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Wow! This issue begins our tenth year of publication.... It amazes me how fast the years go by.

One thing that has changed over the years is that we have gone from a Western European membership base to having members all over the world. Another is that all administration work is done by email and web-based databases so our paper use is very minimal. And after 9 years we've discontinued the use of the PFI Chat list and have now moved on to a PFI Forum (see page 7).

But this month is another anniversary that deserves mention. It is 10 years ago nearly to the day that I met Morgana and Merlin for the first time. Morgana and Lady Bara were the new National Coordinators for the Netherlands and I was the new National Coordinator for Belgium. So during the first week of May 1998, I went up to Ziest so that Morgana and I could put our heads together and exchange ideas. We hit it off immediately and talked for hours. During the last 10 years Morgana's friendship has rescued me from myself more than once... Here's to you Morgana and to the next 10 years of friendship!



PF Conference in London, November 2001.

From Old Pagan Worship to Endovelico
by Isobel Andrade
PFI National Coordinator for Portugal
Translated by Antonia

The proto-historic worship in the sanctuaries of Rocha da Mina and of Castelinho were not identical to the Outeiro de S. Miguel da Mota as we know it now a days under a Romanized period. However, in a closed wide circled area other sanctuaries existed, being more ancient and still marked predominantly by ancient animist cults.



The essence of the pre-Roman religion is different from the romanticized side we know. The societies and the culture develops transforming patterns and the soul's group of one society has difficulties in comprehending what doesn't exist anymore, but with the passing of time and years, remains in history. The ancient people's creed stayed in the memories of the Lusitanae people and some continued in the traditional tales even if those were modernized through the Romanization and dispersed in the following times.

Here the veneration was to a native divinity in which the worshipping evolved and consequently being altered by the arrival of new deities brought by Mediterranean people and other tribes coming from the centre and south. But with the social changes, the sacred hill always stayed with importance, the surrounding region became more populated in the times of the "Cônios and Béticos". Alongside the sacred places and for some distance, spreads a rocky formation. Ossa, was probably also by circumstance a meeting point of exchanges; a Greenish hill with water and game, with a shielding stone formation one Oasis in an immense region of great planes.



For place of cult the ancient chose the hilltops to direct their worship to the heavens marrying the sky with the earth. Because the mountain was revered; in her gorge she received the bodies of the enemies, the nicks sculpted in her stone spoke to men devoted to the divine, carriers and interpreters of the Gods voices. Behind her canyons was where the tribes hid, in the scarps were left offerings from totemic animal to cereals. The mountain also

nourished them surviving from hunting and herding. In other locations the menhir demarcated territories and other communitarian cults emerged when the times changed; the worship of the fertilization Goddess the mother earth and other tribal cults. The old religion was not the same in every region but the plurality and the diversity were part of her essence.

Here in “outeiro” the veneration was to the “ Lord of the Mountain”, to EndoVelico.

Guardian of the gone souls, he collected his children in a bowl where the river disappeared, receiving them in their eternal journey. If the mountain gorge devoured the enemies it also embraced the body of the old warrior with funeral honours where only the invited tribes attended. On the mountain top the sanctuaries. Where the ceased stone rises to the sky emanating the power of the mountain, there her voice manifested to the winds, there was the place of wisdom. Descendents of clan lords and wizards of ancient tribes, they perpetuated the believes and knew the places of power, it was the immensity of the flora that the earth here gave making possible the development of the healing arts, the wisdom was transmitted and grew.

The encounter between cultures was absorbed and the wise man not only worked for his tribe but also practiced with men, practicing the knowledge received from the Gods, received and given. Executing healing rites to perform purifications and cast out ailments. In return the people fed them. The new routes broaden the interchange and the sanctuary became popular. Here one received the wounded guardian, the caravan leader who searched for shelter and protection, the orphan child, the travellers and the messengers...



The accessibility and the adaptation to the rite, made us choose the ancient Roman temple, in which the memories lived in writing, becoming the elected place for our contemporanry pagan cult.

Where divine manifestation is, so the place becomes divine.

This sanctuary becomes known as Oracle and place of healing. It isn't odd that we as polytheists believe in the blessing of the healing God.

The cult to the EndoVellico didn't extend to Rome; it was maintained with them in the region.

If the Romans constructed a temple dedicated to a local deity and not to one from their own pantheon, then before the Roan's arrival, the deity was already of importance. Anticipating the religious search by the new civilized inhabitants, they gave significance and emphasis to the local deity- EndoVellicvs, like this perpetuating this ancient cult, transforming it into a blessed place by constructing a new temple that would attract people and consequently commerce.

The valuable surrounding quarries, the nearby commercial routes, the vast fertile planes, suitable for extensive agriculture for consume and export to other provinces, brought to this region unusual prosperity. Characteristically to the Roman culture the temple of Endovelico acquires new ways of healing and new

therapies, receives the personal offerings and also grants guiding answers in diverse matters:

In front of the lord of Healing, the Oracle was consulted.

The God appeared to the pilgrims in dreams (incubatio) but not without first being submitted to a purification and preparation ritual to see and hear the God, under the guidance of the resident priests. The Oracle priests interpreted the dreams and afterwards they would indicate the treatment. The treatments in general, were spread through the Roman Empire in the healing Temples, which consisted of thermal cures, baths and aromatic smoke, exercise and diets, this way a system was developed based on observation from which the modern therapies originated.

The centuries passed, Rome had already fallen and consequently Christianity emerged. Even with the destruction of the temples and the prohibition of cults, in the interior regions certain pagan (pagani) customs were maintained, in the rural areas people kept their religious convictions. The Christian clergy had to replace the previous cults and to supplant the people's need by the given support to the old believe, by adopting martyrs and saints to substitute the old pagan divinities and the people, former worshipper of the old pagan divinities, to whom they approached with requests of healing found churches taking over their sacred pagan places.

The temples were desecrated, the pillars displaced, the flagstones were taken for rebuilding, the statues buried, broken and the altars used for the new chapels being constructed. The need to connect with the divine doesn't die on mankind, adapts, transmutes through time and acquires new forms. Chapels and churches replaced the many Pagan locations, however here in the ancient temple of EndoVelico, the Christian religion didn't develop significantly. The mountain spirit lord slept.

Men always have been pilgrim, since the beginning, from searching for new land and moving clans, the journey to distant places to receive grace or divine council, from the medieval pilgrim in the known pilgrimages, to the walker of the XX century which leaves the city's comfort and walks searching for his magical place.

So, in the beginning of the XXI century the PFI gathers the pagan walkers devoted to the ancient Lusitanian deity- The EndoVelico-and he reappears to the light of day like Phoenix reborn, proving that our practices are capable of coexisting with the modern society without trying to proselytize from our part, but allowing the folk a glimpse of a distant religious past.

Evermore,
Oh! EndoVelico

Isobel Andrade

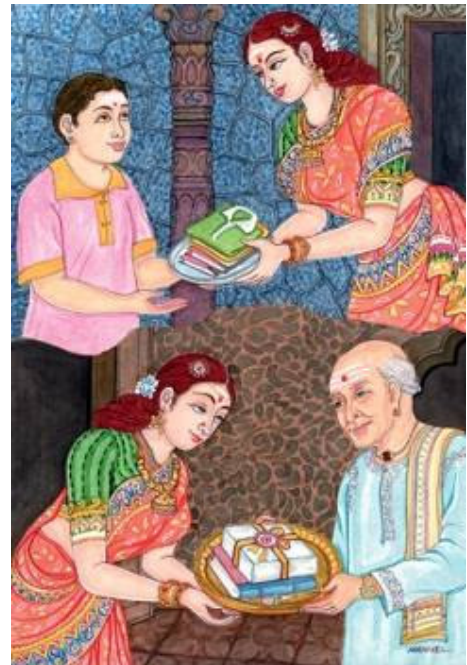


A Pagan Look at Karma **by Saddle LaMort**

The eastern idea of karma has penetrated deep into modern day Pagan thought; but does it really belong there? In the following article I will attempt to map the ideology of Karma, compare it to the laws of nature and provide an alternative for it that might be more suitable for some Pagans.

The concept of Good and Evil was discussed even by Classical Greek philosophers, followers of Zarathustra built their whole theology around it, but it wasn't really widespread until Christianity advertised it. Because of this, the idea that there is an absolute Good and Evil is embedded in European thought and most people find it hard to let go. Even people otherwise free of Christian thought patterns tend to say things like they only work with "white magic, or warn against "black magicians".

The concept of Karma states that for every action (karma), there is a reaction (veepati). In the original context, this means all our desires attract bad veepati, especially if we act on them, for our aim should be Nirvana – a state where no desire or action exists. However, thanks to the New Age movement, Karma in modern Western thought is but a substitute for the Justice of God. The most commonly known concept is that if you do bad things, you attract bad Karma (even the meaning of the word is changed), if you do good things, you attract good Karma.



How can anyone do good (or evil for that matter) things from a Pagan point of view? From Nature's point of view, there is no such thing. Is a tiger evil because it tears apart those who step on his tail? Certainly not. Is a scorpion evil to sting the foot that violates her nice, dark hiding place in a seemingly abandoned shoe? Yet again, the answer is "No".

If we accept that Human is a creature from and of nature, it is logical to measure all it's actions with the same standards. Also, we might consider that all people want something good for themselves (even those who claim selflessness tend to feel nice and warm inside after they did something they consider "good"). From there we might ask – what is "good" in the absolute sense? We only have three possible answers, the democratic, the universal and the righteous. The democratic means Good is when the most people benefit from a certain action; the universal sees Good and Evil in the will of the person; the righteous accepts a certain set of laws – adhering to them is Good, rebelling against them is Evil.

To illustrate the Democratic, let us consider a theoretical situation, where five people are held hostage and one has to die for the other four to live. Each has their own reason to live, a family, friends etc. In this case, we cannot say that it is Good in the absolute sense that any one of them has to die, it is merely choosing the lesser evil. Anything that contains Evil cannot be Good in the absolute sense – therefore we proved that this method does not lead us to an Absolute.

Considering the universal, let us imagine a person. He is full of tender feelings towards his fellow countrymen, helps anyone even without being asked; then he suddenly realises, that the people he loves fare worse and worse, even though he's doing his best. He decides that a certain set of people is responsible for this. He starts a war and attempts to remove such people by whatever means necessary, so they cannot pose a threat anymore. Can the man be truly called evil? From one point of view, he simply did the same type of thing as a mother who kills a man that threatens her child; from another, this is Hitler we are talking about, a mad dictator who had millions murdered. Yet again, we find subjectivity in the matter – the goodwill of one leading to something that is considered by most the greatest evil of all times.

The concept of a set of laws immediately poses two questions: Are these laws manmade or god made, and are they or are they not subject to change. If the laws are manmade and subject to change, there are no grounds to declare any laws Absolute, for the best any human can do is act on their own understanding of the world, therefore any law thusly made will itself be subjective. If the laws are manmade but are not subject to change, they will be both subjective and pathetically outdated after a mere few hundred years. If they are god-made, we always have the problem of which god(s) are we talking about and who does the “translating”. Each god we ask will have a different set of rules; most gods will have rules that contradict other gods’ laws (or their own, e.g. “Thou shalt not kill” vs. “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”). Therefore we may conclude that while each religious person may find the set of laws given to them by their own deity perfect for themselves, none of the god-given laws can be called Absolute – therefore acting on them cannot be considered an act of objective Goodness.

We have to conclude therefore, that since there cannot be an objective set of rules towards Good or Evil, “Karma” (in the western sense, i.e. “reaction” cannot act on them; therefore from the point of view of formal logic, this concept does not work in a natural setting. What would be a natural equivalent to this then? Would that mean that carnage and destruction are bound to go without consequences? Certainly not.

Let us consider, that each action has a consequence. If I bear ill will towards



someone, it might or might not manifest around my target, but it definitely will affect my own life. If I help other people, on the other hand, it also will have an effect, this time it will be more likely beneficial on my own life (what goes around comes around). Everything will have an effect on the energy bodies of the acting person as well. Our energy bodies are mainly controlled by our worldview. What does that mean? Any action that you take with intentions to do something beneficial will most likely bear positive results for ourselves – the more people you do “good” with, the better it will be for yourself. The same goes to each action of ill will, with a “negative” outcome.

However, I cannot stress enough that I’m not talking about “good” or “bad” in any objective sense. If we paint a green line on the wall every day, sooner or later we will be surrounded by the colour green. If we play music, musicians will surround us. Like attracts like. It is up to our own perception, how we view these changes.

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Everything that happens to others, reach us through the filter of our senses; while everything that happens to us effects us physically, emotionally and intellectually. This is the Threefold Law. “An ye harm none, do what thou wilt” is a guideline that is there to remind us – whatever you do will have a consequence. Understanding the laws of nature therefore in itself is enough to realise the point most of the religions are trying to make by setting Divine Rules into stone: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you”.

Taking all of this into consideration, we may conclude there is no real need to see Karma as a blind force equivalent of Santa Claus, giving presents to nice children and punishing the bad ones. Being Pagans, we can substitute a Law of Interaction, that works on the Web of Wyrd – each of our actions resonate on all the strings of the web, eventually getting back to us in the same way we set it into motion. It’s important to stress, that the Law of Interaction is a natural law, like gravity, rather than being a written rule.

Don't forget to sign up for the new PFI Forum!!



It's easy!

Go to <http://www.paganfederation.org/forum/>

And click 'Register'

Fill in your Profile and you are done!

For more info contact the Forum Administrator :

saddie@paganfederation.org

See you there!

PFI Poland

In the Summer of 2007 PFI Poland was launched. One of the first things they did was to organise a weekend workshop in Warsaw on August 25 2007 with Lamia Tesenisis and Yoda from Germany. Here is a brief report from Rawimir:

“The workshops began with a lecture on Dianic Wicca and the differences between this path and other Wiccan traditions. The lecture was interwoven with singing Pagan or even Wiccan songs together in order to get into the mood. After the lecture and a short break participants divided into two groups: women and men.

Participants had a chance to be there together and to prepare for the evening ritual. Lamia led the Women’s circle and Yoda led the men’s circle. After a dinner break a Full Moon ritual took place at 7.30 p.m. Participants worshiped the Goddess in her three forms. The rituals took about 2 hours and made a big impression on many participants.

It is noteworthy that although participants represented different branches of Paganism, some different from Wicca and certainly Dianic Wicca, the workshops passed in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the different kinds of spirituality.

The atmosphere was best characterized by Yoda who stated that he had been unsure if people would be able to open up and at the same time accept their differences. But after the work in the men’s circle he felt that he was part of a family. This aspect was noted after the workshops were completed. None of the participants hurried to leave and they stood talking to each other for a long while.

I'd like to thank Lamia & Yoda who ran the workshop, for their excellent and professional approach, to Boann and Dagda for the idea of workshops and their



effort in organising it, for inviting their friends who gave us so much joy, Enenna for her help in preparations and for interpreting at the lecture, so that the basic barrier between people which is language barrier was torn down. I'd also like to thank Czeski for interpreting at the men’s circle. We could talk honestly without worrying about being misunderstood. I also thank all the participants for great atmosphere. And I hope that such events will become a regular practice.

On the occasion of the workshops Boann passed a gift from international Pagan community for Polish branch of the Federation. The gifts were objects beautifully crafted from wood: athame, chalice, water

bowl and pentacle. We thank you with all our hearts. We will be using the objects during ceremonies organized by our Federation.

Blessed Be,
Rawimir

Cunning folk

by Merlin

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Winter was traditionally a time of story telling. There was little to do on the land. Frost, snow, rain and cold kept people in the house. It was a time to repair your tools, a time to weave baskets and mend clothes, a time to sit round the fire. It was a time to remember the myths and legends, the fairy tales, and also a time to remember the stories, as well as the true history, of the clan.

The Craft too has a history. It has what we may call a mytho-poetic history, a history of myths and legends, of archetypal imagery. And it has a historian's history, a history of real people, of existing documents and verifiable events. I find both versions of history equally valid, equally important and equally useful, but one should of course not be confused with the other. Neither should either version be used inappropriately. And of course it is important to stay informed of the latest historic evidence.

The person who has put a lot of effort into documenting the proper historian's view of the history of the Craft, is Ronald Hutton, professor of history at the University of Bristol. In this article I would like to present an overview of one chapter from his book *The Triumph of the Moon*, together with some of my own questions, insights and conclusions.

The chapter that I've picked, deals with the "hereditary Craft", with Wicca before it became Wicca: it deals with the people who practised what many these days would call "witchcraft", before Gardner came along. The chapter is called Finding a Low Magic, and it deals with real people who lived between 1740 and 1940, before Gardner published his work, and who practised magic, spells and so on.

Were they called witches?

In chapter 6, Finding a Low Magic, Hutton reviews the evidence for low magic, and examines three fairly distinct groups who practised magic and spells:

- cunning folk, literate middle class traders, artisans or schoolmasters
- charmners, often lower class magical practitioners
- witches, anti-social individuals practising evil magic for their own ends



These were the "practitioners of this operative magic in England and Wales between 1740 and 1940" (p.84). They were astrologers, fortune tellers, wise women, wise men or wizards, cunning men and cunning women, conjurors, 'dyn hysbys' (Welsh) or 'pellar' (Cornish, believed to be from 'expeller', one who casts out evil spirits), but not 'witch'. "Folklore collectors themselves often employed the term 'white witch' [for cunning folk and charmners], but this formulation was very rare in the vocabulary of the ordinary people, to whom the word 'witch' almost always

signified somebody who worked magic for personal ends of profit or malice." (p.86). These cunning people usually had some regular employment too.

The cunning folk

Hutton builds this chapter on top of, and supplements, the work of Owen Davies. Davies introduced the term 'cunning folk', and collected 41 case studies, male practitioners, mainly tradesmen and artisans, and the rest were herbalists or schoolmasters. Females were rare, married or widowed, although just as commercially successful. The reason for finding almost exclusively middle class people was that "literacy and learning were perceived as integral accomplishments for most types of cunning craft." (p.87) Hutton presents short case studies of over a dozen of these cunning folk, with an overview of various practices, anecdotes and so on.

The source of knowledge

"The outward sign of their accomplishment was that they possessed books, an immediate distinction..." (p.90) These books were mainly works on astrology, herbalism, medicine, charms, ritual magic, astrological charts, sometimes the Key of Solomon. Writers like Cornelius Agrippa, Michel Nostradamus, Reginald Scot, William Lilly, Francis Barrett. But: "Cunning folk wrote their own notebooks" (p.92), for example "a conjuring book with large brass clasps and corners, an elaborate book of charms and recitations". Some of these are preserved in national archives, such as the National Library of Wales. Cunning folk bought their books, often by mail order, from either Leeds or London. Charmers, to the contrary, often had their simple charms passed on by personal transmission, as to write charms down would dissipate their power. (p.94)



Magical techniques

Charmers often confined themselves to curing growths or rashes of skin, promoting the healing of wounds, staunching bleeding - all ailments which are very responsive to mental suggestion, and often with a near total success rate.

Magical practitioners often used a mirror, crystal, vessel of water etc. for the client to gaze into, until they saw who had bewitched them, stolen their goods, spread gossip and so forth.

Cunning men used fire to burn a special powder or incense to purify houses, people, animals. The heart of an animal could be stuck with pins, burnt or roasted. Hair and nail clippings could be put in a bottle, boiled or buried. Wax effigies were used as well to get even with a witch who put a spell on a household. Apart from this, amulets, charms, healing potions and poultices, horoscopes, card reading and tea-leaf reading, trickery, ventriloquism and slight of hand were all used. "Above all, they devised spells and rites according to their own whims and creative talents, and the needs of their customers". (p.97)

Lodges and covens

"Did cunning folk ever work together, or meet in lodges, guilds or covens? The answer seems to be an almost complete negative..." (p.98) There are exceptions, such as husband and wife teams, or a gathering of wisemen in Manchester in the early nineteenth century. But cunning folk in general were competitors of each other, and their craft was a sideline to their regular employment.

There are plenty of references to witches, but they are the opponents of the cunning people: "individuals possessed of magical powers who chose to use them maliciously against their neighbours, from motives of revenge or entertainment". (p.98) Folklore collectors on the other hand refer to cunning folk as 'white witches', confusing the issue and using a word which the people themselves never used.

Witches always worked alone. There are exceptions: in the tip of Cornwall witches were thought to gather every Midsummer Eve to feast. It is possible that maritime contact from France or Spain planted this idea, which is unusual in England. The word Sabbath for example was used by French and German demonologists, and is not found in eighteenth- or nineteenth-century English folklore.

Other beliefs include witch conventions in Lincolnshire, in Dorset, and south Staffordshire, were "each Midsummer Night all the witches of the world met on the moon to determine the fate of ordinary mortals during the next twelve months". (p.100) There are also a few traces of social contact between witches. But these are rare exceptions. In general, a witch, was an anti-social, isolated figure. The word coven was unknown. It is of Scottish origin, but even there it was not popular, deriving from one sensational and very atypical case of witchcraft, the case of Isobel Gowdie in 1662. Through scholars and writers the word has been popularised.

A belief?

In general, the belief of cunning folk "did not reflect a single cosmology, but was made up of the debris of many" (p.101). So they believed pretty much what everyone else believed, and were mostly Christian, albeit with the addition of what we now would call 'superstition'. The charms and spells too had a clear Christian character - the Bible being used as a spell book more than a theological message. There is no record of a pagan belief system in existence at this time.

Hereditary craft?

Cunning folk's talents were individual, like a talent for music, or beauty. At most, talents like this lasted for one or two generations (p.103). Charmers, who used just one skill to heal one particular ailment, often did pass this on through the family or a close friend. Sometimes people were supposedly born with the gift. In the West Country a charm should be passed down between members of the opposite gender.

In witches it tended to run in families, but that may just be because a family had a bad name anyway. There was also the belief that the power must be passed on when the witch was close to death.

Rich and famous

Charmers regarded their power as a gift, so usually accepted no payment, only gifts. Cunning folk usually charged a fixed fee - usually a low one for the poor, a high one for the gentry. In general these people were commercially successful and had a handsome income - note that they had regular employment as well - and could live comfortably.

Persecution?

The Witchcraft act of 1736 made it an offence to call somebody else a witch, and outlined penalties for people who claimed to work magic, up to 1 year imprisonment.. But for the rest of that century, the law remained a dead letter (p.107) In 1824 the Vagrancy act outlawed persons telling fortunes or using anything like palmistry to deceive and impose (p.107), and this law was enforced and did make life more difficult for cunning folk. The prosecutions rose with the installation of the professional county police forces in 1851, but they also helped to wipe out mobbing of suspected witches. Prosecution usually was the result of unhappy clients being charged exorbitant fees, but most cunning folk who charged normal fees had no problems. The decline in prosecutions around 1900 continued until both acts were repealed in 1951. So these laws never had any real impact: "ordinary people valued magic too much" (p.109).

A decline?

Astrology, herbalism, card reading, spiritual healing - they are still here and have never been away. But the labels have changed, to homeopathy, hypnotherapy, aromatherapy and so on. So no, the profession is still there, but the name has changed.

Personal summary

Hutton finds it a paradox that cunning folk, which most modern witches see as being very relevant to witchcraft, in fact are least relevant! (p.111). And as far as characteristics like religion and coven meetings are concerned, he is right: cunning folk did not have a separate pagan religion, did not meet in groups, did not have initiations, did not pass on things within the family, were not born with "the gift", and so on. At least... if we ignore all the "odd" folklore, that is.

However, cunning folk and charmers between 1740 and 1940 provided the same services which are now being provided by the palmist, tarot-reader, astrologer, holistic healer, herbalist or therapist! And then as now, these people usually work alone, they often have a normal job as well, they earn a decent living, they are literate, learn from books and each other, they do not inherit their skills nor pass them on within the family, they do not meet in lodges or covens, and their religious outlook reflects that of the society in which they live - in the past that was usually Christianity, today it is more "new age": Wicca, paganism, shamanism, Indian or a more free form of Christianity.

Modern day witches (Wiccans) see their "craft" part of "witch-craft" often in this perspective. They become proficient at one or two of these crafts, like astrology or herbalism, in order to help their fellow man. In this sense, they continue (just as the new age therapist does) the tradition of the wise women, wise men, cunning folk and charmers of past centuries: they help their fellow men with natural and magical techniques, above and beyond what science and society provide.

So I don't subscribe to Hutton's conclusion that the cunning folk were the least relevant to modern Wicca. I recognise in their contribution roughly half of what Wicca is today!

What Hutton does point out, is that folklorists mistakenly called cunning folk and charmers "white witches". Also, "Sabbath" and "coven" were imported words from the continent or Scotland respectively, and generally unused in England. But the people themselves used the word "witch" between 1740 and 1940 for the traditional single, evil and anti-social practitioner.

The confusion about the word "witch" is again on the rise today. More and more people (and writers!) believe that one who works with herbs or precious stones or simple spells, is practising white or modern "witchcraft". However, this occupation is at most just a "craft" - a therapy - completely in line with the cunning folk which Hutton describes. Even a Christian can practice such a craft, just like most cunning folk in past centuries were devout Christians. To call such a practice "witchcraft" is incorrect in the historical sense of the word as Hutton has shown. And it is also incorrect in the modern sense of the word, where practices like these are at most only half of modern witchcraft or Wicca.

Hutton says that there is no evidence of a pagan religion at this time. But he does give anecdotal evidence for many practices which are now considered normal in modern Wicca, such as meeting in groups, passing on of power, working male to female, not charging money for the gift, working with magic, charms and spells. The anecdotes are exceptions, and come from all three groups: cunning folk, charmers and witches. Witches, in this historical context, are the anti-social evil competitors of the cunning folk.

One Dalmatian...

Modern Wicca has in effect assimilated all sorts of exceptions from these three competing groups, as well as aspects of the groups themselves, into one coherent working philosophy. It has incorporated the cunning folk practice or "craft" - a practice which of course continues in main stream society too, with all the "new age therapy" practitioners. It has incorporated the charmers' simple spells, and the principle of not charging money. And it has incorporated the exceptions from the folklore about the evil witches, such as working in a group, passing on power, working male to female etc. The one thing it has not incorporated, is the evil, anti-social and solo-aspects of the witches from past centuries. However, even this aspect is still present in a certain way: it is the archetypal image of the (fairytale) witch - an image that symbolises a certain state of psychological and spiritual development that we all need to come to grips with. More often than not it manifests as someone who falls into the trap of being "powerful", or someone who is blinded by the glamour of Wicca.

Modern witchcraft or Wicca therefore is not a simple continuation of the cunning folk practices, nor of the charmers, and certainly not of the evil witches. But it does have things in common with all of these groups.

Is it possible that the folklore, and the practices of cunning folk, charmers and witches, are the fragmented reflections of an older and more coherent body of knowledge and practice? Just like today's psychologists, doctors and priests are different professional groups, performing functions which used to be performed by the shaman, or by the wise woman or priestess of the tribe in (pre)historic times? Is the evidence which Hutton gives more like the description of a few branches of a tree, whilst the tree itself remains invisible to the historian?



Gardner had travelled extensively all over the near and far east. He spent many years in Ceylon, and later in Indonesia. He was well versed in folk magic, and wrote a book about

the Kris. He already had a spiritual connection to the Goddess. See his biography, "Gardner, witch", and his own book, "A Goddess Arrives".

If there ever had existed an old tradition that could be considered a precursor to modern witchcraft, then Gardner's knowledge and interests would have put him in the unique position to recognise the scattered remains of such an old pattern behind surviving remnants such as cunning folk, charmers and witches. He would have been able to intuitively see the outline of such an old tradition. He would have been able to recognise the invisible tree, from looking at the branches and the scattered odd leaves. Just like an archaeologist can see the outline of a building in the colours of the plants in a meadow. And just like you and I can recognise the Dalmatian dog in the scattered dots in this picture. Yes, the dots could represent something else. Yes, they could be random. No, the outline of the dog is not present. But does anyone doubt what it represents?

Gardner's life long interests in folklore and magic may have given him the edge, in being able to pick and choose correctly from what appears to others as "mere folklore". Gardner may have been simply "connecting dots" in a picture that was clear in his own mind. A picture, established over many many years of contact with folk magic all over the world, and quite possibly inspired by the Goddess he loved. As far as I am concerned, and judging by the strength and vitality of Wicca, this is exactly what Gardner did.

Ronald Hutton: *The Triumph of the Moon, A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft.*
Oxford University Press, www.oup.com, ISBN 0-19-820744-1

***Cultural Diversity and Religious Pluralism:
the possible Dialogue in Europe***
19-20 October 2007, Rome -Italy
Report by Saddle LaMort

In the middle of October, Morgana and I set out to Rome to participate in a conference on religious pluralism, probing into the possibility of dialogue, for there can be no multicultural society without each party letting the others know what their aims and beliefs are - and this issue is even more pronounced in the case of religions.

The conference itself begun on the 19th, it was held in the library of the Link campus of the University of Malta, a beautiful building in the heart of picturesque Rome. After the greetings and introductions, Dr. Viggo Mortensen gave a talk, painting us a grim picture of a possible future where Europe has a Muslim majority and the method of conquest is procreation. He seemed to take a mostly Christian outlook on the events, and finished with "to understand is to change". After this Prof. Thadeusz Rachwal talked about religious philosophy from a mostly materialistic viewpoint - he understood religion as the grown-ups' substitute for parental protection. Jorn Borup held a very interesting lecture on Danish Buddhism.

Giuseppe Cali told us about the Universal Peace Foundation, where ambassadors of various religions (strictly monotheistic ones, though) found out that the basis of dialogue should be love towards one another. Prof. Andras Mate-Toth from the University of Pecs, Hungary talked about the functions of religion in the ex-eastern block, and that concluded our day one of the conference.

I left with a distinct feeling that there might be hope yet for peaceful discussion between religious, materialistic and atheistic groups.

The next day Dr. Anne Leuchars began with an excellent report on the religious dialogue project in Sweden. They have already got the Christians and Muslims talking to each other, and the minutes and conclusions of these meetings and conferences were simply breathtaking - we learnt that the Muslims in Europe are mostly on the side of democracy; and that "jihad" means strife rather than a holy war, striving for being good in God's eyes; a concept that is strongly embedded in Christianity as well. The project is called Nya Vagar (New Paths).

The theme of Prof. Peter Gundelach's speech was somewhat similar - he made an anthropologic research on Muslims and democracy in Europe. His original theory was that the longer a Muslim lives in a European country, the more they will be pro-democracy.

There were three main questions: do they agree with the concept of democracy, would they curtail the freedom of radical groups gathering and spreading their ideologies, and are their children (or would their children be) free in their choice of career and life partner. The Muslims were very supportive of free speech for radical groups - but the Professor admitted they might have not thought of any other radical groups, but Muslims. The conclusion of the survey was that living or even being born in a certain country has less impact on one's views on democracy, than nationality. Dr. Enwereuzor Udo talked about the racial rights committee of the EU, of which he was a member.

After a short break, Morgana came with her talk on Wicca, an Example of a Nature Religion. 45 minutes of silence ensued as the scholars struggled with unfamiliar concepts - a religion without dogma, without Holy Scriptures, without saints. They welcomed the concept of Paganism with an open heart and they kept asking questions even during the meal that followed. Of course, they were mostly interested in numbers, members and hierarchy, but Morgana definitely brought a new item into their perspective. They eagerly await all data and ideas on how to integrate Paganism into the ongoing inter-religious dialogue.

After the meal, Prof. Reka Szilardi, a young Hungarian lady gave an excellent report on nationalistic paganism in Hungary. She mentioned the Wicca community as a rare example of the European type Paganism, and talked about the "Shamans", the "Taltos", and likeminded groups, and how they create a romantic new history that suits their romantic ideals better. She also mentioned, that these groups, although they belong to the majority, still behave as if they were a minority.

Emanuela C. del Re talked about profiling terrorists - turns out, that the most likely person to be chosen is the least memorable type of person -, and she mentioned that a Muslim was arrested, because he relaxed to the verses of the Quran; those who had him under surveillance thought him a fanatic. Human rights were not mentioned at any point.

We were shown the homepage, agreed on where the next meeting shall be held next year (in Hungary, strangely enough), and parted ways - and perhaps a little more hopeful for the future of religious pluralism.

Joan of Arc
from The God of the Witches
By Margaret Alice Murray

The story of Joan of Arc has been told and re-told many times, usually with a markedly ecclesiastical bias, often with a surprising want of critical acumen and even of historical facts.

She came from Lorraine, a district where a century earlier the Synod of Trèves had fulminated against "all kinds of magic, sorcery, witchcraft, auguries, superstitious writings, observings of days and months, prognostics drawn from the flight of birds or similar things, observation of the stars in order to judge of the destiny of persons born under certain constellations, the illusions of women who boast that they ride at night with Diana or with Herodias and a multitude of other women". A century after Joan's trial, the inquisitor Nicolas Remy could pride himself on having put to death hundreds of "witches" in that same district.



One of the chief accusations against Joan, and one which she could not refute, was that she had dealings with the fairies. Even her godmother, who should have seen that she was brought up as a Christian, was acquainted with the fairies; and the Sieur de Bourlemont, one of the principal land-owners near Domremy, was married to a fairy lady. It was while engaged in religious ceremonies at the Fairy Tree of Bourlemont that Joan first saw the personages whom she called her Voices, and to whom she gave the names of Christian saints.

Before accepting her, the Dauphin insisted that she should be examined by a body of learned doctors of the Church in order to ascertain if her mission had in it anything "contrary to the Faith". Had the whole country been Christian, as we are always led to believe, such an examination would not have been thought of, but if the greater part of the peasantry, especially in out-of-the-way districts like Lorraine, were still Pagan, an examination of the kind was a necessary preliminary precaution for a Christian prince. When Charles appointed her to her high position in the army he told her to choose from his suite the man whom she desired to be her protector in battle. Out of all those courtiers and soldiers she chose Gilles de Rais, the man who nine years afterwards was tried and suffered for his faith as she did. It was at this time that she said to the Dauphin, "Make the most of me, for I shall last only one year", a significant remark which showed that, like many other Divine Victims, she knew that her end would come at an appointed time.

Her career of victory is too well known to recapitulate here. Only one comment is needed: if she were regarded by the Pagan men-at-arms as God Incarnate her marvellous power over them is accounted for; they would follow where she led in battle, counting it an honour to give their lives in defence of hers. It was the coming

of God in person which put heart into the French troops. The records show that in the eyes of the people she was divine. Article III of the Articles of Accusation states this in plain terms: "the said Joan by her inventions has seduced the Catholic people, many in her presence adored her as a saint and adored her also in her absence, commanding in her honour masses and collects in the churches; even more, they declared her the greatest of all the saints after the holy Virgin; they set up images and representations of her in the shrines of the saints, and also carried on their persons her representation in lead or in other metal as they are wont to do for the memorials and representations of saints canonised by the Church; they say everywhere that she is 'the envoy of God and that she is more angel than woman.'" According to the records she raised the dead, the sick were cured of all diseases by the touch of her garments; and as even professed Christians counted her as almost equal to the Virgin it is more than likely that in the eyes of her Pagan followers she was God indeed. Thibauld de Termes, Bailly of Chartres, was of opinion that what she did was more divine than human. Her own opinion of herself is best expressed in her own words when, in the course of her trial, she boasted to her judges that her Voices spoke of her as "Johanna Puella Filia Dei."

Joan was taken prisoner at Compiègne on May 23rd, 1430, by the Burgundian noble, Jean de Luxembourg. Three days later the Greffier of the University of Paris sent a summons under the seal of the Inquisitor to the Duke of Burgundy demanding that Joan should be sent to Paris to be questioned by the ecclesiastical authority. Joan was not sent to Paris and remained for six months in Burgundian hands. This is a surprising fact, for at that period to capture in battle a person of high rank meant a great accession of wealth to the lucky captor, whose fortune was often made by the ransom. Joan was rich, thanks to the king's generosity. Charles owed everything to her and might be expected to feel his indebtedness; Gilles de Rais, her chosen protector, had vast wealth; the city of Orleans, which regarded her as its saviour, was not poor. Yet no trace or tradition remains that any Frenchman offered to ransom or rescue her; she was left to her fate. At the end of six months, when there was still no sign of a French ransom, the Burgundians sold her to the English, and at once the Church, through the Bishop of Beauvais, demanded that ecclesiastical trial which had previously been vainly demanded by the University of Paris.

The trial began on the 9th of January, 1431. The court was composed entirely of priests and monks, presided over by the Bishop of Beauvais and the deputy of the Inquisitor of France. She was tried for her faith as the articles of Accusation make clear. A damning fact was that she had held communication with "evil spirits" at the Fairy Tree; in fact, like many others, her connection with the fairies was proof positive that she was not of the Church. To the modern mind imbued with the present-day ideas of fairies, such an accusation appears too silly to be taken seriously, but the proofs that a connection of the kind was considered as a capital offence are too frequent to be disregarded.

She was often excessively offhand to her judges, treating them consistently with a disrespect unexpected from a Christian towards those in authority in the Church. She often refused to answer a question, saying "Pass that by". Sometimes she would say that she would answer a question after an interval of time, two days or four days, or even as long as eight days. At the end of the time required her answer would be ready, showing that she was receiving advice from a distance.

There was a strong feeling at the time that she was not burned, but either escaped or was set free. This opinion was openly expressed and does not seem to have been

contradicted by any responsible person. Thus in the Chronique de Lorraine it is stated that "the Pucelle was lost at Compiègne, and no one knew what had become of her; many said that the English had captured her, had taken her to Rouen and burned her; others said that some of the army had killed her because she took all the honour of feats of arms to herself." The Chronique de Metz also discredits the story of the burning, "Then she was sent to the city of Rouen in Normandy, and there was placed on a scaffold and burned in a fire, so it was said, but since then was found to be the contrary". Jean Chartier says, "She was burnt publicly, or another woman resembling her; concerning which many people have been and still are of diverse opinions." The author of the Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris states that "many persons who were deceived by her believed firmly that by her holiness she had escaped the fire, and that someone else had been burned and not herself". It is the same Bourgeois de Paris who speaks of her as "a creature in the form of a woman, who was called the Maiden of God. Who she was God knows".

In all these statements Joan is always styled La Pucelle (the maiden of God) de France. Even the English call her by the same title. Thus the Duke of Bedford writing officially to the king speaks of "a disciple and limb of the Fiend, called the Pucelle". The Continuation of the Brut gives her the same title: "At that same Journey was take the wicche of Fraunce that was called the Pushell; and she was take alle armd as a man of armys; and by her crafte and sorserie all the Frensshe men and her company Trystid to have ovrcome all the Englysshe pepull. But God was lord and maister of that victorie and scomfiture, and so she was taken, and brought and kept in hold bi the Kynge and his counseill all tymes at his commaundement and wille". The English regarded her throughout as a witch and therefore believed very naturally that God had delivered her into their hands as a special mark of divine favour to them.

The title of Pucelle of France is peculiar, its exact significance has never been explained. Joan was first the Pucelle of Orleans, but when she quartered the royal Lilies she became the Pucelle of France. This was clearly a definite title, and possibly showed some special relation to the crown. If the king were still regarded as the Incarnate God whose coven was at this time called his Council, Joan might well be the Maiden of the Coven, such as was found so often in Scotland two centuries later. The title Pucelle has otherwise no meaning as it stands.

In 1436, five years after the trial, the herald-at-arms, Fleur de Lils, and Joan's brother, Jean du Lys, arrived at Orleans to announce officially to the town that Joan, was still alive. The accounts of the city show that on Sunday, the 6th of August, 1436, Jean du Lys, brother of "Jehane la Pucelle", was in Orleans carrying letters from his sister to the king.

In July, 1439, Joan's brothers came to Orleans bringing with them the lady whom they claimed to be their sister Joan, now married to the Sieur des Armoises (also spelt Harmoises). The Council of the city of Orleans presented to Jeanne des Armoises 210 livres parisis "pour le bien qu'elle a fait à ladicte ville durant le siège". She appears to have stayed till September the 4th, about six weeks, during which time she must have met many persons who had known Joan of Arc well both personally and by sight. Still more important is the fact that Joan's own mother was in Orleans at the time of the visit of Jeanne des Armoises, yet raised no protest. Most significant of all was the discontinuance of the masses said for the repose of Joan's soul, which had been celebrated in Orleans on the anniversary of the burning at Rouen but after the visit of Jeanne des Armoises they were said no longer. In 1443 Pierre du Lys, Joan's youngest brother, petitioned the Duke of

Orleans for financial help, pointing out how bravely he had fought in company with his sister, Jeanne la Pucelle, "until her absence and since then up to the present time"; which can only mean that he still regarded or feigned to regard the Dame des Armoises as Joan of Arc.



Whether Jeanne des Armoises was an imposter or not cannot be satisfactorily decided, but one fact emerges clearly, which is that Joan's brothers acknowledged her as their sister and Joan's mother did not deny her. Yet in 1450 an attempt at Rehabilitation was begun and lapsed. In 1452 the mother claimed ecclesiastical and civil rehabilitation for Joan; Pierre du Lys seems to have joined in the claim, for he was poor and Joan's wealth had been great. The proceedings dragged on till 1456; in other words, the Sentence of Rehabilitation was not promulgated till twenty-five years after the trial at Rouen. The interesting point is that the relatives, who in 1439 had recognised the Dame des Armoises as the Joan of Arc who had been tried at Rouen, now in 1456 claimed that the same Joan had been put to death by the English in 1431. In both cases money seems to have been the object. The family had made a

good thing by exploiting the Dame des Armoises, but they made far more by the exaggeratedly heart-rending details which they collected in order to move the hearts of the judges who presided over the Enquiry for Rehabilitation. The Rehabilitation was for the financial benefit of a family who had already foresworn themselves over the Dame des Armoises.

If Joan were a Pagan, and in the eyes of her Pagan followers the substitute for the king and therefore God Incarnate for the time being, much of the obscurity which surrounds her life and death is cleared away. She came from a part of the country so well known to be Pagan that she had to be examined by persons whose own Christianity was beyond question before the king could accept her. To announce her mission she went first to Robert de Beaudricourt, agent in Lorraine for King René of Provence, a king whose magical practices would have brought upon him the wrath of the Church but for his high position. Her "Voices" were called by the names most common among witches, and at her trial she spoke of seeing them among the Christians, they themselves unseen. This use of the word Christian again shows that Christianity was not universal. The remark should be compared with the statement by Danaeus that "among a great company of men, the Sorcerer only knoweth Satan that is present, when other do not know him, though they see another man, but who or what he is they know not". It is also reminiscent of the stories of fairies, who were recognised only by the initiates, when in the company of others.

Joan chose for her protector that great soldier who was of her own religion, and who was later tried and executed as a Pagan. She announced that she would last only one year, and during that time she received almost divine honours from the common people, but she was quite aware that at the end of that year she would suffer martyrdom. When the time came for the sacrifice not one of her friends or worshippers stirred a finger to save her. Throughout her trial she spoke of her god

as "the King of Heaven" as "my Lord", or simply as "God"; she never mentioned "Christ" or "our Saviour", or even "our Lord". It is only in the Rehabilitation that she is reported to have used the name of Jesus. Many people vouched for her having cried Jhesu with her last breath, but no one, not even the priests, were very near her at the end. Massieu, however, stated that she called on God, St. Michael and St. Katherine; in other words, on the very "saints" with whom she had been in communication since her first encounter with them at the Fairy-Tree of Bourlemont.



She used Christian symbols, such as the cross or the words "Jhesu Maria", on her letters when they were intended to deceive. She steadfastly refused to say the Lord's Prayer, a refusal which in later times would have been tantamount to confessing herself a witch. She utterly refused to acknowledge the authority of the Church, though she understood what was meant by the Pope and asked to be taken to him. She declined to take the oath on the Gospels, and after much persuasion and very unwillingly she swore on the Missal. She treated the ecclesiastics who examined her at Poitiers with familiarity; when Pierre Séguin de Séguin, Dean of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Poitiers, asked her what dialect (idioma) her Voices spoke, she answered "A better one than yours", for he spoke in the Limousin dialect. He then asked her if she believed in

God, to which she replied, "More than you do". At the trial at Rouen she treated her judges with contempt. When asked direct questions regarding her faith, she invariably prevaricated; thus, when asked whether she had ever blasphemed God, she answered that she had never cursed (maledixit) the saints; when pressed to say if she had ever denied God, she would make no other reply than that she had never denied the saints. One remark recorded in the Rehabilitation appears significant; it is in the evidence of Dame Margareta La Touroulde; Joan narrated to her hostess how she had been examined by the clergy at Poitiers, and how she had said to them, "There is more in the books of our Lord than in yours". With a slight emphasis on the word our, the signification is apparent, otherwise the remark has no meaning.

The wearing of the male costume seems to have had a signification which was clear to the people of her own time though hidden from us. She insisted that she wore it not by the advice of mortal man, and she refused to wear a woman's dress except by the direct command of God. It is impossible to say why so much stress was laid on her attire, as in itself it has never been a capital crime for a woman to appear as a man. Many a lady dressed as a page and went with her husband or lover to the Crusades, more than one woman was known to have donned armour and given a good account of herself in defending her castle. Yet when Joan discarded her woman's dress in prison and put on a man's habit it was the signal for her condemnation. It is possible that the resumption of the dress connoted a resumption of the Old Religion, and that she thereby acknowledged herself a Pagan and the Incarnate God.

***WICCA, a modern nature Religion -
the impact and implications within Europe***

by Morgana

(This paper was presented at the R.I.P.E. conference: "Cultural Diversity and Religious Pluralism. The possible dialogue in Europe", Rome 19th-20 October 2007)

Origins and Brief History

I would like to begin with a brief overview of "What Wicca Is", and the present situation, followed by an giving account of the actual social impact and the possible social impact in the future.

Wicca is a modern religion but has its roots in ancient times.

Thanks to archaeological discoveries, there is evidence that the origins of Wiccan beliefs can be traced back to Pre-Christian time when people worshipped, for example, a Mother Goddess.

But today I would like to describe what Wicca is – now, in the 21st century. It is a personal view based on my own experiences. Not everyone will agree with me but perhaps this is one of the beauties about Wicca, that there is no single authoritative definition. Wicca is in essence ever changing as Nature itself is ever changing and adapting. Wicca can be described as "organic" and if it becomes inflexible and dogmatic it will lose its vitality.

In the last decennia Wicca practitioners have been experimenting with different types of structures. From the strict structure of a group of initiated witches, also called a coven, within the so-called "Initiatory Tradition" to loose groups of witches working together within the so-called "Eclectic Groups".

Wicca is a Mystery religion.

Is it duotheistic, polytheistic, pantheistic or animistic? Wicca can be described as being all of these. It is not limited in the way divinity is seen. Manifestation of the divine here on Earth, is something that is striven for. This can be done by exploring the imagination and fantasy, using powers of visualization, using intuition & intellect. And by giving expression to the divine it is accepted that truth is always subjective.



It is an experiential religion, where the mysteries of life are revealed in a personal way. It is also an oral tradition whereby first hand experience is of paramount importance. It can only be passed on by what we call "osmosis". Learning by imitation and assimilation. For many people this is a new way of learning and can be quite unnerving. In our society where intellectual prowess is highly regarded it is difficult to accept that learning without logical explanations can be valid.

Gerald Brousseau Gardner

Gerald Gardner can be viewed as the luminary of modern Wicca. He spent most of his adulthood in the far East – mainly Malaysia and Borneo. There he

encountered people, who followed spiritualities akin to prehistoric animism, where the mundane, the religious and the magical were all part of everyday life. In these societies the Rites of Passage, initiations marking the entering into a new part of the life cycle, are mandatory and part of the folk tradition. Wicca too observes these kinds of initiation.

When Gardner returned home, this was the mindset he was looking for – something ancient, but connected to England. This was what he thought to find with the people who identified themselves to him as “Witches”. Gardner referred to the people as a group as „the Wicca”; he called the religion itself Witchcraft, and the followers Witches. Nowadays, however, many, if not most, people use the term Wicca to describe the religion, and “Wiccan” as the follower.

Gardner took the little he had from his original Witch group (or “coven”) and started to experiment with it, adding and reworking material from Rosicrucian, freemasonry, and Hermetic sources as well as folklore texts. Gardner died in 1964, leaving behind a religion that is both old and new. Gardnerians are those who continue to explore and evolve Gardner’s work.

Nature and Earth based.



As the Seasonal cycle is followed the connection with Nature is strengthened. Using Nature as a guide – bending towards natural circumstance instead of trying to adapt nature. In trying to understand the natural world, natural laws are observed and patterns recognized to help understand the necessity for ecological balance.

Seasonal cycles

In following the seasonal cycle one tries try to deepen the knowledge of the Natural world by becoming aware of the changing seasons. Recognizing the natural pattern of conception birth – growth – fruition – death – rebirth, in all processes, whether we are tending our gardens or working in the office. Above all Wiccans are pragmatic. Using insights one

strives towards practical solutions.

Lunar and Solar cycles

Becoming aware of the influences of the sun & moon are also important. As the seasons are influenced by the solar and lunar cycles so are we. It is well known that the moon influences for example the tides, the menstrual cycle and moods in general. (Think also of the word “lunatic”.)

Rituals Rites of Passage & festivals.

Not only are the seasonal cycles celebrated but also important milestones, such as birth and death. These moments are called “Rites of Passage”. Some examples of these rites of Passage are “the naming ritual” or Wiccaning. Here a baby is blessed. Another major “Rite of Passage” is that of entering man/womanhood. For young women this is the celebration of their first menstrual blood. Young men too can also feel the need to mark the period when their voices break and they want to break free of maternal bonds.

(Many groups make up their own Rites of Passage since they weren't included in the core material passed on from one generation of Witches to the next. Often referred to as the "Book of Shadows" – certainly within the Gardnerian rituals they were not included. I should add that the BoS would appear to a relatively recent addition since most country people would not write things down.)

As so often is the case existing rituals are used for inspiration. For example in the case of a Pagan Marriage or "handfasting". The concept of a handfasting has existed for a long time and we even have the expression "tying the knot" which to me would indicate an old custom of binding the couple at marriage.

Sense of community

Rites of Passage can also create a strong sense of community. In our society people come together to celebrate birth and death, but as we have seen there are other rituals, which celebrate a milestone in a human life. Sometimes we can find ritual texts that perfectly describe the situation we are trying to create. Some of them are in fact old pagan rituals that have been Christianized! And the original meaning has been lost.



For example at Easter – in the North of England where I spent my school years - we used to roll eggs down a hill. When participants were asked why they did this, when I saw this same ritual being performed years later, they said "Oh this symbolizes the stone being removed from the Tomb of Jesus. When the stone was rolled away he resurrected." That eggs symbolize fertility and rolling them to break them open as Spring awakes was something, which had been completely lost!

In a similar way the Spirits of Land - or genius loci- have also been forgotten. Well, almost... in many rural areas the old gods have not been completely forgotten and have been immortalized as figures in Churches, such as the motif "The Green Man".

Old customs still bring people together and create a sense of belonging, a sense of community. Although Witches work in small groups, by celebrating the seasonal festivals they link together and know that they are participating along with many others, and although great emphasis is put on self-development the group dynamic is also valued. It is somewhat of a paradox: on the one hand one works as an individual but also as a group.

The Urban Situation

The rituals have a social impact even (if not more so) in the urban situation. When one is outside in a beautiful forest it is not difficult to imagine and feel the spirit of nature. It is however more difficult to feel inspired in the so-called "concrete jungle" and yet this is what the rituals can do. They can provide a moment when one remembers the link with nature and the world around us.

(Nature spirits are all around us. We may refer to them as "Angels" (such as healing angels, who guard a hospital for example. In fact it could be argued that we need to spend **more** time building up a rapport with the "Spirits of the City".)

Primary focus

The spiritual, religious side is primary – it forms the basis of our conscience. How problems are solved depends on how the world is viewed and how the world within is linked to the outside world.

Good and evil are not opposites or forces that exist solely outside of us. We interact with the outside world and our impact in the world will be interpreted by others as being “good or bad”, “just or unjust”, “loving or hateful” or the myriad of nuances between the two seemingly opposites. The Law of Polarity helps us to recognise when things are in harmony. When things are “at-ease” instead of “dis-ease”.

Ethics, personal responsibility

From a sense of community it is a small step to the subject of standards and cultural norms. Within Wicca there is a “Golden Rule” – “An (if) it harm none do what you will”.

Originally a piece of advice on how to do magical work from an ethical point of view – it has become the Wiccan tenet. There are few written laws and the “Wiccan Rede” is a very short piece of advice. And that is all it is. A guideline, whereby one is reminded of personal responsibility. For a Witch evil does not exist as a separate entity outside of them but is the effect of bad timing or place. An action, which in some cases may be “good”, may in fact be “bad” in another situation.

(Example: stealing a loaf of bread to feed starving family. The Law – thou shalt not steal – is being broken but there are mitigating circumstances. And one may be judged on intent rather than the black & white action. Crimes of passion also fall under this category.)

Also “how” the Divine is interpreted falls under the category of “personal insights and responsibility.

The impact of a new religious movement and the implications within Europe.

A New Religious Movement has been described as: a religious faith, or an ethical, spiritual or philosophical movement of recent origin that isn't part of an established denomination, church, or religious body.

However although Wicca is a modern religion it is rooted in ancient traditions. It is basically an animistic religion. Gerald Brousseau Gardner who is regarded as the luminary behind modern Wicca, gave a native folk religion a liturgy. For this reason Wicca does not fit well into the definition of NRM.

Gardner referred to the people as a group as “the Wicca”; and the religion “The Old Religion”. The followers were Witches. Nowadays, however, many, people use the term Wicca to describe the religion, and “Wiccan” as the follower. Wicca and (neo) paganism have also been described as “the fastest growing religion” in the Western World.

Wiccan growth rate:

The ARIS survey of the American adult population indicates a growth in the Wiccan community of 17 fold between 1990 and 2001 - the highest of any faith group monitored. This would indicate a doubling in numbers of adherents about ever 2.5 years. If the latter growth rate is accurate and if it continues, then Wicca would be the third largest religious group in the U.S. by about 2012, behind Christianity and Judaism”.

But the general misuse of the word Wicca makes it very difficult to assess how many adherents there really are. Recent information in the UK reveals that there are: "Over 42.5 thousand Pagans in the UK. The University of Derby's new handbook, "Religions in the UK", has the figures. ... concluding that the total number of Pagans in Scotland can be seen as 1,966, and in Britain as a whole as 42,890." Certainly in Europe it is enjoying growing popularity. The real boom began in the early 1980's – 30 years after the "Fraudulent Mediums Act (1951) had been repealed in the UK.



Small groups became more public after Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) and later Alex Sanders (1926- 1988) became active and gave Wicca the face we know today.

The Pagan Federation was established in 1971 and was set up “ originally as primarily a campaigning organisation: one that would actively fight the ignorance and negative attitudes towards Paganism which were at large in the country (UK) then and which obviously still exist in various forms today.”

Today the PF International has representatives in all western European countries and in recent years has also branched out into Hungary and Poland. The majority of members are Wiccan.

Its major social impact has been to answer the call of many thousands of young people in search of a new spirituality. After the sexual revolution of the 1960's, the so-called “Hippy Generation” and the Feminist Movement the time was ripe for a religion in which sexuality, mysticism, pro-women attitudes and a different, less formal hierarchical structure won terrain.

It has also reflected changing attitudes towards ethic and social responsibilities. As we move towards greater mobility within the EU people are looking for a sense of belonging. The “Clan” aspect of Wicca and paganism can offer small meaningful communities in which new citizens can relate to. There is also a deep-seated recognition that it is Nature that binds us all together. The growing concern for Nature and Ecology has also drawn people to Wicca, which can provide a spiritual backdrop.



One other aspect, which is slowly emerging in Europe, is the necessity for a cultural identity. Much pagan heritage has still to be uncovered in Europe and this is a challenge for all of us. It is part of our European identity and modern pagans are making a serious effort to rejuvenate this past in creating a new spiritual and cultural awareness.

Thank you.

***First Wiccan Minister
Invited to Speak to Commission for Civil Rights
By Christopher Blackwell***

On Feb. 3 a joint news release from Circle Sanctuary and Cherry Hill Seminary announced that Rev. Patrick McCollum, the Lady Liberty League National Coordinator of Prison Ministry and also Cherry Hill Seminary Director of Chaplaincy, was invited to be part of a six member panel of experts to present on Religious Discrimination and Prisoners' Rights to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on Friday, Feb. 8. The panel was being convened to shed light on the nature and extent of the problems which have arisen in this context and to discuss what can be done to resolve inmate grievances. After a period of public comment, a report by the Commission will be made available to Congress.



McCollum is the Director and Chair of the National Correctional Chaplaincy Directors Association, and is the statewide Wiccan chaplain for the California Department of Corrections, and has served as a Wiccan chaplain in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

McCollum is the National Coordinator of the Lady Liberty League Prison Ministries Program, and a member of the National Advisory Council of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

As the newly appointed Director of the Chaplaincy Program of Cherry Hill Seminary, McCollum specializes in courses which address issues encountered by chaplains ministering in institutional settings, such as prisons. Cherry Hill Seminary provides distance-learning graduate-level higher education for Pagan ministry.

The Feb. 3 news release reported McCollum said, "It is an honor to be invited to participate in the dialogue and to share a Wiccan's point of view. Those in minority faiths are seldom given the opportunity to be heard, even when the issue concerns their rights. I am hopeful that this invitation is indicative of what we can expect going forward; that there is truly a desire on the part of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to ensure that inmates receive equal treatment, and a willingness to better serve minority religions."

Below is the transcript of Patrick's Briefing on Prisoners' Religious Rights to the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights given on Friday, February 8, 2008 in Washington, DC

Good morning.

I would like to thank the Commission on behalf of the Wiccan community and on behalf of minority faiths in general, for offering us the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue on religious discrimination in United States' prisons. I will focus primarily on the accommodation of Wicca and the discrimination Wiccans face in State and federal prisons, but I would like the commission to recognize that one can

easily insert the name of any other minority faith in place of Wicca, and still have the exact same end result. That is, these problems are endemic for all minority faiths that are not in the family of religions of Abraham.

I'd like to start with a few true examples of discrimination to illustrate the severity of the problem:



A Wiccan inmate has cancer and the prison guards refuse to transport him to his chemotherapy treatments unless he removes his religious pentacle medallion which they have objections to. He chooses to forgo his chemotherapy and keep his pentacle.

A Wiccan inmate has been trying to go to Wiccan services for months, but the guard at her dorm refuses to give her a pass. The guard says it is for the good of the Wiccan inmate's soul.

Another dying Wiccan writes his volunteer chaplain that he needs to see him before he crosses over. The chaplain makes numerous attempts to reach prison staff to receive the necessary clearances, but no one responds. But worse, prison mailroom staff refuse to forward the chaplain's mail, so that the inmate knows why his chaplain isn't coming.

Over more than a decade, I've had the opportunity to interact nationally with both administrators and inmates on religious accommodation issues. While practices differ from state to state, I found discrimination against minority faiths everywhere. The reason for this is what I call the Dominant Religion Lens Factor.

The Dominant Religion Lens Factor is a process whereby administrators and security staff view all faith practices from the perspective of the Dominant faiths only, leaving no consideration that there are different ways to practice religion. The Dominant Religion Lens Factor is exacerbated by the fact that almost all of the administrators, who oversee religion programs in prisons, are members, and often clergy, of the very same Dominant faiths from which they take their cues, and even worse, many of them believe that their particular faith should dominate the landscape. Consequently, these people make determinations of what faith practices are or are not acceptable, based on the premise that if it looks like the Dominant faith's practices, then the practices are probably okay and should be accommodated, but if the practices do not look like the dominant faith's practices, then both the practices and the faith itself are suspect, and accommodation should be restricted. This particular way of viewing religion, replicates the very same kind of oppressive view that our forefathers and foremothers left Europe to escape, and if there is to be any hope of achieving equal religious rights for prisoners, then this whole way of viewing religion by those in charge, needs to be changed.

Here's how this works:

I arrived one morning at a prison to conduct Wiccan religious services. I put the inmates to work moving the chairs in the chapel into a circle, which is the typical configuration utilized for Wiccan religious services. Almost immediately security stopped us, saying that we could not conduct our services sitting in a circle, citing security. They instructed me that as the chaplain, I had to stand up front at the pulpit and that the inmates had to sit in the pews and that I had to conduct "sermons" from there. I tried to explain that Wiccan clergy do not give sermons and that creating a circle is the Wiccan way of creating "Sacred Space", but they would have none of it. They forced me to conduct my services from the pulpit, completely negating all of the necessary steps to actually conduct a legitimate Wiccan religious service.

What was particularly odd about this scenario is the fact that staff and chaplains, regularly stand, sit, and closely interact, with inmates all of the time, and that's not seen to be a security issue, but conducting religious services in what to them appeared to be a non-traditional way, seemed in their mind to pose a problem. Eventually I was able hold appropriate services, but to this day, staff still make comments about the inappropriateness of this type of a service, and for that reason, among others, ridicule Wicca as not being a real religion.

So, let's take a look at where the Dominant Religion Lens Factor ultimately leads:

I had a Wiccan inmate whose wife died. He was called in by a staff chaplain and given the news. In the course of the conversation, the inmate was told that perhaps his had wife died because of his participation in the Wiccan services, and that if he repented and started attending "real" religious services, there was a chance he could still be saved.

These kinds of interactions are common for minority faiths in prison. And while administrators may not be aware that they are operating in this prejudicial way, the end result for Wiccans is still the same - discrimination.

And then there's the worst case scenario, which actually occurs often, where certain prison administrators, staff, and chaplains fully believe that they have a mission to discourage minority faiths from practicing at all. In this context, the Dominant Religion Lens Factor empowers them and encourages them to act on their biases, which ultimately leads to the kind of behavior in the case cited.

Another problem I've observed is the great difficulty that Wiccans face when trying to gain access to their sacred religious items. In this instance, the number one reason cited for denying them is security, when in fact there isn't a security issue at all.

Wiccans typically use an altar adorned with various religious items. These items are usually composed of a chalice, a few candles, incense, and typically a few natural objects like, a feather, a small crystal, or a flower. A small statue or depiction of deity might also be included, and sometimes a Wiccan religious book. These items are highly sacred to Wiccans and play a critical role in their ability to conduct their religious services. Even so, Wiccans are regularly denied these items nationwide.

Now, here's the kicker:

In every case I've investigated, every single institution that denied these sacred items to Wiccans, allowed the very same items to be used in services conducted by

the dominant faiths. For example Catholics use a chalice during communion, and Muslims and the Catholics use incense. Protestants & Catholics use candles, and both also have sacred art present. Depictions of Jesus and Mary in prison chapels are commonplace, as are other symbols of Christian faith and deity. I've also attended many services where flowers are present, and all of these faiths use a holy book. So why is it that these dominant faiths get all of this without a problem, and yet Wiccans and other minority faiths don't? It's because the administrators and security staff see the dominant faith's use of these items as normal, and the minority faith's use of these exact same items as weird or dangerous, because the services in which minority faiths utilize these items look different to them than those that they are used to.



Another area in which the Dominant Religion Lens Factor plays out involves accommodations that involve significant resources. A good example is the allocation of regularly employed chaplains.

This is a problem throughout the country. California is an example. Even though there are more Wiccans attending religious services at the institutions in question than there are of some of the dominant faith groups who already have regularly employed chaplains, the State has told the Wiccans that they have to prove that their religious tenets require a chaplain before the institution will consider hiring one. So, far the inmates haven't been able to prove that, although they've been trying for nearly five years. But the odd thing about this proof requirement is that the Protestant inmates, who do have regularly employed chaplains, were never required to prove their need for a chaplain at all. And even more telling is the fact that Protestant religious tenets specifically state that clergy is not necessary to practice the Protestant faith, and in fact, the whole Protestant reformation was based on that principle. So, to clarify this situation, if the same standards that are being required of the Wiccans were to be applied to the Protestants, then all the Protestant chaplains would have to be fired.

This is the same issue for other resource allocations, such as space, budget, books, special religious programming and the like. Protestant congregations in most prisons have bible classes, revivals, videos, and choirs; and I even recently attended an event where Bikers for Christ, brought in a dozen full dressed Harleys for the inmates at a several institutions to interact with. All of these accommodations are provided to the Protestants even though none of these things are required by their tenets. Yet the Wiccans are permitted only those things that they can prove are required by their faith tenets. This sets up a very unfair situation, where resource allocation is not accomplished by an equitable formula.

In addition, those who review inmate grievances, including even some courts, also tend to look at the issues through the Dominant Religion Lens, as well, making it difficult for even the most egregious of these problems to be addressed.

The issues I've discussed involve clear and obvious violations of the Constitution of the United States, RLUIPA, and RFRA, as they directly violate the civil rights of the Wiccans involved, yet no one questions them. Why is that? Could it be that our government has established religious favorites? Here are my recommendations to this commission:

If we want to achieve religious equality in prisons, then we have to restrict the hiring of administrators, staff, and chaplains into gatekeeper positions for our nations' correctional religious programs. Only individuals who do not see it as their duty to promote certain religious practices over others should be hired in such positions. This should be a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification. We must also educate those who do act as gatekeepers, about pluralism and the guiding principles of religious accommodation in general, so that all inmates will be permitted a reasonable and equitable opportunity to practice their faiths. And we need to establish a separate grievance process for religious issues, which gives inmates a direct line to action in these areas and protection from retaliation. This new grievance process should include experts in non-traditional faiths, so that the Dominant Religion Lens Process is avoided. And lastly, we also need to get rid of administrators and chaplains who believe that breaking the law by violating inmates' religious rights is justified by faith.

Thank you.
Rev. Patrick McCollum

Has a Black Cat crossed your path?

If you live in the United States, or most European countries, then black cats passing in front of you will likely make you believe that bad luck is on its way. If however you live in the UK or in Japan, black cats crossing your path will probably make you smile and think that good fortune is on its way. Live in Germany and you will probably believe that black cats crossing your path from right to left, is a bad omen. But from left to right, and the cat is granting favorable times for you.

In Italy many hold the superstition that if an inky feline lays on a sick persons bed, death will follow. In China there are those that believe black cats to be harbingers of famine and poverty. Latvian farmers, that find black kitties in their grain silos, dance with joy. They believe these felines to be the spirit of Rungis, a god of harvests.

Crossing the path of a black cat, as opposed to it crossing yours, is generally thought of as inviting the very worst of luck. In Scotland folks believe finding back kittens sitting in their porch is a sure sign of riches, and happiness to come. In most parts of the world it is thought that a black cat walking towards you is a certainty of good luck coming your way.

Chasing black cats out of your house is a certain way to ensure that yours will not be a lucky house. Stroking the fur of black felines will bring you both health, and wealth. In some fishing communities, the fishermen's wives keep their cats indoors, believing that this will keep their men folk safe from peril whilst at sea.

Many people around the world believe that there is a single white hair to be found, on even the blackest of cats. Pull out that hair, without getting a scratch, and yours will be a long, happy and prosperous marriage.

Whatever the local superstitions about cats that are black, most owners of cats consider themselves lucky and blessed. And indeed it is a blessing to own a cat, black or not.

Germany's PFI Conference 2008 – from my point of view
by MoonDancer

A little over two months ago, I didn't even know what the PFI was. It was simply out of curiosity that I decided to sign up for the weekend in Schwerte, Germany: I wanted to learn about the "scene" in Europe and particularly in Germany, I wanted to meet people and learn new things – especially about myself.

My background is American Wicca; since my divorce nine years ago I have been without a Coven – and without the need for it. A little over two months ago I accidentally – is there any other way? – happened upon the German "Sternenkreis" Forum on the Internet, and there I learned about the PFI, among other things.

So much to what happened before. The conference itself started on Saturday morning with a beautiful opening ritual attended by almost everybody (who was not caught in a traffic jam that morning). Vicky Gabriel and William Anderson soon made me feel as if I was standing on the edge of the woods, with birds singing and sunshine lighting up everything – instead of a rather drab Youth Hostel. A very promising start indeed.

We were about 65 people; half of them stayed the night. Aside from a few organizational problems (for example, you had to be quick coming to dinner – else you had to stand in line at the kitchen, asking for seconds), or last-minute changes (music? Eh, no, no music – we're going to dance now..), the weekend was harmonious, constructive, and most of all filled with positive impressions people.

After the opening ritual, there were three workshops to choose from: Astrology, Tarot, and Transition Rituals for parents. I went to the Tarot workshop hosted by Ina Custers-van Bergen, where she showed us some of the underlying principles of the cards that provide the basis for their interpretation. Her detailed analysis of cards 0 and 1 (The Magician and The Fool) in the Rider-Whaite and the Thoth deck was intended to serve as motivation for us to deal with these principles that symbolically manifest and intensify the cards' divinatory interpretation.

During lunch (why, my children have been asking me for years, do Youth Hostels always serve spaghetti on the first day? I still don't know...) we had ample opportunity to make new contacts and intensify current ones, thanks to the fact that as a group, we were on our own. In my opinion, the lunch break went on for a long time; the agenda did not pick up again until 15:00 hrs. But then again, I did not yet know that many people. At least that meant enough time to visit the various vendors and artisans; to look through various books, try on some jewelry, hear about all-natural cosmetics, try some homemade jelly, or talk to GardenStone about his books. I have to admit, I spent most of the time looking at books.

The scheduled workshop on "Musical journeys", unfortunately, had to be cancelled; instead Sandra (PFI Coordinator for Germany) taught us some first steps and basics of "Tribal Dance", a mixture of various dancing styles on the basis of Oriental belly dance. It is danced in a group, though.

After that followed a presentation of the "Wicca-First Steps on the Path" program by Morgana and Saddie. In case anybody does not know then: Morgana is the PFI International Coordinator, and Saddie the Coordinator for Hungary. He also administers the PFI Forum.

Among the participants were experienced Wicca as well as new and curious guests. However, they all had in common a sound knowledge of the subject in question, and so Morgana and Saddle were able to concentrate on telling us about their work with the PFI. The next day, we wanted to do some real-life practice then.

Of course there were other workshops taking place at the same time: there was one where you could learn about Nehalennia – The Return of a Goddess; and one where the men among us (and within us?) could learn something about vision quests. But I'm only one person ;-)

After dinner it was time for Pagan Party, complete with drums and everything else that goes with it.

Sunday morning came much too early, and me almost late for breakfast – I had to get in line for fresh rolls. Actually I had been planning to attend part 2 of Morgana's workshop, but then Diane asked if I would come along to Paul and his discussion group. And she was right, that was an excellent idea! A very well moderated group session on „*Trying to find out what Paganism is, instead of what it is not*“. It is always fascinating to see how good we are at not agreeing with each other! We were no more than 20 people with just as many different opinions on the subject, but the important thing was: we all got along with each other famously and accepted each other's opinions! That is reason for hope indeed. You could probably fill several books on „*Definition or What to enter in a form asking about my religion, if I don't want to enter 'none'*“ alone. But in the end, it seemed to me, everybody had found their own definition to take home with them, at least. And we had learned much about the thoughts of the other participants, as well.

Afterwards I joined the last hour of Morgana and Saddle's workshop; today's schedule called for the practical aspects: first steps in Wicca, the seasons and their significance in our daily life, as well as our own cycle of life. The topic finished with a short meditation, wherein Saddle guided us to some of our own symbolic keys to take home with us. .

Lunchtime – vegetarians had to make do with French Fries, the others had chicken. The evening before we had already agreed to tighten up the schedule a little bit, so we quickly proceeded to the next workshops. On account of the large demand, Ina repeated her Tarot workshop from the day, and Vicky and William introduced us to something they called „*Healing in Movement*“ – and what that can do for us. And what those two hours have done for me, I cannot put into words.. except for those that I said at the end to the others in the group: Now I know why I came here.

The closing ritual was of a very special, celebratory beauty. In keeping with the season we invited Ostara to join us in our celebration, and she not only presented all of us with multi-colored eggs, that we each sent on to others with our good wishes, but also with her blessing as we embark on a new year. It was a beautiful ending to an event that will be with me for a very long time.

It was hard for me to say good-bye to the people that had shared that weekend with me. I had felt very much at home there in that Hostel – more so than I can recall anywhere else. But I take with me the memories, and I bring them to life again every day that I walk the new, old paths. And I look forward to seeing all of you again – let the circle be open but never be broken...

Merry meet, Petra/MoonDancer

Books Books Books !!! **by Diana Aventina**

Some people like books, but I don't like books- I **love** books. I could kiss some of my books because I love them so much ☺

Other girls buy shoes, clothes and jewelry, but I buy books books books! Do you know how certain people elbow their way to the front of a buffet dinner while others of us stay back away wondering if we would starve to death had our life depended on being pushy at meals? Well my dominant alpha female-ness only shows at a book market or a bookstore. Then I become all elbows, hip-checks and shoulder butts.

A few months ago I probably met the man of my dreams in De Slegte bookstore in Hasselt Belgium. He was about 45 or 50 and looked like a professor. He wasn't dressed great, but not bad either and either way, I wouldn't want a relationship with a flashy dresser because then he would want me to dress flashy. So there I was in De Slegte looking for 'Roma Sub Rosa', a series of mystery books written by Steven Saylor which take place in Roman times.

But where were these books filed in De Slegte? In the used section or the new section? Under English mystery, fiction, history? After checking all of the used Book sections I began to give up hope. But everywhere I went, this professor guy was there before me. I was wondering if he thought that I was following him. So I headed for the new books and there they were! Under new English fiction there were 2 books of the series. I reached for one of them and a hand bumped into mine. The professor apparently had been looking for the same author and had reached for the same book. But all's fair in love and book shopping and so with lightning speed my hand darted out and I grabbed the book. Then I batted my eyelashes at him and smiled coyly and said 'Oh did you want this book?' He smiled back and said "That's ok, I'll take this one then' as he grabbed the other Steven Saylor book.

I went to the check-out and paid for 'Roman Blood'. The professor bought 'Rubicon'. Two ships passing in the night, but forever linked by our love of a certain author;s books ☺

Free Online Books!

Are you a book lover just like I am? Then you are going to love this!! I found some great websites where you can download books totally for free and without having to register your name etc. The great thing is that you can download books just to see if you might be interested in that subject. I mean, why not? It's free!

My favorite of them all is <http://www.munseys.com/site/new>
There is a nice esoteric section too.

Project Gutenberg- <http://www.gutenberg.org> 25000 free books!

Sacred Texts- The largest free archive of online books about religion, mythology, folklore and the esoteric on the Internet. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>

Bright blessings and happy reading!
Diana

Pagan Federation International Activities in Belgium

PFI Belgium and Het Element present:

Litha Lier Midzomerfeest!

Sunday June 22 2008

Donkhoeve, Galgeveld 17, Lier, Belgium

Free entrance!

Continuous from 13:00 through 18:00:

Pagan Market, workshops, guided walks, entertainment

19:00: Midsummer Ritual and Midsummer fire

Food and drinks are available to purchase at the site

For more information call: +32 3/455 95 93

or email het.element@scarlet.be

The First ever PFI Belgium Conference!

Mabon Conference

Saturday September 20, 2008

EMABB, Noeveren 67, 2850 Boom, Belgium

Continuous from 10:00 to 22:00

Mabon ritual, workshops, lectures, Pagan market, evening entertainment

Food and drinks are available for purchase

Entry price: PFI members €13.00, non-members pay €15.00

Registration is mandatory as the number of places are limited.

Contact & info:

Maya + 32 486 80 10 13

Or email maya@paganfederation.org

PaGE 2008

Pagan Gathering Europe 2008

Westmalle, Belgium

September 26, 27 & 28, 2008

From Friday September 26 at 6:00 PM through Sunday evening at 6:00 PM there will be fascinating workshops, pathworkings, an opening and closing ritual, & Janet Farrar & Gavin Bone have confirmed their presence !

Children are welcome, but participation to the workshops and other activities is reserved for 18+. Parents remain responsible for their kids at all times.

Price?

Participation to PaGE is only possible in full board. The price includes lodging, breakfast, lunch and dinner and two coffee breaks. The price for the entire weekend for PFI members is €165, non members pay 175.

Registration is mandatory as the number of places are limited. See www.arcadiacoven.be for the registration form and for much more info. Questions? fjierra@paganfederation.org

South Africa: Pagan Religious Marriage Officers

I am pleased to be able to inform you that the Department of Home Affairs has approved the South African Pagan Rights Alliance's (SAPRA) application for designation as a religious organisation in terms of and in accordance with section 5 (1) and (2) of the Civil Union Act. This is the first time in history that the South African government has recognised Paganism as a religion.

Prior to the advent of a just equality and democratic government in South Africa, Paganism as a modern religion of the twentieth and twenty-first century was neither recognised nor acknowledge by the government of the apartheid regime. Consequently the adherents of Paganism in this country have suffered the prejudice of religious intolerance.

The Marriage Act (Act 25 of 1961) prohibited religious marriages conducted according to Pagan religious rites of custom and tradition by stating that religious marriages may only be conducted 'according to Christian, Jewish or Mohammedan rites or the rites of any Indian religion.

The passage of the Civil Union Act finally offered hope to South African Pagans who seek to exercise their long awaited constitutionally protected and guaranteed right to equality in letter and in spirit. By affording Pagans the privilege to be designated as religious marriage officers, the provisions of the Civil Union Act offers Pagans, as proud South Africans, the promise of embracing our faith and religious practices as equal citizens of this great nation.

Since the passage of the Civil Union Act in December 2006 the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA) has been attempting to lodge a formal application, on behalf of members of this Alliance, for this Alliance to be designated as a religious organisation in terms of and in accordance with section 5 (1) and (2) of the Civil Union Act.

This Alliance wishes to nominate several Pagans, of good standing with the national Pagan religious community, adherents of the religion of Paganism, as 'religious marriage officers' in terms of the provisions of the Civil Union Act.

According to section 5 of the Civil Union Act:

5. (1) Any religious denomination or organisation may apply in writing to the Minister to be designated as a religious organisation that may solemnise marriages in terms of this Act.

(2) The Minister may designate such a religious denomination or organisation as a religious institution that may solemnise marriages under this Act.

According to section 5 of the Civil Union Act SAPRA (2) the Minister of Home Affairs has designated SAPRA as a religious institution that may solemnise marriages under this Act.

SAPRA will be submitting formal nominations on behalf of candidates who have requested 'religious marriage officer' status in terms of the Civil Union Act shortly.

Damon Leff

Convenor: South African Pagan Rights Alliance

National Coordinator: Pagan Federation International South Africa

The Temple of Apollo at Didyma

Also called DIDYMI, or BRANCHIDAE, ancient sanctuary and seat of an oracle of Apollo, located south of Miletus in modern Turkey. Before being plundered and burned by the Persians (c. 494 BC), the sanctuary was in the charge of the Branchids, a priestly caste named after Branchus, a favourite youth of Apollo. After Alexander the Great conquered Miletus (334), the oracle was re sanctified; the city administered the cult, annually electing a prophet. About 300 BC the Milesians



began to build a new temple, intended to be the largest in the Greek world. The annual festival held there, the Didymeia, became Panhellenic in the beginning of the 2nd century BC. Excavations made between 1905 and 1930 revealed all of the uncompleted new temple and some carved pieces of the earlier temple and statues. Made a township in 1991, Didyma is a peninsula surrounded by the provincial limits of Mugla and the Akbük cove in the east, the Aegean Sea in the south and west and the lake Bafa and the river Meander in the north. It is located 106 km from Aydin, 53 km from Söke, 73 km from Kusadasi, and 110 km from Bodrum. The number of its inhabitants is 10.400 according to the census of 1990, and its area 300 km².

The Apollo temple of Didyma (the Didymaion), located within the boundaries of the village of Yeni Hisar in the Söke district of the province of Aydın, was known as a sanctuary and seat of an oracle attached to Miletus. Recent excavations revealed remains, which showed that Didyma was not only a seat of an oracle but also the site of dense settlement.

The research concerning the origins of the names of Didyma and Didymaion has been a subject of discussion going on for years. Along with several other myths, it was thought that the name Didymaion that meant "twin temples" or "temple of the twins", was related to Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo. However, as no definite evidence could be found, this theory also remained as a myth. With the intensification of work in recent years on the "Sacred Road" connecting Miletus and Didyma, and the finding of the place of the Artemis cult during the excavations however, it was proved that this thesis was right. The two temples built for the twin brother and sister, the Artemision and the Didymaion, constitute the origin of the name Didyma.

Apollo and Artemis were closely related to the mother goddess Cybele who had, from prehistoric times, a very important place in Anatolia. The mother goddess Cybele had various names (such as Kubaba, Isis, Hapat, Lat) and epithets according to localities and cultures. The most widespread of these names was Dindymene which was derived from mount Dindymus and which is remarkable for its resemblance to the name Didyma.

The name of Apollo is considered not to be Greek. Apollo, who, because of the resemblance in names was identified with the god Apulunas mentioned in Hittite written sources, represented shape given by rational perception, temperate power, fine arts and light. Besides these, he was renowned for his ability to prophesy, and he communicated to people through mediums and oracles his knowledge of the future.



The dependence of communities on religion increased as it was seen that gods possessed forces to direct according to their will, all phenomena and events relating to nature and society. As a natural consequence of the increase in religion, belief in the power to prophesy of the gods who could foresee events and phenomena was intensified.

In the Archaic period the oracle of Apollo had great fame. The great number of temples erected in Anatolia as seats of oracles is evidence that belief in gods had reached enormous proportions. The most important of the temples dedicated to Apollo were the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece, and the Didymaion in Anatolia. These two seats were in constant rivalry with each other. A fine example of this rivalry can be clearly seen in the following verses by the oracle of Delphi.

In the mid 7th century BC, in the oracles of Apollo, the god could be consulted once a year for official matters, and the answers received to questions directed would be in the form of "yes" or "no". When in later years, consulting the god also for private matters became a tradition, these consultations became gradually more frequent. The oracles of Apollo grew very rich as a result of this, and their fame and influence spread over large areas. They became as powerful as the state they were in and were effective in shaping the destinies of persons and communities, and particularly in politics where they played a very important role, they very often caused wrong decisions to be taken.

Pausanias states that the Apollo temple at Didyma had been built before the Greek colonization (10th century BC). It is believed in the light of this that the existence of Didyma, like that of Miletus and Priene goes back to the 2nd millennium BC. However according to the results of excavations and research work undertaken up

to the present day, the earliest temple remains date back to the end of the 8th century BC.

One learns from Herodotus that valuable votive offerings were presented to the temple by King Necho of Egypt at the end of the 7th century BC, and King Croesus of Lydia in the 6th century BC.

It is believed that the construction of the Archaic temple was begun in the mid 6th century BC and was completed at the end of the same century. In the 6th century BC, the Didymaion was administered by a priestly caste named Branchids. During this period, which lasted about 100 years, the temple flourished and went through its most brilliant era.

It was completely burned and plundered by the Persians during the battle of Lade, the priests of the temple were driven to Susa, and the cult statue of Apollo was taken to Ecbatana. The statue of Apollo which was dated back to 500 BC, was made by the sculptor Kanachus of Sicyon and reflects Anatolian - Hittite characteristics.

The construction of the Hellenistic temple was begun after the victory of Alexander the Great over the Persians. However, it was understood from the remains that this Hellenistic temple was not completed.

The temple of which the construction was continued under Emperor Caligula (37 - 41 AD) who wanted to be thought of as the god of the temple, and later under Hadrian (117 - 138 AD), was never completed. With the alterations made in the 3rd century AD to protect it from plunder, the temple took on the appearance of a fortress, and flourished under the reigns of Aurelian (270 - 275) and Diocletian (284 - 305). There are findings which indicate that work was done on the temple during the reign of Emperor Julian (361 - 363).



In the beginning of the 5th century AD, Emperor Theodosius had a church built in the sacred courtyard (Adyton - Sekos). This church, which had the appearance of a three - winged basilica, was destroyed in an earthquake and later rebuilt with one wing (9th century AD).

In the 10th century AD, the two - columned hall (Chresmographeion - hall of the oracle) and the pronaos, which were used as storage areas, were greatly damaged in a fire, and most of the marble turned into lime.

After the Seljuks and the Mongols conquered the region the temple was completely abandoned.

An Italian traveller who visited Didyma in 1446 records that the whole temple was standing, however at the end of the 15th century the temple was completely destroyed by an earthquake and turned into a heap of marble. In later years the temple was used as a quarry, and many of its architectural elements were used as building material in the construction of dwellings and other buildings by the local people.

EXCAVATIONS

The first excavations in Didyma were made in 1858 by the English under the direction of Newton. The area excavated was the Sacred Road.

In the temple, excavations were first begun in 1872 by the French under O Rayet and A Thomas. The aim was to find the cult statue of Apollo, but at the end of the work which lasted two years, the cult statue had not been found. However, it had been possible to determine the dimensions of the temple and to reconstruct its plan.

In the excavations of 1895 - 96, again undertaken by the French, the work, supervised by B Haussoullier and E Pontremoli, was concentrated on the northern part of the temple. These excavations were stopped shortly after due to economic reasons. Excavations begun in 1905 for the museums in Berlin under the supervision of Th. Weigand, were continued on a systematic basis until the year 1937. During this time a great portion of the temple was revealed. After this date, excavations were interrupted and work on publication of the results was begun.

In order find solutions to certain problems concerning the temple and its surroundings, excavations were begun again in 1962, this time for the German Institute of Archaeology, under the supervision of R Naumann. When R Naumann left, the excavations in Didyma were continued under the supervision of Klaus Tuchelt. Work is at present still going on in the area with special attention to research on the Sacred Road.

THE SACRED ROAD

The Delphinion is accepted as the starting point of the Sacred Road connecting Miletus and Didyma. The road ran from the Sacred Gate of Miletus southwards in the direction of the coast to Panarmos Harbour (above Akköy), and - bending south - east from the port, reached the Didymaion. Within the boundaries of Yenihisar, the Sacred Road runs close along the side of the asphalt road. A portion of the Sacred Road has been revealed by excavations and exploratory trenches dug in recent years. However, due to certain bureaucratic obstacles, it has not yet been possible to establish its connection to the temple.

On either side of the road there were statues of Branchids (priests and priestesses attached to the temple), crouching lions and sphinxes, all of which gave the road an impressive appearance. Monumental tombs and sarcophagi belonging to important persons were also dispersed along the road. Statues of Branchids revealed in the excavations carried out by Newton in 1858 on the Sacred Road have been taken to the British Museum. Some fragments belonging to the statues are in the storeroom of the house of excavations in Didyma. Four of the Branchid statues in which Hittite influence is apparent and which have been dated back to the 6th century BC, are on display in the museum in Miletus. In the years 100 and 101 AD Emperor Trajan had the Sacred Road restored. The parts of the road that had fallen down were raised to a higher level and the other parts were repaired. Inscriptions indicate that the restoration work was completed in a very short time.

It was understood from a milestone revealed during excavations that the road was 16.5 kilometres long. According to the portions uncovered, the width of the road which was made of stone blocks, changed between 5 and 7 meters. On both sides of it were rows of shops, votive fountains, monumental tombs, baths, and the area for the cult of Artemis. Findings indicate a dense settlement. The group of people who set out from Miletus to join the annual celebrations and festivities which were held

in the Didymaion every spring, reached the temple after a long walk, there were therefore, resting places on the Sacred Road. It is understood that the Terrace with the Sphinx, uncovered during excavations carried out in 1985 about 4 kilometres to the south of Akköy, was a halting place built for rest purposes.

THE ARCHAIC DIDYMAION (The Apollo Temple at Didyma)

Remains of foundations of the Late Geometric period were found during excavations carried out in 1962 by German archaeologists within the secos of the Hellenistic temple to look for the first Apollo temple of Didyma which, according to Pausanias, had existed before the 10th century BC. The temple which, according to the foundations of secos walls uncovered in the north and south parts, was 10.20 meters wide and 24 meters long and slightly narrowed towards the east, was built at the end of the 8th century BC. The small and simple temple contained a secos (sacred courtyard), an altar, a sacred source, a cult statue and the symbols of Apollo. The Late Geometric temple did not have a naiscos, the naiscos is understood to have been built at the end of the 7th century BC to protect the cult statue. Exploratory digging carried out to the south - west of the temple revealed the remains of a columned building 15.50 meters long and 3.60 meters wide. The remnants and ceramic findings have been dated back to the end of the 7th century BC.

Not many remains are left to the present day from the Archaic Didymaion, as it was burned, destroyed and plundered in 494 BC (the battle of Lade). Besides, findings relating to the Archaic temple are further limited by the fact that the Hellenistic temple was built over the foundations of the Archaic one. However, the construction of the plan was possible and various examples of reconstruction were made through ancient authors, as well as architectural and sculptural fragments found during borings and excavations.

The Didymaion became really important in the first of the 6th century BC when all Ionian cities, and especially Miletus, reached their most flourishing era. The temple was rebuilt in 560 - 550 BC with larger proportions. The influence of the temples of Hera at Samos and Artemis at Ephesus are apparent in the Archaic Didymaion.

The temple, an 87.65 meter long and 40.89 meter wide building of a dipteral plan (having a double row of columns all around), rested on a two - stepped crepes. The longer sides had 21 columns each, the east had 8, and the west 9, whereas in the pronaos there were 8 columns in two rows. Together with the columns within the peristasis (the surrounding hall), the total number of columns added up to 112.

The parts of the temple which were not visible from the outside were made of local tufa, while those that were visible were made of marble. The marble was provided from marble quarries on the island of Toşoz, and in the hills above the village of Pınarcık near Bafa lake. One can still see fragments of roughly prepared column shafts in the quarries at Pınarcık. The party worked marble, brought from the quarry to Latmos Harbour, was then taken by sea to Panarmos Harbor, and from there it was carried to the temple.

The bases and capitals of the 15.45 meter high columns bear the characteristics of the Artemis Temple at Ephesus; the bases consists of tori and double trochili, the Ionic capitals have large volutes, the column shafts have 36 flutes. On the eastern facade, the lower parts of the columns in the front row were decorated with reliefs; a head of a woman (Kore) from these relief is on display in the Charlottenburg Museum in Berlin. The characteristics of all these elements indicate that they were

at the latest made in the year 550 BC, which coincides with the date of the initial construction of the Archaic Didymaion.

The double row of columns in the pronaos indicate that it had a roof. The architrave is quite narrow. In the corners are high reliefs of winged gorgons and behind these are figures of crouching lions. It is believed that certain wild animals' figures were also there besides the lions. This type of decorations is quite unusual in temple entablature. These pieces of work which can be dated back to the end of the 6th century BC, were probably made during restoration works which took place in the temple at the time. On the architrave rest, in due order, a band of egg - and - dart molding, dentils, another band of egg - and - dart moulding, a cornice and a roof.

The inner sides of the walls of the secos (sacred courtyard) were fortified by pilasters in the form of half - columns, which brought colour to the long, high walls. The height of the walls of the 50.25 meter long and 17.45 meter wide secos reached 17.5 meters. Walls of this height give the impression that the secos was roofed, but the greatness of the distances between the pilasters on the walls destroys this theory.

Within the secos stood the naiscos (little temple) where the cult statue of Apollo was kept. However, there are not many findings belonging to this buildings. During borings in the Hellenistic naiscos, foundation remains belonging to a smaller building were found. It is believed that these foundations belong to the Archaic naiscos. The bronze cult statue is known as the "Apollo Philesius" and represents Apollo catching a deer.

In front of the temple (east) and on the same axis stands a circular altar. This altar, of which the other diameter measures 8 meters and the inner one 5.5 meters, had two doors. The holes for the hinges can still be seen on the thresholds. The altar of which the inside is very well preserved, had been used in the Archaic, and also in the Hellenistic and Roman temples as the sacred place where the animals presented as votive offerings were burned. The great amount of ashes found in the building during excavations is evidence of this. In ancient times, animals offered to the gods of the sky were burned in this type of altar, and sanctification was achieved by washing in the blood of the animals offered to the gods under the ground. To the north of the altar is the sacred source. The masonry of the lower parts of this circular well shows that it was constructed in the Archaic period.

3.5 meter high protective walls encircle the front part of the temple. These walls must have been built to diminish the difference of levels in the large area in front of the temple. In the uncovered portion of these protective walls were five outlets with staircases, each 2.5 meters wide. The central stairs are situated just opposite the altar, on the same axis. These stairs led to the terrace on which stood the votive and gods' statues. The style of the egg - and - dart molding used to decorate the upper part of the terrace wall as well as the workmanship of the wall and stairs, bear the characteristics of the Archaic period.

On this terrace one also comes across the remains of two long structures built of limestone. The 34.5 meter long and 7 meter wide buildings must have been shops where visitors took shelter or shopped. These buildings also show the characteristics of the Archaic period.

Next to the stairs along the terrace wall situate in the direction of the south - east end of the temple are rows of benches. It is understood that these benches

extending parallel to the steps of the temple were built in the Hellenistic period, and were the rows of benches for the stadium situated to the south of the temple, Every four years festivities called the "Megala Didymeia" and musical shows, were held here, and torch processions and competitions were arranged. The bases having a hole in the center, which marked the starting points of the races, can be seen at the eastern end of the stadium. These bases lie on the same axis as the altar.

THE HELLENISTIC DIDYMAION

What remains of the temple in the present day, through hundreds of years of earth - quakes, fire, destruction and plunder are mostly remnants of the Hellenistic period. The Roman characteristics witnessed in certain parts of the temple, are elements which have reached the present day from the temple, which continued to be built during the Roman period also.

It is known that the construction of the Hellenistic temple was begun in 313 BC, and that it was erected over the Archaic temple which was burned and destroyed in 494 BC. The donations of Alexander the Great and King Seleucus I of Syria were of great help in the rebuilding of the Didymaion. Furthermore, Seleucus I had the cult statue of Apollo brought back from Ecbatana (300 BC) and replaced in the temple.

The plan of the temple was made by Paionius of Ephesus and Daphnis of Miletus. These two renowned architects had also worked on the Artemision at Ephesus (one of the seven wonders of the world) and the Heraion at Samos, which were considered to be the largest and the most magnificent temples of the Hellenistic period. The Didymaion emerges as the third largest edifice of the Hellenistic period, following the former.

The plan, as a requisition of the cult, had to provide an open air space to hold the Sacred Fountain, the Altar, the Laurel Grove, considered to be the sacred tree of Apollo, and it had also to shelter the cult statue. All these elements had to be arranged in a way not to disturb the covered spaces. The architects constructed an ostentatious example of architecture, by the perfect use of the local characteristics of the cult of the oracle and of the spaces of different levels. This temple differed from a normal temple plan in that it was also the seat of an oracle. The edifice consisted of a long pronaos, a rectangular hall with two columns in the centre (the oracle hall-Cresmographeion), a sacred courtyard surrounded by high walls (Secos-Adyton), and in this courtyard a small temple sheltering the cult statue of Apollo (the naiskos), all set on the same axis but at different floor levels.

The temples, situated over the Archaic one and of larger proportions, had necessitated an uncommonly high lower structure. The temple rested on a 3.5 meter high and 7 - stepped platform (crepis), and had in the centre of the front facade a 14 - stepped stairway of which both sides were limited. The width of these stairs was equal to that of the temple. This characteristic is also visible in the Classical Artemision. The temple, 109.34 meters long and 51.13 meters wide, was built on a dipteral (having a double row of columns all around) plan. It had 21 columns each on its longer sides, and 10 each on the shorter ones. Together with the columns within the peristasis and the ones in the pronaos and cresmographeion, the total number of columns added up to 122. The cost of the columns of which only three stand today, was very high. Excavations have revealed a great number of inscriptions showing the calculation of construction costs prepared during the building of the temple. It is understood from these documents that the cost of one column was 40,000 drachmae and that the daily wages of a labourer was only 2 drachmea. This means that one labourer would have to work

for 20,000 workdays to put a column in its place, or to adapt it to the present day, by assuming that the minimum daily wage of a stone workman be 10,000 TL, the construction cost of a column could be calculated to amount to 200 million TL. It is also known, from these inscriptions that, from 250 BC onwards, 8 architects and 20 construction companies worked for the temple.



Such a large and costly building could certainly not have been finished in a short time. It is understood that the construction went on in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, and that some of it was completed during the Roman period. Although a great portion of the columns were prepared and set in their places, it can be seen that those in the outer row of the peristasis and especially those in the rear facade were never completed.

The height of the columns was first determined in 1873 by A. Thomas as being 19.71 meters. The accuracy of the measurement was evidenced by recent research work also. The lower diameters of the columns vary between 1.96 and 2 meters. This conforms to the rule that, in the Ionic order lower diameters of columns are equal to 1/10th of their height.

A von Gerkan has calculated the total height of the temple, including the 19.71 meter high columns, the stepped lower structure and the entablature, as 29.40 meters. This measurement gives an idea of the magnificence of the temple before it was destroyed.

The double row of columns round the temple gave the building a very impressive appearance as well as depth. Of the 108 columns in the peristasis (the peripheral hall) about 80 are standing in their original places. The letters seen in the upper and lower parts of the fragments of column shafts were written by the workmen to avoid any mistakes during the placing of the columns in their places. This is also an indication that the columns had entasis (a swelling of column shafts).

Of the three Hellenistic columns still standing, the workmanship of two are complete and they carry the entablature. The third column, which carries a capital, has no fluting in its shaft. According to the characteristics of the capitals, the columns were built in the first half of the 2nd century BC.

The bases of the columns in the peristasis display different characteristics; whereas some consist of plinthus, torus and double trochilus, the column bases in the central part of the other row in the front facade show Early Roman characteristics. One of these bases is divided in to 12 rectangular panels decorated

with motifs of sea creatures, palmettoes and other plants. On another base there are double meander and palmento motifs. These bases were built between the years 37 and 41 BC by Emperor Caligula who wanted to identify himself with Apollo.

The capitals situated at the outer corners of the peristasis and ornamented with busts of gods and bulls' heads as well as the heads of Gorgons on the architrave, show the baroque characteristics of the 2nd century AD.

The columns on the north side of the temple, of which the workmanship is complete, are all standing in their places, whereas those on the west side were set in their places, although their workmanship was incomplete, the latter now lie on the ground, fallen in earthquakes. Most of the columns on the south side are missing, and it is understood that they were never completed.

In the front of the temple, after the double row of columns, was the pronaos. Also mentioned as the 12- columned hall in archaeological literature, the pronaos had a total of 12 columns in three rows of four columns each, which carried the roof (Dodecastylos). The marks left by the fire of the Middle Ages can be seen on the Attic styl, scale motifs are carved on the upper parts of the antae walls are profiled in the same form. This is the first time that this characteristic, of which an example is in the Porthenon, is seen in an Ionic temple.

There were three doors in the rear wall of the pronaos. The central door of monumental appearance was 5.63 meters wide and 14 meters high. The fact that its threshold was placed 1.46 meters higher than the floor of the pronaos shows that there was no entrance from here to the oracle hall. The prophecies of Apollo were communicated by his pronouncers to the people through this door. It is therefore named the "Oracle Door". The marble blocks on either side of the door weigh 70 tons each are known as the heaviest elements of antiquity.

The two other doors, one on either side of the monumental door, were each 1.20 meters wide and 2.25 meters high, and provided the entrance to the inner part of the temple. These doors were connected to the sacred courtyard by vaulted and sloping narrow corridors. In the lower parts of the corridors, which opened onto the Adytum, were small divisions that had coffering in their ceilings. Doric elements seen on the doors are characteristics that remind one of the propylaea of the Athenian Acropolis. Only persons working in the temple and priests could enter the inner part of the temple. These people would reach the Adytum through the dark and mystic corridors mentioned above.

To the east of the Adytum, between the doors at the end of the corridors, was a 15.24 meter wide stairway consisting of 24 steps. These stairs led to a 14.01 meter long, 8.74 meter wide and 20 meter high hall with three doors and two columns. This hall which had no entrance from the pronaos was Cresmographeion (the hall of the oracle) which together with the pronaos the first completed sections of the temple. Only priests and mediums could enter this hall, and they communicated the prophecies to the people through the above mentioned monumental door. Therefore, the Cresmographeion and the pronaos, which constituted an entity, were considered the most important divisions of the Didymaion. The two columns in the centre of the oracle hall had Corinthian capitals and carried the roof. Understood to have been built in the beginning of the 3rd century BC on the evidence of their characteristics, these capitals are considered to be among the earliest examples of Corinthian capitals.

The doors the north and south sides of the Cresmographeion open onto stepped passages mentioned as Labyrinths in inscriptions. On the ceiling of the better preserved southern corridor meander motifs can be seen. These passages played an important role in acoustics during cult ceremonies accompanied by the chorus. The roof of the temple was also reached by these passages.

The 21.71 meter wide and 53.63 meter long Adytum is of a very striking appearance with its 25 meter high walls and its top open to the sky. The lower part of the Adytum walls which are at the same level as the Cresmographeion have the appearance of a high podium. Their base is profiled and the upper end is finished with a row of egg - and - dart moulding. The podium, which is made of smooth marble blocks, displays a fine workmanship. In the central parts of the walls are pilasters in the form of half - columns. Over the pilasters were pilaster capitals ornamented with motifs of griffins or vaulted plants, on the frieze between the capitals were reliefs representing winged lions holding Apollo's lyre between their paws, and on top of it all was the cornice ending in the cymatium. All these elements brought colour to the long and excessively high walls. The decorations on the walls of the Adytum bear the characteristics of the Early Hellenistic period. These elements indicate that the Adytum was built in the first half of the 2nd century BC. It has also been proven by an inscription that the Adytum had been completed at that time.

One of the most important findings of recent years in the Didymaion are the drawings on the lower parts of the walls of the Adytum. These drawings, which can be seen with great difficulty and only under certain lighting condition, first attracted attention in 1979 and work was begun on them in 1980. The work is being carried out by Lothar Haselberg who was the first to see the drawings. These were worked onto the smooth marble walls of the Adytum by making about half a millimetre deep incisions in the surface of the marble by a very thin and sharp point, and they represented the plants of various elements and divisions of the Didymaion. In order to obtain accurate drawings, a grid consisting of horizontal lines with 1.8 - 1.9 centimetre intervals cut at regular intervals by perpendicular lines, was prepared beforehand to serve as a scale. This grid facilitated the making of the actual drawings. It is understood that these drawings, which are extremely accurate, were done by the architects who worked on the construction of the temple.

The plans cover an area of 200 square meters. Some of the drawings were made horizontally, whereas others are perpendicular. In general, the horizontal drawings are on a 1 to 1 scale, and the perpendicular ones on a 1 to 6 scale.

Besides the drawings of elements like column bases and shafts, the drawing of a portion of the entablature of the naos was also discovered on the rear wall of the Adytum. These drawings, believed to involve all the parts of the temple, will throw a light upon many an unsolved problem on the Didymaion, thus adding new proportions to the work.

To the west of the Adytum stood the naos, which sheltered the cult statue. The temple, of which only the remains of the foundations can be seen today was 14.43 meters long and 8.24 meters wide. The plan of the naos, reconstructed from discovered fragments, was a pro-style. The temple was a small building with antae obtained by the projection of the two side walls of the naos and four Ionic columns in front. Column bases were of the Ephesus type. The Ionic capitals, antae capitals and entablature ornaments, all show Early Hellenistic characteristics. Wall bases

were profiled in the Attic style like the Adytum walls. The edifice, which looked like the Zeus temple at Priene, was the first Anatolian temple built in the Hellenistic period under Attic influence. In contrast with the smooth, ornament less walls, the entablature was very richly decorated. The coffering of the ceiling in the front hall and the soffits of the lower part of the architrave, were decorated with flower motifs polychrome in various colours. It is accepted, according to the ornamentation of the entablature, that the naiscos was completed in 270 BC and that the cult statue of Apollo, which was brought from Ecbatana, was put in its place in the naos in 300 BC.

The reconstruction model of the naiscos, constructed by putting together the discovered architectural fragments, is kept in the storeroom of the excavation house.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEMPLE

Besides being for centuries a very important oracle seat, the Didymaion was also renowned for its sacred water, sacred grove, the many sacred elements it housed, and its wealth. The riches of the temple had its source in donations and votive offerings made in varying forms. The very valuable offerings of King Necho of Egypt, King Croesus of Lydia and King Seleucus II of Pergamum, had an important place among the donations made to the Didymaion. The donation of various sacrificial animals, 1,000 in number, and 12 rams by Lysimachus, was also one of the interesting offerings.

The fact that Miletus attempted to build a fleet with the treasury of the temple before the battle of Lade, shows how rich the Didymaion was.

One other feature of the Didymaion was that it had the right to shelter. This right, which was termed "the Right of Asylum", was the recognition of the right of inviolability to people who took refuge in the temple. The right of asylum, which therefore created many problems, had given rise to many a discussion. The boundaries of the right of asylum, however, were gradually enlarged and were increased to 3 kilometres by Emperor Augustus Trajan enlarged the boundaries even more and wanted them to be recognized from the beginning of the Sacred Road.

It is understood from inscriptions that the festivities and ceremonies held every year in spring went on even after the Didymaion was completely destroyed in 494 BC. The journey from Miletus to the Didymaion was made by sea or by the Sacred Road. The group of people who set out from Miletus with ceremonies begun in the Delphinion where they received the sanctification of Apollo and were sent forward by the Delphins, came from the Lions' Harbour to the Panarmos Harbour, and from there reached the Didymaion on foot. First, sacrificial beasts and votive offerings were presented to the god, then, after ceremonies to the accompaniment of music and chorus, the important persons entered the temple, and after that, the questions asked by inquires were answered by the oracle. The ceremonies were directed by the Stephanephors. It was shown by inscriptions that the Emperors Augustus and Trajan took the title of Stephanephor and carried out this position. In the Roman period, the Sacred Road gained in importance as the harbors filled up with alluvial mud and travel by sea became unfeasible.

The reason for this extremely impressive and magnificent temple's not being considered among the seven wonders of the world is related by the authorities to its not having been completed.

An interview with Peg Aloï: Cinema and the Occult Revival. By TheoFantastique

This post brings together a number of areas of interest for me, including the increasing interest in fantasy with the counterculture of the 1960s, the connection between fantasy and Neo-Paganism, and the expression of elements related to Paganism and esotericism in film. We will explore issues related to these facets courtesy of an interview with Peg Aloï. Peg is a Pagan and a scholar who works in both the academic and popular arenas. She is a writer on Paganism and the media for Witchvox, is the co-editor with Hanna E. Johnston of the new volume *The New Generation Witches: Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, 2007), and is currently co-authoring a book with Hannah titled *The Celluloid Bough: Cinema in the Wake of the Occult Revival*.

TheoFantastique: Peg, it's a pleasure to talk with you. Thanks for making the time, and for your recent help with my research project into cinematic treatments of the Witch. Let's begin with a little of your background. How did you come to embrace the Pagan pathway, and why did this also become an area of academic specialty?

Peg Aloï: It's a pleasure to do this interview, and it's gratifying to see so much interest in Paganism and academia on the web these days. I also have to thank you for finally nudging me to finish Chris Partridge's book [on the re-enchantment of the West] which is wonderful.

It is always interesting to me to hear how people first "found" Paganism or Witchcraft or Wicca, because even as there are any similarities that modern Pagans have in common when it comes to the roots of their backgrounds, there are just as many unique differences. For me, I was raised in what I'd call a somewhat lapsed Catholic household. My father wanted us to be good church-going Catholics but my Mom rejected the church based on, well, let's say the local parish priest did not approve of decisions she made based on her doctor's advice, and that was that. I did not know the reasons at the time, but I did know my mom did not have much use for the church. I just always found the experience of church to be both wildly exciting (the robes and songs and beautiful stained glass and shiny things) and incredibly boring (the liturgy and rote recitations) at the same time. Shortly after being confirmed I decided it was not for me at all, but I still had to go to church occasionally.

I was also required to attend religious instruction classes once a week; we called it "reledge." It got interesting briefly when I had this teacher who told us juicy stories about teenage girls using Ouija Boards and doing séances at slumber parties who got into all sorts of trouble. It was real satanic panic kind of stuff, which was pretty ubiquitous in the 1970s when I stop to think back on it. The people who ran the classes, who were basically all volunteers from the parish, decided the students should all bring their Ouija Boards one night and we'd burn them in a big bonfire. I really wanted to go and see this spectacle, but I definitely did not want to burn my Ouija Board, so I faked illness that day. I guess I have a kind of perverse relationship to my Catholic upbringing!

More significantly, I was raised in a family that really valued the beauty and utility of the natural world. My dad was a hunter, fisherman and avid gardener, and my mom's ancestors all had farms, so as far back as I can remember we were either growing or catching our own food, or going into the country to pick fruit or gather

nuts. We'd spend summer days fishing or wandering around in the woods at my uncle's place in Pennsylvania, or picking blueberries in the woods in New York. In winter we'd chop firewood and cut down our own Christmas tree and smoke a goose my dad had killed for dinner. At the time, this sort of thing was not considered unusual but it's really a dying way of life in this country now...I mean, many families do not even cook dinner or eat together. If I were a sociologist, I'd love to research the connection of these sorts of foodways that are going out of fashion and chart their decline against the proliferation of Paganism and other nature-based spiritualities. I am completely convinced that my affinity and appreciation for nature and love of the natural world are a direct result of my childhood experiences.

As a child, I was always interested in the occult and Witchcraft. I remember seeing the movie *Crowhaven Farm* on TV when I was little and somehow identifying with the idea of someone being reincarnated as one of the Salem witches. My aunt and uncle let me watch *The Exorcist* on HBO with them, but made me cover my eyes during certain parts. I think I never actually saw the film in its entirety until the director's cut came out a few years ago. I loved the images of Witches or other magical beings I saw on TV, *I Dream of Jeannie* was a favorite show of mine, and I loved *The Twilight Zone*. I vaguely assumed there must be modern witches somewhere in the world because the occult revival and the hippie movement were happening but had no idea there was any sort of living tradition in the United States, so I just devoured books on the history of the occult and folklore and the Salem witch trials and vampires and whatever.

I first found my way into the actual Pagan community when I was working one summer for Greenpeace in Amherst, Massachusetts. One night we were sitting around a fire after a day of canvassing, drinking beer and whatnot, and someone started doing some Pagan chants, you know, what we now call "Pagan Top 40" stuff like "The Earth is our mother" and that kind of thing. I was fascinated, here were these environmental hippie types, singing this Native-American-infused melody, it was the 1980s and the New Age was everywhere and I had only started to become aware that there was a Pagan community out there. Someone looked at me and said "Come on, Peg, you know the words!" I didn't. But they were easy enough to pick up. We had some great times that summer, usually looking for secluded wooded areas to hang out in after work at night, sometimes swimming in forbidden places or sneaking onto private beaches on the Cape to sleep near the ocean.

Not long after this, I started to discover a Pagan community that was less connected to environmental or neo-hippie groups and more about Witchcraft and magic. I was attending the University of Massachusetts for graduate school, and one day I saw a flyer advertising the UMASS Pagan Student Organization. I think it was the first campus Pagan group in the US. I went to a meeting and, again, had this odd experience, just as with the Greenpeace group, of people expecting I knew more than I actually did. I had never attended a Pagan ritual before but at that first meeting when they were planning a Beltane ritual they asked me to be the high priestess. Who knows why? But I thought it was interesting that these strangers were assuming I was experienced in something I knew very little about, and I had not said or done anything to mislead them on this. Anyway, I hung out with these folks a while and they were not quite the kind of group I was looking for (they were a bit socially-awkward and not terribly interested in nature), but eventually I met some other people and attended all kinds of public and private events and I was off and running! I later moved to Boston which is a real vortex of Pagan community, so there was a lot going on, and eventually met people from the coven I later joined and still belong to. But now that I live in Albany, I do not attend rites as often and

have become more of a solitary practitioner, which is what many people who belong to groups for a long time eventually become.

As for Paganism being an academic specialty of mine, well...I have an MFA in English. This is a terminal degree with a focus on creative writing. That and a couple bucks might get you a latte at Starbucks. I mean, it used to be a good degree but there are no jobs now, even PhDs are finding it hard. Fortunately, I did a minor in film when I was at UMASS. I also did an independent study course on Witchcraft in contemporary fiction, with a professor who specialized in myth and fantasy literature. After moving to Boston I was writing for an erotica magazine and a local arts weekly wanted to interview the women behind the magazine. This writer happened to be a film columnist and when he learned of my interest in film and my background he said he'd like to hire me to do short reviews for the paper. I had also taught a couple sections of Film and Literature in grad school. I did little bit of adjunct teaching here and there, including a course on Witchcraft in Film and Fiction. And eventually a friend I'd met through a film festival he was organizing hired me to teach at Emerson, where I have had freedom to develop a lot of unique courses. But I am still not really a bona fide film scholar or even a traditional scholar of any one subject. I have presented papers and published scholarly articles on everything from Celtic studies to travel writing to poetry, and of course film and media. The first time I presented a paper at a conference, the topic had a Pagan focus (it was on the unintentional destruction of sacred sites by Pagan tourists in the UK). Then the second paper I gave, I think it was on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, also had a Pagan focus. So I decided that every time I did any sort of academic presentation or research or published writing, it would have a pagan theme or focus. And that has held true for the last few years. It's not like some sort of spiritual pact with the gods of livelihood, (here's where I'd be laughing if we were doing this interview "live"), it's just a quirky personal challenge that happens to fit well with my eclectic academic path. My spiritual path and my academic one have been similar in that they've both been rather untraditional, I guess.

TheoFantastique: How did you come to study film and its expression of the esoteric?

Peg Alois: Like I said, I more or less fell into it. When I finally got a chance to teach something besides composition as a graduate teaching assistant, I had the choice of teaching Creative Writing or Film and Literature. Tough choice but I am glad I picked the film track as it has led to more teaching opportunities, and getting the job as a freelance film critic as helped, too. Anyway, one of the film classes I taught at UMASS was "Terror vs. Horror: The Psychological and Visceral Sources of Fear." So of course I was exploring the difference between two models of horror cinema, the one a gory, shocking approach (such as one sees in slasher films, etc.) and the other a more subtle (but perhaps ultimately more unnerving) approach, the less-is-more approach. I wanted to try and expose students to things they might not normally think of as horror, like the Australian film Picnic at Hanging Rock, one of my favorites. At first glance, it looks like a costume drama but it has the qualities of mystery, horror and the paranormal as well. I am very intrigued by films that can't be easily categorized, and television shows that meld different genres together, like Buffy or Twin Peaks.

My interest in the occult and in horror films has led me to design courses, on cinema and the occult, supernatural television, and Witchcraft and Paganism in contemporary media, and that's all been really interesting, and the classes have been popular with students. Also, this is a very fertile field in academia now,

especially since there is now a whole new branch of study known as "popular culture" which can be approached from within a variety of contexts. I have noticed for some time now that what we are currently calling "Paganism Studies" is still not a separate discipline unto itself, but is comprised of scholars whose specialties are very diverse: history, sociology, film and media, cultural studies, folklore, gender studies, you name it. And even if some scholars who want to be specialists in Paganism might find this frustrating, I think it works very well, in that it shows how this spiritual movement and its attendant imagery and texts and social implications have really permeated the culture in a very comprehensive and diverse way.

TheoFantastique: In a previous blog post I commend on Robert Ellwood's observations of the influence of the "occult revival" of the 1960s counterculture on various aspects of popular culture such as television programming. You will touch on this in your forthcoming book. Can you summarize some of this revival for us, why it might have come about, and give us some examples of how it surfaced and continues to be worked out in television and film?

Peg Aloï: I think when one talks of an "occult revival" it is important to distinguish among the different occult revivals. There was an occult revival in England at the turn of the 20th century, one in the United States shortly thereafter, and one in the U.K. in the 1960s, concomitant with a revival in the U.S. The one we are most concerned with for our book is the most recent one, and in particular we wish to chronicle the ways in which film influenced it, and was influenced by it, both in the U.K. and the U.S. There are many factors which led to this revival, and interestingly these factors were quite different in these respective countries. For example, the rise of the American counterculture in the 1960s was a conflation of many societal tensions, including women's liberation and the sexual revolution, civil rights, the Vietnam war protest movement, the environmental and back-to-the-earth movements, and of course drug use and, overlaying it all, the increasing social influence of popular music. As well, various works of literature were influential, both older classics and newer works. All of this had an impact upon increasing interest in the occult and the spread of Neo-Paganism. (Of course, the occult and Paganism are not the same thing, but there was and is enough overlap of these communities that they are generally seen as being interchangeable, at least to the mainstream observer). The U.K. did not have the same stake in the Vietnam situation, but the runaway popularity of the Beatles and their ability to directly influence the youth culture through their own spiritual exploration (after 1966 the Beatles were pretty much done with pop love songs) generated a similar sense of unrest among working class youth, and just as the British Wave of music had dramatic impact on the U.S., the energy of the American counterculture infused this unrest in the U.K.

As everyone knows, the behavior of many young people during this period of social unrest was seen as a very negative and corrupt trend in the culture, not to mention the widespread political shift. Once people started to really understand the atrocities and the rather hopeless situation in Vietnam, the general population followed the lead of the young in denouncing the American government's actions; but at the same time, there were so many other aspects of youth culture that were widely disapproved of, and the occult was part of that. Sex, drugs, rock and roll: this phrase had both very negative or very positive connotations depending which side of the fence you were on. I think this was a source of great ideological conflict for many people and I picked up on it as a kid (I was born in 1963). I mean, on the one hand, everyone thought that the wholesale slaughter of young men was a problem; but some people were still caught up in the 1950s and early 1960s- era

fear of Communism and the Cold War and were very protective of their burgeoning American dreams. Obviously, change was in the air, and the religious underpinnings of American culture were becoming unmoored by the large questions of morality that were blazing on American TV screens and newspapers. The coverage of the war was something no one could argue with: in those days, journalism was still a very straightforward and objective discipline. The images of Vietnam spoke for themselves. This really primed the canvas for the media to have a huge influence on the culture.

Those areas of social tension I mentioned earlier were and in many ways still are seen as "liberal" causes and interests. Which made the adoption of Pagan mindsets, such as earth-based spirituality and nature worship which are part of modern Wicca and other paths, seem like a natural outgrowth of the social zeitgeist. But interestingly, in the U.K., the factors which led to a Pagan revival were seen as "conservative" or right-wing sorts of issues. Ronald Hutton discusses this far more eloquently than I am doing in *Triumph of the Moon*. So not only were the roots of the revivals different, the types of people interested in them may well be very different. On a personal note, I have noted an interesting difference between American and British Pagans during my travels in the 1990s, that, in general, manifested in a much more male-dominated and dogmatic way of doing things than once sees in the more goddess-centered, eclectic paths in the U.S. The reason I mention all this is that I think we will find in our research that the popularity of certain occult film texts in both these nations will be to some extent a reflection of the occult communities.

But to offer a summary of the occult revival in film, for the purposes of our book we will probably try to determine a singular moment when it all began. Since we are mainly interested in popular culture, we will consider the influence of the works of experimental filmmaker Kenneth Anger in the 1950s. But the first example of occult cinema that had widespread and culture-changing impact was Roman Polanski's 1968 film *Rosemary's Baby*. In addition to its being a very artful and entertaining film, based on an equally artful novel by Ira Levin, there were some real-life occurrences that added to its aura of evil, and fuelled a widespread spirit of protest against all things occult, even as the film ushered in a palpable fascination with the occult. Namely, the murder of Polanski's pregnant wife, actress Sharon Tate, by the members of the Manson family. Not long after, Polanski was accused of raping a 13-year old girl, and has lived abroad ever since because if he ever enters the U.S. again he will be indicted on that crime. Because the news media today is so obsessed with crime and scandal, we might think such a story is all in a day's news. But at the time, the Manson family's killing spree was a horrific, almost surreal narrative that engendered fear of "murdering cults." Their association with the lyrics of various Beatles songs (scrawled on walls at crime scenes) helped convince the public that their aberrant behavior was somehow the result of the cultural climate.

I think also this is where the word "occult" became imbued with such negativity, because of course Manson's clan were referred to as a "cult" under the influence of this crazy, charismatic guy. I hate to suggest the American public is incapable of making the distinction between these two very different words, but I recall the word "cult" became a buzzword associated with anything "occult." What we now call "satanic panic" has its roots in the fear of the public that any sort of interest in the occult (evidenced by the Beatles lyrics that reflected their interest in Eastern spirituality and social protest) could potentially lead to involvement with murdering cults. A ridiculous leap in logic, perhaps. Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan

in 1966, and his spurious claim that he portrayed the demon who impregnated Rosemary in Polanski's film further reinforced the idea that fiction and real life were frighteningly linked. And the portrayal of the "old folks next door" as a coven of murdering witches was somehow both campy and horrifying. Suddenly your neighbors were capable of anything. By the time *The Exorcist* came out in 1973, portraying incidents of Black Mass desecrations and the demonic possession of a pre-pubescent girl, the American public was completely convinced that Satanism, Witchcraft and the occult were a dangerous trend stealing away the souls of our young people. I mean, little Regan had a Ouija Board! I am sure that was the reason for why I was encouraged to burn mine. Then Linda Blair went on to star in all these rather shocking made-for-TV films, which were great, but underscored again that this actress played nothing but troubled or evil characters.

It's also true that we saw a real dearth of occult film and TV in the 1980s, and I think that is directly due to the rise of the Moral Majority under Reagan. It was not until the early 1990s, when we saw the rise of the New Age and Neo-Paganism and Wicca, that we see a return to television of occult, Pagan and paranormal shows, like *The X-Files* or *Xena, Warrior Princess*. Let's face it, *Buffy* could not have existed without *Xena*.

TheoFantastique: Scholars like Christopher Partridge in the U.K. have commented on this and referred to it as a process of re-enchantment in the Western world. He says this has given rise to a "popular occulture" that surfaces not only in film and television, but also video games and music. Would you agree with this sentiment? And if so, how would we differentiate between esoterically-influenced forms of pop culture and a simple increased interest in general fantasy, myth, and fairytales?

Peg Aloï: I think Partridge was right to try and explore the shift in those terms. I also appreciate his use of the term "neo-Romanticism" over other descriptive terms because if you really look at it, the Romantics were so very instrumental in both periods of occult revival. Without the poetry and perhaps more importantly, the ideology of the Romantics, which of course was rooted in a desire to revive the imagery of classical mythology and the dream of the pastoral life, Neo-Paganism would never have happened. Some theorists also credit the Romantics with influencing not only the occult revival but the entire 1960s cultural shift. Camille Paglia wrote an essay exploring various aspects of this, including the idea of rock music and the live concert experience as an expression of Dionysian impulses. We had a movement in the 1980s called "New Romanticism" which was mainly about music and fashion...and to some extent a renewal of interest in Romantic poetry and the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, for example. Partridge acknowledges the influence of various works of fiction on renewed interest in fantasy and fairy tales but also in Pagan worldviews and alternatives to mainstream spirituality, in particular Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and, more recently, Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series. Then there was the very popular artwork throughout the late '70s and '80s of Brian Froud, Boris Vallejo, Sulamith Wulfin, Susan Seddon-Boulet and others. That kind of art is still very popular with lots of new artists joining the ranks, although it seems to me it is getting more and more twee, maybe because it's all aimed at little girls now. I don't think there necessarily was or is a general increased interest in fairy tales that has fed the trend in literature and art; I think a few writers and artists whose personal visions have led them to produce work concerned with these worlds is what has fuelled that revival of interest. And I think perhaps their interests are more likely to have originated in esoteric interests, at least Pratchett's.

I think it's very complex and difficult to trace what influenced what, because clearly there is a lot of overlap. I mean, I personally think video games that are very fantasy-oriented these days have their basis in role-playing games which started in the late 1970s with Dungeons and Dragons, which of course was directly influenced by Tolkien's worlds and lexicon. To be honest, I think that the reach of popular culture has become so pervasive and in a way insidious, in that many of us may have no idea where an idea or image or cultural trend or phrase first emerged. This makes it hard on artists because often their ideas or work is imitated and then it is the imitation that gets noticed more widely than the original. This has certainly been true in terms of Pagan literature and art. For years now I have abhorred the trend in the Pagan community to value mediocrity, to choose the cheap imitation over the original. Maybe we have the mainstreaming of Paganism to thank for this. And people also choose the simple over the complex, the quick fix over the thoughtful solution. Someone can become a Witch overnight, no need to engage in training or study, We certainly have Llewellyn Publishing to thank, or blame, for this. That's not to say all their books are bad, or their practices are questionable, they simply gave the public what it wanted.

Something else that intrigues me about the idea of "occulture" is the way in which some entities have co-opted the imagery or message of the occult or Paganism in order to subvert its actual ideology. I have noticed a really disturbing trend in late night television commercials for the army, though: they have these really well-produced, special-effects laden ads that make military maneuvers look exactly like role-playing games, and seem to be suggesting that, if you are good at video games, you'd be good at using this equipment. But it seems really odd to me to suggest that the sort of teenager who would be interested in fantasy video games (and who this sort of ad is clearly aimed at) would be someone inclined to join the army. Now with all the young men and women at risk in the Iraq war, I wonder if this sort of advertising campaign has been successful in reaching disaffected young people. The majority of soldiers killed have been very young and from very small towns. Okay, I am starting to think I don't want to take this too much further but readers can draw their own conclusions.

TheoFantastique: There has been a close connection between speculative fiction and Paganism for some time, from interest in the writings of H. P. Lovecraft to Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange World* informing the mythos of the Church of All Worlds. Why do you think there is such a strong connection between Paganism and speculative fiction in its various forms?

Peg Aloï: As I understand it, speculative fiction, is different from science fiction in that it posits a possible and plausible future based on the way things are now and the way things seem to be going. So in science fiction, it's all about space travel or technology, but in speculative fiction you see a lot of interesting ideas having to do with things like ecology, biology, evolution, politics, gender and sexuality, societal structure, drugs, etc. Sometimes this kind of fiction posits a very positive vision, as with the Heinlein book, and sometimes a negative one (like Ursula LeGuin's *The Word for World is Forest*). Speculative fiction often functions as a cautionary tale, and usually offers a hopeful vision, because it can point out the mistakes made along the way and perhaps inspire ways to avoid an undesirable future. At its heart, the Pagan revival is a form of speculative fiction. Modern Pagans look at the world as it is and want to change it. They (we) see a lack of connection to nature, resulting in a range of problems from pollution to obesity. We see a dearth of compassion, leading to a loss of civility and cultural awareness. We see the absence of the childlike sense of wonder all humans need to access from time to time, which is

making us all cynical and depressed. We see a failure to challenge and engage our children in traditional ways, which is making our children into spoiled, underachieving, entitled little zombies. We see an obsession with technology that is making us lose touch with what it means to be human.

Paganism means rejecting the world as it is, and sometimes you find Pagans who try their best to live in a sort of fantasy world. They might spend too much time involved with sub-cultural communities or role-playing games or escape into literature or the Internet. To some extent this kind of activity can help perpetuate the popular stereotype that Pagans are anti-social or geeky or whatever. But most Pagans want to effect change in ways that will effectively allow them to exist in the world as it is, but to improve the quality of life and in some cases, effect change in the culture. To do this they look to "the old ways" and to ideas, images, stories and myths of the past, and integrate this into contemporary living, using whatever technology and products are available. And now you see a real integration of different kinds of subcultures that are engaging with Paganism. It is impossible to gauge the importance or the Internet in spreading awareness and information, but of course it also levels the playing field and perhaps makes Paganism less unique or special. And of course some "old school" Pagans would rather have the community remain insular and underground, but there is no turning back now. I do think modern Pagans should give some thought to how such changes are affecting our spirituality and social interaction. The only way to get any perspective on this kind of thing is to remove yourself from it for a while. Which is why I like to attend Pagan gatherings outdoors where you can remove yourself from the online milieu and see how this movement really is a living one.

TheoFantastique: What do you think the future of our media culture holds for the continued expression of esotericism in cinema?

Peg Aloï: It's been interesting to see the response to esoteric texts aimed at children. The Harry Potter franchise has been hugely popular and also has generated a lot of rage. People ban the books and burn them and actually think that the whole Hogwarts model is endangering our children by introducing them to Witchcraft. Some protest literature even tries (ineffectually, in my opinion) to compare the Hogwarts style of magic to Wicca, which it has nothing to do with, of course, but the kind of people who want to ban a series of books that actually get kids reading again are the kind of people who want as accessible a target as possible, and Wiccans are the new Satanists, really, aren't they? There is a growing atmosphere of protest aimed at the new film *The Golden Compass* (based on the first book in Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*) have garnered accusations of promoting atheism and being anti-Catholic. I did not read the books but having seen the movie I can't understand where these accusations come from at all!

I have also heard that the studio funding for the sequel to *The Wicker Man* being filmed by Robin Hardy, *Cowboys for Christ*, is being held up because some of the financial backers are fundamentalist Christians offended by the title. It seems unlikely there will a change anytime soon in this kind of public scrutiny. I won't get into the whole political situation we're in now and how there is really a problem with people recognizing the appropriate separation of church and state. But clearly the climate of indignation and panic-mongering about the future of our children goes hand-in-hand with the very pervasive effort to turn this into a Christian, right-wing nation. It's really feeling like the 1980s all over again, where the public outcry against the occult really did lead to an avoidance of occult topics in popular media. The only difference between how things are now and the more visible kinds of protest one saw during the era of satanic panic in the 1980s, is that the protest is

now taking place among well-organized groups on the Internet, which is of course where many people believe all the most significant cultural discourse is taking place (she said/typed, in the interview which will appear on a popular esoteric blog).

TheoFantastique: You've already alluded to this, but does Paganism and esotericism in pop culture represent a continuing area of promising possibilities for researchers from a variety of disciplines?

Peg Aloï: Oh, absolutely. We've been seeing a surge in this for some time now. Perhaps the one place this really caught fire was within Buffy studies. The first international Buffy conference in England represented an astonishing array of disciplines. That was where I met Hannah. There were talks on Buffy that explored this TV show from very diverse contexts, including history, media, literature, psychology, ethnomusicology, queer studies, anthropology, etc. It was amazing. I think that has really helped set the tone for academic conferences that deal with Pagan-oriented topics as well, and in fact a lot of the same scholars who are into Buffy are also involved in Paganism studies. Hannah and I have co-organized two conferences with the Department of Folklore and Mythology at Harvard, the first one on Witchcraft and Paganism in Contemporary Media, and the second on Paganism, Folklore and Popular Culture. These were both very successful and dynamic, and the most exciting part was the wide variety of disciplines represented, even for the media conference.

One thing that has changed a lot since the 1980s is that now it is permissible to approach topics in Paganism and the occult as someone who is both a scholar and a practitioner. It used to be sort of controversial to be "out" as a Pagan if you were studying Paganism; partly because being an ethnographer usually connotes the image of an outsider. When Tanya Lührman's book came out (*Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*) people were conflicted; it was a great book, very sensitive and thorough and insightful, but she posed an interested seeker to gain access to rituals and private Pagan events. I think that made some Pagan scholars uncomfortable and in some cases stymied their efforts to do research within the Pagan community. I also think that academics in the 1980s risked being seen as "weirdos" or being targeted with discrimination in the workplace if they came out as Pagan, but there is so much more awareness now of what contemporary Paganism is, it is less of a problem. This new trend of research being conducted by believers and practitioners is definitely an exciting trend, but a problematic one, too. Just as you find non-academic Pagans who are very dogmatic or inflexible in their beliefs, some academics are the same way, and in some cases may unwittingly or even intentionally imbue their work with aspects of their own beliefs or traditions. It is obviously crucial to remain as objective as one can if one is to maintain an academic perspective. This is the new challenge for Pagan and occult academics: objectivity fuelled by study of the many diverse traditions and expressions of esoteric beliefs and culture.

TheoFantastique: Peg, thanks again for sharing with us. I look forward to hearing more about your book as it nears completion. Please keep in touch so that we can promote the book when it becomes available.

Peg Aloï: It has been my pleasure! Thanks again for your interest and support. (Peg Aloï is a witch and works closely with Witches VOX reviewing films or TV shows. With thanks to TheoFantastique, John Morehead, and Peg Aloï: <http://thefantastique.blogspot.com/2007/12/peg-aloi-cinema-and-occult-revival.html>)

What is the PFI? Morgana, November 2007

The Pagan Federation has been in continuous existence since 1971 and has published its journal Pagan Dawn, and its previous incarnation as The Wiccan, since 1969. Over this time it has grown to have a readership of more than 4.000 quarterly. These facts make the Pagan Federation one of the largest and oldest organisations of its type in Europe.

It was set up originally as primarily a campaigning organisation: one that would actively fight the ignorance and negative attitudes towards Paganism which were at large in the country (UK) then and which obviously still exist in various forms today. To help campaigning, it was essential to create a network of like-minded people who shared common aims. The second major focus of the PF therefore, was to put Pagans in touch with each other, so that they could share views and meet and talk. A nationwide network, now run by over 40 Regional Coordinators and numerous local organisers, has been put in the place so that members can meet and work together for the benefit of Paganism in general.

These two functions are still paramount today but have evolved as times have changed. It might still not be easy to "come out" as a Pagan now, but it was almost impossible a few decades ago. This change in perception, which the PF has helped cause, has enabled us to make considerable strides toward a more proactive and visible celebration of Paganism.

Recent history

Pagan Federation International was originally set up to serve the overseas members of the PF. In the pre-internet days it was so-called "pen-pal" organisation. About 1996 when email began the organisation changed. Tony Kemp a PF member living in France started coordinating the various countries where the PF members lived. Basically NL, Belgium, France & Germany.

By 1999 – PFI was a fact, but still a district of the British organisation. (Also when I became IC) About 2003 beginning to be clear that the whole of the PF should become PFI but this didn't materialise. Instead the PFI moved towards greater autonomy. This culminated in the establishment of a Foundation in 2006. In July 2006 the Council of the PF approved the "affiliated status" of PFI and from that moment became a separate organisation.

What are the changes? Function of the Foundation:

- To promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, education. This also includes anti-defamation work; one of the grassroots functions of the PF. PFI is also a member of ESITIS (The European Society for Intercultural Theology and Inter-religious Studies). Regular conferences dealing with religious themes. Recently for example I was at the RIPE conference in Rome. "Religious Pluralism".

- Organising and coordinating projects of an International character. (EU, Council of Europe, UN etc) = NGO advisory body. For example EYID 2008. Also working with Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Human rights issues rising from religious violence, gay rights and women's rights. Also monitoring Pagan fundamentalism (extreme right views, ethno-nationalism)

- Working with other human rights organisations (UNITED in NL – anti-racism etc)

- Dealing with international affairs – also from non-members – pagans in general. More social aspects, legal position of pagans. Advisory task. We can't give legal support, but can give information about similar cases for example in the UK & USA, where pagans have been involved in court cases. .
- Contact with the Press/Media where necessary. PFI Nations will handle local press. .
- To coordinate the activities of the PFI Nations, including creating new PFI's and the appointment and coaching of new NC's.
- Coordinate activities regarding the PFI Forum and other Internet communication including news sites .
- Pagan World – magazine of the PFI. For and by the members. .
- Communication with the PF British Isles. Has an advisory seat for foreign affairs on the PF Council, held twice a year.
- Issuing Annual Reports.
- Organising, and helping PFI nations with, conferences, workshops etc.
- Any other business an NGO is required to do by law.

PFI Nations

These are the working parties of the Trust. At the moment these are PFI Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Scandinavia, South America, Spain, Turkey, USA, World

They are in effect local associations and have members. (Members can also be described as being "Affiliated members of the PF")

Each local PFI Nation is managed by a National Coordinator = NC.

Functions of the NC: They are responsible for:

- The administration of the members
- Financial management. Reports to be sent to the TRUST every quarter. Details of budgets, membership fees etc still have to be worked out.
- They can create a PFI Team to delegate jobs such as webmaster, events manager, newsletter editor, local organisers, moderator for the PFI Forum, interfaith officer

Day-to-day business of a PFI nation:

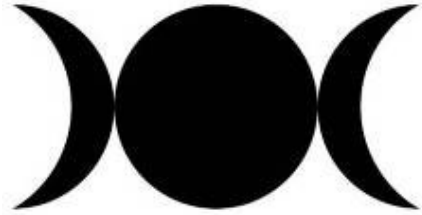
This can vary immensely from country to country. Some are more focussed on networking (PFI NL) whilst others are more concerned with Pagan Rights (PFI SA) and education (PFI Mexico) Much depends on the personal interest of the NC and the PFI team.

See www.paganfederation.org

Morgana

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Bericht über den Workshop „Dianic Wicca“ am 25. August 2007 in Warschau



Am Samstag, dem 25. August 2007 fand in Warschau der Workshop „Dianic Wicca“ statt. Er wurde von Lamia Tesenisis und Yoda geleitet, die Gäste der PFI waren.

Lamia Tesenisis begann den Workshop mit einem Vortrag über die dianische Tradition im Allgemeinen und verglich sie dann mit anderen Wicca Traditionen. Eingewebt in diesen Vortrag waren immer wieder heidnische und Wicca Lieder, die gemeinsam gesungen wurden.

Nach dem Vortrag und einer kurzen Pause bildeten sich für die „sharing circles“ jeweils eine Frauen- und eine Männergruppe. Die Frauen und Männer hatten hier die Möglichkeit, sich in einem Schutzraum näher zu kommen und sich zu öffnen. Der Frauenkreis wurde von Lamia Tesenisis und der Männerkreis von Yoda, Lamias Partner geleitet. Die Arbeit in den getrennten Gruppen ermöglichte es allen Teilnehmern und Teilnehmerinnen, sich emotional auf einander einzulassen und den Schutz der Gruppe zu spüren.

Gemeinsam wurden danach die Vorbereitungen für das Ritual am Abend getroffen.

Nach dem Abendessen gingen wir um 7:30 in ein Vollmondritual zu Ehren der dreifachen Göttin. Das Ritual dauerte ca. 2 Stunden und beeindruckte viele der Teilnehmenden.

Es muss hier betont werden, dass der gesamte Workshop in einer Atmosphäre des gegenseitigen Respekts für die unterschiedlichen Traditionen verlief, obgleich hier viele unterschiedliche heidnische Richtungen vertreten waren, die teils wenig mit Wicca und besonders mit dem dianischen Pfad gemein haben. Diese Stimmung wurde sehr gut von Yoda beschrieben, der erzählte, dass er sich am Anfang des Workshops nicht sicher war, ob sich die Menschen hier öffnen und gleichzeitig ihre [spirituelle] Verschiedenheit akzeptieren könnten. Doch nach dem Männerkreis fühle er sich als Teil einer Familie.

Diese Qualität war besonders am Ende des Workshops zu spüren. Nicht ein einziger Teilnehmer war in Eile sich zu verabschieden. Alle standen noch sehr lange



zusammen und sprachen miteinander, und selbst danach führten sie dies noch in kleineren Gruppen in Restaurants fort.

Ich möchte mich hier bei Lamia Tesenisis und Yoda bedanken, die einen hervorragenden Workshop professionell leiteten, weiterhin bei Boann und Dagda, die die Idee zu einem Workshop hatten, diesen organisierten und ihre Freunde Lamia Tesenisis und Yoda einluden, die uns so viel Freude bereiteten. Ebenso möchte ich mich bei Enenna bedanken für ihre Hilfe bei den Vorbereitungen und für ihre Übersetzungen, so dass eine große Barriere zwischen Menschen, nämlich die der Sprache, überwunden werden konnte und auch bei Czeski, der im Männerkreis die Übersetzung übernahm.

Wir konnten offen miteinander reden, ohne Angst zu haben, missverstanden zu werden. Ich möchte mich deshalb für diese großartige Atmosphäre auch bei allen teilnehmen und Teilnehmerinnen bedanken und hoffe, dass solche Veranstaltungen regelmäßig stattfinden werden.

Im Rahmen des Workshops überreichte uns Boann Geschenke der "Pagan Community" für die polnische PFI. Die Geschenke sind wunderschön geschnitzte Gegenstände aus Holz: Athame, Kelch, Wasserschale und Pentakel. Wir danken euch von ganzem Herzen. Die Gegenstände werden wir in Ritualen benutzen, die wir von Seiten der polnischen PFI ausrichten werden.

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PFI Konferenz 2008 – Ein Erfahrungsbericht

Vor zwei Monaten wusste ich noch nicht einmal, wer oder was die PFI war. Aus reiner Neugier habe ich mich damals angemeldet für das Wochenende in Schwerte: ich wollte gerne mehr erfahren über die „Szene“ hier in Europa und besonders in Deutschland; wollte Leute kennen- und viel Neues lernen – besonders über mich. Ich komme ursprünglich aus der amerikanischen Wicca-Szene; seit meiner Scheidung vor fast neun Jahren war ich nicht nur ohne Coven, sondern auch ohne das Bedürfnis danach. Vor zwei Monaten fand ich durch Zufall – wie auch sonst? – zum Sternenkreis-Forum und darüber zur PFI, unter anderem.

Soviel zu dem Background, mit dem ich dorthin ging. Der Samstag begann mit einem wunderschönen Eröffnungsritual, an dem auch fast alle teilnehmen (die nicht noch im Stau standen...). Dank Vicky Gabriel und William Anderson hatte ich sehr schnell das Gefühl, nicht in einer Jugendherberge, sondern eher am Rand einer mit Licht und Vogelstimmen erfüllten Lichtung zu stehen. Ein viel versprechender Anfang.

Wir waren um die 65 Personen, die Hälfte davon übernachtete auch vor Ort. Abgesehen von einigen organisatorischen Problemen (z.B. musste frau pünktlich beim Essen sein, sonst musste sie sich in der Küche für Nachschlag anstellen) oder sehr kurzfristigen Planänderungen (Musik? Äh nein... wir tanzen jetzt...), war das Wochenende harmonisch, konstruktiv, und vor allen Dingen voller positiver Menschen und Eindrücke.

Nach dem Eröffnungsritual gab es drei verschiedene Workshops: Astrologie, Tarot, und Übergangsrituale für Eltern. Ich besuchte den Tarot-Workshop von Ina Cüsters-van Bergen, in dem sie uns mit einigen grundlegenden Aspekten der Tarot-Karten vertraut machte, die deren Bedeutung zugrunde liegen. Ihre detaillierte Analyse der Karten 0 und 1 (Der Narr und der Magier) im Rider-Whaite und im Thoth Deck war als Ansporn gedacht, uns selbst mit diesen Aspekten zu beschäftigen, die die divinatorische Aussage der Karten symbolisch unterlegen und vertiefen.

Während des Mittagessens (warum, haben mich meine Kinder schon seit Jahren gefragt, gibt es bei den Naturfreunden am ersten Tag immer Spaghetti? Ich weiß es wirklich nicht...) hatten wir dann Gelegenheit, immer noch „unter uns“ neue Kontakte zu knüpfen und alte zu vertiefen. Die Mittagspause war für meinen Geschmack allerdings etwas sehr lang, denn es ging erst um 15 Uhr weiter. Aber ich kannte ja auch noch nicht so viele Leute... Jedenfalls war ausgiebig Zeit, sich die diversen Angebote der Händler, Hand- und Kunstwerker anzuschauen, in Büchern zu blättern, Schmuck zu begutachten, sich über Naturkosmetik zu informieren, selbstgemachte Marmelade zu probieren, oder mit Gardenstone über seine Bücher zu sprechen. Ich war hauptsächlich mit den Büchern beschäftigt, muss ich zugeben.

Der angekündigte Workshop zum Thema „Klangreisen“ musste leider ausfallen; stattdessen habe ich von Sandra einige Grundsritte im „Tribal Dance“ lernen dürfen, einer Mischung diverser Tanzstile auf Basis des orientalischen Bauchtanzes, aber in der Gruppe getanzt. Daran schloss sich die Vorstellung des „Wicca-First Steps on the Path“-Programmes von Morgana und Saddle an. Wer die Personen nicht kennt: Morgana ist die Internationale Koordinatorin der PFI und

Saddie der Kontaktmann für PFI in Ungarn. Er betreut auch das Forum der PFI, aber dazu später mehr.

Unter den Teilnehmern fanden sich sowohl langjährige Wicca als auch neue und neu-gierige. Allen gemein war schon ein gutes Grundwissen in der Thematik, so dass Morgana und Saddie sich darauf konzentrieren konnten, mehr über ihre Arbeit in der PFI zu erzählen. Am nächsten Tag wollten wir dann mehr in die Praxis gehen. Parallel dazu fanden natürlich noch andere Workshops statt: wir konnten uns informieren über Nehalennia - Die Rückkehr einer Göttin, und die Männer unter (und in) uns konnten etwas über Visionssuche lernen. Aber ich konnte ja nicht überall sein. Nach dem Abendessen war Pagan Party angesagt, mit Trommeln und allem, was so dazugehört.

Der Sonntag kam viel zu früh, und ich fast zu spät zum Frühstück. Also erstmal Brötchen holen gehen. Eigentlich wollte ich dann zu Morgana zu Teil 2 des Workshops, aber Diane war da und forderte mich auf, mitzukommen zu Paul und der Diskussionsrunde. Recht hatte sie, das war wirklich sehr sehr gut. Eine super moderierte „Gesprächsrunde um heraus zu finden was Heidentum/Paganismus ist, statt was es alles nicht ist.“ Immer wieder spannend zu sehen, wie gut wir uns selbst nicht einig werden können! Wir waren maximal 20 Personen mit ebenso vielen Meinungen, aber das wichtige dabei war – wir haben uns alle gut verstanden und akzeptiert. Das lässt hoffen! Allein das Thema „Definition“ bzw. „was trage ich statt „keine“ ein in einem Formular, in dem nach meiner Religion gefragt wird“ könnte Bücher füllen. Am Schluss hatte aber, so mein Eindruck, jede/r für sich seine eigene Definition gefunden und mitgenommen. Und viel über die Gedanken der anderen Teilnehmer erfahren!

Danach ging ich noch die letzte Stunde von Morgana und Saddie's Workshop; heute war der praktische Teil angesagt, erste Schritte in Wicca: die Jahreszeiten und ihre Bedeutung in unserem Alltag und unserem eigenen Lebenskreis. Die Stunde schloss mit einer von Saddie geführten Meditation zu unseren eigenen Symbolschlüsseln, die jeder mit nach Hause nehmen konnte.

Mahlzeit – Vegetarier mussten sich mit Pommes zufrieden geben, für alle anderen gab's Hähnchen. Am Abend vorher hatten wir schon kurz abgestimmt, das Programm am Sonntag etwas zu straffen, daher ging es schon kurz darauf weiter mit den letzten Workshops. Ina wiederholte aufgrund großer Nachfrage ihren Tarot WS und Vicky und William führten uns unter der Überschrift „Heilung in Bewegung finden“ ein in Bewegungsrituale und was sie in uns bewegen können. Und was diese zwei Stunden in mir bewegt haben, das kann ich nicht in Worte fassen... Außer mit denen, die ich in unserer abschließenden Runde nach dem Tanz sprach: Jetzt weiß ich, warum ich hier war.

Das Abschlussritual war von feierlicher Schönheit. Ganz der Jahreszeit gemäß luden wir Ostara ein, mit uns zu feiern, und sie schenkte uns nicht nur bunte Eier, die wir gegenseitig mit unseren Wünschen versahen und weiterverschenkten, sondern auch Ihren Segen auf dem Weg in das neue Jahr. Es war ein wunderbares Ende zu einer Veranstaltung, die noch lange in mir nachklingen wird.

Es fiel mir schwer, Abschied zu nehmen von den Menschen, die mich an diesem Wochenende begleitet hatten. Ich habe mich zu Hause gefühlt dort in diesem Naturfreundehaus, wie ich es noch selten irgendwo getan hatte. Aber ich trage die Erinnerung in mir und lebe sie jeden Tag, den ich auf neuen, alten Pfaden wandle. Und freue mich auf ein Wiedersehen – let the circle be open but never be broken...

Merry meet,
Petra

Oude Verhalen

Men noemt de hedendaagse Wicca de 'oude religie'. Maar dan denk ik bij mij zelf: hoe dachten ze vroeger over magie? Als heks ben ik op zoek naar verwijzingen in oude literatuur naar magie, hekserij. Ik lees zeer graag romans uit 'vervlogen tijden'.

Iedereen kent wel Macbeth van Shakespeare, waarin er drie heksen voorkomen. Of de magie in *A Midsummer's Night dream*, van dezelfde auteur. Eerlijk gezegd, ik ben geen fan van Shakespeare. Geef mij maar een verhaal van Jane Austen of een van de Brontë zusjes. Maar omdat ik andere 'oude' auteurs hun verhalen ook wel eens wil lezen, heb ik mij een boek aangeschaft van Elisabeth Gaskell, 'Cranford'. Op zich geen fantastisch verhaal, met geesten à la *Wuthering Heights* of liefde op z'n *Pride and Prejudice*. (om de populaire verhalen van die schrijfsters maar op te noemen)

Neen een gewoon verhaal, dat opgebouwd is uit kleine verhaalstukjes die met elkaar verbonden zijn. Na de eerste doorworsteling van de eerste hoofdstukken wordt het wel een beetje leuker om te lezen. Op een bepaald ogenblik staat het dorpje waar het verhaal zich afspeelt in rep en roer want er komt een magiër naar het dorpje om zijn toverkunsten te laten zien. In deze tijd zou men het kunnen hebben over een goochelaar waar amper 5 man naar komt zien. In die tijd was het 'het evenement' van het jaar.

Nog altijd niet superinteressant voor mij tot er in dat hoofdstuk wordt gesproken over 'de heks van Endor'. Een bepaald personage uit het boek zoekt naar wetenschappelijke verklaringen voor tovenarij en volgens haar zou je zelfs de heks van Endor en haar toverkunsten wetenschappelijk kunnen verklaren.

In dat hoofdstuk wordt door dat personage tovenarij en magie afgedaan als een kwestie van het alfabet. (...conjuring and witchcraft is a mere affair of the alphabet)

Mijn eerste gedachte ging naar een Star Wars film, die zich op een maan van Endor afspeelde, maar gezien het tijdstip waarin dat boek is gepubliceerd voor de eerste maal (1853), was dat volledig onmogelijk.

Dus, heb ik de moderne middelen er maar bij gehaald en het internet geraadpleegd.

De heks van Endor komt voor in de bijbel. Ik laat het aan jullie over om zelf het verhaal op internet op te snorren. Ik weet niet of het over diezelfde heks gaat als er in dat verhaal werd verteld, maar ik vond het een leuke ontdekking dat je in een voor onze tijd ietwat saai verhaal een verwijzing krijgt naar hekserij.

Mijn voorliefde voor Engelse auteurs mocht me eigenlijk niet in de weg staan om eens een boek te lezen met ridderverhalen, geschreven in het middelnederlands. In dat boek wordt een stuk uit het verhaal van Floris ende Blancefloer (13de E) verteld. Voor degenen die niet met het verhaal bekend zijn: het is een liefdesverhaal en de twee mogen van de ouders van de een niet verliefd zijn op elkaar. Het meisje komt terecht in Babyloniën en tegen de jongen zeggen de ouders dat ze gestoven is. Men maakt zelfs een praalgraf. Het verhaal, in dichtvorm en niet al te makkelijk te lezen, geeft een hele beschrijving van de omgeving waar het graf staat, de natuur die er rond staat en de rijkdom waarmee het is bezet.

Enkele van de stenen waarmee het bezet is:

Sofieren, jagonten, calcedoniën, mirauden, bericolen, sardonen, jaspes, crisolten, diamanten, ametisten, topazen en acanten.

In het hedendaags nederlands: saffieren, robijnen, een soort topazen, smaragden, berillen, sardonixen, jaspis, chrysoliet en agaten.

Volgens het verhaal zijn aan die stenen bijzondere eigenschappen aan verbonden, welke bijzondere eigenschappen, dat staat niet vermeld. Die kan je nu terugvinden in de hedendaagse literatuur over hekserij, wicca, (edel)stenen,...

Wanneer de wind uit het Oosten waait...
Sfeerverslag van de derde Ostara-viering van de Werkgroep Traditie
Door Torec van Everborghe

We schrijven zaterdag 29 Lente in het jaar Onzes Heren 2008. Een vroege ochtendzon glanzedanst in de ontelbare dauwdruppels op een verlaten open bosplek ergens in de Noorderkempen. Op het eerste zicht lijkt er niks speciaals aan de hand; alleen maar het wonder der Natuur dat zich elke dag opnieuw voltrekt. Maar wie goed kijkt, bemerkt dat her en der blauw- en roodgekleurde eieren in het weidegras verscholen liggen... . Een sliert opgewonden kinderen staat popelend aan de ingang van de wei, maar niemand durft blijkbaar het veld te betreden. Het lijkt alsof er gewacht wordt op één of ander geheimzinnig teken of gebaar van één van de ouders. “Het zijn de klokken van Rome geweest!”, weet een kleine blonde krullebol. “Maar neen gij!” lacht Gwennevier, vol medelijden met de onwetendheid van het jongetje. “Het was de paashaas, want ik zag nog net zijn witte wolkstaart!”. “Ja...” fluisterde het oudere zusje van de krullebol, wiens koelblauwe ogen straalden als vensters op de hemel. “Het is inderdaad de Oosterhaas geweest; het lievelingsdier van Ostara, de Lentegodin”. “Ze is dan toch gekomen, ondanks het winterweer dat werd voorspeld... .”, grijnst één van de sibbevaders tussen zijn tanden.



Wanneer Alwin de poorten van de Oosterwei opent, barst er een jubelzang los onder de jongeren die de wei opjoelen. Het verlossende sein is gegeven; de jeugd wordt losgelaten. Het is de ongebreidelde levenskracht zelve die onstuitbaar en onweerstaanbaar het landschap instuift en haar vervult met jeugdig geluk. De meisjes gaan op zoek naar blauwe eieren, de jongens naar rode: dat was de afspraak die eeuwen geleden werd gemaakt. De jongens zijn snel en gedreven; de meisjes geduldig en volhardend. Maar stiekem hoopt iedereen om dat ene



mysterieuze witte ei dat de Oosterhaas ergens had achtergelaten, te vinden, dan wel te krijgen Al gauw zijn alle mandjes rood of blauw gekleurd. Ostara is gul dit jaar; de mama's en papa's ook... . De jonge krullebol toont apetrots het witte ei dat hij en niemand anders had weten te bemachtigen en hij schenkt het ootmoedig aan zijn oudere zusje, niet ten volle beseffend welke diepere lading dit gebaar precies dekt. De sibbenoudsten weten het wel. Ze knielen, wanneer ze het zien, neder voor het verbaasde meisje. Ze

buigen spontaan het hoofd en omhangen haar met de Mantel van Ostara. “Wees welkom in ons midden, jonge Godin.”, lacht iedereen haar toe. “Laat je licht over ons schijnen, Ostara-voor-één-dag!” Een stoere jager heeft arglistig de meeste rode eieren weten te vinden en wordt tot Oosterkoning gekroond en gezegend door de jonge Godin. Als een kleine Arthur die de steen had weten te bedwingen, krijgt hij een echt ridderzwaard omgord. Er wordt gefluisterd dat het eeuwen geleden nog gebruikt was om de Slag der Gulden Sporen te winnen... . Een

jonkvrouw met haren zo blond als het jonge tarwe en een mand dat uitpuilt van de blauwe eieren, kijkt zegezekeer voor zich uit. Zij weet dat niemand haar zal verslaan dit jaar. Haar zusje was de voorbije jaren al de beste geweest en nu is het



haar beurt om de eer van de sibbe hoog te houden. Ze stamt uit een geslacht van walkuren en prinsessen en dat zie je aan haar... . Ook zij wordt gekroond en door de jonge Godin gezegend.

Na deze heugelijke gebeurtenissen is het moment aangebroken om de innerlijke mens te sterken met een eenvoudig maar overheerlijk Oostermaal. Brood, kaas, eieren en zelf gebakken taart vormen de ingrediënten voor een miniversie van Brueghels Boerenbruiloft. Op de achtergrond weerklinken de tonen van gitaar en treksak. Een groepje getalenteerde volksmeiden vullen de lentelucht met vrolijke deuntjes en stoute liedekyns. Wanneer het laatste stukje taart een veilige thuishaven heeft gevonden en de kinderen betoverd zijn door een lentesprookje dat werd verteld door een echt wit wief, wordt de eetzaal toneel van een bevreemdend schouwspel. De Traditie-sibben zetten zich aan het werk om hun jaarlijks oosterkruis – het heidense origineel waarop de christelijke palmpasen zich inspireerde – in elkaar te knutselen en te versieren. Jong en oud gaat naarstig aan de slag met lintjes, eieren, bloemen, groensel en het onontbeerlijke broodhaantje. Zij leveren de bouwstenen voor deze eeuwig jonge kosmische lenteboom. Intussen werken enkele sibbevaders aan een levensgroot oosterkruis dat wordt opgericht in het midden van een sacrale cirkel. Straks zal deze boom in vuur en vlam komen te staan tijdens het oosterritueel.

Meer en meer sibben vervoegen zich intussen bij de muzikanten. Er wordt verzamelen geblazen voor een inspirerende oosterkruisprocessie door bossen en langs beemden. Goedgemutst vertrekt de lange heidense stoet oostwaarts. Onderweg klinken vrolijke gezangen en wordt de ontluikende levenskracht in de Natuur en al wat leeft, lachend begroet. Doorheen het gebladerte vangt de zon haar beeld op in de mooie gewaden van de Oosterkoning en -koningin.



Verkwikt door deze zegetocht arriveert het gezelschap terug aan de open plaats. De linten van het grote oosterkruis wapperen fier in de wind en nodigen alle sibben uit om in de cirkel plaats te nemen. Woorden van dankzegging en lentetover worden uitgesproken door een sibbemoeder. Oosterkoning en zijn koningin offeren gouden mede aan de voet van van het oosterkruis, onder goedkeurend oog van Fjalar, de vader aller broodhanen die toekijkt vanuit het Walhalla. Vanuit alle windstreken komen ze

toegestroomd; de ritualisten met het ordenende vuur. Opgaan in vlammen moet het oosterkruis! Geen verterend vuur, geen vernietiging, maar pure evenwicht zoekende energieoverdracht van beneden naar boven en terug. De kinderen staren gefascineerd naar de dansende vlammen. Liederen weerklinken van merels en vinken....

Het is nu 'officieel' Lente en een heidens volksfeest barst los! Rauwe eieren vliegen door de lucht en treffen onder meer de Traditievoorzitter tweemaal vol in het aangezicht tot groot jolijt van het ganse gezelschap. Klanken van schalmei, trekzak en gitaar vullen de lucht en roepen op tot jubelzang. Spontaan vormen zich dansende paren en de bourrees, jigs en polka's wisselen mekaar af en leiden tot een haast extatische eenwording ...vuur... muziek ... dans... ritme... rook ... leven ... orde Echo's weerklinken van de oeroude heksensabbat.



Uren later zinkt de zon tergend langzaam achter de einder. Rond het sluimerende vuur zitten nog steeds een aantal sibbenoudsten op wie tijd en ruimte geen vat lijken te hebben. De muziek wordt slepender, de liederen melancholischer, tot ze uiteindelijk wegdeemsteren tussen de asse... om opnieuw te laaien in de harten van de deelnemers.

We schrijven zaterdagavond 29 Lente. Het was een heerlijke oosterdag in de cyclus van de Eeuwige Wederkeer van Ostara...

Tot in de Bloei maand voor het feest van de blye Meie!
Den Aas Getrouw!

Gli orizzonti di una comunità pagana
Dall'intervento di Cronos del dicembre 2005 presso la sala caffè
concerto di Modena

Inizio subito da uno degli orizzonti che delimitano il fronte di una comunità pagana, benchè non sia il principale, cioè che il paganesimo non è anticristiano. Diciamo questo soprattutto a fronte degli ultimi eventi che sono accaduti e che vedono la chiesa, come è avvenuto di recente a Modena, estremamente infastidita dalle conferenze che ho tenuto come rappresentante della Pagan Federation International alla Sala Caffè Concerto, ospiti dell'Associazione Culturale "La Rose Noire". Tanto infastidita da coinvolgere nella vicenda anche esponenti politici e cercando di non far svolgere l'evento che prevedeva il nostro, cioè questo intervento e subito dopo un concerto di musica folk.

E' per questo che mi preme sottolineare che il neopaganesimo non è anticristiano, nè tanto meno anticattolico, siamo un po' stanchi di essere confusi con altri gruppi o sette di fanatici, la nostra spiritualità, e la Wicca come le altre varie correnti neopagane, hanno fondamenti positivi: noi non siamo a priori, contro nessuna religione, non siamo anticristiani, come non siamo antibuddisti o antiggiudaici. Riteniamo ciascuno libero di seguire la via spirituale, cioè la religione, che meglio crede.

Il paganesimo è per il confronto, e lo è sempre stato: anticamente le civiltà pagane si confrontavano e si scambiavano modelli spirituali. Erano, a livello spirituale, per la tolleranza, direi anche qualcosa di più perchè questo termine implica un sopportare qualcosa che dà fastidio (oggi siamo tutti tolleranti, verso gli extra comunitari, i diversi...), mentre il paganesimo integrava. Se una civiltà aveva qualcosa di nuovo e di propositivo anche in termini spirituali, veniva integrato. Lo straniero, in quanto ospite, era sacro anche perché portava il nuovo. E del resto tutti i modelli pagani, tutte le strutture della spiritualità pagana, classica, celtica, nordica e così via, sono sempre stati modelli esportabili, confrontabili e integrabili.

Certo il rapporto con le divinità era in parte "utilitarista": ti do perché tu mi dai. Oggi questa ci suona come una brutta parola, ma in realtà soprattutto nelle forme rurali della religione pagana, utilitarismo significava possibilità di sopravvivenza. La protezione concessa da un dio attraverso l'abbondanza di un raccolto significava vita per tutta una comunità. Se la protezione veniva meno, ad un certo punto ci si poteva tranquillamente rivolgere ad altre divinità più "attente".

Questo esiste anche nel cattolicesimo: ci sono testimonianze che ci descrivono per esempio usanze per cui se non pioveva la statua del santo patrono veniva messa a testa in giù perchè non assolveva al suo compito di "protezione". In Piemonte abbiamo episodi in cui i sacerdoti cattolici, i cosiddetti sacerdoti masca, erano appunto gli stregoni del villaggio, che erano i responsabili, quando c'era un'epidemia, una carestia, di non aver protetto la comunità efficacemente.

Noi siamo in sostanza ben consapevoli che una parte del paganesimo sopravvive nel cattolicesimo, almeno come pratiche, soprattutto quello delle campagne, una parte importante che va recuperata prima che scompaia.

Oggi diciamo che il paganesimo è rinato, ma non è esatto. Come vedete viene osteggiato e criticato il paganesimo quando propone un nuovo modello spirituale, ma come modello culturale non ha mai smesso di esistere: pensiamo ad uno

psicologo della portata di Hillmann, pensiamo alla filosofia di Heidegger, una filosofia assolutamente pagana come afferma Hans Jonas, pensiamo a filosofi come Salvatore Nautli e Savater che hanno scritto due testi sul neopaganesimo, pur cambiando rotta ad un certo punto. Ma andiamo anche indietro guardando al neoclassicismo e prima ancora al rinascimento: c'era una rinascita di alcuni modelli culturali pagani, ispirati alla classicità. La Venere di Botticelli per esempio, o la Primavera. Tutta la nostra civiltà è percorsa da un paganesimo culturale che nessuno è mai riuscito a spegnere. Infondo lo sappiamo tutti come nel cattolicesimo con il culto dei santi vi sia l'esempio più pagano tra tutte le religioni monoteiste.

Proprio in quanto neopagano, non sono contro il cattolicesimo, non potrei per i motivi che ho detto prima, ma anche perché appunto il cattolicesimo ha tra le sue molte radici, anche una radice pagana.

Certo, c'è stata l'Inquisizione (6 milioni di morti secondo l'interpretazione marxista, o 2 morti secondo alcuni storici cattolici oggi: la verità sta nel mezzo, probabilmente), ci sono state prima ancora altre persecuzioni contro i pagani, ma questa è storia.

Eppure se guardiamo al culto della madonna per esempio, questo ci fa scorgere alcuni elementi pagani, per quanto molto distorti (persino Marion Zimmer Bradley ne parla ne "Le nebbie di Avalon) sotto certi aspetti: Regina Coeli era l'appellativo di Diana.

Ovviamente il neopaganesimo ha un'etica molto diversa rispetto all'etica cristiana e anche presupposti filosofici differenti e quindi sviluppa un pensiero suo proprio, ma questa è un'ovvietà che vale per tutte le religioni, dal taoismo all'islam. Così come dobbiamo dire che la nostra cultura e i nostri modelli culturali sono differenti e allo stesso modo i miti e i simboli a cui ci riferiamo.

Satana, per fare un esempio proprio, visto che le religioni monoteiste ci vedono un po' alla stregua di satanisti, non ci interessa, non fa parte della nostra cultura edella nostra filosofia. Le nostre divinità hanno aspetti sia luminosi che oscuri, una dicotomia profondamente diversa da quella proposta dal cristianesimo incentrata sul conflitto tra bene e male che origina quella morale assolutistica che troviamo profondamente estranea al nostro essere e al nostro vivere.

Il grande contrasto fra neopaganesimo e religioni monotesite, riguarda prevalentemente, se non esclusiavamente, il loro sentire di essere verità uniche, l'affermazione continua del "questa è la mia verità, e non ce n'è nessun'altra". E' questo che porta alle guerre, soprattutto a quelle di religione, mentre nel paganesimo la guerra non era mai giustificata dalla religione: si faceva per conquistare nuove ricchezze e nuovo benessere, per interesse, senza nascondersi dietro alla volontà di Dio, come avviene ancora oggi. Un contrasto che si riaccende quando per esempio i cattolici cercano di creare una società basata sui precetti cristiani, una società per cristiani. Noi crediamo invece che nella società, soprattutto quella che è ispirata alla laicità dello stato, ci debba essere spazio per tutti. Crediamo in una società laica e che in quanto tale sia attenta alle esigenze spirituali, non quelle del tal culto, ma quelle date dalla possibilità di professare liberamente la propria religione. Non una società dove ci si debba difendere dalle ingerenze di una gerarchia spirituale nella vita pubblica, dove le leggi vengano modellate sulla morale di una particolare religione. Una società laica deve rendere l'individuo libero e in grado di scegliere ciò che ritiene bene per lui stesso, nel rispetto delle libertà degli altri. Non stiamo creando una comunità pagana per

prevalere su questa o quell'altra comunità spirituale, noi infatti non abbiamo bisogno di convincere nessuno, proprio perchè crediamo che attraverso l'orizzonte della libertà ognuno sia in grado di trovare la via migliore per arricchire il suo spirito e di questa libertà noi vogliamo essere solo un esempio, uno dei tanti.

Dove e con chi sta il conflitto qui, dove la guerra di religione? Proprio per il fatto che il neopaganesimo non è una religione rivelata, non ci può essere conflitto.

I romani, i greci, gli egizi, fecero guerre per arricchirsi e addirittura sappiamo che prima di invadere una città, si chiedeva agli dei del luogo di uscire fuori.

Alla nostra cultura spirituale appartiene il contatto diretto con la divinità, la possibilità del darsi di una divinità, che rivela i suoi aspetti a ciascuno di noi. E soprattutto si comunica ciò che si scopre e si sente. Condividere la propria esperienza questo è l'altro orizzonte della nostra comunità e se tu segui un'altra tradizione o un'altra via spirituale, tanto meglio, poichè è sul terreno del sentire che ci si può incontrare. La razionalizzazione dell'esperienza spirituale può portare a contrasti. Ma noi sappiamo che "il signore di Delfi si esprime per gesti". Non c'è rivelazione, non ci sono regole dettate: il Dio ispira, ma poi ognuno è libero di seguirne il suo destino.

Integrazione, confronto e libertà eccoli i cardini del neopaganesimo. Infondo è il divino a scegliere noi e allo stesso modo siamo noi a scegliere le nostre divinità: libertà e destino non sono null'altro che due faccie della stessa medaglia, un unico archetipo che appunto è sempre congiunzione degli opposti. Difficile da spiegare, ma non da sperimentare, proprio come è difficile fare una teologia neopagana: perchè il nucleo della nostra spiritualità è la pratica e il sentire che ci portano ad un pensiero che non è teologico e che è oltre la filosofia stessa.

Noi siamo neopani nella nostra quotidianità e questa quotidianità è sempre legata alla contemplazione, sempre contemplazione della bellezza.

Guardiamo all'eroe o volgiamo il nostro sguardo verso il saggio, entrambi in un momento della loro esperienza si rendono capaci di cogliere il bello che c'è nelle cose, e in questo preciso momento la loro estetica diventa etica.

E infatti c'è una bellezza profonda da scorgere nel mondo in cui viviamo. E questa bellezza che cogliamo nel mondo dobbiamo cercare di tradurla nel nostro modo di vivere: il Bello va sempre rispettato. Sarà il bello che cogliamo nella natura per esempio, un bello che come affermava Gadamer, può essere colto con un senso comune che ci mostra la verità di questa bellezza, che ci mostra il mondo positivo sia che siamo sulla vetta di una montagna o sulla riva del mare.

In questo senso la compassione non è una delle nostre virtù: infatti riferendoci ai rapporti tra gli uomini, non cogliamo la pochezza dell'uomo, ma prima di tutto la sua bellezza. La compassione, come è oggi intesa, ci porta invece a soffrire delle miserie dell'altro prima di esaltare e condividere quelle che sono le sue ricchezze. Noi preferiamo e dobbiamo preferire le cose belle che fanno parte di ogni essere umano, poichè crediamo profondamente che come gli dei abitano nel mondo così anche ognuno di noi in quanto parte del mondo ha dentro di se qualcosa di divino, e quindi di conseguenza ognuno ha qualcosa da offrire. Non solo, ma quanto più ci è difficile scorgere il bello, tanto più ci sentiamo chiamati a testimoniare la bellezza.

Oggi purtroppo invece vince un'estetica del brutto (posto che sia un'estetica): assistiamo al trionfo del disastroso: basta guardare un giornale o la televisione per rendersene conto, siamo avidi di brutto, e non di bello, eppure è proprio il bello a mancare a scegliere di celarsi. Ma la profonda natura del neopaganesimo che è controcorrente rispetto alla società è quello di creare dei testimoni della bellezza. Questo ci deve accomunare, questo deve essere il legante della nostra comunità che a poco a poco sta ri-nascendo.

Libero rapporto con il divino ed etica della bellezza, questi sono pilastri condivisibili su cui tutti i templi neopagani dovranno erigersi. I naturali contrasti che esitano nella nostra comunità rivelano solamente che essa è viva e vitale, che non c'è un pensiero unico, poichè il pensiero unico uccide. Quando il pensiero unico si afferma, e questo talvolta è un rischio ben visibile quando alcuni gruppetti pseudopagani cercano di affermarsi a nome di tutti, con il loro mono-pensiero, allora ecco che il conflitto si deve spostare all'esterno e l'altro diventa il nemico, e l'essere anti-qualcosa l'unico contenuto possibile.

Noi dovremmo invece pensare a ciò che conta, a ciò che è importante e che in quanto importante ha valore, cioè il cercare la spiritualità, la propria spiritualità. Questa ricerca spirituale può persino fare a meno di Dei, perchè di fronte alla bellezza qualcosa si sente, qualcosa che non è solo di questo mondo.

Diciamo che siamo in cammino, e gli dei ci seguono in questo cammino, questo è quello che possiamo dire come neopagani. Non sappiamo da dove veniamo, nè sappiamo dove stiamo andando, ma siamo su una strada e non siamo soli. La Wicca e le altre tradizioni neopagane offrono "solo" questo: un cammino.

When Cloning goes Wrong (with thanks to Lady Bara for sending this in!)



RECENSIONE “WICCA, LA NUOVA ERA DELLA VECCHIA RELIGIONE”

-Cronos

Aradia Edizioni, settembre 2007 - www.aradia-edizioni.it



Ho avuto il piacere, grazie a Morgana, di poter aver letto questa pubblicazione, purtroppo non ancora tradotta in altre lingue, che apre un varco per chi vuole capire la Wicca ed accenna anche ad altre correnti spirituali pagane, usando un linguaggio accessibile a qualunque lettore interessato ad approfondire la conoscenza del paganesimo moderno.

Per il pubblico italiano senz'altro utile per comprendere quali siano le radici di questi movimenti religiosi, che in un paese come l'Italia, dominato dal cattolicesimo, vengono spesso descritti dai media in un'ottica che potrebbe deformare l'opinione di chi vuole informarsi al riguardo e capire la vera natura della Wicca. In ogni caso l'autore non si sbilancia in opinioni personali nei confronti di religioni "ufficiali" e cerca semplicemente di riferirsi a fatti attendibili anche se l'entusiasmo personale appare tra le righe.

Cronos illustra il suo percorso personale sul sentiero pagano, raccontando sinteticamente le sue esperienze nell'ambito di varie tradizioni legate alla Wicca e all'interno del coven Alexandrian di cui è attualmente membro.

Interessante è la serie schematica e analitica di spiegazioni assai pratiche, riguardanti i personaggi e gli autori che hanno dato luce al movimento, rituali, strumenti, differenze tra diverse tradizioni ecc., per chi vuole conoscere la storia e le radici di questo movimento religioso che pur essendo relativamente nuovo e moderno, affonda le origini nella storia antica del nostro continente.

In particolare questo libro è utile per capire quali sono stati gli sviluppi recenti della Wicca in Italia, che rispetto ad altri paesi europei hanno avuto un certo ritardo.

Il prezzo relativamente basso di questa edizione permette anche ad un pubblico giovane e a chi abbia delle barriere linguistiche (che purtroppo persistono in Italia...), di poter accedere ad una buona alternativa ad altre pubblicazioni straniere più care e più difficili da reperire nelle librerie italiane.

Luna Verde, Amsterdam, aprile 2008

W dniach 16 i 17 listopada odbyła się Konferencja Międzynarodowej Federacji Pogańskiej w Warszawie.

Gościem specjalnym Konferencji była Morgana, która spotkała się z członkami Federacji w Polsce w pierwszym dniu Konferencji. Spotkanie miało swobodny, towarzysko-zapoznawczy charakter.

Następnego dnia po krótkim rytuale otwierającym Morgana opowiedziała o historii, celach i sposobach działania Międzynarodowej Federacji Pogańskiej. Główne tezy wystąpienia Morgany są zamieszczone poniżej.

Kolejnym punktem programu był wykład Boan i Dagdy na temat europejskiej tradycji reinkarnacji.

Po przerwie obiadowej odbył się wykład Rawimira na temat podstaw astrologii.

Ostatnim punktem programu była dyskusja panelowa na temat problemów pogan w Polsce i na świecie. Nasi zagraniczni goście chcieli rozmawiać o wychowywaniu dzieci w rodzinach pogańskich. Jednakże ze względu na dominujący wśród gości konferencji udział młodych ludzi, dyskusja zeszła na zagadnienie informowania rodzin a w szczególności rodziców o fakcie bycia poganinem. Jednoznacznej odpowiedzi na to pytanie nie uzyskano, bo sytuacje bywają różne. Jednakże przeważał pogląd, że należy być z tym ostrożnym, ponieważ może to prowadzić do niepotrzebnych napięć w rodzinach.

Po zakończeniu konferencji, większość uczestników udała się do pobliskiej restauracji, gdzie w miłej atmosferze spędzili kilka godzin rozmawiając na wszelkie możliwe tematy, co sprzyjało bliższemu wzajemnemu poznawaniu.

W konferencji brała także udział Lesza reprezentująca Rodziny Kościół Polski. Dzięki niej zebrani mogli dowiedzieć jak na kwestię reinkarnacji zapatrywali się Słowianie. Komentarze i uzupełnienia Leszy były cennym wkładem w Konferencję.

Osobne podziękowania należą się Enennie za tłumaczenie wykładu Morgany oraz Boan i Dagdy na język polski

Rawimir



***DO CULTO PAGÃO AO ENDOVELICO**

- Isobel

Os cultos nos santuários proto-históricos da Rocha da Mina ou do Castelinho não seriam iguais aos do outeiro de S. Miguel da Mota como o conhecemos actualmente e ainda sob um período romanizado. Contudo, numa vasta área circundante existem outros santuários, esses mais antigos e predominantemente ainda marcados por ancestrais cultos animistas.

A essência da religião pré-romana é diferente daquela romanceada que conhecemos. As sociedades e a cultura evoluem, os padrões transformam-se e a alma grupo de uma sociedade dificilmente compreende o que não existe mais, mas no correr dos tempos e dos anos, fica-nos a História. Dos povos antigos a crença ficou nas memórias dos Lusitanos e alguma tradição continuada nos contos ainda que modernizada pela romanização e dispersa nos tempos seguintes.

Aqui cultuava-se uma divindade de símbolo nativo cujos cultos foram evoluindo e conseqüentemente sendo alterados pela chegada de novos ídolos trazidos pelos povos do Mediterrâneo e por tribos vindas do centro e sul, mas ao longo das mudanças sociais, o monte sagrado sempre permaneceu importante, tornando-se mais povoado em redor, no tempo dos Cónios e Béticos. Ao longo dos locais sagrados e por grande distância, estende-se uma cintura rochosa, Ossa era provavelmente também por circunstância ponto de encontro e trocas; serra verdejante com água e caça, locais rochosos e defensivos, um oásis na imensa região das grandes planícies.

Para local de culto os povos antigos escolhiam o topo dos montes para se dirigirem aos céus, casando a Terra com o Céu. Porque a Montanha era cultuada; nas suas gargantas recebia os corpos dos inimigos, em nichos esculpidos na sua pedra falava aos homens dotados ao contacto divino, portadores e interpretes da voz dos deuses, e por detrás dos seus desfiladeiros onde se escondiam as tribos, nas suas escarpas eram depositadas oferendas: do animal totémico aos cereais, a montanha também nutria; sobreviviam da caça e da pastorícia. Noutros locais, os menires demarcavam territórios e outros cultos comunitários aconteciam quando os tempos mudavam; a adoração à Deusa na fertilização da Terra Mãe, noutros cultos das tribos... A religião Antiga não é igual em todos os locais e a pluralidade e diversidade fazem parte da sua essência.

Aqui no outeiro cultuava-se o Senhor da Montanha, Ao Endovélico.

Guardião das almas dos Idos, recebia seus filhos nas entranhas por onde o rio desaparecia recebendo-os na viagem eterna, e se as suas escarpas devoravam os inimigos também acolhiam o corpo do velho guerreiro em honras fúnebres que só às tribos convidadas eram tidos. No alto dos montes os santuários. Onde irrompe a pedra que cresce para o céu está o poder imanente da montanha, ali a sua voz manifesta-se nos ventos, ali é lugar dos sábios. Descendentes há gerações dos chefes e feiticeiros das antigas tribos, eles perpetuaram as crenças, e sabem dos locais de poder, e é imensa a flora que a Terra aqui dá, tornando possível desenvolver artes de cura, e a sabedoria transmite-se e cresce.

Os encontros entre culturas são absorvidos e os sábios não somente já só trabalham para a sua tribo, agora também se aplicam aos homens, aplicam o

conhecimento recebido dos deuses, recebem e dão. Perfaziam-se ritos de cura, expulsão das moléstias e as purificações. Para os alimentar, as gentes. As novas rotas proporcionam o intercâmbio e o santuário torna-se popular. Aqui recebe-se o defensor ferido, o chefe da caravana que procura abrigo e protecção, a criança orfã, os caminhanes e os mensageiros...

... A acessibilidade e adaptação ao rito, levou-nos a eleger o local do antigo templo romano, cujas memórias moraram na escrita, tornando-o sítio eleito para nossos cultos pagãos contemporâneos.

Onde há manifestação divina, o local diviniza-se. De Oráculo e de Cura este santuário fica conhecido. Não é de estranhar que como politeístas, acreditemos na Bênção do Deus da Cura.

O culto ao Endovelico não ocorreu com Roma, manteve-se com eles, na região.

Se os romanos construíram um templo dedicado a uma divindade local e não do seu pantheon é porque anteriormente à sua chegada já era importante, e antevendo a procura religiosa pelos novos habitantes civilizados, deram razão e lugar de destaque à divindade local - Endovelicvs, perpetuando assim um culto mui antigo, e transformando-o num local santificado pela construção de um templo novo que atrairia os povos e subjacentemente o comércio.

As valiosas pedreiras circundantes, as rotas comerciais não tão distantes e as vastas planícies férteis, perfeitas para uma agricultura extensiva ao consumo e de exportação para outras províncias, trouxeram a esta região uma prosperidade inusitada. Característica da cultura romana, o templo de Endovelico adquire novas formas de cura e novas terapêuticas, recebe as oferendas pessoais e também responde na orientação para muitos assuntos:

Perante O Senhor da Cura, consultava-se o Oráculo.

O Deus aparecia aos peregrinos em sonho (incubatio) não sem antes terem sido submetidos a um ritual de purificação e preparação para ver e ouvir o Deus, sob a orientação de sacerdotes residentes. Os sonhos seriam interpretados por Sacerdotes ou Oraculares que posteriormente indicavam o tratamento. Os tratamentos em geral, espalhados pelo Império Romano nos Templos de Cura, eram na maioria compostos de curas termas, banhos e defumações aromáticas, assim como a ginástica e cuidados alimentares, e assim evoluiu um sistema baseado na observação, que deu origem às terapêuticas modernas.

Decorrem os séculos, Roma já extinta e conseqüentemente a cristandade, mas mesmo depois da destruição dos templos e da proibição de culto, ainda se mantiveram certos costumes pagãos nos povoados interiores, os dos campos (pagani) mantinham as suas convicções religiosas. O clero cristão teve de substituir os cultos anteriores e suplantar a necessidade do povo no suporte dado pela antiga crença, adaptando então, mártires e santos, para substituírem as antigas divindades pagãs, e o povo, outrora adorador das divindades pagãs e às quais se dirigiam com pedidos de cura, deparou-se com os oragos que tomaram conta dos locais sagrados pagãos.

O templo foi expoliado e as colunas deslocadas, as lajes levadas para (re)construções, as estátuas enterradas, partidas, as aras aproveitadas para a nova capela em construção. A necessidade de ligar-se ao divino não morre na humanidade, adapta-se, transmuta-se através dos tempos e adquire novas formas.

Muitos lugares pagãos foram substituídos por igrejas e capelas, contudo aqui no antigo templo do Endovelico, o culto cristão não cresceu significativamente. O espírito do Senhor da Montanha adormeceu.

O Homem sempre peregrinou, desde as origens em que buscava novas terras e se deslocavam clãs, à caminhada a um local longínquo para receber uma graça ou conselho divino, do peregrino medieval nas conhecidas peregrinações, ao caminhante do sec. XX que sai do conforto citadino e passeia em busca do seu lugar mágico.

Assim, no princípio do sec. XXI, a Associação Cultural Pagã reúne os Caminhantes Pagãos devotos a esta antiga divindade lusitana - O Endovelico – e reaparecemos à luz do dia, qual Fenix renascida, provando que as nossas práticas são capazes de conviver com a actual sociedade, sem qualquer proselitismo da nossa parte, mas permitindo às pessoas um vislumbre dum longínquo passado religioso.

Eternamente,
Oh Endovelico.
HPs Isobel Andrade

*(Excerto texto da autora em – Manual Pagão do Endovelico, Edição particular ACP, 2006)



Associação Cultural Pagã



**PEREGRINAÇÃO POLITEÍSTA
AO ENDOVELLICVS**

**Sábado, 19 JULHO 2008
ALANDROAL - ALÉM-TEJO**

Encontro 10.30h defronte Câmara Municipal Alandroal

**Outeiro S. Miguel da Mota
Evento previsto das 11h às 13h**



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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