Spellstow: Tidings of the Winland Rice

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With this issue, we begin our second year of *Spellstów*. Over the past year, what began as a newsletter for the Ealdrice Háliggyld quickly grew into the official periodical of the renewed Winland Rice – the Rice’s first since *THEOD Magazine* ceased print in 2003. In doing so, *Spellstów* doubled in size as it began to receive submissions from not only the Ealdrice but from Géring, Hræfnscír, and Æppeldor as well. It was a very good first year.

Since our *Blótmónaþ* issue, things have been busy within the Winland Rice. Before *Géoltid* began, our good Cyning named me as Regent (OE: *Healdend*) of the Rice. The *Witenagemót* met twice and, over the past few months, fainings and sundry other gatherings were held at the halls of Æppeldor, Hræfnscír, and Whitthenge. Moreover, Gárman Cyning, Ælfric Þegn, and I have all been working on new books which will soon see print. It was a wealful *winter*. May our *lencten* be so lucky.

In this issue the reader will find articles by Gárman Lord, Ælfric Þegn, Friðoríc of Æppeldor, Wuducind Gilda, and myself. Each are well worth reading. Gárman Lord’s “Significance and Sacral Kingship,” though short, is truly outstanding for the insights that it affords into understanding both the nature of the gods and sacral kingship. Moreover, Hróðbeorht Leornere’s interview with Dan Capp of the musical project Wolcensmen is a must-read as well.

Godspeed,

Þórbeorht, Ealdorblótere Ealdrices
Whitthenge Heall, 2 Solmónaþ 2020
Abanning

Blovmonaþ

Be it known unto all that, nigh the full moon of Blovmonaþ, a faining of the Ealdrice was held at Whitthenge Heall to give worship to Wuldor that we might have his help in the harsh winter ahead. Thereafter the Mummers Play known as the Derby Tup was offered as a láć.

Furtheremore, Æppeldor Friðstów gathered in Tasmania, Australia to mark their Bældæg, that being “May Day” in Northern Middangeard or Beltane as it is known amongst the Celts.
Be it known unto all that, two nights before the Winter Sunstead, Gárman Hláford Cyning set Þórbeorht Ealdorblótere as Regent of the Winland Ríce, abanning it thus:

To All Men be it Known by These Presents:
That, On A Probationary Basis, for However Long It Shall Please Us,
It Is Our Pleasure to set Þórbeorht Ealdorblótere to the Regency of the Winland Ríce,
According to Such Terms As Have Been Understood In Concert With Milord Ælfric Avery,
The Same Being Hereby set by Ourself to be High Wita of the King’s Witan,
Meant as well to be Advisor to the Regent in Such Capacity,
As Helpen Therein by Ethelwynn of Ealdríce héo Hlæfdige
In Our Hope that the Gods shall Friend ly Overlook Upon These New and Needful Arrangements,
Done Upon This Day of December 19, 2019,
As Indight Over Our Hand, Gárman Hláford Cyning of the Winland Ríce of Þéodisc Geléafa
In Hope of a Glæd Géoltyd and wealthy New Year to us all.

Be it known unto all that, on the eve of the Winter Sunstead, that being Módraníht, Þórbeorht, Ealdorblótere abanned the Géol Grið thus:

We abann that the grith of our lord the king be well kept and held by night and by day. Also that all kind of whores, thieves, dice-players, and all other unthrifty folk be welcome to the town, whether they come late or early, at the worship of the high holytide of Yoole, till the twelve days be ended.
Furthermore, the Ealdrice’s guildsmen gathered at Whitthenge Heall to fain the Módru and hold symbel and that at this gathering the Ealdrice’s “poor old hooden horse” was first shown to the folk and given his name, Grim Harold.

Furthermore, on the day of the Winter Sunstead, the folc of Hræfnscír Heall gathered in British Columbia, Canada to fain the gods and to begin twelve days Géoltíd merriment.

Furthermore, Æppeldor Friðstów gathered in Tasmania, Australia to mark their Midsummer.

Æftera Géol

Be it known unto all that, upon the XIIth night Géoltíd, a faining of the Ealdrice was held at Whitthenge Heall to worship Edunne, to wassail both the apple orchards and neighboring goodfolk, to perform a Mummers Play, and to offer the lác of the “poor old hooden horse.”
Sacral kingship is central to the whole heathen dynamic, which is "graceless" and essentially transactional. The true nature of the gods is unknown to us mortals, because it involves life experiences that are only partially intelligible to us. When I once asked Wóden what the gods are "made of," he said "significance." The only way he could explain it to me was that "significance" is the same thing as poetry is made of, the thing that is not knowable in the words within the lines, but is the wordless something which gives you the creeps by the meanings it lays down between the lines. That's why it is said, in perhaps a metaphorical way, that the native tongue of the gods is poetry, that the gods always speak in poetry. And whatever mythology and old wives' tales may say, the gods did not make the universe and everything that is, etc., matters more appropriately explored by cosmologists. What the gods are is a byproduct of the making of the universe, i.e. the implied "significance" that first worked to resolve primordial chaos into primordial order. If one must be metaphorical, call it the licking of Audhumbla out of the primordial ice or something. In a manner of speaking, the gods are latent in all that bespeaks order and purpose, artificial things to be sure, but also what distinguishes man from dumb beast. That is essentially the deeper meaning behind the Three Wynns. Each of us is born a pile of raw ore; our only "significance" being whatever laws the Wyrds laid in the Well for us at our conceiving. Once our souls are bespoken into us at birth by our kin, it becomes up to us as individuals to go on and use life's trials to forge our significance out of the raw ore and shape our meaning into dooms that men remember us by once we're dead. However, we are not all born equal by any means. Not only can only some of us produce, let us say, "significant" poetry, but none of us could ever survive for long in the stratospherically rarified atmosphere of "significance" that is the very stuff of the gods. Similarly, when summoned down among us, the gods are greatly chafed and sullied to have to spend much time in the world we call home, which is why the grounds, the company and the business with them must be carefully sacralized for each occasion.
Significance, then, is what draws order, or worth, out of primordial chaos, but that doesn’t mean that primordial chaos is ever used up or goes away. Indeed, it is ever with us, as the female principle, out of which worth must be constantly formed and re-formed, healed, refreshed and formed anew as use and abuse wear it away, and all our manifestations constantly threaten to lapse back into primordial chaos. It's the eternal dynamic, which we, with some help from the mysteries and uses of our religion, can only hope to partially understand. Meanwhile, so long as "significance" lives or is implied in the fabric of things, the gods are always potentially there. What happens is that men naturally form tribes, the tribes evolve into ever greater spiritual significance and sophistication, and when the tribe is ready their gods appear. Those with the gifts learn by experience how to deal with the gods, and how the gods transactionally linked to them come to ward their luck. Luck itself is in fact nothing more than personal significance made manifest. However, the gods can’t transact with every individual in the tribe without things getting pretty crossed up along the way; there have to be some arrangements made. By preference, the gods will say, “Let us deal with one man among you whom you will have chosen to represent the body of you. Pick whatever one among you whom you trust the most, raise him on the shield, and let your luck with us rise or fall with him.”
Yeaptidely Lope

On Solmónah, Pancakes, and Ploughs by Þórbeorht Ealdoplotene

This article was first published as a blog on the Ealdrice’s old Wordpress blog on the 25th of January 2018. It is our hope that the readers of Spellstów will find something in it to further their own worship.

Amid the Lenten traditions of the English, there may be found threads of yore-old heathen thew that were Christened long ago by the early Anglo-Saxon church. Indeed, such heathenish customs abide to this very day, though few who hold to them know from whence the roots of such rites spring. Foremost amongst these folkways may be reckoned of those of the sun and plough which once belonged to the Anglo-Saxon month of Solmónah (more or less February). Of Solmónah and the heathen worship which followed, Béda wrote that: “Sun-month may be said to be the “month of flat cakes,” which they, in that month, gave to their gods.” Such “flat cakes” betokened the sun itself whose again-faring drew out the day and so betokened the beginning of Lencten, “Lengthening, Lent.”

As a holy housel shared between gods and men, such flat sun-shaped cakes, or as we might now call them, pancakes, were partaken of in great fulsomeness at this time. As sundry Shrovetide traditions show, well into the early Modern Era did Englishmen fatten themselves with such pancakes so as to make ready for the leanness of Lencten. As betold by John Brand amid the leafs of his great gathering of English oldenways, Observations on The popular Antiquities of Great Britain (1777 CE):

\[1\] The English here betokens the nowtidely offspring of the Anglo-Saxons as they may found throughout the “Anglosphere” so as to include Anglo-Americans, Australians, Anglo-Canadians, Rhodesians, and such.

\[2\] Sol-monath dicit potest mensis placentarum, quas in eo dis suis offerebant. Taken from De Temporum Ratione (725 CE), De mensibus Anglorum. Wended from Latin by Þórbeorht.
“At Hoddesdon, in Hertfordshire, the old curfew bell [...] has from time immemorial been regularly rung on the morning of Shrove Tuesday, at four o’clock, after which hour the inhabitants are at liberty to make and eat pancakes, until the bell rings at eight o’clock at night. This custom is observed so closely, that after that hour not a pancake remains in the town.”

Here, alongside the heathenish partaking of pancakes, we find another oldenway held until nowtidely time by the English which has seemingly sprung from the Anglo-Saxon Solmónah. As betold by Brand, Plough Monday, now held on the Monday following Epiphany, once fell nearer to Lent.

“In the North of England there is a custom used at or about this time, which, as will be seen, was ancienyly observed also in the beginning of Lent. The Fool Plough goes about, a pageant that consists of a number of sword-dancers dragging a plough with music, and one, sometimes two, in very strange attire; the Bessy, in the grotesque habit of an old woman, and the Fool, almost covered with skins, a hairy cap on, and the tail of some animal hanging from his back.”
In so unseemly a rite as this, we may find some small remembrance of the heathenish \textit{Æcer Bót}, the “Acre Remedy” of the 10\textsuperscript{th} \textit{hundr}ed\textsuperscript{tide}. Within the \textit{Æcer Bót} itself, the holy-bedding\textsuperscript{3} of a heavenly \textit{drighten} and an earth goddess is recalled so that she might, by his plough and her plowing, be filled with his seed and bring forth the harvest from her bosom. As \textbf{forespelled} by that fore-old spell:

\begin{quote}
“Then have a man drive the plough forth and the first furrow open, quoth then:
‘Hale be thou fold (earth), mother of men!
Be thou growing in god’s fathom (embrace),
filled [with] fodder for the use of men.”
\end{quote}

Indeed, it is in this very spell that the Lenten traditions of the pancake housel and the plough’s \textbf{begoing} are seen together, having first arisen from the same rite. As forthwith follows in the \textit{Æcer Bót}:

\begin{quote}
“Take then each kind of meal and have a man bake a loaf as broad as the inside of the hand and kneed it mid (with) milk and mid holy-water and lay it under the first furrow. Quoth then:
‘Fodder’s full acre for mankind
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3}Known in Greco-Roman religion as a \textit{hieros gamos}, “sacred marriage.”

\textsuperscript{4}þonne man þá sulh forð drífe and þá forman furh onscéote, cweð þonne:
\begin{quote}
Hál wes þú, folde, fíra módor!
Béo þú growende on godes ſeſme,
fódre gefylled firum tó nyffe.
\end{quote}
Wended from Old English by Þórbœorht.
bright-blooming, thou blessed and worthy;
[May] the god, that wrought the grounds grant us growing gift,
that for us every corn-grain may come to use.”

As may be reckoned by the lore-wise, the sun-cake sown by the heavenly drighten into the womb of the rime-cold earth goddess may well fit the Nordic godlore of Fréa’s (ON: Freyr) wedding of the white-armed goddess Geard (ON: Gerdr). In such a way the plough betokens Fréa’s mickle manliness even as the furrowed mound betokens Geard’s waiting womanliness. And so, when Englishmen play about the plough after Epiphany or partake of pancakes at the beginning of Lencen, they do so, knowingly or not, in keeping with a yore-old heathen thew sown long ago. Yet, among those who follow the Anglo-Saxon Théodish Belief of the Ealdríce, such oldenways they remember with advantages, knowing full well as they do that, in such merriment, they fain the wedding of a sun god and an earth goddess, in the hope that such a holy bedding will bring forth a fulsome harvest - even as their fore-elders once did.

**Anglish Wordhoard**

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<td>Beogoing – Procession</td>
<td>Housel – To feast, from the OE “Húsel,” and a word which until lately was used for the Eucharist amongst High Church Anglicans</td>
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<td>Betell – Describe</td>
<td>Hundreldtide – Century</td>
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<td>Drighten – Lord</td>
<td>Leaf – Page</td>
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<td>Fain – celebrate</td>
<td>Oldenway – Tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folkway –Custom</td>
<td>Thew – Tradition, custom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fore-elders – Ancestors</td>
<td>Fulsome – abundant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fore-spell – Prescribe</td>
<td>Yore-old – Ancient</td>
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*Nim þonne ælces cynnes melo and ábacæ man innewerdre banda brádnæ bláf and gecned bine mid meolce and mid báligweere and lege under þá forman furh. Cweþe þonne:

Ful aecr fódres fira cinne,
bearthblówende, þú gebléted weorþ
sé god, sé þas grundas geworbte, geunne ús grówende gifse,
þet ús corna gehwylc cume tó nyte.

Wended from Old English by Þórbeorht.

5This is not to say that Ing-Fréa is “the” sun god nor is it to say that Geard is “the” earth goddess” of Germanic godlore. Indeed, there are sundry gods who might be called “sky gods” and sundry goddesses who might be called “earth goddesses” in our lore. Yet, in the rite betold in the Æcer Bót, Fréa and his wife seem most fitting.
The celebration of Yule is of great significance at Hræfnscír. We recognize that Yule was perhaps the most important yearly celebration of our Germanic heathen ancestors. While Yule is not always found in a recognizable form in Indo-European cultures other than the Germanic, some version of this holy tide and 12 nights of Yule can indeed be found in other Indo-European cultures, even distant and ancient ones like the Vedic, which shows that Yuletide is an extremely ancient Indo-European celebration. As it was to them, so it is to us.

Beyond the ancient importance of the festival, there are some more immediate and personal reasons why Yuletide is so important to us. Hræfnscír is in BC, Canada at a latitude comparable to northern Germany. We have what many in other locations would consider to be severe winters, even though they seem pretty normal to us. This year we have had quite a lot of snow. As I write this there is at least a couple feet of snow on the ground in most places and three feet or more in others. Plowed snow is piled many feet high on the sides of the roads; many road signs are not currently visible. We are just now getting through a cold snap where it was around -13 F for some days.

Fortunately we live in a little banana belt; areas only 15 minutes away from us got temperatures of around -31 and many more feet of snow than we did here. As such, everything "winter" is very important and relevant to us, not least of all the Yuletide celebration. The other reason Yuletide is so important here is simply because we love it; Yule is our favorite time of the year. We are Northerners, and in many ways the spirit of the northern winter defines us. We look forward to Yule every year, and spare no effort in Yuletide decorations and treats, most of which are home-made.
We observed the Grith as abanned by the Ealdrice on December 20, and thus began our festivities. Yuletide at Hræfnscír was a time of faining, feasting and general merrymaking. It really begins when we go hunting for the Yule tree, which we do on the property as we have a variety of our own trees, including uncountable fir saplings. Our faining was done indoors on December 21st, as the weather was too poor then to fain outdoors. Our bread offering was made into the hearth-fire, but the ale offering was taken outside and poured on the hearth, which is in the center of a holy field where we regularly hold our outdoor fainings when weather permits. Our Yuletide activities extended through the entire 12 days of Yule. We burned a Yule log, left an offering of porridge with butter for our ancestral wight and made an offering of a plate of food from the Yule feast with three knives set out for the three Mothers (an 8th century German custom). Another custom we have adopted at the behest of the Lady of Hræfnscír, is the making and burning of an effigy of the old year on the Twelfthnight. This is an old heathenish custom which has survived in South America, perhaps brought there by the Germans from whom our Lady is descended. The effigy is made from straw or hay and old clothes, and then burned. All present take turns jumping over the burning effigy of the old year. If that isn't an old heathen practice, I don't know what is.

The twelve nights of Yule, as a time of forced rest and recreation for otherwise very busy people, afforded us the leisure to engage in several interesting projects. This is as it should be: Yule, though connected to the solar event of the solstice, was otherwise almost entirely defined by its seasonal place in the agricultural cycle. The hardest work of the year was in the fall and early winter, as the folk worked long hours to bring in the grain harvest as well as all other food items which each become ripe and ready for harvesting at their own special times. Livestock which could not be overwintered were slaughtered, and a great deal of work went into food preservation for the winter. When all of this was done, the folk took a much-needed break at Yule, which lasted anywhere from days to weeks depending on the time and place. During this time, feasting and socializing were the most common activities. When winter comes to an end and the ground begins to thaw, the hard work of plowing and planting will begin, so best to rest during the midwinter time, in tune with the natural cycle of the year, while there is the chance!
In my own period of rest this Yule, I ended up finding some resources on heathen Yule customs that survived the heathen period. This has given us many great ideas for further old Yule customs to implement here in years to come. For me, the twelve nights of Yule are traditionally also the time to work on calendar development. It has become so because it is during this time that I tend to get insights on the nature and qualities of heathen calendars. This year, I have developed a new runic calendar for Hræfnscír to mark our holy tides. The calendar is traditional in most ways, but innovative in some. It is a perpetual calendar that gives all necessary dates of faining times, both solar and lunar, for an entire Metonic cycle of 19 years. It can be correlated to the Gregorian calendar but is not in any way dependent on it. I also used my free time at Yule to record three new gealdors for my next album, as well as to shape new wéohas of Neorde, Fréo, and Scyld, and an oath ring for Hræfnscír.

In addition, the editing of my latest book, The Elder Trow Volume I: Germanic Heathen Social Structure and Group Organization is now complete and will be available very soon. This was a somewhat difficult book to write, as it tackles the hard question of what has gone wrong in heathenry over the last four decades and proposes some solutions. It is my hope that this book will be of help in taking heathenry to the next level. Now I have begun work on The Elder Trow Volume II, which is a comprehensive study of ancient heathen blót and faining. Instead of being presented in an academic or theoretical way as is often done by both scholars and heathens alike, The Elder Trow Volume II is structured as a practical guide which is intended to help heathens implement the practice of authentic ancient rituals.

All in all, Yuletide at Hræfnscír was both an enjoyable and productive time. We at Hræfnscír wish the readers of Spellstów blessings of the gods, prosperity and happiness for the new year!
"The universe, the Northern Path, the true folk religion, is not at all a journey into the ‘self,’ that idea in itself is magical, a reification, and a mere romantic palliative, not a cure. The true ‘journey’ is not into the self at all, but its opposite; community.” — Garman Lord

Since time immemorial ethnic and social groups have developed their own cultural aesthetic. They have done so as a matter of natural pride, for easy identification, and as part of the cultivation of corporate identity. Folk dress is part of the fabric of culture and is particularly pronounced, developed, and refined amongst indigenous, tribal, and rural village groups the world over. The sheer multitude, variety, and simple fertile strangeness of traditional costume dazzles the eye. Embodying multiple layers of meaning, including spiritual, magical, and political, folk dress communicates identity and worldview and has the potential to foster a profound sense of belonging within a group. As such, it has great utility in the construction and renewal of Heathen community.

Folk dress is popularly understood to refer to the traditional dress worn by people outside urban areas. Peasant, ethnic, rural, and regional dress are common alternative labels that refer to the same

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thing. The term “national dress” also captures a similar meaning and for the purposes of this article “folk dress” also refers to tribal livery. Naturally, it also extends to include jewelry, cosmetics, tattoos, hair styling, and so forth.

According to Bryan Turner, “the body is an important surface on which marks of social status, family position, tribal affiliation, gender, and religious condition can easily and publicly be displayed.” Beliefs about the magico-religious and symbolic function of substances worn on the body may be as old as mankind itself. The manipulation of textiles and metals expanded the provenance of such cosmetic amulets. Anthropologists have noted that in traditional societies folk dress is thought to embody protective powers and to ensure fertility.

**Folk Dress and Historical Heathenry**

Examples of folk dress from Europe’s cultural past seem to speak to our yearning for the small, homogeneous tribal societies that flourished before Christianity – societies in which every aspect of life was integrated into a holistic system of community, nature, and cyclic time. Historian of religion James C. Russell has noted the vitality of indigenous Germanic religiosity at the time of “conversion” and the fact that our Germanic ancestors enjoyed a very high level of group solidarity, due in part to the homogeneous and rural nature of Heathen society at the time. Folk dress in Germanic antiquity would have eloquently expressed this group solidarity at the tribal level.

Indeed, folk dress would have not only been an expression of social solidarity; as a kind of dramatic cultural adornment it would have played an active, integrative role in Heathen society, helping to establish and reinforce the living sense of defined custom and received tradition that structured the *innangarth*. Fellow Théodish author Shane Ricks has highlighted the fact that cult and identity in the world of the Germanic Heathens was fundamentally performative and integrative, expressing a dynamic play between the actors involved, the location where ritual or other cultural enactment took place, and the history informing the participants. In an insightful article in the Heathen Reconstructionist journal *Óðrœrir* he writes:

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9 Welters 3.
10 Welters 6.
11 Welters 1.
“Traditional custom dictated the proper expression of obligations towards three fundamental objects in the life of Germanic Heathens: their people, their land, and their gods. Maintaining these proven traditions was the foundation of Germanic society. The particular characteristics defining the expression of these obligations and categories of reciprocity delineated the hierarchy of identities or in-groups in which the individual held membership. Some common methods of displaying different social identities in pre-Christian and conversion-era Germanic Europe included food, dress, and facial hair, law and ancestral land, and language and religion.”

Historian Barbara Yorke, specializing in the early medieval period, argues that there is considerable archaeological evidence that the different peoples of Britain did dress differently and that “there is wider evidence from medieval Europe for variation in hairstyles and facial hair as ethnic markers.” Even Tacitus describes several folk customs around hair grooming, as well as their significance within the ancient tribal setting!

Folk dress in traditional Germanic society thus both contributed to and expressed Heathen group solidarity because it helped to signify and define the tribal peer group. Traditional costume can even facilitate the relationship between the tribal group and the localized natural world into which it is woven. Heathen folk dress is indelibly linked in its historical expression to a conception of Heathenism as a tribal religion.

**Folk Dress and Contemporary Heathenry**

Within contemporary Heathenry the most articulate and sustained advocacy for Heathen tribalism has emerged out of Théodish Belief. In Old English the word *Théod* simply means “tribe.” Founded by Garman Lord in 1976, Théodish Belief emphasizes a reconstructive and approach to Germanic Heathenism, the purpose of which is to not only “rediscover the real ‘Old Religion’ [but] inevitably the long-forgotten folkways as well, of their ancient English ancestors.” As keeping with this, Théodish society has typically taken the shape of a “théod” or tribe. It is important to note the significant difference between an anthropological and a merely colloquial use of the word “tribe” in

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both Heathen and popular parlance. In a Théodish context the meaning of the word “tribe” is highly specific.

In an article concerning the relationship between Heathenry and tribalism, Gárman Lord, the founder of Théodish Belief, further articulates the importance of folk dress to tribal group solidarity:

“What is sometimes not appreciated is that there is a biological limit that nature imposes upon the size of any human peer group; one that Anthropologists refer to as a ‘magic number.’ In order to achieve peer-identity, we need to be able to effortlessly and efficiently recognize and identify who our peers are, and nature imposes a limit of about five hundred on the number of face-recognition imprints that the average human brain can store and process...Even a tribe, however, may swell to higher numbers than (500), whereupon they will spontaneously start evolving adjustment mechanisms that are an expression of the tribal social dynamic...One of the most important such mechanisms is of course tribal livery. For tribesmen, it is generally not enough that they all look pretty much alike; they will affect a distinctive tribal dress and style that makes them look even more alike. Even a tribe that normally goes about naked will at least affect traditional tattoo patterns, hair styles or body paint. Obviously a socially efficient society is a healthy happy society, but there is an even more vital function of tribal livery that ought not to be discarded; namely, the case of a tribe which may go over a population of five hundred individuals. In such case, since no one man could expect to recognize every member of the tribe, the right tribal livery tells every tribesman what he really needs to know day-to-day; namely that even if we may not know exactly who he is, we know at least that he is somebody who belongs here.”

One function of Heathen Tribalism is that different Théods (tribes) can develop very specific and highly differentiated thew (custom), due in part to the inherent local and ethno-centric nature of the tribal model. Thus law, custom, belief, and practice may differ significantly between tribes and between Heathen Tribalism itself and the wider Heathen community. One significant expression of this organic differentiation that awaits further development and refinement is tribal livery or folk dress.

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For those inclined to wear Heathen folk dress the main model of inspiration for a revived folk aesthetic is of course the clothing of Germanic antiquity. In some ways this is quite natural because the early Middle Ages represents the time when we, as a folk, were last loyal to the gods of our fathers and enjoyed real Heathen cultural integrity. The early Middle Ages seem to provide models of cultural continuity and integration, paralleling that of other Indigenous peoples who take such obvious pride in their respective national dress styles.

There is however a significant difference between we Heathens and many other peoples who share an orientation toward tradition and who claim an indigenous identity: the forced imposition of feudalistic Christianity on our European ancestors means that we have been long since severed from the organic totality of our original Heathen culture. We simply do not enjoy as much continuity of custom and Heathen folk dress; indeed, the whole neo-Heathen enterprise can appear contrived or artificial, even “invented.” These are challenges to which I will return.

We live in a non-traditional, de-tribalized society. Modernity has forced a heightened level of self-consciousness and reflexivity upon us and this forces us to consciously reclaim and evolve, perhaps “invent,” workable cultural traditions. Folk dress has such ample potential for the development and renewal of European cultural identity, as the history of national dress attests, but it brings with it these issues of cultural agency, authenticity, invention, and tradition.

An instructive example of the successful navigation between the reinvention of national folk dress and revived Heathenism comes from Eastern Europe. There, a search for a deeper understanding of ancient Baltic religion has given birth to the “Pagan” style of folk dress, which is based loosely on archaeological findings. Describing this type of folk dress, folklorist Ruta Saliklis writes:

“[Neo-Pagan folk costume] was by nature more stylized and impressionistic, being based on very scanty archaeological evidence. I was told that it was more “Lithuanian” because, in the words of one proponent, it reflected the only true Lithuanian religion. The display of creativity allowed the makers to get in touch with a more “archaic

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truth.” A wide variety of interpretations was evidenced, and the overlay of what the adherents believe to be ancient religious elements on the “reinvented” costume worn by folklore ensemble members was common...”20

As this passage shows, the reinvention of Lithuanian national dress in Pagan terms itself occurred within the context of earlier such reinventions, themselves negotiated and evolving, rather than emerging unchanged out of the primordial past.

In point of fact many of the most singular and inspiring ‘traditional’ costumes, including those of Wales, Scotland, and the Scandinavian countries, were self-consciously re-interpreted, if not outright invented, by an educated urban middle class in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This does not make them any less authentic or overly proscriptive or indeed any less traditional. They all build on past models and are a worthy expression of the aesthetic will of the nation, at least after they catch on and attain popularity. Imagine Scotland without the kilt? I wouldn’t want to.

It follows that if, in constructing a neo-tribal Heathen aesthetic, we rely exclusively on historical Germanic models, we are in danger of not developing the full cultural potential of folk dress. A relentless focus on “accurate” material representation can lead, as it has done within the re-enactment community and amongst the arbiters of national folk costume “authenticity,” to a lack of differentiation born of the relative paucity of historical examples available to us from the past.

Inter-tribal, regional, and historical differences, even personal idiosyncrasies – for which there must always be a place – are obscured, because they cannot be recovered from the historical record. Much of the dynamism of traditional clothing comes from its localism and its organic, evolving nature. In the remnants of the past we may find, inherit, or develop more coherent visual imagery but that does not mean that symbolic meaning is fixed or immutable. Pattern, meaning, and belief can and do alter with changing circumstances and can change to meet emerging needs or new ideas.

Heathenry is undoubtedly enjoying a period of cultural and religious renewal. And yet, as some Théodish commentators have noted, Heathenry today is often still a culturally “thin” phenomenon and tends to lack the variation in cult, ritual, and aesthetic that one might expect.21 The development of historically informed but nonetheless localized and evolving folk dress offers a wonderful opportunity for building a richer tribal community. Each Théod, each group, must itself be the

20 Saliklis 222.
21 Ricks 27.
ultimate arbiter on questions of authenticity, as its members undergo their own ethno-genesis and develop unique traditions.

A Stitch in Time: Does Heathenry Really Need a Folk Dress Repertoire?

“Théodism has never been play-acting and isn’t anything like the SCA.” - Garman Lord

Despite the arguments I have advanced, the question of folk dress typically divides opinion amongst modern Heathens. As it turns out there are very good reasons for the strong ambivalence some Heathens feel toward 'costume' of any kind. That is why I have decided to preference the word “dress” over “costume” in this article, because they do not necessarily mean the same thing. I agree with folklorist Linda Welters emphasis when she writes that “Dress is preferred to costume because the latter evokes images of Halloween costumes, theatrical or stage costumes, or historical ensembles.”

The propensity of some Heathens to wear “Viking” clothing to ritual events is well known. In addition to the integrative function of adornment already noted, the inclination to “dress up” ostensibly expresses a desire to engage with heritage, to honour ancestral culture, and even to facilitate a change of consciousness during ritual, signifying the transition from a profane to a sacred state. Furthermore, many mainstream religions make good use of archaic ceremonial clothing without inviting ridicule.

On the negative side, sublimated within Heathen culture there are often less edifying reasons for wearing costume that have to with the modern propensity for play acting and a tendency to emphasize form over substance. Seen in this light, dressing up in historical garb brings Heathenry perilously close to medieval re-enactment and it is certainly true that many Heathens are all too enamored of the Viking cliché, to such an extent that they reify the ancient past, substituting fantasy for reality.

Some Heathens have also objected to the use of ritual clothing because they would like to see Heathenry become a more mainstream religious option and outlandish costumes are perceived as too counter-cultural.

I would like to suggest that a more nuanced and selective approach to Heathen-inspired clothing may emerge if we tackle the central issue at stake: the question of authenticity. Let us address what I have come to think of as “the problem of medieval re-enactment.” Doubtless I and many other Heathens

23 Welters 3.
have gravitated toward historical re-enactment in quest of our own cultural heritage. Some of us have even discovered Heathenry for the first time in such a setting. Modern secular society leaves few other avenues open to us to engage with our Heathen heritage, especially when we are just beginning our journey. Often our spiritual impulse is sublimated within a fascination for the genre of fantasy, or arcane music, or with the occult as presented in popular culture. Often these genres are soaked in a Northern European mythos and aesthetic.

Naturally, problems occur when Heathens are unable to differentiate between Medieval re-enactment or role play and the practice of a living religion with ancient, albeit revived, antecedents. This confusion of categories is sadly all too common in some circles and can lead to an emphasis on superficial outer forms at the expense of deeper personal and communal engagement with Heathen tradition.

Yet if the outer forms are frequently shallow or escapist, they nevertheless represent an urgent, if unrefined, need: a cultural desire for self-determined authenticity, that very same impulse which led to the Germanic Revival in the first place. If the objection to Heathen folk dress is based on a rejection of the shallowness that can plague historical re-enactment and its ilk, I would argue that this very shallowness underscores the need for Heathen folk dress as significant vehicle of cultural identity and pride, just as it is for other ethnically self-conscious peoples who emphasize the importance of tradition.

What then constitutes “authentic” Heathen folk dress? I would suggest that there is a qualitative difference between cultural re-enactment and cultural enactment proper. When the Maori of New Zealand perform a *haka* they do so in the traditional livery of their ancestors, yet they are *enacting* their culture, not *re*-enacting it. This is because their tribal livery is but one part of a greater whole; it is situated within the organic totality that is the tribal organism, which encompasses simultaneously their law, customs, social mores, and worldview.

Until Heathenism has developed some of the tribal holism that other traditional peoples enjoy it will remain a culturally “thin” phenomenon. Even if it develops further intellectual sophistication – and there are moves in that direction– Heathenism will not be able to fulfil its promise unless it can cultivate strong social integrity and build communities that can flourish over time. The tribal model
of Heathenism may yet prove the best vector for that project. And because of its socially and spiritually integrative function, tribal livery offers significant aid toward achieving this transpersonal Théodish vision.

Conclusion

Our ancestors were highly pragmatic people and they were survivors. They endured the most extraordinary hardships and trials, particularly in the Migration Age when the troth as we know it was forged and the symbolic repertoire of Heathenism reached its most highly developed material expression. I think we can assume that no element of their culture was surplus to requirements or merely superfluous, including their tribal livery. The significant role of national clothing in the revival of various traditional cultures suggests that the kind of cultural intensification represented by Heathen folk dress may be indispensable to our long-term survival as a group.

To advocate for the (re)introduction of tribal livery into Heathenism is not to assert the primacy of external appearance over internal spiritual development. Nor is it to suggest the primacy of impression over deeds. The ultimate goal of Théodish Belief and other forms of tribal Heathenism is holism and within this paradigm the material culture should reflect the spiritual culture, thus forming a seamless continuum.

Heathen tribal livery should be an emanation of several things: ancestral tradition, local environmental factors, custom, personal preference, and communal affirmation. A newly forming Théod should actively engage in founding these traditions. The one thing it cannot do is cope without tribal livery of some sort – no traditional culture in the history of the world as seen fit to do without it. Why would we be any different? Let's recover our cultural autonomy and strengthen our spiritual sovereignty through Heathen folk dress!
“A horse is a thing of beauty... none will tire of looking at him as long as he displays himself in his splendor.”

- Xenophon

The history of the horse in Britain goes back to 700,000 BCE. During this time, early man hunted the horse and had yet to learn the mysteries of domestication. In 6,500 BCE, the area of land known as Doggerland, the land bridge connecting Britain to mainland Europe, is finally flooded. Prior to this, there is vast archaeological evidence of humans using horse bones for various grave goods and other practical uses. By this time, humans have already started to venerate the horse as a beast of power and beauty.

The domestication of the horse is usually considered to have occurred around 3,500 B.C. However, there is evidence that some of the peoples living around the upper Volga River had achieved this around 4,800 B.C. I am of the belief that various deities revealed the art of domestication to early humans. Among the Slavs, it was Zorya Utrennyaya. Epona among the Celts. Poseidon for the Greeks. And Wóden or even Fréa for the Germanic peoples. And I am certain that there are nameless gods and goddesses lost to our histories that revealed to humans around the world the mysteries of the horse.

The story of Hengest and Horsa is one that is known to us. These divine twins were associated with the horse and descendants of Wóden. Horses had a special place in the hearts of the Anglo-Saxon people. As Heathens concerned with reconstructing lost traditions and customs, we look to history for customs involving horses. What we found are folk customs like “hoodening,” the Hobby Horse (Sometimes known as 'Obby 'Oss), the “poor old horse,” and the Mari Lwyd of the Welsh. These are equine themed festival traditions that were revived during the 19th Century based on
ancient ones done during pre-Christian times. Despite England being a predominately Christian nation, the English people still yearned for the customs of the past.

Here in the Ealdrice, we have often envied the 'Obby 'Oss seen in traditional celebrations across the pond. Þórbœorht, being a Morris Dancer and Mummer, had long expressed an interest in creating one. Lo and behold, this year I found a skull in South Carolina that belonged to a horse whose owner said had suffered an eye wound. This was our chance to bring such a “hooden horse” to life for our fellowship. I brought the possibility to the guild and we agreed to procure it. By that weekend, it was at Whitthenge Hall.

Once it arrived Þórbœorht and I began work on transforming the horse’s skull into a “hooden horse.” In doing so, we drew inspiration from the blueprints offered by other Mummers and Morris dancers and created one that was a fit for our own Oss. We named him Grim Harold after King Harold Godwinson who suffered an eye wound in 1066 and Grim (ON: Grimr), one of the many names of Wóden due to his ability to change shape and his many disguises across Middle-Earth. All of our work paid off, for the Ealdrice and our guests were able to see that terror of the Yuletide season.

Working on this project to bring Grim Harold into existence was a wonderful reminder of what makes Théodish Belief unique. Ours is a religion that often involves reconstruction. Making the “hooden horse,” not to mention working out what to do with him, was itself an exercise in reconstruction. As Théodsmen we all desire to make our rituals better and to experiment. The gods sometimes reveal to us how to improve our worship as Heathens, but often they want us to discover it for ourselves.
In order to give both the artist and his art their due, this is the first in a two-part series focused on Dan Capp and the music of Wolcensmen. In the following issue we will explore the album as well as the short story, Fire in the White Stone, more deeply.

Dan Capp is a musician and graphic designer from North-West England. A musician since his teenage years, he joined the black metal band Winterfylleth in 2014. Around this time, as well, he began work on his solo project under the name Wolcensmen. Musically, Wolcensmen was inspired by the atmospheric/acoustic breaks so commonly found in 90’s black metal. Dan took his cue from these short compositions and, as solo writer and composer, expanded the like into full length songs, accompanied by a variety of musicians and instruments, as a way to explore the lost Heathen culture of England.

What began as homemade copies of a 3 song demo has since grown to see Dan being recently signed to Indie Recording Shop, a small but respected English record label. The music has grown as well in that time and with his newest release Fire in the White Stone, the listener finds a fully realized world and a beautiful step back to a simpler time. In addition to the album, Dan wrote and published a 12,000 word short story to accompany the music as a way to immerse his fans in the world he created.

Dan is a well avowed heathen and world-renowned musician. He recently took some time out of his busy schedule to chat with me about his music, Théodish Belief, and his world view. It is my honor to present the following:
What is your greatest inspiration when writing lyrics? Do you have any specific themes or motifs that you like to return to?

Undoubtedly it is Heathenism and Mythology, with a definite skew towards the more arcane aspects of English lore. First and foremost, I insist upon using timeless imagery, so I would never reference anything modern or contemporary. My second rule (so far with Wolcensmen) has been to only use vocabulary which originates in original English. Even though I (demonstrably) use a much wider vocabulary than that elsewhere (and indeed, in the book which accompanies the latest album), I believe limiting myself in that sense when it comes to Wolcensmen lyrics somehow helps to create the kind of atmosphere and mindset within the listener which I always hoped to. It also forces me to find unusual, archaic words which I may have otherwise overlooked. As you can probably tell, my goal is to sweep the listener back to something resembling a pre-Industrial England, without doing so in an overly 'LARPy' or superficial way. Wolcensmen is meant to be a haven from modern life, and a place of mystery and wonderment.

The themes which I tend to return to most are those which express my belief in the unseen forces of existence, whether they be the Gods, Goddesses, Wights, æther, Runes or Ancestors. This is, for example, the basis of the song 'The Fyre-Bough' from the first album. I've experienced the presence of these forces in my own life, and I have this sort of obsession with trying to depict what that feels like in the form of music. Several songs on the new album 'Fire in the White Stone' - in fact, the whole album’s theme - are about the way unseen forces shape our fate, and how we might harness them.

You've said in previous interviews that you wanted to resurrect an English culture with your music, what are some of the most important aspects of this culture to you?

I'm a frustrated Englishman - frustrated in the sense that I know my country has this reputation of being an Imperial, dominating force in the World, adopting aspects of other cultures and disputing territory. But when you venture deep into the rural parts of England, and into its more remote history, you come to understand that the ordinary Englishman is as humble a homo-body as he of any other nation. Tolkien based his hobbits on the ordinary Englishman, and there's some truth to that representation. The point I'm trying to make is that 'Western culture' is not true
English culture, nor vice versa. The World has sort of stripped the English of their own unique birthright and it’s very common here for critics to say, "What even is English culture?" Rather than dwell upon how offensive that is, I've chosen to try and exemplify the unique aspects of English culture with Wolcensmen. I use the English names for the Teutonic Gods and Runes, where possible. I glorify the poetic nature of the language. And I essentially built part of the concept for the most recent album upon a Rune which is specific to the Anglo-Frisian Rune-set. I'm also not afraid to touch upon the traditionally 'Celtic' aspects of English lore, such as the Arthurian Mythos, because I also believe in the relatedness of ancient culture in North-Western Europe.

We in the Ealdríce are doing much the same, attempting to bring back the beliefs and culture of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Is this something that you see in England as well? Do see the same sort of academic based relearning of ancient customs?

I very much admire what you in the Ealdríce do. I've loosely followed your work for, I think, as long as Wolcensmen has existed. I think that in this increasingly interconnected, post-traditional World, it’s inevitable that people will seek to cling themselves to a more permanent sense of identity and wisdom than those fleeting ones which are fed to us through digital screens. There has definitely been a slow but certain increase among the English of our identity, and I try to support it where possible, by attending traditional festivities, exploring the land with my family, and researching my family tree.

As for academic-based relearning, I don’t know. I have an aversion to the word 'academic' because it always strikes me as a by-word for 'close-minded', often in a very materialist sense. I don’t believe everything must be empirically measured and accounted for and I welcome the mysteries of life. Whilst I do support those – like yourself – who are trying to reconstruct a very accurate, faithful rendition of Anglo-Saxon ways, I find the perennial, cross-cultural truths to be the most important aspect of my faith and practice, with the cultural veneer being only slightly less important. I allow myself to study freely, and to entertain seemingly wild ideas, and I’m just not sure how many 'academics' are capable of that.

You commented on Instagram recently that Ælfric Avery's *Mimir's Mead* was one of your favorite albums from 2019, how/when did you first happen upon Ælfric's music and what are your thoughts on Théodish Scópcraft?

I think I've been aware of Ælfric also for about as long as Wolcensmen has existed. I remember checking out some of his ambient music and seeing a few short videos of him on YouTube. He instantly struck me as very sincere. I was drawn to him, of course, because of my interest in Théodish
types. Naturally I appreciate those who create music and art (or recreate traditional music) in a Théodish manner. When he released *Mimir’s Mead* I was extremely impressed. With such simplicity, he really whisked me straight back to the old Heathen lands of Europe. It’s a shame his accolade seems so far to be confined to the Théodish community, but that actually leads me to explain why I didn’t take this approach with Wolcensmen...

My intent is not for Wolcensmen to only appeal to Heathens (Théodish or otherwise), but to introduce anyone who longs to escape modernity to Heathenry and mysticism. I have had many messages from people saying that Wolcensmen introduced them not just to a mystical, Pagan worldview but to the fact that they have such a fascinating identity - whether English or otherwise. That’s the biggest compliment I could get, honestly, because I want other people to feel the same 'magic' (for lack of a better word) that I feel when I listen to music such as Ælfric’s.

You’ve said in promos for "Fire in the White Stone" that this album has an underlying theme of transmutation and self-improvement, and that you drew this from runic carvings found at Anglo-Saxon burials. Can you expand some on how you interpret those runes and what they mean to you?

The inscription of the runes Ansu(Os)-Lagu-Ur - ALU - upon funerary urns is believed by 'scholars' and 'academics' to mean 'ale'. I don't buy that. Studies and discussions with trusted friends have led to me forming a whole separate theory concerning these inscriptions. I have to credit Stephen McNallen (whatever people may think of him) here. After reading his work on the three cauldrons of Irish lore and how they correspond to the three main energy centres (called Chakras in the East), I couldn't help but correspond these to the three runes of the ALU inscription. After all, Ur is the origin at the base of the spine, Lagu is the flowing waters of the heart, and Ansu(Os) the symbol of godhood at the peak of one's energy flow. To me, ALU represents spiritual ascension and growth, as well as the 'Hero’s Journey' as identified by Joseph Campbell, and this is why it was inscribed specifically on cremation urns, which are connected to the Solar act of cremation. The astute reader might wonder why they were inscribed in that order if the flow of energy is meant to be upwards. Well, in many cases they were inscribed as ULA, and the fact that both directions are noted probably represents the old belief in a mutual exchange of energies between Middangeard and unseen realms. ALU is an important concept to me and I wear a pendant with these runes inscribed upon it. I know what the meaning of life is, and it is to grow (physically, intellectually, creatively, morally and spiritually).
What is next for Wolcensmen?

I find that very difficult to answer, I'm afraid. Sometimes I think I've said and done everything I can with Wolcensmen. I'm a father and provider, and Wolcensmen provides nothing materially for my family. It's an indulgence for me and a gift for others like-minded. That said, I will always make music in some form or other, whether as 'Wolcensmen' or something else. I just want to let people know that musically and thematically, I feel (currently) that I have already taken this to its limits. My continued growth may lie elsewhere, or Wolcensmen may transform in some way to enable that growth. I could imagine performing live at unusual, bespoke events, or maybe taking a more Théodish approach to music as Ælfric does. I think I'd be happy in that guise, even if it diminished my 'fanbase'.

Any last thoughts?

Just thank you for your interest and your support. What groups such as yourselves do is so important and we must always remind ourselves of that. To borrow a Christian phrase, "We are doing (the) Gods' work". I would be glad to keep in touch with you and your kin in the Ealdrice.

We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to Dan Capp for contributing to this issue and we encourage our readers to check out Wolcensmen’s music at https://wolcensmen.bandcamp.com/.
New Books, Music, and Videos

**Book**

*The Elder Trow Volume I: Germanic Heathen Social Structure and Group Organization* by Ælfric Avery

First in the Woodharrow Bund's three part series, The Elder Trow Volume I tackles the hard question of what has gone wrong in the organization of modern heathen groups over the last 40+ years, and proposes ways in which modern heathen group structure can become more traditional and authentic as well as more practical for modern times. A survey of social and group models among the Norse, Anglo-Saxons and Goths is given. Germanic re-tribalization, the concept and understanding of tribalism, ancient Germanic sacral kingship, military kingship, heathen priesthood, modern heathen social structure and group organization, implementation of traditional Germanic culture in modern heathenry, major issues that hinder modern heathen groups, and how to live authentically as a heathen in modern times, are discussed at length.

Available at: [http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/aelfricavery](http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/aelfricavery)
**Book**

*By the Sun, the Stars, and the Moon: Anglo-Saxon Heathen Time-keeping* by Þórbeorht

*By the Sun, the Stars, and the Moon* offers the reader an overview of how Anglo-Saxon Heathens kept time before Christianity introduced the Roman calendar. Found within its pages are reference charts for the times of the day, days of the week, months of the year, and seasons of the year. Also included are Þórbeorht’s translation of Bede’s “*De mensibus Anglorum*” (“The Months of the English”) and the Ealdríce’s reconstruction of the Anglo-Saxon lunisolar calendar for every year of the current Metonic cycle (2010 to 2028).

Available at: [https://haliggyld.org/](https://haliggyld.org/)

**Music**

*Mimir’s Mead* by Ælfric.

Ancient traditional songs and modern compositions in honor of the Norse/Germanic gods and legendary heroes. Featuring galdors in Old Norse, Old Saxon, Old High German, Proto-Germanic, Longobardic, Old Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese and German.

Available at: [https://aelfric.bandcamp.com/](https://aelfric.bandcamp.com/)
Théodish Websites

Théodish Fellowships

Æppeldor – Théodish Belief in Australia (Tasmania)
æppeldor.home.blog

Whitthenge Heall – Théodish Belief in the Mid-Atlantic (Virginia, USA)
whitthenge.home.blog

Théodish Works and Wares

Ælfric’s Germanic Hearp Music – Théodish music
aelfric.bandcamp.com

Háliggyld Books – Théodish books and booklets
haliggyld.org

Heathen Greetings – Théodish Yule cards
www.etsy.com/shop/HeathenGreetings

Spellstów – Théodish news, abannings, and articles
https://spellstow.org/

Woodharrow Bund Press – Théodish and Heathen books by Ælfric
www.lulu.com/spotlight/aelfracery