To blót (pronounced "bloat") is to sacrifice. Blótar (the plural form of blót) strengthen the bonds between humans and the gods, our holy kin. With blótar we honor the gods in a social atmosphere and invite them to share in our celebrations and give them gifts in return for divine favor.

A blót can be elaborate or a simple matter, performed alone in just a few minutes. When a group partakes in a blót, especially if outdoors, calls to the gods are often shouted out and are punctuated by loud "Hails!" echoed by the folk When someone in an Ásatrú ritual says "Hail!" or hails a god it's appropriate to repeat after them in a similar tone and loudness.

For a blót our ancestors would have slaughtered a sacrificial animal. Today most Heathens get their meat from a grocer. The animal selected for the feast was treated with honor and often bedecked with garlands and ribbons. Much care was put into the preparation of the holy feasts. We honor this tradition by sanctifying food and drink being prepared for a feast by passing it over a flame and making the sign of the hammer, an inverted "T," over it and perhaps saying a short blessing like, "Thor hallow this food." To lend an air of sacredness to the feast many will decorate and garnish the dishes for the feast as they would for any lavish dinner party. During the feast a separate plate is often set aside for the gods and ancestors.

The Need Fire is the sacred temple fire of the Northern European traditions. Outside of a temple, these fires were often started with a fire bow. The kindling of the Need Fire was itself a sacred act believed to drive away evil spirits and is today often used as beginning of the hallowing of the ritual area.

1. Gathering - Participants arrange themselves.

The gathering was traditionally preceded with a procession, a Sith. The processional, the ritual area, and the feast table were decorated with seasonal flowers, boughs, garlands, and wreaths appropriate to the holiday being celebrated.

To set the mood, some rituals will start with a chant. Some begin rituals by chanting "Odin, Vili, Ve," either in three rounds or continuously. It prepares the celebrants for the ritual and links the participants to the Heathen gods of creation, intensifying the connection between Midgard and the gods.

The start of the ritual is often signaled by sounding a horn three times.

2. The Hallowing- The area is sanctified.

Rituals are preferably held outside. Whether in a sanctified forest or a particular grove. The perimeter of the ritual area, the vé, is often first marked out with wooden stakes, often of hazelwood, which can be linked by rope of natural fiber. It is then sanctified by a procession of fire. The purpose of the hallowing is not to ward the area but rather to make it more inviting to the gods. Thor was often invoked by our ancestors to make something sacred. The formula in Old Norse used to accomplish this was "Pórr uiki" or "Thor make this sacred!". The procession was probably counter-clockwise. A chant or prayer can be added here. The Anglo-Saxon Eldright suggests:

Fire I bear around this sacred site, And bid all men make peace, Flame I bear to enclose, And bid evil spirits to flee Thor make sacred this holy site

Fire I bear around this sacred site,
And bid all men make peace,
Flame I bear to enclose,
And bid outlaws fare away.
Thor make sacred, Thor make sacred,
Thor make sacred this holy site.
Thor make sacred, Thor make sacred,
Thor make sacred this holy site.

Some will alternately use the Hammer Hallowing to sanctify the space. Starting at the North, and rotating clockwise while making the Hammer-sign, at each direction:

Hammer in the North, hallow and hold this Holy Stead! Hammer in the East, hallow and hold this Holy Stead! Hammer in the South, hallow and hold this Holy Stead! Hammer in the West, hallow and hold this Holy Stead!

For outdoor rituals, a hörg, or altar of heaped stones, was used. Indoors, altars were made of wood or other materials and called a stall. Idols were often made of wood the largest examples being from indoor altars, often being at least life-sized.

Once a vé has been sanctified it is considered a friðgarð or "peace-stead." To our ancestors this meant that it was taboo to shed blood, carry weapons, or "pollute the ground with bodily wastes" within the vé.

3. The Rede - An explanation of the ceremony.

Statement of purpose or why the ritual is being held this is often followed by a reading of poetry or prose which sets the mythic context of the ritual.

4. The Signaling - those the ceremony is to honor are called.

Some kindreds start with a prayer to the Æsir and Vanir to thank them for their past blessings and to ask their continued blessings upon the kindred.

Some kindreds will then offer personal prayers and invocations and welcome new members.

The signalling officially begins with a call to the god or gods to be honored on this occasion. The Gothi or Gythia commonly will stand in the form of the Elhaz rune, like a "Y," for the call.

In Indo-European traditions prayers often "...included exactly the two components of praise of the deity, not infrequently in the second person, followed by a request to the deity" (John Lindow, "Addressing Thor", p. 132). The formula often used in The Troth is:

Hail (best-known name), (descriptive epithet), Child of (parent), lover of (spouse), You who dwell in (name of hall), You who (summarize several relevant deeds) With your (characteristic tool or weapon) Come swiftly to aid me As I (summarize problem being addressed).

5. The Loading/Hallowing - The mead is made holy.

The Gothi takes up the horn and his assistant fills it with mead. The food and drink for the blót is consecrated by carrying it around the hearth fire three times. What, if anything was said is unknown, but the Heiðni tradition suggests "Gods and Elves, make this (mead/beer/milk/ meat/bread) holy" or in old norse "Æsir ok Alfar, helgi (meaðu/bjór/mjólk/kjót/brauð) betta" and making the sign of Thor's Hammer over it.

The Gothi then holds up the horn and offers it first to the god being honored that night in exchange for the blessing of the god(s).

6. The Sharing - Each drinks a small quantity of mead then pours the rest into the blessing bowl.

The Gothi drinks from the horn of mead, imbued with the power and blessing of the gods, which is then passed around the circle, either person to person or by the assistant, often referred to as the Valkyrie in

this role. By drinking, the gathered folk share the power of the gods among themselves. The horn often makes three rounds, the first round to the gods and the subsequent rounds varying from group to group. If you are not comfortable drinking from the horn, it is traditional to make your offering and then kiss the rim of the horn before passing it on.

The first round, the bede, is said to the gods. It is custom to dedicate the bede to the god of the holy tide being celebrated. It is also customary to only call to the gods of the Æsir and Vanir unless by prior arrangement with the host. The bede can be an elaborate prayer or a simple salutation. The second round is often the bragafull where the accomplishments and goals of those gathered are toasted. The third round is often the minni, drunk in honor of the ancestors. The rounds will sometimes continue as a sumble, a ritual toasting where one's words are cast directly into Urd's well. When the horn is one-third full, it is emptied into the blót bowl and the horn is refilled.

The food and drink of the feast are consumed at this point to strengthen the bonds of community in an enjoyable atmosphere with fine food and drink.

7. The Blessing - The altar and participants are sprinkled with mead.

Traditionally, it was the blood of the sanctified animals which was sprinkled on the walls and altar. Most rituals today will used mead or ale which has been blessed for that purpose. The mead is poured from the horn into the blot bowl and then carried by the Gothi or the assistant. The Gothi dips a twig, preferably from an evergreen, into the bowl and sprinkles the altar and each person saying a blessing to each.

The order of the Sharing and the Blessing are often interchangeable and depending on the size of the group one or the other is often omitted.

8. The Giving/Earthing - The mead is poured onto the ground from the bowl.

The blót bowl and plates laid out for the gods and ancestors are taken outside and given to the gods and land wights. This is often done by depositing the offerings at the base of a tree, where animals can devour it on the behalf of the gods and wights, or by casting them into a sacred fire, thanking the gods and spirits.

9. The Closing/Leaving - the ceremony is ended.

The rite is adjourned and often followed by a full sumbel. If a temporary vé was constructed, it may be taken down by simply removing the stakes and thanking the spirits of the land or house.

On-Line Resources

Angelseaxisce Ealdriht
(Anglo-Saxon Eldright)
http://www.ealdriht.org/husel.html/
A Simple Altar Dedication by Swain
Wodening
http://haligwaerstow.ealdriht.org/altar.html
CIAK - The Blot
http://www.ciak.org/blot.htm
Heiðni
http://www.goldenfuture.net/heathenry/

http://www.goldenfuture.net/heathenry/
Raven Kindred - What Happens At A Blot
http://www.webcom.com/~lstead/blot.htm
Our Troth, published by The Troth
http://www.thetroth.org/

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http://groups.yahoo.com/group/minnesota_heathens/

For help with networking, community building, educational support, outreach, prison ministry, or any other assistance we can provide.

BLÓTAR

A brief guide to Ásatrú ritual.



Knowest how one shall write,
knowest how one shall rede?
knowest how one shall tint,
knowest how one shall try?
knowest how one shall ask,
knowest how one shall offer?
knowest how one shall send,
knowest how one shall sacrifice?
-Havamál 145 (Bellows trans.)

None so free with gifts or food have I found
That gladly he took not a gift,
Nor one who so widely scattered his wealth
That of recompense hatred he had.
-Havamál 40 (Bellows trans.)

Worship: (from Old English weordscipe)

"to respect, to honour, or
to give worth to something."