

Research and Composition - Argument

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Clergy Training Program; Generalist Study Program

Requirement: Students shall submit at least two papers of 1500 words in length minimum, one expository in nature and one which expresses a position or argument; both of which should include a list of works consulted and/or cited. Acceptable submissions may include college level research papers, published articles, or any papers submitted for other requirements in any of ADF's Study Programs. Papers must demonstrate thorough research techniques, employ reliable sources, demonstrate a clear writing style, be well organized and make use of standard English syntax, usage and grammar.

STONE CIRCLES AND ADF

The venues used by Groves in ADF vary considerably, from small groves of trees, to open spaces in parks, to people's living rooms. Stonecreed Grove in Cleveland, Ohio, often uses a large park structure with working fireplace for their winter rituals. Awen's Breath Protogrove in Los Angeles, California, often rents a Unitarian Church hall. Cedarlight Grove in Baltimore, Maryland uses the back yard of their church building, weather permitting. And Sonoran Sunrise Grove in Tucson, Arizona, has access to a purpose-built stone circle.

Church halls, backyards and living rooms are practical answers to the difficult question of finding space for Groves to meet. No one would question those. Stonecreed's park building is quite appropriate for holding winter rites in the Norse or Anglo-Saxon traditions – ancient symbols often took place in large drinking halls. Medieval Guilds in Sweden used to drink in halls at their meetings, and there was said to be an inexhaustible supply of mead in the great hall, Valhalla, overseen by the God Odin (Davidson, 42-45).

But what of stone circles? If a Grove is able to meet outside in nature, which is arguably appropriate for a nature religion such as ours, why not just meet in parks or groves of trees? After all, the ancient Druids were said by the ancient writer, Pomponius Mela, to meet in "caves or hidden groves" (Koch, 31).

Most ADF Groves are situated in parts of the United States, Canada and the UK where there is plenty of rainfall. Trees tend to grow in these places of their own accord, without human intervention. Sonoran Sunrise Grove is sited in Tucson, Arizona, which is part of the Sonoran Desert. This desert, while wetter than some, still can only seem to support small mesquite and palo verde trees, which are more like large bushes than trees in the wild. To plant a grove of larger trees would be possible, but would also require a great deal of added water, a resource in short supply in the desert. And even if water were applied aggressively, there is no guarantee that a short interruption in the water supplies might not occur, killing the entire grove.

Stone, however, is plentiful in the desert and cannot die from lack of water or care.

But a circle of standing stones is reminiscent of the stone age stone circles of Britain, Ireland and France. Everyone in ADF knows that Stonehenge wasn't built by the Druids, even though the general public may have this unfounded idea in their heads. Also, there is no evidence that Stonehenge was ever used by the Druids. Isn't the Sonoran Sunrise Grove merely perpetuating a misconception?

I would be the first person to admit that the Druids did not build Stonehenge or the other stone circles, like those at Avebury and elsewhere. Stonehenge was built in successive phases from 2600 BCE to 1400 BCE (Chippindale, 205) and the Druids didn't show up in Britain before the arrival of Celtic culture, beginning around 600 BCE (Davies, 22). There also is no evidence that the ancient Druids ever used Stonehenge, though some modern ones did bury the ashes of their dead there as recently as 1905 (Chippindale, 174).

ADF is a modern religion based on the cultures and religions of all the ancient Indo-Europeans. While we sometimes style ourselves as 'Druids' and even have an Irish name, we are actually far more than just Celts. ADF is made up of people following the hearth cultures of the Celts, Norse, Romans, Slavs, Vedics and Greeks, among others. Our concept of the Well may be Celtic, coming from the old custom of throwing precious objects into rivers and lakes, but our cosmology borrows heavily from the ideas of the Norse and Vedics, among others, including the centrality of fire and the existence of a World Tree connecting Heaven, Underworld and the Midworld where we live.

Therefore, it shouldn't matter if the Druids didn't have anything to do with Stonehenge or any of the other stone circles in northwest Europe. The more important question might be whether any of the stone circles could be connected to the Indo-Europeans.

About the time of the building of Stonehenge II, about 2300 BCE, when the blue stones were transported to the site from the Preseli Mountains in South Wales, there is evidence of the presence

of the Beaker Folk at Stonehenge, attested in the presence of Beaker pottery shards found at the level of the blue stones (Atkinson, 64). The Beaker Folk seemed to have arrived in Britain from the Corded Ware – Battle Ax cultures of central Europe. We don't know much about the Beaker Folk, except for the archeological evidence from their graves. The presence of rich graves, including within them important weapons such as axes, would suggest a less egalitarian society with a love of martial display different from the people who preceded them. An elite society could mean the presence of a hierarchy with a chieftainship at the top. The Beaker Folk introduced the use of metal to Britain and later developed into the Wessex Culture. A Beaker Folk warrior aristocracy may be the beginnings of Indo-European culture and language at Stonehenge (Atkinson, 154-156).

The later building works at Stonehenge also tend to point to an elitist view of the place. Earlier henges, such as that at Avebury, had been large, open affairs that could comfortably seat thousands of people on the embankments, each with a clear view of the center of the circles. About 2000 BCE these open henges were abandoned, and the existence of a field wall across the entrance to Avebury from the Avenue indicates that the site had fallen out of sacred use. Indeed, all the large, open henges were abandoned by this time, leaving only Stonehenge not only occupied, but growing. This new henge, though, had closely spaced stones arranged in a small, tight circle, which would have made it very difficult for anyone outside to see what was going on within (Hutton, 98-100). The presence of an elite warrior aristocracy, along Indo-European lines, would explain this nicely.

In May, 2002, a discovery was made at Stonehenge by Wessex Archeology. The remains of a man were found near Stonehenge in a site filled with Beaker pottery shards. The body, dubbed the 'Amesbury Archer,' was buried with Beaker pots, his longbow and numerous arrowheads. He also had two gold hair tresses, which is significant as it was the Beaker Folk who introduced metal to Britain. But what is even more remarkable about this find is that testing concluded that the man had originally come from Austria or Switzerland, home of the Indo-European Corded Ware – Battle Ax cultures, and was obviously an important person at Stonehenge. The richness of his grave also highlighted the growing inequality among the peoples of the time, also indicative of an Indo-European cultural intrusion (Wessex Archeology, "Importance of the Finds").

The archeological record indicates that Indo-Europeans oversaw the building of the later phases of Stonehenge. But what does that have to do with a Grove that has a Pan-Celtic hearth culture?

A person or Grove usually chooses a hearth culture because of ancestry or because the pantheon and culture of that hearth culture resonates with them. Sonoran Sunrise Grove chose Pan-Celtic as their hearth culture because the original members were all of Celtic descent, with ancestors coming from Wales, Ireland, Scotland, etc. (among others). Is it possible that these ancestors might continue back to the peoples who oversaw the building of Stonehenge? Weren't there a number of

population changes in later history when there may have been a complete expulsion of the original inhabitants in favor of the invaders? In particular, might not there have been complete changes in population during the Celtic migrations into the British Isles and later during the Anglo-Saxon invasions of the 5th - 6th centuries CE?

During the 8th century BCE there is evidence in parts of SE Britain of the abandonment of farms particularly in the Upper and Middle Thames Valley (Cunliffe, 37). This period saw the creation of hill forts in Britain, but many of them seem to have had pastoral uses, for the penning in of cattle for extended family groupings. Others show signs of serving much larger communities. While there is no archeological evidence of battles at these hill forts, it cannot be ruled out that these enclosures were created for defensive means against the incoming Celts (Cunliffe, 50-52).

There is evidence of cultural stress in the British Isles starting about 700 BCE, but there is not much evidence to indicate it was due to the uprooting of the population by invading hordes of Celts. This time may also have been a time of climate change. Starting with the eruption of the Hekla volcano on Iceland in 1159 BCE, which may have devastated Britain's climate for more than a decade, climactic changes may have caused a dramatic fall in population. Traces of ash from this eruption have been found in Scottish peat bogs (Cunliffe, 68). A smaller indigenous population may have made Celtic colonization easier.

Excavations at hillforts in North Wales, particularly those of Moel y Gaer, Breiddin and Dinorben show continuous occupation beginning as early as 1000 BCE and continuing as late as the 3rd or 4th century BCE (Cunliffe, 78-80). This indicates that in Wales, at least, there may not have been any great overturn of population. It was not uncommon for Indo-European invaders to conquer as an elite fighting force and then rule over the conquered populations. It is possible that this may be how the Celtic tribes came to rule over Britain, which would not require the expulsion of existing populations. The only two Celtic migrations that archeologists and historians can be fairly sure of are the migrations of early Le Tene peoples from Gaul to Yorkshire in the 5th century BCE, attested in the archeological record, and of the Belgic tribes from Gaul to southeast Britain in the 2nd to 3rd centuries BCE, as mentioned by Roman historians (Cunliffe, 84).

The fall of Roman power in Britain in the 5th century CE saw the complete takeover of what is now England by the Anglo-Saxons. They managed to do this over the course of a single century. There is literary evidence that some Britons, at least, fled into Wales when their kingdoms were overthrown (Davies, 67-68). For a long time it has been assumed that this Anglo-Saxon takeover was the result of massive migrations of these peoples from the area of Friesland in what is now the northern part of the Netherlands. Archeologists currently have doubts about the size of that migration due to a number of factors. The first is the matter of Anglo-Saxon ships. These were

meant to be rowed, as they had no sails. These ships were unsuitable for cargo and were probably fast warships. The earliest sails in the archeological record didn't appear until 800 CE, three hundred years after the invasions (Jones, 75). Also, there is no mention in Anglo-Saxon literature of mass migrations, and the tales indicated that only three voyages were enough to give a man status, while a mass migration might require hundreds of crossings, in their tiny boats, to get all those people across the Channel from Europe (Jones, 87).

A recent study of Y-Chromosome evidence (which mutates more slowly than the X-Chromosome) shows that the men of central England share the same genotype as those of Friesland, while the men of North Wales are totally different (Weale). The study indicates that there is a marked barrier between the populations of North Wales and Central England, while there is no barrier at all between Central England and Friesland. This implies a population shift in Central England, at least, from Celtic to Anglo-Saxon. If many Celtic men were killed in battle and their women raped, the chromosome change could occur as easily as in a total population shift, without wholesale uprooting of populations. The study measured the Y-Chromosome, which only exists in males. Genetic studies are still young, though, and while this evidence may revolutionize current thought about Anglo-Saxon mass migration, archeologists have still to address the matter. It would be helpful if studies of this kind were made in other parts of England, Cornwall and South Wales. The historical and archeological records indicate that the Anglo-Saxons may not have penetrated very far into Wales, north or south. The Anglo-Saxon King Offa of Mercia built his boundary dike, to mark the edge of his rule, east of the Brittonic Kingdom of Gwent, showing that South Wales remained out of Anglo-Saxon control (Davies, 64-66).

In the excavations at Stonehenge, another burial was found near to that of the 'Amesbury Archer.' This find, dubbed the 'Boscombe Bowmen,' was of a group of seven people. There were three adult males and one teenage male in the group. Skull shape and other indicators show that the people were probably related. Chemical tests were done on their teeth, and the results showed that these people originally came from an area with high background radiation. The only areas close enough to Stonehenge that these people could have come from were in the Lake District and South Wales. As these people were present at Stonehenge during the time of the arrival of the blue stones from the Preseli Mountains in South Wales, archeologists assume that these people were from there as well (Wessex Archeology, "The Boscombe Bowmen").

It is thus possible that at least a portion of the people who built Stonehenge may share a genetic link with the people who currently live in Wales. And all of them, from the Beaker Folk, to the Celts, to the Anglo-Saxons, were Indo-Europeans. As ADF is an inclusive, Indo-European based religion, stone circles must surely have a place in our Groves.

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