

how to practice asatru

How to Practice Asatru: Embracing the Old Norse Path

how to practice asatru is a question that many people interested in Norse spirituality and ancient traditions often ask. Asatru, a modern revival of the pre-Christian Norse religion, is rich with rituals, values, and a deep reverence for the gods and nature. Whether you're drawn to the mythology, the sense of community, or the spiritual connection to the land, embarking on this path offers a unique and meaningful experience. In this article, we'll explore how to practice Asatru authentically, covering its core beliefs, rituals, and ways to integrate the tradition into your daily life.

Understanding Asatru: The Foundations of the Faith

Before diving into how to practice Asatru, it's essential to understand what it entails. Asatru, which means "faith in the Æsir," refers to the Norse gods such as Odin, Thor, Freyja, and others. It's a polytheistic religion that centers on honoring these deities, respecting ancestors, and living in harmony with the natural world.

Core Beliefs and Values

At its heart, Asatru emphasizes virtues like courage, honor, hospitality, and truthfulness. These principles, often referred to as "the Nine Noble Virtues," guide practitioners in their daily lives. The religion does not have a single sacred text but draws from the Poetic and Prose Eddas—medieval Icelandic texts that contain much of the mythology and lore.

Understanding that Asatru is not just about worship but also about lifestyle is crucial. It encourages personal responsibility, community involvement, and a deep connection to the cycles of nature.

How to Practice Asatru Through Rituals and Worship

One of the most fascinating aspects of Asatru is its ritual practices, which can be adapted to fit modern life while maintaining a connection to ancient traditions.

Blóts: Sacred Offerings

Blóts are sacrificial ceremonies where offerings—often food, drink, or symbolic items—are given to the gods, spirits, or ancestors. These rituals foster a reciprocal relationship between humans and the divine.

To practice a blót, you don't need elaborate ceremonies. Start by creating a small altar with representations of your chosen deities, such as Thor's hammer (Mjölnir) or an image of Freyja. Offer

symbolic gifts like mead, bread, or herbs while speaking words of gratitude or invocation.

Seasonal Celebrations

Asatru practitioners often observe the cycles of nature through seasonal festivals aligned with the old Norse calendar. Celebrations like Yule (winter solstice), Ostara (spring equinox), and Midsummer (summer solstice) mark important turning points in the year.

Participating in these festivals is a beautiful way to honor the gods and the natural world. You might light candles at Yule to symbolize the return of the sun or hold feasts during Midsummer to celebrate fertility and growth.

Daily Practices and Meditation

Incorporating Asatru into everyday life can be as simple as a daily moment of reflection or meditation. Many practitioners use runes—ancient Norse symbols—for divination and spiritual insight. You might draw a rune each morning to set your intention or meditate on the qualities of a particular god.

Connecting with nature is also vital. Spending time outdoors, observing wildlife, or practicing mindfulness in the forest can deepen your relationship with the spirits of the land.

Building Community and Finding Like-Minded Practitioners

Asatru is often practiced in groups called kindreds or hearths, where members gather for rituals, feasts, and mutual support.

Joining a Kindred or Hearth

If you're wondering how to practice Asatru in a communal setting, seeking out a local or online kindred can be rewarding. These groups provide opportunities to learn, share experiences, and participate in collective rituals. Many kindreds welcome newcomers and emphasize education and inclusivity.

Participating in Moots and Festivals

Moots are gatherings or meetings for Asatru practitioners, often featuring workshops, discussions, and celebrations. Attending moots can deepen your understanding and help you connect with the broader community.

Additionally, larger festivals such as Althing (a traditional Icelandic assembly) or regional Viking

festivals often have Asatru-related events where you can immerse yourself in the culture and spirituality.

Living According to Norse Ethics and Worldview

Practicing Asatru isn't limited to rituals; it's also about embodying the ethos and worldview of the Norse.

The Nine Noble Virtues

Living by the Nine Noble Virtues is a cornerstone of Asatru practice. These virtues include Courage, Truth, Honor, Fidelity, Discipline, Hospitality, Self-Reliance, Industriousness, and Perseverance. Reflecting on these values and striving to incorporate them into your daily actions helps align your life with the spirit of the tradition.

Respecting Ancestors and the Land

Ancestor veneration is a significant part of Asatru. Many practitioners create shrines or altars to honor their forebears, offering remembrance and respect. This practice fosters a sense of continuity and belonging.

Similarly, a strong bond with nature is emphasized. Many Asatru followers engage in environmentally conscious behaviors, viewing the earth as sacred and worthy of protection.

Practical Tips for Beginners: How to Start Practicing Asatru Today

Starting your journey with Asatru can feel overwhelming, but breaking it down into manageable steps can make the path clearer.

- **Educate Yourself:** Read foundational texts such as the Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, and modern Asatru guides. Understanding the myths and cultural context is essential.
- **Create a Personal Altar:** Dedicate a small space in your home to your gods and ancestors, decorated with meaningful symbols and offerings.
- **Practice Daily Gratitude:** Take a moment each day to thank the gods or spirits for their presence and guidance.
- **Observe Seasonal Festivals:** Celebrate at least one Norse holiday per year to connect with the cycles of nature.

- **Connect with Community:** Look for local or online Asatru groups to share experiences and learn from others.
- **Live the Virtues:** Reflect on the Nine Noble Virtues and find ways to embody them in your daily decisions and interactions.

Embracing a Spiritual Path Rooted in Tradition and Nature

How to practice Asatru is ultimately about forging a personal connection with the Norse gods, ancestors, and the earth. It invites you to live with integrity, courage, and a deep appreciation for life's cycles. Whether you incorporate simple rituals, join a community, or immerse yourself in Norse mythology, Asatru offers a meaningful way to explore spirituality grounded in ancient wisdom.

By approaching this path with respect, openness, and commitment, you can cultivate a rich and fulfilling practice that honors both the past and your present journey.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the basic principles of practicing Ásatrú?

The basic principles of practicing Ásatrú include honoring the Norse gods and goddesses, living by values such as courage, honor, and hospitality, and maintaining a strong connection to nature and ancestral traditions.

How can I start practicing Ásatrú at home?

You can start practicing Ásatrú at home by setting up a simple altar with symbols of the gods you wish to honor, learning about Norse mythology, performing blóts (offerings) or sumbels (ritual toasts), and incorporating Norse virtues into your daily life.

What are blóts and how do I perform one?

Blóts are traditional Ásatrú rituals involving offerings to the gods, spirits, or ancestors. To perform a blót, you typically prepare a sacred space, make an offering such as mead, food, or symbolic items, say prayers or chants to the deities, and share a communal toast to honor them.

Is it necessary to join a kindred or Ásatrú community to practice effectively?

While joining a kindred or Ásatrú community can enhance your practice through shared rituals and support, it is not strictly necessary. Many practitioners begin individually and later connect with others to deepen their understanding and fellowship.

How does Ásatrú incorporate respect for nature in its practice?

Ásatrú emphasizes a deep respect for nature as sacred and interconnected with the divine. Practitioners honor natural cycles, celebrate seasonal festivals like solstices and equinoxes, and strive to live sustainably and harmoniously with the environment.

Additional Resources

****How to Practice Asatru: A Comprehensive Guide to Modern Norse Paganism****

how to practice asatru is a question increasingly asked by those interested in reviving the ancient Norse spiritual traditions. Asatru, a modern reconstructionist faith rooted in Old Norse mythology and pre-Christian Scandinavian beliefs, emphasizes a connection to the natural world, reverence for the gods and ancestors, and a code of ethics shaped by honor and community. Unlike many mainstream religions, Asatru does not have a centralized doctrine or sacred text, making its practice highly individualized and adaptable. This article examines how to practice Asatru from a practical, cultural, and spiritual perspective, providing insights into its rituals, values, and community life.

Understanding the Foundations of Asatru

Asatru, literally meaning "faith in the Æsir," refers to the Norse pantheon of gods such as Odin, Thor, Freyja, and Loki. The faith is part of a broader category known as Heathenry, which reconstructs pre-Christian Germanic spirituality. To practice Asatru authentically, it is essential to grasp its historical and mythological context.

Historical Context and Revival

The modern Asatru movement began in the 20th century, particularly gaining momentum in Iceland during the 1970s when it was formally recognized as a religion. Unlike its ancient counterparts, contemporary Asatru is not a direct continuation but rather a revival based on archaeological, literary, and folkloric sources like the Poetic Edda and the Sagas. This foundation invites practitioners to interpret myths and rituals in ways that resonate personally and culturally.

Core Beliefs and Values

At its heart, Asatru centers on honoring the gods (Æsir and Vanir), the landvaettir (land spirits), and one's ancestors. Key values include:

- ****Honesty and Honor:**** Upholding truth and personal integrity.
- ****Courage (Drengskapr):**** Facing challenges with bravery.
- ****Fidelity (Tryggð):**** Loyalty to kin and community.
- ****Hospitality (Gestrisni):**** Welcoming guests and strangers.

These ethical principles guide both ritual practice and everyday life.

Practical Steps on How to Practice Asatru

Because Asatru is non-dogmatic, practitioners often tailor their spiritual activities. However, several core practices are common.

Establishing a Connection with the Gods and Spirits

A foundational aspect of how to practice Asatru is developing a personal relationship with the Norse deities and spirits. This can be achieved through:

- **Blóts:** Ritual sacrifices or offerings to gods, ancestors, or land spirits, often involving food, drink, or symbolic items.
- **Seiðr and Galdr:** Forms of Norse magic or chanting, used for divination or spiritual connection.
- **Prayer and Meditation:** Speaking to the gods or contemplating their myths and attributes.

These practices foster reverence and invite divine presence into daily life.

Creating a Sacred Space (Hof or Altar)

Many Asatru practitioners maintain a dedicated altar or sacred space in their homes. This space often includes:

- Statues or symbols of gods (Thor's hammer, Odin's ravens).
- Natural elements such as stones, wood, or plants.
- Offerings like mead, bread, or seasonal fruits.

An altar serves as a focal point for ritual and reflection, grounding the practitioner's spiritual practice.

Observing Seasonal Festivals

Asatru aligns closely with the natural cycles, celebrating seasonal festivals that mark agricultural and solar events. Key festivals include:

1. **Yule (Jól):** Midwinter celebration honoring the rebirth of the sun and the gods.
2. **Ostara:** Spring equinox festival focusing on renewal and fertility.
3. **Sumbel:** A ritual drinking ceremony held periodically to honor gods, ancestors, and community bonds.

Respecting these festivals helps practitioners connect with nature's rhythms and the heritage of Norse culture.

Living According to the Nine Noble Virtues

While not universally adopted, many Asatru adherents follow the Nine Noble Virtues, a modern ethical framework inspired by ancient values:

- Courage
- Truth
- Honor
- Fidelity
- Discipline
- Hospitality
- Self-Reliance
- Perseverance
- Industriousness

Incorporating these virtues into daily conduct reinforces the spiritual ethos of Asatru.

Community and Social Aspects of Asatru Practice

Unlike some solitary spiritual paths, Asatru often involves active participation in communities known as kindreds or hearths. These groups meet regularly for rituals, festivals, and social bonding, providing support and shared learning opportunities.

Joining a Kindred or Hearth

Kindreds function similarly to congregations, offering a structured environment for worship and mutual aid. Benefits include:

- Access to collective rituals and blóts.
- Shared resources and knowledge about Norse lore.
- Social networking with like-minded individuals.

However, some practitioners prefer solitary practice, highlighting Asatru's flexibility.

Engaging in Education and Research

Due to its reconstructed nature, Asatru encourages ongoing study of Norse mythology, archaeology, language, and history. Practitioners often read primary sources like the Poetic Edda and scholarly works to deepen their understanding. This intellectual engagement enriches ritual practice and ensures cultural authenticity.

Challenges and Considerations in Practicing Asatru

While Asatru offers a meaningful spiritual path, several challenges merit attention.

Misappropriation and Cultural Sensitivity

Asatru's rise in popularity has sometimes led to misuse or association with extremist ideologies, particularly white supremacist groups. Responsible practitioners emphasize inclusivity, cultural respect, and distancing from such factions. Understanding the historical context and promoting ethical values are crucial steps.

Balancing Tradition and Modernity

Practicing an ancient faith in a contemporary setting requires balancing authenticity with practicality. For instance, traditional Norse sacrifices are adapted symbolically, and rituals may incorporate modern elements to suit individual lifestyles. This dynamic can enrich the faith but also requires careful reflection to avoid superficiality.

Tools and Resources for Practicing Asatru

To effectively practice Asatru, several tools and resources can be helpful:

- **Primary Texts:** Reading the Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, and sagas.
- **Community Forums:** Online platforms such as The Troth or Asatru Folk Assembly for discussion and support.
- **Workshops and Gatherings:** Festivals and local meetups provide immersive experiences.
- **Artifacts and Symbols:** Wearing Thor's hammer pendants or crafting runes for spiritual focus.

These resources assist both newcomers and experienced practitioners in deepening their connection to Asatru.

The journey of how to practice Asatru is as much about personal exploration as it is about honoring a collective heritage. Through rituals, ethical living, and community engagement, modern practitioners revive and adapt an ancient faith to meet their spiritual needs today. Whether approached as a cultural revival or a living religion, Asatru offers a rich framework for those drawn to the wisdom and power of Norse tradition.

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how to practice asatru: Asatru for Beginners Alfreda J. Anderson, 2023-03-07 Those who practice Asatru believe in a direct line of communication with the gods. Asatru adherents hold the gods exist and can be communicated with in a variety of ways, including rites, prayers, and offerings. Since the Norse pantheon contains many gods and goddesses, Asatru cannot be considered a monotheistic religion like Christianity. To differentiate themselves from other polytheistic religions, some Asatru adherents use the term Heathen. Asatru is a religion that emphasizes fellowship, with its adherents regularly coming together for worship, ceremonies, and communal meals. Asatru rituals differ from sect to sect, but they always involve some combination of praying to or offering gifts to the gods. The Asatruar, or members of the Asatru religion, observe holidays like Yule and Sigrblót. According to Asatru, honor is crucial. Respecting one's community and ancestors is a part of this. The Asatruar way of life emphasizes moral fortitude, self-reliance, and strength. Since they consider the natural world to be the home of the gods and goddesses, they try to live in peace with it. To an Asatruar, death is not the end, but a passage to a new world. Asatruar have faith that their ancestors will welcome them into Valhalla upon death, where they will wait for

Ragnarok. This book will provide you with an in-depth understanding of the following subjects: Origins and History of Asatru Core Beliefs of Asatru Practices of Asatru Norse Mythology The Nine Worlds The Aesir and Vanir God Holidays and Festivals Significance of afterlife Asatru in the Modern World Asatru and Heathenism And Much More! If you're ready to learn more about the Asatru religion, just scroll to the top of the page and click Buy Now.

how to practice asatru: Asatru Erin Lale, 2020-08-01 An introduction to the history, beliefs, rituals and deities of this popular Neo-Pagan belief drawn from ancient northern European traditions. Asatru is a modern Pagan tradition whose roots lie in the ancient myths, folklore, sagas, and historical artifacts of those who lived in pre-Christian times in what is now Iceland, Scandinavia, Scotland, Germany, and other parts of northern Europe. It is also one of the fastest growing religions in the United States and Europe. A clear and accessible introduction to this heathen religion, this book covers all the basics and answers the essential questions about Asatru. Key topics include: A brief exploration of Asatru's mythology The role of Asatru's gods and goddesses, rituals, magical practices of divination, spells, and berserkangr (a form of trance magic) The moral virtues of Asatru: courage, honor, loyalty, truth, hospitality, industriousness, self-discipline, self-reliance, and steadfastness A look at various interpretations of the Asatru tradition and the "hijacking" of its symbolism over the last two centuries Readers new to Asatru and experts alike will find this book to be an invaluable resource in understanding this heathen tradition.

how to practice asatru: Essential Asatru Diana L. Paxson, 2021-02-23 With a brand new foreword from the author and other updates, this classic guide to Norse mythology has been given a fresh look for a new generation of readers in the widespread Wiccan and Heathen communities, as well as fans of TV shows like Vikings and The Last Kingdom, the hit Marvel movies featuring Odin and Thor, and authors such as Neil Gaiman, Rick Riordan, and Joanne M. Harris who incorporate legends of the Norsemen and pagan lore into their novels. A journey to fulfillment and renewal. In Essential Asatru, renowned author and priestess Diana Paxson demystifies an ancient, rich, and often misunderstood religion, and offers a practical guide for its modern followers. Filled with clear, concise instructions on living Asatru every day, this truly accessible guide takes you on a journey from Asatru's origins in Scandinavian and German paganism through its acceptance as an official religion in the 1970s and its practice today. Essential Asatru also includes: A complete history of Asatru gods and goddesses, including Odin, Thor, and Ostara The life values, such as honor, truth, fidelity, and hospitality, that shape Asatru's tenets Indispensable information on rituals, rune casting, ethics, and divination Essential Asatru is an elegant and splendid introduction to a centuries-old religion that continues to enrich and fascinate its followers today.

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how to practice asatru: Norse Revival Stefanie von Schnurbein, 2016-01-12 Norse Revival offers a thorough investigation of Germanic Neopaganism (Asatru) through an international and comprehensive historical perspective. It traces Germanic Neopaganism's genesis in German ultra-nationalist and occultist movements around 1900. Based on ethnographic research of contemporary groups in Germany, Scandinavia and North America, the book examines this alternative Neopagan religion's transformations towards respectability and mainstream thought after the 1970s. It asks which regressive and progressive elements of a National Romantic discourse on Norse myth have shaped Germanic Neopaganism. It demonstrates how these ambiguous ideas about Nordic myth permeate general discourses on race, religion, gender, sexuality, and aesthetics. Ultimately, Norse Revival raises the question whether Norse mythology can be freed from its reactionary ideological baggage.

how to practice asatru: Asatru For Beginners Melissa Gomes, 2021-07-31 Everything You Need to Know to Start Practicing Asatru and Discovering the Magic of Norse Paganism, Viking Mythology and the Poetic Edda. Are you curious about Asatru, but don't know where to begin? Or maybe you want to learn more about the myths and legends surrounding our Northern Gods? Either

way, by the time you've finished this book, you will be well on your way to embracing the Viking Spirit and all it has to offer. Asatru is the religion of pre-Christian Northern European tribes, ancestors of modern Scandinavians and other Germanic peoples, who practiced it before the introduction of Christianity to Europe. Asatru is based on Norse paganism and mythology. It embraces a complex heathen worldview that includes the belief in several deities, concepts about death and the afterlife, an understanding of cosmology, and magic and runic beliefs. In *Asatru for Beginners*, best-selling author Melissa Gomes takes you on an enlightening and entertaining journey into Norse paganism. You will emerge from this guide with a solid footing in the basic principles of Asatru as a modern way of life. Melissa shares her own experience in discovering the Norse gods and goddesses, as well as ways to incorporate them into your everyday life. She provides a thorough introduction to mythology and its importance to Asatru, followed by an exploration of the magical practices that make up its core. Melissa's passion for the subject shines through every page of this book. Whether you have been studying Asatru for years or are just starting out, be prepared to learn something new! Yet, the true essence of Asatru and heathenry is within ourselves. It is how we live our lives - by following the virtues of honor, courage, and integrity daily. Our connection with those who have gone before us strengthens our bonds with each other as Heathens. The Asatru religion is an experiential one. Symbols are powerful, and how we use them can define us as a people and can shape our Pagan path: In *Asatru for Beginners*, you'll learn all you need to know to start working with the Norse gods and goddesses as a pagan, including:

- The origins of Asatru and Norse Paganism
- A brief history of Asatru or Heathenism in modern times, with an in-depth look at the modern Asatru movement
- Information on Norse cosmology, including the Nine Worlds of Yggdrasil and the cosmological significance of the sun and moon gods
- Details about each god and goddess in Norse Mythology
- How to honor and work with the Norse deities, including a list of recommended devotional practices
- The Nine Noble Virtues and how they can inform your life today and throughout everyday
- How to celebrate holidays, honor and work with ancestors
- How to perform Viking Magic by creating your own Blot and rituals

By the end of this guide, you will have a working knowledge of the Asatru and the lore and history surrounding it. However, there is no shortcut or easy way around studying Asatru. Indeed, discovering Asatru can truly become a lifelong journey, but *Asatru for Beginners* is an excellent first step along the way. Inside the book, you will also find three bonuses for you, go check them out! If you're ready to start exploring this religion for yourself, just scroll to the top of the page and hit the Buy button!

how to practice asatru: *Way of Fire and Ice* Ryan Smith, 2019-10-08 "Smith's simple guide will enchant any reader interested in Norse mythology and paganism." —Publishers Weekly A Radical New Take On Norse Paganism *The Way of Fire and Ice* reimagines Norse Paganism with mystical practices and rituals for today's world as well as tips for building community and resisting fascism. This approach to working with Norse deities and beliefs is a living, adaptable tradition, representing a strong alternative to the reconstructionist perspectives of Asatru and Heathenry. In these pages, the old ways come alive in a radically inclusive form. You will explore the secrets of the World Tree and the mysteries of the gods, work with the many spirits around us, and feel the deep rhythms that drive all life while creating new songs of power. You will also discover how to make these practices part of your every waking moment, developing your own personal spirituality and building healthy, sustainable communities along the way. "The Way of Fire and Ice offers a vision of an inclusive, welcoming, spiritually rich and socially responsible Norse Paganism. Written in a friendly, direct voice, this book presents a guided pathway for developing practice and community in this tradition." —Morpheus Ravenna, author of *The Book of the Great Queen: The Many Faces of the Morrigan From Ancient Legends to Modern Devotions* "The Way of Fire and Ice is Ryan Smith's magnum opus; a declaration of how we connect with the Gods while using that fire to transform our world." —Shane Burley, author of *Fascism Today: What It Is and How to End It*

how to practice asatru: *The Rune Primer* Sweyn Plowright, 2006-11-01 Sorting fact from fiction about runes has become increasingly difficult in recent years. The number of rune books has multiplied, but the majority of them are based on speculation, or even complete fantasy, and are

often contradictory and confusing. Some readers may be content to settle for these, but a growing number of rune students have been asking for a basic factual foundation so that they can judge for themselves the reliability of the information in the esoteric rune books. The Rune Primer at last bridges the gap between the dry, complex, and expensive academic works, and the less reliable esoteric and New Age books about rune magic and divination. This book makes the old sources accessible, with translations of the rune poems, and the historical information presented in plain English. It also traces many of the recently invented rune myths to their sources, reviews some of the most popular authors, and explains the ideas behind some of the modern esoteric rune systems.

how to practice asatru: Between the Worlds Siân Lee MacDonald Reid, 2006 Neopaganism is the fastest growing new religion in the West. *Between the World: Readings in Contemporary Neopaganism* provides an engaging and well-rounded introduction to this often misunderstood spiritual tradition. This provocative new volume breaks away from the negative doomsday cult focus of existing books on new religious movements and provides a clear focus on feminist spirituality, women and religion, and goddess worship. It offers a spiritual context for paganism and introduces the language of paganism and earth religions. This book examines contemporary paganism - not just the streams from the 1970s and 1980s, but also the increasingly important streams of Druidry and Heathenry. For the first time ever, this book unites essential readings by leading academics and well-known practitioners from all over the world, including Canada. It features the work of Starhawk, Ronald Hutton, Michael York, Graham Harvey, Helen A. Berger, and Wendy Griffith, alongside contemporary Canadian scholars including Lucie Marie-Mai DuFresne, Lori G. Beaman, and Barbara Jane Davy.

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purposes in every century that followed. The Devil's Historians casts aside the myth of an oppressive, patriarchal medieval monoculture and reveals a medieval world not often shown in popular culture: one that is diverse, thriving, courageous, compelling, and complex.

how to practice asatru: The Viking Age Angus A. Somerville, R. Andrew McDonald, 2025-02-28 The fourth edition of *The Viking Age* provides an extensive deep dive into the world of the Vikings, spanning from the eighth and ninth centuries to the present, while also featuring key scholarly interpretations from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Building on the structure and content of previous editions, nearly every chapter has been reworked and expanded, with the addition of an entirely new chapter on commerce and trade. This edition broadens the range of materials while preserving the innovations of earlier editions and advancing them in new directions. In *The Viking Age*, readers are submerged in a comprehensive exploration of the Viking era, covering essential topics such as the role of women in Viking society, the significance of slavery in the Viking economy, commerce and trade, the use of Arabic sources, Viking religion, fertility gods, guardian spirits, the exploits of the Norse kings of Man and the Isles, the importance of Scandinavian and maritime law, the enduring legacy of the Vikings, and more. This extensively revised edition ultimately brings the Vikings and their world to life for twenty-first-century students and instructors.

how to practice asatru: Religion and American Cultures Gary Laderman, Luis León, 2014-12-17 This four-volume work provides a detailed, multicultural survey of established as well as new American religions and investigates the fascinating interactions between religion and ethnicity, gender, politics, regionalism, ethics, and popular culture. This revised and expanded edition of *Religion and American Cultures: Tradition, Diversity, and Popular Expression* presents more than 140 essays that address contemporary spiritual practice and culture with a historical perspective. The entries cover virtually every religion in modern-day America as well as the role of religion in various aspects of U.S. culture. Readers will discover that Americans aren't largely Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish anymore, and that the number of popular religious identities is far greater than many would imagine. And although most Americans believe in a higher power, the fastest growing identity in the United States is the nones—those Americans who elect none when asked about their religious identity—thereby demonstrating how many individuals see their spirituality as something not easily defined or categorized. The first volume explores America's multicultural communities and their religious practices, covering the range of different religions among Anglo-Americans and Euro-Americans as well as spirituality among Latino, African American, Native American, and Asian American communities. The second volume focuses on cultural aspects of religions, addressing topics such as film, Generation X, public sacred spaces, sexuality, and new religious expressions. The new third volume expands the range of topics covered with in-depth essays on additional topics such as interfaith families, religion in prisons, belief in the paranormal, and religion after September 11, 2001. The fourth volume is devoted to complementary primary source documents.

how to practice asatru: Radical Religion in America Jeffrey Kaplan, 1997-01-01 The burning in Waco of the Branch Davidian compound and the Oklahoma City bombing have heightened fear of American extremist groups. Jeffrey Kaplan combines interviews, correspondence, and publications not hitherto accessible to examine the cultic milieu in which these religious movements exist. Kaplan discusses several radical belief systems, but concentrates on three of the more prominent groups. They include the Christian Identity, whose members believe they are the true Aryan descendants of Israeli biblical tribes; Odinism and the related Asatru movement, which attempts to reconstruct the practices of Norse-Germanic paganism; and B'bai Noah, the anti-Christian movement in favor of God's covenant with Noah. To explain the existence and durability of religious cults, he applies the philosophy of Colin Campbell. From Martin Marty, he employs the mapping theory to place the movements in the sphere of American spirituality. His work details how the groups interact, the internal organizational friction, and how the private anti-cult groups—the Anti-Defamation League, Klanwatch, and Cult Awareness Network—monitor the activity of the movements. He argues that right-wing violence is primarily an impulsive act carried out by part-time revolutionaries against

convenient targets or against that which represents change in the status quo. Thought provoking in his analysis, Kaplan lays bare the issues for current debate—how sectarian organizations, far outside the mainstream of American religious life, pose a significant challenge to prevailing conceptions of the First Amendment. He questions the extent to which even the most antagonistic and despised groups can carry out fanatical actions and still benefit from such protection.

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