

Introducing myself.

My spiritual path has been varied.

I started with Church of England- Sunday School teacher, bell ringer, regular member of the church.

In college I moved into a born again missionary group, and even took part in a street theatre group in Switzerland- spreading the word about the word of Jesus. I became disillusioned that my questions were seen as a sign of weakness (and sin) and found I became quite uncomfortable with the ethos around "Jesus weeps that you would question"

I stumbled into Paganism, Druidry, Tarot. But I wanted one thing, and one thing only. A personal teacher. One person who would allow me to question, question, question.

I found him (Shaun) on holiday in Orkney. My first husband and I were visiting him as my husband wanted to learn marital arts with him. I never expected to be drawn to the Norse pantheon, and maybe it was more Shaun than anything. Here was a teacher who expected me to question - everything- and never saw it as a bad sign.

I moved to Orkney a few months later, in the Christmas of 1999, and spent 18 months learning Rune-lore, martial arts, and loka-seidr with Shaun. Since then my life has been lived based on the principles and understanding of the runes.

This course is being created month in, month out as I deep dive into all the runes myself on a very personal level.

You won't find any absolutes here- rather an emporium of information, tools, concepts, and personal reflections.

My style has may change over the months. Partly that's me, more that's the energy of the rune expressing itself.

This is an insight into my brain- expect it it be messy at points!

Training in Orkney with Shaun- that's me in the green, with another brave soul visiting for a week!



Why the Younger Futhark?

The Germanic tribes stopped using the Elder futhark prior to the Viking age, and all our information for these runes has been reconstructed.

The Younger Futhark runes are the gateway to Norse wisdom, with traditional names in Old Norse and clear sources for their wisdom.

So what is Stav?

That is actually such a big question- I always struggle when asked!

Stav is a way of understanding the world using the 16 runes of the Younger Futhark.

Stav can be a martial art, healing tradition, life philosophy, basis for craft work, shamanic path..... and so much more.

And yet Stav is not defined by any one of those applications, and many people are deeply involved in Stav with out following all of those paths.

So- what is Stav?

Basically it is the family wisdom tradition of Ivar Hafskjold which since the 1980's has been taught and practised outside of his family lineage.



The core basics of the tradition are the 16 runes of the younger futhark- but we do not see them as lines on a piece of paper.

Rather we make the shape of the runes with our bodies in a meditative movement we refer to as the stances.

The breath is deepened and matches the movement, attention is turned inward.

This allows us to experience the energies of the runes, and integrate them into our lives using which ever path most calls us.

In time as the stances become learned there are chants that can be added- depending on whether you are chanting for health, spiritual connection, or martial training.

I share an article written by Ivar Hafskjold which explains it far better than my stumbling words;

The Stances

"The stances are the most important part of Stav. Even if that is the only thing you do, you will gradually reach a deep understanding of what Stav is about. But in order to reap the benefits, one has to be constant! It will take at least three years of daily practice for the average person before changes in one's life will start to manifest themselves. The body will start to be able to move in a wider range, and co-ordination between mind and body will improve markedly. The deep breathing will strengthen the abdominal muscles that keep the spine in a correct position, thus eliminating a lot of the back problems that plague modern man. The sound of the breathing will also put you into a meditative state where life's everyday problems are no longer seen as such.

The stances are also the basis of all other aspects of Stav, whether that is healing, crafts or martial arts. But they must never be done lightly or rushed through. After a number of years of persistent training, they will eventually be felt to be the highlight of the day, which will give immense pleasure, instead of being seen as a chore. When one reaches this level, there is no longer any difference between the mind when one does the stances, and the everyday mind.

If possible, the stances should be done outside, in a dedicated area that will gradually turn into a Ve – a sacred place. This will become a focus point for the mind, and for the spiritual forces that have many names in many cultures, but are known in the North as the "landvetter" or spirits of the land. These can also include ancestral spirits, and thus performing the stances will eventually take on the aspect of an offering and a joining of the past, the present and the future."

Written by Ivar Hafskjold at Heimbu the 26th of June 2009

All of my shamanic practice is based on Stav- even though I have clear Druid & Peruvian influences as well. I don't "do" Stav, I am Stav.

Personally I am not able to teach the martial side of stav (though if that interests you I can certainly recommend some great teachers). I can teach the stances, and signpost you to videos as well.

Rune readings

A classical rune reading is based on the three Norns and the understanding of past/present/future.

In Norse mythology there are the three Norns, often considered as “weavers of fate” (not specifically accurate, but it gives a good idea).

They roughly translate into Urd (crone/past), Verdandi (mother/present) and Skuld (maiden/future).

The Norns gather at a well, and the well itself can be seen as a personification of the Norns.



The well water, reaching deep into the earth, is Urd.

Urd represents **all that has happened up to this point**. Acknowledging that by understanding the past we can appreciate what has created/shaped the present moment. And significantly by understanding the past we can have a good sense of how the future is likely to unfold. There is genuine wisdom to be found in having a good understanding of past situations.

Verdandi represents the present moment. Such a fleeting concept, yet oddly ever present.

The name Verdandi is linked to the concept of “becoming”, our future is always there one step away, yet our true power always lives in making the best of the present moment.

In the well analogy **Verdandi is the surface of the water.** That strange space that is defined by both water and air. Just as the present moment is ever caught between the past and the future.

Skuld represents the future, but in a very specific way. Her name is often translated as “debt”, but that can have a negative connotation- so I prefer the word consequences. It is a reminder that our future is shaped not only by our past, but how we use each and every present moment. How we live today will bear consequences for tomorrow.

In our well analogy **Skuld is the water vapour arising off the well.** Will that water vapour form mist, or clouds, hail, rain, or snow? Will it destroy a crop, or bring the end to a drought? We can catch a feeling for the future, but it is still mutable, as yet unformed.

And so we can say that in a rune reading the three runes represent past/present/future, though understanding the Norns adds so much depth to this simple concept.

Patrons & Power animals

In Stav there is a very specific concept about Patrons (similar to spirit guides/power animals).

You have two Patrons, that are true reflections of your soul in this lifetime, and really do help you to fully understand yourself and reach your full potential.

Each Patron will be a Norse deity found within the 16 runes of the younger futhark, and many people take a while to truly connect with their Patrons.

There are many other spirit guides we can work with:

Allies- we have a close working relationship with them, it often feels like family or a good friend (for me this is Frey)

Teaching guides -they are there to support our growth, can be antagonistic or friendly depending on the circumstances (Odin for me much of the time)

Ancestral - they are a part of our heritage, and shape us to a degree, but don't always "feel" like us. (Ull and Njord for me)

Your two Patrons traditionally reflect the two sides of you:

Ljos- the side others see, and you are more comfortable with (light)

Murk- your shadow side, perhaps the side of you that you are less comfortable with, or move into under stress or difficulty.

You find your Patrons by:

Shamanic work, specifically a journey to your tree, where you hear a noise, turn around, and see an animal representation of your Patron.

"Sitting out" heading out to nature to "be" for three days, and three nights. I would not suggest anyone attempt this with out having made sure they are medically and psychologically fit to do so.

Personal connections with the deity/animal. Oddities that bring them to your attention in daily life.

General shamanic work, and a growing awareness there is a deep relationship there.

Other people commenting on the connection.

This is deep soul work, and a part of truly knowing yourself. Take your time, allow it to grow, It took me 17 years of deep searching to find my murk Patron!

In Shamanic journeys you never allow your Patron to be defined by one journey, it needs at least three, and it has to feel right.

[How this course came about..](#)

I'd been holding my group sessions in the Barns for about seven years, gently diving deeper and deeper into the runes. Then one October, in our weekend retreat, I wrote the 16 runes of the Younger Futhark on bits of paper and we looked at which ones we work with, and those we perhaps were less familiar with.

It was no surprise that the runes I love were very familiar to all- Odin, Freya, Njord, Hel and my favourite Loki. There were some that were known but not that well- Frigg, Jord, Ull, Vidar. There was one that I had consciously avoided- Heimdall, always a blind spot for me. And curiously my favourite rune was almost unworked with by my students- Frey.

My co-host for the weekend looked at our rune montage (Heimdall was on the floor, not the table as we work with him so little). His main surprise was the lack of connection with Frey. I think one of my students said something like "Oh Maddy keeps that rune for herself" What was actually happening was once the students were settled in their journey I would scoot off and chat to Frey- so I kind of thought "we" were working with him, but it was only me.

This was the start of our deep and focused "Rune-a-Month".

Each month I deep dive into a rune;

- 2 sessions at the barns (lokk-seidr)
- A recorded lokk-seidr journey.
- An emailed pdf of notes.
- An hours discussion by Zoom

This is deep, life changing work held in a close community space.

And I am loving where it is taking me.