

Women's History

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Rhythm and Gender

In Spain, the Twelfth day of Christmas is celebrated by drummers drumming in the Epiphany on January 6. This tradition, well known in "The Twelve Days of Christmas," song which sings of twelve drummers drumming, has its roots in Christian doctrine.

As a young girl, Layne Redmond wanted to be a drummer, but was told by her parents that drumming was for boys. In her book entitled *When the Drummers Were Women*, (1997), Redmond writes that the earliest known religions rituals revolved around the beat of frame drums. Women, considered holy because of their seemingly magical ability to create new life, performed these sacred drumming rituals. Historian William H. McNeill suggests that the rhythmic rites associated with the ancient goddesses were critical prerequisites for the emergence of humanity. Goddess drumming was a powerful tool for communal bonding until the fall of the Roman Empire

Evidence of major incursions of warlike nomads, invaders referred to as Kurgans or Aryans or Into-Europeans, rode horse-drawn chariots and brandished swords. The peaceful goddess-based cultures were no match for them. In her book, *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), Riane Eisler describes Kurgan culture as a dominator model of social organization in which 'male dominance, male violence, and a generally hierarchic and authoritarian social structure was the norm.'

The fall of the Roman Empire marks the powerful transition point in history from the worship of many gods and goddesses into the worship of one. And that one was a god. The goddess was demonized, imbued with evil connotations, buried. The new power elite doomed the goddess to eventual oblivion; erased this culture. Rhythmic music, perhaps an echo of the human pulse, was central to these women's rites, and the drum was the core of the rhythm. But the warriors of this new deity banned the sacred frame drum. The drum was silenced, but not the drummer. She still drums in women who pulsate for women and women's causes...and the beat goes on.

Happy 2005.

References

www.cresourcei.org/cy12days.html

When the Drummers Were Women, Layne Redmond