Deep Ancestors

Practicing the Religion of the Proto-Indo-Europeans

Ceisiwr Serith

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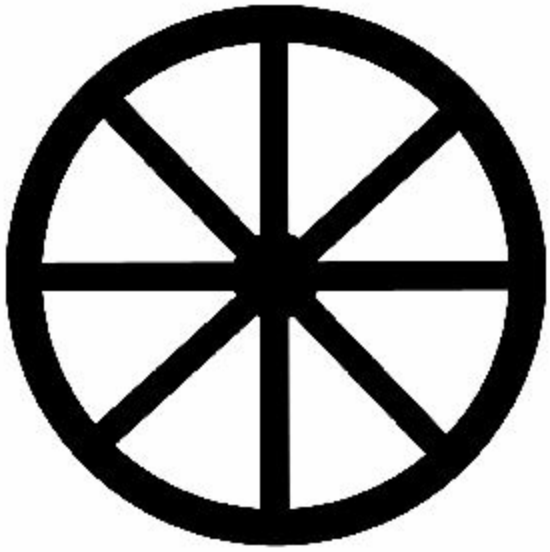
Proto-Indo-Europeans



Ceisiwr Serith

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To all my blue elephants

Preface

My wife says no one but me reads prefaces. Allowing for some rhetorical exaggeration, I am going to accept her warning and limit this preface to some technical matters and acknowledgements. If you are the type that doesn't read prefaces, you're not reading this anyway. If you are, the information in this preface will answer some of the pickier questions you might have. Some of this will be covered later in the book for the benefit of those who are not reading this. Those of you who do read prefaces will be a step ahead. Good for you.

Calling anything "Proto-Indo-European" is a dangerous thing. The term covers thousands of years, during which large changes took place. For instance, at the beginning of the Proto-Indo-European period, the language had no genders; nouns were divided into animate and inanimate classes. By the time the language was breaking up, the animate class had been split into male and female, and the inanimate had become the neuter. It can be assumed that Proto-Indo-European religion underwent equally radical changes.

I will be using the term to describe the period when the language and culture were beginning to break up. In other words, I am looking at the last point at which the language and culture could be called "Proto-Indo-European." I do this out of necessity, since most of the religious material cannot be dated to any stage within the Proto-Indo-European period. However, if it survived well enough to be reconstructed, it is reasonable to believe that it still existed at the end. I also hope in this way to present Proto-Indo-European culture in its most developed form. Roughly speaking, this is around the third and fourth millennia BCE.

Even with this restriction, anything we can call "Proto-Indo-European" is synthesized from what was certainly a widespread culture with regional differences. For this reason, there are those who do not like to use the term at all, or if they do use it, consider it an abstraction without a historical reality to which it might refer. Their view is that the term does not apply to a single language or culture, but rather to the commonalities of a number of neighboring cultures. Their point is a reasonable one, and should stand as a warning to those of us with a different view.

Even if it is accepted, we are still allowed to speak of a common culture, of ways in which the postulated neighboring cultures interrelated and shared ideology and language. At the very least we can say that there was a common Indo-European. If anyone is uncomfortable with my use of "Proto-Indo-European," then perhaps they can simply replace it in their mind with "common Indo-European" each time they encounter it. Indeed, this might even result in a more compelling construction, since it will replace the question of why we should do what some ancient culture did with the recognition that what is included here is in fact that which those of us who come from an Indo-European culture hold in common.

It was from regional differences, perhaps of neighboring but culturally distinct cultures or perhaps

of what we might call "dialects" of a single culture, that the descendant Indo-European cultures — the Celts, Romans, Indo-Iranians, etc. — arose. Just how and when this breakup happened is debatable. We can be sure that it was in waves; the Proto-Indo-Europeans didn't all get together one day and say, "hey, let's break up."

There will be those who feel that I have overstepped the boundaries of the evidence (or, less charitably, my competence). This is indeed an ambitious book. It may even be over-ambitious. I have tried to stay within the limits set by the evidence, but there have been times when creating a viable structure has required some imagination. The amount necessary has varied. The dragon-slaying myth is preserved in great detail, for instance, whereas the ritual material is found in a combination of outline and theory, from which I had to write something coherent. I have tried to make it clear when I have recreated and when I have innovated. I hope that even when I have gone beyond the evidence, I have not betrayed it.

This book must be considered a report on a work in progress. Indeed, a possible title would have been A Prolegomena to a Reconstructed Proto-Indo-European Religion. Of course, with a word like "Prolegomena" (roughly "a beginning treatment") in the title, nobody would have bought the book. As time goes by, new research will be done, new ideas and data presented, and old texts and archaeology reinterpreted. This will require changes in the beliefs and practices of reconstructed Proto-Indo-European religion. This is a good thing, with the religion steadily approaching the truth about our ancestors. Indeed, in the very writing of this book I have had to discard many early ideas as I encountered new information. But the changed vision was always more moving, more powerful, more meaningful than that which it replaced. Consider this a process of progressive revelation, except that instead of coming from the gods it comes from scholars.

Since this book is not written for those scholars, though, I have dispensed with most of the scholarly apparatus. References will be regrettably few; to give all available data would have made an already unwieldy book impossible. Those who wish to know more are directed to the bibliography, or encouraged to write to me to see if I can dig through my stacks of articles to find the relevant information.

I have both the obligation and the pleasure of acknowledging those who have helped me. First, I must thank the scholars whose names appear in my references. Although they would probably be horrified at what I have done here, their work was vital to the effort.

A number of members of Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF) were most helpful. The Grove of the Sacred Crows, the Grove of the Ninth Wave, and Nemos Ognios/Protogrove of the Living Flame humored me by putting on earlier forms of some of the rituals. The members of the ADF e-mail lists were helpful, and others, particularly the members of World Tree Grove and Nemos Ognios, provided spiritual and personal support. The organizers of the Wellspring and Desert Magic festivals gave me the opportunity to make my ideas more coherent by presenting them to attendees.

Kate and Frank Dalton, the organizers of Craftwise, also allowed me to give presentations on some of this material, as well as permitting the staging of the first Proto-Indo-European ritual I had attempted. Both of these were very important in developing what you see here. The people who listened to me and asked some good questions were vital.

Numerous e-mail lists were helpful. The most important of these was the ever-lively Yahoo Proto-Indo-European Religion list.

Many of my sources have not been easy to make sense of, since they not only sometimes disagree,

but are written for professional linguists, and therefore couched in somewhat confusing technical terms, and assume background knowledge that I didn't always have. In clearing a path through the thickets of the world of linguistics, I have been guided in part by some helpful guides.

Doug Barr saved me from several embarrassing mistakes in the early stages of the book (his linguistic knowledge being greater than mine) and provided invaluable critiques and suggestions. More important, his enthusiasm for the project encouraged me and gave me the hope that others might find my private passion of interest.

In the final stages, Deiniol Jones proved a valuable source of linguistic knowledge.

Anne Schoepf, although primarily interested in Germanic religion, has shown an enthusiasm for the project that has been instrumental in its completion. She reviewed an early version of the manuscript, and if I didn't always take her advice, it was always appreciated.

It is customary to say that any blame for errors should fall on my own shoulders, and I willingly do so. Many decisions had to be made, and I cannot be sure that I always leapt the right way.

As always, special thanks must be given to my wife Debbie and my daughter Elizabeth. As well as for their heroic attempts to put up with my ramblings on Proto-Indo-European, they are to be thanked merely for being there. Nothing would make much sense without them, and nothing, let alone this project, would be worth doing.

Chapter 1

The Deep Ancestors

*Oinos, *dwo, *tréyes, *k^{w}etwor, *pénk^{w}e. *Ptḗr, * mā́ter, *sunús, *dhugtér.

These words from a language spoken five thousand years ago are still understandable today. In only slightly modified form they survive as parts of our own language. Not only that, many of the concepts of the culture of the people who spoke it have lived through the years and send their echoes throughout our lives.

Do not think of the Proto-Indo-Europeans as a people who died out a long time ago. They live, and their culture lives, in us; transformed by time and the influences of other cultures maybe, but still recognizable at the core of our values, language, and culture. By understanding them, we understand ourselves.

Who were these people? To begin with, we don't know for sure where they lived. The homeland question is one of the hottest areas of debate in Indo-European studies, but the most popular theory places it on the steppes, near the Caspian Sea. Wherever their homeland might have been, the Proto-Indo-Europeans spread out into the land their descendants now occupy. They spread out by conquest, by migration, by intermarriage, by trade, and by cultural influence. As they spread, they changed, mixing with those among whom they moved, and undergoing the inevitable effects of time. They became the Indo-Europeans – the Celts, the Germans, the Romans, the Greeks, the Balts, the Slavs, the Indo-Iranians, and a number of smaller branches.

They became us. They spread out from Europe across the seas, colonizing the Americas and Australia, spreading their languages around the world, until today when well over half of the world speaks an Indo-European language as either a first or a second language, and Indo-European culture influences everyone else.

Even with the changes, the common heritage remains, linking the descendant cultures to each other and to the Proto-Indo-Europeans. This common heritage is easily seen in the core vocabulary, in the words for both common and important things such as family relationships and numbers: *mā́ter, and *dwo, for instance. These words have been carefully reconstructed from their descendants. Let's take the first three numbers as an example:

Old Irish	oīn	dāu	tri
Latin	ūnus	duo	trēs
Old Norse	einn	tvā	thrīr
Old English	ān	twā	thrīe
Lithuanian	viẽns	dvi	trys
Old Church Slavonic	ino-	dŭva	tri
Avestan	aēva-	dva	
Old Indic	éka-	dvé	trī

From these obviously similar words (and from others I haven't given), we can reconstruct the Proto-Indo-European *oi-no-s, *dwo, *tréyes. (Linguists use asterisks to show when words have been reconstructed rather than attested. Since all Proto-Indo-European words are reconstructed, I won't always use the asterisk.)

Because elements of the Proto-Indo-European language can be reconstructed, the same holds true for their culture. The words show one way – there is a Proto-Indo-European word for "wheel," so the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have had wheels. Examination of the descendant cultures is another way. Just as father/pater/pitar point to *ptḗr, so too comparing the role of the father in Germany, Rome, and Vedic India tells us what it meant to be a ptḗr.

You might still be asking why we would want to bother studying these people anyway. After all, not only are they long dead, but weren't they the patriarchal, pastoral, sky-father-worshiping warriors who destroyed the peaceful, agricultural, matrifocal, Neolithic goddess-worshipers of Old Europe?

First, they weren't really that bad. They have become a caricature, and although a caricature reveals some truth, it hides even more. Of course, the cultures into whose area they moved weren't exactly utopias either; there is plenty of evidence for warfare in Neolithic Europe.

Most important, even to the extent that they were patriarchal, pastoral, sky-father-worshiping warriors, they are still our patriarchal, pastoral, sky-father-worshiping warriors. They are our ancestors, and studying them gives us insight into our own cultures.

Further, as we study them, we will find fewer things to deplore. They were indeed patriarchal, but with some interesting twists. They worshiped a sky-father, to be sure, but had some darn powerful goddesses.

We may even find some characteristics to admire. They were pious, courageous, and hospitable. They held honor in high regard, and were ashamed of their misdeeds. They had a highly developed oral tradition, with intricate and elegant poetry, and they expressed themselves in a language of surprising complexity and beauty. Above all, the virtue they held in the highest esteem was truth. Come with me into the world of our ancestors, and you may be surprised.

The common ancestry of the Indo-Europeans wasn't even suspected until 1767, when James Parsons made the link between a number of the languages. Unfortunately, his work was generally ignored. In 1796, Sir William Jones put forth the theory that Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Gothic (an early example of Germanic), Celtic, and Old Persian were all "sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists" (Mallory, 1989, 12). The "perhaps" proved to be unfortunately true, and despite the common error still made by many non-linguists of identifying this source with Sanskrit, it soon became clear that the search for the common source would have to be undertaken through comparative linguistics.

"Comparative linguistics" is just what it sounds like. Languages are compared, rules for the transformation of one element into another are derived, and from these comparisons, hypothetical protoforms are constructed. The forms to be compared should ideally come from languages widely separated in time or space, and from the earliest available stages of these languages, if they are to be believable. For instance, forms from the closely located Greek, Armenian, and Indo-Iranian do not inspire great confidence in the result, but Celtic, Latin, and Indo-Iranian do. There is a phenomenon called "the archaism of the fringe," that says change takes place more quickly in the center of a group than on the edges. Thus Celtic and Indo-Iranian are particularly important for recreating the Proto-Indo-European language. Latin, at the center, is less important, but if it agrees with Celtic and Indo-

Iranian, so much the better. Pride of place in language goes to Hittite, since it is recorded so early that it died out before most of the others are attested. In a backwater itself, with such an early date, it had little time or opportunity to influence or be influenced by any other languages before we encounter it. That means that if something in the Hittite (or other Anatolian) language agrees with something from almost any other group (there is evidence of contact with Indic), we can pretty solidly assign it to Proto-Indo-European times. In this way, the common source – Proto-Indo-European – continues to be reconstructed; a word here, a sound there, a piece of grammar when possible.

But now comes a realization – if there was a language, there must have been people who spoke it. If there were people who spoke it, they must have lived somewhere. That brings us back to the homeland question – where did these ancestors of ours live?

It is hard to say. The search for the homeland of the Proto-Indo-Europeans has been a hotbed of speculation and theories since the existence of the language was first proposed. Answers have ranged from Ireland, to Scandinavia, to Central Europe, to Central Asia, to Southern Asia, to Northeastern Asia. (A good treatment is Mallory, 1989, who devotes an entire chapter to the question.) I glanced off the homeland question earlier with a "nobody knows for sure"; now it's time to see what people have suggested.

The evidence for the theories has primarily come, as it must, from the reconstructed language. For instance, there is a reconstructed word which likely meant "beech," and another that meant some sort of salmonid fish. This suggested that the homeland must be found in an area where both of these existed. The problem is that words for plants and animals are frequently applied to similar species when a people move to a new area. The bird Americans call a "robin," for instance, is similar to the bird the word refers to in England, but is actually a completely different species.

Applying linguistic evidence to archaeological evidence is one way to check such speculations. For instance, there are words in the reconstructed language that seem to imply a level of domestication of the horse, the *ekwos. Archaeology can tell us a lot about when and where the horse was domesticated and how its use spread.

I will not belabor the point. Anyone interested in the details can read Mallory, 1989. Suffice it to say that attempts have been made to find the homeland. The suggestions have been critiqued, and many dropped. Right now, as a result of the winnowing of the evidence, there are three main claimants.

First, there is that of British archaeologist Colin Renfrew (1987). In his view, the Proto-Indo-Europeans lived in Anatolia, where the Indo-European Hittites later lived. From there, the culture spread in waves of enculturation rather than by migration or conquest. In other words, neighboring peoples took up the Indo-European culture instead of the Indo-Europeans themselves having to move. There are a number of problems with this theory; the main one being that there simply isn't enough time for things to have occurred this way. So although you may encounter his theory, it is not the most likely one.

The second is that of Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1995). They see the Proto-Indo-Europeans as starting from the southern Caucasus. This would be somewhat amusing if true, since it would make the Indo-Europeans literally "Caucasians." Gamkrelidze and Ivanov base their theory in large part on some idiosyncratic reconstructions, including "monkey" and "lion," which require a southern point of origin. The theory has not been around for very long, so it is difficult to say whether it will have any staying power.

Finally, there is the kurgan theory of Marija Gimbutas. (This is discussed in some depth, with opinions both pro and con, in Skomal and Polomé, 1987.) She named it after the burial mounds, or kurgans, of the people in southern Russia, near the Caspian Sea, which is where this theory puts the Indo-European homeland. This has proven a very popular theory, to the point where it seems that even if some of the details may be wrong, the general area is right.

Now why does any of this matter? If a homeland can be identified conclusively, then the archaeology of the area can be included in the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European culture. This is somewhat circular; linguistic information is used to determine whether an archaeologically defined culture fits with a linguistically defined people, and then the archaeology of that culture's sites is used to tell us about the linguistically defined people. Nonetheless, if such a people can be found, things might be learned from archaeology that have not been preserved in the language.

Linguistics may be the queen of Indo-European studies and archaeology may play its role, but we are not limited to those. The source of much of what you will read in this book is comparative mythology. In this method, aspects of the cultures (including but not limited to their mythologies; the term is not particularly accurate) are compared to find similarities. It is then assumed that these similarities go back to the Proto-Indo-European period, if they are close enough, common enough, and come from cultures far enough apart to preclude borrowing. For instance, the horse sacrifice of Chapter 14 is attested in Ireland, Rome, and Vedic India, with possible data from the Hittites and the Slavs. Or, to use a more mythological example, the characteristics of a *Tiwaz among the Proto-Germans, the Roman Jupiter, Greek Zeus Pater, and Vedic Dyaus Pitar tells us what sort of god the one whose name we can reconstruct through linguistics – *Dyḗus Ptḗr – was. Comparative mythology has great power, and like anything with great power must be used carefully. It is subject to the same rules as comparative linguistics.

Using these three tools, we reconstruct our Proto-Indo-European culture. Applying them to the homeland question, what do we get? We get no firm answer. For now we have to content ourselves with postulating a homeland in an area that Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty has called "east of the asterisk" (1980, 151).

Even without the knowledge of the homeland, these tools will tell us a lot about the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Enough to write a book about. In fact, enough to write many books and many articles. Enough to write this book.

Before turning to the religion of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, some unpleasantness must be dealt with. Due mostly to the efforts of Nazis and Neo-Nazis, "Indo-European" has become associated in the minds of many people with concepts of race. This is not only unfortunate, it is also untrue. "Indo-European" is a linguistic term, and from the belief that linguistic units may be correlated with cultural units, it has become a cultural term. What it is not is a racial term.

The proof of this is easy enough. One need only look around the United States at all the people speaking an Indo-European language and living in an Indo-European culture. How many of them have ancestors that did not? This simply carries on a trend begun when the Indo-Europeans first started spreading out, intermarrying with the people whose land they moved into, blending their genes and culture. The reverse is also true; there are people living in western China who are descended from the Indo-European Tocharians but who now speak Chinese.

"Indo-European" and "Proto-Indo-European" are linguistic terms first and cultural terms second. Since both language and culture may be transferred from one genetic grouping to another, neither term

may be used to refer to a race. No race is more Indo-European than another, except in the very limited sense that more of their ancestors spoke an Indo-European language. Still, since no language is superior to another, the postulating of any racial superiority on linguistic grounds is just plain silly.

In case anyone has missed it, let me say it one more time: "Indo-European" is not a race. Anyone who picked up this book expecting some sort of racist drivel can either put it down now or prepare to be reeducated.

That said, all this reconstruction does not necessarily mean that if we were to go back in time to the Proto-Indo-Europeans and go to their homeland (wherever that was), we would find a culture as described by Indo-European scholars. It is possible that instead of the more recent cultures being descended from some Proto-Indo-European Ur-culture, they may represent varying growths from themes present within a diverse culture. This is especially true of reconstructed myths.

Nonetheless, we have to make some assumptions in order to begin, and I will begin with the assumption that there was a Proto-Indo-European culture, and that what we reconstruct tells us something about that culture. The proof of the pudding is in the tasting, and of the reconstruction in the consistency, breadth, and its power to move. I think this book will show reconstructed Proto-Indo-European language and culture fit these criteria well.

Chapter 2

Proto-Indo-European Society

The common image of the Proto-Indo-Europeans is of a pastoral people constantly wandering in search of greener pastures, both literally and figuratively. They destroyed whoever got in their way, for they were a race of warriors. They killed the men and forcibly married the women.

Were the Proto-Indo-Europeans warriors? Certainly. Rather, they had warriors. All the ancient societies did. This was not limited to wandering tribes; look at the settled Romans or Irish. No ancient society could survive without warriors; those were violent times.

Were they nomads? Although what we can reconstruct of Proto-Indo-European culture and language contains an emphasis on herding, and even though the Proto-Indo-Europeans had enough wanderlust to start their long treks from the homeland, they weren't nomads, at least not of a pure kind. No society survives without a large settled population. The most nomadic of cultures have trade relationships with settled peoples, providing the nomads with necessities such as grain and iron. The question is whether the settled populations were Proto-Indo-Europeans or from some other group.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans certainly practiced agriculture. We know this because there are PIE words for things such as "pig" (*sū́s) and "plow" (*H_2érH$_3$trom). Obviously, they wouldn't have had names for things with which they weren't familiar. If those things had belonged to non-Indo-European trading partners, we would expect first, that the words would have been borrowed from them, and thus not Indo-European and second, that the things had limited importance in PIE culture. Neither of these is true for *sū́s and *H_2érH$_3$trom. As we will see, both pigs and plows are significant parts of PIE religion. The words as well are perfectly good PIE. *Sū́s may have the etymology of "the one who gives birth," and *H_2érH$_3$trom is clearly PIE, since it's formed from the root *H_2érH$_3$- "to plow" and *-trom, a suffix meaning "thing that." Nomads aren't expected to have words for either; "plow" is obvious, and pigs aren't animals nomads would have – short legs.

A reasonable guess from all this is that the Proto-Indo-Europeans practiced transhumance. This is an economy in which animals, usually cattle, are driven from winter to summer pastures and back again. While in the summer pastures, they are watched over by the male youths. The Irish are famous for transhumance up to early modern times, with the change in pastures taking place at May Day and Halloween. With goats substituted for cattle, this is still done by the Kalasha, a Pagan Indo-European people from the Hindu Kush.

A people's economy can have a large effect on their ideology, and this is definitely the case with the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Transhumants tend to see things as pairs – home and the wild, winter and summer, female and male, etc. The transhumant lifestyle also affects seasonal rituals, marriage arrangements, and class structure. The loose connection with the land it fosters might also contribute a willingness to migrate; transhumants might not be as used to wandering as nomads, but certainly

more so than settled farmers.

It would seem that the PIEs expanded the binary divisions of transhumance into a triple system by opposing groups of two to a third thing. The resulting system can charted like this: (1 + 1) + 1.

Over several decades, the French sociologist Georges Dumézil analyzed the triple system, describing it in what he called the "Indo-European ideology." He called the three categories "functions," at first finding them in social classes, but then identifying them in other aspects of culture. His theory has been quite controversial, but I think most of the objections have been based on a view that if the three social classes didn't exist in an Indo-European culture, then the functions couldn't either and that if enough cultures didn't have the functions, then the Proto-Indo-European culture couldn't have had them either. I believe that this is a misunderstanding of the theory.

This misunderstanding is understandable to a point, since Dumézil did emphasize the effect of the ideology on the social order, giving them names identifying them with social classes. They are the magical-judicial (first, priestly/royal) function, the martial (second, warrior) function, and the producer (third) function. However, he, and others who have followed his theory, have identified the functions in many areas of the ways the IEs organized the world.

For instance, there are three forms of healing: prayers and magic (first), surgery (second), and herbs (third). The Irish goddess Brighid (or, more properly, three sister goddesses named "Brighid") was the patron of poets (first), smiths (second), and healers (third). There are even standard colors for the functions – white (first; ritual purity), red (second; blood), and blue or black (third; dark like dirt).

Not surprisingly, these functions show up in the religion of the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Many of the gods, for instance, are associated with particular functions, and the functions have an effect on both the rituals and the groups that perform them.

This influence is not total, however. For instance, the hearth goddess, a very important deity, does not fit into the three functions. In part this is because "you can't comb the hair on a billiard ball without a cowlick," as Vincent McBride, one of my wife's professors in college, liked to say. No system can ever include all possibilities. If this is true of finite billiard balls, how much more true must it be in the infinite realms dealt with by religion?

If we use the social identities of the functions, we can see clearly how the combined binary/trinary system works.

The first function shows its binary nature in its name; it is made up of the magico-religious and juridical categories. We can express this in the binary form of 1 + 1. The second function is also binary, dividing into the protecting warrior and the destroying warrior.

Now, one subtlety of the three functions is the so-called "War of the Functions." Simply put, the first two functions gang up on the third function, eventually forming an upper class. This is especially evident in India, with the priests (brahmans) and warriors (kśatriyas) lording over the producers (vaisyas). Combining the dual nature of each of the first two functions with this gives us ((1 + 1) + (1 + 1)) + 1.

The third function is binary in its own way, divided into male and female. In transhumant terms, this is the wild and the domestic, respectively. So now we have ((1 + 1) + (1 + 1)) + (1 + 1).

As society becomes more complicated, a unifying force is needed, one which stands above all the functions. This transfunctional category was filled by a king; although in a sense he belongs to the juridical section of the first function, if he is to be effective he must incorporate all three functions

into an ordered society. The structure now is (((1 + 1) + (1 + 1)) + (1 + 1)) +1.

At all stages, there is that which doesn't fit, and therefore has either no part in society or a very ambiguous one. These include people such as merchants (who go between groups), smiths and other craftsmen. If these Outsiders are brought into the plan, we have (((1 + 1) + (1 + 1)) + (1 + 1)) +1) + 1. There are finally those who aren't part of society at all, the Outsiders. Their addition gives us (((((1 + 1) + (1 + 1)) + (1 + 1)) +1) + 1) + 1.

This is hardly the reductionist system as some critics have said. It is also more a system of binary oppositions than of pure trifunctionalism.

I don't believe the trifunctional system to be the primary one, either ideologically or historically. Instead, it seems to me that the Proto-Indo-Europeans transhumant economy led naturally to an original binary system. In transhumant societies, the two halves of the year are not seen as the same. The herders, young men and boys, often live with the herds, spending the summers in the typical pastoral life, sleeping outdoors or in tents, and wandering with the herds. Out in the pasturelands without their women or older men, the youths band together into warrior groups and get into trouble. Boys will be boys, after all, even on the steppes. They start cattle raiding, a practice which becomes elevated into high epic in some cultures. The Irish classic, the Táin Bó Cuailnge, sometimes called the Irish Iliad, is actually the story of a cattle raid.

Back at home, the women weave and farm. Back at home – the summer pastures are not home, they are camping places. Home is where the women are. It is not a large step from this to identifying women and home. It is a similar step to identifying agriculture and women, since agriculture will be in large part done by women while the young men are out herding. From these oppositions arises a binary view of things, a dualism.

There is more than one kind of dualism. One of the best known is the good/evil distinction such as is found in Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster certainly was the first to make the radical distinction between these two, and to posit their relationship as the defining characteristic of existence, but in doing so he likely drew on earlier and less far-reaching dualisms inherent in the Indo-European mythical system he inherited. Good/evil was not one of these earlier pairings. There is a tendency in Indo-European thought to break up things into good and ambivalent. The ambivalent is then itself broken up into benevolent and malevolent. In other words, 1 + (1 + 1).

A non-ethical example of this form of Indo-European dualism is found in the Proto-Indo-European language. Originally there were two "genders" – animate and inanimate. Things that moved, that were alive, were animate; things that weren't, were inanimate. In some cases, this meant two words for something. Water, for instance, could be moving in a stream and be *ap-, or sitting in a pot and be *wódr.

Eventually the animate class broke up to form the masculine and feminine genders. There were now three genders, but even so, they were constructed in a binary way, with two classes (animate and inanimate), one of which was split in two (masculine and feminine).

I suggest that a similar split took place within Proto-Indo-European society which divided one of the animate categories – that of the male – into the first and second functions, and turned the inanimate category – that of the female – into the third function. As a result, we have the overwhelmingly male aspect of the first two functions, and the female nature of the third (and, correspondingly, of the earth). Note that this does not fit with the gender split, since the animate – which becomes masculine and feminine in the gender system – becomes socially two kinds of masculine, and the neuter

inanimate becomes socially feminine. A number of factors can explain this. First, it is obvious that no aspect of society, if it is to be mapped onto human beings, can be neuter. Second, we have the division in transhumant societies between the nomadic (i.e., animate) male sphere and the sedentary (i.e., inanimate) female sphere. Third, it is important to remember that grammatical gender is not the same thing; thus German mädchen, "girl," is grammatically neuter.

All of this helps explain some of the cowlick nature of Proto-Indo-European religion. Aspects of the early binary system were assigned to particular functions, while others that resisted this assigning, fell into either no function at all or into all three. We will see later how the latter two functions were particularly the case with goddesses.

A test for this is the varying attributes of the first function *Dyḗus Ptḗr and the second function *Perkʷū́nos. (Much of what follows is based on suggestions by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995, 694-695; while their thoughts were seminal, what I have done with them is to my credit or blame.)

Dyḗus Ptḗr, as his name, "Shining Sky Father," tells us, is the god of the bright sky. Perkʷū́nos, "The Striker," is the god of the dark sky, not of the night but of storms. Here we have a perfect dualism. Inherent in the nature of Perkʷū́nos is both a warrior/hero aspect (lightning) and an agricultural one (rain).

In the later traditions, we see an interesting split. The Roman Jupiter and Greek Zeus (both of whose names come from Dyḗus Ptḗr) are not just gods of the bright sky, but also have the lightning of the dark sky under their control. This clear contradiction on its own demands an explanation. The Roman Mars has both second and third function attributes, but does not control lightning. The Norse hero/warrior/storm god Thor is also a god of farmers. The Vedic Indra is also a god of both lightning and agriculture. In Scandinavia, Dyḗus Ptḗr's reflex (a "reflex" is a descendant of an earlier term) Tyr (< *Tiwaz < *Deiwos, which is essentially the same thing as *Dyḗus) has been demoted by the advent of Odin into a second function figure who nonetheless maintains the typically first function roles of guardian of truth and oaths. He is little worshiped, however. The Vedic Dyaus Pitar has virtually dropped off the map. Among the Balts, the most important deity is Perkunas, who is both protector and guarantor of fertility. Dievas plays little role in people's devotion and is mainly a figure in mythology.

What I think has happened here is that the original pair of Dyḗus Ptḗr and Perkʷū́nos have been placed into a trifunctional framework, into the first and second functions respectively. In some cases – Thor, Indra, Perkunas – the descendant of Perkʷū́nos has retained control over lightning, while in others – Jupiter, Zeus – the descendant of Dyḗus Ptḗr has acquired it (perhaps under Near Eastern influence?) In all cases, the new second function figure has retained an agricultural side, making him appear to have third function aspects. The real power has gone where lightning goes; where the warrior/hero god has lost it (Rome, Greece), he has fallen into second in rank as well as function, and where he has kept it (Lithuania, Scandinavia, India), it is Dyḗus Ptḗr who has faded away.

That the split into the three functions occurred in different ways in different cultures tells me that it is late. Greece in particular causes difficulties. The Greek deities don't fit the system well, and we know too much about Greek religion to put this down to our ignorance. Trifunctionalism does pop up throughout Greek culture; for instance, in Plato's Laws the ideal city is arranged trifunctionally. We never get the impression that it is the defining system of Greek thought, though. This could lead one to believe that the Greeks never developed trifunctionalism or separated from the other Indo-Europeans before trifunctionalism developed, if it weren't for the nagging little trifunctional bits scattered

throughout Greece.

The lateness of the development of the functions is the main explanation I see for the sloppiness in the descendant traditions regarding their attribution of some religious elements among the functions. Because of this sloppiness, the three functions, while being an important part of Proto-Indo-European religion, cannot be its impelling structure. You can't comb the hair on a billiard ball without a cowlick, and you can't force a complex religion with a complex history into a simple system.

In different parts of the Indo-European world, the trifunctional ideology was absorbed to differing degrees and in different ways into the religion. It nonetheless pops up in many places and may be considered a legitimate part of both the society and the religion of the period that this book attempts to recreate. The "pre-trifunctional" side of things, the system of binary oppositions, has deeper roots than anything the trifunctional system can give us, and does not disappear from Proto-Indo-European religion, even at the point where Proto-Indo-European society was splitting up. Both it and the trifunctional ideology will therefore play important roles in the religious system I will be attempting to reconstruct, with neither playing the primary one.

Chapter 3
Beginnings

This is the story of how the Cosmos came to be.

Everything was water. Everything was Chaos. Did it seethe? Was it still? What was it formed of? Where could it be said to be? To speak of it in truth would be to arrange it in well-ordered words. But Chaos is not ordered at all. That is its nature.

Our not knowing does not matter. Chaos is what it is, beyond understanding. All we need know is that Chaos was there, the great ocean, and there was no Cosmos.

Yet if Chaos was truly Chaos, it must have had in it portions in order; a Chaos without them would be a limited one, and to limit is to order. Between this hidden order and the Chaos around it, there was a borderline, a division between the great sea and the Nothing from which the Cosmos would be formed.

From this order, into the Nothing, land rose out of the water, a small clod, floating on the surface of the ocean. Lying there, it grew, expanding more and more. Still there was Chaos; there was land and there was water, to be sure, but each was still Chaos.

As the land expanded and lying there on the surface of the water, the great Serpent of the Deep awoke. The eyes in his three heads opened, those eyes of terror, opening into the roiling Chaos within. Lord of Waters, he drew from the land its waters and locked them fast in his deep-set lair. He didn't know of true taking, of true giving; he thought he could take without giving, he thought he could hoard, with closed hands. So he imprisoned the waters of the expanding land, wrapping his coils tightly about the land. The waters bellowed plaintively, and the land dried out and stopped its growth.

From beyond the earth in his land of clouds (the waters of heaven), the Thunderer heard the lowing. With an answering shout, he entered the world with his spear of lightning, his flaming wágros, his club set about with countless spikes. He came to the serpent, coiled beyond the world in its cave of Chaos, and struck it hard. Three times he struck, and with each, a head fell. With each, the blood of the snake gushed out, mixing with the waters, until it lay dead beneath the bolt of the Striker. He released the cows, he released the maidens, he released the waters, and the waters poured forth. They poured forth and made the earth fertile, and the fertile earth grew. But it was still without order, a clod on the waters.

At that time, there were Yemós and Mannus, twins. Yemós took the kingship of the gods and spirits. He became troubled and took counsel with Mannus, saying:

"Under my rule, there is no balance,
the worlds are cursed with nothing bad.
Within my kingdom is nothing ill.
Everything flourishes, and there is no ending.
Balance is not complete in this land of mine.

Now there is only life.
To balance it there must be an ending of life."
Mannus spread his hands, and said:
"Your counsel is well spoken.
Ending must come that beginning might be."
Yemós spoke quickly, before Mannus could:
"I am the king, and it is my privilege
to offer myself for the sake of the world."

Mannus took up the knife. Mannus knew the words to say, Mannus knew the deeds to do.

Mannus seized Yemós; he struck him hard. Mannus took the knife and said the words of the sacrifice. He divided the body and from it made the world. From the skull he made the sky, from the brain the clouds, from the eyes the celestial lights, from the hair the plants, from the flesh the soil, from the bones the rocks, and from the blood the rivers and streams. The Cosmos was ordered, the Xártus established.

And when the world was made, Mannus lived in it, ruling as king and priest of it.

But the soul of Yemós took the final journey to the land on the far side of the river of memory, the flowery plain surrounded by high walls of earth. There he now sits and rules as king.

When Mannus had lived many years, he died, and took the journey that Yemós had marked out, across the river to the land of his brother. There they both dwell.

This is the story of Mannus, first priest, and Yemós, first king and lord of the dead, and how the world came to be ordered through their actions. Those who know the way come to the land of dead in the proper time and are greeted there by Yemós, first to die.

There are actually three creation myths concealed in this story. Like all creation myths, these tell more than just how the world came to be; they also tell how the world came to be the way it is, and how we are supposed to act in it. For instance, as an Indo-European myth, it quite explicitly contains the three functions, in the order three, two, one.

The first myth is somewhat cursory: earth rose out of the ocean and spread. This is a very widespread myth, occurring in many non-Indo-European cultures as well. It has been given the name of the "Earth Diver Motif," because in most versions the land is brought up from below by someone or something diving down to get it. For instance, in a Hindu version Viṣnu, incarnated as a boar, brings up the clod on his tusk. Because the different Indo-European families chose different figures as their diver (and some have no diver at all), I've left the cause of the clod's appearance ambiguous.

This myth segues into one the most widespread Indo-European myth – the Dragon-Slaying Myth. It appears in so many of the descendant traditions that we can even reconstruct the sentence *eg^{w}hent óg^{w}him, "he killed the serpent" (Watkins, 1995, 154). As a creation the myth, it was often told by the various peoples at their new year rituals. For instance, a number of Irish heroes — Lugh or Finn mainly — kill a monster that is triple in some way (three hearts, three demons, etc.) at Samhain, the Irish new year. With each new year the world is recreated, and so the creation is reenacted.

The third myth, the ordering sacrifice, is the most important to our actions and fate, which is why it is told in such detail. Bruce Lincoln, in Myth, Cosmos, and Society (1986), has done the best work on this myth.

The Norse version is probably the best known. In one of the stories in Snorri's Edda

("Gylfaginning"), Ymir (< *yemós) is killed and cut up by Odin, god of priests, and his brothers Vili and Ve. Then, the world is formed from Ymir's body: the sky from his skull, etc.

As usual, the Romans both changed the myth to history and applied it to Rome, with the story of Romulus and Remus (possibly from *yemós). In the process of building the city, Remus is killed, in some variants by Romulus.

An interesting bit of information is found in Ovid's Metamorphoses (Book 4). Atlas, the giant who holds up the sky (the axis mundi personified), transforms into a mountain: beard and hair into trees, arms into mountain trails, bones into boulders. This forms a link between the sacrificial cosmology and its origin, the cosmogony. It makes us think — is death (Yemós) the pillar which holds up the universe?

When we think some more about this myth, we might be struck by the number of paired opposites. The first to appear is the Twins. That these two are opposites only becomes clear later in the myth, when one dies and the other lives, but the fact that they are twins makes us think about the question of the identity of opposites. What does it mean to be both of the same nature and of the opposite?

The ultimate opposition is life/death. Yemós becomes aware of the necessity of this opposition, and realizes that without it, there can be no true good. The only way to create the balance is for something to die. With his death, the life/death pair starts to operate fully. First, from Yemós' sacrificed body our world is created; life comes out of death. Second, Yemós is restored to a kind of life, as ruler of the world of the dead. His brother, on the other hand, enters the world and becomes himself subject to death. People are taught that the balance will be maintained, at least in this world, but are also assured that after death will come another kind of life.

Most important, by death entering the world, the ritual of sacrifice is instituted. With Yemós' death comes a means for humanity to approach the gods. This is perhaps the ultimate balance of life and death. To sacrifice is, of course, to kill, to bring Chaos into our Cosmos. It is only as a result of this entry of Chaos that the world becomes ordered – a delicious paradox. Just as the first sacrifice was the means by which the world was ordered, so our own sacrifices ensure the continuation of the world. This is sometimes represented in sacrifice by an arrangement of the parts of the sacrificed animal; our sacrifice is a repetition of the cosmogony, and by it, we ensure the continued newness of creation. This insight into the nature of life and death and their relationship is the deep meaning of this myth. When we understand it, both sacrifice and our own deaths become themselves creative acts. The entrance of death through a sacrifice makes death sacred. It is not a terrible thing; in fact, it is the great act of creation without which nothing would live. Death is as important to us as life; the world cannot continue without it, and our own deaths as well as the deaths of sacrificial animals ensure the world's continuance.

A word should be said about the end of things. Just as the world was formed from Yemós, so the world will, in the end, return to Yemós. He will be reformed: from the sky his skull, from the clouds his brain, from the celestial lights his eyes, etc. This will not truly be the end, though. Yemós will be sacrificed again, and a new Cosmos formed. There will actually be no end.

In fact, there was actually no beginning. The cycles have been going on forever, and will continue forever. New gods will rule, new people will walk new worlds and new wonders will appear; all according to the marvelous workings of the way of things.

Chapter 4

The Lay of the Land

A cosmos is ordered by definition, so if we say that the Proto-Indo-Europeans conceived of a cosmos, we are saying that there was a cosmic order. The way this order is expressed in a culture is called its "cosmology." Understanding a religion's cosmology is vital to understanding everything else about it. Notice where I have put this chapter – ahead of almost everything people usually think of when they think of religion.

Cosmology describes the universe. Not just any kind of universe — a "cosmos" is a universe that is ordered and beautiful. ("Cosmos" shares a root with "cosmetic.") This is especially true in Proto-Indo-European religion, which assumes not only that there is an order to things and that the universe is beautiful, but that it is order that makes the universe beautiful. Those of you who are instantly turned off by the idea of order, who think that all order is stifling, should hold on for a bit and see just what sort of order I'm talking about.

Because cosmology is so important, the Indo-European cultures preserved the original Proto-Indo-European cosmology very well; so well, in fact, that of all the things in this book, it is the one I am the most sure of.

Illustration 1 shows the Proto-Indo-European cosmos. <Illustration 1 goes here> In the center of the world is the axis mundi – the world pillar. This comes in two parts. First, there is the part that extends upward. A tree is shown here, but the Indo-Europeans sometimes envisioned it as a mountain. Sometimes they combined the two as a tree on a mountain. It can't be said whether the tree or the mountain was the earlier, but I suspect that both were used by the Proto-Indo-Europeans.

The species of the world tree varied in different areas. Oak was the most common, but ash and sycamore are also found. Oak seems to have been the original; the Proto-Indo-European *perk^{w}- has a large number of connected meanings in the Indo-European languages (oak, lightning, striking, mountain) which suggest a connected complex of ideas associated with the center of the world. The other species were probably promoted to world tree status because they were particularly impressive species in areas where tall oaks didn't grow.

The structure of the tree is the structure of the visible universe, its living skeleton. Here, we get a first glimpse of order.

At the foot of the tree is the other part, a well that extends downward just as the tree reaches up. "Downward" is perhaps less than accurate; the well does not go down so much as it comes up. The point at which it meets the tree is the point at which the world comes into being. This was not only in the beginning, it continues to do this; creation is a continual process.

The Norse cosmology is particularly well preserved. Although Christian himself, Snorri

Sturluson presented a complete Pagan cosmology in his Edda. "Gylfaginning" describes the world tree Yggdrasill, at the base of which the gods hold court (establish order). Its branches extend throughout the sky, and its roots support the world. Its three main roots reach into different worlds. One goes into Ginnungagap, the Chaos out of which the Cosmos was formed and where the frost giants (the enemies of the gods) live. At its end is Mimir's well, source of Odin's wisdom. Another has its end in Niflheim, where the dragon and other serpents gnaw upon it. The final root is in the land of the gods, and ends at the well of ørlog, (the pattern laid down by the past), the actual spot of the gods' council place. From this well, the three women, the Norns, water Yggdrasill. It has been argued (Bauschatz, 1975, 77) that these wells are elaborations of an earlier, single well. The earth itself is circular, surrounded by the sea. On the other side of the sea live the frost giants; on this side is a wall to protect the earth from the giants. Because of our world's central location among the other worlds, it is called "Midgard" – the "Middle Enclosed Place" ("Gylfaginning" 8). In the ocean, encircling the world is the cosmic snake, the so-called Midgard Serpent, whose greatest enemy is Thor. The sky was formed from the skull of Ymir, a primeval giant who was dismembered to form the world.

"Voluspá," in the Poetic Edda, describes a similar cosmology. Yggdrasill, described here as an evergreen ash, has at its base the well of fate. The encircling ocean that borders this world is also encountered in Icelandic tales.

At the other end of the Indo-European world, Iranian religion, even with the reform of Zoroaster, preserved an equally complete Indo-European cosmology. As described by Mary Boyce (1984:10), this scheme is of a flat circular earth resting on water. From it rises the mountain High Hara, from the top of which pours the river Aredvi, emptying into the sea that surrounds the earth. In other descriptions, it is a plant of life in the center. All of this is enclosed within a stone sky.

For all the complaints made about how little Indo-European examples have survived in Greece, we find some shockingly clear versions of the IE cosmology in the stories surrounding Herakles. One of his twelve Labors was to bring back the Apples of the Hesperides. These sacred apples grew on a tree that was on the mountain of the world pillar Atlas, and guarded by him. (The tree is located in other places in other versions, including beyond the world-surrounding ocean.) The tree was surrounded by a wall (an enclosed space, like the Cosmos) and tended by maidens (like the Norns). It was protected as well by a serpent coiled around it (like the Midgard serpent). Herakles kills the serpent with an arrow (Thor killing the Midgard serpent with his thrown hammer) and takes the apples. The story of his Second Labor repeats the theme. He has to kill the multi-headed Hydra (the Great Serpent), who lives in a bottomless swamp (the waters of Chaos), under a tree. He does so with his club, a sword and flaming arrows. (Graves, 1960, II: 107-109, 145-149.)

More fragmented evidence is found in some of the earliest Greek material; the Homeric tradition and the religious rituals. The Iliad (Bk. 14) speaks of the surrounding River Ocean, describing it as the fountainhead of the gods (and thus, like the tree of the Hesperides, both surrounding and in the center). A vertical division is described by Poseidon in the Iliad 15.185ff: the sea, the land of the dead, and the sky belong each to a different god, but the earth and the holy mountain Olympus belongs to all of them. "Olympus" may originally have meant simply "mountain" (Langdon, 2000, 466); it was the mountain. Although not described as the center of the world, it fulfills that spot's functions of connector between the earth and the celestial gods, as well their council place. Under the ground lives Hades, the god of death, and dead heroes. The surface of the earth, like Olympus, belongs

neither to the celestial, terrestrial, nor aquatic deities; it is shared by them. Unlike Olympus, it is inhabited by a number of land spirits as well (e.g. the dryads).

Another Greek center of the world is Delphi where a priestess prophesied (and her pronouncements were always true) when inspired by fumes rising from a cleft. The spot was originally guarded by a sacred snake, the Python, who was killed by Apollo. The holy mountain Olympus reaches up into the sky, where the gods dwell, and the earth's navel Delphi reaches downward, whence true prophecy arises. The cleft, like the well of the Norns, gives access to wisdom that is obtained through women. The Balts and Slavs believed in a world tree, a birch, that grew either at the end of the world or in the middle of the sea (Gimbutas, 1967, 754). It grew from a cosmic stone, connecting heaven, earth, and hell. The horses of the sun were tied to it. The tree provided access to the land of the gods. When people died, it was believed that they had to climb a stone hill, which is the sky, to get to the land of the gods.

Among the Celts, the clearest description appears in the story of Niall of the Nine Hostages. The hag who gave him the kingship guarded a well that is described in a thirteenth century poem as being in the exact center of Ireland. In one version, in the middle of the well was a stone that shone like the sun, from which a fountain of water came. Next to it were five yew trees (one for each province of Ireland), dropping their fruit into it. Their roots extended into the well. The fruits were eaten by the salmon in the well. The hag identified the stone as the pillar of Uisnech and the spring as that of Tara, the two places considered to be (both) the center of Ireland (Breatnach, 1953, 330-332).

Celtic folklore provides other information – fairies living under the land and across the sea that are dangerous but powerful, sacred wells that contain a fiery liquid that gives wisdom to the worthy. There are also the continental Jupiter columns, built near water, with an image of Jupiter spearing a serpent on their tops.

These variations in the descendant traditions serve only to emphasize aspects of the original plan – a world surrounded and supported by ocean, with a well in the center which reaches down to the underworld water. In and beyond the water lies a great serpent (or serpents), who threatens the Cosmos. The water feeds a tree or a mountain, which returns its own produce to the water, and the cycle continues.

The axis mundi formed by well and tree extends from below (water) through the land into the sky. These are the three worlds of Proto-Indo-European: Bhudhnōn ("Bottom"), Médhyom ("Middle"), and Weis ("Air") (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1994; 405, 408-409).

The tree has a structure formed by its branches and roots. Water, however, has no structure. It shapes itself according to the container into which it is poured. The container for the cosmology's water is the tree. The water is the unmanifest, the tree the manifest. Or, to put it another way, the water is Chaos and the tree Cosmos proper.

The water in the well feeds the tree. What we have here is recognition that an unrenewed Cosmos would grow brittle and unyielding. It would become like a crystal, beautiful but dead. It is the constant influx of Chaos that prevents this from happening.

Chaos, however, is dangerous. It threatens to overwhelm Cosmos. We need Chaos; otherwise our world breaks and we die. Indo-Europeans do not like Chaos. In fact, many Indo-European rituals are intended to deal with it. They do not deal with it by denying it, however. The Cosmos, after all, does not deny it. Instead, just like the Cosmos, Indo-European ritual incorporates Chaos into order. An Indo-European ritual may be said to take place at the point at which the well and the tree meet.

This is one of the ways in which the cosmology affects the religion.

We're getting a bit ahead of ourselves, though. Let's return to the cosmology.

What exactly is the order we are talking about? As an image, it is the structure formed by the tree's branches and roots. But what does this really mean? Let's take a quick look at the importance of order in a few of the Indo-European traditions; we will find there a word which will not only give us a shorter way to discuss this than "the order of the Cosmos," but will tell us something about what this order meant to the ancient Indo-Europeans.

We can start with Zoroastrianism. The central concept of this religion is that the universe is a battleground between the good god, Ahura Mazda, and the evil spirit (not quite a god) Angra Mainyu. The will of Ahura Mazda is that everything be in a beautiful harmony, an order, which Zoroastrians call asha, opposed by Angra Mainyu's lie. Humanity cannot just act beautifully in accord with this order, but through our actions, both moral and ritual, we can actually strengthen asha in the universe and aid in the battle.

In Vedic Hinduism, we find the same sort of thing. There the word is ṛta. The devas, the good gods, support the ṛta, and the asuras, the bad gods, are its opponents. (The situation is a bit more complicated, but this will do for now.) The asuras are, in fact, the forces of Chaos. They seek to disturb the Cosmos, to disrupt the order.

In a less clearly religious sense, if we look at the Greeks we find the words aristos, "the best" (> "aristocracy") harmonia, "harmony," and ararisko, "fit, adapt, harmonize." Armenian gives us arnel, "to make" (Benveniste, 1989, 369-370).

All of these words – asha, ṛta, aristos, harmonia, ararisko, and arnel, as well as others such as "arithmetic" "art," and "rite," go back to Proto-Indo-European H_2er-, "to fit together according to the proper pattern;" a proper pattern, one which is both organized and beautiful. The Proto-Indo-European word for this pattern is Xártus (*H_2ertus).

Betty Heiman (1957, 734) says something about the Vedic ṛta that describes the Xártus perfectly: "[Ṛta] is rather the inner balance of mutually corroborating, or even of reciprocally counteracting, forces which through their very rotation and fluctuation finally reach an equilibrium. The cosmic process of Ṛta is a dynamic order of persons and objects, not dedicated from without, but developing freely from within." Although all of our actions take place within the Xártus, and although it should be our goal to act in accord with the Xártus, even those actions that are not in accord get plowed back in and incorporated into it.

All of Proto-Indo-European life and religion is simply an attempt to know the Xártus and to live by it. We are to find our place in things and to fulfill that place to the best of our abilities. This entire book is dedicated to explaining the Xártus and the actions by which we can act in a way harmonious with it.

Okay, here's the crazy thing – hidden in the waters of Chaos are the seeds of Cosmos. The trees job, at the point where it meets with the well, is to extract those seeds and incorporate them into the structure of its branches, which is the Xártus.

Where do those seeds come from? How do they get in the waters of Chaos? Look carefully at the illustration. Fruits are falling from the tree into the waters that feed the well. The tree feeds the water with its seeds. The water transforms them and then feeds them back into the tree. The tree transforms them into its branches, incorporates them into the Xártus, and then feeds them back into the water. And so the circle turns.

What are these fruits? They are the deeds of everything that is part of the Cosmos. The Xártus is not an external order. It arises from the Cosmos itself. It is a living thing. It is affected by all events in the Cosmos, as it affects them.

There is an exchange occurring at the very heart of the universe: Cosmos gives to Chaos, Chaos gives to Cosmos. It is through this exchange that the very existence of our Cosmos is assured. This exchange is the very basis for the order in which we live our lives.

This exchange, particularly its reciprocity, is a representation of the central truth of Indo-European religion: a gift demands a gift. I have given this rule the name "ghosti-principle." The Proto-Indo-European word *ghosti- means "someone with whom one has a reciprocal obligation of hospitality." (This word is the root of both "guest" and "host.") A ghostis (plural *ghostēs) is someone with whom you are bound through an exchange of gifts. The rules of etiquette require that if someone invites us to a dinner at their house, we owe them a dinner at ours. If we are to establish a relationship, we must take part in reciprocity. This is clear on a human level. We will see how it is the basis of Proto-Indo-European ritual theory. Here we see it at the root of the cosmology.

The part of the Cosmos we live in is Médhyom, familiar to students of Norse mythology (and Tolkien fans) as "Middle Earth." Whereas the overall Cosmos is organized in a threefold vertical pattern, Médhyom is divided into four. These are the familiar directions. There is a difference in function between them in many of the descendant traditions. Vedism alone gives us a number of systems: the south is Indra, or the Ancestors, or Agni, and so on. Emily Lyle (1990, 6-25) has attempted to reconstruct a Proto-Indo-European system of attributions from sources as diverse as Roman chariot teams, Plato's Republic, and the Vedic sacrificial system. She suggests that the first function is associated with the east, the second with the south, the third with the north, and the trifunctional with the west.

In Ireland, however, we see a very different system: "knowledge in the west, battle in the north, prosperity in the east, music in the south, kingship in the center" (The Settling of the Manor of Tara, 23). Here we see the two axes, east-west and north-south, reversed (with the interesting variation of music representing the third function).

What's going on here? Is Lyle wrong? Is the Irish system an aberration? As with so many Indo-European questions, the answer is cleared up by an appeal to linguistics.

There is a fair amount of variation of words for directions from one Indo-European language to another, which might make us doubt the importance of the directions to the Proto-Indo-Europeans. There is, however, a pattern to the terms. The Cornish word for "north," cleth, is the same as that for "left;" Sanskrit dakṣiṇa, "south," is cognate with Latin dexter, "right," and with Old Irish dess, both "right" and "south." The connection between "right" and "south" is common throughout the Indo-European world. (Words for "north," on the other hand, vary; people would rather not talk about the dark side of the world, so they continually made up new words for it.) Two more bits of evidence and it all falls into place: the openings of Indo-European temples tend to be on the east, and the statues in them face that direction.

What we see from this is that what matters in Indo-European thought is not the directions in which things are, but towards which they face. South is to the right and north to the left if we, like the Greek deity images, are facing east. East is a very important direction in Indo-European ritual, as we will see later; but what is important here is that when one is facing east in prayer, as is standard, one is facing the priestly direction. In Ireland, The Settling of the Manor of Tara is telling us where the

functions are, while the other traditions tell us where we should face.

The point of all this is that there are indeed things attributed to the four directions, and those are the three functions plus the trifunctional, but the two that matter in religion are, it should be no surprise, east, the direction of prayer, and west, where one stands while praying. These are the directions of the priests and the trifunctional king, the two most important people in Indo-European religion. The other directions are just left and right.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans did divide the Médhyom into the four directions, but did not make a big deal about it, except for east and west, with their important parts to play in ritual.

To sum up, the Proto-Indo-European universe is a Cosmos, an ordered and beautiful structure. It is organized vertically into three worlds: Bhudhnōn, Médhyom, and Weis. In Bhudhnōn and outside the universe are beings that are opposed to the Cosmos, whereas in Weis are beings that support it. Those of us in the middle world are also in the middle of this opposition. Our goal is to live by the Xártus, the living structure of the Cosmos, and thereby help maintain the Cosmos.

Xártus has a tendency to become too rigid, but it contains within itself the very means to correct this. By allowing the Chaos of Bhudhnōn to enter into the Cosmos through carefully controlled means, the deities keep the Cosmos both structured and creative. This is expressed mythically by the image of the tree, the support of the universe, and the well, which brings up quantities of water from Bhudhnōn to nourish the tree. We can contribute to the process by actions, especially ritual ones, that are properly designed to bring in the creative water without threatening the Cosmos.

Keep these things – the Xártus, the importance of reciprocity, the proper use of Chaos, the vertical organization into three worlds, the axis of the tree and the well, the fourfold division of Médhyom, and our responsibility and ability to keep the Cosmos safe and strong by acting in harmony with the Xártus – in mind as you read the rest of this book.

Chapter 5

Xártus, Dhétis, Yéwesā, Swā́rtus, Swédhos

How's that for a chapter title? It's nothing to be scared of, though. These are merely names for different kinds of order or law. We saw in the last chapter how much the Proto-Indo-Europeans loved order. This chapter will discuss different ways in which they expressed this love.

Xártus we have already been introduced to. It is the living structure of the universe. In the cosmology, it is the pattern created by the branches and roots of the world tree, and is contained in a potential form in the water that feeds the tree. The tree brings into manifestation that which the water holds only in implication. I bring it up again because it is the basis of all the other subjects of this chapter. Dhétis, yéwesā, swā́rtus, and swédhos are all are ways of manifesting the Xártus.

The tendency of the Xártus is towards order. Since the Xártus is a living, growing thing, so is the order toward which it tends. But order is by nature static. It is the element of Chaos that is fed into the Xártus both at its source (the water and the serpents that live in it) and its manifestation (the ability of its products, especially people, to work against the Xártus, the results of which are fed back into it), that keeps Cosmos from being so static that it would be oppressive and would shatter at the slightest touch. The Xártus does not shatter. That is because it is pliant; it is alive.

The Xártus is preserved among people both by biology, which is formed by it, and by culture, which is formed in part by it and in part by the humans who take part in culture and pass it along. The Xártus is thus both preserved and changed in its passing along, and different cultures develop differently as a result of local conditions and the choices the members of each culture make. Each culture is a different branch of the Tree, and the differing cultures, each in their own way acting with or against the Xártus, contribute to the infinite diversity that is the Xártus.

The Xártus, in its manifested form of the tree, is many-branched, each of its branches being equivalent to a space/time event. Larger limbs belong to larger units, such as a person or a nation. The smallest limbs interpenetrate infinitesimally throughout all events and beings, providing a structure to them, and bringing them the power of the existence. It is similar to the way the blood vessels penetrate between the cells of the body, bringing each its nourishment.

The Xártus impels, but it does not compel. It is not inexorable Fate, but rather more like momentum. It is the way things are and the way they will be if things continue along the same path, not the way they must be.

One may perceive the Xártus, or at least conform to it, in a number of ways. All are worth practicing, since by them the approach to the Xártus becomes clearer and easier.

Divination can tell us about the Xártus. It relies on the assumption that all seemingly random incidents are in fact occurring as part of the Xártus. By mastering and practicing forms of divination, the Xártus becomes clearer. Chapter 19 covers divination in greater detail.

Study of the world in general and that which is about you in particular is a good method. The

Xártus is swirling through all these things, and understanding how they work will help you understand how it works. This kind of study involves both experiential study and "book learning." The danger with intellectual study is that it is too easy for it to become your only path, or for it to seem so much more important than the others that you neglect them. Be careful to balance your practice.

It is not that you will see the Xártus with your eyes, like a great net laid over the world. It is more that you will become aware which of your thoughts and deeds are in accord with it. You will perceive that one direction is more desirable than another, and it may not even be the one that profits you the most. You may think of it as intuition; that is just a name given to the prompting of the Xártus.

It is not as if you will perceive the Xártus in a flash of inspiration, either. (This is possible, but not likely.) Sudden glimpses of parts of it, of how things are inter-related, may come. It won't matter; bit by bit, you will be turning your life onto a path that flows along with the Xártus.

Eventually, if you continue with the practices and follow the urging of the Xártus, you may not even be consciously aware of the Xártus. You will simply flow through life, doing what is right, just, and true – what is of the Xártus.

Walking this path means following a variety of sub-laws that are part of the Xártus. The most obvious are the laws of nature. Some of these you don't have any choice with; gravity is not going to suspend itself for you. Others, such as the laws we see operating in relationships between species, are possible to violate. These should still be followed, since they are the working of the Xártus in the realm of the physical.

Just as the universe is structured according to the Xártus, human behavior is structured by dhétis; the laws made by human beings to regulate society. A perfect dhétis would be a reflection of the Xártus for the people, place, time, and all other circumstances in which they were created, fitting these things precisely into the Xártus. Developing such a dhétis is an impossible quest, there being so many variables, but a society should nonetheless try. Many Pagans are already involved in this task, working for environmental laws and social justice. How much do you know about the Common Law, other than that you can be considered married by it in some states? Common Law is not legislated. It grows; it arises naturally as a society lives. Common Law expresses the way things have been done, the momentum of a society, and the identity that develops through its existence. It is one clear form of the dhétis.

Perfection of the dhétis is impossible because laws are about compromise and getting along, and even at their best represent a groping towards perfection rather than its attainment. Like the Xártus, the dhétis may be considered a living process, constantly evolving, hopefully for the better.

Since we live in a non-Pagan society, it might seem as if the laws will not fit the Xártus perfectly, since they are largely made by non-Pagans. This would be an unfair view. There are some things worth remembering. First, those non-Pagans are part of the circumstances of your place and time and thus have their own part to play in the Xártus. Their needs and values must be respected and taken into consideration. Second, the deeds of non-Pagans may well be more in accord with the Xártus than those of Pagans, if the culture is primarily non-Pagan. Third, as said before, no society's dhétis can exactly fit the Xártus. Try to make yours do this, but do so in a relaxed manner. Things will work out. They may take time, but the Xártus has all time at its disposal. Fourth, your own behavior has its effect on the Xártus of your society. Live in accord with the Xártus yourself, and be an example and inspiration to others. Let your life be a testimony to the beauty and desirability of our path. Fifth, as part of this example, obedience to just dhétis and a protest of unjust dhétis is your responsibility.

Work to improve your society, both by obeying those laws that help society function smoothly and justly, and by working to change those that do not.

In Proto-Indo-European society, each group, or clan, was headed by its ptḗr ("father"), and each larger grouping of several clans by its Rḗḱs ("king"). The actions and moral capacity of the leaders, especially the Rḗḱs, reflected on the society. If the Rḗḱs' dhétis did not correspond sufficiently to the Xártus, his whole group could suffer, through the displeasure of the gods, military defeat, and/or crop failure. A Rḗḱs could be deposed for this, since in most cases he had been elected, at least by an upper class, and ruled only with their consent.

Nowadays in the secular world, most countries have fortunately extended their franchise so that all classes are involved in the selection of their leader. The council, which even in Proto-Indo-European days most likely existed to advise the Rḗḱs and carry out his decisions, has been expanded into Congresses and Parliaments. Under such a system, it is the responsibility of each voter to ensure that the dhétis of the land corresponds to the Xártus as best as possible. Of course, this requires an attempt on the voter's part to understand the Xártus as well as possible. The broad outlines are obvious – justice, respect for life, proper defense, ecological protection. Keep in mind that even though Proto-Indo-European society was theocratic, it is in keeping with the Proto-Indo-European love for truth to keep religion and state separate, since it is only in the free contention of beliefs that the truth may be found.

The yéwesā get their own chapter (chapter 7) because they are so important, especially to this book. For now, it is enough to say that these are the rules by which rituals are conducted and they are the working of the Xártus in their own way as is the dhétis in its. Ritual, properly performed, puts you in contact with the gods and thus indirectly with the Xártus. A proper ritual is itself in accord with the Xártus and while performing it, you are yourself in accord with the Xártus. It may be said that a single ritual, properly performed, will make the path of your life that of the Xártus.

Swā́rtus is the Xártus of a particular individual, a twig of the great tree. One's swā́rtus is determined by the context of the Xártus as a whole, by all the factors that make up the Xártus – genetics, family life, education, culture, etc. What you are meant to do is based on where you come from.

Must you follow your swā́rtus? Of course not. Like the Xártus, it impels but does not compel. It is, in fact, not a separate thing: it only exists when the individual is observed in isolation. But the individual does not exist in isolation, only in relation to the whole. Because of this, sometimes it is necessary to break one's swā́rtus. Sometimes the branch must be broken for the sake of the tree. Sometimes aspects of one's swā́rtus, each arising from a separate influence, contradict each other and a choice must be made. We see examples of this throughout the Irish tales. There we find an aspect of swā́rtus called a geas, a prohibition or compulsion associated with an individual. For instance, Cú Chulainn had geasa against eating dog meat and against refusing hospitality. When, towards the end of his life, he was offered a guest dish of dog-meat, he had to choose which geas to break. His swā́rtus had crossed itself, and he had to take one path or the other. He chose to accept the meat (a good decision, since hospitality is an important virtue). Of course, he ended up dead. Then there was Conaire, who broke a number of geasa on the way to a feast. He did so because to act differently would not have been the proper way for a king to act. He sacrificed his own swā́rtus on the altar of the swā́rtus of kingship, a much larger branch than his own. He did the right thing. Of course, he ended up dead too.

So what does this mean? That if you break your swā́rtus you will end up dead? Maybe. But a few things must be kept in mind. First, in these tales we are dealing with warriors. They have already assumed, by virtue of their warrior-hood, a swā́rtus that is likely to end in violent death. Their goal is not long life, but *ḱléwos ńdhgʷhitom, "undying fame." Since their stories are still told, they got what they wanted. A first function individual, a priest, might have lost out in other ways. Perhaps his prayers might have gone unheeded. Second, they each broke their swā́rtus in the service of a greater good. They paid the price, it is true, but they did the right thing. Some things are worth dying for.

Following one's swā́rtus is like drifting down a stream, the easy and proper way to go. Breaking it is like turning and trying to swim against the stream, tiring and improper. What if someone is drowning upstream from you? You must turn and swim to save them. The result may be that you become tired and are swept away, perhaps to be dashed on the rocks. But you followed the Xártus. You did the right thing.

This brings us to the swédhos. This is just a fancy Proto-Indo-European way to say "ethics." (*Swédhos is, in fact, the root of "ethics.") Literally, it is "that which pertains to oneself." Swédhos may be thought of as the ways in which one works out one's swā́rtus. Thus, they are also the ways to follow the Xártus as a whole, and in the end, this is what matters the most.

If you knew your swā́rtus perfectly, there would be no problem with swédhos (except for the doing part, usually the hardest part). Most people struggle to know what to do, just like me. It is for this sort of person that the ancients developed lists of virtues, or more often, told stories that showed what those virtues were. These virtues are actions that follow the main branches of the Xártus. You can't go wrong by following them, even if your swā́rtus should put greater demands on you.

Now, ethics can be defined as the study and practice of the right way to live, of the way that leads to Virtue. It is the art of doing the right thing in the right context. In Proto-Indo-European religion, the definition of Virtue is very simple: Virtue is that which is in accord with the Xártus. The closer our actions are in accord with the Xártus, the closer we are to Virtue.

How are we to determine whether our acts are in accord with the Xártus? There may be said to be three kinds of virtuous acts: First, those that put us in accord with the Xártus. These may be called virtuous because it is through them that ultimate Virtue is obtained. Some of these have been discussed already, such as close observation of the world. Second, those acts that are already in accord with the Xártus. Of course, these are the most virtuous of acts, but they require the diligent performance of the first kind of act in order to be known. The Xártus must not only be perceived; it must be so internalized that all acts flow from it as naturally as the Xártus itself flows from the Cosmos (and vice versa). Third, those that do both; ritual acts according to the yéwesā both lead one into knowledge of the Xártus and are themselves expressions of the Xártus.

Actions that are commonly thought of as virtues may be any of the three kinds of Virtue. Before discussing these in detail, however, it will be necessary to consider the interesting fact that such virtues may differ from culture to culture, from place to place, from time to time. How then can they be considered virtues? Does Virtue change in differing contexts?

Put quite simply, no. Virtue (with a capital "V") is accord with the Xártus. This principle never changes, no matter the context. The Xártus is context, and so Virtue will always be within it. The virtues (with a small "v") may change from one context to another because they are operating within the Xártus, and the Xártus consists of all factors relevant to a particular time, place, and event. It

therefore changes within different contexts. That is a function of its being organic — it grows, it is not static.

When an action is being considered, it must be considered within its context. Only then will it have a chance of being in accord with the Xártus. This context may include culture. For instance, bragging may be considered a virtue in a Norse context and a vice in a Japanese one. There is no contradiction here. The Xártus has manifested itself differently in each culture, and to be in accord with it actually requires contradictory behavior according to the culture.

This is not saying that anything goes, that there are no rules, that because an act is virtuous in one culture and a vice in another, there are no true virtues. There are indeed true virtues, once the context is considered. The context is the Xártus as it is at the moment when something is to be done. To act in accord with this is virtuous, to act against it is a vice — within their proper context.

So what types of acts are virtuous within a Proto-Indo-European context?

First, there is Truth. Truth, which in personal actions may be called integrity, is a virtue that transcends culture, because to live according to Truth, to live with personal integrity, is the same thing as living in accord with the Xártus. Truth is thus not just a virtue; it is Virtue itself.

Similar things may be said of justice. Justice is acting with regard to one another in accordance with the way things are. It is a virtue that is beyond culture. It may express itself differently in different cultures, it may be determined differently; this is not because justice has changed, or has only a relative value, but because the Xártus has had its own changes, and to be in accord with it requires corresponding changes. It is the bringing of Truth into society or the manifestation of truth in it. The things that justice demands may change with context; the society that is Just is that which reflects Truth the closest.

These two might be said to be self-sufficient; together they comprise all Virtue: one's own Truth and Truth in society. Of course, life is not so easy. To act virtuously requires more specificity in order to guide us towards what is True or Just in a particular case, and to help us with the often more difficult job of acting as that knowledge requires.

Hospitality is one of the greatest of this sort of virtue. It is the way in which we humans express the ghosti-principle with others, not just with other people, but with the gods as well. This is what ritual is; a sharing of hospitality with the gods. There are even myths in which those we think are human are in fact gods. Thus it is the rule to treat human guests as we would the gods.

But not only for these reasons. Hospitality, through the operation of the ghosti-principle, glues society together. Not only is this good from a practical point of view; it is an actual part of the Xártus. Just as the Xártus is an expression of the way the parts of the Cosmos relate to each other, hospitality is the most important way the parts of society can relate in an aesthetically pleasing manner. The practice of hospitality is thus a way to make the Xártus more real among us, and to put ourselves more in accord with it.

Hospitality was taken so seriously that in Vedic India, the failure to offer food to a guest meant that the gods were excluded from a feast. A story told by Ovid in Metamorphoses demonstrates hospitality's importance dramatically. Jupiter and Mercury, on a trip to our world, are turned away from every home except for that of a poor couple, Bookies and Philemon. There they are treated with great hospitality. The result is that the others in the area, those who had not lived up to the rules of hospitality, are destroyed while Baucis and Philemon are made priest and priestess of a temple and granted the extraordinary boon of one not dying before the other. The message is clear: hospitality is

such a divine responsibility that even the gods are caught up by it.

Tied in with the principle of hospitality is noblesse oblige. The Bible puts it in a way that agrees with the Proto-Indo-European: "Of those to whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). The more you have, the more open your hands should be.

This is the model for Indo-European charity. We are obligated to share our wealth. We are obligated to help strangers as well as those we know. So important is this model that the Proto-Indo-European deity who enforces charity is Dyḗus Ptḗr, the highest of the gods. Thus we have Zeus Xenios, "Zeus of the Stranger," who enforces our relationships with those not of our in-group.

Charity is in the hands of the enforcer of natural order because it is part of the natural order. The Proto-Indo-European god Xáryomen, god of the social law (the dhétis) has his part to play, since the practice of charity will result in public order, and the dispensing of charity is the dispensing of human justice as well, but the chief god of charity is the chief god of all.

Remember that *ghosti- means "someone with whom one has a reciprocal relationship of hospitality," and that the principle which sustains the Cosmos is expressed in terms of hospitality. Through the giving and receiving of hospitality, we take part in the force that forms and drives the universe. Remember this the next time you think that a particular exchange of gifts (such as at work or on certain holidays) is meaningless. It is in fact an opportunity to strengthen relationships, follow ancestral ways, and support the structure of the universe. Pretty serious stuff.

Courage is a virtue because it is only through having courage that we can maintain our personal integrity, that we can express Truth according to Justice. It is through courage that we maintain our grip on living the way we should; on living according to the Xártus. This includes courage in our daily lives, to resist the temptations that draw us away from the Xártus, and to make the efforts to attain knowledge of and live in accord with the Xártus. It also includes courage in battle and other emergencies, because in those cases it allows us to live (and perhaps die) in accord with what we believe is important and true.

Loyalty is a virtue. It is one because it allows us to continue the links established by hospitality. But because it breaks agreements, implied or explicit, it is a violation of Truth. Disloyalty is thus a form of lack of integrity, and usually arises from a lack of courage. In such a way are the virtues connected.

Temperance is a virtue because tending too far in any one direction can lead us from the balance that is inherent in the Xártus. It may also blind us to what our duties should be according to the other virtues, even to what the Xártus of the moment is. Like the Xártus, virtue is a flexible thing. It does not say one should be all one way in a rigid system but that one should instead live according to current context but without going beyond the greater context.

Excellence is a virtue, what the Greeks called arete (> *xártus). It is what the Army calls "Be all that you can be." It is a virtue because it calls you to follow your swā́rtus, because it says to you that you are capable of trying, because it holds up the Xártus in front of you and says, go on, give it a shot.

Responsibility is a virtue. It, like so many of the other virtues, is a form of Truth, for it is doing what you have said you will do. It is a form of Truth in action.

Duty is a combination of responsibility and loyalty. You perform those acts that you have agreed to, no matter how unpleasant, and no matter how unexpected they may have been at the time of assuming the responsibility and loyalty.

Piety is a great virtue. It is doing what the gods desire. It is performing the proper rituals in the

proper way at the proper time. Ritual propriety is a part of piety.

Even more than doing what the gods desire, piety is the desire to do so. It is the perceived need to worship according to the customary manner. It is a love for the gods that leads you to do what is right in prayer and in ritual. There are acts that are pious to all the gods – prayer, offerings, constant thought. There are acts that may be pious to a particular deity – certain offerings, or particular requirements for purification. Learn them; perform them. This is piety.

This leads us to our next virtue, knowledge. Knowledge of local events leads to perception of the local xártus, and from there to the Xártus as a whole. Knowledge of the gods leads to proper worship. Knowledge of the yéwesā leads to proper worship. Knowledge of particular facts or skills makes you what you are meant to be, and allows you to express your own swā́rtus with excellence.

Love is a virtue. It is closely related to hospitality and loyalty, and leads to the same thing, closer ties among people and thus a strengthening of the web of relationships that is part of the Xártus. Love of the gods leads to piety. Love of knowledge leads to its cultivation. Love of ritual leads to ritual propriety. Romantic love leads to a binding that at its best is part of your swā́rtus, what you are meant to be. Love strengthens all the virtues, and is a virtue in itself. It may be said to be the perfect embodiment of the ghosti-principle.

These are not all of the virtues, but I hope they give you an idea how others may be determined. All virtues arise in context, so be as sure as you can of your context. For instance, individual deities to whom you are devoted may impose restrictions on you. To live up to these is a virtue. It is a kind of loyalty. It is also a direct response to the part of the Xártus that the individual deity expresses.

The attempt to lead a virtuous life is always a struggle. It can never be said to be accomplished forever. Such a life could not be Virtue, for Virtue is life in accord with the Xártus, and the Xártus is a living, changing thing. Virtue is a dance between the world that you encounter and your perception of the Xártus, and you have been put down smack dab in the middle of it. The music plays on, and the only question is what sort of dance you will do. Will it be one of Virtue? Follow the swédhos; follow your swā́rtus. Do the right thing.

Chapter 6

Spiritual Beings

The Proto-Indo-Europeans were unreservedly polytheistic, worshiping and revering a large number of divine beings. Their descendant cultures each acknowledged hundreds and even thousands of these. Some of this multiplicity is due to an elaboration of the earlier system; gods might be discovered at any time, as it became necessary or desirable. For instance, the Romans created gods from abstractions, such as Justice and Faith, and from men, such as the deified emperors. Sometimes new gods were absorbed from non-Indo-European cultures; the Greek Aphrodite is descended from the Near Eastern Astarte (via "Ashtoroth").

Spiritual beings can be divided into Deities, Ancestors, Land Spirits, Miscellaneous Beings, and the Outsiders, but these categories are not hard and fast. Ancestors can become deities or land spirits, and some beings are hard to classify. The Greeks, who divided spiritual beings into Gods, Daimones, and Heroes, sometimes found it difficult to separate heroes from gods. Sometimes — Herakles is the best example — a hero could even become a god.

In each of the three worlds dwells a different type of numinous being. Above are the celestial Deities. Below (in the land of the dead) are the Ancestors. On the horizontal plane are the Land Spirits. And in the waters or beyond them are the Outsiders.

Déiwōs

The Deities

The word for "deities" is "Déiwōs" (sing. Déiwos) "the shining ones," or "the celestial ones." This leaves us no doubt both as to how the Proto-Indo-Europeans thought of them and where they believed they dwelt. There are also chthonic deities, those of the Underworld, but the celestial ones set the primary tone. The deities are also the *ghutom, "to whom libations are poured" (> "god"), telling us one way in which they are to be worshiped. They are *dotores weswām, "givers of goods," telling us what they do in return for this worship.

The Déiwōs are *n-mrtōs, "undying." They may have had a beginning (perhaps as long ago as the beginning of the universe itself), but they have no end. This is because they drink a beverage called *Nekter, also known as the ambrosia or nekter of the Greeks, the soma of India and the haoma of Iran. A version of it may be drunk by us in ritual, giving us power and long life, but even that won't keep death from us forever. We are not gods.

We are not gods. This is one of the articles of the Indo-European faith. We are related to them, made from similar stuff, and even able to interbreed with them. But they are a different kind of being, as different from us as we are from the animals. We are ontologically different.

The gods are beings who are powerful, holy, and good. They are not archetypes, and in no way are they mere projections of psychological reality. They certainly correspond to archetypes, but this

should be no surprise; one of the ways in which psychologists determined archetypes was by investigating myths.

More important, the gods that we know are those who are relevant to us. This explains why so many of them are good to us, because we wouldn't tend to encounter deities who weren't. Even those deities who aren't good can be dealt with in such a way that they are as good to us as possible, since they fit into the Xártus, which is the ultimate good. There may well be other gods, but the ones we worship are the ones suitable for us.

The gods are not personifications of natural laws either; the laws and the gods co-exist. The gods are both the servants and the guardians of natural law. They enforce it but are not the same as it. The gods uphold the Xártus. This is simply by being who they are, by performing their functions and by opposing the forces that would destroy the Cosmos — the Outsiders.

The gods are individual beings, separate from us and from each other. As individuals, each has their own interests and preferences. This is necessary if they are to take part in the Xártus, which is a relationship between separate elements. Knowing and following the Xártus perfectly, they are much wiser and more powerful than us. This means that their interests and preferences will sometimes seem mysterious to us, or even be unknown. Our ancestors, through thousands of years of experience and by thousands of different people, came to understand them pretty well, and we should rely pretty heavily on the records our ancestors left us.

The deities are not omnipotent. They are constrained both by their nature and the Xártus. For instance, Dyḗus Ptḗr is a god of justice; it would be against his nature to act unjustly. The gods cannot act against their nature because it is their nature that defines their existence. This does not mean that Dyḗus Ptḗr will always act in a way that seems just to us. He has more concerns than each of us and more wisdom to understand what is necessary. It also does not mean that he chooses between acting in accord with the Xártus and acting not in accord with it. The question simply doesn't occur to him; he is a being whose actions always correspond to the Xártus.

Because they are constrained by the Xártus, the deities are similar to natural forces. Each is part of the working of the universe and each fulfills their part to perfection. That is what makes them gods.

Neither of these two constraints – their nature and the Xártus – are external to the gods. They are both what the gods are. There is nothing above the gods (except for other gods). There is something within them and behind them. Notice also that one of these constraints — the Xártus — is within and behind everything. Notice also that it might be said that the nature of a deity is the same as the Xártus for them. Another way of putting this is that each "rides" a branch of the Xártus, the one that corresponds to their nature, expressing it, affecting it and governing it.

Judging from the descendant traditions, the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have worshiped a large number of deities, and honored a number of lesser divine beings as well. Unfortunately, only a few of these can be reconstructed by both name and function. Others are clear in their functions, but lack names.

Most Indo-European deity names are transparent in meaning, originating as descriptions, as titles. Woden is "the ecstatic one," Rudra is "the howler," and Hermes "the god of the cairn." Certain of these titles became the main ones, even promoted to the status of names, but the poets and priests still took delight in inventing titles. The Homeric Hymns praise the "Far-Shooter" (Apollo), the "Shooter of Stags" (Artemis), and the "Fulfiller" (Zeus).

For the deities who survive in function but not in name, I have therefore felt free to construct my own names, or rather titles, by which they can be addressed. I will specify which names are my own creation, all others are reconstructions. It is possible that I have by luck or inspiration struck on an actual primary Proto-Indo-European title for a deity. It is even more possible that I have constructed a title which the Proto-Indo-Europeans would have recognized. Of course, what matters most is that the gods to whom they refer will recognize them. Given the Indo-European love for such titles, I feel sure the gods will know to whom we are talking.

Like their descendants the Romans, the Proto-Indo-Europeans had deities of abstractions. They believed that the existence of an idea assumed the existence of a deity to rule over it. This comes from the belief in the Xártus; the reality we perceive reflects the structure of the universe. If we perceive an idea, there must be a something in the structure of the universe that corresponds to it. That something is personal. That something is a deity. So rather than turning an abstraction into a deity, the Proto-Indo-Europeans were noticing the preexistence of a deity of that abstraction. This means that if you have something you want to pray for and there is no reconstructed Proto-Indo-European deity that seems appropriate, ask yourself what abstraction best expresses your desire. You can then use that as your deity name. (Translating it into Proto-Indo-European would be nice, but not necessary.)

The Gods

Many of the Proto-Indo-European male deities can be assigned to particular functions. There are very few male deities who cross the line between the three functions, and these probably originated as gods of one of the function who acquired the other functions in a secondary sense. The gods can overlap into other functions, though. For instance, Thor is a second function deity. However, though his connection with thunderstorms he was prayed to by farmers for rain. He thereby becomes a god of fertility. Sometimes this overlapping occurs as a result of patronage. Because someone might have developed a particularly close relationship with Xáryomen, Xáryomen would be expected to have a particularly close interest in them. Although he is a god of social unity, they might pray to him for fertility or protection. Warriors who pray to a second function figure for courage and protection might end up praying to him for prosperity as well. It is this that creates a little wiggle room in the system.

The third function is connected religiously with fertility cults. It is difficult to find evidence for Proto-Indo-European religion of this type for two reasons. First, most of what we can reconstruct of Proto-Indo-European religion is from the works of first function writers, composed either for their own function or for second function, the warrior aristocracy. The members of these two functions did not care about the third function's cults as much as their own and may even have viewed them with suspicion as possible sources of subversion against the established order.

The other reason is less sinister. As the Indo-Europeans migrated, they would naturally absorb the local agricultural religion, leaving their previous agricultural cults behind. This is because the fertility of the land is connected with the spiritual inhabitants of the land. It behooves us to make friends with the local fertility deities. Trying to impose our own on the land may offend both sets of beings. Under this interpretation, the lack of knowledge about Proto-Indo-European cults shows a great respect for the deities of fertility, not a lack of it.

[The forms of names of many of these deities have been taken from Jackson, Peter. Light from Distant Asterisks: Towards a

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Dyḗus Ptḗr

"The Shining Sky Father" is the most important deity of the Proto-Indo-Europeans. His very name is related to *déiwos – he is the god. It is recognizable in the Roman Jupiter, Greek Zeus Pater, Illyrian Dei-patyro, Vedic Dyaus Pitar, Baltic Dievas, Luvian Tatis Tiwaiz, Palaic Tiyaz Pāpaz, and Germanic *Tiwaz. Among the Scyths he was just Papaeus, "Father." In other words, memories and versions of him survived in almost all the IE cultures, which shows how important he was.

From the beginning he was the major deity. The best example in the descendant traditions of Dyḗus Ptḗr 's magnificence is the Roman Jupiter, the most supreme form of whom was Jupiter the Best and Greatest (Jupiter Optimus Maximus).

Dyḗus Ptḗr is the transcendent lord. He is the protector of the Xártus, the enforcer of natural law. As such, he may be called Xártupotis, "Lord of the Xártus." (The vocative form, that used to address him, is Xartupotei; the vocative of Dyḗus Ptḗr is Dyeu Pter.) As god of the bright sky, he was probably connected with the sun, although not in the sense of being the sun; rather, the sun was his symbol. The sun sees all, is lord of the bright sky, and performs functions according to the unfailing law of the universe, the Xártus – just like Dyḗus Ptḗr. Dyḗus Ptḗr dwells in great splendor, and is almost unapproachably sacred. He is the god of priests, the embodiment of the way rituals are to be performed. In Dumézilian terms, he is the magico-ritual half of the first function.

Dyḗus Ptḗr is a god of justice. He does what is right, ensures that others do likewise, and punishes those who do not. Oaths are sworn by him. His sacred animal is the ox — power under control.

He doesn't have a wife whom we can identify, although he must have had a mate in order to be the father of the Diwós Sūnú and Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr (see below). Because he is a sky father, it may be tempting to link him with an earth mother, and indeed his Vedic version, Dyaus Pitar, is so linked. However, the Earth Mother fits more easily with another deity, Perk^{w}ū́nos, so his wife is unfortunately unknown. Jackson (2002, 73), wants to identify her as Diwōna, but since that is essentially a female version of "Dyḗus," and he can give no other details, there hardly seems to be any point to the suggestion.

Lord of the wide and shining sky,
Guardian of the well-laid law,
Dyeu Pter, preserve my people,
may their way conform to Right.

Xáryomen

"Xáryomen" is one of the personalized abstractions I mentioned earlier. He is not one whose name I made up, being found in Ireland (Eremon), Gaul (Ariomanus), Anglo-Saxon England (Irmin), Zoroastrianism (Airyaman) and the Vedas (Aryaman). His name is formed by adding *-men, a suffix similar to the English "-hood," to a root that may mean "Indo-European" (Puhvel, 1987, 182). This is the root that was made famous when it was distorted by the Nazis – *H_2erya-. Its descendants include Old Irish aire, "free, noble," and Hittite ara, "member of one's own group, peer, friend" (Puhvel, 1978a, 336-337). The Hittite meaning seems closest to its original one, with "Xáryomen" therefore meaning "The God in Charge of Our Group," specifically of doing things the way our group does

them. He is the deity of "Indo-Europeanness."

Xáryomen is the partner of Dyḗus Ptḗr in the first function, the legal figure according to Dumézil's classification. He could be considered an early king who established the laws of society. This is his defining characteristic; just as Dyḗus Ptḗr rules (and is ruled by) natural law, Xáryomen rules (and is ruled by) social law, the dhétis. Together with Dyḗus Ptḗr, he enforces justice and oaths are sworn by him. He enforces contracts. Through him, the wealth of society is circulated properly among us.

Xáryomen is a god of marriage and of healing. This peculiar combination of traits makes perfect sense in a Proto-Indo-European context. Marriage is a contract which ensures the continuation of the tribe in an orderly manner. It joins members of a tribe or closely related tribes into a society ruled by the dhétis. Healing is a return to the way things should be; *med-, the root of "medical," means just that, "returning to the way things should be" (Benveniste, 1973, 399). Xáryomen is a god of good social order; of the right way for things to be. He is therefore a god of peace and plenty, of the successful and orderly continuance of society.

For all our sons, good wives.
For all our daughters, good husbands.
For all our people, happiness and health
in a land ruled by just law:
Xáryomen, we pray to you.

And since Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen are often linked together, here is a prayer for them both:

Dyeu Pterkʷe Xáryomenkʷe:
May what we do be according to the Dhétis.
May what we accomplish conform to the Xártus.

Perkʷū́nos

Perkʷū́nos (either "Striker" or "Oak God") is the god of thunder and lightning. We've already seen him in his great myth, slaying the Serpent. As the mighty champion, he is a god of war particularly against outside dangers and in defense of his people. As god of the thunderstorm, he is, like Thor and Mars, a patron of farmers.

In some of the descendant traditions, his name comes from one of his titles, the Thunderer. Thus we have the Norse Thor (<*Thunaraz) and Celtic Taranis. Another name by which he might be know is *Koryonos, "god of the warband."

Perkʷū́nos survived by name in Albania (Perendi), Thrace (the area of modern Bulgaria, Perkos), India (Vedic Parjanya and Kalasha Pērūne), and Anatolia (Pirwa). His worship under a name descended from *Perkʷū́nos survived best among the Balts, where he was called Perkunas. This Baltic hero was a defender of truth, protector against evil, and ensurer of fertility. Like Perkunas, Perkʷū́nos' weapon is the double-headed axe made of either metal (bronze or the sacred metal iron) or flint. He may also be armed with a club, as are Herakles and the Daghda. He throws this weapon, the wágros, and it returns to him to be thrown again. It does not take much imagination to see an image of lightning here.

In European folklore, Neolithic axes, which were often turned up by farmers when plowing, were believed to be actual thunderbolts. This connects Perkunas with the belief that the first thunderstorms of spring fertilized the fields. The connection of Perkunas with these beliefs most likely descended from Perkʷū́nos. This great fighter is therefore a defender of truth, a provider of fertility, and a source

of protection to his followers.

The sacred animal of Perkʷū́nos is the bull; an animal of great power, rampant sexuality, and danger. The hoof beats of a running bull suggest thunder. One of the Proto-Indo-European words for "bull," *wisontos, means "the one who urinates." The combination of bellowing and urination brings to mind the god of thunderstorms.

The ancient connection between Perkʷū́nos and Dyḗus Ptḗr is well expressed in the comparison between the unpredictable, passionate bull (the stormy sky), and the placid, rulable ox (the clear sky).

The *perkʷ- in his name may be that which is the root of "percussion," or the source of words meaning "oak," perhaps because oaks were believed to be often struck by lightning. The most famous is the Latin "querquus," familiar from the name of Albuquerque ("white oak"), New Mexico. Other descendants are linked with "mountain" (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995, 526-527).

This complex of ideas – striking, lightning, oak, and mountain – identifies Perkʷū́nos with the axis mundi. This fits with his position as defender of truth; he is the support of the universe. The oak connection also emphasizes his strength, integrity, and tenacity. The root *dreu-, from which comes English "tree" and "true," formed the root for "oak" in some languages. Perkʷū́nos is hard, even stubborn. Stubbornness in defense of truth is a virtue

Lord of lightning, mighty warrior,
Slayer of serpents, dry earth wetter.
Perkʷū́nos, lord, earth's great hero.
Perkʷū́nos, lord, you I praise.

Diwós Sūnú

The "Sons of God" are twins who are third function deities. Their worship survived among the Greeks and Romans (Castor and Pollux), the Vedic Indians (the Aśvins) and the Balts (the Dieva Deli). Echoes may have survived among the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons, and the continental Germans.

Although twins, they are not identical in nature. One is a god for riders and owners of horses; he has a warlike nature, so he is also a good patron god for cavalry soldiers. The other more peaceful, is associated with cattle; since cattle equal wealth, he may be prayed to for general prosperity.

Though they have different function and personalities, they are invoked together. In fact, their separate names are not recoverable. As a pair, they guide mankind, especially sailors, farmers, and riders, and may be prayed to for healing, fertility, and prosperity. They are divine rescuers from all sorts of immediate crises, particularly at sea; they may not help you get that project done on time, but they will be there in the midst of a hurricane.

The Twins are closely related to the sun and mare goddesses (see below), and are often found in the same stories. Helen (perhaps originally a sun goddess) is the sister of the Dioskouri; the Welsh Pryderi is the son of mare goddess Rhiannon and the husband of the daughter of "Fair Shining One;" the Aśvins ("Horsemen") are the husbands of Sūryā (daughter of the sun), and Saules Dukterys ("Daughter of the Sun"), in Lithuanian folklore, is wooed by her brothers the Dieva Deli ("Sons of God"), who accompany her through the sky. Castor and Pollux also accompany the sun, and in some versions of their myth are the sons of a mare goddess. The two most common relationships are that either the three are siblings or the Twins are the suitors of the goddess. Of course, we are dealing with deities here, so the two are not mutually exclusive.

They are so strongly connected with horses that one or both might appear in horse form. Such is

the case in the Welsh collection of tales, the Mabinogion, where Pryderi is born on the same day as a horse, and the two are raised together. The Baltic Twins appear as horses, while the Theban twins are called "The White Colts of Zeus" (Ward, 1968,12). They are sometimes described as the horses that pull the sun's chariot across the sky. And Aśvins means "Horsemen."

The father of the Twins may be Dyḗus Ptḗr, as for instance among the Greeks, where Castor and Pollux are called "dioskouri," "Zeus's boys," or the Balts, where they are the sons of Dievas. The Aśvins are sometimes the sons of Dyaus Pitar, although sometimes only one is. Their fatherhood by Dyḗus Ptḗr is only found in the easternmost families (Greek, Baltic, and Indo-Iranian), so it may not have been a common Indo-European belief. Nevertheless, Pryderi is fostered by Teyrnon, whose name means "Lord;" with such a name it is possible that he is a reflex of Dyḗus Ptḗr (although it must be pointed out that Ford, in the notes to his translation of The Mabinogi (1977, 12) suggests instead that he is a sea god).

When described physically, the Twins are always youthful. The classic treatment of them is by Donald Ward (1968).

Riding on your well-matched steeds,
Come to me, Diwós Sūnú.
Come with your blessings for house and land.
Come with your blessings for men and cattle.

Other gods do not fit so well into the three functions. Remember, Dumézil's system, no matter how useful, is not the be-all and end-all of Indo-European religion.

Yemós and Mannus

Yemós ("Twin") and Mannus ("Man") are another set of twins found throughout the Indo-European world, in myths from the Germanic peoples (Norse Ymir, and German Tuisto and Mannus), as well as from the Celts (the Irish Donn) and the Romans (Romulus and Remus). Yemós really comes into his own in the Indo-Iranian area, where as Yama/Yima he is the god of the land of the dead.

We've met them already in the story of the origin of the Cosmos. In the primordial time, Mannus sacrificed Yemós and formed the world from his body. Mannus was therefore the first priest, and Yemós the first to die. Yemós (or his soul) went to the land of death and became its ruler. In so doing, he established the pathway to death.

These twins didn't just establish the Cosmos and then go away. After their deaths they were both deified, although Yemós is definitely "more divine" than Mannus, a first among equals. Yemós gets into the very structure of the world, while Mannus stays behind and starts history rolling.

Although they are twins, they are not the same in either rank or function. Of the two, Yemós is higher; his name describes both of them. He is the twin. He is the first king, succeeded by his brother.

The most important aspect of Yemós is as a god of death. He may be prayed to by those about to die, or on behalf of those who have just died. The main thrust of such prayers are for him to show the soul of the deceased the way to the kingdom of Yemós.

As the offerer of the first sacrifice, Mannus is the first priest, treating his brother as if he were a sacrificial bull. This may explain why the Irish Donn, first to die in the invasion of Ireland and lord of a land of the dead, shares his name with the great bull of Cuailnge whose story is told in the Irish epic

Táin Bó Cuailnge. Like Yemós, the body of the Táin's Donn was dismembered; while the parts didn't order the Cosmos, they did contribute to that of Ireland, giving names to the places where they fell.

Yemós and Mannus, king and priest,
Sacrificed and sacrificer,
I pray to you.
May the path be clear to the land of the dead.
May the funeral rites be properly performed.

Xák^{w}ōm Népōt

"Close Relative of the Waters" (sometimes called just "Neptonos") guards a well which contains a fiery liquid. (*Xák^{w}ōm Népōt (*H2ék^{w}ōm népōt) is Jackson, 2002:82; Edgar C. Polomé and J. P. Mallory (in Mallory and Adams, 1997:203) suggest Xapōm nepōts (*H2epōm nepōts).) This liquid grants rule, wisdom, inspiration, or prosperity to those who drink it. There's a catch, though (there always is). Those who wish to drink from the well must deserve the well's gifts; they cannot have any moral flaws, and must approach the well in the appropriate ritual manner. In other words, the gifts of the well are available only to the virtuous.

In the myths of the well, some sort of disaster arises that demonstrates this. In Ireland, the reflex is Nechtan, whose well contains a fiery liquid that only he or his three cupbearers can draw. His wife, Boand, after committing adultery with the Daghda, goes to take water from the well to purify herself (or to prove her innocence in another version of the tale). Alternatively, she is jealous of her husband and the cupbearers, and the disastrous trip to the well is an attempt to prove herself their equal. She walks about it counterclockwise (the wrong direction to circle Irish holy wells) three times, and each time the well overflows, destroying in turn an eye, a hand, and a thigh. This trifunctional destruction is completed when the last eruption chases Boand to the coast, drowning her and forming the river Boyne.

The Roman version is in the form of history. This is typical; before their contact with Greece, they had turned much of their myth into history. In the 4th century BCE, during the feast of Neptune, the Alban lake, fed by a spring and enclosed within an extinct volcano, overflowed. The oracles said the lake was offended because improperly created magistrates were conducting rituals. To stop its overflow, the water has to be diverted into channels. The verb that Livy uses here is extinguere, i.e., "extinguish," a word that is otherwise used only of fire (Puhvel, 1973). Once again there is a spring-fed body of water, associated with fire and a water god, offended by a breach in sacred law.

The Greeks had their own myth of this type. The god Poseidon, equated with Neptune by the Romans, had a holy salt-well in Mantinea. Anyone unauthorized who looked into it would be blinded.

Over in Iran, we find the Zoroastrian Apām Napāt who guarded a sacred lake in which the Xvarenah, the glory of God and the source of sovereignty, was stored. The hero Franrasyan tried to lay claim to it because that would have given him the kingship. However, he was not qualified to be king, so although he tried three times, each time the water escaped him. Finally, both Xvarenah and water flowed out through three channels and surrounded the earth (Littleton, 1973:425). These waters are personified as female spirits. This lake may have been what is spoken of in Yasna 10.4, where a well that is the source of Truth is described.

In India, the Son of the Waters, there called Apāṃ Napāt, is so closely related with fire that he was

even addressed as "Agni." His liquid nature was not forgotten though; he is also connected with Soma, the god of the sacred drink of the same name.

The waters of which Xák^{w}ōm Népōt is both guardian and relative are the source of all that is good in all three functions plus the transfunctional sovereignty. It makes sense then, that he doesn't fit into any single function. Such powerful water comes from the well at the world's center. The waters themselves appear sometimes as cows (prosperity) and sometimes as young women (such as Nechtan's cupbearers). They're not the ocean and so Xák^{w}ōm Népōt is not a sea-god. As far as we can tell, the Proto-Indo-Europeans did not have such a god.

Xák^{w}ōm Népōt is also not the waters' relative in a genetic sense. *Népōt in this case is likely to have meant "connected in a very close way" or "dweller in."

With such widespread survival of his name and myths, Xák^{w}ōm Népōt was clearly an important figure to the Proto-Indo-Europeans. He is connected with one of the most central mysteries of Indo-European myth and religion that will be discussed in depth in chapter 16. For now, it is important to note that Xák^{w}ōm Népōt provides immense power, but only to those who approach him in a morally pure state and with the proper ritual.

Keeper of the flaming water
Lord of Power, Lord of Truth:
Keep us pure and strong and holy,
Make us fit to drink from the well.

Páxusōn

"The Nourisher" or "Shepherd" has a famous descendant – Pan. Páxusōn is also the source of the Vedic Pūsan, god of herds and roads, and may have a functional cognate in the Gaulish Cernunnos (Fickett-Wilbar, forthcoming). Probably, he was originally a god of herds, but because of the nature of the herds (between properly domestic and wild) and the location of the pastures outside the homestead, he became a god of bidirectionality. He is the one who stands between. He guards travelers, merchants, and other go-betweens. He guards the herds, the source of wealth, as well. He may be prayed to both as an opener of the ways and as a giver of prosperity. He is also the psychopomp, the deity who guides the souls of the dead on their way. As such he is prayed to in the funeral ritual.

Páxusōn, guardian of the borders,
Open up the gate
and let our prayers through.
Bless all our beginnings
so our acts may be done rightly.

Ménōt

"The Moon" – yes, the Indo-European moon is male, as shown by the gender of the word in Celtic and Germanic. The female moon of Greece and Rome seems to have been an eastern Mediterranean invention. The Man in the Moon is a good Indo-European figure. "Ménōt" may also mean "Measurer" (Lincoln, 1986, 8); the moon measures the sky in space, while measuring out time as well.

Often cosmic deities don't make much impact in personal worship. In the case of Ménōt, however, the metaphorical connection between measuring and thinking (as in "reckoning") and the homonym of *men- "think," connects us with him as a god of thinking and memory.

Shining Wheel turning, rolling through the night,
Continue to measure the far-flung sky.
Continue to measure the days' steady passing,
Continue to measure with the Xártus in mind.

Déiwīs

The Goddesses

While gods can generally be assigned to specific roles and Dumézilian functions (with some fuzziness, of course), the goddesses (singular déiwī) are more difficult to pin down. This is due in part to the patriarchal nature of Proto-Indo-European society. Most goddesses were less important than the gods.

What is more interesting is that some goddesses are more important than the gods are; while men were associated with doing things (the three functions), women were associated with being things. They are associated with natural phenomena, locations, weather conditions, times, etc., rather than with roles. Because many of the goddesses were associated with locations, the Indo-Europeans left many of them behind as they migrated, replacing them with the goddesses of the new lands. The gods came with the Indo-Europeans because they could. The goddesses stayed behind because they had to; the land couldn't move with the Indo-Europeans, so the land's goddesses stayed with it.

What made some of the goddesses so important is that proper worship of the new goddesses validated the Indo-European possession of the land. The Indo-Europeans knew that without the approval of these goddesses they had no business being in their new lands. Such approval was approval by the land itself. This belief was repeated in the home life, where the hearth fire was a goddess; the establishment of a hearth fire is what made possession of the house legal.

However, the Indo-Europeans poured the new goddesses into Indo-European molds. Because of this, although we can't always be sure of the original Indo-European goddesses, particularly their names, their shapes have been left behind in the descendant traditions. This means that we can make some good guesses as to what those goddesses must have been like.

Because of the adoption of local goddesses by the early Indo-Europeans, it is most proper for Indo-European worshipers to learn the goddesses associated with the land in which they live, and to worship them in the manner preferred by those goddesses. This is the Indo-European way.

With all this, some Proto-Indo-European goddesses did survive. This does not deny the land-based nature of Proto-Indo-European goddesses, but actually confirms it. Two are goddesses — locations that are accessible from everywhere. One is a portable location. Two are not so much particular goddesses as categories into which local goddesses can fit, and two are with us no matter where we go. One is a very special case.

Functionally speaking, goddesses tend to fall into one of three categories. They may belong to no function at all, they may fall into the third function, or they may be trifunctional.

Trifunctional goddesses may in turn be classified as Cow Goddesses and Mare Goddesses (a division suggested and developed by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, especially 1979-80, 1980). A cow goddess is maternal, safe, and protecting. Her sexuality is in service to the tribe. An Irish example is Brighid. She is the patron of poets (first function), smiths (second function), and healers (third function). She is attended by a white cow with red ears, and is given offerings of dairy products. In her Christian form, St. Brighid, who is called the foster mother of Christ, her maternal aspect is clear

(e.g., Carmichael; 1992; 81, 297).

The mare goddesses are more dangerous. Because of this, they tend to be harder to identify, their stories having been toned down by Christian recorders, or even by their own worshipers. An Irish example would be Medb. She practices magic and gives kingship (first function), leads an army (second), and is sexually promiscuous (third). It is this last aspect of mare goddesses that is frequently emphasized. They usually have many mates, and are not faithful to any of them. This is a goddess whose sexuality is in service only to herself. She is great, and gives (if she wishes), sovereignty and inspiration to society and even to her chosen mates.

While the mare goddess may seem to be more appealing to moderns than the cow goddess (macho goddesses are in), the ancients were quite clear that she was not someone to be trifled with. For instance, Medb sends most of her lovers to their deaths in battle against Cú Chulainn. By far, the ancients preferred cow goddesses; this is only to be expected, since they were more concerned with the survival of the tribe than the sexuality of the individual.

Hékwonā

The exemplary "Horse Goddess." (The sound in the middle of this is indeed [kw], not the usual k^w.) The Gaulish Epona bears a name that is an exact reflex. Another possible name would be Medhuna "Intoxicator" ("Goddess of Mead"). This is a fairly well-reconstructed name found in Ireland (Medb), Gaul (Meduna) and India (Mādhavī).

Hékwonā is the goddess who provides sovereignty through mating with the one who would be king. If refused or mistreated, she can be vicious in her reprisals. The Irish Cú Chulainn, having rejected the mare goddess Morrígan, was sent to his death. Even not refusing her can be no treat, since she can appear in the form of a hag who demands sex. Those who give her what she wants are delighted when afterwards she turns into a beautiful woman who gives them the kingship. In the story of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the hag he encounters is described in horsy terms, her hair like a mane.

Gerald of Wales (102) describes a ritual involving this goddess. According to him, in northern Ireland a king was inaugurated by having intercourse with a white mare. The mare was then killed and cooked. The king then bathed himself in her broth and drank it without using his hands. There are parallels with the Vedic Aśvamedha, a horse sacrifice performed to make a king a universal sovereign. In turn, "Aśvamedha" is cognate with the name of a prince, Epomeduos, found in a Gaulish inscription (Puhvel, 1955).

A figure who preserves the characteristics of Hékwonā is the Indian Mādhavī (< *medhu-), whose story is found in the Mahābharata. There was a rule in India that after "graduating" from his training, a disciple was to offer a gift to his teacher. When Gālava asks his teacher Viśvamitra what he wants, the teacher asks for eight hundred horses, each white but with one black ear. In despair over where to find so many of such a rare kind of horse, Gālava asks advice from Yayāti. He doesn't have the horses, but he gives Gālava his daughter Mādhavī. Gālava brings her to a king named Ayodhya, who does have them. He offers the king Mādhavī as a wife, but Ayodhya has only 200 of these horses. Mādhavī then pipes up and says that she has the magic power of restoring her virginity, which means that she can bear this king a son, but still be qualified to marry other kings. The deal is made and after a son is born, Gālava and Mādhavī make the same deal with two other kings. Now with 600 horses, he is appalled to learn that that is all there are. He returns to Viśvamitra, and offers Mādhavī to him as a substitute for the missing horses (we have, after all, already learned that she is equivalent

to 200 of them), for his own conception of a son. Viśvamitra replies that if only Gālava had brought her to him in the first place, he would have engendered four sons, and they would have been even. Mādhavī is returned to Yayāti, who gives her the choice of a final husband. Turning down the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men, sages, spirits, and even animals, who present themselves to her, she chooses instead to "marry" the forest, and disappears into it to live as a sage (Dumézil, 1973:70-78).

Even with the elements inserted by later patriarchal society, the identity of Mādhavī as a horse goddess shines through. Although Gālava comes up with the idea of trading her for the horses, it's she who suggests only giving the first king a son, and then regaining her virginity so she can do this more times. As well as showing that she has control over her own sexuality (no matter how limited is the degree to which society can allow her this), her serial marriages are, for Hindu society, downright promiscuous. Add in the facts that not only is she the equal of 800 rare horses, but that she is, through the bearing of kings, the founder of royal dynasties, and then topping this with the source of her name in *medhu-, we have a clear reflex of Hékwonā.

The sequential matings are also found in the Irish Medb (also < medhu-), a wife and mother of kings, who never had a man without another in his shadow. The Irish story of the "Cattle Raid of Cooley" (Táin Bó Cuailnge; Kinsella, 1989) tells of a war she starts to gain an especially fine bull. Her nemesis in this war is Cú Chulainn, whom we have already seen having his own troubles with a mare goddess. At the end of this war, one of her men complains that they'd lost the war because they had followed a mare. We are also told that wherever she plants a horse goad, a bile grew. A bile was a sacred tree which mythically symbolized a territory and the right of its king to rule, and a common spot for inauguration rituals. That we have here a goddess who isn't just Irish, but pan-Celtic is shown by the Gaulish Meduna, a goddess about whom we would dearly love to know more.

Hékwonā is not exactly a one-man woman, then. She is partial to warriors, whom she makes into kings. On a divine level, her natural mates are the warrior Perkʷūnos, with whom she conceived the Twins in some versions of the myth, or the kingly lawgiver Dyḗus Ptḗr, the father of the Twins in others, or of course, both.

The Mare Goddess has both benevolent and malevolent sides. In her malevolent aspect she is a bitch goddess, in both senses of the word. There is, for instance, the Irish Morrígan, with her love/hate relationship with Cú Chulainn ("Hound of Culann").

Her malevolent side is due to the untamed nature of her sexuality. Sexual force is dangerous, to both individuals and society, if it is not channeled into constructive outlets. With the Mare Goddess, we are dealing with pure power, which is beyond our ability to control. It is only by playing according to her rules that her power can be harnessed.

Hékwonā overlaps the sun goddess Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr somewhat, to the point that in some of the later descendant traditions they have become identified with each other. Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr is connected with horses (especially through the Diwós Sūnú), and Hékwonā is described with solar imagery. Hékwonā is particularly solar in her power and the danger of approaching her. In Proto-Indo-European times, they seem to have been different goddesses, though.

Horse goddesses are often accompanied by or in some other way associated with birds. The Welsh horse goddess Rhiannon had birds which could wake the dead and lull the living to sleep ("Culhwch and Olwen," The Mabinogi, 139). The Dioskouri and Helen of Troy were conceived when Zeus raped Leda in the form of a swan; she then gives birth to an egg from which her children

hatch.

Although primarily connected with sex separated from motherhood, Hékwonā's descendants nonetheless sometimes do have children. When she does become a mother, she is a dark one. She may destroy her children, as Rhiannon was accused of doing, or simply abandon them, as Mādhavī did.

She may also have conceived through rape, as with Leda. The Greek Poseidon lusted after Demeter of Phigalis; to escape him, she changed herself into a mare and ran away. He changed himself into a stallion, followed her, and raped her. Because of her rage over this, she was given the name "Fury." The Hindu Samjñā left her husband the sun, leaving behind a double. When her husband eventually figured things out, he went after her. She turned herself into the form of a horse and ran, but he caught up with her and ejaculated into her mouth. She vomited the semen out through her nose, giving birth to the Aśvins who, as we have already seen, are forms of the divine twins, associated with horses.

It is common to interpret such myths as a reflection of the conquest of goddess worshiping peoples by the Indo-Europeans. The goddess worship aspect of the pre-Indo-Europeans has been greatly exaggerated; there are other myths in which the pre-Indo-European goddesses are assimilated peacefully. Perhaps the rape versions arose in areas where the Indo-European migrations were particularly violent, or were invented later to support patriarchal institutions. The story of Mādhavī makes me think that it was the latter; in her story we see a transition from a woman who chooses her own husband to one who is treated as property to be traded for horses. Whatever the reason for it, the rape myth adds emphasis to Hékwonā's insistence that sex will always be on her terms, making her a deity to pray to for defending against or punishing sexual abuse of any kind.

The Demeter/Poseidon connection illustrates another association, that with the sea. Waves are called "horses" throughout Europe, the Irish Macha is daughter of "Nature of the Sea," and Rhiannon is married to Manawydan, the Welsh version of the Irish sea god Manannan. India has developed the connection into a complex image, involving a fiery mare that must be kept submerged lest she destroy the world. Eventually, she will do just that.

Because of her immense power and ambiguity of motivation, Hékwonā is not a "fun" goddess, and is not one to be lightly approached. Her approval is vital in inauguration rituals, but in general she is better propitiated than invoked.

Hékwonā, great and powerful,
Wielder of power great and dangerous,
Giver of gifts, giver of kingship,
Provide the power to protect the just.

G^{w}ouwinda

It should come as no surprise that the Proto-Indo-Europeans, herders of cattle, should have a cow deity. A likely name for her, G^{w}ouwinda (reconstructed from Irish Boand and Indic govinda, in Campanile, 1985), means either "White Cow" or "She Who Provides Cows" (Campanile, 1985).

The Cow Goddess is a completely benevolent character. Like the Mare Goddess, she is a highly important deity; unlike her, her sexuality is dedicated to the maintenance of the social order. G^{w}ouwinda is wife and mother, and directs her sexual energy in those directions. She grants the material wishes of her worshipers; for instance, in the Irish, Norse, Iranian, and Indian cultures there

are stories of magic cows that grant wishes.

Cow goddesses are scattered throughout the Indo-European world. Perhaps the most famous is "cow-eyed Hera," from Greece. A mother of many of the gods (Hephaestus and Ares parthenogenically), she is called the origin of all by Alcaeus of Mythilene. Her Roman equivalent, Juno, is also honored as a mother. In a trifunctional form, Juno Savior Mother Queen, she was invoked by women about to give birth.

An interesting link between the horse and cow goddesses appears in Greece. Poseidon seduces Melanippe ("Black Mare") and she gives birth to twins. Following her mare nature, she exposes them on a mountain, where they are found by a cow, who raises them. This is a good illustration of the difference between a horse and a cow goddess.

It is at the ends of the Indo-European world, where the old cattle herding days were preserved the longest, that the best examples are found. Ireland, land of cattle raids, gives us Boand and Brighid. We have heard Boand's story already; how she committed adultery with the Daghda and was destroyed by a fiery liquid, creating the river Boyne in the process. The pairing with the Daghda pairs her also with his other mistress, the Morrígan. In this myth we see a cow goddess acting like a horse goddess and being punished for it.

The fire and water mixture appears with Brighid as well. Her water connection comes through in the many healing wells associated with her. Since she is primarily a hearth goddess, she will be discussed in detail later. As a "house and home" goddess however, it's understandable that she would have cow connections. She travels with a white, red-eared cow, causes cows to give milk three times a day, and is given offerings of milk. Although a virgin, in later Gaelic folklore, she serves as the foster mother of Jesus.

At the other end of the Indo-European world, India gives us an embarrassment of cow goddesses. The most striking is Sarasvatī, goddess of a sacred river whose actual geographical identity has unfortunately been forgotten. Perhaps it doesn't really matter; her river comes from heavenly sources.

There is much maternal and cow imagery about Sarasvatī. She is prayed to for children (RV (Rig Veda) 2.4.17), she gives forth milk and ghee (a form of clarified butter) (RV 1.164.49), she is prayed to for a safe pregnancy (RV 10.184.2). Throughout the Rig Veda, water is described as cows. Sarasvatī is portrayed as white and dressed in white garments, white being the color of sacred cows. In most descriptions, she is calm and peaceful, although she can show a dangerous side if necessary to protect her worshipers.

Sarasvatī is also trifunctional: a goddess of purity who inspires speech, a consort of heroes, and a giver of gifts, fertility, and healing. She causes the success of all prayers (RV 6.3.8), defeats enemies (RV 6.61.7), and is the best of mothers (RV 2.41.16).

Another Vedic cow goddess is Dānu. She will be discussed in greater depth later. For now it is enough that she is described as laying down with her son like a cow with her calf (RV 1.32.9).

In nearby Iran, we find Aredvi Sura Anahita – "Moist, Heroic, Immaculate" – clearly a trifunctional goddess. I am not aware of any specifically bovine features of hers, but otherwise she fits this slot well.

Although connected with all three functions, G^{w}ouwinda operates mainly in the third (giver of fertility, prosperity, and healing). She is associated with purity, including sexual purity. This shows the magnitude of Boand's transgression. G^{w}ouwinda is, in fact, the image of the perfect wife and mother, loyal to both husband and children.

There are enough cow goddesses to raise doubt that there was one Proto-Indo-European cow goddess. It is quite likely that the cow goddess is a classification rather than an individual deity. Even if this is so, she may be treated as an individual goddess by the principle of the deification of abstractions.

Pray to G^{w}ouwinda for protection and for blessings. Approach her as you would a beneficent mother. Ask her to pour out her blessings.

Mother of Cows, Mother of People,
whose stream of blessings is everflowing,
whose shining body delights the eyes,
whose holy purity blesses all:
Praise to you, honor to you, love to you.

Xáusōs

"Rising," the goddess of the dawn, the goddess behind the Greek Eos, Roman Aurora, Vedic Usas, Lithuanian Aušrine, and Germanic Eostre. She is the most confidently reconstructed of the Proto-Indo-European goddesses, by both name and function. This isn't any surprise; after all, dawn travels with the tribe. Although a beautiful maiden, Xáusōs is not all sweetness and light. Dawn is ambivalent, neither night nor day. The dark has been safely navigated, the light is not yet here. And it might not come. Xáusōs is the keeper of the gates of dawn — will she open them? There is always the chance that she might not. And even when she does come, her gift is ambivalent. Each day brings us closer to death. Xáusōs is therefore a goddess to be welcomed, but with care.

Even with the ambiguity, Xáusōs is an upholder of order. The sun does rise, and as long as the Xártus is upheld it will continue to do so.

The ambiguity has another source. Since dawn is neither night nor day, it's between one thing and another. It doesn't really belong; despite taking part in the Xártus, and even being an important part of its operation, it doesn't really belong to the Xártus, because it doesn't have a definite identity. Thus, it shares in both the promise and danger of Chaos. As a result, dawn rituals express some hopeful thinking and try to work a little magic. Through them, it will be the promise we get, not the danger.

Xáusōs has a connection with birch trees. The birch is one of the first trees to reawaken in the spring, and thus an apt symbol for a dawn and spring goddess with the whiteness of its bark connecting it with purity. According to Paul Friedrich (in Mallory and Adams, 1997:65), "The birch was a symbol for the feminine and specifically for young, virginal femininity in PIE times." He also suggests that PIE *bherHxgyos "birch" might have been formed from a root meaning "bright," or that the two might have become connected via folk etymology.

Shining and young, she appears on the horizon.
Baring her breasts, she spreads her light.
With singing maidens, with streaming cows,
she dances over the earth disk's edge.
You who precede the shining wheel,
perform great deeds as the Xártus instructs.

Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr

"Daughter of the Sun" – the figure connected with the Indo-European sun is female. She is not

necessarily the sun herself, but rather the daughter of the sun as a symbol of Dyḗus Ptḗr, or a maiden who conducts the sun through the sky. Her name has survived as Greek Helen, Vedic Sūryā, and Baltic Saules Meita.

Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr is the sister of the Twins, although in some of the descendant traditions she has merged with Hékwonā and become their mother. The merge may have occurred because of the close connection of Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr and horses. This forms part of her link with the Twins. It is most likely describing the sun as either a horse itself, carried on the back of a horse, or pulled in a chariot by a horse (or by two, who are the Twins).

As well as the Twins' sister, she is the wife or lover of one or both of them. Thus in Wales we have Cigfa, daughter of "Fair Shining One," married to Pryderi (who was twinned with a horse), the Vedic Aśvins as the husbands of Sūryā, and the Baltic Saules Meita being wooed by the Sons of Dievas.

A phrase *swens $k^{w}ek^{w}$los, "wheel of the sun," is reconstructed from Sanskrit, Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995:624). The symbol of the sun is a circle, usually with rays, and sometimes with an equal-armed cross inside it. This was commonly put in graves (Jones-Bley, 1993:432); perhaps representing a hope that as the sun emerged from darkness so would the dead person. It was often drawn on the dead in ochre: as a red wet substance, the ochre probably signified blood, connecting the return of the sun with a desire for the dead person's return to life (or a magical means of assuring that). This does not necessarily imply a belief in reincarnation, since the rebirth could have been in the land of the dead, but it does suggest that Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr was a helper to the dead.

Bright One, who shines in the midst of the dark,
Helper of those on life's final journey:
Watch over those who give you worship.

Wéstyā

"She of the Household" (from *H_2ues-, "to dwell" with an extension *-t- and the feminine ending *-ya) is the goddess of the hearth. She is the very basis of the family, its sacred source — the hearth fire is the heart of the house.

Wéstyā is the least personified of the Proto-Indo-European deities, being actually present in the flame on the hearth and therefore having little need of personification. For example in Rome, statues of Vesta were rare and late, and the Greek Hestia had no myths told about her. The identification with the flame resulted in her being given titles that referred to the fire: the Scythian Tabiti, "The Warming One;" Baltic Gabija, "Little Fire;" without any of them being thought of as a "name." Rather, new titles were formed separately in the descendant traditions, with the result that we don't know what name the Proto-Indo-European would have called her. Following the known Indo-European practice, I have constructed "Wéstyā," using the same root as "Vesta," the best-known of the Indo-European hearth goddesses. Alternate names would be "Xā́sānoyā" (*xā́sā, "hearth" + *-no-, a deity name suffix, + *-ya) or "Demspotnī," "Lady of the Household."

Fire is exceptionally holy, the most holy thing in our world. It is in fact, possible that one of the words for fire, *péH_2ur, is related to *peuHx- "purify" – either fire is the means of purification, or is an expression of the purity of Wéstyā. In some myths it comes down from the heavens, either as lightning or from the sun. In others its origin is from under the waters, the mystery expressed in

Xákʷōm Népōt.

Fire is the means by which natural items are transformed into food. This is true both of our own food and that which we give to the gods — the sacrifice. Fire is a doorway between our world and the next; that which is burned in it goes up to the celestial gods, up the pillar of smoke as if up the axis mundi.

Wéstyā incorporates all of these themes. She is that without which we can not worship the gods, can not even live in our homes. Without her, we have no right to live on our land.

We can see this in some Indo-European laws. In Wales, for instance, a squatter gained possession of land only when a fire had been lit on his hearth and smoke had come from the chimney (Owen, 1978, 1980:339). The association between ownership and the fire was so strong that the right of a Welsh heir to occupy his father's land was called "the right to uncover the fire" (Rees & Rees, 1961:157). At the far eastern end of the Indo-European realm, under Vedic law, new territory is legally incorporated with the construction of an altar to the fire god Agni.

Archaeological evidence from the Romanian Celts hints at a similar belief. Some houses excavated there appear to have been abandoned voluntarily. Their hearths, which were in the center of the room, had been deliberately and ritually dismantled (Zirra, 1976:16-17). To the southeast, in Albania, the fire on the hearth confirms the existence of the family through the generations (Poghirc, 1987, 179.

In all of these cases, the principle is the same — a place belongs to those whose fire burns in it.

This principle sheds light on the most famous fire, that of the Vestal Virgins at Rome. In their round temple (Roman temples were generally rectangular) burned a fire that was not allowed to go out. It was tended by the Vestal Virgins, who were buried alive if they lost their virginity. If the fire went out, they were scourged by the pontifex maximus, and then the fire was relit through friction.

The fire of Vesta was the hearth of Rome, and therefore gave the Romans the right to occupy their land so long as it burnt. The Vestal Virgins were the "brides of Rome," even wearing bridal dress. Similarly, in Greece the eternal fires of Hestia, in her round temples were tended by women past the age of marriage (Plutarch, Numa, IX), i.e., by unmarried women.

The famous fire of Brighid at Kildare in Ireland, described by Gerald of Wales (76-69) in the 12th century, is one more example of a virgin-tended hearth, this time outside but within a circular hedge. By the time the existence of the fire is recorded, the virgins are nuns ("brides of Christ") and Brighid is a saint. Just as at the temple of Vesta, men were excluded from the area within this hedge.

That these fires are all tended by unmarried women is a natural result of the "territory belongs to the person whose fire burns on it" principle. Because the PIEs were patriarchal, that meant that it belonged to the husband of the woman or women who tended that fire. The punishment of straying Vestal Virgins is therefore not excessive in Indo-European terms; a man who takes possession of one of the women who tend the hearth of Rome by having sex with her is taking possession of Rome itself. The straying virgin, and the man who has seduced her, are executed for treason.

Thrace gives us a variation of this theme. In the royal palace of 3rd-4th century BCE Seuthopolis was a main hall with a raised hearth in its center. The hearth was square, with a circular depression in its center. That this was equivalent to the fires of Hestia and Vesta, the common hearth of the people, is shown by the presence of another hearth altar in another room of the place (the royal family's domestic hearth), and smaller hearth altars in many of the city's houses (Maringer, 1976:178-180). The hearth of the people was in the home of the king, where it was presumably tended by his

wife and/or daughters. There would be no concern about divided loyalties. The king was the embodiment of the people; loyalty to him was loyalty to everyone and his fire was the people's fire.

In the Vedic rituals of India, there are several fires, among them a round one, the gārhapatya, which is tended by the wife of the person the sacrifice is being performed for. There's no conflict there; it is his sacrifice, so it should be his hearth, tended by his wife. If any of the other fires go out, they can be relit from the gārhapatya, but if that fire goes out, they all have to be extinguished, and offerings have to be made before relighting the gārhapatya, and then the others lit from it. Like Wéstyā, the gārhapatya is the point of origin.

Wéstyā is the holy center of the home, its inside. She is especially connected with women. This is not only because she is a goddess; she, like women, is a source of holy power. She is also identified with the house as a whole. (As an aside, it's good to continue the traditional rule that women may wear hats indoors but men may not. For a man to wear a hat indoors is to offend the house spirits, as if the house alone was not enough protection. A woman is identified with the home, and therefore cannot offend it.)

The worship of Wéstyā is centered in the domestic cult. This will be described in greater detail later. For now it should be noted that her rituals are conducted by the women of the household.

Not really a guest in my home, little flame on the hearth,
I give you the offerings due a guest.
Not really a guest in my home, Household's Queen:
I am a guest in yours.

Donu

Donu (or perhaps *Danu) is the special case. According to Miriam Robbins Dexter (1980, 1990b), she seems to be a non-Indo-European river and earth goddess who was adopted at an early stage of Proto-Indo-European religion. This makes her Proto-Indo-European enough for our purposes. She is found throughout the Indo-European domains, from the Irish goddess Danu to the Vedic Dānu to the Danube, Don, Dniester, Donets, and Dniepr rivers. The Greeks were called the Danaans, and the Danes are descended from Dana. She is not found among the Hittites, which may be evidence that she is late Proto-Indo-European, but even to the Hittites, the deities of rivers and springs were female.

As a river goddess, Donu is the giver of fertility to the land. "Donu" may have been carried along with the Indo-Europeans as a title rather than a personality, being applied to a river or earth goddess in each new land. She may be worshiped effectively at local rivers, especially the major river in a watershed, and especially at that river's source. The local goddess may be worshiped under her own name, or called "Donu," or even "the Donu" as a title or name. Or she may be called by a combination of names; the Charles river here in Massachusetts, called Quinobequin by the Indians, may be the abode of Donu Quinobequin.

Purest stream, water clearly flowing,
source of life and source of power,
Donu, queen of land extending,
lady of both earth and river:
Here for you this sweet libation,
Here for you our glad oblation,

Back to you our gift is flowing.

Kolyos

"The Coverer" – the goddess of death. Her name survived into the Norse Hel, Greek Kalypso, and Hindi Śarva (Lincoln, 1991, 78). We have seen that the land of the dead has a god; Kolyos, on the other hand, is death itself, who drags people down into death with a noose or a snare. She is not a goddess to be friends with but not one to make an enemy of either. Sacrifices to the dead involve a separation, while at the same time honoring; this sort of ritual is definitely appropriate for Kolyos. She is best offered a pig, which is not shared with her worshipers.

Keep far from us your snare,
You who lie in wait for us.
Keep far from us the time
when you will be our Coverer.
We honor you, we acknowledge your power,
but we do not desire your presence.
Take what we give you and do not return.

Dhéǵhōm Māter

The "Earth Mother" was probably not a purely Proto-Indo-European deity. She appears to have been worshiped under this name only in the central Indo-European area: the Balkans (Semele), the Baltic lands (Lithuanian Žemyna, Latvian Zemes Mate), and perhaps among the Slavs Mati Syra Zemlja ("Moist Mother Earth"). Earth Mothers in other Indo-European areas bear other names. Because of this, she was most likely either part of the Proto-Indo-European women's cult (and thus replaced when the Proto-Indo-Europeans migrated) or a goddess worshiped by the non-Indo-Europeans among whom the Proto-Indo-Europeans lived, given a name associated with the earth by the Proto-Indo-Europeans. On the other hand, like fire, she could have lacked personification, and thus had her name reformed from time to time. Jackson (2002:80-81) suggests the name "Pltwī" (his actual form is *$plth_2wih_2$-), "broad one" as a title.

In Greece, the Homeric Hymns (XXX) call her the Mother of All, and in India she was the womb of all. Dhéǵhōm Māter is a cow goddess, and is similar in many respects to Donu; the giver of fertility, the source of power.

Her proper sacrificial victim is a sow. Oaths may be sworn to her, "on my mother's womb."

Earth's wide womb, of all things the mother,
on whom we walk, from whom we come,
across whom we go on our lifelong journey:
Be our mother, with your arms enfold us.

Wíḱpotēs

"Lords of the Household," is a term I use for the Ancestors. The word most likely meant something like "Chieftains," as Proto-Indo-European households were founded by a man who, after his death, became the protecting spirit of his family. Thus, the great ancestor of the family was its founding Chieftain, at whose grave rituals were held.

A good example is the burial of the Hero of Lefkandi in Greece, who appears to have been buried

in his home, with his wife and four horses. The mound built over the grave was the center of rituals, including further burials (Calligas, 1988:230-2).

The line between ancestors and deities can be a little blurry. People, especially monarchs, may claim to be descended from the gods. (The current English dynasty is descended from Woden.) An ancestor cult can develop enough for the ancestors themselves to be thought of as deities. This was the case in Albania, where the souls of ancestral figures were worshiped as deities at the hearth, where offerings were made to them (Poghirc, 1987, 179). This is a way in which the male cult of the ancestors meets the female cult — the worship of the hearth goddess. The hearth is then even more a family altar.

The ancestors are of two types, those of blood (our genetic ancestors) and those of culture (those who founded our society). For instance, George Washington had no biological children, making him the genetic ancestor of no one. However, he is one of the Founding Fathers, making him an ancestor of American culture.

This shows how we can honor the Indo-European ancestors even though the Indo-Europeans are not a race. Some of us probably have some genetic ancestors that lived with the Proto-Indo-Europeans before they broke up. Most of our ancestors have different origins. Over time, our ancestors were absorbed into Indo-European culture, bringing some of their own traditions with them, but mostly accepting Indo-European ways. All of these are ancestors, both of blood and culture.

As Neo-Pagans, we make one break with the Proto-Indo-Europeans. We honor our Founding Mothers as well.

The Xánsūs (sing. Xánsus)

"The Spirits" — a generic term I use for all the lesser supernatural beings who inhabit the world, especially the land-spirits; the inhabitants of wood and mountain, rock and field, tree and stream. Many of us are familiar with the dryads, Greek spirits of trees, or the naiads, spirits of streams. The Anglo-Irish Puca (Shakespeare's Puck) is also quite famous. Less well known are the Russian leshii, vodianoi, and polevoi (Ivanits, 1992).

Land spirits are ambivalent. After all, we have taken part of their turf in which to create our world. They overlap with the Outsiders (more on them later) to this extent. On their own turf (what is left of it), they can be dangerous. They can mislead the traveler, causing him to lose his way, or they can give gifts, inspiration, or the ability to enter the Otherworld.

Land Spirits are best approached with respectful caution. Offerings made to them are frequently propitiatory; "take this in return for what we have taken from you." What these offerings consist of will depend on where you live. Study the local folklore and see what it says. The Xánsūs aren't beings brought with the Proto-Indo-Europeans on their migrations, but rather ones they encountered. They were incorporated into the Indo-European religious system. You should do likewise with your own local spirits.

Miscellaneous Figures

Not all spiritual beings can be put into these three categories. Reality, especially divine reality, is too complex for that.

Ǵeronts

"The Old Man" is both guardian of and guide across the river that lies between our world and the land of the dead (Lincoln, 1980a; 1991). He is not worshiped, but must be propitiated in the funeral rite. His Greek counterpart Charon was paid off with a coin placed beneath a corpse's tongue. In a pre-monetary society, his payment would have been an offering, perhaps a sacrifice, or a share in one.

It is only in the west (Celtic, Germanic, Greek, Roman) that he is described as old, so this may be a regional thing. The imagery is natural though, since old age carries us off to death. The belief in the boatman of the dead (or guardian of the bridge over the river) is spread throughout the Indo-European world (Lincoln, 1980a).

Gheredhz

The "Growler" is the sleepless dog who guards the entrance of the land of the dead. It is no surprise to find a dog here. Dogs are scavengers, feeders on dead things. Indeed, the dog is a Proto-Indo-European symbol of death. (See especially Lincoln, 1979 (reprinted in 19911, 96-106). They are also the domestic form of wolves, the ravenous beast for the Indo-Europeans, and thus a little bit suspicious.

The most famous guardian of the pathway to death is the Greek Cerberus. There are also the Vedic dogs of Yama and forms of Hell Hounds are found in Germanic and Armenian culture as well.

Like Ǵeronts, Gheredhz must be passed somehow. Classical tradition gives three ways to get past him, corresponding to the three functions. Orpheus lulled Cerberus to sleep with a song (first function), Herakles overcame him with force (second), and Aeneas got past him by offering him a honey-soaked cake (third).

In some of the descendant traditions there are two dogs. Sometimes one carries souls to death and one to life. This seems a later elaboration to me, perhaps originating from the idea of a dog on either side of the path to the land of the dead.

Gheredhz seems at least an annoyance, at worst the ultimate danger if we are dead, but if we can't pass him to get into the Afterworld, where will we go? However, he can be passed with the proper ritual means. In the end, if we do the right things we will be OK.

G^{w}hedhruós

Accompanying Perk^{w}ū́nos as well as being worshiped in their own right is a band of young beings similar to a warrior troop, the *koryos. They are filled with the power of life and in some traditions are half animal. Their imagery likely had its origin in the young men guarding their herds in the summer (with an occasional raid on other tribe's herds).

Unlike Xáryomen, who governs the orderly side of marriage, the G^{w}hedhruós ensure marital fertility. The classic examples in the descendant traditions are the Vedic Maruts, who accompany Indra, and the Greek Myrmidons, the companions of Achilles.

The Hóg^{w}hēs

The Outsiders ("The Snakes" (sing. *Hóg^{w}his))

These are the Outsiders, all of those beings who do not belong to our system. The vast majority of them are land spirits. Such spirits can be thought of as nature as opposed to nurture. They are the spirits who ruled our land before we made our homes here; the spirits of rocks we moved, of dirt we dug, of trees we felled. At best, they may be neutral to us, and at worst opposed to us.

Outsiders can also be ancestors (especially those denied the proper funeral rites or suicides). They can be deities as well. Some deities are Outsiders even when they are brought into the system. The Norse Loki is an example; even as blood-brother to Odin he remains a trouble maker, continually bringing disaster upon the gods. In the end he will even be a primary cause of the destruction of the Cosmos. It is significant that he wasn't worshiped by the Norse, appearing only in their stories. He is an example of a being whose nature is chaos. We are kidding ourselves if we think such beings can be incorporated into our system without bringing disaster in the end.

Other deities are Outsiders because they aren't part of any human system. The Universe is large, and there are deities we have no business attempting to incorporate. They simply are not deities that have any relationship with humans or with our Cosmos. Perhaps animals have their deities; if so, they are Outsiders to us.

In fact, outsiders are pictured as animals, specifically wolves or snakes. Loki's son was Fenris wolf, and the World Snake (the Midgard Serpent) will take the side of the forces of chaos in the destruction of the world. The Vedic asuras are depicted as snakes. In Zoroastrianism, wolves and all reptiles are considered as creatures of the evil spirit Ahriman.

These are obvious choices to the Indo-European mentality. The wolf is a dangerous animal and a rival of the hunter. He was, in fact, the only large carnivorous mammal in the probable Proto-Indo-European homeland. Wolves are the archetypal beasts; killers and scavengers.

Wolves are also ambiguous. As well as their undesirable traits, wolves possess qualities — strength, power, and battle-frenzy — that are desirable in a warrior. That is why warriors are often called "wolves." (But then, warriors are themselves ambiguous – good (defenders) and bad (killers).)

Even more, the wolf is the shadow side of the dog. The dog at the hearth, the faithful and loving helper — yet inside lurks the wolf. The archetypal loyal friend is a version of the archetypal beast.

Serpents also are ambiguous. They may be granters of wisdom or wealth, or protectors of the household, such as the green snakes of Baltic folklore, or the Greek Agathos Daimon, a house guardian spirit in snake form. These types of snakes are even sometimes manifestations of the ancestors. An example is the snake encountered by Aeneas (Virgil, 5.116 -129), which he takes to be his dead father.

In many other cases, they are the forces of Chaos, opposed to Cosmos, or disorder, as opposed to society, who must be defeated, or at least dealt with. A cosmic snake is the Vedic Vṛtra, killed by Indra for constricting the development of the universe and withholding the fertilizing waters (sometimes imagined as cows, the portable wealth of the Proto-Indo-Europeans). Societal snakes include the many serpent or serpent like beings slain by various Irish heroes, and the huge number of dragons slain by heroes and knights throughout the expanse of Germanic and other European folklore.

The latter commit a sin by guarding treasure, preventing it from performing its proper function of binding society together by its circulation. Germanic culture depended on the giving of gifts from lords to retainers. The dragons were acting as anti-lords; by hoarding treasure they are preventing its use by the human lords (Watkins, 1995:300). This is the social equivalent of Vṛtra restricting the growth of the world and keeping cattle (wealth) in captivity.

As with wolves, there are biological reasons to see snakes as ambiguous. Although they are primarily land animals, their motion, reminiscent of waves, associate them with water. Strangest of all are their almost miraculous means of locomotion. Lacking legs, they still move quickly across the

ground. That breaks the rules, putting snakes outside the ordered universe.

The Outsiders are not necessarily evil. They are outside, not part of the Cosmos, and therefore dwell in Chaos. In a sense, this is an unfair way of putting things; some of them may belong to a Cosmos, but just not our Cosmos. In our Cosmos, because their Cosmos follows its own and different rules, they are disruptive and introduce elements of a foreign system into our Cosmos. Some Outsiders may therefore be considered chaotic in a passive sense: their presence in our system causes chaos, but they do not intend to invade our system.

Other Outsiders are chaotic in an active sense. They actively try to disrupt our system. Some do so because it is their nature. Why should such beings exist? Just as there are an infinite number of deities, so there are an infinite number of Outsiders. These provide an infinite number of natures, some of which are chaotic.

If there are an infinite number of Outsiders, then there are those who are benevolent, at least at certain times, under certain circumstances, and for certain purposes. We've already seen this with the Baltic green snakes and the Greek Agathos Daimon. They just manifest themselves to us in ways that don't follow our rules.

The role of the Outsiders, the relationship between Cosmos and Chaos, is one of the mysteries of Proto-Indo-European religion. Chaos threatens to overwhelm Cosmos. Think back to the IE cosmology: the tree (Cosmos) is fed by the well (Chaos). Chaos keeps Cosmos alive. Left alone, Cosmos will die. If allowed full rein, Chaos will destroy Cosmos. It is vitally important that Chaos be allowed to enter Cosmos, but only in a properly mediated way. This mediation is one of the roles of ritual, especially of sacrifice. The Outsiders are not to be worshiped, but they must somehow be brought into a relationship with us. Otherwise the Cosmos dies.

If we aren't supposed to worship the Outsiders, then what can we do? First, we can prevent them from becoming Outsiders in the first place. When we build our homes, we can make offerings to the land spirits and invite them into our lives. We can turn them from spirits of wild nature into spirits of domesticity. There is a danger here, though. If we forget them once our houses are built, if we neglect to give regular offerings (they are partial to bread, eggs, and milk), they can make trouble. This may be why the snakes represented on Roman domestic altars are usually accompanied by representations of offerings to them – a sort of permanent ritual.

Second, we can give offerings to those who are already Outsiders. We give them a small part of our lives, and they leave the rest alone. These sort of rituals are called "apotropaic" ones.

Third, we can make it clear to them that we will not stand for any nonsense. One of the roles of Perk^{w}ū́nos is to stand against the Outsiders. He has slain them in the past, and he will do it again if necessary.

Finally, the very act of sacrifice brings them into a relationship with us. A little bit of Chaos is brought into Cosmos through death, but since it is done in an ordered way it contributes to Cosmos instead of threatening it.

However it is done, the Outsiders must be dealt with. We cannot enjoy our Cosmos in peace if the forces of Chaos remain unacknowledged.

Chapter 7

Yéwesā

A ritual involves a repetition of the principles that provide the structure of the Cosmos, that is to say, of the Xártus. Proper ritual supports the Xártus and renews the universe. By performing such a ritual, we are acting as a proper part of the Cosmos. The result is blessings, such as prosperity or inspiration, for those who practice the ritual or in whose name it is enacted.

The ritual that best achieves the goal of maintaining the Cosmos is that of sacrifice. Not only is a ritual of sacrifice following the Xártus, it is the very act by which the Cosmos came into being. Sacrifice is the archetypal Indo-European ritual. For instance, we have the Germanic *blotan, "to worship by means of sacrifice," and the Old Persian yad, which means both "sacrifice" and "worship" (Neff, 1980:32-33). To recapitulate, the cosmogony is to form the Cosmos again, as fresh and as new as when it was first formed, untouched by entropy.

A Christian parallel might help illustrate this. Roman Catholic doctrine calls the mass a sacrifice, the repetition of the death of Jesus on the cross, and yet the Bible says that Jesus died once and that is enough. This may be reconciled through the ritual truth that ritual takes place in what Mircea Eliade calls illud temporis, "that time." Jesus is sacrificed only one time, and each time the mass is performed, those attending are present at that one time.

The same is true of an Indo-European sacrifice. The ritual, if done properly (a big if), is the same ritual by which the Cosmos was formed. Those of us who are present at the ritual are present at the cosmogony. Our sacrifice is that sacrifice.

If the ritual is performed improperly, it simply may not work. Worse, it might work, but in such a way as to introduce a destructive force into the Xártus. Such is the power of ritual, and such is the importance of the rules of ritual, called the yéwesā (sing. *yéwos).

The yéwesā were discovered over time, perhaps by trial and error, perhaps by divine revelation or mystical experiences, or perhaps by analogy with the world around. This last is especially important; these rules are analogies, metaphors, and symbols. A ritual is an ordered collection of symbolic words and acts, and the yéwesā tell us what words and acts, and how to arrange them.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans don't seem to have excelled in the plastic arts. In Europe, the pots of the Indo-Europeans are quite crude compared to those of the peoples who were there before them. They seem to be the work of a people who just didn't care; indeed, of a people who had no sense of the aesthetic.

However, Calvert Watkins (1995) has shown clearly that the Indo-Europeans possessed a strong sense of beauty. It just did not manifest in physical objects that are found in museums, or an archaeological site. It was not an aesthetic of space. It was an aesthetic of time; of words spoken in time.

The Proto-Indo-European love for beauty manifested itself in poetry: words for ritual, stories of the works of the ancestors, and the laws of the tribe. All of these were composed in intricate meters,

with patterns of alliteration and repetition of words and phrases woven in at carefully determined places. Combining this with a special poetic vocabulary produced compositions that still have the power to move. The Rig Veda is a prime example, and the Odyssey another.

There are phrases reconstructible from Proto-Indo-European that call the poet the "weaver" or "crafter" of words (*wekʷóm tekson). A "weaver" is an expected metaphor. The poet creates patterns in time as the weaver does in space.

But a "crafter"? Why is the poet, one of the mostly highly respected members of Proto-Indo-European society, compared with a technician, someone whose products do not seem to have aroused the interest of the Proto-Indo-Europeans?

My guess is that the Proto-Indo-Europeans were expressing their love for poetry by comparing their greatest accomplishment with that of the surrounding peoples. Sure, the others were proud of their pottery, their woodwork, or their stone carving. Those were their technicians. The technicians of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, their greatest artisans, were their poets. They worked in words.

Now what does all this have to do with the yéwesā?

Simply put, the rule is this: words and actions weave people together into the Xártus. The yéwesā are the connecting points between people and the very structure of the universe. Like modern ecologists trying to devise and live a life that is in accord with the material world, our ancestors worked hard to develop and enact patterns of words and actions that were in accord with the spiritual world.

The Zoroastrian Yasna 28 states, "teach me to pronounce these eulogies by which existence comes into being." Words not only connect, they create. In Vedic rituals uncultivated speech is avoided — the world created must be beautiful. In Rome and Greece, those not saying ritual words were expected to say silent; any unplanned word could spoil the ritual. This is not a religion of spontaneous utterances, but one of structure; a structure intended to reflect that of the Cosmos.

So what are these yéwesā? Some of them will be discussed when the actual rituals are presented. This chapter will present the more important ones, and the ones that will be used in everyday worship.

The primary yéwos is reciprocity — the ghosti-principle. We are ghostēs to the gods. What does this mean? That we give to the gods, the gods give to us, and by this mutual giving we are bound more tightly together.

What do we give the gods? We give sacrifices, offerings, and words. Unfortunately, "sacrifice" has become a bit of a dirty word in modern Paganism; we are all worried that our neighbors will think we are sacrificing animals. A little practical knowledge will help counter-balance this concern.

First, an animal sacrificed in ancient times was killed as painlessly as possible, and treated well before the killing. This was required by the ritual. In Roman sacrifices, the animal was stunned by a blow to the head and then killed by its throat being slit. This was done by experts who could ensure it was done properly. This is not very different from kosher butchery today, where an equal concern is taken that the animal does not suffer. It is different from the way in which animals are sometimes killed for consumption by the slaughterhouses; in fear and confusion.

The parallel with kosher butchery goes further. In most cases (the exception being offerings to the dead and certain other beings of the Underworld), the meat of the animal was eaten by those present, with only small or token parts being burned for the gods. These were not "burnt offerings," with an entire animal being consumed by flames for the gods. They were essentially sacred barbecues.

Why do it in the first place? We have seen one reason already: a sacrifice is a repetition of the primal act. By repeating this act, we are keeping the Cosmos going. We are incorporating Chaos into Cosmos in a way safe enough that Cosmos will be invigorated rather than destroyed. We are performing a life-giving act.

The second reason should be obvious. We are enacting our side of the ghosti-principle. We are giving to the gods that which is ours, and, in return, they will give blessings. A somewhat crass explanation of this is the Latin phrase do ut des : "I give so that you will give." I say it is a bit crass because it almost implies a forcing of the gods to return gifts. They are free beings and have the right to say no, but they probably won't. Why? Because they know the rules too — a gift demands a gift. Since they are perfect embodiments of the way things are, they will come through for us.

In some cases, the gift exchange will be the other way round. The gods will have already given their blessings, and we will be performing the sacrifice in return. This may be a particular instance, such as a vow: I will offer you this, if you do that. It may be an implied gift: a sacrifice after a good crop, for example. It may simply be a thanksgiving offering in return for the many things the gods have done for us. Who knows which came first, the gods' gifts or ours? Good friends don't keep track of such things.

The third reason is that a sacrifice is a meal shared with the gods. We sit down with them, in a spirit of hospitality and friendship, and eat together. It is a communion in the most literal sense.

Okay, so animal sacrifice is not so icky, but it still isn't something we are likely to do. We have no trained slaughterers, oxen are large and could feed far more people than we are likely to have at our rituals, large animals are expensive, there is no room to keep them in an apartment, and there are always the neighbors, the police, the NSPCA, and even the board of health. What's a poor Pagan to do?

We are to do as always. We ask ourselves what our ancestors did. As usual, they come through with an answer. We use substitutes. This is already found in ancient times. For instance, in Plutarch's "Life of Lucullus" we are told that when an animal was unavailable one made of dough was used. As Christianity took over, such substitutes became more common; in Slavic tradition, for instance, a bread loaf called a "bull" was used at weddings. In other areas, concern with not harming animals led to substitutions. In Zoroastrianism, the dron ritual, in which a piece of bread is consecrated, topped with butter, symbolically offered to a fire, and then eaten by priests (Jamaspasa, 1985), was clearly originally a sacrificial ritual. In India, the Aitareya Brāhmana (2.8) tells us, "When they also offer a cake in the animal sacrifice, let our sacrifice be with a sacrificial victim possessed of the sacrificial quality; let our sacrifice be with a fully constituted victim" (Keith, 1998, 1920).

Clearly, the gods find grains to be an acceptable substitute, so that is what we will use. For the rest of this book, when I say that an animal is to be sacrificed it can be assumed that what is meant is bread that has been ritually identified with that animal. Those artistically and culinarily gifted may wish to make three-dimensional models of the animals. For the rest of us, a piece of flatbread will do. What is important is that it be named in the ritual as the appropriate animal and treated as if it were that animal. That which is done in a ritual manner is real.

Not all rituals are big public sacrifices. The simplest ritual act is a prayer. Even the big public sacrifices include prayers, but praying is also something done by an individual. Prayers have their rules too. (I cover this in depth in my Book of Pagan Prayer.

Prayer is communication with the gods. We reach out, and with luck, they reach back. Well, not really with luck — with the yéwesā. There are standard forms of prayer that are adaptable to any circumstance.

The first step in prayer is identifying whom you are praying to. This can be straightforward — "I pray to Perkʷū́nos," or more indirect — "Wielder of the wágros, I pray to you," or both.

This is followed by a description of the past deeds of the deity, whether mythical — "Perkʷū́nos, wielder of the wágros, who slew the great serpent in the beginning of time," or personal — "who has been ever my help in times past," or both. This continues the identification and prepares for the request: see what you did in the past; I am going to ask for something similar.

Before getting to the request, you show the deity what you are doing for them. This is your half of the gift exchange that will establish the relationship with the deity. This can usually be put as, "I make this offering to you." Of course, it is usually accompanied by an offering, or this prayer can be an introduction to a sacrificial ritual with the offering coming later.

Now you have something like, "I pray to Perkʷū́nos, wielder of the wágros, who slew the great serpent, who has been ever my help in times past. I make this offering to you." Now you add your request — "and ask for help in the difficulties ahead." The request might be put as desire ("I wish for this"), a subjunctive ("that this might happen"), or even an imperative ("I give you this, you give me that"). The imperative seems to us to be a little rude, but it follows the principle that if the one praying has done the prayer properly then the deity will respond if it is within their power.

As a final piece, you might end the prayer with a vow of a future offering. If you are praying in a situation in which it is impossible to make an offering at the time (while your plane is taxiing, for instance), this will be the way to go.

Our final prayer looks like this:

I pray to Perkʷū́nos, wielder of the wágros,
who slew the great serpent in the beginning of time,
who has been ever my help in times past:
I make this offering to you
and ask for help in the difficulties ahead.
And when they have been successfully overcome,
I vow an offering of an axe head,
with poured libations.

This form of prayer is appropriate for any deity.

In lists of characters, either gods or heroes, the last one mentioned often has an adjective added. For instance, " Perkʷū́nos, Xákʷōm Népōt, and far-ranging Páxusōn," or " Ménōt, Xáryomen, and ever-just Dyḗus Ptḗr."

It is traditional to make such prayers in what is called the "orans" position. This is simply standing with the arms straight out to the side, with the elbows bent up at a ninety degree angle and the palms facing forward.

Whether private or public, prayers should be said in the presence of fire. Fire is a symbol of the presence of the gods; after all, they are the Shining Ones. More important, fire is the way our offerings are transformed from things of our kind to things of the gods' kind. The fire in front of us when we pray is the fire of sacrifice, and our words are laid on it like presents to be brought to the gods.

This can be carried a step further. The fire of sacrifice burns where the well and the tree meet, the point between Chaos and Cosmos. It not only transforms our world into the divine world, it transforms Chaos into Cosmos. It is the means by which the link between the two is made, by which Chaos is brought safely into Cosmos. Your little fire has the power to do this, provided the rituals are performed according to the yéwesā. The yéwesā are that important.

In Indo-European belief, things associated with the direction "right" are, well, right. Offerings to the gods are made with the right hand in both Greece and India. Omens that appear to the right are good, while for the Hittites the left was of ill omen, and associated with perjury (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995, 686). Even today, we raise our right hands when we take an oath. In the rituals later in this book, all single-handed actions are done with the right hand, unless stated otherwise.

The dislike for the left extended to words. Although *deks- can be reconstructed as the Proto-Indo-European word for "right" with almost complete certainty, no word can be found for "left." The Proto-Indo-Europeans must have had a word for it, of course. Most likely "left" was subject to taboo, and was replaced with euphemisms, which then became the common words. This process could have happened several times, as each euphemism acquired the full status of "left" and had to be replaced.

This is not a conspiracy against left-handed people, although the fact that right-handedness is more common and when combined with the Indo-European love of rules, almost certainly played a part. The main reason is that when facing east the warm, light direction is to the right, and the cold, dark direction to the left.

Why facing east? East is the direction of prayer. It is the direction of dawn, where light begins. The Holy Ones are also the Shining Ones, so when we look toward the light we look toward them. We have already seen how the four directions were given names based on an eastward facing person. Indo-Europeans "orient" themselves.

The most famous example of the obsession with "rightness" is doing things to the right — clockwise. For instance, Plautus tells us (Curcilio, 68-9), that it is the direction to turn when praying. The Anglo-Saxon spells prescribe the same thing.

It is also the direction to go around, to circumambulate, sacred sites. This is most famous in Ireland, where it is the way holy wells are honored. The Scandinavian stave churches had surrounding porches about which worshipers went clockwise. Vedic house building rituals involved this direction.

Blessings could be given this way. In the Táin Bó Cuailnge, Emer gave Cú Chulainn one by saying, "I drive around you, turning to the right." Vedic tradition calls for blessing one's food by sprinkling it with water clockwise.

Finally, it is the direction for establishing sacred sites. The stones of the sacred hearth in Vedic rituals are put down this way. The quarterly division of Iceland was described as east, south, west, and north.

The opposite direction is more varied in its meaning, which makes sense since it's something that doesn't fit the rules. To some extent, it is the opposite of clockwise, and used in cursing. In the Norse Grettissaga, a witch who is creating a cursed tree stump walks around it counterclockwise. In a similar way, in Ireland it was an insult to go counterclockwise around someone. In many places, funeral processions went this way, and Vedic tombs were marked by plowing counterclockwise.

Above all, sacred sites are not to be circumambulated counterclockwise. That was the direction

Boand circled the Well of Nechtan; it wasn't her only violation (there was the little matter of adultery), but it sure counted.

There are ritual uses for counterclockwise motion besides cursing. Just as clockwise establishes, counterclockwise dissolves. It is sometimes used to open a doorway into the Otherworld. In a story told of the Childe Rowland, a fairy mound is opened by counterclockwise circumambulation (Puhvel, 1978, 1980:344). Its more important use is in purification. Zoroastrians use it this way to drive demons away from the mortar in which they prepare their ritual drink.

Counterclockwise motion is also used in rituals directed toward the Wíḱpotēs. It cuts us off from them in funeral rites, separating us from death. It is a reversal of the way things are done in the celestial world. It represents the chaos that death introduces into our lives.

Circumambulation is one of the basic Indo-European ritual acts, whether clockwise or counterclockwise. Its most important function is to mark off space.

With the obsession with going around, it is odd that most Indo-European sacred space is square or rectangular. The Greek and Roman temples and the Celtic enclosures are good examples. Perhaps this is because a well-laid Cosmos (which the sacred space represents) has four directions.

Not only four but also (indeed, especially) three is considered to be a religiously perfect number. We have seen it in the functions, linking it both to earthly society and to the gods. We tend to think that things have a beginning, a middle, and an end, despite the fact that since the middle is usually so much longer than the two ends that the three aren't really the same. Thus, three is a number of completeness. Something that is done thrice is done totally.

It has been argued that the Proto-Indo-Europeans didn't use deity images in their rituals. Certainly, no word for them has survived.

There is a strong tradition in some descendant cultures that originally they also had no images. Tacitus (Germania 9) says the Germans thought it beneath the dignity of their deities to be represented in material form. According to Plutarch, Numa forbade the early Romans to make images of the gods, and the Greek deity statues were certainly influenced by Near Eastern religion.

What seems to have been missed, however, is that although the early Indo-Europeans didn't use images, there is plenty of evidence that they used representations. Tacitus' comment literally says that the Germans objected to the gods' representation with human faces (humani oris). Note that this allows for other ways of representing them; it almost implies that there were such.

Non-human (-faced) representations are found among other Indo-European peoples. In Rome, stones that marked borders were treated as images of Terminus. In Greece, the Samians used a board for Hera, and the Spartans two up-right boards connected by two cross-beams for the Dioskouri (Burkert, 1985; 52, 213). As for the Iranians, according to Herodotus (4), the Scyths used a sword to represent their "Ares." Finally, in certain Vedic rituals, a pole, elaborately consecrated and decorated, was used as an image for Indra and Viṣnu (Woodard, 2006, 76-8).

In short, a modern view of divine images as necessarily having human form has confused observers into thinking that the early Indo-Europeans (and thus the Proto-Indo-Europeans) had none. Perhaps "image" is the wrong term, but I would say that they almost certainly had representations. As the evidence shows, these would have been abstract or symbolic.

I have included some of these in my spring equinox ritual, as examples of how they could be made. In it, I use ribbons with poles for Xáusōs and the Diwós Sūnú. Similarly, cows' horns could be used for G^{w}ouwinda, a horse's skull for Hékwonā, and an axe for Perk^{w}ūnos. You get the idea. I

don't think it would be right to use any images for Dyḗus Ptḗr and Wéstyā, since he is the clear sky, and she is the fire on the hearth.

If you wish to use deity images, they can be put up at the point in the ritual when each of them is invoked. I would recommend that they be placed to the east of the fires, so that they are being faced when the worshipers are looking in the sacred direction. Alternatively, they can be put in the west so that they themselves face east, as was the case in Greece and as implied by the entrance of so many Indo-European temples being in the east.

One of the greatest sources for variation in ritual arises from the nature of the beings towards whom it is directed. Celestial deities require different forms of ritual from chthonic ones. In Greek rituals, animals sacrificed to these had their throats tipped down, while sacrifices to the celestial deities had them tipped up. We learn from Odysseus' sacrifice to the dead (Odyssey Book 11) that sacrifices to chthonic beings might be offered into a pit. Celestial deities received offerings through a fire, usually on a raised platform.

These are some of the yéwesā. You will see more of them in the rituals later.

The rituals are a mixture of reconstructed elements, elements implied by reconstructed elements, elements taken from one or more of the Indo-European traditions but not reconstructible to Proto-Indo-European, and ones added for aesthetic reasons. This has been necessary to flesh out what we do know; to create workable rituals from the fragments we possess. I particularly wanted to express the complexity of Indo-European rituals, a distinction that is not clear in the descriptions that are often made. For instance, we find in the Umbrian rituals from Iguvium (Poultney, 1959), the use of several kinds of bread, of both wine and mead for libations, of different postures for the priests, and of some prayers being spoken clearly, some mumbled, and some made silently. Clearly, there was a feeling that the divine reality, and the ways in which were to relate to it, was not simple. It has been impossible to point out which elements belong to which category without increasing the size of this book beyond its already unwieldy length. I will be glad to provide this information if contacted.

Chapter 8

The Domestic Cult

The domestic cult, the worship that takes place within the home, is primary in both origin and importance. I believe that in their early years, the transhumant Proto-Indo-Europeans were organized into extended families; separated from each other by grazing lands and then gathered together with others at festival times. In time, those who met at these gatherings would grow into a clan of intermarried families. From the clan would grow the town, and from the town Indo-European society with its three functions.

First came the family and its rituals — we start from where we are. Just as they are the core of our lives, they are also the core of Indo-European religion. This was the case even in the highly developed cultures of Greece and Rome. Their great celebrations, with their processions and sacrifices of many animals, were no doubt enjoyable, but attending them wasn't required to be a pious member of the community. What was necessary was to honor the household deities.

In Rome, the importance of the domestic cult was shown by its being the duty of the pater, the head of the household. He served as the family priest, making daily offerings to the lares and penates (the household spirits), and to any deities special to members of his family, on behalf of all who lived in his house.

The standard Indo-European family was an extended one, with grown children and their families living near the grandparents; since the Indo-Europeans were patrilocal, these would be the parents of the sons. With changes in mobility, and with so many Pagans being converts (whose parents would therefore not be following our religion), such extended family units are hard to establish and maintain. Because of this, the modern domestic cult devolves upon the nuclear family.

This worship will vary from family to family, incorporating the favorite deities of each family, and admitting variations according to local situations. This is true enough that Angela Della Volpe could write that each Indo-European family had its own religion (1990:160). But the major objects of worship are the original Proto-Indo-European primary deities, Dyḗus Ptḗr, Perkʷúnos, and Wéstyā. Of almost equal importance are the Wíḱpotēs — the ancestors who worshiped in the same way as we do, and now their wisdom guides their descendants.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans may have had home shrines, but they aren't necessary. A home is its own sacred space, and since only fire and water are needed for a basic Proto-Indo-European ritual, you only need a bowl of water to purify yourself and a flame (a candle or oil lamp) to serve as the presence of Wéstyā and as the means by which offerings are made. For practical reasons, you will need a plate or bowl on which to put offerings of food or drink. After leaving them in place for a day or so, you may put them outside for the spirits to take the rest.

Within the family, the ptḗr, who is the oldest male, is the priest. His duties include the daily prayers (either with the other members of the family or by himself on their behalf), and making the main offerings on special occasions. The main offerings and prayers are to Dyḗus Ptḗr and

Perkʷṹnos, but he should also make offerings at least once a week to the deities of the family members.

Before his weekly offerings, the ptḗr puts an offering bowl in front of the lamp of Wéstyā (a lamp beside your stove or hearth — see below) and prepares a liquid offering such as beer or mead, and makes sure he has matches or a lighter at hand. He begins the ritual by purifying himself. After dipping his right hand into a bowl of water, he touches his forehead and says:

Pr-óntm supós púros sy-ēm.
[May I be pure that I might cross through the sacred.]

He dips his hand again, touches his lips, and says:

Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-yēm.
[May I cross through the sacred that I may attain the holy.]

He dips his hand again, touches his heart, and says:

Punkʷúbhos ḱwéntom nḱiēm.
[May I attain the holy that I might be blessed in all things].

Now purified, the ptḗr lights the lamp, saying:

Wéstyā is here,
the heart of our home.

He holds both his hands out straight in front of him, joined and cupped, and says:

The waters support and surround me
The land extends about me
The sky stretches out above me
At the center burns a living flame.
May all the Holy Ones bless me.
May my worship be true.
May my actions be just.
May my love be pure.
Blessings, and honor, and worship to the Holy Ones.

With the first line, he brings his hands up to the outside in a curved motion so as to have traced a bowl. With the second, he places them at the center of the top of this bowl and then pulls them flat horizontally, tracing a line. With the third, he brings them up from the ends of the line, curving them until they meet at the top of an inverted bowl. With the fourth, he extends them over the flame and then draws them back toward his heart. He next raises his hands into the orans position for the four lines beginning with "may." With the final line, he puts his hands flat on his thighs and bows for a moment. (These motions were devised with the help of Jenni Hunt.)

He now pours the libation into a bowl and says:

I pray to the Holy Ones my ancestors worshiped,
omitting none, forgetting none, leaving none out.
May all the Holy Ones receive my blessings,
receive my words and my oblations.
May all the Holy Ones send forth their blessings,
send forth their gifts and benedictions,
to all who dwell within my home,
to all for whom these words are spoken.

He then stands in the orans position and says:

Dyḗus Pter, Lord of law
Perkʷúnos, mighty defender
May this home be orderly and peaceful,
well-built and protected,
blessed by the gifts the gods bestow.

He bows to the fire, extinguishes it, and is done. If family members have deities they are particularly devoted to, he may also offer to them before extinguishing the fire, although those devoted to each of them should also be regularly making their own offerings.

The worship of Dyḗus Ptḗr, Perkʷúnos, and the patron deities of the family members is the first part of the domestic cult. The second is made up of the practices surrounding the hearth.

The oldest woman in the family, the mā́ter, is the tender of the hearth. As might be expected, she is responsible for the cult of Wéstyā, assisted by the other women and girls in the family. She also makes offerings to the ancestors.

Her role as keeper of the hearth makes her a very powerful figure: the true family altar is the hearth. If you have a working fireplace, you may use it for your altar, provided you regularly (at least once a week) prepare some food in it and use part of the food as an offering and the rest in a family meal; this can be as simple as toasted marshmallows or popcorn. Failing this, put an oil lamp or long-burning candle, a "lamp of Wéstyā," next to your stove, with an offering bowl in front of it. Whenever you use the stove, say, "We cook with the fire of Wéstyā." For the main meal of the day, light the lamp from the stove (using a match as an intermediary) and leave it burning as you cook your meal.

Whenever she lights the lamp, the mā́ter says:

Wéstyā is here, the heart of our home.

At least weekly, offer food and milk or oil to Wéstyā. A bit of food from your table is a must; the Romans offered some from every meal. If you use a fireplace, put these offerings into the fire. If not, place them in bowls in front of your lamp and leave them there overnight, putting them outside for the land spirits the next day. Small pieces may be burned in the flame of the lamp.

When she offers to Wéstyā, the mā́ter says:

Burn on our hearth, Wéstyā,
Source of all that is holy:
bless us who dwell here,
and smile on all we own
and give special care to guests
that our hospitality might honor you.

A further ritual that may be performed to honor Wéstyā is circumambulating her fire, a very widespread Indo-European custom (Volpe, 1992:90). In ancient times, the hearth was in the center of the home physically, making this easy to do. Nowadays that's unlikely to be true, so as part of weekly worship the lit lamp of Wéstyā can be put on the kitchen table, lit with fire from the stove, and then circumambulated clockwise, of course.

The daily lighting of the flame is important. In this way the cult of Wéstyā is maintained in everyday life. The connection between the lamp and the stove is also important; a bit of her goes into each piece of food we eat and thus into us. Wéstyā feeds us. It is here, in the heart of the home, that

we can connect with the holy. The cult of Wéstyā is the most important way to do this.

The domestic rituals form the core of the devotional side of Indo-European religion, the point where the relationship of reciprocal exchange becomes one of love. In Hinduism it may have given rise to the bhakti cult, the most common form of modern Hinduism, in which love of a deity is the preeminent thing. Similar attitudes pop up throughout the Indo-European world. The connection of hearth, heart, and love make the cult of Wéstyā a natural starting place for this sort of devotion.

One interesting aspect of the cult of Wéstyā is that there are no animal sacrifices made to her. She is given bread, milk, oil, butter, etc. She is a calm and clear influence, and the only strong emotion surrounding her is love.

The third part of domestic worship is the cult of the Ancestors. Because this worship is within the family, it is the genetic ancestors who are meant here. Strictly speaking, the Wíḱpotēs are honored rather than worshiped, since they are not deities. On the family level, their honoring has the same importance as the worship of the deities.

The Ancestors form a great extended family to which we belong. The most distant ancestors are like the ptḗr and mā́ter of this family. When a living ptḗr and mā́ter perform the domestic rituals, they embody the ptḗr and mā́ter of the Wíḱpotēs.

The offerings to the Wíḱpotēs may be a daily rite or a weekly one. The ritual is begun with the purification, lighting of the fire of Wéstyā, and offering to Wéstyā as done in her cult. The mā́ter then takes some of the food from a main meal and places it with her left hand in an offering bowl before the lit lamp of Wéstyā. She may offer some drink as well. As she makes the offering, she says:

> Wíḱpotēs, ptḗres and mā́teres,
> founders of our family,
> sources of our lives:
> We make due offering to you
> We honor you with gratitude.
> Be with our family
> and ensure its continuance and prosperity.
> Advise and comfort us in all troubles.
> Bless and support us with all your gifts.

Once a year honor the Wíḱpotēs as a whole. Different Indo-European cultures did this on different days. The Celtic Samhain (Halloween) or Roman Parentalia (February 13-24) are well known; less famous is the Iranian Frarvardigan (March 16-20).

The dates of these rituals do not come close to coinciding in an absolute sense. In a relative sense, however, they are the same: they all occur at or shortly before the New Year of their culture. The symbolism of this is pretty straightforward; as the old year dissolves, time and space dissolve with it. As a result, the border between this world and the next is removed, and the dead return. The most obvious reason to honor the dead at this time is that they are there, and they can be seen either as family who should be invited to any feasts given by their family, or guests and therefore under the laws of hospitality. As a time of a reestablishment of the world, this is an appropriate occasion for us to get right with the past before we start a new future. The new year will be formed according the Xártus and the actions of the dead are a large part of the Xártus. They are therefore quite literally returning in the forming of a new yearly pattern. The ritual for this is in Chapter 17.

You should also hold a yearly festival in honor of your household deities. We see examples of

this among the Celts and Romans. The Gaelic Brighid's day (Feb. 2) celebrations involved house blessings, and Brighid was a hearth goddess. The Romans had Terminalia (Feb. 23), at which the god of the borders was worshiped. The delightful description in Ovid's Fasti (2.639-58) has the husband offering grain and wine into an altar fire lit by a coal brought by his wife from their hearth on a potshard.

No Proto-Indo-European date for this sort of ritual can be reconstructed, so which one is chosen can be left up to the family observing it. One good day might be the anniversary of moving into your home.

On this day, make the usual offerings to Dyḗus Ptḗr, Perkʷúnos, Wéstyā, and the Wíḱpotēs, and also to the deities special to members of your family. In other words, honor all the spiritual beings who watch over your household. Invite them into your home and eat a meal in their presence. Give offerings from the meal to them, especially to Wéstyā.

Even while observing all of these rituals, do not forget the most important one, the giving of hospitality. This is a domestic reflection of the ghosti-principle; the exchange of hospitality binds society together.

Chapter 9

The Wíḱs

Worship in the home comes first, but gathering a few like-minded households together is certainly fun, and the increase in the talent pool gives greater possibilities to learn. A Proto-Indo-European word which can be used for such a group is *wíḱs (Latin vicus, "town," Gothic weihs, "village, domain" (Benveniste, 1969:251)). This is not a clan or a tribe, since those are essentially extended families, but more like a village. A slightly different form of the word is found in as first syllable of "Wíḱpotēs."

Since modern Pagans don't live in the sort of society the ancients did, with villages made up of people practicing one religion, a modern wíḱs would be like a congregation or a study group, a group of friends who get together to socialize, learn, and worship the gods. It isn't a tribe, however; your main responsibility is to your domestic cult, and to your family, not to your wíḱs.

In the Proto-Indo-European domestic cult, the ptḗr was the priest, assisted by other family members. As groups grew bigger, specialization developed, resulting in the establishment, in some Indo-European cultures, of separate classes, one of which was that of the priests.

Any modern group requires certain officers: secretary, treasurer, and perhaps a chief administrator. Like ancient societies, a wíḱs also requires religious officials whose jobs are to officiate at rituals on behalf of the wíḱs, to make most of the offerings, pronounce most of the sacred words, and make sure the ritual is performed properly. These roles are performed by people who might be called priests.

There is, however, no reconstructible Proto-Indo-European word for "priest." Based on Latin flamen and Vedic bhraman, some have suggested *bhlagh(s)men, but that just doesn't look right. It is too complex to be a Proto-Indo-European word, and the "gh" in the middle doesn't quite fit the Roman evidence (Puhvel, 1966, 55). We're left with no Proto-Indo-European word for "priest," which suggests that a separate class of priests, such as the Celtic druids, didn't develop in the Proto-Indo-European period.

This suggestion finds support from our being able to reconstruct Proto-Indo-European words for two kinds of priest: *Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter. These correspond to the two major priestly offices. The Xádbhertor is the one who makes the offerings. This word, found in Celtic (ad-opair), Umbrian (arsfertur), and Sanskrit (advaryu) literally means "the one who carries forward" (Neff, 1980, 69). What he carries forward are the offerings. He makes the sacrifices; performs the sacred acts. He must be able to perform the ritual acts gracefully and with beauty.

The Ǵhéuter is the one who calls to the deities, and who sings the praise songs. The word means "pourer" (he "pours out" prayers), and is found in several of the Indo-European traditions, from Celtic (Gaulish gutuater) to Sanskrit (hotr) (Varenne, 1991, 234). The Ǵhéuter is the primary reciter of invocations. He is the wíḱs' poet, its bard. He must be comfortable with speaking publicly, and will need to be able to memorize the words of the rituals. It is good if he is also capable of

extemporaneous poetry.

Note that these words are descriptions of duties, not people. The Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter are those who do certain things, not those who are certain things; it is likely that there wasn't originally a priestly class, but rather that the priestly roles could be performed by anyone qualified. Because Indo-European rituals were very complicated, and their correct performance vital, becoming "qualified" could require much training. These are not necessarily permanent titles; they may exist only within the context of a ritual. The positions may be rotated among your members, or be held exclusively by two of them. Both male and female adults may serve in this capacity. Priests aren't the leaders of the wíḱs, though. They might even be said to be the followers. Their offices exist only to serve the members.

Another servant of the members is the Rḗḱs. *Rḗḱs is the root of Irish ri, Sanskrit rajan, and Latin rex. It is sometimes translated "king," but "chieftain," or perhaps just "someone with special power" would be more accurate. It may even mean "the one who keeps things straight (that is, in order)." Like the priests, it is his job to keep things in order. The realm of expertise of the priests is the yéwesā. The Rḗḱs maintains the dhétis.

Most important of all, the Rḗḱs is the ritual representative of the wíḱs. As ancient sacrifices were generally conducted for the benefit of a particular person, if they are to be performed for the wíḱs there should be a person who personifies the wíḱs. That person is the Rḗḱs.

The Rḗḱs has sacred duties in the rituals then; how much temporal power he possesses is up to the wíḱs. He may be the chief administrator as well, or the wíḱs may decide to have the temporal duties performed by someone else. Since the Rḗḱs must be male (in order to perform the ritual duties), you may very well wish his office to be purely a ceremonial one.

He must live an exemplary life. His infractions of the yéwesā and his swā́rtus not only reflect on the wíḱs, they directly affect it. All of a Rḗḱs' actions are written directly into the Xártus. As the one responsible for the dhétis (even if he has no temporal power, he is responsible in the religious sense), his actions are the expression of the Xártus in the workings of the wíḱs.

The Rḗḱs is a transfunctional figure. His loyalties must be to the wíḱs as a whole and not to any one function within it.

The Rḗḱs is chosen by election and confirmed in his office through the horse sacrifice (see Chapter 14). This ensures the approval of Hékwonā. Choose a Rḗḱs for whatever time limit you choose. A year is not too short.

If you are disturbed by the monarchical overtones of the Rḗḱs, choose a Chieftain (or simply an Executive) to fulfill the temporal duties. A Chieftain is elected for a fixed term. Although the Rḗḱs must be a man that does not mean that the wíḱs must be run by a man. A wíḱs can have a Rḗḱs for the ritual side of things, with the Chieftain having the real authority, and this can be either a man or a woman.

The Champion or Nḗr ("man," with connection to "virility," its reflex) is these days a ceremonial post. There are points in the rituals where his help is required. In the old times, the presence of warriors in a social grouping was a necessity and the Nḗr would have been the chief of them. He would have been the main protector of the Rḗḱs, and would frequently eventually become Rḗḱs himself. (In the harshness of ancient times, this nice theory could break down and the Nḗr might arrange his own succession).

Despite the historical realities and the fact that "Nḗr" means "man" (as in "male person"), there is

no reason why the office can't be held by a woman. If the Wíḱs has a Rḗḱs, he may take the Nḗr's ritual roles if there aren't enough people in the wíḱs to have a separate person in the role.

The Nḗr's symbol of office is a two-headed axe. (These are easy to find; most hardware stores carry them.)

The Fire Tender is either the wife of the Rḗḱs, or an unwed woman or girl of marriageable age. Failing that, a younger girl may perform this role, followed by, in order of precedence, a married woman, a boy, a single man, and a married man. The Fire Tender is the priestess of Wéstyā, and like those of Brighid, Vesta, and Hestia should be unmarried, or like the tender of the most important fire in Vedic ritual, be the wife of the person for whom the ritual is being performed. In public rituals that is the Rḗḱs, so the job of Fire Tender would fall to his wife.

The job of the Fire Tender is a surprisingly difficult one. It is not just to keep the fires going, but to be the still center about which the ritual turns. While others are doing things, her job is stillness. It is a meditational task requiring perfect attention. Except for points in the ritual when she has specific tasks, she is performing her role best if no one notices she is there. Even when she feeds the fires, her goal is to weave her actions so flawlessly into the ritual that each one, far from being an interruption, is the only thing to do at that moment. As I said, a hard job.

The Diviner practices three categories of divination. He takes omens before sacrifices, to determine if it is a propitious time for the ritual. Of course, if the answer is no, he will be called upon for more precise information on what a good time would be. He may perform public divinations for a group, answering such questions as, "Which land should the wíḱs buy?" He may divine for individuals. The Diviner should not be one of the Priests; there is too much pressure on them, which could lead to self-deception. Individuals may also divine for themselves, or for others, apart from public rituals. Divination is discussed in more detail in chapter 19.

Except for the Rḗḱs or Chieftain, the officers should be chosen in true Indo-European fashion: the best should have the honor. In a small wíḱs the choice may be obvious, or there may be too few to have good competition. In the latter case, divination or drawing lots are options.

Other members of the wíḱs should take active parts in the rituals. They may carry things, play music, hand things to the offerers, or assist the Fire Tender. Even the children of the wíḱs can take part. In Greek sacrifices, young boys tended the meat as it cooked, and maidens carried water and baskets. In Rome, children sang hymns.

Proto-Indo-European public religion is essentially congregational. After the household, the wíḱs is the standard unit. Anything more is simply unnecessary. However, two or more wíḱs may create a larger structure. This can range from a loose association of friendship to a more formal one closer to a federation. If the latter, they will need to choose a high Rḗḱs to serve over all the wíḱs. The Rḗḱs of each wíḱs may keep that title, or may instead be called "Wíḱpotis," "lord of the wíḱs." This is the singular of the word I've used above for ancestor: a Rḗḱs is a living ancestor.

Chapter 10

Preparation for Ritual

Purification

A ritual begins before anyone gathers, with the preparation of the celebrants and the materials. There are practical aspects to this: the materials are collected and put where they will be used. There are aesthetic aspects: the materials are arranged in a pleasing manner and beautiful clothes are put on. And there is the ritual aspect: purification.

Purification amounted to an obsession with the Indo-Europeans. Things had to be clean both physically (they were washed) and spiritually (also with washing, or, if that were not possible, sprinkling). There was an overlap between the physical and the spiritual; washing accomplished both.

Purification is an act which makes things sacred. It removes anything that does not belong to the object being purified, or to the purpose to which that object will be put. It separates the object from the everyday world. It also simplifies the object. A purified bowl is just a bowl. Anything else that might have clung to it has been removed. It therefore perfectly expresses its part of the Xártus, its "bowlness." It comes close to godhood, it participates in the divine. Because it participates in the divine, it may now exist in sacred space.

The need for purification should not be seen as an insult to the material. The pollution from which the mundane must be purified in order to enter sacred space has its counterpart in the pollution from which extremely sacred things must be purified if they are to enter into mundane space. A good example comes from the Greek Orestes. When he murdered his mother he acquired a sacred nature; so extreme an act pushed him right out of the land of men. He had to be purified not because he wasn't sacred, but because he was. This is what led Mary Douglas to define pollution as "matter out of place" (quoted in Zaidman and Pantel, 1992, 10). Here again, we see the Indo-European concern with order: everything belongs where it belongs, and when it leaves its proper place a ritual must be performed.

People have a great need for purification, being complex creatures that absorb numerous influences during their days. Their minds jump from thought to thought, making it difficult to concentrate once the time for ritual arrives. Purification provides a moment of separation from daily cares, an introduction to a time of peace. It removes the parts of people that aren't really themselves; when you are purified, you act from that part of you that is truly you.

To purify yourself, dip your hand into a bowl of water. Touch your forehead and say:

Pr-óntm supós púros sy-ēm.

[May I be pure that I might cross through the sacred.]

Dip your hand again, touch your lips, and say:

Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-yēm.

[May I cross through the sacred that I may attain the holy.]

Dip your hand again, touch your heart, and say:

Punk^{w}úbhos ḱwéntom nḱiēm.

[May I attain the holy that I might be blessed in all things].

This is an individual purification, suitable for solitary rituals. There is a general purification at the beginning of public rituals; the Priests, the Fire Tender, and the Nḗr should purify themselves in the solitary way before creating sacred space.

Purification is necessary for ritual objects as well. Nomads, even transhumant nomads, can't carry a lot of purely ritual items around with them; such equipment is a characteristic of settled peoples. The Proto-Indo-Europeans are likely to have treated their ritual equipment as temporarily sacred, and to have returned it to ordinary use afterwards. Most of what you use in ritual need not be permanently dedicated to the gods.

Before each ritual, wash or sprinkle each ritual item, saying:

Púros zdhi.

[Be pure.]

Dry them with a clean white towel and put them on another until all of the items have been purified. Then sprinkle them once more with a mixture of salt and ground roasted barley, which is called "xádor" (literally "dry stuff").

Barley is used in Greece as a purification, sprinkled on animals before sacrifice. Both the Roman and Hittite material gives us the added detail of roasting and grinding the barley; all three include salt. Since Rome could not have borrowed from Anatolia, it is likely that we are looking at a Proto-Indo-European tradition.

To prepare the xádor, take barley and roast it in a frying pan, stirring enough to keep it from burning. The pearl barley you can buy in a supermarket is fine. When it is toasted, put it in a bowl and allow it to cool.

Then take a mortar and pestle. Holding the pestle in your right hand and facing east, knock on the inside edge of the mortar four times, in the east, north, west, and south, saying as you do:

Wágrō hóg^{w}him g^{w}hent.

[With the wágros he killed the serpent.]

Pour some rock salt into the mortar (the quantity depending on the size of the mortar), saying:

Pure and clean, and free from decay.

Grind the salt into powder.

Then pour in some of the roasted barley, the same quantity as the salt. Treat it the same way. When you grind it, make sure it is mixed well with the salt.

Repeat the barley grinding twice more, and you have xádor.

Xádor may be prepared ahead of time and then stored, or it may be prepared after the purification and robing but before the rest of the ritual.

The knocking comes from the Zoroastrian haoma preparing ritual and uses Indo-European imagery. In the Zoroastrian ritual, the knocking is accompanied by prayers to smite the demons. In a Proto-Indo-European context, this is a ritual repetition of the victory of Perk^{w}ūnos over the serpents. Note that the knocking proceeds counterclockwise about the mortar. Impurities are being driven out, so this is the appropriate direction for the knocking to take place.

Clothing

Traditional Pagan ritual garb was usually, except sometimes for priests, clean, nice clothes. For instance, in Rome the Vestal Virgins (the brides of Rome) wore wedding dresses and the flamens had special caps, but the average upper-class worshiper wore a toga. Togas seem exotic to us, but they were essentially the suits of their day. If you wear nice but normal clothing to a ritual, you feel dressed up but not self-conscious.

My recommendation is that most worshipers wear some special clothing, and other attendees wear nice, clean clothes, with the priest dressing similarly, except in white. (A white shirt could be enough to make the distinction.)

When dressing yourself for ritual, say:

Dyḗus Ptḗr Xrtú me weryeti.

[Dyḗus Ptḗr covers me with the Xártus.]

Chapter 11

Sacred Space

Indo-European rituals take place within sacred space. This does not necessarily mean in a temple; at least not a building dedicated for worship. As most of the later Indo-Europeans built such temples, they did not have complete objections to them. However, the sense was always that they were nice but not necessary.

A Roman, used to his beautiful temples, could still make an offering at a temporary altar made from sod. Homer's Greeks were perfectly happy to perform sacrifices wherever they happened to be. When using their temples, the Greeks and Romans performed their sacrifices outside them, the Greeks even with their backs to them. Vedic rituals always take place in temporary sacred space. The semi-nomadic Proto-Indo-Europeans were not likely to have had any permanent sacred space.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans were accustomed to worshiping under an open sky; a roofed structure would have blocked the view of the divine celestial beings. Remember, the Proto-Indo-Europeans were not big on the plastic arts; they worked with time rather than with the material. A sacred structure would not have been high on their list of priorities.

With all these caveats, can we even be sure that the Proto-Indo-Europeans had any sacred space? I think that we can, and I hope that by demonstrating that the reconstruction of such space is possible, it will become clear what they thought about it.

If sacred space was important to them, the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have had rituals to create it. The outline of these rituals can be reconstructed.

First, the defining characteristic of sacred space is that it is cut off. That may, in fact, be what the root of "sacred" means (*sek-; Harriet Lutzky, in Mallory and Adams, 1997, 494). Sacred space is that which is cut off from non-sacred space. Walls, ditches, stones, or other markers that say, "Here is where sacred space begins," usually mark it out physically.

There is a distinction to be made between "sacred" and "holy,": two different aspects of the divine. The Indo-European languages have separate words for these — Latin sacer and sanctus, and Greek hieros and hagios (Polomé, 1982b, 286 - 287). The sacred is that which is forbidden except to those who are properly prepared. The water of Nechtan's well was sacred and brought death to Boand. The Proto-Indo-European word for "sacred" is *seup- (Watkins, 1975b); there is also *weik-, "consecrate; forbid to (= separate from) human contact" (Mallory and Adams, 1997, 493).

The holy, on the other hand, is the divine that is desirable, invigorating, provides us with blessings, and is unreservedly benevolent. One possible word for "holy" is *kwen(to)- (Mallory and Adams, 1997, 493).

To find the holy, we must go through the sacred. It is in that set apart and dangerous area where blessings are obtained. The proper mediating rituals that give us safe passage through the sacred also bring us to the holy.

The second point is that sacred space includes the holy. Ritual space may be said to have two parts; that which makes it sacred and that which makes it holy.

The border that cuts off the space and the fire on the altar that provides a place at which to approach the gods express these two defining characteristics of Indo-European sacred space. The border makes it sacred. Establishing a relationship with the deities through offerings makes it holy.

Perhaps an example will make this clearer. Plutarch ("Life of Romulus") and Ovid (Fasti 4:807-848) tell the story of the founding of Rome. Romulus marked out the borders of Rome by plowing around them. When he came to where the gates would be, he lifted the plow so that people could leave and enter the city without passing over sacred ground. Remus, his brother, tried to jump over the furrow, and Romulus struck him dead.

The major qualities of the sacred are found here. First, its creation is identified with the creation of the world. Remus is the sacrificed Yemós. His death is the sacrifice that will allow the creation of the world of Rome.

Second, the space is literally cut off using a metal blade, in this case a plow. We find this elsewhere, in a tale about Denmark, where Zealand was created by plowing. Gefjon was granted as much land as she could plow around in one day. She plowed so hard that the land broke off to form the island. Zoroastrian fire temples contain sacred areas called pawis, marked out by channels cut into the ground. When a temporary pawis must be constructed, the channels can be cut with a metal knife. Vedic rituals form sacred space with a plow or a wooden sword. An Irish story tells how the defensive ditch of Emain Macha was made by being cut with the pin of Macha's brooch.

Third, it can only be entered through non-sacred gates. The cut is dangerous; it is *seup, and is not to be crossed.

Just as the sacred is the border, the holy is the center. It is in the holy center that the divine enters our world. (See Eliade, 1959, for a fine treatment of the holy center.)

The center can be indicated in a number of ways. The cosmology shows two, the well and the tree. Throughout the IE world, wells and shafts appear as holy sites to be revered and offered to. The holy wells of Ireland are good examples; to this day offerings are made to them by tying small pieces of cloth to nearby bushes in return for healing and other blessings. The Roman mundus, a pit around which Romulus marked out the borders of Rome, is another. Today's custom of wishing wells may continue the tradition of the well as the source of the holy; remember that according to the ghosti-principle someone who wants a wish granted must give something in return.

The well or shaft clearly communicates with the chthonic spirits, those that dwell beneath the ground. The tree communicates with the celestial deities. It is a means by which we are connected with the land above; the tree goes up. Of course, it is also a means by which the blessings of the celestial gods come down.

We have already seen, in the discussion of the cosmology, numerous examples of natural tree symbols, such as the many sacred trees of Ireland. These are found in sacred spaces; in the Odyssey (2.358 - 362) the Greeks, while waiting for favorable winds to bring them over to Troy, sacrificed at altars by a spring over which spread a plane tree (a spot that includes both tree and well). They are found in permanent sacred sites as well (with the temple built around them), or they are replaced with pillars — artificial "trees." The pillar of Irminsul in Anglo-Saxon England is an example of this, as are the Jupiter pillars of eastern Gaul and western Germany. As in Vedic ritual, in the ritual to follow I will identify the sacrificial stake with the world tree, while a pit will be in the ritual for the

Ancestors.

You may wish to erect a pillar or dig a hole, or both. All that is really needed as your holy center is a fire of offering. I will turn to that in a moment. Before considering the ritual equivalent of the holy, I will describe the way the sacred is indicated on the ritual ground.

The Enclosure

The border creates an enclosed space, which is called a *ghórdhos in Proto-Indo-European. (The word is the root of English "yard.") The ghórdhos should be a flat, dry area, marked out as a rectangle. Its size will depend on the number of people that will be attending the ritual. As a standard size that will fit at least a dozen, I suggest six paces by twelve paces, echoing the sacred three. That is the size and shape that will be assumed in the rituals. The long side runs east to west, "orienting" the space. (See appendix 4 for how to mark out a rectangle.)

Rectangular seems to be the standard Indo-European shape for sacred space. Greek, Roman, and Zoroastrian temples are rectangular; and the Romano-Celtic shrines are square, within rectangular enclosures. Vedic ritual gives one possible explanation when it explains the square āhavanīya fire (the main offering fire) as belonging to heaven. Perhaps the temple is meant to be "heaven on earth." Perhaps the Vedic explanation is late, and earlier it was an entirely earthly concept — the four directions — that was implied. My own theory is that a rectangular space was chosen to provide a clear east-west axis, allowing an emphasis on facing the sacred eastern direction.

There are a few examples of round Indo-European temples (other than the very special cases of Vesta and Hestia). The preference still seems to run toward the rectangular, but a round space is not completely wrong. It is possible that the other round temples, like those for Vesta and Hestia, had special reasons for being that shape that are now lost. All in all, a rectangular shape is the best for standard purposes.

The Fire

Fire is at the very center of Indo-European ritual and of the ritual space. There are two different types of fire in Indo-European ritual.

The domestic fire is the most basic. It is the fire of Wéstyā and, as has been already been explained, it has many functions from the practical to the spiritual. This is the fire of the domestic cult. In established communities, a common hearth was sometimes established at a single place, such as the fire of Vesta. In temporary public sacred space, things are more complicated.

In both Roman and Vedic public rituals, there was more than one fire. The Romans used two. The main fire was on a square altar, the ara, which stood in front of each temple. This was the one into which the main offerings were made. Next to it was another fire, the foculus, which was offered incense and wine at the beginnings of sacrifices. These were the standard offerings in the domestic cult, and this fire may therefore be identified with the domestic hearth (Dumézil, 1970, 314-15). It is likely that its flame was brought from the home of the person sacrificing; without lighters or matches, this would be the easiest way to bring fire to the ritual.

A standard Vedic ritual has three fires. The primary one is the gārhapatya, the "fire of the master of the house." This is a round fire, lit from the householder's sacred fire. It is therefore the representative on the ritual ground of the hearth of the one for whom the sacrifice is offered. During the ritual, his wife stands close to it.

To its east is the āhavanīya, the "fire of offering." This fire is the connection between the gods and the earth, representing the presence of Agni, god of fire and priest of the gods. The altar, a cushion of grass on which the gods are invited to sit, is next to it. This fire is square.

The third fire is the dakṣiṇa, the "southern fire." Made on the southern edge of the sacrificial area, its purpose is to guard against evil spirits (Outsiders, especially the dead) which might come from this direction, in Vedic cosmology the most dangerous. It is fan-shaped. The dakṣiṇa is clearly a late addition to the Indo-European fire system, by its unusual shape. (Dumézil (1970, 320-1) argues that the fire of Vulcan, situated outside the walls of Rome, is equivalent, but I'm not convinced that it had an important ritual function.) Unlike the other two fires, the dakṣiṇa is named not by its purpose but by its location. Its name is formed in a different way from those of the others, almost as an afterthought.

From Ireland, we find little evidence for individual rituals, but we do have the round fire of Brighid at Kildare. This fire of the hearth goddess is in a round temple (marked with a hedge), and tended by women.

The cultural evidence points to two fires. The distinction between the shapes appropriate for different fires has been mentioned already: the round temples of Vesta, Hestia, and Brighid, vs. the rectangular temples to other gods and the combination round and square (combined hearth and public fire) at Seuthopolis. One last bit of data comes from the cemetery of Tulkar, in South Tadzhikistan. These Iranian people buried their males with rectangular hearths and their females with round hearths (Mallory, 1989, 53).

It is therefore clear that Indo-Europeans made a distinction between a domestic fire (even when it was the hearth of an empire) and one used in public rituals. The first was connected with the domestic cult, and received offerings to family deities and ancestors; the second was the one on which the deities' portion was placed.

All of this shows the Proto-Indo-European system to be two fires, the dakṣiṇa being an elaboration. The fact that both are not always present suggests that one may have been primary, perhaps only in relative importance, but perhaps chronologically as well.

The domestic hearth is certainly the primary of the two. The gārhapatya is lit from the sacrificer's own hearth. If the other two fires go out, they may be relit from the gārhapatya; if it goes out, it must be completely reestablished (Dumézil, 1970, 313; Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 7.5 (in Keith, 1998)). In Rome, the hearth fire next to the main altar was offered to first. In Greek rituals, Hestia was offered to first as well — "Hestia first" was a Greek saying meaning "first things first." In Vedic ritual, the gārhapatya is the first established and the source of the others.

I suggest that the domestic fire (*xā́sā) is also chronologically primary to the public fire. It is only after the semi-nomadic Proto-Indo-European clans began to gather into larger political units that a need for public ritual unconnected with a particular clan's guardians arose and with it the need for a public fire. Relying on the Indo-European law that the lighting of a fire legalizes possession (and its converse, that the fire's extinction ends possession), we can be assured that wherever our sacred fires are lit belongs to us, at least for the duration of the fire. Whether we meet on our own land, in a public park, or a VFW hall, as long as our fires are lit we are in our own place.

To designate the public fire, I have used the animate Proto-Indo-European word for "fire," *hn̥ǵʷnis (rather than the inanimate *peH$_2$ur). It seems to me that a fire through which sacrifice is made is alive, even if in a less personified sense than that on the hearth (other than in Vedic religion,

where *hn̥gʷnis is the source of the name of the fire god Agni); however, it can't be used for the hearth fire because it's masculine.

We can't know what kind of wood the Proto-Indo-Europeans used in their rituals. The fire of Vesta was made of oak (Taylor, 1979:104,); the fire of Perun at Novgorod was also of oak (Taylor, 1979:125). In the Hebrides, the Midsummer fires should be made from "crionach caon (sacred faggots), such as the faggots of the oak, the rowan, the bramble, and others, "but "[t]he blackthorn, wild fig, trembling aspen, and other 'crossed' woods are avoided" (Carmichael, 1992, 590). In Vedic ritual, a number of woods are prescribed, depending on the purpose of the ritual. Oak seems to be the most popular, and since that fits in nicely with the usual Proto-Indo-European cosmological system, I suggest that for your fires.

The arrangement of the fire logs mattered. As we have seen, the shape was important, and that would have been established through the placing of the wood. On Greek vases, we see a "log cabin" arrangement, and Vedic sources are also quite specific. I will include a specific arrangement in the rituals.

The xásā need not even be made of wood at all. Since it is almost certain that what was brought from the domestic fire was coal, incense briquettes, pieces of charcoal impregnated with chemicals to allow them to light easily, could replace them. This would allow the xásā to be carried more easily and is what I myself use.

A cauldron filled partway with sand is good for the xásā. The handle found on cauldrons will enable it to be carried by the Fire Tender, although even with briquettes, she will need to wear a fire glove to protect her hand. A sand-filled cauldron is quite heavy, so I recommend putting a circle of wood, sealed with waterproofing and caulked around the edges, about an inch from the top with the sand on the top of that.

The Altar

The square fire is put on an altar. (Most properly, it is the altar itself, but here I'm using the word to refer to the physical object connected with it). An altar may be defined either as a place where the gods sit or as a place at which offerings are made.

The descendant Indo-European peoples commonly used stone altars, a material that is both functional and artistic, but unsuited to the semi-nomadic lifestyle of Proto-Indo-Europeans. The Proto-Indo-Europeans themselves most likely used turf altars.

This is seen in some of the descendant traditions. The Anglo-Saxon Land Remedy Spell (A13; Grendon, 190, 173-7) seems to contain a ritual for the creation of sacred space. In it, four sods — one from each side of the land — are brought to church and masses are said over them.

The Romans, in Augustan times, had the tradition of placing a sod on their stone altars before sacrifice. This was in memory of ancient times, when altars were made from sod. A sod altar is also found in the Aeneid (117ff.).

The Indo-Iranians had grass altars (Skt. barhish, Av. barezish). This grass might be strewn on the ground, or placed on a small structure of earth or brick. The same word, vedi, is used in Vedic rituals for both the pile of grass and the structure on which it might be placed. The grass is anointed with ghee and the gods are invited to seat themselves on it, serving as both offering place and place of the gods.

Finally, there are the Scots, who in the eighteenth century were recorded building their May Day

fires on a pile of turf (Frazer's note on Ovid's Fasti, 417).

The western examples use sod, and the Indo-Iranian use grass. The use of grass is most likely a result of the separation of the fire of offering from the seat of the gods in Vedic ritual. Grass is not suitable for a firebase but it is very suitable for a seat. The Vedic earth pile with grass on top is essentially a turf altar.

Sod is the original form. As both a vertical structure and something made from earth, it symbolizes the world mountain (one of the forms of the axis mundi). The fire is built on its top, a symbol of the deities, shining at the top of the mountain, and it is the means by which our offerings may be sent up the mountain.

In a small-scale ritual or on public land, building an altar entirely of sod may be a bit much; in such cases, one sod is enough to satisfy the ritual symbolism. Dig it to the west of the ghórdhos and place it in the center, the spot where the hn̥gʷnis belongs. On or over this, place a sand-filled square barbecue, one low enough for the seated Fire Tender to watch over both it and the xā́sā, but slightly higher than the cauldron. If you want a strong vertical emphasis (especially desirable in large group rites, where visibility is a problem), sods can be taken from the border of the sacred place and piled, with the center sod on top. This will not only increase the identification with the world mountain, it will recall the mystic unity between the center and the edge (holy and sacred) that seems to be hinted at in other aspects of Indo-European ritual.

The Pit

When the altar sod (or the central one) is dug up, it leaves behind a hole. This may be called the *régʷes, the "dark place" (Mallory and Adams, 1997, 147), and is used in rituals for the ancestors as their spot of offering. It is to the west of the space because it goes down, and the west is where the sun goes down. When we face it, from the center, our backs are to the rising sun, and we face the dark. Even during rituals in which the Ancestors aren't offered to there will be a régʷes since the altar sod will have been dug up from there. In most cases, its existence won't be acknowledged.

A more elaborate régʷes, useful for rituals in which large offerings are made into it, can be dug within the space left by the sod. The dirt dug up is then put around the hole, to mark it out as sacred and to identify it with the enclosed land of Yemós.

For rituals in which digging a pit is not possible, a bowl may be used and any offerings placed into it disposed of after the ritual in a pit dug elsewhere or in water. The bowl must be lower than the hn̥gʷnis or xā́sā.

The Speltá

You will need a place to put your tools and supplies. This is not an altar, since offerings are not made on it, and the gods do not sit on it. It is simply a table. I call it a *speltá, which is Proto-Indo-European for "board." A cutting board works well. Put it either on the ground or on bricks, stones, or stools to lift it up a bit and to keep you from having to lean over when picking things up or putting them down.

The Ritual for Creating Sacred Space

For the sake of continuity, I will include the preliminary rites here.

Items needed:

At the processional site:

Bowl of water for purification; a musical instrument for calling the people together, such as a horn or a drum; a piece of bovine leather (if this is not available, a square of unbleached wool felt can be used); the xā́sā, on the piece of leather, with briquettes; small pitcher of lighter fluid; means of lighting the xā́sā; fire glove; small bowl of melted clarified butter; spoon for offering butter; pitcher of mead; the sacrifice.

Two-thirds of the way between the processional site and where the ghórdhos will be:

A second piece of leather; bowl to make dough in; pitcher of water for mixing the dough; flour (either barley or spelt); dark beer in a pitcher; a second piece of bovine leather (or a piece of dark wool); bowl of barley mixed with local sacred grain.

Either carried in the procession or at the ghórdhos site:

Bowl of barley and the local sacred grain; bowl of water (this can be the same as used to make the dough if you have filled it with enough water); broom; shovel; hn̥gʷnis container (if it is not built on the sod altar itself); fuel, kindling, and tinder for the hn̥gʷnis; a second pitcher of water; four short poles (about 4‘ tall); small sledge hammer to drive the poles into the ground; two long poles (about 8’ tall); one medium pole (about 6’ long); lid of the xā́sā; fire extinguisher, with a blanket to cover it if you wish; a blanket or mat for the Fire Tender to sit on; the speltá; a second bowl of butter; a second butter spoon; and the equipment for the particular ritual, put on the speltá: for a sacrifice, for instance, you will need a knife, a bowl of xádor, and a small bowl of water.

Carry as much of this as you can, and put the rest where it will be needed.

Purify the equipment. This can be done by anyone. Mark out where the corners of the space will be with holes, and then put sticks in them so they can be found easily. Instructions for this are found in appendix 4. Make a hole to receive the sacrificial stake.

The attendees gather some distance away from where the ghórdhos will be, the Nḗr carrying his axe. This spot will be away from the where the procession will form. A signal, using a drum or a bell, can be given to call everyone together.

1. Calling and purification

The Ǵhéuter goes to where the procession is to begin and calls to the others:

Gʷmté, gʷmté, gʷmté,
Gʷigʷmsḱóte,
Gʷigʷmsḱótōd!
Gʷmté, gʷrtíbhos Déiwōm!
Uzmé ḱéidont:
Klúte tónz!
Gʷmté hn̥gʷnim.
Gʷmté, spnté!

[Come, come, come;
ever come;
ever and always come!
Come to please the Gods!
They are calling you:
Hear them!
Come to the fires

Come and worship!]

The others go to where he is.

When all have arrived, the Nḗr says:

Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte!

[Be silent!]

May we all maintain a holy silence.

With each "Tūsyéte" he speaks more softly.

If the group is small enough, a bowl of water is now passed around for people to purify themselves as they desire. If there are too many for this to be done easily, the Fire Tender asperses them, saying:

Pr-óntm supós púrōs sīme.

Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-īme.

Punkʷúbhos ḱwéntom nḱime.

[May we be pure that we might cross through the sacred.

May we cross through the sacred that we might attain the holy.

May we attain the holy that we might be blessed in all things.]

2. The Beginning.

The Xádbhertor asks:

Diviner, is the day propitious?

The Diviner replies:

The omens have been taken and are auspicious.

3. Lighting the xā́sā.

In the old times, the xā́sā would have consisted of coals from a home fire or an otherwise sacred fire. The flame to light it can still be brought from somebody's home. If the wíḱs has a Rḗḱs, it can come from his house. If the ritual is being performed for a particular person (but still being put on by the wíḱs), it should come from their home. A match can be used to transfer the fire from the stove to a candle in a jar, which would then be brought to the ritual. (Depending on size, a car cup holder might hold this kind of candle, although somebody besides the driver will have to be assigned to watch it during the drive.)

If the fire in the xā́sā is lit at the site, the Fire Tender holds three matches vertically and says:

The supporting pillar of the home

resting on the earth.

Spring forth, fire, from the center of our world.

She strikes them as one group (or lights them with the brought flame), and lights the briquettes.

She can also use a lighter or flint and steel, saying instead:

Strike the rock, lightning born flame.

You may wish to pour a small amount of lighter fluid on the briquettes before lighting them.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Wéstyā, who burns on our hearth, in our home,

we call to you to join us here,

bringing our prayers to the gods,

forming the means by which we sacrifice.
May the holy arise in our midst,
the pure and the blessing.

Once the xā́sā is burning well (or, if you have used lighter fluid, died down a bit), the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, saying:

Bhlegpotyā, nzmé pnkʷús ghedh.
[Shining Lady, unite us all],
for by worshiping at a common hearth
we are made one family, one people.
Demespotyā, your household is here.

The Ǵhéuter says a short prayer putting forth the reason for the ritual. When he is finished, the Nḗr holds his axe head out to the Xádbhertor, who pours mead on it while the Ǵhéuter says:

God whose presence is lightning,
whose voice is thunder:
hear my little voice that calls you here.
With libations, with prayers, poured out,
we call you here.
Destroyer of opposition, destroy all that oppose us;
Remover of obstacles, remove all in our way.
Go before along our path,
guiding us through the untamed lands,
Protector, cleaver of mountains.
He pauses and says:
Set forth upon the shining path,
the ancestral way laid out before us.
Place your feet with measured stride,
in ancient rhythm.

4. The Procession

The Nḗr leads, holding his axe vertically in front of him in both hands, followed by the Ǵhéuter and Xádbhertor side by side, the Xádbhertor on the left. The Xádbhertor carries the sacrifice, on a plate. The Fire Tender follows, carrying the xā́sā. The others follow her in two lines. If you wish, you may sing a processional song; if there are musicians, they are at the end of the procession.

When the piece of leather is reached, all stop. The Fire Tender puts the xā́sā down on the leather.

The person who has brought the flour now pours enough water into it to make a stiff dough, mixing it with their hands. (They will probably want to have a towel and extra water with them so they can wash and dry their hands afterwards.) They form a ball from the dough and then make a rough bowl by indenting it. They place this on the ground to the outside of the leather.

The Nḗr puts the head of the axe on the ground, touching the dough bowl. The Xádbhertor says:

Those who stand outside who stand against are crushed by the wágros,
are completely thrown down, their land seized.

He then pours beer into the bowl from the ghórdhos side of the axe (there needs to be enough beer to overflow the bowl), while the Ǵhéuter says:

Those who once stood outside and will stand with us are those who receive this offering.
Once beyond the borders, you now serve them;
now as servants of the Protector, you protect.

The Fire Tender picks up the xā́sā. The Nḗr touches his axe to the leather, and says:

These cattle are ours, this cattle ground is ours.
We take our due, which we have earned.

The person with the first piece of leather lays it down on top of the second, rolls the two up with the first on the outside, and picks them both up. The procession continues. This time, however, the person in the lead is the one with bowl of mixed grain. They scatter it as they go.

When the procession reaches the entrance to the space all stop. The Ǵhéuter says:

Déiwonz adbheromes!
[We wish to sacrifice to the gods!]

All:

We wish to worship the gods!

5. Purifying and building the space

All enter and take their places. The person with the bowl of grain crosses the space, scattering whatever is left, saying:

Xánsūs whose land this is,
give, in return for this offering,
a place to hold our rites.

The Nḗr stands to the right of the gate (as seen from the inside). The person with the pieces of leather puts them down to slightly to the west of where the xā́sā will eventually be, unrolling them in such a way that the second is on the bottom. The Fire Tender places the xā́sā on them. The Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter cross the space and go to the west, where they stand facing east, with the Xádbhertor to the Ǵhéuter's right. The Xádbhertor puts the sacrifice on the ground slightly to the left of where the speltá will be.

The person who has scattered the grain now takes a bowl of water, and walks to the east, sprinkling it on the way, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Be pure, this place of ours.
Be pure, be clean, be fit for the gods

They put the empty bowl down next to the empty grains bowl.

The Fire Tender sweeps where the xā́sā will be, while the Ǵhéuter says:

The best of worlds is pure, the best of worlds is clean, the best of worlds is here,
where we dwell,
where we will graze our cattle,
where we will place our hearth.

The Fire Tender puts the broom down outside of the space, while the Nḗr gives his axe to someone to hold. The Fire Tender goes to the xā́sā, picks it up, and the Nḗr slides the leather so that its western half is where the xā́sā will be placed. The Fire Tender puts the xā́sā down and sits. The clarified butter and butter spoon is placed on the eastern half of the leather.

The Nḗr takes the shovel, and cuts a square sod from a spot a pace or three outside of and to the west of the ritual space. He puts the sod in the space's center. If you want a higher base for the altar,

cut one sod ritually and set it aside before cutting more to make a pile, with the first sod on top.

As he cuts, he says:

From Bhudhnōn to Weis.

As he puts the main sod in place, he says:

You are the mountain, the most high mountain,
on which the gods dwell, from which they descend.

The Xádbhertor sprinkles the altar with water, saying:

From Bhudhnōn to Weis,
and flowing back
the waters feed the world.
Be pure, be clean, be fit for the gods.
An altar where living flames will rise,
a place fit for sacrifice.

If the hn̥g^{w}nis is going to be put in a container rather than built directly on the sod(s), he puts the container over it now.

Then someone picks up a pitcher of water, goes to where the right pole of the gate will be, and walks clockwise around the edge of the space, pouring water, while the Ǵhéuter says:

The surrounding waters flow on the border.
They make a division between outside and inside
across which we may only pass with danger.
The great sea encloses us.
Mégō móri nzmé gherdheyeti.

They put the pitcher down.

The Nḗr hands his axe to someone and picks up the shovel. He goes to where the right pole of the gateway will be, touches the shovel to the ground, and says:

The sacred is cut off from that which is not.

He traces the border of the ghórdhos from pole hole to pole hole clockwise with the shovel. If the ground will permit it, he may cut an actual mark into it. He stops at the left pole hole of the gate, lifts the shovel, and says:

Our ghórdhos is sacred, set apart,
within the border of the encircling river.
Pure and holy is this place of ours,
fit for the gods to enter.

He puts the shovel down, just inside of and parallel to the border, returns to his place, and retrieves his axe.

The Xádbhertor picks up one of the short poles and the sledgehammer and goes east from the center, turns to the gateway, and walks to the southeast corner pole hole. He drives the pole into the ground there, saying:

Sukwrtóm.
Sudhrtóm.
Susətóm.
[Well built.
Well supported.

Well established.]

He returns to the center to take another pole. He does this with all four of the short poles, each time first walking to the center of the border and then turning to the right to reach the appropriate hole. He then takes two longer poles and goes to the east. He drives them into the ground about two feet apart, the left one first, to form a gateway, as the Ǵhéuter says:

Be for us a protection against the outside.
Be our threshold, where outside becomes inside.

The Xádbhertor goes to stand in the east, to the left of the Ǵhéuter, keeping the hammer.

The Outsiders who are in the space must now be expelled, and those outside it repelled.

The Ǵhéuter says:

May our ghórdhos be safe from the stifling snake,
from those that stand beyond and below.
May none assail our well-built world
May none seek to crush our well-built walls.

The Nḗr goes to the Ǵhéuter who puts his hands on the Nḗr's shoulders and says:

Go with the protection of Dyḗus Ptḗr, lord of the Xártus.
Go with the protection of Xáryomen, lord of the dhétis
Go with the protection of Perkʷṓnos, killer of serpents.

The Nḗr, with the axe in his right hand, goes to the gateway, faces outwards, and holds up the axe in both hands. He says:

He took his wágros, and with it slew.
Perkʷṓnos the hero slew the serpent.
With the wágros he slew it, he laid it low.
Wágrō hógʷhim gʷhent.
[With the wágros he killed the serpent.]

All say loudly:

Serpents, be far away:
Perkʷṓnos guards our rites.

The Nḗr lowers the axe, returns it to his right hand, and returns to his place.

The Xádbhertor takes the medium-sized pole (which will be the sacrificial stake) and brings it to a spot halfway between the hn̥gʷnis and the gates. He pounds it into the ground, saying:

Sukwrtóm.
Sudhrtóm.
Susətóm.
[Well built.
Well supported.
Well established.]

The world is established from sacrifice.
Our prayers will be established through sacrifice.

The other things are put in their places; the speltá is erected, and the sacrifice, bowl of water, bowl of xádor, and knife are placed on it.

Illustration 2 below shows the location of the ritual items after the space has been established.

Processions are often done to music. It can be used to set the mood. Is the ritual joyful? Solemn? Celebratory? One of praise or thanksgiving? Start it out with appropriate music. Silent processions are effective for raising suspense or creating a solemn mood. This is especially true if you ordinarily use music.

The silence proclaimed before a sacrifice (in Iphigenia in Aulis, Euripedes calls it a "holy silence") is a feature of Greek, Roman, and Vedic ritual. It has the psychological effect of emphasizing the words and actions of the following ritual, especially in their creative aspect. A new world is born from the silence.

The original purpose of the silence is most likely reflected in a Vedic rule that no one should speak carelessly during a sacrifice. The time of ritual is not for ordinary things. Perhaps extraneous speech was believed to work its way into the ritual and establish itself as "real." The Romans had flutes playing during sacrifices to drown out sounds of ill omen that might also acquire ritual status.

The making of the dough bowl is intended to form a loose bond with those who occupied the land before us. It is a bowl that is not a bowl, doesn't completely hold the offering, and is made of a food that is not a food — it is not cooked and, even if it were, it would be too dense to be edible. The idea came from a suggestion made by Miles C. Beckworth (2002) that such a thing was used in the rituals described in the bronze tablets of Iguvium. I must note, however, that he is not suggesting the use that I have made of the dough.

The idea of creating space as a procession symbolizing migration and occupation of new land comes from Woodard, 2006, in which he analyzed Roman and Vedic sacred space rituals. I have included a symbolic cattle raid through the use of the leather.

Chapter 12

Public Rituals

The basic public ritual is a sacrifice. There are several kinds; the one that will be discussed in this chapter may be termed a generic sacrifice. The more specialized rituals (those to the ancestors, the horse sacrifice, and the triple sacrifice) are discussed in later chapters.

The Indo-Europeans sacrificed for many different reasons: times of the year, events in individuals' lives, events in the history of each national grouping, etc., and each involved both sacrifices and rituals directed towards its own special purpose. Nevertheless, these varying rituals were constructed according to the unvarying principles of the yéwesā.

Different animals were sacrificed on different occasions and to different deities. The highest status animals normally sacrificed were cattle. Cattle are the archetypal domestic beasts for Indo-Europeans. Indeed, *Wiro- peku — "men and cattle" — is the Proto-Indo-European expression for the tribe and everything it owned. "*Pa wiro- peku" ("protect men and cattle) is a prayer found in Latin, Avestan, and Sanskrit (Watkins, 2000:2015). It is no surprise that the sacrifice of cattle, usually bulls or oxen, was common throughout the Indo-European world; they were the wealth of the tribe. Tacitus (Germania 5) tells us that the ancient Germans figured wealth only in terms of how many cattle they owned. Even the English word "pecuniary" comes ultimately from the root word for "cattle." Cattle were what was most prized, and what was closest to the giver, and therefore made an especially dear gift.

In Rome, cattle were sacrificed for the purification of the fields in spring. In the Greek, Indian, Slavic, Roman, and Germanic areas, they were sacrificed at funerals. Among the Germans and Balts, a cattle sacrifice accompanied an oath taking.

Oxen are most appropriately sacrificed to Dyḗus Ptḗr and bulls to Perkʷū́nos. Since originally these two deities were paired, as gods of the bright and dark sky, they are connected to agriculture. This explains why an animal that might be expected to be associated with third function deities (as the embodiment of wealth) is instead sacrificed to first and second function deities.

A bull sacrifice may also be performed for the general well-being of a person or family. It is also done at the spring and funeral rituals, and may be done for the well-being of the wíḱs.

Pigs are third function animals. The Proto-Indo-European word for "pig," *su, may even be from *seu-, "to give birth" (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995:511). Pigs were sacrificed to the Greek Demeter, goddess of growth, and in Rome, they were especially connected with fertility.

The purpose of a ritual often requires a variation in its structure. A ritual that is part of a divination rite would be structured differently from one for prosperity. Often, the only differences are the deity the ritual is directed toward, the kind of animal sacrificed, and the prayers said. I will give the basic ritual and then comment on particular points.

The prayers and specific actions in this ritual aren't reconstructed; except for a few precious

phrases, no particular details have survived from Proto-Indo-European ritual. This doesn't mean that all of this made up from whole cloth. As with the sacred space ritual, an outline can be reconstructed, into which we can plug details of our own devising.

The details here are based on three things: extrapolation from known principles (the yéwesā); parts of rituals that aren't found in enough traditions for us to call them Proto-Indo-European, but which fit into the structure and agree with the principles; and things which are either demanded by practical reasons (such as the use of incense briquettes and lighter fluid), or suggested by theatrical ones (such as calling the people together with music). I've tried to an extent to structure the prayers by the principles of Proto-Indo-European poetics, as described in particular by Calvert Watkins (1995), but have not always been able to do so.

The Ritual

Preliminary Rites

The ritual must be performed on an auspicious day at an auspicious time. If it is going to be held for a seasonal festival, this may be assumed. If it is for another purpose, the Diviner will need to check to make sure the day and time are acceptable. This will have to be done in enough time to allow for rescheduling the ritual for a more auspicious time. How long before will depend on the ritual. A wedding has to be planned very far in advance, and it is too late to do the divination after the hall has been booked. On the other hand, with a funeral there may well be no choice. You do your best.

The Diviner may use whatever method they prefer (a rather elaborate one is given in chapter 19). If the results are unfavorable, they divine to see what must be done to make the ritual favorable. Required changes may include extra purifications, extra offerings, or even postponement.

Items required:

The equipment listed in the previous chapter.

The sacrifice:

a plate on which is a piece of white flatbread, on top of which is another plate with another piece of white flatbread on it. On top of that are two gold ribbons or lengths of gold chains placed vertically and parallel to each other, with a piece of rope, about two feet long, coiled on top of that. A white cloth is placed over the bread and on top of that a smaller piece of flatbread, this last one whole wheat.

At the spot where the ghórdhos will be:

a bell and a striker; a pitcher of mead; on the speltá, a bowl of water, a bowl of xádor, and a knife.

First, create the sacred space.

1. Opening prayer.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Come we together on this holy day
across the distances that lay between us
to this time, to this place,
for one strong purpose:
To worship the Holy Ones in the proper manner,

as is their right to receive it.

All say:

May our worship be according to the Xártus.

Ǵhéuter:

Bhlǵontes, ḱlute nōs!

[Shining Ones, hear us!]

We wish to sacrifice to you with beautiful words and well-done deeds!

Holy Ones, Mighty Ones, Protectors of our People!

Splendid Ones, Steadfast Ones, Givers of Gifts!

Gods rightly worshiped for years uncounted.

All:

We praise you,

we worship you,

we pray for your presence.

The Ǵhéuter then calls to the deity or deities to whom the particular ritual is dedicated, naming them and giving a short description of their titles, deeds, and attributes.

2. The fires.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter to the xā́sā, while the Ǵhéuter says:

We feed the fire on the heart of our land.

With the fire we take possession

of the land it lights, of the world it warms.

From here to there we take possession.

(He gestures from side to side as he says the last line.)

The Fire Tender then lays three logs on the hn̥ǵʷnis, one each to the south, west, and north. As she places them, the Fire Tender says:

Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Bhudhnēn dhidhēmes.

Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Médhyō dhidhēmes.

Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Wēi dhidhēmes.

[We place this fire in Bhudhnōn.]

[We place this fire in Médhyom.]

[We place this fire in Weis.]

She puts tinder in the center and kindling in a teepee shape above it, within the three logs. She then lights it by transferring a briquette from the xā́sā with the butter spoon. As she places the briquette, she says:

Be our place of sacrifice, hn̥ǵʷnis,

where our offerings will be transformed by the pure and holy fire

into pure and holy gifts, incorruptible,

fit for the Undying Ones.

She then blows on the hn̥ǵʷnis to enflame the tinder, while the Ǵhéuter says:

With our prayers we feed you,

with the breath of our mouths.

Xánmōd xánmom.

[From breath to breath.]

It is quite possible that the briquette won't set the tinder on fire. For this reason, put a few matches near the hn̥gʷnis that the Fire Tender can light from the briquette and use them to light the tinder. She may also pour some lighter fluid on the tinder in the hn̥gʷnis first.

After the fire is burning well, the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, while the Xádbhertor says:

Be fed with the produce of cattle.
Shine with the shining cow's gift.

3. The circumambulation.

The Xádbhertor says:

We honor fire with right turning.

He picks up the sacrifice and goes clockwise around the fires. This may be accompanied with a song. When he returns to his place, he puts the sacrifice down.

The circumambulation is the last of the opening rites. The main body of the ritual is next. Specific variations are given in the following chapters. The general practice is to conduct a sacrifice.

4. The hymn.

The sacrifice begins with a hymn of praise, recited by the Ǵhéuter. This can have the prayer from part 1 as its beginning (although a different one is better, since it shows more effort), but it ends with a petition for the fulfillment of the purpose of the ritual. Promises of future actions if the request is granted may be added to the prayer.

The prayer may be done in concert with the congregation, with all reciting it together, or in a call and answer format.

5. The first offering.

The Xádbhertor picks up the small piece of bread from the top of the sacrifices, takes it to the hn̥gʷnis, and breaks up there, scattering some of it on the ground and most of it into the hn̥gʷnis, saying:

We offer to you the gift of the ground
transformed by our work
into food for us and for you.
Receive with pleasure this first gift to you.

6. The blessing of the sacrifice.

He returns to his place. He removes the cloth and puts it over the knife. He uncoils the rope and drapes it on top of the cloth. He raises the sacrifice and says:

This [the animal to be sacrificed] has come willingly, eagerly,
to the place of sacrifice
bedecked with gold
in celebration and beauty.

He puts the sacrifice down and removes the chains, putting them on the ground to the right of the speltá. He picks up the bowl of water on the speltá in his left hand and sprinkles some of it, using his

right hand, over the sacrifice three times, saying each time:

A pure offering is this,
without blemish or stain,
fit for [the deity of the occasion].

He puts the water down, and picks up the bowl of xádor in his left hand. He scatters the xádor from it three times with his right hand onto the sacrifice, saying each time:

Be blessed and fed with the fruits of the earth.

He then picks up the main sacrifice (that is, the top plate) and brings it clockwise about the space, carrying the bowl of xádor as well. Each person takes some xádor and throws it on the sacrifice with their right hand.

7. The sacrifice.

When the Xádbhertor returns to the speltá, he puts the bowl down, and lifts the sacrifice with his left hand, with his right one on top of it. He says:

A proper offering is this,
as it is right to give.
This [sacrificial animal] to [deity of the occasion.]

He puts the sacrifice down and then picks up just the bread in his right hand. He crosses his left hand under it to pick up the knife, keeping it covered by the cloth, and with the rope still draped over it. He carries them to the Fire Tender who pours some clarified butter on the bread, saying:

With the heart of the cow,
with all we own,
we offer to you,
you who stand behind all things.

He then brings the bread to a spot just to the west of the sacrificial stake, and puts it on the ground. He puts the knife to its right with the blade away from it. He takes the rope and loops it clockwise around the stake, ending with the ends crossed on top of the bread saying:

Arrived at the center of the Cosmos, you are bound:
bound to the service of those who give,
bound to the service of those who shine,
bound to the sacrifice, to the immortal.

The Nḗr comes over to the fires and stands in the south, facing the Fire Tender. When he has arrived, the Fire Tender says:

Pérkʷeti!
[May he/it strike!]

The Nḗr goes clockwise slowly around the space, holding the axe upright and out. As he walks, the Fire Tender strikes a bell, and the others (except for the Xádbhertor) join in with their own instruments, by clapping, or by stamping on the ground. Following the Fire Tender's lead, they increase the tempo and volume as he walks.

While the Nḗr circles, the Xádbhertor leans close to the sacrifice and softly says (it is to the animal he speaks; the others do not hear over the noise they are making):

The path is well-marked, from ancient days till now:
as you have freely offered yourself,

freely take the path,
bound only by the prayers we have made,
carrying them on your back.

During the line “bound only... ”, he takes the knife from under the cloth, draws its dull side across the sacrifice from its lower left to its upper right, and then puts it on the cloth. When the Nḗr has returned, he picks up the knife again, holding it flat, with the sharp edge away from the sacrifice.

When he has returned to the south, the Nḗr lifts the axe high and the Fire Tender says:

Pérkʷeti!

All the others except the Nḗr and the Xádbhertor say:

Pérkʷeti!

The Nḗr brings the axe down hard against the sacrifice, and then lifts his axe to a vertical position in front of him and returns to his place. As the axe hits, the percussion stops.

As soon as the axe is lifted, the Xádbhertor says:

We free you to take the sacred path,
to take the holy path,
the divine path to the Divine Ones.

While speaking, he removes the rope, coiling it to the right of the stake, and then quickly cuts a slice from the right side of the bread, using his right hand. He cuts this in half again. He puts the top half in the hn̥gʷnis, saying:

[Deity of the occasion] here is your share.
We are ghóstēs to [deity of the occasion].
[Deity of the occasion] is ghóstis to us.
Sit down at our table, [deity of the occasion],
and see the meal we have spread out for you.
Héd, heti wḗǵ.
[Eat and be strong.]

He holds the bottom of the slice over the hn̥gʷnis for a moment, long enough to toast it if possible. He then gives it to whomever the sacrifice is being held for. If the sacrifice is being held for the wíḱs this will be the Rḗḱs; if the wíḱs has no Rḗḱs, he cuts it in half again and shares it with the Fire Tender. He then holds the main piece of the bread over the hn̥gʷnis for a moment, long enough to toast it if possible, and then hands it to those gathered. He gives it to the Fire Tender first (if she hasn’t already eaten a piece), who tears off a piece and eats it. The Xádbhertor gives the remainder to another, and it is passed around, each eating some of it. If there are too many people present for this sharing to be practical, it is shared among the main celebrants, or among representatives of the attendees. While it is being distributed, the Xádbhertor puts the rope in the fire. If there is any bread left over, it is placed in the hn̥gʷnis.

If the ritual is being performed in honor of more than one deity, the prayers can simply be directed to all of them and a single sacrifice performed, so long as the same animal is not inappropriate to all of them. If the deities are such that different animals should be sacrificed, each deity must get their own animal, with steps 3 through 7 repeated for each sacrifice, but with the distribution to participants left until all have been offered to. Each person must eat some of each sacrifice, to not do so would be insulting to the deity to whom it was offered.

The Xádbhertor returns to his place.

8. The libation.

The Ǵhéuter brings the pitcher of mead to the hn̥gʷnis and, with his right hand, pours it out at the base of the fire, being careful not to extinguish it, saying:

All the Holy Ones, be honored in our midst.
Be welcome at our table, all of you.
We pour out our offering to you
like living water, like grain from a bag.
Drink deeply of the gifts we give.
Pnkʷudéiwomus ǵhewomes.
[We pour a libation to the All-Gods.]

He then begins a litany of titles of praise to the All-Gods. After each one, all reply:

Uzmei ǵhewomes.
[We pour a libation to you.]

This is an opportunity for the Ǵhéuter to show some creativity. Done right, this could be a moment of real ecstasy. Possible titles include:

Wise Ones/Beneficent Ones/You of Wondrous Power/One Who Bless/Smiling Ones/Possessors of Many Cows/Beautiful Ones/You Whose Being is the Xártus/Celestial Ones/Heavenly Ones/You Who Watch Over Men and Cattle/You Who Look on us from Above/You Whose Beneficence Sustains Us/etc.

As the last one, the Ǵhéuter says:

Givers of Gifts, we praise and welcome you.
He then returns to his place.

9. The Piacular sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor picks up the remaining piece of bread from the sacrifice and takes it to the fires, where he breaks it up and puts one piece in the xā́sā and one in the hn̥gʷnis, and then breaks up the rest and scatters it on the ground, saying:

Gods and Goddesses
Holy Ancestors
Spirits of this Place:
If anything we have done here has offended you
If anything we done here has been incomplete
If anything we have done here has violated the yéwesā
or in any way done violence to the Xártus,
accept this final offering in recompense.

10. Desacralizing the Ghórdhos.

This phase starts with a hymn or prayer of praise to the deity or deities of the occasion by the Ǵhéuter or by all. When the hymn is over, the Ǵhéuter says:

Hngʷnei, gwrƚtonz dedəmes.
[Fire of sacrifice, we thank you.]

The Fire Tender spoons clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis. While it is burning, she moves a coal from

the hn̥gʷnis to the xā́sā with the butter spoon, saying:

The true altar of the people is the hearth.

When the butter is burnt, she extinguishes the hn̥gʷnis by pouring water from the pitcher on it.

When the hn̥gʷnis is out, the Ǵhéuter says:

Lady of Fire, Queen of the hearth,
who by rights receives the last,
bless and guard all those who worship you
whether in their home or without
whether alone or with others
whether thinking of you or engaged in business.
Pure One, receive this offering.

The Fire Tender spoons clarified butter on the xā́sā, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Xā́sā, gʷrƚtonz dedəmes.

[Fire of the hearth, we thank you.]

When the butter is consumed, the Fire Tender extinguishes the xā́sā by pouring water on it and then putting the top of the cauldron on.

Once the fires are out, the ghórdhos is no longer sacred.

11. The Ending.

When the xā́sā has finished smoking, the Ǵhéuter says:

With the hearth fire extinguished,
the center of our sacred world is gone.
With the center of our sacred world gone,
the sacred site dissolves about us.
We will carry it in our hearts, though,
nestled deep with the love of the gods.

The Ǵhéuter speaks or sings one last hymn to the deity of the occasion. When he has finished, the Xádbhertor says:

We have offered to the Holy Ones
and they have accepted our sacrifices.

The Ǵhéuter says:

We have raised our words to the Old Ones as it is right to do.

The Xádbhertor says:

We have made offerings to the Shining Ones as it is right to do.

The Ǵhéuter says:

May we always be mindful of those we have worshiped.
May we always be mindful of them, worthy of worship.
May we all grow strong, under their watchful eyes.

The Ǵhéuter raises his hands into the orans position and says:

Shining Ones, who rule by the Xártus,
we have worshiped you as the yéwesā require.
We may end this rite with confidence,
knowing you will bless us.

He lowers his hands, looks at the people around him and says:
Walk on the path of the Mighty Ones,
under their protection, with their blessing.
All say:
Tód hestu!
[So be it!]

All leave in procession, with the Nḗr leading the way, followed by the musicians, the congregation, the Fire Tender, the Xádbhertor and the Ǵhéuter. The items in the ghórdhos are left to be retrieved later.

12. The Feast.

The feast is part of the ritual, rather than just a meal held afterwards. It serves several purposes. It is a meal shared among people; sharing food is an act of bonding by which the wíḱs is made stronger. If there are non-members of the wíḱs present, the feast provides an opportunity for hospitality.

The feast is also a meal shared between people and the gods, drawing us closer to the gods. This is why the sacrifice is "cooked" on the same fire that receives the gods' portion.

If it is possible to wait until after the feast to clean up, then do so. If not, some wíḱs members may return to the site after the procession and clean up. Wash and dry the equipment before packing it up.

Commentary on the ritual: (The numbers refer to the parts of the ritual commented on.)

Butter is used as an offering because not only is it from the sacred animal, the cow, but it also burns, and quite literally feeds the fire. It is clarified for practical reasons — it keeps longer than unclarified butter and melts more easily; and aesthetic ones — melted clarified butter is a clear golden color, unlike the rather unpleasant looking melted regular butter. Its clarity might also be said to serve a religious purpose; in a sense, it is purer than ordinary butter. Finally, it might be thought of as the essence of the butter, its "spirit," with the butter's solid "body" removed. Clarify the butter a day or so before the ritual. Bring it to the ritual solid and melt it there. Directions for clarifying butter are in Appendix 3.

2. The logs are laid clockwise, with a gap at the east. The sacred influence of the gods will enter there.

In Indo-European sacrifices, fire is usually brought from elsewhere. To a certain extent, this was a practical matter in the days before matches. The insistence on it raised it to a higher level. The Bronze Tables of Iguvium includes directions for its being placed on a carrier, and carrying is an integral part of lighting a new fire of Vesta.

From where was it brought? In Aristophanes' Peace, which describes a Greek sacrifice, we are not told, nor are we in the Iguvine Tablets. Vedic ritual takes fire from the hearth of the person for whom the ritual is being performed.

Rome gives two bits of information. First, there is the relighting of the fire of Vesta if it should go out. A competition is held amongst the Vestal virgins, and the first fire lit by them by friction is carried into the temple. This is a good example of the importance of carrying fire from one place to another; even the hearth fire of Rome is carried to its place.

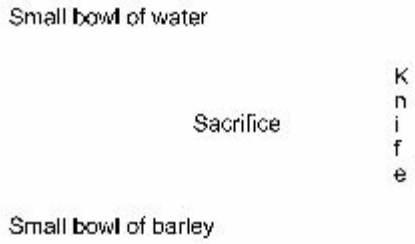
The second is the foculus, the portable hearth placed next to the ara, the sacrificial altar. The foculus is offered to first, so it was most likely lit first, and also likely used to light the fire on the ara.

The fire is carried from the hearth. If the ritual is being performed for an individual, it comes from their hearth. If it is for a wík̑s that has a Rḗk̑s, it can come from the Rḗk̑s hearth. In any case, a new hearth, the xā́sā, is established on the ritual ground, around which this new group of people can gather.

5. There is a certain amount of discomfort among Indo-Europeans at the idea of the actual killing of the animal in the sacrifice. In India, this was one of the factors in the rise of vegetarianism, and the especial emphasis of this in relation to the cow, originally the sacrificial animal par excellence. In Greece and Rome, it was important that the animal "consent" to sacrifice in some way, by shaking its head when sprinkled with water, for instance. The equivalent here is the declaration by the priest that the animals have "come willingly, eagerly to the place of sacrifice"

A second distancing is the Fire Tender's statement to the Nḗr, *perkʷeti. This is a subjunctive third person singular of the verb perkʷ- "strike" (as in "Perkʷū́nos"), and means "he/she/it will/might strike." By using *perkʷeti-, she is off the hook, because she hasn't actually told the Nḗr to strike, the Nḗr is off the hook because the subject of *perkʷeti can be "it," the axe, and not "he," the Nḗr. The Xádbhertor is off the hook as well — he only cuts up an already dead animal. Even so, he cuts the animal up quickly, partly to get it over with (limiting his association with the death aspect) and to make sure that if the Nḗr hasn't finished the job it will die without causing any fuss that might negate the sacrifice.

The position of items on the speltá:



Indoor Rituals:

Use three charcoal briquettes in the cauldron for the xā́sā, and four in the usual container for the hn̥gʷnis. If the ritual is being performed in someone's home, use only the xā́sā, since the hearth is the home's altar. There is also no need to create a ghórdhos in a home; a home is by definition a sacred space. In fact, to do so would be to insult the guardians of the home by implying that they can't be relied upon to do their jobs.

In a ritual performed inside, but not in a home, establish the ghórdhos as usual. Instead of pouring the borders, sprinkle them; instead of dragging the shovel along the ground, carry it; instead of putting up poles, use stones, with the two markers for the gate larger than the others.

Even when a hn̥gʷnis is used, there will be no sod altar. Instead, several pieces of grass, torn up with their roots (if possible), should be placed under the hn̥gʷnis in place of the sod.

The gods' portion won't burn completely. At the end of the ritual, put it aside, and dispose of it later, possibly at a later outdoor ritual, or by burning it in some other way (such as in a barbecue).

Chapter 13

Rituals for the Ancestors

It is not just the Shining Ones to whom we give offerings — the Ancestors must receive their share. The cult of the Ancestors forms an important part of domestic worship, but there are also times when it is right to offer to the ancestors of more than one family. For instance, the wíḱs may wish to celebrate a ritual for Memorial Day, and there is the New Year's ritual (chapter 17).

The classic (and classical) example of such a ritual is one held by Odysseus in Book XI of the Odyssey, but described in more detail in Book X. I recommend its close study. Odysseus digs a square pit, a cubit each way. He then pours out libations of milk, honey, wine, and water to the dead. He scatters barley and vows to sacrifice a bull on his safe return home. He also promises a black lamb to the prophet Teiresias. He then sacrifices a black ewe and a black ram, looking away as he does so. The flesh is burned, and the blood allowed to pour into the pit. It is not said where the fire was built, but my guess would be right on the ground next to the pit (i.e., not on a raised altar).

The cult of the ancestors has much in common with that of the gods as presented in the previous chapter. A ghórdhos is created, fires are lit, the sacred beings praised.

There are many differences as well. The world of the living (and our gods are indeed living) and the world of the dead are in many ways mirror images of each other, reversing some of the rules. The Śatapatha Brāhmaꟻa (2.1.3.1) gives an elaborate example of this. The spring, summer, rains, waxing moon, and day represent the gods, and the autumn, winter, dewy season, waning moon, and night the ancestors. Thinking of the cosmology, you might say that from one side of Médhyom we look up to Weis, and from the other we look down to Bhudhnōn.

The up/down distinction is reflected in ritual. Offerings to the gods go up, through the fire. Offerings to the ancestors go down, through the rég^{w}es. Instead of the turf altar being the center point of the ritual, the hole left by the turf's removal is.

The overall theme is one of opposition to the usual ritual form. Use your left hand where you might ordinarily use your right. Look away from the sacrifice as it is offered. Face west instead of east. And so on.

Ancestral rituals also include elements of separation. We've already seen Odysseus looking away in the sacrifice. Another example is found in the Roman ritual of Lemuria, performed for the roving spirits of the dead, where the pater goes through the house at night throwing beans over his shoulder as offerings. As he does so, he doesn't look back, because the dead are following, picking up the beans.

We have already seen how the dead had their own fire in the Vedic ritual. They were seen as somehow dangerous, like Outsiders, and it was necessary to propitiate them. In the part of the ritual dedicated to them, the cord worn by initiates was switched to the other shoulder than the one it was usually worn over.

All this is because although we are part of the ancestral line, we do not want to become ancestors ourselves quite yet. The sacrificial animal is not shared among the people. The ancestors get all of it. The ritual ends in a counterclockwise circumambulation, cutting us off from the ancestors. And it is important not to look back.

The Ritual

Items needed:

At the beginning site:

The items necessary for creating sacred space, except for those required for the Outsider portion, the sacrificial stake, and the hn̥gʷnis, if you use a pan for it. You will, however, need the wood and extra matches. The wood will need to be short enough so they do not fill the pit that will be dug more than halfway. The sacrifice is a piece of whole wheat flatbread on a plate, another piece of whole wheat flatbread on a plate on top of that, two gold ribbons or lengths of gold chains placed vertically, parallel to each other, a white cloth, and on the very top a smaller piece of whole wheat flatbread.

At the ghórdhos:

A small bowl of melted clarified butter, a butter spoon, matches on a plate, and, if desired, a small pitcher of lighter fluid.

On the speltá:

A small bowl of xádor, one of barley, another of water, and a knife, the three bowls on the left side. Next to the speltá, on the left, put a pitcher of dark beer and a pitcher of unfiltered nekter (see Chapter 16).

The attendees gather some distance away from the ghórdhos, which will already have been established by this point (see chapter 11 for the ritual), the Nḗr carrying his axe. A signal, using a drum or a bell, can be given to call everyone together.

1. Calling and purification.

The Ǵhéuter calls out:

Gʷmté, gʷmté, gʷmté,
Gʷigʷmsḱóte,
Gʷigʷmsḱótōd!
Gʷmté, gʷrtíbhos Wíḱpotibhos!
Uzmé ḱéidont:
Klúte tónz!
Gʷmté hn̥gʷnim.
Gʷmté, spnté!

[Come, come, come;
ever come;
ever and always come!
Come to please the Ancestors!
They are calling you:
Hear them!
Come to the fires
Come and worship!]

When all have arrived, the Nḗr says:

Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte!

[Be silent!]

May we all maintain a holy silence.

With each "Tūsyéte" he speaks more softly.

If the group is small enough, the bowl is passed around for people to purify themselves as they desire. If there are too many for this to be done easily, the Fire Tender asperses them, saying:

Pr-óntm supós púrōs sīme.

Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-īme.

Punkʷúbhos ḱwéntom nḱime.

[May we be pure that we might cross through the sacred.

May we cross through the sacred that we might attain the holy.

May we attain the holy that we might be blessed in all things.]

2. The Beginning.

The Xádbhertor asks:

Diviner, is the time proper?

The Diviner replies:

The omens have been taken are not inauspicious.

3. Lighting the xā́sā.

For this ritual, don't bring fire from someone's house. That kind of connection is not desired, lest death visit the home of the person from whose house the fire would be taken. The one exception would be when a family is performing the ritual for their own ancestors. In general, the xā́sā is lit at the ritual site.

The Fire Tender holds three matches vertically and says:

The supporting pillar of the home

resting on the earth.

Spring forth, fire, from the center of our world.

She strikes them together and lights the briquettes.

She can also use a lighter, saying instead:

Strike the rock, lightning born flame.

You may wish to pour a small amount of lighter fluid on the briquettes before lighting them.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Wéstyā, who burns on our hearth, in our home,

we call to you to join us here,

bringing our prayers to the gods,

forming the means by which we sacrifice.

May the holy arise in our midst,

the pure and the blessing.

Once the xā́sā is burning well (or, if you have used lighter fluid, died down a bit), the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, saying:

Bhlegpotyā, nzmé pnkʷús ghedh.

[Shining Lady, unite us all],

for by worshiping at a common hearth
we are made one family, one people.
Demespotyā, your household is here.

The Ǵhéuter says a short prayer putting explaining why a ritual for the Ancestors is being performed. When he is finished, he pauses and says:

Set forth upon the shining path,
the ancestral way laid out before us.
Place your feet with measured stride,
in ancient rhythm.

4. The Procession.

Someone with a bowl of mixed grain leads the way, scattering it as they go. The Nḗr follows, holding his axe vertically in front of him in both hands, followed by the Ǵhéuter and Xádbhertor side by side, the Xádbhertor on the left. The Xádbhertor carries the sacrifice. The Fire Tender follows, carrying the xā́sā. The others follow her. There is no processional song, although a low-toned drumbeat may be used.

When the procession reaches the entrance to the space all stop. The Ǵhéuter says:

Wikpótibhos sepomes!
[We wish to honor the Ancestors!]
All: We wish to honor the Ancestors,

All enter the space. The Fire Tender puts the xā́sā down in the center of the space. The Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter stop slightly inside the gate and stand facing west, with the Xádbhertor to the Ǵhéuter 's left. The Xádbhertor puts the sacrifice on the ground between himself and the speltá.

Because there are differences between the usual sacred space ritual and the one required for this one, I will include the ancestral ritual version here.

The Nḗr stands to the Ǵhéuter's right. The others arrange themselves equally about the ghórdhos, close to the edge, but leaving a gap in the west.

The person with the bowl of grain crosses the space, scattering whatever is left, saying:

Xánsūs whose land this is,
give, in return for this offering,
a place to hold our rites.

The person who has scattered the grain now takes a bowl of water, and walks to the west, sprinkling it on the way, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Be pure, this place of ours.
Be pure, be clean, be fit for the Ancestors

They put the empty bowl down next to the empty grains bowl.

The Fire Tender sweeps where the xā́sā will be, while the Ǵhéuter says:

The best of worlds is pure, the best of worlds is clean, the best of worlds is here,
where we dwell,
where we will graze our cattle,
where we will place our hearth.

The Fire Tender puts the broom down outside of the space, and then picks up the xā́sā. She moves it to the east of the center. She puts the butter and butter spoon to its west, and sits down on the south,

facing north.

Someone then picks up a pitcher of water, goes to the where the right pole of the gate will be, and walks counterclockwise around the edge of the space, pouring water, while the Ǵhéuter says:

The surrounding waters flow on the border.
They make a division between outside and inside
across which we may only pass with danger.
The great sea encloses us.
Mégō móri nzmé gherdheyeti.

They put the pitcher down.

The Nḗr hands his axe to someone and picks up the shovel. He goes to where the left pole of the gateway will be, touches the shovel to the ground, and says:

The sacred is cut off from that which is not.

He traces the border of the ghórdhos from pole hole to pole hole counterclockwise with the shovel. If the ground will permit it, he may cut an actual mark into it. He stops at the right pole hole of the gate, lifts the shovel, and says:

Our ghórdhos is sacred, set apart,
within the border of the encircling river.
Pure and holy is this place of ours,
fit for the gods to enter.

He puts the shovel down, just inside of and parallel to the border, returns to his place, and retrieves his axe.

The Xádbhertor picks up one of the short poles and the sledgehammer and goes east from the center, turns to the gate way, and walks to the northeast corner pole hole. He drives the pole into the ground there, saying:

Sukwrtóm.
Sudhrtóm.
Susətóm.
[Well built.
Well supported.
Well established.]

He returns to the center to take another pole. He does this with all four of the short poles, each time first walking to the center of the border and then turning to the left to reach the appropriate hole. He then takes two longer poles and goes to the east. He drives them into the ground about two feet apart, the right one first, to form a gateway, as the Ǵhéuter says:

Be for us a protection against the outside.
Be our threshold, where outside becomes inside.

The Ǵhéuter holds his hands out in front of him with the palms down and says:

Wíḱpotēs, uzméi ḱredzdhedhəmes!

All:

Ancestors, we set our hearts toward you!

Ǵhéuter:

Come we together at this time of honoring,
across the distances that lay between us

to this time, to this place,
for one strong purpose:
To give proper honor to the Old Ones,
as it is their right to receive it.
He lowers his hands as all say:
May what we do be according to the Xártus

5. The Rég^{w}es.

Someone digs a square pit about a forearm deep to the west of the xā́sā, piling the dirt from the pit next to it on the east. The Xádbhertor pours an offering into it of dark beer (half of what is in the pitcher) and scatters barley into it, both with his left hand. The Ǵhéuter says:

The door is open.
We give food to the dead.
May they be with us tonight.

6. Opening prayer.

The Xádbhertor returns to his place beside the Ǵhéuter, and the Ǵhéuter says:

We call to the Ancestors,
to those who went before us,
who have walked on the path of Yemós,
to his flowery plain, enclosed with strong walls,
to dwell there in peace.
For this time, in this place,
we approach you and you approach us;
we wish to honor you and to ask for your wisdom.

7. The fires.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter onto the xā́sā, while the Ǵhéuter says:

We feed the fire on the heart of our land.
With the fire we take possession
of the land it lights, of the world it warms.
From here to there we take possession.

He gestures from side to side with his staff he says the last line.

The Fire Tender then lays three logs in the western end of the rég^{w}es, one each to the south, east, and north. As she places them, she says:

Tóm hńg^{w}nim Bhudhnēn dhidhēmes.
[We place this fire in Bhudhnōn.]

She puts tinder in the center and kindling in a teepee shape above it, within the three logs. She then lights it by transferring a briquette from the xā́sā with the butter spoon. As she places the briquette, she says:

Be our hńg^{w}nis, our link with the ancestors.

She then fans the briquette to enflame the tinder. It is quite possible that the briquette won't set the tinder on fire. For this reason, put a few matches near the hńg^{w}nis that the Fire Tender can light from

the briquette and use them to light the tinder. She may also pour some lighter fluid on it first.

Once the fire is burning well, the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, while the Xádbhertor says:

Be fed with the produce of cattle,
shine with then shining cow's gift.

The Xádbhertor pours half the Nekter into the east end of the rég^{w}es, saying:

Be enlivened, Ancestors,
to return to this world,
to this space,
for a while, as is proper.

8. The circumambulation.

The Xádbhertor says:

We honor the ancestral fire with leftward turning.

He picks up the sacrifice and goes counterclockwise around the rég^{w}es. When he returns to his place, he puts the sacrifice down.

9. The hymn.

The Ǵhéuter says or chants a hymn to the Ancestors, or leads the people in one. This is an example:

You who lived in times before us,
You who laid the path which we follow,
You who built the world we dwell in,
You whose wisdom formed our culture,
You whose blood now flows within us,
You whose teaching forms our days,
Be with us, pass on your wisdom.

This can be turned into a litany by following each of the lines that begin with "You" with the people chanting something like, "Come to us, be with us."

10. The first offering.

The Xádbhertor picks up the small piece of bread from the top of the sacrifices, takes it to the rég^{w}es, and breaks up there, dropping the pieces into it saying:

We offer to you the gift of the ground
transformed by our work
into food for us and for you.
Receive with pleasure this first gift to you.

11. The blessing of the sacrifice.

He returns to his place, raises the sacrifice and says:

This pig has come willingly, eagerly,
to the place of sacrifice
bedecked with gold

in celebration and beauty.

He puts the sacrifice down on the speltá, removes the chains and cloth, and puts them neatly to the left of the sacrifice. He picks up the bowl of water on the speltá in his right hand and sprinkles some of it, using his left hand, over the sacrifice three times, saying each time:

A pure offering is this,
without blemish or stain,
fit for the ancient ones.

He puts the water down and picks up the bowl of xádor in his right hand. He scatters the xádor from it three times with his left hand onto the sacrifice, saying each time:

Be blessed and fed with the fruits of the earth.

He then picks up the main sacrifice (that is, the top plate) and brings it counterclockwise about the space, carrying the bowl of xádor as well. Each person takes some xádor and throws it on the sacrifice with their left hand.

12. The sacrifice.

When the Xádbhertor returns to the speltá, he puts the bowl and plate down on it. He moves the bread from the plate to the ground, puts both hands on it, and says:

A proper offering is this,
as it is right to give.
This pig to the Ancestors
that they might be strong
that they might give us their wisdom.

He picks up the knife in his left hand and, carrying the animal in his right, brings it to a spot just east of the rég^{w}es and puts the animal down. He puts the knife on its left, with the blade away from it. The Fire Tender pours some clarified butter on the sacrifice, saying:

With the heart of the cow,
with all we own,
we offer to you,
you who stand behind all things.

The Xádbhertor twists the rope into a loop, counterclockwise, and returns it to the top of the bread, with the bend hanging down into the rég^{w}es and the crossed ends on the bread. He says:

Arrived at the dark place, you are bound,
bound to the sacrifice, to the Wise Ones,
to the Dead.

He squats and covers his eyes with his hands.

The Nḗr comes over to the fires and stands in the south, facing the Fire Tender. When he has arrived, the Fire Tender says:

Pérk^{w}eti!
[May he/it strike!]

The Nḗr goes counterclockwise slowly around the space, holding the axe upright and out. As he walks, the Fire Tender hits the ground with a piece of wood, and the others join in by stamping their feet on the ground. Following the Fire Tender's lead, they increase the tempo and volume as he walks. While the Nḗr circles, the Xádbhertor leans close to the sacrifice and softly says (it is to the

animal he speaks; the others do not hear over the noise they are making):

The path is well-marked, from ancient days till now:
as you have freely offered yourself,
freely take the path,
bound only by the prayers we have made,
carrying them on your back.

During the line "bound only...", he takes the knife from under the cloth, draws its dull side across the sacrifice from its upper right to its lower left, and then puts it on the cloth. When the Nḗr has returned, he picks up the knife again, holding it flat, with the sharp edge away from the sacrifice.

When he has returned to the south, the Nḗr lifts the axe high and the Fire Tender says:

Pérkʷeti!

All the others except the Nḗr and Xádbhertor say:

Pérkʷeti!

The Nḗr brings the axe down hard against the sacrifice, and then lifts his axe to a vertical position in front of him and returns to his place. As the axe hits, the percussion stops.

As soon as the axe is lifted, the Xádbhertor says:

We free you to take the Ancient Path,
to take the laid out path,
the dark path to the Dark Ones.

While speaking, he removes the rope and throws it into the régʷes. He then quickly cuts a slice from the left side of the bread, and puts it in the régʷes. The Ǵhéuter says:

Ancestors, receive the first part of the sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor cuts the bread in half horizontally, holds the bottom half over the fire a moment, and then puts it in the régʷes. The Ǵhéuter says:

Ancestors, receive the second part of the sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor takes the remainder of the sacrifice, holds it over the fire a moment, and then puts it in the régʷes, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Ancestors, receive all of the sacrifice.

Héd, heti wḗǵ.
[Eat and be strong.]

13. The libation.

The Xádbhertor pours the rest of the beer with his left hand into the régʷes, saying:

All the Wíḱpotēs, be honored in our midst.
Be welcome at our table, all of you.
We pour out our offering to you
like living water, like grain from a bag.
Drink deeply of the gifts we give.
Wikpótibhos ǵhéwomes.
[We pour a libation to the Ancestors.]

The Xádbhertor returns to his place.

14. The Piacular sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor picks up the remaining piece of bread from the sacrifice and breaks off a piece, which he puts in the régʷes. He takes the rest to the fires, where he tears off two pieces, one of which he puts in the xā́sā, and the other in the hn̥gʷnis. He then breaks up the rest and scatters it on the ground, saying:

Gods and Goddesses
Holy Ancestors
Spirits of this Place:
If anything we have done here has offended you
If anything we done here has been incomplete
If anything we have done here has violated the yéwesā
or in any way done violence to the Xártus,
accept this final offering in recompense.

15. The omen.

One of the main reasons to perform a ritual to the Ancestors is to receive their wisdom. Even when an ancestral sacrifice is performed ostensibly to honor them, a desire for their wisdom is implied. The Diviner faces the régʷes, sitting to its east and facing west, and holds his divining tools in his right hand. He holds his left hand over them and says:

By these offerings made to the ancestors
we ask for their wisdom.

He then performs the divination and speaks the result. If the answer is favorable within the ritual context (i.e., the ancestors may be pleased with the ritual, but still have bad news to give) the ritual continues. If it is not, another offering of beer is made, and the process repeated until the answer is favorable.

16. Farewells.

This phase starts with a hymn or prayer of praise to the Ancestors by the Ǵhéuter or by all. When the hymn is over, the Ǵhéuter says:

Hngʷnei, gwrƚtonz dedəmes.
[Fire of sacrifice, we thank you.]

The Fire Tender spoons clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis. When it has burned sufficiently, the Xádbhertor says:

With food and drink, you are fed in your world.
With Nekter, you are enlivened in your world.

He pours the rest of the Nekter in the régʷes, and says:

With fire, you are warmed in your world.
By your birth we were established in a relationship with you.
By our rites the relationship is maintained,
and your wisdom assured for us.

17. The ending.

The Nḗr comes over and fills the régʷes in by pushing the dirt in with his axe. He stays standing to the east of the régʷes, facing west.

The Ǵhéuter says:

The door between us and the Ancestors is closed.
They go to their place, and we to ours
as is only proper.

The Fire Tender extinguishes the hn̥gʷnis by pouring water from the pitcher on it.

When the hn̥gʷnis is out, the Ǵhéuter says:

Lady of Fire, Queen of the hearth,
who by rights receives the last,
bless and guard all those who worship you
whether in their home or without
whether alone or with others
whether thinking of you or engaged in business.
Pure One, receive this offering.

The Fire Tender spoons clarified butter on the xā́sā, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Xā́sā, gʷrƚtonz dedəmes.
[Fire of the hearth, we thank you.]

When the butter is consumed, the Fire Tender extinguishes the xā́sā by pouring water on it and then putting the top of the cauldron on.

Once the fires are out, the ghórdhos is no longer sacred.

The Xádbhertor says:

The ritual is at an end.

All say:

Tód hestu!
[So be it!]

Go counterclockwise about the space once or thrice, and leave in silence, without looking back. All then purify themselves. The Xádbhertor returns later to clean up (the others may help).

No feast is held for ancestral rituals. The intent is to separate from the dead rather than to share with them.

If possible, cleanup of the ritual site should be postponed until the next day, or at least as long as possible. At the very least, eat something before returning to the site, in order to rejoin the land of the living. The dead do not eat, except for the offerings we make.

Commentary

2. Note that a more somber note is taken with the question of whether the time is proper to perform the ritual.

4. The procession should be made either in silence or with a slow drumbeat. Again, there is a somber note.

12. The reason why the left hand side of the bread is cut off rather than the right is that the animal is imagined to be facing the left rather than the right. It is not that we are cutting off the tail.

All of the bread is given to the Ancestors because we do not want to connect ourselves too strongly with them. This was a common practice in ancient Greece and Rome; chthonic deities were given an entire animal, with none being eaten by the participants.

Indoor Rituals

Use a deep bowl for the rég^{w}es. Fill it partway with dirt (potting soil will do), and put a container of enough dirt to fill it next to it. After the ritual cover the rég^{w}es (even cling wrap will do) and set it aside in an unused portion of your house (the cellar is perfect, but even a corner is sufficient) until you can dispose of it by burying it, bowl, cover and all, or dropping it into a body of water.

Use three charcoal briquettes in the cauldron for the xā́sā, and four in the usual container for the hn̥g^{w}nis. If the ritual is being performed in someone's home, use only the xā́sā, since the hearth is the home's altar. In this case, light the xā́sā from the home's stove after making an offering of milk to Wéstyā. There is also no need to create a ghórdhos.

If your xā́sā is not higher than the rég^{w}es put the xā́sā on a small platform so that it is. This is very important; otherwise the rég^{w}es can't be said to be extending downwards.

In a ritual performed inside, but not in a home, establish the ghórdhos as usual. Instead of pouring the borders, sprinkle them; instead of dragging the shovel along the ground, carry it; instead of putting up poles, use stones, with the two markers for the gate larger than the others.

Even when a hn̥g^{w}nis is used, there will be no sod altar. Instead, several pieces of grass, torn up with their roots (if possible), should be placed under the hn̥g^{w}nis in place of the sod.

Chapter 14

The Horse Sacrifice

Thundering horsemen out of the steppes — this is the classic image of the Indo-Europeans; chariot fighters, horsemen, precursors of the knights to come. As we have seen, this is not the whole story. Yet it can not be denied that the horse was important to the Indo-Europeans, especially in their period of expansion. The mobility it gave them enabled them at first to graze their herds over large pastures, then to conquer new pastures, and to move their family groupings to new lands.

That the sacrifice of a horse is one of the classic Indo-European rituals is no surprise. Versions of it are found throughout the Indo-European world. One particular variation is found in India, Rome, and Ireland, with hints from Wales, Anatolia, and Germania, and it is that variation this chapter is about. The descriptions, especially from India, are exceptionally detailed, making this a Proto-Indo-European ritual which can be restored with extreme accuracy. (See O'Flaherty, 1980, for a good summary of the evidence, although I disagree with her opinion that the horse sacrificed in the Proto-Indo-European version was male.)

The coronation ritual described by Gerald of Wales discussed earlier is one of our sources. The Vedic Aśvamedha is another, described in detail in many texts. In rough outline, it involved the dedication of a stallion, which roamed for a year accompanied by warriors. At the end of that year, it was sacrificed in a ritual involving the clubbing sacrifice of a dog, the decoration of the stallion, feeding the horse rice balls, and mimed sex between the king's primary wife and the stallion to the accompaniment of obscene banter. The main recipient of the sacrifice was Indra, similar to Perk^{w}ū́nos. (Campbell, 1962:190-197, is the most accessible detailed description of this ritual.)

The dog/horse connection is found in Wales (the horsy Rhiannon is accused by her maids, who had smeared her mouth with puppies' blood, of eating her son), Germany (horse and dog bones were found together in burials), and Anatolia (puppies sacrificed in a purification ritual similar to one in which horses are used; the army — the object of purification — marched between the two halves of a puppy. A similar ritual was held in Rome).

In Rome, the reflex is the October Equus. Held at the end of the campaigning season, it purified the people from the pollution of the summer's military activity. A chariot race was held, and the right hand horse of the winning team was sacrificed with a spear to Mars (i.e. Perk^{w}ū́nos) after bread had been tied to its head. Its head and tail were cut off, and its tail carried to the Regia (the ritual house of the king). There the blood from the tail was dripped on the hearth. The inhabitants of the Via Sacra and Subura fought and whoever won got the horse's head. (The classical material on this ritual is collected in Vangaard, 1979).

Besides the account given by Gerald of Wales, there are other hints of the horse sacrifice in the Irish texts. One is found in the life of St. Molasius in which the king, on his way to contest the kingship with St. Molasius, has his horse seized by an oak. The horse won't move again until its head

is turned to the east. In the second, found in "The Wooing of Emer," charioteers are charged to prevent anyone who has eaten horse meat in the last twenty-seven days from mounting a chariot. This points to a lunar correspondence to the ritual. Twenty-seven days is about the time from the appearance of a new crescent moon to the last appearance of the waning of the moon.

The Roman ritual was held on the Ides of October, originally the full moon. We don't have a moon date for the Aśvamedha, but the Vedic calendar was lunar, so I would expect a lunar timing there as well, but occurring in the spring. We don't know when the Irish sacrifice would have been held.

There are bits and pieces from other places in the Indo-European world. In many places, horses were sacrificed to the sun. In Gaul, we find someone named "Epomeduos," a cognate of aśvamedha (Puhvel, 1955), perhaps he had a horse sacrifice performed for him.

Ibn Fadlān, a Muslim trader of the 12th century, describes a horse sacrifice amongst the Rus, a Norse tribe living in northern Russia (Montgomery, 2000). The horses were raced until they sweat before being sacrificed. Dogs were also sacrificed. The occasion for this was the funeral of a chieftain.

The overlapping between these rituals – horse and dog, kingship and purification, cooked grain and the dedication of the sacrifice to a second function deity – all point to a common origin. Look for these themes throughout the ritual.

I see four reasons to hold this ritual. It may be held as part of the inauguration ritual of a Rḗḱs. A wíḱs without a Rḗḱs may hold the horse sacrifice as part of their own founding. A wíḱs might want to hold an annual horse sacrifice on the anniversary of its founding. The horse sacrifice may also be held as a fall ritual, at the end of the local growing season, and as a commemoration of the end of the Proto-Indo-European campaigning season. Although we no longer raid cattle, and war is now, unfortunately, a year-round activity, we still draw into our homes during the cold season, and, despite winter sports, become less active. The end of the "campaigning season" is still relevant to us.

The horse sacrifice is not appropriate for the benefit of one person. This is because the Mare Goddess is trifunctional, and a sacrifice that involves her should benefit all three functions. The apparent exception of the Rḗḱs is not an exception at all; the spiritual welfare of the Rḗḱs is that of the wíḱs. This is a ritual where the presence of a Rḗḱs is highly desired. If the wíḱs doesn't have a Rḗḱs, one can be elected solely for this ritual.

I will give the ritual first, with commentary after it.

The Ritual

The Mare

Of course a real mare is not used in the ritual. What is used instead is a papier mâché horse.

The foundation of the horse is a horse-shaped piñata. Remove all the decorations until you are down to the framework. Cut the head three-quarters of the way around, leaving it attached at the top. (This is to assure that the head will come off easily, and to allow access to its interior.) Apply three layers of papier mâché. Do not connect the head and body with the first two. Before applying the third, put a bottle of Nekter inside the body, holding it in place with crumpled newspaper. Then close up the head and apply the third layer, this time connecting the head and body. Cut a slit to form a mouth. Then paint the horse white and add black eyes.

Items required:

At the beginning site:

A metal club (a length of pipe will do); a length of rope; and a bowl of xádor (some will be used in the procession, and bowl with the remainder will be later placed on the speltá).

Along the processional route:

A dog. This is a thin piece of wood, easily split, and painted black, with white eyes.. Clapboard does nicely.

A little further along the processional route:

The mare, covered by a flame-colored cloth, over which is a water-colored cloth. A rope is looped around its neck.

At the ghórdhos or carried in the procession:

The items needed for creating sacred space (except for those used in the dough ritual, which will not be performed), a small bowl of melted clarified butter, a spoon to offer the butter with, two green ribbons, beads and/or ribbons for each participant, a large bowl, rain water in a pitcher.

On the speltá:

Small bowl of water, the bowl of xádor, a knife, and a small ball of cooked barley in a container or on a plate.

At the beginning of the ritual, the Nḗr carries the metal club and the length of rope as well as his axe. If at all possible, perform the ritual at a site a good processional distance away from a body of water.

If the wíḱs has a Rḗḱs, and he has a wife, she is the Fire Tender for this ritual.

The attendees gather some distance away from where the ghórdhos will be, the Nḗr carrying his axe. This spot will be away from the where the procession will form. A signal, using a drum or a bell, can be given to call everyone together.

1. Calling and purification.

The Ǵhéuter calls out:

Gʷmté, gʷmté, gʷmté,
Gʷigʷmsḱóte,
Gʷigʷmsḱótōd!
Gʷmté, gʷrtíbhos Déiwōm!
Uzmé ḱéidont:
Klúte tónz!
Gʷmté hńgʷnim.
Gʷmté, spnté!
[Come, come, come;
ever come;
ever and always come!
Come to please the Gods!
They are calling you:
Hear them!
Come to the fires
Come and worship!]

The others go to where he is.

When all have arrived, the Nḗr says:

Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte! Tūsyéte!
[Be silent!]
May we all maintain a holy silence.
With each " Tūsyéte" he speaks more softly.

If the group is small enough, a bowl of water is passed around for people to purify themselves as they desire. If there are too many for this to be done easily, the Fire Tender asperses them, saying:

Pr-óntm supós púrōs sīme.
Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-īme.
Punkʷúbhos ḱwéntom nḱime.
[May we be pure that we might cross through the sacred.
May we cross through the sacred that we might attain the holy.
May we attain the holy that we might be blessed in all things.]

2. The Beginning.

The Xádbhertor asks:

Diviner, is the day propitious?

The Diviner replies:

The omens have been taken and are auspicious.

3. Lighting the xā́sā.

If the wíḱs has a Rēḱs the fire can come from his house. If not, to light the fire, the Fire Tender holds three matches vertically and says:

The supporting pillar of the home
resting on the earth.
Spring forth, fire, from the center of our world.

She strikes them as one group (or lights them with the brought flame), and lights the briquettes. She can also use a lighter, saying instead:

Strike the rock, lightning born flame.

You may wish to pour a small amount of lighter fluid on the briquettes before lighting them. The Ǵhéuter says:

Wéstyā, who burns on our hearth, in our home,
we call to you to join us here,
bringing our prayers to the gods,
forming the means by which we sacrifice.
May the holy arise in our midst,
the pure and the blessing.

Once the xā́sā is burning well (or, if you have used lighter fluid, died down a bit), the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, saying:

Bhlegpotyā, nzmé pnkʷús ghedh.
[Shining Lady, unite us all],
for by worshiping at a common hearth
we are made one family, one people.
Demespotyā, your household is here.

4. The Opening Prayers.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Déiwonz adbheromes!

[We wish to sacrifice to the gods!]

All:

We wish to worship the gods!

The Ǵhéuter says:

Come we together on this holy day
across the distances that lay between us
to this time, to this place,
for one strong purpose:
To worship the Holy Ones in the proper manner.

All say:

May our worship be according to the Xártus.

Ǵhéuter:

Bhlǵontes, ḱlute nōs!

[Shining Ones, hear us!]

We wish to sacrifice to you with beautiful words and well-done deeds!
Holy Ones, Mighty Ones, Protectors of our People!
Splendid Ones, Steadfast Ones, Givers of Gifts!
Gods rightly worshiped for years uncounted.

All:

We praise you,
we worship you,
we pray for your presence.
The Ǵhéuter then says:
Wielder of the Wágros,
Defeater of the Serpent,
Watcher and Guardian,
Bringer of the Thunderstorm,
Bringer of the Rains,
Bringer of growth:
Perkʷū́nos, we call to you.
Perkʷū̄nos, we dedicate this rite to you.
Perkʷū́nos, hear us.

The Nḗr holds his axe head out to the Xádbhertor, who pours mead on it while the Ǵhéuter says:

God whose presence is lightning,
whose voice is thunder:
hear my little voice that calls you here.
With libations, with prayers, poured out,
we call you here.
Destroyer of opposition, destroy all that oppose us;

Remover of obstacles, remove all in our way.
Go before along our path,
guiding us through the untamed lands,
Protector, cleaver of mountains.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Set forth upon the shining path,
the ancestral way laid out before us.
Place your feet with measured stride,
in ancient rhythm.

Begin a procession along the lakeshore with the Nḗr first, followed by the Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter, the Fire Tender, the Rḗḱs, and then the others, with any musicians at the end.

5. The Dog Sacrifice.

At some point, the procession encounters the figure of the dog and stops. The Nḗr goes to it and says:

The path of the dog is not ours today.
May all obstacles be removed,
may nothing trip us up,
may nothing stand in the way of the mare.

He hits the dog with his club, knocking it over. As he hits it, the others yell out:

Gʷhńdhi!

The Ǵhéuter then says:

May all impurities be removed.

The Nḗr chops the dog in two with his axe and places half on each side of the path the procession will follow. As he does so, the Ǵhéuter says:

By the death of the dog, we are cleansed.
By our path through the dog, we are cleansed.
Kunḗ pūtes smes!
[By the dog we are cleansed!]

The procession proceeds between the halves. When all are through, the Nḗr ties the two pieces to the club and throws them into the water. If there is no water, he ties the club and pieces together, and places them to the left of the path, disposing of them later by throwing them into water or burying them.

6. The Mare.

Not far beyond the dog and at the edge of the water, is the mare, covered with the water-colored cloth on top of the flame-colored cloth. The Ǵhéuter and Xádbhertor go to it. The Ǵhéuter says:

Hékwonā, come to us on spiraling waves.
Xákʷōm Népōt, pour her out in flaming water.
Páxusōn, make firm the road between us,
that She might come to us free from obstruction.

The Xádbhertor throws some xádor with each of the first three lines.

Two of the people present uncover the mare, one cloth at a time. The Ǵhéuter says:

The mare returns victorious to the land where she is queen.
She has excelled in the races,
she has overcome the watery trials,
she rises to the surface,
a flame from out of the depths.

The mare is picked up by a woman, the wife of the Rḗḱs if the wíḱs has one.

7. The Main Procession.

The Ǵhéuter begins a processional chant:

Ride the mare as she goes along,
Sing her praises, feed her seed,
Take her to the pole so long,
Sing her praises, breed the steed.

It is sung or spoken once through and then the procession begins, with the others joining in the chant. The woman carrying the horse is second in the procession, after the Nḗr. The chant may be accompanied by percussion instruments and clapping.

When the ritual site is reached, the usual sacred space ritual is enacted. Those carrying objects (except for the woman with the mare, who stands holding it in the west part of the space) put them in the center. The ghórdhos is then established according to the usual ritual, from the point of arriving at the space.

8. The fires.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter to the xā́sā, while the Ǵhéuter says:

We feed the fire on the heart of our land.
With the fire we take possession
of the land it lights, of the world it warms.
From here to there we take possession.

(He gestures from side to side as he says the last line.)

The Fire Tender then lays three logs on the hn̥ǵʷnis,, one each to the south, west, and north. As she places them, the Fire Tender says:

Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Bhudhnēn dhidhēmes.
Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Médhyō dhidhēmes.
Tóm hn̥ǵʷnim Wēi dhidhēmes.
[We place this fire in Bhudhnōn.]
[We place this fire in Médhyom.]
[We place this fire in Weis.]

She puts tinder in the center and kindling in a teepee shape above it, within the three logs. She then lights it by transferring a briquette from the xā́sā with the butter spoon. As she places the briquette, she says:

Be our place of sacrifice, hn̥ǵʷnis,
where our offerings will be transformed by the pure and holy fire
into pure and holy gifts, incorruptible,
fit for the Undying Ones.

She then blows on the hn̥gʷnis to enflame the tinder, while the Ǵhéuter says:

With our prayers we feed you,
with the breath of our mouths.
Xánmōd xánmom.
[From breath to breath.]

It is quite possible that the briquette won't easily set the tinder on fire. For this reason, put a few matches near the hn̥gʷnis that the Fire Tender can light from the briquette and use them to light the tinder. She may also pour a small pitcher full of lighter fluid on the tinder in the hn̥gʷnis first.

After the hn̥gʷnis is burning well enough, the Fire Tender offers clarified butter to it, while the Xádbhertor says:

Be fed with the produce of cattle.
Shine with the shining cow's gift.

9. The circumambulation.

The Xádbhertor says:

We honor the fire with right turning.
The woman with the horse carries it clockwise around the fires. This may be accompanied with a song.

10. The Tethering of the Horse.

The Xádbhertor goes to the sacrificial stake and says:

Stake of sacrifice, rising in the east
Point of sacrifice, filled with fire
Stave of sacrifice, establishing the world
Place of sacrifice, according to the Xártus.
He sprinkles xádor on the stake, saying:
Straight one, we honor you.
Erect one, receive our praise.
Long and stiff, to you this gift.

The mare carrier brings the horse to the Fire Tender who pours some clarified butter on it, saying:

With the heart of the cow,
with all we own,
we offer to you,
you who stand behind all things.

The mare is then brought to the stake and set down, facing inwards (that is, to the west). The Ǵhéuter takes the rope, forms a loop around the horse's neck, and loops it clockwise around the stake, ending with the ends crossed on top of the mare, saying:

Arrived at the center of the Cosmos, you are bound:
bound to the service of those who give,
bound to the service of those who shine,
bound to the sacrifice, to the immortal.

11. Dedication and Blessing of the Horse.

The woman who carried the horse ties a green ribbon or cord low on the horse' neck, just in front of its front legs. She ties a second green ribbon or cord right in front of the horse's hind legs. The Xádbhertor spoons clarified butter on each of the three parts into which it is now divided, and he calls for blessings for the three functions.

While the head is anointed, the Xádbhertor says:

May Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen give us holiness and justice,
and rule by the dhétis,
and life according to the Xártus.

Ǵhéuter:

Dyeu Pter Xaryomenkʷe,
doqete ḱwentom nzmei.
[Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen, give us holiness.]

While the middle is anointed, the Xádbhertor says:

May Perkʷū́nos give us strength and vitality,
and protection from danger,
and life in safety.
Ǵhéuter:
Perkʷū́nos,
dōq xóyum nzsmei.
[Perkʷū́nos, give us vital force.]

While the tail section is anointed, the Xádbhertor says:

May the Sons of Dyḗus Ptḗr give us fertility and health,
and material prosperity,
and life in abundance.
Ǵhéuter:
Diwós Sūnú,
Pekumkʷe wīromkʷe, doqete nzmei.
[Sons of Dyḗus, give us cattle and men.]

The Xádbhertor or the Rḗḱs says:

May the Mare give us all these things, and more besides.
May she grant us our desires throughout the coming year.
May our harvest be great, our baskets full, our storehouses overflowing.
We dedicate this offering to Perkʷū́nos:
may he watch over and protect this wíḱs.

If the sacrifice is being performed for the inauguration of a Rḗḱs, when the Xádbhertor is anointing the mare, the Rḗḱs' wife anoints the Rḗḱs. She anoints his head, his right hand, and his feet. While the Xádbhertor is saying, "May Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen give us freedom and justice, and rule by law, and life according to the Xártus," she says just the "Give us (etc.)." She does the same with the other anointing prayers.

Each person comes to the mare and prays for something, putting a decoration (bead, ribbon, smudge of color, etc.) on the part appropriate for what is prayed for. They may pray for more than one thing; if so, a separate prayer is said for each, and a separate decoration added. If the ritual is being performed to establish a Rḗḱs or a wíḱs, all prayers must relate to the Rḗḱs or the wíḱs.

The Xádbhertor or the Rḗḱs feeds the horse the cooked barley, saying:

Be filled with seed,
give birth to our prayers.

He turns the horse to face the east, making sure the rope doesn't fall off. He says:

Be our pray-er.
Bring to the gods our desires
mounted safely on your back.

12. The first offering.

The Xádbhertor picks up the small piece of bread from the top of the sacrifices, takes it to the hn̥ǵʷnis, and breaks up there, scattering some of it on the ground and most of it into the hn̥ǵʷnis, saying:

We offer to you the gift of the ground
transformed by our work
into food for us and for you.
Receive with pleasure this first gift to you.

13. The Sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor picks up the knife and goes to the horse. He puts the knife down to the right of the mare, with its dull side facing her. He then puts his hand right hand on its head, and says:

This horse has come willingly, eagerly,
to the place of sacrifice
in celebration and beauty.

He sprinkles it with water three times, with his right hand, saying each time:

A pure offering is this,
without blemish or stain,
fit for Hékʷonā.

He puts the water down, and picks up the bowl of xádor in his left hand. He scatters the xádor from it three times with his right hand onto the sacrifice, saying each time:

Be blessed and fed with the fruits of the earth.

He puts his right hand on the mare's head and says:

A proper offering is this,
as it is right to give.
This mare to Hewn.

The Nḗr brings the axe to the Rḗḱs (or goes himself to the mare), and the Mare Carrier picks up the large bowl and comes to stand beside him. The Rḗḱs or Nḗr holds the axe high in the air for a moment, and all cry:

Pérkʷeti!
[May he/it strike!]

The Rḗḱs or Nḗr goes to the fires and stands in the south, facing the Fire Tender. When he has arrived, the Fire Tender says:

Pérkʷeti!
[May he/it slay!]

He goes clockwise slowly around the space, holding the axe upright and out. As he walks, the

Fire Tender strikes a bell, and the others (except for the Xádbhertor) join in with their own instruments, by clapping, or by stamping on the ground. Following the Fire Tender's lead, they increase the tempo and volume as he walks.

While the Nḗr circles, the Xádbhertor leans close to the sacrifice and softly says (it is to the animal he speaks; the others do not hear over the noise they are making):

We free you to take the sacred path,
to take the holy path,
the divine path to the Divine Ones.

He removes the rope during this, coiling it to the right of the stake, and says:

The path is well-marked, from ancient days till now:
as you have freely offered yourself,
freely take the path,
bound only by the prayers we have made,
carrying them on your back.

When he has returned to the south, the Rḗḱs or Nḗr lifts the axe high and the Fire Tender says:

Pérkʷeti!

All the others except the Rḗḱs or Nḗr and the Xádbhertor say:

Pérkʷeti!

The Rḗḱs or Nḗr uses the axe to cut off the head of the mare, and all fall silent. If necessary, the Xádbhertor uses the knife to cut the head the rest of the way off. The Xádbhertor unties the rope from the horse, if it has not come off when the head was severed off, and puts the large bowl beneath the neck and pours the Nekter from the bottle inside the horse into it. The Rḗḱs or Nḗr anoints the stake with some of the Nekter, saying:

The Tree is fed by the Waters of the burning Well,
in which she dwells,
the Mare in Flames.

He pours rain water into the large bowl, saying:

The gift of Perkʷū́nos is ours,
the water that courses down through his cast flames,
Sky and Earth mingle through the intercession of water,
their fluids blending to become our drink.

He holds the bowl up and says:

Spékyete Nektérm!
[Behold the overcomer of death!]

All:

Spékyete Nektérm!
[Behold the overcomer of death!]

He puts the bowl down, picks up the mare's head, and places it on the top of the stake. He cuts off the tail with the knife, dips the tail in the Nekter, and asperses the ghórdhos and those present with it. He then puts the tail in the horse's mouth.

The Diviner removes the bottle from the mare's body and throws the body onto the ground, where it is covered with a blanket. Everyone (or representatives if there are too many at the ritual) stomps on it, breaking it up. Later (after the ritual) it is disposed of, preferably in the lake, or by being

buried.

If the sacrifice is for a new Rḗḱs, the bowl with the Nekter in it is then given to his wife. She brings it to the Rḗḱs, who drinks without touching the bowl with his hands. The Rḗḱs' wife then puts the bowl next to the xā́sā. If the ritual is for the wíḱs, the bowl is passed among the members, who drink from it using their hands as cups.

As each person is presented with the bowl, the presenter says:

Hékwās Nektérm.
[The death-overcomer of the mare.]

14. The libation.

After all have drunk, the Xádbhertor pours the remainder at the base of the hn̥gʷnis (being careful not to extinguish the fire), while the Ǵhéuter says:

All the Holy Ones, be honored in our midst.
Be welcome at our table, all of you.
We pour out our offering to you
like living water, like grain from a bag.
Drink deeply of the gifts we give.
Pnkʷudéiwomus ǵhewomes.
[We pour a libation to the All-Gods.]

15. The Final Sacrifice.

The Xádbhertor removes the head and tail from the stake. He puts them in the hn̥gʷnis, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Divine Mare, grant your gifts not to us alone;
convey them to all the celestial gods.
Through our sacrifice we feed them.
Shining Ones, here is food for you!

When they are burnt, close the ritual in the usual way, beginning with the piacular sacrifice.

Commentary

5. The dog has three meanings. First, its death is purifying. I am not sure why this should be so; it may be related to the belief that the lick of a dog is healing. Second, the dog is Gheredhz, who is removed from our path so that we are set on the path of life. Third, there is the bitch aspect of the Mare Goddess; by sacrificing a dog, we are asking that she should come to us in her benevolent aspect.

6. Covered with the two cloths, the Mare is the fire in the water. It connects her with the Vedic submarine mare, a fiery horse which is submerged to keep it from destroying the world. It isn't hard to see the power of Hékwonā here. It also connects with all the fire/water symbolism in Indo-European religion, as well as the association of the reflexes of Xákʷōm Népōt with horses.

7. "Feed her seed" means both "feed seed to her" and "feed her children." This act is reminiscent of both the rice in the Vedic ritual and the bread tied to the head of the Roman horse. It also symbolizes the sexual act found in the Irish and Vedic rituals.

11. The division into three parts is one for each of the functions. This makes it clear that the

sacrifice is trifunctional.

The head and tail are treated in a special way in the October Equus and in Germanic archaeological remains. The enigmatic treatment of the tail finds echoes in Vedic, Roman, and Germanic ritualsalthough its meaning is not clear. Are the head and the tail the two ends, and thus symbolically the entire horse? Is the sexual symbolism of both the tail and the mouth operative? If so, the sprinkling is a distribution of fertility.

The mare's head and tail being placed on the stake is a very complicated act. There is the sexual symbolism of head and tail, as well as of the mare "mounting" the stallion, this reversal of the usual pattern being a clear statement of who is actually in charge here. There is the fact that the head is the front, the tail the back, and the stake the middle. Conjoined they represent totality. There is all the symbolism usually associated with heads: seat of the soul, chieftainship, the part that sees.

The body of the horse is stomped on by everyone for two reasons. First, it prevents anyone from feeling not responsible for the horse's death. A sacrifice is performed by everyone present, not just the one who deals the blow. We all benefit from the life-death relationship, and therefore we all should take responsibility for it. Second, if the head and tail are to be treated specially, the body must be treated mundanely. The stomping on the body turns it into a mundane object which may be disposed of as desired. It's covered with a blanket so that those present both do and don't destroy it.

Chapter 15

The Triple Sacrifice

The Indo-European love of triplicity is expressed in an especially interesting ritual format: three animals are sacrificed at one ritual. We have evidence from the three main sources of Indo-European ritual information.

Probably best known is the Roman suovotaurilia. As the name tells us, the sacrifices are a pig (sus), a sheep (ovis), and a bull (taurus). The ritual, performed every five years, was used to purify the people of Rome. The animals were led about them and then sacrificed. The purification element was also evident in another use — expiation for severe ritual error.

In Greece we find the trittyes, which used the same three animals, and in India the sautrāmani. The latter was used as part of the inauguration of a king, as well as for a purification, to remove the evil influences of enemies. Most interesting of all is that it was used to free a sacrificer of soma, the Vedic ritual drink (see chapter 16), from the after-effects of that ritual (Dumézil, 1970, 237-238).

But why a triple sacrifice? And why these three animals? Any time the number three is found in Indo-European religion we should ask ourselves whether it has to do with the three functions.

First there is the pig. As we have seen already, pigs, including boars, sows, and piglets, are generally sacrificed to third function deities, particularly goddesses. They are also sacrificed for oath-taking, purification and divination. In India and Iran, the same role is taken by the goat.

Pigs are not an animal for nomads — short legs — but are a classic animal for settled people or for transhumants. They are easily kept around a settlement, will eat almost anything and require minimum care. They are associated with goddesses as they are not the sort of animal that would be kept by men in the field with the cattle. They are women's beasts, kept at the home base which was run by women.

Another reason why pigs are especially connected with fertility deities is their prolific nature; they have a lot of piglets. We have already seen how the Proto-Indo-European word for pig, *sus (> sow) may come from a root *seu-, "to give birth."

Throughout the Indo-European world, pigs are associated with the chthonic side of things – death, the underworld, and vegetation. They are also connected with heroes, although in that case they frequently bring about the death of the hero, even if they have protected him in his lifetime.

Then comes the ram. This martial animal has often been connected with second function deities. For instance, in Rome it was sacred to Mars.

Finally, there is the bull or ox. As we have seen, the ox is sacred to Dyḗus Ptḗr, the first function deity par excellence.

The exact assignment of the animals to the functions is not a sure thing. In the Vedic ritual the ram is offered to the first function goddess Sarasvatī, the bull to second function Indra, and the goat to the third function Aśvins. Nevertheless, the trifunctional aspect of the ritual is found in all three cultures.

Simply identifying the three functions with the animals might be an accident. What clinches the case is the order in which they are named. In both Greece and Rome we find the order 3/2/1. This is a meaningful order; the sacrifice is taken from the most everyday to the most holy.

So why sacrifice three functional animals? Why not just sacrifice the trifunctional horse and be done with it? The question may well answer itself; if a horse is all three functions, it is only appropriate for someone who himself is all three functions, i.e., a Rḗḱs. The triple sacrifice, representing the three functions separately, can be done by and for non-royals.

Triple sacrifices can be performed for a variety of reasons. They are performed for sealing an oath, as a purification (in which case the animals are led around the place to be purified), or as an offering to fertility deities. The modern wíḱs can use it for any of these reasons. "Sealing an oath," for instance, can mean confirming friendship with another wíḱs. Another use, which brings in both purification and fertility, would be as part of a spring ritual. It can also be used as part of a ritual to bless a new home or property.

The ritual, although complex in theory, is simple enough in practice. The animals (or rather, the bread which stands in for them) are brought to the place of sacrifice, each on its own plate. They are led around the place as a whole before being brought into the ghórdhos. If they are to be sacrificed as a purification rite, they are brought counterclockwise about the place or person to be purified.

The sacrifices are then placed to the west of the fires, with the bull in the south and the ram in the middle; the three functions go from the third in the north to the first in the south. This is the order in which they will be sacrificed. This means that the order of sacrifice will be from the dangerous north to the beneficent south. This also represents a movement from Bhudhnōn through Médhyom into Weis.

The sacrifices are then performed in the order of pig, ram, and ox. Each one is sacrificed separately. When all have been sacrificed, the ritual continues with the libation to the All-gods. The ox is sacrificed to Dyḗus Ptḗr, and the ram to Perkʷū́nos. The only remaining question is which third function deity the sow is sacrificed to. To the Diwós Sūnú? To Gʷouwinda? To Donu? Good question. So good that I don't have much of an answer. Gʷouwinda seems out; this is a pig, not a cow. Of the other two, take your pick. Some aspect of the ritual may make the decision for you. Otherwise you may perform the ritual to all the Third Function deities by name, or as a group: "To all the gods and goddesses of giving birth and bringing forth, of prosperity and wealth, we offer this sow."

Chapter 16

Nekter

The fire in water theme, expressed mythically in the cosmology and personally in the figure of Xák^{w}ōm Népōt, finds its ritual expression in the drink known as *Nekter – the "death overcoming" (Polomé, 1991, 84; Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995, 721). The word is familiar in the English word "nectar," and the Greek nektar, associated with ambrosia, the food and drink of the gods. (Sources disagree on which is which.)

Indo-European religion is filled with sacred drinks. A quick review is in order.

The Greek gods have been known to give nektar to humans to heal them (Iliad 519:38 ff.). In "The First Hymn to Demeter" from The Homeric Hymns, Demeter anoints Demophoon with ambrosia to give him immortality. Ambrosia and nektar are also used as perfume, especially by Aphrodite and Hera.

In the "First Hymn to Hermes" in The Homeric Hymns, it is said that the Fates feed on honey. If they have been fed properly, they pronounce inspired truths; if not, they pronounce falsehoods.

In some rituals, the Greeks made their own drink they called "ambrosia," which was a mixture of various liquids and solids. Athenaeus (9:473) records a ritual in which Zeus is offered an ambrosia made from pure water, olive oil, and all kinds of fruit. A similar mixture is recorded in The Odyssey, Book 11, where Odysseus pours into a pit honey, milk, sweet wine mixed with water, and white barley, as recommended by Circe. It would be reasonable to suppose that he is giving the dead something to make them sufficiently living so that he can see them.

Another possible mixture is recorded in "The First Hymn to Demeter." Demeter refuses red wine as unlawful for her to drink and asks instead for a mixture of barley, water, and pennyroyal. The barley, if it was infected with ergot, may have had hallucinogenic properties. This drink is behind the one in the Eleusinian mysteries (Watkins, 1978, 15).

Calvert Watkins (1978) points out the importance of the drinks being provided by or at the advice of a woman. He also notes that it is consumed seated.

In Ireland, a sacred drink is found mostly as a drink of sovereignty. The story from Ireland of Niall of the Nine Hostages is relevant here; the hag compares her drink to mead, honey, and strong ale. The Ulster coronation ritual is also relevant; to drink the broth of the mare is to drink kingship. At the inauguration feast at Tara, the high-king's wife hands him a cup of mead. Sovereignty is also the theme when the horse goddess Morrígan, after predicting the course of a battle that will determine the rule of Ireland, gives the soon to be victorious side two handfuls of the blood of the king of their enemies.

Kingship isn't the only gift Irish drinks hold. "The Caldron of Poesy" (Breatnach, 1981, 1984) describes a cauldron that is the source of poetic ability. Its contents are "a noble brew in which is brewed/the basis of all knowledge/which is set out according to law" (lines 85-7).

Finn MacCumhaill's hands had a healing ability that may have been linked to his thumb of

knowledge. If he gave anyone a drink from his hands they would be cured. There are multiple stories as to how he acquired this ability. In one, it happened that food was disappearing as soon as it was cooked. Finn followed the food thief back to the fairy mound where the well of knowledge was kept. As the door closed, he tried to stop it but only managed to get his thumb stuck in the door. One of the women of the mound, who had just finished distributing the drink, spilled some on Finn's thumb. He removed his thumb from the door and sucked on it, and thereby received knowledge.

In other stories, Finn acquired his knowledge without the mediation of his thumb. In one he simply drank from two wells near Carn Ferudaig. In another he lost his strength by bathing in a pool. He and his followers then attacked the nearby fairy mound, assuming correctly, that the sidhe had something to do with it. Cuilenn, the lord of the mound, came out and gave Finn a drink from a golden cup. The drink not only restored his strength but gave him wisdom as well (Nagy, 1985).

The Irish connect healing with the wells dedicated to St. Brighid, originally a goddess connected with fire, milk, and ale. In this case, the drink is connected with a cow goddess.

On the continent, we discover the justifiably famous grave of a Celtic prince from Hochdorf, Germany, dated to around 530 BCE. This fortunate chieftain was buried lying on a bronze Etruscan couch, wearing gold-decorated shoes and silk. Among his grave goods were nine drinking horns, one a meter long and thus probably meant for the prince himself. The drink for this horn was to have come from a cauldron 80 cm high and 104 cm across, which had once held five hundred liters of a drink made with honey and one hundred different herbs. Fifty-eight of those herbs were identifiable, and some of those would have been brought from some distance. This is clearly a ritual drink, if for no other reason than it is unlikely that even the most sophisticated palate would have been able to distinguish a mead made with one hundred herbs from one made with a mere seventy-five. It is obvious that this was meant for the prince's refreshment in the Otherworld; it is possible that it may have been the means by which he would be revivified there. (This remarkable tomb is described in a number of sources; two good ones are Enright, 1996, 134-135; and Jörg Biel, 1991, 125-128.)

In later Gaul, we find honeyed beer. By the time we have records of it, it is the drink of the lower classes. This is opposed to the wine of the upper classes. Since wine was an imported drink, it would have been a prestige item, and naturally drunk by the upper classes. It would have replaced an earlier drink, and the presence of mead in the princely graves strongly suggests that it would have been that drink. (Most of this information comes from Arnold, 1999, and Watkins, 1978, must-reads for anyone interested in this topic.)

Poetic inspiration is the point in Norse stories that tell of Odin's mead of inspiration. It was created when the two races of gods, the Aesir and the Vanir, sealed a treaty by spitting into a vat. From the saliva, the Aesir created a dwarf named Kvasir who could answer any question. He was killed by two other dwarves, who mixed his blood with honey and made mead. They gave it to the giant Suttung, who gave it to his daughter Gunnlod to guard. Odin wormed his way into Gunnlod's cave and in return for his spending three nights with her, she offered him three draughts from the mead. He drank all of it, turned himself into an eagle, and flew away. Some of the mead which Odin spat out along the way back is the source of inspiration of minor poets ("Skáldsaparmál," 56-57 (in Snorri)).

The mead normally drunk by the Norse gods is actually milk from the goat Heithrun, who eats the leaves and branches of the world tree. This milk is the water from the well, transformed first by the tree and then by the goat.

Beer also had connections with sacred drinks among the Norse. In "Sígrdrifumál," in The Poetic Edda, we find "I bring you beer, mixed with power and great fame; it is full of lays and healing charms, of favorable magic songs and auspicious runes." The difference between beer and mead would have blurred by the common addition of honey to beer (Polomé, 1996, 99-100).

Among the continental Germans (and their Anglo-Saxon relatives), the giving of an alcoholic drink by a woman was an important part of rituals conveying and confirming lordship. Enright (1996) has an extended study of this ritual; among other things, he points out that strainers, used to remove herbs from the mixture that was beer or mead in Germany in ancient times, are often found in the graves of women and only of women. He also suggests that such a strainer is found in images of the Celtic goddess Rosmerta, whom he sees as a goddess of prophecy.

Moving east, we encounter the Sarmatian Nartyamonga. This large chalice gives magical gifts such as the power of prophecy but not without a price; whoever drinks from it must be above reproach.

In Zoroastrianism, there are two relevant substances; Xvarenah and haoma. Literally meaning "the good things in life" (Greppin, 1973, 232-233), Xvarenah may be defined as the glory of the divine, sacred power. It is a luminous and fiery liquid, stored in fire and water; its ultimate source is infinite light. Anahita, the greatest female spirit, the spirit of religious and moral purity, has a large amount of Xvarenah and distributes it by means of her river. All good spiritual beings possess it, as do priests, kings, and some warriors.

Haoma ("juice") is a sacred drink, filled with Xvarenah. Haoma exists both in a cosmic sense (there is a real haoma, independent of what we do) and in a ritual sense (there is a haoma we concoct in our worship). These two haomas are identified during a ritual; when speaking within the ritual, cosmic haoma and ritual haoma are the same.

Apparently, ritual haoma was at one time a psychoactive drug. In the Zoroastrian scriptures, there is reference to the intoxication of haoma. Significantly, it is said that this intoxication "goes rightly" (Yasna 10.8); that it is in accord with divine law.

There are two forms of haoma in the Yasna ritual. One is prepared before the ritual by the priest's assistant from ephedra (a stimulant herb) and pomegranate twigs (pomegranates are fertility symbols) pounded together in water. During the ritual, the priest prepares a second form of haoma, which includes goat's milk as well as the water and the twigs.

This white form may be a ritual version of something called "white haoma," which is used as a name for the tree of life, the fruit of which feeds the spirits in heaven. At the end of the world, a great bull will be sacrificed, and its fat mixed with white haoma, will be the drink which gives immortality to the dead.

Haoma is used in the ritual for the dying and in priestly initiations. Finally, it was under the influence of haoma that Zoroaster's parents conceived him.

Hinduism gives us what is probably the most famous Indo-European ritual drink: soma. The word is cognate with the Zoroastrian "haoma," and is applied to both a psychoactive plant and the drink prepared from it. Since the species of plant that soma was made from has been forgotten, a plant with a milky sap is used today.

There is more than one myth of the origin of soma. The Rig Veda (4.26.4-6) tells how it was brought from far away by an eagle (remember Odin). In the later Mahābhārata, it is churned by the gods and the asuras from the great ocean, using a mountain (probably the axis mundi) for a churning

stick and a great snake for the cord with which to pull it. The friction caused by the churning sets the mountain's trees on fire; the boiling sap flows into the ocean, where it mixed with the waters, forming amṛta ("deathless," often identified with soma) and turning the waters into milk. The gods churn the milk, producing soma, other gifts and divine beings. Their last production is the physician of the gods, who carries a pot containing amṛta (thus creating amṛta/soma a third time) (O'Flaherty, 1975, 274-280).

Soma is compared with or equated to many things in the Rig Veda; honey, milk, the semen of a stallion, sap, and butter. It is described (RV 9.72.7ab) as being found in the navel of the earth and as supporting the sky. It is called "honey" (madhu, a cognate of "mead") and "inebriation" (mada). This shows that the psychotropic plant used to make ritual soma, whatever that plant may have been, was probably a replacement for an originally alcoholic drink made from honey. It is further described as being mixed with milk, sour milk, and barley (MacDonnell, 1999, 153).

The gods drink soma, filling themselves with ecstasy and divine power. Indra, the hero and warrior god, is especially fond of it. Intoxicated with soma, he is invincible. Perhaps the most famous line of the Rig Veda (8.48.3) refers to soma: "We have drunk the soma, we have become immortal."

The god Soma is a god of the moon and an upholder of order and truth. He is primarily male but has androgynous qualities. He can appear either as a male animal such as a bull, stallion, or buffalo, or as a female, a cow. He is frequently associated with Agni, the god of fire.

The relationship between Agni (fire) and water is very complex. Agni comes down to earth hidden in rain, which is then absorbed by plants. That is why plants burn. Agni is said to have been born from the water, and this is the form called Apāṃ Napāt "Son of the Waters." The cognate evidence of Nechtan and Neptune fits in here.

The connection between alcohol and sacred power goes far back in history and is shown by the fact that Germanic alu, "ale," may be cognate with Hittite alwanza, "affected by sorcery" (Polomé, 1986, 103). This Hittite-Germanic correspondence is all the more impressive for linking two cultures so far away from each other in both space and time.

Finally, there is the linguistic evidence of a Proto-Indo-European *médhu-, "mead." Its descendents include Welsh meddw, "drunk," Old Irish Medb, Vedic madhu, Aśvamedha, and mada, and English "mead."

This is only a small amount of information on ritual drinks in Indo-European religion; the subject deserves its own book. From this short overview we see several things. There was belief in a drink that provides immortality, inspiration, ecstasy, and power (especially sovereignty). Bruce Lincoln (1987, 202) writes: "in all instances, the drink appears as a heightener of abilities and activities. When consumed by a priest, it increases his powers of vision and insight. Similarly, it makes a poet more eloquent, a warrior more powerful, a king more generous and just." In all these cases, the pint is one of Order, of the Xártus. Sovereignty concerns the proper king, healing a return to the proper order, the increase of power to a person is in a form proper to that person, etc. The Indo-European sacred drink confers the Xártus in tangible form to those who drink it. Properly prepared, they are put into an even stronger state of the proper.

The sacred drink exists in both a cosmological and a ritual sense. In the cosmology, the point at which the drink enters our realm is the mouth of the well, it enters from the very center. This is where the water from the well, the force of Chaos entering the Cosmos, meets with the fire of offering.

Nekter is formed by this mixing. We have seen the importance of the controlled influx of Chaos for the survival and thriving of Cosmos. Chaos must be ordered, so that it doesn't destroy Cosmos, but it must remain chaotic, if it is to have any effect. This is done by the creation of Nekter, which is both water (Chaos) and fire (the ordering sacrificial fire). In ritual, this mixture of fire and water may be created and then consumed. We become equated to Cosmos, and it is we who are revitalized by Chaos.

The drink, in its mythical form, is acquired (OK, stolen) by a bird with celestial and fire associations from the enemies of the gods; it is taken up into Cosmos from Chaos. It is thought of as both fire and water; other opposites, such as male and female, and enemies (gods and asuras, Aesir and Vanir), are reconciled in it. It is dangerous for anyone who is not in accord with law, both Xártus and yéwesā, to approach it, for it is a detector of religious truth or falsehood, and punishes transgressors severely.

Cosmological Nekter occurs in two forms, one fiery and one white. The fiery is that which issues from the well; the white is the return given by Cosmos back into the waters, completing the ghosti cycle. The first is associated with mares and the second with male figures. The white form is identified with both milk (G^{w}ouwinda, and a result of pregnancy, for which the presence of a male is necessary) and semen.

On a ritual level, this drink is a mixture, perhaps to reflect its dual nature. Most commonly, it contains water, honey, a psychoactive substance (alcohol, ergot, ephedra) and something white (a dairy product, usually milk, and/or barley). It can also exist in a form that does not have milk added to it, such as beer or ale, but the former seems more common. This makes sense, since this form is not the pure Chaos issuing from the well, but a version that has already been mediated. That this is the case is shown by the Zoroastrian Yasna ritual, in which the freshly prepared haoma is presented to the fire, but mixed with goat's milk before being consumed by the priests.

Ritual Nekter is mediated in some way by a woman, such as the Irish queen, the Norse Gunnlod, or the Greek Circe. As a drink associated with proper Order, it is consumed sitting down, with the attendees in their proper relationship with each other.

The Eastern traditions make and consume their ritual drinks (haoma and soma) at the same ritual, but that may be because the plant or plants used had their affect without fermentation. (The identity of the plants isn't known. Suggestions have been as diverse as cannabis, the amanita muscaria mushroom (fly agaric), ginseng, and ephedra. The last is still used in Zoroastrian rituals, and it's reasonable to suggest that it was the original. (See Flattery and Schwartz, 1989 for an extended argument in favor of ephedra.)) I would like to suggest the possibility that the Vedics didn't even know themselves. The RV tells us that the plant was bought from the indigenous Indians; perhaps those sellers wanted to keep the identity secret. That would explain the fact that the RV isn't clear enough for a consensus to have been developed.

In the West, alcoholic beverages were used – mead in the north, ale/beer among the Celts, and wine in Greece. That alcohol was the original mind-altering substance is clear; first, the obvious fact that whatever it was, the soma/haoma plant didn't grow in the West; second, the name of some of the horse goddesses, including the Vedic Mādhavī can be traced to *medhu- "honey," the basis of mead; and third, in the Indo-Iranian traditions there is madhu, which is sometimes identified with soma/haoma, and sometimes severely criticized as inferior to it. The criticism is important, since no one criticizes something that doesn't exist. (Perhaps this served to set the upper classes apart from

the lower.)

Archaeological evidence from the Celts hints at the possibility that the drink may not have been fermented before the ritual. The mead in the grave was apparently not completely fermented when it was poured into the vats. This may be due to not having a large quantity of finished mead on hand at the death of the chieftain.

Honey-beer would have had its honey added before fermentation, and unlike the mead at Hochdorf, there is no evidence I'm aware of to indicate that anything else was added either before or after fermentation.

Michael Enright, in his fascinating Lady With a Mead Cup, has provided much information on mead rituals, primarily in the border region between the Gauls and the Germans. I highly recommend this book.

I have discussed the background of Nekter in greater depth than other topics because it is the most powerful mystical element of the Proto-Indo-European religion, and each of the drinks found in the different cultures sheds light on its nature.

Nekter has the power to give blessings for each of the three functions — poetic inspiration, invincibility, and healing and fertility, as well as the trifunctional gifts such as sovereignty or the ability to act according to the Xártus. It is clear from the myths that its gifts are given separately; ritually speaking we need to make the Nekter with an appropriate ritual for our circumstances. In this way our Nekter differs from the Nekter of the gods in not being all-purpose. But in a more important way, it makes our Nekter rituals more like that of the gods. It is perfectly appropriate to the moment; theirs because it is the divine Nekter, ours because we have limited it that way.

Because of this, Nekter may be prepared for a number of rituals. Its preparation and consumption is the central part of my Midsummer ritual (chapter 17). It is also used in the funeral and wedding rituals (chapter 18), and to anoint a baby after birth, to grant it long life. Nekter may also be prepared and consumed on its own, to provide inspiration, strength, and long life or fertility.

Ritual purity, always desirable, is vital to the Nekter rituals. This includes moral purity – remember the myth of Boand; if you have broken any aspects of the dhétis, you will need to make it right before taking any part in a Nekter ritual. In any case, extra ritual purifications are in order. As well as the usual ritual washing, take an entire bath, wear completely clean clothes, including shoes; new shoes (or shoes only used for Nekter preparation) would be nice, or go barefooted.

Nekter rituals are always performed by more than one person, an important function of Nekter being the maintenance of social order. Even so, a Nekter ritual may be performed for the sake of a particular person, if that person is in some sense performing an act relevant to their particular societal role (such as a warrior about to go into battle).

Preparation

Items required:

Purification:

small bowl (for purifying yourself), large bowl, spring water to fill them, two or three towels.

Preparation:

clarified butter, butter spoon, pan, barley, bowl for barley, mortar and pestle, second bowl for crushed barley, mead, small pot, pitcher, cloth for covering pitcher, gold chains or ribbons.

Adjust the amount of barley and mead for the number of people who will be at the ritual. Use one

part barley to three parts mead.

Purify yourself and the tools, and create sacred space. (If you are performing this a house, offer to Wéstyā instead.)

Spoon a small amount of clarified butter into the pan, saying:

The prize of the people is the cow
and the prize of the cow is the golden butter.
Through the giving of butter
the gods come to us
and we go to them to dwell in their land.

Heat the butter and then pour about a handful of the barley into the pan, saying:

The home of the people is the earth
and the prize of the earth is the barley.
Through the giving of barley
the gods come to us
and we go to them to dwell in their land.

Fry the barley well, stirring it clockwise with the spoon in your right hand to keep it from burning. When it is toasted, spoon it into the bowl to cool.

Once it is cool, take the mortar and pestle. Holding the pestle in your right hand and facing east, knock on the inside edge of the mortar four times, in the east, north, west, and south, saying with each knock:

Wágrō hógʷhim gʷhent.
[With the wágros he killed the serpent.]

Pour some of the barley into the mortar and grind. When you have done this, pour it out into the second bowl and repeat until it is all ground. (You will not need to produce flour, cracking most of the barley is the goal.)

Pour the mead in the pot. Put in on the fire, saying:

Hńgʷnis xakʷā́kʷe,
dṓnom ḱwéntom Xákʷōm Népōt
nǵntōt déiwōnz ǵnəsḱomom.
[Fire and water,
the blessing of Xákʷōm Népōt.
Through the unknown we come to know the gods.]

Heat until bubbles just start to rise. Then sprinkle some of the barley on top of the mead and stir, saying:

Yéwōt xadbherontós
yéwesos xadbherontós
séntō dhéstō
sóntes dhéstō gʷnƚti.
[Through the sacrificial barley
By the laws of ritual
Along the divine path
Come divine things.]

Let the mixture cool, and then pour it into the pitcher, using the stirring spoon to make sure all of

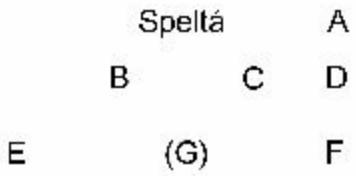
the barley makes it into the pitcher.
Cover the pitcher with a white cloth with gold chains or ribbons on top. Leave overnight.

The Main Ritual

Besides the items required for a usual public ritual, you will need:

A. Basket of cups
B. Ladle on a white cloth
C. Pestle on the same cloth as the ladle
D. Bowl representing the well
E. Strainer in a bowl or on a plate
F. Pitcher of milk
G. The Nekter.

Arrange these items like this:



The strainer and pestle will have to be larger in this part of the ritual than in the preparation part. For a pestle, I use a two foot length of steel pipe, capped at each end.

Establish sacred space in the usual way. The Cupbearer comes last in the procession, carrying in the Nekter, and places it inside the gateway, to the left as seen from the inside. If there are enough people attending, have someone carry in the milk, as well as the usual sacrifice and mead.

Follow the usual ritual order, sacrificing a horse to Xák^{w}ōm Népōt. After he uses the water to bless the sacrifice, the Xádbhertor moves the bowl to the upper right corner of the speltá. After the offering to the All Gods, begin the actual Nekter ritual.

The Xádbhertor says:

Nisédte, tosio sewe xartḗu stḗnói.
Nisédte, tesās sewe xartḗu stḗnói.
Nisédte, smptḗi xartī.
[Sit down, each in his own rightful place,
Sit down, each in her own rightful place,
Sit down, that we may drink together in order]

All sit in their usual places. The Cupbearer sits across the fire from the Fire Tender.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Suklúte moi.
Nu pélnom Nektrós weryemi.
[Here me well:
I am telling the story of Nekter.]

The Xádbhertor says:

Listen well to the story of the Nekter.

The Ǵhéuter says:

The Outsiders held the Nekter in their well of Chaos.
But it didn't belong there.

Yes, Nekter is Chaos, is fire, is water,
is a burning which can overthrow the Cosmos,
destroying men
destroying the gods
destroying even the Xártus.
But that is why it is wrong for the Outsiders to hold it in their untamed land.
The Nekter belongs in the divine realm.
It belongs in the land of the gods.
The gods know how to use it.
In their hands the Nekter supports the Xártus
protecting not only the Cosmos of the gods
but the Chaos of the Outsiders.
That is why the Nekter really belonged to the gods.
The Outsiders were thieves.
It wasn't right for them to have it
and they wouldn't give the Nekter up.
Dyḗus Ptḗr, who knows the Xártus, knew the Nekter had to be saved,
and he, the one who sees all things, knew what to do.
The Fire Tender pours clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis.

The Ǵhéuter says:

The Knowing One called to Perkʷūnos and told him to seize the Nekter.
Perkʷúnos picked up his wágros.
He knew how to deal with snakes.
The killer of the great snakes was not afraid.
The Fire Tender pours clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Perkʷúnos set out, accompanied by the eagle of Diwós Patrós.
To the land of the Outsiders, he went.
Into the heart of Chaos, he went.
He went to overcome the Outsiders and seize from them the Nekter.
The Outsiders came out from behind their walls,
made arrogant by their knowing of the Nekter.
They set their snares,
which trap the unknowing.
He raised his wágros,
which strikes without error.
Xáḱskʷe ként.

[And the battle began.]

The Xádbhertor says:

And the battle began.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Perkʷúnos fought well and bravely, but he had no Nekter so he was not strong.
The Outsiders had Nekter, and they were strong.

Perkʷúnos could fight the Outsiders but without the strength of the Nekter he couldn't win.
The Outsiders could fight Perkʷúnos but without his wágros they couldn't win.
Back and forth went the battle,
now this one winning, now that,
Perkʷúnos slowly leading the Snakes from their fortresses.
And while the battle raged, the eagle flew to the Nekter,
which lay unguarded by the Outsiders who were fighting far from their walls.
He drank it all, in three draughts, emptying its container, and flew back to the gods,
Perkʷúnos riding between its wings,
behind its golden-eyed head, filled with Nekter.
With their many eyes, the Outsiders saw this, and followed in rage.
But they were too late.
The eagle had reached the tree, and now flew high up to the top,
through Cosmos where Chaos can not go if the gods are strengthened with Nekter.
It flew to its master, and Dyḗus Ptḗr received the Nekter,
the eagle pouring it into the Shining Sky's cup.
Now the other gods clustered around, wondering what to do.
They wanted the Nekter, but they feared this piece of Chaos among them:
Would it burn even them,
would it burn even that Tree,
and the Cosmos dissolve in the flames of Chaos?
Dyḗus Ptḗr feared it too, but he is wise.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter.

The Ǵhéuter says:

He gave the Nekter to Xákʷōm Népōt to guard.
Xákʷōm Népōt put the Nekter at the base of the tree,
where the fire of sacrifice burns in the waters of purification,
and set about it cupbearers, pure themselves, of unsullied power.
Watching well, they keep it safe, he and them;
it from others,
and others from it.
There at the nexus between Chaos and Cosmos, the Nekter is kept,
safe from those who must not drink it,
lacking purity
or strength
or wisdom.
But they offer their cups,
to the brim with Nekter,
to those with the right to drink it:
May we be such.

The Fire Tender puts clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis. The Xádbhertor says:

Swélplm ǵʷelntós xakʷā́s Patréi ǵhewomom.
[We pour fuel to the Guardian of the burning water.]

Be good to your guests and let us come to you.
May we approach your well and drink the fire safely
that we might be immortal.

The Cupbearer purifies herself. She wets her right hand with the water from the bowl on the speltá, saying:

Pr-óntm supós púros sy-ēm.
[May I be pure that I might cross through the sacred.]

She dips her hand again, touches her lips, and says:

Xnḱóntm ḱwéntom séupm pr-yēm.
[May I cross through the sacred that I may attain the holy.]

She dips her hand again, touches her heart, and says:

Punkʷúbhos ḱwéntom nḱiēm.
[May I attain the holy that I might be blessed in all things].

The Xádbhertor says:

There are three cupbearers who serve the drink.
They are those who give it to us;
The Nekter is guarded by Xákʷōm Népōt,
Beneath the sea where the waters burn.
He is its keeper, and he decides to whom it goes.
But it is the three women who give the drink.
We must offer to Xákʷōm Népōt to allow us to bring it.
But we must pour libations to the cupbearers to ask them to bring it.

He pours three small libations of milk on the east side of the bowl, saying:

Pibéte tóm ǵláktom nzmed xapénz.
Hitxám sté wntās
lēdétekʷe poqontm nzmei pātās ptéis.
[Drink this milk from our wealth
and, pleased, let us drink from that which you guard.]

He then ladles some into a cup and gives it to the human cupbearer, saying:

Bhér Nektérm nzmé
nzmed sontós nmrtōs.
[Bring the Nekter to us
that we might be immortal.]

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis, while the Xádbhertor says:

Xákʷōm Népōt, wéidwōs, Nekterm mr-ḗi xárkti.
Xakʷsā udéni.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Xákʷōm Népōt, wise, holds the Nekter in the sea,
Living Water in the waters.

The Xádbhertor says:

Tóm qongʷn hedmes.

The Ǵhéuter says:

We feed him with butter.

The Xádbhertor says:

Tosyo démz tozmi ǵhóstoi Nektrē bhrǵhyétu.

The Ǵhéuter says:

May he rise from his home
with the Nekter in his hand.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis.

The Xádbhertor says:

May he, through the power of his shining,
make the pouring water a feeding of the tree,
not its destruction.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Gʷem henter hekwou,
woskʷe gʷemyḗti.

The Xádbhertor says:

Between twin horses come,
and we will come to you,

The Ǵhéuter says:

Purified,
at peace with those who dispense the Nekter,
and with their blessing.

The Fire Tender offers clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis.

The Cupbearer goes to the Nekter, moving clockwise around the fires (i.e., she first goes between the xā́sā and the speltá). She removes the chains and the cloth and puts them on the ground to the right of the pitcher. She picks up the pitcher and brings it towards the fires. On the way, she stops three times, pouring a drop of Nekter out each time, saying:

May they be satisfied with one drop. [the first time]
May they be satisfied with two drops. [the second time]
May they be satisfied with three drops. [the third time]

When she pours out the third drop, the Xádbhertor says:

Hogʷhēs, hóinom tóm bherǵheti.
[Snakes, that is all you will get.]

The Cupbearer goes to stand in front of the Xádbhertor, who says:

Nekter destroys the impure,
Nekter destroys the untrue.

The Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter purify themselves, saying:

Púros [masc.]/Púrā [fem.] s-yēm.
[May I be pure.]
Xártus [masc.]/Xartā [fem.] s-yēm.
[May I be true.]

The Cupbearer hands the Xádbhertor the Nekter, and he takes it in his right hand. She sits back down in her place. The Xádbhertor picks up the strainer in his left hand. He pours the Nekter through the strainer into the well bowl, saying:

Fire that falls,
Water that rises.
From the one, the other;
from the other, the one;
From both combined,
entry before the gods,

He puts the Nekter pitcher and the strainer down. He picks up the pestle and uses it to squeeze as much of the Nekter out of the grain in the pitcher as possible, saying:

Rising on the back of the eagle
under the protection of he whose wágros I wield,
who rescues us from the Serpents
as the Xártus declares.

He puts the pestle down, picks up the strainer again, and pours the pressed out Nekter through the strainer into the bowl. He puts the Nekter pitcher down, pick up the pestle and uses it to press Nekter out of the grain in the strainer, saying:

The wágros-won overcomes death,
the stolen steals away weakness,
the eagle-borne leaves darkness behind.

The Xádbhertor puts the strainer back its place and the pestle between the speltá and the well bowl, parallel with the edge of the speltá with the handle end away from him The Cupbearer pours milk, of a quantity equal to that of the Nekter, into the bowl and mixes it with the pestle. The Xádbhertor says:

Offering creates ritual,
ritual creates order,
order creates Cosmos.
Through offering Chaos is tamed.
But still holds within the truth of Chaos
which is no truth at all.

The Cupbearer puts the pestle down and takes the bowl to her place by the fire. She puts the bowl on the ground and sits down. She then puts her hands on either side of the bowl, holding it but not taking it off the ground and while the Ǵhéuter says:

The well reaches down into the depths.
The well reaches down into Bhudhnōn.
The well reaches up from the depths.
The well reaches up from Bhudhnōn.
It brings us flaming water.

The Cupbearer lifts the bowl up to the level of top of the hn̥gʷnis (but not actually over it) while the Ǵhéuter says:

The living waters rise into Médhyom;
They fill it and enliven it.
Chaos flows into Cosmos
and Cosmos is renewed.

The Cupbearer holds the bowl over the fire, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Living water, living flame.
Chaos and Cosmos meet here in the center
the point between order and disorder.
Fiery water upwells and threatens to destroy.
But here at the center
is the transforming flame of the sacrificial fire
the fire of offering
and here the flaming waters of Chaos are tamed and turned.

The Cupbearer stands, holding the bowl, and says:

Hńgʷnis udéni,
kĺtos táxus sāgyetor.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Fire in water,
the hidden mystery
here revealed.

The Cupbearer brings the bowl back to its original place. The Fire Tender offers clarified butter and the Ǵhéuter says:

Xákʷōm Nepti,
Pnkʷúbhos Déiwoibhoskʷe,
[To Xákʷōm Népōt
and all the gods]
Our offerings and our prayers.
We pray for wisdom and inspiration.
May we, filled with Nekter,
accomplish our ends.

All say:

May we, filled with Nekter,
accomplish our ends.

The Cupbearer ladles out a very small amount of Nekter on the ground to the east of the fire, while the Xádbhertor says:

The Nekter is the gods'.
The Divine drink it.

The Cupbearer ladles some Nekter into a cup and hands it to the Xádbhertor, who holds it out towards the fire, and says:

Dótorbhos weswom Nekterm dedəmes.
[We give Nekter to the givers of gifts.]
We make offering to the gods through fire.

He drinks the Nekter in the cup. Then he puts the cup down and stands with the bowl at eye level. He turns clockwise, starting and ending in the east, holding the Nekter out to the people, while the Ǵhéuter says:

From the source of the waters
flows fiery liquid;
from the well of Xákʷōm Népōt

the gift of Nekter is offered
Source of life to all who drink it,
Source of power to all who drink it,
Source of holiness to all who drink it.
Drink and be filled with the water that burns,

The Cupbearer says:

G^{w}emyéte punk^{w}ū́s pútos pibótek^{w}e.
G^{w}emyéte pibótek^{w}e dōnom Xák^{w}ōm Nept'oss.

The Ǵhéuter says:

All who are worthy come and drink.
Come and drink the gift of Xák^{w}ōm Népōt.

The cupbearer ladles out some Nekter into a cup and then drinks it while the Xádbhertor says:

Pō dubū́ táxeus:
Dṓtōres weswom Nekterm dednti.
The Ǵhéuter says:
Drink deeply of the mystery:
The givers of gifts give Nekter.
After she drinks, she says:
Nmrtā esmi.
[I am immortal.]

She then ladles out some into a cup for the Fire Tender and the process is repeated. The Xádbhertor picks up the bowl and the Cupbearer the ladle and cups. They go around the space, doing the same with each person, starting with the Ǵhéuter and then the Rḗḱs (if the wíḱs has one). [Note: there must be some Nekter left over when all have drunk.]

Each person responds:

Nmrtos esmi. [masc.]/Nmrtā esmi. [fem.]

When all the others have drunk, the Xádbhertor drinks again. He returns the bowl to its place and he and the Cupbearer goes to theirs. The Xádbhertor says:

Nmrtōs smes.
[We are immortal.]
Xak^{w}ās piplmes.
[We are filled with living water.]

All say:

We are filled with living water.

The Xádbhertor says:

Nmrtōs smes.
Hng^{w}nios piplmes.
[We are filled with living fire.]

All say:

We are filled with living fire.

The Xádbhertor says:

Nmrtōs smes.
Nektrós piplmes.

[We are filled with Nekter.]

All say:

We are filled with Nekter.

The Xádbhertor says::

Nekter is our sacrificial fire.
We are become an offering.
We rise to the gods.
We dwell in the presence of the gods.
Through the power of the Nekter
we are made immortal.
Nmrtōs smes.

All say:

Nmrtōs smes.

There is a pause to allow the attendees to rest in the presence of the gods. Then the Ǵhéuter says:

It is right for there to be an end to things.
We return blessed by the Holy Ones,
confident that we will attain our goal.

He pours milk into the bowl of Nekter. He puts down the pitcher and holds the bowl with both hands. He swirls the bowl three or nine times clockwise to mix the milk and the Nekter and says:

Chaos and Cosmos are joined together,
both revivified.

He scrapes the barley from the pitcher and strainer into the Nekter bowl with the butter spoon, saying:

The leavings of the ritual
That which does not belong
We cast them out and keep our world.

The Ǵhéuter, preceded by the Nḗr, brings the bowl and spoon outside the space counterclockwise to the north, if possible at the base of a tree. He pours the mixture onto the ground, scooping any extra out with the spoon, saying:

Cosmos gifts Chaos.
Exchange is maintained.
Cosmos is assured.

The Xártus continues.

He returns to the space, followed by Nḗr, and says:

The water to the water,
the fire to the fire.

All say:

We live by the Xártus,
continually fed by the waters of Nekter.

He returns to his place, sits, and says:

By the drinking of the Nekter we are made immortal and are destined to live in the company of the gods,
But we are men and destined to live among those of the earth.

Through the drinking of Nekter in the company of the gods the Xártus is enlivened,
Through the drinking of Nekter in the company of men, the dhétis is enlivened.
Everything is in its proper place.

The Xádbhertor picks up the plate that had held the sacrifice, and puts it on top of the empty Nekter bowl. The ritual continues as usual, starting with the piacular sacrifice, and with the final prayer being dedicated to Xák^{w}ōm Népōt.

Chapter 17

Seasonal Festivals

This is where we encounter some serious difficulties. The problem is that as the Indo-Europeans migrated, they found themselves in places with differing seasons. The climates of these different areas and the type of terrain forced different economies on them. They usually kept their interest in the herds, although in some cases it got shifted to other animals (such as goats among the mountain-dwelling Kalasha), but they adapted their economies to the local conditions and adopted the seasonal festivals of the people amongst whom they moved, or created new ones. This is as it should have been; Pagans adjust themselves to the local environment. Thus among the Greeks, we find festivals surrounding the non-Proto-Indo-European grape and olive.

What is a poor Proto-Indo-European Pagan to do? First, we should follow the ancient pattern: adopt and adapt. What are the seasons where you live, what is the local economy? What dates are important in them? Write rituals around those.

But if we follow the Proto-Indo-European way, surely we want to celebrate the seasons in as Proto-Indo-European a way as possible. Even if we celebrate different days than the Proto-Indo-Europeans, it would be nice to celebrate them in a Proto-Indo-European way. If we are to do this, we have to do some difficult reconstruction. There are some methods which will help us with this.

First, there is the comparative method that has served us so well so far. Just as linguists have looked for patterns of similarities in words and grammar, we can look for patterns of seasonal observances. There are a few of these that can be discerned. There are great similarities between the Celtic Beltane and the Roman Parilia. In Armenia, we find a traditional custom around May Day which involves jumping over a fire (Russell, 1990, 2690), suggesting that here we have an actual Proto-Indo-European calendar ritual, even more so since this ritual appears to have originally been from Iran.

Second, there are conclusions that can be drawn from the fact that the Proto-Indo-European economy was most likely transhumant. Since a transhumant culture is both pastoral and agricultural, we would expect certain seasonal events to be celebrated: the taking of the herds to and from the summer pastures, and planting and harvesting festivals. The Beltane and Parilia rituals are examples, being performed before the herds are taken to their summer pastures.

I have applied these two methods as much as possible. When that failed, I have often fallen back on the calendars of the Zoroastrians and Kalasha. The latter are still transhumant, and the calendar of the former reflects a transhumant past. The conservatism of Zoroastrianism, combined with an economy and climate in Iran similar to the one expected in the Proto-Indo-European homeland, makes the Zoroastrian calendar the most relevant of the descendant traditions' calendars.

That calendar is a combination of pastoral and agricultural elements, just the sort of thing to be expected in a transhumant society. The seven holidays are Mid-Spring, Midsummer, Bringing in the Corn, Homecoming of the Herds, Midwinter, The Feast of the Dead, and New Year (Boyce, 1984,

18). Compare this with the four Irish festivals of Samhain (the New Year, Feast of the Dead, and Homecoming of the Herds), Imbolc (early spring, the lambing season, and beginning of planting), Beltaine (the bringing of the cattle to their summer pastures) and Lughnasad (the beginning of the harvest), and the characteristics of the calendar of a transhumant culture become clear.

All things considered, this may be said to be the most speculative chapter of this book. The conclusions, even more so than those in the others, are not carved in stone. Read it accordingly. Now, to begin at the beginning.

The date of the Proto-Indo-European New Year is debatable. The Vedic new year is unknown, but some of the evidence points toward autumn, with rituals of renewal and purification, and with words for "winter" and "autumn" synonymous with "year." The Irish New Year was in the fall, at Halloween. The Romans, on the other hand, originally celebrated New Year's in the spring, later moving it to the familiar January. The Zoroastrian New Year was also originally in the spring, as was that of the Pagan Slavs. The Greeks' was in the summer. The Pagan Baltics' appears to have been at the spring equinox, although rituals honoring the dead, which are common at New Year festivals, are found not only then, but also at the winter solstice. Whether this represents the later shift to a January beginning or to something different is a difficult question; I will soon show why I lean towards the latter. Some of the Kalasha celebrate at the spring equinox, and some at the winter solstice. The Germanic New Year was the winter solstice. What was the Proto-Indo-European date, then?

This stymied me for some time. In fact, this chapter was the last to be written because of it. I vacillated between the winter solstice and the spring equinox for some time. The only scholars I know of who have dealt with the question (Lyle, (1990), and Kershaw (2000)) come down on the side of the winter solstice. But, I am not convinced. Lyle suggests a very complex calendar that does not agree with the lunar-solar nature the Proto-Indo-European one must have possessed. Kershaw relies solely on northern European data, and one piece of his data, that carnival festivals are found mainly between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, actually pointed in the direction I was eventually to take, although under the influence of other sources.

The breakthrough came from the Kalasha. Here we have closely related tribes, sharing similar economies and the same climate, and living close together, yet celebrating different dates. That had to be explained.

An interesting possibility occurred to me. What if the end of one year and the beginning of the next weren't at the same time? This may seem odd, but is not necessarily so; the Roman year was originally set up that way, with the year ending with December, and not starting up again until March. In between were the main festivals of the dead and of purification ("February" originally meant "month of purification"), which is just what would be expected of a period "out of time." The fact that the misrule period of Saturnalia was around the winter solstice is also relevant; the old year has dissolved, and with it order. Things become topsy-turvy.

In 1896, Robertson (578) found that among the Kalasha the new year was January 16 (i. e., not far from the winter solstice), the feast of the dead was March 8 (587-578), and the greatest feast of the year (which it is reasonable to suspect was originally at the new year) was March 19-29 (i. e., bracketing the spring equinox).

In such a system, the months between the winter solstice and the spring equinox are outside of the calendar. Not being in the calendar, they are a time that is outside of time.

This is just what we would expect for this part of the year in a transhumant culture. Herding,

raiding, and agriculture are all on hold for a while. It's time to stick close to home, do craftwork and equipment repairs (neither of which are calendar dependent), have parties, socialize, tell stories — in effect, this is downtime, when nothing really important happens. There is no need to keep track of the calendar, because each day is just like the next. The world is on hold.

The Kalasha and Roman evidence that points strongly towards the year ending at the winter solstice but beginning at the spring equinox, fits in well with the postulated transhumant Proto-Indo-European economy. The Baltic evidence suggests this as well, with new years type rituals performed around both of those dates. The scattering of dates in the rest of the Indo-European world can generally be explained either as a simplification of the original system, such as in Germania, or as a result of a radically different climate and economy, combined with substrate influence, such as Greece and India. Ireland seems a little more difficult to explain, but if we associate the beginning of the Proto-Indo-European year with the taking of the cattle to their summer pastures (as I think we can), then it is natural for the Irish to begin their year at Beltane. Of course, their year doesn't begin then. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the other end of the year when the cattle return, Samhain, would become equally important, which is indeed what happened. The fact that Irish Samhain myths are very similar to Germanic winter solstice myths suggests that Samhain became the end of the year. Add in the tendency that Caesar recorded (6.18) of the Celts beginning things at nightfall, and the shift of the beginning of the year to correspond with its end becomes clear. This is speculative, but certainly something to be considered.

The calendar in this book is therefore based on three principles. The feast days will be based on transhumance, they will be similar to those of Zoroastrianism, and the year will end at the winter solstice and begin at the spring equinox.

Like most, the Proto-Indo-European calendar was not a purely solar one. The evidence of the Gaulish, Roman, and Vedic calendars is enough to tell us that it was lunar-solar. For instance, the beginning of the Roman month was originally the new moon. The fact that the word for "moon" (*men-) is related to that for "to measure" confirms the lunar element of the calendar. Months were defined by the moon.

Of course, the lunar year and the solar year do not coincide. There are approximately, but only approximately, twelve lunar months in a solar year. The two differ by a few days. If a lunar calendar is left uncorrected, the months will cycle through the solar year, and there will be no regular connection between the months and the seasons. This is clearly intolerable for any culture that practices agriculture, in which there is hardly any point in having a calendar that does not allow the prediction of seasons.

The solution for lunar-solar calendars in general, is to insert an extra month every few years to bring the system back into alignment. This seems awkward to us, and it might have been a bit awkward to the ancients, since it was eventually replaced by a more solar calendar.

Since the exact system (how long a month, inserted how often) varied among the different descendant traditions, there is no way to reconstruct how the original Proto-Indo-European calendar would have worked. I do not mourn this because I think that the seasons are more important than the calendar, and that the calendar is designed purely to keep track of the seasons. We now have a perfectly good calendar, the Gregorian calendar, which does an admirable job of this, and I say we should use it.

The only exceptions I would make would be the timing of the beginning and end of the year.

Because of the combined lunar/solar nature of the Proto-Indo-European calendar, the year would not have started exactly on the day of the equinox. I think it likely that it began on the new moon before it, and ended on the full moon after the winter solstice. I suggest that this timing be kept, in order to link the lunar and solar concepts of time at these beginning and ending points of the year.

One more detail of the Proto-Indo-European year must be mentioned. We have names for only three of the seasons: *gheis-, "winter," *wesr, "spring," and *sem-, "summer." There is no reconstructible word for "autumn." This implies a year divided into three seasons, rather than the four we are used to.

One explanation for this would be that autumn was meaningless to the Proto-Indo-Europeans, that there was nothing significant about it to separate it from the others, so it was absorbed into summer and/or winter. This could be possible if the Proto-Indo-Europeans didn't practice agriculture. Tacitus (Germania 26) tells us that the Germans only had three seasons for this very reason. This simply couldn't have been true of the Proto-Indo-Europeans (and I doubt that it was true of the Germans; there is no human culture outside of hunter-gatherers which does not practice agriculture or rely on those who do. It is a long way from the Rhine to where the Balts and Slavs lived; at least some of the Germans must have practiced agriculture), since, as we have seen, they had words connected with farming, such as "plow" and "pig."

Another possibility is that this is an artifact of a much earlier culture, when the pre-Proto-Indo-Europeans were completely pastoral. Even if they were originally pastoral, if the Proto-Indo-Europeans held together long enough to develop a word for "plow," they would have been together long enough to develop a word for "autumn."

The reason I find most likely that we can't reconstruct a Proto-Indo-European word for "autumn" is not because it was not important, but because it was very important. The season of the harvest varies from area to area, and from crop to crop; again we see the influence of climate and economy. In some areas, the harvest of the main crop would occur in what generally would have been summer, or there would have been more than one harvest. The result would have been a concentration on the harvest(s), rather than on the time of the year in which it took place, and no word for autumn would have been necessary, or even desirable. The three-season aspect of the Proto-Indo-European language will therefore not be part of my reconstructed year.

The rituals may seem to some to be rather formal. After all, holidays are generally times of merriment; of traditional foods, decorations, dances, music, etc. Unfortunately, none of this can be reconstructed, even though it must have existed, for the very reason that it is so widespread; people are quite happy to make up new ways to celebrate, adopt them from other people, and change fashions when the old ways lose their appeal. These elements, I leave to the creativity of my readers. What I will give instead will be the "high church" elements of the holidays, the solemn parts.

The Spring Rituals

I think it likely that the Proto-Indo-Europeans would have celebrated two spring rituals, one aligned with the lunar/solar calendar and celebrated around the equinox, and one aligned with the agricultural year. The second ritual given here may be performed whenever the ground is ready for the planting, and may even fall before the equinox. The first is always celebrated on the new moon before the spring equinox.

The Spring Equinox Ritual

Begin the ritual before dawn on the new moon before the spring equinox (the day on which the crescent is expected to first be sighted. Try to time it so the ritual and actual dawn coincide.

In addition to your usual items, you will need a pitcher of Nekter, a pitcher of milk, bunches of small bells such as jingle bells (enough for each man), and material for a bull sacrifice.

Establish the ghórdhos. The space left by the dug up sod will be the rég^{w}es. To the east, nine paces outside the gate of the ghórdhos, erect a pole with dawn-colored (various shades of pink) ribbons attached at one end, and a pole with red, yellow, and white ribbons on either side. The center pole represents Xáusós, and the ones on either side the Diwós Sūnú. If you can use birch, the wood of Xáusós, for the poles, so much the better.

Start the ritual according to the public outline, up to the first hymn. Direct the hymn to Xáusós. After it, the Ǵhéuter says:

With fallen fetters, in red-robed splendor,
stream forth, Dawn Maiden, return the herds.

All sing:

Out of the too-long darkened east,
come, to us Xáusós, illumine the land!
Out of the long extending night,
come, to us Xáusós, illumine the land!
Out of the frigid, empty cold,
come, to us Xáusós, illumine the land!

The Fire Tender goes with all the women present to the gate. One of them picks up the two pitchers and pours some Nekter just outside the gate and to the right. (Or two women may each pick up one pitcher, and the one with the Nekter pitcher pours some.) The Fire Tender says:

Xáusós, come to us, as cow, not as mare.
Disperse the fog the serpent leaves behind.

The men in the ghórdhos sing the song again. While they sing, the women take three steps. They stop, and the woman with the Nekter pours some again. The Fire Tender says:

Xáusós, come to us, as cow, not as mare.
With your maids about you, open the gate.

The men sing again, and the women take three more steps. The woman with the Nekter pours some again, and the Fire Tender says:

Xáusós, come to us, as cow, not as mare.
Do not block the gate, may the sun's path be free.

The men sing again, and the women take three more steps. The woman with the Nekter pours half of what remains in front of the center beribboned pole, and the Fire Tender says:

Xáusós, come to us, as cow, not as mare.
Opening wide the river's mouth,
pouring forth with the white streaming water.

Two of the women pick the Diwós Sūnú poles up out of the ground, and turn to face the ghórdhos. The woman with the pitchers gives them to the Fire Tender, who pours the Nekter into the milk pitcher and swirls it nine times clockwise, in three groups of three, to mix it. She pours it on the ground in front of the Xáusós pole and says:

Xáusós, maiden, open the way
for the sun to rise and light the earth.
Stream forth, dawn's light.

The women all say:

Lady Xáusós, do not hold the sun back.
Open your cloak and let her leap up
with the Twins attending
one on each side.
Let her rise
attended by her maidens.
Let her rise
and illumine the world.

The Fire Tender puts down the pitchers, goes to the far side of the poles (passing counterclockwise around the Xáusós pole) and faces the ghórdhos. She takes the Xáusós pole from the ground and holds it up. As she does so, the men start to ring their bells. Everyone (including the men) say:

Dawn has returned, out of the night,
arising from the waters at the edge of the world,
coming as cow, not as mare.

The women return to the ghórdhos, the women with the Diwós Sūnú poles leading, followed by the Fire Tender and then the others. Those with the Diwós Sūnú poles push them in the ground on either side of the gate, just within it. The Fire Tender pushes the Xáusós pole into the ground just east of the hn̥gʷnis. She then returns to her place and offers clarified butter on the hn̥gʷnis, while the Ǵhéuter says:

We offer to Xáusós
with glad welcome.
Illumine the land, Shining Maiden.
Open the gateway for the sun
each day as is right.
Accept this offering
and our praises.

The men stop ringing their bells.

Then perform a bull sacrifice offered jointly to Dyḗus Ptḗr, Perkʷū́nos, and the Diwós Sūnú (with only one victim). The ritual is performed slightly differently from the normal one. Before the bull is killed, the Xádbhertor says:

From the first sacrifice the foundations of the earth were laid.

Rather than cutting a slice from the right of the bread as usual, the Xádbhertor cuts off the bottom third and puts it into the régʷes (or he gives it to someone else to do that). He says:

From Bhudhnōn the world arose.

He cuts off the top third (half of what is left) and offers it to the fire, saying:

From the holy part the holy ones come,
from the high part the high part.

He cuts the middle portion that remains in two horizontally, and then the top half of that into four

vertically. He places one piece to each of the directions of the ghórdhos (or gives them to someone else to do so), starting in the east and proceeding clockwise, while the Ǵhéuter says:

Laid out between Bhudhnōn and Weis lies Médhyom:
Organized and laid out by the first sacrifice.
Arisen from the waters,
Set free by Perkʷū́nos,

With each part put in its proper place by Mannus:

Skull to sky

All:

Skull to sky,

Ǵhéuter:

Brain to clouds

All:

Brain to clouds

Ǵhéuter:

Eyes to the celestial lights

All:

Eyes to the celestial lights

Ǵhéuter:

Hairs to plants

All:

Hairs to plants

Ǵhéuter:

Flesh to soil

All:

Flesh to soil

Ǵhéuter:

Bones to rocks

All:

Bones to rocks

Ǵhéuter:

Blood to the waters

All:

Blood to the waters

Ǵhéuter:

Life to life

All:

Life to life

Ǵhéuter:

Soul to soul

All:

Soul to soul

Ǵhéuter:

Through sacrifice the world is established.
Through sacrifice the world is maintained.
Xártus is established,
Xártus is maintained,
through the performance of ritual according to the yéwesā.
Our rite today has been properly performed
and the world made new.

The remaining piece of bread is then shared out and the ritual finished in the usual way.

This ritual is one of the birth of the Cosmos. First light enters it; then the primal sacrifice is enacted, and the disordered rush of the dawn's waters transformed into Cosmos.

The Planting Ritual

This is the ritual to be performed at the start of the planting season. It is held whenever appropriate. Symbolically, it would be best to hold it after the new year ritual (say two weeks to rest up from the festival), but the climate in your area may require a different date. It may even be held in the fall or winter, if that is when your planting season begins, or more than once if more than one major crop is planted. Some adjustments of the words may be necessary in such cases.

There is a folk belief in Europe that the earth can't be fertile until the first thunderstorm of spring. The idea seems not to be only that the rain is necessary (or any rain would do), but rather that the lightning serves as a fertilizer of the earth, an electric phallus shooting out of the sky, opening it to be filled with the semen of rain.

This belief fits in well with the agricultural side of Perkʷűnos. He is not only the god of war; his power breaks up the cold, restricted earth, and frees the fertility hidden there. His presence at the sowing of the fields becomes clear.

The ritual includes a bull sacrifice, dedicated to Perkʷűnos. Besides those items needed for that, you will need a horn, a small loaf of bread that breaks easily (a very large cracker may be used), a pitcher of Nekter, and a small bag of seeds.

This one time the xā́sā is lit by the Nḗr, with flint and steel. Since cigarette lighters use flint and steel, one may be used.

After the opening prayer, the Ǵhéuter blows three blasts on the horn and says:

The bull bellows longingly for the missing cows.
Locked in the serpent's bonds, they wait for release.
Locked tight in winter's bonds, the earth awaits release.
On the day of new life we have come together
to call the lightning down to earth
to open the earth to the seeds we sow.

After the lighting of the fire, and the circumambulation, the Nḗr stands in front of the Ǵhéuter and holds his axe up, with the head at eye level. All look at the axe head, while the Ǵhéuter holds his hands up to it and says (this is the hymn):

In the old times, the beginning times
Perkʷűnos killed the serpent.
Perkʷűnos hógʷhim gʷhent.

All:

Perk^{w}ū́nos killed the serpent.

Ǵhéuter :

He threw his wágros and the serpent was slain,
the dark place was opened and the cows emerged,
the waters flowed, the ground grew green,
the land grew great, the wide-spread earth.
In this time, in the planting time,
Perk^{w}ū́nos kills the serpent.
Perk^{w}ū́nos hóg^{w}him g^{w}honeyeti.

All:

Perk^{w}ū́nos kills the serpent.

Ǵhéuter:

He throws out his wágros and the serpent is slain.
Beneath lightning and rain the ground grows green;
the lowing of cows joins with the bellowing of thunder,
his sound is heard as he traverses the sky.
Perk^{w}ū́nos, mighty one, who wields the wágros,
sow with your seed the waiting land,
and bring us rich harvests, filled with food.

Then the Nḗr lifts his axe as high as he can, and says:

Perk^{w}ū́nos!

All repeat:

Perk^{w}ū́nos!

He puts the bottom of the axe's handle on the ground. One of the others brings the bread to the Xádbhertor, who breaks it over the head of the axe, saying:

Perk^{w}ū́nōi tód dedəmes!
[We give this to Perk^{w}ū́nos!]
We offer to Perk^{w}ū́nos!

He holds the axe up again, and the Ǵhéuter says:

Perk^{w}ū́nos, we pray to you with praises well-earned.
Since the old times you have been the protector of the people
a formidable warrior, to all foes a fearful sight.
In the first time it was you who split open the obstruction,
allowing the waters to flow.
In this time, be the same forceful one,
opening the waiting land.

All sing:

Perk^{w}ū́nos, mighty one, wielder of the wágros,
send forth your seed to enliven the earth.

They continue to repeat this, stomping their feet on the ground, keeping the beat. After a time or two through it, the Nḗr goes to the east by the gate, facing out, holding the axe upright in both hands, with the blade perpendicular to him. He begins to go clockwise around the ghórdhos. As he passes each person, they lift their arms up high in praise, and keep them there. As the Nḗr moves, he builds

speed, and the tempo of the song changes with him. When the Nḗr returns to the east, he faces out the gateway, stands for a moment, and then drives the axe head into the ground. Everyone brings their arms down with the axe. At that moment the singing and stamping stops.

The Nḗr cuts three short furrows into the ground with the axe and then stands with the axe held up a moment or so. He then lays it on the ground and the Fire Tender brings him the bag of seeds and the pitcher of Nekter. He scatters the seeds over the furrows and pours the Nekter over them. The Ǵhéuter says:

The Thunderer splits the earth.
The Great Bull wets the ground.
Perkʷúnos scatters his seed.
With flashing fire the bolt has fallen.
Perkʷúnos, ever bless us!

All say:

Always bless us with your many gifts.

If the wíḱs has a Rḗḱs, he is the one who cuts the ground, scatters the seeds, and pours the Nekter. Then perform a bull sacrifice.

The Blessing of the Herds

Sometime later in the spring, on the cusp of summer, would begin the phase of the transhumant year when the cattle were taken to their summer pastures, accompanied by many of the young men. This would have required a blessing of both the herds and the men, accompanied by a cleansing of all from the impurities of winter.

This is a reasonable speculation from the Proto-Indo-European transhumant economy. The actual ritual given below is based largely on the Roman Parilia (April 21) and the Celtic Beltane (April 30), but as I have shown earlier, the Armenian (originally Iranian) evidence suggests that at least some aspects of it were widely spread throughout the Indo-European world.

The date is variable for this kind of ritual. The almost identical Parilia and Beltane were celebrated some days apart, most likely to account for the differing climates. Where I live, in New England, May seems a good time, either May Day or Memorial Day, the unofficial beginning of summer. It should not be too close to the Perkʷúnos ritual; it should be after it. This reflects ancient reality (although the ground may be soft enough for planting, those summer pastures, usually on hills, need some more warming up; there must be time for the crops to be planted before the young men leave), and modern reality (too many festivals close together is a tough thing to manage).

Besides the items required for a standard sacrifice, you will need some wet straw.

Dedicate the sacrifice to Páxusōn. A typical prayer to him might go like this:

Lord of flocks, of herds, of cattle,
Páxusōn, keeper of the wealth of the wíḱs:
We praise your protection in seasons past
and ask it today for these your people.
Bless and purify both men and cattle,
on all the tribe your blessings pour
to all the tribe your goods endow.

Sacrifice a goat to Páxusōn, but cut a slim slice from the top of the bread and offer it into the fire

for Perkʷűnos after Páxusōn's portion. For the final prayer, include Perkʷűnos:

Páxusōn who guards the wíḱs' herds
Perkʷűnos who guards the wíḱs' youth
Together guard both herd and herder,
together guard both tribe and wealth.

After the sacrifice is complete, but while both fires are still burning, the Fire Tender puts wet straw on the fires to make them smoke. Then everyone, the Fire Tender first, passes between the fires from north to south. The Nḗr goes second, and the Xádbhertor next to last. The Ǵhéuter, who goes last, says while the others pass through:

The pure smoke of the sacred fires
carries away your winter's wastes.
Be pure, be clean, be properly prepared,
for the tasks of the summer that lies before you.

Instead of passing between the fires, individuals may prefer to jump over them.

Then continue the rite, extinguishing the fires and feasting as usual. If you have actual herds, save some of the straw. After the ritual, bring it to them, light it, and blow the smoke over a representative sample with the above words.

Midsummer

At Midsummer, the youths would be away with the herds, but the women, children, and adult men would still be by the homes, certainly enough people for a ritual. I have based this ritual on a combination of the common European connection between Midsummer, and fire and water (also found among the Kalasha (Robertson, 1896, 592); the widespread association of horses in general, and horse sacrifices in particular, with the sun; and the connection between both Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr and Xákʷōm Népōt and horses.

Besides the items for a usual sacrifice, you will need those for a Nekter ritual.

Start the ritual your usual way. Sacrifice two horses, stallions to be precise, using two pieces of white flat bread. This is not the horse sacrifice described in chapter 14; use the standard ritual, but use a stallion as the animal sacrificed.

The first of these is a sacrifice to Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr. This is the first hymn:

She rides high, the Wheel of the Sun,
She Who Shines sails through the sky.
She it is whom we praise today,
Daughter of the Bright Sky.
Continue always to rise from the horizon
in the same way.

All:

Day after day

Ǵhéuter:

Continue to climb to your height
in the same way.

All:

Day after day

Ǵhéuter:
Continue to set in the west
in the same way.
All:
Day after day
Ǵhéuter:
Continue to return to us
in the same way
All:
Day after day
Ǵhéuter:
Continue to uphold the Xártus.
All:
Day after day.

The second sacrifice is dedicated to Xákʷōm Népōt: the fire of the sun at its height is about to go down into the dark water of fall and winter. There is also the connection here with the submarine mare, the fire hidden in the water.

For the first prayer, you might say:

Xákʷōm Népōt, burning waters lord,
mystery deep, in darkness hidden:
Here at the sun's height,
Now at the sun's strength,
we offer this sacrifice.
May it be for you a blessing.
May it be for us a blessing.
May power flow from us,
fire to water, water to fire.
Praise and honor to Xákʷōm Népōt.

For the final prayer of this sacrifice, you might say:

Offered well to Xákʷōm Népōt,
the horse burns with a sacred flame.
Grant us long life, lord of mystery;
may the fire within us burn long and bright.
Xákʷōm Népōt, the bright well's guardian,
is worthy of praise, worthy of worship,
worthy of honor, worthy of sacrifice.

After the sacrifice, celebrate a Nekter ritual. Before the presentation to the people, the Fire Tender extinguishes a flaming brand or taper in the Nekter. This is a solemn moment, and is done in silence. The fire is going into the water, and although it is part of the mystery of life that is the Nekter, it is also a symbol of the beginning of the waning of the year — the sun is starting to go into the water, the bright times are beginning to fade.

The Fall Equinox Ritual

Counterbalancing the bringing of the cattle out to the fields is bringing them in again. The two do not divide the year exactly in half,; there is a harvest festival to balance the planting one, and it is these two pairs — planting and sending out, bringing in and harvesting — that balance each other. From a practical point of view, the order is obvious. Everyone is needed to plant, so it must be done before the sending out; everyone is needed to harvest, so it must be done after the bringing in.

Just as before, in the sending out, there was a purification of everyone from the impurities of winter, this one is for the men. There are several reasons for this. The pastures are a liminal place, both wild and tame. The wild has to be removed before the completely tame can be reattained. Summer time, with cattle in the fields, would also have been the time for cattle raids. Whether as raiders or defenders, the men would have had to serve as warriors. Since warriors are ambivalent figures, their danger must be removed so they can be reincorporated into society.

Why aren't the women purified too? They don't have to be. They would have been at the pure home base, tending the pure hearth fires. They don't have the ambivalence of the incoming warrior to be removed. Instead, they are the removers of impurity. One is reminded of the story of Cú Chulainn. He was returning home in his battle frenzy, and the inhabitants of Emain Macha were justifiably concerned. The women went out to greet him, and bared their breasts to him. He turned away his gaze, and was plopped into a vat of water. It boiled so strongly that the vessel broke. He was then put into a second vat, the water of which boiled with bubbles the size of fists. He was placed in a third vat, and this time the water was merely warmed. His martial ardor had been purified out of him by the women.

This is a ritual of home and of the purifying powers of women. It is the men, identified in part with the Outsiders, who must be made insiders, and only the women can do it.

The men who are "returning from the pastures" will need weapons. Ideally these are spears. Staffs will do as a substitute, although if they carry staffs they should also carry knives, to include metal in their kit. The Nḗr carries his axe. They will also need butter offerings; you can simply put a plate of butter with spoons (one for each man) outside the wíḱs to the right (use solidified but soft clarified butter).

For the ritual, all the usual parts are generally played by the women of the wíḱs; older men may also take parts. If the Nḗr of the wíḱs is a woman, a man is chosen to perform this part for the main ritual, and if the Xádbhertor or Ǵhéuter are men, women are substituted for them.

The women gather and form the ghórdhos, marking the border and lighting the fires. After the hn̥ǵʷnis is burning and offered to, one woman pours water across the gateway. They then send out a call. This could be with bells or with a ululating cry. The men then come to the gateway, carrying weapons and the sacrifice, which is a cow (white flatbread). They stop at the gateway.

The Ǵhéuter says:

You who come from the outside,
what is your desire?
One of the men says:
To return to the home,
and warm our hands at our ancestral hearths.

The Ǵhéuter says:

You come with weapons,
with the stench of the pastures still upon you.

We don't allow that in our home.
Wéstyā will not allow such men to approach her flames.
Disarm yourselves and you may enter.

All the men except the Nḗr pile their weapons outside the gate. They then enter, one by one, taking a spoonful of butter as they do so. As they enter a woman (each one's wife if he has one) anoints their heads, arms, and feet with water, saying:

I remove you from the outside.
I anoint you with the inside.
Crossing the edge of water you are made pure.
Only thus purified may you enter,
and thus purified, may offer to Wéstyā.

After being purified, each man goes to the Fire Tender and gives her his offering of clarified butter, saying:

I give the gold of the treasure of the herd,
which I have served well and protected.

She melts the butter over the xā́sā and then pours it on it (or this could be done by the men's wives). The man takes his place with the women, with his wife if he has one.

The second to last man to enter is the one with the cow. After being purified, he goes to the Xádbhertor and presents it to her, saying:

The gain of the pasture
is brought back to the people
to increase its wealth.

She accepts it, saying:

It is good.

He then takes his place. The last man to enter is the Nḗr. The Xádbhertor and Ǵhéuter themselves purify him, along with another woman, his wife if possible. After the three have separately purified him, each anointing him and saying the words, his wife, if possible, or the Xádbhertor if not, anoints his axe with clarified butter, saying:

Only in the service of the wíḱs may you carry this axe.
Only to protect us, to serve our interests.
Perkʷű́nos with the wágros, Nḗr with the axe,
defend us from danger, keep the Outsiders at bay.

The Nḗr answers:

Only in the service of the wíḱs,
Only to protect;
the wágros of Perkʷű́nos
is this axe of mine.

He is then allowed to enter and make his offering to the fire.

The ritual continues as usual, with the cow as the sacrifice. It is dedicated to Gʷouwinda. The first prayer might be:

Granter of gifts, of milk overflowing,
To Gʷouwinda we call, Lady of Cows.
She whose milk enlivens the tribe

for both infants and men skilled in actions.
The herds and the people are bound close together
through your mediation, through your love and care.
Watch over the people and receive this offering
your own due share.

The final prayer, which includes both Gʷouwinda and Wéstyā, might be:

With due reverence we have worshiped the Mother
who gives to her children with open arms.
We ask for continuance of blessings and love
continually given with no thought of ending.
Praise to Gʷouwinda, Lady of Cows
Praise to the one who answers our praise
And praise now to Wéstyā, pure flame shining,
about whom we gather, now as one people.

After this prayer, the Fire Tender offers clarified butter twice to the xā́sā, as the Ǵhéuter says:

Gʷouwinda and Wéstyā, the home's true guardians.
Watch over the people who have given the offerings,
your own due share.
End the ritual as usual.
The feast should include dairy foods.

The Harvest Ritual

Balancing the planting is the harvest. Our plans and hopes have come to fruition. Although all Pagans should grow some of what they eat, even those who do not have a harvest of their own depend on the harvest of others. In fact, it might be said that it is the non-farming Pagan who most needs to be reminded that their food, neatly packaged in supermarkets, was grown and raised with hard work and luck.

Besides the usual items, put a small bowl of flour and one of salt by the fires.

Set up your ghórdhos as usual, except dig a round pit between the fires after the ghórdhos has been established, but before all of the items have been brought in. As they dig it, the person says:
The womb of the earth opens in our midst.

For an indoor ritual, use a basket, filled a third with dirt, and with a bowl of enough dirt to fill it the rest of the way next to it.

There are two sacrifices in this ritual, both pigs, to be dedicated to Dhéǵhōm Mā́tr. On top of the bread for the main sacrifices (pigs), put a smaller loaf of whole wheat flat bread. Establish the ghórdhos and light the fires. After the hymn that follows the circumambulation, the Fire Tender pours clarified butter into the hole, saying:

When the sun has cracked her face in the drought of the summer,
it is the cow who moistens her, with the golden butter,
and the Earth calls out her thanks,
blessing the cow and those who own her.

The Xádbhertor picks up the top piece of pita bread and holds it upright, saying:

The fruit of the earth, the gift of the mother.

He carries it to the hole or basket. He puts it on the ground and pours a small amount of clarified butter on it, spreading the butter with the spoon while saying:

Gift of ground, milk of cows,
may we be rich in both.

He picks up the bread and puts it in the hole, saying:

We return a portion of the earth's blessings.
May she continue to grant them,
and may we continue to deserve them.

The Fire Tender mixes the flour and salt, and then mixes in some water from the pitcher. She divides this dough into three equally sized pieces, and flattens each. She dips the butter spoon in the butter and puts a small amount of butter on one of the pieces of dough, and then fries it over the hn̥gʷnis. She repeats this with the other two. As each is done, she places it on top of the bread in the hole. With the first piece she says:

Hair and blood of the Mother

With the second:

from our work
through the gold of the cow
and the holy fire

With the third:

to Her.

She wipes any soot off the butter spoon and returns the spoon to its usual place.

The Xádbhertor then covers the bread with the rest of the dirt, saying:

Children grow hidden in the womb
and in their time spring out from the darkness
for our strength.

He returns to his place. The Fire Tender pours clarified butter on the dirt, saying:

Fuel for the fires of Mother Earth,
for her hearth and her fires of offering.
Her children, people and cattle, promise her this.

The ritual then continues as usual. For the first prayer you might use:

Dhéǵhōm Mā́tr, on whom we walk
Pltwī, who spreads beneath us
in whom we plant,
from whom grows grass
that feeds out herds.
Dhéǵhōm Mā́tr, to you we call out,
to bless our rite with your holy presence.
You who give birth and receive the dead,
The beginning and the end of all.

For the second prayer:

We perform our rite under the sky,
but it is upon the broad earth that we lay our fires.
We offer today to she who is our very body.

In her very body we lay our offering.
We honor her with this pig,
asking for full harvests.
For the final prayer, you might use:
Having given you your due
we bid you farewell, Mother Earth.
But how can we do that, with you all around us?
How can we do that with you always in our hearts?
Not a farewell, then, but a giving of thanks
and a promise to remember you throughout our days.

The feast is a very important part of this festival. If necessary, delay it a few hours so all members of the wíḱs can attend the ritual. The feast should be like an American Thanksgiving meal, but with beef rather than turkey at its center.

The Festival of the Dead

With the death of the year at the winter solstice comes the return of our ancestors. This is an ambivalent event — the ancestors bring us wisdom, but do we really want dead people hanging around? This festival includes them, but it both welcomes them and sends them on their way. It is not meant to call them; they will come whether we want them to or not. We have to be ready for their presence, and able to make sure that they return to their proper places.

The ritual is performed on the new moon preceding the first full moon after the winter solstice. The season it ushers in, lasting till the spring equinox, is a wonderful time for parties; what is done on these days cannot be said to really count, since they belong to no year. It is a great time to make a fool of oneself.

The ritual begins in each person's home at sunset. If you are a member of a wíḱs, it still begins there; remember that the domestic cult is primary. All members of the family watch the sunset together. When the sun is well and truly down, the ptḗr says:

They are here.
The mā́ter says:
They are here among us,
our beloved ancestors.

Then all go inside. On the way in, the ptḗr pours a libation of Nekter at the threshold, saying:

Welcome our ancestors,
home and your spirits,
and see them safely on their way.

Then enter. If you have a fireplace, light a fire in it. The fire should be kept burning all night, or at least the coals should be warm enough in the morning to rekindle the flames. Set your table with an extra setting for the ancestors. In front of the plate, put your Wéstyā lamp, and light it from the fireplace, or if you do not have one, from your stove (using a match as an intermediary). Put a bit of each food on the plate for the ancestors, and pour some drink into their cup for them as well, and then eat your own meal.

After the meal, go back outside (if possible) and conduct a sacrifice for the ancestors. Add the food from the Ancestors' place to your offering into the rég^{w}es. Leave the rég^{w}es open.

Until the ritual for the end of this period, the ancestors will be with you. It is a good time to make sure the domestic cult is practiced assiduously, to talk about family lore and traditions, and to visit relatives.

If you have a wíḱs, gather it together the night after the home ritual and conduct a sacrifice to the Ancestors. The emphasis will be on the cultural Ancestors rather than the genetic ones, on those the wíḱs has in common. Leave the régʷes open at the end of the ritual.

Each night during this period, eat in the presence of your Wéstyā lamp. As the mā́ter lights it, she says:

They are here among us,
our beloved ancestors,
sharing our lives.

Put a plate and bowl in front of the lamp. Include bread as part of each meal, and put a piece of it on the plate before you eat. Pour Nekter into the bowl and cover it to prevent the Nekter from evaporating.

The period of the feast may be as great as two weeks (i. e., until the full moon). You may choose when to end it, although it should last at least three days.

On the last evening, if you are member of a wíḱs, gather together with them after your evening meal. (If it is more convenient, such as if you have small children, only one parent may go to the wíḱs meeting, with the other staying home and tending the hearth.) Again conduct the sacrifice to the ancestors, this time covering the régʷes. Do not stay too long after the sacrifice; your place is at home.

The Wéstyā lamp must burn all night. When you return, you may stay up all night or go to bed. However, you must be up before dawn. A little before dawn (during false dawn is fine), rekindle the flames, if you have a fireplace. The mā́ter pours a libation of Nekter into the bowl you have been using for the ancestor offerings, saying:

On our hearth,
in the flames,
our ancestors give their blessing.
Receive in return new life,
new power, to continue in the land of Yemós.

Take the bowl and plate of bread to the régʷes. The mā́ter puts the bread in it and pours the Nekter over the bread. The ptḗr says:

Be fed, O ancient ones,
be filled with food.
Receive these gifts so richly earned.
Receive our love, our thoughts, our time,
you without whom we would not be.

He then fills in the hole, while the mā́ter says:

They go their way
and we go ours.
May we live a long life
and peacefully join them at its end.
May we walk the path of Yemós

but not before our time.

Go around the covered rég^{w}es counterclockwise.

If you are performing the week's rituals inside, make a special attempt to do at least this part outside. Seal the pot by filling it with earth, and dispose of it as soon as you can by dropping it into a body of water or burying it. If you can't do any of the ritual outside, still fill the pot with dirt (potting soil is fine) and then keep it in the least-used part of the house until you can dispose of it.

After circumambulating the pit, go inside and extinguish the flames without ceremony. Purify yourself to remove your connection with the dead.

The Winter Festival

Wintertime in transhumant societies is down time. The crops are in and pastoral duties are light. Because of this, it is a perfect time to gather around a fire, and eat, drink, and tell stories (both old and new) and jokes. This is the ritual, if you want to call it that. At one or more times between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, gather at somebody's house, preferably someone with a fireplace. If your wíḱs doesn't have someone with a fireplace, at least light a few candles to add ambience, and celebrate in the semi-darkness. The person whose house it is lights their Wéstyā lamp and offers to it. The candles are then lit from it. There is no hn̥g^{w}nis; this is a ritual of the home.

Try to make the festival at least an all-night affair. If you have a three day weekend, you can make a really big deal out of it, with chats over morning coffee, children having a several day long sleep over, and other events that bring people together. Perhaps you will have a several day long cribbage tournament. Perhaps it will snow, and you can make snowmen and go sledding. Perhaps you will just spend a lot of time talking. This is a good time to make sure that the children know their lore, from what the ancient heroes did to what great uncle Ted did. The important thing is to stay close to hearth and home, with good friends. You can even do this at more than one house, more than one time during the winter. There is no end to friendship.

Chapter 18

Rites of Passage

The birth of a baby is a marvelous occasion. My strongest memory, burned into a mind that forgets so much, is of the dark eyes of my newly born daughter looking at me. I had spoken to her daily, through all those months when she was growing in the womb, and I can't help thinking that she was taking the opportunity to finally see who had been talking. She stopped crying, opened her eyes, and I knew that my life was changed forever.

Such an event should be celebrated. I am about to give a ritual to accompany this celebration, but if I ever hear that any of my readers has conducted the ritual and left out the balloons and streamers, the boasting phone calls to friends and family, the gifts to both child and spouse, I will never forgive you. I may even track you down and berate you.

That said, I will turn to the ritual.

Indo-European naming rituals share certain elements. Carrying the child around the fire, introduction to important deities, and naming are the most basic of these. That the naming is done by the father reflects a fact of patrilineal society — it is clear who the mother is, but the paternity is not so obvious. Fathers therefore ritually acknowledged that the baby was theirs.

This patrilineal act is still relevant. It is obvious to all concerned that a mother and her baby are connected. This is not so with fathers. I was the primary caregiver for my child, and I remember strangers saying, "Oh, so you're babysitting today." No, I wasn't babysitting; this was my daughter. We can't stop strangers from saying such things, but we can at least make the fatherhood of the child clear to those who attend this ritual.

Note that the ritual includes two namings. If desired, the second can be done by the mother and the first by the father. If a child is being adopted, this would be particularly appropriate, clearly and ritually expressing the new bond.

The ritual may begin at the location where the birth took place. In most cases this will be a hospital. That is a fine place to give birth; rules have been relaxed to allow for a more humane experience, and facilities are available in case something goes wrong. Proto-Indo-European women most likely gave birth in their own homes, but based on what we know from other cultures, a lot of the mothers and babies probably died. That is not something we want to reconstruct.

The father brings some Nekter, and anoints the child's head, hands, and feet; in symbolic terms, all of her. He says:

> Be full of life:
> live long and with joy.

If you are using honey-water for Nekter, be careful not to get any in the baby's mouth; honey is not safe for babies. The father then anoints the mother's head, saying:

> G^{w}ouwinda bless you,
> Donu attend you,

Dhéǵhōm Mā́tr show you the way,
you who have been Xáusós,
bringing forth the dawn.

When the baby and mother come home, the mother places the baby on the threshold for a moment and says:

Guardian of the household,
be guardian of this child.

The couple bring the baby inside, followed by any guests. (This is a Proto-Indo-European equivalent of a Christian baptism or Jewish bris, so it should be a public event. Invite friends and family.) Once inside, the father holds the baby while the mother lights the hearth fire, saying:

Wéstyā is here, the heart of our home.

She takes clarified butter in a spoon with a heatproof handle, holds it over the fire until it is melted, and then pours it into the fire, saying:

Be fed with the gift of cattle, fire on the hearth.
Pure and worthy of offerings are you,
Burning One, Wéstyā, heart of our home.

(If an oil lamp is used, the butter is poured into a bowl placed at its base.)

The father holds the baby out and says:

Wéstyā, Privopotyā, watch and ward.
incorporate this little one into your household;
grant her blessings.
Grant long life,
may the fire in her heart burn bright and long.

The father walks three times around the hearth with the child. If a fireplace against the wall is being used, light a candle from it and put it on the floor with enough room around it for the circumambulation. Throw the candle in the fire afterwards. When he is finished, he gives the baby to the mother, and anoints the child's head with Nekter, saying:

Nómn toi dedəmes.
[We give you a name.]
You are [name]
and your family acknowledges you.
You are [name],
and life and love surrounds you.
Live through the years
safe in this knowledge.

The baby may then be presented to all who are there, for their blessings, gifts, or simply oohing and aahing. It might be appropriate to perform the version of the bull sacrifice used in the New Year's ritual; after all, a baby is a whole new world. A pig to G^{w}ouwinda, Donu, and Dhéǵhōm Mā́tr, and an offering of dairy products to Xáusós would not be out of place. Then again, that might spoil the fun which must follow, especially for the non-Pagans present, such as relatives. If you want, you can always perform this sacrifice later.

Wedding

The Proto-Indo-Europeans were exogamous; they married people who weren't members of their family groupings. This meant that marriages formed ties linking different clans. Ritually, a marriage almost became a treaty, a contract between different groups. Like all contracts, it was made official by an exchange of gifts.

Today most marriages are also exogamous. Marriage is still not just a bond between two individuals. It binds two families together, and the network of marriages weaves society together, one family to another.

Marriage among the Indo-Europeans was a very complicated affair; there wasn't just one kind. In India there were eight, in Rome three, and in Ireland nine. In Rome, we find the confarreatio, a permanent sacred marriage, the usus, essentially a common law marriage requiring one year's cohabitation, and the coeptio, marriage by purchase.

The various forms of marriage likely had their origin in the three functions (Sergent, 1984). Using the simplest system of the three, from Rome, as an example, confarreatio is clearly first function, and coeptio third. Usus may have had its origin in marriage by capture, a second function marriage (Sergent, 1984; Hiltebeitel, 1980).

For modern Pagans, all this is just an interesting piece of history. In fact, in many forms of Neo-Paganism a sort of reverse usus is practiced; rather than a marriage being established through a year's cohabitation, a "handfasting" can be dissolved after a year and a day.

What I am suggesting is a combination of all three. A marriage through ritual – confarreatio. A marriage through living together – usus. And a marriage through gift-exchange – coeptio. In this way all three functions are brought in, and the marriage is solidified by being linked with all of society. This strengthens both the marriage and society as a whole.

The Proto-Indo-Europeans were patrilocal; brides moved into their husbands' households. We see this in the Proto-Indo-European root *wedh-, source of "wedding," which describes marriage from the man's point of view, and means literally "to lead to one's home." In our culture, newlyweds are equally likely to move into the bride's home, or into one of their own. This difference requires changes in ritual.

One surprising Indo-European custom, found in Greek, Roman, and Vedic weddings (Volpe, 1990, 165) is for the bride to bring coals from her family's hearth to light the new couple's fire. The hearth is the family altar, the major recipient of offerings there are the ancestors, and the Proto-Indo-Europeans were patrilineal — yet fire passes down the female line. I can only see this as being due to the identification of women with the hearth and home, and with the role of the wife as Fire Tender.

The ancient gift exchange which established a marriage could be as valuable as cows or as mundane as bread. The modern equivalent may be the exchange of wedding rings.

Weddings are traditionally preceded by an engagement period, which must also itself be established through a gift exchange. In modern society, the custom is for the man to give the woman a diamond ring. In Indo-European terms, that is a quarter of the way there. The bride needs to give the groom a present as well. A piece of jewelry, if he wears jewelry, is appropriate, although not a ring that can be confused with a wedding ring. Most important is that, like the woman's engagement ring, the gift be clearly for his exclusive use, not something they will share after the wedding.

All right, now we are halfway there. The other half is one that may be difficult to arrange if one or both of the parents are not Indo-European Pagans, or even Pagans at all. Since a marriage binds the families as well as the couple, there must be a gift-exchange to establish the bond. Perhaps it can

be introduced to the parents as an old ethnic custom you would like to follow. That is what it is, after all. Taking each other out to dinner will suffice, or better yet, exchanging dinner invitations to each others' homes.

The engagement period, in the Indo-European view, is almost a marriage. Not all of the privileges or responsibilities of a marriage are granted, but some certainly are. In a very traditional society, in which men and women were not allowed to be alone together, engaged couples often were. On the other hand, a broken engagement could result in legal action, a "breach of promise suit." What we are talking about here is betrothal, which although not a trial marriage, comes close.

The Wedding Ritual

A custom which shows up in many parts of the Indo-European world is the bathing of the bride. In some places the groom bathes as well. This is not a surprising custom; bathing is a rite of separation. In patrilocal Indo-European cultures, it is not surprising that it is very common for the bride to bathe: she is leaving her family and entering her husband's. In a society such as ours which is neither patrilocal nor matrilocal, both are leaving their family. When next they visit their old home, it will be theirs no longer. Both must bathe.

Of course, it would be a rare bride or groom in our culture who wouldn't at least take a shower before getting married. Bathing isn't quite the big deal it used to be. Some effort must be made then to make this bath something special. Add some Nekter to the bath water, or bathe in a slightly darkened room as a symbol of separation.

This special bath is taken the day of the wedding. That way the bather can dress in their wedding clothes afterward, going from a state of separation into the liminal state that is a wedding.

Special wedding clothes are universal. The styles vary so much that no pattern can be observed. Like the average American first-time bride, the Zoroastrian groom wears white, but a Roman bride wore red. My recommendation to the bride is that she wears the type of dress she has been dreaming about since she was four or five. As for the groom, it is traditional, at least in American society, for him to wear whatever the bride wants him to wear. Most of us are only too happy to oblige. A Proto-Indo-European wedding in white wedding gown and tuxedo may seem a little anachronistic, but it will still be quite beautiful, and will prevent the "I can't believe we wore that" reaction while looking at wedding photos years later.

Another custom that is widespread is cutting the bride's hair. This is also a rite of separation, with an added twist. In many Indo-European cultures, girls and unmarried women wore their hair long and loose. Married women, although possibly wearing it long, wore it up. Cutting one's free-flowing maiden's hair is thus a goodbye to the single life. What is cut doesn't have to be the whole hair; a single lock, or a trim of the bottom, is sufficient.

The hair that is cut off is used as an offering. In Greece, it was offered to goddesses of childhood such as Artemis and Athena. Since the woman is leaving her childhood home for another, it is appropriate to offer the hair at her home shrine to the ancestors, the gods of her childhood family. The cutting and offering may be done before or after the bath.

A wedding is primarily under the rule of the first function deities Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen (since it is a contract), as well as the transfunctional Cow Goddess (since G^{w}ouwinda is the goddess of marriage). The third function deities and the G^{w}hedhruós have their parts to play as well.

Schedule the wedding for an auspicious day. The day can be determined by tradition (June is

traditional in American culture, following Roman custom), astronomical events, or divination. Reality has a role to play too; no matter how auspicious a particular Tuesday might be, inconveniencing guests would be a bad way to start a marriage.

Hold the wedding sacrifices the day, or even a week, before the main ritual. This will allow the day of the ceremony to be less stressful. It also means that wedding guests who are not Pagan need not attend so Pagan a ritual.

A standard sacrificial ritual is performed. If possible, the sacrifices should be on the bride's family's property. If it is, the ghórdhos need not be established. Light the xā́sā with fire from the bride's family's hearth, brought by the bride's mother. This is good even if the bride has lived in her own house before her marriage, as it emphasizes the continuity between the generations.

Sacrifice an ox to Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen (as gods of the law), offer butter to Gʷouwinda (as goddess of marriage), and a ram to the Gʷhedhruós (as guarantors of domestic fertility). Give the parts normally eaten by the priests to the couple. Before extinguishing the xā́sā, reserve some of its fire for the ritual the next day. (A large votive candle in a glass will do.) The bride's mother will bring the reserved fire with her to the ritual that day, and give it to the bride before the ceremony.

Before she leaves her home on the day of the main ceremony, the bride walks three times, counterclockwise, around the family hearth (or a flame lit from the hearth); another separation rite.

The priests arrive before anyone else and establish a ghórdhos as usual. They do not light either fire, but put both in their places, a little further apart than usual, and with the fire equipment far enough back to allow the later circumambulation. Depending on the practicalities, such as how many people are present, the ghórdhos might include where the guests will be sitting or not. After establishing the ghórdhos, the priests may wait there or leave and come back later with the guests.

If the guests will be sitting inside the ghórdhos it would be nice to have a purification rite, but things being as they are that is perhaps too much to ask. Provide a bowl of water on a small table, just outside the ghórdhos, so Pagan guests can purify themselves according to their own traditions.

When the priests have everything prepared and the guests have all arrived, the wedding may begin. Seat the guests to the east of where the xā́sā and hn̥gʷnis will be. The groom should enter relatively unobtrusively and stand with the priests while the bride processes. This will satisfy both standard modern practice and Proto-Indo-European tradition, since the bride will be moving towards the groom, a reflection of patrilocality. The groom and the priests stand to the west of the fire, facing east (i.e., facing the guests and gate). The bride carries the reserved fire in the procession. When she arrives at the xā́sā, she uses the reserved fire to light it, and then puts the reserved fire down next to the xā́sā in case the xā́sā should need to be relit. She stands in the east, between the xā́sā and the hn̥gʷnis, facing west.

The Fire Tender lights the hn̥gʷnis from the xā́sā. The Ǵhéuter then calls upon Dyḗus Ptḗr, Xáryomen, Gʷouwinda, the Gʷhedhruós, the Ancestors of both families, and any deities to whom the couple are especially devoted, with prayers or hymns. This need not be a tedious collection of prayers that just go on and on; the functional deities can be grouped together, or even all of the deities. It seems best to me to separate the prayer to the Gʷhedhruós, since they are not deities, and the prayer to the Ancestors should definitely be separated, both because they are honored rather than worshiped, and because of their connection with death.

After the prayers, the Fire Tender offers melted clarified butter to the hn̥gʷnis three times, while the Xádbhertor says:

To all the beneficent deities, offerings and praise.
To all the ancestors of blood and culture, offerings and praise.
To all the Holy Ones, we send prayers for happiness and plenty.

(She offers once with each line.)

The Ǵhéuter says:

May this man and this woman be gifted
with the blessings of all the holy ones.
May the shining ones and the ancestors shower blessings upon them.

He turns to the groom and asks:

[Name], why do you come here today?

The groom answers:

I come here to be wed to [name],
to join with her in the contract of marriage.
I come of my own free will,
without constraint or compulsion.
This is my heart's true choice:
that we be wed.

The Ǵhéuter then asks the bride the same question and receives the same answer. The Xádbhertor goes to the bride and takes her by the right hand and leads her to stand in front of the groom. The Ǵhéuter says:

Make your vows before the gods, then.

The groom swears the marriage vow. This may have been written by him or by the couple together. (There isn't any reason not to use the "richer or poorer" vow from The Book of Common Prayer. It has been used so many times by so many denominations, and in so many movies and TV shows, that it has lost its denominational origin and become something shared by all English speakers.) He ends the vow by saying:

I am hékwos [stallion], you are hékwā [mare].
Before the gods,
before the ancestors,
before the people of our community,
before all who watch us here,
I swear these things.
I make a vow,
weaving my words into the Xártus.

The bride then swears her marriage vow, which she may have written by herself or with the groom (or she may use the "richer or poorer" one). She ends by saying:

I am hékwā, you are hékwos.
Before the gods,
before the ancestors,
before the people of our community,
before all who watch us here,
I swear these things.
I make a vow,

weaving my words into the Xártus.

The Ǵhéuter says:

With what gifts is this marriage made?

The couple exchange rings. As the groom puts on the bride's ring, he says:

With this gift I become your husband.

As the bride puts on the groom's ring, she says:

With this gift I become your wife.

The groom moves to stand to the bride's right.

The Xádbhertor takes the left hand of the groom and the right hand of the bride, and joins them together, saying:

The hands are joined,
the act performed,
the marriage established,
the two made one.

If the Xádbhertor is legally qualified, he may now say the traditional "By the power invested in me by the state of [ ], I now pronounce you husband and wife." It would not be inappropriate for the guests to applaud at this point.

The Fire Tender goes to stand to the right of the Xádbhertor. The couple disengage their hands and go to the xā́sā, and the bride says:

A new hearth is lit,
a shared flame is burning.

The groom picks up the bowl of melted clarified butter and gives it to the bride. She offers some on the fire, saying:

I offer to our xā́sā.
May it burn forever in our hearts.

Thus their first married act is to make an offering to their hearth fire. They next circumambulate the fire three times clockwise. The bride then extinguishes the reserved fire and relights it from the xā́sā. They go to the priests, who hold their hands over the couple in prayer. The Ǵhéuter says:

In the eyes of the gods
In the eyes of the ancestors
In the eyes of the community
Before all who are watching here,
You are one.
A new household has been established
a new xā́sā lit,
and we are all stronger for it.
Blessings upon you from the holy ones.
Blessing upon you from all of us.

The bride picks up the reserved fire, the couple turn and, accompanied by their friends, process out. The priests and Fire Tender disestablish the ghórdhos after the guests have gone.

Fortunately, the next step is straightforward: a party. The wedding feast is practically universal, and the Indo-Europeans are no exception. The emphasis on hospitality as something that binds society together is evident in wedding feasts.

There is an Indo-European tradition, found in India, Iran, Greece, and Rome, to give to charity at weddings. It may be made by the couple, or by the parents in the couple's name. Perhaps it is a gift to people too often seen as Outsiders. Perhaps it is a knock wood act, so that the couple doesn't ever find themselves in need of help. Or perhaps it is just an attempt to spread the happiness of the occasion as far as possible. Whatever the reason, it is a nice custom.

During the reception, the reserved fire sits on the table in front of the couple. If they are going to their new home after their reception, they take it with them. If there are pilot lights, they put them out and relight them from the reserved fire. They let the reserved fire burn out naturally, or use it to light another fire, such as in a fireplace. If instead they are leaving on a honeymoon right from the reception, they extinguish it by blowing it out together before they leave the reception hall. If it is not possible to bring the fire to the couple's final home, it can be brought in a symbolic way through bread baked in the bride's home before the wedding. If this is done, the bread should be present throughout the wedding and reception.

When they do get to their new home, the bride makes an offering to the threshold deity before entering. If there are pilot lights, extinguish them and relight them. Start your own fires.

After entering, and perhaps after relighting the hearth fire, the bride makes an offering to the house spirits. This is done as a delightful anachronism reflecting patrilocalism, even if the new home was actually originally the bride's. If the latter is true, anachronism and modern sense may be combined, with both bride and groom making offerings.

A year after the wedding, the bridal party gets together to celebrate a meal, hosted by the new couple. With this act of usus, the marriage is finally established.

Aspects of the ritual that are attested are the divination, the baths, the exchange of gifts, the sacrifices to multiple wedding deities, the carrying of fire from the bride's home, the leading of the bride to the groom, the giving of charity, and the wedding feast. The line "I am hékwos, you are hékwā" has been suggested as reconstructed (Puhvel, 1987, 275), based on Roman and Vedic material. Other elements are based on such principles as the importance of contract and gift exchange.

Inaugurating the Rḗḱs

This ritual has several goals. The Rḗḱs must establish a relationship with Hékwonā, and he must establish one with the wíḱs. Along the way, he must propitiate the gods of all three functions, putting himself right with them so he will be qualified to lead a united people.

The major part of the ritual is the horse sacrifice. It is ironic that the horse goddess is approached by killing a horse. The sexual symbolism of killing and eating ties together with the mysteries of the acts to make sacrifice a strong binding technique. Add in the principles of exchange, and a powerful ritual is formed. The differences between the usual horse sacrifice and the form used in inaugurating the Rḗḱs were given in chapter 14. There are also additional rites specific to an inauguration.

After the tethering of the mare, the Xádbhertor leads the new Rḗḱs to a platform and puts him on it. The Ǵhéuter says:

Is this your Rḗḱs, O Priests?

Wíḱs members who align themselves with the first function say:

By all the shining ones, he is.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Is this your Rḗḱs, O Warriors?

Wíḱs members who align themselves with the second function say:

By our weapons' truth, he is.

The Ǵhéuter says:

Is this your Rḗḱs, O People?

Wíḱs members who align themselves with the third function say:

By sea, land, and sky, he is.

The Rḗḱs then says:

To Dyḗus Ptḗr and Xáryomen
To Perkʷūnos
To Diwós Sūnú and Hékʷonā,
I make my oath today
that all my actions as Rḗḱs
will be in accord with the Xártus
and in agreement with the dhétis
and for the good of the wíḱs.
And if I should break this oath, may the deities reject my prayers.
And if I should break this oath, may my weapons turn against me.
And if I should break this oath, may there be an end to all my prosperity.

The Ǵhéuter then recites a poem or sings a song listing the accomplishments of the Rḗḱs. After the praise, the Rḗḱs comes down from the platform and gives a gift to the Ǵhéuter. Then the horse sacrifice continues. The feast after the ritual must be hosted by the new Rḗḱs; a king gives with open hands.

Funeral

Death comes to all of us. We know that. That this aspect of death was important to the Proto-Indo-Europeans shows in what became of their word for "death," *nek-, in Greek – anagke, "fate." We see this in English, as well, where "he went to his fate" can mean "he died."

Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The soul is described in terms related to breath. Compare, for instance, the English "spirit" and "respiration," or the German atmen, "to breathe," with the Sanskrit atman "soul." The soul is connected as well with Weis — the high realm where the gods live. Our souls, our breath, and the gods are thus connected; when we breathe our last, our souls are sent to the land of the gods.

In a series of articles, Bruce Lincoln (1977, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1982 (all but 1977 are reprinted in Lincoln, 1991)) charted out the Indo-European geography of the land of the dead, and the way the soul gets there. Much of the geography of the Afterworld is familiar to most of us from the Graeco-Roman mythology of Charon, Lethe, Styx, and Cerberus. The soul must make a difficult and dangerous journey. The only safe way is that laid out by Yemós, when he himself went that way.

The journey takes the soul to the edge of a river which he must cross. This is the river of forgetfulness; when he is carried over the river, his memories are carried away by it and to the spring that comes out through the well. In this way, the memories of the ancestors become available to the living. They are in fact the source of our greatest wisdom. This may be seen as metaphor: the wise ones drink the wisdom of the past. I think the Proto-Indo-Europeans took it literally, and in the Nekter

rituals attempted to drink a liquid which would actually hold the ancestral wisdom.

Crossing the river requires the help of Ǵeronts. Once across, the Soul must encounter and get past Gheredhz.

The soul eventually reaches the land of Yemós. This is an enclosed land (*ghórdhos – we have seen this word before). Our bodies have their own path, though. As they come from earth, so they go to earth. As the earth came from the body of Yemós, so our body which comes from the earth must return to Yemós —our hair to grass, our flesh to soil, our bones to rock, etc. Each thing to its proper place, according to the Xártus. One of the goals of the funeral is to help this happen.

Funerals are like weddings, in that they are rituals which are not only for the supposed subjects but for the community as well. In our multi-religious society, many of the participants who must feel in some way consoled if the funeral can be said to be "successful" will not be Pagan, or, if Pagan, not Proto-Indo-European Pagan. Remember that the ritual is in part for them. It would be good if those in charge of arranging the funeral could consult with some of these people to see if there are things that could be done that, while not changing the essential Proto-Indo-European nature of the funeral, would serve to soothe them.

I confess that whenever I think of funerals, I think of a Monty Python sketch in which a funeral director lists three ways of disposing of a body: "We can burn her, bury her, or dump her." More politely, cremation, inhumation, and burial at sea. There are actually many more methods that have been used (exposure for instance) but these are certainly the top three. The last (burial in water) is exceedingly uncommon, and the vast majority of bodies are disposed of by cremation or inhumation.

This is true among Indo-Europeans as well. The Zoroastrian Towers of Silence, in which bodies are exposed to carrion birds, are a glittering exception, but even among Zoroastrians, there is evidence that the Iranians originally practiced cremation; the word for the towers of silence, daxma, has the etymological meaning "burning" (Nagy, 1974, 103). The top two are found throughout the Indo-European world, even coexisting comfortably in the same culture at the same time. The Romans, for instance, practiced both. At least some of the kurgan people, those possible Proto-Indo-Europeans, were buried, in the burial mounds that give the culture its name. The lack of other burials opens the possibility of cremation for the others. If so, cremation and inhumation would have coexisted right from the beginning.

Perhaps originally the different methods were used for different classes. If so, we would expect the top two functions to be burnt, since fire is associated with them, and the third function to be buried in the earth with which they are so strongly identified. But the evidence, such as it is, suggests the reverse; the burial mounds we have are clearly, based on the richness of the grave goods, those of upper class people, the kings, warriors, priests. According to Vesci (1985, 45, n. 74) most people were buried, but if so, where are the bodies?

What it comes down to is that we can't say at this point why some people were buried and some cremated. Since no principles can be laid down, the decision of which to use is left to personal choice. Either is appropriate in a Proto-Indo-European context, and the ritual is written with both in mind.

The first purpose of a Proto-Indo-European ritual is to remove the pollution caused by death, to "get the dead out of Dodge," as a friend of mine expressed it. In time, through the rituals performed after death, and through the experience of the dead in the Otherworld, he will become one of the Ancestors whom we will invite to visit us (under carefully controlled ritual conditions); for now it is

important to send him on his way, to keep death away from the living.

There is thus a great concern about the purification of the participants in the funeral, especially close relatives. They are, after all, the ones who have been closest to death.

All of this is not meant to be disrespectful to the deceased. He has his path, and we have ours. The ritual is meant to make the division between these two paths as effective as possible, and to thereby help him take the right path.

Funeral Ritual

If family members can be present at the death, it is for them to close the eyes of the deceased. They then say good-byes. As much as possible the body should not be left unattended until its final disposal. Embalming is acceptable, although not preferable. The funeral must be within three days if possible, since there are rites to be performed on the third day after death. If it can't be, then perform them three days after the funeral.

As soon as possible after the death, the immediate family lights their hearth flame, offers to it, and then extinguishes it. Until their house is purified later in the ritual, they eat no food cooked there.

It was customary in many Indo-European cultures for the body to be wrapped in a clean white shroud, either with or without clothes. I see no objection to its being dressed in the person's best clothes, however.

A viewing of the body is very Indo-European, and may be soothing to many, providing as it does an opportunity for friends and relatives not at the death to say goodbye. Close family members, especially the spouse, should stay near the body during this period.

At the end of the viewing, before the closing of the casket, a short ritual takes place. These items are required:

A container of Nekter, a bowl of ochre (powdered red-colored chalk may be used), a small pitcher of water, towels, grave offerings, a cake (a cookie will do, but not one with chocolate in it), and a container of barley.

A priest (it could be a family member if the deceased is not part of a wíḱs) formally welcomes everyone to the funeral, explaining what will happen for the benefit of guests. He then dips the index through ring fingers of his left hand into the Nekter and touches them to the lips of the deceased, saying:

You who have died, join the undying ones.
May your soul be filled with strength and power.

He reserves the remainder of the Nekter for later.

He then pours enough water into the ochre to make a paste, and mixes it with the same fingers. He draws a circle on the deceased's forehead with the paste, saying:

Be filled with life in the beautiful meadows.
Be filled with warmth in the land of Yemós.

He then makes rays from the circle to form a sun symbol and says:

Through the sun's gateway, rise with the dawn,
there in the other world.
Xáusós, open his way.
Sawélyosyo Dhugətḗr, be his steed.
[Name], rise in the land of Yemós.

He washes and dries his hands.

Then the relatives place any grave offerings they wish (or that the deceased had asked for) into the coffin. The priest or a family member puts in an offering for Ǵeronts, which, following Greek custom, may be a coin, or may simply be a piece of silver or gold. They say:

This for the Old Man.
May he speed you on your way.

The priest or another then puts in the cake for Gheredhz, saying:

Take this cake along with you
as a gift for the dog that guards the gates,
a sop for Gheredhz.
May you pass the dog.
May you not be a wolf.
Walk with cake in hand past the dog.
Walk by Gheredhz by means of your gift.

(This is why the cake can't contain chocolate; chocolate is poisonous to dogs.)

The priest or another then puts barley in the coffin, scattering it with each of the first three lines of this prayer:

May you have well-plowed fields.
May you have fruitful land.
May you have all good things,
There, in the widespread pastures.
May they not be taken from you.

The coffin is then closed. If the body is to be cremated, the rest of the ritual is performed. If it is to be buried, it is now transported to the cemetery.

At the grave site you will need a bowl of water and the rest of the Nekter from earlier.

At the cemetery, the coffin is taken once or thrice around the grave, counterclockwise, and then put in place. Pallbearers may be used to help carry or accompany it. The priest or family member stands at its head and says:

May this death be a true sacrifice.
May the soul go on its way.
May the body go on its way.
May the soul go to where it belongs.
May the body go to where it belongs.
Breath to air

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Blood to the waters

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Bones to rocks

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Flesh to soil

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Hair to plants

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Eyes to the celestial lights

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Brain to clouds

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

Skull to sky

All:

Tód hestu.

Priest:

May each part go to its place.
May all things be as they should.
May your soul go to the land of Yemós
to live with the gods in the widespread pastures.

He then sprinkles the coffin with water three times, and then Nekter three times, and says:

Yemós, who reigns in the land beyond,
first to die, guide of souls:
make clear the way for this soul's journey
across the river
past the dog
into the pastures that stretch out forever.
Grant him wide pastures, and prosperous herds!

If possible, the coffin is now lowered into the ground. The priest pours the leftover Nekter into the grave. All who wish place some dirt in the grave. The priest says:

We separate from death,
Go on our way,
Walk from the edge of that world to ours.

All then go counterclockwise about the grave and leave without looking back.

If the body is cremated, put it in an urn with a sun symbol on it. Pour the leftover Nekter in. After the urn is closed, say:

Enter into the ghórdhos Yemosyo. [the enclosed land of Yemós].

Next will come a feast, as is usual after any ritual. This is not to be held at the house of the deceased, since that is still impure. Before entering the house where the feast is being held, each person must purify themselves as they usually do before a ritual. For this purpose, leave a bowl of water outside the door. (Non-Pagans need not purify themselves.) Even with this purification, close family members are ritually impure for the three days after the funeral, and are not to take part in any other rituals, including their personal and domestic cults.

The feast afterwards is typically Indo-European, as well as traditionally American. Among the Ossetes, Norse, and Slavs it was believed to feed the dead.

Part of the feast is games, in honor of the deceased. Races are especially traditional. The most famous funeral in the history of Indo-European ritual, that of Patroclus in The Iliad, included such games. They were held among the Slavs as well, and the horse races of the Celtic Lughnasad ritual may be a memory of funeral games.

One interesting aspect of funerals that is found everywhere in the Indo-European area is the idea that a funeral is not a one-shot thing. Zoroastrians believe the soul lingers for three days and is judged on the third day, whereupon it enters heaven or hell. The Capitulare of Bishop Hincmar of Reims (832 CE) forbids libations on the first, seventh, and thirteenth day after death, so they must have been going on; you don't take the trouble to forbid something that isn't happening. Interestingly enough, Hittite ritual prescribes libations on those same days. In Rome, the second ritual was on the ninth day; in India, the third day. Three days is also the length of a traditional gypsy funeral. Although the day for it varies so widely, I am going to suggest the third day, both because it is a common one and because of the importance of the number three among Indo-Europeans.

On the third day after death, (or the third day after the funeral if it has had to be held too long after the death) the close family (and any others who wish to attend) go to the cemetery towards dusk. There they pour libations of dark beer on the grave and make offerings of food, saying:

Go on your journey fed and refreshed
that you may reach the enclosed land.
Take your seat among the ancestors.
Receive the offerings to the mothers and the fathers.

They then return to the home of the deceased. The nearest relative sprinkles the threshold and says:

Purā zdhi.
[Be pure.]
May this house be pure.

Everyone purifies themselves and enters. Now that they are ritually pure, they can once more take part in rituals. They relight their hearth flame and offer to it, and then to the ancestors, before doing anything else; the domestic cult will have been interrupted and it is time to start it up again. This is followed by cooking some food and eating it.

The offerings at the grave are repeated on the ninth day, but the purifications aren't necessary upon returning. There are libations made at the grave on the anniversary of the death as well, for as long as anyone wishes to. The words spoken then are:

Offerings to you, ancestor.
May you be filled with food in the land of Yemós.
Continue to bless us with your wisdom.

Chapter 19

Divination

Divination is the obtaining of information, by magical or divine means, that couldn't be gained in any other way (at least not easily or at that time). It can include telling the future, telling the present, or telling the past. The last two might seem odd reasons to practice divination; you might think that there are easier (and more accurate) ways to find these things out. Here is a situation where both are combined: you want to know if there is treasure buried in your backyard, so you perform a divinatory rite. This looks for knowledge from the past: did someone bury treasure in your backyard? It also looks for knowledge from the present: at this particular moment is there treasure buried in your backyard? Short of digging up your entire backyard these are not easy questions to answer. Divination may give an answer.

Divination comes in many forms. Divine beings may come in visions or dreams. The world itself might be observed, either through natural means (such as the swaying of trees or the calls of birds) or artificial (such as the casting of runes) to see what the Xártus is tending towards at that moment. The theory of the latter method is that these means are themselves part of the Xártus and thus reveal it, but are easier to interpret than natural events, and less likely to deceive than human guided ones.

It is important to point out that by viewing the Xártus, one is viewing what will be if the flow of the Xártus remains unchanged. Thus divination is not truly "fortune-telling"; what is learned is not fated to be. Indeed, why bother if nothing could be done?

The methods used by Indo-Europeans vary widely. The Romans are famous for their system of inspecting the entrails of sacrificial victims, but this was taken from the Etruscans and was therefore not Indo-European in origin. In later years, they also adopted astrology from the Near East. Their system of listening for bird cries or watching for their presence is less well known.

One particularly interesting Roman form of divination involved chickens. Before a battle, cakes were set out before chickens in cages. The chickens were released, and if they ate greedily, throwing the cakes about, that was a good omen for the success of the battle. Of course, smart generals increased their chances of a good omen by not feeding the chickens the day before. In one famous case, the birds refused to eat at all. The general said, "Well, if they won't eat, let them drink," and threw them in a river, drowning them. He lost the battle (Ogilvie, 1969, 57).

Tacitus tells us (Germania 10) that the Germans divined using staves carved with symbols (perhaps runes or an earlier system of signs) that were scattered on a cloth. The Ynglinga Saga tells of the casting of lots. The Germans also had horses which told them the future (Germania 10). The hero Finn MacCumhaill had his "thumb of knowledge." He needed only bite on it to learn whatever he wanted to know.

There are two points to all this. First, except for one form which I will discuss in a moment, there is no widespread reconstructible method of Indo-European divination. Second, Indo-Europeans didn't hesitate to borrow a form or make up their own.

The upshot is that it is not contrary to Indo-European thought to use whatever form of divination you are most comfortable with. Astrology, runes, Tarot cards, the I Ching — whatever. An especially intuitive diviner can use the Roman bird form of divination; it is also found in later folklore throughout Europe. Systems differ and the bird-based diviner is left to their own resources in interpreting exactly what the birds are saying.

For more momentous occasions — whether the wíḱs should have a Rḗḱs or not, for example — there is a form of divination found throughout the Indo-European world, one that can be reconstructed in confidence and in considerable detail. I'll lay out the evidence and then give a ritual for this form.

In the Irish tale Serglige Con Culainn, a ritual is described in which a white bull is killed. A man eats his fill of its meat, drinks its broth, and goes to sleep after a prayer is spoken over him by four druids. While he sleeps, he has a dream of the man who will become king (MacCana, 1972, 91-92). In the similar story told in Togail Bruidne Da Derga, we are further told that the prayer was "an incantation of truth," and that the man would die if he lied about what he dreamt.

In a version from the Western Islands from 1703, a man is wrapped in a cow's hide and left in a wild place overnight. "Invisible friends" come to him to tell him what he wants to know.

A late (post 1200) parody Welsh example is in "The Dream of Rhonabwy," from The Mabinogi. The title character, while on a search for a renegade prince, is put up for the night in a pathetic excuse for a hall. It is warmed with a fire of chaff which throws up smoke and chokes everyone. A hag serves Rhonabwy and his two men a dinner of barley bread, cheese, and watery milk. When it is time to sleep, they are given a pile of straw and sticks, infested with fleas. Rhonabwy understandably can't sleep, and goes to the far end of the hall, where there is a yellow ox-skin on a platform. He lies down on that, and has a dream in which a youth takes him to King Arthur's court. This is obviously a parody, but parodies have to be based on something or they're just not funny.

These examples come from Christian era sources. That makes the Roman evidence all the more important. There is an episode in The Aeneid (7.80 ff.) in which Latinus, troubled by omens, goes to the oracle of Faunus for advice. At this oracle, a fountain deep in the woods, the priest performs divination by sleeping on the hides of sacrificed sheep. Spirits come to him, including the gods and the dead.

Ovid describes a similar ritual (Fasti 4.649-7). King Numa sacrifices two sheep in a sacred grove, one to Faunus and one to Sleep. The hides are laid on the ground and he is sprinkled with water and wine, and two beech wreathes are placed on his head. He wraps himself in the fleeces, prays, and then dreams. Faunus appears to him in his sleep with an oracle.

In an Iranian source, the Arda Viraz Namag (Prologue 1-3, in Boyce, 1984; Horne, 1917), Viraz is chosen by lot, as the most righteous of men, to conduct a divination to ask the departed souls whether Zoroastrianism is the true religion. In a place thirty-steps wide, he washes himself and puts on a new garment. He lays a new blanket on some boards and, sitting on it, performs the dron ritual. He honors the dead and eats food, presumably the dron. He then drinks three cups of a mixture of wine and the drug mang. He says grace and falls asleep. While he sleeps priests chant prayers over him. In his dream, he goes to heaven.

Finally, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (5.2) preserves a complete ritual of this type, to be performed on the night of the full moon. The celebrant mixes herbs with sour milk and honey. He then makes four offerings of ghee into a fire, to "the chiefest and best," "the most excellent," "the firm basis," and "the abode." Crawling away from the fire, he takes up the herb, milk, and honey mixture in his hands

and prays over it for preeminence and unity with everything. From the cup, he then drinks four sips, praying to Savitṛ, god of magic and the sun when it is not in the sky, as he does so. He cleans the cup and lies down to the west of the fire on a skin or the ground. If he sees a vision of a woman, his ritual has been successful.

When the details of these examples are considered together, there is clearly a pattern to which each tradition has made modifications. The form of the proto-ritual seems to have been that a milk-giving animal was sacrificed and its meat was eaten by the diviner. He also consumed a sacred drink, either the animal's broth or an intoxicating beverage. He then lay down on the animal's skin, which was likely put on a low wooden platform. Prayers were said over him by priests (the ritual is public rather than private), and then he slept. A vision came to him in his sleep from the ancestors. The public nature is important. The ritual may be to determine the next king, or to find proof for Zoroastrianism, or the significance of omens.

The deity to whom the sacrifice is made is only rarely mentioned. In The Aeneid and Fasti it is Faunus (and Sleep), in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad it is Savitṛ, and in the Arda Viraz Namag the offering is made to the departed souls. The source of the vision is more often mentioned. In The Aeneid the revelation comes from gods and the dead, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad from a woman, and in the Arda Viraz Namag from the souls of the dead. Rhonabwy's vision is of King Arthur's court, and thus of the past; he communes with the dead.

It is clear that the knowledge sought is intended to come from the ancestors. This is clear in The Aeneid (not only do the dead appear to Latinus; Faunus is his father) and the Arda Viraz Namag, and implied in "Rhonabwy." Since Savitṛ is god of the sun when it is not in the sky, it may be implied in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad as well: he comes from the Underworld. The offerings to "the firm basis," likely the earth or even that which supports the earth, and to "the abode," likely the land of the dead, suggests this as well.

An interesting secondary detail is the wooden platform, which appears in Wales and Iran. This may be a liminal device; the seer is lifted up, but not high, putting him neither on the ground nor truly in the air.

Some of the Celtic and Germanic examples, and one of the Roman, prescribe wrapping in the hide, rather than merely lying on it. In this way the seer is identified with the sacrificial animal: he is in its skin. The seer goes with the animal to its intended target.

In most versions, the sacrifice is consumed in some way, and eating is a common form of identification. What we eat becomes part of ourselves.

The point of the ritual is thus bound to the meaning of the sacrifice. The seer, identified with the dead animal, goes where it goes — to the ancestors. From them the seer acquires knowledge to benefit the community.

This is a confidently reconstructed ritual, with evidence from a wide span of the Indo-European world. We can be quite certain that something of this sort was practiced in Proto-Indo-European times. Because of its elaborate and public nature, it should be reserved for occasions when the wíḱs as a whole (or a family) has a specific question.

The Ritual

Besides what is required for a sacrifice to the ancestors you will need an extra pitcher of water, a bowl large enough for the sacrifice to fit in, a wool blanket, Nekter, writing materials, and food.

The wíḱs gathers in a place where it will be possible for the diviner to sleep. A ghórdhos is established, unless the ritual is being performed in a home, in which case the hearth goddess will be offered to instead. If there is a platform to sleep on, great, but don't be too concerned about it.

After the ghórdhos has been established and the fires lit, perform a sacrifice to the ancestors. Instead of the animal's head being put in the bowl, it's eaten by the diviner. The Xádbhertor puts the other two parts of the sacrifice in the bowl and covers them with water. He stirs the water a few times to ritually mix the two, identifying the water with the broth of the sacrifice and making it into a sacred drink and then sprinkles some of this on the wool blanket. The diviner then wraps themselves in the blanket. Four members of the wíḱs (most properly the Xádbhertor, the Ǵhéuter, and two others) stand around him and say:

Go to wisdom.
Go to knowledge.
Go to the Wíḱpotēs, to those who know.
Bring back their wisdom.
Bring back their knowledge.
Bring back word of what we would know.

The lines may be divided among the priests, for instance, with each of the first three lines being said by a different person and the last three by the Ǵhéuter, or the whole prayer may be said in unison.

They repeat this three times. The diviner picks up the bowl with the water and pieces of the sacrifice in it and says:

I drink the blood of the sacrifice.
I drink the sacred drink.
May it bring me to the ancestors
and safely back again.

He drinks the water, puts down the bowl, and lies down.

The four priests again chant their prayer three times. Then they put out the fires and leave, and the diviner goes to sleep. He says in his mind as he does:

May the Old Ones answer our prayer.
May I know [here the question asked].

He repeats this to himself as he falls asleep.

The next morning, as soon as he wakes, he writes down his dreams. He then calls to the others (who should be waiting nearby) and they come to where he is. He reads them his dreams, and then interprets them (with the help of the others, if need be). The Chieftain or Rēḱs then says:

We thank the Old Ones for the wisdom they give us.

The Xádbhertor covers the bowl the sacrifice is in, and then gives Nekter to the diviner, who drinks while the Ǵhéuter says:

You drink in life,
Nekter, the undying.
May you live for long years.

The Xádbhertor then gives the diviner some food, while the Ǵhéuter says:

You eat the food of the living.

When the diviner has finished the Nekter and food, the ritual is over. Dispose of the bowl the sacrifice is in by burying it or dropping it into water.

Appendix 1

> — In etymologies, “became.”
< — In etymologies, “comes from.”
* — When this is in front of a word it means that that word has not been found in a surviving form (it is “unattested”) but instead was reconstructed from descendant words. All Proto-Indo-European words are this kind of word.
Anatolia — The Asia Minor part of Turkey.
Axis mundi — The pillar around which the world is organized in a cosmology.
Chthonic — Referring to beings associated with the underworld.
Cognate — In either language or culture, a characteristic that derives from the same root as another. For instance, the Gaulish name Epomeduos and the Sanskrit Aśvamedha are cognates.
Cosmogony — A myth of the origin of the Cosmos.
Cosmology — A mythical view of the structure of the Cosmos.
Déiwōs — “Gods, shining ones.” The Proto-Indo-European deities.
Dhétis — The system of law in society.
Function — A category of Indo-European thought, as theorized by Georges Dumézil. There are three: the first function is the magical, religious, and legal function; the second is that of the warrior; and the third is that of the producers.
Ghosti-principle — The principle acting in the universe, society, and ritual that says that relationships are established and maintained through the exchange of gifts.
Liminal — A state between two other ones. From Latin limen, “threshold.”
Orans — A position common in Indo-European prayers in which the arms are extended out from the body to the side, and then the elbows bent up at a ninety degree angle. The hands are open, with the palms facing forwards.
PIE — Proto-Indo-European.
Reflex — A linguistic element that is descended from another. For instance, “two” is a reflex of the Proto-Indo-European *dwo.
*Rḗḱs — “King.” The leader of a wíḱs, or a ceremonial position within the wíḱs.
RV — Rig Veda.
Transfunctional — Taking part in all three functions. Also called “trifunctional.”
Transhumance — An economics and social system found in some herding societies in which the year is divided into a period when the herds are taken to summer pastures at some distance from settlements, and one in which they are brought back home. Transhumants also practice agriculture.
Vedic — Used here, it refers to the earliest form of Hinduism, that of the Rig Veda and other early texts.
*Wíḱpotēs —”Masters of the household.” A name I use for the ancestors.
*Wíḱs — “Household.” A group of Proto-Indo-European worshipers.
*Xánsūs — “Spirits.” The word I use for the land spirits.

*Xártus — “Fit together.” The pattern by which the universe manifests itself. Similar to Germanic wyrd and Vedic ṛta.
*Yéwos (pl. *Yéwesā) — A rule of ritual behavior.

Appendix 2

Pronunciation Guide

My spellings of PIE are different from those used by linguists. There are two reasons for their idiosyncratic nature. First, PIE is generally written phonemically rather than phonologically. This means that they represent units of sounds rather than the sounds themselves. An English example of this would be "electric" and "electricity." In the first, the "c" is pronounced [k], and in the second [s]. Imagine that English didn't have a "c," and had to use either "k" or "s" in its place. This would mean that to spell them exactly as pronounced, we would have "elektrik" and "elektrisity." These would be the phonological spellings. However, if we wanted to show that the second word comes from the first, we might want to spell it "elektrikity," with a rule that [k] before [i] changed to [s]. This would be a phonemic spelling.

Linguists have traditionally written Proto-Indo-European in the same way. For instance, one way of forming the imperative of a verb is by taking its reduced (eliminating single vowel, and the first one of diphthongs) and adding *-dhi. One imperative of *H_1es- "to be," then would be written as *H_1s-dhi. However, phonological rules, that laryngeals (such as that represented by *H_1) preceding consonants aren't pronounced, and that unvoiced consonants before voiced ones become voiced themselves (in this case the [d] changes the [s] to [z]), cause *H_1sdhi to be actually pronounced [zdhi]. The traditional spellings make sense to linguists, because they show the relationships among the different forms of words clearly. However, the words in this book's rituals are meant to be spoken, so I wrote them phonologically so they could be easily read aloud.

Second, I've written pronunciations for the laryngeals. These are sounds that were originally postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure in the late nineteenth century to explain some peculiarities in reconstructed PIE forms. His theory languished until the translation of Hittite in 1927. It turned out that Hittite had consonantal sounds exactly where Saussure had predicted them. It was then realized that they had also survived to some extent in Albanian and Armenian.

Despite the success of the laryngeal theory, the specifics are still uncertain. The number of them that has been suggested has ranged from one to ten (Meier-Brügger, 2003, 107). I have used the most common suggestion of three.

Their pronunciation has also not been settled. Because of this, they are usually written as "H," with subscripted numbers to label each of the three: *H_1, *H_2, *H_3. Even those with strong opinions on their pronunciation have continued to write them in the traditional way. What is certain is that they disappeared at an early stage of most of the Indo-European languages, but had certain affects on adjacent vowels, called "coloring." An *H_2 colored [e] to [a], and an *H_3 colored [e] to [o]. *H_1 didn't affect vowels, but has been reconstructed for a number of reasons, the most common of which is the theory PIE roots couldn't begin with vowels; a laryngeal was therefore suggested for the beginning of roots that seemed to have an initial vowel.

The question is, how were they pronounced? *H_1 is fairly uncontroversially seen as [h]. Less

certain is that of *H_2 but [x] (the sound in Scottish loch) is the consensus. *H_3 has proven more difficult. Opinion is divided between [x^w] (a labial version of [x]) and [γ] (a voiced version of [x]). Because of my minimal qualifications, I'm hesitant to decide between the two. However, since *H_3 causes voicing in adjacent consonants, I am convinced that it must have been voiced. I have therefore chosen [γ] as its sound. To make printing easier, however, I have used "q" rather than the Greek letter to represent it. Those who disagree can substitute their preference for mine easily enough.

The next question is whether they should be represented at all. They eventually disappeared in most branches, after making the changes to their adjacent vowels. But when did they disappear? Hittite, in which they are most strongly preserved, was the first of the descendant languages to separate from the others, with large differences between it and the rest. Many linguists have taken the attitude (whether consciously or not) that it doesn't "really count" as Indo-European.

I've found this unacceptable for two reasons. First, the Anatolian languages are acquiring a growing respect for their relevance in Indo-European reconstruction, especially for what they can tell us about syntax. (See, for example, Boley, 2003, 2004.) Second, and what convinced me, is that laryngeal reflexes are in fact not only found in Anatolian, but also found to an extent in Armenian and Albanian. In my opinion this requires them to have survived at least until those languages split off.

However, I have allowed laryngeals to disappear in three situations: when they are word-final, when they are word-initial before a consonant, and when they are between a vowel and a consonant. In these cases, I've allowed them to have their coloring affects before disappearing, and lengthened any adjacent vowels. (This phenomenon of lengthening a sound when one next to it disappears is so common that there's a term for it, "compensatory lengthening.") Laryngeals in these positions seem, to me, likely to have been the first to go, even in the late Proto-Indo-European period.

As far as the laryngeals are concerned, my reconstructions are based on these principles:

1. The laryngeals still existed in the time period I'm dealing with.
2. However, they had already affected their adjacent vowels with H_2 coloring of [e] to [a], and H_3 coloring of [e] to [o].
3. H_1 may be pronounced as [h], H_2 as [x], and H_3 as [γ] (the last spelled here as "q"). I have included these pronunciations in my ritual words. These may be converted to a non-laryngeal version easily enough by removing those symbols. The same could not be said of writing the words without the laryngeals. Since there was a PIE [o] which was original, rather than originating in *H_3e, and an [a] which did not come from *H_2e, a laryngeal-less version can not be easily converted without consulting references.
4. For ease of reading aloud and typesetting, I've used "q" instead of "γ."

Consonants

Consonants in Proto-Indo-European have the same value as in English, with the following exceptions:

bh, dh, gh, kh — These are aspirated consonants, and are pronounced like the English [b], [d], [g], and [k], followed by a short puff of air. We actually do have these sounds in English, but don't notice them. You can get a feel for this by comparing the [p] sound in "stop" to that in "pit;" the latter is aspirated.

g — Always hard, as in "get."

ǵ — A palatalized [g]. If you say the sound [g], you will see that it is done at the back of the mouth,

by the entrance to the throat. A [ǵ] is the same sound, except pronounced at the palate; that is to say, the roof of the mouth. It may take a bit of practice to do this, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as [gy].

g^w — A labialized [g]. It's a [g] pronounced with the lips rounded. This is the voiced version of [k^w]; see below on how to pronounce that.

ḱ — A palatalized [k]. If you say the sound [k], you will see that it is done at the back of the mouth, by the entrance to the throat. A [ḱ] is the same sound, except pronounced at the palate; that is to say, the roof of the mouth. It may take a bit of practice to do this, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as [ky]. It is essentially the first sound of "cute."

k^w — A labialized [k]. It's a [k] pronounced with the lips rounded. This is, in fact, the way that the English "qu" is pronounced. You may have been taught, like me, that "qu" is pronounced as a [k] followed by a [w], but it is in fact a single sound. This may be seen clearly by emphasizing it: say "just be quiet" with a strong emphasis on each word and a short pause between, and you'll see the [k^w] at the beginning of "quiet."

m — When this is found without a vowel associated with it, it is pronounced the way you would answer if somebody asked what sound an "m" made.

n — When this is found without a vowel associated with it, it is pronounced the way you would answer if somebody asked what sound an "n" made.

q — In my spelling, a representation of the voiced version of [x]. (See below.)

r — There is no way of knowing if the Proto-Indo-European [r] was trilled, rolled, or pronounced like the English [r]. It is a matter of personal taste, then. I like to give it a bit of a trill. When this is found without a vowel associated with it, it is pronounced like "fur" without the [f].

x — As the German or Scots "ch" (ach, loch). In linguistic terms, an unvoiced velar fricative.

y — Always a consonant, never a vowel.

Vowels

"a" as the "o" in "hot"

Weight

Machine

Rote

Lute

Long vowels are just that — the short vowels held a little longer.

The vowels aren't exactly as in English, but have what is sometimes called their "Latinate" or "Italian" value. In English, our vowels have a touch of the diphthong to them, especially the long ones. For instance, an English long "a" (which would be equivalent to an Italian [e] with a bit of Italian [i] after it. This is particularly obvious is "day." Proto-Indo-European vowels are spoken without this slight glide.

Accented vowels are technically said with a higher pitch than unaccented ones; the stress accent we use in English is a later development. A good way to get a feel for this is to think of how your voice goes up at the end of a question.

Diphthongs

Ai — As "Aye, aye, sir."

Ei — As the English “a,” as I said above.
Eu — This sound doesn’t exist in English; pronounce it like the two vowels spoken in quick succession.
Oi — As in English “coin.”
Ou — As in “lout.”

Appendix 3

Clarifying Butter

The process of clarifying butter removes the solids from it. In cooking, the advantage is that it has a higher smoke point than regular butter, which means that food can be cooked at a higher temperature. In ritual, there are two advantages. The first is practical; clarified butter takes longer to solidify. This means that butter can be melted before the ritual , with a very strong chance that it will not resolidify before it is needed. (If it does, it can be spooned and then melted over the fire.) The second is aesthetic; ordinary melted butter is not particularly attractive as it is cloudy and non-homogeneous. Clarified butter, on the other hand, is a clear golden color.

Clarifying butter is quite simple. Melt unsalted butter over very low heat. Do not stir. Both the low heat and the not stirring are very important; remember that you are removing the solids, so avoid anything that might cause mixing. Once the butter melts completely, allow it to sit on the heat until any bubbling stops. (If you are using very low heat, this bubbling will be the result of water escaping.) Once it has stopped, remove anything floating on the surface of the butter with a spoon. When you have done that, carefully pour the liquid out into another container. Most of the solids in the butter will have sunk to the bottom, so be careful that you don't pour them out with the liquid. You will lose some of the liquid this way but that can't be avoided. Alternatively, you can pour the butter through a coffee filter in a funnel. After the butter has cooled, cover it and store it in the refrigerator.

While clarified butter will keep longer than regular butter, there should be no need to make it more than a day or two before a ritual.

Appendix 4

Marking Out Sacred Space

It is very hard to mark out a perfectly rectangular space by eye. However, there is a fairly simple way to do it.

Push a stick into the ground in what will be the center. From this, pace out what will be half the length of the space to the east, and push a stick in there as well. Turn to one side, take half as many paces as you did for the length, and push a stick in. Return to the second stick, pace the same distance out in the other direction, and push another stick in. Then get down on the ground and sight among the three sticks, to align this new one with the other two eastern ones.

To form the gates, take one pace to either side of the eastern center stick, and mark each spot with sticks, again aligning them with the others.

Return to the center, and pace out to the west the same number of paces you did for the east. Push a stick in the ground there. You now have the long axis marked.

From this new stick, pace out as many steps in one direction as you did for each corner of the eastern side, and mark it with another stick. Adjust the location of this stick so that it aligns with the space's center stick and the corner of the space diagonally opposite.

Repeat for the last corner, making sure you align it with both the other two sticks of this side, and the center and diagonally opposite sticks.

A more precise rectangle can be constructed by using the Pythagorean theorem. Take a chain that is twelve feet long and join the ends to make a circle. Mark it so that it is divided into lengths of three, four, and five feet. You will be using the equation of $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$ to make a right angle.

Put a stake where your center will be. Pace out half of the length of the space towards the east and mark it there as well. Stretch out the four-foot length of the chain so that it is in line with your to marks; attach it to the second stake, and give it its own stake at the other end. Stretch the chain out by the mark between the three- and five-foot sections, and stake it down once it is taut. You will have formed a right triangle, with its right angle being between your space's centerline and what will be one of its edges. You now have a straight line which you can use to measure out the eastern edge of your space. Repeat this process after you've paced out each corner. Check your alignment by sighting along a line made by diagonally opposing corners and your center stake, and adjust as necessary.

However you mark your space, once you have done so, pound holes into the ground where each mark will be. For this you can use a mallet with either a short piece of sawed off a pole like the ones you'll be using, or the sort of spike designed to hold flags in the ground. Put the sticks back in the holes so you can find them again easily during the sacred space ritual.

The pounded holes are necessary unless you have very soft soil, as it is surprisingly difficult to pound poles into the ground well enough so that they won't fall over.

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