

Witchfest 2016

What is this about?

Over the past few years here I have talked about visualisation, astral and chaos magic. They are just side effects of my primary path which is kemeticism.

I have longed to talk about this aspect of my path but have struggled to come up with what to cover, because for the past 30 years of travelling it i know from talking with other kemetics that my path is borderline at best and so i feel quite an outsider when talking to others. Not quite good enough for a talk here.

My goddess is an obscure one for starters, selket the scorpion goddess, and this connection has yield little information, she's not mainstream, she has no temples dedicated to her, no priest hood etc. so i found solace working directly with her and looking outside kemeticism.

However, i can talk about my path now. This is because for the past year all that i thought i held true about my goddess has been wrong. It has been a year of reevaluation of what it is to be kemetic and to rebuild my path. This talk is about that journey.

What is Kemetism?

We are perhaps the most fortunate of all the ancient reconstructionists. We have a long and rich history, artistic practice and varied mythology in which to delve into. This unfortunately presents problems, the main being that over the thousands of years of their society many things changed. They even managed to loose things like using a potter's wheel for a few centuries only to rediscover it. We are talking a huge timescale. Some changes were accidental some were on purpose either because they found their calendars became out of sync and just changed things to suit, others because of ideology such as antekanton.

We have multiple creation stories, we have many tales concerning the deities and things there are incomplete and sometimes conflicting for example osiris isis death and horus birth wasn't fully written down by the ancient egyptians, perhaps because it was a popular story so no body needed to or maybe it was too sacred. It was only later during the greek period that it was written down and appears as we know now it of set killing osiris, cutting it up and then isis bringing it all back. I was at a conference a few years ago where this story came up and was told that this story we all love is actually a greek creation, they added bits to appeal to their audience.

Therefore when kementics discuss their path together there will be inconsistencies between practices due to individuals working with any particular time period. Some are aware of this but others can cling to their own thoughts and i've been involved some some heated debates

over what is right or wrong. In fact i've even seen this at egyptology conferences where academics will debate and they hopefully know better than us!

Recon truth: Practices change over time. Location and can conflict. There is no one way. Even the archaeologists can't agree so what hope do we have? Pick a time period and do your best on the research.

What to reconstruct?

So we have a large pool of information and ideas, so what do we reconstruct? For example state and personal connection with deity were quite possibly vastly different in approach. Temple practices were also quite extremes with the purification rites alone being quite harsh for inclusion in our modern lifestyle especially if you have a day job. There is no way I can spend hours removing all body hair on a daily basis for example.

Then if you try and follow any of the healing spells for example in the leiden medical papyrus i would suspect if you aren't arrested for trying to obtains some of the ingredients you would probably end up in hospital. There are many things that either don't quite agree with where we are now as a society.

They may be distasteful or even illegal to practice. We are not ancient egyptians.

Recon truth: How far do you go. Only as far as is practical. Can't do everything especially if you have a life

Conflicting research

So you read, you find what you like and start doing it. Happy now? What happens then if new research pops up that opposes your understanding? Do you (a) ignore it, (b) change completely, or (c) try for an assimilation?

New discoveries are being made all the time, either completely new or from egyptologists reinterpreting previous material in light of other developments. Again, others will disagree as that is what academics seem to like doing. But there will come a point when research whether it's new or something you've missed will utterly undermine everything.

Recon truth: Be prepared to challenge what you know and understand.

A big one

I will wind this section of the talk up about a thorny subject of cultural appropriation. First my goddess came to me for whatever reason she has, i don't feel that Egypt is my home and sacred land and that i don't have a right to trample all over it. I live here in the UK, this is my

home and i am proud of my family line who ive traced back to the early 1600s. I feel it is important to protect the heritage of egypt in whatever way possible as the beauty and amazing. We must also remember that the gods do not care where we are physically. Our ancestors (egyptian or not) travelled far a wide and took their beliefs with them. Romans bought a temple of isis to london. Far from home.

Many say that appropriation is bad if the society is still living, but if its a dead one like egypt its fine to grab what you want.

Recon truth: Be respectful of where we pull our information from at all times. We are not ancient egyptians. We should not strip that ancient society and thankfully there are mechanisms in place by the antiquities departments to prevent the losses that occurred over the last couple of hundred years. Preservation of as much of the context and the steps we take in our reconstruction should be sensitive to the not just the society that went before but to those gods that we claim to honour. Ma'at has never meant so much as in truth to our path.

My Personal Take On This

Those are the main aspects and points i've had to consider at some points throughout my kemet practice over the years but all of them were at the foreground over the past year.

As i said at the start things have changed for me, and it all began with a simple renewal of my ees membership. There was an offer to buy a years access to jstor. Ive been a member since the mid 90s but they were offering back catalog access to their journals so it was a wonderful opportunity to look at articles going back 150 years of the society.

In a way i wish i hadn't. Sometimes ignorance is bliss. In my can it completely screwed my ignorance up.

Much of my ignorance comes from finding it hard to research my goddess due to her name. Selket is the modern interpretation but the hieroglyphics as srqt. Straightforward enough but when egyptologists transliterate it and it our latin character form they will often stress the consonants in different ways so the s can sometimes be a form of 's' sound, the q can be a various forms of the 'k' sound. Then the injection of vowels introduces more variation such as serqet, cirket, the list is endless. Makes doing word searches really hard and tedious.

The situation before the current round of research was that she was an early goddess, the odd passing reference to some place the greeks called pselkis that might be connected with her but for the most part she is akholwegde to have no temples explicitly dedicated to her, no fixed priesthood and no fest dates. She probably held a high position with pharaohs and you can't escape the scorpion king mace head, which may or may not be her. She also seemed to have been urpsed by isis as her influence increased.

That left me with very little to work with and my connection with kemetism has largely been superficial in that i only work with egyptian deities and primarily with selket, anubis of old and more recently thoth and hathor.

This all changed though while going looking through the EES articles. I felt the need to have one last go with looking for leads on my goddess. If this failed then what other hope had i? I found things.

First i found reference to constellations associated with her, quite clearly in the left and up of the central group on the map in in seti's tomb was her, even spelt out her name. That was unexpected. I have a love of astronomy but because of my assumption that it would draw blanks i failed to really explore this area. But i found her. Then i found the group of stars associated with her. Now called Coma berenice stars are linked on the seti star map. Denderha map does not show it and points to constellation of scorpio but that is far later at 200bc. Seti is earlier in archaic periods could have been ursa minor from some references in the pyramid of unas. The star maps moved 3-4 times due to precession. More to questions than answers that set me off looking and still more to look.

That discovery made me wonder about other aspects and assumptions i have had. The first then was festival dates. Again review of what i had showed there was in fact a festival date, i did actually find two both separated by 13 days. 23rd of october and 5th nov. at first i thought it was two, but looking at the various calendar tables i found other notable dates had shifted. Therefore i knew it must just be one date and there is a calculation problem.

This was the most fundamental of my discoveries. Shocked me to the core because from the very start of the connection i had with my goddess i always found closest to her around samhain. Now ive always long thought that was because of the thinning views etc but no, it appears it could be due to my intuition telling me this is her special time. This year, for the first time ever i was able to mark both of those dates (why have one festival when you can have two), though the 5th november being closest to the time i have made as extra special.

Revelations did not stop. I revisited previous research on pselkis only to find another element of intuition becoming true. Again from the start my goddess has told me we can never go home. Now i thought it was due to my heat and sand issues. But it appears not. As it turns out pselkis now known as el dakka was flooded due to the aswan dam. She is right we can never go to her sacred sight as its under water now. There also was incidentally a temple there which although not dedicated to selket (thoth?) did incorporate many images of her, its greek period with foundations that were new kingdom of not older. That temple was moved 100km away from the site. I could go there but would be it home?

How has these discoveries changed my path?

Of course I now have a festival date for my goddess. On top of that I have looked at a number of calendars and picked out other festivals for the other deities that I have particular interest. Surprisingly only adding Thoth and Hathor I now have over 40 festival dates throughout the year - most of those being Hathor as she's quite a popular lady!

Not sure how I feel about the sacred space. It's not a loss as such as I have a sacred space to be with my goddess. This is due to previous issues I've had over dealing with the purification rites I mentioned before. They just don't fit with my life so at a very early stage of my journey my goddess suggested I look at astral magic and through there I have a visualised temple where I inhabit a pure bodily form in a fixed sacred space. That way I can just slip into a new body on demand without all the tedious physical actions required.

For many many years this has been my preferred ritual practice. It suits for this reason as well as the fact that I'm solitary and much of my temple practice was pretty much a solitary practice anyway - certainly not a public event for the serious stuff.

Who am I?

I am a Kemetite

I began my journey long before I picked up on these labels. I work primarily with a single deity, Set, though others have come and gone through the years with her.

I had developed an understanding of ceremonial magic before I was able to deeply delve into authentic Egyptian texts.

The lack of resources limited my exploration and education. All I had was my intuition often from Set.

Recon truth

Intuition is a mixed bag. I can be wrong. If you want the authentic experience

With these truths what do I do?

First I ignore what other Kemetites say I'm doing wrong. They have their POV and that will differ.

I lead a busy life so i cant conceed to a rigoursous temple strutcute (a) i dont have the time. B. So far ive not found good enough evidence for formal temple space for my goddess even though i am aware of her having a cult centre i perselkis in later periods.

For physucal ritual space i have a spare room with my ditty statues set. I dont dress them as would be tradtion as i dont do daily ritual for them. But they are in a room i pass through so they do recuve nods and words of thanks regularly even if they are in the shadows. I do try and keep that aspect. They are not for public display. Sometimes when i do workshops then i will take along a couple of them usually the least breakable auch as my anbuiss and bast statues. My primary goddess and others never leave the house.

Altar space in niches

Daily call to ra

Door can be shut for incense as i do use frankincense a lot. Gods whos scent is sweet from transformation into a swallow. I use that as part of my opening of the mouth ritual during any festival work.

Festivals its taken a long time to find some. Samhain always. Mid summer through to lamas for both aspects of wep ron pet.

Beltane with other pagans.

No others though that is slowly changing as i embrace other deities such as thotgh and hathor. They have plenty and so i am in the process of constructing my own calendar that i can use.

Temple vs house hold. I tend to stwitch between both. I will bring out my cult statues and put on the show from time to time as i need but for day to day then i would work as most

Box of tools.

At first was fairly traditional in w3stwrn magic tradtions
But incorporated some aspects of egyptian mythology such as deity and some iconography
Lack of source material was the problem this was early 90s
Joining ees was fundamental to my development - a wealth of research and knowing where the good stuff is as apposed to made up or misinformed
Knowing i had mayerial that was as far as possible factual and authenitce helped. I dont have a problem with bridging the gap but early on a solid framework can really take the vagueness out and allows focus. Examples?

Festival issues. Not seen anything for decades as under now it appears as misapprehension of no festivals. Found two sets of calendars that suggest two dates for her festival. 23rd oct and 6th nov. Funny how always felt closest to set around this time. Instinct plays a part. Then which is correct? 13 day difference feel November is stronger also various other indications suggest it is the preferred date.

is constantly changing my understanding. Do I change with it?

Examples

7 minions switch over

Do I need to go back over original sources myself?

Same for four sisters

Festival dates edfu and del albarhi or mdina? Connected sites shared icon and rites but different dates or overlap. Which is right both. They had reasons that suited.

What is right?

~~Most of my talks have focused on visualisation astral magic and chaos magic but the foundation and significant half of my practice is Egyptian magic. My primary goddesses who entered my life during my childhood is an Egyptian one.~~

~~This is about my plodding along a path and attempting to reconstruct Egyptian practice in a convenient but as accurate way I can in honour of the deities I work with~~

For my own purification rites I will shower (don't have a bath), shave, brush my teeth (which has similar properties to natron salts). For the other aspects

astral

Being solitary. Formal temple work as very private. So ideal for solitary practice. But what if you need a group

Luckily all these new directions has resulted in the past year to reconcile them and form a new basis of my path. More as a recon than before. With many sources.

Glad cm provides the openness to embrace change and the wisdom to acknowledge change