

(RE)CONSTRUCTING DRUIDRY: THE ROLE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MAKING OF TRADITION

This paper presents an anthropological study of contemporary Druidry as a form of spiritual identity, examining the role that scholarship and technology have played — and continue to play — in the creation and development of this tradition. The study pursues three objectives: (1) to assess the applicability of M. Strmiska's typology of modern Paganism to contemporary Druidry, drawing on ethnographic material collected by the author; (2) to analyse the reasons why modern Druids engage with scholarly publications in their spiritual practice; and (3) to address the conceptual question posed by the Ship of Theseus paradox in the context of contemporary Druidry: if all the constituent elements of the original tradition have been replaced, does it remain the same tradition? The analysis is organised around two chronological stages in the development of contemporary Druidry: its emergence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and its contemporary evolution. The first stage is examined through historical sources and published scholarship, allowing an analysis of the formative role of scholarship and technology in the initial construction of the tradition. The second stage is investigated through long-term observation of Druidic and other Celtic spirituality-oriented communities, together with three written interviews conducted by the author with contemporary Druids from Wales, Brittany, and Ireland. The findings suggest that contemporary Druidry cannot be adequately described within a strict reconstructionist/syncretic dichotomy. Instead, it represents a dynamic religious tradition in which reconstruction and innovation coexist. The study further demonstrates that scholarship has come to function not only as an external means of studying Druidry but also as one of the internal mechanisms through which the tradition is continually interpreted, reconstructed, and developed.

Keywords: Paganism, Contemporary Druidry, scholarship, technology, spiritual identity

Author Info: Domrachev, Denis S. — Ph.D. in Culturology, Junior Researcher of the Centre for European Studies, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). E-mail: denisdomrachev@gmail.com ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1394-4705>

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