

Christmas Customs in Greece

Kallikantzaroi- Greek Christmas Goblins

Some customs and traditions are practiced and believed and the same way all over the World no matter the country of their origin. Throughout the years these traditions have been tweaked a bit here and altered a bit there. Kallikantzaroi is one such story which has become a Greek Christmas tradition.

What are Kallikantzaroi?

Kallikantzaroi are mischievous Greek goblins, elves or gnomes.

They come up to the surface of the Earth during the twelve days of Christmas from the end of December, when the sun will not move again, until January 6(Epiphany). They tease people, eat their food and sweets and they cause all sorts of trouble and mischief.

These twelve days are also known as the winter solstice, celebrated in ancient Greece in the month of Poseidon and in medieval times; yule or yuletide.

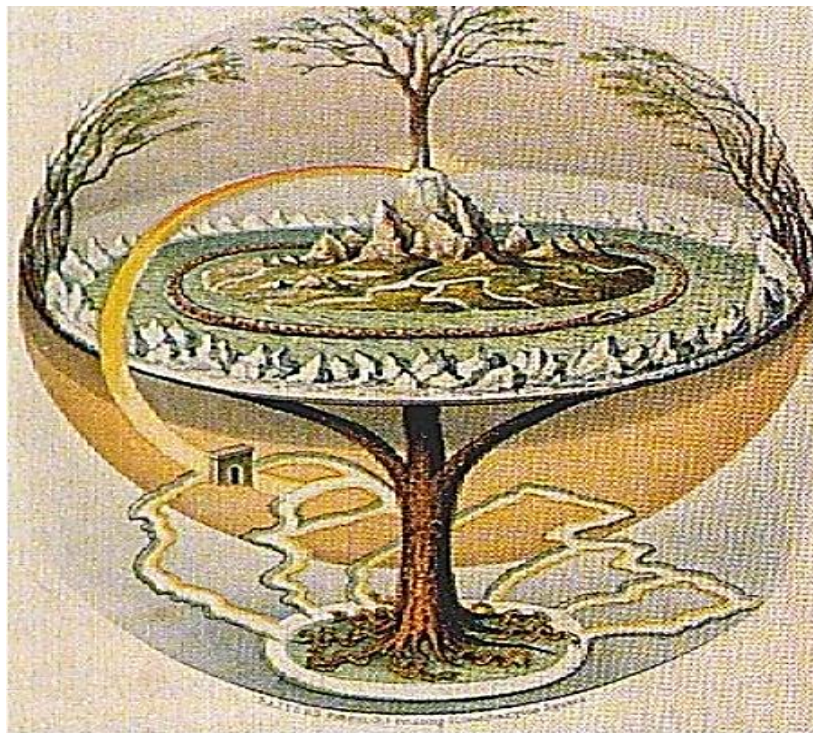
Another version of the tradition is that the Kallikantzaroi come up to the world during this period every year, because Christ has not yet been baptized and therefore cannot protect humanity from evil.

The rest of the year they live at the centre of the Earth where they spend their time using a large saw to cut down The World Tree, or The Tree of Life, that holds up the World.



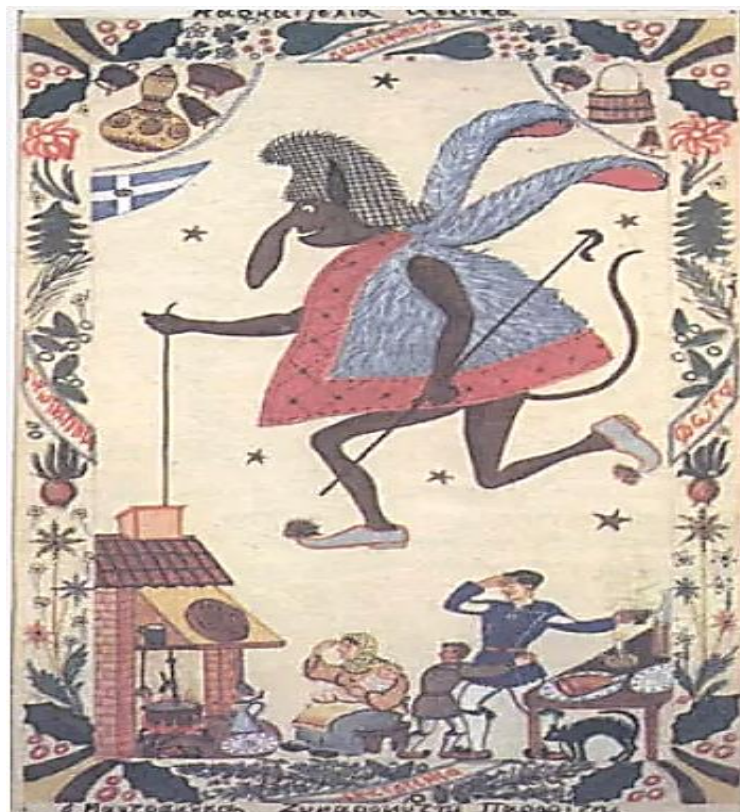
Greek Christmas goblins – Kallikantzaroi cutting down The World Tree

But when the Kallikantzaroi arrive back at the centre of the Earth, they find that The World Tree has fully grown again; the large saw is out and they start to chop it down all over again.



World Tree, or, Tree of Life

Kallikantzaroi are said to be small, black male, ugly with long black tails and goat-like legs. They speak with a lisp and eat small creatures such as worms, snails and frogs. They only come out at night and are afraid of the sun, fire and holy water. They enter houses anyway they can; through windows, down chimneys through keyholes and any cracks that they may find, in walls and around doors. Once inside they cause havoc. They are considered stupid and wicked.



Kallikantzaroi enter houses anyway they can, once inside they cause havoc.

How to protect yourself from Kallikantzaroi

1. Leave a colander on your doorstep at night, the Kallikantzaroi, who can only count to two and consider the number three holy and will kill themselves before pronouncing it, will spend all night counting the holes. They only ever reach the number two and start again so as not to utter the word three! The number three holds great significance in Christianity, as it represents the Holy Trinity, and it is for this reason that it is said that the little creatures are unable to even utter the number.
2. Mark your door with a black cross on Christmas Eve.
3. Burn a smelly shoe on the fire; the foul smell will keep them away!
4. Burn a large log so they can stop coming down the chimney, for twelve days until the sixth of January, when the Kallikantzaroi will go back to the centre of the Earth.
5. Use the decorated bowl with the wooden cross as a means to keep them away. The wooden bowl is customarily filled with water, after which the water is sprinkled in each room of the house.

kallikantzaroi are frightened away on January 6th(Epiphany), by Greek priests who used to go through all the houses blessing them with holy water splashed around with a bunch of fresh basil.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASeUYMhKkEg>



Photos of kallikantzaroi