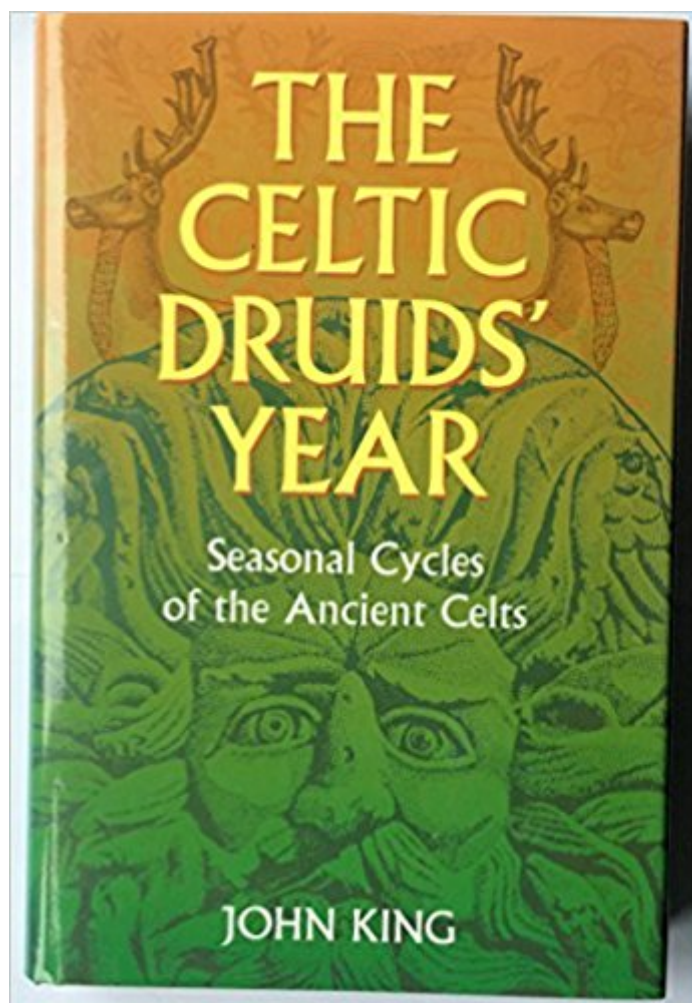


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The Celtic Druids' Year: Seasonal Cycles Of The Ancient Celts



Synopsis

"King's focus is on the wheel of the Celtic year with its cycle of four celebrations.... King describes the religious underpinnings of the festivals, the functions of the Druid priests and bards, relationships to other mythologies, and the influence of historical assimilation and migration on what we know of Celtic myth."-- "Booklist. 256 pages, 30 b/w illus., 6 x 9 1/4. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

This well-packaged new book on the Celts puts substantive academic research into popular terms. King's focus is on the wheel of the Celtic year with its cycle of four celebrations: the fire feast of Lughnasa; the still-celebrated festival of the dead, Sarnhain (Halloween); the feast of the herds at Imbolc; and the wild abandon of Beltane, with its maypoles. Corollary to those festivals are the equinoxes and solstices, observed by the Celts in less ritualized fashion but important to them as markers in the agricultural year. Besides the annual cycle, King describes the religious underpinnings of the festivals, the functions of the druid priests and bards, relationships to other mythologies, and the influence of historical assimilation and migration on what we know of Celtic myth. A good resource, well written and well researched. Patricia Monaghan

This is my first reading of anything Celtic and I absolutely loved the book. My intention when I purchased the book was to find out about ancient agricultural societies and how they viewed the world, how they functioned as a whole, and what beliefs they held. Interestingly enough, my interest

changed to actually enjoying the history behind the Druids and the society in which they were held in such high regard. I enjoyed the book for several other reasons as well: King made a valid argument as to the location on the calendar as to where the Celtic year would begin and end. It is logical, to me at least, that for an agricultural society they would celebrate in the summer when food was plentiful and the days long; not in the winter when they were possibly starving and living off of the meager rations that they could eat from the salting of meat. One of the other reasons that I liked this book so much was because it dealt with so much of the Celtic society in such a relatively short novel. King touches on religion, Roman influence, cultural oversights by previous historians, and of course the calendar and their alphabet (which takes up a large portion of the later half of the novel for obvious reasons). As a reviewer I would recommend this book to anyone interested in Celtic philosophy and Society who haven't read any or much Celtic history as of yet. What I got out of this book was that I wanted to read more about the society; to find out more about the Druids, the Bards (or Ovates) and their incredible---and sometimes magical---lives. Great read.

In doing research into the hidden meanings found in many Celtic art works I found this book invaluable. While I am not looking to follow the Druid way, there is good live advice, wise and simple.

I read this book in college & have searched for it since. Detailed information about dyadic cycle & holidays. I reference it all the time

This work by Mr. King is a very interesting read, though difficult to get started into. It is full of factual information, scholarly discoveries and ideas that make even experienced followers of the path sit back and think. Despite the utility and genius of the book, there are a few things that I didn't like about it. First, the title is deceiving. A little less than half of the book is actually about the cycles of the Celtic year, and even less about the holidays and rituals. The entirety of the first 4-5 chapters is general background information on the Celts and the Druids. While this information is useful, and accurate, it is also replicated in 100 other books. Second, Mr. King makes an interesting case that the Druids were the remnant of a long-forgotten Pythagorean cult, at best a dubious proposition and a laughable one at worst. Though his points are interesting, it is all conjecture with very little solid information to back it up. Lastly, Mr. King doesn't delve deeply enough into the various subjects he explores. Though the information is good as a primer, it is hardly an advanced book on the subject of the Celts and the Druids. Most of the information can be found in any other book. I gave the book 4 stars because Mr. King makes some points that are glossed over, skipped or ignored by other

writers. While its true that he does this to try to prove his pet theories correct, the information is made no less valid. The few unique things in this book turn out to be rare gems in the sand.

Although I generally liked this book, I was disheartened by chapter 8; "The Eight Stations of the Year." This is a Wiccan concept, unfamiliar to the Celtic/Druidic mindset. There is no evidence that the Druids celebrated the Vernal or Autumnal equinoxes or the Winter solstice. I was similarly disheartened by chapter 9; "The 13 Months of the Year," which relies on Rob't Graves' good old "Celtic Tree Calendar," which, more recently, has been found to be pure claptrap. If you're interested in a Celtic calendar, look into the Coligny calendar. Not bad overall, but these two later chapters belong in the garbage.

I picked this book up without knowing anything about it in advance. I was interested in the author's idea of what a "druid year" would be. That is reserved for the end of the book. The beginning half is a well-researched look at what functions druids performed in their society, and a general over-view of pre-Christian Celtic society. This half is perfect for the student who past asking what a druid is and does, but wants a firmer historical context on which to base further study. In particular, Pliny's popular "white-robe and golden sickle" description is questioned, and for the general student's purposes, disproved. In the second half of the book the author presents his version of the Celtic Druid Year. King's most notable (and controversial) idea is that New Year Celebrations were held at mid-summer, contrary to the popular belief that New Year arrived at Samhain. This idea, however, is not unique to King. Ronald Hutton has also argued against the possibility that Samhain was the Celtic New Year. For each of the 8 feast days, King describes what the situation would have been for the community the Druid(s) "worked" for -- what foods would be available and concerns regarding weather conditions as manifestations of their gods' favour/ disfavour. This description added to his discussion of the feast days helps present to the reader the practical rather than purely spiritual or magical functions of the celebrations. Overall, this is a well researched and honest book. However, the author's insistence that the druids were the decedents or an off-shoot of the Pythagorian Cult is the reason it did not earn 4 or 5 stars. While King's research shows similarities between the two groups, it is this reader's opinion that King is too eager to find a "legitimate" source for druidry, akin to those who wish to place the druids as the decedents of the citizens of Atlantis or one of the lost tribes of Israel.

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