

household. It is called the Hari no Kuyo. Reverse the roles; step into each other's shoes!

December 9

FEAST OF TONANTZIN (MEXICAN)

In 1531 the ancient Goddess Tonantzin appeared on this day to Juan Diego at the site of her old pagan temple on Tepayak Hill, which had stood undisturbed since the Spanish conquest. According to Juan Diego, Tonantzin said she loved the people and wanted her shrine rebuilt. Her wish was granted. Tonantzin was believed to be the manifestation of the Virgin Mary. Hence, Tonantzin is called the Virgin of Guadalupe, and on this day she is celebrated by Mexican people, who come to her shrine from all over the world. "For I am the Mother of all of you who dwell in this land," said she. * Viva Tonantzin!

December 13

ST. LUCY'S DAY (SWEDISH)

This is the grandest celebration of Lucina as Sun Goddess. Women dress as brides and parade through the streets dispensing cookies and drinks, spreading cheer as the Goddess dispenses the new rays of the sun. The daughter of the house, wearing a candle crown, awakens the family with cakes and song. Young girls in white dresses are most prominent in these celebrations, since the Sun Goddess is a child still. Men dress as elves, Lucy's helpers. If you fly on Swedish airlines on this day, the crew will still perform Lucy's fest for you.

*Durbin-Robertson, Juno Covella. 248.

December 17

CELEBRATION OF OPS; SATURNALIA (ROMAN)

Saturn and Ops, the Goddess of Plenty, celebrate their blessings today. This was the original gift-giving season, when people gave each other things wrapped in rice paper for Ops, Goddess of Fertility, and dolls representing the people themselves in health and prosperity. Saturn liked partying, with wine and singing. Slaves were given freedom on this day, and every effort was made to return to the Golden Age, when there had been no social ranks. The festival went on for the rest of the month. This custom is the origin of all the carnivals and revels. Some of these carnivals have survived in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Hungary.



December 21

WINTER SOLSTICE; SUN REENTERS CAPRICORN

This is the Winter Solstice, the birth of ~~the~~ a major sabbat for witches, who greet the sun with all-night vigils and dance and sing in the new rays. The sun reenters Capricorn the sign of the goat. Virgin mothers give birth to their children all around the world: Isis gives birth to the sacred son Persephone; Demeter gives birth to her sacred daughter Persephone; the goddess gives birth to Dionysus. Amaterasu (Japan) comes out of her cave. These celebrations of rebirth are the origins of Christmas.

December 23**FOOL'S DAY (EUROPEAN)**

Pagan lore tells of the yearly dying and rebirth of the king. On this day in Europe, the town's fool was crowned and seated on the throne, and the real king went into "hiding," a simulated death. Even the mighty had to die in order to be reborn again.

**December 24****MOTHER NIGHT (ANGLO-SAXON)**

Our pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors called the night before Christmas the night of the mothers—or Modraniht (Anglo-Saxon for Mother Night). Who were these mysterious mothers, who awed all the world? As in an orchestrated divine act, the great goddesses from all over the world gave birth, and the new world was born.

This is a magical time—a renewed commitment to life has been made by the mothers. Youth is filled with excitement, because after the night of the mothers, their turn is coming. The next day, all the love the mothers celebrated will shower down on the young in the form of presents of magical meaning. These early Anglo-Saxons most likely had a big dinner for each other, where the women of the family visited and got presents ready for the children. All the popular symbols of this season come from pagan times. The Tree of Life, our Christmas tree, we decorate today with round balls and lights. The sweets we hang on it, the gifts we place under it, the entire nativity scene is part of the pagan heritage. Putting the yule log on the fire has Germanic/Scandinavian origins. Yule means "the wheel." Ops is still giving presents as her festival continues. The Star Goddess, the

Lady of Nature, rules over the world. Her symbol of the pole star, displayed on top of all Christmas trees, reminds us of our deep memories of her.

December 25**JUVENALIA: DAY OF THE CHILDREN (ROMAN)**

On this day, much artistic entertainment— theater, mummings, stories, magical characters (harlequins, fools) in costumes and masks—was provided for the children. Everyone wore their best clothes and ate the best foods. Giving talisman presents that had good luck value—a bell, a lucky hat, a pair of socks for you to wear on your lucky path, toys, warm things to wear during the winter yet to come—were probably the first gifts. There were dances, where youth met, courted each other, and fell in love under the mistletoe. Long before our Anglo-Saxon ancestors had their very first contact with Christianity (a Far Eastern import not indigenous to Europe), they already celebrated Christmas, which for centuries was known as Modraniht, much as we celebrate it today.

December 25 _____

CELEBRATION OF ASTARTE (SEMITIC)

Related to Ishtar of Babylon, starry Astarte, the Great Goddess from the Middle East, dates back to neolithic times. She was the creating, preserving, and destroying power we associate with all the virgin goddesses. Solomon in the Bible worshipped her; maybe that's why the Christians made her into the devil Astoreth and, to make things worse, masculinized her as well. Astarte was called Athtar by the Arabs. In Aramaic, she was Attar-Samayin, the morning star in heaven. To the Canaanites, she was known as Ash-toreth, the celestial ruler, mother of Baalim, mother of all the gods.

December 25 _____YULE: RETURN OF THE SUN
(TEUTONIC)

The figure of Santa Claus has gone through many incarnations, from old god to Christian saint to a major figure in American folklore.



His reindeer testify clearly to his shamanic origins, and his elves are from the fairy traditions of the Old Religion. The Kissing Bough is the mistletoe, magic cast on would-be lovers. Sometimes a girl would sit atop the yule log as it was dragged in; then everybody drank to the health of the girl, who symbolized the sun goddess.

Saturnalia continues during this time.

December 31 _____

HECATE'S DAY (ROMAN)

The year is turning. The flames of the hearth are rekindled. Hestia/Vesta, the Goddess of the Flame, is honored. Build fires in this season, in a fireplace or outside. Light lots of candles to brighten this winter month. Banish fear, raise joy, for your journey around the sun is complete. Give thanks for the rich experiences you have had and renew your hope for another ticket around the sun:

*Queen of heaven, Goddess of the Universe,
The One who walked in the terrible chaos
And brought life by the law of love
And out of chaos brought us harmony
And from chaos she has led us by the hand.
Woman of women, Goddess who knows no
equal,
She who decrees the destiny of people,
Highest ruler of the world,
Sovereign of heaven,
Goddess even of those who live in Heaven—
Hear our prayer!**

*"Ishtar." in Stone, *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood*, 107. Permission to reprint courtesy of Beacon Press.