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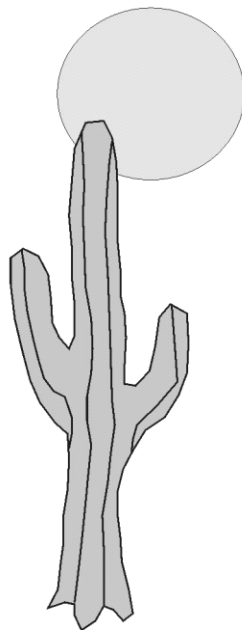
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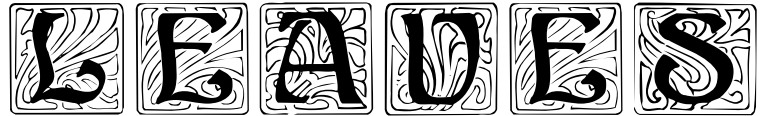
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~Divination and Communication~

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Archdruid



“A typical week in the life of the Archdruid”

Why am I talking about what the Archdruid does?

I have been pushing for more accountability for officers and had expressed the idea on the Mother Grove list last February that we should have ‘contracts’ in place for people in office. This would

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have a two-fold effect. First it would give people running for office an outline of what was expected from them, and second, if they were not doing the job well, we could show them in writing where the problems were.

Along those lines, I had prepared a 'contract' for the position of Archdruid, showing what I do for the organization in seven different areas. One of the board members expressed the idea that the members of ADF might be interested in seeing what I do on a daily and weekly basis. So along with telling you about that, I have added in the full outline of the contract I had done at the end of this article for your perusal.

The start of the day

My day usually starts by meditating and doing a short honoring of the Kindred at my altar. This usually follows the pattern that I have posted on my website at <http://tinyurl.com/rb3ex>. After the meditation, it's time for coffee and what I consider one of the most important parts of my day, handling email.

Email

I am usually reading and responding to email for the first two or three hours of the day as well as checking several times during the day for updates. I feel that by my being visible on the member related lists, people will understand that the leader of our church is a real person and not just someone who is a figurehead. Currently, I am on fifty-three ADF lists hosted on the ADF server, along with forty-seven ADF related lists hosted on other servers.

As the head of ADF, I am also on twelve lists on the National and International level, and I'll be talking more about them below. And last, as part of my continuing education in Indo-European history, I'm on nine academic lists dealing with history and languages.

All in all, I usually receive between two and three hundred emails a day, unless one of the lists 'flares' up and then it can go much higher! I try to make a point of checking email *every* day, even while I'm traveling or at festivals. If I'm at a festival where there is no cellular service, it makes it real hard to catch up afterwards.

Service for members

In the contract I wrote, I divided my service to our members up into three areas. First is service to our solitary members. One way I help is by answering questions on the solitaires list or directing people to the right place to get answers. Another way is by meeting with solitaires at festivals or while I'm traveling.

In service to our Groves and Protogroves, I'm on most of the grove officer lists so that I can answer questions or respond to problems at an early stage before they escalate. I also visit with Groves and Protogroves while I'm traveling and give workshops if they want to arrange them. And last, I work with the Council of Senior Druids (CoSD) to improve the training we give our Grove and Protogrove leaders.

And finally in service to our Guilds, Kins and SIGs, I'm on their lists to answer questions and I work to help utilize them more when questions and projects arise. As with the rest that follows, while not all of these forms of service happen every day, they can be spread out through the year on a continuing basis.

Service as Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The next level of service in the contract I wrote was that of service as the CEO of an International corporation. Many people still think of ADF as a small church; but in actuality, in addition to being a church, we are a corporation with 'branches', our local congregations, in several countries.

My main job in this position is to provide the 'vision' for the direction we take and facilitate discussion on the Mother Grove list. There are usually problems that appear that require the board's attention, although thankfully these have been fewer in recent years, and then the Mother Grove has to respond to them.

At the present time, the Mother Grove is working through a process of re-doing our Bylaws and Policies. After consultation with a lawyer about the Bylaws in 2005, we found that there were several important changes that needed to be made, so we are taking the opportunity to revisit all of them to tighten them up and get rid of the conflicting sections. This is turning out to be a long process, but will be worth it in the long run!

Another part of my service in this area is to work as the executive overseer of all of ADF programs and appointed positions. In this respect, I work closely with the Administrator, Chronicler and Preceptor to aid the efficient running of the organization.

And last, it is part of my responsibility to organize and facilitate the quarterly Mother Grove meetings. I prepare the agenda and keep the discussion at the meeting focused and moving along.

Service as head of Clergy Council (CC)

As Archdruid, I am also the head of our Clergy Council. In this position, I facilitate discussions of the CC list; I am there to talk to any of the current priests when they are having problems; and I work to strengthen our religion by helping to build our 'shared vision' of what ADF is.

I am also working closely with the CC Preceptor and the CTP Training committee on the Clergy Training Program and with the students working through it. As students are working through the first circle, we are finalizing the courses for the

second and third circles. It is my belief that we are building a course that will be much sought after by people looking to work as clergy, even to those from other Paths who join ADF specifically to take the training.

And finishing with my favorite service as the head of the CC, I have the proud job of consecrating our new Priests. Watching them as they learn and grow into fine Priests is a wonderful thing. And then being able to stand with them in ritual and tell the people gathered about the service that they have done for ADF, is one of the high points of being Archdruid!

Help ADF grow strong

The next area that I listed in my contract was that of helping ADF grow strong. This is done in many ways. One is by showing an ADF presence at festivals and presenting workshops on ADF related topics. At festivals, there are many opportunities to talk with not only our current members, but also with people who have an interest in what we do and may soon become members.

Another way is by being visible on lists, not just ADF related lists but others as well. The more people that hear about us, not only through my efforts, but through the efforts of all of our members; the more that will be responsive to what we say and want to join us. It has been said recently by several publishers that this will be the 'decade of the Druids,' similar to the past few decades which have been the 'decades of the Witches.' Looking at book sales, many people today are very interested in the Path of Druidry and will be looking for organizations to join. I feel that once they read or hear about ADF, they will find what they are looking for!

Representing ADF to the larger Pagan Community

Another way I represent ADF is to the larger Pagan community. I do this by networking with other Pagan groups on the local, National and International levels. This is where some of those 'other' email lists come in. On a local level, I am active in the email lists for the surrounding cities and take part in our annual Pagan Pride Day celebrations.

On the National level, I work with groups such as the OurFreedom list, which is a meeting place for leaders of National Pagan groups. I am on the administration team for this organization. I am also active in the Pagan Event Organizer's list, which deals with events around the country and the Pagan Writer's list, which deals with helping writers become established. I also am a member of several of the Druid networking organization in the US, such as the North East Druid Coalition (NEDC) and I am currently working with other Druid leaders to form a Federation of American Druid Orders (FADO), which will be a council similar to the Council of British Druid Orders (COBDO).

On the International level, as part of my work on "The Solitary Druid," I contacted the heads of all of the Druid organizations I could find in the world. I've continued that exchange of information and have established cordial relationships with many of those leaders. I am also a member of the Grey Council of Wizards, founded by Oberon Ravenhart-Zell, which brings together magic workers from around the world and teach at the Grey School of Wizardry, an online school.

Representing ADF to the non-Pagan Community

Another form of service is to represent ADF to the non-Pagan community. I am always available to be interviewed by the mainstream press whenever questions about Druidry arise. One of the

projects on my 'to-do' list is to develop a press kit that will be available for grove leaders to use while talking to the press.

I have had two books that have gone out through mainstream publishers to show the general populace what Druidry is about and have responded to articles in magazines as the head of ADF. And finally, I am a member of the Council for a Parliament of World Religions (CPOWR) and am working on attending the next World Parliament wherever it will be held.

Continuing education

The last section of the contract I wrote dealt with continuing education. As we all know, our knowledge of what the ancients did continually grows and changes as new material comes to light. As head of an organization that prides itself on scholarship, I feel that it is my duty to try and learn as much as I can about all of the Indo-European peoples. I also want to make sure that as new information comes in, I am aware of it. That in part is where the academic lists come in.

While my primary hearth culture is Celtic, and I'm continually learning more about it, I feel it is important that I know about the other hearth cultures found in ADF. I am expanding my reading and resource lists to include those other cultures.

Another part of my research is on early divination methods. It is a field I've long been interested in and one in which I hope to continue finding new information about how omens would have been taken in ritual. This research led to my book "The Divine Liver" and I hope to be able to produce several others like it.

Summation

So to sum this up, here is a breakdown of my weekly activities for ADF.

1 Email lists - 14 to 21 hours per week – and it's every day, even at festivals, not only 5 days a week ;-)

2 Answering personal mail from members, both email and snail mail – usually another 2 hours a week or so.

3 Following up on questions from the publication team and other 'projects' in ADF – this takes about 2 hours per week.

4 Working with organizations on the Regional, National and International level for ADF. For example, OurFreedom, CPOWR, etc - another 2

or 3 hours per week.

5 Working up workshops on ADF and Druidry for festivals – this varies but gets more hectic come April. From a low of nothing to about 10 or so hours per week just before festival season, then down to about 1 or 2 hours just before each festival to update and polish them.

6 Travel time – again, this gets more hectic during the spring and summer, and there is almost none during the winter.

7 Writing books on Druidry – 20 hours or so per week during the winter, and it drops off as travel picks up. Writing and traveling usually balance each other out. ☾

Upcoming Books from ADF Member Ceisiwr Serith

Release dates and ISBN numbers pending. Look for them in 2007.

Speaking of the Sacred A Pagan Book of Common Prayer

Already well known for his previous exploration into pagan prayers via his 2002 book for Weiser Books, Ceisiwr once again provides a means to explore prayer outside of the mainstream religions.

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Ecstatic Trance

By Linda Costello

Introduction

My interest in Ecstatic Trance came about by personal experience. In the early 1990's, I began to spontaneously experience awarenesses of otherworldly beings. These beings would explain things to me from a greater perspective, and I began to gain much clarity about patterns in my life. During these times of communion, I would often be completely unaware of my current surroundings. The more these instances continued, I found myself being able to know other people's thoughts and feelings. At the time I was studying Counseling/Psychology, and began to worry that I was in some sort of psychosis, so I began to research more about the experiences I was having. I found out that others had experienced the same or similar phenomena, which led to my learning about Ecstatic Trance. I realized that my experiences fit the definition.

What is Ecstatic Trance?

So what is Ecstatic Trance? Let's start with defining the individual terms.

The word, Ecstasy, has its roots in Greek, *ecstasis* – to be outside oneself. Ecstasy is a category of trance or trancelike states in which an individual transcends ordinary consciousness and as a result has a heightened capacity for exceptional thought or experience. These may include profound emotional feelings, intense concentration on a specific task, extraordinary

physical abilities, and especially awareness of non-ordinary mental spaces. This last is often referred to as religious ecstasy.



The word, Trance, has its roots in Latin, *transir* – to go over or across, and from Old French, *transe* – passage, fear, vision. A trance is a hypnotic, cataleptic, or ecstatic state, detachment from one's physical surroundings, and/or a semiconscious state, as between sleeping and waking. Basically, trance is an altered state of consciousness.

Thus, Ecstatic Trance is an altered state of consciousness that results in heightened awareness outside of oneself; one could say, a passage or journey into non-ordinary reality.

The Trance State

Scientists have identified four different states of consciousness and define each state by the number of brain waves emitted. Depending upon activity in the mind, our brains emit electrochemical impulses of various frequencies.

The most rapid of these is known as Beta. They range from 13 – 60 pulses per second and are identified when we are fully alert or when we feel agitated, tense, or afraid.

When we are in a state of physical and mental relaxation, our brain waves pulse to the beat of

7 – 13 pulses per second. We are aware of our physical surroundings, but are not focusing our attention there. This is known as the Alpha state, and is a very suggestible state.

When the brain wave impulses slow to 4-7 pulses per second, we are in the Theta state. This is a light sleep state, where we are no longer conscious of the physical world.

The deepest state is the state of Delta, when our brain waves pulsate at a rate of 0.1 - 4 pulses per second. We are in a complete unconscious state.

Neuroscientists claim that when people are in the alpha state, significant levels of beta-endorphin, norepinephrine, and dopamine are produced, all of which are linked to a feeling of well being and acute mental clarity. Relaxation and meditation aid the practitioner in achieving this state.

These particular states can be induced through the use of patterning, or creating an outer impulse that matches the brain wave impulses of the desired state. Most “shamanic” or trance-inducing drumming is at a rhythm of 4.5 beats per second, which corresponds to the theta state, and thus the practitioner enters into a trance. The rhythmic drone of Tibetan Chants is at the same rhythm and transports the monks to a state of bliss.

Theta brings forth heightened receptivity, inspiration, flashes of dreamlike imagery, and is often considered the gateway to learning and memory. Being in this state increases creativity, enhances learning, reduces stress, and awakens the intuition as well as extra sensory perception.

Core Concepts

One of the methods I used to study what I am calling Ecstatic Trance is through the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, founded and run by Michael Harner. I attended several weekend and week-long courses, and learned much about and experienced the state of ecstatic trance of which I

now write.

Harner believes that our ancient ancestors all over the world knew how to maximize human abilities of mind and spirit for healing and problem solving. He calls the methods employed, “shamanism,” a term that comes from a Siberian tribal word for practitioners of this kind of work: ‘shaman’ (pronounced SHAH-mahn). Shamans use a technique known as journeying to access hidden worlds which are usually known through myth, dream, and near-death experiences.

After years of study, Harner and his colleagues produced what he calls “core shamanism,” devoid of culture, and based upon the elements that they found in common throughout the many tribal cultures that they studied. He claims that the teaching and use of the basic principles and practices of core shamanism have encouraged a rapid revival of shamanic healing practices in the West and elsewhere. He purposefully chose not to imitate any specific cultural tradition, but rather trains his students in underlying cross-cultural principles. He feels that this is especially suited for Westerners who can adopt and integrate a system into their contemporary lives. This idea appeals to me, as I would like to develop a “shamanism” or more accurately, a system of Ecstatic Trance, geared for those who follow Indo-European paths, and specifically for my personal Celtic hearth culture.

Mircea Eliade did a similar cross-cultural comparison of common elements which he presented in his book called “Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy.” Combining information gathered by Eliade with the work of Harner, some of the common elements that are found across cultures include:

- Belief in three distinct worlds of being, usually given as above, middle, and below.
- The use of helper spirits or animal allies who assist the shaman in his healing and other tasks.
- The idea of the central axis or world tree that

enables the shaman to enter the worlds above or below by climbing into its branches or down into the roots.

- Entry to the underworld by use of a cave, spring or well
- Entry to the upperworld by use of climbing a ladder, a tree, or anything tall, or by flying
- Belief in the ability of the shaman to shape shift to accomplish certain shamanic tasks or receive certain knowledge.
- Belief in communion and conversation with the ancestors.
- Practice of techniques intended to alter the consciousness of the shaman. These techniques may either be through ritual dancing, drumming, music, meditation or through the use of some mind altering substance.
- Belief that the shaman is one with nature and the rest of creation, or is on the path to be so.

Because both Harner and Eliade have studied what they each label as “shamanism” extensively, and their discoveries have been widely disseminated, any sort of ecstatic trance that we hear about these days tends to be referred to as shamanism. So as to avoid the association with Siberian shamanism, I will continue to refer to these practices as Ecstatic Trance for the rest of this article.

Evidence of Ecstatic Trance in Indo-European Cultures

According to Eliade, although trance did not always dominate their tribal spirituality, we can find evidence of many of trance practices among the Indo-European cultures. Indeed, even within our own ADF cosmology, there are similarities with some of these core concepts, such as the three worlds, the World Tree, communion with the ancestors, and most

definitely, a oneness with Nature.

Miranda and Stephen Aldhouse-Green, in their work, *The Quest for the Shaman*, focused upon evidence of shape-shifters, sorcerers, and spirit-healers of Ancient Europe. They found both overt and covert reference to gender-switching and shape-changing beings within the mythic literature from early medieval times. Within the literature, there is much evidence of interaction



between this world and the Otherworld, especially communion with the dead. Art and artifacts uncovered archeologically seem to substantiate these ideas. One example is the use of cauldrons in so many of the ancient myths, to symbolize entrance to the Otherworld. On the Gundestrup cauldron, we not only have the object at hand, but the iconographic narrative upon it includes a scene where warriors are placed upside down in a vat, seemingly to illustrate a process of rebirth, thus demonstrating a relationship with the land of the dead.

Germanic culture:

From the Germanic culture, we have a perfect example of the core concepts in Odin, known as the Great Magician, who hung from a tree for nine days and nights to glean the meaning of the runes through his dreams and visions. The tree from which he hung is often referred to Yggdrasil, or the Cosmic Tree, and correlates to the idea of a central axis or world tree as referred to in the core concepts. During the time Odin was on the tree, he changed into the shape of many different animals, thus correlative with both shapeshifting and animal allies.

There are also many references to underworld descents in Germanic mythology which parallel

the archetypal images of traveling the road of the dead, crossing the river, encountering an obstacle, and overcoming the obstacle in some sort of initiatory moment. We also see the existence of *seidhr*, a means of foreseeing the future by traveling to the underworld.

Greece:

In Ancient Greece, ecstatic trance seems to be related to Apollo. Abaris, a man from the North with a golden arrow, thus marking him as Apollo's, would presumably non-physically travel from land to land, healing the sick and predicting disasters. He would sometimes be depicted as flying through the air on his arrow. Aristeas, another follower of Apollo, was seen in more than one place at the same time. He could also be found in crow form, following Apollo.

In the legend of Epimenides of Crete, the man entered into a trance state in the cave of Zeus on Mount Ida. He learned to journey through many otherworldly lands, healing and prophesying, among other ecstatic practices.

In the story of Orpheus, we find the descent into the lower world (Hades) to bring back the soul of his wife, Eurydice. He was also known for his magical and divinatory skills, and when he was slain, his head continued to sing as it floated away, and later became an oracle.

Central Asia:

In Central Asia, we have the Scythians, Caucasians, and Iranians. The funeral practices of the Scythians indicate a veneration of the ancestors as well as an altering of consciousness to induce trance. The Caucasian people have also preserved many of the traditions of the Scythians, and also demonstrate other practices that are relative to our core concepts. They have a belief about the deceased crossing a bridge as narrow as a hair, a myth about a Cosmic Tree whose top touches the sky and at whose root there is a spring. There are stories of *messulethe*, a type of psychomp who escorts the dead to the otherworld.

The Iranian culture has similar views, but tend to focus more on the destiny of the soul, and the crossing of the bridge at death resembles an initiation. The bridge is said to connect earth and heaven at the Center, thus again demonstrating a central axis.

The mystical and ecstatic elements in the spirituality of Zarathustra also correlate to our core concepts. These include mystical or symbolical communication between heaven and earth, the bridge connecting the worlds, sacred space, the importance of song, and references to the use of hemp as a means to induce trance. The story of Artay Viraf contains a seven-day trance in which visions, journeys, and references to the underworld and upper world were related. There were also references to shape-shifting among the Turko-Mongols.

India:

In Brahmanic ritual, we find again the ceremonial ascent to the world of the gods. The means by which this is accomplished is the *yupa* – a tree that the priest chooses in the forest and prays in a way that dedicates it to touching the sky, filling the air, and steadying the earth. The Cosmic Pillar has been established, and sacrifices are made to honor the gods. Again, we find evidence of shape shifting and animal allies throughout their practices, as ascents to the upper world, the world of the gods are made. These ascents are usually accompanied by reaching certain levels of ecstatic trance.

The Rg-Veda also presents examples of soul retrieval, a correlation to the concept of our oneness with nature. Trance elements may also be found in Indian beliefs concerning death, and the soul's reunion with the ancestors (*pitaras*).

In the aboriginal Orissan tribe in India, we find “initiatory marriages,” or marriages with otherworldly beings. This is a very real part of their lives, and it is common for them to relate their dreams involving tutelaries (spirit allies) as

objective reality, and part of the supernatural election of their tribal healers. Initiations often involve common elements of crossing bridges. Trance is also induced using rice shaken in a winnow to a repetitive beat, similar to a drumbeat.

Celtic:

Folks involved in the Celtic Reconstructionist movement (CR) spend much of their time researching texts, learning languages, meditating and doing spirit journey work, and basically gathering enough material to create the groundwork for a modern Celtic tradition that respects the ancient sources, as well as rejecting those parts of ancient worship that are not appropriate for this day and age.

Within their research, the CRs have identified the cosmos in terms of three realms of Land, Sea, and Sky, which are often correlated with the underworld, middle world, and upper world. A tree, or world tree, is seen as the center of the cosmos. Fire plays a pivotal role in the culture, and often a symbol of fire on water would indicate divine inspiration, and sometimes can be seen as a substitute for the world tree as the pivotal center. These directly relate to some of the common elements that Harner and Eliade have identified.

In my research for evidence of ecstatic trance in the Celtic culture, I have uncovered much. Since my hearth culture is Celtic, this is the arena in which I have concentrated most of my studies.

The most well-known form of trancework that we find in Celtic history is the ceremony of the Tarbh Fheis – The Bull Feast. A bull was slaughtered, and the celebrants would eat of the bull's meat. After they feasted, a druid would wrap himself in the bull hide and other druids would rhythmically chant to aid the journeyer in entering into a trance state, usually to “see” in a dream state who the next king of the land would be.

Another example of ecstatic trance is found in the “fili” or sacred poet. According to Erynn Rowan Laurie, one of the leaders in the CR movement, a fili is a sacred ecstatic poet. She goes on to talk about the fact that filidh go through at least eight, and possibly up to twenty years of training in formal schools. Nora K. Chadwick from Oxford University makes a similar reference in her *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, and goes on to explain about the different grades of fili. Laurie has listed them in Gaelic with her own translation into English as follows:

foclo/c [novice], macfuirmid [son of composition?], doss [bushy tree, shelterer?], cano [cub or whelp], cli/ or druimcli/ [ridgepole, roof-tree], anrad or ansru/ith [great stream], and ollamh. The highest rank of any craftsman or scholar was also called ollamh. [great high one]”

The filidh, like the fa/ith (prophets and seers), use poetic tools to induce visions, one of which is known as the imbas forosnai. Chadwick includes a translation in her *Scottish Gaelic Studies* that discusses the process of entering into the trance state as well as the origin of the term “Imbas.” A paragraph from that work follows:

“Imbas Forosna, 'Manifestation that enlightens': (it) discovers what thing soever the poet likes and which he desires to reveal. Thus then is that done. The poet chews a piece of the red flesh of a pig, or a dog, or a cat, and puts it then on a flagstone behind the door-valve, and chants an incantation over it, and offers it to idol gods, and calls them to him, and leaves them not on the morrow, and then chants over his two palms, and calls again idol gods to him, that his sleep may not be disturbed. Then he puts his two palms on his two cheeks and sleeps.” And men are watching him that he may not turn over and that no one may disturb him. And then it is revealed to him that for which he was (engaged) till the end of a nómad (three days and nights), or two or three for the long or the short (time?) that he may judge himself (to be) at the offering. And

therefore it is called Imm-bas, to wit, a palm (bas) on this side and a palm on that around his head.”

Imbas is maybe more accurately translated as poetic ecstasy, as it is a state that takes one out of oneself. According to Laurie, Imbas is the single most sought-after trait in Celtic mythology, with the possible exception of prowess in battle.

Many techniques are used to achieve trance states, and research into ancient Celtic culture continues to uncover possibilities.

Recently, sweat houses have been discovered around Ireland. Irish sweat houses are small structures, made out of field stones, and looking like beehives. They had a small crawl space for a doorway, and venting to allow smoke out. It appears that fires were made in them, as soot has been found on the ceilings of some of them.

According to Reverend Robert Gage of Rathlin Island, the sweat houses were used as a sweat cure for healing the ill. There is also some proof that they were used to help clear complexions. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that they were used for trance, beyond the idea that they were purported to be used mostly around Samhain, which is also the time when psychotropic mushrooms tend to appear in many fields around the country. Some believe that there is a connection.

There is continued research being done by members of the CR movement, and currently efforts are underway to construct a sweat house based upon evidence uncovered about ancient customs, and similarly, rituals to be used in the sweat house ceremonies are being developed that would be in alignment with what is known of the ancient ways.

How to Recognize Ecstatic Trance

One of the questions that may arise is how to recognize ecstatic trance when you are in it. What does it feel like? What characterizes that

particular state of consciousness?

I can only speak from experience when I describe what it feels like to me, but the best explanation I can give is that it feels as though what is normally thought of as imagination or dreams, which is usually secondary to physical, every day reality, suddenly shifts to be the reality upon which I put my attention. This state is sometimes called non-ordinary reality, and is usually described as a change in one's point of reference.

Ways of Entering into Ecstatic Trance

I have already discussed the use of a percussive sound made at the rate of 4.5 pulses per second which would entrain our brain waves to a similar pulsation. There are also other ways to induce the trance state.

For example, one can use a repetitive dance step to induce trance. Anything that puts the mind on automatic can be successful. In many cultures such as the Bushmen of the Kalahari, we can find techniques of trance dancing, which elevate them into ecstatic, altered states of consciousness. In 1991, in one of the holistic psychology classes I took at Lesley College, Cambridge, MA, I participated in a circle dance that was specifically geared towards inducing such trance.

Another example is the use of toning or chanting to induce heightened states of awareness and ecstatic trance. Chanting can be used in the same way as drumming, by producing a hypnotic rhythm that coincides with the rate of brain wave impulses most conducive for ecstatic trance.

Fascinating work is being done by Felicitas D. Goodman and Nana Nawnaud wherein certain body postures are utilized to enter into Ecstatic Trance. Goodman is an anthropologist and a highly regarded expert in linguistics. She has researched over seventy ritual postures, which, when combined with a rhythmic stimulation of the nervous system, will move a person beyond

the limits of ordinary perception and self-definition. Goodman claims that any ecstatic trance experience will increase one's well-being, physically and psychologically.

Another ceremony that has been adapted to our Western culture is the use of sensory deprivation to attain an ecstatic state of consciousness. Just as the ancient Celts would wrap themselves in a bull hide, so can we use something as simple as plastic wrap to confine our bodies in such a way as to let our spirits roam free within a state of trance. While in this state of receptivity, I have personally received messages from my own patron gods and goddesses, as well as valuable insights and wisdoms that came through.

There are also more intense ways of entering into the trance state. In 1979, a new term was coined by Fakir Musafar, called "Modern Primitive." He uses this term to describe some of the spiritual practices of body modification found in various cultures, which he has adapted to our Western culture. Various techniques are utilized to expand boundaries, shift consciousness, and induce visions, all of which lead to personal healings and transformation.

Several years ago, I participated in one of Musafar's workshops based upon the Hindu Ball Dance, a sacred ceremony from the Savite Hindu Culture, where round objects were tied onto the body by way of piercings. The celebrant would then dance around with these objects pulling on the skin until they began to enter an altered state of consciousness – ecstatic trance. There were several of us at the workshop who participated in learning about the practices, the techniques, and finally participated in the "dance." I saw and

heard many wondrous events during this experience. For myself, I entered into a heightened state of consciousness that could only be described as euphoric. I felt as though the spirit of the event was dancing me and I was transported to a place where I could view the event from a higher perspective. I danced for about four hours, never once feeling tired. Most notably for me, I felt myself joined, merged, with the dancers around me. One woman had a vision of her late daughter that totally transformed her grief into a faith in life after death. Others reported similarly remarkable experiences. There are many such stories of utilizing these types of techniques to attain heightened spiritual awareness and experiences.



Specific Practices

How do we apply what we know about ecstatic trance to our current day meditation practice? I have employed many methods of using Ecstatic Trance in my meditations. Here are some suggestions that can be tried.

One way is to make a recording of a steady drumbeat of approximately 4.5 beats per second or to order one ready-made. I would suggest that you start out with a five to ten minute recording of the steady beat. It's a good idea to also have a closing to help bring you back to waking consciousness. I suggest stopping the steady beat, beating out three beats of three, and then a rapid beat that is approximately three or more times faster than the original beat which plays for two or three minutes, then finalize with a final three beats, three times. As you become more proficient with entering into the altered state of consciousness, you can prolong the amount of time with the steady beat.

Another option is to develop a rhythmical chant, such as “Well and Fire and Sacred Tree, Flow and Flame and Grow in Me.” Repeat this over and over and over until it becomes automatic, and you lose awareness of your physical surroundings. Once you are in an altered state, you are free to explore these realms, and often no longer need to repeat the words. It’s a good idea to set some sort of timer to alert you when it is time to come back to waking consciousness. This can also be achieved by setting an intention for the journey to only last for a certain period of time. Again, as you become more facile at this process, you can expand the length of time in which you journey.

Utilizing sacred positions to facilitate the state of ecstatic trance is yet another method. Most of my thirty years of meditation practice has taken place in one of two positions. One is called the God position, or the King position, and is the one I most often use. Basically it is a position of sitting on a chair with spine straight, feet flat on the ground, and hands resting on the arms of the chair or on one’s knees. This allows one to remain alert enough to be aware of subtle changes in consciousness without having to attend to the body.

The second position I have used is called the Corpse position. In this position, one lies flat on one’s back, feet together, and hands at the side of the body. This is extremely useful for longer or deeper trance journeys, so that there is no danger of falling over, or cutting off circulation. The biggest danger is falling asleep and missing the journey.

Experimenting with other sacred postures can yield different results. Be creative and especially, enjoy the journey.

Conclusion

Ecstatic Trance has been around for as long as we have historical records, and it is here to stay. I hope, after reading this article, that you have

gleaned some insights into this process, and can start to incorporate various practices into your ceremonies and meditations, and indeed, into the heartbeat of Our Druidry.

For those readers with an interest in this subject, there is now an Ecstatic Trance Special Interest Group, and you can join it by subscribing to the list or by sending me an email at Linda@risingphoenix-adf.org expressing your interest.

Here is a short recommended reading list for those who want to explore more deeply.

Ecstatic Trance: New Ritual Body Postures, by Felicitas D. Goodman and Nana Nauwald
Where the Spirits Ride the Wind, by Felicitas D. Goodman
Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, by Mircea Eliade
The Quest for the Shaman, by Miranda and Stephen Aldhouse-Green
Way of the Shaman, by Michael Harner

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Goodman, Felicitas D; online at <http://www.ritualbodypostures.com>
Musafar, Fakir; About Fakir; from: <http://www.bodyplay.com/> ☞

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A Druidic Baptism?

By Rev. Kirk Thomas

Last May, at the Desert Magic Festival, I was privileged to receive a tarot reading from Meredith McDonald, the Chief of the Seers Guild. I have had readings from her before, using tarot, runes and ogham, and they have usually turned out to be quite prescient. This time would be no exception.

But first, let me mention a series of postings I and others made on our religion e-list at ADF-RELIGION@LISTS.ADF.ORG. It had occurred to me that I had been baptized in a Christian church as a baby, and that the result of this baptism could be that I had been magically marked as a Christian, functioning in that paradigm whether I wanted to or not. Now, I don't know if this is true or not, but the thought did bother me, and so I posted to that list, asking for opinions on how this magical marking might be removed. There were a number of interesting ideas that came out of that conversation, and I decided that I would write a ritual one day to see it done.

And promptly forgot all about it.

Meredith knew that I would soon be heading off to Wales for a two-week intensive course in Welsh, and that I would have some free time while there. During the reading, she suddenly got an odd look on her face and said, "Kirk, I see water; water in Wales. There's something to do with water." "Really?" I said. "What do you mean?" She replied, "I see you in water while you're there. You need to get into water." "Get into water?" I said. "Do you mean, like, splash

my face in some water?" "No!" she insisted. "You need to actually get into water while you're there. Immerse yourself." "Immerse myself!

Do you mean total immersion?" "Yes," she replied, "total immersion."

The only image I had in my head was taking off my clothes in front of the Gods and everybody and wading into the river Towy; into the *cold* river Towy. Fat chance!

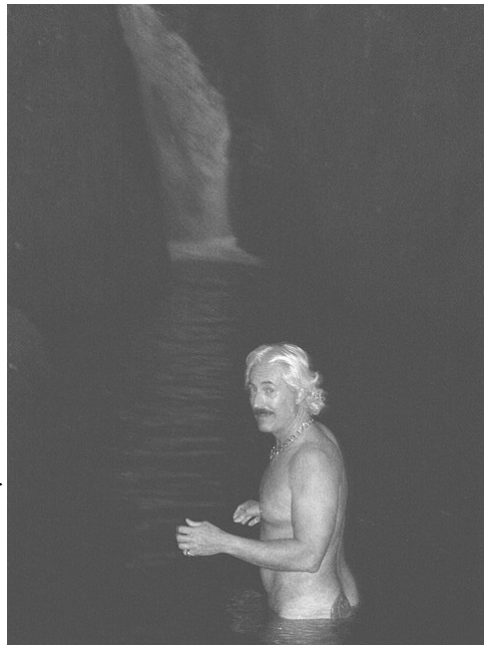
And so I pushed the idea out of my mind. Later, while driving around Wales just before my course was to begin, I remembered her vision. "Well," I thought, "I'm almost out of time to get wet!" I do trust Meredith's visions, though, so I kept my

eyes open, hoping to spot an opportunity to jump into water, but nothing appeared. I hate to admit it, but I was actually relieved.

Towards the end of the first week of my Welsh course, however, one of the other students showed me a new translation of the *Mabinogi* by John Bollard. This edition was full of photos of many places mentioned in the tales. This student drew my attention to a photo of the Ffynone falls and pool on the river Dulas in Pembrokeshire. According to the book, these falls were locally reputed to be an entrance to the Underworld.

I felt like I'd just been hit by lightning. This was the place where I was supposed to go and get wet! If I could find it.

That Saturday was a day off, so one of my



classmates, Evy, and I drove off to find wonderful sites to visit, with Ffynone burning in the back of my mind. After visiting castles and chapels and holy wells, it came time to try and find the falls. I had found the river Dulas on the map and we drove all around it, on both sides, but found nothing and were ready to give up. Just then, Evy said that she had found another river Dulas on the map some miles away. I glanced over to see her finger on the map, and there, to the right of her finger was the place name, Ffynone.

Eureka! So we retraced our steps and finally drove into the woods near to where this waterfall had to be. “Now what”, we wondered. An elderly couple walking on the road told us of a path that seemed to go in the right direction, so we parked and took the path. I could hear a waterfall! We hurried along only to discover that the falls were part of a very modern dam. There was a small lake and a house beyond the dam.

I was very dejected. It was getting late, and it seemed like we had come to a dead end. Then Evy suggested that we go back to a pub we had passed on the way there and *ask* someone.

Heck, I’m a *man*, for heaven sakes. Men don’t ask for directions! But that was the only way I’d ever find the place.

There was an old Welshman sitting at the bar in the pub. He was obviously three sheets to the wind (and probably always was, from the look of his nose) but he was happy to talk. With some prodding, we found out that the falls and pool were just past that house on the lake we had seen!

And sure enough, they were. It was getting on to eight o’clock and the light was beginning to dim.

And there was no one else around. So I stripped off my clothes and waded into the pool.

Yikes! That water was *cold*! Going in deeper than my crotch was especially shocking. I got in as deep as my waist, held my breath, and submerged. *Aaarrgggghhh!* When I surfaced, Evy told me that her camera hadn’t worked. I wanted a picture of me emerging from under the water, to prove to Meredith that I had actually done this, so when Evy was ready, I submerged once more. *Again, Aaarrgggghhh!* I quickly climbed out of the water and got dressed.

But Evy looked grim. Apparently the flash on her camera had failed, or something. So off came my clothes and back into the water I went. Though I was getting numb from the waist down, things were also starting to ache. I submerged for the third and final time.

Just as I surfaced, Evy pointed up at a tree and shouted, “Look at that!” There, carved into the surface of the tree was a Green Man face that looked as though He were watching over us. Modern Pagans used this place!

And that’s when it hit me. In my surprise I no longer felt my aching whatever’s, or even noticed the cold.

This was my Pagan baptism. This three-fold immersion was what my soul had been wanting all this time. I felt joyful and completely at peace. With tears streaming down my face, I launched into a lusty rendition of “Hail All the Gods” as I drank in the sanctity of this place.

In some profound way, I felt that I had come home. ☪



Two Powers on a String and a Prayer

By Anne Lenzi

I've never really been able to just "meditate," sit there and empty my mind. It just does not work for me. I have to be in motion; my body must be engaged in some kind of activity. So, I approached my two powers Mediation in this matter. I have done the craft of beadweaving for several years, mostly for my own enjoyment, particularly the peyote stitch style. I chose to do a meditation with beads with no pattern and no idea what would come of it. This meditation took me 4 days to complete:



I began each night with the similar meditation I used when in labor with my son, and when I want to "clear" divination items (remove the energy from whatever past reading I do) I would close my eyes, take a deep breath and whisper "I am the fire and the sea and the tree, flame and flow and grow in me" over and over until I can feel a mist running over my hands. To my mind's eye, it looks like the mist from someone pouring water over dry ice as it flows out of the bowl. I open my eyes and begin my task. I think of the power of potential, of the Underworld, and the earth. I think of the sky of the Heaven Power, of order from chaos, the fruition of the potential, and the weaving of the earth and sky.

The beads begin as inert little glass pieces, lying segregated in their little tubs, making a bead rainbow in the box. They lie there in their most basic form, little doughnuts of glass, complete but nothing more than themselves at this point. They are the inert, the unformed, raw materials of my pattern waiting to be woven. I'm not sure what form the design will take; I've sketched no pattern this time. I've stare at the colors in the

bin and finally pick three. I make row of six beads and begin to weave.

The first three days, nothing much happens. I stitch for a few moments, and then set it down. On the fourth night, I start on the yellow; I'm beading quietly listening to the baby monitor as my husband puts my boy to sleep. My hands begin to tingle; I feel power creeping down my arm from chest to my hands. The room feels a little darker, the light from the lap brighter until I all I can see is the beadwork. Stitch, pull, stitch, stitch, pull, stitch.

My hands are wet now; the tears have made tiny pools on the piece. There is a flaw in my work. Somewhere in the last three lines I've missed a stitch. I take out the scissors and get ready to cut into my design, slowly undoing the last 1/2 hour's work. I look at the flaw again. Maybe I can fix it. I try three times and then decide to leave the flaw.

I stop looking for the right pattern and just

weave, yellow flies at the tip of my needle, creating a brick step triangle, imperfect, lopsided. My hands are starting to ache a little, since it has been so long since I've done protracted beading, but they tingle too, I can feel the energy of the earth, the sea and the flame in my hands, I am making the flame, I have given my sea to the piece. I continue to bead and realize I've pricked my hand, not enough to bleed, but enough so that a little flake of my skin flies off. I have given of my tree. The piece is complete; the sacred flame seems to flicker with light in my hands. I sit there for a moment, trembling, my hands aching, tears running down my face.

This is the strength of the two powers, the ability to weave potential with intent. When I began this meditation, I had no idea what I would really be looking for, and in fact expected very little to happen, as I was pretty familiar with the "be the tree" type guided mediation. I wanted to do

something different, something that was still connected to the two powers and not completely alien to me, but something that would "shake me up" and take me down paths not usually traveled. It certainly did and in an incredibly cathartic way.

I have found that using the two power (i.e. grounding and centering) is not only an important part of ADF ritual, but it is important to **any** ritual in which you anticipate to actually accomplish something. When you use the two powers, you are able to disconnect yourself from the mundane world and link with something much more basic, much more primal, which enables us to perform ritual on a level that cannot be done if we are worrying about the rent or getting the kids to daycare on time. Without grounding and centering, the people in the ritual are not united in intent, but merely performing a play without the necessary balance and focus needed to work ritual. ❧

Darkness on the Path

By Cathlene McCabe

My daughter and I are making a long winter's drive from Austin / Ft. Hood, Texas back home to Snohomish, Washington, December 2004, right before Winter Solstice. I am driving she is sleeping.

It is a very dark, cold, cloudy night. I can see nothing yet I continue to drive. The headlights of the car barely light the road, only enough to let me know I am indeed still on the road. I have no idea what the terrain is, because I can't see it. I surmise from the twists, turns, the ups, & the downs that it must be mountainous or hilly at least.

"Why do I continue to drive?" I ask. The answer "If stay on the road I will get where I am going." It occurs to me that many times along our path we experience dark, cold, cloudy

times. It may seem that there is only darkness and no light, no discernable direction. We may ask, "Why do I continue?" Because having faith to stay on the path of awakened light, each of us will get where we are going. It does not mean that we will not question, or that path will not be rocky and rough, or that the darkness will not seem insurmountable, we are human so these are part of our path. However, the light will return whether now or later, this life or the next. So on my path I will stay knowing that the light will return.

I have now driven a few more miles; the clouds have started to lift. I can perceive outlines of the hillsides that flank the roadway. Still more miles I drive; the clouds are now gone the moon and the stars shine brightly beautifully lighting the path. The light has indeed returned. ❧

Divining with Birds, Insects and Arachnids

By Alferian Gwydion MacLir

On a high bluff over the Mississippi River my grove met for the Autumnal Equinox. I arrived before the rest of my friends so sat at one of the picnic tables and had a slice of a very ripe cantaloupe. Afterwards, solitary as I was, I opened a copy of Skip's *The Solitary Druid* and began to read. However, with the vast expanse of blue lake in front of me --

Lake Pepin -- one of several widenings of the Great River -- my eye was repeatedly drawn away from the page to the beauty of the scene. A few sailboats plied the waters but I quickly noticed something else -- what appeared to be small white islands. Yet, clearly they were not islands because they kept moving and shifting. Specks of white were flying about too, and then a squadron of these white dots flew across my vision in a perfectly spaced line, single file like some sort of code against the blue water. They were pelicans, beginning their southward migration. Massing and then unwinding themselves into another island on the water, there must have been thousands of them. And when they flew together, they formed streams of flowing dots. What were they doing, I wondered? Restlessly, landing on the water, then rising and moving to another spot? Restlessly aware of the cold wind and the warm sunlight on the equinox?

I had seen another example of this even spacing of a line of birds on my way up to the bluffs. A mother turkey and her brood of eight chicks, now nearly full-grown, crossed the road in front of me. I slowed down and admired them as they glanced back at my car with slight alarm. Off they went, still dutifully lining up and walking in perfectly spaced single file behind the hen as they crossed the road. Off in the grass they scattered

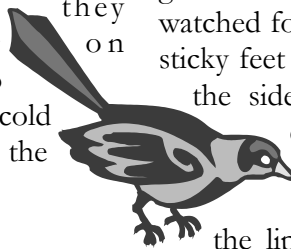
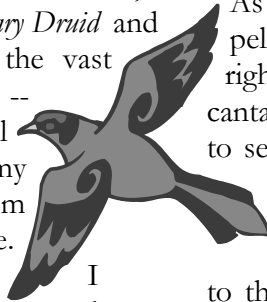
a bit as they negotiated the ditch and the hillside beyond it, disappearing into moving patterns in the tall prairie grass.

As my eye struggled between the page and the pelicans, I noticed that I had other visitors right beside me. On the table before me the cantaloupe rind had become an object of interest to several yellowjackets and a wasp. They were not interested in *me*, but landed and drank the juice deeply, their abdomens pulsating till they were full. Then before flying back

to the hive, they would hop to the table where they carefully washed their antennae. Once the washing up was done, off they flew in an instant into the trees. Such quiet grace has the flight of bees. While all this was going on a tiny spider appeared in mid-air, lowering himself from the sky on an invisible filament. He joined me and became very curious about Skip's book. I addressed the spider politely and his tiny black eyes gazed up at me curiously. He listened, then climbed my finger when offered. Twice he made a try for my beard to see if it would serve as a good home, but I gently dissuaded him. Then I watched for five minutes as he used his skill with sticky feet and nearly invisible spun silk to climb

the side of my metal drinking cup. After exploring this slippery surface for some time, he appeared to abandon it, never having actually come over the lip and into the caldera of the strange mountain. A wasp few down into the cup and drank heartily of the last drops of apple juice I had left there. This tiny spider, hardly an eighth of an inch long, was quite wary of the yellowjackets and the wasps, suspecting them not to be entirely vegetarian in their tastes.

I hope I shall never forget the look of intelligence on that spider's face and his apparent great interest in me. His tiny body was patterned elegantly and his black eyes were smaller than



pinheads, yet bore all the expression of listening and meeting my gaze. I was not, as it turned out a "solitary druid" at all, but accompanied by many friends who occupied my time until my human fellows arrived. Birds and insects and arachnids (and mercifully no mosquitoes) who were all beautiful, fascinating, and intelligent. Our Celtic ancestors divined the will of the Mighty Ones by looking at the flights of birds. The message I received from the Divine as I sat talking to the little people and gazing at the untouchable majesty of the flying people, was this: That we are all kin and that you seldom have to look far to find someone with whom to share your lunch. As Horton the elephant was wont to say in another famous book of Druidic wisdom, "A person's a person, no matter how small."

It took only the slight shifting of vision and empathy to notice these small creatures and treat them politely, rather than shooing them away or killing them, as so often humans do without a

thought. I wonder what inspiration they took away from their encounter with me? The bees seemed only very slightly interested in the likes of me. Did they pause to appreciate that fact that I had brought the cantaloupe? I don't think so. Bees are opportunists and very single minded in their particular glory. But that wee spider seemed to take me for a very interesting mystery -- indeed a landscape. He seemed to be exploring, not bent on a single-minded mission. Perhaps he was rather young. I noticed an even smaller mite of some sort, bright red, which was in scale almost as small compared to my friend the spider as he was to me. What world of knowledge and experience did that tiny fellow possess, for whom the smooth curve of a metal dinner plate was an undiscovered country?

William Blake summed it up when he wrote, "To see a World in a Grain of Sand. And a Heaven in a Wild Flower. Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand. And Eternity in an hour." ❧



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Ensuring the Future of ADF

By Linda Costello, Treasurer

An article entitled What's Fair Pay for Your Pastor? By Scott A. Arnold, (From Action Information, Volume XVIII, Number 1, January/February, 1991, p. 9.) states, "Many factors must be considered in deciding how much to pay clergy. These include, but are not limited to, the following: denominational salary standards, the cost of living in your area, the standard of living that will be expected of the pastor, housing costs, transportation and automobile expenses, insurance needs (medical, life, home) taxes, social security payments, pension plans, continuing education costs, equity payments, clothing (a pastor's "work clothes" are quite expensive), utility costs, school, medical and dental expenses, entertainment expense."

In a study on clergy salary done within the past five years by Becky MacMillan, a labor economist, and Matthew J. Price, former associate director of Pulpit & Pew and now director of analytical research at the Episcopal Church Pension Group in New York City, I came across some interesting facts. One of the tenets was that "Low clergy salaries make it difficult for pastors to be true to their calling." (<http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu/salaryrelease.htm>)

In churches with congregations in excess of 1,000 members, salaries in Protestant churches were in the realm of \$55,000 to \$66,000 per year. Smaller churches paid their clergy less, but the median salary for a pastor of any size Protestant church was approximately \$40,000 in 2001. For Catholic churches, where the priests did not have families to support, the salaries were much more modest, more in the range of \$26,000 per year.

In light of the fact that the Archdruid is the most visible role in ADF and most important for

maintaining and growing our organization, I would like to suggest that we begin paying the Archdruid of ADF a salary in order to ensure our future.

It is obvious by reading Skip Ellison's article in this same issue of Oak Leaves in which he delineates the duties he performs on a regular basis, that one could not hold the position of Archdruid while also trying to hold down a full time job. It is only by being retired that he is able to do all that is required of the position. Having to earn a living while carrying out the functions of Archdruid would greatly decrease possible candidates for the position in the future.

I am sure that those who do the job as Archdruid, do it because they love it, and not to be paid for it (just like most of us in leadership). Love of the job, however, does not pay for such necessities as gas, airfare, supplies for attending our festivals and other religious events, not to mention mortgages, food, clothing, etc. Effectiveness as Archdruid is dependent upon having the resources necessary to support oneself as well as pay for the demands of the position.

Although we cannot yet consider all of the living expenses that have been mentioned, we could start out gradually at first, by covering the equivalent of eight hours per week at a base rate of \$10 per hour - a token payment that is still in line with our current cash flow, yet reflects our commitment to supporting those who do so much for this organization. Eighty dollars a week would mean that four memberships a week would go towards salary. This is a small price to pay to grow into the future.

Over time as the organization grows, hopefully



this can become a full time, paid position. ADF has now passed 1,000 members in size. A membership of this size provides us with the resources necessary to make the transition to having a paid Archdruid. As we move up to the next levels, say 5,000 or 10,000 members, then we can consider salaries for other officers, such as the Administrator, the Chronicler, the Preceptor, the IT Manager (and maybe even the Treasurer), for the several hours of work they are doing each week.

Each of these positions, as we begin to offer financial incentives and contract obligations, will help bring in new members, because ADF will begin to display a brighter, more vibrant look. Rather than running on an all-volunteer staff, ADF would be able to move from a model where things are done "when we get to them" and "eventually" to a model where goals are set and items are accomplished in a timely manner. As it stands, expecting our volunteers to accom-

plish tasks by certain dates is impossible, as the amount of work they can do is entirely dependent upon their schedules. If we are offering paid positions, however, we can set definite expectations and ensure that these expectations are met.

It has always been part of Isaac's 'Long Term Vision' that ADF would grow into a 'mainstream' religion. We are growing, and as this growth occurs and more time is required for the administration of ADF, having paid positions is becoming a necessity. In order to meet the goals ADF was founded upon and still espouses, we need to invest in our future – a future where eventually, as we grow our groves, it shouldn't be out of the question that we would be paying our clergy and perhaps even our Senior Druids something out of the funds that are brought in by our thriving groves. Paying our Archdruid is a logical next step in legitimizing ourselves as a mainstream religion and ensuring our future. ☞



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About Divination

By George Hersh

Divination is an essential function of our living brain. Our nervous system coordinates and regulates our body for effective response to the challenges of the world. Our complex vertebrate brain acts in part as a reservoir of experience, of useful memories and wired-in behaviors. In part, it also acts to bind together memories and information gathered by our senses into a coherent map of our surroundings. But our brain is distinguished from a moist bundle of automatic computing machinery by our anticipations of events and processes, our ability to make stories and to tell how they should come out.

No formal system of logic can hold all truths. No mechanical sieve can winnow out all truths. The model of the world within our skull is necessarily untruthful, incomplete, and imperfect; but it is an amazingly competent seer, a predictor of what may befall.

We come to trust this ability to the point of betting our lives; driving, for example, at speeds that push our response times to their limits and beyond. Sometimes a deer wanders onto the highway and our failed predictions cost us dearly. But in most life situations, our trust is rewarded. We can, however, become enslaved to or immobilized by our most fearful visions.

Living as diviners from moment to moment, we seek ways to reach out beyond our limited view, to see deeper, to see farther, more clearly, in greater detail, with greater relevance to the cares and desires of our hearts. We make or learn external systems of formal divination.

Formal systems of divination provide symbolic patterns which can correspond to our queries and our needs. Typically, such systems display a randomizing element which allows chance to

influence the outcome, some ambiguity of symbolic structure, and room for synchronicity, for the events of the divination to be influenced by the large currents of the world.

Divination systems range from the minimal choice of a coin toss, through the 'I Feel Lucky' icon on a search engine, dice, cards, Tarot, Geomancy (Western and Eastern), the I Ching, Astrology, Cheiromancy, to the ceremonial magician's Conversation With The Holy Guardian Angel. Lon Duquette's "Every Day Divination" is a pleasant comparative survey.

In a Pantheacon workshop a few years ago, Adric Petrucelli provided a concise, and artful summary of good divination practice, which I can neither better nor ignore:

For the clearest possible reading, construct your inquiry carefully. Try to frame your initial question to be answerable at the simplest level of reading with a 'Yes' or a 'No.' Use open and non-leading terms in your initial question rather than narrow specifications. Do not waste your opportunity by testing the oracle, concealing information in a trick question, or asking a question so general or so basic that no reasonable answer can be expected. Avoid repeating the same question in the hope of getting the answer you desired. Don't 'oracle shop.' Do ask a more specific question seeking clarification if you feel lost or uncertain in your understanding of a response. When you do understand a response, don't try to make it change for the better by fiddling with it."

Advice on using cards.

Cartomancy became a fertile ground for divination alongside the use of cards as devices for recreation and gambling. The same basic

human impulse leads from gambling to the science of statistics and to the arts of divination: If I can predict outcomes better than my opponents, I win. Aha! If I can predict the future I win. If I just look like I can predict the future, I can make a living (stock market pundits, political analysts, physicians, etc.).

For us, it is sufficient to respect the process of divination and to use it under appropriate safeguards and conditions. If you are accustomed to a particular tradition or belief system, you may wish to treat cartomancy as a formal ritual. In such a divination, cleanse and prepare yourself, preferably wearing a clean garment reserved for the work. Protected sacred space should be cleansed, established, and warded by a method which you find familiar, comfortable, and efficacious. Practice makes perfect.

Keep your deck clean and safe from mechanical injury. Many card readers store their favorite deck wrapped in a silk handkerchief. Arrange as much quiet and freedom from interruption as you can. Work on a clean uncluttered surface.

Compose yourself, ground, and center, Set out the deck and a notebook used only for recording divination work. (Record date, time, location, the question asked, the spread selected, and the cards as they are dealt. Good notes are a strong aid to developing skill and understanding.)

Shuffle the deck, allowing your hands to become accustomed to the cards and the cards to become reacquainted with your hands. At what you feel to be the proper moment, deal out your chosen spread. Record and read the cards in the order dealt before looking for other orders of parallel

sequence or association. If a meaning jumps out at you, note it down. Look again.

Short cuts become obvious as the process becomes familiar. Resist the temptation. Take the time to develop rhythm and grace as you practice.

In general, after use restore any inverted cards to their original orientation and put your deck away without returning it to the first order of suits and numbers. Any deck accumulates a history of its uses. Because you are establishing a relationship between yourself and the cards, you may wish to restrict the deck to your own hands. Or, with appropriate caution, you may allow a querent to perform the initial shuffling and dealing, using contaguity to strengthen the connections between the questioner, the question, and the changing order of the cards.

Examine each card in the spread with attention to echoes or kinships indicated by images, numbers, colors, suits, et cetera. Relationships and kinships among the cards can form blocks of meaning which together convey a statement. More than one thread of meaning can often be followed through a spread.

An inverted card does not necessarily mean a negation or inversion of meaning, but can be a mark of emphasis.

You can use any standard Tarot spread. A wealth of general guides to Tarot cards and variants are published by U.S. Games Systems. In spite of the dozens of manuals and lists, individual cards are not simple carriers of specific dictionary meanings. The descriptive statements of the various manuals can evoke responses, but should not restrict them.



Treat the cards as evocative symbols, gateways for communication between the querent and the wordless, boundless continuum which surrounds us and permeates the deepest recesses of our being. When your mind dances with the cards, the cards dance with you.

This approach to divination is paraphrased from the late John McCliman's "Gestalt Tarot." For a comprehensive and detailed exploration of this approach, applicable to any divination deck, see "Heart of Tarot" by Amber K and Azrael Aryn K. Their approach is quite different from what is commonly accepted as "intuitive" reading. The querent's immediate personal responses to

the images are more important than any search through lists of card-by-card 'meanings.'

If the manipulation of cards is simply not compatible with your image of proper druidical behavior, try lots, rune stones, ogham slips, Charline Palmtag's Goddess stones, or any of the other systems suggested above. Regular and systematic use of a divination method eventually allows the practitioner to recognize and interpret specific omens or portents in the world as it is. Then, the manipulation of mechanical aids becomes a comforting piece of showmanship for the untutored audience. ☞

ADF Hospitality List

By Anne Lenzi

For the past three years, west coast ADF members have hosted a Hospitality Suite at the Pantheacon Convention held in San Jose, CA every President's Day weekend, along with performing a ritual during the convention. Last year, we really got the party rolling when Isaac Bonewits attended the convention and wowed us with his wit and terribly bad puns.

Each year, we continue to revise and improve our ideas for the suite (for 2007, we plan on having an "English Pub" night, complete with... well, I'm not quite sure yet, but by February there will certainly be a plan) and have received a very positive response from the general Pagan population and from other Druids. Earlier this year, we moved our planning list from yahoo groups to the ADF server under the name ADF-Hospitality.

So, what is the ADF-Hospitality listserv? In a nutshell, it's an event planning listserv to help people plan, discuss, or just eavesdrop on people planning events that involve ADF members. We

hope that this will blossom beyond just our little California convention to be a clearing house for ideas, projects such as participation in local Pagan Pride events, regional events, or even national or international pagan events at which ADF may want to have a presence (i.e. Starwood or Sirius Rising).



We can even use this list to discuss ways of extending ADF's hospitality to others out in the world.

Come and join ADF-Hospitality at <http://www.adf.org/forums/> ☞

Beginning a Rune Relationship

By Todd Reiser

Simple. Keep things simple I say, make things easy to understand and keep them personal. The best way to learn an esoteric system in my opinion is to keep things understandable and easy to relate to, allowing personal investigation without a lot of unnecessary definition.

At the beginning of this year I taught a course on Runes at the Unitarian Universalist Community of El Paso, Texas. It was an enjoyable personal challenge and I hope it challenged those who attended. From that class I found that most attending saw the Runes as merely another divinatory system, another Tarot. And while this can be the case, and the Runes can be used in a traditional Tarot fashion, there is a depth to the Futhark of which only the Ogham can compete.

Here's the crux of learning the Runes: The symbols mean something, but those meanings are not independent, nor are they static, they can change from person to person, from experience to experience, yet the core of the Rune is steadfast. The symbols themselves are merely the ideographic representation of the meaning. I envision the symbols, taken at their face value, as a surface, like that of a lake surface, still like glass and maybe even reflective of those doing the looking. The meaning is all that is below the surface: the seaweed, the roving schools of fish, and the bacteria supporting the health of the lake. Therefore the surface is merely the end result of that which is beneath it and its form shaped from that foundation material.

Given that definition, how should someone interested in the Runes begin the journey? If one chooses to study the Elder Futhark, twenty-four runes await exploration, all with their own

number, meaning, poem, beings, esoteric and exoteric meaning attached. It is a somewhat daunting endeavor to open a book on the subject, dive in, and attempt to institute a memorization regiment, and that's if you have the time and the brain space to do so after your nine to five. So, how should a future Runester begin his or her swim into the waters of the Rune row?



At the beginning of course, or at least with what is most visible and tangible. For when we jump into a lake we first pierce the surface.

This method is my own. It's not enough to crack open the book of a scholar on the subject or use mind tricks to memorize meanings, Rune work has to become personal at some point, and that is how I choose to begin.

I suggest the study of two Runes a month, the first week for Personal Investigation into the symbol of the Rune and another to allow the study of the poems related to the Rune and of the entities and meanings associated with it.

Personal Investigation entails a period of working with the ideographic representation of the Rune. So, beginning with Fehu, if you want to start with the first Rune, the seeker would start doing two things:

One is to incorporate the Rune in meditation. Visualize the Rune, twist it about, turn it upside down, and allow the Rune to convey it's meaning through its symbol. Fehu symbolizes cattle, and mobile assets, this is easy to see from its physical presence. The main point of this exercise is to put aside the books that statically tell you the meaning of a Rune, and instead use your own

intuition, intellect and heart to evaluate the Rune for yourself and also allow the Rune's essence to, in turn, evaluate you.

The second part of the Personal Investigation involves bringing the Rune into your everyday life. During your daily routine remember the Rune and find it in the patterns around you. Look for it in the branches of trees, or in the cracks in the sidewalk, or among the tile patterns on your kitchen floor.

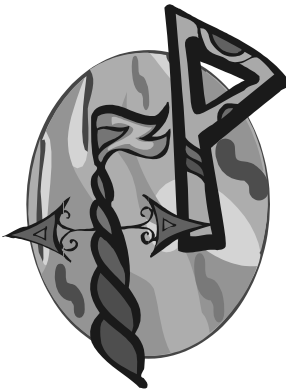
The next week will be spent investigating the meaning of the Rune. Now is the time to open those books and read what the 'experts' have to say. Use as many sources as you can and ask friends about their experience with the Rune your studying. Also take some time to read a myth or two involving the being or beings associated with the Rune.

My pattern for working with Runes can fluctuate greatly. Once you have gone through the Futhark in its given order one by one, you may wish to pursue a more in-depth study with them.

Other suggested ways of study:

Begin in the middle with Jera and Eiwahaz and work your way out in pairs until reaching Fehu


and Othel, investigating the relationship of opposites that will arise. Or begin at Fehu and Uruz working your way down the row, again in pairs, looking closely at the progression from one to the other and contemplating the wisdom generated from the symbiosis of both.



As an example, beginning with the middle pair one would start with Jera, which esoterically represents Orbit and cyclical patterns while Eiwahaz represents the Axis, the dependency is apparent. As well Fehu and Othel have a similar relationship: Fehu being representative of Movable

Assets and Othel being those Inherited Assets that are fixed such as our family, genetic traits, and even Hamingja.

Take the runes in threes, then in groupings of four and five, learn them in Aetts as was historically taught.

As I have said the Runes are not stagnant, as you grow on your path Rune patterns will change, insights will deepen. So, mix it up and begin to challenge your perception that Runes are merely a divinatory system, given a bit of attention the Futhark can be much more. 

Odyssey of the Nine Virtues

By Jon Bollin

This all started when I began construction of my Nemeton in my back yard, You see, I wanted to have stone carvings of ADF's Nine Virtues surrounding the perimeter of the sacred space. Kind of monuments used during walking meditations within my little grove. So, as I am apt to do, I consulted my fellow ADFers, on line and in person, to get some creative input on the best way to incise the stones.

One very odd fellow (OK, Spotted Toad) suggested I do it in Ogham! But in Gaelic, not just the phonetic translation of the word in English to Ogham. How very Druid-ish! I loved the idea. So I set out with all my aids and references to translate our Nine Virtues first into Irish Gaelic, then into Ogham.

Here is where I ran into my conundrum. As you

will see below, there are several synonyms for all nine. And this is no way a complete list of Gaelic words that translate directly into the English word. This is solely a brief list using the references cited.

Here is where things got fuzzy. As part of ADF's Dedicant program, we are tasked with essaying the Nine Virtues. The DP asks that we write at least 125 words on "The Dedicant's understanding" of the Nine Virtues. As the DP is written, there is a bit left up to personal interpretation. So, as I struggle with the linguistic correctness of the translations, the question arises, "Is there a standard from ADF that defines the Irish Gaelic translations?" I can't find anything anywhere that does. Then I got to thinking, I doubt I ever will, for many obvious reasons. One, the virtues themselves are defined by the English words we use and may never translate directly into Irish, Welsh, Manx, etc. Therefore, I have to conclude that I have to pick the translation that best speaks to the way I view the virtues themselves.

Wisdom,

Críonnacht, wisdom, direct translation.
Eagnadh, wisdom, prudence.
Eagnachd, wisdom, prudence.

Piety,

Cráifeach, pious,
Deabhóideach, devout.
Crábhadh, devotion, piety, religion.
Naofa, adj, holy, hallowed, sacred.

Vision,

Aisling, vision, dream
Tairgneachd, prophecy.
Dailgneachd, prophetic vision.
Dearcadh, multidisciplinary state of mind.
Taibhreamh, dream.

Courage,

Calmachd, stoutness, courage.
Curantachd, bravery, courage.
Fearalachd, manliness, hardiness, courage.
Niadh, bravery, valor, courageous.
Misneach, courage.

Integrity,

Urram, respect, honor.
Urramachd, honorableness, nobility.
Onair, honor.
Onaraich, honor, respect.
Iomláine, fullness, wholeness, entire, total.

Perseverance,

Buanas, lasting, perseverance.
Buaine, permanence.
Buanseasmhacht, perseverance.

Hospitality,

Féile, generosity, hospitality, festival.
Flaithiúlacht, generosity, hospitality.
Feileachd, liberality, generosity, bounty.
Olachas, host, hospitable.

Moderation,

Stuaim, modesty, moderation.
Mearthacht, moderation, restraint.

Fertility,

Siolmhar, fertile.
Siolor, prolific, fertility.
Torthúil, fertile, fruitful.
Sult, fat, comeliness, mirth, fertility.

So, there you have it. I have made my choices and will use the appropriate translation that best suits my assessment of each of ADF's Nine Virtues. Which ones did I choose? You'll just have to come to my little grove of oak trees in southern Arizona and find out.

~*~

Sources- englishirishdictionary.com. Address:
Site 6, Magherintoor, Buncrana, Donegal, Ireland

Alexander MacBain, An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language Published by Gairm Publications, 29 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 6BZ
Tel. 041-221 1971
Printed by Clark Constable (1982) Let, Edinburgh
ISBN 0 901771 68 6
1st edition - 1896
2nd edition (revised) - 1911

Photolitho Reprint of 1911 edition – 1982

The School Gaelic Dictionary

Prepared for the use of learners of the Gaelic language

by Malcolm MacFarlane

Eneas MacKay, Bookseller

43 Murray Place, Stirling. 1912

Gramadach Lexicon

Simple printout of the lexicon used by the Gramadach computer programs. Translations are from a lot of places (Foclóir Póca, GAELIC-L, word-of-mouth, &c).

Ewen MacEachen, GAELIC DICTIONARY – FACLAIR, published in 1842 ☞

Chanting the First Oath

By Brandon Newberg

An oath is an important thing, but it is all too easy to forget. I knew this might be the case with my First Oath. How could I keep it at the fore of my attention, as I progressed through the Dedicant Program? How could I internalize the triad of Virtue, Piety, and Study, which my oath emphasized? How could I get beyond the words of it, and get under the skin of it?

I decided to commit to a special devotion: chanting the First Oath every morning for one month. In this way, I hoped to engage not only my mind but also my body and heart.

At first it was rocky going. I used the example oath from the handbook, with only a few changes, and the words felt alien. I had no melody or pattern for the chant, and it came out quite awkward. So I listened to a clip of Sveinbjorn Beinteinsson chanting the Eddas, simplified the rhythm, and improvised. That helped, but still I often stumbled and forgot words. By the end of the month, however, I was on sure footing, I was starting to feel closer to the words, and it was beginning to feel like *my* oath. I decided to continue chanting.

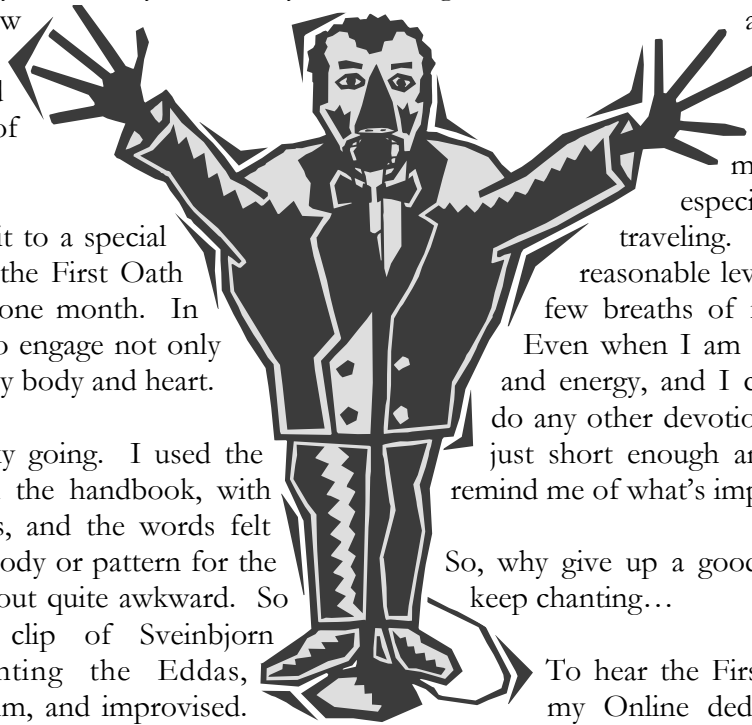
The more I did it, the more I began thinking naturally in terms of Virtue, Piety, and Study, as well as my commitments to ADF. That's when I knew I'd reached my goal. But I was enjoying the chanting so much, I decided to continue longer. Now it's been more than six months,

and I still love chanting the First Oath. For me, it makes a fine morning devotional,

especially when I am traveling. I just find a reasonable level of solitude, take a few breaths of fresh air, and chant. Even when I am feeling low in mood and energy, and I can't bring myself to do any other devotions, the First Oath is just short enough and lyrical enough to remind me of what's important.

So, why give up a good thing? I think I'll keep chanting...

To hear the First Oath chanted, see my Online dedicant journal, called Lilies and Cedars and Corn, at the web address below. Access entry 2006.09.28@19:29 (web version of this article) and follow the instructions at the bottom. <http://brandondedicant.livejournal.com/> ☞





Festival Review

Pantheacon 2006

By Anne Lenzi

On President's Day weekend I attended Pantheacon 2006 in San Jose, CA is four day Pagan convention which draws people from all over the world.

During the convention, we held an ADF Ritual, which included the ADF Unity Rite, in which I was honored to be able to take part it.

Isaac Bonewits ran the ritual and Meredith McDonald was the seer. I also participated, as did Kestral, Richard, Shannon and Wayne from San Jose, CA, Linda from Phoenix, AZ, Ogam and Mike from San Francisco, CA, Jack from Los Angeles, CA, Guil from Anchorage, AK.

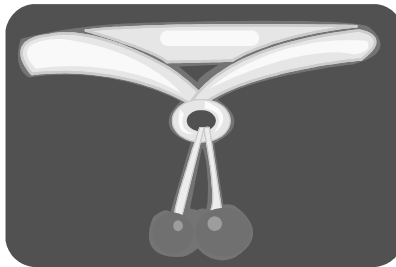
The pre-ritual briefing was full of puns (I'll omit them here in case Isaac cares to use them for another festival at a later date) and Meredith and Isaac played off each other well. The tone was set with laughter.

When the first bell rang I felt my eyes fill with tears, which has honestly never happened to me before at an ADF ritual (I've cried during a ritual, but usually at the offerings). Jack beat his drum and scared the crap out of the outdwellers so none would dare disturb our rite. The ritual began and Meredith began to sing to Brid with the voice of one blessed by inspiration and joy. Isaac sang invocations and blessings throughout the ritual.

One by one each of us stepped forward and did our parts, those from the east, from the west, from the north and from the south. Together we spoke the names of the ADF Groves and Protogroves, each round ringing louder and prouder

as I think we all realized how strong ADF had become, and how connected we all were.

The omen was pulled (from Meredith McDonald)



What Brought us? - Yew (Iodho) - Death and regeneration; Darkness and danger shrouded in the evergreen hew of life

How is our offering received? - Birch (Beithe) - Birth (go figure) - Renewal and purification;

the shining lady of the woods; the gods accept our gifts as offerings of regeneration. (Kinda of reminds me of the Historical Purpose thing 'we come to honor the gods that they may become stronger' to paraphrase it;>)

What is your blessing or challenge for the future? Heather (Ur) Inspiration; Particularly the inspiration that comes from burning all else away and replanting.

To honor the Dagda Isaac sang "A Hymn to the Dagda" (http://www.neopagan.net/IB_Songs_Irish.html#HymntotheDagda) I also have to interject here that for the rest of the weekend I pestered my husband with the phrase "but...is it to please the ladies?" because I just could not get that phrase out of my head.)

Then we each took an acorn (or 5) for our own prosperity. We wound down the ritual, said goodbye to our guests, and mingled with the crowd, chatting about the ritual.

It was really quite amazing and really got to core of why I chose ADF 3 years ago, for friends, fellowship, laughter, and faith. ☪

Morrigan Praise Offering

By Meredith McDonald

This is another example of Divinatory working producing a ‘performance’ piece. This was given to me in a trance ritual. I merely transcribed it and sang the tune given during deep trance.

~*~

PRAISE OFFERING FOR THE MORRIGAN

We begin with three women placing their veils over their heads. ‘Priest’ goes to the center. (She is wearing a mask) She leads the crowd in a spoken chant:

CHANT

Who is she?
What is she?
Where will she be?

This is repeated nine times – then, Priest intones NEMAIN’S name three times. Woman 1 enters, holding up a mirror with an angry face painted on the back. She navigates thru the crowd showing only the face to the participants as Priest sings/speaks . . .

Evident and Clear Cut Enemy of man

Insults to honor at her command.
Nemain weaves thru the world Silent as the grave,
She whispers mockeries meant to enslave
Us all in her passions for intrigue and spin
She shows us our enemies
They all live within!

On the last phrase, Woman 1 flips the mirror and shows the gathering their own faces during her final circuit around the crowd. CHANT is spo-

ken three times as Nemain goes to the fire and faces in.

After this, Priest will invoke Macha three times. Woman 2 enters and spreads red material around the ritual area – preferably one long piece. (She is stoking the flames of conflict and creating the ‘blood’ of battle.) As she does this, Priest sing/speaks:

Macha, Reveler!
She is the very blood
That pours from us.
She is the very sword that severs us.
She is the happy mistress
Of our woes
But, Oh how we call to her.
Oh, How we long for her
Oh! How we love her,
Macha
Ravishing Countenance of conflict, contempt,
and condemnation.



Woman 2 goes to join Woman 1 at the center – they are facing in towards the fire. We CHANT four times and Priest intones Badb three times.

Woman 3 enters and begins gathering the red material. (She is feeding on the creation of her sisters – restoring the area.) Priest speak/sings: Carrion Crow, Carrion Crow, Carrion Crow
Feeding – on destruction
Living – on the dead

Fueling – from contention
Insatiable woman of void,
Flowing through the carnage of our games
Restoring to the whole what was
Never Ours

Never claimed
Words fallen like the axe
Sustain you
Babd – feast on our terrifying folly!

Great Queen attend us
Teach us
Defend us
Purge our pain tonight!

WOMAN 3 joins the other at the fire – facing in.
CHANT four times. All sound STOPS! They
slowly turn as Priest leads their chant:

The three women spiral out among the crowd.



Hittite Divination: Oracles, Birds and the Behavior of Sheep

By Michael J Dangler

Communication with the deities is a constant among all societies and religions. How we establish that communication, though, can be radically different between cultures and religions, or it can be remarkably similar.

words and gifts. The paradigm for the divine-human relationship was a master-slave one. A human could expect from his divine lord or lady just what a slave could from his master.¹

The Hittites are an Indo-European culture whose origins are somewhat clouded. Located in Asia Minor and forming a major empire in the middle of the second millennium BC, other Indo-European peoples eventually invaded them and the Assyrians eclipsed their power. They borrowed liberally from the non-Indo-European Hattians who lived in the area before they did, and many of the Hittite deities are actually Hattian deities. The Hittites also borrowed from their neighbors in Mesopotamia, particularly the Akkadians and the Sumerians. They called their pantheon "the Thousand Gods," and today's scholars don't dispute that claim: indeed, it may be a low number.

This does not, of course, mean that the Hittites felt themselves to be degraded by this relationship. Rather, we have a specific word for prayer that was adulatory and offered praise: *walliyatar*.

The Hittites both understood and expected that their deities would speak with them on a regular basis. Revelation and divination were not uncommon, and this forms the basis of this article.

The Encyclopedia of Religion (Second Edition) indicates that Hittite prayer was of a character that Neo-Pagans are unlikely to have an interest in, but it defines a good starting point for how this culture saw its relationship with the divine:

The oldest form of divination that we have record for is prophetic divination. In Old Hittite, the *Telepinu Proclamation* is a warning from "the men of the gods" about serious offenses. Unfortunately, the record is not as strong as we would like, and there is some disagreement among scholars who these "men of the gods" were.

The premise underlying all Hittite prayer is that gods thought like mortals and could be influenced by pleasant

Oracular divination is our most attested source of divination. These involve long lists of questions, where answers would be given in a specified divine language. The answers were

always "yes" or "no," meaning that the lists of questions would become quite long before the actual solution was found.²

Some seven hundred tablets and fragments survive of these lists. They are listed as question and answer combinations. In his article, "Hittite Oracles," Richard Beal describes the character of this method:

The vast majority of these texts consist of inquiries intended to discover why something bad has happened. For instance, perhaps the king was sick. It was then necessary to discover whether this illness was due to divine anger. If so, it was necessary to determine which of the thousand gods of the Hittites was angry. When the cause was narrowed down to a particular deity or maybe to several, then it was necessary to find out why each deity was angry. All kinds of omissions, derelictions and problems were placed before each deity with this question "is this why you are angry?"

If the deity indicated that he/she was not angry at a particular infraction, then another infraction would be presented. When the deity indicated that he/she was indeed angry because of this particular infraction, the question would be followed up by "Is this all—there is nothing else?" A negative answer would mean that more testimony was called for. An affirmative answer would end this phase of the inquiry. Questions would then be posed to discover what sort of restitution, compensation, punitive damages, prayers, and so on were required to satisfy the deity and quiet his/her anger. Only when each answer had been taken through the entire process was the inquiry finished.³

You can understand that this method might take some time. With a thousand deities who might

be angered with you, determining which it is and how to make amends is difficult. Fortunately, the Hittites seemed to enjoy this sort of divination, because they took meticulous records.

The Hittites also practiced extispicy, where an animal (usually a sheep) was sacrificed, and the exta were examined for various blemishes, creases, etc. This job fell to a priest called a *barú*, who was a diviner-exorcist. This practice appears to have originated with the Babylonians by way of the Hurrians, as the terms for various parts were Hurrian. The divinatory system here is a complicated play, where double negatives are extremely important. The right is the "good" side, and the left the "bad" side (this will occur again later, with bird divination). If a bad sign, such as "beating" occurred on the right (favorable) side, it was bad; if, however, it occurred on the left (unfavorable) side, then it was good. Two bad omens could become a favorable omen, though this is not so much rule as it is convention.⁴

On the way to the sacrifice, the sheep would be observed by the *barú*, and the behaviors, including which pen it is in, where it beds down, and whether it sticks out its tongue (and to which side), would determine the omen read.⁵

Bird oracles and augury seem to be uniquely Hittite in the region and area, rather than from Hurrian or Mesopotamian influence. A bird watcher would describe the bird, starting when it enters the field of vision and ending when it leaves. The bird is said to "come" initially, indicating that it "comes" into the field of vision of the watcher. It will then be described as "coming left" or "coming right" or "coming away". If the bird crosses the "river" or "road" (the mid-line of the field of vision), it may be said to "go across", but never to "go" unless it leaves the field of vision. It may "go" and "come back", but it never "goes" anywhere and then "goes" another place. The bird, if it goes to ground, may be described as "hiding" or "sitting" rather than "going."

Some texts describe the field that the bird flies through as a rectangular field, usually with a river or a road that runs down the center. The bird does not give a "favorable" or "unfavorable" response, but rather "confirms" or "throws away" the statement. The wording here prevents the bird watcher from asking a "yes/no" sort of question. A good statement that is "thrown away" is generally considered unfavorable, while a bad statement that is "thrown away" is favorable. Instead of "Do you approve, O Gods?" the query is more, "let the birds confirm this." They will then either throw away or confirm the statement. ⁶

Another method of divination was the snake divination. A water snake was put into a basin and given a name that fit the query, such as "the snake of the land of Hatti." It was then assigned to another symbol, possibly indicating where it would enter the basin from (areas around the edge of the basin were given symbolic names, some favorable and some unfavorable). It would then be released into the basin to find its way around, and places it stopped would be noted, as would actions it did. If there were fish or other snakes in the basin, it would be described in relation to the other animal, or, should the snake bite the other animal, the record would show where on the animal it bit. Finally, a determination would be made from all these various stops, bites, and starting points about whether the divination was favorable or not. ⁷

Most often, once a divination had been done, it would be checked against a different kind of oracle, ensuring that there was no failure. ⁸ This is very different from our modern conception of divination, where nearly every book on the subject insists that you should never ask a question twice from the same divination set.

Divination by dreams, a standby for many cultures, is surprisingly only attested to late in the Hittite timeline, not appearing until the New Kingdom. ⁹ This brings up interesting questions

about the use of dream divination in Indo-European cultures and whether it is attested as an actual Indo-European practice, but those questions are best left for another article. There is a ritual, though, where a man suffering from impotency is instructed to sleep in a holy place and report his dreams. ¹⁰

It is interesting to look at these divinatory practices and see how they are or might be reflected in our own. The implication that a very simple "yes/no" might be the extent of the answer from the gods alone is very different than what we often do in ritual, and implies that we have a lot more work to do before we can satisfactorily state that we "know the will of the gods."

~*~

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⁸ entry on Hittite Religion, p. 4072

² entry on Hittite Religion, p. 4072

³ Beal, p. 58

⁴ Beal, p. 59-60

⁵ Beal, p. 64

⁶ Beal, p. 65-70

⁷ Beal, p. 74-76

⁸ Beal, p. 80

⁹ entry on Hittite Religion, p. 4072

¹⁰ entry on Hittite Religion, p. 4072

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Divination for Public Ritual

By Meredith McDonald

As we all know, ADF is committed to public ritual. That commitment impels us to consider how we may best serve the community. As Chief of the Seers Guild, I presented a workshop on Divination in public ritual. This practice takes place in many different forms, most obviously in oracular practices such as Oracular Seidh. Though there are many schools of thought on the purpose of divination as a part of public ritual, I think it best suits the purposes of this forum to stick to ADF style ritual.

I'll begin with the purpose of the Omen in the ADF liturgy. It seems that we began with a purpose that was connected to the kindred's reception of the offerings we've given. However, after over twenty years of public worship, this purpose has evolved and grown. It was my original feeling that the power inherent in asking the gods how we've done in the process of sacrificing to them was far more powerful than simply asking them for an omen. The suspense and trust involved in asking for that approval is palpable in the moment of the return flow. And it has quantifiable results when the omen is unfavorable. I have heard more than one transformative tale from members who worked up the courage to offer something in response to the omen and these stories make this a more than viable method of public omen-taking.

That being said, I've grown to have a new regard for a different purpose (and focus) for the omen in ADF Public Ritual. The purpose that seems

to be gaining popularity as we hit our young adult years is simply to ascertain the nature of the blessings we are about to receive from the kindred. With this purpose, the omen is taken and often used to charge the blessing cup before it is sent around to the people. (This is a practice I picked up from Ian Corrigan after a unity rite at Summerland festival.) He placed three fire sources around the blessing cup and put the three omens into a sentence while lighting the flames, using three matches. Ever since seeing the magic behind that use of the omen I have leaned more heavily towards using the omen more as a message from the three kindred to the people.



Having discussed two of the purposes for taking the omen in ADF ritual, I'd like to mention a few ways to call for these omens. A common ex-

ample of a reading to check the reception of the offerings is similar to the 'past, present, future' reading that many folks use for personal divination. In this reading, I ask 'What Brought us?' and pull a 'few'. (A few is another name for a single symbol, particularly a single Ogham.) The second question is 'How is our Offering received?' and the third is 'What blessing or Challenge do the kindred offer us?' This reading really does cover several bases. We learn what the most important aspect of our gathering is; how our offerings have been used and taken; and we are given the specifics on the blessing to come. If this last symbol is negative, we know that they offer a challenge and drinking the cup means that we accept the challenge.

Possibly the most common method of taking the omen to learn the specific nature of the Kindred's blessing is to pull a symbol from each of the three. We ask what the Ancestors, Nature Spirits and Shining Ones offer us in return for our sacrifices and worship. This reading has the added benefit of being enhanced by the three realms and the three representations of the gates aligned with it. For example, the symbol drawn for the Ancestors will correlate with the well and the past; the Nature Spirits, the tree and the present; and the Shining Ones are the fire and the future. As mentioned above, this reading also makes the 'charging' of the blessing cup a little more magical.

Having discussed the purpose and the method of taking the omen, let's focus on the appropriate tools. It is my sincere feeling that Seers in Our Own Druidry should rely upon well know oracles or 'symbol sets' when taking the omen at the beginning of the return flow. (This happens after the final prayer of sacrifice. The flow turns from us offering to them to them offering back. Thus, continuing our relationship through the principle of ghosti, exemplified by the phrase – 'A Gift calls for a Gift!') Though I do work with oracular modes of divination, including channeling, I believe that this work best fits as a magical working and is not the best mode of taking the main omen.

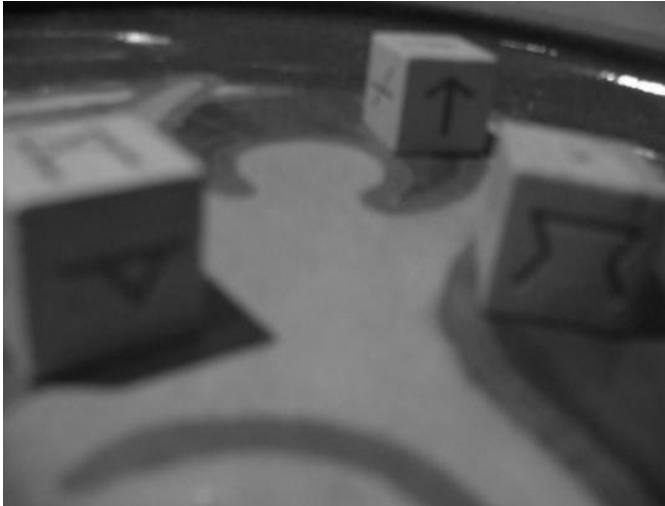
My reason for feeling this way has to do with the responsibility of the Seer to be accountable to the people. If s/he uses a symbol set, they are offering everyone the opportunity to share fully in the power of the omen. In ritual a seer can only say so much, but if the people know what symbols have been drawn they will be able to seek out deeper understanding of their own, thus strengthening the lasting power of the ritual they have attended. This keeps the seer humble as well, and, being a seer myself, I find this extremely valuable. I am not able to take responsibility for my personal prowess as a diviner if I am simply pulling symbols from a bag. I also feel that channeling is such a questionable practice to

so many of the folk who may gather in our groves and halls, that we are placing a barrier between them and acceptance of the omen thus, between them and the kindred. This is why I recommend that all ADF seers use a symbol set for taking the main omen. If they'd like to incorporate less quantifiable modes of divination into the magical workings of the rite, however, I am all for that. (And have employed it myself to great success.) **DISCLAIMER:** It should, however, be understood that channeling for public ritual should only be undertaken by people with vast experience with trance work that has included methods for 'going away' and 'coming back'. And should be considered along the lines of swimming alone in the ocean – never channel without a reliable and fully trained 'ground' who can bring you back out of trance.

Now, as for which symbol sets you should use for ADF public ritual, there are plenty of choices. I tend to lean towards the ones that we have some idea may have been used for divination by the ancients. Of course we have no real evidence that they used Ogham or Runes in exactly the same way we do today, but we do know that they cast lots, which is basically what we do when we pull a rune from a bag. This method is called sortilege and it applies to any symbol set – including the Greek Alphabet, Tarot and Animal Oracle decks. As I've already made quite clear, sortilege is the method I most recommend for taking the omen in an ADF rite. I know many people feel strongly that you must learn one of the older divination sets for rituals in the Celtic, Greek or Norse hearth cultures; however, I feel that tarot is fine for use in a public ritual. I would only say this. The concepts found in 20-24 symbols are usually stronger and more easily grasped by the gathered folk than the concepts included in a deck of 78 cards. Not to mention the fact that the ogham are tied to tress, which is lovely for us druids, and the runes are a very powerful magical system to boot. There's just more bang for the buck, I feel. And there is a great power in sacrificing your time and energy to learning a new divination set simply for use in

public ritual. So, can you use the tarot for ADF Public Ritual – of course you can! (We'd rather see you up there taking omens than not.) However, does the Seer's Guild encourage you to learn older symbol sets? Of course we do! (NOTE: I do consider animal oracle decks to be the only substitute we have to animal omenry and prefer that method to classic tarot, personally.)

Now for a few tips to reading for Public Ritual: As with any ritual, presentation has a great deal to do with the impact you will make on the people gathered. This being the case, think about what you can do to make the moment before you take the omen somehow different or more magical. Is there a piece of jewelry or



clothing that you put on as part of the process of drawing the symbols? Is there a prayer you could say or chant you could sing that would help the folk to send energy towards you as you choose lots? Some people have had some success with reciting Odin's speech about sacrificing for the runes in Havamol. This gives the people a sense that you know what you are doing when you step forward to take the omen. (Even if you think you don't!) And, please don't just pull your cards out of a tattered old box. Wrap them in silk. Place your runes in a beautiful bag. These things will help people to travel with you as you seek guidance from the three kindred.

Be sure to speak clearly and be as concise as possible. Practice taking the omen at home by speaking out loud. (This makes a big difference in your comfort level when you do end up in front of people.) And, finally, for presentation, don't be afraid to use humor. The omen is a serious part of ritual, but that doesn't mean that

you can't relax and use humor to help communicate the blessings of the spirits!

For a few final ideas on making your work as a seer deepen; try taking omens before and after ritual as well. This gives you an opportunity to consider the things that float around the performance of the ritual itself. Be sure to write these down in the same place that you keep your omens for ritual. Speaking of which, the best,

most productive, most reliable way to excel as a seer is to commit to keeping a journal of all the omens you've taken AND go back regularly to read them. Be sure to write down any results that seem to tie to past omens as well. This is how you build the language you use as a seer to understand the gods. This way, in future, you'll

know what certain things mean. If, every time you pull the Needfire rune you run out of milk, then, eventually you will know to check your milk supply when that rune shows up. (Sure, other people pull it in times of great stress, but, maybe for you it only means – make sure your fridge is stocked.) This may or may not be the sort of thing you'd share in public ritual, but it does help to build a working relationship with your divination tool.

Well, this article is longer than I expected and I've only grazed upon the things that characterize reading for ADF Public Ritual. So, it must be time for a shameless plug. If you are interested in learning more or discussing the ideas in this article further, please join the Seers Guild. It is open to any ADF member and our list can be found on the ADF website under 'Forums.'





Little Acorns

Divination

By Lady DragonStar

It was a crisp, cool day in Little Acorns Grove. A brisk, winter wind filled the air as the last of the Autumn leaves blew in swirls on the breeze.

Everyone was getting ready for the Winter Solstice celebration, tidying up the grove, some were raking the leaves, some were clearing the old ashes from the fire circle, and yet others were decorating the grove in winter finery, but the ones that held Collin and Aidan's attention that day, and even little Brigid's as she toddled around the grove were Morgaine and the young apprentices gathered around her.

Morgaine was the seer for the grove. It was her job to call the Gatekeeper keeper to open the door between the worlds, and it was her job to take the omen to determine how the sacrifice was received, and what form the blessing from the Gods would take. This year, the sacrifice was a beautiful evergreen wreath that had spent 3 nights in the home of each grove member, where it was decorated and blessed before passing on. Right now, however, Morgaine was teaching the art of divination to her students.

"Come on over and join us, if you'd like," said Morgaine to the kids after seeing them watching her and her students. Some of the students were throwing sticks in the air and then reading the markings scratched into them, others looked like they were playing a rather strange game of cards, a few were staring into a small fire, and others were gazing into a black bowl filled with water,

and there was even one boy who was lying on his back staring at the clouds.



"What are they doing?" Asked Aidan as Brigid giggled when the young girl with the sticks tossed them into the air.

"They are learning the art of divination," said Morgaine. "Divination is one way that we can talk to the Ancient Ones and the Nature Spirits, and with the truth that lies within us to find answers to our questions.

"Like telling the future?" asked Collin as sparks flew up in the fire when one of the students threw a handful of herbs into the flames.

"Well, the future is not always, written in stone, Collin," Morgaine said with a smile. "Little things happen all the time to change the future, often in big ways, so it's just not possible to tell exactly what the future holds. What divination can do, however, is tell what is most likely to happen if we continue on the path we are on. If we like that possible outcome, fine, if not, then we can take action to change it.

"Another thing divination can do is help us to help ourselves make decisions about questions we are having difficulties with. We can use the symbols in divination to talk to our own inner voice that always knows the truth, and then that inner voice can steer us in the right direction. ❧

“Why is everyone doing something different?” asked Aidan as Brigid giggled at the girl tossing sticks in the air.

“There are many different tools for divination, and some work better than others for each person. Each of us is different, and what works for one person, may not work for another, and some methods are better suited for some situations than others. Some like scrying, which is what our friends staring at the fire, into that bowl, and even the boy staring at the clouds are doing; another form of divination is the Tarot cards, which is what they are doing over there, and that young lady over there is throwing the Ogham sticks. There is a certain meaning to each stick or card, and they are read how they wind up in the shuffle. For simple “yes-no” questions, you can use a pendulum, or even flip a coin, but my favourite is this,” she said, pulling out a small velvet pouch from her crane bag. She emptied it, and two stones of the same size

and shape fell out, the only difference was that one was black, and the other was white. “When I’m trying to make a simple decision, or just can’t quite make up my mind, I reach into this bag and pull out one of the stones. As you can see, they’re both alike except for the colour, so I won’t know which one I have until I pull it out.

“Wow!” said Aidan, “that looks really hard!”

“It is hard, Aidan, but it’s also easy, too. You can learn a divination method very easily, but you can spend the rest of your life learning it and never know it all. That’s half the fun!” she said, ruffling his hair.

“Hey, Aidan, let’s go find us some “yes-no” stones for our pouches!”

Yeah,” shouted Aidan, and they all ran off to find their stones. ❧

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Please send one submission per attachment specifying the format, author’s name, your email, and membership status. Be sure the title of the piece and your name are at the top of the page, and you have checked it over for spelling and grammatical

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E-mail: info@sassafragsgrove.org

Spiral Spirit Protogrove, ADF
Ridley Park, PA 19078-9998
E-mail: info@spiralspirit.org

Whispering Lake Grove, ADF
Erie, PA 16505
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Ocean's Tide Protogrove, ADF
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Many Rivers Protogrove, ADF
Nashville, TN 37207
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Henge of the Sacred Fire Protogrove, ADF
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Grove of the Seven Hills, ADF
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Riversong Protogrove, ADF

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Moon Flower Protogrove, ADF
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E-mail: moonflowergrove@yahoo.com

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Guilds

Artisans Guild
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E-Mail: smithing_chickyahoo.com

Bardic Guild
Chief: Bardd Dafydd
E-Mail: dafyddredoakgrove.org

Brewers Guild
Chief: Flip
E-Mail: flipchainolakescamp.com

Dance Guild
Chief: Zona-Lisa Bennett
E-Mail: samhain3x3aol.com

Healers Guild
Chief: Rodney Cox
E-Mail: uberrodcomcast.net

Liturgists Guild
Chief: Kirk Thomas
E-Mail: druidkirkyahoo.com

Magicians Guild
Chief: Rodney Cox
E-Mail: uberrodcomcast.net

Naturalists Guild
Chief: Epona
E-Mail: eponamysticdruid.com

Scholars Guild
Chief: Vacant

Seers Guild
Chief: Meredith McDonald
E-Mail: meredithmcdruiddruid.com

Warriors Guild
Chief: Selene Tawny
E-Mail: selenetawnyroadrunner.com

☪

Special Interest Groups
American SIG
E-Mail: kduttoncarolina.rr.com

Children's Education and Parenting SIG
E-Mail: eponamysticdruid.com

Ecstatic Trance
E-Mail: lindac5755aol.com

Foireann Mhorrigan
E-Mail: wrywjyaho.com

Solitaires SIG
E-Mail: grey-badgercharter.net

The People of the Purple Feather
E-Mail: aethontobargmail.com

☪

Kins
Aus Dhwer: Eastern Gate Kin
E-Mail: ratrijagmail.com

Clann na nGael: Gael Kin
E-Mail: senior_druidyaho.com

Eldr ok Iss: Kin of Fire and Ice
E-Mail: flipchainolakescamp.com

Oi Asproi Koukouyayies: White Owls Kin
E-Mail: robhcyberspace.org

Slavic Kin
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Tylwyth Y Ddraig Goch: Clan of the Red Dragon
E-Mail: deinioljones-falkus.wanadoo.co.uk

*For more information on Groves, Guilds, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Kins please see the full listing on our webpage:
<http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>*





Ár nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874



Membership and Subscription Form

Beside your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, please indicate whether the information is: Publishable (P), meaning it can be printed in ADF publications and we can give it out freely to people who wish to contact you; Sharable (S), meaning we can give it out to ADF members who request it; or Confidential (C), meaning that only the Mother Grove and ADF office staff will have access to it.

Legal Name: _____ P _ S _ C
 Religious Name: _____ P _ S _ C
 Address: _____ P _ S _ C
 City: _____ State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____
 Country: _____ Phone Number: _____ Birth Date: ___/___/___ (mm/dd/yy)
 Email Address: _____ P _ S _ C

The information on this form represents a:
 New Membership Renewal Revival of Expired Membership.
 Information Update (If name/address changed indicate previous)

If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us? _____
 If this is a membership renewal please state your ADF membership number: _____
 In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any? _____
 I am 18 years of Age or Older: { } Yes { } No (If no, see waiver below.)

ADF Membership Rates:

Regular Membership _____ years @ \$20/year = \$ _____
 Prisoner Membership _____ years @ \$10/year = \$ _____
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Members _____ years @ \$20/year = \$ _____
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Non-Members _____ years @ \$25/year = \$ _____

Total Due \$ _____

Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to "ADF" in U.S. dollars only.) Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing. There are special rates for Prisoners. Please contact us if you are a prisoner or are assisting one. This form may also be found online at: <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>.

Under 18 Membership Waiver

If you are under the age of 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign this waiver to indicate her/his permission for you to join ADF, and that signature must be notarized.

To whom it may concern: (enter child's name here) _____ has my permission to become a member of ADF, and I am fully aware of the Neopagan nature of this organization.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Notary Seal:

Contributors

Articles

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“Hittite Divination: Oracles, Birds and the Behavior of Sheep” pg 33

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“Typical Week in the Life of the Archdruid” pg 2

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Next Issue:

OL #36 - Spring - Magic and Ritual

Deadline for Submissions:

January 1st, 2007



Trillium ADF Spring Gathering

The 9th Annual Trillium: ADF Spring Gathering April 19 – 22, 2007

At The Log Cabin (TLC) Campground in Cross Junction, Virginia
Proudly hosted by Grove of the Seven Hills, ADF & Riversong Protogrove, ADF

{This year, Trillium will explore Hearth Cultures within ADF}

Activities include:

- ~ Workshops ~
- ~ Warrior Games ~
- ~ Bardic Circle ~
- ~ 2nd Annual Brewing Competition ~
- ~ Children's activities ~

Also featuring a Seed Exchange:

Have too many seeds? Want to diversify your garden? Bring your seeds (home grown or store bought) and go home with a handful of new possibilities.

Pre-Registration (Open from 1/1/07 until 4/05/07) : Adults \$35 / Children \$20

After 4/05/07: Adults \$45

Day Rate: Adults \$20 / Children \$10

Electricity: \$10 extra

(Exquisite meal plan once again provided by Mountain Rhythm Café)

Register online for admission and meal plan at:

<http://www.trilliumgathering.org/>

Or by mail to:

GOSH, ADF
516 Orchard St.
Lynchburg, VA. 24501

For more information, email Aesa at:
SD@SevenHillsADF.org