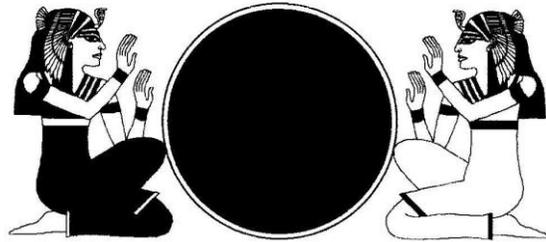


Temple of the Dark Moon



Circle Casting Down Under

By Frances Billinghamurst © 2007

The direction in which the sacred circle is cast often causes many debates within the various Pagan communities south of the equator. Should the Northern Hemisphere direction be observed or, like the Sabbats, is circle casting down under also different?

The Temple of the Dark Moon follows the latter view point largely because there is a difference in the Earth's own energy between the hemispheres. North of the equator, the energy moves in a clockwise direction. In the south, however, it moves in the opposite direction.

The journey that the Sun makes also echoes this change in direction. Whilst it rises in the East and sets in the West, as it does in the Northern Hemisphere, the Sun travels across the sky via the North, in an anti-clockwise direction. This means that to move "deosil" around the circle is to move in an anticlockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere.

An increasing number of books, as well as other resources (including Internet pages) are appearing stating that the word "deosil" means "clockwise", thus making its opposite counterpart "widdershins" to mean "anti-clockwise". These meanings are not only erroneous but cause problems for magickal novices in the Southern Hemisphere.

According to the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (which uses the etymologies from the *Oxford Dictionary of Etymology* in an abbreviated form), the word "deosil" is an

Anglo-Saxon word meaning "Sunwise", or "in the direction of the (apparent) motion of the Sun". While in the Northern Hemisphere this is indeed a clockwise direction, in the Southern Hemisphere, however, this is an anti-clockwise direction.

The word "*widdershins*" is derived from a Middle High German word "wider-sinnes" where "wider" means "against" (or "back") and "sin" "direction" (or "to travel"). Combined together, "widdershins" is more correctly defined as meaning "in a direction contrary to apparent course of the Sun". Therefore, in the Northern Hemisphere, widdershins was considered unnatural and unlucky as one was moving against the Sun. By the mid 1500s, English speakers had adopted this meaning for anything following a path opposite to the direction the Sun travels across the sky (that is anti-clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere).

This difference in direction leads onto another difference between Northern and Southern Hemispheres, and that is the placement of the Elementals within a sacred circle.

As mentioned earlier, the Sun rises in the East and because of this many magickal teachings position the Element of Air in the East. Air represents new beginnings, and this is reflected in the rising Sun. With the Sun setting in the West, the Element of Water (which rules the emotions) is placed in this direction. When the Temple of the Dark Moon is based in South Australia, the positioning of these two Elements are not changed, after all the rising and setting of the Sun does not change regardless of what Hemisphere you are in. What is changed are the positioning of Fire and Earth.

As the Sun moves from rising to setting via the North, it makes sense that the most appropriate Element for the North (which represents passion and drive) is Fire. It is from the North that the hot Summer winds arrive from, and north of Adelaide the deserts and Equator can be found. Likewise, the Southern quarter (the dark quarter) represents the Element of South, that of the Winter Sun. Southerly winds blow up from the South Pole and are bitter cold.

People living on the Eastern seaboard of Australia, however, might use the following Elemental Directions:

- North = Fire. This is similar to the above example as Australia is South of the Equator.
- West = Air. This direction is used because in Australia winds blow across the continent from the Indian Ocean. However, some practitioners equate West with Earth as to the West is the rest of continent).

- South = Earth. Similar to the above example associated with the Antarctic and it is the traditional opposite of Fire within a circle. (Some practitioners do equate the South with Air).
- East = Water. On the Eastern States, the Pacific Ocean is to the East.

For people living in the middle or northern parts of Australia, the choice is up to you. Observe your natural environment, experiment with the differing elemental associations, and find out what works best for you. Paganism is a very individual path and what works for one person might not work well for you. And the only way to find out what works for you is to take the bull by the horns and have a go yourself.

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training having commenced in 1993. She has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wicca tradition, with interests also in ceremonial magick, the Qabalah and traditional Wytchcraft.

After founding the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999, Frances spent some six years as secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) where she worked closely with both the Police and Attorney General with respect to changes in legislation. She has led rituals with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm, and occult philosophy Ramsay Dukes, as well as presented lectures at various national and international events.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*.

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