



## The Ritual Year Working Group

### THE RITUAL YEAR CONFERENCE 2016: FINDHORN, SCOTLAND, 8–12 JANUARY 2016

The 12th annual conference of the SIEF Working Group on the Ritual Year, hosted by the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, will be held at Findhorn, on the shores of the Moray Firth in northern Scotland.

The centrepiece of the conference will be a visit to the Burning of the Clavie, an ancient New Year fire festival in the neighbouring village of Burghead, held each year on 11 January, Aul Eel (Old Yule) according to the Julian calendar.

Conference sessions and accommodation will be at the Findhorn Foundation's ecovillage at the mouth of the river Findhorn, a beautiful facility run along environmentally responsible and sustainable lines.

### REGULATING CUSTOMS

The conference theme will explore the parallel, intertwined systems that regulate customary practices. These largely unwritten mechanisms have a traditionality of their own, based on social relationships, hierarchies, and lawmaking institutions. Together, these symbiotic systems foster a range of stability and change within customs: creativity and innovation, control and regulation, preservation and even ossification. They shape, preserve, and develop customary practices.

These regulatory systems are found in socially constituted bodies (e.g., organization) which control behaviour through example, policy, and practice, and in the multi-valent personal relationships that define and control community behaviour. On the more formal side, we find control systems embedded in legally constituted bodies such as local councils, police services, and formal regulatory/legislative systems.

Scholars might like to look at customary practice from both emic and etic perspectives. Topics could include:

- The 'insider' rules that govern behaviour during the enactment of a custom;
- Negotiations within communities that govern practice;
- (Attempted) regulation from outside the community;
- Historical precedent that guides or influences the practice or revival of a custom;
- Motivations and resources in the re-establishment or revival of dormant customs.

We also welcome proposals on the interplay between ritual year and cycle of life customs, theoretical issues, and local/regional customs and practices.

### ABSTRACTS

Paper proposal abstracts of 300 words are invited by **15 October**. Abstracts should include,

- An outline of the topic and argument;

- The analytical and theoretical frameworks used;
- Up to 100 words of biographical information about the author.

Please submit abstracts in a Word file or within an e-mail to Thomas A. McKean ([T.A.McKean@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:T.A.McKean@abdn.ac.uk), cc'ing [elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:elphinstone@abdn.ac.uk)). You will receive a receipt for your submission (if not, please resubmit).

The programme committee consists of Thomas A. McKean, Frances Wilkins, Athanasios Barmplexis (University of Aberdeen) and Marlene Hugoson (RY).

We intend to publish a **refereed** collection of papers selected by the programme committee as part of the Ritual Year series.

### IMPORTANT DATES

- 15 October – abstracts due
- 30 October – contributors notified and registration opens
- 9 December – early registration ends

### PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

The formal conference will take place over a weekend with arrival on Friday morning and formal paper sessions completed on Sunday, followed by the conference dinner.

#### *Conference*

	Morning	Afternoon
<b>8 January</b>	Arr	Welcome and Papers
<b>9 January</b>	Papers	Papers
<b>10 January</b>	Papers	Papers

#### *Optional Excursion*

On Monday 11 January, Aul Eel, there will be an optional excursion to local sites of interest, including thousand-year-old Pictish sculptured stones, finishing in the village of Burghead for the Burning of the Clavie.

Those not taking part in the excursion and Clavie may depart on 11 January, those staying on will depart on 12 January.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

#### *The Elphinstone Institute*

The Elphinstone Institute is a centre for the study of Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology at the University of Aberdeen. Established in 1995 in celebration of the quincentenary of the university's founding, the Institute researches and promotes the culture of the North and North-East of Scotland in context. The Institute offers a Taught MLitt (Master's) degree in Ethnology and Folklore as well as the research degrees of MLitt Res, MPhil, and PhD. Staff and students use ethnographic methodologies to explore ideas of identity and belonging, meaning and function, drawing on an exceptional heritage of traditional music, ballad and song, story, lore and language, alongside the dynamic creativity of those who live and work here today. (For more information, see [www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone).)

### ***Findhorn Village And Foundation***

The small Highland fishing village lies on Findhorn Bay, on the shores of the Moray Firth in northern Scotland. Known for its white shifting sands and lively birdlife, Findhorn also boasts diverse plant varieties, trout, salmon, and finnock fisheries, and the Royal Findhorn Sailing Club. (For more information, see [www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/findhorn/findhorn](http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/findhorn/findhorn).)

The village came to international notice through the Findhorn Foundation, a community based on spiritual values founded in 1962, the largest single intentional community in the UK. The Foundation runs an educational centre, workshops, conferences, an outreach programme, and a world-leading 'eco-village', featuring nearly thirty ecologically-designed and run buildings. (For more information, see [www.findhorn.org](http://www.findhorn.org).)

### ***Costs***

Accommodation will be at Findhorn Foundation ecovillage, with do-it-yourself breakfast provided. Conference sessions and other meals will be at the Foundation's Universal Hall.

- Conference: Approximate conference cost, including 3 nights' accommodation, all meals, teas/coffees, and conference fees will be about £215 (around EUR300).
- Airport transfer: EUR30-50 (we may be able to arrange some conference transport from Aberdeen to Findhorn as well, details to come).
- Optional excursion on 11 January: Includes transport, meals, accommodation on night of 11 January, etc., around EUR70.
- SIEF fee: All participants should join SIEF via the SIEF website.

### ***Transport***

The nearest airports to Findhorn are Inverness (INV) and Aberdeen (ABZ), both of which have regular flights from around the UK and Europe. Delegates will then travel via train or bus to Elgin, near the conference location. A conference minibus will run from Elgin to Findhorn on 8, 11, and 12 January, and there may be a dedicated bus from ABZ to Findhorn, finances permitting. More details soon.

Inverness (INV) has international flights from Amsterdam, Geneva, Zurich, and Dublin, and UK flights from Manchester, London, Birmingham, Bristol; 'cheap' airlines include FlyBe (on which you usually get a chocolate at the end) and easyJet. There are buses every half hour from INV to Elgin, which take a little over an hour and cost around EUR15.

Aberdeen (ABZ) has international flights from Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Paris, Bergen, Gdansk, Copenhagen, as well as Dublin, Stavanger, Oslo, and Kristiansund, and UK flights from London (LCY, LHR, LGW, LTN, STN), Manchester, Durham, East Midlands, Norwich, Bristol, Newcastle, Leeds Bradford, Birmingham, Stanstead, Belfast City, Cardiff; 'cheap' airlines include FlyBe, Wizzair, easyJet. There are trains from Dyce, near the airport, roughly every two hours to Elgin which take around 1:40 and cost around EUR25, as well as hourly buses from Aberdeen city centre, which take about 2:20 and cost about EUR18.

Other options include flying to Edinburgh (EDI), Glasgow (GLA), and various English airports and taking the train to Elgin.

[www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com) is a good site for train and bus research. More details and suggestions will be available later on.

### **Thomas A. McKean**

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President, Kommission für Volksdichtung

Convener, American Folklore Society British Folk Studies Section