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"Understanding the Galdrabók & Creating Original Designs"

by Greg Crowfoot

PART 3: THE ÆGISHJÁLMUR

The Ægishjálmur, or "Helm of Awe"

In Part 2, we explored examples of the "Super-Bind". In this section, we will explore at the last of "THE GALDRABÓK"'s major design families, the Ægishjálmur.

The Ægishjálmur, or Helm of Awe is perhaps the most elegant expression of runic sigil-magic. Here, rigid and rounded variant forms are often combined with other design structures to create sigils of unparalleled power and artistic beauty. It is through an understanding of rigid and rounded rune-forms and a grasp of the general structures employed in all Ægishjálmur that we can begin to grasp the original intent of the Helms presented in "THE GALDRABÓK", and undertake creation of our own Ægishjálmur.

The origins of Ægishjálmur are the subject of some controversy. Some scholars, such as Edred Thorsson, believe that the Helm of Awe or 'Ægishjálmur' was originally part of the treasure-hoard of the Nibelungen. The 'eight-star' upon which its designs are generally based is generally defined as being none other than the runic symbol of the "world-star", invoking the power of the nine worlds into the final spell(although some versions utilize the Hagal-snowflake

instead).

However, Sven Ulfsson has advanced another theory about the origins of the Helm which deserves mention. Ulfsson believes that the Ægishjálmur originally derived its name from the Sea-God, Ægir. Ulfsson bases his idea on entries found in the "ICELANDIC-ENGLISH DICTIONARY", by G.T.Zoëga (Sigdur Kristjánsson, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1922). The term 'Ægiris' is listed as a masculine noun meaning 'sea', or 'ocean'. 'Ægishjálmur' translates to 'over-awing helmet' and the term 'Ægja' means to frighten or threaten. Ulfsson believes that 'Ægishjálmur' literally means the 'Helm of Ægir', and expresses the terrible power the sea is capable of. While he does not disagree with the idea of the eight-star and the world-star being synonymous with one another, he does point out the similarity between the eight-spoked design and the compass points used by ancient Norse mariners to navigate. The close tie between these two symbols presents a strong argument for the idea that the 'world-star' as we know it today may have its roots in the maritime activities of our ancestors.

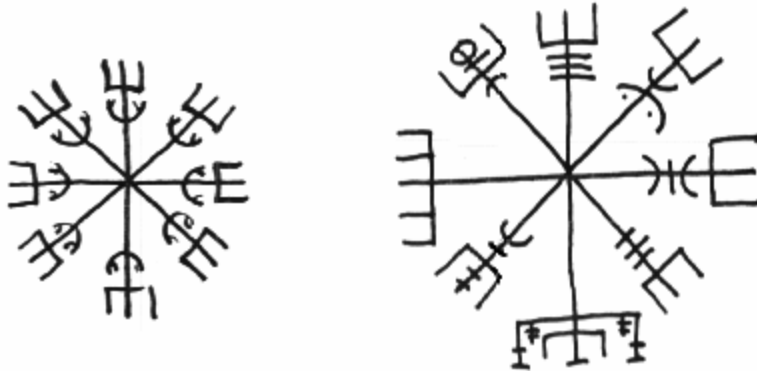
Personally, I support Ulfsson's theories, but I leave it to the reader to determine for themselves which theory they feel best explains the Ægishjálmur's origins.

In any case, regardless of which source the Ægishjálmur sprang from, scholars have universally agreed on the power of this mystic design. The Helm of Awe is frequently quoted by all sources as being able to grant its' wearer the

ability to strike fear into an enemy and grant great magical powers.

There are two good examples of Ægishjálmur that can be found on pages 87 and 89 of "THE GALDRABÓK" (also see my Diagram 1); the 'Solomon's Innsigli' and the 'Vegvisir'. The former is described as a sigil carried for protection, and the latter is used to prevent its' wearer from becoming lost on a journey (which certainly supports Ulfssons' theory about the linkage between the eight-star and the compass).

Diagram 1: The 'Solomon's Innsigli' and the 'Vegvisir'



The 'Solomon's Innsigli' represents one of the most basic forms of a Helm. It appears to employ only essential construction elements, without the addition of runic-variants. The 'Vegvisir' on the other hand, is more complex and clearly utilizes runic variants in addition to standard construction elements.

Basic Construction Elements of the Ægishjálmur: Zones and Specific Symbols

1. Zones

In "NORTHERN MAGIC", Edred Thorsson explains that Ægishjálmur, (like later "Hex-Signs") are composed according to three zones, radiating from the center of the eight-star moving outwards (see my Diagram 2, Figure A). The first zone at the center expresses the inner-being. The second zone comprises the subjective universe and the third outermost zone, the objective universe. Based upon the overall intent of the spell, runic variant symbols are placed according to the zone they are intended to affect and the eight-star is modified accordingly.

For example, if the sigil is designed to affect both the wearer and the outside world, those symbols which would affect the inner-self are placed in the second zone on shortened spokes and those which would affect the objective universe are placed on the spokes furthest from the center(the third zone). If on the other hand, the spell is intended solely to affect the outer world, then the runic symbols will be placed evenly on all eight spokes in the third zone (please see Diagram 1 and Diagram 2, Figure B).

In addition to these zones, the Ægishjálmur employ specific symbols in order to 'route' the magical forces they invoke into the proper directions. In "NORTHERN MAGIC", we are given an insight into these symbols.

2. Terminal Forks

The first symbols that we will address are what I call 'terminal-forks'. These are found at the ends of the spokes

of the eight-star, facing outwards. The rigid terminal-fork(see Figure C), acts to both radiate magical energy outwards and prevent a return flow. The rounded terminal-fork (frequently seen with smaller cup-like endings) acts in a more profound manner to prevent a back-flow(see Figure D). The last kind of terminal fork worth mentioning is an open ended Algiz-like design (Figure E), which Thorsson tells us, acts as an 'activator', radiating the power of the Helm outwards into space.

3. Other Construction Elements

The next group of symbols are either complimentary to the terminal-forks or are found elsewhere in a typical Helm. The first of these symbols is the circular terminator (which we have encountered previously in the section dealing with the design of a Terror-stave. See Figure F of this Diagram and Part 1, Diagram 5, the 'Terror-Stave'). This symbol acts to re-circulate some of the magical energy of the Helm back to itself (in effect re-charging it automatically).

Another symbol is a group of horizontal lines crossing a spoke(see Figure G). These lines act to accelerate or amplify the magical energy invoked by the sigil as a whole. When a straight horizontal line crowns a terminating fork at the ends of a spoke, it also acts to prevent diffusion of magical energy(see Figure H).

Small curving lines crossing a spoke or a terminal fork (see Figure I) are also frequently encountered. These act

very much like a cup would, catching any returning energy and preventing it from reaching the wearer. They can be found at the ends of a terminal fork(as in Figure D), or by themselves(generally placed in the second zone).

Now, as if all of this isn't enough, a typical Helm of Awe also employs rounded and rigid rune-forms in combination with each other and the construction elements mentioned above. Often, variant rune forms and Ægishjálmur design elements are identical to one another and in the final designs are combined together to serve dual purposes. For this reason it is often impossible to separate the original runes of the specific spell from the basic Helm and we are left with only the description their designers give to us to go on. Nevertheless, we are not prevented by this from the creation of original designs. If the basic guidelines of the Ægishjálmur construction elements are kept in mind and we use the proper runic variant-forms we will arrive at the same results as the Icelandic and Germanic sorcerers of old.

Diagram 2: Design Elements of the Ægishjálmur

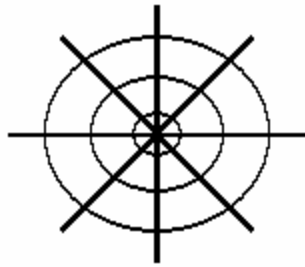


Fig.A

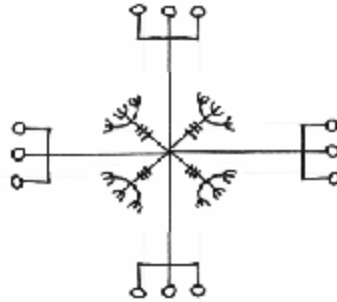


Fig.B



Fig.C



Fig.D



Fig.E

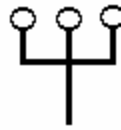


Fig.F



Fig.G



Fig.H



Fig.I

Construction:

a)Basic Intent

For our design example, we will create a Helm that is intended for general magical power, moving forcefully along its spokes and outwards into the objective universe.

b)Design

Our Helm will employ the basic Ægishjálmur construction elements and the old Norse runic-number spell "luwatuwa"(see "FUTHARK", page 103), or "Laguz, Uruz, Wunjo, Ansuz, Tyr, Uruz, Wunjo and Ansuz". These add to a total of 8 runes equaling 66, or 6 (the number of creation and destruction)

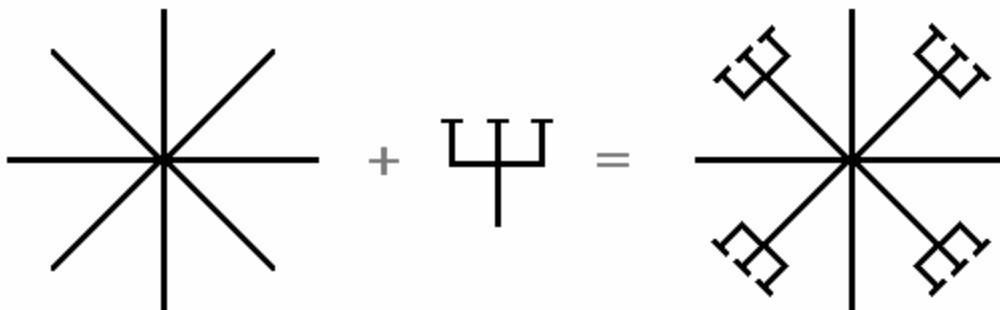
times 11 (the classic "master-number" of conventional western numerology).

Our first step will be to draw an eight-star. Everything we use from here on out will be incorporated into this basic framework.

For simplicity's sake, our Helm will be designed to operate in the Objective Universe (zone 3). As a result, all of the spokes of the wheel will of even length (see my Diagram 3).

The first element we will add will be four terminating forks with horizontal lines capping their ends (see also Diagram 3). These forks are not only intended to radiate the power outwards, but to also ensure that it remains focused in that direction (which is why we are not simply employing the Algiz-like forks instead; our intention is to create a more lasting and directed spell).

Diagram 3



The next step will be to create an ensigilated bind of our power-word. The first rune, Laguz is rendered in its rigid-form (Diagram 4, Step 1). The second rune, Uruz is

also drawn in this manner, reversed, mirrored, and bound with the Laguz-form (also see Diagram 4, Steps 2 and 3).

Diagram 4:

Step 1

$$\uparrow = \nearrow + \nwarrow = \uparrow$$

Step 2

$$\cap = \cap + \cap = \cup + \cup = \cup$$

Step 3: Final Result

$$\uparrow + \cup = \cup$$

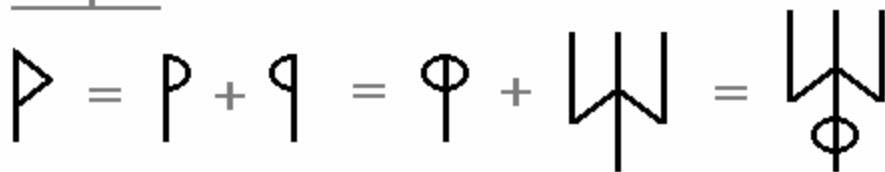
A word of explanation is deserved here: The 'reversal' of Uruz is undertaken in order that the final bind-form will face outwards into the external universe and send its energy in that direction, rather than send it straight back to the source of the spell. While it appears that this step might act to reverse the influences of the runes (by reversing their forms), the runes are in fact depicted in the normal manner from the artificial perspective of the outside world, and thus have not truly been 'reversed'. According to the rules of Sigil-magic, they still retain the 'positive' attributes of their 'non-mirrored' parent-forms. In addition, by taking this step, Uruz has been repeated twice

and thus we are able to include both occurrences of this rune in our original number-formula. Also, by combining the 'mirrored' Uruz and Laguz on a spoke, we have also created Tyr in the process(see Diagram 4, Steps 1 and 3 for this).

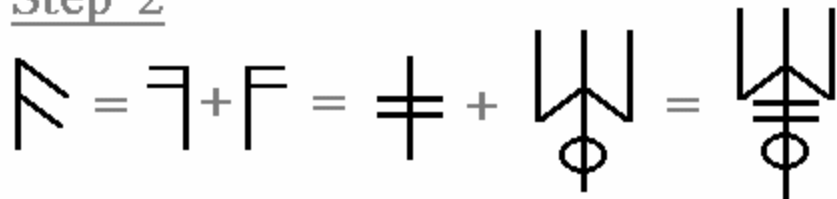
Only two more runes remain; Ansuz and Wunjo. Because Ansuz and Wunjo also occur twice in the number-formula they will be mirrored as well and placed below the Uruz-Laguz-Tyr bind form(see Diagram 5, Steps 1 and 2).

Diagram 5

Step 1

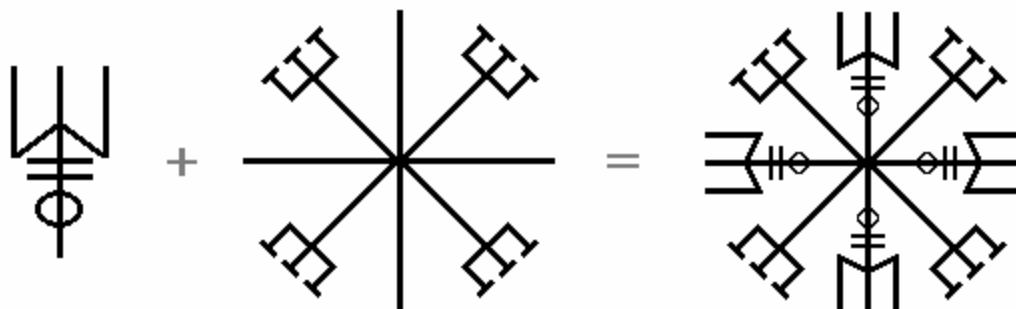


Step 2



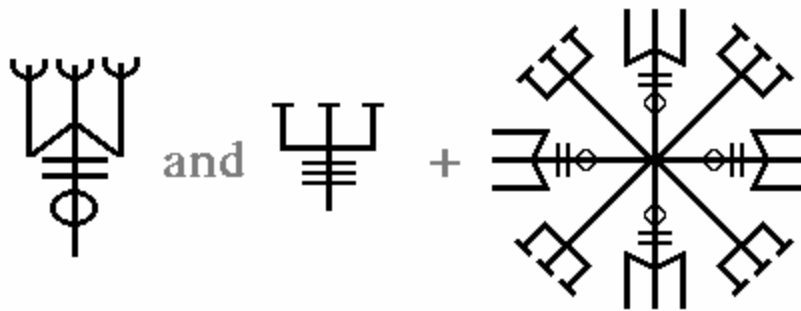
The final design is applied to the remaining four 'open' spokes of our helm(see Diagram 6). But we are not completely done yet.

Diagram 6



Our next step will be to add additional 'cup' forms to the ends of the fork created by our bind(see Diagram 7), in order to hold back any negative energies that might attempt to return to the Helm. We will also add a trio of horizontal elements to our other four spokes to act as accelerators and to also represent rigid variants of Tyr, invoking victory and success(see Diagram 7).

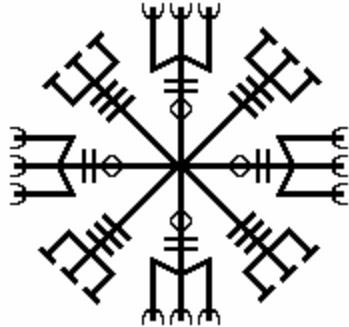
Diagram 7



The final result can be seen in its' entirety in Diagram 8. As a side note, a happy accident occurred when we created the Uruz-Laguz-Tyr bind form; a fourth runic-form was also fashioned. This is a rigid-variant of Sowilu (which we can invoke, or not invoke as we see fit). The total numerical value of our design is 264(the sum of all four repetitions of our bind formula) and 68(our 4 Tyr variants), or 332(which is in turn divisible by 2(664 times), the number of cooperation between two forces. In this case those forces would be the magician and the magic he or she will invoke with the aid of this Helm. If Sowilu is included in the charging of this Helm, the total value will be 396. This is divisible by 3 and 9(an even more powerful pair of

magical number-values).

Diagram 8



c) 'Carving'

Our Helm will be drawn and charged in the same manner as any bind; each runic element will be 'carved', 'reddened' and 'sung'. The timing of our operation can be approached in two ways. The long method involves the 'carving'(i.e. 'carving', 'reddening' and 'singing) of the runes in our basic bind of "luwatuwa" in conjunction with their runic-hours. This method, when applied to the "luwatuwa" formula will take us three days to complete.

We would begin at 9:00 am with Laguz, continuing at 2:00 PM with Uruz, then at 8:00 PM 'carve' Wunjo. The following day, we would start work again at 4:00 PM for Ansuz, and then 'carve' our next rune, Tyr at 5:00 AM. That afternoon, at 2:00 pm, we would 'carve' Uruz, then at 8:00 PM, Wunjo. On the third and last day we would 'carve' Ansuz at 3:00 PM and the remainder of our design.

One of the shorter methods we might employ as an alternative, utilizes the sum total of our runes, or 396 (with Sowilu added). This equals 9(when added together and

rendered down to its lowest sum) and we would begin our work at the ninth hour, or 9:00 PM. Our sum is also divisible by 3 and if we chose, we could begin instead at the third hour of the day, 3:00 PM. Of the two times, I would choose a 9:00 PM starting time(because of the greater power this number has).

Both the long and short methods will work. The choice is up to the designer and just how thorough they want or need to be.

Holding to tradition, we would also use the 'sator-arepo' incantation at the start and finish of our endeavor.

d)Application

Our Helm may be etched onto metal, wood, or parchment. It may be carried as a talisman during magical operations, or etched or drawn onto magical tools.



Conclusion

This ends my series on understanding basic Galdrabók designs and their construction. Although I feel that research in this area has opened up certain doors, there are still many design forms found within the Galdrabók's pages that defy understanding. It is my hope that through additional exploration, that their mysteries will be deciphered and that the technology that they employ will also become available to today's student of the northern magical tradition.



For comments about this article or to contact the author,
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