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The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

Summer 2004 • Issue No. 25





Walking With Fire

An Eastern Indo-European Conference

Presented by
The Order of the Perfumed Scorpion
in fellowship with
Aus Dhwer, Ár nDraíocht Féin
and the Slavic Kin, Ár nDraíocht Féin.

October 15th through October 18th, 2004
Prattsville, New York, United States

Walking With Fire is the first ADF event of its kind! As a conference, Walking With Fire focuses entirely on the Eastern cultures and religions of the Indo-Europeans. There will be rituals, workshops, food and fellowship in the tranquil Catskill Mountains. Included are all meals, workshops, rituals and accommodations in a beautiful home overlooking a vibrant stream.

Our presenters include the Archdruid of ADF Skip Ellison, published author and respected scholar Ceisiwr Serith, Assistant Chieftain of the Slavic Kin Francesca Hedrick, Deputy Preceptor and Senior Druid Michael J Dangler, Director of Aus Dhwer and President/Purohita of OOtPS Adhitin Ratrija and more!

The events start on Friday evening with a rite to Vastos Pati. They continue on Saturday with an Agnihotr ritual, five workshops, and part one of a PIE ritual. The day ends with a Vedic performance and traditional Indian meal. Sunday contains five workshops, as well as part two of the PIE ritual, and culminates with a Slavic ritual and feast!

Location: Prattsville, New York

Date: Friday October 15th, 2004 through Monday October 18th, 2004.

Admission: FREE. Please register by October 5th.

For more information, please visit our web site at: <http://www.walkingwithfire.org>

Or E-mail us at: conference@walkingwithfire.info

You may phone us at: 1 773-972-7073

We hope that you will join us to discover the Eastern Indo-Europeans in this beautiful intimate environment!



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from The Anchorito

Once again, I'd like to thank Narabali and her team for the wonderful job they are doing on getting Oak Leaves out. I know how hard they have been working and we can all see the wonderful results!

This has been another busy travel quarter for me. In May, I attended the annual meeting at the Wellspring festival at Brushwood Folklore Center near Sherman, NY. In July I attended the Sirius Rising festival and the Starwood festival. Both held at Brushwood Folklore Center and the Kaleidoscope festival held in Ontario province, Canada. In August, I am attending Muin Mound Madness, held on my land near Syracuse, NY and the Summerland festival held Camp Clifton in Yellow Springs, OH. At all the festivals, I have been presenting workshops of ADF and related subjects and meeting with our members.

Our organization continues to grow strong and we have been seeing several new Protogroves coming into existence in the past quarter. Welcome to all of the new Grove Organizers! Organizing a new Protogrove can be hard work at times, but it is very rewarding in the long run.

Bright Blessings,
Rev. Skip Ellison

OAK LEAVES

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Why Vedism

by Adhitin Ratrija with N. Agnaya

When I first opened the Rgveda I knew only that Vedism was part of the eastern branch of the Indo-Europeans. I did not yet know of the complex deities overflowing with contradictory tales. I did not know that my beliefs were to be mirrored in those of karman, dharman, and Rta. And yet, it was only a short time before I found myself connecting to this ancient religion.

I was understanding ritual concepts that the scholars were puzzled by. I felt the connection to the gods and goddesses that embodied the very elements themselves. I saw my own life of beauty and violence, chaos and order, devotion and selfishness. It was all reflected back to me within the world of the Vedas.

Many years have passed since that moment. I now understand more than I did, and I laugh fondly at the things I thought I knew. The Vedas have become a truth to me. They are my sruti, my Rta, my dharman. They guide me on my way and assist me when I ask.

As I begin to reach out and talk about this subject, this world of Vedism, I find myself meeting many interesting characters. There are three questions which I find myself being asked by many people. They are deceptively simple questions that have me walk a tight rope between what the individual wishes to hear and what is the historical truth. And yet, no matter how many times I hear these questions I am always caught off guard. Each time one of the questions is asked it is as if I am hearing it for the first time:

Is Vedism a form of Hinduism?
Are Kali, Siva, Krsna, Laxmi, Ganesha, Rama,
Sita, Hanuman or Durga Vedic?
Why Vedism?

To answer one question is to answer them all. It is to dig into the past of Vedism and tell all of what we know.

The Indo-Aryans

The Indo-Europeans are often split between two physical regions. The western branch includes those cultures who colonized north and west into Europe. The best known



of these cultures are the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Slavs, and Norse. To the east the Indo-European cultures migrated into Asia, primarily India, Afghanistan, Iran, and other parts of what is now known as the Middle East. It is this eastern branch with which we are interested.

Dated at around 1700-1500 BCE, we begin finding archaeological remains of the Indo-European peoples in the Indus River valley. Much of this evidence is found in excavations of the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, both now in Pakistan. In both these sites, one finds the remains of an ancient society, then a break where that society suddenly disappears followed by evidence of a new society with an entirely different culture colonizing the same city.

This new society represents the first incursions of those peoples known as the Indic division of the

Indo-European culture into the Indian Peninsula. Later, this culture would spread across the land, eventually taking the name of 'Arya' for itself, which translates to 'noble'. It is from this root word that we derive the term for the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European's. These people we now also know as the Vedics.

The Vedic Texts

After having established themselves across the north of India, the Vedics eventually had the majority of their

religious practices codified into four main works: the four Vedas. There were also several ancillary texts written as commentary, which make up a collection of works known as the Upanisads.

The holy texts are split into two categories: sruti-tradition and smrti-tradition. The sruti sources are ones that have been “heard.” These texts were revealed by the Gods to specific Rsis (priests). The smrti sources are those that have been “memorized”, and as such have been created by man without divine assistance but based on sruti texts.

The Vedic texts fall mostly within the category of sruti and are known as the Vedas and portions of the Upanisads. Veda translates literally into “knowledge.” The word veda is derived from the verb vid- which means “to know, to be aware of.” Upanisad is broken up with “sad” meaning “sit” and most likely refers to the extreme secrecy that was to be enforced with the sharing of the Upanisads by having the student sitting beside the teacher. This leaves the word Upanisad referring to “secret text.”

There are a total of four Vedas. Three of the Vedas, the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, and the Samaveda, can be dated to between 1500-1200BCE. A fourth Veda -- the Atharvaveda was established slightly later, between 1200-1000BCE. Each Veda consists of its the main text, or Samhita, as well as dedicated commentary and instruction on that text, which is known as the Brahmana.

The Rgveda consists of more than one thousand hymns that are arranged into ten books. These hymns were meant to be spoken to the gods during ritual and contain the myths of the Vedics. The Yajurveda is a collection of hymns from the Rgveda in the way they were meant to be used during ritual. The Yajurveda is split into two versions: the White Yajurveda and the Black Yajurveda. The basic differences are that the White Yajurveda keeps separate the Samhitas and Brahmanas while the Black Yajurveda mixes the two. There are additional differences in translations as well.

The Samaveda is a collection of songs to be sung during ritual. Some of the material is a reworking of the Rgveda, while the rest of the material is original. The Atharvaveda is a volume which deals specifically with magic and the use of rituals as cures, protection and curses.

The Samhitas are the actual text, or hymns, of each of

the Vedas while the Brahmanas are the commentary upon the Vedas. The Brahmanas set out to explain, in detail, the going-ons of the Vedas.

The Upanisads generally date from about 800-600BCE and are made up of twelve Upanisads: the Brhadaranyaka, the Chandogya, the Taittiriya, the Aitareya, the Kausitaki, the Kena, the Katha, the Isa, the Svetasvatara, the Mundaka, the Prasna and the Mandukya. These texts are several ancillary texts written as commentary on Vedism in general.

While the Upanisads show more information on the Vedas, they also show a breaking away from traditional Vedic thought into the basic tenets of what would grow to become Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). The Upanisads are predominantly thought processes and commentary. They can be seen as a mix of smrti and sruti for the most part.

Past these texts you find yourself within the man made texts of the smrti-tradition. While this in no way demeans their value, it simply must be stated that to a Vedic these texts are made up or commentaries that have been quite removed from their original Vedic thought process.

Two smrti-tradition texts which are still of great use: the Grhya Sutras and the Crauta Sutras. The Sutras were roughly set down between 400 and 200 BCE, although this is just scholastic guess work. The Grhya Sutras deal specifically with household ritual to be performed by the householder. The Crauta Sutras depict elaborate rituals which included one or more clergy.

There are also the Aranyakas, or ‘forest texts,’ which give us greater insight into the breaking down of the Vedic religion. The Aranyakas, which some scholars link as sruti, were philosophical musings and speculation written by hermit-priests who had secluded themselves from society in order to concentrate on the study of the Vedas.

These later texts also include works on yoga, avastu, and jyotish. They also include the Kama Sutra, the Dharma Sutras and the Laws of Manu. In addition, such epics as the Mahabharata, the Gita and the Ramayana are man made creations said to be from the fourth century BCE.

Also worthy of a peripheral note are the holy texts of the Indo-Iranians. This culture was to go on to become the Zoroastrians, and the oldest portions of their holiest text,

the Avesta, is dated to around 1000 BCE. Since the Indo-Iranians began as an offshoot from the Vedics, one finds similar god-names (the Vedic Mitra versus the Zoroastrian Mithra, for instance) as well as differing versions of some of the same myths. Occasionally, the Avestan version of a Vedic myth will reverse the point-of-view of the story, thus casting the Vedic Gods instead as demons. There is thus a good amount of evidence that the Vedic-Iranian split was not an amiable one, so the Avesta offers an interesting contrast for comparison.

The Vedic Religion

To the Vedics, the world consisted of three spheres. The first was the earth, the second was firmament (also called the sky), and the last was the intermediate region, or the space between the earth and firmament. Each of the three spheres was divided in additional sections. The ground and heaven were supported by beams, yet the sky was without support. This caused a great deal of discussion by the Vedic on why it did not fall.

The ancient Vedics believed in polytheism, believing all of their Gods to be separate individuals. The vast majority of the gods were the elements such as the wind (Vayu) with some gods being concepts such as speech (Vac).

Towards the end of the Vedic period the belief of kathenotheism came forward. Kathenotheism was the belief and practice that during a ritual, or worship, that the participants called for one God who would then embody all of the attributes of the other Gods within the pantheon.

This change in beliefs was one of the markers of the end of Vedism. From this step it went in monism. Monism is the belief in one God, or higher power, and that all other "gods" are manifestations, or avatars/incarnations, of the higher power.

To the Vedics, upon death, going to heaven was their goal. A great many rituals were performed to ask for the favor of the Gods and wash away shortcomings in an attempt to reach heaven. Heaven was seen as a place of light that was without the negative aspects of life. In heaven there was no disease, no want, no death, no darkness and no fear.

Heaven is shown as an ending to life on earth and a beginning of a life in Heaven with the Gods. There was no reincarnation in the Vedas.

The Vedics began as a migratory culture. Due to matters of survival (such as food supply or grazing space), it was necessary for the early Indo-Aryans to maintain a mobile existence. Their existence was often contingent upon the ability to pack one's home and move to an entirely different location. They developed a ritual format where an open space was found and consecrated, then ritual was performed in the open with no permanent structures necessary.

Later, the Vedics were able to establish cities and consecrated permanent public spaces in which to hold ritual. It was merely the scale that changed. As the Vedics grew more successful, the rites grew larger and more elaborate. The format of the proceedings, however, still remained faithful to their roots. Later, after Vedism's fall, Hinduism began to favor private personal worship (called puja and often referring to the worship of idols as an aid in worshipping a god), and established elaborate buildings in which to gather and pray. It is this difference between open Yajna and private worship which in one aspect defines the difference between Vedism and Hinduism.

A few of the basic Vedic practices and beliefs are Rta, dharman, karman and Yajna.

Rta translates quite literally to 'order'. It is the order by which the universe, were it a perfect place, should run. One may conceive an illustration of Rta as literally 'a place for everything, and everything in its place'.

Dharman is personalized Rta. If the world were a play, then Rta would be its script, and dharman would be each individual's particular part. Why does Surya (the Sun) pass across the sky each day? Because it is Surya's dharman - his part in maintaining Rta -- that he do so. And, being the steadfast upholder of Rta that he is, Surya fulfills his dharman by faithfully rising each dawn to traverse the sky until dusk.

Karman, then, translates to 'action'. Karman is the embodiment of the actions one takes and the deeds they do. Here there is no judgment of good or evil over these deeds, but one must understand that actions beget consequences. Once again, as in a play, one may decide go 'off book' -- throwing away their lines and bursting into an impromptu monologue, for instance. In just this same manner, one may choose to ignore their part, their dharman, and do solely as they wish.

They must understand, however, that this action naturally leads to consequence. The consequence may be bad, it may be good or it may be neutral.

Yajna is the term for Vedic ritual. It differs from many religious rituals in that it is public and elaborate, yet does not necessarily take place in an established enclosed space such as a temple or church. This is to be performed by the clergy and follows very strict rules.

The Vedics had their clergy split up into different types. Each of these types was responsible for a specific part in the ritual and attached to a specific Veda. Each member of the clergy went through years of training and was considered an expert in their field.

The four major priests are Hotr, Udgatr, Adhvaryu and Brahmin. It must be noted that all Vedic priests were Brahmins, and there is a specific role performed by a priest who is called Brahmin. This Brahmin is the chief priest of the ritual.

The **Hotr** is the priest who works with the Rgveda and is responsible for reciting. The **Udgatr** is the priest of the Samaveda and is responsible for the singing done in ritual.

The **Adhvaryu** is the priest of the Yajurveda and is responsible for all of the points dealing with the ritual.

This includes setting up the ritual space, laying out the ritual items, preparing the ritual fire, gathering the ritual offerings, killing the sacrificial animals, cooking the sacrificial animals, and offering all of the sacrifices to the fire.

The **Brahmin** is often matched up with the Atharvaveda, but they must know all of the Vedas. It is their job to stand silently by the sacrificial fire and to act as a satellite of the ritual and to correct any mistakes that may happen during the ritual. Because of this, they must know all of the Vedic the Vedas and be familiar with all of the workings of the ritual.

There are several assistants to the four main priests and these assistants had their own titles and specific duties. Some of the additional priests were the Agnidhra (an assistant to the Adhvaryu), the Prastotr (an assistant to the Udgatr) and the Pratihart (also an assistant to the Udgatr). There was also the Purohita, a Brahmin who performed domestic rituals and often was the primary Brahmin for

the king.

The Vedic Society

Within the ancient society of the Vedics there was a class system which was reflected in the gods. This class system was split up into the Brahmins, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra. The Brahmins were the priest class, the Kshatriya were the ruler class, the Vaisya were the common people and craftsman, and the Sudra were the non-Vedic immigrants (often times serfs or prisoners of wars).

At the time of the Vedics, one was not classified to be within the Sudra class for their lifetime. It works much in the way that modern immigration works today, with the individuals being accepted and free to seek out their profession once they had placed themselves within the society. The Sudra could remain Sudra for many generations. They remained such until they found themselves integrated into the society.

The class system was used more as descriptive terms than as a “birth right”. Where you laid in the class system was based upon your skills, with the exception of royalty and the above mentioned immigrants.

The Vedics were omnivorous. They did eat meat. They ate cows and just about any other animal they could get hold of. They were not vegetarians or vegans.

The Vedics were defined as patriarchal and patrilineal. Despite the obvious male dominance, the Vedic period gave a certain power to women in its ritual dependant culture. The Vedics viewed rituals as a means of keeping the social and cosmic order of the world and women were vital within keeping these goals.

The coupling of a husband and wife was very important to the Vedics and to their ritual. It was required that any man who was to have a ritual performed had to be wed.

It can be easily suggested that almost every wife had some sort of Vedic training due to the timing of rituals. Every day Householder rituals were to be performed and often the male of the house would be away for periods at a time.

There is proof that there were women who recited the

Vedas, sung the hymns and were Rsis. In short, there were female Brahmins, some of which are credited with certain parts of the Vedas. It was also dependant on the wife to tend to the sacred fire so that it would never go out.

It was not until later times that women began to take on the roles as being impure and it was not until post-Vedic texts that wife burning became popular.

The Vedic Offshoots

The Vedic culture and religion eventually came to dominate, and define, India. Towards the end of the Vedic period the many scholars within Vedism began to start a process of thinking differently about how they were connected to the Gods, to Heaven and to Yajna. It was this questioning mixed with the ramped corruption of the Brahmins that helped lead the way to Vedism's fall.

The people who had once practiced Vedism were now on their way to adopting new philosophies and ways of communing with the divine(s). The religions that splintered off from Vedism took ideas, thoughts and beliefs from Vedism and brought them into new ways of thinking that were meant to rebel against the Vedic religion, thus negating them as a different sect of Vedism.

Vedism was not allowed to evolve further as a religion, but instead it lay stagnant while other religions splintered off from it. These religions took specific beliefs within Vedism and followed them to their own ends, thus ending the Vedic period and the religion of Vedism. Some of the the off shoot religions of Vedism are Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism), Buddhism and Jainism.

Buddhism is the religion founded by the Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, in the 6th Century BCE. Like many other offshoots from philosophies spawning from Upanasadic speculation (Gautama himself was a Ksatriya, or noble, and well-versed in Vedic philosophy), it is a religion begun as a reaction to Vedism and the orthodoxy of that time. Buddhism sees the 'self' as a aggregate of many elements called 'skandhas' which include one's physical form, senses, perceptions, deeds, and conceptions. It attempts to free its adherents from the cycle of birth, death, and re-birth by the doctrine of Enlightenment, and contends that salvation is only possible after the elimination of suffering, caused chiefly by attachment, striving, and seduction by the senses.

Jainism is the religion which gradually splintered from Vedism around the time of the Upanisads, and was systemized as a doctrine by Vardhadama (Mahavira) around 550 BCE. It believes in the body and soul as separate, with the soul enmeshed in karmic matter that it must work off in order to reach Nirvana. It's five highest principles, or Vratas, are: Ahimsa (non-violence), Asathya Tyaga (relinquishing of anger, wrath, and deceit), Astheya (abstention from coveting or thievery), Aparigraha (re-linquishing of anger, wrath, and deceit), Astheya (abstention from coveting or thievery), Aparigraha (relinquishment of excess, particularly in regard to property), and Brahmacharya (moderation in earthly pleasures).

Sanatana Dharma, or **Hinduism**, is not a religion. Rather it is a group of religions found within India that share common beliefs while still remaining very different. Many may even argue that it is not a religion but more a way of life. The term "Hinduism" was not developed by the practitioners, but by groups outside of the religions as a means for labeling the entire Indian people.

Often referred to as the successor religion to Vedism, the Hindu religions are no more the same religion as Vedism than Islam is the religion of the Christians. After the populace began to lose faith in the Brahmins (due primarily to elitism and corruption), they began to turn increasingly to the speculations within the Upanisads. In particular, the Aranyakas (which were originally penned by sunyassins, or hermit-priests living in the wild) provided a road map by which solitary practitioners could re-enact Vedic ritual without the actual physical activity of Yajna.

Also, other philosophical speculation during the late Vedic period, coming most often in the form of derivative texts called Sutras, fed the reform movement. These steps toward short cutting ritual eventually led to a much greater emphasis on private meditation, and an overall philosophy which embraced concepts such as reincarnation, Karma, Dharma, the caste system, and the personification of all gods into a single god-power known as Brahman. With the last step, Hinduism ceased as a polytheistic religion into fell the embrace of monism (monism being the belief in one supreme being and that all other beings are incarnations of the One).

There are many groups within Hinduism that claim a sort of "going back to the Vedas". While these groups are attempting to create a bond with the Vedas, they will never

be followers of Vedism while they still hold their core ideals.

These core beliefs are at odds with those of the Vedas. Many followers of Hinduism do translate the Vedas to fit into Hindu thought by changing the translation to reflect the beliefs of monism, reincarnation, the caste system and absence of animal and human sacrifice. However, this does not make them followers of the Vedas, but rather poor translators.

A well known movement to go “back to the Vedas” is the Arya Samaj movement. This movement was started in 1875 by Dayananda Sarasvati. It was a movement within Hinduism that was meant to turn back to the Vedas. It was their belief that the Vedas alone were sacred and the only revelation of God. They also believed that all of the sciences of the modern world could be found within the Vedas.

As has been already stated, the Arya Samaj are followers of Hinduism. While they are attempting to go back to the Vedas they are not Vedic. While they do not except the texts past the Vedas, they are still monists, and uphold other Hindu views. In their reformations they rejected Brahminic control and they are open to all castes and women.

This movement was the second movement of this sort, the first being Brahmo Samaj, both of which had political power. The movement of Arya Samaj helped to contribute to the Indian Nationalist movement and works to convert those Hindus who have turned to Christianity, Islam and other non-Hindu faiths.

There are additional Indian tribes which claim to perform Vedic rituals. However, when you take a ritual and strip it of it's meaning to replace it with new thoughts and beliefs it ceases to be what it was. As is the case in some Hindu tribes in India who make claims to performing Vedic ritual. They may be going through the motions but the two beliefs systems are vastly different.

Notably, when speaking about Hinduism we are talking about the Hindu religions within India. While sharing similar beliefs and gods, the practices and tenants of Hinduism within Bali, Cambodia and Nepal is vastly different from that of Indian Hinduism.

At this point in time, there is no proof that there are any people who practiced Vedism in an unbroken line from the time of the Vedics. Nor is there any proof that there are any practitioners of Vedism within India in the sense of organized religion. It is quite possible that practitioners of traditional Vedism do exist, but we have yet to hear of it.

Why Vedism?

Now we have come full circle, ending with the questions we began with:

Is Vedism a form of Hinduism?
Are Kali, Siva, Krsna, Laxmi, Ganesha, Rama,
Sita, Hanuman or Durga Vedic?
Why Vedism?

Hopefully you have come to the conclusion that Vedism is not a form of Hinduism, not only because Vedism came before the Hindu practices but also because the differences between the two faiths. Vedism believes in polytheism, heaven, no reincarnation, no hell, Rta, dharman, karman, sruti and a class system. Hinduism believes in monism, reincarnation, judgement, Karma, Dharma, a caste system, smrti and Brahma.

By the same token one should know that the gods of Hinduism are not Vedic gods, owing in part to the differences between sruti and smrti.

Yet, is Hinduism Indo-European? If not, when did it cease to be such? It is my opinion that when the people rebelled against Vedism and began the offshoot religions that they ceased to be practicing an Indo-European religion.

These individuals turned away from their old religion and embraced a new one, leaving the old behind. Some terms and gods remain but their meanings and status are now quite different. The people rejected the old ways in favour of religions and philosophies that show a great disdain for the Vedic practices.

Logic then has us ask aren't these new religions just natural progressions of Vedism? I would argue that they are not. I would suggest that these new religions were guided by men to separate themselves from the human corruption within Vedism. This was not a natural evolution but a rebellion.

It is true that eventually the Vedic religion may have taken similar turns as the new religions. This is evident in the Brahmanas and Upanisads. However, had Vedism been allowed to evolve and had it become monistic, or monotheistic, I feel it would still retain the names of the gods of the Vedas and not the new creations of the post-Vedic texts.

So why Vedism? Why not Hinduism? Why not Jainism? Why not Buddhism?

When I came to Vedism it was a silent religion. It was facing the fierce battle of the old gods and the new gods, and losing. I felt I belonged more in Vedism than anywhere else: it shares my beliefs, I can converse with the gods, I connect with the rituals.

Why do I not practice one of the offshoot religions? There are three reasons. The first is that because Vedism was built around a nomadic people it was geared more towards community. Community is very important to me, as is the aiding of others. This is not to say there is nothing individualized within Vedism, rather it is very community based. The offshoot religions are more egocentric, focusing on the individual and their path.

The second is the fundamental belief systems. I do not believe in reincarnation. I believe in heaven. I do not believe in karma. I believe in karman. I do not believe in Dharma, Brahma, enlightenment, Gurus or the validity of the smṛti texts. I believe in dharman, Rta, free-will and the śruti.

The third reason is one I have put a great deal of thought into. We all know that in many of the Indo-European cultures there are wars between the new gods and the old gods.

Imagine, if you will, that you worshiped the old gods. What would your feelings be towards the worship of the new gods? How would you react to the new gods turning the ways of the old gods on their head until they no longer reflected the old beliefs? What would you think to know your gods were to now live in the realm of scholastic research only? How would you feel knowing your gods were now shadows of their former selves, pushed to back burners and given little to no respect and ridiculed? What would you do in knowing that your gods are being forgotten?

In the Indo-European myth of the old gods and the new gods, the Vedic gods would be the old gods. The new gods are those of the offshoot religions. Rather than fight the old gods, the new gods have created new myths which ignore many of the old gods. This results in the vast majority of the old gods being forgotten with the remaining being demoted to lesser beings. The vast majority of Vedic gods are no longer worshipped. The exception to this is Vsnu.

Vsnu is a Vedic god and he did make it over to Hinduism favourably. Unfortunately, the Vsnu of Hindu lore is not the Vsnu of Vedic lore. The same is said of Surya. Usas and Sarsvati. Surya now has a very minor role, the brilliance of his consort Usas is all but forgotten in favour of Kali, Laxmi and Durga. Sarsvati, who was a minor river goddess deity in the Vedas, is seen as a major goddess of learning in Hinduism having swallowed up the Vedic goddess Vac.

I worship the old gods. I give no respect to the new gods whether they are post-Vedic, pre-Vedic or man made smṛti creations. This is why Vedism. It is because Vedism is about bettering myself to help my community. It is because Vedism is not about tying yourself to the score cards of Dharma and Karma. Vedism is about taking responsibility for your actions and your choices. Vedism is about being responsible for your own life. Vedism is about having only one chance to get it right.

Vedism is about honouring the old gods.

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Prayers for Reconsecration of the Hallows

Wellspring 2004

by Todd Covert with Francesca Hedrick

In preparation for Wellspring 2004, numerous ADF members donated their labor to expand the national Nemeton, located at Brushwood Folklore Center in Sherman, New York. During the main ritual at Wellspring, the following prayers were offered to reconsecrate the Hallows of the newly-improved Nemeton. The offering to the Well was made by Francesca Hedrick, to the Fire, by Todd Covert, and to the Tree, jointly by Francesca and Todd.

The Fire

By Todd Covert

Atop the mound
Stone on stone
As in the elder days.
Hearth and altar:
Ever may the People's gifts be welcome.
(Whisky is poured on the stone foundation of the Fire altar)

Sacred Fire
You who rise to meet you kin, the Shining Ones:
Be the light of all the Gods and Goddesses,
Ever call the people to this place.
(Whisky is poured into the bed of the Fire)

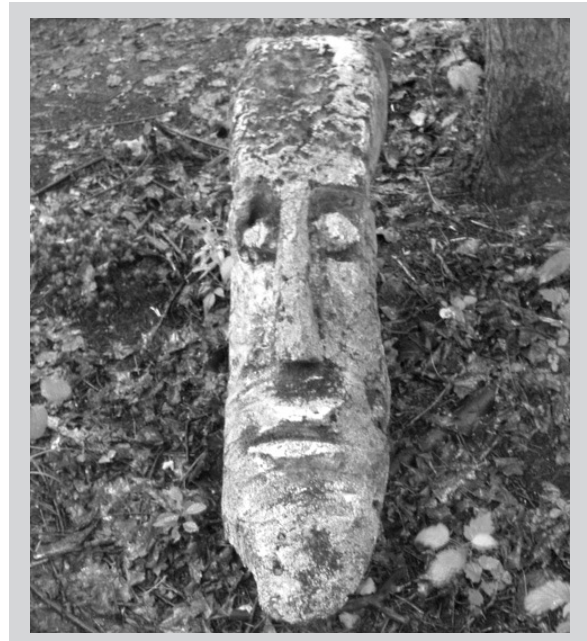
By the Fire within this offering:
Be you ever sacrificed and sacrificer.

Tine Naomh, loisc ionainn!
Sacred Fire, burn within us!
(The remainder of the whisky is poured into the heart of the Fire)

The Well

By Francesca Hedrick

A shaft but a hole in the ground
That leads down to the waters below
The waters that flow from rivers, lakes and oceans
The waters that flow and swirl beneath us
We make this offering of silver
To the shaft and well
Sacred waters flow within us.
(Offering is made into the Well shaft)



Photograph by M

The Tree

By Todd Covert

At the center of the world
Amid the throng of all the Midworld Kin,
Address we now the Tree:
Rooted deep, crowned high,
You hold the very mystery of life,
Piercing the Sky,
Yielding to the Waters.
By our words
We name you worthiest of all the Kindred of this place
By our will
Be now the living heart of this our Sacred Grove
(incense is then offered to the Tree)
And by this our offering
May you be the very pillar of the many Worlds.
Crann naomh, fas ionainn!
Sacred Tree, grow within us!

Triple Invocation of Manann n Mac Lir Wellspring 2004

by Todd Covert

The principal action for main ritual at Wellspring 2004 was the installation of a Gatekeeper totem, set opposite the Earth Mother totem installed back in 2000. Although we were installing it to enshrine the Gatekeeper generally, Ian Corrigan's intent was to address Manannán Mac Lir specifically in the rite. Skip Ellison was to install a visual image of Manannán for the participants, then the totem was to be placed physically, then Manannán was to be invoked by me with offerings of apples, mead, and then a small cask of ale to be split with an axe and libated onto the totem. The following was the prayer I delivered with the offerings:



“Lord of Waves and Ways,
As we offer here the fruit of Emain Abhlach, Avalon,
Come with speed into the place”

(Three apples are offered to the Fire)

“Lord of Wisdom, Trickster King,
As we offer mead, sweet mead,
Which is both fire and water,
Bend your shape to take the seat.”

(Mead is poured into the Well)

(Here the remains of the former Bile were offered to
the Fire)

“A Mhanannain! O Son of Sea!
We stand here now as at the roaring waves
And call to you with gift familiar.
Come with Crane Bag,
Cross the mists,
And flood this shrine with magic and your warding
ways!
A Mhanannain Mhic Lir! Glac ár n-iobairt seol!
Manannán Mac Lir, accept our sacrifice!”

(A cask of ale is split with the axe and the contents
poured onto the totem.)

“Biodh sé amhlaidh!”



Photograph by M

Domovoy

by Katherine Milechkiene

Although the name Slavs appears to be all encompassing, it does little to give a person the full understanding of the vast area these people inhabit. Around 600 C.E., the Slavs had divided into three distinguishable linguistic regions: East Slavs (who settled in present day Ukraine, Russia and Belarus), the West Slavs (who now occupy Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) and the South Slavs (who lends its ancestry to the Serbs, Bulgarians, Croatians and Macedonians).

The languages, although similar, have two different alphabets. Depending upon influences from outside sources, either the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabet was incorporated. The Latin, or Roman, alphabet was introduced to the western Slavs whereas the eastern and most of the southern Slavs use the Cyrillic alphabet.

Religiously, Christianity was accepted by the south Slavs first. This is mostly due to their having been influenced by the Mediterranean. The western and eastern Slavs retained their older pagan traditions longer.



By the 10th century C.E., Christianity had openly replaced the older religions. But, the pagan ways continued on as folklore and in fairytales (although it is difficult to differentiate the actual tale from Christian influence in the latter).

While I was perusing the history of Catherine the Great, I had come across an interesting account of one of the troubles she faced. According to this tale, Orthodoxy was the accepted religion, but the people were still practicing their “old ways” too. The people (especially the peasants) were still “superstitious” and afraid to let go of their pagan beliefs. This means the older religion was still openly being practiced in Russia late into the 18th century C.E. Great effort was made to erase the remaining elements of the old religion after that assessment. She felt that it was holding Russia back from being seen as a civilized place and a world power.

It is unfortunate that most of the representations and icons of the older gods have been destroyed either by crusading religions or by nature. However, like most other pagan religions, you can still see traces and influences of them in the churches and records.

One such practice, that is still practiced today, is the calling of your homes’ Domovoy (Domovoi). A Domovoy is a household spirit. According to the Encyclopedia of Russian and Slavic Myth and Legend, “At the creation of the universe the Domovoy rebelled against Svarog. He drove them from his realm and they fell to earth, some to the land and some down stovepipes.” A Domovoy is seen neither as good or bad and can be mischievous or benevolent, depending upon its mood and the time of the year.

It is said that on March 30th, the Domovoy becomes unsettled and malicious. It remains in this state from dawn until midnight. The exact reasons are unknown, but some surmise it is due to the fact he is shedding and “changing his coat” or, possibly, that he feels the urge to escape and marry a witch.

It was not until the introduction of Christianity that a

demonic nature was attached to the Domovoy's character. The features given to the Domovoy were less than attractive as the being was becoming demonized.

The creature was described as short, all covered with hair (the exception being around his eyes and nose) and having hair even on the palms of his hands and soles of his feet. If he drug his hand across your face while you slept, a bristly and cold touch foretold of impending woes ahead. A warm and fuzzy touch meant good fortune would befall.

Although mostly seen as a male figure, there are references to female Domovoy's as well. The male would live in the stove of the house, while the female (wife) lived "...in the henhouse or the outbuildings".

These spirits were thought to be ancestors of your paternal line. The Domovoy did not like to be seen so he was invisible. Reportedly, when you did sight a Domovoy, it took on the form of an ancestor or the past owner of your home. Sometimes, when the male of the household was away, a Domovoy would be seen in his form plowing the fields at night. If he were to be seen, it was usually to signify a malady was about to occur. Often times it meant the death of the head of the house would happen shortly thereafter or your house was in danger.

In more modern times, the only time a Domovoy can be seen is on the Thursday preceeding Easter and on Easter Sunday itself. He is usually spotted sitting in a corner of his stall.

Domovoy's were treated with great respect. He is considered (and considers himself) the master of the house. Keeping the house clean for him, referring to him in a respectful manner and by not sleeping in what might be considered a path of the Domovoy (ie.: in front of the stove, near the threshold of your home or in the center of the floor) were all ways to show respect.

When a family moved from one house to another, they invited their Domovoy to go with them (or showed respect to the new one). To transfer a Domovoy to a new home, coals from the old stove were taken to light the fire in the new stove. The husband and wife of the house would stand outside of the new home and call to the Domovoy or the words "Welcome, Grandfather, to the

new home!" were spoken.

An offering was then made to the Domovoy of bread and salt set on a plate. The bread and salt were then left for the Domovoy in its new home (the stove) and the offering plate broken and buried outside the front door. This practice is supposed to relate to an earlier form of fire worship. The people of Galicia actually believe their hearths to be haunted by the spirits of the dead.

If a new house was to be built, several assurances were incorporated to bring good luck to the home and to appease the Domovoy. Apparently, a new home was a big deal for the Slavic people. Unlike today, we just buy a home and basically move in, the Slavs were much more concerned with who/what they were disturbing by building the home and then relocating the family.

Russians believed that by building a new home, the head of the household was soon to die. Or, that the first person to enter the home would shortly die. In order to prevent this, a sacrifice (most commonly of a cock) would be offered up by cutting off the creature's head and burying it in the uppermost corner of the house or where the first stone or log was to be laid. There have been times when even human sacrifices were performed for this occasion. If no human could be found, an unsuspecting person's shadow would be measured and the string would then be buried in his/her stead. This is on the assumption that once the string was buried, the person would then fade to a shadow. These offerings are believed to be tied to an older form of Earth Goddess worship.

Aside from simply being a spirit that followed a family from house to house, the Domovoy took on certain responsibilities for the family. It's duties include managing the house, protecting the family's livestock and grain and warning the family of trouble. The Domovoy is seen as a spirit that generally protects the family outside sources and from other spirits that may bring harm to them.

Slavs (Russians especially) differentiate between Domovoy's. Your neighbors Domovoy is seen as malevolent and your household Domovoy must protect you and yours from him. It was believed that your neighbor's Domovoy would try to steal your oats and livestock. Transversely, yours would try and steal your neighbor's possessions (that would be part of his mischievous be-

havior or a convenient excuse as to why you had your neighbors oats). He would not allow other spirits to play or enter your property.

Household noises could be seen as indications of the Domovoy trying to tell the family something. Creaks, groans, wailing and clattering of pans about the house were often seen as bad omens. While singing, dancing and laughing were all indicators of good omens.

A Domovoy will also warn the family of upcoming misfortunes by riding your horses in the field until they are exhausted or by knocking on the walls. Collectively they will appear in the meadows surrounding a town and begin moaning and wailing if there is pestilence and war or fire on the way.

Domovoys are very possessive and do not like other spirits. If another spirit is to be appeased the Domovoy must be tricked into not knowing such an event took place.

An example would be if a goose had been sacrificed as an offering to a water-spirit, the head would be hung in the poultry pen so when the Domovoy counted the flock that night, he would not notice one missing.

If another Domovoy existed in the same house as yours, fights might ensue between the two of them. The spirits would go so far as to throw things around the house, bang pots and pans at each other and cause a general ruckus. When the owners had enough of this behavior, they would bang a broom against the walls and demand one of the spirits to leave. Quite often this would give the desired results and one of the Domovoys would depart.

The Domovoy is a form of ancestral worship and a form of early fire worship. The relationship held with the Domovoy can be likened to man's relationship with fire. Fire can be both constructive and destructive. As can a Domovoy.

A Domovoy that has not been treated with the respect he feels he deserves can bring much misery and destruction into a household. Anything as simple as forgetting to keep his path clear or not putting out food can be reason for the Domovoy to misbehave.

However, having a Domovoy as part of your home can

also be rewarding and give a sense of security. It can easily be adapted to fit into today's lifestyle.

Calling to your family's Domovoy to enter into your home is not only a way to reconnect with your ancestors, but will also ensure you try to keep your house a little tidier. Just remember to be respectful, leave bread, cookies or porridge by the stove and do not block his path. Go ahead and call to your family's Domovoy. It's a wonderful hearth practice and way to reconnect with your past.

Finally, just some basic notes to remember. If you do decide to call on your family's Domovoy, always treat him with the greatest respect. Remember he probably is connected to your ancestors and cares just as much for you as you should for him. If you do your job he will do his and help to keep your house and family safe.

Don't forget to leave him offerings of bread and salt and to thank him for his help (if you are celebrating a holiday, he should get to celebrate, too). Heed the warnings and omens given, they are for your benefit.

Do not forget him if you move. This could prove to be disastrous for the new inhabitants of your home (chances are the new owners have never even heard of a Domovoy).

Don't be afraid to call on him, but be certain you are ready for the responsibility of caring for this entity and never abandon him. He would never willingly abandon you.

Good luck to you and your Domovoy.

Other names by which Domovoys are known:

Domovoi (Russia)
Domowije (Poland)
Stopan (Bulgaria)
Dedek or Djadek (Czech)
Tomte (Scandinavia)
Haltari (Finland)
Brownie (Great Britain)



Shining Ones

A Day In The Life Of An Indo-European Deity

Ratri

By Adhitin Ratrija

*Here comes the Night; with her twinkling eyes
the Goddess has lit many places,
adorned once again with all her beauty.*

-Rg Veda, Book X, Hymn 127

Sunlight faded behind me as I walked further away from the entrance above. Fleeting, an old quote passed through my mind, "You are in a twisty maze of passageways, all alike" and somewhere in my subconscious, a small chuckle arose.

My feet tapped against the wet stone steps, which spiraled deep down within the Earth. We passed streams and wells, and after many caverns I stood alone before the final curtain. Beyond it lay the chamber of the Deity who had led me here. I pulled back the veil, and stepped unexpectedly from an subterranean cave into a room filled with stars.

There in the shadows she stood, draped in layers of deepest maroon so dark it almost vanished before my eyes. Here and there, the threads of her garment sparkled transparently, like lights in the far distance. As she turned, I could almost make out her face from the shadows. It was not as if her features were obscured, so much as if they were actually part of the darkness itself. She looked at me with eyes that were an endless blue -- cold and deep; familiar, yet distant as infinity. The corners of her mouth turned up teasingly into that familiar Mona Lisa smile... and suddenly light flooded over me. My eyes snapped open. I was instantly back in the middle of a forested glade surrounded by the other workshop participants, waiting for the trance meditation to come to a close.

Describing my experience, I spoke afterward with Paul Maurice, then Senior Druid of World Tree Grove and the guide for this particular pathworking. In my long



search for this mysterious Patron, I had earlier discounted the Norse and Celtic pantheons. Now, based on visual cues such as the style of her clothing, I vaguely wondered aloud whether she might be Vedic -- a pantheon I knew only peripherally from having studied Ch'an Buddhism for a number of years.

"Ratri," Paul exclaimed suddenly. "Vedic Goddess of the Night."



There are a total of only five complete Vedic Hymns dedicated solely to Ratri. Of these, only one (the most famous: Book X, Hymn 127) is found in the Rg Veda. The other four are contained in the Atharva Veda (Book XIX, Hymns 47-50). More often, Ratri is found mentioned in conjunction with her twin sister Usas, the Dawn.

That is not to say that Ratri is any less beautiful than the rays of light which herald her sister's coming. Indeed, the stars themselves are said to be her "twinkling eyes". This is not a Goddess of the darkness. Rather, she is the bright starlit night. She drives away the dark, filling the valleys and heights with her light. This "mother of frost" is radiant in her splendour, possessing the grace of a youthful maiden and adorning herself in the stars of heaven. In fact, the Vedics occasionally referred to Dawn as taking place not only at morning with the rising sun, but also at sunset with the 'rise' of night.

Ratri also takes the form of those things contained

within the darkness. She has taken the splendor of the lion and of the stag, the form of the tiger, the leopard. She is the neighing of the horse, and the wild-man's bellow. So familiar is she with the things that lurk in the darkness, she is most often called upon within spells of protection.

The ancient brahmins frequently requested her to watch over the people as they slept. She prevents any harm befalling them from that which flies or crawls or prowls the mountains. She protects the citizens from the villain and the marauder and the thief in the darkness. A passing association also exists between Ratri and the wolf, owing perhaps to the number of times that she is invoked to protect the people and livestock from their jaws.



The Vedics did not have religious statuary. This figure is part of Ratrija's collection and represents the Goddess Ratri. Photo by M.

On a personal level, this Goddess is somewhat playful, certainly enjoying the air of mystery that surrounds her. She is kind, but also has a sense of humor. She loves a good secret. While she will never intentionally impede your progress, you are the one who will have to peel back the layers of a situation until you uncover the truth at the heart of it. From her, you will receive aid and assistance, albeit in ways that you're never quite certain if she's done anything at all. And, in the end, you'll complete your search, but the path you will have walked will be nothing like the one to which you first believed you were setting your feet.

All encompassing, she is always there, just behind the dawn, the day, and the light. Do not mistake her for the abyss or for the void, as those attributes surely better suit other Goddesses like Nirriti or Vac. Remember, the shining stars are but her adornments, and there are millions upon millions of stars in the heavens.

In the vastness of the Universe, there is much that is Night...

*O resplendent Night,
may you lead us, innocent,
to Dawn, from Dawn to day,
and from day back to you!*

- Atharva Veda, Book XIX, Hymn 50



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A Druid Speaks

Interviewing ADF Members

Michael J Dangler is one of those ADF members that seems to be everywhere all at once. If he is not acting as the Senior Druid of Three Cranes Grove in Ohio, he is attending on of the many festivals hosted by ADF members. We pulled Michael aside to learn more about him and how he fits into the ADF picture.

Oak Leaves: Let us just jump right in. How did you come to polytheism?

Michael J Dangler: I tripped over it on my way out the door one morning when I was late for work, and after I finally got up, I rubbed the bump on my head and shouted, “Hey, that makes sense!”

Actually, it was a fairly slow process. It started around my freshman year in high school, when I became interested in Native American beliefs. Throughout the time I worked with those beliefs, though, I felt more and more like I was stealing the last vestiges of tradition and ownership from a community that didn’t have much left. Eventually, I realized that those beliefs were not very compatible with either my ancestry or my culture. To this day, I have issues with appropriating Native American beliefs into spiritual worship.

I went through a brief time of searching for one thing and then another. Eventually, I stumbled across a few (rather fluffy) books. I won’t embarrass myself by mentioning their titles, but I’ll bet you can all guess them in three tries or less. It says something when a publication by TSR [the company that makes Dungeons & Dragons] is more accurate than the “religious” books out there, though.

Eventually, after sifting through several different religions and umbrella terms, I settled on being a Druid. This meant a bunch of Gods and Goddesses, and I got to learn how to wrap my mind around a bunch of independent entities who control all sorts of phenomena and can have a personal relationship with me. I never practiced the other various Neo-Pagan traditions. I probably decided I was a Druid in the summer between my

sophomore and junior years in high school. No later than January of 1996.

OL: When did you first discover ADF?

Recently, when digging through some old email I had printed out in 1996, I found a response that Isaac Bonewits had sent me regarding Groves in the Chicago area. I had some exposure through the alt.religion.druid newsgroup, which is where I probably picked up the first mention of it. It was not until Lughnassadh of 1999 that I finally contacted a local Grove for real [6th Night Grove in Dayton, OH], though. I attended ritual with them for a while, before striking out on the business of founding my own Grove.

OL: Do you recall your first ADF ritual?

Oh, yes. Very much. I took a friend and he wasn’t so keen on the whole “weird Pagan thing”, and sat on a picnic table about 50 yards away for the full hour and a half that the rite took. His eyebrow got quite the workout, what with all the arching it did that day.

OL: What was it like for you?

I loved it. When Amergin (the Senior Druid) started in on the Two Powers meditation, I felt “religious” for the first time in my life. I still can’t describe it, but I sometimes attempt to by saying I felt “full.” It was a beautiful thing. I often wonder whether the rituals I lead have the same effect on first-timers. The cynic in me says that they don’t, but I hold out a little hope.

OL: Many people may not know, but you follow two “paths”?

Yes. I’m a Druid and a Discordian. A Discordian is a follower of (or dancer with) Eris, a goddess of chaos, discord, and strife. She’s really cool. It’s a strange mix, but after a few years of worrying about it, I finally found a couple of other ADF members with the same affliction, so I no longer worry much about appearances.

OL: How did you bump into these two belief systems?

Well, I stumbled across the word “Druid” the first time in a D&D manual. When I found out that the character class was based on a real social class in Western Europe, I got interested and did some real digging.

I bumped into Eris one night in a bar. She kept buying me drinks until I finally passed out, and when I woke up, we had matching tattoos. I’ll only tell you what the tattoos look like if you’re good. That happened in 1999, as I read my way through the *Illuminatus!* Trilogy. She just kept popping into and out of my life, and forcing my attention on little bits of chaos. Eventually I gave in, and She gave me a pat on the head. It was a strange religious experience.

OL: How do these paths work, or not work, with each other?

They work surprisingly well, actually. There’s a bit of give and a bit of take, and my Discordian friends call me “uptight” and my Druid friends call me “not very serious” (you’d be surprised how insulting both statements are supposed to be).

When I work in my primary pantheon, that of a Gaulish or continental Celtic pantheon, I’m a fully polytheistic person. The deities are individuals and there are many possibilities with them. Esus, Cernunnos, and Taranis all exist. When I move into a Discordian pantheon, though, I’m fully monotheistic. “There is no Goddess but Goddess and She is your Goddess.” Polytheism allows for monotheistic beliefs just as well as it allows for other polytheistic ones. It’s just that the monotheistic beliefs don’t really allow for the polytheistic beliefs. Shockingly, or perhaps not so, I don’t have any issue reconciling these two belief systems.

OL: Many people tend to fear the entire idea of Eris, to the point of being very negative about Her. How is it that you see Her?

Scared? Of Eris? Only on days ending in “Y”.

Chaos isn’t something to be afraid of. Some people want order, order, order. They fight change tooth and nail. They fear what they aren’t sure about. They become

angry at sentences ending in prepositions. They only see destruction, death, and a world where things are different. It’s like the children’s book title that never made the cut: “You’re Different, and That’s Bad.”

Chaos isn’t all that, though. There is also the chaos of potential, the fertile ground that breeds new ideas and positive structures. It is the Ginnungagap from which all things are formed. Every religion has this state of chaos, and we are, directly or indirectly, related to it as created beings. We are, in effect, beings of chaos ourselves. To hold order as a higher standard is fine, but when we practice it to an extreme, rather than in moderation, we run the risk of becoming trapped in an order that is just as destructive (if not moreso) than the disorder that we fear.

Besides, we’re not talking about the Eris from Hesiod’s *Theogony*. We aren’t discussing the mother of Pain and Distress. We’re discussing a Neo-Pagan Goddess who doesn’t much resemble the ancient Greco-Roman deity. To start with, She’s sexier, but She’s also more laid back and fun to hang out with. The Romans were afraid of chaos. The Greeks hated the strife associated with Eris. Americans aren’t. We’re different people, with different needs, and I think that’s what those who fear Her miss.

She showed up in a bowling alley, for Goddess’ sake! Would any Greco-Roman deity be caught dead in those shoes?

OL: I know that you have had problems with bringing Eris into the ADF ritual structure. How do you balance this out with your worship?

I do daily chaos workings that satisfy the Discordian in me. During actual ritual, I deal with Eris during the Outdweller portion of the rite. I have a tendency to invite Her to come listen to rites, and very, very rarely invite Her participation. My first experience with Eris in a full ADF liturgical outline met with major disaster [see article: “Eris Is Coming To Tea”], and subsequent attempts have met similar fates.

I admit to a sense of accomplishment when I invoked Eris at my Dedicant Oath rite and a collective gasp ran through the crowd. There were about a hundred people there, and I’d guess that about a third of them very

nearly had a heart attack that day.

OL: Where does Esus fit in with all of this?

Actually, despite the high visibility that Eris gets, Esus is my primary patron. He's the one who moves me to do things (well, at least things that aren't silly and off the wall). Esus pushed me to form Three Cranes Grove, ADF, and the name of the Grove is tied directly to his myth. I turn to him as a father when I need advice, and I see myself as a (sometimes disobedient) child. If there's a real issue, I go to him over Eris. The problem is, the two have created a sort of accord, in which Esus gets to be the primary deity in my life, but Eris gets to be the more visible of the two, so a lot of people receive a slightly false impression of who I really am.

OL: What is it that you do in ADF?

My first and most important job in ADF is as the Senior Druid of Three Cranes Grove, ADF. I'm also the Deputy Preceptor and the scribe of the ADF Dance Guild, and I do some work as an ADF Office Elf and on the ADF Website. I've also been told that I serve the valuable purpose of "looking stupid so no one else has to."

OL: What do you do as a Deputy Preceptor?

Well, I was hoping that I would get a Colt .45, a silver star, and be allowed to form a posse and hunt down Dedicants who were behind on updating their meditation journals, but Jenni [the ADF Preceptor] told me I wasn't allowed to do that.

Instead, I spend a lot of time on the ADF-Dedicants email list; I read and comment on several Dedicants' LiveJournal [livejournal.com] entries, as well as reading the Dedicants community on the same website; I mentor a few Dedicants; I can approve Dedicant Programs (and just recently approved a new one); and I help with the revision of various study programs when asked.

The best thing is how much I learn from helping the Dedicants. I haven't ever read a journal entry or spoken to a Dedicant when I didn't learn something new and impressive. It's given me a unique insight into the competence and the sincerity that ADF members display in their religious and spiritual work.

OL: As the Deputy Preceptor, and the person farthest along in the Generalist Study Program, why do you think so few people are enrolled in the various educational programs that ADF has to offer?

Well, I'm not totally sure I'm the furthest along in the GSP, but I hope that there are still people out there making headway.

I think part of the reason people haven't enrolled is that we require the Dedicant Program to be finished first. At a full year of study, the DP isn't small potatoes when it comes to a study program. I would like to see the DP required for most leadership positions in ADF eventually, as at the moment there are very few positions in ADF that require it. I think that if our leaders had worked through it, they could not only help distribute the work of the ADF Preceptor (by passing their Grove members in the case of Senior Druids), but could also start working through the Clergy Training Program or the Bardic Guild Study Program or the Artisans Guild Study Program.

There's also an aspect of leading by example. If our leaders start finishing the programs and encouraging their Grovemates or encouraging other Solitaries, we might start to see more life in the study programs, too.

OL: What do you think can be done to help people take the steps to join the various study programs?

Encourage the Dedicant Program as often as possible. It's a great program, and it's under-used in ADF. That's step one.

Step two is a bit more involved. There was a study done recently by the Dance Guild when we were trying to gain approval, and it showed that we have a very small number of people enrolled in our study programs. This tells me that it's possible that our study programs aren't meeting some of the needs our members have.

To solve this, I'd like to ask that the members of ADF, those who have the most vested interest in our study programs, to tell the ADF Preceptor, the Guild preceptors, me, and anyone else who will listen what it is that you want to learn. Tell these people what would make you join a study program, and what support systems you

would like. If we're doing something wrong, we don't know it unless you tell us. Of course, we can't take every idea and run with it, but with input from the students, we can make the programs useful and workable.

OL: Why did you decide to start an ADF Grove?

Mostly so I could spend more time with my girlfriend, as I was driving to Dayton two or three times a month, and it was taking the full day nearly every Sunday, which seriously cut into the time I could spend with her. As I became more and more involved in 6th Night Grove, I was spending less and less time with her. Finally, I realized that my religion was getting in the way of my own happiness, so I started a local Grove. There's more work involved with that, but at least I'm not adding two hours of drive time onto it.

Of course, one of my patrons was giving me the opportunity to help officiate ritual and was laying the groundwork for starting a Grove in Columbus, too. The push that Esus gave me was more of an opening door than it was a push onto the path, but I stepped through that door and started my work in the local community. It was mutually beneficial to Esus, ADF, and myself, and it was about time that Columbus had a new Grove.

OL: Any advice for those individuals who may wish to start a Protogrove or Grove?

First, start with self-examination. Why do you want to start a Grove? Is it for the right reasons? Do you know what you're doing, and if not, do you know where to get help?

Second, be prepared to fly by the seat of your pants sometimes. Not everything will work out every time, and more often than not, it won't work out at all.

Finally, ask for help if you need it. ADF-SD is a great email list for Senior Druids and Grove Organizers to read and ask questions on. Heck, I still ask questions on it every so often.

OL: How does ADF on a national level interact with Three Cranes Grove on a local level and vice versa?

Actually, a local Grove can usually get along just fine

without dealing with the international leadership, so long as we submit the required quarterly reports. On the other hand, we are fortunate to have a few Guild officers and even a Mother Grove member in the Grove, and we're rather proud of the impact that Three Cranes has on the international level. It shows me that we have active, quality members who are willing to get their hands dirty. Those members who are not involved as officers or with any elected position are becoming more active on the ADF lists, and their intelligent and thoughtful commentary is just as valuable to the organization as a whole as any position in leadership.

OL: When talk of ADF occurs, you seem to turn to the virtues listed within the Dedicant Program. Would you care to share with us those virtues and what they mean to you?

The 9 Virtues are: wisdom, piety, vision, perseverance, integrity, courage, hospitality, moderation, and fertility. I wouldn't say that I use them as a moral code, per se, but rather that I use them as a screen through which I can take a problem and analyze it. I used them to take a hard look at a decision of my own recently.

I was considering applying for an exemption to the rules of applying for Dedicant Clergy, as I won't be eligible until next year. After a lot of thought and prayer, I sat down to work through it on my own. The process went a bit like this: Do I want to try to push this through and request an exception to the rule, or do I want to play by the rules and work with them? How do the virtues fit into this? If I'm going to act with integrity, should I be looking at ways to circumvent the rules? If I want to act with hospitality, should I ignore the rules set down? If I wish to act with wisdom, should I rush in just because I believe that ADF would grant the credentials? Finally, if I truly wish to be pious, should I even consider clergy credentials in order to "test the waters"?

Quite often, applying a few or all of the virtues to a problem can radically change your outlook on the issue. It did for me in this case, and helped me get at the root of my questions.

OL: Why do you think the members of ADF need to give more attention to these virtues?

I think that if we're teaching values and virtues, but never applying them, then we're doing ourselves a disservice. ADF doesn't require its members to follow the virtues, and even in the Dedicant Program we ask Dedicants to look at them critically and not to blindly accept them (in fact, if a Dedicant has a personal disagreement with any of the virtues, we encourage rejection of that virtue). Despite this, I think that they form a valuable criteria for looking at problems and solving them in a way that you can be proud of your decision. I'd like to see ADF members make more use of them in their writings, and I would love to see more thoughts and discussion on them. Who knows? Maybe we'll come up with a better set of virtues to use?

OL: Many people experience ADF mostly through the various mailing lists and Oak Leaves. Do you think that ADF's Internet presence gives a clear picture of what the ADF community is?

In some cases. I think that the website paints a rather accurate picture of who we are and what we do. I think that most of our communications with members and potential members show that we stick to our principles. I also think that we're well represented on most of the major online Druid communities, as well as several reconstructionist communities.

There is a darker side to the internet presence, though, as well. Occasionally, ADF comes under attack in various forums online, and quite often the person who shouts the loudest wins the day on message boards, journals, and over email. I haven't seen many attacks that had real merit, but those of us who have a strong online presence need to remember to talk about the things we like about ADF, too. I don't mean that we should be all light and love about ADF, but it doesn't do us any good to moan about where ADF is lacking if we fail to mention the good things about it. Besides, if you can't find anything good to say about ADF, why are you still here?

Another thing that has come up recently is the issue of the level of scholarship being too high on some of the ADF lists. I would hate to discourage good scholarship, so instead I'll ask that the ADF members who are daunted by the big fish in the small ponds to start asking those big fish questions. Don't let them get away with extemporizing on a subject until it's devoid of feeling.

Attack them with good questions and make them think, too. In my experience, there is nothing most of these people like better than a good debate. I know I do.

Also, don't let the focus on scholarship cause you to think that personal spiritual experience isn't valued. It is, honest! Just remember, it's one thing to claim that Odin showed up with two eyes and wearing a pair of tights in a dream and a whole other thing to claim that he was depicted that way in the Eddas.

Recently, a mantra was posted by Rob Henderson to the ADF-Dedicants list in response to some frustrations. It was simple, plain, and effective:

"ADF is *not* the mailing lists."

Repeat as often as necessary.

ADF is a church, not a bunch of email lists. Don't let the lists take over your spiritual life, especially if they're smothering you.

OL: What would you advise people to do in order to see the ADF community in action?

Get active! ADF can do a lot, but without the (wo)manpower of the members behind it, ADF is a lame duck. We have a lot of potential in the membership, so much that I think we're under-using the members that we do have. There are many Guilds with open positions that they can't fill, and even some of our international leadership positions run unopposed. If you think you have the skills, run for an office! Let your vision contribute to ADF's vision!

OL: I like to think that ADF is young with a promising here and now and a very bright future. Where do you see ADF in 5 years? 20? 50?

That's my same feeling. ADF's future is very bright, and I have an undying sense of optimism in the members. As far as where ADF will be in the future, I see the organization growing and providing services it can't at the moment. More than that, I see many more Groves owning land and buildings, and more permanent worship locations showing up.

One of the most important things to me is the festival scene, where I expect our leaders and those going through the various study programs to be presenting workshops that detail information required to complete courses in ADF's study programs. We have a lot of workshops at ADF festivals now, but it's rare that you can take the knowledge provided and apply it directly to any of the study programs. I would love to see that change.

I have to admit, though, that I'm not great with visionary planning. I prefer to take things one step at a time, and to work them out fully without having a set of major goals that may or may not still be feasible when you get halfway there. Honestly, I see ADF as being around in 50 years, but I have no idea what it looks like. Hopefully there will be a place for 75 year-old children such as I will be then.

OL: The topic of clergy is always an important one in communities such as ADF's. What are your feelings on clergy within ADF and the community at large?

Over the past month or so I've given this a remarkable amount of thought. Personally, I feel that the role of clergy is to serve both the gods and the community. The ADF community comes first, of course, for any ADF Priest, but the rest of the Pagan community should also have access to that Priest. I also think that they need to be involved in several aspects of their community, and prepared to perform the rites that the community requires. As I struggle to decide whether I will apply for clergy credentials myself, I find more things that I feel clergy should be prepared to do, and I wonder if I can do those things.

OL: What traits do you think a clergy member should have?

The willingness to do things not for themselves should top the list. I don't mean a life of denial of the flesh, or even necessarily that being clergy is their primary job or goal. What I mean is that an ADF Priest should not be holding ritual because she feels that it is good for her, but rather that it is good for the gods.

An ADF Priest should hold himself to a higher standard of conduct, not only with his deeds, but his thoughts as

well.

Finally, an ADF priest should be willing to make sacrifices when they're required. At the same time, an ADF Priest should not give up those things that make her who she is, and should not give up what is important to her.

Again, as I struggle over the decision to apply myself, I wonder if my life, as I wish to live it, would allow me to do those things. It's a hard thing to think about.

OL: What do you see as your greatest accomplishment, thus far, as a member of ADF?

I have my Dedicant Program certificate, which was big, and I have my Grove's provisional charter. Those two things are measurable. The thing I've gotten most fulfillment out of, though, is being told by Dedicants that my help is useful. Being told that I've helped someone is the best feeling in the world, and to know that I've helped them make a bit of sense about things is a wonderful experience. It reminds me why I spend all the time I do reading the lists and checking journals.

OL: Who do you admire within ADF and why?

My scribe and my pursewarden, Judi Nielsen and Jenni Hunt, respectively. They really do most of the work in the Grove, and I'd be lost without them. I'm quite serious when I say I have the best Executive Committee in ADF.

OL: Outside of ADF?

More than anyone else, my own father. I don't know if I could explain it all that well, but he's influenced me in so many ways I can't even begin to do it justice. I might try, but none of them have been terribly religious (or even necessarily exciting to the general readership), so I'll leave it at that for now.

OL: How do you balance your religion with the rest of the pieces of your life?

I fit a lot of my religion into the times that I'm alone, as I see it as an intensely personal thing. There are portions of it that I am very public about though, but I fight to keep from wearing my religion as a badge. I don't men-

tion it in my office, nor do I make an issue out of it when there is no reason. I'm open about who I am, but you have to ask me before I will discuss my religion with you, and it has to be a fairly pointed question. I've been studying religion too long to talk about it, I sometimes think.

OL: I know that you perform some form of worship every day. Why do you feel that this is important?

It keeps my mind on the gods, and on the virtues. I remain conscious of right action, and decision making is much clearer when the consequences of your actions can be seen more clearly. It opens my mind to the possibility of the sacred, and that feeling lasts all day. It's kind of like training your eyes to see things that are hidden, and your ears to hear the whisper of a certain immature goddess on the wind.

I'm a big fan of doing daily rites, yes. I know that it's hard to find the time to do them, but sometimes the effort of doing the rite is all the sacrifice required, and sometimes it's the only way to stay sane. Besides, when you've done them as long as I have, they become so important that you have to either do them or you start to wonder whether your luck is tied to them or not, and you feel naked if you leave the house without doing one.

OL: How do you communicate with the gods?

There are five ways that I do this, really.

The first is through a shared symbol set. I tend to use the runes for this, and studied them extensively for a while so that I could finally get the symbols down well enough to only occasionally be confused by their meaning.

The second is through opening to them during daily ritual. I call out to the gods and I see if they will answer.

The third is through the occasional sign. One morning I drove to work and encountered a crane flying low over my car, and the same morning I received a raise. Of course, it wasn't a very good raise, but even the gods can't make the state of Ohio give its employees a good raise.

The fourth is through full ritual, in which offerings and

praises are exchanged for blessings.

The fifth is through simple conversation. Very often, these conversations go on for an hour or more, and they're usually spontaneous. I simply start talking, or the gods do, and we end up talking until either something interrupts or we conclude. I sometimes write them down, but not often.

OL: Sometimes the gods can leave us confusing messages. What are your suggestions for figuring things out?

I have a tendency not to rush into things. I don't want to interpret every little thing as a message from the gods, but similarly I don't want to miss anything they may leave. To that end, I generally consider everything from two directions: the sacred and the profane. I tend to err on the side of the sacred, but I don't let it make me superstitious or overly cautious. Not everything is a sign, and the gods sometimes have better things to do than mess with us, contrary to popular belief. If it's something we're meant to know, we'll know it soon enough.

It may seem like my suggestion is, in short, "Don't try to figure this out." That's not the case at all. I just think that, when it's all confusing, we need to step back and consider things, not assume that we've figured it out and go running off into the darkness. And we need to admit to ourselves that sometimes, things just happen, and there's no good reason for it.

OL: I want to thank you for your time, it has been most appreciated. I wish to end this with one final question: what is your fondest memory of an ADF event?

At Summerland in 2001, I was standing in the opening rite during the opening prayers. I opened my eyes during the Earth Mother invocation and I was shocked to see the ground moving in response to the invocation. It was as if the earth was coming up to greet the prayer, and I was amazed at the feeling that this gave me. As the prayer ended, the earth settled back into its place, but I knew what I had seen, and that was enough for me.

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The Wandering Druid

ADF Members' Tales From the Road

Clear As Children

by N. Agnaya

We had settled upon going to India for Ratrija's 40th birthday. Our schedule was to fly to London then Mumbai and then landing in Delhi to spend a few days in the area. Delhi became our base camp for the first few days which had us taking a hired car to Hairdwar on one day and Agra on the next. The next stop was Khajuraho followed by the Bandhagarh park and ending in Orissa for a trip from Bhubaneswar to Konark and then to Puri before heading back to Delhi for our flight home.

Our goals were to swim in the Ganges, see tigers, visit various temples, pay homage to Surya, see the ocean and for me to perform my wedding to Agni that would instate the bonds that had been broken in my Vedic wedding ceremony to Ratrija.



The fatigue of not having a proper nights sleep set in. I found myself drifting off into a dark slumber; the voice of an airline steward echoing in my ears: "Coffee? Coffee? Coo...fff...eeee...."

I felt something hard slam into my foot. I found myself stuck in a thick slumber, where all attempts of movement were halted by the feeling of being trapped in a vat of melted marshmallow. Fighting to wake up I felt my body twitching in an effort to stay asleep.

My eyes fluttered open and moved directly to the ground by my feet.

"Hello Yama." I said with my inner voice.

"Hello." Yama responded.

An old man is laying on the ground, blood trickling from his right nostril. His eyes are glazed over, his mouth agape and showing well aged teeth and a slightly raised tongue.

"Is he dead?" I ask Yama.

"Not yet."

We were half way through our journey.



Temple at Khajuraho, Taken by N. Agnaya

"When will he die?" I asked Yama.

"Soon."

"We all have to die, I suppose."

"Yes, we do."

I looked over as a rush of people come forward with the call for a doctor from the airline steward. They prod the old man, fishing for a heart beat, searching for the means to give him mouth to mouth. The man never made it off of the flight alive.

Yama's voice softly permeated my mind:

"Welcome to India."

Delhi

The first thing you notice about Delhi is the dirt. The layer of golden brown dust that sticks to everything. Once you get further into the city you start to notice the soot covered buildings. Then it hits you: the vast number of people. It is like being swallowed alive by a sea of bodies.

Then you notice the sheer volume of autos on the road. It is an intricate ballet of cars moving into each other head on and swerving at just the precise moment which avoids an instant (and painful) death.

“Beep! Beep! Beep!”

It is a sound that echoes. Every time you pass, every time you move, every time you stop, every time someone else moves; the air is engulfed with the sound of horns.

Our driver was a lovely man from Nepal. He graciously complimented me left and right and told us a tad about Delhi, his family and his faith (Hinduism). He made many jokes at his “bad” English and the Delhi traffic.

We stopped by a book store so that I could purchase some books on Indian dance. Then we went to the different sights. We saw the B’ahai Temple, the Red Fort and the India Gate. We also went to the Gandhi park and museum.

The Gandhi park is beautiful. I think that is because it is so clean and quiet. It is an oasis in Delhi; we could not understand why more people were not there. You could see the dark black stone slab marking the point

of cremation by walking around the top pathway. A school of young children were walking around it and giving their respects as we wandered by.

We then went to the hotel, tipped our driver handsomely and went up to our room for the night. Ratrija went back down to pay the travel agent for the hired cars and train tickets.

The entire day out the most I got from people was stared

at. A few European and American travelers checking out of the hotel that morning gave me dirty looks, but mostly everyone just looked at me with their heads slightly tilted to the side. Most of the hotel staff would give me a “Namaste” and tell me I looked very beautiful in a sari.

While Ratrija was waiting for the manager of the travel shop, an assistant came asked him if he could ask a question.

“I don’t want to be rude, or offensive,” he said.

“Go ahead, ask,” Ratrija replied.

“Your wife. She shaves her head?”

“Yes,” Ratrija answered.

“She is very beautiful, don’t you think she would look better with hair?” he asked as a wave of regret washed over his face. “Oh, no.. I mean.. umm.. uhh...”

“I know what you mean,” Ratrija laughed. “I think she looks very beautiful with no hair.”

“Yes, she is very beautiful,” he said. “Can I ask you another question... why did she do it? Did she did it for religion?”

“You have a wife yes? Or sister? Or girlfriend?” Ratrija

asked.

“Yes.”

“I’m sure you have heard them say that they cannot do anything with their hair and wish they could just get rid of it, right? Well, my wife didn’t just say it, she did it.”

The man laughed in understanding.



B'ahai Temple at Delhi Taken by N. Agnayi



Taj Mahal at Agra Taken by N. Agnayi

.It seems he was very afraid that I was a religious fanatic

for all Hindus.

The Ganges at this point is colder and, more importantly, cleaner than elsewhere on the “plains” in India. By the time the Ganges reaches Varanasi, it is so polluted that the water is a murky brown.

Agra

As we entered Agra, the driver pulled over to a small group

of men. One of them came forward and hopped into the car. he introduced himself as our guide and asked what our plans were. We told him we wished to go to Fatehpur Sikri and then the Taj. He teeth were stained from too much bettle nut use.

We then drove in a maze of streets. Agra was not as crowded as Delhi but it was more dirty and polluted with paper and plastic garbage everywhere.

The car pulled into a parking lot a few hundred yards from the Taj Mahal. We walk up to the Taj, stopping to take pictures along the way.

We finish the tour and head back to the car. Groups of people are stopping to point and smile.

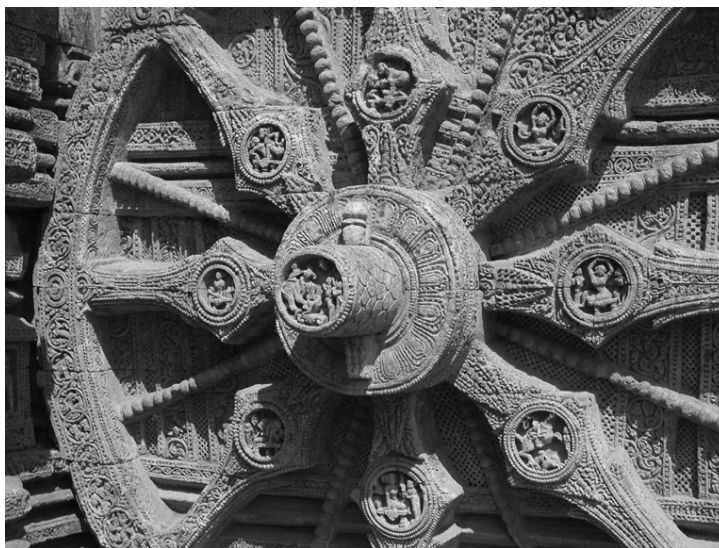
“They’re all talking about you.” he says. “They’re shocked that a Westerner is wearing a sari and knows how to wear it!”

Hairdwar

Hairdwar is the same distance away from Delhi as Agra, only it is in the opposite direction. Hairdwar is one of the holiest cities in India and has no alcohol or meat within it. It is at the foot hills of the Himalayas and is the spot where the Ganges flows from the mountains into the plains. Because of this it is an important pilgrimage spot



Temple at Khajuraho Taken by N. Agnayi



Surya Templs at Konark Taken by N. Agnayi

Eventually made our way to Hairdwar. We know we have arrived because out of no where mountains just pop up out of the fog. They are the most beautiful shade of dark blue and sit against the sky with such grandeur.

Making a mad dash across the road we headed past crowds of pilgrims, beggars, merchants and rickshaw drivers to the pedestrian bridge that led over the river.

I pulled the end of my white sari up over my head, adjusting my sun glasses to try and catch a glimpse of the Ganges between the large sleek bridge system and throngs of people that seemingly followed us around. We crossed the bridge, the blue Himalayas gazing down upon us from a coat of fog.

It was not long before I found myself being torn away, pushed off by a sea of people seeking redemption of some sort. Their

need I understood: after just spending a day in Agra I could still feel the polluted town’s filth clinging to my soul. Agra changed a person, and in my case it was not for the better.

We walked over to the left and found a flight of stairs and climb up, finding ourselves on another, less crowded pedestrian bridge. This bridge leads to the ghat so we walk onto it.

We find a nice semi-private place and proceed to watch everyone else to see what it is that they are doing. The men seem to be stripping down to their underwear and the women down to their petticoat and cholis (underskirt and blouse).

The water appeared to have a quick current. The occasional loaf of bread or pocket of ashes would come twirling down the waves.

"I cannot do this." I stated.

"If you don't, you'll regret it for the rest of your life." Ratrija says. He was right, of course. "I'll go first."

He then proceeded to take off his kurta pajama and stood there in his dark grey underwear. A small crowd of men stopped about ten feet away, watching and waiting.

This part of the Ganges had stone steps that led down into the water. A chain link fence made of two rows went along the side of the water. Every few feet a chain goes from the fence to the ghat itself.

Ratrija climbed down into the water and grabbed onto the chain. He crouched down so the water is splashing against his waist, then he dunks his head under. Once. Then twice. He sat in the water for a while before climbing back up to where I had a towel waiting.

"I just realized something." I say. "My sari is white, so is my petticoat..."

"So...?" he replies, pulling his clothing back on.

"You do know what happens to white clothing when it gets wet, yes?"

"Oh. Well, I'll be waiting here with the towel from when you come up!" he smiled.

I slowly unwrapped my sari and handed it over to him. I took off my sandals and stepped onto the first step of the ghat. I dipped my foot into the waves, it was a tad chilly but not as cold as I thought it would be.. The current pulled at me, tempting me to let go and go along with it on it's journey through the land.

The water rushed over me. It was the most invigorating feeling. I held tight to the slick chains in the water and crouched down into a dance position, my left leg stretched out behind me and my right leg bent, dipping my head under the surface.

"I have come before you. I am here. Agni you are my lord, I am honoured to worship." I said in Sanskrit, I dared not open my eyes. I raised my head from the water. The water flowed over me with a swift strength, I could feel my body beginning to numb with the chill.

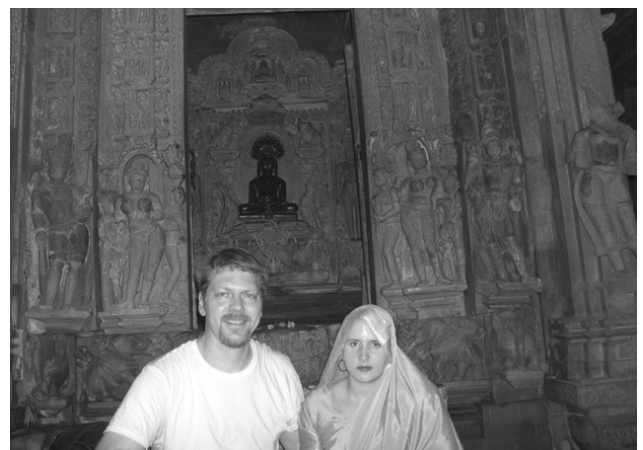
I clamored out, attempting not to slip on the stone steps that millions of people have walked on before. I came up out of the water as my husband fumbled to get the towel around my waist. I rung out my petticoat as best as I could and then wrapped my sari back around me, tucking in the pleats, wrapping the end around my shoulder and up over my head.

A priest came by, wearing nothing more than a sash and a dhoti. He stood silently before us, placing a bit of red kum-kum on my forehead with a short slender match stick. Ratrija gave him our last remaining rupee and then we head off the ghat and back to the car.

Nothing bothers us from this point. It is as if the weight of my entire life has been washed away and all that remains is pure joy.

The ride back is quiet and peaceful. We watch the pilgrims wander the side of the road for Sivaratri, we watch the people working in the fields and the occasional person shitting in the woods. We pass groups of people dancing and singing over large portable P.A. systems.

We left Hairdwar clear as children.



Ratrija & N. Agnaya in a temple at Khajuraho



The above are merely excerpts from the vast journal entries written during my first trip to India. I will be going over our travel in depth with video at Walking With Fire: An Eastern Indo-European Conference <http://www.walkingwithfire.org>



Living Our Druidry

Personal Experiences In The Practice Of Our Druidry

My First Druidic Experience

by Josh Yeager

I first learned about druids in my college French civilization courses. There was brief mention of the indigenous peoples of Gaul (France) practicing nature-based religion before the Roman conquest, and for a brief period thereafter. Our textbook offered minimal information about druidic practice, but contained a fascinating old wood engraving of a druidic “priest” in a long cloak, gathering mistletoe from a sacred oak with a sickle.

There was also mention of a very sacred grove, hidden deep in the forest of Carnutes (near modern day Orléans), where annually representatives from each druidic grove would convene to discuss both civic and religious matters that concerned those living in the Celtic world. There were also the obligatory exaggerated caricatures of alchemists and magicians in the French Asterix & Obelisk cartoons, but that was about the extent of my experience with druids until recently.

I relocated to Phoenix, AZ last summer from the east coast, and I must admit that I have had some strange -- even disconcerting vocational and interpersonal experiences out here. Despite the rocky start, I continually feel an underlying sense that this is where I need to be.

While enjoying a refreshingly temperate autumn day on my patio, I dug out my old French textbook and came across the old wood engraving again. This time however, the image really piqued my interest. Armed with a harefooted Internet connection, and a new focus for my rapacious curiosity, I began researching “everything druid”. I started taking notes, compiling lists, and drawing parallels between my modern existence, and the experiences of our occidental forebears.

I’d always held a great reverence for nature, and despite my primarily Germanic heritage and quasi-Christian upbringing, I’d always felt as though a pantheon of deities made much more sense than one singular male entity lording over me with threats of eternal damnation. The more I read and learned about druids, the louder that chord inside me vibrated. All of this really began to

click and I could easily see modern applications for this supposedly “dead religion”.

When I sussed out Linda Costello’s contact info online, I was more than pleased to learn that plans were well underway for establishing a local Phoenix area proto-grove. Linda and I briefly communicated via email for a few weeks, and she reassured me that sexual orientation should not be an issue with this group. That was not only affirming to me as a gay man, but it really crystallized my desire to see what this druid grove was all about.

Now mind you, just because I am gay does not mean I define myself by my sexuality. However, in my estimation, it does seem rather fruitless to fraternize with any group or organization, which would cause one to have feelings of self-loathing, guilt, or otherwise incite negative feelings. I was now determined to attend and participate in the upcoming Winter Solstice celebration.

The celebration was set to be held the Friday night before the actual solstice, in the backyard of the home of one of the proto-groves inaugural members, Shevon. While terribly excited about attending this celebration, I was still somewhat skeptical about what to expect, and who might be there.

You should understand that I, like many people, are leery of organized religions in general, and prefer to commune with the powers that be in a more personal way. I don’t necessarily have a label for what I do, or follow the teachings of any particular group. My spiritual beliefs and practices have accumulated organically through time and intuition.

I admit there was trepidation on my part about meeting up with this group of people. So I brought my spiritual sidekick and all around good buddy Jesus to act as my “wingman” that night. Don’t be fooled by the name. Jesus is a buddy of mine who grew up in a fundamentally Catholic household here in Phoenix - not he of Nazareth fame.

When that Friday night arrived, Jesus and I gathered our snack offerings and our courage and drove to Shevon's place. We saw a few others poking around outside and lead them to the backyard, as proscribed by Linda in her invite. We saw all kinds of folks out back, milling about, casually mixing and chatting, and enjoying the warmth of an outdoor fireplace.

I have to admit that being in a strange place, with strange folks, for a supposed ritualistic solstice experience made me a tad bit nervous. I wasn't really sure what to expect. Jesus and I looked at each other. "Should we bolt or hang out and see what this is about?" I asked him. He knew as well as I did that I wanted this experience, so I took a deep breath and smiled nervously at a jovial woman in a cloak. Then Linda emerged from the house and explained a bit about the ritual in which we were about to partake. That's when things really got underway.

We were called into the sacred circle via the east entrance, and as we filed in one by one, each of us stopped at the entrance where we were spiritually aspersed with a few drops of water, and cleansed by thick wafting phantoms of smoke billowing out of a sage smudge stick. The sage smelled wonderful and actually helped to calm my nerves a bit. One by one we all entered the circle and the ceremony was underway.

While I was not familiar with the chants and incantations, I absorbed everything that was going on around me with intense wonder and interest. We'd all received booklets to guide us through the ceremony, but I didn't feel as though I needed mine. Everything seemed to flow naturally, and not much explanation was needed. And like myself, most of those in attendance had not been to a druidic rite before, but the few druids who were well-versed and knowledgeable lead the way for us.

The ceremony consisted of all the standard things one might expect in a pagan ritual of this nature. There were offerings made to the deities. The elements were invoked. Our ancestors were honoured and appeased. There was even a communion-like blessing involving sacred water (as well as apple juice and cookies!), but the most satisfying aspects of the ceremony were the openness and inclusion imparted by our druidic hosts.

In the beginning of the ceremony there was a attunement rite lead by Shevon, wherein we all joined hands, closed

our eyes and meditated on becoming tall sturdy oak trees with long healthy branches reaching skyward, and deep roots grounding us in Mother Earth. This practice was so positive and fulfilling for me. Not only am I a firm believer in positive visualization and meditation, but this rite really calmed my nerves, focused my breathing, and closed the circuit that connected me with the rest of the group. I then felt at one with my surroundings.

There were two other highlights of the experience that I'd like to share. In the middle of the ceremony we were all handed pens and paper stars and invited to inscribe our aspirations for the coming year on paper stars. The stars were then burned in effigy to the solstice. I feel as though this type of communication with the deities/universe is quite powerful.

Secondly, we were all invited to come forth to the middle of the circle and actively participate by accepting a sacral wreath into our grasp, and offering our praise, thoughts, prayers and meditations to the powers that be. We were allowed to honour our chosen deities in our own ways, yet amongst our peers and in the middle of a power circle.

How warmly accepting and affirming it was to worship amongst my peers, by my own ways and means, yet enjoying the comfort of the group's energy in sending my messages of blessing!

As the ceremony closed, we filed back out of the sacred circle, back into this time and space -- back into Shevon's backyard in 2003. I was still the same person, unscathed and unharmed by my experience. And to the contrary, I felt so much more spiritually balanced and satisfied for having participated.

Afterwards everyone socialized, snacked, and enjoyed each other's company. There was a general feeling of good cheer and a distinct new balance in the ether around us. I met some wonderful folks and I'm looking forward to continuing on my journey, now bolstered by this new experience, and secure in the knowledge that there are goodhearted people working for the common good on this oft-forsaken Earth.





The Solitary Path

News, Resources & Rituals For ADF's Solitary Members

Solitary Druid

by Joey Bernard

Welcome to the ramblings of a solitary Druid. It's been a little while since there's been a voice for solitaires. While I won't and can't speak for all solitaires, I hope that what I write will resonate with some of the many out there. I hope to continue these articles over the next several issues, and maybe stick around for a regular column. In this issue, I guess I'll introduce myself, and the idea of the solitary.

My name is Joey Bernard and I've been what I would call a Druid for quite a few years now. I guess you could call me an agnostic Druid; I don't necessarily believe in any particular form of divinity, but I do feel that there must be something else out there. And so I look. These columns will be ramblings about my search, and how that happens as a solitary.

We should begin with defining exactly what kind of creature is a solitary Druid? There are several species of this very odd duck. There are those who are solitary due to geography. These would prefer to congregate with others of their kind, but due to difficulty in travelling (either because of distance or capability) they are unable. These solitaires are solitaires of circumstance.

Then there is another species that are solitary due to temperament. These solitaires prefer to work alone. They either don't feel comfortable sharing these deepest experiences, or they don't see the use of having a grove to work with. These types are quite happy wandering on their own, occasionally working with others, but for the most part working on their own.

I am a bit of a mix of both. As far as I know, I'm the

only ADFer on the East Coast of Canada, so I would say that definitely places me in the geographic solitary camp. But I am also much more comfortable working as a solitary as well. I relish in the discovery of some new bit of lore, or some revelation in a ritual. I also enjoy the freedom of being able to set the schedule and content of what ritual will be, or what readings I will be doing this week. That freedom is one of the most precious things to me.

As well, I focus on what in ceremonial magick would be called High Magick. I don't practise magick and ritual to change the outside world, but focus on my own spiritual development. As such, I find it much more comfortable to do these types of workings alone. I should also stress that working alone can be down-right scary at times, too. Without the immediacy of a mentor that would be available if you were part of a grove, you can definitely have the feeling of being out there without a net. But that's is part of the exhilaration. Sometimes you need to work without a net to really feel engaged in life. Life, for the most part, is far from the safe, comfortable complacency that seems prevalent in our society.

This is a small look at where I am coming from as a solitary Druid. In the up coming issues I will be discussing things like ritual for one, some history and lore of famous solitaires (wasn't Taliesin a solitary?), and occasionally some interesting bit of lore (especially when I haven't been able to think of anything else to write).

Until next time, stop reading this and go out and listen to your local tree. S/he is much smarter than I claim to be.

Slavic Kin

Who are the Slavs? What languages did they speak? What did they believe?

The Slavic Kin exists to provide a welcoming environment for those seeking information about the Slavic peoples and to provide support for those of us who practice a Slavic religion. Please join us!

Chieftain: Katherine Milechkine beebop1@earthlink.net **Assistant Chieftain: Francesca Hedrick**
ladybythesea@yahoo.com **Scribe: Sharon Gorbacz** dragynphyre@mindspring.com



Call Of The Oak

News, Resources & Rituals From ADF's International Community

Ritual Announcements

by Zoe Willowsong

Dancing Lights Protogrove of Toronto, Ontario,
Canada has the following rituals planned:

Mabon
September 23rd, 2004
Led by Dana
Culture: Norse

Samhain
October 30th, 2004
Led by Zoe
Culture: Celtic

Yule
December 21st, 2004
Led by Rod
Culture: Celtic

Imbolg
February 3rd, 2005
Led by Rod
Culture: Celtic

All dates are tentative, so please contact us for more
information if you'd like to attend.

Web site: <http://groves.adf.org/dancing-lights>
E-mail: dancinglightsgrove@yahoo.ca
Phone number: (905)579-3121



Attention all Artists!

ADF has issued you a Challenge!



Each quarter we will send out a word, an idea. You can take that idea and explore it through whatever medium you choose! When you are done, simply send in a picture or copy of whatever it was that you came up with to Oak Leaves. We shall then pick a few to place into the next issue of Oak Leaves along with the next Challenge! That means you have three months to finish your project. You don't have to be a member of any guild to participate, you just have to be creative!

So here is your first challenge!

Ancestors

Deadline for this challenge is January 1st, 2005.

What can you do that would express your concept of Ancestors? What color would it be? What size, what would you make it out of? These are just a few questions you get you started! Lets see some ART!

Please send your submissions to the Oak Leaves Art Director at Vedis_jansdottir@mchsi.com

Little Acorns



Usas

Ratri

Usas is the Vedic Goddess of the Dawn. She is the most beautiful of all Goddesses. She is the wife of Surya, lover of Agni and sister to Aditya Bhaga and Ratri.

Ratri is the Vedic Goddess Night. She is not the darkness of night but rather the light which drives away the darkness at night.



Glow

The radiant glow of the morning sun
Rising over the horizon
Caught me by surprise

For in the opposite direction
Setting in the distance
The lucent glow of the full moon

I stared at the moon
Feeling a chilling sadness
Its departure took of me

I looked to the sun
Sensing a warming joy
Stirring within me

I send a part of me on the setting moon
To shine upon your night

I smile at the rising sun
That brings a part of you to my day.

-Francesca

Praise Offering to the Sun

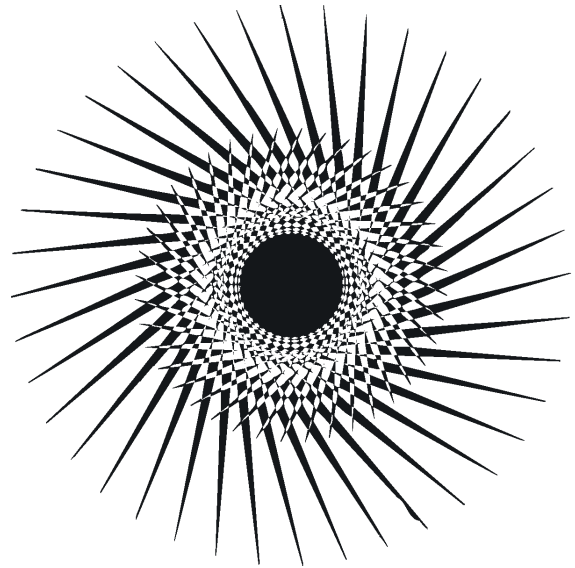
Helios Elektor!
Robed in flame, girt with stars;
Eyes flashing beneath your helmet of gold.

Helios Kritês!
All-seeing, All-hearing;
Neither men nor gods can hide from your gaze.

Helios Eleutherios!
Light of day! Light of Truth!
We see all things clearly as you blaze above.

Helios The Shining,
Helios the Judge,
Helios of Freedom,
Hail Helios the Sun!

-Emerald



The Bower

*What are the temples of men but pallid screens that hide
The glorious cathedral heaven has fashioned without?
And what so fair do these shrines of lath and stone hold
That compares with the enchantment of moonlit woods?*

I walk among trees veiled in mist
In the grey light between worlds. Crossing
A brook, I come suddenly upon a bower
Of moon-kissed lilies jeweled with dew.
They wait in silence for archangel roses to wake
And spread their sweet perfumed mantles.
Caressed by gentle fingers of jasmine wind, I roam
Through a faery realm of ponds and green-meadowed vales
As dawn's blush, like a wordless prayer, rises into the heavens.
While I journey, the grasses speak to me of Her whose tread
They bear unhurt. They wave their tiny hands
To reveal the way that I must take to seek Her.
And lo, I find Her in a meadow where blue-bells grow.
Her golden orb is wrapped in the Lord of Morning's
Salmon hued cloak. And there She gathered me within Her
heart anew.

-J. Michael Robertson (Grey Elf)



Drawing Down the Moon

by Margot Adler

ISBN 014019536X

List Price \$16.95

I have owned this book for ten years, and finally sat down to read it to meet this requirement of the dedicants program. While reading it, I kept wondering what took me so long? I found the book to be extremely interesting and helpful in understanding the history of neo-paganism in this country. I truly did not realize how new the movement actually is until I read this book. I found Adler's style to be very readable, even though the book was very long. Her writing reflects the interviews she had with people she found very interesting. As a result, her interest made them interesting to me also.

We've been discussing this book in our study group, and so far, chapter 6 – the interview with Sharon Devlin – has incurred the most discussion. She was so outspoken about her beliefs, some of which we agreed with, such as “having a responsibility to the One to get it together and make your Godhead count for something” (p 140), and some of which we debated for a couple of weeks, such as “Drugs and sex are an essential part of magical rites.” (p.143)

I, personally, was fascinated by the chapter on the Church of All Worlds. I found the philosophy expounded therein is much like my own, including a dedication to ecology and an openness to the experience of life. In the same chapter, Adler discussed Discordianism. I found this most interesting in the way that the religious tenets, so to speak, work to question everything, which often results

in a breaking down outworn structures in order to build anew.

Thanks to Adler's inclusion of it in *Drawing Down the Moon*, I enjoyed reading Isaac Bonewitz' vision for ADF (p. 326). I found it fascinating to read what he had said back at the beginning, considering where we are as an organization today. It's very inspiring to see what we have all made of it.

I found the chapter on Radical Faeries to be very interesting, especially since I often went to ceremonies held by a local Radical Faeries group in Phoenix, back in 2001. At the time, I hadn't realized the history of the group.

Although there was a lot of good information on ecology, I found Adler's final chapter on politics to be rather dry. All in all, however, I found the book to be an excellent read, and highly recommend it to anyone interested in paganism.

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Review by Linda Costello

Aus Dhwer, Eastern Gate Rin

We are working to provide resources, video of rituals being performed and liturgies from the Eastern Indo-Europeans for use in your own practices. Please join us in exploring the practices of the Eastern Indo-Europeans.

<http://www.ausdhwer.org>

Director: director@ausdhwer.org Preceptor/Liturgist: preceptor@ausdhwer.org Archivist: archivist@ausdhwer.org



Festivals & Festival Reviews

Wellspring 2004

by Linda Costello

The Journey

I arrived in Cleveland on time, and made my way down to the baggage pick-up, excited about meeting Kirk, Gannd, and Meredith there. Meredith was waiting by some suitcases and waved me over. She quickly filled me in on the complications that poor Kirk and Gannd had suffered, with the conclusion at that time that they wouldn't be in until 11:00 pm, so she thought we could go shopping and hob-nob around Cleveland, since she had previously lived there for 9 years. So, I went to get my two checked bags, and after waiting around for awhile, and only finding one, someone came up to me and asked me if I was missing a bag. When I answered affirmatively, they told me to follow them to a little office, where they wrote up some sort of claim. Apparently, the Phoenix airport had never put it on the plane. They were just sending it, and the flight should arrive at 9:30, so I shrugged and said I'd be back for it, and Meredith and I headed out to get the mini-van Kirk had reserved.

We took care of all that, and hit the roads of Cleveland. We first went to a Bavarian Bakery that was right across the street from where she used to live. Mmmmmm. Then we went to visit a new age shop, where she had first worked as a card reader. That was fun. I bought myself a new Celtic ring, as a symbol of the weekend.

Then we went grocery shopping at Marc's, a discount place that has all kinds of cool stuff, in addition to groceries. We got almost everything we needed from there. We had a bit of a scramble when we realized they don't take credit cards or out of state checks, and my paycheck wasn't going to hit my account until Friday. Yikes! But we worked it out. Then we went on a quest to find some Cotton Club ginger ale that Meredith said she couldn't get in LA. We went to three stores looking for it, buying a few things at each store for potlucks, etc. We did finally find the ginger ale too, much to her delight.

Then we went and got my luggage, and then to Dianna's 24 hour diner, where we had a bite to eat, and we talked, and we talked, and we talked. We talked about so many things, it was amazing. But the most amazing part for me was learning about Manannon Mac Llyr - who, it seems, is the one who was playing with me 10-15 years ago, expanding my consciousness. Yikes! But we worked it out. Then we went on a quest to find some Cotton Club ginger ale that Meredith said she couldn't get in LA. We went to three stores looking for it, buying a few things at each store for potlucks, etc. We did finally find the ginger ale too, much to her delight.

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While we talked, we got several more calls from Kirk about missed and changed connections. _ We finally went back to the airport around 3:30, and waited until Kirk and Gannd's plane finally landed at 4:24 am, and then we all drove to Wellspring, which was in Sherman, NY, about 2 hrs away. We got there dead tired. Kirk, Gannd, and I crashed for a while in a tent that Skip had set up for us, and Meredith went wandering around and greeting people. :) I could only sleep an hour, as the talking was loud and the sun was warming up the tent. So, I got up and socialized too.

Building a Grove workshop

Friday morning at 11 am, Todd did a workshop on Building a Grove. It was really great for me to go to that, given the fact that I am in the midst of it. I got to take a peek at the stuff I did right, the stuff I still need to work on, and the stuff I am immediately taking back to my grove. For one, we will be working on a Vision Statement, something we haven't really done yet. I think it will be good

for everyone to buy into what we are about. As it is now, I tend to be the one that carries the energy for the group, and I love it, but... I think it is important for the group to be less dependent on just me.

Restful afternoon

After a bite to eat, I took a shower, and then lay down for another nap. We had decided that I would get the stand-alone tent, and Kirk and Gannd would stay in theirs. It was kind of strange having that big tent all to myself. I was still trying to function on only about 2-3 hrs of sleep, and my aging body just cannot function like that. I slept for about 1.5 hours, while people talked, sang, shouted, and all sorts of other noises all around me. In some ways, it was comforting as I definitely knew I wasn't alone. When I realized I wasn't going back to sleep, I got up and socialized a bit, then Kirk and Meredith and Todd went to a mother grove meeting, and I tried to figure out what to do with myself. I guess Gannd was sleeping, because I didn't know where he had gotten to. I wandered up to the potluck, and I made myself some new friends, and in fact, Sharon and Shawn had brought an extra chair and lent it to me for the weekend.

Sumbel

Next thing I knew, dinner was over, and everyone was gathering for the Sumbel. I enjoyed myself immensely. And boy, was I surprised when I found myself making an oath that I would finish my DP by summer solstice. Yikes! I have GOT to find some time to read that last book.

Evening Socializing

After Sumbel, Meredith and I went hot tubbing. Then I ended up going down to the fire circle with Todd where others, including Meredith joined us. They talked and talked, while I alternately listened and when I got cold, got up and danced. Finally, we all went back to the hot tub, where we met up with Michael and others.

Camping in the cold!

Sleeping in the tent that night was very cold. My hair was somewhat damp from being in the hottub till 2 am, and so I cuddled under the covers (even my head, which I

never do), and tried to sleep. I did fall asleep right away, but in three hours, I awoke, absolutely freezing. I had warm clothes on already, and I had no extra blankets, so threw my winter coat over myself, and that helped enough for me to get back to sleep for another 2-3 hours. Then people were talking so loudly right outside my tent that I finally got up. It reminded me of a group of grackles, when they get chattering and cackling with each other. LOL.

Generalist Study Program

After breakfast and socializing at the campsite of Naribali, I attended the generalist study program talk by Jenni. I didn't know much about the structure of ADF's study programs, and I learned a lot. I also have a strong interest in helping to organize it all, as I think it could be something really valuable, and something we can be proud of as an organization, once it is really up and running, and conforming to the vision of excellence.

I also heard about the Initiates' program for the first time, and got very excited. This sounds like exactly what my groves are looking for. I will start working with them on some of the preliminaries, so that when and if any of them also finish their DP, and move on, they will at least have some background. Hey, they asked me for magic. Magic is what they will get. ADF style.

Seers Guild Meeting

After that, I went to the Seers Guild meeting. I thought Meredith and Francesca did a great job of outlining their thoughts on it all. I look forward to doing this work too.

Liturgists Guild Meeting

Then, a quick bite to eat for lunch and off to the liturgist guild's meeting. I really enjoyed this one too, as I know I will be doing this one also. I had suspected I would after Kirk's liturgy class, and then I was sure once I had seen Todd's outline for the liturgist program he offers to his grove. (Raven's Cry Groves are really lucky to have such programs available to them. I'm jealous.) Anyway, I took many notes and I know I have a long way to go before I can be as effective actually doing ritual as some of the people I have seen lately, but it definitely shows me where I need work.

Women's High Tea

After the liturgy meeting, I went to the High Tea for women. What fun! We had our share of Long Island Ice Teas. Our chant was: "Flowing waves of reality, Cushioned in the candle. Peaceful Protected Secure and Connected, Recharge the well within."

Bardic Circle

During the day, I had bought myself a little djembe drum for the full moon drumming circles my grove holds, so I was eager to find out what it could do. After potluck supper, and another MG meeting, we headed down for the Bardic Circle, and I took my new drum with me. It was fun. Meredith and Kirk and I sang the Ode to Three Druids in a Boat. Kirk sang the Masochistic Tango, and Meredith sang her Mae West song. I wanted to sing Song-Lines, but I was too busy tasting the mead and watching everyone else. Oh well. Maybe next year.

Camping Warmer

Francesca had offered to let me sleep in her van that night, to avoid, at least in part, the cold winds that found their way into my tent. It had been so cold outside the night before that I took her up on her offer. As a result, the night was toasty warm.

Council of Senior Druids Annual Meeting

Sunday morning was warmer, and I quickly raced to take a morning shower before our first meeting of the day - the COSD (Council of Senior Druids) - the one that I worked so hard to get provisional status for, so I could be there as a voting member. It was worth it. Todd awarded me with the certificate announcing Rising Phoenix's status as a provisional grove, and I felt really proud, as though the sun was shining out of my chest (or perhaps like a phoenix rising out of the ashes). We talked about a number of things, including having more standardized by-laws, especially for protogroves to use as a template. I volunteered to help with some of the research involved with that. I also felt called to volunteer to help Caryn with the GCC, mostly helping to keep groves on track with their officers' membership renewals, and their quarterly reports. As she said, she did her best to discourage me from the task, but, hey, when I am called,

I don't question it.

ADS Annual Meeting

After the COSD meeting, we headed down to the main pavilion for the Annual Meeting. It was very inspiring for me to hear Isaac talk about his thoughts and goals for the organization, and I hung on every word of the updates people gave. Again, when Kirk announced the formation of our protogrove, and now having grove status, I felt really proud and happy to be a part of ADF, and of the work I have done to achieve this.

Initiates Study Program

Later in the afternoon, Jenni was supposed to give the next talk, but she wasn't feeling up to it, so Ian talked about the Initiates program in more detail. I am SO excited about this program. I wish it was ready now so I could start it. I am thinking that I should probably get involved in the formation since much of what it will entail is work I have already done in the past 20-30 years of my spiritual path....which probably explains why I feel so excited about it. heheh.

Mother Grove Meeting

After that, I sat in on the public Mother Grove meeting at 5 pm. It was very interesting to watch the dynamics. More than once, I wanted to add my two cents, but felt as an observer, I probably shouldn't do so. For some reason, I took copious notes during the whole meeting. Lots was left for further discussion. What drew my attention the most was the fact that a hummingbird kept flying in and out of the pavilion all the time that the meeting was going on. A sure sign of good things to come, I'd say. High ritual

And good things did come later that night.... the ritual was AMAZING. The power that was invoked, the presences of the gods and goddesses so palpably real all around us, the inner connection I felt with Manannan, the outer connections I felt with so many of those I love around me. When I looked into the eyes of the idol of Manannan, I heard him laughing in my head, and I smiled. It's been such a long journey we have taken together, and I am only now coming to realize how much I value dancing at the boundaries with him.

Later that night, after long talks with Todd and Meredith, I fell asleep in my comfy bed in the van with memories of the past, promises of the future, and Manannan's undeniable presence in my now.

Mother Earth Cries

I awoke to the sound of rain beating down on the van's windows. We almost made it through the whole weekend with sunshine every day. But luckily I had the raincoat that Todd had convinced me to bring with me, and it was actually kind of fun to be traipsing around in the rain, without a care for how damp I got, how my hair got all funky, how muddy my shoes got. In fact, I was reminded sharply of my many years in Boston, and it somehow felt natural and right.... as though the godden were crying because we were leaving. I know that there was grieving in my heart that the weekend was ending.

The Journey Home

We packed up our stuff, said our goodbyes, and headed out. The trip home was uneventful (except when they stopped me at the security gate to search my purse, and found a rock at the bottom of it!), but here it is Wednesday, and I am still in some sort of altered space. More grounded today for sure, but irrevocably changed by the experience. I am so blessed.

And thus ends my expose on my first Wellspring experience.



ADF Festivals

Fall Festival & Druid Gathering

When: September 16 - 19, 2004

Where: Four Quarters Farm, Artemis PA

Organizers: Red Oak Grove, ADF

Contact: officers@redoakgrove.org

Website: <http://www.redoakgrove.org/fallfest/>

Three Realms: A Pacific Druid Festival

When: October 7 - 10, 2004

Where: Sage Hill Campground, Santa Barbara, CA

Organizers: Raven's Cry Grove, ADF

Contact: ThreeRealms@ravenscrygrove.org

Website: <http://ravenscrygrove.org/3realms.htm>

Walking With Fire: An Eastern Indo-European Conference

When: October 15 - 18, 2004

Where: Prattsville, NY

Organizers: Eastern Gate and Slavic Kins, ADF

Contact: ratrija@perfumedscorpion.org

Website: <http://www.walkingwithfire.org/>

Winter Nights Festival

When: October 29 - 31, 2004 (tentative)

Where: Jenny Jump State Forest, NJ

Organizers: Grove of the Midnight Sun, ADF

Contact: winternights@grovmidnightsun.com

Website: <http://www.grovmidnightsun.com/wn/>

WinterStar Symposium

When: February 26 - 29, 2004

Where: Atwood Lake Resort, Dellroy, OH

Organizers: ACE (with StoneCreed Grove, ADF)

Contact: webchameleon2@rosencomet.com

Website: <http://www.rosencomet.com/winterstar/>



Oak Leaves



Your Article, Art Work Or Advertisement Could Have Been Here!

Oak Leaves accepts all sorts of materials on any subject related to the Indo-Europeans and Our Druidry. We look forward to receiving your poetry, stories, art work, rituals, travel stories and religious experiences.

We also have a sizeable membership base of which would be glad to see your advertisement of your wares, services or events!

Please contact us for details: adf-chronicler@adf.org



Falling Acorns

Announcements

found at: <http://www.walkingwithfire.org>

Newly Approved Special Interest Groups (SIG)

ADF Brewers, contact Flip Rutledge (flip@chainolakescamp.com) for more information.

Adhitin Ratrija
Director

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Births

Lady DragonStar and Greybird (aka Natalie and Bill Smith) are proud to announce the birth of their son Aidan Alistair Smith, born 1 August 2004 at 5:33 am weighing 8 lbs 14 oz and 21 inches long. He joins his 2 1/2 year old big brother Collin Micael in our happy home.



Aidan Alistair Smith

Slavic Kin, ADF

The Slavic Kin was officially approved on July 30, 2004. We thank ADF for allowing groups of culturally related folks to form the Kins, and thanks to all of the members of the Slavic Kin who expressed such an interest, which is how we got started!

We have at least 8 members thus far, and our officers are Chieftain: Katherine Milechkine, Assistant Chieftain: Francesca, and Scribe: Sharon Gorbacz (aka Dragynphyre).

The Kin's main focus will be on the culture, religion, and folklore passed on to us by the Slavic peoples.

We have not yet decided on a name for our Kin, though a number of suggestions were bandied about in our early stages of formation. "Kielbasa and Sauerkraut" was one of the more humorous submissions. "People of the Birch" and "Children of Moist Mother Earth" were other suggestions, and we are still attempting to find more common threads in the folklore and mythology of the myriad Slavic peoples to be able to come up with a name that will encompass who we are as a people.

Our members are interested in all things Slavic, from keeping a link with our present, passing along articles that may be of interest to the rest of the group, to keeping a link with our past, by researching, writing articles and collecting stories and recipes from our families.

Sharon Gorbacz (aka Dragynphyre)
Slavic Kin Scribe
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Rin Reports

Aus Dhwer, Eastern Gate Kin

We have been working on creating videos of our rituals so that we may upload them to the Internet to share with others. In partnership with the Slavic Kin we are hosting an Eastern Indo-European conference this year. It is being held in New York during October and features such speakers as Francesca Hedrick, Skip Ellison, Michael J Dangler and Ceisiwr Serith. More information can be

Crossword puzzle

I went with the most common spellings out of the sources I used. And where some myths have different versions I tried to go with the most common one. Sources and can be provided if needed.

C-Celtic, S-Slavic, G-Greek, R-Roman, N-Norse

Across

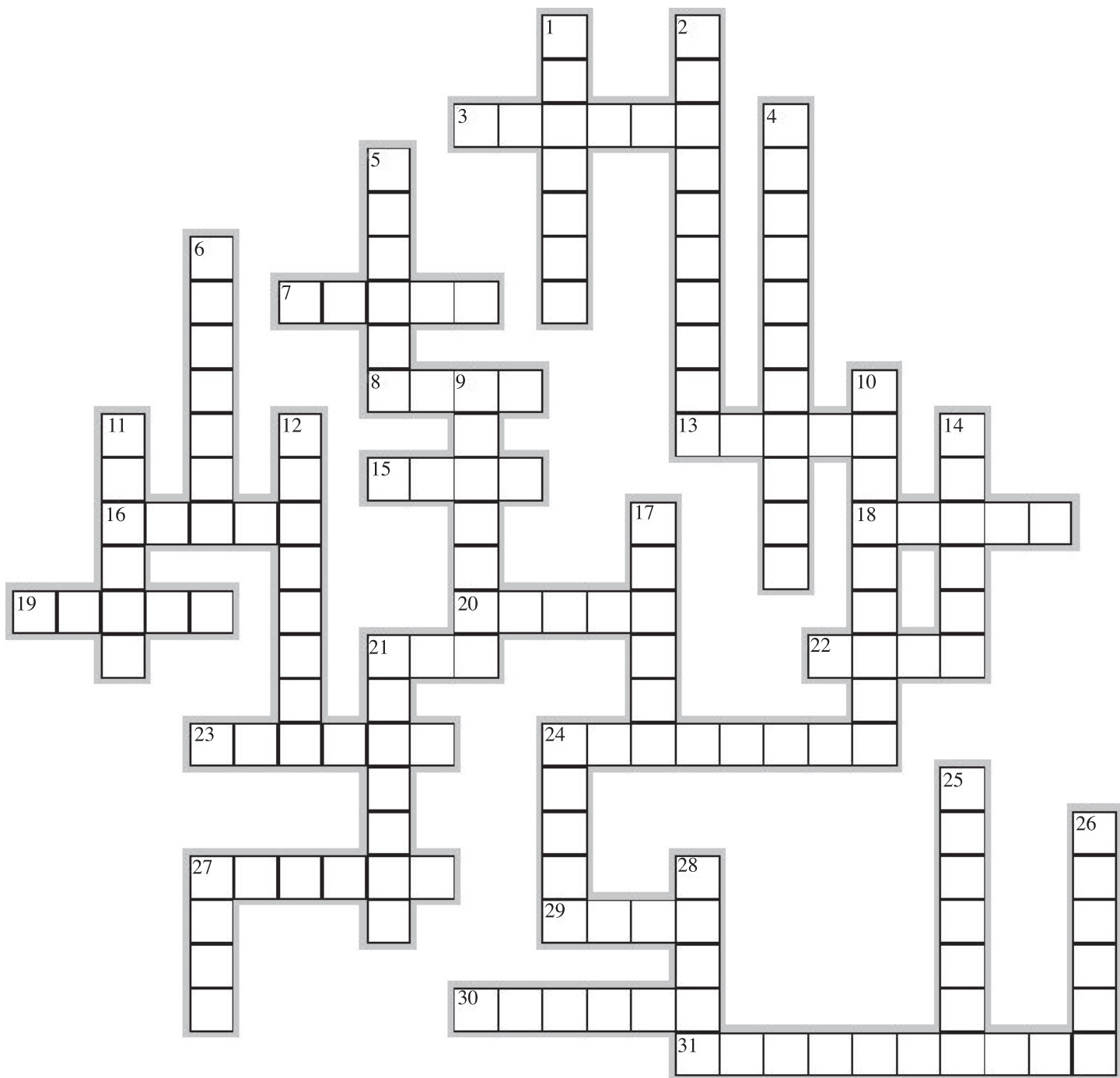
3. It is said, on the day he was born, he invented the lyre before noon and stole 50 of Apollo's oxen before sunset. (G)
7. Name the "magic horn" (N)
8. He was guardian of the spear of Gorias which killed all opponents. (C)
13. Can describe an otherworld abode or Fay folk (C)
15. He possessed a "magic ship" that could be folded into a pocket when not in use (N)
16. He rides through the air in his fiery chariot lead by a he-goat and hurls thunderbolts at offenders. (S)
18. She's known as the face that launched a thousands ships (G)
19. In her house Fensalir she spun golden thread and rainbow clouds. (N)
20. She was changed into a fly by buamnach, was swallowed and reborn as...? (C)
21. She is goddess of the underworld - and is half black and half white. (N)
22. The finding of these 7 beasts was one of the tasks set by Lugh for the sons of Tuirenn (C)
23. Tyr lost is hand binding this monster (N)
24. One version says he kept Odysseus from home for 20 years for blinding his son Polyphemus. (G)
27. The Slavic Paradise or underworld - home of the Alatur stone.(S)
29. He was bound in a cavern beneath the earth, and guarded by a great serpent whose poison dripped on him. (N)
30. While visiting Tir Tairngire he was given the silver branch of Mannannan (C)
31. On Zeus' command he created the first woman on earth out of clay. (G)

Down

1. He fought with Cuchulainn for 3 days at the ford when Ulster was being attacked. (C)
2. The Garden of the gods on the western extremity of the Greek world. (G)
4. Name of the "magic ship" (N)
5. He was the only survivor of the destruction of Da Dargaâs hostel (C)
6. Lugh rode this "magical horse" during his quest for the sword of light (C)
9. Beowulf's famous battle was with this monster (N)
10. It is here that the dead gather prior to their otherworld journey (C)
11. He found and named Taliesin (C)
12. Owner of the "magic horse"? (C)
14. It was from here that the stone of Fal derived (C)
17. He gathered what was left of the Trojans and sailed with them to Sicily. (R)
21. He possessed a "magic horn" that will summon all the gods to battle at ragnarok (N)
24. He spent a year in the shape of Arawn, Lord of Annwn and won his friendship (C)
25. After killing him by mistake, she placed him in the stars making the constellation Orion. (G)
26. The serpent who lay coiled at the roots of the great world tree (S)
27. An old witch, who travels on an iron mortar propelled by a pestle. (S)
28. He made a hand of flesh for Nuada - for which he was killed. (C)

Helpful Resources

Myths & legends of all nations -Robinson & Wilson
Norse myths -Kevin Crossley Holland
Aquarian Guide to British and Irish Mythology Matthews
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>
<http://www.northvegr.org/lore/main.php#eddas>



Answers For Crossword Puzzle In Issue 24:

Across

2. MITHRA—Persian God born from a rock
5. SWANS—Ler's children
8. TREE—Woody plant
9. SKULD—The 3rd of 3 Norns
11. USHAS—Vedic Goddess of the dawn
13. OGHAM—Luis, Duir, Gort etc
17. LYRE—Small harp like musical instrument
20. UNDERWORLD—Hades, Helheim, Mag Mell Etc

Down

1. PERKUNAS—Baltic God of thunder

3. HESTIA—Greek Goddess of the hearth
4. DEOSIL—Clockwise movement
6. AVESTA—Indo-Iranian's sacred text
7. VEDA—Sacred scripture of Vedism
10. DOMOVOY—Slavic God of the home
12. SIR—title of a knight
14. MEAD—Alcoholic drink of fermented honey
15. PROVIDER—One of Dumezil's three
16. YMIR—Norse giant
18. RUNES—Wunjo, Perth, Teiwaz etc
19. AWEN—Druid Inspiration

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submission guidelines

Oak Leaves seeks to provide a forum of sharing, learning and community growth through the content within its pages. You can help by submitting your articles, essays, art work, poetry, recipes, travel stories, reviews, thoughts, rituals, and announcements. Oak Leaves welcomes submissions from both non-members and members of ADF.

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Submissions may be sent via the post to: Oak Leaves Submission c/o ADF, P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874. Or submissions may be sent electronically as attachments to: oak-leaves@adf.org. Electronic submissions should have a subject line that reads: "Oak Leaves Submission". Please do not send electronic submissions which are more than 500KB without receiving confirmation first.

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Notary Seal :

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