



Hi all and welcome to the 41st issue of Pagan World!

Has anyone noticed that this begins our 11th year of Pagan World with me as its editor? Pretty cool, no?

See you next issue!

Bright blessings,

Diana

April 8, 2009

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Phoenix: The Passing of a Great High Priest and Witch
by Eileen Smith, author of The Witches Heart
and Link, National Coordinator of the Pagan Federation International – USA



On August 22, 2008 the Gods welcomed home a true son of the Goddess. Phoenix, at the young age of 75, passed into the Summerland.

Together with his wife, Lady Theos, Phoenix was one of the founders of the Craft here in the United States, and his influence is felt deeply throughout the community.

Phoenix was introduced to the Craft by Ray and Rosemary Buckland, who moved to the US in 1962 and later started the first Gardnerian coven in America. Phoenix and Theos first met the Bucklands when they purchased one of Aleister Crowley's altars, known as the Boy Table, and contacted the Bucklands to help verify its authenticity. They all soon became friends. The Boy Table displayed a young man standing on his head holding the table top up with his feet. The altar came with a legend that if you rubbed the Boy's behind, your wish would come true. But we were

warned to be careful of what we wished for, as it may come to pass in strange ways.

Their friendship grew as Phoenix and Theos joined the Bucklands when they started their Gardnerian group on Long Island back in the late 1960s. This was America's very first Gardnerian coven and it help set the stage for how the Craft would develop over the years here in the US. Nearly all Gardnerians in the United States stem from that coven, Phoenix included.

Phoenix and Theos later led the group after the Buckland's marriage ended. The group became known as the Long Island Coven and it quickly took root and grew. People were drawn to Phoenix and Theos because of their knowledge and dedication. I was one of those lucky people. I first met Ray Buckland at his Witchcraft Museum in Bay Shore, New York. He put me in touch with Phoenix and Lady Theos. He said if I really wanted to learn the Craft, they were the High Priest and Priestess that could help. That changed my life.

The things I will miss most about Phoenix were his incredible wit and his keen sense of humor. When you spoke to Phoenix, he made you feel that what you had to say was important. He took time with people and was a great listener. Note how many people who were close to Phoenix commented on those same aspects when remembering him.

The first time I visited their home in Commack, Long Island, Phoenix and Theos invited me into their den for a chat and a social drink. This was no ordinary den! The first thing that I saw as I entered was the coffin coffee table. (It wasn't vacant either.) The coffin had a glass top, showing a vampire inside dressed for a formal occasion. I wasn't sure whether to place my drink on top of the coffin or lay a rose on it! Where ever you looked around their house, there was something amazing to see. Phoenix was a passionate collector of Craft artwork and magickal tools. Their home was filled with many Craft treasures.

I remember they even had real, full-sized tombstones in the back yard. Entering their home was like entering another world...

Their home was warm and very spacious; it became the perfect covenstead for the Long Island group. The home was always open and had a friendly feeling as soon as you set foot inside.

Phoenix and Lady Theos were the beginnings of the Long Island Line of the Gardnerian Tradition. There are hundreds of covens that stem from that line today. Phoenix's work in the Craft has gone far beyond what he expected and will live on for generations to come. Whether Gardnerian or not, much of the modern-day Pagan community has been touched by the work done by Phoenix and those early few in Long Island.

Lady Gillis, a member of the Long Island Coven and dear friend of Phoenix, knew him since the early days of the Craft and its first Pagan Way meeting, which served as an Outer Court training forum for Gardnerians in the 1970s. "Phoenix shared his wit, kindness, generosity and unending help," Lady Gillis explains. "There was no bad word in his resume."

Phoenix trained Lady Gillis for hours in hypnotic drawing down of the Moon. "A part of him lives in my heart and in my being." Like any influential teacher or mentor, the gifts Phoenix helped people discover will live on within them, long after he has passed.

Lady Gillis saw that his love for our Craft never wavered. The Craft might not exist today had Phoenix not fought for it, she feels. "Thirty six years ago we emerged, born from Rowen and Robat, nurtured by Theos and Phoenix," Lady Gillis explains. She visited them just before their move to Florida in 2004. Phoenix was so ill, but nevertheless, he sat in his chair joking and reminiscing like the Phoenix of olde.

Phoenix was stricken with a polio-related illness and other health problems. He was confined to a wheelchair for several years. Any of us who suffer from a disability should feel comfort, strength and self-confidence from the example set by Phoenix. In spite of his physical limitations, Phoenix reached out, did great things and touched the lives of many people, who in turn touched others, and then others...

"Cross to Avalon, beloved mentor -- you live in each breath taken by the Craft" Lady Gillis offers as a blessing.

Born in Brooklyn, New York on January 28, 1933, Phoenix was a prolific writer in both his business career and in the Craft. He authored and co-authored dozens of books and professional articles which were renowned for their humor, plays on words and strong opinions. "He'd be at the typewriter 18 hours a day," commented Theos. Phoenix spent part of his childhood in Florida, then moved back to New York as a teenager. He was married to Theos for 54 years and they had eight children and ten grandchildren together. They moved to Florida in 2004.

As you stand in Circle next Samhain, please join us in remembering Phoenix. Listen for his laughter and look for the gleam in his eye. We will all miss him greatly.

(Eileen Smith was initiated into the Gardnerian Tradition by Lady Theos and Phoenix in 1973. She has spent over 30 years teaching others. She is the author of *The Witches' Heart*, an insightful grimoire of the EarthGuard Tradition.

The Baal Shem Tov & Wandering in Heaven
Submitted by Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD

Getting on for three hundred years ago, in a remote hut in the Carpathian Mountains, there lived a wonder-worker named Rabbi Israel. He was born in 1700 in Okup and died in 1760 in Medzibuz.



Some now say that he never existed; the like has been said of King Arthur and of Jesus Christ; their legends remain with us. Some say that Israel was never a rabbi, but rather an unlearned peasant who took authority unto himself. It is told that even as a child he deserted the village schoolroom to run into the woods where he learned the speech of animals and birds, of trees, stones, and flowers [In other words, he can be said to have had a “shamanic” upbringing].

A grown man, he knew all the secret mysteries of Cabbala; but he refused to lead the stifled life of the synagogue scholar, and withdrew to the mountains, where he earned his livelihood as a lime-burner, and where he would wander alone, sometimes for many days, absorbed in his strange reflections. [In other words, on what can perhaps best be described as the equivalent of “vision quests”].

When Israel came down from the mountains to Medzibuz it was to teach men to live with abounding joy, for joy in every living thing, he said, is the highest form of worship. The woods were holy, and the fields, every stone and blade of grass contained a spark of the living Soul; every act of living: breathing, eating, walking should be accomplished with fervour, joy, ecstasy, for every act spoke to God.

He did not violate tradition; he enlarged it. He was observant of every point of the law, and he revered the house of prayer; but he said again that divinely simple truth that becomes lost in the ritual of every religion; he said that the full-hearted desire to worship was more important than the form or place of worship.

Disciples gathered about him; soon legends began to grow of the wondrous deeds and teachings of Rabbi Israel, and then he was called the Baal Shem Tov, which means the Master of the Wondrous Name. By that Name, he had the power to do miraculous deeds. He went from one end of the earth to the other in the space of a single night; he conquered the wild boars that the sorcerers set upon him; he pierced the iron wings that shrouded the earth from heaven; he drew the dead bride from her untimely grave.

For a thousand years the Jewish folk genius for the creation of myth had made no new body of legend. But now the genius that had made the unsurpassable tales of the bible and the gem-like parables of the Talmud was turned back to its natural sources, and at once it began to weave the marvelous fabric of the legend of the Baal Shem Tov.

He stood in the market-place, telling his fables to the entranced people who gathered about him while the rabbi of the town preached to an empty synagogue. In their huts of a Sabbath, his followers repeated the strange meaningful fables he had uttered, and told tales of the miraculous deeds he had done. Pilgrims came to Medzibuz, and carried home with them the tales of the Baal Shem Tov. Soon his followers numbered in the hundreds, and they became known as the Chassidim. The word Chassid implies intense piety, ardour, fervour, ecstasy.

Despite the opposition of many noted rabbis, who accused him of ignorance, of wizardry, of Sabbath-violation, the number of Israel's followers grew, for his teaching had that beautiful simplicity that goes directly to the hearts of the common folk. The secrets and delights of heaven were no longer reserved for the scholars who could pass all their days and nights in the house of study; the water-carrier and the mule-driver could gather around the long table in the hut of the Master, and take part in the discussion.

Folk literature has two sources. The tales may grow imperceptibly as they pass among the people, each teller adding his words, until the image is complete; or they may be made in entirety by one who is so completely within his folk as to speak with the voice of the entire people. The Chassidic legend is drawn from both these sources.

The legends of the Baal Shem Tov have no single authorship; they were made partly from the Baal Shem's sayings, partly by story-tellers who went from town to town repeating the tales; one of the legends is concerned with what happened to such a storyteller. Later, the tales were written down, and to this day they are circulated by the hundreds of thousands in little penny-story-books printed in every city of Poland and Russia. Many generations of Jewish children had no other Arabian Nights than these Chassidic tales, whose glamorous adventures they absorbed while their parents discussed the deep meanings concealed in the same fables. At last scholars, philosophers, and literary men discovered the legends, and such masters as Israel Zangwill, Sholom Asch, S. Ansky, and the German poet-philosopher Martin Buber have made use of them.

And here is one of those very same tales, the story of how the Baal Shem Tov left this reality:

The Wandering in Heaven

DURING the day, the Master served all living creatures. From far away they came, begging Life of him; supplicating voices flowed from the mouths of all breathing beings, and the breath of their suffering reached toward him.

He took of his Power, and divided it among them. Unendingly he gave his strength out of himself. Unendingly his Faith flowed to them, in answer.

Under the touch of his finger the wounds of the world were healed.

During the day, he served all living creatures. But at night his soul took freedom. She



would no longer remain among the suffering. She shook off time and space as two imprisoning fetters, and raised herself to the borders. She shook off the earth from her foot. She tried her wings. And the Heavens received her.

In Heaven, there is neither time nor space, but infinity and eternity. Each night the soul went further into infinity, deeper into eternity. She followed the living path.

But there came one night when a wall of earth stood before the soul, barring her way. Boundless as had been her flight, so was the barrier boundless. The living path came against the wall, and died. A dark finger had put out all the light of all the stars and covered the warmth of all heaven.

And the wall had a countenance, formless and shadowy, yet it seemed to the soul to be more familiar than her own self. And the soul recognized it, for it was the face of the human life that she had left in the evening, and to which she had to return in the morning, as into a warmed bed.

But from the other side of the wall there wakened a sound, a great voice in the darkness. It was as though the Path lived again on the other side of the wall, and wakened and spoke:

The Voice of the Unknown spoke:

"Soul, yearning soul, soul of power and of dreams. Soul that seeks for all things, space and infinity, object and mystery at once! This is the boundary. Here is the altar of the world. Beyond this boundary, human life may not pass, for the name of this place is God's Wall.

"Unto this spot reaches variety. Beyond this spot, the Oneness begins.

"Soul that has come unto this silent, impenetrable wall-

"Sever yourself from earthly life, and I will open to you. Or return in your flight. For whoever has passed beyond me, does not return."

And the Voice sank. And again there was nothing before the soul but the dim, silent wall.

The soul lifted her head. For the space of an instant she stood, as though listening to the resounding word, and then she spoke her answer:

"I depart from the—"

In that instant, on earth, a woman leaned over a bed in which lay the body of a man. She looked, she touched the pale deathlike sleeper. Then she cried, "Israel!"

Her cry flew straight to Heaven. Her cry was swifter than the spirit of the stars, swifter than the angel of death. Before that instant was closed, the cry stood at the end of the Path upon which the soul had passed so many nights, and the cry put his hand over her shoulder.

Then the soul withheld her words, and looked behind herself. And she spoke no more. She put her arm about the neck of the messenger, and returned in her flight.

That was the last time the Master wandered toward Heaven.

The introduction to the Baal Shem Tov and the story above were both taken from Levin, M (1932) *The Golden Mountain: Marvellous Tales of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem and of his great-grandson, Rabbi Nachmann retold from Hebrew, Yiddish and German Sources*, New York: Behrman House Inc. Publishers. This text is in the public domain in the US because its copyright was not renewed in a timely fashion.

Creating Your Own Mythic Animals **by Anthony Link**

When we look at the myths of old, remember that old tales were once quite new. People, not much different than you or I, created stories about animals to explain their surroundings. They dreamt of great birds that rose up from the ashes, or fire-breathing beasts who tested our courage. They lulled children off to sleep on the wings of great white horses who flew like clouds in the sky.

Today we can bring to life our own private menagerie of mythic animals. We can create our own nature tales colored with animal images -- whether a modern-day dragon, or a simple fire-fly glowing in a glass jar.

Some say story telling is a lost art. Don't believe it. Within us all lays a whole nest full of stories just waiting to hatch. Our imagination is most powerful when we share it with others. Pagans are especially adept at this; not only have we rediscovered the myths of old, but we know the power of visualization in creating something new. Think about your own beliefs and try to form a story. If you do not have a nine year old to share these stories with, pretend that you do. Can Mother Earth be a Mama Bird whose eggs are many different colors? Can magick be a caterpillar who changed into a beautiful butterfly? Can you and I be like fish swimming in the same school? You are limited only by your own imagination! (And that has no limits.)

Myth making is nothing more than making an analogy. We use symbols to make a complex idea easier to understand. In days of Old, people lived with animals as part of their everyday lives. It is natural that the poets and bards (and teachers) of the time would use magickal animals to convey their message. If animals are not part of your daily surroundings, then look around and see what you see. Perhaps a piece of office equipment as fast as a panther, or as stubborn as an ox?

You don't have to share your mythic animals with anyone. They can be your private pets, guarding your own inner secrets. Animals evoke a great deal of inner emotion for us all. Perhaps you have a saber tooth tiger standing guard over your home? Are your loved ones followed by friendly eagles, soaring high above to protect them from harm? Maybe your own private pair of Ravens circle the world each day, reporting back what they see to assist in your search for the perfect mate, career, or home?

Want to create something special? Many mythic animals are mixtures: part human, part beast, part bunny, part bird. In your own private petting zoo, you make the rules. You too can combine attributes to meet your specific need. Perhaps you need the courage of a lion, coupled with the speed of a hawk to meet that next deadline? Take out a pen and sketch what this creature might look like. Doing so makes it more real. If you do not like to draw, then use your "inner easel" and imagine the animal. Hear its mighty roar; feel its wings rush. (And then get to work - you have a deadline to meet!)



If you do not wish to create your own mythic animals, you can use a variety of symbols already on hand. One modern-day American myth tells about the great battle that happens every four years, where the Elephant battles the Donkey. Obviously these

symbols represent the U.S. political process with both Republicans and Democrats. Mythic animals also exist within our economy. A Bull Market charges ahead and grows. But the period of decline is likened to hibernation and called a Bear Market. Can these be symbols for cycles of change? How do these cycles fit into your own life?

Once your mythic animals become real, you can work with them in a variety of ways. I have heard stories of people dreaming about a certain animal just before the outbreak of a recurring medical condition. The dream became an early warning to signal the need for medical care. Language is nothing more than agreeing on a set of symbols. Ask your own inner vision, your subconscious, your spirit guides, your ancestors to speak to you in a way you will understand. Set up a lexicon of symbols to use going forward - and look for those which have already been used within your own past.

One day when I was nine years old, a little bird whispered in my ear. It had bright blue wings, with tail feathers shaped like spirals. Above its head glowed a small flame like that of a votive candle. Its voice was young and soft and sounded just like my own. It told me I can fly. You can fly too!

Book Review by Morgana:

Working with the magical forces of the Druid Tradition.
Philip & Stephanie Carr –Gomm, Illustrated by Will Worthington:
www.connections-publishing.com

I have worked with the Druid Animal Oracle and found it to be most inspirational. Of course I was really interested to see if the Druid Plant Oracle was similar in feel. I have not been disappointed.

This pack that contains 36 cards (and 3 blanks) and a 144-page illustrated book is in keeping with the earlier work. And it would certainly serve as a welcome addition to the Animal Oracle. The cards are large format with brightly but naturally coloured illustrations. The plants illustrated are distinct and can be used for meditational purposes as well as for readings.

33 cards represent wild plants and 3 are “collective cards”. One set is The Banes (Wolfsbane, Henbane & Hemlock) and are “deadly plants that also offer gifts if used wisely”. Another set is the Guardians’ (Elder, Hawthorn and Birch) and are trees “which act together as preservers of our health.” And one set the Restorers ((Roseroot, St. John’s Wort and Valerian) “a trio of ancient and indigenous plants of the Druid sourcelands, which act to restore the balance between body and soul.”

In the book there are suggestions for different layouts or spreads. These are the same ones used in the Animal Oracle so I was already familiar with them. I rather like the “Pentagram Spread” which deals with different aspects of the question – that is from an elemental perspective. This can often give you an idea of where the different forces are in play.

However you can just lay out the cards and chose one or two as an answer to your question. A fantastic set of cards that you can play around with and let them work on you. Philip and Stephanie have created a wonderful oracle that brings the archetypal forces of the plants to you. A wonderful gift!

**YEARLY CONFERENCE PFI-PORTUGAL
November 22, 2008**

PAGANISM: A NATURAL RELIGION

by Thorg da Lusitânia

Translated by Sara Timóteo

Good afternoon to all present. Today I am going to talk about Paganism as a natural religion and also its' founding principles and convictions that distinguish and define it as a religion with a set of precepts and principles, as it always has been, even in such troubled and tragic periods as the persecution times that culminated with the Inquisition's institution. Without those precepts and principles, that is, strong rules and convictions (in a word, beliefs) we could not have survived the burning fires. But we did survive and in this New Age, in which religious freedom exists, I respectfully remember those who fought for that freedom or gave their lives for it, because not once have they never denied their beliefs under torture.

In fact, it was their solid conviction regarding the right to express freely but responsibly their beliefs that allows me to stand here today to express the founding and contemporary principles of the Old Religion – Paganism.

As Pagans and followers of the Old Religion, we see ourselves as Pantheists and Polytheists. We recognize in the Divine the superior cause of which the Creation is a consequence and to which we «re-connect» through ethical and ritualistic precepts.



As Pantheists we believe that Nature is sacred and we think of it as a Manifestation of the Divine, so for us Matter is as sacred as Spirit, because only through Matter can we be aware of a spiritual existence. That explains why consider Matter sacred and we honour it in our rituals, being itself often the place chosen for conducting our cult and veneration ceremonies.

As Polytheists we feel that the Divine, despite being one in itself as Nature is, similarly to Nature, diverse in its manifestation. That belief allows us to admit the existence of several Gods and Goddesses that inspire our knowledge and favour a better understanding of Creation. We also believe that Creation has had its origins, as the mythologies suggest, in different but complementary «Creative Powers/Forces» emerging from a void of indistinctness known as the «Primordial Ocean» or the «Static Abyss» that contains all regardless of distinction.

Those «Creative Powers/Forces» are humanly felt and assimilated metaphorically as a manifestation of the God of the Sky and of the Goddess Mother of the Earth, or plainly as the Goddess and the God. That is why we believe women and men have equal rights.

As a Natural Religion we stand for a deeper Harmony between Man and Nature and its' cycles so that we can better understand its greatness, its founding reason to exist and what sustains it, as well as the role played by Mankind and by each and everyone of us, as a spiritual and physical being, in that evolutive process – Creation. This perception of an evolutionary Creation is sustained by the mythologies. That is the

main reason for us to see the Old Religion as a dynamic, non-deterministic religion that assists Mankind since the beginning of a spiritual awareness as the primary cause where everything that is returns once its cycle is completed and through which Man «re-connected» by making use of magickal-religious rituals.

Besides Nature as a source of inspiration we also have myths and texts that sustain our doctrines and beliefs. Such texts and myths are a result of thousands of years of existence and they inspire our thoughts and meditation practices.

These texts are generally known as: Sumerian or Mesopotamic, Egyptian, Indo-European, Celtic, Northern, Slavic, Greek or Roman Mythologies, besides others that due to geographic boundaries are somewhat less visible in our European idiosyncrasies: Chinese, Japanese, Mayan, among others. For us, such myths represent an ancestral legacy and they provide us some insights as to how the ancestors saw and understood the spiritual world and connected themselves with the Divine, throughout the Ages in which Paganism flourished. The Pagan times also saw the rise of great civilisations present in Sumer, Egypt, Greece and Rome (the most known by the regular European citizen and that more strongly influenced our western culture which we are a part of, despite our particular traits). Such influences are still vivid today, as we may see regarding the birth of Democracy in Athens, city that gave birth to legislators such as Solon, whose principles are still a reference for today's Paganism.

We invite you to revisit some of those principles that somehow managed to be very useful today to the individual's harmonious development, and by extension, to the community he/she happens to be a part of:

Solon's Laws/ Principles/ Commandments

- Trust good character more than promises.
- Do not speak falsely.
- Do good things.
- Do not be hasty in making friends, but do not abandon them once made.
- Learn to obey before you command.
- When giving advice, do not recommend what is most pleasing, but what is most useful.
- Make reason your supreme commander.
- Do not associate with people who do bad things.
- Honour the Gods.
- Have regard for your parents.



Besides Solon, others deserve our reverence by their thoughts and principles, namely the philosophers Socrates, Plato and his concepts regarding the Gods and the supra-sensitive world; Aristotle that postulates in his work about the Metaphysics the sacredness of Nature, stating that spirit is an integral part of matter (Pantheism).

The mythologies are the foundation of our doctrines and convictions and constitute by themselves a reference for the ritualistic precepts and magickal-religious ceremonies that we use to «re-connect» to the Divine. Even though these canon-law exist, there is

not a ritualistic dogma, but only ritualistic patterns that define some expressive Traditions such as: Wicca, Druidism, Asatru (Northern Tradition), Classical, Celtic or Iberian Tradition. Those Traditions are reunited in small groups, respectively Covens, Groves, Heathen, Circles and Cuevas. There are also, paired with these more traditionalist groups, some others of a more eclectic and popular nature, turning Paganism in one religion united by its convictions but diverse in the manifestation of the same beliefs through individual or communitarian manifestations, from rituals that pervade the cults honouring local or regional



Deities to the spiritual expressions of New Age movements. These differences are thought of in Paganism as a natural reflex of the diversity of Mankind that in turn reflects the multiplicity of Nature from which we are born and of which we consider ourselves as «sons/daughters», metaphorically speaking. This attitude regarding difference causes us pagans to be more tolerant and understanding towards different ethnicity, religion(s), sexuality or others, if we are respected in our beliefs and not by making of them an «expiatory goat» and a motive for persecutions, torture and burning that submitted us unto a secret religion for centuries.

Having regard for others is implicitly contained in the golden rule of Gerald Gardner, one of the references more recent of the Old Religion, as well as Doreen Valiente. Both of them were precursors of the Wiccan/Pagan movement and stood for religious freedom in the middle of the 20th century in Great Britain and consequently contributed for the recognition of Paganism as a religion.

This principle states that our individual freedom has boundaries and that those boundaries are the others. We have the responsibility for our own actions and we have to make sure that those actions are of harm none deliberately, because if they do we will have to face their consequences.

Gardner and this principle convey an old spiritual knowledge that should be consciously present in all of us and that we can synthesize in the following statement:

“All in us is recorded, as insignificant as it may seem, molding our character and originating the impulse for the next action and thus contributing for the “Being” that we are”.

We should then think about the message Gardner left us: “An it harm none, do as Thou wilt.”

With this principle of “Freedom with responsibility” I finish my lecture where I tried to present objectively the contemporary foundations and convictions of Paganism as a religion. I hope my explanation was clear to all present and I thank you for your attendance and attention.

New Expressions of Spirituality Conference,
November 6-11 2008, Szeged, Hungary
Contemporary Trends and Approaches to Neopagan Studies
by Anna Marie Dostalova

The conference, which took place in a lovely hotel in the college city of Szeged, Hungary, was sponsored by the Re-Dial Association for the Study of Religions in cooperation with the relevant department of the University of Szeged. I'd like to summarize some of the most interesting discussions related to Neopaganism for the readers of *Pagan World*.

Is Druidry an indigenous religion? With this challenging question, Suzanne Owen (Edinburgh) argued convincingly that if we rethink the common, merely political definition of "indigenous religions", as promoted by the United Nations, this can well be a true statement. The definition, as she explained, should rather refer to the close relationship with local landscape. By comparing a British Druid group and a Native New Foundland community, she showed a range of similarities between contemporary Native American revivalists and Neopagan Druids, even though there are still some key differences to keep in mind.

Among the highlights of the full-length lectures was the presentation given by Marion Bowman (UK), an anthropologist, who has been field-researching "the Glastonbury phenomenon" and its exports to other European countries for ten years. She defended the need for a localized perspective in the study of religious phenomena and showed us how Glastonbury is situated mythologically, geographically, historically and how, for example, the local Catholic and High Church Anglican traditions of religious processions have influenced the more famous Goddess movement. Recently, an attendee of the remarkable 2004 Annual Goddess Conference has settled down in Budapest and started an analogous initiative, which Bowman continues to observe. Graham Harvey (UK), on the other hand, embraced a more narrative and philosophical approach in his lecture. He personally discourages the use of such concepts as "world" or "new" religions since, he feels, these aren't the most important characteristics of the movements commonly addressed so. He criticized the academical construct of Christianity as a monolithic religion, which produces unhealthy contrasts in comparison. Also the word "polytheism", embraced dearly by some Neopagan movements, was coined in monotheist circles to describe traditions alien to them, thus contain a load of pre-conceptions which might not necessarily be useful for the study of "polytheisms".

He perceives a tension between "esoteric" and "indigenous" tendencies in Neopaganism. Also, with all these concepts in mind, he noted that there are three major modes of localization in the movement: Neopaganism as a world religion, partially localized as in the reversed Wheel of the Year in the Southern Hemisphere, or totally localized such as when Pagan groups develop cults of local natural features like rivers or mountains.

When it comes to cultural prejudice, I was personally impressed by Polish presenter Dorota Hall who, in her field research among New Agers, concluded that the Western originating term with all its related studies might be of limited use in Central Eastern European context.

Why? Most importantly, we don't share a common recent history, so the whole phase of New Age movement's history was omitted due to the Iron Curtain. This was also the case for pre-war occult milieu which was effectively pushed underground and

persecuted by the totalitarian regime. She pointed out that local expressions of holistic spirituality under the Communist regime remain comparatively unexplored. Also, the holistic expressions of new spirituality, such as faith healing, divination and belief in spiritual beings, have many more parallels in the traditionally Catholic and Orthodox countries, which they lack in Protestant lands where the whole New Age theory was coined. The researcher quoted Polish attendees of a New Age festival who could organically merge the concepts derived from local Catholicism, such as Divine Providence or Biblical quotations, with their practice of *reiki* or the miraculous cult of an Indian guru. The boldest statement would indeed be that only the language has changed among Polish New Agers, who remain devout Catholics in their self-image.

I presented an overview of the short history of Neopagan movement in my homeland, the Czech Republic, and pointed out several local specifics that make our country a captivating topic of research. Namely that the Neopagan movement, unlike in other Central Eastern European countries, lacks any pre-war continuity, which makes it a first generation movement. These demographics, common among New Religious Movements, possess some inherent challenges, such as intensified social homogeneity which influences the movement's ability to develop pluralist strategies in order to become truly inclusive.

Among the more positive local specifics I listed the lack of nationalism and a single dominant sense of ethnicity expressed in Neopagan reverence for the Ancestors – there are both Slavic, Norse and Celtic revivalists who can find support for their beliefs even in the actual history of the country, which was colonized by all three ethnics. This leads me to the hypothesis that the Czech Republic is a peculiar “crossroad” of cultural influences where the Eastern and Western types of Neopaganism intermingle.

Scott Simpson, “an honorary Pole”, presented us with a captivating analysis of the circular drinking rite among Polish Pagans which has both traditional roots and resembles the modern Asatru *sumbel*. From studying the basic functions of ritual he concluded with certain surprise that the most remarkable feature of Neopagan rituals is *innovation*, rather than the more commonly treated educational and social cohesion enhancing functions.

His colleague Piotr Wiench, introduced us to his primary research subject, the Neopagan reconstructionisms which he considers, as a sociologist, to be a conservative reaction against modernity fuelled mostly by nationalism.

No discussion about new spirituality would be quite complete without a mention of the phenomenon of our age – the Internet. Tomas Gal (Slovakia) explored the social utopia dimension of early online subcultures. Another provocative thesis was presented by Daren Kemp (UK) who compared postmodern spirituality with globalized economy. Some of the other topics discussed methodological issues of New Age study, inclusion of spirituality into psychotherapy, survey of religious attitudes in Sweden, faith groups in climate change campaign and public ecological ritual, and Pagan elements in the popular Anastasia and Vissarion movements.

*The list of abstracts can be found at <http://www.reuropa.org/spirit2008/abstracts.html>. The author of this report, Anna Marie Dostalova, is a religious studies student at Charles University of Prague and independent researcher in contemporary religion. Known under her Pagan name Noira, she is a local Pagan webmaster and active member of *Ár nDraoicht Féin: A Druid Fellowship*. She can be contacted via her tradition's website at <http://adf.davnyobycej.cz>.*

NEWS FROM PFI
An Interview with Rawimir, NC for PFI Poland

Morgana: Hallo Rawimir, You have been the NC for PFI Poland since 2007. How are things developing in Poland?

R: The Polish pagan community is bigger and older than PFI in Poland. At the beginning it was grouped around Internet lists such as Wicca-pl, neo-pagans two-pl and wicca-abc or few Internet forums. We talked about the Pagan movement, which started with developing of Internet communications. Earlier in Poland the only thing that was present (or was visible) were the Slavonic Pagan Groups which as I think are still bigger than others e.g. Wiccan (in fact eclectic Wiccan), Druidic, Nordic, Germanic, Baltic Pagans groups. So, when we started PFI activity in Poland, our country wasn't without Pagan interest. We have had much information about Polish and Western Paganism. Enenna's websites, wicca.pl and 3jane, birch.wicca.pl give a good insight into Wicca in Western Europe and America. For a few years they had been the only solid source of information. The history of the establishment of PFI in Poland has been a little funny. It was somewhat accidental. One day I decided to be a member of PF, so I wrote an email to PF in London. In that time I didn't know about PFI. They redirected my e-mail to you. You asked "your men" in Poland, Boann and Dagda if they had heard about me. By accident I was a student of their Wicca 101 group. They confirmed, that they knew me and recommended me as potentially PFI NC in Poland. So we started to collaborate. I must say that they both have helped me a lot to organize the first events. Now we have about twenty members and I believe we do some good work for Pagan community in Poland with our events and regular moots.

M: Can you tell us a bit about the events you have organized?

R: In Poland one should make distinction between two things: Polish Pagan Community and Polish Branch of PFI. The members of PFI are in a minority but I believe a meaningful minority. As PFI PL we started our activity in the Summer 2007. The first event organized by PFI in Poland was Dianic workshops in Warsaw in August 2007 provided by Linde and Ron from Germany. Then we organized a conference in November 2007. I think you have remembered it. (Yes! I was there,--Morgana ☺) About that same time we started to organize pub moots in a few Polish cities. Now we have monthly moots in Warsaw (each last Thursday of the month), in Poznan (each last Friday of the month) and also in Gdansk (Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot) and Wroclaw if we feel we want to. In 2008 we organized only one event. It was the conference in Poznan in May 2008, which was quite popular in Polish circumstances. From the beginning of our activities in Poland we established a PFI PL forum (forum.paganfederation.pl). That was a few months before the PFI forum was operational. So today our forums are linked to each other but they are not integrated. I think it'll be a potentially good project for the future. The PFI PL forum works successfully and is now one of the most important and active platforms of communication between Polish Pagans. Not all of the Polish pagans are sympathetic PFI ideas in the beginning, they all now profit from our work and have changed their opinion.

M: How do you see PFI Poland developing in the future?

R: In my opinion, the most important task is to organise a platform for contact between Polish Pagans and also between Polish Pagans and the Pagans Community abroad. The second task is very important as well because of our tradition of emigration. So we have

Polish pagans in UK, France, and Germany. Sometime they asked us to help them to find contact with local Pagans group. We want also to give possibility to learn about modern Pagan Paths in other countries. We can do it by organizing workshops in Poland with experienced people from other countries. For now, I realize that Wicca is popular and people want to know about it not only from books and web pages but also from living, experienced people. This is most important task for PFI PL for now.

M: Recently Archaeologists unearthed a Celtic village in Poland, dating from the 3rd to 2nd century BC. Can you tell us something about the pagan heritage in Poland?

R: I haven't heard anything about this. Now many archaeological digs are being made in Poland because of road building and we have found many interesting things. I'm not surprised that the Celtic remains were found. It's known fact that Celtic tribes lived in the territory of contemporary Czech and South Poland. Also there were Germanic tribes in the Northern parts. There were Vandals and Goths. Not all of them left this territory before Slavonic tribes came. So, today we are Slavonic people but in our genetic pictures there are Celtic, Germanic and Slavonic genes.

It is funny, when Biscupin, the prehistoric village in Kujawy from B.C. was discovered, Polish historians said that it was Pre-Slavonic culture and during WWII Germans tried destroyed it. But in 80's the Polish historians recognized that it wasn't pre-Slavonic. May be pre-Germanic with influences other cultures, Celtic as well?



The Slavonic tribes in territory of contemporary Poland, East Germany (until Elba), Czech and Balkan have lived since V-VII c A.D. At the beginning they lived in the territory of contemporary Ukraine and east-southern Poland (but this is not sure). The most accepted theory says that Slavonic tribes was derived from Pre- Baltoslavonic community and mixed with Iranian tribes: Sarmats and Alans, who were, maybe, warriors and priests in this new ethnic community.

The remains of pre-Germanic-pre-Slavonic contact are a few words in Slavonic in military and government areas. Some of them come from later times but some of them are really old and probably come from the time of the first contacts with Goths and Vandals. E.g. Slavonic chiefs were called "Kniaz". This is very early taken word from Germanic in the same meaning. Now it is English King or German Konig. The first historic Polish chief, Mieszko the first official title was Prince (Kniaz) of Poles and Vandals. According to the official history, the Vandals left our territory a few centuries later. So it is very probable that some of them remained here and with some Slavonic tribes became Poles.

The linguistics suppose that the name of the great Polish river Vistula comes from Celtic and its meaning is "white water" or just "water". It shows that we, European people are completely mixed ☺

M: This is fascinating and once again shows how diverse not only pagan but European history is. Many thanks for your time Rawimir and good luck with PFI Poland."

SUMMER SOLSTICE 2008 IN PORTUGAL:
by Ana Lúcia Fonseca (P.F.I. and A.C.P. member)

A meeting between pagans happened last June, on the 21st and 22nd in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. On the Saturday morning members and guests both were conducted to Aldeia de Chãs where the Summer Solstice was celebrated near the very old stones. All were cooperative and enthusiastic about cleaning and preparing the space for the ritual.



At last the ritual began: the High Priest and the Messenger approached the Sun Portals as the High Priestess, the Priestess and the Musicians (playing «adufe», a Portuguese traditional instrument) prepared themselves and the place for the purification fire and the Workers prepared all the participants to enter the sacred circle.

The casting of the circle took place as the English High Priestess Julie and the High Priest John Belham-Payne, the Workers and the Messenger for Bandua entered the space. They then started the ritual. After all the participants have been placed, the Priestess performed the water purification and the circle spun around more than once to the sound of the «adufes» with such vivacious and joyful spirit as only those who participated can describe. And the Ancient Gods were once more invoked and honoured on that land: Aerno, God of the Winds and the Sky, Vellico, Atégina, Agrarian Goddess, Nabiga Goddess of the Waters and Tuariaecus of the Forests.

And all the people present felt the manifestation of the winds as the ritual continued. The consecration of the communion drink happened so that we all could share with the Gods the sacred drink. This ritual included people from Spain, Portugal, Brazil and United Kingdom.

In the end, the High Priestess asked for peace and prosperity for Iberia while distributing some soil kindly brought from Spain by the English Priestess who lives there. We said fare-well to the Ancients, leaving the sacred circle behind in the form of a snake group who gradually had been leaving the past and returning to the present. After the ritual, a picnic allowed for a calm and soft talk between the members during the entire afternoon.

At 5 p.m. we put everything in order and prepared ourselves for the evening ritual. At sunset the solstice stone was the place chosen for the second ritual. This time, local people attended integrated on the Sun Festivities organized by the Events Commission of Chãs and so the High Priestess explained the purposes of this ancient cult and its meanings for the people who lived there before.

As the Sun disappeared leaving behind the longest day of the year, the fare-well to the Sun was performed and Goddess Treberuna was honoured through a deeply felt prayer that all listened as the «adufe» was played...

On Sunday, the members and guests who had signed for it could participate in a Tour Jeep to the Archaeological Park of Vale do Côa. Leaving Foz Côa in different jeeps headed to Canada do Inferno, the participants could familiarize themselves with those sharp and abrupt lands and beautiful landscapes that were once inhabited by the ancient people who left their marks through the enigmatic rupestrian art we had the privilege to see.

The Wheel of the Year, The Wheel of Life

**Morgana's workshop,
Barcelona February 13th 2009
by Lerdian PFI Spain.**



On 13th February P.F.I. Spain, had the honour to organize a workshop with Morgana, International Coordinator of P.F.I. with Lejiana as translator.

At the workshop, called "The Wheel of the Year – The Wheel of life" Morgana guided us through the wheel, through every festival, through every phase of the year, and the phases of our life.

In the interval from Yule to Imbolc (about 2nd February) we are protected from the winter under a fine layer of snow, where the belly of our mother protects us from the inclemencies of outside.

The first buds in the spring are the stirrings of birth and the return of life. What has been developed under the Earth bears blossom and shows its beauty.

From this moment we advance through the wheel, reaching our sexual stage of development: adolescence, at Beltane (1st May), later to reach our splendour at Lughnassad (1st August), to die symbolically, or literally, at Samhain (31st October), and then to return to be (re)born again at Imbolc.

Morgana noted two different "wheels" in this cycle; the seasons of the year, in which each festival takes a step to a new stage, and another one in the scale of the life, assigning to each period the duration of 7 years. Once the wheel has turned full circle, the new birth corresponds to retirement (about 56 years of age) like a second wake up. The wheel turns a second "round".



The resemblance between the annual cycles and the "Rites of Passage" demonstrate the universality of these stages, that they are more than just random classification, and are based on the most stable cycles of our society; natural cycles and agriculture.

These four crucial points – the so-called "Cross Quarter Days" – are related to agriculture. These are connected to the lunar cycle and associated symbolism,. The other four points that are connected to the Sabbats, based on the solstices and equinoxes, are obviously solar related.

Nevertheless, although the festivals are celebrated at relatively concrete astronomical dates, we shouldn't forget that the agricultural festivals, solar and lunar, are related to the sun, the moon, and the planet earth as with many other subjects.

In agriculture it is not the concrete date that determines the moment, for example, for gathering the grain, but the time when it actually ripe and this can differ from place to

place. In the same way it happens to the rest of events of our life. The baby will be born in the same way when he's prepared for it, and the young person will mature when his experience and consciousness have evolved.

Morgana showed us that the cycles, annual or of our own life, are unpredictable and shouldn't be predicted, and can only be compared for own comparison, and not to determinate which is better or more correct than the other. A cereal does not grow here in the same way at the other end of the planet and it is the same with people.

Equally the festivals, their symbolism and the celebration will vary according to the zone, the climate, traditions and customs.



Like Dion Fortune says in the book *The Mystic Qabalah*; "The western man must find the roots of his traditions in his own lands. Neither the body, physiologically, nor the mind, psychically, are prepared to assimilate something from we are totally uprooted."

From P.F.I. Spain we want to thank Morgana and Lehijana, for her support, effort, and the unforgettable weekend that we shared with them. And to all the assistants, at the workshop and also at the Pub Moot, and our members and the support given and the confidence shown in us and in our work.

Book Review by Morgana
Plant Spirit Wisdom- Shamans and Sin Eaters by Ross Heaven
O-books <http://www.o-books.com>

I was rather intrigued by the subtitle of this book "Shamans and Sin Eaters". I'm afraid I wasn't familiar with the term "Sin Eater". According to this book it is "a Celtic expert in healing the soul through shamanic ritual and spiritual healing". And according to Wikipedia:

*"The term **sin-eater** refers to a person who, through ritual means, would take on by means of food and drink the sins of a deceased person, thus absolving his or her soul and allowing that person to rest in peace. In the study of folklore sin-eating is considered a form of religious magic. This practice was said to have been practiced in parts of England and Scotland, and allegedly survived until modern times in Wales. Traditionally, it is performed by a beggar and certain villages maintained their own sin-eaters. They would be brought to the dying person's bedside, where a relative would place a crust of bread on the breast of the dying and pass a bowl of ale to him over the corpse. After praying or reciting the ritual, he would then drink and remove the bread from the breast and eat it, the act of which would remove the sin from the dying person and take it into himself."*

This book is Ross's account of his contact and "apprenticeship" with Adam whom he met in the 1970's. He describes Adam as a seer & poet but above all a healer of the soul. He also described himself as "transformer", that is the Sin Eater transforms energy. But the greatest transformers are the Trees and Plants.

Ross discusses the ways in which trees, herbs (including mushrooms) and the four elements can help us as healers and how we can deepen our own Shamanic understanding of the natural world. Full of practical advice, exercises and suggestions for rituals Ross gives us a glimpse into the world of the Sin Eater.

The Bat'onebi: The Spirits who live beyond the Black Sea
Submitted by Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD



The *bat'onebi* are spirits who are believed to live beyond the Black Sea and they are sent out by their superior in all directions, in order to test the loyalty of mankind. During the daytime, the *bat'onebi* move about on mules. In the evening, however, they return to the houses of the sick and reside in the bodies of the stricken. *Bat'onebi* are to be obeyed without question, as resistance only enrages them. Nonetheless, their hearts can be conquered with tenderness and caresses; thus, it is possible to protect oneself from calamity. They are said to enjoy gentle songs and the bright sound of instrumental music.

The blisters from chickenpox (*qvavili*, literally: flowers) and the redness from measles (*ts'itela*, literally: redness) are said to be signs of the arrival of the *bat'onebi*. As a rule, such infectious diseases, called "the Lords" (*batonebi*), or "the Angels" (*angelozebi*), "visited" a person once in a lifetime only, and therefore it was regarded as a sacred duty, a service to God. The people believed that some supernatural creatures, which appeared in the house, caused such diseases.

To cure the patient and keep his or her relatives from danger, it was necessary to please "the Lords" in every way possible, to make them feel good. For this it was considered helpful to use bright coloured fabrics and clothes, to keep away from strong and unpleasant odours, and also from sharp objects. The patient's relatives were not allowed to smoke, to drink alcohol, to slaughter animals, to shoot, even to speak in a loud voice and to quarrel. The people entertained "the Lords" with special songs and dances; they laid "the Lords' table" with ritual food and erected "the Lords' tree" decorated with viands and bright ribbons. When the patient was cured, the ceremony of "seeing-off the Lords" was held.

When *batonebi* came, it was also thought reasonable to pray for help to St. Barbara, to St. John the Baptist, and to St. Queen Tamara. Other efficient means of cure included a vow to take a sacrificial animal to the church, or to perform a ritual.

In preparation for the ritual, the patient's bed and room would be decorated with colourful fabrics and flowers. Visitors would wear red or white garments and walk around the sick person with presents for the *bat'onebi* in their hands. A table full of sweets and a kind of Christmas tree would be prepared for them too. If the illness became worse, the family of the patient would turn to the ritual of "asking-for-pardon" (*sabodisho*) and a *mebodishe* (a woman who has access to the *bat'onebi* and acts as a mediator) would be invited to contact them to find out what they want and to win them over. Once the patient recovered, the *bat'onebi* would then escort on their way, back to where they came from.

Even today practitioners can be found who work with the *bat'onebi*, and the following article is about one such person:

Exorcist From Gali
by Nana Abshilava

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"Otche nash, eje isi na nebesi, da svyatitsa imya tvoio, da budet carstvo tvoio.... Amin, Amin, Amin." It's the 23rd Psalm in Russian, offered up as a prayer by Iliko Rostobaya - on a mobile phone.

"I don't have right to give you an interview," he says. "I am a savior of people and I do what the God and angels tell me. They are my journalists, and it is enough."

Rostobaya is about 60 years old. He lives in Perigali (first village of Gali), in an area that the disputed Georgia once controlled before losing it to the unrecognized government of Abkhazia after a bloody civil war 14 years ago. He serves his God and cures people afflicted by batonebi (demons). Some local people call him Ilia III. (Ilia II is the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church.)

Before the war, Rostobaya was the director of the house of culture in nearby Achigvara for over 30 years. He has a wife, two sons and one daughter. He suffered from obesity for many years and at one time weighed about 150 kg (330 pounds).

He traveled to several countries looking for help, without success. In Germany they tried forcing him to drink so much cold water he couldn't eat. He also tried acupuncture. But he says he cured himself. He suffered bad dreams that tortured him until he says "batonebi" came to him. He then lost 80 kg (about 175 pounds).

There are said to be 12 types of batonebi, and each causes a different illness. The word "batonebi" in the Georgian language can be used either as the plural form for gentleman, or it can be translated as "Lord." But in Abkhazia and the neighboring Georgian province of Mingrelia, "batonebi" can sometimes mean "demon."

"I always had dreams where two men pushed me to commit suicide, and nobody could help me," Rostobaya said. "And when I awoke I wanted to kill myself. It continued for many years. Then I began to feel that I was a savior and I could cure people from batonebi."

"Before I began God's service, I was like other people. I loved women. I worked.

"Batonebi can curve a person's body. When it happens, the person doesn't understand what he does. He can kill anybody, even his child, because the devil lives in his body. But I can help them, because I am a savior. I am God's messenger. Batonebi appears because of sins which people do."

Another batonebi is blamed for the red body rash also known as German measles. According to Rostobaya, when you have the disease, you can forecast the future or predict when others will catch the disease.

He says that if people get a big batonebi, they can't bathe for 40 days, can't go into mourning, can't drink alcohol, and can't wash and iron clothes. He says their body will curve and they may even try to crawl under a sofa. He says such ill people need

comfort, music, song and dance - and their own savior. The savior plays a panduri (Georgian folk music instrument) and sings, prays and lights candles. Patients who come from afar live in his house.

Nobody knows where the batonebi legend began, and why it is known only in Abkhazia and Mingrelia. Medical workers are skeptical.

"When children are small, parents must bring them to doctors and inoculate them against redness and pockmarks", said Maya Abakelia, a pediatricist. "I think (batonebi believers) are neurotics; I think they go mad."

The Georgian Orthodox Church doesn't recognize batonebi and its Saviors.

"I don't believe Iliko. Demons can be cured and only by the church. I also had such patients, and we followed rules. I was starving for them for 40 days and praying, no song and dance like they do. I don't give them permission to come to church with a panduri . This is a temple and not a concert hall", said Father Sergei, priest of the Ilori temple in nearby Ochamchira.

"I cure a lot of diseases," Rostobaya said. "For example, I cured a couple from Gali with AIDS. I cured a lot of people from every country. I am famous. Everybody knows me. I cure over the phone. My words cure them even over the mobile. Even my saliva helps them.

"I had a guest from Russia two months ago. She will have an accident tomorrow," said Iliko as she shows a photo of a young girl. "She is a reporter like you, but if I don't help her, she'll die."

Helped by a dream, he found an old church that was buried under 10 meters of earth. Helped by his son and some neighbors, he dug it up and found old bones, axes and other weapons. Some people believe it is the burial spot of Queen Tamar Bagrationi. They built a big cross that lights up every night to mark the spot.

"When archaeologists from Tbilisi heard about the church, they came and wanted to make an examination to see in what century it was built," Rostobaya said. "But I didn't allow them, because (the batonebi) don't give me the right."

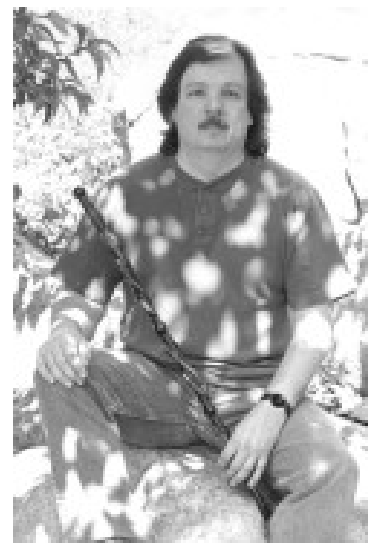
He dreams about rebuilding the church. But for now, after each recovery from a batonebi, he and his patients perform an animal sacrifice at the church he found.



Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD (Alternative Medicines) works as a teacher and a writer. Publications include *The Power of Metaphor* for Crown House and *The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story* for Cambridge Scholars Publishing. *Shamanic Journeys through Daghestan* and *Shamanic Journeys through the Caucasus* are both due to be published in paperback by O-Books in 2009. Michael has been involved in teaching and teacher training for over thirty years, has given presentations at Conferences in more than twenty countries, and hopes to have the opportunity to visit many more yet.

Interview with Raven Grimassi
Religious Writer, Lecturer and Witch
by Christopher Blackwell

Raven Grimassi brings to mind of a variety of things. Founder of the Aridian Tradition of Stregheria, a researcher of Italian Witchcraft, he has studied and practiced several Wiccan traditions. He has been a constant student and teacher. He refuses to call himself a scholar, despite lifelong study and prefers calling himself a religious writer. He freely shares what he has learned by both giving lectures and workshops on what he has learned.



Yet any attempt to pin him with a label usually sets you up to discover that he does not neatly fit into the box you tried to put him in. To some, he is controversial, at least when his opinion differs from theirs, nor does he back off from what his own studies seem to reveal.

Christopher: You got an early start on your study of Italian folk magic and Witchcraft?

Raven: Yes, I grew up under the influence of what I now call peasant witchcraft. My mother was a war bride who came to the U.S. from Italy at the close of World War II. She brought with her the basics of the tradition I that I learned. Other relatives in Italy were instrumental in revealing deeper levels, and from this I created the Aridian Tradition of Italian witch. This is the published material, which is different in many ways from what I teach my initiates, and I personally practice.

Christopher: You then explored several varieties of Wicca as it developed?

Raven: Yes, I first became aware of Wicca in the summer of 1969. I encountered a young woman who worked at an herb shop in San Diego. Through her I was introduced to a series of people, and later initiated into a coven. This group claimed descent from Gerald Gardner, but this eventually proved to be false.

I also studied Wicca under Lady Sara Cunningham in the 1970s. In time I was connected with a group calling itself Brittish Wicca, and I was initiated into this tradition. Years later I was asked to become guardian of a Book of Shadows from the Pictish-Gaelic belonging to a friend who facing an early death. This position required initiation and so it was done.

Christopher: Yet in the end you came back to Strega and developed your Arician Tradition.

Raven: Yes, and I guess the old saying is true that “there’s no place like home.” The Arician Tradition, unlike the Aridian Tradition, is an initiate system. My published material is Aridian, not Arician.

Christopher: You’ve been regarded as a controversial figure, particularly in connection with Italian Witchcraft. Why do you believe this is?

Raven: It’s true that some people are skeptical and critical of my writings on the Italian

Craft. They're a relatively small band of people compared against the number of loyal readers who continually support my work. But like most critics the skeptics are quite vocal. The members of one group took it upon themselves to generate a campaign against my writings in many forums on the Internet. Sadly, this is a campaign of misinformation and misrepresentation. And unfortunately there are some people who believe whatever they read on the Internet. But I suppose this is the fate of anyone who is a public figure. For some reason certain people enjoy fabricating negative tales, and other people appear eager to believe the worst about another person.

So, I just keep on living my passion and writing about what I believe in. That seems to be a reasonable way to spend my days in this lifetime.

Christopher: Wicca and Witchcraft, the endless controversy over what each is and how they relate to each other and what they are becoming - this seems to be an endless argument in Wiccan circles. Perhaps you could give our readers a brief idea of your views?

Raven: Well, back in the 1960s, Wicca and Witchcraft were one and the same. The words were interchangeable. This seems to have divided sometime in the 1980s. Wicca began to be viewed as the religion and Witchcraft was depicted as a magical craft. The next phase ushered in the notion that Wicca was something new, and many people considered it to be the invention of Gerald Gardner and his cohorts. That's not a view I share, but it does seem clear that he added elements that didn't come with the original system.

I see Wicca as a British version of Witchcraft, and one that has evolved over the years. I see Witchcraft as the magical and spiritual tradition of a pre-Christian European sect. Every region in Europe had its "witch people" and I believe these individuals served as a sort of tribal priestess and priest, and as a form of shaman.

Christopher: I noted one of your books is about helping the eclectic Wiccan or Witch on how to get their new tradition organized and functional. Is this similar to the method you used in putting together your own Aridian Tradition of Strega?

Raven: In a sense I suppose it is. I am interested in foundational material, and I used this to construct the Aridian and Arician systems. This was also my approach to writing my new book, "Crafting Wiccan Traditions." I gathered the foundational material and the commonality of Craft traditions, and organized it into the book. This way people can look at elements of the entire Craft and see how everything fits together and functions.

Christopher: You wrote a book that tried to explain some of the energies used in working magic. I don't think I have heard much on the whys and wherefores of energy work before.

Raven: Right, and it's also that many people don't seem to care why something works. They just want it to work. But you see, in knowing why something works you can construct your own rituals and spells. If you don't know why, and you don't understand the inner mechanism, then you'll always be reliant upon the people who do.

Christopher: Anything new on the horizon that you would like to let our readers know about?

Raven: I do have two projects underway. One is a new book tentatively titled, "The Cauldron of Knowledge." It's about how to retrieve ancestral knowledge & wisdom through the memory passed to you in your DNA. The book will most likely be available in the Fall of 2009.

The other project is a book tentatively titled, "The Witches' Lore: A Compendium of the Works of Charles Leland on Italian Witchcraft." I've been writing this book for many years. In addition to presenting what Leland wrote about Italian Witchcraft in several of his books, I also present commentaries on the topics. This helps flesh them out more, and I also include ethnographic support for the things he wrote about.

Christopher: What would you like to see modern Pagans accomplish that we have not yet done?

Raven: Move from tribal to a "united nation" of tribes. You see, history tells us that tribes are easy to conquer because they fight among each other. This weakens them and diverts their resources. The ancient Romans knew this when they fought the Celts, and the U.S. cavalry knew this when they battled the American Indians. Well, today there are people who oppose Paganism and everything under that umbrella, and they also know the principle of divide and conquer.

I think it was Benjamin Franklin who once said, during a meeting to plan the Revolutionary War against Britain, "If we do not hang together then we shall certainly hang separately." That's something to think about.

Christopher: Thank you for taking the time for this interview.

Raven: I appreciate the opportunity. So, thank you very much for making this happen.

Books by Raven Grimassi:

(available from Llewellyn Books <http://www.llewellyn.com/> or <http://www.ravengrimassi.net/>)

- Beltane
- The Cauldron of Memory: Retrieving Ancestral Knowledge & Wisdom
- Crafting Wiccan Traditions: Creating a Foundation for Your Spiritual Beliefs & Practices
- Encyclopedia of Wicca & Witchcraft
- Hereditary Witchcraft: Secrets of the Old Religion
- The Hidden Path
- Italian Witchcraft: The Old Religion of Southern Europe
- Spirit of the Witch: Religion & Spirituality in Contemporary Witchcraft
- The Well Worn Path
- Wiccan Magick: Inner Teachings of the Craft
- The Wiccan Mysteries: Ancient Origins & Teachings
- The Witch's Familiar: Spiritual Partnerships for Successful Magic
- Witchcraft: A Mystery Tradition
 - The Witches' Craft: The Roots of Witchcraft & Magical Transformation

Book Review by Morgana

Wicca Magickal Beginnings – A Study of the Possible Origins of the Rituals and Practices Found in this Modern Tradition of Pagan Witchcraft and Magick.

by Sorita d'Este & David Rankine

See <http://www.avalonia.co.uk/>

On the back cover of this book we read the following:

“The origins of the Wiccan Tradition have long been a subject of debate amongst practitioners and scholars alike. Did Gerald Gardner invent the tradition? Is Wicca a survival of a British folk magick system? Could it be a continuation of a European tradition of Pagan Witchcraft? Might it be that it evolved from Victorian ceremonial magick, or perhaps it is the modern manifestation of the medieval Grimoire Tradition?”

Indeed there have been many ideas and discussions as to where Gerald Gardner gathered the material that forms the basis of “Wicca”.

In this extensive book Sorita & David have examined their own material, passed on to them as initiated witches.

“Our preconceptions were constantly challenged as we explored the origins of the practices and beliefs from different angles in an effort to find possible solutions to the question of when and where the tradition may have originated. We separated the rituals into their component parts, then looked at each individually and even divided them up into smaller parts, before finally putting it all back together creating a colorful mosaic with our findings.”

Reviewing several sources of material from anthropology and psychology to folklore, grimoires and contemporary magickal orders a number of subjects typical to Wicca are examined, including the origin of the word *Wicca*. One, which I wasn't aware of for example, is from “The history of the Anglo-Saxons” by Thomas Miller: “Scarcely an obscure English province is without its wise-man, or cunning fortune teller, those lingering remains of the Wicca of the Saxons.”

One interesting chapter is about the “Book of Shadows” and the origin of the term. Although the Craft is often cited as an oral tradition which would logically discount a *BOOK* to record incantations and so on, it is interesting to note, “the use of the hand-copied BoS in the Wiccan tradition can thus be seen as a likely continuation of a common European magickal practice” referring to the practice of hand copying grimoires.

From discussions about oaths, covens, degree systems, black-hilted knives, scourging, to the Golden Rule of Wicca, the Magickal Circle, pentagrams and elementals, Sorita & David have provided a fantastic source book. They have presented a separate section in which they list their conclusions as to the “Magickal Beginnings of Wicca”. I won't list them here of course, go and buy the book ☺ Mind you the bibliography alone is worth the money! Excellent.



Lives of the Necromancers
by William Godwin



The oldest and most authentic record from which we can derive our ideas on the subject of necromancy and witchcraft is unquestionably the Bible. The Egyptians and Chaldeans were early distinguished for their supposed proficiency in magic, in the production of supernatural phenomena, and in penetrating into the secrets of future time. The first appearance of these extraordinarily gifted men, or men pretending to be gifted, that is recorded in Scripture is on the occasion of Pharaoh's dream of the seven years of plenty, and seven years of famine. At that period the king sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men; but they could not interpret his dream.

Their second appearance was upon a most memorable occasion, when Moses and Aaron, armed with miraculous powers, came to a subsequent king of Egypt, to demand from him that their countrymen might be permitted to depart to another tract of the world. They produced a miracle as the evidence of their divine mission: and the king, who was also named Pharaoh, called before him the wise men and the sorcerers of Egypt, who with their enchantments did in like manner as Moses had done; till, after some experiments in which they were apparently successful, they at length were compelled to allow themselves overcome, and fairly to confess to their master the Pharaoh, *This is the finger of God!*

The spirit of the Jewish history loudly affirms that the Creator of heaven and earth had adopted this nation for his chosen people, and therefore demanded their exclusive homage, and that they should acknowledge no other God. It is on this principle that it is made one of his early commands to them; *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*. And elsewhere the meaning of this prohibition is more fully explained: *There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer: these shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones*.

We are in the same manner informed of the oracles of the false Gods; and an example occurs of a king of Samaria, who fell sick, and who sent messengers, and said to them, Go, and enquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease. At which proceeding the God of the Jews was displeased, and sent Elijah to the messengers to say, *Is it because there is not a God in Israel, that you go to enquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron? Because the king has done this, he shall not recover; he shall surely die*.

The appearance of the Wise Men of the East again occurs in considerable detail in the Prophecy of Daniel, though they are only brought forward there, as discoverers of hidden things, and interpreters of dreams. Twice, on occasion of dreams that troubled him, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, commanded that the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans of his kingdom come to him and explain his dreams. Each confessed that they were unable to interpret his dreams. Daniel, a prophet of the Jews was the only one who could help the king. Nebuchadnezzar then promoted Daniel to be master of the magicians.

A similar scene occurred in the court of Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, in the case of the hand-writing on the wall. It is probable that the Jews considered the Gods of the nations around them as so many of the fallen angels, or spirits of hell, since, among other arguments, the coincidence of the name of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, with Baalzebub, the God of Ekron, could scarcely have occurred by chance.

The Magi, or Wise Men of the East

The Magi, or Wise Men of the East, extended their ramifications over Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, India, and probably, though with a different name, over China, and indeed the whole known world. Their profession was of a mysterious nature. They laid claim to a familiar intercourse with the Gods. They placed themselves as mediators between heaven and earth, assumed the prerogative of revealing the will of beings of a nature superior to man, and pretended to show wonders and prodigies that surpassed any power which was merely human. To understand this, we must bear in mind the state of knowledge in ancient times, where for the most part the cultivation of the mind, and an acquaintance with either science or art, were confined to a very small part of the population. In each of the nations we have mentioned, there was a particular caste or tribe of men, who, by the prerogative of their birth, were entitled to the advantages of science and a superior education. It plainly appears that the art of divination was extensively exercised in Egypt and that the practice was held in honour.

In the great contention for supernatural power between Moses and the magicians of Egypt, it is plain that they came forward with confidence, and did not shrink from the debate. Moses' rod was turned into a serpent; so were their rods: Moses changed the waters of Egypt into blood; and the magicians did the like with their enchantments: Moses caused frogs to come up, and cover the land of Egypt; and the magicians also brought frogs upon the country. Without its being in any way necessary to enquire how they effected these wonders, it is evident from the whole train of the narrative, that they must have been much in the practice of astonishing their countrymen with their feats in such a kind, and, whether it were delusion, or to whatever else we may attribute their success, that they were universally looked up to for the extraordinariness of their performances.



It is necessary here to take notice of the great revolution that took place under Constantine, nearly three hundred years after the death of Christ, when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire. This was a period which produced a new era in the history of necromancy and witchcraft. Under the reign of polytheism, devotion was wholly unrestrained in every direction it might chance to assume. Gods known and unknown, the spirits of departed heroes, the Gods of heaven and hell, abstractions of virtue or vice, might be made the objects of religious worship. Witchcraft therefore, and the invocation of the spirits of the dead, were practised with toleration and were not regarded as deviations from the religion of the state.

It is true there must always have been a horror of secret arts, especially of such as were of a maleficent nature. At all times men dreaded the mysterious power of spells and incantations, of potent herbs and nameless rites, which were able to control the eternal

order of the planets, and the voluntary operations of mind, which could extinguish or recall life, inflame the passions of the soul, blast the works of creation, and extort from invisible beings and the dead the secrets of futurity. But under the creed of the one God, the case was exceedingly different. Idolatry, and the worship of other Gods than one, were held to be crimes worthy of the utmost abhorrence and incurred the severest punishment. There was no medium between the worship of heaven and hell. All adoration was to be directed to God the Creator through the mediation of his only begotten Son or to his saints. On the other hand sorcery and witchcraft were sins of the blackest dye. In opposition to the one only God, the creator of heaven and earth, was the prince of darkness, the prince of the power of the air, who contended perpetually against the Almighty, and sought to seduce his creatures and his subjects from their due allegiance. Sorcerers and witches were supposed to do homage and sell themselves to the devil. The mind of man could conceive of no crime greater and its perpetrators should be exterminated from the face of the earth.

The Roman Empire

It was not within the range of possibility, that such a change should take place in the established religion of the empire as that from Paganism to Christianity, without convulsions and struggle. Julian, a man of great ability and unquestionable patriotism, succeeded to the empire only twenty-four years after the death of Constantine; and he employed the most vigorous measures for the restoration of the ancient religion. But the reign of Julian was scarcely more than eighteen months in duration: and that of Jovian, his successor, who again unfurled the standard of Christianity, lasted hardly more than half a year.

The joint reign of Valentinian and Valens, Christian emperors, had now lasted several years, when information was conveyed to these princes, and particularly to the latter, who had the rule of Asia, that numerous private consultations were held, as to the duration of their authority, and the person of the individual who should come after them. The succession of the Roman Empire was elective; and consequently there was almost an unlimited scope for conjecture in this question. Among the various modes of enquiry that were employed we are told, that the twenty-four letters of the alphabet were artificially disposed in a circle, and that a magic ring, being suspended over the centre, was conceived to point to the initial letters of the name of him who should be the future emperor. Theodorus, a man of most eminent qualifications, and high popularity, was put to death by the jealousy of Valens, on the vague evidence that this kind of trial had indicated the early letters of his name. It may easily be imagined, that, where so restless and secret an investigation was employed as to the successor that fate might provide, conspiracy would not always be absent. Charges of this sort were perpetually multiplied; informers were eager to obtain favour or rewards by the disclosures they pretended to communicate; and the Christians, who swayed the sceptre of the state, did not fail to aggravate the guilt of those who had recourse to these means for satisfying their curiosity, by alleging that demons were called up from hell to aid in the magic solution. The historians of these times no doubt greatly exaggerate the terror and the danger, when they say, that the persons apprehended on such charges in the great cities outnumbered the peaceable citizens who were left unsuspected, and that the military who had charge of the prisoners, complained that they were wholly without the power to restrain the flight of the captives, or to control the multitude of partisans who insisted on their immediate release. The punishments were barbarous and indiscriminate; to be accused was almost the same thing as to be convicted; and those were obliged to hold themselves fortunate, who escaped with a fine that in a manner swallowed up their estates.

***Bard and Host of Druid Cast
Interview with Damh the Bard
By Christopher Blackwell***

While looking up Celtic Myth Podshow, I ran across a Druid singer, Damh the Bard and a song, "Cauldron Born." I contacted him and asked for an interview. There turned out to be a lot to know, including him hosting a podcast brought on by the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.

Christopher: How long have you known you were a singer?

Damh: I've been singing since I was a small child. While all of my friends were into football, I was obsessed with music. I started learning the guitar when I was eight years old, wrote my first songs when I was 11, and had my first live concerts the same year. I got sidetracked from the folk stuff when I hit my teens and early twenties, but then picked up the acoustic again in the mid '90s.

Christopher: So how early did you start singing in public? How did you change as you moved through your early singing career?

Damh: I was weaned on the likes of John Denver, and my guitar teacher was an Irish folk musician, and that really influenced my early development as a musician. But I was also into rock and loved AC/DC, Ramones, bands like that. Now maybe it's because I'd been taught folk, but I just couldn't play the rock guitar, but I could play the drums. So throughout my teens and twenties I played drums in rock bands. But my song writing and guitar playing was always folk influenced, and as I moved into my 30s I picked up the old acoustic again, and here I am today.

Christopher: What are some of the musical influences in your life? How have they altered your development of style and content?

Damh: Obviously Irish folk has been a huge influence on my song writing, but I also love the big choruses of good rock songs. The chorus is the pay off, it's the climax that the listener is waiting for, so I really try to always deliver... and satisfy! I personally feel that a song needs a hook, a melody and rhythm that dives straight to the heart - that makes the listener feel that they already know the song, that somehow it's within them. I think it was my love of rock music that taught me that.

Christopher: So how did you come to be a Druid?

Damh: I think, like a lot of people who find Druidry, I've always been one. I just didn't have a label for how I felt about the world. In the end it was as simple as sending off for an intro pack from the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, and when that came through, I felt like I'd come home.

Christopher: How does this affect your singing? Did this cause any change in direction in your songs or music?

Damh: Absolutely. It gave my song writing a purpose, a real direction. Most of my songs are about myth, magic, and the natural world. It's my passion. And there are a lot of people out there who feel the same way. We are speaking the same language, so they understand what I'm singing about.

Christopher : You have been part of groups and created groups. Why did you decide to work on your own?

Damh: I love working with other musicians, but I found that it became really hard to get four people to the same place, at the same time. People have different priorities, but mine is music, and in the end I had to make the decision to go it alone. I still have lots of musician friends, and we play together, but the song writing, and live performances, well, I just adore the freedom a solo performer has. I tend to talk and communicate to the audience a lot, maybe slow down or even stop a song to sing with the audience. I think that's harder to do with a group. It's also the practical portability of the solo performer. I can play plugged through a PA in a theatre, or acoustic around a campfire or in someone's home. It's how the ancient Bards would have been, I'm sure.

Christopher: Could you give us some sites where people could learn more?

Damh: Sure. My website is www.paganmusic.co.uk, and that really is the hub of all my other sites. From there you can get to my blog, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube channel, the lot.



Christopher: Any upcoming gigs? Do you ever get over to America?

Damh: I send out a monthly newsletter to my fans, and one of the things I keep getting asked is 'When are you coming back to the USA!'. The answer is as soon as I can. The problem is it's such a huge country, and I really need to know where my fans are. So I've asked them to tell me where they want me to play - that's stage one, then I can book a few dates and come over. So if your readers want me to come and play in their area, drop me an email from the link on my website, and let me know where you are.

Christopher. You are also the host of a podcast, Druidcast - The Druid Podcast. Could you tell us a bit of how the podcast came to be and how long it has been on line?

Damh: The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids is fantastic at looking after its members, but wasn't so good at communicating with those outside the Order. I'm a great fan of podcasts, and just suggested putting one together for the Order, and they liked the idea. It's one of my highlights of the month. I've met some really interesting people, and been able to support some fabulous independent artists too.

Christopher: What are your plans for its future?

Damh: To keep doing what I'm doing. I'm currently recording my first traditional folk album, but with a Damh the Bard twist, and I'm thoroughly enjoying that. I'd love to get over to the USA again, and there are plans for concerts in South Australia too. It's such an amazing ride, who'd want it to change? It just keeps getting better!

Christopher: Where could our readers find out more?

Damh: The best thing to do would be to sign up for my monthly newsletter from the front page of my website at www.paganmusic.co.uk. That's the place where things are kept up to date with tour news, and free MP3s etc.

Christopher: I noted that you are a member of the Order by the Bards, Ovates and Druids. Would you give my readers a bit of information on this organization?

Damh: The Order is the largest Druid organization in the world, and basically offers a home study course on modern Druidry. That might sound a bit cold and detached, but it's far more experiential than dusty academic study. My Druidic journey started with their course and, although I finished the course in 2003, I still continue to get a lot of nourishment and connection through my Druid work.

Christopher: Where could our readers learn more about the organization?

Damh: The best place would be their website at www.druidry.org

Note from Diana: Damh the Bard, also known as Dave Smith wrote the Druid Information Pack for the Pagan Federation back in 1997. The text can be found on <http://www.be.paganfederation.org>

Book Review by Morgana

Kate West: The Real Witches Craft – Magical Techniques and Guidance for a Full Year of Practising the Craft
Llewellyn ISBN 978-0-7387-1374-8

These two books really belong together. Kate is English and is a former PF Vice President. She has been practising Wicca for over 25 years. She is a High Priestess of the Hearth of Hecate and a contributor to the Children of Artemis magazine "Witchcraft and Wicca".

I have known of Kate's for most of those 25 years, I fondly remember the wonderful cassettes she recorded of elemental pathworkings. Her talks at various conferences were always worth attending. The first book "The Real Witches Handbook" is clearly written primer. She begins by dispelling many of the common myths about witchcraft, and then goes on to explain what it is. She also gives some practical advice about "coming out of the broom closet" with some examples of letters to explain your chosen path.

In the second book Kate goes into the various techniques used in Witchcraft – from working with the elements, meditation, to crafting spells and working on the Astral. She also deals with "the Darker Side of Magic" when we sometimes have to deal with negative energy and when things go wrong. How to deal with Murphy's Law in other words ☺

Coupled with examples of practical work Kate offers a good grounding in magical work. Her style hasn't changed in all the years I have known her which I think is a great compliment. Despite the glamour of Internet she has remained true to her down-to-earth style.

How the World Was Made

Source: John Maurice Miller, *Philippine Folklore Stories* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1904), pp. 57-64.

This is the ancient Filipino account of the creation.

Thousands of years ago there was no land nor sun nor moon nor stars, and the world was only a great sea of water, above which stretched the sky. The water was the kingdom of the god Maguayan, and the sky was ruled by the great god Captan.

Maguayan had a daughter called Lidagat, the sea, and Captan had a son known as Lihangin, the wind. The gods agreed to the marriage of their children, so the sea became the bride of the wind.

Three sons and a daughter were born to them. The sons were called Licalibutan, Liadlao, and Libulan; and the daughter received the name of Lisuga.

Licalibutan had a body of rock and was strong and brave; Liadlao was formed of gold and was always happy; Libulan was made of copper and was weak and timid; and the beautiful Lisuga had a body of pure silver and was sweet and gentle. Their parents were very fond of them, and nothing was wanting to make them happy.

After a time Lihangin died and left the control of the winds to his eldest son Licalibutan. The faithful wife Lidagat soon followed her husband, and the children, now grown up, were left without father or mother. However, their grandfathers, Captan and Maguayan, took care of them and guarded them from all evil.

After a time, Licalibutan, proud of his power over the winds, resolved to gain more power, and asked his brothers to join him in an attack on Captan in the sky above. At first they refused; but when Licalibutan became angry with them, the amiable Liadlao, not wishing to offend his brother, agreed to help. Then together they induced the timid Libulan to join in the plan.

When all was ready the three brothers rushed at the sky, but they could not beat down the gates of steel that guarded the entrance. Then Licalibutan let loose the strongest winds and blew the bars in every direction. The brothers rushed into the opening, but were met by the angry god Captan. So terrible did he look that they turned and ran in terror; but Captan, furious at the destruction of his gates, sent three bolts of lightning after them.

The first struck the copper Libulan and melted him into a ball. The second struck the golden Liadlao, and he too was melted. The third bolt struck Licalibutan, and his rocky body broke into many pieces and fell into the sea. So huge was he that parts of his body stuck out above the water and became what is known as land.

In the meantime the gentle Lisuga had missed her brothers and started to look for them. She went toward the sky, but as she approached the broken gates, Captan, blind with anger, struck her too with lightning, and her silver body broke into thousands of pieces.

Captan then came down from the sky and tore the sea apart, calling on Maguayan to come to him and accusing him of ordering the attack on the sky. Soon Maguayan appeared and answered that he knew nothing of the plot as he had been asleep far down in the sea.

After a time he succeeded in calming the angry Captan. Together they wept at the loss of their grandchildren, especially the gentle and beautiful Lisuga; but with all their power they could not restore the dead to life. However, they gave to each body a beautiful light that will shine forever.

And so it was that golden Liadlao became the sun, and copper Libulan the moon, while the thousands of pieces of silver Lisuga shine as the stars of heaven. To wicked Licalibutan the gods gave no light, but resolved to make his body support a new race of people. So Captan gave Maguayan a seed, and he planted it on the land, which, as you will remember, was part of Licalibutan's huge body.

Soon a bamboo tree grew up, and from the hollow of one of its branches a man and a woman came out. The man's name was Sicalac, and the woman was called Sicabay. They were the parents of the human race. Their first child was a son whom they called Libo; afterwards they had a daughter who was known as Saman. Pandaguan was a younger son and he had a son called Arion.

Pandaguan was very clever and invented a trap to catch fish. The very first thing he caught was a huge shark. When he brought it to land, it looked so great and fierce that he thought it was surely a god, and he at once ordered his people to worship it. Soon all gathered around and began to sing and pray to the shark. Suddenly the sky and sea opened, and the gods came out and ordered Pandaguan to throw the shark back into the sea and to worship none but them.

All were afraid except Pandaguan. He grew very bold and answered that the shark was as big as the gods, and that since he had been able to overpower it he would also be able to conquer the gods. Then Captan, hearing this, struck Pandaguan with a small thunderbolt, for he did not wish to kill him but merely to teach him a lesson. Then he and Maguayan decided to punish these people by scattering them over the earth, so they carried some to one land and some to another. Many children were afterwards born, and thus the earth became inhabited in all parts.

Pandaguan did not die. After lying on the ground for thirty days he regained his strength, but his body was blackened from the lightning, and all his descendants ever since that day have been black.

His first son, Arion, was taken north, but as he had been born before his father's punishment he did not lose his color, and all his people therefore are white.

Libo and Saman were carried south, where the hot sun scorched their bodies and caused all their descendants to be of a brown color.

A son of Saman and a daughter of Sicalac were carried east, where the land at first was so lacking in food that they were compelled to eat clay. On this account their children and their children's children have always been yellow in color.

And so the world came to be made and peopled. The sun and moon shine in the sky, and the beautiful stars light up the night. All over the land, on the body of the envious Licalibutan, the children of Sicalac and Sicabay have grown great in numbers. May they live forever in peace and brotherly love!

Book Reviews by Morgana

Karen Tate: Walking an Ancient Path – rebirthing Goddess on Planet Earth

See: <http://www.o-books.com/>

In this book about the Sacred Feminine Karen has created 5 sections attributed to the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and spirit or quintessence. Starting from the source Karen begins with “Lifting the Veil to Becoming” and her own awakening to the Goddess. She includes her ordination into the Fellowship of Isis as priestess of Isis, in a later chapter.

In the Earth section Karen looks at the Goddess through “her sacred landscape”. Traveling through Greece, Ireland, Anatolia, (Turkey) and Egypt and she visited the various temples dedicated to such goddesses as Artemis, Brigid and Isis. She writes as if it were her own diary and includes little personal rituals such as the “Blessing of the Car”, whilst traveling around Ireland.

Going on to Water: this section deals with “Coming to know ourselves and the Divine through Ritual.” Karen looks at ritual for better relationships, the Festival of Isis, working with community, ‘coping with loss’ and other rites of passage.

In the Fire section she also includes the description of her own ordination at Clonegal Castle. During times of transformation and upheaval, prayer and ritual can help you to structure your life. And here Karen shows you ways in which to create rituals, which can help in the transformation process.

In the closing section Air, the emphasis is on creativity and the ways in which you can heal and even change the world. Here she discusses how one can be a priestess in a very practical way. How one can create home temples and incorporate festivals in ones daily life. And how one can create a balance, working with both the God & Goddess.

From the ancient path Karen has paved the way for a modern path of Goddess worship with much practical advice. An excellent introduction for those not yet familiar with all the Goddess has to offer both past and present.

Sandra Kynes: Your altar – Creating a Sacred Space for Prayer and Meditation

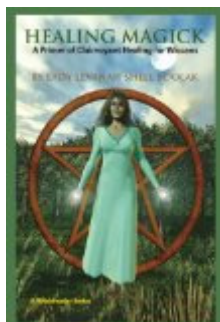
www.llewellyn.com

This is a rather novel approach to creating an altar, by using a number of objects to determine the focus of the altar. In describing how to use this book Sandra writes, “This book is about using the altar as a game board. ... it is ... not meant to be frivolous or irreverent, but rather a way to convey the concept of a matrix for an altar and a different form of mediation practice.”

First she explains what “Altar Work” is. Using the altar matrix it works as a catalyst, a trigger. So from the One-part altar where the basic associations are ‘beginnings, the center, contemplation, the Divine, primacy etc’ one can expand to the Two-part Altar with as basic associations ‘balance, duality, division, healing, love etc.’

With numerous illustrations and tables of attributions this is an adventure into a new way of channeling numerological concepts. The altar becomes a kind of mandala. This can certainly help us to deepen our connection with the Divine, or personal deity, and the various symbols used to express that connection.

Book review by Morgana
Lady Levanah Shall Bdolak: Healing Magick
- a primer of Clairvoyant Healing for Wiccans
www.corkhillpress.com



Levanah has devised the “Clearsight Energetic Medicine Healing” system. She describes herself as, “..a hetero Dianic priestess but I am also the Director and one of the teachers in Clearsght, a Clairvoyant Center and School that the Elder Priestesses in my coven formed in 1979.” She adds, “In this book I am primarily addressing two issues: that of you, the individual, getting in touch with your clairvoyant healing ability to use it in everyday life; and the ability to do energetic healing on the spot when there is no time or space for ritual and something must be done in the immediate.”

And this is exactly what Levanah does – she starts straight away, with simple but highly effective spells. She also emphasises the necessity to heal ourselves – to understand intuition and to “see beyond”, Clearsight. Using many symbols and concepts Wiccans are familiar with she illustrates how to connect with different energies. Not just from herbs but also employing different techniques. She has spent many years teaching in Japan and is familiar with Asian healing techniques such as Qigong, Shiatsu but also Ayurvedic medicine.

However using her own insights and adapting a method which is not only conducive to the wester mindset Levanah has also created a “modern” system. Her method for grounding for example is concerned with the whole bbody not just your legs. With “Running Energy” consciousness is also altered by combining earth and cosmic energies. Using numerous drawing of the various postures it is easy to see what is being meant. Later you can then do “energy healing’on other people.

This is a very concise book and one which I think will surprise many Wiccans!
See also the website “Clearsight Healing”: <http://www.clearsightaura.com/index.php>

Other books by Lady Levanah:



Interview with Kate West
English Author, Speaker, and High Priestess
by Christopher Blackwell

One benefit of the Internet age is we can explore far afield of our own country. Hence I keep in touch with some Pagan organizations in Europe. One, the Children of Artemis in England, is where I have had the good fortune to get in touch with Kate West, a well-known author, speaker, and workshop teacher. She is also the High Priestess of the Hearth of Hecate. I guess the nicest thing about the internet is discovering that well-known people are often quite nice people. So I asked for an interview; she said yes.

Christopher: How did you develop your interest in your path? Is this something you just studied on your own or did you gain any help from your family and people you knew?

Kate: Hi Chris, how lovely of you to want to interview me, and thank you for doing so. The short answer to your question is both. As a small child I was uprooted from normal life when my mother and father took a live-in post with an elderly Lady, although my father still kept his full-time job. I use the capital 'L' quite deliberately, for she was one. As later evidence would show, she was also 'one of us'. My father, from his Northumberland roots, taught me much about the birds and the animals, tracking and wood-craft. My mother, with her London upbringing, had a lot of teaching to give me about knowledge of people, their intentions, their actions, the results, and thus love and the removal thereof! But the Lady (as I will call her); she was an artist, elderly, and quite eccentric. She was 'moneyed' and definitely had her own views! As a very small child I was required to spend much time with her, and she taught me much about the land, but even more about the people who inhabited it. It is her informing of me that has encouraged me to think that Witches should be 'the watchers and the listeners of the world' for she taught me that a Witch needs to know how people work, otherwise they will never be able to grasp the thread of the spinner and, maybe, learn how to change it. In retrospect I believe that she may have been on the outskirts of one of the earlier occult groups. But that still left me with a huge amount to learn and to experience for myself.

Christopher: When did you discover that that your interests had a name?

Kate: I was in my late teens (15 or thereabouts) when I actually found that my beliefs had a label; up until then I had always thought of myself as being almost cursed as different! My mother was Catholic, and my eldest brother was being inducted into the Catholic church. I felt very different; I'd already lived many years of being told that no, you can't see a ghost, or no, nice girls don't 'predict' who is phoning. Then I found this book which implied that there actually were people who called themselves Witches! It was ghastly and pandered to all, and I mean all of the prejudices of the 1960s and 1970s. It even gave the Lord's Prayer, written backwards, with the promise that, if you say it three times out aloud, the devil can appear and you can become a witch! Do you actually know what happens if you do that? Well I can tell you; you feel remarkably stupid and gullible, and so far no devils have turned up to claim my soul!



Christopher: You founded your present coven, didn't you?

Kate: Yes, I did, but only after working within other covens. Like every other HPS and HP I carry the lessons I have learned and try to make them new and better lessons to teach. Although running a coven is not really about teaching, it's more about mentoring and enabling.

Christopher: How did you get into writing? Had you planned to be a writer?

Kate: Plan!? You just have to be joking!! No, it most definitely not like that! I worked in a 'new-age/occult' shop in a remote seaside town. In the 'summer season' it was frantic, in the winter it was quiet enough to actually watch paint dry! So I wrote a leaflet to answer the questions that people had asked. So they took it away and asked a new, more interesting set of questions and I tried to answer them. Thus the leaflet grew to a booklet, and the booklet grew to a proper book, and then I got accepted by a publisher ... and the rest is history.

Christopher: How many books have you written? How are your books different from many of the ones the market?

Kate: I've actually produced 13 publications, a 'witchy number', yes? From the moment I started I made sure that my books were always going to be 'an easy read', my first proof-reader; a friend's daughter, was 13, when she started working with me. She always kept me very grounded in the 'real world' and helped me to keep my writing relevant and 'live' to young people, which means it's also 'real' to people who are new to Paganism and the Craft. C: Easiest books to write? That's a hard question, most of my books have been 'easy' to write because I can visualize the people I'm talking to; to me they are like my coven- members, and the other interested people I meet and talk to. I very much write to the people I've met. C: Most difficult? Oh Goddess, that just has to be The Real Witches' Year! It had to be planned; day by day, topic by topic and include seasonal, secular and 'our' religious festivals, and more. I had a certain amount of 'space' for each day, and this was reduced and increased at random intervals by the publishers, whether or not I'd already written part, most, or all of the whole book! There have been at least four full-length versions of this book, and no-one really knows how many false starts! So it was definitely the most complex work I've undertaken to date.

Christopher: Didn't you recently have an American publisher take on some of your titles?

Kate: The rights to my books are in the process of being sold to Llewellyn, and they are gradually releasing my stuff in the U.S. They've changed a few covers, and I think they've improved them. I understand that they're even going to re-release the one that nearly got away: "The Real Witches Coven" never stood a chance in the UK; it fell between three editors (I seemed to have an unwanted side effect at the time they kept getting pregnant!), and thus the book missed out on any publicity! Also, at the time, the publishing ideal of 'appeal to the widest audience possible' assumed that a book for potential coveners must sell less than one for 'everyone'.

Christopher: We have some questionable books on the market and some questionable characters in Wicca. Don't you have some strong feelings about personal responsibility to the Wiccan community?

Kate: Speaking personally, writing books on the Craft is never going to be profitable

enough to make a living so either I do it because I'm an idiot or because I feel a need to be speak out for our community! I accepted my first media interview because I saw someone on TV who said that they represented all Pagans and Witches (and therefore me) and, to be honest, he rather made us look foolish. Since that day: I've appeared in local and national newspapers. Done local, national and international radio, and have done TV stuff all over. I was there in the days when the interviewer always had to bring in a member of the established Church in order to present "a balanced point of view" and I was there when the established Church refused to send anyone in against that 'Kate West person'! I'm proud to have been a part of informing the public that we Pagans and Witches, are not the demons we were portrayed in times gone by. I hope and trust that we are now getting to a point where we are acceptable, if not quite yet accepted.

Christopher: How and why did you get started as a speaker at Pagan events and workshops?

Kate: I must confess I took advantage of an absence of speakers at a very small local event. It was great fun, and so I did another, at which I made lots of fun of us Pagans and Wiccans and our written and unwritten rules. This led to me being given a very unofficial 'title' the first Pagan stand-up comic! I guess that all those years of speaking at Sunday school, and of being a management consultant paid off I had no fear of the audience. I love it when they heckle and we can laugh together, and I love it when we all get together and we can raise energy, chant, or just enjoy a laugh and a giggle!

Christopher: Ever feel stage fright?

Kate: Always! But, when I stand in the wings (or simply sit to the side) I apply my tall-thin-wonderful 'on-stage' personality and she gets me through it!

Christopher: You have been in the public spotlight for a number of years. Ever feel the need to step back and take more time for yourself and your family?

Kate: I have only the one son; my own late-in-life miracle! He attended his first Pagan conference at age three weeks and has been with me, at every conference and interview, and featured in most of the photos and stuff. I became instrumental that we broke the 'rule' of only over 18's in public, because I wouldn't appear if he couldn't be with me. Over the years I, by my insistence and he, by his good and inquiring behavior, have changed the world of the Pagan conference and now it is rare to find a group which won't have at least some open rites and rituals to which the children of the attendees may be invited. Of course this has not been universally welcomed!! I'm cutting back a bit on my public performances and intend to focus more on him.

Christopher: Where can our readers learn more about you and your projects?

Kate: I don't currently have a website I've always been a bit technophobic! But there's usually information about my books and appearances as well as those of other authors on the Children of Artemis website www.witchcraft.com

Christopher: What else would you like to tell our readers?

Kate: I'd just like to take the opportunity to wish your readers all the Blessings of the Season. Blessed Be)O(

Celtic Myth Podshow
Interview with Gary and Ruth
By Christopher Blackwell

Ellen Hopman alerted me to a nice review of her last book on the Celtic Myth Podshow. That was how I came to find out about this place for all the old Celtic myths. Knowing how popular all things Celtic are with many of our Pagan readers, I asked Gary and Ruth if I could interview them and find out more. They were kind enough to take a bit of time out of their busy schedule to answer the questions.

Christopher: What draws you to Celtic myths?

Ruth: I have always had a interest in folklore, spawned I suspect by fairy tales that were read to me as a child, but my true love is faerie folklore, and Europe abounds with tales of faeries and magical beings of all kinds. So when I discovered Celtic myth and the mythical faeriefolk, I was hooked.

Gary: My interest came from a childhood love of the works of Tolkien. I wanted to learn Runes. Secret writing for a kid how magical! I wanted to learn all about the Elves and the Dwarves and Wizardry and, of course, the more I learned the more I realized that Tolkien drew a lot of his imagery from the Norse Myths. As I grew older, my parents taught me about my own Celtic ancestry and I discovered that the Celts had their own Elves, Dwarves and Wizards. So, I had found my way home.

Christopher: Why did you decide to create this podshow and what is its purpose? Did you have background experience?

Gary: Do you want to answer the 'why' and I'll answer the technical question?

Ruth: Sure. We have managed to get hold of quite a few books about Celtic mythology packed with lots of marvelous tales, but they are really quite hard to read and understand. What we couldn't find was a simple and complete account of all the tales. You'll find Irish Tales or Welsh tales or whatever, and occasionally books with tales from each of the Celtic Nations but nothing with all the tales from all the countries. So, we thought that the best way to learn all the tales was to read them ourselves. And if we were reading them to each other, why not share them with others who might also find it a useful way to learn the myths.

Gary: That's right, and a lot of our audience are saying that our shows are helping them to learn the myths. We've never done anything like this before and it was pure chance that enabled us to discover podcasts and podcasting on the Internet and it seemed like the perfect tool for the job. We read "Podcasting for Dummies" which was a superb starting place and gathered knowledge and equipment from there. I suppose it must have taken three to four months before we launched.

Christopher: When did you put it on the air and how long do you expect it to run?

Ruth: The first show we produced was in January 2008, and we release a new show every two weeks. We are now up to show number 21, plus the special shows we produce for the Celtic fire festivals, solstices and equinoxes. We have worked out that it

will take us approximately five years to cover all the Celtic myths, and a couple more years to cover all the folklore as well.

Gary: Yes, we intended from the very beginning to build up a complete collection of Celtic myths. As much information as possible in one place and presented in as entertaining a manner as we could manage. The trouble is that the more we learn and research, the more tales we are finding! We could still be here at the turn of the next century!

Christopher: How has the response been to your show so far? What's been the audience's favorite shows?

Ruth: Amazing! It continually stuns us.

Gary: We were hoping that people would love the stories just as much as we do, but many are finding the shows a positive help in their own spiritual paths. We get some lovely emails.

Ruth: We do and, in fact, we made some wonderful friends through the show.

Christopher: What do you think the audience's favorite show has been?

Gary: Well, judging from the number of emails and downloads we've had it looks like Episode 9, Let Fly the Crows of Battle. This show tells the story of the Battle of the Tuatha De Danaan against the Fomori and culminates in the hero-battle between Lugh and Balor of the Evil Eye.

Ruth: That's true, and almost every holiday special is well received. These are the shows when we accept contributions from our audience, so that we read them modern stories and play some beautiful music.

Gary: Yes, and we always finish off with some outtakes of the mistakes we have made. It seems that listeners like these a lot.

Christopher: What other features do you have on your site besides the podshow?

Ruth: We have a forum in which fans of the show can get together and talk about all things Celtic they're fun. We have a section on the forum for listener's stories, poems and artwork as well. We have a news/blog section in which we try to keep our listeners up to date with all the breaking news in the world of the Celts. Generally, there is at least one new post there every day. We also have a growing set of galleries from listeners and famous artists of Celtic or Fairy related art.

Gary: We also have a Resources section which includes some biographies of the main characters in the stories and some maps of the locations although I am a bit behind in updating these. We've got lists of Celtic fiction with a non-fiction list coming soon. We also have got a section for our contributors so that listeners can find out more about them and have just started a section for Celtic-based charities.

Ruth: But I guess the most important section is the Shownotes. Each episode has a web-page associated with it that not only gives all the sources used in creating that story, but lists all of the hard-to-learn- and-say names and any other information that would go with an episode.

Christopher: You have quite a crew involved in creating it. Care to tell us a bit about them and what they do?

Ruth: These are our family and friends. We rope them in to do a bit of voice acting whenever we can. Our sons and daughter have all taken part as well as some of their friends. It has turned out to be a whole family affair. You can even hear the dog and cats in a few recordings.

Christopher: What are some of your plans for the future of Celtic Myths Podshow?

Gary: One of the things we are thinking about is to produce enhanced podcasts in the future, which would run in parallel to our main show and enable our listeners to see images while the show is playing. We've also considered maybe adding stories to YouTube.

Ruth: Another thing we would like to do, is to go out and interview people such as authors and musicians who are inspired by Celtic mythology. We are interested in how the Celts affect our modern world as well as the ancient tales.

Christopher: Where can our readers find out more about your podshow and do you ever seek ideas from your audience?

Ruth: That's easy. If you use iTunes on your computer, you can go to the Store and search for Celtic Myth you will find the Celtic Myth Podshow. Just click on the subscribe button and you will get every new episode when it's released. Alternatively, you can pop along to our website at <http://celticmythpodshow.com> where you can listen or download the episodes directly.

Gary: The website is also where you'll find the Shownotes, forums and so on. There is also a 'Help' page on our website that tells you all about podcasts and the whole RSS thing which should hopefully make the whole process a piece of cake.

Ruth: We love getting feedback and encourage our listeners to make suggestions for the show, and we take any feedback we get from listeners seriously. It was a listener's suggestion to add the maps to the website, and also the lists of names you'll find in the shownotes. We are always open to new ideas and ways to improve the website and the show.

Christopher: Anything else you would like to tell us?

Ruth: There are two other things that are worth mentioning. We believe that these stories are the ancestral right of all Celts. For that reason, our shows will always be free. They will also always be kid-friendly Celts live in families, after all.

Gary: We'd also like to say 'thank you', Christopher, to you and AREN and wish safe travels to you and your readers.

Meeting Your Animal Helper
Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD (Alternative Medicines)

The tale that follows comes from Mingrelia - a lowland region in the west of Georgia, bordering the Black Sea. Tea and grapes are the chief products of the region and Poti is the main port. It was taken from the collection of Georgian tales translated by Marjorie Wardrop and first published in 1894. The story was collected by Professor Tsagareli and first published in *Mingrelskie Etudy*, S. Pbg., 1880.

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The Prince who befriended the Beasts

There was a king, and he had three sons. Once he fell ill, and became blind in both eyes. He sent his son for a surgeon. All the surgeons agreed that there was a fish of a rare kind by the help of which the king might be cured. They made a sketch of the fish, and left it with the sick monarch.

The king commanded his eldest son to go and catch that fish in the sea. A hundred men with their nets were lost in the sea, but nought could they find like the fish they sought. The eldest son came home to his father and said: 'I have found nothing.' This displeased the king, but what could he do? Then the second son set out, taking with him a hundred men also, but all his men were lost too, and he brought back nothing.

After this, the youngest brother went. He had recourse to cunning; he took with him a hundred kilas of flour (Kila, a measure of flour = about 36-40 pounds) and one man. He came to the sea, and every day he strewed flour in the water, near the shore, until all the flour was used up; the fishes grew fat on the flour, and said: 'Let us do a service to this youth since he has enabled us to grow fat'; so, as soon as the youth threw a net into the sea, he at once drew out the rare fish he sought. He wrapped it up in the skirt of his robe, and went his way.

As he rode along, some distance from his companion, he heard a voice that said: 'O youth, I am dying!' But on looking round he saw no man, and continued his journey. After a short time, he again heard the same words. He looked round more carefully, but saw nothing. Then he glanced at the skirt of his robe, and saw that the fish had its mouth open, and was dying. The youth said to it: 'What dost thou want?' The fish answered: 'It will be better for thee if thou wilt let me go, some day I shall be of use to thee.' The youth took it and threw it into the water, saying to his comrade: 'I hope thou wilt not betray me.'

When he reached home, he told his father that he had been unsuccessful. Some time passed. Once the prince quarrelled with his comrade, and the latter ran off and told the king how his son had deceived him. When the king heard this, he ordered his son to be taken away and killed. He was taken out, but when they were about to kill him, the youth entreated them, saying: 'What doth it profit you if you slay me? If you let me go, 'twill be a good deed, and I shall flee to foreign lands.' The executioners took pity on him, and set him free; he thanked them, and departed.

He went, he went, he went, he went farther than anybody ever went – he came to a great forest. As he went through the forest, he saw a deer running, in a great state of alarm. The youth stopped, and fixed his gaze on it; then the deer came up and fell on its face before him. The youth asked: ‘What ails thee?’ The prince pursues me, and on thee depends my safety.’ The youth took the deer with him and went on. A huntsman met him, and asked: ‘Whither art thou leading the deer?’ The youth replied: ‘One king has sent it as a gift to another king, and, lo! I am taking it.’ The youth thus saved the deer from death, and the deer said: ‘A time will come when I shall save thy life.’

The youth went on his way: he went, he went, he went, so far he went, good sir, that the ‘three day colt (of fable) could not go so far. He looked, and, lo! a frightened eagle perched on his shoulder, and said: ‘Youth, on thee depends my safety!’ The youth protected it also from its pursuer. Then the eagle said to him: ‘Some day I shall do thee a service.’

The youth went on: he went through the forest, he went, he went, he went, he went further than he could, he went a week, two weeks, a year and three months. Then he heard some fearful rumbling, roaring, thunder and lightning – something was coming through the forest, breaking down all the trees. A great jackal appeared, and ran up to the youth, saying: ‘If thou wilt thou canst protect me; the prince is pursuing me with all his army.’ The youth saved the jackal, as he had saved the other animals. Then the jackal said: ‘Some day I shall help thee.’

The youth went on his way, and, when he was out of the wood, came to a town. In this town he found a castle of crystal, in the courtyard of which he saw a great number of young men, some dying and some dead. He asked the meaning of this, and was told: ‘The king of this land has a daughter, a maiden queen; she has made a proclamation that she will wed him that can hide himself from her; but no man can hide himself from her, and all these men has she slain, for he that cannot hide himself from her is cast down from the top of the castle.’

When the youth heard this, he at once arose, and went to the maiden. They bowed themselves each to the other. The maiden asked him: ‘Wherefore art thou come hither?’ The youth answered: ‘I come for that which others have come for.’ She immediately called her viziers together, and they wrote out the usual contract.

The youth went out from the castle, came to the seashore, sat down, and was soon buried in thought. Just then, something made a great splash in the sea, came and swallowed the youth, carried him into the Red Sea, there they were hidden in the depths of the sea, near the shore. The youth remained there all that night.

When the maiden arose the next morning she brought her mirror and looked in it, but she found nothing in the sky, she looked on the dry land, and found nothing there, she looked at the sea – and then she saw the youth in the belly of the fish, which was hiding in the deep waters. After a short time, the fish threw up the youth on the place where it had found him. He went merrily to the maiden. She asked: ‘Well, then, didst thou hide thyself?’ ‘Yes, I hid myself.’ But the maiden told him where he had been, and how he got there, and added: ‘This time I forgive thee, for the cleverness thou hast shown.’

The youth set out again, and sat down in a field. Then something fell upon him, and took him up into the air, lifted him up into the sky, and covered him with its wing. When the maiden arose next morning, she looked in her mirror, she gazed at the

mountain, she gazed at the earth, but she found nothing, she looked at the sky, and there she saw how the eagle was covering the youth. The eagle carried the youth down, and put him on the ground. He was joyful, thinking that the maiden could not have seen him; but when he came to her she told him all.

Then he fell into a deep melancholy, but the maiden, being struck with wonder at his cunning in hiding himself, told him that she again forgave him. He went out again, and, as he was walking in the field, the deer came to him and said: 'Mount on my back.' He mounted, and the deer carried him away, away, away over all the mountains that were there, and put him in a lair. When the maiden arose the next morning, she found him, and when he came back to her she said: 'Young man, it seems that thou hast many friends, but thou canst not hide thyself from me; yet this day also I forgive thee.' The youth went sadly away; he lost his confidence.

When he sat down in the field, an earthquake began, the town shook, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and when a thunderbolt had fallen, there leapt out from it his friend the gigantic jackal, and said to him: 'Fear not, O youth!' The jackal had recourse to his wonted cunning, it began to scrape at the earth: it dug, it dug, it dug, and burrowed right up to the place where the maiden dwelt, and then it said to the youth: 'Stay thou here, she will look at the sky, the mountain, the sea, and when she cannot find thee she will break her mirror; when thou hearest this, then strike thy head through the ground and come out.'

This advice of course, pleased the youth. When the maiden arose in the morning, she looked at the sea, she found him not, she looked at the mountain, she looked at the sky, and still she could not see him, so she broke her mirror. Then the youth pushed his head through the floor, bowed, and said to the maiden: "Thou art mine and I am thine!" They summoned the viziers, sent the news to the king, and a great feast began.

As is so often the case in tales from the Caucasus, the story features three sons, and again, as is customary, it is the youngest of the three who succeeds in the end and is thus in a position to assume the role that his father formerly played. Initially, however, he fails in his mission and he is forced to flee for his lie. On his journey, he encounters, in turn, a deer, an eagle and a jackal. The youth saves them all from danger, and in return they offer to help him whenever the need should arise.

Now it so happens that the king of the land the youngest son journeys to has a daughter, a maiden queen, "who has made a proclamation that she will wed him that can hide himself from her". However "no man can hide himself from her, and all these men has she slain, for he that cannot hide himself from her is cast down from the top of the castle". With the assistance of his animal helpers, the youngest son succeeds in hiding himself from the queen though, and the story ends happily with a great feast to celebrate the union of the two young people.

One of the attributes often credited to shamans, as well as to witches and other kinds of magical practitioner, is the ability to communicate with the animals, and the youngest son clearly has this in the story. Another attribute of shamans is they have helpers in other realities and the three animals the youngest son encounters on his journey fulfil this role.

On the other hand, the inclusion of the fish in this tale is probably a reference to *The Book of Tobit*, a book of scripture that is part of the Catholic and Orthodox biblical

canon. In it Tobias (Tobit's son) is attacked by a giant fish, whose heart, liver and gall bladder are removed to make medicines. The angel Raphael, sent by God to heal Tobit and to and to free Sarah from the demon of lust Ashmodai, then instructs Tobias to use the fish's gall to cure Tobit's (his father's) blindness.

So how is it that a tale which clearly has pagan roots includes such references to Christianity? The answer is of course that over time all folktales tend to get modified as they are handed down. Our ancestors travelled around narrating, singing, or acting out the stories handed down through the ages. Obviously the plots and characters and locations adopted different meanings as they traversed the landscapes and cultures of the planet; they took on regional variations which changed through time, both "accidentally", by a kind of "Chinese whisper" process, and through deliberate manipulation for propaganda purposes (Ford, 2008, p.37).

There is, however, another reason for the apparent mixed messages. In Georgia, as was the case all through the region, "The lines between being obviously Christian or obviously Muslim could be indistinct. In the Caucasus people in both religious categories enjoyed alcohol, were far removed from clerical authority, and practised a form of folk religion that bore only scant resemblance to the orthodox varieties found elsewhere" (King, 2008, p.56). Although this particular quote refers to the past, by and large the same situation still applies today, especially in the more remote and inaccessible areas.

Meeting Your Animal Helper

SCRIPT FOR THE GUIDE: (To be read in a gentle trance-inducing voice). Make yourself comfortable and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to help you relax. Feel the tension disappear stage by stage from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Let your surroundings fade away as you gradually sink backwards through time and actuality and pass through the gateway of this reality into the dreamtime. (When the participants are fully relaxed, begin the next stage).

You find yourself standing in the open air, in the countryside, a place you know well, a place that you have visited many times before, either in your everyday life or in your dreams. You look for an opening into the earth – maybe a rabbit warren, maybe a cave, maybe a hole in the ground - and you find one. You find one that feels just right for you. And from there you start to lower yourself down, lower and lower you go, out of the darkness and into the light, until eventually you feel the solid ground under your feet once again. At first the light blinds you after the darkness, but gradually you get accustomed to it. Look around you. What do you see, what do you hear, what do you taste on your lips, what do you smell, and what you feel? Take a minute of clock time, equal to all the time you need, to explore this special place, this place of power for you.



And now, coming towards you, you see a figure, not a human one. What kind of creature is it? This creature is your friend and is coming both to support you and give you guidance. Take a minute of clock time, equal to all the time you need, to get to know each other, and find out what special qualities your Helper has to offer.....

And now perhaps you have a question you'd like to ask, either a personal; question, or a question of global concern. Take a minute of clock time, equal to all the time you need, to ask, and listen to the advice your new friend has to give.....

Before you leave, make sure you thank your Helper, promise to honour the advice you've been given, and also that you'll return again. And now that the purpose of your journey has been accomplished, now that you have been given the support and encouragement that only your Helper can give you, the time has come to make your way back home. Higher and higher up to your everyday world you climb, higher and higher until you reach the surface once again, and back to the place you started from.

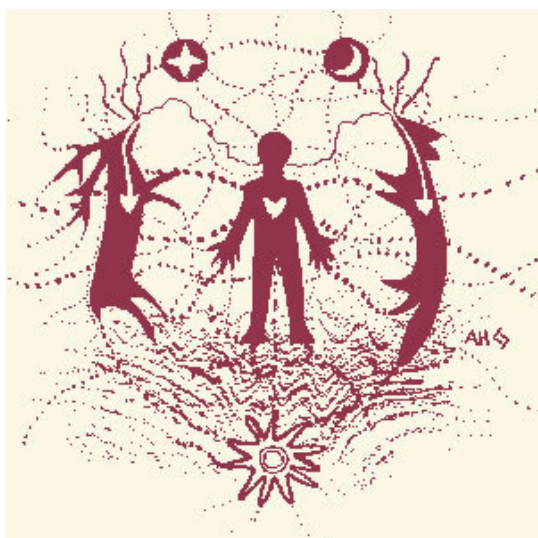
Take a deep breath, let it all out slowly, open your eyes, and smile at the first person you see. Stretch your arms, stretch your legs, stamp your feet on the ground, and make sure you're really back, back in ..., back where you started from. Welcome home!

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Although Michael originally trained as a Core Shamanic Counsellor with the Scandinavian Centre for Shamanic Studies under Jonathan Horwitz, these days his focus is more on the academic side of shamanism, with a particular interest in the folktales with shamanic themes told by and collected from the peoples of the Caucasus. For more information, please visit www.Thestoryteller.org.uk



Interview with Mo Bachelor
28 Sept 08, London
“Inclusiveness of Modern Pagan Religion”

When and where did you get started in Paganism?

As a child, like many children, I felt a sense of connection with various aspects of nature, like the seasons, twilights, tides and full moons, an instinctive sense of the magical. This was the emotional start. I was also very interested in mythology, mainly Greek, and was very attracted by this. Looking back, I took on a sense of the gods as real from about 9 or 10 years old, and wanted to find a way to mark my connection with the gods.

When about 13, I was reading the books of Alan Garner, who was interested in folklore and wrote children's stories. They had definite Pagan content and were very enchanting stories; something inside me took them and the contents very seriously. This was in the early 70s, which was in the Hippie and post-Hippie time, with influence from the counter-culture. I had a fascination with occultism and magic, which developed quite quickly. The only sources I had were from WH Smith or the local library - at that time coffee-table books on the occult were available there in popular form - and also David Conway's *Magic - an Occult Primer*, which was a how-to book on ritual magic. This book was a break-through, it was there next to the magazines and novels, and it started me on exercises to train the will and the imagination in visualisation. I was 15 and thought I'd found the great secret.

At the same time coffee-table books regularly featured witchcraft, particularly Alex and Maxine Sanders' coven, and I got to the point at which I could recognise faces from the regularity of their appearance. I could spot them and think, "Oh, it's them again." I was fascinated by the figure of the Horned God. I had seen him before in an encyclopaedia as Pan, and immediately a reaction of deep recognition went right through me. One of the books was Margaret Murray's *God of the Witches*, and I was completely transported by it, because of the figure of the Horned God.

At about 17, I was given a copy of *What Witches Do*, by Stewart Farrar. At the time, this brought things together and was a bit of an epiphany for me. It was a very healing book for me personally at that point, though it didn't deal with any gay issues and was very heterosexual. In recent years it seems everyone speaks about the Goddess before anything, but with me it was definitely the Horned God that drew me. For a relatively short time, I tried to form a witchcraft practice on my own, but everything I read said that to be a witch, a witch had to initiate me. It was not so much referred to as 'Wicca' but rather as "Witchcraft" as I remember, and the clear indication was that only a witch can make you a witch, and that initiation was into a coven usually.

So I set up a devotional practice, centred around inward deity contact. Outwardly, this was reflected in nature. Practice was not exclusively centred on the Horned God, but this was the most powerfully attractive figure. That was how it started, but the phase drew itself to a close. I got an inner message that I had to move on from this and into a life of my own. Time to grow up and get out there. I didn't seek initiation at this time because I got this message, and it was true. I wasn't ready for anything like that. But the path drew me very powerfully, at what was an impressionable age for me, and the experience was very real.

By then (about 1976) I was aware that I was gay, but while I found it ok within myself to be gay, I wasn't finding validation in anything that I was reading in any kind of occult literature. Quite the opposite, it was more often very condemnatory. This was what was available publicly at the time.

Going back to 1974 I knew that Alex Sanders was bisexual, but I didn't see it published anywhere. It was very much Alex and Maxine in print, but it was all over the grapevine, and I managed to hear about his sexuality at the age of 15, just being at a comprehensive school in Fulham. At about the age of 20, I was also reading Edward Carpenter, Allen Ginsberg and Walt Whitman. Ginsberg was a gay role model for me. I went to uni (East Anglia – Norwich), and witchcraft stayed in the back of my mind.

I started to get interested in Thelema, and read *The Great Beast* by John Symonds. I started reading Crowley's writings, then later those of Kenneth Grant: my reaction was a bit ambivalent. Crowley was a fascinating character: gutsy, bisexual, rebellious, exotic; but with regards to the sexuality question, he didn't really provide much validation. Crowley's work, philosophy and symbolism was primarily heterosexual, with his *Scarlet Women*, etc, but he did work with men sexually as well, most notably Victor Neuberg. Some people consider his most important work to have been with Victor Neuberg in fact. I knew about Neuberg via John Symonds, and there were whole chapters about the Paris Workings and those in the north African desert.

Aleister Crowley seemed to be a morally ambiguous, possibly irresponsible and sadistic, but also romantic, figure. On the one hand they produced *The Vision and the Voice*, but there was also this sadomasochistic edge to the romance, with perhaps an emphasis on the sadism or narcissism of Crowley. Then Crowley dumped Neuberg in the desert! Reading that provided something for a 19-year-old, but it wasn't a mature validation of my sexuality, or of homosexuality in Paganism.

It's as if I was looking for something, but what I wanted wasn't as freaky or wild as what I was finding.

So was the only way you would find validation there, more or less through complete hedonism?

Yes pretty much, as you were presented with the figure of Aleister Crowley, and he left people in the desert, and did sex magic and took drugs, and people went mad, and so forth. What can you make out of that? You have to stretch it to say "well he was a crazy-wisdom teacher and a genius etc", which is cold comfort to mere mortals. None of it was about two guys having a spiritual relationship that is essentially whole and wholesome. He presented a rebellious figure, and that may have been of some help in terms of strengthening my sense of individuality, because Thelema is very individualistic. But it didn't seem to me to run deeper emotionally and in human terms. My interest was that he was a magical figure who was not just heterosexual, but he had a strong aura of dangerousness which of course could pull both ways, being both attractive and repellent. Attitudes towards Crowley were almost superstitious, and he had a definite mystique for my generation.

I recognised that he was extraordinary. In a way a lot of things you read about in the early to mid 70s tended to reflect an earlier sense of occultism with a big bogeyman of 'black magic', and this was anything that involved drugs, sex or blood. These three things were termed "left-hand path", and were considered spiritually disastrous, let

alone such things as homosexuality. Aleister Crowley was marked by that judgement, because he did all of the above and more.

There were some positive things about sexuality in Dion Fortune, etc, but they were very heterosexual. Homosexuality was one of the bogeymen in that worldview, i.e. the fourth point, along with sex, drugs and blood (Fortune was fine with her kind of sex though). It was a very highly charged topic: bereft of spirituality, it was soulless sexuality, or inverted sexuality. It could open you to some kind of psychic bestiality or mess up your karma! Bizarre ideas.

In 1978, Doreen Valiente brought out *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* – this was the first book I read which said that if you want to be a witch, you can become a witch without being initiated by one. Her book was the first that talked about self-initiation, albeit a qualified one. It gave people an option to practice witchcraft for themselves, but still in a way which had an essentially heterosexual background.

A year later, in 1979, Starhawk brought out *The Spiral Dance*, a different type of book. Starhawk again said that I could do it myself. She was the first witch I read who was actually positive about gayness, which was a real change. If I had found it then, a book from 1973 by Martello was also positive about gay people and witchcraft. He critiqued homophobia in witchcraft, and the idea that a man could be spiritually scarred by initiation from another man. Martello disagreed, but I didn't know about Martello until the 1980s, via the Atlantis Bookshop.

Then I did quite a few things in the 1980s, including continued interest in Aleister Crowley, AO Spare, witchcraft, meditation etc, mixed in with other stuff.

But I was also heading for a big personal, psychological and spiritual crisis in the mid - late 1980s. I emerged from this in about 1990, with much more interest in Hindu and Sufi teaching, much more open, universalist and mystical. Much less focus on magic per se. It was very much focused around the heart and perception of reality through the heart. My interest in magic, witchcraft, etc, never left, but a sense of a need or interest in power for its own sake lost any sense of magnetism or reality, and took on a sense of not being substantial, seeming to be merely glamour or illusory. My focus became more heart-centred, about love, sense of being and freedom. It was as if a whole bunch of things were turned upside-down, like the Hanged Man tarot card, and this was meaningful because my sense of causality had changed fundamentally, and it wasn't how one would normally see it.

How did you carry this forward into your ongoing approach to your spiritual life?

I went through the 1990s and drifted happily in a soup of teachings with likeminded friends with elements of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism. There was a lot of considering this and living from and by the heart. I was learning to let go of mind so that heart could guide me. It was very Hippie and was like going back to the 1960s without drugs and politics. It was like the 1960s I had glimpsed as a kid, and some people around me had been there through that. There was a big sense of sharing.

A phrase from Hinduism was important to me: Satsang. Sang means community and Sat is lightness or consciousness. So satsang was being with people with whom we felt a sense of heart-consciousness and spirit of the sacred together. That quality emerges through inter-relationship.

So it's not a formal bond?

No, it's just something that happens and you recognise it. It's very much a magical quality, enchanted with lightness and clarity. There was an enormous amount of healing going on there and I guess that I continued to return to things about witchcraft and magic, but with an intolerance of crudeness and egotism. Concern with power seemed to feel heavy, crude and deluded, binding in a sense, as if a focus on one thing contracts your consciousness, but focus on another can expand or free your consciousness. It didn't mean it was wrong to do magic or have power in terms of abilities, but someone could have an unhealthy attachment to a sense of power as such. So it was like they were almost fetishising it. Sometimes I would hear someone talking and would have a gut reaction to it, like a real come down, whereas before, at a younger age, I would have found the same thing interesting. Now the same conversation would tell me that there is nothing here for me.

I remember talking with someone after the crisis, and the post-crisis period was enormously expansive, and did not seem limited by "me" and separative identification, so my head hadn't put it into boxes. It was an experience of oneness of being, not as an idea or philosophy, but simply as self-evident, self-abundant experience. I talked with a friend about old books on magic and things people would do with it, and it was like seeing people playing about in a basement in a little room. The real stuff isn't in the basement. It's not even in the building. That was the sense I got of it, and it changed my sense of magic as well. I think, years later, that my sense of magic is based on a sense of holism, and a sense of continuity with the greater whole.

By then, this was the 1990s, and during that decade, the impression I got was that neo-Paganism was taking off in terms of more and more books coming out, and books having a somewhat different market and approach. There was an explosion of popular Pagan publishing, even before the Internet. The output was variable in terms of quality, but what really shifted was that before in Witchcraft, Paganism and Magic, the books were obscure and specialist in approach, geared to the individual quest, while now there was a shift to being far more open, accessible and community-orientated. I think this was a positive thing to happen.

I also noticed that a shift towards acceptance of gay people was taking place. During the 70s, mainly it was blank or negative. During the 80s, it was a mixture of eg Starhawk being positive, and the Farrars diffident but respectful, and in the 90s most comments were that it was ok, with an atmosphere of "What kind of problem would you have with people being gay?" It had really shifted. We had moved beyond the old occultism with its paranoia and prejudice, its guardians and rebels, to something far more natural and easy going and healthy. I personally think that American Pagans contributed a lot to this.

Previously, it was a question of the individual reader as a seeker looking for something hidden, and it was about giving people partial guidance and something to head towards. Later it was about giving people something to actually help them in their lives as Pagans, and things that would be more healing, and allowing them to build their own paths in a sense. So maybe the books became less demanding, which could give rise to laziness in the reader, but there seemed to be good heart in the books, giving something helpful to what they saw as an emergent community. So this was a big change and I was happy for the positive side of this change, and it fit well with the changes I had been through with a focus on the heart.

I still find myself going back to the old books and authors, they are from another time now, and one that was irreplaceable in terms of the social and spiritual upheavals and flights of inspiration. Best not to lose sight of these older authors and the time they came out of, because really you don't need to. It's almost as if each time period has virtues and limitations, but if we can keep that continuity of experience and the recollection of it, then we have a greater whole. There have been really good developments over the last 20 years or so, but it is important not to lose the wellspring that came from an earlier generation.

It's that continuity that is important, and in any real community, continuity between generations is vital. In the Pagan community, we don't typically come from Pagan families, so our generations aren't linked by biology in that sense, yet we do have a community with different generations in place, but they have put themselves there by choice. I think that it is relatively easy for people to look at each other and wonder, "Who are you?" It's too easy to do that.

In ordinary communities, kids and parents relate, but in ours, it's much easier to abrogate that relationship. In doing so, you get a severance of that community and that experience. Our elders and youngsters, and all in between, all have something to gain by placing themselves in that communal understanding. We have an enormous amount to gain by opening up to each other's experience, and taking each other seriously on an emotional level, bringing some heart to it.

If you had a particular message for the Pagan community, what would it be?

Approach things with heart, and value some dissolution of the walls that separate us, and value community. Don't be taken in by people who want to define your spirituality for you and tell you how it should be, and judge you. Follow your heart. Be uncool, have faith, relax and be surprised. We aren't a religion like other religions, we grew out of secular freedom and spiritual diversity and the spiritual quests of myriad individuals, but the bottom line is we're ordinary people and we need each other as much as any people do.

How do you find advice in such a situation?

We all need people who can listen to us and actually see where we're at. The right kind of people will listen and have an idea about how to help you get to where you need to go. But first, they have to see you for who you are, as another human being. Just do the same for them. Real advice and real perception comes from the compassionate heart. Look for that. If it isn't kind, then it's a very poor substitute for the real thing. Learn to listen to your own heart early on. Expect to be treated kindly and with consideration, and expect the same of yourself.

Are there parallels between things in the Pagan community and the gay community?

Yes. Both largely come together out of choice or inner experience of ourselves. Both communities experience the same lack of traditional ties. They are also similar in terms of the rarity of gay or Pagan families. Most of us come to this without those ties.

Would your advice to people from both communities be the same?

Yes, it would be. It's about heart, continuity, community. Don't be taken in by people who will judge you or take you to bits – this is the same for Pagans or gays. It's very much a parallel.

To a large extent, our own histories are invisible to us, in both communities. We need that history because the lack of it influences how we behave. We have an ambiguity about our past which opens a window to creativity (in particular in Paganism). Some of our most creative times were when people had an amount of knowledge but there were gaps, so they drew upon their creativity to come up with something that really worked spiritually.

One thing I find looking back at old material is that while some are embarrassed by its inaccuracies, it seems to me that the innocent ignorance and belief in things that were not provable gave rise to enormous creativity and we should appreciate this. If people are too literally reconstructionist (though research is valuable), it's possible to cut off inspiration. People with relatively poor historical information were still inspired, and we can continue to be creative.

What about HIV and Paganism?

I don't know. There was a huge slowly mounting panic in society in general. Much of modern Paganism has had a commitment to being affirmative of sexuality and the body, so HIV hit both gays and Pagans in particular ways I think. Social change was at first negative in response to HIV, and then eventually positive. There was a gay Panic in the 1980s, the "gay plague" of the tabloids, homophobia just spilled straight over into plain phobia. Buried hell fire and brimstone got dug up and taken for a spin round the block. Gays were particularly demonised and blamed, but so was the entire liberal post sixties affirmation of sexuality and pleasure as valuable. I think many Pagans embraced a sense of responsibility towards facing our common human predicament, especially in view of "all acts of love and pleasure" etc. Some probably tried to distance themselves and look at it as a gay thing, going into denial at first. Then the panic wore off, other responses came through along with clearer information, and it turned around. The 80s were a big time of transition. It was quite a hard decade for me.

Is it your observation that gay people needed Pagan spirituality more as a reaction to HIV?

I think gay people needed any spirituality they could get, but Pagan spirituality largely avoids the pitfalls of moralistic abstinence as a primary (and ineffective) response. The need was there all along, but it must have been brought out through issues of death and loss, as these are very psychologically potent. It was the first plague in a very long time. Given the categories of people affected, HIV could almost have been invented by the religious right. It combines fatal consequences with issues of sex, sexual identity and sexual behaviour. It's about blood, polluted blood, semen, saliva, and causes the most intimate acts to become potentially deadly. Homophobia suddenly became a mortality issue: eating together at a table, sharing a bathroom. These things throw a spot light on the issues. Attitudes have improved in the face of this. The 60s and 70s weren't liberated for most people, but rather for a significant minority of a certain age. Homophobia lit up and played out during the AIDS panic, but it was lit up by a fire that proved to be inexorably universal and indiscriminate. I don't know if I'm right, but I almost feel as if a part of our society's homophobia was thereby exorcised, in our own lack of liberation meeting the actual death of so many people, with so little power to do anything about it at the time. I think now we're more tolerant as a result.

De Archetypische Magiër **door Ina Custers**



Binnen de Westerse Mysterietraditie werken we met de oude Goden en helden. Carl Gustav Jung noemde deze psychologische krachten archetypen. Dit is de brug tussen de spirituele kennis van de oude mysteriescholen van het onderbewuste, en de wetenschappelijke benadering in onze tijd. Door te werken met deze krachten maak je contact met een groot energiepotentieel, dat richting geeft aan de onderstroom van psychische bewegingen in je onderbewustzijn, en het kan je ondersteunen in je spirituele groei; dat is het werk van de magiër.

Voordat Jung de archetypen omschreef, stonden er al een aantal belangrijke archetypen op het Tarotdeck. We kennen allemaal de beelden: de Dwaas als naïeve buitelende nar, die door het gebrek aan ervaring in de valkuilen van het leven stapt. De Heremiet, die als eenzame kluizenaar het licht door het duister draagt. De Keizerin, die als moeder van het land, verzorgt en vrucht draagt.

Archetypen zijn beladen met allerlei associaties, en een archetype is niet per definitie positief. De god Zeus die functioneert als leider van de godenwereld, hield er een aparte huwelijksmoraal op na. Hierdoor werd zijn eega Hera regelmatig groen van jaloezie, en dit dreef haar tot drieste daden. Mercurius was niet alleen de boodschapper van de goden, maar was ook God van de handel. Omdat het er in de handel soms niet eerlijk aan toe gaat, werd hij ook de God van de dieven.

De Goden leven in ons allemaal, en vormen matrixen waarop onze psychologie is opgebouwd. Bij tijd en wijlen komt een archetype in onszelf krachtig tot leven, en zet een serie gebeurtenissen binnen ons sociale en spirituele leven in werking. Situaties en mensen kunnen hierdoor plotseling in een goddelijk daglicht komen te staan, waardoor de alledaagse gebeurtenissen een diepzinnige betekenis krijgen.

Binnen de Westerse Mysterietraditie werken wij met een aantal technieken die het 'aannemen van de godvormen' heten, en hierdoor komt de energie die aan de archetypen verbonden is vrij ter beschikking. Als magiërs werken wij intensief met de archetypen, en tegelijkertijd representeren wij als magiërs ook het archetypische beeld van de magiër oproepen. Daarom lijkt het me interessant, om de associaties en het Werk van de magiër naast elkaar te zetten.

Het verheffen van de archetypen

Dion Fortune, was Kabbaliste, en was als Magister een belangrijke ingewijde in de Westerse Mysterietraditie. Zij omschreef praktische magie als 'het verheffen van de archetypen.' Dat is een volkomen ander beeld van magie als wat de doorsnee Nederlander hieronder verstaat.

De meeste mensen associëren magiërs met toverkunsten, sprookjesfiguren. Ze kennen magiërs uit de verhalen van Harry Potter. In boekvorm of als film hebben magiërs een grote amusementswaarde. Kom je er in het echt eentje tegen dan roept dat gevoelens op van ongeloof, of maakt in sommigen een oerangst op. In anderen wordt het 'stoute jongens gevoel' wakker geroepen (en dat belooft meestal niet veel goeds :-)), en sommigen gaan onderzoeken wat het is.

De archetypische magiër wordt ook op de tarot afgebeeld, en op deze kaart staat in symbooltaal ook zijn functieomschrijving: Deze staat beschreven in symbooltaal. De symbolen van de archetypische magiër zijn o.a. de hebreeuwse letter Beth ב, de planeet Mercurius ☿. Hij wordt verbonden met een tekst uit de Sepher Yetzirah die hem in verband brengt met de sfeer van Glinsterend Bewustzijn, de zogenaamde Chazchazit: de plaats waar vandaan de zieners hun visioenen ontvangen.

De taal van de magiër

Zoals je merkt zitten er nogal wat verschillen tussen de breed verbreide associaties, en de symbolische sleutels op de tarotkaart. Waarom zouden we deze vreemde sleutels serieus nemen als het om de archetypische magiër gaat? Omdat de standaard tarot decks ontworpen zijn door magiërs van de Westerse Mysterietraditie. A.E. Waite, en Aleister Crowley waren ingewijde magiërs. Om de diepere lagen van de symboliek op de kaart te ontsluiten, en hiermee zicht te krijgen op de archetypische magiër is het nodig om de taal van de mysteriën te spreken.

Je moet hiervoor de symbooltaal tot leven brengen in jezelf, zodat deze geen theoretische formule blijft, maar de weg baant voor een levende ervaring. Hiervoor gebruiken magiërs een bepaalde soort visualisaties, de Pathworkings. Om symbolen om te zetten naar levende beelden en naar innerlijke ervaringen, moet je het Glinsterend Bewustzijn in jezelf tot leven roepen zodat jij dat innerlijk vermogen leert aan te zetten waarmee de zieners zien.

Het Huis van de magiër

Hoe doe je dat dan, zul je je dan wellicht afvragen? Deze vraag wordt beantwoord door het verschijnen van het symbool van Mercurius op de kaart. Op Crowley's kaart staat het eigenlijk heel precies; wordt zelf Mercurius, staat erop. Mercurius had als God een belangrijk symbool: zijn staf. Je ziet de Caduceus staf in zijn ruggengraat staan.

En wat doet die hebreeuwse letter Beth dan op die kaart? Elke hebreeuwse letter is behalve een klank ook een hiëroglief. Beth betekent huis. Beth-Lehem betekent 'Huis van Brood'. Wat is dat 'Huis van Brood' op de laag van de mythologie? Dat huis is de aarde zelf. Het huis van brood is tegelijkertijd je fysieke lichaam.

De magiër jongleert met de werktuigen der Wijzen. Dit zijn de staf, het zwaard, de kelk en het pentagram. Dit zijn symbolische werktuigen. Zij zijn de werktuigen waarmee de magiër werkt om de filosofische elementen aarde, water, lucht en vuur te verheffen naar een hoger plan. Hierdoor ontstaat het vijfde element: geest. Doordat dit vijfde element ontstaat vindt de bezieling van de materiele werkelijkheid plaats. Hierdoor krijgt de levende werkelijkheid een goddelijke glans, en er ontstaat een plaats waar gebeurtenissen betekenisvol worden: de plek, waar de archetypen tot leven komen.

En hoe doet die magiër dat dan? Dit is verborgen op de kaart. De sleutel zit verborgen in de houding die de magiër aanneemt. Met zijn armen verbindt hij het 'Boven' en het 'Beneden' met elkaar. Hemel en Aarde, het Goddelijke en het alledaagse worden via hemzelf, via zijn staf, via het jongleren met de vier elementen met elkaar verbonden.

Hoe komt het Goddelijke hier dan in terecht? De magiër neemt de lichaamspositie aan van de letter Aleph א, de letter die os betekent, en die verbonden wordt met de Adem van de Geest – de Ruach. Diezelfde os die in Beth-Lehem het Licht van de Wereld verwarmde. De Magiër is zelf de Aleph. Hij werkt met de vier elementen en creëert hierdoor Beth: het Huis van de Geest, hij doet dit met de vier elementen dwars door de vier kabbalistische werelden heen, zodat het goddelijke zich manifesteert in de stof. Zo wordt jouw leven en jouw persoonlijke omstandigheden en verwickelingen, het Beth-Lehem, het Huis van Brood. Alle materie is gekristalliseerde goddelijke energie, en de magiër verbindt de geestelijke wereld met de aardse werkelijkheid: hij bezielt deze zodat deze een betekenisvol geheel wordt.

De transformatie van de magiër

De magiër verbindt zich in zijn meditaties en in zijn rituelen met symbolen, en maakt deze tot een levende werkelijkheid. Hij werkt met de goden, de engelen, hij werkt met abstractere archetypen zoals bijvoorbeeld de ronde tafel. Telkens weer gaat hij een dialoog aan met de innerlijke werelden en verbindt hij de uitkomst met de alledaagse werkelijkheid. Hierdoor bouwt extra betekenislagen in, in zijn beleving. De zon is de verschijningsvorm voor de Spirituele Zon. De wind is de drager van de Ruach - de Geest van God. Het water is het Hemelse Manna, de sterren zijn Goden. De betekenissen komen door middel van meditaties, geestelijke oefeningen en rituelen harmonisch als een extra bewustzijnslaag bovenop de alledaagse werkelijkheid te liggen. Ze bijten elkaar niet en zitten elkaar niet in de weg.

Het effect is dat de wereld, de gebeurtenissen en de innerlijke werkelijkheid in een voortdurende staat van verheffing komen te verkeren. Onder elke omstandigheid is het mogelijk om contact te leggen met de spirituele lagen van de werkelijkheid, en de wereld van de verschijningsvormen ook door deze bril te bekijken. Ook is het voortdurend mogelijk om de kracht van de Geest door te laten vloeien in het Huis van Brood, en zo het Koninkrijk van de Geest op aarde te beleven. Je hoeft niet te wachten tot je dood gaat om in de hemel te komen, je verbindt de hemel en de aarde. Hoe? Door ze voortdurend te verbinden volgens het principe van 'Zo Boven, zo Beneden'.

Every Magician becomes a Mystic in the end.

De magiër bewandelt het spirituele pad van zijn leven. Dit wordt gesymboliseerd door de zwarte en witte tegels van de tempelvloer. Hij bewandelt de weg van de polariteit en balanceert licht en donker in zichzelf. Hij transformeert zichzelf naar een hoger plan. Deze spirituele weg noemt hij het Grote Werk, het is het werk aan het Zelf. Aan het begin van dit pad, zijn de redenen waarom mensen hiervoor kiezen soms erg pragmatisch. Als het pad gevolgd wordt, dan ontwikkelt de magiër tot een mysticus. Dit gebeurt vanzelf als je gebruik maakt van het Glinsterend Bewustzijn, de zogenaamde Chazchazit: de plaats waar vandaan de zieners hun visioenen ontvangen.

Ina Cüsters-van Bergen

September 2008

www.templeofstarlight.eu



NEHALENNIA **door Draak**

Begin dit jaar heeft GardenStone in eigen beheer het door hem geschreven boek 'Die Rückkehr der Göttin Nehalennia' uitgegeven. Laat ik beginnen met te melden dat dit het meest complete werk rond Nehalennia is dat ik ken. GardenStone belicht zo'n beetje elke richting van waaruit de godin gezien kan worden. Het boek begint met een uitgebreide opsomming van alle vondsten die met de vrouw der Lage Landen in verband gebracht kunnen worden. Een groot aantal votiefstenen wordt uitgebreid beschreven en tot in de details toegelicht. Verder gaat GardenStone zelfs in op de wijze waarop de stenen gemaakt zijn. Vervolgens wordt Nehalennia in haar historisch perspectief geplaatst. Hoe zag het stukje land eruit in de tijd waarin reizende burgers van het Romeinse Rijk een steen bij een van de tempels achterlieten. Waar kwam het materiaal vandaan waarvan de stenen gemaakt zijn. Wie zijn de mensen achter de stenen?

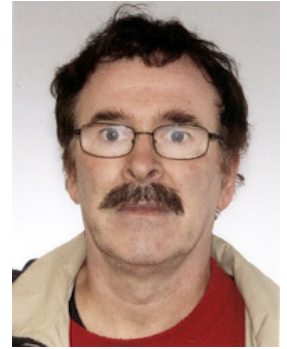


Na dit eerste deel vol harde feiten gaat de auteur in op de godin zelf. Nu komen vragen aan bod als wat haar naam kan betekenen en wat er mogelijk achter de symboliek op de stenen zit. Het laatste deel van het boek gaat in op de rollen van Nehalennia in het hier en nu. Zo gaat GardenStone in op de verschillende kunstenaars die in hun kunstwerken en -projecten met haar gewerkt hebben. Ook gaat hij in op de rol die de godin speelt in het hedendaagse heidendom, en dan met name de groepen die heel specifiek met haar naar voren treden. Hier wordt onder andere ruim aandacht geschonken aan Het Rad en wat Nehalennia voor ons betekent.

Door het hele boek heen lezend en bladerend bekruipt mij echt het gevoel dat GardenStone alles, maar dan ook echt alles, wat er op het gebied van Nehalennia te vinden is onderzocht heeft. Hij presenteert de vele verschillende zienswijzen op velerlei gebied op overzichtelijke wijze. Daarnaast heeft hij een poging gewaagd om van het boek meer te maken dan 'slechts' een droge opsomming van feiten. Een aantal maal last de auteur een verhalend intermezzo in, waarin de lezer wordt meegenomen naar de tijd en situatie waarover hij op dat moment schrijft. Alleen al de poging daartoe krijgt mijn waardering. GardenStone's Duits is voor de Nederlandse lezer met enige kennis van deze taal heel toegankelijk. Het is ook op een prettige manier geschreven. Hoewel de auteur wel degelijk zijn conclusies trekt uit het gepresenteerde materiaal, laat hij ook de lezer vrij om alle weergegeven ideeën en theorieën op waarde te schatten. Het wordt nergens te bepalend. Ik raad een ieder die in Nehalennia geïnteresseerd is dan ook aan dit boek aan te schaffen. Al was het alleen maar omdat je een completer werk mijns inziens niet zult vinden. Naar aanleiding van het verschijnen van zijn boek heb ik GardenStone tot slot nog een aantal vragen voorgelegd.

Voor degenen die de naam GardenStone niet kennen. Kun je in het kort vertellen wie GardenStone is?

Ik ben een Nederlander en werd geboren in Groningen. De liefde voor een Duitse vrouw trok me naar Duitsland, waar ik nu plusminus vijftien jaar woon in de Taunus, een prachtig middelgebergte even ten noorden van Frankfurt. GardenStone is de naam waaronder ik bekend ben als ritueel magiër, schrijver, webdesigner en asatru'er. Men kent mij wereldwijd vanwege mijn internetpresentatie; een website die al sinds 1993 bestaat en veel informatie op heidens, magisch en aanverwante terreinen aanbiedt, en dat in drie talen. In het Duitstalige gebied heeft mijn naam ook enige bekendheid gekregen door artikelen van mijn hand in tijdschriften en door de boeken die ik heb geschreven. Men kent mij ook als magieleraar. Op uitnodiging van groepen geef ik workshops, cursussen en trainingen over en in veel gebieden van de magie en sjamanisme. Zo heel af en toe leid ik ook iemand op tot allround ritueel magiër, in een één-op-één situatie.



Ik ben je nu een paar keer tegengekomen bij de bijeenkomsten van de Duitse Asatrugroep Eldaring. Ligt Asatru aan de basis van jouw levensfilosofie? Hoe zou je jouw persoonlijke levensfilosofie omschrijven?

Dat hangt ervan af, hoe je het begrip 'asatru' invult. In mijn boek over asatru heb ik uitgebreid geschreven, hoe ik asatru zie. En in die opvatting neemt Asatru inderdaad een grote plaats in mijn leven in. Mijn wereldbeeld is magisch. Grofweg kun je daarbij stellen, dat ik verbindingen zie, die volgens de werkwijze niet gezien of verklaard kunnen worden. Mijn magische praktijk bestaat daarin, die verbindingen te gebruiken om bepaalde doelen te bereiken.

Je nieuwste boek gaat over de godin Nehalennia. Eerder heb je al over andere godinnen en vrouwelijke geesten geschreven, zoals Vrouw Holle en de witte wieven. Is er een specifieke reden waarom je tot op heden vooral over vrouwelijke geesten geschreven hebt, of is dat slechts toeval?

Toen ik me aansloot bij de Duitse Asatru-gemeenschap, merkte ik al snel, dat van de goden voor meer dan negentig procent de mannelijke genoemd en vereerd werden. Slechts af en toe werden ook godinnen genoemd. Het waren ook steeds dezelfde. Toch kent het Germaanse pantheon zelfs meer godinnen dan goden. Merk je trouwens, dat ik het niet het Noordse pantheon noem; in de laatste uitdrukking worden gewoonlijk alleen de goden der Vikingen bedoeld, terwijl ik ook heel nadrukkelijk de goden van de Germanenstammen opneem, die ruim voor de Vikingtijd West- en Midden-Europa bevolkten. Mijn publicaties over vrouwelijke goden en geesten hebben in de Asatru-gemeenschap in het Duitstalige gebied er al heel duidelijk toe bijgedragen dat deze al een veel grotere rol gekregen hebben in het denken en in de rituelen. Die houding past ook naadloos bij mijn lezingen die ik gegeven heb over vrouwen in asatru. Ik ben ervan overtuigd, dat ook dat heeft bijgedragen aan het veel grotere aantal aan vrouwelijke leden van de Asatru-gemeenschap hier.

In het voorwoord van je boek schrijf je dat de naam Nehalennia al lange tijd een bijzondere aantrekkingskracht op je heeft. Waarvoor staat Nehalennia voor jou?

Ik doe niet mee aan het veralgemenen van een bepaalde god of godin. Ik bedoel aan één godheid veel meer eigenschappen en verantwoordelijkheden toe te kennen dan ze vroeger hadden. Je hoeft je dan weliswaar maar op één of twee goden te richten, maar in mijn optiek is dat een onaanvaardbare afwaardering van veel andere goden. Onze goden hebben alle hun eigen verantwoordelijkheden, samen dekken ze alle gebieden van ons

leven en onze maatschappij af. Wat daarbij wel nodig is, is om de eigenschappen en verantwoordelijkheden van een godheid aan ons huidige leven en maatschappij aan te passen. Om je vraag te beantwoorden, neem ik Nehalennia als voorbeeld: In mijn boek lees je, dat Nehalennia vroeger verantwoordelijk was voor bescherming op de zeereis naar en van Engeland en de bretonse kust en, wanneer het handelsreizen betrof, ook voor de materiele winst daarbij. Tegenwoordig gaan de reizen over zee veel verder weg. Handelsschepen bevaren alle wereldzeeën. Het is mijns inziens passend om Nehalennia nu te zien als patrones voor scheepsreizen over alle zeeën en oceanen en, desgewenst, ook voor het succes bij de handel daarbij. Voor de vele andere gebieden van ons leven hebben we andere goden, meer dan honderd. Die zijn alle aanspreekbaar. Daarop heb ik in mijn boek over asatru de nadruk gelegd.

In dit laatste boek, en ook in je andere boeken, leg je veel nadruk op feiten en de juiste weergave daarvan. Waarom vind je dit zo belangrijk? Hoe sta je ten opzichte van auteurs die veel losser met feiten omgaan?

Je hebt feiten en feiten. Het verschil zit hem in de hardheid ervan. Een hard feit is bijvoorbeeld dat er een steen gevonden werd, die er uitziet als een votiefsteen waarop in het romeins de woorden *Deae Nehalennia* staan en waarop ook nog geschreven is, eveneens in het romeins, dat iemand dankt voor verworven rijkdom. Wanneer boven de tekst een vrouw is afgebeeld, die een scheepsroer in de ene hand houdt, in de andere hand een schaal met fruit draagt en met een voet op de voorsteven van een schip staat, dan mag je als feit aannemen, dat het om een handelsreis gegaan is, de steen de vrouw Nehalennia uitbeeldt en zij als schutspatroun voor die handelsreis over zee gezien werd. Eigenlijk is dat al een interpretatie, maar vanwege veel vergelijkbare situaties, vondsten en beschrijvingen wordt dat onder historici als een feit gezien.

De aanname dat Nehalennia een andere naam voor de keltische Godin Morgaine is, is historisch niet acceptabel. Het probleem daarbij is, dat zulke aannames als historische feiten geproclameerd worden. Ik gebruik het woord maar zelden, maar in zulke gevallen noem ik dat gewoon dom. Aan onwetendheid is wat te doen, je kunt jezelf informeren. Dat echter te vullen met fantasygegevens, dat noem ik dom. Tot zover vanuit historisch oogpunt. Wanneer het de religie betreft, ligt het voor mij anders. Religie heeft geen historische validiteit nodig, het geloven aan een god of godin en zijn of haar macht heeft niet de steun van historische feiten nodig. Maar het verschil tussen religie en historie moet dan wel duidelijk zijn, en ook het geven van wat historisch als feit gezien mag worden en wat de eigen mening, interpretatie of speculatie is. Dat geldt voor mij des te meer, wanneer iemand publiceert.

In je voorwoord schrijf je verder dat het doen van onderzoek in historische en mythologische bronnen zich heeft ontwikkeld tot een echte hobby van je. Ik, en ik denk velen met mij, kende de naam GardenStone in eerste instantie als zijnde verbonden aan de enorme databank op dat gebied die je hebt aangelegd met Boudicca's Bard. Met welk doel heb je al die informatie gepubliceerd? En heb je er nog verdere plannen mee in de toekomst?

Het doel van de database is het doorgeven van informatie rondom onderwerpen uit de verschillende heidense religies, uit de verschillende gebieden van de magie, alternatieve geneeswijzen, divinatiemethoden, enzovoorts. Die informatie moest gemakkelijk toegankelijk en kostenloos onder de zon is, dan de paar grote wereldreligies. Er is meer dan wat de wetenschap kan bewijzen, meer dan de gebruikelijke medicijnen, enzovoorts. Sinds 1988 doe ik dat al. Eerst in de oude inbel-netwerken en sinds bijna 15 jaar via het internet. Als je er eens de tijd voor neemt, zul je ontdekken, dat heel veel

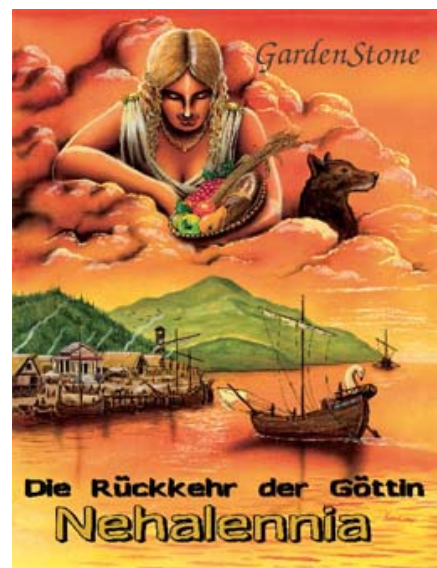
informatie, die eerst op mijn site te lezen was, nu door veel andere sites is overgenomen. Mijn informatiesteen is dus flink aan het rollen gegaan. De site wordt nog steeds uitgebreid; regelmatig worden me informatieve teksten aangeboden en gewoonlijk worden deze ook opgenomen.

Over welke onderwerpen kunnen wij in de toekomst nog meer boeken van jouw hand verwachten?

GardenStone, *Germanischer Götterglaube* - Arun Verlag, Engerda, Duitsland 2003

Wie geen probleem heeft met duitse sites, die kan het bijvoorbeeld bestellen bij de uitgever.

www.bod.de Dat is de hardcover uitgave, grotendeels in kleur. De goedkopere, overwegend zwart-wit uitgave, in paperback is daar ook te bestellen.



Het kan ook via mijn eigen site www.boudicca.de besteld worden.⁴ Daar moet je dan in het menu op 'shop' klikken en dan wijst het zich vanzelf. En tenslotte kan ook gewoon een email aan mij worden gestuurd waarin je de paperback of de hardcover bestelt. Dan krijg je een mail van me terug met de betaalinformatie en ontvang je een gesigneerd exemplaar. Verder zijn er al een paar boekhandels in Nederland, die het ook voor hun winkel besteld hebben, maar daarvan weet ik niet zoveel. Die moeten het direct bij de duitse uitgever bestellen. Ze krijgen dan natuurlijk de gebruikelijke boekhandelskorting. Via mij gaat dat eventueel ook wel.

Er liggen nog verschillende projecten, maar een nieuw boek kan nog wel een jaar of twee, drie duren. Ik heb nog niet besloten welk thema dat zal worden. Dat komt ook, omdat de uitgever van mijn asatruboek een aantal gebieden gaat afstoten, waaronder de heidense religies. Ik heb daarom onlangs de rechten van mijn asatruboek teruggekregen. Dat ga ik in de komende tijd helemaal nieuw bewerken en nieuw uitgeven, nu ook in eigen beheer. De tekst wordt herzien, veel illustraties worden vervangen en alle tekeningen van de goden-amuletten moeten nieuw gemaakt worden. Daarvoor ben ik nog op zoek naar een illustrator; als dat niet lukt, moet ik ook dat zelf doen. Dat wordt in elk geval mijn volgend project; ik trek er ongeveer een jaar voor uit.



Vikingská náboženství

Gareth Williams

(Překl. Jakub Achrer)

Vikingy si často představujeme jako pohanské plenitele. Ale jak vysvětluje Gareth Williams, poměrně rychle přijali křesťanství, a to jak na domácí půdě, tak i v jimi dobytých územích.

Věk konverze

Vikingská éra byla obdobím významných náboženských změn na skandinávském území. Populární pohled obvykle považuje vikingy bez výjimky za pohany nenávidící křesťanskou církev, což je poněkud zavádějící. Je samozřejmě pravda, že veškeré skandinávské obyvatelstvo na úsvitu vikingského věku bylo pohanské, ovšem vikingové měli mnoho bohů. Nebyl pro ně žádný problém přijmout křesťanského boha jako součást svého panteonu. Většina vědecké obce se v současné době domnívá, že vikingské útoky na křesťanské kostely neměly s náboženstvím nic společného. Spíše souvisely s prostým faktem, že kláštery byly jednak bohaté a jednak chabě bráněné, díky čemuž se stávaly snadným cílem plení.

Vikingové se setkali s křesťanstvím díky svým nájezdům. Když se usazovali v zemích s křesťanským obyvatelstvem, přejímali jejich víru poměrně rychle. Což platí pro Normandii, Irsko a celé Britské ostrovy. Ačkoliv o tom současná literatura příliš nehovoří, celkem snadno najdeme důkazy v archeologických nálezech. Pohané pohřbívali své mrtvé s poklady a dary, zatímco křesťané nikoliv, díky čemuž můžeme změnu v náboženství poměrně snadno vysledovat.

Podobně jako u konverze v zahraničí, i ve Skandinávii můžeme během vikingského období pozorovat postupnou změnu, která souvisela s příchodem anglosaských a germánských misionářů. Již v polovině jedenáctého století bylo křesťanství dobře zavedené v Dánsku a většině Norska. Ačkoliv na začátku 11. století proběhly dočasné konverze ve Švédsku, usadilo se na tomto území křesťanství až v polovině 12. století. Součástí křesťanské konverze byl samozřejmě i zábor tradičních pohanských posvátných míst. Dobrým příkladem je Gamle Uppsala ve Švédsku, kde nalezneme na jednom místě zbytky kostela i sérii velkých pohanských pohřebních mohyl.

O pohanských náboženských praktikách vikingské éry nevíme prakticky nic. Záznamů je málo a ačkoliv ve vikingských ságách (pocházejících převážně z Islandu 13. století) najdeme pohanský obsah, musíme mít na paměti, že byly sepsány přibližně 200 let po konverzi ke křesťanství. Víme, že kmenoví náčelníci měli zároveň i roli kněží a že pohanské uctívání zahrnovalo také oběti koní, ale ne o mnoho více.

Více toho víme o příbězích obestírajících pohanské bohy. Kromě příležitostných referencí v rané poezii, přežily tyto příběhy konverzi zejména proto, že byly považovány spíše za mýty než za vyjádření náboženského přesvědčení. Hlavním zdrojem informací jsou Eddy, skvělé literární práce představující staré náboženské představy jako lidové



příběhy. Ale i do nich se promítá křesťanský vliv. Například vládce bohů Odin byl obětován pověšením na strom a probodnutím kopím, po čemž následovalo o pár dní později znovuzrození – což je zřejmá paralela s křesťanským ukřižováním.

Přesto však Edda poskytuje obrovský objem informací o bozích a jejich vztahu k obrům, lidem a trpaslíkům. Nejmocnějším bohem byl jednooký Odin, otec všeho, bůh válek, spravedlnosti, smrti, moudrosti a poezie. Pravděpodobně nejpopulárnějším bohem byl Thor, který byl sice prostý, ale neuvěřitelně silný. Se svým kladivem Mjølnirem, které vyrobili trpaslíci, byl hlavním obráncem bohů proti obrům. Byl také bohem bouří a jako takový byl uctíván zejména námořníky. Amulety s motivem Thorova kladiva byly oblíbené napříč vikingským světem. Bratr a sestra, Frey a Freya, bůh a bohyně plodnosti, byli rovněž důležití a existovala i spousta menších bohů a bohyň.

Bohové a obři

Velkými nepřáteli bohů byli obři. Mezi těmito dvěma rasami byly konflikty velmi časté. Mezi bohy byl ovšem pouze Thor natolik silný, aby se s obry mohl měřit silou, takže bohové se snažili obvykle obry různě přehytračit. Sám Odin vymýšlel chytré lsti, ale kdykoliv bohové potřebovali opravdu záluďný plán, obrátili se na ohnivého Lokiho. Tak jako oheň, který může dodat nezbytné teplo nebo způsobit zkázu, učinil Loki spoustu věcí Bohům prospěšných, ale také mnoho škodil. Problémy, které řešil, byly obvykle způsobeny jeho vlastním rošťáctvím.



Navzdory napětí mezi bohy a obry, docházelo na individuální úrovni k četným kontaktům. Mnoho bohů mělo s obry vztahy. Jedním z nich byl Loki, který měl se svou obří ženou tři monstrózní děti. Jeho dcera se stala vládkyní podsvětí. Jeden syn Jormunagund byl hadem tak velkým, že objal celou zemi. Druhým synem byl Fenris, vlk tak mocný, že děsil bohy. Báli se jej a tak jej ošálili, aby se nechal spoutat magickým řetězem, který jej svázal až do doby, než skončí čas.

Kdysi se věřilo, že svět skončí finální bitvou jménem Ragnarok, bitvou mezi bohy a obry. Loki se svými dětmi v této bitvě zaujme místo po boku obrů. Thor a Jormunagund, kteří spolu mívali dlouhé sváry, v bitvě zabijí jeden druhého. Odina zabije vlk Fenris, který bude následně rovněž zabit. Přes svět se přežene oheň, který zničí bohy i lidi. Nicméně z obou ras zůstane dostatek přeživších k založení nového světa.

Pohanství a křesťanství společně

Nájezdy na franská království a Britské ostrovy přinesly vzrůstající kontakty s křesťanstvím. Ačkoliv vikingské si často během nájezdů svou víru ponechávali, narůstal tlak na konverzi ke křesťanství za účelem lepšího soužití s křesťanským obyvatelstvem. Toto se mohlo dít na politické úrovni, jako například ve Wedmorské dohodě z roku 878. Tato dohoda zavazovala vikingského vůdce Guthruma k přijetí křesťanství za kmotrovství Alfreda z Wessexu. Výměnou jej Alfred uznal za vládce východní Anglie.

Jiná více či méně formální dohoda panovala v oblasti obchodu. Křesťané totiž s pohany nesměli obchodovat. Ačkoliv nebyla vyžadovaná úplná konverze všech skandinávských

obchodníků, byl zaveden zvyk „předběžného podepisování“. Což byl krok na půl cesty, bez křtu, avšak znamenající ochotu křesťanství přijmout. Pro povolení k obchodu byl dostačující.

Když se vikingové usazovali vedle křesťanského obyvatelstva, tlak narůstal. V akademických kruzích nepanuje shoda, pokud se jedná o rozsah skandinávské kolonizace Britských ostrovů. Poměrně málo lidí dnes přijímá tezi, že vikingové v některé oblasti kompletně nahradili původní obyvatelstvo. Někteří osadníci si brali místní ženy, jiní přicházeli s celými rodinami. Děti takto smíšených svazků vyrůstaly v částečně křesťanských domácnostech a často byly vychovávány jako křesťané. Manželské svazky společně s církví postupně přinesly úplnou konverzi.

Poklidnou koexistenci pohanů a křesťanů naznačuje i ražba mincí vikingského Yorku. Jeden typ mincí nese jméno svatého Petra namísto vládce. Což vypadá velmi křesťansky. Ovšem na mnoha mincích je písmeno I jména PETRI vyobrazeno jako Thorovo kladivo. Některé mince mají Thorovo kladivo i na rubové straně. Tyto mince nesou úmyslné poselství o tom, že bylo přijatelné pohanství i křesťanství.

Konverze ve Skandinávii

Pokusy o konverzi Skandinávie začaly ještě před vikingskou érou. Anglosaský svatý Willibrord vedl v roce 725 misií do Dánska. Ačkoliv byl králem dobře přijat, měla jeho misie pramalý účinek. Franský svatý Ansgar vedl druhou vlnu misionářských aktivit od roku 820 dále za podpory franského císaře Ludvíka Pobožného. Ansgar a jeho následovníci založili misie v Dánsku a Švédsku za podpory místních vládců, ale na místní obyvatelstvo neměly tyto pokusy žádný efekt.

Archeologické nálezy ukazují, že křesťanství bylo postupně přijímáno v Norsku po jednotlivých osadách, přičemž často se tak dělo i nezávisle na místních náčelnících. Stejný princip můžeme pozorovat i ve větším měřítku. V polovině desátého století se Norský panovník Hakon Dobrý, který byl vychováván v Anglii, pokusil použít svou královskou autoritu k zavedení křesťanství. Když se ukázalo, že by tím ztratil podporu pohanských náčelníků, zanechal svých pokusů a poslal biskupy zpátky do Anglie.

Dánský panovník Harald Modrozubý byl úspěšnější. Jeho slavný runový kámen v Jellingu nám říká, že Hafale „udělal z Dánů křesťany“. Toto potvrzují i křesťanská vyobrazení na dánských mincích i germánské záznamy o usídlování biskupů v dánských městech. Což bylo začátkem trvalé dánské konverze. Po Haraldově smrti sice mohlo dojít k pohanské reakci, avšak křesťanský vliv se v Dánsku a v Anglii pevně zabydlel s nástupem vlády Knuta v roce 1018.

Další pokusy anglosaských misionářů na konci desátého století měly v Norsku a Švédsku malý dopad. Olaf Tryggvasson norský a Olof Skötkonung švédský byly oba konvertováni, nicméně účinek na obyvatelstvo byl jen omezený. Úspěšnější byl vlna konverze za vlády Olafa Haraldssona (1015 až 1030), která postupně vedla až k trvalému přijetí křesťanství. Švédsko nicméně čelilo pohanské reakci v polovině 11. století a křesťanství se v něm trvale zavedlo až ve 12. století.

Gareth Williams
(Překl. Jakub Achrer)

La Rueda del Año

La Rueda de la Vida

Morgana

13th of February of 2009



El pasado 13 de Febrero, desde P.F.I. España, tuvimos el honor de organizar una conferencia con Morgana, Coordinadora Internacional de P.F.I., como ponente y Lehijana, colaborando como traductora.

En la conferencia, titulada “La Rueda del Año – La Rueda de la Vida” Morgana nos condujo a lo largo de la rueda, por cada festividad, por cada etapa del año, y de nuestra vida, expresando su significado de una manera sorprendentemente esclarecedora.

Es en el intervalo previo a Imbolc (2 de Febrero) cuando nos gestamos, en el duro invierno, bajo la fina capa de nieve, donde el vientre de nuestra progenitora protege de las inclemencias el proceso paralelo que se gesta en su interior.

Los primeros brotes en la primavera son muestra del nacimiento y el retorno de la vida. Lo que ha sido gestado bajo la tierra da fruto y muestra su belleza.

A partir de este momento avanzamos a lo largo de la rueda, alcanzando nuestra etapa sexual en la adolescencia, en Beltane (1 de Mayo) para más tarde alcanzar nuestro esplendor en Lughnassad (1 de Agosto), morir simbólicamente en Samhain (31 de Octubre) y volver a nacer nuevamente en Imbolc.



Morgana planteó dos escalas en este ciclo; la propia del año, en la que cada festividad da paso a una nueva etapa, y otra en la escala de la vida, asignando a cada ciclo la

duración de 7 años de manera que, una vez girada toda la rueda, el nuevo nacimiento queda relacionado con la jubilación como un segundo despertar.

El símil entre los ciclos anuales y los ritos de paso nos demuestra la universalidad de estas etapas que, más que tratarse de de clasificaciones aleatorias, se fundan en la más estable de las bases de nuestra sociedad; los ciclos naturales y la agricultura.

Estos cuatro puntos cruciales relacionados con la agricultura reside un latente simbolismo lunar, mientras que en los otros cuatro puntos que conforman los ocho Sabbats, solsticios y equinoccios, se da una obvia relación solar.

Sin embargo, aunque las festividades se celebren en fechas astrológicas relativamente concretas, no debemos olvidar que las festividades agrícolas, solares y lunares, están mas relacionadas con el sol, la luna y el planeta tierra que con cualquier otro tercero.

En agricultura no es la fecha concreta lo que determina el momento de recoger el grano, sino la propia evolución del grano, que difiere de cada lugar. Del mismo modo sucede con el resto de eventos de nuestra vida. El bebé nacerá cuando esté preparado para ello, del mismo modo que el joven madurará cuando su experiencia y conciencia hayan evolucionado.

Morgana nos mostró que los ciclos, anuales o de la propia vida, son impredecibles y no deben predecirse, ni compararse con sus vecinos más que como contraste. Un cereal no crece igual aquí que en el otro extremo del planeta, como no lo hará una persona.

De igual modo las festividades, su simbolismo y su celebración variarán según la zona, su clima, sus tradiciones y costumbres.

Como menciona Dion Fortune en su obra "La Cabalah Mística"; el hombre occidental ha de encontrar las raíces de sus creencias en su propia tierra. Ni el cuerpo, fisiológicamente, ni la mente, psíquicamente, están preparadas para asimilar algo de lo que estamos totalmente desarraigados.

Desde P.F.I. España queremos agradecer a Morgana y Lejiana, su apoyo, esfuerzo, y el inolvidable fin de semana que vivimos con ellas. Y, a todos los asistentes, tanto a la conferencia como a la Reunión Informal, y a nuestros socios, el apoyo otorgado y su confianza en nosotros y nuestra labor.

A todos vosotros, mil gracias.
Leridian, Febrero 2009

P.F.I. Spain



Contact us !

On a national level, each country has a National Coordinator. This is the person you should write to with all your questions and you should keep him/her informed of changes of address or e-mail! If you cannot contact your National Coordinator, you can contact the International Coordinator.

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