

# *Elf-locks, Lúfa, and Wichtelzopf*

*A Personal Reflection on Matted Hair Traditions and Heathenry*

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# *Matted Hairstyling*

*matted & knotted*

*“locks”*

*diverse methods ...*

*freeform : neglect, plating*

*twist & roll*

*twist & rip*

*back combing*

*crochet*

*plaiting*

*binding*



*A matted hairstyle being maintained using a crochet hook.*

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# Hindu

*Tamnaya culture*

*c. 3,300-2,600 BCE*

*the Vedas*

*“sadhu” : “mokṣa”, mendicant*

*“jata” : twist & roll, binders*

*Shiva & Kali*

*roots & river*

*boons & banes*



*A Vaishnava sadhu in Kathmandu.*

(By Wen-Yan King - Flickr, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2198855>)

# Rastafari

*new religious movement*

*Abrahamic*

*Afrocentric*

*diaspora folk traditions*

*syncretism*

*“ital” : freeform, twist & roll*

*“The Gong” Howell c. 1932*

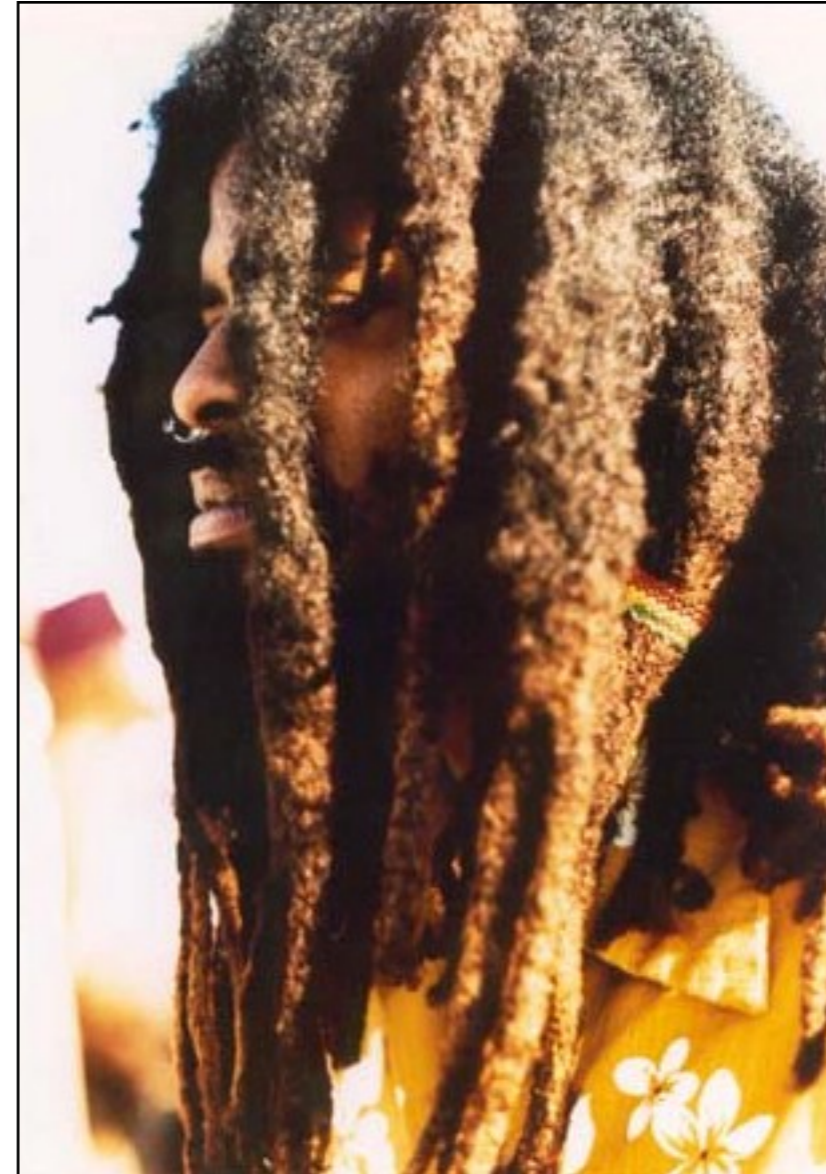
*Samson & Daniel*

*Vow of the Nazarene*

*colonialism : “dreaded locks”*

*Youth Black Faith c. 1949*

*“Babylon” : “Zion”, “One Love”, “livity”*



*Rasta man with tuff dreads.*

# Plains Cree

*First Nations*

*social roles*

*last colonized*

*Plains warfare*

*lost tradition*

*plaiting, freeform*

*pragmatic*

*ceremony for warriors*



*Cree chief Pitikwahanapiwiyin with locked hair, 1885. He was also known as Poundmaker; born in Rupert's Land, near present-day Battleford; the child of Sikakwayan, an Assiniboine medicine man, and a mixed-blood Cree woman, the sister of Chief Mistawasis*

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# *Cultural Misappropriation*

*multi-cultural, mixed heritage*

*colonialism & acculturation*

*collective intellectual property*

*power imbalance*

*historicity : authenticity : ownership*

*reflexivity*

*privileged : white, settler*

*not privileged : Heathen, ill*

*Cultural appropriation*

*The adoption of elements of one culture by members of another culture; a.k.a. 'cultural exchange'.*

*Cultural misappropriation*

*When a dominant culture appropriates a practice from a minority culture; without permission and/or respect.*

# *Historic Heathens*

*similarity : liminality, outsider status, spiritual power, apotheosis*

*Scandinavia c. 800 CE*

*Germanic tribes c. 98 CE*

*Northeast Europe c. 1700 CE*

*non-Heathen accounts*

*folkloric survivals*



*Map of the Roman Empire and Magna Germania in the early 2nd century*

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# Vengeance Oath

*Old Norse grooming & hygiene*

*Völuspá*

*Baldrs Draumar*

*“The Histories”, by Tacitus*

*Harald Harfager’s Saga*

*“lúfa” : freeform*



*Harald Fair-Hair, in an illustration from the fourteenth-century Flateyjarbók.*

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# Warrior Societies

*coins, bracteates*

*wild, ropy hair*

*Óðinn*

*warrior societies*

*männerbund*

*upper-class youth*

*feat of return : vengeance*

*marriage*



*An early-medieval silver sceat of anonymous ruler, dating to the period c. 710-740. The images are identified as Woden. The coins were likely minted in Ribe, Denmark, but collected in the United Kingdom.*

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# Gnosis & Apotheosis

*not a literal warrior*

*right-wing extremism in Heathenry*

*Public Safety Canada*

*Criminology & Social Justice*

*apotheosis of Óðinn*

*roots : Yggdrasil, Hoddmímis holt*

*“ham” : shape-shift, Ólfhéðnar*

*“wyrð” : weight of the human ham*



# Being *Elfed*

conversion : “fairy-faith”

syncretism : Finno-Urgic, Celtic, Slavic

“alfar” : “wurm”, *Alfheimr*, *Hel*, “*dvargr*”

borders : taboo, emotion, place, persons

“*Romeo and Juliet*” by Shakespeare

“*King Lear*” by Shakespeare

“*Jane Eyre*” by Brontë

Grimm : *wichtelzopf*, *Frau Holle*

“*plica polonica*”



*An example of a plica polonica, from between 1734-1766*

(By Creator:Felicità Sartori - [www.wilanow-palac.pl](http://www.wilanow-palac.pl), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27100185>)

# *Elf Sickness*

*elf sicknesses*

*no physical cause*

*inside the head (psychological)*

*parasitic worms*

*stitches & cramps*

*fevers & headaches*

*“touched”*

*“elf-shot”*

*elf suzerainty*

*elf-magic (“gandr”)*

*matting gone = elf-connection gone*



*“Elf arrow” charms, set in silver*

(By geni - Photo by user:geni, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26376133>)

# Gnosis & Healing

## *Lyme disease*

*borrelia burgdorferi*

*swelling & hives*

*chronic fatigue*

*'brain fog'*

*melancholia*

*impact : off work, suicidal*

*elf wurm : changed life, doors  
of death, not cured*

*take charge of the relationship*

*spiritual advantage*



*"Borrelia burgdorferi" the causative agent of Lyme disease  
(borreliosis) magnified 400 times*

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# *In Summary*

*practice of many cultures*

*not cultural misappropriation*

*spiritual, liminal, magical*

*social identity marker, critique of power*

*Óðinn : oath, warriors, vengeance*

*Hulda : elves, sorcery, healing*

