

## **The Ynglinga Saga,**

Heimskringla or The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway  
The Story of the Yngling Family from Odin to Halfdan the Black

### OF THE SITUATION OF COUNTRIES.

It is said that the earth's circle which the human race inhabits is torn across into many bights, so that great seas run into the land from the out-ocean. Thus it is known that a great sea goes in at Narvesund and up to the land of Jerusalem. From the same sea a long sea-bight stretches towards the north-east, and is called the Black Sea, and divides the three parts of the earth; of which the eastern part is called Asia, and the western is called by some Europa, by some Enea. Northward of the Black Sea lies Swithiod the Great, or the Cold. The Great Swithiod is reckoned by some as not less than the Great Serkland; others compare it to the Great Blueland. The northern part of Swithiod lies uninhabited on account of frost and cold, as likewise the southern parts of Blueland are waste from the burning of the sun. In Swithiod are many great domains, and many races of men, and many kinds of languages. There are giants, and there are dwarfs, and there are also blue men, and there are any kinds of stranger creatures. There are huge wild beasts, and dreadful dragons. On the south side of the mountains which lie outside of all inhabited lands runs a river through Swithiod, which is properly called by the name of Tanais, but was formerly called Tanaquisl, or Vanaquisl, and which falls into the Black Sea. The country of the people on the Vanaquisl was called Vanaland, or Vanaheim; and the river separates the three parts of the world, of which the eastern most part is called Asia, and the western most Europe.

### OF THE PEOPLE OF ASIA.

The country east of the Tanaquisl in Asia was called Asaland, or Asaheim, and the chief city in that land was called Asgaard. In that city was a chief called Odin, and it was a great place for sacrifice. It was the custom there that twelve temple priests should both direct the sacrifices, and also judge the people. They were called Diar, or Drotner, and all the people served and obeyed them. Odin was a great and very far-travelled warrior, who conquered many kingdoms, and so successful was he that in every battle the victory was on his side. It was the belief of his people that victory belonged to him in every battle. It

was his custom when he sent his men into battle, or on any expedition, that he first laid his hand upon their heads, and called down a blessing upon them; and then they believed their undertaking would be successful. His people also were accustomed, whenever they fell into danger by land or sea, to call upon his name; and they thought that always they got comfort and aid by it, for where he was they thought help was near. Often he went away so far that he passed many seasons on his journeys.

#### OF ODIN'S BROTHERS.

Odin had two brothers, the one called Ve, the other Vilje, and they governed the kingdom when he was absent. It happened once when Odin had gone to a great distance, and had been so long away that the people Of Asia doubted if he would ever return home, that his two brothers took it upon themselves to divide his estate; but both of them took his wife Frigg to themselves. Odin soon after returned home, and took his wife back.

#### OF ODIN'S WAR WITH THE PEOPLE OF VANALAND.

Odin went out with a great army against the Vanaland people; but they were well prepared, and defended their land; so that victory was changeable, and they ravaged the lands of each other, and did great damage. They tired of this at last, and on both sides appointed a meeting for establishing peace, made a truce, and exchanged hostages. The Vanaland people sent their best men, Njord the Rich, and his son Frey. The people of Asaland sent a man called Hone, whom they thought well suited to be a chief, as he was a stout and very handsome man; and with him they sent a man of great understanding called Mime. On the other side, the Vanaland people sent the wisest man in their community, who was called Kvase. Now, when Hone came to Vanaheim he was immediately made a chief, and Mime came to him with good counsel on all occasions. But when Hone stood in the Things or other meetings, if Mime was not near him, and any difficult matter was laid before him, he always answered in one way -- "Now let others give their advice"; so that the Vanaland people got a suspicion that the Asaland people had deceived them in the exchange of men. They took Mime, therefore, and beheaded him, and sent his head to the Asaland people. Odin took the head, smeared it with herbs so that it should not rot, and sang incantations over it. Thereby he gave it the power that it spoke to him, and discovered to him many secrets. Odin placed Njord and Frey as priests of the sacrifices, and they became Diar of the Asaland people. Njord's daughter Freya was priestess of the sacrifices, and first taught the Asaland people the magic art, as it was in use and fashion among the Vanaland people. While Njord was with the Vanaland

people he had taken his own sister in marriage, for that was allowed by their law; and their children were Frey and Freya. But among the Asaland people it was forbidden to intermarry with such near relations.

#### ODIN DIVIDES HIS KINGDOM: ALSO CONCERNING GEFION.

There goes a great mountain barrier from north-east to south-west, which divides the Greater Swithiod from other kingdoms. South of this mountain ridge it is not far to Turkland, where Odin had great possessions. In those times the Roman chiefs went wide around in the world, subduing to themselves all people; and on this account many chiefs fled from their domains. But Odin having foreknowledge, and magic-sight, knew that his posterity would come to settle and dwell in the northern half of the world. He therefore set his brothers Ve and Vilje over Asgaard; and he himself, with all the gods and a great many other people, wandered out, first westward to Gardarike, and then south to Saxland. He had many sons; and after having subdued an extensive kingdom in Saxland, he set his sons to rule the country. He himself went northwards to the sea, and took up his abode in an island which is called Odins in Fyen. Then he sent Gefion across the sound to the north to discover new countries; and she came to King Gylve, who gave her a ploughgate of land. Then she went to Jotunheim, and bore four sons to a giant, and transformed them into a yoke of oxen. She yoked them to a plough, and broke out the land into the ocean right opposite to Odins. This land was called Sealand, and there she afterwards settled and dwelt. Skjold, a son of Odin, married her, and they dwelt at Leidre. Where the ploughed land was is a lake or sea called Laage. In the Swedish land the fjords of Laage correspond to the nesses in Sealand. Brage the Old sings thus of it: --

"Gefion from Gylve drove away,

To add new land to Denmark's sway --

Blythe Gefion ploughing in the smoke

That steamed up from her oxen-yoke:

Four heads, eight forehead stars had they,

Bright gleaming, as she ploughed away;

Dragging new lands from the deep main

To join them to the sweet isle's plain.

Now when Odin heard that things were in a prosperous condition in the land to the east beside Gylve; he went thither, and Gylve made a peace with him, for Gylve thought he had

no strength to oppose the people of Asaland. Odin and Gylve had many tricks and enchantments against each other; but the Asaland people had always the superiority. Odin took up his residence at the Maelare lake, at the place now called Old Sigtun. There he erected a large temple, where there were sacrifices according to the customs of the Asaland people. He appropriated to himself the whole of that district, and called it Sigtun. To the temple priests he gave also domains. Njord dwelt in Noatun, Frey in Upsal, Heimdal in the Himinbergs, Thor in Thrudvang, Balder in Breidablik; to all of them he gave good estates.

#### OF ODIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

When Odin of Asaland came to the north, and the Diar with him, they introduced and taught to others the arts which the people long afterwards have practised. Odin was the cleverest of all, and from him all the others learned their arts and accomplishments; and he knew them first, and knew many more than other people. But now, to tell why he is held in such high respect, we must mention various causes that contributed to it. When sitting among his friends his countenance was so beautiful and dignified, that the spirits of all were exhilarated by it, but when he was in war he appeared dreadful to his foes. This arose from his being able to change his skin and form in any way he liked. Another cause was, that he conversed so cleverly and smoothly, that all who heard believed him. He spoke everything in rhyme, such as now composed, which we call scald-craft. He and his temple priests were called song-smiths, for from them came that art of song into the northern countries. Odin could make his enemies in battle blind, or deaf, or terror-struck, and their weapons so blunt that they could no more but than a willow wand; on the other hand, his men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, but neither fire nor iron told upon themselves. These were called Berserker.

#### OF ODIN'S FEATS.

Odin could transform his shape: his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in shape of a fish, or worm, or bird, or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands upon his own or other people's business. With words alone he could quench fire, still the ocean in tempest, and turn the wind to any quarter he pleased. Odin had a ship which was called Skidbladnir, in which he sailed over wide seas, and which he could roll up like a cloth. Odin carried with him Mime's head, which told him all the news of other countries. Sometimes even he called the dead out of the earth, or set himself beside the

burial-mounds; whence he was called the ghost-sovereign, and lord of the mounds. He had two ravens, to whom he had taught the speech of man; and they flew far and wide through the land, and brought him the news. In all such things he was pre-eminently wise. He taught all these arts in Runes, and songs which are called incantations, and therefore the Asaland people are called incantation-smiths. Odin understood also the art in which the greatest power is lodged, and which he himself practised; namely, what is called magic. By means of this he could know beforehand the predestined fate of men, or their not yet completed lot; and also bring on the death, ill-luck, or bad health of people, and take the strength or wit from one person and give it to another. But after such witchcraft followed such weakness and anxiety, that it was not thought respectable for men to practise it; and therefore the priestesses were brought up in this art. Odin knew finely where all missing cattle were concealed under the earth, and understood the songs by which the earth, the hills, the stones, and mounds were opened to him; and he bound those who dwell in them by the power of his word, and went in and took what he pleased. From these arts he became very celebrated. His enemies dreaded him; his friends put their trust in him, and relied on his power and on himself. He taught the most of his arts to his priests of the sacrifices, and they came nearest to himself in all wisdom and witch-knowledge. Many others, however, occupied themselves much with it; and from that time witchcraft spread far and wide, and continued long. People sacrificed to Odin and the twelve chiefs from Asaland, and called them their gods, and believed in them long after. From Odin's name came the name Audun, which people gave to his sons; and from Thor's name comes Thore, also Thorarinn; and also it is sometimes compounded with other names, as Steenthor, or Havthor, or even altered in other ways.

#### ODIN'S LAWGIVING.

Odin established the same law in his land that had been in force in Asaland. Thus he established by law that all dead men should be burned, and their belongings laid with them upon the pile, and the ashes be cast into the sea or buried in the earth. Thus, said he, every one will come to Valhalla with the riches he had with him upon the pile; and he would also enjoy whatever he himself had buried in the earth. For men of consequence a mound should be raised to their memory, and for all other warriors who had been distinguished for manhood a standing stone; which custom remained long after Odin's time. On winter day there should be blood-sacrifice for a good year, and in the middle of winter for a good crop; and the third sacrifice should be on summer day, for victory in battle. Over all Swithiod the people paid Odin a scatt or tax -- so much on each head; but

he had to defend the country from enemy or disturbance, and pay the expense of the sacrifice feasts for a good year.

#### OF NJORD'S MARRIAGE.

Njord took a wife called Skade; but she would not live with him and married afterwards Odin, and had many sons by him, of whom one was called Saeming; and about him Eyvind Skaldaspiller sings thus: --

"To Asa's son Queen Skade bore  
Saeming, who dyed his shield in gore, --  
The giant-queen of rock and snow,  
Who loves to dwell on earth below,  
The iron pine-tree's daughter, she  
Sprung from the rocks that rib the sea,  
To Odin bore full many a son,  
Heroes of many a battle won."

To Saeming Earl Hakon the Great reckoned back his pedigree. This Swithiod they called Mannheim, but the Great Swithiod they called Godheim; and of Godheim great wonders and novelties were related.

#### OF ODIN'S DEATH.

Odin died in his bed in Swithiod; and when he was near his death he made himself be marked with the point of a spear, and said he was going to Godheim, and would give a welcome there to all his friends, and all brave warriors should be dedicated to him; and the Swedes believed that he was gone to the ancient Asgaard, and would live there eternally. Then began the belief in Odin, and the calling upon him. The Swedes believed that he often showed to them before any great battle. To some he gave victory; others he invited to himself; and they reckoned both of these to be fortunate. Odin was burnt, and at his pile there was great splendour. It was their faith that the higher the smoke arose in the air, the higher he would be raised whose pile it was; and the richer he would be, the more property that was consumed with him.

#### OF NJORD.

Njord of Noatun was then the sole sovereign of the Swedes; and he continued the

sacrifices, and was called the drot or sovereign by the Swedes, and he received scatt and gifts from them. In his days were peace and plenty, and such good years, in all respects, that the Swedes believed Njord ruled over the growth of seasons and the prosperity of the people. In his time all the diar or gods died, and blood-sacrifices were made for them. Njord died on a bed of sickness, and before he died made himself be marked for Odin with the spear-point. The Swedes burned him, and all wept over his grave-mound.

#### FREY'S DEATH.

Frey took the kingdom after Njord, and was called drot by the Swedes, and they paid taxes to him. He was, like his father, fortunate in friends and in good seasons. Frey built a great temple at Upsal, made it his chief seat, and gave it all his taxes, his land, and goods. Then began the Upsal domains, which have remained ever since. Then began in his days the Frode- peace; and then there were good seasons, in all the land, which the Swedes ascribed to Frey, so that he was more worshipped than the other gods, as the people became much richer in his days by reason of the peace and good seasons. His wife was called Gerd, daughter of Gymis, and their son was called Fjolne. Frey was called by another name, Yngve; and this name Yngve was considered long after in his race as a name of honour, so that his descendants have since been called Ynglinger. Frey fell into a sickness; and as his illness took the upper hand, his men took the plan of letting few approach him. In the meantime they raised a great mound, in which they placed a door with three holes in it. Now when Frey died they bore him secretly into the mound, but told the Swedes he was alive; and they kept watch over him for three years. They brought all the taxes into the mound, and through the one hole they put in the gold, through the other the silver, and through the third the copper money that was paid. Peace and good seasons continued.

#### OF FREYA AND HER DAUGHTERS.

Freya alone remained of the gods, and she became on this account so celebrated that all women of distinction were called by her name, whence they now have the title Frue; so that every woman is called frue, or mistress over her property, and the wife is called the house-frue. Freya continued the blood-sacrifices. Freya had also many other names. Her husband was called Oder, and her daughters Hnoss and Gerseme. They were so very beautiful, that afterwards the most precious jewels were called by their names.

When it became known to the Swedes that Frey was dead, and yet peace and good seasons continued, they believed that it must be so as long as Frey remained in Sweden;

and therefore they would not burn his remains, but called him the god of this world, and afterwards offered continually blood-sacrifices to him, principally for peace and good seasons.

**Ed Ahmad Ibn Fadlan** wrote in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but I enclose his description of Vikings? on the Volga because it seems to be the earliest description there is.

**Ahmad ibn Fadlan** and the Rusiyyah. ( translated by James E. Montgomery)

I saw the Rūsiyyah when they had arrived on their trading expedition and had disembarked at the River Ātil. I have never seen more perfect physiques than theirs—they are like palm trees are fair and reddish, and do not wear the *qurṭaq* or the caftan. The man wears a cloak with which he covers one half of his body, leaving one of his arms uncovered. Every one of them carries an axe, a sword and a dagger and is never without all of that which we have mentioned. Their swords are of the Frankish variety, with broad, ridged blades. Each man, from the tip of his toes to his neck, is covered in dark-green lines, pictures and such like. Each woman has, on her breast, a small disc, tied <around her neck>, made of either iron, silver, copper or gold, in relation to her husband's financial and social worth. Each disc has a ring to which a dagger is attached, also lying on her breast. Around their necks they wear bands of gold and silver. Whenever a man's wealth reaches ten thousand dirhams, he has a band made for his wife; if it reaches twenty thousand dirhams, he has two bands made for her—for every ten thousand more, he gives another band to his wife. Sometimes one woman may wear many bands around her neck. The jewellery which they prize the most is the dark-green ceramic beads which they have aboard their boats and which they value very highly: they purchase beads for a dirham a piece and string them together as necklaces for their wives.

They are the filthiest of all Allāh's creatures: they do not clean themselves after excreting or urinating or wash themselves when in a state of ritual impurity (i.e., after coitus) and do not <even> wash their hands after food. Indeed they are like asses that roam <in the fields>.

They arrive from their territory (*min baladi-him*) and moor their boats by the Ātil (a large river), building on its banks large wooden houses. They gather in the one house in their tens and twenties, sometimes more, sometimes less. Each of them has a couch on which he sits. They are accompanied by beautiful slave girls for trading. One man will have intercourse with his slave-girl while his companion looks on. Sometimes a group of them



comes together to do this, each in front of the other. Sometimes indeed the merchant will come in to buy a slave-girl from one of them and he will chance upon him having intercourse with her, but <the Rūs> will not leave her alone until he has satisfied his urge. They cannot, of course, avoid washing their faces and their heads each day, which they do with the filthiest and most polluted water imaginable. I shall explain. Every day the slave-girl arrives in the morning with a large basin containing water, which she hands to her owner. He washes his hands and his face and his hair in the water, then he dips his comb in the water and brushes his hair, blows his nose and spits in the basin. There is no filthy impurity which he will not do in this water. When he no longer requires it, the slave-girl takes the basin to the man beside him and he goes through the same routine as his friend. She continues to carry it from one man to the next until she has gone round everyone in the house, with each of them blowing his nose and spitting, washing his face and hair in the basin.

The moment their boats reach this dock every one of them disembarks, carrying bread, meat, onions, milk and alcohol (*nabīdh*), and goes to a tall piece of wood set up <in the ground>. This piece of wood has a face like the face of a man and is surrounded by small figurines behind which are long pieces of wood set up in the ground. <When> he reaches the large figure, he prostrates himself before it and says, "Lord, I have come from a distant land, bringing so many slave-girls <priced at> such and such per head and so many sables <priced at> such and such per pelt." He continues until he has mentioned all of the merchandise he has brought with him, then says, "And I have brought this offering," leaving what he has brought with him in front of the piece of wood, saying, "I wish you to provide me with a merchant who has many dīnārs and dirhams and who will buy from me whatever I want <to sell> without haggling over the price I fix." Then he departs. If he has difficulty in selling <his goods> and he has to remain too many days, he returns with a second and third offering. If his wishes prove to be impossible he brings an offering to every single one of those figurines and seeks its intercession, saying, "These are the wives, daughters and sons of our Lord." He goes up to each figurine in turn and questions it, begging its intercession and grovelling before it. Sometimes business is good and he makes a quick sell, at which point he will say, "My Lord has satisfied my request, so I am required to recompense him." He procures a number of sheep or cows and slaughters them, donating a portion of the meat to charity and taking the rest and casting it before the large piece of wood and the small ones around it. He ties the heads of the cows or the sheep to that piece of wood set up in the ground. At night, the dogs come and eat it all, but the man who has done all this will say, "My Lord is pleased with me and has eaten my

offering.”

When one of them falls ill, they erect a tent away from them and cast him into it, giving him some bread and water. They do not come near him or speak to him, indeed they have no contact with him for the duration of his illness, especially if he is socially inferior or is a slave. If he recovers and gets back to his feet, he rejoins them. If he dies, they bury him, though if he was a slave they leave him there as food for the dogs and the birds.

If they catch a thief or a bandit, they bring him to a large tree and tie a strong rope around his neck. They tie it to the tree and leave him hanging there until <the rope> breaks, <rotted away> by exposure to the rain and the wind.

I was told that when their chieftains die, the least they do is to cremate them. I was very keen to verify this, when I learned of the death of one of their great men. They placed him in his grave (*qabr*) and erected a canopy over it for ten days, until they had finished making and sewing his <funeral garments>

In the case of a poor man they build a small boat, place him inside and burn it. In the case of a rich man, they gather together his possessions and divide them into three, one third for his family, one third to use for <his funeral> garments, and one third with which they purchase alcohol which they drink on the day when his slave-girl kills herself and is cremated together with her master. (They are addicted to alcohol, which they drink night and day. Sometimes one of them dies with the cup still in his hand.)

When their chieftain dies, his family ask his slave-girls and slave-boys, “Who among you will die with him?” and some of them reply, “I shall.” Having said this, it becomes incumbent upon the person and it is impossible ever to turn back. Should that person try to, he is not permitted to do so. It is usually slave-girls who make this offer.

When that man whom I mentioned earlier died, they said to his slave-girls, “Who will die with him?” and one of them said, “I shall.” So they placed two slave-girls in charge of her to take care of her and accompany her wherever she went, even to the point of occasionally washing her feet with their own hands. They set about attending to the dead man, preparing his clothes for him and setting right all he needed. Every day the slave-girl would drink <alcohol> and would sing merrily and cheerfully.

On the day when he and the slave-girl were to be burned I arrived at the river where his ship was. To my surprise I discovered that it had been beached and that four planks of birch (*khadank*) and other types of wood had been erected for it. Around them wood had been placed in such a way as to resemble scaffolding (*anābīr*). Then the ship was hauled and placed on top of this wood. They advanced, going to and fro <around the boat> uttering words which I did not understand, while he was still in his grave and had not been

exhumed.

Then they produced a couch and placed it on the ship, covering it with quilts <made of> Byzantine silk brocade and cushions <made of> Byzantine silk brocade. Then a crone arrived whom they called the “Angel of Death” and she spread on the couch the coverings we have mentioned. She is responsible for having his <garments> sewn up and putting him in order and it is she who kills the slave-girls. I myself saw her: a gloomy, corpulent woman, neither young nor old.

When they came to his grave, they removed the soil from the wood and then removed the wood, exhuming him <still dressed> in the *izār* in which he had died. I could see that he had turned black because of the coldness of the ground. They had also placed alcohol, fruit and a pandora (*ṭunbūr*) beside him in the grave, all of which they took out. Surprisingly, he had not begun to stink and only his colour had deteriorated. They clothed him in trousers, leggings (*rān*), boots, a *qurṭaq*, and a silk caftan with golden buttons, and placed a silk *qalansuwwah* <fringed> with sable on his head. They carried him inside the pavilion on the ship and laid him to rest on the quilt, propping him with cushions. Then they brought alcohol, fruit and herbs (*rayḥān*) and placed them beside him. Next they brought bread, meat and onions, which they cast in front of him, a dog, which they cut in two and which they threw onto the ship, and all of his weaponry, which they placed beside him. They then brought two mounts, made them gallop until they began to sweat, cut them up into pieces and threw the flesh onto the ship. They next fetched two cows, which they also cut up into pieces and threw on board, and a cock and a hen, which they slaughtered and cast onto it.

Meanwhile, the slave-girl who wished to be killed was coming and going, entering one pavilion after another. The owner of the pavilion would have intercourse with her and say to her, “Tell your master that I have done this purely out of love for you.”

At the time of the evening prayer on Friday they brought the slave-girl to a thing that they had constructed, like a door-frame. She placed her feet on the hands of the men and was raised above that door-frame. She said something and they brought her down. Then they lifted her up a second time and she did what she had done the first time. They brought her down and then lifted her up a third time and she did what she had done on the first two occasions. They next handed her a hen. She cut off its head and threw it away. They took the hen and threw it on board the ship.

I quizzed the interpreter about her actions and he said, “The first time they lifted her, she said, ‘Behold, I see my father and my mother.’ The second time she said, ‘Behold, I see all of my dead kindred, seated.’ The third time she said, ‘Behold, I see my master,

seated in . is beautiful and verdant. He is accompanied by his men and his male-slaves. He summons me, so bring me to him.” So they brought her to the ship and she removed two bracelets that she was wearing, handing them to the woman called the “Angel of Death,” the one who was to kill her. She also removed two anklets that she was wearing, handing them to the two slave-girls who had waited upon her: they were the daughters of the crone known as the “Angel of Death.” Then they lifted her onto the ship but did not bring her into the pavilion. The men came with their shields and sticks and handed her a cup of alcohol over which she chanted and then drank. The interpreter said to me, “Thereby she bids her female companions farewell.” She was handed another cup, which she took and chanted for a long time, while the crone urged her to drink it and to enter the pavilion in which her master lay. I saw that she was befuddled and wanted to enter the pavilion but she had <only> put her head into the pavilion <while her body remained outside it>The crone grabbed hold of her head and dragged her into the pavilion, entering it at the same time. The men began to bang their shields with the sticks so that her screams could not be heard and so terrify the other slave-girls, who would not, then, seek to die with their masters.

Six men entered the pavilion and all had intercourse with the slave-girl. They laid her down beside her master and two of them took hold of her feet, two her hands. The crone called the “Angel of Death” placed a rope around her neck in such a way that the ends crossed one another (*mukhālafan*) and handed it to two <of the men> to pull on it. She advanced with a broad-bladed dagger and began to thrust it in and out between her ribs, now here, now there, while the two men throttled her with the rope until she died.

Then the deceased's next of kin approached and took hold of a piece of wood and set fire to it. He walked backwards, with the back of his neck to the ship, his face to the people, with the lighted piece of wood in one hand and the other hand on his anus, being completely naked. He ignited the wood that had been set up under the ship after they had placed the slave-girl whom they had killed beside her master. Then the people came forward with sticks and firewood. Each one carried a stick the end of which he had set fire to and which he threw on top of the wood. The wood caught fire, and then the ship, the pavilion, the man, the slave-girl and all it contained. A dreadful wind arose and the flames leapt higher and blazed fiercely.

One of the Rūsiyyah stood beside me and I heard him speaking to my interpreter. I quizzed him about what he had said, and he replied, “He said, ‘You Arabs are a foolish lot!’” So I said, “Why is that?” and he replied, “Because you purposely take those who are dearest to you and whom you hold in highest esteem and throw them under the earth,

where they are eaten by the earth, by vermin and by worms, whereas we burn them in the fire there and then, so that they enter Paradise immediately.” Then he laughed loud and long. I quizzed him about that <i.e., the entry into > and he said, “Because of the love which my Lord feels for him. He has sent the wind to take him away within an hour.” Actually, it took scarcely an hour for the ship, the firewood, the slave-girl and her master to be burnt to a fine ash.

They built something like a round hillock over the ship, which they had pulled out of the water, and placed in the middle of it a large piece of birch (*khadank*) on which they wrote the name of the man and the name of the King of the Rūs. Then they left.

He (Ibn Fadlān) said: One of the customs of the King of the Rūs is that in his palace he keeps company with four hundred of his bravest and most trusted companions; they die when he dies and they offer their lives to protect him. Each of them has a slave-girl who waits on him, washes his head and prepares his food and drink, and another with whom he has coitus. These four hundred <men> sit below his throne, which is huge and is studded with precious stones. On his throne there sit forty slave-girls who belong to his bed. Sometimes he has coitus with one of them in the presence of those companions whom we have mentioned. He does not come down from his throne. When he wants to satisfy an urge, he satisfies it in a salver. When he wants to ride, they bring his beast up to the throne, whence he mounts it, and when he wants to dismount, he brings his beast <up to the throne> so that he can dismount there. He has a vicegerent who leads the army, fights against the enemy and stands in for him among his subjects.

