



The Legacy  
of Our  
Ancestors



# THE LEGACY OF OUR ANCESTORS

*Germanic Festivals and Customs in the Annual Cycle*





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## *Introduction*

A foreboding remembrance of a distant and seemingly long-gone world of experience runs through our time; a world that once gave our ancestors a sense of security in all struggles and struggles and gave them the secure feeling of being enclosed and protected in a greater order. This world was vaulted high above by the bright halo formed by the unchanging orbit of the sun itself.

was built above the broad earth and was renewed year after year: It was the high hall of the sun, which the Edda calls the hall of Gimle, the stronghold of all order, in whose structure the master builder of the world himself revealed the laws according to which all life, courtship and decay take place. The life of the individual, however, was not, as it might seem to us today, a path that emerges from somewhere in the dark nothingness only to lose itself again in the void; rather, it was a thread that could not be separated from the great fabric on which the circling celestial bodies weave incessantly. And when it seemingly disappeared from the bright house of summertime existence to plunge into the winter darkness below the edge of the visible world, this was nothing before the certainty that the path of life, like the path of the sun, would lead out again with the same necessity beyond the edge of the dark world.

It was in this foreboding recognition that the holiness of life dawned on the ancient sages; and all our morality still rests on it today, if we are only able to look down to the roots, insofar as it is more than the observance of a dead statute. It is that morality which no zealous preacher will ever be able to give us, but which still permeates us today with an uplifting sense of foreboding when we stand in the towering hall of a German cathedral, which is probably basically nothing other than an image of that high, light-flooded hall of the sun of which the old poets spoke. But this recognition is also the source of that heroic spirit which, joyful as the sun



because the battlefield of hard life is also subject to its laws; for it is itself the archetype and model of the hero who joyfully strides his way to victory. A few hundred years ago, however, the word "pious" still meant "brave" to our ancestors; and so their piety was filled with a courageous mood of soul that harbored the heroic spark like a precious treasure.

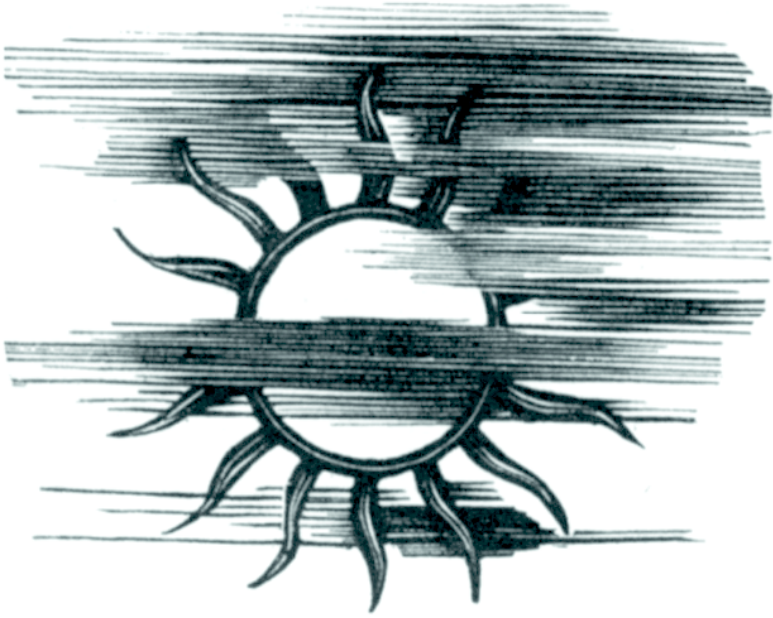
The old faith seemed long since broken, eradicated and replaced by a new doctrine. All the piety and holiness of our Germanic life seemed to have been taken, together with the words that had been stolen from us, into a foreign administration that tried to offer us the bread from our own father's house, mixed with foreign ingredients and made almost unrecognizable and inedible, as a gift from a foreign land. But this foreign power has not penetrated into the deepest parts of our souls. The old world order with its piety of life, displaced from conscious life, withdrew into the poetic unconscious, which allowed deeper spiritual landscapes to blossom in myth and fairy tale than any doctrine preached to the ears could ever have done. It also remained alive in the customs of the people, which from time immemorial gave wonderful form to their faith and their commonality. Thus the old faith still lives today as a spark under the ashes; and if one looks at it correctly, that which has been erected against and above it has itself only retained its vitality for as long as it was able to live from the suppressed and repressed German good.

But today we are faced with the danger that this good, impoverished and deprived, will be completely lost to us. Thousands of years of superimposition by foreign ways of thinking have led us to question with our minds what was once a matter of course for the knowing mind. What is wanted has increasingly taken the place of what has grown; but perhaps this is precisely why our longing to find our way back to the half-buried sources and to regain from them the holiness of life that gave our ancestors their inner security in bravery and loyalty has become all the stronger. Today, however, this can only be possible by way of full consciousness, if we reverently engage with the old sacred ideas and try to represent their content in our language.

The following descriptions have arisen from this intention; they are written from the experience of the course of the year and have been placed here again in the ring of the German year, as our ancestors experienced it. They have emerged from the experience of what lives in us as memory and what science has recognized and proven. But they are not scholarly thanks in the usual sense; they want to bring back to life and pour over into living goods what still lives as echoes and what a science serving national renewal has collected from earlier times: insofar as these are real life values at all. These are only a few pieces from the treasury of the eternal German spirit, and yet they speak for themselves.

to us like something long familiar. We hope that the real old gold will sparkle in it and restore something of the old ancestral heritage to many. May the individual reader find his way back in silence with this book to that old and eternally young land of our native faith, may larger circles seek together the path to the sources of our being; we hope that the purpose of this book will be fulfilled for all: to be a guide to the eternal values of the German soul.





## *Winter Solstice - The Turn of the Year*

All life is struggle and victory. Victory, however, is the obligation to fight again and again. Therefore, struggle is the highest content of victorious life itself. Translated into our language, this is the heroic confession of the Teuton. It is a confession in which

expresses the experience and the echo of the eternal struggle that the ancestors of the Germans once had to fight against the eternal ice of the North. The roots of our strength, our spirit, our faith and our morals lie in this battle.

In the barren north, where the fire of the sun only offered sparse opportunities for life for a long time and in a tough battle with the ice, the world view of the Germanic people was born. His life was a struggle with darkness and cold, and in this struggle he had no ally other than his own strength and tenacity, except the sun, which rose out of the fog and darkness for a few short months every year and gave him a short but wonderfully bright summer's day. Thus the sun became the archetype and symbol of his own power for the Germanic people; the symbol of the divine spark that he felt burning within him, the spark that he felt as a constant commitment to heroic life. The life of the sun in its short course of the year, in its joyful, bright summer day and in its dark winter darkness, became a symbol of his own life, which was set before him as a high task: as the obligation to fight against the darkness and all the evil powers that threaten the pure spark of high life.

From the north, Nordic spirit and Nordic blood radiated in ever new waves over the inhabited earth, and everywhere he brought with him his high world view, which was a world view of light; a heroic world view of constant, restless, and unrelenting

struggle. But the battle of light is not a matter for unhappy, disheartened souls. It carries its own reward, its own joy: joy was and is the keynote of all genuine heroism. Joy animated the warlike Nordic sharks who created states and high spiritual cultures in distant India and on the mountains of Iran. Joyful heroism lived in the unforgettable deeds of the ancient Greeks, who are closely related to us. And joyful and heroic were the Germanic Scha-ren who, in the storms of the change of nations, destroyed the old and the rotten and created a new, Germanic Europe. Wherever a poet or thinker of Nordic blood and spirit ever gave shape to his highest creed, he did so under the ancient parable from the experience of his primeval eyes, which still lived and shone in our great poet:

Happy as his sun to fly  
By heaven's glorious plan,  
Walk, brethren, your way  
Joyful, like a hero to win!

For the Nordic people, the sun is the creator of all living things. With the fire of the sun, the Nordic Prometheus brought the divine light from heaven to earth and ignited the fire that will never go out as long as the great heavenly light continues to shine above us, and as long as heroic hearts beat here on earth, beating from the purity of the sun.

spirit to shape the legacy of the ancestors into new life. In his annual festivals, the German celebrates the battle of light with cold and darkness. In the old, sacred festival of the winter solstice, they celebrate the rebirth of the light from the night of the year; in the high fires of Easter time, they celebrate the victorious re-emergence of the light of heaven for the great heroic deed of spring and summer. He celebrates the victory of the light at the height of summer, when the sun reaches the highest point in its annual course. Then the fires from the heights greet the sun again, the great parable of his own life in its becoming and passing. For the heroic man of the north knows that in all becoming, passing away is inevitable. Just as the sun descends from its victorious height into the darkness of the winter night, he himself will descend from the heights of life into the darkness of death. But the spark of divine life is never extinguished: like the sun, it will rise again and take up the battle with darkness anew.

Life is struggle - a community of life is a community of struggle. At the turn of the year, when the experience of struggle is particularly vividly symbolized, the experience of community must also experience its most intense deepening. The fires of the sun, with which we celebrate the holy night of the year, are the most profound celebrations of our national community. Most of all, however, it is the fire that celebrates the victory of the reborn sun and at the same time the fruit of the common work of the year,



when the barn and the granary are full of the golden fruit of the year; when there is a mysterious murmur in the air of the hunt of the God who takes all that is dead with him in the storm to give it back to new life in the roar of the universe.

Thus the winter-green tree, the tree of the year and of life, towers from one year to the next and shines as the "radiant banner of God", as our ancestors called it, leading the ranks of the coming years and generations. In former times, burning disks whirled through the air throughout Germania, torchbearers walked and still walk here and there around the snow-covered fields, connecting the newborn solar power of the motherly hereditary power. The dead, however, who belong to the community of the fighting men, were consecrated with the minnet drink of the living.

We want to bring back to life and make visible everything that has been faithfully preserved in the depths of the German folk tradition as the indestructible core of our being. When the fires of the sun blaze up, we know their old and eternally new meaning: preserve the sacred spark in which God revealed himself to the ancestors and to you in the Nordic winter night.





## *The Meaning of Carnival*

Many things that seem to us today to have become empty and meaningless habits of rootless city dwellers still have their roots in the soil of thousands of years of tradition, on which the deepest experience once grew, which extends from prehistoric times into our own day. The symbols of these customs still include the symbols of the world order, as our ancestors recognized them, but also

tools and equipment with which they once fought the great battle for light and life. They not only fought this battle with dogged tenacity and perseverance; they also knew how to celebrate victory in the eternal struggle to secure and preserve life. Even the Northerners, who were so life-oriented and serious about life, could become fulfilled people during these victory celebrations. In his close connection with life and the course of the all-pervading sun, this exuberance is particularly evident when the life-giver emerges victorious from the confines of winter and, as a liberated queen, begins her radiant run to the heights of summer.

No wonder that the man of the North, who was an open-air man, was "out of his mind" in the truest sense of the word when he was first lured out of his wintry home by the invigorating power of the heavenly light; that the unrestrained lust of his carefully guarded life overwhelmed him anew and the youth of the year tempted him to exuberant action. This unrestrained exuberance, which turns things upside down and overcomes all that is rigid, old and overly dignified through cheerful ridicule, is the other side of the Germanic man who, placed between ice and sun, grasps the full meaning of life in the serious and the cheerful.

This is the deeper meaning of our carnival customs, which originally had nothing to do with the church's commandment to fast, nor did they get their name from this. Rather, the name refers to the fire nights of the growing and fruitful season of

maturing life. This meaning can still be recognized above all in places where customs have been preserved in a more genuine and meaningful way in rural isolation than in the disenchanting big city. There, too, noisy merriment is the basic tone of the celebrations; but the joy is even more inward and genuine because it is closer to its deeper origins. In many cases, people still run across the fields with burning torches to "wake up the corn", as they say, and symbolically tell it of the victory and rise of life. Once again, only the children, the most constant keepers of ancient customs, have preserved many things in their games and songs. In their springtime games, they still know about the maiden with the golden hair who was imprisoned by the evil giant in the dark tower or in the maze, and who is now freed by the youthful hero and led to the bridal run. They still play - even on the asphalt of the big city - the ancient game of heaven and hell or of the snail's shell, the image of the winter sun's orbit, which as "Troy's castle" still forms the ancient scene of the game of the virgin's liberation in its own places.

In many cases, these games are far apart in the calendar, because the Church had driven a wedge into the middle of the joyful festive season with the Lent it had introduced; and so the same customs can be found partly in spring and partly in summer. And it was precisely the call to strict penance that heightened the festive mood in the last days before Lent to the wild frenzy that we find today during Shrove Tuesday, especially in such cities.

where Lent is still observed. So what is the meaning of the word "carnival", which is used to celebrate this old spring festival not only in Germany but also in southern countries? The word is Latin, the custom is originally German.

"Carrus navalis" is a ship set on wheels, which in ancient times was driven through the countryside as a symbol of the arrival of spring, filled with cheerful, noisy people proclaiming the victory of new life. An ancient custom of seafaring peoples, for whom the resumption of navigation was the most vital event of the new year. We know that in Germanic times the divine figure of Nehalennia, as the liberated virgin was then called, sailed through the lands of the Lower Rhine. In legends and fairy tales, the bringer of salvation floats on this ship with the gift from unknown lands; it brings the Lohengrin of our legend with the early spring bird, the holy swan; it also carries the holy year tree, at whose roots it lay in the night of July. The chariot with the merry fools has served as a festive symbol throughout the Middle Ages; the poet Sebastian Brant tried to castigate the countless fools of all mankind under its image.

What the ship is to seafaring peoples, the plow is to farmers; and even today we still find it among the symbols of the life-awakening springtime. In Saxony, it is harnessed by jesters on Candlemas Day, when, according to the old working order, work ceased in artificial light, and it is driven with a cheerful crack of the whip and the sound of the plow.

The plow was driven through alleys and fields to wake up people and fields and to announce the resumption of farming. We also find this plow on the prehistoric rock paintings of the north, which are at least equal in age and significance to the much more famous Egyptian wall paintings.

Prince Karneval and his wife, who are celebrated like a king today, also have a family tree that stretches far back into Germanic prehistory. We have very old reports that tell of the festive hauling in of a giant doll, in which a person was often hidden, as is still the custom in southern countries today. In Flanders they call him the "giant" and celebrate him like a king who has returned to his kingdom after a long absence and who - as was once the case - has freed the maiden from the imprisonment of the winter giant in a foreign land and is now leading her home in a festive procession. We see that it is spring itself that is caught up under this symbol; and the festive bridal procession that his procession actually represents is the ancient myth of the marriage of heaven and earth, which takes place in the awakening of the motherly earth by the rays of the youthful sun. The catching up of this "giant" is already depicted on a Germanic rock painting, which is several thousand years old and therefore probably the oldest depiction of a carnival procession.

Cheerfulness and love of life and overflowing joy of existence - not in superficial thoughtlessness, but as a deep, meaningful affirmation of

life itself - that is the meaning of the merry carnival, which is also part of the heritage of our ancestors as a supplement to more serious celebrations.



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## *On the Sword Dance and the Swordsmen*

Many years ago, a strange procession could be seen in a small village in Westphalia at carnival time: Eight men, carrying huge swords on their shoulders, marched from farm to farm under the leadership of a ninth. Wherever they went, the wide hallway door was readily opened for them; they walked around in a round dance for a short time and then, at the command of the ninth, the leader of the procession, they stretched out their swords.

The swordsmen held their swords together crosswise so that the sharp blades formed a large star. Each man held his own sword in his right hand and the tip of his opponent's sword in his left, which was protected with straw to prevent injury. They then began to sway this star of swords, and when a certain amount of momentum was achieved, the dancer in front jumped onto the center of the "rose" with a bold leap. He would leap up with it, fall back and then leap even higher the next time, each time reaching his swaying dance floor again with uncanny certainty. The game continued until the bold dancer reached the roof beam at the top with a swing, to which he clung, usually to catch a piece of booty, a ham or a sausage. This was placed in a large sack and the sword fencers moved on to collect more booty on other farms with their daring game, which was then eaten at the communal feast.

And yet, of course, such a life-threatening game was not played for the sake of the reward. To Germaine, all play is a reflection of life, about whose hard and dangerous nature he was never mistaken, but which he affirmed so completely in this hardness and danger that his games were for the most part fighting games. And when this iron-hard brotherhood, whose members all took turns in daring the dangerous dance, afterwards consumed the gifts they had won at the cult banquet, they were probably expressing the idea that only

to enjoy what he has fought for himself at the risk of life and limb. This is what "play" in Old German usage at the same time "fencing"; and just as the game is an image of life for him, he also sees life as a single fighting game that uplifts male courage. Two thousand years ago, the Roman Tacitus already knew about this fighting game of the Germanic tribes: "There is only one kind of spectacle among them, which recurs at every gathering. Naked youths, who play this game as a sport, perform a dangerous dance between swords and spears. Practice brought art, this grace. But they do not do this for gain or merit: the pleasure of the spectators is the only reward for bold audacity."

The Romans probably did not fully grasp the meaning of the Germanic game. The lust of the chariot is what elevates the bold player and makes him fearsome and unconquerable in the great sword dance of battle; up to the time of the Landsknechte, the turmoil of battle was called a dance or a round dance. And there is another meaning: the battle between light and darkness is symbolically, but no less dangerously, fought out in it. For this reason, we find the sword dance at the celebration of spring, which is the real meaning of carnival, and at wedding celebrations, which are preceded by a practice in the sword dance, which originally, and here and there up to the present day, the bridegroom himself had to undergo. One such spring play, known there as the "Easter play", is called the "Easter play".

The story of the "Ostersachs" is told to us in a medieval song by Mr. Neithart von Reuenthal: in spring, the peasants tie their shiny long swords around their necks; Fridebolt, the lead dancer, carries the sword, which is called the "Ostersachs" elsewhere, and leads the crowd to the Wasen, which lies in front of the farm gate. The poet calls out to him that he should be brave and stand his ground in the fencing so that "Frau Kunze" will be pleased - probably alluding to the secretly adored "Vrouwe" of this peasant knight. But it is among the peasants that the ancient game has survived longest in its original form, and most tenaciously where the old peasant freedom has remained alive and binding the longest. In one village in Lippe, until a hundred years ago, no one could marry into the farming community unless they had a fencer's sword, which was called a "Pauk". In other words, the Germanic village association did not accept any man who did not prove himself capable in combat and fighting.

German folklore has also made its supreme legendary hero, King Dietrich of Bern, into a sword dancer who performs in a carnival fencing match. King Etzel himself is the lead dancer, Dietrich's famous twelve companions are sword dancers, and it is he himself who finally slays the demonic challenger in the sword fight and liberates the captive maiden, which is reminiscent of the battle between summer and winter for the liberation of the sun maiden. And the song of the

Worms Rose Garden has become a swordplay in which Dietrich's heroes fight with Kriemhilden's men; the lead dancer and victor on Dietrich's soap is old Hildebrand, whose name is also mentioned elsewhere in the sword plays. This reminds us that the actual underlying tone of all these sword plays was in fact a deeply tragic one. After all, our oldest heroic song tells of the fateful sword fight between father and son in which Hildebrand slays his son Hadubrand.

This tragic outcome is also depicted in our sword fencing games: a fencer sinks to the ground, seemingly struck to death, and is carried out on his swords by the others. After some time, of course, he is woken up again, which probably stems from the ancient myth of the hero's death and rebirth. It is only seemingly a contradiction that this deeply tragic play took place during the carnival season, a time of great revelry. There is, of course, no sense of penitence behind the Germanic hero, but rather his knowledge of the two sides of life: the hard necessity and the cheerful confidence that believes in the immortality of life and therefore, as in the old heroic song, knows how to joke about his own wounds and dance between swords and spearheads.



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*Easter fire  
and Easter water*

Rivers and streams have been freed from the ice! The great wheel of the year and of life has begun its ascent anew; the time of the first awakening of the irrepressible, new joy of life has given way to a quieter and more contemplative, but also deeper and more inward mood. The first daylight shines brighter and earlier from the east: the day has caught up with the night, and soon it will have

outstripped its nocturnal brother in length. The day comes when the rising and setting of the great celestial light establishes the balance between day and night, as it appears in the east and disappears in the west, thus forming the great horizontal line in the annual cycle, from which the ascent to the summer height is now unstoppable. The ancient, sacred meaning of this time of conquering light still lives on today in its name and custom. Our old German ancestors called it the "Langizo", the time of the lengthening days, which appears to us as the fair Lenz and is still called the "Langes" in Tyrol today. For more than a thousand years, our poets have sung of him as a youth with flower-bedecked hair - not unlike the youthful god Freyr, who was celebrated by the farming ancestors of our ancestors as the bringer of spring and life, and whose golden-bristled boar made the last snow disappear from hills and slopes. For us, however, the great time of awakening and growth is old and always familiar under the name of "Easter time". We hardly realize what the name actually means; but its magic has remained unchanged through all the ages of alienation, falsification and flattening that have come over our people in thousands of years. Today, as in the past, its experiential content signifies light and life and the dawning light of a new age; and this is indeed the meaning of its word, which originally meant "new light". It is connected with "east", for when the light of the heavens returns to the exact eastern point of the sky,



the time of summer's ascent has arrived: the upper half of the year has begun.

But this new light was greeted from time immemorial with earthen fires blazing from mighty piles of wood from the mountains to proclaim victory and homecoming. Once again, the message is passed on from mountain to mountain, from height to height: just as our ancestors announced a great victory to even the most distant of their people through these chains of fire. And the old custom went and goes even further, revealing meaningful life significance in its symbols: the wheel of the holy year itself is caught up in the flames of the new light and rolls across the earth spraying light and fire. In many a quiet landscape, where the traffic roller has not yet crushed everything, these wheels of fire are still rolling today, passed down from generation to generation with the sacred fire of blood and life itself, of which they are symbols. Many weeks in advance, the straw with which the huge wooden wheels are stuffed is gathered and prepared; a joyful and solid community is formed in this joint preparation, because it touches the innermost core of what is the essence of all national community: the common orientation towards the eternal goal that is given to us all by nature. On the day of the festival, the wheels are rolled up the mountain, set alight in the dark of night and set in motion towards the valley. A whirlwind of flames rolls down, leaving a glowing trail behind me; the wheels race down to the valley in ever more powerful leaps - with the trails of fire on their backs,

they leave a message of light in the fields until they burn out or are suddenly extinguished in the next stream or river. This used to happen everywhere in the Germanic regions; today the custom has only survived in Hesse and Westphalia.

Other rune signs also tell of the meaning of this victorious time. The man rune, which symbolizes the rise of light, is still preserved today as a sign of Easter in our traditional symbols. In Friesland, Holland and Westphalia they are called "Palmboschen"; they are three-forked sticks richly decorated with eggs, various leaves, the last apples and colorful ribbons. They have their enlarged images in the "Easter maias", which are erected here and there as a sign of spring; they are wrapped in straw and burned from top to bottom. In the old runic song, the rune is called "Der Menschen Freude" ("Man's Joy"), which is why it still adorns the forehead of the leading cow today when the cattle are driven back to the mountain pastures for the first time in the German Alpine countries. And other symbols such as Easter cookies and gable signs point to a deeper meaning: when the rune is transformed into a human figure with raised arms, it is the savior himself, who begins to lift the sun high in the summer sky.

There are many interpretations of this Easter experience in our legends and fairy tales, the most faithful keepers of old ancestral beliefs. The fairy tale tells of the six brothers who were transformed into six swans, and

are redeemed by their sister and given back to new life. The Easter cake still shows us the six-piece wheel with the six swans hanging from the evergreen, upright fir branch. And legends and fairy tales also take us back to that distant time when our familiar fairy tale images were perhaps once a tangible reality, and when the name "Easter" still had its full meaning. You still know about the Virgin who is locked in the chamber of an inaccessible tower that has only one window facing east: but through this window the youthful sun hero climbs in and leads the liberated Virgin to the lunar high festival. This is how the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, among many others, has been handed down to us. The name Ostara, which this symbolization of the almighty life force once bore, preserves the name and meaning of this ancestral legacy to this day.

It also lives in the tradition that is always nourished from the depths of the German soul and therefore has nothing to do with either "superstition" or the superficial civilizational conceit of our time. It is the belief that, on holy Easter nights, the divine omnipotence of life, enhanced, pervades all of nature: the fire that burns on the mountains and the water that is freed from the ice by the new sun. So the women go to the flowing stream in the holy morning hour to draw the Easter water, which now itself contains all the healing, purifying and revitalizing powers with which the Easter sun streams through all of nature.

An ancient and sacred mythical image! It reminds us of the women who sit at the fountain of the world and hold our fate in their hands.



## *Bridal Consecration and Bridal Jewelry*

For the Germanic people, all security of existence, all security in the changing times and destinies, lay in their basic idea of the unity of the world, the unity of inside and outside, of the individual and the general. Thus the great events of the course of the world were to him great reflections of human life; but human life with its ascent, its high time.

For him, the cycle of time and its descent was a repetition of the cycle of the world in a thousand individual circles - but in both circles the same eternal and unbreakable laws prevail. The great unity of the course of the year and the course of life was so self-evident that it is still in our blood today and that our language still bears witness to this unity. When the sun prepares to set its "high time", the time in which she stands high and shining in the sky, this was above all the time in which the lovers found each other and set out together on the path that leads to the height and perfection of all life. The "wedding time" was a celebration of joy, a celebration of life itself, and if the word today only means the bridal celebration, it shows that all festivity and joy of life was contained in this one celebration.

How poor we would be if we had to gain a sense of the world from the teachings of today's natural science alone, if we did not still live from what the past millennia have left us in terms of knowledge of life and worldly wisdom! If we did not automatically participate each spring in the wedding that the sun and the earth celebrate together and which has always been the eternal archetype of the wedding between man and maiden! "It was as if heaven had silently kissed the earth" - that has been the melody of every earthly wedding since time immemorial; it was the melody of all truly pious joy of life consecrated by God, which carries on divine life from generation to generation and which in Germania has never been forgotten.

The sacred wedding and consecration of the bride was once completely drowned out by the gloom of the sense of sin and the denial of the world. We find evidence of this holy wedding and consecration of the bride in the oldest pictorial documents of our prehistory, in the rock paintings of the North. There the mighty, hammer-wielding sky god, who lived on in our Donar, himself stands before the bride and groom and consecrates them with his weapon, the life-creating and doom-defying hammer. It is the weapon that he wields in the blazing lightning when heaven and earth celebrate their stormy union in a thunderstorm. - Thousands of years later, the giant king still says in an Edda song:

"Bring the hammer to consecrate the bride!  
Put the malmer in the maiden's lap!"

And another Christian poet of the Middle Ages has the Virgin Mary say: "The blacksmith from the Oberland threw his hammer into my lap." The battle hammer and battle axe have been replaced by the sword, and so we often find the consecration of the bride with the sword in old German legal customs. The traces of such sword inscriptions can still be seen on the bridal doors and bridal chapels of many old churches, just as they were previously attached to the bridal stones of the heath, where the consecration of the bride was still performed until modern times.

We still know from many a poem of the German Middle Ages how such a bridal consecration took place; and here the poets linger with

love when it is the betrothal of a great and famous hero. Siegfried and Kriemhild are married in the ring of friends and relatives:

She was told to stand together in the ring and  
asked if she wanted the handsome man.

The Nibelung poet also tells a moving tale of the betrothal of the young Giselher, who has already been consecrated to death, to the beautiful Dietlind.

All these customs of life were originally one and the same at the princely court and on the farm, and remained so throughout most of the Middle Ages, until the old Germanic unity of life was destroyed from the outside and broke down on the inside. The young farmer's wife was queen on her wedding day, and the kingdom she took possession of was the farmhouse with its high seat by the hearth. For a long time, the young bride was led three times around the hearth fire or around the kettle hook; and to this day, she assumes her rule over the house and farm by sitting on the bridal chair. This bridal chair still bears signs of ancient meaning today, including the Odal rune, the symbol of the holy patriarchal heritage, which the housewife must now cherish and look after.

Originally, the bride probably wore royal clothing everywhere. The bridal crown is still preserved today in many German regions, both in the south and the north. We also know it from old depictions, and among the royal adornments that medieval painters and portraitists used, the bridal crown was the most common.



The bridal crown, like so much else, is borrowed from German reality. An ancient symbol of the royal woman as well as the bride is the "Fürspan", the golden breastplate, which is usually set with eight stones; it has its models and predecessors in the Germanic breastplates of ancient times. In the Middle Ages, it was the symbol of princesses and queens, but also of women of free odals who alone were allowed to wear the Fürspan in the cities. Nothing is more characteristic of the Germanic heritage, which was still alive in the High Middle Ages, than that we recognize the Germanic bride in the "Minne", as celebrated by the old German poets as the archetype of femininity: she wears the Fürspan, the "insignia of Minne". In German mysticism, however, the divine Minne appears in the same bridal costume, adorned with the "divine insignia"; and this divine insignia is also the golden disk with the "seal of the world". This again echoes the idea of the marriage of sun and earth; and when brides in Friesland, Westphalia and Siebenbürgen still wear this old sun sign today, which is passed on from mother to daughter, this reveals the old and ever-young belief in the solar nature of life, of which the wife and mother is the guardian.





## *The Golden Chariot*

"His claws - through the clouds are beaten,  
he rises with great power..."

So begins a "Tagelied" by Mr. Wolfram von Eschenbach, one of our greatest old German poets, who sings of the rise of the solar eagle in the eastern sky. And in the greatest creations of our poets and singers, it sounds almost

like the same experience of the new light that six hundred years later the master Ludwig van Beethoven brought back to powerful resonance in his much-sung and much-lived verses:

"She comes and shines and beams at us from afar,  
and goes the same way as a hero."

The ancient Aryan experience of the sun hero, who steps out of his tent like a giant to run his new course joyfully, has become more of a daytime experience for the southern man, while the northern man, for whom light and darkness fight their eternal battle on a larger forest, experiences it most deeply and lastingly in the course of the year. But it belongs to the oldest and most vivid experience of Nordic man, and so all Indo-European languages have the same word for this eternal experience of the new light: the Ushas open the light cycle of the day for the Indian, the Aurora for the Roman and the Eos for the Greek. For the Germanic people, however, Ostara, who comes from the same ancient sacred realm, became, or rather remained, the goddess of the new light of the year; for the world experience of the Indo-Germanic people in general is rooted in the annual experience of the Nordic solar cycle. Thus the name "Easter" or in old German "ostarun" means the "days of the new light", in connection with the word "east". For it is originally the festival on which the sun was welcomed at the spring equinox, when day and night equalize the daytime sky.

The day, however, triumphantly progresses to gain the upper hand from now on. This annual festival was so deeply rooted in the customs of the ancients that Christianity had to appropriate its meaning when it placed the day of the Lord's resurrection at the time of this festival of the resurrected sun; and that the name of the old pagan festival has remained alive to this day with its old meaning.

For what would speak more to the heart today, and what would give deeper expression to our longing for spring and experience of light, than all the customs associated with this holy Easter time - right down to the baked goods that the "pious bakers bake and make right"? They still form the ancient sacred symbol of the wheel of the year in its rectangular shape in the dough, sometimes further developed into the "pretzel"; they also form the wheel of the year with the six swans, which are the subject of a profound fairy tale. The four-part wheel itself is the symbol of the equinox, which still rolls from the mountains in many parts of Germany today, wrapped in damp tan, and as a living image of the course of the sun proclaims new light and new life to the fields and meadows. As early as the 16th century, Johannes Boehm tells us about this custom, which is certainly much older: "Many who have never seen this astonishing spectacle believe that the sun or the moon is falling from the sky." The custom still prevails in the Odenwald, in the mountains of Westphalia, in the Palatinate and elsewhere. The sacred Easter fire, however, burns on the mountains at night throughout northwest Germany,

when Easter Day gives way to the holy Easter Vigil. In addition to the wheel, other symbols of ancient sacred world significance and world faith have been preserved. At Attendorn in Westphalia, for example, the fire blazes around the sign of the human rune Y; and here, too, the old sign of the ascent to the height of the year has retained its old meaning. For in the runic calendars it denotes the quarter of the year with which the ascent to the highest height of summer begins, to which the "midsummer pole" is erected in the same form as the old man-rune.

The wood on which this fire otherwise feeds is also of a very special kind; in many cases it still has to be stolen, i.e. procured secretly. But here and there it is still lit with an "emergency fire" drilled from two pieces of wood, set alight with a pistol shot or beaten out of the stone - a custom that even the formerly hostile church has adopted for Holy Saturday. Just as this fire is a symbol of new life itself, it also serves to awaken life: people walk across the fields with burning logs, tufts of straw or torches, where the germinating seed is just beginning to sprout. Few people are aware that our torchlight processions, which are an expression of hope for a new life and a new era, originated from these torchlight processions.

The leap over the fire, which is practiced at the Easter bonfire as well as at the midsummer bonfire, also has this deep meaning, it is a test of courage and at the same time a symbol of bold, new life; for all life

requires boldness and daring. In one of our greatest myths, this necessary trait has become legend: in the legend of the hero Siegfried, who rides through the Waberlohe to awaken the sleeping, girded bride to new life. He himself is the old sun hero who awakens the light maiden Ostara, who sacrifices herself to the beloved hero in a burst of flame. Here death and rebirth are one; and rebirth from fire was probably the original purpose of these fires, as well as the burning of the dead by our ancestors.

All these images that reflected the meaning of their world order to our ancestors - sun chariot, sun wheel and new light - were still in the mind of the poet of the "Trutznachtigall" when he wrote 350 years ago:

O beautiful sun! O mail so fast!  
O golden horse and carriage!  
O pure wheel, shod in pure spring  
with delicate luster!  
In winter, your light, so bright,  
which you give us, was lost;  
your wheel and your spring seemed to  
be frozen by the cold.





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## *What the Maypole Tells*

One of those songs that have become a folk song because they touch a primal and essential side of the popular mind sings of the lime tree that rustles above the fountain at the gate. In it, the old idea has become a poetic experience that the tree, and in particular the lime tree, is so closely related to man that a whole community has chosen it as its patron saint.

The tree and its life are in close communion with the lives of those who planted it. From the rustling of the lime tree speaks the spirit of the community itself, when God stirs its branches in the storm. Many a dear word is carved into its bark, in the hope that - entrusted to the protective spirit of common life - it will fulfill secret wishes and become living life itself. This is especially true for the secret wishes of those who have entrusted their names to the bark. After all, according to ancient Nordic myth, the first human couple was created from two trees, where the eternal wave washes the earth's shore and Allfather's breath blows.

As a guardian of justice and law, the tree is placed in the community; it is to guard the field like a representative of the highest judge and keep the evildoer away. For this reason, the tree offender is punished like a robber or murderer: Whoever cuts off the top of a green tree shall have his head cut off on its trunk, and whoever injures its root shall pay for it with his own foot. So say the old country wisdoms. But this folk wisdom can only be understood if one traces its deepest meaning: it is the sacred and inviolable life itself that is placed under such strict protection. In the life of the tree, however, the life of the many flows together, forming a living community like the trunk and branches and leaves of the tree.

In some places, this primal feeling is still vividly palpable, which comes from a nature that has become an alien to us

feeling. In Sweden we still know the "Boträ", the family tree, in whose life the life of the village community is decided. Our Low German fairy tale of the Machandelbaum tells of this tree: it preserves the murdered life and lets it awaken anew; from its branches it rustles comfort to the desolate father and horror to the guilty murderer. In this tree is the Wölsungen sword, the sacred legacy of the clan; and also the knife of the brothers, which announces by its condition whether the distant brother is doing well or badly. Under the lime tree, the village community comes together for the Thing, to which the living and the dead are summoned by a solemn call. For an unbroken chain winds around those who are living and those who once lived but have not left the community.

Our maypole also has its origins in this sacred tree. When it puts on its new green robe after winter baldness, when new life rises up its trunk and unfolds green and joyfully, the high time of the year begins and with it the high time of the popular community. The winter-green tree, which was decorated with lights in the Julnacht, finds its counterpart in the summer-green tree of May; the spirit of community, which it symbolizes, celebrates its high time. This spirit is expressed not only in joyful and exuberant celebrations, but also in the will to defend the homeland. In addition to games and dancing, the great year

is the meeting of the able-bodied, which once brought the Franconians together on their May field, but which today still calls the shooting fraternities to the royal shooting, which was once a very serious competition to determine the most skilled in arms.

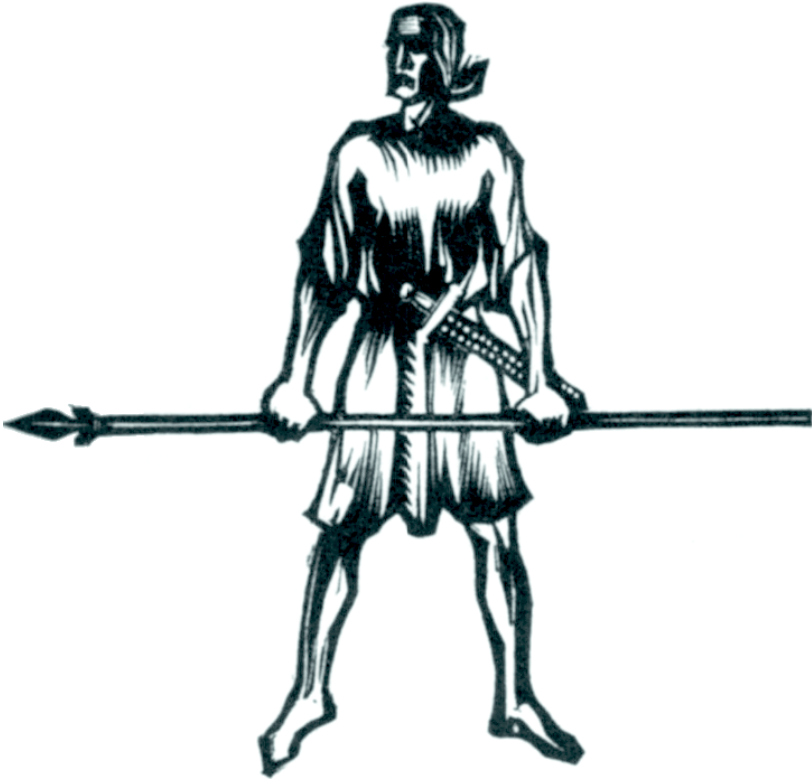
The sacred sign of the year was once hung on the "Merklinde"; we know of a small town in Westphalia where a lighted lantern is still hung in the branches of the lime tree on May Day and a jug of beer, the old sacrificial drink of the Germanic tribes, is poured down through the branches.

A felled tree was not always chosen for the maypole, which was then erected in the middle of the village and decorated with various symbols, a large wheel and colorful flags. The living tree itself is its predecessor, it was decorated in the past and is still decorated in some places today to celebrate spring. The ancient Swabians are said to have had trees which they decorated with woven branches and all kinds of precious objects for festivities. In our imperial legend, which is actually the mythical expression of our state consciousness, this idea plays a role in its most original conception. When the Emperor Frederick, or whoever else is meant by this, returns from his mountain of death, he hangs his shield on the barren tree and it begins to green and blossom again. Thus the people and the empire based on them blossom again when their time has come and they are given the ruler who is called to rule them. But the legend also tells us that until then there will still be a hard struggle

and that the forces of light and darkness meet for a bloody battle at the birch tree, which is also nothing other than the tree of the great turning point of the year and the world.

The custom of the maypole has been preserved. Let us make sure that it does not become an empty showpiece that lasts one day and is then forgotten again! Let us remember the ancient sacred roots of this tree, which grows from the place where the eternal waters of our nation gush forth from the fountain of Urd.





## *On the Germanic Conquest of Land*

It is an old Germanic thought: the soil is more than a dead possession to the German, it is the bearer of life and thus a high pledge entrusted to the cultivator by God himself for use and care. From this basic idea

explains all the wisdoms and customs that have been associated with taking possession of new land and regaining the old since prehistoric times. They are acts of consecration that symbolically conclude a covenant with the highest divine power, which manifests itself in the forces of earth and sun; but these live in the sacred fire that burns on the hearth and forms the center of all land that is united all around under one owner. Thus the paternal heritage of the court, the Odal, is also an image of the entire national land and furthermore an image of Mittgart, the inhabited and ordered world in general. Just as the bride turns the house three times when she takes possession of her farm, so when the land was taken in ancient Iceland the Norwegian landowners surrounded the newly acquired land with a bonfire; or they lit large fires at the corners of the land itself, and it is expressly stated that they sanctified the whole area with this fire. If the land was less extensive, a burning arrow was shot over it. King Harald the Fair-haired decreed that none of his men should take more land than he could surround with fire in one day.

All this fire custom, however, was related to the great world fire, the sun, which sanctified the land through its appearance over the conquered land. That is why the laws stated that the fire should be lit when the sun was in the east and that these fires should burn into the night. As a visible symbol of the marriage of the sun's power,



in Iceland it was once an axe, the ancient sacred symbol of Thor, the god of heaven and earth; the landing site of the Axe Fjord was named after it. Everywhere, however, it was customary to erect a high pole, the top of which was then touched by the rising sun; not infrequently it was the pole of the banner itself, under which the victorious battle for the land had been waged. It then crowned the mound under which the fallen were buried; and the idea prevailed that their power, married with the power of the earth and the sun, had become an element of the sacred ground itself and would continue to be passed on to future generations who cultivated the soil.

For it was very often the case, and in prehistoric times it must have been the case, that the land was taken from the burial mound of the fallen or the leader and that the center of the clan and tribal associations lay here forever. This also explains the custom, which we find attested among the Saxons, of taking earth from the native soil and scattering it on the newly acquired land: it is the power of the earth itself that is thus communicated to the new land, and the new settlers sit on the soil of the old homeland. Some later misunderstood legends have preserved this trait and turned it into a trick, which was originally a sacred and meaningful custom. That is why the Norwegian clans who crossed over to Iceland took the sacred earth from the sanctuaries of their homeland with them to place it at the newly erected shrines

to scatter. Perhaps the Swabians, who moved from the Spree and Havelland to the Neckar and Danube regions, also brought sacred earth from the ancient grove of the Semnones to Hohenstaufen, Tübingen, Hohentwiel or wherever else the tribe's sanctuaries were founded. The great idea of the unity of the German earth becomes visible to us in such customs: wherever there is earth consecrated by the blood and graves of the ancestors, Germans should be aware of it. The idea that all land ownership is "received from God and the glorious element of the sun" is expressed again and again right up to the peasant traditions of more recent times. This idea is visible as far back as the distant primeval times, which have laid down evidence of their life and thought on the rock images of the North; we find there the moving of the plow around the land, as well as the erection of the pole, which a later time expressly testifies to. Thus we may perhaps assume that the erection of the maypole, which takes place every year, and also the moving of the plow at springtime are ancient customs that originate from the same world of thought: it is the annual reaffirmation of the covenant that the ancestors once made "with God and the glorious element of the sun". And we can interpret a monument that the first historically recognizable, albeit tragically failed, land conquest of Germanic tribes in Germany has left us from this world of thought. It is the tall and pointed stone at Miltenberg am Main, on which a Latin inscription is inscribed.

The inscription, which can be seen here, has taken the place of Germanic runes; it tells us that this stone was erected between the territories of the Cimbri, Teutons, Haruden and Ambrons. Parts of these Nordic peoples settled in the Maigau during the great migration and erected this high stone as a symbol of land conquest and peace.





## *Solstice - The Fate of the Sun*

That is the secret of blood and origin: many thousands of years of experience flow into it, awakening new experiences and sharpening the inner sense for all the thousands of sources from which the life and senses of our ancestors still speak to us today. That's why we once stood around the solstice fire as young wanderers, that's why we still light folkloric bonfires today, and

conscious Germans are the beacons of the heights, which are symbols for the elevation of life that fate has set us as a task.

This primal memory is the secret of the magic of those bright nights in which the fading red of evening and the glow of dawn merge; when the place of rising comes so close to that of setting that the summer sun's orbit appears like a high, festive gateway arched over the summer earth by the uplifted arms of the sun hero. Among the images that originate from this primal experience, we still understand the original and eternal meaning today: the marriage of the creative power of the sun with the maternal forces of the earth, and, fatefully placed between the two, the consecration of the human community, which is indissolubly bound together by blood, spirit and fate. It still lives in the children's song:

Open the gate, open the gate,  
A golden chariot is coming...

in which the ancient sun hero himself is celebrated. His symbols, carved in stone, amber and runic inscriptions in remote prehistoric times, tell of his victorious journey to the summer heights. In Schleswig, people erect the midsummer pole, in which the old man rune is preserved, because it is the symbol of the sun hero who raises his arms high in the summer sky. Hardly any other festival in our summer season, however, is equal to this one in terms of honor and deep national meaning,

which is celebrated in Questenberg am Harz at the height of summer. On a rock above the village stands an oak trunk with a huge wheel wreath hanging from its crossbar, which is renewed every year to celebrate the solstice. Early in the morning, when the first rays of the sun appear, the village community gathers on the hill and greets the rising star with horn calls. Then the old wreath is taken down and wrapped with fresh, new leaves; the leaders of the village community sit down in the ring of the wheel, eat bread and meat and pass around the drink as a sign of the community that embraces everyone. At high noon, the wreath is raised, the tufts of leaves are renewed on both sides and the beginning of the new half of the year is heralded with the cry "The quest hangs".

Anyone who has ever taken part in this festival feels first and foremost connected to those generations for whom the custom was once an experience - a world experience that was condensed into a communal experience. The wreath is nothing other than the clearly recognizable symbol of the world circle that surrounds everyone and binds them together in a community of destiny from which no one can escape, and yet in which everyone is safe. That is why elsewhere girls weave wreaths of nine kinds of herbs to throw on the trees or in the solstice fires - secretly hoping that life's destiny may also be rounded off for them in this symbolic image of their natural destiny. Such a wreath once adorned the giant Thinglinde tree in Nordhausen am Harz, the "Merichs-

linde", to which the shoemakers' guild, councillors and mayors flocked on the summer festival to spend the midsummer night in leafy huts. Even today, wreaths and "crowns" are placed over the doors of thatched houses in Lower Saxony on the eve of the holy midsummer night. Once upon a time, the tin cup was passed around by the girls and the "Minne", that is, the memory of the dead and the living who belong to the clan or the community.

It has remained a festival of light and fire to this day. The burst of flame is its emblem; but bundles of straw and tar barrels on long poles are also burned and burning wreaths of pitch are thrown into the water, because on these holy nights the liquid element receives the consecration of the sun, whose fate it is to go back into the darkness from now on. It is the knowledge of the inescapability of this fate that gave the Germanic people and their myths the basic tragic feeling, but at the same time also the knowledge of the inner unity of all human destiny with the great fate of the sun in world law. From this knowledge was born the myth of the light Balder, who must descend from the bloom of his sunny life to the dark Hei - struck by the spear of inescapable fate to which all living things succumb.

But this fate is not a dull one for the Teuton, rigid compulsion that intervenes from a foreign world into our own: in the deepest sense we are



all connected with it, because the law of the world is also our own law,

for the independent conscience  
is the sun of your moral day.

And so it makes sense that the greatest tragedy of Germanic culture, the downfall of the Nibelungs, takes place on a summer solstice:

"On a solstice the great murder happened",

and when the knower of this fate, the grim and yet so joyfully brave Hagen, begins the final battle with a shout:

Now we drink the minne and sacrifice the king's wine!

The German people as a whole has had to go through this fate again and again. And everyone who does his best has once or more often to pass through that depth which is the fate of the sun; the depth in which one wants to despair when everything fails and when the best intentions are misjudged. And yet he will keep the spark alive in himself, for the Germanic man knows the eternal law of dying and becoming, of which his myths and symbols tell. He will not bow down like a slave to a dull law that is incomprehensible to him; he will carry his light through the depths like a free man. For all light will be just as independent as

the sun, whose image it is, will naturally make its way upwards again. This certainty is provided by the myth and custom of the summer solstice:

And as long as you don't have that,  
this to die and become,  
You are just a gloomy guest  
on the dark earth.



## *The Solar Hero and Heroic Legend*

The mythical foundation of our national life lies beyond all historical events - and yet it continues to have a determining influence on our historical actions. Even today and day after day. In the course of our lives, however, we have all passed through a stage of development in which the mythical legacy of our ancestors was a direct experience for us; more real and almost stronger than that which we are familiar with,

that meant the demands of everyday life. It was at that time when Siegfried, the bright and brave one, came to us as the eternal model of our being; when we experienced his strength, his deeds and his fate within us, when we slew the dragon with him and read of his sudden end with fury and hot grief in our hearts. Or when we were later shaken and uplifted by the superhuman image of grim Hagen and the demise of the death-defying Burgundians; when we made the loyalty and infidelity of Dietrich of Bern's companions and his deeds and suffering the yardstick for our own friendships and adventures.

Why are these figures still so familiar to us, centuries after their deaths? What still makes our hearts beat faster when Siegfried strikes his dragon, we who are steeped in a natural science that has killed all legendary animals more relentlessly than any hero ever did? The answer to this question is provided by another science that deals with our own innermost nature: German studies and Germanic studies. It teaches us - because it is only a part of the science of life itself - why we are the way we are; why we feel the way we feel, and why this being and feeling has not changed in essence and essence since the days of the forefathers, and cannot change if we remain what we are.

Heroic sagas and heroic songs reach back to the creative origins of our people, from which we all come and from which we continue to draw our strength, whether we know it or not.

They are a common original possession, because they go back to a common primal experience that was so powerful that its images are still alive today and trigger new experiences in us. All heroes, however, who were worthy of veneration when we were young and still are today, bear the traits of that primeval hero in whom the parable of the divine has gained symbolic form from the experience of world events.

Here lie the eternal roots of our Germanic experience of God, they are firmly interwoven with our oldest and ever new experience of the world; and everything that has given force and form, shock and intimacy to our experience through the centuries, even in the last age, is fed by these eternal roots that rest firmly in our ancient, sacred foundation. Wherever the image of the battle-hardened hero takes shape in a historical champion of the nation, the image of the old Nordic sun hero rises up in him from the mythical primordial ground: he gives him his features, in which the characteristics of divine descent become clear, because every new hero called to lead the people in the change of generations and centuries appears to the ancestral consciousness of the people as a new embodiment of its eternal archetype. These traits must have already been borne by the hero who, for the first time in historically tangible time, led the victorious battle with the Roman resistance: Armin, as the Romans called him, whom we can recognize today in our light hero Siegfried. Ancient legends are associated with his name.

Like the sun hero of prehistoric times, he grows up in the dark cave of winter in order to overcome his power with his own divine strength and pave the way for new life. That is why he forges the sword himself in the dark cave with the dwarves, with which he wins the decisive battle against the lindworm. We know today that the iron sword was once made of bronze in earlier times, and that in even older times it was the stone axe that the sun hero wielded and with which he blasted the capstone of the barrow, just as Donar smashes the stone giants of winter with his hammer. A megalithic tomb near Bremen has handed down to us a five-thousand-year-old image of this hammer-wielding sun hero.

When, after the invasion of a foreign world a thousand years ago, German divine life took refuge in the workshops of woodcarvers and stonemasons, the German heroic saga faithfully preserved the old heroic spirit and recognized it again and again in the great leaders of its own time. Alongside the first liberator from Rome's superiority came the figures of the great wandering age: above all the Gothic hero Dietrich von Bern. He too was adorned by legend with the deeds and sufferings of the sun hero, he fights with the dragon, he too finds the sword in the dark dragon's lair that opens the way to the light, and he too is given the sun-like eyes that reveal the divine spark and that blaze like sparkling lightning in anger. The legend tells of him that at the end of his earthly life he rode a black horse and

entered the stone house of the ancestors, only to return from it one day in the great final battle for the victory of life. And wherever a king or an emperor was able to fulfill his people's longing for freedom and justice, he took on the features of his ancestral role model, and the people awaited the return of the one who was the archetype of their own world law because he fulfilled their own law of life. In the oldest writings of the Indo-Europeans, he is the "God in the waters", who, according to the world experience of the ancient northern peoples, rises from the waters of the sea every year to new life and new deeds. He is still depicted on a Germanic tombstone that his companions once placed for a dead hero on the Rhine. Many an old legend tells us that the dying hero sought the sun with his eyes, imbued with the knowledge that an old German poet put into words:

Were not the eye sunny,  
The sun could never behold it,  
And was not God's own power in us,  
How could the divine delight us?







## *The Holy Bread*

As children, we all knew the legend of the proud Frau Hitt, who disregarded and mistreated the bread and was turned into a giant stone as a result. As in most German legends, a myth from the distant past lives on in this one; from the time when bread was sacred in Mittgart, in the God-protected human world, as the bearer of life and salvation. Whoever

had to return to Utgart, to the desolate world of the stone giants, where there was no bread and no life and no sacred clan peace.

An age that values life according to stock market prices has almost forgotten this ancient myth; only the most faithful guardians of unconscious good, the farmers and the children, still know of it. And yet, for sighted eyes, it reaches back to those ancient times when man and woman first prepared their place with the stone hoe in the barren soil of the breadfruit, which was both cradle and grave for the grain in which life dwelt. It was carried on from clearing to clearing, it began its triumphal march across the Marches, and wherever it took root, the God of salvation brought settledness and clan peace to the land. Thus grain and bread became a symbol of the life-giving spirit of the world itself. Under his image, the eternal law of the world was understood, which also applies to man, inevitable and comforting at the same time: "Die and become." The myth of world events was also the myth of bread, which repeats those events in ripening and decay. The spirit in the grain carries the sacred life through the ice age of winter and resurrects it in spring. It carries human life, which is so closely bound to it that no life is conceivable without it.

"Holy" is the Germanic word for everything that bears life and promotes life. Bread is sacred to him when he scatters it as grain in the field; it is sacred when he mows it down, when he crushes it

and is finally consumed. Thus the sky god and his earthy companion appear in the image of the holy bread. It is the high time of the year when the high heaven with its solar power lovingly embraces the motherly earth to produce the bearer of life:

I beseech the earth and the heavens above:

Erde, Erde, Erde, mother of the earth!....

Be green in God's embrace,

Filled with food, for the salvation of men!

This is how the Germanic ancestors greeted the "holy wedding", which was also the time of the human wedding. In the time of ripeness, the procession of the fields walked along the "Schnad", commanding all the land to the holy peace of God; and even in the Middle Ages, the plowing farmer was under very special legal protection. And finally comes the time of death, which here is a sacrificial death in the truest sense of the word; when the reaper mows down the waving stalks that must serve life through their death. This is the basis of the old myth of the sacrificial death of the god: that is why the god of harvest, grain and bread is also the god of the mown warriors, the ancient Wodan, who opens the way to life when he destroys life. To show that he lives on, however, farmers still leave the last sheaf in the field today; it is intended for Wode's horse, or it is itself called the Wode, because in it the divine life symbolically lives on. In the same thought, the dead were given some grain to take with them to the grave; the space of the house was left empty,

but the room in which the grain was stored was a sacred space, and in the Germanic hall there was the sanctuary in which the divine life itself dwelt.

Ancient myths of kindred peoples tell us of the suffering and sacrificial death of the divine savior; but even our fairy tale of the king's son, who fears nothing, knows that through the steadfast suffering of all adversities the king's daughter, the new life, must be liberated. The Greeks tell of Dionysus, the son of Zeus, that he was torn apart and consumed by the Titans; but from the parts of the shattered Titans grew the race of men, who all carry the divine spark of Dionysus within them. The Germans created the myth of bread in a very similar way; Wodan, who still lives with farmers today, sacrifices himself, just as he takes the lives of people when life itself demands it. But he lives again in his transformations: in the sacred bread, as well as in the sacred intoxicating potion, as the inventor of which he is honored, and in which he inspires and elevates the spirit of man.

The old grain spirit still lives on in our folk beliefs today under various symbols; be it the rye cow, which scares the children out of the grain to protect the sacred breadfruit; be it the "rye cock" or the "rye woman", which are regarded as images of the spirit of life and also give their name to the last sheaf here and there. The harvest cock, which adorns the last sheaf in many German districts and is a wooden image above the barn.

The door is a symbol of ancient mystical thinking.

This is why bread and all pastries are sacred; even in prehistoric times, bread was given the shape of the symbols of the sacred world empire: the shape of the god of the year or his sacrificial animals. At all sacred turnings of the year, such pastries were eaten in honor of the life-giving deity. Eating the bread symbolized the union of God and man; this is why the dead of the clan and the people also partook of it, to whom the "All Souls' Bread" is still given today at the Feast of the Dead, because they too are still subject to the great law of the universe.

That is why peasantry is nobility and the highest duty: the peasant is the keeper and guardian of the holy bread in which the divine lives. Reverence for the holy bread is reverence for the laws of life, of whose immortality it bears witness.





### *The Ghost in the Grain*

The ripe grain has fallen to the sickle, just as man at the end of his circle of life has fallen to the sickle of the great reaper, in order to complete the circles of existence anew. That spirit of life has taken on many different forms.

The spirit of the grain is the one under whose image our ancestors imagined life and growth, which was given to them in the holy grain and the holy bread. Now that it is coming to an end, the spirit of the grain is called the "old man" par excellence, also the "old man", the "Schewekerl" or the harvester. When the grain has laid down under the pressure of the wind before being cut, the "Old man" sat on it, as they say. He also makes the grain wave, and when the sickle rushes through the grain, he retreats from the fallen swaths further and further into the uncut grain until he is encircled and caught in the very last sheaves. "Olemanno!" is then heard, and whoever mows and binds the last sheaf has caught the "old man" and must carry him from the field to the barn with his own hands:

You have the old man  
And you have to keep it!

In some areas, this old man is none other than the Wode himself, the lord of the hosts of mown-down warriors, who has remained alive to this day under his old name. Here and there, people still kneel before the old man in the last sheaf and even kiss him. This was a custom that was forbidden to the inhabitants of the Prussian Warmia by a papal legate as late as the 13th century, without it being able to do much to change the minds of the pious heathens. So the last sheaf is probably a man wearing trousers, a shirt, a vest and an old



hat, and enjoys the veneration of the good spirit. For even if it is claimed in Norway that this "reaper" lives invisibly in the fields and feeds on the farmer's grain all year round, this is only his right, for it is actually he who gives the grain its fertility and vitality. His figure is set down in the courtyard, the reapers form a ring around him and dance the round dance around him three times. Then the feast is held, which in Bavaria is called the "Niederfall", and the Gerstenmann, the Hafermann or Roggenmann is asked to take his share of the meal - a sacrificial meal in the truest sense of the word. After the meal, the binder of the last sheaf takes the rye man in her arms and dances around with him three times on the threshing floor, and then the other sheaf binders do the same. Finally, they put him in a corner of the threshing floor and let him watch the feast until he takes his place of honor there until the next harvest. Its power is transferred to the one who touched it last; this shearer is now called the "old man" himself, is wrapped in straw and has to carry a straw man on his back to his neighbor.

Perhaps it goes back to an even older world of imagination when the spirit in the grain is perceived as an animal, as a pig, a goat or a dog. When the wind blows through the rye field, it is said that there are wild pigs in the grain, or one sees the rye wolf or the rye dog. These spirits are both good and evil; they make the grain grow, but also know how to destroy it.

When the grain is mown, the grain spirit must retreat from each mown piece into the unmown one, and the reaper must be careful that he is not "struck by the harvest goat" there, or that the "rye wolf does not get him under". This is what they say when a reaper suddenly falls ill during harvest time. Today, the most common symbol of ripe and cut grain is the corncock, which used to be killed with the last sheaf in the form of a living rooster. It lives on as the "Arnehahn" and the "Stoppelhann" in many other parts of Germany. In Brandenburg, the harvest festival itself is often called the "last cock". A colorful rooster carved from wood is placed on top of the harvest wreath, which in turn is placed on a pole. The whole thing is carried home on the last cartload as a decoration and is often nailed over the barn door.

The wreath is the old symbol of the wheel of the year, a symbol of the eternal "die and become!" that encompasses the whole of life. This wreath on the pole is also placed in the growing cornfield, often as protection against an evil corn spirit, the Bilwis rider or Bilmessschnitter. He is said to mow long, narrow paths in the ripe grain field. He is thought of as a long, bony man who wears a long-sleeved skirt and a three-cornered hat and always has his hands in his trouser pockets. He usually rides through the field on a black billy goat; at the edge of the cornfield he then takes off his right shoe and ties a small, very sharp sickle to his big toe, which he uses to cut the grass and

mows the long narrow lanes through the grain.

It is easy to recognize the figure that has entered our pictorial art as the "Gevatter Tod": he is the reaper who mows down the grain like the people, and in all details he can still be recognized in his original meaning. The sickle has also been replaced by the scythe; the painted cross that he cuts into the field and which he himself carries as a symbol has become an hourglass; and even the hands "in his pockets" can be recognized. As a further development of the annual wreath, his figure stands on the stubble field with his arms bent in a circle; we find the same figure, cast in bronze, as a burial object in the burial urns of our Germanic ancestors. This "Friend Hein" was not a frightening image to our ancestors, who knew about the law of dying and becoming, but the peaceful companion on the path of all life, which flows eternally in repetition. And they recognized this deeper meaning everywhere: in the mowing of the stalks and the gathering of the sacred breadfruit, as well as in the raging of the battles, which for them found their deeper meaning in the fact that they served the preservation and expansion of the Odal, their farmland and habitat.





## *Leadership and Following*

As long as we know of warlike alliances of fighting men, all warfare will be characterized by the closest union of a chosen leader with the men who are prepared to follow him in every honourable deed, in battle and in death. Thus at the beginning of written German history stands that shield,

the story of the Germanic followers, which the Roman Tacitus may have recounted to a Germanic source:

"Leaders are more effective through their example than through their official authority; when they are ready quickly, when they are visible from afar, when they fight at the forefront, they arouse admiration. There is great competition among the followers: everyone wants to be the best with his prince, but the leader is anxious to have many and quick followers. That is honor, that is power: always being surrounded by a large band of selected young men; in peace it is an adornment, in battle a firm fence."

This description contains all the elements that form the basic structure of all honor and loyalty in our Germanic poetry and in later German heroic poetry, and thus of any fighting community: loyalty and bravery between leader and followers, and no less between followers and leaders, because loyalty is only loyalty if it is always and at all times mutual. This image was so deeply rooted in the imagination and feelings of all Germanic peoples that a whole series of words bear witness to it to this day: leader, prince, lord, duke and the terms "Truchtin" and "Thiodan", which no longer exist today; for the retinue, however, "Gesinde", i.e. "Wegge- nossen", "Gesellen", i.e. "Saalgenossen", and "Gesellen", i.e. "Saalgenossen". "Disciple", a word that has lost its original meaning to a completely different circle of ideas. It originally referred to the young men of the military retinue; the Christian

Early German poets, however, did not know how to find another word to describe the followers of Christ, and so the word and concept have passed into a completely different world.

Not only in legend, but also in historical reality, this henchman riding among his companions and fighting at their head often appears at the greatest moments in German history. King Otto the Great rode as a true Germanic henchman into the great Battle of the Lechfeld, as described by Widukind von Corvey:

"In the fifth army, which was the largest, rode the prince himself, surrounded by exquisite swords from all the thousand nations and by battle-happy virtue, and with him was the banner of victory, fenced in by dense heaps of troops. The prince seized the shield, raised the sacred spear and was the first to blast against the enemy, gloriously, as befits a king who commands men of valor."

This army cluster, which surrounds the leader himself and which does not leave the field alive if the leader falls, is called the "consolation" because it is a symbol of all solidity, all trust and all security for the prince, when he himself is the first to ride against the enemy. It is the manly challenge of primeval German times and the German present of the Middle Ages when Hagen, the archetype of the loyal follower to the death, speaks the words in the Song of the Nibelungs:

"It is a great comfort to the people," said Hagene, "that the lords are leading the way to the forefront!"

Our historical heroes have also always remained loyal to their men. If Liudolf, the son of the great Otto, fell out with his father because he wanted to remain loyal to his young followers at all costs, this is precisely why he became a hero of German folk legend, interwoven with the image of Duke Ernst of Swabia.

The greatest folk poem, alongside the Nibelung song, the song of male loyalty, and the Gudrun song, the song of female loyalty, which was a symbol and example of loyalty to the Germans for more than a millennium, is the poem of Dietrich von Bern and his companions. The stories of him, the great king of the people, were told wherever Germanic peoples lived: by travellers in Bavaria and Austria, by the Ostland travellers of the Hanseatic League and by Westphalian merchants in the merchants' parlors of Norway; and the theme, in various variations, is always that of how Dietrich won over his companions after a hard struggle, how he remained loyal to them and they to him; how he lost the kingdom for their sake, and how he sees almost all of them perish in the heroic final battle with the Burgundian princes. Folk poetry has portrayed the figures of the old Germanic followers, of whom Tacitus already reports, in true-to-life personalities: the prince's confidant, gray in battle, in the old Hildebrand, the young, hot-tempered Degen in the quick and fiery Wolfhart. And the tragedy of the Bernese has its origins in his loyalty to his followers:



Dietrich evacuates his kingdom before the false Sibich in order to free his loyal followers from captivity. Wittich, the disloyal follower, goes over to the enemy; but Heime, who is loyal to the core of his soul, a self-willed iron head, is forced out of his circle by Dietrich himself through mistrust, forcing him to go into the woods and wait for the day when he can prove his loyalty.

Here, too, Germanic folk poetry has recognized the tragedy of all living community; that loyalty can come into conflict with fidelity, personal honour with manly duty, so that the most faithful is misjudged. But for the old poets this is the highest loyalty, that Heime remains true to himself in the woods in order to stand by his lord on the day of justice and to suffer the real traitor with the sword.

The basic forces of Germanic nature always remain the same in the German people. Wherever a living order was newly formed, it was founded on mutual loyalty between leader and followers and on the justice that rules over both. Every community that rests on this foundation is indestructible; it is transient when this foundation is shaken.





## *The Sacred Flag*

There was nothing great in the life of the Teuton that did not make him aware of his close and indissoluble bond with the spirit and nature of his ancestors. Their life was his life, his deeds were their deeds, and in his

highest display of strength, in battle and war, he felt their immediate closeness more than anywhere else, indeed his complete oneness with them and their heroic spirit. From this knowledge of the unity of living being in the span of the sexes, his symbols arose, and above all the symbols of war and battle.

On the burial mounds of prehistoric times, which contained the bones of the ancestor in the stone chamber, a pole stood out as a mark and sign, carved from the sacred wood that is the symbol and seat of life for the native Northman. Not just a dead marker, but a living bridge from the world of the maternal earth to the upper world of the bright sky, in which the sun runs its course and in which the deeds are worked in which the dead of the clan and the people have their share, just as they inseparably share in the spirit and the blood of those who work these deeds. These signs were charged with the divine power that works in the earth power and the sun power, and which, as an indestructible part, connects the dead harboring in the Heireich with the men acting in Mittgard. This sacred symbol, charged with divine and ancestral power, was carried into battle as a field emblem; the young crew protected it with shield and lance and felt the power of victory emanating from it; for the power of the ancestors lived in it, and it was the belief in victory itself that was embodied in it. Until well into the Middle Ages, the battle was an agreed meeting with the enemy; the banner pole was set up on the agreed field and the

shield castle was formed, at which the commander himself stopped, and at which the decision of the God of War was made.

This emblem was crowned with a symbol of victory; in Germany it was usually the golden eagle, which still accompanied our German kings of the Middle Ages in war, and which was already used by the Saxons a millennium and a half ago when they advanced victoriously and extended their empire deep into central Germany and across the sea to Britain. Where they had won new land, they planted the sacred sign on the battlefield, facing east, towards the rising sun: in this way, the ancestral spirit and ancestral power would flow from the graves of the homeland into the newly won soil and the universal power of the sun would consecrate the new homeland soil. For it was from the sun that the Teuton took his land, as many peasant legends of later times still tell us; but in the sacred field mark it wedded itself to the sacred earth power, the maternal element, from which Donar, the old god of the Germanic peasant warriors, was also nourished, as the Edda tells us. The eternal order of the universe was united in it with the law of blood and soil, which is the primal basis of all sacred clan laws. And that was the ultimate meaning of all Germanic struggle: to live according to the law of the ruling sun and at the same time to be firmly rooted in the power of the earth, in which the power of the many thousand ancestors lives.

This field mark, which was firmly attached to the ground, was later called the "Standhart", meaning

"steadfast"; and our word "standard" is formed from this. Today, as in ancient times, it denotes the standard of a warlike troop and its leader and the symbol of an unbreakable fighting unit. The storming individual units, however, who charged with sword and lance into the enemy, carried a special standard, the storm banner with the long red flag cloth. It, too, dates back to Germanic prehistoric times: the war spear of Wodan is its archetype; a red cloth was tied to the shaft as a sign that the decision rested with him, the inscrutably powerful one, which in former times was probably soaked in the blood of the warriors themselves. It was the sign that all who followed it had consecrated themselves to death and accepted life, if it remained with them, as a new gift from the Whale Father. But in this willingness to die lay the highest exaltation of life for the Germanic man ready for war. In the song of the Nibelungs ready for death, it says of Volker, the standard-bearer of the Burgundians: "He tied a sign to a shaft that was red."

In the old empire, it was the highest privilege of the Swabian army to carry this storm banner in front of the imperial army, in which the German confidence in victory, ready for death, was always embodied. Time and time again, the storm banner had to be paraded beneath the mound of its slain defenders: whether it was the raven banner of the Normans, the storm banner of the German knights, the banners of the German Landsknechte or the banners of Prussian and German battalions.

When the warrior in Germanic times and today still takes his oath of allegiance to the flag, the old, sublime thought lives in it: in the emblem lives the spirit of the ancestors and their martial deeds, in it lives the spirit of the martial community itself, which outlasts death, for "the flag is more than death". That is why the flag soaked in the blood of the slain warriors is forever the mythical rallying point for living and dead warriors.







## *The Holy Spear*

Among the imperial jewels of the old empire, which have returned to their old place in the imperial city of Nuremberg after an absence of one hundred and fifty years, the most venerable jewel is not the precious golden crown, venerable as it must be to all Germans; it is the iron spearhead that the old royal spear carried. It is the oldest emblem of Germanic leaders and kings, not in the form of a golden crown, but with an iron spearhead.

The symbol of their dominion was the victorious spear. This dominion, however, was of divine origin, and the sacred spear, in which the dominion was symbolized, was itself in the true sense the emblem of the all-ruling and victorious god, who appears in later Germanic times as the whale father and all-father Wodan. Originally it may have been the Germanic god of heaven Tiu, whose name is used in the rune series to designate the spear-shaped rune. If our ancient kings and emperors therefore derive their rule from a divine calling, this is not just an invention of the medieval church; it is a continuation of the ancient Germanic idea that all human and earthly order should be a reflection of the great order of heaven and the universe.

In prehistoric Germanic times, as Tacitus tells us, the lord lent the young follower the horse and the "bloody, victorious spear": this was also a transfer of the ruler's and victorious power inherent in the leader to the young warrior. Thus the old Germanic images depicted Wodan and his representative, the army commander, predominantly with shield and spear, and the great Goth king Dietrich of Bern wields the spear as a symbol of his kingship on the equestrian statue that once stood in Rome and was brought to Aachen by Emperor Charles. The holy spear was also among the royal symbols that the dying King Conrad had his brother Eberhard present to Henry, the former enemy Duke of the Saxons, in 919.

old royal emblem is associated with one of the greatest deeds in German history. King Henry himself, who renewed the old East Franconian kingdom from its Germanic roots, is depicted on his seals with a spear and shield. The spear he wielded, which is still preserved today among the imperial regalia, admittedly comes from another Germanic people, but it is precisely this that reveals its origins in the common Germanic past.

In 922, the Lombard dukes presented the spear of the Lombard kings to King Rudolf II of Burgundy as a symbol of their rule over the Italian Lombard kingdom. Four years later, this spear was handed over by Rudolf to King Henry, who thus symbolically extended his rule over the old Burgundian kingdom; the spear has since become the symbol of German kingship in general. The Lombards themselves had adopted this royal spear from their distant Germanic ancestors; we repeatedly hear of it as the symbol of the divine calling of their rulers. Once, for example, at a conflicting royal election, the right king was designated by a falcon perched on his spear. King Authari extended his reign to Lower Italy; he touched a pillar standing in the Strait of Messina with his spear, thus marking the boundaries of his reign. The legend of King Otto I tells a similar story: he is said to have hurled his lance into the "Ottesund" in the north of Jutland, thus marking the border of his realm.

However, we know with certainty from history that Otto wielded the sacred spear of the Germanic kings in the greatest and most decisive battle of his life, the Battle of Hungary on the Lechfeld on August 10, 955. After a courageous speech to the men of his entourage, he seized the shield and the sacred spear and was the first to charge against the enemy, who was defeated in this battle to the point of complete annihilation and driven from German soil forever. He may have kept the spear in the palace he had built in Magdeburg, and thus the old Lombard royal symbol returned to the origins of this people, after it had been led successively by Lombard, Burgundian and German kings - a symbol of the permanence of Germanic nature in the course of an eventful history. In 1002, King Henry II, the last Saxon king, assumed the German kingship with the holy lance in Mainz.

Somewhat later, the memory of the origin of the old Wodan's spear began to fade; church legend associated it with St. Mauritius, and still later it was said to be the lance with which Longinus, the Roman captain, opened the side of Christ on the cross. In the 10th century, an iron nail was inserted into the spear blade, which supposedly pierced the right hand of Christ on the cross. The penetration of Christian ideas reshaped the Germanic tradition, but it is precisely this blood-stained nail that still leaves a dark reminder of the "bloody, victorious spear" of

Germanic prehistory. And in Wolfram Eschenbach's Parzival, into which much of the world of thought of the Old Empire has flowed from Germanic tradition, the spear soaked in the blood of the king is carried before the new ruler in the Grail Castle. King Henry IV, who throughout his life had to defend the independence of the German Empire against the papacy, had the tip of the spear encircled with a broad silver band, to which Emperor Charles IV added a golden band.

In a document from 1246, the holy spear is described as a "Spear and nail of our Lord" - the old spear of the gods has been completely incorporated into the Christian world of thought. But under this strange shell we have long since rediscovered the true Germanic core.





## *Clan and Legend*

Family after family in an endless chain once inhabited and cultivated the soil of Germania, buried their dead in graves of stone or in burnt urns and thought about the meaning of this life, which they lived joyfully and strongly and in awe of the inscrutable and, when the pressing need of the clan or the people demanded it, joyfully put it at risk. For many thousands of years, one limb was enough for the next.

They not only worshipped the sacred grain of bread as the visible sign of life support, but also the goods of the soul and the spirit, which had grown into myth and fairy tale, symbol and legend over the centuries as the fruit of experiencing and understanding the world. Until, in the time of the great twilight of nations, mighty armies came from the foreign South to put their law in the place of the native one and their world of gods in the place of their own. An outstanding leader rallied the people and defeated the enemy armies, and for a long time, perhaps more than a thousand years, people sang of this leader who, through his victory, restored peace to the people and their clans.

But another time came, more evil than that: foreign armies came again, but this time it was their own tribesmen who led them; and in their wake came foreign men with other teachings, who knew nothing of all that had grown on their native soil. And before their work the ancient, holy world of their own traditions had to give way and recede into the darkness of the woods and the wasteland of the heathen. And finally it found a last refuge only in the souls themselves, which had remained the same as in primeval times, and in what they told each other by the crackling fire and in the winter weaving cellar, and finally by the whirring wheel in the spinning rooms.

And with that, Lady Sage had returned to where her real home was: in the living



circle of generations in which the sacred grain of bread and the living grain of tradition were passed on from child to child in a life-giving and life-sustaining way. While the men and women who stand on the heights of life give the active life its due, plow up heathlands and clear forests, the ancestress and the ancestor know the ancient, deep undertones that form the eternal accompanying melody of this active life; and from them the grandchildren who sit at their feet, and who at all times are the most receptive to the old knowledge and the old faith and to the wonders that the world reveals to those who know its ancient and deep secrets. The oldest and the youngest.

This is the contemplative and dreaming part of clan life, which only through this addition becomes that mysterious primordial being of which we still sense a hint today. Here we still knew of great ancestors who rested outside in the moors and who, as they once were in life, are now the sacred guardian spirits of the whole clan. They still knew of the king in the mountain who had taken his treasures with him so that no disgraceful quarrel over the hoard would disturb the peace of the clan. They still knew of the child at whose cradle the wise women had come to bestow their gifts on him; and how the wicked woman then brought her the bad fate from which the brave king's son, who feared nothing, delivered her again.

And not only did people know all this, they also knew the places where it had happened. People in the Mark knew the mountain where once before

in ancient times, King Hinz was buried in three coffins with all his treasures. In Mecklenburg, there is a mound where the dwarves sat at a stone table and tended a brazen cauldron. On the Weser there was even a mound where a queen who had come from Norway was once buried; around her grave there were said to be twelve pitch barrels that burned for weeks. This and much more was and still is known, and the "scholars" had always talked about this "Superstition" shook their heads and referred the "stupid people" to other tales that were supposed to be far older and better authenticated than this spinning-room gossip. Until one day another kind of scholar came along, who had probably also heard the old stories from their ancestress and felt their wonderful magic; and they thought that what had grown on this soil could not be so stupid after all. They dug a hole in the mountain in the Mark, and lo and behold, the king's treasures and his three coffins (there were three burial urns) came to light. In Mecklenburg, a learned man called the peasants together, and when they really did come across the stone table and the bronze cauldron while digging, the peasants feared the wrath of the dwarves, abandoned their shovels and ran away. Finally, on the Weser, the scholar, who was himself a man of the people and had a healthy respect for them, found the traces of the pitch barrels while digging and was able to determine exactly where they had stood.

Now, little by little, the ancient wisdom of the people was seen with different eyes and it was recognized

that this wisdom is much more genuine and enduring than all the parchments that had been brought from foreign lands and praised as ancient revelations. And it was recognized that other legends also have a deep, venerable core: for example, the legend of the great king of the people who sits at the stone table in the mountain and waits for the day when his people call him to help in their greatest need. The entire German people have come to see themselves as a single clan, so much so that they have made this ancestor in the mountain the eternal symbol of nation and kingdom.

And so we were also able to find and correctly interpret the old, profound image of the good spirits giving their gifts to the newborn in the cradle as wise women on a tomb depiction in Sweden. The good gifts - that is the inheritance of the clan that is given to every newborn. The one evil gift, however, which is probably given to everyone in the cradle, must be overcome by a fighting, active life, symbolized by the king's son, who fears nothing.





## *The Sacred Hearth*

In the oldest myths of mankind, fire has become the symbol of mankind's ascent; as the keeper and master of fire, man differs most visibly from the animals, who all fear fire. The mythical Prometheus, who brought fire from the heavens to mankind, became the epitome of the mastermind who, in his battle with the forces of nature, wrested the most powerful comrade in fire from them.

In the house of the Norse primeval times, the sacred fire blazed in the stone fire pit in the middle of the living room; the only source of warmth and light.

The sacred fire was the carefully cherished symbol and pledge of the world's light. Then the sacred fire was the carefully nurtured symbol and pledge of the world's light, which had to fight the lindworms and fiends in the underworld; as far as it spread light and warmth, it banished life itself into its circle, and it was in this circle that the ancient, eternal myth of the bright sun hero and his deeds and sufferings may have been first composed.

It remained an element and symbol of life even in later times, when the old dwelling house had extended far and wide in length, width and height; when it had stretched upwards on pillars made of oak trunks and carried a huge, expansive roof, in whose dim height the sparks of the crackling hearth fire flew, and through whose cracks and joints the smoke sought its way out. The fire pit moved to the upper end of the long rectangular house, where the clay-stamped, tiled or stone-covered part of the hall was, which in northern Germany is still referred to by the ancient name of "Flett". The children grew up on this hearth, in the royal hall as in the house of the free farmers, as the old heroic songs tell us; the sacred hearth was the center of clan life here and there, and from very old tradition we can conclude that originally even the ancestor himself was buried under the hearth. At the sacred hearth stood the seat of the woman, who was enthroned here as queen of the house, like the prince in the

time of the king's hall, she had the seat by the fire among his faithful, and just as the farmer's wife in Westphalia can still oversee and direct the whole house from the hearth. In a sense, she is the guardian of the sacred fire itself; and as the bearer of this task, she may also have become the guardian of the sacred fire that the largest cult communities kept at the centers of their worship. For the ideas and institutions of the service of the gods were transferred by the Norse peoples from the narrower sphere of clan life and clan order to the larger scale of the world and world order; just as the word "home" in the Norse language denotes both the narrower scene of clan life and the scene of world events as a whole.

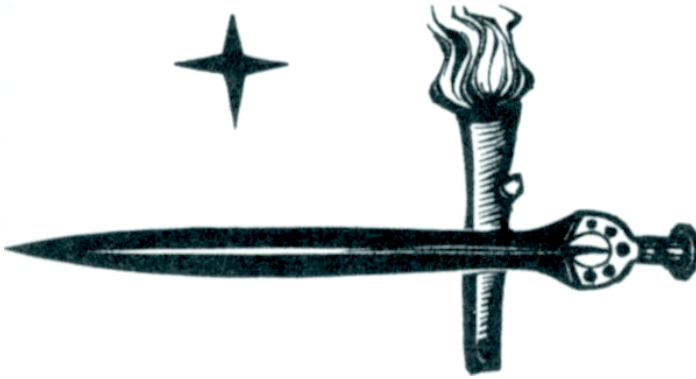
Thus the custom has survived to this day that the young woman was led around the hearth three times when she moved into her new home, thus assuming control of the interior of the house. Where the hearth had been moved to the back wall of the house, as was usually the case later in the Saxon house, she was at least led around the kettle hook, the "Hahl", which was a very special ornament of the house with its artistic wrought iron work and its rich symbolic content. With its annual wheels, sun discs and all kinds of creatures from the world of legends and fairy tales, it has preserved the tradition of the time when the sacred hearth fire was worshipped as an image of the great fire of the sun. This

great parable was once depicted in the common custom of extinguishing all hearth fires far and wide with water at the time of the winter solstice, when, according to the oldest myth, the sun sank into the ocean, and lighting the new fire with the wooden fire drill. Twins originally had to make it flare up in front of or under the large hallway gate, and from this fire the farm owners from near and far fetched the new fire for their hearth.

This custom of renewing the hearth, which was called "emergency fire" a thousand years ago and still is today, was cruelly fought against during the conversion period; and yet it has survived under its old name into our century. It was closely associated with the customs of the solstices, especially the winter solstice, when the rebirth of the sun was celebrated in the rebirth of the fire. Then the "Julblock" was rolled into the renewed hearth fire, usually the root end of a tree, and the tree of life and other symbols of the course of the year were carved into the soot on the hearth wall. This is also where the human world comes into closest contact with the world of spirits, which in the legends enter and leave through the chimney; the wild hunter also likes to throw his healing or ominous gifts through the chimney.

All of these are just variations of the old salvation prayer associated with the hearth fire: it is the shining and warming center of the clan, the refuge of its life and thus itself a parable of the eternal living.





## *Germanic Funeral Rites*

It is graves that remind us most vividly of life in prehistoric times. For our ancestors, they were monuments to life itself; without them, we would know little of their lives, of their artistry, their valor and their mighty strength - and above all of their high senses and thinking. Their graves are places of consecration because they bear witness to the knowledge of indestructibility,

because the will to eternity manifests itself most meaningfully in the changing times. Honoring the ancestor - that was the basic principle that set the arms of the Stone Age people in motion when they rolled granite blocks from far away and piled them up into houses for the dead, the likes of which have never been erected for the living. By honoring their ancestors in this way, however, they erected monuments to themselves, which we face with reverence for the ancestors as well as for the grandchildren who were capable of such deeds. For what could move northern man, who has enough to contend with in life, to make such a superhuman effort to honor the dead if not a high and mighty idea?

Gone are the days when dry parlor scholars thought they could explain such deeds by the survivors' fear of the dead. A better knowledge of our folk tradition could have taught them better. For the graves of prehistoric times have retained indelible, living and real memories for thousands of years. Stronger than the horror which may seize man in everything that has to do with death and passing away, was the feeling that an indissoluble connection waved over all parting and passing away; that a constant mysterious coming and going prevailed in the eternal series of blood and forged a firm relationship and an indissoluble bond between those who lived and those who had passed away. This idea was at the heart of all the symbolic interpretations expressed in the honors paid to the deceased: no one

divided the afterlife between hell and heaven, as in southern countries, but rather life in the circle of saints or in the ring of comrades-in-arms; the middilgard of our ancestors and its heroic addition of the Valhalla of warriors. And if the hero still needed purification, there was room enough for it here on earth, on the scene of the eternal heroic battle. Legends, fairy tales and customs, the deepest testimonies of our true view of the world, offer ample evidence of this.

The dead hero was also destined for new deeds in the "afterlife", which was usually thought of as a new life on this earth; that is why he was laid to rest in the full regalia of arms, that is why the men-at-arms rode around his grave and sang of his deeds:

Then the sprightly heroes rode round the hill,  
The nobles twelve, who according to ancient custom  
In songs sang the funeral dirge  
And praised the king. They praised his bold deeds  
aloud and his chivalrous nature,  
Honoring his deeds in word and speech  
In a befitting manner that adorns the man,  
To exalt the dear Lord by praise In faithful spirit,  
when death's hand from body's shell the soul loosed.

This is how the Anglo-Saxon song sings of the funeral of the brave Beowulf. But the king who lives in the mountain is henceforth the guardian spirit of the clan and the whole people, and even thousands of years later the people know that a king lives there, and what weaponry or ornaments he has with him.

Life after death had to be imagined by the Germans as a continuous action and struggle. For once a hero and warrior had fallen in battle, the stormy force at work in him could not possibly sink into nothingness; it had to continue to work, even in the storms of great nature itself. Thus arose the magnificent image of the wild army, in which the souls of the departed ride through the air under the leader Thor or Wode; and it was not without reason that the day of the leader of the dead was set at the end of the parting, when the storms of the autumnal equinox begin to sweep away the withered leaves. If Michael later took his place, nothing had changed except the name. Throughout the Middle Ages, the great autumnal gatherings fell on the great autumnal thing of the old sword god. The living and the dead were solemnly summoned to this annual thing, at which the judgment was held in the name of the law-abiding sword god. The great band that encircled the site embraced them all in the name of the sacred peace of justice and kinship.

Many things have changed under the influence of foreign worlds of thought, which for a long time made us forget our ancestors from the distant past. Today, with the help of research, we have once again reached the roots of our being, and only now are we able to truly appreciate how faithfully the folk tradition has preserved its knowledge of these roots over the millennia. Above all, it is that tradition which, like a great axis, runs from the gray prehistoric times through our living history;

the legend of the king in the mountain who sits at his stone table, adorned with weapons, and as the mighty ancestor of the clans watches over the salvation of future generations, only to emerge again when the people need his help in their greatest need.





### *The Germanic Roland*

In the burial mounds of prehistoric times, the ancestors of the great farming families rested in stone burial chambers or clay urns. The grave was more to the descendants than it is to us today: it was the place where the ancestral power was alive and invisibly flowed over to those who had been carried by the blood of the ancestors.

of the dead in the hills. The trunk of a tree was erected on the grave as a visible sign of this ancestral power, which passed on to humans and gods as "earth power", the trunk as a symbol of the living tree, just as the resting place of the dead man himself was a symbol of the indestructible life force that reigned in his lineage. In the form of this sacred pole the ancestor was present among the living with his power; at the touch of his emblem it passed over to the living; be it that he stood in the midst of the assembly of things as the supreme swearing witness at the thing and judgment, or that he was carried before the army into battle as a standard-bearer. If there he guaranteed the brazen preservation of law and justice, here he brought victory. For a single great bond held all the members of the clan and the people, whether they lived in the light or dwelt in the realm of the dead; and so even in later times the Lord of Judgement "delivers the dead and the living to the judgment of the neck".

This sacred pole symbolically united the power of the earth with the power of the victorious sun, under which the living dwell, and in this way the land of the ancestors was united with the land of the angels. When new land was taken into possession for clans and families of the people, the sacred ancestral pole was erected on the new land as a sign of the land being taken, and the power of the ancestors flowed over to the new land, which was then called the ancestral pole. "taken to life by the sun" , as medieval documents tell us. However, as the sun and the bright day have always been the guardians and protectors of the realm, ancestor-



grave and ancestral stake were the focal points of the courts, and through them the sacred peace of law was visibly and tangibly embodied.

A foreign faith and a foreign law came over the Germanic land and brought foreign thoughts and forms, which struck at the very roots of many an old sacred belief and custom. But as little as they were able to separate us from our ancestors by blood, they could not eradicate the roots of what had been made from the blood and spirit of our ancestors for thousands of years. Old sacred legal customs were transferred to the churches; but the new place of worship, the church tower, took over the name of that sacred ancestral and judicial pole, the "steeple", from the Anglo-Saxons themselves. The old grave markers made way for new ones, but the ancestral spirit was not so easy to banish from the law. It lived on as the center of the "cherished thing"; next to its living counterpart, the lime tree that rustled above the stone seats of the aldermen. It even penetrated into the church tower, transformed into the image of a pugnacious saint standing on the pillar, like Patroclus in Soest and formerly Mauritius in Magdeburg. But in some areas, such as East Prussia, it has also survived as a grave marker, and the living wood still tells us more today than the magnificent tombstones that have come to us with a foreign world.

Originally, the sword itself was hung on the court posts as a stronghold of legal peace, which is why it was also called the sword post, and

next to it perhaps also the shield of the king, who had early become the supreme ruler. From time immemorial the Teutons have worshipped the divine in the sacred symbol, not in human form; and so only later times have given the sacred wood hints of human features which point to the one whose power lives in the symbol. We know that the ancient Norse had already given the sacred high pillars, in which Thor's power lived, a suggestive face. On the mainland this transition took place much more slowly. But gradually the ancestral pole with the sword became a sword-armed human figure, sometimes with a shield; since the Middle Ages these legal symbols have been called "Roland". In most cases, the arms and sword, pressed tightly against the body, still point to the original pole figure. Wooden Rolands, which have been preserved here and there in small towns and villages, still have the original shape, with a head only indicated by notches, as the old grave poles still show today. The rolandes, which hold the arm with the sword outstretched far from them, go back to a different basic form: the arm with the sword was originally only a sign of judicial authority, which was attached to town halls and courthouses.

With the decline of Germanic freedom among the German peasantry, the old legal symbols often fled from the countryside to the cities, where they became the witnesses of successfully asserted freedoms and rights for centuries.

Emperors and kings, who were regarded as the creators of freedoms, were also placed on the old court pole, such as the great Emperor Otto, who is enthroned as a rider under a canopy on a high pillar in Magdeburg's market square. Only in Westphalia, in the land of the "Red Earth", have the old peasant courts been preserved in the sacred foe until modern times; and the name "Red Earth" also explains the name of the venerable legal symbols under which "Roland, the Giant at Bremen Town Hall" is the best known and most accomplished, but not the oldest.

"Red Earth" or the "Red Land" are old designations for the places of neck jurisdiction, which were fenced in with a red thread as a sign of legal peace. From this enclosure, the "Rotland", the name has been transferred to the old emblem in its center, which therefore has nothing to do with the name of the well-known Frankish hero. According to the old statutes, however, the aldermen of the Feme had to be elected "on red earth", i.e. on an old site, and since the land of Westphalia was the land of origin and last retreat of the Feme, it was finally called the "Red Earth" itself. In the course of the millennia, however, the original meaning of the ancestral symbol as the guardian of clan life has been preserved here and there. In Bramstedt in Holstein, bridal couples are led around the Roland three times after the wedding ceremony and sung:

As long as the wind blows and the rooster  
cries, Sal dances around the Roland,  
If de Sünn unnergeiht.





## *The Birth of the Light*

Nordic-Germanic belief in God has lived for thousands of years in symbols and in those who created these symbols. Symbols are more than ornaments, more than symbols in the general sense; they are ancestral images of an innermost experience, shaped into forms that speak mysteriously to those who have blood from the blood and spirit from the spirit of those who once, in primeval times, created from their experience of the world those

created symbols. That is why they still speak to us today, why they awaken in us that primal experience which is unique and eternal, which is not subject to any psychology or development, because it emanates directly from that point in the soul where the human and the divine meet.

This primal experience is the birth of light. To the Germanic people, everything that seems transient to us is a parable of the great imperishable, the All-Father of the world, of life and of our being. And that is why dying and becoming is a guarantee for the eternity of existence. Holy days, holy nights, however, are those times in which this eternal being becomes visible in the fact that death and life touch each other. In prehistoric times, on the edge of the Arctic, this experience seized and shook the northern man anew every year. When the sun, long sunk in darkness below the circle of vision, flashed again for the first time below the southern mountains, above the southern winter seas, when the light shone in the darkness, he was seized by overwhelming joy, and a joyous festive season was dedicated to this rebirth of light. It was not much different for the farmer on the German plain and in the mountains: when the new light proclaimed new life and new growth, he himself felt inwardly connected to this new life. The spark of a life full of God and action was kindled in him and lifted his soul to free action and work.

This primal light illuminated and enlivened the Germanic man wherever he went to fulfill his mission.

It shone in the youthful crowds of the people's spring when they set out to win new land for light and life out there in Utgard; it shone for the warriors who strode their course as unchanging as the sun, "joyful as a hero to victory". It shone for the bold Vikings when they steered their keels across the dark maw of the sea on their worldwide voyages. And it shone for those German men and women who sought the divine within themselves, away from foreign externalization, and found it again in the "little spark" of which Master Ekkehard speaks. The pious minds of our people have experienced the rebirth of the light in many different images and have written poems about it. One of the oldest and most beautiful is that of the newborn child lying in a golden cradle in the hill of the Alps, which gives wonderful expression to the belief in the sun-like divine life in the clan. Another is that of the winter-green tree that preserves life through the night of the year and lets it flare up in the light of its branches. And a third image, much sung about in songs and fairy tales, is the maiden with the golden hair, who is locked in a dark tower, only to reappear on the pinnacle after her imprisonment, radiant with new life. This tower, made of clay, is one of the most beautiful symbols of our Christmas season. It is adorned with the wheel of the year, St. Jul, and the heart, the symbol of Germanic divinity. A small light burns at the bottom of the tower, symbolizing the light in the darkness, until the beginning of the new year and

the great light at the top of the tower is lit.

This is how it may have once burned on the towers of our ancestors in prehistoric times, of which only a single scholarly report, but many legends and fairy tales and above all these tower candlesticks in popular use tell us. In this symbol, Germanic heroism and a deep spirit have found their common expression. They are still alive today in our German Christmas experience, which no foreign spirit has ever been able to distort or obscure.





*On the Wild Army  
and the Three Wanderers*

In the storms of the winter night, the Germanic people experience the work of the all-powerful god. That is why Wode, the leader of the army of the dead, is also the lord of the twelve nights in which the wheel of the year stands still; the nights between the solstice day and the day of the Perchten, when the wheel begins its new rotation. But in this twelfth night

the world wheel and with it the world order, and so the inhuman Utgard, the world of fiends and evil spirits, breaks ominously into Mittgart, the world of salvation and human security. For the Teuton knows highs and lows, he is familiar with life and death, and he familiarizes himself with the battle against that other world, whose forest is the stormy nature, but also his own heart. Thus he may experience all the more deeply that great upheaval which every year puts the vitality of nature to the test; and if he participates wholeheartedly in this decisive battle, he will heroically raise the powers of his own heart. He knows that when the whale father roars over pathless forests on a snorting white horse, tugs at the ridges and blows into the hearth fire, that it is only through this that the fire gains new strength, and that the holy spark in his own breast is kindled higher when it shines in the darkness.

So he once formed a wild army himself with death-defying men, roaming through forests and by blazing torches with booming drums and blaring horns, feeling completely at one with that eternal spirit that moves with the clouds in the winter storm, to awaken sleeping nature and kindle new fire on the herds and in the hearts of bold men. And wherever in our history a deadly bold band of warriors joined together to fight unholy enemies, to awaken the people and to kindle new fire in their hearts, they felt a kinship with this wild, daring hunt:

It descends in gloomy rows,  
and blaring horns resound in it  
and filling the soul with horror!

In the German Alps, such crowds still hold their processions during the Twelve Nights. But where they tramp over the dead fields, the farmer knows that they will bear twice as much fruit in the coming year. For the Wode, which they can hear coming along on a snorting white horse, is at the same time the benevolent giver of growth and harvest.

But the storm is followed by great stillness. The light that was born in the night of the year has proven its strength in the storm, and its silent growth overcomes the power of the unholy world from within. The folk custom, the faithful mirror of our yearly life, also reveals the eternally valid here. Three kings wander through the land, with star and crown; they knock on doors and beg for gifts, and wherever they enter a field or pass through a grove, the earth and tree reward them with double gifts. They are regarded as the wise men from the East, of whom the Bible tells us: but they have only become kings with us, and if there they bring gifts of reverence to the new Lord, here they bring the new life itself. They carry the star with them, but with us this same star is the ancient sign of the year. In many places it is even a wheel itself, which is set in circular motion by the three kings - as a sign that the wheel of the year has now begun its rotation again, and with it the earthly wheels that are set in motion in the

twelfth all had to stand still if they did not want to arouse the wrath of the white horse rider and Mrs. Holle.

Our own writings, however, which bring us tales from sacred prehistoric times, tell us of the three gods who created human life and destiny from trees on the shores of the raging sea:

All the counselors, holy gods,  
went to the judgment seat and took counsel;  
to three Aesir from this group,  
strong and gracious, came to the shore:  
they found ash and elm on the land, w  
ithout strength, without destiny.  
They had no soul, no sense,  
no warmth of life, nor bright colors:  
soul was given by Wodan, sense by Hönir,  
Life gave Lodur and light color.

Even older Nordic myths, recorded in distant India, tell of the three brothers of the gods who go with the year and who begin their "year" in the holy nights. At the other end of the Nordic world, on the rock faces of Scandinavia, these three can still be seen carved in stone: they hold the wheel of the year, just as our three kings carry the wheel star of the year with them. In the north, the three are called the High One, the Equal One and the Third One; in India, however, they are called the Walking One, the Shining One and the Third One in the Waters. Our fairy tale has also faithfully preserved these three divine brothers. They are the three brothers who are sent out by their father

to get the water of life. All three go through many adventures and dangers, but only the third reaches the goal and finds the water of life. They all three lead up to the coming year, but only the third leads it to the end; for they are the coming, the turning and the declining year.

For many thousands of years, these three wanderers have kept their vintage, bringing light and life, since they first awakened the higher life of humanity at the edge of the northern sea. They will go on through the millennia if we faithfully preserve the heritage of the ancients with them.





## *The Mothers' Night*

Wherever Germans live and have taken root on the wide earth, the Christmas tree burns around the winter solstice. The winter-green tree, which blossoms in lights in the middle of the annual night, has become a symbol of Germanness and the archetype of its experience of the world. In the east and south-east of the empire, the ring of settlements stretches far and wide, which Germans plow into the tangled earth.

But everywhere, in the Bohemian Forest, in the Alps, in the scattered settlements of the Carpathians and far away in Übersee, the lights on the tree that has become the tree of the Germans blaze at Christmas Eve. Wherever a people expands its living space, it takes its domestic gods with it in order to remain true to itself; whether it be earth from the sacred soil of the homeland, high pillars from the hall or sacred customs in which the world experience of the people is contained. What the tree of light is to us today has many predecessors, and this symbol of world building has absorbed many similar traditions. The ridge tree lives in it, which bold Vikings took from the Nordic heath to Iceland and across the ocean to distant Vinland. And the blue light on the tree, which we light on the tree today for all the people of the world, near and far, is deeply connected to the light that was once burned to "mourn" those who were far away on perilous voyages or who were looking for new ground beyond the Marches to light the lights of national life on it.

For as it is today, so it was in ancient times. Everything we learn from ancient writers about the customs and beliefs of our ancestors touches us like good news from our prehistoric times, because we sense a deep kinship across the millennia, which is a guarantee for the permanence of our soul and being. Germanic peoples had wandered far and wide and had established new lands beyond the borders of the Roman Empire with sword and plow.



But here, too, they faithfully preserved what had once grown in their homeland. The Angles had emigrated from their Holstein homeland, settled in Britain and finally became Christians. But the Christian priest Beda was still writing about their Christmas customs around the year 700:

"They named the night itself, which is now highly sacred to us, with the pagan word 'Modranicht', which means 'Night of the Mothers'; according to our assumption, because of the consecration customs they celebrated throughout the night."

Does this name "Night of the Mothers" or "Mothers' Night" from the youth of our people not touch us like a very familiar memory of our own childhood? It is the night consecrated to the mystery of motherhood, in foreboding relation to that great experience of the rebirth of the sun from the abyss of the world, the womb of all being. If the mother with the child forms a large part of the emotional content of the festival today, then this emotional content is also an ancient heritage, for the human couple with the child under the world tree is an image that is certainly closely connected with those womens' customs of the Mothers' Night. But there is even more to the name. We know it from many monuments, and in our folk customs and fairy tales it still resonates today, that the three mothers are among the most trusted figures of our native faith, who, as bearers of womanly wisdom and motherly kindness, go through the land at this time of year, distributing gifts and helping the children,

giving people good advice and good thoughts - especially where a child is in the cradle.

So deeply did this idea live in our people two thousand years ago that even the Germanic tribes, as Roman officials who ruled the German Rhine, had these three mothers, who protect the newborn, erected as memorials. The Romans left, and new, related Germanic tribes arrived; but they too knew about the three mothers a thousand years later. And the housewives used to set the table for them on holy nights, put food and drink on it and add three knives so that the three sisters, as they were called, could feast on them. Pious zealots may have railed against this, but the motherly sisters live on in the hearts of the people, and so a monument was erected to them, known as Einbede, Warbede and Willibede, in Worms Cathedral. But Germanic legend and the German fairy tale have preserved them with all their traits even more firmly. The holy nights belong to them, in which the new light and the new year are born; so they appear everywhere at the cradle of the newborn and give him their gifts. In Bavaria they are called the "Heilrätinnen", more often the "Perchten", meaning the shining ones, because they accompany the light at its birth. They are invited as guests by the people and prove to be friendly and helpful to the good. We know them - albeit in quadrupled numbers - from the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, to whom they bestow the good gifts of life, which finally triumph over the evil one

and remain victorious under the influence of the thirteen. In the old Norse tale of the "Norn Guest", the good sisters light the light of life for the child; here the inner connection with our Christmas festival of light becomes particularly clear. And since they have appeared in the holy trinity since time immemorial, bring their gifts to the child and are full of wisdom, they may well have shared a great deal of their nature with the wise men from the East, of whom neither number nor name is known, and may even be the actual original figures of the numerous Epiphany plays.

Ancient myths and eternally young legends tell of the three mothers who sit at the foot of the world tree and spin the threads of all creation. The night is dedicated to them, which we, like our ancestors, celebrate as consecration nights. To descend to these mothers, as a great poet put it, means to take refuge in the living roots of our national being, which today has found a symbol that embraces the whole earth in the radiant tree of the world.





## *The Golden Apples*

In our fairy-tale world, the deep realization of what our people wrote about themselves lives on anew; how they interpreted their lives and their meaning. We hear of the bold king's son who fears nothing; of the poor youth who carries within him the high calling to become the king of the golden mountain; of the veteran soldier who makes a pact with death and the devil, only to remain victorious over both in the end because he is undaunted

and boldly goes his way. It is always the chosen hero who makes his way through hardship and danger to where the water of life flows, which gives immortality, and where the grove stands, in the middle of which grows the tree with the golden apples - the apples of life, of which eating means eternal life. But even more than that: knowing the meaning of life, which in itself means eternity and immortality.

And yet the grove of golden apples does not lie somewhere in an inaccessible afterlife where no living person can reach. It is true that hardship and danger, fiends and adventures threaten everywhere along the way: but what leads beyond all these obstacles is a pure mind and a courageous heart. The land of golden apples lies within ourselves - it is the land in the deep well into which the golden Mary descends in order to rise again as a golden maiden. For she has shaken the tree with the fruit, she has baked the bread and milked the cows; and since she has done all this in the right spirit, for the common good and for the sake of the cause itself, she finds the right path, and she returns rich and honored from the inner land. But the unlucky Marie, who thought only of herself in all this, who let the fruit, bread and milk go to waste, returns with shame from the land where the true value of man is weighed and his inner nature becomes visible.

This orchard, in which the tree with the golden apples stands, is nothing other than that field

of working and proving oneself, which is decided in the circle of the year, in which work and harvest, working and gaining follow each other eternally. In the center of this grove of the year stands the tree with the golden apples, on which the golden-feathered bird sits, and whose golden apples form the circle of the year as it is drawn by the sun on the face of the year. The tree stands where the sacred center of the year is; at the bottom of the well into which the sun descends in order to rise again from it, rejuvenated and with new vitality, together with all those who follow its eternal laws. There they find the new light and the golden fruit that can only be broken by those who have the right courage and the right attitude - those who are able to endure in silence the hardships that evil powers and evil spirits inflict on them. It is the tree of midwinter, of the holy nights, when the sun and people have returned to their origins in order to take refuge in themselves.

In prehistoric times, our ancestors experienced this depth of the year much more powerfully, because they were more directly confronted with life and its dangers than we are, who sit in a well-stocked pantry and have lost our sense of life itself along with our sense of its dangers. The fruit of the year lay piled up in the barns and dishes; the only guarantee for the life of a long winter and a distant spring. Thus the golden fruit of the apple tree might well have become a symbol of the golden sun itself, on which it had ripened; and in the nuts seemed the

life of the sun itself. This is the essence of the fairy tale, in which the nuts on the tree of life contain a dress that is as radiant as the sun. So the custom of building a frame on which eight golden apples hang for Christmas must also go back to ancient times; for this frame is an image of the course of the year itself, and the lights correspond to the golden apples. Nor is the bird sitting on the world tree missing. This is also the meaning of the gilded nuts that still hang on our Christmas tree today; the nuts that in the fairy tale of Cinderella and Allerleirauh turn the poor girl into a royal bride in a golden robe. The hero in our fairy tale who gets the golden apples from the distant orchard is none other than the ancient Aryan sun hero who, as Heracles in Greek mythology, fetches the apples from the sacred grove guarded by the Hesperides, the daughters of the night. To the people he is the archetype of the brave German man who goes his way regardless of danger or hardship, thanks or ingratitude, because he recognizes the meaning of his own life in regaining the fruits of his inner life for the whole people. The image of this sacred tree with its golden fruit is widespread among many peoples, but only the people of its original Nordic homeland and their relatives in other countries have preserved its true meaning. Our people have faithfully held on to their ancient knowledge in myths and customs against foreign falsification. For us, the tree with the golden apples is like thousands of years ago,



the image of true knowledge: the knowledge of pure life and its eternal laws.

For a while, a strange magic has managed to fill this sacred annual cycle with dark ghostly figures and turn it into a magic circle of unholy powers. But whoever seriously digs for the treasures that rest in the sacred home soil will fare like the treasure tomb of which our greatest poet sang. Out of the black, stormy night, the boy with the shining bowl approaches him, and like a warning from the vital past, he hears his saying:

Drink the courage of pure life,  
then you will understand the teaching,  
do not return to this place  
with fearful conjuration:  
Work during the day,  
guests in the evening,  
bitter weeks, joyful feasts  
be your future magic spell.