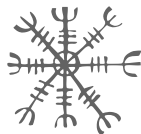


The Sorcerer's Cottage

Kotbýli kuklarans

Let there be mist
and mischief



Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft

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Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft

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The Sorcerer's Cottage was first opened on 23. July 2005

While preparing the first part of the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft it soon became clear that historical knowledge on the subject was quite limited. The main emphasis of historians was on political history, trade, and the personal history of the learned and powerful. The only source used about witchcraft cases were court records and little information was available about the accused and the charges for which they were sentenced. Broadly speaking popular culture is an uncharted territory. This is in many ways understandable in light of the few sources available from late medieval and early modern times in Iceland. We know little about the living conditions of the common man, the tenant farmers who lived on small farms throughout the country, but a few hints, however, can be gleaned from several contemporary sources.

The vast majority of those accused of witchcraft or sorcery belonged to the lowest strata of society. A few upper class individuals were accused of witchcraft but not one of them was subjected to corporal punishment.

The purpose of this second part of The Museum of Sorcery & Witchcraft, The Sorcerer's Cottage at Klúka, is to show the living conditions of tenant farmers on the poor farms, give a glimpse of their world view, and what means they used in their fight for survival.



If you don't want a man to visit your abode, carve this stave on a piece of rowan when the sun is at its zenith, walk three times around the house the way the sun turns and three times against the sun's route holding the rowan with the carving and sharp thorn grass and then lay both on the gable above the door.

SEARCH AND FIND

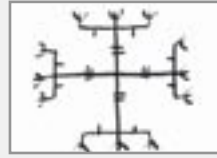
The instructions connected to many of the staves in The Sorcerer's Cottage are printed in this programme.

THE BUILDING

For centuries the turf house was the only type of building in Iceland. However, few people would have lived in the many-gabled turf houses preserved on several of Iceland's bigger farms. The tenant farmers' abodes in remoter parts of the country had little in common with these buildings. Some of the first travellers visiting Iceland describe buildings that give some idea of the poor man's home.

About fifty years after witchcraft cases were discontinued two Icelanders toured the whole of the country and wrote a book about their travels. Buildings were of no special interest to them (as opposed to foreigners who wrote about their visits in the 18th and 19th centuries), but they mention that the worst buildings are to be found in the seasonal fishing stations. The following quotation is from a chapter about the driftwood on Strandir:

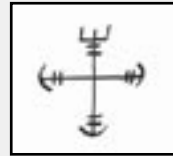
Though the men of Strandir are excellent woodworkers and coopers their houses are so badly constructed, especially in the northernmost parts, north of Trékyllisvík, that they must be the worst in the country. When a house falls down they build a new one in a day. They simply stack several logs on top of each other and then shovel turf and earth at these walls so they don't fall down. Several logs



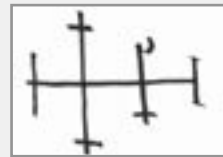
To win a girl. Carve this stave on bread or cheese and have her feed on it.



Carve this sign on the horn of your eldest ram and your sheep will not drown in floods.



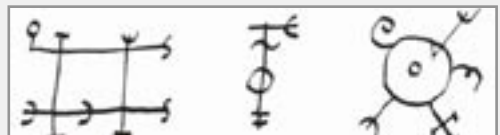
To make your sheep docile. Take juniper and willow that grow facing east when the sun rises and carve this stave on it and let your sheep walk over it in summer and under it in winter.



If a cow's milk is bloody. Carve this stave on oak and milk the cow over it.

To make your sheep docile

Carve these signs on scrub oak and bury it under the threshold where your sheep pass over and your initial with it.



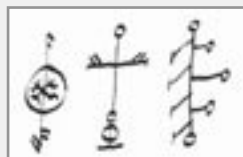
are laid across the walls and the roof built on them. Short bits of driftwood are then laid on the rafters, then turf, sweaweed, and finally stones so the whole lot won't blow away. They waste the wood in much the same way that our ancestors did the woodlands.

This way of building was probably not used in Bjarnarfjörður since land-locked farms had no right to the driftwood. Instead, while the bottom of the valley was all wetlands and bogs, there was plenty of good turf for building and it must be assumed that the poor tenants used material that was close at hand. In Bjarnarfjörður turf was used for building well into the 20th century, a late and good example being the great circular sheepfold which is still used.

Stone is used for the foundation of the Sorcerer's Cottage while the walls are built with *klambra*, turf blocks cut in a certain way and laid in a herring-bone pattern with strips of turf between the layers. Extra large blocks of turf were used on the end of walls and on corners to ensure stability.

Each part of the cottage has a different kind of timber frame made from uncut driftwood logs. On top of the rafters driftwood is used, either short logs split like firewood, cuts from the outside of logs, or short and wide drift-

To fish well



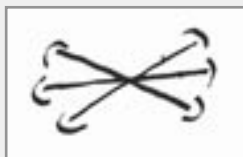
Carve this on vellum and tie it to your fishing hook.



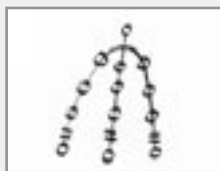
Carve on skin and tie it to your sinker.



Carve this on the bow.



Carve this on murderous oak if you want a good catch.



For rowing

This stave must be carved on leather and coloured with your blood, put it where it rests under your oar, but carry it yourself on the boat and off it. Noone will row better than you.

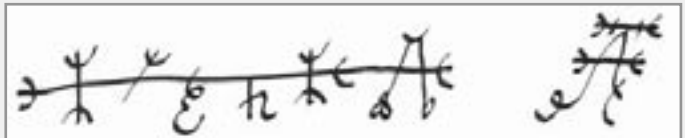
wood bits cut into shingles, all with several layers of turf on top, the middle thickest and cut in a special way.

Three adjacent buildings house the exhibition, two of them are the tenant's home, the first a combination storehouse and kitchen and the second with the living quarters and room for some livestock. The final part is an addition dedicated to bits from the history and legends of the region.

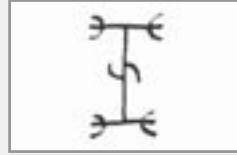
THE PEOPLE

The names of the accused in witchcraft cases give little information about them. In some cases we know where they lived and hence we can ascertain that they were tenant farmers or farm labourers. Their lives can best be described as constant strife. On some farms the total number of stock was one cow, ten sheep or less, and a horse. This was hardly enough for a family of four when part of the produce had to be paid to the landowner. Farming land is limited in all the Westfjords and if fishing failed the population decreased rapidly as it did in times of sickness or in unusually cold years. It is therefore not surprising that some witchcraft cases seem to have started with competition for better farms. In others magic was used as an aid to farming practices, or illegal ways were used to make the neighbour's task more difficult.

Carve on a goat's horn, leave near your house to prevent harm to your animals.



To prevent drowning



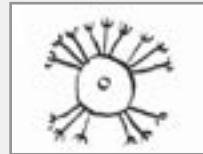
Keep this sign with you and you will not drown in sea or freshwater.

For mowing

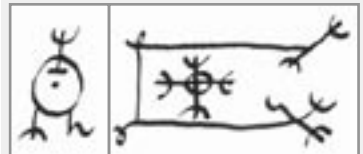


These staves you should carve on the upper handle on the pole of the scythe and colour with blood from the main artery of the left hand.

Against foxbite



Cut this on the forehead of one of the gelded rams and the fox will not kill.



Keep these staves in the sheep-house and you will not suffer the fox biting.

Almost all work on the farms was done by hand with primitive tools. The peat for heating was carried by hand from the wetlands and so was the manure on the fields, and other tasks were even more wearying. Surprisingly wheelbarrows were unknown in Iceland before the 19th century. In these conditions it is not difficult to understand that, as long as people believed in the power of certain words and magical signs, illegal and magical ways were used to ease their burden. Haymaking was easier if the scythe kept a good edge and hence it could be worthwhile to get assistance from the dark powers.

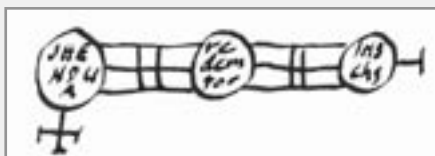
Killing rune



These staves should be written on paper and thrown in the tracks of his horse and one of his animals will die if he takes offence without reason and cover the stave in the hoof-print.

The rings of Charlemagne

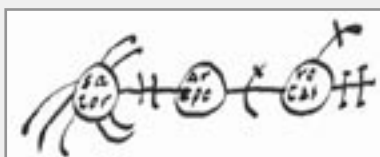
These are the nine rings of help sent by God with his angel to Pope Leo so he could give them to king Charlemagne for protection against enemies in accordance with what follows. In nomine patris et filio et spiritus sanctus. Amen.



The first three as follows: These first three rings, and the first protects against all the pranks of the devil and enemies' attacks and troubled mind; the second against sudden death and collapse and all fear of the heart; third against an-

ger of enemies that their minds be troubled when they look at you and may be filled with numbness and turn away.

The second three circles are as follows: These second three circles, and the first is for sword wounds; the second for devilish wiles and not losing one's way; the third against the wrath of powerful men and all persecution by evil men.



The third three circles are formed as follows: These third three circles and the first gives victory in legal disputes and popularity among all men; the second for all fear; the third protects against vices of the body and debauchery.

These nine circles shall be born on the breast or on either side when expecting one's enemy.

and according to legends they moved north as churches were built in parish after parish.

The most famous trolls were the three that tried to separate the Westfjords from the rest of the country. One of them still stands in Drangsnæs and the couple that filled Breiðafjörður with islands only made it to Kollafjarðarnes in Kollafjörður before the sun rose and turned them to stone. Some have names such as Þömb, Kleppa, and Þjóðbrók, and stories about them were familiar to everybody. Many folk tales tell of these trolls and several place-names are connected to them.

Grímur Ingjaldsson was one of the early settlers. He arrived in Iceland late in autumn and spent the winter in Grímsey, the island in the mouth of Steingrímsfjörður, and fished in Húnaflói Bay. Once he took his infant son with him wrapped in a sealskin. While fishing he caught a *marbendill*, a human like creature that lived at the bottom of the sea and which was believed to have the gift of prophesy. Grímur asked the creature where he would eventually settle. The *marbendill* answered:

There is no need to predict your future, but the infant in the sealskin will settle where your mare, Skálm, lies down with her burden.

Later that winter Grímur was lost at sea. The following spring his wife set off with the young

To prevent theft

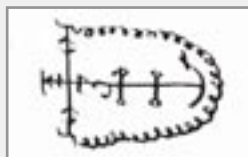


Make this sign on the doorpost and a cross with the wrong hand.



That a thief will be stuck inside a house, put this stave under the threshold.

If your livestock is prone to accidents



Carve this on oak and bury it under the floor and let the livestock pass over.

The nine Helms of Awe

These are the nine helms of awe that everyone that deals with knowledge cannot do without and each and every one must be used.

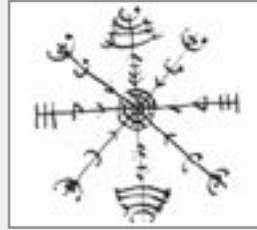


Þórir and travelled to Breiðafjörður. One year later the mare finally lay down with their luggage still on her back when they reached the southern part of Snæfellsnes and there Seal-Þórir, as he was known, became a chieftain.

Ghosts were also a part of Icelandic reality from the earliest times. The Saga of bishop Guðmundur the Good tells of a horrible creature with the head of a seal which terrorised the inhabitants of Strandir around 1200.

Other creatures were supposed to live in Goðdalur, one of the two valleys stretching into the moors from Bjarnarfjörður. Bishop Guðmundur tried to cleanse the valley but the effect was not lasting. The local heathen temple had been in Goðdalur and the area around it has always been left untouched. Even cutting the grass around the ruins was a sure way of calling on yourself some misfortune. Tales were told of secret sacrifices performed there and even today a certain mystery surrounds the valley. Another untouchable spot is the barrow of the heathen that established the

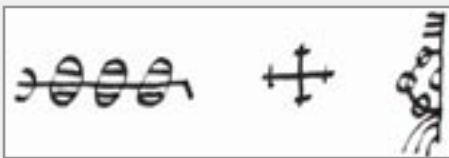
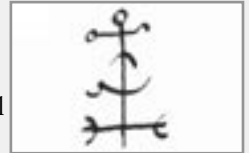
Veldismagn
(that which increases power)



It must be carved on lignite and colour the stave with blood and let it lie between your breasts and nothing evil will harm you and you will return healthy and free of sickness after travelling on sea or land.

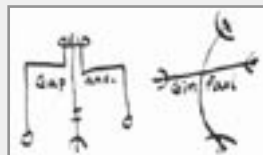
Wrestling magic's

If you intend to wrestle with a man carve this stave on a cylinder and hang it over him sleeping and speak this: I cast a spell on you and scare you, bloat you and beat you Odinn himself with xxx, Frigg, ginfaxi, gapandi, may you never rest easy you evil stink until the sigil of Baldur lies on your breast.



If you want to wrestle well carve these signs on your shoe with human bone or the toe of the leg you wrestle with and say:

I send the devil himself into his breast and bone that wrestles with me, in your name Thor, Odinn, and face the northwest.



Item use the knife you use for eating to carve a piece of turf facing a waxing moon and sprinkle with your blood, then place it in your shoe and say to the root this verse:

Ginfaxi under the heel,
Gapandi on the toe,
Exert yourself like before
For now the need is great.

temple, and still today many people regard the place with awe.

THE FIRST MAN IN BJARNARFJÖRÐUR

Njal's Saga, the most famous of the Icelandic sagas, tells of the first native inhabitant of Bjarnarfjörður, Svanur son of Björn, the settler of the area. Svanur was related to Hallgerður langbrók, the most famous shrew in the Sagas, and hid the slave who killed her second husband for her. The saga says that Svanur was a great sorcerer, quarrelsome and difficult to deal with. One day he stood up and told the slave that men were on their way to revenge their kinsman and kill him. The slave picked up his weapons but Svanur simply wrapped a goatskin around his head, went outside and recited:

Let there be mist and mischief,
let marvels befall all those
that as foes seek you.

A great fog descended on those riding across the hill south of Bjarnarfjörður, they could not see and fell from their saddles and some walked into bogs while others lost their weapons in the woods. Three times they attempted to cross the hill and were always met by the fog which lifted as soon as they turned back. According to legend Svanur walked into the mountain above Svanshóll and came out far to the north close to his fishing station. Njal's Saga says that eventually his boat sank and people saw him walk from the sea and into Mt. Kaldbakshorn where he was warmly welcomed.

Much later another sorcerer named Snorri lived on the same farm and was something of a recluse. He told his daughter that when he

The Sigil of Salomon



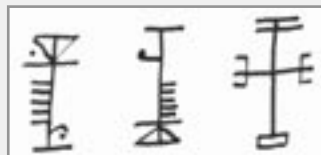
If you seek to be wise and have good dreams then carve this sign on lignite and keep it under your head.

Blood-oxen – Earth-oxen



To prevent theft, the first by day and the second by night. Carve them on the inside of the lid of the chest which preserves your wealth.

When evil is approaching



These staves one should carve on oak and paint them with blood from your hand and hang them over your door. Little evil will then enter.

died his body should be buried in a certain part of the homefield and not in the cemetery at Kaldrananes. The local clergyman objected and demanded a Christian burial. Transporting the coffin proved difficult because it kept falling off the horse. When they passed close to a place that according to legend is an old burial place, the coffin suddenly became easy to handle and the burial was uneventful.

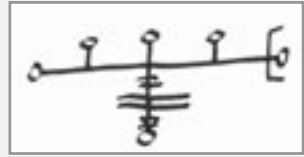
Fifty years later gravediggers found the coffin and opened it and found no bones in it, no teeth or human hair, only remnants of clothes and some of the things Snorri had told his daughter to put in the coffin - fishskin, his secret books, and some wood shavings.

OTHER SORCERERS IN BJARNARFJÖRÐUR

Bjarnarfjörður was off the main routes in former times since it was easier to cross the mountain to get to the north of Strandir. Little information can be gathered about the valley before the time of the witch hunts. Two cases are known from Bjarnarfjörður and some people from the valley were involved in the proceedings against Klemus Bjarnason, the last man to sentenced to death for sorcery in Iceland. His sentence was later reduced to life in prison.

In 1660 Guðrún Magnúsdóttir accused three men of causing a strange sickness that she had suffered from for many years but nothing more is known about that case. In 1676 Jón Pálsson

To break the leg of a horse



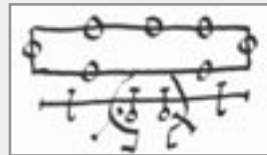
Carve this on a tablet and drop it on the path. Carve with the knife you use for your food – this is the stave.

For trading



Draw this stave on furry paper and preserve it secretly under your left arm. Success in trading is then ensured.

So all your ewes shall have twins



Carve the following stave on sheep's manure with the rib of a mouse and in raven's blood on a slab of basalt and burn in the door of the fold and let the smoke drift onto your sheep on the old St. John's day.

If something unclean is around

Carve this stave over the door of the house. Make an awl of juniper or silver.



was whipped at Kaldrananes for owning a grimoire of nine pages with many strange signs and also two spells against foxes with many and unacceptable uses of Gods holy name.

His neighbours pleaded for mercy since Jón had never used his knowledge to do evil, but the pages were burned under Jón's nose while he was whipped almost to death.

Although nobody was tried for witchcraft or sorcery after the second decade of the 18th century, the people of Strandir continued to practice magic. A sorcerer named Jón glói lived next to the heathen ruins in Goðdalur in the 18th century and acquired fame for showing the sheriff how to raise the dead.

INVOCATIONS, PRAYERS, AND SPELLS

Words have always had immense power in Iceland and few things were more terrifying than to have a poet condemn you in verse. Words could also be used to keep away evil spirits, and some such texts are in direct contrasts with what the clergy taught. There are invocations that are supposed to drive ghosts back to where they came from, others to keep spirits at a distance or to guard the livestock from foxes. Mixed with such material are catholic prayers that survived among the common people after the Reformation.

Some spells are a strange mix addressed to the holy trinity and Mary the mother of God as well as Thor, Odinn and other heathen deities. Other texts include a blend of medieval mysticism and corrupted Latin and for ages people thought that excerpts from the Vulgate Bible on vellum had the power to keep evil at bay.

In the Sorcerer's Cottage you hear the voices of some of those that were brought up in pre-industrial times in Strandir, telling stories of ghosts and elves. These come from the folklore collection of the Arnarnaganean Institute in Reykjavík.

STAVES OR MAGICAL SIGNS

All of the signs and staves seen in the Sorcerer's Cottage can be found in Icelandic grimoires, some from the 17th century, some from later times though all of them seem to be related. The origin of this peculiar Icelandic magic is difficult to ascertain. Some signs seem to be derived from medieval mysticism and renaissance occultism, while others show some relation to runic culture and the old Germanic belief in Thor and Odinn. Much of the magic mentioned in court records can be found in grimoires kept in various manuscript

collections. The purpose of the magic involved tells us something of the concerns of the lower classes that used them to lessen the burden of subsistence living in a harsh climate.

Interesting books on the same subject. You can get them in the museums souvenir stores or in our secure online-shop. Please visit our online-shop at www.galdrasyning.is/magicraft - we send all products worldwide.

ANGURGAPI - THE WITCH HUNTS IN ICELAND

To date little information has been available in English about Icelandic witchcraft and sorcery though interest in all aspects of the European witchcraze has increased. Angurgapi tells of how witch-hunts started in Iceland, it tells of a number of individual cases, what the culprits were accused of, what has been preserved in grimoires of a peculiar Icelandic tradition, and how trials of sorcery and witchcraft ceased in Iceland. In the book you find many interesting photographs of Icelandic grimoires which has never been published before.

Author: Magnús Rafnsson

Publisher: Strandagaldur (Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft)

Year: 2003

ISBN: 9979-9584-1-3

TWO ICELANDIC BOOKS OF MAGIC

Grimoires and magical staves are regarded either as silly or evil superstition or exciting remnants of forbidden wisdom. They feature prominently in Icelandic witchcraft trials. The two manuscripts printed in the book were written around 1800, only 100 years after prosecutions for witchcraft in Iceland ceased.

The first manuscript in the book, Lbs 2413 8vo, was written ca. 1800 and is the largest collection of magical staves in a single manuscript even when compared to those collected by amateur scholars almost a century later. Many of the magical acts described are the same as those mentioned in court records and similar ones can be found in the 17th century grimoires.

The manuscript itself measures 10 x 8 cm with 74 leaves and nothing is known of its history or how the library acquired it. Apparently a systematic collection was intended, beginning with various acts to prevent theft or find who has stolen, then

a collection of love magic, but after that there seems to be no specific order to the staves. After a number of protective staves or sigils there follow a number of invocations against ghosts and evil spirits.

The second manuscript in the book, Lbs 764 8vo, was written ca. 1820 and is very different. It is 14 x 8,5 cm, only 14 leaves and wrapped in an old leather wallet. The manuscript was bought in 1903 but no information about its history has been found. The first half appears to be of European origin and this part consists of protective signs and texts in Latin and with little connection to Icelandic court cases unless such signs or texts are the kind of blasphemy sometimes associated with staves or sigils.

The book *Two Icelandic Books of Magic* counts 263 pages, including 4 pages in colour and is a paperback. The book is both in English and Icelandic. The Icelandic text is printed with modern spelling on the right hand page and an English translation on the left page.

Author: Magnús Rafnsson

Publisher: Strandagaldur (Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft)

Year: 2008

ISBN: 978-9979-9584-5-1

WITCHCRAFT AND MORAL OFFENSES IN 17TH C STRANDIR

The people of Strandir are believed to be more knowledgeable in magic than other Icelanders ever since some of the most notable cases of witchcraft occurred there in the 17th century. Here are printed for the first time all the extant court records of these cases with an English summary. A remarkable picture of the world view and the living conditions of the common people is revealed, through accusations of bantering and persecutions which the culprits themselves believed in. Other court records from the second half of the century tell us of the behaviour and thoughts of the people of Strandir in cases about theft, moral issues and accidents in a harsh fight for survival. This book is in Icelandic and has an English summary.

Author: Már Jónsson

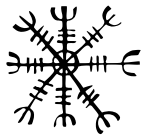
Publisher: Strandagaldur (Museum of Icelandic Sorcery & Witchcraft)

Year: 2008

ISBN: 978-9979-9584-4-4



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