

= Einherjar =

In Norse mythology , the einherjar (Old Norse " single (or once) fighters ") are those who have died in battle and are brought to Valhalla by valkyries . In Valhalla , the einherjar eat their fill of the nightly @-@ resurrecting beast Sæhrímnir , and are brought their fill of mead (from the udder of the goat Heiðrún) by valkyries . The einherjar prepare daily for the events of Ragnarök , when they will advance for an immense battle at the field of Vígríðr ; the battle which the " ein " (here meaning single @-@ time) refers to . Heimdall occasionally returned the best of Einherjar to Midgard or Jotunheim with the purpose of killing giants , but they were forbidden to talk with the living .

The einherjar are attested in the Poetic Edda , compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources , the Prose Edda , written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson , the poem Hákonarmál (by the 10th century skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir) as collected in Heimskringla , and a stanza of an anonymous 10th century poem commemorating the death of Eric Bloodaxe known as Eiríksmál as compiled in Fagrskinna .

Scholarly theories have been proposed etymologically connecting the einherjar to the Harii (a Germanic tribe attested in the 1st century AD) , the eternal battle of Hjaðningavíg , and the Wild Hunt . The einherjar have been the subject of works of art and poetry . Valhalla is the place of Odin . It is told in Norse mythology that einherjar are those with golden auras only seen by Valkyries . The einherjar are the Warriors trained by Asgardians .

= = Attestations = =

= = = Poetic Edda = = =

In the poem Vafþrúðnismál , Odin engages the wise jötnunn Vafþrúðnir in a game of wits . Disguised as Gagnráðr , Odin asks Vafþrúðnir " where men fight in courts every day . " Vafþrúðnir responds that (here einherjar is translated as einheriar) :

In the poem Grímnismál , Odin (disguised as Grímnir) tells the young Agnar that the cook Andhrímnir boils the beast Sæhrímnir , which he refers to as " the best of pork " , in the container Eldhrímnir , yet adds that " but few know by what the einheriar are nourished . " Further into Grímnismál , Odin gives a list of valkyries (Skeggjöld , Skögul , Hildr , Þrúðr , Hlökk , Herfjötur , Göll , Geirahöð , Randgríð , Ráðgríð , and Reginleif) , and states that they bear ale to the einherjar . Towards the end of the poem , another reference to the einherjar appears when Odin tells the king Geirröd (unaware that the man he has been torturing is Odin) that Geirröd is drunk , and that Geirröd loses much when he loses his favor and the favor of " all the Einherjar . "

In the poem Helgakviða Hundingsbana I , the hero Sinfjötli flyts with Guðmundr . Sinfjötli accuses Guðmundr of having once been a female , including that he was " a witch , horrible , unnatural , among Odin 's valkyries " and that all of the einherjar " had to fight , headstrong women , on your account " .

= = = Prose Edda = = =

In the Prose Edda book Gylfaginning , the einherjar are introduced in chapter 20 . In chapter 20 , Third tells Gangleri (described as king Gylfi in disguise) that Odin is called Valföðr (Old Norse " father of the slain ") " since all those who fall in battle are his adopted sons , " and that Odin assigns them places in Valhalla and Vingólf where they are known as einherjar . In chapter 35 , High quotes the Grímnismál valkyrie list , and says that these valkyries wait in Valhalla , and there serve drink , and look after tableware and drinking vessels in Valhalla . In addition , High says that Odin sends valkyries to every battle , that they allot death to men , and govern victory .

In chapter 38 , High provides more detail about the einherjar . Gangleri says that " you say that all those men that have fallen in battle since the beginning of the world have now come to Odin in Val @-@ hall . What has he got to offer them food ? I should have thought that there must be a pretty

large number there . " High replies that it is true there are a pretty large number of men there , adding many more have yet to arrive , yet that " there will seem too few when the wolf comes . " However , High adds that food is not a problem because there will never be too many people in Valhalla that the meat of Sæhrímnir (which he calls a boar) cannot sufficiently feed . High says that Sæhrímnir is cooked every day by the cook Andhrímnir in the pot Eldhrímnir , and is again whole every evening . High then quotes the stanza of Grímnismál mentioning the cook , meal , and container in reference .

Further into chapter 38 , Gangleri asks if Odin consumes the same meals as the einherjar . High responds that Odin gives the food on his table to his two wolves Geri and Freki , and that Odin himself needs no food , for Odin gains sustenance from wine as if it were drink and meat . High then quotes another stanza from Grímnismál in reference . In chapter 39 , Gangleri asks what the einherjar drink that is as plentiful as their food , and if they drink water . High responds that it is strange that Gangleri is asking if Odin , the All @-@ Father , would invite kings , earls , and other " men of rank " to his home and give them water to drink . High says that he " swears by his faith " that many who come to Valhalla would think that he paid a high price for a drink of water if there were no better beverages there , after having died of wounds and in agony . High continues that atop Valhalla stands the goat Heiðrún , and it feeds on the foliage of the tree called Læraðr . From Heiðrún 's udders flow mead that fills a vat a day . The vat is so large that all of the einherjar are able to drink to their fullness from it .

In chapter 40 , Gangleri says that Valhalla must be an immense building , yet it must often be crowded around the doorways . High responds that there are plenty of doors , and that crowding doesn 't occur around them . In support , High again quotes a stanza from Grímnismál . In chapter 41 , Gangleri notes that there are very many people in Valhalla , and that Odin is a " very great lord when he commands such a troop " . Gangleri then asks what entertainment the einherjar have when they 're not drinking . High responds that every day , the einherjar get dressed and " put on war @-@ gear and go out into the courtyard and fight each other and fall upon each other . This is their sport . " High says that when dinner time arrives , the einherjar ride back to Valhalla and sit down to drink . In reference , High quotes a stanza from Grímnismál .

In chapter 51 , High foretells the events of Ragnarök . After the god Heimdallr awakens all the gods by blowing his horn Gjallarhorn , they will assemble at a thing , Odin will ride to the well Mímisbrunnr and consult Mímir on behalf of himself and his people , the world tree Yggdrasil will shake , and then the Æsir and the einherjar will don their war gear . The Æsir and einherjar will ride to the field Vígríðr while Odin rides before them clad in a golden helmet , mail , and holding his spear Gungnir , and heading towards the wolf Fenrir .

In chapter 52 , Gangleri asks what will happen after the heavens , earth , and all of the world are burned and the gods , einherjar and all of mankind have died , noting that he had previously been told that " everyone will live in some world or other for ever and ever . " High replies with a list of locations , and then describes the re @-@ emerging of the world after Ragnarök . The einherjar receive a final mention in the Prose Edda in chapter 2 of the book Skáldskaparmál , where a quote from the anonymous 10th century poem Eiríksmál is provided (see the Fagrskinna section below for more detail and another translation from another source) :

= = = Heimskringla = = =

At the end of the Heimskringla saga Hákonar saga góða , the poem Hákonarmál (by the 10th century skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir) is presented . The saga relates that king Haakon I of Norway died in battle , and yet though he is Christian , he requests that since he has died " among heathens , then give me such burial place as seems most fitting to you . " The saga relates that , shortly after , Haakon died on the same slab of rock that he was born upon , that he was greatly mourned by friend and foe alike , and that his friends moved his body northward to Sæheim in North Hordaland . Haakon was there buried in a large burial mound in full armor and his finest clothing , yet with no other valuables . Further , " words were spoken over his grave according to the custom of heathen men , and they put him on the way to Valhalla . " The poem Hákonarmál is then provided .

In Hákonarmál , Odin sends forth the two valkyries Göndul and Skögun to " choose among the kings ' kinsmen " and who in battle should dwell with Odin in Valhalla . A battle rages with great slaughter . Haakon and his men die in battle , and they see the valkyrie Göndul leaning on a spear shaft . Göndul comments that " groweth now the gods ' following , since Hákon has been with host so goodly bidden home with holy godheads . " Haakon hears " what the valkyries said , " and the valkyries are described as sitting " high @-@ hearted on horseback , " wearing helmets , carrying shields and that the horses wisely bore them . A brief exchange follows between Haakon and the valkyrie Skögun :

Skögun says that they shall now ride forth to the " green homes of the godheads " to tell Odin the king will come to Valhalla . In Valhalla , Haakon is greeted by Hermóðr and Bragi . Haakon expresses concern that he shall receive Odin 's hate (Lee Hollander theorizes this may be due to Haakon 's conversion to Christianity from his native heathenism) , yet Bragi responds that he is welcome :

= = = Fagrskinna = = =

In chapter 8 of Fagrskinna , a prose narrative states that , after the death of her husband Eric Bloodaxe , Gunnhild Mother of Kings had a poem composed about him . The composition is by an anonymous author from the 10th century and is referred to as Eiríksmál , and describes Eric Bloodaxe and five other kings arriving in Valhalla after their death . The poem begins with comments by Odin (as Old Norse Óðinn) :

The god Bragi asks where a thundering sound is coming from , and says that the benches of Valhalla are creaking ? as if the god Baldr had returned to Valhalla ? and that it sounds like the movement of a thousand . Odin responds that Bragi knows well that the sounds are for Eric Bloodaxe , who will soon arrive in Valhalla . Odin tells the heroes Sigmund and Sinfjötli to rise to greet Eric and invite him into the hall , if it is indeed he .

Sigmund asks Odin why he would expect Eric more than any other king , to which Odin responds that Eric has reddened his gore @-@ drenched sword with many other lands . Eric arrives , and Sigmund greets him , tells him that he is welcome to come into the hall , and asks him what other lords he has brought with him to Valhalla . Eric says that with him are five kings , that he will tell them the name of them all , and that he , himself , is the sixth .

= = Theories and proposed etymological connections = =

According to John Lindow , Andy Orchard , and Rudolf Simek , scholars have commonly connected the einherjar to the Harii , a Germanic tribe attested by Tacitus in his 1st @-@ century AD work Germania . Tacitus writes :

As for the Harii , quite apart from their strength , which exceeds that of the other tribes I have just listed , they pander to their innate savagery by skill and timing : with black shields and painted bodies , they choose dark nights to fight , and by means of terror and shadow of a ghostly army they cause panic , since no enemy can bear a sight so unexpected and hellish ; in every battle the eyes are the first to be conquered .

Lindow says that " many scholars think there may be basis for the myth in an ancient Odin cult , which would be centered on young warriors who entered into an ecstatic relationship with Odin " and that the name Harii has been etymologically connected to the -herjar element of einherjar . Simek says that since the connection has become widespread , " one tends to interpret these obviously living armies of the dead as religiously motivated bands of warriors , who led to the formation of the concept of the einherjar as well as the Wild Hunt [...] " . Simek continues that the notion of an eternal battle and daily resurrection appears in book I of Saxo Grammaticus ' Gesta Danorum and in reports of the eternal battle of Hjaðningavíg .

According to Guðbrandur Vigfússon , the concept of the einherjar links directly to the Old Norse name Einarr . Vigfússon comments that " the name Einarr is properly = einheri " , and points to a relation to the term with the Old Norse common nouns einarrör (meaning " bold ") and einörð (

meaning " valour ") .