

# OF ÆTTIR AND ÁLFAR

## AN INTERPRETATION OF ELVES

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PRESENTED AT  
EAST COAST THING 2019

# ABSTRACT

IN THIS PRESENTATION, AUZ MAKES A CASE FOR INTERPRETING ÁLFAR AS BEINGS OF EQUIVALENCY TO HUMANS, NOT AS EITHER 'DIVINE' OR 'ANCESTORS'.

HIS ARGUMENT IS BASED PRIMARILY ON A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF COSMOLOGICAL REFERENCES IN THE PROSE EDDA, A KINSHIP ANALYSIS OF LIKELY ÁLFAR FIGURES IN THE MYTHS, AND, ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF HISTORICAL OLD NORSE AND SÁMI CULTURES.

THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS INCLUDE ADVANCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOUND THEORETICAL GROUNDWORK FOR GANDR-SORCERY, AND 'RACISM-PROOFING' HEATHEN WORLD-VIEWS, AMONGST OTHERS.

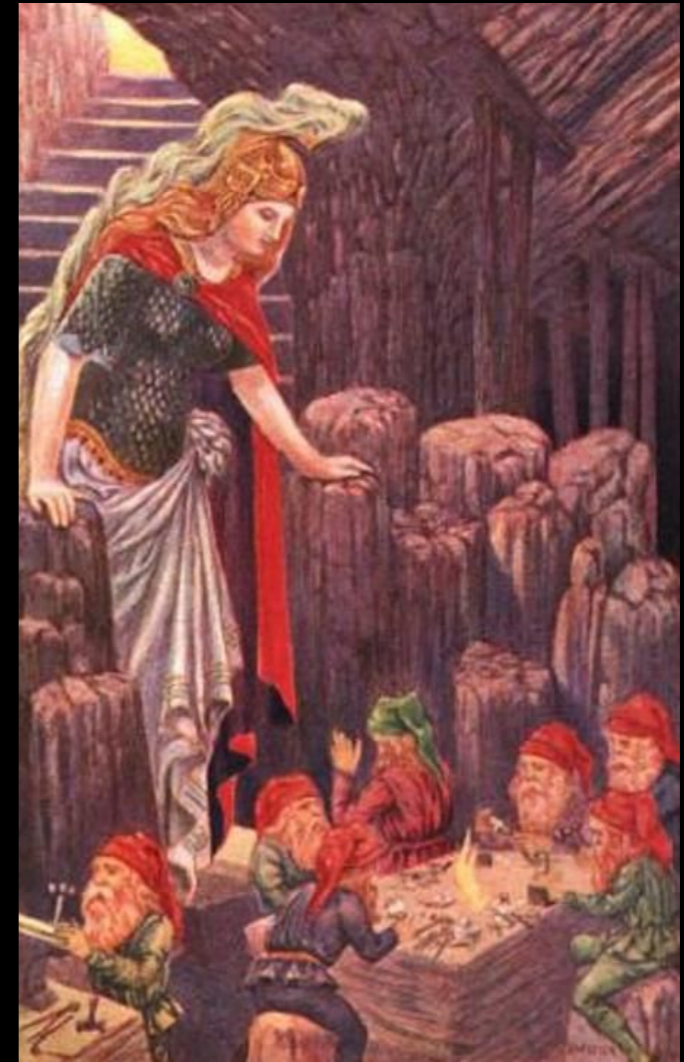


THIS DISCUSSION ASSUMES A FAIRLY  
BROAD KNOWLEDGE OF HEATHEN LORE.

PUT UP YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION, AND  
I WILL TRY TO OFFER MORE EXPLANATION AFTER EVERY FEW SETS OF SLIDES.

# CLASSIC MISUNDERSTANDINGS

1. THE ÁLFAR ARE THE MALE ANCESTORS.
2. ÁLFAR LIVE IN CERTAIN PLACES IN MIÐGARÐR.
3. ÁLFAR ARE CATEGORICALLY DIFFERENT BEINGS FROM DVERGR.
4. ÁLFAR ARE NOT EQUIVALENT TO HUMANS.
5. ÁLFAR CULTURE IS LIKE THAT OF ELVES IN SPECULATIVE FICTION.



FREYJA AND THE DWARVES

PATTEN WILSON, 1908

# ICELANDIC ELVES

- ◆ HULDUFÓLK
  - ◆ AMALGAM OF DIMINUTIZED BEINGS
  - ◆ DWARVES, ELVES, WIGHTS, TROLLS
- ◆ 'FAIRY FAITH'
  - ◆ 2/3 OF WOMEN, 1/3 OF MEN = CELTIC
  - ◆ LOWER STATUS = GREATER IMPORTANCE ELVES
- ◆ BIASED ETHNOGRAPHIC EXAMPLE



By George Pearson - Icelandic Legends : Collected by Jón Arnason : Translated by George E. J. Powell and Eiríkur Magnússon, Richard Bentley, London, 1864. This illustration facing page 88. Digitized version from Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=qDAeAAAAMAAJ>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4761290>

# SNORRIAN HEATHENRY

- ◆ SNORRI STURLASON > PROSE EDDA
  - ◆ MYTH = KEY TO POETRY
- ◆ BAD PAGANS, BUT GOOD ANCESTORS
  - ◆ EUHEMERISM
- ◆ ECHOS OF CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW
  - ◆ CHARACTERS, NOT 'GODS'
- ◆ LITTLE CONCERN TO MYTHIC 'TIMELINE'

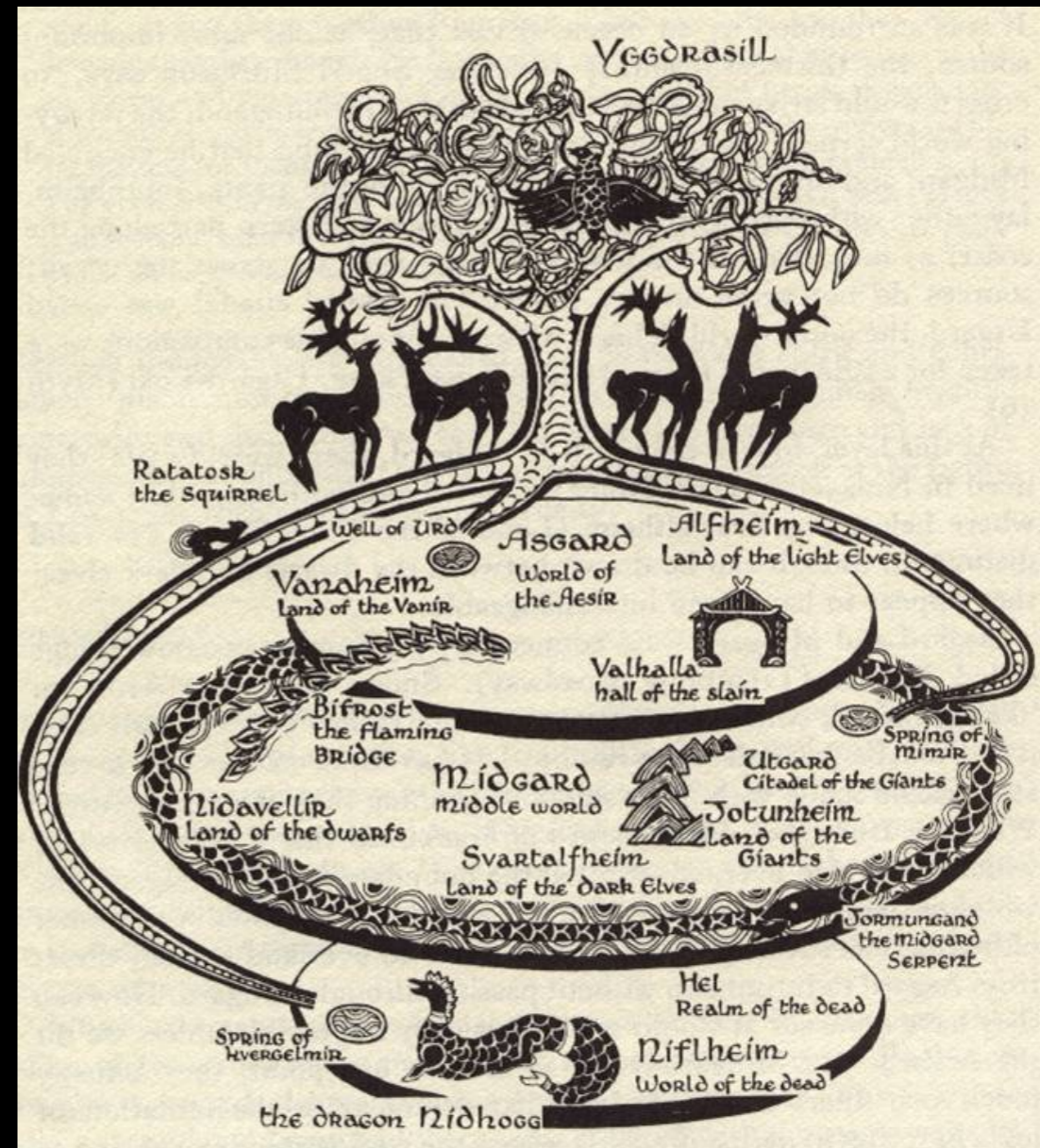
**\*hits hen-blunt\***

**If Baldr is Jesus, Loki is Judas, Óðinn is Yahweh, Freya is sexy Mary and Frigga is mommy Mary, alfar are angels, dvargr are micro-demons, jötnar are über-demons, and all the gods are immigrants from Troy, maybe I'm Snorri Sturluson?!**



# SNORRIAN COSMOLOGY

- ◆ INFLUENCE : ANGELS & DEMONS
- ◆ COSMOLOGY
  - ◆ NUMBER OF WORLDS
    - ◆ 2 ÁLFAR WORLDS: LIGHT & DARK
  - ◆ LOCATIONS
    - ◆ ABOVE & BELOW MIDGARD



# RYDBERGIAN HEATHENRY

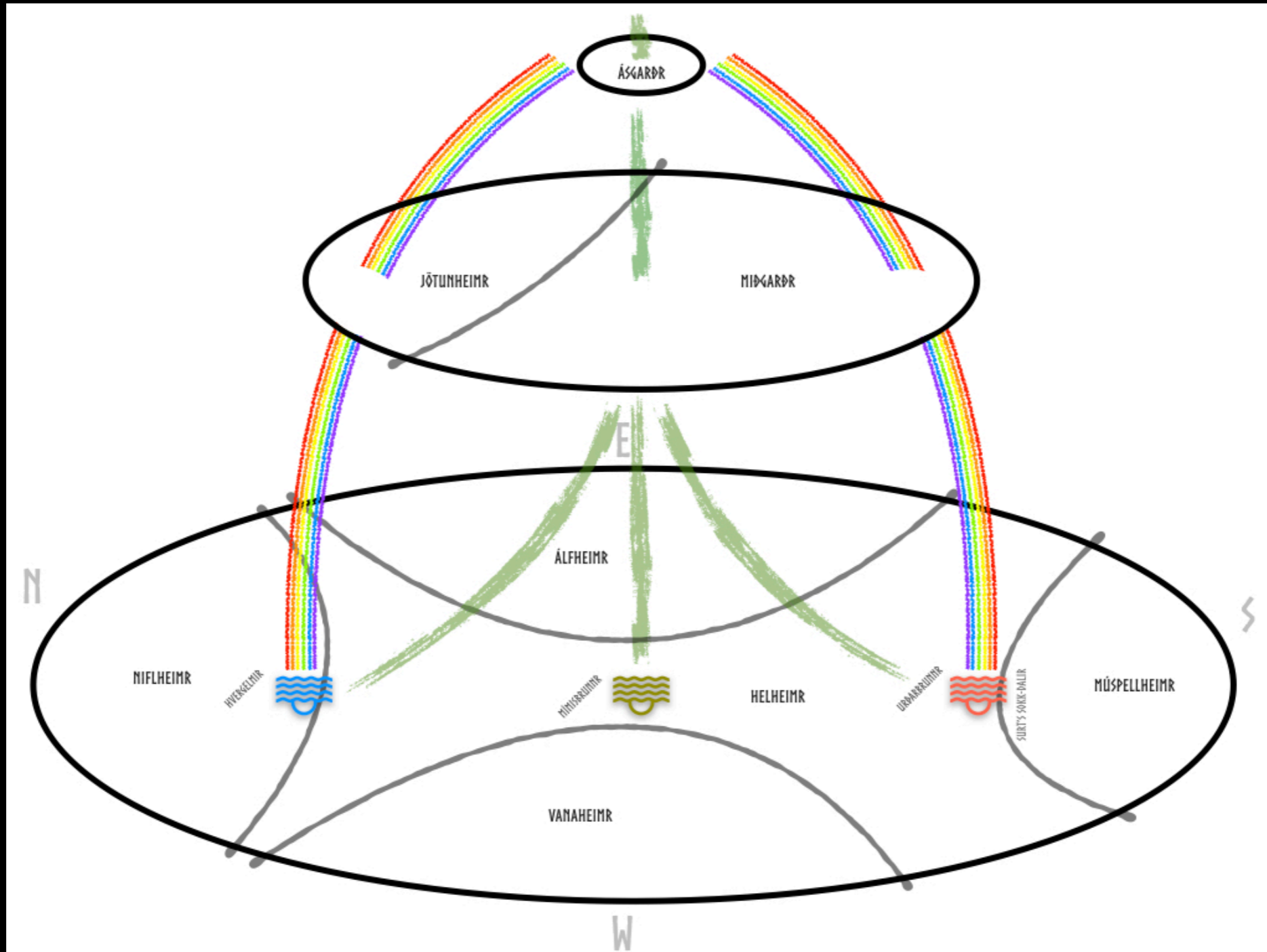
- ◆ POETIC EDDA, OVER PROSE EDDA
- ◆ STRUCTURE & STORY
  - ◆ KINSHIP
  - ◆ LAW & CULTURE
  - ◆ MOTIVATIONS (PLOT)
- ◆ NOT SYMBOLIC (OF NATURE)
- ◆ INTERNALLY COHERENT VISION



ABRAHAM VIKTOR RYDBERG  
1828 - 1895



# RYDBERGIAN COSMOLOGY



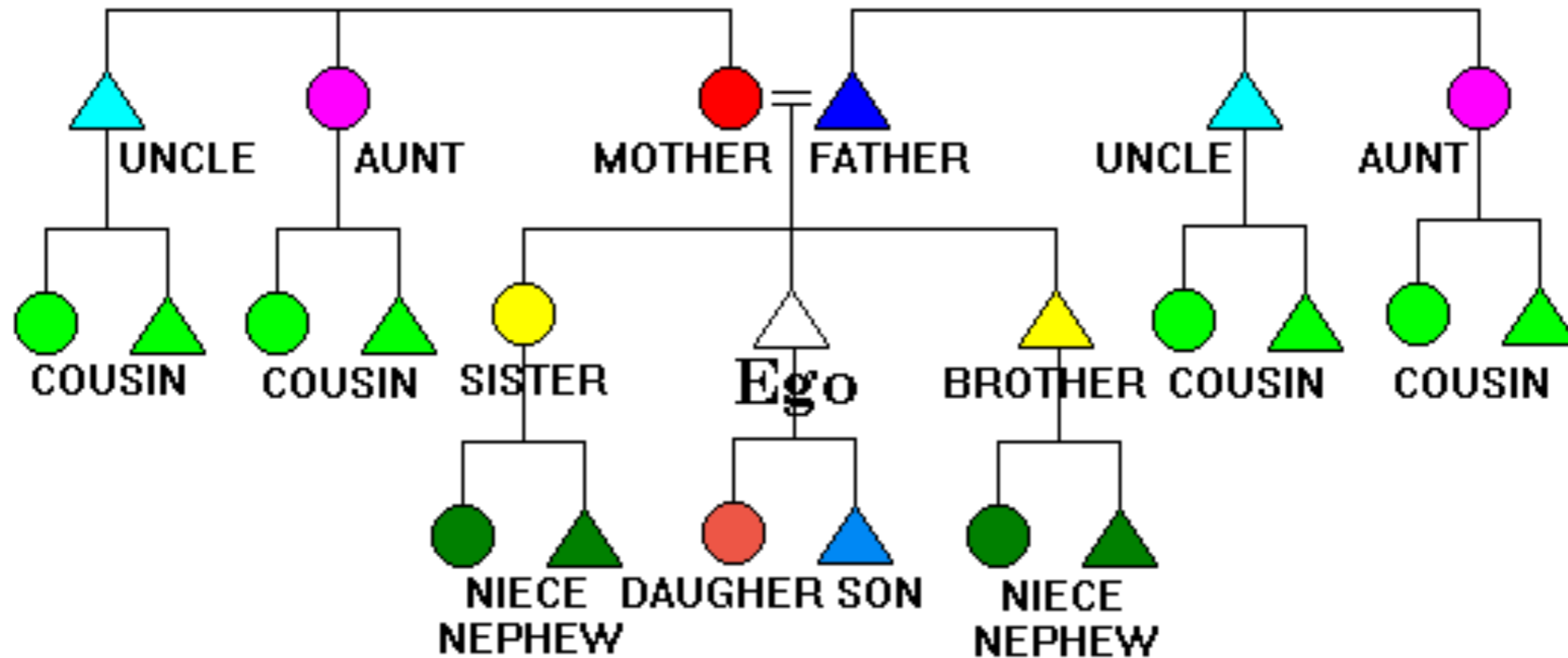
# CREATION

- ◆ BEINGS OF THE DEATH OF YMIR
  - ◆ YMIR > HAIR > TREES > DRIFTWOOD > HUMANS
  - ◆ YMIR > FLESH > SOIL > DIRT > 'WURM' > ÁLFAR
- ◆ BEINGS OF THE LIFE OF YMIR
  - ◆ YMIR MATING OF LEGS > JÖTNAR
  - ◆ YMIR MATING OF ARMPITS > VANIR + PROTO-ÆSIR
- ◆ BEINGS OF LIFE BEYOND YMIR
  - ◆ AUÐUMBLA > BÚRI > BORR > ÆSIR



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# MODERN ANGLO-SAXON KINSHIP



- ◆ LINEAL AND COLLATERAL KINSHIP SYSTEM



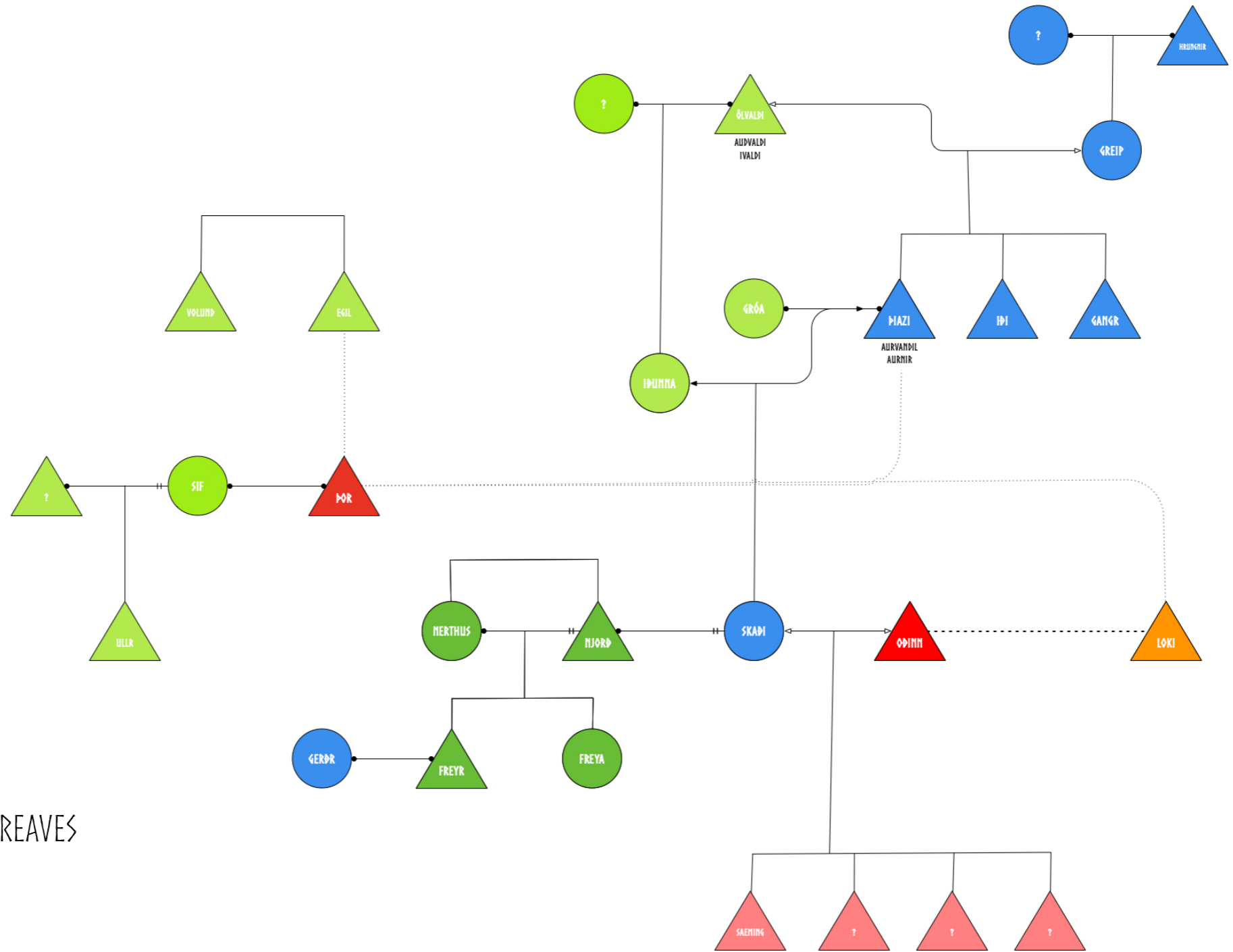
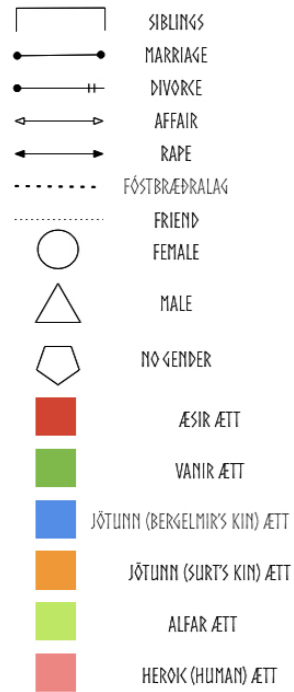
# TRADITIONAL SÁMI KINSHIP: SIIDA

- ◆ RELATIVES ON THE FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY ARE EACH LUMPED INTO INTO THEIR OWN CATEGORIES
  - ◆ SPECIAL TERMS FOR MOTHER'S OLDER AND YOUNGER SISTERS & FOR FATHER'S OLDER AND YOUNGER BROTHERS
- ◆ COUSINS = SEMI-SIBLINGS, DIFFERENTIATED BY GENDER
- ◆ ENTIRE GENERATION OF ELDERS = GRANDMOTHER OR GRANDFATHER
- ◆ RELATIVES BY MARRIAGE NOTED WITH TERMS
- ◆ DID THE SÁMI INFLUENCE OLD NORSE KINSHIP?



# INTERWOVEN ÆTTIR: SKAÐI

## LEGEND



SOURCES: RYDBERG & REAVES

# SÁMI LORE 1

- ◆ SÁMI 'ELVES' : HALDE
  - ◆ ADVICE, WARNINGS
  - ◆ SICKNESS
- ◆ UNDERGROUND 'TENTS' : GOAHTI
- ◆ UNDERWORLD : SAIVO



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# SÁMI LORE 2

- ◆ PLACES OF POWER : SEIDI
  - ◆ EARTH-FAST STONES
  - ◆ BOTTOMS OF LAKES
  - ◆ MOUNTAIN TOPS
- ◆ ROCK IDOLS : STORJUNKARE





# ÁLFAR CULTURE 1

- ◆ WILDERNESS LIFE
  - ◆ HUNTING & GATHERING
  - ◆ HUSBANDRY OF 'WILD' CREATURES
  - ◆ BUSHCRAFT
  - ◆ FURS & 'CRUDE' GARMENTS



By I, Berig, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2279776>

# ÁLFAR CULTURE 2

- ◆ WINTER ACTIVITIES
  - ◆ HUNTING
    - ◆ USE OF MISSILE WEAPONS, ESPECIALLY THE BOW
  - ◆ SKIING
- ◆ PRE-METALLURGY TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY STONE TOOLS



# ÁLFAR CULTURE 3

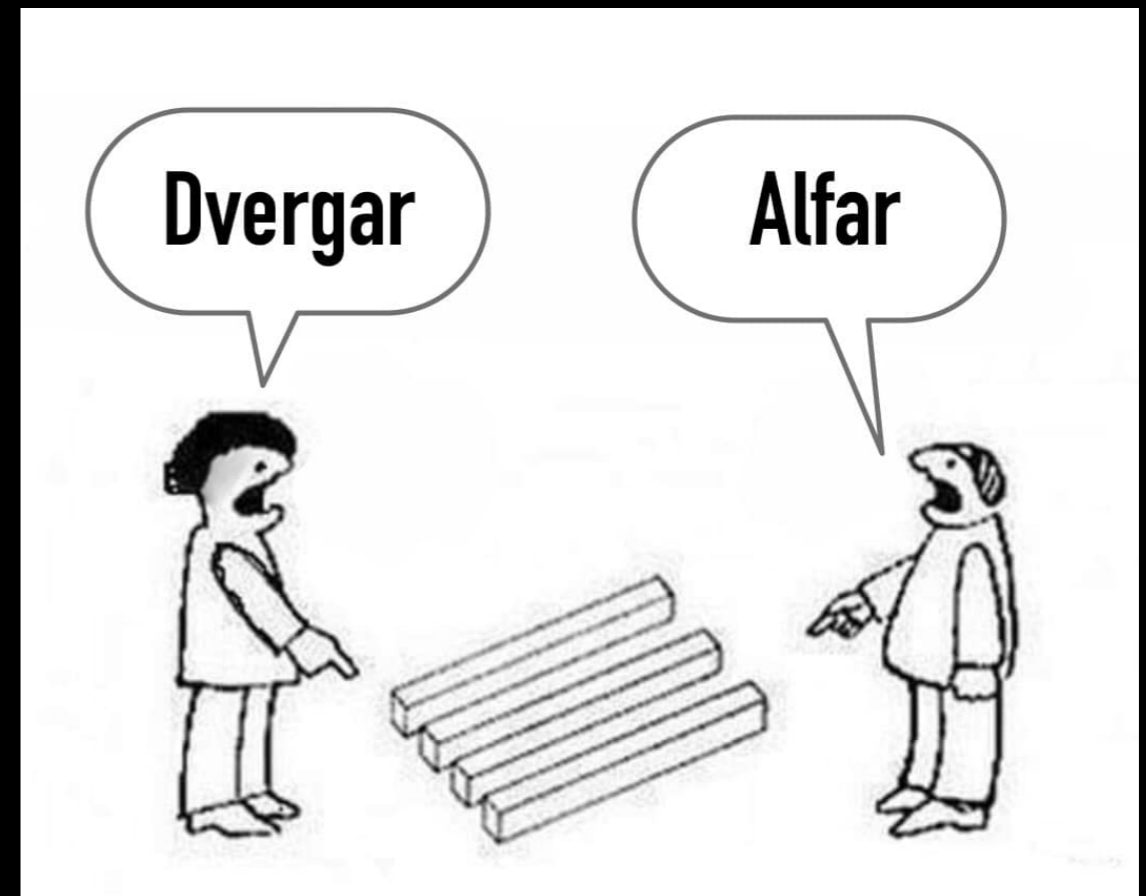
- ◆ CREATION OF MAGICAL OBJECTS
- ◆ SHAPE-SHIFTERS
- ◆ HEALING & HARMING SORCERY
- ◆ HIDDEN & ANCIENT
  - ◆ CAVES & HOLES
  - ◆ STONES



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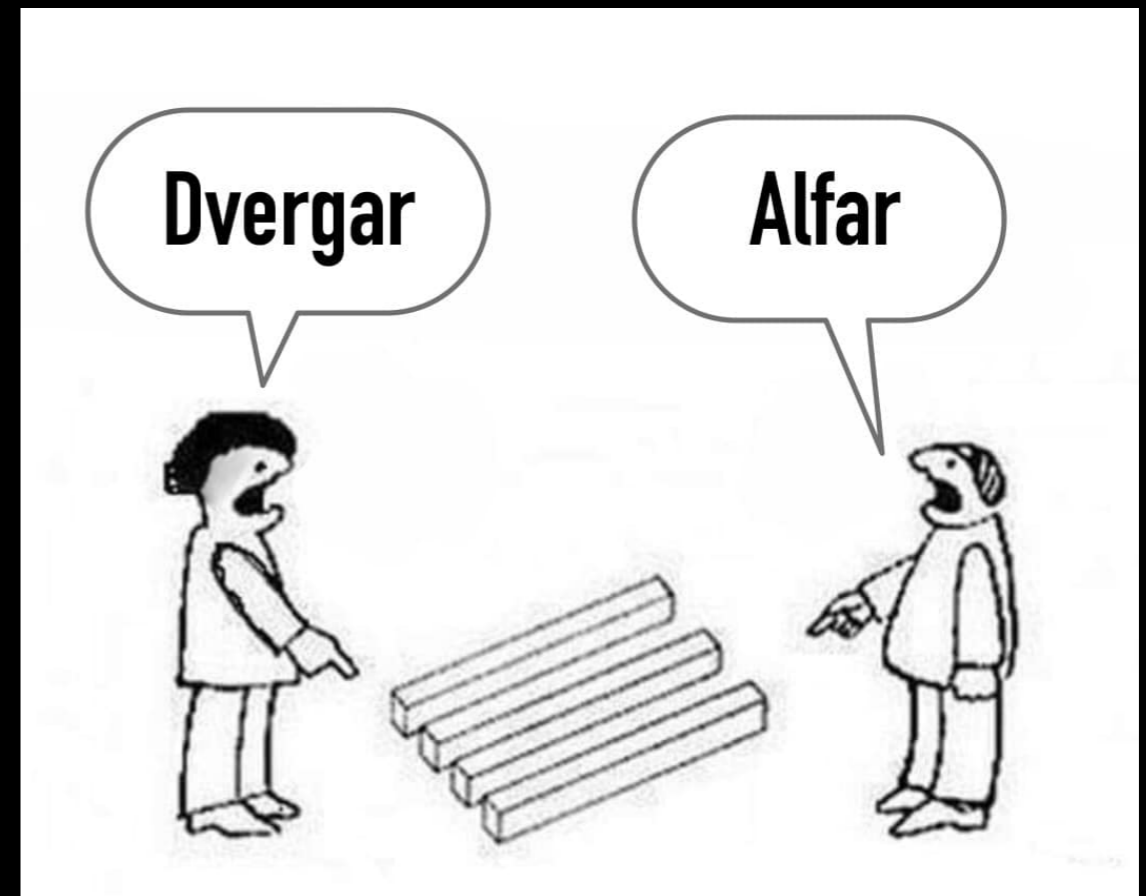
# HUMANS VS DVERGR

- ◆ DVERGR = NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANS
  - ◆ PAYMENTS & TRICKS (NOT GIFTS)
  - ◆ KIDNAPPING & 'SEDUCTION' (NOT PART OF THE KIN GROUP)
  - ◆ CLOSE UNDERWORLD
  - ◆ CORRUPTION & PHYSICALITY



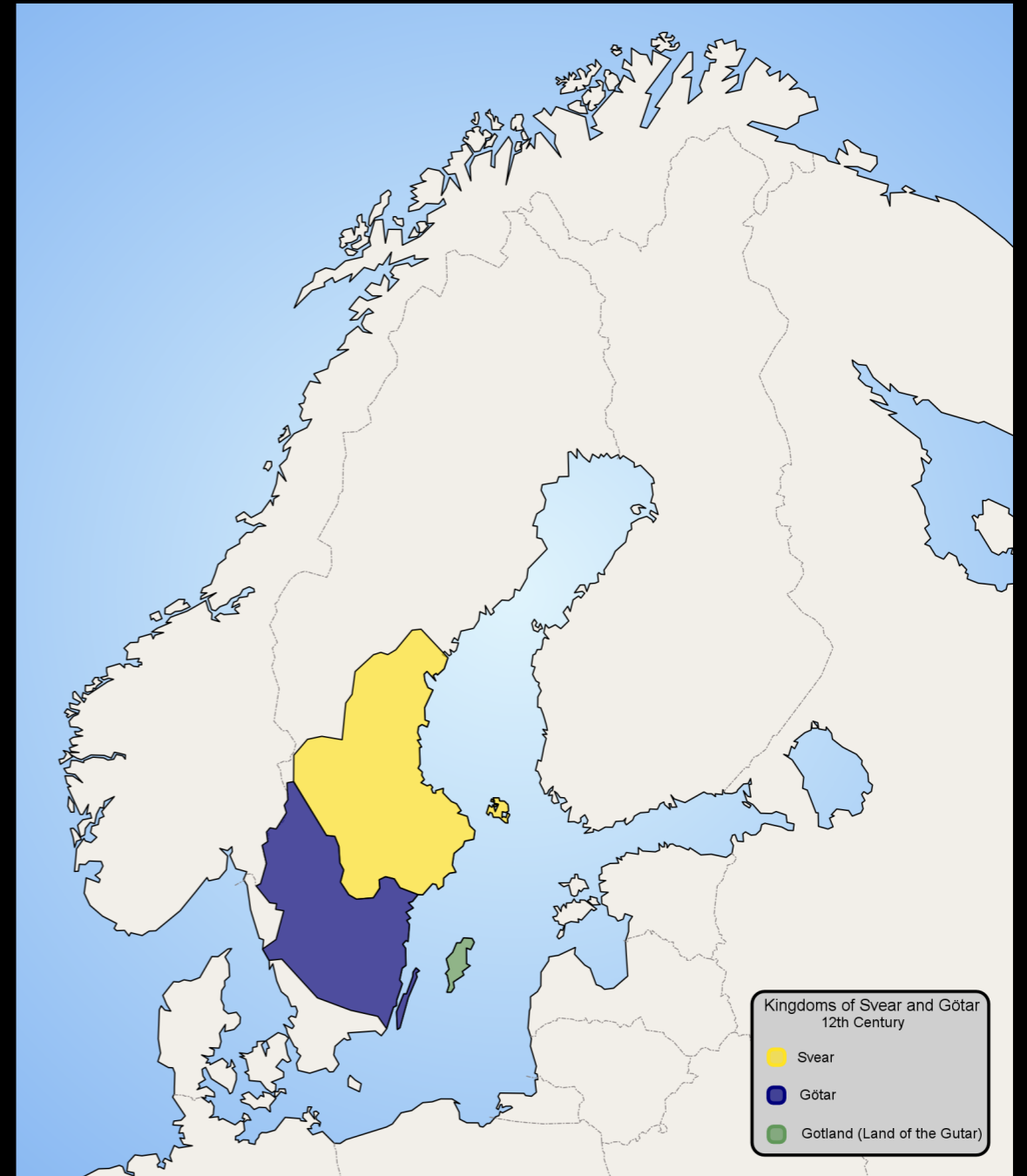
# HUMANS VS ÁLFAR

- ◆ ÁLFAR = POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANS
  - ◆ ADVICE & GIFTS (NOT PAYMENT)
  - ◆ ANCESTOR (PART OF THE KIN GROUP)
  - ◆ FAR UNDERWORLD
  - ◆ WISDOM & TRANSCENDENTAL



# CLAIMS TO SOVEREIGNTY

- ◆ ROYAL LINEAGES TIED TO ÁLFAR
  - ◆ IN WHAT IS NOW SWEDEN
- ◆ PERIOD PROTO-OLD NORSE & SÁMI KONFLIKT
- ◆ UPG: SÁMI = SYMBOLICALLY ÁLFAR?
  - ◆ > OLD NORSE CLAIMING DESCENT
  - ◆ = CLAIMS OF LORDSHIP



# SPECULATION : VOLUNDR

- ◆ FREYR = ÁLFHEIMR AS A 'TOOTH-GIFT'
- ◆ UPG : VÖLUNDR = THE MATERNAL UNCLE OF FREYR
- ◆ IF HE HAD NO SONS, HE WOULD PASS ON THE KINGSHIP OF ÁLFHEIM TO FREYR, AS A GIFT OR THROUGH INHERITANCE.



[https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypijzW3WknFIJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/Wayland\\_the\\_Smith.html](https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypijzW3WknFIJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/Wayland_the_Smith.html)

# ÁLFAR AS ANCESTORS?





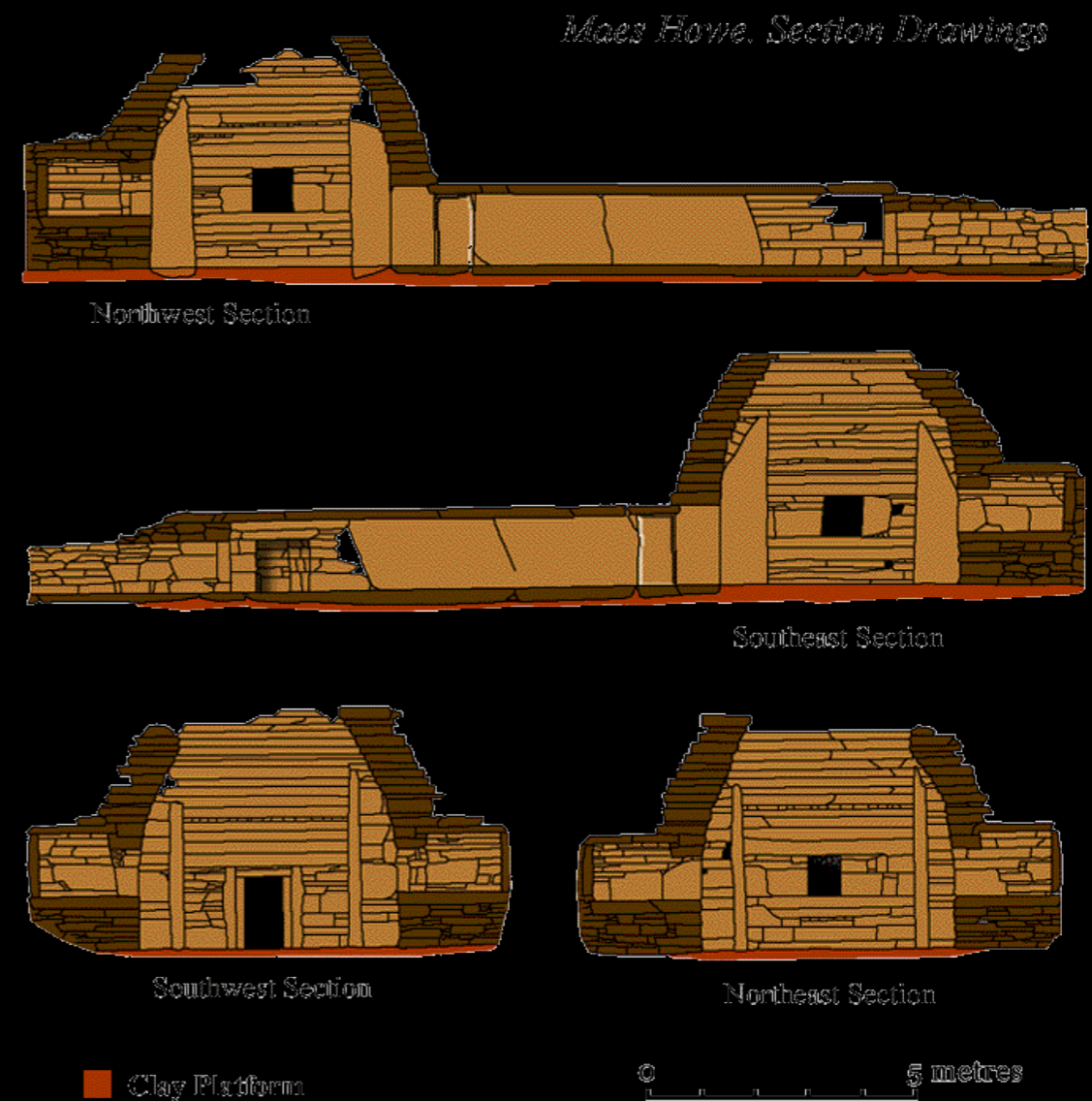
# BECOMING KIN TO ÁLFAR

- ◆ MARRIAGE TO AN ÁLF, IN MIDGARDR
- ◆ MARRIAGE TO AN ÁLF, IN ÁLFHEIMR
- ◆ FOSTERAGE / FRIENDSHIP TO ÁLFAR
- ◆ TRAVEL TO ÁLFHEIMR = DEATH = NEW 'LIFE'



# METAPHOR: THE 'FOREIGN' DEAD

- ◆ ÁLFAR ARE THE “FOREIGN DEAD”
- ◆ ALIENATED BECAUSE OF ...
  - A. CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
  - B. PASSAGE OF TIME
- ◆ FOREIGN DEAD ≠ ANCESTOR



# BECOMING AN ALF

OPAL LAND BURIAL	PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEAD	APPROX. GENERATION	BEING TYPE
LIFE REMEMBERED	EGO RELATIONSHIP	- 3 GENERATIONS	HUMAN
NAME REMEMBERED	KINSHIP RELATIONSHIP	4-8 GENERATIONS	DEAD ELDER
AETTIR REMEMBERED	SOCIETAL RELATIONSHIP	4-8 + GENERATIONS	HISTORIC ANCESTOR
ANCESTRY REMEMBERED	HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP	8-16 + GENERATIONS	LEGENDARY ANCESTOR
ANCESTRY FORGOTTEN	SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP	8-16 + GENERATIONS	ÁLF

# IMPLICATIONS

1. GANDR SORCERY
2. ANCESTOR WORSHIP
3. 'RACISM-PROOFING'
4. COHERENCE

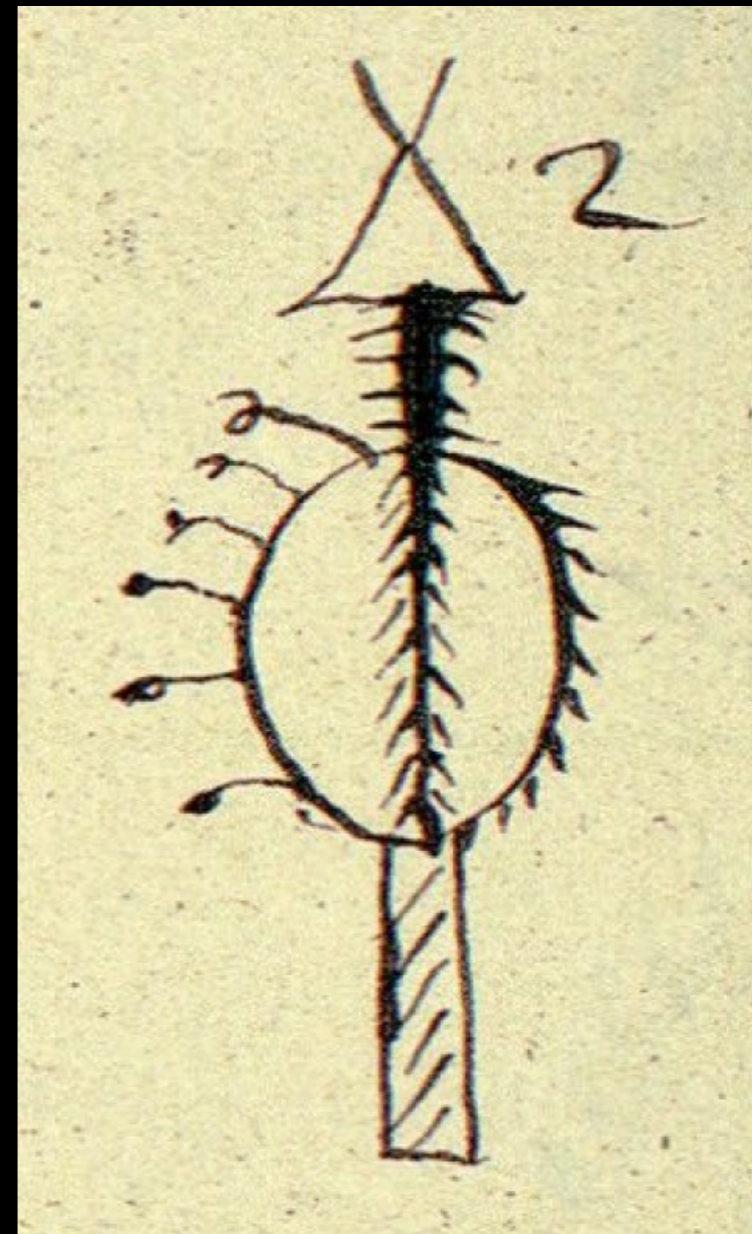


<https://www.norsegodsasatru.net/alfar.html>

◆ NATURE OF LOKI?

# GANDR SORCERY

- ◆ 'SENDINGS' & SHAPE-SHIFTING
  - ◆ INSECTS
- ◆ STAVES & MAGICAL TOOLS
  - ◆ WANDS, WITH MAGICAL INSCRIPTIONS
  - ◆ RANGLES & GOADS
- ◆ UPG: ACCESS + COERCE / DIRECT SPIRITS
- ◆ UPG: OVERLAP WITH BOTH GALDR (MAGICAL INSCRIPTIONS) & SEIÐR (MAGICAL MANIPULATION OF RELATIONS & THOUGHTS)



# SPECULATION : THISTIL : MISTIL : KISTILL

- ◆ THISTLE : MISTLETOE : CASKET
- ◆ SORCEROUS CHARM > GANDR + GALDR
- ◆ 'FLYING' PLANTS IN TROLLODOM
  - ◆ THISTLE = SEED, FLIES FREE
  - ◆ MISTLETOE = PLANT FLIES, SEED FLIES IN GUT OF BIRDS
- ◆ CASKET = LOKI AS FALCON, MAGICAL STAFFS
  - ◆ PERSONAL UNDERWORLD
  - ◆ SECURES MAGIC ITEMS
- ◆ COMMONALITY? = CAPTURE & CONTROL GANDR
- ◆ ÁLFHEIMR = LAND OF MAGIC ITEMS



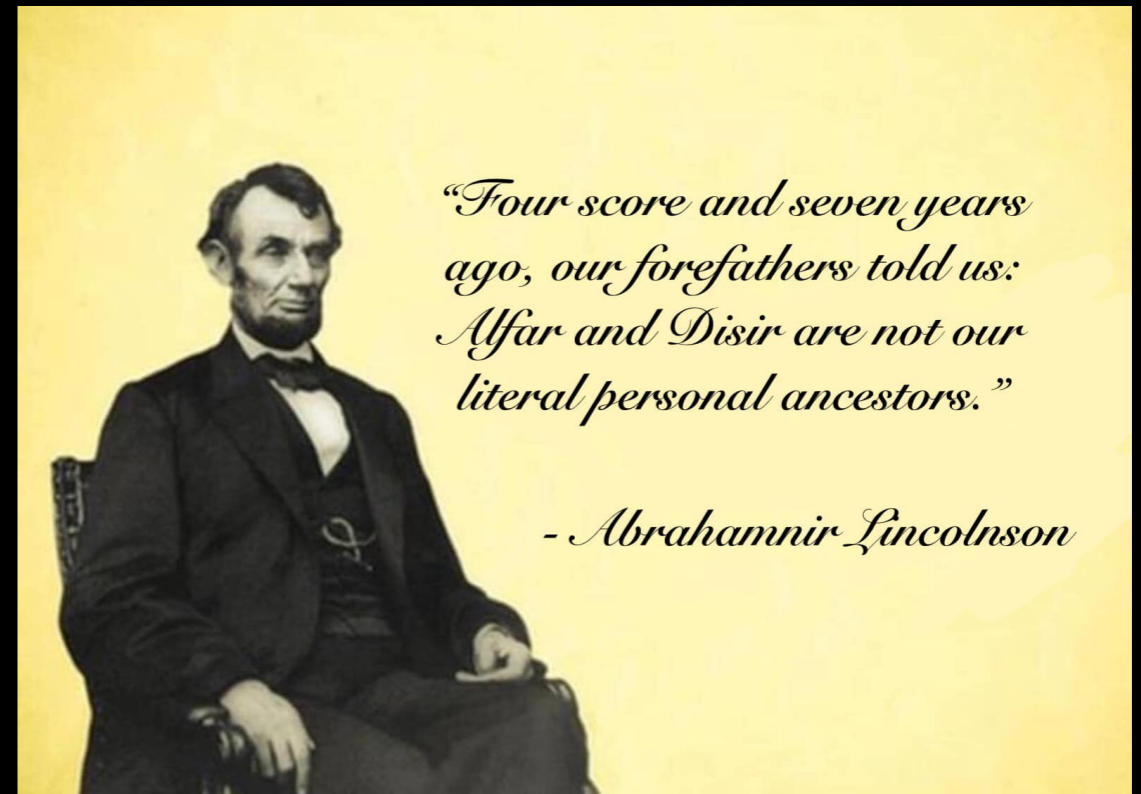
# SPECULATION : LOKI

- ◆ CHILD OF SURT'S LINE
  - ◆ ALLIANCE FORSTALLS RAGNARÖK
- ◆ USES ÁLF-TYPE MAGIC
- ◆ MIDDLE-MAN WITH DVERGR
- ◆ SMITHING ARTIFACT
- ◆ UPG : KINSHIP WITH ÁLFAR?



# ANCESTOR WORSHIP

- ◆ NOT ALL YOUR ANCESTORS ARE ÁLFAR!
  - ◆ ONLY SOME
- ◆ INTERMEDIARIES WITH THE UNDERWORLD
  - ◆ THUS, INTERMEDIARIES WITH THE DEAD





# 'RACISM-PROOFING'

- ◆ THUS, NOT ALL ANCESTORS ARE 'DIVINE'
  - ◆ YOUR "BLOOD" IS NOT PURE
- ◆ EVERYONE INTERMARRIES
  - ◆ MULTIPLE LOYALTIES
- ◆ OVERLAPPING, NESTED LOYALTIES TO ONE'S ÆTTIR



# COHERENCE

- ◆ REFLECTS OLD NORSE CULTURE
  - ◆ SOCIAL CONFLICTS ARE KIN-BASED
- ◆ EXPLAINS KENNINGS OF THE POETIC EDDA
- ◆ CREATION STORY HAS FEWER HOLES
  - ◆ [ONLY SURT'S KIN REMAIN]
- ◆ ELEGANTLY LINKS MYTHOLOGY & FOLKLORE



# TAKE AWAYS

1. AS A GROUP, THE ÁLFAR ARE NOT ANCESTORS TO HUMANS.
2. ÁLFAR LIVE IN ÁLFHEIM, BUT CAN TRAVEL TO MIDGARDR, THROUGH CERTAIN PLACES AND UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.
3. ÁLFAR AND DVERGR ARE THE SAME TYPE OF BEING, BUT WITH DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIPS TO HUMANS.
4. ÁLFAR ARE TO THE VANIR, AS HUMANS ARE TO THE ÆSIR.
5. THE ÁLFAR HAVE A QUASI-NEOLITHIC AND WILDERNESS-FOCUSED CULTURE.

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