

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Online International Conference of PAEAN

**The Future of Contemporary Paganism:  
Challenges and Developments**

**25.05.2015 at 18:00-21:00 / CET.**



**Pagan/Academic European Associates Network**

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The conference is in cooperation with Pagan Federation

International

The lectures focus on the different aspects of development of Contemporary Paganism and its challenges. The online conference in a platform in which scholars, pagans and non-pagans can engage in, includes, amongst other things, an inter-religious dialogue that will hopefully increase learning, understanding and developing from the combined discussions.

**Introduction and arrival/log-in – 18:00**

*To log in to the conference, please go to the following link at the time of the conference: [www.anymeeting.com/PaganFederationInternational](http://www.anymeeting.com/PaganFederationInternational)*

18:00 - 18:15 - Opening speeches

**The First Panel – Pagan Theology, Technology and Rituals**

Time: 18:15-19:15

***“Pagan Theology” and the future of Paganism-***

*Mr. Stanislav Panin (Lecturer in Philosophy at the D. Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology of Russia)*

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A concept of “Pagan Theology” is usually associated with Michael York’s book *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* published in 2003. This concept has been producing a number of discussions throughout last decade and particularly in the last few years both inside and outside Pagan community.

In 2012 and 2013 a related discussion on “Pagan Studies” emerged with a critical publication of M. Davidsen in “*Method and Theory in Study of Religion*” (24, 2012, pp. 183-199) followed by answers published in “*Pomegranate*” by E.D. White (Vol. 14, №1, 2012, pp. 5-21) and M. York (Vol. 15, №1-2, 2013, pp. 136-150). In my presentation, I will try to focus on several important problems related to “Pagan Theology”.

The first problem I am focused on is the concept “Pagan Theology” itself (or Pagan Theologies as C. Craemer put it in her book *Seeking the Mystery: An Introduction to Pagan Theologies*). The study of this question includes an examination of academic and religious roots of this “research programme”.

The second problem is a view on “Pagan Theology” from the perspective of the academia. While for some scholars “Pagan Theology” appears to be a legitimate field of study and/or “research programme”, for others it is an attempt of some Pagans to act in the academia according to their personal interests instead of achieving academic goals.

Finally, the third problem is a discussion on “Pagan Theology” emerged among Pagans. Not only academic but also insider’s reflections of this topic are very ambiguous. While some Pagans welcome this concept as a new view on paganism and a step in the development of Pagan community, others are very critical about it describing it as dogmatic, overgeneralizing and ecumenist approach that is not suitable for Paganism.

***The Oracle of the Healing Serpent – Ancient Rites and Technoetic Arts-***

*Dr. Lila Moore (Advanced Research Associate at the I-Node of Planetary Collegium, Greece, Plymouth University, UK ) Lecturer in Spiritual Cinema, Department of Mysticism and Spirituality, Zefat Academic College*

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In this paper I will demonstrate aspects of my research and practice which is pursued within a syncretic and technoetic arts context. It brings together serpent imagery relating to healing rites and the feminine. I reflect on Australian Aboriginal and Peruvian mythic and ritualistic depictions of serpents created by contemporary artists, e.g., Australian filmmaker Michelle Mahrer, Aboriginal choreographer and dancer Bernadette Walong, shaman and painter Pablo Amaringo (Peru).

To this will be added imagery and emerging knowledge from my forthcoming masterclass in Kefalonia, Greece where I'll explore with a group of participants the annual ceremony of the Holy Snakes of the Virgin Mary. The phenomenon and centuries-old tradition involves the interaction of people with harmless snakes that magically appear at the village of Markopoulo during the Theotokos. The ceremonies with the snakes reportedly result in healing cases, which transpire during altered states of consciousness. The exploration's method in the field will be based on embodied, kinetic experience.

The phenomenon may be the manifestation of a regional morphic field, 'spirit of a place,' with roots in the healing practices and snake goddesses of Minoan and Mycenae cultures. There could be a connection to the oracle of the Egyptian snake goddess Wadjet and the python of Delphi. Moreover, the neighboring islands of Kefalonia and Ithaca are associated with Homer, with the latter generally identified as Odysseus' home. Homer's descriptions of healers and healing are vital to this discussion, including the sacred snake of Asklepios, the god of healing.

Overall, I propose that the healing serpent archetype is finding its way back to our consciousness through diverse technoetic means and arts. It has been kept alive within the mysteries of the sacred feminine for millennia, and is now rising in visions of contemporary artists who engage with shamanic practices, awaiting our participation.

19:15 -19:20 - Break

## **The Second Panel – Western Esotericism practices and the academy**

Time 19:25-21:00

*Is there a Future for Neopaganism in the Holy Land?: Past and Present in the Shaping of a Community-Building Discourse among Israeli Pagans, 1998-2013-*  
*Mr. Shai Feraro, (PhD student Tel Aviv University).*

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This paper will present the discourse maintained by Israeli Pagans when discussing questions of organization and of religious-political rights. I will argue that although Israeli Pagans may employ a community-building discourse, they constantly fear the perceived negative consequences of public exposure. They see the bond between (Jewish) religion and the state in Israel as a main factor in the intolerance and even persecution that they expect from the government and from religious fundamentalists. The result of this discourse during the first ten years or so of the presence of Modern Paganism in Israel can be seen through the metaphor of a dance, in which participants advance two steps forward, only to retreat one step back.

Ronald Hutton's recent claims regarding the benefits which the Revisionist Model in Pagan history holds for modern-day Pagans will be set against this background. According to Hutton, this model supplies Modern Pagans with a "greater sense of integration into, and a common inheritance with, the parent society." (Hutton 2011: 231-232). Considering the unique nature of Israeli society and identity politics, can Israeli Pagans expect to reap similar benefits? Canaanite reconstructionism and the recent establishment of an Israeli branch of the Pagan Federation will be discussed.

## ***Influences of Bulgarian folklore and ancient traditions on Contemporary Paganism and Magic***

*Ms. Martina Capuleti (Editor of Pagan World in Pagan Federation International)*

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The Bulgarian nation has one of the richest folk heritages not only in Europe but in the entire world. The culture, history and heritage of Bulgaria have been marked by a number of ancient civilizations, including the Thracians, Slavs and especially Bulgars. Many of the old rituals such as the Kukeri, Baba Marta and others are still kept alive in the modern Bulgarian culture and are practiced by a vast number of Bulgarian citizens with a different religious background. Bulgaria is officially a secular nation and the Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion which gives a lot of freedom for the individual to practice and express spiritual and religious ideas freely. The growing interest in this ancient ritual and spiritual heritage is nowadays the reason of the creation of many pagan groups all over the territory of Bulgaria. These groups and associations are trying to gather the forgotten knowledge, wisdom and customs of their ancestors and to practice the ancient rites in order to understand better the religious paths of the ancient inhabitants of the country implementing the folklore in their everyday life. Bulgarian folklore and oral traditions are not only influencing the creation of various spiritual groups and historical reenactment associations but also influencing modern magical groups and societies with an already established structure and magical teachings. The folklore and ancient magic has apparently successfully been incorporated amongst the practitioners of different background and interest in both paganism and magic. The present paper focuses on the influences of Bulgarian folklore and ancient traditions of different tribes once living in the territory of nowadays Bulgaria on contemporary paganism, religious groups, and associations as well as on contemporary magic.

***The Reconstruction of the Slavic Paganism-***

*Mr. Gwiddon Harveston (National Coordinator of Pagan Federation International in Russia)*

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The discussion is intended to provide a basic overview of what we know about Slavic pagan roots, while focusing primarily on the Eastern Slavs (ancestors of modern Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians). Gwiddon is using a variety of literary Russian sources, many of which are not available outside of Russia and have never been translated. Modern Slavic pagan movement in Russia will receive some attention, along with the discussion on how research into folklore, ethnography, archeology and the occult continues to transform modern Slavic pagan philosophy in Russia. Everyone is welcome.

21:00- closing speech

We wish to thank the PAEAN conference committee for organizing this event and the lecturers who participates in it.

**The PAEAN Conference committee:**

Morgana Sythove

Hili Ratzon

Daniel Exposito Romero