

Everyone, and I hope you're all having a great time this afternoon, but we're just going to bring you this tour through time about the sun. We often talk within the Pagan world a lot about the moon. We also talk about the goddess and we don't talk so much about the Gods, males. Now I know I'm female, but I'm always more drawn to work with male deities. So that said, this talk came about after we had lots of conversations around solstice, about the symbolism of the sun within our group, and it sparked us off on a bit of an exploration about the deities of the sun and also depictions of the sun. So I'd just like to tell you that I'm not a historian or an archaeologist or very knowledgeable, but what I am is a pagan who worships the sun. So I've set out on this task to bring you as much information as I could fit into a talk, but then I thought, where on earth could I start This for the most part was a personal exploration of the sun through its time, its importance, and its reverence.

I decided to look back into human culture for what may stand out as important, but where could I start? What is important? What could I find out? So I decided to look at art and other creative mediums, and these mediums such as art, jewellery and song, often depict what humans express as important to them and are often the way we preserve those stories, our history and our culture, a timeline to be seen. We invest a lot of time and build our connection with art and song. It's often created to convey a message or to serve as a record or maybe an echo of the past. We can certainly look at ancient art as an archaeologist and use science and along with surmising make some good educated guesses at the meaning of it. And when we are looking at the work of archaeologists and historians, we really can get a sense of connection to that piece of art that may have been painted thousands of years ago. The voice of the painter can be in part reanimated and I find this fascinating, what details we can collect by science to make this educated guess and form a connection. So as I look through art through the ages and noted this sort of pattern in the evolution in relation to the sun and indeed the gods themselves, I saw of this pattern and I'll reveal that in a short while. But first of all, I will mention the context in which I noticed it.

I started off looking at the oldest images in history and with all these wonderful, there were so many wonderful images that came from the palaeolithic. I'll start by beginning with the palaeolithic, the Neolithic and a little jump to the ancient age, classical period, and indeed some modern references. So that said, let's go on a little journey to see what I found. Firstly, we'll look at Chauvet Cave in France, which contains cave art dated at 30,000 years old. As you can see from the image of this cave behind me, it is quite vast and the pattern that I mentioned earlier was that as time elapses through the ages, art seems to change and influences of depictions of the sun as being an actual deity. It's almost as we humans evolved, so did the need to know why we exist and so did the birth of the relationship to the oldest gods and the cosmos. Here we see palaeolithic hunters, which give an animistic approach to life. We see animals as important on the cave paintings as though they themselves may have been the original gods of the Palaeolithic age. As we look at other depictions of anthropomorphic figures, they may give us a clue as to the nature of the religious beliefs on the palaeolithic or do they

A very famous image, which I'm sure you'll have seen. It's named the sorcerer, and this is quite a controversial point when we look at the image on the left, which was famously drawn as a representation of the original work in the cave. It does appear as though this could be a representation of a horned God or a shaman from the Palaeolithic era. And this particular image has been a hot debate amongst historians. The image on the right seems to differ from the painting as though some details or some artistic licence may have occurred. Ronald Hutton himself theorised that the person who drew the original copy was fitting evidence to support this magical hunting theory of cave art, citing that the figure drawn is not the same as the one on the cave wall. And Ronald's theory led him to conclude the reliance of the artist's initial sketch resulting in later scholars erroneously claiming the Sorcerer was evidence of a horned God that dated Palaeolithic times. Of course, we will never know, but it does strike the imagination. It's theorised that these shaman-like paintings of which I will show another in a

moment represent an anthropomorphic theme which reveres fertility and animistic worship. This conclusion is drawn from a number of images that show a large or swollen phallus.

In this slide behind me, we are looking here at a human that has the ability to shift into an animal, and this is also from a cave in France. As you can see, there is an anthropomorphic figure. The blending of animal or human, animal and human or early humans certainly seems to be a common theme in the depiction of the gods. For those who can connect to spirit as shaman, it's certainly one that has continuously been used throughout history and can be seen in ancient Egypt where the gods will often have a human's body with the head of an animal.

The blend of human and animal is certainly a powerful one, almost bordering on shape-shifting experience. And when we work in animal masks, as I often do, and channel the animal, the energy of that animal that we are trying to encompass, it takes us to other worlds. Anyway, back to shamans of the Palaeolithic. A lot of what is surmised from the past is best guesses from more modern written about sources and also archaeological findings. And when researching the shamans in the images that I'm showing you, I noted that the Bradshaw Foundation said, based upon the research of shamanic rituals of recent times, we may speculate that shamanic visionaries of the Palaeolithic would in a similar fashion to their modern counterparts, have induced trance during intense self-inflicted pain, self-mutilation, cold hunger and isolation. The palaeolithic shamanic rites may well have included frenetic, ecstatic dancing to the rhythm and clapping of mythic words or mantras that is in all known elements, which will eventually bring about an altered state of consciousness. The last image I will show you from this time is from the Lascaux cave, sorry, I can't pronounce the French. And here we see a male lying down on his back again with his phallus showing to represent his own fertility. It is surmised that this is a shaman in the state of ecstasy with it being on the ground and the animals in the scene are not truly the animals, but in fact a shamanic vision and not a nude human about to be trampled by a rather large animal.

So you may well be sat there thinking now why is she talking about shamans and animism and not the sun? I'd like a refund. Well, the answer is simply to show you a mini version of the sort of things that were there in those times, you'll note that there's the relationship between the human and the animal and not the cosmos. We know that the Palaeolithic people buried the dead, but we don't know a great deal about what they thought about their soul, their existence, or in fact the wider world and cosmos. But as we travel a little further in time, we look to the Neolithic era when things began to change. The way that people thought about divine beings and the importance around them did change. Now, this is an image that most of you will probably recognise, and this is the nebra sky disc. It's a bronze age disc, and it was found in Germany, which are beautifully crafted from bronze and gold. Its raw materials were discovered to have been gathered as far away as Cornwall, and the knowledge needed to make this disc was indeed local. As the observations of specific astrological phenomenon had been made to that area. The golden orb at the centre is said to represent the full moon or in fact the sun, the crescent shape being the crescent Moon.

Harold Miller, who is the director of the state Museum for prehistory, stated that the astronomical rules that are depicted would not be imaginable without decades of intense observation. Until the disc was discovered no one thought that prehistoric people had capability with such precise astronomical knowledge. As well as being a beautiful object it's very impressive that the amount of energy that was put into it. This is one of my favourite objects in history, and it shows clear knowledge and reverence of the sun, moon, and stars, which is, as you may note, quite different to the cave paintings in France. So moving on in the timeline to ancient Egypt, which spans approximately 5,000 years along with the pharaohs who were seen as kings, solar gods in ancient Egypt were very important and many of their gods were associated with the sun. The sun was said to bring spiritual qualities of the gods. Here we see

one of those, this is Ra. Ra was seen as very important to ancient Egyptians, and even his eye became defined as the goddess Hathor and among others. And his spit became moisture, which bears forth the goddess Tefnut.

RA was seen as a creator God and he was very powerful and the head of all gods, no one could ever overpower him except for the great goddess and queen of magic Isis who tricked Ra to gain power over him. There are lots of mythology surrounding Ra and that would definitely need a talk all on its own, but I think that it was very important in talking on the sun to mention Ra. Something that strikes me as important to mention about Ra is his boat also known as a solar bark or a sun barge. The morning boat was called the Attet or Mattet, and the Mattet was the first of the two boats travelled in by Ra the sun God, as he travelled the sky daily. The evening sun was called the Sektet boat and arrived journeyed from noon until sunset on the Sektet boat to the terrifying realm of the underworld known in Egypt as the Duat. The boat as called the boat of a million years are also the bark of ages. Under the ship you can see there is giant snake or deadly serpent who was called Apep, who attacks some battles with Ra. Apep was viewed as the greatest enemy of him and he was given that title, Enemy of Ra.

The defeat of Apep every night in favour of Ra was thought to be ensured by the prayers of the Egyptian priests and worshipers at the temple. And Ra also was helped by the other gods themselves. Now in a talk mentioning the sun, I felt it fitting to talk about Stonehenge a little. I won't talk too much about this massive topic because there's so much in it and so many different theories. Some of the theories of what Stonehenge actually is a coronation place for the Danish kings at Druid's temple, an astronomical computer for predicting eclipses, and solar or events that sounds quite fancy and a place of ancestor worship or a cult healing centre. The outer posts of the henge seemed to date in the Mesolithic period and the stones to the Neolithic, which says to me it certainly was a place that had some form of significance for a long, long period and still does right up to now. We'll never know the true purpose of Stonehenge, but we do have a lot of information to make about educated guess. I have visited Stonehenge and was part of a ritual with the Cotswold order of Druids, and that was at the winter solstice. And when I actually arrived to the stones, heavily pregnant, hot and very bothered, I was actually really disappointed when I entered the stones themselves to me on entering it, it felt like a Lego set. I couldn't feel a thing. But during the rite we rest to huddled to the centre and to hum as though we were a swarm of bees. And when we did this, the energy of the stone seemed to come alive.

It just connected. And I was just like, yes, finally Stonehenge feels like something. This is great. And even my daughter who was then in utero of course began to kick with some fury. So I actually found that winter solstice there quite magical in the end. An interesting theory again by Professor Hutton that he stated at his talk at the Megalithomania Festival was that Stonehenge is in fact feminine and the stones are the upright legs of the mother and the sun's rays penetrating the earth bestow it with fertility, which is quite an interesting way of putting it when you think about the light coming through the stone to the solstice.

So as I mentioned earlier in the talk, there are often things that are created to show worship and this is one of them. This is actually the Ballyshannon Sun disc. And this is a thin sheet of beaten gold and has raised decorations of the cross shape surrounded by circles, geometric patterns, objects such as this known as sun discs are one of the earliest forms of sheets gold work found in Britain and Ireland. They often have a central perforation and it's very likely that they were actually worn probably with a backing. They're often found on their own or in pairs, particularly in burials.

So this is another image of a solar disc on my right, and this is from Swedish bronzes age. And just showing you these just to show the commonality between the Ballyshannon, the Swedish, and again the Nordic bronze chariot. So this is a period of time where the sun was very much depicted by a solar disc. And if you remember back to the image of Ra as well in ancient Egypt, he very much has a solar disc on

his head and often you'll see Isis with this or Sekmet, it's very much a sphere, a disc, which is quite interesting. So the image you'll see now is a second pendant I wanted to show you, which is a 3000 year old gold sun pendant, which is heralded as one of the bronze ages most wonderful finds in the last century. And astonishingly this is so well preserved and was discovered by metal detector enthusiastic structure in 2018.

It was found in a landscape that would've been boggy and wet during the bronze Age and the curators think that it would've been intentionally cast into the water as an offering, which we see so many times including to the modern day. I think it's another very, very beautiful connection to the sun that someone's created. It's obviously a metal which is gold, which is obviously very connected to the sun also. It's very worth going and having a look at the online depictions of this with the museum it's attached to or actually visiting it itself because it's very beautiful considering its age.

Okay, this is one of my favourite pictures that I've got to show you so far, and this is image number 41 from the T petroglyphs in Sweden. In total there are thousands of images in the Talum petroglyphs on about 600 panels within the world Heritage area. They were originally just carved into the rock, but they were painted red so that visitors could see them, which is a real sore point of controversy because some people find that really offensive and others find it really useful. In this image you'll see there are two female spirits and another, sorry, figures, and another figure of an unknown gender. And this just shows how you can see how they always seem to be tending to the sun within the image. And this might not be how it was depicted, but it's just how I see it and it just gives that kind of image to show reverence really to me.

Another one of the images from the tanum carvings, as you can see there is the solar wheel, which is a symbol that many non-pagans will be very familiar with. In fact, I got one on myself representing the sun, and that is again from those carvings. I put alongside the solar wheel, the bride and groom, which is from there also. And I did that just because that's such a really famous image so that if you haven't seen the tanum images before, you may have seen that one. I know that Heilung famously used it in their video, so that's not really connected to the subject but I just wanted to share that with you.

Okay, here's some more images from the tanum carvings and these are of warriors and they're ships. And you'll see interestingly that the centre of their body looks almost as though it's a solar wheel. And obviously because these are quite crude, crudely drawn kind of simplified images, it's difficult to know whether those are depicting a shield or in fact that they are kind of representing the warriors as though the sun is the shield on the centre of the warriors, perhaps surmising maybe that would be giving them strength and things like that. So they're really, really interesting images and it's well worth if you like these images kind of looking into them because the stories that come behind them, the Tanum museum actually have quite an extensive website with all the different slides of the different imagery within it that you can go and kind of dig into and get lost in a very big black hole.

Okay, so the name of that particular section is actually following the path of the sun. And over the decades on the Tanum petroglyphs have revealed that the people depicted in the rituals in order to understand their world, a world encapsulated in a pantheon of water, sun, and fertility and the world whose symbolism represented ceremonial battles between winter and summer. And the ship is the icon of the path of the sun, the sun ship. So again, when we look back, we had the bark with Ra, and here we have a ship. There seems to, when you look at the kind of threads commonalities through history, once we kind of go into the time when people were noticing the wider cosmos, there seems to be a vehicle or also an animal that will transport the sun, which seems to be quite common throughout many, many, many cultures, which is really interesting.

I'm just going to talk to you a little bit about the Sami, and this is because they have such a wonderful imagery within their drums. I absolutely love drums. And you'll see in the centre of the image, I do have

a better picture of it in a minute, but the centre of the image, you can just about see a circular line in the middle with some bits coming out that's actually the sun and the line is the horizon. So this drum is made of wood and skin and there's a bowl type drum. And again, well this is from the British Museum and you can visit it or you can actually, if you can't get to London, you can go onto the website and you can actually pull the image out and twist it around and do all sorts of fancy things, which are really interesting to look at.

And there's a much bigger explanation. It's actually made from a single piece of Pinewood and it's got a reindeer skin stretched across and it's covered in painting designs using ink which was made from chewed alder bark. And it depicts maps, guides, and accounts of the world of spirits and the gods. And the handle at the back is formed by two open cuts of the bowl. The skin is stretched out across it with wooden pegs and metal nails which also provide reinforcement. So the images on the drums represent the personal visions and experience of the shaman of the Noady, which you sketched out to represent the dangerous journey through different levels of the Sami universe to communicate with spirits. So there's now this kind of dividing of different worlds that are being clearly shown within the context of not just the sun, their thinking of other worldly things as well, which is quite different to what we looked at earlier. The lower part of the drum actually represents the Sami underworld. And you can see that highlighted line I mentioned before, which is representing the horizon, but also the divide between the upper world and the lower world

In the underworld, there are boats that are actually associated directly with the sun. And again, like we saw before with Ra, and in the Tanum depictions that there is actually a vehicle again. So we have a boat again, boats seem very, very common in this journey of the sun. And the sun is repeated in its image several times, which represents its daily journey from the sky east to west as well as return journey through the underworld. Now this is something that is also repeated as I mentioned before, with RA descending into the Duat and coming back out. So it's very cyclical this journey. And when we have a little look at Greece and Rome later, that's very similar there too. So the sun is outlined, just cresting the horizon and they think that this actually is referring to the winter solstice, the darker time of the year. The Sami people, living in the Arctic and the sub Arctic Europe, their homeland, covers parts of northern Norway, Sweden and Finland and as well as parts of Russia. And for almost 3000 years the Sami lived as hunters and gatherers. But from about 1500 they became semi nomadic herding reindeer and trapping animals in the north fishing along the coasts. Today there are about a hundred thousand Sami, and although they live in towns and cities in rural life, the rural life is very still much a heart of their identity. The images on the drum of the reindeer herding, fishing and winter solstice remain very important to the Sami people as their ancestral cultural symbols, they represent the continuity within their land and their ancestors.

It's quite an interesting to see in such a visual way upon the drum, the kind of ideas about the world connecting to it, the upper world, the lower world, and the cosmos around them. I think it's a really beautiful way. And also when you bang a drum, you've enlivened that drum and its story. So for that shaman to beat that drum of his story, livens it, which I think is just wonderful.

So here I have extracted from the drum the specific drawings, which you can see in a little tiny bit more detail. And another drum this is, and you'll see at the centre, the central cross with the diamond, and this is representing the horizon and the sun also. And you can see the different figures around in the line for the central line for the underworld, which is really fascinating to see how detailed those particular drums are. So here you can see a very classical image of the Greek God Helios, and again, similar to Ra in his bark and the son of all drawn chariot of the Scandinavian anthologies. He is also in a vehicle and his choice of vehicle is a chariot. And again, it's being drawn by horses. So there's this connection between the sun, the people, the animals and a vehicle in order to transport them. And again, this seems to be a

common theme throughout lots of cultures. So if you notice as well, the wheels of his chariot almost represent those open spoked kind of solar crosses that we've seen before in the Tanum. So it's quite it quite fascinating that between the different cultures, there's so many commonalities within them.

And this is one thing that I noticed when we move into the classical Greek and Roman periods, which you'll see in the image, is that around the head of Helios where the sun is depicted again as solar disc, you'll now see rays of light coming out from him, which seems to be quite common within that era, where previously it was this very simple disc and it's also a little reminiscent with Christianity coming in with the depictions of Jesus as well, who is also depicted with the sun. This other image that is Sol Invictus, which is Roman. And you can see again those things raised of the sun around the head. And again the horses, this is actually a Roman coin.

So just to skip right into the modern era, many of us here will have attended various Neopagan festivals that incorporate the battle of the Holly and the Oak King who represent the personification of summer and winter. The Evergreen Holly King represents the dark half of the year and the oak king, half the light half. Whilst these are modern depictions, they do provide a very visual story which Pagans and Pagan families can easily connect with. They can connect with nature and identify really clear aspects of the season. And it's quite fun, let's face it, shouting. Oak King, Oak King!, so the battles are enacted in a kind of Mumma's play, which again, a play is a creative endeavour. It's not a song or a picture, but it's another creative way in order to make a connection. And some people criticise the battle of the Holy Oak King say, oh, it's just modern. It's just modern. Well, I'm sure when the Greeks discovered the old gods at the time they were there, they didn't say, Nope, sorry, Helios not listening to you. You're too modern. So not that I'm saying that the oak holy king are gods, but I just think it is a nice way to connect. It's a fun way to connect as well, and it does bring people into that celebration of the sun at those times.

So we've been on a little bit of a journey and I do apologise for my nerves, but I did get told I was doing it well. I decided I was doing this talk last night, so I do apologise if I stammered a little bit around. So just wanted to kind of share with you what I've started about this stuff for the sun. Okay, so for me, the sun is so integral to our very existence. It gives us light heat growth. It reveals the moon, which we often forget because we see so much about the moon. But we forget that without the sun sometimes we wouldn't see the moon. She'd be hidden. And so there are so many aspects of the sun and it's so integral to our life. And I think sometimes we actually take it for granted because we forget to worship the sun. Not everyone obviously, I'm just saying in a lot of modern pagan stuff, it's very much focused around the moon. So let's not forget the sun. So some of us worship the sun as being masculine and others feminine, and same with the moon, but whichever pairing you choose, the sun and moon will always continue to dance with each other. We hope meeting each other and they'll revealed by light. I hope that you've enjoyed this exploration of the sun and its importance and I will leave you there. But I just wanted to say one last thing. Hail to the sun. Hail, sun.