



Transcript Episode 10: The Matronae, or what did the Romans ever do for us?

[start tune]

00:11 Jens

Welcome to the Wyrd Thing Podcast, episode 10, which happens to be the start of our second season as well. My name is Jens, my co-host today is Suzanne, and we have a guest which is the lovely, amazing Ulrike. And we will speak about the topic of the Matronae. But before we start with that, Ulrike, could you please tell us a little bit about yourself?

0:36 Ulrike

Yeah, hello Jens, and Suzanne. Thank you for introducing and inviting me to the podcast. I am – always have to count in my head how old I am. I have been born in the year of 1967, that means I am going to be 55 years old this December. And I live in South-Western Germany with my family. I am identifying as a western continental heathen, and polytheist, which means that I am not as much drawn to the Nordic pantheon in want of a better word and tradition as many heathens which I know.

I have been raised as a Catholic until I was a teenager. Then I started questioning and, you know, it was the 80ies, and everyone and their brother were Wiccan or of the rather bad Germanic heathenkind and yeah, I looked around and all I saw was Dianic witches or Wiccans or Nazis. So I left the subject of religion or tradition or paganism well alone because that wasn't at all my cup of tea, until I found the Eldaring on the internet at the beginning of the new millennium. And yeah, then I sort of came out of the closet with my heathenry and started to be a connected heathen person. I said that I met a lot of interesting people in the Eldaring and this is continuing. I meet amazing people. And I made really good friends and people I like a lot. So that's my heathen biography.

But I am also a person who likes to learn and who likes to read. So I am reading and learning quite a lot about cultural history and going in a kind of scholarly perspective at heathen issues and heathen discussion points. That's also something that I like very much, that I can combine ritual and UPG with scholarly and factual aspects of history, religious history. Which is a bit of what we will do today, I guess.

03:22 Jens

Oh, absolutely. Our plan is to benefit a little bit from your private research you've done in the last years and to learn from you and to speak with you about the topic of the Matronae. So, to get a start into that, could you please give us an overview and maybe the most fascinating details you have at hand about the topic of the Matronae?

03:46 Ulrike

Yes. I think first of all it needs saying that I have been researching the Ubian Matronae. Because the Matronae as a cult has sources which are in different regions of Europe. First of all, the



Matronae, the Ubian Matronae are a cult which has been practised along the Western Rhine shore, North-Western Rhine shore and down what we call The Netherlands today and it's a cult which has been practised by Germanic people, Celtic speaking people and Roman people who settled there. So it's a kind of multi-cultural cult which has been put together from different cultural sources.

The Ubian Matrone, the Ubians were a Germanic, probably mostly Germanic tribe which settled at the Western shore of the Rhineland. Of course you know Cologne, Köln, is Roman, Ubian settlement. The name has been given by the Romans but Ubians founded the city. They moved from the other side of the Rhine to this place because the Romans wanted them to. To fill in the space which has been left by the Eburonic people. That was a Celtic tribe which was killed by Caesar. And the land was empty and Caesar wanted the region to be settled. So he said to the Ubians: Come here, settle with us, and you will be under the protection of the Roman empire. And the Ubians did that because they were kind of bullied by other Germanic tribes at the other side of the Rhine. They were very Roman-friendly and so they moved and settled there and founded the city. Of course, it was the Roman empire so they were a Roman colony in a way but they had their own culture.

The Ubian Matronae are called Ubians because they're wearing Ubian costume, for example. And we call this cult the cult of the Matronae because the deities who are venerated are depicted as women. Most often in a triad, three women, sitting, And we know of this cult because archaeologists have found hundreds of votive stones dedicated to these goddesses. Mostly just texts on the votive stones, inscriptions, but sometimes they are also depicted in relief form. We have no written documents of this cult, just the votive stones. But we have learnt a lot from them and all we can say or all we know about the Matronae is from these votive stones. These are the only sources for the cult.

06:59 Jens

You said we've no written sources. But as I understood usually these votive stones had inscriptions on them.

07:06 Ulrike

Yes, of course.

07:07 Jens

So we have no sagas, no old parchments but we have hundreds of stones with inscriptions and statuettes of the Matronae.

07:19 Ulrike

Yes. So of course, an inscription is a text, too. So is this a textual tradition but it not as if we have books. There is no Roman scholar who says, oh, the Ubian, they are worshipping Matronae. This is not the case. We have just these stones but we have a lot of them. Archaeologists are finding new ones, not by the week, unfortunately, but a lot of new stone are being found and of course new research is being done so it's a field where you can learn a lot all of the time and new things come up very often.



So what I wanted to say is I am concentrating on the Ubian Matronae. There are Matronae cults in the south of France, which is the Narbonne region, which is a bit different as I might explain later. It's purely Celtic, which means inscriptions to these Matronae are concentrating on Celtic aspects of the cult. And there is another Matronae cult in Northern Italy, the Po region, also different. I'm not quite sure if I remember correctly but in the Po region there are more single Matronae depicted. It's not always a trio. And of course it's only a Latin, a Roman culture.

But the Ubian Matronae in West of the Rhine, in the Nordeifel, Northern Eifel, this is a conglomerate of Roman culture, Germanic and Celtic speaking people. So I think this is a very interesting example of romanization, in a very, I cannot use the word indigenous but it is a cult practised by people who live there together. Who have different ethnicities but nevertheless found a way to worship deities together. And I think that's a very interesting phenomenon. Also, I'm from there [chuckles]. So I think... I always feel at home when I'm thinking or reading about the Matronae. So it's a bit of home for me.

09:48 Jens

How does the typical votive stone look like?

09:51 Ulrike

The typical votive stone is not complete. So most of the time we just have, what do you say, „Bruchstücke“, yeah, fragments, of course. We just have fragments. But I'd say a typical votive stone is some kind of stone with an inscription and the inscription says to whom it has been made and by whom. And when we're lucky, we're getting some hints when this happened. So like „Under the consulate of Marcus Aurelius huh-huh-huh“, then we have a rough time window to know: OK, this was made when Marcus Aurelius was consul. So we know the names of the deities and the names of the people who give the votive stone as an offering and if we're very lucky, we also get an image of the deities who is being venerated.

And we have some very, very beautiful stones who are now standing in a museum in Bonn, also in Cologne there are some votive stones, with very detailed and specific images of the Matronae. We can recognise their costume, we can recognise that maybe they have height or different demeanour. We know they're sitting which is always a hint of a deity. When someone is sitting in a picture, it's a sign of their divinity or royalty. A person who is standing in a picture is rarely a very high or noble person.

We also see details about how people practised the cult. It's not: And then person one does this and then person one does that. But we see people offering incense, we see people bringing food, we see people in a procession. These are hints about to what extent the cult was done in groups or what they did. So these are all signs how the cult was done, how it was practised.

And we have also been very lucky to find cult sites where a lot of stones have been put up in a larger place. There were real cult sites where people went to and made offerings or celebrated. Where we know there were houses for party things and there were cult houses, temples. And from the outline of the cult site we can make rough guesses about how people practised. So it's not very specific and not very detailed what we know but we do know a few things and we can make educated guesses at how the cult was done and how people venerated.



12:51 Jens

So we have these stones with these typically three female figures on them. I understood they are always female.

12:58 Ulrike

They're always female. And on the big stones, they are always three. There are also single Matronae, which you could buy from craftsmen and could you put them up at home. This is very specific for the Ubian Matronae, there were always three. On my home altar, I have a small replica of Matronae who have been worshipped at home. You could buy those little statues and put them on your small home altar. And people did that, because we had a lot of them. Very small. But the big ones, they of course stood on more or less public places at the temple. And they always show three Matronae.

And these Matronae most of the time wear Ubian costume which can be recognised because they wear a special headdress. A very round headdress, it's like a balloon around the head. And this is what Ubian women or married women wore at special occasions. I am not sure if they wore it every day but it was part of their traditional costume. And these Matronae, a lot of the time the Matrona in the midst doesn't wear a headdress. So left and right, the Matrona wears a headdress and that one in the middle doesn't wear a headdress. Which makes scholars say: Okay, the Matrona in the middle seems to be a younger woman than the ones to the left and the right. Because usually married women wore this headdress and not the unmarried, younger ones.

14:41 Jens

So we have the young ones in the centre and the two married ones to the side? OK.

14:47 Ulrike

Yeah. They also wear of course tunics, and little, very often little lunula necklaces. A lunula is a small moon necklace. I think it's a Gallo-Roman cultural thing. So it's not quite Germanic, such a lunula. But you can see this German-Celtic-Roman mix. Roman inscription, Roman way of venerating, because putting up votive stones is not a Germanic custom. It's a very Roman custom to worship deities that way or to make good on a promise you made to that deity. So Latin inscription, Roman way of offering a present to the deity, Germanic costume, Celtic or Germanic names have been given. These were the names of the people who have made the votive stones or had them made. This mixture is recognisable at all times.

15:49 Jens

Do we know anything about the topics the Matronae were connected to by these inscriptions?

15:53 Ulrike

Yeah. We know this because they all have bynames. This is also very specific of the Ubian Matronae. They have bynames. So you have for example the Matronae Aufaniae. Or you have, let me have a look – every Matronae trio has a different byname. And we have dozens, if not hundreds, of different bynames which says us something about what people expected of the Matronae. And this was very diverse. Matronae are being expected to protect, to denote the place where people come from or where they are living. We don't know that in every case.



Sometimes we cannot put the finger on what the byname is all about because sometimes we can't even say: Is it a Germanic byname or is it a Celtic byname? You know, linguists are having parties with all those bynames, because it's such an obscure and sometimes difficult field.

But we know that all the bynames people were able to decipher show that the Matronae are very well-meaning and loved deities. I think there are one or two bynames which are a bit warlike. You know, something like or which may show that the people who worshipped them were more on the warrior side of things. But most of the time, they give protection. They give wealth. They give health. And they are the places in which they are venerated. They have river names or forest names. Or they are just called „the Matronae of the people of the East“ or „who are living East“. So they embody identification for the people who are venerating them. So it's very diverse.

We have a few Matronae who are called upon for fertility. But not human reproduction fertility, but fertility of the place. Because the Ubian Matronae, they have no babies on their lap or something like that, which is the case with the Celtic Matronae cult in Narbonne. There we see babies or diapers or something like that. We don't have that in the Ubian region. It's mostly fertility of nature. It's wealth, overall wealth and thriving. This is what people called on them. They wanted to thrive, they wanted to be protected. They look at them as a sort of identification markers for living in a place.

I think neither the Germanic people nor the Celtic people nor the Roman soldiers who came together to venerate the Matronae, they thought in terms of multiculturalism or something like that. They just wanted to live together and live well together. And for a few decades, this was really possible. At the time, in which the cult was manifested. Which, by the way, was from around 150 to 300 after the turn of the era.

19:17 Jens

That's quite some decades. That's probably some centuries we're talking about here.

19:22 Ulrike

Yah, but it's a very specific era. Because, for the region we're talking about, they were part of the Roman empire, which was of course not a thing to rejoice about. But it brought people living there, yah, a bit of peace because they didn't have constantly to go on war with the other tribes. And they had possibilities to earn money, to earn their livelihoods. Of course most of them were farmers. But around the big cities there were also a lot of Roman veterans who have been given land to colonise and to settle. And they married Ubian women. So we have a lot of mixed families, Germanic / Roman.

There were also quite a few Celtic speaking people who managed to evade the killings done by Caesar, who has been, of course, you know, the Romans weren't fluffy bunnies with the land, they wanted an Empire. And sometimes I guess the people just thought: OK, we can go to war with the Romans. And they did that, but a lot of time they just had no chance. We know that the Romans couldn't invade the whole of what was called the Germania, and a lot of what is no German hasn't been colonised by Romans, which is of course a good thing.

But on the other hand the Ubians did well. They still had a good part of their own culture, they still had their deities. It was a kind of peaceful time. Until the Romans had their problems, the Empire



broke down and Germanic tribes, such as the Franks, came over the Rhine once more. Which was the end of the 3rd century after the turn of the era. And, yah, war started again and we all know what happened, migration times. That was when the money was scarce and people couldn't afford to have votive stones made again. So the votive stones are documents of the wealth of the people. If you could afford to have a votive stone made, then you had money and you were able to spend that money for your religious purposes. That is not a bad thing.

21:55 Jens

So could we be a bit more precise about the region, please?

22:00 Ulrike

Yeah. The region is a triangle between I'd say Aachen in the North, so Northern Eifel, and to the South, Bonn, and to the West, a bit more, I'd say, 80 to 120 km to the West. So it's Western Germanic, West of the Rhine. And I don't know how international people are who are listening to this. It's North of the Rhine, North of Germany, South of the Netherlands, a bit of Belgium. This triangle between the borders of these three modern countries with the Rhine as a border to the East.

22:47 Jens

So no Matronae East of the Rhine, you say.

22:50 Ulrike

Ah, I don't think so. I don't think so because the Rhine was the border of the empire.

22:59 Jens

Yeah, I mean I'm sitting here about 10 kilometres East of Rhine, so it feels a bit I'm just left out by that.

23:06 Ulrike

Yeah, wrong side of the Rhine. „Scheel Sick“ [laughs].

23:12 Jens

I don't think of this as the wrong side of the Rhine. We have a lot of Roman artefacts here. So, we have the „Niederrheinischer Limes“, although I think that's more fortresses and stuff like that.

23:27 Ulrike

Of course, borders have never been that sharply drawn. Of course there was exchange and people traded and talked to each other and maybe visited each other, or maybe you still have family over there or something like that. So it's never a sharply drawn line. I think. So you have to expect cultural exchange.

The question is, I think, the veneration of maternal deities. A big question which is also discussed by heathens, is: A Matrona, this is a Latin term or it is seen as a Latin term, because is also a Celtic term. The Celtic word is I think pronounced a bit differently. But most of the time, people say: Matrona, what's a Matrona? It's an elderly, not necessarily elderly, but noble woman. Noble



married woman. The word root is of course "mater", which means mother. So Matrona can mean mother, but it's an honorary term. It doesn't mean biological mother. It means venerated lady.

So if you're a Matrona, or you were a Matrona – the modern term „Matrone“ in German is a very, you know, if you're a Matrone in German, you're a not very attractive, old woman. But Romans used this term in a context of nobility. When you're a Matrona, you're a venerated lady, and this is how it is interpreted by scholars. The Matronae are venerated ladies, deities. They are not necessarily mothers in a reproductive way. They are protectresses. And I don't know how I was getting to that. So the term Matronae, Matrona, it's Latin but it can also be used in a Celtic linguistic context and also with that meaning. Not necessarily reproductive and biological, but in a context of veneration and admiration.

26:02 Jens

And we have many of them. We have these many stones and I understood they are all different ones.

26:08 Ulrike

Yeah. The bynames are all different. The manner of making up the stones is always the same. It's Latin fashion or Roman fashion. You have the stone and you have the inscription which has been chiselled by a crafts person. And the inscription always follows the same way, it's: To the Matronae (for example) Aufaniae, Someone dedicates this stone with thanks and gratefulness, and usually the end of the inscription is a certain formula which expresses that the giver of the stone does this because either he owes this to the Matronae or he had the vision of needing to do this. So it's always done in a Roman fashion after a certain formula. Yes, it's always the same but the bynames are different.

27:04 Jens

So what we have is hundreds of local goddesses in this area [Ulrike: Yes] which has been worshipped in this period [Ulrike: Yes] of which we don't have any sagas or written accounts by Roman scholars. But we have all these stones with these inscriptions which if I compare it to other things it's quite a lot to me to be honest. So, from Nehalennia, we have three statuettes, or may it's a bit more now archaeologists dug out somewhere, and that's also it. So we have all these names, all this cult in this area, which happens to be the place you're born and you grow up.

27:46 Ulrike

Yeah, but that's just aside. I think in our context the interesting things which we can learn about the Matronae, this does not depend whether you have been born at the place where they have been worshipped 2000 years ago. But I think, what we can learn from this cult, or what we can take over into a modern practice, is something different. And the fact that we have, for want of a better expression, lesser deities, a lot of small deities which have been venerated in a lot of small places shows that there have been many levels of worship.

Small communities had their own small deities. Not that these deities were small, but they just had power over a certain region. And the scholar Ton Derks, which is from the Netherlands and has done a lot of Matronae research, and he says that we can see that the levels of worshipping in Germanic and Celtic tribes, they started at a small level, at community level. So they started out in



clan or kinship organised groups. And then they had deities which were worshipped by larger communities, maybe on a tribe level or tribal level. And then they had deities which were worshipped when more tribes came together. So we have different levels of deities which were worshipped by bigger or smaller communities.

And it's not only the Matronae which were mentioned or which have votive stones. We know a lot of different names for deities, mostly female deities, in the Western Germanic region which haven't been documented in a written text at all. Now we know of them just by votive stones. And they always have power over very small groups or small region. Like the deity Rura for example, who is a goddess who rules over the region where the river Rur is flowing. So what we can learn is that you, to reconnect with old deities, you don't always have to invoke the big names. You can now look around where you live and have a look at who has been venerated here. Was it a deity who embodies the mountain or a river or a more abstract concept like protection from war, from hunger, or whatever.

31:03 Jens

So the Matronae are the everyday goddesses for the everyday issues like health and wealth and things like that. And not the big names for war and politics.

31:12 Ulrike

Right. So this is what is such a lovely perspective on this cult. Is that you live together in a small community, like maybe a very small settlement or village, something like that. And maybe the community started out as some kind of kinship-organized community. But then there came this Roman soldier who married your cousin. And then there was this person or this family who lived here for ages and they have Celtic names and then have the Ubians who came there when Caesar made them move and these communities grew together and worshipped together. You can see this in the way the votive stones are designed and created.

And you can also see this or scholars guess that it is so because the cult sites have temples which are, you know, they are a far cry from the big Roman temples but they have been smaller examples of the way Romans organise their cult. But it's been done by Germanic people and Celtic speaking people. How do we know that? Because we know the names of the people who give the offerings. And we can most of the time say, this is not a Germanic name so it's Celtic, or vice versa. Or there are Roman soldiers putting up stones. And of course Roman names, they have three names, citizens, Roman citizens, they do have three names. So we can always know when a person is a Roman citizen.

I think that is the most fascinating thing we can learn from the Matronae cult. Is, look around at the place you live. It doesn't matter if you are born there or not. Or if your parents came from some place entirely else. You can connect with the deities of the land by just, you know, trying to find the deity which has been venerated there. There is no gate-keeping or no excluding someone because he is not from there or his ancestors came from some place else.

33:38 Jens

Would you like to tell us a bit about your personal experiences with the Matronae and the cult of the Matronae?



33:45 Ulrike

Yeah, I can do that. Actually it is very simple. I have started with setting up an altar for the Matronae a few years ago, maybe 15 years ago. And I, for a very long time, I used to make daily offerings. And, it is always hard to speak about personal experiences, but when you make offerings and tending to an altar, with time you go into dialogue with the deity your venerating or your offering to. I got a lot of feedback which gave me a lot of strength to go through my personal everyday and also hard times. With time I started to, I don't know how to say it, but the Matronae became a mixture of home and a source of personal strength to me.

I have to say, I just said it doesn't matter where you come from, but as I said before my ancestry in the last 500 years is from the place they were worshipped. So this is not to say I am gatekeeping here or something like that. But for me the Matronae, they stand for my home. And I have no idea and no one of course can go back that far back genealogically, but they embody a part of my ancestry. That's really just a personal aspect which is not mandatory. It doesn't have to be ancestry. You don't have to think: OK, my ancestors they worshipped the Matronae, so I can or can't do this. But for me, I love them because they were worshipped in the place where I feel at home. This is maybe a better way to put it: They were worshipped in the place where I feel at home and where my home is.

I developed a very personal connection to them and I also think I got a lot strength and a lot of good things and so I made this vow to put my research and what I know about them into an article. Which I did. So this my kind of personal votive stone and inscription. And from this article and this research I held a lecture at the IASC in Gerolstein. And as it happens, we were able to visit a cult site with the whole, or most of the IASC party, of which you were a part, Jens, I remember. [Jens: Yes.] For me, that was a really very, very wonderful day. And to have an offering with this group, in this context, at the Matronae cult site, that was really a highlight.

37:04 Jens

So for those who don't know: IASC is the International Asatru Summer Camp. This one was in 2018. So it's been people, mainly from several part of Europe, a few people from Overseas. So it was quite an international crowd we had there.

37:22 Ulrike

Yes. I think we were 120 people? Or under 100? Around 100 people at the IASC, but we weren't that much when we went to the Matronae cult site. I think we had two buses full of people. My husband and I we planned the excursion. Buses were hired and people were driven to the cult site. And it was very hot day, it was a very hot week. It was summer 2018, it was very hot. Nearly as hot as this year. So we hiked a bit until we came to the cult site.

We visited two cult sites. One of them is on a sort of a small hill and one of them is in the woods. And then we held a blot, I think at the second cult site. And had a picnic there, and it was a very wonderful day. The lecture I held was on the day before so people had some factual information about the cult site, about the cult as such. But the excursion to the cult site that was purely, it was pragmatic cult. [Laughs] We made a procession like the people depicted on the votive stones. We offered food, we offered incense, we invoked the Matronae. And I think there were also personal offerings made. Yeah, it was very nice.



38:55 Suzanne

It sounds like a beautiful way of honouring your connection and the research that you have done as well and to be able to share that with so many people.

39:04 Ulrike

Yes. Yes, I felt so honoured to be able to do this, you know. That people honoured me with their trust. Also, I felt that was such a powerful moment. For many people, it was, you know, it is always wonderful and awesome to be able to offer at a very old cult site. And not many of can do that all the time. You know, not all of us have an authentic cult sites in front of their home. And so being able to offer at a cult site which has witnessed so many offerings, that was quite a powerful experience. I mean, I have been to these cult sites before, obviously. With my family, and in private. But is always different if you are worshipping in a group.

40:00 Suzanne

From what you were saying earlier, it sounds like for the Matronae, some worship was in private in homes, and other worship was very public and very community-based. So to take your community to that site, is – yeah.

40:16 Ulrike

Yes, exactly. I still think a lot about this day and, yeah, it was really a highlight for me to do that. Also, I think I'm relieved that I could go through with my vow to worship the Matronae with my work and my words. And, yeah, so for me that was quite a thing to be able to do that.

But I know that people are finding Matronae or are worshipping Matronae in their own places of living. For example I have friend who is living in the United States. They have Matronae veneration at the place where they live, and they have given their Matronae a name according to the place where they live. And I think that's beautiful because this is just the idea. You know.

Look around and try to find or reconnect with the deities who are embodying the land or embodying the things that you need to connect with. And you can do this whether you have been born at the place or not. You just need to develop a sense for the deities or spirits or the numina which are current in that place or in that region. You know, animism is the new hot shit in heathenry [laughs], I think, at the moment, but this is just what has been done. Connecting with the land by looking at the land. This is just what people did with the Matronae and I think this is what modern people very much need as well. Regardless of ethnicity or cultural barriers or whatever.

42:01 Jens

So what can we take from the cult of the Matronae to modern heathenry? I understand that doesn't have to be always the big names. So for everyday life there are local deities around us we can worship. Who are maybe much more suitable for the everyday things of life. The everyday things being important things like health and having enough food and things like that.

42:31 Ulrike

Yeah, which, of course, if you look at it that way, this is not an everyday thing. You know, having enough food is a very existential, it's the most existential thing there is. Having enough food to survive. So, yeah, everyday life, but also personal things which are important to you. I guess. And



we know about the different levels of worship which have been made by the tribes or in tribal context.

You know, our community, Jens' and my community, the Eldaring, we have different hearths, „Herde“, and each of these hearths have different names, and some kind of different context. And this is just it. Each community identifies a bit differently, and you can try to express that in your cult or in the way you do it. This hearth does their blot this way, and those, they do it another way. It's all different, and it's very diverse, but there is an underlying mainstream maybe which they have in common. But the different Matronae names, they show that the identity, that groups might identify differently. But it's not all the same, but it's not at all that different, either. If I am making sense here. [Laughs]

44:05 Jens

Yes, so what I have learned today actually, well, or have been reminded today, is that if we look at the most common sources, we usually see the tip of the hierarchy of the gods and goddesses, and that's also just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much foundation to that and I think the Matronae can ground us a bit to that to remember it's not only the very big names. It's the small folks, it's the local deities, it's the landwights, however you call them. There is a lot of that and they are so important.

44:38 Ulrike

Yes. Personally, I think I wouldn't use the word hierarchy. Because hierarchy implies a power structure. And I think that's not the case here. But I would talk about different levels of worship according to the size of the community. But of course you're right. It's the tip of the iceberg. There are many, or not so many, but there are interesting theories how we came from so many small local deities to a deity like Frija, the continental great goddess. And how this happened that we just have this name which sort of stands for all those many, many local female deities.

And the scholar Erika Timm, she says maybe when groups, which were kinship organised, when they got bigger and tribes merged with the time, they like sort of found a name for all their different goddesses and said: OK, this is the name your goddess has and this is the name our goddess has. We can't use both names so we find a new one. And one big goddess emerged from all the mergings which have taken place. And that's of course an interesting theory [sighs] but we can't know that. In the end, it's really just guesswork.

And I think, if we want to have a living practice, a living modern practice we need to find a way to worship in a community and still have our personal ways of worship. We can do this by, you know, focussing on the big names, like you say. But smaller groups and personal practice is, I think, we can't forget and can't omit the local deities and the so-called smaller deities. Of course, the landwights too. It is a thin line, when is a numen a landwight or a spirit, and when do we call it a deity. This is all personal experience, in the end.

47:02 Jens

And the other important aspect for me I take from this Matronae topic is really the diversity in it. So as you said several times, it's been Celtic/Germanic/Roman, they all mixed, they joined in this cult. Kept their culture, joined of course a bit, had cultural exchange but joined in this one cult and had a quite peaceful living in that era together. So that is very astonishing and great.



47:32 Ulrike

Yeah, I think so, too. I mean, of course, when I say peaceful...

47:38 Jens

It's a relative peace for this era.

47:41 Ulrike

And of course living in a country which is been settled by an imperialist power, it's not all been cream cakes and strawberries. And of course, there has been uproar and upheaval and you know, people struggled all the time. But the fact that the Romans were very liberal when it came to religious and cultural expression. As long as you took part in the state worship, of course. As long as you also turned up at for the Roman emperor cult or whatever they did at that place, then you could whatever you liked with your own personal religious tradition.

And the fact that there have been high-ranking Roman soldiers who have been putting up very, very beautiful and very expensive stones, which have been found in Bonn, shows that this was probably an expression of, you know, goodwill and loyalty to the people. Like some CEO says: "Oh, I am just one of you, and I am doing just the same thing as you, so look, here is my beautiful, very expensive Matronae stone. And I do this because I am very fond of you." And you can see a bit of goodwill and you can see the wish to thrive together, maybe regardless of the ethnicity.

49:11 Jens

So we have the brilliant example of diversity in the worshipping these very local goddesses. Which is extremely beautiful, when I think about it.

49:20 Ulrike

Yeah, I think, of course, this is a very general judgement of the phenomenon. But yeah, I think that's right. This is an example for the fact that romanization was not always a top-down experience. But that culture and religious expression sort of organically can evolve into something very beautiful, very local, but also a very open thing.

And this is the thing about roots. If you have them, and, I don't know how to say it, you don't need to be gatekeeping when you're rooted in your experience and in your community. I don't have to be envious or I don't have to exclude people because they are from some place else and want to worship deities which have been worshipped at the place where I come from. I'm not losing anything if I share that cult or if have my community growing. As long as people want to thrive and want to work together in a community, I think it's all the same. It doesn't matter where you come from.

50:42 Suzanne

So you're using the Matronae there and welcome people in, saying, hey, we can share this connection together.

50:53 Ulrike

Yeah, yeah. This was a bit of what I tried to do at the IASC. And the wonderful thing was that whether people came from West of the Rhine or from Germany or from Europe, yeah, they all



instantly, that was my impression at least, they all instantly got that. Like, this is something we can do together. It doesn't matter which language we speak or where we come from, but we want to do good things together and we want to live well together. And the Matronae, they can help us with that. [Laughs] It's a bit hard to speak about all of this because it's such a personal thing to do.

51:45 Jens

You're doing wonderful, Ulrike. [Ulrike: Thank you.] Suzanne, is there anything you would like to add or give us some feedback about that?

51:51 Suzanne

I must admit I've caught myself just listening to the things you've been talking about and have been absolutely fascinated and just wanting to understand this and wanting to know more. Which is maybe why I have not asked so many questions because I just wanted to listen to what you've been saying. To hear you describe such a profound connection is a really lovely thing to share with, not just with us but with the people who are listening to our podcast as well.

52:20 Ulrike

Yeah. As I said, it's not so easy to speak to a person, or to persons, you can't see about such a thing. But it's still very important to me. I wrote an article about the Matronae and it has been published in German on the Eldaring website. So if you can read German, you can find it there. This article contains all the research I have done for the IASC excursion and lecture. And it has a bibliography as well.

If you can't read German and still want to read a bit about Matronae there is some profound detailed research done by Ton Derks who has also published in English, I guess. But there is a wonderful book by Philip A. Shaw, who's a British scholar, I think a linguist he is, and he wrote a book called „Pagan Goddesses in the early Germanic world“ where he discusses Eostre, Reda and also the cult of Matrons. It's not that much but what he writes is very coherent and very profound. So it's a good starting place for doing some research of your own.

And, hm, I have always wanted to translate my Matronae article. But I just never found the time to do it, but it would be a nice project to look over it after those five years and maybe tackle that translation with a native speaker. But, yeah, as I am also doing a lot of stuff for university, personal or private research always take a back seat at the moment.

54:14 Jens

Next to family. We don't mention that.

54:16 Ulrike

Yes. [Laughs] Of course. Family also is very important for me. And I have a lot of them.

54:25 Jens

OK, now that you've set the homework, Ulrike, I think we're finally reaching an end here. Is there anything one of you would like to add to this topic or to this episode?



54:39 Suzanne

For me it's just to say thank you so much for sharing all of your research, your passion, your experiences with us. It's been really lovely to listening to your talk, about this subject and to learn so much about it in such a short time.

54:55 Ulrike

You're welcome. It's nice to have been invited and to be able to talk about it because yeah, it's such an important topic for me. So thank you for listening.

56:19 Jens

Yes, I think that's our final words here. Thank you all for listening to The Weird Thing Podcast. Thank you, Ulrike, for filling us in on this topic and sharing this and discussing with us and I hope to hear you next time again. Good bye!

56:35 Ulrike

Good Bye!

[end tune]

Jens: I want to kick out Craig.

Suzanne: Sorry, Craig.

Ulrike: Goodbye, Craig. [Chuckles]

Suzanne: Goodbye, Craig! [Laughs]