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The Beltane Papers

A Journal of Women's Mysteries

Earth Day (Spring) 10,011th (2011) year of the Goddess Issue 51 - \$4.00



"IxChel" by Sharon McLeod



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General e-mail: editor@thebeltanepapers.net

Website: <http://thebeltanepapers.net>

Guiding Lights: Helen Farias, Carolyn Hadley, Marione Thompson Helland, Shekkinah Mountainwater, Mary Daly, Merlin Stone

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Issue 51, Earth Day 10,011th year of the Goddess

(Spring, 2011)

Guiding Goddess: IxChel, Jaguar goddess of the Mayans, most power goddess of new life and renewal, , hear our planet's pleas. Help us cleanse and heal her wounds. Help her to regain her balance. Help us find new ways of living that protects and supports her healing. Help the people of the world realize the impact each of us has in our environment and help each of us take responsibility for preventing more damage. Lead us with your rainbows, a sign of renewal and recovery, the most wondrous rainbow appears after the storm, we are in a storm, help us see that rainbow.

Blessed Be

About the Cover Artist

Sharon McLeod was born an artist and decided to stay one! Exploring many styles she has developed her talent into a mystical display of pen and quill, watercolours and acrylics.

Sharon draws on her beliefs in the Goddess to channel beautiful esoteric work of art. Her daughters Freya and Lilith live and dream together in a forest haven behind the Gold Coast in Queensland Australia. Their passion for nature and wildlife is reflected in Sharon's exquisite range of prints and cards and arty delights! Many hours of love are weaved into each piece to make this unique collection.

To see more of Sharon's art go to www.sharonmcleod.com



About this issue...

Happy Earth Day! We've made it to 28 pages! This has allowed us to bring back book, music, products and workshops/festivals reviews. Along with this, we will no longer be mailing the folded copies. It damages the magazine too much and at 28 pages, it is too thick. From now on, all issues will be mailed in an envelope. I am also turning over the mailings to our printer. I just can't do all this myself anymore. This does increase the cost of shipping a bit, please see the new pricing at the bottom of page two on the left hand side. I am really excited about this bit of growth; TBP is coming back stronger and better than ever.

I knew this issue would take longer to get out as I pushed and pursued the topic rather than waiting to see what gathers together. I've really wanted to focus on cultures other than the western European ones for the longest time.

In my search for a goddess, the Mayan goddess IxChel stood out. She is a complex goddess who is reaching out from the past and is present in today's culture. There are museums, hotels; even tricycle taxis on Cozumel consider Her their 'patron saint' and use Her image as their logo. Children are being named after her. There

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ERRATA: I apologize for attributing Max Dash's article, *The Old Goddess*, to Jezibell Anat in the table of contents. The author is correct on the article page.

Disclaimer: *The opinions and ideas of the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff members.*

Merlin Stone 1931-2011

Marilyn C. "Merlin" Stone, sculptor, author, professor, and "her-storyian," passed away on February 23, 2011, cared for by her life partner, Len Schein. Stone had suffered from dementia and other illnesses for several years before her death at the age of 80.

Stone was born on September 27, 1931 in Brooklyn, New York. She was raised and educated in New York and went on to attend New York State College, where she earned her Bachelor's in Art Education. She then earned a MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts and also spent five years engaged in independent study at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England.

Stone worked primarily as a sculptor throughout the late 1950's and into the 1960's. Several of her pieces still stand in various locations in New York State. She also served as a Professor of Art and Art History at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Stone became interested in archaeology early on by



most accounts, and it is for her work on Goddess archaeology and prehistoric Goddess cultures that she is best known. From 1971-1976, Stone traveled through several countries in the Mediterranean, including Crete and Greece. She published her findings about what she considered a lost Goddess culture in two books, *When God Was a Woman* and *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood*. Positing a matriarchal, Goddess-focused history, *When God Was a Woman* (published in England as *The Paradise Papers*) was a catalyst for the revival of interest in Goddess mythology and veneration in the late 1970s, and is still considered a central text in feminist spiritualist and NeoPagan circles.

Stone is survived by her partner, Len; her two daughters; and millions of colleagues and admirers around the world.

Contributed by Susan Harper, Ph.D.

Merlin Stone In Memoriam

Merlin Stone, you searched and searched and shared all the deep mysteries that you found so generously sifting through the shards of our forgotten and hidden past. Without your coffee soaked vision quests, my understanding of the Goddess would have had a much smaller scope, my *Wise Woman's Tarot* would surely have been missing some amazing yet less remembered Goddesses and the world would have been slower in recognizing the simple fact that God was once and is still a woman and that we could all see ourselves reflected in some *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood*.

We stand on your shoulders gently and in awe and gratitude for your complete dedication to creating space for the Goddess of a thousand names to rise from the underground like a flaming phoenix.

We follow your lead and like a flaming phoenix we will all rise from our own ashes and resurrect self respect.

Goddess speed dear Merlin and may you be attended by many mystical maidens on your journey home .

Maat will weigh your heart and see its lightness and Hecate will cut away any and all dross from your shoulders and simply say, "Well Done."

Blessings Flash Silvermoon

Regarding Merlin Stone

I was in my early 20's and I had been studying meta-

physics for a few years. I had come to a spiritual dead end so to speak. I felt something was missing. When I discovered and read *When God was a Woman*, everything clicked! Why hadn't I thought of that? Why hadn't I explored the fact that the Divine is feminine? This was the food for my soul that I was so seeking. I began searching for other books and information that would help me on my new found path. I began to seek out Goddess groups in my area and later became initiated and subsequently ordained as a Dianic Priestess. Thank you Merlin Stone for being there when I most needed you. Blessed Be.

Liz Casillas-Stergiou

On Merlin Stone

Few people have inspired me like Merlin Stone and her work. Because of her I found Goddess; deity, archetype and ideal. Because of her, my life has been filled with inspiration, meaning and direction. It is up to the rest of us now to carry the torch. To find our voice. To speak up for Goddess ideals, because it is up to women to change the world! Thank you beloved Merlin Stone. May you smile down on us and guide us from that special resting place in the arms of the Mother.

Karen Tate

To Mark the Passing of Merlin Stone

As I look back upon my life's journey, I am well aware that there were two defining moments in early on; two

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Re-Storying Goddess: Virgin/Maiden

by Glenys Livingstone

This is the second of a four part series, Re-Storying Goddess, which is an edited excerpt from PaGaian Cosmology: Re-inventing Earth-based Goddess Religion, wherein Goddess in Her three aspects is celebrated as Poetry for the Whole Creative Dynamic continually birthing the Cosmos. Re-storying "Her" means re-storying "her" – the human, as well as our habitat – this Place that we are, that She is. It is not female biology that has betrayed the female, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton observed more than one hundred years ago, it is the stories and myths we have come to believe about ourselves. As we regain our Maternal/indigenous bodyminds we may re-create ourselves.

The Virgin as she has been known in patriarchal times is a distortion of the original understanding of Her. She is originally primarily in relationship with herself, and she is not asexual. She is decidedly self-determined, remains her own property, whether or not she has sexual relationships. The term virginity signified autonomy, and it was a power to be "at cause", instead of "at effect"; it was only in later patriarchal stories, that a Goddess' autonomy was "concomitant" with a loss of her sexuality, as in Athena's case (Robbins Dexter 143). The Goddess of old was always considered virginal; it was an ever-present quality of Hers. In some later stories before the quality was completely diminished, She frequently "renewed" her virginity ritually (Harrison 311-312) – sometimes to suit Herself, sometimes to suit the males with whom She mated. Esther Harding (125) expressed that the woman who is virgin, one-in-herself, does what she does – not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself; not because of any desire to gain power over another ... but because what she does is true.

The Virgin's purity is this: Her unswerving commitment to Her truth, Her true Self. This Self-serving purity was a deep commitment to Being. Later patriarchal obsessions with unbroken hymens turned the Virgin's essential "Yes" to Life into a "No". She became reduced in Christian times to a "closed gate." (Warner 73) sometimes naive. In the Olympian pantheon the Virgin often came to be associated with

harshness and indifference.

It was because of the Virgin's association with the beginning of things, the emergence of life, that She came to be understood as passionately protecting the flame of Being – "the 'hearth', which is also the original altar." (Neumann 284-285) She loved all beings, desired their existence. She knew Creative Lust – Lust for Being. So Virgin Goddesses of many cultures have guarded perpetual flames, representing this purity of purpose and passion. Diana, Great Virgin of Rome, is depicted with a flame. The priestesses of Brigid, Goddess in Ireland, tended a flame; which was later, for a period of time, tended by nuns and Brigid was re-configured as a saint.

As Artemis in Greece, in Her Virgin aspect She was revered as midwife because of her single-minded drive to bring life into being. (Spretnak 77-79) The earliest stories of Artemis speak of a Goddess for whom "each creature – each plant, each wood, each river – is ... a Thou, not an it." (Downing 167) Women called upon Her in childbirth, and the labour-easing herbs used by midwives in Old Europe were called Artemisia. Artemis came to be known as One that protected and nurtured the young and vulnerable, the will to life, the spirit. She was as much concerned with physical being as with the making of soul – there was no separation. As Virgin, Artemis was associated with untamed nature, the pre-domesticated, the pre-informed, the wild. She was the Possibility of the open mind, the new and untried. She had no need to be afraid, because She was certain of taking care of Herself. Artemis was known as a Mighty Huntress, and in earliest human cultures this was not contradictory to deep relationship with the animals that were hunted. She was also known as Lady of the Beasts; the deer was often Her animal – an animal associated with birth and renewal, and the bear associated with rebirth/hibernation and fierce mothering. Artemis is often depicted as an archer. Her arrow that flies true and on centre, is just as surely the arrow of Self. Christine Downing declares that



Virgin of the Seeds by Madalena Lobao-Tello

“the spear of the goddess is a spear of passion”, and notes Rene Malamud’s perception that “all passion means fundamentally a search for self.” (Downing 180, quoting Malamud in Hillman 56)

Athena has, in Western secular culture, most commonly embodied the patriarchal version of Virgin – depicted as She has been in a suit of armour, with the head of Her sister Medusa on Her shield. In Athena’s story as it evolved over time, can be seen a story of women throughout the ages. (Daly 13-14) Originally Athena was from North Africa where She was an aspect of the Triple Goddess Neith, along with Metis and Medusa. (Walker 74) In Her oldest images and stories, Athena was associated with bird and snake, and was the inventor of all arts. She was one of the very early parthenogenetic Goddesses. Patriarchal myth accounts for Athena’s existence by virtue of Zeus giving birth to Her from his head, after having swallowed her mother Metis when Metis was pregnant with Athena. Metis, Goddess of Wisdom Herself (and the old form of Athena), cannibalized by Zeus, was said to counsel Zeus from within his belly (Daly 13) – She was in effect, the first woman behind every great man. Athena became the archetype of the patriarchal dutiful daughter, Her father’s mouthpiece, used to give authority to his edicts that included the denigration of Her own kind. In the Oresteia, one of the most frequently performed Greek dramas, standardly interpreted to be a lesson in the wisdom of state administered justice, Athena casts the deciding vote to acquit Apollo of the murder of his mother. The grounds for his acquittal is that the mother is not a parent, merely the nurse of the male seed, and Athena is proclaimed as primary witness to the glory of a child brought forth from the father. Athena then persuades the Furies, the last remaining representatives of old Mother powers to submit to the new patriarchal order. Whereas, in the older stories, Athena was daughter of the Mother, indistinguishable from the Mother Herself. She was spiritual warrior – protecting the arts and wisdom, not a soldier. (Spretnak 97) Her holy quest had been in the service of Life, urging forward the creative spirit, that all may be fully what it is capable of being. It was Her vision, not armour, which was Her strength.

The Virgin aspect loves Herself, as She loves all, identified as She is with Life itself. To despise Self is to despise All. As Aphrodite, She “lifts Her robe to admire her own full buttocks” (Iglehart Austen 132); Inanna too, Great Goddess of the Sumerian people rejoices in Her own sexual beauty very explicitly. Aphrodite, like her Sumerian Sister, is the Creative Force itself. In Aphrodite’s case, She is identified with the oceans as Source of Life, and doves and waterbirds attend Her; the actual inseparability of the Mother and Virgin aspects is obvious here. It is interesting to contrast this perspective on Aphrodite with that of Jungian, Robert Johnson, who claims the patriarchal myths as the earliest sources on Her. (1) Johnson calls Aphrodite “primitive femininity”, and after affirming that all women contain “the Aphrodite nature”, proclaims “her chief characteristics ... (as) ... vanity, conniving, lust, fertility, and tyranny when she is crossed”. (Spretnak 35 quoting Johnson 6) Charlene Spretnak wonders particularly about his inclusion of “fertility” in the “string of negative adjectives”. Johnson goes on to label Aphrodite as “a thorough bitch.” (Spretnak 35 quoting Johnson 7)

Persephone is a Virgin Goddess who has been to hell and back. In Persephone’s story in its earliest version, (Spretnak 105-118) we see particularly the connection of the Crone

and the Virgin, how these two aspects are really inseparable. Persephone chooses to go to the underworld and indeed becomes Queen of the Dead; she comes to know this realm and to guide others through it, but she is equally associated with re-emergence, re-generation. She is not a naive Virgin; she can go into the darkness in trust, knowing its fertility, and trusting deeply her own impetus to sprout afresh, to begin again. She is a Virgin who has been around the block many times, and because of that (not in spite of it), she continues to believe in her capacity to take form again. This Knowledge of life and death, of the cycle, is the Mystery that was celebrated in the rites of Demeter and Persephone in Eleusis every Autumn. It was so, long before the Paschal Mysteries of Jesus crept in. Persephone’s descent is a return to the depths for Wisdom, and Her emergence from the Earth, is an image of the power to Be, that surges through all Creation continuously and is manifest in individual life stories also. She is the Seed of Life that never fades away. Persephone tends the sorrows – as Spretnak tells in her version of the story. Persephone’s pronouncement is:

You have waxed into the fullness of life And waned into darkness; May you be renewed in tranquility and wisdom. (Spretnak 116)

Persephone goes into the heart of our sorrows to unfold the Mystery. She is an energy present in the seeds, in each person, creature, all of existence – at the heart of matter, of Life.

These Goddesses are the anthropomorphic forms of an energy, a dynamic that is Virgin. She has been named Artemis, Athena, Brigid, Aphrodite, and Mary ... so that we may speak of Her. These forms that humans have given Her are only one of Her valencies, the way in which we may tell stories; there are other subtle valencies to be understood once it is clear that we speak of an aspect of Divine Essence (as opposed to a bit of patriarchally imagined female psyche). When I speak of Virgin, I understand Her as the Urge to Be – whatever it is in the dead looking branch that pushes forth the green shoot. She can be felt in you, as the Urge to take a new breath, as your hunger for food, as your hunger for anything. She is passionate. She can be felt in your longing – any longing. She is that in you which midwifes the soul, and any creative project. She is known when there is real self-love, one’s beauty recognized, one’s truth held firm and allowed Being. She is the hope, the Promise of fulfillment, symbolized and expressed in the image of the new crescent moon, and felt, as that fine sliver of light enters your eyes. She is all Possibility within you, within the seething quantum foam. She is essentially a big “Yes” to existence.

I associate the Virgin with the Buddha nature, that Shining One within all that calls us to emerge yet again ... She is the future that calls us to become all that we can become, for whom we “refine the gold”. Virgin nature is “She Who will Be”, who can hold forth her song despite any forces of disintegration. She is the courage, confidence and exuberance to say “yes” to each particular small self.

Glenys Livingstone Ph.D. has over thirty years experience on a Goddess path, which has included diverse spiritualities and a scientific perspective, inner work as well as academic scholarship. Her studies have been in theology, ritual, archaeomythology, social ecology, psychology, sociology and education.

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The Mayan Goddess IxChel

by Merlin Stone: excerpt from "Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood" pages 92-96

Beacon Press, Boston, 1979

Especially revered among women, the Mayan Ix Chel was closely associated with the moon. There is some question about whether the account of the moon's experiences with the sun was originally attributed to Ix Chel, or to another name of the Moon Goddess in Mexico and Guatemala, Ix Ac-tani. The shrine on Cozemel Island, just a few miles off the northeastern coast of the Yucatan peninsula, is definitely associated with the name Ix Chel. It was customary for all women who were pregnant or wanting to be, to visit the shrine of Ix Chel on this island. The astral bodies mentioned in this account are Venus (Chak Noh Ek), the Pleiades (Trab), and the constellation of Scorpio (Zinaan Ek) – which, incidentally, was known as Scorpions to the Mayan astronomers.

Ix Chel, sacred silver disc of the darkened heavens, first woman of the world, graciously gifted the people of the Yucatan, Campeche and Guatemala, with the easing of childbirth and the knowledge of healing. Mother of all deities, it is She who causes the blood to gather so that it may flow with the passage of the month.

So powerful was Ix Chel that when it was the time of the Haiyococab, the flooding and remaking of the earth, it was She who sent forth the inundating waters. Some say that She sent great waves from the ocean that pounced upon the land and swallowed it, while others tell of a giant earthen vessel whose contents She poured down from the skies-so that the earth could be cleansed, so that life could start anew.

Crowned with the feathers of an eagle, eagle feathers carefully woven in intricate design into Her heavenly throne, Ix Chel was known as Eagle Woman and eagles were seen



Photo by Mary Moon

as messengers of Her moon essence. From Her home in the heavens, Ix Chel watched a spider carefully as it spun its gossamer web and in this way gave birth to Ix Chebel Yax, She who later taught the knowledge of the weaving to the women of the earth. Thus they say it was the wisdom of the spider that gave us the ways of the loom and the spinning of the cotton, this knowledge brought to Guatemala by daughter Ix Chebel Yax who also taught how to blacken the cotton with carbon, how to redden the cotton with the rust of iron, how to purple the cotton with the fluid of the prized purpura shell.

Coming to the mats of those who were ill, Ix Chel would appear at their feet, invoked by the sacred smoke of copal and tobacco, bringing with Her the finely ground powder of crab, the slowly brewed broth of turkey, guava tips and the haaz papaya, the sap of the rubber tree and the honey mead balche to quench the thirst of fever. And all the while, as Ix Chel stood by the mat of the one who was ill, She held the reed cradle in

Her arms, signifying Her power over life.

Among the Mayan people, the tale was told that in the very beginning of time the heavens were filled by two great lights-for at that time the moon was as bright as the sun. Ix Chel, glowing in all Her radiance, fascinated the sun so that he became determined to win Her love. To trick Her grandfather, who guarded Her jealously, the sun borrowed the body of a hummingbird and in this form, the sun flew to the home of the gracious shining Ix Chel. Upon the sun's arrival, he was welcomed by the Goddess with a drink of the honey of tobacco flowers but sitting there, sipping upon the

cool drink, the hummingbird sun suddenly felt the sting of a clay pellet that had been sent with the force of a blow gun, piercing deep into his feathered side.

Who could have done such a thing but my grandfather, thought Ix Chel, as She carried the wounded bird to the privacy and safety of Her own room. There She nursed it gently until it could once more spread its wings and fly about the room. But caring for the wounded bird had aroused a tenderness within the Goddess, a feeling that She had never known before and when the sun suggested that they fly off together, into the empty spaces of the great heavens, to escape the jealous grandfather-though somewhat reluctant, Ix Chel agreed.

Clear across the heaven flew the two luminous bodies. Finding a cedar log canoe, they slipped it into a marshy stream of heaven and began to paddle as fast as they could. But the jealous grandfather, bursting with rage, called upon Chac, he who controlled storm, to hurl a lightning bolt at the two who had defied him. In hope of some protection, Ix Chel jumped into the water and became a crab. The sun soon followed close behind Her, taking the form of a mottled turtle. But the strategy was to no avail as the lightning bolt aimed at Ix Chel found its target-and the Goddess lay dead in the slow moving waters of the reed filled stream of heaven.

The buzzing of heavenly dragonflies mourned hymns around Her body. Wings fluttered in ripples' of grief. But lamentation transformed into action when the dragonflies prepared thirteen hollow logs and for thirteen days they hovered about the dead Ix Chel-so many dragonflies that no one could see what was happening, not even the sun. On the thirteenth night the logs broke open. Out of twelve crawled the great and awesome snakes of heaven but from the thirteenth, Ix Chel emerged-once again alive and brilliant in Her regained wholeness. The sun was overjoyed and this time proposed marriage to which Ix Chel agreed. Thus the pair set up. their home in heaven, side by side.

But it was not long before there was trouble, for soon they had a constant visitor in their new home. The brother of the sun, the delicately beautiful Chac Noh Ek, stopped by all too often for the comfort of the sun, often lingering closer to the moon and quickly disappearing when the sun arrived. The sun grew hot with jealousy, accusing the radiant Ix Chel of encouraging his brother, accusing the glowing Ix Chel of succumbing to his brother's charms, finally accusing the Moon Goddess of making love with Chac Noh Ek. And refusing to listen to Her words of reply, in insanely jealous rage-the sun threw the moon down from the heavens!

Landing not far from the Lake of Atitlan, scarcely missing the peak of the nearby volcano, Ix Chel fell upon the grassy banks, Her frustration and hurt at unjust accusations changing to anger and defiance. Just at that moment a vulture came gliding down and landing close by, the vulture's

The Goddess IxChel

retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ixchel>

Ixchel or Ix Chel is the 16th-century name of the aged jaguar goddess of midwifery and medicine in the ancient Mayan culture. She corresponds, more or less, to Toci Yoalticitl 'Our Grandmother the Nocturnal Physician', an Aztec earth goddess inhabiting the sweatbath, and also appears to be related to another Aztec goddess invoked at birth, viz. Cihuacoatl. In Taube's revised Schellhas-Zimmermann classification of codical deities, Ixchel corresponds to the goddess O.

Identification

Referring to the early 16th-century Mayas, Landa calls Ixchel "the goddess of making children", and also mentions her as the goddess of medicine. In the month of Zip, the feast Ihcil Ixchel was celebrated by the physicians and shamans (*hechiceros*), and medicine bundles containing little idols of "the goddess of medicine whom they called Ixchel" and also divination stones were brought forward. In the Ritual of the Bacabs, Ixchel is once called 'grandmother'. The goddess's two principal qualities (birthing and healing) suggest, in their combination, an analogy with the aged Aztec goddess of midwifery, Toci Yoalticitl.

Ixchel was already known to the Classical Mayas. As Taube has demonstrated, she corresponds to goddess O of the Dresden Codex, an aged woman with jaguar ears. A crucial piece of evidence in his argument is the so-called 'Birth Vase' (Kerr 5113), a Classic Mayan container showing a childbirth presided over by various old women with weaving implements in their headdress, and headed by an old jaguar goddess, the codical goddess O. On another Classic Mayan vase, goddess O is shown acting as a physician, further confirming her identity as Ixchel. The combination of Ixchel with several aged midwives on the Birth Vase recalls the Tz'utujil assembly of midwife goddesses called the 'female lords', the most powerful of whom is described as being particularly fearsome.

Meaning of the Name

The name Ixchel was in use in 16th-century Yucatan and in the Baja Verapaz. Its meaning is not certain. Assuming that the name originated in Yucatan, *chel* could mean 'rainbow'. Her glyphic names in the (Post-Classic) codices have two basic forms, one a prefix with the primary meaning of 'red' followed by a pictogram, the other one logosyllabic. Ix Chel's Classic name glyph remains to be identified. It is quite possible that several names were in use to refer to the goddess, and these need not necessarily have included her late Yucatec and Pokom name. Her codical name is now generally rendered as 'Chac Chel'.

Ix Chel and the Moon

In the past, Ix Chel has been identified as the Clas-

compassion for the moon caused it to offer Her a ride to the high mountain peaks where the vultures made their home. It was in this way that Ix Chel met the King of the Vultures and in Her sorrow and confusion accepted his offer to stay there with him as his lover.

But the sun soon learned that far from suffering, his wife was now well treated by the handsome black bird and in his jealousy, he grew even hotter-until he finally devised a scheme to find the vulture's nest. Hiding in the hide of a deer, the sun waited for a vulture to spot the carcass. Even sooner than he expected, vulture wings swooped down upon the deer, whereupon the jealous sun hopped upon the vulture's back-and so was taken to the summit where Ix Chel now lived.

Once there, the sun begged, he pleaded with Ix Chel, poured out apologies like drops of water in a flooding river, spoke perfect pictures of all they had experienced together to first become husband and wife. In even deeper confusion than before, Ix Chel bade the handsome vulture farewell and flew back into the heavens with the sun-to resume Her celestial throne beside him. Hardly had She settled back into Her heavenly home, when again the sun grew hot with jealousy. Angrily, he shouted at Ix Chel, 'Why do you move so close to Chac Noh Ek? Why do you allow Zinaan Ek to brush against you and why do you stay in the house of the Tzab? Everyone sees you embrace them before you part. How can I call myself your husband and still keep my pride before all the others of heaven? It is true that you are beautiful, lustrous and radiant, wise and gentle, but if I cannot have you for my own, no one else will have you as you ,are!' Thus shouting and raging, the sun began to beat his wife, trying to destroy the beauty of Her being, to scar Her so badly, no other would want Her. Ix Chel stood firm with defiance as the blows fell upon Her. But as Her brilliance dimmed with the severe assault, Her will inside grew stronger-until, finally, with an anger of Her own, She flew off into the night!

Never again did She marry another, though many offered marriage as She passed by. 'The sun is my husband', She would say, though She quickly disappeared whenever he arrived. Wandering alone in the dark night sky, She thought about the women of the earth, those who paddled miles in small canoes to pray at Her shrine on Cozumel Island, those who asked for Her help, those who truly needed Her, those who had loved Her always. Thus among the many gifts of knowledge that Ix Chel gave to the women who knew Her best at Cozumel, was Her example that a woman must be free to come and go as she pleases-just as Ix Chel comes and goes, even disappearing for days at a time. But women trust that Ix Chel will return, for no matter how often She leaves, She soon reappears in the night time sky, Her image most brilliantly reflected in the waters that caress the shores of Cozumel.

sic Maya moon goddess because of the Moon's association with fertility and procreation. However, iconographically, such an equation is untenable, since the Classic Maya moon goddess, identifiable through her crescent, is always represented as a fertile young woman. On the other hand, the waning moon is often called 'Our Grandmother', and not inconceivably, Ixchel may have represented this particular lunar phase associated with the diminishing fertility and eventual dryness of old age. Her codical attribute of an inverted jar could then refer to the jar of waning moon being emptied. However this may be, the moon cycle, taken alone, is of obvious importance to the work of the midwife.

Ixchel as an Earth Goddess

An entwined serpent serves as Ixchel's headdress, crossed bones may adorn her skirt, and instead of human hands and feet, she sometimes has claws. Very similar features are found with Aztec earth goddesses, of whom Tlaltecuhltli, Toci, and Cihuacoatl were invoked by the midwives. More in particular, the jaguar goddess Ixchel could be conceived as a female warrior with a gaping mouth suggestive of cannibalism, thus showing her affinity with Cihuacoatl Yaocihuatl 'War Woman'. This manifestation of Cihuacoatl was always hungry for new victims, just as her midwife manifestation helped to produce new babies viewed as captives.

Ixchel as a Rain Goddess

In the Dresden Codex, goddess O occurs in almanacs dedicated to the rain deities or Chaacs and is stereotypically inverting a water jar. On the famous page 74 originally preceding the New Year pages, her emptying of the water jar replicates the vomiting of water by a celestial dragon. Although this scene is usually understood as the Flood bringing about the world's and the year's end, it might also represent the dramatic onset of the rainy season. The image of the jar filled with rain water may derive from the sac holding the amniotic liquid; turning the jar would then be equivalent to birthgiving.

Mythology

Ixchel figures in a Verapaz myth related by Las Casas, according to which she, together with her spouse, Itzamna, had thirteen sons, two of whom (probably corresponding to the Howler Monkey Gods) created heaven and earth and all that belongs to it. No other myth figuring Ixchel has been preserved. However, her mythology may once have focused on the sweatbath, the place where Mayan mothers were wont to go before and after birthgiving. As stated above, the Aztec counterpart to Ixchel as a patron of midwifery, Toci, was also the goddess of the sweatbath. In myths from Oaxaca, the aged adoptive mother of the Sun and Moon siblings

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Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destinations

Cozumel and Isla de Mujeres

by Karen Tate excerpt pages 325-328, CCC Publishing, , 2006)

The entire island of Cozumel is an altar to Ix Chel, renowned as a sanctuary for healing, particularly for women in need of divine assistance with all matters of childbirth. Some women arrived here seeking to become pregnant, while others came to give birth. Meaning "Place of the Swallows," Cozumel (koh zoo mell) was a pilgrimage site for people living on the mainland and the priestesses of the island were known for their gifts of prophecy. According to Antoinette May, a priest or priestess would be stationed inside an idol and transmit messages to the people from the gods. This was much the same technique ancients in other cultures around the world communicated between their deity and their congregation.

San Gervasio is the main Maya and Toltec ruin on the island with a shrine dedicated to the Goddess. Inhabited from about 300-1500 BcE it is located in the forest. It is easy to reach and there is a small snack bar on site. Cozumel is just one of the many places in Mexico sacred to Ix Chel (ez shell) who is often depicted as a maiden, mother and toothless crone. She is known as a Goddess of the Moon, and associated with the rabbit, also a lunar creature. Another of her symbols was the jar which represents to some the womb and to other devotees the waters vital for irrigation of crops. She can be beneficent bestowing life-giving rains or the angry crone who can empty her vials of wrath in the form of rainstorms and floods upon humankind. She is sometimes said to be the wife of Kinich Ahau, the sun god, or one of his manifestations, including Itzamna, a creator god. Related to her Aztec counterparts Coatlique and Coyolxauhqui she shares in their attributes, therefore like Coyolxauhqui, she is a force of transformation which comes with giving birth. Like the fragmented Coyolxauhqui, synonymous with our complex, multi-faceted psyches and lives, she brings balance into our life. Like Coatlique, she rules over the domain of life and death. She shares lunar and warrioress aspects. She can be depicted as a warrioress standing guard with a spear and shield and surrounded by motifs of destruction.

She is a healing deity who ruled the domains of medicine and was a Goddess of the curative waters. As a Goddess who watched over women in childbirth, it is said a statue of Ix Chel would be put under the bed of women for easy deliveries. It was to Ix Chel they prayed to become pregnant. No doubt she was called upon by many working as midwives in this time. Anyone who has ever been sick knows there is a striking difference between the assistance given by women. In their empathy they are usually moved to reach out and give the balm of their caring nature as well as the prescribed pill or treatment. When one considers the

female, or the mother as caregiver, is it any wonder so many Goddesses are called upon as healer deities? With a touch or a bug they connect with their patient and respond to their needs. Scientific studies have shown women do not just recognize a condition, they also share the emotion of the patient. Consequently they are superior healers, integrating both rational thought as well as feelings. Ix Chel, like other healing goddesses, is surpassed by none in providing the proverbial chicken soup for our bruised bodies and psyches. Cozumel was described in the Chilam Balam Chronicles as a paradise to the Maya. An island of natural tunnels and honeycombed passageways, it later became a hideout for pirates. The community on Cozumel was unfortunately devastated by the Spaniard Cortez and his men in 1519. Today Cozumel is a haven for fishermen and divers.

Getting to Cozumel

Travelers can fly directly into Cozumel or take a ferry from the mainland at Playa del Carmen. To reach San Gervasio from the main town of San Miguel, take Avenue Benita Juarez east to the San Gervasio access road. Turn left and follow the road for 4.5 miles (7 km) and follow the signs .

Goddess Focus

Ix Chel Farm: Saving our Resources

Ix Chel Farm, named for the Goddess of childbirth and medicine is located in the rainforest of Bruit, near San Ignacio . There since 1982, Dr. Rosita Arvigo has had the good fortune to study under the famous bush doctor, Don Elijio Panti until his death in 1996. Teaching Rosita all he knew about the medicinal herbs of the rainforest, Rosita now continues the work he started at the farm where they practice sustainable development to preserve rainforest plants used in traditional medicine.

Dr. Arvigo works with medical doctors and medical organizations the world over trying to discover what secret cures the rainforest holds for diseases such as AIDS, cancer, diabetes, infertility and hypoglycemia before deforestation makes it impossible. She offers seminars to doctors and has established the Panti Medicine "Trail in honor of the late Dr. Panti, which teaches the medicinal uses of the herbs, trees and shrubs along this mile-long path above the banks of the Macal River. She is also trying to document many Maya cures for disease which she learns from local traditional healers before this important knowledge also disappears .

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Modern Maya Rituals

article and photos by Janice Van Cleve

By great good fortune, I was recently invited to join a tour through Guatemala as a guest lecturer. The major focus of our itinerary was to witness and participate in a number of modern Maya rituals.

The Maya developed a very sophisticated civilization, which flourished in Central America for almost 1, 500 years – from 250 BCE to the Spanish Conquest in the 16th Century. The classic period of Maya history when they build their most famous temples and cities was between 250 CE and 850 CE. They mysteriously abandoned their southern cities to the jungle in the 9th Century, which is fortunate for archeologists because, unlike Athens or Rome, these ruins were not recycled into later cities. Except for the impacts of weather, roots, and time, they are very much as the Maya left them.

Today the lands of Yucatan, Chiapas, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador are home to some seven million Maya. Lands communally held by native farmers in ancient times were gobbled up by the Spanish during the conquest and the Maya were forced to work in near slavery for their new masters. That pattern has continued in modern times in which the Latino urban elite has dominated politics and the economy at the expense of the rural Maya. But the Maya have often rebelled. The whole second half of the 19th Century saw the Maya almost succeed in overthrowing Mexican control of the Yucatan. There were rebellions in the 20th Century in El Salvador and Chiapas, sparking a sanctuary movement in the United States for refugees of the conflicts. Guatemala convulsed in a bloody civil war that ended only in 1996.

The peace treaty ending that war allowed the Maya, among other things, to practice their religion again. A visitor to Tikal or one of the many other sites in Guatemala today may be surprised to see new altars in the old ruins blackened by recent sacrificial fires. We burned some of those sacrificial fires on our trip to see and participate in modern Maya rituals.



Author taking notes

Eight Batz Ritual

Momostenango lies in the heart of Quiche country. The Quiche Maya live in the rich fertile highlands of western Guatemala where they grow maize, vegetables, and beans just like their ancestors did 2000 years ago. And just like their ancestors, they mark the turning of their almanac calendar in a ceremony called Eight Batz. Eight Batz is the beginning of the next 260-day ritual cycle. The Maya also follow the annual Haab calendar of 18 months of 20 days each and one unlucky month of 5 days duration. Still another calendar called the Long Count tracks the number of days since the Fourth Cre-

ation. This is the one that begins the inscriptions on most of the classical dated monuments. It is the Long Count calendar that turns over on December 21, 2012. The Maya don't use this calendar anymore and could care less about the so-called end of the world that fascinates some non-Maya groups in the United States.

We gather on a hilltop outside of the city. This is one of five or six hilltops on which worshippers are coming together to burn offerings and make their petitions to the gods for the coming cycle. It is 4:00 am and pitch dark. The stars shine brightly overhead. We easily pick out the turtle constellation, which is how the Maya classify Orion's belt. We see the triangle of the three stars – Alnitak, Rigel, and Saiph – which form the hearthstone or place of origin for the Maya. They believe that this is where creation began.

The shaman prepares the fire very carefully. First he makes a circle of sugar about three feet in diameter. He quarters the circle with sugar and makes a small circle in each of the quarters. Then he places a ring of copal incense nodules around the outer rim and four large cones of copal in the center. The space between the cones he fills with charcoal. Atop that he carefully arranges a pyramid of sticks, herbs, and cigars. He alternates thin taper candles around the top – white for the ancestors and yellow for healing. Each of us is

given two candles of each color, which we hold tightly in our hands in anticipation for what follows.

The shaman prays in Quiche. We don't understand what he is saying, but we have paid money in advance for this ritual to cover the cost of materials, etc. Since money is a form of energy in our modern society, our contributions help to transform us from being merely spectators to active participants. Our donations are a realistic and efficient way to demonstrate our respect for the shaman who is praying on our behalf and to join our energies with his.

Four other shamans join us. They call the four directions in this order: east then west, north and finally south. East is red for the dawn. West is black for the night. North is white for the clouds and south is yellow for the noonday sun. The shamans do not cast a circle. The hilltop is apparently already holy ground that needs no clearing, casting, or consecrating. When the fire gets going, they invoke each of the 20 day signs in all 13 of their aspects: one Imix, two Imix, three Imix, and so on. Now we are grounded in both space and time. When all 260 days of the cycle have been invoked, the chief shaman invites each of us to put our prayers and wishes into the candles and one by one step up to the fire and throw them in. Fire is the catalyst that converts offerings into smoke, which the gods can consume. In classical times they burned blood soaked papers and beating hearts of victims the same way for the same reason.

Every so often the shaman splashes alcohol on each of the four quarters to flare up the flames. He dumps a healthy scoop of granular copal into a charcoal fired censer and walks around behind us liberally bathing us in the sweet smelling incense. Afterwards we approach the fire individually a second time to smudge ourselves. We scoop the smoke over and around our bodies in 13 repetitions. Then the shaman's wife takes a bouquet of flowers and after infusing it with smoke, strokes everyone's aura with it front and back. At the end of the ceremony, there is no devocation of the day signs. Instead, the shamans line up and we pass by them giving each a double hug. The fire is left to burn out of its own accord when we leave.

This same ritual is performed at two other altars on our hilltop and on four other hilltops in the area. Momostenango means "place of many altars". By this time the sun is risen and we can see smoke rising from the other hills. Some shamans and their initiates stay up all night and make a pilgrimage to each of the five hilltops. This ceremony will be repeated after another 260 days have passed.

Maximon Ritual

Santiago lies on the south shore of Lake Atitlan, which is itself the deep throat of a huge ancient volcano, filled with water. It has no spillway, but rather empties through cracks in its floor caused by earthquakes centuries ago. Santiago is

one of the centers of the Kaqchikel Maya who were a main target of government oppression during the civil war.

The men of Santiago centuries ago created a god they called Maximon. They freely acknowledge that they created him – no star in the east, no divine revelation, no initiated tradition handed down. This is important because it shows that at least in some instances the Maya understand that they have the power to create gods, as they need them. In this case, this god was supposed to protect the women of the town while the men were away on business, because Santiago is on the main trade route from communities on the Pacific coast to the highlands.

However, the story goes that the men discovered that their women were getting pregnant anyway and they suspected Maximon. They cut off the idol's arms and legs (and the other appendage) and they converted him into a deity from whom they ask favors. I did not witness any prayers or actions that showed worship of the god for his own sake, at least as far as I could grasp. They appear rather to focus upon him their prayers and supplications. I'm not sure if he is supposed to be an intercessor and to whom, or if they believe he has the power himself to grant their wishes. We learned that they trot him out on parade during Easter week and otherwise house him in a shabby backroom shrine on a side street.

Our path to Maximon seemed at first to have all the earmarks of a scam. First our guide said not everybody could visit Maximon, especially tourists. You have to know where he is (scam sign #1 – create mystery and exclusivity). Then the guide took us on a winding path through the dank warrens of the city to a narrow dim alley (scam sign #2 – take your marks on a journey. This invests them in the mystery). Then just before you go in talk about offerings but be very vague about how much is enough (scam sign #3 – shake down for cash.) By this time the marks will figure "Oh well, we've come this far, we may as well pay." It really wasn't all that much, actually, and it is an effective way of contributing our energy to the ritual.

The shrine is in a dim dusty back room in a rambling barrio of similar rooms. It has a tin roof and no windows. The ceiling is decked out in a checkerboard of cheap plastic doilies interspersed with colored balloons. Two of the checkerboard squares hold circular fluorescent lights for illumination. Leaning against the walls on either side of the entrance are painted statues of saints carved of wood like you'd expect in an old village church. Among them is a statute for death and several images in coffins decked with plastic flowers. Votive lamps flicker before them.

In the center of the room is a table with a bench behind for visitors and the idol of Maximon propped up in front. About 12 votives flicker in front of him. He smokes and drinks so a lighted cigarette is constantly in his mouth. This creates the image of movement and life in the statue. He is clothed with

various hanks of cloth and on his head are two cowboy hats, both with pink and purple veils hanging off the back.

On either side of the idol are stools on which sit the acolytes. The one on the left tends the cigarette, occasionally catching the ash in a pan or inserting a new one and lighting it. The one on the right assists the deacon. He counts out the donations very openly as part of the ritual, he keeps the censer burning, and he helps the deacon with communion. Communion, by the way, consists of beer and 150 proof rum. Alcohol is a key ingredient of Maya rituals. Bishop Landa in 1566 noted that the natives got drunk during their religious ceremonies and Evon Vogt noted in his anthropological study (1970) of the Zinacanteco Maya in Chiapas that rum is an essential ingredient of their religious practices.

Then the priest arrives with his client. They kneel before Maximon and line up more candles in front of the votives already there. The priest prays on the client's behalf. The prayers were in Kaqchikel, which I did not understand, but they seemed to say that the client is a good person and please grant her request. At one point the priest removes one of the cowboy hats off of the idol and places it on his client's head with the veil hanging down in front covering her face. He says some more prayers and then has her kiss the hat on all four of its sides before returning it to the idol. This may have been a symbolic way of bonding the client and the god.

The acolyte hands the priest a crude censer made out of a large tin can that is filled with burning charcoal. It has a handle fashioned out of a coat hanger. The priest heaps generous scoops of copal into this censer producing thick clouds of sweet smoke. He censes the idol, his client, and himself. Then he passes it around so we can all smudge ourselves. The tightly crowded room, billowing smoke, flickering candles in the dark and tacky decorations are almost overpowering. Our vision blurs and breathing is difficult. The mind gets a little dizzy. The combination actually does work to transform the dingy little room into an otherworldly place.

Toward the end of the ceremony the client makes her personal prayers to Maximon. She seems not at all shy that she is asking for very personal things in front of all these visitors. In fact our role there lends support to her pleas and she gratefully asks Maximon to include our wishes with her own. Finally the deacon pours the beer and passes the cups around. Then he pours shot glasses of the rum and passes them as well. After he repeats this several times, we're all thinking this religion is looking pretty dang good! The acolytes even tilt back the idol so they can pour beer and rum into his mouth as well. After the first ceremony, a second priest came in with his client and the whole rite was repeated.

Rose Petal Rituals

The end of the civil war in Guatemala not only allowed Maya shamans to construct altars and lead rituals at classical Maya sites. The people themselves gained the right in some cases to preserve and rebuild temples in the ancient cities. What they build may not be archeologically correct, but it is culturally correct and this is what they have done at Iximche, which is between Lake Atitlan and Antigua. This former Kaqchikel capital rebelled against the Spanish after earlier joining them against their rivals, the Quiche. In one corner of this sprawling complex, the native people have built a small temple with niches on all four sides for votive offerings much like the votive candle racks in Catholic churches. Before this temple, is a circular concrete altar where we performed another ritual.



Rose petal ritual

The ritual at Iximche and the one at Quirigua were both led by the same shaman and his family who accompanied us on our journey. The performances were both very similar so I have chosen to combine them here.

The shaman covers the altar with a graceful carpet of pinon fronds. Over this he carefully designs a four-pointed star in rose petals creating compass points to each of the four directions. In the center he constructs a circle of copal nodules with a pile of charcoal in the center. On this base he raises a pyramid of wood and colored candles crowned by a spire of candles at the peak.

The candles represent a sacrifice of all that we hold dear, including even our very bodies. Red candles signify blood, the burning of which is food for the gods and a symbolic substitute for a more sanguine offering. White is for bone. Yellow is for flesh. The Maya believe that the Fourth Creation was the fourth attempt by the gods to create worshippers who could articulate prayers and remember the rites. The result of this creation was humans made from maize,

hence the yellow color for flesh. Green and blue are merged together to represent Nature. Black is for the night. They use cream-colored candles as well, but their significance was not explained. The family's children pass out two candles of each color to each of us – except for the cream colored ones.

Over to the side at the base of the reconstructed pyramid, is laid out the shaman's personal altar. In the center of a circle of beads are two equilateral crosses. These appear to represent the sun (like on the flag for the state of New Mexico in the USA) because where the arms intersect is molded an ahau day sign. I did not see if the one underneath had the number of the day, but it would not surprise me. There is a mask of a god above the circle of beads as well.



Shaman's personal altar

The shaman calls the four directions in the Maya way: east first, then west, followed by north, then south. He prays to the lord of the day and this time we all kneel and he kisses the altar in a clear sign of worship. His censer is a nice ceramic model with a ceramic handle. With it he censens the altar and then walks around behind each of us to bathe us in smoke. I think the translator said this was part of a purification rite, but I'm not sure I captured that correctly.

Then began "the counting of the days". The shaman and his wife alternated chanting the 13 counts of each of the 20 days, occasionally tossing a candle into the fire. Several days before in Antigua we calculated our personal day signs which serve as our zodiac natal signs in Maya terms. According to one source, the Maya count daybreak as the beginning of the new day, not midnight, so since I was born at 1:09 am, my sign is the one from what would correspond to the previous day in Gregorian reckoning. As the count of days proceeds, we listen for our day sign. When we hear it, we step forward, pray our desires into our candles, and toss them into the fire.

The kids come round again and give us each a handful of sesame seeds. When we throw them into the flames it makes a crackling sound. We also throw in handfuls of sugar. The

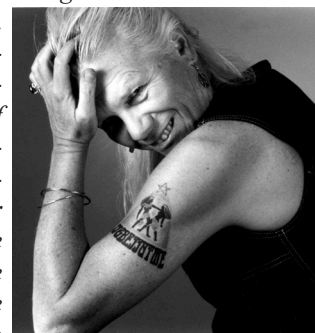
shaman stirs the fire one more time and stokes the censer. He walks around us to smoke us all again and sets the censer on the altar. Then we walk widdershins around the circle, stopping to smudge ourselves in the smoke of the fire and the smoke of the incense. Finally we end the ritual with hugs all around.

Conclusion

There are not many resources for further study of modern Maya ritual practices. Evon Vogt's *The Zinacantecos of Mexico: A Modern Maya Way of Life* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1970) is one of the best scientific anthropological studies. The much better known *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* by David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker (Harper Collins 1993) is hugely valuable as much for the informed speculations of the authors as for their eyewitness accounts. Of course no understanding of Maya mythology can even begin without the *Popol Vuh* translated by Dennis Tedlock (Simon and Schuster 1985). This is the Maya bible as it has come down from the Quiche people. There are also nine *Chilam Balam* books from several Yucatan towns which were compiled in the 18th and 19th centuries which contain prophecies, herbal lore, calendrics, astrology, and mythology.

However, there is no substitute for actual first hand witness and I do count it as a major learning experience to have seen these rituals and even participated in them. They ring true to their cultural roots with no reference or apologies to the veneer of Catholic religion that was imposed by the Spanish. As a Wiccan priestess myself, I appreciated the use and meaning of symbols in these rituals and the activation and movement of energy that was created. I am grateful to the modern Maya shamans and their people who are willing to let foreigners peek into this most sacred and intimate part of their lives.

"Janice Van Cleve is author of many articles on www.witchvox.com as well as stories and articles in magazines such as Women Outdoors and Washington Trails. For the last 11 years she has applied her degrees in Medieval History and languages to the study of the Maya civilization. Her particular interest is to bring the characters of Maya history to life for modern readers, particularly the strong women - and there were many! Her research paper on the powerful and influential Queen One Balam can be found at the website www.janicevc.doodlekit.com. There it is also possible to find her biographies of two Maya kings of Copan in Honduras in which she has illuminated the roles of the women in their lives. Both are available from Amazon or may be ordered from your local bookstore.



Janice Van Cleve is also a priestess of the Women Of The Goddess Circle, a Pagan community of women in the Dianic tradition of Wicca based in Seattle. She may be contacted through the website.

<http://www.janicevc.doodlekit.com/home>"

Curanderismo: Mexican Folk Healers; Healing from the Soul

by Shirley Vanderbilt, originally published in *Massage & Bodywork* magazine, February/March 2001.

Guadalupe Dominges was born in Taos, New Mexico, into a family of Hispanic folk healers known as curanderos. After being called “baby” for the first month of her life, her parents took her to church for the Feast of Guadalupe, where the local priest chose her name. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the patron saint for many curanderos, folk medicine practitioners, and the most beloved by Mexicans.¹ As a young child, Guadalupe Teofista Valerio -- both Guadalupe and Teofista (Greek) meaning daughter of God -- began training in the healing arts under the tutelage of her grandmother. “Doctors were scarce,” said Dominges in an interview from her Taos home. “We had to rely on using plant life to survive illness, diseases, even fractures.” In addition to learning about healing plants and their usage, Dominges was taught the skills of a sobadora, from the Spanish word sobar, meaning to massage or touch.

“The work that is done is similar to Shiatsu,” said Dominges, describing the techniques of massage, stimulation and acupressure work for the hands and feet, head and neck. “I was taught how to apply the work and never to touch anyone without asking their permission. My grandmother showed me there were differences in how the toxic energy felt, where we held different types of energies. Holding on to the energy is what makes your body toxic. It all comes into the abdomen, and to us the core of healing is your abdominal space. I never touch extremities until I have resolved what is going on in the abdominal space.”

Curanderismo is a holistic approach in which the focal point of the healer’s work is the soul and its connection to God. “In the work my grandmother showed me,” said Dominges, “you never think of curing anyone, because we are not the healers. God is the healer and all we are really do-

ing is mirroring back to the people how they manifested their problem. If I don’t point this out, you will continue to have pain -- it won’t leave you until you decide to do something about what is going on at the emotional and spiritual level.”

Among the curandero’s tools, the most important is the heart. The tangible implements are symbols of the healer’s spiritual faith and relationship to Mother Earth. There is a great awareness of ceremony, honoring nature and making offerings of gratitude. Natural elements are brought into physical healing with the use of feathers, rocks, crystals and wood. For limpias (energy cleansings), sage, cedar, juniper or copal (resin) are burned to make purifying smoke. Naturally fertilized or organic eggs, salt, cornmeal, water and soil are also used for limpias. Alters contain symbols of the four elements -- earth, water, fire and air -- and other articles illustrative of forces called upon to assist in healing. Candles with



Curandera by April Ashworth

pictures of saints, religious statues, flowers and herbs are included.² Everything in the curandero’s healing practice and lifestyle is infused with a relationship to nature and God.

In the tradition of Hispanic culture, curanderismo is used by all family members within the home, but only the one with the don (gift) will become a curandera or curandero in the public sense, providing healing to the whole community. Typically, curanderos inherit their healing powers from the previous generation, but at times someone outside the family may be blessed with the gift. In Dominges’ recent family history, the title had skipped every other generation.

When the family’s Indian medicine blanket that had been passed down from Dominges’ great-great-grandfather, a curandero, was presented to her by her grandmother, “I knew that I was the selected one,” said Dominges. “Until

then, I was just hanging out with Grandma, not that I was seeking the title in any way.” Dominges began working as a curandera in her community at the young age of 14. As with most curanderos, she does not advertise her practice or hang out a sign. Her large clientele has been built solely through word of mouth.

In 1995, Dominges became a licensed massage therapist. “My clients pressured me to do this because their insurance wouldn’t pay. They said, ‘We have to go to the massage therapist to get touched and come to you to get healed.’ I did it for my own benefit, too,” she said, commenting on the advantages of taking courses in anatomy and physiology and learning other modalities. Dominges received her MT training at the Scherer Institute of Natural Healing in New Mexico, where she now teaches classes. Although she sometimes incorporates the new techniques she has learned, she continues to practice primarily in the tradition of her grandmother, noting that it benefits people more quickly. “But I can’t always practice like her,” said Dominges. “Because I am a licensed MT, I have to also honor that training.”

The Curanderos

Curanderismo evolved in the Americas as the cultures of Spanish immigrants, indigenous tribes and African slaves came together. The Spanish arrived with advanced healing methods including herbology and duality theories of body humors, as well as spiritual beliefs in curses, possession and Godly punishment for sins. These concepts blended with those of Aztec, Mayan and southwestern Indian tribes whose medical approach was holistic and earth-oriented. With the importation of African slaves came similar indigenous beliefs of spiritual energy and earth-based rituals.³ Thus, curanderismo is not only a blending of cultural roots, but also a continuation of each culture’s ancestral ways. The legitimacy of this rich medical inheritance is perpetuated through the actions of curandero and patient, conveying value on their ethnic healing norms.⁴

This blending of healing practices is evident in Dominges’ family history, with the inheritance of her Indian medicine blanket. “We are native to the land in more than one way,” she said, suggesting that in addition to her Hispanic roots, some of her ancestors may have been Pueblo Indians from the area. Speaking of some of the practices used in her family, she said, “Who gave it to us is not really known, but we honor those people every time we take a recipe, with the knowledge that Holy Spirit enabled them to create this cure.”

Dominges’ specialty, sobadora, is just one of a group of categories defining curanderos. The sobador uses hands-on healing of massage and acupressure, working especially with the stomach and digestive tract, and relies on herbal treatments as needed. In contrast, the hierbalisto (herbalist)

uses herbs alone and does not work on the patient manually.⁵ A partera is a midwife who provides pre- and postnatal care but also uses herbs in her practice.⁶ Similar to a chiropractor, the huesero specializes in muscle and bone manipulation⁷, providing spinal adjustments and setting dislocated joints.⁸ Although all curanderos may use pláticas (heart to heart talks) with their patient, one who specifically counsels is called a consejero.⁹

Empowering People

Among various villages, there may be other titles and practices¹⁰, but throughout the world of curanderismo there is the curandero total, one with extensive experience who practices all the various subspecialties. Dominges uses the term curandero mayor (major or chief). “Curandero or curandera is a big title,” said Dominges. “Mayor is one who has already used and practiced the techniques...herbs, counseling, adjusting bones, healing and other things. They don’t use witchcraft, but they know how to reverse it.” The use of mayor is a reflection of the language of her ancestors. “In this area where we live, we are accused of speaking 17th century Spanish,” said Dominges, noting that the terminology common in New Mexico and southern Colorado has not changed in the past 500 years. Farther south into Mexico and beyond, there has been a transition in the meaning of many Spanish words.

In describing the curandero’s work, Dominges said, “We empower people to look at their emotional, physical and spiritual life so their bodies will heal.” Many of the patients she works with are women who have experienced rape, domestic violence or other traumatic events such as stillbirths or abortions. With these women, she said, “You have to go to the core of why all this has happened. They can be victims of victims. The key factors in this kind of work are forgiveness and loving.” Dominges encourages the patient to forgive herself, to ask forgiveness of others, and to forgive the one who has inflicted pain on her. As part of the healing, she also encourages the woman to express love in these same three aspects. In novena (nine is an important number in curanderismo), she gives nine sessions, three days apart, focusing on memory within the body cells, helping her patient to let go of old issues. By working with forgiveness and safe physical touch, the psychological effect is one of releasing memory stuck in the muscle tissue. “Like squeezing a pimple,” said Dominges, “you get rid of the puss inside and the tissue can heal.” This and other basic concepts learned from her grandmother, though parallel in thought with modern bodywork practice, have long been a part of curanderismo.

Another ancient remedy, now popular in massage circles, is the use of hot stones. “We use wood stoves with a water tank on the side to heat stones,” said Dominges. Hot stones serve many purposes -- placed in the cradle for pre-

mature babies, for treatment of arthritis or muscle soreness or placed on the stomach for intestinal problems. The stones are cleansed in the sun, where they pick up energy. "Cleansing in the sun is a big part of being grounded," said Dominges. "Sometimes when the spirit goes back into the body, it's not sure it should be there. We use the stone to center and ground you, putting the spirit back into the body correctly."

Curanderos are aware of the importance of limpias not only for their patients, but also for themselves. "I treat myself when I know what is going on," said Dominges, "and go to other people when I know these negative energies are manifesting too greatly for me to be able to handle myself."

For the most part, massage therapy training encourages a quiet treatment atmosphere, with the therapist limiting conversation to aspects of comfort and need. "This is totally contrary to what my grandmother taught me," said Dominges. An important element of curanderismo is verbal interaction between healer and patient, an evolved delving into the inner core of emotion and spirit. Then there is the aspect of time. The curandero takes as much time as is needed to unfold the patient's history, the emotional/spiritual source of their illness and to perform the healing. Curanderismo is not amenable to our traditional American schooling, in which one attends classes and earns a degree or certificate. It is a life-long process and indeed, a commitment to lifestyle. Some curanderos apprentice with many mentors throughout their life. Dominges began her apprenticeship with her grandmother, but has continued to learn through self-study and work with other healers.

The Curanderismo View of Health

Elena Avila, in her book *Woman Who Glows in the Dark*, wrote "Curanderismo teaches that humans are physical, emotional, mental and spiritual beings. When all aspects of a person are in harmony with the inner self and the universe, the soul is intact." She explained that if the spirit, the envelope of energy that protects the soul, "is relatively healthy, the soul will be too." Avila is a psychiatric nurse who returned to her Aztec roots of curanderismo. From her Aztec teachers, she learned that spirit "is the sum total of our nutritional habits, whether good or bad, it is the energy generated from our feelings, whether balanced or unbalanced, and the energy created by our thoughts." Spirit also includes education and intentions and "the part of our being that connects us to the "Great Spirit." In curanderismo, illness occurs when the person carries around unwanted energies that interfere with the balance of spirit, such as distress, fear and worry. "Some people would call this energy negative, but I simply call it energy that doesn't belong to us," said Avila.¹¹

According to Avila, curanderismo identifies four classifications of illness that emphasize the interrelatedness of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual functioning. Physi-

cal illness includes bilis (rage), body toxicity and digestive problems caused by excessive secretion of bile due to constant rage, empacho (blockage), which can be digestive due to eating problems, or blockage of emotions or energy, and mal aire (bad air), colds, earaches or facial paralysis caused by exposure to night air or bacteria. In mental illness, whether from chemical imbalance or severe trauma, the curandero considers the person's entire body, emotions, soul and spirit, rather than treating an isolated mental aspect. The types of emotional illness are envida (envy), sickness of the soul in the envious, or of spirit in the envied, mal puesto (curse), seen by many healers not as a hex but as a resistance of the patient to take responsibility for occurrences in their life, thus blaming others, mal ojo, popularly translated as evil eye, actually meaning illness caused by too much attention or staring, and mala suerta (bad luck) which is considered to be the result of energy and expectations that are expressed, especially in those with low self-esteem, rather than some outside force.¹²

Spiritual illness is defined as susto (soul loss) or espanto (fright). Susto occurs when the protective spiritual aura is violated through traumatic or frightening events, "a state in which we do not feel fully present or as if we are really ourselves," said Avila.¹³ Espanto is the result of seeing a ghost or being awakened suddenly, causing the spirit to wander.¹⁴

In the case of abuse, explained Dominges, the spirit moves out of the body to allow (tolerate) the abuse to happen. Healing doesn't take place unless someone brings the spirit back into that space. "In the type of massage I do," she said, "my work is pretty deep sometimes. If I get a vision or symbol, all I can do is offer it to my patient, and they can think about it and see if it's part of their life or not." While doing deep work with a patient, she had a continuing vision of wooden steps coming out of an external doorway. After telling the patient about the image, the woman replied, "When I was being really abused in my home that was my place of peace." She had forgotten about it until Dominges brought it up. Dominges told her, "You can still use it (mentally) as a place to go for peace."

"Negative energy can enter your body in a lot of ways," said Dominges. When there is shock, she noted, it is sometimes only treated with sedation by physicians. "When we (curanderos) treat shock, we use vientosas, like cupping in Chinese, on the belly and back. The viento (wind) of shock becomes trapped, stagnated," It's important that the patient come in as soon as possible, not for massage but for the cupping, to move through the shock and diminish their fear. She also uses velas (ear coning) for healing of negative energy through ears. Velas are good not only for earaches and infections, but also to heal children from the family's verbal abusive.

The liver, according to Dominges, is the core of heat of anger. "If you're holding anger in the liver," she said, "it af-

fects the eyes. In the way I was taught, poor eyesight comes from what you don't like about what you are seeing and what is making you angry." You have to step away from it and not internalize it, she said. Any negative energy, such as being hit, will control your life. You have to have it removed -- acknowledge it and demand that it leave.

In the Hispanic culture, those who use their powers for negative energy, such as casting spells and causing illness are called brujas (witches). It is a firm belief that has survived many generations. "In New Mexico," said Dominges, "when Catholicism came to the area, the curanderas were pushed aside. To the priests they were witches. In a sense, it is white witchcraft. I practice removal of the negative energies, but not in giving it." It is interesting to note that despite the priests' earlier exhortations against curanderismo, the Catholic religion figures prominently in the healing powers of the curandero. In curanderismo, all healing comes from God.

Faith and the Soul

"God is the exact center, the precise mother drum of the entire relationship we call curanderismo," said Avila.¹⁵ "The Latinos of the world continue, over the centuries, to meld their religious rites that are, in part, Old World, and in part, New World Catlico (Catholic). Curanderismo is a part of the great colorful weaving that results."¹⁶ The firm belief that God provides the remedies for cure is one held between the healer and the healed.¹⁷ The curandero is chosen by God. It is also God who is the source of their talents and abilities¹⁸ If the patient is not cured, it is God's will that they go elsewhere for a cure.¹⁹ In the healing treatment, the names of saints are invoked to assist with, rather than supplant, a petition to God, reinforcing the request and giving more strength to the intent.²⁰

"I always tell them I am coming from my belief in Jesus Christ and the training I have received in my beliefs and Catholicism," said Dominges. "I say the church isn't what makes me. My belief in God and Spirit is what makes me. I'm not for everyone and everyone is not for me. Whoever comes is sent by God." Reflecting on the altar in her treatment room, Dominges explained that she doesn't intend to offend anyone of another faith. "Your door or journey doesn't have to be through Catholicism. It is a process of all faiths -- the faith and the love of God and trust that God will help you through your healing. Everything from God is good. It is humanity's perception and actions that make it bad."

When asked if she performs soul retrieval, Dominges said, "I call it soul alignment." When the body goes through a state of shock, whether in an auto accident, being traumatized in birth or being hit by another person, the soul is no longer aligned with the body. The curandero brings the soul back into alignment, and the soul knows that it's okay to be

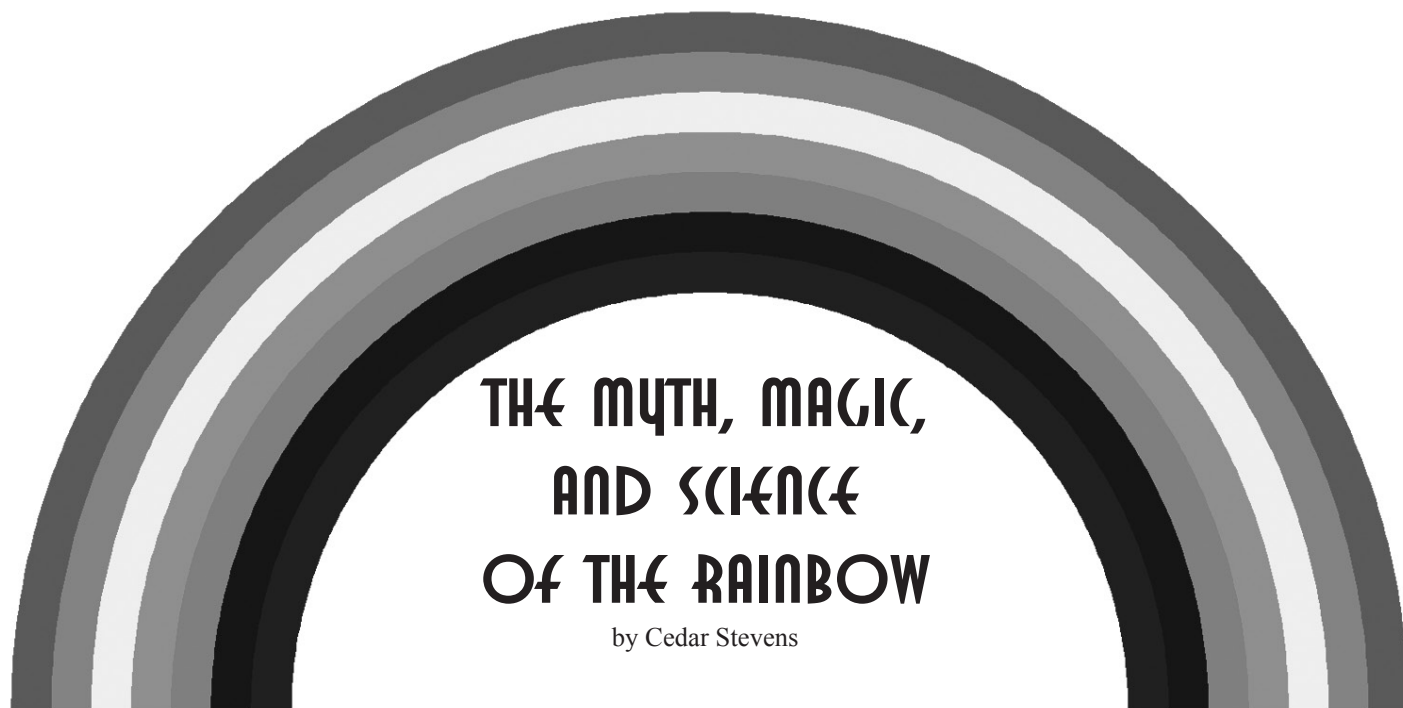
in the body again.

"When you work with your spiritual, emotional and mental being," said Dominges, "that will heal what is going on with your body. If you can look at what has created that pain for you, that pain will go away. Everything is for a purpose, nothing is a mistake. There are no accidents. If you really look at what's happened, it's a way for the spiritual world to make you pay attention, to be mindful."

In her work, Dominges brings together families to experience touching one another in a way that unites their spirits. "It is not even spoken," she said. "People don't even try to understand it because they feel it in their soul. There can be lot of forgiveness, understanding and communication. An entire day can go by and not once were they touched. The biggest problem we have in our world today is no one is touched. When people come in and I begin to help them through touch, one of the key things that happens is a sudden alignment of spirit."

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THE MYTH, MAGIC, AND SCIENCE OF THE RAINBOW

by Cedar Stevens

The Arc of the Rainbow has ever captured the joy and imagination of the human spirit. From the Greek Goddess Iris to the Rainbow Serpent of the Aborigines of Australia to the Gay Pride Flag, the Rainbow has been a symbol and tool of perception and the gentle power of diversity and creative energy. In this essay I will attempt to link, explain, and expand upon the available magic, science and mythology of the Rainbow.

The colors of the Rainbow were described as numbering seven by Sir Isaac Newton, no doubt building from and explicating his studies of classic natural history. Newton's color wheel is: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Purple.

On more modern painter's color wheels, the Rainbow is usually divided into six colors, omitting Indigo, which is a tertiary color. All of the other colors of Newton's Rainbow are primary: Red, Yellow, and Blue, or secondary: Orange, Green, and Purple. Why is Indigo included in this system? Newton probably had other, very good reasons to define the Rainbow as a function of the favored magical number of seven, and far be it from me to argue with Isaac Newton on that account.

I hereby propose that the Newtonian Rainbow be relieved of the anomalous Indigo color, which does not even manage a scientific definition (expressed as a range of frequencies of vibrations of light) in an ordinary college dictionary. I recommend that we preserve the magic number seven of the Rainbow by including "Clear," as the combination of all the colors. Allow me to explain.

The natural, undissected Rainbow is known to us by two phenomena: the appearance of the Rainbow Arc in the Sky, and the division of white light by the art of the Prism. Both are really expressions of the same basic reality of perception. Visible light, perceived and often described as white light, is a combination of particles of energy which express them-

selves in a cyclical nature, known as waves. A triangularly shaped transparent solid which is the prism, or a drop of water, by the process of diffraction, has the power to separate the colors hidden within white light, according to frequency of the waves. This is then very easy to measure experimentally, and to demonstrate with ordinary graphics.

It bears mentioning that white light itself is just one small fraction of the kinds of electromagnetic energy that communicates through the universe. Others are radio waves, infrared radiation, etc. When we speak of the Rainbow, or white light, we are speaking of: that subset of electromagnetic radiation which is discernible by the eyes of human beings. It is known that other waves of energy are perceived by other living beings, such as magnet fields by pigeons, or ultraviolet colors by many kinds of insects. Other forms of this wave type of energy transformation are sensed by hearing, or by tactile sensation of vibrational motion. In between the high frequency vibration of visual light and the relatively low frequency of sound waves, there is a lot of room for imagination. Therefore, the Rainbow colors are one subset of energy that is especially applicable and useful to humans.

The other, lower octave of energy waves well known to humans are known as sound waves, and Sir Isaac Newton and others have attempted to correlate the two phenomena.

**Red – do Orange – re Yellow – mi Green – fa
Blue – sol Indigo – la**

Purple - si (which was recently replaced with "ti" for reasons that do not pay homage to the original meanings of the words they were derived from.)

In our modern adjustment of the Newtonian Rainbow, Indigo would be replaced with Purple for "la," and Clear (or White or Silver) would be given to "si." There are reasons for this correlation, which are useful in order to correlate the classic Rainbow with the Hindu and Yogic understanding of

Chakras.

Chakras are energy centers of the human body as perceived by Yoga practice. We find alternative examples of the same system which can resolve light, major scale musical notes, the Oriental chakras and perhaps even fragrance.

- **Red** - 1st chakra, root, base of spine
- **Orange** - 2nd chakra, sex belly below navel
- **Yellow** - 3rd chakra, solar plexus
- **Green** - 4th chakra, heart
- **Blue** - 5th chakra, throat
- **Purple** (or Indigo in other systems) - 6th chakra, third eye, middle of forehead
- **White/Clear/Silver** (or Purple = Violet in other systems) - 7th chakra, crown, above the skull.

This review of chakras is much abbreviated, since many excellent books give further information and alternative color systems for the chakras. This system of healing is highly individualistic and many people have different color expression of their chakras. For example, Pink is a common color replacement for the heart chakra. The seven-scaled rainbow as applied to the chakras is a generalized, idealized imaging of the average human. Your mileage may vary!

Let us return to the prism and the rainbow. There are two easily observable differences between the two phenomena. A prism, resting on the lab table, splits the beam of light and onto the screen. At the bottom is red, the color with the longest wavelength, and less affected by the diffraction of the prism. The other colors proceed, with purple at the top. To contrast, the rainbow casts its colors with purple at the bottom, inside of the arc, and red at the top. To simplify the explanation, the water drop of rain not only acts as a prism, which separates light into its component colors, but it also acts as a mirror, and a concave one at that. This concave mirror reflects light in a reversed manner, which is why the colors of the primary rainbow is "upside down" Oh, but there are many things that can transpire within a droplet of water, and here is another. Sometimes light is refracted, and then reflected and reflected a second time within the drop of water. And since the rainbow is cast by not one drop of water, but by many, the many droplets often conspire to cast a second rainbow above the first, in which the colors are reversed, with Red at the bottom and Purple at the top.

If we have all the colors of the rainbow plus white, then what of the color black? black is the 0th chakra. Below the feet, corresponding to primordial darkness, that which came before the light, before the Big Bang. Then, seemingly for no reason at all, Nothing anomalizes into Something, and the world is born. It sounds as good a theory as many, at least, and science has made some compelling scenarios upon the hypothesis.

*First the darkness, then comes light
And now behold by Iris' might:
Purple! (Response: Purple!)
Blue!*

Green!

Yellow!

Orange!

Red!

And by Her Rainbow,

The Artist's palate fed!

In this proposed sevenfold package of the rainbow, the six primaries and secondaries, we name "Clear" as the seventh and combination of the six. Clear can be understood to be both black and white, recognizing the origin of light, and the end of the palate where all colors blend again to return to darkness. Representationally, in art or function, white, silver, or Black could be used to stand in for clear, as the aesthetic or interpretation requires.

The colors of the rainbow are not evenly divided according to the frequency range of light. We perceive a disproportionate range of visible light as the color red, from 6220 to 7700 angstroms, about 38%. Green is the next most popular, with 22% of the spectrum as we perceive it. violet weighs in next from the lower end of our range 3900 - 4500 angstroms, or 15% of the visible spectrum. yellow and orange get a small bandwidth each, and Blue accounts for 11% of the spectrum we perceive.

This seems to tell us a lot about ourselves as monkeys. leaf green, fruit red. But flower purple? What does color purple teach us? Do other monkeys favor it as we do?

Magical Associations and Mythology of the Rainbow

Simply because of the power and universally shared perception of color, the rainbow becomes an alphabet of the range of human emotions. These associations of colors easily translate into magical and perceptual technology applied to everything from psychotherapy to candle spells.

Used all together, the rainbow then translates into an open road for That Which is Possible for human beings. Appearing after a storm as it does, the rainbow offers promise, hope and healing, as Noah and his wife saw it after the Flood.

Iris is perhaps the most personable mythic deities to represent the rainbow. She is given as the daughter of the oceanic Elektra (not the Electra of Trojan myth or the Pleidean star sister) and Thaumus. She often appears in the same capacity, and even in the company, as fellow messenger god Mercury, and she shares with him the depiction of winged head and feet. Her duty is primarily to Zeus and Hera. Many other religions see the rainbow as not a deity but as a road, a connection between Heaven and Earth, and it is not wasted on many mythopoetic systems that the rainbow appears to go beneath the Earth at the horizon and then back up again, suggesting a continuously circular bridge between above and below, between life and death.

In tarot, the 14th trump card, Temperance, is often depicted as an Angel who mixes fire and water into a vessel

which then pours forth a rainbow. In some decks, including the Crowley Thoth deck, Temperance is replaced (or reinterpreted) by the Art card. Crowley was himself something of an artist and many of his groups of associates and friends as well as he had little use for Temperance but religious devotion to Art, so the transposition suggests. Since the rainbow is the basis of the artist's palate, it makes magical sense to correspond the two. As in the nature of the rainbow, the Temperance Angel combines the pure elemental essences of fire (light) and water (the drop of cloud vapor) to create the rainbow. This would explain why even older interpretations of the Tarot do not give Temperance the modern day definition of purity and restraint, but rather one of transformation by way of alchemy, the perfect combination of elements. One element in the right proportion perfectly tempers another to create a thing of beauty. The Temperance Angel is often depicted standing next to iris flowers, reinforcing its association or equivalence with the goddess Iris.

The other Tarot card that features the rainbow is the Ten of Cups. Usually, it depicts a heterosexual nuclear family of two parents and two children, boy and girl, celebrating home, prosperity, and family beneath the rainbow, which is encrusted with ten golden, overflowing Cups. It symbolizes the attainment of material and familial blessings, the crowning glory of adulthood, presumably after all the prerequisite rites of passage, the Storms.

The arch of the rainbow has also been used as a political symbol of diversity, and it may be that Reverend Jesse Jackson was not the first who used it as a symbol of racial tolerance and mutual support, as the rainbow creates an arch, and each block that forms the architectural arch is necessary for creating that portal from one stage of understanding and evolution of thought into another, following the imperative of Grace. By the alchemy of all the races and of all walks of life, the strength of the arch and the permanence of the doorway are improved. Evolution and ecology also teach us the lesson that strength and resiliency of the ecosystem are improved by diversity in species.

This very radical concept that differentness is acceptable, and that even our survival may depend upon it, is certainly one of comfort to any individual who has ever been marginalized or made to feel different or even unwelcome in the dominant culture. The next political use of the rainbow's power of diversity is by the Gay Pride movement. Was the rainbow borrowed from Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, or is it Judy Garland's rendition of "Over the Rainbow" in *Wizard of Oz* that made the Rainbow flag colors a banner under which to rally? I believe it fair to say that Art and Gayness have long felt comfort in each other's arms. The alchemy of the Temperance Angel would imply that a serendipity of the several theories would combine to make the most radiant of hues, and perhaps a most splendid political alliance.

Could it mean that Iris of the Rainbow is therefore the goddess of art and creativity, of the diversity of race and human expression of sexuality and all other potential ways of being and vision? I propose that she be considered as such, and her conversations with me on these subjects lead me to

write this very monologue. Iris is easily the Goddess of Gay Pride, Art, and Racial and Political Diversity. In other words, everything under the rainbow, creative potential as perceived and expressed by humans.

The rainbow is not the creatrix, nor is Iris, but Iris of the Rainbow speaks to those created by the Mother, who eventually terrifies, abandons or at least disappoints us by becoming the Destroyer (the Storm). Often immediately upon separating ourselves from the Mother, many of us undergo a Storm of spirit, where our basic right to exist, our ability to "fit in" or care for ourselves is called into question. By looking to the promise in the sky, the light of the sun transforms within the tears in our eyes into the Rainbow, which offers hope, redemption, and a promise that all of us have a part in creating the world.

In nature, the rainbow has but few rare natural expressions. In the hands of humans, however, it becomes the basic tool of art, allowing the creation of many forms of color, including the return to black, a combining of all the colors of pigment, which combine to approximate the primordial lack of light, absence of color. As a tool, the rainbow artist's palate combines in limitless colors, shades, and shapes to create that which is possible.

Magical operations involving the rainbow

Just viewing a rainbow is purifying and blessing. It is considered to be bad luck, taboo, or just plain rude, to point at a rainbow. If desired, a magical object can be placed where it appears that a rainbow ends in order to bless or consecrate it. The rainbow is supposed to point towards a pot of gold, and it could be used in divination. For example, where I often viewed rainbows from my former magick shop, I could usually make them point to the "Everything 99 Cent store." Wishes are often uttered to be taken on this bridge from Earth to Heaven to the Underworld and back again. Photograph yourself or friends for a long lasting reminder of your blessing.

Rainbow water is a multipurpose blessing water appropriate to any magical use. I have a distinct memory of reading in Scott Cunningham's *Earth Power* something like this "The three most magic waters are 1) Sunshine Water, rain that is collected when the Sun is shining, 2) Rainbow Water, which is rain collected while a rainbow is in evidence, and 3) the most magic water of all is Tears shed for Joy." I began collecting accordingly. But since then I have been unable to source this memory! The best I can find in the *Rainbow Brew* in Cunningham's *Incense Oils and Brews*, which has you collect the Rainbow water for multipurpose magical use, since it has all the colors in it.

Rainbow water would then be very potentiating as an addition to any magical baths, teas, or water used for inks, magical painting or sacred art. Blessings, creativity workings, or any artistic operation could only be enhanced by the Rainbow water. Likewise, any spell designed to imbue Hope after the Storm, or instill attitudes of Tolerance or even just eye opening could find use for it.

Ceremonial magicians, especially in the Golden Dawn tradition also make use of a rainbow wand. While the precise procedures of its construction are probably initiatory secrets, it involves a wand that is black at the handheld end, radiating upward beginning with red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple then white. My personal adaptation for this is a 7 inch wand with one inch per color. I use red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple then clear (which can be represented as pearl, white or silver). Alternatively, a 49 inch or 49 centimeter wand or staff could be constructed with the same proportions. While each color is being painted, the corresponding note is sung, and the wand is imbued with this note while visualizing and uttering words of power relating to the color. Each band of color is thereby informed of its power as it is being painted. A pitch pipe is very helpful to this exercise. If at all possible, the wand should be oriented such that the root end of the stick or dowel is the bottom, colored as red (or black in the ceremonial tradition). If you buy prefab dowels from a craft center, the orientation of the wood can often be determined thus: hold a pendulum over each end of the rod. The root end should cause the pendulum to swing in a circular (feminine) direction whereas the (masculine) branch end should make it swing back and forth.

Just as the seven notes are correlated to the colors of the rainbow, it could be attempted to correlate olfactory notes to color. Without giving my own recipe for Iris of the rainbow oil, I can tell you that clove, oak moss, and sassafras are usually interpreted as red, and these combinations can be used monochromatically or synergistically for aromatherapy and chakra alignment.

- **Red:** clove, oak moss, sassafras
- **Orange:** ginger, lemon, nutmeg
- **Yellow:** lime, champa flower, vetiver
- **Green:** rosemary, pine, bay laurel
- **Blue:** calamus, cardamom, hyssop
- **Purple:** Rose, lavender, birch
- **Clear/White:** sandalwood, ylang ylang, frankincense

There are some individuals who by accident of birth have crossed lines of perception, allowing them to experience color as sound, sound as scent, or scent as color. It is also known that certain psychoactive drugs can mimic this integration temporarily, giving a glimpse into this mesmerizing experience which is called synaesthesia. So boggling as it is to the mortal mind, it may give us a hint as to that which lies beyond life and death, over the Rainbow Bridge.

The rainbow appears but of rare occasion and ephemerally, but we have borrowed the component colors to load the paint which is ever on the palate, and what we will create of it is our future, before us on a blank canvas.

My name is Cedar Stevens and I have been a practicing witch and potioneer for over fifteen years. I am the proprietor of the Natural

Magick Shop. For thirty years I have been an avid botanist, herbalist, and gardener. I combine this expertise with my naturally excellent sense of smell to bring you high quality potions produced under the most exacting protocols. Visit my website at <http://naturalmagickshop.com/>



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are the IxChel farms, dedicated to the understanding and recording the healing and medicinal plants and practices of the Maya. Even the 2010 UN Climate Summit invoked Her.

“Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, invoked the ancient jaguar goddess IxChel in her opening statement to delegates gathered in Cancun, Mexico, noting that IxChel was not only goddess of the moon, but also “the goddess of reason, creativity and weaving. May she inspire you — because today, you are gathered in Cancun to weave together the elements of a solid response to climate change, using both reason and creativity as your tools.”

I think calling on the old gods to help us with the planet’s healing is a great idea, old gods from all cultures. I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I enjoyed discovering IxChel and learning about her.

As always, thank you for your continued support of TBP

Lise Quinn

Continued from page 3 - Merlin Stone

brief ideas that planted their seeds in my soul and drastically changed the course of my journey and the passions I would pursue. The first was being introduced to the power of myth and hearing Joseph Campbell tell me to ‘follow my bliss.’ What I didn’t know at the time was what my bliss was. Then I read the words of Merlin Stone when she wrote in 1979 (prior to the publishing of her book): *“In the beginning, people prayed to the Creatress of Life, the Mistress of Heaven. At the very dawn of religion, God was a woman. Do you remember?”*; something deep within my soul responded and cried out, ‘Yes! I remember!’

There are those who would argue that this moment of recognition was a reactionary response to the 2nd wave of feminism sweeping the West; others would argue that Merlin’s words guided me to tap into what Carl Jung calls the collective unconscious, and yet others could argue that I was remembering previous lives of service to the Great Mother. I know what I believe; Merlin Stone awoke the priestess in me that day; she called to all her sisters around the globe from an ancient past. Merlin reached out and spoke the words no one dared to speak. She awoke generations of women from a deep disturbing sleep, and I will forever be indebted to her for her bravery and truth. Merlin Stone changed the path of my life, and I sit proudly in service to the Great Mother once

again; I know my past and my history, and because of Merlin Stone, I remember. Her passing is a great loss to us all, yet I know in the depths of my heart and soul that our paths will cross again as our work is not yet complete. May the Great Mother hold her gently in Her arms until she can be returned to us once more.

With Light and Love, Patricia (Gydenar) 'Iolana

Having recently finished Riane Eisler's book, *The Chalice and the Blade*, I began to feel strongly drawn to goddess spirituality. She wrote of days of yore when people worshipped Goddess as mother. Times were peaceful and cooperative and there was true egalitarianism among people. I then did a woraksop with Jean Shinoda Boen on "*Goddesses in Every Woman*". This was most impressive and nonformulaic and it made so much sense to me that we all had these counterparts withing us to a greater or lesser degree.

It was in this context, I signed up for a workshop in western Massachusetts with a lovely woman named Merlin Stone. She was soft spoken, extremely knowledgeable and she did not seek the limelight. When I mentioned i was new to the goddess she was most warm and encouraging, assuring me that the goddess welcomes all. During the course of the workshop she mentioned that Starhawk had asked if it was OK to do spells, encouraging her (Merlin) to do more teaching and presenting as prior to that she had been much more engaged and devoted to her writing. Merlin gave her permission and so far she felt the spells seem to be working. She also encouraged doing work with Starhawk to became more involved with the spiritual aspects of women's spirituality and witchcraft. We learned much about the goddess from this workshop which led to the acquiring of Merlin/s wonderful books, *When God Was a Woman* and *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood*. Merlin's passing is a great loss to the world.

Mary Gamson

Continued from page 5 - Re-Storying Goddess: Virgin/Maiden

She is the author of PaGaian Cosmology: Re-inventing Earth-based Goddess Religion, which was an outcome of her doctoral work in Social Ecology from the University of Western Sydney. Glenys' doctoral research was an experiential study of the three phases of the Triple Goddess – Virgin, Mother, Crone – as Creative Cosmological Dynamic, and the embodiment of Her in seasonal ritual as a catalyst for personal and cultural change.

About the Artist: Madalena Lobão-Tello

In me there is also the spirit of the navigators and Portuguese adventurers. Everything begins with the trip imposed starting from the old world, of Portugal to the Discovered ones and to the colonies of Mozambique, in Africa, full with black ethnoses and of a splendid coloring.

The distance between my made sleepy origins and that sudden awak-



ening doesn't drain the endless question: Who am I? Experience this fabulous latitude mixing it with other lives, with other pains, with the purity of the color and the plot of mosaics to the one that they call Mestizo.

I built Attitudes starting from my Latitudes. In these Latitudes I looked for the seeds of wild light that populate my paintings and ceramics.

IWhat I capture is, therefore, a trip inside of the spirit... to those "doors and windows of the soul", feminine territories of connection with the Life and the Divinity.

In these Latitudes, with my Attitudes and by means of the continuous Art looking for the Being's Woman experience

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Continued from page 8- The Mayan Goddess IxChel

is finally imprisoned in a sweatbath to become its patron deity. Several Mayan myths have aged goddesses end up in the same place, in particular the Cakchiquel and Tz'utujil grandmother of Sun and Moon, called B'atzb'al 'Weaving Implement' in Tz'utujil. On the other hand, in Q'eqchi' Sun and Moon myth, an aged Mayan goddess (Xkitza) who would otherwise appear to correspond closely to the Oaxacan Old Adoptive Mother, is not connected to the sweatbath.

Cult of Ixchel

In the early 16th century, Mayan women seeking to ensure a fruitful marriage would travel to the sanctuary of Ix Chel on the island of Cozumel, the most important place of pilgrimage after Chichen Itza, off the east coast of the Yucatan peninsula. There, a priest hidden in a large statue would give oracles (Cogolludo). To the north of Cozumel is a much

smaller island baptized by its Spanish discoverer, Hernández de Córdoba, the 'Island of Women' (Isla de las Mujeres) "because of the idols he found there, of the goddesses of the country, Ixchel, Ixchebeliax, Ixhunie, Ixhunieta, only ve-stured from the girdle down, and having the breast covered after the manner of the Indians" (Landa). On the other side of the peninsula, the head town of the Chontal province of Acalan (Itzamkanac) venerated Ixchel as one its main dei-ties. One of Acalan's coastal settlements was called Tixchel 'At the place of Ixchel'. The Spanish conqueror, Cortés, tells us about another place in Acalan where unmarried young women were sacrificed to a "goddess in whom they put great trust and hope", possibly again Ix Chel.

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Continued from page 9 - Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destina-tions Cozumel and Isla de Mujeres

Isla de Mujeres

Another island sanctuary of Goddess Ix Chel, Isla de Mujeres, meaning "Island of Women," has a small but crum-bling shrine where she was once venerated on its southern tip. Ix Chel must have permeated the everyday thoughts of her ancient people. A Goddess of magic, she was called upon to prophesy the future of the community. A Goddess of love and sexuality, she brought inspiration to average people as well as to artists and musicians alike. A Goddess of water, she was vital to farmers as they planted and harvested. One of the first domestic goddesses, she was with them as they ground corn, and made tortillas and tamales. She taught women how to weave and produce clothing for their families. Without a doubt, she is "Lady Rainbow," Goddess of renewal and creativity. She was invoked with her consort Itzamna during

the month of Zip as the Moon Goddess of healing. She ruled the day called Caban, which meant earth. Associated with wild birds, she was sometimes depicted with eagle claws and crowned with feathers. It is not hard to imagine altars to Ix Chel in the homes of these people or in their fields.

In this lush natural habitat, the setting for her rituals at her shrine on Isla de Mujeres (iss-la day moo-hair-es), must have been spectacular. It is easy to vision the women in their festive and colorful clothing, adorned with shells and pol-ished pieces of jade at their wrists and ankles, their neatly plaited hair, accented with flowers or feathers, coming across the waters in joyous prayer and song under the light of the full moon. Upon arriving, they danced, sang, and prayed to Ix Chel, as the cuiapipiltin or priestesses made offerings of incense, and special food or spices to the Goddess. On this island sanctuary, with faces raised upward toward I x Chel the Moon Goddess, with the ocean breeze on their faces, her beneficent mist moistening their skin, her essence must have been powerfully tangible and transcendental as women be-came one with deity. The ambiance of the shrine urges the devoted to meditate by moonlight as they listen to the ebb and flow of her waters, lulling one into a light trance, so that they might more easily hear the Mothr's voice and marvel at the beauty and splendor of her creativity.

At the site, a walkway from the ruin leads down to a nat-ural arch, with the ocean on one side and the Bay of Women (Bahia Mujeres) on the other; it is quite a magnificent view. Isla de Mujeres is a small island about 5 miles (8 km) long that reminds most visitors of the shape of a fish. It is easy to walk most places to rent a moped or taxi. The island has be-come popular over the years as Cancun has grown by leaps and bounds. Snorkeling, fishing and diving are also major attractions.

Getting to Isla de Mujeres

Ferries and shuttle boats run to Isla de Mujeres hom Cancun throughout the day. To find the Ix Chel shrine, start at Avenide Rueda Medin and go southeast past Playa Lan-cheros into the EI Grafon National Park. About 1/4 mi (,iz km) farther along the road visitors will arrive at the shrine.

An independent scholar, speaker, radio show host, published author, and sacred tour organizer, Karen's body of work blends her experiences of women-centered multiculturalism evi-dent in archaeology, anthropology and mythology with her unique academic and literary talents and travel experi-ence throughout the world. Her first book, Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destinations has garnered prestigious endorsements, while her second book, Walking an Ancient Path, Rebirthing Goddess on Planet Earth, was a final-ist in the National Best Books of 2008 Awards. Tate's work has been high-lighted in the Los Angeles Times, Seat-tle Times and other major newspapers.

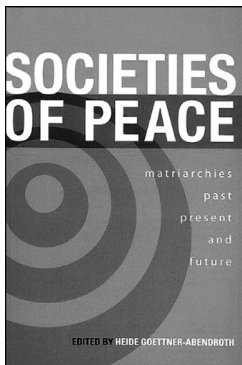


She is interviewed regularly in print, on television and on national public radio and hosts her own radio show, Voices of the Sacred Feminine considered a treasure trove of insight and wisdom for our time. Her work has segued into writing, producing and consulting on projects which can bring the ideals and awareness of the Sacred Feminine into the mainstream world through television and film.

The Beltane Review

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Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present and Future

Edited by Heide Goettner-Abendroth

ISBN: 0978223357,

Inanna Publications, 2009

List Price:: \$39.95

It is time to celebrate with the publishing of *Societies of Peace*! We now have the definitive textbook on the incredible outpouring of modern matriarchal studies that has occurred in recent years. An excellent anthology of research, essays and ideas by luminaries in the academic world, *Societies of Peace* also brings together political activists, goddess scholars, feminists and indigenous wise women from all over the world. The new paradigm of Matriarchal Studies is here to stay! Presenting concrete social alternatives to the looming global crisis of patriarchal civilization, matriarchal studies holds great political potential, offering lifeboats developed from thousands of years of experience.

If we take the wisdom in *Societies of Peace* and DELIVER IT! as Kenyan activist and powerhouse Wahu Kaare suggests, it will have an incredible impact on the world. The times require a fundamental shift in the way we live our lives, and findings on matriarchal cultures can offer us the vision of a new society.

Matriarchies have a non-violent social order, conform to motherly values, and are based on gender equality. Political decisions are reached through consensus, and social guidelines guarantee a good life for everyone. Matriarchal spirituality, deeply rooted in a reverence for Mother Earth and her gifts, prevents the exploitation of nature or animals. These societies, both ancient and still existing on the planet today, are humanity's – and especially women's – great heritage. *Societies of Peace* presents to a wider public the message of an alternative social and cultural model that promotes trust, mutuality and abundance for all.

Edited by Heide Goettner-Abendroth, the founding mother of modern matriarchal studies, the scholarship and ideas in *Societies of Peace* are taken from two ground-

breaking world congresses on Matriarchal Studies that she led – *Societies in Balance* in Luxembourg in 2003, and *Societies of Peace* in Texas in 2005. For the first time at these Congresses, international scholars working on matriarchal studies and women's spirituality in isolation from one another came together to connect and collaborate. The book features exciting, creative and important contributions from (among others) Riane Eisler, Barbara Alice Mann, Peggy Reeves Sanday, Claudia von Werlhof, Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, Vicki Noble, Susan Gail Carter, Annette Kuhn, Lamu Gatusa, Bernedette Muthien, Fatimata Oualet Halatine and Wilhelmina J. Donkoh.

Of special interest is Genevieve Vaughan's contribution and sustaining gifts, both to the Texas congress and the book, as well as her article *Matriarchy and the Gift Economy*. The guiding light for the new gift economy movement, Genevieve describes the practice of "freebies" like housework, childcare and other "random acts of kindness" that already exist in society, unrecognized and unappreciated by the dominant patriarchy. Within a matriarchal culture, the mode of distribution is based on the principles of nurture and needs are met directly, resulting in a more functional community than that of a market economy based on self-interest, greed and profit. Gift-giving creates positive relationships, justice and solidarity, and with radical change, could be adopted as the new alternative economy.

The knowledge and insight made possible with modern Matriarchal Studies is absolutely amazing, and has the capacity to change the historical record and create a paradigm shift in the prevailing worldview. *Societies of Peace* gives us the tools to wake up and take on the great work, which is creating alternative, life-affirming matriarchal models as the basis for a new society!

reviewed by Pegi Evers

Pegi Evers is a Canadian artist whose work has been exhibited in multiple galleries and solo or group shows. As an independent Curator she has developed exhibition projects with artist collectives and arts organizations, and has been employed as an Arts Publicist and Fundraiser. She lives near the Peterborough Petroglyphs in Ontario, Canada. Lyssanda Designs donates a portion of its proceeds to organizations that protect Canadian wilderness.

<http://www.lyssanda-designs.com>



Psychic Tarot: Using Your Natural Psychic Abilities to Read the Cards

by Nancy Antenucci and Melanie Howard

ISBN: 0738719757

Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd 2011

List Price: \$14.95

As a tarot reader who uses her sixth sense when reading cards, I was disappointed that I could not find any books specifically on using your psychic skills to read tarot. Most tarot books on the market seem to be about the basics: what the cards mean and how to do a layout. There were mentions about intuition but nothing in depth. I began to think that not many of tarot readers actually use psychic abilities – or perhaps we just don't admit it.

Then along comes this book by respected tarot reader Nancy Antenucci and co author Melanie Howard, boldly titled *Psychic Tarot*. To say that I was excited to get this book is an understatement. I was chomping at the bit for it to be released! Finally, a tarot book that I could relate to!

Antenucci starts the book out with a little antidote about sitting at a table with famed tarot author Rachel Pollack and a group of readers. Pollack asks the group if they considered themselves to be psychic and most of them answer “no”. I found that very interesting as I have over the years encountered many other readers who shied away from the psychic word. I never understood this nor could I comprehend why people thought having intuition was some sort of “gift”. In my mind, we all have this ability – just some of us seem to train it, use it and trust it more. The authors seem to agree with this and in the first chapter of the book discuss the hang ups about the word “psychic” as well as how to let go of these misconceptions.

The next few chapters give exercises for intuitively understanding the Minor Arcana, Majors and the Court Cards – building a solid foundation and structure but still encouraging the reader to look for their own clues and interpretations rather than adhering to a “strict” meaning. This helps the reader to begin to let go of “logical” interpretations and start to trust their own intuition to “find” meanings.

Chapters on *Energy Basics*, *Seeing the Unseen*, *Trusting the Sight* and *The Initial Image* have more advanced exercises for developing psychic abilities. These practices are serious but fun at the same time – I loved the author's gentle sense of humor and play. If you are the type of person who is afraid of psychic stuff, these little exercises will allow you to imbue a sense of fun as you discover and hone your sixth sense.

But for me, the rest of the book is where the real gems

lie. The authors lay out system for divination, *The Six Principles*, which could apply to any sort of psychic work – not just tarot reading. This is sound, sensible advice that any aspiring psychic, medium or reader will want to read. From grounding to integration, this solid counsel provides the reader with common sense strategies that will help them to remain with one foot firmly on the ground as they tap into the other worlds. I find this to be so valuable as so many mystics I know seem to have trouble with their real lives when they do this type of work.

My favorite chapter is on boundaries – where once again, the authors offer up excellent guidance that no reader will want to miss. Antenucci shares one of her own personal stories that illustrates excellently on why a reader will want to set boundaries – which includes letting go of the reading once it is done. I nodded my head in agreement throughout this entire chapter.

Traits Of A True Reader finishes off the book nicely with this line: “A true reader is really a teacher. A teacher helps others wake up to their own creative authority.” I found that statement to be very powerful.

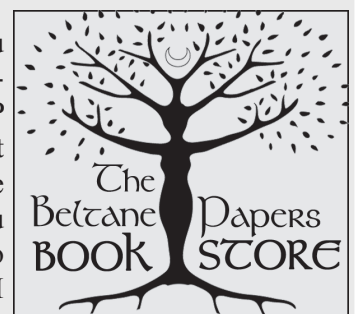
The appendix in the back has all the exercises mapped out so that you can find them easily once you have finished reading the book. If you want to go back to a particular exercise, this is a nice touch and makes the book accessible and user friendly.

I think this book is especially good for those who wish to learn how to read in a more intuitive fashion. It will appeal to beginners and intermediates alike and I hope it will encourage more tarot readers in particular to embrace their intuition and be less fearful about saying that they are psychic.

reviewed by Theresa Reed

Theresa Reed (aka The Tarot Lady) has been working as a professional tarot reader for 20 years, reading cards for clients from all walks of life. She also teaches yoga and mentors aspiring tarotists. Theresa is an avid blogger and writes about tarot on her popular blog, The Tarot Lady Blog (<http://blog.thetarotlady.com>). You can learn more about her through her website: <http://www.thetarotlady.com>

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PaGaian Cosmology Celebrating Cosmogenesis

Triple Spiral/Goddess

each particular Self

Urge to Be ... Virgin

deep relationship with Other

Place of Being ... Mother

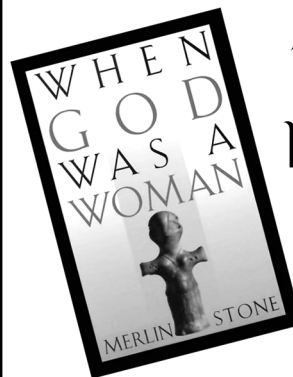
direct participation in Creative Cosmos

Space to Be ... Old One

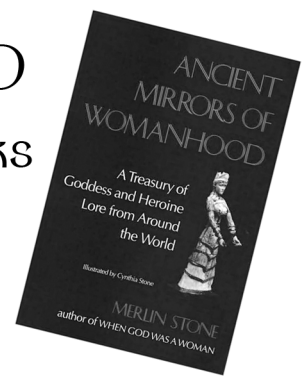
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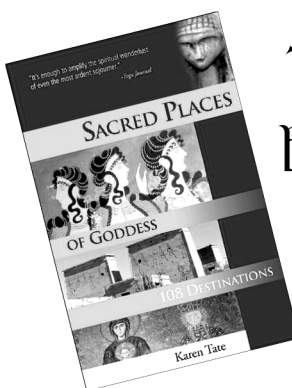
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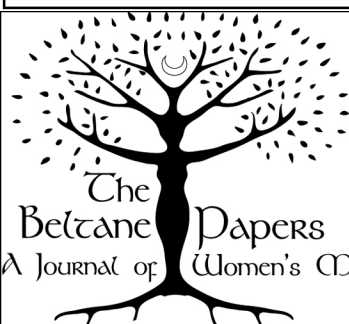
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Ways to help the people of Japan

As you know Japan has been devastated by the tsunami and the nuclear plants' failures and leakage. Many of us want to know what we can do to help. Here are a few ideas.



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