

Thegainvald

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EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, OR THE LAY OF THEGAINE

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, OR THE LAY OF THEGAINE

(Accompanies the Translation of Book 1 of 65)

True written records from the early First Era are almost entirely Merethic, originating either from the substantial cruxi-catalogues of Ayleid torture poets, from the Chimeri-Velothi Theophagia (which remain inscrutable to all but the most ardent Dunmeri scholars), or from the Direnni Man-Mer epic verses which rose to prominence in Glenumbrian aristocratic passion-plays after the publishing of Beredalgo the Signifier's translations. Dwemer writing was rare and will not be discussed here. Nedic accounts -- whose mythic echoes still shape contemporary visions of history -- were largely dependent on oral tradition and were compiled several hundred years after the [Alessian](#) Rebellion in 1E 243. Such writings were reflective of Alessian values and subject to the approval of that restrictive censorship so common in early Cyrodillic government. Thus while they remain instructive to understanding the cultural milieu in which they were written, their credibility as primary sources is dubious. The Nordic peoples credit [Ysgrammor](#), their arch-father with adopting writing from falmeric scripts and suitably name him "the First Historian." As in so many ways, Ysgrammor proved the exception rather than the rule. The practice of writing and record keeping remained uncommon among early Atmoro-Nordic society. It was not until the reign of King Harald and the theological collision of Nordic Totem-worship and proto-Alessian Eight Divines (prior to the codification of the Alessian Order into a strictly monotheistic cult) that writing became widespread within Skyrim.

This makes the Thegainvalde, or the Lay of Thegaine, all the more important for its rarity. Thegaine was a Merethic/early First Era explorer who chronicled firsthand the Atmoran invasion of Tamriel. Unlike the apocryphal [Songs of the Return](#), which were written much later and serve to elevate the deeds of those early Atmoran warbands, the Thegainvalde provides a glaringly honest depiction of the deeds of the Five Hundred Companions. One need only look to the author's conflicted depiction of the central figure, [Ylgar Ysgrammored](#) (second son to Ysgrammor), to understand the truth of this. Ylgar is portrayed alternately heroic and cruel, wise and impulsive. He is impressively human, bearing little of the Nordic hero-myth which would come about (and remain after) the Second Era.

The origins of Thegaine are unknown, although scholars believe him to be a warrior or a retainer to the Five Hundred Companions. No established Nordic geneologies trace their lineage to Thegaine, which implies that

either his line was ended or that he did not bear noble blood (hence a retainer). If so, he was a retainer of some importance, for his personal relationship with the blind prince is apparent even to the casual reader. In the years that followed the initial invasion, Thegaine fought and followed Ylgar through his initial conquests against the Falmer. Secondary to Ylgar in importance is an object which Thegaine calls [the Eye](#), which is almost a character in itself. Summarily named The Eye, The Jewel, The Jewel of the Falmer, The Eye of the Falmer (bearing no relation to the famous moonstone jewels of the same name), and Hoflahgolz (an untranslatable Atmoran name), this singular gem acts as the focus and passion of Ylgar. It is unknown whether such a gem exists, although given the otherwise apparent veracity of the source I am inclined to believe it did. Certainly it presents a credible casus belli for the Atmoran campaigns, if one were ever needed.

Ylgar's first campaign against the Falmer, the armistice, and his second campaign make up the first book of the Thegainvalde. The second book begins some time later, when Thegaine has begun his journeys across Tamriel. These writings make up the majority of the work, and document his interactions with many of the great nation-states of that time, including the Ayleid kings, the oligarchic Orsimium magistrate, the Camoran kingdom, the splintered Kahjiti Mane-autocracies, and even various interactions with ancient Argonian tribes.

The Thegainvalde was not published, but was recovered almost in its entirety by Umberto Saugandra of the Antiquarian Circle in Solitude, Skyrim. It was not found in a tomb as might be expected, but in a cache buried on a hillock overlooking the southern bank of the Yorgrim tidal delta, just south of Windhelm. It was written on multiple journals, with remarkably little damage given the age of the work. Some pages had been removed, apparently intentionally, either by the author or by another. These gaps are noted. A deeply personal work, the Thegainvalde is presented in as honest a translation as possible.

Signed

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Book 1, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 1 OF 65

It befell in the days of [Ysgrammor](#) Arch-Father who held rule over all the Elder Wood that there was a devilry in the south who held war against his colonies, and harried them cruelly. Then Ysgrammor came to his palace in Jykulfryk (which was joined from the mighty bows of a Green-Pine in days before number) and spoke unto his captains and said:

“Long have our kinsmen across the grey sea suffered under the barbs of snow-demons, but fought they proud and lusty. I know this for I have fought and labored with these proud, as to the lowest and meanest among them have I toiled and bled. For I love you as I love mine own, dear captains, and my heart is thick with whale-fat. And bearing this love do I bring grave news. The covetous, who hunger for gold and furs and works of clever-craft, came in force upon our State two moons ago. They sought the war-gaze of our [Eye](#), which belongs by right of founding to we thicket-men! Many Snake-bound lie red beneath the snow this day, forsaken even the property of a burial pyre. Naught but your father and your brothers, Hawk-borne swift were sent across the sea to you.

“Therefore I say, gather your axes, the fairest and keenest. Gather your bows, and set your hammers and carvers to fletch-craft. Dry you mounds of whale-fat and spread the oil upon your ships. Make each of you a gift to [Shor](#), and let it be no less than six wolves. And when one year has passed and you have bid your arrangements complete, then bring you Sons and Daughters of the Wood to me an army. There is wet-work to be done.”

And so his captains went, as far as to Forelgrim, and Hrisskar’s Wood, and even to Krykandakthorin where the air is dark.

Book 4, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 4 OF 65

It befell in the days of [Ysgrammor](#) Arch-Father who holds all the world under the breadth of his shield that at last a peace was made with the Snow Prince. Four months were they harried at bowshot, and were mastered under swift-seeking arrow. The Devils, ice-tongued debaters, made war cunning-craftily of cold and wind and snow. But ill-bred were these to raise shields against the sons of Mora, for they are born the very same. So passed three ships, long-keeled, to the harbor of the Morning's Star and there held port while the larger axes advanced. The enemy made fast the sea, white-stilled, and rose walls thereupon, and made for siege-work. Then [Ylgar](#), who was chief captain and battle-thinker, came to his father and said "Our position is dire, our lines weakened, our axes blunted. We can neither endure counterattack, nor mount attack from land or sea. Yet our enemy knows nothing of this. Let me speak in strength with the devils and make peace to our advantage."

Then said Ysgrammor Arch-Father "Far-seeing be your mind's eye my son, I warrant farther than mine axe-haft. My blood is redder than yours, and I would not bear clever-works against these devils. But your eyes are owl's, and I will hold what counsel is laid at my feet."

To which the Battle-Thinker replied "Your blood is redder by far father; mine is cold and binding as pack-ice. But think you not I have forgotten our red-vow, I desire nothing but odds with this petty prince. Let me pluck again the [Eye](#), torn once from your own socket, and ever after will these devils falter and stumble and trouble us no more."

So Owl-Eyed Ylgar was clad in the raiment of peace, and went he nude and blue-tongued to the fortress of the devils. But they would not meet with him in sum, and brought forth upon the ice a delegation of twenty priests and confederates so that they might consider his terms. And Ylgar spoke, fox-like, and said "So you have come in small counsel, no doubt so that your own might not hear our argument, even-tempered and measured, and that they might not lower arms against your wishes. Now suppose that you few who come here should make an assurance, that we may speak calm as lake-fish and not quarrel over every consistency, and that if you should have quarrel that you say it in due time, and that we may speak plain and not in politic. Is it agreed?"

And the Snow-Prince said "None now find fault with calm presentation of argument. But find we fault in your present stance, and we suppose that you will make war upon us whatever our posture. Therefore fear we that you should make present judgement to your favor, neither entertaining our pleas nor demands."

And Ylgar said “Differ we in wit, as is natural and understandable, for bear we recourse to many fine-honed arguments. But now we make no fine phrases, neither claiming [Kyne](#)-right by sanctity of voice, nor by honor of history, nor of lineage. These are but word-knots, unfit for princely lips. Cast about your cleverness and know this truth: that we are too strong for you, and so do what we wish while you must suffer what we bear.”

And the Snow-Prince said “Then if you will allow no concept of justice, and so reduce us to self-interest, nonetheless we argue that it is against both our interests to fight, for much needless blood shall spill. But if you will allow a measure of law, we will renew that we have done you no wrong which has not been compensated manyfold.”

And Ylgar said “Bring you two-handed arguments, and we will answer them by turn. Firstly that you say we allow no justice; this is false. Let it be at present that justice is ours to define. Our law is jeweled, many-faceted. We have dealt rubies, yet hear now another face. Second, you say our actions overstep your provocations, but though this hold in corpse-cutting, you still maintain war-spoils. You know of which I speak, cruel-theft of mine own father’s brow. Without this return there can be no peace.”

And the Snow-Prince said “Speak you of Magnia-et-BalEn, the Echo Stone, Third before even White-Gold, raised by the song of my ancestors in times forgotten. That you should set eyes upon such heaven is a blasphemy, that you should claim ownership is beyond absolution.”

And Ylgar said “Nonetheless.”

Then the Snow Prince took counsel with his clergy, set between two incalculable losses. The devil-priests spoke words of soothe to the Ice-Prince, that the Eye was imperturbable, that whatsoever the Sons of Mora should attempt would be surely turned against them by the living will of Magnus. And in opposition, that they faced immediate loss this moment and that if they should be overrun then they would lose the Eye regardless. So the Prince relented, for he loved his people dearly and could not abide their slaughter. With his hand he plucked out his right Eye, and when he did he stumbled, and reaching out Ygar caught him by the wrist and held him a moment. And with the left hand he took the Eye and wordlessly returned across the ice.

Book 5, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 5 OF 65

(Page located in a “library” within the [Schism](#) beneath Solitude)

“Herein is the account of [Ylgar Ysgrammored](#) and his description of the [Magnia-et-BalEn](#), the Falmeric Eye. Dictated to [Thegaine](#), amended by Thegaine.

It approaches as if from a great distance, inexorable, drawing, defiant. The Eye itself is massive, larger than the masted warship even, but I hold it at length between my thumb and finger. It refuses Will done upon it, and all my efforts to that end are as water. Still, like melody half-remembering itself, or a cry beyond my hearing it describes. Describes what? There is a language that I cannot see. True language, like wyrm-tongue, but slower. Honey-speak. Perfection. This cannot go to Father, blunt, crude-mannish and headstrong. He would not understand, even as I scarcely begin to.

Here is a space of seven months, wherein Ylgar Ysgrammored was taken nigh into madness made much by study of the Eye. This is but one example of many speeches dictated to Thegaine.

Sing great architect, geometer-primus, revelation. Call out in Truth, cascading, decadent linework. Infinite polygonal! Minute precision! Sing Lord of Compasses, whose angles are secret succession, forseen infinite! Whose Will is the ten-thousandth of a degree stretched about ten-thousand years! I have begun to hear, and by hearing to chart the hyperbolas of Scripture. I begin to learn, Thegaine. See, take now into your heart a graph, macro-soidal, and lay upon it Rhythms, like tides, multiplied upon themselves, split infinite dimensionally across all axes, and you begin to see the True Shape. And when you see this, know your place within it. Then all-chartable all-calculable all-deducible infinity! Here within is a secret shape, not yet revealed, whose vector is Future. I will find it, Thegaine. I must.

Here after seven months of madness was Ylgar Ysgrammored returned, by Mara’s grace, to his senses. Now is he become dour and grave, and consults the Falmeric Eye rarely if ever. Many questions were offered on the nature of this grief, few were answered in total. Here is the meager understanding offered Thegaine, and so summarized.

The Falmeric Eye is an elven reliquary, possibly their god’s eye in actual, possibly only symbolically. Regardless, the weight of such symbolism has made it a cultural cornerstone of Falmer society, one which in loss they have despaired over. Moreover, it contains immensely powerful magics. The Prince speaks of these in riddles and circles, but this is my interpretation of his speech: The Eye is a looking-glass of sorts, like

might be kept at the prow of a ship. But instead of oceans of water, it looks across oceans of time. And just as a ship is steered by the sight of its glass, so it seems our ages -- even the earth beneath our feet -- are steered by the sight of the Eye. But whither the Prince's sight is fixed I cannot know."

Book 6, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 6 OF 65

Now is it come that a peace has been made with the Snow Prince! The exultant shout was heard and harried across ship-prows, first from those vessels returning from the Morning's Star, then to the luggage and retainer boats, and finally to the very campfires upon the Yorgim shore! The Snow Prince has retreated, and [Ysgrammor](#) Ebon-Haft has once again lashed Wuthraad to his mast. Already a great stonework has begun, and the kiln-fires burn nightly.

The devils have retreated to their mountain-fortress in the south, which they call [Falmantis](#) and we have named Monahven, to recoup their dead and recover their wounded. Even now, our axes and slings dare not approach such a tower, for it is the consolidation of their magics.

So the Arch Father has willed our own chisels and hammers to raise a keep, and a bailey, and a wall about it which shall stand as a mountain to the Sons of Mora. It is to be named Venhalm, for the wind of our breath shall blow always upon the face of our enemy.

The prison-boats are an ill prize. They ride the grey-tide by morning and night unto our harbor. [Kyne](#)'s honor demands a battle-trophy, and this was done rightly at the Morning's Star. Priests of Mara and of Kyne, and the dead-fox-priests whose names are in Sovengarde, made sacrifice of the ship Ynglatty. At the young prince's bidding, a paeon to the dead was sung, and the corpses piled among the timbers and cedar-futtocks. Even the honorable enemy were given proper burial according their custom and rank. All this was done well. Yet Stuhn's hunger is principal among many of our fathers, and such have made slave-tribute of their own conquered. Now prison-boats line our piers.

This is an ill policy, and we shall suffer for it.

Book 11, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 11 OF 65

The King is dead, long live the King.

Hoar-bearded [Ysgrammor](#) fell hotly, battle-dripping, wind-roaring. The seeing-women so foretold, hawk-eyed they cried the hour of his death across the waters of the Yorgrim. And when this hour came near, word was sent by crow and merlin to his foes, to Sinmur and Lodorr, and to Kyrnag the Cleaver, and to many others, and even to the Snow Prince himself for the chance to fell their foe in single combat.

A great host was brought under the walls of Venhalm, and an arena was constructed for the blood-letting. Kyrnag was there, and Sinmur and Lodorr, and also Unuroth and Golgarat, and Brishnak the Slaver, and Conkorrigan. There also was the Hill-King of the giants Onmulath with his mace. All came save the Snow Prince, who would not name the Arch-Father Foe.

None then were willing to face the Arch-Father first, for all similarly wished to fight him weakened and bloodied. But at last Sinmur the frost giant came forward with his sword Wind-Biter, and Ysgrammor slew him. So too he slew Golgarat with a blow to the eye which punctured the helm and the skull and the brain, and so Conkorrigan, and Qualth the Tall, and many others.

At last fell the Arch-Father upon a ten-ell corpse pile, his foe in his teeth, and none left to oppose him.

Now the [King](#) has returned from [Ylsulvin](#), in long communion with [Kyne](#), and bears in his hands a Scripture, Star-Spun. His eyes are bandaged, and speaks he only tremulously. “[The Eye](#) is a bearing, like others, upon which turns The Wheel’s hub. Thus understood, I chart our velocities across the Plane of the Ecliptic, endless potential spiral curvatures to a thousand time-spaces. This is muddy, squalid work. But I fear to grasp the Wheel and to turn it, and so reveal the name of God. [Shor](#) was the first to do this, and his are the lantern-lights of death. How much less I, who walked only briefly in his shadow?”

Book 65, Thegainvald

EXCERPTS FROM THE THEGAINVALDE, BOOK 65 OF 65

It befell in the days of [Ylgar Ysgrammored](#) that there was a mighty drake in the south who held war against him long days. Then Ylgar Grey-Eyed spoke with his knights and lords and said unto them “long have we suffered by breath of this wyrm, who holds us in tooth and claw and storm. We dare not send our armies against him for fear they should fall and we should come to ruin. So it falls to me, your king, to march against him myself and match him tongue for tongue if I may. Thus have I seen and spoken.” There was much fear and consternation among the knights and lords for they loved their king as their father. At night, [Thegaine](#) came to him and spoke soft words to soothe and succor him and entreated him to stay his journey. But Ylgar Grey-Eyed spoke and said “I am [Ylgar of Once](#) and Shall Yet Be, and my heart is firm. Take comfort, for as the smith works metal and is wrought by the metal, so shall what may come work me and be wrought by me. Upon my fingers, and my hands, and my lips I shall return to you.” Then Thegaine was soft and still and held him all the long night. And come morning, Ylgar Ysgrammored was buckled bright in harness, with gloves of supple leather. No shield he carried, but upon his breast were writ runes of surety. No helm he wore, but sang he lusty cries of war blood red. And in his hands he bore Wuuthraad, the great axe of his fathers. And with him went nought but one whose name was torn in battle, and he only to bear witness.

It came to pass that Ylgar Ysgrammored came by foot to the hills beneath [Monahven](#) which was at that time the home of [Paarthurnax](#) Fell-Song. Ylgar spoke in heavy greeting, and his voice was as wind borne from the sea. So the Grey-Eyed bid Paarthurnax the welcome of the sons of Mora, keen-biting. And when the clouds broke again, the sun-soft sky unbeaten, then came answer in dread battle-tongue. The Deep-Voiced answered, not in rage but politic, for he knew well the son of Ysgrammor. This was a great debate, and for thirteen days and thirteen nights the Ysgrammored spoke, [Kyne](#)-breathed and willful. But before every argument the drake spoke treachery and deceit, and twisted Ylgar’s words to his own ends. And the King knew that he was beaten.

Broken and exhausted, and set upon by mockery, the Grey-Eyed was soon to perish. But it is said that the son of Ysgrammor was oft of two minds, and that the one did not always know the other. Then the Mage spoke with the voice of the King, taking out of time a word never yet said, and that was Perfection, and all fell-sung theories and furies were quenched as the burning brand before the avalanche. The Deep-Voiced knew that he was lost and named the Mage “Vanquisher” and ever after were they friends, for above even might do wyrms admire cleverness.

They slept then, and when they rose they drank blood-honey and snow to quench their throats, and Ylgar spoke weakly, saying “Now are you my friend and brother, and I ask of you an indulgence. Take from me my [Eye](#), world-staying, and hide it for a time, until the doom-drum sounds again.” At this the wyrm surprised, and cautioned the Grey-Eyed, saying “This mountain is still young, prince, with many songs unsung. The

first canto is barely writ and you would silence the players?” And Ylgar Mage-King answered “Here is a pupa, moth-kindled, elven-bound and beautiful. Yet within is borne an eyas, man-roaring. And he shall work great music. But now, gentle as the piping woodflute, must this music temper for a time. And so shall this land stay, though all the world about it wriggle and dance in progress, until the drum beats a new march.”

And the drake did as he was bid.