

International Asatru Summer Camp 2018

IASC Herald



#8

Colophon

post IASC 2018 Herald
#8 December 2018

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Editorial

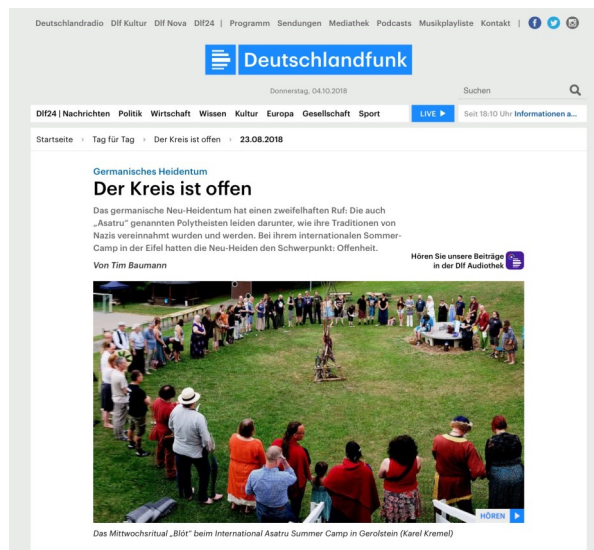
By Frigga Asraaf

Hot weather and lot's of music are two things that could be mentioned first when asked about IASC 2018. The first heathen karaoke was a huge success and the Big Loki Battle might become another IASC tradition. I guess by friday afternoon the shops in Gerolstein sold out all their super soakers. Many more happened during our 2018 summer camp which the articles a and pictures in this e-magazine will show. Just for the record: 110 persons from 16 countries world wide joined IASC 2018 and even some regular guests from the youth hostel enjoyed the water balloon fight, the auction and the closing ceremony. This years auction was even more of a succes then the previous ones with a reveneu of 2300 euro's! Thanks for all contributions and thanks for all generous bids!

Asatru-Eu Network gladly announces Asatru Schweiz to be part of our european heathen network since IASC, which means AEUN now counts 15 groups from 11 countries.

Eldaring - Germany
VfGH -Germany
Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost-Norway
Forn Sed Sweden - Sweden
Nordisk Tingsfaellig - Denmark
Kith of the Tree and the Well (KTW) - England
Asatru-UK - England
Het Rad - The Netherlands
De Negen Werelden - The Netherlands
Gotland Forn Sed - Spain
Noatun - Spain
Asatru Polska - Poland
Les Enfants d'Yggdrasil - France
Clan Ostara - France
Asatru Schweiz - Switzerland

People from the Netherlands, the UK and Norway will look for a location for IASC 2021. An update about this quest will be published in the Asatru-Eu Herald 2019. However without any other contributions there will be no Asatru-Eu Herald in 2019 or in 2020. So, if you want a Herald next year please sent a picture, a poem, a recipe, a story, an article, a cartoon or drawing to frigga@aanhet.net!



Another highlight of IASC 2018 is the outcome of the visit of the German radio journalist Tim Baumann from station Deutschlandfunk (DFL) to our summer camp on Wednesday. He interviewed various people during the day and observed from within the circle the hand fasting ceremony and the Big Wednesday Blot. On September 23. 2018 in the program *Tag für Tag* an item about IASC called *Der Kreis ist offen* was broadcasted.

What I remember from the IASC 2018

by Hermann Ritter

This time it worked. We two drove to the „International Asatru Summer Camp“. Because of the situation in Spain (remembering Catalonia), the IASC had to be relocated, and thankfully the Germans offered to move the event to the Eifel (more precisely: to Gerolstein) at short notice. Let's face it: the price was suspiciously low, answering the question of why the food was so scary. But that's better than a civil war, although I'm not sure if you can at least get a breakfast egg from time to time in a civil war.

Content: The IASC includes various Germanic pagan groups, all of whom are organizing the event together. These are „Het Rad“ and „De 9 Werelden“ from the Netherlands, „Asatru UK“ and „The Kith of the Tree and the Well“ from Great Britain, from France „Les Enfants d'Yggdrasill“ and „Clan Ostara“, from Sweden „Forn Sed Sverige“, from Denmark „Nordisk Tingfaellig“, „Asatru fellesskapet Bifrost“ from Norway, „Gotland Forn Sed“ and „Asatru Iberica“ from Spain, in addition „Asatru Polska“ from Poland. Germany was represented by the VfGH and the „Eldaring“. The guests from 16 countries (including China, Peru, New Zealand and the USA, as well as various European countries) were as colorful as the ranks of the organizers.

The program announcement in advance was a little getting used to, but when the program then came (as „IASC Herald # 7“), it contained in addition to the program points diverse warnings. For Germans these warnings were funny, regarding themes like gluten and the German compulsion for cash.

28.07. Saturday

One week program – from 28.07. to 04.08. – was planned, and we did not want to miss it. So we drove to Gerolstein on Saturday. On site we were greeted by various familiar and unknown faces. Over the time, there were about 30

„Eldaring“ members who came across us at the IASC. The proportion of Germans totaled around half of the 100 people.

On Saturday evenings, there was an official welcome („Word of Welcome“) by the organizers, during and after which one had the opportunity to acquaint strangers with some beers.


The language of the event was English – it was very smooth, as everyone tried to understand everyone. Despite all prejudices, many of the international guests were also able to speak German.

29.07. Sunday

On Sunday there was a „Creative Conversation“ on „Inclusion“. „Creative Conversation“ is a kind of guided discussion, where instruments, which one knows from the pedagogy, are used in discussion (and paganism). It is interesting that in this context it led to a good and appreciative discussion. Of course it is difficult for Germans to relate the German word „Inklusion“ and the English „inclusion“. The latter includes more, is anti-racist, anti-exclusionary and anti-fascist.

It was found that in many countries, fascist or fascist groups appear to be trying to penetrate Nordic paganism, or have already done so, as in the United States. And how difficult it is to get the „left-wing groups“ to a unified appearance.

Later we found time to escape the hostel kitchen and to penetrate the „Café Sherlock“ in the neighboring village. Here, in addition to a café and restaurant, beautifully decorated with mystery theme films and movie posters, was a thriller archive, a mystery antiquarian bookshop (bad, very bad for the free space in my suitcase) and a bookstore. We were here a total of three times; the second time we brought visitors from the Netherlands, who were thrilled by food and ambience, the third time we took here with same friends from the Eldaring a farewell drink.



Afternoon was the very beautiful opening ceremony. In the evening there was a lecture on the „Matronenkult“ in the Eifel area in Roman times, which you had to listen to mandatory as preparation for the excursion on the next day. The content was very good, confidently recited, and instructive for Germans, Romans and especially the guests from overseas.

30.07. Monday

The Matronae-excursion was well visited, so we had to travel with two buses. Two matron places of worship were visited (Nettersheim and Pesch), both of which offered leisure time for everyone for their own approach to the power and might of the matrons. At the second place there was a ritual, organized by the Cologne Herdwart, which was powerful and peppy.

In the evening we visited the „Flame of Frith“ and the lecture (without practical exercises) about „Sex and Religion“.

31.07. Tuesday

My lecture „Nazism in Fantasy and Paganism“ led me to talks about the topic „Right-wing extremism in the current Nordic paganism“ for the rest of the week. These were all interesting conversations, but then I realized at some point that – especially at over 35 degrees Celsius - it can also be exhausting for my brain.

The „Voluspa ritual“ that took place on this day did not cool us down, but rather relaxed everybody.

01.08. Wednesday

The „Talk on Norns and Ritual“ and the subsequent, quite controversial discussion were very interesting, especially about the connections to obstetrics and terminal care.

In advance, we were asked to participate in a renewed „handfasting“ („renewal marriage vows“) of a long affiliated couple. We were happy to be ready, and it has been - also thanks to the incredibly funny „Gode“ from Sweden - an unfor-

gettable moment.

The following „Big Wednesday Blot“ almost could not top this ritual.

In the evening there were songs from „The Cunning Crone and Company“, then a pagan DJ tried to make us dance. But at temperatures that were still over 30 degrees Celsius that was hardly possible.

02.08. Thursday

Excursion with city tour to the pagan parts of Trier. The less you say about buses that do not have working air conditioning, the better. Let's just be silent regarding radios that you can't turn off, so that all the time a crunching noise comes out of the speakers. Let us then excuse various organizational deficiencies at an outside temperature of almost 40 degrees Celsius – let us spread the gracious mantle of silence on the details – and ignore the length of this bus ride while extending it without consultation with the participants for another 2 hours, which torpedoed all subsequent planning for the day. Then and only then do you have approximate idea of the frame of this excursion and the state of mind in which we finally reached the hostel with the threatening dinner there.

Trier himself is interesting.

The day before, my wife had identified (while walking past war memorials of 1848, 1864 and 1870/71) a cemetery, on which the victims of the last months of World War II from September 1944 to the end of the war were buried, especially child soldiers from the „Volkssturm“. In addition to these there were graves for civilians, prisoners of war and civilian workers from other countries and even some unknown dead. She came up with the idea to perform an ancestor blot there. In agreement with the IASC organization, a suitable time for this program extension was found. In the evening, about 12 to 15 people took part in the blot in the cemetery. In the planning, she had been looking for something that might well connect the colorful mixture of dead ones being buried here in uniform

war graves. She came across the song „Lili Marleen“. She then told us something about the story of the song, before we sang together the first verse in German, then in English. In a very moving blot-round everyone had the opportunity to drink and tell something about an ancestor.

Despite the actually more than completed program, we then participated in a late-night Spår-ritual. Impressively, under the guidance of the Swedish Ritual Leader, a monotonous repeating chant (Vardlokur) enriched and channeled energies from the circle of participants that gave the three Völven in the center strength to transform and develop their powers. In a previously agreed way questions could then be asked to the Völven, or Seidhr-Mothers and Seidhr-Father.

The evening ended with a pagan karaoke dominated by heavy metal-pieces. I was just able to sing together with our „Herdwart“ from Hamburg the classic „Killing me softly“. The audience had lighters in their hands and wept with emotion (or pain).

03.08. Friday

The lecture „Ar nDraiocht Fein Ritual“ was about the basics of ritual work from the Celtic point of view and then tested in a practical exercise (which was very successful).

The „Big Loki Battle“ with water bombs was more for the younger generation.

The very entertaining auction brought over € 2,000 as pre-financing for the next IASC, whose location is still being discussed between the UK, the Netherlands and Norway (it will end up being Germany, but I still keep this prediction secret).

The Closing Ceremony turned into a gripping hugging. The rest of the evening everyone skipped the planned dance night to sit outside, drink beer, praise the gods, build old friendships and make new friends.

04.08. Saturday

After a farewell round, we went home.

What is missing?

Three more blasphemes about whether potato printing is Asatru. And the evaluation of the realization that the Dutch know no jokes about the Dutch, but then laugh heartily, if you tell them a joke about the Dutch.

This is no attempt to credibly express a beautiful week in words. You can't have everything.

Heil Delling. Hail the matronae.

Community





Fun, Frith and Friendship



In memory of Andreas 'Morph' Burghardt

by Jens Brehmen

The first time I met Morph was when I joined the local Eldaring group in Hamburg in spring 2011.

His most remarkable feature to me was his openness to other people. He welcomed me as I've seen him welcoming others later: Accepting from the first second. If he learnt later that he didn't get along with them, he withdrew, but only after giving them a really fair chance to earn the trust he had given in advance.

In that first time, I learnt a lot by him about heathenry, not by being taught, but simply by his example. He was a viking reenactor, loved going to the markets, and was especially enthusiastic about Moesgaard, the Viking Woodstock as he called it.

In summer 2014, he was diagnosed with cancer. As he had delayed seeing a doctor for long, the disease was quite severe already at the diagnosis. So at our Yule celebration that year, I wondered how much time would be left for us, and promised him to accompany him to Moesgaard if his health would permit it next summer.

The Moesgaard market overlapped with the first weekend of IASC 2015, and so he suggested to go to the market first and then travel on to Sweden to IASC. Which is what we did in 2015. As he heavily partied with some Irishmen the Sunday evening and we delivered the daughter of some friends to her parents somewhere between Helsingborg and Unnaryd, it was nearing dusk on Monday of IASC when we finally arrived.

Fortunately Patrick helped me raising Morph's viking A-Frame tent on the camp site. I slept there the last nights alone, because Morph

simply stayed in a living room in the main building when he decided he didn't like the walk from there to the camp site, barefooted as usual, over the gravelled path.



Unnaryd was the IASC of the dwarf groups, the few helping duties everyone had to perform in the kitchen and elsewhere. Morph took extra shifts in the kitchen instead of going to some lectures, because he so much needed to feel useful even in his poor health, but also because he so much liked talking with the people there working with him.

He also loved singing with the Englishmen. And talking late into the night. Even when we had to flee from the smell of the surströmming, which slowly conquered the whole building.

He recruited Pernille there to help with the big viking buffet his best friend organised that autumn on his farm on Fyn. I guess he invited everyone returning from IASC via Hamburg to his place there.

On return, we took Ottar first to the railway station in Malmö and then stayed for a night at a lovely young women's place in Malmö. When I asked him whether she was an old friend of his, he replied, „no, I met her for the first time this year in Moesgaard“.

Three more years remained for him after IASC 2015. His health slowly declined further, but he always tried to make the best out of it. Came to our monthly pub moots, celebrated most of our equinox and solstice celebrations, joined our Disenblot weekends. I would have loved to bring him to IASC 2018, but in spring 2018, he told me he would not go due to his financial situation. I understood that his health situation would also not allow it.

In July 2018, I took him for a night to the viking market in Oldenburg. He moved slowly with his rollator over the market, but whenever he met someone he knew from earlier times, especially some lady, they stopped, chatted long and a huge smile crawled over both of their faces. He stayed up until 3AM, still making new friends there.

Morph died on the 14th of August 2018 in Hamburg. I'm grateful for all the good times we've had together and all the stuff I learned from him. I will miss him for a very, very long time.



Morphs Runestone stand in Fyr, Denmark, it was carved by Erik Sandquist and tell: Friends raised stone after Morph. Brother to many, friend to all. Erik carved.

The final Time Table

Time Table IASC 2018

	Saturday July 28	Sunday July 29
Breakfast 07.30 - 09.00		
Morning		9.30 - 10.30 Papekaule Chakra Meditation Andre Henriques 09.30 - 12.00 Kasselburg Creative Conversation Per Lundberg
Lunch 12.30 - 14.00		
Afternoon	Arrival 14.00 16.00 - 17.30 Party room Cunning Crane and Company rehearsal	13.30 - 14.30 Kasselburg AEUN meeting closed 15.00 - 16.00 Outdoors Opening Ceremony 16.45 - 17.45 Outdoors Memory Circle Nathalie Cue Comez
Diner 18.00 - 19.30		
Evening	19.45 - 20.15 Partyroom Word of welcome 20.30 - 21.30 Kasselburg BWB meeting* 21.30 - 21.30 Party room Heathen song-writing rehearsal	19.30 - 21.00 Party room Matronae lecture Ulrike Pohl 22.00 Kasselburg Wickerman, movie Peter Warholm

Market Hall
Sunday - Friday daily market / exhibition and IASC Office

*BWB - Big Wednesday Blot, coordinator Miguel Sanchez

** The Bronze-casting workshop is a two day workshop on Monday and Tuesday, but might be extended to Thursday and Friday.

	Monday July 30	Tuesday July 31
Breakfast 07.30 - 09.00		
Morning	09.30 - 16.00 Matronae Excursion Ulrike P 10.00 - 16.00 Munterley Bronze-Casting Peter Warholm	9.30 - 12.00 Papekaule Yggdrasil Per Lundberg 10.00 - 16.00 Munterley Bronze-Casting Peter Warholm 10.00 - 12.00 Kasselburg Nazism in Fantasy and Paganism Hermann Ruse
Lunch 12.30 - 14.00		
Afternoon	14.00 - 16.00 Kasselburg Rune Stamping Frigga Anlauf and Dolly v.d. Berg	13.30 - 15.30 Papekaule Dynamic Rune Reading Vincent Ongkewidjo 13.30 Next to the outdoors altar Connecting with the Earth Gerry Damen 16.00 - 17.30 Party room Singing and Dancing in old heathendom Gerald Reifeld 17.00 - 17.30 Kasselburg BWB meeting*
Diner 18.00 - 19.30		
Evening	20.00 - 22.00 Party room Flame of Frith Frigga, Nancy, Michiel and Annette 20.00 - 21.30 Kasselburg Sex and Religion Günna Stencke 22.15 Party room And Karaoke After Party Phil Parker and Miguel Sanchez Ted Chambers and Peter Warholm	20.00 - 21.30 Party room Voluspá, ritual Amada and Andre Henriques 22.00 Kasselburg Wickerman, movie (18+) Peter Warholm

	Wednesday August 1	Thursday August 2
Breakfast 07.30 - 09.00	10.15	
	9.30 - 10.30 Papekaule Mantra Meditation Andre Henriques 09.30 - 12.15 Munterley Potato Printing Pernilla Jørgensen 12.00 - 12.00 Kasselburg Talk on Norms and ritual Vincent Ongkewidjo	09.30 - 16.00 Trier Excursion Daniel Jakobs and Lukasz Bunk 10.00 - 16.00 Munterley Bronze-Casting ** Peter Warholm 10.00 - 12.00 Papekaule Carving Runes in Wood Per Lundberg
Lunch 12.30 - 14.00		
Afternoon	14.00 - 15.00 Outdoors Handvasting (renewal marriage vows) 15.30 - 17.30 Outdoors Big Wednesday Blot	13.30 - 15.30 Kasselburg Witches on Wyrd Ways Frigga, Nancy, Annette 15.45 - 17.45 Papekaule Living landscape Michiel de Nijs
Diner 18.00 - 19.30		
Evening	Nine Worlds in Sound and Song Party room 20.00-20.30 The Cunning Crane and Company 20.45 Heathen DJ- Andre	19.00 Ancestor-Blot 20.30 - 22.30 Papekaule Seidr in our time Sylvia Hill and Per Lundberg (Seidr ritual -> enter your name in the list for participation!) 20.45 Grosse Hölse 20.45 Bitter Kommunen! 20.45 Sobu and der gese wisse Bitter Kommunen!

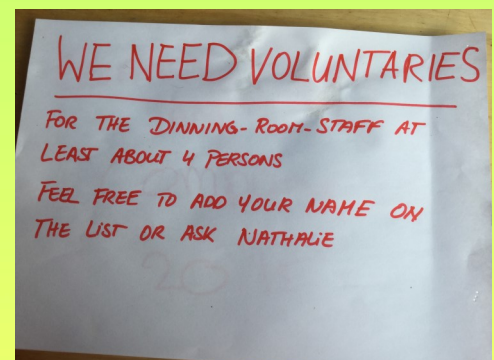
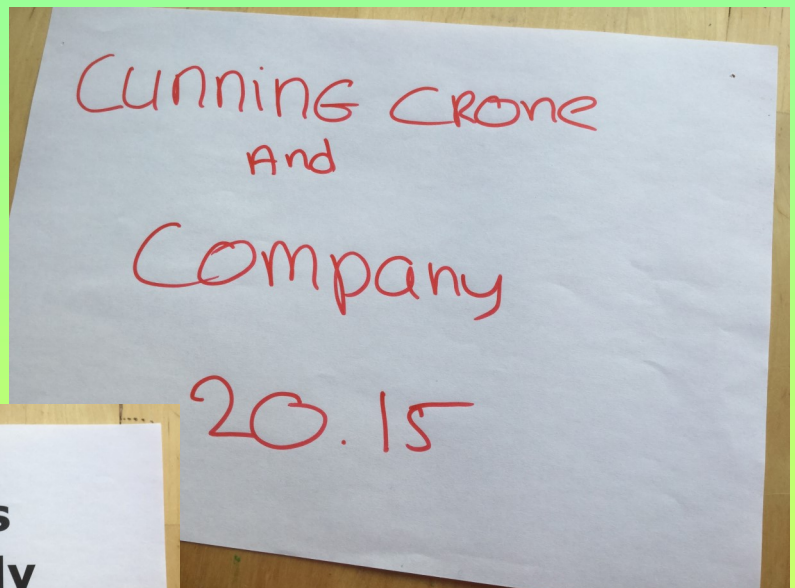
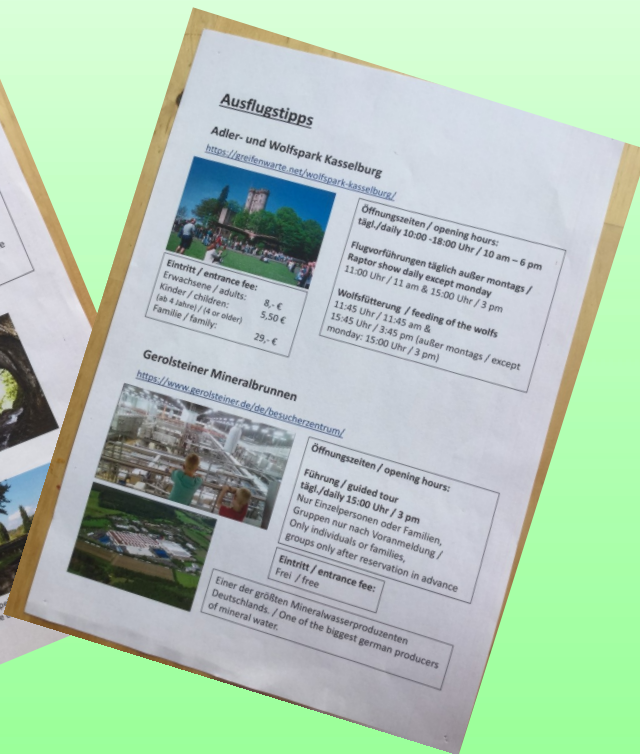
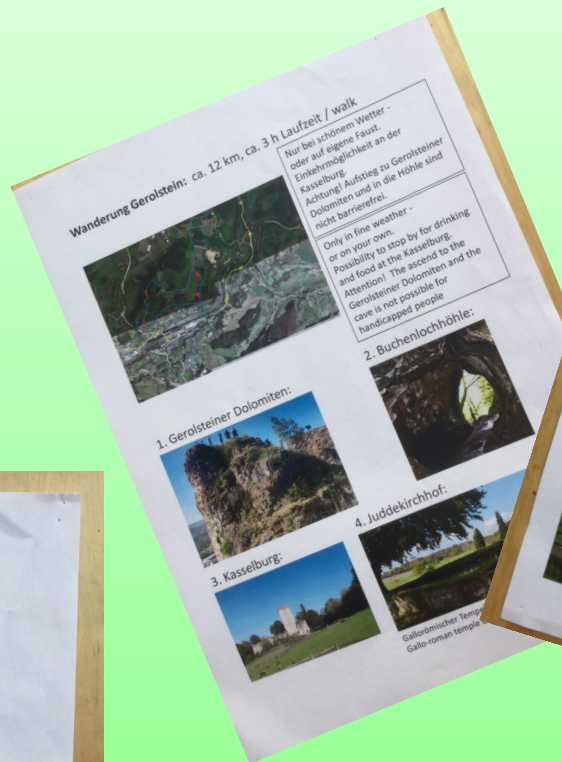
20.00
Childrens
Show!!
outside

20.45
Bitter
Kommunen!
20.45 Sobu
and der gese
wisse Bitter
Kommunen!

	Friday August 3	Saturday August 4
Breakfast 07.30 - 09.00		
Morning	10.00 - 14.00 Munterley Bronze-Casting ** Peter Warholm 10.00 - 12.00 Papekaule Ar nDraiocht Féin Ritual Robert Lewis 12.00 - 13.00 AEUN meeting closed 13.15 - 15.15	Leaving room (09.30) Packing Cleaning Departure
Lunch 12.30 - 14.00	14.00	
Afternoon	15.30 - 16.30 Outdoors Big Loki Battle for young and old! Nancy Tinkhof, Anika Stein 16.00 - 17.30 Big Hall / Outdoors IASC Auction	
Diner 18.00 - 19.30		
Evening	19.45 - 20.30 Outdoors Closing Ceremony 21.00-22.30 Party room Heathen Sing-a-long	

we meet 19.00 at the front door and walk to the cemetery next to the parking meter (Petra)

And more stuff from the pin board





A heathen story

by Frigga Asraaf

*Where you can live in
the love of the common people.
Smile from the heart
of a family man.*

*Daddy's gonna buy you
a dream to cling to.
Mama's gonna love you
just as much as she can,
and she can*

Above is one of the refrains of *Love of the common people* by Paul Young, a song from 1983. Most likely I already told somewhere that often I think in songs. Better to say: my brains have the habit to think (partly) in songs. As if they play with me and give me regular a riddle and I have to figure out why it is this specific song. Lately the meaning of frith and the word inclusive in combination with heathendom have been on my mind and I guessed the song had to do something with this.

Frith

What frith meant exactly in the old days we do not know. We also have to keep in mind that a lot of what we know is from the upper class, but what about the common people, people like you and me. Playing with this thought was the answer to this times song riddle: what was on the hearts and minds of the common people of the germanic tribes. Would there be much difference between what the common people of old wished and what we as the common people of today wish for? Translating it into their times I would say a peaceful live in good health with family and friends. Take care of the land, grow crops for food. Keep a couple of sheeps, a goat or two and a cow also to help to plough. Do


some hunting and fishing. Have proper stock for winter. The chance to raise kids healthy and safe.

Frith is a word that resonates to many a heathens today and I guess it is becoming a heathen concept to express heathendom to be a peaceful religion. Lets first have a look at what the word itself could tell us. The English word frith derives from the old English *friðu*, *friþ* and is related with the Old Nordic *friðr* and the Old High German *fridu*. They all derive from the Proto Germanic **friþu-* ‘calm’, ‘protection’. Even more backwards we end up with the Proto Indo-European word **priyas*, ‘specific to’ (‘specific to the clan’ or ‘specific to the community’). In our modern day Germanic languages related words for peace are *vrede* (Dutch), *frede* (West Frisian) , *fred* (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) and *friður* (Icelandic). In the old Germanic languages related words for peace mean as much as ‘safe conduct’, ‘good understanding’, ‘peacefulness’, ‘peace (calm)’, ‘joy’ en ‘well-being’. Frith is also related to the word free, *freo* in Old English and in Old Saxon, Old Frisian and Old High German *fri*. All derive from the Proto Germanic **frija-* meaning ‘free’ but originally meaning ‘beloved’.

The meanings given above are pretty usefull to describe for me as a common person how I would like life to be: safe and free in a good understanding with my fellow common people.

Inclusive

Later on frith will be back, but first I have to look at another concept. A while ago I became aware of the concept #inclusiveheathendom used by some heathens. It looked absolutely fine at first, but there was a voice nagging in



the back of my head that would not shut up. I gave it a lot of thought, but I couldn't nail down what my concern was. I was glad somebody else could! Jósúa Hróðgeir Rood a PhD candidate in old Norse religion and anthropology wrote in a discussion on FB (Peter Warholm's timeline) about it:

"It's not the GOAL I'm criticising. It's the method. When you create concepts they have effects beyond your intention. Concepts take on lives of their own.

And by creating a concept of "inclusive heathenism" you are giving the notion that heathenism is NOT in and of itself inclusive- but that you have created an interpretation which is.

And that's how it's going to be interpreted and used against us."

Although the above expressed my concerns it did not silence the little voice in my head. There always will be a lot to think about on this subject if only we have to be very careful not to do exactly the opposite of what we claim to do/be.

To me heathendom is what we make of it, likewise any religion. In each field (read here religion) there is the entire scale from very open minded people to very dogmatic inward people. All is part of the field and we have to deal with it some way. So, I do not think it to be wise to create an interpretation. Jósúa suggested to use #heathendomisinclusive instead for the reasons he mentioned. Such a small difference making such a huge difference in meaning is amazing and a least should get proper consideration.

As usual I have lots of questions. What do heathens who use #inclusiveheathendom tell the world with it? Do they want to explain in this way that they are creating their own interpretation of Germanic Heathendom? I do not think so, but as it is not clear to me how about people

from other fields, whether religious or secular?

My Germanic Heathendom is a lot of things and amongst all it is inclusive. I started using the word inclusive years ago to express in one word heathendom open to everybody. The idea behind this was and still is that I rather tell what I'm for instead of what I'm against.

As strong as I am in my opinion everybody is free to call themselves a heathen I am even stronger were I stand in rejecting ideologies like fascism and national socialism. Whereas I can or will not deny a person to be heathen I can and will speak out against things like violence, hate, and oppression. Which immediately brings an issue to mind: it is easy to take a stand in general, but what if it comes down to family and friends? How I will deal with it most likely will differ with each person and situation and I will try not to narrow myself down to pre-conditions before hand. Human kind is already too much estranged.

If there is inclusive heathendom does that mean that there is also exclusive heathendom? Just wondering... And what about non-inclusive... Seeing the words inclusive and non-inclusive almost in one sentence gives me the creeps. To me it sounds too much like 'we are the good guys and they are wrong' and 'if you not do it our way you are doing it wrong'. Good intentions easily turn into a trap, something about the road to Hel. Yes also Christians understand things pretty well! Also keep in mind fear is a bad counsellor and so is haste.

Stories

Stories are important. We need stories! So, what are stories we, as heathens, want to tell? To me Frith is an awesome heathen story. It is not a tale to tell only amongst ourselves as heathens, but it is a meaningful one we have to offer the world. To me it is a story that has been in my heart and mind for so long and since a couple of years I more and more put it into words and tell

it where ever I can. By far it is not only tale. I hear many other heathens tell their own version. So, lets combine our strength even more and tell our story of community sense and being aware we need one another as human beings.

That we have a responsibility towards the earth, the environment and our neighbourhood.

Please join our stories of kindness, empathy, hospitality and generosity! Our story of frith!

IASC 2018 Altars





Do we as modern heathens need a new theology and philosophy?

By Per Lundberg

Gode in Samfundet Forn Sed Sweden

This rant is in response to Frigga Asraaf in the IASC Herald pre-camp 2018 wrote about in *Theology versus Philosophy* and also this thread goes further to Karl E. H. Seigfrieds article *A Better Burden: Towards a New Ásatrú Theology* Which can be read on <https://www.norsemyth.org/2017/10/a-better-burden-towards-new-asatru.html>

Just for clarification in this text I use the word heathenry as being the same to forn sed and asatru. I am aware that both groups and individuals think these words have different meanings, but just to simplify the writing of this text, I have chosen to just use the word heathenry.

Now onto the subject at hand.

Let's break down the title a bit!

New – as I think of this word; its modern, current in our times. Also reaching forward in time, not looking backwards at what has been. When one thinks of the word *new* its almost an automatic connection to the word old as a contrast to new. So in this way of thinking and with the value of heathenry is something old and that we current heathens are 'carrying the torch of the old'.


Of the theology that the “old ones” had, we have just to little sources of to make any conclusive and multifaceted sense of. Conclusions are very much a projection from us moderns upon the 'old ones'. The words *old ones* is to denote all the various time periods and over large geographic area that we can denote our spiritual path from. Very broad indeed and that is the way it is, as I assume that you that are reading this have some prior knowledge about the history of Germanic/Scandinavian heathenry. This

might come as a shocker to you, but much of the heathenry today is new. Yes we do have quite a lot left but that is more like a skeleton of some base that we in current era base a spirituality/religion upon today. The bones of the old need nervous system, muscles, blood vessels and respiratory system. The metaphor is also of value as our religion and tradition needs nourishment, digestive and respiratory systems and importantly ways to get rid of waste.

The need for the state of mind that heathenry of today is as the old ones did in the past is a easy to understand the need for. We live in times that are in turmoil. Many become heathens in part because the monotheistic way. Of power monopoly and claiming to be the “only right” religion. Of course we need to move further in to having a functioning spirituality and religion. Modern heathenry has been going on since the 1970-ties. As far as I know, sure there might have been some small groups here and there. Heathenry of current times are less than fifty years in the active making!

Most heathens have been 'at it' for ten to thirty years. We are no longer a anti-movement, but a for and then in the common threads of heathenry exploring, practising and evolving heathenry is the focus of value. Since I became active self-identifying heathen in the late 1990-ies, I have clearly seen a lot of development. Twenty years ago there was much more talk about what heathens are not. The last ten years there has been a definite shift in content, in practice, in theology and philosophy.

Need – do we as a pluralistic network of heathens need theology / philosophy today? Quite honestly, we already have a lot of it! What I find



that we do not have is open, conscious and brave conversations and discourse of our multifaceted heathen theology. Philosophy is the values one has and they govern the conscious and subconscious actions we continuously make each day and hour and surely every minute as well!

Philosophy - system of values and views on life, it's the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

To specify, does the network of groups and organizations of heathens need a common philosophy?

I think we do need a more conscious and expressed moral and ethical framework. That all the groups and all individuals would be able to have one common philosophy/theology is just a silly notion as it is impossible! Its neither doable nor of interest. There is no one-size-fits-all, that way of thinking does not suite heathenry, but a flexible system of common views. As I ponder and reflect, I see that we already have a system of values.

How can I say this?

- Well, simply enough; all that anyone does is done from the values one has. Be they conscious and subconscious values. Most of the values have been incorporated and that 'program' used so many times that they are on autopilot. To make these systems of values more in the light is importance and of value.

Just to give an example of what we do have. Perhaps many of us are to in it and cannot see the forest for the trees. One observation I make is that we stand in a circle during blot. Why? And to what purpose? What does that tell us about ourselves?

What is needed in my opinion is a discourse, or many conversations, on screens (Netheim as I jokingly like to call it) in books and conversations off screen. I suggest that many persons in different countries and organisations observe different behaviour that heathens do. Boil this down and discuss and write down the value

system that these behaviours are based upon.

The need-fire burns in the individual heathens heart. The development of theology ought to have spiritual and religious practice as its platform. Perhaps heathens that have the same *fulltrui* could communicate and share and develop more common spiritual practice and written description of their relationship to their *fulltrui*. It's just an idea!

Theology - is pluralistic in nature and I think that heathens need to understand its forms and adopt a flexible attitude. The word pluriform is a good word, meaning many forms in one great whole! This is most likely what it was during the era of *the old ones* and I think should be also today.

Furthermore, what I do believe we modern heathens need to be doing more is to write and dare to ask the pertinent questions. Those that do open up more possibilities and explore both theology and philosophy that which we have today and that which we can create together with the "shining ones"

From the coaching that I know, asking questions is the path to open up the matrix thoughts and system of values, and to explore the need-webb about a subject matter. So just using only the words theology and philosophy does not help us. We need to be able to apply and open up the value-webb and ask questions like:

- Can you tell me about Freja?
- Please tell me about the characteristics of Freja.
- If you pray/talk with Freja, what do you say or talk about?
- When holding a blot to Freja, what words to her do you say and why?
- Do you have a fulltrui, can you tell me about her/him?
- What subject would be wrong to talk to Freja about?

Philosophical questions can be:

- How does fate and free will interact with each other in your life?
- What is the collective purpose of humans in the scheme of old Norse myths of working up to Ragnarok and on through to Idavallen?
- How is collective purpose different from individual purpose?
- Does that which is manifested in words and actions just that which is supposed to happen?

Through the reflection and the practice the mo-

dern heathenry, asatru, forn sed, can grow as each individual grows and dies piece by piece. The oak of current heathenry is but young, but roots that reaches beyond the now. The bone structure of the old can more and more receive the systems of life, nerves, blood vessels, heart, lungs etc. The need for practice of our ways and grow together aids us in the exploration that lies ahead. Each conversation, each blot and workshop held, each book and article written is adding to heathenry today!

¹ Thanks Robert Lewis of the Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, for a great way of expression and perception of the deities! <https://www.adf.org/>



IASC 2018 Cord

It almost has become a tradition that Frigga Asraaf makes an IASC cord. The IASC 2018 cord was used in the opening ceremony to tie all IASC logs to the pole and all groups and all participants got a piece of the cord by the end of the closing ceremony.

IASC 2018 Mug

A gift for all participants with the text: IASC 2018 Gerolstein, Germany 7/28 - 8/4 and the lyrics of our IASC song. A nice idea from Haimo Grebenstein.

Memorabilia



IASC 2018 Mead

Martje and Ralph from Beowulf-Schleswig sent us along with the mead order a huge surprise: a special IASC 2018 mead with a lovely lable. www.beowulf.de





The Ubian Matronae – a presentation and an excursion

by Ulrike Pohl

When I realized that the 2018 IASC would take place in proximity to two remarkable cult sites of two groups of local trinity deities, the Matronae Aufaniae and the Matronae Vacallinae, I decided to offer a presentation showing current results of solid academic research about them to create a foundation which would make a visit to said cult sites – taking in the atmosphere and holding Blót there – a spiritual and emotional counterpart, actually, the best of two worlds!


In the presentation, I tried to answer a few questions about the Ubian Matronae (which is the umbrella term for these deities) in general before going into a discussion of the cult sites and related questions and phenomena. These were questions like: Who are the Ubian Matronae? Are they Roman, Germanic, or Celtic? Where and how were they venerated? Who venerated them in the first place, and why? What do we know about the actual cult performance?

A longer essay about what I found out plus bibliography will follow and will be published in a future issue of the Asatru-EU Herald, so for now I will just summarize here without going into detail.

We know about the cult of the Ubian Matronae only because between approximately 100 and 250 CE, a large amount of votive stones to them have been made and put up, mostly in the region where the Germanic tribe of the Ubians settled, roughly in a triangle between Bonn, Neuss and Aachen, west of the Rhine. These votive stones are made in classical Roman style and either show an inscription telling to whom and by whom the dedication has been made, or ad-

ditionally show three seated goddesses with various attributes, clad in Ubian costume with remarkable traditional headdresses. The cult started slowly and got so popular that archaeologists have found more or less 800 stones dedicated to 70 different Matronae trinities, who can be recognized by their different bynames, some of the names are mentioned only once, only a few of them more often. This shows not only that the cults were locally rooted and not very widespread, but also that each trinity had a close relationship to the people who dedicated the stone. A few trinities stand out because they have a large number of stones to themselves, like for example the Matronae Aufaniae.

The Ubian tribespeople themselves relocated from their erstwhile home a bit more south and on the other side of the Rhine to the region in question, where they met surviving members of the Eburones, a (probably) Celtic tribe which was defeated and killed by Caesar's troops during the conquest of Gallia Belgica, and Germania west of the Rhine. The Ubii founded the city which is now called Cologne. During the following years, the province of Germania inferior was established by the Romans who had a constant military presence there, and Roman veterans were given land after their service and settled there too, resulting in a mixed population of people speaking Germanic or Celtic languages, and Romans, with a huge cultural Roman influence. The Ubian cult is similar to those Matres and Matronae cults elsewhere in Europe but also shows remarkable differences, for one, most stones address the deities as Matronae, but they use a byname. These bynames can be sorted in four categories: topic names or place names, names deriving from water places, names with a tribal relation or showing a



connection to a certain group of people, and nomina actoris, which are names who show us what the people saw in these deities. Most bynames can be put into the first category.

Also mentioned on the stones are the people who gave the order to erect the stone, the dedicants. From these names, we can see that they consisted of Germanic and Celtic locals, Roman soldiers and veterans, and especially in Bonn and Cologne, by members of the Roman military and administrative elite.

Judging from the bynames and the attributes shown on the stones as well as the organisation of the cult, scholars believe that some of the Ubian Matronae were seen as ancestral deities, some of them as givers of fertility of the land and general blessings and protection. Almost all bynames express their benevolence.

We also discussed the question if the cult was being imported by the Romans or had Germanic or Celtic roots. Possible forerunners of this form of cult have been considered a fertility cult with goats, a tree cult, or aniconic ancestor cult resp. an ancestor cult with perishable cult objects.

Further we talked about the two cult sites which were going to visit the next day, their special locations and what results that had on the cult. And certain features of the sites as well as depictions on votive stones gave us an impression what cult performance might have looked like – there were processions, sacrifices of wine, incense/fumigation, fruit, grains and grain products and flower garlands, also bloody sacrifices. Most probably cultic meals and feasts took place, music played a role too. Again, we can imagine that the Roman style of offering had a huge influence on cult performance if we believe that the depictions on the stones are authentic, but especially in rural places we can expect a very heavy local flavour. We then looked at how and why the cult faded

out in the fourth century, and very briefly touched the subject of possible continuity through the Catholic saints Fides, Spes and Caritas.

I was happy with how the presentation went and that people seemed to have a genuine interest in the subject, but my expectations were surpassed by the excursion which took place the next day. We drove there by two buses. I did not count but I guess we were around 60 people. The first site we visited was the site of the Matronae Aufaniae in Nettersheim. We walked a short way out of the village, the site is situated a bit higher on some sort of plateau overlooking the place. It was a sunny and hot day, and we rested there, took in the atmosphere, talked about archaeological details of this rather small site and we made offerings at the replicas of stones to the Mothers from the Fen, the Matronae Aufaniae. The nearby structures of the former Roman military base were in part visible, too, which we noticed on our way back to the buses. The second site we visited is just a few kilometers away between the villages Nöthen and Pesch. It is situated in the forest and rather larger than the first site, and it was a cult site for the Matronae Vacallinehae. We picknicked there and then held a blót, which was created and lead by Sebastian, who was supported by our friend Barbara and myself.

It was a wonderful experience and very moving for me to be part of such a large community there, and I dare say the atmosphere was so welcoming and friendly that I assume our offerings, which we made on behalf of our IASC community, have been accepted.

Of course, we made sure at both sides that we left nothing behind which should not be there, and then we were driven home to camp.

Personally, and as a long time venerator of the Ubian Matronae, both doing the in-depth research for the presentation, sharing that with

such a wonderful group of people and visiting and offering together at two cult sites, each of them impressing in their own way, has been something of a dream come true.

I believe that one of the wonderful things about IASC is sharing about what we do differently in

our respective religious communities, and how and why we do it, and to realize what we have in common. I do hope that this feature of Continental Western Germanic religion has made an impression on those who were there, and I thank all of you from my heart from making it happen.





Ancient Trier Excursion





Revised Lecture on „Sex and Religion“ (2018)

By Günna Stienecke

Sex and Religion“ is the title of this lecture. „Sex in the cult“ would be more to the point. Anyway, these words don't seem to go well together.

At least in the mind-set of the Mono-God-believers, sex and religion is already a tense, if not contradictory connection. But sex as a part of religion, let alone *sex in the cult*, would be a completely absurd and obscene suggestion.

So, if something as „sex in the cult“ had ever existed, we'd be left to trace it back to ancient heathen religions.

„Sex in the cult“ – I wouldn't know if it was more than a rumour when I first came across this alleged phenomenon during my studies of Theology, back in the 1980s. It was always a marginal note referring to an ancient pagan custom, respectably labelled as „The Sacred Marriage“. Indicating that there have been numerous, but nameless priest-kings and their High Priestesses, or vice versa, performing sex in the open on a special day (or night) of the year. First evidence: Ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia (present Iraq). Second evidence: Anywhere else, where heathens lived. Surely ancient heathens knew nothing of the original sin or sin in the flesh – so why not celebrate the power of love and fertility? Or the love for power and god-like sex?

These were the crumbs and bits of informations I could get a hold on. Nobody seemed to bother, if you wanted to know more. But then, why mention it at all? For simply vain reasons (like, I read Herodotus in original Old Greek, see footnote X) ? Or because it seemed opportune to recharge an image of heathenry which leaves heathens on a Stone Age level?

Surprise or not:

For hundreds of years, if not milleniums, „*sex in the cult*“ has been taken for real and treated as a fact, at home in remote cultures which stuck to their archaic roots. Not that anyone had witnessed what they reported. But story-telling and history hasn't been much of a difference for the longest time, and still today it sometimes seems convenient to leave it at that.

A closer look at history, though, will reveal that sex and religion were never compatible elements in a meaningful context. Sex in the cult is an inherent contradiction, not because it is a taboo in monotheism, but because it is a taboo in heathenism. Sex in the cult has never played even a minor role in the developing of the early „One-God-Alone-Movements“, just because there has never been something like *sex in the cult*.

Now that I have given away the conclusion so soon, I owe you some explanations. First of all, it would be a waste of time to go through all the sources relevant in this discussion, to conclude that it has been a waste of time to talk about something which never existed. Secondly, there is a big discrepancy between a non-existing phenomenon and a steady stream of reference to it. Thus the „Sacred Marriage“ phenomenon (if only mentioned *en passant*) has never stopped to exist.

This discrepancy caused a shift in my dealing with the problem.

The main question coming up now is not, whether, how or why „sex in the cult“ occurred, but how and why the *speech* of „sex in the cult“ could work as an unchallenged cliché – and a false cliché, at that.

A cliché is never meant to capture the essential traits of a given reality. A cliché is intentionally made up. It is useful, not because it pictures the nature of a person or a group or whatever, but because it shows what we want to see. It reduces a manifold reality down to a minimum, thus promoting a point of view and a judgement that suits our prejudices.

Talking of the cliché *sex in the cult*, it is worth underlining that it is (pretty much as *sex'n drugs and rock'n roll*) made up of male fantasies. It would not exist nor survive without applying double moral standards. It allows, even demands, sex beyond all the norms of morale given in a society. At the same time, this trespassing bears no consequences on the men, while women will be left stigmatized as sex servants or prostitutes.

Now we are on the road of the history of a cliché.

The cliché of *sex in the cult* has been brought up first by some Old Greek authors, but it can't be separated from cultures of the Ancient Near East. (Thus I spare you an argument with charlatans like G. Frazer, who used it to promote his discovery of a world-wide phenomenon, against all evidence.)

One premise of the sex in the cult –cliché is, that the goddess of Love demands a service of love. Who could be more appropriate then to play the main role in this scenario than the most prominent goddess of the Ancient Near East, Ishtar, the wide known goddess of Love? (Let's ignore for the moment, some of her equally important traits, conveniently catalogued as her different aspects).

The cults of Ishtar were ubiquitous in Mesopotamia, and merged with those of many goddesses in her wake. Once the cults of Ishtar were the paramount stage-set for *sex in the cult*, the „Sacred Marriage“ appeared just as the tip of the iceberg. The whole thing, of course, must have been much bigger. Underneath the

surface, we're supposed to find the solid base: a well organized section of her temples, built for the training and maintaining of female sex-workers for the benefit of the institution. Thus the *terminus technicus* of „cult- or temple prostitution“ respectively „cult- or temple prostitutes“.

You may ask:

Why should prostitutes be an essential part of the temple personnel? What is the difference between profane prostitution and temple prostitution? Were cult prostitutes on stand-by, until the temple chief called for action? Or was their job basically identical with the job of the ordinary sex worker in the street, only that the wages went straight to the temple to raise the temple income? And if so, why would a woman apply for this kind of temple job?


Here is an answer I found in a book (published in 2007):

„The only way to compensate for the stigma of her profession, was to apply for the service as a temple prostitute, because then she was part of the religious cult.“ (Romina Schmitter, p. 18f.)

I find this explanation rather disturbing than convincing or reasonable. Schmitter draws her conclusion on the well known and unchallenged premises: A) Temple prostitution existed for real;

B) Ordinary Prostitution had a bad reputation, the temple service (i.e. sex in the cult) had a high reputation; C) the high reputation of cult prostitutes resulted of the eminent ritual of the „Sacred Marriage“; D) The eminence of the „Sacred Marriage“ is due to the most important and therefore most sacred Fertility rite which is due to magical thinking, i.e. Divine Sex to make the wheat grow.

Along the lines of these premises, you may well conclude that the shift from ordinary prostitution to temple prostitution was common and a



slight relief for the women. You may rightly insist on rejecting the very term of temple prostitutes, because there is no exchange of money here, and speak of temple servants instead. That would save both the women's reputation and the „Sacred Marriage“. It does not explain, though, why the ritual highlight of the year would require an army of women supposed to do their holy duty once in a year.

What is annoying me most, though, is the stubbornly repeated reference to the same old storytellers whose authority on the matter is taken for granted, never questioned, even increasing every time they are quoted. Not that we have a big choice of those high ranking authorities. The first one is Herodotus, the second one Strabo.

At the core of the cliché of *sex in the cult* lies, naturally, the goddess of Love. I can't help thinking of a Russian matryoshka: a cliché in a cliché... The goddess of Love is the master of love. She wants sex in her cult, she loves sex. She knows all the magic spells, the weeds, the potions, to ensure she'll get what she wants, to get whom she wants.

She is the woman in love, the power of love, the protector of woman love, baby love, man love, She chooses the king who will rule her land in the name of love.

Most of that is true, according to the stories and myths of Ishtar, but it is less than half of the truth. The goddess of Love – may she be called Ishtar in Mesopotamia, or, elsewhere in the Ancient Near East, Anat, Shaushka, Hebat, Ashtarte, or, why not, Freiya in Europe – is at the same time the goddess of War. Meaning death and destruction, triumph and defeat, bloodshed and slaughter.

It should not come as a surprise, when you think about it, that she is also the goddess of Fate. She can change your gender, can change your luck, change your life, change anything to its opposite.

Having that in mind, we will have a much

broader access to the old cuneiform texts which deal with the cults of Ishtar.


The next matryoshka contains the ceremony of the „Sacred Marriage“. As we have seen, the central part of this ceremony is the copulation of the representative of the goddess of Love and her male consort. Now as the main reason for having sex is reproduction (don't argue!), we gladly have a new label for our goddess of Love. We just add one word, and we have the goddess of Love and Fertility. Does it matter, that one typical trait of the goddess of Love is, that she has many lovers, but no children?

Already the next matryoshka is waiting. At the end of the ceremony

it becomes solemn. This is a small, but important part. Music has stopped, actors keep still, and the High Priestess resp. the goddess of Love and Fertility blesses the king (normally the local wheather god– representative), speaking: „I determine your destiny with favour!“ Meaning, in this minute the king has gotten all the power to rule the land. This is much more of a responsibility than fathering a child and keep the palace personnel running. The king is chief of the administration, legislation, food chains, construction sites and, last not least, the army. Many of a king had been fighting in the front line, the sword of Ishtar in his hands. And all this thanks to the goddess of Love, Fertility, War, Magic and Fate.

Lovely matryoshkas – you'd always think, this must be the last one. Just one last look. There is still the army of lovers. I never found out, what they were doing all the time, or doing at the ceremonies.

As this is wholly up to everyone's fantasy, I might guess that they have been trained in dancing or playing music. That would explain their massive presence. Also, consider this: the duty of the High Priestess, i.e. the sex part in the ceremony, would require some woman not in her



period. So with a big staff, you're at the safe side. Otherwise the fertility rite would miss the point, lose its magic and degenerate to a purely symbolical act (like the Lord's supper in a Protestant church).

Now, I think, you're ready for the hard facts, as being reported by the authorities. The first say has Herodotus, a Greek writer and traveller, some say geographer, some say historian. He lived in the 5th century b.C. in S.W. Minor Asia and later in Italy. Although it is highly debatable, if he has ever been in Babylon, he wrote about the city and its culture and is still appreciated as an excellent expert on the Babylonian society.

The most oftenly quoted story of Herodotus refers to a Babylonian goddess named Mylitta (otherwise not known). In his eyes she is a „Assyrian“ equivalent to Aphrodite (most probably a forerunner of the famous Aphrodite of Greece).

The story goes like this (Herodotus, History, 1,99):

Every woman of Babylonia was obliged to prostitute herself once in her life time, in honor of the Goddess Mylitta. Thus masses of women crowded constantly extra-built pathways around the temple, and masses of men strolled around to pick up a woman after their favour. The women had no choice and had to accept whoever asked her first. The money for the deal went to the temple cashbox.

To round up the story, Herodotus let us know that unattractive women spent four years waiting in the temple places until her religious duty was fulfilled.

This is all somewhat confusing. As to the goddess Mylitta, she might well have originated in Babylonia and have her cults in Assyria, as these countries overlapped in their territories and traditions. That leaves us to search for Mylitta's

temple *somewhere* in Assyria. But there is no way to tell, whether this story relates to conditions contemporary to Herodotus or those of a remote past. The link to Aphrodite makes it even harder to pin the story down to a particular time of history. Both the „Assyrian“ Aphrodite and the Babylonian Mylitta were loved by the Persians, as Herodotus remarks elsewhere. Here we are at least in the Persian era of his time. On the other hand, the „Assyrian“ Aphrodite and her disgusting cults would be different from the Greek Aphrodite and have at least different origins. This is confirmed by Herodotus himself, who states elsewhere that Aphrodite had her first cult in Askalon (in modern Palestine). But all the search for a historical context for this story leads to nothing. Herodotus is not dealing with history. The whole point of the Mylitta/Assyrian Aphrodite story is that of a simple message: the tradition of cultic prostitution has a long history in far remote places. Herodotus' writing is less concerned with facts and understanding than with pictures of the utmost strangeness of different cultures, which deserve disrespect and contempt. Thus he comments himself: „The obligation of Babylonian women is the most disgraceful of all customs of the Babylonians“ (Her., II,61).

As to the prostitution in the streets nearby Mylitta's temple, it looks like a mixture of both ordinary and temple prostitution. What I don't see, is any connection to sex in the cult, though. At the most

I find sex *for* the cult, but definitely no piece of evidence for the „Sacred Marriage“.

I can't help to make you familiar with a modern theory of this special form of sex *for* the cult: Sex for the cult is nothing else than „apotropaic prostitution“, meaning: it's an act of prostitution all right, but religiously motivated, even demanded, to ward off bad luck. Obligatory for every woman who planned to get married. Because this very intention was „against the rules of the goddess of Fertility, which demand that no laws must regulate sexuality“. Take your

time and think about it. There is a law for sexuality that there must be no law for sexuality... (Schmitter, p.17).

(These Assyrians... Either far ahead of their time or simply nuts)

Finally: Babylon.

As an expert traveller-journalist, Herodotus reported with an eye for details of Old Babylon's fauna, architecture of houses, places and temples, including the famous ziggurat of the City-god Marduk .

Modern science, however, criticizes that his report is due rather to fantasy than memory of an eyewitness, as it can't be confirmed archeologically.

Anyway, he presents some important details of the ziggurat's sacred corners.

„On top of the tower“, he tells us, „there is a spacious temple, and inside a richly decorated bed, unusually big, a golden table next to it. No statue is to be seen, and nobody has access to this chamber at night except a chosen native woman. That's what the Chaldean priests of this temple say. They also revealed that the god himself would come to sleep on the bed... This is the same story told by the Egyptians as to what happens in the city of Thebes, where the woman spends the night with Jupiter of Thebes (Amun) all the time“.

Insider information by a Chaldean priest. Fair enough. They were known far and wide as experts in all ritual things. A big bed in a V.I.P. temple-room, a chosen woman, god personally, a twosome night at the top of the tower,... Just as in Egypt!

Hollywood factor: 10. Source evidence factor: thumb down.

Just one more quotation of Herodotus, just to show you his yellow-press-skills:

„All other peoples, except of the Egyptians and the Greek, copulate in the temples of the Gods, and after they had sex they walk unwashed in

the sanctuary, and they believe that humans were just like animals, because it was plain to see that animals and birds also copulate in the temples and the holy groves. Now if the gods found that unpleasant, the animals wouldn't do that at all. But they do it, and that's the reason why people do it, too. That's what I've been told; but I personally don't like it...“¹

Here's the next authority in our matter: Strabo.

Also a Greek historian, 1st. century b.C., he wrote a lot of books,

titled : „Remarks On History“, volume 1 – 43 (most of them gone, though). He was decent enough to admit that he liked a rather journalistic style of writing. That's to his credit, but I will focus on the informations given.

He came up with a story similar like that of Mylitta. Place of action is now somewhere in far away Armenia (no more details). The cult in question belongs to the Persian goddess Anaitis (or Anahita).

The women obliged to prostitution for her cult are the daughters of the Armenians.

As he is the only one who has ever heard of a cult of Anahita in Armenia – no matter which epoch – it looks pretty much like hear-say story -telling in the way of Herodotus serving the need für sensation.


Like Herodotus, Strabo refers to the temple of Thebes in Egypt.

He informs us that the most beautiful and prominent young girls of Thebes were being prostituted for the temple of Amun until they were grown up women. Then they would be married.

If this story of a cultic gang-bang that lasted for years, leaves a bad taste to the listener, it has probably served well the author's intentions.

Another story tells us about the Hellenic seaport Corinthia, once one of the most important and

¹ Herodotus, History 1/99



richest cities of Greece. According to Strabo, there were more than 1000 temple-girls dedicated to Aphrodite's cult. Dedicated seemed to have become a synonym for women engaged in sex in the cult.

1000 temple-girls in a big seaport – I apologize for being cheap, but I can't help thinking of an ancient religiously mantled Reeperbahn. Strabo himself was smart enough to give you only as much as a hint that the dedication to the goddess, sex and alcohol belonged together. He refers to Komana (in Asia Minor / modern Turkey) as a city of softies who used all their estates for wine-growing. By the way, he labelled Komana as „Mini-Corinthia“. Now you can imagine how Corinthia itself must have looked like.

Strabo, who visited Corinthia in 29 B.C., had never been an eyewitness of the scandalous phenomenon: the 1000 temple-girls of Aphrodite were already history to him and meant to illustrate the decadent richness of Aphrodite's temple in the heyday of Corinthia. Apart from Strabo, there is no one else to confirm *sex in the cult* in Corinthia.

Tanja S. Scheer, a specialist in Greek Antiquity, concluded her investigations on that matter: „Sacral sex in the temple's area is inconceivable in Greece“ (Tempelprostitution in Korinth?, 2009, p. 221).

The main reason, which holds both for Greece and Mesopotamia, is the absolute rule of purity for the whole temple area, including equipment and personnel. Even small injuries or skin infections sufficed to be suspended from sacral duty. Excretions of the body were per se considered to be impure. Women menstruating were not allowed to enter the temple. Sex in the temple would be a top sacrilege.

I spare you the contributions of Roman writers and Fathers of the Church, who used the same stereotypes as a stark contrast to their own mo-

ral codes. Suffice to say, that Herodotus and Strabo would have been very proud to see themselves quoted and taken serious for the next 2000 years.

Despite, or because, of the discoveries of the era of modern archeology and progress in science, professors of all faculties seemed to be busy arranging the new facts around old premises and rather confirm than question old authorities.

One thing important for our topic is that we learn about a simple but effective trick which helps transporting and spreading the cliché of *sex in the cult*.

The trick consists in the art of picking up a widely unknown special term, then detach it from its original context and fill it up with a new content suiting to the wanted cliché. Thus you have a fine new technical term, which has an alibi-history and can be used as a keyword to pimp up your theory.

The key-word wearing the coat of a technical term for *sex in the cult*, is „Sacred Marriage“. This is the translation of Greek „*hieròs gamós*“, open to interpretation, if taken out of the original context.

So let's have a look at this. Originally, *hieròs gamós* was the name of a feast day during the long festival called „Marriage of the Gods“. It was the day when Hera and Zeus married. So *hieròs gamós* means, within its original context: „the divine (or holy) wedding day“.

So why then could this term be chosen and misused as a *technicus terminus* for practising sex in the ritual?

We may keep in mind that Herodotus and Strabo suggested real sex in the cult, taking „women's dedication to goddess X“ and „prostitution“ as synonyms. But the new *technicus terminus* „Sacred Marriage“ has been distilled from a context, which has never been even slightly indicated before, because it didn't make sense at all. Marriage, sacred or not, divine or human, has always and foremostly been

a matter of legitimate relations. Thus no point for Herodotus and others.

But the „Sacred Marriage“, taken out of its original context, could work as an unsuspecting term for a suspicious thing: sex as a driving force in religions of morally inferior cultures of the heathen past.

The same trick has been applied to denounce a group of temple women as sex-workers in the temple cult. The chosen term here is „hierodules“, also taken out of the original Greek context. Here it is just the general term for the temple personnel, both male and female. What their job was, exactly, remains unclear, but sex for or sex in the cult would be an absurd assumption. Otherwise the early translators of the old Hebrew texts into Greek (known to us as the Old Testament), would never have used the term *hierodules* for the class of Jewish priest (Levites), who were exclusively male. It would be out of question to speak of 200 hierodules who had been recruited for the new temple in Jerusalem (see Esra 8, 15-20).

Detached from their original context, *hierodules* could now be used as a technical term for any woman or group of women who were reported to be seen in or near a temple. Especially the temple of a goddess and her loathsome cults.

The *qedesh* (a group of cult servants) in Ancient Israel? Supposed to be hierodules, i.e. cult prostitutes. Evidence from the texts: nil. They are mentioned only 8 times in the Old Testament, and from that we only learn: They were dedicated to a divinity, they were both men and women, and only once there is a reference to a specific women's competence, namely „weaving garments for Asherah in the houses of the *qedesh*“.

Even the prophet Hosea, whose favourite word is „whore“ and the „whoring of the Israelites“, mentions the *qedesh* only once.

Notably, it refers to real cult practice, but it's

not sex and whoring which sets him up, it's making offerings together with the *qedesh*.

The whoring of the Israelites is only a metaphor: Jahwe is the patriarch, and his bride (Israel) is fornicating with many lovers (other gods).

As the *qedesh* can be found also in much older Akkadian texts, I would like to open the last chapter, which will focus on some relevant sources from Ancient Mesopotamia.

Here, the *qedesh* are deeply connected with Ishtar and her cults. They were concerned with singing, with purifying rituals and assistance at birth.

There we are, back to where it all began. But now we will not confine ourselves to stories of hearsay. Much better, we have access to the ancient cuneiform inscriptions containing myths, hymns, ritual descriptions, incantations and charmings.

These sources can be filed into shape, for the benefit of the *sex in the cult cliché*, with a new trick in the repertoire: just cut a whole text-passage out of its context and use it to back up your own story.

For example: We have the description of a king's ritual which contains a hymn to the gods. The whole ritual is meant to legitimize the king as the ruler of the land, but the goddess herself, the Queen of the gods, must give her O.K.

Now the hymn which is being recited during the ritual, praises the Queen and the king of the gods in the most erotic pictures and sexual connotations, certainly in the style of perfect poetry.

At the end of the hymn, the goddess proclaims her decision concerning the destiny of the king, still the king of the gods.

Of course, she would determine the king's destiny „with favour“.

It should be clear that the description of a ritual is not the same as the ritual itself. A ritual

description is a schedule for the performers of the ritual. It is concerned with the course of events and the texts which have to be recited. If a hymn was to be recited, it was still a hymn and not a stage direction.

There is no need to assume that the high priestess in person uttered the formula in favour of the king – maybe she did, we simply don't know, as there is not a hint in the text. But it is out of the picture to suggest that she actually would mimic what the goddess did in the hymn, in order to validate her decision. It's nowhere in the text, either.

If we detach the hymn from its context, though, forget about the king's destiny, and take it as a blueprint for real action of the representatives of the divine couple – then we may talk about sex as the crucial part of a religious ceremony.

I would call it, very politely, a deliberate distortion of source material.

As to the human representatives of the divine couple – so badly needed for the *sex in the cult* cliché – there is neither much to gain from the fact that every king called himself „husband“ of the goddess and the woman chief of a temple „wife“ of the Weather god. Wouldn't that be a perfect casting for a „Sacred Marriage“ show?

Bad choice, as there are 18 cases known from the Old Babylonian period telling us that the chief temple-priestess was a daughter or a sister of the king.

Again, it is too easy to jump from „marriage“ to „Sacred Marriage“, no matter, who is involved (humans, gods, or both of them).

Instead, we should try to understand marriage as a commitment, important both to human relations and human-god-relations.

The reason, why the symbolism of marriage has been chosen to describe the human-god-relationship, is not sex (which would somehow overstretch our fantasy). The symbolism of mar-

riage (which you can also find in the bible or in Christian hymns) has been chosen, because it is the clearest metaphor of a legitimate relationship. Only through marriage the rights and obligations of the chief of the house (or the temple) – woman or man – were acknowledged.

The privileged position of both kingdomship and temple institution were legitimized by their relation with the highest goddess, mostly Ishtar, Goddess of the gods, Goddess of sky and earth, Goddess of fate.

That marriage is more than a valid ticket for sex, even for gods, becomes obvious in a Sumerian hymn which deals with the marriage of Enlil (the Sumerian weather god in the shape of a bull) and Ninlil, the „mother“ and Queen of the gods. Here it says:

what the „bull fathered“ and „mother gave birth to“ were the „exalted **me**“, no less than destiny's laws or an order on a higher level, something we might call **wyrd**. It goes on: „The **me** that you can hand out (allot,) produce the certain destiny (lot in life), a matter that cannot be destroyed“.² Apart from Ninlil of Nippur (the religious capital of the Sumerians) the Goddess of Fate is Ishtar.


Now we see what the king's ritual is all about.

It's not about the king and Ishtar, the goddess of Love. It's about the king and Ishtar, the goddess of Fate.

The king, better the would-be-king, needs to meet Ishtar, not because of sex, but because he is part of the fate. If Ishtar were benevolent, he would be responsible for the wealth, the health, and the security of the land. He'd need to trust and rely on her, be indebted to her for the rest of his life.

There is one part in the king's ritual, which

² quoted after Marie-Chr. Ludwig: „Untersuchungen zu den Hymnen des Ischme-Dagan von Isin“, Wiesbaden: 1990



illustrates the sheer power of Ishtar better than words can do. At night-time, a lot of actors, dancers and musicians are engaged in this part to give a spectacular performance.

Out of this group of performers stands a special group of men³, whose outfit and actions seem at first glance mysterious and contradictory. Their garments and hairstyle are typical female, but they brandish swords and knives or clubs, ecstatically dancing in the light of torches.⁴ It is a show of the might and power of the martial Ishtar. How could the force of fate which can change everything in a minute, be demonstrated better than in a wild dance of Ishtar's bravest trans-gender warriors? A dance of life on the edge of doom and death.

All this is expressed in many a hymn or lament in one short sentence:

„She changes the right side to the left, the left side to the right“.

„She changes a man into a woman, a woman into a man“.⁵

„Without you no destiny is determined at all.“⁶

I want to conclude this lecture with a last look on the women of Ishtar. I will focus on one of the many groups in her cult, the *harimtu*, as they were called. What is known about them, counts for the other groups, too.

Far more interesting than what they did⁷, is what they were.

Their special status can be summarized as follows: they were independent, unmarried women or, as the people of Mesopotamia would say: „neither the daughter of a man nor the wife of a man“. Her life and her sexuality were obviously not constricted by the norms of the patriarchal system, as it was the case for wives, mothers and daughters of the male citizens. If she wanted, though, she was free to marry (then her status changed to the one of a wife, and she was no longer a *harimtu*), or to have children,

also as a *harimtu*. Her child would then be a legitimate heir of the father who was also obliged to care for the needs of the *harimtu*. The status of a woman who is in no way dependent of a male authority is reflected in the word *harimtu*, rooted in the Akkadian verb „to separate“.

Does that make her a „prostitute“? The dictionary of Akkadian says: yes. But then dictionaries are the most repetitive books I know. Julia Assante dissents strongly from this on the base of a thorough analysis of every text where the term is attested, concluding that *harimtu* (and the Sumerian equivalent) does not mean prostitute.

Anyway, the leap from „common prostitution“ to „temple prostitution“, is lacking in logic as much as the jump from marriage to „Sacred Marriage“. It's rather telling us about the fantasies and prejudices of those who jump. The cliché of *sex in the cult* could only be so firmly grounded on history, because the reasons to love it were always the same. The main reasons being: ignorance to facts, disrespect and discrimination of strange people and cultures, and sexist attitudes.

This small history of the *sex in the cult* cliché is not so important.

The reasons and patterns behind it, however, are working everywhere clichés substitute reality. That's why asking questions is better than to keep silent.

Akkadian: *assinu* and *kurgarru*

⁴ This part of the ceremony is carried out in the night

⁵ Cf. J. Assante, in: T.S. Scheer (ed.), 2009, p. 46

⁶ Cf. J. Assante, in: T.S. Scheer (ed.), 2009, p. 49

⁷ They are attested in the profession-list of the temple along with the woman doctor, woman barber and woman cook. That doesn't clarify her job, but it shows that her job was legally organized and paid.

(This lecture has been held by Günna Stienecke on July 30/2018 at the IASC in Gerolstein/Germany).

This lecture is based on an article with the same title (published in „Herdfeuer“ Nr. 38 /2014). Below you can find a list of literature that I used.

Assante, Julia: „Bad Girls and Kinky Boys? The Modern Prostituting of Ishtar, Her Clergy and Her Cults“, in: Tanja S. Scheer, 2009

Budin, Stefanie: The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity“, Cambridge:2008

Fleming, D.: „The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar“, Atlanta, 1992

Groneberg, Brigitte R. M.: „Lob der Ishtar: Gebet und Ritual an die altbabylonische Venusgöttin“, Groningen: 1997

Ludwig, Marie-Luise: „Untersuchungen zu den Hymnen des Ischme-Dagan von Isin“, Wiesbaden: 1990

Marsman, Hennie J.: „Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their social and religious position in the context of the Ancient Near East“, Leiden: 2003
v.d. Toorn, K.: „Theology, Priests and Worship in Canaan and Ancient Israel“, in: CANE 3

Scheer, Tanja S. (Hrsg): „Tempelprostitution im Altertum“, Berlin: 2009

Schmitter, Romina: „Prostitution – Das älteste Gewerbe der Welt?“ hrsg. V Bremer Frauenmuseum e.V., Oldenburg: 2007 (2004)

Stark, Christine: „Kultprostitution im AT?“ (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 22 Göttingen, 2006

Yoffee, Norman: „Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of Earliest Cities, States and...“, 2005.

Our New Matronae



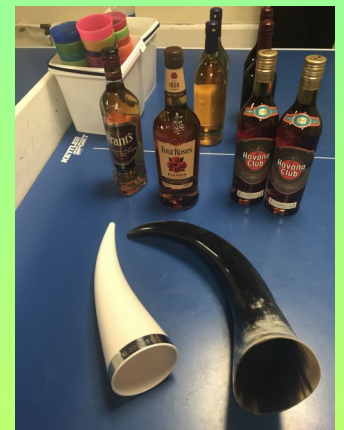
... and Gerolstein welcomed us on Monday





Fun, Frith and Friendship







The Big Wednesday Blot 2018

by Andre Henriques

It was in IASC 2012 in Sandhatten, Germany, that the Big Wednesday Blot was first introduced, and you can read all about it in one of my articles on the post-IASC Herald for that year (<http://www.asatru-summercamp.org/the-herald-archive/>). In 2012 the Wednesday Blot was organised in a very fluid way, finding people closer to one God or Goddess, and inviting them to participate in the blot calling that deity in their own way. It also involved digging three 'wells' from the Earth in the ritual space, with Jorg (Ger) and his beloved Goddess Jord, and having Gunna (Ger) to sing a beautiful song dedicated to Freya.

Nowadays the Wednesday Blot has become a regular feature of IASC, a big ceremony that marks the middle point of the intense IASC week. This time it was coordinated by Miquel (Spain), who wisely scheduled meetings where anyone attending could participate in the blot, as part of the ritual team. There were very interesting discussions on these meetings, in terms of ritual structure, and on the different ways that different people practice their blots and interact with the Gods.

The main theme for this blot was journeys, a mid-week assessment of where each one of us was. We gathered in Gerolstein from all over Europe, and with us we brought our experiences and the ways of our lands, to contribute to the camp. And by the end of the week we would journey to our homes and our communities, taking back many new experiences of the fantastic IASC week to share. Thoughts and memories we brought with us to Gerolstein, and many others will be carried back to our lands, with Woden's day being a fitting day to celebrate that. What follows is an account of how I remember how we celebrated our Wednesday blot


at IASC 2018.

After some last minute runs for people to gather their own drinking vessels, be it their horns or their precious IASC mugs, we were ready to start. Some people also placed amulets and other objects by the IASC pole in the centre of the ritual space, to be blessed during the ritual. We started with an introduction where I explained the theme of the ritual, and some of its structure, so people knew beforehand what to expect, allowing them to follow and experience it more deeply because of that. To bring us all together into a ritual mindset, we did a breathing attunement, feeling the Earth, contemplating the skies, and allowing the awareness that we were in this Midgard, this Middle World, where we can connect with many other realms.

We then raised energy in the ritual space and within ourselves by singing Odin-Vili-Ve nine times. This was a chant I first heard in the 2012 IASC, and that Amanda and I continue to use regularly in our blots in England, both in private groups and in regular public events at Treadwell's bookshop. Below is how I wrote about this chant in the 2012 article covering the Wednesday blot:

"We started by chanting Odin-Vili-Ve, a chant shared by Ingmar (Ger), calling upon the first Gods who structured the cosmos and created us humans, giving us breath, will and a divine spark. Through our breath we chanted, through our will we called, until our spark was burning and all around felt sacred."

We continued to raise energy by doing a rune chant, chanting all the Elder Futhark runes in quick succession, in a pace inspired by a Heilung's song. It was a fantastic suggestion by



Miquel that really worked magic. The giver of runes Himself was surely proud of our efforts!

We then brought forward the mead and juice to be blessed, extremely well crafted mead by Miquel, and apple juice of Idunna's gifts. Mead and juice were blessed with four runes that embodied the intent of the ritual: Eihwaz, Gebo, Wunjo, Raidho. The energy of the runes was magically projected into the drinks, so we could all around our circle partake of this ritual's intent: around Yggdrasil, the tree where Odin hangs, we came to Gerolstein to share and to enjoy, and we'll take all that with us in our journey, back to our lands. Horns and mugs were filled, and we were ready to call the Gods.

First of all, the Goddesses of those lands around Gerolstein, the Matronae Albiahenae, who were so welcoming in our pilgrimages to their sacred sites a couple of days before, were called by Ulrike (Germany):

"(...) All giving Matronae, join our celebration, heil!"

Patricia (US) called the Thunderer, who protected us well from storms forecasted for that day, and Ragna (Ger) called upon Odin:

"Hangatyr, Hroptatyr, (...) Odin, Odin, Odin! Heil!"

Davy (Ned) honoured the Zeeland Goddess Nehalennia, and Gerry (Ned) praised the fire and laughter of Loki. Diego (Spain) recited an alliterative poem in honour of Frey he composed for this ritual, and myself (Port) praised the beauty, art, dance and magic of Freya.

Eyvind (Den) called upon Tyr, and upon the need for righteous sacrifice when it is needed for our communities and loved ones, and Miquel (Spain) honoured the Norns, as we have all come together at that moment, our threads intert-

wining under their blessings.

There was then time for all the other people present to come to the middle of the ritual space, and do their own offerings to the Gods and Goddesses they chose to. Once everyone had their time doing that, we did what is becoming another classic of IASC, the one word symbol. We were around 80 people in this ritual, and it would take ages for everyone to have their own praise or call to the Gods. The one word symbol allows everyone to speak their voice and their hearts at least once in the ritual. The theme of the symbol was the theme of the ritual itself, what was the most important to us from all that had already happened at this IASC that we wished we were taking back in our journeys back to our lands. These words were then mirrored, changed or developed, at the one word symbol at the closing blot of the Summercamp.

Uklrike thanked the Matronae and all the Gods, to close the ritual, and we were ready for the second half of IASC 2018, to make it one more memorable Summercamp. We were very lucky with the weather that Wednesday. We were spared the scorching heat that was prevalent throughout the week, the Gods were truly on our side when we needed them most.

Also attending the Wednesday blot was a reporter for the German radio Deutschlandfunk (DLF), who did a very positive coverage of our Asatru-EU heathenry with his piece 'The circle is open' (Der Kreis ist offen). In a world of media with many sensationalist agendas, Haimo assessed well that this journalist would not distort our voices and what we do. The calls quoted above, from Ulrike and Ragna, can be heard in the programme itself, and other words from some of us can be heard on the links at the end of this article.

Around 80 people on this Wednesday blot circle, over 100 over the week, from 16 different nationalities. Well, it did seem Portugal was not

counted, and we were actually 17 nationalities! But that's ok, as my dual nationality makes me a Brit as well, at least on paper, and that's where I returned to, to share and keep kindling the flame of Asatru. The flame that started burning bright in Denmark in 2009, and continued this year with new inspiration, new ideas, new friends, and the absolute certainty that the threads of Asatru-EU keep growing stronger and stronger, and that the web we are weaving keeps growing longer and longer.

On the day after, Thursday, one of the seers in the seidr rite told me that wherever the next camp will be in 3 years time, we should bring much joy. My instant thoughts were about

Frey, that he would be a strong presence in the next Summercamp. Looking forward to the next journeys in Europe in between, and to that big journey, to IASC 2021, wherever we may roam. Wassail!

Links:

http://podcast-mp3.dradio.de/podcast/2018/08/23/der_kreis_ist_offen_germanisches_neuheidentum_bei_einem_dlf_20180823_0951_84e1a48e.mp3

https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/germanisches-heidentum-der-kreis-ist-offen.886.de.html?dram:article_id=426102

Blot and Ritual







IASC and inclusive heathenry

by John Potts

Every IASC is different, and this year's edition was no different. Of course it was about reuniting with old friends I hadn't seen for more than 3 years, and of course there was much mead and silliness and song and late nights. And then there was the heat, and how glad I was to be sleeping in a tent, with at least some coolness during the night. I won't mention the food, although at least there were potatoes. But the one thing that made this IASC uniquely memorable for me was the big step forward we managed to make on the issue of inclusive asatru.

Per Lundberg got the ball rolling on Sunday, moderating a “creative conversation” exploring what inclusiveness means. For me the main conclusion of that discussion is that to be inclusive requires drawing boundaries; more specifically, boundaries relating to behaviour that I will not accept. As one of the IASC participants eloquently put it: “No one should, in an equal society, be discriminated for something they didn't choose and can't do anything about it. If someone chooses an ideology which makes them discriminating towards people because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, then that is a valid reason to be exclusive towards them.”

That same evening, we were treated to a most interesting lecture on the Matronae, presented by Ulrike Pohl. The Matronae cult puts forward a compelling case for acceptance and inclusivity 1800 years ago. The Ubii, a Germanic tribe, were resettled in the Rhineland by the Romans, and brought with them the worship of the Matronae. As Roman soldiers and civilians settled in the same territory, they took up the worship of these goddesses who had now become “local”, mingling Roman and Germanic traditions in a cult which appears to have welcomed people

from both cultures.

Our introduction to the Matronae was deepened next day: an excursion to two different Cult sites gave us the opportunity to make a personal connection to them; as well as to celebrate a blot in their honour at one of their major cult-sites.

It soon became clear that the topic of inclusive heathenry was at the forefront of many of the IASC participant's minds, and so an impromptu meeting was added to an already well-filled schedule on Wednesday. The original vague idea was to take the thoughts and ideas we had started discussing and developing during FrithForge last year and build further on them. We rounded up all the FrithForge participants we could find, as well as a number of people who hadn't been able to attend or who were very interested in the topic. An intense brainstorming session followed, focussing on the concrete steps we could take to promote an inclusive heathenry. A number of practical suggestions, several relating to communication, were put forward; highlighting the need for us to define a strategy including short-term and long-term goals. We agreed that we would need another session to brainstorm that. Another important conclusion we arrived at was the need to address the issue from a spiritual perspective as well.

This conclusion, rather organically, fed into the preparations for the Seidh-session which was held on Thursday evening. This was a “hjallesittning” (roughly translates as “ledge-sitting”), the focus of which was “lighting the fires of frith, spreading the sparks across the continents and fanning them into flame in the hearts of many; too numerous to extinguish.” Early in the evening Per explained the mechanics of the ritual and our focus for it, followed

by familiarising us with the chant we would be using. As dusk began to fall, the ritual started: standing in a circle we started raising energy by chanting and drumming. We focussed this energy towards the centre where a pair of seidhworkers sat, using this energy to travel into the spirit-world in order to carry out their seidh-work. After quite some time, they had finished their task; these are the images the seidhworkers brought back from their seidhwork.

Seidhperson 1

“A mass of screaming faces, all trying to push themselves in front, as far as the eye can see. Purposefully, so that we can see nothing else.

The energy builds up, and other faces appear in the mass. Some of them are strange, not restricted to just one form. These are well-intentioned spirits. The energy we are directing flows out to them. They make a circle around our fire, and our fire gets connected up to other fires around the world. Here too there are helpful spirits and faces. We direct the energy to these fires and purposefully to these spirits to strengthen them in their tasks. The spirits around the fires stand with their faces turned outwards, both protecting and spreading our values towards the outside. Mind the wolves!”

Seidhperson 2

“Fires burn on the hilltops, in the valleys float horrible oily clouds. The fires can hardly be seen because the clouds hang above them and try to gain the hilltops. Suddenly we cross the sea; here there are only 3 fires still burning, the rest is black oily clouds. Dirty, black, sticking like tar. The clouds shine and glitter on their underside, like false gold, luring people to them until they get caught and trapped in the sticky blackness. The objective of the black clouds is to take things over, to dominate. The energy we send feeds the fires. It sinks into the earth, deeper even than the dwarves, where a sort of dragon resides. The fires must be

connected up to the deep power of the earth. We do this not just for ourselves, but for all the spirit creatures. We need to do this also for them, for the heartbeat of the earth. Our strength lies in the connections between people, but also with the other beings and spiritual creatures. Not just connections between organisations, abstract ideas and concepts, but between people! The connection between individuals is extremely important!”

After the main seidhwork was finished, some of the participants were able to ask personal questions to the seidhworkers and get an oracle in response. Eventually all the questions had been answered, and the seidhworkers returned from their trance. Night had arrived, and our intense seidh session had come to an end.

On Friday, Robert Lewis gave an introductory presentation of ADF, which for most of us was something completely new. Robert then gave us the opportunity to participate in a “typical” ADF ritual, honouring the gods. After a very brief discussion, we agreed to honour one of the gods whose name kept coming up when we talked about inclusivity: Heimdall, the guardian of boundaries. The ritual itself was very interesting, albeit rather more ceremonial than I am used to. One aspect in particular appealed to me: after the offering, we asked for Heimdall's blessing. This we did by drawing the runes; the idea behind this is based on the old practices of taking auguries to confirm if the divinity had accepted the offering. In this case, we ended up drawing 6 runes:



Personally I take these runes as a favourable omen: our efforts to spread the fire of inclusive heathenry (fehu sowulo) have protection (algiz), and there is help available (ehwaz) to stop the spread of nationalist/racist ideas (hagalaz othila).

In the afternoon, we held another fruitful brainstorming session. The outcome of our discussions was a short list of three main goals:

1. Promotion of whole healthy respectful society, build a heathen community which people feel safe going to. This covers also providing better community support and improving community feeling
2. Raising internal awareness of inclusivity amongst members of our organisations. We also need to make clear what inclusivity means, and raise awareness about dog-whistles
3. Becoming the go-to reference source for all things heathen related (this includes increasing visibility, and increasing prominence)
4. Make use of different media (video, art, cultural events...) to get our message out to the wider community: not all heathens are far-right or neo-nazis.
5. Organise and participate in pagan events, festivals
6. Become more visible and prominent than

all non-inclusive groups, ensuring our inclusive group of heathen organisations is highly visible and becomes the reference for heathenry/asatru.

7. Increase availability and visibility on different platforms, especially different social media... we must be easily findable. We need to define a list of social media we want to be a part of.

8. Be clearer to the outside world that we are inclusive. Shout it out!

Another topic that was discussed was the target groups – who are we aiming our message at? This will drive our communication strategy. One aspect in particular was highlighted: we need to communicate our thoughts and ideas about inclusive heathenry to the broader pagan/heathen community.

Of course, just holding brainstorming sessions doesn't get things done; so some volunteers got together and initiated a media project. Short statements about inclusive heathenry from various participants were filmed, and will be put together to produce a snappy video clip.

A lot of time, energy and constructive efforts went into making this IASC a success, on many fronts. But perhaps the most important thing we achieved at this IASC was meeting each other again face-to-face, strengthening the bonds between ourselves, cementing existing friendships and forging new relationships.

Greeting the elements

Dolly vd Berg

With the earth in my bones, I greet.
With the water in my blood, I greet.
With the air in my breath, I greet.
With the fire in my heart, I greet.



Things to do



Asatru-EU Network



Het Rad
Netherlands



De 9 Werelden
Netherlands



Asatru UK
United Kingdom



Les Enfants d'Yggdrasill
France



Forn Sed Sverige
Sweden



Verein für Germanisches Heidentum
Germany



Nordisk Tingsfællig
Denmark

The Kith of the Tree and the Well

United Kingdom



Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost
Norway



Eldaring
Germany



Clan Ostara
France



Gotland Forn Sed
Spain



Asatru Polska
Poland



Asatru Schweiz
Switzerland