



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

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

See you next issue!

Bright blessings,

Diana

April 8, 2009

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Wandering in Heaven

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

The Voice of the Unknown spoke:

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I depart from the—"

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

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

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

That was the last time the Master wandered toward Heaven.

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

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

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

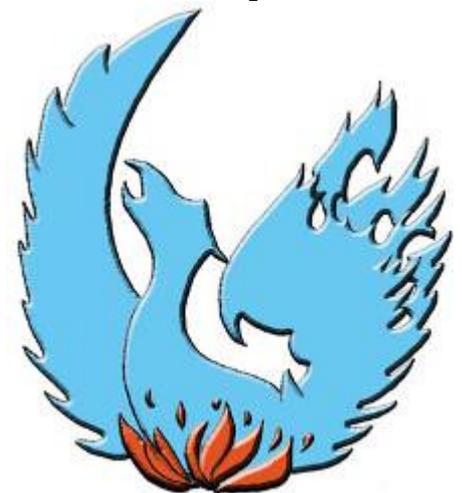
Today we can bring to life our own private menagerie of mythic animals. We can create our own nature tales colored with animal images -- whether a modern-day dragon, or a simple fire-fly glowing in a glass jar.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Book Review by Morgana:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAGANISM: A NATURAL RELIGION

by Thorg da Lusitânia

Translated by Sara Timóteo

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Solon's Laws/ Principles/ Commandments

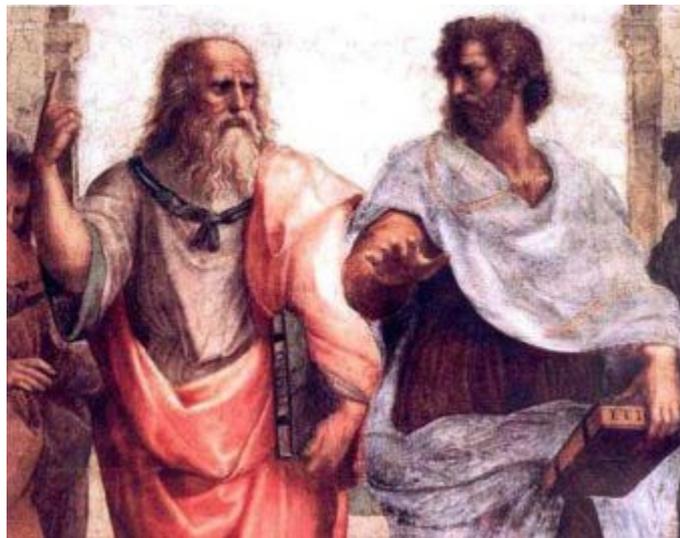
- Trust good character more than promises.
- Do not speak falsely.
- Do good things.
- Do not be hasty in making friends, but do not abandon them once made.
- Learn to obey before you command.
- When giving advice, do not recommend what is most pleasing, but what is most useful.
- Make reason your supreme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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Wheel of the Year, The Wheel of Life

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Exorcist From Gali
by Nana Abshilava

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Books by Raven Grimassi:

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

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

Book Review by Morgana

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

by Sorita d'Este & David Rankine

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

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

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

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

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

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

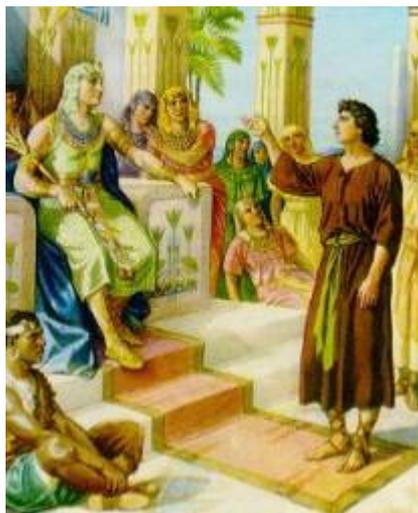
Reviewing several sources of material from anthropology and psychology to folklore, grimoires and contemporary magickal orders a number of subjects typical to Wicca are examined, including the origin of the word *Wicca*. One, which I wasn't aware of for example, is from “The history of the Anglo-Saxons”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

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

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



Lives of the Necromancers
by William Godwin



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

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

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

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

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

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

The Magi, or Wise Men of the East

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

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



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

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

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

The Roman Empire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Christopher: What are your plans for its future?

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

Christopher: Where could our readers find out more?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book Review by Morgana

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

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

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

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

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

How the World Was Made

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

This is the ancient Filipino account of the creation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book Reviews by Morgana

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

www.llewellyn.com

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

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

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

Contact us !

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

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