JUSTIFYING THE MODERN PRACTICE OF RECIPROCITY WITH HEL

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MANY DEATH GODS

- NORDR
- FREYR
- ODIN
- FREJA
- RAN
- THOR
- SINDRI
- VARIOUS OTHERS
HEL’S CONTROVERSIAL REPUTATION

- REFERENCED AS EVIL
- DAUGHTER OF LOKI
- CAST OUT OF ASGARD
- ARMY OF THE DEAD AT RAGNAROK
- SISTER OF JORMUNGANDR AND FENRIR
- REPUTED AS QUEEN OF DEVILS AND CAST AS A DEMON
HEL’S CONTROVERSIAL REPUTATION

- May have never been worshipped
- Later Christian personification of death
- Could be a fabrication
- Controversial among reconstructionists
PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM

- RECONSTRUCTION AS A HISTORICAL PROCESS
- THOSE IN THE PAST GAINED CONNECTION
- WE SEEK TO IMITATE THAT CONNECTION
- WHAT WE BUILD WILL NOT BE THE SAME
- UNSOLVABLE PUZZLES OF HISTORY AND SPIRITUALITY
WHO IS HEL?

- HEL AS A DEVOURER?
  - VILLAIN?
- HEL IS GIVEN RULERSHIP
- DEATH AS A PRIMARY ASSOCIATION
- NORÐR AND RAN MAY BE GUIDES
- STORY OF BALDR
- SAXO’S BALDR
- ASSOCIATIONS WITH HELHEIM AND NASTROND
- HADING’S GUIDE
- MULTIPLE DEATH MATRONS?
POSSIBLE EVIDENCE OF HEL WORSHIP

- I4RV

- I24RV
LATER MENTIONS OF HEL

- REFERENCED IN CHRISTIAN SOURCES
- SAGA OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEOEW
- OLD ENGLISH GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS – “SHE-HELL”
- DEATH GODS AND MEDIA TREATMENT
- SAGA ASSOCIATIONS WITH AFTERLIFE AND SACRED SITES
- EGIL’S SAGA AND DISTANCE
RECIPROCITY WITH DEATH

- RECIPROCITY WITH A DEATH DEITY AND BRINGING DEATH INTO YOUR LIFE
- RECIPROCITY WITH THE CARETAKER
- SAGA OF FRITHJOF THE BOLD AND RECIPROCITY WITH RAN
- LETTER OF SIDONIUS
- BUILDING A JUSTIFIED RECIPROCITY WITH HEL
Today we gather to honor a deity often ignored. Sometimes out of fear, sometimes because so little is known of her. She is a hidden goddess. Mysterious both in myth and history. There are no placenames for her, no idols, or known temples, and yet she is the one that greets our ancestors after death, welcoming them to her great hall, seeing to it that they are cared for. This is Hel, Goddess of Death, who we invite here today.

It is presumed that there are no placenames for Hel so as not to invite death into the lives of those who live there. So, for this ritual, we come before her with masks. We give her honor as the caretaker of our ancestors, but we recognize her power.

Let us hallow this space, and banish all ill wights from among us.
May the Gods guide us,
May our oaths keep us,
May our deeds free us,
May our ancestors aid us always.
May the gods banish from this land and wood all evil and wrong,
Hallow this place, shield this area from all baneful wights,
Let the gods' blessing be over our heads! (Light central fire)

There are many stories of Hel's realm,
of people who traveled there.
Hading was once guided there,
By a mysterious woman bearing herbs in winter.

The mysterious woman guided him,
through dark clouds and a long, worn road,
through a grand battle, eternally raging
through beautiful fields of herbs to deaths walls,
where she wrung off the head of a rooster
and flung him over the walls of Helheim
the bird came to life, testified by a loud crow.
There are many stories of Hel’s realm.
of people who traveled there.
Thorstein had fared out to fish with his men
A great bounty to seek for his family

But on the evening his shepherd saw his father’s sacred mountain
open wide on the north side.
inside he could see mighty fires,
and could hear a great clamor within
with the clank of drinking horns
He struggled to get closer, that he might hear their words,
He caught the words of welcome to Thorstein and his crew
and heard them bid Thorstein sit in the high seat by his father.
Hel, Goddess of the Dead, we hear these stories of old. Only hints of your realm we hear, A land without death, A land forever green and growing, A land of celebration and love, A land at the end of a difficult road.

This is the place you have prepared for our ancestors. Hail, and welcome to thee, Hel, Goddess of the Dead.
The Hidden Goddess, Hail!

All: Hail!
Maiden of Helheim, Hail!
All: Hail!
Grave Guardian, Hail!
All: Hail!
Walker Between Worlds, Hail!
All: Hail!
Matron of the Dead, Hail!
All: Hail!
She who is Death and Life, Hail!
All: Hail!
The Lady in Blue, Hail!
All: Hail!
Goddess who Rules Entombed, Hail!
All: Hail!
To our ancestors in Hel's care, Hail!
All: Hail!
Those souls who went before us, Hail!
All: Hail!
Hail to the ancestors!
All: Hail!
Hel, we have brought for you gifts to you and the dead. Memories, words of closure, or a message of thanks, spoken or written, offered before the fire. These we sacrifice to you, in thanks for your care of the dead.

Interactive / In Person: If you wish to speak, you may, if you wish to stay silent, you may. If you have any additional gift, you may add it to the fire.

Led Ritual / Digital: As offerings are given, we offer a gift of silence for our loved ones who have passed. If you have any additional gift, you may add it to the fire.

(Offerings are given, horn is passed)

Hel, we wish for you to accept these messages as our sacrifice and thanks to you. Please carry them to our ancestors and loved ones in your care, and may they help you better know those who are there.

(Pour dregs of horn into offering bowl)
There will be no blessings today, for the same reason there are no placenames. Hel is unique among the gods, and the time to receive her blessing is in death. Hel waits on the ness, but we stand resolute, and face our lives with courage. Only the Norns know the time we will meet the one who rules entombed, our lady in blue.
From the gods, to the earth, to us.
From us, to the earth, to the gods.
A gift has been given.
So let it be.

To a land without death,
A land forever green and growing,
A land of celebration and love,
A land at the end of a difficult road.

Hel, Hidden Goddess, Matron of the Dead, hail and farewell.

ALL: Hail!

May the gods depart, friends, blot has ended.
Let us all feast and celebrate our ancestors,
Who will one day greet us as well!
QUESTIONS?