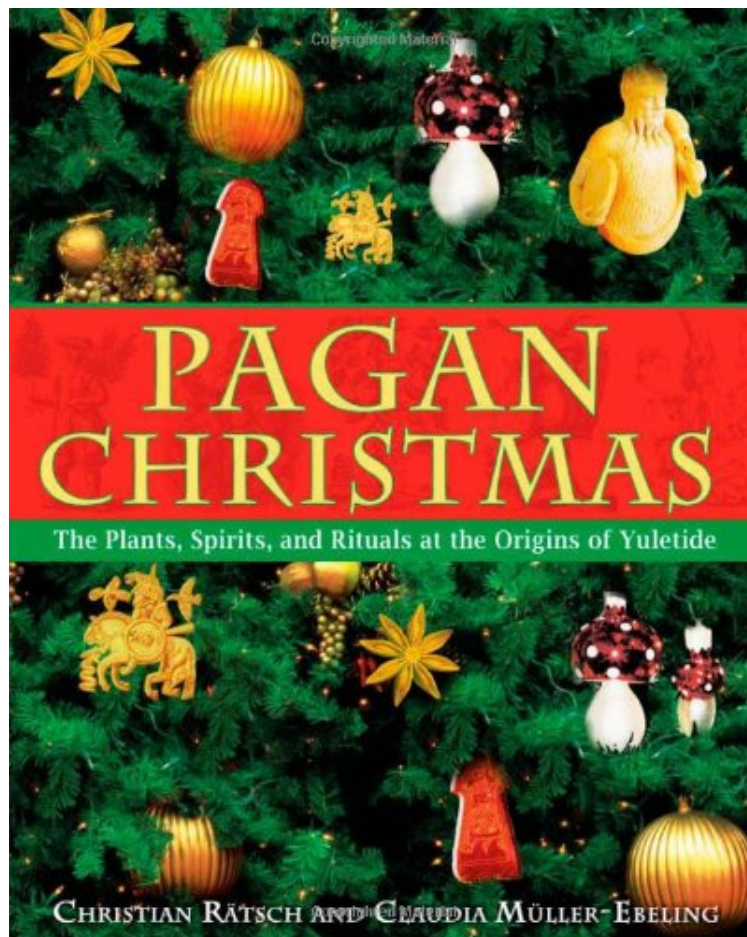


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Pagan Christmas: The Plants, Spirits, and Rituals at the Origins of Yuletide

Christian Rtsch, Claudia Mller-Ebeling
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Christian Rtsch, Claudia Mller-Ebeling : Pagan Christmas: The Plants, Spirits, and Rituals at the Origins of Yuletide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pagan Christmas: The Plants, Spirits, and Rituals at the Origins of Yuletide:

51 of 51 people found the following review helpful. Mystical and Academic BookBy Kyra_AthenaFirst, this book is written by two German anthropologists and was only recently translated into English. The research is very thorough and objective. I'm sure someone would argue with this assertion, but I don't think I'd want dispute anthropologists who study ethnobotany and art history as well. They are more qualified than I am. Second, the book is not really a how-to book as far as rituals and such. This is more about the traditions and symbolism which we believe to be Christian and part of Christmas observance. Imagine telling someone that Santa Claus is really the personification of a hallucinogenic mushroom, the fly agaric, often used in shamanic religious practices. St. Nicholas' sack has pagan symbolism. The Christmas tree was the Christian church's response to the pagans who worshipped the living tree, so

cutting down and killing the tree would be the ultimate insult. Plants and recipes involving particular spices are also mentioned in here. The living evergreen wreath is exceptionally symbolic as the circle of life and the wheel of the year. Buying gifts and decorating like mad is a new phenomenon during the Christmas season as is evident in poems, stories, and sayings from as late as the early 1900s. I believe this book would be educational and would benefit almost any reader. Pagans and Christians should all read this book. Some extremists wouldn't like it as it is in direct conflict with their beliefs. I say buy the book or borrow it from a library for its educational value. If it had been available in English, I would have bought it sooner. I've been looking for a book like this for years. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Loses something in translation By Meredith Dillman I wanted to like this book. I love the premise and there are some interesting parts, but I suspect it lost a lot in the translation from German. Many sections are oddly repetitive or don't explain traditions that would be more familiar to native German readers. There were points where it unclear what he was trying to explain or how the subject related to general topic. I am interested in plants and read previous reviews before ordering this, but the writing was a little more convoluted and academic than I expected. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lovely book with lots of interesting information. By Nina Malischev This is a lovely, interesting book, concentrating on the botanical influences on Pagan Christmas- that is, the customs we celebrate today that in fact have roots in pagan celebrations. It presents quite a lot of information about a wide variety of plants, mushrooms, etc., and includes lovely photographs. I really enjoyed it and it was fun finding the meaning behind things like holly and ivy, the Christmas tree, mistletoe, etc.

An examination of the sacred botany and the pagan origins and rituals of Christmas Analyzes the symbolism of the many plants associated with Christmas Reveals the shamanic rituals that are at the heart of the Christmas celebration The day on which many commemorate the birth of Christ has its origins in pagan rituals that center on tree worship, agriculture, magic, and social exchange. But Christmas is no ordinary folk observance. It is an evolving feast that over the centuries has absorbed elements from cultures all over the world--practices that give plants and plant spirits pride of place. In fact, the symbolic use of plants at Christmas effectively transforms the modern-day living room into a place of shamanic ritual. Christian Rtsch and Claudia Mller-Ebeling show how the ancient meaning of the botanical elements of Christmas provides a unique view of the religion that existed in Europe before the introduction of Christianity. The fir tree was originally revered as the sacred World Tree in northern Europe. When the church was unable to drive the tree cult out of peoples consciousness, it incorporated the fir tree by dedicating it to the Christ child. Father Christmas in his red-and-white suit, who flies through the sky in a sleigh drawn by reindeer, has his mythological roots in the shamanic reindeer-herding tribes of arctic Europe and Siberia. These northern shamans used the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom, which is red and white, to make their soul flights to the other world. Apples, which figure heavily in Christmas baking, are symbols of the sun god Apollo, so they find a natural place at winter solstice celebrations of the return of the sun. In fact, the authors contend that the emphasis of Christmas on green plants and the promise of the return of life in the dead of winter is just an adaptation of the pagan winter solstice celebration.

"The authors and the translators richly deserve congratulations on what is without doubt one of the finest books about Pagan Christmas written in recent times." (Lee Prosser, Ghostvillage.com, Dec 2006) "The illustrations and photographs are excellent. The text is concise, and accurate. Pagan Christmas is a fine reading experience!" (Lee Prosser, Ghostvillage.com, Dec 18, 2006) From the Back Cover CHRISTMAS / PAGANISM The day on which many commemorate the birth of Christ has its origins in pagan rituals that center on tree worship, agriculture, magic, and social exchange. But Christmas is no ordinary folk observance. It is an evolving feast that over the centuries has absorbed elements from cultures all over the world--practices that give the magical properties of plants and plant spirits pride of place. In fact, the symbolic use of plants at Christmas effectively transforms the modern-day living room into a place of shamanic ritual. Christian Rtsch and Claudia Mller-Ebeling show how the ancient meaning and use of the botanical elements of Christmas provide a unique view of the religion that existed in Europe before the introduction of Christianity. The fir tree was originally revered as the sacred World Tree in northern Europe. When the Christian church was unable to drive the tree cult out of peoples consciousness, it incorporated the fir tree by dedicating it to the Christ child. Father Christmas in his red-and-white suit, who flies through the sky in a sleigh drawn by reindeer, has his mythological roots in the shamanic reindeer-herding tribes of arctic Europe and Siberia. These northern shamans used the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom, which is red and white, to make their soul flights to the other world. Apples, which figure heavily in Christmas baking, are symbols of the sun god Apollo, so they find a natural place at winter solstice celebrations of the return of the sun. Indeed, the emphasis at Christmas on green plants and the promise of the return of life in the dead of winter is by its very nature another form of the pagan winter solstice celebration still practiced today. CHRISTIAN RTSCH, Ph.D., is a world-renowned anthropologist and ethnopharmacologist who specializes in the shamanic uses of plants. A former president of the German Society for Ethnomedicine, he is the author of *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants and Marijuana Medicine* and coauthor of *Plants of the Gods*. CLAUDIA MLLER-EBELING, Ph.D., is an art historian and anthropologist and coauthor, with

Christian Rtsch, of Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas and Witchcraft Medicine. Both authors live in Hamburg, Germany. About the Author Christian Rtsch, Ph.D., is a world-renowned anthropologist and ethnopharmacologist who specializes in the shamanic uses of plants. Currently serving as the president of the German Society for Ethnomedicine, he is the author of The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants and Marijuana Medicine and coauthor of Plants of the Gods. Claudia Mller-Ebeling, Ph.D., is an art historian and anthropologist and coauthor, with Christian Rtsch, of Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas and Witchcraft Medicine. Both authors live in Hamburg, Germany.