



Shining Lakes News

A Newsletter for Shining Lakes Grove, A.D.F.



Fall Equinox 2016

Vol. 24, No. 4

Snakes on a Plain . . . Staff

When you read a book, you can't always tell which parts of the text will stay in your memory for decades to come. In junior high school, I read Fritz Leiber's novel *The Big Time*, about a war between two factions of time travelers known as the Snakes and the Spiders, who attempted to defeat each other by changing history. At one point, one of the characters explains how thoroughly their influence has permeated human existence by noting that all humans are afraid of either spiders or snakes, but never both. Even at age 13, I thought this "fact" sounded a little dodgy, but I must admit, every time I've discussed it with other people, they always say that they have some level of phobia with one but not the other. I don't think this was caused by time travelers, honest, but it's interesting to think about the evolutionary and cultural forces that have defined how we perceive these animals, and how we relate to them.

For this article, I want to focus on two symbols associated with the snake, and not just so I can spare Gen from having to read about spiders. Despite their origins both coming to us via ancient Greece, they really didn't have anything to do with each other until much more recently, but now the two get conflated all the time.

The Rod of Asklepios was depicted as a staff with a single snake wrapped around it, combining two symbols associated with healing. Since many healers were itinerants who traveled from place to place to practice their

arts, the walking stick became associated with them. And many cultures have associated snakes with the healing arts as well, between the snake's venom being associated with drugs that could cure as well as harm, the chthonian connection of snakes slithering around on the ground among the plants that could be made into medicine, and its ability to shed its skin, becoming "reborn" in a new, healthy



1 Detail of Hermes with caduceus, Attic red figure cup, ca. 480-470 BCE, from Vulci.

skin. Temples of Asklepios would keep non-venomous snakes and allow them to move around freely in the patient dormitories so their "healing energy" could help with recovery.

The caduceus started out as a herald's staff, and as such was associated with the safe travel that a herald received during times of war, which then led to its association with travel and commerce. There are multiple myths for its origin, including Homeric Hymn 4 where Apollo gives Hermes a staff with three branches at the top, and a tale of Hermes using his staff to separate two fighting snakes

and bring peace between them. But the caduceus was not exclusively associated with Hermes, and we also see depictions of other Greek messenger gods carrying it, most notably Iris, the rainbow messenger of Hera. The Romans continued this association of the twin-snaked staff with their god Mercury, who was also associated with commerce and travel, and that connection has endured to this day.

So these two snake-on-staff symbols were both used in ancient Greece, but with very different meanings. Why, then, do we sometimes see the caduceus used as a symbol of medicine today?

The confusion appears to have begun in 1871 with a decision made by John M. Woodworth, the first Surgeon General of the United States. While the Armed Forces had been using the rod of Asklepios as part of their emblems before this time, he designated the caduceus as the official symbol of the Marine Hospital Service. It is unknown exactly why he chose it, possibly because of the Marine Corps' connection to the Merchant Marines, or maybe he just preferred its symmetrical design. And in 1902, the US Army adopted the caduceus as its insignia for medical officers, despite protestations from many of their doctors who had a classical education and knew full well that it had nothing to do with medicine.



2 The Star of Life (with the Rod of Asklepios), designed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, used internationally for emergency units and personnel.



3 The U.S. Army Medical Corps Branch Plaque

(The cynic might point out that a symbol of commerce might actually be more appropriate for modern Western medicine than a symbol of healing, but that's a topic for another article.)

So what are we to make of this confusion? For many, the caduceus is now a symbol of the medical profession, regardless of its origins. But plenty of organizations still use the single-snaked staff as their symbol. Which is the correct one to use?

The answer, as is usually the case in polytheism, is both of them. Our modern minds are locked into the concepts of categorization and compartmentalization in a way that those of the Ancients simply weren't. Too often I see people new to Paganism obsessing over which one deity they need to honor for a particular undertaking, when there are often many different choices. Even now, you may be thinking that Asklepios is the one Greek god we should be honoring as a patron of healing, but Apollo was also called to as such, not to mention Panacea the goddess of the universal cure, Hygeia the goddess of cleanliness and sanitation, and another dozen I can think of? There is often more than one right answer to a question, and if a connection makes sense to you, then you should work with that in your personal practice. This kind of diversity and willingness to explore is, in my opinion, what makes our polytheistic path truly wonderful.

Yours in service to the Kindreds and the Grove,
Rev. Rob Henderson, Senior Druid



Ann Arbor Pagan Pride Day 2016

After over two years of negotiating and planning, and more stumbling blocks than the toy-covered floor of a child's playroom, Ann Arbor Pagan Pride Day finally happened! As most of you know, I've been working with a group of local folks to bring Pagan Pride Day to our area. Even after we had gotten permission from the Lansing and Detroit groups to hold one here (we fall within a 50-mile radius of both, and the parent org discourages having PPD events so close together), the challenges of filing corporate paperwork, finding a site we could afford, and just having enough people to pull it off seemed daunting.

But we still made it happen, and 173 people attended, despite the rainy morning we endured during set-up. Perhaps more importantly, we managed not to lose money on it, making it very likely that we can do it again next year!

While it wasn't an official SLG-sponsored event, I was very proud to see our Grove buy a vendor space there, where Gen, Kestrel, Candy, and Serena talked to folks about what we do while I was busy with the overall event. Thank you for your help!

- Rob

Correction

Shining Lakes News Spring Equinox 2016 should have been listed as Vol. 24, No. 2. Likewise, the Summer Solstice edition should have been listed at Vol. 24, No. 3. Online copies will be corrected asap. The editor apologizes for the error!



4 The AMA's modern logo; the organization switched from a caduceus to a more appropriate Rod of Asklepios in 1912.

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Grove Calendar: Fall Equinox to Yule

Social Events

Coffee Hour: Join us for our monthly discussion of interesting topics. *9/30, 10/28, 11/18, 12/9, 8-11 pm at Sweetwaters*

Meetings

SLG Business Meeting: Discussion of general business and setting of the calendar. *10/11, 11/8, 12/13, 7-9 at Rob's (online access will also be available)*

Helping the Huron

River Roundup: Collect water and insect samples from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jfrenzel@hrwc.org) *10/8, 9 am-3pm or 11 am-5pm, meet at NEW Center*

Bug ID Day: Count the insect samples we collected from streams in the rivershed. Sponsored by the Huron River Watershed Council. (You must register in advance for this! jfrenzel@hrwc.org) *10/16, 12-2 pm or 2-4 pm, meet at NEW Center*

Rituals

Fall Equinox Rite: Will we be doing our usual ritual to honor our river mother Ana, or will we be doing something completely different? Be there to find out! There will be a raffle and potluck following the ritual. All welcome. *9/25, 2-5 pm at Jan's*

Liturgists' Roundtable—Ritual Planning: Help us plan our Samhain and Yule rituals. All welcome. *10/25, 12/6, 7-9 pm at Sweetwaters*

Samhain Afternoon Rite: Join us as we celebrate the reunion of our tribal father Lugh and our river goddess Ana. This ritual will feature a craft project, and is suitable for all ages. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. *11/5, 2-4 pm at Jan's*

Samhain Evening Rite: Join us as we honor the Ancestors and Mannanan, our god of the Otherworld. This ritual uses themes of death and rebirth, and may not be suitable for young children. There will be a potluck after the rite. *11/5, 6-9 pm at Jan's*

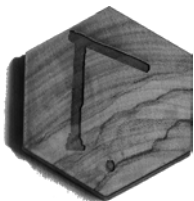
Yule Rite: Join us as we honor Danu and Bel, our primal mother and father deities. There will be a raffle and potluck after the rite. *12/18, 2-5 pm at Friends*

Druidic Divination

Crazy Wisdom Bookstore
114 S. Main St., Ann Arbor
October 23rd, 1:30 to 4 pm

The Druid holiday of Samhain was a traditional time to practice the divinatory arts. Join Rev. Rob Henderson as he presents information on several divination techniques used by the ancient Indo-European peoples: the Elder Futhark of the Norse; the Ogham of the Irish; the Greek Alphabet Oracle; and haruspicy, the Roman technique of divination via the liver.

The registration fee is \$10.



Per our new bylaws amendment, all Grove memberships will be due at Samhain. So if you've been wondering when to give us your dues, now you know! If you won't be at the Samhain rituals, you can always send them to us at:

Shining Lakes Grove, ADF
PO Box 3901
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
September 25 2-5 Fall Equinox Rite Jan's	26	27	28	29	30 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	October 1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 9-3 or 11-5 River Roundup NEW Center
9	10	11 7-9 Business Mtg. Rob's	12	13	14	15
16 12-2 or 2-4 Bug ID Day NEW Center	17	18	19	20	21	SWEETEST DAY 22
23 1:30-4 Druidic Divination Crazy Wisdom	24	25 7-9 Liturgist RT Sweetwaters	26	27	28 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	29
30	31 HALLOWEEN	1	2	3	4	5 Samhain 2-4 Afternoon Rite 6-9 Evening Rite Jan's
6 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS	7	8 7-9 Business Mtg. Rob's	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	19
20	21	22	23	24 THANKSGIVING	25	26
27	28	29	30	December 1	2	3
4	5	6 7-9 Liturgist RT Sweetwaters	7	8	9 8-11 Coffee Hour Sweetwaters	10
11	12	13 7-9 Business Mtg. Rob's	14	15	16	17
18 2-5 Yule Rite Friends Meeting	19	20	21	22	23	24

Addresses:

Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, 1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor
Crazy Wisdom Bookstore, 114 S. Main St., Ann Arbor
Jan's, 11623 Lisa Lori Lane, South Lyon

NEW Center: 1100 N. Main, Ann Arbor
Rob's, 330 Chidester St. Apt. 812, Ypsilanti, (734) 277-1897
Sweetwaters Coffee and Tea, 3393 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor