Yarn magic, sorcery and prophecy are all words rooted in an ancient Celto-Germanic Indo-European linguistic change. This change is believed to have happened in the early Bronze Age before there even was a proto-Celtic language. (For more information especially about the archeological evidence connecting the proto-Celtic people in Spain and the proto-Germanic people in Scandinavia, please click here.) In this change, the proto-Indo-European word for “yarn, string” became the Celtic root for sorcery, while for the Germanic peoples it eventually became the word seidR.

We know that the Germanic tribes believed some women had psychic prophetic powers. Thiota of the Alemannic-Frankish people, the Semnones’ seeress Ganna, and Waluburg who went with German soldiers to Egypt are documented by the Romans in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. In the 5th century the Christian Goths blamed the Huns on the Haliarunnos, their Pagan wise women who consulted the dead. This is similar to the work of a volva in the Icelandic sagas when she performed seidR, holding her staff. Ganna and Waluburg come from Germanic words for “wand” and may have been titles like volva.

The Romans recorded that Veleda was a Bructerian priestess who prophesied during a Germanic and Gaulish rebellion against Roman rule. Veleda was assumed by many to speak a Germanic language, but further investigation points to a Celtic name. Until the Romans decided that everyone living northwest of the Rhine was Germanic speaking and everyone to the southwest of the Rhine was Gaulish and then attempted to reinforce that, in reality tribes could have spoken either, both or even possibly a unique combination of the languages. The Belgae region (roughly in the area of and around modern Belgium) was most likely Celto-Germanic Iron Age mix, with the Celtic name Belgae meaning “swelling with battle rage.” In dress, lifestyle and housing there was little difference between the two. A German tribe is known to have helped a Gaulish ally in their battles against another Gaulish tribe, and it probably wasn’t that unusual for temporary alliances to have been made. We find this in the rebellion against the Roman Empire, guided by Veleda. Although the rebellion failed, Veleda is supposed to have impressed the Romans so much that she was brought to Rome. (Veleda is pronounced more like Weleda.)

The Romans assumed Veleda was a personal name, but it is linguistically connected with the Old Irish title vleilet or fili, “bard, poet,” the Welsh gweled, “seer,” and the Gaulish uidlua, “sorceress.” Modern Gaulish Reconstructionist Segomáros Widugeni uses the term welitâ, a “female mystic associated with seership and the sovereignty complex” who “Carried the Weaver’s Beam as a badge of office.” Gifts from the bride to the groom of expertly woven fabrics were an important part of the Hallstatt and later Gaulish marriage.
Gifts from the bride to the groom of expertly woven fabrics were an important part of the Hallstatt and later Gaulish marriage ceremonies. The Celtic king-making ceremony is believed to have involved a symbolic marriage to a high ranking woman who offered him ale or mead. The woman represented the sovereignty of the land and was most likely a file or welitâ, depending on where in the vast Celtic-speaking world the ceremony took place.

This nicely brings us to the seeress in the great Irish saga Tain Bo Cuailnge, Fedelm Noichrothach ("nine times beautiful"). Because her name appears between other Goddesses' names such as Macha, some believe that Fedelm was originally considered a Goddess. Fedelm makes Her appearance when Queen Medb (a Gaelic sovereignty Goddess of intoxication) is about to leave with Her army. She arrives wearing red in a chariot drawn by two black horses, described as a beautiful young woman with three braids, two coiled on her head and another hanging to her calves. Each eye has three pupils. She holds a gold weaver's beam, an object commonly associated with fate in Indo-European mythology. Some scholars believe her name is linguistically linked to Veleda.

Another Goddess linked to Veleda is the Celtiberian Velonsae whose name refers to a strong will, command, and prophecy. Three Germanic Suebic military leaders are known to have had Celtic names associated with the same Celtic word for “command” found in Velonsae. Again we are reminded of the interconnected history of the Celtic and Germanic speaking peoples. Velonsae also has linguistic connections to the Old Irish word file (poet-seer), which connect Her to Fedelm. Velonsae is one of the few Celtic Goddesses known to be directly involved with fate and prophecy, and I am surprised that She is not worshiped more widely, especially by those involved with divination and the psychic arts.

The Úidlua are less well known. They were a a group of Gaulish women who had the help of a sorceress named Severa Tertionicna in a legal dispute. We know this from a curse tablet where the plaintiff asks a Goddess to reverse Severa’s magic so he can finally in court win against the Úidlua. Severa Tertionicna used yarn in her spell, another connection to the weaving. The names of the Úidlua are listed, but as the daughters of mothers, not fathers, which is very unusual for Gauls. Their “mothers” may have really been their sorceress teachers, because three Úidlua had the same “mother.”

While we find triads of Celtic Goddesses like the Matres, the Morrigan and Brig, there’s no explicitly stated three Celtic destiny Goddesses like the Norse Norns and Roman Fates in what we know of Celtic deities. (TheMorrigan, Macha and Badb are involved in battle prophecy and magic to influence the outcome, which seems to be a version of the triple destiny Goddesses, especially with Badb's similarity to Lugh, the oath God who possibly declared the futures of people.) Still, we find likely fate Goddesses in Fedelm, Velonsae, Rosmerta and a Gaelic Christian mention of the 7* sisters of fate. History records other Celtic female seers and yarn sorceresses, like the Scottish and Manx “witches” who sold sailors strings with knots which, when untied, would release the wind. The highest level of the file, the ollamh, was trained in magical arts, a highly prestigious rank achieved by Ullach, daughter of Muinechan, who died in 934. She was called Banfile Eireann, “The Woman Poet of Ireland”. Add the Gaulish island of Sena where female oracles who, when possessed by the deity, foretold a person’s future, and we find a long history of prophetesses and yarn sorceresses in Celtic lands.

*(While 3 was the most significant number in Indo-European culture, 7 was the sacred number for the Near East due to the seven “planets” who correspond with the Sumerian deities. The importance of 7 became part of the Old Testament and Christianity.)*

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About a week before the end of the month, I post the monthly calendar so you have time to copy and mail it to your pen pals in prison. Remember that they need the Guide to the Athens, Julian and other calendars, plus the new moon (not dark moon) and full moon dates found here and here, where the Yoruban, Anglo-Saxon and Athens weekly and monthly calendar are. If you want a pen pal, I suggest looking at Black & Pink’s list for Pagans. For pointers on writing someone in prison, check out here. It’s the new Guide to Writing Pagan Prisoners!
hardest to fill. If you have used paperback books that you don’t need, please consider donating them. There’s a books to prisoners organizations within 200 miles of most people and they’d love those books! Check out your closest one! Literacy rates are low in prison and the average book is read by seven people! Prison, as one man told me, “can be college, if you treat the time that way. You just have to keep getting books, because there’s no classes or training in state prison.”

On with the show!

April Pagan Holy Days

The Anglo-Saxon name for April was Eostre, whose name links Her to the east and dawn. Her name became Easter. As Easter is held on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, it is believed that Eostre was worshiped on the full moon after the spring equinox.

Akitu, the Sumerian festival of barley and Babylonian celebration of Marduk’s victory over Tiamat, started the new year. The new moon of the 1st Babylonian month Nisannu (April-May) began the 12 day holy time. Marduk and the other deities renew their covenant with Babylon now and promise another cycle of seasons.

Fortuna Virilis, Roman Goddess with power over women’s relationships with men, was honored April 1.

April 1 was also the Veneralia, Festival of Venus Verticordia (“Heart Turner”). Venus Verticordia turned the hearts of Roman women to be faithful wives and chaste maidens. Men and women, married or single, poor or wealthy – everyone prayed to Venus Verticordia for help involving love, sex and marriage. She maintained the gender roles and morality that Roman society expected from all women.

The Megalesia held April 4 to 6 celebrated the Goddess the Romans called Magna Mater, but originally was Cybele, the great mother from Phrygia in the Near East. The rituals began with an offering of herbs at Her temple. People held big parties, visited friends and went to the theater.

8 days before the new moon in April, Venus of Eryx was worshiped by courtesans and prostitutes. Her main temple was on the western point of Sicily in Eryx.

The 6th day of the April-May lunar cycle Athens held a purification ceremony. One woman and one man were picked to represent the adult population. Wearing garlands of figs, the couple was sacrificed on the seashore. Their burnt to ashes were scattered on the sea. In later times they were banished from Athens, symbolically taking away all evil in the city’s residents. They also were a sacrifice to Apollon, so He would not burn the crops.
The same day started the 2 day long harvest festival the Thargelia. The first day is for purification, such as fasting, bathing and abstaining from sex. The next day is Apollon’s birthday feast of the first fruits. Artemis and the Horae (Greek Goddesses of the seasons) also received offerings from the first harvest.

During the Cerialia, April 12-19, Romans celebrated the reunion of grain Goddess Ceres (similar to Demeter) and Her daughter Proserpina. (Persephone is Her Greek name). Ovid instructs: “Ceres delights in peace; and you farmer, pray for perpetual peace and a peaceful leader. Good Ceres is content with little, if that little be but pure.” Women in white carried lit torches, like Ceres in search of Proserpina.

Fordicidia, April 15 or the full moon, is an ancient Roman fertility rite. A pregnant cow (“forda”) was sacrificed to Terra Mater, or Mother Earth. The Vestal Virgins sacrificed the unborn calf and used its ashes at the Parilia. The fields received the fertility of the cow.

On the 19th the New Orleans Saint Expedite who grants fast solutions especially in law and business and helps with overcoming obstacles to financial success is honored.

Held on April 21, the Parilia honors Pales who purifies the flocks. Ovid instructs: “Shepherd, do purify your well-fed sheep at twilight; first sprinkle the ground with water and sweep it with a broom. Deck the sheepfold with leaves and branches fastened to it; adorn the door and cover it with a long garland. Make blue smoke with pure sulphur ….when the (cakes of millet are) cut up, pray to rustic Pales, offering warm milk to her.”

On the 23rd Ogun is honored by those involved with Spiritualist Voodoo.

The ancient Roman Robigalia on April 25 honors Robiga, the spirit of mold, to protect the crops.

Walpurga’s night, April 30, is celebrated in Germany much like Halloween. Witches were said to meet on the tops of the moist remote mountains. Historically Walpurga was an Anglo-Saxon nun but She became synchronized with earlier Pagan practices. Some images of the Saint, especially in Sweden, show her holding shafts of wheat, because Walpurga is the fertility of the fields. For the last 9 days of April She runs through the forest hiding from a man who is chasing her. He may ask farmers if they have seen Walpurga. If a farmer replies no, he will be rewarded with gold by Walpurga. On May 1 Walpurga is free and brings summer to the land, much to the delight of the farmers.

On April 27, the Roman temple of Flora was dedicated, and her games and rituals lasted until May 3. “Perhaps you may think that I am queen only of dainty garlands; but my divinity has to do also with the tilled fields. Honey is my gift. ’Tis I who call the winged creatures, which yield honey, to the violet, and the clover, and the grey thyme.” (Ovid) Flora was honored by the oldest college of Roman priests, the Arval Brethren, in their sacred grove. During a week of parties, hares and goats (animals who breed frequently) were released. Beans were scattered in the crowd as symbols of fertility. Everyone wore crowns of flowers. “When white robes are worn for Ceres’ festival, Why brightly colored clothes suitable for Flora? That is because the harvest whitens when the grain is ripe, But flowers come in a variety of colors.” (Ovid )

Völundr/Weland, Saami & Germanic cultural mix

March 9, 2020 2 Comments

When I get letters from someone in a racist Odinist prison gang who actually wants to learn the religion, I send a collection of writing, much of it focusing on how much the Germanic peoples borrowed from and married into other cultures. This is from one of my favorites, a book I highly recommend to any Heathens or Norse Pagans interested in shamanism. My family has the Saami flag in
the porch window, in solidarity with their indigenous rights. Since no one knows what it is, when they ask, they receive a little speech about the Saami, which in Vermont people usually find interesting.

Anyway! If you are teaching incarcerated Heathens, please include information like this, to show that xenophobia and racism are not traditional Germanic Pagan ways. I did a little editing to make this easier for a prisoner to understand. The average reading level is 6th grade, which is why it’s so important that we donate books and money to books-to-prisoners organizations, a list of which is found here.


The Norse Sagas and other accounts tell us not only about Scandinavian exploits, but also about the indigenous reindeer people of the north they called Lapps. These people, whose self-designation is Saami, were experts in northern travel technologies, including skis, sleds and sewn and riveted boats of the types that brought the Swedish Vikings down Russian rivers to Constantinople, and that were still used by coastal fishermen in Norway and sealers on the Gulf of Bothnia in the twentieth century.

There are as many as 500 Archaic Scandinavian words in all Saami languages. The first Nordic loan words relating to husbandry, herding and farming were undoubtedly acquired much farther south than previously believed, perhaps as far south as Svealand in Sweden, where there were fur markets such as the famous, still-operating disting market in Uppsala. Saami words were also borrowed by Germanic speakers and these relate to transportation, trade and hunting. The Saami terms relating to boats and boat building, which was a special Saami skill set, as well as words relating to sealing and the Saami use of dogs for finding ringed seal dens in the ice. The Nordic community, as attested by the Norse sagas, was also highly respectful and even fearful of Saami healing and witchcraft and they borrowed the Saami word noaidi, which means "shaman" or "healer."

Although the Saami and the Norse were almost certainly actively involved with each other in the exploitation of these alpine resources, there is much evidence of interdependencies, not least in hunting, but also in religion. Worldviews also met and merged as the shamanistic beliefs of the circumpolar world became deeply entrenched in the Nordic psyche, finding form in the religion of the Vikings. Many Saami offer rites and ritual practices, for instance, mirror Germanic Iron Age practices, and vice versa.

There are also examples where the meeting of these two peoples resulted in the stuff of folklore. The Nordic fascination with dwarves, trolls and giants may have grown out of early contacts between the Saami and the Norse.

The ritual bear burial at Grundskatan, iron slag placed in hearths in dwellings, and circular sacrificial features of Saami type are longue durée expressions of Saami identity. Saami religion was syncretistic and incorporated Germanic/Norse grave forms, including cremations.

Fire was the most transformative form of technology available in prehistory. Metallurgy is thus more than a technology, it is magic. During the period A.D. 400–600, large amounts of iron were produced in the Swedish forests of Dalarna and Jämtland, presumably for trade. This is also where the forest or hunting graves are found and these are Saami in origin. Most of the slag has been found on the shores of lakes and rivers and coincide with the distributions of Stone Age settlements. Iron slag has been documented in North Norway, for example in a probable shaman’s hut at Vapsgieddi. Slag was deliberately put in hearths because of its magical, especially transformative, properties. Metamorphosis was an empirical reality and the hearth was a sacred place.

The master smith Völundr/Weland is described in the Older Edda from ca. 1000, which is one of the oldest of the Icelandic texts. He was originally a dwarf or from a family of dwarves or elves, but he was completely human and with human emotions. His tale is prefaced by a brief description of his background: “The Finn King had three sons, Slagfinn, Egil and Völundr, who traveled on skis and hunted reindeer …” (Bæksted 1970:228). The tale then goes on about how Völundr, having made a magic sword and 700 rings of red gold that he tied to his forge, was robbed by King Nidud and his soldiers, who wore chain mail. Meanwhile, Völundr, on returning home from bear hunting, was captured and tied up. He had his leg tendons cut, but took to the sky using wings he had forged (Bæksted 1970:229). Most intriguing about this story are the references to the “Finn King,” skis, reindeer, dwarves and even a bear. Völundr’s forge was on an island.
The Völundr allusions point northward, and there are valid reasons for taking them seriously. There is now credible archaeological evidence for Finn Kings. The shamanistic context in Norse religion is also expressed through the Seidr rituals, which involves female divination, as seen among the Saami. The ritualistic value of iron to the Germanic practice of offering weapons and animals in bogs and watery cult places, we also know the Saami practiced. There is likewise a strong gender component to metallurgy in which the forge is seen as a womb and symbolizes fertility. Sacred sites were used for both “bloody sacrifices” and metal offerings. The objects consist of brooches, pendants, clasps and buckles of pewter, bronze and silver, silver coins and iron arrowheads. Coins and ornaments are usually perforated. They were Saami expressions of alignment with the Norse gods and Norse society, not attempts to downplay their own social hierarchies.

While bears were the largest and most dangerous predators in the Nordic region and were revered as such, their spiritual significance among circumpolar peoples like the Saami related in greater measure to their humanlike attributes, including body proportions, particularly when skinned, their upright and sitting stances, footprints, omnivorous diets, feces, cleverness and even emotional behavior, including crying and masturbation. Added to these qualities is the bear’s ability to hibernate, to survive without eating, and then seemingly rise from the dead in the spring. The bear was a sacred animal in all Saami areas and bear hunting was a sacred undertaking. Bear bones and a complete skull with teeth were found in the southeast corner of an Early Iron Age terrace house and not far from some graves. This is a “typical bear grave of Southern Lappish type”.

This parallels the Grundskatan find and shows that the Saami were directly involved in spiritual interactions with Germanic farmers in Hälsingland. The bear also figured in Germanic Iron Age funerary contexts in middle Sweden, Gotland, Öland, southwest Norway and the Åland Islands, where the dead were sometimes buried lying on or wrapped in bear skins, of which only phalanges remain. Interestingly enough, a Norse cult site, including bear skulls/bones, was found on Frösön in Jámtland showing the proximity of these parallel worlds in northern Sweden.

### Mars & Celtic Gods Neto, Lenus, Cocidius, Rudianos & Nemetona (plus some Heathen myth skepticism)

**February 28, 2020**

For those of you who weren’t reading this time last year, here’s the [link](#) to the festival for a ton of Celtic deities associated with Mars. Some of Them probably were associated with Mercury, too. The imperial Roman pantheon doesn’t match well with small independent tribes’ “chieftain” God. He doesn’t really match Jupiter, the Emperor of the deities, because they didn’t have an Empire. The Kemetic, Greek and Babylonian Empires had pantheons that seemed to fit with each other better because of their cultural similarities. You find this when comparing the Sumerian/Babylonian deities who ARE the planets (Jupiter – Marduk, Venus – Inanna/Ishtar, Moon – Nanna/Sin, etc) with Their Greek equivalent.

The tribal independence of the Celtic speaking peoples leads to more regional divine ancestor style deities of the place and clans of a tribe. Lots of Them because there were lots of tribes. To be a good chieftain, you had a father role in that culture. You protected your huge “extended family” of the tribe, like Mars. Mars takes care of boundaries – the city of Rome’s, the farmstead’s. His own temple was on the edge of Rome, because He like most warriors defended borders. Also, warrior energy isn’t really civilized enough to be in the domestic realm of life. What warriors face they become – dangerous to society. We see this with demi-God hero Cu Chulainn. The red halo, destructive acts and twisted body of His warp spasm need three vats of cold water and the mothering bare breasts of the noble women to return Him to a civilized state that was safe to be near the civilian population. Beserkers weren’t guys you wanted hanging out in your village during peace time. A Celtic chieftain had to come from the warrior class, so a lot of Celtic deities were aligned with Mars. But a Celtic chieftain had to negotiate temporary federations, trade, have the wisdom of a poet, the strength of eloquence, and so many other tribal chieftain deities were associated with Mercury. And some were associated with both. Neto was also associated with Apollo, the solar light, the healer, the musician, the bisexual lover. The society structure made the chieftain God and the Goddess of the *fertile land/ river different than the deities of Empires.
This is why it's very hard for me to believe the Eddas where there's 12 (Olympian, anyone?) deities and Odin is somehow like Zeus, when these were rural people who put off unifying their many kingdoms for centuries. The Asatru temple to Odin in Iceland makes little sense to me because Odin was not very important to the Heathens of Pagan Iceland. Thor was by far the most important. Also we know Frey was very important and we read about His temple in the Sagas. Njord was given sacrifices because as an island people without any trees, they relied on trade with Norway and then trips to Greenland for timber and other items. No one could attack Iceland, so deities about war weren't necessary. These were farmers and merchants. But being an educated man, I imagine Snorri tried to put the myths into a Classical background. He was dealing with the powerful unified Norwegian royal family – the people whose ancestors chased out the lesser kings who became many of the settlers of Iceland. That he named his spot at the Althing Valhalla tells us quite a bit about his ego and which God He felt was most important, even though it doesn't match what we know about Heathen Iceland.

* In some Celtic languages the word for "valley" and "river" are the same. Rivers flow through valleys. Nantosueltas’s name translates into "sunlit valley", surely the ideal place for cattle and crops, but is usually translated in older Pagan books as "winding river". With the continental Celts, especially the Gauls, I try to put both words together and think "river valley."

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**Celtic Festival of Dies Equeunu and the Alci**

*February 24, 2020 | 3 Comments*
This continues my modern Reconstruction-derived practice of interpreting Roman holy days in a Gaulish, Iberian, trans-Alpine Celtic manner. **Erudinus** is the only ancient Celtic deity for whom we have a Celtic festival date, so for the rest, I’m trying what some ancient Celtic language speaking tribes may have done: match a native deity with a Roman one.

Researchers now tend to believe that the conquered Celtic peoples often chose what parts of Roman religion to take, even choosing the Roman God for the correspondence, which is perhaps why many Celtic Gods are linked to **Mars** in one inscription and **Mercury** in another. The official Roman pantheon really doesn’t match the tribal deities of the different Celtic peoples. To the Gauls, **Mercury**, who was not very popular among most Romans, was considered far more important than **Jupiter**. **Mercury** had the strength of communication, wealth and safe travels. **Mars** was the protector. Together They met the requirements for a good chieftain. As the Gauls rejected attempts by nobles to unify different tribes and form a permanent empire, a “top God” like **Jupiter** was not traditional.

Relevant parts of Roman religion was adopted and sometimes a self-conscious nostalgia for their own almost forgotten ways was revitalized. The latter seems to be especially true for the Britons, based on Folly Lane. (What’s that? You don’t know what is at Folly Lane and what it says about how Britons were adapting and reacting to Roman religion? Maybe you should buy a copy of *Steel Bars, Sacred Waters* and find out! Shameless plug for a great cause!)

On February 27 the Romans held a festival celebrating the birth of the Greek **Castor** and **Pollux**, the horse riding sons of **Zeus**, also known as “dioskouri”. They have a beautiful myth of self sacrifice which is related to the meaning of the astrological sign Gemini, according to East. “**Castor** was born mortal. **Pollux** was born immortal. When **Castor** was slain in battle, **Pollux** was inconsolable in his grief. He begged **Zeus** to relieve him of the bonds of immortality and allow him to die along side his brother. **Zeus** refused. And yet, in his wisdom, **Zeus** solved **Pollux**’s pain by granting **Castor** immortality as well.” Also, according to Brady, “**Castor** was connected to the morning star and was the horseman; **Pollux**, the boxer, was connected to the evening star and was associated with darkness.”

**Castor** and **Pollux** were very popular with the Gauls. The proto-Indo-European twin “Sons of God” survived not only in Greece and Rome, but in many cultures. They often are associated with a solar or mare (or both) Goddess who may be Their mother, wife, or both. The mother of **Castor** and **Pollux** is a mare in some myths and are the companions of the Sun. The **Aśvins** (“Horsemen”) are Vedic heroes, physicians and perhaps the evening and morning star (Venus) always found with the Sun, whose daughter **Sūryā** is Their wife. The Lithuanian **Dieva Deli** (“Sons of God”) travel the sky as horses with Their sister **Saules Dukterys** (“Daughter of the Sun”) whom They court romantically. The legendary brothers who led the Angles, Jutes and Saxons’ invasion of Britain, **Hengist** (“stallion”) and **Horsa** (“horseman”), may also have Their roots here.

It’s very odd that the famous horse riding Celts don’t have any horse twin hero Gods. Of course, the ancient mare Goddess **Macha** gives birth to twins after being forced to race the King of Ulster’s horses. (A race She won.) The greatest Irish hero **Cu Chulainn** in His earliest tales was born with a colt. The *Mabinogi* states that mare Goddess **Rhiannon**’s son **Pryderi** was found as a newborn with a mare who just gave birth to a colt. Although these medieval hints suggest that there were ancient Celtic twin horse hero Gods, until recently Their names were unknown.
Then, an inscription was recovered in Pola de Gordón, León, to Dies Equeunu (pronounced: Dee-ess eh-QUEE-hu-nu), “the sons riding on the horse”. That’s about the clearest title for these deities as you can get! Notice that They ride one horse. More details are found in Iberia and Gaul, but with Their other title, the Alci.

Here’s what Tacitus wrote in Germania: “Among the Nahanarvali is shown a grove, the seat of a prehistoric ritual: a priest presides in female dress; but according to the Roman interpretation the gods recorded in this fashion are Castor and Pollux: that at least is the spirit of the godhead here recognised, whose name is the Alci (nomen Alcis). …they worship these deities as brothers and as youths.”

There are Gaulish personal names like Alcovindos, meaning “white like the Alci” and place names like Alcobendas near Madrid, meaning “hills of the Alci.” Obviously, the “the sons riding on the horse” have something to do with being white. Guides to the Celtic realm of the dead ride white horses, like the Mabinogi’s Arawn, Gwyn ap Nudd, and the Gaelic Donn. Gwyn and Fionn mean “white,” so we can pretty safely guess that Their horse is white. If They are associated with the Sun or Venus, white could possibly be connected to radiance. However, we don’t have any evidence linking Them to either.

“Hey! The Alci are German Gods, Heather! Now I doubt your entire blog and book!” No! Wait! Please, there’s fancy linguistic proof! Also, when the Germanic tribes migrated into a Roman Celtic world, the Germanic languages absorbed many Celtic words. And remember that Celtic people over a wide area were naming their children and places after the Alci.

The fancy linguistic proof: Take the Indo-European word Palkio, meaning “divine twins” and do the usual Celtic drop of the first letter “p”. We get the Celtic “divine twins” – Alkio. Then, the logic goes, the Alci is a Celtic name for the divine twins. This is why we can learn so much about a deity by Their name, which often is a title.

We know that the Romans often were wrong about what tribes were of which culture. Despite their map showing that the Germanic tribes lived north of the Rhine and Gauls lived south of the important trade river, it was never that simple. The Belgae region seems to be Celto-Germanic, a merging of established Gaulish peoples and recent Germanic emigrants. According to Tacitus, in the 1st century CE the People of Ingvi-Frey, the Ingvaeones, had settled the area around and including Denmark. Also, early records of Germanic tribes mention leaders who had Celtic names. A few scholars think that there may have been a Celtic elite who ruled over some of the North Sea tribes. Before Denmark’s coastline drastically changed a few centuries before the German migrations, these Celtic tribes may have made southern Sweden a satellite state. If Celts were worshiping the Alci in Denmark then, the Germanic people may have learned about the Alci then, if Germanic tribes ever did.

Also, we now have a lot of linguistic and physical evidence that during the Bronze Age people in southern Sweden and coastal northern Spain were trading goods and culture. The Scandinavian petroglyphs and Iberian stele of that time depict almost startling exact images of wagons and warriors. Scandinavian amber has been recovered in Greece, increasing the range of the Bronze Age trading region. The Phoenicians built the first city in Iberia in the 9th century BCE on Spain’s Atlantic coast, being the first people to trade in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic coast. The proto-Celtic Atlantic Seacoast Culture spread from the Straits of Gibraltar to Scotland, but some evidence may show trade with Sweden. This could be another way the Celtic word arrived in a Germanic language – again, if the Alci ever were worshiped by Germanic tribes.

**Prayer to Dies Equeunu for Fast Rescue** Heather Awen

O Dies Equeunu,
Please hear my prayer!
I am in trouble,
I need fast help,
I need the Divine Twins!
Please, quickly ride into this situation,
Stop the crisis,
Save my life, save our lives.
Save my life, save our lives,
Save us!
Time is of the utmost importance,
Lives are at risk!
Dies Equeunu, you are Gods of heroes
And I need you here now!

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As I’ve stated in each post of the series, we know that the Celtic tribes had more power than once thought over how they interpreted the religion of the Romans who conquered them. If they often chose the Roman deity names to match their own deities, altered how Roman style temples were built and had their own ideas about Roman deities, perhaps they used the Roman calendar to synchronize festivals for their deities. Even if they didn’t, it is a
On February 21, the 3 day Roman festival the Parentalia ended as the Feralia began. In the original Roman calendar, March was the first month, in honor of Mars, God of war, and February was dedicated to purification from the previous year. The Feralia was the final festival to honor the ancestors. Offerings, usually food, were taken to the tombs. The Feralia also honored Jupiter Feretrius. When people sign marriage and other contracts, Jupiter Feretrius is witness. In the Roman Empire, people made an oath that if that if they lied, Jupiter Feretrius should strike them down.

It’s the oath aspect of the festival that concerns this post. Lugus may derive from the word “oath” as in “I swear to curse you if you are my enemy, that’s my oath.” Lugh and Llew both use Magick to deal with enemies, so it’s a strong possibility. It may tell us something about the way Celtic language speakers understood the word “oath.” He may be a God of destiny, with these oaths. (The ancient Celto-Germanic crow Goddess Badb of Irish myth also uses the Crane Stance on Her prophetic curses.)

The 1st century shrine in Braga, Fonte do Ídolo (Fountain of the Idol), isn’t just dedicated to the popular deity Nabia (Pronounced: “NAH-bee-ah”). The God Tongoenabiagus is also named. (Pronounced: “tong-goy-na-BEE-ah-gus” – for me, it’s easier to learn if I break the name into two parts, practice them separately and then altogether.) The Celtic root word for His name is related to making oaths (“I swear”). Considering what we know about Lugus, Jupiter and ancient oath God UllR, it would seem that Tongoenabiagus smites those who break their promises.

There’s quite a lot of talk in Heathenry about the importance of keeping your word which applies to Celtic tribes as well. The entire structure of society was based on oaths. Warriors pledged to follow a chieftain, king or new young cattle raider. Heterosexual couples married, maintaining the patriarchal family. Lesser chieftains and kings pledged themselves to greater ones. Tribes formed loose federations, especially in wartime. Merchants were expected to give and get a fair price for their goods. And humans made oaths to deities and fully expected to have a cursed life if they broke them. Trade was just as important for the 1st century BCE Celt as it was for an 8th century Viking. The Gauls relied on their role of merchants so strongly that they adopted the Roman God of commerce and travel, Mercury, and worshiped Him more than the Romans did. Obviously the Celtic people in pre-Christian Iberia would have needed a deity to witness the promises of their contracts to make sure that the oath would be enforced by a greater power.

In the farthest southwest point of Portugal during the 6th century BCE, a Celtic language inscription written in the Phoenician alphabet praises Lug. His popularity in coastal Iberia (Celtici in the south, Gallaecia and Asturias in the north) and the eastern part of the Meseta and south of the Pyrenees Mountains (Celtiberia) appears to have been active and consistent even after Lugus was forgotten in Gaul. Iberia may even be the original home of Lug.

However, Gallaecia probably relied on a local oath-enforcer, the God Tongoenabiagus. The oath Gods tend to be very high ranking, often the leader of the pantheon. With this in mind, perhaps it makes sense that Tongoenabiagus, who is only mentioned once in the evidence left for archeologists, was included with Nabia, whose followers left behind evidence of many inscriptions and sanctuaries, at Braga in northwestern Portugal.

The gender of Nabia, like a few other Iberian deities, is somewhat confusing. Although linked with Jupiter by the Romans, Nabia was also associated several Goddesses, such as Victoria (Victory, a war Goddess), Juno (Jupiter’s wife and equal, the Queen Goddess), Diana (Goddess of wild forests, hunting and midwives) and others associated with fertility and health. These many Roman Goddesses provide us with a good example of how most Celtic Goddesses were understood by most Celtic language speaking people: capable of any "function."

It is possible that Nabia was the head of the pantheon for the ferocious Bracari tribe who at one time controlled much of Gallaecia and Asturias. The Romans recorded that the Bracari were one of the fiercest Celtic tribes whose fearless female warriors would rather die than live as slaves. Like many Iberian people, the Bracari relied on selling metal ore and goods. When the Romans attacked, the Bracari’s warriors hid in their iron mine and ambushed Roman troops.
The first encounter between Celts in Iberia and Romans was probably as mercenaries in the Punic War. Phoenicians built the first Atlantic trade port in southern Spain in the 9th century BCE and were involved in the Atlantic Seacoast Culture, so the Celtic association with Carthaginian merchants was very old. We are given an interesting look at these warriors who seem to have been trained in Druid divination.

“Rich Gallaecia sent its youths, wise in the knowledge of divination by the entrails of beasts, by feathers and flames— who, now crying out the barbarian song of their native tongue, now alternately stamping the ground in their rhythmic dances until the ground rang, and accompanying the playing with sonorous caetrae.” (A caetra was a small type of shield used in the region).
– Silius Italicus, Punica

Where there’s trade, there’s transportation of goods. Nabia is the Goddess of fresh water and many important rivers, including the Nabão River in Tomar, the Rivers Navia (which flowed into the southern Bay of Biscay) and Avia, and the Neiva River by the ancient Roman capital of Gallaecia Bracara Augusta, which today is called Braga. She had several sanctuaries, including one with thermal hot springs, which connects Her to health. The Gallaecians understood the healing power of saunas, “taking baths in vapours that rise from heated stones.” (Strabo, III.3.3) The door frames for the inner rooms of saunas were highly decorated, suggesting a ceremonial function, and called pedras formosas (“beauty stones”).

Rivers were an important part of the European transportation system, which makes Nabia important for trade. Her good favor was needed for safe travels to and from the Atlantic coast, where boats could take the Iberian metals north to Gaul and Britain or be exchanged with Carthaginian merchants for wine, glass and pottery. In the Roman Empire, some Gaulish tribes earned their wealth by controlling a river and demanding tribute from those who would travel it. There’s no reason to think that some Celtic tribes in Iberia did not do the same.

With so many people coming together to trade, perhaps Tongoenabiagus was needed to keep merchants honest. The Fountain of the Idol was in a shrine dedicated to just Him and Nabia in the important Roman capital of Gallaecia Bracara Augusta, a center for luxury goods. Celtic cultures often paired a hero chieftain God with a sovereignty Goddess, both of whom had a variety of roles in human society ranging from granter of fertility to psychopomp for the dead. The pairing was not always the same couple and They did not necessarily have to be lovers. Rosmerta is traditionally paired with Mercury, but Her age indicates that She probably was understood to be His mother.

Although historically Gallaecia is as Celtic as Gaul or Ireland, it’s mostly ignored in every pop culture Celtic Paganism book and academic book on different Celtic Reconstructionist reading lists. This is true for all of Iberia. But Galicia has the most information on its native pantheon compared to the rest of Iberia and even the well-known Belgae tribes north of Gaul bordering Germania.

So why don’t we know about Nabia when She’s far more documented than a currently popular Goddess like Nemetona or Don? One reason is that the research has been happening recently and still yields surprises. Also, the Celtic Iberian deities have very few remaining statues (if any). Even without the details of a specific myth, the root word of a deity’s name/title and Their depiction can tell us a lot about a deity, and we often don’t have either for Iberian deities. (Iberia was home to many different Celtic languages, some of which are only now seriously being studied.) The hundreds of inscriptions are being reexamined and we’re learning important details. The “dying and resurrection” grain God Erudinus also of northwestern Iberia had a festival on June 23 and 24. This is the ONLY date from actual polytheist Celts for an ancient Celtic deity and proves that the Summer Solstice was important to at least some Celtic people. (I believe that medieval Gaelic monks didn’t mention any solar Pagan holidays because they had been replaced by Easter, St John the Baptist Day, St. Martin’s Feast Day and Christmas.)

Another reason I think contributes to the obscurity of Celtic Iberia is simply ethnicity of Celtic Pagans today, which is an almost taboo subject. The truth is that most Celtic polytheists I have met are looking for their pre-Christian ancestral religion. British Pagans often ignore the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Danish Heathens and focus on the land in a neo-Celtic modern Druid cosmology. Brythonic polytheists mostly focus on the medieval Welsh text the Mabinogi and the inscriptions and temples to the deities of the occupying Gaulish soldiers in the Roman military. (Actual ancient Brythonic deities known today are few because native temples
Hughes in his book *The Book of Celtic Magic* even invents a nationalist “Celtica” to describe the spirit, myth and traditions of the 6 nations that at least until recently had speakers of Celtic languages, which is odd because the ancients never referred to the inhabitants of Britain or Ireland as Celtic. The concept of a pan-Celtic cultural connection between these nations is very recent and ancient Celtica is a region mostly in modern-day France. The huge Keltoi culture across Europe into Turkey is ignored in his “Celtica” and implies that you must live in the U.K. and Ireland. If you are not there, you can’t feel “Celtica” which evidently exists only in those lands. Modern Saxon Pagans and German Celtoi Reconstructionists are dismissed by writing like this, much less American Celtic Reconstructionists, which is sad. It is that type of attitude we’re trying to keep out of prison gangs using Paganism as a front – ethnic/national exclusion and cultural misappropriation.

Meanwhile, looking online, Scotland seems to have more Gaelic polytheists than Ireland, where Wicca is the most common Pagan religion. This could be because that much of Celtic mythology is common Irish knowledge woven into place and Catholicism, so it doesn’t feel like an occult (secret) religion. The Farrars, incredibly important English teachers of Wicca, have been based in Ireland for decades. Gaelic is a soon forgotten, difficult subject in school. Also, even in cosmopolitan Dublin and progressive Galway, bookstores have very limited Pagan sections compared to New Age and Buddhism. I hope the books by Lora O’Brien help Gaelic Pagans actually in Ireland, as they are very place-based.

The fascination with Gaelic polytheism mostly comes from the descendants of Irish immigrants. During the Irish Potato Famine the United States received a lot of Irish immigrants. Irish ancestry is the most common ancestry for Caucasian Americans, tied with German heritage. Australia and Canada also have many citizens whose ancestors came from Ireland and Scotland and so they turn to those deities. Even many Gaulish polytheists know from where in France or Germany their ancestors immigrated. As much as we say that ethnicity doesn’t matter in Celtic Pagan Reconstructionism – and it honestly doesn’t matter; anyone can worship Celtic deities in Celtic ways as it was a culture, not carried in DNA – it seems that most people are drawn to deities they think some of their ancestors worshiped. In fact, the only time I have heard someone say that they were Celtiberian was a Latino warrior in a primarily Gaelic ADF Grove.

Bilingual books about the Celtic tribes and their religion in Iberia probably would be popular with many Hispanic Pagans who seek an ancestral connection with ancient European polytheism, based on the pattern we find with other modern Celtic polytheists. I know that a lot of Latinos discover Paganism in prison, often through their devotion to Saint Muerte, but don’t feel like Wiccans or called to the Orisha, and of course are not allowed to be Odinist Heathens. From letters by Latino Pagans who received free copies of *Steel Bars, Sacred Waters*, I’m told that the ancestral connection with Celtic Paganism gives them a home once they know about it.

Yet Iberia should matter to all Celtic Pagans. Iberia had more Celtic settlements than anywhere else in Western Europe (yes, including France!) and deep cultural and linguistic ties to Ireland, Britain and coastal Gaul since the Neolithic Atlantic Seacoast Culture and the Bronze Age. So the culture of northwestern Iberia shares quite a lot with the most popular form of Celtic polytheism: Gaelic. It is even in important Gaelic mythology, as we’ll soon remember.
Tongoenabiagus came from the Castro Culture, which was very similar to the Celtic tribes of Ireland and Britain. These tribes of the valleys and mountains near the Atlantic ocean were seasonally transhumant cattle-raising pastoralists protected by a warrior elite. That’s how we also describe the ancient Irish: seasonally transhumant cattle-raising pastoralists protected by a warrior elite. Like the Celtic peoples of Britain and Ireland, homes were round huts, unlike the Gauls. The Celtic people of northwest Iberia originally built small hill-forts (called “castros”) that were unoccupied and show no signs of warfare, just like in Britain. A few rounded huts with prominent hearths were available for some type of communal activity.

Two popular theories about the early hill-forts are: one, that they were tribal religious centers or, two, where the tribe’s pastoral animals were seasonally counted so the chieftain could take his share. The chieftain was responsible for sacrifices on behalf of the tribe. As archeology of Iron Age Britain shows that large amounts of animal sacrifices occurred in spring and autumn, coinciding with medieval Gaelic Beltain and Samhain, both ideas could easily be combined into tribal seasonal ceremonies based on the birth and death of cattle.

Just like in Britain, much bigger hill-forts were later constructed by fertile farmland, for defense and prestige. Some places built oppida (urban trading posts enclosed within intimidating walls), filled with round granaries, square workshops, communitarian halls, shared forges and of course saunas. Some even had fountains, drains and reservoirs, important for a Goddess of water like Nabia. At the same time, the round family hut became a fenced-in cluster of huts with a courtyard in the center, similar to those in coastal Wales when being raided by Irish pirates. Strabo described leather boats on northern Iberian rivers, lakes and coasts which probably were like Irish currachs and Welsh coracles. Bronze Age trade with Britain had long connected the two proto-Celtic lands, but this mostly ended in the early Iron Age. Iberia had iron and didn’t need to trade with Britain any longer. Yet their shared culture obviously continued.
The Celtic style of dress in Iberia was generally like that of other Celts, who all shared a love for fancy designs woven into fabric. Married women wore the same style head wraps as married Gaulish and Germanic women. A large scarf covered the braided hair, with the long ends of the fabric twisted and then wrapped around the head like a brim. (Statues of the Matres show these head wraps.) Every region had variations of the style; Iberians sometimes added a veil to cover the neck. Men wore arm bands and other accessories typical in metal rich Gaul, while women’s jewellery was somewhat influenced by the Mediterranean, especially earrings. Both men and women with power had their own versions of the gold torc neck band. The ends often had empty, large terminals which held little stones, making them rattles. As we know that rattles were sewn on garments in other Celtic regions, the find of torc rattles adds to our awareness that trance-inducing sound was valued by Celts in general.

The Castro Culture not only mined copper, gold, iron, tin and lead; they forged many tools. They were relatively self reliant communities. Breads were made from their own harvests of wheat and millet as well as roasted and ground acorns. Beer and bread came from oats and barley. Like the Britons they grew peas and cabbage and foraged for nutrient rich nettle and watercress. Clothing was made from linen and wool. Cattle provided milk and butter as well as meat along with pigs, sheep and goats. Hunts for wild boar and deer were popular, as in the medieval Welsh Mabinogi and depicted on carved and painted Pictish stones. The deities Epona and Lug were very popular, along with many local deities.

In Gaelic myth, Lugh’s beloved foster mother is the Fir Bolg noble Tailliú (pronounced: “TAL-dyoo”) who in one version is said to be a Princess of Galicia. It’s in Her honor that the early harvest festival Lughnasadh is celebrated. Marriage and fostering children were important political tools for gaining allies and ending wars. With Lug so popular in Iberia, could Lugh and Tailliú be an old remembrance of an Iberian myth of the Celtic hero chieftain God and the sovereignty Goddess who makes the land fertile? Or of marriages used to form bonds between kingdoms that once included the Gallaecia and the insular Celts?

In Lebor Gabála Érenn (our main source for Irish mythology), the last invaders of Ireland are the sons of Mil, the ancestors of the Gaelic-speaking humans. They sailed to Ireland from Galicia, which makes northeastern Iberia home for the Gaels. Of course, this is tangled up with Biblical myth, like the whole Lebor Gabála Érenn and our sources for the ogham alphabet, along with Irish monks’ social commentary on the lack of protection from the Vikings. (Bres is usually a good member of the Tuatha De Danann. The myth about His greed and corrupt leadership seems to be an Irish monk’s creative writing about the current situation in 10th century Ireland. There’s many layers to the myths.)

If you once could not find a reason to learn about the Celts in Iberia, I hope that you now understand how important Iberia is for studying any Celtic language-speaking people’s religion. There’s even a strong Bronze Age connection with Sweden.
The following prayer is from Steel Bars, Sacred Waters: Celtic Paganism for Prisoners. It is available from Gullveig Press to American incarcerated Pagans and those engaged in prison ministry at no profit to us ($12 for the huge book and shipping and taxes). For other people, if you buy it directly from us, it is less expensive than ordering it from Amazon and we get more profits which go straight to sending copies of the book to people in prison. ($25 covers everything – and it’s at least twice as long as most books!)

1% of Americans are in prison, more than any nation, and approximately 10% of prisoners are Pagan with few if any resources beyond white supremacist groups. This is 1 in 1,000 Americans, so there’s more Pagans in prison than outside of prison. Please donate your used paperbacks to your nearest books-to-prisoners organization. (Find it here.)

**Prayer to Tongoenabiagus to Keep Your Word** by Heather Awen

A person is only as good as their word,
And mine was often worthless,
Lying to family,
Betraying the trust of others.
I spread fear and doubt,
Made others suffer from my cowardice and greed.
O Tongoenabiagus,
Those broken vows
Those deceitful words
How I wish I could undo
The damage that came from every one.
Please don’t give up on me, Tongoenabiagus.
You see through all my broken promises,
Every con and every scam,
The hurt lovers and people poorer for knowing me,
And still believe I can change my ways.
I can change; I will! I have the courage to admit my mistakes to you, and
Unburdened, I have the courage to become a better person.
I admit them, you know what I have done.
Time to move into responsibility for the words I speak today.
Instead of being crushed by past shame I steady myself, making my vows something on which others can depend.
Truth – I know my limits and I know my strengths.
What I promise matches the reality of who I am and my situation.
I build my honor day by day, and although this is something only I can do,
Tongoenabiagus, I pray for help from you.
Thank you, strong one.

* Hughes is a Druid in his own order, not a Reconstructionist or focused on the living Celtic language cultures, so it’s his UPG without him stating this, a quality of the more dangerous types of Pagan books, especially for prisoners with extremely limited access to information. I like sharing UPG, but let’s be sure to call it that. It’s the main flaw in Raven Kaldera’s book for prisoners. Who said Frødi is Frey’s grandfather? Oh, him. Kaldera states as facts his own opinions, which confused many seeking a non-racist, non-
Frodi is Frey’s grandfather. Oh, him. Kaldera states as facts his own opinions, which confuses many seeking a non-racist, non-homophobic Heathen resource.

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Gullveig Press does not endorse whatever stuff WordPress is advertising. Odds are you don’t need it and it destroys your ecosystem, countless human workers and the planet in general, so you could use your money more wisely. Maybe buy a copy of Steel Bars, Sacred Waters for a prisoner with no income?
It’s that time again, and February has a lot of festivals, so copy this list and mail it to your pen pal in prison! What? You don’t have a Pagan pen pal in prison who needs someone on the outside with whom to share information, friendship and humor? Why not? It’s so easy and does so much! The right fit may take a few pen pals, but with my guidance, you’ll be safe and prepared! Just start here and then use the category search for blog posts on Resources and Be an Ally to learn more. I get letters asking me about getting a Pagan volunteer in their prison like Buddhists do, and I have to say “I’m sorry; Pagans suck.” I literally write that. (I explain why, just like I do later in this post. Oddly, the most involved and generous Pagans are economically poor ones with disabilities and/or chronic diseases who have experienced loss and being a second class citizen.)
But you don’t have to go to a prison and do all that training – Any book, blog posts or photocopied articles will be shared with ALL the Pagans. You’re going to need to send $5 for them to buy stamps and paper especially if they’re in state prison, but I covered a better way here. (I’ve learned one important thing about prison: If you are going to do crime, make sure it is a federal offense. “Club Fed” offers more than other prisons. Meaning: Federal prison offers crumbs; state prisons offer nothing and private prisons don’t follow the U.S. Constitution! Yikes!)

Remember that your pen pal needs the Guide to the Athens, Julian and other calendars, plus the new moon (not dark moon) and full moon dates found here and here, where the Yoruban, Anglo-Saxon and Athens weekly and monthly calendar are.

If you don’t have a penpal but want to help, we’ll happily send free copies of Steel Bars Sacred Waters: Celtic Paganism for Prisoners to prisoners and books to prisoners organizations if you donate the money! Pagan books are in the Top Five Requested Books and hardest to fill. I know us Pagans; half of us border on hoarders and we joke about it. But you know those books you bought that aren’t resources you need or have no new information about a tradition you follow or are from a tradition you found on the search to your actual Pagan religion? There’s a books to prisoners organizations within 200 miles of most people and they’d love those books! Check out your closest one! Call your friends, post on social media that you are doing a Pagan-y book drive, and have folks donate to you. Then you put the books in a box or two and drop them off or mail media rate. Dictionaries and blank journals are also need! Heck, ANY soft cover book almost is needed! Literacy rates are low in prison and the average book is read by seven people! Prison, as one man told me, “is college, if you treat the time that way. You just have to keep getting books, because there’s no classes or training in state prison.”

I think that those of us on the outside are outnumbered by incarcerated Pagans. If you do the math (1 in 100 Americans are in prison – more of the population than any other nation in the world – and 8-12% of them claim a Pagan religion), there’s 1 incarcerated Pagan for every 1,000 Americans! That’s one reason why I think we suck at prison outreach (we’re outnumbered) – The other being that most books, especially Wiccan or Ceremonial Magick, never mention giving to the deities or the world, just taking, and polytheists like Christians would rather donate money more than time to their deities or own “faith community”, so “community service ministry” never reaches the minds of most solitary Pagans, which most of us are. The last reason – the depressing one – is the pettiness of cliques and organizations who won’t work together. Even though tons of Pagans in theory want to do something for people who have nothing in their religion, they put human B.S. first. (That’s why it’s so easy to do it your way – who can say you’re wrong? It’s not the Internet – you’ll be respected and treated well and your opinions valued!) And, yeah, I explain all this after “Pagans suck.” Look, in all the Pagan books you’ve read, how many ever suggested service offerings or ministry to those who can’t pay? Almost none. And I ask these prisoners if they were doing anything positive for strangers when outside? Well, hey, then you know what people on the outside are like, dude.)

If you are scared that you don’t know enough about Paganism to be a resource or guide style pen pal, don’t worry. You have blogs you can copy and paste in narrow margins using the font that takes the least space to make cheap “newsletters.” You can send 4¢ photos of deities, altars and shrines found online. Prison is very visually boring and people study photos together. Art pix are also really popular.

You have access to so much! And you might change someone’s life by caring. A lot of people want someone to care about and my severe illnesses bring that out in the pen pals that want to be allies and get over self pity – i.e. the types of people I value.

On with February!

The Anglo-Saxon month that roughly corresponds with February was called “Sun month” although another source has it called “kale month.” Kale is a very nutritious green which grows successfully in cold climates. “Sun month” obviously refers to the lengthening of the days.

February is named for God Februus of purification. In the earliest Roman calendar, the new year began on March 1, so February originally was for cleansing away the impurities of the last year.
On February 1 the sacred grove of Helernus, Roman God of vegetables, was filled with devotees. As Priests made sacrifices, the public prayed for a good vegetable crop.

Juno Sospita, Goddess of Protection and Fertility, wore goat skin with the head and horns as a helmet. Accompanied by a crow or raven (scavenger birds of the battlefield) or snake, Juno Sospita held a spear and sword. In Her home town Lanuvium on February 1 virgins were blindfolded and led out of town to Juno’s grove. The girls brought barley cakes to feed Juno’s sacred snake. When the snake ate, the town knew that the land and humans would be fertile.

Imbloc is the Gaelic day honoring hearth Goddess Brig. Being cold in Ireland and Scotland, it was a household ritual, focusing on gratitude for longer days and milk from ewes (female sheep) giving birth.

In medieval England ewes still gave birth in early February, celebrated as Ewemeole. Food reserves were low and harvests weren’t for many months, so the milk was vital for survival.

9 days after the full moon of the lunar month in January–February, the Diasi, the largest festival of sky father Zeus, was held in Athens. Pastries shaped like pigs and sheep were offered by the entire population.

Around this time, those people preparing for initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries spent at least 3 days doing the Mysteries at Agrai, or the Lesser Mysteries.

February 5 is the Roman Februalia, honoring Februus. The home was thoroughly cleaned, then a Priest or member of the household banished anything that might bring harm. Salt and grain were sprinkled around the home. As the mixture was swept outside with a pine bough, the bad spirits were also swept away.

From February 5 to 17 Romans honored Fornax, Goddess of the Ovens, with the Fornacalia. The communal feast was simple, with Her wine offering given from ceramic jugs, not expensive metals. Fornax protected the home from oven fires and the bread from burning. In the past families shared a communal oven, which is the root of the Fornacalia celebration.

The old Swedish month Goe was in our February and March. For one week in Goe, Sweden had its annual Thing of All Swedes (like a parliamentary meeting but all free men were allowed to attend). Along with political and legal affairs, the Thing hosted a great market called The Disting and a Disirblot to honor female ancestors and other powerful women/Goddesses. Offerings for peace were made at the Great Temple in Uppsala.

The 9th is sacred to the Orisha Oya.

February 13 (or the full moon) is the Roman Festival for Faunus, rural God of the wild woodlands. His name means “Kindly One” and He looked after the lonely shepherd. Hunters and farmers also honored Him.

On February 13 the city of Rome was purified by the Amburbium. Chanting and making sacrifices, a procession of solemn worshipers circled the city’s boundaries.

The 6th day of the February–March month of Athens is dedicated to Artemis Elaphelios (“Shooter of the Deer”).

2 days later Asklepios, the demi-God of healing, was honored in Athens. The Dionysia also began and continued for 6 days. Singing boys and a wooden statue of Dionysus, God of vines, were part of a procession, celebrating His liberation from winter. People went to the theatres for 3 days, enjoying comedies and tragedies.

February 17 was the Quirinalia, a Roman festival celebrating the ancient Sabine (an Italian people) God Quirinus. The Sabines had a fortified settlement near Rome, the Quirinal, named after Quirinus. The settlement was absorbed by Rome and Quirinus joined
Jupiter and Mars as Gods of the Roman state. Depicted as a bearded man in the clothes of a Priest and soldier, His wife is Hora and His plant is myrtle.

Parentalia, Rome’s private rites to appease the dead, was held from February 13 to 21. Temples were closed, marriage was not allowed and no altar fires burned. A Vestal Virgin started the Parentalia by pouring a libation to the dead. Families gathered at the family tomb to perform private rituals of offerings. Ovid guides us: “The Dark Shades seek little, they prefer devotion over a costly gift.” The Feralia was the public end of the Parentalia, held February 21. The dead (“manes”) wandered around the cemetery, enjoying offerings left for them. Temples were still closed so people gave the manes all their attention.

The Feralia also honored God Jupiter Feretrius, the aspect of Jupiter that made certain oaths were kept. He witnessed the signing of contracts and marriages, with those involved asking that He strike them down should they break their vows. A women’s ritual in honor of Tacita, the Roman Goddess of Silence, was lead by an older woman. The main part involved sewing the mouth of a small, dead fish closed, as the woman said, “We have bound tight hostile tongues and unfriendly mouths.”

After honoring the ancestors, the Cara Cognatio (Roman Festival of Caring Kin) honored the living family and household deities on February 22. Household deities received offerings and the family members made peace and prayed for harmonious relationships.

February 23 is the Roman Festival of Terminus, God of land boundaries.

On the 27th Rome held horse-racing festivals for was God Mars called the Equirria.

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Only Ancient Image of Idunna Found –at Balder’s Funeral! 6th century Germanic Paganism

January 7, 2020 | 1 Comment

I posted recently about a lot of the important information an article by Speidel on Burgundian 6th century belt buckles gives us about Germanic mythology and how these deities look. That particular belt buckle from Saint-Maur depicts Balder’s fight on the way to Hel, a forgotten scene from Baldr’s Draumar. This post’s buckle from Saint-Quentin is our only ancient portrayal of Idun, and She’s at Balder’s funeral. The Eddas don’t mention Idun attending Balder’s funeral, so there’s obviously an older, lost piece of the myth that was vital to the story. The belt buckle from Saint-Maur (and other art of the time) gives us fantastic details on how Balder, Loki, Hel and the World Tree were depicted consistently by Germanic tribes from Italy to Denmark in the 6th century, which I hope Heathen storytellers and artists are as excited about as I am! I so want to see modern versions of Loki the birdman and Hel with Her torch!

Idunna and four Gods are depicted on a 6th century buckle found in a limestone sarcophagus from Saint-Quentin, which was beneath the Merovingian collegiate church of Saint-Quentin in northern France. Four winged “angels” hold a wreath formed by a twin-headed snake around a large seated man with a beard and wings. The man was thought to be the Christ – except the Christ never is depicted with a huge erection. This is common for Balder on some other Burgundian belt buckles. No scholar ever tried to explain the penis on the Saint-Quentin belt buckle because if you expect the Christ, there is no explanation. The Burgundians were converted to Christianity by now, but it appears that some wealthy people kept Pagan images. The Frankish belt buckle in the Cottel collection (National Museum of Antiquities in Saint Germain) depicts Balder also seated on a throne, as does a Frankish buckle kept in Köln, but with the addition of the erect penis and weapons.

Fabric hangs beside and between the 4 “angels”’ legs, their Germanic noble “Prachtmantel” falling down over their back. The “angels” are actually deities, most of whom we can find in other art. Late German migration era deities were sometimes portrayed with wings. This is especially true with some Eastern European Heathen Germanic belt buckles whose Germanic makers were possibly influenced by the Asian steppes culture that temporarily ruled them. These steppes people are believed to have had shamans who shape-changed into birds of prey for Otherworldly astral travel and possibly brought this concept to Heathen religion. Often on
shape-changed into birds of prey for Otherworldly astral travel and possibly brought this concept to Heathen religion. Often on Burgundian Christian buckles the names of the mythical beings depicted are written with the figure. With the Saint-Quentin belt buckle scholars could not easily understand the “words” on the “angels” because none of them thought to consider that the letters were runes. A note was made in 1956 that someone should look into this. Today, looking at the art with a Heathen’s eye, the letters as runes make sense.

In the upper left is the most important God, Tiw, who offers Balder His decorated spear. 3 Tyr runes are across His chest. Tiw has short hair, a beard and an ax. In the lower left corner is Woden, with His typical braid in a knot and perhaps an early Walknuten on His chest of the runes “WWW.” He hands over a large ring, almost definitely Draupnir, which we see Woden with on 5th century bracteates.

The upper right portrays Frey, probably with the rune F on His chest. He has no pupils causing His eyes to look fierce. As on the Rällinge statuette and the Gotlandic Sanda picture stone 166, Frey has a pointed chin beard. In what must be a pre-Gerda myth, Frey gives Balder His slightly curved narrow sword, as seen also on the Saint-Maur buckle and on the Sanda picture stone.

Most spectacular is Idun in the lower right corner. She is shorter than the Gods, unlike Hela who is always tallest. Idun’s face is wide and Her hair is elaborately styled. She wears a neck band and spreads Her legs, naked thighs exposed. This is as sexy as it gets in the 6th century! This is screaming “fertility Goddess!” Obviously Idun’s sexuality is tied to the immortality of the deities. Her left hand offers Balder an apple. On one of Her thighs may be the runes ID. Idun’s sexuality may have been toned down by the Christian Snorri. We know that Her apples don’t actually keep the deities immortal; She does, and that’s why a giant has Loki kidnap Her. (As apple trees were brought north by the Romans, the golden apples of Idunna really do seem to be adopted by Germanic mythology from the Greeks via the Romans.)

Peaceful twin snakes circle the deities on the Lyngby medallion and on the Saint-Quentin buckle, as they do here. There’s a knotwork border with four winged serpents beyond it, thought to be outer edges of Hela’s realm. The scene has been interpreted as Balder’s funeral, safely in Hel, receiving gifts from the Gods. The gifts don’t appear to just be symbolic of the deities depicted. They are found in myth together, just not this myth.

In the Eddic Skírnismál, Skirnir tries to win the Jotun Goddess Gerda’s hand in marriage for Frey, offering Her Idun’s apples, Frey’s sword and Odin’s Draupnir. Skirnir recalls Balder’s funeral when he offers Gerda Draupnir. He also uses a stave carved with runes about infertility or sexual desperation to threaten Gerda, whose name means “enclosed field” where fertility is most desired.

Balder probably needed these gifts from the deities to survive into the next world. During Ragnarok, Balder stays safe, waiting with Nanna (even known in the 6th century) at a banquet in Hel, until the reborn world needs His leadership. Perhaps Balder kept the powers of the deities safe: the spear of the rightful ruler, the Magick sword, the endless prosperity of Draupnir and the apples of immortality. Belt buckles, including the Christian ones, often had a prayer or charm engraved on them to protect the wearer from death. Perhaps belt buckles depicting Balder’s funeral and His trip to meet the waiting Goddess Hela reassured Burgundian warriors about their ultimate fate, to die and be reborn as Balder’s companion in the Realm of Ancestors.

The buckles being called Burgundian were mostly cast after the Merovingian Franks took control of Burgundy. But they have the usual themes, images and rectangular design of the Burgundians who settled around Lake Geneva and north of the Jura Mountains.

To read the actual paper, there’s a link on the first post about it. I’m just summing up most of it because it is so invaluable for all those who honor the Germanic deities.

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January Pagan Holy Days Resource

December 20, 2019

Gullveig Press sends an 18 page detailed polytheist calendar with dates of new (NOT dark) and full moons, Mercury Retrograde and lots of information about other Pagan cultures’ division of the year, month and week to incarcerated prisons for $2.25. But if you are pen pals with a Pagan in prison, you can copy each month’s calendar from this blog, print and mail! It’s usually posted on the 23rd so you have a time to send it.

Make sure that you included the Introduction to the Calendar so they can understand the Athens calendar, the Julian calendar and have the dates for the new and full moon. As the mail is slower this time of year, try to send it at least a week in advance. Thank you for doing this work for your pen pal!!

Gullveig Press Pagan Festival Calendar by Heather Awen, author of “Steel Bars, Sacred Waters: Celtic Paganism for Prisoners” Gullveig Press, PO Box 126, St Johnsbury, VT 05819, 556 pages, $12 includes shipping.

January is named for Roman God Janus, who rules over beginnings and the transitional space of doorways. He’s depicted with a face of both sides of His head. January became the 1st month of the year later in Roman history. Originally it was March.

January 1 is Janus Agonalia, when Romans gave sweets like jars of honey, dates and figs to Janus and their loved ones so their year would be sweet. Ovid instructs: “Now must good words be spoken…. banish mad disputes straightaway!” They believed that you must only say positive, kind words when beginning anything.

Vediovus, a Roman God of the manes (the dead), was active in the barren month of January. He’s depicted as a young man carrying arrows with a goat.

During the 1st two weeks of January Greek healing deities Aesculapius, His mother Coronis and His daughter Salus (Hygeia is her Greek name) received offerings in the Roman Empire. Aesculapius had a staff with a snake coiled around it, still the symbol for doctors today.

January 5 is the Roman Festival of Pax, Goddess of peace. Her symbols are an olive branch, cornucopia and scepter. Crossroads are places of transition that attract spirits. The Roman countryside held the Compitalia from January 3 to 5 to please the crossroad spirits. By hanging a head of garlic for every household member, their real bodies and minds would stay safe. In towns, families on the same block brought honey cakes to a festival.
The 8th is sacred to the tough Haitian lwa of the Revolution, abandoned children and lesbians, Erzuli Dantor.

The Carmentalia is January 11 or 13 (or full moon), when the nymph Carmentis was invoked as Postvorta and Antevorta, names that refer to Her power of looking into the past and the future. The festival was mostly held by women. No leather or blood sacrifices are allowed in a grove or temple of Carmentis. Instead of wine, She wants milk as a libation (drink).

The 17th is dedicated to Ogun in New Orleans Voodoo, focusing on work opportunities and protection. During the waning moon of January rural Romans celebrated the Sementivae and Paganalia. While sowing of seeds, sacrifices of baked goods were made to Tellus (Mother Earth) on one day and Ceres (grain Goddess; similar to Greek Demeter) on another. The community prayed for a good harvest, peace and prosperity.

2 days before the dark moon of the lunar cycle of December-January, Hera, Greek Goddess of marriage, was honored with Her husband and the leader of the deities, bright sky father Zeus, at the Gamelia.

The day after the new moon was sighted in the lunar month of January-February began the Anthesterion (Older Dionysia) in Athens. Focus was on the flowers of spring. (The climate was similar to Southern California.) After sunset clay jars of wine were broken as a libation for Dionysus, God of wine. The next day featured drinking competitions as the dead wandered amongst the living, receiving water and wheat flour mixed with honey. The day ended by banishing the dead, yelling, “Get out, Keres (spirits that work harm), the Anthesteria is over!” The next day people ate pottage (boiled grains with honey) and offered it to Hermes in His role as psychopomp (guide to the dead).

The 27th Romans celebrated the birth of Castor and Pollux, horse riding sons of Zeus. Gauls also worshiped Them.

If we’ve missed a traditional Pagan festival please let us know! Include information about the festival and the source of the information.

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**The Cailleach Yule Protection Magick**

*December 16, 2019* 1 Comment

There’s a Scottish Yule tradition that combines Gaelic myth and Norse Heathenry with Magick. As the well-known legend of the Cailleach Bheur (pronounced KAL-lyuhk VYEYR) says She came from Norway, dropping boulders carried in Her apron, we get a glimpse of the Norse influence from the Norwegian nobles fleeing the newly united Norway for Scotland. In the Irish Story of Mongan the Cailleach Dubh only She has the red-eared white cow (Otherworld colors) who is needed to save the King of Lochlann (Scandinavia). There is a legendary old witch with a name similar to the Cailleach known in Norway and Sweden.

The Cailleach is firmly rooted and thriving in Gaelic myth, legend and place names. The Cailleach is a title given to many Goddesses in Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland who are land-shapers,
The Cailleach is a title given to many Goddesses in Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland who are land-shapers, shapeshifters, giantesses, guardians of animals (especially deer and magical cattle), and associated with winter, storms, and wells that could overflow and destroy the world. Aside from Cailleach Bheur, Her other northern Scottish names are Gyre Carling (“biting old woman”) who is the Queen of the Fairies, Nicneven (“daughter of Nevis”) with Her water nymphs (Ben Nevis the tallest mountain in Scotland and the Cailleach Bheur’s home) and “Gentle Annie” which is a name used by sailors to placate Her when sailing by the dangerous Corryvreckan Whirlpool (“Cauldron of Plaid”) where She washes her clothing. The Cailleach Beinn Na Bric (“of the Speckled Mountain”) and the Cailleach Mhor Nam Fiadh (“Great Cailleach of the Deer”) tell hunters when to hunt and how many to kill. Those who do not listen meet terrible fates. In the Lowlands She is often called Carlin and many stones are named for her. On the land traditionally controlled by my ancestors, the infamous cattle raider clan Tweedie, there’s a rock called “the Carlin’s Tooth.”

Her blue skin is like dark storm clouds, Her white hair is like leafless trees in the snow, and Her one eye is like the glaring winter sun. In the spring She renews Her youth by bathing in a pool at dawn, before a dog can bark.

The Isle of Man has the famous prophetess Cailleach ny Gueshag (“of the Spells”) and the Caillag ny Gyoamagh, “Lady of Gloominess,” with a mood like storm clouds and rain. Her husband is the Sea God Manannan Beg Mac y Leirr, and She is sometimes seen as a heron gathering sticks. (The Scottish Cailleach of Loch a-na-Cailleach rides a heron in the moonlight.)

In Ireland the Cailleach Bearra is famous for a boulder throwing contest with another Cailleach that shaped the land around Poll Mountain. The Cailleach in County Kerry (southeast Munster) lives in a cave under a rock and is said to have lived there since the time of the Fir Bolg. Corca Duidhna is the Cailleach of the Dingle Peninsula, also in southeast Munster. In County Mayo (northern Connaught), the Cailleach Bhearthach lives at Neifinn Mountain. Two live near the Cliffs of Moher in Western Ireland: the Cailleach Bronach (“the Cailleach of Sorrow”) and Cailleach Mal at Hag’s Head. In western Connaught the Cailleach Bearra’s great age is the focus. A Christian Priest asks Her how many years She’s lived and She replies that there is a bone in her attic for each one. The Priest keeps trying to count the bones, but never can.

The Cailleach is associated with many Neolithic passage tombs similar to Newgrange, but smaller. Loughcrew is home to many, including the large stone Sliabh na Caillíghe which faces north known as the “Chair of the Hag”. The over 25 tombs were built on three hilltops now called “the Old Woman’s Mountains”. Many of the passage tombs are aligned with sunrise on the equinoxes, where a beam of sunlight illuminates the patterned spiral, lozenge and circle decorated back walls, above a stone bowl that would have held ashes from cremations. Over half of Ireland’s counties can be viewed from the hills, and the tombs, covered in white quartz stones, would have glistened from far away. What makes these pre-Celtic tombs relevant to Celtic Paganism is that La Tene style art on pieces of bone and Celtic glass beads, bronze rings and bone pins were discovered in one. The tomb was still considered a sacred site 3,000 years after its construction, receiving offerings usually associated with women.

The tomb’s link to the equinoxes is intriguing. In what is probably a rather modern tale, the Cailleach Bheur holds prisoner the Goddess of Summer (Brid, the Scottish Bridget, pronounced “breedj”) until either just after the spring equinox (March 25th, Lady’s Day) or Beltane. Sometimes She has a son Angus Ever-Young (much like the Irish Aengus Mac Og) who stays at the Emerald Isle of the West (Ireland) during winter. He falls in love with Brid and fights His mother all spring, causing the erratic weather patterns. Other times Brid frees Herself, using her wand to bring the land back to life.

The Cailleach is a title meaning “veiled one”, which is thought refer to nuns. Historically, many older noble widows often became nuns. Their time bearing and raising children over, they were politically obsolete for their families. For many, the peaceful company of nuns and monks, time spent spinning wool, baking bread for the poor, tending medicinal herb gardens and teaching children to read and write would have been a good “retirement”. Today Cailleach’s used as an insult similar to “hag.” (The Irish fella I’ve been with for 4 years was a housemate when we were teenagers in Galway and still lives in Ireland. When I was writing Steel Bars, Sacred Waters: Celtic Paganism for Prisoners, he thought that Cailleach was a very odd name for a Goddess, since he himself even uses Cailleach to describe a mean, bitter, rude older woman.)
In some parts of northern Scotland the Cailleach is blamed for the illnesses and deaths that happen during winter. The Norse tradition of the Yule log was part of the Christmas season, but with a different meaning. A Norse Yule log should be so large and long that several men are needed to carry it into the long house, for it must burn for 12 nights and days.

The regional change to the Norse Yule log is to find a gnarled, twisted log that is considered ugly as the winter death-dealing Cailleach. The log is officially named the Cailleach, with all the diseases and injuries She brings. Set on fire, Her destructive power is destroyed in the purifying flames.

There are ways for those of us who don’t or can’t have access to fire can use this spell. All ritual items in Steel Bars, Sacred Waters had to be things Pagans could make with only paper, pencil and tap water. That’s really the only reason it’s for prisoners – Remove that and people say it’s the pan-Celtic Reconstruction based book they’ve always wanted. It’s honestly the book I always wanted. A prisoner wrote thanking me for going beyond the “standard manufactured Celtic deities” and asked why other Pagan books don’t offer new information so both beginner and intermediate Pagans can continue to grow. A free world Pagan Group in Alaska asked me the same thing: Where’s the resources for the intermediate Pagans? How can we grow in soil of 101 books? Since no one else even mentions the incredibly important Iberian Celtic deities and cultures, I’m very pleased that I have made those deities accessible after 1600 years without worship. And we actually DO have a lot of information about Celtic rituals; it’s just not the same from Ireland to the Ukraine.

If you have a fireplace, you can find your own smaller version of the Cailleach log. If you have a candle, you can write all the deadly problems that come with winter on a piece of paper twisted into a log and burned in the candle flame. I suggest doing all fire magic in a sink. Keep a bowl of water in case the Cailleach needs to be drowned to prevent a dangerous fire.

The ritual for prisoners and people like me who physically are made ill by any flame uses paper. Draw a gnarled, twisted log while focusing on the life-threatening aspects of the Cailleach. With all versions of the Cailleach log, your ability to focus on the Cailleach or visualize Her dangers and will the log to become what you think is the most important part. Know that it is the winter Cailleach who would bring illness, injury and death to your door.

Next draw flames over the Cailleach log. Concentrate on the log burning, being consumed by the life-giving, protective fire. If you have a deep Gaelic cosmology, you may want to think of the fire as the Goddess Brid. The flames drawn over the Cailleach log should be drawn faster and faster, messier and messier, as your passion builds to eradicate Her. Drone hum or shake little rattles or bells tied to your clothing. You can chant a rhyme that states the goal as having happened such as “The Cailleach is gone/ and with Her all that’s wrong!” or “Alive I am, healthy I stay/ For the Cailleach has been burned away!” (These insular Celtic additions from ancient ceremony and folk Magick can of course be used if you have fire.)

When the Cailleach log is totally covered with lines and can no longer be seen (or the paper has turned to ashes), the rite is done. Focus on releasing the last built up energy into the paper or ashes with your palms and breath, careful not to scatter the ashes. “By the forces of land, sea and sky, so it is done.” Toss the totally cool ashes out the back door if you have one or scatter by a cemetery with which you have a good relationship. (Picking up trash, making offerings to the first woman and first man buried there, and practicing good psychic hygiene like the ancient Greeks after they were exposed to miasma by bathing and/or burning sulfur immediately after leaving – these are some ways to safely earn the respect of the cemetery and its guardian spirits. Sulfur smells like rotten eggs.) If you cannot go outside, forcefully tear or crumble up the paper and put in the trash.

Steel Bars, Sacred Water is available directly from Gullveig Press at a lower price than at Amazon. All proceeds go to sending free copies to incarcerated Pagans. We have special bulk order and prison clergy/volunteer prices and Australian discounts, as Amazon Australia does not carry the book. We will happily buy a prisoner a copy if you donate $12 U.S.! And remember to donate used paperbacks on almost any topic to your nearest books-to-prisoners organization. Many prisoners are functionally illiterate and prisoners share books, so your donation will improve on average seven prisoners’ ability to read per book!
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