



*Hi all and welcome to the 43rd issue of Pagan World!*

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**A Happy Halloween & Samhain to all!**



**Peter J. Carroll**  
**Interview, November 2008**  
**(Part Two)**

**By Morgana & Saddle**  
**From Wiccan Rede Lammas 2009**

**S: Coming back to the Apophenion. Liber Kaos seemed to be very much a book of magical theory, while the Apophenion seems to have more religious overtones, which I found very interesting.**

P: Well, yes, although I wouldn't say religious in the conventional sense, but I think I'm developing more of a sense of mystical reverence for the Universe than I used to have. I used to be a bit of a reductionist. My early writings on magic are almost an attempt to deconstruct them to their basics, and then to reassemble simple pieces back to a usable structure. As I get older I seem to develop a more holistic outlook, tending to regard the Universe as an organism, which is somehow alive in some sense. Call that religion if you like, I regard it as a more mystical perspective.

**S: Also, in Apophenion you talk about the personal pantheon, which was again not something completely new, but it is talked about from a completely new perspective. Conventional magic talks about the Ego as being the driving force behind magic itself. You talk about consciousnesses, Egos in plural.**

P: Well, I never was particularly attracted to Thelemic theory, which does seem very ego-based. They would perhaps argue that they are talking of some transcendent form of the ego, your true Will. I'm not sure such a thing exists. At least not in a unitary form. I think people are far more complicated than that. Most monotheist religions attempt to say

only part of you is good. You know? Part of you is just terrible. Crowley almost did the opposite. He said the terrible part is good and the good part is bad, but I still think that's a bit too black and white for me. I think we are very, very complicated creatures, really, we have many motivations, all of which needs satisfying, otherwise we're likely to go mad eventually.

**S: Why did you choose to explain this in the terms of many consciousnesses rather than the many facets of the same consciousness?**

P: I don't experience myself as having a single centre of consciousness. I appear to myself to pass through many different modes. Some people may say maybe that's just moods, but in extreme states during invocations I seem to become somebody else. I'm sometimes very surprised what I've written. I thought: "surely I didn't write that!". I keep re-reading the book, finding surprising things in it, and wondering why I wrote that. Some people like to describe creativity as having an origin outside of themselves. Some people talk of spirit guides, some people talk of intelligence from aliens and all kinds of crazy things. I just think that the human mind is far more complex than psychology currently admits. I think there are whole worlds within it. The sort of consciousness I have when I'm dreaming seems completely different to the one that I have when I'm sitting here talking. I have more than one different self that dreams. I experience myself to consist of several different people basically. I think possibly in the way that the pagans appeared to have at some point. If you read the very early pagan literature, apparently they didn't have the same sense of personal agency that modern people like to ascribe to themselves. They considered themselves the playthings of the gods.

A man might excuse himself for committing adultery – “I’m sorry, Zeus did it”, “Well, that’s perfectly alright then”. To try and pretend to be coherent all the time is perhaps psychologically unhealthy. When you look at all the things that people do in our culture to get out of their heads, to become someone different for a while, whether they go and scream and shout at a boxing or a football match, or whether they watch pornography or whatever they do, people always seek to express the other parts in themselves that they don’t express in ordinary life. In the past we would have perhaps described those things as minor gods, which people worshipped. But I find it simpler to assume that they are all parts of our very, very complex psychology. I think the idea that you only have a single self, or that you should have a single self, is very much a monotheistic idea that’s been bolted on the last couple of millennia, and I think, possibly it’s time to re-examine it.

***L: We have many facets, to some you are a father, to others...***

P: But is there a real self underneath that? I don’t think so. There’s a huge range of drugs that you can give people, which will change their personality completely. And as long as they stay on the drug they’ll have that personality. You can give drugs that will make people paranoid. You can give drugs that will make people violent all the time. You can give drugs that will make people calm and docile all the time. So what is the real self? I don’t think there is one.

***S: Liber Kaos tried to revolutionise the way we look at magic. Is the Apophenion trying to revolutionise the way we are looking at deities?***

P: I think, in our scientific-based culture we tend to think a bit too much in black and white about certain

things. When pagans talk to me about their gods I wonder, does that pagan imagine that there is a place called Asgard with people in spiked helmets sitting in it controlling the Universe, or does that person think of the cosmic or psychological forces. I mentioned Asgard, but what about your average Hindu? I think they have what we call a “Mythos” kind of belief, I don’t think many, except for the poorest in India literally believes that there is a god whose head was cut off and then replaced by an elephant’s head, who brings good luck. I think most educated Hindus tend to regard it as a myth which has acquired it’s own power. It’s none the less powerful for that, but I don’t think they would literally believe it to be true. I may be wrong. I’ve had difficulties with getting Hindus to explain it to me in detail. Here in the West culture tells us to believe that God is literally real, and is literally some Old Testament tyrant, or some New Testament hippie figure who was and is real in an objective sense. I don’t think most of the older religions looked at it quite the same way. Perhaps they did, but when you read the stories they concocted about them, they appear to have concocted them almost self-consciously. They know that they can change and add to the story if they wanted to, whereas we’re not supposed to change or add to the story of Jesus at all, because it’s supposedly literally true. That, I think is perhaps the difference. Of course besides the high philosophical ideas of religions, it mostly comes down to solving your emotional problems. I say, well, why not have a little help from gods, if they’re useful? In Western monotheism that’s considered the height of idolatry unless, of course, you call them saints. I say why not just do it? I was particularly impressed by reading translations of the older Tibetan tantras. Some of their books on magic and tantra would say things like “At this moment summon a convenient god”. And they actually

have this tradition of Tulpas. They have this idea that you can create a thoughtform. They say that some of the entities you may encounter are not really independent pre-existing gods, but are created by human intentions.

***L: What kind of place can the gods have in modern society?***

P: I think we do still create gods in a certain sense, in a way they did in ancient times. Look at the television! You're invited to become intimately involved with the thoughts and ideas of various celebrities. And they are in a way imaginary, aren't they? They're only patterns of electrons on a tube, no more than imaginary figures really. And some people literally treat them like gods, don't they? They talk to them in their own heads.

***L: It was in Liber Kaos where you said somebody only becomes real when you go out to lunch with them.***

P: Quite.

***L: People, especially young people have this identity problem of "Who am I?" and "What am I doing?". With this they have formed their idols, football- and pop groups and whatnot.***

P: But in the past this would all have been done religiously. If you went to an ancient Greek or Roman amphitheatre for a play, the characters weren't purely secular. Many of them were figures from mythology. In the theatre they were made „real" for people.

***L: Those characters would give the morality of the story. The question is where do we get our morality today?***

P: I'll give you an example of something I've seen recently. I used to

read Superman and Batman comics, when I was a kid. Now there are anthologies of such things in the bookshop. They're called things like "Gods in Lycra". Modern gods. And now they are talking about the Marvel heroes as if they formed some sort of pantheon. And most of the superhero comics had a moral purpose as well. The triumph of good, the failure of meanness, or whatever. People would want stories like that. To develop ideas about their own beliefs.

***L: But after classical paganism, a lot of religions, especially Christianity provided the "straight and narrow pathway". Coming back to this idea of the seventies' revolutions, what happened?***

P: I think culture suddenly became too complex for monotheism. There were just too many options in life. Too many freedoms, too many different things you could do. The old style monotheism, with its ten commandments and everything was no longer perceived as adequate.

***L: Rudolf Steiner has this idea of the parabola, where there were these ages as everyone got deeper into matter, and one has the possibility to decide whether they go in really deeply, or remove themselves from matter and into the world of spirituality.***

P: Well, that depends on what you mean by materialism. I was very much influenced by Ramsey Duke's idea that the material and spiritual is all the same thing. When people talk about materialism they just mean the abuse of matter, wasting it. To me you define spirituality in the things you do. Everything you do is also "things". Surely if you go out and look after the environment, plant trees and treat Nature well – that is as much an expression of spirituality as sitting in a church. On the other hand, the most

grossly material things were done in the name of so-called “spiritual” religions. Vast cathedrals were built, huge armies marching across countries slaughtering millions. Everything we do is on the Material Plane one way or another. It just depends on the quality of what you do, really.

**L: I really like the fact about your magical system that it's organic – everything has to affect the life body in a way that it becomes more at ease, as opposed to dis-eased.**

P: What I'll say always annoys pagans, but why was it that monotheism succeeded paganism? Many pagan societies did things that we find now quite horrible, and the kinds of neo-paganisms that we have now don't involve those things, generally speaking. It doesn't involve human sacrifice, the roman arena and gladiators, institutionalised prostitution, all kinds of superstitions that don't appeal to us now. In many pagan cultures it was pretty damn grim, and monotheism, when it was introduced, succeeded with a positive social revolution at the time. The modern neo-paganism we have is another revolution on top of monotheism. It kept a good part of monotheist morality. When a pagan says things like „An it hurt none”, that's basically no more than the Christian „Do unto others”, isn't it? Most religions have a theoretical morality, which is far removed from the actual reality as it's practiced, but given the choice between living in a Christian Dark Age and a Viking Dark Age, I would probably opt for the Christian one. That society was marginally less brutal as far as I can see. I don't see much of a golden age in the past, except possibly Athens under Pericles for a short period. And even then not for women, I suppose.

**L: Christianity basically created a laity. There is a divine connection, and you are not allowed to have a conversation with God – Christianity has taken away this direct mystical connection.**

P: Yes. The Catholic Church has said for millennia, that only it had the keys to heaven, didn't it? Protestantism basically said it's every man for himself, which is an advance, and I think most of the better magical thinking evolved from post-protestant cultures. I think part of the reason we're having some trouble getting much going in the Latin countries is because they are ex-Catholics.

**L: But the Catholics had the idea of what ritual is about, and when you look at real rituals, then the Protestants have nothing on the Catholics.**

S: Well, since they took everything from the Mithras cult...

**L: Yes. I think most of neo-paganism is about going back to the original connection, but with what we already have. So we have the best of both worlds.**

P: I think you have to work on that basis. I believe that any form of complete retreat to the former Pagan fundamentalism is crazy. It always makes me laugh when I look at people in modern occultism use egyptological symbolism. You can use a simplified egyptological system, as presented by the Golden Dawn, but then you look at an academic book on Egyptology, you realise it's just a complete mishmash. Ancient Egypt is a civilisation which lasted for about two thousand years and was spread out through a country about two thousand miles long. All those gods that were made into a pantheon by the Golden Dawn came from completely different periods, from completely different cities often

separated by a thousand of miles... they would worship one god and would never have heard of the other.

**L: It's like people in Wicca believing in an unbroken line back to whenever... I think there has to be certain honesty about it, even if it's only honesty to yourself.**

P: It came to me as a revelation at a very early age that every generation rewrites magic in a way. To me the first bit of really obvious Chaos Magic, although it doesn't look like it, was the Golden Dawn. Basically Mathers and his mates assembled a system from countless different sources from the past and pretended they hadn't. So I thought, when it came to putting my ideas together, which became inevitable (I didn't call it Chaos Magic initially, I didn't start calling it that, we just adopted the title), I thought I'm not going to pretend that this stuff is of ancient antiquity, or following any kind of unbroken tradition or anything. I'm going to say "Yes, we're making it up." Everyone else has always done that. Look at the medieval grimoires. Many bits of that are pinched from Hermeticism. Now Hermeticism isn't what it says it is, Hermeticism was in the first couple of centuries an attempt to recover fragments of Egyptian knowledge, that were then translated into Greek. It was syncretic even in it's own day. It ascribed to itself a historical tradition, which it didn't have. I thought "Well, you can't get away with this anymore". We'll take what we want, and we'll admit that we did it.

**L: People really need to break away from the idea that these things are etched in stone. You talk about Paganism; you talk about "of the land..."**

P: You know that the ultimate source material for most of what passes for Witchcraft is? It's the Malleus

Maleficarum, a lunatic fantasy paranoia written by some Catholic priests. And now they are taking it as their gospel.

**L: I think the main question is how do we create a mystery religion for today?**

P: What do you mean by mystery religion?

**L: To me, a mystery religion is to sort out the paradoxes of your own life. As soon as you recognise paradoxes, you realise the patterns - which is quite an Apophenic way of looking at things - and can start to unravel them on your own terms.**

P: I thought you're talking about mystery in terms of a religion with certain secrets that are ritually passed.

**L: Absolutely not!**

P: The mystery of being able to understand the inner working of things, then? On those terms I would say science was a mystery religion, because most people don't understand how it works. A few people understand the way atoms make up things and that gives them a certain ability to predict what things will do. Also, magic, as I would understand it, is a mystery religion. It says certain things about how certain things will work in the world. It says certain things about how psychology works, which may be applicable to other people's worlds quite possibly. It gives you some understanding of things like that. I think it's a mystery religion in the sense that it gives me a model of what spirits are. It allows me to understand my psychological motivations both as evolutionary developments, and also those things, which, because they acquire an amazing degree of coherence and persistence are almost independent entities.

**L: And that brings us to the question of what are the gods?**

P: You are looking at systems which are immensely complicated and powerful, they are like gods compared to us, and you can sometimes placate them or please them, but you really can't annoy them long term, without something very bad happening.

**L: The ultimate goal for many people is to be happy...**

P: I don't know about that. I think one of the ancient Greeks had the difference between pleasure and Virtue, I think it basically came down to that there is more ultimate pleasure in virtue than pleasure, isn't there? To have done something of lasting value is worth any number of boxes of chocolate or bottles of beer, because that's just gone in a few hours. I think happiness comes ultimately from virtue rather than pleasure. An attempt to create happiness by buying pleasure doesn't seem to work very well.

**S: We have arrived to my next question about the Apophenion. Where would a Panpsychic draw his morality?**

P: Most sensible systems of morality are based on just long-term common sense, aren't they? If you go around killing people, you will probably eventually get killed yourself as a result. If you go around thieving, eventually the amount of theft in society will make it unsustainable and everything you have will be taken away

Look at almost any piece of morality and ultimately it's evolved from the social situation. A lot of our sexual morality is ultimately economic, and that's why it's changing so much at the moment, because the economics are changing. In the times when it was

absolutely imperative for couples to stay together to raise children to keep the farm going, huge amounts of religiously backed morality developed around the subject. It's always situational. Now that the economic situation is changing, now that it's not so bad for society if single women reproduce it's become a less of a moral problem as well. I don't think there's an ultimate morality, it always evolves, doesn't it? A morality is now evolving in the ecological direction. The Bible basically says the Earth is there to do what you will with, the "beasts of the field are all your property". And now we're realising that that might not be situationally correct with what we've got - so the morality is changing again.

**L: Yes, people should be far more concerned with adapting to the land than the other way around.**

P: Some cultures have a morality like that even today. The first son would get the land, the second son would get sent to the monastery (advertised as a privilege). And because that often leads to a huge surplus of women, the first son often marries a pair of sisters. It doesn't sound like normal morality, but it does keep the population in balance with the environment, instead of the land being chopped into smaller and smaller pieces and the whole thing ending in wars.

Coming back to the original topic, I would only go as far to say that yes, morality does need a change now. I don't think Panpsychism argues for any particular moral stance, because we could say, well, the more evolved life form you've got, the more intrinsic value it has. I sometimes wonder, when my wife goes around the garden picking up slugs and snails and stamping on them, I think well, that snail is a considerably more advanced life form than the plant that it's eating. I have a problem with that. But there

again, just how many of them would I be able to tolerate? And by using their food, I'm probably killing them anyway by lowering their chances.

**L: On a different subject: what was your purpose to do magic in the first place?**

P: Curiosity. Ultimately I would say curiosity.

**L: No ulterior motives? Most people in Wicca would say, "To heal people".**

P: Oh, I do that stuff, but it's ultimately curiosity. The same thing that motivates scientists. The Large Hadron Collider has been built ultimately to satisfy curiosity. "What on Earth would happen, if we switch it on?" To me magic has a lot of practical uses, of course, but ultimately it's curiosity.

**S: You're talking about Results Magic. What was the most impressive result you have achieved with magic?**

P: Well, it depends on what you mean by impressive. Whether you're talking about useful or improbable. When I get really angry, I've done poltergeist effects: throwing things over the room without touching them, smashed bits of glass just by looking at them. But only when I get very, very angry. Although this might seem completely mad the most interesting result I ever got, was with a whole bunch of us in Germany. We did a big evocation to send an entity back to have a look at the Big Bang. This was the time when the Big Bang entered everyone's consciousness in a very big way, and we thought the Chaostar looks like a big bang, so is Chaos Magic a "Big Bang mysticism"? I always was quite intrigued by the idea of the Big Bang. After all, I have to say I believed in it. So we did this thing one afternoon, we

manufactured the entity based on a child's toy robot, and built a whole set of rituals around it, and decided to send it astrally back to the time of the Big Bang, billions of years ago and it'll come to us in our dreams and show us what it looked like. Just about everybody reckoned, they got the strange result that the Universe looked back then just about the same as it does now. I kind of ignored that result for a long time, but it was recorded, and it gradually begun to dawn on me that this may be one of the most astonishing discoveries that I ever made by magic. It may yet prove to be wrong, but if it were proved to be right, I'd say that was practically the most astonishing result I ever got. I do expect the Big Bang theory to collapse in my lifetime if I'm lucky. I may be completely wrong on that, but if so, that would be the realisation of my most interesting result ever.

**S: This result is referred to in the Liber KKK.**

P: I think it is. I may have put it into print. If you can use magic to get that kind of result, what can't you do?

**L: When you talk about the Universe looking the same, do you mean 20th-21st century, or...**

P: No, I mean on the vast scale. It's not all compacted into one place. It's not in a state of explosion. The stars are distributed on a large scale, the Big Bang didn't happen at all. As the pagans thought, we live in a Universe that undergoes endless cycles, but not cycles of expansion and contraction.

**S: Another completely random question. Where does the Chaostar symbol come from?**

P: There are several reasons for that one. It was the symbol of the ancient Babylonian goddess Ishtar, and then Michael Moorcock used it as a symbol

of chaos in his fantasy novels. These are the two main sources, but it's got everywhere now, hasn't it?

**L: In Wicca it would be the Eight-fold Path.**

P: Well, the Buddhists have a wheel with eight spokes, don't they?

**L: I'm intrigued about the pantheon of the Apophenion, for example Pareidolia...**

P: Yes, Pareidolia is basically Apophenia gone a bit wrong. The works of Dali are fabulous examples of Pareidolia. One thing mutating into another, seemingly unrelated things... dreamlike stuff. Many gods seem to be personifications of things that exist in the human mind, so Apophenia is the personification of what I see as the driving force behind magic itself. Most magic is concerned with strange and hidden connections between things, systems of correspondences. What drives people to make those connections in the first place? Then in 1958, I think it was, some psychologist called Klaus Conrad coined the word Apophenia, and I thought: Wow! I never heard the term before, until someone mentioned it on the College. They just mentioned it in the course of discussion. I broke off my reply, googled the word Apophenia, went back to the message thread, saying „oh, my god, what an extraordinary idea! We could have a goddess called Apophenia!” and someone wrote back: „Well, okay, Pete, we've just seen the birth of a goddess. Well done.” I thought, why not? We have made deities out of all kinds of things. Okay, maybe not made a deity, but recognised that there was one there. That's what magicians have done all the time, isn't it.

**S: Apophenia seems to be everywhere. If we take Chaoism, both the first Chaos Mass and the**

**publishing the first edition of the Principia Discordia happened in 1976.**

P: yes, that influenced us.

**S: I have another autobiographical question. In an interview you wrote that you never really excelled at team sports.**

P: Yes, I'm not a good co-operator. I feel more comfortable either in charge of something or not involved, to put it bluntly. I might be just very egotistical, I don't know, but I always felt I'd rather trust my own judgement than somebody else's.

**S: Then how did the whole idea of the IOT happen?**

P: Don't forget, I put myself in charge of it. The reason I decided to play the whole hierarchical gambit was to get something done. Ever since college I had magical groups and I always found myself organising things, otherwise not much would happen. If I delegated things, people would do them, but if nobody was organising it, nothing would happen. There are supposedly a couple of other Chaos groups, the Z(Cluster) and Autonomatrix, which are supposedly completely anarchic, but it was a deliberate choice to introduce hierarchy, so the administration and organisation would get done. Anarchy doesn't tend to work. Not for very long, and not for more than three or four people. Frater U.D. was a tremendous organiser, and the whole European thing wouldn't have come about, if he hadn't been there.

**M: What is the hallmark of the good Chaos Magician?**

P: Imagination and determination, I suppose. Unless you have the imagination to make something, or make something of yourself, no one is

going to do it for you. Also persistence, really, and determination. We've had so many people drift through it and not really getting into it. But it's still very much 'Do It Yourself'. You only get out what you put into it. The people who stayed with it were the people who tended to innovate within it, rather than just administer it.

***M: And what do you mean by imagination? Do you mean fantasy? What role does fantasy play in your system?***

P: I don't know how imagination works really; I think it's something really weird and chaotic. You just have to let it happen. The only way I find I can stimulate imagination is to get a load of data together and then just let it stew and see what happens. It's mainly seeing connections, I suppose, the Apophenia idea. But I don't suppose I'd go off to the realm of fantasy in the sense of fantastic and impossible things. I always see imagination as finding something that is just do-able, realisable. My imagination is normally aimed at trying to create something possible.

***M: Yes, and going back to a previous discussion about Kabbalah, where do you get your ideas? Where does Kabbalah come from? From angelic or divine beings? Or from our own imaginations?***

P: I think Kabbalah was an early exercise of lateral thinking. Trying to read more into the sacred texts than what they apparently contained. The classical operation of Kabbalah is Gematria, when you take a word, try to find its numerical equivalent, and then try to find other words with the same number, and try to find a philosophical or metaphysical connection between them. It's a mechanical process, and often creates rubbish. It's a bit like that device you

can find in novelty shops. You press a button, and a word falls out, then you try to find how that relates to my problem. I think ultimately Kabbalah is no more than that, a technique of association. Of course, what we call Kabbalah now is not like the ancient Kabbalah. The Tree of Life is medieval. It's just a technique to read more into something than what at first it appears. It's an attempt to extract those things, but you're largely manufacturing them really.

***M: Do you see it possible that imagination can be part of a divine intervention?***

P: Yes. Because imagination involves creating something that wasn't there in the first place, it's not causal, is it? We can't account for where it comes from. It seems to come from somewhere else.

***S: Is there anything else you would like to tell our readers?***

P: Use your imagination and determination to make it real! It's not an easy thing to make work, because it's pretty foreign to our consensus world-view. It's something you have to work quite hard at to make it work. Maybe in a previous age, when it was part of the common currency of thought, behaviour and belief was easier. Now we have to work quite hard at it. And you have to make it relevant to today. Every generation reinvents magic. I don't think there are any real bizarre arcane secrets. It's a syncretic art, but that really is the secret. There are no ancient sacred texts that work magic by themselves. You have to put it in there by your own effort.

***M & S: Thank you very much.***

## ***Pagan holidays in Russia – ‘Makosh’ by Gwiddon, PFI Russia***

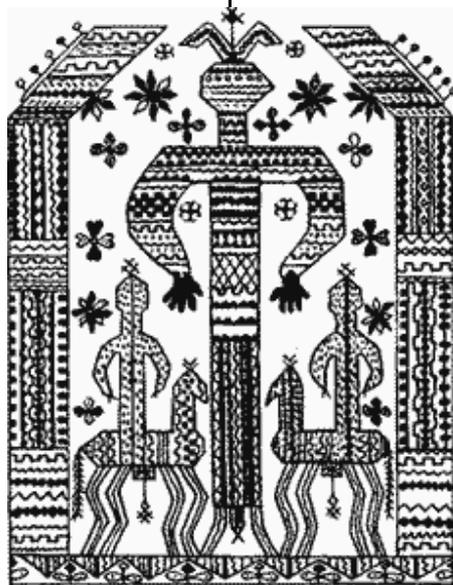
In the lands of the East Slavs, right in the centre of the Great Russian plain from time immemorial common folk and noblemen alike celebrated one of the great High Days of the Wheel of the Year, ‘Makosh’ at the end of October. The name for this holiday comes from the namesake and title of one of the oldest deities worshipped in what is known today as Russia, as well as other Slavic lands.

The exact meaning of her name is hidden deep within folk-memory and scholars still argue as to what it means. Most often the name is divided into two parts – ‘Ma’ – meaning mother and ‘Kosh’ – a purse, a sack – most often associated with a ‘purse of Fate’. On other words, Makosh is the Mother of Fate. Another interesting layer to her name’s meaning is added by ‘moknut’, ‘mokraya’ – words with a common root of ‘mok’ – moisture. That’s why some argue the etymology of her name from moisture, moist earth – which echoes in the memory of another ancient goddess, whose very name (or title) is ‘Mati Syra Zemlya’ (‘Mother Moist Earth’ in English).

The archetype of an old chthonic goddess, with attributes of down to earth grittiness, moisture (related to the life-giving waters of the deep unconscious) and Fate, is reflected not only in her purse, which holds both good and ill luck, hidden from view to avoid the possibility of bias in the choice of Fate, but also in the spinning wheel, with the thread that she spins being the thread of one’s Fate, as well

as association with magic and divinations – all of these attributes appear to link her, at least in spirit, if not in direct relation with common Indo-European origin, with the Greek goddess Hecate.

Pagans today often think of Makosh as the goddess who is responsible for the creation of continuities, continuity of time and space, of life itself in its many rites of passage, continuity of a family, and of everything which contains more than one element, which continues to grow into something else, yet retains its internal logic, something which continues on to repeat after a different fashion again, and again and again. Makosh’ is also the one with the will and the power to sever that continuity if such action becomes necessary in light of other continuities.



A Russian pagan author, Tatyana Blinova in her book ‘Pyatnitza’ said: “..in today’s world things like the one-story-fits-all paperback novels for ladies, sitcoms, knitting, everyday trips (home – kindergarten – work – store – kindergarten - home), weekly house cleanup, traditional spring cleaning, birthdays, national holidays and rights of passage – is today’s jurisdiction of Makosh. She is also the one who enables us to get through this routine, if we let her help us. ... So, at this moment, while writing this book I am stringing words, articles and periods into one continuity, one understandable system of signs to express my ideas, so that they are understood by the readers – I am doing Makosh’s work. The modern woman does not have to necessarily weave or spin threads to do Her work...”

The time to honour Makosh' corresponds exactly with the time of the year, which is close to her in 'feel' – not the harsh dryness of summer or winter, but the moist and cool rainy season of late autumn. Russians call this time of the year, to this day, 'Rasputitza' (the 'Off-road time' in English). In ancient times, and quite often nowadays as well in the countryside, late autumn was the time when rain turned dirt roads into mud, thus severing ties between villages. People felt isolated and insular. Merchants and travelers could not continue with their normal ways, and folks turned to a more private, family and home-based life until the first frost.

Rain would also force people to stay put, preventing them from gathering the harvest, seeing friends and relatives in other villages, and going outside in general. This was the perfect time for traditional women's occupations – celebrating weddings, spending time with children and family members at home, weaving and spinning threads with girlfriends (interestingly enough, in the old days a woman had to count the number of knots as she weaves, so most often the weavers would sit perfectly still and quiet, silently counting in their minds the knots, which is almost like meditating).

The high point in Makosh celebration is a week-long period between the two Fridays at the end of October. Friday is sacred to Makosh in the Slavic lands, same as it is to Freya in the Norse lands, and the Christian Orthodox Church co-opted the holiday, calling it 'Paraskeva Pyatnitza' (in English 'Paraskeva Friday'). Saint Paraskeva is the Christian mirror-image of Makosh'.



The site 'Slavyanskaya Sloboda' <http://slavyans.narod.ru/holidays/makosh.html> provides the following interpretation of the rites for Makosh' celebration:

Nature is poised awaiting the arrival of Winter. Women are getting ready for their usual work during long winter nights. That is why the ritual leader starts the rite with the following traditional song:

Lady of the house, open up the doors!  
 Guests are a-waiting in your backyard!  
 Open up your hewn doors!  
 Spread your new runners for them!  
 Honoured guests have come to you  
 Makosh' the mother has come to you  
 Like a mother, she'd shower you with  
 gifts,  
 Walking through your cozy house,  
 To open up your painted chests,  
 Into one she puts very light thin  
 fabric,  
 And white linen she puts in another,  
 And into the third one she puts white  
 fine cloth...

Priestess of Makosh (crowned with a wreath and holding a horn of plenty in hand) collects sacred offerings of bread, wine and honey. A chicken is sacrificed (NB:



Nowadays mostly they make do with store-bought chicken meat). After the ritual opening come the traditional divinations for the coming winter. For the feast, women make porridge of gruel with honey and milk, as well as roast the chicken. Women put on ritual games, with their faces covered with masks, which they put on after a long break for the summer. When darkness comes, the spirits and ghosts emerge from the

other world and begin their wild dances. They greet the coming winter and revel in the anticipation of its arrival. To protect themselves and scare off the evil spirits, people don the scary masks. The celebration is concluded with a special dance – the double-ring circle dance.

The rite we have described here is based on some of the folk traditions, kept by women in the country-side all over Russia and other Slavic lands. It speaks of the understanding our ancestors had for the Wheel of the Year, the changes which occur in that special time between seasons. This holiday marks a special spot when the veil between the worlds grows thin, and we can interact with other-worldly beings – our ancestors, which protect us when we honour them and other beings, which may be mischievous, if taken lightly or without respect.

Winter was a very trying season for our ancestors, and so divinations were necessary to predict what will happen in the coming times of snow, when hunger and frost forces common folks to do all they can to survive. Women were very important at this time, as they worked hard to preserve the harvest to make it last through the winter, in the name of survival. Thus, celebrating the Mother of Faith, ancient mother Makosh', as well as women, her earthly representations, is what is right and proper at this time. Happy holidays!



***The Modern Althing:  
To Honor the Gods, the Old Ways  
and the Faith  
By Susan Granquist***

Assemblies, known as things (ON. þings), were a vital part of the lives and customs of the Germanic and Old Norse people. These gatherings were held at a traditional spot which could accommodate large groups of people coming together such as a field, forest or hill at an agreed upon time. Many of these places retain their names as a meeting place, such as the Icelandic, Þingvellir, which means literally "assembly field." There are many similar places with the same meaning such as Tingvalla in Sweden and Tynwald on the Isle of Man.



Although the Icelandic Alþingi is perhaps the best-known thing today, it was based on ancient custom among the Germanic people. An early Iron Age Roman inscription to Mars Thingus, which is translated as the God of the thing, on a votive stone in North England dating from the 2nd century, and Tacitus (Germania 11) records the wide-spread custom in the first century CE. In Old Saxon 'thing' was in use 685 CE with the same meaning of an assembly or gathering, and as ðing in OE and OHG as þing in ON. The term, þing derives from the Common Germanic \*þengan meaning "appointed time," and the meaning of thing in the sense of an unspecified object is derived from this earlier, original usage.

There were things for many purposes and of different sizes and importance,

ranging from a húsþing or house-thing, held by a chieftain for his own men, to much larger meetings to an Allsherjarþing, or thing of all the hosts, such as the Icelandic Althing or the Swedish Thing of all Swedes.

Today we tend to think of the things as strictly courts and legal proceedings, but things were held for many reasons, and the seasonal things in particular were likely to be much more. There were religious rites, story-telling, trading, socializing, exchanging news, renewing old acquaintances as well as meeting new people.

Today we tend to think of the things as courts and legal proceedings, but things were held for many reasons, and the seasonal things in particular were likely to be much more. There were religious rites that bound the community together despite the differences argued at thing, and it was a time for trading as well.

An essential aspect of thing was the requirement of frið or peace. Regardless of the type of thing, it was deemed to be held under the protection of the gods, and was opened with a solemn declaration of peace, even those who were on their way or returning from a thing were both protected and bound by requirement of peace. Breaking the peace of thing was viewed as the same as the breaking of peace or shedding of blood on temple grounds. This was not the peace of absolute agreement, but one of arbitration and mediation, putting



aside weapons and fighting as a means to solve problems and work out differences. It is an ideal to strive for in modern times.

In years leading up to 1997, there were concerns about the growing arguments fed by the internet and bulletin boards where misunderstandings could so easily arise, and the lack of places to go unless one was a member of a particular group or organization. One solution that was proposed was an Althing where all could attend regardless of organizational affiliation or lack of, where individuals could meet and talk to people with different views in order to find others they find fellowship according to their own needs and interests in the same manner as in the elder times.



Such cooperation and growth was also felt to be necessary in order to meet the challenges presented by a largely Christian oriented government and society in maintaining and securing our religious rights. Of even greater importance was the need for a gathering where the youth of our faith could meet one another, and the sharing of concerns of raising a family with heathen principles.

In October of 1997 an Althing was held on that basis in Nashville, Tennessee, with the participation of a special guest, Allsherjargoði Jormundr Ingvi from Iceland, and members from various groups and organizations. The requirement of frið at this time is not to be in laying aside sharp and

wounding words, and to discuss differences with thought and care.

Although the Irminsul Ættir has continued to sponsor the Althing financially, it is not an Aettir meeting or thing in the usual sense; nor have we been alone in presenting the Althing. We have had the help and support of dozens of individuals over the years whose dedication to the faith goes beyond the politics and disagreements that often divide the heathen community. Troy Wisehart is one of the goður who has presented rituals and workshops at the Althing and participates actively in the planning. Of the Althing he said in a recent message, "With ritual, fellowship and workshops on various aspects of heathen life not only is this gathering a great get away for the whole family but an valuable educational experience as well. I strongly encourage any heathen who would like to contribute to the growth of heathenry to take advantage of this opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the preservation of our Northern European heritage."

Tina Reid, from Abbotsford, BC, also explains her reasons for the sacrifices and effort to hold and attend the Althing:

"On a personal note, in my family, the Althing has become somewhat of a New Year's ritual. It marks the beginning of a new yearly cycle for me. Each year I have attended, I have left with a new focus. Early on, the gods and goddesses made it abundantly clear that they would give me a task, and when the next Althing rolled around, I was finished with that task and received a new one.

In the beginning, it was a simple matter of familiarizing myself with a different deity, but as I grow older, the tasks are becoming more and more complex. I think the ability to receive

these tasks and understand them at the Althing is the result of so many of us making an effort to be together in one place. The energy of all of us combined in one place speaks louder than regular blóts, and it's a palpable thing when you're there, which is why it seems to me that it is not just important to me that I am there, but to the Gods and Goddesses, too. They attend, too, and they hear us. Some years, it has felt like slogging through an arid land for months before finally coming to a well. I fill up on them and feel content and at peace when I leave with a clear mission.

The other side is that we have gathered as a group. We have come together for years now. For some of us it entails difficulties to take the time out of our daily lives to travel to the thing, but we do, because it is important for us on a personal level, but also as a group or a people. We need each other. Each person's energy adds to the group and makes the call to the Gods and Goddesses even louder and more heartfelt.

We are proud to be able to do this each year. In the past, the Althing and the thing were important events for my ancestors. I feel that I do honour unto them by following in their footsteps. Odin said that cattle die, kinsmen die: the self must also die; I know one thing which never dies: the reputation of each dead man. Because of that, I believe it is important that we gather and speak of our ancestors. We also share and receive knowledge with those who have gathered at the Althing, which, I believe, is also an integral part of this faith."

There is an open list for those who wish to participate in general discussions and the planning of the Althing, or volunteer to do rituals, workshops or other presentations at [Althing-L@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Althing-L@yahoogroups.com). The Althing is open to all, Heathen or not.

## ***Taking the Medicinal Waters at Kilburn Wells***

***by Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD***

Though hard to believe as you walk down Kilburn High Road today, (in the suburb of London where I have spent most of my life) back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century taking the local medicinal waters used to be a highly popular pastime and attracted many people to the neighbourhood.

Kilburn grew up on the banks of a stream which has been known variously as *Cuneburna*, *Kelebourne* and *Cyebourne*, which flows from Hampstead down through Hyde Park and into the River Thames. It is suggested the name means either Royal River or Cattle River ('Bourne' being an Anglo-Saxon word for 'river'). The river is known today as the River Westbourne. From the 1850s it was piped underground and is now one of London's many underground rivers.

The name Kilburn was first recorded in 1134 as *Cuneburna*, referring to a priory which had been built on the site of the cell of a hermit known as Godwyn. Godwyn had built his hermitage by the Kilburn river during the reign of Henry I, and both his hermitage and the priory took their name from the river. Kilburn Priory was a community of Augustinian canonesses. It was founded in 1134 at the Kilburn river crossing on Watling Street (the modern-day junction of Kilburn High Road and Belsize Road). Kilburn Priory's position on Watling Street meant that it became a popular resting point for pilgrims heading for the shrines at St Albans and Willesden. The Priory was dissolved in 1536 by Henry VIII, and nothing remains of it today.

The priory lands included a mansion and a *hostium* (a guesthouse), which may have been the origin of the Red Lion pub, thought to have been founded in 1444. Opposite, the Bell

Inn was opened around 1600, on the site of the old mansion.

The fashion for taking 'medicinal waters' in the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to Kilburn when a well of chalybeate waters (water impregnated with iron) was discovered near the Bell Inn in 1714. In an attempt to compete with the nearby Hampstead Well, gardens and a 'great room' were opened to promote the well, and its waters were promoted in journals of the day as cure for 'stomach ailments':

*Kilburn Wells, near Paddington.—The waters are now in the utmost perfection; the gardens enlarged and greatly improved; the house and offices re-painted and beautified in the most elegant manner. The whole is now open for the reception of the public, the great room being particularly adapted to the use and amusement of the politest companies. Fit either for music, dancing, or entertainments. This happy spot is equally celebrated for its rural situation, extensive prospects, and the acknowledged efficacy of its waters; is most delightfully situated on the site of the once famous Abbey of Kilburn, on the Edgware Road, at an easy distance, being but a morning's walk, from the metropolis, two miles from Oxford Street; the footway from the Mary-bone across the fields still nearer. A plentiful larder is always provided, together with the best of wines and other liquors. Breakfasting and hot loaves. A printed account of the waters, as drawn up by an eminent physician, is given gratis at the Wells.*

—The Public Advertiser, July 17 1773.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the wells declined, but the Kilburn Wells remained popular as a tea garden. The Bell was demolished and rebuilt in 1863, the building which stands there today.

The following information on the waters was found in *The Domestic*

*Encyclopaedia* Vol 4 by A. F. M. Willich, which was published in 1802:

Kilburn-Water, is a saline mineral fluid, obtained from a spring at Kilburn-well, about two miles from the end of Oxford-street, London. This water was formerly in great repute, but is at present seldom employed. Nevertheless, it promises to be serviceable in cases of habitual costiveness, where powerful laxatives would be productive of dangerous consequences ; as it may be used with safety, till the intestines have recovered their natural tone. It may farther be advantageously taken by persons of sedentary lives, who are peculiarly subject to hypochondriasis, indigestion, and other disorders arising from relaxed habits. The dose is from one to three pints, which should be drunk at short intervals, till it produce a purgative effect : and, as its operation is very slow, it appears to be eminently calculated for persons, whose stomachs are delicate or impaired.

The only evidence that remains today of the existence of the former Wells is a commemorative paving stone, on the corner of Belsize Road and Kilburn High Road.



The following extract from Edward Walford's 1878 publication *Old and New London*: Volume 5. throws further light on what the neighbourhood used to be like. It also shows how complaints about the frightening pace of change in the modern world are

actually nothing new, for people were making them in the last century too:

*... Such has been the growth of London in this north-westerly direction, within the last half-century, ... and such the progress of bricks and mortar in swallowing up all that was once green and sylvan in this quiet suburb of the metropolis, that the "village of Kilburn," which within the last fifty years was still famous for its tea-gardens and its mineral spring, has almost become completely absorbed into that vast and "still increasing" City, and in a very short space of time all its old landmarks will have been swept away.*

*... Kilbourne ... took its name from the little "bourne," or brook, ... rising on the southern slope of the Hampstead uplands. It found its way from the slope of West End, Hampstead, towards Bayswater, and thence passing under the Uxbridge Road, fed the Serpentine in Hyde Park. The brook, however, has long since disappeared from view, having been arched over, and made to do duty as a sewer.*

... before the end of the sixteenth century, and even perhaps earlier, near a mineral spring ... there arose a rural house, known to the holiday folks of London as the "Kilburn Wells." The well is still to be seen adjoining a cottage at the corner of the Station Road, on some premises belonging to the London and North-Western Railway. The water rises about twelve feet below the surface, and is enclosed in a brick reservoir of about five feet in diameter, surmounted by a cupola. The key-stone of the arch over the doorway bears the date 1714. The water collected in this reservoir is usually about five or six feet in depth, though in a dry summer it is shallower; and it is said that its purgative qualities are increased as its bulk diminishes. These wells, in fact, were once famous for their saline and purgative waters. A writer in the *Kilburn Almanack* observes:—"Upon a

recent visit we found about five feet six inches of water in the well, and the water very clear and bright, with little or no sediment at the bottom; probably the water has been as high as it now is ever since the roadway parted it from the 'Bell' Tea Gardens, not having been so much used lately as of old." "Is it not strange," asks Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth, "that, in these water-drinking times, the wells of Hampstead and Kilburn should not come again into vogue?"

From: 'Kilburn and St John's Wood', *Old and New London: Volume 5* (1878), pp. 243-253. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45234> [accessed: 02 September 2009].

Unfortunately, however, the wells never did. And these days, as you struggle to make your way through crowds of shoppers heading for *Sainsbury's*, *Primark*, *Poundland* and the like, it is hard to imagine they ever even existed. What you can do, though, is to drown your sorrows at the passing of an era in the rebuilt Old Bell (pictured below).

Well dressing is the art of decorating (dressing) wells, springs or other water sources with pictures made of growing things. This ancient custom, still popular all over Derbyshire, is thought to date back to the Celts or even earlier. The church banned it as water worship, but the tradition refused to die. The wells are dressed with large framed panels decorated with elaborate mosaic-like pictures made of flower petals, seeds, grasses, leaves, tree bark, berries and moss. Wooden trays are covered with clay, mixed with water and salt. A design is drawn and its outline pricked out onto the surface of the clay. The design is then filled in

with natural materials, predominantly flower petals and mosses, but also beans, seeds and small cones. Well-dressings are beautiful and delicate and take a lot of work to make, and yet they only last for a few days. After the well dressing is erected next to the well it is blessed in a short outdoor service. In towns and villages that



have several wells, a short procession from well to well is carried out during the blessing of the wells. The well dressing season spans from May through to late September. And, who knows? Perhaps there was a

time when the Kilburn Wells were dressed in this manner too.

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Michael Berman BA, MPhil, PhD, 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. A resource book for teachers on storytelling, *In a Faraway Land*, will be coming out in 2010.

As for his work in the field of religious studies, although Michael originally trained as a Core Shamanic Counsellor with the Scandinavian Centre for Shamanic Studies under Jonathan Horwitz, these days his focus is more on the academic side of shamanism, with a particular interest in the folktales with shamanic themes told by and collected from the peoples of the Caucasus. For more info please visit [www.Thestoryteller.org.uk](http://www.Thestoryteller.org.uk)

***A Bit of Wiccan History***  
***Interview with***  
***Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone***  
***By Christopher Blackwell***

Janet Farrar and Gavin Bone represent a remarkably large segment of Wiccan history. In 1970 Janet was initiated by Alex Sanders as Maxine Sanders was initiating Stewart Farrar. Stewart would work with her and later become her husband.

Gavin Bone was initiated into Seax-Wicca in 1986 and would meet the Farrars and become friends with them 1989, becoming an important member of the team, working together with them and nursing Stewart during his several strokes.

As I researched them, I found them to be more fascinating. I therefore e-mailed them with a request to interview them and they were kind enough to grant it.

***Christopher: Janet, I am struck by the fact that you and Stewart would get your training at the same time and how this would affect both of you so personally that you would form a life together. What was it like for you and did you have any idea of the path it would lead you on?***

***Janet:*** At the time I was this '60's 'hippy chick' all 'peace and love beads'. I had no idea that it would lead me into the direction that I took, and I know that Stewart didn't either. You mentioned training, well, let's be honest about this, there was very little training at the time, and most of what we were taught was pretty basic: Circle Casting, simple sympathetic magic. We certainly weren't taught anything in depth and practical work was definitely 'on the job' training. You simply joined in the ritual which was being performed on the night. Most of the training that Alex (Sanders) did

give his 'lectures'. These consisted of him dictating notes, but he never answered questions and you never dared ask. I still have all those notes. They make fascinating reading, particularly Stewart's side notes as to where Alex got his information from.

***Christopher: Stewart was a writer and a journalist. How did the book "What Witches Do" come about? How and when did you begin to write together?***

***Janet:*** Stewart met Alex and Maxine Sanders at the premier of documentary film "Legend of the Witches." Stewart was what he called 'an interested agnostic' at the time, although he had a few friends, including fellow journalist Francis King who were involved in the occult. Stewart asked Alex and Maxine if he could interview them for his paper Reveille. They agreed, and actually invited Stewart to take part in circle as part of the interview. Now how many Alexandrian covens would agree to that today? Alex was so impressed with the interview he asked Stewart if he would do the voice over for a long playing record of A Witch Is Born. It was during this that Stewart and myself actually met, as I was the initiate for the recording.

Alex also used many of Stewart's photos for the cover of the LP, so it was this that forged the relationship between Alex and Stewart. Several years earlier Alex's story had been published by June Johns in the book King of the Witches. Alex had never been really happy with the book. He felt it just didn't contain enough information on 'what witches do!' He voiced this to Stewart and that's how the title came about - *What Witches Do*.

It was a unique book for its time. Certainly others had published books on Wicca but they hadn't actually

talked about what actually went on in circle. This was the first.

**Christopher: When you and Stewart left and formed your own coven, at what point did you begin to personalize your practice of Wicca?**

**Janet:** Almost immediately. It was unavoidable as Alex had given us and the other members so little material to work with. We found that we had to fill in the gaps. Sure, we had the ritual framework, the Book of Shadows that Alex had appropriated from the Crowthers, but it just wasn't enough. The real change occurred when we moved to Ireland. Here was a land rich in mythology and magic. It just didn't seem appropriate to use the elements of Western High Magic in a country where the gods, goddesses and spirits of the land were still alive. We quickly began to create rituals and practises related to the ancient Irish which we were still seeing practised. We also began to take material from other sources such as Robert Graves White Goddess and of course, Maura McNeills Rites of Lughnasa. Many people don't realise that the Holy King/Oak King ritual cycle can almost be fully credited to Stewart's adaption of it from Graves. You won't find it being used in Wicca before 1980. Eventually these were to be published in Eight Sabbats for Witches and The Witches Way. The books which became A Witches Bible. What was fascinating was the reaction to them. They were being hailed as landmark works, while others were accusing us of 'giving away the secrets' and being 'oathbreakers'.

Well, the Gardnerian Rituals that were in them were already published and the whole festival cycle in the books was actually all our own work.

**Christopher: When did you and Stewart begin to give your talks about Wicca?**

**Janet:** We did a few talks in the UK at places like Atlantis Bookshop, but there were really for book promotion. Our actual giving lectures and workshops really started in 1991 when we first visited the United States on a four month tour. We were completely surprised at the effect we had, had on Wicca in the US. All our workshops, lectures and seminars were booked out. For many our books had been their first introduction to Wicca, so they considered us 'their spiritual mother and father'. That was a bit disconcerting, I can tell you! We really had to get a grip on our egos to stop them over-inflating.

The real touring and workshops began when Gavin joined us in 1993. He immediately joined us on the next three month tour to the US. It was Gavin who really changed everything regarding the way we gave workshops and lectures. Stewart was an excellent author and incredibly literate, but he was not always a good speaker. While Gavin was quite shy at first, he quickly showed that he knew how to engage people, as he took a much more 'hands on approach'. Since then most of our workshops have been practical and experiential, based on the principle that people want to learn practical techniques as well as have an actual spiritual experience.

We have been back and forth to the US every year since 1993, but we have also visited Australian and New Zealand, South African, and of course, the UK and Europe. In fact, we are doing more and more in Europe particularly in Italy, where there is a resurgence of interest in pagan practise.

**Christopher: Gavin, How did you come to be initiated into the Seax-Wicca tradition?**

**Gavin:** Well, rather like Janet and Stewart it was a case of that was what was on offer at the time! I think people need to remember that Wicca in the UK was incredibly closed off right up until the late 1980's. People tended to join the first coven they came across. To be honest, I'd have been quite happy joining a Gardnerian or Alexandrian coven if it had been around in my hometown! I joined the Seax-Wica coven in 1986, up until then I had been a solitary witch. In a way I feel lucky that I came into Seax-Wica first. The reason being is that I didn't have to put up with the b\*\*\*\*\*t over the origins of the tradition - we all knew in the group it came from a book! Of course, I've never been able to do things the easy way; the first magical group I joined was an eclectic group consisting of a Ceremonial Ritual Magician, three Spiritualist Mediums, a Sufi practitioner, and a Norse Shaman. I was the youngest in the group, and it was the Norse Shaman who had set up the Seax-Wica coven. I knew my life in Wicca was going to be strange when the young lady initiating me initiated me as a 'Jesuite' rather than a 'Gesith' (the Seax-Wica name for priest). The Seax-Wica coven very quickly left the material in Buckland's book behind and we quickly began to use material from Janet and Stewart's books, as well as the other contemporary writers of the time such as RJ Stewart, Marion Green etc. We also began to experiment with Shamanism, which was just becoming popular and with Chaos Magick. It became very eclectic. All of us in the coven came from different magical backgrounds so we swapped information and what we had learnt. I have a background in spiritual healing and spiritualism, so that was gift to the group, so to speak, and these experiences are evident if you've ever attended any of our workshops or read any of the books I contributed to. What was interesting was that once we had learnt the

magical rules, it didn't matter what we did and where we took it from it all seemed to work!

**Christopher:** *How did you come to meet the Farrars and what effect did they have on you?*

**Gavin:** Well, I first 'met' them through their books. My first book on Wicca was actually Doreen Valiente's ABC of Witchcraft. The back cover of the book endorsed several others from the same publisher included *The Witches Way*, which was the first of their books that I brought.

I first physically met them at an event in England, Pagan Link'89. It was suppose to take place at Leicester University, but when the head of the University found out he cancelled the event. We ended up having to have the festival in a muddy field on a pick-your-own strawberry farm at a place called Groby. It was September, pouring with rain and cold. The first time I saw Janet and Stewart they were huddled together trying to keep warm, just after giving a lecture in a large tent that the wind was whistling through. Myself and my then wife, Tania, decided they needed warming up so we got them tea. Being Nurses, we had volunteered to do First Aid on the site, so were making sure that speakers didn't suffer from hypothermia.

I met Janet and Stewart again, about a year later. I had made firm friends with the organisers of the event, and joined their group, Clan Bran, an eclectic mix of people from different Craft backgrounds. When they visited Ireland, I went with them and met Janet and Stewart again.

They weren't what I had expected when I met them. Most Alexandrians and Gardnerians I had met didn't accept that I was valid as a witch; in

their eyes I simply didn't have the right 'initiation'.



Janet and Stewart weren't like that, they accepted anyone they considered to be genuine in their intent regardless of Wiccan origins. It's difficult to really quantify the effect Janet and Stewart had on me. Obviously their books were highly influential on myself and the covens I was a member of. The real effect though was when I physically met them. First of all, they renewed my enthusiasm for Wicca which had become jaded by being continually told that 'I wasn't Craft' and needed 're-initiation', but most importantly, they changed my life. I never expected to be where I am today, a published author and giving lectures and workshops.

**Christopher:** *Janet, what was your and Stewart's impression of Gavin? Did either of you realize that he was going to become a partner with you two?*

**Janet:** Well, I really enjoyed the cup of tea the first time I met Gavin! The next time was a bit different. It was in Ireland and I had been going through a really hard time, which I had been trying to keep to myself. Gavin caught me in the kitchen and said 'why are you hurting'. I was taken aback and thought: 'what an arrogant bastard!' Later I realised that he was in fact quite perceptive and was the only one seemed to care about the fact I was going through something.

I don't really know what Stewart's impression was of him, he certainly liked him. He was much quieter than many of the people around us at the time and only seemed to open his mouth when there was something important to say. I think that impressed Stewart.

**Christopher:** *Why did you decide to move to Ireland that has become your home?*

**Janet:** It wasn't really for any deep spiritual reason - it was actually financial! The only people who make lots of money as authors are people like Dan Brown! Most of us live pretty much close to the bread line most of the time and would make more money in mundane jobs. This is why we moved to Ireland, they don't tax writers. Of course, once we moved here we fell in love with the place; with its history and with its people. We certainly wouldn't consider living anywhere else now.

**Christopher:** *Gavin, You have co-authored books with the Farrars, you became their business manager and then you nursed Stewart after his stroke. This seems to have been strong partnership between you all. Isn't that close a relationship between partners unusual?*

**Gavin:** Yes, it is unusual. You have to know some of the background to understand why this occurred. Janet and myself became a 'couple' in Salem during a visit for the 3rd Centenary of the Salem Witch Trials. It was not intended but it happened. Afterwards we agreed to split.

Janet told Stewart what had happened and that it would happen again. Much to her surprise he simply told her to 'get him over here to Ireland and we'll live as a threesome!'

What you have to understand is that Stewart was in his '70's and there was a 34 year age gap between him and Janet. He realised he was getting old and that she needed someone younger in her life – now that's love! We discovered later from one of his oldest friends he had in fact engineered us getting together which is why he hadn't come with us to the United States.

To live in this sort of relationship, where a woman has to all intents and purposes two husbands takes a certain level of maturity. We certainly wouldn't recommend it for everyone, it just worked for us. I think that was because we all had the same spiritual beliefs and goals. Certainly, there were ups and downs but in the end it was 'all for one, and one for all'.

**Christopher** *Each came in with different talents and training. How has that affected the practice and teaching that you do today?*

**Janet and Gavin:**  
We think it's given

us a unique approach to Wicca and style. Gavin has a background in Spiritual Healing, while Janet is a practising medium. We have absorbed those aspects into our group training and workshops. Our emphasis has become much more on experiencing the mysteries through spiritual connection, as well working with spirits and psychic practise. Translated into practice this means energy work, spirit-craft, and understanding spiritual cosmology. We use a quote during many of our practical workshops: 'it's not enough to know how to drive the magic car, you have to know how it works so you can fix it!' We now teach 'magical mechanics'. This has come out of our



joint experience and knowledge of magic and spirituality.

**Christopher:** *Gavin you introduce an idea not heard a lot here in the States, possible ties of Wicca to ancient shamanism. Care to tell a bit about that?*

**Gavin:** I don't think I was the first to mention the links. Shamanism was mentioned both in Doreen Valiente's books, and Janet and Stewart's as the root of magical practise. My interest in the connection stems from my origins in what was really a self-initiatory coven. I think this made us much more open to new ideas. In the early to mid 1980's the Shamanic revival was just getting started due to the influence of Michael Harner. Several writers on witchcraft had

started to adopt shamanic techniques including Starhawk. Many of us just didn't understand why a clearly pagan tradition such as Wicca was using Judeo-Christian magic such as Caballa. We simply rejected it, this led

many to reject Wicca as well in the UK, while others like myself looked at the possibility of merging both practises.

If you look at the history of Wicca it has always been based around the principle 'if it works use it!' Doreen Valiente the mother of modern witchcraft, had always been clear about this. I think Gardner applied this and used what was around him, and in the 1940's and '50's that meant High Magic. Alex Sanders, of course did, the same, in fact in his case to a heavier degree.

One of things I came to realise was that if you brushed away the modern

overlays there is in fact a bedrock of shamanic practice beneath REAL traditional witchcraft, including the use of trance states. This is very clear to anyone is familiar with Robert Cochrane and the witchcraft that he practised.

If Gardner and Sander's can adopt High Magic as the basis of practice for witchcraft why can't we adopt older traditions such as Shamanic practise? Surely that is historically more in keeping with what witchcraft is, working with spirits in magic practise.

**Christopher: Since Stewart's death, you two carry on the tradition and now are married. What plans do you have for the future?**

**Janet and Gavin:** At present we're pretty much carrying on the way we have over the last few years. We are visiting the UK for three events this year, conferences in Preston, Canterbury and The Day for Doreen (Valiente) in London in September. We are going to be in the US for Samhain; Florida, Washington DC and Delaware. In the meantime we are continuing with our on-line course, and planning one off seminars over the summer. In the meantime we are also running our open circle - Teampall Na Callaighe - as well as our coven. We are looking forward to a glorious hot summer in Ireland after 5 years of rainy summers, so that we can go out with our groups to the ancient sites.

**Christopher: Where can our readers learn more about what you are doing, or about your books and traditions?**

**Janet and Gavin:** We have our main website at [http:// www.callaighe.com](http://www.callaighe.com) . But we also have an open Facebook site under the names Janet Farrar \_ Gavin Bone. This is kept continually update with news of our tours, workshops, and online seminars.

**Christopher: Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?**

**Janet and Gavin:** Wicca and Witchcraft are evolving traditions. They aren't static, over time they change and they adapt new techniques into them. It doesn't matter what tradition you are from, or how you started in Wicca, all that is important is your connection to the divine, with the God and Goddess. To quote Gardnerian: 'There is only one true initiator'. Who is that? Is that a High Priest or Priestess, no it's the divine itself. It is why ultimately you cannot be a witch unless you make that connection and it doesn't matter how you were initiated, whether it was from someone who has correct lineage or from a self-initiator, unless the divine is present, the 'initiation' hasn't happened.

For years Wicca has been about itself. It's been like a child who says 'me, me, me!' It has been completely driven by its own needs rather than the needs of the world. Now it is beginning to realise that it is a spirituality and spiritualities are not driven by self-ishness, they are driven by self-lessness. Wicca has to realise in these changing times that it has to be about service to the divine, to the God and Goddess. This is what being a Priestess or Priest is all about, about service not about fulfilling our own drives, otherwise we are just engaging in spiritual masturbation!



**Paganism:**  
**A Responsible Religion**  
**by Thorg da Lusitânia**  
**Translated by Sara Timóteo**

This short explanation about Paganism, also known as the Old Religion, aims to refute the unfounded accusations directed to its followers of being connected to extremist right-wing parties, devil worshippers, Satanists or simply ravaging and rowdy savages.

The Old Religion was until the advent of Christianity the most practiced belief. Its roots are intertwined with the roots of Mankind. As any other religion we believe in a spiritual world, primary cause and source of everything that manifests in this physical world.

Pagans believe that the body, as well as Nature where they are generated due to an emanation from Spirit to Substance are sacred, two complementary forces that become one and indivisible on the Creation process. For us, the sacredness of Nature lies in this interaction between Divine and Matter; therefore we do not regard any human being as less virtuous or impure, «born in sin» and needing to be purified through any baptism or to ask for forgiveness for an «original sin».

Monotheist religions share a dualistic perspective, inherited from Zoroastro and later perfected in the IIIrd century of the Common Era by Mani (manicheism), stating that the spirit being pure and the matter impure, the evil resided in Matter and so if the Spirit prevailed over matter all evil would end for the human being (and Mankind would be gone). Is from this school of thought that contemporary monotheisms emerge and with them a radical perspective on the purity of the Spirit as the source of

all Good and on the impurity of the Matter as the source of all Evil, opposed principles that are at war with each other until one of them (Good) wins and the Evil (the impure substance) be destroyed. This way of thinking causes the human being to become naturally more extreme regarding perspectives and behaviors that we could resume in one sentence: «If you think like me you are with me and you are one of the good ones; if you think differently then you become my enemy and I have to fight you». This is the logic of dualism that distinguishes Good from Evil.

Regarding these two ways of understanding and interpreting Creation, we can only think that the concepts of sin and of the Devil as the personification of absolute Evil are strange to Paganism. This is easy to confirm through the study of pagan mythologies, namely the Greek, Sumerian, Northern or Egyptian myths just to mention the most known.

Gerald Messadié, journalist, researcher and author of several articles and books about religion such as *A History of God* and *A History of the Devil* states that:

*“It was the Hellenic democracy that kept the Devil outside the borders. Because the Fallen Angel is nothing but a logic strategy of totalitarian powers. Never a Greek clergy was known for taking the supranational power to separate Good from Evil.”*

As we get here I think that hereby was fully demonstrated the emergence of the Devil as the supreme Lord of Evil and now seems to be the time to question: why should we, followers of the Old Religion, to be led to follow a being that does not belong to our beliefs (Wiccan, Anglo-Saxon, Classical or others)? What would we really profit from cults to the Judaic-Christian

Satan, Alter-Ego for the Good God and the reason to validate His existence? If there was not a being entirely evil there would be no need to be a being entirely good, whose commandments constitute the only Truth and whose true Law shall reward the good and punish the bad.

Despite having not such reduced and radical notion of Evil or any deity as devil we still have our ethics and morals. Undoubtedly our minds resonate with freedom and tolerance of traditions and cultures different from our own, because we do not forget that Paganism is a reflex of the same cultural diversity found in its distinctive folklores. However, being tolerant about the Tradition of each one does not mean that we are libertines without ethics or rules, but instead that we are responsible people that understand that Good and Evil are two faces of the same coin and a good coin has two faces. For us there is not any belief or culture entirely evil or good as we may see on this excerpt from the Iliad attributed to Homer:

*“When he asks himself whence come good and ill, the answer he gives is that they are dispensed by Zeus from great storerooms which lie in his palace.” ...*

As we may conclude from these few lines it is up to the human being to choose. We are responsible for our freedom of choice and not dependant on a God entirely evil and other God entirely good. This is also known as our free will; the Greeks had a perspective that all Men receive a share of good and evil and that is up to them to manage that share. As we all know, for instance, civilisations such as the Greek do not build or survive upon a world without rules.

Paganism does not recognize dogma or mysteries, but instead several perspectives (Traditions) and levels of

understanding Creation in its origin and manifestation and in which we all exist with our affinities and divergences.

Those levels of perception are like realms of existence that travel over all creation. They are everywhere and anywhere to be found and reflect the ways in which one relates to the Divine and to the world around him/her. So these levels are based on the being either physically, emotionally, mentally and/or ecstatically (trance).

These realms of understanding allow that the same principle, idea, myth or fact be interpreted differently according to the degree of sensibility and grasping of each one. Paganism also tries to convey that principle by respecting diversity and understanding between diverse traditions and mythologies – some value more the «historic» or factual, others the symbolic meanings, others the social and even others that conjugate successfully two or three perspectives. The diversity of these levels of understanding only emphasizes the richness of the myths that come from a world where Mankind made no distinction between the «dream world» and the «real world» and where Gods and Goddesses still «walked» with Men.

That is the reason why the study of Paganism through mythologies may be seen as necessary for the development of a feeling of mutual religious tolerance so needed these days.

And for those who insist that we are connected in some way with Neo-Nazi ideals or parties, we state that in our religion there is not such thing as one people, one nation or official way of cult so close to the far right-wing movements. We do not subscribe the idea of one Leader or, for that matter, only one God.

Again, I quote Gerard Messadié in his work about *The History of God*, in which the author states specifically that:

*“The fundamental social values of contemporary Christianity, such as the respect for others and the sense of social justice, were instituted by Greece, and not certainly illustrated by the history of the Church, at least until the end of the XIXth century. And in the XXth century even the strange pontifical political stand regarding Nazism was object of vivid criticism.”*

As may be derived from the previous words, the values that the western world is so proud of, such as respect and concern for others, democracy and social justice do not emerge from a Christian Europe but from a Greek pagan perspective. With the end of Europe as a confessional state, from the mid-XXth century on, there comes again the possibility of religious freedom, the acknowledgement of the Old Religion and its followers, until then forced to hide because they were named as sorcerers/warlocks, devil worshippers, libertines and source of curses and all evil of society.

This principle of justice and concern for others inherent to Paganism is evoked by Gerald Gardner during the XXth century when he approaches the «Threefold Law» in the context of using indiscriminately and insanely magick, referring also to other law that became a precept in Paganism:

*An it harm none do what ye will*  
Here freedom equals responsibility.

By the way, there is nowadays a winding temptation to attribute to this phrase from Gardner a similarity with Aleister Crowley's *Do what Thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law/ I am the Law.*

I believe this comparison has no sense. The two sentences are in no way related – their essence is very different. Gardner appeals to responsibility while Crowley appeals to the Chaos in every «Star» by being one's own Law. This is only one of the many divergences between Thelema and Paganism; to insinuate that Gardner somehow took advantage of Crowley's ideas to create Wicca becomes ridiculous in the sense that demonstrates a major ignorance of the essential distinction between «magick» and «religion» concepts.

I tried to make this explanation as clarifying as possible regarding those accusations inspired in old inquisitorial prejudices that today still convey fear, distrust and a false image of the Old Religion. Of course today there is more of an academic patina to it – it is there, covered by civilized discourses broadcasted everyday through the media into our homes. Such apparently innocuous discourses are generating day by day fearful thoughts on the mind of the ordinary citizen and radical perspectives among their own people.

I respectfully remember those who died for their faith not accepting the imposed conversion, today as in the old days of the Inquisition persecutions, tortures and sacrifices. Their followers of the Old Religion were accused of heathenism and brightened the fire with their bodies in name of their Good and One God. We have to keep resisting and fighting, in a responsible and dignifying manner, so that we can be up to the examples of the ancient pagans and so that our beliefs and rights may be respected as a faith with over a thousand years that contributed for many cultures and civilizations and also for ours.

## NEWS FROM PF INTERNATIONAL AUGUST 2009

### Introducing PFI Russia and visit to Moscow August 2009

Via PFI I have had sporadic contact with Russians for a number of years. Unfortunately my lack of Russian or misfortune to be attracted to less savoury groups and/or individuals made any real contact virtually impossible.

This situation dramatically changed when Yggeld contacted me in 2007 and even more so when Gwiddon contacted me in 2008. Briefly this led to creating a website – including all the problems of dealing with Cyrillic – and the launch of PFI Russia in June 2009,

<http://www.ru.paganfederation.org/>



Gwiddon attended the Dutch PFI conference in May and he and Paul sorted out the remaining technical problems. Thanks to both of you for making the website possible!

I made a reciprocal visit to Moscow from August 12-19, 2009. The highlights of the week were meeting some wonderful Russian pagans. Gwiddon had arranged to meet Yggeld & Stanislav and later we spent a wonderful day with Stanislav, Tatiana and Vitya at a local sacred site.

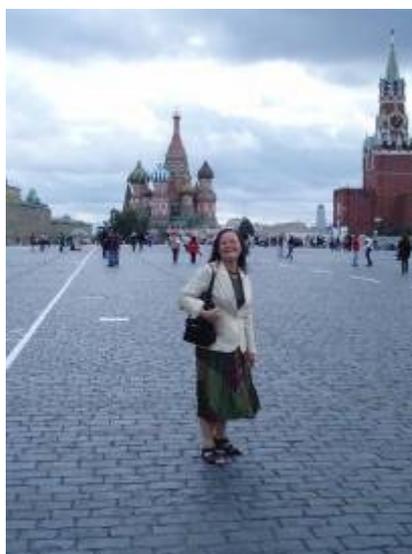
At our first meeting we introduced ourselves of course and spent some intensive hours discussing how we

could further cooperation between our respective organisations.

Yggeld told us about “North Wind – Scientific and Research Society”. He explained that “North Wind’s main activity is to search, study and develop the ways for preserving the non-material Indo-European cultural heritage including Slavs.” They also restore ancient burial mounds. It also acts as an umbrella organisation for a number of pagan groups. “We also restore the ancestors’ rituals, together with “Circle of Pagan Tradition”

Stanislav – who along with Yggeld is one of the founding members of North Wind – is an archaeologist and is able to offer his expertise when restoring for example the burial mounds which have unfortunately been looted.

“The First Congress of the Circle of Native (Pagan) Tradition\* took place in Vyshgorod-on-Yakhroma of mitrovsky district, Moscow region in Russia since 29th April till 2nd May 2007. It gathered more than 40 officially registered delegates, representatives of 21 heathen groups and communities from 20 cities of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The first version of the Heathen Tradition Manifest, which goal is to unite the followers of the Native Religion, was presented by the authors at the Congress.”



I was surprised to see how green a city Moscow really is – it is the largest European city with over 10.5 million inhabitants and yet

there are numerous parks with rich forests and some lovely old trees. Stanislav invited us to visit one of these parks- Kolomenskoye which was the former royal estate. There was a wonderful old Oak tree, carefully tended by the park keepers. There we raised a traditional carved wooden Slavic chalice to greet the Spirits of the Land and to wish each other good health and lasting friendship.

We walked on to a beautiful glade, which in the August sun was already whispering Autumn.

There we were shown the “Woman’s Stone”, a natural large stone with a multiple of “roundings” not dissimilar to women’s breasts. Tatiana told me that it was tradition for women to sit on the stone and “absorb the fertile energy”. As in many other places I have visited with similar sacred spots, even Christian women gladly come along for help if they are having difficulty getting pregnant. That day the stone was being regularly visited with groups of women sitting there (and including a couple of guys.)

People would toss coins over the stone for good luck – I was given a handful of small change so that I too could make a wish! Then Tatiana and I made a blessing, raising the chalice once more and offering seeds as a gift. It was a wonderful afternoon (See photos).



**At the Woman’s Stone.**

Of course Gwiddon and I visited the Red Square, St. Basil’s Cathedral (with the famous

“onions domes”) and the National History Museum, with an amazing

collection of pre-historic artefacts and beautiful figurines to the Scythian Gold.

For more comments and photos of the visit please see the PFI Forum – <http://www.forum.paganfederation.org/> - Russian Language section and other places.

Thanks to Gwiddon for volunteering to be the National Coordinator for PFI Russia and to my new found friends in Moscow, my hearty thanks for all the books and gifts and very warm welcome. I hope we can meet again soon.

***Bright blessings,  
Morgana***



**Home altar with god carving and wooden chalice (Yggeld)**

***Drinking from a Slavic Chalice at a folk festival***



**Russian Paganism**  
**Interview with Yggeld**  
**By Christopher Blackwell**

The breakdown of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism ended the official Atheism. There has been a rapid development of religion in Russian, not only Christian, Muslim and Jewish, but also Pagan.

In an online forum for Pagan Federation International I came across reports on some of the problems and development of Paganism there, some reported by Yggeld. So I asked if I could interview him and he kindly agreed to this interview.

**Christopher: Could you give us a bit of background about you and perhaps what Pagan path you follow?**

**Yggeld:** I was born and brought up in Moscow, in the Soviet Union - Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR). Now this country is called Russia.

My secular name is Dmitry Gavrilov . I am forty years old. I have a university degree in Chemical Engineering.

I came to paganism in 1986 - way back in the Soviet period. Both then and now I have not considered paganism to be a religion. Paganism is wider than religion. Paganism is the primordial and natural world perception of any normal person. It is incident to anybody from the very childhood. When remembering myself as a child, I understand, that I was already comprehending the world as a pagan at that time. You can call paganism different names, but it is certainly mainly based on mythological outlook, which is regarded as equal to rationalist outlook, and there is always a place for cosmos and magic.

Way back in 1986 I joined one of Moscow groups, which members were calling themselves cosmists. We admitted, that there is a Superior Mind in the Universe, and that Nature is a living being, and that it is intelligent in its own way. We are still certain, that Nature can feel both happiness and pain. The world around us is not some soulless medium. The world is inhabited by spirits, it is personalized and magical. So the Nature should also be treated as a Superperson.

In early 1990's many people from my generation also started to understand paganism as worshiping of ancestors. After leaving this life, the ancestors become a spiritual part of the Creation and the Nature. Together with the High Gods - cosmic superpersons - they are an integral part of this Universe, and they are watching us from other dimensions, from the Other World, the World to Come, giving us their help and support, if we turn to them correctly.

**Christopher: As the official Atheism fell by the wayside in Russia, there seemed a rush to fill the void. How did that affect Paganism in Russia.? How much what we see is old Paganism and how much is what we might call neo-Paganism.**

**Yggeld:** Paganism existed during the Soviet years in the form of cosmism, even though its followers did not realize this fact. Such world-famous scientists as Vladimir Vernadsky, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Ivan Yefremov are the prominent figures of the Russian cosmism. Vernadsky developed a teaching about anthroposphere (noosphere). Tsiolkovsky spoke about radiant form of personality existence. Yefremov returned us to euhemeristic idea about the people, who are like Gods.

Unfortunately internationalism, which was the official ideology of the Soviet Union, did not allow Russians to pay due respect to their ethnic tradition, and to have sufficient knowledge of their ancestors' folk tradition. There was a gap between the ethnic and cosmic parts of paganism. Books about paganism written by Academician and archaeologist Boris Rybakov were a real revelation to many of my compatriots. It looked like he built a bridge from the High Forces and Ancient Gods to us, living on the Earth and honoring the custom.

When communist and internationalist ideology was defeated, people started looking for new spiritual support. Part of the people were comforted by religion - Christianity, Islam or Buddhism. However many started to look for their own roots and paths. Anyone, who honors his ancestors as spirits and gods, is a pagan.

For a Christian serving God is more important, than the family ties. Those, who invent non-existing ancestors and new gods for themselves are neo-pagans. Neo-paganism, just like Christianity, is geared to Revelations, including those written in books, which leads to spiritual dead end and blindness. Any person should choose the path to walk on solely by him(her)self, being guided by the natural and internal law as well as conscience.

**Christopher:** Were there any ready sources of information on the various forms of Paganism or has that had to be developed from scratch?

**Yggeld:** There are several sources of our knowledge about the Russian and Slavic paganism. These are medieval Christian exhortations against paganism written in XII-XVII centuries, some parts from the medieval Russian chronicles. Epic works, which have been preserved till

present times - The Lay of Igor's Warfare, epic tales, magic spells. Even some folk Christian sources contain a lot of pagan ideas, e.g. in Columbine Book. In XIX-XX century the scientists collected huge amount of ethnographic materials, in the Russian North in the first place, where paganism survived much longer.

No country in the world became Christian in a blink of an eye or by some miracle. Stories like these are fiction and ideological subversion. Paganism remained alive among people for really long. Its traces can be found even now - in the customs and beliefs. Materials collected by the scientists recorded the folk tradition, which the church failed to destroy.

Besides, in our work we rely upon archaeological data (and we try cooperate with archaeologists), sacred texts of other Indo-Europeans, we are looking for and are finding parallels in Rigveda, Avesta, Homer's and Orphic anthems, Elder Edda and etc.

***Christopher: How do Pagans find each other in Russia?***

***Yggeld:*** We find each other at rituals and mass fests. Also by correspondence, as well as via Internet. Sometimes we find each other in truly mystical ways, when people meet, and discover spiritual affinity.

***Christopher: Officially freedom of religion, but what does that mean as far as government help or discrimination, especially for minority religions?***

***Yggeld:*** Freedom of religion was also an official position of the Soviet Union. However, in the Soviet times the church did not dare to record all Russians as orthodox Christians. Church was really separate from the state in the Soviet Union. Those, who

believed in Christ, and followed Christian rituals, were the actual Christians.

In present Russia many of former communists and members of youth communist organizations (Komsomol) became "orthodox Christians". I think, that were just about as much communist, as they are now orthodox Christians.

Nobody is prosecuted for their religion in Russia. However the most favorable treatment is provided to the Russian Orthodox Church and the officials close to it. They are trying to proclaim, that Russian people are wholly orthodox, which is far from being real.

**Christopher: What about the rapid rise of the Russian Orthodox Church? Does that create any problems for Russian Pagans?**

**Yggeld:** The church in Russia is invading the field of secular education. However, even the priests themselves admit, that there is only a small percentage of those, who truly believe in Christ.

Slavic paganism is not officially recognized as the ethnic religion of the people yet. But the real paganism in its actual sense is not a religion for everybody - in modern conditions Paganism is the belief of free people.

In my opinion Christianity, in the way it now exists in Russia, restructures the human consciousness to submission, and it weans away from having independent thinking.

We - pagans - recognize every individual's right to freedom of religion. This is their personal matter. However, we are against altering and rethinking the history in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Jointly with atheists we stand against teaching religion at public schools. However, we are ready to look for points of contact with the Christian church, when we speak of struggling drug abuse, alcoholism, debauchery on the TV screens or homelessness on the streets.

**Christopher: Is there any reaction from the ordinary Russians, any backlash against Pagans?**

Yggeld: We do not cause any active antagonism, and find understanding amongst atheists and followers of ethnic beliefs of Finno-Ugric and Siberian peoples in our country. There are publishing houses and media in Russia, thanks to which we can get our position across to co-citizens.

We have both opponents and supporters there. Only in 2009 alone I published five books about Slavic and Indo-European paganism.

In order to clearly state our position, I and my co-authors wrote and published Heathen Tradition Manifest. It has already been published in different countries five times by now, including its English version in WCER magazine. This document was recognized as the theoretical basis for pagan movement development by several dozens of Russian and Ukrainian pagan groups. Here is the internet link for the readers to read this document both in English and Russian:

<http://northernwind.ru/project/trad/ryam.pdf>

<http://northernwind.ru/project/trad/ryam.pdf>

**Christopher: Have the Pagans formed any organizations to help protect their freedom and to educate people about what Paganism is and is not?**

**Yggeld:** Yes, we have also formed our own organizations in order to be able to more efficiently stand for our beliefs. I took part in creation of the social movement of the Circle of Native (Heathen) Tradition in 2001, and I am still a member of the Circle's Coordination Board.

Besides I also represent a scientific and research society - Northern Wind - which was formed in 1998. This is not a pagan association, but it unites the people, who want to understand traditional world outlook, without restricting themselves by the narrow framework of Christian dogmas. However, it turns out, that non-Christian way is in fact the pagan and the scientific way. In our activities we are guided by UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention.

During the recent years the Circle of Native (Heathen) Tradition has been holding regular meetings and consultations with other large Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian pagan associations. These are first of all Union of Slavic Native Belief Communities (leader -Vadim Kazakov), Skhron Yezh Sloven (leader - Vladimir Golyakov), The Great Fire (leader - king Ogin, also known as Gennadiy Botseniuk). The School of Gennady Adamovich - Professor of Minsk University - is our partner in Belarus.

**Christopher: What do Pagans hope to accomplish in the future? How much contact do they have with Pagans world wise?**

**Yggeld:** We are open for contacts with the followers of Indo-European Tradition from any country of the world. Russians and Slavs originate from the Indo-European root. So far we have initially established regular contacts with PFI and WCER. We are ready to provide our foreign coreligionists with our books and

articles, which English translations are currently being prepared.

The immediate objectives of the Russian and Slavic paganism (and probably the world paganism as well) are reflected in the Heathen Tradition Manifest, which I mentioned above. I would like to cite a collective option translated by Dennis Schedrivy (Kharkov, Ukraine) for you:

#### WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO?

«Know and remember. The one, who does not know and does not remember, what happened yesterday, will not care about what is going to happen tomorrow. Who of you knows your own family tree to at least the fourth degree of relationship?

Who of you knows, what our ancestors laid down their heads - some of them with a scythe, some with a sword, some with a rifle, and some with a book? What did they burn for alive in fires and drowned with their legs and arms tied up with blessed hemp?

What kind of Today is it without yesterday? And it is today, when our Tomorrow is being born. We cannot and must not count on a "good guy", who will come to us and invest money in our movement.

We remember the saying: the one, who pays, orders the music. Do we want heathens to dance as saltimbancos at festivals and holidays for the fun of the crowd and powers that be?

The voice of one man is the voice of no one. Only by cooperating together, can we create the base for the Tomorrow, which will really be better than Yesterday.

For this we have to:

- wake our souls, our memory and our mind from hibernation. Truly the sleep of mind gives birth to monsters. Going

away from heathen Weltanschauung turns things, that have long existed not depending on the human presence or absence in the World, and with which people have always got along, into a hundred-headed monster. If it were otherwise, there would not be anyone, who'd have to write these words, and there wouldn't be anyone to read them; - recall and always remember that "honor" and "conscience" are not just empty words, and that no matter how hard it may sometimes be, we should treat each other, judge and ump each other by the Honor, Consciousness and Truth. Our World is us.

Our World is as good as we are; - understand and accept: no matter who our ancestors were - those famous for their bravery, or those who dishonored themselves, and no matter what paths they walked - they are still our ancestors. If it weren't for them, we would not exist. We take pride for some of them, and we atone the faults and mistakes of others. But we remember everyone. It is unworthy for a heathen to renounce his ancestors. The ancestors are not to be judged; - recognize each other and join together our experience, our knowledge, our memory, and collect them in such a way that they would be available to all coreligionists; - establish close and strong connection between each other and constantly share the achievements and understandings; - learn to pass whatever we have saved to our children - pass it in such a way, that our children would not be like outsiders, who are ready to abandon their home and kin and run to the other side of the world for the shine and rattle of empty rattle-bags.

We should state our spiritual sooths in understandable form. We should tell the truth about ourselves to anyone, who wants the Truth. We should encourage those, who are

interested, to learn and follow the Natural Tradition.

Everyone has the right to receive first-hand knowledge about the gist of heathenism, with no errors or mutilations. Everyone has the right to make his choice in accordance with the constitutional freedom of conscience;

- the gist of heathenism should be brought to the people not by some estranged saints or volkhvs, who are lost in the spiritual wanderings, but by live and active people. If there are no such people, they should be brought up;

- secure economic independence for the own self, own family and help the fellow believers to achieve it;

- spend forces and funds for multiplying the knowledge and skill in all fields of the human being - from crafts to arts. Any reconstruction should start with active mastering of skills and tools. This is the wisest investment of forces and funds. A heathen must become a master and teach others his mastership. Knowledge and skills are pleasing to Gods;

- search and find connections and ways of creative interaction with science;

- act: do not wait for someone to resolve our survival and environmental problems, and problems of preserving the memory of centuries.

All the above are just initial steps. We should become those, who will undertake the hard work to lead this world out of the dead end, which we have brought there by our own non-understanding (or brought by someone with our hands?). And the time is running: tomorrow it may be late. and one day it may happen that there is no Tomorrow for us.

This is the only way! We, the heathens, will not only manage to survive in the modern world, but will

also become a force, which this world will have to consider.

So, the status quo can be changed by directing the modern people thinking to other, natural aggregate of vital and spiritual values, which will allow to break the vicious circle with no violence.

The living standard, which modern civilization gives to us, should be maintained, but with this said any excess should be refused, and we should return to worshipping the surrounding Nature. This can only be done voluntarily. Then a new epoch of the people's being will start on the Earth.

We believe that for this purpose heathenism should be recognized and accepted as an effective Force».

***Christopher: Anything else that you would like our readers to know?***

***Yggeld:*** I would like to wish Good Luck to everybody, who is reading my interview. Our ancestors are watching us from the Higher Worlds, and let them guard you from any troubles, while we remember them.

I wish every pagan to know and remember his(her) ancestors, who are now one with the Nature. This is the will of Gods. I think, that although we may have different ancestors, but the Gods are still the same.

There are no German, English, Indian, Slavic or Russian gods. We only call Them, the High Forces, in our own languages. Each of us uses his own language to name Them. And the Gods smile in reply. Let the Gods guard you!

## **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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