



Ars Magica

Land of

Fire
& Ice

Mythic Iceland

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Land of Fire and Ice

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Orthography	.4
Further Reading	.5

Chapter 2: Land and History

Icelandic Pre-History	.6
The Christian Priests	.7
Settlement	.8
The Battle of Hekla	.11
Establishment of the Law	.11
Galdramen Hreppur	.11
The Colonization of Greenland	.12
The Attempted Colonization of Vinland	.13
Christian Era	.13
The Interdiction	.14
The Age of the Sturlungar	.15
Timeline	.16

Chapter 3: People and Culture

Settlements	.20
Rank and Status	.21
Icelandic Culture	.22
Economy	.24
Hreppar (Cooperatives)	.27
The Galdramen Hreppur	.27
The Giant and Troll Clans	.29
Landvaettir	.32

Chapter 4: Law and Governance

Legal Structure	.34
The Legal Process	.37

Chapter 5: The Church

Before the Conversion	.41
The Early Days of the Church	.42
The Church in the 13th Century	.43

Chapter 6: Icelandic Magic

Galdramen	.45
The Trollsyrir	.51
Arcane Abilities	.54
Supernatural Virtues	.54

Chapter 7: Toframanna Saga

Theme	.62
Saga Advice	.62
Character Creation	.64

Chapter 8: Fire and Ice

Introduction	.67
Theme	.67
Saga Premises	.68
Fire and Song	.69
Spider in the Ice	.70
Saga Advice	.74
Saga Timeline	.75

Chapter 9: Blood of Innocence

Background	.77
Setting the Scene	.77
Fate Lends a Hand	.79

Chapter 10: Vindolanda

Scartaris	.88
Old Vindolanda	.92
Other Sancta	.94
Kerlingarfjoll Valley	.96

Chapter 11: Thord's Feast

Synopsis	.98
The Feast at Stad	.98
The Thorsnes Varthing	.99
Blund's Farmstead	.99
The Dragon's Nest	.100
The Covenant Farmstead	.101

Chapter 12: Meet the Dragon

Synopsis	.102
The Althing	.102
Eldborg	.102
Hekla Lair	.105
Conclusion	.106

Chapter 13: Feast of Thanks

Synopsis	.107
The Invitation	.107

Journey	.107
The Singing Caves	.109

Chapter 14: The Glittering Plains

Synopsis	.114
A Plot is Hatching	.114
Blund's Farm	.114
Einar's Journey	.115
A Long Way Down	.115
Glasvellir	.116

Chapter 15: Brighde's Gauntlet

Synopsis	.120
Victor's Plan	.120
Hetep's Plan	.120
Council Meeting	.121
The Gauntlet	.121
Old Vindolanda	.121
Damhan-allaidh's Tomb	.122
Victor's Farewell	.122
Sea Temple Sanctum	.122

Chapter 16: Spider Through Mist

Synopsis	.125
Foreshadowing	.125
The Assault	.125

Chapter 17: Into the Gateway

Synopsis	.127
The Stelae are Corrupted	.127
The Stelae are Uncorrupted	.129
The End	.129

Chapter 18: Characters133

Iain the Scot	.133
Donncadh Scot	.134
Victor filius Pralix	.135
Liam the Shapeless	.136
Hetep the Corrupter	.137
Damhan-allaidh	.138
Einar Gamlisson	.139
Pan Caudarax	.140
Bard Snaefellsass Dumbson	.141
Thord Sturluson	.141
Vifil Halldorson	.142



Chapter 1

Introduction

Far beyond the knowledge of most in Mythic Europe lies a land of fire and ice. Untouched by man until the 8th century, it is a land of contrasts, with huge glaciers, fiery volcanoes, barren lava fields, lush meadows, and rivers teeming with fish. Its remarkable people match its astonishing natural beauty. Although they were few, Icelanders created one of the most interesting societies in medieval Europe.

From 870 to 1262 AD the Norse settlers developed and maintained an independent state. Without warlords and kings they made their own laws and settled their own disputes. Fighting both harsh winters and volcanic disasters this unique society gave us the Icelandic sagas, an extraordinary collection of literary and historical importance, which have inspired authors for over eight hundred years. Without these sagas of warriors, giants, wizards, trolls, dragons and faeries, modern fantasy literature would have lost much of its inspiration.

This book seeks to help you create your own Icelandic saga for an **Ars Magica** game within Mythic Europe. This book not only gives

On the west of Norway comes the island called Iceland, with the mighty ocean washing round it: a land very squalid to dwell in, but noteworthy for marvels, both strange occurrences and objects that pass belief.

— The Danish History
of Saxo Grammaticus

you a place in which to set up a covenant, but also provides a set of adventures around which to build your saga. From its conception to possible destruction, these adventures will help develop and maintain the momentum of your game.

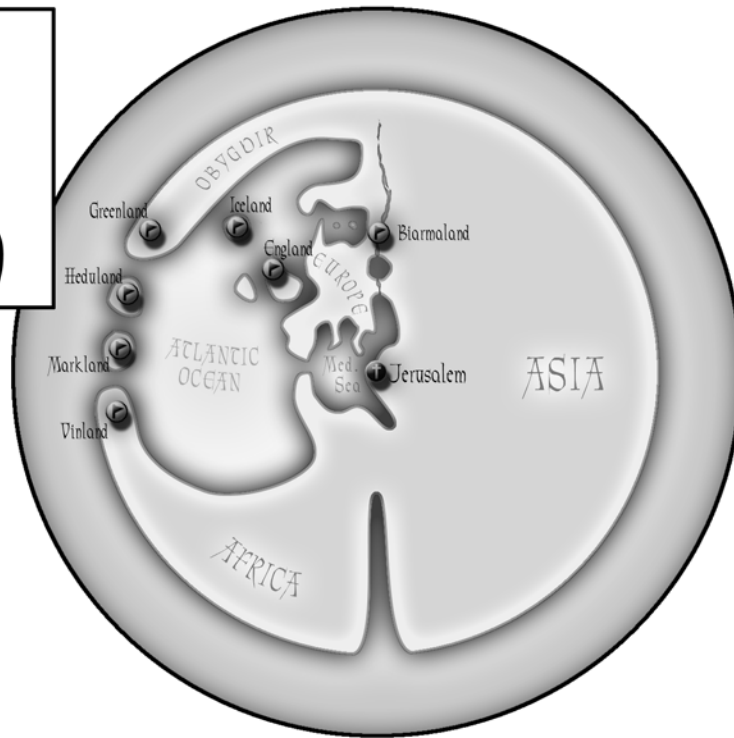
As well as the story-arc adventures, story seeds will give the players welcome or unwelcome opportunities to interact with the local population and get to know Icelandic society. Mythic Iceland is presented as virgin territory for Hermetic magi. However, Iceland has its own magicians and magi will not find themselves unrivaled in power. Icelandic magicians will be as unwilling to submit to the Order as their countrymen are to the Norwegian crown.

Alternatively the material here may be used with an existing saga, set in any other tribunal location. **Ars Magica** encourages Troupe play, in which the usual storyguide may step aside for a while and someone else can run the occasional adventure. This book has been written so a temporary storyguide can run a series of adventures far away from the main saga environment. This gives a degree of independence and freedom to the temporary storyguide otherwise difficult to achieve.

Orthography

Old Norse is a difficult language to pronounce, and we have adopted a scheme that emphasizes readability rather than accuracy or consistency. We have excluded all diacritic characters, and rendered the letter 'thorn' as 'th'. The letter 'eth' has been rendered as 'd'. The singular nominative endings (·r and ·n) have been removed or anglicized ('galdor' rather than 'galdr', for example). Finally, some words have been further anglicized.

The Icelandic Ring of the Earth



This book is aimed at storyguides seeking to create a new Saga or anyone looking to run adventures within an existing one. The sections on history and culture may be read by anyone. However, Chapters 7–18 should not be read by anyone not wishing to act as the storyguide for the setting.

Further Reading

This book is written for the **Ars Magica** setting of Mythic Europe. Although the authors have based the mundane history on genuine historical sources, this is not a history book. Where historians may make tentative claims and present alternative possibilities, we have taken a position. In regard to mythic history we have taken many of the more mystical sagas as authoritative. The bibliography (page 143) lists all the books used in the preparation of this sourcebook. However, if you wish to pursue subjects in more depth we recommend the following books.

Byock, Jesse, *Viking Age Iceland*: A richly detailed account of all aspects of life during the Free State period.

Jones, Gwyn, *A History of the Vikings*: A highly readable general history of the Vikings.

Miller, William Ian, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*: Interpretations of the Icelandic sagas and legal code.

Gunnar Karlsson, *The History of Iceland*: General history from the settlement to the modern age.

Simpson, Jacqueline, *Legends of Icelandic Magicians*: Although many of these magicians are out of period, they give excellent ideas for the galdramen. Also details the life and magic of Saemundur the Wise.

Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda*: A collection of Norse mythological stories as well as instruction on Skaldic poetry. Written by one of the major political figures in medieval Iceland. Otherwise known as the Prose Edda.

Swaney, Deanna, *Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands*: This modern travel guide provides a wealth of local information on geography, geology, climate, flora and fauna. It also gives an historical overview as well as local history on particular regions.

Williams, Paul, *Ultima Thule: Mythic Scandinavia*: This **Ars Magica** sourcebook focuses on mainland Scandinavia. It contains a detailed description of Norse theology and magic, which can supplement the material given here.