

# **“CONNECTED TO THE PAST”: CREATIVE RITUALITY AT ETRUSCAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE FRAME OF EUROPEAN RAINBOW GATHERINGS**

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**Abstract:** Contemporary rituals at archaeological sites display competing interpretations of the past, future, and related religious, identitary and political claims—as found in research on contemporary Paganisms. This paper examines such rituality and tradition-building among the Rainbow Family. The article compares the Rainbow case to research on Paganisms, after describing what kind of ritual expressions related to archaeological sites are found in a Rainbow Gathering and how the expressions relate to each other in the frame of the collective culture. The article provides an example of crafted rituals and folkloric narratives in an ‘event-cultural’<sup>1</sup> community that recognizes the right for subjective signification. It explains how narratives and practices, while not completely convergent, can still relate to each other in the collective frame without being a threat to social cohesion or cultural coherence. In the Rainbow case, a demand for shared beliefs is replaced with participation in the shared practices, and a broad ideological division accommodating various alternative-holistic religious traditions.

**Keywords:** Ritual creativity; Tradition; Rainbow Gatherings; Neopaganism; Archaeological sites

## **Introduction**

Accept, to begin, that tradition is the creation of the future out of the past. A continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown, tradition is stopped, parceled, and codified by thinkers who fix upon this aspect or that, in accord with their needs or preoccupations, and leave us with a scatter of apparently contradictory, yet cogent, definitions. (Glassie, 1995: 395)

It is imagination that creates intangible heritage, and that constructs “heritage” from places, objects and events. In that sense, the human right involved in this issue is *freedom of imagination*—the right to imagine one’s relationship to the past and construct a sense of identity based upon it. (Magliocco, 2014: 242-243)

Following folklorist Henry Glassie (1995), I begin from the premise that tradition is crafted. Further, tradition is shaped according to historically and culturally contingent aims regarding identity and cultural creation (Testa, 2017a, 2017b; Creed, 2011), or as anthropologist Jonathan Friedman states, “all constructions of the past are socially motivated and have, thus, to be understood in positional terms” (Friedman, 1992: 854-855). This article investigates the nature of tradition-crafting in Rainbow Gatherings as it relates to archaeological sites, and its dependencies in this social and cultural environment. A comparative point or reference is taken from Pagan studies, as plenty of research has been conducted into creative Pagan rituality at archaeological sites, and the theoretical and methodological framework is largely the same (foremost Wallis & Blain, 2003; Strmiska, 2005; Magliocco, 2014). The article compares aspects of creative rituality between Rainbow Gatherings and contemporary Euro-American Paganism and maps out the relationship between communality and polyvocality of tradition.

## **Rainbow Gatherings**

Rainbow events were born in the aftermath of the 1960’s countercultural shift in the US, among hippies and anti-war activists. The original vision was to bring together the various factions of the countercultural movement in the US, in a spiritual event that would function peacefully without appointed leaders, without buying and selling, and despite people believing in very different things. The tradition of Rainbow Gatherings celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022 and the events have spread around the globe, but many aspects of the original vision still hold. Firstly, the Gatherings still bring people together to live in anarchistic temporary communities that aim to thrive without the usual frameworks of modern societies: Rainbow events have no centralized power, no market-type economy, and no shared religion in the traditional sense. Secondly, the events still display the variety and scope

of countercultural ideologies and alternative religious traditions, with the majority representing the different currents of contemporary alternative-holistic ‘spiritualities’ (Niman, 1997; Ratia, 2020; Welcomehome, n.d.).

Another fundamental part of Rainbow culture is nature. Rainbow culture values nature highly and focuses on ‘natural’ living—the events are organized in changing countryside and wilderness locations, with participants typically travelling considerable distances to attend, as well as camping and living a simple outdoors lifestyle during the event (discussion about ‘nature’ and related concepts below). In addition to environmental ideas reflected in the practical Rainbow life and the fact that much of the Gathering events’ educational content focuses on ideas of ‘natural’ living, Rainbow’s collective ritual traditions involve elements of sacralised nature, ranging from various Pagan and Indigenous influences to esoteric ideas of nature’s energies. In this sense, the Gatherings can be said to represent a globalizing form of alternative-holistic spirituality that finds much of its inspiration and leading themes in re-enchanted nature. But, and importantly for this article, the culture claims to equally accept all kinds of religious expressions, and thus, ‘nature’ functions as a common symbolic denominator (Niman, 1997; Ratia, 2020; cf. Lewis & Pizza, 2009; Partridge, 2005, 2006).

Rainbow’s appreciation of nature involves clearly religious themes, but in addition it reflects countercultural sensibilities and symbolism. The Gathering culture places itself in staunch opposition to the mainstream society and the criticism is reflected throughout the culture, including Rainbow’s own vocabulary. The outside world in general, and the ‘ailing’ (as it is seen) modern Western world in particular is called *Babylon* in Rainbow parlance.<sup>2</sup> The concept of nature aligns with this countercultural sentiment in a specific way: nature and various related ideas are commonly seen as the antithesis and the counterforce to the challenges of modern societies. Babylon represents the ills of the modern world such as consumerism, profits over people and commercial values, militarism, industrialism, destruction of nature, social inequality, oppression, and violence. Conversely, nature, ‘natural’ things and living in harmony with nature are seen as the remedies. (Ratia, 2020).

Presently, Rainbow Gatherings are happening in all continents save Antarctica, with the majority taking place in Northern America and Europe. To say something of the scope of the activity, there were

approximately 65 Rainbow Gatherings around the globe in 2018, with populations ranging mostly from a few dozen to a few thousands. Two bigger events are held annually: the ‘European Rainbow Gathering’ drawing up to 3000-4000 people, and the ‘National Rainbow Gathering’ in the US attracting up to tens of thousands of participants. The community is an open and loose network of people which does not keep any kinds of official records and refuses all kinds of official representation—so what can we say about the population?

## People on the Rainbow Trail

The Rainbow Family of Living Light (as the group calls itself) and their events are complex research subjects, and certain conditions need to be established to view the phenomenon accurately. All organization is done by volunteering participants who follow an unwritten Rainbow tradition, and the different Gatherings operate as independent events with their own content and economy. The events have a rich ritual culture, but meanings attached to the rituals vary among the Gatherers. Some see the rites as deeply spiritual, others more as customary practices.

Most Rainbow participants belong to the interlaced networks of Western counterculture and vernacular-religious traditions under the umbrella of contemporary alternative-holistic ‘spiritualities’. To a religious studies scholar, the strongest currents can be defined as ‘New Age’ and Neopagan traditions, although their overlap is wide, and the labels are mostly rejected by the Gatherers themselves. The question of defining and categorizing forms of contemporary alternative-holistic religiosity is contested, and the various approaches seem to be dependent on the different research subjects and perspectives.<sup>3</sup> I follow the general distinctions articulated by Sarah M. Pike (2004: 16, 18, 21-23, 34). To give just a single distinction, although both traditions involve reverence of nature, Neopagans turn specifically to (ideas of) premodern polytheistic religious traditions, while ‘New Agers’ focus largely on development of consciousness.

Not all Gatherers explicitly describe themselves as ‘spiritual’. For many, the expressed motivations to gather are social or cultural: being part of a community, participating in its creation and serving its needs, making friends, celebrating life, learning new skills and ideas.

For others, the purpose is participating in a radically countercultural project of creating political, economic, and social alternatives. A common reason that Gatherers state for their participation is being in nature and learning a more natural lifestyle (Field notes).

Overall, the Rainbow Family is a mixed bag of people of various ages, creeds, and backgrounds, so all my generalizing observations about ‘Rainbow spirituality’ are based more on the collective practices and the shared general ideas than any well-defined or fully prevalent belief content. The same goes for all other questions of ideology and world view. The event-centred nature of the Rainbow tradition also means that the manifest communities are transient, the population can change considerably from one Gathering to the next, and even within the span of one event as people come and go. Rainbow Family needs to be approached as a loose community that is formed on other bases than convergent religious belief or well-defined ideology, or closely shared cultural or socioeconomic background. At the same time, most Rainbow participants do come from Western or Westernized countries and middle-class backgrounds—a demographic that is typical of alternative-holistic religiosity in general (Rose, 2005: 89; Pew Research Center, n.d.). Before we can understand the ideological orientations relevant for Rainbow people, we need to take little detour and discuss the cultural meanings of two central concepts (Ratia, 2020).

### **Countercultural conceptualization: ‘tribal’ and ‘natural’**

On one level, Rainbow culture declares the equality of all humans, whatever their ethnicity, nationality, or religious background (Welcomehome n.d.). On another level, there is an alternative perspective that valorises ‘natural’, ‘archaic’ and ‘tribal’ cultures, contrasting these ideas with the countercultural view of a corrupt modern (Western) world and its woes. In Western counterculture and alternative-holistic religious traditions in general, ‘tribal’ and Indigenous cultures are typically seen to be more socially just, environmentally sound, and spiritually aware. In this view, the world is divided not by national borders, but between people and cultures that live a sustainable life ‘in harmony’ with each other and the Earth, and those who do not. This understanding, of course, is not without its own biases and mischaracterizations, and sits on the continuum of Western exoticism and primitivism. The extreme

forms of these attitudes are problematic and have drawn accusations of cultural appropriation especially regarding Native American cultures (Niman, 1997: ch.7). However, the Family is diverse, and all Gatherers can't be charged for 'playing Indian' (Deloria, 1998), but the ideas are influential on an ideological level (Ratia, 2020; Pike, 2004; Urban, 2015).

'Natural' things and options are typically highly valued by Rainbow participants, as they are by the broader alternative-holistic and countercultural factions, and increasingly by the mainstream public as well. Gatherers favour 'natural' diets, healing methods and medicines, 'natural' elements in philosophy and religion, and more. What is noteworthy is that many of these 'natural' choices have, or are presented to have, a connection to traditional and Indigenous cultures—as they are in the mainstream and commercial worlds (Levinovitz, 2020). Nature and 'natural' things are prevalent also in Gatherer's spiritual life and experiences, and firmly connected to ideas of positive development and 'healing'. Rainbow's collective open rituality typically features nature as a transcendent entity, and participants report spiritual and transformative experiences related to nature. Simply spending time in a natural environment is considered transformative, something which is mirrored i.a. in Bron Taylor's and Sarah Pike's work (Taylor, 2010: 97; Pike, 2004, 2017).

Many ritual practices popular among Gatherers involve nature in a direct manner (meditation in nature, 'grounding' exercises, walking barefoot), and they culminate in experiences of unity, communication and bonding with non-human entities or the nature/cosmos as a whole (Field notes). The expressions for the reverence of nature are drawn from ideas of Indigenous and exotic religious traditions, which in addition to being relatable are generally seen as biocentric forms of religion supporting a sustainable relationship between humans and nature. The ritualized organizational practices in Rainbow culture are thought to be a continuation or a revival of actual tribal traditions. The Rainbow Family thus sets itself in alignment with 'natural' and 'tribal' cultures, which are seen as counteracting the values and practices of the mainstream Babylon. The broader Rainbow mission is characteristically seen as a matter of a re-connection to humankind's shared roots (Ratia, 2020, cf. Lewis & Pizza, 2009; Partridge, 2005, 2006).

In addition to contemporary Paganisms, many other subsets in the contemporary alternative-holistic religious traditions elevate ideas of Indigenous cultures to an exemplary position. They are seen as representing ‘natural’ living and ‘ancient wisdom’, awarding a healthy, peaceful, and meaningful life, and thus superior to modern views. This lens has a wide angle—there are heaps of examples of alternative-holistic ‘spiritualities’ lifting and re-appropriating concepts and practices from ancient and exotic cultures: religious, political, and economic traditions, arts and crafts, philosophies and healing practices, social structures, and other cultural institutions. These ideas and practices are then re-inserted into the contemporary countercultural world view to promote such modern concerns as spiritual development, wellbeing, non-commercialism, non-violence, environmental and economic sustainability, egalitarianism, feminism, minority and civil rights, headless politics, ‘authenticity’ and individual fulfilment (Rountree, 2006). In addition, they provide building blocks for subjective significations and practices. The valorisation of the ‘natural’, including ideas of ‘tribal’, can amount to a complex re-interpretation of ethical and cultural statements, as is noted by other scholars (St John, 1997, 2012, 2013; Pike, 2004; Urban 2015; c.f. Friedman, 1992).

I want to remark that tensions and problems relating to cultural appropriation and the rights of cultural minorities are a serious issue, and this article is not meant as an uncritical or apologist take on the appropriative handlings of minority cultures among the Western alternative-holistic spiritualities. Unfortunately, a tone-deaf and uncritical view of cultural borrowing and re-appropriation is common also among the Rainbow population. Open discussion concerning appropriation, indigenous rights, or respect for minority voices is rare among the Gatherers, and comments tend to overlook actual minority positions (Field notes). That said, a certain romanticizing and idealizing attitude towards exotic cultures and indigenous traditions has been common in alternative-holistic spiritualities since their inception, as it was already among their forerunners in Western esotericism, and this needs to be taken as an existing and influential feature of the genre. Here, my purpose is to discuss the emic views of the Rainbow community and the complexity of cultural symbols and their use.

## Gathering traditions

Rainbow Gatherings have formed remarkably fixed and characteristic cultural traditions regarding the camp and its infrastructure, as well as collective practices constituting the political, economic, and ritual traditions. As with any vernacular and (mostly) oral tradition, the culture involves fixed core components as well as a level of subjective and local interpretations and appropriations that vary within the collective frame. The descriptions given here are based on my fieldwork in various Rainbow events in Europe,<sup>4</sup> which in certain features differ from Rainbow events in the US (Niman, 1997; Schelly, 2014; Ratia, 2020).

Regarding the camp and life in it, the general style is rugged and rural. Rainbow tradition discourages the use of technology and electricity beyond camping items such as flashlights, so mobile phones, cameras, and other gadgets are rarely seen. All Rainbow camps have roughly the same basic layout. The camp is separated from the outside world by a distance, and participants typically need to hike in. No cars are allowed into the main camp. The first thing marking the arrival into Rainbow Land is a camp called the Welcome Home (“Welcome home” is also a greeting for incomers). This place functions as an arrivals’ centre and an info point. It offers advice to newcomers and general guidelines of the practical life in Rainbow. The advice frequently includes stern requests to leave certain aspects of modern life behind, such as electric devices and machinery, meat, alcohol, and (hard) drugs (Ratia, 2020).

Inside the Rainbow camp area, there are neighbourhoods of participants’ tents, and communal camps with specific functions: the Medical Area, the Children’s Camp, social hubs known as Chai-kitchens, an area for bartering, sacralised space(s) for devotional activities, workshop spaces, the Main Kitchen and food storage, and in the middle of the camp—the Main Fire. Most communal structures are either large tents or canopies fashioned with wooden poles and tarpaulins, but the Main Fire consists of a large fire pit demarcated with stones and surrounded by a flat open area. The Main Fire is also known as the Sacred Fire, and it is the most central, popular, and symbolically significant location of a Rainbow camp. Here, the collective meals are eaten, the main rituals are conducted, and the collective discussions



are held. The fire is kept burning throughout the event, and commonly regarded as sacred.

Most Rainbow events in Europe last for a month, beginning on the new moon and lasting for a full lunar cycle, with the full moon night forming a climactic high point of the Gathering. The Gathering is preceded by a preparatory phase called the Seed Camp, and followed by a Clean-up period, so in reality the Gathering location can be occupied for 6-8 weeks. The population rises from a handful of first comers to its peak of hundreds or thousands of people around the full moon, and then decreases slowly until the Clean-up is done and the area is vacated.

## **Archaeology and tradition-building**

As conspicuous signs of the history of a place, archaeological sites have attracted the attention of world religions and non-institutionalized religious forms alike. In addition to providing an impressive location for religious practices,<sup>5</sup> they are often directly involved in tradition-building. James R. Lewis (2012) has written about archaeology as a part of the strategies for legitimating traditions through appeals to rationality and science. Crucial to remember, tradition is not singular or fixed, and archaeological sites can have various competing traditions connected to them. As Lewis points out, when archaeological sites elicit alternative interpretations, the legitimation strategy becomes an appeal to the authority of tradition as well. Marion Bowman's (2006) work on Glastonbury provides examples of creation and re-interpretation of tradition, regarding both vernacular Christianity and contemporary Pagan traditions, and how alternative knowledges can become established in local lore, and influential in religious, identity, and political claims.

One alternative strain of archaeological interpretation that Lewis presents (2012: 210-211) is connected to the narratives I encountered in my fieldwork: 'Goddess archaeology' and especially the work of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. As Lewis explains, Gimbutas' books became influential in the creation of feminist mythology that presents a matriarchal alternative history of 'Old Europe', based on her contested view of Neolithic cultures (Gimbutas, 1991). Another example of creative but contested interpretation of archaeological findings can be found in Povedák and Hubbes' (2019: 276) studies on Hungarian and Romanian ethnic Pagans.

## Comparing Rainbow rituality with contemporary Paganisms

Two things need to be clarified for this comparison. Firstly, contemporary Paganism is a diverse phenomenon, and all Pagans are not alike. This article discusses European and North American Paganisms, considering the difference between ‘nationalistic’ and ‘universalistic’ forms. Secondly, Rainbow Gatherings are not explicitly religious events, and in the emic understanding of the advocates of alternative-holistic spiritual traditions, their kind of ‘spirituality’ is often seen as opposed to ‘religion’—with which the participants mean typical institutional forms of religion. The denominator “spiritual but not religious” that has grown influential in contemporary religiosity reflects the same general sentiment. At the same time, certain religious aspects are obvious—and significant—in the culture of Rainbow Gatherings. The Gatherings have a rich and varied ritual life, involving collective rituals incorporated in the daily life of the events, and various forms of devotional and transformative rituals put forth by the participants (Ratia, 2020). Rainbow Gatherings differ from most contemporary Pagan events in that they do not explicitly identify as Pagan, nor any other religious affiliation. In contrast, they declare to be open for people of all faiths and creeds. Nevertheless, general themes and elements in Rainbow’s collective rituality concur with typical Pagan ones: a sacralized fire, ritual Circles, sacralization of nature, ideas of dynamistic powers and/or spirits, etc. (Ratia, 2020; Strmiska, 2005; Lewis & Pizza, 2009).

Rainbow life includes several central, collective rituals involving themes that are popular—or even definitive—in contemporary Paganisms. European Gathering events are timed according to the moon, and other natural cycles, such as solstices and equinoxes are observed as well. The Main Kitchen produces two collective meals every day that are eaten after a large ceremony. Nightly celebrations at the Sacred Fire are popular in the Gathering events, typically involving singing, chanting, drumming and ecstatic dancing. As mentioned, Rainbow’s organizational models also heavily depend on ritualization. The political model is based on ritualized collective discussions known as Talking Circles and Councils, where important decisions are established through a ritually expressed consensus. The events’ economy follows ideals of shared resources and collective responsibility, involving a jubilant collection of donations after every meal. In addition, participants are encouraged to express their

religiosity as they please, including organizing and providing rituals and teachings according to their own affiliations and interests. Thus, various autonomous, personal, and small-group rituals are part of everyday Gathering life, and a great majority of them is related to ideas of personal and societal transformation, or ‘healing’. I call the participatory and egalitarian currents in Rainbow’s tradition of religious practice ‘open rituality’: all participation is voluntary, anybody has the right to originate content, roles of ritual leadership are situational and temporary, and a broad diversity of expressions is accepted. This is similar to what scholar of religion Léon van Gulik has written about Pagan rituality, calling it ‘democratic’ and ‘egalitarian’ (van Gulik, 2011: 14-15; Ratia, 2020, Field notes).

Contemporary rituality at archaeological sites has been studied mostly in the frame of modern Pagan groups, some of which differ from Rainbow Gatherings regarding the measure of unanimity and regulation in their religious traditions. Although many modern Pagan communities are not institutionalized, and Pagans are understood to have a right to their own ‘path’, contemporary Pagans have also formed organizations and hierarchical structures, with some involving authority and regulation (e.g. Wicca: van Gulik, 2011: 15). Rainbow Gatherings offer a special example in the field of contemporary rituality in their radical anti-authoritarianism as they refuse all centralized and coercive forms of authority and claim to support individual freedoms, also regarding interpretation of religious ideas and practices (cf. Partridge, 1999). Rainbow culture is also markedly transnational, lacking the shared orientation and links to specific places and regions that are common to ethnic varieties of modern Paganisms (Strmiska, 2018). In their stead, Rainbow culture actively promotes religious plurality, and the ideological orientation recognized in Rainbow culture (Babylon vs. Nature, as discussed above) accommodates multiple interpretations and significations, also regarding ethnicity and connections to place.

Anthropologist Jenny Blain and archaeologist Robert J. Wallis have studied contemporary rituals at archaeological sites in the frame of modern Paganisms in the UK. Some of their basic findings are in line with my own observations and provide a comparative point for this article:

From active interactions with sites, such as votive offerings and instances of fire and graffiti damage, to unconventional (contrasted with academic) interpretations of sites involving wights and spirit beings, Neolithic shamans, or goddesses, there are diverse areas of contest over so-called “sacred” sites. (...) “Sacredness” is made evident in stories: the term exists and indexes meanings within narratives which have meaning within different user-groups—“subcultures” or better “neotribes”—with their own mythologies/metanarratives which form part of the identity construction of adherents. (Wallis & Blain, 2003: 318)

The field of modern Paganisms itself shows that crafted traditions can be formulated in various ways and involve radically different orientations towards themes such as ethnicity, nationality, and relationship to place. Paganism researcher Michael Strmiska (2005, 2018) has written about the differences between ethno-nationalistic movements he calls ‘blood and soil’ Pagans, and universalistic and eclectic ‘peace and love’ Pagans, displaying how religious affiliations align with political orientations that can differ radically even among Pagan traditions drawing from the same cultural sources. Strmiska also mentions the creativity and autonomy of a Pagan practitioner, explaining that “these different forms of Paganism may easily overlap and blend, and individual Pagans may mix and match elements from either end of the spectrum as well as intermediate points between” (Strmiska, 2018: 31).

As concrete representations of the past and place, archaeological sites are significant to Pagan practices—but are there differences between Pagan groups and do they align with the political divisions as presented by Strmiska? Religious science scholar Matouš Vencálek follows the basic division between Pagan movements “trying to reconstruct the old religions, and those creating new belief systems that are merely inspired by such religions” (Vencálek, 2018), calling them respectively *reconstructionist* and *revivalist* Pagan movements (*reconstructionist* and *eclectic* in Strmiska, 2005). According to Vencálek’s study of Czech Pagans, the reconstructionist movements are more inclined to using archaeological sites in their rituals, as the ideas of historical precedence, traditional place and ‘ancestors’ remain pronounced in their crafted tradition. However, also the revivalist Pagans enjoy rituals at archaeological sites, as it is experienced to bring added value and meaning:

(...) it seems to be more important for reconstructionist movements, while the revivalist ones seem to be putting emphasis rather on the energy of the place, its compliance with the intention of the ritual and its overall feeling. However, even the revivalist Pagans do consider it beneficiary to use the sites somehow connected with the lives and practice of their ancestors, as there is just something more to it, as one of the Pagans told me. It simply provides an added value, as such places are considered to provide a deeper connection with the spirits of the ancestors, with the land and the gods.” (Vencálek, 2018)

Rainbow Gathering locations are not sought out based on their status as known ritual locations or archaeological sites, but foremost on practical features serving a large and prolonged camping event. As one informant experienced in the process of scouting for suitable Gathering sites tells me: “You know we have to look for water, firewood, open areas for Circle. And many other things. Also, we have to know that we can stay there without problems.” But in talking about archaeological remains at Gathering sites, he also recognizes that ancient ruins of ‘natural people’ give the location a certain extra value: “I think it’s really good for the energy of the Gathering” (Interview: B.D.) Thus, the Rainbow’s relationship with archaeological sites resembles more the eclectic/ revivalist Pagan traditions, which Povedák and Hubbes (2019: 248 and references therein) call ‘Western-type’ European Neopaganism.

Researchers of Paganisms have noted the strong physical and material qualities of popular ritual customs. Ritual gestures involving the body such as being physically present in a place, laying down, sitting, kneeling, and touching, and interaction with material elements such as water, soil, stones, plants, and structures at the ritual space are central in creative Pagan rites (Rountree, 2006). My research on the Rainbow joins with these observations (Ratia, 2020), and the discussion on crafted rituality below displays this, describing various material and embodied ways of ritual interaction and practice.

Jenny Butler, in her study of contemporary Paganism in Ireland, found that Pagans experience the ancient locations as powerful, attributing the power as a kind of ‘magical residue’ from the rituals conducted in the past (Butler, 2015: 105). The same thought was expressed by Rainbow participants, together with other interpretations that attribute the special power to nature itself (Field notes). According to the latter ideas, some places impart ‘Earth energy’ in special quantities

or qualities which the ancients have been aware of, and placed their dwellings, temples, or graves there for that very reason. In the networks of alternative-holistic tradition, this idea overlaps many others, such as geomancy, ley lines, energy vortices and 'Earth's chakras', all examples of the concept of spiritual/magic energy that is often envisioned to be either locational or accumulative (Field notes).

## **Archaeological sites at Blera and Bolsena**

My fieldwork involves four Gathering events in two separate sites, both on and around ancient Etruscan habitations in the region of Lazio in Italy. I visited two Gatherings in the area of Luni sul Mignone, close to the village of Blera (2015 and 2019), and two at a site next to the Lago di Bolsena lake (2014 and 2016). The campsite at Bolsena was on a hillside, and according to narratives told among the Gatherers, a 'temple of Minerva' once stood on top of this hill. The camp area had some caves and chambers cut into the rock. In Blera, the site had many visible ancient remains, including rock-cut chambers, locations of longhouses, and a remarkable habitation complex on top of the Luni hill that has been dated to the Bronze Age. The first of the Gatherings at this site was situated directly among the rock chambers, but the next one was placed outside of the archaeological area (MiBACT, 2012).

These Gatherings in Blera and Lago di Bolsena were not generally focused on the Etruscans, and a part of the Gathering participants paid little attention to the remains, or to the whole topic. But for many others, the Etruscan remains and the knowledge of being in an ancient dwelling place, or perhaps a sacred site, were significant. Outside of the Gatherings, many Rainbows participate in Neopagan and New Age pilgrimages directed at 'sacred sites' and 'power places'. Visiting ancient places of worship from pre-Christian times has been found to be significant for contemporary Pagans and other alternative-holistic practitioners around the globe (Dubisch, 2009, 2015; Fedele, 2018; Rountree, 2006).

During my fieldwork, many Rainbow participants interacted with the landscape and the ruins in active and tangible ways, not all of which were explicitly ritualistic. Some Gatherers utilized the rock chambers as temporary dwellings, establishing camps in them, and children played in the chambers and caves. The remains evoked multiple narratives among

the Gatherers, interpreting their functions and history, and providing frames for the interaction with the physical reality. As Blain and Wallis (2008, also Wallis & Blain, 2003) remarked regarding Pagan ritual, these rituals and narratives involved archaeological knowledge of Etruscans, including academic research but also ‘alternative’ archaeological theories, historical and pseudohistorical information, and subjective significations based on experience and intuition. Some Gatherers thought that the chambers had been tombs, as Etruscans are known to have built necropolises of rock-cut tombs, and at least some of the more prominent rock chambers in the Luni sul Mignone area have been identified as tombs by archaeologists (Hellström, 1996). Others saw them rather as ancient dwellings, storages, and ritual spaces (Field notes).

According to my observations and discussions with the participants of these events, many Gatherers involved the remains and the landscape in their individual spiritual practices. Common forms of practice included meditation and prayer, small rituals involving offerings and chanting, and physical interaction such as sleeping in the chambers and caves. These practices involved people from different countries and backgrounds, with various subjective aims and purposes, and thus naturally, multiple competing frames of signification and meaning. Examples of themes and ideas mentioned in discussions were connecting with the past, ‘grounding’ and healing, spiritual / magic energies, visions and insights, prophetic dreams, and experiences related to past lives (Field notes). Next, I will present three individual descriptions of ritual expressions and the related narratives with varying thematics and point out similarities with Pagan traditions.

### ***‘Ancient Etruscan Temple’***

One group of Gatherers established a social space in a prominent rock-cut chamber complex that they regarded as an ancient ritual space and called a ‘temple’. The remarkable features of the location prompted creative interpretations and explanations, as well as ritual interaction. The place included a large chamber cut into the tuffaceous rock, with five niches cut into the inner walls, a wall engraving interpreted to depict the moon, and a lower chamber. My interviewee explained the features thus: “[T]emple inside had on left side wall 4 [columns] cut out where statues of mother, father, child and the spirit used to stand. [L]ooking

at the Moon on the back wall was one [column] for Mother Earth statue. [I]n the back of the room was a little stair going to the next floor...this was the space for herbs.” (Interview: C.L.O.) A large stone with a wide indentation cut into it stood outside of the entrance. “[R]ight in front of door of temple [...] was one big rock with a round basin cut out. Etrusks put water in it at full moon and get readings out of it.” (Ibid.) A little further out were stones set into a half-circle. The group camping in the area placed a fire pit in the middle of the half-circle of stones and used them as seats, suggesting that this was their original purpose.

Constructing collective devotional spaces is a common Rainbow tradition, and typically, every Gathering has at least one such designated place. Usually, these are sacralized spaces in nature, open for all Gatherers and for all kinds of devotional expressions and religious practice. The ‘Temple’ location in Blera was also a popular social space, where devotional and festal events took place. Examples of collective rituals in this location include Singing Circles (collective devotional singing and chanting), group meditations, ceremonial use of tea, cacao and cannabis, and various rituals focused on ‘healing’. Some activities were sombre, solemn, and dedicated to spiritual ideals, but others could better be called parties (Field notes). Festal rituality is not uncommon in the Rainbow, nor in contemporary Paganisms (Wallis & Blain, 2003: 316-318), and is one of the examples of deep contestation regarding ideas of ‘proper’ religious behaviour and ways of worship between contemporary Pagans and actors representing heritage guardians and mainstream religions (Ibid.).

The Etruscan remains invited other celebrations as well. Another interviewee told me about a birthday party held in a big rock chamber in the Lago di Bolsena Gathering site, and about a party organized at the ruins on top of the hill, which were attributed as an ‘ancient temple of Minerva’ (Interview: B.D.). As Wallis and Blain (2003) observe regarding Stonehenge and the contemporary Pagans who use the site in their practices, there is a logic of use that contrasts the established ‘preservation ethic’ of heritage guardians such as the officials managing ancient remains. The Pagan celebrations at Stonehenge often involved drunkenness and raucous celebration, until such occasions were prohibited by the English Heritage association in charge of the site, preferring quietude over ‘partying’. Wallis and Blain suggest that the



officials' idea of sacredness regarding Stonehenge is thus modelled after the “sacredness conventionally associated with the passive, humble, and serene Protestant sobriety” of mainstream religious traditions (Ibid.: 316). Many Rainbow participants certainly share this interpretation, and view the limitations set by officials as oppressive to their chosen way of religious devotion and ritual practice. Although some Gatherers expressed concern over damaging the remains, interactions such as described here were generally not considered improper. One participant said that “[L]iving and loving in there is more respectful than the people who came before us. Grave robbers and archaeologists just wanted to take stuff.” (Interview: S.S.).

Gatherer narratives related to this ‘Ancient Etruscan Temple’ mostly expressed generalizing ideas such as connecting with the past, with the place, or the ancient people who once lived there. Some of the more defined ideas talked about imagined history or the energy of the place: “People have been doing this [ritual] here for a long time” (Field notes) and “There are many powerful spots here. I’m sure the Etrusci knew this!” (Discussion: S.M.). Various ideas about the Etruscans were expressed in informal discussions: “Etruscans worshipped the Goddess”, and “They loved Mother Nature”, but also things like “Their women were free to do what they wanted”, “They were sexually free people” and “You know they were rich and powerful. They enjoyed their life.” (Field notes, Interview: C.L.O.).

### ***Ritual fire on the Luni hill***

On the level of collective rituality, allusions to the location and to Etruscans were usually general and ambiguous, echoing established underlying ideas relevant to Rainbow culture regarding ‘tribal life’ and ‘ancient wisdom’ and their perceived continuity with the Rainbow (Ratia, 2020). However, one example recounted to me stands out. A Rainbow Gathering held at Blera in 2017 had initially placed the campsite right in the middle of the archaeological area, with the Sacred Fire on top of the Luni hill, on a clearing close to the most prominent remains. According to my informant, the local officials had soon approached the Gatherers, demanding them to remove the fire pit and cease all activities within the archaeological site. In order to continue the Gathering event, the participants agreed to these demands, and relocated the Sacred Fire

(Discussions: B.M., Gianji). My informant saw this as a power struggle, where the officials represented the interests of the Italian state and the Roman Catholic Church, and wanted to suppress countercultural activities and especially, alternative religious practices. In his eyes, The Gatherers were expressing their devotion to nature and “the old gods” with the Sacred Fire, just like the ancient Etruscans had before them, and the modern powers had no right to prevent people from exercising their religion and freely gathering (Ibid.).

The story of the ritual fire and the conflict it sparked was told to me as an assertion of religious rights and voicing criticism against state control of sacred sites. The Rainbow Gatherers who lit a ritual fire on top of the Luni hill claimed to be following ancient Etruscan traditions, thus establishing ideas of continuity and succession, and of a religious right to practice in a traditional manner. In this scenario, the ancient Etruscans were portrayed as ideological allies to the Rainbow, and representing an endemic religious tradition older than Christianity.

Neopagan rituality at recognized heritage sites has brought up similar contestation. Wallis and Blain discuss the questions of access, rights and religious freedom regarding a contested ‘sacred site’ in their 2003 paper on Stonehenge, coming finally to observations approaching Sabina Magliocco’s concept of freedom of imagination: “In the new folkloric narratives of travellers and celebrants (...) and other ‘party people’ (for whom partying is a means of protest, a political act; Rietveld, 1998), such events are continuing a long tradition, an idea connecting/ legitimated by ideas about circles as prehistoric meeting places, feasting places, market places, and so on” (Wallis & Blain, 2003: 317). And, as Wallis and Blain (Ibid.: 314) point out, the views of the past are not only conceptions of what constitutes folklore and tradition, but they are mobilized in the attempts to negotiate site use and management. Regarding other prehistorical sites such as Stonehenge in the UK, heritage officials have (at times) acknowledged Pagans as a growing interest group whose requirements of access to the site should be observed along with other groups. This brings up pointed questions of immaterial heritage, religious rights, and legitimacy: who can claim their religious expressions legitimate, authentic, and ‘traditional’, and on what grounds?

### ***Sinister Etruscans in a Place of Power***

Several informal discussions in my field material painted a different picture of the ancient Etruscans. Instead of the benevolent ‘ideological allies’ who were said to worship nature or the ‘Goddess’, darker features of Etruscan culture were proposed. Some narratives were focused on war, oppression, and violence, and described the Etruscans as conquering their peaceful neighbours by military superiority, while others hinted at the use of ‘black magic’ (Field notes). These Rainbow participants mentioned ideas such as “Etruscans had slaves” and “they did human sacrifices”, as well as the already mentioned ideas of the place being a ‘place of power’, and Etruscans being attracted to the location for that reason (Field notes).

The personal rituals that one of these informants engaged in were likewise focused on the idea of locational spiritual / magic energy, not ideas of specific Etruscan beliefs: he described ‘charging’ personal ritual objects (crystals) by placing them in the waters of the nearby Vesca river and leaving them in one of the chamber caves overnight (Field notes). The same informant recounted a narrative based on alternative archaeological and historical theories that involve the Vatican City: “Etruscans were there before the Romans, they founded Rome. (...) The Vatican is built on a hill that was an Etruscan cemetery. The Etruscan Goddess of the dead is called Vatika, that where the name comes from. (...) You know about the Etruscan museum in Vatican? They collected a lot of (...) powerful things there, Vatican is full of evil stuff and it’s all much older than people think.” (Discussion: B.M.).

Narratives about ‘Goddess Vatika’ and collections of occult artefacts are examples of long-lived alternative knowledges—some of which can be called conspiracy theories—regarding history in general, but especially the Vatican City and the Catholic Church. Conspiracy mentality and related narratives have been recognized as a subset of or at least closely related to religious phenomena, and recent research has coined the term ‘conspirituality’. Michael Barkun (2006) began to discuss conspiracy beliefs in the US in the 2000’s, and Asbjørn Dyrendal (2017, 2020; Robertson & Dyrendal, 2018) has written extensively about the religious aspects of conspiracy theories in the context of Nordic countries.

These narratives have been circulating among countercultural actors and other alternative thinkers and they intersect with common themes and topics in the related subcultural networks, such as ideas of magical items and occult powers in connection with historical events, and specifically, ‘dark secrets’ regarding the Pope and the Catholic Church. Just as the stories of ‘ancient wisdom’ of the peoples of the past, these are part of the narrative traditions relevant to alternative-holistic spiritualities and Western counterculture. What is noteworthy is the fact that these narratives also paint a very black-and-white picture of the ancient Etruscans, but this time they are cast as ideological allies of the opposing side. They describe Etruscan culture as resembling what the Rainbows appoint as the negative qualities of ‘Babylon’: slavery, oppression, military prowess and war, and even a religious system involving sacrificial violence.

The narratives collected from my informants represent a form of tradition circulating among this group of alternative-holistic practitioners. I am not an expert in Etruscan culture or an archaeologist, but a folklorist, and thus I evaluate these narratives not based on their factual or historical accuracy, but as parts of the verbal tradition that prevails in the Rainbow events that I study. These narratives and the related activities are informative of contemporary religious forms and their relationship to history and heritage.

### **Polyvocal community or heritage soup?**

Prehistorical sites activate and actualize ideas related to the past, to place and landscape, and through these, to identity. The subcultural networks related to alternative-holistic religiosity and Western counterculture involve a host of ideas, ‘knowledges’ and mythological elements that practitioners are able to draw from as sources for folkloric narratives and creative rituality. But in a multivocal environment such as the Rainbow, some of the differing interpretations involve conflicting ideas. What keeps this from leading into disputes, or an experience of diluted, diffuse, and meaningless heritage soup?

Getting back to Sabina Magliocco’s concept of freedom of imagination, we can state that in the Rainbow this freedom is typically protected, and diversity of beliefs is accepted. As I have described above, some ritual expressions were interpreted by framing the ancient

Etruscans as ideological allies, and others by suggesting that they were ambivalent or even sinister characters in history. Some rituals were based on ideas of ‘energies’, others on deities. The proponents of these conflicting ideas were free to express them and engage in ritual and religious practices as they saw fit but required to provide the same freedoms to others (Field notes). As is common for Pagans as well (van Gulik, 2011: 14), Rainbow culture has a strong sense of perennialism, as in “the paths are many, but the truth is one”,<sup>6</sup> and this ideal is combined with acceptance of self-identification and chosen affinities.

In Rainbow-related materials such as Gathering invitations and websites, often the first thing is a declaration supporting subjective signification. Other primary ideas expressed in these contexts are egalitarianism and collaboration in the face of diversity. The moniker ‘family’ is used as a collective noun, and participants commonly call each other ‘sisters’ and ‘brothers’.

What is the Rainbow Family of Living Light? First of all, be prepared for a different answer from each person who responds. Rainbow is different things to different people.

(...) we all consider ourselves to be part of a huge, extended family, no matter what our reason for gathering, no matter what our spiritual or religious or political or economic or social views may be.

Each year, individuals take personal responsibility and work together with others on whatever they are inspired to do.

*Because* when we work together voluntarily, we illuminate the way out from under the burden of the governments & the banks. (Welcomehome, n.d.)

Rainbow celebrates being a diverse community, and finds cohesion in collaboration, also in the ritual and religious sphere. Overlaying the multivocal individual religious expressions is the mutual Gathering life, including daily collective rituals that operate within a shared symbolic universe that is necessarily broad and under-defined (sacralized nature, ‘natural’ life, transformation, countercultural alternatives) to accommodate subjective signification. In this manner, the diversity of the actual population is mitigated and the ideological frame for collective practices is kept inclusive.

A related characteristic of Rainbow culture is the bold dissolution of established national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries in favour of self-identification and chosen communities seen in the adoption of foreign and Indigenous cultural features (Ratia, 2020). Other researchers

have noted that contemporary Pagans—although as mentioned, some currents are formed after ethno-nationalistic ideals—tend to blend local and global features in their traditions, creating an interplay of nationalist and cosmopolitan aspects (Rountree, 2017). What has been deemed ‘fakelore’ and cultural appropriation, and problematic as it can be, can also be seen as a product of a purposeful ideological re-arrangement of cultural boundaries, where the territorialized and exclusive ideas of the past are replaced with practice-oriented elective affinities favouring a global, environmental ethic.

My field examples display features that align with those established in existing research on contemporary Pagan rituality. As with Paganisms, there is a variety of crafted rituals and related narratives referring to different and even conflicting themes and ideas, some of which speak to local and regional identities, while others address individual or global concerns. These practices, narratives, and meta-narratives participate in the identity-construction of individual practitioners, but also of the group identity of the European Rainbow Family, as the topic of heritage relates to and symbolizes the broader countercultural struggle that the Family sees itself as involved in. Pagans have similarly mobilized ritual and crafted tradition in positioning themselves in relation with the mainstream world. Also similar to Pagan rituality, the ritual practices in my fieldwork seem to be heavily based on material and corporeal things.

Léon van Gulik has suggested that the ritual and religious flexibility of contemporary Paganisms is due to them being still in a formative stage as religious traditions and going through a ‘crystallization phase’ (van Gulik, 2011: 13-14), where the “body of ritual is still open” to creativity. I would like to remark that in addition to this, the ritual creativity and religious crafting that is so common in contemporary forms of religiosity might also be due to the conscious and explicit demand for the right of subjective signification, or freedom of imagination.

‘Crafting’ of tradition begs for discussion of authenticity, and such questions have shaped the discourse regarding tradition and culture for long. ‘Crafted ritual’ joins the idea of ‘invented tradition’ that Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger brought to academic consciousness in the 1980’s, focusing not on the fact that all tradition was invented at some point, but that tradition is subject to re-interpretation, and some traditions present themselves as older than they are. When I began

my studies in the late 90's, concepts such as 'folklorism' were taught as distinct from 'authentic' folklore with negative or at least dubious undertones. Although authenticity remains a pertinent topic in studies of human culture, the assumption of more or less 'real' forms of tradition has given way to the recognition of authenticity as a cultural ideal, also among researchers. Instead of value judgements hinging on ideas of 'original' and unbroken tradition, contemporary scholarship judges the explicit and implicit attributions of tradition, next to their verifiable historicity and age. The term 'folkloresque' reflects this, signifying items or popular culture that refer or allude to folklore, and 'folklorism' has been redefined in a similar manner (see Radulović, 2017; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Foster & Tolbert, 2016).

## Conclusion

Archaeological sites, interaction with them, and the context they provide for contemporary ritual emphasize the aspects of place and the past, framing the various personal, local, and global concerns that finally motivate and shape the rituality. Through this ritual interface, ideas of past and future are mobilized in discourses regarding identity, purpose, and relationships with the world. Tradition is crafted in various manners to express and enact personal and cultural interests, ranging from playful and ironic attitudes to serious and solemn ones, from local and national concerns to global and universalistic ones, including spiritual and political aims, and addressing relationships within the community, between the community and its outside, and between humans and the transcendent.

The Rainbow case portrays a crafted ritual tradition that, like contemporary Pagan rituality, re-interprets and re-creates established knowledges, as exemplified by rituals at archaeological sites. The usual local, ethnic, and national identity-markers as well as religious traditions are also similarly supplemented with alternative sources and knowledges—both cultural and subjective. The differences between research on Pagan rituality and my examples regarding the Rainbow are finally small, with the biggest difference being the increased plurality and heterogeneity of religious expressions in the Rainbow, and the explicit and conscious polyvocality of the community. Polyvalent and creative religious input might finally be a characteristic not specifically of the

Rainbow, Paganisms or even alternative-holistic spiritualities in general, but of contemporary religiosity, and especially pronounced in 'evental' formations such as gatherings and festivals. The Rainbow example shows that the polyvocality does not need to be a threat to communality. A community (at least an event-community) needs very little in the way of shared beliefs, and functioning social, material, and practical elements in both ritual and community-building seem to suffice. The culture's recognition of the right of subjective signification means that the form for the religious tradition is open, horizontal, and polyvocal. At the same time, the ideological content described in this article (centrality of sacralized nature, 'natural' life, transformation etc.) is common and popular, even if not fully prevalent. The claims of polyvocality and freedom of signification make the religious tradition more approachable and acceptable for the Gatherers, but it might also obscure the possibility that many participants finally do share a big part of their basic beliefs.

In the light of these results, alternative-holistic spiritualities are rather decontextualizing than revitalizing actual older traditions—and in doing this, they give space to creativity. The spiritual actors strip selected features of existing traditions from their contexts and connotations while using them as building blocks of novel traditions, thus engaging in a re-contextualizing and re-traditionalizing process. In this creative process of adaptation to contemporary and subjective concerns, they re-focus attention and re-interpret meanings, creating and re-creating a new traditional form—while often attempting to still assume authenticity and other cultural values based on the status and reputation of the older source traditions. Crafted traditions can produce re-vitalizing effects of older ethno-national religions when they are directed to support such aims, like in the case of reconstructionist ethnic Paganisms, but also opposite examples exist, such as the Rainbow.

Returning to Henry Glassie stating that "tradition is the creation of future out of the past" (Glassie, 1995), we need to see that tradition is a continuous process, and people are not passive 'tradition-bearers' but conscious and creative actors who choose and modify traditional content according to their needs and concerns. Like all people, Rainbows construct their own 'folkloric' narratives regarding themselves and their relationship with the world. And, as Glassie explains, 'folk and lore', or community and tradition, create each other: "The group exists because



its members create communications that call it together and bring it to order. Communications exist because people acting together, telling tales at the hearth, or sending signals through computerized networks develop significant forms that function *at once as signs of identity and forces for cohesion.*” (Glassie, 1995: 400, emphasis mine). In an inclusive alternative-religious event-community such as the Rainbow, the crafted collective tradition needs to be loosely defined and specifically open to subjective signification to accommodate the variety of people and the need for individuality inherent in our times, while still incorporating strong ‘community-building’ elements to create social cohesion, cultural coherence, and a sense of continuity.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I use ‘event-culture’ as defined in St John & Gauthier (2015): “popular cultural movements for whom the *event* is not an occurrence held in support of an external cause, but is itself the principal concern of the organisation”.

<sup>2</sup> In Rainbow parlance, as in much of contemporary Western counterculture, *Babylon* is an emic term connoting the oppressive and materialistic sides of modern Western societies. The religious symbolism of Babylon in this meaning draws from historical and biblical sources. It refers to the period of ancient Judeans in Babylonian captivity, and two distinct biblical narratives: the Tower of Babel and the Whore of Babylon. In Jewish vernacular, Babylon became a symbol for a big city, its decadence and corruption, as well as wrongful leadership and oppression, evoking the idea of resistance. The term was used as such in Judaism, and later in Rastafarianism. Its use in contemporary counterculture comes through the Rastafarian tradition, popularized in the West by its messengers in Reggae music.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion about the definition of New Age, see Aupers & Houtman (2006), Chrystides (2007), Hanegraaff (1996), Heelas (1996), Kelly (1992), Kemp & Lewis (2007), Pike (2004), Sutcliffe (2003), Wood (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Four field periods involved Gatherings at archaeological sites, but the research is further informed by an extensive ethnographical study of Rainbow Gatherings in Europe, consisting of five years of fieldwork in 14 Rainbow events of different sizes (from a handful of participants to a few thousand) in Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria. The research includes participant observation, informal discussions and 33 semi-structured interviews.

<sup>5</sup> About sacred spaces and ritual see: Post, Molendijk & Kroesen (2011), *Sacred places in modern western culture*, and Post & Molendijk (2010), *Holy ground: Re-inventing ritual space in modern western culture*.

<sup>6</sup> *Perennial philosophy* is a philosophical and spiritual perspective that views all religious traditions as sharing a single, metaphysical truth or source.

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*“Conectados con el pasado”:**ritualidad creativa en los sitios arqueológicos etruscos en el marco de los encuentros europeos del Arco Iris*

**Resumen:** Los rituales contemporáneos en los yacimientos arqueológicos muestran interpretaciones contrapuestas del pasado, el futuro y las reivindicaciones religiosas, identitarias y políticas relacionadas, tal y como se encuentra en la investigación sobre los paganismos contemporáneos. Este artículo examina dicha ritualidad y la construcción de la tradición entre la Familia Arco Iris. El artículo compara el caso del Arco Iris con la investigación sobre los Paganismos, después de describir qué tipo de expresiones rituales relacionadas con los sitios arqueológicos se encuentran en un Encuentro Arco Iris y cómo las expresiones se relacionan entre sí en el marco de la cultura colectiva. El artículo proporciona un ejemplo de rituales elaborados y narrativas folclóricas en una comunidad “evento-cultural” que reconoce el derecho a la significación subjetiva. Explica cómo las narrativas y las prácticas, aunque no sean completamente convergentes, pueden relacionarse entre sí en el marco colectivo sin ser una amenaza para la cohesión social o la coherencia cultural. En el caso del Arco Iris, la demanda de creencias compartidas se sustituye por la participación en las prácticas compartidas, y una amplia división ideológica que da cabida a varias tradiciones religiosas holísticas alternativas.

**Palabras clave:** Creatividad ritual; Tradición; Reuniones Arco Iris; Neopaganismo; Yacimientos arqueológicos

*“Conectados com o passado”:**ritualidade criativa em sítios arqueológicos etruscos no âmbito dos encontros europeus do Arco-Íris*

**Resumo:** Os rituais contemporâneos em sítios arqueológicos exibem interpretações concorrentes do passado, futuro e de reivindicações religiosas, identitárias e políticas relacionadas – como encontrado em pesquisas sobre paganismos contemporâneos. Este artigo examina essa ritualidade e construção de tradição entre os participantes da Família Arco-Íris. Após descrever as expressões rituais relacionadas a sítios arqueológicos que são encontradas em um encontro Arco-Íris e como essas expressões se relacionam entre si no quadro da cultura coletiva, o artigo compara o caso Arco-Íris a pesquisas sobre o paganismo. O artigo fornece um exemplo de rituais e narrativas folclóricas elaborados em uma comunidade “evento-cultural” que reconhece o direito à significação subjetiva. Explica-se como, embora não completamente convergentes, narrativas e práticas ainda podem se relacionar no quadro coletivo sem ser uma ameaça à coesão social ou coerência cultural. No caso Arco-Íris,



a demanda por crenças compartilhadas é substituída pela participação em práticas compartilhadas e por uma ampla divisão ideológica que acomoda várias tradições religiosas holísticas alternativas.

**Palavras-chave:** Criatividade ritual; Tradição; Encontros Arco-Íris; Neopaganismo; Sítios arqueológicos