WHAT RECONSTRUCTIONIST PAGANISM ISN'T...

Reconstructionism isn't historical re-enactment.

Many people in Reconstructionist groups enjoy dressing in period costume, trying traditional crafts or foods or games or combat styles, and so on. Some gain spiritual satisfaction from doing so-and besides, it can be a lot of fun. But our religions are meant to be meaningful to us, here and now. We're modern people, with modern-day concerns: we can never be Egyptians of 1300 BC, or Vikings of 800 AD, or Romans of 100 AD-nor should we try. Furthermore, there are some aspects of ancient cultures that really should not be brought back, such as slavery and human sacrifice. But we believe that our ancient religions, and the cultures of which they were integral parts, do contain much that is deeply true for us now, and that should be brought back into the world.

Reconstructionists aren't generally eclectic.

You'll often hear the statement in Wiccan circles that "all the Gods are one God, and all the Goddesses are one Goddess". Many Recons consider that statement to border on the offensive. We experience our Gods as different individuals, with their own personalities and ways of working. Part of why we enjoy our own friends' company is that they're different from each other — and so it is with our Gods.

A typical Ásatrúar, Hellenist, or Kemetic would recognize the worth of other neo-pagan paths, and accept that their gods exist and are valid for their worshippers—but she would generally not worship them herself. Some Reconstructionists follow traditions that did allow the worship of gods from other cultures; Roman religion, for example, imported the cults of Isis, Cybele, Ma, and Mithras, and Roman Reconstructionists may choose to honor these gods along with the native Roman gods. But that's kept within known historical limits—a Roman reconstructionist would not freely combine the worship of Mars with that of, say, the Hawaiian volcano goddess Pele! There are some Reconstructionists who feel called to honor the Gods of more than one path. However, such "dual-trad" people usually keep their pantheons separate, at least in public. You won't find anyone hailing Isis at an Ásatrú blót, or making an offering to Thor in an Egyptian temple.

The belief in all deities being parts of one Godhead was rare in ancient times. Most ancient peoples believed in separate deities—as do most Reconstructionists today. That being said, some groups (such as the Kemetic Orthodox), and some individuals, do see their own deities as Names or aspects of one Source. But they still approach that Source through honoring its diverse aspects.

Reconstructionists don't do Wiccan rituals.

Recon rites usually don't have the male-female polarity that Wicca often has; the roles in most rituals are in principle open to both sexes. Most don't use the four elements of Air, Earth, Fire and Water—Celtic Reconstructionists work with the Three Realms of Land, Sea, and Sky, whereas Ásatrú symbolism may be based on Fire and Ice. Recon rituals don't require "casting a circle", "drawing down the Moon", or "raising up power"; the aims of Recon worship services are quite different from those of a standard Wiccan ritual. And each Reconstructionist tradition follows its own calendar of holy days—which may or may not overlap with the Eightfold Wheel of the Year common in Wicca and witchcraft.

The ethical systems are also quite different. Most Reconstructionists don't subscribe to the "Threefold Law" or the "Wiccan Rede." Different reconstructionist faiths have different ethical codes, which usually stress honor, hospitality, truth, and personal responsibility.

Reconstructionism isn't Magic(k).

Certainly, people all over the world did and do magic—loosely defined for our purposes as "attempting to change the universe in accord with one's will." Many Reconstructionist faiths are *open* to doing magic within the appropriate cultural framework. Thus, many Ásatrúar work with runes; Hellenics might study the large number of Greek spells and amulets that have survived; Celts might work on techniques such as *imbas forosnai*, and so on. Reconstructionists might also choose to work with shamanistic practices, such as Norse *seidhr*. But it's not necessary to do any of these things to be a Reconstructionist. Our central focus is simply different. On the other hand, traditions like Western ceremonial magic(k) draw heavily on Egyptian and Greek mythology and magical practice, but ceremonial magick is not a Reconstructionist path.

Reconstructionist religions don't claim to be unbroken historical traditions.

Some pagan-era practices survived conversion to Christianity and are preserved in the folklore of many countries. But the religions we practice, as they were practiced centuries ago, died out; it's now up to us to revitalize them. (Mind you, we don't believe that our *Gods* died out; they've always been there, sometimes in forms that we don't suspect.)

OK, SO WHAT IS RECONSTRUCTIONIST PAGANISM?

Reconstructionists emphasize worship.

We honor and revere our Gods. Some individuals may be closest to a particular deity, but still will worship all the Gods of their chosen path. In most traditions, Recons also honor their ancestors, as well as various types of lesser spirits. Rituals are times to strengthen the bonds of friendship, respect, and reciprocal obligation between ourselves and our gods.

Reconstructionists emphasize study.

We try to learn as much about our ancient religions as we can, using old texts, linguistics, folklore and archaeology as the foundation on which we build. Some of us learn languages (Old Norse, Ancient Greek, Old Irish, etc. . .) to worship our gods in the oldest ways, or to understand religious texts in the way our forebears would have understood them. Not all of us are scholars, and you don't have to have a degree or speak obscure languages to be a perfectly good Reconstructionist. Still, most Recons have a better-than-average background in studying the roots of their faiths. As Ásatrúar often say, "We're the religion with homework!" And many of us find spiritual fulfillment and joy in the very act of study.

Reconstructionists emphasize culture. In today's world, one's "religion" is all too often something that one goes into a building for an hour each week to practice; then one comes out and resumes ordinary life. But the ancient religions that we follow were not separable from the daily life of the people that followed them. We can understand our chosen religions more deeply by studying the ancient cultures that they were a part of. We learn how religion was woven into the ancients' lives—and how we can weave it into the fabric of our own lives.

Reconstructionists may innovate—but our innovation is clearly marked as such. When we don't know how something was done or believed in ancient times, we say so, and we try to come up with modern forms that are faithful to the spirit of what the ancients would have done. Attuned individuals sometimes receive communications from their gods concerning new ways to understand them or worship them. Although these have to be evaluated critically, on their own merits, they are a valid part of any living religion. But again, we distinguish between the old and the new, and always try to keep the new true to the old.

We can't know everything about how ancient religions were actually practiced. But to paraphrase what the leader of one national group often says: If an Iron Age Celt or a Viking-era Norseman or a Middle Kingdom Egyptian were to travel to our time and watch a Reconstructionist group's ritual, he might find some of the details to be a little strange. . . but the *spirit* and the *intent* of the rite would (hopefully) be recognizable immediately.

GUIDE TO RECONSTRICTIONIST PAGANISM ON THE INTERNET

Heathenry / Asatru (Germanic

Reconstructionism) The Troth — <u>http://www.thetroth.org/</u> Ásatru-U — <u>http://www.asatru-u.org/</u> Raven Online — <u>http://www.webcom.com/~lstead/</u> Thaet Miercinga Rice — <u>http://www.ealdriht.org/</u>

Kemeticism (Egyptian Reconstructionism)

International Network of Kemetics — <u>http://www.inkemetic.org/</u> Per Ankh — <u>http://www.per-ankh.org/</u> Akhet Hwt-Hrw — <u>http://www.hwt-hrw.com/</u> Kemetic Orthodoxy — <u>http://www.kemet.org/</u>

Hellenismos (Greek Reconstructionism)

Hellenion — <u>http://www.hellenion.org/</u> Neokoroi — <u>http://winterscapes.com/neokoroi/</u> Sponde — <u>http://www.sponde.com/</u> Elaion — <u>http://www.elaion.org/</u>

Religion Romana (Roman Reconstructionism)

Nova Roma — <u>http://www.novaroma.org/</u> Temple of the Religio Romana — <u>http://religioromana.net/</u> Mithraeum — <u>http://www.mithraeum.org/</u> The Julian Society — <u>http://www.juliansociety.org/</u>

Celtic Reconstructionism

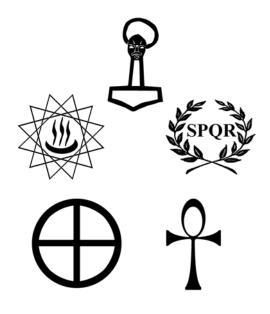
IMBAS — <u>http://www.imbas.org/</u> Keltrian Druidism — <u>http://www.keltria.org/</u> Dún Sgáthan — <u>http://cyberpict.net/</u>

Romuva / Dievturi (Baltic Reconstructionism) Romuva—<u>http://www.romuva.lt/</u> Dievturi—http://www.ailab.lv/dievturi/d12.htm

Vedic Reconstructionism Order of the Perfumed Scorpion—

http://www.perfumedscorpion.org/

Reconstructionist Pagan Religions



An Extremely Brief Guide



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