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German 2310

Lesson #1

The history of Germans starts from its origins. According to Reinhardt, there are no documents or information that precisely describes and details the Germans lives and activities from their origins (3). However; the old Germanic warrior Ethos’ values and beliefs, along with old Germanic tribes’ culture, can be described from mostly Roman sources.

It is well-known German lands were well broad and widespread. Moreover, they had a large geographical complexity along with a large diversity within the population throughout Europe. From Cornelius Tacitus stories, it was found out that the classic red and blonde hair was common in the Northern Germans which made them significantly unique from the rest of the population. Within tribes this was considered a trait that made them look fearful and powerful against their enemies in battlefields because the red hair looked like fire flames. Subsequently, men without this hair look, as a way to preserve the traits, used artificial dyes to physically look similar to their German peers.

When it comes to power, German tribes had different leaders such as the elected king or Duke, Chiefs, and a popular assembly. The Duke was chosen by the popular assembly based on his loyalty on the traits and German culture. The king had unlimited power during war times. After peace was restored, the Duke was forced to finish his term (Reinhardt, 13). The popular assembly had the duty of establishing public order and peace, as well as punishments. The Chiefs were considered a bond between their followers on mutual service and trust (Reinhardt, 13-14).

The population of tribes had different roles in the community. Men were either warriors or did haunting for the tribe. The Germans were passionate, loyal, and heroic, which were the values among they were known the most. One of the warriors’ iconic weapon was a wooden shield with the feature of leather/iron bands to fortify it (Reinhardt, 7). These shields were a way to distinguish between tribes depending on the color of the shield. Also, the weapon was a symbol of freedom and manhood. Whenever they lost a bottle, for them it signified an act of cowardice, betraying their loyalty to their tribe. Loyalty was essential for the warriors in battles but also at home. According to Reinhardt, marriage was the most important civil contract for men, so they were very loyal to their families. Another role in the German tribes was the women, which they were housewives and took care of the home and family. There were also slaves that supported the work at the fields.

The German tribes were very faithful to their different Gods, which they considered they had a personal relationship and a mutual sign of respect was essential. Thor was one of the Gods. He was the God of the war, the protector of pasturage, and the control behind changes of weather, that maintained peace. Another recognized God within German tribes was Odin. According to Roman sources he only had one eye and it was considered “father of the slain”, the supreme leader of warriors who rushed into battle without fear for their own life.

Valkyries was known as dark spits that soared over the battlefields. They believed there was a place in heaven called Valhalla where the warriors who lost their lives in war, resided to fight a final battle after their recovery. This place was seen as a long hall with different doors letting men in. Valhalla is described as an area with ceilings made of shields and very detailed walls supported by spears. Ragnarok was the final battle mentioned in Valhalla. This was seen as an apocalypse that destroyed all warriors and Gods. Subsequently, Valhalla was this place to get the warriors ready to fight the apocalypse where all their loyalty is based on.

Valkyries, Valhalla, and Ragnarok were the three pieces of German mythology that connected their values and beliefs which showed unity in battle. This also created the awareness that no matter how strong the warriors were, and how loyal they were in battle as well as with their families, defeat will always happen.