

Zisa, Undoer of Knots

Goddess of a Living Tradition



An Existence Defended

Exploring Her Lore



Sources of Evidence

1. Modern Urglaawe
2. Philology
3. Lokasenna
4. Grimm and the Nuremberg Chronicle
5. Augsburg



Urglaawe

The Pennsylvania Dutch branch of Heatheny has Zisa as a wife of Ziu. She's one of the primary deities in Urglaawe's pantheon.

Urglaawers celebrate her feast day on September 28th.

She is known as the Undoer of Knots and Remover of Obstacles.

She is associated with Mary Undoer of Knots (ie Saint Bridget & Goddess Brigid)

She is associated with the color red.

DYEU

DIWAS (?)

TYR

DEIWOS

TIWAZ

TIW

~500BCE - Proto-German spoken

~100 BCE - First Germanic Consonant Shift / Grimm's Law

~200-300 CE - Second Germanic Consonant Shift (southern Germany only)

ZIO
ZIU -> ZISA



Lokasenna

"Be silent, Tyr! | for a son with me
Thy wife once chanced to win;
Not a penny, methinks, | wast thou paid for the wrong,
Nor wast righted an inch, poor wretch."

- Lokasenna, verse 40

- Lokasenna = Flyting
- Flyting = Viking Rap Battle
- The power of the insults is in their truthfulness.
 - Thus, we must conclude Tyr has a wife.

(And she has a son by Loki!)



Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*

1836 Grimm publishes his collection of German myths. Included is story reference by several 11th C manuscripts about the founding of Augsburg.

- Zizaris was a “barbarian” hill fort with a wooden temple to their goddess Zisa.
- Romans besieged Zizaris until...
 - “...on the 59th day, which happened to be the day of the Goddess Zisa, famous among the barbarians, when there was a festival more lascivious than frightening, a huge crowd of barbarians, bursting unlooked for from a nearby wood, broke unexpectedly from the fort and (what was even worse!) destroyed all the cavalry.”
- Roman conquered the town in 15CE naming it Augusta Vindelicorum, but the temple “remained inviolate even after a Roman colony was created there.” This city becomes Augsburg.



Zisa in Augsburg: Pinecone Edition

The earliest seals of Augsburg have a “tree of life” within the walls, with a single star above.

(over the mists of the night?)

In the late 15th century, the story goes that an antique pine tree cone was “found” in the city and the city seal was switched from a tree of life to a pinecone. This pine was known to be the Swiss Stone Pine / Arolla Pine (*Pinus cembra*).

Pinecones are intimately associated with the Tree of Life in some cultures, where pinecones “pollinate” the tree of life.







Zisa in Augsburg: Enlightenment Edition

During the Enlightenment, the Classical World was all the rage, and with it came an appreciation of ancient pagan deities.

The Nuremberg Chronicle celebrates Cisa (sometimes also called Ceres, Circe, or Cybele) as a protector of their city.

Folk tales about the Gorgon of Augsburg protecting city.

In 1615 the ancient Perlachturm, a 600 year old city watchtower, is rebuilt to be the center of municipal offices. Atop their civic center, they place a weathervane of Cisa figure holding a pinecone.



Zisa is wearing a crenellation!
Not a crown but a heraldic
symbol of sovereignty



Zisa in Augsburg: Catholic Edition

In 1615, a husband is praying with the priest in Augsburg for Mary to save his marriage. He presents the knotted wedding ribbon to Mary. Miraculously the ribbon unties itself and their relationship is salvaged.

Augsburg becomes a Catholic pilgrimage site for Mary, Untier of Knots (*Maria Knotenlöserin*).

In 1700, Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner, grandson of the OG husband, paints Mary Untier of Knots devotional.





Urglaawe Revisited

The Pennsylvania Dutch branch of Heatheny has Zisa as a wife of Ziu.* She's one of the primary deities in Urglaawe's pantheon.

Urglaawers celebrate her feast day on Sept 28th (Kalends of Sextilis + 59 days!)

She is known as the Undoer of Knots and Remover of Obstacles.

She is associated with Mary Undoer of Knots (ie Saint Bridget & Goddess Brigid)

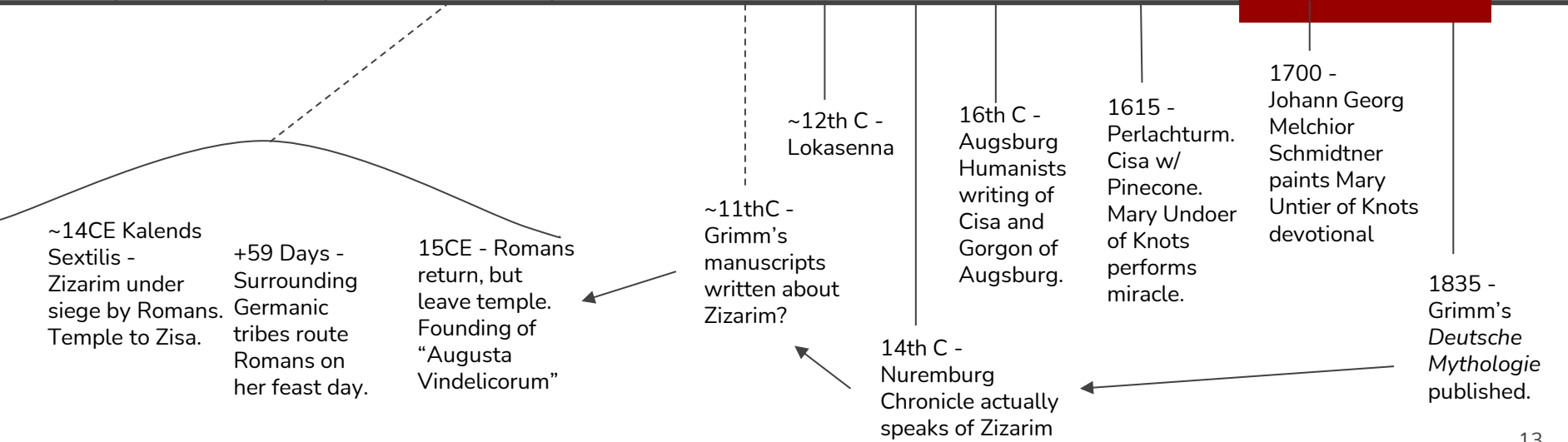
She is associated with the color red (from devotional... and more?).

DYEU
DEIWOS
DIWAS (?)
TIWAZ
TYR
TIW

~500BCE - Proto-German spoken
~100 BCE - First Germanic Consonant Shift / Grimm's Law
~200-300 CE - Second Germanic Consonant Shift (southern Germanic only)

ZIO
ZIU

Late 1600 to Early 1800s: Germans immigrate to Pennsylvania





A Tradition Thriving

Exploring Her Present Worship



Undoer of Knots

- Remover of Obstacles
 - Releasing negative ideations
 - Alleviating self-sabotage
 - Opening up bound muscles
- Releaser of Chains
 - Relationship assistance
 - Easing divorce
 - Clearing up issues within a relationship
 - Helping to let go



Gentle Lady

- Zisa is the Undoer / Untier / Remover / Releaser
- She is NOT the Breaker / Slicer / Cutter
- Her works take time. She is a subtle, slow deity.

- But like a knot undone, results will happen in a rush.
 - Not dissimilar to how one solves a riddle: patient pondering leads to immediate insight.



(Un) Weaver Goddess

As a goddess undoing knots, Zisa is linked to weaving. As a wife of Tyr, she is linked to the cosmic balances. Thus, it stands to reason she may be entreated to change the weavings of one's wyrd.

Similar to Tyr, she has no time for nonsense. She takes a cosmic view and does not lightly alter wyrd.

Note: Augsburg rose to prominence in the Middle Ages as a center of textile manufacturing.



The Cosmic Knots

As the divine pair with Tyr, she is also concerned with the cosmic balance. Zisa's role complements and contrasts Tyr's.

She does not enact laws but UNDOES INJUSTICES.

She is a powerful ally in any works relating to dismantling systems of oppression, hatred and supremacy.



Pinecone Protector

Given her connection with removing societal injustices and her gentle nature, she is naturally a protective goddess as well.

- Zisa is seen to have protected Zizarim from Romans.
- Renaissance folk tales speak of a protective Gorgon of Augsburg.

The pinecone protects the seeds. It is the parent protecting the next generation, the children. *Zisa is the pinecone and we are her children.*



Swiss Stone Pine - *Pinus Cembra*

“ This pine is loved by both humans and wildlife for its seeds, which are easily extracted from the cone, highly nutritious, and very tasty. Pine cones cut into slices are used to flavor Schnapps, which is then sold as "Zirbenschnapps" or "Zirbeler" Schnapps.

Beds and furniture made of the very aromatic smelling *Pinus cembra* wood are very popular within the Alpine region of Europe. A scientific study of Joanneum Research in 2003 has shown that exposure to a Swiss Stone Pine may improve sleep by saving you up to 3,500 heart beats per night making nights more restful and restorative. The aromatic *Pinus cembra* wood is said to be antibacterial as well. Some studies also indicate that beds made of Swiss Stone Pine may tend to reduce meteorsensitivity.”





Red Lady

Urglaawer associate the color red with both Zui and Zisa.

Stone pine liqueur, Zirbenz, is a warm red.

Similarly, the Stone pine cones can be used to make a dye. Guess what color this dye becomes. (Another connection with weaving / textiles too.)

Finally, Mary Undoer of Knots wears red. This is highly atypical for Marian iconography and likely draws from Zisa.





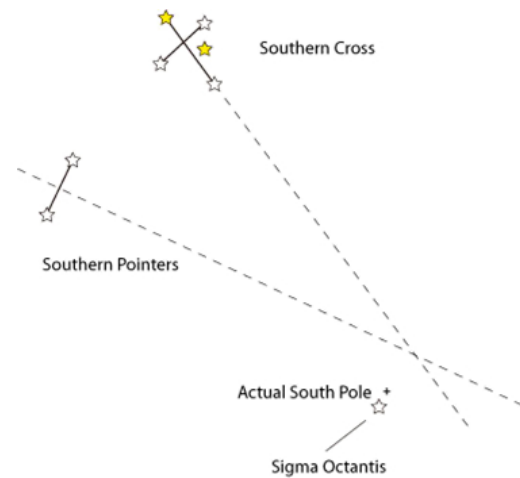
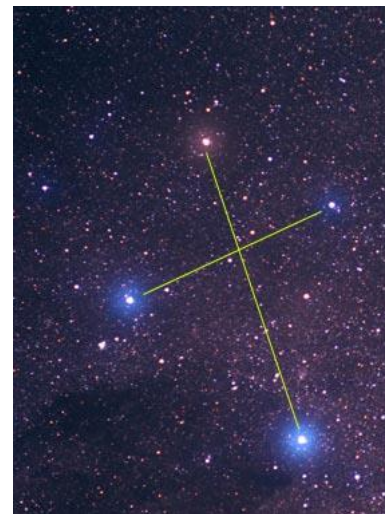
The Delight of the North Star

An Urglaawe charm recalls that the South Star is a delight of the North Star's eye.

North Star is a representation of Ziu (Tyr), supported by the Old English rune poem for the Tiw / Tiwaz rune and Urglaawe lore.

There is currently no South Star. But the Southern Cross indicates where this southern axial pole would be. It points to an emptiness.

The Southern Cross is not visible in the Northern Hemisphere. However, due to the Precession of Equinoxes, this constellation was historically visible up until 400CE.





The Flame of Wisdom

The Deitsch rune Fackel (cognate of Kenaz) is associated with Zisa. Fackel is proactive elemental metal, harnessed fire, and illumination of hidden information. In dry conditions with wind and fire, the pine cone releases seeds, allowing regeneration.

The Old English Rune poem calls Cen (cognate of Kenaz) the both the torch and the pine, as pine was often used for torches and firewood. It similarly relates to the illumination of wisdom.

“Call twice upon Tyr for victory” ... call twice upon Zisa for...?





A Strange Precipice

Exploring Beyond the Known



Coming out of the Closet

According to modern queer theory, queer is both a noun and a verb. As a verb, to queer something is to question the edges and blur the boundaries.

Zisa queers divinity, but being both known and unknown, and by being Catholic and Heathen.

Zisa also has a connection to “coming out” which is undoing the knots of social expectations.



A Son Chanced to Win

While the Lokasenna frames Loki as taking advantage of Tyr's Wife, folklore tells a different story. In Iceland, the Shetlands and Denmark, a knot is called a Loki.

Divine children often symbolize a union of the parental forces. Loki and Zisa both have connections with:

- Knots (Untier v Folklore)
- Fire (Cen v Hearth)
- Transmutation (Wyrd v Status Quo)
- Unraveling (Undoing v Transgressing)
- Queerness (Coming Out v Genderqueer)

Could their child represent some form of these ideas?



Still of Maiden
China drag artist
from *Yellow Peril:
Queer Destiny*.



More Pinecone Symbolism

Many instances of staves with pinecone atop (Osiris, Bacchus, the Catholic Pope) symbolizing enlightenment and wisdom.

Pinecones are held / offered by Babylonian and Hindu deities as symbols of spiritual consciousness.

Our “Pine”al Gland, shaped like (and named after) the Pinecone. This gland regulates sleep and circadian rhythms.

Often used as symbols of eternal life and in conjunction with the Tree of Life.





The Knots of Suffering

Cosmic Balances. Removing Injustices. Vital red energy. Fires of regeneration. Letting go of suffering. Immortality. Enlightenment. Releasing burdens. Symbolizing emptiness.

Is Zisa some kind of Buddhist hippy god?!

Or maybe Her child is??





Concluding Comments

Ultimately Zisa is a bundle of contradictions. She is known yet not known. She is named and not named. She is Catholic yet Heathen. She holds the Southern Star, but there is no star. She is modern but perhaps among our most ancient deities.

She is a creator. But creates removal. She dwells that magic space of uncertainty and non-linearity.

She is Zisa, Undoer of Knots.

THANK YOU

Comments? Questions? Confusions? Kudos?