

## Magic 1

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**Question 1: Discuss the importance of the action of the magico-religious function as it is seen within the context of general Indo-European culture. (minimum 100 words)**

According to Dumézil's theory of tripartitization the magico-religious function was part of the first function of society in Indo-European cultures and would have been handled by the priests.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the culture of the ancient Iranians (Avestan culture), the *zaotar* (Priest), a member of the priestly class known as *Magi*, would have handled sacrifices, performed of rites, and other magic workings that were needed by the community. In other Indo-European societies it would have also been handled by those among the priestly class; the *Druids* in Celtic lands, the *Flamen* in Rome, and the *Brahmans* in Vedic culture.

**[Introduction to questions two and three: As different Indo-European societies developed, the figure of the magician in those societies evolved in differing ways, for example: in Roman society the magical function evolved, it was divided away from the priestly function and regulated by a different set of laws while in the evolution of Gaelic culture the magical and priestly functions remained entwined within the same cultural functionary.]**

**Question 2: Discuss your understanding of the evolution of the magician from early to late periods within one Indo-European culture. (minimum 300 words)**

According to Herodotus (*Histories* 1.101<sup>2</sup>), the *Magi* were a tribe of priests of the Medes. They were very powerful in Median society until the unification of the Median and Persian Empires in 550 BCE. Herodotus mentions the *Magians* as sacrificers when "the *Magians* poured libations to the heroes who were slain at Troy"<sup>3</sup> and again when he discusses the Magi "sacrificing white horses to make the stream favourable"<sup>4</sup> and when the *Magians* offered "victims to the Winds, charming them with the help of conjurers."<sup>5</sup> Herodotus also mentions the *Magians* as interpreters of dreams (1.107<sup>6</sup>, 1.108<sup>7</sup>, 1.120<sup>8</sup>, 1.128<sup>9</sup> & 7.19<sup>10</sup>) and omens (7.37<sup>11</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Winn, Shan. *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness*. Lanham: University Press of America. 1995. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus 1:101. *The History of Herodotus*. Trans. George Campbell Macaulay. Vol. 1. New York: MacMillan and Co., 1904. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Histories* 7:43. Retrieved 07/31/2008. <[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus\\_history\\_book7.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus_history_book7.php)>.

<sup>4</sup> *Histories* 7:113. Retrieved 07/31/2008. <[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus\\_history\\_book7.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus_history_book7.php)>.

<sup>5</sup> *Histories* 7:191. Retrieved 07/31/2008. <[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus\\_history\\_book7.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/herodotus/herodotus_history_book7.php)>.

<sup>6</sup> Herodotus *The History of Herodotus*. George Rawlinson, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, John Gardner Wilkinson. New York: D. Appleton and Company. 192.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 129.

It seems likely that the term *Magi* referred not only to the hereditary caste of priests in the Medes but the priestly class of the Persians who also lived in that region. There certainly seems to be enough linguistic evidence to support this (see later entries in this report). However, in the texts of the Avesta, the term appears once only, as (Younger Avestan) *moghu tbiš* meaning “hostile to a member of the tribe.”<sup>12</sup> It seems that this implies that the Magi were originally the priests of the old religion, opposed to the teachings of Zoroaster.

Around the time of Alexander’s conquest it appears that the *Magi* were executed in mass. According to one manuscript “he seized and slew those who went in the garments of *Magians*.”<sup>13</sup> This did not end the influence of the *Magians*. In a cuneiform text from Babylon, known as the *Dynastic prophecy*, many were reported to have fled and later gathered and taught each other what they remembered. In this way the religious practices of the *Magians* was preserved.

During the Sasanian period the word *magu* meant the “chief of the magus”<sup>14, 15</sup> and eventually evolved into the Pahlavi *Magopat* which later Persians recognized as *Mobad* or *Mobed*, meaning an ordained member of the Zarathushti priesthood.<sup>16</sup> It seems that they must have at some time agreed to join the Zoroastrians and eventually became their religious leaders.

Though it seems likely that folk magic did take place to some extent, it also appears that magic was primarily the realm of the priests and that those accused of performing magic could have been greatly punished. The *Denkard* warns against the use of magic saying it is one of, “the five vices of Ahriman”<sup>17</sup> and that “men become tyrannical owing to them.”<sup>18</sup> It goes on to say that any “man given to magic should strengthen especially good intentions or the thought of loving people well; for by this the vice of the evil eye or the intention of doing harm to people is injured and the power of the *Druj* of magic is weakened.”<sup>19</sup> The *Denkard* also cautions “that man should not as far as possible remain naked” because if his body is seen naked he could be “subject to much injury from magicians.”<sup>20</sup>

***Question 3: Compare and contrast the culturally institutionalized position of the magician within at least two Indo-European cultures. (minimum 300 words)***

In ancient Ireland the Druids were bards<sup>21</sup>, judges<sup>22</sup>, magicians<sup>23</sup>, historians<sup>24</sup>, and healers<sup>25</sup>. They were the professional class of the Irish culture. They were both feared and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>12</sup> Boyce, Mary. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol. 1. Brill: Leiden, 1975. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Boyce, Mary & Frantz Grenet. *History of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*. Vol. 3, New York: E.J. Brill.1991.16.

<sup>14</sup> Bagli, Jehan. “Training for Priesthood in the Modern World: A Zarathushtrian Perspective.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9.2 (2006): 80.

<sup>15</sup> Pekala, S. Kori. “Evil and How to Combat Evil: Magic, Spells, and Curses in the Avesta.” Dissertation. Harvard University, 2000. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Bagli, Jehan. “Training for Priesthood in the Modern World: A Zarathushtrian Perspective.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9.2 (2006): 80.

<sup>17</sup> Denkard 3:295. Retrieved 08/04/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/denkard/dk3s275.html>>.

<sup>18</sup> Denkard 3:295. Retrieved 08/04/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/denkard/dk3s275.html>>.

<sup>19</sup> Denkard 3:295. Retrieved 08/04/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/denkard/dk3s275.html>>.

<sup>20</sup> Denkard 3:340. Retrieved 8/8/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/denkard/dk3s275.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis, Peter Berresford. *The Druids*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub Co. 1995. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 189.

revered. There seem to be resources that argue both for<sup>26</sup> and against<sup>27</sup> the Druids as a hereditary class. Druids were well known to be magicians in the ancient world and were often compared to the Magi of the Persians. In *The Druids* Ellis quotes Pliny, ‘even today Briton is still spell bound by magic, and performs its rites with so much ritual that she might almost seem to be the source of Persian customs.’<sup>28</sup>

The *Magi* of the ancient Persians were a professional class of people that held the positions of priests, magistrates, and healers. Despite arguments to the contrary there is evidence that this social class was not hereditary. In the Gathas, the earliest of the Iranian sacred texts, there are no commandments that specifically identify the priesthood as a closed caste. Nor are there any in the later parts of the Avesta.

There are commandments in the *Hordad Yasht*<sup>29</sup> that specifically warn not to teach spells to any person other than a father, full-blood brother or an occult priest. The occult priest was a special category of priest who dealt with magic and not with the other elements of the priestly profession.

However, during this time it was very common for children to follow in his parent’s footsteps and there are a number of passages in the Avesta which indicate that a person was free to choose his profession including the priesthood. In the *Vendidad* it says “let him who wants knowledge, be taught the holy word... (during regular parts of day and night) ... until he learns all the words taught by former teachers (*aethrapaitis*)” (Vd 4:44-45<sup>30</sup>).

Zarathushtra himself prays that King *Vishtaspa*, who had previously been a warrior, have ten sons, three to become priests, three to become warriors, three to become pastoralists, and one to succeed the King (*Vishtasp Yasht* 1:3<sup>31</sup>). Further evidence that the priestly caste was not hereditary can be found in *Haoma*’s curse on those that do not offer him his rightful portion of the sacrifice (the jaw, the tongue, and the left eye<sup>32</sup>). He curses these sinners to have no priest born into the household.<sup>33</sup> This implies that any household could produce a priest.

**Question 4: Identify the terms used within one Indo-European language to identify ‘magic’ and ‘magician’ examining what these terms indicate about the position of the magician and the practice of his or her art. (minimum 100 words)**

Before getting too far into the analysis of the words used in the Avesta for ‘magician’ and ‘magic,’ I should briefly discuss the origin of the word ‘magic’ (in the English language) itself. It is derived from the Greek *magikos*, which was derived from the Persian *magos*. This word is

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 247.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 199.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 212.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, Peter Berresford. *The Druids*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub Co. 1995. 157.

<sup>27</sup> *The Encyclopedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Science, Literature and General Information*. 11th . Vol. III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910. 597.

<sup>28</sup> Pliny qtd in Ellis, Peter Berresford. *The Druids*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub Co. 1995. 247.

<sup>29</sup> Yasht 4:10. Retrieved 8/8/2008. <[http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt4\\_bi.htm](http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt4_bi.htm)>.

<sup>30</sup> Yasht 1:3. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd4sbe.htm>>.

<sup>31</sup> Vishtasp Yasht 1:3. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/fragment/vytsbe.htm>>.

<sup>32</sup> Yasna 11:4. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y9to11s.htm>>.

<sup>33</sup> Yasna 11:5-6. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y9to11s.htm>>.

found in Avestan and Old Persian as well as Median, as evidenced by Herodotus's observations that the *Magoi* were the priestly class of the Median people. It has been suggested that the term *magauuan* might have been the original source for this word, a term that designates a person connected with ritual. However, if this is so we must consider that the root of that word is *maga*, which seems to denote a ritual exchange of gifts between the gods and sacrificers to the gods.<sup>34</sup>

The word for magic in the Avestan, Old Iranian, is *maqθrəm*.<sup>35</sup> The Priest or magician (which were essentially the same thing) in Iranian culture may have been addressed by any number of names throughout the various periods of Iranian history. The terms used in the Gathic hymns for Priest are *ratu* (Ys 14.5, 27.13<sup>36</sup>) and *zaotar*, or *zaotâ* (Ys 33.6<sup>37</sup>). *Ratu* means a righteous leader, while *zaotar* comes from the pre-Zarathushtrian Sanskrit term *haotar*, an invoker of the Divine.

The word *âthravan* was a term used for priests in the Younger Avesta.<sup>38</sup> There seem to have been two categories or schools of âthravans: the memorizing and the guarding priests. It seems the "memorizing" one was the standard priest, and the "guarding" one was a priest of an "occult" order (Yashts 4.9<sup>39</sup>, 5.86<sup>40</sup>, 14.5<sup>41</sup>) that protected the magical rites of the priests.

In the later Gathic era the title of *aethrapaiti*, or teacher, was also used. In later Pahlavi/Persian this term became *Herbad* or *Ervad*.<sup>42</sup> Generally, the magicians of Iran were called, at least by the Greeks, *Magi*. It seems generally accepted that the *Magi* (plural for Magus) were members of a sacerdotal class.

The words in Avestan for sorcerer were *yâtumaiti* [*yâtumañt*] or *yâtavô* [*yâtu*]<sup>43</sup>, which could also mean a devil, a wizard, or a person who worships demons. This indicates how the Avestans clearly believed that there were sorcerers conducting evil magic for the advancement of Chaos just as the priests performed their rites for the advancement of Order. In fact, the primary form of magic conducted in the Avestas seems to be that used to counteract curses and the magical workings of sorcerers.<sup>44</sup>

***Question 5: In Norse culture we see magic divided into to primary methodologies known as Galdr and Seidhr. Galdr is very much the formal magic of sound, word and poetry meaning literally to intone while Seidhr is the magic of the spirits and is used by the folk in their everyday lives to assist in their crafts and arts. Compare the methodologies of spoken word***

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Slocum, Jonathan & Scott L. Harvey. Old Iranian Online: Avestan Base Form Dictionary. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/aveol-BF-X.html>>.

<sup>36</sup> Yasna 27:13. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y13to27s.htm>>.

<sup>37</sup> Yasna 33:6. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y28to34.htm>>.

<sup>38</sup> Vendidad Fargard 18. 6. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd18sbe.htm>>.

<sup>39</sup> Yasht 4:9. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <[http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt4\\_bi.htm](http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt4_bi.htm)>.

<sup>40</sup> Yasht 5:86. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt5sbe.htm>>.

<sup>41</sup> Yasht 14:5. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <[http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt14\\_bi.htm](http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt14_bi.htm)>.

<sup>42</sup> Bagli, Jehan. "Training for Priesthood in the Modern World: A Zarathushtrian Perspective." Teaching Theology and Religion, 9.2 (2006): 79-84.

<sup>43</sup> Boyce, Mary. A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. 1. Brill: Leiden, 1975. 85.

<sup>44</sup> Pekala, S. Kori. "Evil and How to Combat Evil: Magic, Spells, and Curses in the Avesta." Dissertation. Harvard University, 2000.

***magic and spirit magic and discuss their cultural significance within at least one Indo-European culture. (minimum 300 words)***

Until recently there was not much evidence about what types of magic were practiced in Iranian culture. Fortunately a graduate student at Harvard, S. Kori Pekala, recently published a dissertation on the topic and it has proven to be of great value to those studying the practice of magic among the Avestans.

*Word Magic*

Word magic is often found in the form of spells. Malinowski says that spells often contain phonetic elements which may “express certain emotional states associated with the desire which is to be realized by means of the magic,” use words that “invoke, state, or command the desired aim,” and contain mythical allusions that suggest the origin of the magic.<sup>45</sup>

Curses were created to counteract the hatred of the miserly and the envious. Frequently deities who were deemed in direct opposition of whatever characteristic the evil doer was believed to exemplify were called upon in these counter-curses. In *Yasna* 60:5<sup>46</sup> *Sraosa* is called upon to disperse stinginess, while *Aredvi Sura Anahita* is expected to protect against the negative intent of “envious people” (Y 65:8<sup>47</sup>).<sup>48</sup>

Another way to strengthen *Asha* and weaken *Druj* was through priestly magic, which was performed for the purpose of renewing the cosmic order and strengthening everything that the Avestans deemed “good.” This magic is called *humaiia* “creative magic.” The oldest of spells, such as those found in the Gathas were used for this purpose, including the *Haoma* ritual (Vr. 12:2., 12:3., 12:4.<sup>49</sup>).<sup>50</sup>

*Spirit Magic*

The folk magic of the Avestans would have closely equated with the *Seidhr*, or spirit magic performed by the Norse, though it was most often used to avert curses or the negative intentions of others. Most curses in the *Yasna* are actually reverse curses that are intended to return planned evil on to its originator.

*Yasna* 65:8<sup>51, 52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Malinowski, Bronislaw. Magic, Science and Religions. Long Grove: Waveland Press. 1992. 73-74.

<sup>46</sup> *Yasna* 60:5. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <[http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy\\_zend\\_avesta/yasna/yasna\\_60.html](http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy_zend_avesta/yasna/yasna_60.html)>.

<sup>47</sup> *Yasna* 65:8. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <[http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy\\_zend\\_avesta/yasna/yasna\\_65.html](http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy_zend_avesta/yasna/yasna_65.html)>.

<sup>48</sup> Pekala, S. Kori. “Evil and How to Combat Evil: Magic, Spells, and Curses in the Avesta.” Dissertation. Harvard University, 2000. 123.

<sup>49</sup> *Visperad* 12:2-4. Retrieved 8/05/2008. <[http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy\\_zend\\_avesta/visperad/visperad\\_12.html](http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy_zend_avesta/visperad/visperad_12.html)>.

<sup>50</sup> Pekala, S. Kori. “Evil and How to Combat Evil: Magic, Spells, and Curses in the Avesta.” Dissertation. Harvard University, 2000. 75.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>52</sup> *Yasna* 65:8. Retrieved 8/08/2008. <[http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy\\_zend\\_avesta/yasna/yasna\\_65.html](http://www.ishwar.com/zoroastrianism/holy_zend_avesta/yasna/yasna_65.html)>.

*Nor the thief, or bludgeon-bearing ruffian who would slaughter the disciples, nor a sorcerer, nor a burrier of dead bodies, nor the jealous, nor the niggard, nor the godless heretic who slays disciples, nor the evil tyrant among men. Against these may our waters come as torments. As destructive may these come (?), may they come to him who has done those first (foul evils), as to him who does the last.*

There seems to also have been a practice of soul travel which is “similar to the shamanistic journeys involving a kind of “death” and return to the body.”<sup>53</sup> This usually happens as a reaction to spiritual crisis. This is seen in the case of *Arda Wiraz*<sup>54</sup> and *Kerdir*.<sup>55</sup> While it seems that *Arda Viraf* used a hallucinogen to achieve the soul travel, it isn’t clear whether *Kerdir*’s vision was induced by hallucinogens as well.

In the case of *Arda Wiraz (Arda Viraf)*, He drinks wine and a hallucinogen, and his soul travels to the next world where it is greeted by a woman who represents his faith and virtue. He is then conducted by *Srosha* in Crossing the *Chinvat bridge*, and sees the souls of the blessed (*ahlav*). Then he descends into hell and is shown the sufferings of the wicked.<sup>56</sup>

**Question 6: Discuss the existence and relative function of trance-journey magic within at least one Indo-European culture. (minimum 100 words)** The Norse have a practice known as *Seidhr*, in which the magician, almost always a woman, goes in to a trance state and ‘journeys’ to the Otherworlds or employs a spirit to do so. This practice is used to divine the answers to various questions that are brought to her by the supplicant(s). Sometimes this technique is used to see the future (often by asking a deceased person’s spirit), other times it is used to speak with the dead.

This is somewhat similar to the soul journey described in the proceeding question. In both of the Iranian cases the seer’s soul travels to both heaven and hell where he communicates with spirits and the dead. He sees future events during this journey as well and encounters the spirits of the dead.

**Question 7: Discuss the place of alphabetic symbolism (runes, Ogham, Greek letters, etc) as part of the symbolism of magical practice within one Indo-European culture examine how this alphabet may or may not relate to the earlier sound, word and poetic magical methodologies. (minimum 300 words)**

There seems to be little evidence that the Iranians practiced any form of divination by an alphabetic symbol set. In *Nicandri Theriaca* the Magi are described as using rods or sticks for divination when the author says that “the Median diviners also divine with rods (*Scholia* in

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 82.

<sup>54</sup> Translated by Prof. Martin Haug, *The Book of Arda Viraf. The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, Volume VII: Ancient Persia*, Charles F. Horne, Ph.D. (ed.), 1917. <<http://www.avesta.org/mp/viraf.html>>.

<sup>55</sup> Johnston, Sarah Iles. *Religions of the Ancient World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2004. 383.

<sup>56</sup> Translated by Prof. Martin Haug, *The Book of Arda Viraf. The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, Volume VII: Ancient Persia*, Charles F. Horne, Ph.D. (ed.), 1917. <<http://www.avesta.org/mp/viraf.html>>.

*Nicandri Theriaca* 613).<sup>57</sup> This may simply be a misidentification of the *barsom*, a bundle of rods used in ritual to symbolize the vegetable kingdom which is often praised for its bounty while performing rites, for divination rods. It could also be a reference to an ancient, but lost, practice of divination similar to one that may have been used by the Druids of Ireland.

Therefore I will instead discuss the use of oghams in the Irish culture. In modern Paganism, oghams are often used as a form of divination. Most scholars agree that the ogham is an alphabetic system. Its original origin and use, however, are widely debated. Legend tells that Ogma mac Elathan invented the ogham to “be the preserve of the learned.”<sup>58</sup>

Beithe birch b	Luis blaze/herb l	Fern alder f	Sail willow s	Nion fork/loft n	Uath fear(?) h	Dair oak d	Tinne rod/metal t	Coll hazel c	Ceirt bush q
Muin neck m	Gort field g	nGéatal wounding(?) ng	Straif sulphur z	Ruis red(ness) r	Ailm ? a	Onn ash-tree o	Úr earth u	Eadhadh ? e	Iodhadh ? i
Éabhadh ? ea	Ór gold oi	Uilleann elbow ui	Ifin pine ia	Eamhancholl double c ae	Peith soft birch p	Eite feather	Spás space	Eite thuathail reversed feather	

**Figure 1**

Originally, the ogham alphabet consisted of 20 characters (*feda*), which are arranged in four groups (*aicmi*). Each of the *aicme* is named for the first character in the series. Five extra letters were added later, possibly to facilitate the writing of manuscripts this group is called the *forfeda*. In the *Ogam Tract*, over 100 variations of the ogham are named. Some of these systems appear to be alphabetical while others appear to be numerical.

Some scholars suggest that ogham was a secret language used by the Druids for communication and divination prior to the invasion of Rome. Since, many ogham inscriptions on stone, especially those found in Wales, also are inscribed in Latin this seems unlikely. Others contend that, because existing inscriptions do not date earlier, the invention of the ogham did not occur until the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

In the *Tain*, Cuchulain arrives at the fort of the three sons of Nechtan, where he discovers a stone pillar, around which was written in ogham that every hero who passed thereby was bound to issue a challenge. This seems to imply that ogham was not a cryptic writing system but an ordinary script, meant to be read by anyone. In the same saga Cuchulain frequently cuts ogham on wands, which he leaves in the way of Medb’s army. These are brought to his friend Fergus to read.

*Sounds* - Many scholars contest the ogham was derived from Latin, as it appears that many of the *feda* were not sounds found in Irish Gaelic at the time. Others contend that the Runic alphabet is

<sup>57</sup> Jong, Albert De. *qtd. in Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*. New York: Brill Academic Publishers. 1998. 398.

<sup>58</sup> Mcmanus, Damien. *A Guide to Ogham*. Kildare: Leinster Leader Ltd., 1991. *qtd in Ellis Ogham: The Secret Language of the Druids*. Tucson: ADF Publishing

a more likely contender since this would explain the presence of “H” and “Z,” which did not exist in Irish, as well as vocalic and consonantal variants “U” vs. “W” unknown in Latin.<sup>59</sup>

*Words* - The characters of the ogham don't just represent a letter sound they also appear to represent various concepts or things found in the Irish world including trees, cows, dogs, and agricultural (the *Ogam Tract*<sup>60</sup>). In fact, it is said that the training of the Gaelic poet or *file* involved learning one hundred and fifty varieties of ogham, and it seems that most of these varieties are provided in *The Ogam Tract*.

*Poetic*- Assuming the story was not contaminated by the superfluities of Celtic monks, in the “Voyage of Bran,” we are there told that Bran wrote the fifty or sixty quatrains of the poem in Ogam.<sup>61</sup> This seems to indicate that the ogham could have been used in this way by a poet. It also appears that Gaelic poets were required to learn over one hundred different varieties of ogham in their training.

*Magical* - Evidence for the use of ogham in divination comes from McManus who quotes from *Tochmarc Etaine* in which the Druid, Dallan, makes rods of yew and inscribes ogham upon them, using them presumably to reveal where Etaine had been taken.<sup>62</sup>

**Question 8: Discuss three key magical techniques or symbols from one Indo-European culture. (minimum 100 words each)**

The working of spells (often in highly ritualized settings for the purpose of recreating the cosmos), the offerings of sacrifices in the hopes of receiving gifts in return, the setting of curses, the use of magic to divine the future, and the use of healing rites to cure the injured or diseased are among the most common magical techniques in the Indo-European world.

*Healing Magic*

Healing was of great importance in a time when serious injuries could mean the difference between the comfort of your family or begging in the streets. Healing is a concern that is found throughout the Avesta. Gods are often called upon to heal disease. There were also methods of performing surgery and preparing herbal medicines. Spells and incantations were also recited (*Vendidad* 7.44).<sup>63</sup> In *Vendidad* 7.44 references are made to healers who heal with the knife (surgeons), herbs (pharmacists or physicians), and those who heal with the “Vitalizing Holy Thought” (priests or magicians) who shall heal the “innards of the Orderly Man.” The Avesta also contains the myth of Airiaman,<sup>64</sup> the healer god and *Thrita*,<sup>65</sup> the first mortal healer.

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<sup>59</sup> Graves, Charles. “On the Ogham Character and Alphabet. Part II. .” Academy, Royal Irish. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol. Vol IV. Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1847. 356-367.

<sup>60</sup> The Ogham Tract. *from the Auraicept na N-Éces*. Retrieved 8/12/2008. <<http://www.maryjones.us/ctexts/ogham.html>>.

<sup>61</sup> *The Voyage of Bran Son of Febal to the Land of the Living: An Old Irish Saga*. Translated by Kuno Meyer. London: David Nutt. 1895. 66. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/vob/vob02.htm>>.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Vendidad 7:44 Retrieved 8/12/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd7sbe.htm>>.

<sup>64</sup> Vendidad 22:7. Retrieved 8/12/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd22sbe.htm>>.

Interestingly, *Thrita* is a cognate for the Vedic *Trita* who is associated with reparation for sin during sacrifice.<sup>66</sup>

### *Creative Magic*

Creative magic, which is meant to recreate the cosmos is also common, at least among the Magi.<sup>67</sup> Priestly magic was performed for the purpose of renewing the cosmic order and strengthening everything that the Avestans deemed “good.” This magic is called *humaiia* (also *humaya*) “creative magic.”<sup>68</sup> The oldest of the spells, such as those found in the Gathas were used for this purpose, including the *Haoma* ritual. Vr.12:2., 12:3., 12:4., 12:6<sup>69</sup> Every proper sacrifice and every properly performed ritual strengthened the cosmic order, *Asha*, and weakened *Druj*, evil. Basically they recreated the cosmos and reinforced the magic that made it ordered. It also seems that the priests of the Avesta were convinced that evil sorcerers were performing rites for the fortification of evil and they felt a need to combat this further with apotropaic magic.

### *Apotropaic Magic*

Apotropaic magic is used to turn away evil. In Iran the most common magical practice seems to be the setting of or countering of curses.<sup>70</sup> This practice was most often used to avert curses or the negative intentions of others. Most curses in the *Yasna* are actually reverse curses that are intended to return planned evil to its originator. Curses were created to counteract the hatred of the miserly and the envious. In *Yasna* 60:5 *Sraosa* is called upon to disperse stinginess,<sup>71</sup> while *Aredvi Sura Anahita* is expected to protect against the negative intent of “envious people” (Y 65:8).<sup>72</sup> Spells and curses in the Gathas, the oldest texts of the Iranians, are scarcer than in the Younger Avesta but they do exist. For example in the use of formal curse language, the optative mood in a statement of ill wishes, can be found in *Yasna* 53:8:

So they whose deeds are evil, let them be deceived, and let them all howl, abandoned to ruin. Through good rulers let him bring death and bloodshed upon them and peace from these (their assaults) unto the happy villagers. Grief let him bring on those, he that is the greatest, with the lord of death; and soon let it be.<sup>73</sup>

### **Question 9: Discuss the relative place and methodologies of magic within your personal religious/spiritual practice. (minimum 100 words)**

I am not a magician. By that I mean that I do not do magical workings in and of themselves. I say prayers and I make sacrifices and I feel that there are magical elements in my daily rites as well as in the larger public rites I lead. When I do rites I envision what I want to

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<sup>65</sup> Vendidad 20. Retrieved 8/12/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/vendidad/vd20sbe.htm>>.

<sup>66</sup> Fowler, Murray. “Trita Soter.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 67. 1, (1947), 60.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Visperdad 12:2, 4 & 5. Retrieved 8/12/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/visperad/visperad.htm#chap12>>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>70</sup> Pekala, S. Kori. “Evil and How to Combat Evil: Magic, Spells, and Curses in the Avesta.” Dissertation. Harvard University, 75 & 123.

<sup>71</sup> *Yasna* 60:5 Retrieved 8/14/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y54to72s.htm>>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>73</sup> *Yasna* 53:8. Retrieved 8/14/2008. <<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y53brt.htm>>.

come to pass and I envision the beings that I call upon. Every element of nature is 'magical' in its own way and I honor it with gifts and sacrifices whenever I enter natural space.

Again, being a skeptic, I am uncertain about whether magical workings are effective because we do them or because we believe in them. As a student of psychology I recognize the power of the mind and the subconscious. I believe that creative visualization can induce change in a person's life. If I can envision a thing coming to pass I can come to believe it will happen and I may subconsciously do minor things that lead to that thing happening.

For example, a person who has grown up in an abusive household and who is continuing the pattern by dating an endless succession of abusive men may be asked by their counselor to imagine that they wake up tomorrow and a miracle has occurred. They no longer feel interested in abusive men. Then she is asked what would be the first thing she would notice that would tell her that something has changed. She is asked to walk the counselor through the day noting things that would indicate to her that the miracle had occurred. This is a form of creative visualization. Once a person can imagine something happening it is easier for them to make the changes necessary to make it happen. These changes may be subtle and the effect may appear to be a miracle or 'magic.'

***Question 10: Into which basic categories would you divide magical arts and how do you see those categories functioning within the context of ADF? (minimum 300 words)***

I am very concerned with the ethics of magic. Whether magic is a placebo effect or a genuine mystical phenomenon is irrelevant. In either case both have the potential to meddle with the autonomy of others. Because of this concern I would caution magical practitioners in ADF to use care in the selection of their magical arts.

I feel that divination has a place in ADF though I am uncomfortable with it as a medium for counseling, as some people in ADF might advocate. Counseling, while a useful tool, has huge potential for abuse and likewise seeing has the potential for this same abuse but without the legal and ethical training or checks and balances in place. It is far too easy to subtly influence the decision-making process of another person through counseling or divining. The seer's own perceptions and biases (even if unspoken) may easily influence the client.

If ADF teaches ethics and perhaps some narrative therapy techniques, then I could see divination as a method for therapy or counseling. Otherwise, I see it as a way to get things moving. When a person is ambivalent about a choice they have to make it may help to have a push in one direction or another. Often divinations can be vague enough for the client to interpret what they already knew they needed to do. Counseling is the same way. Many people come to a counselor because they want confirmation that they should do what they've already made up their mind to do. A good counselor or seer will recognize that the client can best be served by exploring both options and allowing the client to draw their own conclusions about what to do.

I also feel that healing rituals have a place in ADF. Many people have illness, disease, or injury that they desire to have healed and 'magic' can be a useful vehicle for this. Again, it doesn't matter if the effect is a genuine phenomenon or if it is placebo. What matters is that the person believes it will work and it does. Studies have shown that cancer patients who believe they are being prayed for fare better than those who do not. I think this is an example of placebo effect but for the family and the patient it's magical.

While I do not agree with doing weather magic, I believe that the Earth knows what she needs and when she needs it, I do see how asking for a stay in weather might be appropriate. For example, when a ceremony is about to be performed or if there are already floods or natural

disasters as a result of like weather, it may be appropriate to ask for a stay, or diversion, of weather patterns.

I can also see the need to do warding magic. I can understand how setting guardians or wards on a piece of property may be useful and appropriate. Not only would this be helpful during ritual but it would also be good for the protection of land or for ritual spaces that may be affected by vandalism, wild fires, or flooding. A good example of this can be found recently with our own nemeton. We use a space at a local retreat center. They suffered fires for the last several weeks. The final fire did get onto the property and burned about 75% of the land but did not affect the buildings or the nemeton and our camping areas. The owner of the property was amazed at how the fire burned all around our area but did not touch a blade of grass within the space. We have frequently called on guardians to protect the space and have asked for the spirits of nature themselves to ward against harmful forces. I do not know if this is what saved our area but I like to believe that this is the case.