal, the sayings of Grim (one of his many names), Odin offers the listener some of his Kennings;

I was called Mask, I was called Wanderer, General and Helm-Wearer, Known and Third, Thund and Ud, Hellblind and High; Broadhat, Broadbeard, Victory-father, Hnikd, All-Father, Father of the Slain, Atrid, Burden-God; By one name I have never been known since I went among the people.¹⁶⁷

Odin said that by one name he has never been known since he went disguised among the people. Grim itself means “Masked One” and is a reference to Odin’s secret wanderings. Other

¹⁶⁶ This informant was the exception, rather than the rule. Loki is expressively Rökkr, and for someone to claim allegiance to all the negative aspects of a Rökkr deities are unusual. The informant wasn’t considered Ergi, or even othered, and his proud veneration of Loki was accepted by the whole of his Kindred. Ergi is a Viking insult, indicating effeminate behavior unbefitting a Viking male. Divination was considered a woman’s art, and men were usually forbidden to learn it.
¹⁶⁷ Larrington, 55.
names used to highlight the mendicancy of Odin include Helm-wearer, Broadbeard, and Broadhat, which indicate mechanisms he used to hide his visage. Much is written of Odin’s Halls in the Viking Over-world, but many of his names focus on his worldly travels, such as Wanderer, and Reiðartýr, one who rides or travels.

Other darker names for Odin include Harbard, hoary or hard beard, Bolverk, evil-bringer, and Haptaguð, God of prisoners. These kennings refer to some facets of his personality not held in high esteem by outsiders, who see them as proof that Odin was an evil god for evil people.¹⁶⁸ My informants understand these facets as reflections of life, however. Life is hard and dark, and one must never shy from the scarier and wilder aspects of existence. To Northern Tribes with their great mead-halls and stories rife with glory and pride, one who focuses on the wild or disconsolate aspects of daily life might easily be perceived as darkly other. This otherness can be as Sacred as in Hel and Garðr, and dangerously so. There are many accounts of Odin treading dangerously close to the status of Ergi in his pursuit of afterlife knowledge.¹⁶⁹ Yet despite this otherness, Odin was still the king of the Æsir. He was venerated as much as he was feared regardless of his contradictory natures.

Other names for the All-Father include Sviðurr (Wise-one), Vakr (Wakeful one), Veratýr (God of Being), Svölñir (Cooler- or one who cools disputes) and Hroptr (Sage). It takes no stretch of the imagination to see how these epithets highlight Odin’s role as a dispenser of truth and well-being. Those Vikings who want to focus on Odin as a bringer of peace may focus on his Kenning Saðr, Truth-teller or Soothsayer, versus his others. Perhaps the most telling clue in this search into Odin’s multifaceted character, however, is the name Odin itself. Rendered

¹⁶⁸ I am quoting Christian friends and family.
¹⁶⁹ Odin lied, cheated, murdered, and often practiced forms of divination. He also dressed in woman’s clothing to bed Rind, Goddess of frost. Much of Odin’s exploits could very well earn him the title of Ergi.
Óðinn in Old Norse, the word comprises the root óðr, which means ecstasy, fury, inspiration, frenzy, passion, or burning, and the suffix –inn, the masculine definite article meaning the master of, or more aptly, the living *embodiment* of óðr. An old Germanic interpretation of óðr is *wet* (as in Wotan, the German version of Odin), which means to blow, inspire, or spiritually arouse. In this way, Odin’s true name indicates that he personifies ecstasy, passion, frenzy, burning, madness, inspiration, or any other similar interpretations.170

For the Vikings, the naming of something in relation to its character is a sacred endeavor. That the Æsir have so many different kennings is proof of this sacredness. Yet one type of naming has more sacred in nature than the others. Kennings such as Horse-Mother, All-Father, or Odin-Son, names based on genealogy, either through ancestral ties or immediate family will highlight the most significant aspects of the Viking Sacred.

**Disblut, ‘Ula, and ‘Aumākua**

An ‘*Ula* is another Hawai`ian word that denotes “sacred.” Dr. Marie Alohalani Brown explains, ‘*Ula* denotes “sacred” but it also means *red*, which is considered a sacred color, perhaps because it recalls blood, and therefore life.”171 ‘*Aumākua* denotes “ancestral guardian,” the specific term for a deity with human descendants who acts as their protector.172 These twos concept overlaps with the Viking use of Blut, which ranges in meaning from blood, red, and ancestry. *Blut* also refers to sacrifices Vikings made in the name of the sacred, calling the offerings they made to the Gods Æs-Blut. Today, contemporary Heathens designate gatherings of Ásatrú as Bluts, whenever modern practitioners collectively call down their Gods and offer honey mead, baked goods, and crafted objects instead of blood sacrifices. However, within the

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172 Brown, *Ka Poʻe Moʻo*,
ancient Viking and contemporary Heathen community, the most sacred understanding of Blut implies neither the color red nor the substance of blood itself but applies to the deep and meaningful ties related to family and ancestry.

Hela Loki’s-Dottir, Odin All-Father, Thor Odin-Son, or even Loki Horse-Mother, the lineage of a person is Sacred in a way that few outsiders understand, which recalls how in Hawai’ian tradition, the sacredness of ancestry and lineage are expressed in cosmogonic genealogical chants such as the Kumulipo, which takes the listener back through the ages and cements the Hawai’ian’s place within the creation of the cosmos.¹⁷³ Like the aforementioned Kenning or names of the Gods, individual deities were known by their immediate family, predecessors, and descendants. Hela was the ruler of her domain but understood as Rökkr due to the proclivities of her father Loki. Thor became famous on his own merit but gained his strength through his Father Odin, and thus is called Thor Odinson. Loki’s greatest shame and ultimate undoing came through his mothering of the horse Sleipnir. He thus became Loki Horse-Mother. Odin of course wields the most power in the Norse cycles because he fathers All of the pantheon. He was aptly named Odin All-Father.

All of the Gods could lay claim to Odin’s lineage, including most of the Jotun-Giants as well. In addition, the deities could also claim their blood-ties from Ymir, the first entity in creation. However, not just the gods enjoyed the benefits of sacred blood-lineage. One of the greatest gifts a Viking can inherit is the Dis-Blut, which literally translates as “blood of the Dis.” The term Dis itself is somewhat vague, but loosely applies to most female deities, especially the Valkyries, the all-female group of Odin’s chosen warrior-elites, and certain other Rökkr, or Twilight Deities. Ellison provides an easier interpretation of Dis, when she reports, “The

evidence certainly seems to suggest that the guardian Valkyries, the guardian hamingjur of the family and the guardian disir are one and the same conception.” 174 Many of my informants sought to render Dis-blut as somehow the ability to count the blood of any Deity, female or male, amongst your ancestry, and with this ancestry to have inherited the hamingja of that deity. Much like the ‘Aumakua, the Dis-blut calls to her descendants to uphold the values set by the matriarchal deities. 175 While not everyone amongst the informants can make such a claim to have a Disir ancestor, all can at least open up a dialogue binding their genealogy to the Gods.

In the Rígsþula or Rígsmál (the List or Lay of Rig), a poem found in the Prose Edda, the text explains this type of genealogy through narrative. The story goes that Rig, a kenning for Heimdell- watchmen of the Gods, once went out traveling. He stayed with three households for three nights. The first three nights he visited the house of Thrall, [servants, peasants, and laborer]. Nine months after he left this house, the blood-line of all-workers was born. The next three nights he lodged in the house of merchant. Nine months later, the blood-line of all-merchants and businessmen was born. The last three nights he spent in the House of King. Nine months hence, the bloodline of all royalty was born.

In the Voluspa or the Seeress’ Prophecy, Odin alludes to the Rígsþula when he calls out, “I ask for a hearing of all the holy races Greater and lesser kinsmen of Heimdall.” 176 That all mortals, regardless of their station, descend from Heimdell, Watchman of the Nine Realms attests to the sacred duty of every Viking to uphold the rules and guard the realms, just as their forefather did. Even those practitioners who don’t ascribe to the Heimdell tale can still ascribe to blood-ties to Ymir.

174 Davidson (1943) 135.
175 This is never patriarchal- as only female deities are numbered among the Disir.
176 Larrington, 4.
In Similar to the Hawai`ian understandings of *Mana*, every living person inherits some *Hamingja* in the Viking system. Regardless of how little or how much *Hamingja* they receive by birth, it is a Viking’s purpose to maintain and nurture it, so that their children and their children’s children can in turn inherit more. Like the world itself, birthed from the corpse of Ymir, mortals possess a sacred nature, they are birthed from trees, crafted by the gods, and it is their mission to continue participating in this natural cycle.

**Reputation**

For the Vikings, death represented a sacred doorway through which we all must pass, rather than the end of our individual journey. One’s children and later descendants who inherit the Kennings, *Hamingja*, and Blut remain protected by *Garðr*, and will keep alive these traditions. Successive generations will tell and retell stories of the ancestors for as long as there are people to hear them, and in this way, the Viking Sacred never dies. One final piece of the Sacred remains to be addressed, reputation. In the Havamal, the Sayings of the High-One, traditionally believed to have been set down by Odin himself, the All-Father offers a distinctly Viking understanding of one’s place in the cosmos, one presented many times thus far;¹⁷⁷

> Cattle die, Kinsmen die,  
> and the self must also die;  
> I know one thing which will never die,  
> The reputation of each dead man.¹⁷⁸

The most sacred thing a Viking Heathen can do is to live a good life and leave his story behind in his passing.

Odin himself plays no part in the new world that emerges after the Ragnarok, during which the world of the Gods will fall. Some things won’t die, “Yggdrasil was eternal, and

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¹⁷⁸ *Larrington*, 76.
survived even Ragnarok.” \(^\text{179}\) The world will be reborn after the Ragnarok, man and his ilk will continue to prosper, but they won’t need Odin, according to Snurlson. That being said, the Ásatrú Heathens of today still practice veneration of the old gods. According to Calico, Ásatrúar Heathens believe that “the old gods have stirred, becoming active again after a dormancy of almost a thousand years and calling their people back to the old ways” \(^\text{180}\) The Norse afterlife offers these contemporary believers a far richer and varied world than the violent caricature of horned helmets and nihilistic blood-shed. The Viking’s rich tapestry of spiritual representation can still be explored, but can only be rightly conceived by shifting paradigms from caricatures to a more accurate and respectful viewpoint. Davidson, the expert on such things explains, “Symbolism in Norse hands is so well done that it ceases to be symbolism, and becomes a vivid and convincing picture which is sufficient in itself, and is accepted.” \(^\text{181}\) This acceptance of symbolism is the means by which the Heathens create their folkways.

**Folkways**

The majority of my analysis thus far has focused on understanding what is important to my Heathen informants. As discussed in Chapter 2, Folkways can be defined as “paths that lead us to the hosts of our ancestors,” and at the same time “the means through which we transport the ancestors within us.” Some of my informant’s definitions of Folkways were;

- The Paths we walk to come closer to those who came before us.
- A way to emulate a group’s ancestors. The Vikings today try to be like their Viking forefathers.
- A path to our Ancestors.

As with all the varied concepts related to the sacred and the etymological assessments I have presented, I feel that any remaining answers concerning Hawai’i’s particular role can be

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\(^{179}\) Dougerty, 32.
\(^{180}\) Calico 25
\(^{181}\) Davidson (1943) 147
found in Folkways. In the foreword to *The Past Before Us: Moʻokūʻauhau As Methodology*, Dr. Marie Alohalani Brown offers perhaps the clearest understanding of Folkways that I have found;

> Our culture has always been dynamic and thus always evolving. Crucially, past, present, and future are tightly woven in ‘Ōiwi theory and practice. We adapt to whatever historical challenges we face so that we can continue to survive and thrive. As we look to the past for knowledge and inspiration on how to face the future, we are aware that we are tomorrow’s ancestors, and future generations will look to us for guidance.¹⁸²

In this statement, the whole intent of Ásatrú Heathenism is realized. Contemporary Vikings attempt to weave together their gloried past, their tenuous present, and a bright future together with the broken threads of their frayed narrative. The ancient texts were overwritten by Christian interpretations and distortions. Racist and neo-Nazis adopted their spirituality for their own distinct and often irreconcilable purposes. Worse still, unlike contemporary Hawai`ian practitioners, the Ásatrú Heathens inherited no accurate and reliable methods of retention to ensure their lore’s perpetuation, no remembered oral chants to fall back on, nor codified narratives to share amongst their number. But like the Hawai`ians, the Vikings can count on their numbers to ensure the survival of their current efforts. They look to whatever scraps of past they have for knowledge and inspiration. Some of the Heathens can claim familial narratives to be added to ongoing mythology. Some of the more spiritual among them even claim to talk to their pantheon directly.¹⁸³ With their numbers growing, an authentic understanding of the Viking Faith will replace the caricature.

**Conclusion – Does Hawai`ian Culture play a Role in the Growth of Ásatrú?**

Since I began this work, the kindred in Hawai`i have been approached by a fellow kindred circle on the Northwestern Pacific Coast about gathering their numbers and reaching

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across the sea to the continental United States. I am not sure what such binding of communities might bring. At least one of my informants expressed excitement at the proposal, but several others seem reluctant. As they explain their hesitant response, they stress that they enjoy their anonymity and discreetness. They favor nurturing their own family and building Folkways to their ancestors, and such grand alliances across the ocean may prove obtrusive to that lifestyle. None of my informants could provide me with any comparative knowledge of mainland versions of Ásatrú Heathenism. They preferred to focus on the here and now. I cannot say the same applies to the majority of the broader Heathen community living elsewhere, but thus far, all the quiet family-oriented heathens I have met here prefer the quiet style of family practice that Hawai‘i affords them.

Determining whether or not this local phenomenon is wider spread among other Heathen communities within the rest of the country would require extensive fieldwork elsewhere, and is beyond the scope of the present study. The small and scattered group of informants I have been blessed enough to work with are stationed here in the islands, thousands of miles from the numerous circles in the continental United States. Out here, they have their countable numbers including their ‘Ohana, all affiliated with the military in some capacity.

My Hawai‘i informants continually come and go, contacting me when they can, inviting me whenever possible. As military personnel, they treasure what little time they have with their ‘Ohana. Whenever the community gathers for a function, they inevitably make it a family affair. Ultimately, I think that their limited numbers and relative isolation here allows them the opportunity to nurture their small community in their own time. The Heathen community may be

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184 As an outsider, there were many functions of a familial nature that I was not privy to. There were some familial functions that I was invited to. I understand the differences, and am honored to be included. I not only appreciate, such distinction, but condone it. Family means everything.
growing in Hawai‘i, but the growth while steady, remains slow, in keeping with the standards that they set for it. I surmise that this may be the only role Hawai‘i plays in local Heathenry.

I return to the question I raised in the preface, “Does Hawai‘i promote the growth of the Heathen community?” I ultimately feel that the answer is no. Perhaps the aforementioned isolation and distance from the continental U.S. aid the sense of community, but I would hypothesize that this could easily be said about Guam or other isolated places with an American military presence. I also suspect that the similarities of the two Faiths, indigenous Hawai‘ian and Viking Heathenry are explained by their origins as place-based worldviews. In their contemporary circumstances, these two traditions just happen to be green religions with some remarkable complementary contexts, essentially indigenous worldviews contending with the lingering effects of Christian colonialization. I am remiss in finalizing my research with such an obvious conclusion, but I can see no alternative. Perhaps in the future, one of my local informants might regale me with the shockingly edifying datum that will allow for new insights into Ásatrú Heathenism. Until that day, however, the local Heathens will continue to practice their Faith as quietly and unobtrusively as they have so far.
Appendix A: Jarnsaxa Scale

“Scale of Racial and Cultural Tolerances in Ásatrú” (aka "The Jarnsaxa Scale")
by Jarnsaxa Thorskona

As in all organized religions, there are issues in Ásatrú where not all of the practitioners are of one mind. Sadly, one of the most contentious issues in our faith revolves around how open the religion is to people who are not of Northern European/Teutonic racial and/or cultural heritage. Not surprisingly, this is an issue that is very emotionally charged, and it is often difficult to conduct civil discussions on the various positions that are held. To try and remove some of the overt emotionalism that often accompanies this topic, and to try to help clarify what the range of viewpoints are, I have created a fairly basic scale that provides summaries of the most common viewpoints I have encountered or been otherwise made aware of. I would like to thank Doug from Texas who has provided assistance in editing and refining this scale. The descriptions are written from the perspective of one who holds that viewpoint. It should be noted that at the furthest ends of the scale, the beliefs held may come across as more extreme, and I have tried to indicate this without belittling the holder of the viewpoint or the holder itself. I have also tried to eliminate as much inflammatory language as possible, and to avoid implying any judgments or personal feelings I may have about any particular viewpoint. If, however, in reading these descriptions, you feel I have not succeeded in these efforts, please contact me at jarnsaxa@localip.net with any suggestions you may have to correct the problem.

1. Ásatrú is an open religion which anyone can join. There are, however, certain things that must be done in certain ways, certain points of theology that must be strictly adhered to and certain beliefs that must be held. Anyone who doesn't agree with all of these points simply isn't Tru and can be deemed "traitors" to the Gods. One of these points that everyone must agree to is that Ásatrú is open to people of all races, and those who believe otherwise are not welcome and should be actively denounced so that there is no confusion of their beliefs with those of real Ásatrúar. I will only worship alongside those who follow the same beliefs.

2. Anyone who wants to become Ásatrú can, regardless of racial or cultural history. Individuals have the freedom to choose any religion to follow, and I will defend and uphold that right. All are welcome to my Kindred and I will worship alongside any Tru man or woman.

3. As the ties to the Æsir and Vanir are often ties to our ancestors (racial, cultural or ethnic), it is more difficult for those of non-Northern European heritage to be Ásatrú, but it is not impossible. I accept that the Gods and Goddesses will call to them whomever they choose and will worship alongside any True man or woman.

4. Only those of Northern European background can truly follow the path of Ásatrú. This does not imply that people of other races are in any way "less" than those of Teutonic heritage, only that they are different. All races and ethnic groups are equal in freedom to make a life of worth, and the theologies and pantheons that are connected to a non-Northern European heritage are every bit as valid and important as Ásatrú. By the same token, all non-Teutonic ethnic paths are just as closed to me as Ásatrú is to others. I feel it is of greatest value to follow the path of your cultural and ethnic background, as these forces have had a great impact on who you are. Because I acknowledge and respect the validity of the various paths, however, I am willing worship with those who respect our Gods but are not of our path or ethnic group, and will certainly worship with any Tru man or woman.

5. Only those of Northern European heritage can be Ásatrú, and Northern European races should separate from all other races. This does not imply that people of other races are in any way "less" than those of Teutonic heritage, only that they are different. All races and ethnic groups are equal in freedom to make a life of worth, and the theologies and pantheons that are connected to a non-Northern European heritage are every bit as valid and important as Ásatrú. By the same token, all non-Teutonic ethnic paths are just as closed to me as Ásatrú is to others. I feel it is of greatest value to follow the path of your cultural and ethnic background, as these forces have had a great impact on who you are. Because I acknowledge and respect the validity of the various paths, however, I am willing worship with those who respect our Gods but are not of our path or ethnic group, and will certainly worship with any Tru man or woman.

6. Only those of Northern European heritage can be Ásatrú and the European races and ethnic groups are superior to all other races and ethnic groups. Aryans are the only true humans, and as such have an obligation to keep the racial and ethnic blood pure. If the only way to achieve this is to rid the world of the lesser races, then so be it. Only true Aryans can worship the Æsir and Vanir.

© Marklander 1997 (http://lavrans.tripod.com/20scale.html)
Appendix B: Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative for Exempt Researchers

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2

COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*
* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details.

See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

• Name: Richard Mason (ID: 8155815)
• Institution Affiliation: University of Hawaii (ID: 1688)
• Institution Email: masonrl@hawaii.edu
• Curriculum Group: Human Subjects Research (HSR)
• Course Learner Group: Exempt Researchers and Key Personnel
• Stage: Stage 1 - Basic Course
• Record ID: 31846162
• Completion Date: 02-Jun-2019
• Expiration Date: 01-Jun-2022
• Minimum Passing: 80
• Reported Score*: 89

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY DATE COMPLETED SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127) 01-Jun-2019 3/3 (100%)
Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID: 16680) 01-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Cultural Competence in Research (ID: 15166) 01-Jun-2019 4/5 (80%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491) 01-Jun-2019 4/5 (80%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490) 01-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504) 02-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505) 02-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID: 17464) 02-Jun-2019 3/5 (60%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution
identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.
Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k86a56d9f-6e64-4227-a0a4-eb4c32e83fa-31846162

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929 Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**
** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

• Name: Richard Mason (ID: 8155815)
• Institution Affiliation: University of Hawaii (ID: 1688)
• Institution Email: masonrl@hawaii.edu
• Curriculum Group: Human Subjects Research (HSR)
• Course Learner Group: Exempt Researchers and Key Personnel
• Stage: Stage 1 - Basic Course
• Record ID: 31846162
• Report Date: 02-Jun-2019
• Current Score**: 95

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES MOST RECENT SCORE
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491) 01-Jun-2019 4/5 (80%)
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127) 01-Jun-2019 3/3 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504) 02-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505) 02-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)
Cultural Competence in Research (ID: 15166) 01-Jun-2019 4/5 (80%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID: 17464) 02-Jun-2019 5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution
identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.
Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k86a56d9f-6e64-4227-a0a4-eb4c32e83fa-31846162

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
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Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval

DATE: September 12, 2019
TO: Baroni, Helen, PHD, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Religion
     Mason, Richard, BS, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Religion
FROM: Rivera, Victoria, Dir, Ofc of Rsch Compliance, Social & Behav Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE: MANA AND HAMINGJA: ASATRUAR HEATHENS IN HAWAII
FUNDING SOURCE: PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2019-00483
APPROVAL DATE: September 12, 2019

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On September 12, 2019, the University of Hawaii (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) 2.

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the OHRP Website www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via the UH eProtocol application. The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program by phone at 956-5007 or email uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.
Appendix D: Informed Consent

University of Hawai‘i

Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Mason, Richard L. Primary Investigator

Project title: Mana and Hamingja: Ásatrúar Heathens in Hawai‘i

Greetings. I am Richard Mason, a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the Department of Religion. I am seeking local Heathens to take part in a religious research study. This study will fulfill requirements for earning my graduate degree. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the role that Hawaii plays in the growth of local Ásatrúar Heathens. The Heathen community in Hawaii has been growing steadily over the last few decades, and I am asking you to participate because of your involvement in this growth.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you so choose to be a part of this project, we will meet for an interview at a place and time convenient for you. The interview will consist of 12-20 open ended questions, with interviews not lasting for more than an hour. Interview questions will include questions such as:

- “What has been your experience as an Ásatrúar Heathen in Hawaii?”
- “If you have also spent time in the Mainland, how has Hawaii been different from there?”

Only you and I will be present during the interview. With your express permission, I will audio record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no benefit for participation in this interview, yet the outcomes of this project will allow for a deeper understanding of the Heathenry in Hawaii, and Hawaii’s role within that community. I trust there is little risk for participation in this research project. Project results will be used as evidence in the final thesis paper and code names will be used to protect identities. The research reviewed will be confined within University of Hawai‘i system. At any time, the findings of this project will be made available to participants upon their request. If at any time, the participants become uncomfortable, anxious or wish to leave the project, they can halt the interview and withdraw at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality: I will keep all data secure in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office or in a password protected computer file. The only individuals with access to the data are my University of Hawai‘i advisor and myself. Afterwards there are other agencies that have legal permission to review research records. The University of Hawai‘i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study. If given consent, participants (and code-names) will be referenced in a research paper and presentation. After analyzing recorded responses, they will be deleted.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time with no penalty or loss to you.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please email me at masonrl@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Helen Baroni, at baronih@hawaii.edu. You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808 – 956 - 5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu for any problems, questions, or concerns. Please visit https://www.hawaii.edu/researchcompliance/information-research-participants for more information on your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to Richard Mason.
Appendix D: Informed Consent (continued)

University of Hawai‘i

Consent to Participate in a Research Project
Mason, Richard L. - Primary Investigator

Project title: Mana And Hamingja: Ásatrúar Heathens in Hawaii

Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission to join the research project entitled, Mana And Hamingja: Ásatrúar Heathens in Hawaii

Please initial next to either “Yes” or “No” to the following:

Yes  No   I consent to being recorded via audio/video camera during the interview portion of this research.

Yes  No   I consent to a soubriquet/ code-name in association with my kindred circle to be used in a thesis paper/project.

Yes  No   I consent to allowing my likeness used in presentation of research results via photograph and/or video recording.

Name of Participant (Print): ___________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature: _______________________________________________________

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent: _______________________________________

Date: ____________________________

Thank You

Mason, Richard. L. – GA in Religion at University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
GLOSSARY

**Blut:** A Heathen meeting, in which mead is poured as an offering to Deities. Also written as Blot or Blót.

**Denomination:** Any of the varied venerations of a particular pantheon within the Heathen community—Vanir, Dis, Jotnar, Rökkr, Æsir, etc.

**Fanboyism:** A theoretical Orientation of Universalist who awakens to Heathenry through popular media such as comic books or film.

**Kindred:** A small local group of Heathen practitioners, also called a Circle.


**Orientation:** The three Divisions of Heathenism based on questions of Racism, Ethnicity, and Authenticity, representing a range of answers to the question, “Who’s allowed to be a Heathen?”

**People of the Book:** The Abrahamic Faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Also known by Heathens as the Three Tribes, or the Three Tribes of the Book.

**Triibalist:** An orientation that believes that only those of Northern European (including Celtic) heritage or those who swear themselves into a Circle can be an Asatru.

**UCMJ:** The Uniform Code of Military Justice.

**Universalist:** An orientation that believes that anyone can be an Asatru.

**Volkish:** An orientation that believes that only those of Germanic or Scandinavian descent can be Asatru.
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