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Goddesses in Celtic Religion

Cult and Mythology: A Comparative Study of Ancient Ireland, Britain and Gaul

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Introduction

This work consists of a comparative study of the female deities venerated by the Celts of Gaul, Ancient Britain and Ancient Ireland. To begin with, a number of terms need to be defined, the background sketched in, and the methodology to be adopted outlined. In particular the following questions will be considered: What is meant by 'Celts/Celtic' and who were the Celts? What are the sources relating to the Celtic goddesses and what problems do they raise? And finally, what are the aim, methods and outline of this study?¹

I) Historical Background

A) Who were the Celts?

The terms 'Celts' and 'Celtic' are nowadays widely used to designate different peoples and concepts in space and time. Manuel Alberro explains that "the terms have different and often contradictory meanings in different contexts, and that linguists, social anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, folklorists and others use it according to how they perceive it."²

The adjective 'Celtic' is for instance used to refer to 5th - and 6th -century Irish Saints, such as Patrick of Armagh, Brigit of Kildare or Columcille of Iona;³ early medieval illuminated Irish manuscripts, such as the Book of Kells or the Book of Armagh;⁴ Arthurian Romance, consisting of the legends relating to the British King Arthur and his knights;⁵ and the culture, art, music, dance and legends of modern Celtic-speaking countries or regions, such as Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany. This thesis does not include such subjects and focuses rather on the ancient pagan Protohistoric⁶ peoples, speakers of a basic Celtic

¹ * Asterisk indicates term defined in the glossary.

² Alberro, 2008, p. 1005.

³ Saint Patrick, Saint Brigit and Columcille are the three major saints of Ireland. Saint Patrick (c. 385 AD - c. 461 AD) was not the first Christian missionary in Ireland, but was the most influential. He is traditionally believed to have Christianized Ireland from 432 AD to 461 AD, but alternative dates (456-493 AD) are sometimes given. Saint Brigit (c. 439 AD - c. 524 AD) founded a celebrated convent at Cill Dara (Kildare), while Columcille (c. 521 AD – c. 597 AD) founded monasteries at Doire (Derry, Co. Londonderry) and Dairmhaigh (Durrow, Co. Offaly), and left Ireland for Iona, an island off the south-west coast of Scotland, in 563 AD to evangelize the Scottish people. See Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 417-423, 51-55, 89-93 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 363-365, 58, 95-96.

⁴ The Book of Armagh or *Liber Ardmachanus* was compiled from 807 AD by Feardomnach in Armagh (Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland). It is presently housed at Trinity College, Dublin. The Book of Kells or *Leabhar Cheanannais* was written at the monastery of Kells in Co. Meath at the end of the 8th c. or beginning of the 9th c. It is kept at Trinity College, Dublin. See Mackillop, 2004, pp. 48, 281.

⁵ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 26-27.

⁶ Protohistory is a period situated between Prehistory and the emergence of writing (recorded history), designating cultures making and using metallurgy. It consists of three main periods: the Copper Age or Chalcolithic period (c. 3500-1800 BC), the Bronze Age (c.2000-800 BC) and the Iron Age (800-52 BC).

language, who appeared in the 8th c. BC in Central Europe and, who, from the 4th or 3rd c. BC, occupied a vast territory from Eastern Europe to Spain and Ireland in the west, until the Roman invasions of Gaul in the 1st c. BC and Britain in the 1st c. AD, and the Christianization of Ireland at the beginning of the 5th c. AD.

The Celts belong to the family of the Indo-Europeans, who appeared in Europe and Asia in the Copper Age (in around the 5th to 4th millennia BC). This group of peoples, who shared common linguistic, societal, religious and cultural features, developed the first metal tools and introduced the horse and the wheeled vehicle. When and how the Celts appeared remains difficult to determine with certainty and is still a matter of debate among historians.⁷ They are generally accepted as being the direct ancestors of the Megalithic and Urnfield civilizations of the Middle and Late Bronze Age (c. 1700-1300/1300–900 BC), respectively characterized by the funerary practices of the tumulus*, which consisted in interring the dead in burial mounds, and of incineration, which consisted in cremating the deceased and placing their ashes in pots buried in flat cemeteries.⁸ The appearance of the Celtic civilization is associated with the development of a new material culture of iron-working at the beginning of the Iron Age. The earliest historical references to the Celts are by the 6th-century Greek geographer Hecataeus of Miletus, who used the word *Keltoi* to refer to the peoples living to the north of the Greek colony of Massilia (Marseilles), and by the mid-5th-century Greek historian Herodotus, who stated in his *Histories* that the Celts inhabited the region near the source of the Danube.⁹ Subsequently, Greek and Latin writers used this name to designate the peoples living in western and central Europe. This indicates that, despite their political disunity, those non-Mediterranean European peoples had a sufficient unity, in material culture, religion, ethnology and language, to be identified as a homogeneous entity by Classical writers.

Celtic civilization consists of two main historical periods: the 1st-Iron Age period, known as 'Hallstatt Culture', lasting from about 800 BC to 450 BC, and the 2nd-Iron Age period, called 'La Tène Culture', which started in 450 BC and ended in 52 BC in Gaul with the Roman conquest by Julius Caesar, and in 43 AD in Britain with the Roman invasion led by Claudius (fig. 1). These two dates marked the beginning of the Gallo-Roman and Romano-British civilizations in Gaul and Britain. In Ireland, the La Tène culture endured until the Christianization of the isle at the beginning of the 5th c.

Fig. 1: Chronology of the Iron Age. Brunaux, 2005, p. 35.

⁷ Kruta, 2000, pp. 123-135 ; Kruta, 2002, pp. 58-63 ; Brunaux, 2005, pp. 29-30 ; Green, 1992a, p. 10.

⁸ Brunaux, 2005, p. 30 ; Kruta, 2002, p. 60 ; Green, 1992a, p. 10.

⁹ Powell 1983, pp.13-14 ; Alberro, 2008, p. 1007 ; Cunliffe, 2006, p. 13. Hecataeus of Miletus's work is lost and is referred to by later Greek historians. Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book II, 35: *I am willing to believe that [the Nile] rises at the same distance from its mouth as the [Danube], which has its source amongst the Keltoi at Pyrēnē and flows right through the middle of Europe, to reach the Black Sea at Miletos's colony of Istri. The Keltoi live beyond the Pillars of Hercules, next to the Kunēsioi who are the most westerly people of Europe. Book IV, 48: the [Danube], that mighty stream which, rising amongst the Keltoi, the most westerly, after the Kunētes, of all the European nations, traverses the whole length of the continent before it enters Scythia.*

1 st Iron Age Culture of Hallstatt	Early	Ha C	800 BC – 650 BC
	Late	Ha D	650 BC – 475 BC
2 nd Iron Age Culture of La Tène	Early	LT A	475 BC – 375 BC
		LT B	375 BC – 275 BC
	Middle	LT C	275 BC – 150 BC
	Final	LT D	150 BC – 25 BC

The Hallstatt period takes its name from a small village situated to the north of Lake Hallstatt in the valley of Salzburg, in the heart of Austria, where about 2,000 inhumation and incineration tombs, dating from the last third of the 8th c. BC to the beginning of the 5th c. BC, have been discovered since 1710. The main excavations, which revealed 994 tombs, were carried out by Johann Georg Ramsauer between 1846 and 1864.¹⁰ Archaeological evidence of the Hallstatt culture has been found in central Europe, Austria, in the south of Germany and in the west of the Czech Republic. It was characterized by the development of a military class run by powerful and prestigious chiefs or princes belonging to an aristocratic élite, who built hill-top fortified residences, called 'hill-forts', and were interred in impressive and richly decorated mound burials - that is funerary rooms covered by a tumulus* - with their tools, weapons, four-wheeled carts and harnesses, drinking equipment (cauldrons, horns, etc) and food offerings.¹¹ This funerary practice is exemplified by the sumptuous 530 BC-inhumation-burial of the Prince of Hochdorf (Bade-Wurtemberg, Germany), and the 500 BC-mound burial of the Princess of Vix (Côte d'Or, France).¹² From the 6th c. BC, the decline of the wealth of the region seems to have caused some populations to migrate to the west of the Rhine (in what is now Switzerland), the south-west of Germany and the east of France.

The La Tène period, which is generally said to have started around 450 BC, takes its name from a small Swiss village situated on the bank of Lake Neuchâtel, where thousands of metal votive offerings, such as jewelry, tools and weapons, have been dredged from 1853 onwards.¹³ The La Tène period was a significant phase of expansion. The Celtic communities progressively settled in the whole of present-day France, the Netherlands, North Italy, North and West Spain, Britain and Ireland (fig. 2). The La Tène culture was characterized by important social, cultural and political changes, and significant artistic development. The phenomenon of princely tombs in mound burials considerably developed and became differentiated from the Hallstatt period by the ritual deposit of two-wheeled carts and weapons. Hill-top fortified cities, referred to as oppida*, covering an area between 30 to 1,500 hectares, were built in a large part of Europe, Britain and Ireland, from the beginning of the 2nd c. BC until the end of the 1st c. BC.¹⁴ Finally, remarkable artistic innovations, denoting the ability, inventiveness and ingenuity of the Celtic craftsmen, gave birth to a typical Celtic artistic style, referred to as 'La Tène Art' or 'Celtic Art', evidenced

¹⁰ They were composed of 538 inhumation tombs and 455 incineration tombs, which are housed in the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna (Austria). Kruta, 2000, p. 657 ; Cunliffe, 1997, pp. 37-38.

¹¹ Kruta, 2000, pp. 135-155, 657-659 ; Kruta, 2002, pp. 61-63 ; Cunliffe, 2006, pp. 56-57, 61-69 ; Brunaux, 2005, pp. 30-34.

¹² Kruta, 2000, pp. 667-668, 863-864 ; Biel, 1987, pp. 95-188. See Chapter 5 for more details.

¹³ Kruta, 2002, pp. 64-110 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 155-335, 837-838 ; Brunaux, 2005, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴ Fichtl, 2000, pp. 1-15, 31-34 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 762-763 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 84-86.

by jewels (torques*, fibulas*), coins, weapons (swords, helmets, shields) horse trappings, tools (cauldrons, spits, firedogs) and vessels (vases, bowls) principally in bronze, iron and gold. Items in wood have not survived, while work in stone is unusual.¹⁵ La Tène art is stylistically characterized by inscribed and intricately inlaid designs; its spirals and interlacing designs combining motifs borrowed from the natural world (such as human faces, animals and plants), geometric forms of the Hallstatt period and themes adapted from Classical and Oriental arts. The La Tène period thus clearly appears as the period of the full flowering of the Celtic civilization.

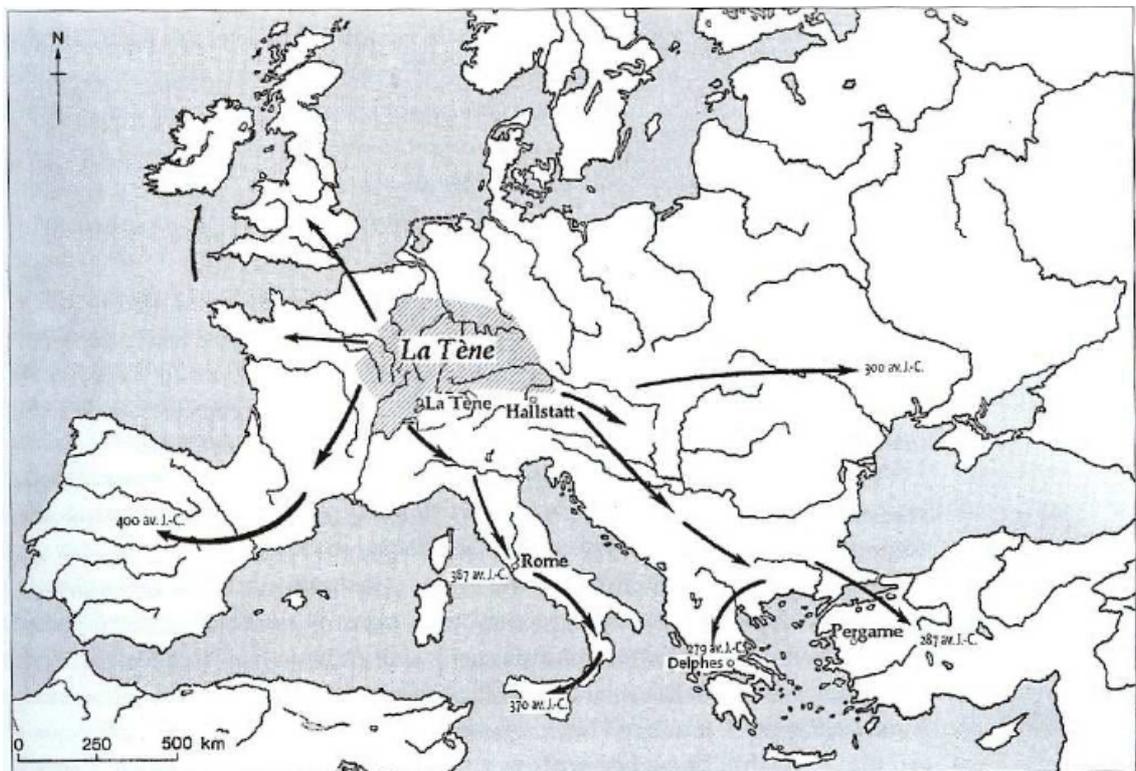


Fig. 2: Map of Celtic expansion in Europe in the La Tène period. Raftery, 2006, p. 11.

B) Celtic tribes

¹⁵ Cunliffe, 2006, pp. 123-144 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 429-433 ; Kruta, 2002, pp. 47-51 ; Duval, 1977 ; Megaw & Megaw, 1986 ; Megaw & Megaw, 2005.

In Celtic times, Gaul, Britain and Ireland were a patchwork of different communities or tribes, who were not politically or militarily united: each tribe was ruled by a chief – for example Ambiorix, leader of the Eburones, or Ambigatos, king of the Bituriges - and had its own specific organisation. However, despite their political disunity and diversification, the Celtic peoples were linked by economic ties and shared common linguistic, cultural, artistic, societal and religious values. The tribes lived on a territory delimited by frontiers which were generally natural, such as a river, a forest, a mountain, etc. Even though a certain number of tribes remain unrecorded, many of them are identified by the evidence of archaeology and the statements of Classical authors, notably Julius Caesar in his 1st-century BC *Gallic Wars*, the Greek geographer Strabo in his late 1st-century BC or early 1st-century AD *Geography*, the Latin historian Tacitus in his 1st-century AD *Annals* and *Histories*, and the Greek geographer Ptolemy in his 2nd-century AD *Geography*.

The name and location of the around twenty Celtic tribes settled in Ireland about the 1st c. AD are given by Ptolemy (fig. 3): in the north-east, the Rhobogdii; in the north-west, the Vennicnii; and in the west, the Nagnatae, settled in today's Co. Mayo, the Autinni and the Gangani near the River Shannon, and the Vellabri in the area of present-day Co. Kerry.¹⁶ The south was occupied by the powerful tribe of the Iverni, later called Erainn, who gave their name to Ireland (Erin) and are generally regarded as being at least partially descended from the first Celtic people to have settled in Ireland around the 5th c. BC.¹⁷ The Brigantes, who were certainly an off-shot of the potent British Brigantes tribe settled in Yorkshire (GB), inhabited the south-east of Ireland.¹⁸ Finally, in the east, from south to north, six peoples are mentioned: the Coriondi, the Menapi, the Cauci, settled near Dublin, the Eblani, who were probably the ancestors of the Ulaid, and the Darinii.

¹⁶ Freeman, 2001, pp. 69-81.

¹⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 104-105 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 204-206 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 190-191 ; Freeman, 2001, pp. 74-75.

¹⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 193, 195 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 50 ; Joliffe, 1941, p. 37.

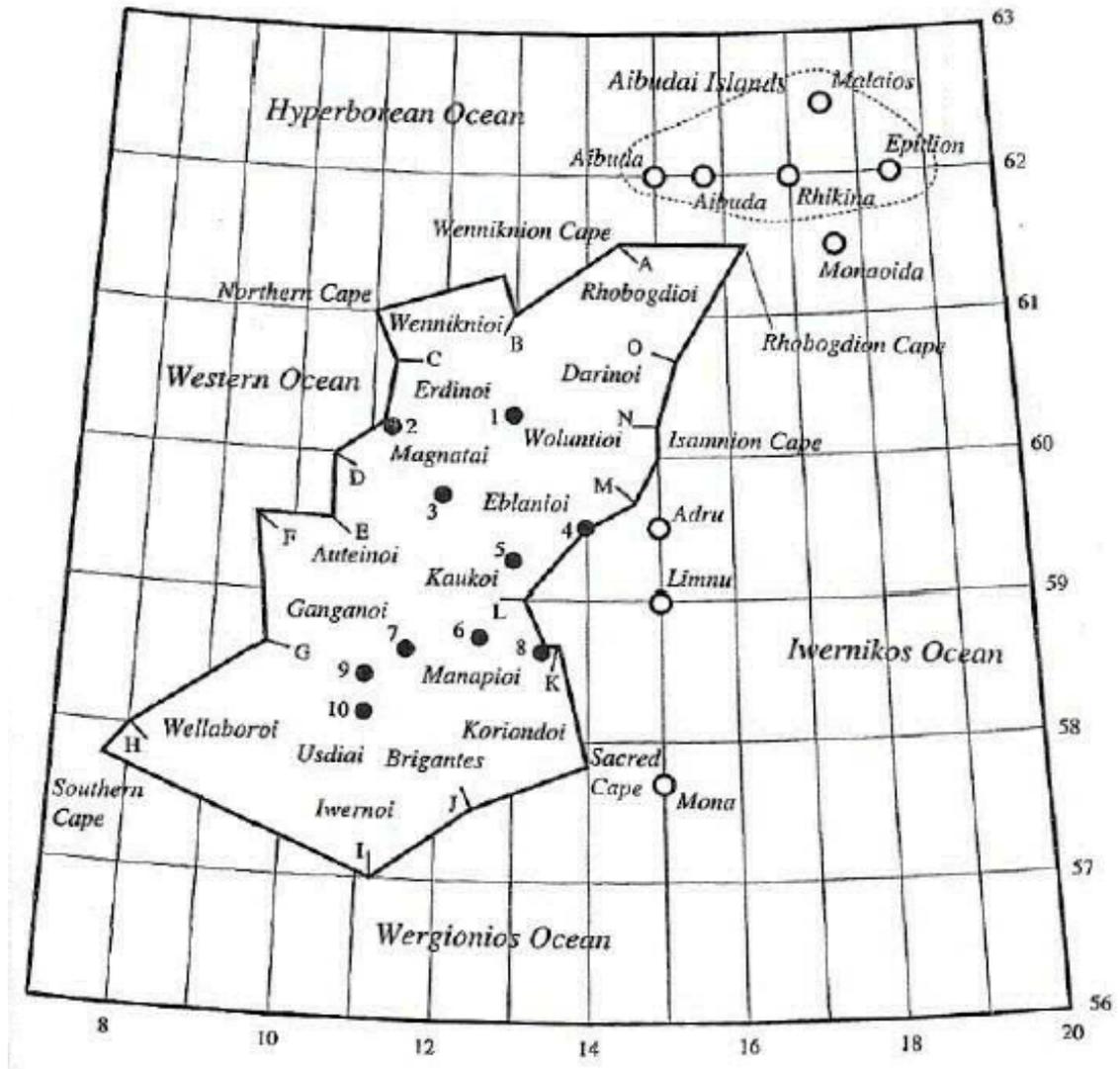


Fig. 3: Ptolemy's map of Ireland with the name and location of the Celtic tribes. Freeman, 2001, fig. 18, p. 69.

In Britain, about thirty Celtic tribes are recorded by Strabo, Tacitus and Ptolemy (fig. 4).¹⁹ The powerful Brigantes sept* occupied the present-day counties of Yorkshire and Northumbria. They were ruled between 50 and 70 AD by the famous Queen Cartimandua, who, contrary to her husband *Venutios*, became allied with the Romans and handed her people over to them.²⁰ The potent Ordovices tribe was situated in North Wales to the south of Anglesey, and was neighboured to the south by the Demetae and to the east by the Cornovii (in the Severn Basin).²¹ In the south-west and centre were settled the Dobunni, between Bristol Channel and the River Severn, and the Belgian Catuvellauni and Atrebatas tribes,

¹⁹ See the various entries in Kruta, 2000 for the references to the Classical authors.

²⁰ Kruta, 2000, pp. 496, 519 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 181-184.

²¹ Kruta, 2000, pp. 764, 573, 561.

respectively situated to the north and south of the Thames.²² The Iceni tribe, led by the celebrated Queen Boudicca, who, with the help of the Trinovantes, raised a revolt against the Roman invasion in 60 AD, inhabited present-day Norfolk and Suffolk.²³

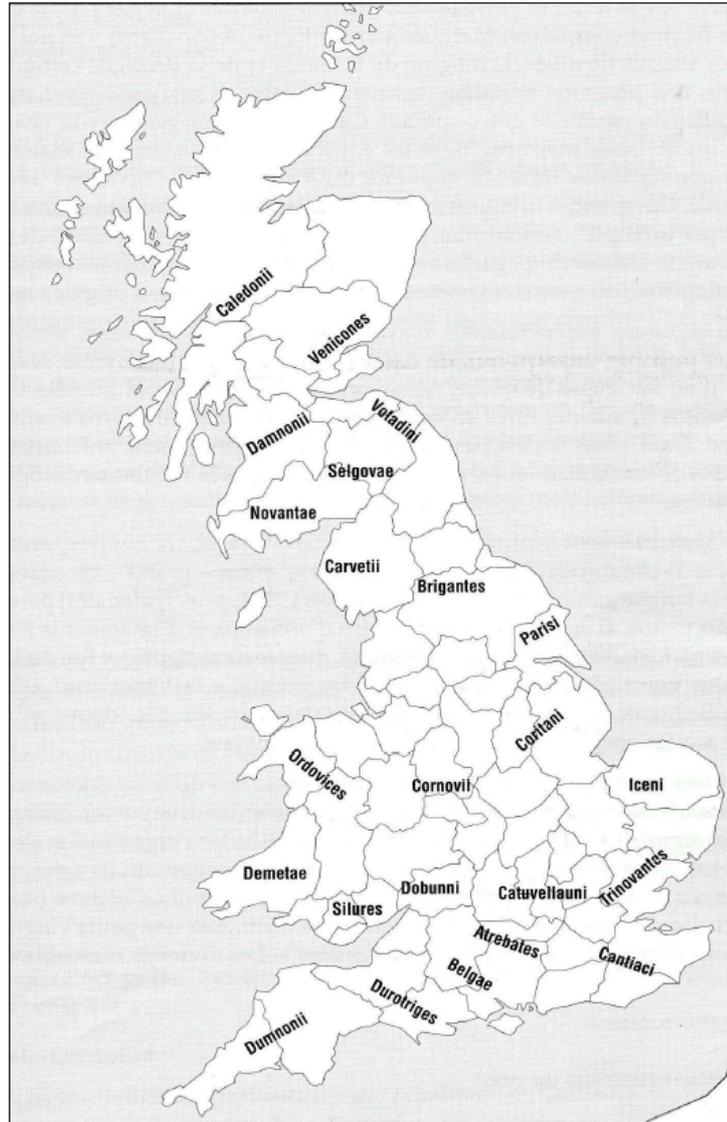


Fig. 4: Map of the main Celtic tribes in Britain. RDG, p. 9, fig. 1b.

In Gaul, about sixty tribes have been reported, not counting the unrecorded septs* and the tribes of the Narbonese region, annexed earlier by the Romans in 125 BC. The most powerful were the Allobroges, the Sequani, the Lingones, the Aedui, the Arverni, the Remi, the Treveri, the Carnutes, the Pictones, the Santones and the Volcae (fig. 5). The Sequani inhabited the present-day regions of Franche-Comté and Burgundy, and were neighbored to the east by the Helvetii of today's Switzerland and to the west by the Lingones, who inhabited the area of Langres (Haute-Marne), and by the Aedui, who had their territory

²² Kruta, 2000, pp. 577, 526, 438.

²³ See Chapter 3 for more information. Kruta, 2000, pp. 486, 677 ; Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 30-35 ; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 16 ; Dio Cassius, *History of Rome*, LXII, pp. 1ff ; Dudley & Webster, 1962 ; Webster, 1978 ; Andrews, 1972 ; Green, 1995, pp. 33-34.

between the River Saône and the river Loire.²⁴ The powerful sept* of the Arverni dwelled in the present-day region of Auvergne and had their stronghold at Gergovia, near Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme), while the Allobroges occupied a vast territory situated between the Alps and the départements of Isère and Rhône.²⁵ The Remi exercised their power over the region of Champagne, and were neighboured to the east by two smaller tribes: the Mediomatrici, living in the département of Moselle, and the Leuci, inhabiting the area of Toul (Meurthe-et-Moselle).²⁶ To the north-east of the Remi, in present-day Luxembourg, were settled the potent Treveri, who had Titelberg as their chief oppidum*.²⁷ As for the Carnutes, they inhabited a vast territory in the centre-west of Gaul, while the Pictones and the Santones were settled on the south-west coast, in the present-day Poitou and Charente-Maritime, and the Volcae Arecomici and Tectosages in the départements of Gard, Hérault, Tarn and Haute-Garonne.²⁸

²⁴ Kruta, 2000, pp. 816, 595, 708.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 435-436, 404 ; Jospin, 2002, pp. 96-98 ; Beck, 2007, p. 4.

²⁶ Kruta, 2000, pp. 793, 706, 726.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 844.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 517-518, 776, 809.

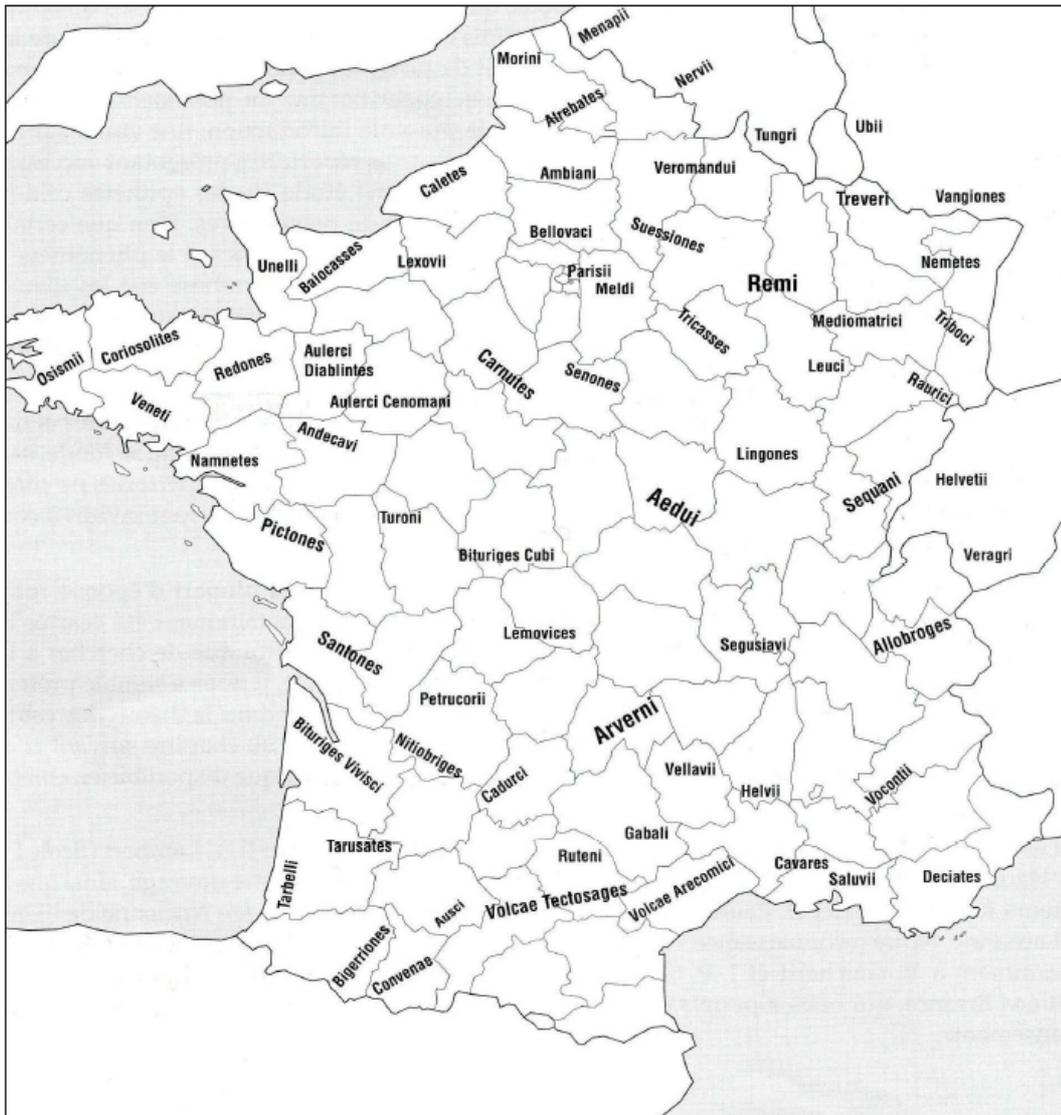


Fig. 5: Map of the main Gaulish tribes. RDG, p. 8, fig. 1a.

C) The Gallo-Roman and Romano-British Periods

In 125 BC, the Romans annexed the Mediterranean coast and named it the *Provincia*.²⁹ The rest of the territory, designated by the Romans as *Gallia Comata* or 'Long-Haired Gaul', remained Celtic and the La Tène culture flourished until the conquest of Gaul undertaken by Julius Caesar from 58 to 51 BC (fig. 6).³⁰ After the defeat of Vercingetorix in 52 BC at Alésia (Côte d'Or), which marked the beginning of the Gallo-Roman civilization, the *Provincia* was renamed *Narbonnensis*, and the *Gallia Comata* became a Roman province and was divided into three territories: *Lyonnaise*, *Aquitaine* and *Belgica* (fig. 7). As regards Britain, Caesar's attempts to invade the isle in 55 BC and 54 BC were unsuccessful. Celtic culture endured

²⁹ Brunaux, 2005, pp. 44-45.

³⁰ Brunaux, 2005, pp. 44-55.

until the mid-1st c. AD, when, in 43 AD, the Emperor Claudius subdued the Britons and created the Roman province of Britannia.³¹

The Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain was facilitated by the political and military disunity of the Celtic tribes, who regularly fought among themselves. The quarrel between the Aedui and the Sequani, which triggered the Gallic Wars, is a good example of the instability prevailing within the Celtic communities. After the Sequani - allied with the Arverni and the Germanic mercenaries of Ariovistus - invaded their territory, the Aedui sent their chief Diviciacos to Rome in 61 BC to ask for assistance. In 58 BC, Roman legions were stationed in modern-day Alsace and defeated Ariovistus. Similarly, in Britain, some tribes revolted against the Roman invasion, such as the Iceni and their Queen Boudicca in 60 AD, while others, such as the Brigantes, led by Queen Cartimandua, allied with Rome. Caratacos, the king of the Atrebates tribe, who led the revolt of the Britons against the Roman invasion from 43 AD to 49 AD, took refuge in the Brigantes kingdom, but was betrayed by Queen Cartimandua and handed over to the Romans.³²

³¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 179-186 ; Kruta, 2001, pp. 233-255.

³² Caratacos was the son of Cunobelinos, King of the Trinovantes sept. See Kruta, 2000, p. 516.

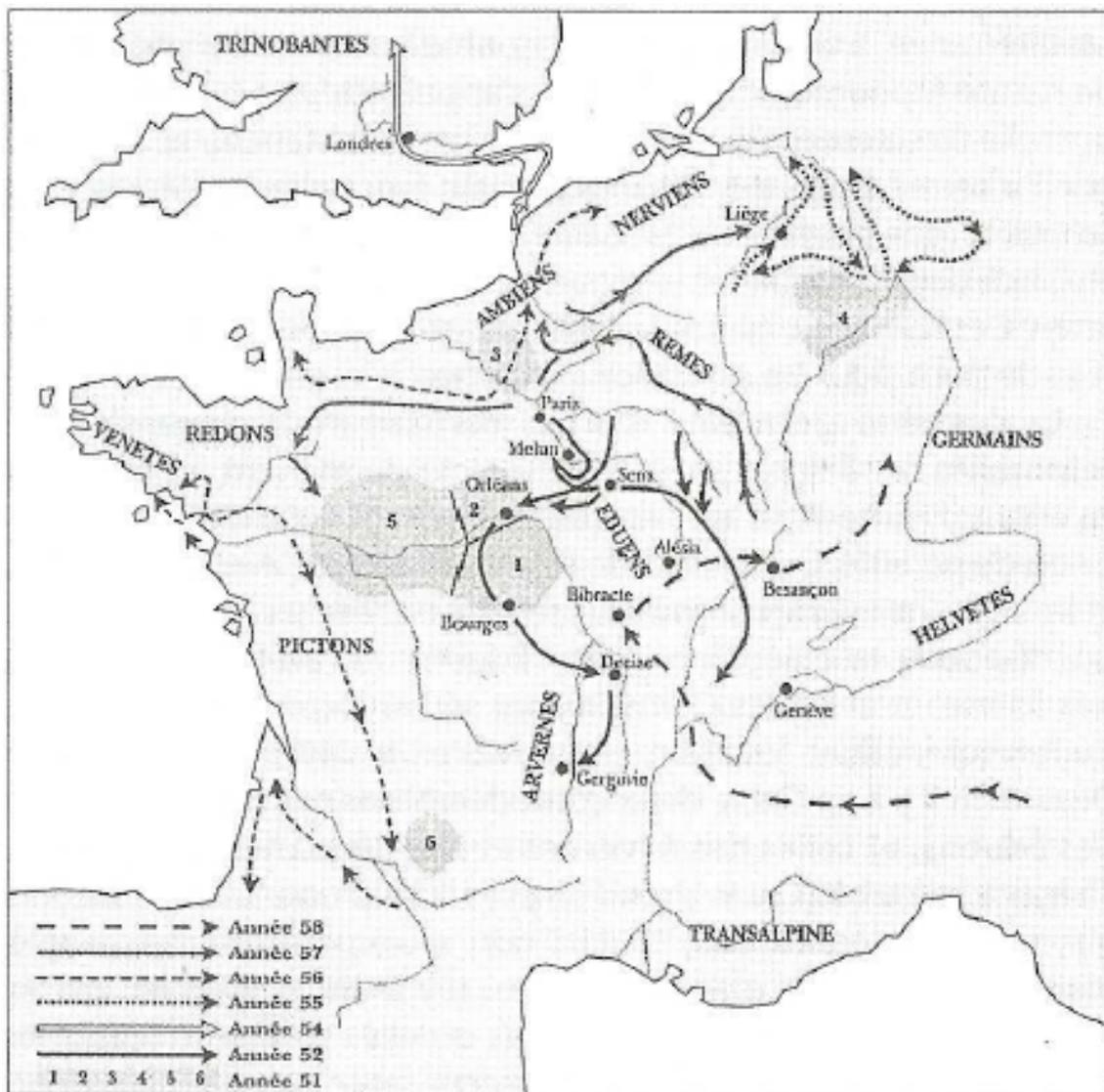


Fig. 6: Map of the Roman invasion of Gaul by Julius Caesar (the 'Gallic Wars') from 58 BC to 51 BC. Brunaux, 2005, p. 46.

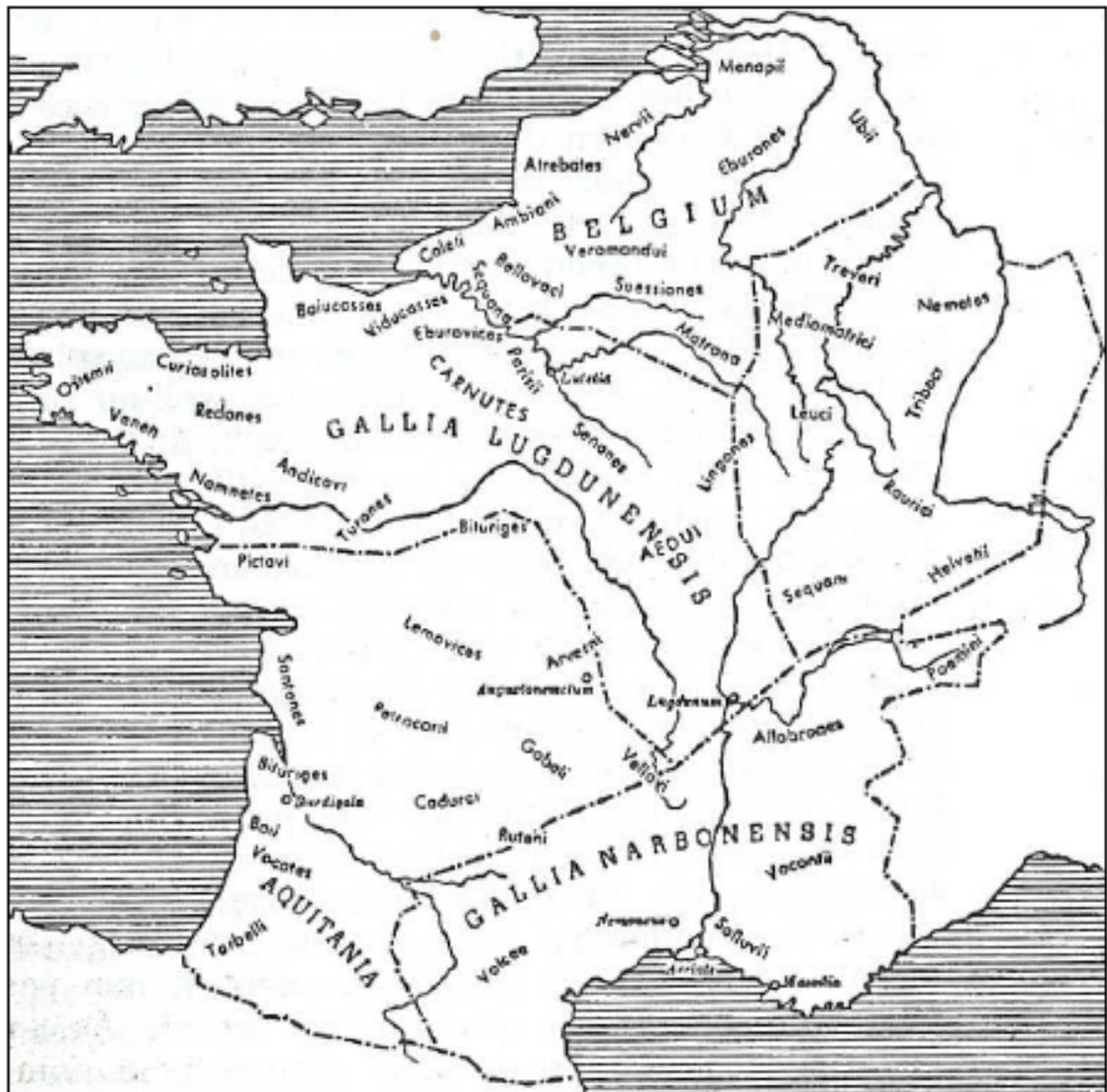


Fig. 7: Map of Roman Gaul after Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars. De Vries, 1963, p. 17, fig. 2.

After the defeat of Gaul and Britain, roads were built for commercial purposes and the ancient territories of the Celtic tribes were transformed into civitates* or 'cities', where the Roman political, administrative, commercial and religious values were embraced by the newly Romanized aristocracy – for example the Allobroges' territory became the city of Vienne, and the Volcae Tectosages' territory the city of Toulouse.³³ Each civitas* had a county town and was subdivided into rural districts, called pagi*, and secondary towns, called vici*. Juridically speaking, there were three different types of civitates*: *Roman coloniae*, inhabited by Roman citizens only; *Latin coloniae*, composed of Roman and Latin citizens, who had an intermediary status between full Roman citizenship and non-citizen status; and *peregrine cities*, constituted of people who had neither the Roman citizenship nor the Latin Right*. Gaulish and British warriors placed themselves in the service of Rome, integrated

³³ Brunaux, 2005, pp. 51-55 ; Pelletier, 1993, pp. 68-69.

the Roman army and were given Roman citizenship and the functions of command.³⁴ Recruitment was later extended to Romanized peregrines (non-Roman citizens), aged between sixteen and twenty-six, who obtained Roman citizenship as a reward for their incorporation.³⁵

As regards religion, the ancient cults and beliefs of the Celts were not proscribed by Rome, but the druidic sacerdotal function and sacrifices were banned. Since the Celts did not use writing, ancestral beliefs, traditions and myths died out with the disappearance of the druids, who were the holders of the sacred knowledge. The cult of the Roman deities and of the Emperor imposed by Rome in the *civitates** significantly influenced Celtic religious life, but the Britons and Gauls did not renounce their culture and religious beliefs for all that. Despite Romanization, Celtic deities went on being prayed to, worshipped and honoured. In other words, British and Gaulish peoples accepted the administrative, political and religious framework of the Romans, while remaining attached to their original way of life, customs and religious practices. This mutual assent led to a complete syncretism between the two religions and gave birth to a new type of religion referred to by researchers as 'Gallo-Roman' and 'Romano-British religion'. The indigenous deities were subjected to what Tacitus calls the *interpretatio Romana*, a habit which consisted in giving Latin names to gods who did not belong to the Roman pantheon.³⁶ Subsequently, the indigenous gods, who were profoundly different in nature and functions from the Roman gods, undeniably lost a part of their original essence and characteristics in this forced equation. Through this fusion, three modes of worship emerged in the epigraphy. Some of the Celtic deities were entirely replaced by Roman deities (Apollo, Mercury, Mars, Minerva, Maia, etc), and definitely lost their name and identity. Others became epithets of Roman gods or had their name juxtaposed to those of Roman deities, such as Belisama Minerva, Brigantia Victory, and Abnoba Diana. Finally, others were not equated with Roman gods and kept their indigenous name. Such is the case of Damona, Segeta, Segomanna, Bergusia, Rosmerta, Nantosuelta, etc. Within this category, it is interesting to note that some were coupled with Celtic gods, for example Bergusia and Ucuētis, Nantosuelta and Sucellus or Damona and Borvo, while others were partnered with Roman gods, for example Rosmerta and Mercury.

II) Sources

The Celts had the peculiarity of transmitting their culture, religious beliefs and myths exclusively by oral means. From the 7th c. BC, however, they were confronted by Greek script, since a Greek colony had settled in the south-east of Gaul and founded Massilia in about 600 BC. Except for their accounts, they chose deliberately not to use the written form, and thus their history, knowledge, myths and beliefs were left unrecorded.³⁷ This reasoned religious interdict certainly ensued from a strict refusal to give a fix form to esoteric knowledge: the sacredness of knowledge lay within its non-written form, which profoundly enhanced its mystical character. Therefore, there are no contemporary indigenous literary texts describing Celtic myths and deities.

³⁴ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 745-752.

³⁵ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 785, 788-789 ; Southern, 2006, p. 100.

³⁶ *Germania*, 43, 4-5.

³⁷ Brunaux, 2005, p. 25.

The available data relating to Celtic goddesses falls into three main categories, which are of a different nature and period according to the country concerned: the contemporary Classical texts, the vernacular literature of early medieval Ireland, and archaeology, consisting of places of devotions, epigraphy and iconography. Classical texts on Celtic religion mainly pertain to Gaul and information on the goddesses is very scarce. Irish medieval literature describes the myths of the ancient Celts of Ireland, while votive epigraphy and iconography concern Britain and Gaul only, since the practice appeared with the Roman conquest. The archaeological material is fragmentary, sparse and very often obscure. As Celtic tradition was oral, the study of Celtic deities is complex, for all types of evidence are indirect, and thus, to an extent, distorted: Classical authors commented on peoples whose cults and worship they considered to be primitive and barbarian; Irish mythology was written down from the 7th c. AD by Christian monks; and votive inscriptions and divine representations in Gaul and Britain date from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times. The archaeological evidence for the places of devotion is both from pre-Roman and Gallo-Roman/Romano-British times, but the goddesses honoured in Celtic sanctuaries cannot be identified by inscriptions or representations. As the evidence for Celtic goddesses is sparse, scattered and indirect, the subject of this study presents ambiguities and has frequently been the subject of multiple – sometimes contradictory – interpretations. To reconstruct the nature and origin of the Celtic goddesses, their functions, cults and myths, it is therefore necessary to use a wide variety of types of sources pertaining to many different periods. A detailed analysis and comparison of the surviving linguistic, literary, epigraphic and iconographical data in Gaul, Ancient Britain and Ireland will allow us to establish connections and similarities and thereby piece together a pattern of Celtic beliefs in Gaul and Britain as they relate to female deities.

A) Gaul and Britain

1) Classical texts

Many Greek and Latin writers commented on the religion, practices and cults of the Celts, but very little is said about the deities they worshipped, particularly as regards the filiations of the gods and a possible pantheist structure of belief. The only mention is by Julius Caesar, who wrote in the mid-1st c. BC. In a famous passage of the *Gallic Wars*, in which he describes the five chief gods of the Gauls, he refers to a potent goddess presiding over craftsmanship, whom he names Minerva.³⁸ The main Classical authors referred to in this study as regards Celtic religion are Diodorus Siculus (writing between 30 and 60 BC), Strabo (c. 40 BC – 25 AD), Pliny (23-79 AD), Lucan (39-75 AD), Tacitus (c. 56-117) and Dio Cassius (c. 155-230 AD). Those works represent a significant body of information on the religious practices and beliefs of the Celts: war, divination, philosophy, sacrifices, the belief in the afterlife, etc, but many of them are fragmentary and remain difficult to interpret. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the vision of the Classical authors on the Celts was distorted, for they considered them as uncivilized peoples who had recourse to ‘barbaric’ practices. This is certainly why they sometimes reported unusual and cruel rituals, such as human sacrifices or head-hunting.³⁹

³⁸ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book 6, 17 ; De Quincey, 1923.

³⁹ Duval, 1957, pp. 15-16 ; Green, 2004, pp. 29-32 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 150-171.

2) Votive Epigraphy

a) Sources

Votive epigraphy, which is the study of inscriptions dedicated to goddesses with the aim of honouring, imploring or thanking them, is an important tool as regards our subject, for it reveals the names of goddesses, who, although they were venerated in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times, were undeniably Celtic on account of their name. Votive epigraphy is a Roman practice, which was adopted by the Celts after the Roman conquest. Inscriptions to Celtic deities thus date from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times only. This means that the Celts were in the process of Romanization and that their religion and beliefs had already been significantly influenced and altered by Roman culture.

Inscriptions to deities were engraved on various objects of different materials, such as steles*, altars, vases, plaques and jewels, in stone, bronze, silver, gold or lead. The formula traditionally used in recognition of a granted vow was *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, that is '(the dedicator) paid his or her vow willingly and deservedly'. Gaulish and British votive inscriptions fall into four categories: inscriptions in the Latin language (the most numerous); inscriptions in the Greek language; 'Gallo-Latin inscriptions', which are in the Gaulish language with Latin lettering; and 'Gallo-Greek inscriptions', which are in the Gaulish language with Greek lettering. These last two groups of dedications are of great interest and importance for several reasons. First and foremost, they are in the Gaulish language, which means they were written by Gaulish people.⁴⁰ Furthermore, although they are limited in number, they are more ancient than the numerous Gallo-Roman inscriptions, which generally date from the 1st c. AD to the 3rd c. AD. Indeed, as has been noted, some Gaulish people first came into contact with the Greek language when a Greek colony was founded at Massilia (Marseilles) in about 600 BC. Accordingly, some Gaulish people were able from an early period to use Greek script to write their language down. Gallo-Greek inscriptions date from the 3rd c. BC to the 1st c. AD, the ones from Narbonese Gaul being the most ancient ones.⁴¹ They are more ancient than the Gallo-Latin inscriptions, which belong to between the 1st c. BC and the 4th c. AD and probably preceded or co-existed with the time when inscriptions were uniquely in the Latin language and script.⁴²

Inscriptions from Gaul and Germany discovered before the end of the 19th c. are listed in the volumes XII and XIII of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL)*, which is in Latin and reproduces a facsimile of the inscriptions without transcription and translation. The *Année Epigraphique (AE)*, created in 1888 by René Cagnat, completes the *CIL* and publishes every year a facsimile of the inscriptions. Various other works have recently republished the ancient and newly discovered inscriptions of the Roman provinces of Gaul, such as the five volumes of the *Inscriptions latines de Narbonnaise (ILN)*, the six volumes of the *Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine (ILA)* and the two volumes of the *Les inscriptions latines de Belgique (ILB)*. Other published collections of inscriptions relate to particular tribes or cities, such as the *Inscriptions de la cité des Lingons* by Yann Le Bohec. Those works generally give comprehensive details and information on the origin of the dedication, the nature, dimension and date of the material, a transcription, a translation and a picture. The Gallo-Greek, Gallo-

⁴⁰ Lambert, 1995, p. 12.

⁴¹ Lambert, 1995, p. 81.

⁴² Lambert, 1995, pp. 117-118.

Etruscan and Gallo-Latin inscriptions have been compiled in the first two comprehensive volumes of the *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises (RIG)*. The Roman inscriptions of Britain have been listed in the two volumes of the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain (RIB)*, which offer transcriptions, translations and drawings of the dedications. Finally, Nicole Jüfer and Thierry Luginbul have indexed all the epigraphic references relating to the gods and goddesses of the British, Gaulish, Italian and Iberian Celts in *Répertoire des dieux gaulois (RG)*.

As far as possible, inscriptions will be given with a translation – except for a few of them which have not been translated by epigraphists –, dated and studied in their archaeological context – particularly when the place of discovery was a place of devotion. Finally, the name of the goddess invoked will be analyzed and the origin and name of the dedicators will be considered.

b) Dating

Inscriptions can be dated according to the use of specific formulas or phrases. Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, in a work entitled *Diis Deabusque Sacrum, Formulaire votif et datation dans les Trois Gaules et les deux Germanies*, has studied closely the various votive phrases and their possible dating. The use of the formulas *Dea* ('Goddess') / *Deo* ('God') and *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae)* ('In honour of the Divine House'), which associates the Imperial House to private and public cults, were in use from the mid-2nd c. AD.⁴³ Their association in the inscriptions dates from the first half of the 3rd c. AD.⁴⁴ The term *sanctus/sancta* ('sacred'), sometimes given to the deities, appeared in the mid-2nd c. AD and survived until the end of the 3rd c. AD.⁴⁵ The formula *pro salute* ('for the safety of'), generally followed by the genitive form of the person's name or by the adjective *suo/sua* ('his', 'her'), indicates that the inscription dates from the end of the 2nd c. AD to around 250 AD.⁴⁶ As for the terms *sacrum* ('sacred') and *Augustus/Augusta* ('August'), associating the invoked deities to the Emperor, they cannot be used as chronological criterions, for they were used from the beginning of the 1st c. AD until the 3rd c. AD.⁴⁷

c) Dedicators

Votive inscriptions were offered by pilgrims who sought the favours of the gods and wished to have their vows granted. The study of the names of the dedicators is particularly interesting, for it brings significant information on the dedicator's origin and his (or her) social status. Some of the dedicators had Latin names and were Roman citizens, soldiers in the Roman army or people in charge of administrative functions, while others had typical Celtic names and were peregrines, that is free provincial subjects of the Empire who inhabited areas recently conquered by the Romans and who did not hold the Roman citizenship. Inscriptions dedicated by people of Celtic stock are the most significant, for they produce evidence of a pre-Roman worship to Celtic goddesses. Moreover, such evidence indicates that the Celtic beliefs were still vivid among the local population after the conquest and, that, despite the

⁴³ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-17.

⁴⁴ This formula was very common in the epigraphy of Belgica and the two Germanies. Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁶ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁷ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 19-21, 24-25.

Romanization of the country in terms of administration, politics and religion, people of Celtic origin went on paying homage to their ancient deities.

Firstly, the Celtic origin of a dedicator's name can be ascertained by Alfred Holder's *Alt-Celtischer Sprachschatz*, a work in three volumes published in 1896-1913, and by Xavier Delamarre's *Noms de personnes celtiques dans l'épigraphie classique*, released in 2007. Secondly, peregrines distinguished themselves from Roman citizens by the 'unique name' or single name they bore. They generally indicated their filiation with the abbreviated term *fil(ius)* ('son of') or *fil(iae)* ('daughter of'). Interestingly, different degrees of Romanization can be noted within this group. When the dedicator and the father's dedicator are both peregrines bearing Celtic names, it evidences their attachment to their Celtic roots and their wish not to become Romanized. When the dedicator is a peregrine but has Latin name, whereas his father has a Celtic name, it indicates that the father deliberately chose a Latin name for his son. This proves his desire to become Romanized - the choice of a Latin name was the first step in the long process of gaining Roman citizenship.⁴⁸ Finally, it is noticeable that some Roman citizens had a Celtic gentile* or cognomen*, which provides proof of their Celtic origin. By keeping a Celtic name, they displayed profound respect for their indigenous origins.

Roman citizens can be identified in the epigraphy by the *tria nomina* ('three names') or *duo nomina* ('two names') they bore.⁴⁹ The official name of a Roman citizen was generally composed of three constitutive elements: the *praenomen* ('first name'), the *nomen* or *gentilice* ('second name') and the *cognomen* ('nickname'). While the praenomen and gentilice were usually abbreviated, the cognomen was unabridged, for it was the constitutive element of the name.⁵⁰ The use of the cognomen became general at the beginning of the 1st c. BC, while the use of the praenomen disappeared in the 2nd c. AD.⁵¹ From that time onwards, and more particularly in the 3rd c. AD, Roman citizens usually bore the *duo nomina*. Finally, some dedicators were freed slaves – they are recognizable by the abbreviated term *l(ibertus)*, which indicated they were freed from their master -, ⁵² while others were soldiers in the Roman army (prefect*, centurion*, optio*, etc) or held peculiar administrative functions (decurio*, tabularius*, etc.). Inscriptions offered by soldiers are particularly attested in Britain, the Roman Province of Belgica and the two Germanies.

d) Etymology of divine names

The study of the significance of divine names is essential as regards this work, insomuch as it can shed light on the possible nature and functions of the goddesses. While Irish goddess

⁴⁸ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 167-168.

⁴⁹ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 81-94.

⁵⁰ The praenomen* was given to men on their 9th day of birth and to girls on their 8th day. The nomen* originally indicated the filiation of the dedicator and the cognomen* was generally attributed at birth and was a distinctive element. It could reflect a physical peculiarity, for example *Rufus* ('Red'); the vow of a moral quality, for example *Clemens* ('indulgent') or *Maximus* ('the Greatest'); a biographical detail, for example *Sospes* ('the one who has avoided a danger'); a craft or profession, for example *Mercator* ('merchant') and *Agricola* ('labourer'); or an animal, for example *Taurus* ('Bull'). See Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 82-102.

⁵¹ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 93, 99-100.

⁵² For instance: *Cratea Caecili(us) M(arci) l(ibertus)*, 'Cratea freed from Caecilius Marcus'. During the Empire, they generally received the praenomen* and nomen* of their ancient master, for example *C(aius) Cassius C(aii) l(ibertus) Moderatus*, 'Caius Cassius Moderatus freed from Caius'. See Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 158-160.

names can be explained by the Irish language, which was written down from the 7th c. AD by Christian monks, Gaulish goddess names reflect a dead language which did not survive the Roman conquest and which nowadays remains largely unknown. A few fragmentary inscriptions engraved on coins, ceramic vessels, stone altars, and bronze or lead plaques, such as the Calendar of Coligny, discovered in 1987 in the département of Ain, the 'Plomb du Larzac' found in 1982 in Aveyron, or the 'Plomb de Chamalières' excavated in 1971 in Puy-de-Dôme, have nonetheless survived.⁵³ Despite their fragmentary aspect, limited number and difficulty of interpretation, these recent discoveries are significant for the study of the Gaulish language, which have been partly reconstructed through comparative linguistics by Pierre-Yves Lambert in *La langue gauloise* published in 1994, and by Xavier Delamarre in *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise* released in 2003. The Gaulish language is part of the Celtic languages, composed of the Celtiberian, Lepontic, Brittonic (Welsh, Cornish and Breton), and Goidelic (Irish, Manx and Scottish) languages, which all belong to the family of the Indo-European languages.⁵⁴ Comparative linguistics consists in comparing the various Celtic languages which are attested by the 8th-9th-century literary data and which are still spoken, such as Irish, Welsh and Breton.⁵⁵

In *The Gods of the Celts and the Indo-Europeans*, published in 1994, Garrett Olmsted has gathered the various works carried out so far on the etymology of the Celtic goddess names of Ireland, Britain and Gaul, but his analyses do not always fall into the province of scientific work, and are sometimes inaccurate and misleading. Recently, various works on Celtic divine names have been published within a programme of research called *Fontes Epigraphici Religionis Celticae Antiquae* or *F.E.R.C.A.N.* ['Epigraphic Sources of the Ancient Celtic Religion'], coordinated by Manfred Hainzmann (University of Graz, Austria).⁵⁶ The article by Lambert, entitled 'Les noms des dieux', published in 2006 in *Religions et Histoire*, is also worth mentioning. All these works show the limits of etymology, which is not always an exact science and often gives rise to different interpretations. The fact that various etymologies are possible for a particular divine name is problematic regarding the identification of the nature and functions of a goddess. Votive dedications have thus to be studied principally in their archaeological context. When combined with etymology, the study of the place of discovery of the inscription and the votive material can throw light on the essence of the goddesses.

3) Places of devotions and religious offerings

Except in cases of re-employment* - which does not give any information on the religious context -, inscriptions will be studied in their archaeological context: the structure and function(s) of the place of devotion and the nature of the votive offerings will be analysed. Since, as we have noted, the Celts did not write, dedications belong to sanctuaries dating from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times only. The Celts had nonetheless

⁵³ Lambert, 1995, pp. 109-114, 150-173.

⁵⁴ The family of Indo-European languages is composed of about ten main languages: Hittite, Indo-Iranian, Albanian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, Tocharian, Italic, Hellenic and Germanic. See Lambert, 1995, p. 13.

⁵⁵ In Wales: Old Welsh is attested from 800 AD. In Ireland: Ogam (from 350 AD) and Old Irish (from 750 AD). In Brittany: Old Breton (from 800 AD). Old Cornish is attested from 800 AD, but the Cornish language became extinct at the end of the 18th c. The Scottish Gaelic and Manx languages are attested from the 16th c. Manx died out around 1960, while Scottish Gaelic is a living language. See Lambert, 1995, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁶ Spickermann & Wiegels, 2005 ; Hainzmann, 2007.

significant places of worship, which they undeniably dedicated to deities, but their identity remains unknown and open to speculation. Celtic sanctuaries and Celtic religious cults are comprehensively studied by Jean-Louis Brunaux in his works entitled *Les Gaulois, Sanctuaires et rites* (1986), *La religion des gaulois* (2000) and *Guerre et religion en Gaule* (2004). Celtic places of devotion were generally enclosed areas, marked out by a wooden fence or a ditch, with a single entrance and a central pit, called 'hollowed altar' or 'offering well', where food, animal carcasses or weapons were deposited and left to decompose as an offering to the deity of the place. Examples of such types are the 3rd/2nd-century BC sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise) and the early 3rd-century BC sanctuary of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme).⁵⁷

Gallo-Roman and Romano-British religious monuments were often erected on ancient Celtic foundations or places of worship, but this remains difficult to prove, as the materials used by the Celts were putrefiable – they did not use stone but wood – and the places of devotions are not always identifiable – they could be marked out by a ditch, an altar dug in the ground, a tree, etc. In Gallo-Roman/Romano-British times, the sanctuaries, known as 'fana', were usually composed of two square or rectangular rooms in stone fitted into each other. The inner room, called a 'cella', was open to the east and generally contained a cult image or statue representing the particular deity venerated in the temple and an altar where the votive offerings were deposited. The outer wall of the second room formed a gallery around the cella, where pilgrims would ritually walk around. Such types are exemplified by *Coventina's Well* near Carrawburgh (GB) or by the sanctuary dedicated to *Apollo* and *Sirona* in Hochscheid (Germany). Other important religious buildings were the water sanctuaries, composed of baths and religious rooms erected near a sacred spring, where pilgrims would come to take the waters, pray to the deities and leftex-votos or 'votive offerings' in their honour. The ex-votos fall into different categories: dedications; statuettes in white earth representing protective deities, such Mother Goddesses or *Venus*; wooden or stone statuettes picturing pilgrims and swaddled infants; coins; jewels; and anatomic ex-votos, which depicted diseased body parts, such as heads, legs, arms, torsos, feet, hands, internal organs (lung, heart, etc) and eyes. They were for example found in large number at the sanctuary of the Sources-de-la-Seine (Côte d'Or), presided over by *Sequana*, the goddess of the River Seine. Ex-votos are important to study, for they attest to a cult rendered to a goddess and can shed light on her nature and attributes. Anatomic ex-votos for instance clearly evidence the healing function of a goddess.

4) Iconography

Except for the Matres and Matronae ('Mother Goddesses'), who are widely depicted in the iconography of Britain and Gaul, Celtic goddesses are scarcely represented. It is generally agreed that the Celts did not represent their gods with anthropomorphic* traits.⁵⁸ Diodorus Siculus besides reports in his 1st-century BC *Library of History* that Brennos of the Prausi, the Tolistobogii leader, who launched a raid against Delphi in 279 BC to seize its treasures,

⁵⁷ Brunaux, 1986, pp. 17-26 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 91-112 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 92-124.

⁵⁸ Boucher, 1976, p. 173 ; Green, 2003, pp. 7-8.

laughed at the sight of the statues of the Greek gods when he attacked the temple.⁵⁹ This passage would indicate that the Celts were reluctant to represent their gods:

Brennus, the king of the Gauls, on entering a temple found no dedications of gold or silver, and when he came only upon images of stone and wood he laughed at them, to think that men, believing that gods have human form, should set up their images in wood and stone.⁶⁰

Brunaux argues that, in Celtic times, deities were not represented in human form but were probably symbolized by a simple object, such as a sword or a spear.⁶¹ A few sculptures in wood, dating from the Bronze Age, such as the male idol made of yew discovered in a bog at Ralaghan, in Co. Cavan (Ireland), however tend to prove that ancient peoples did on occasion represent their gods with human features.⁶² But these wooden figurines cannot be interpreted with certainty: were there human or divine figurations?

Iconographical representations of Celtic goddesses, combined with an inscription identifying them, dating unambiguously from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times, remain limited in number and are always modeled on Classical figurations.⁶³ Anepigraphic* representations have not been included in this work, except for a few the identification of which is undisputable. The iconographical material is catalogued in the twelve volumes of the *Recueil Général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule romaine*, published between 1907 and 1938 by Emile Espérandieu. This work was completed by four additional volumes edited by Raymond Lantier from 1947 to 1965 and is being completely revised and updated by Henri Lavagne in his *Nouvel Espérandieu*.

Celtic goddesses are generally represented majestically sitting or standing, with a diadem in their hair. They wear long tunics and bear the traditional Greco-Roman attributes of fertility, such as the cornucopia*, the patera*, fruit or cakes. Celtic goddesses are also sometimes represented with the traits of specific Roman goddesses. Such is the case of the goddess *Abnoba*, who is pictured with the attributes of the Roman woodland-goddess, *Diana*: she wears boots, a quiver and arrows. Occasionally, distinctive elements of indigenous types can be noted, notably in the plastic conception; the style and type of a garment or a jewel, for example the traditional Celtic bardocucullus* and torque*; the seating or crouching position, which is a typical feature of Celtic divine or heroic representation; and singular attributes of non-Classical style, such as the duck-shaped boat of *Sequana*, the house-on-pole emblem of Nantosuelta, or the antlers of the two unidentified goddesses from Besançon (Doubs) and Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme).

Finally, iconography can shed light on the functions of a goddess. *Brigantia* is for instance pictured wearing a helmet and holding a spear: she is thus endowed with protective and war aspects. *Artio* ('Bear') is accompanied by a huge bear which she personified and protected as her name indicates. Sometimes the attributes of a goddess are difficult to

⁵⁹ The Tolistobogii were one of the three ancient Celtic tribes of Galatia, in central Asia Minor, together with the Tectosages and the Trocmi. The Prausi were a Celtic people of unknown origin. Brunaux, 2005, pp. 278-279 ; Koch, 2006, p. 246 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 493-494, 786, 842.

⁶⁰ *Diodorus Siculus, The Library of History, Book 22, 9, 4.*

⁶¹ Brunaux, 2004, p. 90.

⁶² Mahr, 1930, p. 487 ; Coles, 1990 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994, pp. 155-156.

⁶³ Boucher, 1976, pp. 160-179.

identify and determine. Their significance remains thus obscure and subject to various interpretations, like in the case of *Nantosuelta's* emblems.

B) Ireland

As has been noted, the existence of Gaulish and British goddesses is not evidenced by ancient indigenous literary texts, but by scarce and often obscure epigraphic, iconographical and archaeological material. Conversely, there are no votive dedications, divine representations or places of cult related to specific goddesses in Ireland. Irish goddesses are known only from the corpus of mythological texts in the vernacular language which was written down from the 7th c. by Christian monks.

1) Irish medieval literature

As Ireland was never invaded by the Romans, the Celtic culture and religion flourished until the Christianization of the island at the beginning of the 5th c.⁶⁴ Unlike Gaulish and British mythology, of which there are no written sources, Celtic Irish tradition, myths and beliefs was preserved in written form by the Christian monks from the 7th c. AD. Although much of the material culture described in these sources was largely expurgated by the Church and comprises many Christian beliefs, the basically pagan, pre-Christian character of the mythology presented in this literature cannot be disputed.

Irish mythology, which reflects the various traditions, beliefs and customs of the Celtic Irish peoples, is a large corpus of divine and heroic tales, collected in manuscripts dating from the 11th to the 15th c., the earliest ones of which are *Lebor na hUidre* ['The Book of the Dun Cow'], probably compiled at the end of the 11th c., *Lebor Laignech* ['The Book of Leinster'], dating to c. 1150, and others, such as *Leabhar Bhaile an Mhóta* ['The Book of Ballymote'] and *Lebor Buide Lecáin* ['The Yellow Book of Lecan'], compiled at the end of the 14th.⁶⁵ In the codices, the legends are organized by theme. The Book of Leinster for instance contains 187 legends, classified in twelve themes, such as *Togla* ('Stronghold Destructions'), *Tána* ('Cattle Raids'), *Tochmarca* ('Wooings'), *Catha* ('Battles'), *Uatha* ('Caves'), *Imrama* ('Sea Voyages'), *Fessa* ('Feasts'), *Airgne* ('Massacres'), etc.⁶⁶ The archaic character of the language of some texts clearly evidences the antiquity of the legends, which undeniably predated the compilation of the manuscripts. The earliest legends date from the 7th c. AD to the 9th c. Because of oral tradition, various versions of a same legend are known, which explains why it remains difficult to establish a reference text.

⁶⁴ Kruta, 2000, pp. 382-386 ; Kruta, 2001, pp. 255-268.

⁶⁵ The *Book of the Dun Cow* was compiled at the abbey of Clonmacnoise (Co. Offaly) by, among others, the scribe Máel Muire mac Céileachair, who was murdered in the monastery in 1106. It is so called because the original vellum upon which it was written was supposedly taken from the hide of the famous cow of St. Ciarán of Clonmacnoise. It is currently housed in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. The *Book of Leinster* was formerly known as *Lebor na Nuachongbála* ['The Book of Noughaval'] and was compiled by several scribes in Leinster, one of the five ancient provinces of Ireland. It is now divided between Trinity College and the Franciscan Library, Dublin. The *Book of Ballymote* was compiled in c. 1390 in Ballymote, Co. Sligo. It is currently housed at the Royal Irish Academy, in Dublin. The *Yellow Book of Lecan* was compiled at Lecán (now Lacken), near Inishcrone, in Co. Sligo, around 1390. It is housed today in Trinity College, Dublin. See Mackillop, 2004, pp. 48-49, 430 ; Lambert, 1981, pp. 21ff ; Dottin, 1924, pp. 5-26, 52-118.

⁶⁶ D'Arbois de Jubainville, 1883, pp. 350-354.

Irish mythology has been organized by modern scholars in four categories or 'Cycles'. The first cycle, known as 'Mythological Cycle', is organized around three main legends: the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'], *Cath Muige Tuired Cunga* ['The Battle of Moytirra of Cong'] and *Cath Maige Tuired* ['The Second Battle of Moytirra'], which relate the mythical origins of Ireland and the stories of the various pagan gods and goddesses.⁶⁷ The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'], composed at the beginning of the 12th c. and edited by Stewart Macalister (1938-1956), recounts the successive invasions of Ireland by six divine races: Cessair, Partholón, Nemed, the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha Dé Danann ('the Tribe of the Goddess Dana'), who, after being defeated at Sliabh Mis⁶⁸ by the human sons of Míl, retreated beneath the earth and dwelt in ancient cairns and tumuli*. From that time on, the world was divided in two: human beings inhabited the surface of the earth, while gods and goddesses lived in the *sídh* or 'Underworld'. The *Tuatha Dé Danann* are the main gods and goddesses of Ireland: the *Dagda*, an old and huge father-god, who resides at *Brugh na Bóinne* (Newgrange) in Co. Meath and has for attributes a cauldron of plenty and a staff, dispensing death on one side and restoring life on the other; *Lug*, a young and powerful leader-god, who is known as the *Samhildánach* ('the one who possesses all the arts'); *Nuadu*, the King; *Dían Cécht*, the physician; *Oghma*, the champion; *Goibhniu*, the Smith; the *Mórrígain*, *Badb* and *Macha*, the three goddesses of war; *Bóinn*, the goddess of the river Boyne, wife of the *Dagda* and mother of *Oengus*, who is the god of youth and beauty; and *Brigit*, the poetess and daughter of the *Dagda*.

Cath Muige Tuired Cunga ['The Battle of Moytirra of Cong'], edited and translated by J. Frazer in 1916, tells of the first divine battle which occurred at Cong, in Co. Mayo, between the *Fir Bolg* and the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, who after their victory, took possession of the island. The First Battle of Moytirra is a duplication of the famous *Cath Maige Tuired* ['The Second Battle of Moytirra'], which relates the battle at Moytirra (Co. Sligo) between the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, led by the powerful *Lug Lámhfhada* ('Long-Armed'), and the sinister race of the *Fomhóire* ('Underworld Phantoms'), commanded by *Lug's* grandfather, *Balor* of the Evil Eye. *Lug* defeated *Balor* and led his tribe to victory. There are two original independent narrative versions of the conflict, each represented by a single manuscript. The earlier full version, edited and translated by Gray, dates to the 11th century, but is based on earlier texts - pieces of which are found in the literature from the 8th c. onwards -, while the later version, edited by O'Cuiv in 1945, dates from about the 16th c. In this present work, only the earliest narrative will be referred to, for the second version is of late date and differs considerably from the first one in subject matter as well as in language: some passages have been omitted and new elements, which are found again in folk legends, have been added.⁶⁹

The second cycle, known as 'the Ulster Cycle', recounts the prodigious deeds of the royal and warrior class of Ulster, including the renowned characters King *Conchobhar mac Neasa*, King *Fearghus mac Róich*, and the celebrated warrior *Cú Chulainn* ('the Hound of Culann').⁷⁰ The central elementary story of the Ulster Cycle is an 11th-century saga, entitled *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley']. It narrates the cattle-raid launched by Queen

⁶⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 366-370, 478-481 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 340-341, 414-416.

⁶⁸ Sliabh Mis is a mountain south of Tralee, in Co. Kerry.

⁶⁹ Gray, 1982, p. 10 ; Ó Cuiv, 1945, pp. 5-8.

⁷⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 109-112, 137-146, 217-219, 488-492 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 99-100, 115-117, 216-217, 422-423 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 65-66, 70-72, 96-97.

Medb of Connachta against the Ulaidh of Ulster, led by King *Conchobhar mac Neasa* and protected by the young powerful hero Cú Chulainn, to gain *Donn Cuailnge*, the great bull of Cooley. This legend has been preserved in three different recensions. The reference text for this work is *Recension I*, the oldest manuscript version of the mythical epic tale, edited and translated by Cécile O'Rahilly in 1976.

The third cycle, called 'Fianna Cycle', is a large corpus of mythological and folk legends, dating from the 8th c. onwards, which describe the adventures of a band of warriors, called the Fianna, led by the mythical hero *Fionn mac Cumhaill* and his son *Oisín*.⁷¹ *Fionn mac Cumhaill* is a warrior-seer who acquired the gift of *imbas forosna* ('wisdom that illuminates') by burning his thumb on the salmon of knowledge fished in the River Boyne. From that time on, each time *Fionn* would chew his thumb, mystical knowledge and foresight would be granted to him. Finally, the fourth cycle, called 'Historical Cycle' or 'Cycle of the Kings', tells of the lives of the legendary kings of Ireland at the royal sites of Emain Macha in Ulster, Cruachan in Connacht, Cashel in Leinster and Tara in Midhe, from the 3rd c. to the 7th c.⁷² The most celebrated of earlier kings, who is described as the first king to have seated at Tara from 227 to 266 AD, is certainly *Cormac mac Art*, the grandson of *Conn Cétchathach* ('Conn of the Hundred Battles'), the 2nd-century mythical ancestor of Irish kings.⁷³

Welsh medieval literature has often been compared to Irish literary tradition by modern scholars, for it has preserved some pieces of mythological material, but it is late, poorly documented and the legends were reshaped within a different context from Ireland.⁷⁴ Britons, and particularly those who lived in the south of the country, were directly subjected to Roman culture from 43 AD and converted to Christianity in the 3rd c. AD.⁷⁵ The ancient Welsh legends had thus undergone important distortions when they were written down from the 11th c. or 12th. The most relevant material, which relates the adventures of King Arthur and his companions and associates them to ancient mythological themes and characters, who sometimes bear names similar to those of the Irish deities, principally consists of *Culhwch ac Olwen* ['The Tale of Culhwch and Olwen'] and the *Mabinogi*, composed of four branches entitled *Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed*; *Branwen, Daughter of Llŷr*; *Manawydan, Son of Llŷr*; and *Math, Son of Mathonwy*. For all these reasons, Welsh medieval literature will only be referred to occasionally in this work, notably in terms of divine name similarities between Irish goddesses and Welsh mythical characters.

2) Mythology and Folklore

It is important, for the purposes of this study, to determine the difference between the terms 'mythology' and 'folklore', which have to be differentiated in terms of content, form and time. *Mythology* represents the body of myths related to an ancient people or civilization and its polytheist religion, written down in antiquity or early medieval times. It describes the adventures and filiation of the gods and goddesses and points to hieratic beliefs, cults and ceremonies. It is thus profoundly imbued with sacredness. Conversely, *folklore* is not written but handed down orally from individual to individual and from generation to generation.

⁷¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 227-233, 238-249 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 221-222, 230-233 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 98-99.

⁷² Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 301-302 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 122-123.

⁷³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 115-118, 121-129 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 101-102, 105-106.

⁷⁴ Green, 1992a, pp. 20-21 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 42-44 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 55-57.

⁷⁵ Kruta, 2000, pp. 55-57.

Folklore encompasses the traditional and popular beliefs, practices, customs, legends, jokes, songs, etc. of a present-day society. It does not refer, strictly speaking, to deities, but to supernatural characters, such as fairies and a variety of otherworld beings such as sprites, elves, apparitions, spirits haunting forests, rivers, lakes and hills, etc. One celebrated solitary being is the *bean sí* ('banshee'), an otherworld lady who is heard to lament at the imminent death of a person of Gaelic stock. Some particular features or motifs, such as an invisible cape, fairy changeling or the slaying a dragon by a bold hero, are repeatedly encountered in the legends.

Mythology and folklore also differ from one another by their 'literary genre'. While mythology was an esoteric literature, reserved for learned and initiated people, folklore is an exoteric literature which is orally transmitted and evolves within a society. As a general rule, mythology is learned, conscious and set, while folklore is popular, unorganized and in perpetual evolution. These dissimilarities show that mythological and folk legends should not be confused and that mythology and folklore are two distinct subjects. Nonetheless folklore is believed to have resulted from the popularization of the ancient sacred myths and thus undeniably reflects ancient pagan Celtic beliefs and customs. In this study, consideration will be limited to the study of the mythological accounts pertaining to the world of the gods and mythical heroes, but reference will occasionally be made to folklore when survivals of ancient deities and beliefs are traceable and worth mentioning.

III) Outline

The geographical scope of this study thus consists principally of Ireland, Britain and Gaul. Celt-Iberia, North Italy, Central and Eastern Europe will also be referred to occasionally.

Historically, it encompasses a period from about the 8th c. BC, when the first Celts appeared in central Europe, to about the 400 AD, when Ireland became Christianized and Gallo-Roman and Romano-British cultures came to an end. This work does not aim, however, at identifying *all* the goddesses of the Gallo-Roman and Romano-British peoples. It intends rather to reconstruct, through sources dating from Irish early medieval times and Gallo-Roman/Romano-British times, the goddesses which are specific to the Celts.

The oral tradition of the Celts, the conquest of Gaul and Britain by the Romans and the rare comments of the Classical authors explain why we have so little knowledge of Celtic goddesses; of their character, attributes, functions and place with in systems of religious belief. The scarcity, disparity and indirect character of the sources make the study of the goddesses complex and hazardous. There are dangers in becoming too speculative and going beyond the limits of the material. We have thus tried to collect and analyze the data in the most accurate and objective way possible.

Even though the Irish texts were written down from the 7th c. A.D. by Christian monks, it cannot be denied that they describe some of the ancient cults and deities of the Insular Celts, who undoubtedly had traditions, rites, myths and deities in common with the British and Continental Celts. The similarity which exists between the names of gods or goddesses known from Irish mythology and from dedications discovered in Gaul or Britain is not insignificant and supports this contention. From this, it follows that Irish mythology can sometimes bring the abstruse Gaulish and British Celtic deities to light, explain their personality and clarify some of their functions. This work thus attempts, by gathering,

comparing and analysing the various linguistic, literary, epigraphic and iconographical data from Gaul, Ancient Britain and Ireland, to answer the questions ‘Which goddesses did the Celts believe in?’ and ‘Did the Celts from Ireland, Britain and Gaul venerate similar goddesses?’. Despite the spatial and temporal differences in the sources - archaeological and linguistic data from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times in Gaul and Britain, and early medieval literature in Ireland - is it possible to reconstruct some myths concerning the Celtic goddesses? What were their nature and functions? How were they worshipped and by whom? Were they hierarchically organized within a pantheon? Because of the substantial number of Celtic goddesses and the large scope of this work, it was not possible to deal with all of the goddesses – although most of them have been studied. We have chosen not to deal with goddesses whose cult was certainly more Gallo-Roman than Celtic, and who have formed the subject of extensive work by other researchers, such as the horse-goddess *Epona*. The cult of *Epona*, studied notably by Katheryn Linduff, is attested by around 280 figural representations and sixty-seven inscriptions from Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, Italy (Rome), the Rhineland, Gaul, Britain, and Spain; and apart from her name, which can be derived from the Celtic language, the material is of late date and dedicated mostly by soldiers in the Roman army.⁷⁶

Because of the lack of evidence, the disparity of the sources and, above all, the large number of Celtic goddesses and their complex nature, classifying and organizing the goddesses into ‘categories’ turned out to be a difficult task. The five chapters which follow treat subject areas that intertwine in numerous ways, for Celtic goddesses seem to have a multi-faced character and to have fulfilled functions of a different nature. We have attempted to establish a clear focus for each chapter, yet allowing overlapping where this seemed unavoidable.

Chapter 1 ‘The Mother Goddesses (Matres, Matrae, Matronae)’ analyses the character of the Matres, Matrae and Matronae, who represent the ancestral concept of the earth as a mother goddess sustaining her people through the natural resources emanating from her womb. Their cult is attested by around 700 epigraphic and iconographical devices, dating from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times, in Britain, northern Spain, Gaul, Germany and Cisalpine Gaul (North Italy). While their generic name *matres / matronae* seems to be Latin, their epithets are exclusively of Celtic or Germanic origin. The reliefs, which generally represent them in groups of three bearing attributes of sovereignty (diadems, thrones and tunics) and fertility (cornucopiae*, paterae*, fruit, cakes and swaddled babies), are clearly modelled on the Classical figurations of mother goddesses. This chapter discusses and questions the origin of the cult of the Matres, Matrae and Matronae: were they of Roman, Gallo-Roman, Germanic or Celtic origin?

Chapter 2, ‘Nature and Bounty’, concentrates mainly on the concept of the goddess as the embodiment of Nature, exemplified, among others, by goddesses personifying the land, such as Irish *Ériu*, Macha or Tailtiu, and Gaulish *Litavi* and *Nantosuelta*; animals, such as Gaulish Artio and Irish *Flidais*; trees or forests, such as the *Dervonnae*, the *Eburnicae* or *Abnoba*; and high places (hills and mountains), such as British Brigantia and Irish Brigit, Gaulish Bergusia/Bergonia or Alambrima. This chapter will also question the long-

⁷⁶ The etymology of her name is explained in Delamarre, 2003, p. 163. The epigraphic references are listed in Jüfer, 2001, pp. 38-39. The iconographical representations are listed by Sterckx, 1986, pp. 19-38 and in *LIMC*, t. 5.1, pp. 985-999 & t. 5.2, pp. 619-628. A comprehensive study of the goddess’ cult and its origin was published by Linduff, Katheryn, ‘Epona: a Celt among the Romans’, in *Latomus*, 38, 4, 1979, pp. 817-837. Two other articles are worth mentioning: Oaks, Laura, ‘The Goddess Epona: concepts of sovereignty in a changing landscape’, in Henig & King, 1986, pp. 77-83 ; Boucher, Stéphanie, ‘Notes sur Epona’, in Burnand & Lavagne, 1999, pp. 14-22 & plates I-VII.

established image of some goddesses, such as Irish *Flidais*, who is generally understood as a woodland-deer-goddess, or Gaulish *Arduinna*, who is universally accepted as a woodland-boar-goddess. It also explores the function of the land-goddess as a purveyor of natural riches, which is greatly illustrated by goddesses of bounty, such as the Irish *Mór Muman* and the Gaulish *Rosmerta*, *Cantismerta* and *Atesmerta*.

Chapter 3, 'Territorial- and War-Goddesses', examines the notions of divine sovereignty and protection of the territory and the tribe. Compared to Irish mythology, which tells of a trio of powerful and terrifying goddesses of war, appearing in the shape of a raven, very little material evidencing a cult to protective and martial goddesses in Gaul and Britain has survived. The aim of this chapter is to compare the descriptive elements of the Irish medieval texts to surviving linguistic, literary and archaeological data from Britain and Gaul, so as to reconstruct some myths concerning Celtic divine warrioresses.

Chapter 4 'Water-Goddesses' delves into the subject of goddesses related to water, such as river, spring and fountain goddesses. It gathers the literary and archaeological material which provide proof of the existence of such cults and examines the different functions fulfilled by water-goddesses in Ireland, Britain and Gaul.

Finally, chapter 5 'Intoxicating Goddesses' looks into the subject of goddesses linked to drunkenness, ecstasy or trance by purveying 'intoxicating' beverages - notably mead - which they personify. It discusses the possibility that such goddesses were the representatives or personifications of specific cults and rites attached to intoxication in Celtic times. The aim of this chapter is thus to collect, analyze and reconstruct the essence and functions of those singular goddesses and examine the nature of their cults, in order to determine the context in which they may have been worshipped and appealed to.

Chapter 1 The *Matres* and *Matronae*

Introduction

The Mother Goddess is an entity, whose cult is universal and very ancient, the first female figurations, known from sculptures, reliefs*, rock paintings and engravings, going back to the Palaeolithic period. The figurine, sculpted in reindeer wood, dated c. 32,000 BC, discovered in La Ferrassie, near Les Eyzies (Dordogne, France), which represents a small round abdomen, with no breasts, head, arms and legs, might be one of the oldest female figures.⁷⁷ The specialists have seen in this statuette a pregnant woman, but the interpretation remains yet very hypothetical.

From that time onwards, female figures seem to have been represented with hypertrophied breast, abdomen and bottom, and atrophied head and limbs, which probably symbolizes the female functions of fertility and fecundity. It is difficult to say if at this time these female depictions were already understood as representations of 'mother goddesses', inasmuch as we do not know if any kind of 'religion' existed in those remote times and if there was anything close to a divine representation of Nature.⁷⁸ These representations might indeed have been simple depictions glorifying the female functions. And yet, when looking at the Lespugue Venus, which is one of the most famous examples of this type, it is difficult not to see in her a Goddess, embodying the various concepts of fertilizing and bountiful Nature. We have thus chosen to see in those prehistoric statues representations of 'goddesses', keeping in mind that theories about their functions and attributes remain very hypothetical and obscure. The Lespugue Venus, dated c. 23,000-21,000 BC, was discovered in 1922 in the Grotte des Rideaux, in Lespugue (Haute-Garonne).⁷⁹ It is artistically similar to the Venus from Monpazier (Dordogne), dated c. 23,000-21,000 BC.⁸⁰

Furthermore, some 'goddesses' seem to have been intentionally depicted pregnant, for the emphasis is placed on their round and prominent abdomen and their hypertrophied vulva. Such a type can be seen in the engraving from the cave of La Marche, in Lussac-les-Châteaux (Vienne), dated c. 13,000-12,000 BC,⁸¹ or in the bas-relief*, dated c. 25,000-20,000 BC, sculpted on a limestone block coming from the 115 metre-long rock

⁷⁷ Marshack, 1972, p. 294 and fig. 159, a, b.; Peyrony, 1934, p. 51, fig. 50.

⁷⁸ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 11-22.

⁷⁹ The Venus of Lespugue is 14.7 centimetre-high. See *L'Anthropologie*, vol. 32, 1922, p. 365, fig. 2, pl. I to III ; Gimbutas, 2005, plate 7 and p. 189, fig. 252 ; Husain, 2001, p. 10 ; Vialou, 2004, pp. 851-852. There are other representations of the same type in Europe, dating from the Palaeolithic period, such as the figurine representing a goddess with heavy hanging breasts and large hips, discovered in Dolní Věstonice, Moravia, dated c. 24,000 BC. See Marshack, 1972, pp. 304-305 ; Gimbutas, 2005, p. 81, fig. 86. Another example is the figurine in ivory, representing a goddess, whose ample breast is surmounted by a chevron. It was discovered on the site of Kostienki, on the Desna, Ukraine and is dated c. 20,000 BC. See Gimbutas, 2005, p. 63, fig. 49 ; Boyer, 1995, pp. 7-19.

⁸⁰ Gimbutas, 2005, p. 131, fig. 169.

⁸¹ Gimbutas, 2005, p. 168, fig. 216, 3 ; Vialou, 2004, p. 898.

shelter of Laussel, showing a 'Venus holding a horn'.⁸² Moreover, some graphic symbols, in the shape of chevrons, triangles and semi-circles, having a line or a point in their centre, could be interpreted as symbolic representations of the vulva of the goddess - the line or point possibly indicating the orifice.⁸³

The megalithic culture of the Neolithic period gave birth to statue-menhirs* or drawings of female idols, generally represented with two small circles in relief, standing for the bosom, and a sort of U-shape necklace. Such figurations were particularly found in Britain and in France, notably in the funerary dolmens of Tarn and Gard and in the menhirs* of Aveyron, Tarn and Hérault (fig. 1).⁸⁴ Two famous examples are the statue-menhir* in granite from Câtel, Guernesey (GB), dated 3,000-2,500 BC,⁸⁵ and the charcoal drawing painted on the left wall of the antechamber of the hypogeum n°23 of the Razet cemetery, in Coizard (Marne), dated c. 3,000-2,500 BC.⁸⁶ At this time, it seems that the goddess was sometimes reduced to simple representations of breasts in relief, which can appear on the walls of the gallery tombs, such as in Tressé (Ille-et-Vilaine, Brittany, c. 3,000-2,500 BC).⁸⁷ As for the megalithic tombs, they have sometimes been construed as the symbolic representation of the body of the goddess.⁸⁸ The entrance would stand for the goddess's vulva, while the main funerary chamber would symbolize her womb. Marija Gimbutas for instance compares the dolmens with a corridor from Ile-Longue, Larmor-Baden, (Bretagne), and the court cairns from Ballyglass, Co. Mayo, and from Deer Park (Maghezaghannesh) and Creevykeel, Co. Sligo (Ireland), to the body of the Mother Goddess in a standing or sitting position (4th millennium BC).⁸⁹ The earth is then understood as the maternal womb, where important people were buried for them to be reborn in the otherworld. While this interpretation is interesting, it remains conjectural.

⁸² This goddess is also known as the 'Venus from Laussel'. Gimbutas, 2005, p. 168, fig. 216, 1 ; Marshack, 1972, p. 287, 328-329 ; Vialou, 2004, p. 845.

⁸³ Gimbutas, 2005, pp. 35-47, 265-273 ; Marshack, 1972, pp. 303-308.

⁸⁴ De Vries, 1963, p. 125 ; Grenier, 1945, p. 335 ; Green, 2004, pp. 72-73. This is called the culture of the Seine-Oise-Marne (SOM), which developed between 3,400 BC and 2,800 BC in the Paris Basin.

⁸⁵ Gimbutas, 2005, p. 70, fig. 69.

⁸⁶ De Vries, 1963, p. 125 ; Déchelette, 1924, pp. 585-595 ; Gimbutas, 1995, p. 220, fig. 295 ; Vialou, 2004, p. 1226.

⁸⁷ The gallery tomb, known today as 'Maison des Feins or Maison des Fées' ('House of the Fairies'), is precisely situated in the Forest of Mesnil. Feins is a village situated 28 kilometres from Tressé. The excavations were carried out in 1931 by Sir Robert Ludwig Mond and the report was published by his assistant: Collum, Vera Christina Chute, *L'Allée couverte de Tressé*, Paris, Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1938. For a picture of the gallery tomb, see Gimbutas, 2005, p. 71, fig. 70.

⁸⁸ Gimbutas, 2005, pp. 175-185 ; Briard, 1979, pp. 30-35.

⁸⁹ Gimbutas, 2005, pp. 176, fig. 231, p. 180, fig. 180.



Fig. 1: Statue-menhir unearthed in Saint-Sernin-sur-Rance (Aveyron), representing a goddess with two circles in relief standing for her breasts and a U-shape necklace. RG 1631.*

The concept of the 'Mother Goddess', embodying the earth and all its products, i.e. forests, plants, animals, rivers and foodstuff, is clearly noticeable in all the ancient mythologies of Indo-European and other origin. Known as Ishtar or Nammou ('the August Dame') in Assyrian-Babylonian mythology,⁹⁰ Indo-European examples are also numerous, such as Gaia, Rhea or Demeter ('Mother Earth') in Greek mythology,⁹¹ Juno ('the Young

⁹⁰ Assyrian-Babylonian mythology goes back to the 3rd millennium BC *Nammou* is a Sumerian goddess. She is the primordial deity of the pantheon of Eridou. *Ishtar*, also called *Asherah*, is the name of the primordial Great Goddess of the Semite. She is the consort the god El and presides over the fertility of the soil and the fecundity of the cattle. Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 79-81, 84, 730, 772 ; Lévy, Anne-Déborah, 'Ishtar', in *Dictionnaire des Mythes littéraires*, Paris, Ed. du Rocher, 1988, p. 780.

⁹¹ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 120, 696, 827-828, 661-662. Gaia, who embodies the Earth in the process of formation, is the partner of Ouranos, the Sky. They represent the original couple. Rhea, the daughter of Gaia and Ouranos, is the wife of Cronos ('Time') and gives birth to all the powerful Greek gods, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Demeter and Hades. She is the Mother Goddess par

One') in Roman mythology⁹² or Freya ('the Sovereign') in Norse mythology.⁹³ This kind of Goddess or Terra Mater ('Earth Mother') universally represents the grand creative principle, i.e. the land which feeds everything and everybody.⁹⁴ The Latin word *māter* is besides reminiscent of the various primary functions of the goddess, since it signifies 'the source, the origin, the cause', as well as the 'mother of men and animals' and the 'nurse'. The titles Magna Mater ('Powerful Mother') or Mater Deum ('Mother of the Gods') are for instance given to the Phrygian goddess Cybele, who became one of the most powerful Greek and Roman female deities of fertility.⁹⁵ She represents the Earth in its primitive state and reigns over the reproduction of animals, plants, gods and human beings. As for the ancient Roman grain-goddess Ceres, who, like Demeter, makes the wheat sprout and grow, she is given the significant designation of *mater frugum*, i.e. 'the mother who provides the produce of the earth, such as the cereals, fruit or vegetables'.⁹⁶

As we will see throughout this chapter and the following one, the ancient concept of a Mother Goddess being at the origin of everything, dispensing terrestrial life and feeding her people, held an important place in the religious conceptions of the Celts. Whereas some names and stories of Land and Mother Goddesses have survived in Irish medieval literature - giving us a certain idea of the primary roles and attributes of those goddesses - the British and Gaulish data are sparse and obscure, for almost nothing remains of the ancient beliefs of the Celts in those countries, on account of their oral lore and of the Roman invasion.

As there is no written literature describing the early British and Gaulish Celtic religions, the only information we possess comes from inscriptions honouring the deities. These inscriptions are precious to the scholar, for it is exclusively through them that the names of the goddesses venerated in Celtic times are known. However, it is important to keep in mind that the dedications date from Gallo-Roman times. The question which must be considered, then, is whether we are dealing with deities of Celtic, Gallo-Roman or Roman origin. Moreover, it is important to separate the goddesses who are definitely Celtic from those who seem to have a Germanic provenance and nature, especially in the areas where the two peoples had considerable contacts, most notably along the Rhine. Only the study of the origin of the goddess names can unravel these thorny questions, since the iconography, which seldom accompanied the epigraphy*, is generally of Classical character. The etymology* of the goddess names is all the more essential in our analysis as it allows us to determine the possible functions of an undetermined goddess. Even though the figurations are mainly of Greco-Roman type, they are to be taken into account, for with the dedications they illustrate the role of the goddesses and sometimes fortunately offer an attribute of indigenous character.

excellence. As for Demeter, she is the goddess presiding over wheat and harvest. She ensures its germination and maturity. Ceres was later assimilated to her. For more details about Demeter, see *Brill's*, vol. 4, pp. 235-242.

⁹² Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 195-196 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 250-252, 735-736 ; Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 668-690 ; *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 1107-1111. Juno, the wife of Jupiter, protects women throughout their life. She bears various epithets according to the roles she plays in the life of women. When she presides over marriage, she is called Juno Jugalis. When she presides over pregnancy, she is Juno Lucina, etc.

⁹³ Boyer, 1995, p. 120 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 322-323, 694. Freya, daughter of Njord and sister of Freyr, is the goddess of fecundity and vegetation.

⁹⁴ Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 106 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 201-206.

⁹⁵ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 201-202, 656 ; on Magna Mater and her cult, see James, 1960, pp. 177-208 ; *Brill's*, vol. 8, pp. 458-459.

⁹⁶ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 257, 644-645.

Before going into detail concerning the various Celtic goddesses embodying the land and purveying fertility, we will look into the controversial subject of the Matres and Matronae, literally ‘Mothers’, whose cult was widespread and of great importance in Gallo-Roman times, for more than 700 epigraphic and iconographical devices, honouring or representing them, have been discovered in Britain, northern Spain, Gaul, Germany and Cisalpine Gaul (North Italy).⁹⁷ Are these ‘Mothers’ to be looked on as part of ancient Celtic belief systems or as the result of the importation of the Roman pantheon? In other words, did the cult of the ‘Mothers’ spring up in Gallo-Roman times, through contact with Roman religion, or was it originally Celtic?

I) Etymology of their generic name

Numerous inscriptions from the Rhineland,⁹⁸ Gaul, Britain and Cisalpine Gaul, dating mainly from Gallo-Roman times, are dedicated to divine female figures called Matres and Matronae,⁹⁹ who were honoured in groups, as their designation in the plural form shows. This designation is sometimes said to be Latin,¹⁰⁰ for it can be related to the Latin feminine word *māter* (‘mother’), plural *matris*; *mātrōna* being an extended form of this term, meaning ‘woman, spouse, wife of a Roman citizen’, that is the housewife who was in charge of the household and the children.¹⁰¹ Others point out that these terms are a mix of the Gaulish and Latin languages.¹⁰² They are thus to be understood as ‘Celtic Latinized forms’, which would enhance the Gallo-Roman character of those female deities. While their name can be connected to Latin, it can also be related to Gaulish *mātīr* (‘mother’); the existence and inflections of which have been revealed in various early Gallo-Greek and Gallo-Latin inscriptions, i.e. inscriptions in Gaulish language with Greek or Latin lettering. Gaulish *mātīr* (‘mother’), cognate with Old Irish *máthair* (‘mother’), gen. *máthar*, derives from Indo-European **mātēr* (‘mother’), like Latin *māter* and Greek *mētēr*.¹⁰³ According to Eric Hamp and Olmsted, *Mātr-ōna* is the derived form, but it is clear that the term *Matrona* is Latin.¹⁰⁴

A) *Matir* and *materem* (‘mother’): Plomb du Larzac

The Celtic word for ‘mother’ is attested in the nominative singular form *mātīr* in a Gallo-Latin inscription from Larzac, engraved on a lead plaque, composed of two fragments, inscribed

⁹⁷ *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, pp. 2213-2249 lists 702 iconographical and epigraphic documents to the Matres, Matronae.

⁹⁸ The Rhineland (Rheinland in German) designates the land situated on both sides of the river Rhine in the west of Germany.

⁹⁹ *Matrae*, with the Latin inflexion *-ae*, is a vulgarism.

¹⁰⁰ *Brill's*, vol. 8, p. 481.

¹⁰¹ *Brill's*, vol. 8, p. 483.

¹⁰² Deyts, 1992, p. 60 ; Duval, 1957, p. 52 ; Cléber, 1970, p. 254.

¹⁰³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 220 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 287-288, 361-362.

¹⁰⁴ Hamp, Eric, ‘Varia’, in *EC*, 27, 1990, p. 182 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 288, 362: the Gaulish plural form corresponding to *Matronae* would be **Matronas* (**Matronabo*).

on each side.¹⁰⁵ The ‘Plomb du Larzac’ was found in 1983 on the opening of a funerary urn, on the Gallo-Roman necropolis of Hospitalet-du-Larzac, known as La Vayssière (Aveyron). This text, dating from the end of the 1st c. AD, is the longest text in the Gaulish language which has been discovered so far – about sixty lines and one hundred and seventy words or fragments of words. In *La langue gauloise*, Lambert offers a translation of some parts of the text, which contains various magical formulas and a list of names of women, one of whom, Severa Tertionigna, may be a sorceress. The text also gives the lineage between mothers and daughters, which is quite unusual, for it is generally the name of the father which is specified. The word *mātir* thus appears on face 1a, lines 11-12 and 14: *poti[ita m]atir paullias*, ‘Potita mother of Paullias’, *adiega matir aiias*, ‘Adiega mother of Aiias’, and on face 1b, lines 5-6: *ulatucia mat[ir] banonias*, ‘Ulatucia mother of Banona’ (fig. 2).

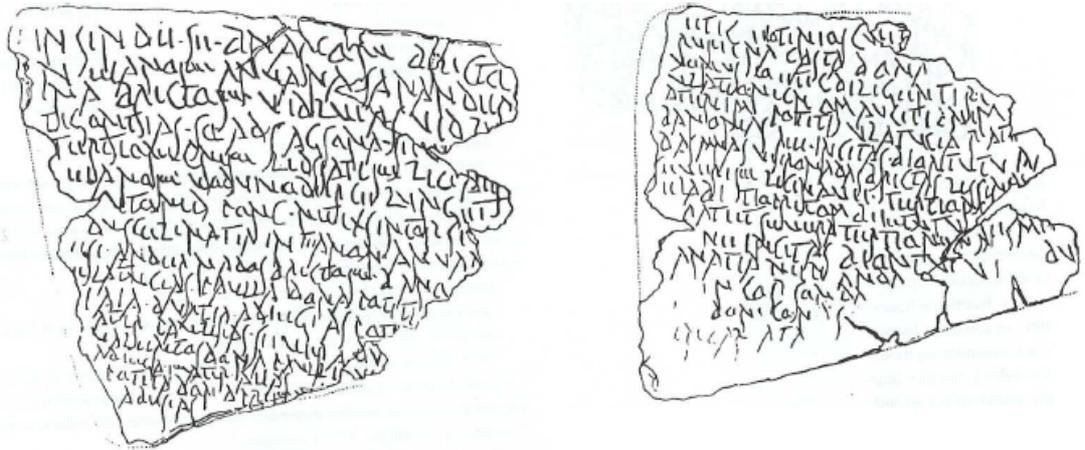


Fig. 2: Face 1a (left) and face 1b (right) of the ‘Plomb du Larzac’. Lambert, 1995, pp. 160-161.

The word ‘mother’ may also appear in the accusative singular form *materem*, with a possible Latinized inflexion –*em* (cf. the Latin inflexion of *mātrēm*), on face 1b, lines 4-5 of the Plomb du Larzac: *aucitigni(m) materem potiiti*, which Lambert translates as ‘Auctiona, mother of Potitos’.¹⁰⁶ Here the filiation would be between a mother and her son, for *Potitos* is a masculine proper name.¹⁰⁷ Despite its possible evolution from Latin *mātrēm*, Delamarre asserts that the form *materem* is in accordance with the archaic Indo-European type, cf. Sanskrit *mātāram*, Greek *mētéra*, and Lithuanian *móterj* (**mātrēm*)¹⁰⁸

B) *Matrebo* (‘to the Mother Goddesses’): Nîmes and Glanum

Moreover, the dative plural form *matrebo*, ‘to the mothers’ is known from two Gallo-Greek inscriptions from Nîmes (Gard) and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Glanum, Bouches-du-Rhône). These two inscriptions are of great interest, for they honour the divine mothers

¹⁰⁵ Now in the Musée de Millau (Aveyron). For a comprehensive study of the ‘Plomb du Larzac’, see Lejeune, 1985, pp. 95-177 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 160-172.

¹⁰⁶ Lambert, 1995, pp. 61, 160-162, 168-169.

¹⁰⁷ Lambert, 1995, p. 168 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 150 (*Potitus*).

¹⁰⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 220 refers to Meillet, Antoine, *Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues indo-européennes*, Paris, Hachette, 1937, p. 305.

of those respective cities. The dedication from Nîmes is engraved on a pedestal, which used to be surmounted by a statue: [-]αρταρ[ος] Ἰλλανουιακος δεδε / ματρεβο ναμαουσικαβο βρατουδε[...], '(?)artaros son of Illianus offered (this) to the Mothers of Nîmes, in gratitude (?), on accomplishment of a vow' (fig. 3).¹⁰⁹ It was found in 1740 on the site of the temple dedicated to the god Nemausus, known as 'Temple of the Fountain'. Michel Lejeune asserts that the dating of this inscription cannot be earlier than the middle of the 2nd c. AD, because of the shape of some of the letters.¹¹⁰ Lambert, however, indicates that the Gallo-Greek inscriptions from Narbonese Gaul generally date from the end of the 3rd c. BC to the 1st c. BC.¹¹¹ It is significant that the father of the dedicator bears a Celtic name: *Illianus*, the meaning of which is unknown.¹¹² We thus have here a dedicator of Celtic stock, paying homage to divine mothers in the Gaulish language, which is of great significance.

Similarly, the votive altar from Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, found in 1954 near the Fanum* of Hercules, offers an inscription bearing the form *matrebo* 'to the Mothers': ματρεβο / γλανεικαβο / βρατουδε- / καντεν, 'To the Mothers of Glanum, in gratitude (?), on accomplishment of a vow'.¹¹³ Henry Rolland suggests that the few epigraphic particularities of this inscription allow us to date the votive stone from the first half of the 1st c. BC, which is previous to the usage of Latin script, appearing in the second half of the 1st c. BC in Glanum.¹¹⁴



Fig. 3: Gallo-Greek inscription from Nîmes dedicated to the 'Mothers'. Lambert, 1995, p. 86.

It is also interesting to note that a Gallo-Latin inscription from Plumergat (Morbihan), engraved on a boundary stone, bears a very similar word with the exact same inflexion: *atrebo*, meaning 'To the Fathers'. This is the dative plural form of the Gaulish word *atir*, cognate with Old Irish *athir*, Modern Irish *athair*, 'father'.¹¹⁵ The vocative singular form of this word, *ater*, appears on lines 6-7 of a Gallo-Latin tile discovered in Châteaubleau (Seine-et-Marne): *ater ixsi*, 'my father belonging to me'.¹¹⁶ The inscription from Plumergat is the following: *vrabos iiiiovt atrebo aganntobo durneogiapo*, which Lambert translates

¹⁰⁹ *RIG I*, 203 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 86.

¹¹⁰ *RIG I*, 203.

¹¹¹ Lambert, 1995, p. 81.

¹¹² Delamarre, 2007, pp. 109, 223.

¹¹³ *RIG I*, 64 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 87-88.

¹¹⁴ Rolland, 1958, pp. 114-115 ; *RIG I*, 65.

¹¹⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 58-59.

¹¹⁶ Lambert, 1998-2000, pp. 107-108. The text is eleven-line long.

'Vrabos (offered?) to the Fathers who mark the boundary of (?)...', while Gildas Bernier glosses 'Vrabos erected (this) to the Fathers of the Boundary (or Country) for Giapos, son of Durnos'.¹¹⁷ The scholars do not agree on the meaning of the epithet *agannt-* describing the Fathers. Lambert and Bernier see an active participle based on **agos*, 'boundary stone' - these Fathers would thus be deities personifying boundaries of frontiers or properties.¹¹⁸ As for Sterckx, he attempts to translate their epithet as the Fathers 'who reinforce, who assure the cohesion (of the clan)' without explaining his theory.¹¹⁹ As far as Lejeune is concerned, he uses the two similar inscriptions from Glanum and Nîmes to demonstrate that this epithet is a toponym* designating the village of Plumergat (territory of the Veneti): 'To the Fathers of Aganantos'.¹²⁰

C) *Matron* ('belonging to the Mother Goddesses'): Istres

Finally, the genitive plural form *matron*, signifying 'of the Mothers', 'belonging to the Mothers', appears on a Gallo-Greek rupestral* inscription from the oppidum* of Castellán, a rocky hill overhanging the pond of the Olivier, near Istres (Bouches-du-Rhône). The site was inhabited from the 8th c. BC to the Early Middle Ages.¹²¹ The inscription is deeply engraved on a rock face, 2.4m from the ground, on the east side of the hill: *ματρον* (fig. 4).¹²² This rupestral* inscription, probably dating from the 2nd or 1st c. BC, is quite impressive, since its letters are about 20cm high.

In the middle of the 20th c., Fernand Benoit went in search of votive material evidencing a place of open-air devotion to the Mothers, and carried out excavations at the bottom of this rock face, but to no avail.¹²³ According to Lejeune, the possibility of finding religious buildings dedicated to those deities in the area is hopeless, for the devotion must have been rendered directly to the natural element embodied and protected by the Mothers: the rock.¹²⁴ Indeed, the inscription, in the genitive form 'of the Mothers', clearly indicates that the hill of Castellán was the property of the Mothers. Moreover, the fact that the inscription was directly made on the rock face must signify that the Mothers in some way personified the hill itself. Their function must have been the protection of what was in their possession, that is the hill, and by extension, of the people living on that mount.

¹¹⁷ *RIG* II-1, 15 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 62, 107 ; Bernier, 1970, pp. 655-667 ; Schmidt, 1987, pp. 134-135 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 288.

¹¹⁸ This would relate them to the *Deivoi Termonioi* ('Gods of the Boundary'), venerated in Cisalpine Gaul, and to the *Termini* honoured in Rome. See De Bernardo Stempel, 1995-1996, pp. 101-103.

¹¹⁹ Sterckx, 1998, pp. 25-26.

¹²⁰ Lejeune, 1970, pp. 669-672.

¹²¹ Lejeune, 1988, p. 97.

¹²² *RIG* I, 519 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 61, 86 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 220 ; Lejeune, 1988, pp. 97-101 ; Hamp, Eric, 'Varia', in *EC*, 27, 1990, pp. 181-182.

¹²³ Benoit, Fernand, in *Gallia*, XII-2, 1954, p. 433.

¹²⁴ Lejeune, 1988, p. 101.



MATRON

Fig. 4: Picture and facsimile of the rupestral inscription Matron ('belonging to the Mothers'), from the oppidum* of Castellon, Istres (Bouches-du-Rhône). Lejeune, 1988, pp. 100-101 (fig. 12, 13).*

These Gallo-Greek inscriptions from Nîmes, Glanum and Istres are of great interest because they reveal the worship of divine Mothers and are in the Gaulish language, which means they were written by Gaulish people, and date from between the 3rd c. BC and the 1st c. AD - the ones from Narbonese Gaul being the most ancient ones.¹²⁵ With the Plomb du Larzac, they also provide evidence of the existence of the word 'mother' in the Gaulish language, revealing its form and some of its declensions:¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Lambert, 1995, p. 81.

¹²⁶ Table given by Lejeune, 1988, p. 99.

nom. sing.	<i>mātir</i> , 'mother' (Larzac)
acc. sing.	<i>materem</i> (?), 'mother' (Larzac)
gen. sing.	(?)
dat. sing.	(?)
nom. plur.	(?)
acc. plur.	(?)
gen. plur.	<i>ματρον</i> (<i>matron</i>), 'belonging to the mothers' (Istres)
dat. plur.	<i>ματρεβο</i> (<i>matrebo</i>), 'to the mothers' (Glanum, Nîmes) <i>ατρεβο</i> (<i>atrebo</i>), 'To the fathers' (Plumergat)

The most significant example is the rupestral* inscription from Istres, in the Gaulish language, which dates from the 2nd or 1st c. BC, and testifies to some sort of cult anterior to the Gallo-Roman period. Here the Mothers are directly invoked in Nature, by means of the natural element which they personify. While the forms *Matres* and *Matronae* seem to be more Latin than Celtic, it is clear that a cult to the Mother Goddesses predated Gallo-Roman times, as the inscription from Istres strongly indicates. To determine their origin, nature and possible functions, it is first necessary to study the surviving epigraphical evidence from Britain and the Continent. Differences and similarities between the forms *Matres* and *Matronae* will be studied and geographical areas of use will be noted. These generic names are generally associated with epithets, the origin of which is often problematic, for some appear to be Celtic and others Germanic. Moreover, their significance is often ambiguous and can refer to different geographical, ethnonymic or descriptive entities. Even though classifying them into categories remains difficult, a broad outline will be established.

II) The Epigraphic Evidence

A) The forms *Matres* – *Matronae*

1) Differences

The inscriptions to the *Matres* and *Matronae* fall into two main groups. On the one hand, about 150 inscriptions are dedicated to the 'Mothers' without specific epithets, around sixty of which mention the forms *Matres* or *Matrae* and eighty of which refer to the term *Matronae*, prevalent in Cisalpine Gaul (51) and Germany (25).¹²⁷ Here are two instances coming from the Meseta region, in Northern Spain: *Arria Nothis Matribus pro secundo v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the *Matres*, *Arria Nothis* for the second time paid her vow willingly and deservedly', and *Matrib(us) T(itus) Racilius Valerianus ex vot(o)*, 'To the *Matres* *Titus Racilius Valerianus* offered this'.¹²⁸ On the other hand, another hundred or so inscriptions associate their name with peculiar attributive bynames*. Indeed, about forty

¹²⁷ Anwyl, 1906a, pp. 30-31 ; *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, pp. 2213-2249 ; *Brill's*, vol. 8, pp. 481-482 ; *Daremberg & Saglio*, pp. 1635-1639 ; *Roscher*, vol. II-2, col. 2464-2479. For the various inscriptions to the *Matronae* without epithet, see *RDG*, pp. 51-52. There are also two inscriptions from Gaul, one from Switzerland and one from Slovenia.

¹²⁸ Beltrán Lloris, 2007, p. 36, n°2.3, p. 35, n°2.2.

different epithets are known for the Matres and Matrae,¹²⁹ such as, among others, the Matres Nemetiales in Grenoble (Isère),¹³⁰ the Matres Britannae in Winchester (GB),¹³¹ the Matres Masanae in Cologne (Germany),¹³² the Matres Arsacae in Xanten (Germany),¹³³ the Matres Brittae in Fürstenberg and Xanten (Germany),¹³⁴ or the Matres Remae in Gereonsweiler (Germany).¹³⁵ As for the Matronae, around sixty different epithets have been recorded,¹³⁶ such as the Matronae Ambiamarcae in Floisdorf (Germany),¹³⁷ the Matronae Valabneiae in Cologne,¹³⁸ the Matronae Caimine[h]ae in Euskirchen¹³⁹ or the Matronae Tummaestiae in Sinzenich.¹⁴⁰

In Gaul, the terms Matres and Matrae are particularly represented in Narbonese Gaul (around 37 inscriptions), particularly in the territories of the Allobroges (10) and of the Vocontii (10), and in the north-east of Gaul, notably in the territories of the Lingones, the Aedui, the Senones and the Mediomatrici.¹⁴¹ Their cult is also evidenced in the territories of the Helveti and of the Sequani, even though the inscriptions are far less numerous.¹⁴² The term Matres is found in Britain, notably in the north, along Antonine's and Hadrian's Wall, in the east, in Chester (Cheshire), in the south-east and south, in Cirencester (Gloucestershire), Bath (Somerset) and London. It is also mentioned in various inscriptions from Germany, particularly along the Rhine, in Northern Spain, especially in the north of Meseta, and in Rome (Italy) (fig. 5).¹⁴³ If the form Matres is used outside Gaul, the form Matrae seems to be confined to Gaul. As a general rule, it seems that the term Matres/Matrae is generally associated with epithets of Celtic origin. Nonetheless, it happens to be sometimes combined with a Germanic epithet, such as for the Matres Annaneptae in Xanten,¹⁴⁴ the Matres Kannanef(ates) in Cologne,¹⁴⁵ the Matres Suebae in Cologne and

¹²⁹ *RDG*, pp. 17-74 ; *Roscher*, vol. 2.2, col. 2476-2477 has a list of the various bynames* of the Matres/ Matrae.

¹³⁰ *CIL* XII, 2221.

¹³¹ *RIB* 88.

¹³² *CIL* XIII, 8223.

¹³³ *CIL* XIII, 8630 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 26.

¹³⁴ *CIL* XIII, 8632, 8631.

¹³⁵ *AE* 1990, 733.

¹³⁶ Vendryes, 1997, p. 45 ; *RDG*, pp. 17-74 ; *Roscher*, vol. 2.2, col. 2477-2479 has a list of the various bynames* of the Matronae.

¹³⁷ *CIL* XIII, 7898 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 144 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 142.

¹³⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8226, 8227 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 188.

¹³⁹ *CIL* XIII, 7969 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 52 proposes to relate that name to Irish *cáemna*, *cóemna* 'protection, hospitality' ; while Neumann, in *RGA*, vol. 19, p. 439 offers to relate their name to Germanic **χaima*-, 'House', 'Built-Up Area'.

¹⁴⁰ *CIL* XIII, 7902 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 186.

¹⁴¹ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, pp. 465-467 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 88-95, 130 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 128-135 ; Vallentin, 1880 ; Drioux, 1934a, pp. 105-117, 119-120 (Lingones) ; Thévenot, 1951, pp. 7-26. The Gallo-Roman site 'Les Bolards' is situated near Nuits-Saint-Georges in Côte d'Or, which was part of the territory of the Lingones).

¹⁴² Castan, 1875, p. 171.

¹⁴³ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 287-291 ; *Roscher*, vol. 2.2, col. 2465 ; Rüger, 1987, pp. 1-30 ; Green, 2003, p. 51 ; Bémont, 1981, p. 79 ; Beltrán Lloris, 2007, pp. 31, 35-38, 47-49, fig. 6-11 ; Gómez-Pantoja, 1999, pp. 421-432 ; Duval, 1957, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 8629.

¹⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII, 8219.

Deutz,¹⁴⁶ the *Matres Vapthiae*, whose inscription was found in the Rhine,¹⁴⁷ and the *Matres Frisavae* in Wissen (see below).¹⁴⁸



Fig. 5: Map of the votive inscriptions dedicated to the Matres. Rüger, 1987, p. 7, fig. 3.

As for the term *Matronae*, it could be viewed as the Germanic 'counterpart' or 'equivalent' of the Celtic *Matres*, inasmuch as it is mainly confined to the Rhineland, i.e. in the regions of Jülicher, Zülpicher and the Voreifel - the area between Neuss, Bonn and Aachen -, which corresponds to the territory of the Ubii tribe.¹⁴⁹ While the *Matronae* are generally honoured with attributive bynames* in the Rhineland, they are venerated without specific epithets in various dedications from Cisalpine Gaul, especially in the area from Verona to the Maritime

¹⁴⁶ *CIL* XIII, 8224, 8497, 8225 ; *AE* 1984, 655.

¹⁴⁷ *CIL* XIII, 8841.

¹⁴⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8633.

¹⁴⁹ Derks, 1998, pp. 119, 124.

Alps and the Ligurian Riviera (fig. 6).¹⁵⁰ As we will see, the term Matronae is generally associated with divine bynames* of Germanic origin in the Rhineland, but there are some examples of it coupled with Celtic epithets, for instance the Matronae Lubicaein Cologne¹⁵¹ or the Matronae Dervonnae in Milano and Brescia (Italy).¹⁵² Finally, the dedicators honouring the Matronae are sometimes of Germanic origin, such as Chamarus and Allo from Zülpich-Enzen: *Matronis M(arcus) Chamari f(ilius) et Allo*, 'To the Mother Goddesses, Marcus, son of Chamarus, and Allo'.¹⁵³

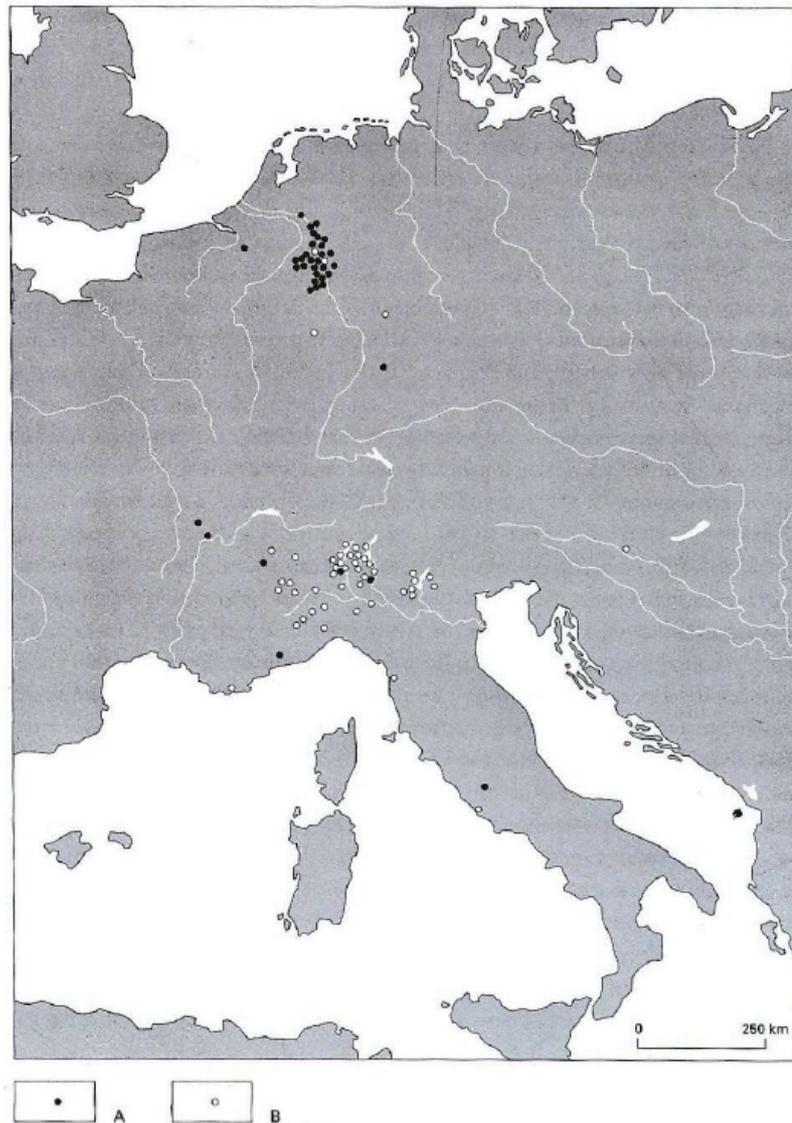


Fig. 6: Map showing the distribution of the dedications to the Matronae with and without epithets.). A. Matronae with epithets. B. Matronae without epithets. Derks, 1998, p. 129, fig. 3.19 (after Rüger, 1987, fig. 1 and fig. 2).

¹⁵⁰ Pascal, 1964, pp. 116-123.

¹⁵¹ *CIL* XIII, 8220.

¹⁵² *CIL* V, 5791, 4208.

¹⁵³ *AE* 1981, 679 ; for the Germanic names, see Weisgerber, 1968, pp. 146, 241.

2) Equivalence in meaning?

It is noteworthy that the same epithet can be associated with both the terms *Matres* and *Matronae* in the inscriptions, which clearly proves that these two forms are interchangeable and equivalent in meaning.¹⁵⁴ An example is that of the *Senonae*, who are called *Matres* in an obscure dedication from Metz (Moselle) and *Matronae* in Boeckingen (Germany): *Seno(nibus) Matro(nis) coh(ors) I Helvet(iorum) [...] vsIm*, 'To the *Matronae Senonae*, Cohort I of Helvetia [...] paid the vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁵⁵ Their name, based on Gaulish *senos*, 'old', 'ancient', cognate with Old Irish *sen*, Welsh, Cornish and Breton *hen*, 'old' (< IE¹⁵⁶ **senos*), is undeniably Celtic. The *Matres / Matronae Senonae* ('the Old Mothers') may have been deities of age or protective ancestors and are etymologically linked to the *sept** of the *Senones* ('The Old Ones'), who gave their name to the city of Sens (Yonne, France).¹⁵⁷ The *Octocannae* are also named *Matronae* on seven dedications from the sanctuary of Krefeld-Lank (Gripswald) and Gellep (Germany), and *Matres* in a dedication from Gellep.¹⁵⁸ While the linguists do not concur on the meaning of their name, they agree that they are Celtic goddesses; the first part of their name being not necessarily Latin *octo*, 'eight'. According to Delamarre, who breaks down their name as **Ougtu-candā*, with *octo-*, *oxtu-*, 'cold', cognate with Old Irish *uacht*, and *cand(i) > cann-*, similar to Welsh and Breton *can(n)*, 'white' or 'shinning', their epithet could mean something like 'White Cold' or 'Shining with Frost'.¹⁵⁹ They would therefore have been Winter Mother Goddesses, bearing some resemblance to the Norse *Hrímpursar* ('Rime Thurses' or 'Frost-Giants').¹⁶⁰ Karl Schmidt and Wolfgang Spickermann relate their name to the root **puktókā > *(p)októka* - see Middle Irish *ochtach*, meaning 'Fir' or 'Spruce'.¹⁶¹ The *Matronae / Matres Octocannae* might thus have been 'Tree Mothers'.

This alternation between the forms *Matres* and *Matronae* is also found for Mother Goddesses possessing Germanic epithets (see below). The *Andrustehiae* are called *Matronae* on four inscriptions from Cologne, Bonn and Godesberg, and *Matres* on another dedication from Cologne.¹⁶² Similarly, the *Aumenahenae* are called *Matres* and *Matronae* on two different dedications from Cologne.¹⁶³ The *Vacallinehae*, who are generally called *Matronae* – twenty-nine inscriptions from Germany out of forty-nine mention this form -, are also associated with the term *Matres* in a dedication from Endenich (Germany).¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁴ Derks, 1998, p. 120 ; Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 191.

¹⁵⁵ The inscription from Metz remains yet hypothetical. *CIL* XIII, 4304: *Dis M Senon(u)m Tris et Domin(o) Mer(curio) Cosumi ex iussu Mercur(ii)* ; *CIL* XIII, 6475.

¹⁵⁶ IE means 'Indo-European'.

¹⁵⁷ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 270-271 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 289 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 22. The *Senones* were a Celtic tribe inhabiting the present region of the *Sénonnais* in France, which is to say the départements of Yonne, Aube, Seine-et-Marne and Côte d'Or. Sens was their capital under the name of *Agenticum*, cf. Kruta, 2000, p. 815.

¹⁵⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8571-8577 (*Matronis Octocannabus*) ; *AE* 1981, 686 (*Matribus Octocannis*) dates from the first half of the 3rd c. AD.

¹⁵⁹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 144, 215, 228.

¹⁶⁰ Mortensen, 2003, p. 51 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 336-338.

¹⁶¹ Spickermann, 2005, p. 141 ; Schmidt, 1987, pp. 148-149 ; Gutenbrunner, 1936, p. 223 ; Mees, 2002, pp. 139-141.

¹⁶² *Matronae*: *AE* 1956, 245 ; *CIL* XIII, 8212 (Cologne) ; *AE* 1931, 23 (Bonn) ; *CIL* XIII, 7995 (Godesberg). *Matres*: *AE* 1981, 669.

¹⁶³ *CIL* XIII, 12054 (*Matres*), 8215 (*Matronae*).

¹⁶⁴ See *RDG*, pp. 68-69 for references to the inscriptions. The one mentioning the form *Matres* is *CIL* XIII, 8003a.

Finally, the Aufaniae, who are honoured in seventy-two dedications, are named Matronae in forty-five inscriptions from Germany, France (Lyons) and the Netherlands, and Matres on three inscriptions from Zülpich, Nettersheim (Germany) and Carmona (Spain).¹⁶⁵ One of the inscriptions is particularly interesting, for it says *Matribus sive Matronis Aufanabus*, 'Matres or Matronae Aufaniabus', which clearly shows that there was no sharp difference in meaning between the two terms.¹⁶⁶

3) Some Celtic dedicators

With regards to the dedicators honouring the Mothers in Gaul, many of these have Latin names, but it is noteworthy that some have typical Celtic names. This can be considered evidence that people of Celtic stock still payed homage to their deities in Gallo-Roman times. In four different inscriptions, individuals called *Casuna*, *Mastonia*, *Sappiena* and *Oxia*,¹⁶⁷ respectively pay their vow to the 'Mothers', in Brienne, near Brignon (Gard), in Lyons (Rhône) and in Besançon (Doubs): *Casuna v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) Mat(ribus)*, 'Casuna paid her vow willingly and deservedly, to the Mothers';¹⁶⁸ *Matris aug(ustis) Mastonia Bella v.s.l.m.*, 'To the August Mothers, Mastonia Bella paid her vow willingly and deservedly';¹⁶⁹ *Sappiena Lychnis matris v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Mothers Sappiena Lychnis paid her vow willingly and deservedly';¹⁷⁰ *Matrabus sacrum, Oxia Messori filia v.s.l.m.*, 'Sacred to the Mothers, Oxia daughter of Messorus paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁷¹

Similarly, in the inscriptions from Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse) and Sahune (Drôme), the names of the dedicators' fathers, Vassedo and Solimutus, are Gaulish: *Matribus Adcultus, Vassedonis f(ilius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Mothers, Adcultus, son of Vassedo, paid his vow willingly and deservedly' and *Ingenua Solimuti (filia) Matris v.s.l.m.*, 'Ingenua, daughter of Solimutus, paid her vow willingly and deservedly to the Mothers'.¹⁷² It is interesting to note that women's names stand out in the dedications to the Mothers, for it illustrates their close connection to these deities. The Mothers must have helped and protected the dedicators in their everyday lives.

B) Celtic epithets: general approach

¹⁶⁵ For more details, see the list below. The references are in *RDG*, pp. 24-26.

¹⁶⁶ *CIL* XIII 8021. The whole inscription is the following: *Matribus sive Matronis Aufanabus Domesticis M. Clodius Marcellinus Mles Leg I M v.s.l.*

¹⁶⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 60, 215: *Casuna* is based on the Celtic root *casu-*, the significance of which is unknown; pp. 127, 226: *Mastonia* is derived from *massa-*, *mast-*, the significance of which is unknown. Delamarre, 2007, p.160 and Delamarre, 2003, pp. 267-268: *Sappiena* from *sap-* 'fir tree', cf. the ancient name of Savoy, which is *Sap-audia*, meaning 'the country of the fir trees'. Delamarre, 2007, pp. 147, 229: his analysis of *Oxia*, derived from *oxi-*, *oxso(n)-*, 'ox, cow' is doubtful. It must come from **ouxi*, 'above, superior'.

¹⁶⁸ *CIL* XII, 2915.

¹⁶⁹ *CIL* XIII, 1760.

¹⁷⁰ *CIL* XIII, 1763.

¹⁷¹ *CIL* XIII, 5370.

¹⁷² *CIL* XII, 1304, 1310; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 190, 235 (*Vassedo*, 'Servant' or 'Submitted'). Delamarre's analysis of *Solimutus* as meaning 'Sight' is doubtful, 2007, pp. 170, 227; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 287, 307. *Sahune* is situated between Nyons and Remuzat, about 30 kilometres from Vaison.

The Mother Goddesses are thus known with a variety of epithets. As we are going to see, it must be borne in mind that many of them are not Celtic but Germanic, while others are undeniably Latin, such as Parcae, Fatae, Junones, Domesticae or Campestris. This is the reason why Christoph Rüger's analysis of the Mothers, in his article entitled 'Beobachtungen zu den epigraphischen Belegen der Muttergottheiten in den lateinischen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum' ['Notes on the Inscriptions dedicated to the Mother Goddesses in the Latin Provinces of the Roman Empire'], published in *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* ['Matronae and related Goddesses'] in 1987, is beyond the scope of this study.¹⁷³ Indeed, he does not distinguish the Latin and Germanic names from the Celtic epithets. Moreover, his list seems to be drawn principally according to the Latin divine epithets rather than the Celtic and Germanic ones. All attributive byname groups taken into account, he classifies the cult of the Mothers into eight categories: geographic deities, for instance the Ambioreneses, Montes and Campestris ; roadway deities, for instance the Triviae and Quadruviae; spring deities, for instance the Nymphae, Fontes and Suleviae; animal deities, for instance the Cervae and Gantunae; ancestral deities, for instance Proxsumae and Veteres;¹⁷⁴ tutelary deities, for instance, Dominae and Virgines; functional deities, for instance Nutrices, Parcae and Medicinae ; and deities whose names are the plural form of a single deity, such as Cereres, Junones and Diania.¹⁷⁵

Classifying deities according to the meaning of their epithets, as did Rüger, is problematic, for the ambiguity of etymological evidence means that a byname can have various etymologies and refer to diverse attributions. Those different possible significations cultivate ambiguity. It also appeals to the supernatural and to the mystic, mysterious and complex nature of deities, who are multi-faceted, for they have the ability to possess various kinds of functions and attributes within a single personality. Furthermore, it is clear that a certain amount of attributive bynames* still remain obscure or hypothetical to the scholar. It is nonetheless possible to establish a broad outline, keeping in mind that an epithet can fall into several categories.

Despite these difficulties of classification, it is clear that some of the goddess bynames are geographic or toponymic*. This means that they refer to a place which they personify and protect. The Matres Glanicae for instance are clearly 'the Mothers of Glanum' and the Matres Nemausicae, 'The Mothers of Nîmes' (see above). In addition, epithets can be ethnonymic*, referring to names of tribes. This means that either the sept* took its name from the goddess they believed in, or they gave their ethnic name to the goddess they held in high respect and esteem. In any case, the goddess is eponymous of the tribe she represents, nourishes and protects. Such is the case of the Matres Treverae, venerated in Birten (Germany), who are 'the Mothers of the Treveri',¹⁷⁶ and the Matronae Vediantiae, honoured in Cimiez (Nice, Alpes-Maritimes), who are 'the Mothers of the Vediantii'.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Rüger, 1987, pp. 1-30.

¹⁷⁴ Despite their Latin name which means 'Kinswomen', the Proxsumae do not seem to be Roman goddesses. Their cult is attested in Gaul only, which tends to prove that they were Celtic goddesses in origin (see below). As for the Veteres, they are not Roman either, for their name is also written Vheteres in the inscriptions, which proves that their name is not related to the Latin adjective *vetus* meaning 'old'. Thus, Veteres does not mean 'the Ancient'. It is actually a Germanic name designating the ram.

¹⁷⁵ Rüger, 1987, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁶ *CIL* XIII, 8634.

¹⁷⁷ *CIL* V, 7872, 7873 ; Barruol, 1999, p. 366. See Chapters 3 and 5 for more details about those goddesses.

Others seem to refer to natural elements, such as the Matronae Dervonnae ('Mothers of the Oak') in Milano and Brescia (Italy),¹⁷⁸ or the Matres Eburnicae ('Mothers of the Yew') in Yvours-sur-le-Rhône (Rhône).¹⁷⁹ Finally, some bynames* tend to be descriptive of what the goddesses incarnate or the functions and attributes they fulfill. For instance, the Matres Mogontiones, venerated in Agonès (Hérault), must have embodied 'Youth', on account of the meaning of their appellation.¹⁸⁰ As for the Matronae Lubicae, honoured in Cologne, they might have personified 'Love' as well as 'Affection' given to the people, for their name is possibly derived from the root **lub-*, **lob-* 'to like', 'to love'. The verbal forms *lubi*, *lubias* and *lubitas*, 'love', 'that you love' and 'loved' are attested on various inscriptions from Gaul (< IE **leubh-*, 'to love', 'to desire'), and Lubos and Lubus are common male proper names in Celti-Iberia.¹⁸¹ Schmidt and Delamarre propose to gloss their name as 'The Loving, Affectionate Mothers' or 'The Endearing Mothers'.¹⁸² Similarly, the Rocloisiabo, 'the Listening Goddesses', honoured in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, have the ability of listening to the prayers of their pilgrims.¹⁸³

The Matres Eburnicae is a good example of the issue of categorization. Their epithet relates to a natural element - the yew tree - and might have come from an ethnonym*, for it refers to the tribe of the Eburones, but this hypothesis implies a linguistic transformation Eburonikā > Eburnikā (see Chapters 2 and 3). Moreover, they might have been the personification of some intoxicating cults attached to yew, as will be shown in Chapter 5.

C) The 'Mothers' in Britain

In Britain, the dedications to the Matres amount to approximately fifty inscriptions, all but a few from military sites, notably along Antonine's and Hadrian's Wall, and dedicated by soldiers. One of the few exceptions is the inscription to the Matres Ollototae, which is from the non-military site of Heronbridge, Cheshire.¹⁸⁴ This suggests that the cult of the Matres and Matronae was brought to Britain by auxiliary troops from the Continent, such as by the Germanic legionaries of the Roman army.¹⁸⁵ However, it does not mean that the Celtic peoples from Britain did not have any cultural notions of the Mother Goddesses, only that some particularities in the worship must have come with the army.

The cult of the Mothers in Britain is clearly Romanized, for they all bear Roman epithets, such as Transmarinae, Campestrae, Domesticae or Fatae,¹⁸⁶ apart from the Matres Ollototae and the Matres Suleviae. The Matres Ollototae are undeniably Celtic,

¹⁷⁸ *CIL* V, 5791, 4208.

¹⁷⁹ There may be a homonymy between the place-name Yvours (**Eburnicum*, 'Place planted with Yew Trees') and the divine epithet Eburnicae. *CIL* XIII, 1765 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46. The inscription was discovered near the wall of the garden of the Castle of Yvourt, near Lyon. It had been re-used* in the wall of the castle.

¹⁸⁰ *AE* 1986, 471. See the section on Mogontia in Chapter 4 for more details.

¹⁸¹ *CIL* XIII, 8220 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 209 indicates that the word 'love' is unknown in insular Celtic.

¹⁸² Schmidt, 1987, pp. 143, 149 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 120, 225.

¹⁸³ *RIG* I, n° G-65. See Chapter 5 for more details.

¹⁸⁴ Bémont, 1981, pp. 67-68 and note 8 ; Biró, 1975, pp. 13-58 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, pp. 463-465 ; *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, pp. 2214-2215 ; Barnard, 1985, p. 242 ; Anwyl, 1906a, pp. 45- 51.

¹⁸⁵ *RGA*, vol. 19, pp. 438-439 ; Daremberg & Saglio, p. 1636 ; Webster, 1986, pp. 63-65 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 289 ; Barnard, 1985, p. 237.

¹⁸⁶ These inscriptions to the Matres Domesticae, Campestrae and Fatae are studied in the last part of this chapter.

for their name is composed of Celtic *ollo-*, 'all' and *teuta, tauta*, 'tribe'.¹⁸⁷ They are thus 'The Mothers of All the Peoples'. They are mentioned in an inscription from Heronbridge (Claverton, Cheshire): *Deabus Matribus Ollototis Iul(ius) Secundus et Aelia Augustina*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Ollototae, Julius Secundus and Aelia Augustina (set this up)',¹⁸⁸ and in three inscriptions from Binchester (Durham): *Deab(us) Matrib(us) O[[l]lot(otis) T[[j]b(erius) Cl(audius) Quintianus b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Ollototae Tiberius Claudius Quintianus beneficiaries of the governor, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow' ; *[M]atrib(us) O[[l]loto(tis)] CARTO VAL MARTI Vetto(num) GENIO LOCI LIT . IXT*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Ollototae ... Cavalry Regiment of Vettonians....' ; *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(axiom) et Matribus Ollototis sive Transmarinis*, 'To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, and to the Ollototae or Overseas Mother Goddesses' (fig. 7).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 414-415 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 241, 295-296 ; Sterckx, 2000, p. 76. For the etymology* of the Ollototae, see *infra*. See also the Matres Mediotautehae.

¹⁸⁸ *RIB 574* is engraved on an altar in red sandstone, discovered in 1931 on the Roman site in Red House Croft, near Heronbridge, beside the Roman road to Wroxeter. On the right side of the altar is engraved a jug, on the left side a patera*.

¹⁸⁹ *RIB 1031; RIB 1032; RIB 1030*.

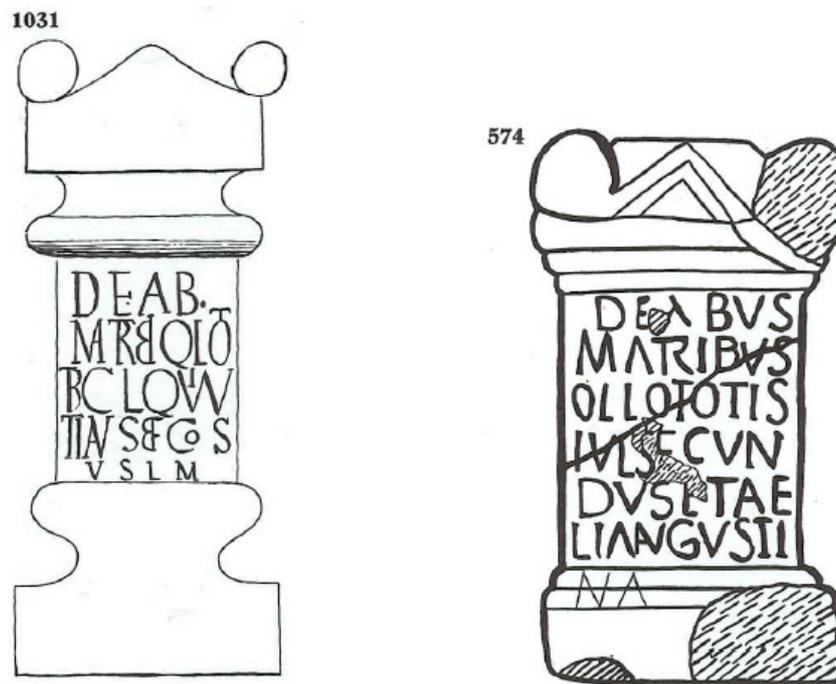


Fig. 7: Three dedications to the Matres Ollototae ('Mother Goddesses of All the Peoples'). RIB 1031, discovered in 1600 and now lost, and RIB 1032, probably seen in 1599 and now lost, were discovered at Binchester (Durham). RIB 574 was found at Heronbridge (Cheshire). In the Grosvenor Museum.

As for the Matres Suleviae, they were venerated in Colchester (Essex): *Matribus Sulevis Similis Atti f(ilius) ci(vis) Cant(ius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Suleviae, Similis, son of Attus, a tribesman of the Cantii, willingly fulfilled his vow', and in Bath: *Sulevis Sulinus scul(p)tor Bruceti f(ilius) sacrum f(ecit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Suleviae Sulinus, a sculptor, son of Brucetus, gladly and deservedly made this offering' (fig. 8).¹⁹⁰ The Matres Suleviae are known from ten other inscriptions discovered in Rome.¹⁹¹ They are also mentioned without the term *Matres* in thirty-nine dedications from Britain, such as at Cirencester (Gloucester), Bath (Somerset) and by conjecture at Binchester Roman Fort (Durham), and from the Continent (Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Romania, France and

¹⁹⁰ RIB 192 is engraved on a green sandstone base, found in 1881 in Colchester, in Balkerne Lane, west of the west wall of Roman Colchester. RIB 151, was discovered in 1753 in Bath on the west side of the lower part of Stall Street.

¹⁹¹ CIL VI, 31140-31142, 31145, 31146, 31148, 31149, 31171, 31174, 31175.

the Netherlands).¹⁹² Contrary to what Olmsted and Green maintain, their epithet is not the plural form of the goddess name Sulis, who is honoured in thirty-nine dedications discovered at the curative hot spring of Bath, called *Aquae Sulis*.¹⁹³ This erroneous etymological association has led to various inaccurate interpretations. For instance, Joan Alcock, who relates the *Suleviae* to Sulis, points out the possible healing abilities of these mother goddesses.¹⁹⁴ While Sulis was certainly a healing goddess, for she was venerated at the thermal spring at Bath and associated with Minerva, the goddess of medicine, there is no evidence that the *Suleviae* performed such a function.¹⁹⁵

According to Delamarre, the theonym Sulis is based on Celtic *suli*, '(good) sight', which is cognate with Old Irish *súil*, 'eye'.¹⁹⁶ It is noteworthy in this context that an oculist stamp* was found on the site, which might tend to prove that the spring of Bath, around which was erected a temple to Sulis-Minerva and a complex of baths, had curative virtues for the eyes.¹⁹⁷ Other scholars derive Celtic *sūli* from the IE root **sāuel-*, *suel-*, 'sun', supporting the view that, in ancient times, the sun was the metaphor of the omniscient eye; a theory which is categorically rejected by Lambert.¹⁹⁸ As regards the name of the *Suleviae*, Léon Fleuriot identifies a prefix *su-*, 'good' and a radical *leu-*, 'to steer', cognate with Old Irish *lúí* and Welsh *llyw*, 'rudder', and Middle Breton *leuyaff*, 'to steer', and proposes to gloss their name as 'Those who steer or lead well'; an etymology* which is accepted by Lambert and Delamarre as the most probable one.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Britain: *RIB* 1035 (Binchester): *Sul[e]vi[s] (?) [ala] Vett[on(um)] CANN v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the *Suleviae* the Cavalry Regiment of Vettonians ... willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow'. This inscription is now lost. It was inscribed on an altar found about 1760 ; *RIB* 105, 106 (Cirencester): *Sule(v)is Sulinus Bruzeti (filius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the *Suleviae*, Sulinus, son of Bruzetus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow' ; *Sulevis [P]rimus [...]*, 'To the *Suleviae*, Primus ...'. The first inscription was found in 1899 in the north-west part of the town with two reliefs* of three *Matres*. The second inscription was discovered in 1902 at the foundry, Cricklade Road, outside the south gate of Cirencester. There are both in Corinium Museum. *RIB* 151 (Bath). See *RDG*, p. 64 to get all the references.

¹⁹³ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 362-363 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 200-202.

¹⁹⁴ Alcock, 1965, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Jayne, 1925, p. 519.

¹⁹⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 287.

¹⁹⁷ Lambert, 1980, p. 176.

¹⁹⁸ Lambert, 1980, p. 175 refuses this derivation and proposes **su-wli-*, with *su-* 'good' and *wel-* 'to see', while Bammesberger, 1982, pp. 155-157 supports the idea that it is linked to the ancient metaphor 'eye-sun' ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 363 derives the names of the goddesses *Sulis* and *Suleviae* from IE **suel* 'sun' ; Green, 1992a, p. 201 says that their name is etymologically linked to the sun ; see Delamarre, 2003, p. 287 and Olmsted, 1994, pp. 362-364 for more details and other examples.

¹⁹⁹ Fleuriot, 1981, p. 105 & 1982, p. 126: *Su-leviae* would be in Modern Welsh **hy-lywydd-*, 'the Ones who steer well' ; Lambert, 2006, p. 55 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 286.



Fig. 8: Left: Altar from Colchester (Essex) dedicated to the Matres Suleviae by a dedicator Celtic Attus. In Colchester Museum. RIB 192. Right: Altar from Aquae Sulis (Bath) to the Suleviae by a Celtic dedicator Sulinus. It is now in the Roman Baths Museum. RIB 151.

In addition to the fact that very few Mothers bear Celtic bynames*, other indications in the epigraphy lend weight to the hypothesis that the cult of the Mothers was imported from the Continent into Britain. The various dedications to the Matres Transmarinae, literally 'the Overseas Mothers', known from Lowther, Plumpton Wall (Cumbria), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Tyne and Wear) and Risingham (Northumberland), illustrate that the worship of the Mothers transcended the seas.²⁰⁰ The Matres Ollototae ('Mothers Of All the Peoples') probably refer to the Mother Goddesses venerated on the Continent, for they are compared to the *Transmarinae* in an inscription from the Roman Fort Binchester (Durham): *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Matribus Ollototis sive Tramarinis Pomponius Donatus, b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) pro salute sua et suorum v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, and to the Mother Goddesses of All the Peoples, or

²⁰⁰ CIL VII, 303, 319, 499, 994 ; Barnard, 1985, pp. 242-243 ; Rüger, 1987, p. 11 ; Fleuriot, 1982, p. 126.

Overseas, Pomponius Donatus, beneficiaries of the governor, for the welfare of himself and his household willingly fulfilled his vow' (fig. 9).²⁰¹ Moreover, other dedications pay homage to Mothers of foreign countries, such as the ones from York, dedicated to the 'African, Italian and Gaulish Mothers', from Winchester to the 'Italian, German, Gaulish and British Mothers' and from the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall to the 'German Mothers'.²⁰²

Finally, it can be noticed that the names of the dedicators are all Latin and those of soldiers,²⁰³ apart from a few, such as the dedicator from Doncaster (Yorkshire), who has names of Celtic origin: *Matribus M(arcus) Nantonius Orbiotal(us) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Mothers, M(arcus) Nantonius Orbiotalus paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 9).²⁰⁴ If his first name Marcus is Latin, his two other names, Nantonius ('Valley') and Orbiotalus ('Forehead-of-Heir'), are Celtic.²⁰⁵ Similarly, in the inscription to the Suleviae from Colchester, the dedicator's father has a Celtic name Attus.²⁰⁶ In the inscription from Bath, the dedicator and his father also bear Celtic names: Sulinus, clearly derived from the goddess name, and Brucetus, the meaning of which is unknown.²⁰⁷ This Sulinus, son of Brucetus, is besides the one who offered a dedication to the Suleviae in Cirencester, which is about fifty kms from Bath.

²⁰¹ RIB 1030 is engraved on an altar, on the right side of which a patera* and a jug are drawn, and on the left side, a knife and an axe. It was discovered in 1891, south of Binchester fort. It is now in the Black Gate.

²⁰² RIB 653 found in 1752 in Micklegate, opposite Holy Trinity Church, York. Now in the Yorkshire Museum: *Mat(ribus) Af(ris) Ita(lis) Ga(llis) M(arcus) Minu(cius) Aude(n)s mil(es) leg(ionis) VI Vic(tricis) guber(nator) leg(ionis) VI v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the African, Italian and Gaulish Mother Goddesses Marcus Minucius Audens, soldier of the Sixth Legion* Victrix and a pilot of the Sixth Legion*, willingly, gladly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow'; RIB 88 was "found in 1854 near the south end of Jewry Street, Winchester, in demolishing a boundary wall of the old county jail." It is now in the British Museum: *Matrib(us) Italis Germanis Gal(lis) Brit(annis) [A]ntonius [Lu]cretianus [b(ene)]f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) rest(ituit)*, 'To the Italian, German, Gaulish, and British Mother Goddesses Antonius Lucretianus, beneficiaries consularis, restored (this)'; RIB 2064 was found "before 1839 at some site presumably at Hadrian's Wall." It is now in the Black Gate: *Ma[tribus] Ger[manis] M(arcus) Senec[ia]nius V[...]*, 'To the German Mother Goddesses Marcus Senecianus V...'.
²⁰³ Bémont, 1981, p. 80.

²⁰⁴ RIB 618 was discovered "in 1781 in digging the cellars for a house in St Sepulchre Gate, which leads southwards from the site of the Roman fort". On the right side of the altar is engraved a jug and on the left side a vase with flowers. It is now in the Yorkshire Museum.

²⁰⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 138, 145, 228 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 232, 243, 288 ; Evans, 1967, p. 107, 238-239, 259-261 (for *Orbiotalus*).

²⁰⁶ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 32, 212. As for the dedicator, he bears a Latin name *Similis*, meaning 'similar', 'like'.

²⁰⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 174, 49: *Bru-cetus* (?), with *bru-* ('eyebrow')? ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 363.

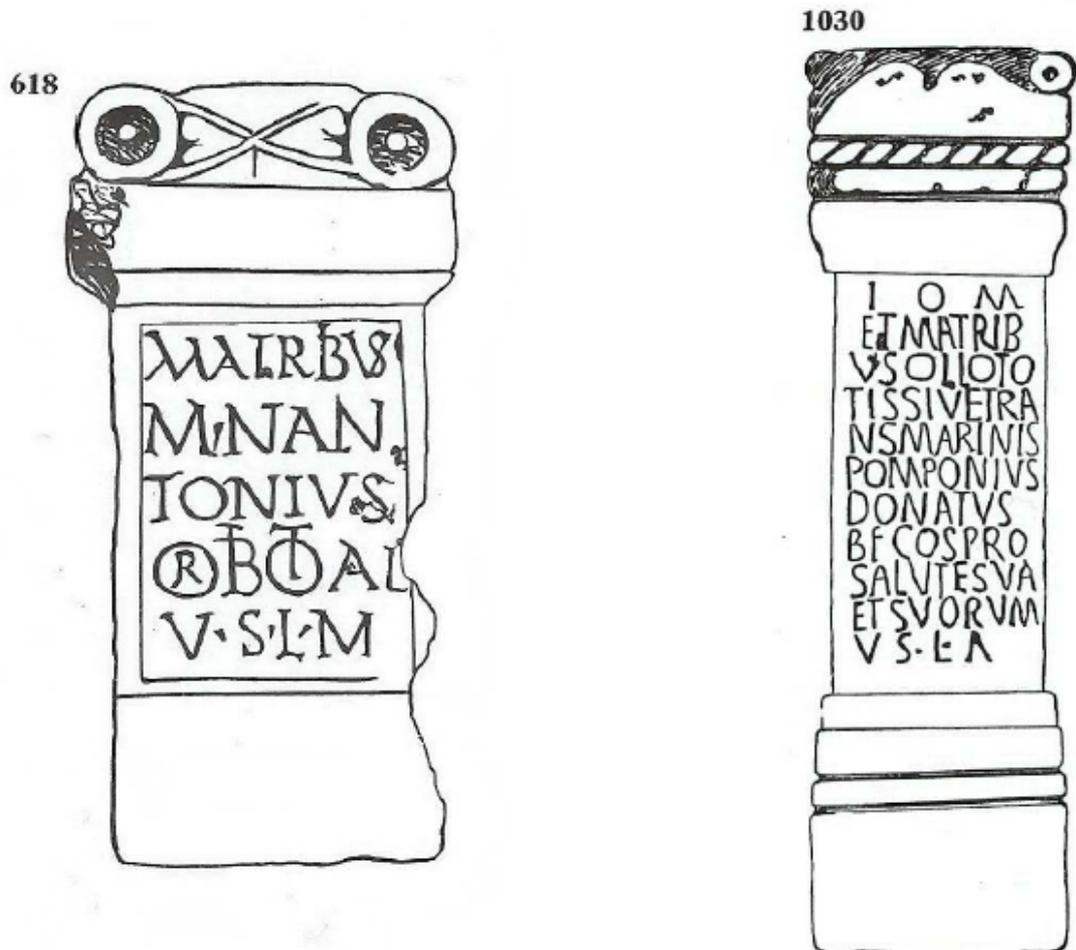


Fig. 9: Left: Inscription to the Matres from Doncaster (Yorkshire). RIB 618. Right: Dedication to the Matres Ollototae sive Transmarinae from Binchester (Durham). RIB 1030.

Therefore, the cult of the Matres in Britain seems to be mostly Romanized and imported. Apart from Ollototae and Suleviae, the Matres' epithets are all Roman and the dedications come from military sites. Moreover, the dedicators are prominently Roman citizens, holding honorary functions or titles, such as Tiberius Claudius Quintianus, who honoured the Ollototae in Binchester, and soldiers in the Roman army. It would appear, however, that pre-Roman worship *did* survive, for epigraphic evidence has been discovered of people of Celtic stock paying homage to Mother Goddesses bearing Celtic bynames*.

III) Germanic and Celto-Germanic Mother Goddesses?

As the Germanic peoples also practiced the cult of the Mothers, it is difficult to determinate, notably when a dedication comes from the Rhineland, whether the Goddesses are of Celtic

or Germanic origin. It is all the more problematic since the Germanic and Celtic sept's* might have had some cults in common and some divinities of mixed character.

A) A list of Goddesses bearing Germanic epithets

According to the etymology* of the epithets, some Mothers are definitely Celtic, while others are undeniably Germanic. Siegfried Gutenbrunner and Günter Neumann, who have listed and studied the various etymologies of the Germanic bynames* of Mother Goddesses, point out that the divine names ending in *-henae*, *-ehae*, *-nehae*, *-eihae*, *-ahae*, *-ehiae*, *-anehae*, *-inehae*, *-ahenae* are undoubtedly Germanic.²⁰⁸ Kern, Anwyl and Spickermann note that the intervocalic 'h' is typical of the Mother Goddess names found in Germanic areas.²⁰⁹ Thus, the Matres Almahae, honoured in Plan-d'Aups-Sainte-Baume (Var), must be Germanic, although they are venerated in France and associated with the Celtic term Matres.²¹⁰ It must be also the case of the Aldemehensae venerated in Rognes (Bouches du Rhône).²¹¹ The existence of inscriptions dedicated to goddesses bearing a Germanic name in Gaul or in Britain can be explained by shifts in population or by the settling of Germanic contingents of the Roman army in those areas.

Below is a list of the various divine names which are regarded as Germanic. This exhaustive list is worth mentioning, for too many goddesses are often claimed to be Celtic - such as in Jüfer's *Répertoire des dieux gaulois* - whereas they are definitely not: the Matronae Afliae or Aflims, venerated in Cologne and Wesseling,²¹² the Matronae Ahinehaein Blankenheim,²¹³ the Ahreccanae in Cologne²¹⁴ (who are probably the same as the Ahueccanae in Gleuel),²¹⁵ the Matronae or Nymphae Alaferhuiae in Dormagen, Bonn, Patteren and Altdorf,²¹⁶ the Matronae Albiahenaein Ober-Elvenich,²¹⁷ the Matronae Alhiahenaein Neidenstein,²¹⁸ the Matronae Almaviahenae in Thorr,²¹⁹ the Matronae Alusneihaein Derichweiler and Inden-Pier,²²⁰ the Matronae Amartninehaein Bonn,²²¹ the

²⁰⁸ Gutenbrunner, 1936, p. 122 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 106 ; Rüger, 1987, p. 25 ; Ihm, 1887 ; Burns, 1994.

²⁰⁹ Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 154-156 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 30 ; Spickermann, 2002, p. 147.

²¹⁰ *CIL* XII, 330. The Almahae are sometimes said to be the eponymous goddesses of the toponym* *Aulps*, see *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, p. 2244.

²¹¹ *AE* 1891, 42.

²¹² *CIL* XIII, 8211 (*Matronis Aflibus*), 8157 (*Matronis Aflims*). Boyer, 1995, p. 64 suggests that their name means 'the Mothers who reinforce', but he does not explain this etymology* ; Neumann, in *RGA*, p. 439, proposes 'The Vigorous Ones', from Anglo-Saxon *afof* 'strength'.

²¹³ *CIL* XIII, 8845.

²¹⁴ *AE* 1981, 672 (*Ahrec]cani[bus]*).

²¹⁵ *CIL* XIII, 8161.

²¹⁶ *AE* 1926, 66 (in Dormagen) ; *AE* 1984, 670, 674, 676, 677, 678, 680, 681, 682, 685, 686, 689, 692 (in Bonn) ; *CIL* XIII, 7862 (in Patteren), 12012 (in Altdorf) ; Matronae Alaferhuiae Amfratninehae: *AE* 1984, 691 (in Bonn).

²¹⁷ *CIL* XIII, 7933, 7934, 7935, 7936.

²¹⁸ *CIL* XIII, 6387 ; see Neumann, 1987, pp. 121-122 for an etymology* of their name.

²¹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 12065.

²²⁰ *NL* 194 ; *AE* 1977, 549 ; see Neumann, 1987, p. 124 for an etymology* of their name.

²²¹ *AE* 1984, 690.

Amfratninehae in Bonn,²²² the Matronae Amnesahenaein Thorr,²²³ the Matres Annaneptae in Xanten,²²⁴ the Matres or Matronae Andrustehiae in Cologne, Bonn and Godesberg,²²⁵ the Matronae Anesaminehae in Zülpich,²²⁶ the Aserecinehae in Odendorf-Rheinbach and Odenhausen,²²⁷ the Atufrafinehae in Berkum,²²⁸ the Matronae Audrinehaein Hermülheim,²²⁹ the Matronae or Matres Aufaniaein Germany: Bonn (39), Cologne (8), Nettersheim (13), Commern (1), lülich (1), Mainz (1), Zülpich (3), Pommern (1), Bürgel (1), Xanten (1), in the Netherlands: Nimwegen (1), in France: Lyons (1) and in Spain: Carmona (1),²³⁰ the Matres Aumenahenaein Cologne,²³¹ the Austriahenae / Austriatum in Morken-Harff and Bonn,²³² the Matronae Authrinehaein Hermülheim,²³³ the Aviaitinehae in Bürgel,²³⁴ the Matronae Axsinginehaein Cologne,²³⁵ the Cantrusteihae in Rheydt, Tetz and Hoeilaart,²³⁶ the Matronae Channinae or Chu(c)henehae in Merzenich and Zülpich,²³⁷ the Matronae Etrahenaein Roedingen, Pesch, Bettenhofen,²³⁸ the Matronae Fachineaein Zingsheim and Euskirchen,²³⁹ the Matronae Fernovinehae in Meckenheim and Cologne,²⁴⁰ the Matres Frisavaein Wissen,²⁴¹ the Ghandrumanehae in Billig,²⁴² the Matronae Hamaheviae

²²² AE 1984, 671, 672, 675, 679, 683, 687, 688 ; see Neumann, 1987, pp. 124-125 for an etymology* of their name.

²²³ CIL XIII, 12066.

²²⁴ CIL XIII, 8629 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 125 thinks they are Germanic goddesses.

²²⁵ AE 1981, 669 ; AE 1956, 245 ; CIL XIII, 8212 ; AE 1931, 23 ; CIL XIII, 7995.

²²⁶ CIL XIII, 7926 ; see Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 166-167 for an etymology* of their name.

²²⁷ CIL XIII, 7978, 7979, 7981 ; for an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, pp. 125-126.

²²⁸ CIL XIII, 7984-7989 ; for an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, pp. 123-124.

²²⁹ F. 282, 283, 284, 286 ; AE 1928, 20.

²³⁰ For the references, see *RDG*, pp. 24-25. The inscription in Lyons: CIL XIII, 1766. For a comprehensive study of these goddesses, see Cramer, Franz, 'Diatronae Aufaniae', in *Römisch-germanische Studien, gesammelte Beiträge zur Römisch-Germanischen Altertumskunde*, Breslau, F. Hirt, 1914, pp. 171 ff ; Rüger, 1983, pp. 210-221 ; Green, 1992a, p. 146 puts forward that the Aufaniae are Celto-Germanic deities, which is very unlikely, for their name is not Celtic but Germanic, see Neumann, 1987, pp. 114-115 ; Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 164-166.

²³¹ CIL XIII, 12054, 8215.

²³² AE 1962, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106 ; *ILB*, G, 9 i, j, l, m, n, o, p. For more information, see Weisgerber, Leo, 'Der Dedikantenkreis der Matronae Austriahenae', in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, vol. 162, 1962, pp. 107-138.

²³³ F. 285, 281.

²³⁴ CIL XIII, 8531 ; see Neumann, 1987, p. 121 for an etymology* of their name.

²³⁵ CIL XIII, 8216 ; see Neumann, 1987, p. 113 for an etymology* of their name.

²³⁶ AE 1968, 327 ; CIL XIII, 7880, 3585. For more information, see Chuermans, Henri, *Les Matronae Cantrusteihiae*, Bulletin des Commissions royales d'art et d'archéologie, Belgium, 1870.

²³⁷ AE 1945, 5 ; CIL XIII, 12008, 12009 ; CIL XIII, 7923, 7924 ; for an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, p. 114.

²³⁸ CIL XIII, 7890 ; AE 1968, 934 ; CIL XIII, 7895 ; see Neumann, 1987, pp. 115-116 for an etymology* of their name.

²³⁹ AE 1977, 563a and 563b, CIL XIII, 7829, 7830, 7970. For an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, pp. 118-119.

²⁴⁰ CIL XIII, 7980 ; AE 1956, 246. For an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, p. 118.

²⁴¹ CIL XIII, 8633.

²⁴² CIL XIII, 7968 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 104 confirms that they are Germanic goddesses.

in Altdorf,²⁴³ the Matronae Hiherapaein Enzen,²⁴⁴ the Matronae [...]illoruhanehae in Euskirchen,²⁴⁵ the Matronae Iulineihiae in Müntz,²⁴⁶ the Matres Kannanef(ates) in Cologne,²⁴⁷ the Matronae Lanehiaein Lechenich,²⁴⁸ the Matronae Mahalinae or Mahlinehae in Deutz, Cologne and Benzlath,²⁴⁹ the Matres Marsacae in Xanten (?),²⁵⁰ the Matronae Nait[i]enae in Thorr (?),²⁵¹ the Matronae Ratheih(i)aein Euskirchen,²⁵² the Matronae Renahenaein Bonn,²⁵³ the Matronae Romanehae / Rumanehae in Lovenessen, Bonn, Jülich, Uellekoven, Rommers-Kirchen, Weilerswist,²⁵⁴ the Matronae Saithamiae or Saithamiaein Hoven,²⁵⁵ the Matres Suebae [...]euthungae or Sidinae in Cologne and Deutz,²⁵⁶ the Matronae Teniavehaein Blankenheim,²⁵⁷ the Matronae Textumeihae (Ambiamarcae) in Floisdorf, Soller and Boich,²⁵⁸ the Matronae Tummaestiae in Sinzenich,²⁵⁹ the Matronae Turstuahenae in Düren and Vettweis,²⁶⁰ the Matronae Udravarinehaein Cologne and the Udovarineae in Vellekoven and Thorr,²⁶¹ the Matronae Ulahinehaein Zülpich,²⁶² the Matres or Matronae Vacallinehae (Leudinae) in Antweiler (3), Pesch (38), Aachen (1), Lessenich (3), Eendenich (1), Iversheim (2), Jülich (1) and Saltzvey (1),²⁶³ the Matronae Vallamaeneihiae in Cologne,²⁶⁴ the Vanamianehae in Thorr,²⁶⁵ the

²⁴³ *CIL* XIII, 7864.

²⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 7900.

²⁴⁵ *AE* 1977, 562.

²⁴⁶ *CIL* XIII, 7882.

²⁴⁷ *CIL* XIII, 8219.

²⁴⁸ *CIL* XIII, 7976.

²⁴⁹ *CIL* XIII, 8492, 8221 ; *AE* 1935, 101.

²⁵⁰ *CIL* XIII, 8630, 8632.

²⁵¹ *CIL* XIII, 12068.

²⁵² *CIL* XIII, 7972. For an etymology* of their name, see Neumann, 1987, p. 121.

²⁵³ *NL* 200.

²⁵⁴ *CIL* XIII, 7973, 8028, 7869, 8149 ; *AE* 1977, 574, 561 ; see Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 167-168 for an etymology* of their name, which would mean 'the Mothers of the Romans'.

²⁵⁵ *CIL* XIII, 7915, 7916.

²⁵⁶ *CIL* XIII, 8224, 8497, 8225 ; *AE* 1984, 655.

²⁵⁷ *CIL* XIII, 8847 ; see Neumann, 1987, p. 126 for an etymology* of their name.

²⁵⁸ *CIL* XIII, 7899, 7849 ; *AE* 1968, 324.

²⁵⁹ *CIL* XIII, 7902 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 186 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 115 (see below).

²⁶⁰ *AE* 1977, 548 ; *NL* 193 ; see Neumann, 1987, pp. 116-117 for an etymology* of their name.

²⁶¹ *CIL* XIII, 8229, 8147, 12069.

²⁶² *CIL* XIII, 7932.

²⁶³ There are forty-nine inscriptions dedicated to these Mother Goddesses, see *RDG*, pp. 68-69 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 146-147 ; Lehner, Hans, *Der Tempelbezirk der Matronae Vacallinehae bei Pesch*, Bonn, Universitäts-Buchdruckerei und Verlag, Carl Georgi, 1919.

²⁶⁴ *CIL* XIII, 8228.

²⁶⁵ *CIL* XIII, 12069.

Matronae Vanginehae in Erfstadt Friesheim,²⁶⁶ the Matronae Vataranehae, Veteranehae or Veterahenae in Embken (9), Nideggen-Abenden (9), Rommerskirchen (1) and Wollersheim (3),²⁶⁷ the Matres Vapthiaefound in the Rhine,²⁶⁸ the Matronae Vatviae Berhliahenae Nersihenae in Hasselsweiler, Gusten, Lipp, Roedingen, lülich and Morken-Harff,²⁶⁹ the Matronae Vesuniahenae in Vettweis and Zülpich,²⁷⁰ the Matronae Vocallinehae in Pesch²⁷¹ and the Xulsigae in Trier.²⁷²

It is also important to point out that some single goddesses can be seen to be not Celtic, on account of the composition of their name. Such is the case of the goddess Travalalhea honoured in Cologne,²⁷³ Vagdavercusta venerated in Brescia (Italy), Adony (Hungary), Cologne, Rindern, Monterberg (Germany) and Hemmen (Netherlands),²⁷⁴ Vidasolithana in Topusko (Croatia)²⁷⁵ and Viradecdis / Viradecthis / Virathethis / Virodacthis in Vechten (Netherlands), Birrens (GB), Strée-lez-Huy (Belgium) and Mainz (Germany).²⁷⁶

B) Some indications on the meaning of the Germanic epithets

The study of those Germanic goddesses is beyond the scope of this study, which is why we will not analyse and comment on the significance of their names but merely give here an overall view of the matter. Neumann, who bases his work on Jan De Vries's, Julius Pokorny's, Kern's and Gutenbrunner's previous studies, proposes a comprehensive analysis of the etymologies of those Germanic goddess names.²⁷⁷ The epigraphic references to the goddesses are given in the above list.

First of all, it appears that some Germanic divine titles refer to the landscape or to the functions fulfilled by the Mother-Goddesses. The Matronae Chuchenehae / Cuchenehae might for instance personify the 'Hill', their name being derived from Germanic **hauha*, 'high'.²⁷⁸ The famous Matronae or Matres Aufaniae should be understood as **au-fanja-* (> **au-fani-*), i.e. 'Isolated Boogey Land' or 'Remote Swamp', with Germanic **fanja* 'swamp',

²⁶⁶ AE 1984, 669 ; see Neumann, 1987, p. 116 for an etymology* of their name.

²⁶⁷ Twenty-one inscriptions are dedicated to these Mother Goddesses, cf. *RDG*, pp. 69-71.

²⁶⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8841.

²⁶⁹ *CIL* XIII, 7861a, 7884, 8510, 7891, 7893, 7892, 7883 ; *NL* 232-236 ; Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 174-177 would translate Vatviae by 'guardian, protectress', from Gothic *vathro*, 'guard' and Nersihenae would refer to a name of place, deriving from the name of the river Niers. The Matronae Vatviae Nersihenaewould thus be 'the Guardian Mothers of (a place called N.)'.

²⁷⁰ *NL* 192 ; *CIL* XIII, 7850-7854, 7925.

²⁷¹ *CIL* XIII, 12022, 12029 ; AE 1968, 341, 351, 357.

²⁷² AE 1924, 16.

²⁷³ *RSK* 114.

²⁷⁴ AE 1952, 138, 1935, 163 ; *CIL* XIII, 12057, 8702, 8703, 8662, 8805.

²⁷⁵ *CIL* III, 3941.

²⁷⁶ *CIL* XIII, 8815 ; *RIB* 2108 ; AE 1968, 311 ; *CIL* XIII, 11944, 6761.

²⁷⁷ Neumann, 1987, pp. 103-132 ; *RGA*, vol. 19, pp. 438-440 ; De Vries, 1931, pp. 85-125 ; De Vries, 1957 ; Pokorny, 1959-1969 ; Gutenbrunner, 1936 ; Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 153-177. See also Herz, 1989, pp. 206-218.

²⁷⁸ Neumann, 1987, p. 114.

'marsh', corresponding to Gothic *fani*, 'mud'.²⁷⁹ As for the Vanginehae, their name may come from the root **wanga-*, 'countryside', 'field', 'meadow' and thus be in close relation with the landscape.²⁸⁰

Moreover, some epithets are hydronyms*, such as that of the Matres Aumenahenae, which corresponds to the river Oumena, today Aumenau, flowing by the city of Aumenau (Hesse, Germany).²⁸¹ The Matronae Cuchenehae also bear a close relation to the river Kocher, in Old High German Cochana, situated in the north-eastern part of Baden-Württemberg (Germany).²⁸² As for the Matronae Etrahenae, their name might be derived from Germanic **aitrah*, 'water which becomes swollen', that is 'river in spate',²⁸³ and the Vataranehae, Veteranehae, Veterahenae from the Germanic **watar*, 'water'.²⁸⁴

Other divine bynames* are ethnonyms*. An example is that of the Matronae Hamavehae, who are etymologically linked to the Chamavi, a Germanic people settled along the North bank of the Lower Rhine – this region, which is nowadays Hamaland, was called after them.²⁸⁵ Similarly, the Matres Kannanefates are the Mothers of the Germanic tribe of the Cananefates, Canninefates, Caninefates, or Canenefatae, who inhabited the western part of the Batavian Island – now the western part of the Netherlands.²⁸⁶ The Matronae Vanginehae and the Matres Vagionae, who are honoured in Neidernberg,²⁸⁷ are etymologically related to the Vangiones, who inhabited today northern Alsace (France), while the Matres Suebae are eponymous of the sept* of the Suebi, settled along the Rhine and later in the region of today's Alsace.²⁸⁸ The Matres Frisavae are eponymous of the sept* of the Frisii or Frisiavi, living in some parts of the coast of the Netherlands and Germany,²⁸⁹ and the Matres / Matronae Cantrustehiae (Andrustehiae) are related to the Condrusi, who were probably located in the region named after them, Condruz, situated between Liège and Namur (Belgium).²⁹⁰

Finally, some epithets are toponymic*, because they refer to place-names, such as the Matronae Albiahenae, who could be understood as 'the Mothers of Albinicum', now Elvenich,²⁹¹ the Matronae Iulinehiae, 'the Mothers of Iuliacum', now Jülich,²⁹² the

²⁷⁹ Neumann, 1987, pp. 114-115 ; Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 164-166 translates their name 'Lady', 'Nymph', i.e. 'Lady of the area or Lady of the river', cf. Germanic *fani*, *feni*, 'Valkyrie, fairy, nymph'.

²⁸⁰ Neumann, 1987, p. 116 ; RGA, vol. 19, p. 439. Their name is to be related to the toponym* Wangen in Allgäu, which is located in the south-west of the district of Souabe, in Baviera (Germany).

²⁸¹ Neumann, 1987, p. 110.

²⁸² Neumann, 1987, p. 114. The river Kocher is a 182 kms long right tributary of the Neckar.

²⁸³ Spickermann, 2005, p. 145 ; Neumann, 1987, pp. 108, 115-116.

²⁸⁴ Neumann, in RGA, vol. 19, p. 439 ; but Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 168-169 proposes 'Hospitality'.

²⁸⁵ Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; RGA, vol. 19, p. 439.

²⁸⁶ RGA, vol. 19, p. 439 ; Tacitus, *The Histories*, Book IV, written around 100-110 AD.

²⁸⁷ *AE* 1967, 338.

²⁸⁸ Neumann, 1987, pp. 111, 116 ; De Vries, 1931, p. 98 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 425.

²⁸⁹ Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; RGA, vol. 19, p. 439 ; Spickermann, 2002, p. 147 ; Specht, 1937, p. 6 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 425.

²⁹⁰ Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, II, 4.

²⁹¹ *CIL* XIII, 7933, 7934, 7935, 7936 ; *Roscher*, vol. II-2 col. 2466 ; *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, p. 2244.

²⁹² *CIL* XIII, 7882 ; see Spickermann, 2005, p. 130 ; Spickermann, 2002, p. 147 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 425 ; De Vries, 1931,

Matronae Lanehiaie, 'the Mothers of Lechenich',²⁹³ the Matronae (Vatiae) Nersihenae, 'the Mothers of Nersiceniacum', now Neersen,²⁹⁴ and the Matronae Mahlinehae, 'the Mothers of Mecheln' (Antwerp, Belgium).²⁹⁵

Therefore, one can notice that the Germanic Mother Goddesses have epithets, which, exactly like the Celtic Mother Goddesses, are descriptive of their functions or refer to the landscape, rivers (hydronyms*), peoples (ethnonyms*) and places (toponyms*), which they embody, protect and rule.

C) Celto-Germanic Goddesses?

It is sometimes difficult to determine the origin and character of some goddesses, who could be either Celtic or Germanic. In certain cases, the attributive bynames* indeed confront us with a problem, for they seem to combine Celtic and Germanic words or derivations.²⁹⁶ This is what Schmidt and Spickermann call 'hybrids', that is words with mixed etymologies, or 'keltisch-germanische Mischkomposita', that is Celtic-Germanic compound words.²⁹⁷ In Lower Germany, for instance, Spickermann counts twenty-two purely Celtic epithets, eighteen 'Mischkomposita' plus fourteen unclear 'hybrids'.²⁹⁸ Are these Mother Goddesses to be regarded as Celtic, Germanic deities or Celto-Germanic on account of their seemingly ambivalent character, mirrored in the mixed etymology* of their names?

1) Celtic root + Germanic adjectival suffix *-henae*

The name of the Matronae Berguiahenae, for instance, which appears on various inscriptions from Gereonsweiler, Bonn and Tetz (Germany),²⁹⁹ seems at first sight to be Germanic because of the Germanized suffix *-henae*. And yet, one can notice that their name can be related to the Celtic word *bergo-*, signifying 'hill', derived from IE **bherǵh*, 'high'.³⁰⁰ They are thus etymologically linked to Celtic Bergonia ('Mount'), honoured in Viens (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), and Bergusia ('Mount') in Mont-Auxois (Côte d'Or).³⁰¹ According to Patrizia De Bernardo Stempel, their name, possibly 'Those who belong to the Height', is therefore a Celtic theonym* with a Germanic variant.³⁰² Nonetheless, it should

²⁹³ CIL XIII, 7976 ; *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, p. 2244.

²⁹⁴ CIL XIII, 7883 ; *Roscher*, vol. II-2 col. 2466.

²⁹⁵ CIL XIII, 8492, 8221, AE 1935, 101 ; *Roscher*, vol. II-2 col. 2466.

²⁹⁶ Scherer, 1955, pp. 199-210.

²⁹⁷ Schmidt, 1987, pp. 141-149 ; Spickermann, 2005, pp. 142-146.

²⁹⁸ Spickermann, 2005, p. 131.

²⁹⁹ CIL XIII, 12013 (=AE 1907, 101): *Matronis Berhuiahenis Q Acilius Verus dec(urio) c(oloniae) C(laudiae) A(ugustae) A(grippinensis)* ; CIL XIII, 12014 (= AE 1907, 102) probably dates from around 200 AD: *Berguiahenis i(ussu) M(atronarum) M(arcus) ? Severinius* ; AE 1984, 694 dates from the end of the 2nd c. or the beginning of the 3rd c.: *Matronis Berguiahenis [...]* ; CIL XIII, 7878: *[Matronis Ber]guineh[i]s Grati[ni]us Victor et Grati[ni]e Alanis [...]*. In AE 1984, 694, p. 199, it is said that they are probably the same deities as the *Vatviae Berhliahenae*, venerated in Morken-Harff (Germany), see NL 236.

³⁰⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 73 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 213 is not sure about the composition of *Bergu-iahenae* (?) ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 142.

³⁰¹ CIL XII, 1067 ; CIL XIII, 11247. See Chapter 2 for details on those goddesses.

³⁰² De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 142.

not be forgotten that the IE root **bherǵh* gave the word 'hill' or 'mountain' in Germanic too: **bergaz*, in Modern German *Berg*, 'mountain'.³⁰³ From this, it follows that the Matronae Berguiahenaere probably more Germanic than Celtic, all the more so as their name ends in *-henae*.

The epithet of the Matronae Albiahenae, honoured in Ober-Elvenich,³⁰⁴ is also a 'Mischkomposita', for Albia-henae is composed of a Germanized suffix *-henae* and of a Celtic word *alb-*, *albio-*, *albo-* signifying 'world (from the above)', 'bright world', 'celestial', derived from IE **albho-*, 'white' and cognate with Welsh *elfydd*, 'world'.³⁰⁵ This word is the opposite of *dubno-* > *dumno-*, 'deep, from below, dark', 'World from down below', that is 'the Underworld, the Otherworld', present in the Welsh compound *Annwfn*, 'Other World'.³⁰⁶ In Gaul, three deities have similar names: Albius ('Of this World') in Aignay-le-Duc (Côte d'Or),³⁰⁷ Albiorix ('King of this World') in Mont-Genèvre (Hautes-Alpes), Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse) and Montsalier (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence)³⁰⁸, and Albiorica ('Queen of the World') in Saint-Saturnin d'Apt (Vaucluse).³⁰⁹ De Bernardo Stempel glosses the Albiahenae as 'Those who belong to the Earthly World'.³¹⁰ As far as Neumann is concerned, he thinks that their epithet is a Germanic hydronym* reflected in the name of the river Elbe, which rises in the northern Czech Republic and flows to the North Sea (Central Europe).³¹¹ We also saw that their epithet may be a toponym* referring to the town of Albinicum (Elvenich, Germany).

The same problem is again encountered in the name of the Matres Mediotautehae, venerated in Cologne (Germany): *Matribus Mediotautehi[s] lul(ius) Primus vet(e)ranus leg(ionis) I M(inerviae) P(iae) F(idelis) vslm.*³¹² Olmsted suggests these are Germanic deities, because of the inflexion *-ehae*.³¹³ However, the first element *medio-*, 'central, middle' is known in Celtic.³¹⁴ In addition, it is possible to recognize in the second element the Celtic word *touta*, *teuta* meaning 'tribe' or 'people', cognate with Old Irish *tuath*, Middle Welsh *tut*, 'tribe', 'people', Welsh *tûd*, 'country', Breton *tud*, 'the people', all coming from IE **teutā*, 'tribe', 'people'.³¹⁵ This word is found again in the names of the Gaulish gods Toutatis /

³⁰³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 73.

³⁰⁴ *CIL* XIII, 7933, 7934, 7935, 7936.

³⁰⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 37-38 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 16, 210 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 145 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 417 ; Hamp, 1992, pp. 87-89 ; Meid, 1990, pp. 435-439.

³⁰⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 151 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 220 ; see Lambert, 1995, pp. 171-172: the word *antumnos* ('Other World') appears on the 'Plomb du Larzac'.

³⁰⁷ *CIL* XIII, 11233. *Albius* is partnered with the goddess *Damona*, see Chapter 4.

³⁰⁸ *AE* 1945, 105b, c, d and 106 (Mont Genèvre) ; *CIL* XII, 1300 (Vaison-la-Romaine) ; *AE* 1990, 710 (Montsalier).

³⁰⁹ *CIL* XII, 1060. See Chapter 3 for more details on this goddess.

³¹⁰ De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 142.

³¹¹ Neumann, 1987, p. 110.

³¹² *CIL* XIII, 8222.

³¹³ Olmsted, 1994, p. 417.

³¹⁴ Delamarre, 2003, p. 222 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 226. See the name of the tribe of the Mediomatrici, which means either 'Those who live in the Middle of the Rivers' or possibly 'Those of the Median Mothers' (**medio-māteres*).

³¹⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 234 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 295-296 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 266-269.

Teutates (Mars),³¹⁶ Toutenus (Mercurius),³¹⁷ Teutanus (IOM),³¹⁸ who are 'The One (God) of the Tribe' and in Toutiorix (Apollo), 'The King of the Tribe'.³¹⁹ In addition, the Matres Ollototae, studied above, honoured in Binchester and Heronbridge (Britain), are 'The Mothers of All the Peoples'. One can also notice that the Irish gods are called the Tuatha Dé Danann, that is 'the Tribe of the Goddess Danu'.³²⁰ The form *tautehae* is equivalent to Celtic **toutiko-*. Indeed, Neumann specifies that the diphthong /au/ is Germanic and is equivalent to Celtic /ou/.³²¹ As for Olmsted, he advocates that, if the *-h-* in the inflexion *-ehae* has the value of *-x-*, it would indicate that the name was originally Celtic, with an ending in *-ica*, *-eca* (**Mediotoutica*), and actually underwent a Germanic influence later on.³²² The name of the semi-Celtic, semi-Germanic Matres Mediotautehae can be glossed as 'The Mothers of the Middle Tribe or 'of the Central Country'.³²³

Similarly, the Matronae Gesahenae, honoured in Roedingen, Bettenhofen, Deutz and Cologne (Germany), seem to be at first sight Germanic.³²⁴ Neuman proposes to link their name to the Germanic verb *geisa*, meaning 'to rage', 'to storm', 'to charge at', 'to attack', 'to assault'.³²⁵ Yet, Schmidt and Delamarre list them among the Celtic goddesses, relating the first part of their name *gesa-* to Celtic *gaiso-*, *gaeso-* > *geso-*, meaning 'spear', 'javelin', cognate with Old Irish *gae*, genitive *ga*, 'spear', *fo-gha*, 'dart', 'javelin', Welsh *gwayw*, Old Breton *guugoiuou*, 'spear', 'javelin'.³²⁶ The Matronae Gesahenae are etymologically linked to the Matronae Gesationum, venerated in an inscription from lülich (Germany),³²⁷ and to the Gaulish tribe of the Gaesati ('Armed with Spears' or 'Lancers'), who were settled along the Rhône.³²⁸

³¹⁶ In England: *RIB* 1017 (Cumbria) ; *AE* 1994, 1120 (Great Walsingham) ; *RIB* II, 3 / 2422.38 (unknown), 8 / 2503.131 (Kelvedon), 3 / 2422.36, 37 (Lincoln), 3/ 2422.39 (Thetford), 3 / 2422.40 (Willoughby-on-the-Wolds) ; *RIB* 219 (Barkway) and in Austria: *CIL* III, 5320 (Seckau), in Italy: Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, 528 (*Toutatis Medurinis*: Rome) ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 295 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 328-329 ; Lajoie, 2008, pp. 63-68 ; Vendryes, Joseph, in *RC*, 40, 1923, p. 175.

³¹⁷ *AE* 1927, 70 (Bingen) ; *CIL* XIII, 6122 (Hohenburg) ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 328-329.

³¹⁸ *IOM* = *I(iovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)* ; In Hungary: *CIL* III, 10418 (Alt-Ofen) ; *AE* 1991, 1324 (Bölcske) ; *AE* 1965, 349 (Obuda).

³¹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 7564 (Wiesbaden, Germany) ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 260-261, 295 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 230, 234 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 128 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 266-269, 286-288 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 393 and Sterckx, 1996, pp. 40-41 would see another etymology* and gloss his name as 'The King of Healers'.

³²⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 478-481.

³²¹ *RGA*, vol. 19, p. 439.

³²² Olmsted, 1994, p. 417.

³²³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 222 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 424.

³²⁴ *CIL* XIII, 7889, 7890, 7895, 8491, 8496 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 415 suggests that they are Germanic and could have been the protective Mothers of an unrecorded tribe called the Gesationes.

³²⁵ Neumann, 1987, p. 116.

³²⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 174 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 103, 222 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 148.

³²⁷ Gutenbrunner, 1936, p. 190 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 148 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 143 ; *AE* 1967, 344: *Matronis Gesationum lul(ia) Ver[?] f(ilia) Attia vslm*. The name *Attia* is Celtic, see Delamarre, 2007, p. 32, but the significance is unknown.

³²⁸ Rüger, 1987, p. 30 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 174, cf. the proper names *Udlu-gesus* ('Magical Spear'), *Mero-gaisus* ('Crazy Spear'), etc ; Lacroix, 2003, pp. 73-74 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 631, 638 ; Polybus, *Histories*, II, 22 ; Tacitus, *The Histories*, I, 4 ; Plutarch, *The Life of Marcellus*, III, 2 ; Barroul, 1999, pp. 305-307.

From all of this, it follows that the origin of some mother-goddesses' divine epithets confronts us with a problem. Indeed, it is possible to link the first element of those bynames* to the Celtic language, while the adjectival suffix *-henae* is clearly Germanic. On the one hand, such epithets could be understood as Celtic theonyms including a Germanic element or variant. This would mean that the original Celtic name underwent a transformation or a change when confronted with Germanic peoples and it would imply that those goddess names are Celtic in origin.³²⁹ On the other hand, it might be that some Celtic names are borrowed from Germanic. For instance, regarding the *Matronae Gesahenae*, Oswald Szemerényi suggests that the Celtic word **gaisos* may have been borrowed from Germanic, on account of its vowel pattern.³³⁰ This would indicate that those goddesses were probably more Germanic in origin than Celtic.

2) Goddess names in *gab-*

Divine names comprising the root *gab-*, such as *Gabiae*, *Gabinae*, *Garmangabis*, *Alagabiae* and *Ollogabiae*, are the most striking examples of the difficulty in determining the origin of some Mother Goddesses. The theme *gab-* exists both in Celtic and Germanic languages, but with a significant difference in meaning. In Germanic indeed *gab-*, which is identical with Old Norse *gefa* and German *geben*, 'to give', means 'to give', 'to offer', while in Celtic *gab-* is related to Old Irish *gaibim*, 'I take', *gaibid*, 'he takes', and Welsh *gafael*, 'to hold' and thus signifies 'to take'.³³¹

Therefore, one can wonder whether the *Junones* or *Matronae Gabiae*, venerated in Müddersheim, Rövenich, Cologne, Kirchheim, Rohr, Xanten and lüllich (Germany),³³² the *Gabinae* honoured in Bornheim (Germany),³³³ the *Matronae Alagabiae* in Buerger (Germany),³³⁴ the *Ollogabiae* in Castell and Mainz (Germany)³³⁵ and the goddess *Garmangabis*, mentioned in an inscription from Lanchester (GB),³³⁶ are Celtic or Germanic goddesses.³³⁷ According to the origin of their name, the *Gabiae* and *Gabinae* could thus be understood as either meaning 'Those who Give', 'Givers' or 'Those who Take/Seize'. Considering the *Gabiae* and *Gabinae* are Germanic, Kern observes that they are "ladies, dispensers of gifts and munificence", since their name can be related to Gothic *gabei*,

³²⁹ Schmidt, 1987, p. 148 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, pp. 142-146.

³³⁰ Szemerényi, Oswald, 'An den Quellen des lateinischen Wortschatzes', in *Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 56, 1989, p. 124 proposes the prototype **ghoisos*.

³³¹ Lambert, 1995, pp. 123, 173 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 173 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 221 ; Spickermann, 2005, pp. 134, 140 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 144 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 285-286, 412-414 ; Boyer, 1995, p. 64 ; Fleuriot, 1982, pp. 123-124 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005a, pp. 185-200.

³³² *CIL* XIII, 7856, 7937, 7938, 7939: *Gabiabus C(aius) Campanius Victor m(iles) l(egionis) l M(inerviae) P(iae) F(idelis) slm*, 7940, 8192: *lunoniibus Gabiabus Masius votum retulit*, 7950 ; *F. 273: Matronis Gabiabus Nelev[----] Cai fil[ius] vslm* ; *CIL* XIII, 7780, 8612: *lunonibus sive Gabiabus m(onumentum)*, 7865: *Gabiabus lustus Quinti fil(ius) vslm*, 7867.

³³³ *AE* 1981, 678: *Gabin[i]s sacrum ex im[p]erio ipsar[um] L(ucius) Fonte[ius] Firmus v[slm]*. This inscription dates from the second half of the 2nd c. AD or the first half of the 3rd c. AD.

³³⁴ *CIL* XIII, 8529: *Matroni[s] Alagabiabus lul(ia) Pusua pro se et luli(i)s f(iliis) Peregrino Sperato Severo vslm*.

³³⁵ *CIL* XIII, 7280, 6751: *Ollogabiabus Aiiuva Messo[r]*. The name of the dedicator, Aiiuva, is Celtic, see Delamarre, 2007, p. 15.

³³⁶ *RIB* 1074. See Chapter 5 for more information.

³³⁷ Fleuriot, 1982, pp. 123-124.

'munificence', 'wealth', *gabigs*, 'rich' and Old Norse *göfugr*, 'generous'.³³⁸ Kern, referring to Old Norse *giffta*, which combines the notions of giving and marriage, argues that they could be protectresses of marriage.

As for the themes *ala-* and *ollo-*, comprised in the bynames* *Alagabiae* and *Ollogabiae*, it seems that *ollo-*, 'all' is Celtic, while *ala-*, 'all' is Germanic.³³⁹ *Ollogabiae* would be thus a Celtic divine name signifying 'Those who take and keep everything', 'All-Seizing',³⁴⁰ while *Alagabiae* would be its Germanic counterpart, but with the opposite meaning of 'Those who give everything', 'All Givers'.³⁴¹ As for Régis Boyer, he suggests to relate the Germanic prefix *ala-* to the root **alu*, found in some runic* inscriptions, denoting good luck and tutelary chance.³⁴² According to him, the *Alagabiae* would therefore be 'The Good Luck Givers' or 'Those who bring good luck'. These Celtic and Germanic prefixes are found in two other goddess names, such as the *Matres Ollototae* and the *Matres Alatervae*, honoured in Cramond (Scotland): *Matrib(us) Alatervis et Matrib(us) Campestribus coh(ortis) I[II] Tungr(orum)*, 'To the *Matres Alatervae* and to the *Matres Campestris* of the Cohort II of *Tungrorum*' (fig. 27).³⁴³ The *Alatervae* are highly likely to be Germanic, because of the prefix *ala-*, 'all' composing their name. Kern besides points out that the dedicators are Germanic people in the *Tungrian cohort** of the Roman army. As regards the etymology* of their name, he proposes the connection to Germanic *teru*, 'tree', cognate with Middle Norse *tere* and Gothic *triu*, 'tree'; a theme which also exists in Celtic (**deru*).³⁴⁴ The *Matres Alatervae* might therefore be the 'Mother Goddesses of All sorts of Forests'. As far as Delamarre is concerned, he supposes that their name is the same as the *Alateivae* (possibly **Alante-* (Celtic?) or **Ala-dēviā*), venerated in Xanten (Germany): *Alateiviae ex iussu divos medicu[s]*.³⁴⁵ Kern relates this title to Anglo-Saxon *alatave*, *calteav*, 'safe', 'healthy', 'in good health'.³⁴⁶ On account of this etymology* and the dedicator, who is a doctor, he translates their name as 'Health' and compares them to the Greek goddess of Health, Cleanliness and Sanitation: *Hygieia* or *Hygeia*.³⁴⁷

In the case of the mother-goddesses in '*gab-*', it is thus difficult to determine their provenance with certainty, for their name can be related to the two languages. The fact that goddess names are identifiable with Celtic as well as Germanic is actually not surprising. The Germanic and Celtic languages are both derived from Indo-European, which means that they have similar roots or words. L. Fleuriot would suggest that Celtic peoples reinterpreted

³³⁸ Kern, 1873-1875, p. 157 ; Fleuriot, 1982, p.123.

³³⁹ Schmidt, 1987, p. 144 ; Schmidt, 1957, pp. 250-251 ; Fleuriot, 1982, p. 123 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 210.

³⁴⁰ Olmsted, 1994, p. 286 proposes 'All Controllers', 'Great Controllers', 'Those who keep everything' ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 35 suggests 'All-seizing'.

³⁴¹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 210 suggests that *ala-* is Germanic but does not give a translation of it ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 286, 412-413: 'All Givers' ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 144: 'den Allgebenden' ; Neumann, 1987, p. 111: 'die Alles Gebenden'.

³⁴² Boyer, 1995, p. 64.

³⁴³ *RIB* 2135.

³⁴⁴ Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 157-158 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 140.

³⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII, 8606 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 16, 210.

³⁴⁶ Kern, 1873-1875, p. 157.

³⁴⁷ *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 603-604.

the Germanic radical *gab-*, which originally signified 'to give' rather than 'to take'.³⁴⁸ A few other examples are worth mentioning here. The Matronae Arvagastae, for instance, venerated in Modersheim, are said to be Germanic (maybe **arvo-gost-*), and yet, it is noticeable that the root *gassu-*, *gast-*, the meaning of which is unknown, is also found in the Celtic language.³⁴⁹ Similarly, in the name of the Germanic Matronae Gavadae, honoured in Bettenhofen, München-Gladbach, Roedingen, Iulich, and Thorr (Germany), a Celtic root *gavo-*, the meaning of which is unknown, is detectable.³⁵⁰ The epithet of the Germanic Malvisae, venerated in Cologne and Nieukerk, might also be related to Celtic *malu-*, *malo-*, *mallo-*, possibly meaning 'high', 'important', 'superior'.³⁵¹

In addition to the occasional similarity in languages, it is clear that the cult of some deities must have been shared by the Germanic and Celtic peoples, who lived side by side along the Rhine, had many contacts and probably exchanged and borrowed many religious ideas and customs from one another. The contiguity between the two peoples must have resulted in goddesses of mixed or hybrid character, reflected in their very names. The most significant examples supporting that idea are very certainly the Matronae Albiahenae, the Matres Mediotautehae and the Matronae Gesahenae. The first elements of their epithets are indeed Celtic, while the endings *-henae*, *-hae* are Germanic. We can therefore refer to those 'hybrid' Mother Goddesses as 'Celto-Germanic'.

IV) Iconography

In addition to being honoured greatly in the epigraphy, the Mother Goddesses are also widely evidenced in the imagery from the Continent and Britain.³⁵² If the mother-goddess can be represented as a single figure, she is often duplicated, tripled, quadrupled or even quintupled. The triads of mothers are in fact the most widespread representations. It seems that the Mothers started being depicted as such from the end of the 1st c. AD.³⁵³

A) Classical attributes

They are conventionally represented in a sitting posture, most of the time in an aediculum* - occasionally with a footstool under their feet – and wearing long garments and diadems on their hair, which is the expression of their magnificence, majesty and sovereignty. Besides,

³⁴⁸ Fleuriot, 1982, p. 124.

³⁴⁹ *CIL* XIII, 7855 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 27, 222 sees a Germanic epithet, which he breaks down as **arvo-gost-*, but he also points out the possible connection with the Celtic root.

³⁵⁰ *CIL* XIII, 7894, 8536 and *AE* 1977, 553 ; *CIL* XIII, 7888, 7885, 7886, 7887, 12067 ; *AE* 1977, 550 ; Neumann, 1987, pp. 119-120 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 102-103, 222.

³⁵¹ *CIL* XIII, 8208, 8598 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 126 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 125, 226 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 146 says that the Malvisae are linked to a county town called Malva situated in the province left to the Danube, and to Malvensis, the name of one of the three regions of Dacia during the reign of Marcus-Aurelius. The *Tres Daciae*, i.e. Porolissensis called after the city of Porolissum (near Moigrad, county of Salaj), Apulensis called after Apulum and Malvensis called after Malva (unknown location), had a common capital called Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. Malva is apparently derived from a word *mal* meaning 'Mount', 'Mountain'.

³⁵² *Paulys*, vol.14.2, pp. 2237-2242 ; *LIMC*, Suppl., vol. 8.1, pp. 808-816 ; Deyts, 1992, pp. 58-72 ; Green, 2001, pp. 188-205.

³⁵³ Carré, 1978, p. 123.

the Roman title *Augustae* is sometimes given to them in the dedications, such as in Vienne: *Matris Augustis, C. Titius Sedulus ex voto*, 'To the August Mothers, C. Titius Sedulus offered (this)'.³⁵⁴ This title enhances their power and majesty and gives an official dimension to them.

The Mothers traditionally bear the universal attributes of the Greco-Roman *Terra Mater*, such as horns of plenty, eggs, loaves of bread, baskets of fruit, cereal head dresses or cakes, small animals, all representing the abundance of the products of the Earth which they literally embody. These attributes emphasize their life-giving propensities. A statue discovered in Alésia (Côte d'Or) depicts for instance a single seated goddess, with a long tunic and a tiara, holding a large basket containing a dozen pieces of fruit of various sizes in her lap (fig. 10).³⁵⁵ Another instance is the plaque from Cirencester (Gloucestershire, GB), representing three seated mothers, wearing coats and tunics. The one on the left holds a tray of cakes and loaves in her lap, while the two others on the right hold trays of fruit (fig. 10).³⁵⁶ As for the Germanic Mother Goddesses, they can be distinguished by the characteristic round hat they generally wear, such as on the relief* of the *Matronae Aufaniae* discovered in Bonn (Germany) and the pipe-clay figurine from Bonn representing three small Mothers holding fruit on their knee (fig. 11).³⁵⁷

It is clear that all these attributes of human and earthly fertility are quite common and imitate the religious Greco-Roman images. Thus, the figurative representation of those Mother Goddesses is not Celtic in character. Nonetheless, Simone Deyts argues that, if the attributes are borrowed from Classical representations, the statues are of indigenous character, for they were made in Gaul by local artisans and sculpted in regional material, such as limestone, terracotta or bronze.³⁵⁸

Epigraphy accompanies the imagery but rarely, and these testimonies are thus of great importance. The bas-relief* from Lyons, for instance, shows three small goddesses sitting and holding cornucopiae* and baskets of fruit in their laps, under which is engraved the following inscription: *Matr(is) Aug(ustis) Phlegon med(icus)*, 'To the Mother Goddesses, Phlegon doctor (offered this)' (fig. 12).³⁵⁹ Similarly, another damaged altar, discovered in Fourvière (the hill overlooking Lyons) in 1895, depicts three Mothers sitting, wearing long tunics and coats, and each holding baskets of fruit on her knee (fig. 13).³⁶⁰ Along with this altar was found a tablet in white limestone bearing the inscription: *Matr[is Aug(ustis)] P. Mattius Qua[rtus], L. Mattius Satto, C. Mattius Vitalis, ex voto*, 'To the August Mothers, P. Mattius Quartus, L. Mattius Satto (and) C. Mattius Vitalis offered (this monument)'.³⁶¹

³⁵⁴ *CIL* XIII, 1826 ; Rhys, 1888, p. 101. For other examples, see *CIL* XII, 1823-1826, 2220, 2388, 2448, 2593 ; *CIL* XIII, 1758-1764 ; *CIL* XIII, VII, 168, 221, 303, 319, 346, 559.

³⁵⁵ Deyts, 1998, p. 67, n°28 ; *RG* 2350. It was discovered in Alésia, Mont-Auxois, in 1908.

³⁵⁶ MacCana, 1983, p. 88 ; Green, 2004, p. 120, fig. n°8. In Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

³⁵⁷ *LIMC*, Suppl., vol. 8.2, p. 553, n°1 and 4. See also n°7 and 8, found in Cologne, which are reliefs* representing three Mothers wearing similar round hats. N°7 is dedicated to the *Matronae Aumenahenae* and n°8 to the *Matronae Boudunneihae*.

³⁵⁸ Deyts, 1992, pp. 60-61.

³⁵⁹ *RG* 1741 ; *CIL* XIII, 1762 ; Deyts, 1992, p. 58 ; Courcelle-Seneuil, 1910, p. 164. There are other dedications to the *Matres* in Lyons, but there is no physical representation: *CIL* XIII, 1756-1760, 1763-1765.

³⁶⁰ *RG* 7068 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 153. It was discovered during drilling works for the building of the funicular railway. On the other sides of the altar are respectively represented the hammer-god with his olla*, Mercurius with his traditional attributes, i.e. the purse, the caduceus* and the tortoise, and Fortuna with the rudder on a sphere.

³⁶¹ *CIL* XIII, 1761.

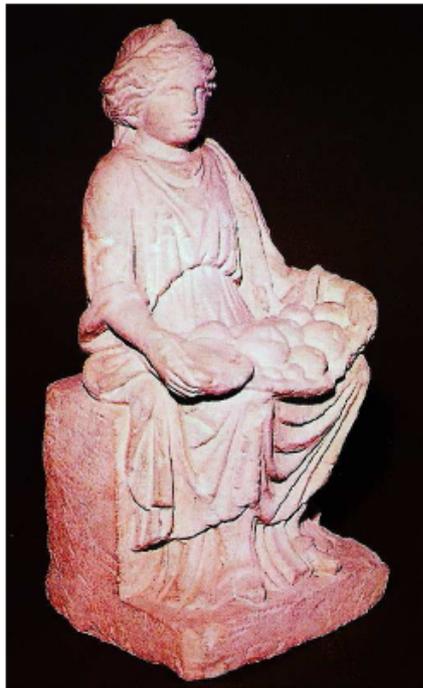


Fig. 10: Left: Single Mother Goddess from Alésia (Côte d'Or). In the Musée Alésia. Deyts, 1998, n° 28, p. 67. Right: Plaque from Cirencester, Gloucestershire (GB), representing triple seated mothers of Classical type. In Corinium Museum, Cirencester.LIMC, Suppl., vol. 8, 2, p. 554, n°16.



Fig. 11: Left: Altar combining a representation and a dedication to the Matronae Aufaniae from Bonn (Germany). Right: Pipe-clay group of three Mother Goddesses from Bonn wearing the typical round hat of Germanic goddesses. In Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn. LIMC, Suppl., vol. 8, 2, p. 553, n°1 and 4.



Fig. 12: Rectangular tablet from Lyons (Rhône), depicting three mother goddesses, holding baskets of fruit and cornucopiae, with an inscription naming them: Matris. In the Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyons. RG 1741.*



Fig. 13: Mutilated altar representing Mother Goddesses with baskets of fruit, discovered in Fourvière (Lyons, Rhône). In the Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyons. RG 7068.

B) The Nursing Mothers or *Nutrices*

The generosity of their curves – a round abdomen and ample breasts sometimes bared - and their association with a consort or wrapped infants represent fecundity, procreation and the renewal of the human race. In the representations of divine couples, which are numerous in Autun (Saône-et-Loire), Entrains (Nièvre) and Alésia (Côte d'Or) - where around seventeen reliefs* were discovered - the goddess symbolises the concept of the 'wife-goddess', who marries the god to procreate.³⁶² The deities are generally seated side by side on a throne and hold various attributes of fertility. They are sometimes turned towards each other and have affectionate gestures for one another, such as on the relief* from Alésia (fig. 14).

³⁶² Many reliefs* showing a divine couple have been discovered, see Green, 2001, pp. 45-73 ; Deyts, 1992, pp. 68-72 ; Deyts, 1998, pp. 70-71, n° 31-32 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 271-274.



Fig. 14: Relief of a divine couple discovered in Alésia (Cote d'Or). The goddess holds a cornucopia* in her left hand and represents the concept of the 'Wife-Goddess'. In the Palais du Roure d'Avignon. Deyts, 1992, p. 69.*

The theme of the Mother Goddesses nursing children is widespread in the iconography of the Matres. A high-relief* found in Vertault (Côte d'Or) shows a triad* of nursing goddesses with one breast bared, who are about to get a baby washed.³⁶³ The first goddess holds a wrapped infant in her hands, the second one a baby's flannel blanket and the third one a washbowl and a sponge (fig. 15). Similarly, a votive relief* discovered in Cirencester (Gloucestershire, GB) has the central goddess holding a baby in her arms, while the two other ones may have baskets of fruit or swaddling clothes for the baby on their knee (fig. 15).³⁶⁴ This representation is interesting, for it seems to have some indigenous peculiarities, which might differentiate it from the figurations of marked Classical character. The Mother Goddesses indeed wear their hair loose and do not wear a diadem. Other examples of such a role are the five small statuettes in white terracotta found in 1991 in a well in Auxerre (Yonne) representing seated Matres, wearing a diadem and long garments, feeding one or two infants at their breast (fig. 16).³⁶⁵ Similar pipe-clay figurines have been found in Britain,³⁶⁶ in Gaul, such as in Alésia,³⁶⁷ Dijon (Côte d'Or),³⁶⁸ and Autun (Saône-et-Loire),³⁶⁹ and in Germany, such as in Trier, notably in the temple dedicated to the goddess Aveta³⁷⁰ and in the precinct near Dhronecken.³⁷¹ Those figurines are generally found in temples, houses

³⁶³ Deyts, 1998, n°29, p. 67 ; Deyts, 1992, p. 65. It was discovered on the site of Vertillum (Vertault) in 1894.

³⁶⁴ Green, 2004, fig. n°7, between p. 120 and p. 121.

³⁶⁵ Deyts, 1998, n° 30, pp. 68-69.

³⁶⁶ Jenkins, 1957, pp. 38-46 ; Jenkins, 1978, pp. 149-162.

³⁶⁷ Rabeisen, 1986, pp. 101-115, n° 83-99, and pl. 11-15.

³⁶⁸ Rouvier-Jeanlin, 1985, pp. 56-78, n° 141-199.

³⁶⁹ Vertet, Vuillemot, 1972, pp. 16-22, n° 336, 89, 222, 377, 376, 379, 221, 322.

³⁷⁰ Wightman, 1970, p. 217.

³⁷¹ Wightman, 1970, p. 223.

and more particularly in sepulchral contexts.³⁷² They may have been sorts of amulets, which women could easily carry with them because of their small size, protecting them and their children in their everyday life or during pregnancy, as well as in the afterlife when deposited in tombs. Those terra-cotta figurines were made in large numbers from the 1st c. AD to the 3rd c. AD in workshops situated for instance in Toulon-sur-Allier, Bourbon-Lancy or Autun and were easily distributed throughout Gaul and even further on account of their compact size.³⁷³



Fig. 15: Left: Trio of nursing goddesses from Vertault (Côte d'Or). Museum of Châtillon-sur-Seine. Deyts, 1998, n°29, p. 67. Right: Nursing Mother Goddesses from Cirencester (Gloucestershire, GB). In Corinium Museum, Cirencester. Green, 2004, fig. n°7.



³⁷² Green, 2004, p. 84 ; Deyts, 1992, 66-68.

³⁷³ Deyts, 1992, p. 66 ; Camuset-Le Porzou, 1985, pp. 14-15.

Fig. 16: Five statuettes in white terracotta of nursing Matres discovered in a well in Auxerre (Yonne). Deyts, 1998, n° 30, p. 68.

Those Gaulish and British Nursing Mother Goddesses clearly echo the cult of the Nutrices, which was significant in and around Poetovio (Slovenia) where two sanctuaries and numerous depictions, very often combined with inscriptions, were discovered. Their name is the plural of Latin *nutrix*, designating 'a woman's breast' or 'a wet nurse' - cf. the verb *nutricare*, 'to suckle, to nurse, to nourish, to promote the growth of (plants and animals)'.³⁷⁴ In Poetovio, the Nutrices are always venerated in the plural form and are often portrayed as three women, but only one of them holds and breast-feeds the baby, while the two others may be servants.³⁷⁵ Some of the depictions are combined with inscriptions naming them, such as the one from Zgornji Breg, dating from the 2nd c. AD, which shows three women, similarly dressed, under which is engraved the following inscription: *Nutricibus Aug(ustis) sacrum Aurelius Siro pro salute Aureli Primiani v.s.l.m.*, 'Sacred to Augustus and to the Nutrices, Aurelius Siro for the safety of Aurelius Primianus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.³⁷⁶ The woman in the middle is seated and feeds a baby at her left breast, while the two other ones, standing on each side, hold a patera*, a towel, a dish and an urceus* (fig. 17). It is interesting to note that the Nutrices are worshipped only at Poetovio and that a significant number of dedicators have Celtic names, such as Malia, Donnia ('Noble'), Siro ('Star') and Vintumila.³⁷⁷ Šašel Kos maintains that these nursing goddesses were brought there by "a Celtic group which had settled the region along with other Celtic tribes when they occupied the later Regnum Noricum*"³⁷⁸.

There is, besides, an inscription found near Utrecht honouring the Matres Noricae, 'The Mother Goddesses of Noricum': *Matribus Noricis Anneus Maximus mil(es) leg(ionis) I M(inerviae) v.s.l.m.*, which might have been offered by a soldier coming from Noricum*.³⁷⁹ This could be further proof of the existence of the Matres-Nutrices cult in Poetovio.³⁸⁰ Therefore, the Slovenian Nutrices are very similar to the British and Gaulish Nursing Mothers. They should be related to the Roman Dea Nutrix ('Wetnurse Goddess'), who was venerated alone or together with Saturnus/Frugifer or Tanit Caelestis in North Africa during the Roman period. There are examples of inscriptions dedicated to her in Lambaesis, near modern Tazoult and Azîz ben Tellis (Algeria): *Nutrici Deae Aug(ustae) Sacrum* ; *Nutrici Aug(ustae) templum C. Hostilius Felix sacerdos Saturni s p. f. id. d.*³⁸¹ Dea Nutrix is generally portrayed in the reliefs* breast-feeding babies or accepting children presented to her so as to gain her protection.

³⁷⁴ Oxford Latin Dictionary, s.v. 'nutrico, nutricare' and 'nutrix, nutricis'.

³⁷⁵ Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 180-184 ; LIMC, vol. 6.1, pp. 936-938, vol. 6.2, pp. 620-622 ; Paulys, vol. 17.2, pp. 1501-1502.

³⁷⁶ Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 167-168 ; Wigand, 1915, pp. 206-207, n°10, fig. 114 ; Hoffiller & Saria, 1938, n°325 ; LIMC, vol. 6.1, p. 936, n°4, vol. 6.2, p. 620, n°4.

³⁷⁷ Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 185-186 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 147, 282 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 88, 169, 220, 232.

³⁷⁸ Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 187.

³⁷⁹ CIR 577.

³⁸⁰ Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 189.

³⁸¹ CIL VIII, 2664, 8245, see also CIL VIII, 8246, 8247 ; Brill's, vol. 9, p. 921 ; Paulys, vol. 17.2, pp. 1500-1501 ; Leglay, Marcel, *Saturne africain: histoire*, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1966, pp. 200-222.



Fig. 17: Representation of Nutrices from Zgorzlj Breg (Poetovio, Slovenia). LIMC, vol. 6.2, p. 620, n°4.

This nursing function is echoed in the very name of the Matres Mopates, venerated in Nimwegen (the Netherlands): *Matribus Mopatibus suis M(arcus) Liberius Victor cives Nervius neg(otiator) frum(entarius) vslm*.³⁸² Their epithet (**map-at-eis*) is undeniably Celtic, for it is derived from Gaulish *mapat-*, 'child'.³⁸³ It can be glossed as 'The Mothers with a Child'.³⁸⁴ They are etymologically linked to the god Maonos ('The Young Son'), whose name comes from Gaulish *mapo-*, 'son', 'young boy'.³⁸⁵ He is venerated in various inscriptions from the north and north-west of Britain, such as in Chesterholm (2), Hadrian's Wall (1), Corbridge (3) (Northumbria) and Ribchester (1) (Lancashire) and from Gaul, in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône), and in a Gallo-Latin inscription from Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme).³⁸⁶

The Gallo-British god Maonos is an etymological forerunner of the Welsh divine hero Mabon, literally meaning 'Youth' or 'Young God' in Middle Welsh.³⁸⁷ The 11th-century Arthurian legend *Culhwch ac Olwen* recounts that Mabon son of Modron is kidnapped when he is three nights old. Culhwch goes in search of him, but it is Arthur who eventually saves him from prison in Gloucester.³⁸⁸ The name of Mabon's mother, Modron, signifies 'Mother' and is philologically a development of the name of the Goddess of the River Marne in

³⁸² CIL XIII, 8725.

³⁸³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 217 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 226, cf. the proper name Agedo-mapatis ('with a Child Face').

³⁸⁴ Spickermann, 2005, p. 141: 'die kinderfördernden Gottheiten'.

³⁸⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 216-217 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 84-85 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 84-85 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 380-383 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 463-466 ; Green, 1992a, p. 140 ; Sterckx, 1996, pp. 27-29 ; Meid, 1991, pp. 41-42.

³⁸⁶ AE 1975, 568 ; RIB II, 3 / 2431.2 ; RIB 2063, 1120, 1121, 1122, 583 ; IAG 213 ; RIG II-2, 100 ; Lambert, 1979, pp. 146-148 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 29-30, 150-153.

³⁸⁷ Olmsted, 1994, p. 384 ; Ross, 1996, p. 293 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 317 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 137-138.

³⁸⁸ For a summary of the narrative, see Mackillop, 2004, pp. 118-120 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 84-85.

Gaul, Matrona ('Mother').³⁸⁹ This of course leads scholars to think that Maponos ('Son') was the son of Matrona ('Mother'), like Mabon ('Youth') is the son of Modron ('Mother'). A Mother–Son pattern therefore stands out from both Welsh literature and Gallo-British epigraphy. Significantly, this archetype is found again in Irish mythology. The god Oengus ('True Vigour'), the son of the river-goddess Bóinn and the Dagda, who resides at Brugh na Bóinne (Newgrange) in County Meath, is indeed nicknamed *Mac ind Óc*. This form is ungrammatical and seems to have been interpreted as 'the Son of the Youth'. It has been reasonably suggested that the true original form was different, **Maccan Óc* or *In Mac Óc*, that is the 'Young Boy or Son'. He is thus clearly identical to Gallo-British Maponos and Welsh Mabon.³⁹⁰

In this role of Nursing Mothers, the Matres appear very clearly as dispensers of fecundity and protectresses of childbirth and childhood. This is actually a universal principle found in many other ancient religions. For instance, the main role of the Egyptian Isis, the wife of Osiris, is to breast-feed Harpocrate - the name of Horus as a child.³⁹¹ As for the Roman Juno, the wife of Jupiter, she is famous for presiding over childbirth and protecting women.³⁹² She is besides nicknamed Lucina, that is 'she who brings to the light', when specifically fulfilling this function.

V) Triplism: a mark of Celtic tradition?

As we have seen, 'three' is a recurrent figure in the iconography of the Mother Goddesses. Could triplism³⁹³ be a mark of Celtic tradition, as some scholars maintain? Joseph Vendryes indeed stipulates that "triplism is a *Celtic conception*, according to which a person is divided into three persons, each representing one of the aspects of the total activity."³⁹⁴ In Irish mythology, for example, trebling is characteristic of the divinities, who are often represented threefold or as trios. For instance, the gods who forge the weapons for the Tuatha Dé Danann in *Cath Maige Tuired* ['the Second Battle of Moytirra'] are three in number. Goibniu, the smith (Old Irish *goba*), Luchta, the carpenter (Irish *sóer*), and Credne, the worker in bronze (Irish *cerd*), are known as *na trí Déa Dána* ('the Three Gods of Craftsmanship') in literature.³⁹⁵

³⁸⁹ Vendryes, 1997, p. 45 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 29-30 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 362 ; Ross, 1996, p. 270 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 332 ; Green, 1995, pp. 64-65 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 152.

³⁹⁰ O'hOgain, 2006, pp. 20-23, 38 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 516-517 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 383 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 47 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 17-18 ; Carney, 1964, p. 112. The conception of Oengus by the Dagda and Bóinn is mentioned in the poems, entitled *Boand I*, on lines 73-75, and *Boand II*, on lines 25-40, comprised in the *Dindsenchas*. See Gwynn, 1913, pp. 30-31, 36-37.

³⁹¹ Tran, Tam Tinh, *Isis lactans – Corpus des monuments gréco-romains d'Isis allaitant Harpocrate*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1973.

³⁹² Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 250-252, 730-731 ; Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 668-690 ; *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 1107-1108.

³⁹³ This word is used by Green, 1992, pp. 214-216.

³⁹⁴ Vendryes, 1935, p. 325 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 47 ; see also Green, 2001, pp. 169-171 ; Macculloch, 1911, p. 45 ; Mac Cana, 1983, pp. 48-49.

³⁹⁵ Goibniu makes the spear for Lug Lámfhota, with which he kills his grandfather Balor. Luchta makes the shields and spear shafts, while Credne makes the rivet for spears, hilts for swords and bosses and rims for shields, see Gray, 1982, §100-102, § 122: "Goibniu the smith was in the smithy making swords and spears and javelins. He would make those weapons with three strokes. Then Luchta the carpenter would make the spearshafts in three chippings, and the third chipping was a finish and would set them in the socket of the spear. After the spearheads were in the side of the forge he would throw the sockets with the shafts, and it was not necessary to

As regards the gods, the concept of triplism is also widely found in iconography from Gaul, Britain and Ireland.³⁹⁶ There are indeed many representations of three-headed or three-faced gods in Gaul, such as the god from Reims, who is often equated with Mercury,³⁹⁷ the bearded god with prominent eyes from Langres,³⁹⁸ the Bronze god from near Autun,³⁹⁹ and those portrayed on the pots from Bavay (Nord), Jupille (Belgium) and Troisdorf (Germany).⁴⁰⁰ In Britain, reliefs* showing a three-faced stone head were discovered at the temple at Viroconium, now Wroxeter (Shropshire).⁴⁰¹ In Ireland, in Corleck (Co. Cavan) was unearthed the famous bald round-faced *tricephalos*, which is a head with three identical faces, probably dating from the 1st c. AD.⁴⁰²

Significantly in the Irish texts, several triads of goddesses could echo the triadic groups of the Gallo-British Matres or Matronae. The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] mentions that the isle of Ireland is personified by three goddesses: Ériu, Banba and Fódla.⁴⁰³ Similarly, the goddesses of war form a trio composed of the Mórrígain ('Great Queen'), Badb ('Crow') and Macha ('Field'), who is sometimes replaced by Nemain ('Panic').⁴⁰⁴ In an old glossary, Badb, Macha and the Mórrígain are said to be the three Mórrígain. This implies that the primary divine character of the trio was the Mórrígain and that she is herself envisaged as a tripled deity. This text is of great importance, for it is the only mention of the Mórrígain in triple form:

Badhbh, Macha agus Mórrígain na téora Mórrígnae. Badb, Macha and Mórrígain are the three Mórrígnae.⁴⁰⁵

Similarly, Macha, whose name is derived from *mag*, 'field' (Magesiā > Macha), is viewed as being three in number. There are several versions in literature of the three Machas: Macha, the wife of Nemed, the Ulster Queen Macha Mong Ruadh ('Red-haired'), daughter of Aed Rúad and wife of Cimbáeth, and Macha, the wife of Crunniuc mac Agnomain, who brings 'debility' to the Ulstermen.⁴⁰⁶ While the goddesses of war seem to be separate figures on

set them again. Then Credne the brazier would make the rivets with three strokes, and he would throw the sockets of the spears at them, and it was not necessary to drill holes for them; and they stayed together this way.", and pp. 120, 125-126 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 308-317 gives a comprehensive study of the various mentions of these three gods in the texts ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 277-278 ; Dillon & Chadwick, 1973, p. 14 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 110, 257, 305. For instances in Welsh literature, see Bromwich, 1961, pp. 155-156.

³⁹⁶ Green, 1992, pp. 169-205 and Ross, 1996, pp. 107-115 give a comprehensive study of triplism and triple heads in the imagery ; Duval, 1957, pp. 44-45.

³⁹⁷ Ross, 1996, p. 428 ; Green, 1992, pp. 171-174 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 245, n° 364 (the original was lost during WWI).

³⁹⁸ RG 3287.

³⁹⁹ Lambrechts, 1942, p. 21.

⁴⁰⁰ Lambrechts, 1942, pp. 33-34 ; Cunliffe, 1979, p. 70 ; Green, 1992, pp. 175-176 and fig. 78, p. 252 note 35 ; Mac Cana, 1983, p. 48 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 246, n° 365.

⁴⁰¹ Ross, 1996, pp. 110-111, fig. 46.

⁴⁰² Birkhan, 1999, p. 245, n° 363 ; Duval, 1977, pp. 227-228, fig. 238 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 108-109, fig. 45 and pp. 110, 150-152 ; Raftery, 1951, fig. 263.

⁴⁰³ Macalister, 1956, pp. 34-37, 76-79. See Chapter 2.

⁴⁰⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 361-363, 26-28. See Chapter 3.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ms. H. 3. 18. Trin. Coll., Dublin, p. 82, col. 2. This reference is given by Hennessy, 1870-1872, p. 36.*

⁴⁰⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 325-327 ; Dumézil, 1954, pp. 5-17 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 318-119.

account of their different roles, the three Machas might be emanations of a single deity.⁴⁰⁷ According to Georges Dumézil, whose ideas are repeated by De Vries, the three Machas are distinct figures possessing a specific role and character.⁴⁰⁸ He argues that they are the representation of the 'functional tripartition', reflected in most of the Celtic female triads. Indeed, the first legend presents her as a Seer (sacerdotal function), the second one as a Warriress (war function) and the third one as a Mother-Farmer (agrarian and fertile function).⁴⁰⁹ Likewise, the daughter of the Dagda, Brigit, is a threefold goddess, for she is said in *Sanas Cormaic* ['Cormac's Glossary'], dated c. 900, to have two sisters bearing her name.⁴¹⁰ The first Brigit possesses *filidhecht*, that is 'poetry, divination and prophecy', while the other two preside respectively over curing and smithcraft. It seems that the three Brigitas are the triplication of the very same figure; triplication emphasizing and sublimating her various abilities and powers.

In Gaul, the idea of a goddess envisaged in triple form might be echoed in the name of the goddess Trittia meaning 'Third', related to Gaulish tritos, 'third'.⁴¹¹ The goddess Trittia is mentioned in three inscriptions discovered in the Var - in Fréjus: *Trittia L(ucius) Iul(ius) Certi f(ilius) Martinus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Trittia, Lucius Iulius Certi, son of Martinus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly';⁴¹² in Pierrefeu: *Trittia M(arcus) Vibius Longus v.s.l.m.*, 'To Trittia, Marcus Vibius Longus paid his vow willingly and deservedly';⁴¹³ and possibly in Carnoules, but the dedication is very damaged: *Trittji(a)e Iul(ius?) Tenci[-] v.s.l.m.*⁴¹⁴ Olmsted and Anwyl suggest that Trittia is the eponymous goddess of the city of Trets, situated near Aix-en-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône), which Albert Grenier and Jules Toutain refute, pointing out that the inscriptions were not found precisely in the area of this town. They add that the ancient name of Trets, which is Tritis or Tretis - sometimes Trecis, then Treds - , was never written with two 't's'.⁴¹⁵ The fact that the inscriptions were not very far from Trets may, however, be relevant, and the duplicated 't' in Trittia may be an effect of the personification of the place. The conundrum can perhaps be best solved by considering that the town was called after the goddess Trittia, whose name in the sense of 'third' would more properly be written Tritia. Significantly, an inscription discovered in Duratón, Segovia, Castilla y León, in Celt-Iberia, alludes to the trinity concept of the Matres and to their potency, as their epithet Termegiste ('the Three Almighty') indicates: *Matribus termegiste v(otum)*

⁴⁰⁷ O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 350, n°2 thinks there is only one Macha with three different husbands. It is the triplication of the very same figure.

⁴⁰⁸ Dumézil, 1954, pp. 8, 16-17 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 136-137.

⁴⁰⁹ On the functional tripartition, see Dumézil, 1986, pp. 24-51 ; Dumézil, 1995 (vol. 1).

⁴¹⁰ Meyer, 1912, p. 15. The text is given in Chapter 2. *Sanas Cormaic* is an Old-Irish Glossary, which was compiled by Cormac mac Cuilennáin (AD 831-908) towards the end of the 9th century. This may be the earliest dictionary in vernacular language. Cormac mac Cuilennáin was a scholar and a bishop of Cashel and King of Munster (AD 902). For more information about him, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 129-130.

⁴¹¹ Old Irish *treide*, Welsh *trydydd*, Breton *trede*, all deriving from *trtio- > *trtio-, 'third', see Delamarre, 2003, p. 303 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 234. Tritos is attested as the proper name of a potter on line 13 of a Gallo-Latin graffiti, engraved on a sigillated shard, unearthed on the archaeological site of La Graufesenque, which was renowned for its production of ceramic. La Graufesenque is situated two kilometres from Millau (Aveyron), in the territory of the Ruteni, see Lambert, 1995, pp. 129-131.

⁴¹² *CIL* XII, 255.

⁴¹³ *CIL* XII, 316.

⁴¹⁴ *AE* 1997, 1028.

⁴¹⁵ Olmsted, 1994, p. 423 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 33 ; Grenier, Albert, in *REA*, 41, 1939, pp. 141-142 ; Toutain, 1920, p. 309.

s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito), 'To the Three Almighty Mothers (the dedicator) paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁴¹⁶

If the female triadic groups are widely represented in the iconography with the Matres, there are yet very few three-headed or three-faced goddesses. One of the few surviving examples is the small statue of a goddess in bronze discovered in 1890 in Cébazat, near Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme), whose head is triplicated (fig. 18).⁴¹⁷ According to Jean-Léopold Courcelle-Seneuil, the goddess wears a diadem decorated with a plant, possibly artemisia, which was devoted to Diana.⁴¹⁸ It is worth noting that the idea of triple-headed female supernatural beings is encountered in an 11th-century legend belonging to the lore of the hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill. In this story, entitled *Finn and the Phantoms*, the hero, along with his companions Caoilte and Oisín, rode to a hillock called Bairneach south of Killarney on his new black horse, won in a horse-race at Clochar (Co. Limerick).⁴¹⁹ In the evening, they decided to stop in a mansion to have some sleep, but they rapidly realized that the place was gloomy and inhabited by weird frightening creatures, such as a grey churl, a headless man with a single eye on his chest and a hag with *tri cind for a caelmuneol*, i.e. 'three heads on her scrawny neck'.⁴²⁰ A terrible fight broke out between the macabre supernatural beings and the three warriors which lasted until dawn, when the three creatures suddenly disappeared. The 13th-century legend *Bruidean Chéise Corainn* ['The Mansion of Keshcorran' (Co. Sligo)] also tells of a visit of Finn mac Cumhail to the otherworld. He encountered three otherworld ugly sisters, who played sinister tricks on him and his comrade Conán Maol to punish them for hunting and sleeping on the hill of Keshcorran which belonged to their father.⁴²¹

Interestingly, the concept of a threefold goddess also survived in the Welsh 12th-century *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* ['Triads of the Isle of Britain'], *Triad 56*, which mentions that there were three Queens Gwenhwyfar at the court of Arthur.⁴²²

Teir Prif Riein Arthur: Gvenhvyuar verch Gvryt Gvent, A Gvenhvyuar verch Vthyr ap Greidiavl, A Gvenhvyuar verch Ocuran Gavr. Three Great Queens of Arthur's Court: Gwennhwyfar daughter of (Cywyrd) Gwent, and Gwenhwyfar daughter of (Gwythyr) son of Greidiawl, and Gwenhwyfar daughter of (G)ogfran the Giant.

According to Rachel Bromwich, *Triad 56* is the only Welsh source which alludes to three Queens Gwenhwyfar; all the other texts mentioning only one Gwenhwyfar, daughter of (G)ogfran the Giant.⁴²³ In her view, the threeGwenhwyfars are a reminiscence of Welsh and Irish traditions, which offer many examples of triple goddesses.

⁴¹⁶ *CIL* II, 2776 ; Knapp, 1993, p. 271, n° 292 ; Gómez-Pantoja, 1999, p. 423, n° 8a ; Sopeña, 2005, p. 350 ; Olivares, Carlos, 2002, pp. 121 ff.

⁴¹⁷ Courcelle-Seneuil, 1910, pl. X ; Lambrechts, 1942, pl. XV, fig. 38.

⁴¹⁸ Courcelle-Seneuil, 1910, p. 161.

⁴¹⁹ Stokes, 1886, pp. 290-305 ; Mac Néill, Eoin, 1908, vol. 1, pp. 28-30 ; Ní Shéaghda, 1942, vol. 1, pp. 169-181 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 137-138.

⁴²⁰ Stokes, 1886, p. 298.

⁴²¹ Ní Mhuirgheasa & Ní Shéaghda, 1941, pp. 3-15 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 204-205.

⁴²² Bromwich, 1961, p. 154. Gwenhwyfar is the Welsh counterpart of Guinevere, the wife of Arthur, see Mackillop, 2004, p. 262 ; Ross, 1996, p. 267.

⁴²³ Bromwich, 1961, p. 155.



Fig. 18: Three-headed goddess in bronze from Cébazat (Puy-de-Dôme). Courcelle-Seneuil, 1910, pl. X.

As the iconography and literature show, triadic groups of female figures were widespread and common to Irish, British and Gaulish peoples. Threeness undeniably had a strong magico-religious dimension for the Celts, who, in triplicating their deities, dignified them and emphasized their potency and magnificence.⁴²⁴ Those divine trios are generally understood as the emanation and multiplication of a single deity, rather than as three distinct beings.⁴²⁵ They are thus seen as 'three-in-one figures'. However, one cannot say that divine triplism is peculiar to the Celts only, for the concept of triadism is shared by many other ancient religions of Indo-European origin.

In Hinduism, for example, the *trimūrti*, meaning 'trimorphic' or 'three forms', is the triple aspect of the supreme being, symbolized by a triad* of primordial gods, that is Brahmā, the creator of the world, Visnu, the preserver of nature, and Shiva, who destroys the world at the end of each age.⁴²⁶ In Slavic mythology too, the primary god is called Triglav, literally 'Three-Headed'.⁴²⁷ He represents the unity of three gods, called Svarog, Perùn and Dažbog - later Veles or Svetovid. He also reigns over three realms. His first head indeed presides over the Sky, his second head over the Earth and the third one over the Under-World, symbolizing thus the three powers of the universe: expansion, retention and balance. A three-sided god governing the same three worlds is also found in the religion of the Toba-Bataks of Sumatra

⁴²⁴ Lambrechts, 1942, pp. 33-34 ; Green, 2001, p. 170.

⁴²⁵ Mac Cana, 1983, p. 42 ; Bromwich, 1961, p. 155 ; Vendryes, 1935, pp. 325-328.

⁴²⁶ Ringgren & Ström, 1966, p. 230 ; Zimmer, 1972, p. 124 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 459-460, 859.

⁴²⁷ Znayenko, 1980, pp. 30, 63 ; Ringgren & Ström, 1966, p. 359. He is now said to personify the culminating peak of the Julian Alps, in the north-west of Slovenia.

in Indonesia,⁴²⁸ while in the religion of ancient Iran, triads of gods are also found, such as Mithra, Ahura Mazdâh and Anâhita, or Zervân, Ohrmizd and Mihr.⁴²⁹

Three-fold goddesses are also widely represented in Classical mythology. As we will see, the goddesses of Fate, the Roman Fatae and Greek Moirai are generally represented three in number. Similarly, the Nymphs, who are the embodiment of Nature, appear as a trio of goddesses. Such is also the case of the Greek Graces, who are generally depicted as three women symbolizing beauty, gentleness and friendship, sometimes bearing the names of Aglaia, Charis and Pasithea.⁴³⁰ The Greek goddess of the dead, Hecate ('she who has power far off'), is also represented as a three-faced or three-bodied figure in the iconography.⁴³¹ She is, besides, usually called 'the Triple Hecate'. Moreover, the terrifying snake-haired and fanged Gorgons are three sisters, called Medusa ('Ruler'), Stheno ('Strength') and Euryale ('Wide-Leaping'), who turn into stone whoever meets their eyes.⁴³² They are related to the three grey-haired Graiae ('Old Women'), named Enyo ('Furious'), Pemphredo ('Waspish') and Deino ('Dreadful'), who live in Atlas' cave and possess a single eye and a single tooth which they lend to each other.⁴³³ Even though the Muses are generally said to be nine in number, they were originally envisaged as a trio of goddesses, presiding over music, dance, fine arts and above all poetry.⁴³⁴ On Mount Helicon, in the region of Thespias, in Boeotia (Greece), the Muses Melete ('Practice'), Mneme ('Memory') and Aoede ('Song') inhabit two springs, the Aganippe and the Hippocrene, while in Sicyone (Peloponnese) and in Delphi they personify the three strings of the ancient lyre, as their respective names Nete ('Bottom'), Mese ('Middle') and Hypate ('Top') show.⁴³⁵

From all of this, it follows that triplism is a typical characteristic of Celtic deities but is not specifically a mark of Celticity, threefold deities being found in many other ancient mythologies. Divine triplism actually goes back to Indo-European times, but it is significant that it survived so strongly in Welsh and Irish literatures and in Gallo-British iconography.

VI) Mother-Goddesses with Roman epithets

⁴²⁸ Ringgren & Ström, 1966, p. 408 ; Sinaga, 1981, pp. 1-264.

⁴²⁹ Ringgren & Ström, 1966, pp. 171-172, 177.

⁴³⁰ Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 147. The Graces (Charites in Greek and Gratiae in Latin), who generally accompany Aphrodite, do not play an essential role in myths.

⁴³¹ *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 38-40 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 151-152 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 221-222 ; *LIMC*, 6.1, 985-1018 for a list and a study of the various depictions of the triple goddess Hecate.

⁴³² *Brill's*, vol. 5, pp. 937-938 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 146 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 233-234, 700 ; see *LIMC* 4.1, 285-362 for a catalogue of the various representations of the Gorgons.

⁴³³ *Brill's*, vol. 5, pp. 955-956 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 147. They are the daughters of Ceto and the sea god Phorcys.

⁴³⁴ Their name, Muse, is similar to Latin mens and English mind. The nine Muses are called Clio, 'Renown' (history), Euterpe, 'Gladness' (flute-playing), Thalia, 'Abundance' or 'Good Cheer' (comedy), Calliope, 'Fair Voice' (epic poetry), Terpsichore, 'Joy in the Dance' (lyric poetry and dance), Erato, 'Lovely' (lyric poetry and songs), Melpomene, 'Singing' (tragedy), Polymnia, 'Many Songs' (mime) and Urania, 'Heavenly' (astronomy). See Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 225-226 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 151-153, 770 ; *Brill's*, vol. 9, pp. 322-325 for more details about their attributes and legends.

⁴³⁵ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 151 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 225.

It has been observed that the epithets of the Matres and Matronae were mainly of Celtic and Germanic origin. Nonetheless, their generic name is sometimes associated with Roman epithets or goddess names in the inscriptions. This phenomenon reflects the process of *interpretatio Romana*, which consisted in attributing Roman epithets or divine names to gods who did not belong to the Roman pantheon and juxtaposing their names in the dedications. The Matres and Matronae are associated with six different Roman goddess names or epithets in the inscriptions from Gaul and Britain: the Junones, who were protectresses of childbirth and women; the Parcae or Fatae, who symbolized destiny; the Nymphs, who were personifications of natural elements, and were more particularly linked to healing springs in Gaul; the Proxumae, who were protective goddesses probably possessing similar functions to the Domesticae, an epithet pertaining to the protection of the household; and the Campestris, who were related to the battlefield and the protection of the cavalry. The Celtic (Matres) Suleviae, honoured in twenty different inscriptions from the Continent and Britain, are a good example of this epigraphic *interpretatio Romana*. They indeed bear the epithet Domesticae in a dedication from Cologne (Germany),⁴³⁶ the epithet Junones in Marquis, near Calais (Pas-de-Calais, France),⁴³⁷ and are associated with the Campestris in Rome (Italy).⁴³⁸ As will be demonstrated, the link between the Matres/Matronae and these Roman goddesses could be demonstrated because they had various attributes in common, such as fertility, motherhood, fate and protection in every aspect of life.

A) The Junones

The 'Mothers' are sometimes associated with the Roman Junones, who are the guardians of women, as the Genius is the protector of men.⁴³⁹ The Junones ('the Young Ones'), plural form of the goddess name Juno ('the Young One'), represent the destiny of women from childbirth to death and ensure fertility.⁴⁴⁰ The Junones are honoured on their own for instance in Bordeaux (Gironde),⁴⁴¹ Agen (Lot-et-Garonne),⁴⁴² Nîmes (Gard),⁴⁴³ Aigues-Mortes (Gard),⁴⁴⁴ Nérès-les-Bains (Allier),⁴⁴⁵ Rollainville (Vosges)⁴⁴⁶ and in Trier, Pützdorf, Zülpich, Wesseling and Xanten (Germany).⁴⁴⁷ The dedications to the Junones are also numerous in Cisalpine Gaul, with a significant concentration in the East of the province,

⁴³⁶ CIL XIII, 12056: *Sule[v]jis Domest[?]cis suis Fab[?] Ianarius [et] Bellator [et] Iullus I[?]m.*

⁴³⁷ CIL XIII, 3561: *Sulevis Iunonibus sacr(um) L(ucius) Cas(sius) Nigrin[.]*

⁴³⁸ CIL VI, 768: *Sulevis et Campestribus Sacrum L Aurelius Quintus Leg VII Geminae votum solvit laetus libens dedicavit VIII K septembre bradva et varo cos.*

⁴³⁹ Duval, 1957, p. 54.

⁴⁴⁰ Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 690-691 ; *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 1107-1111 ; *LIMC*, vol. V.1, pp. 814-856, V.2, pp. 533-553 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 95, 126.

⁴⁴¹ CIL XIII, 567: *Iunonibus Iuliae et Sextiliae.*

⁴⁴² CIL XIII, 914: *Iunonibus Augustale Porticum et Maceriam Capito [...].*

⁴⁴³ CIL XII 3067: *Iunonib(us) Montan(is).*

⁴⁴⁴ CIL XII, 4101: *Iunonibus Aug(ustis).*

⁴⁴⁵ CIL XII, 1373: *N(umini)b(us) A(u)g(ustoru)m (et) I(unoni)b(us) v(ican)i N(erioma)g(ense)s*, 1374: *Numinibus Augustorum et Iunonibus Neriomagienses*. For other instances, see Anwyl, 1906a, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁶ CIL XIII, 4704.

⁴⁴⁷ CIL XIII, 3642, 7860, 7920, 8158, 8622.

between Aquilea and Lake Maggiore and more importantly in Verona and Brescia.⁴⁴⁸ According to Anwyl, the Junones must have had a role of healers when associated with places famous for their curative waters, such as Nérís-les-Bains.⁴⁴⁹ This is probable since one of the functions of Juno was notably the protection of the health of women.⁴⁵⁰

Protecting women and embodying fertility were also functions of the Matres, which would explain why they were compared and assimilated to the Junones in four inscriptions from Cisalpine Gaul, in Arcisate (Lombardy): *Matronis Iunonibus Valerius Baronis F. v.s.l.m.*, Como (Lombardy): *Iunonib(us) Mátrón(ae) ex visu c. vir max*, Verona: *Iunoni[...]* *Matron[...]*,⁴⁵¹ and from Cispadane Gaul, in Pitinum Pisarense: *Matronis Iunonibus [...]* *Sacrum [...]*.⁴⁵² Similarly, the Matres Suleviae are named Junones in an inscription from Marquis (Pas-de-Calais).⁴⁵³ Another example is that of the Gabiae, who are called Matronae in Miel (Germany): *Matronis Gabiabus Nelev[---] Cai fil[ius] vslm*,⁴⁵⁴ and Junones in Cologne and Xanten: *Iunoniibus Gabiabus Masius votum retulit ; Iunonibus sive Gabiabus m(onumentum)*.⁴⁵⁵ These various instances show that the term Junones was believed to be identical to the term Matronae. It may even have completely replaced it in some areas after the Roman invasion, such as in large parts of Cisalpine Gaul.⁴⁵⁶

B) Roman *Parcae/Fatae*

The 'Mothers' are also equated with the Roman *Parcae*, *Fatae* or *Fatae*. Two dedications from Britain exemplify this connection. The first one was found on the shore at Skinburness, near Silloth (Cumbria): *Matribu[s] Par(cis) [...]*, 'To the Mothers the Fatae',⁴⁵⁷ and the other in Carlisle (Cumbria): *Matrib(us) Parc(is) pro salut(e) Sanctiae Geminae*, 'To the Mother Goddesses, the Fatae, for the welfare of Sanctia Gemina' (fig. 19).⁴⁵⁸ Another noteworthy example is that of the Matronae Dervonnae 'Mother Goddesses of the Oak', venerated in Milan (Italy): *Matronis Dervonnis C(aius) Rufinus Apronius vslm*, 'To the Matronae Dervonnae, C(aius) Rufinus Apronius paid his vow willingly and deservedly',⁴⁵⁹ who are given the title of Fatae in an inscription from Brescia (Italy): *Fatis Dervonibus vslm M(arcus) Rufinius Severus*, 'To the Fatae Dervonnae Marcus Rufinus Severus paid his vow willingly

⁴⁴⁸ There are many examples in Cisalpine Gaul, such as *CIL V 3234-3240* (Verona) ; Pascal, 1964, p. 117.

⁴⁴⁹ Anwyl, 1906a, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁰ Duval, 1957, p. 54 ; *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 1107-1108.

⁴⁵¹ *CIL V*, 5450, 5249, 3237.

⁴⁵² *CIL XI*, 8082.

⁴⁵³ *CIL XIII*, 3561.

⁴⁵⁴ *F 273*.

⁴⁵⁵ *CIL XIII*, 8192, 8612.

⁴⁵⁶ Anwyl, 1906a, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁷ *RIB 881* was found in 1866. It is in the British Museum.

⁴⁵⁸ *RIB 951* was found in 1861 near the *Carlisle Journal Office*, English Street. The base has a socket on the top, which may have been for a relief* representing the 'Mothers'.

⁴⁵⁹ *CIL V*, 5791 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 44.

and deservedly'.⁴⁶⁰ This example shows that the terms *Matronae* and *Fatae* are connected with one another and that the 'Mothers' were believed to share some of the functions of the Roman female deities.



Fig. 19: Base of buff sandstone dedicated to the *Matres Parcae* from Carlisle (Cumbria). In *Carlisle Museum. Haverfield, 1982, p. 327.*

The *Parcae* are the late triple representation of the Roman goddess *Parca*, who originally presided over childbirth and destinies.⁴⁶¹ Her name may come from the Latin verb *pario*, 'to give birth' or 'to produce' (for the earth).⁴⁶² The *Fatae*, from Latin *fatum* ('oracle, prediction'; 'fate', 'destiny'; 'life-time', inducing death; 'fatality', 'unfortune'), or *Parcae* ('Those who bring forth the child') are the Roman counterparts of the Greek *Moirai* (*Μοῖραι*), whose name, generally translated as 'Cutters-off' or 'Allotters', can be related to Greek *moira* designating the 'part', the 'share', the 'portion' and to Greek *móros* referring to 'lot' or 'fate', with the idea of dispensing good as well as bad.⁴⁶³ They are generally represented as three female deities, called the *Tria Fata* ('the Three Destinies'), for they supervise and embody the destiny of humankind from birth to death.⁴⁶⁴ While *Nona* ('Ninth'), the equivalent of Greek *Klotho* ('Spinner'), spins the web of life with her distaff and presides over childbirth, *Decima* ('Tenth'), who is similar to Greek *Lakheis* ('the Drawing of Lots'), protects marriage and holds the thread of life i.e. dispenses fate. The third one, *Morta* ('Death'), the equivalent of the Greek *Atropos* ('Inevitable' or 'Unchangeable One'), cuts the thread of life and symbolizes death.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁰ *CIL* V, 4208.

⁴⁶¹ Roscher, vol. 3.1, p. 1570 ; *DNP*, vol. 9, p. 327.

⁴⁶² Bek-Pedersen, 2007, p. 61.

⁴⁶³ Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 137 ; Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 60-61 relates this Greek word to Old Norse *Hlutr*, "which describes the individual lot used for lot-casting but also a kind of amulet or oracle as well as a share or part of a whole".

⁴⁶⁴ *LIMC*, vol. 6.1, pp. 636-648, vol. 6.2, pp. 375-380 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 217, 767-768, 797.

⁴⁶⁵ Lampe, G. (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961, pp. 261, 759, 794 ; Bek-Pedersen, 2007, p. 66 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 137-138.

The Parcae or Fatae are honoured on their own in many inscriptions from Britain, such as in Carlisle (Cumbria): *Parcis Probo Donatalis pater v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Fatae for Probus his father Donatalis gladly and deservedly fulfilled his vow' (fig. 20);⁴⁶⁶ from Germany, such as in Wies-Oppenheim,⁴⁶⁷ Cologne⁴⁶⁸ and Cleves;⁴⁶⁹ and from Gaul, where they are principally represented in the Narbonese region, such as in Nîmes (Gard),⁴⁷⁰ Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône),⁴⁷¹ Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse),⁴⁷² Orange (Vaucluse),⁴⁷³ Apt (Vaucluse),⁴⁷⁴ and Rians (Var).⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁶ *RIB* 953 now in Carlisle Museum.

⁴⁶⁷ *CIL* XIII, 6223: *Deabus Parcis C(?)aesonius Liberalis vet(eranus) l(eg.) [VIII?] [A]u[g.] v. [s.]*.

⁴⁶⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8179: *FATIS*.

⁴⁶⁹ *CIL* XIII, 8687: *Fatis A[u]g[...]*.

⁴⁷⁰ *CIL* XII, 3045, 3046: *Fatis T. Pomponius ex voto* ; *CIL* XII, 3111, 5890 (*Parcae*).

⁴⁷¹ *CIL* XII, 645: *Valeria Elevteria Parcis vs[l]m*.

⁴⁷² *CIL* XII 1281: *Fatis Cornelius [...]*.

⁴⁷³ *CIL* XII, 5835: *Fatuis sanctis* ; Vallentin, 1880, p. 32.

⁴⁷⁴ *CIL* XII, 1095.

⁴⁷⁵ *CIL* XII, 348: *Parcis V. S. C Nicinius Gra[ft]us*.



Fig. 20: Altar from Carlisle dedicated to the Parcae (Cumbria, GB). Haverfield, 1982, p. 336, n°3.

This concept of fate-women is also found in Norse mythology, in the mythical characters of the Nornes (*Nornir*), which generally appear three in number, especially in later medieval texts. A poem from around 1,000 AD, entitled the *Vǫluspá* (19-20) or 'The Sybil's Prophecy', which is comprised in the *Edda*, has them standing by the fountain of Urðr and watering the ash tree Yggdrasil to prevent it from withering.⁴⁷⁶ The poem is the following:

Ask veit ek standa, / heitir Yggdrasill, / hár baðmr, ausinn / hvíta auri; / þaðan koma dggvar / þærs í dala falla; / stendr æ yfir, grænn / Urðar brunni. þaðan koma meyar, / margs vitandi, / þriár, ór þeim sæ / er und þolli stendr; / Urð héto eina, / aðra Verðandi, / -skáro á skíði- / Skuld ina þriðio. / þær lgg lggðo, /

⁴⁷⁶ Generally this poem is the first one appearing in the various editions of the *Edda*. McKinnel, 2005, pp. 37-38 ; Mortensen, 2003, p. 25. The date of this work is not certain and still controversial.

þær líf kuro / alda b#rnum, / ørl#g seggia.⁴⁷⁷ I know an ash that stands / called Yggdrasill, / a tall tree, watered / with white silt; / from there comes the dew / which falls in the valleys; / it stands eternally, green / over the well of Urðr. From there come maidens, / very knowledgeable, / three, from that lake / which stands under the tree; / one they called Urðr, / another Verðandi, / -they carved on slips of wood- / Skuld the third one. / They laid down laws, / they chose life / for the children of men, / the fate of men.⁴⁷⁸

It seems that, originally, there was only one goddess embodying Fate: Urðr. In Old Norse, the noun *urð* means 'fate' when it is feminine and 'death' when it is masculine.⁴⁷⁹ It is cognate with Old German *wurd* and Old English *wyrd*, 'destiny'. Under the Greco-Roman or Celtic influence, Urðr was later tripled and given two sisters bearing the names of Verðandi ('happening, becoming, taking place now'), the present participle form of the Old Norse verb *verða*, 'to become', and Skuld ('debt' or 'something owed').⁴⁸⁰ On account of an etymological misinterpretation, medieval scholars translated their three names as 'Past' for Urðr, 'Present' for Verðandi and 'Future' for Skuld, certainly to justify and illustrate their functions as embodiment of Fate.⁴⁸¹

It is generally accepted by scholars that the Old Norse texts describe the *Nornir* as spinners, holding and weaving the thread of human life in their hands, but Karen Bek-Pedersen has demonstrated in her thesis entitled *Nornir in Old Norse Mythology* that spinning-Nornir are actually never mentioned or alluded to in the original sources.⁴⁸² This idea, which is generally taken for granted, must have arisen from the well-known characters of the Roman Parcae or Greek Moirai, who are clearly described as weavers of fate in the Classical texts.⁴⁸³ As this poem tells, the main function of the Nornir is to preside over the destiny of humankind and to apply the law of nature and fate to them: "They laid down laws, they chose life for the children of men, the fate of men".⁴⁸⁴

In addition to being associated with the Parcae in the epigraphy, the Matres are also sometimes represented in the iconography as three women possessing some of their attributes, which are generally the spindle, the distaff and the scroll. Such is the case on

⁴⁷⁷ Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 64-65 (from Neckel, 1936).

⁴⁷⁸ Beck-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 64-65. Other editions of the *Völuspá* with an English translation: Pálsson, Hermann, *Völuspá - The Sybil's Prophecy, Edinburgh, Lockharton Press, 1996* ; Sigurðr, Nordal, *Völuspá, translated into English by Benedizk, B.S., & McKinnell, J., Medieval Texts, Number 1, Durham & St Andrews, 1978.*

⁴⁷⁹ Mortensen, 2003, pp. 48-49 ; Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 24, 32, 67-68, 174-176 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 331-332.

⁴⁸⁰ Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁸¹ This idea is often repeated in general works about Germanic and Norse mythology. See, for instance, Ringgren & Ström, 1966, p. 230. Bek-Pedersen, pp. 67-68 explains that Verðandi was interpreted as meaning 'Present', because it is the present participle form of the verb *verða*, 'to become'. As for Skuld, it can be related to the verb *skulu*, which has the meanings of 'shall, must' or 'bidding, need, duty, obligation', with the idea of 'events to come', which is why it was interpreted as 'Future'. Finally, Urð was sometimes related to the past plural form *urðu* of the verb *verða*, 'to happen, come to pass, take place' which indicates that things 'did happen'. This similarity between the noun *urðr* and the past form *urðu* led to the false interpretation of 'Past'.

⁴⁸² Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 120-177.

⁴⁸³ *Illiad*, XX, 127-128, XXIV, 209, 525 ; *Odyssey*, VII, 195, XI, 139. For other instances and more details, see Bek-Pedersen, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁸⁴ Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 173-210.

the relief* found in Trier, which has three goddesses, holding a spindle, a cloth and a distaff (from right to left).⁴⁸⁵ The relief* from Metz is more dubious, for only a clumsy drawing of it remains.⁴⁸⁶ Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, of the three goddesses situated above a tree-faced head, the one on the left lifts a distaff in her left hand and holds a spindle in her right hand. Similarly, a relief* from Dannstadt represents a group of several goddesses: Victory, Maia, a goddess with a torch (Juno), and two draped goddesses, one of whom holds a bowl in her right hand and the other one a spindle in her left hand.⁴⁸⁷ As for the relief* from Spire, it shows a goddess holding a ball of wool in her lap, which recalls the spinning of the Fatae.⁴⁸⁸ Finally, two bas-reliefs* discovered in Nuits-Saint-Georges (les Bolards), show a trio of goddesses, holding a baby, a patera*, as well as the beam of a pair of scales and a scroll or *volumen*.⁴⁸⁹ These attributes, which are undoubtedly borrowed from the myth of the Roman Parcae, represent the power of the mothers over life and destiny. They are perceived as weavers of fate and prophetesses.

C) The Nymphs

From the Roman invasion, particularly in the south and south-east of Gaul, the cult of the 'Mothers' seems to have often been replaced by the Greco-Roman Nymphs, whose name in Greek *nýmphai* and in Latin *nymphae* means 'young woman', 'bride'.⁴⁹⁰ In Classical mythology, the Nymphs are youthful and beautiful female Nature deities who inhabit the sea, rivers, springs, trees, mountains, and generally appear in groups.⁴⁹¹ The association between the 'Mothers' and the Nymphs was made especially in the context of healing waters and sanctuaries, for the Nymphs are usually remembered as female water-spirits and represented in the Greco-Roman iconography as half-naked or naked women, generally appearing three in number.⁴⁹² An altar from the springs of Allègre-les-Fumades or Fonts-Belles (Gard) combines an inscription *Nymphis Casunia Quintina v.[s. l.] m.*, 'To the Nymphs, Casunia Quintina paid her vow willingly and deservedly', with a depiction of three Nymphs, who stand half-naked, holding a shell in front of them. Their hair is loose and they wear bracelets around their arms, above the elbow (fig. 21).⁴⁹³ On the same site was discovered another altar having a goddess, lying on an urn, surmounted by three busts of Nymphs (fig. 21). The figuration goes with the following inscription: *Nymp(his) Quintina Maximi*

⁴⁸⁵ RG 4937 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 184 ; Wightman, 1970, p. 217.

⁴⁸⁶ RG 7234 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 95, 184.

⁴⁸⁷ RG 5990 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 186.

⁴⁸⁸ RG 5958.

⁴⁸⁹ Deyts, 1976, n°170 and n°171. The two reliefs* were found in wells. In Latin, *volumen* means 'rolled up manuscript or book, roll of parchment or papyrus scroll'.

⁴⁹⁰ Lavagne, 1979, p. 192 ; *Brill's*, vol. 9, p. 928 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 131.

⁴⁹¹ *Brill's*, vol. 9, p. 928 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 200-201, 215-216, 780 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 233. There are various types of Nymphs, such as the Dryads, who are tree-nymphs, the Meliae, nymphs of ash-trees, the Oreads, mountain-nymphs, the Naiads, water-nymphs, the Nereids, sea-nymphs, the Oceanids, ocean-nymphs, the Acheloids, nymphs of the river Achelous, etc.

⁴⁹² *LIMC*, vol. 8.1, Suppl., pp. 891-902, vol. 8.2, Suppl., pp. 584-597.

⁴⁹³ It was found in 1876. *CIL* XII, 2845 ; *CAG*, 30.2, *Le Gard*, 1999, p. 139, fig. 80 ; *RG* 507.

f(ilia) v.s.l.m., 'To the Nymphs, Quintina daughter of Maximus paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.⁴⁹⁴

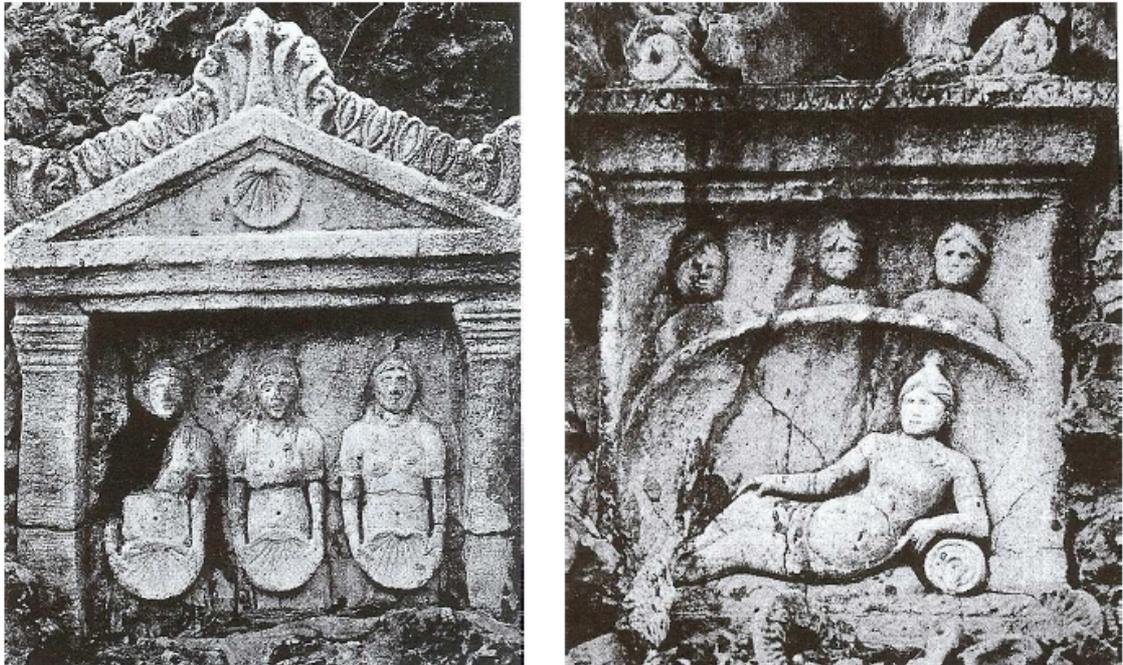


Fig. 21: Bas-reliefs* from the spring of Les Fumades, Allègre (Gard), representing a trio of goddesses, called Nymphs. Left: RG 507 and CIL XII, 2845. Right: RG 506 ; CIL XII 2849.

Only one dedication associates the terms *Matres* and *Nymphs*. It is engraved on a votive altar and was discovered in a place known as 'Val des Nymphes', situated east of the village of La Garde-Adhémar (Drôme), in the territory of the Tricastini: *Matris Nymphis [...o...]jernus Ply[ca]rpus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Mothers Nymphs, [...o...]jernus Polycarpus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁴⁹⁵ The altar can be seen at the entrance of the church of Saint-Michel de la Garde-Adhémar (fig. 22).

⁴⁹⁴ CIL XII 2849 ; CAG, 30.2, *Le Gard*, 1999, p. 139 ; RG 506. In Nîmes, CIL 3105 has also a representation of three women, above which is engraved the following inscription: *Nymphis Sacrum*, 'Sacred to the Nymphs'.

⁴⁹⁵ CAG, 11, *Drôme*, 1957, p. 50, n°38 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 95-96, n°127. For details on the Tricastini tribe, see Kruta, 2000, p. 845. The name of the dedicator is of Greek origin.



Fig. 22: Altar dedicated to the *Matres Nymphae* from the 'Val des Nymphes' (Drôme). (Source: church of Saint-Michel de la Garde-Adhémar).

The Nymphs are venerated on their own in numerous inscriptions from the Continent and Britain. In Britain, they are for instance venerated at the foot of Croy Hill (Dunbarton), at Greta Bridge fort (Rokeby, Yorkshire), in Chester (Cheshire), in Risingham (Northumbria) and in Carvoran (Northumbria): *Deabus Nymphis Vetti[a] Mansueta e[t] Claudia Turi[a]nilla fil(ia) v(otum) s(oluerunt) l(ibentes) [m(erito)]*, 'To the Goddesses Nymphs Vettia Mansueta and Claudia Turianilla, her daughter, willingly and deservedly fulfilled their vow'.⁴⁹⁶ In Gaul, they are more specifically honoured in Narbonese Gaul, where more than thirty dedications to the Nymphs have been discovered,⁴⁹⁷ notably in St-Saturnin d'Apt (Vaucluse),⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ RIB 2160, 744, 460, 1228, 1789.

⁴⁹⁷ *Pauly*s, vol. 17.2, pp. 1527-1599 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 88 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 32. *CIL* XII, 2926, 1090-1093, 1177, 1325-1328, 2845-2850, 2926, 3103-3109, 4187, 5772, 2352.

⁴⁹⁸ *CIL* XII, 1090-1093.

Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse),⁴⁹⁹ Carpentras (Vaucluse),⁵⁰⁰ Allègre-les-Fumades (Gard),⁵⁰¹ Uzès (Gard),⁵⁰² Nîmes (Gard),⁵⁰³ Montpellier (Hérault),⁵⁰⁴ Aix-en-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône).⁵⁰⁵ This can be explained by the fact that there are many curative springs in the area. They are also worshipped in other areas from Gaul and Germany, such as in Auch (Gers),⁵⁰⁶ Lyons (Rhône),⁵⁰⁷ Langres (Haute-Marne),⁵⁰⁸ Tongres (Belgium),⁵⁰⁹ Miltenberg (Germany),⁵¹⁰ Zingsheim (Germany),⁵¹¹ Dormagen (Germany),⁵¹² etc.⁵¹³

The Nymphs are generally anonymous, but a few inscriptions from Britain and Gaul impart them divine titles, some of which are definitely Celtic, while others are not. The Nymphs are for instance called 'Percernes' in a single dedication from Vaison-la-Romaine: *Nymphis Aug(ustis) Percernibus T(itus) Gingtius Dionysius ex voto*, 'To the August Nymphs Percernes Titus Gingtius Dionysius offered this'.⁵¹⁴ Their name might be derived from Indo-European **perkw-*, 'oak', which became **kw-erkw-*, in Common Celtic.⁵¹⁵ Lambert yet specifies that Percernibus is likely to be Ligurian rather than Celtic.⁵¹⁶ As for the goddess Brigantia, who undeniably bears a Celtic name,⁵¹⁷ she is surprisingly called *deae Nymphae* (dative sing.) on an altar discovered near Hadrian's Wall (GB), although she is generally associated with war deities, such as Victoria or Caelestis.⁵¹⁸ The inscription is the following (fig. 23):

Deae Nymphae Brig(antiae) quod [uo]juerat pro sal[ute et incolumitate] dom(ini) nostr(i) Inuic(ti) imp(eratoris) M(arci) Aurel(i) Seueri Antonini Pii Felic[i]s Aug(usti) totiusque domus diuinae eius M(arcus) Cocceius Nigrinus [pr]oc(urator) Aug(usti)

⁴⁹⁹ CIL XII, 1325-1329.

⁵⁰⁰ CIL XII, 1177.

⁵⁰¹ CIL XII, 2845-2849.

⁵⁰² CIL XII, 2926.

⁵⁰³ CIL XII, 3103.

⁵⁰⁴ CIL XII, 4187.

⁵⁰⁵ CIL XII, 5772.

⁵⁰⁶ CIL XIII, 437-438.

⁵⁰⁷ CIL XIII, 1778.

⁵⁰⁸ CIL XIII, 5678.

⁵⁰⁹ CIL XIII, 3605.

⁵¹⁰ CIL XIII, 6606.

⁵¹¹ CIL XIII, 7832.

⁵¹² CIL XIII, 8521-8522.

⁵¹³ For other instances, see CIL XIII, 21, 50, 6265, 6649, 6750, 7210, 7278-7279, 7460, 7691, 7724, 7758, 7691, 8156 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 84-89 & vol. 2, pp. 62-97.

⁵¹⁴ CIL XII, 1329.

⁵¹⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 148, 229 ; Hatt, MDG 2, p. 90 translates Percernibus by 'transparent' without explaining his etymology*, presumably through a Latin analysis: *per*, 'trough'+verb *cerno*, *cernere*, 'to perceive'.

⁵¹⁶ Lambert (March 2009): personal communication.

⁵¹⁷ See the section on Brigantia in Chapter 2.

⁵¹⁸ RIB 628 (Castleford), 627 (Greetland) for Victoria ; RIB 1131 (Corbridge) for Caelestis. See Chapter 3 for more details.

*n(ostri) deuo[tissim]us num[ini maies]tatiq[ue] eius u(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito) This offering to the goddess-nymph Brigantia, which he had vowed for the welfare and safety of our Lord the Invincible Emperor Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus and of his whole Divine House, Marcus Cocceius Nigrinus, procurator of our Emperor and most devoted to his deity and majesty, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled.*⁵¹⁹

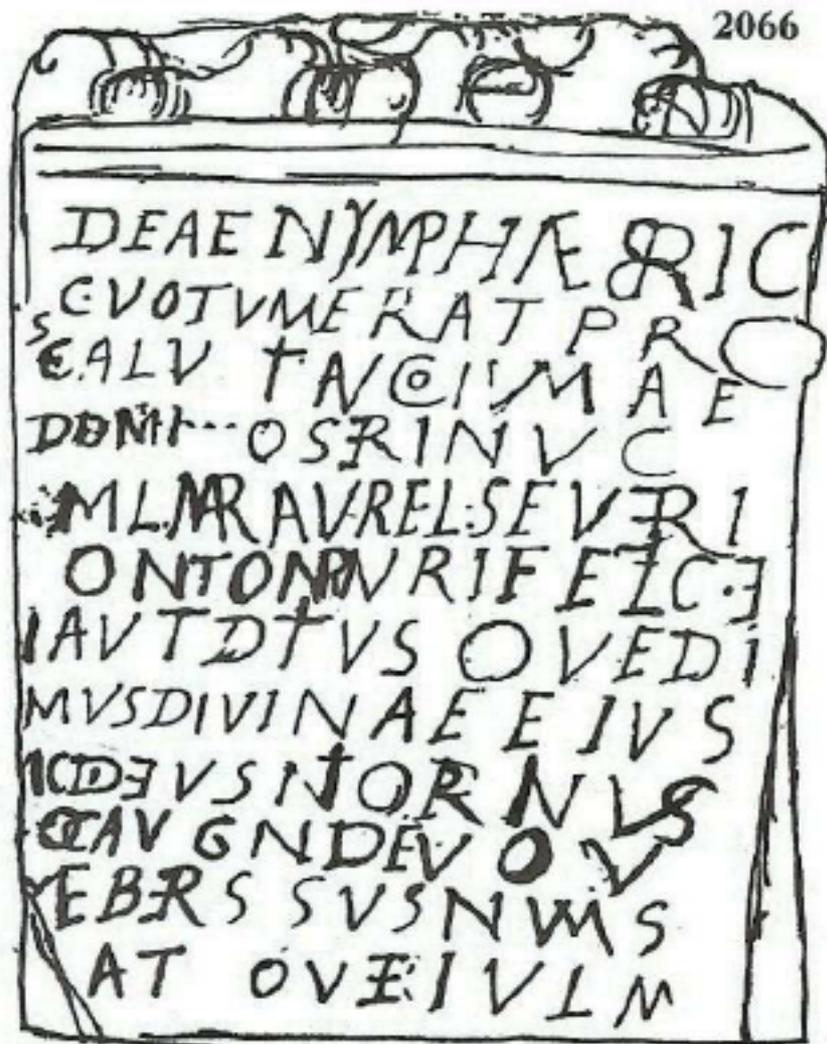


Fig. 23: Altar dedicated to the goddess-nymph Brigantia from Hadrian's Wall (GB). RIB 2066.

The goddess Coventina, known by fourteen inscriptions at the holy well of Carrawburgh, (South Northumbria, GB), is also called Nymphae (dative sing.) in two dedications.⁵²⁰ The origin of her name is not yet determined with certainty. She might be a Celtic goddess or not. Another famous example illustrating this association between the Mothers and the Nymphae is that of the Nymphs Griselicæ, who presided over the healing spring at Gréoux-les-Bains

⁵¹⁹ RIB 2066.

⁵²⁰ RIB 1526, 1527. See Chapter 4 for more details.

(Alpes-de-Haute-Provence), but the Celticity of their name is however unlikely. One can admit at least the Celticity of the suffix *ika-* in *Griselica*. As a consequence, even though the place-name (or god name) *Grisel-* is not Celtic, the derived form *Griselica* may have been invented by the Celts. The inscription is the following: [*Annia M(arci) ---] fil(ia) Faustina T(it)i Vitras(i) Poll[i]onis co(n)s(ulis). II. Praet(or)is [q]uaest(or)is Imp(er)atoris pontif(icis), [proc]o(n)s(ulis) Asiae uxor Nymphis Griselicis*, 'Annia Faustina, daughter of Marcus, [...] wife of Titus Vitrasius Pollion, consul for the second time, praetor, quaestor of the Emperor, pontiff, proconsul of Asia, to the Nymphs Griselicae' (fig. 24).⁵²¹

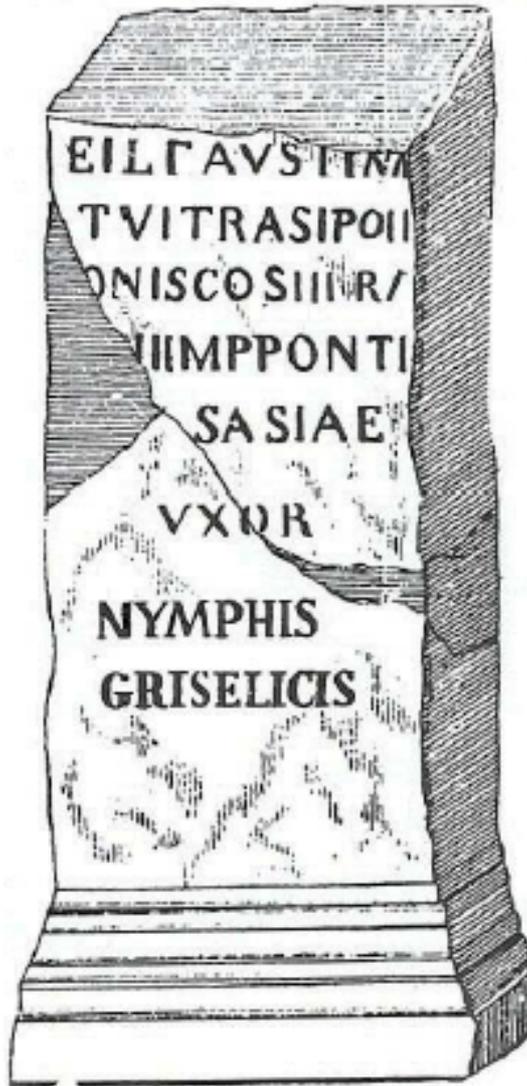


Fig. 24: Altar dedicated to the *Nymphae Griselicae* from Gréoux-les-Bains (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence). CAG, 04, *Les Alpes-de-Haute-Provence*, 1997, p. 222, fig. 181.

⁵²¹ CIL XII, 361 ; CAG, 04, *Les Alpes-de-Haute-Provence*, 1997, pp. 222-223. The altar was found in two pieces; one was discovered in the 17th c and the other one in the 19th c. It is interesting to note that a god called Graselos is honoured in a Gallo-Greek inscription engraved on an altar discovered in Malaucène (Vaucluse). Graselos is the topical god of the River Groseau, which flows in Malaucène. See *RIG I*, 148, pp. 188-195.

The Nymphs are also called 'Volpiniae' in an inscription from Tönnistein (Germany), a term which does not seem to be of Celtic origin: [...?] *et Nimpis Volpinis Cassius Gracill[us] Veteranu[s] v.s.l.m.*, '[...]' and to the Nymphs Volpiniae, Cassius Gracillis Veteranus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁵²² Finally, in a very damaged inscription from Gonsenheim (Germany), the Nymphs are termed 'Laurentes': *[Ny]mphis Lauren[tibus]*, 'To the Nymphs Laurentes'.⁵²³ Olmsted suggests that the Nymphs Laurentes are the protective Celtic goddesses of a local spring near Gonsenheim and that their name must refer to a toponym*,⁵²⁴ but in this he is mistaken, for a reference to the Nymphs Laurentes is found in Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁵²⁵ They are indeed invoked in a prayer by Aeneas when he sails to Pallenteum (Mount Palatine, in Rome):

Nymphae, Laurentes Nymphae, genus amnibus unde est, tuque, o Thybri tuo genitor cum flumine sancto, accipite Aenean et tandem arcete periclis.⁵²⁶
Nymphs, Laurentine Nymphs, who give birth to rivers come, and you, O father Thybris with your hallowed stream, receive Aeneas and guard him at last from danger.⁵²⁷

Their epithet actually refers to the territory of the people of the Laurentines, which was situated south of ancient Ostia, in Latium, at the mouth of the Tiber, in Central Italy. They must have been the water spirit inhabiting the rivers of that particular area and are therefore Latin.

D) The *Proxsumae* and the *Domesticae*

In the south of Gaul, thirty-nine inscriptions are dedicated to goddesses called Prox(s)umae, whose origin and essence remain somewhat obscure and mysterious, for they do not seem to be known in Classical religion, although their name is undeniably Latin. It is related to the Latin *proximus*, *proxumus*, which means 'the ones who are the closest, the nearest, the most intimate (to somebody)', hence the translation of their name by Paul-Marie Duval as 'The Very Close Ones', by André Buisson as 'The Closest Ones' and by Anwyl as 'Kinswomen'.⁵²⁸

Their cult seems to have been strictly limited geographically to the lower Rhône valley, on the right and left banks of the Rhône, which is quite unusual (fig. 25). The inscriptions to them were discovered in Clansayes, near Montélimar (Drôme: 1), Barry (Vaucluse: 1), Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse: 6), Orange (Vaucluse: 2), Mazan near Carpentras (Vaucluse: 2), Apt (Vaucluse: 1), Avignon (Vaucluse: 1), Baron (or Uzès?, Gard: 1), Nîmes (Gard: 21),

⁵²² CIL XIII, 7691. This name is studied neither by Delamarre nor by Olmsted.

⁵²³ CIL XIII, 7212.

⁵²⁴ Olmsted, 1994, p. 428.

⁵²⁵ The *Aeneid* dates from 29-19 BC and recounts the legend of the Trojan Aeneas, who went to Italy and became the ancestor of the Romans.

⁵²⁶ **Book, VIII, 71-73.**

⁵²⁷ **Jenkyns, 1998, pp. 532-533.**

⁵²⁸ Duval, 1957, pp. 54, 87 ; Buisson, 1997, p. 271 ; Anwyl, 1906b, p. 41 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 55.

Beaucaire (Gard: 1), Le Paradou (Bouches-du-Rhône: 1) and in Camargue, near Auricet (Bouches-du-Rhône: 1).⁵²⁹

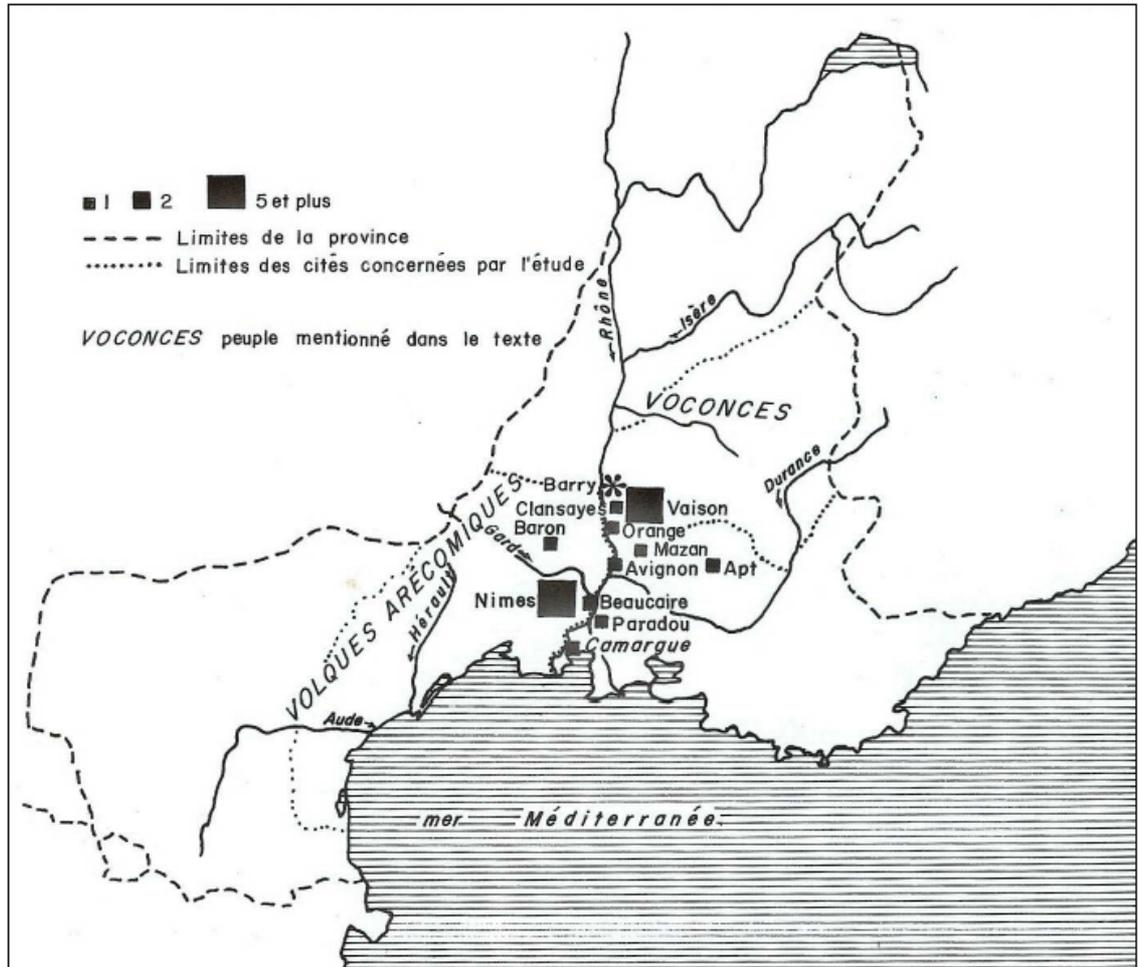


Fig. 25: Map showing the distribution of the inscriptions and reliefs* representing the cult of the Proxumae. Buisson, 1997, p. 275, fig. 3.

Unlike the Junones, the Fatae, the Campestrae or the Nymphs, the Prox(s)umes are never associated with the term Matres, Matrae, Matronae or with a Celtic divine title in the dedications. They are always venerated alone and interestingly twenty-one out of the thirty-nine dedications are offered by women, such as in this inscription from Nîmes: *Laliae Primulae Proxsumis suis v.s.[l.m.]*, 'To her Proxumae, Lalia Primula willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'.⁵³⁰ This shows that women had a very strong bond with those female deities, who were certainly protectresses of women in their everyday and family life. It is also noticeable in the inscriptions that the dedicators generally mark their close attachment

⁵²⁹ Buisson, 1997, pp. 269-280 ; *Paulys*, vol. 23.1, pp. 1037-1039 ; Espérandieu, 1924, p. 5 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 88 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 131 ; Anwyl, 1906a, pp. 31-32.

⁵³⁰ *CIL* XII, 3119. For the various names of the dedicators, see Buisson, 1997, pp. 274-275.

to the Proxsumae by the use of the possessive adjective *suus*, dat. *suīs*, 'his', 'her', 'which belongs to him or her'. This has led scholars to think that the Proxsumae were probably spirits of the grandparents or protective genii guarding the individual, the family and the household, having thus a pronounced domestic and private dimension.⁵³¹ At the end of the 19th c., specialists thought they were 'topical or local' deities, specifically related to the tribe of the Volcae Arecomici, but 20th-21st-century archaeological discoveries have proved that the cult was extended to the Rhône valley and to other peoples, such as the Libicii (?), the Cavari, the Nearchi (?), the Tricastini, the Albici, the Memini, the Vocontii and the Volcae.⁵³² The fact that dedications were often discovered in the context of ancient habitats may evidence the domestic character of the Proxsumae.⁵³³ Moreover, Buisson points out that many of the votive altars are of very small size (around 20-cm high and 15-cm wide), which made them very easy to carry.⁵³⁴ It emphasizes the personal aspect and the intimate link with those deities. Interestingly, the possessive adjective is also used in relation to the Matres, *suīs Matribus*, 'to his/her own Mothers', which establishes a link between them and the Proxsumae.⁵³⁵ Instances are found in inscriptions from Andernach: *Matribus suis Similius Miles ex casse germanicap(ia) f(idelis) D(omitiana) pler(omate) Cresimi vsllm*,⁵³⁶ from Berkum (Germany): *Matribus suis Candidus et Paterna vsllm*,⁵³⁷ from Hadrian's Wall (Drumburgh to Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria): *Matribus suis milite[s...]*, 'To their own Mother Goddesses the soldiers [...]'⁵³⁸ and from York (North Yorkshire): *[M]atribus suis Marcus Rustius v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) Massa l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To his own Mother Goddesses Marcus Rustius Massa gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow'.⁵³⁹

Four of the dedications come with images of Classical type. The altar discovered in Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse) has the depiction of a single goddess standing on a pedestal, wearing a classical tunic and short hair, and holding fruit, a cup or a patera* in her two hands. The inscription above reads: *Proxsumis, Potita, C(...i) Codonis f(ilia), v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Proxsumae, Potita, daughter of C(aius) Codonius, paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.⁵⁴⁰ The Proxsumae are also represented as a group of two goddesses on the altar from Clansayes (Drôme), which shows a very damaged and rough engraving of two busts of goddesses and bears the following dedication: *Proxsum[is] suis Baebia Eroë [s(olvit)] m(erito)*, 'To her Proxsumae, Baebia Eroë paid her vow deservedly'.⁵⁴¹ Finally,

⁵³¹ Espérandieu, 1924, p. 5 ; Lavagne, 1979, p. 193 ; Colson, 1850-1851, pp. 74-75 ; Germer-Durand, Germer-Durand & Allmer, 1893, p. 21 ; Lavagne, 1979, p. 193, note 148.

⁵³² Colson, 1851, pp. 42-75 ; Germer-Durand, Germer-Durand & Allmer, 1893, pp. 20, 59-71 ; Buisson, 1997, pp. 271, 273-274.

⁵³³ Buisson, 1997, p. 275.

⁵³⁴ Buisson, 1997, p. 274. See for instance *CIL* XII, 1024, 3113/2822, 3118, 31223125, 3114, 3115, 3117, 3128 ; *ILGN* 409, 411, 412.

⁵³⁵ Anwyl, 1906, pp. 34, 45.

⁵³⁶ *CIL* XIII, 7681.

⁵³⁷ *CIL* XIII, 7982.

⁵³⁸ *RIB* 2055 was found in 1834.

⁵³⁹ *RIB* 654 was found in 1850 in Park Place, Monkgate, on the line of the road leading north-east to Malton. In the Yorkshire Museum.

⁵⁴⁰ *CIL* XII, 1331 ; *RG* 277 ; Buisson, 1997, p. 276.

⁵⁴¹ *CIL* XII, 1737 ; *RG* 331 ; Buisson, 1997, p. 277.

three busts of goddesses appear on the monument found in Barry, near Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Vaucluse),⁵⁴² bearing the inscription *Beratia E. P[...]| I [P]roxsumas Sibi et Suis*, 'Beratia (prays or implores) the Proxsumae for herself and her relatives', and on the altar discovered in Nîmes (Gard), bearing the dedication *Prox(umis) Bituka v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Proxsumae, Bituka paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.⁵⁴³ On these two monuments, the Proxsumae are represented as a trio of goddesses, which relate them to the various iconographical figurations of the Matres and Matronae, who are generally represented as three in number (fig. 26).



Fig. 26: Relief of three Proxsumae from Barry (Vaucluse) with an inscription naming them. Buisson, 1997, p. 270, fig. 1-2.*

Moreover, although the Proxsumae have a Latin name, it seems that they were originally Celtic deities, for a surprising great number of the dedicators and their fathers

⁵⁴² *CIL* XII, 1251 ; *RG* 7453. See Buisson, 1997, pp. 269-272 for a comprehensive study of this inscription.

⁵⁴³ *RG* 445 ; *CIL* XII, 3114.

have typical Celtic names, such as Sennius,⁵⁴⁴ Attia,⁵⁴⁵ Vrassia,⁵⁴⁶ Bituka,⁵⁴⁷ Aviulla and her father Atilius,⁵⁴⁸ and Codonius.⁵⁴⁹ As regards the names Lucceius,⁵⁵⁰ Verus,⁵⁵¹ Seneca,⁵⁵² Potita, the feminine version of Potitus,⁵⁵³ Laliae, possibly the feminine version of Lalus,⁵⁵⁴ and Baebia, the feminine version of Baevius,⁵⁵⁵ their Celticity is doubtful. Therefore, the Proxumae, being three in number, protecting women and being invoked by people of Celtic stock have many similarities to the Matres, whom they may have replaced in this particular area of Gaul (the Rhône Valley). On account of their geographical distribution, the Gallo-Roman cult of the Proxumae is certainly of indigenous origin and, even though their Gaulish name never appears in the inscriptions, it can be assumed that that their name was translated from a Gaulish theonym, which Lambert reconstitutes as **nessama- (*neθama-)*.⁵⁵⁶

The Proxumae are thus very similar to the Domesticae, who are, as their Latin title indicates 'The Ones of the Household' or 'Relative to the Family'.⁵⁵⁷ They are for instance honoured in inscriptions from Bonn: *Iulia Teratia Domisticis v.s.l.m.*,⁵⁵⁸ and Niederbronn (Germany) *Dom[...]*.⁵⁵⁹ The Domesticae are an epithet of the Matres in various dedications from Britain, such as in Stanwix (Cumbria): *Matribu[s D]omesticis [s]uis Asin[us] S[e]nili[s] vs[um]*, 'To his own Mother Goddesses of the household Asinius Senilis willingly

⁵⁴⁴ *ILGN* 174, Mazan (Vaucluse): *Proxumis suis L(ucius) Sennius Tertiolus*, 'To his Proxumae, Lucius Sennius Tertiolus'; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 165, 231.

⁵⁴⁵ *CIL* XII, 661, Camargue (Bouches-du-Rhône): *Attia Prima Proxumis suis*, 'Attia Prima, to her Proxumae (offered this)'; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 32, 212. This proper name is also known from a dedication to the Matronae Gesationum, see *AE* 1997, 344.

⁵⁴⁶ *CIL* XII, 3127, Nîmes (Gard): *Vrassia P(roxumis) s(uis) vs[um]*, 'Vrassia, to her Proxumae willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'; Delamarre, 2007, p. 206.

⁵⁴⁷ *CIL* XII, 3114; *RG* 445, Nîmes (Gard): *Prox[im]is Bituka vs[um]*, 'To the Proxumae Bituka willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'; Delamarre, 2007, p. 42.

⁵⁴⁸ *ILGN* 409, Nîmes (Gard): *[Pr]oxum[is] [p]ro salu[te] [A]tilius Rufin[us] Clu[ia] A[viv]illa vs[um]*, 'To the Proxumae, for the good health of Atilius Rufinus, Cluia Aviulla willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 30, 34, 212. *Atilius* is also the nomen* or gentile* of the dedicator in *ILGN* 197, Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse): *Proxu[m]is vot[um] T(itus) Atili[us] Felix*, 'To the Proxumae, after making a vow, T(itus) Atilius Felix (offered this)'.

⁵⁴⁹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 69.

⁵⁵⁰ *CIL* XII, 1330, Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse): *Proxum(is) Suis Lucceius Fuscus vs[um]*, 'To his Proxumae Lucceius Fuscus willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow'; Delamarre, 2007, p. 120.

⁵⁵¹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 198, 236.

⁵⁵² *CIL* XII, 1332, Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse): *Proxumis Seneca Secundi fil(ia) v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Proxumae, Seneca, daughter of Secundus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'; Delamarre, 2007, p. 164.

⁵⁵³ *CIL* XII, 1331, Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse): *Proxumis Pottita C(ai) Codoni f(ilia) v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Proxumae, Potita, daughter of C(aius) Codonius willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow'; *RG* 277; Delamarre, 2007, p. 150.

⁵⁵⁴ *CIL* XII 3119, Nîmes (Gard): *Laliae Primulae Proxumis suis*, 'Lalia Primula, to her Proxumae'; Delamarre, 2007, p. 114.

⁵⁵⁵ *CIL* XII, 1737 & *RG* 331, Clansayes (Drôme): *Proxum[is] suis Baebia Eroë M.*, 'To her Proxumae, Baebia Eroë in gratitude for merit'; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁵⁶ Lambert (March 2009): personal communication.

⁵⁵⁷ *Paulys*, vol. 5.1, p. 1296; Green, 1992a, p. 146.

⁵⁵⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8024, 8025.

⁵⁵⁹ *CIL* XIII, 6047.

and deservedly fulfilled his vow',⁵⁶⁰ in Burgh-by-Sands, near Hadrian's Wall (Cumbria): *Matr(ibus) Dom(esticis) uex(illation) [I]eg(ionis) VI [V(ictricis)] P(iae) F(idelis)*, 'To the Mother Goddesses of the Household a detachment of the Sixth Legion Victrix Pia Fidelis (set this up)' (fig. 27),⁵⁶¹ in York (Yorkshire): *G(aius) Iuliu(s) Crescens Matribus Domesticis vsIm*, 'Gaius Julius Crescens to the Mother Goddesses of the household willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow',⁵⁶² and in Catterick (North Yorkshire): *Matribus Domesti(cis) Iul(ius) Victor pro se et suis vsllm.*⁵⁶³ Three other examples, dating from the end of the 2nd c. AD to the beginning of the 3rd c. AD, are found in Bonn (Germany): *Iul(ius) Qu[...] Ma(tribus) Do[m]esticis*; *Matribu[s] Domest[i]ci[s]*; *[Matribus Do]mesticis [...]juibus [...]cdonib [...]flaus [apol]lodo[rus et] M. avr si.*⁵⁶⁴ The Germanic Mother Goddesses Aufaniae are also called Domesticae in two dedications from Bonn (Germany): *Matr[onis] Aufan[iabus] Dom[...]*; *Matribus sive Matronis Aufanabus Domesticis M. Clodius Marcellinus Mles Leg I M v.s.l.*⁵⁶⁵ As shown by the frequent epithet Domesticae, it is clear that the Matres must have had a role of protectresses of the household and must have been worshipped in familial and personal contexts.



⁵⁶⁰ RIB 2025.

⁵⁶¹ RIB 2050.

⁵⁶² RIB 652.

⁵⁶³ AE 1962, 251.

⁵⁶⁴ CIL XIII, 8022, 8023, 8026.

⁵⁶⁵ AE 1981, 664 ; CIL XIII 8021.

Fig. 27: Altar dedicated to the *Matres Domesticae* from Burgh-by-Sands, near Hadrian's Wall (Cumbria, GB). Haverfield, 1982, p. 335.

E) The *Campestres*

Finally, the *Matres* took on a military aspect when equated with the *Campestres*, whose Latin name means 'of the plain'. Associated with the *campus*, 'parade-ground', 'battlefield' or 'encampment', the *Campestres* were the Roman female genii of the army, military camps and the battlefield.⁵⁶⁶ They were held in veneration by mounted units and were thus, as Sylvia Barnard specifies, mothers who afforded protection for the cavalry on the battlefield.⁵⁶⁷ They were also believed to bring prosperity to towns and people.⁵⁶⁸ They had therefore a significant military aspect and were not simply 'Mothers of the Countryside', as Olmsted suggests.⁵⁶⁹

The *Campestres* are honoured on their own in various military inscriptions from Böklingen, Benningen (Germany), Rome (Italy), Gloster Hill near Warkworth (Northumbria), Newstead (Roxburghshire), Auchindary (Dunbarton)⁵⁷⁰ (GB) and the following at Castlehill (Antonine Wall): *Campestribus et Britanni(ae) Q(uintus) P(isentius) Iustus pr(a)ef(ectus) coh(ortis) IV Gal(lorum) v(otum) s(olvit) I(aetus) I(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Goddesses of the Battlefield and Britannia, Quintus Pisentius Iustus, prefect* of the Fourth Cohort of Gauls, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow'.⁵⁷¹ The inscriptions show that the worship of the *Campestres* was confined to soldiers and Roman people.⁵⁷² In Germany and Britain, the dedicators are indeed mostly soldiers of the Roman army, while in Rome they are generally *Equites singulares*, that is the Imperial Guard, composed of horsemen, who were recruited along the Rhine and the Danube.⁵⁷³ This of course enhances their military and classical character.⁵⁷⁴ Eric Birley, who studies and compares the various inscriptions to the *Campestres* in Rome and Britain, specifies that Marcus Cocceius Firmus, the dedicator of the dedication from Auchendavy, near Antonine Wall, had once served with the *Equites singulares*.⁵⁷⁵

In Britain, there are two dedications associating the *Matres* with the Roman *Campestres*. The first one was discovered in 1789 at Benwell (Northumbria): *Matr(ibus)*

⁵⁶⁶ RIB 1334 ; Bémont, 1981, p. 80.

⁵⁶⁷ *Paulys*, vol. 3.2, pp. 1443-1446 ; *Roscher*, vol. I.1, pp. 849-850 ; Barnard, 1985, p. 242.

⁵⁶⁸ Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 1638-1639.

⁵⁶⁹ Olmsted, 1994, p. 363.

⁵⁷⁰ See *Paulys*, vol. 14.2, pp. 2223-2224 ; *CIL* XIII, 6470, 6449 ; *CIL* VI 31139, 768, 31157, 31144, 31167, 31158 ; *CIL* III, 3667 ; RIB 1206, RIB 2121, RIB 2177 found in 1771: *Marti Minervae Campestribus Herc(u)l(i) Eponae Victoriae M(arcus) Coccei(us) Firmus c(enturio) leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae)*, 'To Mars, Minerva, the Goddesses of the Parade-ground, Hercules, Epona and Victory, Marcus Cocceius Firmus, centurion of the Second Legion Augusta, (set this up)'.

⁵⁷¹ *CIL* VII, 1129 = RIB 2196 was discovered "in 1826 in ploughing on the south side of the Antonine Wall a few hundred yards east of the fort of Castlehill. It appeared to have been intentionally buried." It is in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

⁵⁷² Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 97.

⁵⁷³ Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 789-791.

⁵⁷⁴ Daremberg & Saglio, p. 1638 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 97.

⁵⁷⁵ Birley, 1935-1936, pp. 363-377.

Tribus Campes[t]r[is]ib(us) et Genio alae pri(mae) Hispanorum Asturum [Severianae Alexandrianae?] Gordianae T(erentius?) Agrippa prae(fectus) templum a so(lo) restituit, 'To the Three Mother-Goddesses of the Battlefield and to the Genius of the First Cavalry Regiment of Asturian Spaniards styled [...] Gordian's Own, Terentius Agrippa, prefect, restored this temple from round-level' (fig. 28).⁵⁷⁶ In the second inscription, excavated at Nether Cramond (Scotland) in 1697, the Matres Campestris are honoured along with the Matres Alatervae : *Matrib(us) Alatervis et matrib(us) Campestrib(us) coh(ors) I Tungr(orum) ins(tante) VERSCARUM [c(enturione)] leg(ionis) XX V(aleriae) V(ictricis)*, 'To the Mother-Goddesses Alatervae and the Mother-Goddesses of the Battlefield the First Cohort of the Tungrians (set this up) under the direction of [...] the centurion of the Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix' (fig. 28).⁵⁷⁷*

1334



2135



⁵⁷⁶ CIL VII, 510 = RIB 1334.

⁵⁷⁷ RIB 2135 is now lost. According to the RIB, p. 656, the Matres Alatervae are equal to Matres Alaferhuiae (CIL XIII 7862) and Alateiviae. The form Alatervae might be regarded either as a fusion of the two recorded German forms, or as a misreading of Alafervis.

Fig. 28: Left: Altar from Benwell (Northumbria) to the Matres Campestres. Haverfield, 1982, p. 331. Right: Altar from Cramond (Scotland) to the Matres Alatervae and Campestres. RIB 2135.

Through the *interpretatio Romana*, the names of the Matres and Matronae, like the other goddess names of the Celtic pantheon, were associated with Roman epithets or with the names of Roman goddesses, who had similar characteristics and functions to theirs. Like the indigenous Mother-Goddesses, the Junones, Parcae/Fatae, Nymphs, Proxumae, Domesticae and Campestres were indeed represented as multiple or collective female deities, as their names in the plural form indicate. Moreover, the depictions generally represent them as trios of goddesses, such as the Nymphs and the Proxumae, for whom some iconographical devices have been discovered in Gaul. This of course establishes a connection to the Matres/Matronae, who are mainly portrayed as three in number on the numerous reliefs* found in Britain, Gaul and Germany. Finally, they were similar in their functions of fertility, fecundity and motherhood. Finally, all these Romanized goddesses protected the household, the family and women all through their life, as well as in the afterlife, which is why the Matres/Matronae were easily associated with these Roman epithets after the Roman invasion. It is clear that, in certain areas, such as in the south of Gaul, the names and cult of the Nymphs, Fatae and Junones completely replaced those of the indigenous Mother-Goddesses in Gallo-Roman times. Therefore, an important concentration of dedications to Roman female deities in a certain location could indicate an ancient cult of the Celtic Mothers. Such is very certainly the case of the Proxumae, whose thirty-nine dedications are confined to the Rhône valley, and who were worshipped by a significant number of dedicators of Celtic origin.

Conclusion

From all of this, it follows that the origin and character of the Matres and Matronae ('Mother Goddesses'), whose cult was so widespread in Gallo-Roman times as the epigraphy and the iconography show, is a complex issue. Some information has been gathered and analyzed throughout this chapter and several arguments can be put forward regarding this question.

The form of their name seems to be more Latin than Celtic. Yet the word *matir* existed in Gaulish as the Plomb du Larzac evidence, for instance, proves. We can thus speak of 'Latinized Celtic' terms. It is also of great interest to note that three inscriptions in Gallo-Greek language mention a worship to 'Divine Mother Goddesses'. This is significant, for they are in Gaulish, which is very rare and means they were dedicated by Gaulish devotees. Moreover, they date from the 2nd or 1st c. BC, which is the very beginning of the Roman occupation of the Narbonese region. Therefore, the Celtic people at this time were not yet much influenced by the Roman religion. As for the inscription from Istres, its interest lies in the fact that the dedication to the Mothers was directly engraved on the natural element that they embodied and protected: the rock of the hill of Castellan. We have thus here significant testimonies of earlier and indigenous cults honouring the Mother Goddesses.

Even though Matres and Matronae are Latinized forms, it is clear that most of their epithets are of Germanic or Celtic origin. As a general rule, the term Matronae is associated with Germanic bynames* - this, however, does not indicate that the Matronae were Germanic goddesses- , while Matres and Matrae are combined with Celtic bynames*. Matronae and Matres are equivalent in meaning, but it is at the same time possible to identify very

specific and different areas of use. While the Matres are mainly honoured in Britain, in Gaul, especially in the south-east, in North Spain and sometimes in Germany, the Matronae are generally venerated with epithets in the Rhineland and without bynames* in Cisalpine Gaul. At first sight, it seems that an important part of the devotion to the Mother Goddesses is confined to military sites, such as along Hadrian's or Antonine's Wall in Britain or along the Rhine in Germany. However, it must be kept in mind that the places of dedications were areas which the Celts had occupied by immigration or conquest. Many of the dedicators also bear Roman names and/or belong to the Roman army. And yet, some of them have typical Celtic names, which is of great importance, for it evidences and reflects the attachment of people of Celtic stock to their ancient deities.

The iconography of the Matres and Matronae is very Classical in type and generally speaking does not have any hint of Celtic peculiarities, except sometimes in the haircut, when the goddesses wear their hair loose without diadems, or in the style of manufacture. The Mothers are indeed represented with the Greco-Roman attributes of fertility, such as cornucopiae*, fruit or paterae*. Neither is the portrayal of the Mother Goddesses in groups of three particularly Celtic, for there are many instances in Greco-Roman mythology of triple goddesses. Divine triplism actually goes back Indo-European times.⁵⁷⁸ Triadism is nonetheless typical and much stressed in the case of Celtic deities, as evidenced in the Gallo-British images and in Irish and Welsh medieval lores e.g. the three Machas, Brigits, the three goddesses of war, etc.

The fact that in Gallo-Roman times the Matres and Matronae were associated in the inscriptions with Roman goddesses or epithets, such as the Junones, Fatae, Domesticae or Campestris, prove that the Romans needed to identify those goddesses with their own. This epigraphic *interpretatio Romana* obviously means that the Matres and Matronae were originally not part of the Roman pantheon, but belonged to the Celtic beliefs - otherwise why would the Romans have felt it necessary to parallel them to Roman deities? It is true that the concept of maternity is particularly well illustrated in Greco-Roman mythologies, such as in the character of Juno, and that some goddesses are triplicate, such as the Fatae or the Nymphae, and yet, one can notice that, strictly speaking, there are no triple deities who literally bear the plural basic name of 'Mothers'. This revered personage is, however, venerated in the singular form and has different attributes and functions. Moreover, if the Junones, Fatae, Nymphae, Campestris, Domesticae have the general beneficial traits of Mother Goddesses, they yet embody particular aspects of nature, destiny or death and possess specific functions, such as war or the protection of women, children and the household. These goddesses are actually 'derivations' of the Mother Goddesses, who definitely have a wider agrarian character.

We can gather from all of this that the Matres and Matronae, even though they underwent an important Romanization in Gallo-Roman times, were Celtic or Germanic in origin and their cult probably goes back to Indo-European times. It is nevertheless difficult to determine where the cradle of their cult was: Gaul, Cisalpine Gaul or Germany? Cecil Benett Pascal, who studies the cults of Cisalpine Gaul, tends to believe that the cult of the Mothers originated in Cisalpine Gaul, arguing that the dedicators from this province are from the "local civilian population", whereas in Germania Inferior they are mostly soldiers.⁵⁷⁹ And a large number of those soldiers and officers, who undeniably played a significant part in the

⁵⁷⁸ Vries, 1963, p. 132 ; Campanile, 1996, pp. 74-77 says that the Mother Goddesses in Indo-European times had three characteristics. They were collective, local and protective. His interpretation is based on the study of Vedic epithets which describe the gods as 'having several mothers', i.e. 'protected and happy'.

⁵⁷⁹ Pascal, 1964, p. 117.

expansion of the cult of the Mothers, were from Cisalpine Gaul.⁵⁸⁰ Pascal adds that one of the earliest dated inscriptions to the Mothers (37-41 AD) was found near Lake Maggiore.⁵⁸¹

Finally, the Matronae are associated with bynames* in Germany, while in Cisalpine Gaul they are venerated without epithets. This might be the reflection of some earlier stage of worship. Cisalpine Gaul may thus have been the cradle of the cult of the Mothers, but there is no proof that it was imported into the Rhineland.⁵⁸² Others propose that the cult of the Mothers sprang from the Rhineland, for a certain number of dedicators in Cisalpine Gaul are *Equites singulares*, from the imperial guard, the members of which were mainly recruited along the Rhine and the Danube.⁵⁸³ Consequently, these are people from Celtic and Germanic areas, who brought the cult of their Mothers with them and, being far from their home, they were anxious to pay homage to their ancestral deities. As for Karl Simrock, he suggests that the Mothers are Germanic in origin, because they were identified with the Norns.⁵⁸⁴ The worship may equally well have been originally Celtic and then imported to the right bank of the Rhine.⁵⁸⁵ In other words, the Germanic tribes may have adopted the religion of the Gaulish people and taken up a similar name to designate their own Mother Goddesses.

Some scholars have tried to sketch earlier stages of the cult of the Mother Goddesses, but their theories remain very hypothetical. They would think of a pre-anthropomorphic animistic stage in the cult of the Matres. Rüger suggests that the genuine form of the Mother Goddesses would have been a goat,⁵⁸⁶ while Heinz Günter Horn and Spickermann propose that it might have been a tree on account of the frequent drawings of trees on the sides of the altars dedicated to the Matronae.⁵⁸⁷ As Ton Derks argues, however, the fact that Mother Goddesses bear a close relation to trees does not mean that they were previously represented as such.⁵⁸⁸ He assumes "the existence of an (anthropomorphic*) ancestor cult before the beginning of Romanization", which is very certainly the case, for anthropomorphic* statues of so-called goddesses are known from Prehistoric times.⁵⁸⁹

According to Alfred Maury, the worship and tradition of the Mother Goddesses endured in folk beliefs after Christianization and survived in the form of supernatural beings, i.e. the fairies, who are sometimes called Bonnes Dames ('Good Ladies'), Dames Blanches ('White Women'), Bé Find ('White Women'), Bean Sí (the anglicized form of which is Banshee, 'Woman-Fairy'), or Fata ('Fate'), known from many medieval tales and

580 Hatt, MDG, II, p. 91.

581 *CIL* V, 6641 ; Pascal, 1964, p. 117.

582 Pascal, 1964, p. 117 ; Haverfield, 1892, pp. 317-318.

583 Daremberg & Saglio, p. 790.

584 Simrock, 1869, p. 331.

585 Anwyl, 1906a, p. 35 ; Daremberg & Saglio, p. 636.

586 Rüger, 1983, pp. 210-221.

587 Horn, 1987, pp. 51-52 ; Spickermann, 2002, p.p. 148-149.

588 Derks, 1998, p. 124 and note 220.

589 Derks, 1998, pp. 126-127.

folklore.⁵⁹⁰ It is besides noteworthy that the name designating the Welsh fairies, especially in Glamorganshire, is *Y Mamau* ('The Mothers') – the general appellation being *y tylwyth teg* ('the fair folk').⁵⁹¹ The phrase *bendith y mamau*, literally 'the mothers' blessings', is used to avoid fairy kidnapping, tricks and mischiefs. In Wales, the highest point in the Clwydian Mountains (Denbighshire) is named *Y Foel Famau* ('the Hill of the Mothers'), where the otherworld community lives.⁵⁹² The Fairies are even sometimes called 'goddesses' in legends⁵⁹³ and have inherited some characteristics of ancient goddesses: they are associated with natural elements, such as forests, fountains, hills and have magic, shape-shifting or invisibility powers, which are reminiscent of those of the ancient deities.⁵⁹⁴ In Ireland, the fairy folk are called *sí*, earlier *sídh*, 'mount', and live in hills or tumuli*.⁵⁹⁵ The *sídh* in early literature was used to designate the otherworld, that is the place where the ancient Tuatha Dé Danann ('the Tribe of the Goddess Dana') were believed to dwell.⁵⁹⁶

Another interesting point concerns the name Fata, which is sometimes used for the fairies, particularly when they are described as three fairies who foretell the future at the birth of a child and offer him presents. This name is the same as the Roman goddesses Fatae. According to MacCulloch, Fata comes from Latin *fatum* ('fate'), Middle Latin *fatere* ('to enchant'), which gave *faer* ('to enchant') in Old French and a participle *faé* ('enchanted') - see the common appellation *les dames faés* ('the enchanted ladies') in romances.⁵⁹⁷ Old French *faerie*, later *féerie* ('enchantment' or 'illusion'), gave Old English *faery*, Modern *fairy*, plural *fairies*. The Fairies are thus to be regarded as the heirs of the Fatae, all the more so as they are associated with birth and fate. In Brittany, the tradition at a birth was to spread a table for them, which echoes the custom of placing a couch for Juno Lucina in Roman times.⁵⁹⁸ For all these reasons, the tradition of the Fairies might therefore contain distinct echoes of the cult of the Mother Goddesses in general.

⁵⁹⁰ See the study of Maury, 1843 ; Castan, 1875, p. 172 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 206 ; Macculloch, 1911, pp. 45-46, 73 ; Macculloch, in *ERE*, 5, 1955, p. 181 ; Macbain, 1885, p. 37. For details about the Fairies, see Macculloch, in *ERE*, 5, 1955, pp. 678-689 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 206-212 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 200-202.

⁵⁹¹ Anwyl, 1906a, p. 29 ; Anwyl, in *ERE*, 4, p. 574 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 40, 417 ; Gwynn, 1930, pp. 51, 236 ; Ross, 2001, pp. 133-136.

⁵⁹² Rhys, 1878, p. 39 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 29 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 131 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 47.

⁵⁹³ Grimm, 1882-1888, p. 1400.

⁵⁹⁴ Macculloch, in *ERE*, 5, 1955, pp. 681-682.

⁵⁹⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 206.

⁵⁹⁶ Mackillop, 2004, p. 386.

⁵⁹⁷ Macculloch, in *ERE*, 5, 1955, p. 678.

⁵⁹⁸ Maury, 1843, p. 31.

Chapter 2 Nature and Bounty

Introduction

Irish mythology and Gallo-British archaeology are clearly evocative of a worship rendered to the Earth and Nature. The Irish legends illustrate the concept of an otherworld realm, called *sídh*, situated beneath the earth, the mountains or water.⁵⁹⁹ The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] relates that the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, after being defeated by the mortal Son of Míl, retreated beneath the earth and dwelt in ancient cairns and tumulus*.⁶⁰⁰ From that time on, the world was divided in two: human beings inhabited the surface of the earth, while gods and goddesses lived in the Underworld. This explains why caves, hills, springs, lakes and rivers were regarded as entrances or doors towards the supernatural world. In Gaul and Britain, votive offering wells, generally excavated on religious centres, may be a reflection of such a concept.

Iron Age sanctuaries were generally surrounded by a ditch and enclosed by a fence, in the middle of which a pit or 'hollow altar' was dug. The pits could be a rectangular, circular, oval or indefinite shape. Their width could vary from 1 to 5 metres and their depth from 1 to 3 metres.⁶⁰¹ Archaeological evidence reveals that those concave altars served for the deposit of food offerings, which were part of a whole complex of religious rites. The digging of a well was a concrete way to reach and make contact with the gods and goddesses, who were believed to dwell beneath the ground. Such sacred cavities are found in the 3rd/2nd-century BC sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise), where entire bovids were left to decompose in nine pits situated in the heart of the enclosure, and in the polygonal enclosure of the 3rd c. BC sanctuary of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), which had a pit filled in with carcasses of domestic animals in its centre. The most significant example of this type is undoubtedly the 3rd c. BC open-air oval ditched enclosure of Libenice (Czech Republic), which covers a surface of 1600 m² and has an impressive 2-metre deep subterranean edifice of 11x8 metres, composed of two oval rooms, in its south-east part (fig. 1).⁶⁰² This sacrificial pit could be reached by means of a sort of banister or stairs flanked by two walls. The presence in the first cavity of bones of breeding and domestic animals, such as bulls, pigs, sheep, goats and dogs, points to a cult rendered to a pastoral, agrarian and chthonian* deity. Some parts of the sacrificed animals were roasted and eaten in the enclosure, while the non-comestible rest were deposited in the pit and left to rot so as to feed the deity, ensuring the fertility of the ground, and pay homage to her.⁶⁰³ An iron ploughshare, interred at the bottom of a votive

⁵⁹⁹ Dillon & Chadwick, 1973, pp. 182-192 ; Green, 1992a, p. 190 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 359-360, 386 ; Beck, 2003, pp. 76-86 ; Sims-William, Patrick, 1990, pp. 57-81 ; Wagner, 1981, pp. 1-28 ; Spaan, 1969 ; Löffler, 1983.

⁶⁰⁰ Macalister, 1956, pp. 14-39 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 478-481 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 414-416.

⁶⁰¹ Brunaux, 1986, p. 33.

⁶⁰² Lantier, 1963, pp. 272-280.

⁶⁰³ Lantier, 1963, p. 279.

post in the 4th-2nd c. BC ditched circular enclosure of Frilford, Berkshire (Oxfordshire, GB), may be also indicative of a fertility cult rendered to an earth deity.⁶⁰⁴

The offering wells of those Iron Age sanctuaries provide proof of a cult devoted to deities of fertility. Carcasses of animals were dedicated to them and left to decompose in the earth in gratitude of their presents. This rite was also a way of ensuring the future fertility of the land. As the Celts did not write, inscriptions identifying those deities of prosperity cannot be found. As a consequence, the deities invoked remain anonymous. With regard to the various mythologies of the world, it is clear that fertility is mainly achieved and watched over by female deities.⁶⁰⁵ The goddess is actually the archetype of prosperity. This can be explained by the fact that the land has been regarded as a divine mother who nurtures her people since time immemorial. The characters of the Matres and Matronae, widely evidenced in the epigraphy and iconography of Britain and the Continent, significantly illustrate the tradition of 'Mother-Goddesses' feeding and protecting the human race. The babies and horns of plenty they hold in their arms also evidence such a role. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the cult of the Matres particularly flourished in Gallo-Roman times and probably replaced ancient Celtic goddesses of abundance in certain areas. What evidence is there in Irish medieval literature and Gallo-British archaeology of specific goddesses embodying the Earth and purveying fertility? Who were they? What were their functions and how were they honoured?

The first part of this chapter will be devoted to goddesses personifying the land and possessing agrarian features, such as Irish Ériu, Macha, Tairniu – all of earlier Celtic derivation - and Gaulish Litavi and Nantosuelta. The second part will then analyze the literary, epigraphic, etymological and iconographical data proving the existence of goddesses purveying natural riches, such as Irish Mór Muman and Danu, and Gaulish Rosmerta, Cantismerta and Atesmerta. The third part will examine the essence of goddesses attached to specific natural elements, such as animals, trees or mountains – the rivers and springs will be studied in the following chapter. Existing theories concerning the existence or nature of some goddesses, such as Gaulish Arduinna, who is universally understood as a woodland boar goddess, or Irish Flidais, who is generally said to be a woodland deer goddess, will also be considered.

⁶⁰⁴ The Iron Age sanctuary consisted of two rows of six posts each, see Lewis, 1966, pp. 2, 7, 81-82 and fig. 15, 86 ; Cunliffe, 2005, p. 563 and fig. 20.3. For details on the Roman sanctuary, see Henig, 1984, p. 39 ; Hingley, 1982, pp. 305-309.

⁶⁰⁵ See Husain, 2001.

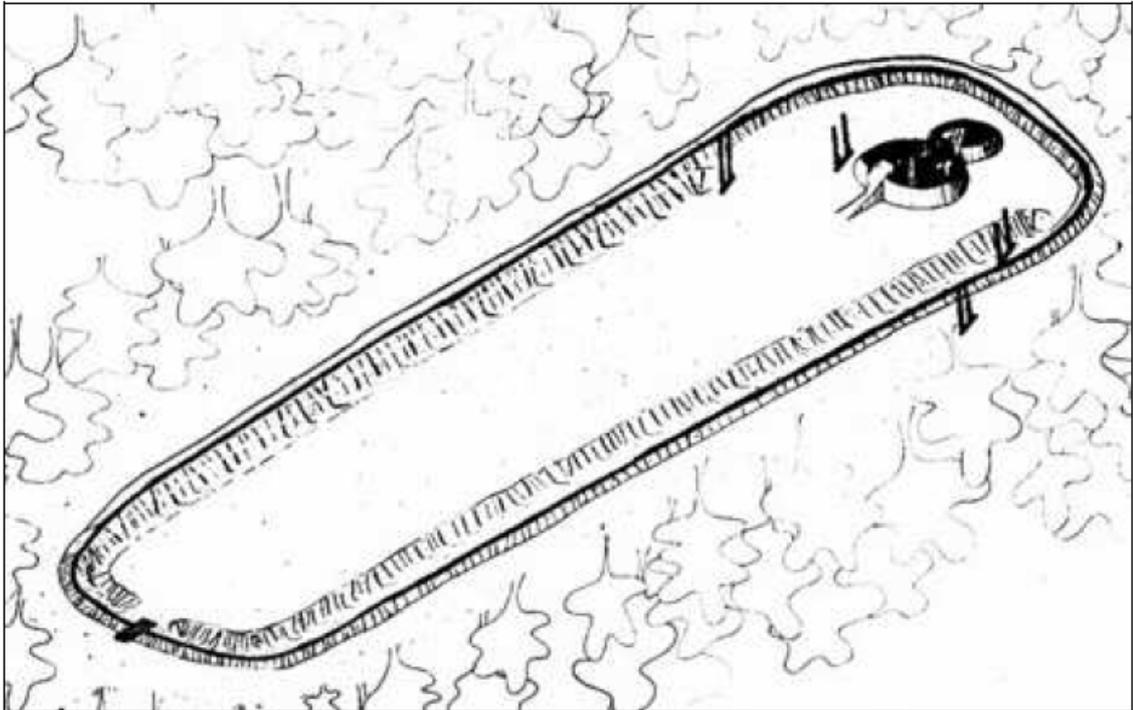


Fig. 1: Graphic restitution of the enclosed sanctuary of Libenice in Czech Republic with an impressive hollow altar at its end. Lantier, 1963, p. 275.

I) The Goddess as the Embodiment of the Land

A) Gaulish *Litavi* ('the Earth')

In Gaul, there are five inscriptions from Mâlain and Aignay-le-Duc (Côte d'Or), in the territory of the Lingones, dedicated to a goddess called Litavi, whose name in Gaulish literally signifies 'Earth', meaning: 'the Vast One, the Broad One'.⁶⁰⁶ Rudolf Thurneysen has demonstrated that Litavi's name was similar to that of the Indian goddess of the Earth *Prthvī*,

⁶⁰⁶ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 204-205 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 225 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 138 ; O'Rahilly, 1946a, p. 13 ; Holder, ACS, vol. 2, p. 423 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 421 ; Hatt, *MDG*, 2, pp.106, 108, 131.

Prthivī, 'Earth' in Sanskrit.⁶⁰⁷ The ancient names designating Brittany or Armorica, i.e. Welsh *Llydaw*, Old Breton *Letau*, Old Irish *Letha* and the Latinized form *Letavia*, all come from a Celtic **Litavia*, 'the Earth *par excellence*', 'the Country'.⁶⁰⁸ As for Le Bohec, he proposes to gloss *Litavi*'s name as 'the door towards the otherworld', but he does not explain this etymology*.⁶⁰⁹

The first inscription discovered in Mâlain reads: *Marti Cicolluis et Litavi [...]*, 'To Mars Cicolluis and to Litavi (...)'.⁶¹⁰ Another dedication, dating from the 2nd c. AD, was found there: *[Marti Cicollui] e[st] Li[st]a[vi] Cresce[ns ?] Sen(n)i(i) M[ar]tialis [fil(ius)] [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) ?]*, 'To Mars Cicolluis and to Litavi, Crescens (?), son of Sennius Martialis, paid his vow willingly and deservedly (?)'.⁶¹¹ *Crescens* and *Martialis* are Latin cognomina*, while *Sennius* is a Latinized gentile* of Celtic origin.⁶¹² Another altar, dating from the 2nd c. AD, was found at a place known as 'En Magnotte' in Mâlain in 1884: *[Ma]rti Ci[co]llui et Litavi L. Mattius Aeternus Ex voto*, 'To Mars Cicolluis and to Litavi, L. Mattius Aeternus (offered this monument) after making a vow'.⁶¹³ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, but his gentile* *Mattius* may be of Celtic origin.⁶¹⁴ An inscription engraved on a monument, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, was discovered in 1637, in the cemetery of 'Sous la croix dressée' in Mâlain: *[Marti Cicolluis] et Litavi ex voto suscepto v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Mars Cicolluis and to Litavi, having made a vow, paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁶¹⁵ The dedicator is anonymous, unless his name was written at the beginning of the inscription, but this is highly unlikely, for this practice was uncommon. Finally, an altar in yellow limestone, dating from the end of 2nd c. or the beginning of 3rd c. AD, was found in re-employment* in the cemetery at Aignay-le-Duc: *Aug(ustis) sac(rum) deo Marti Cicolluis et Litavi P. Attius Paterc[us] [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)]*, 'Sacred to the August deities, to the god Mars Cicolluis and to Litavi, P. Attius Paterculus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁶¹⁶ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. His gentile* *Attius* and cognomen* *Paternus* are Latin.⁶¹⁷ It is worth noting that *Attius* is also attested as a Celtic name in other parts of Gaul.⁶¹⁸

As the dedications show, *Litavi* is always partnered with Mars Cicolluis, whose epithet, attested in other inscriptions from Mâlain, Xanten (Germany) and Dijon (Côte d'Or), might

⁶⁰⁷ Thurneysen, in *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 4, pp. 84-85.

⁶⁰⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 204 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 54 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 297 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 37: a lake lying at the bottom of Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales, is also called *Llyn Llydaw*.

⁶⁰⁹ Le Bohec, 2003, p. 44 refers to Guyonvarc'h, Christian-Jacques, in *Ogam*, XX, 1-2, 1968, pp. 490-494.

⁶¹⁰ *CIL* XIII, 5599 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 263 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 45-46, n°28.

⁶¹¹ *CIL* XIII, 5600 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 265 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 44-45, n°25.

⁶¹² Delamarre, 2007, p. 165 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 45.

⁶¹³ *CIL* XIII, 5601 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 266 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 44, n°23.

⁶¹⁴ Delamarre, 2007, p. 129 ; Solin & Salomies, 1994, p. 115.

⁶¹⁵ *CIL* XIII, 5602 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 264 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 44, n°27.

⁶¹⁶ *CIL* XIII, 2887 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 267 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 176, n°295.

⁶¹⁷ Solin & Salomies, 1994, pp. 26, 376.

⁶¹⁸ Delamarre, 2007, p. 32.

mean the 'Fierce Striker' or the 'Very Muscular'.⁶¹⁹ Four of the inscriptions being discovered in Mâlain, it can be induced that this city was the chief place of worship of the divine couple. Interestingly, Mars Cicolluis is associated with the Roman goddess Bellona in a dedication from Mâlain: *[Mar]ti Cic[ollui] [e]t Bell[onae]*, 'To Mars Cicolluis and to Bellona'.⁶²⁰ From this, it can be deduced that *Litavi* was assimilated to Bellona in Gallo-Roman times.⁶²¹ In Roman mythology, Bellona is the personification of war, as her name derived from *bellum*, 'war' indicates. According to various traditions, Bellona is the sister, daughter or wife of the Roman war god Mars.⁶²² She escorts him on the battlefield, takes part in the fighting and enjoys the carnage. She is often represented brandishing a spear or sword in her hand, wearing a helmet and driving Mars's cart. Bellona is similar to the Greek goddess Ényo, the messenger of Ares who delights in hearing the screams and pain of the wounded or dying warriors.⁶²³ The lack of information does not enable us to affirm that *Litavi* is a goddess related to war. The association of Mars Cicolluis and Bellona could be due to the fact that Cicolluis was certainly a war god as his name tends to prove.

Another interesting Celtic epithet related to *Litavi* is that of Apollo Cobledulitavus, mentioned in a single inscription from Périgueux (Dordogne): *Deo Apollini Cobledulitavo*, 'To the god Apollo Cobledulitavus'.⁶²⁴ According to Delamarre, his byname* can be broken down as *Cob-ledu-litavus* (**Com-lēdu-litavus*), with *com*, 'with', *ledu*, of unknown significance, and *litavus*, 'earth'.⁶²⁵ As for Olmsted, he less convincingly proposes to gloss his name as 'With Great Feasts'.⁶²⁶

As her name evidences, *Litavi* is the embodiment of the Earth *par excellence*. This aspect is greatly illustrated in Irish medieval literature, which portrays a trio of goddesses incarnating the isle of Ireland and bearing names directly referring to the land: Ériu, Banba and Fótlá.

B) The Isle of Ireland: *Ériu*, *Banba* and *Fótlá*

The earlier designation of Ireland, *Ériu*, the anglicised form of which is *Éire*, dative *Éirinn*, genitive *Éireann*, derives from a Celtic form **Iveriu*, signifying 'land'.⁶²⁷ It is equated with Old Irish *íriu*, genitive *írenn*, meaning 'land' or 'ground', which was certainly the primary form of *Ériu*. The designation is already attested in Antiquity, for Greek writers used the word

⁶¹⁹ CIL XIII, 5597, 5598, 5604 (Mâlain), 5479 (Dijon) ; AE 1981, 690 (Xanten) ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 116 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 65 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 343.

⁶²⁰ CIL XIII, 5698 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 74, n° 262 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 45, n°26. *Bellona* is also partnered with an indigenous Mars in Trier (CIL XIII, 3637) and in Mayence (CIL XIII, 6666). Other dedications to *Bellona* come from the sanctuary of Villard d'Hériat: CIL XIII, 5337, 5352 ; see Hatt, MDG 2, p. 134.

⁶²¹ Le Bohec & Sapin, in *Bulletin de la société archéologique et historique de Langres*, XXII, 324, 1996, pp. 64-68/1996, pp. 64-68.

⁶²² Brill's, vol. 2, pp. 589-590 ; Roescher, I, 1884-1890, col. 774-777 ; LIMC, III, pp. 92-93.

⁶²³ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 249, 632, 681 ; Reinach, 1913, p. 255.

⁶²⁴ CIL XIII, 939.

⁶²⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 68, 224, 225 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 38.

⁶²⁶ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 396-397.

⁶²⁷ O'Rahilly, 1946a, p. 10 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 191 ; Vries, 1963, p. 136.

Iernē, e.g. Strabo (*Ἰέρνη*), and later *Iwernia*, e.g. Ptolemy (*Ἰουερνία*), to refer to Ireland.⁶²⁸ Moreover, the term *Érainn* 'land-dwellers', which is related to *Ériu* and is similar to Ptolemy's *Iverni* (*Ἰούερνοι*),⁶²⁹ was used to designate several Celtic tribes living on the isle and more particularly in the south.⁶³⁰

From *Ériu*, Thomas O'Rahilly reconstructs the goddess name **Évernā* or **Éveriū*. He maintains that *Ériu* is a Sun Goddess whose name must be understood as 'the one who travels regularly, who moves in a customary course', that is 'the Regular Traveller',⁶³¹ an etymology* which is rejected by Osborn Bergin.⁶³² O'Rahilly's theory is all the more unlikely as *Ériu* does not bear any solar imagery in the literature.⁶³³ She is never described wearing circlets or rings inferring a connection with the sun or the moon. It is actually her lover, the Formorian king Elatha ('Art' or 'Science'), who is portrayed in *Cath Maige Tuired* with golden-yellow hair, wearing five golden 'wheels' on his neck and travelling across the sea in a vessel of silver, possibly standing for the barque of the sun.⁶³⁴ These attributes may evidence that Elatha is the embodiment of the Sun. Moreover, in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions'], *Ériu* is partnered with a warrior-king, who may be the personification of the sun, since his name Mac Gréine signifies ('Son of the Sun').⁶³⁵ The imagery of those accounts tends to illustrate the archaic belief in the union of the Land-Goddess with the Sun God symbolizing the eternal cycle of Nature: the sun indeed fertilizes and grows the fields.⁶³⁶ As the following account exemplifies, *Ériu* is therefore not a sun-goddess but an earth-goddess *par excellence*.

In verse, Ireland is generally called by two other poetic names: *Banba*, originally *Banbha* meaning '[place of] women's death', and *Fódla*, earlier form *Fótlá*, signifying 'Swarded One'.⁶³⁷ As their names point out, they personify the land of Ireland. *Banba* may have primarily been the sovereign land-goddess of south Leinster and the plain of Meath, for old place names are reminiscent of her name in those areas.⁶³⁸ The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] stages *Ériu*, *Banba*, *Fótlá* as a trio of queen-goddesses, respectively married to the three Kings of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Mac Gréine ('Son of the Sun'), Mac

⁶²⁸ Strabo, in his *Geography*, 1.4.3, written in c. 19 AD, was the first to use the term *Iernē* (*Ἰέρνη*), the most common and long-lasting name for Ireland among the Greek writers, used until the end of the Roman empire. For Ptolemy, *Geography*, 1.2, see Freeman, 2001, pp. 38-39, 66-67. In Latin, it became *Hibernia* by the contamination of the word *hibernus* (e.g. Caesar, Pliny and Tacitus).

⁶²⁹ Ptolemy, *Geography*, 8.3 ; see Freeman, 2001, pp. 74-75: "Ptolemy himself notes that the town of *Iwernis* has the same basic name as Ireland (*Iwernia*)."

⁶³⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 204-206

⁶³¹ O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 297 ; O'Rahilly, 1946a, p. 26 sees a root **ēv* < **ēiv* and compares it to Sanskrit *ēva*, which signifies 'to hasten' or 'course', 'habit' and thus believes in a solar deity moving according to her usual course.

⁶³² Bergin, 1946, pp. 147-53 ; Vries, 1963, p. 136, note 1.

⁶³³ O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 305 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 192.

⁶³⁴ *Elatha* and *Ériu*'s union gave birth to the King *Eochaid Bres* and triggered the war between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomhoire off. Gray, 1982, § 16-24 and p. 123 ; O'Rahilly, 1946a, p. 27 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 304-305 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 177.

⁶³⁵ Macalister, 1941, pp. 152-153, 122-123, 182-183 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 192 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 318.

⁶³⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 192.

⁶³⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 30 (*Banba*) and p. 191 (*Fótlá*) ; Hogan, 1910, p. 95. For instance, *Fótlá* is used as the personification of Ireland in the poetry of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550-1617) ; see Mackillop, 2004, p. 237.

⁶³⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 30 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 33.

Cuill ('Son of Hazel') and Mac Cécht ('Son of the Plough'), whose names reflect ancient solar, natural and agrarian functions completing the earth aspect of the goddesses.⁶³⁹

Tr# meic Cermada Milbe#il meic Eachach Ollathair .i. Mac Cuill 7 Mac Cecht 7 Mac Gr#ine: .i. Mac Cuill, coll a dea 7 Ethur a ainm 7 Banba a ben ; Mac Cecht #arom, cecht a dea, Tethur a ainm, Fotla a ben ; Mac Gr#ne didiu, gr#an a dea, Cethur a ainm, H#riu a ben. The three sons of Cermat Milbel s. Eochu Ollathair were Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, Mac Grene. Mac Cuill, the hazel god, Ethur his name, Banba his wife: Mac Cecht thereafter, the ploughshare his god, Tethur his name, Fotla his wife: Mac Greine further, the sun his god, Cethur his name, Eriu his wife.⁶⁴⁰

The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] recounts that, after the defeat of the Tuatha Dé Danann by the human Sons of Míl, the three goddesses personifying the island met the three Kings and accepted their sovereignty, provided that their name would be on the island from that time on. Ériu met the Kings at Uisneach (Ushnagh, in County Westmeath), the ritual centre of Ireland, Banba at Sliabh Mis (Slieve Mish, County Kerry) and Fótla at Sliabh Eibhlinne (Slieve Felim, east County Limerick). This legend is obviously a medieval dramatization, but it illustrates the ancient belief of the land envisaged as a goddess:

Imacallsat Meic M#led i S#ib Mis 7 Banba. Asbert Banba friu: M#s do gab#il h#renn t#ncabair n#r bo ch#ir in s#n i t#ncabair. Is d# #cin, ol Amairgen Gl#ngel, in fili. Ascaid damsa #aib dana, ol s#. Cia ascid, or siat. M'ainm for in innsi seo or s#. Caidhi t'ainm? or iat. Banba, or s#. B#d ainm dond insi seo, ol Amairgen. The sons of Míl had colloquy with Banba in Sliab Mis. Said Banba unto them: If it be to take Ireland ye have come, not right were the good-fortune in which ye have come. It is by necessity, said Amorgen Gluingel, the poet. A gift from you to me then, said she. What gift? said they. That my name may be on this island, said she. Let it be a name for this island, said Armorgen. Acallsat Fotla in Eblinniu. Atbert a c#tna friu, 7 cuinchid a hainm for in n-insi. Atbert Amairgen: Bud ainm dond insi seo, Fotla. They had colloquy with Fotla in Eblinne. She spake with them in like manner, and desired that her name should be upon the island. Said Amorgen: Let Fotla be a name upon this island. Acallsat h#rind in Uisniuch. Asbert friu: A #cu, or s#, is mochen d#ib; cian #t# oc f#idib far tuidecht. Bud lib co br#th ind insi seo, 7 n# bia co airthir in domuin inis bus ferr. N# bia ciniud bas choml#niu inda for [c]ciniud-si. Is maith sen, ol Amairgen; is maith ind f#stine. N# ria bud maith a buide, ol #ber Donn, sinser Mac M#led, acht riar nd#ib 7 riar cumachta f#in. Cumma duit, ol #riu; n# ba duit tarba na hindsi seo, 7 n# ba dot chlaind. Ascidh damsa, a Maccu M#led 7 a chland Bregoin, ol s#; .i. m'ainm for in n-insi seo. Bid # bas pr#mainm d#, ol Amairgen. They had colloquy with Ériu in Uisnech. She said unto them: Warriors, said she, welcome to you. Long have soothsayers had [knowledge of] your coming. Yours shall be this island for ever; and to the east of the world there shall not be a better island. No race shall there be, more numerous than yours. Good is that, said Amorgen; good is the prophecy. Not right there it to thank her, said Éber Donn, eldest of the sons of Míl; thank our gods and our own might. To thee 'tis equal, said Ériu; thou shalt

⁶³⁹ Vendryes, 1997, p. 44 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 164-165 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 304 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 317-318.

⁶⁴⁰ Macalister, 1941, pp. 152-153 and 122-123, 182-183.

have no profit of this island, nor shall thy progeny. A gift to me, ye sons of Míl, and ye children of Breogan, said she; that my name shall be on this island. It shall be its principal name, said Amorgen.⁶⁴¹

Significantly, the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] relates that the first invader of Ireland was a woman, called Cessair. Her name was used in poetry to designate Ireland; she is thus another emanation of the goddess embodying the isle.⁶⁴² It recounts that Cessair fled the Flood and arrived with fifty women and three men at Dún na mBarc, on Bantry Bay, in County Cork, forty days before the Flood. One week after, she died with her fifty maidens of a disease in Cul Cessrach in Connachta. The five invaders who came to Ireland after her were Partholon, Nemed, The Fir Bolg, the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Sons of Míl. The text is the following:

Do gab#il Cassrach andso s#s, 7 dia sc#laib r#a nd#linn. Ceist: Cia c#ta rogab H#rinn ar t#s, #ar Tustin talman? Ninsa. Cessair, ingen Betha meic N#e meic L#miach, dalta-side Sabail meic Man#ail [...]. Of the Taking of Cessair here below, and of the tales told her of her before the Flood. Who first took Ireland in the beginning, after the Creation of the World? Cessair, daughter of Bith s. Noe s. Lamech; fosterling was she of Sabail s. Manual [...].⁶⁴³

The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] also stipulates that the first woman who invaded Ireland was Banba. Similarly, it recounts that she came with one hundred and fifty women and that she gave her name to Ireland after dying of an illness:

Cia didida cia [sic] ragab Erinn iar tusmid talman? Is ed isbert Lebar Droma Snechta comad Banba ainm na ced ingine fogabad Erinn ria ndlínd, .i. comad uaithi nobet Banba for Erinn. Tri c#icait ogh do dechaid 7 triar fer. [...] Catracha bliadan badar is an indsi: dosainic iaram galar, conerbailtar uili an aen sechtmain. Now who (was the first) who took Ireland after the creation of the world? This is what the Book of Druim Snechta says, that Banba was the name of the first woman who found Ireland before the Flood, and that from her Ireland is called 'Banba'. With thrice fifty maidens she came and three men. [...] Forty years were they in the island: thereafter a disease came upon them, so that they all died in one week.⁶⁴⁴

It is of great interest to note that this paragraph (167) of the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] is an extract from the *Leabhar Droma Sneachta* ['The Book of Drumnat'], also called *Cín Droma Sneachta* ['Quire of Druim Sneachta']. This manuscript, which has been lost since the Middle Ages, was written in County Cavan in the early 8th c.⁶⁴⁵ This early text offers an independent account of the story of the Antediluvians and attests of the antiquity of Banba as a divine figure, who was later supplanted by the humanized character of Cessair.⁶⁴⁶ Another interesting point is the idea of the goddess dying and giving her name to the land. It explains and illustrates how the goddess literally becomes the land. This pattern is well-

⁶⁴¹ Macalister, 1956, pp. 34-37, 76-79.

⁶⁴² Mackillop, 2004, p. 86.

⁶⁴³ Macalister, 1939, pp. 180-183.

⁶⁴⁴ Macalister, 1939, pp. 176-177, § 167, also told pp. 184-185, § 175, pp. 196-197, § 187.

⁶⁴⁵ Macalister, 1939, p. 167.

⁶⁴⁶ Carey, 1987, p. 40.

known in Irish mythology and the texts sometimes describe the land as though it was the body of the goddess.

C) The Land as the Body of the Goddess

In Irish literary tradition, other goddesses have marked agricultural features and bear names referring to the earth. Legends tell of their death and their burial in the land, which then became called after them. From that moment on, earth and goddess were as one and parts of her body could be seen in the landscape.

The Irish goddess Clidna is etymologically related to the land, for she has a name meaning 'the Territorial One'.⁶⁴⁷ Moreover, she is associated with Cúan Dor ('Harbour of Gold'), the bay of Glandore, in Co. Cork, and remembered as Tonn Chlíodhna ('Clíodhna's Wave'), because she was drowned there. She will be studied in more detail in Chapter 4.

Another noteworthy example is the queen-goddess Tailtiu, who was married to the last Fir Bolg King Eochaid mac Eirc and is sometimes said to be the foster mother of the powerful Lugh Lámfhota.⁶⁴⁸ De Vries explains that Tailtiu's name was originally **talantiu*, cognate with Irish *talam*, 'earth', from IE **tel*, 'flat, flat floor'.⁶⁴⁹ Tailtiu thus means 'Earth' or 'Plain'. In the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, she is said to be the daughter of Mag Mór ('Great Field') and to have cleared the forests and dug the plain of Brega, situated between the Boyne and the Liffey (mostly Co. Meath). This is indicative of a significant agrarian character. The legend tells of her death, due to exhaustion, and of her interment in a field which became called after her: Mag Tailtiu ('Plain of Tailtiu'), now Teltown, in County Meath. On her deathbed, she asked to have a feast held in her honour each year. It is known as Óenach Tailten ('Tailtiu Fair or Assembly'). The legend is the following:

A chóemu críche Cuind chain éitsid bic ar bennachtain; co n-écius duíb senchas sen, suidigthe óenaig Thalten. Trí chét blíadan, fodagaib, teora blíadna do blíadnaib co gein Críst, coistid rissein, ón chét-óenuch i Taltein. Taltiu ingen Magmóir maill, ben Echach gairb maic Dúach daill, tánic sund ria slúag Fer mBolg co Caill Cúan iar cath chomard. [...] Mór in mod dorigned sin al-los túagi la Taltin athnúd achaid don chaill chóir la Taltin ingen Magmóir. Ó thopacht aicce in chaill chain cona frémaib as talmain, ria cind blíadna ba Bregmag, ba mag scothach scoth-shemrach. Scaílís a críde 'na curp iarna ríge fo ríge-brutt; fír nach follán gnúis fri gúal, ní ar fheda ná fhíd-úal. Fota a cuma, fota a cur i tám Thalten iar trom-thur; dollotar fír, diamboí i cacht, inse h-Érend fria h-edacht. Roráid-si riu 'na galur, ciarb énairt nírb amlabur, ara n-derntais, díchra in mod, cluiche cáinte ch dia cáiníod. Im kalaind Auguist atbath, día lúain, Loga Lugnasad; imman lecht ón lúan ille prím-óenach h-Erend áine. Dorairngert fáitsine fír Taltiu tóeb-gel ina tír, airet nosfaímad cech flaith ná biad h-Ériu cen óg-naith. O nobles of the land of comely Conn, hearken a while for a blessing, till I tell you the legend of the elders of the ordering of Tailtiu's Fair! Three hundred years and three it covers, from the first Fair at Tailtiu to the birth of Christ, hearken! Tailtiu, daughter of gentle Magmor, wife of Eochu Garb son of Dui Dall, came hither leading the Fir

⁶⁴⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 85-86.

⁶⁴⁸ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 395-396.

⁶⁴⁹ De Vries, 1963, p. 138 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 292-293, 379.

Bolg host to Caill Chuan, after high battle. Great that deed that was done with the axe's help by Tailtiu, the reclaiming of meadowland from the even wood by Tailtiu daughter of Magmor. When the fair wood was cut down by her, roots and all, out of the ground, before the year's end it became Bregmag, it became a plain blossoming with clover. Her heart burst in her body from the strain beneath her royal vest; not wholesome, truly, is a face like the coal, for the sake of woods or pride of timber. Long was the sorrow, long the weariness of Tailtiu, in sickness after heavy toil; the men of the island of Erin to whom she was in bondage came to receive her last behest. She told them in her sickness (feeble she was but not speechless) that they should hold funeral games to lament her—zealous the deed. About the Calends of August she died, on a Monday, on the Lugnasad of Lug; round her grave from that Monday forth is held the chief Fair of noble Erin. White-sided Tailtiu uttered in her land a true prophecy, that so long as every prince should accept her, Erin should not be without perfect song.⁶⁵⁰

Likewise, the goddess Macha is closely related to the land, agriculture and fertility, for her name can be glossed as 'a marked portion of land'.⁶⁵¹ In Irish, the singular word *macha*, plural *machada*, signifies 'an enclosure for milking cows, a milking yard', while *machaire* is 'a large field or plain'.⁶⁵² M. J. Arthurs relates her name to Irish *mag*, Gaulish *magos*, 'field' and supposes that the original form of Macha is **Magosia* ('Plain', 'Field' or 'Earth').⁶⁵³

A poem of the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, entitled *Ard Macha* ['The High Place of Macha'], relates that the first Macha, the wife of the third invader of Ireland, Nemed, was murdered and then buried in one of the twelve plains which her husband had cleared:

In mag imríadat ar n-eich, do réir Fíadat co fír-breith, and roclass fo thacha thig in mass, Macha ben Nemid. Nemed riana bail ear blaid dá sé maige romór-slaid: ba díb in mag-sa, is maith lemm, dara rag-sa im réim rothenn. Macha, robráena cach mbúaid, ingen ard Áeda arm-rúaid, sund roadnacht badb na mberg, dia rosmarb Rechtaid rig-derg. In the plain where our horsemen ride, there, by the will of the right-judging Lord, was buried in fair seclusion a lovely woman, Macha wife of Nemed. Twice six plains did Nemed clear before his home, to win renown; of these was this plain, to my joy, across which I shall wend my steady way. Macha, who diffused all excellences, the noble daughter of red-weaponed Aed, the raven of the raids, was buried here when Rechtaid Red-Wrist slew her.⁶⁵⁴

The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] gives the same account and indicates that her name was given to the plain where she was buried: Ard Macha, modern Ard Mhacha, anglicised Armagh, understood by mediaeval writers as 'The High Place of the goddess Macha'. Actually, this place name would have originally meant no more than 'the high point of the plain', with *ard* signifying 'height', 'raised point' and *macha*, 'plain'. The reversion to goddess-imagery in the context of such a placename is significant. Such imagery was enduring:

⁶⁵⁰ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 146-159 ; Stokes, 1893, pp. 486-487.

⁶⁵¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 325

⁶⁵² RIA Dictionary, M, 11-12 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 169, 378.

⁶⁵³ Arthurs, 1952-1953, pp. 25-29 ; Le Roux, 1983, pp. 135-143.

⁶⁵⁴ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 124-125.

Acht is muchu atbath Macha ben Nemid old#s Andind, .i. in dara H#ithe d#c #ar tiachtain d#ib in H#rinn atbath Macha, 7 iss# c#t marb #renn do muintir Nemid. Ocus is #aithe ainmnigter Ard Macha. But Macha wife of Nemed died earlier than Annind; in the twelfth year after they came into Ireland Macha died, and hers is the first death of the people of Nemed. And from her is Ard Macha named.⁶⁵⁵

In those two legends, Macha is clearly associated with the land and agriculture. And yet, Dumézil, who relies on the *Edinburgh Dinnshenchas*, asserts that Macha does not have an agrarian character. According to him, she has an obvious function of ‘seer’.⁶⁵⁶ If this attribute is indeed plainly described in the poem, it seems yet difficult to dismiss the idea that Macha is linked to the land. It must be borne in mind that the *Edinburgh Dinnshenchas* date from the 15th c., which means they are later than the *Metrical Dindshenchas*. Despite their late date, the *Edinburgh Dinnshenchas* remain interesting, for they speak of the three Machas and relate how they were killed and buried in a land which was then named after them. The first part on Macha, wife of Nemed, is the same as the one related in the *Metrical Dindshenchas* and the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* [‘The Book of Invasions’], apart from the function of foreseeing attributed to her. The second part of the poem depicts how Macha Mong Ruadh (‘Red-haired’) was slain and interred in the field now bearing her name: Mag Macha (‘the Plain of Macha’), surrounding Emain Macha. Finally, the third part tells of Macha, wife of Cruinniuc mac Agnomain, who engendered the debility on the Ulstermen and was buried in a place known as Ard Macha (‘Macha’s Height’). The poem is the following:

Ard Macha, cid dia ta? Ni ansa. Macha ben Nemidh meic Agnomain atbath ann, 7 ba he in dara magh deg roslecht la Nemhead, 7 do breatha dia mhnai go mbeith a ainm uasa, 7 is i adchonnairc i n-aislinge foda reimhe a techt ina ndernad do ulc im Thain bho Cuailngi ina cotludh tarfas di uile ann rocesad do ulc and do droibhelaib 7 do midhrennaib, go ro mhuidh a cridhe inti. Unde Ard Macha. Atchonnairc Macha marglic tri fhis, ratha na raidmid, tuirthechta trimsa Cuailghne fa gnim ndimsa nimuaibre. Nó Macha ingen Ædha Ruaidh meic Baduirnn, is le rotoirneadh Eomuín Macha, 7 is and roadnacht día ros-marbh Rechtaid Rírgerg, is dia gubhu rognídh ænach Macha. Unde Macha magh. Ailiter, Macha dano bean Cruind meic Agnomhain doriacht ann do comrith ann ri heocho Conchobair, ar atbert a fear ba luathe a bean inaid na heocho. Amlaidh dano bai in bean sin, inbhadach, go ro chuindigh cairde go ro thæd abru, 7 ní tugadh di, 7 dogní in comhrith iarum 7 ba luaithiamh si, 7 o roshiacht cend in chede berid mac 7 ingin, Fir 7 Fíal a n-anmann, 7 atbert go mbeidis Ulaidh fo cheas oitedh in gach uair dos-figead eigin, conid de baí in cheas for Ultu fri re nomaide o re Conchobhair go flaith Mail meic Rocraide, 7 adberar ba si Grian Banchure ingean Midhir Bri Léith, 7 adbeb iar suidhiu 7 focreas a fert i nArd Macha, 7 focer a gubha, 7 roclannad a lía. Unde Ard Macha. Ard Macha, whence is it? Not hard (to say). Macha, wife of Nemed, son of Agnoman, died there, and it was the twelfth plain which was cleared by Nemed, and it was bestowed on his wife that her name might be over it, and ’tis she that saw in a dream, long before it came to pass, all the evil that was done in the Driving of the Kine of Cualnge. In her sleep there was shown to her all the evil that was suffered therein, and the

⁶⁵⁵ Macalister, 1940, pp. 132-133.

⁶⁵⁶ Dumézil, 1954, p. 17.

hardships and the wicked quarrels: so that her heart broke in her. Whence Ard Macha, 'Macha's Height.' Macha, the very shrewd, beheld Through a vision — graces which we say not — Descriptions of the times (?) of Cualnge — 'Twas a deed of pride, not of boasting. Or, Macha, daughter of Aed the Red, son of Badurn: 'tis by her that Emain Macha was marked out, and there she was buried when Rechtaid Red-arm killed her. To lament her Oenach Macha, 'Macha's Assembly,' was held. Whence Macha Magh. Aliter. Macha, now, wife of Crunn, son of Agnoman, came there to run against the horses of King Conor. For her husband had declared that his wife was swifter than the horses. Thus then was that woman pregnant: so she asked a respite till her womb had fallen, and this was not granted to her. So then she ran the race, and she was the swiftest. And when she reached the end of the green she brings forth a boy and a girl — Fír and Fíal were their names — and she said that the Ulaid would abide under debility of childbed whensoever need should befall them. So thence was the debility, on the Ulaid for the space of five days and four nights (at a time) from the era of Conor to the reign of Mál, son of Rochraide (A.D. 107). And 'tis said that she was Grian Banchure, 'the Sun of Womanfolk,' daughter of Midir of Brí Léith. And after this she died, and her tomb was raised on Ard Macha, and her lamentation was made, and her pillar-stone was planted. Whence is Ard Macha, 'Macha's Height.'⁶⁵⁷

It is interesting to note that Macha is etymologically related to epithets of Gaulish Mother Goddesses. The byname* of the Matres Mageiae, mentioned in an inscription from Anduze (Gard), may be derived from Celtic **magos*, cognate with Old Irish *mag*, gen. *maige*, meaning 'field', 'plain'.⁶⁵⁸ Could the Matres Mageiae be understood as 'The Mother Goddesses of the Field/Plain'? The inscription is the following: Q. *Caecilius Cornutus Matris Mageis v(otum) s(olvit) [(i)bens) m(erito)]*, 'To the Mothers Mageiae, Q. Caecilius Cornutus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'. The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens.

This root is also found in the name of the goddesses Magiseniae, known from some graffiti engraved on a goblet discovered in Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin): *Deabus Magiseniis*, 'To the Goddesses Magiseniae' (fig. 2).⁶⁵⁹ Their name seems to be composed of Gaulish *magi-*, 'broad', 'big', 'vast' (**magos* 'field') and *seno-*, *seni-*, *sena-*, 'old', 'ancient'.⁶⁶⁰ The Magiseniae might therefore mean something like 'The Broad Ancient Ones' or 'The Old Fields'. From this etymology*, it follows that the Magiseniae were land-goddesses and ancestresses; an aspect reflected in the story of Irish Banba, who simultaneously appears as the ancestress of the divine race and the embodiment of the isle itself. On account of the similarity of the names, some scholars have assumed that the Magiseniae were the consorts of Hercules Magusanus/Magusenus of the military camps, venerated in 22 inscriptions from Romania, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain and Rome.⁶⁶¹ This is actually not the case, for

⁶⁵⁷ Stokes, 1893, pp. 480-481.

⁶⁵⁸ AE 1963, 116 ; *Gallia*, 20, 1962, p. 628. Neither Olmsted nor Delamarre mention these mother goddesses. This interpretation is my own.

⁶⁵⁹ The inscription was found Rue du Faubourg de Pierre, in Strasbourg. AE 1980, 653a ; *Gallia*, 38, 1980, pp. 454-455 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 123.

⁶⁶⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 213-214, 270 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 225, 231 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 34, 37.

⁶⁶¹ The connection is suggested in *Gallia*, 38, 1980, pp. 454-455. For the various inscriptions dedicated to this god, see RDG, p. 50 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 124.

his epithet is to be related to Celtic *magus*, 'servant' and not to **magos*, 'field'. *Magusenus*, composed of *magus* and *senos*, is 'the Old Servant'.⁶⁶²

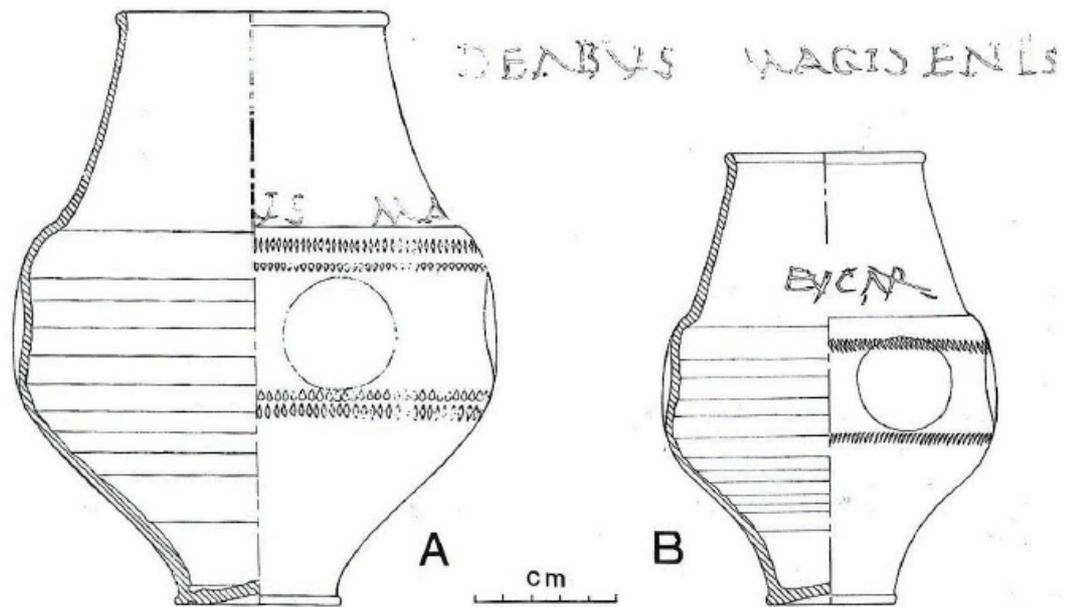


Fig. 2 (A): drawing of the gobelet with the inscription to the Goddesses *Magisenae*, discovered in Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin). *Gallia*, 38, 1980, p. 455.

The concept of the land as the goddess's body is mirrored in accounts specifying that Danu's and the Mórrígain's breasts are eminences in Co. Kerry and Co. Meath. Danu, the mother and ancestress of the Tuatha Dé Danann, brings prosperity to the province of Munster. The *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'],⁶⁶³ *Sanas Cormaic* ['Cormac's Glossary']⁶⁶⁴ and *Cóir Anmann* ['The Fitness of Names']⁶⁶⁵ mention that two hills in Co. Kerry

⁶⁶² Lambert, 1995, p. 60 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 214 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 225: e.g. *magu-senus* with *magus* 'servant'.

⁶⁶³ Macalister, 1941, pp. 122-123, 160-161, 188-189.

⁶⁶⁴ Meyer, 1912, p. 3 ; O'Donovan, 1868, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁶⁵ Stokes & Windisch, 1897, pp. 288-289. *Cóir Anmann* is a document explaining the significance and associations of many personal names from early Ireland, like the *Dindshenchas* elucidates the meaning of place-names.

are called *Dá Chích Anann*, that is 'The Paps of Anu'. These two hills, situated 10 miles east of Killarney, near Clonkeen, have the shape of two breasts and cairn burials at their summit (fig. 3 and 4):

Nó Muma .i. mó a hana nás ana cach coigidh aili a nEirinn, ar is innti nó adhradh bandía in tsónusa .i. Ana a hainm-sein, 7 is uaithi sidhe isberar Da Chigh Anann ós Luachair Degad. Or Muma, that is mó, 'greater' its ána, 'wealth' than the wealth of every other province in Erin; for in it was worshipped the goddess of prosperity, whose name was Ána, and from her are named the Two Paps of Ána over Luachair Degad.⁶⁶⁶



Fig. 3: Dá Chích Anann ('The Two Paps of Anu') in County Kerry, Ireland. Birkhan, 1999, picture n°357.

⁶⁶⁶ Stokes & Windisch, 1897, pp. 288-289.



Fig. 4: Summit of one of the hills called *Dá Chích Anann* in County Kerry (Ireland) where a burial cairn in the shape of a nipple is situated.

The Mórrígain's body also shapes the landscape, for two small mounts, near Newgrange, in Co. Meath, are named after her: *Dá Chích na Mórrígana*, 'The Paps of the Mórrígain'.⁶⁶⁷ In the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, they are alluded to as "the two Paps of the King [Dagda]'s consort", that is the Mórrígain:

**[...] Fégaid Dá Cích rígnai ind rí / sund iar síd fri síd blai síar: / áit rogénair
Cermait coem / fégaid for róen, ní céim cían [...]. [...] Behold the two Paps of
the king's consort[i.e. the Mórrígain]/ here beyond the mound west of the fairy
mansion: / the spot where Cermait the fair was born, / behold it on the way, not a
far step [...].**⁶⁶⁸

It is worth noting that the Mórrígain is equated with Anu/Danu in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions']. This tends to prove that the Mórrígain, who is part of the trio of war-goddesses, was originally a land-goddess possessing fertility and nurturing aspects:

**Badb 7 Macha 7 Annan .i. Mórrígan .i. diatat Da Chich Anann i l-Luachair, tri
ingena Ernbaís na bantuaithaige 7 de bl aithmn. Badb and Macha and Annan [i.e.
the Morrigan] of whom are the Two Paps of Ana in Luachair, the three daughters
of Ernmas the she-husbandman i.e. [...?]**⁶⁶⁹ **Tri ingena aile dana oc Ernmais, .i.**

⁶⁶⁷ Hennessy, 1870, p. 55 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 66 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 361 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 161.

⁶⁶⁸ Gwynn, 1906, pp. 18-19, 62-63.

⁶⁶⁹ Macalister, 1941, pp. 160-161.

Badb 7 Macha 7 Mórrigu, .i. Anand a hainmside. Ernmas had other three daughters, Badb and Macha and Morrighu, whose name was Anand.⁶⁷⁰ In Morrighu, ingen Delbaith mathair na mac aile Dealbaith .i. Brian 7 Iucharba 7 Iuchair: 7 is dia forainm Danand o builead Da Chich Anann for Luachair, 7 o builed Tuatha De Danann. The Morrighu, daughter of Delbaeth, was mother of the other sons of Delbaeth, Brian, Iucharba, and Iuchair: and it is from her additional name 'Danann' the Paps of Ana in Luachair are called, as well as the Tuatha De Danann.⁶⁷¹

The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] also stipulates that the Mórrígain and Macha are identical. Fertility is also personified by their mother Ernmas, who is a 'she-farmer', like Be Chuille and Dianann:

Badb 7 Macha .i. in Mórrígan 7 Anann .i. diata da chích Anann .i. I-Luachair tr# ingena Ernbaís na bant#athige. Badb and Macha [i.e. the Morrighu], and Anann of whom are the Two Paps of Anna in Luachair were the three daughters of Ernmas the she-farmer. B# Chuille 7 Dianand na d# ban-t#athig. Be Chuille and Dianann were the two she-farmers.⁶⁷²

The Mórrígain is clearly associated with the land and agriculture in an early text, entitled *Compert Con Culainn* ['The Conception of Cú Culainn'], dating from the beginning of the 8th c. This legend describes her ploughing a piece of land, which her husband, the Dagda, offered to her. This meadow is called after her: Gort-na-Morrigna ('Mórrígain's Field'). It is now identified with Óchtar nÉdmainn ('Top of Edmand'), situated on the border of Co. Armagh and Co. Louth.⁶⁷³ The text is the following:

In Gort na Mórrígnae asrubart is Óchtar nÉdmainn insin. Dobert in Dagdae don Mórrígain in ferann sin 7 ro aired leesi é íarom. The ploughing/field of the Great Queen which he said is Óchtar nÉdmainn. The Dagda gave to the Great Queen that land and it was ploughed by her after that.⁶⁷⁴

Finally, the pattern of goddess's body shaping the landscape is mirrored in an in-tale* of *Compert Con Culainn* ['The Conception of Cú Culainn'], entitled *Tochmarc Emire* ['The Wooing of Emer'].⁶⁷⁵ Cú Chulainn describes his journey to his lover Eimhear and gives onomastic* information concerning the places he passed through. He recounts then the story of the River Boyne, flowing to the north of Dublin, and explains how the goddess Bóinn was drowned in the river after making trial of the enchanted well of her husband Nechtan (see Chapter 4). What is particularly interesting in this legend is that parts of the river are clearly described as body-parts of the goddess. A portion of the river is her forearm and her calf, while another is her neck and another her marrow:

For Smiur mná Fedelmai asrubrad .i. Bóann insin. Is de atá Bóann fuirri .i. Bóann ben Nechtain meic Labrada luid do choimét in topair díamair baí i n-irlainn in

⁶⁷⁰ Macalister, 1941, pp. 130-131.

⁶⁷¹ Macalister, 1941, pp. 188-189.

⁶⁷² Macalister, 1941, pp. 122-123.

⁶⁷³ Hennessy, 1870, p. 55 ; Van Hamel, 1933, p. 172 ; Gray, 1982, p. 129 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 66.

⁶⁷⁴ Van Hamel, 1933, p. 37, §37.

⁶⁷⁵ Van Hamel, 1933, pp. 16-68.

dúine la trí deogbairiu Nechtain .i. Flesc 7 Lesc 7 Lúam. 7 ní ticed nech cen aithis ón topur mani tised na deogbairiu. Luid in rígan la húaill 7 duimmus dochum in topair 7 asbert ná raibhe ní no colfed a deilb nó dobérad aithis fuirri. Tánic túaithbél in topair do airiugud a cumachtai. Ro memdatar íarom teora tonna tairis cor róemaid a dí slíassait 7 a dessláim 7 a lethsúil. Rethissi dano for imgabáil na haithise sin asin tsíth co ticed muir. Cach ní ro reithsi, ro reith in topar ina diaid. Segais a ainm isin tsíth, sruth Segsa ón tsíth co Linn Mochai, Rig Mná Núadat 7 Colptha Mná Núadat íar sin, Bóann i mMidi, Mannchuing Arcaít í ó Findaib co Tromaib, Smiur Mná Fedelmai ó Tromaib co muir. On the Marrow of Fedela's wife as said i.e. Boánn she was. She is called Boánn from this, i.e. Boánn the wife of Nechtan, son of Labhraidh, who went to observe the mysterious well that was at the verge of the fortress along with the three cupbearers of Nechtan, i.e. Flesc and Lesc and Lúann. And nobody used to come without a blemish from that well except for the cupbearers. The queen went with ostentation and pride to the well, and she said that there was nothing which would damage her appearance or would cause blemish to her. She came left-handwise around the well to feel its power. Then three waves rose up from it, so that her two sides and her right hand and one of her eyes were fractured. She ran then to avoid that blemishing, from the mound until she reached the sea. Wherever she ran, the well ran after her. Segais was its name in the mound – the stream of Segais from the Pond of Mochae, the Forearm of Nuadhu's wife and the calf of Nuadhu's wife following that. Boánn in Midhe (Middle), she is the Mannchuing (neck) of Silver from the [rivers] Finn to the [rivers] From. It is the Marrow of Fedhelm's wife⁶⁷⁶ from the [rivers] From to the sea.⁶⁷⁷

This tale undeniably predates the 10th c., for *Tochmac Emire* ['The Wooing of Emer'] was continually revised from the 8th c. to the 10th c. The same story is related in the first version of a poem, entitled *Bóand*, published in the *Metrical Dindshenchas* (see Chapter 4).⁶⁷⁸

D) The Gaulish Goddess *Nantosuelta*

The goddess *Nantosuelta* is known from a single inscription and two reliefs* which portray her as the consort of the famous Gaulish god *Sucellus* generally understood as 'Good Striker',⁶⁷⁹ mentioned in ten dedications from France (Ancy-Mâlain, Lyons, Metz, Vichy, Vienne), Switzerland (Yverdon and Augst), Germany (Mainz and Worms) and Britain (York), and is represented on many a relief* with his typical curly hair and beard, long-shafted hammer and olla*(fig. 5).⁶⁸⁰ *Nantosuelta* is an atypical goddess who differentiates herself

⁶⁷⁶ *Fedelm* is another cognomen* for *Nuadu*.

⁶⁷⁷ *Van Hamel*, 1933, pp. 37-38.

⁶⁷⁸ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 26-33, 480-481.

⁶⁷⁹ Lambert, 2006, p. 57 argues that this etymology* is actually not possible, for the verb **kell*, 'to strike' is not attested in this form in Celtic.

⁶⁸⁰ For the references of the inscriptions, see *RDG*, p. 63. For studies of the iconography, epigraphy and etymology* of *Sucellus*, see among others Germain, R., *Le dieu au maillet*, Comité d'édition de la Société culturelle et de recherches du pays gannatois, Gannat,

from the other goddesses by characteristic attributes of her own which remain enigmatic. The difficulty in deciphering the essence of Nantosuelta resides in the etymology* of her name, on which scholars disagree, and her attributes, which have been the subject of conflicting interpretations.



1970 ; Chassaing, Marcel, *Une passion: l'archéologie: Le Dieu au maillet*, Imp. Rozé, Orbec, 1986 ; Lussien-Maisonnette, Marie-Josèphe, 'Un dieu-au-maillet dans le Nord de la France', in *Bulletin des musées royaux d'art et d'histoire*, 1974, pp. 101-110 ; Flouest, Ed. & Gaidoz, M. H., *Le Dieu gaulois au maillet sur les autels à quatre faces. I. L'Autel de Mayence, II. Les Autels de Stuttgart*, E. Leroux, Paris, 1890 ; Pilane, Alfred, *Pro Segora. Le Dieu au maillet (gallo-romain) expliqué par les monnaies des Segours de l'Evre et par les trouvailles des mines de Bélié*, Farré et Frelon, Cholet, 1940 ; Blanchet, A., *Note sur deux représentations de Sucellus et sur l'aire de répartition des figures de ce dieu celtique*, Imp. Nationale, Paris, 1953 ; Toulec, Daniel, *Le Silvanus gallo-romain: l'assimilation Silvanus-Sucellus. Epistemologie, Méthodes et Sources*, Thèse de Doctorat, Histoire, Université Paris 1, Paris, 1993 ; Green, 2001, pp. 75-86 ; Thévenot, 1968, pp. 131-142 ; Deyts, 1992, pp. 85-93 ; Duval, 1957, pp. 60-63 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 99-105 ; Lajoie, 2008, pp. 53-59 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 44 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 300-304 ; Linckenheld, 1929, pp. 50-55 ; Reinach, 1896, pp. 49-50 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 257-258 ; Drexel, F., 'Die Götterverehrung im römischen Germanien', in *BRGK*, 14, 1923, p. 22 ; Schmidt, 1957, p. 170.

Fig. 5: Statue in bronze of Sucellus from Prêmeaux, wearing typical Gaulish garments and holding the olla and the long-shafted hammer in his hands. In the Musée de Beaune. Deyts, 1992, p. 85.*

1) Epigraphy and Iconography

The goddess name Nantosuelta is known from a single inscription, belonging to between 150 and 250 AD, discovered in Sarrebourg, near Metz (Moselle), in the territory of the Mediomatrici. The stone was unearthed in 1895, about 20 metres from a mithraeum*, excavated at the bottom of the Mount Marxberg, on the north side of the Rebberg.⁶⁸¹ This shows that oriental and Celtic deities could be worshipped side by side on a same site. The dedication, which makes her the consort of the hammer-god Sucellus, is combined with a portrayal depicting the couple: *Deo Sucello Nantosuel(a)e Bellausus Mass(a)e filius v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the god Sucellus and Nantosuelta, Bellausus, son of Massa, paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 6).⁶⁸² The dedicator, Bellausus, and his mother, Massa, have Celtic names and bear the unique name, which means that they are peregrines.⁶⁸³ The goddess is depicted wearing a diadem and a long tunic, which are typical Classical garments denoting majesty and sovereignty. As for her attributes, they are not clearly identifiable and remain difficult to decipher. What is certain is that they are not of Classical character and that they are quite uncommon. In her left hand, Nantosuelta has a long pole surmounted by an object in the shape of a small house, while in her right hand she probably holds a patera* above an altar.⁶⁸⁴ Under the niche where the couple stand, the image of a huge crow appears.

The singularity of her attributes enables us to identify the goddess on anepigraphic* reliefs*, such as the other altar from Sarrebourg (Moselle), discovered on the same site. She is pictured on her own, with the staff-house emblem in her right hand and a cassolite for incense or a beehive surmounted by a crow in her left hand (fig. 6 and 7).⁶⁸⁵ Three superimposed objects of round-shape, interpreted as honeycombs, honey cakes or paterae*, appear at her feet on the left hand-side.⁶⁸⁶ The fact that she is portrayed on her own evidences her independence as a goddess and proves that she was worshipped individually. The inscription accompanying the image does not mention her name: *In h(ono)r(em) d(omus) d(ivinae), M(arcus) Tignuarius v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'In honour of the Divine House, Marcus Tignuarius paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁶⁸⁷ The dedicator Marcus Tignuarius bears the *duo nomina*; a form particularly in use at the end of the 2nd c. AD.⁶⁸⁸ The abbreviated formula *In h. d. d.* indicates that the inscription dates from the end of the 2nd c. AD or the beginning of the 3rd c. AD.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸¹ CAG, 57.1, *Moselle*, 2004, p. 713-714.

⁶⁸² RG 4566 ; CIL XIII, 4542 ; CAG, 57.1, *Moselle*, 2004, p. 715, n° 80 and fig. 457 ; Reinach, 1896, p. 46 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 258, n° 396 ; Green, 2001, pp. 47-48.

⁶⁸³ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 39, 127.

⁶⁸⁴ RG 4566, p. 36.

⁶⁸⁵ RG 4568 ; CAG, 57.1, *Moselle*, 2004, p. 715 ; Reinach, 1896, p. 47 ; RE, vol. 5, p. 110 ; Green, 2001, p. 26.

⁶⁸⁶ RG 4568, p. 38 ; Reinach, 1986, p. 47.

⁶⁸⁷ RG 4568 ; Reinach, 1896, p. 46.

⁶⁸⁸ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 8-9, vol. 1, p. 152.



Fig. 6: Left: the altar from Sarrebourg (Moselle) portraying and naming the couple Nantosuelta and Sucellus. Right: the second altar from Sarrebourg depicting Nantosuelta. CAG, 57.1, Moselle, 2004, p. 715, fig. 457 and 458.

⁶⁸⁹ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.



Fig. 7: Detail of the altar from Sarrebourg (Moselle) depicting Nantosuelta with her long staff-house attribute. A crow is perched on what seems to be a beehive or a cassollette for incense. RG 4568.

Nantosuelta is recognizable by her staff-house attribute on a lost relief* discovered in Spire, situated south-east of Mannheim (Germany), in the territory of the Nemetes (fig. 8).⁶⁹⁰ The drawing is probably not very faithful to the original relief*. The goddess is accompanied by a crow standing at her feet. She holds a round object, possibly a cake, in her left hand. The peculiar aspect of this relief* is that the goddess is topped by a solar head, which may be indicative of a connection with the sun. Another possible representation of her was discovered in Tetig, located between Metz and Sarrebruck (Moselle).⁶⁹¹ The relief* is crude and damaged and seems to be of indigenous character (fig. 8). The goddess holds a huge beehive or house in her right hand and a round object, perhaps a cup or a cake, in

⁶⁹⁰ RG 6000.

⁶⁹¹ RG 7534.

her left hand. The fact that the relief* is small (25x17 cm) and was discovered in a modest villa rustica* may attest to Nantosuelta's protective aspect.⁶⁹²



Fig. 8: Left: Drawing of the lost relief from Spire (Germany).RG 6000. Right: The crude relief* from Tetig (Moselle) might be a representation of Nantosuelta. RG 7534.*

Other portrayals of the hammer god and a female partner have been discovered in various other places, such as in Oberseebach (Bas-Rhin),⁶⁹³ Grünwinkel,⁶⁹⁴ Mainz (Germany),⁶⁹⁵ Jouey,⁶⁹⁶ Dijon,⁶⁹⁷ Nuits-Saint-Georges-Les Bolards (Côte d'Or),⁶⁹⁸ and

⁶⁹² Lickenheld, 1929, p. 61.

⁶⁹³ RG 5564 ; see also RA 1879, I, planche XII et p. 337 ; Green, 2001, p. 49.

⁶⁹⁴ RG 352 ; Green, 2001, p. 49. It is not far from Oberseebach.

⁶⁹⁵ RG 5752 ; Green, 2001, p. 49.

⁶⁹⁶ RG 2039. It was found in 1865 in the place known as 'la Queue-des-Mouilles', in the woods of Promenois. The god is bearded; he holds a hammer in his left hand and a patera* in his other hand. On his left hand-side, a purse is at his feet. The goddess holds a cornucopia* in her left hand. The attribute in her right hand is missing.

Besançon (Doubs).⁶⁹⁹ In addition to not being identified by an inscription, the goddess accompanying the hammer god does not possess the distinctive attributes of Nantosuelta. Consequently, contrary to what Green advocates, those reliefs* should not be regarded as depictions of Sucellus and Nantosuelta.⁷⁰⁰ Sucellus's female consort is actually the archetype of the Mother Goddess. She is represented seated on a throne beside the god and bearing the classical attributes of the Terra Mater, such as the diadem, the tunic, the patera*, horns of plenty, baskets of fruit, apples, jars or pots, etc. Moreover, it is worth noting that Celtic gods and goddesses are usually polyandrous* figures. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a god associated with different female partners in the images – and vice versa. The Gaulish god of hot springs Borvo is for instance partnered with both Damona and Bormana.⁷⁰¹ As for Damona, she has two other consorts: Albius and Moritasgus.⁷⁰² Similarly, in Irish mythology, the Dagda is described as the husband of the Mórrígain⁷⁰³ and of the river-goddess Bóinn.⁷⁰⁴ It is thus important not to jump to conclusions as regards the portrayals of Sucellus and Nantosuelta.

2) Etymology of her name

The term Nantosuelta has given rise to various etymologies, but the meaning of her name remains somewhat obscure. At the end of the 19th c., Henry D'Arbois de Jubainville proposed to relate the first element of her name *nanto-* to the name of the Irish war god *Nét* ('Leader'), genitive *neit*, derived from Old Irish *néit* meaning 'fight', 'battle', an idea which Vendryes seems to support.⁷⁰⁵ As for the second element *suelta*, it would be the past participle of the verbal root *suel*, 'to shine'. From this, he suggested to gloss Nantosuelta as 'the One brilliant by her courage', 'Brilliant in War' or 'as brilliant as the god of war'. Accordingly, Nantosuelta would be a warrior, a function which she definitely does not seem to fulfil, for she is never represented with weapons in the iconography. D'Arbois de Jubainville's etymology* would seem to be inaccurate and should be definitely dismissed.

Alternative etymologies have also been suggested by scholars. The Celtic theme *nantu-*, cognate with Welsh *nant*, 'valley, water-course, stream', Breton *nant*, 'valley' and Old Cornish *nans*, 'vallis', designates the 'valley', the 'watercourse', the 'stream', that is the

⁶⁹⁷ RG 3441.

⁶⁹⁸ Planson & Lagrange, 1972, pp. 119-128.

⁶⁹⁹ RG 5277. The damaged relief of undetermined origin, discovered near Besançon, depicts the hammer-god with a goddess wearing a garment composed of a long robe and a tunic and holding a sort of vase with a narrow neck in her left hand.

⁷⁰⁰ Green, 2001, pp. 48-54. Lambrechts, 1942, published an analytical map of the cult of the hammer god and his consort, see Green p. 47, Map 5.

⁷⁰¹ Borvo is attested by twenty-two dedications in Gaul and two in Portugal. For more information about him, see Beck, 2007, pp. 5-9. For Bormana and Damona, see Chapter 3.

⁷⁰² *CIL* XIII, 11233 in Aignay-le-Duc ; *AE* 1965, 181 in Alise-Sainte-Reine.

⁷⁰³ Their respective trysts are told in *Cath Maige Tuired*, see Gray, 1982, § 84, pp. 44-45; and in the *Dindsenchas*, see Gwynn, 1906, pp. 18-19 and 1924, pp. 196-201.

⁷⁰⁴ Gwynn, 1906, pp. 10-11, 18-21.

⁷⁰⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 374 ; Reinach, 1896, pp. 51-52 and see note 1 for D'Arbois de Jubainville's explanation ; Vendryes, *LEIA*, N-7 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 686.

place where the river flows.⁷⁰⁶ In the Alps, the 'nant' is a common appellation of mountain torrents. The second part of her name *suelta* has given rise to various etymologies. On the one hand, Delamarre and Olmsted suggest it could be related to the IE root **suel* designating the 'sun'.⁷⁰⁷ Nantosuelta's name would therefore mean 'Sun Valley', that is the one who makes the valley bloom.⁷⁰⁸ Her association with the sun could be evoked by the radiant head surmounting her image on the relief* from Speyer, but this remains dubious. On the other hand, Vendryes, Schmidt and Lambert maintain that it *suelta* is derived from verbal theme **swel-*, 'to curve'.⁷⁰⁹ Moreover, the ending of her name in *-ta*, found for instance in Rosmerta or Segeta, indicates it is a name of action. Nantosuelta, broken down as **nantos-sweltâ*, is generally understood as 'Winding Brook' or the 'Meanders of the Stream'.⁷¹⁰

Lambert, who does not dismiss the possibility of this etymology*, nonetheless argues that the term *nantu-* could not have evolved in a form *nanto-*. He proposes to see an inflected form of a theme in *-u-*. *Nantōs* could then stand for an older **nantous*, the genitive of *nantu-s*, 'stream', 'valley'. He compares the second element of her name *-wel-tâ* to Welsh *gwellt* and Breton *gueot*, 'hay' or 'grass to be cut'. Accordingly, her name would be a 'juxtaposed' noun rather than a compound noun - genitive of a possessive phrase + noun in the nominative - and would designate 'the meadows', 'the pasture of the valley'.⁷¹¹ In view of those various etymologies, Nantosuelta clearly stands as a goddess originally embodying the valley, the streams, the fields and the landscape.

3) Interpretations of her attributes

Nantosuelta is a complicated figure to understand. In addition to the meaning of her name, which, as we have seen, is still controversial, her attributes are of a complex nature, for they are atypical, puzzling and identifiable only with difficulty. Nantosuelta generally holds a long pole surmounted by an object, which for Espérandieu would be the illustration of a beehive.⁷¹² As far as Birkhan is concerned, the house-shaped object would represent a tomb or a simple *villa rustica** carried on a pole during processions.⁷¹³ This object also reminds him of the Welsh wren houses, which have an identical shape. Accordingly, it could be the representation of an aviary. Emile Lickenheld and Salomon Reinach's suggestion is the most probable. They identify the object with a small house or a hut which would reflect the protective role of Nantosuelta for the household and the family.⁷¹⁴ She might have procured

⁷⁰⁶ Lambert, 1995, p. 203 (Glossaire d'Endlicher: *nanto*, 'valley'); Delamarre, 2003, pp. 231-232; Delamarre, 2007, p. 228; Evans, 1967, pp. 236-237.

⁷⁰⁷ Delamarre, 2007, p. 233; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 300-303.

⁷⁰⁸ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 300-303.

⁷⁰⁹ Vendryes, 1997, p. 109, note 44 by Lambert; Schmidt, 1957, p. 274; Olmsted, 1994, p. 302.

⁷¹⁰ Ross, 1996, p. 43, Green, 2001, p. 47.

⁷¹¹ Lambert (March 2009): personal communication.

⁷¹² RG 4566, p. 36.

⁷¹³ Birkhan, 1999, p. 86. In Roman times, a *villa rustica*, as opposed to *villa urbana* 'urban villa', was set in the open countryside, often as the hub of a large agricultural estate.

⁷¹⁴ Reinach, 1896, p. 45; Lickenheld, 1929, pp. 60-61; Green, 2001, pp. 47-48; Mackillop, 2004, p. 342.

well-being, chance, wealth and blessing for the members of the family.⁷¹⁵ She is thus close in the essence to the *Matres Domesticæ* or to the *Proxumæ* studied in Chapter 1.

As regards the recurrent symbol of the crow, it can be interpreted in various ways. First of all, it is an acknowledged fact that the crow was both a symbol of war and death for the Celts.⁷¹⁶ For instance, this bird occurs on some casks of Celtic warriors, such as the cask from Ciumesti (Romania), dating from the beginning of the 3rd c. BC, surmounted by a bronze raven (Chap. 3 - fig. 6).⁷¹⁷ Moreover, the Irish war-goddesses and announcers of death, the *Mórrígain* ('Great Queen') and *Badb* ('Crow'), can take the shape of a raven when they fly over the battleground looking for dead warriors' bodies to devour. Despite the attempt of D'Arbois de Jubainville to etymologically link *Nantosuelta* to the notion of combat, the goddess does not have any war-like traits in the portrayals. Thus, Anne Ross is incorrect when suggesting that the crow should be understood as a war-symbol characterizing the goddess.⁷¹⁸

In ancient civilizations, almost all birds were regarded as divine messengers, belonging to the Otherworld and acting as mediators between the supernatural and the natural worlds.⁷¹⁹ This is the reason why the oracle, which was an answer from the gods to the questions of human beings, was generally symbolised by a bird, the species of which varies from one country (or area) to another; birds of prey, such as eagles or ravens, doves and water birds.⁷²⁰ Various studies demonstrated that the crow is the Celtic oracular bird *par excellence*. This bird is often portrayed accompanying gods and goddesses.⁷²¹ Such a role is also evidenced by two Classical legendary accounts. Clitophon recounts that the foundation of Lugudunum (Lyons) was dictated by a flight of crows:

Near the river Arar (the present-day River Saône) is the Mount Lugdunus, which changed of name for the following reason: Mômoros and Atepomaros, chased out by Sêsêronéos, went to this hill to build up a town, according to the order of an oracle. Ditches for the foundations were being dug when suddenly appeared crows, which, flying here and there, covered the surrounding trees. Mômoros, who was clever with the science of augury, called the new city Lugdunum. For in their language, the crow is called lougos and a high place dounon.⁷²²

⁷¹⁵ Lickenheld, 1929, pp. 60-61 ; Green, 2001, p. 48 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 342.

⁷¹⁶ Green, 1992a, pp. 69 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 113 ; Green, 1992, pp. 177-181 ; Green, 2001, pp. 26-27, 142-144 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 311-330, 366-368 ; Duval, 1987, pp. 20-21 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969, pp. 85-86.

⁷¹⁷ Duval, 1977, pp. 78, 106 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 548, 522 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 380, n° 731.

⁷¹⁸ Ross, 1996, p. 313 thinks that *Nantosuelta* is a 'raven-goddess', who is related to war on account of the imagery of the crow.

⁷¹⁹ Guyonvarc'h, 1986, p. 129 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 42 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 302-377.

⁷²⁰ Benoit, 1970, pp. 66-67. The distribution of the species is conformed to the geography of the country: the crow, which is the prophetic Celtic bird *par excellence*, is replaced in the marsh areas of the river valleys by the wading bird.

⁷²¹ Green, 2001, pp. 26-27, 142-144 ; Cooper, 1978, p. 47 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 175-177 ; Grenier, 1945, p. 341 ; Reinach, 1908-1909, p. 457 ; Haggerty-Krapp, 1936, pp. 242ff ; Linckenheld, 1929, pp. 72, 85 gives some examples of goddesses in the company of crows, such as the bronze figure with two ravens in the Museum of Saint-Germain and the stone mother goddess with ravens at Saintes.

⁷²² *Clitophon (Pseudo-Plutarch), a Greek historian, born in Rhodes, considered to be fictitious by some critics. De Fluviiis VI, 4 (3rd of 4th c. AD).*

As for Livy, he relates in his *History of Rome* a duel between a Gaulish leader and a tribune called Marcus Valerius, whose victory was augured by a crow perched on his head, hence his nickname Corvus (fig. 9):

Whilst the Romans were passing their time quietly at the out- posts, a gigantic Gaul in splendid armour advanced towards them, and delivered a challenge through an interpreter to meet any Roman in single combat. There was a young military tribune, named Marcus Valerius, who considered himself no less worthy of that honour than T. Manlius had been. After obtain- ing the consul's permission, he marched, completely armed, into the open ground between the two armies. The human element in the fight was thrown into the shade by the direct interposition of the gods, for just as they were engaging a crow settled all of a sudden on the Roman's helmet with its head towards his antagonist. The tribune gladly accepted this as a divinely-sent augury, and prayed that whether it were god or goddess who had sent the auspicious bird that deity would be gracious to him and help him. Wonderful to relate, not only did the bird keep its place on the helmet, but every time they en- countered it rose on its wings and attacked the Gaul's face and eyes with beak and talon, until, terrified at the sight of so dire a portent and bewildered in eyes and mind alike, he was slain by Valerius. Then, soaring away eastwards, the crow passed out of sight. Hitherto the outposts on both sales had remained quiet, but when the tribune began to despoil his foeman's corpse, the Gauls no longer kept their posts, whilst the Romans ran still more swiftly to help the victor. A furious fight took place round the body as it lay, and not only the maniples at the nearest outposts but the legions pouring out from the camp joined in the fray. The soldiers were exultant at their tribune's victory and at the manifest presence and help of the gods, and as Camillus ordered them into action he pointed to the tribune, conspicuous with his spoils, and said: `Follow his example, soldiers, and lay the Gauls in heaps round their fallen cham- pion!' Gods and man alike took part in the battle, and it was fought out to a finish, unmistakably disastrous to the Gauls, so completely had each army anticipated a result corre- sponding to that of the single combat. Those Gauls who began the fight fought desperately, but the rest of the host who come to help them turned back before they came within range of the missiles. They dispersed amongst the Volscians and over the Falernian district; from thence they made their way to Apulia and the western sea.⁷²³

⁷²³ See Appendix 1. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 7.26 ; Canon Roberts, 1912. See also Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, (Zonaras) 7.25 ; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 15.1 ; Appian, *Celtica*, 10 (fragment).



Fig. 9: Stele* from Citta della Pieve evoking the myth of the tribune Marcus Valerius Corvus. Archaeological Museum of Florence. Brunaux, 2004, p. 88, fig. 35.

In addition, in Irish mythology, the Mórrígain and Badb have sometimes the role of prophetesses.⁷²⁴ As regards Germanic and Scandinavian mythology, ravens are the companions of the omniscient gods Wōdan and Óðinn.⁷²⁵ Óðinn's two crows Hugin ('Spirit') and Munnin ('Memory') fly all over the world during the day and settle at night on his shoulders to tell him what they have seen and heard; wherefore Óðinn is called Hrafnaguð ('Raven-God').⁷²⁶ From this, it can be inferred that Nantosuelta's crow might have had the role of an oracular divine messenger, reporting the questions, prayers and actions of human beings to her.

Following on from the role of supernatural mediator, the crow also had a funerary dimension, as a conveyor of souls towards the otherworld.⁷²⁷ Nantosuelta's crow might

⁷²⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁷²⁵ Wagner, 1970, pp. 22-25 ; Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, pp. 285-286.

⁷²⁶ Wagner, 1970, pp. 24-25.

⁷²⁷ Brunaux, 2000, p. 175.

thus represent the goddess's ability to accompany the deceased to the supernatural world. Besides, some scholars have interpreted the house symbol appearing at the end of Nantosuelta's staff as the representation of a funerary 'house-tomb'.⁷²⁸ Furthermore, the object she sometimes holds in one of her hands might be viewed as a funerary urn or cassolette for incense. It could parallel the olla* of Sucellus, which could contain offerings for the dead.⁷²⁹ All those attributes could thus attest to her connection with death and to her funerary functions.

Another interpretation of Nantosuelta's aspects can be suggested. If the round object she holds is not a cassolette for incense but a beehive, as suggested by Espérandieu, she might have had a connection with bees and honey.⁷³⁰ Moreover, the three round-shaped objects at her feet on the relief* from Sarrebourg (fig. 6) have been interpreted as honeycombs or honey cakes.⁷³¹ As will be demonstrated in Chapter 5, honey was a natural product of great importance and sacredness in antiquity. Henry Hubert, who supports that idea, affirms that Nantosuelta is a 'beehive goddess', and that her partner, Sucellus, might have been the holder of a sacred beverage of immortality, possibly mead, symbolized by the olla* or cup.⁷³² This theory is interesting, for Sucellus is sometimes portrayed with a barrel, which may be a symbol of brewing.

At any rate, it seems highly likely that Nantosuelta was originally an earth-goddess. Sucellus, with his gobelet and long-shafted mallet, can be compared to the Irish Dagda, whose attributes are a great cauldron and a staff, dispensing death on one side and restoring life on the other.⁷³³ According to Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, the name of the Dagda comes from a Celtic *dago-Dewios*, with *dago* signifying 'good' and *Dewios*, similar to Indic *Dyâus*, Latin *Deus*, Greek *Zeus*, referring to the 'sky'.⁷³⁴ In Dagda ('the Good God') is therefore the reminiscent figure of the father god or sky-deity of Celtic and Indo-European religions. Being nicknamed Aedh Álainn ('Fiery Lustrous One') and Aodh Ruadh Ró-Fheasa ('The Red Fire (Sun) of Absolute Knowledge'), he was primarily associated with the sun.⁷³⁵ Sucellus and Nantosuelta might originally have been the couple representing the land-goddess mating with the sun/sky deity, for they both represent the forces of nature and of the ground. They

⁷²⁸ Reinach, 1896, p. 47 ; Linckenheld, 1929, pp. 67-68, 85 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 301.

⁷²⁹ Linckenheld, 1929, p. 85.

⁷³⁰ RG 4568, p. 38.

⁷³¹ RG 4568, p. 38 ; Reinach, 1896, p. 47.

⁷³² Hubert, 1912, p. 281 ; Green, 2001, p. 42.

⁷³³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 151-154 ; Green, 1992a, p. 75 ; Mac Cana, 1983, pp. 64-66 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 43-47 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 213-214. The great inexhaustible cauldron of the *Dagda* (*coiri an Dagdai*), from which "no company ever went away unsatisfied", is described in *Cath Maige Tuired* ['The Second Battle of Mag Tuired'], see Gray, 1982, pp. 24-25 ; Stokes, 1891a, pp. 58-59. For a physical description of the Dagda and a mention of his staff, which can kill on one side of it and restore life on the other, see *Mesca Ulad* ['Intoxication of the Ultonians'], Hennessy, 1884, pp. 32-33: "In his hand was a terrible iron staff, on which were a rough end and a smooth end. His plays and amusements consisted in laying the rough end on the heads of the nine [men], whom he would kill in the space of a moment. He would then lay the smooth end on them, so that he would animate them in the same time."

⁷³⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 151 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 204.

⁷³⁵ *Aodh*, earlier *Aedh*, from Celtic *aedos*, 'fire', found in names of tribes, such as the Aedha and Aedhnai in Ireland, and the Aedui in Gaul, is an ancient appellation for the sun deity ; *ruadh*, 'ruddy' or 'red-haired' ; Ró-Fheasa ('the all-knowing'). In Dagda ('The Good God') is also called Ollathair ('Eochaid the Great Father') - the name Eochaid is derived from *ech*, 'horse'. See Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 17, 19.

were later given domestic and funerary functions, protecting the household and the family in the terrestrial life and accompanying the dead in the afterlife.⁷³⁶

E) Some remarks on *Aericura*

The spelling of this goddess name varies greatly: *Aericura*, *Aerecura*, *Erecura*, *Eracura*, *Ericura* and *Herecura*. Her name, the meaning of which remains obscure, is probably not Celtic but Germanic. Delamarre however thinks she is Celtic and proposes to break it down as **Ēri-cūrā*, 'Wind of the West'.⁷³⁷ As far as Olmsted is concerned, the first element of her name *eri-* might be an intensive prefix meaning 'to go beyond', while the second element *cura* might come from the zero-grade of **kueru-* signifying 'grind, mill, flour'. According to him, *Ericura* would mean 'Before the Bread'.⁷³⁸

However, the fact that her worship is concentrated to Southern Germany and the North-West of the Balkans would tend to prove that she is of Germanic origin.⁷³⁹ She is mentioned in inscriptions from Mainz, Sulzbach, Stockstadt, Monterberg, Xanten, Iversheim, Cannstatt, Mautern, (Germany), Beetgum and Holledorn (the Netherlands), Langres (Haute-Marne), Belley (Ain), Rome, Aquileia and Perugia⁷⁴⁰ (Italy), Verespatak (Romania) and Announa (Thibilis) in Numidia (present-day Algeria), which was a Roman province. Scholars sometimes relate her to the god *Arecurius*, honoured in an inscription from Corbridge (Northumbria, GB): *Deo Arecurio*. It must however be borne in mind that this inscription is quite uncertain, and it might be a misreading of *Mercurio*.⁷⁴¹

Two of the inscriptions from Cannstatt are combined with a representation of the goddess. The first one portrays her draped and shod, sitting and holding a basket of fruit in her lap.⁷⁴² The inscription, engraved at the bottom of her feet, reads: *[Her]ecur(a)e sig(num) Val(erius) [...] vslm* (fig. 10).⁷⁴³ The other relief* is mutilated and only the bottom of it remains.⁷⁴⁴ The inscription is engraved under a seated goddess, who wears a dress and shoes and holds a basket of fruit on her knees: *Herecur(a)e Cottus G[...]i (filius) ex voto suscepto posuit v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)*.⁷⁴⁵ *Aericura* does not possess any distinctive attributes of her own. She is depicted merely with the attributes of fertility and does not distinguish herself from the iconography of the *Matres* and *Matronae*. Several other reliefs* of the same type, representing a similar seated goddess with shoes and basket of fruit were discovered in the area (fig. 10). This type might be figurations of *Aericura* but it could equally be portrayals of a single Mother Goddess.⁷⁴⁶

⁷³⁶ Lickenheld, 1929, p. 73.

⁷³⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 13-14, 221.

⁷³⁸ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 303-304.

⁷³⁹ Linckenheld, 1929, p. 49 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 89 ; Green, 2004, p. 124.

⁷⁴⁰ Perugia was situated in the Etruscan territory.

⁷⁴¹ *RIB* 1123 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 304 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 4.

⁷⁴² *RG Germ.*, 562.

⁷⁴³ *CIL* XIII, 6439.

⁷⁴⁴ *RG Germ.*, 564.

⁷⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII, 6438.

⁷⁴⁶ *RG Germ.*, 560, 565, 569, 634.



Fig. 10: Left: Figuration combined with an inscription identifying the goddess Aericura discovered in Cannstatt. In the Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart. CIL XIII, 6439 ; RG Germ., 562. Right: Statuette of a Mother Goddess discovered in Cannstatt: Aericura? In the Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart. RG Germ., 560.

On a mutilated altar from Sulzbach, near Karlsruhe (Germany), discovered in 1813 in a cave, Aericura is represented seated beside the god Dis Pater, as the inscription engraved on the socle indicates: *I(n) h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) d(eae) s(anctae) Aericur(ae) et Diti Pat(ri) Veter(ius) Paternus et Adie(ctia) Pater(na)* (fig. 11).⁷⁴⁷ Their heads are now missing. The god wears a tunic and holds an object in his hands, possibly an unrolled scroll, while the goddess has a long robe and a tray of fruit in her lap.

As his name shows, Dis Pater ('Father of Riches')⁷⁴⁸ was originally a god of fertility and agriculture.⁷⁴⁹ He was later attached to the realm of the dead and became the Roman

⁷⁴⁷ CIL XIII 6322 ; RG Germ., 347 ; Green, 2001, p. 69 ; Allmer, vol. 5, p. 107, n°32. In the museum at Karlsruhe.

⁷⁴⁸ *dis* is a contraction of *dives*, 'riches'.

⁷⁴⁹ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 220, 258, 810-811 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 116, 148-149, 276.

god of the Underworld. He is identical to Roman Pluto ('the Rich') and corresponds to the Greek Hades. Linckenheld and De Vries demonstrate that the distribution of Aericura and Dis Pater's cult is complementary to the distribution of Nantosuelta and Sucellus's worship.⁷⁵⁰ In other words, the areas of cult do not tally and thus complete one another. Lickenheld points out that the two divine couples must be emanations of one another, for they possess the same agrarian, chthonian* and funerary functions.⁷⁵¹ As far as he is concerned, Aericura and Nantosuelta are one and the same divine character, like Sucellus and Dis Pater are the very same figure. Auguste Allmer and De Vries reject this view and argue convincingly that Dis Pater cannot be regarded as the equivalent of Sucellus, since he does not bear the same attributes, that is the hammer and the olla*.⁷⁵² Moreover, Nantosuelta has an iconography specific to her which clearly distinguishes her from Aericura. Nevertheless, they probably share similar functions of prosperity and benevolence.

The agrarian attributes in her iconography clearly illustrate *Aericura's* role of land-goddess. Her association with Dis Pater supports that idea, insomuch as this god was originally worshipped as a purveyor of riches. As Dis Pater was also the lord of the realm of the dead, Aericura might have been linked to death and endowed with a funerary aspect. Those various elements led Green and De Vries to compare her to the Roman goddess of the dead Hecate, who was originally a goddess dispensing fertility of the ground, luck and victory. They also parallel her with the Greek goddess Persephone, the equivalent of the Roman goddess Proserpina, who primarily presided over crops and the germination of plants before being partnered with Pluto and reigning over the Underworld.⁷⁵³ Those examples show that chthonian* goddesses were closely linked to death. This can be explained by the eternal cycle of nature which consists of birth, death and renewal. Finally, Aericura's funerary dimension could be evidenced by the fact that reliefs* and inscriptions were discovered in cemeteries, such as in Cannstatt, or associated with funerary stones, for instance in Rottenburg.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁰ Linckenheld, 1929, pp. 49-50, 59 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁵¹ Lickenheld, 1929, p. 74.

⁷⁵² *RE*, vol. 5, p. 107, n°32 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 89.

⁷⁵³ Green, 2001, p. 41 ; Green, 1992a, p. 26 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 4 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 89 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 221-222, 704-705, 802-803, 810-811 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 151-152, 264-265 ; *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 38-40.

⁷⁵⁴ Lickenheld, 1929, pp. 48, 63



Fig. 11: Relief with inscription from Sulzbach (Germany) representing Aericura and Dis Pater. RG Germ, 347.*

From this it follows that the faith in a goddess embodying the land is ancient and firmly fixed in tradition. According to the places and traditions, she took up various names referring to the earth, land, plain or field. On the Continent, there is evidence of the goddesses *Litavi* ('Earth'), the *Matres Mageiae* ('the Mother Goddesses of the Field?'), the *Magiseniae* ('the Ancient Fields') and *Nantosuelta* ('Winding Brook' or 'Meadows?') and in Ireland of *Ériu* ('Land'), *Tailtiu* ('Earth' or 'Plain') and *Macha* ('Field'). The personification of the land is, besides, well-illustrated in Irish medieval literature which sometimes depicts how the body of a goddess shapes the landscape. Moreover, some legends clearly stress the agrarian functions of the goddesses attached to the land, the most relevant examples being the *Mórrígain* ploughing her piece of land or *Tailtiu* dying of exhaustion after clearing the forests and digging the plain of *Brega*.

II) The Land-Goddess as a Purveyor of Riches

It is stating the obvious to say that human beings remain alive and sustain themselves thanks to the products of the earth. Water, fruit, crops were logically interpreted as offerings from the land-goddess, who was thus envisaged as a nurturer. It was the earth-goddess who was believed to feed the people by providing them with food and water. As studied in Chapter 1, this function is clearly evidenced by the worship of the Matres and Matronae, who are portrayed holding classical attributes denoting the fertility of the earth, such as cornucopiae*, fruit, cakes or patera*. The Nutrices, represented in the Gaulish iconography swaddling or feeding infants, obviously hold the same role. The land is the mother who nurtures her beings.

This role is also evidenced by the worship of single goddesses from Ireland and Gaul who have names literally meaning 'Nurturer' or 'Provider'. This is the case for instance in the name of the goddess presiding over Munster Mór Muman, 'the Mór of Munster', who presides over the land of Munster (Mumu, later Mumhain). Her name does not signify 'the Great Mother', as Olmsted suggests,⁷⁵⁵ but 'the Great Nurturer', as Ó hÓgáin explains.⁷⁵⁶ Mumain is not to be related to the word *muman* meaning 'mother', but to *mumu*, later *mumhain*, signifying 'nurturer'. Mór Muman is clearly a land-goddess, for the first element of her name *mór* was used to characterize earth-goddesses, such as the Mórrígain. Moreover, she is described marrying various kings of Munster in *Mór Muman Ocus Aided Cuanach Meic Ailchine* ['Mór of Munster and the Tragic Fate of Cuanu Son of Cailchin'],⁷⁵⁷ a pattern which is characteristic of land-goddesses (see Chapter 3 and 5). Similarly, *Sanas Cormaic* ['Cormac's Glossary'], dated 9th c., explains that the land-goddess Ana/Anu, whose name is a later pet name for Danu, is the mother of the gods of Ireland and that she is the one who feeds them. The Tuatha Dé Danann ('Tribe of the Goddess Danu') also bear her name. The equation of her name with Irish *anai*, 'wealth' or 'abundance' is however a fanciful and inaccurate interpretation by medieval glossators.⁷⁵⁸ The image of the land-goddess as a mother nurturing her people clearly illustrates her function as distributor of wealth and food.

Ana .i.mater deorum Hibernensium. Robo maith didiu rob#athais s# deos; de cuis nomine ana .i. imed, et de cuius nomine Dá Chic[h] hAnund #ar L#achair nominant[ur], ut fibula fertur .i. amail aderait ina sc#laide. Ana: the mother of the gods of Ireland. It was well she nursed deos i.e. the gods: ana i.e. 'plenty', for whom are named the 'Two Paps of Ana' beyond Luachair, as the story-tellers say.⁷⁵⁹

The concept of the land-goddess nurturing her people may also be echoed in the goddess name Alauina / Alauna, mentioned in two inscriptions discovered in Pantenburg (Germany), where she is associated with the goddess *Boudina* 'Victory'.⁷⁶⁰ The inscriptions read: *[Bo]udi{n}u{ae} [et] Alaunae C(aius) Sextilius Sollemnis*, 'To Boudina and Alauna, Caius Sextilius Sollemnis' and *Deo Vroi[o] Boudina E et Alau{i}nae C(aius) Sextilius Sollemnis*,

⁷⁵⁵ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 162-209.

⁷⁵⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 359.

⁷⁵⁷ O'Nolan, 1912, pp. 261-282.

⁷⁵⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 159.

⁷⁵⁹ Meyer, 1912, p. 3 ; O'Donovan, 1868, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁶⁰ Evans, 1967, pp. 156-158 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 83-84 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 214.

'To the god Voroio, Boudina (E?) and Alauina, Caius Sextilius Sollemnis'.⁷⁶¹ The inscriptions are offered by the same dedicator, who is a Roman citizen on account of his *tria nomina*. It is worth noting that Alauna may be the feminisation of the god name Alaun(i)us, honoured alone in Notre-Dame-des-Anges (Var): *Jus Tacitus [---] Alaunio [---] sp vslm*,⁷⁶² and equated with Mercurius in Mannheim (Germany): *[Ge]nio Mercur(ii) Alaunii Iul(ius) Ac[co]ninus Augustinus ex vsllm*.⁷⁶³ In addition, Alauna might be cognate with the goddesses Alounae, known from three dedications discovered in the area of Salzburg (Austria), more precisely in Chieming and Seeon: *Bedaio Aug(usto) sacr(um) Alounar(um) Setonius Maximianus* ; *Sacro Alounarum Aug(ustarum) Non(ius) Iu(v)enalis* and *Bedaio Aug(usto) et Alounis*.⁷⁶⁴ Interestingly, the dedicator Bedaius, who pays homage to those deities in two of the inscriptions, bears a Celtic name.⁷⁶⁵ Šašel Kos points out that the Alounae can be paralleled to the ethnonym* Alauni, a tribe settled in Noricum*.⁷⁶⁶ This leads her to think that they may have been the protective goddesses of this sept*. Delamarre and De Bernardo Stempel translate the divine names Alauna and Alounae as 'Nourisher(s)', relating them to Old Irish *alim* and Old Norse *ala*, derived from an IE root *al- meaning 'to nourish'.⁷⁶⁷ If many rivers in Europe bear that name, it is certainly because the river, when it is well-stocked with fish, has the ability of providing its people with food.⁷⁶⁸ Though interesting, this etymology* remains uncertain, for Alauna and Alounae can also be glossed as 'the Nomads', 'the wandering ones'.⁷⁶⁹

The role of 'provider' is greatly illustrated on the Continent by goddesses bearing names literally referring to the activity of distributing wealth: Rosmerta, the consort of Mercurius, whose cult is attested by a significant number of inscriptions and iconographical devices in the north-east of Gaul; Atesmerta, mentioned in a single inscription from Haute-Marne; and Cantismerta, known from a single dedication discovered in Switzerland. Who were those goddesses of bounty? Apart from nurturing, did they have other functions? Can they be distinguished in the iconography by specific attributes? Were they honoured by dedicators of Celtic or Roman origin?

A) Solitary *Rosmerta* (central and north Gaul)

1) Etymology of her name

The goddess name Rosmerta, mentioned in about thirty inscriptions from Gaul and Germania Superior, is undeniably Celtic. The etymologists agree on the meaning of her name, which is composed of the intensive prefix *ro-* (**pro*) signifying 'very', 'great',⁷⁷⁰ and

⁷⁶¹ F 82, 83 ; AE 1982, 667.

⁷⁶² CIL XII, 1517.

⁷⁶³ CIL XIII, 6425

⁷⁶⁴ CIL III, 5572, 11779 ; ILLPRON, 1546.

⁷⁶⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 38.

⁷⁶⁶ Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 144 ; Scherrer, 1984, pp. 134-135.

⁷⁶⁷ Delamarre, 2003, p. 37 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 210 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, pp. 21-22.

⁷⁶⁸ Rivet & Smith, 1979, pp. 239-478.

⁷⁶⁹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 37.

⁷⁷⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 261-262.

of the element *-smertā*, 'distribution' - a noun of action in *-fā* - based on the verbal theme **smer-*, 'to distribute', 'to give', 'to attribute', denoting bounty and supply.⁷⁷¹ Duval explains that this root expresses "the idea of prediction and provision, of preparing and precautions to take, [...] of destiny regulated by Providence."⁷⁷² Her name has been glossed in various ways, such as 'the Highly Foresighted',⁷⁷³ 'the Very Attentive',⁷⁷⁴ 'Goddess of Plenitude',⁷⁷⁵ the most appropriate one being 'the one who gives or distributes', i.e. 'the Great Purveyor or Provider'.⁷⁷⁶ Her name therefore evokes her primary role of land-goddess supplying her people with all the natural products necessary for them to survive. As for Anwyl's etymology*, who proposes Rosmerta, 'the Exceedingly Brilliant One', from *smert* 'shining', it is definitely inaccurate and irrelevant.⁷⁷⁷

It is significant that Rosmerta is cognate with other names of gods and goddesses, based on the same root *smerto-*, *smero-*, for it indicates the importance and antiquity of a cult devoted to divinities of 'supply' and 'foresight'. In addition to Atesmerta and Cantismerta, such is the case with the gods Smertrios ('the Purveyor'), venerated in France, Austria, Germany and Great Britain,⁷⁷⁸ Smertus (Jupiter) honoured in Grignan (Drôme) and Escovilles-Sainte-Camille (Yonne),⁷⁷⁹ and Smertu-litanus (Mars) ('The Large Purveyor') - with *litanos*, 'vast', 'large' -, known from an inscription found in Möhn (Germany).⁷⁸⁰

2) Inscriptions

Pierre Lambrechts saw in Rosmerta a mere female duplication of the god Mercurius, explaining that she did not have any peculiar functions or roles, apart from being the consort of the god.⁷⁸¹ This is actually incorrect to say, since recent archaeological evidence has proved that Rosmerta was worshipped in her own right. This is the case in five inscriptions, two of which are combined with a figuration. Therefore, it can be affirmed that Rosmerta fulfilled far more important functions in ancient times than being the mere partner of a Gallo-Roman god. In Gissey-le-Vieil (Côte d'Or), in the territory of the Aedui, she was honoured in a now lost inscription: *Aug(usto) sa[rc(rum)] Deae Rosm[er]tae Cne(ius)*

⁷⁷¹ Meillet, 1923, pp. 183-184 ; Vendryes, 1933, pp. 376-377; Vendryes, 1937, pp. 133-136 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 42 thinks that the original and basic meaning must have been 'fate', c.f. Greek *μέρος* and *μοίρα* ; Lambert, 1987, p. 529 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 148 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 277 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 232 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 25 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 21 ; Rivet & Smith, 1979, pp. 460-461 study the tribal names *Smertae* and *Smerti*.

⁷⁷² Duval, 1953-1954, p. 230.

⁷⁷³ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 406-408.

⁷⁷⁴ Delamarre, 2003, p. 261.

⁷⁷⁵ De Vries, 1963, p. 127.

⁷⁷⁶ Duval, 1953-1954, p. 230 ; Webster, 1986, p. 57 ; Lambert, 1987, p. 529 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 57 ; Bémont, 1969, p. 24 ; *LIMC*, VII.1, p. 645.

⁷⁷⁷ Anwyl, 1906a, p.39.

⁷⁷⁸ *AE* 1950, 98 (Grossbuch, Carinthie, Austria) ; *CIL* XIII, 3026: *SMERT* (the Nautes Parisiacae monument, Paris) ; *CIL* XIII 11975: *Marti Smertrio* (Liesenich, Germany) ; *RIB* 804 (Moresby, GB) ; Duval, 1953-1954, pp. 219-238 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 66-68 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 170 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 340 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 33-35 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 21.

⁷⁷⁹ *AE* 1987, 756 (Grignan, France) ; *AE* 1967, 317 (Escovilles-Ste-Camille, France): *SMERTU[...]*.

⁷⁸⁰ *CIL* XIII, 4119 (Möhn, Germany) ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 224 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 204.

⁷⁸¹ Lambrechts, 1942, p. 185.

Cominius Candidus et Apronia Avitilla v(otum) s(olve)runt l(ibentes) m(erito), 'Sacred to the August Goddess Rosmerta, Cneius Cominius Candidus et Apronia Avitilla paid their vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 12).⁷⁸² The two dedicators may be husband and wife. While the man is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *tria nomina*, the woman's first name Apronia is a patronymic Latin name and her second name Avitilla is Celtic – it is possibly based on *avi-*, 'desir'.⁷⁸³ On account of the use of the formula *Dea*, the inscription was not prior to the mid-2nd c. AD.⁷⁸⁴ Dr Morelot, who studied the altar in 1843, assumed that Rosmerta was a topical* deity whose cult was attached to the curative waters of Gissey.⁷⁸⁵ According to him, Gissey is a Celtic name meaning 'place filled with water', with Celtic *gi*, 'water and cey, 'full of'. In the same area, a statue of a half-naked woman lying down, probably dating from the end of the 2nd c. AD or the beginning of the 3rd c., was discovered. She may be the personification of the waters of Gissey, for river- and spring-goddesses are very often depicted in such a position, wearing only a cloth around their hips (fig. 13).⁷⁸⁶ It may be thus inferred that the worship of Rosmerta in this locality was connected to the thermal waters of Gissey-le-Vieil.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸² *CIL* XII, 2831 ; Lothe-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 101, n°133.

⁷⁸³ Dondin-Payre, 2001, pp. 234 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 34, 212 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 61.

⁷⁸⁴ Raespeat-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.

⁷⁸⁵ Morelot, 1843-1844, pp. 210-211, 215. At this time, no other inscriptions to Rosmerta had been discovered.

⁷⁸⁶ Morelot, 1843-1844, pp. 222-226.

⁷⁸⁷ Bonnard, 1908, pp. 160-161 ; Thévenot, 1968, p. 89 ; Green, 1995, p. 127.



Fig. 12: Inscription to Rosmerta engraved on an altar found in Gisse-le-Vieil (Côte d'Or). Morelot, 1843-1844, p. 211.



Fig. 13: Statue, dated end of 2nd c. AD, beginning of 3rd c. AD, probably representing the goddess personifying the curative waters of Gisély-le-Vieil (Côte d'Or): Rosmerta? Morelot, 1843-1844, p. 222.

Rosmerta is also invoked by herself in a dedication unearthed in the locality of 'La plaine au-dessus des Bois', in Dompierre-sur-Authie (Somme), situated in the territory of the Ambiani. The inscription, engraved on a silver band, belonging to the wooden pedestal of a statuette, was found in 1989 during the excavations of a sanctuary, dating from the end of the 1st c. AD, composed of a fanum* and open-air areas where deposits of offerings were made. This inscription reads: *Rosmert(ae) Aug(ustae) Exstipibus*, 'To the August Rosmerta Exstipibus (offered this)' (fig. 14).⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁸ AE 2002, 1003 ; Piton, 1993, p. 87 and picture p. 88 ; Gachelin, 2002, pp. 57-62 ; Fauduet, 2005, p. 96. The translation is my own. *Exstipibus* must be a proper name, but Delamarre, 2003 & 2007 does not refer to it.



Fig. 14: The inscription to Rosmerta, engraved on a silver string course belonging to a socle in wood, found in Dompierre-sur-Authie (Somme). In the Musée Berck-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais). Piton, 1993, p. 88.

Furthermore, an early inscription in Gaulish language and Latin lettering, engraved along the inside brim of an earthenware vessel unearthed in Lezoux (Puy-de-Dôme), comprises the divine names Rosmerta and Rigani (fig. 15). The 'Terrine de Lezoux' was discovered in 1974 on the site of the Neolithic and Proto-historic necropolis 'Chassagne', also called 'des Religieuses', excavated between 1972 and 1976 in the 'Pré Tardy', which is situated west of Lezoux (Puy-de-Dôme), in the territory of the Arverni. It was found in a funerary well dating to the time of Tiberius (1st half of the 1st c. AD).⁷⁸⁹ The *RIG II.2* gives the following transcription:

e[.]jo i euri rigani rosmertiac.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹ CAG, 63.2, *Le Puy-de-Dôme*, 1994, pp. 131-132, 152-153.

⁷⁹⁰ *RIG II.2*, 67, p. 181.

Several interpretations of this inscription have been proposed. On the one hand, Rigani and Rosmerta could be the name of two different goddesses. Rigani is the Celtic equivalent of Latin Regina ('Queen'). The 'Queen Goddess' is honoured in Worringen (Germany),⁷⁹¹ Lanchester (GB),⁷⁹² and Lemington (GB)⁷⁹³ (see Chapter 3). The offering would have thus been made to both Rigani and Rosmerta and the inscription would read:

I have offered this to the 'Queen' (and) to Rosmerta.⁷⁹⁴

On the other hand, Rigani and Rosmerta may be two epithets designating the same deity. This is the more likely interpretation, for Regina is a title which is sometimes given in the epigraphy to the Roman goddesses Juno, Minerva and Fortuna and to the Gallo-Roman horse goddess Epona.⁷⁹⁵ The inscription would then read:

I have offered this to Rigani Rosmerta, i.e. the Queen Rosmerta.⁷⁹⁶

However, Lambert in the *RIG* II.2 suggests another possible interpretation, which he argues is the most probable one.⁷⁹⁷ According to him, the coordination between the words Rigani and Rosmerta is definitely not possible. Therefore, it cannot be an offering to two separate deities. He interprets the final word *Rosmertiac* as an abbreviated form of *Rosmertiac[on]*, a word in *-āko-* designating a name of feast, that is 'the feasts of Rosmerta'. Feasts held in honour of land-goddesses are known in Irish medieval literature, such as Óenach Macha ('Macha's Assembly') for Macha and Óenach Tailten ('Tailtiu Fair') for Tailtiu, two earth-goddesses *par excellence* (see above). This theory is thus plausible. Lambert reckons that the word *rigani* could refer to a (human) queen, who would have made the offering. From this, it follows that the inscription should be read:

This I offered, (me) the queen of the feasts of Rosmerta.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹¹ *CIL* XIII, 8518.

⁷⁹² *RIB* 1084.

⁷⁹³ *AE* 1950, 134.

⁷⁹⁴ Lambert, 1995, pp. 145-146 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 362.

⁷⁹⁵ Lejeune, in Hatt, 1981, p. 31 ; Hatt, 1981, pp. 17-18 ; *CIL* XIII, p. 115, 85 (*Juno*) ; *CIL* XIII, 177 (*Minerva*) ; *CIL* XIII, 6677 (*Fortuna*). Epona is given the title of Regina in Alba Iulia, Dacia (Romania), *CIL* III, 7750: *Epon(a)e Regina(e) sanct(ae)* ; in Dulca (Dalmatia), Euskirchen, 1993, n° 278 and *CIL* III, 12679: *Epona Re[g(inae)]* ; I. O. M. *Epon(a)e Regin(ae) Genio Loci P. Bennius Eg[...]* *Regius Mil. Coh. Vol. Adiu[tor] principis, b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) v(otum) s(olvit)* ; in Razgrad (Bulgaria), *AE* 1993, 1370 and Ivanov, R., in *Arheologija (Sofia)*, 35, 3, 1993, pp. 27-29: *[---Dea?]e Eponae Reg(inae) pro salu(te) d(omini) n(ostri) M. Aur(elii) Antonini [Pii] Fel(icis) Aug(usti). Valerius Ruf(---) b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) XI Cl(audia)e Antoninianae V[---] Lae(to) Il et Ceria[le] c(o)ns(ulibus)]* ; in Szentendre (Hungary), Euskirchen, 1993, n° 281: *Epon(a)e Reg(inae)*.

⁷⁹⁶ Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 159.

⁷⁹⁷ *RIG* II.2, 67, pp. 181-183.

⁷⁹⁸ *RIG* II.2, 67, p. 183.

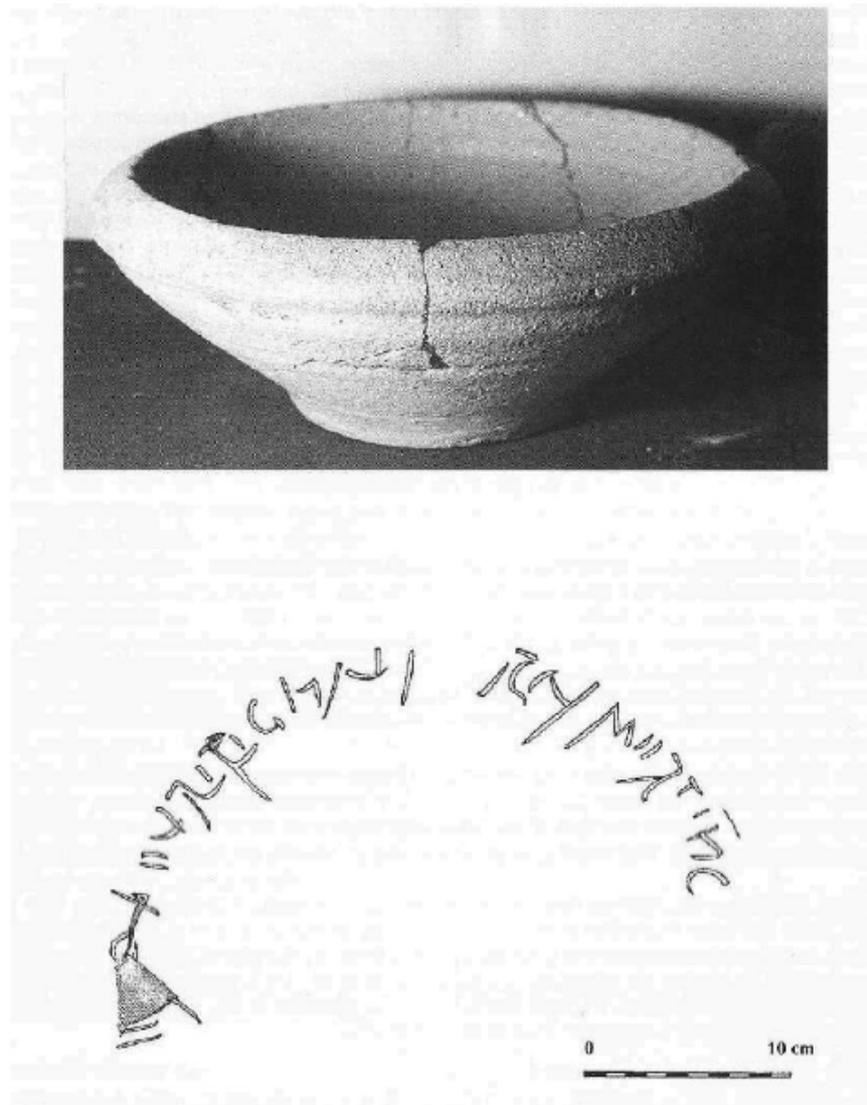


Fig. 15: The earth ware vessel from Lezoux with the Gallo-Latin inscription mentioning 'the feasts of Rosmerta'. *RIG II.2*, p. 180.

Finally, the name of the goddess may appear on a fragment of vase in marble, found in Austria (Noricum*) between 1980 and 1990 in an unidentified field: [---Ros]merta [---].⁷⁹⁹ This object has been interpreted as an offering to the Goddess.

3) Iconographical devices combined with an inscription

In addition to those four inscriptions, remarkable images of Rosmerta, combined with a dedication identifying her, are known: the statuette in bronze from Champoulet (Loiret) and the relief* from Escolives-Sainte-Camille (Yonne). In 1935, a hiding-place containing a series of Gallo-Roman bronze statuettes was uncovered in Champoulet, a small village near Saint-Fargeau (Loiret), in the territory of the Carnutes. There was found a bronze statuette of Rosmerta, wearing a coat, a tunic and diadem (fig. 16 and 17).⁸⁰⁰ René Joffroy suggests

⁷⁹⁹ *AE* 2005, 1157 ; *Annona epigraphica Austriaca*, 2005, p. 239, n° 114 and pp. 366-367.

⁸⁰⁰ *AE* 1980, 643 ; *LIMC*, VII, p. 645, n°2 ; Joffroy, 1978, pp. 799-802 ; Lejeune, 1978, p. 810 ; Joffroy, 1983, pp. 5-12.

she might have held a patera* in her right hand and a caduceus* or cornucopia* in her left hand. The inscription engraved on the pedestal is the following: *Aug(usto) saccr(um) d(e)ae Rosmert(a)e Dubnocaratiaci Maross(us) Marulli filius v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) d(e) s(uo) d(edit)*, 'To the Sacred August Goddess Rosmerta Dubnocaratiaci, Marossus son of Marullus paid his vow willingly and deservedly and offered this at his own expense'.⁸⁰¹ Interestingly, the dedicator Marossus (*maro-* 'great', 'big') and his father *Marullus* bear Celtic names. Their unique name indicates they are peregrines.⁸⁰²

The substantive Dubnocaratiacius is also attributed to Mercurius and Apollo in three other inscriptions from the same site:⁸⁰³ *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) deo Merc(urio) Dubnocaratiaco ex stip(endio) eius sub c(ura) Sedati Valloicis ; Aug(usto) sac(rum) Merc(urio) Dubnocaratiaco Messa Marulli v.s.l.m ; Aug(usto) sac(rum) deo Appolino Dunocaratiaco Nobili(s) Titiani f(ilius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

⁸⁰¹ AE 1980, 643.

⁸⁰² Delamarre, 2007, pp. 127, 226 ; Dondin-Payre, 2001, pp. 300, 304-305.

⁸⁰³ AE 1980, 641, 642, 644 ; CAG, 45, *Le Loiret*, 1988, p. 46 ; Lejeune, 1978, pp. 806-812 and fig. 9, 10, 12 ; Joffroy, 1978, pp. 795-799 and fig. 1-2.



Fig. 16: Inscription to Rosmerta engraved on the socle of a statue. Lejeune, 1978, fig. 11.

Dubnocaratiacius could mean something like 'Dear to the World', with *dubno-*, 'dark', 'mysterious', 'from the (under)world' and *cara-*, 'dear',⁸⁰⁴ but Lejeune and Lambert maintain that Dubnocaratiacius is not to be understood as a divine name but as a localizing epithet in *-iaco*, referring to a place or domain belonging to somebody.⁸⁰⁵ Like Marti Masuciaco is related to the land owned by Masucius⁸⁰⁶ and Mars Victor Magniacus Vellaunus to a place called Magniacum,⁸⁰⁷ Rosmertae Dubnocaratiaci should be interpreted as 'Rosmerta from the place known as Dubnocaratiacum', that is 'the property of Dubnocaratus'. It is actually the proper name of the owner of the domain which means 'Beloved of the World'.⁸⁰⁸ In the

⁸⁰⁴ Lejeune, 1978, p. 813 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 151 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 215, 220 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 330.

⁸⁰⁵ Lejeune, 1978, p. 814 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 39 ; Lambert, 2008, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁰⁶ *CIL* XII, 1565 ; *Gallia*, 27, 1969, pp. 210-213.

⁸⁰⁷ *CIL* XII, 2373 ; *ILN* V, Vienne, 559.

⁸⁰⁸ Lambert, 2008, p. 1.

second inscription to Mercurius it is noticeable that the dedicator Messa, who has a Celtic name, is the daughter of Marullus, and thus the sister of Marossus, the dedicator paying homage to Rosmerta.⁸⁰⁹ From those inscriptions and bronzes, it can be inferred that the property Dubnocaratiacum belonged to the head of the family Marullus and that a place of worship dedicated to Rosmerta, Mercurius and Apollo was located there. This family is of Celtic origin, for all the members (father, son and daughter) have Gaulish names. Bearing the unique name, they are peregrines.



Fig. 17: Statuette in bronze of Rosmerta with inscription discovered in Champoulet. In the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Joffroy, 1978, fig. 3.

Another relief* with dedication to Rosmerta, dated from the second half of the 1st c. AD, comes from Escolives-Sainte-Camille (Yonne), in the territory of the Aedui. It was found in a place of worship known as 'Champ-des-Tombeaux', a sanctuary located near the spring

⁸⁰⁹ Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 300.

of the Creusot (fig. 19).⁸¹⁰ The goddess is represented standing alone in a niche, wearing the usual long robe and diadem of the Classical mother goddesses. She holds a huge cornucopia*, full of round fruit - possibly apples - in her left hand and a patera* in her right hand. These are the common attributes of the Greco-Roman divinities of abundance and fertility. The inscription, engraved along the arc of the niche, associates Rosmerta with the Emperor: *Dea(e) Rosmertae Iunianu(s). // sac(erdos) Aug(ustis) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) // S.H. / XXI / TLL (?)*, 'To the goddess Rosmerta, Iunianus, priest of Augustus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 18).⁸¹¹ Originally, the stone was engraved only with the votive formula *v.s.l.m.* and the price of the stone *SH XXI* (21 sesterces).⁸¹² The dedicator Iunianus is a peregrine*, since he bears the unique name. According to Monique Dondin-Payre, Iunianus is an indigenous Latin name, based on a root *iun-* signifying 'desire', which is typical of peregrines.⁸¹³ He indicates his function: he is a priest (*sacerdos*) of the Emperor Augustus. On the account of the formula *Dea*, the inscription is not prior to the middle of the 2nd c. AD.⁸¹⁴

The worship of Rosmerta may be linked to the curative spring of Le Creusot, for excavations carried out at the Champ-des-Tombeaux revealed the foundations of an early 1st-century AD sanctuary and baths. Moreover, anatomical ex-votos* in wood, bronze and stone, similar to those found at the Sources-de-la-Seine, attest to a cult rendered to a healing deity related to the curative spring.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁰ Kapps, 1967, pp. 3-6 ; Bémont, 1969, pp. 30-31 ; Deyts, 1992, p. 120 ; CAG, 89.1, *L'Yonne*, 2002, pp. 345, 350.

⁸¹¹ *AE* 1968, 306 = *AE* 1975, 617 ; Bémont, 1969, pp. 25-28 ; *LIMC*, VII. 1, pp. 644-645, n°1 ; Lothe-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 100, n°132 ; Green, 2001, p. 42 ; Green, 1995, p. 127.

⁸¹² The *sestertius* or *sesterce* was an ancient Roman coin, which was a small silver coin, occasionally issued during the Roman Republic, and was a large brass coin during the Roman Empire.

⁸¹³ Dondin-Payre, 2001, pp. 291, 299, 303.

⁸¹⁴ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.

⁸¹⁵ CAG, 89.1, *L'Yonne*, 2002, pp. 345-354 ; Lothe-Birot, 2004, vol. 1, p. 92 ; Kapps, 1974 ; Laurent, 1990, pp. 9-20 ; Laurent, 1995, pp. 2-8 ; Laurent, 1996, pp. 54-59.



Fig. 18: Facsimile of the inscription engraved along the arc of the relief of Rosmerta from Escolives-Sainte-Camille (Yonne). Bémont, 1969, p. 24.*

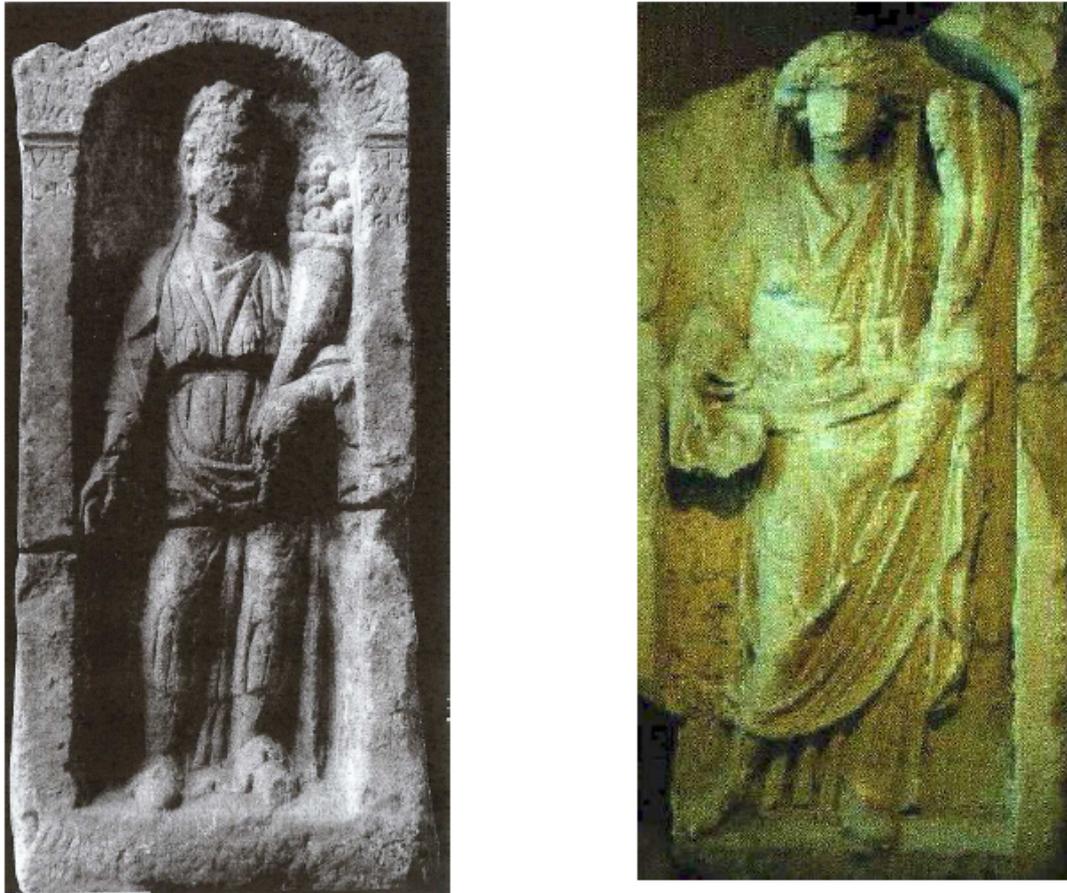


Fig. 19: Left: stele* from Escolives-Sainte-Camille (Yonne) with inscription to Rosmerta. Bemont, 1969, p. 30. Right: Anepigraphic relief* of a goddess of plenty from Soulosse-sous-Saint-Elophé (Vosges), where three inscriptions to Mercurius and Rosmerta have been discovered. The goddess stands in approximately the same position, holds a huge cornucopia* in her left hand and wears a long tunic and a coat. CAG, 88, p. 352, fig. 398.

B) Atesmerta

The goddess Atesmerta is known from a single inscription, discovered in 1918, at a place known as 'Combe-du-Champ-Bas', located in the heart of the Forest of Corgebin, in the commune of Chaumont-Brottes (Haute-Marne), in the territory of the Lingones.⁸¹⁶ The altar was found together with bones, fragments of pottery and coins from the mid-3rd c. AD: *Atesmert(a)e Magiaxu(s) Oxtaeoi f(ilius) v.s.l.m.*, 'To Atesmerta, Magiaxus, son of Oxtaeus/

⁸¹⁶ CAG, 52.1, *La Haute-Marne*, 1997, p. 143 ; Thomas, 2003, pp. 14-18.

Oxtaius paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 20).⁸¹⁷ The goddess name Atesmerta is composed of the intensive prefix *ate-*, *ad-*, 'very' and of the root *smerto-*, 'distribution'.⁸¹⁸ Atesmerta is therefore equivalent in meaning to the goddess name Rosmerta and can also be glossed as 'Great Purveyor'. The names of the dedicators Magiexus, based on *magi*, 'great', 'big',⁸¹⁹ and of his father Oxtaeus or Oxtaius,⁸²⁰ are Gaulish. This attests of the indigenous character of her cult. Her name is seemingly the feminine version of the god names Atesmertius (Apollo) venerated in Le Mans (Sarthe),⁸²¹ Atesmerius honoured in Meaux (Seine-et-Marne)⁸²² and Adsmerius mentioned in Poitiers (Vienne).⁸²³

⁸¹⁷ *AE* 1925, 98 ; *ILTG* 414 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 340, n° 623 ; Drioux, 1943, p. 68, n° 216 ; Blanchet, 1921-1930, pp. 169-171 & 1924, pp. 327-330.

⁸¹⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 57 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 211 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 128-131.

⁸¹⁹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 213 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 123, 211, 225 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 375 ; *ILTG*, n°414.

⁸²⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 208 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 147, 212, 228 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 896 ; *ILTG*, n° 414. *Oxtaius* is probably a 'local' name, because it is known from other inscriptions of the same area, see *CIL* XIII, 5408, 5441, 12240.

⁸²¹ *AE* 1984, 641 (Le Mans) ; Aubin, 1983, pp. 15-18.

⁸²² *CIL* XIII, 3023 (Meaux) ; Sterckx, 1998, pp. 35-36 ; Sterckx, 1996, pp. 58-59.

⁸²³ *AE* 1967, 301 (Poitiers) ; *CIL* XIII, 1125 (Poitiers) ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 25 ; *Gallia*, 25, 1967, pp. 262-263.



Fig. 20: Altar dedicated to Atesmerta found in the Forest of Corgebin (Haute-Marne). In the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Chaumont. Le Bohec, 2003, p. 340, fig. 297.

Excavations carried out unofficially by Luc Thomas between 1989 and 1992 revealed a 15-metre deep chasm, called the 'Gouffre des Bonshommes', and a subterranean river, where a bowl in ash wood and 300 Roman coins and a few Gaulish coins were found.⁸²⁴ When the water-level rises, the river gushes from the chasm and provokes a sort of geyser, rising sometimes up to 1.50m and flooding the valley over several kilometres (fig. 21). Nearby, a small rectangular temple, called *cella**, probably built over a primitive place of worship in wood, evidenced by the alignment of five pole holes of previous date, was unearthed (fig. 22 and 23).⁸²⁵ In the area of the temple was discovered a much damaged 1.55m high statue of a woman, which may be the representation of the goddess Atesmerta (fig. 24). Various anatomical *ex-votos**, such as a webbed hand, a leg, heads and busts,

⁸²⁴ Some Lingones coins and a Sequani coin in silver of the Gaulish chief Togirix, see Thomas, 1992, pp. 100-101 & 1993, pp. 84-86 ; Thomas, 2003, pp. 19-28, 59-61, 68.

⁸²⁵ Thomas, 2003, pp. 35-38.

similar to those from the Sources-de-la-Seine, were also found (fig. 25).⁸²⁶ Thomas explains that other alignments of pole holes discovered on the site could be indicative of a place where the ex-votos were deposited.⁸²⁷ A study of the coins revealed that the sanctuary was in use from c. 50 BC to the second half of the 3rd c. AD, when it was then destroyed. It seems clear that the sanctuary was erected in connection with the 'geyser', the appearance of which was limited in time and unidentifiable, and thus mysterious and sacred. It must have been understood as a divine manifestation or a benediction from the gods. The altar dedicated to Atesmerta clearly proves that she was the goddess presiding over the place and the anatomical ex-votos* suggest that people came to pray her so as to have their pains soothed. From this, it can be affirmed that Atesmerta was a local healing spring-goddess.



Fig. 21: Picture of the river in spate with geyser coming out of the chasm, situated next to the small sanctuary. Thomas, 2003, p. 31.

⁸²⁶ Thomas, 1993, p. 86 ; Thomas, 2003, pp. 43-58.

⁸²⁷ Thomas, 2003, p. 38.



Fig. 22: Picture of the excavations of the small temple with simple cella. Thomas, 2003, p. 37.*



Fig. 23: Map of the sanctuary of Corbegin. The small Gallo-Roman temple (yellow rectangle) was built above a previous place of worship in wood (the two parallel grey lines), marked by the pole holes (black points). The chasm is represented by the yellow circle. Thomas, 2003, p. 38.



Fig. 24: Female statue found near the temple, possibly representing the goddess Atesmerta. Thomas, 2003, p. 55.



Fig. 25: Ex-votos (heads and bust) found in the sanctuary of Corgebin. Thomas, 2003, pp. 47, 49.

C) Cantismerta

The goddess Cantismerta is mentioned in a single inscription discovered in 1858 in Lens (Switzerland), near the Chapelle Saint-Clément: *Cantismerte L(ucius) Quartillius Quartinus [v(otum) s(olvit)] I(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Cantismerta, Lucius Quartillius Quartinus

paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 26).⁸²⁸ Her name might be found again in a graffiti engraved on a pottery bowl discovered during excavations carried out in the new cemetery of Vannes (Morbihan) in 1899-1900. The graffiti being very difficult to read, its significance remains uncertain and hypothetical. Lambert proposes two possible readings: *CJantismertis srl* or *Jl Atesmertisrl*.⁸²⁹



Fig. 26: Altar dedicated to Cantismerta from Lens (Switzerland).
(Source: Musée Cantonal d'Archéologie Sion, O. Harl, 2005.)

Her name is composed of *smertā*, 'distribution' and of a prefix *canti-*, the significance of which has still not been determined with certainty. The translation proposed by Jean-Jacques Hatt of *canti-*, 'white' and Cantismerta, 'Purveyor of Whiteness' is improbable.⁸³⁰ This etymology* put him on the wrong track. He supposed that Cantismerta was the primary goddess lying behind the goddess Candida Regina, who was honoured in two damaged

⁸²⁸ *CIL* XII, 131 ; *RIS*, n° 249 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 40.

⁸²⁹ *RIG* II-2, 83, see Lambert, 1995, pp. 147-148.

⁸³⁰ Hatt, 1981, p. 16 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 171.

steles* combining images and inscriptions found in Ingwiller (Alsace) – destroyed in 1870. The first one was engraved above the depiction of a man and a woman standing in a niche: *D(e)ae Can[...]
Reginae lo[...]
c[...]
a[...]
ex [v]oto p(osuit) l(ibens) l(aet...) m(erito)*, ‘To the goddess Can(?) Regina lo(?) (offered this) in accomplishment of a vow’ (fig. 27).⁸³¹ The second one was engraved above the relief* of three personages standing in a niche: *D(eae) C(an...) R(eginae) Divixta Terentiani (filia) v(otum) s(olvit)*, ‘To the Goddess Can(?) Regina Divixta, daughter of Terentianus paid her vow willingly and deservedly’ (fig. 27).⁸³² The dedicator Divixta is a woman peregrine* who bears a typical Celtic name, based on the root *divic-*, ‘to avenge, to punish’.⁸³³ At first, Hatt thought he could reconstruct the name Cantismerta from the damaged altar, but he later acknowledged that this reconstitution was inaccurate.⁸³⁴ There is clearly not enough space between *Can[...]* and *Regina* for nine other letters. The discovery of an inscription dedicated to the goddess Candida Regina in Heddenheim (Germany) in 1965 allowed him to restore the name of the goddess honoured in steles* from Ingwiller: Candida.⁸³⁵ He believed Candida could have replaced Cantismerta, because Candida and Cantismerta both had names referring to ‘brightness’, but this theory is not admissible on account of the inaccuracy of his suggested etymology*.

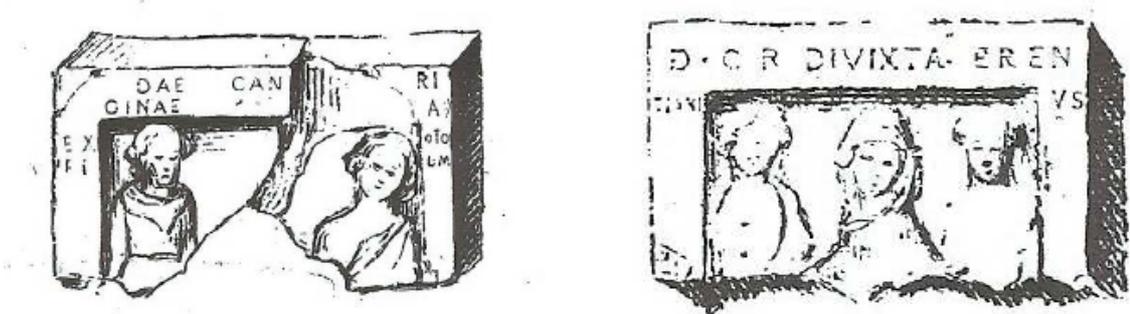


Fig. 27: Two steles* dedicated to Candida Regina from Ingwiller (Alsace), destroyed in 1870. RG 5642 & 5612.

As far as Schmidt and Lejeune are concerned, they suggest relating *canti-* to a Celtic *canto-* meaning ‘wheel’. Cantismerta would thus be a ‘Purveyor having the wheel for emblem’.⁸³⁶ In view of this etymology*, Hatt suggests that Cantismerta could be the divine warriorress represented on a coin of the Ambiani riding two horses and holding a torque* in her right hand and a wheel in her left hand (Chapter 3, fig. 13).⁸³⁷ However, when comparing this coin with others of the same style, the round object brandished by the female rider is clearly not a wheel but a shield.⁸³⁸ As for Evans, he relates *canti-* to **canto-*, ‘hundred’,⁸³⁹

⁸³¹ RG 5642 = *CIL* XIII, 6021.

⁸³² RG 5612 = *CIL* XIII, 6022.

⁸³³ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 145-146 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 87, 220.

⁸³⁴ Hatt, 1971, p. 213: *Cantismerta Regina* ; Hatt, 1981, p. 16 corrected his mistake: *Candida Regina*.

⁸³⁵ Hatt, 1981, pp. 15-16: *Deae Candidae Reginae L. Augustius Iustus C. cohort II Raetorum v.s.l.l.m.*

⁸³⁶ Schmidt, 1957, p. 91, 162 ; Lejeune, in Hatt, 1981, p. 29.

⁸³⁷ De la Tour, 1892, pl. XXXIII, n°10379 ; Hatt, 1981, p. 24, fig. 1 ; Hatt, 1989, pp. 41-43, fig. 18a ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 159-160 ;

Hatt, 1984, pp. 317-320.

⁸³⁸ Duval, 1987, pp. 49-64 and see Chapter 3 for more details.

⁸³⁹ Evans, 1976-1978, pp. 235-245: **canto-* ‘a hundred’.

which leads Olmsted to gloss Cantismerta as 'With Hundred Foresight'.⁸⁴⁰ Finally, Lambert and Delamarre argue convincingly that *canti-* should be understood as a preposition **kanta/kanti* meaning 'with'.⁸⁴¹ Cantismerta would thus be a 'Great Purveyor' like Rosmerta and Atesmerta, but her name has a slight difference in meaning. Lambert explains that Rosmerta embodies "the achieved and definitive distribution", while Cantismerta symbolises "the general and continuous distribution in space and time".⁸⁴²

D) The Divine Couple: *Rosmerta* and *Mercurius*

In addition to the four dedications venerating her alone, Rosmerta is honoured in a significant number of inscriptions (twenty-five) with the Gallo-Roman god Mercurius in the north-east of Gaul and on the right bank of the Rhine valley.⁸⁴³ As regards the iconography, there are only two monuments combining a portrayal of the divine couple and a dedication identifying them. About forty other anepigraphic* reliefs* from the east and the centre of Gaul, representing Mercurius with a goddess of plenty, are generally interpreted as figurations of Mercurius and Rosmerta, but, as it will be argued, these attributions are uncertain and problematic, for Rosmerta does not distinguish herself in the iconography by typical attributes of her own. Moreover, Mercurius is a polyandrous god, partnered with other goddesses, such as Maia, Fortuna or Visucia, who, when depictions exist, bear the exact same Classical attributes of fertility as Rosmerta.

1) Inscriptions

a) North-east of Gaul

Treveri

Rosmerta and Mercurius were honoured particularly by the tribe of the Treveri. Seven inscriptions indeed pay homage to them, such as in Reinsporth: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae), Deo Mer[c]urio et Rosme[r]te Docci(i) Apr[o]ssus et Accep[t]us IIIIIviri (seviri) A[u]gusta[l](es) v(otum) [solverunt] l(ibentes) [m(erito)]* ;⁸⁴⁴ Wasserbillig: *Deo Mercurio [et] deae Ros]mertae aedem c[um] signis orna]mentisque omn]ibus (fecit or restituit?) Acceptus tabul[arius seviri] augustal[is], item hospitalia [sacrorum cele]brandorum gr[atuita] sibi poste]risque suis ded[icavit]* ;⁸⁴⁵ Niedaltdorf: *Mercurio et Rosmer[tae] Messor Cani libertus*, 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta, Messor, freed from Canus' ;⁸⁴⁶ Niederemmel: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae), D[eo] Me[r]curio [et] Ro[s]me[r]tae aed?]em [...] da[...] n[tius] Pr[ud]ens [e]x iu[ss]u posuit ; [In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae)] Deo Mer[curio] e]t Rosm[ertae] A]diuto[r]ius Ur]sulus [v. s.] l. m. ; In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Deo Mercurio et d(e)ae*

⁸⁴⁰ Olmsted, 1994, p. 406.

⁸⁴¹ Lambert, 1987, p. 529 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 103-104 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 215.

⁸⁴² Lambert, 1987, p. 529.

⁸⁴³ *Paulys*, vol. 1.A (1), pp. 1129-1146 ; *RDG*, p. 60 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 155 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 182, 187, 205.

⁸⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 4192.

⁸⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII, 4208.

⁸⁴⁶ *CIL* XIII, 4237 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 10.

[R]osmertae Mer[curiali]s Aug(usti) lib(ertus), [adiutor t]abula[rriorum v.] s. l. m.⁸⁴⁷ and Andernach: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Mer[jurio et] Rosmertae a[ram cum] signi du[obus] Flavia Pri[mula] v(otum) s(ovit) l(ibens) [m(erito)]*, 'In the honour of the Divine House, to Mercurius and Rosmerta, an altar with two statues in bronze Flavia Primula offered (this) paying his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁸⁴⁸ Most of the dedications beginning with the votive formulas *In h.d.d.* and *deo/dea*, they can be dated from the first half of the 3rd c. AD.⁸⁴⁹

Mediomatrici

South of the Treveri, the sept* of the Mediomatrici also paid homage to the couple, as the inscription discovered in 1858 in Fournirue Street in Metz proves: *Deo Mercurio et Rosmertae Musicus Lilluti fil(ius) et sui ex voto*, 'To the god Mercurius and to Rosmerta, Musicus son of Lillutus and his family in accomplishment of his vow'.⁸⁵⁰ The inscription is engraved on the socle of a statue from which only the bare feet of the couple remain. While the dedicator Musicus bears a Latin name, his father Lillutus definitely has a Celtic name.⁸⁵¹ They are both peregrines, for they have unique names. The fact that the father chose a Latin name for his son shows his wish to become Romanized.⁸⁵²

Leuci

In the territory of the Leuci, who were located south of the Mediomatrici, six inscriptions have been uncovered. The inscription discovered on Mount Sion in Saxon-Sion (Meurthe-et-Moselle) reads: *Deo Mercurio et Rosmertae Carantus Sacri [f(ilius)] pro salute Urbici filii v. s. l. m.*, 'To the god Mercurius and to Rosmerta, Carantus, son of Sacrus, for the safety of his son Urbicus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow'.⁸⁵³ Excavations carried out on Mont-Sion revealed traces of a Gallo-Roman sanctuary, which was certainly connected to the curative spring situated next to the place of worship.⁸⁵⁴ The dedicator Carantus and his father Sacrus ('Consecrated'), possibly similar to Sacer, bear Celtic names, while the dedicator's son Urbicus has a name of Latin origin. This illustrates the process of Romanization undergone by the various generations.⁸⁵⁵ Urbicus bearing a unique Latin name, the members of the family are Romanized peregrines.⁸⁵⁶

In the village of Soulosse (commune of Soulosse-sous-Saint-Elophé, Vosges), three dedications to the couple, now housed in the Museum of Epinal, were discovered:

⁸⁴⁷ *CIL* XIII, 4193, 4194, 4195.

⁸⁴⁸ *CIL* XIII, 7683 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 205.

⁸⁴⁹ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

⁸⁵⁰ *CIL* XIII, 4311 ; *CAG*, 57.2, Metz, 2005, p. 182, A66.2 ; *RG* 4288 ; Hupe, 1977, p. 173, n°105. It is housed in the museum of Metz.

⁸⁵¹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 117.

⁸⁵² Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 259.

⁸⁵³ *CIL* XIII, 4732 ; Bonnard, 1908, p. 156 ; *CAG*, 54, *Meurthe-et-Moselle*, 2004, pp. 344-345.

⁸⁵⁴ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 10.

⁸⁵⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 57, 160, 215, 230 ; Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 238 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 10 proposes for *Carantus* 'friend', 'stag' or 'sandy rock'.

⁸⁵⁶ Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 259.

1. Mercurio Rosmert(ae) sacr(um) vicani Solimariac(ae), 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta, the inhabitants of Solimariaca offered (this monument)'.CIL XIII, 4683 ; CAG, 88, Vosges, 2004, p. 351.
2. D(eo) M(ercurio) et Rosmerte dono dedit Albucia ex voto [v.] s. l. m., 'To the god Mercurius and to Rosmerta, Albucia offered (this monument) and paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.CIL XIII, 4684 ; CAG, 88, Vosges, 2004, p. 351. It was found in re-employment* in the rampart of the village.
3. Mercurio et Rosmert(ae) Ci[n]tusmus Samotali fil(ius) v.s.l.m., 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta, Cintusmus son of Samotalus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.CIL XIII, 4685 ; CAG, 88, Vosges, 2004, p. 351.

In the two last dedications, one can notice that the dedicators bear Celtic names and are peregrines. Albucia is a woman's name and probably means 'Celestial'.⁸⁵⁷ Cintusmus is based on *cintu-*, 'first' and his father's name Samotalus may mean 'with a Summer-Forehead' or 'Calm-Forehead' – perhaps in the sense of 'bright-foreheaded' or 'fortunate' - being composed of *samo-*, 'summer', 'calm' or 'similar' and *talus*, 'forehead'.⁸⁵⁸ In 1976, two anepigraphic bas-reliefs* representing a goddess with a cornucopia* were found in the area of Soulosse. One of them is very similar to the representation of Rosmerta discovered in Escolives-Sainte-Camille (see fig. 19). Marie-Chantal Lothe-Birot explains that their worship might be related to the thermal waters of Soulosse, but the lack of evidence concerning the potential existence of a sanctuary or thermal establishment in the area and the lack of information about the place of discovery of the inscriptions makes it impossible to be certain.⁸⁵⁹

Near Soulosse, three kilometres from Grand (Vosges) - where a sanctuary of healing waters to Apollo Grannus was erected in Gallo-Roman times – a very damaged inscription, together with fragments of a statue of Mercurius, were discovered in a tumulus*-tomb, containing at least three corpses, located at the entrance of the forest of Hamets, near the antique road going from Grand to Nasium. The inscription reads: *[Mer]curio [et] [Ros]merta[e] [Cint]usmus [et] Ael(ius) Vest(ius) [v.]s.l.m.*, 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta Cintusmus ... aelvest(?) paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁸⁶⁰ Interestingly, the dedicator Cintusmus has the same name as the dedicator from Soulosse; he may be thus the same person. Cintusmus bears the unique name: he is a peregrine*. The second dedicator Aelius Vestius is a Roman citizen: he bears the *duo nomina*, which was in use from the end of the 2nd c. AD.⁸⁶¹

Finally, a dedication to the couple was found in 1859 in the wood of Châtenois, in Morelmaison (Vosges): *Mercurio et Rosmertae sacrum Regalis et Augustus Ra[...] haeredes Februarini v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)*, 'Dedicated to Mercurius and Rosmerta, Regalis and Augustus Ra[...], heirs of Februarini, willingly and deservedly fulfilled

⁸⁵⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 17, 210 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 6.

⁸⁵⁸ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 159, 231, 233 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 117, 266, 288-289 ; Evans, 1969, p. 335 ; Lhote-Ribot, 2004, p. 7 ; Dondin-Payre, 2001, pp. 289, 316.

⁸⁵⁹ Lothe-Birot, 2004, vol. 1, p. 62 ; Bertaux, 1990, pp. 186-187.

⁸⁶⁰ CIL XIII, 5939 ; Laurent, 1861, pp. 215-217.

⁸⁶¹ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 8-9, vol. 1, p. 152.

their vow' (fig. 28).⁸⁶² The first dedicator is a peregrine* and his name, based on the root *reg*, is Celtic.⁸⁶³



Fig. 28: Altar dedicated to Mercurius and Rosmerta by the Celtic peregrine* Regalis, discovered in the wood of Châtenois, Morelmaison (Vosges). *CAG*, 88, Vosges, 2004, p. 234, fig. 242.

Lingones

Mercury and Rosmerta were also venerated in the territory of the Lingones. In addition to the stele* from Langres, a very damaged and almost illegible inscription was discovered in the area of Magny-Lambert, near Savoisy (Côte d'Or). Le Bohec proposes the following reading: *M(ercurio) et Ros(mertae) Oa[...].llu() Vadarillae fili(-) vv(ota) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta, Oa...llu() son (daughter?) of Vadarilla paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁸⁶⁴ This stele*, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, was formerly housed in the Musée archéologique de Châtillon-sur-Seine but is now lost. It is engraved on a rectangular stone above seven juxtaposed heads of divinities, which, according to Espérandieu, symbolize the seven days of the week. From left to right: Saturni (Saturne), Solis (the Sun), Lunae (the Moon), Martis (Mars), Mercurii (Mercury), Iovis (Jupiter) and Veneris (Venus).⁸⁶⁵ The name of the dedicator is certainly Celtic – Le Bohec suggests

⁸⁶² *CIL* XIII, 4705 ; *CAG*, 88, Vosges, 2004, p. 234.

⁸⁶³ Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 266, 289.

⁸⁶⁴ *CIL* XIII, 11263 ; *AE* 1901, 59 ; Drioux, 1934, p. 77, n° 289 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 177-178, n°299.

⁸⁶⁵ *RG* 2336.

Oassos(?) – and his mother, Vadarilla, also bears a Celtic name.⁸⁶⁶ Their unique name allows us to say they were peregrines.

Bellovaci

Finally, in the very north of Gaul, a fragment of bronze plaque with the letters *R...SM...* was discovered in the west part of the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Vaux-de-la-Celle, in Genainville (Oise). The sanctuary is composed of a temple with double cella*, surrounded by three basins connected to a curative spring, and other buildings, such as a theatre. The temple was built over a fanum* dating from the middle of the 1st c. AD.⁸⁶⁷ Coins prove that the site was frequented from the second half of the 1st c. BC, that is before the erection of the fanum*.⁸⁶⁸ The reading of this plaque is unsure, but Pierre-Henry Mitard proposes to reconstruct the name *R[o]sm[erta? ----]*,⁸⁶⁹ because several dedications to Mercurius along with three statuettes representing the god were also uncovered at this emplacement (fig. 29).⁸⁷⁰ From this, Mitard infers that the temple had been erected in honour of Mercurius and his usual consort Rosmerta.

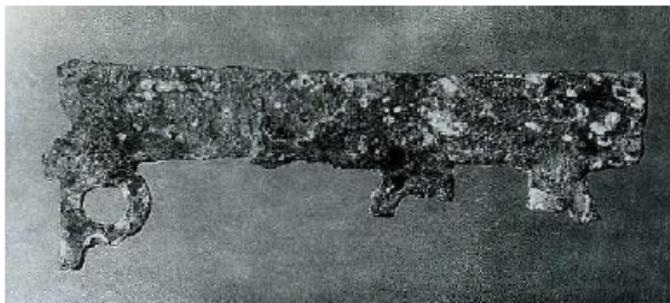


Fig. 29: Fragment of bronze plaque dedicated to Rosmerta and bronze statuettes of Mercurius from the sanctuary of Vaux-de-la-Celle (Oise). Mitard, 1993, p. 363, fig. 7 and 13.

⁸⁶⁶ Le Bohec, 2003, p. 178 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 187.

⁸⁶⁷ Mitard, 1993, pp. 311-325 ; Fauduet, 2005, p. 97.

⁸⁶⁸ Mitard, 1993, p. 415.

⁸⁶⁹ *AE* 1996, 1078.

⁸⁷⁰ Mitard, 1993, p. 364, n°2 and fig. 7 p. 363.

b) Germania Superior

Rosmerta and Mercurius were also venerated in Germania Superior, such as in Spechbach, on the right bank of the Rhine: *[Mercur]rio [et Ros]mert(a)e [sac(rum) vi]cani [vici N]jediens(is)*,⁸⁷¹ and in the territory of the Vangiones, such as in Alzey: *[In hono]rem d(omus) d(ivinae) [deo Merc]urio et R[osmerte Se]cundius [...ex] voto pos[uit laetu]s lib. [m.]*,⁸⁷² and in Worms: *Deo Mercuri(o) et Rosmerte L(ucius) Servandius Quietus ex voto in su(o) p(osuit)*. The dedicator L(ucius) Servandius Quietus bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens.⁸⁷³

In Cleinich (Neumagen), Mercurius is given a title of Celtic origin Abgatiacus. The inscription is the following: *In hono[rem] d(omus) d(ivinae) Mercur[io] Abgatiac[o?] et[?] Rosmertae aedem qu[e... ?]*, 'In Honour of the Divine House and to Mercurius Abgatiacus and Rosmerta (the dedicator) had this temple erected and [...]'.⁸⁷⁴ The votive formula *In h.d.d.* indicates that the inscription dates from the end of the 2nd c. AD or the first half of the 3rd c. AD.⁸⁷⁵ Abgatiacus could be seen as an indigenous divine epithet or name, but, as Lambert clarifies, words ending in *-iaco* are localizing epithets which refer to a place owned by a person or to the name of a landowner.⁸⁷⁶ Like Mercurius Dubnocaratiacus and Rosmerta Dubnocaratiacusin Champoulet are 'Mercurius' and 'Rosmerta of the property of Dubnocaratus', Mercurius Abgatiacus must be 'Mercurius of the domain of Abgatiacus'. The proper name Abgatiacus is undoubtedly Celtic but is not attested anywhere else.

In the dedication from Ueß (Mayen), Mercurius is associated with a Celtic epithet *Excingiorigiatus*: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) deo Mercurio Excingiorigiati et Ro[s]mert(a)e C. Satu[r]ninius Viriaucus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito). Aedem d(ono) d(edit)*, 'In Honour of the Divine House, to Mercurius Excingiorigiatus and Rosmerta, C. Saturninius Viriaucus paid his vow willingly, gladly and deservedly. He offers this temple at his own expense'.⁸⁷⁷ The use of the votive formulas *In h. d. d.* and *deo* prove that the inscription dates from the first half of the 3rd c. AD.⁸⁷⁸ The first element of this byname* *ex-cingo-*, with *ex-*, 'out of' and *cingo-*, 'warrior' or 'hero', means 'the one who leaves to attack' or 'the one who goes forward'.⁸⁷⁹ It seems clear that the second element *rigiatis* is cognate with Gaulish *rix*, 'king' (< **rīx*, **rīgos*).⁸⁸⁰ *Excingiorigiatus* may therefore be glossed as 'King of Warriors' or 'He who Rules the Attackers'.⁸⁸¹ *Excingiorigiatus* could be interpreted either as an epithet given to Mercurius or as the name of an individual indigenous god, later juxtaposed to Mercurius through the process of the *interpretatio Romana*. Lambert, however,

⁸⁷¹ CIL XIII, 6388.

⁸⁷² CIL XIII, 6263.

⁸⁷³ CIL XIII, 6222.

⁸⁷⁴ F. 80 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 9. Lambert, Delamarre and Olmsted do not suggest an etymology* for this name.

⁸⁷⁵ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

⁸⁷⁶ Lambert, 2008, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁷⁷ AE 1935, 29 ; N. 137 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 99.

⁸⁷⁸ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11 ; Raepsaet-Charlier, 2001, p. X.

⁸⁷⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 169, 116 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 99-100: *excingo-*, 'warrior' or 'attacker' is very frequent in Celtic onomastics, e.g. *Excingus*, *Excingomarus*, *Exciggorigis*, etc.

⁸⁸⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 260-261. For example: *Ver-cingeto-rix*, 'Supreme King of Warriors'.

⁸⁸¹ Olmsted, 1994, p. 338 proposes 'He who Rules through Striding', which is less probable.

points out that Excingiorigiatus is derived from a proper name Excingiorix or a gentilice* Excingiorigiatus, which would be the name of the owner of the property to which Mercurius belonged.⁸⁸² The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of the Roman citizens; his cognomen* is Celtic though: Viriaucus (<*Viriāco-).⁸⁸³ This must indicate that his father was a peregrine* of Celtic origin.

c) Romania

Finally, an inscription, dated c. 236-238 AD, recently discovered in Sarmizegetusa (Romania), shows that the cult of Mercurius and Rosmerta was brought as far as Dacia by the Romans: *Invicto Mithrae Marti Camulo Mercurio Rosmertae Q(uitus) Axius Aelianus u(ir) e(gregius) proc(urator) Aug[g(ustorum)] Ioni*.⁸⁸⁴ The dedicator Quintus Axius Aelianus was financial procurator in Dacia Apulensis under Maximinus Thrax (236-8 AD) and probably at the beginning of the reign of Gordian III (238-244 AD). In this dedication, oriental (Mithra), Roman (Mars and Mercury) and Gallo-Roman deities (Camulus and Rosmerta) are invoked. The dedicator probably knew the Gallo-Roman deities from the time when he was financial procurator in Belgica and in Germania Superior and Inferior.

2) Iconography with inscriptions

One clear portrayal of the couple accompanied by a dedication naming them is the altar discovered in Eisenberg, located near Göllheim and Grunstadt (Germany) (fig. 30).⁸⁸⁵ The inscription engraved under the figuration is the following: *Deo Mercurio et Rosmerta Marcus Adiutorius Memmor decurio civitatis st(...) ex voto [v(otum)] s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the god Mercurius and to Rosmerta, Marcus Adiutorius Memmor, decurio civitatis, st(...) offered this and paid his vow willingly and deservedly'. The dedicator bears Latin names and the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. He is a member of the ruling class, since he is a *decurio civitatis**, that is a member of a city senate who was in charge of public contracts, religious rituals, order, local tax collection, etc.

The Roman god Mercurius, counterpart of the Greek god Hermes, is easily recognizable on this relief*. Naked and beardless, he bears the attributes which are characteristic of him, such as the petasus* or winged hat and the caduceus*, a herald's staff crowned with two snakes, standing for his role as messenger of the gods. The purse he holds in his right hand symbolises his functions as protector of commerce, merchants and travellers - his role being illustrated by his name derived from Latin *merx*, 'merchandise' and *mercari*, 'to trade', 'to traffic'.⁸⁸⁶ As for the goddess standing beside him, she wears a tunic and a coat, and holds a patera* in her right hand and a purse in her left hand. This typifies her role of land-goddess and echoes the functions of her consort. Another anepigraphic stele* of the same type was discovered in Eisenberg.⁸⁸⁷ The god bears the exact same attributes and the goddess probably holds a patera* with her two hands. A goat, which is, with the cock

⁸⁸² Lambert, 2006, p. 54.

⁸⁸³ N 137 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 201.

⁸⁸⁴ AE 1998, 1100.

⁸⁸⁵ RG 6039 ; CIL XIII, 11696 ; LIMC, VII.1, p. 645, n° 6 ; LIMC, VII.2, p. 497 ; Bémont, 1960, pp. 31-33 and fig. 1 ; Deyts, 1992, p. 119 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 406 ; Hatt, MDG 2, p. 187.

⁸⁸⁶ LIMC, VI.2, pp. 270-306 ; DNP, vol. 8, pp. 1-4 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 173-174 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 254, 273, 762-763 ; Lhote-Birot, 2001, pp. 4-5 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, pp. 60-61.

⁸⁸⁷ RG 6054 ; Hatt, MDG 2, p. 187.

and the tortoise, the emblematic animal of Mercurius, is placed between the two divinities. In view of the other portrayal with inscription, it can be inferred that this altar is a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta.



Fig. 30: Left: Stele* from Eisenberg with figuration and inscription. In the Museum at Spire. H.0.90m. RG 6039 & CIL XIII, 11696. Right: Mutilated statue of a draped goddess holding a caduceus* in her left hand, identified by the inscription *Deae Maiiae* as the goddess *Maia*. It is in the Museum of Spire. H.1.25m. RG 5977.

The second epigraphic stele* was discovered in 1615 in Langres, in the territory of the Lingones.⁸⁸⁸ It is now lost and only a somewhat doubtful drawing, made by Montfaucon, remains. It represents the busts of a god with petasus* and a goddess wearing a coat on her shoulders, under which the following inscription is engraved: *Deo Mercurio et Rosmerte Cantius Titi filius ex voto*, 'To the god Mercurius and Rosmerta, Cantius son of Titi according to his vow' (fig. 31). According to Dondin-Payre, the name of the dedicator Cantius is an

⁸⁸⁸ CIL XIII, 5677 ; RG 3220 ; CAG, 52.2, *Langres*, 2001, p. 67 ; *Paulys*, vol. 8, p. 1131 ; *LIMC*, VII.1, p. 645, n° 7. It was found in Langres at 'rue des Piliers'.

indigenous Latin unique name, while the name of his father Titi is Celtic.⁸⁸⁹ Cantius and Titi are peregrines.



Fig. 31: Drawing of the lost altar from Langres, combining a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta and an inscription honouring them. RG 3220 & CIL XIII, 5677.

As one can notice, the two epigraphic reliefs* from Eisenberg and Langres do not shed light on the nature and functions of Rosmerta, who appears as a mere goddess of prosperity beside the god Mercurius.

3) Mercurius and other female partners

a) Mercurius and Maia

The Roman goddess Maia, 'mother' or 'nurse',⁸⁹⁰ is the other usual consort of Mercurius, mainly in Alsace, the valley of the Rhine and in the south-east of Gaul. In Greek mythology, Maia, who is the eldest of the seven Pleiades, the daughters of Atlas and Pleione, is a minor figure.⁸⁹¹ She is actually not the wife of Hermes/Mercury, as depicted in the Gallo-Roman iconography, but her mother. The Romans held her in high esteem and added to her legend the persecution by Juno and her transformation into a star by her lover.

Mercurius and Maia are honoured together in dedications from Germany⁸⁹² and from the territory of the Allobroges, notably in Villaz (Haute-Savoie): *Mercurio et Maiae T(itus)*

⁸⁸⁹ Dondin-Payre, 2001, pp. 290 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 56, 182, 215, 234.

⁸⁹⁰ Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 210.

⁸⁹¹ Grant & Hazel, 2002, pp. 210, 275-276 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 190, 273. Zeus loved her in a cave on Mount Cyllene, and she gave birth to Hermes (Mercury). She was also the nurse of Arcas, son of Zeus and Callisto. An obscure passage of Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius's *Saturnalia* (I, 12, 16) tells that she is the goddess after whom the month of May (*Maius*) is called, see Fowler, William Warde, *The Roman festivals of the period of the Republic*, London, Macmillan and Co., 1899, p. 100 ; Webster, 1986, p. 58.

⁸⁹² Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 165-166 ; *CIL* XIII, 1769, 6157, 7532, 7533, 11678b.

Coelius, 'To Mercurius and Maia, Titus Coelius (offered this)',⁸⁹³ and in Saint-Hillaire (Isère): *Mercurio et Maiae G. Verrius Aurelius ex voto*, 'To Mercurius and Rosmerta, G. Verrius Aurelius offered (this stele*)'.⁸⁹⁴ In those two inscriptions, the dedicators are Roman citizens, for they bear the *duo* and *tria nomina*. The couple is also venerated in the valley of the Rhine, such as in Mertzwiller (Bas-Rhin): *Mercurio et Maiae sacrum Sennaues Le[...] filius Gnata Lutevi filia [...]ratulla filia Rufino et Quadrato cos.*⁸⁹⁵ This altar is interesting, for the dedicator Sennaues (**Sennāgo-*) has a Celtic name,⁸⁹⁶ as well as his mother Gnata ('Daughter')⁸⁹⁷ and his grandfather Lutevius ('Swamp Dweller').⁸⁹⁸ A fragment of a stele*, discovered in 1845 between the villages of Pfaffenhoffen and Ringeldorf (Bas-Rhin), might have represented the heads of Mercury and Maia with an inscription identifying them: *[Mer]c(urio) et Maiae [I]lliomarus [Toc?]issae filius vslm*, 'To Mercurius and Maia, Illiomarus son of Tocissa(?) paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁸⁹⁹ This relief* is now destroyed. The name of the dedicator Illiomarus 'Great- (?)' is Celtic,⁹⁰⁰ as well as the name of his mother: Tocissa is mentioned in another inscription from Strasbourg.⁹⁰¹ Their unique name indicates they were peregrines.

Like Rosmerta, Maia is sometimes venerated on her own, such as in the inscriptions from Germersheim (Germany),⁹⁰² Neustadt (Germany) (see fig. 30),⁹⁰³ Saintes (Charente-Maritime),⁹⁰⁴ Grenoble (Isère)⁹⁰⁵ and Lyons (Rhône).⁹⁰⁶ In Lyons, the inscription *[M]aiae aug(ustae) s(acrum)*, 'Sacred to the August Maia', is engraved under a very damaged relief* representing the goddess seated and draped, wearing shoes and probably holding a basket of fruit in her hands.⁹⁰⁷ Interestingly, Maia is honoured in triple form in a stele* from Metz (Moselle), which echoes the cult of the *Matres* and *Matronae*: *In Honore[m] Domus Divinae Dis Maiiabus Vicani Vici Pacis.*⁹⁰⁸ Under the inscription stand three veiled goddesses; the two on the left used to hold an apple in their hands. This is the only existing example of a tripled Maia.

b) *Mercurius* and *Fortuna*

⁸⁹³ CIL XII, 2557. Villaz is situated between Aoste and the Lake Léman. The stone is in the Musée Château d'Annecy. *Coelius* could be either Celtic or Latin, see Delamarre, 2007, p. 69.

⁸⁹⁴ CIL XII, 2570. Saint-Hillaire is situated between Aoste and the Lake Léman.

⁸⁹⁵ CIL XIII, 6025.

⁸⁹⁶ Delamarre, 2007, p. 165.

⁸⁹⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 105, 222 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 181-182.

⁸⁹⁸ Delamarre, 2007, p. 121 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 211-212.

⁸⁹⁹ RG 5623 ; CIL XIII, 6018 ; LIMC, vol. VII.1, p. 645, n°13.

⁹⁰⁰ Delamarre, 2007, p. 109.

⁹⁰¹ CIL XIII 5969 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 182 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 189, 218.

⁹⁰² CIL XIII, 6095: *DEAE MAIAE / AEDEM A SOLO FE / CIT G ARRIVS PA / TRVITVS BF COS / V S L L M.*

⁹⁰³ CIL XIII, 6095 ; RG 5977.

⁹⁰⁴ CIL XIII, 11064: *Mai(a)e (H)el(e)nu(s) A(uli) Lycii s(ervus).*

⁹⁰⁵ CIL XII, 5867, 5870, 2194.

⁹⁰⁶ CIL XIII, 1748.

⁹⁰⁷ RG 1751. The relief was discovered at 'rue Pareille, quartier St-Vincent' in 1873.

⁹⁰⁸ CIL XIII, 4303.

A stele* from Glanum (Bouches-du-Rhône) represents a goddess with a huge cornucopia* and a rudder surmounting a sphere, partnering a Mercurius with purse, petasus*, caduceus*, tortoise and goat. Contrary to what Green asserts, this goddess is clearly not Rosmerta, but Fortuna.⁹⁰⁹ Fortuna is a Roman goddess who personifies Fate and its unknown factors.⁹¹⁰ She distinguishes herself by characteristic attributes of her own, such as the rudder, the globe or sphere, the wheel and the bow. Many a relief* from Mayence, Grand, Châtelet, etc, depict her.⁹¹¹ She is sometimes crowned and winged, standing or sitting. In Gaul, she is mentioned in about thirty dedications, generally made by soldiers.⁹¹² In addition to Mercurius, she is sometimes associated with healing deities, notably in Germania Superior, or with the Matronae, especially in Germania Inferior.

c) *Mercurius Visucius and Visucia*

It is significant that Mercurius is given a Celtic divine epithet Visucius and partnered with a goddess Visucia in an inscription found in 1832 in Köngen, situated to the east of Stuttgart (Germania Superior): *Deo Mercurio Visucio et sa(n)ct(a)e Visuci(a)e P(ublius) Quartionius Secundinus decu(rio) c[ivi(tatis)] Suma(locennensis) ex iu(ssu) v.s.l.m.*, 'To the god Mercurius Visucius and to the sacred Visucia Publius Quartionius Secundinus decurio civitatis of Sumalocennensis according to an order paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.⁹¹³ This inscription is engraved on a socle of a statue, but only the feet of the two deities remain (fig. 32). The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of the Roman citizen and is part of the political class, for he is a *decuriocivitas**, i.e. the person in charge of public contracts, religious rituals, order, local tax collection, etc.

Visucia undeniably is the female doublet of the god Visucius. She is generally held to be mentioned in another inscription discovered in Trier, but the stone is very damaged and the reading is thus very uncertain: *DAE V[...] IÉ CI CVI*.⁹¹⁴ In this inscription, she is given the title of *sancta*, 'venerable' or 'sacred', which is sometimes given to goddesses in the dedications from the two Germanies. This formula was in use from the middle of the 2nd c. AD to the end of the 3rd c. AD.⁹¹⁵ As for Visucius, he is honoured alone in three inscriptions from Heidelberg, Pfalsbourg and Herapel (Germany),⁹¹⁶ and associated with Apollo in an inscription from Saverne (Germany)⁹¹⁷ and with Mercurius in six dedications from Bordeaux (Gironde), Agoncillo (Spain), Esthal, Hockenheim, Trier and Varuswald (Germany).⁹¹⁸

The meaning of their names remains obscure and is still much debated. Delamarre suggests that Visucius might mean 'crow', *visuco-* being possibly cognate with Old Irish

⁹⁰⁹ Salviat, 1979, p. 49 ; Green, 1995, pp. 126-127 ; Green, 2001, pp. 59-60, fig. 23 ; Webster, 1986, p. 58. It is in the Musée des Alpilles, St-Rémy-de-Provence.

⁹¹⁰ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 259-260 ; *Brill's*, vol. 5, pp. 506-507.

⁹¹¹ *RG* 5727, 5746, 5752, 5757, 5766, 5887 (Mayence), 7526 (Châtelet), 4899, 4903 (Grand), etc.

⁹¹² See the list by Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 112, 173, 178-179, 182, 187, 196-199, 208-209.

⁹¹³ *CIL* XIII, 6384 ; *RG Germ.* 595.

⁹¹⁴ *CIL* XIII, 3665.

⁹¹⁵ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, p. 22.

⁹¹⁶ *CIL* XIII, 6404, 5991, 4478.

⁹¹⁷ *CIL* XIII, 5991.

⁹¹⁸ *CIL* XIII, 577, 6118, 6347, 6384, 3660, 4257 ; *AE* 1976, 327.

fiach, derived from **uisuco-* or **uesākos*, 'voracious' - from an IE root **ues-*, 'to eat one's fill'.⁹¹⁹ As far as Olmsted is concerned, he glosses Visucius and Visucia as 'the Worthy' from an IE root **vēsu*, 'good' or 'worthy'.⁹²⁰ Visucius and Visucia might also be derived from the root **visu* (<IE *weid*, 'to know') meaning 'who knows', 'who foretells', 'who sees', also found in the goddess name Visuna, mentioned in an inscription from Baden-Baden (Germany).⁹²¹

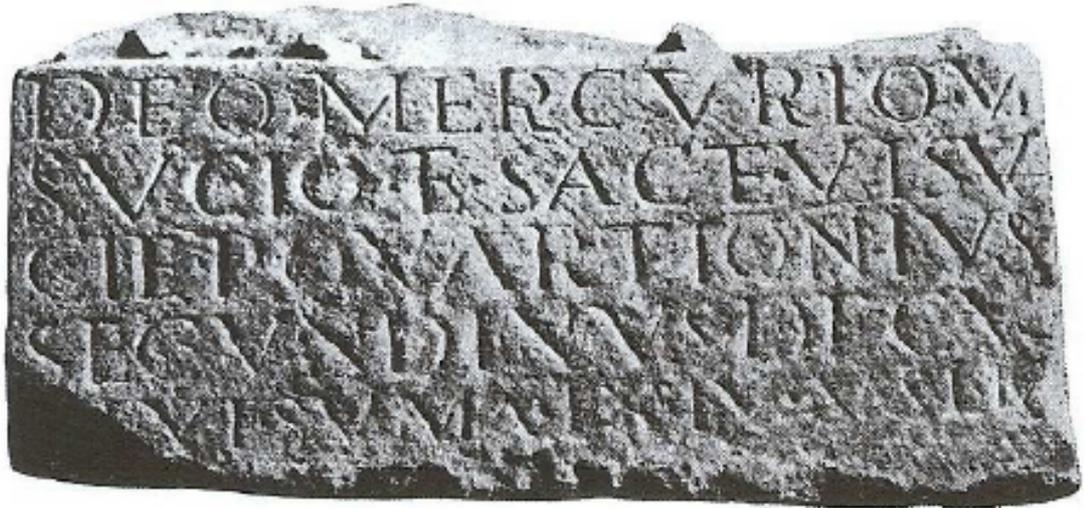


Fig. 32: Socle with the remains of the feet of two deities, bearing an inscription to Mercurius Visucius and Visucia. In the Museum of Stuttgart. RG Germ. 595.

d) *Mercurius* with a nameless female consort: *Rosmerta*?

It seems that many figurations without any inscription are attributed to Mercurius and Rosmerta without firm evidence.⁹²² While Mercurius is easily recognizable by his petasus*, purse, caduceus* and typical animals,⁹²³ Rosmerta does not possess any attributes peculiar to her, but generic characters of fertility usually attributed to deities of abundance and prosperity, such as the Matres / Matronae and Classical figures, such as Maia, Fortuna, Venus, etc. While some goddesses can be distinguished in anepigraphic images by typical attributes of their own, such as Nantosuelta with her distinctive pole-house emblem and crow, Rosmerta cannot. Moreover, Mercurius is often partnered in the iconography with other goddesses, such as Maia and Fortuna or mother goddesses of plenty, who bear, like Rosmerta, mere attributes of fertility and abundance. Accordingly, on reliefs* without inscription, such as the ones from Autun (Saône-et-Loire), Auxerre (Yonne), Saint-Moré (Yonne) or Vertault (Côte d'Or),⁹²⁴ it is not possible to assert that the consort of Mercurius is Rosmerta. Similarly, the couple from Nérès-les-Bains (Allier), often attested as being a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta, are actually a figuration of Mercurius with a

⁹¹⁹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 322.

⁹²⁰ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 330-331 sees a root **visu* cognate with Irish *fiu*, 'worthy' and Welsh *gwiw*, 'suitable'.

⁹²¹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 236 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 318-319 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 200 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 423 ; *CIL* XIII, 11714.

⁹²² Hatt, *MDG* 2, pp. 205-207 ; Green, 2001, pp. 54-61.

⁹²³ *LIMC*, VI.2, pp. 270-306 ; *DNP*, vol. 8, pp. 1-4.

⁹²⁴ *RG* 1825, 1833, 1834, 1859, 2201, 2883, 2926, 3375.

Nymph or Venus.⁹²⁵ By the same token, Green and Graham Webster both fall into this trap when they claim that Rosmerta was venerated in British water sanctuaries, such as in Bath and in Gloucester, for there is no evidence that the goddess accompanying the god Mercurius on the reliefs* is actually Rosmerta.⁹²⁶ Rosmerta is never attested in the epigraphy from Britain. Moreover, the goddess accompanying Mercurius in the British iconography is often attributed with a sort of small bucket or wooden tub, interpreted as a symbol of plenty, comparable to the cauldron of renewal.⁹²⁷ And Rosmerta is never associated with such an attribute on the Continent. Therefore, this goddess with a bucket should be understood as a different type.

It is nonetheless possible to identify anepigraphic reliefs* with Mercurius and Rosmerta when dedications to the couple were discovered in the same area. Thus, Colette Bémont, who has studied the various non-inscribed iconographical monuments possibly representing the couple, attributes the monuments from Niedaltdorf (Germany),⁹²⁸ Kinkelneuhäusel (Germany),⁹²⁹ Eisenberg (Germany),⁹³⁰ Metz (Moselle),⁹³¹ Dijon (Côte d'Or), Autun (Saône-et-Loire) and Sens (Yonne - lost)⁹³² to Mercurius and Rosmerta.⁹³³ In Niedaltdorf for instance, the inscription to the couple – given above – was found among the ruins of a small temple together with the fragments of a relief* representing Mercurius and a draped goddess. On account of the dedication, the goddess is undoubtedly Rosmerta.⁹³⁴ Similarly, a stele* found in Metz has Mercurius, naked, with petasus* and caduceus*, offering a purse to a goddess of plenty, who wears a long dress and a coat and holds a cornucopia* in her left hand (fig. 33). The portrayal is combined with an inscription mentioning Mercurius only: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) De[ro Mercur]io lu[...]*, 'In honour of the Divine House, to the god Mercurius [...]'.⁹³⁵ As the relief* was discovered in the same street as the inscription to Mercurius and

⁹²⁵ RG 1573 ; Lambrechts, 1942, p. 46, n° 9 and picture n°12 affirms that this is a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta ; Thevenot, 1968, p. 88 ; Green, 2001, pp. 55-56. It is housed in the Musée de Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

⁹²⁶ The works by Green, 1995, pp. 125-128 ; Green, 1992a, p. 180 and Webster, 1986, pp. 57-61 are cursory and mostly inaccurate, in so much as they consider that all the figurations representing Mercurius with a goddess are representations of Mercurius and Rosmerta. For the relief from Gloucester, see Rhodes, 1964, p. 24, n°9 ; Webster, 1986, chapter 3, pl. 6. ; Green, 2001, p. 58, fig. 22 ; LIMC, vol. VII.1, p. 646, n°20. The relief represents Mercurius with caduceus* and cockerel, and a goddess with sceptre, ladle and bucket. For the relief from Bath, see Cunliffe, 1971, pl. 37 ; Webster, 1986, chapter 3, pl. 7 ; Green, 2001, p. 57. It represents Mercurius with petasus*, caduceus* and purse, and a goddess with her own caduceus* and a bucket, box or casket. Under the couple, there are three *genii cucullati* and possibly a goat or a dog.

⁹²⁷ Green, 1992a, p. 180.

⁹²⁸ RG 5105, 5106 ; LIMC, vol. VII.1, p. 645, n°3, 9: an inscription to the couple was found in Niedaltdorf, cf. above.

⁹²⁹ RG 4488

⁹³⁰ RG 6054

⁹³¹ RG 4288, with an incomplete inscription, CIL XIII, 4312: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) d[...]jo [...]*, see LIMC, vol. VII.1, p. 645, n°5. An inscription without figuration dedicated to the couple was found in Metz, cf. above.

⁹³² RG 7519, 1836, 2785 ; Bémont, 1960, pp. 32, 35, 40 ; Bémont, 1969, pp. 28, 31-32, fig. a and b

⁹³³ For a complete list of the steles*, without dedications, probably representing Mercurius and Rosmerta, see Bémont, 1960, pp. 29-43 ; Green, 2001, pp. 54-61

⁹³⁴ RG 5105, 5106 ; Bémont, 1960, p. 35

⁹³⁵ RG 4288 ; CAG, 57.2, Metz, 2005, p. 182, A66.1 ; Hupe, 1977, p. 173, n°106 and pl. 7, fig. 2. In the museum of Metz.

Rosmerta, engraved on a socle of a statue, the figuration is certainly that of Mercurius and Rosmerta.⁹³⁶

Outside the 'areas of inscriptions', it is difficult to determine whether the images of Mercurius with a goddess are representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta. Bémont explains the impossibility - due to the lack and uncertainty of the iconographical evidence - to establish a distinction between Rosmerta and Maia in their attributes.⁹³⁷ The iconographical types she distinguishes are Maia-Rosmerta holding a basket of fruit or a cornucopia*, such as in Niedaltdorf or Kirkelneuhäusel, and Maia-Rosmerta bearing Mercurius's attributes, such as the purse, for instance in Metz and Eisenberg, or the caduceus* and purse, for instance in Nöttingen and Schorndorf.⁹³⁸



⁹³⁶ See above for the inscription: *CIL* XIII, 4311

⁹³⁷ Bémont, 1960, pp. 35-38.

⁹³⁸ *RG* 350 (Nöttingen) ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 206: the goddess holds a patera* in her left hand and a purse in her right hand. *RG* 655 (Schorndorf), Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 206: the goddess holds a caduceus* with her two hands. See Bémont, 1960, pp. 39-43 for a catalogue of the various possible representations of Rosmerta-Maia and Mercurius.

Fig. 33: Relief from Metz (Moselle), identified as a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta, for a dedication identifying the couple was discovered in the same street (CIL XIII, 4311). Hupe, 1997, p. 211, pl. 7, n°2.*

F) Conclusion

From this study, it follows that Rosmerta is honoured on her own in the centre of Gaul (Aedui, Carnurtes and Arverni) in four inscriptions, two of which are combined with portrayals - a statue in bronze and a relief* in stone. Being mentioned in an inscription coming from the territory of the Ambiani (Somme) and possibly in another from the territory of the Bellovaci (Oise), it can be assumed that her cult was extended to the north of Gaul. As for the worship of the divine couple Rosmerta-Mercurius, attested by twenty-five inscriptions, two of which are accompanied by images, it was particularly concentrated in the north-east of Gaul (Treveri, Mediomatrici, Leuci, Lingones) and Germany Superior (fig. 35). It is interesting to note that the north-east of Gaul seems to have been an area where the cult of Celtic divine couples was important, for Nantosuelta and Sucellus's worship is also evidenced in this region.

Unlike Nantosuelta, Rosmerta does not distinguish herself in the iconography by peculiar attributes and attitudes. Her representation is very Classical; she is depicted with cornucopiae* and paterae*, representing prosperity and symbolising her role as provider of fertility. Sometimes she holds her partner's attributes – purse and caduceus* – but these images are not combined with inscriptions identifying her with certainty. While Nantosuelta has a distinctive iconography and a Celtic god Sucellus for partner, Rosmerta has a Classical and basic iconography and is coupled with a Gallo-Roman god, Mercurius: does this mean she is not a Celtic goddess and that her cult is Gallo-Roman? First of all, her name, which is etymologically linked and similar in meaning to Atesmerta and Cantismerta, is undeniably Celtic. The existence of goddesses, whose names refer to the notion of distribution, attests to a significant worship rendered to bounteous goddesses. As for her partner Mercurius, he may have replaced some indigenous god(s), who was/were originally coupled with the goddess. It is true that the epithets Abgatiacus, Excingiorigiatus and Dubnocaratiacus, given to him in Cleinich (Neumagen), Ueß (Mayen) and Champoulet (Loiret) do not support that argument, since they are not divine epithets or names belonging to a previous indigenous god, but names of properties and owners. However, the inscription from Königen, which associates Mercurius with a Celtic divine name Visucius, coupled with Visucia, clearly proves that Mercurius was linked to indigenous gods through the process of the *interpretatio Romana* and probably replaced a certain number of them. This could be evidenced by a figuration from Trier,⁹³⁹ which has Mercurius wearing the Celtic torque*, and the statue from Nérès-les-Bains (Allier) where he holds a ram-horned snake in his hand:⁹⁴⁰ these two elements are characteristic of Celtic deities.⁹⁴¹

⁹³⁹ RG 4929 ; Wightman, 1985, p. 178 ; Green, 2001, p. 55. It is housed in the Landesmuseum Trier. It is a mutilated block found in 1895. On one side, it shows Mercurius and a goddess separated by an altar. The god wears the Celtic torque*, a purse and caduceus*, and a cock may be standing between his feet. On another side of the altar, there is a beardless man cutting down a tree, possibly Esus (?), with three cranes and a head of bull. On the left side of the altar, there is a mutilated image of a draped goddess.

⁹⁴⁰ RG 1573 ; Lambrechts, 1942, p. 46, n° 9 and picture n°12 affirms that this is a representation of Mercurius and Rosmerta ; Thevenot, 1968, p. 88 ; Green, 2001, pp. 55-56. It is housed in the Musée de Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

⁹⁴¹ Green, 1992a, pp. 195-196, 211-212 ; Green, 1992, pp. 142-144, 146-148, 159-160, 227-229 ; Green, 2001, pp. 25-26, 55-57, 64-65, 86-96, 105-106, 114-115 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 117-118, 430-434.

As regards the dedicators (and their father or mother) honouring Rosmerta, a significant number of them have names of Celtic origin. They generally bear the unique name, which indicates they are peregrines. Magiaxus, son of Oxtaeus or Oxtaius, honours the goddess Atesmerta in the forest of Corgebin (Haute-Marne). In Champoulet, a whole family of Celtic origin, owner of a property with a Celtic name, Dubnocaratiacum, pays homage to Rosmerta, Mercurius and Apollo: Marullus, the head of the family, Marossus, his son, and Messa, his daughter. In Saxon-Sion (Meurthe-et-Moselle), Langres (Haute-Marne) and Magny-Lambert (Côte d'Or), the dedicators and their father or mother bear Celtic names: Carantus and Sacer, Cantius and Titi, Oassos (?) and Varadilla. In Morelmaison (Vosges), the dedicator Regalis is a Celtic peregrine*, while in Soulosse (Vosges), an inscription is offered by a woman Albuca and another by Cintusmus, son of Samotalus. Cintusmus is mentioned again in the dedication from near Grand (Vosges). In Metz (Moselle), it is interesting to note that the dedicator Musicus is a peregrine* with a Latin name and that his father bears a Celtic name: Lillutus. The fact that the father chose a Latin name for his son attests to his desire to become Romanized. In Ueß (Germany), the dedicator C. Satu[r]ninius Viriaucus bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, but his cognomen*, Viriaucus, is undeniably of Celtic origin. By keeping a Celtic name, the dedicator displays his attachment to his indigenous roots. In Gisseyle-Vieil (Côte d'Or), Apronia Avilla bears the *duo nomina*; she is thus a Roman citizen. While her gentilice* is Latin, her cognomen* Avilla is Celtic. Romanized women often kept a cognomen* which reminded of their Celtic origin and culture, probably because they were somehow the guardians of tradition.

Some of the dedicators are also Roman citizens. They bear either the *duo nomina*, such as Aelius Vestius near Grand (Vosges), or the *tria nomina*, such as L(ucius) Quartilius Quartinus, who pays homage to Cantismerta in Lens (Switzerland), Cneius Cominius Candidus, the probable husband of Apronia Avilla in Gisseyle-Vieil (Côte d'Or) and L(ucius) Servandius Quietus in Worms (Germany). Some of them fulfil civic duties or functions, such as Marcus Adiutorius Memmorin Eisenberg (Germany), who is a *decurio**, Acceptus in Wasserbilig (Germany), who is *tabularius sevir augustalis** and the dedicator in Niederemmel, who is a freed *tabularius**.

In comparison with men, women are not much represented. Out of four, two of them are peregrines with Celtic names: Albuca in Soulosse and Vadarilla (the dedicator's mother) in Magny-Lambert. The two other ones bear the *duo nomina* and are thus Roman citizens: Apronia Avilla in Gisseyle-Vieil (Côte d'Or) and Flavia Pri[mula] in Andernach (Germany).

From this, it follows that Rosmerta was mainly honoured by a population of peregrines of Celtic origin, particularly in the north-east of Gaul, and by Roman citizens or freed slaves in the territory of the Treveri and Germany Superior.

With regard to the functions of Rosmerta, several hypotheses can be suggested. First and foremost, on account of her name and her iconography, it is clear that Rosmerta is a land-goddess fulfilling the role of distribution and sustenance. By dispensing the products of the earth to her people, she offers them prosperity and benevolence. As a certain number of inscriptions and images were discovered in water sanctuaries or near famous curative springs, such as in Gisseyle-Vieil, Escolives-Sainte-Camille, Mont-Sion and Genainville, it can be assumed that Rosmerta had some functions of protection, care and cure. In the inscription from Mont-Sion, the formula *pro salute* used by Carantus, a Celt who asks for the safety of his son Urbicus, supports that idea. Moreover, the sanctuary of Atesmerta, erected near the source-geyser of the Forest of Gorgebin, where anatomical *ex-votos** were discovered, provides evidence of a healing cult rendered to the goddess. Finally, Rosmerta may have endorsed a funerary role, accompanying, protecting and sustaining the deceased

in the afterlife, for the inscription near Grand was found inside a tumulus*-tomb where three corpses were interred. Moreover, the Gallo-Latin graffiti from Lezoux, probably mentioning 'the feasts of Rosmerta', was unearthed in a funerary well on the necropolis of Chassagne, which would suggest chthonic* and funerary functions.

From the 1st c. AD, in certain areas, the cult of Rosmerta was certainly replaced by the cult of the Roman goddess Maia, who accompanies Mercurius in several inscriptions and depictions from the valley of the Rhine and the centre-east of Gaul (territory of the Allobroges). What is interesting to note is that Maia is sometimes honoured by people of Celtic stock, as the inscriptions from Mertzwiller (Bas-Rhin) and Pfaffenhoffen (Bas-Rhin) show. This attests to the process of Romanization in the religious sphere. The tradition of Maia and Rosmerta in general, indeed, is intermingled and difficult to distinguish geographically and iconographically.

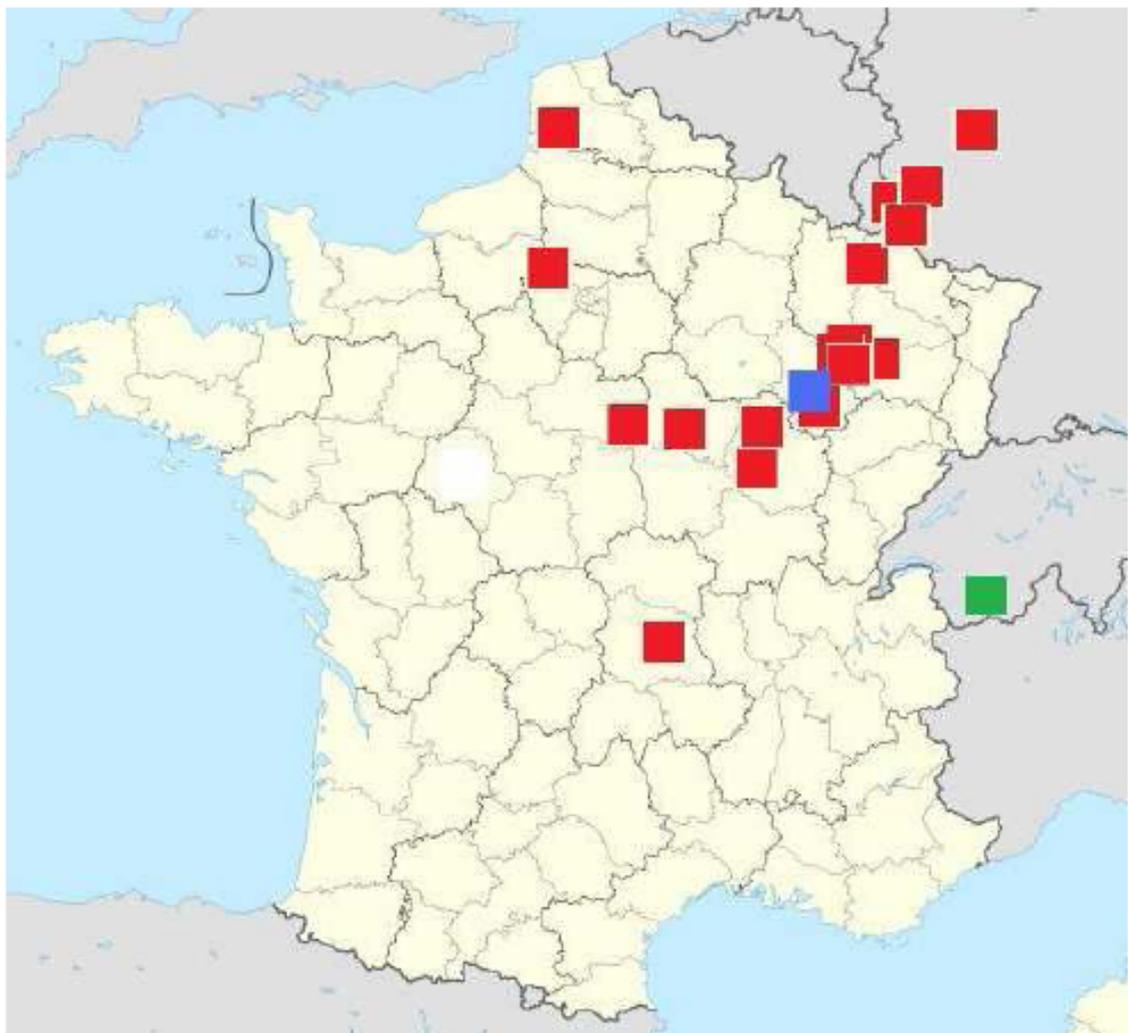


Fig. 34: Map showing the distribution of the cult of the Goddesses of Bounty: Rosmerta (in red), Cantismerta (in green) and Atesmerta (in blue) (Source: N. Beck).

III) Goddesses embodying Particular Natural Elements

The etymology* of divine names, Gallo-British iconography and Irish literature tend to prove that, while certain goddesses embody the earth and its fertility, others personify particular elements of nature, such as trees, forests, plants and animals, or are attached to particular features of the landscape, such as hills or mountains. While there is epigraphic and iconographical evidence of bear goddesses, the existence of a deer goddess can be questioned. Then, the data indicating evidence of a worship rendered to goddesses of vegetation will be assembled and analyzed. Finally, attention will be paid to goddesses whose names refer to highness or high places, for this evidences the sacredness of mounts. Were those goddesses simple deification of animals, trees and mounts? What were their essence and functions? Which cults might have been attached to them?

It is interesting to note that both in Ireland and Gaul some goddesses must have personified hills or mounts. The notion of 'highness' seems to have had an important part in the cults of the Celts, for goddesses bearing names denoting highness and eminence are of a quite significant number. The goddesses Arduinna, Brigit, Briganda, Brigindona, Bergusia, Bergonia all have indeed names referring to elevation, while Andei, Soio and Alambrima may be the personification of specific mounts, for their epithets can be related to names of hills or mountains, located in the area where the inscriptions were discovered. Who were those goddesses of high places?

A) Animal Goddesses?

1) *Artio* ('the Bear'), *Andarta* ('the Great/Powerful Bear')

The goddess *Artio* is attested in the territory of the Treveri by three inscriptions found in Weilerbachthal (Luxembourg): *Artioni Biber*, 'To *Artio Biber* (offered this)',⁹⁴² in Daun (Germany): *Artio Agritius*, 'To *Artio Agritius* (offered this)',⁹⁴³ and in Stockstadt (Germany): *[deae A]rtioni Sacr(um) S. Sexti S[...][d]e sv[o]pos*, 'To the Sacred goddess *Artio*, S. Sextus S[...]'?⁹⁴⁴ The two first dedicators *Biber* and *Agritius* are peregrines, since they bear the unique name, but have Latin names. They are thus in the process of becoming Romanized. In the inscription from Stockstadt, the dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. The fourth inscription was discovered in 1832 in Muri, near Bern (Switzerland), in the territory of the Helvetii. It is the most interesting one, for it is engraved on the socle of a famous bronze group, dated 2nd c. AD: *Deae Artioni Licinia Sabinilla*, 'To the goddess *Artio*, (from) *Licinia Sabinilla*'.⁹⁴⁵ The bronze group shows a seated goddess, facing a huge bear, which is looking at her with its mouth open. The bear is situated beneath a tree probably symbolizing the forest where it lives (fig. 35). The dedicator is a woman, who bears the *duo nomina* and Latin names. She is thus a Roman citizen.

⁹⁴² *CIL* XIII, 4113.

⁹⁴³ *CIL* XIII, 4203.

⁹⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 11789.

⁹⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII, 5160 ; Reinach, 1900, p. 289, pl. 1 ; Boucher, 1976, p. 161, fig. 291 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 114.



Fig. 35: Bronze group with dedication from Muri representing the goddess Artio ('Bear') facing a bear. Lacroix, 2007, p. 114.

The goddess Artio has the common posture and attributes of plenty of the Classical Mother Goddesses. She wears a long tunic and a diadem and was originally seated on a throne. She has a patera* and fruit in her lap and holds a sort of stick surmounted by a basket of fruit in her left hand. Therefore, she does not have any particular attributes indicative of her indigenous character.

As regards the bear, it cannot be taken for a particular Celtic feature characterizing the goddess. It is for instance the characteristic emblem of the Greco-Roman divine huntresses Artemis and Diana.⁹⁴⁶ Although the bear was a widespread animal in western and northern Europe during the Iron Age, probably hunted by the populations for prestige and for its fur and skin, bear imagery is almost nonexistent in Romano-Celtic iconography, except for a few representations on coins⁹⁴⁷ and some jet bear-shaped amulets principally discovered

⁹⁴⁶ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 153-154.

⁹⁴⁷ Dottin, 1915, p. 338 ; Jullian, *HG*, vol. 2, 1908, p. 348.

in tombs from North Britain, such as in Bootle (Lancashire), Malton (Yorkshire) and York (Yorkshire) (fig. 36).⁹⁴⁸ The bear does not seem to have held an important part in death-rituals either, for bones of bears are not found where important amounts of skeletons of other animals, such as oxes, pigs, sheep, goats and horses, are.⁹⁴⁹ The only data to date are claws and teeth of bears discovered in the La Tène sepulchres of Mont-Troté, Acy-Romance and Clémency (Ardennes), which can be understood as talismans or ornaments for the deceased.⁹⁵⁰



Fig. 36: Jet bear-shaped amulet from Bootle (Lancashire, GB). Green, 1992a, p. 41.

If the iconography of Artio is not of indigenous character, her name is undoubtedly Celtic. In the Celtic language, two words designate the bear. The first one *matu-*, cognate with Old

⁹⁴⁸ Green, 1978, pp. 23ff ; Corder, 1948, pp. 173-177 ; Green, 1992, p. 217 ; Green, 1992a, p. 41 ; Ross, 1996, p. 435 and fig. 198, p. 433.

⁹⁴⁹ Meniel, 2006, pp. 165-175.

⁹⁵⁰ Meniel, 1987a, pp. 357-361 ; Meniel, 1987, pp. 101-143 ; Meniel, 1992, p. 113 ; Meniel, 2001, p. 13 ; Green, 1992, pp. 45, 54, 125.

Irish *math*, 'bear', is for instance comprised in the Gaulish proper name Matugenos ('Born of the Bear'), in the Welsh hero's name Math von Mathonwy ('Bear son of a Bear Cub') and in the Irish personal name Mathghamhain ('Bear') and surname Mac Mathghamhna (Mac Mahon, 'Son of the Bear').⁹⁵¹ Interestingly, a Diana Mattiaca is honoured in an inscription from Wiesbaden (Germany): *Dianae Mat[ti]acae [ex] voto*, 'To Diana Mattiaca (this monument) was offered'.⁹⁵² Mattiaca can be viewed either as a descriptive epithet, based on *matu*, *mati*, *matiacos*, 'favourable', or as a divine name referring to a goddess in bear-shape.⁹⁵³ Diana Mattiaca could therefore mean either 'Diana the Favourable' or 'Diana the Bear-Shaped'. Such is also the case of the god Matunus, mentioned in a single inscription from High Rochester (Northumbria), whose name can be glossed as 'Bear' or 'Favourable'.⁹⁵⁴ Most of the scholars would opt for a descriptive epithet,⁹⁵⁵ but the idea of a goddess in the shape of a bear should not be ruled out. Given that one of Diana's emblematic animals is the bear in Roman mythology, she might have replaced an indigenous bear-goddess originally venerated in the area. Mattiaca may also be an ethnonym* referring to the tribe of the Mattiaci 'the Good People (?)', who lived in the area of today's Wiesbaden, the southern Taunus mountain range and the tract of Wetterau, on the right side of the Rhine.⁹⁵⁶ As the inscription was found in Wiesbaden, Diana Mattiaca may have been the goddess presiding over the Mattiaci. The strong likelihood is that this word for a bear reflects an ancient taboo* concerning the animal: *mat-* meant 'good' and thus reference to the bear was in terms of 'the good beast'.

The other, and original, word for 'bear' in Celtic was *artos*. It is cognate with Old Irish *art*, Welsh *arth* and Old Breton *ard*, *arth-*, simultaneously signifying 'bear' and 'warrior'.⁹⁵⁷ The goddess Artio ('Bear') is etymologically related to the goddess Andarta, whose cult is very certainly local, for the eight inscriptions honouring her come from Die and the area of Die (Drôme), in the territory of the Vocontii.⁹⁵⁸ Her name is composed of the intensive prefix *ande-*, 'very, great, big' and of the root *arta*, 'bear'. Andarta is thus the 'Great Bear'.⁹⁵⁹ In five inscriptions, Andarta is attributed the title *August*, which is redolent of her sacredness and potency and indicates that her cult was made official in the Roman pantheon, probably towards the end of the 1st c. AD. The use of the votive formula *dea* indicates that the dedications are not prior to the middle of the 2nd c. AD. As for the dedicators, they all bear the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. The three following dedications were discovered in Die: *Deae Aug(ustae) Andartae L. Carisius Serenus (...?) vir aug(ustalis) v(otum) s(ovlit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta, L. Carisius Serenus [...] augustal sevir (?) paid

⁹⁵¹ Macculloch, 1911, pp. 212-213 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 117 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 36.

⁹⁵² *CIL* XIII, 7565.

⁹⁵³ Evans, 1967, pp. 228-232 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 221 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 226.

⁹⁵⁴ *RIB* 1265 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 433 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 221.

⁹⁵⁵ Schmidt, 1957, p. 239 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 430 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 221.

⁹⁵⁶ Olmsted, 1994, p. 430.

⁹⁵⁷ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 55-56.

⁹⁵⁸ The Vocontii were a Celtic sept* located in today's Provence, between the rivers Durance and Isère. Their western neighbours were the Allobroges and their eastern neighbours the Cavares. See Barruol, 1999, pp. 282-283 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 864.

⁹⁵⁹ Lacroix, 2007, p. 113 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 45-46, 56 ; Olmsted, 2004, p. 430.

his vow willingly and deservedly' ;⁹⁶⁰ *Deae Aug(ustae) Andartae T. Dexius Zosimus*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta T. Dexius Zosimus (offered this)'⁹⁶¹ and *De(ae) Aug(ustae) Andartae M. Iulius Theodorus*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta M. Iulius Theodorus (offered this)'.⁹⁶² An inscription was found in Aurel, a town situated 15 kms from Die: *Deae Andartae Aug. Sext. Pluta[tij]us Paternus ex voto*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta Sext(ius) Plutatus Paternus offered this',⁹⁶³ while another was unearthed in Sainte-Croix, located about 9 kms from Die: *Deae Aug(ustae) Anda[rtae]*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta'.⁹⁶⁴ The following inscription was discovered in Le Cheylard, situated 40 kms from Die: *Deae Andar[tae]*, 'To the Goddess Andarta'.⁹⁶⁵ A dedication comes from Deam, a hamlet nearby Die: *Deae Aug(ustae) Andartae M. Pomp. Primitivus ex voto*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta M. Pomp(ius) Primitivus offered this'.⁹⁶⁶ The final inscription, coming from Luc-en-Diois, was reconstructed by Pierre Wuillemier: *[D]Jae Aug(ustae) [Andartae] [S]ex(tus) Maticius*, 'To the August Goddess Andarta Sextus Maticius (offered this)'.⁹⁶⁷

Some god names might also refer to the bear. Such is the case of Artaius who is equated with Mercurius in an inscription from Beaucroissant (Isère).⁹⁶⁸ His name is generally regarded as meaning 'Bear' (*Arta-ius*), but Delamarre proposes to break it down as *Ar-tāius*, that is 'Great Thief'.⁹⁶⁹ The god Artahe, Artehe, venerated in seven inscriptions from Ourde and St-Pé-d'Arde (Haute-Garonne) might also signify 'Bear', but his name is likely to be more Iberian than Celtic.⁹⁷⁰

It is difficult to decide on the nature of Artio and Andarta, for the peaceful representation from Muri is probably misleading and not representative of the original functions of those goddesses, who are generally understood as personifications and protectresses of the bear or as patronesses of the forest and hunting.⁹⁷¹ The bear, which was a dangerous and difficult animal to hunt, was certainly praised for its strength and majesty. It must have thus been a symbol of war and kingship. Significantly, famous kings in Welsh, British and Irish medieval literatures bear names literally signifying 'bear', such as the mythical King of Ireland Art, the son of Conn Céadchathach and the illustrious King Arthur, who appears in the 11th- and 14th-century Welsh legends *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Mabinogi*.⁹⁷² On account of their name

⁹⁶⁰ CIL XII, 1556.

⁹⁶¹ CIL XII, 1557.

⁹⁶² CIL XII, 1558.

⁹⁶³ CIL XII, 1559.

⁹⁶⁴ CIL XII, 1555.

⁹⁶⁵ CIL XII, 1554.

⁹⁶⁶ CIL XII, 1560.

⁹⁶⁷ ILGN 230.

⁹⁶⁸ CIL XII, 2199: *Mercurio Aug(usto) Artaiio sacr(um) Sex(tus) Geminius Cupitus ex voto*; Olmsted, 1994, p. 431; Delamarre, 2003, p. 56.

⁹⁶⁹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 27, 233.

⁹⁷⁰ CIL XIII, 70, 71 (Ourde); CIL XIII, 64, 73 (St-Pé-d'Arde); ILTG 36, 37, 38.

⁹⁷¹ Green, 1992, pp. 217-218; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 429-430; De Vries, 1963, pp. 122-123; Duval, 1957, pp. 48-49.

⁹⁷² For details on *Art*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 25-26; Mackillop, 2004, p. 25 and on *Conn Céadchathach*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 115-118; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 101-102. For *Arthur's* name, see Guyonvarc'h, 1967, pp. 215-238; Walter, 2002; Mackillop, 2004,

and the bronze group from Muri, it is clear that Artio and Andarta are bear-shaped goddesses protecting the animal. Nonetheless, as Jacques Lacroix and Ross give us to understand, those goddesses were certainly more than simple 'woodland-goddesses'.⁹⁷³ They must have been prayed to and honoured for the magnificence and force the bear incarnated and originally had war or royal functions. To support that idea, some scholars attempted to relate Andarta to the war-goddess Andraste, mentioned in Dio Cassius's *History of Rome* (LXII, 6, 7) (see Chapter 3).⁹⁷⁴ This is however highly unlikely, for their names do not seem to be similarly constituted. *And-arta* ('Great Bear') is definitely different from *An-drasta* ('the Invincible'), composed of a negative prefix *an*, 'non' and a root *drastos*, 'to vanquish, to oppress'.⁹⁷⁵

2) A Celtic Deer Goddess?

Flidais, in Modern Irish *Flíodhais*, is usually understood as a woodland deer-goddess, presiding over the wild animals, forests and hunting, which is why she is generally compared to the Greek Artemis and Roman Diana. The analysis of the various texts mentioning her will however demonstrate that these ideas are inaccurate and give a misleading image of the goddess.

First of all, Flidais is remembered in Irish medieval literature for her cattle called *buar Flidais* ('cattle of Flidais'), mentioned for instance in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'], in which she is said to be one of the Tuatha Dé Danan and the mother of four daughters:

Flidais, diatá buar Flidais; a cethri ingena, Airgoen 7 Bé Chuille 7 Dinand 7 Bé Theite. Flidais, of whom is the 'Cattle of Flidais' ; her four daughters were Airgoen and Be Chuille and Dinand and Be Theite.⁹⁷⁶

In *T á in B ó Flidais* ['The Cattle Raid of Flidais'], the earliest versions of which date from the 9th and 10th c., she is made the wife of Fergus Mac Róich and is similarly associated with cattle and cows. Here is an extract of the earliest version (9th c.) contained in the *Book of Lecan*:

Et doberat Flidais assin dún, 7 dobreth a m-bái di chethrai and .i. cét iulgach 7 secht fichit dam, 7 tricha cét di chethrai olchena. And they took Flidais out of the fortress and they took all the cattle that were there and a hundred calved cows and seven twenties calving cows and thirty hundred of cattle in general. It was after that that Flidais went to Fergus Mac Róich.⁹⁷⁷

pp. 26-27. For *Arthur's* appearance in *Culhwch and Olwen*, see Mackillop, 2004, pp. 118-120 and in *The Mabinogion*, see Gantz, 1976 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 312-317. For details on *Arthur's* romance, see Green, 1992a, p. 34 ; Luttrell, 1974 ; Alcock, 1971 ; Ashe, 1968 ; Cavendish, 1978. For studies of the Celtic aspects in the character of *Arthur*, see the bibliography given by Mackillop, 2004, pp. 26-27.

⁹⁷³ Lacroix, 2007, pp. 113-118 ; Ross, 1996, p. 435.

⁹⁷⁴ Green, 1995, p. 32 ; Webster, 1986, p. 54 mentions that this idea was put forward by Ross, but he does not give his reference.

⁹⁷⁵ Holder, ACS, vol. 1, p. 151.

⁹⁷⁶ Macalister, 1941, pp. 122-123, § 314 and pp. 132-133, § 317.

⁹⁷⁷ Windisch, 1884, pp. 208-216 edited three various copies of the earliest version of *Táin Bó Flidais*, dating from the 9th c. (Middle Irish), while Dobbs, 1916-1917, pp. 133-152 published three copies of the later version, dated 14th or 15th c. (Early Modern Irish).

As for the translation by Olmsted of the 10th-century version of *T á in B ó Flidais*, comprised in the *Book of the Dun Cow*, it is inaccurate and misleading.⁹⁷⁸ Flidais is indeed not identified with cows and does, as he maintains, but with cows and bullocks (*damaib*):

7 toberat Flidais leo assin dun [...] 7 oberat a m-bái di cethrib and .i. cet iulgach, 7 da fichit arc et do damaib, 7 tricho cet di mincethri olchenae [...] Ba sé sin búar Flidais.⁹⁷⁹ **And they took Flidais out of the fortress [...] And they took all of the cattle that were there, that is a hundred calved cows and a hundred and forty of bullocks and thirty hundred of small cattle in general [...] That was the cattle of Flidais.**⁹⁸⁰

Flidais is once again paired with cows in a text entitled *Benn Boguine* ['The Peak of Bogun'],⁹⁸¹ dated 9th c., mentioned in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*:

Fecht dia tánic sunda, mar cach ngábit ngalla, ón mnaí cen lúraig lumma bó da búuib dar Banna. Flidais ainm na mná-sin ingen Gairb maic Grésaig ind fairenda fial-sin, ben Ailella fésaig. Co roth#ed in bó-sin dá l#eg ar in lúth-sin, gn# garb, nárbu gnáth-sin, b# ocus tarb don túr-sin. Hither came, once on a time, as it were any foreign [...] straying from a woman, a beast of price, one of her cows, across the river Bann. Flidais was the name of that woman, daughter of Garbh son of Gréssach; that well-accompanied generous one, wife of bearded Ailill. That cow dropped two calves on that run; a rough business, which was not unusual, a cow and a bull on that journey.⁹⁸²

Thurneysen believes that Flidais is the archetype of the woodland-goddess, guardian of the forests and wild animals, comparable to Diana or Artemis.⁹⁸³ To support this idea, he proposes to relate the name Flidais to the word *os* signifying 'faun'. This theory would imply that Flidais is written in two words, that is *Flid Ois*, 'wetness of faun', with the significance of 'untamed'. This would give a genitive *buar Flid Ois*. It is however noticeable that this form never appears in the texts. In addition to always being written as one word, Flidais is never spelt with the letter 'o'. Therefore, it is clear that Flidais cannot be connected to the word *os*, 'faun' and be envisaged as a woodland-goddess. Besides, Ó hÓgáin points out that the antiquity and genuineness of Flidais is problematic, for her name is never declined in the texts, whereas all the other divine names are.⁹⁸⁴ Indeed, *Flidais* should be *Flidaise* in the genitive, and *buar Flidais* ('Cattle of Flidais') should be written *buar Flidaise*, but these forms are never encountered in the texts. This must be indicative of a medieval invention. In view of this, it must be acknowledged that Flidais is highly likely not to be a genuine goddess. To support that idea, it is necessary to study her relation to *Niad Ségamain*, to which her association with cows and does is actually due.

⁹⁷⁸ Olmsted, 1994, p. 54.

⁹⁷⁹ *Windisch, 1884, p. 215.*

⁹⁸⁰ *Translation by Ó hÓgáin.*

⁹⁸¹ This place has not been definitely identified, but there is such a placename. It is a mountain peak over Inver Bay in Co. Donegal, called Bewnbawn in English. See Hogan, 1910, p. 108.

⁹⁸² *Gwynn, 1924, pp. 70-75, 391-393.*

⁹⁸³ Thurneysen, 1921, pp. 317-320.

⁹⁸⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 257.

In the c. 9th-century *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* ['Corpus of the Genealogies of Ireland'], a corpus containing all the important Irish pedigrees and genealogical material from the earliest literary period down to c. 1,500 AD, Flidais is said to be the mother of Niad Ségamain and they are both associated with milking, cows and does:

Niad-Segamain lasa mbligtis diabulbuar .i. ba# 7 elti. Flidais Foltcha#n a m#thair diambtar b#e elti Niad-Segamain, by whom were milked double cattle, that is cows and does. Flidais 'the Fine-haired', his mother, to whom does were cows.⁹⁸⁵

If the name Flidais seems not to be genuine, Niad Ségamain undoubtedly is. The antiquity of his name is certain, for the first element *Niad*, known in Old Irish as *nía*, genitive *niath*, 'warrior', is derived from a Celtic form **netos* meaning 'leader' or 'warrior', attested as a divine name in inscriptions from Spain (Lusitania): Neto in Conimbriga and Netoni in Trujillo.⁹⁸⁶ Similarly, the second element of his name Segamain is similar to the god name Segomo(ni), known from various dedications found in Gaul.⁹⁸⁷ Segamain and Segomoni are both based on the Celtic root *sego-* meaning 'force', 'vigor', 'victory'.⁹⁸⁸ Finally, the name of Niad Ségamain appears in two Ogam scripts, dated 5th or 6th c. AD, discovered in Waterford: *Neta Segamonas* and *Netta Segomonas*.⁹⁸⁹

The fanciful etymology* proposed for the name Nia Ségamain in the c. 13th-century *Cóir Anmann* ['The Fitness of Names'] is obviously due to the inability of the medieval writers to understand its significance. This misled them to relate Ségamain to words, such as *seg* 'milk', *segamail*, 'milk-producing' or *ségnat*, 'little deer', extrapolating from this that Nia Ségamain was connected to the milking of cows and does, which is pure medieval speculation.⁹⁹⁰ The text explains that his father is Adammair and his mother Flidais:

Níadh Séghamain .i. is ségh a maín, ar is cuma n#blighthea bai 7 eillti fon aenchumai cach día ré linn, ar bá m#r in main d# na neiche sin sech na righu aili. Ocús is sí in Flidhais sín máthair Níadh Ségamain maic Adamair, 7 do bhlighthea a flaith Níadh Ségamain in búar sin .i. diabulbhúar .i. bá 7 eillti do bhliaghan re linn Níadh Ségamain, 7 issí a máthair tuc in cumhachta tsidhamail sin dó. Nia Ségamain, that is, ség 'deer' is a maín 'his treasure' ; for during his time cows and does were milked in the same way every day, so to him beyond the other monarchs great was the treasure of these things. And it is that Flidais (above-named) who was the mother of Nia Ségamain son of Adammair ; and in Nia Ségamain's reign those cattle were milked, that is, double cattle, cows and does, were milked in the time of Nia Ségamain, and it was his mother that gave him that fairy power.⁹⁹¹

⁹⁸⁵ O'Brien, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 362-363.

⁹⁸⁶ CIL II, 365, 5278 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 344 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 141.

⁹⁸⁷ CIL XIII, 2846 (Nuits-Saint-Georges, 5340 (Arinthod), 1675 (Lyon), 2532 (Culoz) ; AE 1994, 1224 (Les Bolards) ; AE 1999, 1067 (Ara Romae et Augusti) ; CIL V, 7868 (Cimiez).

⁹⁸⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 376-377 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 231.

⁹⁸⁹ Macalister, 1945, pp. 257-260, 290-291, n°263, 300 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 327 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 376 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 67-69.

⁹⁹⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 377.

⁹⁹¹ Stokes, 1897, pp. 294-295.

And in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* [‘The Book of Invasions’], it is worth noting that his father is called:

Adamair Flidais de Mumain .i. mac Fhir Chorb. Adamair Flidais of Mumu, son of Fer Corb.⁹⁹²

This tends to indicate that Flidais was originally an epithet for Adamair and must have been misunderstood by some glossators as a separate name designating the wife of Adamair. From this was invented the supernatural female figure Flidais to whom were given the same fanciful functions of milking and protecting cattle, cows and does as her son Niad ; those attributes actually ensuing from the medieval speculations over the significance of Niad Ségamain’s name.

From this, it follows that Flidais is a pure invention of medieval writers and therefore not a goddess in origin. Moreover, she is not a deer-goddess, protecting and reigning over the wild animals and the forest, as it is often claimed by scholars,⁹⁹³ but presides over domestic animals, for medieval literature associates her with cattle and cows. She is sometimes related to does because of her filiation to Niad Ségamain, but as pointed out, this relation is only due to an etymological speculation in the medieval period. Her association with does might also have been encouraged by an equation with Greek Artemis, who is usually accompanied by a doe in the iconography.⁹⁹⁴ As for the belief, advanced by Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, in *Celtic Gods and Heroes* - which has unfortunately been repeated in many works - that Flidais is a woodland deity reigning over the beasts of the forests and travelling in a chariot drawn by deers, there is no textual evidence for such an idea.⁹⁹⁵ This assumption by modern scholars must come from the discovery of votive models of carriages, pulled by stags, oxen or swans, sometimes with a divinity standing in the middle, such as the bronze model cult wagon, dated 7th c. BC, from Strettweg (Austria). In the centre, a female deity supports a massive vessel with her head and two hands and is surrounded by deer, horses and soldiers (fig. 37).⁹⁹⁶ The theory of Flidais driving a cart led by deer may have also sprung from a fanciful assimilation with Diana, who is sometimes represented on coins driving a chariot drawn by does (fig. 38).⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹² *Macalister, 1956, pp. 282-283.*

⁹⁹³ Green, 1992, pp. 65, 168 ; Green, 1995, p. 167 speaks of a “deer-goddess, herder and hunter of deer and other wild creatures, the personification of raw nature” ; Ross, 1996, pp. 277, 286, 295, 420 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 65-67.

⁹⁹⁴ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 154.

⁹⁹⁵ Sjoestedt, 1949, pp. 36-37, 46 does not actually give her references ; Makillop, 2004, p. 238 ; Ross, 1996, p. 277.

⁹⁹⁶ Birkhan, 1999, p. 261, n° 407 ; Green, 1995, p. 1 ; Green, 2001, p. 137, fig. 56.

⁹⁹⁷ *LIMC*, vol. II.1, p. 829, n°268, n°269, n°270, and vol. II.2, pl. 616, pictures 268-270 ; Carabia, 1999, p. 27.



Fig. 37: Cult-wagon in bronze from Strettweg, Austria (7th c. BC). Hatt, 1989, p. 21, fig. 2.



Fig. 38: Representations on coins of Diana driving a cart drawn by deers. LIMC, vol. II.2, pl. 616, n° 268: anonymous denarius, dated 143 BC; n° 269: denarius of C. Allius Bala dated 90 BC; n° 270: denarius of L. Axius Naso dated 71 BC.

As regards Gaulish mythology, the deer cult seems to be represented mainly by gods, the most significant example being Cernunos, whose name is generally accepted as meaning 'the Horned One'.⁹⁹⁸ Cernunnos is known from a single inscription engraved on one of the four sides of the *Nautes Parisiacae* monument, dated c. 14-37 AD, discovered

⁹⁹⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 106 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 335-337.

under the choir of the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris, in Paris.⁹⁹⁹ The name Cernunnos is engraved above the representation of a bearded god wearing two antlers, from each of which a torque* hangs (fig. 39).¹⁰⁰⁰ This representation is very similar to the god figured on one of the plaques of the Gundestrup Cauldron (fig. 40).¹⁰⁰¹ The god is seated cross-legged and has long antlers coming out of his skull. He wears a torque* around his neck and holds another one in his right hand. In his left hand is a ram-headed snake, which is a typical Celtic mythological animal. The god is surrounded by various animals: a huge stag with long antlers stands on his right-hand side. On account of those two representations, it seems that the antlers, the torque* and the cross-legged sitting position are the attributes particularizing Cernunnos. It is nonetheless difficult to assert with certainty that all the portrayals of antlered gods, such as the relief* from Reims, the statuette from Autun or the relief* from Vendoeuvres (fig. 41) are figurations of Cernunnos.¹⁰⁰² The cult of a god in the shape of a stag may be reflected in Irish tradition in the supernatural figure of Derg Corra, a weird servant of Fionn mac Cumhaill, dismissed after one of Fionn's lovers had fallen for him. Fionn went to search for him one day in the forest and saw him in a tree partaking a meal with a stag, a blackbird and a trout. This legend, dating from the 8th century, entitled *The Man in the Tree*, relates that Derg Corra went about the forest "on shanks of deer", which is redolent of his shape-shifting power.¹⁰⁰³ It is also worth noting that his name means 'the Red Peaked One'. This, according to Ó hÓgáin, relates him to Cernunnos ('the Horned or Peaked One').¹⁰⁰⁴ Other names in the Fianna lore may be evocative of such a cult. When he was young, the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill was called Demne, which is seemingly a corruption of *damne*, 'little stag'.¹⁰⁰⁵ Furthermore, the name of his son Oisín, earlier Oiséne, is a diminutive of the word

⁹⁹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 3026. For an interpretation of this monument, see Jacomin, 2006.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Olmsted, 1979b, pl. 95 ; Thévenot, 1968, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰⁰¹ Goudineau, 2006, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰² Duval, 1963, pp. 42-46 and fig. 13, 14 ; Ross, 1961, pp. 63-86 ; Boucher, 1976, pp. 174-178 ; Thévenot, 1968, pp. 144-149 ; Green, 2001, pp. 86-96 ; Lajoie, 2008, pp. 30-36.

¹⁰⁰³ Meyer, 1904, pp. 344-349 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 46-47, 78 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 162-163, 239-240. The text in translation from the Irish is the following: *The fianna carried off captive women from Dún Iascaigh [Cahir] in the territory of the Dési. A beautiful maiden was taken by them. Fionn desired this woman for himself. She set her mind on a servant who was with them, that is Derg Corra son of Daighre's descendant. For this was his custom: While food was being cooked by them the servant used to leap to and fro over the hearth. It was because of that that the maiden loved him, and she asked him one day to come and lie with her. Derg Corra did not accept that on account of Fionn, who desired her as a wife. She brought accusations against him to Fionn and said that he had raped her. Then Fionn said to him: 'Begone from my presence. You shall have a respite of three days and three nights, and after that beware of me!' Then Derg Corra went into exile and dwelt in the forest, and he used to go about on shanks of deer (si verum est) he was so light. One day when Fionn was in the forest searching for him Fionn saw a man on the top of a tree with a blackbird on his right shoulder and a bright bronze vessel in his left hand, with water in it, in which was leaping a trout. And a stag was at the foot of the tree. And what the man was doing was cracking nuts, and he was giving half the kernel of a nut to the blackbird on his right shoulder while he himself ate the other half. And he would take an apple out of the bronze vessel in his left hand and divide it in two, and throw half to the stag at the foot of the tree. He himself would then eat the other half. And he would wash it down with a sip of water from the bronze vessel in his hand, so that he and the trout and the deer and the blackbird were drinking together. Then his company asked Fionn who he in the tree was, for they did not recognise him because of the cloak of concealment which was about him. Fionn put his thumb in his mouth. When he took it out again, his imbas [great knowledge] illumined him and he sang an incantation and said 'It is Derg Corra son of Daighre's descendant', he said, 'who is in the tree'.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 162.

¹⁰⁰⁵ This is mentioned in the 12th-century bibliography of Fionn, see Weisweiler, 1954, p. 39 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, p. 77.

os, 'fawn': Oisín is therefore the 'Little Fawn'.¹⁰⁰⁶ Finally, the name of the grand-son of Fionn mac Cumhaill, Oscar, may signify something like 'deer-love'.¹⁰⁰⁷ It is clear that deer cults and names particularly survived in the Fianna lore because of Fionn's passion for deer-hunting.¹⁰⁰⁸



Fig. 39: Representation of Cernunnos on the c. 14-37 AD Nautes Parisiacae monument, excavated under the choir of the Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris. (Source: Musée National du Moyen Age, Cluny, Paris).

¹⁰⁰⁶ Meyer, 1910, Dublin, p. xviii ; *RIA Dictionary*, s.v. *oisén* ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 77-78.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 1988, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 163, 238-249.



Fig. 40: Representation of the antlered-god Cernunnos on the Gundestrup Cauldron. Beside him stands a huge stag and other animals. Goudineau (ed.), 2006, p. 62.



Fig. 41: Antlered god sitting cross-legged (Cernunnos?) surrounded by two naked children and snakes discovered in Vendoeuvres (Indre). Now in the Musée de Châteauroux. Lacroix, 2007, p. 213.

Representations of female deities with deer antlers are almost non-existent. There are only two instances, the place of discovery of which is imprecise and uncertain. The first example come from the Puy-de-Dôme and is now in the Musée de Clermont-Ferrand (fig.

42),¹⁰⁰⁹ while the other example was found in Besançon (Doubs) and was then believed to be lost, but it is actually the statuette housed in the British Museum (fig. 42).¹⁰¹⁰ Those antlered goddesses are portrayed seated cross-legged, holding a patera* and a sort of bowl in their hands. Two other horned or antlered goddesses may be depicted on a fragment of pottery from Richborough (Kent), showing the bust of a goddess, and on the stone from Ribchester (Lancashire), but those instances remain questionable.¹⁰¹¹ Wearing antlers and sitting cross-legged, those atypical goddesses could be viewed as the female equivalent and consort of Cernunnos. This might indeed be the case, for female partners can bear the attributes of their consort. As we noted above, the goddess accompanying Mercurius on some reliefs* from the east of Gaul sometimes has a purse and caduceus*.¹⁰¹² However, Stéphanie Boucher points out that while the cross-legged antlered god is sometimes associated with a goddess in the imagery, the latter is never pictured crouching or antlered.¹⁰¹³ The goddess is a mere Mother Goddess bearing attributes of fertility.¹⁰¹⁴ Consequently, the two antlered goddesses from Clermont-Ferrand and Besançon cannot be envisaged as consorts of Cernunnos.

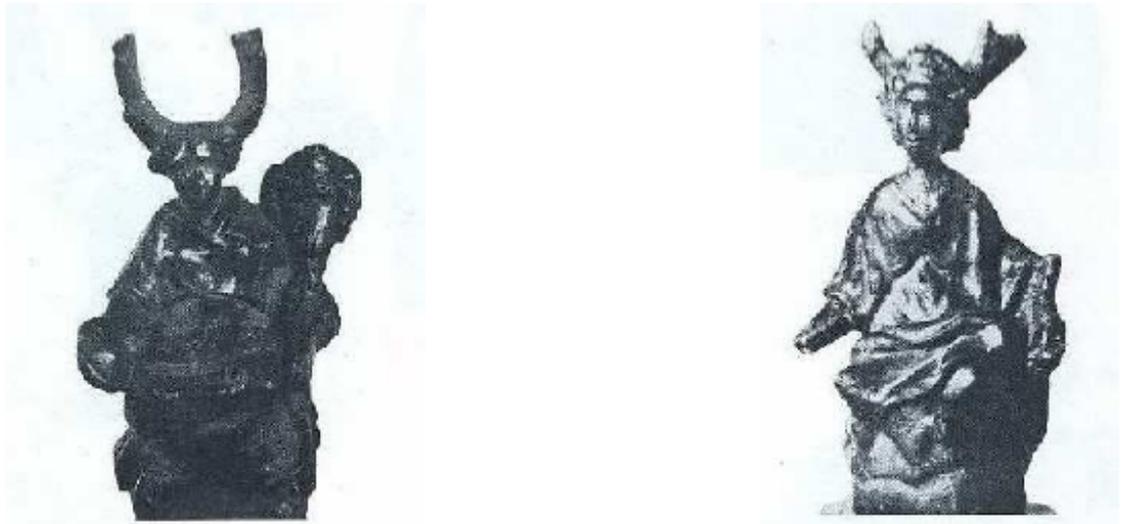


Fig. 42: Antlered goddesses in Bronze from Besançon (Doubs), now in the British Museum, London (left), and from the Puy-de-Dôme, now in the Musée de Clermont-Ferrand (right). Boucher, 1976, pl. 66, fig. 317 and 318.

Their nature and functions are thus somewhat puzzling. They are undoubtedly not fountain- or river-goddesses as Camille Jullian suggests.¹⁰¹⁵ In Roman mythology, rivers are indeed personified by powerful bearded gods with two horns on their forehead or in the shape of bulls, such as the river god Achelous.¹⁰¹⁶ In *Mosella*, Ausonius also specifies

¹⁰⁰⁹ Deyts, 1992, p. 40 ; Boucher, 1976, pp. 174, 342, pl. 66, fig. 318 ; Lambrechts, 1942, n° 30, p. 25.

¹⁰¹⁰ Deyts, 1992, p. 40 ; Boucher, 1976, pp. 174, 342, pl. 66, fig. 317 ; Lambrechts, 1942, n° 31, p. 25 ; Duval, p. 45, fig. 16.

¹⁰¹¹ Ross, 1996, p. 295 and p. 192, fig. 103, 144.

¹⁰¹² Gassies, 1907, p. 184.

¹⁰¹³ Boucher, 1976, p. 177.

¹⁰¹⁴ Gassies, 1907, pp. 364-368.

¹⁰¹⁵ Jullian, 1907, pp. 185-186.

¹⁰¹⁶ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 199 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 2.

that the river Mosel is horned.¹⁰¹⁷ Being female deities, definitely not wearing horns but antlers, those two goddesses cannot be viewed as personifications of rivers. According to Boucher, the cross-legged position and the antlers can be interpreted as “supplementary powers” magnifying the nature of the Mother Goddess,¹⁰¹⁸ but it must rather be the survival of some ancient belief in deities in deer-shape. In support of that idea comes an inscription engraved on a column discovered at Dobrteša vas, near Šempeter, in the territory of Celeia (Croatia), dedicated to the goddess Carvonja, whose name literally means ‘Doe’. It is based on the Celtic word *carvo* signifying ‘stag’, ‘deer’, cognate with Irish *carr*, Welsh *carw*, Old Cornish *caruu*, Breton *karo*.¹⁰¹⁹ The significance of her name implies that the goddess was worshipped in the shape of a deer, just as Artio (‘Bear’) must have been in bear shape or Damona (‘Cow’) and Bóinn (‘Cow White Goddess’) in bovine shape. The inscription reads: *[Ca]rvoniae Aug(ustae) sacr(um) p[r]o salute C[n.] Atili Iuliani*, ‘Sacred to the August Carvonja for the safety of C[n.?] Atilius Iulianus’ (fig. 43).¹⁰²⁰ The fact that the dedication was made for the safety of Cn. Atilius Iulianus, who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, tends to indicate that Carvonja was a protective and salutary goddess. Šašel Kos compares her to Artemis/Diana and makes a woodland hunting goddess of her.¹⁰²¹ This dedication to a deer-goddess serves to illustrate the representations from Clermont-Ferrand and Besançon, where the goddesses have only kept the distinctive elements of the deer, that is the antlers.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ausonius, Mosella, 470-472*: Corniger externas celebrande Mosella per oras Nec solis celebrande locis, ubi fonte superno Exeris auratum taurinae frontis honorem “O Moselle, you horned river! Far and wide your reputation Should be spreading, and not only where on high spring-waters issue, Where you show your golden bull-face [...]”

¹⁰¹⁸ Boucher, 1976, p. 178.

¹⁰¹⁹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 108 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 215 ; Evans, 1963, pp. 329-330 ; Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 137 ; Sterckx, 2005, pp. 29-30 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2003, p. 44.

¹⁰²⁰ *CIL* III, 5115 ; Scherrer, 1984, p. 121, n°27.

¹⁰²¹ Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 137-138.



Fig. 43: The column from Dobrteša (Croatia) bearing the dedication to Carvonía ('Doe'). Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 137.

Moreover, the concept of a deer-shaped goddess is well represented by several legends of Irish medieval literature which relate that certain female characters have the ability to transform into a doe. An 11th-century legend belonging to the tradition of Fionn mac Cumhaill tells that Blái Dheirg,¹⁰²² the mother of Oisín, generally appeared in the shape of a doe and gave birth to Oisín in this form, justifying thus his name 'Little Fawn':

Ticed i rricht eilte hi comdái na díbergge. co ndernad Ossine de ri Blai nDeirgg i rricht eilte.¹⁰²³ ***Blái used to come in the shape of a doe And join the díbergg-band So that Oisín was thus begotten Of Blái Derg in the shape of a doe.***¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰²² For details on *Blái Dheirg*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 410-411 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 354-355, 376 ; Green, 1992a, p. 166.

¹⁰²³ Best & O'Brien, 1957, p. 729.

¹⁰²⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 77-78.

The legend survived in 18th- and 19th-century popular oral versions of both Ireland and Scotland with some folk variants. They relate that Fionn's wife was turned into a doe after being enchanted by a nasty personage and that she gave birth to Oisín while hunted by Fionn.¹⁰²⁵ The pattern of the supernatural lady transformed into a deer appears in another 12th-century text of the Fianna cycle, *Accallamh na Senórach* ['The Colloquy of the Old Man'], in which Caoilte mac Rónáin, a loyal friend of Fionn mac Cumhaill,¹⁰²⁶ is told by the underworld lord ('The Dark One')¹⁰²⁷ on a visit to the otherworld *ráth* (fortified place) that he sent the lady Máil to him in the form of a deer so as to allure him to his place. The meaning of that legend is that Donn had attracted Caoilte and a Fianna troop to visit him by using the 'deer' as a decoy, while the Fianna were hunting. They conversed with Donn and the Tuatha Dé Danann, feasted with them, and spent the night in the *ráth*:

[...] 7 ro chuirsemar in ingin Máil út ar do chennsa co Toraig thuaiscirt Eirenn, ar-richt baethláig allaid, 7 ro lensabairsi hé co rangabair in síd sa, 7 in maccaem út atchithi 7 in brat uaine aendatha uimpi ac in dáil, issí sin hí', ar Donn. [...] and we sent that maiden Máil to meet you [i.e. Caoilte] to Tory (Island) in the north of Ireland, in the shape of a young wild deer-calf, and ye followed her until ye reached this dwelling, and the young one that ye see with the fully green mantel on her, that is her', said Donn.¹⁰²⁸

This aspect is also mirrored in a 12th-century poem, entitled *Faffand*, comprised in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, which recounts how the supernatural woman Aige was changed into a wild doe by the evil spirits:

Broccaid brogmar co n-gnám gíall do chiniud gorm-glan Galían, dó ba mac Faifne in file, ní gó taithme tiug-mire. Ba hí máthair in maic maiss Libir ind láthair lond-braiss; ingen dóib in dían dírmach ind Aige fhial il-gnámach. Oll-mass in cethrur cáem cass; ba clethchur sáer co sognass; athair is máthair co n-áib, ingen is bráthair bláth-cháin. Tucsat na siabra side– nír gnám tiamda téithmire– delbsat i n-deilb láig allaid Aigi sáir co serc-ballaib. Roshír h-Érinn or i n-or re cach n-albín rúad rogor, corchúardaig Banba m-brethaig co calma fo chaém-chethair. Tarnic a gnám is a gal, fríth sund co sír a sernad; tucsat i m-brianna i m-bine fianna Meilgi Imlige. Broccaid the powerful with winning of hostages, of the bright and famous race of the Galian, he had a son, Faifne the poet; the record of his final madness is no falsehood. It was she was the mother of the comely son,– even Libir quick and eager of mood: their daughter was the swift lady of the hosts Aige, the noble and skilful. Exceeding fair were the four, curled and gentle; they were a noble kin, of virtuous behaviour, the father and the lovely mother, the daughter and the brother soft and fair. The evil spirits made an onset (it was no feeble deed of wanton folly):–they changed into the form of a wild doe the noble Aige of the

¹⁰²⁵ Some references are in Murphy, 1953, p. xxi ; Campbell, 1872, pp. 198-200 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1988, pp. 78-79 ; McKay, 1932, pp. 144-174.

¹⁰²⁶ For details about *Caoilte*, earlier *Caillte*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 64-66 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 70.

¹⁰²⁷ For details about *Donn*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 178-181 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 147-148 ; Green, 1992a, p. 85. *Donn* 'dark' presides over the obscure kingdom of the dead.

¹⁰²⁸ *Stokes, 1900, p. 139.*

love-spots. She traversed Erin from shore to shore fleeing before all the fierce and fiery packs; so that she coursed round Banba, land of judges, bravely, four fair times. Her doings and her valiance had an end, here came to pass her final dissolution; they tore her in pieces in their wickedness, did the warriors of Meilge of Imlech.¹⁰²⁹ The two Gaulish statues of antlered goddesses from Clermont-Ferrand and Besançon, the inscription from Dobrteša (Croatia) dedicated to the goddess Carvonia, whose name literally means 'Doe', and the 11th - or 12th - century Irish legends telling of deer-shape-shifting goddesses are suggestive of a belief in the existence of a Deer Goddess in Celtic times. Flidais, however, cannot be understood as an indication of such a cult, for, as demonstrated, she is not a genuine goddess and is clearly not related to does but to cattle. Her presumable association with deer is actually due to fanciful and inaccurate medieval and modern interpretations.

B) Goddesses of the Plant Kingdom

The plant kingdom was particularly revered in ancient times, as proved by legends, classical accounts, iconographic and archaeological evidence, and by divine, proper and tribal names.¹⁰³⁰ The sanctity of plants and trees can be explained in several ways. First and foremost, vegetables and the fruit of some trees, such as those of oak, apple-tree or hazel, were highly-valued foodstuffs, being both nourishing and easily-accessible. Secondly, some species of plants and trees were specifically used for curing pains and illnesses. The wood of certain trees was also used in the making of habitations, weapons and tools, enabling people to grow food, hunt and protect themselves. In times of storm and rain, trees and forests could also serve for shelter to the population. Finally, as Paul Friedrich demonstrates in his analysis of tree names in Indo-European languages, certain trees seem to have held a peculiar and significant place in the religious and cultural sphere: yew, beech, birch, linden and more particularly oak.¹⁰³¹

1) The 'Cosmic Tree': the Axis of the World

The mysticism of the tree springs from its longevity, its great presence, its imposing majesty and its impressive height and size: it overhangs the valley and dominates the world. Moreover, the tree reunites and links the three parts of the cosmos in itself. Rooted in the chthonic* world, it stands out with its trunk and boughs in the terrestrial world, while its foliage spreads towards the celestial world. The tree thus represents the intermediary between the divine and human worlds and symbolizes the axis of the world. The 'world tree' or 'cosmic tree' is a recurrent theme in world mythologies.¹⁰³² The most suggestive example is the Norse ash tree Yggdrasil, which is said to be situated at the centre of the world.¹⁰³³ Its

¹⁰²⁹ Gwynn, 1906, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰³⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2003, pp. 46-60 ; Vendryes, 1997, pp. 50-52 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 59-65 ; Macculloch, 1911, pp. 198-207 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 195-199 ; Green, 2001, pp. 100-106, 151-155 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 12, 41, 27, 42, 265-266, 412 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 212-214.

¹⁰³¹ Friedrich, 1970.

¹⁰³² Eliade, 1983, pp. 231-237 ; Brosse, 2001, pp. 32-38 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, pp. 62-64.

¹⁰³³ Eliade, 1983, pp. 238-239 ; Brosse, 2001, pp. 14-24 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 873 ; Mortensen, 2003, pp. 24-25, 27 ; Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 64-65, 85-86, 91-93.

branches spread all over the earth and towards the sky, the gods gather at its foot and springs, giving access to absolute knowledge, gush forth from its three roots, as this extract from the *Edda* by Snorri illustrates:

Briðja rót asksins stendr á himni, ok undir þeiri rót er brunnr sá e heilagur er heitir Urðar brunnr. Þar eigu guðin dómstað sinn. The third root of the ash extends to heaven, and beneath that root is a well which is very holy, called Weird's well. There the gods have their court.¹⁰³⁴

In Irish mythology, four trees - *Bile Tortan* ('Tree of Tortu'), situated in Ardraccon, near Navan (Co. Meath), *Eó Mughna* ('Yew of Mughain') at Mughain (Co. Clare), *Craobh Uisnigh* ('Bough of Uisnigh') at Uisneach (Co. Westmeath), *Eó Rosa* ('Yew of Ros') at Old Leighlin (Co. Carlow) and *Craobh Dháithí* ('Bough of Dháithí') at Farbill (Co. Westmeath) – were believed to be sacred.¹⁰³⁵ *Bile Tortan*, a gigantesque 150 metre-high and twenty-five metre-wide ash tree, situated in the territory of the *Uí Tortan sept**, is sometimes described as the 'world tree'. This tree, which fell down in the 7th c. AD, is said to have existed since the beginning of times and its branches, full of birds and fruit, spread up to the sky.¹⁰³⁶ The *bile*, 'large tree', 'tree trunk' or 'post', from Celtic **bilios*, generally had an atypical form and was believed to be the dwelling of the gods.¹⁰³⁷ The chiefs of tribes and kings were inaugurated under its branches.¹⁰³⁸ The ash tree *Craobh Uisnigh* was also regarded as the 'world tree' because it was believed to be situated at the exact centre of Ireland; hence its nickname 'the navel of Ireland'. According to tradition, it fell down in the 7th c. AD.¹⁰³⁹

Nell Parrot, analyzing the representations of sacred trees on monuments from Mesopotamia and Elam, explains: "There is no cult of the tree in itself; under such a figuration always lies a spiritual entity."¹⁰⁴⁰ In a poem of the *Rennes Dindshenchas*, entitled *Éo Rossa*, which depicts the five sacred Irish trees and tells how they fell, the Tree of Ross is described as "a firm strong god":

Eó Rossa 7 Eó Mughna 7 Bili Dathi 7 Craeb Uisnig 7 Bili Tortan, coic crand sin. Eo Rosa, ibar é. Sairtuath co Druim Bairr dorochair, ut Druim Suithe cecinit: Eo Rosa, roth ruirech recht flatha, fuaim tuinni, dech duilib, diriuch dronchrand, dia dronbalc [...]. The Tree of Ross and the Tree of Mughna and the Ancient Tree of Dathe and the Branching Tree of Uisnech and the Ancient Tree of Tortu – five trees are those. The tree of Ross is a yew. North-east as far as Druim Bairr it fell, as Druim Suithe ('Ridge of Science') sang: Tree of Ross, a king's wheel, a

¹⁰³⁴ Faulkes, 1982, p. 17 ; Bek-Pedersen, 2007, pp. 90-91 for this poem, and pp. 64-65, 85-86, 91-93 for other references to *Yggdrasil*. See also the poem on the *Nornes* in Chapter 1.

¹⁰³⁵ Henry, 1978, p. 145 ; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 144-149, 505 ; Stokes, 1905, pp. 258-259 ; Stokes, 1894, p. 420 ; Vendryes, 1953, p. 4 ; O'Hanlon, 1875, vol. 4, p. 218 ; Stokes, 1887, p. 185 ; Stokes, 1895, p. 279 ; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 148-149 & 1924, pp. 240-247, 440-441 ; Bieler, 1979, pp. 162-163 ; Hennessy, 1866, p. 77.

¹⁰³⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2003, p. 56.

¹⁰³⁷ Delamarre, 2003, p. 75.

¹⁰³⁸ Mackillop, 2004, p. 41.

¹⁰³⁹ Ó hÓgáin, 2003, pp. 56-57.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Parrot, 1937, p. 19.

prince's right, a wave's noise, best of creatures, a straight firm tree, a firm-strong god [...].¹⁰⁴¹

The belief in Tree-Gods is evidenced in the epigraphy of Gaul. A MarsBuxenus, whose namemight be derived from a Celtic stem **box-*, **bux* meaning 'wood',¹⁰⁴² is mentioned in an inscription from Velleron (Vaucluse).¹⁰⁴³ The god Fagus, honoured in Tibiran (Hautes-Pyrénées), St-Béat (Haute-Garonne) and Générést (Hautes-Pyrénées), has a Latin name signifying 'Beech' which is undeniably the transcription of an indigenous theonym*.¹⁰⁴⁴ The god Expercennius, mentioned in a dedication from Cathervielle (Haute-Garonne), might be an oak god.¹⁰⁴⁵ In the area of Angoulême (Charente), a god called Robori was worshipped. His name is generally glossed as 'Sessile Oak', but Delamarre suggests it rather means 'Very Furious' (*Ro-bori*).¹⁰⁴⁶

As their names indicate, some goddesses are also the personification of a tree. A Celtiberian goddess called Drusuna is closely related to the tree, since her name is based on the stem *dru-* meaning 'tree', 'oak'.¹⁰⁴⁷ Drusuna ('Divine Tree or Oak') is venerated in a dedication from Segobriga (Catalogne): *D[-]sunae [-] L(ucius) V[---] H[---]A v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Drusuna L(ucius) V[...] H[...] paid his vow willingly and deservedly',¹⁰⁴⁸ and in two inscriptions from San Esteban de Gormaz (Vieille-Castille): *Drusune Cisa Dioc(um) Suattan(i filia) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Drusuna Cisa Diocum(?) daughter of Suattanus paid her vow willingly and deservedly',¹⁰⁴⁹ and *Atto Caebaliq(um) Elaesi f(ilius) D(rusunae) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Drusuna, Atto Caebaliquum(?) son of Elaesus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁰⁵⁰ In the inscription from Segobriga, the dedicator has a Latin name and certainly bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. In the two inscriptions from San Esteban de Gormaz, the dedicators's fathers Suattanus and Elaesus are peregrines bearing Celtic names and the praenomen* of the dedicator Atto is Celtic.¹⁰⁵¹ The stem *dru-*, 'tree' is found again in the epithet of the possibly Germanic Matronae/Matres Andrustehiae, venerated in Germania Inferior, in Cologne, Bonn and Godesberg.¹⁰⁵² Delamarre proposes to split down their name as **and-dru-st-ya-*, that is 'The Ones who stand by the Big Tree (of the World)', with *ande*, 'very, big', *dru-*, 'tree' and *-sto-*,

¹⁰⁴¹ Stokes, 1895, p. 277.

¹⁰⁴² Evans, 1967, pp. 316-317 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 37 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 346.

¹⁰⁴³ *CIL* XII, 5832.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 223, 224, 225 ; Rodriguez, 2008, pp. 178-179, n° 147 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 195 ; Vendryes, 1997, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *CIL* XIII 329 ; Rodriguez, 2008, pp. 210-212: the prefix *ex-* would be Celtic.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *CIL* XIII, 1112 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 195 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 51 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 94.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Olivares, Carlos, 2002, p. 124 ; Blázquez, 2001, pp. 65-66 ; Marco Simón, 1999, p. 151 ; Sopenña, 2005, p. 353 ; Sterckx, 2005, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Hep* 2000, 178 ; Abascal & Cebrían, 2000, pp. 199-200, n°1, fig. 1.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Hep* 1996, 893 ; *AE* 1995, 868 ; Gómez-Pantoja & García Palomar, 1995, pp. 187-188.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Hep* 1996, 894 ; *AE* 1995, 869 ; Gómez-Pantoja & García Palomar, 1995, pp. 187-188.

¹⁰⁵¹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 173 (*Suattanus*), 94 (*Elaesus*), 32, 212 (*Atto*).

¹⁰⁵² *AE* 1981, 669 ; *AE* 1956, 245 ; *CIL* XIII, 8212 ; *AE* 1931, 23 ; *CIL* XIII, 7995.

'who stands'.¹⁰⁵³ In this divine epithet might thus be reflected the concept of the Cosmic Tree, at the foot of which deities used to gather and meet.

2) Oak Goddesses: the *Dervonnae*

The existence of Mother Goddesses personifying oak is evidenced by an inscription found in Milan (Italy), in the territory of the Insubres, dedicated to the *Matronae Dervonnae*, whose byname* is Celtic, for it is based on the Gaulish root *dervo-*, 'oak', similar to Old Irish *daur*, genitive *dar/dara*, Welsh *dâr* and Old Breton *dar*, 'oak', derived from a common Celtic word **daru* designating oak. The inscription is the following: *Dervonnae Matronis Dervonnis C(aius) Rufinus Apronius vslm*, 'To the *Dervonnae Matronae*, C(aius) Rufinus Apronius paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁰⁵⁴ The same Mother Goddesses are given the Roman divine title of *Fatae* in an inscription from Brescia (Italy): *Fatis Dervonibus vslm M(arcus) Rufinius Severus*, 'To the *Fatae Dervonae*, Marcus Rufinius Severus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁰⁵⁵ In these two inscriptions, the dedicators are Roman citizens bearing the *tria nomina*. Without going into detail, it is clear that oak was a sacred tree for the Celts and played a prominent role in their religion, tradition and imagery.¹⁰⁵⁶ Pliny indeed reports that the Gaulish people held nothing more sacred than oak (*robur*).¹⁰⁵⁷ He specifies that the druids chose oak-woods for their groves and used oak-boughs to perform the religious rites. Moreover, Lucan states that the druids ate the fruit of oak (acorn) in rites of divination.¹⁰⁵⁸ It is also worth noting that the *ex-votos* discovered at the Source-de-la-Seine are all made out of oak-wood. This wood was certainly chosen on purpose for its symbolic, sacred and magical qualities. Because of its imposing size, its large trunk, boughs and dense foliage, its impressive longevity and its majesty, oak symbolized force and wisdom and was regarded as the 'Axis of the World' in many ancient religions (fig. 44).¹⁰⁵⁹ It is therefore not surprising to find goddesses personifying the strength, wisdom and sacredness of this tree.

¹⁰⁵³ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 22, 211, 220, 232.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *CIL* V, 5791 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 423 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 27 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 84, 219 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 141: see the name *Dervorix* ('King of the Oak'). See Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *CIL* V, 4208.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Brunaux, 2000, pp. 136-137 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 350 ; Green, 1992a, p. 164 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969, p. 221 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 23-28 ; Macculloch, 1911, pp. 198-200.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, XVI, 95: "Upon this occasion we must not omit to mention the admiration that is lavished upon this plant by the Gauls. The Druids - for that is the name they give to their magicians - held nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree that bears it, supposing always that tree to be the *robur*. Of itself the *robur* is selected by them to form whole groves, and they perform none of their religious rites without them - plying branches of it; so much so, that it is very probable that the priests themselves may have received their name from the Greek name for that tree. In fact, it is the notion with them that everything that grows on it has been sent immediately from heaven, and that the mistletoe upon it is a proof that the tree has been selected by God himself as an object of his especial favour."

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Scholias* known as *Bernoises* to *The Pharsalia* of Lucan, commentum ad versum I 451.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969, p. 221 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 150.



Fig. 44: Left: A huge old oak from Montmahoux Forest (Doubs, Jura). Right: the majestic and impressive 400-year-old sessile oak tree, called 'Chêne des Hindrés', situated to the north-east of Paimpont, in the mysterious Forest of Brocéliande (Ille-et-Vilaine). With its 5-metre large trunk, its winding and robust branches and its peculiar shape, this giant oak seems to be the guardian of the place and to preside over the forest. Bilimoff, 2003, p. 63.

3) Yew Goddesses: the *Eburnicae*

Another tree held a significant place in Celtic tradition and belief: the yew.¹⁰⁶⁰ The tree was embodied by the *Matres Eburnicae* ('Mother Goddesses of the Yew'), honoured in a single inscription discovered in Yvours-sur-le-Rhône (Rhône). Their name is based on Gaulish *eburos* signifying 'yew'.¹⁰⁶¹ The inscription is the following: *Matris Aug(ustis) Eburnicis*

¹⁰⁶⁰ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 430-431 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 28-32 ; Macculloch, 1911, pp. 201-203 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2003, pp. 49-56 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969, p. 518.

¹⁰⁶¹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 160 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 55.

Jul(ius) Sammo[...] et [...], 'To the August Mother Goddesses Eburnicae, Julius Sammo[...]? et [...]'.¹⁰⁶² The Matres Eburnicae are eponymous of the tribe of the Eburones ('People of the Yew'), who were situated in the area north of the Ardennes, between the Main and the Rhine.¹⁰⁶³

Francisco Marco Simón mentions a yew god, known from an inscription discovered in Duratón (Segovia), Spain: *Eburianus*.¹⁰⁶⁴ As the inscription is engraved on a tombstone and as it is not combined with the word *deo* or any other votive formula, it can be inferred that Eburianus is a proper name rather than a divine name. In other words, this inscription is actually not a votive dedication but a funerary inscription. As for the inscription discovered in Macquenoise (Hainaut, Belgium), it is difficult to determine whether the name *IVIRICCI*, possibly *Ivericus* or *Iverix* ('King of the Yew'), is a proper or divine name.¹⁰⁶⁵ The inscription is engraved on the socle of a statue representing a hooded man holding a snake in his right hand and a bowl in his left hand. This statuette could be the figuration of a god or the portrayal of some king or chief.

4) Beech Goddesses?: the *Baginatiae*

Furthermore, 'Beech Mother Goddesses' might be worshipped in the south-east of Gaul (fig. 45). The Matres Baginatiae are known from four inscriptions found in Provencal Drôme, in Bellecombe: *Baginatiabus [v]slm*, 'To the Baginatiae, [the dedicator] paid his vow willingly and deservedly', and in Sainte-Jalle: *Baginatiab(us) Primula Quinti f(ilia) vslm*, 'To the Baginatiae, Primula daughter of Quintus paid her vow willingly and deservedly'; *Baginatiabus C(aius) Girubius Cato vslm* 'To the Baginatiae, Caius Girubius Catus paid his vow willingly and deservedly' and *Baginatiabus Ioventius Lemisonis f(ilius) vslm*, 'To the Baginatiae, Ioventius son of Lemisonis paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁰⁶⁶ The Baginatiae are etymologically related to gods, such as Baginatis (Jupiter), venerated in Morestal (Isère),¹⁰⁶⁷ Baginus in Tarendol and Bellecombe (Drôme)¹⁰⁶⁸ and less convincingly Baco – written with the letter *c* -, honoured in Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire).¹⁰⁶⁹

The meaning of their epithet is still controversial. On the one hand, it might be derived from a Gaulish word **bagos* designating 'beech'.¹⁰⁷⁰ On the other hand, it may come from a root *bag-* signifying 'to fight'.¹⁰⁷¹ Lambert however explains that the ending of their name in *-atis* indicates a close and special relation to a place.¹⁰⁷² Like *Mercure Dumiatis* is 'the inhabitant of Dumion (Puy-de-Dôme)', the Baginatiae would be 'the inhabitants of the

¹⁰⁶² *CIL* XIII, 1765 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46. The inscription was discovered near the wall of the garden of the Castle of Yvourt, near Lyon. It had been re-used* in the wall of the castle. See Chapter 5 for more details.

¹⁰⁶³ Guyonvarc'h, 1959, pp. 39-42 ; Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, V, 24, 26, VI, 31, 34-35 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 526, 594.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Marco Simón, 2005, p. 297 ; *CIL* II, 2764a ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 92.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *AE* 1994, 1234 ; Sterckx, 1998, pp. 92-93 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 113 ; Sterckx, 1994, pp. 255-273.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *AE* 1889, 183 ; *ILGN*, 251 ; *AE* 2000, 867, 886, 889 ; Desaye, Lurol, & Mège, 2000, pp. 178-193.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *CIL* XII, 2383.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *CIL* XII 1377 ; *AE* 1889, 183.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *CIL* XIII, 2603 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 64 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1964, pp. 195-199 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 37 ; Lajoie, 2008, pp. 24-27.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷¹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 212 ; Sterckx, 2000, pp. 30-31 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 299.

¹⁰⁷² Lambert, 2006, p. 53.

bagino-, that is of the wood of *bago-*, or ‘the inhabitants of Mount Vanige’ (Drôme).¹⁰⁷³ Their epithet is therefore to be understood as a topical adjective, rather than a name referring to the beech tree or to the notion of war.

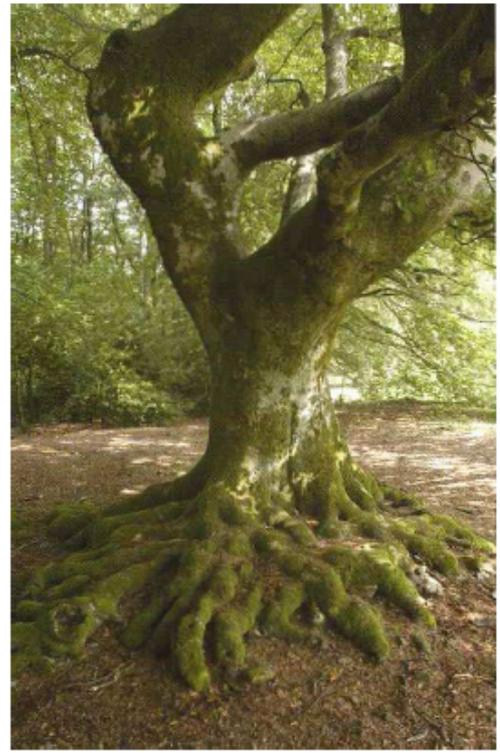
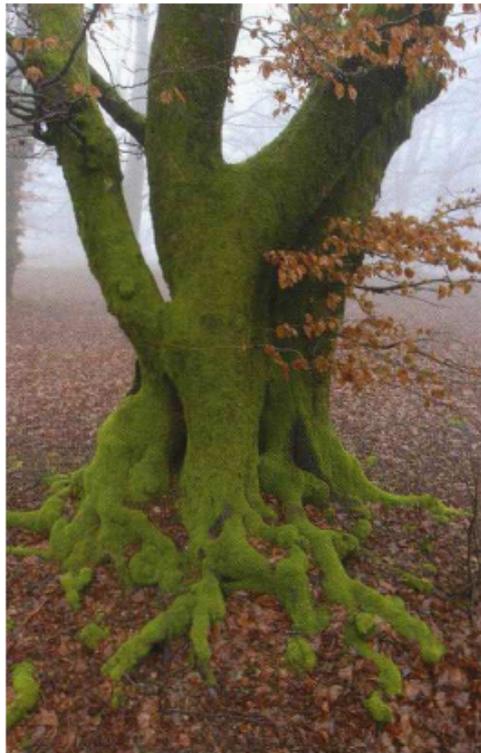


Fig. 45: Beech trees from Mont Beuvray (Burgundy). Their tortuous and imposing ramifications and roots going deep into the ground inspire a feeling of mystery, sacredness and potency. Romero, 2006, p. 30.

5) The *Duilliae* and the *Vroicae*

Significant goddesses of the plant kingdom may be the *Duilliae*, who are venerated in two dedications from Palencia (Vieille-Castille), in the Iberian Peninsula:¹⁰⁷⁴ *Annius Atreus Caerri Africani F(ilius) Duillis V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)*, ‘Annius Atreus Caerri son of Africanus to the *Duillae* paid his vow willingly and deservedly’,¹⁰⁷⁵ and *Cl(audius) Latturus Duillis v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) [e]x vi(su)*, ‘Claudius Latturus to the *Duillae* paid his vow willingly and deservedly after having a vision’.¹⁰⁷⁶ The two dedicators are Roman citizens, since they bear the *tria* and *duo nomina*. The goddess name derives from a Gaulish root *dulio-*, *dulli-* meaning ‘leaf’, cognate with Irish *duille*, *duillén*, ‘leaf’.¹⁰⁷⁷ The *Duilliae* may therefore be glossed as the ‘Leaves’ or the ‘Leafy’. They may be related to the god *Dulovius*, worshipped both in Gaul and Celtic Hispania. He is indeed honoured in two lost inscriptions discovered in Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse). The first one, probably found at the

¹⁰⁷³ Lacroix, 2007, p. 130 ; Barruol, 1999, p. 283, note 5 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Blázquez, 1975, pp. 90-92.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Blázquez, 1962, p. 67 and pl. 4, fig. 8 ; Fita, 1900, pp. 508-511.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Blázquez, 1962, p. 67 ; Fita, 1900, p. 507 ; Albertos, 1952, p. 54.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Delamarre, 2007, p. 220 ; Blázquez, 1962, p. 68 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 71 ; Birkhan, 1970, p. 518.

beginning of the 17th c., read: *Dullovio M(arcus) Licinius Goas v.s.l.m.*, 'To Dullovius Marcus Lucinius Goas paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁰⁷⁸ The second inscription: *Dulovio*, 'To Dullovius' was engraved on an altar, which had the engraving of a god surrounded by palm leaves on the other side.¹⁰⁷⁹ In the Iberian Peninsula, he is venerated in Cáceres (Estramadure): *M(arcus) F(abius) [...] Scelsus Aram Qua(m) Donavit [P]jos(uit) Anim(o)*,¹⁰⁸⁰ and in Villaviciosa (Grases), where he is given the epithet *Tabaliaenus*: *[Dul]ovio Tabaliaeno Luggoni Arganticaeni haec mon(umenta) possierunt*.¹⁰⁸¹ Like the Dulliae's name, Dulovius' name signifies 'the Leafy' or 'the One of the Leaves'; an aspect illustrated by the palm leaves surrounding the god in the relief* from Vaison.¹⁰⁸²

Even though the nature and etymology* of the Vroicae remain unsure, they are worth mentioning here. They are honoured along with the Aldemehenses (?) in a dedication from Rogues (Bouches-du-Rhône). Their name literally means 'heather' in Celtic – an old form *vroica survived into the Old Irish *froích*, *fróech*, 'heather'.¹⁰⁸³ The inscription was found in the park of the Château de Beaulieu in 1887, 3.5 kms to the south-east of Rogues: *Verax Antenoris f(ilius) et Potissuma, Ollunae f(ilia), Vroicis et All[.]inensi[b]us loc[.]*, 'Verax, son of Antenor, and Potissuma, daughter of Olluna, to the Vroicae and to the A[...]inenses [...]' (fig. 46).¹⁰⁸⁴ As their unique name indicates, the two dedicators are peregrines, who bear Celtic names: Antenor and Potissuma.¹⁰⁸⁵ Potissuma's mother, Olluna, has a Celtic name and Antenor's father, Verax, has a Germanic name according to Dondin-Payre.¹⁰⁸⁶ Being known by this single inscription, those deities remain difficult to apprehend. Their gender was even questioned, but today they are commonly accepted as female deities.¹⁰⁸⁷ Allmer suggests the Vroicae and the Aldemehenses are rural deities, while Yves Burnand maintains they are protective deities of the place.¹⁰⁸⁸ As for Paul Aebischer, he has argued that the Vroicae were water-goddesses, whose cult survived in some hydronyms* of Switzerland.¹⁰⁸⁹ They could be etymologically related to the god Vorocios, whose name is evidenced on a bronze ring found in a well in Vichy (Allier) and survived in the antique name of Vouroux, Vorocium, situated 20 kms from Vichy.¹⁰⁹⁰ His name might indeed be a deformation of Vroici, Vroicae, 'heather', but its composition does not seem to support that idea.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁷⁸ CIL XII, 1280 ; CAG, 84.1, *Vaison-la-Romaine et ses campagnes*, 2003, pp. 114-115, n° 30.

¹⁰⁷⁹ CIL XII, 1279 ; CAG, 84.1, *Vaison-la-Romaine et ses campagnes*, 2003, pp. 114-115, n° 31.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Blázquez, 1962, pp. 97-98 ; Fita, 1900, p. 505 ; AE 1900, 119.

¹⁰⁸¹ AE 1965, 109.

¹⁰⁸² Sterckx, 1998, pp. 71-72 ; Scarlat Lambrino, 1966, pp. 1353-1357.

¹⁰⁸³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 329 ; Degrave, 1998, p. 462 ; Dottin, 1920, p. 360.

¹⁰⁸⁴ AE 1891, 42 ; ILN-III pp. 304-305, n°240.

¹⁰⁸⁵ ILN-III p. 305.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Holder, ACS, vol. 3, 455 ; Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 290.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Sterckx, 1998, p. 140.

¹⁰⁸⁸ RE 3, 1890, p. 51 ; Burnand, 1975, p. 191.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Aebischer, 1931, pp. 312-324.

¹⁰⁹⁰ CIL XIII, 1497.

¹⁰⁹¹ Sterckx, 1998, pp. 137-138 ; Thévenot, 1955, pp. 25-26 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 348 ; Degrave, 1998, pp 324, 460.



Verax, Antenoris
f(ilius), et Potissuma,
Ollunae f(ilia), Vroicis et
AII[.].inensi[b]uș loç[.]

Fig. 46: Inscription to the Vroicae and Aldemehenses (?)
from Rogues (Bouches-du-Rhône), ILN-III pp. 304-305, n°240.

6) The Black Forest: *Abnoba* (*Diana*)

The name, functions and attributes of the goddess *Abnoba*, known from nine inscriptions discovered in the area of the Black Forest in Germany, remain somewhat obscure. It is significant that both Pliny and Tacitus gave her name to the mountain of the Black forest: *Montis Abnovae* or *Abnobae*.¹⁰⁹² It tends to prove that *Abnoba* was the personification of this peak, like the god *Vosegus* was the embodiment of the Vosges Mountains. The meaning of her name is indefinite. Alfred Holder proposes to relate it to the Celtic word *abona* signifying 'river', cognate with Old Irish *aba*, *abainn* (standard spelling *abha*, *abhainn*), Welsh *afon*, Breton *aven*, 'river', all coming from an IE root **ab-* designating 'the waters' as supernatural beings.¹⁰⁹³ Several rivers in Britain, such as the various rivers *Avon* and the Scottish River *Awe*, are derived from *Abona*.¹⁰⁹⁴ Two other goddess names from Portugal and Austria are based on the same root *ab-*, 'divine water'. The goddess *Abna* is known from a single inscription discovered in Santo Trison (Douro Littoral, Portugal)¹⁰⁹⁵ and the goddess *Abiona* is honoured in Sankt Peter in Holz, Austria: *Abionae Albanus [...]*, 'To *Abiona*, *Albanus* [...]' (fig. 47).¹⁰⁹⁶ The dedicator *Albanus* has a Celtic name, derived from the root *alb-*, 'celestial'.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹² Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae*, 4, 79 ; Tacitus, *Germania*, 1.

¹⁰⁹³ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 89 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Sterckx, 2000, p. 19 ; Hamp, 1991-1992, pp. 15-20.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Prósper, 1997, pp. 271-280 ; D'Encarnação, 1975, pp. 77-78 ; Sterckx, 2000, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 40 ; Glaser, 1992, p. 68, n°51 ; Scherrer, 1984, n°1 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 18.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 16, 210.



Fig. 47: Fragment of altar dedicated to Abiona from in Sankt Peter in Holz, Austria. (Source: Römermuseum Teurnia by O. Harl, 2002.) Glaser, 1992, p. 68, n°51.

Abnoba is venerated on her own in dedications from Cannstatt: *Abnoba sacrum M. Proclinius Verus Stator v. s. l. l. m ; [a]bn[obae] [s]a[crum]*,¹⁰⁹⁸ from Pforzheim: *In h(onorem) [d. d.] Abn[obae et] Quad[rubis] ; [Ab]nob(a)e [...] Iulius [...]*,¹⁰⁹⁹ from Waldmössigen: *Abnoba Sacrum L Vennon[i]us Me[...]*,¹¹⁰⁰ and from Röttenberg: *Abnoba Q. Antonius Silo leg(ionis) I adiutricis et leg(ionis) II adiutricis et leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) et leg(ionis) IIII F(laviae) f(elicis) et leg(ionis) XI C(laudiae) p(iae) f(idelis) et leg(ionis) XXII p(iae) f(i)d(elis) v.s.l.l.m* (dated 89-96 AD).¹¹⁰¹

Abnoba is equated with the Roman woodland-goddess Diana in two dedications. The one from Mühlenbach reads: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Deanae Abnoba Cassianus Casati v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito) et Attianus frater Falcon(e) et Claro co(n)s(ulibus)*.¹¹⁰² The dedicator bears the *duo nomina*; he is thus a Roman citizen. His gentilice* Cassianus is a Latinized name of Celtic origin and his cognomen* Casatus is

¹⁰⁹⁸ CIL XIII, 11746, 11747. In the Museum of Stuttgart.

¹⁰⁹⁹ CIL XIII, 11721, 6332.

¹¹⁰⁰ CIL XIII, 6356.

¹¹⁰¹ CIL XIII, 6357 ; Raepaert-Charlier, 1975, p. 247.

¹¹⁰² CIL XIII, 6283.

Celtic.¹¹⁰³ The votive formulas *In h. d. d.* and *dea* indicate that the inscription dates from the first half of the 3rd c. AD.¹¹⁰⁴ The second inscription was discovered in the ruins of a Gallo-Roman thermal establishment, in Badenweiler. *Dianae Abnob[ae]*, ‘To Diana Abnoba’ was engraved on the socle of a statue which had disappeared.¹¹⁰⁵ Excavations carried out by Werner Heinz and Rainer Wiegels around 1980 at Badenweiler revealed other fragments from this altar. The archaeologists were then able to reconstruct the complete dedication: *Dianae Abnob[ae] M(arcus) Senn[i]us [F]ronto s[---] ex voto*, ‘To Diana Abnoba, Marcus Sennius Fronto offered (this altar)’.¹¹⁰⁶ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. While his praenomen* Marcus and cognomen* Fronto are Latin,¹¹⁰⁷ his nomen* is Celtic: Sennius (‘Old’).¹¹⁰⁸ This proves that the Celtic origin of the dedicator and his attachment to his roots and cults. Jacqueline Carabia argues that Abnoba was given curative water functions specifically in Badenweiler, like Diana Tifatina had a famous healing water sanctuary in Capoue.¹¹⁰⁹

In Mühlburg, near Karlsruhe, the dedication *Deae Abnob(a)e Lucius Moderatus v.s.(l.) m.*, ‘To the Goddess Abnoba Lucius Moderatus paid his vow willingly and deservedly’, is engraved on the socle of a statue, the head of which is missing, found in 1850 (fig. 48).¹¹¹⁰ The dedicator Lucius Moderatus is a Roman citizen. He bears the *duo nomina*, a form particularly in use at the end of the 2nd c. AD.¹¹¹¹ The goddess is represented in the features of Diana, but the style is crude and of indigenous character.¹¹¹² The proportions are not respected and the goddess does not have the acknowledged grace of Diana. Carabia adds that “the male features of the goddess evoke the stocky Gaulish women who participated in the fighting”.¹¹¹³ The subject is nevertheless very similar to the statue in bronze of Artemis/Diana housed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyons (fig. 48).¹¹¹⁴ In the Karlsruhe statue, Abnoba wears a short tunic (chiton*) and small boots. She leans her left hand on a sort of mound of round fruit or a rock and plunges her right hand into a quiver tied up on her back. A dog holding a hare in its paws lies at her feet.

As her name might mean ‘divine waters’ and is given to the mountain of the Black Forest and as she is equated with Diana in two inscriptions and a portrayal, it can be assumed that Abnoba was the embodiment and protectress of the mountain, the Black Forest and its rivers, perhaps even the Danube which rises in the forest.

¹¹⁰³ Rémy, 2001, p. 151.

¹¹⁰⁴ Raepsaet-Charlier, 2001, p. X.

¹¹⁰⁵ *CIL* XIII, 5334 ; Bonnard, 1908, pp. 176-177.

¹¹⁰⁶ Heinz, 1982, pp. 37-41 ; Wiegels, 1982, pp. 41-43.

¹¹⁰⁷ Solin & Salomies, 1994, pp. 82, 334: *Fronto* is attested as a gentilice* and a cognomen*.

¹¹⁰⁸ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 165, 231.

¹¹⁰⁹ Carabia, 1999, pp. 27-29.

¹¹¹⁰ *CIL* XIII, 6326 ; *RG Germ.* 345 = *LIMC*, II.2, n°48, p. 628 ; *LIMC*, II.2, pp. 854-855, n° 418.

¹¹¹¹ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 8-9, vol. 1, p. 152.

¹¹¹² *RG Germ.* 345, p. 214.

¹¹¹³ Carabia, 1999, pp. 28-29.

¹¹¹⁴ *LIMC*, vol. II.1, p. 814, n°85 & vol. II.2, p. 603, n°85.



Fig. 48: Left: Statuette combined with an inscription to the Celtic goddess Abnoba. In the Badischer Landesmuseum de Karlsruhe. *RG, Germ.*, 345 ; *LIMC, II.2, n°418, p. 628*. Right: Statuette in bronze of Artemis/Diana wearing a chiton*, boots and a quiver in her back. In the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Lyons. *LIMC, II.2, p. 603, n°85*.

C) Goddesses of 'High Places'

1) Arduinna ('the High One')

a) Inscriptions

The goddess name Arduinna is known from an inscription discovered on the road from Düren to Montjoye, near Gey (Germany): *Deae Arbinnae T(itus) Iulius Aequalis [v]slm*, 'To the goddess Arduinna, T. Julius Equalis paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹¹¹⁵ Spickermann explains that the letter *b* accounts for the letter *u*. *Arbinna* must be a presumably regional

¹¹¹⁵ *CIL XIII, 7848*.

variant of Arduinna.¹¹¹⁶ Arduinna is generally said to be honoured with the Celtic god Camulus and the three Roman deities Jupiter, Mercury and Hercules in a dedication from Rome engraved under a relief* representing the five deities: *Arduinne, Camulo, Iovi, Mercurio, Herculi, M(arcus) Quartinius M(arci) f(ilius) cives Sabinus Remus, miles coh(ortis) VII pr(aetoriae) Antoniniane p(iae) v(indicis) v(otum) l(ibens) s(olvit)* (fig. 49).¹¹¹⁷ In this now lost figuration, Camulus ('Champion' or 'Servant') is unsurprisingly depicted as the Roman god of war, for he is generally associated with Mars in the inscriptions.¹¹¹⁸ As for Arduinna, she is portrayed in the features of Diana with a bow and a quiver. Despite its relatively puzzling character, the authenticity of this document had never been questioned or contested until Claude Sterckx pointed out that it was actually a fanciful reconstitution of a relief*, which originally depicted Saturnus and Mars instead of Arduinne and Camulus.¹¹¹⁹ Therefore, this document does not mention Arduinna and her representation as a Roman Diana is erroneous.



Fig. 49: Inaccurate drawing of the lost relief* from Rome, originally depicting Saturnus, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury and Hercules. Krüger, 1917, p. 11, fig. 8.

A third fragment of inscription, engraved on a silver dish from La Rocque d'Anthon (Bouches-du-Rhône), could allude to Arduinna: *...[t]ialniarduinn[...]*, but the reading remains uncertain and hypothetical.¹¹²⁰ Only one dedication thus mentions the goddess Arduinna, that is the inscription from Düren.

¹¹¹⁶ Spickermann, 2005, p. 139.

¹¹¹⁷ *CIL* VI, 46 ; Krüger, 1917, p. 11. Originally the bas-relief was housed in the Vatican.

¹¹¹⁸ For the meaning of the name *Camulus*, see Delamarre, 2003, p. 101 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 214 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 334-335 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 55. For the various inscriptions dedicated to *Camulus*, see *RDG*, p. 32 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 55.

¹¹¹⁹ Sterckx, 1995, p. 55 and p. 83, fig. 12 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 34.

¹¹²⁰ Sterckx, 1995, p. 54, note 35 ; Whatmough, 1970, p. 71.

b) Etymology of her name

Her name is obviously similar to the Ardennes, the name of the massif and of its vast surrounding forest situated in the north-east of France and the south of Belgium. The Celticity of Arduinna's name has been challenged by some scholars, such as G. Dottin, who questioned whether the divine names Vosegus, Abnoba and Arduinna were of Celtic origin.¹¹²¹ Spickermann, Sterckx and Delamarre however argue it is related to a Celtic root *arduo-* signifying 'high' or 'eminent', cognate with Old Irish *ard*, 'high' or 'big', Welsh *ardd*, 'hill' and Old Breton *ard*, *art*, 'high, steep'.¹¹²² Arduinna would thus mean 'the High One' or 'the Eminent One'. As for Olmsted, he connects the second element of her name *binna*, *vinna*, *venna* to a Celtic stem **benno-* meaning 'summit, hill', similar to Welsh *bann* and Old Irish *benn*, 'mountain, summit, hill'.¹¹²³ He suggests then to gloss her name as 'the High Hills', which is dubious, for Gaulish *banna*, *benna*, 'point', 'tip', 'peak', 'summit' seems to be a different word.¹¹²⁴ Arduinna's name having nothing to do with woods or forests, the translation of her name as 'Wooded Height', which is sometimes encountered in the works of certain scholars, has no justification.¹¹²⁵

Sterckx compares Arduinna to an Irish goddess called *Áirdean*, whose name, coming from an ancient **Arden*, would also mean 'the High One'.¹¹²⁶ Yet, in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'], her name is not *Áirdean* but *Airgoen*, the daughter of *Flidais* and the sister of *Bé Chuille*, *Bé Théite* and *Dianann*. *Áirdean* does not actually exist and *Airgoen*'s name is not etymologically related to Arduinna's:

Flidais diatà buar Flidais; a cethri ingena, Airgoen 7 Bé Chuille 7 Dinand 7 Bé Theite. Flidais, of whom is the 'Cattle of Flidais'; her four daughters were Argoen and Be Chuille and Dinand and Be Theite.¹¹²⁷

Arduinna's connection with the Iranian goddess *Arddvī Sūra Anāhitā*, as suggested by Heinrich Wagner, is not possible either, for *Arddvī Sūra Anāhitā* does not mean 'elevated', 'high' but 'the wet one'.¹¹²⁸

c) The boar-goddess statue: *Arduinna*?

It has always been taken for granted that the statue in bronze representing a divine huntress riding astride a huge boar, is the figuration of the goddess Arduinna (fig. 50).¹¹²⁹ The

¹¹²¹ Dottin, 1915, p. 327.

¹¹²² See also Latin *arduus*, 'high', 'steep' and Greek *orthos*, 'raised', 'upright'. Delamarre, 2003, pp. 51-52 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 139 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 52-59 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 33 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 14.

¹¹²³ Olmsted, 1994, p. 429.

¹¹²⁴ Delamarre, 2003, p. 66.

¹¹²⁵ Sterckx, 1995, pp. 52-53 refers to Lebel, P., 'Appelatifs forestiers dans le nord de la France', in *REA*, XLVI, 1944, p. 135 ; Pokorny, Julius, 'Zu keltischen Namen', in *Beiträge zur Namenforschung*, II, 1950, p. 34 ; Michel, J., *L'onomasitque belge chez César*, Viré, 1981, p. 142 affirms that the word *Ardenne* refers to the forest, while Herbillon, J., 'Ardenne, Ardennais', in *Les Dialectes Belgo-Romans*, VIII, 1950-1951, p. 48 demonstrates that the word *Ardenne* does not denote woods at all.

¹¹²⁶ Sterckx, 1995, pp. 62-69 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 26.

¹¹²⁷ *Macalister, 1938-1956, IV, p. 122, 132.*

¹¹²⁸ Wagner, 1981, p. 7 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 72-73.

¹¹²⁹ Boucher, 1976, pl. 61, fig. 292 ; Pollini, 2002, pl. 61, fig. 292 ; Duval, 1957, p. 50, fig. 19.

goddess, whose head is missing, bears the traditional costume and weapons of Diana. She is dressed with boots, called *cothume*, and wears a short tunic tied up with a belt at waist level, known as a Dorian chiton*. She has a quiver on her back and holds a small spear or knife in her hand. While Diana has generally a bear as an emblem and is often accompanied by a dog or a doe (fig. 51), here the goddess is associated with a boar.¹¹³⁰ The boar is probably the only element of indigenous character in this image, insomuch as it was a sacred animal for the Celts.¹¹³¹

The essence of this statuette has been misinterpreted because of a series of inaccuracies which accumulated and were never questioned, thus putting scholars on the wrong track.¹¹³² The origin of this statuette is actually uncertain. Contrary to what is generally asserted, it was apparently not unearthed in the Ardennes but in the Jura.¹¹³³ It must have been confused with the Ardennes because this area was inhabited by boars and because the goddess bore a similar name. It was actually the second owner who speculated over its nature and origin and arbitrarily labelled it 'Arduinna'; a theory which was never challenged.¹¹³⁴ This statuette is not accompanied by a dedication identifying the goddess. It could be the representation of any goddess or spirit of the forest, and this boar-goddess statue in bronze is therefore not a portrayal of the goddess Arduinna. The presence of the boar nonetheless indicates that it is the figuration of a Celtic goddess with the features of the Roman goddess Diana. The statuette being anepigraphic, her name remains unknown.

¹¹³⁰ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 154 ; Carabia, 1999, p. 23 ; see also Carabia, 1966. Such representations are known in Gaul, e.g. the bronze statues from Lyon and Châlon-sur-Saône, see Boucher, 1977, n°31 and 32 (Lyon) ; Babelon , Blanchet, 1895, n° 17 (Châlon).

¹¹³¹ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 45-46 ; Green, 1995, p. 166 ; Green, 1992, pp. 46-49, 116-119, 157-160, 164-166, 169-171 ; Green, pp. 139-141.

¹¹³² Boucher, 1976, pp. 161, 179 ; Duval, 1957, p. 50 ; *LIMC*, II.1, p. 853, n° 407 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 33-34 ; Green, 2001, pp. 27-28.

¹¹³³ Sterckx, 1995, p. 58.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 58.



Fig. 50: Statuette in Bronze of a huntress goddess riding a boar. The place of discovery is uncertain (Jura or Ardennes?). Boucher, 1976, pl. 61, n° 292.

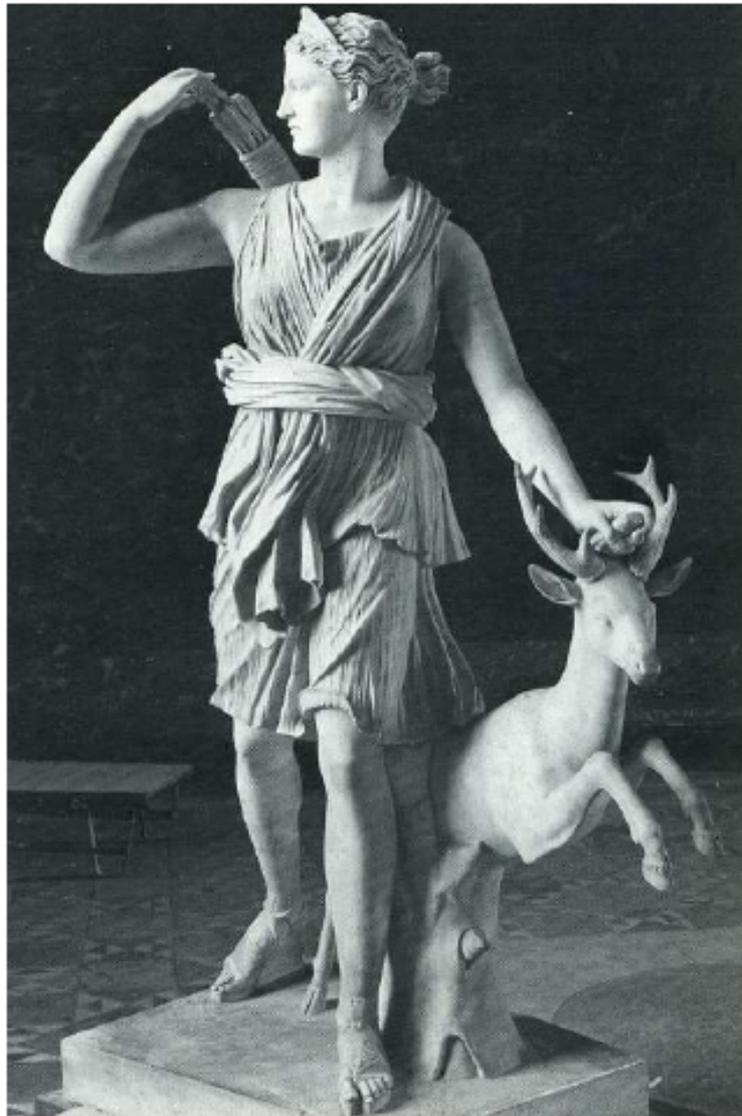


Fig. 51: Copy of a 350/340 BC statue of Diana known as 'from Versailles' in marble, from the time of Hadrian, representing her with sandals, the chiton, the quiver and her emblematic animal: the doe. Musée du Louvre, n° 589, Paris. LIMC, II.2, p. 592, n°27.*

Interestingly, Gregory of Tours, in his 6th-century *History of the Franks*, mentions the destruction of a huge statue of Diana on Mont-Saint-Walfroy (Ardennes). He reports his meeting with Deacon Walfroy (Vulfilaic), a stylit or pillar-saint¹¹³⁵ who preached to Christianize the local population of Yvois, a town located near the Belgian frontier in the Ardennes.¹¹³⁶ Saint Walfroy had his monastery built at the top of Mont-Saint-Walfroy, a 350-metre high hill overhanging the valley of the Chiers and the Pays d'Yvois, situated eight miles from Yvois. He explained to Gregory of Tours that the local population worshipped a statue of Diana erected on this mount and how he persuaded them to abandon that pagan cult in favour of the Christian God. With his help, they had decided to destroy the pagan

¹¹³⁵ Stylits stood on pillars preaching, fasting and praying, believing that the mortification of their bodies would help ensure the salvation of their souls. Saint Walfroy is the only occidental stylit known.

¹¹³⁶ Yvois has been called Carignan since 1662.

idol. It is highly likely that Diana had replaced a previous Celtic goddess. As Arduinna was venerated in the area, it is probable that it was her whom Diana had superseded. It can be thus assumed that Mount-Saint-Walfroy was originally a place of worship for the goddess Arduinna, but this theory remains conjectural.¹¹³⁷ The text is the following:

15. Conversion of deacon Vulfilaic. We started on the journey and came to the town of Yvois and there were met by deacon Vulfilaic and taken to his monastery, where we received a very kind welcome. This monastery is situated on a mountain top about eight miles from the town I have mentioned. On this mountain Vulfilaic built a great church and made it famous for its relics of the blessed Martin and other saints. While staying there I began to ask him to tell me something of the blessing of his conversion and how he had entered the clergy, for he was a Lombard by race. But he would not speak of these matters since he was quite determined to avoid vain glory. But I urged him with terrible oaths, first promising that I would disclose to no one what he told and I began to ask him to conceal from me none of the matters of which I would ask. After resisting a long time he was overcome at length by my entreaties and protestations and told the following tale: "When I was a small boy," said he, " I heard the name of the blessed Martin, though I did not know yet whether he was martyr or confessor or what good he had done in the world, or what region had the merit of receiving his blessed limbs in the tomb; and I was already keeping vigils in his honor, and if any money came into my hands I would give alms. As I grew older I was eager to learn and I was able to write before I knew the order of the written letters [before I could read]. Then I joined the abbot Aridius and was taught by him and visited the church of Saint Martin. Returning with him he took a little of the dust of the holy tomb for a blessing. This he placed in a little case and hung it on my neck. Coming to his monastery in the territory of Limoges he took the little case to place it in his oratory and the dust had increased so much that it not only filled the whole case but burst out at the joints wherever it could find an exit. In the light of this miracle my mind was the more on fire to place all my hope in his power. Then I came to the territory of Trèves and on the mountain where you are now built with my own hands the dwelling you see. I found here an image of Diana which the unbelieving people worshiped as a god. I also built a column on which I stood in my bare feet with great pain. And when the winter had come as usual I was so nipped by the icy cold that the power of the cold often caused my toenails to fall off and frozen moisture hung from my beard like candles. For this country is said to have a very cold winter." And when I asked him urgently what food or drink he had and how he destroyed the images on the mountain, he said: "My food and drink were a little bread and vegetables and a small quantity of water. And when a multitude began to flock to me from the neighboring villages I preached always that Diana was nothing, that her images and the worship which they thought it well to observe were nothing; and that the songs which they sang at their cups and wild debauches were disgraceful; but it was right to offer the sacrifice of praise to all-powerful God who made heaven and earth. I often prayed that the Lord would deign to hurl down the image and free the people from this

¹¹³⁷ Sterckx, 1998, p. 34 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 55-56

error. And the Lord's mercy turned the rustic mind to listen to my words and to follow the Lord, abandoning their idols. Then I gathered some of them together so that by their help I could hurl down the huge image which I could not budge with my own strength, for I had already broken the rest of the small images, which was an easier task. When many had gathered at this statue of Diana ropes were fastened and they began to pull but their toil could accomplish nothing. Then I hastened to the church and threw myself on the ground and weeping begged the divine mercy that the power of God should destroy that which human energy could not overturn. After praying I went out to the workmen and took hold of the rope, and as soon as I began to pull at once the image fell to the ground where I broke it with iron hammers and reduced it to dust. But at this very hour when I was going to take food my whole body was so covered with malignant pimples from sole to crown that no space could be found that a single finger might touch. I went alone into the church and stripped myself before the holy altar. Now I had there a jar full of oil which I had brought from Saint Martin's church. With this I oiled all my body with my own hands and soon lay down to sleep. I awoke about midnight and rose to perform the service and found my whole body cured as if no sore had appeared on me. And I perceived that these sores were sent not otherwise than by the hate of the enemy. And inasmuch as he enviously seeks to injure those who seek God, the bishops, who should have urged me the more to continue wisely the work I had begun, came and said: ' This way which you follow is not the right one, and a baseborn man like you cannot be compared with Simon of Antioch who lived on a column. Moreover the situation of the place does not allow you to endure the hardship. Come down rather and dwell with the brethren you have gathered.' At their words I came down, since not to obey the bishops is called a crime. And I walked and ate with them. And one day the bishop summoned me to a village at a distance and sent workmen with crowbars and hammers and axes and destroyed the column I was accustomed to stand on. I returned the next day and found it all gone. I wept bitterly but could not build again what they had torn down for fear of being called disobedient to the bishop's orders. And since then I am content to dwell with the brothers just as I do now.¹¹³⁸

What emerges from all this is that Arduinna is never depicted, as it is often asserted, as a woodland-goddess or a divine huntress, presiding over the forest, wild animals, game and hunting.¹¹³⁹ She does not have the boar as an emblem either. This confusion arose from the misinterpretation of the boar-goddess statuette from the Jura, which is not a representation of Arduinna, and the fanciful depiction from Rome featuring her as a Classical Diana. On account of her name, she must have originally been a personification of the 'high steep slopes' and reigned over the 'sacred heights', that is hills or mountains.¹¹⁴⁰ Given that the inscription to her was discovered in Düren and given that her name is cognate with that of the massif of the Ardennes, she must have been the personification and patroness of this

¹¹³⁸ Dalton, 1927, Book VIII, 15.

¹¹³⁹ De Vries, 1963, pp. 98, 123 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 33-34 ; Green, 2001, pp. 27, 132 ; Green, 1995, pp. 165-166 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 429 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 52 does not say anything about *Arduinna* except that she has a boar for emblem ; Macculloch, 1911, p. 211 ; Hatt, MDG 2, p. 129.

¹¹⁴⁰ Wagner, 1981, pp. 1-28 ; Sterckx, 1995, pp. 69-72 ; Spickermann, , 2005, p. 139.

mountain and thus of its forest. She is thus similar to the goddess Abnoba, who presided over the massif of the Black Forest in Germany. As a goddess of the 'Mountain' or of the 'High Place', she is linked to the goddesses Bergusia and Brigantia.

2) *Bergusia / Bergonia* ('the Hill')

The goddess name Bergonia is known from a single inscription discovered in 1847 in the area of Viens, a commune located on the Monts de Vaucluse, a massif of the South PreAlps, between Apt and Céreste (Vaucluse), in the territory of the Albiques, where important oppida* have been unearthed. The inscription is the following: *Bergoni(a)e G(aius) L(---) Calvo v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Bergonia Gaius L(---) Calvus paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 52).¹¹⁴¹ The dedicator is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *tria nomina*.



Fig. 52: Inscription to Bergonia, discovered in the commune of Viens (Vaucluse). In the Musée Lapidaire d'Avignon. *ILN*, IV, Apt, n°63.

¹¹⁴¹ *CIL* XII, 1061 ; *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, pp. 367-368, fig. 453 ; *ILN*, IV, Apt, pp. 108-109, n°63.

According to Guy Barraol, Bergonia is etymologically linked to the goddess Bergusia,¹¹⁴² who is venerated with the god Ucuetis in a single inscription engraved on the neck of a bronze vase, discovered in the crypt of an antique monument dating from the 1st c. BC, excavated between 1908-1911 and 1961-1962 on Mont-Auxois, the hill overhanging Alise-Sainte-Reine (Côte d'Or), in the territory of the Mandubii.¹¹⁴³ The dedication reads: *Deo Uceti et Bergusiae Remus Primi fil(ius) donavit v.s.l.m.*, 'To the god Uceti and to Bergusia, Remus, son of Primus, offered (that vase) and paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 53).¹¹⁴⁴ The dedicator is a peregrine*, since he has a unique name, but his name and his father's name are Latin.



DEO Δ VCVETI
 ET-BERCVSIAE
 REMVS Δ PRIMVS Δ FI
 DONAVIT
 V S L M ()

Fig. 53: The bronze vase with the inscription to Ucuetis and Bergusia, discovered in the 'Monument of Ucuetis' in Alise-Sainte-Reine (Côte d'Or) in 1908. In the Musée Alésia. Berthoud, 1908-1909, pl. LI and LIII ; Le Gall, 1985, p. 40, n°XVI.

The god Ucuetis is venerated on his own in two other dedications from Burgundy. The first inscription was found in Entrains-sur-Nohains (Nièvre) and reads: *In hono[rem domus divinae] deo Ucu[eti---]*, 'In honour of the Divine House and to the God Ucuetis [...]'.¹¹⁴⁵ The use of the abbreviated formula *In h.d.d.* indicates the inscription dates from the beginning of the 3rd c. AD.¹¹⁴⁶ The second dedication was discovered in 1839 on the same site as the bronze vase: *Martilis Dannotali ieuru Ucuete sosin celicnon etic gobedbi dugiõntiõ Ucuetin in Alisia*, 'Martialis, son of Dannotalos offered to Ucuetis this building (*celicnon*), and this

¹¹⁴² Barraol, 1958, 24.2, p. 244.

¹¹⁴³ The Mandubii were a small tribe of the centre-east of Gaul. They had Alésia for their chief oppidum* and were the neighbours of the Aedui and Lingones. See Kruta, 2000, p. 720.

¹¹⁴⁴ CIL XIII, 11247 = AE 1908, 187 ; Berthoud, 1908-1909, pp. 385-390, 412-417 and pl. LI, LII, LIII ; Morillot, 1909, p. 335.

¹¹⁴⁵ AE 1995, 1095.

¹¹⁴⁶ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

with the smiths who honour Ucuētis in Alise'.¹¹⁴⁷ This dedication is of great interest, for it is in Gaulish language and Latin lettering and mentions the erection of a monument in homage to the god. This monument was excavated during the two campaigns of excavations in 1908 and 1960.¹¹⁴⁸ The edifice, probably dating from the 3rd c. AD, is composed of a 25m x 13m rectangular yard, surrounded by a 4-metre portico, of various buildings and rooms, where many iron and bronze tools and debris were found,¹¹⁴⁹ and of an underground crypt, where the bronze vase dedicated to Ucuētis and Bergusiawas discovered (fig. 54 and 55).¹¹⁵⁰ The dedicators being smiths (*gobedbi*), these iron scraps were interpreted as votive offerings deposited in the sanctuary to honour the patrons of smiths and metal work. Roland Martin and Pierre Varène, who were in charge of the 1960 excavations, explain:

Unless the building is to be understood as a workshop or a shop, all these objects - which are grouped together in series (keys, locks, rings, adorned handles, hinges and split hinges, etc.) - cannot be considered to have had a merely practical purpose, since the two rooms do not have enough doors or enough furniture to explain this accumulation of objects. We would suggest that most of them were ex-votos or offerings deposited near an altar, in a room with a ritual use. They represent tokens of favour or recognition towards deities affording protection for smiths, and for bronze- and other metal-workers, whose skills were a source of considerable wealth and fame for the town of Alésia.¹¹⁵¹

Lambert adds that this monument must have been a place of worship as well as a place where the guild of smiths could gather, meet and work.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁴⁷ RIG II-1, 13 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 98-102. It was discovered in the cemetery Saint-Père, situated 120 metres from the monument with crypt where the inscription to Ucuētis and Bergusia was discovered. It is clear however that this stone was re-employed and originally came from the same sanctuary.

¹¹⁴⁸ Martin & Varène, 1962, pp. 1119-1133 ; Martin & Varène, 1973, pp. 23-127 and pl. 31-57 ; Grenier, 1931, vol. 4.2, pp. 664-667.

¹¹⁴⁹ Martin & Varène, 1973, pp. 157-159.

¹¹⁵⁰ Grenier, 1931, vol. 4.2, p. 666.

¹¹⁵¹ ***Martin & Varène, 1973, p. 159 ; Thévenot, 1968, p. 125 ; Tassel Graves, 1963, p. 227 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 98-102 ; Green, 2001, pp. 45, 52 ; Green, 1992a, p. 43 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 41.***

¹¹⁵² Lambert, 1995, p. 99 ; Poisson, 1929, pp. 2-3.



Fig. 54: Ruins of the monument of Ucuētis and Bergusia on Mont Auxois (Alésia, Côte d'Or). On the right, large crypt carved in the rock accessible by angled stairs. On the left, a portico. Le Gall, 1985, p. 33, fig. 1.



Fig. 55: Underground room with two similar basement windows. Le Gall, 1985, p. 33, fig. II.

Scholars do not agree on the significance of Ucuētis and diverse etymologies have been suggested. At the end of the 19th c. and the beginning of the 20th c., several etymologies, now dismissed, were put forward. A radical *uc-*, 'elevation' was first recognized and Ucuētis was glossed as 'the god of the summit'.¹¹⁵³ Then, John Rhys proposed to relate Ucuētis to a verbal theme *ucu-* meaning 'act of choosing', 'choice'. Ucuētis was translated as 'the Loving or Choosing One'.¹¹⁵⁴ Léon Berthoud, on the other hand, denied the Gaulish origin of this divine name,¹¹⁵⁵ Georges Poisson recognized in Ucuētis a Celtic root **cuet-* signifying 'to beat the metal' or 'to forge', derived from an IE root (but which one?) meaning 'to strike'

¹¹⁵³ De Belloget, 1872, p. 283.

¹¹⁵⁴ Rhys, 1906, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁵⁵ Berthoud, 1908-1909, pp. 413-414.

or 'to beat', which gave in Middle Irish *cuad* and in Latin *cudo*, 'to beat'.¹¹⁵⁶ According to him, Ucuētis would thus be 'the (Good) Striker'. This would illustrate his role of metal beater and relate him to the hammer-god Sucellus. As for the theory of Eugène van Tassel Graves that Ucuētis means 'Swift Flyer' and is a horse-god, it is fanciful and baseless, as Lambert points out.¹¹⁵⁷ The etymology* advanced by Olmsted is not convincing either. He considers Ucuētis a purely local god, whose name would be a toponym* meaning 'Pine Saplings'.¹¹⁵⁸ As for Schmidt, he proposes 'the One who is invoked', relating his name to the verbal theme **uekw-* / **ukw*, 'to speak' or 'to invoke'.¹¹⁵⁹ Finally, Lambert suggests to see a theme in **okuo-*, 'sharp' or 'pointed' - cf. Latin *accus* - with an agent name in *-ti-*. Ucuētis would thus be 'The Sharpener'; an etymology* perfectly suiting his function of patron of smith craft.¹¹⁶⁰ Lambert's etymology* is the most cogent, but Schmidt's cannot be ruled out.

Seven stone reliefs* representing a seated hammer-god and a goddess bearing the traditional symbols of abundance and fertility were discovered from 1803 to 1923 in Alise-Sainte-Reine.¹¹⁶¹ It is generally agreed that those reliefs* are depictions of Ucuētis and Bergusia, but this is not possible to assert, for they all are anepigraphic. Moreover, those images do not differ from the various depictions of divine couples found throughout Gaul. It could be for instance the portrayal of the god Sucellus with a Mother Goddess, notably when the god is represented with a hammer.

While Ucuētis is clearly a guardian of metalwork, Bergusia must have originally been a goddess attached to the Heights, Mounts or Mountains, for her name is based on a Celtic root *berg(o)*, *bergusia*, literally signifying 'mount', from an IE root **bherǵh*, 'high'.¹¹⁶² It is besides interesting to note that the root *brig-*, 'high', 'eminent', comprised in the divine names Brigantia, Brigit and Brigindona, comes from the same IE root.¹¹⁶³ They are thus goddesses of the same type and essence. The goddess name Bergonia and the epithet of the Germanic Matronae Berguiahenae, venerated in Gereonsweiler, Bonn and Tetz (see Chapter 1), are also derived from the root *berg-*.¹¹⁶⁴ *Berg-* is found again in the epithet of Damona Matuberginis, mentioned in a dedication from Saintes (Charente-Maritime). This attributive byname* can be either descriptive and mean 'The High Favourable', with *matu-*, 'favourable, good', or topographical and designate a local mount where the goddess would have been specifically venerated, possibly 'the Hill of the Bear'(?), with *matu-*, 'bear' (see Chapter 4 for more details).¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁵⁶ Poisson, 1929, pp. 3-6.

¹¹⁵⁷ Tassel Graves, 1963, pp. 225-228 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 101.

¹¹⁵⁸ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 433-434.

¹¹⁵⁹ Schmidt, 1986, pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁶⁰ Lambert, 1995, p. 101 ; Lambert, 1987, pp. 529-530.

¹¹⁶¹ RG 2347 (in 1803), 2348 (in 1834), 2353 (in 1907), 7114 (in 1911), 7118 (in 1913), 7121 (in 1913), 7127 (in 1923).

¹¹⁶² Delamarre, 2003, p. 73 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 213 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 420 ; Toutain, 1920, p. 295 and note 4 ; Thévenot, 1968, p. 218 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 191 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 33 ; Berthoud, 1908-1909, p. 417 and Poisson, 1929, p. 8 think that *Bergusia* is prior to Gaulish and is a proto-Celtic or Ligurian word.

¹¹⁶³ See the following section on *Brigantia*. Delamarre, 2003, p. 87 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 96 ; Poisson, 1929, p. 8 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 33.

¹¹⁶⁴ CIL XIII, 12013, 12014 ; AE 1984, 694 ; CIL XIII, 7878.

¹¹⁶⁵ AE 1919, 49 ; ILTG, 155 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 356 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 221.

Bergonia and Bergusia are therefore to be understood as goddesses personifying and reigning over the mount. While Bergonia was certainly linked to the Monts de Vaucluse, situated near Viens, Bergusia was undoubtedly worshipped in Alise-Sainte-Reine in connection with Mount-Auxois. Poisson's theory that Bergusia was more than a mere goddess of mounts, because she was coupled with a god of metal work, is somewhat unlikely but is worth reporting here.¹¹⁶⁶ Poisson argues that the root *berg-* must have by extension designated the mining riches of the mountains. From this, he assumes that Bergusia was 'a Goddess of Mines', protecting ores and completing the role of her metal-worker partner.

3) Goddesses in *Brig-* ('the High One(s)')

In Great Britain, seven inscriptions are dedicated to the goddess Brigantia. Three come from South West Yorkshire, while the four others come from about a hundred miles away, in the region of Hadrian's Wall. Brigantia is obviously cognate with the name of the tribe of the Brigantes, who inhabited the region where the inscriptions were found (see Chapter 3). The inscription from Brampton (Hadrian's Wall) describes her as a nymph,¹¹⁶⁷ while the dedications from Birrens, Greetland, Castleford and Corbridge equate her with Roman goddesses of war, such as (Minerva) Victory and (Juno) Caelestis.¹¹⁶⁸ The last two inscriptions are significant, for they are offered by dedicators of Celtic stock, although they come from Roman military camps or sites (Adel and South Shields). This shows the attachment of indigenous people to their roots and religious beliefs. The first one, discovered on the Roman site at Adel, north-west of Leeds (Yorkshire), is dedicated by a woman Cingetissa, whose name means 'warrior' or 'attacker'.¹¹⁶⁹ It is engraved on a sandstone altar which has a serpent on its left side: *Deae Brigantiae d(onum) Cingetissa p(osuit)*, 'To the goddess Brigantia, Cingetissa set up this offering' (fig. 56).¹¹⁷⁰ The use of the formula *dea* indicates that the dedication is not prior to the mid-2nd c. AD.¹¹⁷¹ The second altar, discovered in 1895 south of the fort at South Shields, Co. Durham, bears the following inscription: *Deae Brigantiae sacrum Congenn(i)ccus u(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Sacred to the goddess Brigantia, Congennicus willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow' (fig. 56).¹¹⁷² On the back of the altar is engraved a bird, on the right side a patera* and on the left side a jug; elements which may represent the functions of fertility of the goddess. The name of the dedicator Congennicus is Celtic and appears in other inscriptions from Narbonne and Nîmes.¹¹⁷³

Brigantia's name is undeniably Celtic. It comes from the Gaulish word *briga*, cognate with Old Irish *brí*, Cornish, Welsh and Breton *bre*, 'hill', denoting highness and designating a high place, that is a hill or a mount.¹¹⁷⁴ These words come from an Old Indo-European adjective **bherǵh* signifying 'high'. By extension, the word *briga*, *brigant-* took on the

¹¹⁶⁶ Poisson, 1929, p. 8.

¹¹⁶⁷ *RIB* 2066.

¹¹⁶⁸ *RIB* 2091, 627, 628, 1131. For a study of those inscriptions, see Chapters 1 and 3.

¹¹⁶⁹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 65.

¹¹⁷⁰ *RIB* 630.

¹¹⁷¹ Raespeat-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.

¹¹⁷² *RIB* 1053.

¹¹⁷³ Delamarre, 2007, p. 72 ; Joliffe, 1941, p. 42. Narbonne: *CIL* XII, 4883 ; Nîmes: *CIL* XII, 3529.

¹¹⁷⁴ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 87-88 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 96 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 55 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 17.

significance of 'fortified mount' or 'hill fort', describing then the mount where the tribes had settled and built their fortified city. For instance, the oppidum* situated on Mount-Avrollot, overhanging the city of Avrolles (Yonne), was called Eburoriga ('Mount or Fort of the Yew').¹¹⁷⁵ In a recent study, Juan Luis García Alonso demonstrated that *briga* was very frequent in Celt-Iberian toponymics.¹¹⁷⁶ Being far less attested in Gaul, Delamarre advances that *briga* may have had the same significance as the word *dunum*, 'hill fort' found in many a Gaulish place name, such as Lugdunum.¹¹⁷⁷



Fig. 56: Left: Inscription to the Goddess Brigantia by a Celtic woman named Cingetissa discovered at Adel (Yorkshire). In the coach house, Adel Church. Cast in the Yorkshire Museum. RIB 630. Right: Inscription to the Goddess Brigantia by a Celtic dedicator called Congennicus found at South Shields (Co. Durham). Now in South Shields Museum. RIB 1053.

Brigantia is etymologically linked to the Matres Brigaecae, who are venerated in an inscription from Peñalba de Castro, in Celtic Hispania: *Ma(tribus) Brigaecis Laelius P[h]ainus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Mothers Brigeacae Laelius Phainus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹¹⁷⁸ The epithet of the Matres is clearly composed of the root *brig-*, 'high' and of the suffix *-ko*, which is probably localizing.¹¹⁷⁹

Brigantia is also related to the goddess Brigindona, honoured in a dedication engraved on a stone found in re-employment* in the building of an old funerary vault in Auxey (Côte

¹¹⁷⁵ Duval, 1979, pp. 37-38 ; Duval, 1984, p. 145-147.

¹¹⁷⁶ García Alonso, 2006, pp. 689-714 ; Júdece Gamito, 2005, p. 586 and figure 5 (map).

¹¹⁷⁷ Delamarre, 2003, p. 87.

¹¹⁷⁸ *CIL* II, 6338 1 ; Sopenña, 2005, p. 350 ; Blázquez, 1962, pp. 129-130 ; Gómez-Pantoja, 1999, p. 423, n° 6a.

¹¹⁷⁹ Lejeune, 1978, p. 814 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 39 ; Lambert, 2008, pp. 1-2.

d'Or), in the territory of the Aedui. The inscription is in Gaulish language and Latin lettering: *Iccavos Oppianicnos ieuru Brigindon cantalon*, 'Iccauros son of Oppianos offered (this) *cantalon* (circular monument or pillar) to Brigindona' (fig. 57).¹¹⁸⁰ As the name Brigindona is not preceded by the word *dea* 'goddess', it is difficult to determine whether Brigindona is a divine or proper name. However, the use of the dedicatory verb *IEVRV*, similar to Gallo-Greek *εἰωρου* and signifying '(who) offered' or '(who) dedicated', is revealing.¹¹⁸¹ Inscriptions or monuments were usually offered and dedicated to deities rather than to people. As the inscription was discovered at the bottom of the plateau of Montmélian, the worship of Brigindona ('The High One') must have been in relation to this mount. A Gaulish city might have been situated on this hill, but no archaeological data evidencing such a theory have been discovered so far.¹¹⁸² Lacroix specifies that Brigindona's name may have survived in the toponym* Brigendonis, the ancient name of the city of Brognon or Broindon (Côte d'Or), situated about 40 kms from Auxey.¹¹⁸³

ICCAVOS. OP-
PIANICNOS.IEV-
RV.BRIGINDONI
CANTALON



Fig. 57: Gallo-Latin inscription on stone from Auxey (Côte d'Or) dedicated to Brigindona. In the Musée de Beaune. Lambert, 1995, p. 96.

British Brigantia, Celtiberian Matres Brigiaceae and Gaulish Brigindona are etymologically related to the Irish goddess Brigit; the loss of unstressed 'n' in such words being typical of the Irish variety of Celtic. Brigit is described in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ['The Book of Invasions'] as the daughter of the Dagda and listed among the Tuatha Dé Danann.¹¹⁸⁴ Very little information about Brigit has survived in Irish mythology. In *Cath Maige Tuired*, she is said to be the wife of Breas ('Brave'), with whom she begot a son called Ruadhán ('Red-Haired').¹¹⁸⁵ When her son was murdered by Goibhniu the Smith, she wept him and gave thus the first lament (*caoineadh*) of Ireland. This legend clearly illustrates her in her role of mother-goddess. *Sanas Cormaic* [*Cormac's Glossary*], dated c. 900, gives a hint of her functions and describes her as a threefold goddess. She is said to have had two sisters of the same name fulfilling specific roles:

¹¹⁸⁰ *CIL* XIII, 2638 ; *RIG* II-1, 9 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 96 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 134.

¹¹⁸¹ Lambert, 1995, p. 91: there are ten Gallo-Latin inscriptions including the dedicatory verb *IEVRV*.

¹¹⁸² Lacroix, 2007, pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁸³ Lacroix, 2007, pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁸⁴ Macalister, 1941, pp. 132-133, 158-159, 196-197.

¹¹⁸⁵ Gray, 1982, pp. 56-57, 119. For details about *Breas* and *Ruadhán* see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 43-44, Mackillop, 2004, pp.

Brigit .i. banfile ingen in Dagdae. Is# insin Brigit b# n-#xe .i. band#a no adratis filid. Ar ba rom#r 7 ba roán a frithgnam. Ideo eam deam uocant poetarum. Cuius sorores erant Brigit b# legis 7 Brigit b# Goibne ingena in Dagda, de cuius nominibus pene omnes Hibernenses dea Brigit uocabatur. Brigit, i.e. lady poet, the daughter of the Dagda. It is she who was Brigit the woman of poetry, i.e. the goddess whom the poets adored. Because very great and very famous was her protection. Accordingly, they call her the goddess of the poets. Whose sisters were Brigit the woman of curing and Brigit the woman of smith craft, daughters of the Dagda, from whose names among all the Irish a goddess was called Brigit.¹¹⁸⁶

In this text, Brigit appears as a goddess who possesses *filidhecht*, that is 'poetry, divination and prophecy', and protects poets. The two other Brigits respectively preside over medicine and metal work. The three Brigits are the triplication of the very same figure.¹¹⁸⁷ As studied in Chapter 1, triplism emphasizes and sublimates the various abilities and powers of the gods. Brigit is thus the patroness of arts, crafts and healing. In view of those attributes, it can be assumed that the word *briga* could have taken on a different meaning. In addition to its original geographical dimension, *briga* must have had a figurative sense as in Irish *brí*, signifying 'vigour' or 'meaning'. It must have denoted force, vigour, nobility and sacredness, especially when referring to deities.¹¹⁸⁸ It is also interesting to note that *briga* is the same word as Sanskrit *brhatī* and Avestic *bərəzaiti*, signifying 'high' or 'noble'.¹¹⁸⁹ It gave terms referring to kinship and nobility in the Celtic languages, such as Old Welsh *breenhin*, 'king', Cornish *brentyn*, 'noble' and Old Breton *brientin*, 'noble person'. Therefore, the goddess names Brigantia, Brigit, Brigindona and Matres Brigiacaе can be glossed either as 'the High or Eminent Ones' or 'the Noble or Exalted Ones'.¹¹⁹⁰ Highness can thus refer to a high place or to the spirituality of the soul. By their summit rising toward the sky, mounts and mountains stand out in the landscape and compel respect and sacredness. It is thus not surprising that highlands became invested with spirituality and exaltation.

All those occurrences show that Ireland, Britain, Gaul and Celtic Hispania shared the worship of a 'High, Exalted' goddess. Brigit being described as a goddess of arts and crafts in Irish mythology, she is likely to correspond to the goddess Minerva, mentioned by Caesar in Book 6 of *De Bello Gallico* [The Gallic War] as one of the five deities honoured by the Gauls. He indeed stipulates that Minerva has the knowledge of craftsmanship and bestows it on her people:

Deum maxime Mercurium colunt. Huius sunt plurima simulacra: hunc omnium inventorem artium ferunt, hunc viarum atque itinerum ducem, hunc ad quaestus pecuniae mercaturasque habere vim maximam arbitrantur. Post hunc Apollinem et Martem et Iovem et Minervam. De his eandem fere, quam reliquae gentes, habent opinionem: Apollinem morbos depellere, Minervam operum atque artificiorum initia tradere, Iovem imperium caelestium tenere, Martem bella

¹¹⁸⁶ Meyer, 1912, p. 15.

¹¹⁸⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 50 ; Mac Cana, 1983, p. 34.

¹¹⁸⁸ Delamarre, 2007, p. 214 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 37, 190 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 12, 15, 26 ; Joliffe, 1941, p. 34 ; Green, 1995, p. 196.

¹¹⁸⁹ Lambert, 1995, p. 96.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 50 ; Sterckx, 1998, p. 55 ; Green, 2005, p. 196 ; Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1970-1973, pp. 226-227.

regere.¹¹⁹¹ They worship as their divinity, Mercury in particular, and have many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of all arts, they consider him, the guide of their journeys and marches, and believe him to have very great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions. Next to him they worship Apollo, and Mars, and Jupiter, and Minerva; respecting these deities they have for the most part the same belief as other nations: that Apollo averts diseases, that Minerva imparts the invention of manufactures, that Jupiter possesses the sovereignty of the heavenly powers; that Mars presides over wars. To him when they have determined to engage in battle, they commonly vow those things they shall take in war.¹¹⁹²

As we know, the Roman goddess Minerva also possesses the ability of healing. She was venerated in Rome with the epithet *Medica* ('the Physician').¹¹⁹³ This is another quality that Minerva shares with Brigit, who is said to preside over curing. Minerva is also a goddess of war in Roman mythology¹¹⁹⁴ and the goddess Brigantia, equated with Victory in three inscriptions and represented as a warriorress in a relief* from Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland),¹¹⁹⁵ has a pronounced war-like aspect.

As for the possible connection between the goddess Brigit and Saint Brigit (later, Brigid) of Kildare (c. AD 439 - c. 524), whose cult was widespread in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Brittany, it will not be considered in detail here, but it can be noted that on account of the similarity in names, feasts, attributes and functions, some scholars believe that the goddess and the saint were one, while others take them for two different characters.¹¹⁹⁶ Green even challenges the historicity of the Saint, arguing that:

Although Brigit is said to have been the founder-abbess of Kildare, there is no firm evidence for the abbess as a historical figure; descriptions of her life are based almost entirely on legend, which gives rise to the suspicion that she may be a mythic figure who underwent a humanisation-process and was thus endowed with a false historicity.¹¹⁹⁷

On account of their name, the syncretism between the two characters must have been uncomplicated and inevitable. Some attributes and functions of the ancient goddess, such as healing, the protection of farm animals and Imbolc, the 1st February Irish feast, were

¹¹⁹¹ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book 6, XVII.

¹¹⁹² De Quincey, 1923.

¹¹⁹³ Brill's, vol. 8, p. 941 ; CIL VI 30980: *Minerva Medica*.

¹¹⁹⁴ Brill's, vol. 8, pp. 939-944.

¹¹⁹⁵ RIB 2091 and plate XIX. See the section on Brigantia in Chapter 3.

¹¹⁹⁶ O'Cathasaigh, D., 'The Cult of Brigid: a Study of Pagan-Christian Syncretism in Ireland', in Preston, J. J. (ed.), *Mother Worship: Theme and Variations*, Chapel Hill, 1982, pp. 75-94 ; Bowen, E. G., 'The Cult of Saint Brigid', in *Studia Celtica*, 8-9, 1973-1974, pp. 33-47 ; Bowen, E. G., *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1977, pp. 113-114 ; Green, 2005, pp. 198-209. For more information about the saint, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 51-55 and his bibliography ; McCone, Kim, 'Brigid in the seventh century – a saint with three lives', in *Peritfa*, 1, pp. 107-145 ; McCone, Kim, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, An Sagart, Maynooth, 1990, pp. 161-166 ; Bray, D. A., 'The image of Saint Brigid in the early Irish Church', in *EC*, 24, 1987, pp. 209-215, etc.

¹¹⁹⁷ Green, 2005, p. 198.

associated with Saint Brigit in later times and survived in her imagery. It is most likely, in fact, that the saint and the goddess are two different characters: one a mythical personage, while the other is recorded as a historical saint who was traditionally claimed to have founded the convent at Cill Dara (Kildare) and to have died in the year 524 AD. From that time onwards, many miracles and legends were attributed to her.¹¹⁹⁸ She would have been known in living memory for at least two generations after her death. The earliest reference to her is in a text which has been dated on linguistic evidence to the 6th c. AD. It occurs in the form of a prophecy, in a somewhat obscure rhetorical style, in a genealogical tract concerning the Fotharta people in Leinster.¹¹⁹⁹ The prophecy is represented as given to a fanciful prehistoric chieftain Eochaidh Find, brother of the mythical Conn Céadchathach, and it therefore reflects an attempt by the Fotharta to present themselves as related to the Tara kings. The prophecy is the following:

Gain gein cain orddan iartain dodoticfa dit genelgib clann. Condingertar dia mor-buadaib Brig-eoit fhir-diada. Bid ala-Maire mar-Choimded mathair. A fair birth, fair dignity, afterwards which will come to you from your children's progeny. Who will be called due to her great virtues Brig-eoit the truly holy. She will be another Mary, of the great Lord the mother.¹²⁰⁰

Although an invention of the 6th c., this text would imply that Brigit (*Brig-eoit*) was well-known at that time, perhaps recently deceased. It would hardly make sense to people unless it referred to a real person who was known, or had been known recently, to the listeners. All the other texts, such as the c. 650 AD *Vita Brigitae* by the priest Toimtenach – who used the pen name Cogitosus – are however replete with legendary and unhistorical stories of the deeds and miracles of the saint.¹²⁰¹ Some of these deeds and miracles may indeed be fallout from the lore of the goddess.

4) *Andeis* ('the Great One?'): Plateau of Plech

The goddess *Andeis* is known from a single inscription, engraved on an altar in white marble, discovered at the beginning of the 19th c. in the old cemetery situated on the southern side of the hill of the Plech, situated near Caumont, in the canton of Saint-Lizier (Ariège), in the territory of the Consoranni.¹²⁰² The inscription reads: *Deae Andei Laetinus Laeti f(ilius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Ande, Laetinus, son of Laetus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 58).¹²⁰³ A guttus* is drawn on the left side of the altar and a patera* on the right side. *Andeis*'s name can be related to the intensive Celtic root *and-*, *ande*, signifying 'very' or 'great', comprised for instance in the divine name *Andarta* ('Great Bear').¹²⁰⁴ Her name might therefore mean 'The Great One', an epithet denoting

¹¹⁹⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 51-55.

¹¹⁹⁹ O'Brien, 1962, pp. 80-81.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ó hAodha, 1978, p. 42.*

¹²⁰¹ Bollandus, Johannes & Henschenius, Godefridus, *Acta Sanctorum*, Paris, 1863, pp. 135-141.

¹²⁰² For details on the tribe of the Consorani, see Lizop, 1931 ; Lizop, 1931a.

¹²⁰³ *CIL* XIII, 15 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 21.

¹²⁰⁴ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 45-46 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 211.

divine grandeur and strength as well as geographical height.¹²⁰⁵ On account of this possible etymology* and the place of discovery of the stone, it might be inferred that Andeis was worshipped in relation with the mount of the Plech, where a sanctuary may have been situated, but this remains a conjecture as long as excavations are not carried out at this location.¹²⁰⁶



Fig. 58: Altar dedicated to the goddess Andeis, found on the hill of the Plech, situated near Caumont (Ariège). Musée départemental de l'Ariège. CAG, 09, L'Ariège, 1997, p. 95, fig. 57.

5) Alambrima: Mont-Alambre

¹²⁰⁵ Toutain, 1920, p. 293, note 2.

¹²⁰⁶ CAG, 9, *L'Ariège*, 1997, p. 95.

The goddess Alambrima is known from a single inscription engraved on an altar discovered in La Pierre, near Serres (Hautes-Alpes), in the territory of the Vocontii.¹²⁰⁷ The inscription reads: *Alambr[i]mae Severus Perpetui fil(ius) exs voto*, 'To Alambrima, Severus, son of Perpetuus, (willingly erected this altar) in accomplishment of his vow'.¹²⁰⁸ For a long time, the altar served as a stand to the stoup of the village church, but it is now housed in the Musée Départemental de Gap.¹²⁰⁹ Alambrima's name is cognate with Mont Alambre or Mont Arambre, a mountain situated in the area of La Pierre, between the communes of Serres, Savournon and La-Bâtie-Mont-Saléon (fig. 59). Alambrima must therefore have been the personification and protectress of Mont Alambre, which stands out in the landscape and conveys a feeling of grandeur and potency.¹²¹⁰ Alambrima is an oronym, i.e. a name of mountain, the significance of which remains obscure. Delamarre proposes to break down her name as **ar-ambr-* (?), composed of *ar-* or *are-*, 'in front of, near' or 'to the east of', and of the root *ambr-*, probably cognate with Indo-European **(h3)mbhro-* signifying 'rain'.¹²¹¹ Accordingly, Alambrima might be 'the one who is to the east of the rain' or 'the one in front of the rain'; an etymology* which would refer to the situation of Mont Alambre.

¹²⁰⁷ The Vocontii were a Celtic sept* located in today's Provence, between the rivers Durance and Isère. Their western neighbours were the Allobroges and their eastern neighbours the Cavares, see Barruol, 1999, pp. 282-283 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 864.

¹²⁰⁸ *CIL* XII 5848 ; Liou, 1991, p. 267, n° 219.

¹²⁰⁹ *CAG*, 5, *Les Hautes-Alpes*, 1995, p. 135.

¹²¹⁰ *RE*, vol. 1, p. 379, n°425 ; Toutain, 1920, p. 294 ; Barruol, 1963, p. 363 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 9, 130.

¹²¹¹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 16, 210, 211 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 52.



Fig. 59: Mont Alambre (Hautes-Alpes) personified and presided over by its eponymous goddess Alambrima in Celtic and Gallo-Roman times (Source: www.delicfrance.com, June 2009).

6) Soio: Plateau of Malpas

The goddess Soio is mentioned in a single inscription engraved on an altar, dating from the middle of the 2nd c. AD. It was discovered in 1848 in the ruins of the chapel Saint-Gervais, located on the culminating point of the plateau of Malpas, overhanging the village of Soyons, situated south of Valence (Ardèche) (fig. 60). The dedication is the following: *Deae Soioni Aug(sutae) Luccius Marcia(nus) et Sennius Marianus de suo posuerunt loco privato Upeior(um) pupillor(um)*, 'To the Auguste goddess Soio, Luccius Marcianus and Sennius Marianus erected (this altar) on the property belonging to the wards of the Upeii' (fig. 61).¹²¹² On top of that dedication, various archaeological elements were unearthed on the plateau,

¹²¹² CIL XII, 2656 ; RE, vol 2, p. 337 ; Toutain, 1920, p. 294 and note 9 ; CAG, 07, *Ardèche*, 2001, p. 403.

which tends to prove that a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess was located there.¹²¹³ An oppidum*, excavated on the hill, is supposedly the pre-Roman fortified city of the tribe of the Segovellauni, mentioned by Pliny, or of the Segallaunii, mentioned by Ptolemy.¹²¹⁴ The name of the village of Soyons is reminiscent of the name of the goddess: its ancient form Soïo survived until the 13th c.¹²¹⁵ As the inscription was found on the plateau of the Malpa, Soïo can be regarded as the embodiment of the mount and the protectress of the fortified city unearthed at its top. For Delamarre and Olmsted, the significance of her name remains obscure, but Lacroix suggests that Soïo could be derived from a root *soïo-*, **sogio-*, possibly related to the Celtic root *seg-* meaning 'victory' and 'strength', comprised in the divine names Segeta or Segomanna (see Chapter 3).¹²¹⁶ This idea is interesting, for the place where the inscription was discovered was the chief centre of the Segovellauni or of the Segallaunii, whose names are based on the same root.



Fig. 60: Plateau overhanging the village of Soyons (Ardèche). Lacroix, 2007, p. 16.

¹²¹³ CAG, 07, *Ardèche*, 2001, p. 403.

¹²¹⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, III, 3, 4 ; Ptolemy, *Geography*, II, 9 ; Courtial, 1999 ; Blanc & Valette, 1958, pp. 74-79 ; CAG, 07, *Ardèche*, 2001, pp. 395-404 ; Barruol, 1999, pp. 267-272.

¹²¹⁵ Lacroix, 2007, p. 15 ; CAG, 07, *Ardèche*, 2001, p. 396.

¹²¹⁶ Barruol, 1999, p. 284, note 2 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 15.



Fig. 61: Dedication to the goddess Soio found on the plateau of Malpas, overhanging the village of Soyons (Ardèche). In the Museum of Soyons. CAG, 07, Ardèche, p. 403, fig. 526.

Conclusion

Belief in a goddess embodying the earth is widely illustrated in Irish mythology and Gallo-British archaeology. The Irish accounts tell of divine ancestresses personifying the island, the fields or the ground, such as Ériu, Banba, Fóitla, Tailtiu, Macha, the Mórrígain or Danu, who possess pronounced agrarian features and whose body shapes the landscape. In Gallo-British and Celt-Iberian epigraphy, a certain number of goddess names or epithets refer directly to the land or to peculiar natural elements, such as animals, trees or mounts: Litavi ('Earth'), Nantosuelta ('Winding Brook' or 'Meadows?'), Artio ('Bear'), Matres Eburnicae ('Yew Mother Goddesses'), Duilliae ('Leaves'), Bergusia, Bergonia ('Hill'), Arduinna ('High

One'), etc. This suggests that Nature was worshipped as a divine entity by the Celts and that every single natural element was deified. Animal and plant species were sacred because they were part of a system maintaining and ensuring the survival of the human race. Animals were hunted or bred for food, while fruit, vegetables and plants were easily picked up and prized as food. Hill-tops and mountains seem to have been particularly revered. Their majesty, mystery, impressive size and potency in the landscape certainly inspired a feeling of smallness and admiration. Hills and mountains were often chosen as a place of ritual observance or habitation where fortified cities or sanctuaries were built.

It is evident that the earth was mainly presided over by female deities, whose main function was to provide food and nurture the peoples. Such a role is exemplified by Irish Mór Muman of Munster ('the Nurturer') and Danu/Anu/Ana, the ancestress and mother of the Tuatha Dé Danann and Gaulish Rosmerta, Cantismerta and Atesmerta, whose names signify 'Great Providers'. It is significant that a certain number of dedicators paying homage to those land-goddesses on the Continent were of Celtic stock and not Roman citizens yet. It proves that, despite the influence of Roman religion after the conquest, local people did not renounce their culture and religious beliefs and went on praying to, worshipping and honouring their ancient deities. It is conspicuous that the goddesses presiding over the ground and its riches, such as Rosmerta, Atesmerta, Cantismerta and Nantosuelta, were mainly honoured in the north, north-east and centre-east of Gaul. The possibility of a worship dedicated to them in other parts of Gaul is not to be dismissed, inasmuch as the potentiality of further archaeological discoveries is considerable and undeniable.

The earth-goddesses must have intervened in various aspects of life and been honoured in different ways according to social rank. Their role as providers of fertility indisputably relates them to the rural community, which was in charge of working the soil and breeding cattle. Their cult must have been based on the cycle of the seasons, settling on the agrarian calendar and varying from sowing time to harvest time. Irish medieval literature is reminiscent of four important Celtic agrarian feasts which punctuated the pastoral year.

Samain (standard spelling Samhain), on October 31st, marked the starting point of a new year and the renewal of the seasons, symbolized in mythology by the coupling of the sky god with the land-goddess.¹²¹⁷ *Cath Maige Tuired* relates that the Dagda mated with the Mórrígain at the Ford of the river Uinsinn (Co. Sligo) at Samhain,¹²¹⁸ while the *Metrical Dindshenchas* describes his tryst with the river-goddess Bóinn on that very night.¹²¹⁹ This concept has its reflection in the Gaulish divine couples of Litavi and Cicolluis, Rosmerta and Mercurius, Nantosuelta and Sucellus, etc. Metaphorically speaking, the seed of the god and the fecundity of the goddess ensure the abundance and richness of the forthcoming crops which will guarantee the preservation of the vitality of the tribe and the survival of the community. Imbolc, on February 1st, was in the patronage of the goddess Brigit and marked

¹²¹⁷ Le Roux, 1961, pp. 485-506 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1995a, Chapter 1 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1991, pp. 167-168 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 377-378 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 185-186 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 237-238 ; Mac Cana, 1983, pp. 127-128. As regards folklore and customs attached to this feast, see among others Danaher, 1972 ; McNeill, Marian, *Hallowe'en: Its Origin, Rites and Ceremonies in the Scottish Tradition*, Edinburgh, 1970.

¹²¹⁸ Gray, 1982, pp. 44-45, § 84.

¹²¹⁹ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 36-37, l. 25-40.

the beginning of the lactation of ewes.¹²²⁰ It was a ceremony of purification as the cold period drew to a close and a celebration of cattle breeders, farmers and shepherd boys. It was later Christianized as Saint Brigid's Day. Beltaine, on May 1st, announced the beginning of the summer, open-pasturing harvest and cattle-raising.¹²²¹ Various rites of fertility were held, such as the lighting of huge fires or the driving of the livestock between two bonfires. Finally, the feast of Lughnasad, held on August 1st, celebrated abundance, the ripening of fruit and the maturing of grain.¹²²² It announced the end of the summer and the storage of the crops.

Óenach Tailten, the fair held in honour of Tailtiu during the whole month of August, clearly glorifies the fertility of the ground ensured by the earth-goddess.¹²²³ Similarly, Irish mythology mentions a feast called *Óenach Macha* celebrating prosperity ensuing from the goddess Macha. Significantly, the graffiti discovered in Lezoux might refer to a feast held in honour of the purveyor of riches Rosmerta. It is highly likely thus that those various goddesses of fertility presided over specific times of the agrarian year. In *The City of God*, the 4th-century Christian historian Saint Augustine, speaking of the ancient Roman pagan rites, describes that the fertility of the land was not in the hands of a single goddess. The period of sowing was patronized by the goddess *Seia*, the period of growth was presided over by *Segetia* – which is etymologically related to the Gaulish *Segeta* – and harvest time and storage was supervised by the goddess *Tutilina*.¹²²⁴

This reference has its correspondence in the feasts of Imbolc, which was the period of sowing, Beltaine, which was the time of the growth of the crops and Lughnasad, which was harvest time and the beginning of storage. It is very probable thus that several goddesses were respectively associated with those times of the pastoral year. The lack of sources in Gaul does not allow us to determine precisely which earth-goddesses presided over sowing, growing and harvesting. In view of Lambert's etymologies, the only possible suggestion is that *Cantismerta* might have represented the whole sowing-growth period, since her name refers to "the general and continuous distribution in space and time", while *Rosmerta* might have presided over harvest time and storage, for her name indicates an "achieved and definitive distribution".¹²²⁵

In Irish mythology, it is significant that goddesses, such as *Flidais*, *Brigit* or the *Mórrígain*, are associated with cattle or cows. The Irish river-goddess *Bóinn*, from Celtic **Bouvinda* ('the Cow White Goddess'), the Gaulish spring-goddess *Damona* ('Cow') and possibly the British river-goddess *Verbeia* ('Cow') have names which indicate that they were worshipped

¹²²⁰ Guyonvarc'h, 1995a, pp. 83-96 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1991, p. 168 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 270 ; Sjoestedt, 2000, p. 53 ; Green, 1992a, p. 125 ; Vendryes, 1924, pp. 241-244. For details on Saint Brigit Day's, see Danaher, 1972 ; Ó Catháin, Séamas, *The Festival of Saint Brigit*, Dublin, 1995 ; Bray, Dorothy, 'The Image of Saint Brigit in the Early Irish Churches', in *EC*, 24, 1987, pp. 209-215.

¹²²¹ Guyonvarc'h, 1995a, pp. 99-111 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1991, p. 168 ; Binchy, 1958, pp. 113-138 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 39 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 42 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 334-335 ; Ross, 1996, p. 83. For information on the folklore and customs attached to this feast, see Rhys, 1901, pp. 308-310.

¹²²² Guyonvarc'h, 1995a, pp. 131-146 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1991, p. 168 ; Green, 1992a, p. 136 ; Sjoestedt, 2000, p. 30 ; Makillop, 2004, pp. 309-310 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 58, 163, 236 ; McNeill, 1962 ; Rhys, 1901, p. 312.

¹²²³ Guyonvarc'h, 1995a, pp. 114-130 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 395-396 ; McNeill, 1962, pp. 311-338 ; Binchy, 1958, pp. 113-138 ; Westropp, 1920, pp. 109-141 ; Nally, 1922.

¹²²⁴ Bettenson & Evans, 2003, pp. 144, 166. The text is given in Chapter 3 in the section on *Segeta*.

¹²²⁵ Lambert, 1987, p. 529.

in bovine shape. This illustrates the importance of breeding animals in ancient times. In addition to the crops, goddesses of fertility protected the growth and well-being of cattle.

From this, it can be induced that the earth-goddesses were invoked throughout the year by the pastoral community in various rites and customs. They certainly had a protective role in the everyday life of the farmers at work as well as at home. Nantosuelta's house-pole emblem for instance points to a significant domestic cult. The offering wells found in the Iron Age sanctuaries, filled in with food and carcasses of domestic and breeding animals, also provide evidence of a cult rendered to chthonian* and agrarian deities. In this case, the cult was surrounded by sacredness and taboos* and left in the hands of the servers of religion, who were allowed to enter the sacred part of the enclosure to make contact with the deities.

Other functions may have been fulfilled by the ground goddesses according to the contexts and places. The fact that inscriptions to Rosmerta and Atesmerta were unearthed near sacred springs must indicate they could preside over curing and be prayed to for benevolence. Furthermore, they may have been sometimes endowed with a funerary role. Nantosuelta's crow attribute could be interpreted as a symbol of death and would thus typify the goddess's funerary dimension. As for Rosmerta, it is not insignificant that inscriptions to her were discovered in tombs or on necropolises. She might have watched over the deceased, accompanied them in their voyage to the otherworld and ensured their sustenance in the afterlife. Finally, the land-goddess clearly achieved a role of sovereign. The royal aspect is exemplified by Ériu, Banba and Fódla, the trio of land-queen-goddesses, who are married to the three Kings of the Tuatha Dé Danann. In addition to embodying and protecting the bear, the Gaulish goddesses Artio ('Bear') and Andarta ('Great Bear') must have symbolized royal powers and functions. As for the Mórrígan, who was originally a land-goddess before being turned into a war-goddess, she bears a name which denotes sovereignty, for it literally means 'Great Queen' or 'Phantom-Queen'. The sovereign role held by the land-goddess involves protection of the territory and of the tribe. Gallo-British epigraphy and Irish mythology are reminiscent of goddesses patronizing a specific part of the territory and presiding over a particular sept*. In their role of protectress, they were then invested with martial attributes and functions and turned into powerful and dreaded war-goddesses.

Chapter 3 Territorial- and War-Goddesses

Introduction

The previous chapters have analyzed the concept of goddesses embodying the earth and various elements of nature: mountains, forests and animals. Nature definitely had a sacred dimension for the Celts, who revered it in the form of gods and goddesses. Those land-goddesses were respected and honoured for ensuring fertility and providing the people with food. Jullian says "it was easy at the beginning to believe that the surface of the earth was shared among a certain amount of domains each with its own god [...]. Towns and other circumscribed areas of land were under the protection of a god".¹²²⁶ Irish mythology indeed indicates that land-goddesses became attached to distinct territories and were revered with different names according to the peoples and places. These 'territorial' goddesses would have been endowed with a potent role of sovereign, representing, protecting and presiding over the tribe, while sustaining its members and guaranteeing prosperity to the province. Is there proof of such territorial- or tribal-goddesses in Britain and on the Continent? In view of Irish mythology what might have their roles been? Which functions may have been attached to them?

Protection of the territory is patently linked to war. It seems that the goddess presiding over the land and the tribe was, at some stage, given martial attributes to protect the territory and its inhabitants against invaders and enemies. In other words, it seems that the land-, territorial- or tribal-goddess was turned into a war-goddess, invoked for her protective and defensive qualities in time of conflict. As will be seen, various goddesses, such as the Irish Mórrígain and the British Brigantia, possess the double aspect of land and protection in their character. They were originally goddesses embodying the landscape and were later attributed significant war-like attributes and pictured protecting their people and territory.

War was a favourite avocation of the Celts, as Strabo explains in his late 1st-century BC or early 1st-century AD *Geography*:

The whole race which is now called both 'Gallic' and 'Galatic' is war-mad, and both high-spirited and quick for battle, although otherwise simple and not ill-mannered. And therefore, if roused, they come together all at once for the struggle, both openly and without circumspection [...]¹²²⁷

War and religion were closely connected. In *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar says "The nation of all the Gauls is extremely devoted to superstitious rites" (*Natio est omnis Gallorum admodum dedita religionibus*), which means that Celtic people had recourse to the gods and religion for every single aspect of their lives: agriculture, home and family, medicine, etc.¹²²⁸ War

¹²²⁶ Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, p. 62.

¹²²⁷ **Book IV, 4, 2.**

¹²²⁸ Book VI, 16.

was surrounded by rites and traditions of various kinds occurring before, during and after the battle, such as the 'armed council' taking place before the fighting, the 'vow' made to a war deity to obtain victory in exchange for which spoils of war would be offered, and the *devotio*, a rite in which a leader appealed to the underground deities and offered his life to have his army saved.¹²²⁹ In short, Gaulish warriors left destiny in the hands of the gods.

The Irish texts tell of powerful and obscure goddesses of war, spreading terror in the hearts of the most valorous warriors, flying around the battlefield in the shape of ravens and eating the flesh of the dead combatants. Did those preternatural ladies take part directly in combat? If not what role in war did they fulfil? As regards Britain and Gaul, is there literary, iconographical, epigraphic or archaeological evidence of beliefs in crow-shaped war-goddesses? In comparison with Ireland, it seems that material providing proof of a cult devoted to protective and martial goddesses in Britain and Gaul is scattered and fragmentary. Considering the Gallo-British archaeological and linguistic data and what Irish mythology tells us, is it possible to reconstruct some myths concerning Celtic divine warrioresses? What was their essence? Which functions might they have embodied and fulfilled?

I) Tribal- or Territorial-Goddesses: Protection and Sovereignty

The Celts lived in large communities or tribes - called *civitates** or *nationes* by the Roman historians - led by a chief, for instance Ambiorix, leader of the Eburones, or Ambigatos, king of the Bituriges. There were around sixty different peoples in Gaul, not counting the unrecorded *septs** and the tribes of Narbonnensis, around twenty in Ireland and about thirty in Britain.¹²³⁰ Those *septs** shared cultural and religious ideas and were linked by economic ties, but they did not form a political entity or a homogenous whole. The tribes lived on a territory delimited by frontiers which were generally natural, such as a river, a forest, a mountain, etc. Gaulish and British epigraphy reveals that names of single goddesses or epithets of *Matres*, *Matronae* are ethnonyms*, i.e. names of tribes, which tends to prove that the Celtic peoples venerated goddesses bearing the name of their *sept**. As noted in Chapter 1, the tradition of 'tribal-goddesses' was also part of the beliefs of the Germanic peoples, for a significant number of *Matres*, *Matronae*, bearing ethnonymic* bynames* are known. For example, the *Matronae Hamavehae* are the Mother Goddesses of the *sept** of the Chamavi the *Matres Kannanefates* of the *Cananefates*; the *Matronae Vanginehae* and the *Matres Vagionae* of the *Vangiones*; the *Matres Suebae* of the *Suebi*; the *Matres Frisavae* of the *Frisiavi*, and the *Matres/Matronae Cantrusteiahae* (*Andrustehiae*) of the *Condrusi*.¹²³¹ What evidence of tribal-goddesses in Britain and Gaul is there, who were they and what were their nature and functions?

A) Gallo-British Ethnonyms*

¹²²⁹ Brunaux, 1986, pp. 101-113.

¹²³⁰ See Fichtl, 2004 and the map of Gaul at the beginning of the 1st c. AD, p. 9 ; Barruol, 1999.

¹²³¹ Neumann, 1987, pp. 111, 116 ; RGA, Band 19, p. 439 ; De Vries, 1931, p. 98 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 425 ; Spickermann, 2002, p. 147 ; Specht, 1937, p. 6.

In the north-east of Gaul, several names of goddesses refer to Celtic and sometimes Germanic tribes. In Bavay, a small town situated between Valenciennes and Maubeuge (Nord), an inscription dedicated to collective goddesses called Nervinae was for instance discovered: *Nervinis C(aius) Iul(ius) Tertius vsIm*, 'To the Nervinae, Caius Iulius Tertius paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹²³² The dedicator bears Latin names and the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. On account of their name and the place of discovery of the dedication, the *Nervinae* may be the eponymous goddesses of the Nervii, one of the most powerful Belgic tribes inhabiting the area between the River Sambre and the River Escault and neighbouring the Eburones, the Atrebates, the Viromandui and the Ambiani.¹²³³

Similarly, an inscription found in Cologne (Germany Inferior) mentions the Matres Remae: *Matrib(us) Remis Bitorius Bellicus*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Remae Bitorius Bellicus'.¹²³⁴ Interestingly, the dedicator bears two Latinized names of Celtic origin: Bitorius, based on *bitu-*, *biti-*, *bito-*, 'world', and Bellicus, derived from *beli-*, *belli-*, *belo-*, *bello-*, 'strong', 'powerful'.¹²³⁵ The Matres Remae have an epithet referring to the name of the tribe of the Remi ('The First Ones', 'The Most Ancient Ones' or 'the Princes' (<* *prei-mo-i*)), who were located in present-day Champagne-Ardenne, in the north-east of France.¹²³⁶ They may thus be understood as the 'Mother Goddesses of the tribe of the Remae'.

The Matres Treverae, venerated in Birten, in the territory of the Cugerni (Germany Inferior), are undoubtedly the Mother Goddesses of the tribe of the Treveri, whose name might mean 'guides', 'directors', that is 'those who help crossing the river, maybe the Moselle'.¹²³⁷ The Treveri were a powerful sept* located in modern-day Luxembourg and its environs. The inscription is the following: *Matribus Treveris T. Paternius Perpetus Cornicular Leg(io) XXX VSLM*, 'To the Matres Treverae, T. Paternius Perpetus Cornicular Legion XXX paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹²³⁸ The dedicator has Latin names and is a soldier in the legion* XXX of the Roman army.

The instance of the Matres Nemetiales, mentioned in an inscription, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, discovered in 1822 in the cemetery of the ancient church of Saint-Jean, in Grenoble (Isère), is less probable but worth mentioning though: *Matris Nemetiali(bus?) Lucretia [...] Q(uinti) Lib(erta) VM*, 'To the Matres Nemetiales (or to the Matres and to Nemetialis) Lucretia [...] freed from Quintus [...] (fig. 1).¹²³⁹ Their epithet could be related to the Nemetes, a tribe probably of Germanic origin, who neighboured the Vangiones and the Triboci in Germania in the first half of the 1st c. BC.¹²⁴⁰ It may also be the case of the goddess Nemetona, honoured in five inscriptions from Trier, in the sanctuary of the Altbachtal: *Mart[ri] et[er] Nem[etona]e] SCPE[re]*, 'To Mars and Nemetona

¹²³² CIL XIII, 3569.

¹²³³ Kruta, 2000, pp. 752-753 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 416.

¹²³⁴ AE 1990, 733 ; RDG, p. 83.

¹²³⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 39, 42, 212-213 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 72, 76-77.

¹²³⁶ Spickermann, 2005, p. 141 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 257 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 793.

¹²³⁷ Spickermann, 2005, p. 141 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 130 ; Duval, 1957, p. 53 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 301 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 416 ; RDG, p. 81 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 844.

¹²³⁸ CIL XIII, 8634.

¹²³⁹ CIL XII, 2221 ; ILN V.2, n° 360 ; CAG, 38/1, L'Isère, 1994, p. 168, n° 371 ; ILG 11.

¹²⁴⁰ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 415-416 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 41 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 751.

[...],¹²⁴¹ *Ne]met[onae (?)*, 'To Nemetona',¹²⁴² in Klein-Winternheim, near Mainz (Germania Superior): *Nemeton(ae) v.s.l.m.*, 'To Nemetona (the dedicator) paid his vow willingly and deservedly';¹²⁴³ in Altrip (Germania Superior): *Marti et Nemetonae Silvini lustus et Dubitatus vsll p(osuerunt)*, 'To Mars and Nemetona Silvinus lustus and Dubitatus paid their vow willingly and deservedly';¹²⁴⁴ and Bath (GB): *Peregrinus Secundi fil(ius) civis Trever Loucetio Marti et Nemetona v.s.l.m.*, 'Peregrinus, son of Secundus, a Treveran, to Loucetius Mars and Nemetona willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow' (fig. 1).¹²⁴⁵ The ethnonym* Nemetes and the divine names or epithets Nemetona and Nemetiales must be derived from Gaulish *nemeton* signifying 'sanctuary' or 'sacred grove'.¹²⁴⁶ The Matres Nemetiales can therefore be understood as 'The Mothers of the Sacred Grove or Enclosure' and Nemetona 'Sacred Grove' or 'Sanctuary'.¹²⁴⁷ The distribution of the dedications to Nemetona and to the Matres Nemetiales - in the dedication from Bath, the dedicator specifies he is from the city of the Treveri - tends to prove that they were the tribal-goddesses of the Nemetes. Nonetheless, the idea of a goddess embodying the *nemeton* ('sanctuary' or 'grove') remains quite possible and should not be dismissed.

As for the Matres/Matronae Senonae, honoured in Metz (Moselle) and Boeckingen (Germany): *Seno(nibus) Matro(nis) coh(ors) I Helvet(iorum) [...] v.s.l.m.*, 'To the Matronae Senonae Cohort I of Helvetia [...] paid the vow willingly and deservedly',¹²⁴⁸ these are etymologically linked to the tribe of the Senones ('The Old Ones', from Gaulish *seno*, 'old'), settled in the present-day region of the Sénonnais (France), that is the départements of Yonne, Aube, Seine-et-Marne and Côte d'Or.¹²⁴⁹ In Gallo-Roman times, Sens, which is reminiscent of their name, was their capital under the name of Agendicum.

¹²⁴¹ F 324.

¹²⁴² N 12.

¹²⁴³ CIL XIII, 7253.

¹²⁴⁴ CIL XIII, 6131.

¹²⁴⁵ RIB 140 was found in the lower of Stall Street, Bath.

¹²⁴⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 233-234 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 37-38 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 53 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 130 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1986, pp. 226-228 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 751-752 ; ILN V.2, p. 66.

¹²⁴⁷ Lambert, 2006, pp. 53, 55.

¹²⁴⁸ The inscription from Metz remains hypothetical, CIL XIII, 4304: *Dis M Senon(u)m Tris et Domin(o) Mer(curio) Cosumi ex iussu Mercur(ii)* ; CIL XIII, 6475.

¹²⁴⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 270-271 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 231 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 289 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 22 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 815.

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Fig. 1: Left: Altar dedicated to Loucetius Mars and Nemetona from Bath (GB). In the Roman Baths Museum. RIB 140. Right: Altar dedicated to the Matres Nemetiales from Grenoble (Isère). In the Musée dauphinois, Grenoble. ILN V.2, n° 360, pp. 65-66.

It is worth noting that the byname* *Mattiaca* given to Diana in the inscription from Wiesbaden (Germany),¹²⁵⁰ may have been either a descriptive epithet of her character, that is Diana 'the Favourable', or of her function Diana the 'Bear', or an ethnonymic* epithet referring the *Mattiaci* ('The Good People?'), a sept* of probably Germanic origin, which inhabited the area of today Wiesbaden, the southern Taunus mountain range and the tract of Wetterau, on the right side of the Rhine, between the tribes of the Cugerni and Chatti.¹²⁵¹ As the dedication was found in Wiesbaden, it is highly likely that this Diana *Mattiaca* is to be understood as the 'Diana belonging to the tribe of the *Mattiaci*', that is the Diana who protects and presides over them.

¹²⁵⁰ CIL XIII, 7565. See Chapter 2.

¹²⁵¹ Olmsted, 1994, p. 430.

As for the *Matronae Gesahenae*, venerated in Roedingen, Bettenhofen, Deutz and Cologne (Germany)¹²⁵² and the *Matronae Gesationum*, mentioned in an inscription from lülich (Germany),¹²⁵³ they might be related to the Gaulish tribe of the Gaesati ('Armed with Spears' or 'Lancers'), who were settled along the Rhône, but this remains a hypothesis.¹²⁵⁴

Similarly, on account of their name, the *Matres Eburnicae*, venerated in Yvours-sur-le-Rhône (Rhône),¹²⁵⁵ may have come from the name of the Eburones, who were settled in the area north of the Ardennes, between the Meuse and the Rhine, north of the *Atuatuci*.¹²⁵⁶ This hypothesis however implies a linguistic transformation *Eburonikā* > *Eburnikā*, and as the inscription was found far away from the area of settlement of the Eburones, it is difficult to affirm that the *Eburnicae* are ethnonymic* goddesses. They are more likely to be understood as devotees of the yew, a tree which, as we have seen, was sacred for the Celts.

In the south-east of Gaul, the *Matronae Veditantiae*, honoured in Cimiez (Nice, Alpes-Maritimes), are 'the Mother Goddesses of the *Vediantii*', a small sept* inhabiting along the coast between the mouth of the River Var and Monaco Bay to the east of Mont-Agel.¹²⁵⁷ The two inscriptions mentioning the Mother Goddesses are the following: *Matronis Veditantiabus P(ublius) Enistalius P(ubli) f(iilius)*, 'To the Mother Goddesses *Veditantiae*, Publius Enistalius, son of Publius' and *[--deab]us Vedia[n]tiabus--*, 'To the Goddesses *Veditantiae*'.¹²⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that the first name of the dedicator, which he took from his Romanized father Publius, is Latin, while his second name *Enistalius* is Celtic.¹²⁵⁹ This is indicative of his attachment to his indigenous roots and cults, all the more since he was from a place which had been under Roman influence for a long time. According to Barruol, those Mother Goddesses are "eponymous of the country and protectresses of its inhabitants".¹²⁶⁰

Another significant example is the goddess *Dex(s)iva*, known from four inscriptions discovered at the location of the 1.5-hectare oppidum* of the *Castellar* in Cadenet (Vaucluse). This oppidum* was occupied from the 2nd c. BC to the 3rd c. AD and is regarded as the siege of the tribe of the *Dexivates*.¹²⁶¹ The first inscription was discovered before 1572 either in Pertuis or in Cadenet and is now lost: *Dexsivae v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) A(ulus) Com(inius) Suc(cessus)*, 'To *Dexsiva*, Aulus Cominius Successus paid his

¹²⁵² CIL XIII, 7889, 7890, 7895, 8491, 8496.

¹²⁵³ Gutenbrunner, 1936, p. 190 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 148 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 143 ; AE 1967, 344: *Matronis Gesationum lul(ia) Ver[i]j f(ilia) Attia vslm*. The name *Attia* is Celtic, see Delamarre, 2007, p. 32, but the significance is unknown.

¹²⁵⁴ See Chapter 1 for more details. Rüger, 1987, p. 30 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 174 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 415 suggests that they are Germanic and could have been the protective Mothers of an unrecorded tribe called the *Gesationes* ; Barruol, 1999, pp. 305-307.

¹²⁵⁵ CIL XIII, 1765 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46. The inscription was discovered near the wall of the garden of the Castle of Yvourt, near Lyon. The stone had been re-used* in the wall of the castle.

¹²⁵⁶ Kruta, 2000, p. 593.

¹²⁵⁷ Barruol, 1999, pp. 365-367. See Chapter 5 for another interpretation of their name.

¹²⁵⁸ CIL V, 7872, 7873 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 130 ; Duval, 1957, p. 53 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 423 and De Vries, 1931, p. 98, thinks they are Mothers presiding over the town *Vediantia* in North Italy.

¹²⁵⁹ *Enistalius* is probably composed of *eni-*, 'in' and *stal-* (?). See Delamarre, 2007, pp. 95, 221, 232 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 163.

¹²⁶⁰ Barruol, 1999, p. 366.

¹²⁶¹ Bretaudeau, 1986, pp. 41-47 ; Oggiano-Bitar, 1996, p. 273 ; CAG, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, pp. 214-217.

vow willingly and deservedly'.¹²⁶² The dedicator bears Latin names and the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. The second inscription, found in 1817 and now lost, was engraved on a plaque in tin or gold with a semi-circular top and two holes reading: *D(onum) d(at) Quartus Mar(ti) securem D(onum) d(at) o(...)* *Dexsive Quartus securem v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Quartus offers an axe to Mars. Quartus offers [...] an axe to Dexasiva' (fig. 2).¹²⁶³ Her association with Mars in this dedication led her to be understood as his partner. This is however unlikely, the association being indirect and different from the usual dedications made to divine couples. According to Benoit, the axe she is offered is a symbol of protection in everyday life as well as in the afterlife.¹²⁶⁴ The third inscription, engraved on a marble plaque, was found in 1773 together with treasure containing two vases in silver, coins, jewels and various objects:¹²⁶⁵ *Dexivae et Caudellensibus C(aius) Helvius Primus sedilia v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Gaius Helvius Primus paid his vow willingly and deservedly to Dexiva and the Caudellenses in offering seats or benches' (fig. 3).¹²⁶⁶ Here Dexiva is honoured with collective deities, called Caudellenses, known by this single inscription, who are, in the words of Barraol, domestic goddesses "eponymous of a habitat".¹²⁶⁷ The fact that the dedicator offers seats or benches to the goddesses indicates the existence of a temple dedicated to them on the hill of the Castellar, for such benches were set up for the pilgrims to rest when they went to the temple to pray.¹²⁶⁸ The last inscription, probably dating from the 1st or 2nd c., is engraved on a damaged altar: *[D]exivae v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) [.]JORARP[.]*, 'To Dexiva (...) paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 2).¹²⁶⁹ As Barraol argues, the goddess Dexiva is definitely to be related to the tribe of the Dexivates or Dexivates, mentioned by Pliny in *Natural History*, who inhabited the area between the Lubéron and the river Durance and had a sanctuary on the oppidum* of the Castellar.¹²⁷⁰ In addition to the similarity in names, the inscriptions were all discovered on this site, which tends to prove that Dexiva was the protectress of this sept* and of their city. The name of the Dexivates and Dexiva may denote good fortune. They are based on an adjective *deksiuo*-meaning 'southwards' and 'on the right, favourable' in Celtic. According to Delamarre, Dexiva is 'the one who is southwards or on the right', i.e. 'The Favourable One'.¹²⁷¹

¹²⁶² *ILN*, III, n°220, pp. 285-286 ; *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, p. 222 ; *RE*, vol. 3, p. 465.

¹²⁶³ *ILN*, III, n°221, pp. 286-287 ; *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, p. 214 and fig. 218.

¹²⁶⁴ Benoit, 1959, pp. 66, 131, note 28.

¹²⁶⁵ Three descriptions of the content of this treasure are known, one of which is by Calvet, Cl.-E., 1774, ms. 5617, lettre 617.

See *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, pp. 216-217 for the reproduction of those three descriptions.

¹²⁶⁶ *ILN*, III, n°222, pp. 287-288 ; *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, pp. 222-223 and fig. 219 ; Barraol, 1999, p. 204, n°3 ; *RE*, vol. 3, pp. 465-466.

¹²⁶⁷ Barraol, 1999, p. 204, n°3.

¹²⁶⁸ *ILN*, III, p. 288 ; Ihm, 1887, p. 52.

¹²⁶⁹ *AE* 1992, 1170 ; *ILN*, III, n°223, pp. 288-289 ; *CAG*, 84.2, *Le Lubéron et Pays d'Apt*, 2004, p. 222 and fig. 226 ; Barraol, 1999, p. 204, n°3 ; Gascoü, 1994, p. 210 specifies that the end of the inscription might be understood as *[C]or(nelius ?) Arp[.]*. The cognomen* of the dedicator could be *Arpocra*, *Arpocrates*, *Arpocratianus*, etc.

¹²⁷⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 3, 34 ; Barraol, 1961, pp. 3-35 ; Barraol, 1999, pp. 203-206.

¹²⁷¹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 143 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 33.



Fig. 2: Left: Inscription offered by Quartus to the goddess Dexasiva, eponymous of the tribe of the Dexivates, discovered on the oppidum* of the Castellar, in Cadenet (Vaucluse). Right: Mutilated altar dedicated to Dexiva. Both are housed in the Musée Borely de Marseilles. ILN, III, n°221, 223.



Fig. 3: Inscription offered by Gaius Helvius Primus to Dexiva, from Cadenet (Vaucluse). In the Musée Borely de Marseilles. ILN, III, n°222.

The most illustrious example of a 'tribal-goddess' is certainly Brigantia, who, as her name indicates, is the eponymous goddess of the powerful tribe of the Brigantes. The fact that the seven inscriptions dedicated to her were discovered in the region inhabited by the Brigantes confirms that theory.¹²⁷² The inscriptions were indeed found in South West Yorkshire and in the area of Hadrian's Wall and Ptolemy and Tacitus record that the Brigantes were situated in present-day Yorkshire and Northumbria.¹²⁷³ Ó hÓgáin argues that the Brigantes might originally have been a branch of the Ebuovices and took on a new name when they settled in the area of the Pennines, for their stronghold was called Eburakon (York).¹²⁷⁴ It is also interesting to note that a mountain sept*, located in the Alps, in the present-day Briançonnais, bore the name of Brigianii.¹²⁷⁵ Their name could indicate

¹²⁷² See Chapter 2 and the section on *Brigantia* in this chapter for more details.

¹²⁷³ Ptolemy, *Geography*, II, 3 ; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 17 & *Annales*, XII, 32 & *Histoire*, III, 45.

¹²⁷⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, p. 15.

¹²⁷⁵ Barruol, 1999, pp. 338-340.

that they had blood ties with the Brigantes,¹²⁷⁶ but it is more probably redolent of their mountain location, *brig-* referring to highness. Around 50 AD, the King of the Brigantes, Venutius, rebelled against the Roman invaders with a part of his people, while his wife, Queen Cartimandua, became allied with them. The Brigantes were eventually subjected to Roman authority by Petilius Cerialis between 71 and 74 AD.¹²⁷⁷ The seven inscriptions dedicated to Brigantia are from around the end of the 2nd c. AD to the beginning of the 3rd c. AD, when the cult of this goddess was officially encouraged by the Romans (Severan Dynasty).¹²⁷⁸ As we saw in Chapter 2, Brigantia is etymologically linked to Irish Brigit, which is not insignificant. The name and cult of this goddess may have been brought to Ireland by members of the Brigantes tribe, who crossed the sea to find new lands, probably already in Celtic times, and around the 1st c. AD, to escape from the Roman invasion and influence.¹²⁷⁹ This is very likely, for Ptolemy, in his *Geography*, mentions a tribe of this name in South Wexford.¹²⁸⁰ According to Ó hÓgáin, the septs* of the Lagini, situated in the east-centre of Ireland, and the Barreki, settled in the south-east, contained offshoots of the Brigantes.¹²⁸¹

From this, it follows that there are many examples of goddess eponymous of tribes in Britain and Gaul, the largest group coming from the north-east and south-east of Gaul. Dexiva of the Dexivates and Brigantia of the Brigantes are substantial instances of such cult. Apart from Brigantia, whose functions can be deduced from her equation with Roman goddesses and her iconography, the essence, attributes and roles of those Gaulish 'tribal' goddesses remain unclear, for they are known only by epigraphic evidence. The study of the Irish territorial-goddesses, patronesses respectively of a region and of a tribe, may cast new light on that question. They could be taken as an illustration and could give an interesting perspective to the subject.

B) Irish Sovereigns

1) Mythological accounts

Irish mythology illustrates that each province of Ireland, ruled by different peoples, was represented and presided over by a distinctive goddess: Medb Lethderg of the Laighin reigned over Leinster, Medb Cruachan of the Connachta protected Connacht, Macha of the Ulaid was the patroness of Ulster and Mór Muman of the Érainn ruled over Munster. In the various accounts which relate their adventures they are described as acceding to the throne or coupling with kings, which is evocative of their aspect of sovereignty. The figures of Medb Lethderg and Medb Cruachan and their legends will be studied and in detail in Chapter 5.

Medb Lethderg ('Half-Red') presided over the province of Laighin (Leinster), which got its appellation from the name of the sept* of the Laighin, whose name derives from the Celtic

¹²⁷⁶ Olmsted, 1994, p. 360 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2002, p. 174.

¹²⁷⁷ Kruta, 2000, p. 496 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 181-184.

¹²⁷⁸ Joliffe, 1941, pp. 41, 48 ; Miller, 1937, p. 208-209. The Severan Dynasty (193-235) is composed of the Emperors Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus.

¹²⁷⁹ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 193, 195 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 50 ; Joliffe, 1941, p. 37 ; Macalister, 1928, p. 17.

¹²⁸⁰ Ptolemy, *Geography*, II, 2, 6.

¹²⁸¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 193, 195 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 305.

lagini, 'lance-men', or *leiquni*, 'casters'.¹²⁸² The Laighin was an alliance of several tribes, probably originating from Brittany and Britain, who gradually settled in present-day Leinster and parts of Connacht, from the end of the Bronze Age. The Laighin included among them branches of the Brigantes, arriving from Britain in or around the 1st c. AD, of the Gaileoin ('javelin-jumpers', from *gaiso-lingi*),¹²⁸³ of the Bairrche (Celtic Barreki) and of the Domhnainn (Celtic Dumnoni). They merged with the Érainn people and seized Teamhair (Tara) from them around the 2nd c. AD, but lost it to the Connachta two centuries later.¹²⁸⁴ Medb Lethderg presided over the celebrated royal site of Teamhair, the remains of which - a complex of forty monuments - were excavated on the hill overhanging the River Boyne between Navan and Dunshaughlin in Co. Meath (fig. 4).¹²⁸⁵ The accounts insist on the impressive number of husbands she had and her role of sovereign. The *Book of Leinster* indeed indicates that she successively granted sovereignty to Cú Corb, Feidlimid Rechtaid, Art, and Cormarc Mac Airt by marrying them.¹²⁸⁶

As for Medh Cruachan ('Red-Skinned'), she is most certainly an emanation of Medb Lethderg and is also an emblematic figure of sovereignty.¹²⁸⁷ An early 10th-century AD text, entitled *Cath Boinde* ['The Battle of the Boyne'], recounts that she inherited the throne of Cruachain from her father and that she successively married five husbands: Conchobhar of Ulster, Fidech mac Féice, Tindi mac Con, Eochaid Dála and Ailill mac Máta.¹²⁸⁸ The sept* of the Connachta, whose name signifies 'Descendants of Conn', took control of Teamhair (Tara) from the Laighin people in or about 400 AD.¹²⁸⁹ They then destroyed Eamhain Mhacha, the royal centre of the Ulaid and settled in various parts of Ulster. A branch of the powerful Connachta took possession of the south-west province, originally called Ól nÉacmacht, which was from that time on called after them. In view of this information, it is clear that the cult of Medb, which was originally attached to Teamhair (Tara) and the Laighin, was adopted by the Connachta when they seized Teamhair. They brought her cult to Ulster, where groups of them settled after fighting the Ulaid. At this time, her worship was associated with that of the mythical Ulster king Fergus ('Virility') mac Róich ('Son of Great Stallion'), who abandoned and fought against his own people for the love of Queen Medb in an abstruse 7th-century text entitled *Conailla Medb Míchuru* ['Medb enjoined Evil Contracts'] and in the later epic story *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'].¹²⁹⁰ When the Connachta settled in the south-west, probably around 600 AD, Medb was attached to Cruachain, their great fortress. The archaeological site of this fortress is at Rath Chrúachain (Rathcroghan), an impressive Iron Age mound belonging to a complex of around forty-nine monuments, situated to the north-west of the village of Tulsk, in the north of Co. Roscommon (fig.

¹²⁸² Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 305-306 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 146, 246-247, 291.

¹²⁸³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 174: *gaiso*- 'javelin' & p. 203: *ling*- 'to jump'.

¹²⁸⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 163-165.

¹²⁸⁵ Raftery, 2006, pp. 63-68 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 833-834.

¹²⁸⁶ Ó Máille, 1928, pp. 137-138 refers to the *Book of Leinster* (LL) 380 a 53.

¹²⁸⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 340 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 327.

¹²⁸⁸ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 131 ; O'Neill, 1905, pp. 178-179, 182-185.

¹²⁸⁹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 118-119 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 165-171 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 102. For information about the king *Conn Céadchathach* (earlier *Cond Cétchathach*), i.e. 'wise leader of the hundred battles', see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 115-118.

¹²⁹⁰ Carney, 1971, pp. 73-80 ; Henry, 1997, pp. 56-64 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 217- 219, 340.

4).¹²⁹¹ In *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], Cruachain is the stronghold of Queen Medb and her husband Ailill. The legend recounts the raid launched by Medb on the Ulstermen to obtain the great bull of Cooley and echoes the war which occurred between the Connachta and the Ulaid. Medb Cruachan is therefore regarded as the tutelary goddess of the Connachta, who presided over their territory: the province of Connacht.

As regards the goddess Macha, she is associated with the sacral centre of the Ulaid in Ulster which bears her name: Eamhain Mhacha. It corresponds to the huge Late Bronze Age - Iron Age hill-fort, known today as 'Navan Fort', excavated five kilometres to the west of Armagh, in Co. Armagh (fig. 4).¹²⁹² According to Ó hÓgáin, the hill fort, initially called in prehistoric Ireland by the Celtic name **Isomnion*, became known as Eamhain Mhacha, on account of the sacredness of the land surrounding the hill fort - the 'plain', *macha* in Irish, was deified as a goddess.¹²⁹³ Macha being several times equated with the Mórrígain, whose character is very ancient, one can suppose that Macha supplanted the Mórrígain in her role of land-goddess of sovereignty in Ulster.¹²⁹⁴ A later legend relates that Macha was the daughter of Aed Rúad, who, with Cimbáeth and Díthorba, successively ruled over Ireland for seven years each.¹²⁹⁵ After the death of Aed, Macha Mong Rúad ('Red-Haired'), fought for the queenship, which she eventually obtained. She then defeated the five sons of Díthorba, who claimed the throne after their father's death, and married her rival Cimbáeth so as to command his soldiers. To secure her place as Queen, she tricked the sons of Díthorba by turning herself into a leper and bringing them one by one into a forest where she tied them up instead of coupling with them. Reduced to servility, they erected the famous fortress (*ráth*) Eamhain Mhacha in her honour, which became the capital of the Ulaid (from Celtic **Ulati*).

Finally, the goddess Mór Muman ('the Great Nurtress') is believed to have been the patroness of Munster. The province, originally Mumu and later Mumhain, is called after her. From her epithet Mór ('great'), which particularizes the earliest land-goddesses (for instance the Mórrígain), one can infer that her cult is quite ancient and must have emanated with the Érainn people inhabiting the region. She was later given another name, Mughha or Mughain, signifying 'female servant', which actually had nothing to do with her. This confusion must correspond to the time when the power of the Érainn was eclipsed by the Eóganacht ('people of Eógan'), who controlled the south of Ireland from the 5th c. AD to the 12th c.¹²⁹⁶ The eponymous ancestor of this sept*, Eógan, was a derivative of Celtic **Ivo-genos*, meaning 'by the yew conceived'. The Eóganacht adopted and developed her cult by associating her with some of their historical kings.

A 10th-century text features Mór Muman as an early 7th-century historical Queen who married two great kings of the tribe of the Eóganacht ruling over Munster. Here is an example of the recurring pattern of the territorial goddess marrying the reigning king.¹²⁹⁷ The legend, entitled *Mór Muman Ocus Aided Cuanach Meic Ailchine* ['Mór of Munster and the Tragic Fate of Cuanu Son of Cailchin'], relates that Mór Muman was the daughter of Aed Bennáin,

¹²⁹¹ Raftery, 2006, pp. 68-70 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 790.

¹²⁹² Raftery, 2006, pp. 73-78 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 748-750 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 171-177.

¹²⁹³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 325-327.

¹²⁹⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 325.

¹²⁹⁵ Best, Bergin and O'Brien, 1954, pp. 79-85 ; Dumézil, 1954, pp. 9-11 gives a French translation of the text.

¹²⁹⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 202-204 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 189.

¹²⁹⁷ Mac Cana, 1955-1956, pp. 78-85 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 162.

King of Loch Léin (Lake Killarney) - the stronghold of a branch of the Eóganacht.¹²⁹⁸ After being asked in marriage by several kings, Mór Muman started hearing voices warning her of her future woes. Turning mad, she decided to leave the fortress of her father and wandered for two years around Ireland. When she arrived at Caiseal (Cashel, Co. Tipperary) - one of the original strongholds of the Eóganacht sept*, situated on a huge rock, and set up by the mythical Conall Corc after he had seen a yew tree appear there -¹²⁹⁹ she had become an ugly woman dressed in rags. She yet managed to lie with the king of Munster, Fíngéin mac Áeda. She took the Queen's place and bore Fíngéin a son, called Sechnasach. After the death of Fíngéin, Mór Muman went to Cathal mac Finnguine, the king of Glendmain (north-east Cork), where her sister Ruithchern was held in captivity, and they together mourned for Fíngéin. In this text, Cathal mac Finnguine, who ruled over Munster from 721 to 742 AD, is confused with his great-grand father, Cathal mac Aodha, the actual successor of Fíngéin mac Áeda when Fíngéin died in 619 AD.¹³⁰⁰ Mór Muman then entrusted her sister to the care of Lonán mac Findech, who decided to bring her back to her people, the sons of Aed Bennáin. On their way, they were attacked by Cuanu mac Cailchin, King of Fer Maige Féne at Loch Liathmhuine (a place situated in the parish of Kilgullane, Barony of Fermoy, Co. Cork),¹³⁰¹ and Ruithchern was abducted. When Lonán returned to Loch Léin without Ruithchern, the sons of Aed Bennáin proclaimed war upon the sons of Cathal for not being capable of protecting her. In the course of the battle, Lonán mac Findech, seeking revenge for his wife, beheaded Cuanu mac Cailchin.

2) Folk survivals

The character of Mór Muman endured in various folk accounts, particularly in County Kerry, and her character of sovereignty over the territory survived in several other preternatural ladies who were later attached to specific parts of the land of the province of Munster. Clidna, whose name means 'the Territorial One', is associated with Cúan Dor, the bay of Glandore, in Co. Cork, where she was said to have drowned (fig. 4).¹³⁰² Her dwelling is believed to be situated under a rock called Carraig Chliona in the parish of Kilshannig, to the south of Mallow, in Co. Cork. Through oral lore, her cult extended to the whole of Munster and she became one of the most important and famous otherworld patronesses of the province. As her name indicates, Cailleach Bhéarra ('the Hag of Beara'), also called Boí ('Cow') or the *sentainne* ('old woman') of Beara, is related to the Beara Peninsula, located between Bantry Bay and the Kenmare estuary, in the west of Co. Cork (fig. 4).¹³⁰³ In literature and folklore, Cailleach Bhéarra is generally featured as an old and sinister woman, representing the dark side of the land-goddess. She is clearly associated with the land, agriculture and harvest time, configuring the landscape with her fingers and bringing prosperity to the province.¹³⁰⁴

¹²⁹⁸ O'Nolan, 1912, pp. 261-282 ; The two texts published by Mac Eoin, 1978, pp. 63-82, which also recount the story of Mór Muman and her sister Suithchern, with variants in the king names, is not studied here, because the texts, dating from the 14th - 15th c., are too late to be taken into account.

¹²⁹⁹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 202-203

¹³⁰⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 67-68 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 81.

¹³⁰¹ O'Nolan, 1912, p. 274.

¹³⁰² Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 85-86 ; Green, 1992a, p. 62 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 90-91. See Chapter 4 for more details.

¹³⁰³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 58-60 ; Chalendon, 1994, pp. 306-308 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 68-70.

¹³⁰⁴ Hull, 1928, pp. 51-52.

Her aspect of sovereignty is reflected in an 8th-century or early 9th-century poem, entitled 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare', relating she had drunk mead and mated with the kings of Ireland in her youth (see Chapter 5).¹³⁰⁵ In Scottish folklore, she is known as Cailleach Bheur ('the Genteel Old Woman'), and her counterpart is Cailleach Beinne Bric ('the Old Woman of Speckled Mountain'). Moreover, she has some connections with Scottish winter spirits also represented as hags, such as Cailleach Uragaig ('Old Woman of Uragag') of the Isle of Colonsay (Strathclyde), and Caillagh ny Groamagh ('Old Woman of Gloominess'). There was a similar hag called Caillagh ny Gueshag ('Old Woman of the Spells') on the Isle of Man.¹³⁰⁶

The fairy lady Aoibheall ('Sparkling' or 'Bright'), who is studied later in this chapter, presided over the territory of east Co. Clare and north-west of Co. Tipperary and protected the sept* of the Dál gCais (O'Briens), who had a stronghold built on the rock Craig Liath (Craglea, near Killaloe, Co. Clare) in the 6th c. AD (fig. 4).¹³⁰⁷ The legends make this promontory the dwelling of Aoibheall. Finally, the fairy lady Áine, whose name signifies 'Brightness', 'Glow' or 'Lustre', is specifically attached to Cnoc Áine (Knockainey), a hill located near Lough Gur in east Co. Limerick (fig. 4).¹³⁰⁸ She was one of the patronesses of the tribe of the Eóganacht. She is either identified as the daughter of the sea god Manannán mac Lir,¹³⁰⁹ or as the daughter of the fairy king Eógabal.¹³¹⁰ She is generally described as a beautiful radiant fairy lady, as in the poem entitled *Bend Etair*, published in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, which relates that Etar pined for her and died of a broken heart when he was rejected.¹³¹¹ Áine's territorial and sovereign aspect is clearly emphasized in a passage of an 8th-century text, entitled *Cath Maige Mucreama* ['The Battle of Mag Mucreama'].¹³¹² The legend recounts that Ailill, after falling asleep twice at Samhain on Cnoc Áine, wondered who had stripped the grass of the hill during the night and came to inspect the mount with the help of Fearcheas mac Comáin, a seer-poet.¹³¹³ They discovered that fairy people inhabited the hill: the king Eógabal and his daughter Áine. Fearcheas murdered Eógabal and Ailill abused the girl, who cursed him for misconduct. From that time on, the name of Áine was given to the hill.¹³¹⁴ The text as we have it from the 8th c. goes as follows:

¹³⁰⁵ Murphy, 1953a, pp. 83-109 ; Radner, 1974, pp. 75-81.

¹³⁰⁶ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 69-70.

¹³⁰⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 20.

¹³⁰⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 7-8 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 10 ; Hogan, 1910, p. 272 ; O'Rahilly, pp. 286-290 ; Hull, 1928, pp. 50-51.

¹³⁰⁹ Stokes & Windisch, 1891, vol. 3.1, p. 83: *Áine ingen manandain mac lir in la roleg a fer totaetsi anniar armucheannsa combimsea thiar inatigh seach gach teg*, "Áine daughter of Manannán mac Lir, on the day that she left her husband, she came from the west to meet me, so that I was in the west in her house, rather than in any other house." (12th-century poem)

¹³¹⁰ In the 12th-century text *Acallamh na Senórach* ['The Colloquy of the Old Men'], she is the daughter of Eoghabhal and falls in love with Manannán mac Lir. See Stokes, 1900, pp. 104-105 ; O'Grady, 1892, pp. 196-197. The name *Eógabal* has the same root as *Eógan* (indicating the yew-tree as a form of the sept's mythical ancestor or god). In later form, *Eógan* is written *Eoghan*, and *Eógabal* (or *Eógabul*) as *Eoghabhal*.

¹³¹¹ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 114-115, 499.

¹³¹² Ó Daly, 1975, pp. 38-39.

¹³¹³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 6-7 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 9.

¹³¹⁴ In another late text, dating from the 13th or 14th c., the fairy lady explains that she gives her name to the hill. O'Grady, 1892, pp. 575-576: *'ingébatsa' ar Ainne fhionn 'na cúig catha do bar cionn ; is sloinnter uaim in cnoc cain re ré shil Eba is Adaim !'*,

Luid Ailill íarum aidchi shamna do [fh]recaire a ech i nÁne Chlíach. Dérgíther dó is' tilaig. Ro lommad in tilach in n-aidchi-sin 7 ni fes cíá ros lomm. Fecht fo dí dó fon inna[s]-sin. Ba ingnad les-seom. Foídis techta úad co Ferches mac Commáin éices ro baí i mMairg Lagen. Fáith side 7 fhénnid. Do-lluid-side dia acallaim. Tíagait a ndiis aidchi shamna issin tilaig. Anaid Ailill is' tilaig. Baí Ferches frie anechtair. Do-fuitt didiu cotlud for Ailill ic costecht fri fogilt na cethrae. Do-llotar asint síd 7 Éogabul mac Durgabuil rí int sída ina ndíaid 7 Áne ingen Éogabuil 7 timpán créda ina láim oca seinm dó ara bélaib. At-raig dó in Ferches co toba(i)rt buille dó. Ro ráith Éogabul reme issa síd. Atn-úarat Ferches dí gaí mór co rroemid a druim triit. In tan donn-áinic co Ailill cond-ráinic-side frisin n-ingin. Eret ro buí i ssuidiu ro den in ben a ó cona farcaib féoil na crocand fair connáro ássair fair ríam ónd úair-sin. Conid Ailill Ó-lomm a ainm ó sein. 'Olc ro bábair frim', ar ind Áne, 'mo sárugud 7 marbad m'athar. Not sáraigiub-sa ind .i. nocon fháicéb-sa athgabáil latt in tan immo-scéram'. Ainm na ingine-sin fil forin tilaig, .i. Áne Chlíach. Ailill went then one Samhain night to attend to his horses on Áne Chlíach. A bed is made for him on the hill. That night the hill was stripped bare and it was not known who had stripped it. So it happened to him twice. He wondered at it. He sent off messengers to Ferches the poet son of Commán who was in Mairg of Leinster. He was a seer and a warrior. He came to speak to him. Both go one Samhain night to the hill. Ailill remains on the hill. Ferches was aside from it. Sleep then comes to Ailill while listening to the grazing of the beasts. They came out of the fairy mound with Éogabul son of Durgabul king of the fairy mound after them and Áne daughter of Éogabul with a bronze timpán in her hand playing before him. Ferches rises up to meet him and struck him. Éogabul ran on into the fairy mound. Ferches attacks him with a great spear so that his brack broke when he reached the fairy mound. Ailill had intercourse with the girl. While he was so engaged the woman sucked his ear so that she left neither flesh nor skin on it and none ever grew on it from that time. So that Ailill Bare-ear is his name since then. 'You have been wicked to me', said Áne, '[in] violating me and slaying my father. I will cause great injury to you for it. I will leave no property in your possession when we part'. That girl's name is on the hill, that is, Áne Chlíach.¹³¹⁵

The form of the relationship between Ailill and Áine – rape rather than marriage – reflects a hostile twist to the tradition, and properly the lore must have been that Ailill became the husband of the land-goddess Áine. Because of this connection with Ailill Ólom, the mythical king of the Eóganacht, Áine became viewed as the ancestress of the sept*, and because of her relation with the territory of this tribe, she is clearly an emanation of the ancient Munster land-territorial goddess of sovereignty. Her name cannot however be etymologically related to the name of the land-goddess Ana, as Eleanor Hull stipulates in *Folklore of the British Isles*.¹³¹⁶

"Said fair-haired Aine: 'of those five battalions stress I will relieve you, and for all duration of Eve's seed and Adam's let the charming hill have its name from me.'"

¹³¹⁵ Ó Daly, 1975, pp. 38-39.

¹³¹⁶ Hull, 1928, p. 51 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 10, 16.

The Irish mythological and folk legends thus reflect several aspects of early tradition. First of all, it is clear that each tribe worshipped particular goddesses embodying the land where they had settled. Each province of Ireland, ruled by different peoples, became represented by a distinctive goddess: Medb Lethderg presided over Leinster, the land of the Laighin, Medb Cruachan ruled Connaght and the Connachta, Macha (the Mórrígain) protected Ulster and the Ulaid and Mór Muman, the patroness of the Érainn, guarded over Munster. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, those goddesses clearly have land and agrarian aspects: Macha is the 'Field', Mór Muman is the 'Great Nurturer', etc. They are all emanations of the primary goddess embodying the land and bringing fertility, prosperity and wealth to the people. Becoming attached to certain parts of the territory, inhabited by septs* of different origins, the earth-goddess took on different names and various functions were attributed to her.

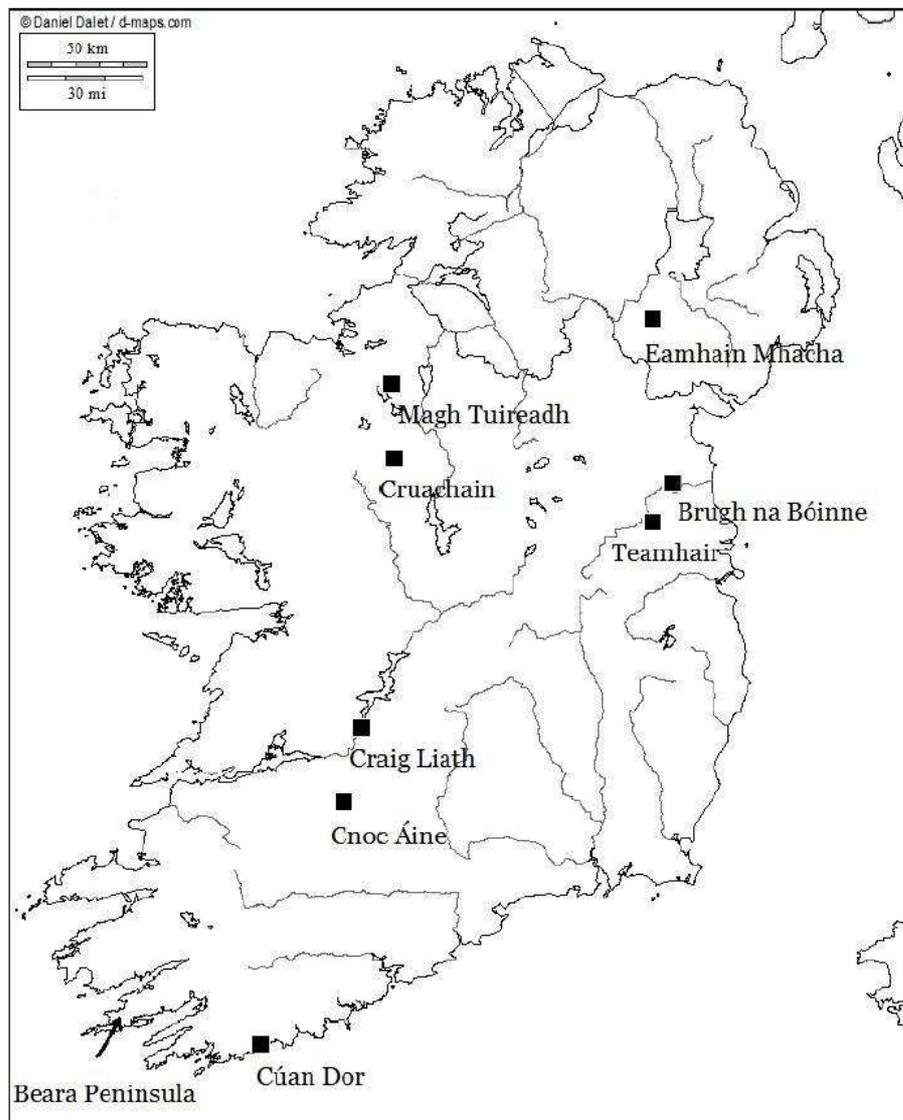


Fig. 4: Map of mythical sites in Ireland relating to Territorial-Goddesses. (Source: N. Beck).

What emerges from the legends is the role of sovereignty pertaining to the territorial or tribal-goddesses. As her title proves, Queen Medb, who subdues kings and heroes, is

the sovereign par excellence. The accounts of Medb Lethderg, Medb Cruachan, Macha and Mór Muman are reminiscent of the archaic belief of the land-goddess mating with the sky-father god, illustrated by the legend recounted in *Cath Maige Tuired* of the Dagda ('Good God') and the Mórrígain ('Great Queen'), who couple at the ford of the river Uinsinn, in Co. Sligo, right before the beginning of the mythical battle between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomhoire: Medb Lethderg, Medb Cruachan, Macha and Mór Muman clearly accede to the sovereignty of the territory by coupling with the reigning kings. The text is the following:

Boí tegdas den Dagdae a nGlionn Edin antúaithe. Baí dano bandál forsín Dagdae dia bliadhnaehimon Samain an catha oc Glind Edind. Gongair an Unius la Connachta fria andes. Co n-acu an mnaí a n-Unnes a Corand og nide, indarna cos dí fri Allod Echae (.i. Echuinech) fri husci andes aole fri Loscondoib fri husce antúaithe. Noí trillsi taitbechtaí for a ciond. Agoillis an Dagdae hí 7 dogniád óentaich. Lige ina Lánomhnou a ainm an baile ó sin. Is hí an Morrígan an bhen-sin isberur sunn. The Dagda had a house in Glen Edin in the north, and he had arranged to meet a woman in Glen Edin a year from that day, near the All Hallows of the battle. The Unshin of Connacht roars to the south of it. He saw the woman at the Unshin in Corann, washing, with one of her feet at Allod Echae (i.e. Aghanagh) south of the water and the other at Lisconny north of the water. There were nine loosened tresses on her head. The Dagda spoke with her, and they united. 'The Bed of the Couple' was the name of that place from that time on. (The woman mentioned here is the Mórrígain.¹³¹⁷

The evidence in Gaul and Britain of goddesses bearing ethnonyms* or names of tribes, such as Brigantia of the Brigantes, Dexiva of the Dexivates, the Matres Treverae of the Treveri, the Nervinae of the Nervinii, the Matres Remae of the Remi, the Matres Senonae of the Senones, the Matronae Vediantiae of the the Vediantii, prove that the worship of tribal-goddesses was part of the religious beliefs of the Celts. The Irish territorial-goddesses are not eponymous of the sept* they represent, but their stories shed light on the possible nature and functions of the Gallo-British tribal-goddesses. As primary land and agrarian goddesses, they ensure prosperity to the province and its inhabitants. As representatives of the tribe, they preside and rule over the territory and people; a sovereign role which leads to a significant function of protection and defence of the land. The Irish mythological legends indeed evoke the pronounced war-like character of the territorial/tribal-goddesses. Thus, Macha rises up in arms and fiercely fights to gain queenship, while Medb declares war on the Ulstermen to obtain the great bull of Cooley. Furthermore, Medb Lethderg ('Half-Red'), Medb Cruachan ('Bloody Red') and Macha Mong Ruad ('Red-Haired') bear epithets referring to the colour red, which symbolises blood and war, as Dumézil points out: "red was the colour of war and warriors for the Celts, as well as in Rome and in India".¹³¹⁸ Those epithets are accordingly redolent of the bloody contests which occurred to obtain the power of a province.

In addition to her function of sustenance, the goddess presiding over the land and the tribe was given regal and martial attributes, conveying protection of the territory and its inhabitants. This role is clearly illustrated by the British goddess Brigantia, tutelary goddess of the Brigantes, who is portrayed with helmet and spear on a relief* from Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland),¹³¹⁹ and equated with the Romanized goddess Caelestis, to whom

¹³¹⁷ Gray, 1982, pp. 44-45, § 84.

¹³¹⁸ Dumézil, 1954, p. 11.

¹³¹⁹ RIB 2091.

was attributed protective functions of the city, and the Roman goddess of war Victory in three inscriptions from Corbridge and Yorkshire (see below).¹³²⁰ The land-goddess was thus turned into a war-goddess when protection was needed in time of conflict.

II) Irish War-Goddesses: Gallo-British Counterparts?

War-goddesses have a very important place in Irish mythology. They are generally three in number and are featured as strong, powerful and horrific creatures, personifying violence, carnage and death occurring on the battlefield. The trio varies from one legend to another, but it is usually composed of the Mórrígain ('Phantom Queen' or 'Great Queen'), Badb ('Crow') and Nemain ('Battle-Fury', 'War-Frenzy' or 'Panic').¹³²¹ The latter is sometimes replaced by Macha ('Field') or Fea ('Everything Most Hateful').¹³²² In the *Battle of Magh Rath*, Nemain is called Bé Neit, that is 'the Wife of the Warrior', because Nemain and Fea are said to be the wives of Nét ('Leader'), who is described as a god of war in the 9th-century *Sanas Cormaic*.¹³²³ The Mórrígain is undoubtedly the primary character of the trio: the others being replications of her. A text indeed explains that *Badhbh, Macha ocus Mórrígain inna téora Mórrígnae*, that is "Badb, Macha and Mórrígain are the three Mórrígnae".¹³²⁴ This reference obviously indicates that the Mórrígain is the original entity, who could be turned into a triple goddess possessing various facets, names and forms.

Before analyzing the essence, attributes and functions of the Irish war-goddesses, it is important to investigate whether their names can be found in the Gallo-British epigraphy. Despite the gap in time and sources, is it possible to establish etymological correspondences which would evidence that an ancient cult dedicated to war-goddesses was shared by the populations from Ireland and from the Continent?

A) Divine Crows of War: *Badb, Cathubodua* and *Cassibodua*

The name of the crow-shaped war-goddess Badb, later Badhbh, derives from Celtic *boduos, bodua*, which must originally have had a connotation of fury, rage and violence and signified 'fight'.¹³²⁵ As Lambert argues, it may be derived from **bhu-dh-wâ*, a participial formation in *-wo-*, *-wâ*, coming from the verbal theme **bheu-dh-* meaning 'to inform', 'to warn', 'to awaken'.¹³²⁶ Badb would thus mean the 'presage' or the 'prediction'. This theory is interesting, for the war-goddess clearly fulfils a role of prophetess and harbinger of death. Furthermore, the apparition of a crow is viewed in Irish mythological and folk traditions as a bad omen, foreshadowing disaster or death. The word *bodb* later evolved with the meaning

¹³²⁰ RIB 1131, 627, 628.

¹³²¹ Mac Cana, 1970, p. 86 ; Sterckx, 2000, p. 71 ; Le Roux, 1983, pp. 111-113. Le Roux's translation of *Nemain* as 'Sacred' - because of its similarity with the Gaulish goddess *Nemetona*, whose name signifies 'sacred wood' - is inaccurate and irrelevant.

¹³²² Hennessy, 1870, p. 35.

¹³²³ *Nét* from Celtic *netos* 'leader'. Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 363, 374 ; O'Donovan, 1842, p. 241 ; Meyer, 1912, p. 82.

¹³²⁴ MS. H. 3. 18 Trinity College, Dublin, p. 82, col. 2 ; Hennessy, 1870, p. 36.

¹³²⁵ Delamarre, 2003, p. 81 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 26 ; Hennessy, 1870, p. 33.

¹³²⁶ Lambert, 2006, p. 56.

of 'raven', 'crow' or 'fighting lady' because the war-goddess was represented in such a shape. As *Badb* appears in time of war and hovers over the carnage of the battlefield, she is often given the epithet of *Cath* which means 'battle' in Irish and is cognate with Welsh *cad*, Old Breton *cat* and Gaulish *catu*, 'battle'.¹³²⁷ The *Cath-Bhadhbh* or later *Badb Catha* is thus the 'Battle Crow'. The Irish *Cath-Bhadhbh* indeed would linguistically go directly back to a Celtic **Catu-bodua*.

It is of great significance to find the exact same name in an inscription from the south-east of Gaul, discovered in a field called 'Vers Fan', at a place known as Les Fins de Ley, in the hamlet Ley, near Mieussy (Haute-Savoie) in 1860: *[C]athuboduae Aug(ustae) Servilia Terentia v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the August Cathubodua, Servilia Terentia paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 5).¹³²⁸ The dedicator is a woman who has Latin names and bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. Scholars are divided on the spelling and meaning of the name of this goddess. The altar being damaged on the left side, some specialists, such as Alfred Pictet, William Hennessy and Olmsted, maintain that the first letter of the name is missing. In view of Irish *Cath-Bhadhbh*, they reconstruct the divine name as *[C]athubodua*, 'Battle Crow' and see in her a war-goddess in crow shape.¹³²⁹ Others, such as Allmer, Toutain and Bernard Rémy, deny the possibility of a missing letter and assert that the name is to be read *Athubodua*. According to them, the first element of her name *athu* can be related to the name of a nearby lake or swamp called *Anthon*, near the village of *Anthon*. *Athubodua* would therefore be the name of a topical goddess presiding over the waters of this lake.¹³³⁰ Nonetheless, this etymology* does not take the second element *bodua* into account, and, as the altar is mutilated on the left side, the possibility of a missing letter cannot be dismissed.

At any rate, this Gaulish inscription proves that the belief in a raven-shaped goddess (*bodua*) certainly goes back to ancient times and was shared by various Celtic peoples. Significantly, Delamarre adds that there might have been some similarity between Irish *Badb*, Gaulish *Bodua* and an archaic Germanic goddess of war and storm called *Baduhenna*, whose name could be derived from a proto-Germanic root **badwa* - meaning 'battle'.¹³³¹ Tacitus, who recounts the revolt of the Germanic Frisians against the Romans at the end of Book 4 of *The Annals*, mentions that *Baduhenna* had a grove bearing her name in Frisia, where, in 28 AD, 900 Roman soldiers were slain by the Frisians:

mox compertum a transfugis nongentos Romanorum apud lucum quem Baduhennae vocant pugna in posterum extracta confectos, et aliam quadringentorum manum occupata Cruptorigis quondam stipendiari villa, postquam proditio metuebatur, mutuis ictibus procubuisse. Soon afterwards it was ascertained from deserters that nine hundred Romans had been cut to pieces in a wood called Baduhenna's, after prolonging the fight to the next day, and that another body of four hundred, which had taken possession of the house

¹³²⁷ Delamarre, 2003, p. 111 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 411 ; Le Roux, 1985, pp. 102-111.

¹³²⁸ *CIL* XII, 2571.

¹³²⁹ Pictet is the first one to have proposed this reconstruction: Pictet, 1867, pp. 112-113 ; Pictet, 1868, pp.1-17 ; Hennessy, 1870, pp. 32-33 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 285 ; Le Roux, 1983, pp. 102-111.

¹³³⁰ *RE*, vol. 3, pp. 327-328 ; Toutain, 1917, p. 306 ; *ILHS* 77, pp. 102-103 ; Pelletier, 2004, p. 207 ; *CAG*, 74, *Haute-Savoie*, 1999, p. 274 and fig. 249.

¹³³¹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 81 ; Simek, 2007, p. 26.

of one Cruptorix, once a soldier in our pay, fearing betrayal, had perished by mutual slaughter.¹³³²



Fig. 5: Altar dedicated to [C]athubodua ('Battle? Crow') discovered in Mieussy (Haute-Savoie). In the Museum of Annecy. Hennessy, 1870, p. 32.

Moreover, a goddess Cassibodua is mentioned in a dedication from Herbitzheim (Germany): *I(n) h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Victoriae [C]assi(b)oduae*, 'In honour of the Divine House and to Victoria Cassibodua'.¹³³³ The use of the abbreviated votive formula *In h. d. d.* allows us to date this altar from the beginning of the 3rd c. AD.¹³³⁴ The significance of the first element of her name *cassi* is still much debated. Various translations have been proposed, such as 'elegant', 'full of hatred', 'saint or sacred', and recently 'tin' or 'bronze',

¹³³² Book IV, 73 ; Church & Brodrigg, 1891. *The Frisians were a Germanic tribe inhabiting along the coast of the North Sea (the Netherlands and Germany).*

¹³³³ CIL XIII, 4525

¹³³⁴ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

with a connotation of hardness or power and probably of brightness.¹³³⁵ The second element of her name *bodua* refers to the 'crow'.¹³³⁶ Cassibodua might therefore be the 'Sacred Crow' or the 'Strong, Powerful Crow' (?). This goddess is undeniably related to war, since she is associated with Victoria, the Roman goddess who attends to the war successes of her people and ensures victory.¹³³⁷

The existence of Irish *Badb* and Gaulish (C)athubodua and Cassibodua strongly suggests that the tradition of a war-goddess in the shape of a crow was extant in Celtic times. The texts describe the raven-shaped goddess flying over the field of battle and devouring the corpses of the dead soldiers. The 13th-century *Glossary of O'Mulconry* indeed specifies that Macha, that is *Badb*, eats the heads of the warriors slain in combat:

Machae .i. badb nó así an trés mórígan, unde mesrad Machae .i. cendae doíne iarna n-airlech. Macha, i.e. Badb, or it is she who is the third Mórrígain, therefore the fruit crop of Macha, the heads of men after the massacre.¹³³⁸

Where does this belief come from? The carrion-crow is a bird of prey which was seen hovering over the battleground after the carnage of a fight, waiting for the moment when it would satisfy its hunger with the flesh of the dead soldiers. Thus the crow became an important symbol of war for the Celts, as some helmets adorned with a raven illustrate.¹³³⁹ A noteworthy example is the impressive iron helmet from Ciumesti (Romania), dated beginning of the 3rd c. BC, which is surmounted by a huge crow in bronze (fig. 6).¹³⁴⁰ Similarly, on one of the plaques of the Gunestrup Cauldron, a warrior is featured wearing a crow-crested helmet (Chapter 5, fig. 8).¹³⁴¹

¹³³⁵ Lambert, 1995, p. 35 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 109-110: when *-casses* is the second element of a word, it has the meaning of 'curled (hair)', e.g. the proper names *Su-casses* ('Beautiful-Curls'), *Tri-casses* ('(who have) Three-Curls'), etc. ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 411.

¹³³⁶ Duval, 1957, p. 57.

¹³³⁷ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 261, 870.

¹³³⁸ **Stokes, 1900, vol. 1, pp. 217, 813.**

¹³³⁹ For a study of the various symbolical meanings of the crow, see the section on *Nantosuelta* in Chapter 2. Green, 1992a, pp. 69 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 113 ; Green, 1992, pp. 177-181 ; Green, 2001, pp. 26-27, 142-144 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 311-330, 366-368 ; Duval, 1987, pp. 20-21 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969, pp. 85-86.

¹³⁴⁰ Duval, 1977, pp. 78, 106 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 548, 522 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 380, n° 731.

¹³⁴¹ Goudineau, 2006, pp. 60-61, 73.



Fig. 6: The iron cask surmounted by a bronze crow
from Ciumesti (Romania), dated beginning of the 3rd c. BC.
Bucarest. In the Muzeul de Istorie. Duval, 1977, pp. 78 and 106.

It is interesting to note that some Classical texts tell of a tradition in Celtic times not to bury the bodies of the dead warriors after the fighting but to leave them on the battlefield to be devoured by carrion crows or birds of prey.¹³⁴² Such a practice is recounted by Pausinias in around AD 180, in his *Description of Greece (Graciae Descriptio)*, which tells of the incursion of the Celtic chief leader Brennos into Greece, through the pass of Thermopylae 'Hot Gates' to reach the centre of Greece from Thessaly:

touto men dê epegegrapto prin ê tous homou Sullai kai alla tôn Athênêisi kai tas en têi stoai tou Eleutheriou Dios kathelein aspidas: tote de en tais Thermopulais hoi men Hellênes meta tèn machên tous te hautôn ethapton kai eskuleuon tous barbarous, hoi Galatai de oute huper anaireseôs tôn nekrôn epekêrukeuonto epoioounto te ep' isês gês sphas tuchein ê thêria te autôn emphorêthênai kai hoson tethneôsi polemion estin ornithôn. This inscription remained until Sulla and his army took away, among other Athenian treasures, the shields in the porch of Zeus, God of Freedom. After this battle at Thermopylae the Greeks buried their own dead and spoiled the barbarians, but the Gauls sent no herald to ask leave to take up the bodies, and were indifferent whether the earth received them or whether they were devoured by wild beasts or carrion birds.¹³⁴³

Similarly, the Greek sophist Aelian, in his *De Natura Animalium* (200 AD), speaking of the Vaccaeï, a people from the north-east of Spain, and the Latin poet Silius Italicus in *Punica* (50 AD) - an important work which recounts the events of the Second Punic War, from the

¹³⁴² Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 22, 55 ; Lamblard, 2004, pp. 29-30.

¹³⁴³ Book 10, Chapter 21, 6 ; Jones & Ormerod, 1959-1961. For more details about Brennos and the historical context of this account, see Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 53-59.

oath of Hannibal to the victory of Scipion at the end of the war at Zama - explain that the Celt-Iberians used to leave the bodies of the warriors killed in action on the ground in open air, so that the birds of prey, which were regarded as sacred, could eat their flesh and entrails:

The Vaccaeï burn the bodies of those who are dead of illness on a pyre [...] Those who are dead in war, and who they regard as noble men of high value, they abandon them to the vultures, which they regard as sacred.¹³⁴⁴ The Celt-Iberians came after them. Eager to die in battle, they consider it a crime to burn the body of those who die in this fashion. They believe that their souls return to the heavens and the realm of the gods, if their corpses are torn to pieces by the greedy bird of prey.¹³⁴⁵ In Celt-Iberia, there was an ancient custom of leaving dead bodies to be devoured by the foul bird of prey.¹³⁴⁶

In addition to being mentioned in some passages of Classical literature, the Celtic funerary practice of exposing the bodies of the dead warriors to the birds of prey is attested in the iconography, notably from Celtiberia. A fragment of stele* discovered in Lara de los Infantes (Burgos, Museo Arqueológico) depicts a scene of war. On the left, two soldiers play music on long trumpets. On the right, from top to bottom, a spear or javelin, a standing warrior with a sword, a head of spear and a huge bird which may be a crow can be identified (fig. 7).¹³⁴⁷ Two fragments of painted ceramic from Numantia - a city situated in the north of Spain which resisted the Romans from 143 to 133 BC - show two warriors lying on the ground flown over by birds of prey.¹³⁴⁸ Moreover, a stele* from El Palao, in the Alcañiz region (Teruel), is of great interest, for it has a rider holding a spear in his left hand and a round object in his right hand. At his feet, the body of a dead warrior, who holds the same round object in his left hand, lies and is being eaten by two ravens (fig. 8).¹³⁴⁹ Finally, Jean-Louis Brunaux refers to a stamnos*, dating from the 1st quarter of the 4th c. BC, housed in the Kunstmuseum in Bonn, which represents two Celtic warriors fighting two Italic soldiers (fig. 9).¹³⁵⁰ The Celtic warriors are recognizable because they are combating naked and because they wear a belt holding a typical La Tène sheath. The one on the right is dead and lies on the ground. A bird of prey, perched on his shoulder, devours the flesh of his stomach. A second vulture, situated behind the fighting warrior, seems to be waiting for his death: the bird of prey, which is an omen of death, represents the impending death of the warrior.

¹³⁴⁴ Aelian, *Historia Animalis*, Book 10, 22.

¹³⁴⁵ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, Book III, 340-344.

¹³⁴⁶ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, Book XIII, 470.

¹³⁴⁷ García y Bellido, 1949, vol. 1, n. 361, pp. 367-368, vol. 2, lám. 265, n°361 ; Martínez de Burgos, 1935, p. 35, n° 146, lám. IX ; Blázquez, 1963, pp. 422-423 ; Maia-Bessa, 1999, p. 118.

¹³⁴⁸ Schulten, 1931, pl. XXII.

¹³⁴⁹ Brunaux, 2004, p. 120 and p. 121, fig. 54 ; Marco Simón, 1976, pp. 76-77, pl. 2, fig. 1.

¹³⁵⁰ Brunaux, 2004, p. 118 and p. 129, fig. 55.



Fig. 7: Stele from Lara de los Infantes depicting a scene of war. On the right appears a huge bird: a crow? In Museo Arqueológico, Burgos. García y Bellido, 1949, vol. 2, pl. 265, n°361.*

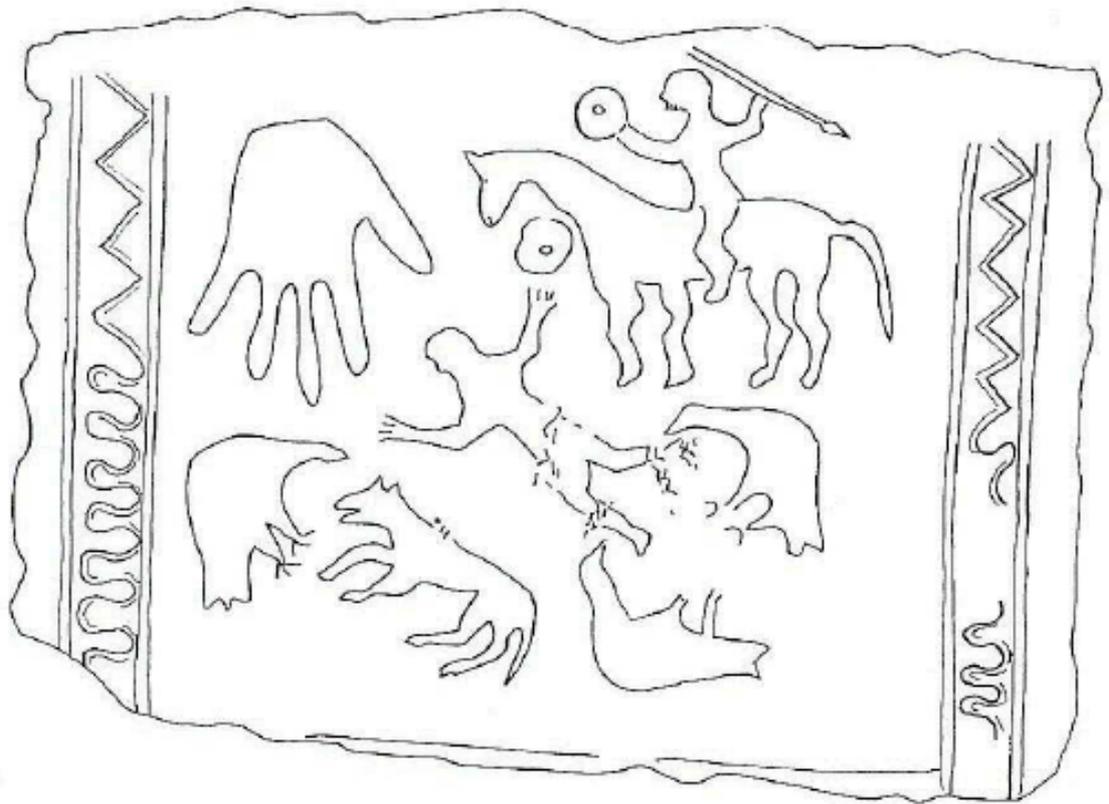


Fig. 8: Facsimile of the stele from El Palao, in the Alcañiz region (Teruel), Spain, depicting a scene of war: a dead warrior is being devoured by two crows. Brunaux, 2004, p. 119, fig. 54.*



Fig. 9: Fourth-century BC stamnos* depicting a scene of war: the Celtic dead warrior on the left is being devoured by a bird of prey perched on his shoulder. In the Kunstmuseum in Bonn. Brunaux, 2004, p. 119, fig. 55.

This has a clear parallel with the episode of the death of the great Irish hero-warrior Cú Chulainn, recounted in a text entitled *Aided Con Culainn* ['The Death of Cú Chulainn']. The text dates from the 14th or 15th c., but the stratum of the legend is previous to the 10th c.¹³⁵¹ It relates that the death of Cú Chulainn was brought about by the six children of Cailitín, a warrior slain in combat by the hero. Medb had these children reared by a sorceress in the faraway regions of the world, and they returned to Ireland determined to use their magic to avenge their father's death. One of these children was the sorceress called Badb:

[...] 7 do bí a inathar rena chosaibh ann sin, 7 do thúirn in branfiach Badhbha forsna hindaibh, co tarlla camlúb dona cáelánaibh fo chosaibh in brainfhaigh, co tarlla leagad dó. 7 do maidh a gean gáire for Coin Chulainn uime sin 7 is é sin gáire deidhenach do-rinne Cú Chulainn. Et tángatar neóill in bánéga dá innsaighi ann sin 7 táinic roime chum locháin do bí a coimnesa. Do bí 'ga thonach féin as, gurob Lochán in Tonaigh ainm in locháin dá éisi. [...] and his intestines were about his legs then, and the raven Badhbh descended on the place, so that a twisted loop of the guts happened to be under the legs of the raven, so that it was knocked down. And his merry laugh came to Cú Chulainn at that, and that was the last laugh done by Cú Chulainn. And the shades of white death came over him then, and he went to a pool which was nearby. He was washing himself from it, and accordingly that pool is named Lochán an Lonaigh [i.e. 'the Pool of

¹³⁵¹ Van Hamel, 1933, pp. 110, 113 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 142-143.

the Washing'] after that. 'Cáit a fuil Badhbhingin Cailitín?' ar Medb. 'Atú sund', ar Badhbh. 'Éirigh,' ar Medb, '7 fagh a fis damh in beó nó in marb Cú Chulainn.' 'Rachadsa and sin,' ar Badhbh, 'gidh b'é olc dogébh de.' Is é richt a ndeachaidh a richt eóin ar eittillaig annsan áer ósa chind, 7 'má tásan beó, marbhfaidh sé misi don chéturchar asa chranntabhull, óir ní dechaidh én ná bethidheach etorra 7 áer nar marbhfad, 7 má tá marbh, do-gén túrnamh ara chomair, 7 do cluinfid sibhsi mo chomarc.' 7 táinic a richt fuince .i. fennóigi a frithibh forarda na firmaminti ósa cind, 7 do druit anuas d'éis a chéile no co ráinic a comgaire dó, 7 do léig a trí sgrécha comóra ósa chin, 7 do thúirn arin sceich ósa comair amach, conadh sceich fuinci ainm na sceiche ar Mag Muirthemne. Ó 'd-chonncatar fir Érenn sin, 'is fir sin,' ar siat, 'is marbh Cú Chulainn 7 innsaighther dúin é.' 'Where is Badhbh, daughter of Cailitín?' said Meadhbh. 'I am here,' said Badhbh. 'Arise,' said Meadhbh, 'and get knowledge for me whether alive or dead is Cú Chulainn.' 'I will go there,' said Babhdh, 'even though I fare badly due to it.' The form she went in was that of a bird flying in the air over him, and 'if he be alive he will kill me with the first shot from his sling, for no bird or animal [ever] went between him and air that he would not kill, and if he is dead I will descend in front of him, and ye will hear my outcry.' And she came in the form of a crow i.e. of a scaldcrow from the very high realms of the firmament over him, and she came down gradually until she came near to him, and she gave her three great screeches over him, and she descended onto the thorn-bush in front of him, so that the thorn-bush on Magh Muirtheimhne ['the Plain of the Inundation'] is named the thorn-bush of the crow. When the men of Ireland saw that, 'it is true for you,' they said, 'Cú Chulainn is dead, and let us approach him.'¹³⁵²

This is a fictional development of Badb into a daughter of Cailitín, but she retains the earlier mythical connotation of the otherworld woman who is hostile to Cú Chulainn: the Mórrígain or Badb. The text is reminiscent of her early crow-shaped image and shrieks. It recounts that Badb first came to Cú Chulainn to drink his blood when he was cleaning his wounds in a lake after the fighting. She tripped over his entrails, which made him laugh one final time. Cú Chulainn strapped himself to a stone column, so that, even in death, he would face his enemies standing. Badb is then sent by Medb to check whether the great hero is dead.

This funerary custom might be also attested by archaeological discoveries. Brunaux suggests that the polygonal enclosure of the war sanctuary of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), situated about forty metres from the quadrangular enclosure, may have been used as a door towards the otherworld, where the corpses of the dead warriors of the victors were deposited in open air at the mercy of the birds of prey for their souls to be taken to the Beyond.¹³⁵³ The enclosure was paved and delimited by high walls in wood and cobs. In the north part of the enclosure, a two-metre-deep hollow altar and a significant amount of carcasses of domestic animals which attest to intensive religious practices and rituals were unearthed. The excavations indicated that, after a few months, the walls had been destroyed and the trenches filled in with the remains of the pavement, burnt wood and vestiges from the enclosed area. These vestiges turned out to be a hundred human bones and weapons, which means that corpses had been left to decompose in the yard, where religious rites must have been held, before filling up the ditch. Given that some of the bones have marks of

¹³⁵² Van Hamel, 1933, pp. 73-133.

¹³⁵³ Brunaux, 2004, pp. 120-124. See *infra* for details on the sanctuary.

animal manducation, Brunaux assumes this might have been a death rite consisting in letting the vultures devour the flesh of the dead warriors to facilitate their travel to the otherworld.¹³⁵⁴ Unlike the quadrangular enclosure, the bones were not those of the enemy warriors but of the winning camp. About fifty one-metre high steles* in sandstone in the effigy of warriors were indeed discovered on the site. They must have represented the hero-warriors who had courageously fought: their bravery had to be eternally glorified. This funerary rite must have been accompanied with religious ceremonies and practices, which would explain the various animal sacrifices and the hollow altar. The priests were present to establish contact with the otherworld and to ease the transition of the heroes to the supernatural world. Furthermore, offerings were made so that the gods would accept and look after them.

Therefore, it is clear that the crow shape of the war-goddess springs from the fact that birds of prey were often seen flying over the carnage at the end of a combat. It is natural for such birds to feed on the flesh of dead bodies. The birds were generally regarded as divine messengers or oracular birds commuting between the realm of the gods and the natural world, predicting events or answering the questions of the human beings.¹³⁵⁵ In the context of war, the mediator of the gods took on funerary aspects, being then understood as a conveyor of the souls of the glorious dead warriors to the otherworld. This is attested by some Classical texts, iconographical data and possibly archaeological discoveries, such as the polygonal enclosure of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme). The bird of prey was then deified as a goddess taking its shape and cries, flying over the battlefield, taking part in the carnage and exulting in bloodshed. As the Classical authors explain, it was honourable for the Celts to die in war. It was a proof of courage, valour and great merit for the warrior who gave his life for the protection of his people. Not to bury the dead heroes but to leave them in the open air was a mark of high respect, for the warriors, eaten by the crow goddess, would be taken to the divine world and eternally praised.

B) The 'Queen' Goddess: Irish *Mórrígain*, Gallo-British *Rigana*, Welsh *Rhiannon*

The meaning of the name of the most famous Irish war-goddess has caused a lot of ink to flow among the scholars, for its spelling differs from one text to another: *Mórrígain* / *Mórrígu* or *Morrígain* / *Morrígu*.¹³⁵⁶ The second element of her name is unambiguous. In Old Irish, *rígain* means 'queen', like Welsh *rhiain*, which originally signified 'queen' but has today the meaning of 'young lady, maiden, virgin'.¹³⁵⁷ They are both derived from an old Celtic word *rīgani* / *rīgana* meaning 'queen', equivalent to Latin *rēgīna*. The ending in 'u' is due to analogy with other feminine words which have a genitive ending in 'an', as *Mórrígain* does (gen. sing. *Mórrígan*). As for the first element of her name, it is problematic, for it is sometimes written with a short vowel, i.e. *mor* meaning 'phantom' or 'nightmare',¹³⁵⁸ and sometimes

¹³⁵⁴ Brunaux, 2004, p. 122.

¹³⁵⁵ See Chapter 2, the section on Nantosuelta for more details.

¹³⁵⁶ Le Roux, 1985, pp. 97-102 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 66 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 409 ; Sjoestedt, 2000, p. 5 translates 'Queen of Demons', which is inaccurate ; De Vries, 1963, p. 146 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 379 translates her name simply by 'the Queen' ; Mac Cana, 1970, p. 86 'Phantom Queen'.

¹³⁵⁷ McCone, 1998, pp. 1-12 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 258.

¹³⁵⁸ Stokes, 1891a, p. 128 ; Thurneysen, 1921, p. 63 ; Kluge, 1934, p. 371a.

with an accented vowel, i.e. *mór* meaning 'great'.¹³⁵⁹ This difference in spelling changes the significance of the goddess name.

Generally, the form *Morrígain*, that is 'Phantom Queen', is taken to be the earliest and primary form.¹³⁶⁰ And yet, one is inclined to think that the form *Mórrígain*, that is 'Great Queen', is the correct spelling, given that the adjective *mór* is often used to qualify land-goddesses in Irish tradition, for instance *Mór Muman* ('Great Nurtress'). Furthermore, it seems that the appellation 'Great Queen' is more suitable for a goddess than the designation 'Phantom', although this latter designation could refer to her link to death. The context of carnage and her function as an harbinger of death are of later date than her attributes of land-goddess, and this is the reason why we chose to spell her name *Mórrígain* rather than *Morrígain*.

Just as Irish Cath-Bhadhbh is similar to Gaulish Cathubodua, the *Mórrígain* is etymologically linked to the goddess epithet or name *Rigani*, which is attested in Latin form by three Gallo-Roman inscriptions discovered in Great Britain and Germany. The dedication found in Worringen (Germany), in the territory of the Ubii, reads: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) deae Regin(ae) vicani se[...] Gorigienses*, 'In honour of the Divine House and of the goddess Regina, the inhabitants [...] Gorigienses'.¹³⁶¹ The one discovered before 1732 in Lanchester, located in the north-east of Britain, is engraved on an altar, which has a wild boar on the left side: *Reginae votum Misio v(otum) l(ibens) s(olvit)*, 'To the Queen-Goddess, Misio willingly fulfilled his vow'.¹³⁶² The dedicator *Misio* is a peregrine*, for he bears the unique name. The most interesting monument is the relief* from Lemington, a town situated a few kilometres north of Lanchester, because it offers an inscription combined with a depiction of the goddess: *DEA RIIGINA*.¹³⁶³ The goddess is represented "with a halo coiffure and a robe reaching to the knee. In her left hand she holds a pointed staff resting on a stand, in her right hand a short staff resembling a cordoned column".¹³⁶⁴ These attributes bespeak her sovereignty and power, and might bear some war symbolism.

Other Gaulish goddess-names comprise the root *riga*, *rica*, 'queen': *Camuloriga* ('Queen of the Champions'),¹³⁶⁵ and possibly *Albiorica*, but her name is uncertain. An inscription engraved on a mutilated altar discovered around 1875 in Saint-Saturnin d'Apt (Vaucluse) reads: *Albiorice v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Albiorice [the dedicator] paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 10).¹³⁶⁶ One could wonder whether *Albiorice* is a divine name or a proper name, but the use of the votive formula *votum solvit libens merito* indicates that the inscription is offered to a deity. Scholars are divided over the gender of

¹³⁵⁹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 259 ; Le Roux, 1983, pp. 100-102.

¹³⁶⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 361 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 66, 227, note 180. Her name survived in the fairy lady *Morgane* of the Arthurian legends, see Marx, Jean, *La Légende arthurienne et le Graal*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1952, p. 70.

¹³⁶¹ *CIL* XIII, 8518 ; *RDG*, p. 83.

¹³⁶² *RIB* 1084. In the Chapter Library, Durham.

¹³⁶³ *AE* 1950, 134. Lemington is situated near Moreton in the Marsh. The relief and inscription was not found in Chedworth as mentioned in *RDG*, p. 59. The relief found in Chedworth is actually dedicated to *[L]JEN MARTI* and represents a god holding a spear and an axe (*AE* 1950, 135).

¹³⁶⁴ (Anonymous), 1949, p. 114. A picture or drawing of the relief was unavailable.

¹³⁶⁵ See later in this chapter.

¹³⁶⁶ *CIL* XII, 1060. On the left and right sides of the cippus* is engraved the word *serta*. Between the divine name and the votive formula the words *corona corona* are written.

the deity. Augustin Deloye and Otto Hirschfeld reconstruct the feminine name *Albiorica*, while Espérandieu, Barruol and Jacques Gascoü argue that the form *Albiorice* stands for *Albiorix*.¹³⁶⁷ While the goddess name *Albiorica* is not known from any other dedications, the god name *Albiorix* is mentioned in several inscriptions from Mont-Genève (Hautes-Alpes), Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse) and Montsalier (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence).¹³⁶⁸ The first element of his name *albio*, 'bright', 'world (from the above)' has a religious and mythological connotation and seems to refer to high places, such as mounts or mountains.¹³⁶⁹ *Albiorix* ('King of the World') is imaginistically the opposite of the proper name *Dumnorix* ('King of the Under World') which alludes to the world of darkness.¹³⁷⁰ According to Sterckx, *Albiorica* may have been a healing goddess similar to the Roman goddess of health and hygiene *Hygia*, because her consort *Albiorix* is sometimes associated with *Apollo* in the inscriptions.¹³⁷¹ However, *Albiorix* is never attached to the god *Apollo* in the epigraphy,¹³⁷² and moreover, there is no archaeological data indicating a healing cult attached to *Albiorica*.

¹³⁶⁷ See *ILN*, IV, p. 141; Barruol, 1963, p. 356 for a discussion of the various interpretations and references.

¹³⁶⁸ Inscriptions to *Albiorix* in Mont Genève: *AE* 1945, 105b,c,d and 106; Vaison-la-Romaine: *CIL* XII, 1300; Montsalier: *AE* 1990, 710. See Barruol, 1999, pp. 356-362; Lavagne, 1979, pp. 171-173; Capello, C. F., 'Una stipe votive d'età romana sul monte Genevris (Alpi Cozie)', in *Rivista Ingauna e Intemelia*, 19, 1941, pp. 96-137. There is also a god *Albius* partnered with *Damona* in Aignay-le-Duc: *CIL* XIII, 11233.

¹³⁶⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 37-38; Olmsted, 1994, p. 417; *ILN*, IV, p. 141; Barruol, 1999, p. 358.

¹³⁷⁰ *AE* 1989, 521: *Postumus Du[m]norigis f(i)lius verc(obretus)*; Evans, 1967, pp. 301-303; Delamarre, 2003, p. 151; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 91, 220; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 345-346; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 33; Sterckx, 1998, pp. 27-28.

¹³⁷¹ Sterckx, 1998, p. 27; Sterckx, 1996, pp. 41-42.

¹³⁷² Delamarre, 2007, p. 16.



Fig. 10: Altar from Saint-Saturnin d'Apt dedicated to the goddess Albioric(a)e or the god Albiorix. In the Musée Lapidaire d'Avignon. ILN IV 95.

Rigani appears beside the name of Rosmerta on the Gallo-Latin graffiti from Lezoux either as a divine name referring to an individual goddess, or as an attributive byname* of Rosmerta, or as a word designating a real human queen.¹³⁷³ Regina is also given as an epithet to the goddess Epona in various inscriptions from present-day Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Croatia.¹³⁷⁴ Rigani is itself cognate with god bynames*, such as Mars Rigas in Malton (GB),¹³⁷⁵ Mars Rgisamus in Bourges (Cher) and West Coker (GB),¹³⁷⁶ and Mars Rigonemetis ('King of the Sanctuary') in Nettleham (GB).¹³⁷⁷

¹³⁷³ See Chapter 2, pp. 174-176.

¹³⁷⁴ See Chapter 2, p. 1755, note 795 for the references.

¹³⁷⁵ *CIL* XIII, 1190 ; *RIB* 711.

¹³⁷⁶ *RIB* 187.

¹³⁷⁷ *RIB* 245b ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 233-234 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 228, 230.

In addition to being mentioned in Irish mythology and Gallo-British epigraphy, the goddess termed Rigani also appears in Welsh medieval literature. One of the most important female mythological characters of the *Mabinogi* bears the name of Rhiannon, which comes from an old Celtic word **Rīgantonā*, meaning the 'Divine, Great Queen'.¹³⁷⁸ The first branch of the *Mabinogi*, entitled *Pwyll*, recounts that Rhiannon, daughter of Hyfiid Hen, was given in marriage to Pwyll ('Intelligence, Judgment'),¹³⁷⁹ Prince of Dyfed, who had been mesmerized after seeing her riding on a white horse. His rival Gwawl, son of the goddess Clud, stole Rhiannon from him at his wedding-feast by tricking him. Pwyll then killed Gwawl to recover his fiancé. When Rhiannon's son, Pryderi, was abducted on the night he was born (May Eve), she was accused of murdering him. He was in fact being reared by Teyrnnon Twrf Liant, Lord of Gwent. Her punishment, which lasted seven years, consisted in waiting at the horse-block outside the palace gate and offering a ride on her back to any visitor. In the third branch, entitled *Manawydan*, Pryderi became King and Rhiannon married Manawydan after Pwyll's death. The kingdom was then devastated by a mystical fog, which was cast by Llwyd the magician, who was seeking revenge for Gwawl's murder. After being imprisoned in Annwyfn for a long time, Rhiannon and Pryderi were eventually freed by Manawydan. Rhiannon thus perfectly fulfils the role of sovereign implied by her name.

C) Functions: Warriresses or Witches?

Being war-goddesses, the functions and roles of the Mórrígain, Badb and Macha or Nemain are mainly described in three famous mythic battles: *Cath Muige Tuired Cunga* ['The First Battle of Moytura'], *Cath Maige Tuired* ['The Second Battle of Moytirra'] and *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley']. *Cath Muige Tuired Cunga* relates the war opposing the Tuatha Dé Danann to the Fir Bolg, who refused to give half of their territory up to them. *Cath Maige Tuired* narrates the famous battle between the Tuatha Dé Danann, led by the powerful Lug Lámhfhada ('Long-Armed'), and the obscure race of the Fomhoire, commanded by Balor of the Evil Eye. *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, a saga dating from the 11th c., describes the cattle-raid launched by Queen Medb of Connachta against Ulster and its young hero Cú Chulainn.

1) Battle Sorceresses

a) Druidic Magic

Cath Muige Tuired Cunga ['The First Battle of Moytura'] mentions twice that Badb, Macha and the Mórrígain are part of the contingent of the Tuatha Dé Danann. They are the only female characters, together with the goddesses personifying Ireland, that is Danann, Éire, Banba and Fóitla, to take part in the battle. This tends to indicate that the land-goddesses are the ones who become endowed with war-like traits in time of insecurity and peril and have the ability to protect their land and people. The text emphasizes the magical faculties of the war-goddesses, for they are called the *trí bantúathacha*, that is 'three sorceresses':

Rocoraiged catha Tuath nDe Danann isin mag anoir cach ndirech. Tangadur Fir Bolg isin mag aníar ana nagaid. Is iad taisig roergedur re Tuathaib De Danann isin lo sin .i. Ogma 7 Midir 7 Bodb Derg 7 Dian Cecht 7 Aengaba n hlruaithe.

¹³⁷⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 67 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 90, 134 ; Mac Cana, 1970, pp. 80-83. For an English translation of the *Mabinogi*, see Gantz, 1976. For a study of the divine figure Rhiannon, see Gruffydd, 1953. For details about Rhiannon and a summary of the *Mabinogi*, see Mackillop, 2004, pp. 371-372, 312-317.

¹³⁷⁹ De Vries, 1963, p. 90 ; Sherman, 1927, p. 239.

Rachmaitne lib, ar na hingena .i. Badb 7 Macha 7 Morigan 7 Danann. The battalions of the Tuatha De Danann were straightaway drawn up in the plain to the east ; and the Fir Bolg came into the plain against them. The chiefs who went out in front of the Tuatha De Danann on that day were Ogma, Midir, Bodb Derg, Diancecht, and Aengaba of Norway. ‘We will go with ye’, said the maidens, i.e. Badb and Macha and Morigan and Danann.¹³⁸⁰ Tangadur a tus in chatha le Tuathaib De Danann .i. in Dagda Mór 7 Ogma 7 Alla 7 Bres 7 Delbaeth, cuig meic Eladain meic Delbaith [...] na tri rigna .i. ere 7 Fotla 7 Banba, 7 a tri bantuathacha .i. Badb 7 Macha 7 Morigan, Be Chuille 7 Danann a da mbuime. In the van of the Tuatha De Danann advanced the Dagda, Ogma, Alla, Bres, and Dealbaeth, the five sons of Elatha [etc...] the three queens, Ere, Fotla and Banba, and the three sorceresses, Badb, Macha and Morigan, with Bechuille and Danann their two foster-mothers.¹³⁸¹

The same text features the trio as terrifying witches, who do not use weapons to fight the enemies but magical powers through which they succeed in destabilizing, weakening and filling the foe with terror. The battle started with Badb, Macha and the Mórrígain throwing horrific showers of sorcery, blood and fire onto the Fir Bolg, who were then immobilized for three days and three nights in a row:

Is ann sin dochuaidh Badhbh 7 Macha 7 Morrigha gu Cnoc Gabala na nGiall 7 gu Tulaigh techtairechta na tromsluagh, gu Temraig, 7 do feradar cetha doilbthe draidechta 7 cithnela cothaigetha ciach 7 frasa tromaidble tened, 7 dortad donnfala do shiltin as in aer i cennaib na curad, 7 nir legset scarad na scailedh do Feraib Bolg co cenn tri la 7 tri naidche. It was then that Badb and Macha and Mórrígain went to the Knoll of the Taking of the Hostages, and to the Hill of Summoning of Hosts of Tara, and sent forth magic showers of sorcery and compact clouds of mist and a furious rain of fire, with a downpour of red blood from the air on the warriors’ heads; and they allowed the Fir Bolg neither rest nor stay for three days and nights.¹³⁸²

Similarly in *Cath Maige Tuired* [‘The Second Battle of Moytirra’], when Lugh Samhildánach (‘the one who possesses all the arts’),¹³⁸³ asked the Tuatha Dé Danann one after the other what power he or she could wield in the battle, the Mórrígain answered that she could resist the attack, foresee the deeds and bring death upon the foes:

“Os tussa, a Morrighan,” ol Lug, “cía cumang ?” “Ní anse,” ol sí, “ar-roisior; dosifius do-sseladh; ar-roselus, aros-dibu nos-ríastais.” “And you, Mórrígain,” said Lug, “what power?” “Not hard to say,” she said. “I have stood fast; I shall pursue what was watched; I will be able to kill; I will be able to destroy those who might be subdued.”¹³⁸⁴

¹³⁸⁰ Fraser, 1916, pp. 34-35, § 39.

¹³⁸¹ Fraser, 1916, pp. 44-45, § 48.

¹³⁸² Fraser, 1916, pp. 26-27, § 29.

¹³⁸³ For more details on *Lug*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 311-315 ; Beck, 2004.

¹³⁸⁴ Gray, 1982, pp. 52-53, § 106-107, and notes p. 103.

Her answer infers that she did not need to take up arms to fight. Her weapons were her supernatural and visionary powers. Immediately after Lug managed to destroy the petrifying eye of his grandfather Balor by casting a sling stone into it, which marked a turning point in the battle against the Fomhóire, the Mórrígain intoned an incantation to motivate the warriors so that they would be able to overwhelm the foes. Thanks to her magical chant and support, she led them to victory:

Tánic in Morrígan ingen Ernmusa anduidhe 7 boí oc nertad Túath nDéa co fertois an cath co dúr 7 co dícraí. Conid ann rocachain in laíd-se síis: “Afraigid rig don cath! [...]” Then the Mórrígain the daughter of Ernmas came, and she was strengthening the Tuatha Dé Danann to fight the battle resolutely and fiercely. She then chanted the following poem: “Kings arise to the battle! [...]”¹³⁸⁵

It seems thus that the Irish war-goddesses were envisaged by the medieval writers as terrifying sorceresses using supernatural powers, conjurations and incantations to impel the troops to action and attack the enemies.

b) Metamorphosis

Being magicians, the war-goddesses have the faculty of turning into otherworld beautiful ladies, monstrous old women or animals, generally with the aim of approaching, tricking and assaulting the foes. The pattern of the metamorphosis is typical of female supernatural figures in mythology and folklore.¹³⁸⁶ As detailed above, the most famous mutation of the war-goddess is undeniably the crow or raven which stands for a death omen, but the Mórrígain can also take on other forms. At the beginning of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* [‘The Cattle Raid of Cooley’], it is related that the Mórrígain decided not to side with Cú Chulainn but to combat him, because the hero had refused her advances when she had come to him metamorphosed as a young woman of surpassing beauty.¹³⁸⁷ She then foretold him that she would drive the cattle against him and attack him in the form of an eel. She would then come back to him in the shape of a red hornless heifer and in the form of a she-wolf during his duel with Lóch, one of Medb’s warriors. The presage was fulfilled but Cú Chulainn, thanks to his immeasurable strength, managed to repel the three assaults of the goddess and to wound her in the ribs, the eye and the leg:

Ó ro chomraicset íarom ind fir forsind áth 7 # ro gabsat oc glíaid 7 oc imesorcain and 7 # ro gab cách díb for trúastad a chéili, focheird ind escongong trí ol im c[h]ossa Con Chulaind co mboí fáen fortarsna isind áth ina ligu. Danautat L#ch cosin chlaidiub combu chr#derg in t-áth día fulriud. [...] La sodain atraig 7 benaid in n-escongain co mebdatar a hasnai indi 7 comboing in cethri darsna slúagu sair ar écin co mbertatár a puple inna n-adarcaib lasa torandcless darigénsat in dá láth gaile isind áth. Tanautat-som in tsod meic tíre. Doimairg na bú fair síar. Léicid-som cloich asa tailm co mebaid a súil ina cuid. Téite i rricht samaisce maíle derge. Muitti riasna búuib forsna linni 7 na háthu. Is and asbert-som: ‘Ní airciu a n-átha la linni. Léicid-seom cloich don tsamaisc maíl deirg co memaid a gergara foí. Then when the combatants met on the ford and began to fight and to strike one another and when each began to belabour the other, the eel twined

¹³⁸⁵ Gray, 1982, pp. 64-65, § 137.

¹³⁸⁶ Chalendon, 1994, pp. 311-321.

¹³⁸⁷ O’Rahilly, 1976, pp. 57, 176-177.

itself in three coils round Cú Chulainn's feet so that he fell prostrate athwart the ford. Luch attacked him with the sword until the ford was blood-red with his gore [...] Whereupon Cú Chulainn arose and struck the eel and its ribs were broken within it, and the cattle rushed eastwards over the army, carrying off the tents on their horns, so great was the thunder-feat of the two warriors in the ford. Then she-wolf attacked him and drove the cattle on him westwards. He threw a stone from his sling and her eye broke in her head. Then she went in the guise of a red hornless heifer and the cattle stampeded into the streams and fords. Cú Chulainn said then: 'I cannot see the fords for the streams.' He cast a stone at the red hornless heifer and her leg broke.¹³⁸⁸

After the attack, the Mórrígain transformed herself into a one-eyed and half-blind old woman who was engaged in milking a cow with three teats. She then succeeded in tricking Cú Chulainn into curing the injuries he had previously inflicted on her. The hero, who was thirsty after the fighting, drank the milk of the cow three times without knowing that each time he would drink the milk from a teat he would heal a part of the Mórrígain's body.

c) The Shriek

Táin Bó Cuailnge ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'] several times mentions that the attacks of Nemain engendered terror and throw the army into disarray. Nemain embodies all the feelings of fright, panic, anguish, alarm and suffering that human beings undergo when they approach death. By simply conjuring up in her enemies those terrifying feelings, Nemain can provoke hundreds of sudden deaths:

Dosfóbaire thrá ind Némain la sodain 7 níp sí sin adaig ba sámam dóib la buadris ind athig triana chotlud. Foscerdat inna buidne fo chétóir 7 foherd dírna mór din tslóg co luid Medb día chosc. Thereupon the Némain, that is, the war-goddess, attacked them. That was not the quietest of nights for them with the trance-speech of the boorish Dubthach as he slept. The hosts rose up at once and the army was thrown into confusion until Medb came and quelled them.¹³⁸⁹

Cordas mesc ind Némain forsín tslóg. Dollotár i n-armgrith cethri chóiced Érend im rennaib a sleg 7 a n-arm fodessin co n-erbaltatár cét láech díb do úathbas 7 cridenes ar lár in dúnaid 7 in longpairt in n-aidchi sin. And Némain, attacked the host, and the four provinces of Ireland made a clamour of arms round the points of their own spears and weapons so that a hundred warriors among them fell dead of fright and terror in the middle of the fortress and of the encampment on that night.¹³⁹⁰ Cotmesca ind Némain forsín slog. Adbail cét fer díb. Nemain the war-goddess attacked the host. A hundred of them fell dead.¹³⁹¹

The terror penetrating the hearts of the warriors is usually caused by the shriek of the war-goddess. The cry is so piercing and appalling that it kills instantly. *Táin Bó Cuailnge* indeed relates that Badb, Bé Neit (replacing the Mórrígain) and Nemain hover over the battlefield screaming, causing hundreds of terror-stricken warriors to die:

¹³⁸⁸ O'Rahilly, 1976, pp. 60-61, 180-181

¹³⁸⁹ O'Rahilly, 1970, pp. 7, 131, lines 210-214.

¹³⁹⁰ O'Rahilly, 1970, pp. 64, 183, lines 2084-2088.

¹³⁹¹ O'Rahilly, 1970, pp. 107, 220, line 3537.

Imthús immorro fer nÉrind, cotagart Badb 7 Bé Néit 7 Némain forru ind aidchi sin for Gáirig 7 Irgáirich conidapad cét lóech díb ar úathbás. Nírbo hísín adaig ba sámam dóib. But as for the men of Ireland, Badb and Bé Néit and Némain shrieked above them that night in Gáirech and Irgáirech so that a hundred of their warriors died of terror. That was not the most peaceful night for them.¹³⁹²

The theme of the shriek is evoked again in a passage of a 11th-century historical tale entitled *Fleadh Duin Na n-Gedh, ocus Tucait Catha Muigi Rath, Inso* [‘The Banquet of Dún na nGédh¹³⁹³ and the cause of the Battle of Magh Rath’]. The text relates the course of the Battle of Magh Rátha (Moirá, Co. Down), which occurred in 637 according to the annalist Tighernach.¹³⁹⁴ The battle opposed the king of the Uí Néill, Domhnall mac Aeda (from AD 628 to 642) to the king of Ulster, Congal Caech, who was supported by the Scottish forces of Domhnall Breac, sovereign of the Dál Riada tribe of western Scotland.¹³⁹⁵ The battle turned out to be an immense slaughter. Congal Caech and Domhnall Breac fell and Suibhne, son of Colman Cuar, was driven mad. Amongst the terrible bloodshed the figure of the Mórrígain appears. She manifests as a dreadful and sinister old woman (*cailleach*) floating over the battlefield and terrifying the warriors with her piercing cry:

Fuil os a chind ag eigmigh / Caillech lom, luath ag leimnig / Os eannaib a narm sa sciath, / Is i in Morrigu mongliath. There is over his head shrieking / A lean, nimble hag, hovering / Over the points of their weapons and shields: / She is the grey-haired Morrigu.¹³⁹⁶

2) Harbingers of Death

a) The Seer

Following on from their function of sorceress, the war-goddesses also possess the attribute of foretelling forthcoming battles, massacres or deathly events. In *Cath Maige Tuired* [‘The Second Battle of Moytirra’], the Mórrígain, after her tryst with the Dagda at the ford of the river Uinsinn, in Co. Sligo, predicted the imminent battle which would break out between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the sinister Fomhoire:

Itbert-sí íarum frisin Dagdae deraghdís an Fomore a tír .i. a Maug (S)cé[t]ne, 7 ara garudh an Dagdae óes ndánu Érionn aro cend-sí for Áth Unsen ; 7 noragad-sí hí Scétné do admillid [ríg] na Fomore .i. Indench mac Déi Domnann a ainm, 7 dohéruhdh-sí crú a cride 7 áirned a gailie údadh. Dobert-sí didiu a dí bois den crú-sin deno slúagaib bátar ocon indnaidhe for Áth Unsen. Baí “Áth Admillte” íarum a ainm ónd admillid-sin an ríog. Degníth íerum lesin óes ndánou ind sen, 7 docachnotar brechtáur for slúagaib na Fomore. Then she told the Dagda that the Fomhoire would land at Mag Céidne, and that he should summon the áes dána

¹³⁹² O’Rahilly, 1970, pp. 121, 231, lines 3942-3945.

¹³⁹³ *Dún na nGédh* is a fortress near Dowth, Co. Meath.

¹³⁹⁴ O’Donovan, 1842, p. xviii.

¹³⁹⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 176-178 (Domhnall mac Aodha), 486 (Uí Néill).

¹³⁹⁶ O’Donovan, 1842, pp. 198-199.

¹³⁹⁷ of Ireland to meet her at the Ford of the Unshin, and she would go into Scétne to destroy Indech mac Dé Domnann, the king of the Fomhoire, and would take from him the blood of his heart and the kidneys of his valor. Later she gave two handfuls of that blood to the hosts that were waiting at the Ford of Unshin. Its name became 'The Ford of Destruction' because of that destruction of the king. So the áes dána did that, and they chanted spells against the Formorian hosts.¹³⁹⁸

At the end of the battle, the Mórrígain went to the various sídh (otherworld places) to report the victory of the Tuatha Dé Danann over the Fomhoire and foretold the forthcoming violence, plagues and deaths:

#ar mbrisiud íerum an catha 7 iar nglanad ind áir, fochard an Morrígan ingen Ernmais do táscc an catha-sin 7 an coscair móair forcóemnochair ann do rídingnaib Érenn 7 dia sídhcairib, 7 dia arduiscib 7 dia inberaiph. Conid do sin inneses Badb airdgníomha beus. [...] Boí-si íarum oc taircetul deridh an betha ann beus, 7 oc tairngire cech uilc nobíad ann, 7 cech teadma 7 gac[h] díglau; conid ann rocachain an laid-se síis [...] Then after the battle was won and the slaughter had been cleaned away, the Mórrígain, the daughter of Ernmas, proceeded to announce the battle and the great victory which had occurred there to the royal heights of Ireland and to its síd-hosts, to its chief waters and to its rivermouths. And that is the reason Badb still relates great deeds. [...] She also prophesied the end of the world, foretelling every evil that would occur then, and every disease and every vengeance; and she chanted the following poem [...]¹³⁹⁹

Similarly, in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], the Mórrígain prophesied twice the terrible battle opposing the Ulstermen to the Connachta and the violence the war would engender. At the very beginning of the *Táin*, the Mórrígain, in the shape of a bird, perched on a pillar-stone and described the impending suffering to the bull:

Céin bátár didiu in tslóig oc tochim Maige Breg, forrumai Allechtu colléic, noch í in Mórrígan són i ndeilb eúin co mboí forsin chorthi hi Temair Cúailnge 7 asbert frisin tarb: "In fitir in dub dusáim can eirc n-echdaig dál désnad fiacht fiach nad eól ceurtid namaib ar túaith Brega bíth i ndáinib tathum rún rofiastar dub día n-ísa maí muin tonna fér forglass for laich lilestai áed ág asa mag meldait slóig scoith nía boidb bógeimnech feochair fiach fir máirm rád n-ingir cluiph Cualngi coigde día bás mórmacni iar féic muintire do écaib." While the army was going over Mag mBreg Allecto came for a while, that is, the Mórrígain, in the form of a bird, which perched on the pillar-stone in Temair Cúailnge and said to the bull: "Does the restless Black Bull know (it) without destructive falsehood? [...] I have a secret that the Black Bull will know if he grazes (?) ... on the green grass ... Fierce is the raven, men are dead, a sorrowful saying ... every day the death of a great tribe ..."¹⁴⁰⁰

¹³⁹⁷ Áes, 'people, folk, those who' and dán, 'art, profession', i.e. 'people of an art', including poets and craftsmen, physicians and lawyers, etc, see Gray, 1982, p. 98.

¹³⁹⁸ Gray, 1982, pp. 44-47, § 85-86.

¹³⁹⁹ Gray, 1982, pp. 70-73, § 166-167 and notes pp. 113-114.

¹⁴⁰⁰ O'Rahilly, 1976, pp. 30, 152.

It is also related that the Mórrígain had a terrifying and sanguinary vision in the middle of the battle. She foretold the frenzy of the forthcoming fighting and the suffering and death of many warriors:

Is ann sin asbert in Mórrígan isin dorbles itir in dá dúnad: “Crenaid brain bráigde fer. Bruinded fuil. Feochair cath. Coinmid luind Mesctuich tuind taib im thuill im níthgalaib iar luimnich luud fianna fetal ferda fir Crúachan cotascrith imm ardbith cuirither cath ar cosa alailiu cén mair hUltaib, mairc larnaib, mairc d’Ultaib immorro, cén mair larnaib. Is ed dobreth hi clu[a]saib lairn, mairc hUltaib ol niscainedar a ngle.” Then the Mórrígain spoke in the dusk between the two encampments of the Ulstermen: “Ravens gnaw the necks of men. It swells blood. Battle is fought. Madness gathers (?). Hail to the men of Ulster! Woe to the Érainn! Woe to the men of Ulster! Hail to the Érainn!” These were the words she whispered to the Érainn: “Woe to the men of Ulster for they have not won (?) the battle.”¹⁴⁰¹

b) The ‘Washer of the Ford’

In a late 8th-century or early 9th-century poem, entitled *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* [‘The recitation of Fothadh Canainne’], the Mórrígain is described as a frightful and hideous woman who revels in bloodshed, laughs at the carnage, savours the suffering of the warriors and washes the entrails of the corpses on the battlefield. This poem is part of the Fianna Cycle, which brings together the legends attached to the mythical hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill and his troop of *fianna* or ‘hunter-warriors’.¹⁴⁰² The poem stages the death of the legendary ferocious hero-warrior Fothad Canainne, leader of a band of *fianna* in Connacht, who perished by the hand of Ailill Flann Beag, the *fianna* leader of Munster, in the fierce and bloody battle of Féic, situated near Millstreet, Co. Cork.¹⁴⁰³ This war was the result of the romance and elopement of Fothad Canainne with the wife of Ailill Flann Beag. Slain and beheaded by Ailill on the very day of a planned tryst with the woman, the spirit or head of Fothad comes to her lover and recounts the course of the battle:

At#[a]t immunn san c[h]an, mór fodb asa fordercc bol, dreman inathor d#mar, nodusnigh an Mórríoghan. Don#rlaith do bil #ige, is# cotanas#ide, is m#r do fodboibh nigius, dremhan an caisgen tibhes. Rol# a moing dar a hais, cride maith recht nodaais, cid gar di sund úan i mbé, n# fubthad uaman do gn#. Mad cose dam fri g#bud, n#mgaiht[h]i frim idsnádhud, a banscál, nogabtha for, c#in bl#th fa roscarsamur. There are around us here and there many spoils whose luck is famous; horrible are the huge entrails which the Mórrígain washes. She has come to us from the edge of a pillar (?), ‘tis she who has egged us on; many are the spoils she washes, horrible the hateful laugh she laughs. She has flung her mane over her back, a stout heart ...(?) that hates her; though it is near us here

¹⁴⁰¹ O’Rahilly, 1976, pp. 117, 229-230.

¹⁴⁰² For more information on the Fianna Cycle, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 227-233, and on Fionn Mac Cumhaill, pp. 238-249.

¹⁴⁰³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 260-261 ; Meyer, 1910, p. 3.

where she is, let not fear attack thy shape. If hitherto I have been in peril, ... for my salvation ; O woman, ... fair was the aspect under which we parted.¹⁴⁰⁴

The sentence “she has come to us from the edge of a pillar (?)” may suggest that the Mórrígain hovers over the battlefield in the form of a bird. She is described encouraging the warriors to join in the fighting and fight fiercely (“’tis she who egged us on”) and sinisterly laughing at the massacre. The pattern of the washing of the corpses is generally not found in early, but in late medieval literature and folklore. It developed as a separate female supernatural character known as the ‘Washer of the Ford’ who appears to soldiers before a battle at the ford of a river and prefigures their death by cleansing their bloody garments and armour or their mutilated corpses: she is a terrifying death omen.¹⁴⁰⁵ Hull explains:

In many of the ancient tales the forerunner of death takes the form either of a beautiful woman but weeping or of a gruesome and monstrous hag, who is found in the path of a host going to battle, or of a chief who is doomed to death, stooping over a stream, washing and wringing bloody garments and weapons. She is called the ‘Washer of the Ford’, and she informs the doomed man or host that it is their own bloody garments that she is wringing out.¹⁴⁰⁶

As an illustration, Hull reports a story about the Norman Richard de Clare, who met this horrendous character while he was heading with his troop to Dysert O’Dea, a place situated near Corofin, in Co. Clare, to attack Conchubhar Ó Deaghdha, the chieftain of the Cineal Fearmaic and ransack the area in 1318.¹⁴⁰⁷ The preternatural female being was seen “washing armour and rich robes till the red gore churned and splashed through her hand” and it foretold Richard’s death. The next day, Richard and his son fell in the fighting and were found dead in the field near the fort of Dysert.

The ‘Washer of the Ford’ was sometimes associated with *Badb* or the Mórrígain in early Irish medieval literature, as illustrated by the 9th-century text of *Bruiden Da Chocae* [‘The Hostel of Da Choca’], which relates the death of the mythical king Cormac Mac Airt at this otherworldly place, situated at Breenmore Hill, near Athlone, in Co. Westmeath.¹⁴⁰⁸ Before perishing, Cormac met a red supernatural female being, called *Badb*, who was washing a bloody chariot, with its cushions and harness at the ford of Athlone. She then chanted an incantation to him foreshadowing his imminent death:

Dollotar aside co Druim n-Airthir, frissa raiter in Garman, for brú Atha Luain. Scurit a cairpthiu annside. A mbatar ann confacatar mnáí ndeiric for u rind atha, 7 si ag nige a fonnad 7 a fortche 7 a fodbae. Intan no toirned a laimh sis bad erg sruthair na habae di chrú 7 d’fuil. [...] Ocus is annside ro chachain si for lethchois 7 lethshuil d#ibh annso, co n-epert: “Nigim fodb rig dobeaba” [...] “A ben, ca fadb neigisi? (Cormac) in Badb “T’fadhbh fessin sin, a Cormaic, ocus fadhbh t’aesa grádha” Thence they went to Druim Airthir, which is now called the Garman, on the brink of Athlone. Then they unyoke their chariots. As they

¹⁴⁰⁴ Meyer, 1910, pp. 1, 16-17. This poem is contained in only one paper manuscript marked B. IV. 2, which is in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Macculogh, in *ERE*, vol. 3, 1953, p. 286 ; Chalendon, 1994, p. 301 ; Hull, 1928, pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Hull, in *ERE*, 5, p. 783.

¹⁴⁰⁷ The Battle of Dysert O’Dea took place on May 10th 1318 (during the Irish Bruce Wars 1315-1318).

¹⁴⁰⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 120-129 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 61, 105-106.

were there they saw a red woman on the edge of the ford, washing her chariot and its cushions and its harness. When she lowered her hand, the bed of the river became red with gore and with blood. [...] And then, standing on one foot, and with one eye closed, she chanted to them (Cormac and his messenger), saying: "I wash the harness of a king who will perish" [...] "O woman, what harness whashest thou?" (Cormac) The Badb "This is thine own harness, O Cormac, And the harness of thy men of trust",¹⁴⁰⁹

This supernatural creature foretelling death or disaster bears some similarities in character and functions with the Breton 'Lavandières de nuit', who are phantom washerwomen of the night, equivalent to Irish *bean níochain* and Scottish *bean nighe*, 'washerwoman'.¹⁴¹⁰ They are generally viewed as suffering souls expiating a crime or serious sins and are seen at night on the banks of rivers or swamps washing, scrubbing, laundering and beating a shroud, which symbolizes the death of the individual they met. The one who helps them to wring the cloth is doomed to death. Various Breton names designating the 'Lavandières de Nuit' were recorded. R. F. Le Men calls them *couerezou*, *cowerezou*, an archaistic spelling of *kouerez*, 'washerwoman' - from *kouez*, 'laundry detergent',¹⁴¹¹ while Emile Souvestre names them *kannerez*, 'laundress',¹⁴¹² and Anatole Le Braz *maouès-noz*, 'women of the night'.¹⁴¹³ Claire Marmier's translation of *kannerez-noz* by 'singers of the night' is inaccurate.¹⁴¹⁴

The Irish war-goddesses thus appear almost uniquely in the context of battle. Badb, Macha and Nemain are undoubtedly emanations of a primary goddess, that is the Mórrígain. She is the land-goddess who provides herself with war attributes in time of conflict to protect her territory and people. The triplication of her figure enhances her potency, giving her other facets, forms and powers. Contrary to the Greco-Roman war-goddesses, who take up arms to fight the foes, such as in the *Trojan War*,¹⁴¹⁵ the Irish war-goddesses have a purely mystical and supernatural influence on the battle, which complements the military role taken over by the gods. They floor the enemy by their mighty supernatural powers, motivate the troops by their chants and incantations to obtain victory, and fill the foe with panic and terror by their awful shrill screams which kill outright. Shape-shifting, the war-goddess can attack the warriors in diverse animal forms and is generally seen hovering over

¹⁴⁰⁹ Stokes, 1862, pp. 156-159.

¹⁴¹⁰ Souvestre, Emile, 'Les lavandières de la nuit', in *Le Foyer Breton*, Paris, 1845, pp. 69-75 ; Souvestre, Emile, D'Anjou, Pierre, *Contes de Bretagne*, Ancre de Marine, 1946, pp 115-122 ; Souvestre, Emile, *Les lavandières de nuit*, in Seignolle, Claude, *Contes, récits et légendes des pays de France*, Omnibus, 1997, pp. 207-213 ; Brunet, Victor, *Contes populaires de la Basse Normandie*, Emile Lechevalier (ed.), 1900, pp. 59-64 ; Cuisenier, Jean, *Récits et contes populaires de Normandie*, Gallimard, 1979, pp. 99-102 ; Sébillot, Paul, *Légendes locales de la Haute Bretagne*, Société des bibliophiles Bretons, Nantes, 1899, t. I, p 143 ; Sébillot, 2004, pp. 628-630 ; Sand, Georges, *Légendes rustiques* (1858), Editions Verso, Guéret, 1987, pp. 31-37 ; Le Roux, 1983, pp. 79-88 ; Evans-Wentz, 1911, p. 185.

¹⁴¹¹ Le Men, 1870-1872, p. 421.

¹⁴¹² Souvestre, Emile, 'Les lavandières de la nuit', in *Le Foyer Breton*, Paris, 1845, pp. 69-75.

¹⁴¹³ Le Braz, Anatole, *La légende de la mort chez les Bretons armoricains*, t. II, 1945, pp. 259-263.

¹⁴¹⁴ Marmier, 1947, pp. 27-28, 32.

¹⁴¹⁵ Homer's *Illiad* tells that each god chose his camp according to his desire (Book XX, v.1-74). Phoebus Apollo, Ares, Aphrodite, Artemis, Leto and Xanthus (the river) sided with the Trojans, while Hera, Pallas Athene, Poseidon, Hermes and Hephaestus allied themselves with the Greeks. A veritable war then began between the gods. Poseidon was pitted against Apollo, Athena against Ares, Hera against Artemis, Hermes against Leto and Hephaestus against Xanthus (Book XXI, v.385-513).

the battlefield in the form of a bird of prey, whose appearance is a presage of death. She is a seer who foresees and announces the forthcoming suffering, destruction and bloody battles. She is sometimes described as a frightening old lady revelling in slaughtering, laughing at the carnage and washing the entrails, bodies or weapons of the dead warriors; pattern which particularly developed in late medieval literature and folklore and took the form of a female death-messenger, strictly related to war, named the 'Washer of the Ford'. Certain traits of the war-goddess survived in oral lore in other supernatural characters, such as the *bean sí* (*banshee*), the otherworld female death-messenger attached to Gaelic families.¹⁴¹⁶

D) Survivals of the Death-Messenger in Folklore

This idea of preternatural female beings prophesying death survived in the characters of the *bean sí* (Banshee) and *Aoibheall*, who appear to members of families to announce an imminent death. In Irish heroic lore, evil characters haunting the battle field, such as the *bánánach*, a female creature of the battleground and the *bocánach*, a sort of demon who has the appearance of a goat and shrieks in the air over the warriors, can also be regarded as echoes of the war-goddesses.¹⁴¹⁷ Those terms always appear together and in the plural form in stereotyped phrases: *bánánaigh agus bocánaigh*, that is 'white spectres' and 'troublesome spectres'. They are a reflex of the general mediaeval European idea of demons. They are for instance described in a version of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* squealing and flying over Cú Chulainn when he fought his friend Ferdiad for three days at the ford Áth Fhirdiad in the river Dee (Ardee, Co. Louth):

So close was the fight they made now that their heads met above and their feet below and their arms in the middle over the rims and bosses of their shields. So close was the fight they made that they cleft and loosened their shields from their rims to their centres. So close was the fight which they made that they turned and bent and shivered their spears from their joints to their hefts! Such was the closeness of the fight which they made that the Bocanachs and Bananachs and wild people of the glens and demons of the air screamed from the rims of their shields, and from the hilts of their swords, and from the hefts of their spears. Such was the closeness of the fight which they made that they cast the river out of its bed and out of its course, so that it might have been a reclining and reposing couch for a king or for a queen in the middle of the ford, so that there was not a drop of water in it unless it dropped into it by the trampling and the hewing which the two champions and the two heroes made in the middle of the ford.¹⁴¹⁸

1) The *bean sí* (Banshee)

In folklore, the war-goddess has survived in some aspects in the supernatural personage of the Banshee, the anglicized form of Irish *bean sí* literally 'woman-fairy', i.e. 'the otherworld

¹⁴¹⁶ For a discussion of this, see Lysaght, 1996a.

¹⁴¹⁷ Mackillop, 2004, p. 33, 46.

¹⁴¹⁸ Pearse, 1898, pp. 15-16 (translation by O'Sullivan).

lady'.¹⁴¹⁹ The tradition of the Banshee is widespread all over Ireland and the offshore islands.¹⁴²⁰ She is a lonely female character who is usually attached to Irish families with a Gaelic surname, i.e. beginning with *Ó* or *Mac*, but this is not always the case. She is believed to come to announce the forthcoming death of member of the family, whether he lives in the area or abroad.¹⁴²¹ The sources generally indicate that she cannot be seen, except for a few which describe her as an ugly old woman wearing a shroud and combing her long grey hair while she is mourning for the impending deceased. All the collected statements concur to say that the announcement of the imminent death is conveyed by three piercing cries, which tend to be terrifying for the person who hears them. A testimony collected by Patricia Lysaght in Co. Laois perfectly illustrates this:

You know she would get on your nerves crying ; it's terrible. It would bring the cold sweat out on you listening to her. This is mostly how you know that it was not something from here like.¹⁴²²

In a tale entitled 'The Banshee cries for the Boyles', comprised in Henry Glassie's *Irish Folktales*, the son relates his terrifying experience of the Banshee, who came to announce the death of his mother:¹⁴²³

"I saw the Banshee when old Boyle's mother died. I was coming home in the dusk with a load of sods, and the old grey horse and me mother with me." And she says to me, "Some poor woman has lost her man or maybe a son." And the thing wore a shroud as if it had come from a coffin, and its hair was streaming in the wind. We both saw it. And me mother, she says a prayer or maybe two. "That's the Banshee", says she. "Aye, it cried for many an old family here, and some say it's one that had gone before. Be that as it may, no human heart could utter such grief, so, mind ye, I doubt it."¹⁴²⁴

In the folk tradition of south-eastern Ireland, the Banshee bears names which are all derived from the name of the Irish goddess mentioned in the literary texts: *Badb* or *Bodb*. The *badhbh*-appellations differ in spelling and pronunciations from one county to another: *badhb* pronounced [bæib] in Waterford, south-Tipperary and south-Kilkenny; *babha* pronounced [bau] in Wexford, Carlow and south Kildare; and *bo*, *bó* or *bodhbh chaointe* ('lamenting bodhbh') in Kilkenny, mid-Tipperary and some parts of Laois.¹⁴²⁵ The fact that the Banshee has names in the southern areas of the country similar to the name of the Irish war-goddess does not mean, however, that the Banshee is viewed in bird-shape like *Badb*, for she never appears in such a form in the folk legends. In addition to having this similar designation, one can notice that the Banshee and *Bodhbh* are both death-messengers, renowned for

¹⁴¹⁹ Lysaght, 1996a ; Lysaght, 1979, pp. 7-29 ; Lysaght, 1996, pp. 152-165 ; Wood-Martin, 1902, pp. 364-371 ; Ackerman, 1990 ; Chalendon, 1994, pp. 295-301, 330-334 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 31-32 ; Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, p. 430 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 33-34 ; Anwyl, in *ERE*, 5, p. 574 ; Evans-Wentz, 1911, pp. 188-189 ; Hull, 1928, p. 59.

¹⁴²⁰ Lysaght, 1996a, pp. 24-25: see the map of the general distribution of the death-messenger belief.

¹⁴²¹ Hull, in *ERE*, vol. 5, 1955, p. 783.

¹⁴²² **Lysaght, 1996a, p. 84 (Laois 19)**

¹⁴²³ For other stories about the banshee, see Yeats, 1888, pp. 108-127 ; Croker, 1998 ; O'Hanlon, 1870 ; O'Donnell, 1926 ; Todhunter, 1888. Lysaght, 1996a, pp. 34-37 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 27-28 ; Chalendon, 1994, p. 301.

¹⁴²⁴ **Glassie, 1987, p. 129.**

¹⁴²⁵ Lysaght, 1996a, pp. 34-37 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 27-28 ; Chalendon, 1994, p. 301.

their shrill dreadful cries and generally described as ugly, frightful old women. It is significant that the crow is a fairly dreaded bird in folk superstition: it is regarded as a death omen coming from the otherworld.¹⁴²⁶ It signifies either great misfortune or the imminent death of a member of the family of the person who sees such as bird. The raven thus clearly plays the part of the Banshee in folk beliefs. Nonetheless, some differences between the goddess and the fairy lady are noticeable. Contrary to the Badb, whose horrific shriek causes instant death and who delights in bloodshed on the battlefield, the Banshee or Bodhbh is not a hostile character and her scream is to be understood as a lament or wail, filled with sorrow and grief. She does not actually come to kill but to foretell death and to weep for the dead. She actually reflects the professional keening women, whose function is to mourn at wakes and funerals in Ireland.¹⁴²⁷

2) *Aoibheall*

Aoibheall, pronounced [ee-vul], is not to be considered as a goddess, but as a fairy lady belonging to the sphere of oral lore. She presides over the *sídh* of Craig Liath, a rock near Killaloe, in Co. Clare, where the tribe of the Dál gCais (later called O'Briens) had their stronghold from the 6th c. AD.¹⁴²⁸ Her cult must have originally extended to the east of Co. Clare and the north-west of Co. Tipperary. Her name connotes heat and light and can be translated as 'radiant', 'bright' or 'sparkling'.¹⁴²⁹ The concept of brightness is found in other names of fairy ladies, such as Áine 'brightness', 'glow', 'lustre', who is the protectress of the *Eóghanacht sept** and is associated with Cnoc Áine, the Hill of Knockainey in Co. Limerick.¹⁴³⁰ It is clear that *Aoibheall* and Áine are folk survivals of the ancient territorial goddess, presiding over the land and protecting its people.

Aoibheall appears in *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* ['The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill'], detailing the invasions of Ireland by the Danes and other Norsemen. This late 11th - century text describes the historical Battle of Cluain Tairbh (Clontarf, Co. Dublin) which occurred in 1014 and opposed the Norse invaders to the Dál gCais sept* led by Brian Bóramha (AD 926-1014), who became King of all Ireland in 1002.¹⁴³¹ The Battle of Clontarf marked a turning point in the history of Ireland, for the Irish victory put an end to the growing Viking power in Ireland. The historical tale recounts that on the night before the battle, *Aoibheall*, the patroness of the Dál gCais sept*, came to Brian Bóramha and foretold that he would die in battle the following day, which actually happened. She also predicted that his eldest son would be King afterwards:

Táinig Aibhell Craige Léithe chugam arair”, ar sé, “ocus ro innis damh go muirfidhe mé aniú, ocus adubhairt ríom an chéd mhac dom chloinn do chífinn aniú gomadh é do ghebhadh righe tar m’éis, ocus bidh é Donnchadh eisein [...] “Aoibheall of Craglea came to me last night”, he said, “and told me that I would

¹⁴²⁶ Evans-Wentz, 1911, pp. 251-252.

¹⁴²⁷ Lysaght, 1996a, pp. 38-40, 68-71 ; Lysaght, 1996, pp. 153-154 ; Lysaght, 1997, pp. 65-82 ; Sullivan, 2007, pp. 1-11.

¹⁴²⁸ O’Rahilly, 1946a, p. 3 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 20 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 5.

¹⁴²⁹ O’Rahilly, 1946a, p. 4 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 20.

¹⁴³⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 7 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 10.

¹⁴³¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 45-48, 365-366.

be killed today, and said to me that the first son of my family whom I would see today would get the kingdom after me, and that is Donnchadh [...]¹⁴³²

In this passage, Aoibheall plainly fulfills the role of the Banshee. She is indeed the tribal spirit of the O'Briens who announces the imminent death of the King, as the Banshee is the guardian of some Irish families and comes to foretell the death of a family member. In her role as a foreteller of death, Aoibheall also appears to the two sons of Brian Bóramha: Donnchadh and his brother Murchadh.¹⁴³³ In a poem written around the year 1370 by the celebrated poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, who was a professional composer to several leading Munster families of the time such as the O'Briens, McCarthys, and Fitzgeralds, Aoibheall is also called *banfháidh Ó mBriain*, that is 'the prophetess of the O'Briens', which is redolent of her 'bean sí nature'.¹⁴³⁴ Hull, in her article entitled 'Fate' in the *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion*, states that Aoibheall's tradition as a banshee was still vivid in the 19th c. in the oral lore of Co. Clare: "The same goddess [Aoibheall] has been seen in recent times surrounded by twenty-five other banshees of Clare before an impending disaster."¹⁴³⁵

Interestingly, the fairy lady *Áine* has also survived as a *bean sí* in the folklore of the Moneymore-Cookstown area of Counties Tyrone and Derry, in the north of Ireland, where another hill called Cnoc Áine and a well named Tobar Áine are recorded in the parish Lios Áine (Lissan) which is named after her.¹⁴³⁶ John O'Donovan, who went to the district in 1834 to collect folk accounts, indeed reports in *Ordnance Suvey Letters Co. Londonderry* (1834) that:

Áine had been taken away at night by the wee folk from her husband's side, and never returned. She is still living, and [is] particularly attached to the family of O'Corra, who are believed to be her descendants, because whenever one of them is about to die she is heard wailing in the most plaintive and heart-touching manner in the wild glen of Alt na Síon and adjacent to the fort of Lios Áine".¹⁴³⁷

The fact that she was related to a particular Irish family (O'Corra) and came to them to usher the death of a member of theirs by whining clearly indicates that *Áine's* character had evolved into a Banshee at the beginning of the 19th c.

III) Gallo-British War-Goddesses?

In comparison with Irish mythology, very little is known about possible Gallo-British goddesses of war: the data are almost non-existent and scattered. It is however certain that

¹⁴³² Todd, 1867, pp. 200-201. The same account is recounted in Hennessy, 1871, vol. 1, pp. 8-9. The banshee is called *Oebhinn, daughter of Donn-Oilen*.

¹⁴³³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 20 ; 365-366.

¹⁴³⁴ Mac Cionnaith, 1938, p. 323.

¹⁴³⁵ Hull, in *ERE*, vol. 5, 1955, p. 783.

¹⁴³⁶ O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 518.

¹⁴³⁷ O'Donovan, in *OSL, Co. Londonderry, Gaelic Manuscript Collection, Royal Irish Academy (MS. R.I.A.), Dublin, 1834, pp. 228 ff.*

Celtic people venerated deities who had martial abilities and were specifically invoked in time of war, for several Gaulish sanctuaries dating from Celtic times are clearly devoted to war deities. Such is the case of the sanctuaries of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise) and Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), excavated among others by Brunaux, who analyzed their organization and functions, and the possible religious rites attached to them. The war deities revered in those pre-Roman sanctuaries cannot be identified and remain anonymous. As Celtic people generally did not write, it is indeed impossible to find inscriptions on the sites. In view of the archaeological and ethnographic data, it is clear, however, that the sanctuaries were erected in honour of a deity presiding over war, battles and hero-warriors.

A) Gaulish Sanctuaries devoted to War-Deities

The sanctuary of Ribemont-sur-Ancre, dating from the 1st half of the 3rd c. BC, is composed of two enclosures different in shape, use and function: a 40 m² quadrangular enclosure discovered in 1982 and a polygonal enclosure, situated forty metres away, unearthed in 2001.¹⁴³⁸ Impressive amounts of iron weapons (swords, scabbards, spears, shields) together with human bones (legs, arms, pelvises, hands, feet, etc) belonging to about 1,000 men aged between 15 and 40 years old were collected in the two enclosures. The homogeneity and impressive number of human skeletons found together with their offensive weapons indicate that a battle took place in the area. The quadrangular enclosure was originally erected on a wooded mound which later became a sacred wood where the deity resided and human beings were not allowed (fig. 11). Around 20,000 metal pieces and human skeletons in pieces with no skulls, belonging to about 150 individuals, were excavated in this enclosure. According to Brunaux, these remains are undoubtedly those of enemy warriors killed in action.¹⁴³⁹ While the skulls were kept by the victors as proof of their bravery - which is why they are missing from the 'mass grave' - the rest of the corpses together with their weapons and jewels were brought to the sanctuary as an offering to the war deity. Three 'chapel houses', i.e. cavities hollowed in the ground filled to the top with human and horse bones, were unearthed in the north-east, north-west and south-west corners of the enclosure.¹⁴⁴⁰ These concave altars are understood as offering wells dedicated to the war deity dwelling in the enclosed sacred wood. The organization and function of the polygonal enclosure is studied earlier in this chapter.

Similarly, the sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde, like those of Saint-Maur, Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin and Estrées-Saint-Denis, is undoubtedly a war sanctuary, for significant and impressive amounts of human skeletons and weapons were excavated there.¹⁴⁴¹ Contrary to Ribemont-sur-Ancre, Gournay-sur-Aronde was not erected after a specific battle and does not consist of skeletons and weapons coming from a homogenous mass. The analysis of the weapons found on the site (250 pieces of armour, comprising each time a sword with its scabbard, a shield and a spear) reveals considerable geographical and chronological

¹⁴³⁸ Cadoux, Jean-Louis, 'L'ossuaire gaulois de Ribemont-sur-Ancre', in *Gallia*, 42, 1984, pp. 53-78 ; Fercoq du Leslay, Gérard, 'Chronologie et analyse spatiale à Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme)', in *RAP*, n°3/4, 1996, pp. 189-208 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 794-795 ; Brunaux, 1986, pp. 21-26 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 101-112 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 103-124.

¹⁴³⁹ Brunaux, 2004, pp. 110-113.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Brunaux, 2004, pp. 114-118 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 110-111

¹⁴⁴¹ Brunaux, Jean-Louis, *Le sanctuaire de Gournay-sur-Aronde et la religion gauloise*, Thèse de 3^{ème} cycle, Université François Rabelais, Tours, 1981 ; Brunaux, 1986, pp. 17-20 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 91-101 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 92-103.

disparity. The weapons indeed date from the beginning of the 3rd c. BC to the middle of the 2nd c. BC, spreading thus over a period of 120 or 130 years, and come from various places and peoples. Gournay-sur-Aronde can therefore be understood as a sanctuary where warriors used to go to pray and pay homage to a war deity by depositing and offering their trophies and spoils of war. The sanctuary is made of a massive enclosure, composed of an impressive fence and a double ditch, with an imposing entrance door, where the skulls of the foes were nailed up and the weapons exposed for several years until oxidization, before being thrown into the trench (fig. 12). In the centre of the enclosure was situated a hollow or concave altar where entire bovids were deposited as an offering to the god and left to decompose and rot. Putrefaction of the corpses and corrosion of the weapons was part of a whole sacred rite held in honour of the martial deity. A small wood, materializing the divine presence, was located to the north of the offering well.

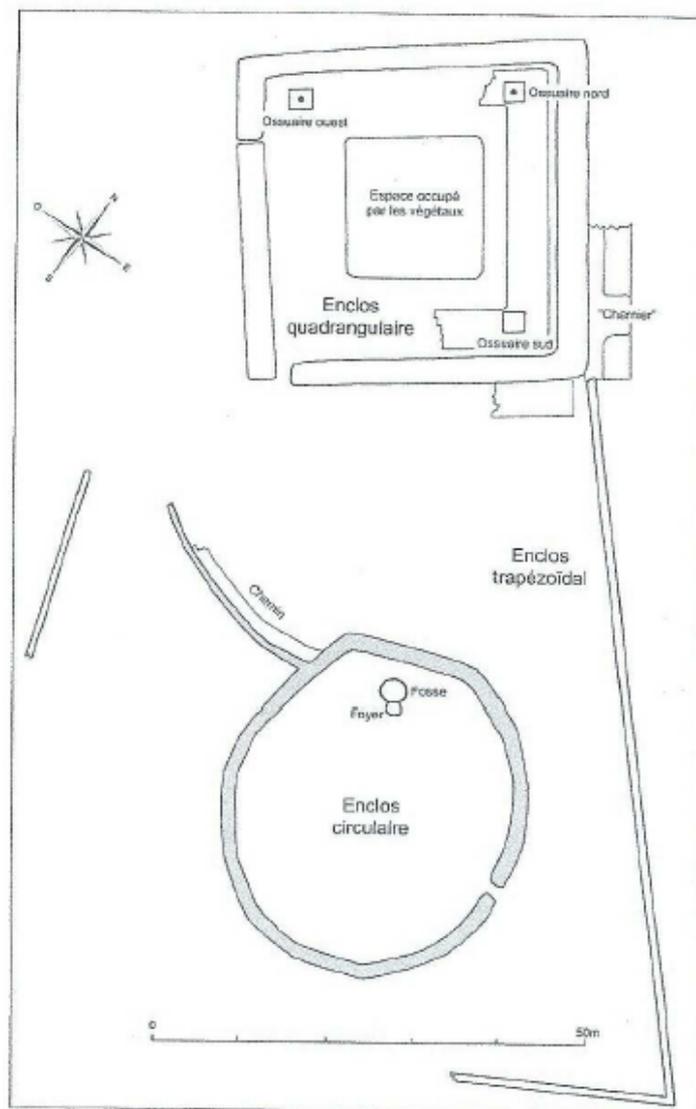


Fig. 11: Map of the quadrangular and polygonal enclosures of the Gaulish war sanctuary of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme). Brunaux, 2004, p. 115, fig. 52.

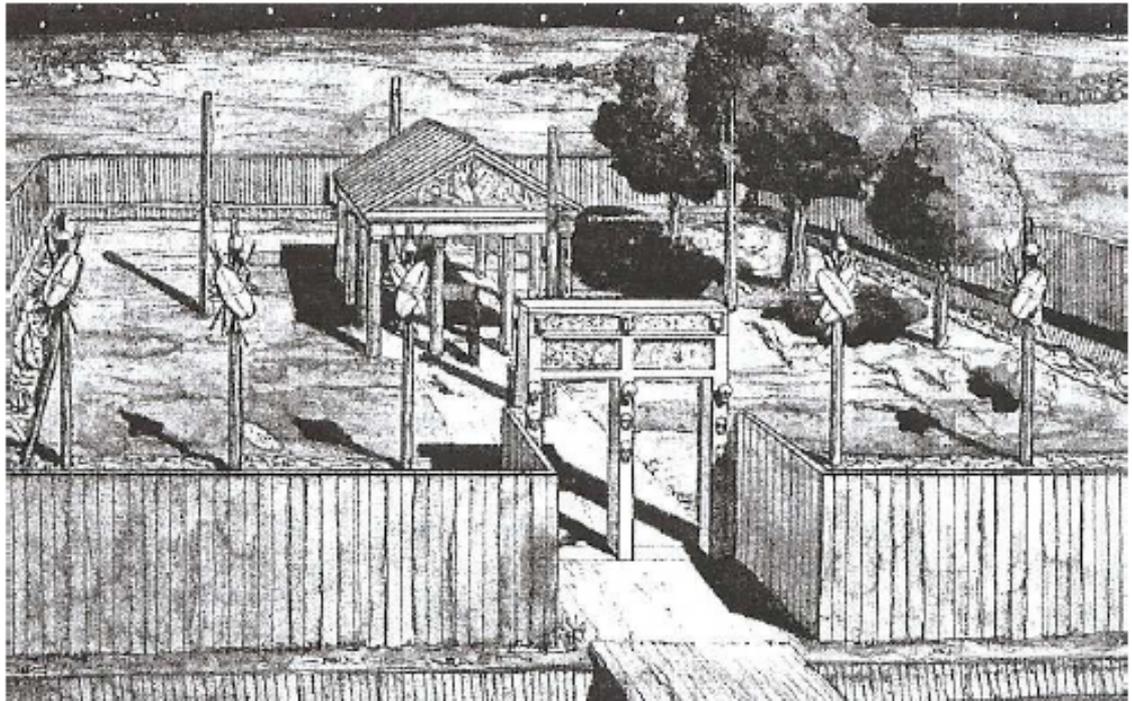


Fig. 12: Reconstruction of the Gaulish war sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise). Brunaux, 2004, p. 92 , fig. 38.

The two sanctuaries produce evidence of a significant cult rendered to war deities in Celtic times, but they unfortunately do not give information on the identity of those divinities. Neither do the Classical texts shed light on that subject. The only reference to a martial goddess is made by the Greek historian Dio Cassius in his *History of Rome* (LXII, 6). Dio Cassius recounts the historical rebellion of Queen Boudicca against the Roman invasion in 60 AD. Boudicca, whose name means ‘the Victorious’,¹⁴⁴² was the wife of Pratustagus, the leader of the Iceni, a tribe situated in today Norfolk, in eastern Britain.¹⁴⁴³ After her husband was slaughtered by the Romans, she raised a revolt, with the help of the neighbouring sept*, the Trinovantes, and plundered and burnt the Roman cities Camulodunum (Colchester) and Londinium (London). Dio Cassius specifies that Boudicca required the divine help and protection of a goddess named Andraste, whose name was explained by Holder as *An-drasta*, ‘the Invincible’, with a negative prefix *an*, ‘non’ and a root *drastos*, ‘to vanquish, to oppress’.¹⁴⁴⁴ While invoking the goddess, Boudicca let a hare abscond from her breast to foresee the forthcoming turn of events:

At these words, employing a species of divination, she let a hare escape from her bosom, and as it ran in what they considered a lucky direction, the whole multitude shouted with pleasure, and Buduica raising her hand to heaven, spoke: "I thank thee, Andraste, and call upon thee, who are a woman, being myself also a woman that rules not burden-bearing Egyptians like Nitocris, nor merchant

¹⁴⁴² See Delamarre, 2003, pp. 83-84: Gaulish *boudi* ‘victory, advantage, profit’, cognate with Old Irish *búaid* ‘victory’, *búadach*, ‘victorious’, Welsh *budd*, Old Breton *bud* ‘advantage, profit’; Webster, 1978, p. 15; Kruta, 2000, p. 486.

¹⁴⁴³ For more information on *Boudicca*, see Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 30-35; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 16; Dio Cassius, *History of Rome*, LXII, pp. 1ff; Dudley & Webster, 1962; Webster, 1978; Andrews, 1972; Green, 1995, pp. 33-34.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 151.

Assyrians like Semiramis (of these things we have heard from the Romans), nor even the Romans themselves, as did Messalina first and later Agrippina;--at present their chief is Nero, in name a man, in fact a woman, as is shown by his singing, his playing the cithara, his adorning himself:--but ruling as I do men of Britain that know not how to till the soil or ply a trade yet are thoroughly versed in the arts of war and hold all things common, even children and wives; wherefore the latter possess the same valour as the males: being therefore queen of such men and such women I supplicate and pray thee for victory and salvation and liberty against men insolent, unjust, insatiable, impious,--if, indeed we ought to term those creatures men who wash in warm water, eat artificial dainties, drink unmixed wine, anoint themselves with myrrh, sleep on soft couches with boys for bedfellows (and past their prime at that), are slaves to a zither-player, yes, an inferior zither-player. Wherefore may this Domitia-Nero woman reign no more over you or over me: let the wench sing and play the despot over the Romans. They surely deserve to be in slavery to such a being whose tyranny they have patiently borne already this long time. But may we, mistress, ever look to thee alone as our head."¹⁴⁴⁵

Further on in the text, Dio Cassius, referring to the sack of the two Roman cities by Boudicca, describes the atrocities committed on the prisoners in sacred places, notably in the 'grove of Andate', whom he equated with the Roman goddess Victory. Andate is highly likely to be the same goddess as Andraste. This shows the uncertainty of Dio Cassius as regards the exactitude of the name of the goddess honoured by the Iceni. Not being mentioned in any inscriptions, the spelling and meaning of the divine name Andraste or Andate remain quite uncertain. Some British scholars suggest that the names Andraste and Andarta are philologically linked and thus refer to the same deity.¹⁴⁴⁶ This is however quite difficult to believe, for their respective names do not seem to have the same composition: *An-draste* ('Unconquerable') and *And-arta* ('Great Bear').

After a harangue of this general nature Buduica led her army against the Romans. The latter chanced to be without a leader for the reason that Paulinus their commander had gone on an expedition to Mona, an island near Britain. This enabled her to sack and plunder two Roman cities, and, as I said, she wrought indescribable slaughter. Persons captured by the Britons underwent every form of most frightful treatment. The conquerors committed the most atrocious and bestial outrages. For instance, they hung up naked the noblest and most distinguished women, cut off their breasts and sewed them to their mouths, to make the victims appear to be eating them. After that they impaled them on sharp skewers run perpendicularly the whole length of the body. All this they did to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets, and exhibitions of insolence in all of their sacred places, but chiefly in the grove of Andate,--that being the name of their personification of Victory, to whom they paid the most excessive reverence."¹⁴⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴⁵ Book, LXII, 6 ; Foster, 1906, vol. 5, Books 61-76.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Green, 1995, p. 32 ; Webster, 1986, p. 54 mentions that this idea was put forward by Ross, but he does not give his references.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Book LXII, 7 ; Foster, 1906, vol. 5, Books 61-76.

As the places of worship and the Classical texts do not give information, the identity of the Gallo-British goddesses of war can only be reconstructed through the study of the few existing iconographical samples and the meaning of the divine names.

B) Figurations on Coins: Human or Divine Warriresses?

Several figurations on Gaulish coins are worth studying and analyzing. They all represent naked women who ride galloping mounts and possess martial attributes, such as the cart, the shield, the spear and the hilt of a knife. The certainty of the femininity of those riders resides in the fineness of the torso, the thinness of the arms and the round breasts, which clearly appear on the facsimiles.

A golden coin, probably dating from the 2nd c. BC, from the département of Loire, in the territory of the Turones, bears the representation of a woman, hair streaming in the wind, who stands on a cart, symbolized by a wheel, and holds the reins of a galloping horse (fig. 13).¹⁴⁴⁸ The female charioteer wears a small skirt and brandishes an unidentifiable stick, probably a weapon, towards the front of the steed. Because of the gonfalon* flying on the right of the horse, Duval asserts that the charioteer is depicted entering the fray.



Fig. 13: Golden coin of the Turones and facsimile. On the obverse: a woman charioteer on a symbolical wagon, holding the reins of a horse. Diam: 2.5cm. Duval, 1987, p. 43, 5Aa (=BN 6422).

Third-century BC golden coins from the area of Rennes (Ille-et-Vilaine), in the territory of the Redones, have a naked woman riding a galloping steed without a saddle on the obverse (fig. 14).¹⁴⁴⁹ She brandishes a shield in her left hand, and a spear with two heads or a thunderbolt with three flashes of lightning in her right hand. The female rider is thus clearly a warrior charging at the enemy. Similar types appear on other coins of the Redones, dated to the 2nd c. BC, where the naked female warrior rides a charger with no saddle,

¹⁴⁴⁸ Duval, 1987, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Duval, 1987, pp. 54-59 ; Depeyrot, 2005c, pp. 122-124, 133-134, n°135 and plate 4, n° 135 ; Delestrée, 2004, série 263B,

holds a shield in her right hand and vertically brandishes the hilt of a knife or sword in her left hand (fig. 15).¹⁴⁵⁰ Under the horse appears a lyre.



Fig. 14: Golden coins from the area of Rennes, territory of the Redones. On the obverse: naked female rider, holding shield and spear or thunderbolt with three flashes of lightning. Diam: 2 cm. Duval, 1987, pp. 54, 57, 7A, 7B (=BN 6756, 6757A).



Fig. 15: Golden coins from the territory of the Redones. Left: Naked female rider, above a lyre, holding a shield in her right hand and touching the ear of the horse with the other one. Diam: 2 cm. Duval, 1987, p. 63, 8B (=BN 6711). Right: Naked female rider, above a lyre, holding a shield in her right hand and vertically brandishing the hilt of a knife or sword. Diam: 2cm. Duval, 1987, p. 61, 8A (=BN 6759).

¹⁴⁵⁰ Duval, 1987, pp. 60-63 ; Depeyrot, 2005c, pp. 124, 137, n°141 and plate 4, n°141 ; Delestrée, 2004, série 263C, n°2089, 2090 and p. 52.

A golden coin from the area of Amiens (Somme), in the territory of the Ambiani, probably dating from the 2nd c. BC, also has a naked female rider on the reverse (fig. 16).¹⁴⁵¹ The woman rides two horses and is turned towards the onlooker. Her hair is done in two touselled buns on each side of her head and she wears a belt and a shoulder-cover. She holds a shield in her left hand and a huge torque* in her right hand. A long palm is represented flying over the shield. She does not have any offensive weapons and is not represented charging at the enemy: she rather seems to march past or parade. The shield is a symbol of war, while the palm is a symbol of glorification. As for the torque*, it is indicative of the divine nature of the rider or it accounts for the spoils of war she has brought from the battlefield. Jewels and weapons were indeed collected from the dead enemies at the end of a battle, because it was a symbol of the fighter's valour.¹⁴⁵² They were generally taken and deposited in the sanctuary of the martial deity to thank him for his support and to honour his potency. As Brunaux explains, each warrior despoiled his victims of his possessions and usually brought them back to the city, proudly and solemnly marching past to the sound of songs of triumph.¹⁴⁵³ This female rider must be an illustration of such a tradition. She appears indeed as the representation of a triumphant and glorified warrior, coming back from the battlefield and showing her spoils of war.



Fig. 16: Golden coin of the Ambiani and facsimile. On the reverse: a female rider with a shield and torque. Diam: 1.5cm. Duval, 1987, p. 49, 6Bb, 6Bsg (=BN 10379 = 10303A).*

Finally, two golden coins from Ancenis (Loire-Atlantique) and Falaise (Calvados) have the figurations of running naked women holding offensive weapons in their hands. The coin from Ancenis, dated to the 3rd c. BC, has the representation of a naked woman with long hair walking fast and holding a sort of sickle in her right hand and an undetermined object in the other (fig. 17).¹⁴⁵⁴ The second coin, dated to the 3rd c. BC, depicts a woman with long curly hair streaming in the air. The character is frantically racing and holds a two-edged

¹⁴⁵¹ Duval, 1987, pp. 48-52. A coin of the same type is in Depeyrot, 2005, p. 190, n°153 and pl. 4, n° 153.

¹⁴⁵² Brunaux, 2004, pp. 112-114.

¹⁴⁵³ Brunaux, 1986, pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Delestrée, 2004, série 224, n°2022 and p. 40.

sword in her left hand (fig. 17).¹⁴⁵⁵ According to De Vries, they are the portrayal of women at war or martial goddesses.¹⁴⁵⁶

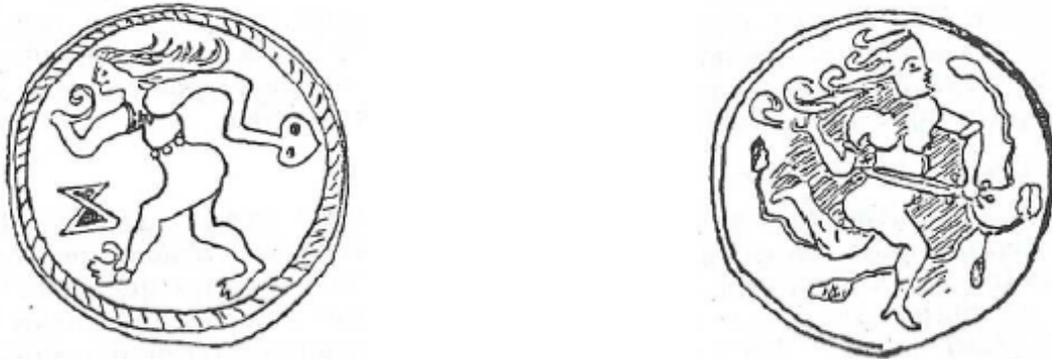


Fig. 17: Facsimiles of golden coins from Ancenis (Loire-Atlantique) (left) and from Falaise (Calvados) (right), representing naked running women holding offensive weapons in their hands: war-like Furies or human warrioresses? De Vries, 1963, p. 144, fig. 5; Delestrée, 2004, n°2022; Guihard, 2008, p. 27, n°1.

The nudity of those war-like women can be explained by the fact that Celtic warriors were often seen entering the fray all naked with only weapons in their hands.¹⁴⁵⁷ This idea is attested by some iconographical devices¹⁴⁵⁸ and Classical accounts. In *The Library of History*, Diodorus Siculus describes the helmets and weapons of the Celtic warriors and indicates they went into battle naked:

Some of them have iron cuirasses, chain-wrought, but others are satisfied with the armour which Nature has given them and go into battle naked. In place of the short sword they carry long broad-swords which are hung on chains of iron or bronze and are worn along the right flank. And some of them gather up their shirts with belts plated with gold or silver.¹⁴⁵⁹

Similarly, Polybius (203-120 BC), in a passage of *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, which tells of the battle of Telamon in 225 BC opposing the Romans to an alliance of Gauls (Insubres, Boii, Taurisci and Gaesatae), recounts that the Gaesatae combatted naked. This is the reason why they were defeated by the Roman javelin-throwers:

[...]For their part the Romans felt encouraged at having trapped the enemy between their two armies, but at the same time dismayed by the splendid array of the Celtic host and the ear-splitting din which they created. There were countless horns and trumpets being blown simultaneously in their ranks, and as the whole army was also shouting its war-cries, there arose such as babel

¹⁴⁵⁵ Guihard, 2008, pp. 26-27, n°1.

¹⁴⁵⁶ De Vries, 1963, p. 144.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Brunaux, 2000, pp. 190-191, 211-213; Ó hÓgáin, 2000, pp. 19, 85-86, 95, 111-112.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Brunaux, 2004, p. 69, fig. 29, and p. 172: sculpture of a dying naked Gaulish warrior, in the Museum of Capitole, Roma.

¹⁴⁵⁹ **Book 5, 30-3; Brunaux, 1986, pp. 106-107. Diodorus Siculus was a Greek Sicilian historian who wrote around 60-30 BC. His Library of History was a history of the Mediterranean world from its beginnings in forty volumes or books – only fifteen have survived.**

of sound that it seemed to come not only from the trumpets of the soldiers but from the whole surrounding countryside at once. Besides this the aspect and the movements of the naked warriors in the front ranks made a terrifying spectacle. They were all men of splendid physique and in the prime of life, and those in the leading companies were richly adorned with gold necklaces and bracelets. The mere sight of them was enough to arouse fear among the Romans, but at the same time the prospect of gaining so much plunder made them twice as eager to fight. However, when the Roman javelin-throwers, following their regular tactics in Roman warfare, advanced in front of the legions and began to hurl their weapons thick and fast, the cloaks and trousers of the Celts in the rear ranks gave some effective protection, but for the naked warriors in front the situation was very different. They had not foreseen this tactic and found themselves in a difficult and helpless situation. The shield used by the Gauls does not cover the whole body, and so the tall stature of these naked troops made the missiles all the more likely to find their mark. [...] In this way the martial ardour of the Gaesatae was broken by an attack with the javelin.¹⁴⁶⁰

By comparison with Polybius' account, the various coins referred to above give the representations of two running female warriors holding weapons, a female charioteer and three different riders charging at the enemy and brandishing weapons: shields, spears, hilts of knife or sword. Those are clearly representations of warriors taking part in combat. The last figuration is that of a warrior coming back from the battlefield, showing her spoils of war and glorified for her deeds. The female riders are not representations of the goddess Epona, who is portrayed riding a horse peacefully and is never associated with war aspects. Are those woman riders at full gallop representations of human or divine warriors? To answer that question it is first necessary to determine whether the Classical texts tell of Celtic women taking up arms and fighting side by side with men. While Irish mythology offers colourful descriptions of war-goddesses, data concerning possible Gallo-British divine warriors are near inexistent and sparse. As we have seen, Irish mythology does not tell of armed divine female riders taking part in battle, but of horrifying unarmed fighting ladies who take the shape of a crow, terrorize their foes and falter their courage by their appearance, shrieks and incantations, so could those female riders then be the figurations of Gaulish war-goddesses? The etymological, epigraphic and iconographical facts evidencing such a cult must therefore be analyzed.

C) Celtic Women at War?

Apart from the famous Queen Boudicca and Queen Cartimandua, very little is known about women at war in Celtic times. Nonetheless, contrary to what Brunaux maintains,¹⁴⁶¹ some texts do allude to the fact that Gaulish women took part in the fighting and probably played a significant role in times of conflict. In *The Library of History*, Diodorus Sicilius evokes the courage of Gaulish women, who are said to be as brave as men: "The women of the Gauls are not only like the men in their great stature but they are a match for them in courage

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Book II, 29-30 ; Scott-Kilvert, 1979.*

¹⁴⁶¹ Brunaux, 1987, p. 84: "Les femmes sont absentes de cette histoire militaire des Gaulois, comme si elles étaient exclues du monde guerrier. Aucun texte ne mentionne leur présence dans l'armée et sur les champs de bataille. Il est encore moins question de leur place."

as well.”¹⁴⁶² In *Historiae*, Ammianus Marcellinus, a 4th-century AD Roman historian – using earlier sources - specifies that Gaulish women could come to their husbands’ aid in time of war. He describes them as fierce, ferocious and terrifying fighters of impressive size and strength. This passage could evidence that women were present on the battlefield, fighting side by side with their husbands:

Celsioris staturae et candidi paene Galli sunt omnes et rutili luminumque torvitate terribiles, avidi iurgiorum et sublatius insolentes. nec enim eorum quemquam adhibita uxore rixantem, multo fortiore et glauca, peregrinorum ferre poterit globus, tum maxime cum illa inflata cervice suffrendens ponderansque niveas ulnas et vastas admixtis calcibus emittere coeperit pugnos ut catapultas tortilibus nervis excussas. Nearly all the Gauls are of a lofty stature, fair, and of ruddy complexion; terrible from the sternness of their eyes, very quarrelsome, and of great pride and insolence. A whole troop of foreigners would not be able to withstand a single Gaul if he called his wife to his assistance, who is usually very strong, and with blue eyes; especially when, swelling her neck, gnashing her teeth, and brandishing her sallow arms of enormous size, she begins to strike blows mingled with kicks, as if they were so many missiles sent from the string of a catapult.¹⁴⁶³

In his *Life of Marius*, Plutarch relates the war between the probably Celtic tribe of the Ambrones and the Roman army, led by Marius, who defeated them at Aix-en-Provence in 102 BC. He explains that the women, witnessing the rout of their soldiers, took up arms (swords and axes) and went to their assistance. They mixed with the warriors and fiercely fought the Romans, crying out in rage, braving the assaults of the foes and undergoing blows and injuries:

Well, then, the Ambrones became separated by the stream; for they did not all succeed in getting across and forming an array, but upon the foremost of them the Ligurians at once fell with a rush, and the fighting was hand-to-hand. Then the Romans came to the aid of the Ligurians, and charging down from the heights upon the Barbarians overwhelmed and turned them back. Most of the Ambrones were cut down there in the stream where they were all crowded together, and the river was filled with their blood and their dead bodies; the rest, after the Romans had crossed, did not dare to face about, and the Romans kept slaying them until they came in their flight to their camp and waggons. Here the women met them, swords and axes in their hands, and with hideous shrieks of rage tried to drive back fugitives and pursuers alike, the fugitives as traitors, and the pursuers as foes; they mixed themselves up with the combatants, with bare hands tore away the shields of the Romans or grasped their swords, and endured wounds and mutilations, their fierce spirits unvanquished to the end. So, then, as we are told,

¹⁴⁶² Book V, 32, 2.

¹⁴⁶³ Book XV, 12, 1; Yonge, 1862, Book 15, pp.45-82.

the battle at the river was brought on by accident rather than by the intention of the commander.¹⁴⁶⁴

A passage in Tacitus' *Annals* is also worth mentioning here, for it alludes to women who could have fulfilled ritual and religious roles on the battlefield, possibly in chanting curses, spells or conjurations for the safety of their own and for the defeat of the foes. It recounts that the Roman Corbulon, to vie with the commander of Britain Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, renowned for his courage and military actions, decided to invade the Isle of Mona (Anglesey), situated to the north-west of Wales. On the shore, battalions of soldiers were waiting for them. A troop of terrifying, frenzied women, with ruffled hair and black dresses, dashed among the ranks of the warriors, brandishing burning torches, while druids recited incantations:

Stabat pro litore diversa acies, densa armis virisque, intercurantibus feminis; in modum Furiarum veste ferali, crinibus delectis faces praeferebant; Druidaeque circum, preces diras sublatis ad caelum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus perculere militem ut quasi haerentibus membris immobile corpus vulneribus praeberent. dein cohortationibus ducis et se ipsi stimulantibus ne muliebri et fanaticum agmen pavescerent, inferunt signa sternuntque obvios et igni suo involvunt. praesidium posthac impositum victis excisique luci saevis superstitionibus sacri: nam cruore captivo adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant. haec agenti Suetonio repentina defectio provinciae nuntiatur. On the shore stood the opposing army with its dense array of armed warriors, while between the ranks dashed women, in black attire like the Furies, with hair dishevelled, waving brands. All around, the Druids, lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth dreadful imprecations, scared our soldiers by the unfamiliar sight, so that, as if their limbs were paralysed, they stood motionless, and exposed to wounds. Then urged by their general's appeals and mutual encouragements not to quail before a troop of frenzied women, they bore the standards onwards, smote down all resistance, and wrapped the foe in the flames of his own brands. A force was next set over the conquered, and their groves, devoted to inhuman superstitions, were destroyed. They deemed it indeed a duty to cover their altars with the blood of captives and to consult their deities through human entrails.¹⁴⁶⁵

Other texts tend to prove that women had a role of protection and encouragement in time of war. They are described standing in the rear of the army or on the edge of the battlefield. They must have witnessed the valiant deeds of their warriors, brought them good luck and roused them. In Tacitus' *Annals* - which relate the 60 AD rebellion of the Celtic tribe of the Iceni, led by Queen Boudicca, against the Romans, led by the commander Gaius Suetonius Paulinus -, the wives of the soldiers are said to have been standing in carts on the edge of the battlefield to witness the victory, encourage the soldiers by their presence and bring good luck to them:

Iam Suetonio quarta decima legio cum vexillariis vicesimanis et proximis auxiliaries, decem ferme milia armatorum erant, cum omittere cunctationem et

¹⁴⁶⁴ Book 19, 9 ; Perrin, 1988 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 410 ; Green, 2005, p. 29. Plutarch was a Greek essayist and biographer (c. 46 AD to c. 127 AD), who wrote numerous treatises and dialogues on philosophical, religious, scientific and literary subject (the *Moralia*), and twenty-three pairs of *Parallels Lives*, biographies of Greeks and Romans (both mythical and historical).

¹⁴⁶⁵ Book 14, 30 ; Church & Brodribb, 1891.

congređi acie parat. deligitque locum artis faucibus et a tergo silva clausum, satis cognito nihil hostium nisi in fronte et apertam planitiem esse sine metu insidiarum. igitur legionarius frequens ordinibus, levis circum armatura, conglobatus pro cornibus eques adstitit. at Britannorum copiae passim per catervas et turmas exultabant, quanta non alias multitudo, et animo adeo feroci ut coniuges quoque testis victoriae secum traherent plaustrisque imponerent quae super extremum ambitum campi posuerant. Suetonius had the fourteenth legion with the veterans of the twentieth, and auxiliaries from the neighbourhood, to the number of about ten thousand armed men, when he prepared to break off delay and fight a battle. He chose a position approached by a narrow defile, closed in at the rear by a forest, having first ascertained that there was not a soldier of the enemy except in his front, where an open plain extended without any danger from ambuscades. His legions were in close array; round them, the light-armed troops, and the cavalry in dense array on the wings. On the other side, the army of the Britons, with its masses of infantry and cavalry, was confidently exulting, a vaster host than ever had assembled, and so fierce in spirit that they actually brought with them, to witness the victory, their wives riding in waggons, which they had placed on the extreme border of the plain.¹⁴⁶⁶

Although it concerns a Germanic sept*, a similar account related by Tacitus in *The Histories*, is interesting to refer to here - Germanic and Celtic peoples were of different origin and culture, but they had practices and customs in common, on account of their proximity. Tacitus, reporting the 69-70 AD revolt of the Germanic tribe of the Batavians against Roman rule, recounts that their leader, Gaius Julius Civilis, asked the women to stand in the rear of the army to rouse the warriors. The text mentions the powerful shrieks of women:

Civilis captarum cohortium signis circumdatus, ut suo militi recens gloria ante oculos et hostes memoria cladis terrerentur, matrem suam sororesque, simul omnium coniuges parvosque liberos consistere a tergo iubet, hortamenta victoriae vel pulsus pudorem. ut virorum cantu, feminarum ululatu sonuit acies, nequaquam par a legionibus cohortibusque redditur clamor. Civilis, surrounding himself with the standards of the captured cohorts, to keep their recent honours before the eyes of his own men, and to terrify the enemy by the remembrance of defeat, now directed his own mother and sisters, and the wives and children of all his men, to stand in the rear, where they might encourage to victory, or shame defeat. The war-song of the men, and the shrill cries of the women, rose from the whole line, and an answering but far less vigorous cheer came from the legions and auxiliaries.¹⁴⁶⁷

From this, it follows that Celtic women were not left out in time of conflict and were seen on or in the vicinity of the battlefield. Even though one of the texts mentions that women could have had recourse to weapons and fighting, it is difficult to assert that women directly took part in the conflict with arms, for no archaeological evidence attests such an idea. Anyhow, the Classical texts never tell of naked female charioteers or riders brandishing weapons and fighting the foes. Consequently, the texts do not provide conclusive evidence that the figurations on the coins of the Teurones, Ambiani and Redones are representations

¹⁴⁶⁶ Book 14, 34 ; Church & Brodrigg, 1891.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Book 4, 18 ; Church & Brodrigg, 1898.

of human warrioresses. The role of women in time of war was certainly more linked to the ritual and religious sphere. Being seen on the edge of the battlefield or at the rear of the army, women could have participated not physically but spiritually in the fighting by chanting incantations to stimulate their army and bring them good luck or by cursing the enemies to weaken them. This is very likely, for the Irish war-goddesses are said to fulfil such a role. They do not take part in the fighting, but recite conjurations, cast terrible spells and pronounce magic formulas to overwhelm the foes and motivate their troops. They are fearsome magicians and death prophetesses rather than fighting women in the proper sense.

If therefore those figurations on coins are not the portrayals of real warrioresses, could they have been representations of divine war-goddesses? Is there any evidence in the archaeology of Gaul and Britain which could produce proof of the existence of Gallo-British war-goddesses?

D) Divine Goddess-Names related to Protection and War

Several goddesses might be related to protection and war on account of the significance of their names, which denote protection, courage, strength, war fury and victory. Relying on etymology* only, however, is problematic. The meaning of some divine names remains uncertain and questionable. In other cases, several etymologies can be accepted for the same name or epithet, such as Belisama, who can be understood as 'the Most Brilliant' or 'the Most Powerful'. Inducing the functions of a goddess from her name when several etymologies are possible is therefore hazardous, but when there is no archaeological evidence (iconography, place of worship, ex-votos, etc) to shed light on the nature and functions of the goddess honoured in the dedication, etymology* is the only science which can bring significant information. In the case of an isolated dedication, i.e. unique and not discovered in its place of origin - because found in re-employment* in a wall for instance - it is important to analyze the various potential interpretations of the divine name. Dismissing a plausible etymology* could prove disastrous for the comprehension of the essence of a goddess.

The war-like aspect of a goddess can also be brought to light by her association with a Roman goddess of war, such as Victory or Minerva, in the inscription, or, in some exceptional cases, by iconographical evidence, such as for Brigantia. When possible, the archaeological and religious contexts should be investigated to determine the nature of the worship. It may be that the meaning of a divine name and the nature of the place of worship do not concur, such as in the case of Segeta, whose name signifies 'The Victorious One' but who was honoured in healing water sanctuaries in Gallo-Roman times. The task is thus complex and the conclusions necessarily conjectural. This shows the complexity of the character of some goddesses, which certainly evolved and became endowed with different features and qualities throughout the centuries, especially at the time of the Roman invasion. Some seem to have been more particularly the embodiment and protectresses of the city or the tribe, while others have names reflecting the qualities needed in war, such as strength, fearlessness, rage and frenzy. Finally, some goddesses personify triumph and seem to have played the part of a leader leading its people to victory.

1) Protection

a) *Anextlomara* ('the Great Protectress')

Protection is personified by the goddess Anextlomara, who is known from a single inscription, dating between the 1st and 3rd c. AD, discovered in Aventicum (Avenches, Switzerland), the capital of the tribe of the Helveti: *Anextlomarae et Aug(usto) Public(us) Aunus*, 'To Anextlomara and to August, Publicus Aunus' (fig. 18).¹⁴⁶⁸ The dedication was found in a context of a habitation, which points to a domestic cult.¹⁴⁶⁹ Anextlomara is associated with the imperial cult of the Emperor Augustus and the dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. Her name is indeed composed of *anextlo-*, *anexto-* signifying 'protection' and *maro-*, 'great', 'big'.¹⁴⁷⁰ Anextlomara is therefore 'the Great Protectress' or 'With Great Protection'. Her name is the feminine version of the epithet given to Apollo Anextlomaros, the 'Great Protector', venerated in South Shields (GB) and Le Mans (Sarthe).¹⁴⁷¹ The discovery of the dedication in a domestic context tends to prove that Anextlomara was a guardian ensuring the safety and prosperity of the people in their everyday lives, at home and at work. She might also have brought protection to the inhabitants in time of conflict or war, but no archaeological data is available to corroborate such a hypothesis.



Fig. 18: Dedication to Anextlorama ('the Great Protectress'), discovered in Avenches (Switzerland). In the Roman Museum of Avenches, vitrine 23, n°1 (Catalogue Inscriptions, n°25). AE 1916, 2 ; F 94.

b) The 'Fortress' Goddesses: *Dunisia* and *Ratis*

The goddess name Dunisia is known from a single inscription, discovered in 1879, when the church of Bussy-Albieu, situated near Montbrison (Loire), in the territory of the Segusavi, was demolished.¹⁴⁷² The dedication, dating from the 1st c. AD, is very damaged, incomplete and remains somewhat obscure. The inscription associates Dunisia with the goddess Segeta, who is mentioned in two other dedications from Feurs (Loire) and Sceaux-en-Gâtinais (Loiret): *(f)il(ius) A. (ci)vitat(is) (Segusiavi?) (pr)aeffecto tem(puli?) deae Segetae*

¹⁴⁶⁸ AE 1916, 2 ; F 94.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Nélis-clément, 2008, p. 91, n°1. It was discovered between *insulae* (houses) 14 and 15.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 49' 218 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 211, 226.

¹⁴⁷¹ RIB II, 2 / 2415.55 ; CIL XIII, 3190 ; Schmidt, 1957, p. 131 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 385-386 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 54.

¹⁴⁷² CAG, 42, Loire, 1997, p. 72.

*Fo(ri) allecto aquae (te)mpuli Dunisiae (pr)aelectorio ma(ximo) ejusdem tem(puli) pag(us) ...blocnus.*¹⁴⁷³

Decipherment of this dedication remains problematic and complex. It mentions a temple erected to the goddess Segeta and another one to the goddess Dunisia. The dedicator, who is anonymous, is apparently endowed with municipal honour or priesthood and seems to have been admitted in a corporation attached to temple duties (*praefectus*).¹⁴⁷⁴ The name *Fori*, which follows the name of the goddess, must refer to Feurs, a village situated 16 kilometres from Bussy-Albieu, where another inscription to Segeta engraved on a weight was found in 1525.

Dunisia's name is related to the divine epithet *Dunatis*, given to Mars *Bolvinnus* in Bouhy (Nièvre, territory of the Senones)¹⁴⁷⁵ and to Mars *Segomo* in Culoz (Ain, territory of the Ambarri).¹⁴⁷⁶ *Dunisia* and *Dunatis* are both derived from the Celtic word *dūnon* meaning 'hill', 'enclosed area', 'fortified town', 'citadel', cognate with Old Irish *dún*, 'fort, fortress', Welsh *dinas*, 'city' and Breton *din*, 'fortified town'.¹⁴⁷⁷ This form, corresponding to Latin *dunum*, is attested by a quantity of place names in Europe, such as *Lugdunum*, 'the Fort of Lugus' (Lyons, Rhône-Alpes), *Eburodunum*, 'the Yew-Fort' (Embrun, Hautes-Alpes), etc. These fortified cities, referred to as *oppidum** in the singular form and *oppida** in the plural form, developed from the beginning of the 2nd c. BC until the end of the 1st c. BC, the most important phase being the last quarter of the 2nd c. BC.¹⁴⁷⁸ The phenomenon of hill-top fortified towns goes back to very ancient times. The first occurrences appeared in the 5th millennium (Ancient Neolithic) and they were particularly developed at the end of the Bronze Age (c. 900 BC) and in the first period of the Iron Age when insecurity increased, but those are smaller and somewhat different from the *oppida**.¹⁴⁷⁹ The *oppidum** covered an area between 30 to 1,500 hectares, and was generally enclosed by ramparts and closed by 'pincer' doors named 'Zangentore'.¹⁴⁸⁰ They were usually situated on hills or mountains, which allowed them to dominate the surroundings and to protect themselves from the foes. Excavations carried out in the second half of the 19th c. revealed the presence of such fortified cities in a large part of Europe, Britain and Ireland (fig. 19). On account of their name, it is undeniable that Mars *Dunatis* and *Dunisia* are the embodiment of the *dunum*, i.e. 'the agglomeration protected by an enclosure' or 'the fortified town'.¹⁴⁸¹ The fort being a place of refuge for the rural population in period of war and the centre of living, sometimes for the population of a whole territory, *Dunatis* ('the Fort') and *Dunisia* ('the Fortress') may

¹⁴⁷³ *CIL* XIII, 1646 ; *RE*, vol. 1, n°131.

¹⁴⁷⁴ *RE*, vol. 1, p. 115, n°131 ; Lajoie, 2006, p. 75.

¹⁴⁷⁵ *CIL* XIII, 2899: *Marti Bolvinno Dun[ati]*. According to Olmsted, 1994, p. 346, the epithet *Bolvinnus* is topographical, for it must have been the ancient name of the city of Bouhy.

¹⁴⁷⁶ *CIL* XIII, 2532: *Deo Marti Segomoni Dunati*.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Olmsted, 1994, p. 338 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 154-156 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 220 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 37, 203 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1963, pp. 363-376 (with a list of the various *Lugdunum* found in Gaul).

¹⁴⁷⁸ Fichtl, 2000, pp. 31-34.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Fichtl, 2000, pp. 29-30 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 762-763.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Kruta, 2000, p. 873 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 84-86 ; Fichtl, 2000, pp. 1-15.

¹⁴⁸¹ Vendryes, 1997, p. 41 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 44.

be understood as the deities embodying and presiding over the stronghold, protecting their people and city.

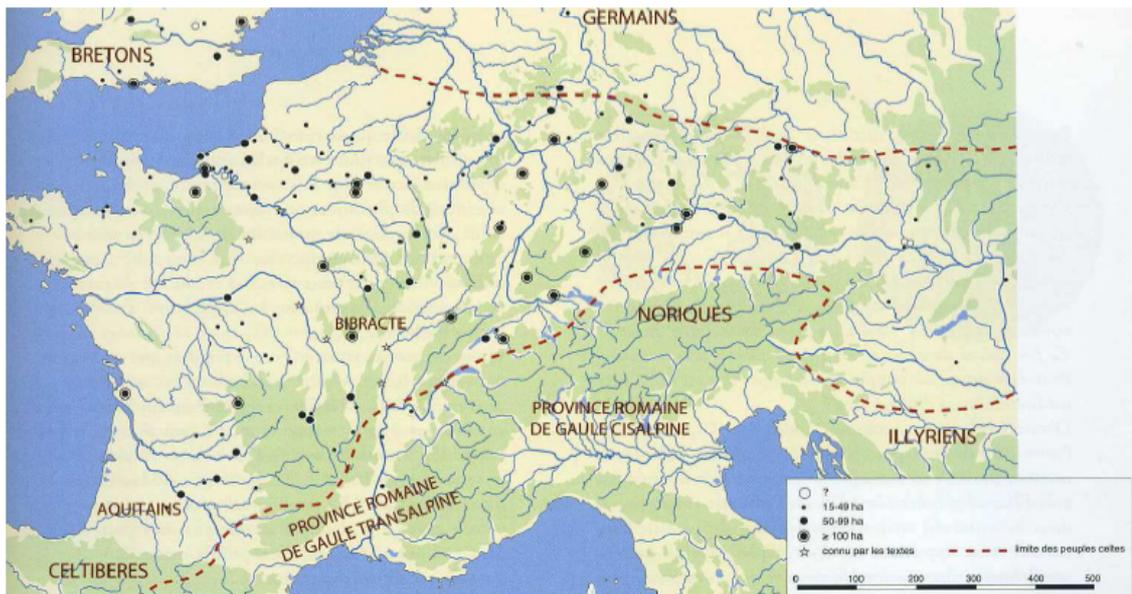


Fig. 19: Map of the geographical distribution of the main oppida* of the Celtic world. Fichtl, 2000, pp. 18-19.

This function of protectress of the fortress may be echoed in another goddess name: Ratis. She is venerated in two British inscriptions from Birdoswald (Cumbria): *Deae Rati votum in perpetuo*, 'To the goddess Ratis a vow in perpetuity',¹⁴⁸² and from Chesters (Cheshire): *Dea(e) Rat(i) v.s.l.*, 'To the goddess Ratis (someone) willingly fulfilled his vow' (fig. 20).¹⁴⁸³ Olmsted mistakenly relates her name to the god name Ratomatos, which he derives from a Celtic root *rato-*, meaning 'grace', 'fortune'.¹⁴⁸⁴ This god name, which is listed neither in Jüfer's *Répertoire des Dieux Gaulois* nor in Delamarre's *Noms de personnes celtiques dans l'épigraphie celtique*, actually does not exist. Ellis Evans specifies that this divine name mentioned by Holder is a misreading of *CIL XIII, 2583* found in Mâcon: [...] *Diorata Mato Antullus Mutilus* (...).¹⁴⁸⁵ As for the goddess name Ratis, it is not based on Celtic *rato-*, 'fortune', 'grace'. It can be related either to Celtic *rate*, *ratis*, signifying 'wall', 'rampart' and by metonymy 'fort' – cf. Old Irish *ráith*, 'lump of earth', 'fort' – or to *ratis*, 'fern', but, according to Delamarre, this latter etymology* is far less probable.¹⁴⁸⁶ The goddess *Ratis* must therefore signify 'the Fortress' and possess the same functions as Dunisia. Anwyl and Olmsted suggest that her name is similar to Ratae, the ancient name of Leicester (Leicestershire), and that she must have been the eponymous goddess of the city.¹⁴⁸⁷ This theory is, however, difficult to believe inasmuch as the two inscriptions were not discovered in the area.

¹⁴⁸² *RIB* 1903 was found before 1873. It is now in the Museum at Carlisle.

¹⁴⁸³ *RIB* 1454 was found before 1867. It is now in Chesters Museum.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 422, 437, 439 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 255 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 240-241.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, 1075 ; Evans, 1967, p. 241.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 254 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 93.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Anwyl, 1906a, p. 47 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 422, 437.

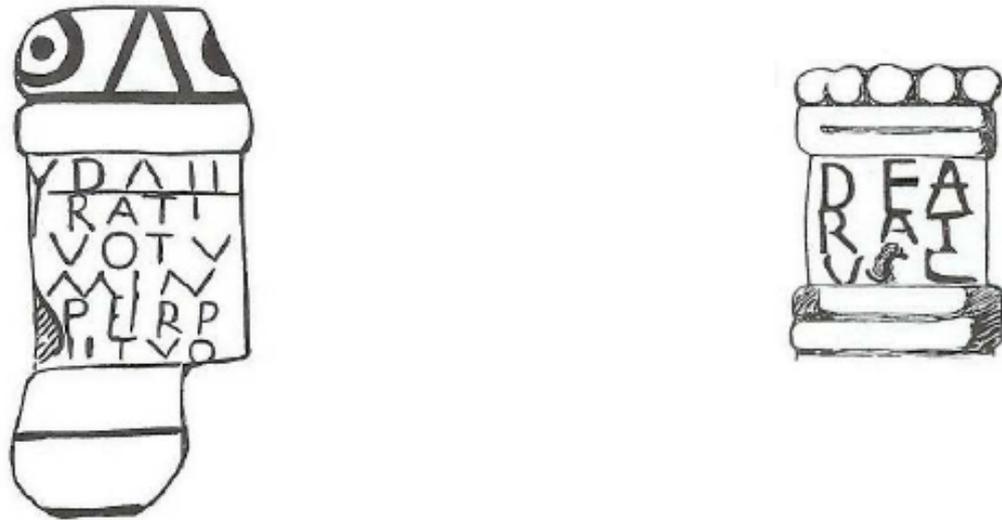


Fig. 20: Altars from Birdoswald and Chesters (GB) dedicated to the goddess Ratis. Carlisle Museum and Chesters Museum. RIB 1903, 1454.

c) Protection of the City

Bibracte

While Dunisia and Ratis are the personifications and protectresses of Celtic fortified cities in general, some other goddesses are embodiments and guardians of particular oppida* and cities. Such is the case of the goddess Bibracte, the eponymous goddess of the chief city of the Aedui, mentioned by Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* and by Strabo in his *Geography*.¹⁴⁸⁸

In the middle of the 19th c., the emplacement of this important Gaulish oppidum* was a controversial issue and brought into vehement conflict the scholars of the time. C. Rossigneux maintained that Bibracte was Augustodunum (Autun), while Jacques-Gabriel Bulliot claimed it was located on Mont-Beuvray (Saône-et-Loire) (fig. 21).¹⁴⁸⁹ The excavations carried out by Bulliot and Joseph Déchelette on this site from 1867 to 1907, resumed between 1984 and 1995, revealed the traces of an ancient occupation and definitely settled the question over the location of Bibracte.¹⁴⁹⁰ These archaeological discoveries showed that settlement on Mont-Beuvray went back to the Neolithic Period. It also evidenced the presence of the Aedui from the end of the 2nd c. BC to the end of the 1st c. BC, when, becoming allied with the Romans, they left their ancient hill fort to settle twenty kilometres away in the new city of Augustodunum (Autun).¹⁴⁹¹ The oppidum* of Bibracte, which gave its name to Mont-Beuvray, covered an area of 200 hectares and was fortified by a double rampart enclosing a complex inside organisation, with aristocratic residences, a gigantic

¹⁴⁸⁸ Caesar, I, 23, VII, 55, 63 ; Strabon, IV, 3.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Guillaumet, 1996, pp. 45-52.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, pp. 3-14 ; Bulliot, 1899 ; Dechelette, 1904 ; Gruel & Vitali, 1998, pp. 1-140.

¹⁴⁹¹ Fichtl, 2000, pp. 31-32 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 468-469.

astronomically oriented basin, a market, arts and crafts districts and sanctuaries located in the highest part of the plateau.¹⁴⁹²



Fig. 21: Picture of Mont-Beuvray (Saône-et-Loire), where the city of the Aedui, Bibracte, was excavated in the 19th c. (Source: J. Delfour, 2000).

Three late inscriptions, probably dating from the 4th c. AD, discovered in Autun (Saône-et-Loire), are dedicated to the goddess Bibracte. The first inscription, discovered in 1679 in an ancient well, is engraved on a circular medallion in silver-plated brass, the authenticity of which was challenged by some specialists, who considered it to be the work of a forger.¹⁴⁹³ Those doubts, arising due to the argument over the emplacement of the Aedui hill fort, have apparently been settled. The inscription reads: *Deae Bibracti P. Capril(ius) Pacatus IIIIIvir Augustal(is) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Goddess Bibracte, Publius Caprilus Pacatus, augustal sevir, paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 22).¹⁴⁹⁴ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens and is an augustal sevir, i.e. a freed slave designated for the year to supervise the Imperial cult of the city. Two other fragments of inscriptions mentioning the goddess were discovered in Autun but are now lost.¹⁴⁹⁵ The first one read *Bibracti (as)signatum*, 'attributed to Bibracte', while the other one was engraved on the socle of a statue, the two feet of which only remained: *Deae Bibracti*, 'To the Goddess Bibracte'.

¹⁴⁹² Kruta, 2000, pp. 468-469 ; Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, pp. 33-80 ; Guillaumet, 1996, pp. 65-144 ; Fichtl, 2000, pp. 74-75 ; Romero, 2006.

¹⁴⁹³ Bulliot, 1870, p. 306, 1873, p. 24 ; Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, p. 16.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *CIL* XIII, 2651.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Bulliot, 1873, pp. 23-24 ; *CIL* XIII, 2652, 2653.



Fig. 22: Facsimile of the inscription to the goddess Bibracte engraved on a medallion in silver brass, discovered in a well in Autun (Nièvre). Bulliot, 1870-1872, p. 306 ; Romero, 2006, p. 20.

The etymology* of Bibracte remains controversial today. On the one hand, most scholars admit that Bibracte is to be related to Celtic *bebros*, *bebrus* signifying 'beaver' - cf. Latin *beber*.¹⁴⁹⁶ It is worth noting that some Celtic peoples bear that name, such as the tribe of the Bibroci, situated in the south of Britain (Berkshire, west of modern London), and the Pyrenean tribe of the Bebruces, who had for King Bebrux 'Beaver'. The Mont-Beuvray or Bibracte can be thus glossed as 'the Beaver-Mount', which may indicate that the hill was inhabited by beavers in ancient times, but this remains to be proved. On the other hand, other specialists, such as Olmsted or Lacroix, side with Vendryes, who analyzes Bibracte as *bi-bracto-*, a reduplicated form of the past participle *bract-*, similar to Greek *phráktos*, *phrássō*, 'fortified' or 'to fence, to wall something in', and suggests that Bibracte might mean 'The Very Fortified (Mount)'.¹⁴⁹⁷ This etymology* is enticing, for Bibracte is actually a fortified mount, the ramparts of which may be of very ancient date, predating the Aedui.¹⁴⁹⁸ Nevertheless, it remains dubious for most specialists of the Gaulish language.

Finally, some have tried to relate her name to the Latin root *biber* signifying 'drink', to justify her divine attachment to the numerous springs and rivers of Mont-Beuvray. From this, Vendryes infers that Bibracte was originally a personification of the springs, which are

¹⁴⁹⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, p. 11 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 69 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 188-189.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Vendryes, 1905, p. 395 ; Lebel, 1962, pp. 171-172 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 420-421 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 18, 136

¹⁴⁹⁸ Kruta, 2000, p. 468 ; Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, pp. 19-28 ; Buchsenschutz, Guillaumet & Ralston, 1999.

numerous on the site of the oppidum*, and Bulliot adds that she must have had the functions of a healer like Sequana.¹⁴⁹⁹ Yet, as Christian Goudineau rightly points out, Bibracte is certainly more a deification of the mount than the springs, for it is the mount which stands out in the landscape of the Morvan and must have originally been worshipped.¹⁵⁰⁰ The cult may nonetheless have later extended to the springs of Mont-Beuvray. Excavations carried out at the Fontaine Saint-Pierre, dated 1st c. BC, revealed much archaeological material, attesting to a healing cult. An ear in bronze echoes the anatomic ex-votos* unearthed at the Sources of the Seine, but this does not prove that Bibracte was specifically viewed as a healing goddess.¹⁵⁰¹ At the summit of Mont-Beuvray, not very far away from this spring, was unearthed what Goudineau defines as “a proto-historic religious enclosure” surrounded by a ditch, where two vases dating from the end of the 1st c. BC were found.¹⁵⁰² According to him, this enclosure could be interpreted as a place of devotion for the goddess Bibracte, but this theory remains speculative.

Bibracte must originally have been the deification of the sacred mount and must have represented its highness and force. When the powerful sept* of the Aedui chose to settle and build their fortress on the plateau of Mont-Beuvray, her name was given to the fortified city and she became its representative and patroness, bringing well-being and protection to her people.

Vesunna

The goddess Vesunna, honoured in three inscriptions, is the embodiment of the chief city of the sept* of the Petrucori which bore the same name in Gallo-Roman times: Vesunna (Vésones), present-day Périgueux (Dordogne). Her name is undeniably Celtic. It is based on the Gaulish root *vesu-* meaning ‘precious’, ‘estimable’ or ‘good’.¹⁵⁰³ Vesunna would therefore mean ‘The Estimable (City)’.

The first inscription, dating from the 1st c. AD, was discovered in Périgueux in the 16th c. in re-employment* in the ancient wall of the city: *Tutelae Au[g(ustae)] Vesunniae Secundus Sotti l(ibertus) d(e) s(uo) d(edit)*, ‘To the August Tutela Vesunnia Secundus freed from Sottus offered this (monument) at his own expense’.¹⁵⁰⁴ The dedicator Secundus is a freed slave who bears a Latin name, while his master Sottus has a Celtic name.¹⁵⁰⁵ The second dedication, dating from the second half of the 2nd c. AD, was found in 1868 in the wall of the convent: *[Numinib(us) A]ugusti [et --- A]ugustae Belic[us et] Bello Prim[i]ani Tutelae Vesunnae porticum exp[ol]iendum et [exorna]nd[um]*, [...] August and to [...] Augusta Bellicus et Bello members of the society of the Primiani had the portico of the goddess Tutela

¹⁴⁹⁹ Bulliot, in his two articles from 1870-1872, pp. 306-319, 1873-1875, pp. 21-30 tried to demonstrate that *Bibracte* was actually not the protectress of the oppidum* of the Aedui but a spring-goddess with healing functions, like Sequana, Vesunna or Aventia ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 49 ; *RE*, vol. 3, pp. 378-379, n° 1038 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 219.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰¹ Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, p. 89.

¹⁵⁰² Goudineau, Peyre, 1993, pp. 90-94.

¹⁵⁰³ De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 146 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 318 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 236 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 71.

¹⁵⁰⁴ *CIL* XIII, 956 ; *ILA-P*, 11. It is housed in the Musée du Périgord.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 172 ; *ILA-P*, 11, p. 79.

Vesunna restored and embellished [...] (fig. 23).¹⁵⁰⁶ The dedicators Bellicus and Bello are peregrines who bear names of Celtic origin.¹⁵⁰⁷ The monument they restored belongs to a sanctuary erected in honour of the goddess Vesunna, called 'Tour de Vésone', a 1st- or 2nd-century AD 24-metre high tower which was originally surrounded by a peristyle* of 23 columns and was the sacred center of a huge sanctuary (fig. 24-25).¹⁵⁰⁸ The last inscription, discovered in Cologne (Germany), is uncertain: [Ve]sun[n]a[e].¹⁵⁰⁹ Some scholars think that her cult was originally related to the Fontaine Sainte-Sabine located in Périgueux.¹⁵¹⁰ She might thus have been a spring-goddess, but this remains conjectural, since the inscriptions were not discovered in the surroundings of the fountain.

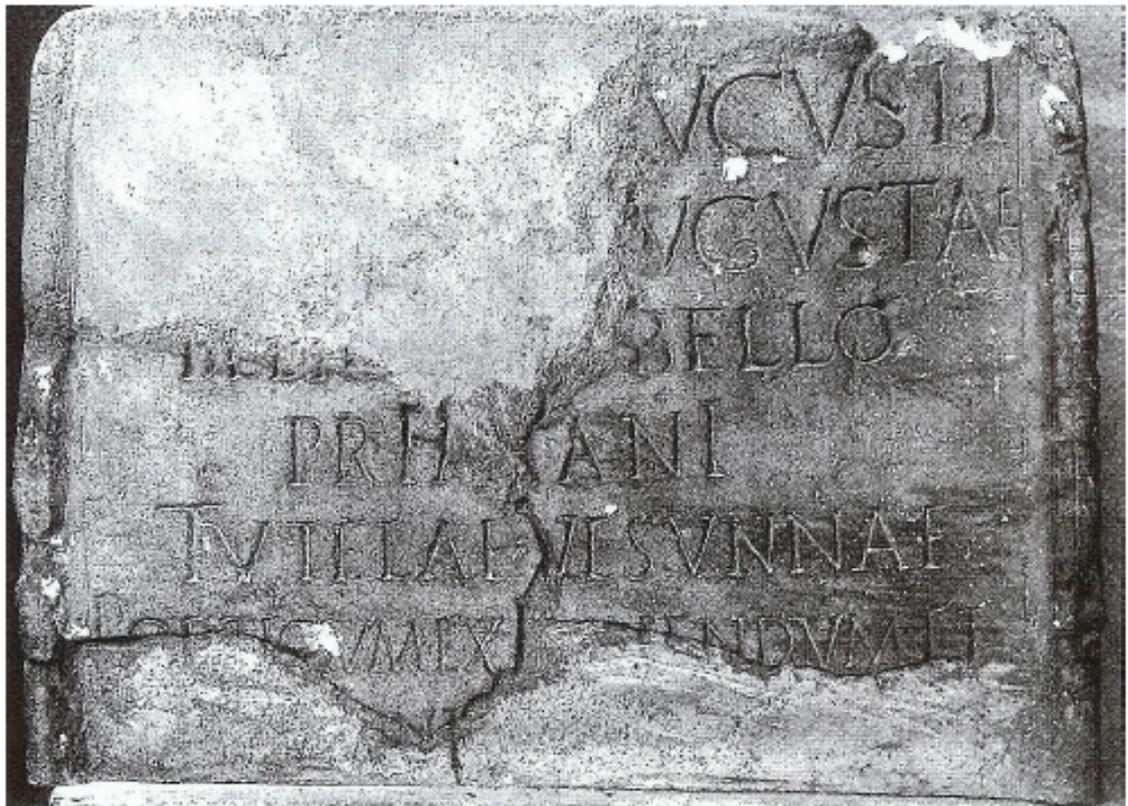


Fig. 23: Inscription to the goddess Tutela Vesunna, found in Périgueux (Dordogne). Musée du Périgord. ILA-P, 24, p. 107.

¹⁵⁰⁶ *CIL* XIII, 949 ; *ILA-P*, 24. It is housed in the Musée du Périgord.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 71-72 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 39.

¹⁵⁰⁸ *ILA-P*, 24, p. 107 ; Thévenot, 1968, pp. 223-224 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 70-71 ; Girardy-Caillat, 1998, pp. 28-35.

¹⁵⁰⁹ *AE* 1981, 670.

¹⁵¹⁰ Olmsted, 1994, p. 429 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 70-71 ; Doulan & Maurin, 2004, p. 141.



Fig. 24: Picture of the vestiges of the Gallo-Roman 'Tour de Vésone'. Girardy-Caillat, 1998, p. 32.



Fig. 25: Virtual reconstitution of the 'Tour de Vésone', which was the heart of the Gallo-Roman sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Vesunna. Musée Gallo-Romain de Périgueux, Service d'Archéologie Régional, IRAA, Archéovision, Plate Forme Technologique 3D, CNRS.

In the two inscriptions from Périgueux, Vesunna is associated with the Roman Tutela, who is mentioned in another dedication, dated 51-80 AD, discovered in three fragments in Périgueux: [...] *Tute[lae Petru]cor(iorum) A(ulus) Pomp(eius) Dumnom[oti f(i)lius] [---] trib(unus) mil(itum) leg(ionis) [---]ae praef(ectus) fabr(um) amphit[heatrum] [cum suis] ornament[is ---] d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) d(edit) A(ulus) Pomp(eius) A(uli) Pomp(eii) Ter[tulli f(i)lius] [---]s perficien[dum curauit] idemq(ue) dedicauit*, '[To ... and (?) to] the Tutela of the Petrucori, Aulus Pompeius [---] son of Dumnom(otus?) military tribune of the [---] legion [---], prefect* of the workers, paid at his own expense the amphitheatre with [all] its ornaments. Aulus Pompeius [---]us, son of Aulus Pompeius Ter[tullus] took charge of the achievement of the construction and put up the dedication of the monument as well'.¹⁵¹¹ Here the dedicator, a Roman citizen and tribune of a legion* of the Roman army, offers an amphitheatre to the Tutela of the Petrucori, whose name Vesunna is known from the two other inscriptions. In Roman cults, Tutela is either a divine attribute given to a deity or a goddess in her own right.¹⁵¹² She is similar in functions to the *geni loci* and Fortuna, with whom she is sometimes associated in the inscriptions: she can be the guardian of a person, a family or a place, such as a country, a city, a house, a boat or a sacred wood, but she is most often remembered as the personification and patroness of a city.¹⁵¹³ She ensures prosperity, well-being, preservation and safety; a type of role which is symbolized by the crown and the cornucopia* she is generally attributed in the iconography. As Jullian explains, her cult is ancient and very often replaced an unnamed local protective deity, whose name was either ignored or kept secret because the inhabitants were afraid that enemies could implore her or pronounce her name to drive her out of the city.¹⁵¹⁴ When her name was known, it was sometimes given to the city she embodied and protected, for instance Bibracte or Vesunna.

¹⁵¹¹ *ILA-P*, 27 ; *CIL* XIII, 962, 11045. It is housed in the Musée du Périgord.

¹⁵¹² See for instance *CIL* XIII, 583, 939 where she is venerated on her own.

¹⁵¹³ Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 553-554 ; *Paulys*, vol. 7.A.2, pp. 1497-1607 ; Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 61-66.

¹⁵¹⁴ Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 63-64.

According to her name, Vesunna is a Celtic goddess, whose cult flourished in Gallo-Roman times. A religious complex and an amphitheatre were built in her honour and her association to the cult of the Emperor (*Augustus*) indicates she was part of the official Roman cults.¹⁵¹⁵ She embodied the city of the Petrucori and offered her benevolence and protection to its inhabitants. She is therefore similar in function to the goddess Bibracte, the personification of the city of the Aedui. Vesunna may be etymologically related to the Germanic *Matronae Vesuniahenae*, venerated in five inscriptions from Vettweis and an inscription from Zülpich (Germany).¹⁵¹⁶ According to Kern, the *Vesuniahenae* would be the protectresses of 'delight, feast, good food'.¹⁵¹⁷

d) Protection of the Tribe: *Brigantia*

In Chapter 2, it was established that the goddess *Brigantia* is etymologically cognate with Irish *Brigit*, Gaulish *Brigindona* and the Celtiberian *Matres Brigiaca*. These all have names referring to high places or designating their divine eminence, prestige and power. Their names mean 'the High One' or 'the Exalted One'. *Brigantia*, who is venerated in seven inscriptions from South West Yorkshire and the region of Hadrian's Wall, is the tribal-goddess of the *Brigantes*, a powerful Celtic sept* inhabiting the region where the inscriptions were discovered. Being their tutelary goddess, she must have represented them and protected them; a role evidenced by a figuration from the Roman Fort at Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland) portraying her with shield and spear and by her equation with Roman goddesses of war and civil protection: *Victory* in Yorkshire and *Caelestis* in Northumbria.

Brigantia (Victory)

The inscription from Birrens is of great interest, for it comes with a representation of the goddess: *Brigantiae s(acrum) Amandus arc(h)itectus ex imperio imp(eratum fecit)*, 'Sacred to *Brigantia*, *Amandus*, the engineer, by command fulfilled the order' (fig. 26).¹⁵¹⁸ This relief* probably dates from the second or third decade of the 3rd c. - it is in fact dated 210 AD. The dedicator bears a Latin name *Amandus*¹⁵¹⁹ and a legionary grade (*Architectus*). According to Norah Joliffe, he may have belonged to the Sixth Legion* based at York.¹⁵²⁰ The goddess is represented standing in a niche, wearing a long tunic, a short cloak and possibly shoes or sandals. Apart from the round object she holds in her left hand, *Brigantia* bears all the attributes of the Roman war-goddess *Minerva*, who is similar to the Greek *Athena*.¹⁵²¹ Like them, *Brigantia* is helmeted and holds a spear in her right hand. The figuration is therefore similar to Classical representations of war-goddesses and does not seem to possess any particular Celtic features.

¹⁵¹⁵ *ILA-P*, p. 79.

¹⁵¹⁶ *NL* 192 ; *CIL* XIII, 7850-7852, 7854, 7925.

¹⁵¹⁷ Kern, 1873-1875, pp. 169-170.

¹⁵¹⁸ *RIB* 2091.

¹⁵¹⁹ Solin & Salomies, 1994, p. 291.

¹⁵²⁰ Joliffe, 1941, pp. 49-52.

¹⁵²¹ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 766 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 222.



Fig. 26: Representation of the goddess Brigantia with helmet and spear, combined with an inscription identifying her, discovered in Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland). Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland. RIB 2091 and plate XIX ; Joliffe, 1941, p. 35, plate 1.

Yet, Joliffe believes that Brigantia's helmet is not of Classical type and may be a mark of Celtic style, for it is, according to her, horned – but this is difficult to determine with certainty.¹⁵²² Helmets with horns are known from Celtic times, even though the type is not common, as Diodorus Siculus indicates in *The Library of History*:

On their heads they put bronze helmets which have large embossed figures standing out from them and give an appearance of great size to those who wear them; for in some cases horns are attached to the helmet so as to form a single piece, in other cases images of the fore-parts of birds or four-footed animals.¹⁵²³

¹⁵²² Joliffe, 1941, p. 50.

¹⁵²³ *Diodorus Siculus, The Library of History, Book V, 30.*

The most well-known example is the helmet in bronze and coral discovered in the Thames by Waterloo Bridge in London, dating from the last quarter of the 1st c. BC (fig. 27).¹⁵²⁴ The most ancient helmets, which are known from 4th-century BC princely funerary tombs on the Continent, are generally in bronze, iron and leather and fall into two main groups: the almost hemispherical helmets and the pointed conical helmets, the earliest type of which, called the 'Berru type', is exemplified by the 4th- or 5th-century helmet coming from the princely tomb with cart of La Gorge-Meillet (Somme-Tourbe, Marne, Hallstatt Period).¹⁵²⁵ Some later pieces are more sophisticated, enhanced with gold leaves, coral, enamel and animal crests, as Diodorus of Siculus details in *The Library of History*. The 3rd-century BC helmet in iron from Cuimesti (Romania) is topped by an impressive crow in bronze (see fig. 6),¹⁵²⁶ while the 1st-century AD (female?) bronze head from Kerguilly-en-Dinéault (Finistère) wears a water-bird-crested helmet (a swan?) (fig. 28).¹⁵²⁷ From the 1st c. BC, helmets became then very similar to those of the Roman legionaries.¹⁵²⁸ Brigantia's horned helmet – if such it is - may therefore be of Celtic tradition. It also has similarities with the helmets worn by Athena/Minerva. It seems that Brigantia's helmet has a crown on the front, as well as a sort of triple crest above, which could be compared to the helmet of Athena in the monumental chryselephantine statue made by Pheidias for the Parthenon (438 BC), though the latter is much more elaborate (fig. 29). Brigantia's helmet might also have something of the hemispherical helmet of Athena/Minerva in the statue from Velletri (c. 430 BC, Italy) attributed to Cresilas (fig. 29).

¹⁵²⁴ Birkhan, 1999, p. 269, n° 424 ; Duval, 1977, p. 204, fig. 211 ; see also Birkhan, 1999, p. 376, n° 723: representation of a naked Gaulish warrior wearing a horned helmet found in Upper Italy.

¹⁵²⁵ Schonfelder, Martin, 'Le casque de la tombe à char de Somme-Tourbe 'La Gorge-Meillet' (Marne)', in *Antiquités nationales*, n°36, 2004, pp. 207-214 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 56-57 ; Brunaux, 1987, pp. 102-107 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 521-522 ; Hatt, 1989, pp. 55-67;; Birkhan, 1999, pp. 107, 377, n° 724. For other instances of helmets, see Birkhan, 1999, pp. 107-108 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 395-396 (Agris), 410-411 (Amfreville-sous-les-Monts), p. 514 (Canosa di Puglia).

¹⁵²⁶ Duval, 1977, pp. 78, 106 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 548, 522 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 380, n° 731.

¹⁵²⁷ Birkhan, 1999, p. 268, n° 422 ; Duval, 1977, p. 194, n°201.

¹⁵²⁸ Brunaux, 1987, p. 106 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 522.



Fig. 27: Horned helmet in bronze and coral discovered in the Thames, London (GB) (end of 1st c. BC) (Source: British Museum, London).



Fig. 28: Goddess (?) wearing a water-bird crested helmet in bronze (1st c. AD) from Kerguilly-en-Dinéault (Finistère). Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'archéologie, Rennes. Duval, 1977, p. 194, n° 201.



Fig. 29: Left: small Roman replica in marble of the chryselephantine (made of gold and ivory on wood) statue of Athena from the Parthenon (438 BC) made by the Greek sculptor Pheidias. The original statue was 9 to 11-metre tall. This replica, dated 1st half of the 3rd c. AD, was found in Athens near the Varvakeion School. National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Athena wears the aegis with the Gorgone's head in its centre. She has the helmet, the spear and the shield. Right: Statue of Athena from Velletri (Italy) attributed to Cresilas (c. 430 BC). She wears the aegis with the Gorgone's head and the helmet. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Galerie de la Melpomène, Aile Sully, Section 15.

As for the small medallion Brigantia wears around her neck, it is reminiscent of the aegis, a sort of goatskin breastplate hemmed with tassels and snakes and adorned with the head of Medusa in its centre, usually worn by Athena/Minerva.¹⁵²⁹ Moreover, according to Joliffe, Brigantia is winged, which is also an attribute of Victory, the Greco-Roman goddess of war deeds and feats, who supports and leads the gods and warriors to victory.¹⁵³⁰ Victory

¹⁵²⁹ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 141 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 56.

¹⁵³⁰ Joliffe, 1941, p. 51 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 254, 870.

is always associated with Athena, who is sometimes depicted holding a Nike in her hand, i.e. a small statue of Victory (fig. 27). Victory is generally represented winged, holding the palm and the crown of laurels in her hands and sometimes surmounting a globe, like Fortuna. From this, Joliffe deduces that the hemispherical object held by Brigantia in her left hand is a globe.¹⁵³¹

Brigantia is besides equated with Victory in two inscriptions from Yorkshire. The first one, dating from 208 AD, was discovered in 1597 at Bank Top (formerly Thick Hollins), Greetland, south of Halifax (West Yorkshire): *D(eae) Vict(oriae) Brig(antiae) et Num(inibus) Aug(ustorum) T(itus) Aur(elius) Aurelianus d(edit) d(edicauit) pro se et suis s(e) mag(istro) s(acrorum) Antonin[us] III et Geta [II] co(n)s(ulib)us*, 'To the goddess Victoria Brigantia and to the Deities of the two Emperors, Titus Aurelius Aurelianus gave and dedicated (this altar) for himself and his family, while he himself was master of sacred rites, in the third consulship of Antoninus and the [second] of Geta' (fig. 30).¹⁵³² The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens and is a sort of priest in charge of sacred rites. The other dedication was found in 1890 in the River Calder, at Woodnook, near Castleford: *Deae Victoriae Brigant(iae) a(ram) d(edicauit) Aur(elius) Senopianus*, 'To the goddess Victoria Brigantia Aurelius Senopianus dedicated this altar' (fig. 30).¹⁵³³ The dedicator Aurelius Senopianus is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *duo nomina*.

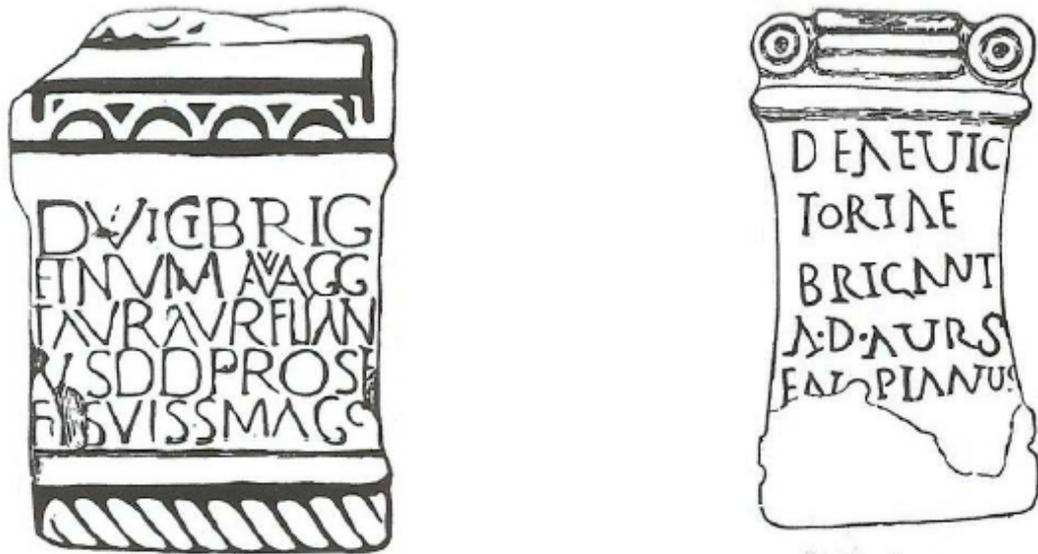


Fig. 30: Altars dedicated to Brigantia Victoria from Bank Top and Castleford (Yorkshire). RIB 627 in Trinity College, Cambridge, and RIB 628 in Leeds Museum.

Brigantia (Caelestis)

Brigantia's name is also juxtaposed to that of the goddess Caelestis, in an inscription from the Roman site of Corbridge (Northumbria): *Ioui aeterno Dolicheno et Caelesti Brigantiae et Saluti G(aius) Iulius Apolinaris c(enturio) leg(ionis) VI iuss(u) dei*, 'To eternal Jupiter of

¹⁵³¹ Joliffe, 1941, p. 52.

¹⁵³² RIB 627 ; Rinaldi Tufi, 1985, p. 20, n°33 and pl. 10.

¹⁵³³ RIB 628.

Doliche and to Caelestis Brigantia and to Salus Gaius Julius Apolaris, centurion of the Sixth Legion, at the command of the god (set this up)' (fig. 31).¹⁵³⁴ The dedicator bears Latin names and is a centurion* from the Sixth legion*.¹⁵³⁵

Brigantia is associated with Jupiter Dolichenus, a Syrian god later equated with the Roman sky-god Jupiter, and with Juno Caelestis, the Romanized designation for the Punic goddess Tanit (=Ishtar), who was the principal deity of Carthage, usually partnered with the god Baal Hammon.¹⁵³⁶ As her name Caelestis ('Goddess of Heavens') indicates, she was originally connected with the cosmos and generally represented with a crescent of the moon. When she became Romanized, Caelestis was given pronounced martial aspects and depicted as a warrior, whose main function was the protection of the city. She was then associated with the Roman goddess of war Minerva / Athena. This must explain why Brigantia is linked to her in this inscription.

The equation of Brigantia with Victory and Caelestis ensured and accelerated the Romanization of her cult. One can notice from the inscriptions, which date from the 2nd or 3rd c. AD, that most of the dedicators are Roman citizens or soldiers, apart from two, who are peregrines bearing Celtic names (see Chapter 2). Brigantia is a multi-sided deity. She is indeed related to the landscape, since her name refers to high places. She is also a tribal-goddess, presiding over the sept* of the Brigantes. Her association with Roman goddesses of war and protectresses of the city and her portrayal from Birrens as a warrior provide evidence of her martial character. From this, it can be inferred that Brigantia embodied the land where the Brigantes lived, brought them prosperity, and presided over and protected the territory and the tribe in time of conflict. In other words, Brigantia unites land, tribal, sovereign, protective and war functions in her personality; functions which ensue from one another. The representation of the Irish goddess Brigit in triple form illustrates such multi-faceted power and omnipotence.

¹⁵³⁴ *RIB* 1131.

¹⁵³⁵ In the Roman army, each legion was composed of ten cohorts, which were subdivided into six centuries. The cohort was supervised by a prefect* and the century by a centurion. See Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 785, 788-789.

¹⁵³⁶ Joliffe, 1941, pp. 43-48 ; Guirant & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 113, 846-847.



Fig. 31: Altar dedicated to *Caelestis Brigantia* from Corbridge (Northumbria). In Corbridge Museum. RIB 1131.

2) Martial attributes: Strength, Courage and War Fury

Other goddesses may pertain to combat and war, for their names imply feelings of rage and fury and denote war-like qualities, such as force, bravery and valour.

a) *Belisama* ('the Most Powerful'?)

Belisama is known from two inscriptions of completely different origin, which indicates that she is not a topical* goddess presiding over a specific area or sept*. The first dedication is engraved on an altar in white marble with blue-grey veins, discovered in re-employment* in the bridge of Saint-Lizier (Ariège), which was the main oppidum* of the Consoranni tribe. The inscription associates her with the Roman goddess *Minerva*: *Minervae Belisamae sacrum Q(uintus) Valeriu[s] Montan[us] v(oto) [s(uscepto)]*, 'Sacred to *Minerva Belisama*, *Quintus*

Valerius Montanus (offered this monument) in accomplishment of his vow' (fig. 32).¹⁵³⁷ Contrary to what Raymond Lizop maintains, there is no archaeological evidence testifying to a sanctuary to Belisama in the upper part of the town.¹⁵³⁸

Belisama is not a mere epithet given to Minerva, since she is venerated on her own in another dedication, discovered in 1840 in Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse), the chief city of the Vocontii tribe.¹⁵³⁹ The inscription is of great interest, for it dates from around the 2nd or 1st c. BC and is in the Gaulish language and Greek lettering: *σεγομαρος / ουιλλονεος / τουτιους / ναμαουσατις / ειωρου βηλη- / σαμι σοσιν / νεμητον*, 'Segomaros son of Villū, citizen of Nîmes, offered this sacred enclosure to Belesama' (fig. 33).¹⁵⁴⁰ The name of the dedicator, Segomaros ('Great Strength' or 'Great by his Victories'), and the name of his father, Villoneos, the meaning of which is unknown, are Celtic.¹⁵⁴¹ Segomaros offers the goddess a *nemeton*, that is a 'sacred enclosure', 'sacred grove' or 'sanctuary'.¹⁵⁴² The *nemeton* was a sacred place of cult and veneration reserved to a deity, where human beings, apart from the initiates, were not allowed. Generally of quadrangular form, dotted with trees and a hollow altar in its centre, its limits were marked out on the ground by a ditch and sometimes enclosed by a fence.¹⁵⁴³ Segomaros, a peregrine* bearing a typical Celtic name, coming from the city of Nîmes, had thus a sanctuary erected in honour of a Celtic goddess in the 2nd or 1st c. BC, which shows the importance of Belisama's worship and the attachment of the indigenous people to their beliefs and cults.

¹⁵³⁷ *CIL* XIII, 8 ; *CAG*, 09, *L'Ariège*, 1997, p. 155.

¹⁵³⁸ Lizop, 1931, pp. 22, 104, 111, 194-196, 304 ; Lizop, 1931a, p. 214 ; *CAG*, 09, *L'Ariège*, 1997, p. 155.

¹⁵³⁹ Barruol, 1999, pp. 282-283.

¹⁵⁴⁰ *RIG* I, 153 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 84-85 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 164-165 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 864.

¹⁵⁴¹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 218, 269-270: Segomaros is composed of *sego-*, 'victory', 'strength' and *maros*, 'great': this name is known from two other inscriptions from Couchey (Côte d'Or), *RIG* II, 2, 133 and Les Baux-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) *RIG* I, 12 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 199 (*Villoneos*).

¹⁵⁴² Delamarre, 2003, p. 233-234.

¹⁵⁴³ Brunaux, 1986, pp. 28-38 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 94-95 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 103-124.



Fig. 32: Left: Votive altar dedicated to Minerva Belisama, discovered in re-employment in the bridge of Saint-Lizier (Ariège). CAG, 09, L'Ariège, 1997, p. 155, fig. 134. Right: Altar dedicated to Belisamarus found in Châlon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire). In the Musée de Chalon-sur-Saône. RE, vol.1, 1913, p. 95.*

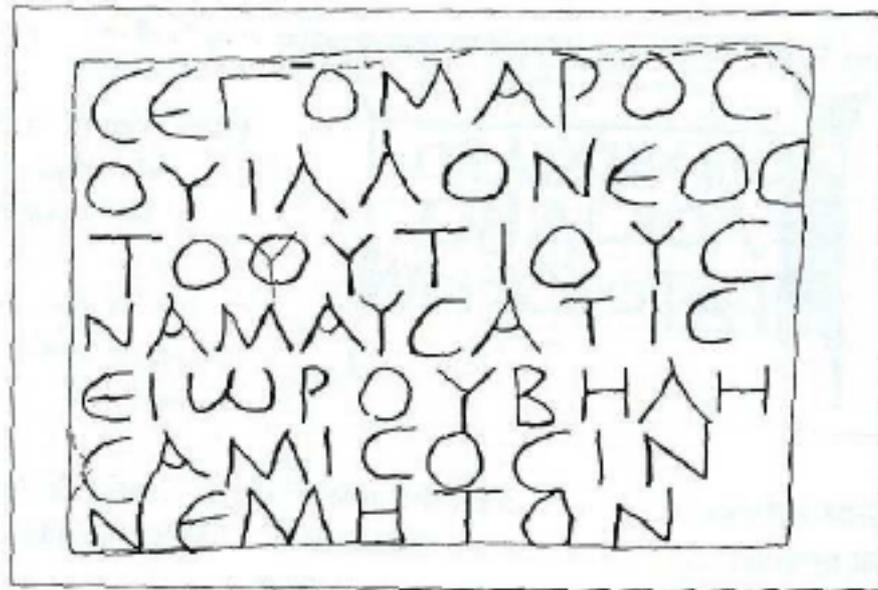


Fig. 33: Gallo-Greek inscription from Vaison-la-Romaine (Vaucluse) mentioning a nemeton offered to the goddess Belisama by Segomaros. Musée Lapidaire d'Avignon. Lambert, 1995, p. 84.

Belisama undoubtedly bears a Celtic name, the significance of which remains much debated. On the one hand, it can be related to an IE theme **bhel-*, which is usually translated 'white' or 'brilliant' but actually denotes 'force'.¹⁵⁴⁴ Delamarre explains that the fanciful and inaccurate interpretation of **bhel-* as 'brilliant' comes from the fact that the Gaulish god Belenus/Belinus, who is known from fifty-one dedications coming from southern and central Gaul and Aquileia (North Italy), is equated with the Roman solar god Apollo in nine of the inscriptions.¹⁵⁴⁵ In fact, his association with Apollo is certainly not due to a solar imagery but to common healing functions. It is indeed clear that Belenus is a curative god, for he is attached to various water sanctuaries, such as the sacred medicinal springs at Sainte-Sabine (Côte d'Or).¹⁵⁴⁶ Belenus / Belinus is to be understood as 'the Master of Power' or 'the Powerful One' rather than 'the Bright One'. Belisama being its superlative form, her name thus means 'the Very or Most Powerful One' and not 'the Most Brilliant' as many scholars maintain.¹⁵⁴⁷

On the other hand, Lambert specifies that her name may be derived from the verbal theme **gwe/-* signifying 'to pierce', 'to kill'.¹⁵⁴⁸ It appears thus that the two suggested etymologies refer to the notion of power, strength and killing. Belisama might thus be envisaged as a goddess related to war and combat. This idea is highly likely, since Belisama is associated with Minerva in the dedication from Saint-Lizier, and, as is well-known,

¹⁵⁴⁴ Delamarre, 2003, p. 72 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 52.

¹⁵⁴⁵ *RDG*, pp. 28-29 ; Gourvest, 1954, pp. 257-262 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 386-387 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Green, 1992a, pp. 30-31 ; Lambert, 2006, p. 52.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 386 ; Duval, 1957, p. 87 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 357-358 ; Vendryes, 1997, pp. 43-45 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 86 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 462 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1963a, pp. 137-158 ; Le Roux, 1970-1973, p. 226 ; Green, 2004, p. 150 ; Anwyl, 1906b, pp. 37-38 proposes 'the Most Warlike'.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Lambert, 2006, p. 52.

Minerva has pronounced war-like functions among others.¹⁵⁴⁹ As the two inscriptions were discovered at the location of the ancient chief fortified cities of the Consorani and the Vocontii, her powers may have been invoked to protect the place and the inhabitants in time of trouble.

The irrelevant etymology* of Belisama as 'Most Brilliant' has given rise to inappropriate theories concerning her functions. Some scholars suggest that Belisama could symbolize lightning or the fire of the forge of Vulcan and be connected to Irish Brigit, who is the patroness of smithcraft and is often assigned fire and shining aspects - these attributes actually characterize more the Saint than the goddess.¹⁵⁵⁰ As for Lacroix, he proposes to compare Belisama's name to the Greek proper name Hellène meaning 'Mistress of Light'. According to him, Belisama could personify the rising sun and be a goddess of the dawn or spring.¹⁵⁵¹

De Bernardo Stempel and Delamarre notice that Belisama may be etymologically related to the goddess Belestis (**Bel-isto* = *Bel-isamo*?),¹⁵⁵² honoured in St. Leonhard (Austria): *Belesti Aug(ustae) T(itus) Tapponius Macrinus et Iulia Sex(ti) I(iberta) Cara cum suis vs/m*, and Unterloibl: *Belesti Aug(ustae) sac(rum) Latinus Tapponi Macrini ser(vus) vs/m*.¹⁵⁵³ De Bernardo Stempel may however be mistaken when she translates Belestis as 'the Most Brilliant' and assumes that she is a Moon goddess, as Sirona is a Star goddess.

Other specialists regard Belisama as a water-goddess because Ptolemy gave her name to the River Ribble in north-west England (Lancashire).¹⁵⁵⁴ Another river, Le Blima, a small tributary of the Dadou in Tarn (France), might be derived from her name too.¹⁵⁵⁵ As there is no archaeological material evidencing a water cult attached to Belisama – the inscriptions were not found in or near water sanctuaries, ex-votos proving a healing cult were not discovered either – those names of rivers do not produce proof of such a function. The fact that the god Belenus is often associated with healing water sanctuaries does not support that idea either, since Belisama's name is not the feminine version of Belenos but of Belisamarus. This god is mentioned in an inscription engraved on a prismatic altar discovered in Châlon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire), in the territory of the Aedui. The dedication is the following: *De[ο] Beli[s]amaro L(ucius) Lanus Sedatianus sive Cod[on]ius*, 'To the god Belisamarus, Lucius Lanus Sedatianus or Codonius' (fig. 32).¹⁵⁵⁶ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. His nomen*, cognomen* and 'nickname' (*Codonius*) are Latin.¹⁵⁵⁷

b) *Exomna* ('the One Without Fear')

Very little is known about the goddess Exomna, who is honoured in a single dedication from Alem, situated north of s-Hertogenbosch (the Netherlands), in the territory of the Germanic

¹⁵⁴⁹ Brill's, vol. 8, pp. 939-944 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 254, 766 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 222.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Kruta, 2000, p. 462 ; Duval, 1957, p. 87.

¹⁵⁵¹ Lacroix, 2007, pp. 167-168.

¹⁵⁵² De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 19 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 39.

¹⁵⁵³ *ILLPRON*, 446, 654.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Ptolemy, II, 3, 2 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 39 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 358 ; *RE*, vol. 1, 1913, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Delamarre, 2003, p. 71 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 167.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *CIL* XIII, 11224 = *AE* 1913, 234 ; *RE*, I, 1913, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Solin & Salomies, 1994, pp. 58, 103, 166, 399.

Batavi: *Deae Exomnae Annius Vitalis v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Exomna, Annius Vitalis paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁵⁵⁸ The praenomen* of the dedicator Annius may be Celtic,¹⁵⁵⁹ while his nomen*, Vitalis, is Latin. Even though the inscription was discovered in the land of a Germanic sept*, her name is undoubtedly Celtic. This can be explained by the proximity between Celtic and Germanic peoples in this area. Exomna is composed of the privative particle *ex(s)* 'without' and of the word *obnos* > *omnos*, 'fear', cf. the Old Irish adjective *essamain*, 'without fear'; hence Exomna, 'the One who is Without Fear' or 'the Bold One'.¹⁵⁶⁰ According to Spickermann, the epithet Exsobinius (**Exs-obn-io-*), given to Mars Lenus in Virton (Belgium), is the masculine version of Exomna, with a *-bn-* variant: *Leno Marti Exsobin(i) Novic(ius) et Expectatus vslm*, 'To Mars Lenus Exsobinius Novicius and Expectatus paid their vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁵⁶¹

Her name denoting fearlessness, it can be suggested that Exomana was a war-like goddess related to battle and combat, who embodied the bravery of warriors and made them take fresh heart when they became discouraged. She might have represented the valour of Celtic warriors, who braved death and gave their life for the safety of their own people. War was a question of honour, dignity and pride: the Celtic warrior fought to the death rather than be humiliated and disgraced.¹⁵⁶²

c) *Vercana* ('Fury, Rage')

The goddess *Vercana* is mentioned in an inscription discovered in Ernestviller (Moselle), in the territory of the *Mediomatrici*: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) deae Vercanu isd(em) co(n)s(ulibus) [...] pos(uit) [...]*, 'In honour of the Divine House and of the Goddess *Vercana* (...?)'.¹⁵⁶³ The votive formula *In h.d.d.* associated with the term *dea* allows us to date this dedication to the beginning of the 3rd c. AD.¹⁵⁶⁴ In Bad Bertrich, near Trier (Germany), in the territory of the *Treveri*, she is honoured along with the goddess *Meduna*: *De(a)e Vercan(a)e et Medun(a)e L(ucius) T() Acc(e)ptus vslm*, 'To the Goddess *Vercana* and to *Meduna*, Lucius T. *Acceptus* paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁵⁶⁵ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens and Latin names.¹⁵⁶⁶ In this dedication, the goddesses *Vercana* and *Meduna* are linked to water and healing, for excavations carried out at Bad Bertrich revealed Gallo-Roman spa installations near to the medicinal springs.¹⁵⁶⁷

Vercana remains a somewhat obscure goddess. The significance of her name could shed light on her possible functions. Olmsted suggests that her name **verc-ano-* could come from an Indo-European root **uer-k-* meaning 'to wind', 'to twist', giving Irish *ferc*, 'knob',

¹⁵⁵⁸ *AE* 1965, 328 ; *RDG*, p. 81 ; Bogaers, 1962-1963, pp. 39-86. The Batavi were a Germanic tribe inhabiting the present-day Betuwe district, around Lugdunum Batavorum (Leiden), at the mouth of the Rhine River.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Delamarre, 2007, p.23.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 170 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 221 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 140.

¹⁵⁶¹ *CIL* XIII, 3970 ; Spickermann, 2005, p. 140 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 100.

¹⁵⁶² Brunaux, 2000, pp. 211-213.

¹⁵⁶³ *CIL* XIII, 4511.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

¹⁵⁶⁵ *CIL* XIII, 7667. See Chapter 5 for an analysis of the dedication and of the possible functions fulfilled by *Meduna*.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Solin & Salomies, 1994, p. 287.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Wightman, 1970, pp. 138, 226.

'handle' and Welsh *cywarch*, 'rope'. In view of that etymology*, Vercana can be understood as a water deity.¹⁵⁶⁸ As far as Lambert, Delamarre and Holder are concerned, Vercana is to be derived from Indo-European **uerg-* signifying 'to do, to act, to hasten, to press', or 'to be puffed with rage, pride or anger', which gave Old Breton *guerg*, 'efficient', Old Welsh *gwery*, 'active', Old Irish *ferc*, *ferg*, 'fury', 'anger', 'rage' and Modern Irish *fearg* - it can be paralleled to Latin *urgeo*, 'to press (the enemy)', 'to hasten', 'to torment', 'to push forward'. Vercana would therefore signify 'Fury', 'Rage' or 'Wrath'.¹⁵⁶⁹ This etymology*, which is the most likely, would indicate that Vercana is a goddess related to war and combat. Her name evokes the state in which the Celtic combatants were said to be when they were fighting the foe, being overcome with anger and wanting to spill blood. It expresses the *furor* or 'war frenzy' which particularized Celtic warriors on the battlefield and, according to contemporary accounts, scared enemies to death.¹⁵⁷⁰

d) *Noreia* ('the Courageous One') and *Veica* ('Combat') (Austria)

It is worth mentioning the goddess *Noreia*, who is known from several dedications discovered in today's Austria and Slovenia, even though the Celticity of her name is dubious and her cult is confined to Romanized Noricans, working for the province, imperial officials and soldiers.¹⁵⁷¹ Her worship was actually part of conventional Roman worship. In the centre of Celeia was discovered an inscription associating *Noreia* with Celeia ('the All Powerful'), the eponymous goddess of the city, and Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the head of the Roman pantheon and of the Capitoline Triad, composed of Juno and Minerva, generally honoured by the army: *IOM et Cel(eiae) et Noreiae sanct(a)e*, 'To IOM and Celeia and sacred *Noeia*'.¹⁵⁷² On another monument from Celeia, she is mentioned together with Mars, Hercules and Victoria.¹⁵⁷³ From the territory of Celeia, at Atrans and Črešnjevec, come two other inscriptions mentioning her.¹⁵⁷⁴ She was also venerated at the sanctuary of Hohenstein (Austria), situated on the River Glen, in six dedications, one of which equates her with the Egyptian goddess Isis.¹⁵⁷⁵ Another inscription discovered at Ulrichsberg (Austria), probably brought from Hohenstein, mentions a sanctuary erected in honour of *Noreia Isis* (fig. 34).¹⁵⁷⁶ Finally, she is honoured twice in Weihmörting, near Boiodurum.¹⁵⁷⁷

¹⁵⁶⁸ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 372-373, 412.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Lambert, 1995, p. 45 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 315 ; Holder, ACS, vol. 3, p. 183 mentions that D'Arbois de Jubainville also derived the name of the goddess *Vercana* from Irish *ferc* / *ferg* 'rage', 'anger'.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Brunaux, 2000, pp. 188-190. See Chapter 5 for more details.

¹⁵⁷¹ For detailed works about *Noreia*, see Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 33-39 ; Kenner, H., 'Die Götterwelt der Austria Romana', in ARNW, II.18.2, 1989, n° 48, pp. 876-894 ; Eadem, 'Dea Noreia', in Grabmayer, J. & Polte, E. (eds), *Die Kultur der Kelten*, St. Veiter Historikergespräche, I, 1989, pp. 24-28 ; Scherrer, P., 'Noreia – Prähistorisch-gallorömische Muttergottheit oder Provinzpersonifikation', in Hainzmann, Manfred (ed.), *Auf den Spuren keltischer Götterverehrung*, Akten des 5. F.E.R.C.A.N. – Workshop, Graz 9.-12. Oktober 2003, OAW, Wien, 2007, pp. 207-242.

¹⁵⁷² ILLPRON, 1649 ; Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 37, fig. 10 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 16.

¹⁵⁷³ CIL III, 5193.

¹⁵⁷⁴ CIL III, 5123, 5300.

¹⁵⁷⁵ CIL III, 4806, 4807, 4808, 14362. The inscription in which she is mentioned with Isis is CIL III, 4809: *Isidi Norei(ae) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) pro salute Q. Septuei Clementis con(ductoris) fer(rariarum) N(oriarum) p[---] d[---] et Ti. Cl(audi) Heraclae et Cn. Octa(vi) Secundi pro(curatorum) ferr(ariarum) Q. Septueius Valens proc(urato) ferr(ariarum)*.

¹⁵⁷⁶ CIL 4810: *Noreiae Isidi fecit a Trebonius*.



Fig. 34: Inscription to Noreia-Isis over the portal of the church-hulk on top of Ulrichsberg (Mount Ulrich, Austria). (Source: Johann Jaritz, 23 April 2004).

It is difficult to determine whether her name is Celtic or pre-Celtic.¹⁵⁷⁸ De Bernardo Stempel proposes to break down her name as **nor-icī* and to translate it ‘the powerful, vigorous, strong or courageous one’.¹⁵⁷⁹ If this etymology* is correct, the goddess Noreica might have originally been a protective goddess, possessing martial aspects and embodying courage at war and strength in battle. This could explain how she later personified and protected the province and its institutions.¹⁵⁸⁰

Interestingly, a lost dedication of unidentified origin mentions a goddess Veica Noriceia: *Veicae Noriceiae A. Poblcius D. I. A[---] P. Postumius P. I. Pau(...) coir(averunt)*.¹⁵⁸¹ The inscription indicates that the two dedicators had a sanctuary erected in honour of the goddess (*coiraverunt*). The divine name Veica is most certainly Celtic¹⁵⁸² and can be broken down as **weik-ā*, that is ‘the one of the battle’,¹⁵⁸³ from an IE root **weik* meaning ‘to vanquish’ and denoting “the ideas of both battle and wonder-working” according to M. York - it can be

¹⁵⁷⁷ *CIL* III, 5613 ; *CIL* VI, 31179.

¹⁵⁷⁸ For Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 33, it is pre-Celtic. For Holder, ACS, vol. 2, pp. 760-761, it is Celtic.

¹⁵⁷⁹ De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 16.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Šašel Kos, 1999, pp. 38-39.

¹⁵⁸¹ *CIL* I, 2217 ; Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 34.

¹⁵⁸² Šašel Kos, 1999, p. 35 ; Holder, ACS, vol. 3, p. 138 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 192: see the proper names *Veicu*, *Veico*.

¹⁵⁸³ De Bernardo Stempel, 2005, p. 22.

related to Irish *fíoch*, ‘ferocity’.¹⁵⁸⁴ In view of this etymology*, it can be suggested that Veica is a war-goddess embodying and presiding over the fighting.

3) Goddesses of Victory

a) *Segeta* (‘Victory’)

The goddess *Segeta* is mentioned in three inscriptions, in Bussy-Albieu (Loire) with Dunisia (see above), in Feurs (Loire) and in Sceaux-en-Gâtinais (Loiret), where healing water sanctuaries were excavated. *Segeta*’s name is based on a Celtic root *sego-* meaning ‘victory’, ‘strength’, derived from an Indo-European root **seǵh-* meaning ‘to subject’, ‘to conquer’, ‘to vanquish’.¹⁵⁸⁵ This root is found in many proper names, such as Segolatus (‘Hero-of-the-Victory’) and Segorix (‘Victorious King’), and many placenames, for instance Segobriga (‘Fortress-of-Victory’), the present-day city Segorbe, situated to the north of Valencia in Spain. From the ending of her name in *-ta*, found for instance in Rosmerta, it can be deduced that *Segeta* is a name of action.¹⁵⁸⁶ Her name is thus related to war and can be glossed as ‘the Victorious One’, that is the one who ensures victory over the foes. As far as Olmsted is concerned, her name should be linked to the Irish *séгда*, ‘lucky, fortunate, propitious’, on account of her close association with curative waters.¹⁵⁸⁷ According to him, *Segeta* would be ‘the Fortune Bringer’ or ‘the Propitious One’, but this etymology* is highly unlikely.

Segeta is etymologically related to the goddess *Segomanna*, venerated on the plateau of ‘Bois de Labaume’ (Gard), and possibly to the Matronis Seccanehis (**sekkon-ikā-*), honoured in Euskirchen (Germania Inferior), whose name might be based on the root *secco-*, a derivation from Celtic *sego*: *Matronis Seccanehis Secundinus Certus [v]slm*, ‘To the Matronae Seccannehae Secundinus Certus paid his vow willingly and deservedly’.¹⁵⁸⁸ The dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens.

Segeta may originally have been the tutelary goddess of the Segusiavi (‘The Victorious Ones’), who had Forum Segusiavorum (Feurs) for their chief city in Gallo-Roman times.¹⁵⁸⁹ A dedication, engraved on a bronze weight of ten Roman pounds (=3.81 kilograms), probably dating from the 2nd or 3rd c. AD, was indeed discovered in 1525 in Feurs. The weight must have been left as a standard in honour of the goddess. The inscription is the following: *Deae Seg(etae) F(ori) ou F(orensium?) p(ondo) X*, ‘To the goddess *Segeta* of Feurs (this weight) weights ten (Roman livres)’ (*X=decem=ten*).¹⁵⁹⁰ Archaeological excavations carried out in 1979-1980 in Feurs revealed the remains of a Gaulish village, dating from the 3rd or 2nd

¹⁵⁸⁴ York, 1993, p. 241.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 269-270 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 31-32 ; Lajoie, 2006, p. 79.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Lambert, 2006, p. 57.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Olmsted, 1994, p. 428.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *CIL* XIII, 8846 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 145 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 163, 231 proposes **Seccaniyā* (?).

¹⁵⁸⁹ Kruta, 2000, pp. 813-814 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2002, p. 127 ; Barraol, 1999, p. 298.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Ten pounds was the ‘weight of kings’. Since 1875, it has been housed in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, Collection Durand, 1825, Département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines, Salle des Bronzes, Salle 32, Vitrine E7. *CIL* XIII, 1641 ; *RE*, vol.1, p. 115, n° 131 ; Lajoie, 2006, p. 75.

c. BC, which developed into a city, where thermal baths and a water sanctuary may have been erected in Gallo-Roman times.¹⁵⁹¹

Another inscription was unearthed in the territory of the Senones, in Sceaux-en-Gâtinais (Loiret), called *Aquae Segetae* in Gallo-Roman times according to the 4th-century AD *Table de Peutinger*.¹⁵⁹² The inscription is engraved on a fragmented disc in pinkish marble (diam. 64 cm), on the reverse of which two long vases, fish and curves or waves redolent of the undulations of water are drawn. Those drawings are either linked to *Segeta* and reminiscent of her watery aspect or they are of later date and were added when the disc was re-used*. The dedication reads: *Aug(ustae) deae Segetae T(itus) Marius Priscinus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) efficiendum curau(i)t Maria Sacra fil(ia)*, 'To the August goddess Segeta, Titus Marius Priscinus paid his vow willingly and deservedly, Maria Sacra, his daughter, took care to realise it' (fig. 35).¹⁵⁹³ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, and his daughter has Latin names.



Fig. 35: Dedication to *Segeta* engraved on the obverse of a disk, discovered in Sceaux-en-Gâtinais (Loiret). On the reverse: drawings of waves, fish or curves (?) and two long vases. Musée du Gâtinais, Montargis. *Gallia*, 32, 1974, p. 305, fig. 2 and 3.

Aquae Segetae ('The Waters of Segeta') was apparently an important religious water sanctuary, located in the locality of Le Préau, La Rivière, situated to the north of the Chemin de César, 2.3 kilometres from Sceaux-en-Gâtinais.¹⁵⁹⁴ The inscription was discovered in 1973, together with statues of mother goddesses and *Venus Anadyomenes**, at the site of a monumental set of Gallo-Roman buildings, dated 1st c. AD, composed of a *fanum** and several water sanctuaries, which included a number of rooms, baths, piping, yards and esplanades, organised around a healing spring. Moreover, anatomic *ex-votos** in bronze

¹⁵⁹¹ CAG, 42, *La Loire*, 1997, pp. 96-97, 99-107 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 814.

¹⁵⁹² Roncin, 1976, p. 57 ; Lajoie, 2006, p. 75. The *Table de Peutinger* is a map of the roads of the Roman Empire. It bears the name of its ancient owner, Conrad Peutinger (1465-1547), who lived in Augsburg, in Germany. It is a copy, done at the beginning of the Middle Ages, of a map drawn in the 4th c. AD.

¹⁵⁹³ *AE* 1974, 423.

¹⁵⁹⁴ CAG, 45, *Le Loiret*, 1988, pp. 168-169, 172, 176 ; Roncin, 1976, pp. 50-66, with map ; *Gallia*, 32, 1974, pp. 304-305.

and silver, representing feet, legs, masculine genital organs and prophylactic eyes were discovered on the site. This undoubtedly indicates that pilgrims came to the sanctuary to pray to the healing water-goddess and to have their pains soothed.¹⁵⁹⁵ Excavations revealed that a vast paved yard surrounded by a portico protecting a series of small rooms (*cellae**) was erected around basin n°XI, where the inscription was found. Those rooms were interpreted as small shops or incubation* rooms, where the sick pilgrims could have slept and waited overnight for divine intervention.¹⁵⁹⁶ The name of the water sanctuary and the dedication enable us to assert that *Segeta* was the healing goddess presiding over the waters of this site.

It is interesting to note that *Segeta* is similar to a minor Roman deity (*indigitamenta*), called *Segesta*, who presided over harvest time and watched over grown corn. As Pliny relates in his *Natural History*, *Segesta* had her image in the sanctuary of *Consus*, at the bottom of the Palatine Hill, in the valley of the *Circus*.¹⁵⁹⁷ He explains that her name is linked to the word *segetes*, 'crops of standing corn':

numa instituit deos fruge colere et mola salsa supplicare atque, ut auctor est hemina, far torrere, quoniam tostum cibo salubrius esset, id uno modo consecutus, statuendo non esse purum ad rem divinam nisi tostum. is et fornacalia instituit farris torrendi ferias et aeque religiosas terminis agrorum. hos enim deos tum maxime noverant, seiamque a serendo, segestam a segetibus appellabant, quarum simulacra in circo videmus. Numa first established the custom of offering corn to the gods, and of propitiating them with the salted cake; he was the first, too, as we learn from Hemina, to parch spelt, from the fact that, when in this state, it is more wholesome as an aliment. This method, however, he could only establish one way: by making an enactment, to the effect that spelt is not in a pure state for offering, except when parched. He it was, too, who instituted the Fornacalia, festivals appropriated for the parching of corn, and others, observed with equal solemnity, for the erection and preservation of the "termini", or boundaries of the fields: for these termini, in those days, they particularly regarded as gods; while to other divinities they gave the names of Seia, from 'sero', 'to sow', and of Segesta, from tile 'segetes', or 'crops of standing corn', the statues of which goddesses we still see erected in the Circus.¹⁵⁹⁸

Similarly, Saint Augustine, the bishop of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba, Algeria), who was a famous Christian theologian and historian at the end of the 4th c. and beginning of the 5th c. AD when the Roman Empire was collapsing, explains in his *De Civitate Dei* or *City of God* (413-426 AD) - which investigates the ancient pagan religions of Rome - that the crops were presided over by different goddesses. *Segetia* was the one who attended to wheat and corn when they were already grown. Saint Augustine adds that her name is related to Latin *seges*, 'crop':

¹⁵⁹⁵ Roncin, 1976, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Roncin, 1976, p. 65.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Lajoie, 2006, pp. 75-78.

¹⁵⁹⁸ **Book 18, 2 ; Bostock, 1855.**

Nec agrorum munus uni alicui deo committendum arbitrati sunt, sed rura deae Rusinae, iuga montium deo Iugatino; collibus deae Collatinam, uallibus Valloniam praefecerunt. Nec saltem potuerunt unam Segetiam talem inuenire, cui semel segetes commendarent, sed sata frumenta, quamdiu sub terra essent, praepositam uoluerunt habere deam Seiam; cum uero iam essent super terram et segetem facerent, deam Segetiam; frumentis uero collectis atque reconditis, ut tuto seruarentur, deam Tutilinam praeposuerunt. cui non sufficere uideretur illa Segetia, quamdiu seges ab initiis herbidis usque ad aristas aridas perueniret?

*They decided that responsibility for the land should not be entrusted to any one god; they put the goddess Rusina in charge of the rural countryside; they consigned the mountain ranges (iuga) to the care of the god Jugatinus; the hills (colles) to the goddess Collatina, the valleys to Vallonia. They could not even find the goddess Segetia adequate on her own, to the responsibility for the crops (segetes) from start to finish. Instead, they decided that the corn when sown (sata) should have the goddess Seia to watch over it as long as the seeds were under ground; as soon as the shoots came above the ground and began to form the grain (seges), they were under the charge of the goddess Segetia; but when the corn had been reaped and stored the goddess Tutilina was set over them to keep them safe (tuto). Would not anyone think that Segetia should have been competent to supervise the whole process from the first green shoots to the dry ears of corn?*¹⁵⁹⁹

Interestingly, in the 3rd c. AD, coins stamped with the effigy of Salonina, the wife of the Emperor P. Lucinius Egnatius Gallienus (253-268 AD), had the following legend on the reverse: *Deae Segetiae* (fig. 36). The goddess wears a very short dress and is represented in a tetra-style temple, i.e. a temple with four front columns. She raises her arms towards the sky and a sort of halo or crown surrounds her head. It is possible that the Emperor's wife, in periods of calamity, had recourse to the harvest goddess *Segetia* to implore her benevolence and fertility.



Fig. 36: Coins stamped at the effigy of Salonina, with on the reverse the mention *Deae Segetiae* with representation of the goddess. Lajoie, 2006, p. 77.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Book IV, 8, 24; Bettenson, 2003, pp. 144, 166.

From a linguistic point of view, it would appear that *Segeta* ('the Victorious') was a martial protective goddess, invoked in time of war to ensure victory to her people. The archaeological discoveries in Feurs and Sceaux-en-Gâtinais indicate that *Segeta* was a healing goddess presiding over curative waters, worshipped by sick pilgrims to be relieved from their pains and sufferance. Finally, comparative mythology allows us to assume that *Segeta* was similar to Roman Segesta/Segetia and was originally a land-goddess, watching over crops and bringing prosperity to her people. From this, it follows that *Segeta* is a multi-sided goddess who had various land, healing, protective and war functions, which varied according to the time, place and needs of the population.

b) *Segomanna* ('Victory Giver')

The goddess *Segeta* is etymologically linked to another goddess named *Segomanna*, mentioned in a single inscription, discovered in 1905, in the middle of the ruins of huts, when excavations were carried out at the site of the oppidum* of Labaume, situated on the plateau du 'Bois de Labaume', which overhangs the small gorges of the River Seynes and the plain of Serviers-et-Labaume (Gard), in the territory of the Volcae Arecomici.¹⁶⁰⁰ The archaeological artefacts collected on the oppidum* attest to an important occupation in the second period of the Iron Age. The site was then abandoned before the Roman conquest.¹⁶⁰¹ The inscription is very well-preserved and the letters are nicely engraved: *Tertius Tincorigis f(ilius) Segomannae v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Segomanna, Tertius son of Tincorix paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 37). The dedicator and his father bear unique names: they are peregrines. While the name of the dedicator Tertius is Latin, the name of his father Tincorix, composed of *tinco*-(?) and *rix*, 'king', is definitely Gaulish.¹⁶⁰² The fact that Tincorix chose a Latin name for his son indicates that he was a Romanized peregrine*.¹⁶⁰³

The divine name *Segomanna* is composed of Celtic *sego*-, 'victory', 'force' and *manos*, probably meaning 'good' or 'favourable'.¹⁶⁰⁴ *Segomanna* is therefore to be understood as 'The One who favours Victory'. In view of this etymology*, she is clearly a martial goddess, who must have been appealed to in time of war to protect the warriors, repel the foes and ensure victory. In other words, *Segomanna* is a victory leader or a victory giver. As the dedication was discovered at the location of the oppidum* of Labaume, she must have fulfilled a protective role, watching over the city and guarding its inhabitants.

¹⁶⁰⁰ AE 1906, 33 & 1909, 82 ; *ILGN* 393 ; Bauquier, 1943, pp. 115-120 and pp. XIV-XV ; Bauquier, 1939, pp. 1-8. For information on this tribe, see Barruol, 1999, pp. 114, 169-170, 172, 225, 233 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 865.

¹⁶⁰¹ CAG, 30/3, *Le Gard*, 1999, pp. 686-688.

¹⁶⁰² Solin & Salomies, 1994, pp. 185, 411 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 182, 234.

¹⁶⁰³ Dondin-Payre, 2001, p. 259.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 215, 269-270 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 226.

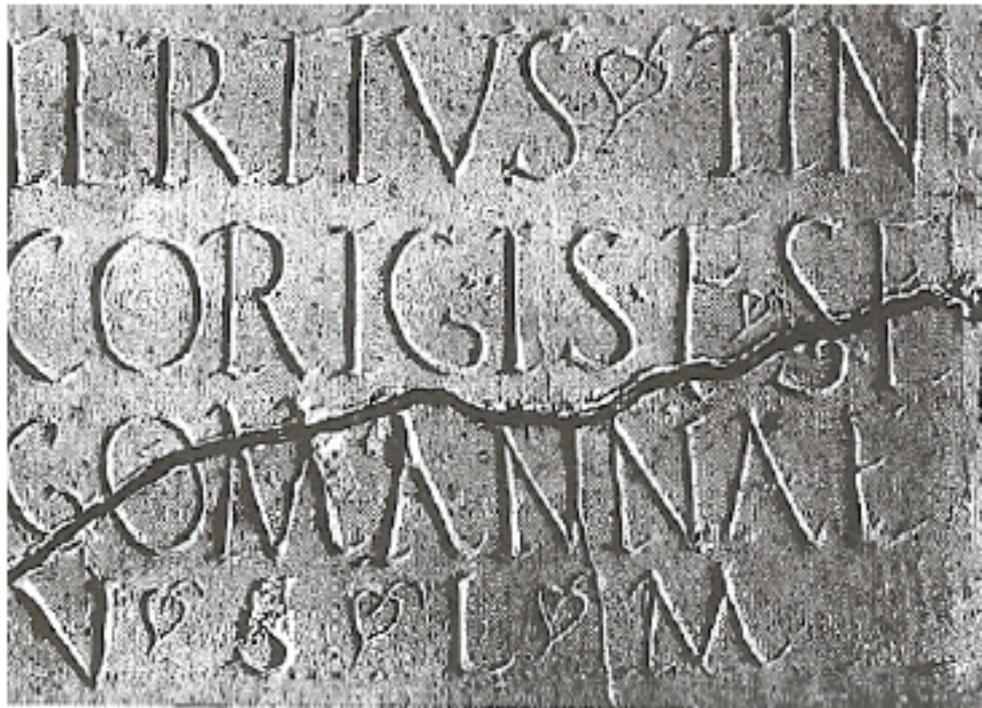


Fig. 37: Inscription dedicated to the goddess Segomanna found on the site of the oppidum* of Labaume (Gard). Musée Archéologique de Nîmes. Darde, 2001-2002, p. 38.

Some scholars suggest Segomanna might have been a water-goddess, possibly in relation with the River Seynes, which flows in the plain of Serviers, because Gallo-Roman vestiges were unearthed at its spring.¹⁶⁰⁵ This shows that the spring of Seynes was worshipped in Gallo-Roman times, but it does not evidence that Segomanna was a river- or spring-goddess, since the inscription was not discovered there. It is nonetheless interesting to note that another inscription, discovered in 1938 on the bank of the River Le Gardon, near the village of Dions, situated a few kilometres to the south of Sévriers-et-Labaume, may mention the goddess Segomanna – the divine name was reconstructed *Segom[anna]* in view of the other dedication. The inscription is engraved on the shaft of a column and reads: *L(ucius) Virius Rustic(us) Viroci f(ilius) Segom(anae) d(e) s(uo) da[t] colum(nam) or colum(nas)*, ‘Lucius Virius Rusticus, son of Virocus, offered this column (or these columns) to Segomanna at his own expenses’.¹⁶⁰⁶ The dedicator is a Roman citizen bearing the *tria nomina*, while his father Virocus clearly has a Celtic name.¹⁶⁰⁷ This shows the wish of the father to become Romanized. The column was found amongst mosaics, parts of walls, elements of columns, fragments of altars and pedestals of statues in the ruins of a Gallo-Roman monument. This building was interpreted as a water sanctuary, situated on the bank of the river, over which the goddess *Segomanna* might have presided, but this remains conjectural.¹⁶⁰⁸

¹⁶⁰⁵ CAG, 30/3, *Le Gard*, 1999, pp. 686-688.

¹⁶⁰⁶ CAG, 30/3, *Le Gard*, 1999, pp. 686-688, p. 353 ; Schmidt, 1957, p. 266 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 44-45. This inscription is neither referenced in *RDG*, nor in Delamarre, 2007, nor in Olmsted, 1994.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Delamarre, 2007 does not refer to it, but it is based on the Celtic root *viro-* ‘man’ or ‘true’, ‘fair’, cf. Delamarre, 2007, p. 236.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Bauquier, 1939, pp. 1-4 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 45.

Segomanna can be equated with the god Segomo ('Victor' or 'Victory Giver'), who is invoked in a dedication from Nuits-Saints-Georges (Côte d'Or) and is attributed the indigenous epithet of Cuntinus, possibly based on Gaulish *cuno-*, 'dog' or 'wolf', in an inscription from Cimiez (Alpes-Maritimes).¹⁶⁰⁹ Segomo is associated with Mars in four dedications from Arinthod (Jura), Les Bolards (Ain), Lyons (Rhône) and Culoz (Ain), where he is given the epithet Dunatis ('Fortress'): *N(umini) Aug(usti) deo Marti Segomoni Dunati Cassia Saturnina ex voto vslm*, 'To the Divine Augustus and to the god Mars Segomo Dunatis, Cassia Saturnina offered (this) and paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁶¹⁰ Given the significance of his name and his association with Mars, the Roman god of War, Segomo is undeniably a god who presided over combat and was revered to assure victory. Lambert explains that Mars Segomo Dunati is to be understood as 'Mars the Victor who lives in the *dunon*, that is the 'fortress' or 'fortified mount', Segomo being a descriptive byname* and Dunatis a localizing epithet.¹⁶¹¹ Interestingly, this inscription seems to echo the dedication *Segeta* and *Dunisia* from Bussy-Albieu. Being based on the root *seg-*, 'victory', *Segeta* is etymologically related to Segomo, while *Dunisia* and *Dunatis* are derived from *dunon*, 'fortified town'. From this, it can be inferred that war deities, such as *Segeta*, *Segomanna* or *Segomo*, who were invoked in time of conflict to gain the necessary strength and vigour to overwhelm, subject and vanquish the enemy, were closely related to the fortified cities of the Celts personified as gods and goddesses ensuring the protection of the inhabitants.

c) *Boudinal/Boudiga* ('Victory')

The notion of triumph is also embodied by a goddess named Boudina, who is known from three inscriptions. The name Boudina is based on the Celtic root *boudi-* meaning 'victory, advantage, profit'.¹⁶¹² Boudina ('the Victorious One') is thus the personification of victory and probably similar in functions to the Roman war-goddess Victory. It can also be related to the name of the British Queen Bouddica ('Victorious'), who, as we have seen, led the Icenii against the Romans in 60 AD.

As detailed in Chapter 2, Boudina is associated with the goddess Alauna, 'Nurturer' (?) in two dedications from Pantenburg (Germany): *[Bo]judi{i}n{u}ae [et] Alaunae C(aius) Sextilius Sollemnis*, 'To Boudina and Alauna, Caius Sextilius Sollemnis' and *Deo Voroio Boudina E et Alau{i}nae C(aius) Sextilius Sollemnis*, 'To the god Voroio, Boudina (E?) and Alauna, Caius Sextilius Sollemnis'.¹⁶¹³ The two dedicators bear the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. In Liesenich (Germany), Boudina is honoured together with the Celtic gods Vindoridius and Mars Smertrius: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) numin[i] Marti Smertrio et [---] Uindoridio Boud[i]nae Cn(aeus) Domitius C[n(aei?) fil(ius)]*.¹⁶¹⁴ The votive formula *In*

¹⁶⁰⁹ CIL XIII, 2846: *deo Segomoni* ; CIL V, 7868: *[S]egomoni Cuntino* ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 218 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 132 refers to the toponym* *Cuntinus vicus* 'the Village-of-the-Dog or Wolf', the present-day *Contes* in Alpes-Maritimes ; Lambert, 2006, p. 52 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 327, 338.

¹⁶¹⁰ CIL XIII, 5340: *Marti Segomoni* ; AE 1994, 1224: *[M]arti Segomoni* ; CIL XIII, 1675: *[Ma]rti Segomoni* ; AE 1999, 1067: *et Ma]rti Segomoni* ; CIL XIII, 2532.

¹⁶¹¹ Lambert, 2006, p. 52.

¹⁶¹² Evans, 1967, pp. 156-158 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 83-84 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 214.

¹⁶¹³ F 82, 83 ; AE 1982, 667.

¹⁶¹⁴ CIL XIII, 11975 ; F. 82, 83.

h.d.d. allows us to date the inscription from the middle of the 2nd c. AD to the middle of the 3rd c.¹⁶¹⁵

Boudina is etymologically related to the goddess Boudiga ('Victory'), honoured in an inscription discovered in 1921 in re-employment* in the wall of the city of Bordeaux (Gironde): *Deae Tutel(a)e Boudig(ae) M. Aurelius Lunaris (se)vir Aug(ustalis) col(oniarius) Ebor(aci) et Lind(i) prov(incia) Brit(anniae) Inf(erioris) aram vover(at) ab Eboraci avect(us) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito) Perpetuo et Corne(liano) consulibus*.¹⁶¹⁶ The dedicator M. Aurelius Lunaris has Latin names and bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. He was a merchant from Brittany and *augustal sevir*, that is a freed slave in charge of the Imperial cult of the city, in York and Lincoln. Boudiga is attributed the Roman divine title of Tutela, who is venerated on her own in three other inscriptions from Bordeaux.¹⁶¹⁷ As explained under Vesunna, who is the Tutela of the chief city of the Pertrucori in Dordogne, the Tutela was the personification and protectress of a city, who ensured prosperity and safety.¹⁶¹⁸ This inscription indicates that the Tutela of Bordeaux, that is the protective goddess of the city, was called Boudiga. This role is attested by her name denoting success and triumph.

It is worth noting that the epithet of the *Matronae Boudunneae / Boudunnehae*, venerated in two dedications from Cologne (Germania Inferior), is also derived from the Celtic root *boudi-*, 'victory'. The ending in *-ehae* indicates that these deities are Germanized or Germanic mother goddesses. The dedications are the following: *Matronis Boudunnehis Dossonia Paterna*, 'To the Matronae Boudunnehae Dossonia Paterna' and *Matron[is] Boudunn[is] M(arcus) Nigrin[us] Serenu[s] vs[er]m*, 'To the Matronae Boudunneae Marcus Nigrinius Serenus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁶¹⁹ In the first inscription, the dedicator is a woman, whose praenomen*, Dossonia, is Celtic.¹⁶²⁰ The dedicator of the second inscription bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens.

d) *Camuloriga* ('Queen of the Champions')

The goddess name *Camuloriga* is mentioned in an inscription discovered around 1844 in Soissons (Aisne), in the territory of the Suessiones: *Deae Camlorig(a)e votum*, 'To the Goddess Camuloriga a vow (was made)' (fig. 38).¹⁶²¹ On the reverse of the stele*, the relief* of a standing character wearing a short tunic and holding a purse in his/her right hand appears. Since the drawing is rough and mutilated, it is difficult to determine the identity of the personage: is it a man or a woman? Could it be the representation of the goddess *Camuloriga*? Her name might again be distinguished on an altar from Ponts-les-Bonfays (Vosges), in the territory of the Leuci - a bust of a woman is engraved on the right panel and the bust of a man is portrayed on the left panel (fig. 39). The inscription could be either read

¹⁶¹⁵ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

¹⁶¹⁶ *AE* 1922, 116 ; *ILTG* 141 ; *RG* 6932.

¹⁶¹⁷ Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 59-66, n°20: *Tutelae Aug(ustae) C(aius) Octavius Vitalis ex voto posuit. L(ocus) d(atu)s ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum). Dedic(atum) decimum k(alendas) Juliano iterum et Crispino co(n)s(ulibus)* ; n°20bis, pp. 66-76: *Tutelae Aug. Lascivos Cani L. ex voto L. D. EX. D. D.*

¹⁶¹⁸ Daremberg & Saglio, pp. 553-554 ; *Pauly's*, vol. 7.A.2, pp. 1497-1607 ; Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 61-66.

¹⁶¹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 8217 ; *AE* 1969/70, 440.

¹⁶²⁰ Delamarre, 2007, p. 89.

¹⁶²¹ *CIL* XIII, 3460 ; *CAG*, 02, *L'Aisne*, 2003, p. 447. It was discovered in Avenue Voltaire, Soisson.

Camu[loric]i or *Camu[loric]ae*.¹⁶²² As Espérandieu points out, this inscription is certainly a funerary altar bearing the name of the deceased rather than a votive stele* representing the divine couple Camulorici / Camuloriga.¹⁶²³

On account of the similarity in names, *Camuloriga* might be related to the god *Camulus*, who is venerated in ten inscriptions from Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Hungary and Italy, six of which equate him with Mars.¹⁶²⁴

Camuloriga is composed of *camulo*, which means 'champion' or 'servant', and *riga*, 'queen'.¹⁶²⁵ Being a divine entity, *Camuloriga* is to be understood as 'Queen of the Champions' rather than 'Queen of the Servants'. Her name is the feminine version of *Camulorix* ('King of the Champions'), which is not attested as a divine name but occurs as a proper name in Ratcliffe-on-Soar (GB), Stackpole Elidur (GB) and Bourg-en-Bresse (Ain).¹⁶²⁶ In view of the significance of her name, W. Fröhner identifies *Camuloriga* with the Roman goddess of war *Bellona*.¹⁶²⁷ She may have been the one who presided over the hero-warriors in time of war, protecting, encouraging and leading them to victory. Besides, it can be noted that the *Suessiones*, who neighboured on the *Remi*, were one of the mightiest Belgian tribes of northern Gaul, and that their King, *Diviciacos*, is described as the most powerful chief of Gaul by Caesar in *De Bello Gallico*.¹⁶²⁸ Therefore, it would not be surprising that this tribe venerated a divine war leader personifying their strength and success, commanding them and ensuring them triumph.

¹⁶²² *CIL* XIII, 4709 ; *RG* 4811 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 134 ; *RDG*, p. 32 ; Toussaint, 1948a, p. 31.

¹⁶²³ *RG* 4811 ; Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 134.

¹⁶²⁴ Rome (Italy): *CIL* VI, 46 ; Solin (Hungary): *CIL* III, 8671 ; Wolberg (Belgium): *AE* 1989, 537 ; Arlon (Belgica): *CIL* XIII, 3980 ; Kruishoutem (Belgica): *AE* 1992, 1244 ; Bar Hill (GB): *RIB* 2166 ; Mainz (Germany): *CIL* XIII, 11818 ; Rindern (Germany): *CIL* XIII, 8701 ; Reims (France): *AE* 1935, 64 ; Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (France): *IAG* 170. See *RDG*, p. 32 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 55 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 334.

¹⁶²⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 101, 258, 260-261. Be careful with Olmsted, 1994, p. 335, for his references and sources are inaccurate. *Camulos* can also mean 'servant', especially when it is a proper name engraved on a funerary inscription, see Lambert, 1995, p. 97. As for Spickermann, 2005, p. 139, he suggests for Mars *Camulus*, 'the one who brings care'.

¹⁶²⁶ *AE* 1993, 1287 ; Macalister, 1945, 455 (Ogam) ; *CIL* XIII, 11216.

¹⁶²⁷ Fröhner, 1865, pp. 332-334.

¹⁶²⁸ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, II, 3, 12 & VIII, 6. For details on the *Suessiones*, see Kruta, 2000, pp. 828-829.

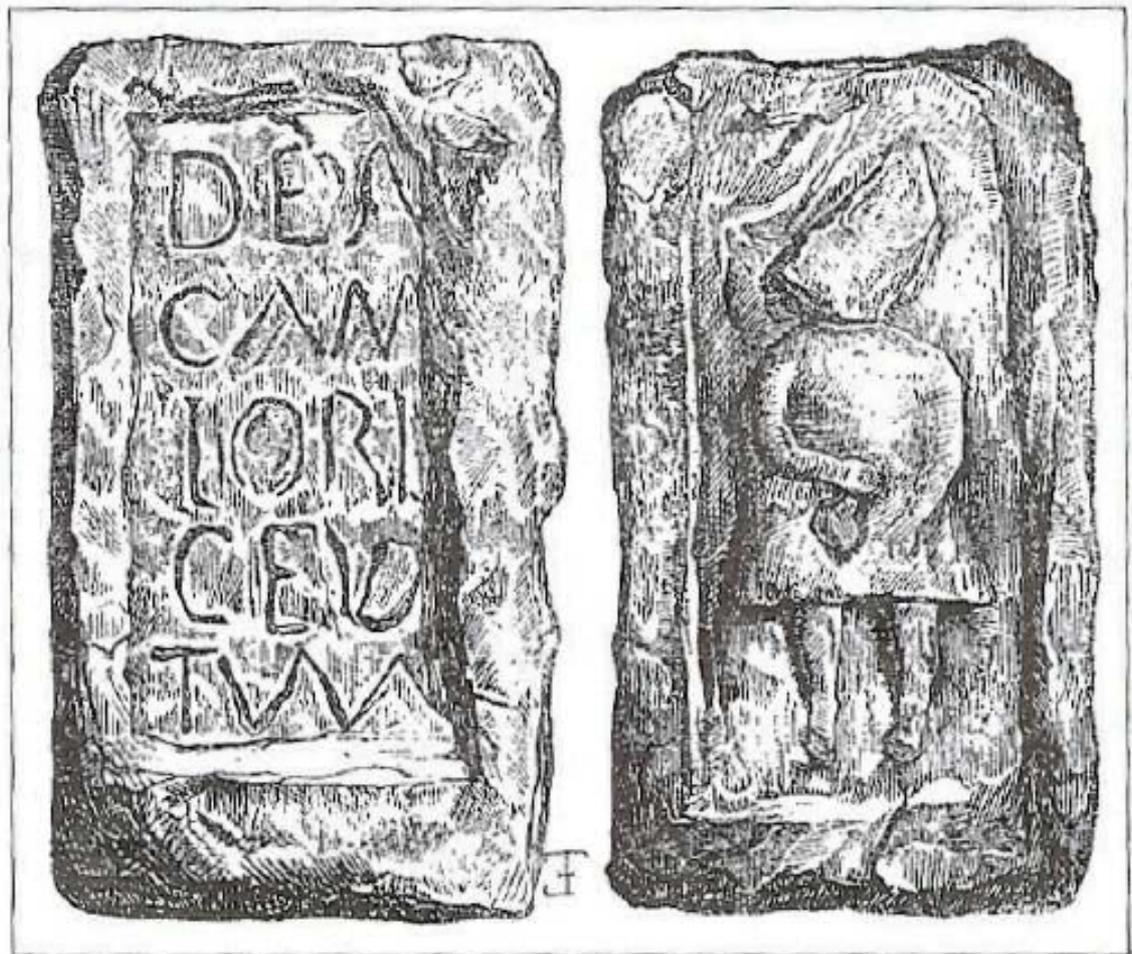


Fig. 38: Votive stele dedicated to the goddess Camuloriga, discovered in Soissons (Aisne). On the reverse a rough representation of a standing character with short tunic and purse. CAG, 02, L'Aisne, 2003, p. 447, fig. 582.*

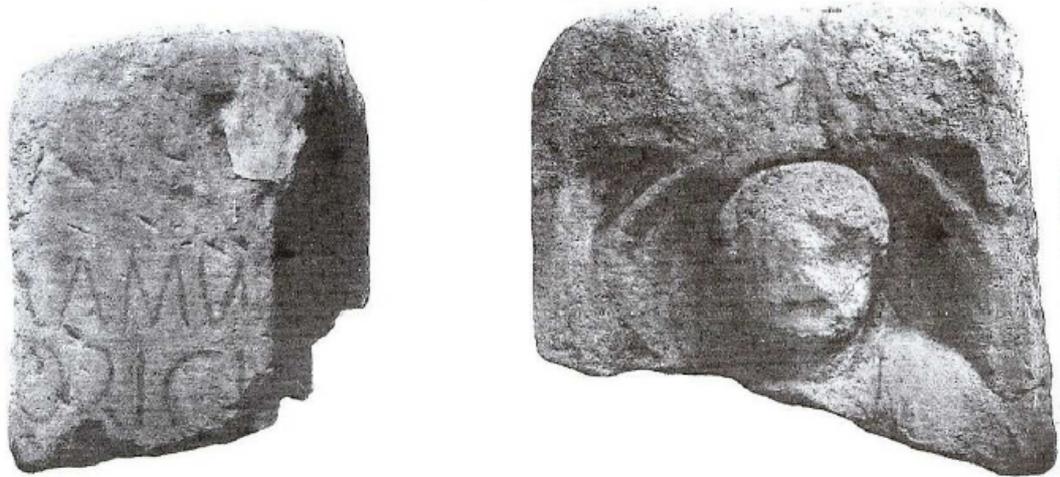


Fig. 39: Mutilated altar from Pont-les-Bonfays (Vosges) dedicated to Camu[[jori][ca] (?), with, on the right, the representation of the bust of a woman, and, on the left, the bust of a man. Musée d'Épinal (Vosges). RG 4811.

e) [T]ricoria/Ricoria ('Great Warriress' or 'Liberating Queen'?)

The goddess Ricoria or Tricoria is known from a unique altar combining a figuration of the goddess with an inscription identifying her (fig. 40).¹⁶²⁹ It was discovered in Béziers (Hérault), in the territory of the Volcae Arecomici, during excavations carried out on the 'Plateau des Poètes'.¹⁶³⁰ On the main panel, the name *Ricoria* is engraved above the rough representation of a draped goddess holding a patera* in her right hand and an undetermined object in her left hand. On the left side of the altar is inscribed the name of the dedicator *C(aius) Pequ(ius) Catli(nus)*, who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. The votive formula *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, which indicates that C. Pequius Caltus thanked the goddess for accomplishing a vow he had previously made, follows. The complete inscription is the following: *[T]ricoriae/Ricoriae, C(aius) Pequ(ius) Catli(nus) v(otum) s(olutum) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To [T]ricoria/Ricoriae, Caius Pequius Catlinus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'. Finally, a patera* and a guttus* with handles are engraved on the right side of the altar. These two objects are common attributes of fertility characterizing land-mother goddesses.

The nature of this goddess is problematic, for scholars do not agree on the spelling and meaning of her name. Moreover, her figuration being that of an ordinary goddess of fertility, it is difficult to determine which specific functions she may have fulfilled. Some specialists propose to read her name as [T]ricoria, inducing that she was the tribal-goddess of the Tricorii ('the Three Troops' or 'The Triple Armies'), a tribe neighbouring the Vocontii, in the south east of Gaul.¹⁶³¹ The altar was not discovered in their territory, but not very far away, and accordingly this theory remains plausible. The divine name Tricoria would thus be composed of the Celtic terms *tri-* meaning 'three' and *corio-* signifying 'troop' or 'army', cognate with Old Irish *cuire*, 'troop, army', Welsh *cordd*, 'tribe, clan, troop', Middle

¹⁶²⁹ *CIL* XII, 4225.

¹⁶³⁰ For information on this tribe, see Barruol, 1999, pp. 114, 169-170, 172, 225, 233 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 865.

¹⁶³¹ *RDG*, p. 67 ; *RG* 539, p. 348 refers to Hirschfeld, the first specialist to have proposed *[T]ricoria* ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 417 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 41 ; Barruol, 1999, pp. 325-330.

Breton *cost-cor*, 'family, troop', derived from IE **korios*, **koros* signifying 'people in arms'.¹⁶³² This root, which undeniably denotes war, occurs in other names of septs*, such as the Coriosolitae ('Army of the Solitae' or 'Complete Army'?) situated in the present-day Côte d'Armor, the Uocorii ('the Two Troops'), the location of which is unknown, the Vertamocorii, inhabiting the present-day Vercors and the Petrocarii('the Four-Troops'), located between the River Dordogne and the River Vézère (Corrèze).¹⁶³³ Interestingly, Elmer Antonsen explains that the proper names Corius, Coria, Coriso are equivalent to Runic* Hariso which signifies 'female warrior'.¹⁶³⁴ Tricoria could therefore be the goddess of the 'Triple Army' or 'the Triple Female Warrior'. On account of her portrayal and the etymology* of her name, it can be inferred that Tricoria combines attributes of fertility and war. She may have simultaneously been the embodiment of the land, providing her people with fertility, and the patroness of the Tricorii and their territory.

And yet, the reconstitution of her name as Tricoria remains highly unlikely. When looking more closely at the altar, it can be noticed that there is no place for a supplementary letter.¹⁶³⁵ Therefore, the goddess name is very certainly *Ricoria*.¹⁶³⁶ Contrary to what Allmer asserted at the end of the 19th c., *Ricoria* is not a Latin name, but clearly a Celtic name.¹⁶³⁷ One possibility would be to analyse *Ricoria* as **Re-coria* < *Ro-coriā*, with an intensive particle *re/ro* meaning 'very', 'great' and the root *coria*, 'troop', 'army' and possibly 'female warrior'. *Ricoria* is thus the 'Great Army' and maybe the 'Great Female Warrior'.¹⁶³⁸ Alternatively, her name could be broken down as **Rīgo-riā*, with *rīgo*, 'king', 'queen' and possibly *ria*, 'free'.¹⁶³⁹ Accordingly, *Ricoria* may be glossed as 'Free Queen', with the meaning of being a 'liberator'.

In view of those two plausible etymologies, it can be induced that *Ricoria* possesses pronounced sovereign, protective and war aspects. Was she a warrior or a divine queen fighting for the liberty and well-being of her people? Her very ordinary iconography, which denotes her powers of fertility and benevolence, does not shed any light on that question. As for Vaillat's theory that she may have been a water-goddess associated with a local spring, there is no etymological or archaeological proof indicating such a possibility.¹⁶⁴⁰

¹⁶³² Delamarre, 2003, pp. 125-126, 301-302: the root *tri-* 'three' is also found in the name of the tribe of the *Tricasses*, i.e. 'the ones who have three plaits', who were implanted around the today city of Troyes in Gallo-Roman times. See Fichtl, 2004, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶³³ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 125-126 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 558, 776 ; Pelletier, 2004, p. 206

¹⁶³⁴ Antonsen, 1975, p. 35.

¹⁶³⁵ *RG* 539.

¹⁶³⁶ Delamarre, 2007, p. 153.

¹⁶³⁷ *RE*, 1878-1883, p. 330, n°364.

¹⁶³⁸ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 1183 proposes *Ric-oria* but does not suggest an etymology* ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 261-262, 125-126.

¹⁶³⁹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 153, 230.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Vaillat, 1932, p. 51.



Fig. 40: Relief* with inscription identifying the goddess Ricoria found in Béziers (Hérault). Musée Lapidaire de Béziers. RG 539.

f) *Coriotana* ('Mistress of the Troops'?)

It is interesting to note that another goddess name comprises the same root *corio-*, 'army' or 'troop'. *Coriotana* is mentioned in a dedication, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, discovered in 1998 in a field at a place known as 'Le Village', in Optevoz (Isère), in the territory of the Allobroges.¹⁶⁴¹ According to André Pelletier, Optevoz may have been a secondary town of the city of Vienne.¹⁶⁴² The inscription is dotted and engraved on the upper part of a hanging in bronze. The object is missing: it may have been a representation of the goddess.¹⁶⁴³ On face 1, it reads: *D(e)ae Coriotana[e]*, 'To the Goddess *Coriotana*', and

¹⁶⁴¹ Pelletier, 1982, pp. 53-61.

¹⁶⁴² Pelletier, 2004, p. 206.

¹⁶⁴³ Carrara, 2000, p. 16.

on face 2: *M(arcus) I(ulius) Primulus d(edit) or d(edicavit)*, 'Marcus Iulius Primulus offered (this)' (fig. 41).¹⁶⁴⁴ The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. Delamarre breaks down her name as *Corio-tanna*, but does not propose any etymology* for the second element of it.¹⁶⁴⁵ As for Lambert, he suggests that this divine name might end in *-ama*, like *Belisama*, and mean 'Mistress of the Troops'.

As *Coriotana* is known by this single inscription and as the place of discovery does not give any information on her cult, one can only rely on etymology* to comprehend her nature and functions. Being related to the army, she might have been a goddess of the battlefield and war, but this remains only a hypothesis.

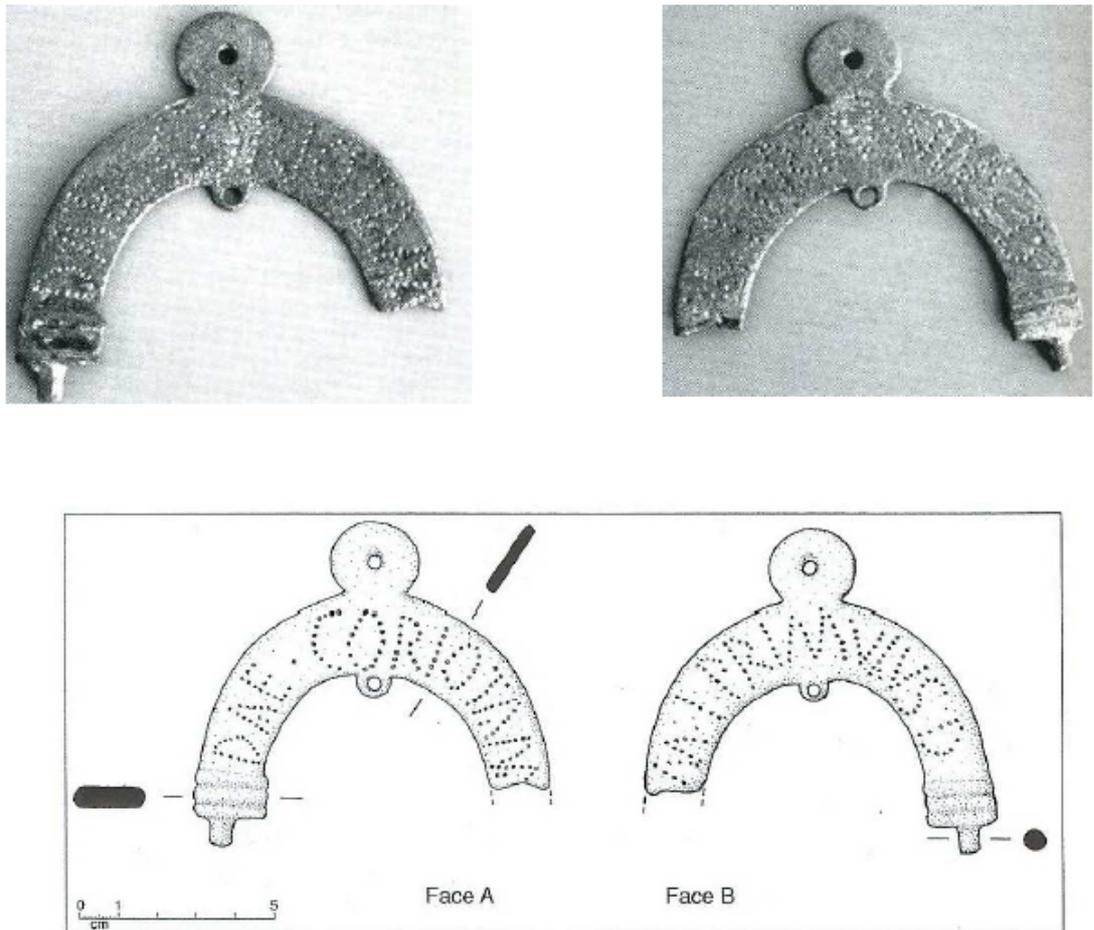


Fig. 41: Pictures and facsimile of the inscription to the goddess Coriotana, engraved on a hanging in bronze. Carrara, 2000, p. 16, fig. 1 and 2.

¹⁶⁴⁴ AE 2001, 1339 ; Carrara, 2000, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 74, 217.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it follows that goddesses, who originally embodied the earth in its wholeness and its fertility, became attached to specific parts of the land. The tribes venerated goddesses, sometimes eponymous of their name, who presided over their territory and inhabitants. In other words, the land-goddess became the representative of the sept* and the sovereign patroness of their territory. They were certainly invoked for the fertility of the soil, the maturing of the crops and the growth of the cattle, which ensured the survival and vitality of the tribe. In addition, they must have been prayed to for the protection of the territory against invaders and enemies. In her role of patroness, the land-territorial goddess was endowed with martial attributes and aspects and turned into a war-goddess, who took on different names and forms according to the regions and tribes.

The Irish goddesses Mórrígain and Macha are significant examples of this development. They are goddesses possessing pronounced agrarian features, who are the patronesses of a specific tribe and part of the territory: the Ulaid and Ulster. Their war-like aspect is evidenced by the Irish texts, which describe them as a trio of fierce and dreaded war-goddesses, taking part in battle and revelling in carnage. In her character, the British Brigantia also reflects the complex pattern of the land-tribal-war-goddess. First, it was noted that her name referred to a high place or hill. This indicates that she was originally related to the landscape. Furthermore, her name shows she was the tribal protective goddess of the Brigantes, who were settled in the north of Britain. Finally, a relief* from Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland) portrays her as a warriorress holding a spear and a helmet and various inscriptions equated her with Roman goddesses of war, such as Victory and Caelestis. The Gaulish goddess Litavi 'Earth' also exemplifies the development of the land-goddess into a war-goddess, since her name is replaced by the Roman goddess of war Bellona in an inscription from Mâlain, where she is venerated with Mars Cicollus.

While Irish mythology offers detailed accounts of the war-goddesses, data evidencing their existence and worship in Gaul and Britain are scattered and fragmentary and thus difficult to interpret. As demonstrated in this chapter, there is however evidence of a cult rendered to martial goddesses. In Britain, two reliefs* picture the goddesses Brigantia and Rigani with offensive weapons. In Gaul, several coins depict divine naked warriorresses frantically running, riding a horse at gallop or driving a cart launched at tremendous speed. They brandish weapons and seem to be charging at the enemy and entering the fray. Moreover, various goddess names refer to protection (Anextlomara), war-like feelings, such as strength (Belisama), fury (Vercana) or courage (Exomana, Noreia). Some achieve the protection of the city (Dunisia, Bibracte, Vesunna), while others ensure victory and triumph over the foe, such as Segeta ('the Victorious One'), Segomanna ('Victory Giver'), Boudina/Boudiga ('Victory'), Camuloriga ('Queen of the Champions'), Ricoria ('Liberating Queen' or 'Great Warriorress'), Coriotana ('Mistress of the Troops?'), etc.

In Irish mythology, the war-goddesses do not seem to achieve a military role like the gods. Their influence on the course of the battle is mystical and supernatural. The texts never describe them taking up arms and fighting in the *mêlée*, but reciting incantations, foretelling slaughter, uttering terrifying cries and casting powerful spells which bring their enemies down. They are thus more to be looked upon as magicians rather than warriorresses in the strict sense of the word. Gallo-British iconography nevertheless offers representations of goddesses armed to the teeth and directly taking part in the conflict. This military aspect is echoed in Irish mythology in the characters of Scáthach ('Shadow', 'Shelter' or 'Protective') and Aife ('Pleasant', 'Beautiful' or 'Radiant'), two terrible warriorresses inhabiting

Alba (Scotland), who train the hero Cú Chulainn in the early medieval text *Tochmarc Emire* ['The Wooing of Emer'].¹⁶⁴⁶ From Scáthach, Cú Chulainn gets his spear, the Gáe Bulga, and learns various martial techniques, notably the salmon leap and the *torannchless* or 'thunder feat'.¹⁶⁴⁷ Being indebted to Scáthach for her training, Cú Chulainn accepts to fight her enemy warriorress Aife and defeats her in single combat. Aife then becomes his lover and teaches him other warrior's skills, such as chariot-driving, casting or juggling. She bears him a son, called Connla, whom Cú Chulainn slays in *Aided Óenfhir Aife* ['The Death of Aife's Only Son'].¹⁶⁴⁸ In the imagery of the Gallo-British Celts, war-goddesses were probably close in character to the mythical warriorresses Scáthach and Aife. In addition, like the Mórrígain, Badb and Macha/Nemain, they must have been invested with supernatural powers and were believed to magically influence the fighting.

For the Celts, war and religion were interrelated: the warriors and the course of the battle were in the hands of the deities. The war sanctuaries of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise) or Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme) clearly illustrate that aspect. Before going into battle, warriors would pray and invoke the powers of the gods. Without their support and protection, they would not go to war. After the battle, they would go back to the sanctuary and deposit their spoils of war to glorify the deity who had given them the force and courage to vanquish. The little knowledge we have of Gallo-British goddesses only allows us to suggest some tentative hypotheses. By analogy with Irish mythology, the representations on coins and reliefs* and the names of some goddesses, it can be assumed that war-goddesses were invoked before a battle took place, so that they would bring their supernatural support to the warriors. Dio Cassius's account of Bouddica appealing to the strength and protection of the goddess Andrasta ('the Invincible One') on the eve of the revolt against the Romans, is evocative of such religious war rites. The war-goddesses were the ones who encouraged and motivated the warriors, gave them the necessary physical and mental strength to overcome the enemy, and led them to victory.

The belief in a crow-shaped goddess, reflected in the character of *Badb*, who is seen hovering over the battlefield and gnawing the corpses of the dead warriors, was undeniably common to the various Celtic peoples, since two inscriptions from the Continent are dedicated to Cassibodua and Cathubodua (or Athubodua). The association of Cassibodua with Victory clearly points to her war-like character. If the restitution Cathubodua is the correct one, the goddess is identifiable with *Badb Catha* ('the Battle Crow') and identical to her: she is related to war. The cult of a goddess in crow shape must have been a reflection of a custom specific to the Celts, which consisted in abandoning the corpses of the dead warriors on the battlefield to be devoured by birds of prey, because those birds were regarded as sacred animals commuting between the human and supernatural worlds and conveying the souls to the otherworld. This death rite is evidenced by several Classical texts and pre-Roman drawings engraved on stone or vases, notably coming from Celtic Hispania.

The character of some goddesses remains complex and difficult to unravel. In addition to being attributed agrarian, sovereign, protective and war features, Brigantia was given the title of Nymph in an inscription from Brampton (Hadrian's Wall),¹⁶⁴⁹ which relates her to water and points to her healing aptitudes. Similarly, the goddess *Segeta* ('the Victorious One'), who must have been a goddess of war given the significance of her name, is worshipped

¹⁶⁴⁶ *Scáthach* and *Aife* are mentioned in Van Hamel, 1933, pp. 47-60.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 140-141 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 7, 181-182, 245, 378-379.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 102-103.

¹⁶⁴⁹ *RIB* 2066.

in relation with curative springs. Her function of healer is evidenced by anatomic ex-votos* deposited in curative water shrines. Water was particularly revered in ancient times and many goddesses seem to have presided over rivers, springs and fountains throughout Gaul, Britain and Ireland.

Chapter 4 Water-Goddesses

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to goddesses linked to water, such as rivers, springs, fountains, lakes, etc. Water has always been regarded as a particular sacred element of the landscape, worshipped for its life-giving and generative force. Archaeology reveals that peoples increasingly settled along rivers and nearby lakes or bogs in the Bronze and Iron Ages.¹⁶⁵⁰ The supply of water was a necessary and essential condition for the survival of the community, the irrigation of the crops and the raising of cattle. Water also had curative virtues which could soothe and heal, and was an important means of transport facilitating cultural and trading contacts. This explains why water was held in high respect and became revered as a divine entity. While promoting life and fertility, water was also recognised as a capricious and dangerous natural phenomenon, which could instantly destroy habitations, flood crops and drown livestock. In addition to being worshipped for its beneficial dimension, water must therefore have been the subject of veneration to calm its wrath and to be granted clemency. The numinous aspect of water also arose from the mystery of its origin: springs miraculously gushed forth from the ground. This inexplicable emanation of water would have been interpreted as a gift from the gods. It was certainly regarded as originating from the divine world, part of which was believed to be situated under the surface of the earth, as Irish mythology gives us to understand.¹⁶⁵¹ Many legends indeed recount that the Otherworld could be reached through water.¹⁶⁵² The sea, a lake, a spring or a river was seen as a threshold or gateway to the divine world, water delimiting the boundary between the natural and the supernatural world.

The first part of this chapter will briefly analyze the archaeological, hydronymic* and literary data evidencing a worship rendered to waters in ancient times and illustrating the belief in a divine entity residing in water. The second part will be devoted to river-goddesses, who are generally eponymous of the river they embody, analyze their functions and study the various religious cults attached to them. The belief in a goddess embodying the river is illustrated in Irish myth by legends recounting the drowning of divine ladies in rivers, who, from that moment on, inhabit, personify and protect the river bearing their name. Such is the case of Bóinn, the goddess of the River Boyne, Sionann, the goddess of the River Shannon, Eithne, the goddess of the River Inny, and Érne the goddess of the River Érne. In Gaul and Britain, epigraphy proves that the chief rivers were also deified: the River Seine was personified by the goddess Sequana, the River Saône by the goddess Souconna, the River Yonne by the goddess Icauni, the River Marne by the goddess Matrona and the River Wharfe by the goddess Verbeia. Did those Irish and Gallo-British river-goddesses fulfil the same functions? Were they similar in essence? How were they worshipped and by whom? The last part of this chapter will deal with the widespread tradition of healing spring and fountain-goddesses evidenced by archaeological discoveries in Gaul and Britain.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Cooney & Grogan, 1994, pp. 153-156 ; O'Sullivan, 2007, pp. 161-163.

¹⁶⁵¹ Löffler, 1983, pp. 82-111 ; Beck, 2003, pp. 76-85

¹⁶⁵² Löffler, 1983, pp. 280-291 ; Beck, 2003, p. 79

Local fountain-goddesses, such as Acionna, Icovellauna, Coventina, Sianna/Stanna and Mogontia, whose curative character is not always certain, and salutary spring-goddesses, such as Damona, Sirona, Sulis, Bormana and Bricta, will be studied from a linguistic, epigraphic, iconographical and religious standpoint.

I) The Divinisation of Water

Before considering in detail the various river-goddesses honoured in Irish and Gallo-British tradition, this part explores the concept of water as a divine entity in Celtic times. Archaeological, hydronomic and literary data evidence such a belief. The numerous hoards of objects discovered in rivers, lakes and bogs from the Bronze Age onwards are clearly to be understood as votive offerings belonging to a whole complex of rites aiming at honouring the deities residing in those watery places. In Gaul, Britain and Ireland, the divinisation of water is besides attested by the significant number of rivers, springs and fountains bearing names, such as *deva*, *divona* and *banna*, meaning 'divine' or 'goddess'. Finally, Irish mythology recalls the faith in a goddess inhabiting and protecting the waters. A very old text, dating from the beginning of the 7th century, describes the waves of the sea as the locks of a goddess, while other texts tell of subaquatic realms inhabited by beautiful divine ladies or recount how a maiden is transformed into the waters after being drowned. This pattern – as already mentioned - is well-known in Irish medieval literature and particularly applied to river-goddesses, as will be analyzed in the second part of this chapter.

A) The deposition of votive offerings in watery places

A certain number of studies have demonstrated that the deposition of artefacts in 'wet places' - sites linked to water - was a particularly widespread custom in the Bronze and Iron Ages.¹⁶⁵³ Aidan O'Sullivan, speaking of Ireland and Britain, explains that ages can be differentiated with regard to the evolution of the practice.¹⁶⁵⁴ In the Middle Bronze Age, it was mainly weapons and tools, such as dirks, rapiers and axes, which were deposited in rivers. From the Late Bronze Age, the ritual phenomenon developed considerably: hoards of weapons, tools, personal ornaments and musical instruments were placed in watery places. In the Iron Age, the deposition of swords, spearheads, spear-butts, jewels, bronze cauldron and horse trappings predominated.

What emerges from the comprehensive analysis of Richard Bradley in the *Passage of Arms* is that the deposition of weaponry and personal ornaments in rivers, lakes and bogs is not meaningless and insignificant.¹⁶⁵⁵ The large number of artefacts constantly deposited in specific areas of rivers, lakes and bogs, from the Bronze Age onwards, throughout Ireland, Britain and Gaul, shows that those items were not accidentally dropped or lost. Bradley draws the conclusion that those deposits were votive offerings, which were part of religious rites fulfilled in honour of deities inhabiting the waters; a theory with which O'Sullivan, Eogan,

¹⁶⁵³ O'Sullivan, 2007, pp. 183-1990 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994 ; Eogan, 1983 ; Raftery, 1994 ; Bradley, 1990.

¹⁶⁵⁴ O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 183.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Bradley, 1990.

Herity, Green among others have concurred.¹⁶⁵⁶ This is all the more probable as many of the metal materials had been previously damaged or destroyed before being deposited. Destroying the weapons before offering them to the gods is a practice known from Prehistoric and especially Celtic times.¹⁶⁵⁷ The war sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde (Somme) is a good example of this 'rite of passage' aiming at honouring the gods by offering them unusable weapons.¹⁶⁵⁸

Examples of such deposits of offerings in lakes, bogs and rivers are multiple. In 1942, a hoard of 150 objects, dated 2nd c. BC to 1st c. AD, consisting of weapons, shields, tools, cauldrons and chariot-fittings, was dredged from Llyn Cerrig Bach, a small lake situated in the north-west of the island of Anglesey (Wales).¹⁶⁵⁹ In Scotland, no less than fifty-three Late Bronze Age weapons were recovered from Duddingston Loch in 1778.¹⁶⁶⁰ In Ireland, collections of metal materials, dating from the Late Bronze Age, were found in Lough Erne (Co. Fermanagh), Lough Gur (Co. Limerick) and Mooghaun Lough (Co. Clare).¹⁶⁶¹ Similarly, on the Continent, a large assemblage of weaponry, jewellery, tools and perishable organic materials, dating from the 3rd c. BC onwards, was retrieved from Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland.¹⁶⁶² In Duchcov (Czech Republic), a huge 4th-century BC bronze cauldron containing about 2,500 La Tène jewels was discovered in a thermal spring called *Obří pramen*, 'The Giant's Spring'.¹⁶⁶³ The archaeological discoveries of hoards in lakes are evidence in support of the accounts of the Greek geographer Strabo and the Roman historian Justinus, who relate that the Volcae Tectosages had flung a huge treasure composed of silver and gold into the Lake of Toulouse to appease the gods' wrath.¹⁶⁶⁴ It is said that the Roman consul Quintus Servilius Caepio, who seized and plundered the city in 106 AD and fished up the gold in the sacred lake, was doomed to a tragic end. In *The Geography*, Strabo recounts the testimony of the Greek philosopher Poseidonius:

And it is further said that the Tectosages shared in the expedition to Delphi; and even the treasures that were found among them in the city of Tolosa by Caepio, a general of the Romans, were, it is said, a part of the valuables that were taken from Delphi, although the people, in trying to consecrate them and propitiate the god, added thereto out of their personal properties, and it was on account of having laid hands on them that Caepio ended his life in misfortunes — for he was cast out by his native land as a temple-robber, and he left behind as his heirs female children only, who, as it turned out, became prostitutes, as Timagenes has

¹⁶⁵⁶ O'Sullivan, 2007, pp. 182-190 ; Herity & Eogan, 1977, p. 210 ; Green, 2004, pp. 127-134.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Green, 1993, pp. 70-71 ; Green, 1994, p. 2 ; Bradley, 1982, pp. 108-122.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Brunaux, 1986, pp. 126-128 ; Brunaux, 2004, pp. 96-100.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Green, 1993, p. 52 ; Green, 1994, pp. 1-13 ; Green, 1995a, p. 218 ; Fox, 1945.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Callender, 1922, pp. 351-365.

¹⁶⁶¹ Ó Ríordáin, 1951, pp. 37-74 ; Ó Ríordáin, 1954, pp. 297-459 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994, p. 156, 167 ; Armstrong, 1917, pp. 21-36 ; Condit, 1996, pp. 34-37.

¹⁶⁶² Kruta, 2000, pp. 837-838 ; Green, 1993, p. 52 ; Green, 2004, p. 131 ; Brunaux, 1986, p. 47.

¹⁶⁶³ Kruta, 2000, p. 585 ; Koch, 2006, p. 619 ; Green, 2004, p. 130 ; Kruta, 1971.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 133-134. See also Cicero, *De oratore*, II, 18, 124 ; Cicero, *De natura deorum*, III, 30, 74 ; Aulu-Gelle, *Noctes atticae*, III, 9, 7 ; Dion Cassius, *Historiae Romanae*, XXVII, 90-91 ; Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VIII*, V, 15, 23-25.

said, and therefore perished in disgrace. However, the account of Poseidonius is more plausible: for he says that the treasure that was found in Tolosa amounted to about fifteen thousand talents (part of it in sacred lakes), unwrought, that is, merely gold and silver bullion [...] But, as has been said both by Poseidonius and several others, since the country was rich in gold, and also belonged to people who were god-fearing and not extravagant in their ways of living, it came to have treasures in many places in Celtica; but it was the lakes, most of all, that afforded the treasures their inviolability, into which the people let down heavy masses of silver or even of gold.¹⁶⁶⁵

As for Justin, he relates the same story about the treasure deposited in the Lake of Toulouse: **The Tectosagi, on returning to their old settlements about Toulouse, were seized with a pestilential distemper, and did not recover from it, until, being warned by the admonitions of their soothsayers, they threw the gold and silver, which they had got in war and sacrilege, into the lake of Toulouse; all which treasure, a hundred and ten thousand pounds of silver, and fifteen hundred thousand pounds of gold, Caepio, the Roman consul, a long time after, carried away with him. But this sacrilegious act subsequently proved a cause of rain to Caepio and his army. The rising of the Cimbrian war, too, seemed to pursue the Romans as if to avenge the removal of that devoted treasure.**¹⁶⁶⁶

The authenticity or otherwise of this story and the actual nature of the gold of Toulouse is not the point here.¹⁶⁶⁷ The interesting thing is that this account evidences the sacred quality of lakes and exemplifies the tradition of depositing hoards and treasures in water to propitiate the gods.

In Ireland, many discoveries of this type have been made in bogs. In the course of the 18th and 19th c., at least sixty-three types of swords, spearheads, gold bowls and gold dress-fasteners, dated 900-600 BC, were discovered in the Bog of Cullen (Co. Tipperary).¹⁶⁶⁸ From the Bog of Dowris (Co. Offaly), an impressive 7th-century BC hoard of swords, chapes, spearheads, socketed axeheads, knives and gouges, razors, buckets, cauldrons and horns, was dredged (fig. 1).¹⁶⁶⁹ As for the bog site at Lisnacrogher (Co. Antrim), it revealed an important range of personal ornaments and weapons.¹⁶⁷⁰ Finds of great interest are the Bronze and Iron Age anthropomorphic* wooden figures, possibly representing a deity, respectively dug up at the Bog of Ralaghan (Co. Cavan) (fig. 2),¹⁶⁷¹ in Lagore Lake (Co.

¹⁶⁶⁵ *Book IV.1.13.*

¹⁶⁶⁶ *Justin, XXXII. 3. 9-11 ; Watson, 1853.*

¹⁶⁶⁷ Boudartchouk & Gardes, pp. 473-474 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 94-95 references the various studies which have been done on the origin, emplacement and authenticity of the gold of Toulouse.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Eogan, 1964, p. 347, n°69.

¹⁶⁶⁹ O'Sullivan, 2007, pp. 184-185 ; Eogan, 1983 ; Rosse, 1983-1984, pp. 57-65.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Raferty, 1983, pp. 97-101.

¹⁶⁷¹ Mahr, 1930, p. 487 ; Coles, 1990 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994, pp. 155-156.

Meath)¹⁶⁷² and on trackways in Cloncreen Bog at Ballykilleen¹⁶⁷³, at Kilberg (Co. Offaly)¹⁶⁷⁴ and at Corlea (Co. Longford).¹⁶⁷⁵



Fig. 1: Seventh-century hoard, composed of weaponry, cauldrons, horns, axes, gouges, razors, etc, dredged from the Bog of Dowris in Co. Offaly (Ireland). In the National Museum of Ireland. O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 184, pl. IX.

¹⁶⁷² Coles, 1990 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994, pp. 155-156 ; Hencken, 1950-1951, pp. 1-247.

¹⁶⁷³ Corcoran, 2003, pp. 12-13 ; Stanley, 2007, pp. 184-185.

¹⁶⁷⁴ McDermott, Moore, Murray & Stanley, 2003, pp. 20-23 ; Stanley, 2006, pp. 5-7.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Raftery, 1996.

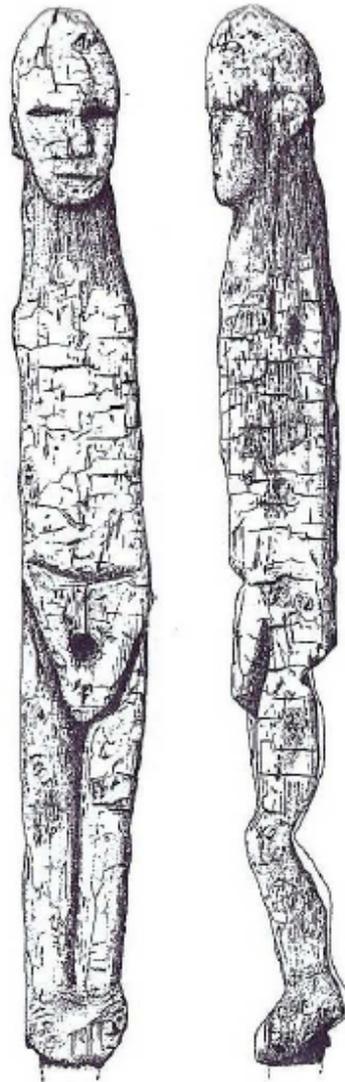


Fig. 2: Anthropomorphic figure in yew-wood, dating from the Middle Bronze Age, discovered in a bog at Ralaghan, in Co. Cavan (Ireland). O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 187, fig. 8.*

The deposition of votive offerings is attested in rivers too. Archaeological discoveries have shown that hoards were generally dropped at specific areas, such as fords. The only difference between river and lake/bog deposits is, as O'Sullivan explains, that "weaponry is dominant in rivers, while ceremonial items (cauldron, horns, gold) tend to be mostly found in bogs".¹⁶⁷⁶ In Gaul, a significant number of Late Bronze Age swords were discovered in the River Loire,¹⁶⁷⁷ and numerous 2nd-Iron Age spearheads and swords were recovered from the River Saône, more specifically at fords.¹⁶⁷⁸ From the River Thames in Britain, spearheads, swords, pieces of armour and defensive weapons have been dredged since the 19th c. These include the two Wandsworth shield bosses, dating to the 3rd c.-1st c.

¹⁶⁷⁶ O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 186.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Briard, 1966, pp. 185-192.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Dumont, 1997 & 2006.

BC, the 1st-century BC horned helmet (chapter 3, fig. 24) and the bronze shield inlaid with enamel, dated to the beginning of the 1st c. AD (fig. 3).¹⁶⁷⁹ Similarly, in Ireland, swords, dirks and rapiers, dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages, were found in the beds of the River Shannon, the River Bann, the River Barrow and the River Érne at particular places.¹⁶⁸⁰



Fig. 3: Bronze shield inlaid with enamel (0.775m), dating from the beginning of the 1st c. AD, discovered in the river Thames at Battersea (Middlesex). In the British Museum, London. Duval, 1977, p. 215, n°223.

The deposition of votive offerings in water in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times is particularly attested at the sources of rivers, thermal springs and fountains. Such offerings to the gods, generally known as *ex-votos* for this period, are of different types. They can be

¹⁶⁷⁹ Green, 2004, p. 128 ; Green, 1995a, p. 218 ; Kruta, 2000, pp. 870-871 ; Adkins & Jackson, 1978.

¹⁶⁸⁰ O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 185 ; Cooney & Grogan, 1994, pp. 143

in wood, stone, bronze, gold, iron or in sheet metal¹⁶⁸¹ and may consist of representations of the pilgrims themselves, swaddled babies and protective deities. For instance, Venus Anadyomene* or Mother Goddesses; personal ornaments such as fibulas*, brooches, rings, bracelets and hairpins; coins; potteries; epigraphic altars and anatomic ex-votos* i.e. images of painful or deceased body parts, such as legs, breasts, eyes, arms, heads, feet and internal organs.¹⁶⁸² Such ex-votos have been discovered in great quantity at the Sources-de-la-Seine (Côte d'Or), Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme), Bourbonnes-les-Bains (Haute-Marne), Luxeuil-les-Bains (Haute-Saône) in France and at Bath (Somerset, GB), etc. Healing springs were generally in the hands of a specific deity, whose name could be identified when dedications were discovered on the site. The Sources-de-la-Seine was presided over by the goddess Sequana, Bath by Sulis, Luxeuil by Brixta and Luxovius, while the 'Source des Roches' in Chamalières - where numerous coins, potteries and thousands of ex-votos in wood testifying to a curative cult were unearthed - was apparently under the patronage of the god Maponos, invoked in a magical text in the Gallo-Latin language.¹⁶⁸³

In Gallo-Roman times, archaeology thus evidences how sites linked to water were worshipped. Pilgrims came to springs to have their pains soothed and prayed to the deity inhabiting the healing waters. It is interesting to note that the religious rites would have involved two stages. Sick pilgrims must have first come to the site to invoke and 'sign a contract' with the deity. A gift was generally made to the deity with the aim of earning its benevolence. The anatomic ex-votos* were probably deposited on the first visit to the shrine. In leaving a representation of the deceased body part in the hand of the deity, the pilgrim was thought to journey back without pain or illness. Such votive offerings can be called 'ex-dono'.¹⁶⁸⁴ They are different in nature from ex-votos, inasmuch as ex-votos were offered once the vow had been fulfilled. To thank the deity, pilgrims would go back to the place of devotion and offer another gift to the deity: a jewel, coins, a vase or a dedication ending with the abbreviated votive formula *VSLM*, i.e. *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, i.e. '(the dedicator) paid his or her vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁶⁸⁵ This phrase indicates that the vow had been granted and expresses the sincere gratitude of the dedicator. Votive offerings were thus either propitiatory or testimonies of gratitude, though it is not always possible to determine whether the offering was made before or after receiving divine grace. What is clear, however, is that in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times, springs, rivers and fountains were believed to be the dwellings of gods and goddesses, who personified the water and exercised their curative and salutary virtues over the people.

People deliberately cast metalwork into water as a gift to the supernatural powers, probably to earn their benevolence and gratitude. This would mean that waters were believed to be personified and inhabited by divine entities, and this idea is confirmed by the meaning of certain hydronyms*, which directly refer to the preternatural character of the river or spring.

B) Numinous rivers or springs: *deva, divonna, banna*

¹⁶⁸¹ Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 125-140.

¹⁶⁸² Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 118-122.

¹⁶⁸³ Bonnard, 1907, p. 76 ; Vattin, 1969, pp. 320-335 ; Vattin, 1969a, pp. 103-114 ; Green, 2004, p. 141 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 134-136 ; Bourgeois, 1992, pp. 17-19 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 535 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 150-159.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Bourgeois, 1991, p. 115.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Deyts, 1992, p. 76.

Alfred Dauzat explains that most ancient river names are mere 'generic names' describing the appearance, nature and quality of the river, such as the 'slow water', the 'black, green, white or red water', the 'slow or fast-flowing water', or of the surroundings through which it flows, such as the 'water of the woods', 'stream of the mount', 'torrent of the cliff', etc.¹⁶⁸⁶ In Gaul, the name of the River Doubs, which rises in Mouthe (Doubs) and joins the River Saône at Verdun-sur-le-Doubs (Saône-et-Loire), was anciently called Dubis ('the Black (Water)'), derived from a Celtic word *dubnos* meaning 'deep, black'.¹⁶⁸⁷ The River Thève, which flows through Seine-et-Marne, Oise and Val d'Oise, originally bore a Celtic name Tava signifying 'the Tranquil or Quite One', from a Celtic root *tavo-* < *tauso-*, 'tranquil, quite'.¹⁶⁸⁸ As for the *Glanis*, a non-identified river flowing in the Ardennes, it is derived from a Celtic root *glano-* meaning 'pure, bright'.¹⁶⁸⁹ In Ireland, the name of the two rivers *an Abhainn Mhór* in Ulster (erroneously anglicized as the Blackriver and the Blackwater) signifies 'Great River', while the name of the river *an Abhainn Dubh* in Co. Cavan (Ulster) means 'Black River', and the name of the river *an Uinsinn* (the Unshin) in Connacht meant 'the River of the Ash Tree'.¹⁶⁹⁰ These names are thus descriptive and involve no particular religious tradition.

Other river names, based on *deva* and *divona*, are numinous names clearly reminiscent of the sanctity and divinisation of rivers in ancient times. They are derived from an old IE root **deivo*, **deiva*, 'divine', which gave the forms *devos* in Gaulish, *dia* in Old Irish, *duy* in Old Cornish and *duiu*, *duw*, *dwy* in Welsh.¹⁶⁹¹ The word *divona* is a derived form of *deva* and must have originally designated a 'sacred spring'.¹⁶⁹²

Many river names in Britain, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Gaul, Belgium and Spain stem from the ancient form *deva*, 'divine', 'goddess'. Such is the case of the Irish River Dee, which flows into the Irish Sea, north of Annagassan (Co. Louth); of the British River Dee, which flows into the Irish Sea in Cheshire (fig. 4: n° 3); and of the Welsh rivers Afon Dwyfawr ('Big Dee') and Afon Dwyfach ('Small Dee') which unite below the village of Llan Ystumdwy in the Lley Peninsula (Gwynedd) (fig. 4: n°4, 5 and 6). In Scotland, two rivers Dee are recorded: the one which flows into the Irish Sea in Kirkcudbright (Dumfries and Galloway) and the one which joins the North Sea at Aberdeen (Aberdeenshire) (fig. 4: n°1 and 2).¹⁶⁹³ In Gaul, there is important evidence of 'deva' rivers: La Dieue, a tributary of the River Meuse in Dieue (Meuse); La Dive, a tributary of the River Thouet in Saint-Just-sur-Dive (Maine et Loire); La Dive, a tributary of the River Vienne in Salles-en-Toulon (Vienne); La Dive, a tributary of the River Bouleaur in Voulon (Vienne); La Dive, a tributary of the River Orne in Peray (Sarthe); La Dives, which flows into the English Channel in Dives-sur-Mer (Calvados); La Dives, a tributary of the River Oise (Oise); La Die, a tributary of the River Drac (Isère); La Divatte, a tributary of the River Loire in La Varenne (Maine et Loire); La Divette, a tributary of the River Dives in Cabourg (Calvados); La Divette, which flows into the English Channel at Cherbourg

¹⁶⁸⁶ Dauzat, 1978, pp. 1-7.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Lambert, 1995, p. 37 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 151-152.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Dauzat, 1978, p. 3 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 293.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Lambert, 1995, p. 37 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 180.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Macalister, 1921, p. 291.

¹⁶⁹¹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 142-143.

¹⁶⁹² Delamarre, 2003, p. 142.

¹⁶⁹³ Rivet & Smith, 1979, pp. 336-338 ; Hogan, 1910, p. 338.

(Manche); La Diosaz, a tributary of the River Arve in Servoz (Haute-Savoie), etc.¹⁶⁹⁴ In the North West of Spain, two coastal rivers, called la Deba - situated to the west of Saint-Sebastian - and la Deva - flowing west of Santander - are also 'divine' rivers.¹⁶⁹⁵ In Belgium, there are also occurrences of the name, such as the River Dievenbeke in Ingelmunster, the ancient River Dieve in Rotselaar (now the name of a fief) and the River Dieversdelle in Uccle-lez-Bruxelles (today's Diesdelle).¹⁶⁹⁶

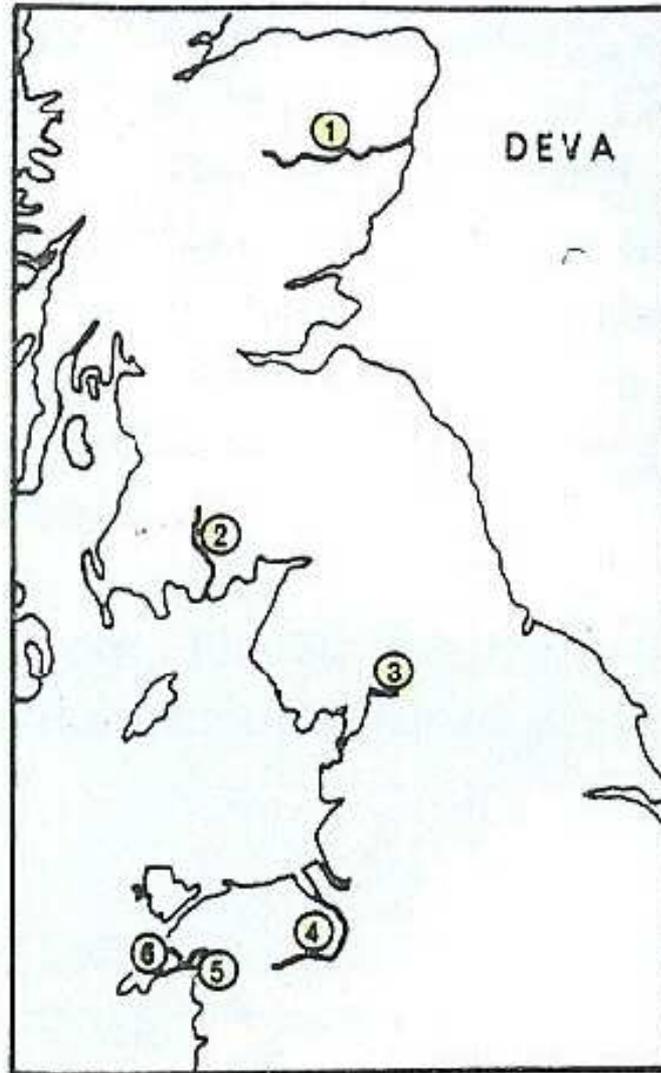


Fig. 4: Map showing the distribution of the river names derived from Deva ('goddess') in Scotland, Britain and Wales: 1. Dee; 2. Dee; 3. Dee (Dent); 4. Dee; 5. Afon Dwyfawr; 6. Afon Dwyfach. Rivet & Smith, 1979, p. 336, fig. 29.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Nègre, 1990, p. 112, n°2106-2110 ; Pictet, 1873-1875, pp. 2-5 ; Lebel, 1956, p. 289 ; Carnoy, 1951, pp. 103-106.

¹⁶⁹⁵ De Vries, 1963, p. 124.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Carnoy, 1951, p. 104.

Other river- or spring-names are derived from an ancient *divona*, 'divine (spring)'.¹⁶⁹⁷ In Britain, the River Devon, a tributary of the River Trent (Nottinghamshire), and in France, the brook Devon which flows in Mayenne, are reminiscent of such an appellation. Springs sometimes transmitted their name to the cities where they were located. For instance, the town of Cahors (Lot) was called Doueona in the 2nd c. by Ptolemy and Divona in the 4th c. on the *Table de Peutinger*.¹⁶⁹⁸ This name originally designated the famous Gallo-Roman 'Fontaine des Chartreux' in Cahors, situated at the entrance of the capital city of the Cadurci.¹⁶⁹⁹ Similarly, Divonne-les-Bains (Ain) got its name from the spring Divonne, famous for its curative virtues, which gushes forth in the city.

Divonna is not attested as a goddess by votive inscriptions. Nonetheless, an obscure text of magical character, dating to the 3rd or 4th c. AD, engraved on the face A of a lead plaque and found in 1887 in a well of a Gallo-Roman villa in Rom (Deux-Sèvres), might be addressed to the goddess.¹⁷⁰⁰ It was found together with fifteen other anepigraphic lead plaques. The origin and meaning of this text remains contested and obscure, because of the uncertainty of the language (Gaulish? Latin? Greek? Pictish?), the identification of the letters and the segmentation of the text. Lambert, in *La langue gauloise* and *RIG II*, sums up the various erroneous, fanciful and imaginary readings, transcriptions and translations which have been proposed.¹⁷⁰¹ The text given hereafter is from *RIG II*; but no relevant translation has been proposed yet:

***apecialligarti estiheiontcaticato (or caticno?) atadentissiebotu
cnasedentiticato (or titicno?) bicartaontdibo nasociodecipia sosio pura sosio
eo#...eiotet sosiopurah..... suade...ix.o.cn auntaontiodise##***

According to Lambert, the theories of Egger Rudolf and Otto Haas, who believe it to be a defixio* written against enemies, are unconvincing.¹⁷⁰² Edward Nicholson claims the text is in Pictish and suggests it is a litany addressed to a spring-goddess to prevent her from drying up, while John Rhŷs thinks that the authors of the magic formula are a married couple, Atanto and Atanta, who begged the goddess Divona to give them a child.¹⁷⁰³ The significance of this tablet-inscription remains then quite enigmatic. It seems nonetheless probable that this magical message is addressed to the goddess Dibona (=Divonna).

The poet Ausonius, in his 4th-century AD *De claris Urbibus*, who sings the beauty and purity of the Fountain of Bordeaux, reported that it was presided over in Celtic times by a goddess called Divona, whose name meant 'divine':

***Salve, fons ignote ortu sacer, alme, perennis, vitree, glauce, profunde, sonore,
illimis, opace salve, urbis Genius, medico potabilis haustu Divona Celtarum
lingua, fons addite divis. Hello, fountain the spring of which is unknown, holy***

¹⁶⁹⁷ Nègre, 1990, p. 112 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 23-25 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 61-68 ; Anwyl, 1906, pp. 43-44 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 360.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Ptolemy, II, 7, paragraph 11: Δουήονα.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Allmer, vol. 2, p. 286 ; Toutain, 1920, p. 301, note 6 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 23-24 ; Vaillat, 1932, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Lambert, 1995, pp. 174-176 ; *RIG II-2*, 103, pp. 285-296 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 371-373.

¹⁷⁰¹ Lambert, 1995, pp. 175-176 ; *RIG II-2*, 103, pp. 287-288, 294-295.

¹⁷⁰² Lambert, 1995, p. 176 ; *RIG II-2*, 103, pp. 287-288.

¹⁷⁰³ Pictish refers to the extinct language spoken by the Picts, the people of northern and central Scotland. References in *RIG II-2*, 103, p. 287.

fountain, beneficial, inexhaustible, crystalline, azure, deep, murmuring, limpid, shaded; Hello, Genius of the town, who pours us a salutary drink, Divona, which means divine fountain in the language of the Celts. ¹⁷⁰⁴

In the time of Ausonius, the fountain apparently flowed out from twelve taps into a basin in marble, but today the spring is no longer visible and its location is uncertain.¹⁷⁰⁵ Robert Etienne has suggested it was situated at Saint-Christoly.¹⁷⁰⁶ There is no archaeological evidence proving the worship of the goddess Divona in Bordeaux, apart from an altar bearing the inscription [...]*Jonae*, which Jullian reconstructed as [*Div*]*Jonae*, but it could also be [*Sir*]*Jonae*, who is mentioned in other inscriptions from Bordeaux.¹⁷⁰⁷

An altar discovered in 1849 on the oppidum* of Laudun, situated near Bagnols-sur-Cèze (Gard), bears the following inscription: *Diiona*, which could be read either *Deona* or *Divona*.¹⁷⁰⁸ This would be the ancient name of the stream L'Andiole, called La Vionnein the 18th c., which rises in the commune of Saint-Marcel-de-Carreiret (Gard) and flows into the river Cèze at the Moulin Bez, in the commune of Sabran (Gard).¹⁷⁰⁹ The inscription could thus be a proof of the cult of the goddess Divona.

Finally, in Ireland, it is interesting to note that the names of several rivers are derived from the Old Irish *Bandea* or *Bandae* and Modern Irish *Bandia*, composed of *ban* ('woman') and *dia* ('deity'), that is 'the Goddess'. These include the River Bann (*an Bhanna*) in Ulster, the River Bann (*an Bhanna*) in Co. Wicklow, the River Banna (*an Bhanna*) in North Antrim and the River Bandon (*an Bhandia*) at Kinsale in Co. Cork.¹⁷¹⁰ The construction *Bandae*, being a compound, replaced the earlier Celtic form *Deva* in the early Old Irish period.

All those *deva*, *divonna*, *banna* names, generally given to rivers and springs in Ireland, Britain and Gaul, clearly evidence that water was regarded as sacred in ancient times and deified as a goddess inhabiting its bed; the concept being significantly attested in Irish mythology.

C) The Lady in the water in Irish tradition

The belief in underwater realms inhabited by beautiful divine maidens is widespread in Irish tradition. *Tír fó Thuinn* ('Land-Under-Waves') is reached by diving into the waters of the sea, a well, a lake or a river, which mark out the frontier between the natural and supernatural worlds.¹⁷¹¹ For instance, the king of Fódhla (i.e. Ireland), Ruadh son of Ríghdonn, goes to the subaquatic *Tír na mBan* ('Land of Women'), a paradisiacal island inhabited by gorgeous women and concealed under the waves between Ireland and Lochlann - a place which is

¹⁷⁰⁴ *Decimus Magnus Ausonius, De claris Urbibus, XIV, 29ff.*

¹⁷⁰⁵ Toutain, 1920, p. 301 ; Greppo, 1846, pp. 113-114.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Etienne, 1972, p. 42.

¹⁷⁰⁷ *CIL XIII 582* ; Jullian, 1987, p. 56-59 (*Sirona*), 87 (*Divona*).

¹⁷⁰⁸ *CIL XII, 2768.*

¹⁷⁰⁹ Allmer, vol. 2, p. 286 ; Germer-Durand, M.E., *Dictionnaire Topographique de la France, Département du Gard*, Imprimerie impériale, Paris, 1868, p. 7 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 360.

¹⁷¹⁰ Hogan, 1910, p. 95 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 6 ; Freeman, 2001, p. 72 ; Mac an Bhaird, 1991, p. 3.

¹⁷¹¹ Mackillop, 2004, p. 405.

uncertainly located, possibly corresponding to Scandinavia.¹⁷¹² This underwater island is also visited by Máel Dúin and Bran on their respective voyages to the otherworld recounted in the 8th-century *Imram Curaig Maíle Dúin* ['The Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat'] and in the 7th-century *Imram Bran* ['The Voyage of Bran'].¹⁷¹³ A text called *Aided Chlainne Tuirenn* ['The Tragic Stories of the Children of Tuireann'] tells that Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, the three sons of Tuireann, were asked by Lugh Lámfhota to retrieve the magic cooking-spit from *Inis Fionnchuire* ('the Island of Fianchuire'), situated underneath Muir Torraín, between Ireland and Britain, where three times fifty beautiful women dwelled.¹⁷¹⁴

The belief in a divine woman in the waves is illustrated by an archaic poem, dating from the very beginning of the 7th c. AD, which describes the waves as the hair of a goddess, who can be identified with the Mórrígain. The verse, sung by the well-known Irish poet Ninníne,¹⁷¹⁵ tells of the drowning of Conaing, son of Aedán Mac Gabráin, King of Alba,¹⁷¹⁶ by a divine fair-haired woman inhabiting the waters (*In bean rola a mong find*). It occurs in the third fragment of the early 7th-century *Annals of Tigernach* (489-766 AD)¹⁷¹⁷ and in *The Chronicum Scotorum*, dated AD 622.¹⁷¹⁸ As for *The Annals of Ulster*, dated 621, it only gives the first stanza, the verses of which are very corrupt.¹⁷¹⁹ It is important to point out that *The Annals of Inisfallen*, dated 615,¹⁷²⁰ and *The Annals of the Four Masters*, dated 617,¹⁷²¹ do not refer to the poem. They only mention the battle of Cenn Delgten, wherein fell two sons of Libren, son of Illann Mac Cerbaill. Hereafter is the poem of *The Annals of Tigernach*, translated by Whitley Stokes:

Conaing mac Aedaín maic Gabrain dimersus est. Bí Nindine eices cecinit: Tonda mara morglan[a], [is] grian rodatoicsetar (rodotoicsitur), ina churach fleascach fann (fleachadh find) for Conaing concoirsetar (cond coseatar). In bean rola a mong find in[a] churach fri Conaing, ised ro tibhi a gen indiu (andiu) fri bili Tortan. Conaing, son of Aedán, son of Gabráin, was drowned. It was Ninníne the poet sang: The waves of the sea, great and clear, and the sun followed him, into his weak wicker-boat, together they were flung at Conaing. The woman threw

¹⁷¹² O'Curry, 1863, p. 235-240 ; Löffler, 1983, pp. 280-281.

¹⁷¹³ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 270-272, 405 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 39-40, pp. 333-334 ; Meyer & Nutt, 1895-1897 ; Whitley, 1888, pp. 447-495 and 1889, pp. 50-95.

¹⁷¹⁴ Löffler, 1983, pp. 281-284 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 273, 353-354 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 313-314 ; O'Duffy, 1888. This is a late medieval text, and the reference in it to 'Muir Torraín' is quite fanciful. 'Muir Torraín' is more properly the Tyrrhenian Sea, off the south of France.

¹⁷¹⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 358-359 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2003, p. 56.

¹⁷¹⁶ *Conaing's* death is entered at the year 605.

¹⁷¹⁷ Stokes, 1896a, pp. 175-176.

¹⁷¹⁸ Hennessy, 1866, pp. 76-77.

¹⁷¹⁹ Hennessy, 1887, pp. 92-93 and note 5.

¹⁷²⁰ Mac Airt, 1951, pp. 84-85.

¹⁷²¹ O'Donovan, 1951, pp. 240-241.

her white mane into his boat at Conaing, that is what caused her to smile today at the Tree of Tortu.¹⁷²²

In The Celtic Realms, Milles Dillon and Nora Chadwick propose another translation, which is more a creative interpretation of the original text than a literal translation:

The deep clear depths of the sea and the sand on the sea-bed have covered them. They have hurled themselves over Conaing in his frail little curach. The woman has flung her white mane against Conaing in his curach. Hateful is the laugh which she laughs today.¹⁷²³

The fair hair of the goddess drowning Conaing stands for the waves of the sea, because *mong*, which means 'hair', 'mane', 'locks', was also used as a metaphor to designate crested waves in Old Irish literature.¹⁷²⁴ This reference indicates that the goddess is the personification of the sea, which she inhabits. The Tree of Tortu (*Bile Tortan*), mentioned at the end of the poem, was the ancient tree standing in the land of the Uí Tortan sept* in Ardraccan, near Navan, in County Meath (see Chapter 2).¹⁷²⁵ Significantly, the same fair-haired female figure resurfaces in an 11th-century poem of the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, entitled *Bile Tortan*, which describes the collapse of that tree. She is portrayed with fair curly hair laughing heartily at the death of the tree:

Ultán Tige Túa. In ben roscaíl a moing find roscaíl mór cuarán come-grind: is cass conatbi a gen iar fuirmed Bili Tortan. Ultan of Tech Tua. The woman who loosed their fair locks, many a trim sandal hath she loosed: gleefully she laughed at the felling of Tortu's Tree.¹⁷²⁶

Edward Gwynn explains that the fall of the Tree of Tortu implies the death of some king, possibly Ailill Molt, who was slain in the battle of Ocha in 482 AD - lines 49-72 of the poem are indeed suggestive of such an idea.¹⁷²⁷ This preternatural female figure, who laughs at the death of Tortu's Tree in the 7th-century poem in *The Annals of Tigernach* and the poem of *Bile Tortan*, clearly points to the Mórrígain.¹⁷²⁸ This goddess is described in Irish texts hovering over the battlefield screaming and laughing at bloodshed - such as in the 9th-century poem, entitled *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* ['The recitation of Fothadh Canainne'], which alludes to her mane and her awful laugh:

[...] dreman inathor d#mar, nodusnigh an Mórríoghan. Don#rlaith do bil #ige, is# cotanas#ide, is m#r do fodboibh nigius, dremhan an caisgen tibhes. Rol# a moing dar a hais [...] [...] horrible are the huge entrails which the Mórrígain washes. She has come to us from the edge of a pillar (?), 'tis she who has egged us on; many

¹⁷²² Stokes, 1896a, pp. 175-176.

¹⁷²³ Dillon & Chadwick, 1973, p. 144.

¹⁷²⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 357.

¹⁷²⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2003, p. 56 ; Bieler, 1979, pp. 162-163 ; Hennessy, 1866, p. 77 ; Stokes, 1887, p. 185 ; Stokes, 1895, p. 279 ; Gwynn, 1913, pp. 148-149 & 1924, pp. 240-247, 440-441.

¹⁷²⁶ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 244-245. This text is contained in the *Book of Leinster* (199 b 61) and in the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (col. 344).

¹⁷²⁷ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 440-441.

¹⁷²⁸ Dillon & Chadwick, 1973, p. 144 ; Gwynn, 1924, p. 441.

are the spoils she washes, horrible the hateful laugh she laughs. She has flung her mane over her back [...]¹⁷²⁹

As regards the theme of the loosing of the sandal referred to in the poem of *Bile Tortan*, Gwynn argues that it is certainly “preparatory to washing the bodies of the dead”; a role which is fulfilled by the Mórrígain in *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* [‘The recitation of Fothadh Canainne’].¹⁷³⁰

It is interesting to note that the Mórrígain is said to be ‘fair-haired’ (*mong find*) in the poem of *The Annals of Tigernach* and in the poem *Bile Tortan*. It relates her to another supernatural lady known as Mongfhind (‘Bright-Maned’) in Irish literature.¹⁷³¹ Even though Mongfhind is presented as a mortal woman in certain sources, it is clear that she was originally a goddess. She appears in the legends as the nurse and teacher of young warriors, such as Diarmait ua Duibne and Gíona mac Lugha, two leading heroes of the Fianna band, and Mac Lughach, the grandson of Fionn mac Cumhaill.¹⁷³² In an 11th-century legend, Mongfhind is portrayed as the stepmother of the king Niall Naoi-Ghiallach. She tried to usurp the throne for her sons by tricking him, but she fell into her own trap and eventually drank the poisonous drink she had prepared for Niall. She died at Samhain, which is why she is now remembered as the patroness of this festival.¹⁷³³ The Mórrígain is likely to have been an emanation of the primary land-goddess Mongfhind, who must originally have been connected to water and sacred knowledge, since her name, composed of *mong* and *find*, metaphorically refers to ‘crested waves’ and to ‘brilliance’ or ‘wisdom’. This is a double aspect which seems to be typical of river-goddesses, for instance the river-goddess Bóinn, whose name derives from an old **Bóu-vinda*, ‘the Cow-White (Goddess)’ or ‘the Bovine Wise (Goddess)’.¹⁷³⁴

The idea of a goddess residing in water is particularly well represented in Irish mythology. A pattern emerges from the various legends: that of the drowning of a divine lady in the sea or the waters of a lake or river. After that tragic event, the goddess dissolves in the waters and merges with it: she becomes the sea, the river or the lake where she perished and gives her name to it. In addition to the faired-hair Mórrígain, whose hair shapes the sea, a legend recounts how the goddess Clidna, later Clidna (‘the Territorial One’), was drowned at Cúan Dor (the Bay of Glandore), in Co. Cork. Since then, she has inhabited the wave which broke over that beach, called after her: Tonn Chlóna, that is ‘the Wave of (the goddess) Clóna’.¹⁷³⁵ This wave was one of the three great waves, with Tonn Rudraige (‘Rudraige’s Wave’) at Dundrum (Co. Down) and Tonn Tuaig (‘Tuag’s Wave’) at Inber Glas, situated near the mouth of the river Bann (Co. Derry), which jeopardized the life of Irish people in ancient times.¹⁷³⁶

There are two versions of this legend, probably dating from the 10th or 11th c., in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*. The first poem is entitled *Tond Clidna I* and describes her elopement

¹⁷²⁹ Meyer, 1910, pp. 1, 16-17. See Chapter 3.

¹⁷³⁰ Gwynn, 1924, p. 441, note 45.

¹⁷³¹ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 357-358 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 334.

¹⁷³² Stokes, 1990, p. 16 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 174-176, 324 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 139-140, 253, 318.

¹⁷³³ O’Grady, 1892, vol. 1, pp. 326-332 ; Dillon, 1946, pp. 30-33 ; Westropp, 1913, pp. 201-202.

¹⁷³⁴ O’Rahilly, 1970, p. 105 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 38, 235-237.

¹⁷³⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 85-86 ; Gwynn, 1913, p. 514 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 90-91 ; Green, 1992a, p. 62

¹⁷³⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 86 ; Makillop, 2004, p. 410.

with Ciabhán from Tír Tairngire ('the Land of Promise'). After landing at Trá Théite (the shore at Glandore), Ciabhán went hunting and Clidna remained in the boat. A great wave then rose over the shore and drowned the lady, who has been dwelling in this particular area of the sea since then:

Clidna chend-fhind, búan a bét, 'con tuind-se tánic a héc; damna d'a máthair beith marb inní dia tarla in sen-ainm. Dia ndernad in t-óenach the ac lucht tíre tairngire, is é thuc in mnái tre cheilg, Ciabán mac Echach imdeirg. Rígan ind óenaig thall tra, ingen dar' chomainm Clidna, tar in ler lethan longach tuc leis Ciabán cass-mongach. Rofhácaib hí forsín tuind, luid uaithi echtra n-étruimm, d'iarraid selga, monur mass, luid roime fon fhid fholt-chass. Tánic in tond tara éis, do Chiabán nírbo deg-shéis; mór gním, ba dimda linne, bádud Clidna cend-fhinde. Tond dúine Téite na tríath, issé a hainm roime in bar n-íath nocorbáided 'mon tuind tra ben diarbo chomainm Clidna. Lecht Téite 'sin tráig-se thúaid; rogáet immese a mór-shluaig; lecht Clidna 'sin tráig-se thess, fri Síid Duirn Buide anairdess. Fliuchthar folt in Duirn Buide i tondaib in trom-thuille: cid dimda do neoch fuil ann, is sí Clidna nosbáidenn. Ildathach is a dá macc, robáitea in triur ac tochmarc; is mairg roadair don luing náchasanaig ar óen-tuind. Cóica long lótar tar sál, teglach tige Manannán; nocharb í 'n chongaib cen gá: robáitea ar thondaib Clidna. Clidna Cendfind, lasting her exploit, at this wave came her death; cause for her mother to die was the matter whence arose the ancient name. When the gathering was held yonder; by the people of the Land of Promise, 'twas he carried off the woman by deceit — Ciaban son of Eochu Imderg. The queen of the gathering yonder in sooth, the maiden whose name was Clidna, Ciaban the curly-haired bore with him, over the wide ship-ridden sea. He left her on the wave, he went from her on a giddy venture, to seek a chase, — fair deed! he went forward under the tangled wood. The wave came after he was gone: to Ciaban it was no lucky sound: a great event, — we grieved thereat — was the drowning of Clidna Cendfind. The Wave of Dun Teite of the chiefs, that was its name before in your land, till there was drowned in the wave in sooth a woman whose name was Clidna. The grave of Teite and her strand are northward; she was slain amid her great host: the grave of Clidna and her strand are southward, south-east of Dorn Buide's Mound. The locks of Dorn Buide are wetted in the waves of the mighty flood: though it cause displeasure, it is Clidna that it drowns. Ildathach and his two sons were drowned all three on their wooing: woe to them that stuck to the ship, that protected them not against a single wave! Fifty ships went over sea, the folk of the household of Manannan; That was no band without spears: they were drowned in the waves of Clidna.¹⁷³⁷

The second poem, entitled *Tond Clidna II*, explains that Ciabhán sailed to Mag Meall ('Pleasant Plain'), where he fell in love with the beautiful daughter of King Genann. He absconded with her on his small craft. A terrible storm then burst out and a huge wave drowned Clidna at Trá Théite:

Genann mac Triúin, torum ndil, ba hé tríath in tíre-sin; ó rogab fonn flatha fáe, ba cáime dia chlaind Clidnae. Brígda in bedg, bresta in forrach, doluid Ciabán cass-mongach, dia ránic Mag medrach Mell tar drong ndegrach na dílenn. Iar

¹⁷³⁷ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 207-210.

techt i tír, tólaib gal, conid ann roarlstar trí cóicta gol, erctha raind, im Chlidna ingin Genainn. Trí cóicta túath fil 'sin raind; gíall cach túaithe il-láim Genaind; dofíl sund ingin cach ríog 'm irla ingine ind ard-ríog. "I n-anmaim Dé tiag-sa dó; biur-sa lium in ingin-so: is sí doróega cen locht, Clidna chend-fhind chness-étrocht." Cechaing céim ina churach, fáchaid in tír trén-brugach, conid iarsin SídnEna; guilsetar na hingena. Tuir ocus túatha in maige dosfúartha fon golgaire: línsat airer na trága, d'imfhastud na gabála. Atbert Genann — garg a gráin: "Cia fuaitges i n-athgabáil," atbert-som tar ler longach, bertis Ciabán cass-mongach. Atbert Genann, ósin t-shluag: "Maith, a Chlidna chaindel-grúad: ind inbaid ticfa do lá, cía mod arafesur-sa." "Bíd th'aire frissin lá atbél: atbiur frit, bid é mo scél, ticfa tond tennfas trilis, corua tar th'adba it inis." Conid iarsin, trúag in dál, doluid Clidna la Ciabán; dirgset in seól, sóeb in sess, timchell hÉrenn aniardess. Esnad na gáithe gairge, ocus anfad na fairrge dosrat fri grian, síd nad lac, i n-inbiur Trága Tellat. Mogenar do Chlidna cháid, ó doluid issin éc-dáil, issin airm rochlóechlóí deinn co fil a hainm ós hÉrinn. Ní sochtmar anocht in tracht, Tond Chlidna cid aréracht: benaid béim fri Banba mbind iar sáeth ingine Genainn. Genann son of Tren, — pleasant [...]! - he was chief of this land; since he got the kingly seat under him, the fairest of his children was Clidna. Vigorous the dash, spirited the onset, wherewith came the curly-haired Ciaban, when he reached cheerful Mag Mell over the fierce concourse of ocean. After coming to the land, with brave deeds in plenty, it is there he uttered thrice fifty cries, that fill a verse, for Clidna daughter of Genann. Thrice fifty tribes are there to the province; a hostage for every tribe in Genann's hands; hither comes a daughter of every king, to tend the tresses of the high-king's daughter. "In the name of God, I will go thither, I will bear off with me this maiden: she it is that I have chosen, the faultless Clidna Cendfind, radiant of skin." He stepped forward into his boat, he leaves the land of strong keeps, so that thereafter it was called Sid nEna; the maidens lamented. The lords and the folk of the plain were left behind lamenting; they filled the tract by the shore to arrest the rape. Said Genann — fierce his hate: "who seizes the pledge?" — said he across the ship-ridden sea, they should carry off curly-haired Ciaban! Said Genann, over the host: "'Tis well, O Clidna, with cheeks aflame! some time shall come thy day in such wise as I shall declare. "Keep watch for the day of my death! I tell thee — this shall be my message! there shall come a wave whose crest shall sparkle, and shall whelm thy home in thine island." So thereupon — woe for the tryst! Clidna went her way with Ciaban; they hoisted sail — unstable the craft — round Erin from the south-west. Roar of the rude wind and storm of the sea carried them on the sand — a mound of strength — in the estuary of Traig Tellat. Hail to chaste Clidna, since she went to the tryst with death, at the place where she changed hue, so that her name is known over Erin. Not silent to-night the strand, if the Wave of Clidna have arisen: it striketh a blow against resounding Banba after the woe of Genann's daughter.¹⁷³⁸

¹⁷³⁸ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 211-215.

The same story with minor variants appears in the later *Bodleian Dinnshenchas*¹⁷³⁹ and in the 12th-century text *Acallamh na Senónach* ['The Colloquy with the Ancients'].¹⁷⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that Clidna, like Sionann and Bóinn, was linked both to water and wisdom. In medieval tradition, she is indeed believed to give inspiration to poets.¹⁷⁴¹

The legend of the drowning of Clidna in the sea can be paralleled to the story of Eba, related in a poem called Traig Eba, contained in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*. The two stories indeed have the exact same pattern. Eba, the leech-woman accompanying Cessair in her journey to Ireland, was drowned under the waves when she was sleeping on a stretch of the coast of Co. Sligo, which now bears her name, Traig Eba:

Traigh Eaba, cidh diatá? Ní ansa. Día tanic Cesair ingen Betha mic Naoí lucht curaigh co h-Erinn. Tainic Eaba in ban-láidh léi, cho rocodail isin trácht, co robáidh in tonn iarom. Conidh de raiter Rind Eaba & Traigh Eaba dona h-inadhaibh sin osin ille. Traig Eba, whence the name? Not hard to say. When Cesair daughter of Bith son of Noah came with a boat's crew to Erin, Eba the leech-woman came with her. She fell asleep on the strand, and the waves drowned her. Hence these places were called Rind Eaba and Traig Eba from that time forth.¹⁷⁴²

From this, it follows that water was believed to be the residence of goddesses in Celtic times. The sacredness, divinisation and worship of the sea, rivers, lakes, springs and bogs is attested by the wide-ranging and far-reaching tradition of the deposition of votive offerings in sites linked to water in Ireland, Britain and Gaul, from the Bronze Age to the Gallo-Roman period. It testifies to an important cult devoted to water deities. Numerous rivers, springs and fountains are besides called 'divine' or 'goddess' in those countries. Finally, Irish legends and poems depict underwater divine realms and tell of goddesses embodying the waves of the sea. As will be detailed in the following sections, particular individual goddesses personifying specific sites are known from Celtic times. Irish medieval literature and Gallo-British epigraphy have revealed many different names of goddesses of rivers, fountains and springs, who appear to have been venerated locally in some cases or on a larger scale in others.

II) River-Goddesses

The cult of river-goddesses is widely attested in Ireland, Britain and Gaul by ancient literary texts, epigraphic devices and votive offerings discovered at places of worship where the goddesses used to be honoured. River deification is not limited to female figures: important river gods are known from inscriptions discovered in Gaul and Germany, such as Rhenos, the god personifying the Rhine, or Danuvios, the god of the Danube.¹⁷⁴³ Nevertheless, river-

¹⁷³⁹ Stokes, 1892, pp. 12-13.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Stokes & Windisch, 1900, pp. 108-109 ; O'Grady, 1892, pp. 200-201.

¹⁷⁴¹ Ó hÓgáin, 1982, pp. 215-223.

¹⁷⁴² **Gwynn, 1924, pp. 292-293, 453.**

¹⁷⁴³ Inscriptions dedicated to the god Rhenus: *CIL* XIII, 5255 (Eschenz), *CIL* XIII, 7790, 7791 (Remagen), *CIL* XIII, 8810, 8811 (Wiltenburg), *AE* 1969/1970, 434 (Strasbourg). Inscriptions dedicated to the god Danuvios: *CIL* III, 11804 (Mengen, Germany), *CIL*

goddesses predominate, certainly because rivers were regarded as mothers fertilizing the fields and nurturing the peoples. In Ireland, the tradition of river-goddesses is well-attested. The chief rivers of Ireland were deified: the Odras as the goddess Odras, the Boyne as the goddess Bóinn, the Shanonn as the goddess Sionann, the Inny as the goddess Eithne and the Érne as the goddess Érne. Their respective legends hinge on a similar theme, which is that of the drowning of the lady in the river. In Gaul and Britain appears the same concept of a goddess bearing the name of the river and personifying its waters: Sequana presides over the Seine, Matrona over the Marne, Souconna over the Saône, Icauni over the Yonne and Verbeia over the Wharfe. Their worship in Gallo-Roman times is evidenced by inscriptions, water sanctuaries and votive offerings, generally unearthed at the sources of the rivers. There is no doubt about their Celticity: their names, even though their origins sometimes remain obscure, are unmistakably Celtic.

A) Irish River-Goddesses: Drowning and Wisdom

1) The River Boyne: *Bóinn* and the River Shannon: *Sionann*

The River Boyne, called *an Bhóinn* in Irish, *Bóand* in Old Irish (genitive *Bóindeo*, *Bóinde*, dative *Bóind*),¹⁷⁴⁴ has its source at Newberry Hall, near Carbury (Co. Kildare), flows through Co. Meath and empties into the Irish Sea at Drogheda (Co. Louth) (fig. 5). In Irish tradition, the river is personified by its eponymous goddess Bóinn. The earliest reference is given in the 2nd-century AD by Ptolemy, who calls the river Buvinda, the original form of which would have been **Bóu-vinda* according to O'Rahilly.¹⁷⁴⁵ **Bóu-vinda* is a 'co-ordinate' or 'co-referential' compound, composed of *bó*, 'cow' and **vindā*, a word denoting whiteness, brightness and wisdom; hence Bóinn, 'the Cow-White (Goddess)' or 'the Bovine Wise (Goddess)'.¹⁷⁴⁶

Her name points to her bovine shape, which relates her to the Gaulish spring-goddess Damona ('Cow Goddess') and possibly to the British river-goddess Verbeia ('She of the Cattle?').¹⁷⁴⁷ Her name is also contained in the name of the healing spring-goddess Borvoboendoa, mentioned in a complex inscription from Utrecht (Germany): *[Deo(?) (H)erc]oul(eo) Macusa(n)o Baldruo Lobbo(no) sol(uerunt) decur(iones) Vabusoae deo Lobbo(no) Boruoboendoe uo(ta) s(oluerunt) a(nimo) l(i)b(entes)*.¹⁷⁴⁸ Gutenbrunner, Delamarre and Olmsted propose to split up her name as **Borvo-bō-vinduā*, with *borvo*, 'to boil' and the compounding form *bō-vinduā*, identical to the name of the river-goddess Bóinn.¹⁷⁴⁹ Borvoboendoa might therefore be 'the Seething White Cow' and is undeniably a healing spring-goddess envisaged in the form of a cow. The cow-shape motif seems

III, 5863 (Rissitissen, Germany), *CIL* III, 3416, 10395 (Alt-Ofen, Hungary) and *CIL* III, 10263 (Osijek, Croatia). Diodorus Siculus, in his *Historical Library* (V, 25, 31), refers to the Danube as *Danoubios*. See also Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 33-34 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 439 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 47-49.

¹⁷⁴⁴ *RIA* Dictionary s.v. 'Boänd'.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Ptolemy, *Geography*, II.2.7 ; Pokorny, 1953, p. 11 ; Mac an Bhaird, 1991, p. 11 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 17, 21-22 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 110-111 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 38 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, pp. 646-647 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 354 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 79-80 ; O'Rahilly, 1970, p. 105 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Sergent, 2000a, p. 235 ; Sterckx, 1996, p. 38 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 148-149.

¹⁷⁴⁸ *AE* 1977, 539-540.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Gutenbrunner, 1936, pp. 67-68, 211 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 79 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 46 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 355-356.

therefore to characterize water-goddesses. Ó hÓgáin points out that the image of the cow is often used as a metaphor for river-goddesses in the Vedic *Rig Veda*, because the flow of the river is compared to the milk of cows, both of which gave mystical knowledge to seers:

[...] the streams of the river being synonymous with the milk flowing from her shape as otherworld-cow. Just as the irrigating waters of the rivers make the countryside productive, so does the divine liquid give mystical inspiration to the Vedic poets.¹⁷⁵⁰

Bóinn's name also refers to the notion of enlightenment possessed by seers, druids and poets, personified by the archetypal hero-seer Fionn mac Cumhaill, whose tradition is intermingled with the cult of the River Boyne.¹⁷⁵¹ The earliest form of his name Find is derived from the same root **vind-*, 'wisdom'.¹⁷⁵² Moreover, a 9th or 10th-century legend relates how he met the seer Finnéigeas cooking the 'salmon of knowledge' on the bank of the River Boyne and how he acquired absolute knowledge by burning his thumb on the fish and then thrusting it into his mouth.¹⁷⁵³ From that time on, Fionn mac Cumhaill would put his thumb into his mouth each time he needed to foresee an event.

The concept of the river giving access to wisdom is widely illustrated in the legends of Bóinn and Sionann, which have the exact same pattern: the drowning of the maiden in the river. As it will be demonstrated, the two stories of Sionann are a copy of the two legends of Bóinn, recounted in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*.

The first legend of Bóinn, entitled *Boand I*, was written by Cuán ua Locháin, an Irish poet who died in 1024. The poem relates that Nechtan, the husband of Bóinn, had a dangerous bewitched well in his homestead. Although access to the well was reserved for Nechtan and his cupbearers, Bóinn one day decided to challenge its powers, but soon after she had approached it, the fountain rose and blemished parts of her body. She then ran towards the sea, pursued by the water of the well, and perished, drowned under the waves of the newly formed river, to which she gave her name:

Síd Nechtain sund forsín t-shléib, lecht mic Labrada lán-géir, assa silenn in sruth slán dianid ainm Bóand bith-lán. Cóic anmand déc, demne drend, forsín t-shruthsin adrímem, otá Síd Nechtain asmaig co roshaig pardus Adaim. Segais a hainm issín t-shíd ria cantain duit in cach thír: Sruth Segsa a hainm otá-sin co Lind Mochúí in chlérig. Otá Topur Mochúí chóir co cocrích Midi mag-móir Rig mná Nuadat 's a Colptha a dá ainm ána imarda. Otá cocrích Midi maiss corrici in fairgi fondglaiss Mór-Chuing Argait gairther di, ocus Smir Find Fedlimthi. Trethnach-Tond ósin immach connici Cúalnge cráibach. Sruth Findchuill ó Chúalnge chrúaid co Loch n-Echach Abrat-rúaid. Banna ó Loch Echach cen ail, Drumchla Dílenn co h-Albain; Lunnand hí i n-Albain cen ail nó is Turrann iarna tucsain. Sabrann dar tír Saxan slán, Tibir i ráith na Román, Sruth n-Iordanen iarsain sair, ocus Sruth n-Eufrait adbail. Sruth Tigir i pardus búan, fota sair síst fri himlúad: ó phardus darís ille co srothaib na síde-se. Bóand a h-ainm coitchend cain otá in síd co fairge fraig: mebur lim aní diatá usce mná mic Labrada. Nechtain mac

¹⁷⁵⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 17-18 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 112 and notes 38, 44 and 45, p. 234 for references.

¹⁷⁵¹ Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 25-28.

¹⁷⁵² Ó hÓgáin, 1994, p. 21 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 235-237.

¹⁷⁵³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 243, 254 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 376.

Labrada laind, diarbo ben Bóand, bágaimm, topur diamair bóí 'na dún, assa maided cech mí-rún. Ní fhail nodécced dia lár nach maided a dá rosc rán: dia ngluased do chlí nó deis, ní thargad úad cen athis. Aire níslaimed nech de acht Nechtain 's a deogbaire: it é a n-anmand, fri gním nglan, Flesc is Lam ocus Luäm. Fecht and dolluid Bóand bán — dosfuargaib a dímus n-án — cosin topur cen tarta d' airigud a chumachta. Immar rothimchill fo thrí in topur co n-étuachli, maidit teora tonna de dia tánic aided Bóinne. Rosiacht cach tond díb ria chuit, romillset in mnái mbláth-buic: tond ria cois, tond ria súil sláin, tres tond brisid a leth-láim. Rethis co fairgi, ferr de, d' imgabáil a hathise, ar nách acced nech a cned: furri féin a himathber. Cach conair dolluid in ben moslúi in t-usce úar imgel: ón t-shíd co fairgi nách fand, conid di gairthir Bóand. Bóand do bruinni ar mbrúich braiss máthair Oengussa oll-maiss, mac ruc don Dagda, miad nglé, dar cend fir na síde-se. S. Nó Bóand bó ocus find do chomrac in dá ríglind, in t-usce a sléib Guaire glé ocus sruth na síde-se. S. Dabilla ainm in chon chóir robóí oc mnái Nechtain nár-móir, messán Bóinne co mblaid luid ina diaid dia torchair. Rosróen sruth in mara immach corrici na cairge clach, co ndernsat dá gabait de, conid úad rohainmnigthe. Atát i n-airthiur Breg mbrass in dí chloich 'sin loch lind-glass; Cnoc Dabilla ósin ille di choin bic na síde-se. S. Síid Nechtain is the name that is on the mountain here, the grave of the full-keen son of Labraid, from which flows the stainless river whose name is Bóand ever-full. Fifteen names, certainty of disputes, given to this stream we enumerate, from Síid Nechtain away till it reaches the paradise of Adam. Segais was her name in the Síid to be sung by thee in every land: River of Segais is her name from that point to the pool of Mochua the cleric. From the well of righteous Mochua to the bounds of Meath's wide plain, the Arm of Nuadu's Wife and her Leg are the two noble and exalted names. From the bounds of goodly Meath till she reaches the sea's green floor she is called the Great Silver Yoke and the White Marrow of Fedlimid. Stormy Wave from thence onward unto branchy Cualnge; River of the White Hazel from stern Cualnge to the lough of Eochu Red-Brows. Banna is her name from faultless Lough Neagh: Roof of the Ocean as far as Scotland: Lunnand she is in blameless Scotland — or its name is Torrand according to its meaning. Severn is she called through the land of the sound Saxons, Tiber in the Romans' keep: River Jordan thereafter in the east and vast River Euphrates. River Tigris in enduring paradise, long is she in the east, a time of wandering from paradise back again hither to the streams of this Síid. Bóand is her general pleasant name from the Síid to the sea-wall; I remember the cause whence is named the water of the wife of Labraid's son. Nechtan son of bold Labraid whose wife was Bóand, I aver; a secret well there was in his stead, from which gushed forth every kind of mysterious evil. There was none that would look to its bottom but his two bright eyes would burst: if he should move to left or right, he would not come from it without blemish. Therefore none of them dared approach it save Nechtan and his cup-bearers: — these are their names, famed for brilliant deed, Flesc and Lam and Luam. Hither came on a day white Bóand (her noble pride uplifted her), to the well, without being thirsty to make trial of its power. As thrice she walked round about the well heedlessly, three waves burst from it, whence came the

death of Bóand. They came each wave of them against a limb, they disfigured the soft-blooming woman; a wave against her foot, a wave against her perfect eye, the third wave shatters one hand. She rushed to the sea (it was better for her) to escape her blemish, so that none might see her mutilation; on herself fell her reproach. Every way the woman went the cold white water followed from the Síd to the sea (not weak it was), so that thence it is called Bóand. Bóand from the bosom of our mighty river-bank, was mother of great and goodly Oengus, the son she bore to the Dagda — bright honour! in spite of the man of this Síd. Or, Bóand is Bó and Find from the meeting of the two royal streams, the water from bright Sliab Guaire and the river of the Síds here. Dabilla, the name of the faithful dog who belonged to the wife of Nechtan, great and noble, the lap-dog of Bóand the famous, which went after her when she perished. The sea-current swept it away, as far as the stony crags; and they made two portions of it, so that they were named therefrom. They stand to the east of broad Breg, the two stones in the blue waters of the lough: Cnoc Dabilla is so called from that day to this from the little dog of the Síd.¹⁷⁵⁴

This poem is identical to an in-tale* of *Compert Con Culainn* [‘The Conception of Cú Culainn’], entitled *Tochmarc Emire* [‘The Wooing of Emer’], in which Cú Chulainn relates his journey to Eimhear. He gives her onomastic* details and tells her the story of the River Boyne.¹⁷⁵⁵ Those two texts are particularly interesting, for parts of the river are described as body-parts of the goddess: a portion of the river is her forearm and her calf, while another is her neck and another her marrow. This clearly illustrates the belief in a goddess embodying the river: her body *is* the river. As *Tochmarc Emire* [‘The Wooing of Emer’] was continually revised from the 8th c. to the 10th c., it is clear that the stratum of the legend predates the 10th c. Cuán ua Locháin must have had access to this earlier text and quoted the story again.

The second poem of the *Dindsenchas*, entitled *Boand II*, is addressed to Maoilsheachlainn mac Domnaill, the Uí Néill High King of Ireland from 980, who was ousted from the kingship in 1002 by Brian Bóramha, the leader of the Dál gCais sept*.¹⁷⁵⁶ The poem was composed before the death of Maoilsheachlainn mac Domnaill in 1022. The story is slightly different from the first poem. It recounts that Bóinn, the wife of Nechtan, met the Dagda at her brother’s house and bore him a son, called Oengus, nine months later. To cleanse herself of her betrayal and guilt, she decided to bathe in the well of Nechtan. Waves then burst from the enchanted spring and drowned her. The poem is the following:

A Máilshechlainn mic Domnaill do chlainn ingine Comgaill, adcós duit, a máil Mide, senchas Bóinde bán-gile. Bóand, bendacht forsin sruth roordaig Críst co cóem-chruth, conid hí ó glenn do glenn sruth Eorthanan na Hérenn. Find Life, Find Gaileóin gairb, do chomóentaíd dá chomainm, dia comrac atá Mag Find, Find lúath Life ocus Mífind. Oén Find díb-sin, beres búaid, sech tóeb Temrach anairthúaid: ann comrecat 'con chommar ocus Bóand bán-bronnat. Bó Gúairi sech Tailtin tair síles tre Loch Munremair: Bó Gúairi ainm na haba ria ráiter in mór-Banna. Mar atá Ordán is an, ó' ráiter sruth Eorthanan, in Bóand bó ocus

¹⁷⁵⁴ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 26-33, 480-481.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Van Hamel, 1933, pp. 16-68 for *Tochmarc Emire* & pp. 37-38 for the story of Bóinn. The text is given in Chapter 2.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 45.

find, do chomrac in dá rí-g-lind. p.36 Tánic Bóand ann andes ben Nechtain cosin cairdes co tech Elcmairi na n-ech, fer dobered mór ndeg-breth. IS ann dorala in Dagda i tig Elcmairi amra: rogab for guide na mná: rodusasáit re hóen-lá. IS ann fastaitís in ngréin co cend nói mís, mór in scél, ic gorad in rafheóir ráin i cléithi in aeóir imláin. And asbert in ben abus "Comrac rit, bad é m' óen-gus": "Is bad Oengus ainm in meicc" asbert Dagda tre daigbeirt. Luid Bóand ó thig co tric dús dá tairsed in tiprait: derb lé docheiled a col da soised ló a fothrucod. A thrí deogbaire in drúad, Flesc ocus Lesc ocus Lúam, Nechtain mac Námat dorat do choméat a chóem-thiprat. Doruacht chucu Bóand mín dochum na tiprat iar fír: ércid tairsi in tobar tenn, corosbáid hí cen forcenn. Dogabad uirre in cach trácht nách soised inber na mbárc ic Máelmórda, mét ratha, ic mac maisech Murchada. Dorónad trócaire Dé for leith Chuind don chomairle, coréló in aidchi déin daill chucut, a Máil féil Sechlaind. O Maelsechlainn son of Domnall of the family of Comgall's daughter! I will tell thee, O prince of Meath! the tale of white bright Bóand. Bóand — a blessing on the stream did Christ fair of form ordain; so she from glen to glen is the river Jordan of Erin. Find Life, Find of the fierce Gaileon, from the union of two names, from their meeting is Mag Find named: — swift Find Life and Mifind. One of the two Finds, that wins victory, flows past Tara from the north-east: there at the Confluence it meets with white-bellied Bóand. Bó Guairi which flows eastward through Loch Munremair past Tailtiu, Bó Guairi is the name of the river which is called great Banna. As there is ordan and an from which the river Jordan is called, so Bóand is bó and find from the meeting of the two royal waters. Thither from the south came Bóand wife of Nechtan to the love-tryst to the house of Elcmair, lord of horses, a man that gave many a good judgment. Thither came by chance the Dagda into the house of famous Elcmair: he fell to importuning the woman: he brought her to the birth in a single day. It was then they made the sun stand still to the end of nine months — strange the tale — warming the noble fine grass in the roof of the perfect firmament. Then said the woman here: "Union with thee, that were my one desire!" And Oengus shall be the boy's name," said the Dagda, in noble wise. Bóand went from the house in haste to see if she could reach the well: she was sure of hiding her guilt if she could attain to bathe in it. The druid's three cup-bearers Flesc, and Lesc, and Luam, Nechtan mac Namat set to watch his fair well. To them came gentle Bóand toward the well in sooth: the strong fountain rose over her, and drowned her finally.¹⁷⁵⁷

¹⁷⁵⁷ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 34-39, 481-482.



Fig. 5: An Bhóinn, the River Boyne at Trim, in Co. Meath, deified as the goddess Bóinnin Celtic times.

The River Shannon, an *tSionainn* in Modern Irish, rises at Tiltinbane in the Cuilcagh Mountain (Co. Cavan) and flows into the Atlantic Ocean in the Shannon Estuary. In the 2nd c. AD, Ptolemy gave the name *Sēnu* to the river, which O’Rahilly reads *Senā* and translates ‘the Ancient (Goddess)’.¹⁷⁵⁸ It is based on Old Irish *sen*, ‘old’, ‘ancient’.¹⁷⁵⁹ As Ó hÓgáin explains, the original name of the river must have been *Senunā*, a word meaning ‘the Old Honoured One’.¹⁷⁶⁰ It was written *Sinann* and *Sinand* in Old Irish, and *Sionann* in Classical (i.e. Late Medieval) Irish.

In ancient times, the River Shannon was personified as a goddess. In an 8th-century text, preserved in the manuscript known as the *Book of Armagh*, describing St Patrick and his company crossing the Shannon, the river is indeed given the name of *Bandea*, that is ‘Goddess’:

[...] et uenierunt per alueum fluminis Sinnæ, qui dicitur Bandea. [...] and they came by the River Shannon, which is called Bandea.¹⁷⁶¹

Moreover, a legend relates how the divine lady Sionann became and gave her name to the river after being drowned in its waters. The *Metrical Dindshenchas* gives two similar versions of the story. The first poem, entitled *Sinann I*, probably dates from the late 10th c. and traces the origin of the Shannon to the Well of Segais in the Land of Promise, which is actually the

¹⁷⁵⁸ Philip, 2001, pp. 74, 113 ; O’Rahilly, 1946, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 270-271.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 454-455.

¹⁷⁶¹ Stokes & Strachan, 1903, pp. 264-265.

source of the River Boyne. It recounts that Sionann, the daughter of Lodan Luchair-glan of the Tuatha Dé Danann, went to see the well, where the mystical nuts of hazel trees inspiring poets fell. She was seriously wounded by the water and drowned in the stream flowing from the fountain. Her name was then given to the river:

Sáer-ainm Sinna saigid dún, dáig rolaimid a lom-thúr: nirb imfhann a gním 's a gleó dia mbói Sinann co slán-beó. Rop ingen rogasta ríam Sinann sholasta shír-fhíal, co fúair cach ndodáil nduthain ingen Lodáin laech-luchair. Hi tír tarngire co túi, ná geib anbthine imchrúi, fúair in suthain-blaid rosmill ingen Luchair-glain lúaidimm. Tipra nad meirb fon muir mass for seilb Chondlai, ba comdass, feib adrímem ria rélad, luid Sinann dia sír-fhéga. Topur co mbara búaine ar ur aba indúaire, feib arsluinnit a clotha, asmbuinnit secht prím-shrotha. Immas na Segsa so dait co febsa fond fhír-thiprait: ós topur na tond tréorach fail coll n-écsi n-ilcheólach. Síltair sopur na Segsa for topur na trén-chennsa, ó thuitit cnóí Crínmoind cain fora rí-gbroind réil roglain. In óen-fhecht n-a tuile thrumm turchat uile don chóem-chrund, duille ocus bláth ocus mess, do chách uile ní hamdess. Is amlaid-sin, cen góe nglé, tuitit n-a róe dorise for topur sográid Segsa fo chomdáil, fo chomfhebsa. Tecait co húais, ra gním nglé, secht srotha, búais cen búaidre, dorís isin topur the dianid cocur ceól-éicse. Adrímem in uide n-úag dia luid Sinann co sóer-lúad co lind mná Féile fuinid cona gléire glan-foruid. Ní thesta máin bad maith linn for in saír sin ná saílfinn, acht immas sóis co srethaib, ba gním nóis dia núa-bethaid. Rotheich in topur, toirm nglé, tria chocur na ceól-éicse, re Sinainn, rothadaill túaid, cor-riacht in n-abainn n-indúair. Rolen sruthair na Segsa ben Luchair na lán-gensa cor-riacht huru na haba co fúair mudu is mór-mada. Andsin robáided in breiss, is rothráiged fo throm-greiss: cid marb in ben co mbruth baidb rolen dia sruth a sáer-ainm. S. Desin fri déine ndile lind mná Féile fír-gile: fail cech óen-airm, cúairt n-assa, sáer-ainm súairc na Sinna-sa. S. The noble name of Sinann, search it out for us, since ye venture to lay bare its origin: not paltry was the action and the struggle whereby the name of Sinann became immortal. Sinann, radiant, ever-generous, was once a maiden right active till she met all earthly misfortune, the daughter of Lodan from heroic Luchar. In the still Land of Promise, that no storm of bloodshed mars, the deathless maid gained the fame that was her undoing, the daughter of bright Luchar, whom I celebrate. A spring (not sluggish) under the pleasant sea in the domain of Condla (it was fitting, as we recount in telling the tale): — to gaze upon it went Sinann. A well with flow unfailing is by the edge of a chilly river (as men celebrate its fame), whence spring seven main streams. Here thou findest the magic lore of Segais with excellence, under the fresh spring: over the well of the mighty waters stands the poets' music-haunted hazel. The spray of the Segais is sprinkled on the well of the strong gentle lady, when the nuts of fair Crinmond fall on its royal bosom bright and pure. Together in plenteous foison shoot forth all at once from the goodly tree leaf and flower and fruit; to everyone it is not unlovely. In this wise, clear without falsehood, they fall afterwards in their season upon the honoured well of Segais at the like hour, with like excellence. Nobly they come, with bright activity, seven streams, in an untroubled gush, back into the well yonder, whence rises a murmur of musical

lore. Let us recount the entire journey whereon went Sinann of noble repute to Lind Mna Feile in the west with the choicest of her splendid abode. There lacks no desirable gift that I could not fancy as belonging to that noble lady save magic lore in its sequences: — it was a new practice for her fresh life. The well fled back (clear fame through the murmur of its musical lore!) before Sinann, who visited it in the north, and reached the chilly river. The woman of Luchar of full chastity followed the stream of Segais till she reached the river's brink and met destruction and utter frustration. There the comely lady was drowned and perished under heavy injury; though the woman of warlike ardour is dead, her noble name clave to her river. Hence with zealous affection is called the Pool of the pure-white modest woman. In every place (an easy visit) is known the noble pleasant name of this Sinann. ¹⁷⁶²

The second poem, entitled *Sinann II*, must date from the early 11th c., since it is attributed to Cuán ua Locháin, the author of *Boand I*. It explains that the River Shannon had its source at Connla's well, around which nine crimson hazel trees of wisdom grew. Their magical nuts used to fall in the waters of the well and engender mystical bubbles. Sinann, spellbound by the bubbles, went into the river with the aim of catching them and drowned:

Sinann, cá hadbar diatá, inneósad cen immargá: atbér cen snaidm co solus a hainm is a bunadus. Innisfed do chách uile bunad Sinna srib-glaine: ní chél in dag-blad diatá: atbér adbar a hanma. Tipra Chonnlai, ba mór muirn, bóí fon aibeis eochar-guirm: sé srotha, nárb inann blad, eisti, Sinann in sechtmad. Nóí cuill Chrimaill, ind fhir glic, dochuiret tall fon tiprait: atát le doilbi smachta fo cheó doirchi dráidechta. I n-óen-fhecht, amail nách gnáth, fhásas a nduille 's a mbláth: ingnad ciarsad sóer-búaid sin 's a mbeith i n-óen-úair abaig. In úair is abaig in cnúas tuitit 'sin tiprait anúas: thís immarlethat ar lár, co nosethat na bratán. Do shúg na cnó, ní dáil diss, dogníat na bolca immaiss; tecaít anall cach úaire dar na srothaib srib-úaine. Bóí ingen, ba buide barr, thall a túathaib dé Danann, Sinann gasta co ngné glain ingen Lodain luchair-glain. Smuainis ind ingen adaig, in bind bél-derg banamail, co mbóí da hindus cach mblad, acht in t-immus a óenar. Lá da tánic cosin sruth ind ingen, ba cóem a cruth, co facca, nochor dál diss, na bolca áilli immaiss. Téit ind ingen, toisc úaille, 'na ndiaid 'sin sruth srib-úaine: báiter hí da toisc anall; conid úaidí atá Sinann. S. Dénum aile, mad áil lib, uáim ar in Sinainn srib-gil, cé bethir lim 'ca légud, ní ferr hé 'ná in cét-dénum. Lind mná féile, ba fír dam, ainm na linde 'nar 'báided: is é a dír maras dise, más fír é fri indise. Dénum aile, is mebair lemm, rochúala cách co coitchenn; Cú Núadat, ba mór maise, robáite 'sin chrúad-glaise. Nó combad Sinann co becht Sín Morainn, tre eterchert: nó sí in moirenn, aidble gním: áille Sinann 'ná cach sín. Sinann — the reason why it is so named, I will declare without deception: I will report clearly without perplexity its name and its origin. I will declare to each and all the origin of bright-streaming Sinann: I will not hide the source of its renown, I will report the reason of its name. Connla's well, loud was its sound, was beneath the blue-skirted ocean: six streams, unequal in fame, rise from it, the seventh was Sinann. The nine hazels of Crimall the sage drop their fruits yonder under the well: they

¹⁷⁶² Gwynn, 1913, pp. 286-291, 529-530.

stand by the power of magic spells under a darksome mist of wizardry. Together grow, in unwonted fashion, their leaves and their flowers: — a wonder is this, though a noble quality, and a wonder their ripening all in a moment. From the juice of the nuts (no paltry matter) are formed the mystic bubbles; thence come momentarily the bubbles down the green-flowing streams. There was a maiden yellow-haired yonder, sprung of the Tuatha De Danann, the sprightly Sinann, bright of face, daughter of Lodan Luchair-glan. One night the maiden bethought her, — the sweet-voiced red-lipped maiden — that every sort of fame was at her command save the mystic art alone. The maiden, — fair was her form, — came on a day to the river and saw — it was no paltry matter — the lovely mystic bubbles. The maiden goes on a lamentable venture after them into the green-flowing river: she is drowned yonder through her venture; so from her is Sinann named. Another version if ye so desire ye may get from me concerning white-flowing Sinann; though it is to be read in my verse, it is no better than the first version. *Lind Mna Feile*, (I speak truly), is the name of the pool where she was drowned: this is its proper title inherited from her if that be the true tale to tell.¹⁷⁶³

It is noticeable that the legends of Bóinn and Sionann have the same motif. As the story of Bóinn is older and as Cuán ua Locháin is the author of both *Boinn I* and *Sinann II*, it seems clear that the legend of Sionann is a derivative of the legend of Bóinn. Both those legends mention the well of Nechtan, situated at the source of the River Boyne, where hazel trees with nuts giving mystical powers are situated. Patrick Ford, in an article entitled 'The Well of Nechtan and 'La Gloire Lumineuse'', explains that the *imbas forosna* or 'wisdom that illuminates' - which was sought after by Irish poets and characterized poetic arts - was believed to be contained in those nuts.¹⁷⁶⁴ In falling into the well, the nuts would imbue the river with all-encompassing knowledge: the source of wisdom thus resided in the body of water. It is interesting to note that an early Irish text, entitled *Togail Buidne Da Derga* ['The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel'], composed around the 8th or 9th c., specifies that on the river Bush (in Co. Antrim) and the River Boyne could be found *imbas*, i.e. mystical inspiration and great wisdom:

[...] 7 imbas for Búais 7 Boind i medón in mís mithemon cacha blíadna [...] [...] and imbas on the Bush and the Boyne when the Boyne in the middle of the month of June each year [...]¹⁷⁶⁵

Moreover, as mentioned above, Fionn mac Cumhaill obtains his *imbas forosna* by burning his thumb on the 'Salmon of Knowledge', fished in the River Boyne, the ancient name of which **Bóuvinda* directly refers to the notion of mystical illumination. When the lady Bóinn decides to challenge the Well of Nechtan in trying to drink water from it or bathe into it, it is certainly to gain access to the absolute seer-knowledge contained in its waters rather than out of mere curiosity. Maud Joynt explains that "the original legend perhaps foreshadowed the dangers which await those who seek the higher wisdom", because absolute knowledge was believed to be perilous when not handled correctly and was not understandable to anybody: it was reserved for a select few.¹⁷⁶⁶ From this, it follows that the rivers in Ireland,

¹⁷⁶³ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 293-297, 530.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Ford, 1974, pp. 67-74. See also Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 111 ; O'Curry, 1873, pp. 142-143.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Knott, 1936, p. 6.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Joynt, 1912, p. 193.

such as the Boyne or the Shanonn, were envisaged as divine figures to whom were attributed the gift of poetical inspiration, mystical wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge.

Today, the source of the River Boyne, situated in Newberry (Co. Kildare), is still worshipped by the local population: it is a holy well, called 'Trinity Well', where people gather to perform various religious and secular activities on Trinity Sunday.¹⁷⁶⁷ The pattern generally consists of reciting the rosary and taking a drink of water from the well, which is followed by music, games and dancing. The well is believed to preserve health all the year round and bring good luck, and local people particularly stress that its water contains a cure for eye-problems and even blindness.¹⁷⁶⁸ An oral legend recorded in the *Schools' Manuscript Collection*,¹⁷⁶⁹ 1938, is particularly interesting, for it recounts that the origin of Trinity Well is pagan and was attributed to a pagan queen called Boyne or Bóinne, wife of King Cairbre - holy wells are generally attributed to a patron Saint. This legend relates that Bóinne was drowned under the waters of the well after making trial of the bewitched well:

Trinity Well is of pagan origin. The River Boyne rises in Trinity Well, it is said that the name Boyne or Bóinne was also the name of a pagan queen who lived in a palace that stood on the site of the present Newberry Hall. Cairbre was the king's name and he would not allow anyone but himself and his three cupbearers to get water from the well. Bóinne went in spite of all warnings to the well, it overflowed and carried her on its water to the sea.¹⁷⁷⁰

This folklore account is the same as the early medieval legend recounting the origin of the River Boyne and its deification. This illustrates the long-lasting tradition of the legend of the goddess Bóinn, and the Christian holy well situated at the source of the river proves that the waters of the river are still regarded as sacred.

3) The River Inny: *Eithne*

The motif of the divine lady drowned in the river is found again in the story of the goddess Eithne, whose name is eponymous of the two rivers called Inny, *an Eithne* in Irish. The major one flows from Lough Sheelan and joins the River Shannon at Lough Ree in the centre of Ireland (Co. Westmeath and Longford) and the smaller one flows in the peninsula of Iveragh (Co. Kerry).¹⁷⁷¹ Eithne's name is derived from the Irish word *ét*, 'envy' and means 'She who causes Envy'.¹⁷⁷² A legend, contained in an early text in Old Irish, entitled *Ferchuitred Medba*, recounts that Eithne was drowned in the stream of Bearramhain while she was pregnant by the mythical King Conchobhar mac Neasa.¹⁷⁷³ Their son Furbaidhe was cut from her womb and the river was called after her:

¹⁷⁶⁷ Jackson, 1979-1980, pp. 46-48, n° 7 ; O'Connor, T., *OSL Kildare*, 1837, vol. 1, 93. Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost and celebrates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, i.e. the three persons of God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

¹⁷⁶⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 39.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Material collected in primary schools.

¹⁷⁷⁰ *Schools' Manuscript Collection 771: 91-92 located in the archives of the Irish Folklore Department of University College Dublin (Ireland).*

¹⁷⁷¹ Hogan, 1910, pp. 403-404.

¹⁷⁷² Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 192.

¹⁷⁷³ For details about *Conchobhar*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 109-112 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 99-100.

7 Eithne ingen Echach Fedlig, ben aili don Concobur cetna, mathair Forbaidi mic Concubuir 7 is aire atbertha Forbaidi dhe .i. a forbud .i. a gerrad do roinduib (sic) a broinn a mathar iarna bathad a nGlais Berramain frissa raiter Eithne indiu 7 is uaithi sloindter ind aband .i. Eithni. And Eithne, the daughter of Eochaid Feidhleach, another wife of the same Conchobhar, the mother of Furbaidhe son of Conchobhar. And the reason why he was called Furbaidhe i.e. he was hacked i.e. he was cut with spear-heads from the womb of his mother after she was drowned in the stream of Berramhain, which is called today the Eithne, and it is from her that the river is named, i.e. Eithne.¹⁷⁷⁴

The same tale is related in *Cath Boinde* ['The Battle of Boind'], dating from the early 10th c.,¹⁷⁷⁵ and in the c. 13th-century *Cóir Anmann*.¹⁷⁷⁶ Another poem, entitled *Carn Furbaide* ['The Carn of Furbaide'], contained in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, offers a slightly different story. It tells that Eithne was the wife of Conchobhar and Lugaid drowned her while she was expecting Furbaidhe in a river which now bears her name:

**Atá sund Carn uí Chathbath fors'rimred arm imathlam, lechtán láechda laích col-
lí, fertán fráechda Furbaidi. Furbaide Fer Benn, ba brass, mac do Chonchobar
chomdass: Ethne a máthair, moltait raind, siur do Meidb is do Chlothrainn. Luid
Ethne sin cóiced cain co m-báe h-i fail Chonchobair: dia m-bátar and immalle
de dorónad Furbaide. Iarsin mostic Ethne anair dia h-assait i Cruachan-maig:
dolluid Lugaid ara cend co bun síd-maige Silend. Sáeb-écht doróni Lugaid
for mnaí Conchobair chubaid: tuc am-mac tria tóeb immach iarna bádud balc-
thorrach. Is uaithi ainmnichther de ind abann dian ainm Eithne, ó mnaí, ní scél
cleithe cruind, atá Eithne arin abaind. [...] Here stands the Carn of Cathbad's
grandson against whom a nimble weapon was wielded; Furbaide's heath-clad
grave, martial monument of a glorious soldier. Huge was Furbaide, surnamed Fer
Benn, son to comely Conchobar: Ethne, whom verses extol, was his mother, the
sister of Medb and Clothru. Ethne came to the pleasant province and made her
home with Conchobar: when they lived together there Furbaide was begotten by
him. Presently Ethne journeys from the east to be delivered in Mag Cruachan:
Lugaid came to meet her at the fairy plain of Bun Silenn. Lugaid committed a foul
crime upon shapely Conchobar's wife: he drew her son forth from her side after
drowning her in ripe pregnancy. [From her is named thenceforth the river that is
called Ethne; from the woman—'tis no grudging secret—the river bears the name
of Ethne.] [...]¹⁷⁷⁷**

Even though Eithne is not represented as a river-goddess in Irish mythology, like Bóinn or Sionann, in this legend clearly lies the pattern of the lady who, after being drowned, becomes the river. The divine lady is eponymous of the river she embodies.

4) The River Érne / Lough Érne: Érne

¹⁷⁷⁴ Bergin, 1913, p. 18, lines 17-22.

¹⁷⁷⁵ O'Neill, 1905, pp. 176-177 ; Wong, 1996, pp. 234, 241.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Stokes, 1897, p. 396 ; Wong, 1996, pp. 233, 241.

¹⁷⁷⁷ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 30-31.

This motif is also found in the legend of the goddess Érne, related in a poem of the *Metrical Dindshenchas* entitled *Loch Érne*. It recounts that the lady Érne was the chief of a peaceful group of maidens in Ráth Cruachan, who took fright at the sight of the terrible Cruachu Olcai. They then ran into Lough Érne and were drowned under its waters:

Loch nÉrne, ard a oscur, ba lind garg cen glan-fostud, diar' thadbain a thescul túaid i fescur fthagmair find-lúain. [...] Andsin romemaid in loch fosin fedain, ronúar-chroth: isin chrích, ra glé-raind glúair, bi mbáatar Éraind arm-rúaid. Desin atá in gairm co ngail, ainm locha Erne adbail, cía robáided and iarsain Erne áilgen imchubaid. Érne chaid cen chuirid cnedaid ingen Buirg bán búredaid ba sárgad sáir-thrín in son bán-mac Máinchin maic Mochon. Érne nóisech cen nemain ba tóisech for ingenaib hi Ráith Crúachan na reb réid; nirb úathad ben 'ca bith-réir. Aicci nobítis ria mess min-sheóit Medba na mór-thress, a cír a criol cen chlód cona diol do derg-ór. Co tánic hi Cruachain cais Olcai co n-úath-blaid amnais, cor' chroith a ulcha ar in slóg in garb-fher doith daiger-mór. Roscaindre fo Chrúaich Cera na baindre, na hingena, taidbsin a chrotha fo chair, gairbsin a gotha glóraig. Rotbeich Érne, ilur mban, fo loch Erne, nách inglan, cor' dáil tairsiu a thuile thúaid, corosbáid uile i n-óen-úair. Cía bad úadaib, is breth chert fiad na slúagaib, ní sóeb-recht, is tairm dar trocha rothairg ainm locha Erne imaird. Loch. A rí, rop fedil fír dam fáilte demin dom dídnad, for nim co mbúadaib rombé, a fhir túargaib loch nÉrne. Loch Érne — high its leap! was a turbulent pool, without bright tranquillity, when first it showed its troubled waters in the north, on a radiant evening in harvest. [...] Then the lake burst forth under the array, till it quaked with cold, in the country, with its pure bright portion, where dwelt the red-armed Erainn. Hence comes the valiant title, the name of vast Loch Érne; though afterwards there was drowned there the gentle comely Érne. The chaste Érne, who knew no art of wounding, the daughter of loud-shouting Borg Bán (the warrior was an overmatch for a powerful third) the white-skinned son of Mainchín son of Mochu. The noble Érne, devoid of martial spirit, was chief among the maidens in Rath Cruachan, home of lightsome sports: women not a few obeyed her will. To her belonged, to judge of them, the trinkets of Medb, famed for combats, her comb, her casket unsurpassed, with her fillet of red gold. There came to thick-wooded Cruachu Olcai with grim and dreadful fame, and he shook his beard at the host, the sullen and fiery savage. The young women and maidens scattered throughout Cruach Cera at the apparition of his grisly shape and the roughness of his brawling voice. Érne fled, with a troop of women, under Loch Érne, that is never dull, and over them poured its flood northward and drowned them all together. Though it may be from them — 'tis a sure judgment in presence of the hosts, and no dubious right, — it is an imperishable title that it has achieved, even the name of noble Loch Érne. O King, may I have, safe and certain, a sure welcome to comfort me! may I find it in glorious Heaven, O thou that didst raise up Loch Érne!¹⁷⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷⁸ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 460-467.

Érne gave her name to the River Erne, *an Éirne* in modern Irish, which flows from Beaghly Lough (Co. Cavan), through Lough Gowna, Lough Oughter and Lough Erne (Co. Longford, Cavan, and Fermanagh) and into the Atlantic Ocean near Ballyshannon (Co. Donegal).¹⁷⁷⁹

5) The River Odras: *Odras*

The River Odras, in modern Irish *Odhras*, must correspond to the today's River Boyle, *an Bhúill* in Irish, flowing from Lough Garra, through the village of Boyle and into Lough Key (Co. Roscommon). It was personified by its eponymous goddess.¹⁷⁸⁰ A poem, entitled *Odras*, in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, explains that Odras was the wife of the lord of cattle and a milkmaid. She was transformed into a stream by the Mórrígain, because she had refused to let one of her cows mate with the bull of the Mórrígain. One day, when Odras was asleep, the Mórrígain came and stole the cow, which aroused Odras's wrath. A fierce battle between the two ladies ensued and the Mórrígain, who was more powerful, turned Odras into a river which then bore her name. The poem is the following:

Odras, úais ind ingen, fris' indlem laíd lúaidme, Odornatan airme meic Laidne meic Lúaidre. Ban-briugaid ba brígach in gnímach glan gúasach, céile cáem co cruthacht do Buchatt balcc búasach. Bóaire cáid Cormaic co roblait in Buchatt, dúiscid búar co m-blaitne cach maitne for muchacht. Fectus luid dia ésse a ben gléisse gasta, Odras rúad co romét, do chomét búar m-blasta. Moch dia m-boí 'na codlud Odras groc-dub gnóach, dosrocht ben in Dagda, ba samla dia sóach. Tuc léi tarb in tnúthach, in rígan garb gnáthach, baí i Líathmuine láthach, in fiachaire fáthach. Dairis boin in búaball, tarb túamann 'nar taídenn, ó Themraig tric táraill co Slemnaib Fraích Oírenn. Slemon ainm in tairb-sin, dremon in dóel donn-sin: a ainm, mer cen mebsain, 'sed rolen in fonn-sin. Luid co Crúachain cróda iarsind úath-blaid ágda in Mórrígan mórda, ba slóg-dírmach sámnda. Luid Odras 'na h-iarn-gait, iarmairt nárbu ada, 's a gilla dúr dorthain, torchair i Cúil Chada. Cada ainm a gilla rofinna mór fíche: ruc Odras, úair áithe, for lurg a búair bíthe. Iarsin, d' éis a gilla, luid in ben gléis glanda co Síd Crúachan cumma, co fríth úath-blad alla. Roléic cotlud chuicce in groc-dub cen glicce i nDaire úar Fhálguud dia fúair sárgud sicce. Dosruacht ina tathum, trúag tachur for tulaig, in Mórrígan úathmar a h-úaim Chrúachan cubaid. Rochan fuirre ind agda tria luinde cen logda cach bricht dían, ba dalbda, fri Slíab mBadbgna m-brogda. Legais in ben brígach fri Segais, sreb súanach, mar cach linn cen líg-blad: nísbaí brígrad búadach. Don tshruthán fháen fhoglas is ainm sáer co soblas, luid ón mnaí thrúraig thadaill cosin abainn Odras. Odras, noble the lady for whom we furbish the lay that we indíte, the daughter of Odornatan [...] son of Laidne son of Luaidir. A lady of land was she, and mighty, deedful, radiant, danger-loving, the fair and shapely spouse of stout Buchat, lord of cattle. Keeper of kine to worshipful Cormac was Buchat, man of might: he roused the lusty herd betimes each morning. His trim alert wife Odras, fierce and tall, followed him one day to watch the sweet-fleshed cattle. As busy dark-wrinkled Odras was sleeping in the early morning the Dagda's wife found her: in this wise came the shape-shifting goddess: The envious queen fierce of mood, the cunning raven-caller, brought off with her

¹⁷⁷⁹ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 192-193 ; Hogan, 1910, p. 395.

¹⁷⁸⁰ Gwynn, 1924, p. 429.

the bull that lived in miry Liathmuine. The bull covered a cow, the paddock bull in our herd: he hied him in haste from Temair to the levels of the Moor of Oiriu. Slemon was that bull's name: wild was that brown savage, a mettlesome unmastered beast: his name clave to that lowland. There came to blood-stained Cruachu, according to the weird and terrible tale, the mighty Mórrígain, whose pleasure was in mustered hosts. Odras came to despoil her by arms, to an issue that was not lawful, with her stark ill-fated henchman, who fell at Cuil Cada. Cada was her gillie's name—many a fight he knew; Odras brought him, in a bitter hour, on the track of her herd of heifers. Afterward, when her henchman was gone, the lady came, in shining trim, to Síd Cruachan likewise, and a weird event befell yonder. Imprudently the dark-wrinkled one let sleep come over her in cold Daire Falgud, where she met mortal outrage. The horrid Mórrígain out of the cave of Cruachu, her fit abode, came upon her slumbering: alas, the combat on the hill! The owner of kine chanted over her, with fierceness unabating, toward huge Sliab Bodbgna every spell of power: she was full of guile. The forceful woman melted away toward Segais in a sleepy stream, like a pool void of lustre: she lost her victorious powers. Odras is the sweet-sounding noble name of the sluggish pallid streamlet: it passed from the lady—luckless visitant—to the river Odras.¹⁷⁸¹

Here the pattern is different from the legends of Bóinn, Sionann, Eithne and Érne, since Odras is not drowned in the river, but the concept is identical. The river and the goddess are as one: the goddess is the personification of the river.

B) Gallo-British River-Goddesses: Mothers and Healers

1) The River Seine: Sequana

Sequana is the name given by Julius Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* (Book I, 1) to the River Seine, which rises at the Sources-de-la-Seine, on the plateau of Langres, about thirty kilometres to the north-west of Dijon (Côte d'Or), and flows in the Paris Basin and on into the English Channel, near Le Havre (Seine-Maritime).¹⁷⁸² With the River Marne (*Matrona*), it marked the frontier between the Belgae and the Gauls:

Gallia est omnis divisainpartestres, quarum unam incoluntBelgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum linguaCeltae, nostraGalliappellantur. Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se differunt. Gallos ab Aquitanis Garumna flumen, a Belgis Matrona et Sequanadividit. All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, those who in their own language are called Celts, in our Gauls, the third. All these differ from each other in language, customs and laws. The river Garonne separates the Gauls from the Aquitani; the Marne and the Seine separate them from the Belgae.

Four campaigns of excavations, carried out at the Sources-de-la-Seine, revealed the existence of a huge Gallo-Roman water sanctuary, notably composed of a temple, rooms and baths, nine inscriptions to the *Dea Sequana*, a bronze statue representing the goddess

¹⁷⁸¹ Gwynn, 1924, pp. 196-201.

¹⁷⁸² The name was given erroneously by Strabo as *Epkoanas* (1st c. BC) and by Ptolemy as *Σηχοανα* (2nd c. AD). It had evolved into *Segona* and *Sigona* by the 6th c. AD and *Secana* in 844, see Nègre, 1990, p. 43, n°1066.

standing on a boat with a duck-headed prow, a stone statue of a seated goddess and a considerable amount of votive offerings: 391 ex-votos in stone, 256 in metal and 278 in wood.¹⁷⁸³ Some of the votive offerings are images of the pilgrims themselves, while others are representations of body parts, such as legs, hands, breasts, pelvises, etc. These discoveries revealed that Sequana was the eponymous goddess of the River Seine and that her cult was prominent in Gallo-Roman times.

a) The campaigns of excavations

The first excavations, carried out by Henri Baudot from 1836 to 1842 at the bottom of the cliff, revealed a series of rooms, a huge entrance and a building where a stone water pipe, fed by an underground spring, used to flow.¹⁷⁸⁴ From 1926 to 1939, Henri Corot successively undertook nine campaigns of excavations, during which he uncovered a vast trapezoid-shaped esplanade and an ellipsoidal basin (4.50mx3m), crossed by a pipe, harnessing a second spring.¹⁷⁸⁵ From 1948 to 1953, Roland Martin and Gabriel Grémaud excavated a fanum*, composed of a five-metre squared cella*, enclosed by a gallery, and a huge yard (15mx10m), with a spring in its middle, surrounded by a mosaic-floored portico. According to Martin, this building and its sacred pool must have been the main place of devotion of the shrine.¹⁷⁸⁶ Finally, Deyts, who undertook to clean up the site from 1963 to 1967, discovered about 300 wooden statues underneath the concrete floor of the trapezoid esplanade unearthed by Corot.¹⁷⁸⁷ This discovery was of great significance, for very little material of this kind had been found until then. The marshy area where the wooden carvings were found had rendered the preservation of those statuettes possible; water and peat had kept the wood intact.¹⁷⁸⁸

b) Etymology of her name

The meaning of Sequana's name remains obscure and uncertain. It is however undeniably Celtic. Edmond Jung and Garrett Olmsted propose to derive her name from an IE root **sik* *W* - or *seiku-* meaning 'to drip', 'to pour' or 'to flow', 'to stream'.¹⁷⁸⁹ Sequana (**seik-ow-an-a*) might therefore be a descriptive name meaning 'the river which is slowly flowing out' or 'the one which is dripping'. It may refer to the small rate of flow on the upper course of the River Seine. As noted above, river names were very often descriptive of the nature and quality of the water, that is whether the stream was fast or slow, green or black, bubbling or quite, etc.

¹⁷⁸³ Deyts, *Un Peuple de Pèlerins*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Baudot, 1842-1846, pp. 95-144, plates I-XVII ; Grenier, 1960, t. 2, pp. 612-614 ; Deyts, 1983, pp. 22-25 ; Deyts, 1985, p. 13 ; Green, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Corot, 1927-1932, pp. 9-10, 242-264 ; Corot, 1935, pp. 357-362 ; Grenier, 1960, II, p. 614 ; Deyts, 1983, pp. 26-27 ; Deyts, 1985, p. 13-15 ; Green, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Martin & Grémaud, 1947-1953, pp. 135-155 ; Grenier, 1960, t. 2, pp. 614-617 ; Deyts, 1983, pp. 28-32 ; Deyts, 1985, p. 16 ; Green, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Deyts, 1983, pp. 32-61.

¹⁷⁸⁸ To avoid them crumbling into dust on contact with air, the statuettes were treated with a plastic resin, called polyethylene-glycol, as soon as they were taken out of the swamp. See Deyts, 1983, pp. 62-63.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Jung, 1969, pp. 434-461 ; Jung, 1973, pp. 283-293 ; Hamp, 'Varia, I. IE *sek-* 'to lose healthy moisture'', in *EC*, 1980, p. 167 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 49-50.

Her name is similar to the name of the tribe of the Sequani, who lived in the present-day region of Franche Comté, in the area of Besançon.¹⁷⁹⁰ Lambert suggests that their name is geographical and signifies 'the people of the River Seine', which would indicate that the sept* originally inhabited the lower basin of the River Seine.¹⁷⁹¹ Bernard Sergent adds that it must have had a religious dimension and referred to the sacredness of the waters of the Seine. The ethnonym* Sequani would therefore mean 'Those (who are the worshippers) of Sequana'.¹⁷⁹²

c) Epigraphy

The goddess Sequana is mentioned in nine dedications, engraved on various objects, such as altars, a stele* depicting a pilgrim, a gold ring, a jar, a leg in stone and a plaque in bronze representing breasts.¹⁷⁹³ When the votive formula *dea* is used, it indicates that the inscription dates from the second half of the 2nd c. AD or the 3rd c. AD.¹⁷⁹⁴

A gold ring

The inscription inscribed on the hoop and bezel of a gold ring reads: *D(eae) Sequan(a)e Clem(entia) Montiola v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Sequana Clemantia Montiola paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 6).¹⁷⁹⁵ As the ring is very small (d. 0.02m), it must have been intended for a child. The inscription starts at the back of the hoop, which is flat and octagonal, and continues along the ring. On the bezel are written the letters *M·M*, the significance of which is unknown. The dedicator is a woman who bears the duo nomina of Roman citizens – women generally did not mention their praenomen* in inscriptions.¹⁷⁹⁶ Clementia is a Latin name, while Montiola is a Celtic name: the dedicator is of Celtic origin.¹⁷⁹⁷ In keeping a Celtic name, the dedicator wants to show her attachment to her indigenous roots. Baudot and Deyts believe that the ring was specially bought as an offering to the goddess, while Green maintains that the ring had been previously worn by the worshipper and then engraved, for it is a very personal item and thus would have been an intimate present for the goddess.¹⁷⁹⁸ These two theories seem equally valid.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Kruta, 2000, p. 816.

¹⁷⁹¹ Lambert, 1995, p. 91.

¹⁷⁹² Sergent, 1995, p. 212 ; Sergent, 2000, p. 11.

¹⁷⁹³ Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 167-175 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 123-127 ; Green, 1999, pp. 26-32.

¹⁷⁹⁴ Raespeat-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.

¹⁷⁹⁵ *CIL* XIII, 2861 = 10024 ; Le Bohec, 2003, M 9, p. 347 ; Baudot, 1842-1846, plate XIV, n°1 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 127, pl. 56, n°4 ; Green, 1999, p. 31, n°7.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, p. 85.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Delamarre, 2007, p. 136 ; Green, 1999, p. 33.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Baudot, 1842-1846, p. 129 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 127 ; Green, 1999, p. 31.

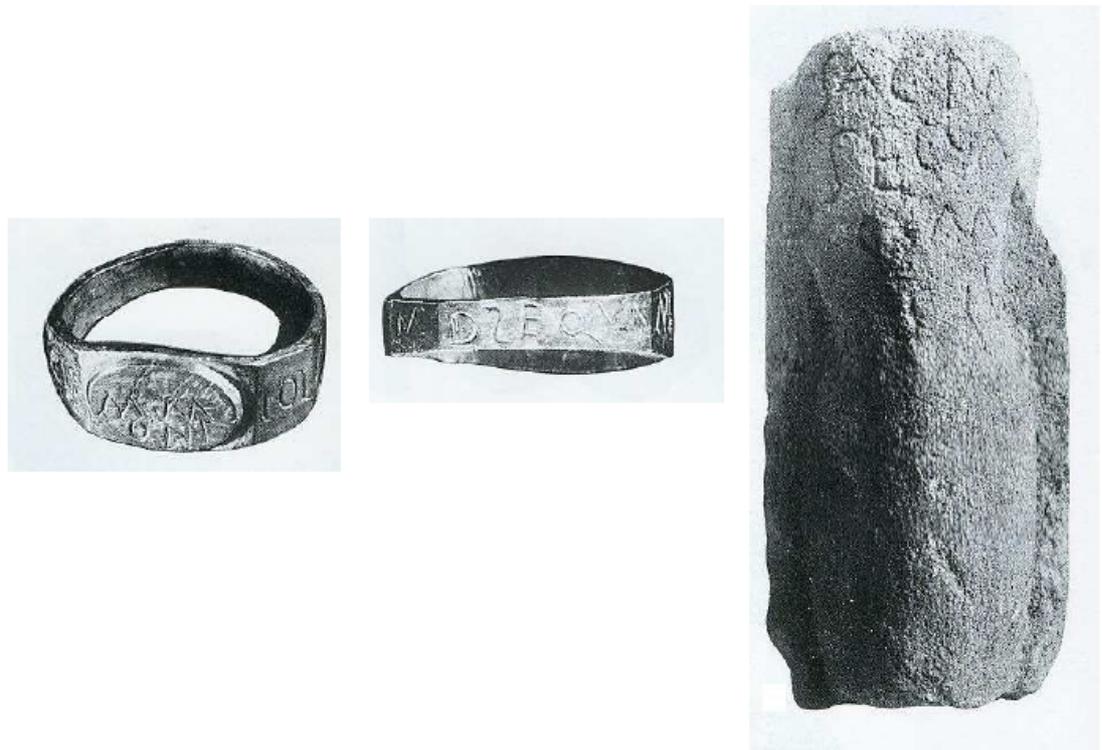


Fig. 6: Left: Gold ring with inscription to Sequana offered by Clementia Montiola. Right: Leg with inscription to Sequana (Sources-de-la-Seine). Deyts, 1994, pl. 56, n°4 and n°2.

Anatomic ex-votos

A four-line inscription, inscribed on the thigh and knee of a coarse-grained stone leg, reads: *Aug(ustae) sac(rum) d[e]ja(e) <bro> Secuan[ae] pro C(...) M[...] v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Sequana. For C(...), M[...] paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 6).¹⁷⁹⁹ The reading of the dedication remains uncertain, because of the irregularity of the letters. The inscription being engraved on a leg, it can be deduced that the dedicator had his leg cured after making a vow. Similarly, another stone leg found at the Sources-de-la-Seine bears the votive formula *V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)*, '(The dedicator) paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁸⁰⁰

¹⁷⁹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 2863 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n° 279 ; Mowat, 1890, p. 377 ; Baudot, 1842-1846, p. 118, plate IX, n°22 ; Green, 1999, pp. 29-30, n° 5 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 126, pl. 56, n°2.

¹⁸⁰⁰ *CIL* XIII, 2866 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°282 ; Baudot, 1842-1846, p. 117, planche IX, n°20 ; Mowat, 1890, p. 378.

Another inscription, dating from the first half of the 3rd c. AD, is engraved beneath the base of a female bust in coarse-grained oolithic limestone: *Au(gustae) sac(rum) d(eae) Sequan(a)e e[x] moni[itu]*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Sequana, after a prophecy'.¹⁸⁰¹ The dedicator is anonymous and had apparently consulted an oracle the prophecy of which was fulfilled according to Sequana's wishes. The fact that the inscription is hidden brings a supplementary magical dimension to the object.

Finally, the following dedication is a three-line inscription in punched dots engraved on a bronze plaque representing two breasts: *De(ae) Sequana (e) Sinuella Vectii f(ilia) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Sequana, Sinuella, daughter of Vectius, paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 7).¹⁸⁰² The dedicator is a woman who is a peregrine* and bears a Gaulish name Sienuella.¹⁸⁰³ Her father has also a Celtic name: Vectius meaning 'Raid'.¹⁸⁰⁴ In using the votive formula *v.s.l.m.*, Sienuella thanks the goddess for accomplishing a vow she had previously made.¹⁸⁰⁵ The fact that the inscription is engraved on a plaque picturing breasts produces evidence of the salutary role of Sequana. This anatomic ex-voto* therefore indicates that Sequana had cured Sienuella's diseased breast.



Fig. 7: Bronze plaque representing breasts with an inscription to Sequana offered by a Celtic woman Sienuella (Sources-de-la-Seine). Deyts, 1994, pl. 56, n°3.

Altars

A pyramidal inscription to the goddess Sequana is engraved on the pediment of the upper part of a stele* in coarse-grained oolithic limestone above the relief* of a male pilgrim.

¹⁸⁰¹ CIL XIII, 2858 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°278 ; Green, 1999, p. 30, n°6 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 125, pl. 55, n°6.

¹⁸⁰² AE 1969/1970, n° 397 a ; Le Bohec, 2003, M 8, p. 347 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 126, pl. 56, n°3 ; Green, 1999, p. 31, n° 8.

¹⁸⁰³ Delamarre, 2007, p. 168 ; Green, 1999, pp. 31, 33.

¹⁸⁰⁴ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 192, 235 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 309 ; Green, 1999, p. 33 thinks it is a Latin name.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Deyts, 1992, p. 76.

The exceptional character of this stele* resides in the fact that it bears two inscriptions in the Gaulish language, which were written by two different people (fig. 8). The first one consists of four lines in Latin lettering and the second one of one line in Greek lettering: A/RIISI/IQVANIA/RIIOSIOVRVS/LVCIIONIIRTIICOMA/ δαγολιτουS αυουωυτ, 'The riverside residents of the Seine (*aresequani*) official honours (*ariios*) dedicated (*iourus*) Lucius, son of Nertecomaros. This is Dagolitus who sculpted it'.¹⁸⁰⁶ According to Lejeune, this inscription must date from the last third of the 1st c. AD.¹⁸⁰⁷ The dedicator is a peregrine* and bears a Latin name, while his father Nertecomaros definitely has a Celtic name.¹⁸⁰⁸ It is composed of *nerto-*, *nerti-*, 'virile strength', *co-*, 'with', and *maros*, 'great', 'big' and thus signifies 'With Great Vigour'.¹⁸⁰⁹ The sculptor Dagolitus is also a peregrine* who bears a Celtic name meaning '(who organises) Good Feasts', with *dago-*, 'good- and *litu-*, 'feast'.¹⁸¹⁰

¹⁸⁰⁶ Lejeune & Martin, 1956, pp. 71-82 ; *RIG* I, 271, pp. 395-399, n°271 ; *RIG* II.1, 12, pp. 143-146, n°12 ; Green, 1999, pp. 26-27, n°1 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 125, pl. 55, n°5.

¹⁸⁰⁷ *RIG* I, 271, p. 395.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Delamarre, 2007, p. 140 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 723 ; Green, 1999, p. 33 ; *RIG* II.1, 12, p. 146 ; *KGP*, p. 249.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 226, 228 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 218, 235.

¹⁸¹⁰ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, pp. 1214-1215 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 81, 218, 225 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 134, 205 ; *RIG* I, 271, p. 399 ; *KGP*, pp. 186, 232 ; Evans, 1963, p. 79.

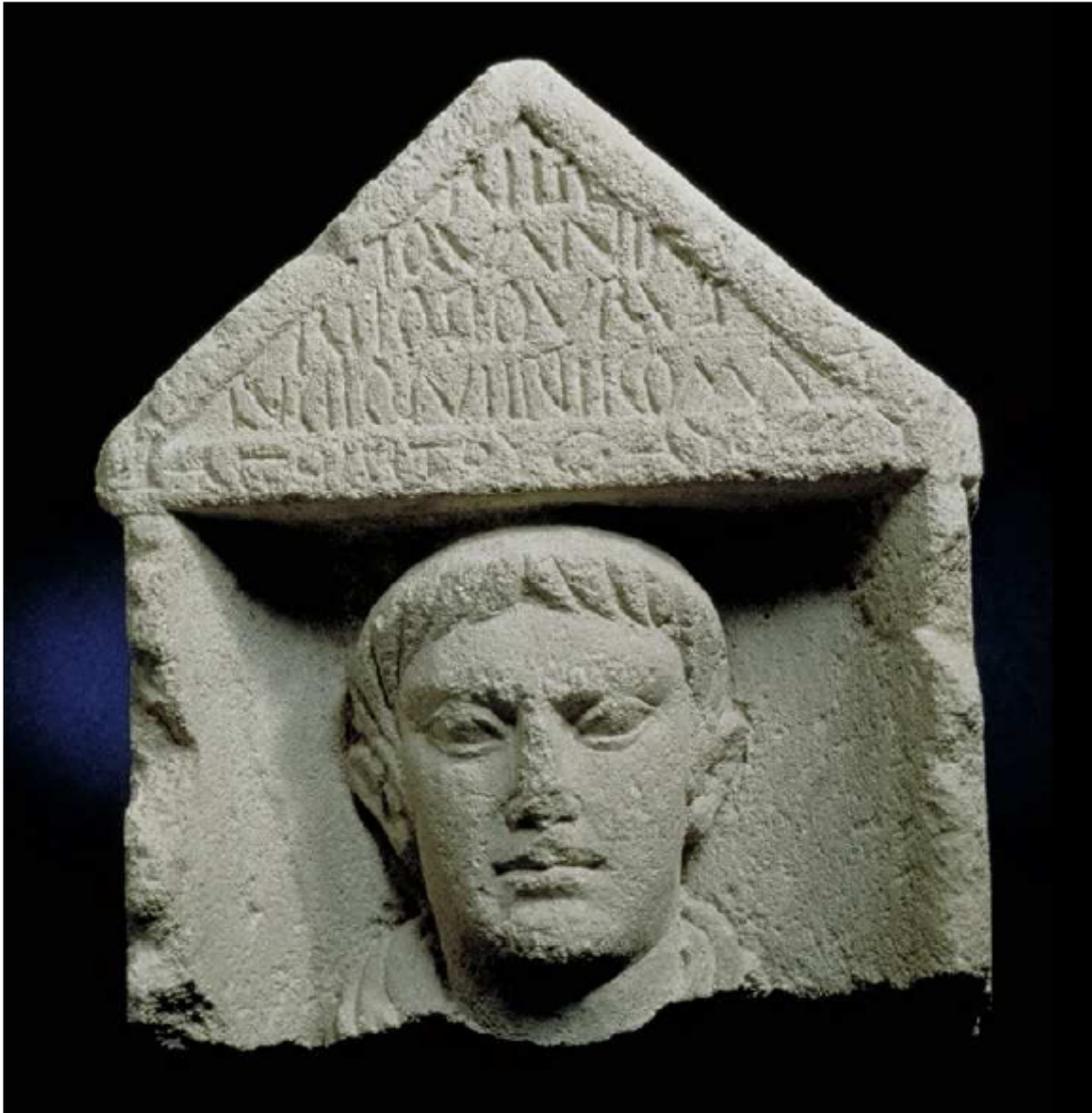


Fig. 8: Two inscriptions in the Gaulish language and Latin and Greek lettering engraved above the representation of a pilgrim (Sources-de-la-Seine). Source : Musée archéologique de Dijon. RIG II-1, n°12.

The transcription and translation of the following inscription, inscribed on an altar in course-grained oolitic limestone, is given by Deyts: *Mariola Matui (?) Mido[(anensis) ?] fil(ia), dia(e) Siqu[a]nn(ae) vo(tum) sol(vit) lib(ens) meri[to]*, 'Mariola daughter of Matuus from Mediolanum to the goddess Sequana paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 9).¹⁸¹¹ As for Le Bohec and Green, they propose to read the beginning of the inscription as: *Mariola Maiumi[?]i fi(lia)*, 'Mariola daughter of Maiumilus'.¹⁸¹² The dedicator is a woman who is a peregrine*. Her name Mariola is generally considered as Latin, but it may also be Celtic, for it could be derived from Gaulish *maros*, 'great', 'big'.¹⁸¹³ Her name is known from another

¹⁸¹¹ CIL XIII, 2864 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 123, pl. 55, n°1 ; Baudot, 1842-1846, p. 127, plate II, n°10 ; Mowat, 1890, p. 377.

¹⁸¹² Le Bohec, 2003, n°277 ; Green, 1999, p. 28, n° 3 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 124.

¹⁸¹³ Green, 1999, p. 33 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 169 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 218 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 127.

inscription found in Charlieu (Loire).¹⁸¹⁴ As for the name of her father, it may be Maiumilus or Matuus ('Favourable' or 'Bear') and is definitely Celtic.¹⁸¹⁵ The dedicator and her father may have come from Mâlain (*Mediolanum*), located about twenty kilometres from the Sources-de-la-Seine.

Another inscription engraved on an altar in oolitic limestone, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, reads: *Deae Sequanae Hilariclus Cl(audii) Aviti servos pro Hilariano filio posuit v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Sequana, Hilariclus, slave of Claudius Avitus, set (this monument) up for his son Hilarianus. He paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 9).¹⁸¹⁶ This altar is now housed in the Church of Salmaise (Côte d'Or), where it is used as a support to the table dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The dedicator is a slave who has a Latin name. His master Claudius Avitus bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens, particularly in use from the end of the 2nd c. AD.¹⁸¹⁷

The following inscription is inscribed on an altar dating to the end of the 1st c. AD or the 2nd c. AD: *Aug(usto) sac(rum) deae Seq(uanae) Flavii(la) pro sal(ute) Fl(avii) Luna(ris) nep(potis) sui ex voto v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Sequana, Flavia Flavilla for the welfare of her grandson, Flavius Lunaris, in accordance with her vow, paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 10).¹⁸¹⁸ The dedicator is a woman who bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens and Latin names. She prays for the good health of her grandson, who also bears the *duo nomina*.

Finally, a fragment of stone is dedicated to the goddess: *[D]eae Sequ[anae]*, 'To the Goddess Sequana' (fig. 10).¹⁸¹⁹

¹⁸¹⁴ *CIL* XIII, 1650.

¹⁸¹⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 124 ; Green, 1999, p. 33 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°277 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 3, p. 392.

¹⁸¹⁶ *CIL* XIII, 11575 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°275 ; Green, 1999, pp. 27-28 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 123-124, pl. 55, n°2

¹⁸¹⁷ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 8-9, vol. 1, p. 152.

¹⁸¹⁸ *CIL* XIII, 2862 ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°276 ; Baudot, 1842-1846, p. 127, planche II, n°9 ; Green, 1999, p. 29 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 124, pl. 55, n°3.

¹⁸¹⁹ *AE* 1969/1970, n°397 b ; Le Bohec, 2003, n°280 ; Green, 1999, p. 32 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 124, pl. 55, n°4 ; Corot, 1927-1932, p. 264 et pl. III.



Fig. 9: Left: Altar dedicated to Sequana by a Celtic woman Maniola. Right: Altar dedicated by a slave Hilarianus (Sources-de-la-Seine). Deyts, 1994, pl. 55, n° 1, 2.



Fig. 10: Left: Altar dedicated by a Roman woman Flavia Flavilla. Right: Stone fragment dedicated to Deae Sequanae (Sources-de-la-Seine). Deyts, 1994, pl. 55, n° 3, 4.

On pottery

The last inscription is inscribed in capital letters around the neck of a red coarse ware jar, which contained 120 bronze and silver plaques and a smaller pot, containing 836 Roman coins dating from 29 BC to 383 AD. The inscription is the following: *Dea(e) Sequana RUFVS DONAVIT*, 'To the goddess Sequana, Rufus offered (this)' (fig. 11).¹⁸²⁰ The jar and its contents are offered to Sequana as a reward for her benevolence by a peregrine* bearing a Latin name. The dedicator is in the process of Romanization, since he bears a Latin name but is not a Roman citizen yet. In honouring a Celtic goddess, he openly manifests his attachment to his ancient cults.¹⁸²¹

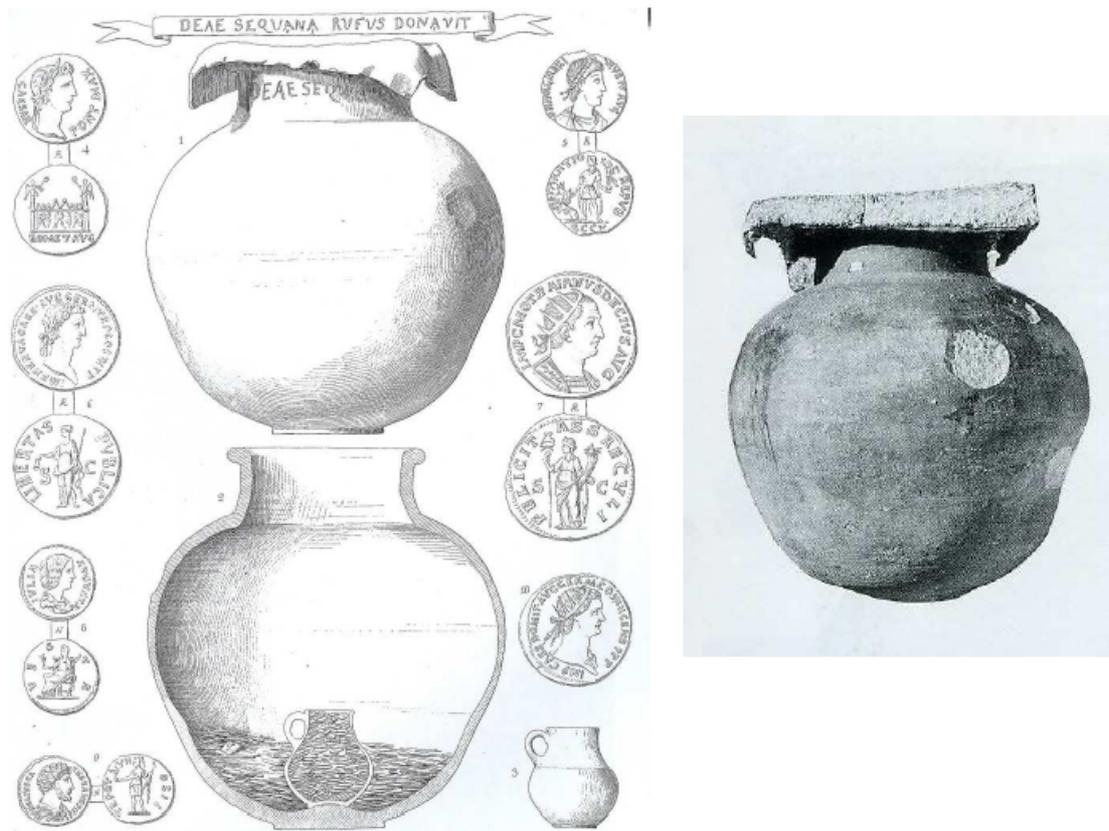


Fig. 11: Drawing and picture of the jar containing a smaller pot, bronze and silver plaques and Roman coins dedicated to Sequana (Sources-de-la-Seine). Baudot, 1843-1846, pl. X ; Deyts, 1994, pl. 56, n°1.

¹⁸²⁰ *CIL* XIII, 2865 ; Le Bohec, 2003, D 6, p. 350 ; Baudot, 1843-1846, pp. 119-120 ; Green, 1999, p. 32 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 126, pl. 56, n°1. For more details on the coins contained in the pot, see Chauvot, 1981.

¹⁸²¹ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 167-168.

d) Iconography

The celebrated bronze statue of Sequana, dated 1st c. AD, was discovered together with the bronze statue of a faun in a rift of the cliff overhanging the site by Corot in 1933.¹⁸²² These statues may have been hidden there in a time of insecurity, possibly when the first Barbarian invasions swept the area in 275 AD.¹⁸²³

The representation of the goddess is very classical: she wears a diadem, a chiton* and a pallium* (fig. 12).¹⁸²⁴ The only element which is of indigenous character is the boat on which she stands. Its peculiarity resides in its stern which is in the form of a duck tail and in its prow which is in the shape of a duck head, holding a round fruit, a pearl, a cake or pellet in its beak.¹⁸²⁵ Similar images of ducks with a cake or a pellet in their beak have been found at Ashby-de-la-Launde (Lincolnshire), Rotherly Down (Wiltshire) and at the Iron Age hillfort of Milber Down (Devon), where the duck is represented swimming, for the water-line is drawn along its body (fig. 13).¹⁸²⁶ Terracotta figurines of ducks in skiffs were also discovered in Vichy (Allier) and Pourçain-sur-Besbre (Allier) in funerary tombs of children.¹⁸²⁷ In the representation of Sequana, the duck obviously symbolizes the water of the river.¹⁸²⁸ Deyts argues that this statue must have been offered by merchants, traders or boatmen, who wanted to honour the protectress and benefactress of water-borne trade on the River Seine.¹⁸²⁹ This would suggest that the cult of Sequana was not related to healing only but also to commerce and waterways. She may have simultaneously presided over sick pilgrims and tradesmen.

¹⁸²² Corot, 1933-1935, pp. 117-120.

¹⁸²³ Deyts, 1985, p. 15.

¹⁸²⁴ Chevalier, 1992, p. 5 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 255, n° 390.

¹⁸²⁵ Corot, 1933-1935, pp. 117-120 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 129-130.

¹⁸²⁶ Green, 1992a, pp. 88-89 ; Ross, 1996, p. 304, fig. 149.

¹⁸²⁷ Camuset-Le Porzou, 1985, pp. 77-79, n° 32 ; Rouvier-Jeanlin, 1972, n° 1215 and n° 1216.

¹⁸²⁸ Green, 1992, pp. 212-214 ; Green, 1992a, p. 88.

¹⁸²⁹ Deyts, 2001, p. 422 ; Chevalier, 1992, p. 5.



Fig. 12: Statue in bronze of Sequana standing on a boat with a duck-headed prow (Sources-de-la-Seine). H. 0.615m and weight: 7.560 kg. In the Musée Archéologique de Dijon. Deyts, 1985, p. 8.



Fig. 13: Bronze duck with the demarcation of the water-line along its body, holding a pellet or a cake in its beak, discovered in the Iron Age Milber Down Fort (Devon). Green, 2004, plate 15, fig. 2.

The 1st-century AD statue in limestone, found by Baudot in 1832, representing a goddess seated in a chair and wearing a pleated tunic, might also be a representation of the goddess Sequana, for it was found in the room facing the first sacred spring (see fig. 22).¹⁸³⁰ Moreover, the sitting position is a mark of pre-eminence generally reserved for deities. This room might thus have been a small temple or canopy* where pilgrims could come, collect their thoughts and pray to the goddess. The head and arms of the statue are now missing (fig. 14).

¹⁸³⁰ Baudot, 1843-1846, p. 104 et pl. III n°1 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 9, 12.



Fig. 14: Stone statue discovered in 1832 by Baudot at the Sources-de-la-Seine, representing a seated draped goddess: Sequana? Deyts, 1994, pl. 58, n°2.

e) Votive offerings and Sanctuary

Apart from the ex-voto bearing a dedication to the goddess Sequana and the two statues, many other votive offerings were unearthed on the site, such as coins, personal offerings (rings, fibulas*, bracelets, necklaces or hairpins), reliefs* portraying swaddled babies or pilgrims and anatomic ex-votos* representing various parts of the body (legs, arms, breasts, pelvises, internal organs, etc). The series of swaddled infants (fig. 15) and full-sized male or female characters amounts to fifty-five images in stone and fifty in wood.¹⁸³¹ They are representations of the pilgrims who came to the sanctuary to honour and pray to Sequana for their vows to be fulfilled. The reliefs* generally portray them wearing the bardocucullus* (fig. 16), or holding symbolical offerings, such as a piece of fruit, a dog, a rabbit, fowl or a purse,

¹⁸³¹ Deyts, 1983, pp. 74-103, 143 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 15, 20-72 ; Green, 1999, pp. 11-17, 87-91.

in their hands (fig. 17).¹⁸³² Some of them are also pictured with a 'straps-and-medallion' motif on chest and back, a garment which might have been a kind of talisman specifically worn for the pilgrimage to the sacred site (fig. 17).¹⁸³³



Fig. 15: Representation in stone of a wrapped baby. (Sources-de-la-Seine). Source: Musée archéologique de Dijon.

¹⁸³² Deyts, 1983, pp. 131-135 ; Deyts, 1985, p. 23 ; Deyts, 1992, pp. 79-80 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 10-12, 23-31 ; Green, 1999, pp. 64-66.

¹⁸³³ Deyts, 1994, pp. 20-23 ; Green, 1999, pp. 11-12, 61-62.



Fig. 16: Statues in wood discovered at the Sources-de-la-Seine, representing pilgrims wearing the Gaulish bardocucullus. Source: Musée archéologique de Dijon*



Fig. 17: Pilgrims holding an apple (left) and a dog (right). The pilgrim on the left wears the straps-and-medallion on chest and back (Sources-de-la-Seine). Source: Musée archéologique de Dijon.

The impressive series of anatomic ex-votos*, consisting of 319 pieces in stone, 247 in bronze and 253 in wood, proves that Sequana was worshipped as a healer.¹⁸³⁴ People would come to the shrine and deposit a representation of the body part which was sore or diseased for Sequana to cure it. Sequana was not specialized in curing particular ailments, since all the parts of the human body are represented: heads and busts (127 in stone, 80 in wood, 5 in terracotta); torsos, trunks, pelvises (39 in stone, 120 in bronze, 13 in wood); legs and feet (100 in stone, 4 in bronze, 45 in wood) (fig. 20); arms and hands (43 in stone, 11 in wood) (fig. 20), eyes (119 plaques in bronze) (fig. 18) and internal organs (4 in bronze, 53 in wood) (fig. 19). Sculpted faces with half-closed eyes may be representations of blind

¹⁸³⁴ Deyts, 1992, pp. 77-78 ; Deyts, 1994, p. 5, 15 ; Deyts, 1983, pp. 104-121, 143 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 72-120 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 125, 129-134, 142-150 ; Green, 1999, pp. 18-25.

people, while distorted legs, arms or feet may point to particular disabilities.¹⁸³⁵ As for the internal organs, such as pharynxes, larynxes, lungs, open or closed ribcages, intestines and kidneys, they are 'stylized' representations which do not accurately reproduce the internal human body. Gaulish people actually had little knowledge of the shape and functions of the internal organs, because they did not dissect human beings.¹⁸³⁶



Fig. 18: Metal sheet representing eyes from the Sources-de-la-Seine. Source: Musée Archéologique de Dijon.

The impersonality and similarity in the 119 bronze plaques picturing eyes and the ninety-one representing pelvises tend to indicate that the ex-votos were mass-produced and sold on the site. Very few anatomic ex-votos* indeed bear a name, apart from the bronze plaque with eyes signed by a Celtic woman Matta (fig. 21)¹⁸³⁷ and the plaque with breasts offered by Sinuella (fig. 8). They were probably made by artisans who used local materials, such as the oolitic limestone of the surrounding cliffs and the oak growing on the plateau, which were easy to extract and shape.¹⁸³⁸ Their workshops were certainly situated inside the sanctuary so that the pilgrims could buy their offerings on the spot.

It is interesting to note that about 2,000 bone fragments belonging to around 193 domestic and wild animals, such as oxes, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, dogs, chickens, stags, boars, foxes and hares, were also discovered by Deyts in the marshy area of the sanctuary.¹⁸³⁹ Wild animals are on the other hand very little represented. Pig and the sheep predominate among the domestic animals. This evidences that animals were sacrificed and that religious rites aiming at honouring the goddess must have been held on the site.

¹⁸³⁵ Deyts, 1994, p. 14 ; Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 150-159. For an interpretation of the possible illnesses or disabilities represented on the ex-votos of the Sources-de-la-Seine, see Green, 1999, pp. 35-54 and Vassal, 1958, pp. 328-359.

¹⁸³⁶ Deyts, 1985, p. 28.

¹⁸³⁷ *CIL* XIII, 2867 ; Le Bohec, 2003, M 12, p. 347 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 129.

¹⁸³⁸ In 1978, the sculptor J. Renaud reproduced various wooden statues found at Sequana's sanctuary. It only took him two to three hours to reproduce a head in wood. See Deyts, 1985, p. 32 ; Deyts, 1983, p. 217 and pl. CXVIII to CXXI.

¹⁸³⁹ Deyts, 1983, pp. 68-69.



Fig. 19: Anatomic ex-votos in wood representing internal organs: a rib cage (left) and lungs (right) from the Sources-de-la-Seine. Source: Musée Archéologique de Dijon.*



Fig. 20: Anatomic ex-votos: an arm in wood (left) and a leg in stone (right) (Sources-de-la-Seine). Source: Musée Archéologique de Dijon.*



Fig. 21: Bronze plaque representing eyes offered by a Celtic woman named Matta, discovered at the Sources-de-la-Seine. Source: Musée Archéologique de Dijon.

Although the waters of the River Seine had no mineral or therapeutic virtues, these anatomic ex-votos* prove that Sequana was a salutary goddess who was prayed to and worshipped for her healing powers.¹⁸⁴⁰ Deyts, who proposes a reconstitution of the sanctuary in Gallo-Roman times (fig. 22), explains that sick pilgrims would come to the sanctuary, perform ablutions* in one of the sacred springs and stop at the temple - the fanum* discovered by Martin – to pray to the goddess for help.¹⁸⁴¹ They would buy an image of their diseased body part in a stall situated in the enclosure of the sanctuary and offer it to the goddess while making a vow of recovery. The ex-votos may have been heaped up onto shelves or placed on the floor in the gallery of the temple, under the portico or maybe in the open air. From the layout of the sanctuary, Deyts infers that there may have been an incubation portico, that is a place where the sick people would spend the night in order to encounter the deity in their dreams and thus recover more quickly.¹⁸⁴²

The priests, who were regarded as intermediaries between the gods and the pilgrims, would interpret the dreams, treat the sick people, and offer them advice and remedies in the name of Sequana. The tradition of incubation is not originally Celtic and was certainly brought from ancient Greece, where it was particularly in use, such as at the 6th-century BC sanctuary of Epidaurus, situated in the north-east of Pennopolese, which was one of

¹⁸⁴⁰ Green, 1999, pp. 76-91.

¹⁸⁴¹ Deyts, 1985, pp. 31-35 ; Deyts, 1994, pp. 8-13.

¹⁸⁴² Deyts, 1985, pp. 34-35. See Chapter 5 for more details on 'oracular incubation'.

the most famous healing centres of Greece dedicated to the god-physician Asclepius.¹⁸⁴³ After the whole ritual of ablutions*, prayers and deposit of ex-votos, the pilgrims would later come back to the sanctuary and bring various kinds of offerings to thank the goddess for accomplishing their vows. Dedications to Sequana bearing the votive formula *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, '(the dedicator) paid his vow willingly and deservedly' indeed indicates that vows had been granted by the goddess.

The sanctuary, which dates from the 1st c. AD, is Gallo-Roman. Coins discovered on the site prove that it was still in use in the 4th c. AD.¹⁸⁴⁴ Yet, it is clear that the goddess and the place of worship predate Gallo-Roman times, since Sequana's name is Celtic. Moreover, a significant number of the dedicators are peregrines bearing Celtic names, such as Sinuella, daughter of Vectius, and Dagolitus, the sculptor. Others are peregrines bearing Latin names but their father's names are Celtic: Lucius, son of Nertecomaros and Mariola, daughter of Maiumilus or Mattuus. The fact that the father chose a Latin name for his son or daughter shows his desire to become Romanized. Nonetheless, despite his Romanization, the dedicator honours a Celtic deity, which proves his attachment to his original roots and cults. Similarly, Clementia Montiola, who bears the duo nomina of Roman citizens, must be of Celtic origin, since her second name is Gaulish. As for Rufus and Hilaricus, they definitely have Latin names, but their unique names indicate that they are not Roman citizens. Accordingly, all of them, except for Flavia Favilla, are peregrines of Celtic origin in the process of Romanization. Furthermore, it can be noted that none of the dedicators held official functions in Roman Gaul. From this, it follows that the sanctuary was mostly frequented by local people in Gallo-Roman times and that it must originally have been an indigenous place of devotion.

f) Survivals?

There is no hagiographical tradition concerning the site of the Sources-de-la-Seine, although many stories tell of attempts of saints to overthrow and replace the indigenous gods, religious practices and traditions. It is nonetheless worth noting that a powerful abbey dedicated to Saint Seine or *Sequanus* was established in 534 AD ten kilometres south of the pagan sanctuary of Sequana, which was partly destroyed at the end of the 3rd c. AD during the Germanic invasions.¹⁸⁴⁵ Legends recount that *Sequanus*'s donkey made a spring to spout up. From that time on, the saint became worshipped in periods of drought. Until the 18th c, pilgrims came to the source to attend mass and traditionally throw goblets of water.¹⁸⁴⁶

A part of the site was bought by the city of Paris in 1864 and transformed into a park, where visitors may now come and throw coins into the sacred spring. In the fifties, an artificial grotto was erected near the ancient sanctuary to receive a modern stone statue of the goddess Sequana sculpted by François Jouffroy.¹⁸⁴⁷ Sequana is represented as a Classical nymph, wearing leaves in her hair and a cloth around her hips and holding fruit in her hands (fig. 23).

¹⁸⁴³ Bourgeois, 1991, pp. 242-246 ; Grant & Hazel, 2002, p. 52 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 216-217, 622, 682.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Deyts, 1985, pp. 37-38.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Deyts, 1985, pp. 37-38.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Bourgeois, 1991, p. 121.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Birkhan, 1999, p. 254, n° 387 ; Deyts, 1985, p. 9.

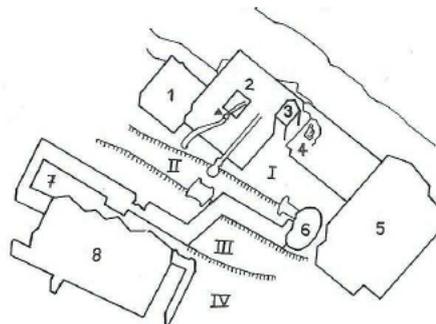
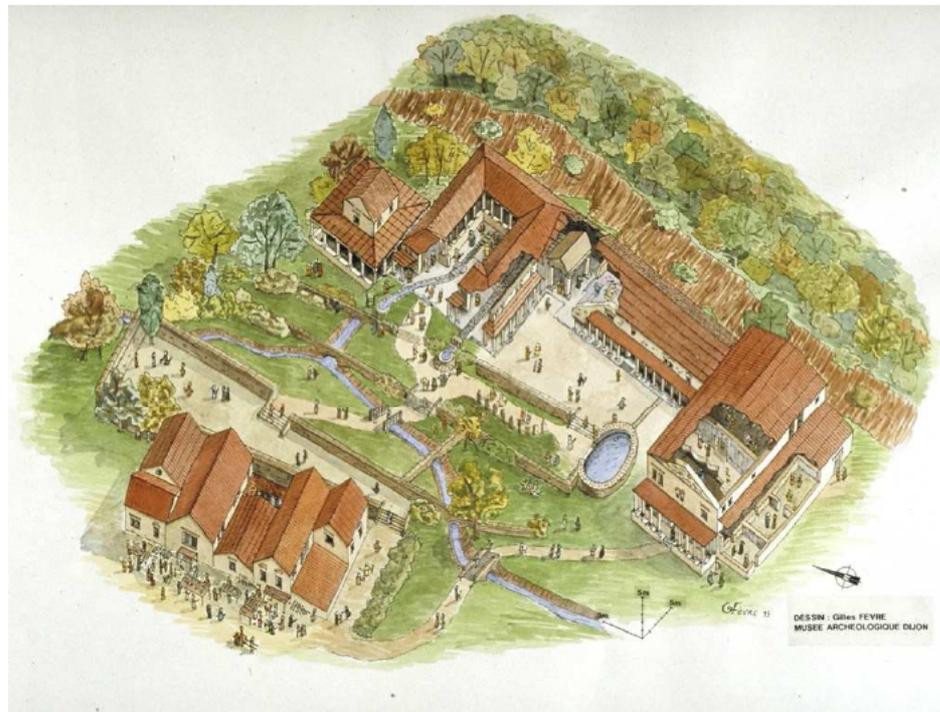


Fig. 22: Reconstruction of the Gallo-Roman sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Sequana at the Sources-de-la-Seine with the sacred spring at its centre. Deyts, 1994, pp. 6-7.

1. fanum* (temple building) 2. portico surrounding the main spring 3. canopy* 4. possible emplacement of a cult statue of Sequana 5. ancillary buildings of unknown functions 6. oval basin containing sacred water 7. processional way 8. buildings, possibly shops, situated at the entrance of the sanctuary (I to IV are the different terraces).



Fig. 23: Modern statue of the Nymph of the River Seine by the Sculptor Jouffroy, situated in an artificial grotto, near the ancient Gallo-Roman sanctuary of the Sources-de-la-Seine dedicated to the Celtic goddess Sequana. Deyts, 1985, p. 9.

2) The River Marne: *Matrona*

The River Marne, which rises on the plateau of Langres at Balesme-sur-Marne (Marne) and joins the River Seine at Charenton-le-Pont (Val-de-Marne), was anciently called *Matrona*, as Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* (Book I, 1) mentions.¹⁸⁴⁸

a) Epigraphy and Sanctuary

An inscription engraved on an altar in grey limestone, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, was discovered in Balesmes-sur-Marne (Haute-Marne) in July 1831 by a farmer. It is dedicated to the goddess *Matrona*, the personification of the River Marne. The inscription

¹⁸⁴⁸ The word evolved into *Materna* in 632, *Matrena* around 700, *Maderna* in 1158, *Marna* in 1185 and *Marne* in 1281. See Nègre, 1990, p. 119, n° 2179.

reads: *Successus Natalis l(ibertus) maceriem caementiciam circa hoc templum de sua pecunia Matronae ex voto suscepto v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Successus, freed from Natalis, had this outer wall in rubble stones built around this temple at his own expense in honour of Matrona, after making a vow, and paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 24).¹⁸⁴⁹ The dedicator Successus is a freed slave who bears a Latin name. His old master, Natalis, also has a Latin name and is a peregrine*, since he bears the unique name. This inscription is highly interesting, for it mentions a sanctuary erected in honour of the goddess Matrona. The dedicator offers the outer wall surrounding the temple in gratitude for the accomplishment of a vow.

Thirty years earlier, in May 1805, ruins of Gallo-Roman buildings had been found in a field located in a place known as 'La Marnotte', five kilometres south-east of Langres, near Balesmes-sur-Marne (Haute-Marne). Excavations carried out by Mr. Devaraigne at the spring of the river revealed no less than twelve rooms, some of which were equipped with hot baths, fragments of paintings in fresco, fragments of marble from the surrounding rocks, a pipe engraved with the initials of the founder of the baths *TI. CL. ATT. F.* and a dozen copper coins with the effigy of Titus (79 -81 AD) and Nero (54-68 AD).¹⁸⁵⁰ This indicates that the sanctuary was certainly erected at the beginning of the 1st c. AD. The temple to Matrona, mentioned in the inscription, must have been part of those buildings.¹⁸⁵¹

Matrona's name is undeniably Celtic. As studied in Chapter 1, Matrona is derived from the Gaulish *mātīr*, 'mother', cognate with Old Irish *máthair*, 'mother', gen. *máthar*, which all come from Indo-European **mātēr* signifying 'mother'.¹⁸⁵² Matrona ('Divine Mother') is the singular form of Matronae ('Mother Goddesses'), honoured in multiple inscriptions from the Rhineland and Cisalpine Gaul (see Chapter 1).

¹⁸⁴⁹ *CIL* XIII, 5674 ; Mowat, 1890, p. 29 ; Royer, 1931, pp. 9-10, n°11 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 331-332.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Luquet, 1838-1839, pp. 377-390 ; Luquet, 1838, pp. 137-150. Because of the unconcern of the local administration, the official documents were not left in the archives, apart from the map of the sanctuary. In 1838, Luquet fortunately copied out one of the unofficial reports remaining in the archives of the Haute-Marne and published it in his article entitled 'Antiquités romaines de Langres'. In this report, he describes the twelve rooms and the findings ('Notes on the baths found at Balesmes, near the spring of the River Marne, and on the left of this river').

¹⁸⁵¹ Vaillat, 1932, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸⁵² Lebel, 1956, pp. 291, 321-322 ; Dauzat, 1978, pp. 63-64 ; Jullian, *HG*, vol. 2, 1909, p. 131, note 8 ; Pictet, 1873-1875, pp. 2-5 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 220 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 287-288, 361-362 Delamarre, 2003, pp. ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 226 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 29, 61, 86, 168, 197

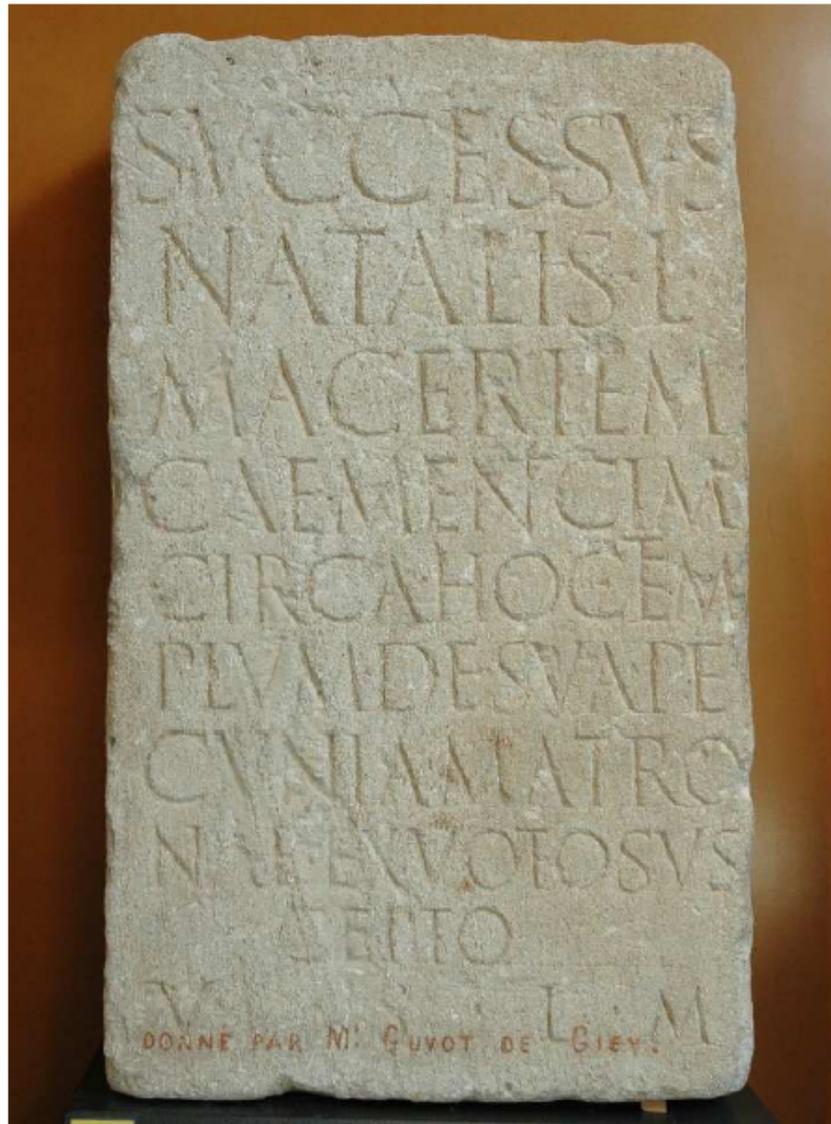


Fig. 24: Dedication to the goddess *Matrona* found in a field near the spring of the River Marne (Haute-Marne). Source: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Langres.

b) The 'Mother-River' Goddess

What were the functions of the goddess *Matrona*, embodiment of the River Marne? First and foremost, her name points to her maternal function. The river is envisaged as a mother who nurtures her people, for it had a significant life-giving and nourishing character inasmuch as its waters were full of fishes, irrigated and fertilized the soil, ensuring thus the growth of crops, which in turn provided food for the cattle and the people living on its banks. The tradition of 'mother-rivers' was important in Gaul, since many river-names in France are derived from *matra*, *matrona*, 'mother', such as La Moder, a tributary of the Zorn in Drusenheim (Bas-Rhin); the Maromme, a tributary of the Seine in the valley of Cailly (Seine-Maritime); La Maronne, a tributary of the Blaise in Brousseval (Haute-Marne); Maronne, a fountain in the parish of Oignes (Aisne); La Marronne, a tributary of the Dordogne (Corrèze); the Mayronnes, a tributary of the Orbieu (Aude); La Meyronne, a tributary of the Argens (Var); the Meyronnes, a spring flowing in the Ubayette (Alpes de Haute Provence); La Meyronne, a tributary of the

Desges (Haute-Loire), etc.¹⁸⁵³ The cult of the river as a mother is not specifically a Celtic tradition. It is indeed found in many other mythologies of the world. Without going into details here, Adolphe Pictet specifies that rivers are called *mâtaras*, 'mothers' in the Vedic glossary *Naighantu*, *matarô*, 'mothers' or *matarô ġitayô*, 'living mothers' in the Iranian collection of sacred texts *Avesta*, and are given the epithet of *mâtritamâs* - the superlative form of *mâtar* - 'the mothers *par excellence*' in the Vedic mystical text *Rigvêda*.¹⁸⁵⁴

The fact that the goddess Matrona had a sanctuary, composed of a complex of baths and a temple, built in her honour at the spring of the River Marne tends to indicate that she was also regarded as a goddess possessing salutary virtues. Apart from the baths, there is as yet no archaeological evidence of a curative cult rendered to Matrona. Unlike the sanctuary of the Sources-de-la-Seine, where a healing cult to the goddess Sequana is clearly evidenced, archaeologists have not found any representations of pilgrims or anatomic ex-votos* at the shrine of Matrona. Neither does the dedication offered by Successus provide proof of such a cult. Even though Successus thanks the goddess for granting his vow, nothing indicates that it is a vow of recovery. It would have been so if the inscription had been engraved on an anatomic ex-voto*, such as the ones found at the Source-de-la-Seine, inscribed on a leg in stone or on a metal sheet representing breasts (see above). Nonetheless, the waters of the River Marne were certainly envisaged as beneficial and salutary, since a complex of baths was erected at its source. The ruins of the Gallo-Roman buildings and the mention of a temple dedicated to Matrona by Succellus prove that pilgrims came to pray to the goddess Matrona and to take the waters of her river. As the site has not been entirely excavated, new investigations could provide further evidence of her cult.¹⁸⁵⁵

c) The Tomb-Boat in the River: Funerary Dimension

As mentioned above, the river simultaneously symbolizes life and death. The mother-river is the one who gives birth and maintains people alive thanks to her waters, but she is also the one who takes life back when she decides to flood inhabitants, crops and livestock: human beings metaphorically return to her womb, representing thus the eternal cycle of renewal. This concept is illustrated by various proto-historical 'coffin-pirogues' found in the bed of some rivers. Those tomb-boats, called *Todtenbaum*, i.e. 'Tree of Death' by Joseph Xavier Boniface Saintine, a 19th-century philosopher, consisted of a hollowed tree trunk serving as a boat where the corpse of the deceased was placed before abandoning it to the river's current.¹⁸⁵⁶

Saintine reports the discovery of tree trunks containing the remains of human beings in 1560 in the Zuyder Zee, an inlet of the North Sea in the north-west of the Netherlands, but he does not give his references. This practice is proved by several examples of 'tomb-boats'

¹⁸⁵³ Pictet, 1873-1875, pp. 7-8 ; Lebel, 1956, p. 322 ; Nègre, 1990, pp. 119-120, n°2178-2182 ; Carnoy, 1951, pp. 105-106 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 59-61, 168-171 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 220. In Ireland and Britain, there are no recorded cases of river-names bearing the name of 'mother'. Nonetheless, it is significant that other features of the landscape are called 'mother'. In Wales, for instance, the highest point in the Clwydian Mountains (Denbighshire) is named *Y Foel Famau* ('the Hill of the Mothers'). See Rhys, 1878, p. 39 and Chapter 1 p. 128.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Carnoy, 1951, p. 103.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Grenier, 1960, t. 4, p. 608, note 3 explains that only a part of the sanctuary was unearthed and that further excavations would be necessary.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Saintine, 1862, pp. 18-19.

discovered in Gaul. The most illustrious instance is the boat-tree found during repair works in the canal connecting the Marne to the Rhine at Chatenay-Mâcheron (Haute-Marne), a place situated 5 kilometres from Balesmes-sur-Marne, where the river rises.¹⁸⁵⁷ The monoxylic pirogue* is 5-metre long and carved out in an oak trunk (fig. 25 and 26). It is composed of two parts: a lid and a hollowed part which contained a human skeleton and three weapons, which are an iron sword in an ornamented scabbard, an iron spear and an iron dagger with a bronze handle representing a human head, called 'anthropoid dagger'. This wooden vessel, dating to the 3rd-1st century BC, was therefore used as a sarcophagus. The weapons tend to prove that the deceased was an honoured prince or warrior. Three similar pirogues, probably dating from the Late Bronze Age or La Tène period, containing skeletons wearing copper rings, and another one enclosing a human skull and two thighbones, were discovered in 1780-1781 and 1787 on the bed of the River Orne, at Mondeville (Calvados), and in Caen, near the bridge of Vaucelles (Calvados).¹⁸⁵⁸ In Le Havre (Seine-Maritime), between 1788 and 1800, a thirteen-metre long monoxylic pirogue* containing human remains was found in the ornamental lake of La Barre during repair works.¹⁸⁵⁹ Finally, a four-metre long hollowed oak tree containing a whole skeleton was dredged from the bed of the River Saône at Montseugny (Haute-Saône).¹⁸⁶⁰ Apart from the coffin-pirogue from Chatenay-Mâcheron (Haute-Marne), now housed in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales (Saint-Germain-en-Laye), the other ones were unfortunately left in open-air when discovered and crumbled into dust a few weeks later.

Those boat-sarcophagi point to a funerary rite which consisted of returning the deceased to the bosom of the 'mother-river' who would ensure his rebirth in the afterlife. As Gaston Bachelard, a renowned French philosopher of the first half of the 20th c., explains, the river and the tree are two powerful maternal symbols; the combination of the two elements thus enhances the funerary dimension:

Water, substance of life, is also the substance of death for ambivalent reverie. In order to interpret the Todtenbaum, the Death Tree, accurately, we must keep in mind with Carl Gustav Jung, that "the tree is, above all, a maternal symbol"; since water is also a maternal symbol, a strange image of the encasing of seeds may be grasped in the image of the Todtenbaum. By placing the dead person in the interior of a tree and entrusting the tree to the breast of the waters, one doubles the maternal powers; the myth of the doubly, Jung tells us, because we imagine that "the dead person is given back to his mother to be borne again." Death in water will be, for this reverie, the most maternal of deaths. The desire of man, says Jung in another place, "is that somber waters of death may become the waters of life, that death and its cold embrace may be the maternal bosom [...]".¹⁸⁶¹

¹⁸⁵⁷ Reinach, 1917, pp. 224-225 ; Duval, 1976, pp. 90-91, n° 90 ; Cordier, 1963, p. 309 ; Lepage, 1975, pp. 210-215.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Cordier, 1963, p. 307, n°6 ; Edeine, 1963, pp. 346-350 ; DAG, vol. II, pp. 725-726 ; Hamy, 1879, pp. 483-487 ; Hamy, 1883, pp. 658-663.

¹⁸⁵⁹ Cordier, 1963, pp. 309-310, n°20-21.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Cordier, 1963, p. 310, n°24 ; DAG, vol. 2, p. 256 ; Feuvrier, 1910, p. 848.

¹⁸⁶¹ **Bachelard, 1983, pp. 72-73.**

This funerary practice is redolent of the belief in the voyage to the Beyond: the boat symbolically brings the deceased to the otherworld, which was believed to be situated under the waters of rivers and lakes.

This tradition, which goes back to prehistory, is practiced among certain present-day peoples, such as the Toradja of central Sulawesi (Indonesia), who called it a *bangka* ('boat') or *jomu* ('covering'),¹⁸⁶² and the Jivaro Achuar and Canelos of Ecuadoran Amazonia.¹⁸⁶³ Speaking of the 'tomb-boat' funerary custom of the Canelos, Raphael Karsten explains that they believed "the deceased [...] ought to make his last journey in a canoe".¹⁸⁶⁴ This ancient belief has survived in the folklore of the west of France. Paul Sébillot reports that in the swamps of the province of Poitou,¹⁸⁶⁵ a mysterious boat covered with a white sheet resembling a pall, called *niole blanche* ('white skiff'), or *la niole de l'angoisse* ('the skiff of anguish'), was believed to appear in the canals of the marshes.¹⁸⁶⁶ It was steered by a ghost called the *tousseux jaune* ('the yellow coughing one'), who would bring death to any person catching sight of him. The death-boat is a particularly recurrent theme in the oral tradition of the coast of Brittany. Sébillot, relating a legend recorded by the Byzantine historian Procopius in the 6th c., describes boats loaded with souls of deceased people seen at night crossing the sea:

The legend of the boat of the dead was one of the first to be formulated on our shores; it no doubt existed here well before the Roman conquest, and in the sixth century, Procopius reported it in these terms: The fishermen and other inhabitants of Gaul who are across from the island of Britannia are entrusted with passing souls over to it and are thus exempt from paying tribute. In the middle of the night, they hear a knocking at their door; they get up and find strange boats along the shore in which they can see no one but which, nevertheless, seem so loaded down that they are about to sink and their gunwales scarcely a thumb's width above the water. An hour suffices for the crossing, although with their own boats they have difficulty making it in a whole night.¹⁸⁶⁷

The motif of the death boat is also found in the folklore of Ireland. There are traditions in many coastal parts of Ireland concerning phantom ships or boats seen at sea.¹⁸⁶⁸ They can be seen before some sea-disaster, as if they have come to take away the people who are destined to be drowned. Also they can be seen after a shipwreck, in which case they are definitely taking away the souls of the drowned people. These phantom vessels are sometimes lit up. Ó hÓgáin relates that in the Irish-speaking parishes of An Rinn and An Seana-Phobal, on the coast near Dungarvan in County Waterford, in the south of Ireland,

¹⁸⁶² Downs, 1956, p. 79: "The coffin was called either *bangka* or *jomu*. The second of these was a general term meaning 'covering', the first meant boat [...] That the coffin was indeed thought of as a boat is borne out by the fact that if one dreamt of somebody rowing in a boat it was assumed that that person would soon die. The coffin was hollowed out of a tree trunk split lengthwise to form a cover [...]."

¹⁸⁶³ Descola, 1986, pp. 148-156.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Karsten, 1935, p. 466.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Poitou englobes the départements of Vendée, Deux-Sèvres and Vienne.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Sébillot, 2002, p. 716.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Sébillot, 2002, p. 474.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Ó Suilleabháin, 1942, p.514.

people talk of a phantom ship called *Bád na Soilse*, literally 'the Boat of Lights', which is much feared.¹⁸⁶⁹

Those discoveries thus prove that the river-goddess, in addition to her virtues of fertility and healing, must have had a funerary function. As a mother, she protected her people both in life and in the afterlife, and ensured their voyage to the otherworld.



Fig. 25: 'Coffin-pirogue', dating from the 3rd-1st century BC (La Tène II), discovered in Chatenay-Mâcheron (Haute-Marne) (Source: Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye).

¹⁸⁶⁹ Ó hÓgáin (June 2008): personal communication.

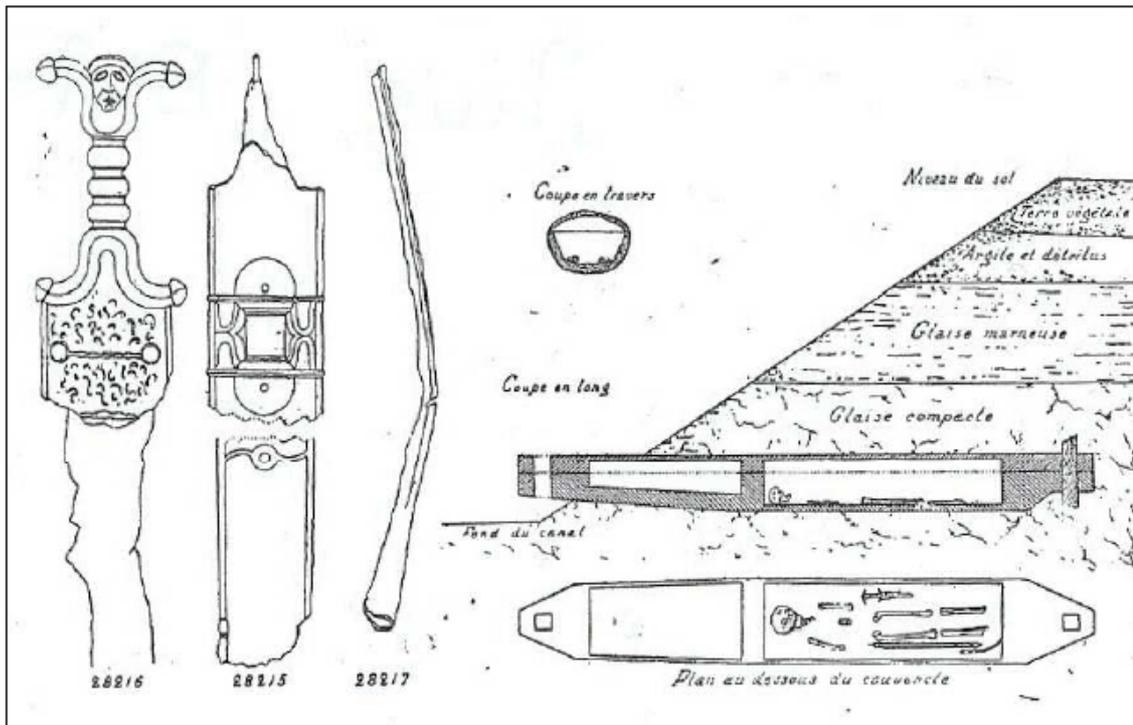


Fig. 26: Right: Drawing of the 'coffin-pirogue' found in Chatenay-Mâcheron (Haute-Marne) with the skeleton and weapons. Left: drawing of the 'anthropoid' iron dagger. Reinach, 1917, p. 225, fig. 252.

3) The River Saône: *Souconna*

The River Saône, which has its source in Vioémnil, at the foot of the Monts Faucilles (Vosges), and flows into the river Rhône in Lyons (Rhône), had two different names in ancient times: *Arar* and *Souconna*.¹⁸⁷⁰ Greek and Latin authors, such as Pliny, Silius Italicus, Seneca, Tacitus, Caesar, etc., refer to the River Saône as a calm river which they call *Arar*, *Araris* and *Araros*.¹⁸⁷¹ The name *Souconna* appears in a 1st-century AD votive inscription dedicated to the goddess of the River Saône. Around 360 AD, Ammianus Marcellinus, one of the last Roman historians of Antiquity, reports that "the Arar is called *Sauconna*" (*Ararim quem Sauconnam adpellant*).¹⁸⁷² It can be noticed that in the 4th c. AD, the form *Souconna* had changed into *Sauconna*. The name then evolved into *Saogonna* or *Sagonna* in the 7th c., *Saone* in the 12th c., *Soone* in the 14th c. and *Sone* in the 15th c and gave the present-day name of the River Saône.¹⁸⁷³

The meaning of *Souconna* remains obscure. According to Olmsted, *Souconna* is derived from an IE root **sūk-* signifying 'juice, sap, moisture, rain', 'to suck' and means

¹⁸⁷⁰ Roy-Chevrier, 1913, pp. 8-43 ; Lebel, 1956, pp. 342-343 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 50-51.

¹⁸⁷¹ Pliny, *Natural History*, Book 3 ; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, Book 15, 504 ; Seneca, *Apokolokintose*, 7 ; Tacitus, *Annalium*, Book 13, 53 ; Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book I, 12.

¹⁸⁷² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum*, Book 15, 11.

¹⁸⁷³ Nègre, 1990, p. 122, n°2200.

'the Suckler', 'the Flowing One', but this etymology* remains conjectural and uncertain.¹⁸⁷⁴ Evidence of her cult was found in two different places: on the bank of the River Saône, in Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire), and near the spring of the brook of the Sagonin, in the village of Sagonne (Cher).

The inscription from Châlon-sur-Saône is engraved on a pedestal in limestone, probably dating to the end of the 1st c. AD, found in 1912, in re-employment* in the 3rd or 4th-century wall of the city.¹⁸⁷⁵ The inscription is the following: *Aug(usto) sac(rum) deae Souconnae oppidani Cabilonnenses p(onendum) c(urauerunt)*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Souconna, the inhabitants (*oppidani*) of Chalon took care to build (this monument)' (fig. 27).¹⁸⁷⁶ This dedication is offered by the inhabitants of the Gaulish oppidum* of Chalon-sur-Saône, called Cabilonnum.¹⁸⁷⁷ Chalon-sur-Saône was probably the second chief oppidum* of the tribe of the Aedui after Bibracte (see Chapter 3).¹⁸⁷⁸ As the inscribed pedestal was originally associated with a statue representing the goddess, it was assumed that before being re-employed in the wall of the city, it belonged to a temple. Excavations carried out in 1852 at a nearby place known as Châtelet, which revealed various architectural fragments, led some scholars to think that a temple dedicated to Souconna had been erected there, but there is actually no cogent evidence supporting such a hypothesis.¹⁸⁷⁹

¹⁸⁷⁴ Olmsted, 1994, p. 367.

¹⁸⁷⁵ It was found in 'Rue des Change'.

¹⁸⁷⁶ *AE* 1913, 161 ; *ILTG*, 314 ; *CAG*, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, p. 152, n°191.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Armand-Calliat, 1936, pp. 26-27, n°49 ; Roy-Chevrier, 1913, pp. 44-80 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 535.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Roy-Chevrier, 1913, p. 45.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Armand-Calliat, *Le Chalonais gallo-roman: répertoire des découvertes archéologiques faites dans l'arrondissement de Chalon*, Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, Chalon-sur-Saône, 1937, p. 49 ; Roy-Chevrier, 1913, p. 2.



Fig. 27: Inscription to the goddess Souconna discovered in Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire) in 1912 (H. 1.30m). Source: Musée Denon, Chalon-sur-Saône.

A second inscription dedicated to the goddess Souconna was found in 1899 at a place known as 'Les Maisons Neuves', in the village of Sagonne (Cher), near the place where the brook called the Sagonin has its source.¹⁸⁸⁰ The inscription is engraved on a small pedestal in stone, where only the naked feet of the goddess remain: *[N]um(ini) Aug(usti) D(eae) Souco[nae] Di[v]ixtus Silani f(ilius)*, 'To the divine power of Augustus, to the goddess Soucona, Divixtus, son of Silanus (offered this)'.¹⁸⁸¹ The dedicator Divixtus and his father Silanus have Gaulish names - Divixtus means 'to avenge', 'to punish'.¹⁸⁸² Furthermore, they bear the unique name, which means that they are not Roman citizens but peregrines. This tends to prove that the cult of the goddess Souconna was prior to the Roman invasion. It is interesting to note that Soucona, Saucona and Sagona are variants of the same name,

¹⁸⁸⁰ Pelletier, 1985, p. 134 ; Roy-Chevrier, 1913, p. 38 ; Des Méloizes, 1901, pp. 1-9, pl. XVII.

¹⁸⁸¹ *CIL* XIII, 11162 ; *AE* 1902, 255 ; *RG* 6968.

¹⁸⁸² Delamarre, 2003, pp. 145-146 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 87, 168, 220.

which would explain why the goddess Souconna was honoured in the village of Sagonne, near the brook of the Sagonin.¹⁸⁸³ As the dedication was discovered near the source of the brook, it can be assumed that Souconna was the personification and protectress of the spring. At this place, archaeologists also unearthed a bronze Gaulish coin, with a curly head on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse, five small bronze coins with the effigies of Tetricus (271-273 AD), Constantinus I (306-337 AD), Valentinienus I and his brother Valens (364-378), fragments of sculpted stones, statues and several hands and arms, which might point to a healing cult, but this remains hypothetical, since the objects are now lost.¹⁸⁸⁴



Fig. 28: Inscription to the goddess Souconna engraved on a small pedestal where only the feet of the goddess remain, discovered near the spring of the Sagonin in Sagonne (Cher) (H. 0.08m, W. 0.27m). Source: Musée du Berry, Bourges (Cher).

A relief* discovered near Seurre (Côte d'Or) might be a figuration of Souconna (fig. 29).¹⁸⁸⁵ The goddess is represented standing with a diadem and a pleated tunic falling under her right breast. A small boat, an upside-down urn with water flowing from it, and a trident, are situated at her feet on the right-hand side. On account of those attributes, which symbolize water, the goddess is clearly the personification of a river. As Seurre is situated on the bank of the River Saône, Claude Bourgeois thinks she is its embodiment.¹⁸⁸⁶ It is not possible to affirm that this relief* is definitely a portrayal of Souconna, since it is not combined with an inscription identifying the goddess. Espérandieu suggests that she might have been the tutelary goddess of Seurre, personifying and protecting the city.¹⁸⁸⁷

¹⁸⁸³ Nègre, 1990, p. 122 ; Pelletier, 1985, pp. 134.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Pelletier, 1985, pp. 134, 143-144, note 86 ; Des Méloizes, 1901, pp. 1-9, pl. XVII ; Reinach, 1903, p. 62.

¹⁸⁸⁵ RG 3584.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Bourgeois, 1991, p. 161.

¹⁸⁸⁷ RG 3584.



Fig. 29: Anepigraphic relief* representing a river-goddess discovered in Seurre (Côte d'Or): Souconna? Source: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Beaune (Number D.59.1.4).

4) The River Yonne: Icauni

The ancient name of the River Yonne, which rises on Mont Préneley (Nièvre) and meets the River Seine at Montereau-Fault-Yonne (Seine-et-Marne), was revealed by a 2nd-century AD inscription dedicated to the goddess Icauni, discovered in Auxerre (Yonne). The name of the river then evolved to *Ingauna* in the 6th c., *Iona* in the 9th c., *Ycauna* in the 12th c. and *Iuna / Yconiae* in the 13th c.¹⁸⁸⁸

The inscription, which is now lost, was engraved on a square altar. It was discovered in 1721 in re-employment* in the ancient wall of the city Auxerre (Yonne).¹⁸⁸⁹ The inscription reads: *Aug(usto) sacr(um) deae Icauni T(itus) Tetricius African(us) d(e) s(uo) d(edit)*

¹⁸⁸⁸ Nègre, 1990, p. 116, n°2153 ; Lebel, 1956, p. 353 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 52.

¹⁸⁸⁹ *CIL* XIII, 2921.

d(edicavit), 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Icauni, Titus Tetricus Africanus dedicated and offered (this stele*) at his own expense'. The dedicator bears Latin names and the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. In 1723, Abbot Jean Lebeuf reported that a relief* representing a woman lying down had been seen by former neighbours near the place where the inscription was inlaid, but the drawing no longer existed at the time of the discovery of the dedication.¹⁸⁹⁰ As reclining naked women are commonplace representations of river-goddesses, this relief* may have been a figuration of the goddess Icauni.

The significance of the name of Icauni is unknown. Jullian explains that it may be based on a Gaulish root **ico*, possibly similar to Latin *aquae*, meaning 'water', 'river'.¹⁸⁹¹ Icauni could then be etymologically related to the goddess Icovellauna, venerated in Metz (see *infra*). There is besides an Istrian goddess of springs and fountains named Ica or Ika, attested near Fianona and Lovran (Croatia).¹⁸⁹² Following this etymology*, Lacroix proposes to break down her name as **(s)ic-auna*, i.e. 'The One who gives Water' and argues that Delamarre's etymology* **(s)(p)ico-* designating the 'green woodpecker' is highly unlikely.¹⁸⁹³ According to him, the radical **(s)ic-* is to be related to the radical *sec-* forming the name of Sequana (**Sec-u-ana*) and the radical *souc-*, a possible variant of *suk-*, found in the name of Souconna.¹⁸⁹⁴ Icauni would have originally designated the spring gushing from the earth rather than the flowing water of the river.¹⁸⁹⁵

Excavations carried out from 1980 to 1984 at the spring of the River Yonne, at Glux, in Morvant (Nièvre), revealed the ruins of two Gallo-Roman temples, situated about a hundred metres from the three springs of the river.¹⁸⁹⁶ The archaeologists did not find any pipes channelling the waters of the river into the buildings, but the proximity of the monuments with the springs undeniably proves that they were erected in relation with it. Pieces of broken Gaulish vases and fifteen Gaulish coins, such as a coin in silver of the Aedui, were found within a radius of one kilometre. This provides evidence that Celtic people already frequented this place of devotion before the Roman invasion. It is likely that the Gallo-Roman monument was built over an ancient Celtic place of worship, marked out by an offering well or by a wooden fence. In view of the sanctuaries of the goddess Sequana unearthed at the Sources-de-la Seine and of Matrona at the spring of the River Marne, it is tempting to think that this shrine was dedicated to the goddess of the River Yonne, whose existence is attested by the inscription from Auxerre. The waters of the River Yonne were perhaps believed to have medicinal virtues like those of the River Seine and attracted pilgrims in need of care, but no archaeological evidence, such as votive inscriptions, anatomic ex-votos* or other offerings, currently supports that theory.¹⁸⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹⁰ Lebeuf, 1723, p. 74.

¹⁸⁹¹ Jullian, 1921, pp. 216-217 ; Dauzat, 1960, p. 123 ; Nègre, 1990, p. 116, n°2153.

¹⁸⁹² *CIL* III, 3031 ; Sterckx, 2000, p. 55 ; Degrassi, A., *Epigraphica*, II, Atti del Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche, VIII, 11, 1962-1965, p. 235.

¹⁸⁹³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 187 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 55.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Lacroix, 2007, p. 53.

¹⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Pequinot & Picard, 1984, pp. 40-43.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Greppo, 1846, p. 307.

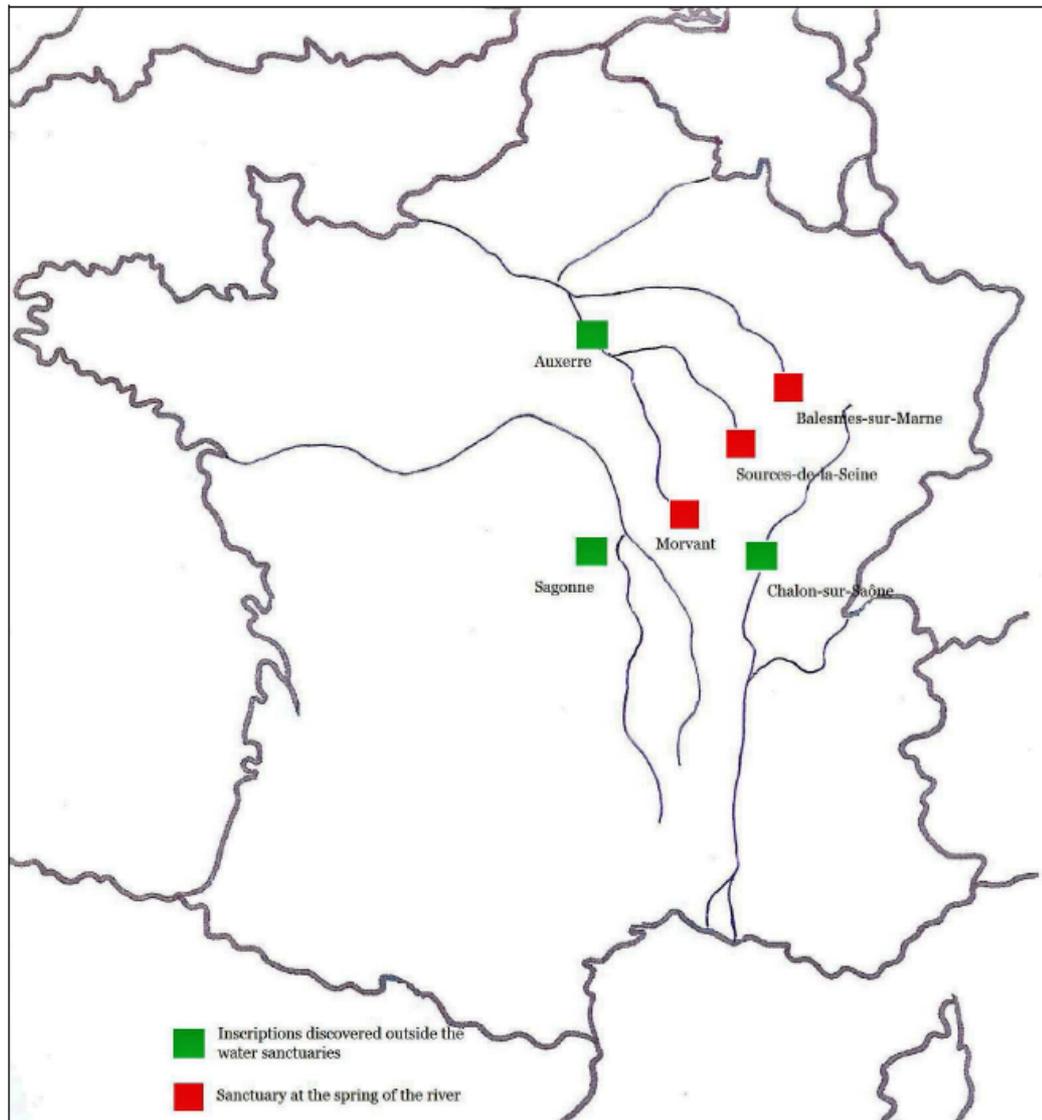


Fig. 30: Analytical map of the inscriptions dedicated to the Gaulish River-Goddesses and the sanctuaries discovered at the springs of the rivers (Source: N. Beck).

5) The River Wharfe: *Verbeia*

The goddess *Verbeia* is mentioned in a single inscription engraved on an altar, discovered before 1600 at a place known as Stubham Lodge, near Ilkley (Yorkshire, GB). On the right side of the stone is drawn a *patera** and on the left side a *guttus**. The inscription reads: *Verbeiae sacrum Clodius Fronto praef(ectus) coh(ortis) II Lingon(um)*, 'Sacred to *Verbeia* Clodius Fronto, prefect* of the second Cohort of Lingonians (set this up)' (fig. 31).¹⁸⁹⁸ The dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens and is prefect* (*praefectus*) of Cohort* II, called Lingonum, attested by other inscriptions from Ilkley and Moresby and by a Hadrianic decree.¹⁸⁹⁹ Clodius Fronto pays homage to the goddess *Verbeia*, who is generally understood as being the personification of the river Wharfe, on which Ilkley is situated.¹⁹⁰⁰

¹⁸⁹⁸ RIB 635.

¹⁸⁹⁹ RIB 636, 798 ; CIL VII, 1195.

Heinrich Wagner and Anne Ross propose to relate her name to the Old Irish root *ferb*, 'cattle' and translate her name as 'She of the Cattle', which would link her to the Irish river-goddess Bóinn, whose name signifies 'the Cow-White (Goddess)', and to the Gaulish spring-goddess Damona, the 'Cow (Goddess)'.¹⁹⁰¹ This etymology* remains conjectural.

A relief* of a goddess wearing a long, pleated sleeveless tunic and holding a snake in each hand, discovered in re-employment* in the parish church of Ilkley, could be a representation of Verbeia (fig. 31).¹⁹⁰² As Ross and Green point out, the snake image might point to a water cult.¹⁹⁰³ It must nonetheless be borne in mind that there is a wide range of complex symbolism attached to this animal, which was represented in various contexts and accounted for diverse aspects. It was notably an emblem of the otherworld, death, medicine and fertility.¹⁹⁰⁴ Consequently, it is impossible to determine whether the relief* is a figuration of the goddess Verbeia.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Rinaldi Tufi, 1983, p. 18 ; *RIB* 635 ; Green, 2001, p. 25 ; Green, 1992a, p. 219 ; Ross, 1996, p. 279 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 364-365 ; Woodward, A. M., 'The Roman Fort at Ilkley', in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 28, 1925, p. 313, n°1.

¹⁹⁰¹ Wagner, 1981, pp. 5-6 ; Ross, 1996, p. 279.

¹⁹⁰² Rinaldi Tufi, 1983, p. 18, n°31 and pl. 9, n°31 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 217, 279 ; Green, 2001, pp. 25, 229, notes 86 and 87.

¹⁹⁰³ Ross, 1996, pp. 430-434 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 194-196.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Green, 1992, pp. 224-230 ; Green, 2001, pp. 25-26, 141-142 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, pp. 867-879.



Fig. 31: Left: Facsimile of the altar dedicated to Verbeia discovered in Ilkley (Yorkshire, GB). Now in the Gardens of the Seminary of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart, at Middleton Lodge, in Ilkley. Rinaldi Tufi, 1983, plate 9, n°30 and RIB 635.

Right: Relief representing a goddess holding two snakes in her hands found in Ilkley: Verbeia? Now in the Parish Church of Ilkley. Rinaldi Tufi, 1983, pl. 9, n°31.*

We have seen that the worship of river-goddesses in Celtic and Gallo-Roman times is widely attested in the epigraphy of Gaul and Britain, and in the ancient literature of Ireland. The fact that the goddess is eponymous of the river proves that she was envisaged as the personification of the river. The pattern of the lady drowned in the river, found in the legends of Bóinn, Sionann, Eithne and Érne, is evocative of that ancient belief. The early legend of *Tochmarc Emire* ['The Wooing of Emer'], which depicts the River Boyne as the body of the goddess Bóinn, is also illustrative of this river-goddess complex. While the Irish medieval texts indicate that Irish river-goddesses incarnated wisdom and were believed to bestow mystical knowledge on the ones who drank their waters, archaeology evidences that Gaulish river-goddesses were worshipped as healers, who brought relief to pilgrims through their salutary waters. In Gaul, moreover, the healing function was not only attributed to goddesses

of rivers. Many wells, fountains and springs were worshipped and put under the patronage of goddesses, who seem to have also fulfilled that role in view of the archaeological context or the curative properties of the waters.

III) Gaulish and British Healing Spring-Goddesses

Archaeological evidence from Gaul and Britain proves that the worship of water was not limited to river-goddesses: many a fountain and healing spring was embodied and presided over by a goddess. While some goddesses protected specific fountains, wells or springs - such as Acionna, whose cult is attested at the Fontain l'Étuvée in Loiret, Mogontia and Icovellauna at the spring of Le Sablon in Moselle, Coventina at the well of Carrawburgh in Northumbria, Bricta at the thermal springs of Luxeuil-les-Bains (Haute-Saône) and Stanna / Sianna at the healing spring of Mont-Dore (Puy-de-Dôme) - others, such as Damona and Sirona, were worshipped on a larger scale by various peoples and in different parts of Gaul. What were the functions of those fountain and spring-goddesses? How were they revered and by whom? The first part will deal with goddesses presiding over local fountains or wells, which do not seem to have had any particular mineral or therapeutic virtues in ancient times, and the second part will analyse goddesses whose cult is attached to thermal waters.

A) Fountain-Goddesses

1) Acionna and the Fountain l'Étuvée (Loiret)

The goddess Acionna is known from an inscription discovered in 1823, thirty-five-metres deep in a well, called the 'Fontaine l'Étuvée', situated at a place known as the 'Clos de la Belle-Croix', 2.5 kms from Orléans (Loiret), in the territory of the tribe of the Carnutes.¹⁹⁰⁵ The inscription, engraved on a quadrangular block, reads: *Aug(ustae) Acionnae sacrum, Capillius Illiomari f(i)lius portic[u]m cum suis ornamentis, v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Sacred to the August Acionna, Capillius, son of Illiomarus, (offered) this portico with its ornaments and paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 32).¹⁹⁰⁶

¹⁹⁰⁵ The fountain is situated on the south-east slope of the plateau of Fleury. To reach the fountain, cross the village Saint-Vincent, go up to the house known as 'Château l'Évêque', situated on the hill overhanging Orléans, then take a right at the cross located in the village of Fleury, and follow the path which goes down to the fountain, situated in the middle of the fields.

¹⁹⁰⁶ *CIL* XIII, 3063 ; *AE* 1911, 1232 ; Desnoyers, 1884, n° 121 ; *RE*, vol. 3, 1890-1898, pp. 310-311, n° 1060 ; *CAG*, 45, *Le Loiret*, 1988, p. 102.



Fig. 32: Dedication to Acionna discovered at the Fontaine l'Étuvée, near Orléans (Loiret). The stele* was housed in the Musée Historique et Archéologique de l'Orléanais in Orléans, but disappeared and is now lost. A cast of the inscription was taken in 1979 from a lithograph drawn by Jollois and is now in the same museum. Debal, 1996, p. 62.

According to Jean-Baptiste Jollois, the stele* must date from the 1st c AD.¹⁹⁰⁷ The two tenons* on the two sides of the stone indicate that the stele* was hung up or embedded in a wall.¹⁹⁰⁸ It was a common tradition to hang up inscribed stones or bronze plaques on the wall of a temple or of a well in Gallo-Roman times to pay homage to a deity. This inscription mentions that the dedicator had a portico built in recognition of the fulfilment of a vow. The portico might have been part of a religious edifice erected in honour of Acionna, but no archaeological data provide evidence of such a monument in the area. The dedicator Capillius has a Roman name, but is not a Roman citizen, since he bears the unique name. As for his father, he has a Gaulish name: Illiomarus, which is composed of *illio-* (?) and *marus*, 'great' - also known in the form *Ibliomarus*.¹⁹⁰⁹ The fact that the Celt Illiomarus chose a Latin name for his son reflects his wish to become Romanized. In paying homage to a Celtic goddess, *Capillius* however shows his attachment to his indigenous roots and cults.¹⁹¹⁰

The 'Fountain l'Étuvée', commonly called 'de Lestuvée', 'de l'Estuif' or 'de l'Estuvée', from Old French *etui(f)* and English *stew*, signifying 'fish-tank', supplied all the thermal and swimming establishments of Orléans with water until the 18th c., when it dried up, probably

¹⁹⁰⁷ Jollois, 1825, pp. 162-163.

¹⁹⁰⁸ Jollois, 1825, p. 162.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 108-109 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 218-219.

¹⁹¹⁰ Debal, 1996, p. 63.

after being deliberately obstructed.¹⁹¹¹ In 1823, Jollois decided to excavate the spring, because its profuse waters could be harnessed to supply the network of public fountains of Orléans.¹⁹¹² As the spring of l'Etuvée was the result of the rains falling on the thickly-wooded plateau of Fleury, it is highly likely that the spring was copious in ancient times - forests are the main cause of the formation of fountains. The first excavations brought to light a big quadrilateral basin, a small duct harnessing the spring and a well 3.5m in depth, constructed with pieces of timber, where many Roman remains were discovered, such as fragments of tiles and pottery, a cinerary urn, clay bowls and dishes, a small flint axe, a bronze hook and the inscribed stone to Acionna.¹⁹¹³ From 1971 to 1989, the excavations were resumed and two square basins, one of which was surrounded by a wall, were discovered.¹⁹¹⁴

Acionna's name is known from two other fragments found in re-employment* in the Roman wall of the city of Cenabum(Orléans) and in an ancient wall situated at the corner of the streets of the Ecrevisse and of the Hôtelleries. The two fragments being very damaged, their reconstitution is uncertain. The first one reads: [*Aug. Acijonn(a)e [... e]t Epade[textorigi . . .]*], 'Sacred to Augustus and to Acionna [...] and Epadetextorix (?)'.¹⁹¹⁵ The co-ordinating conjunction *et* indicates that the inscription was offered by two dedicators. Léon Dumuys reconstituted the name of the second dedicator as Epadetextorix, in view of an inscription from Nérès-les-Bains (Allier) which mentions this name.¹⁹¹⁶ Delamarre proposes to break it down as **Epađ-atexto-rigi*, with *epađ* similar to *epo-*, 'horse', *atexto*, possibly 'belongings' and *rigi*, 'king', that is 'the king who possesses horses (?)'.¹⁹¹⁷ As for Robert Mowat, he suggests to translate his name as 'protective lord of horses', with *epo-* 'horse' and *actetorix* 'protective chief'.¹⁹¹⁸ Since Epadetextorix bears the unique name, he is a Celtic peregrine*. The second fragment is uncertainly dedicated to the goddess: [*Acionna]e sacrum*, 'Sacred to Acionna (?)'.¹⁹¹⁹

As regards Acionna's name, it is undeniably Celtic, but its significance remains obscure. According to Delamarre, it is based on a root *aci-*, the meaning of which is unknown.¹⁹²⁰ Olmsted advances that it might come from a Celtic root *acio-* signifying 'water', derived

¹⁹¹¹ Pons, 1994, p.43 ; Debal, 1996, p. 44.

¹⁹¹² Jollois, 1825, pp. 143-167 ; Vaillat, 1932, p. 17.

¹⁹¹³ Greppo, 1846, p. 268.

¹⁹¹⁴ Debal, 1996, p. 45.

¹⁹¹⁵ *CIL* XIII, 3064 ; Dumuys, 1885, pp. 318-319 and fig. A. Dumuys does not refer to Acionna, or draw a parallel between this fragment of dedication and her in his article. Nonetheless, he mentions that a statue of a goddess, broken in six fragments – the head was missing – was found at the same place. It represented a life-size goddess, draped and standing, who seemed to be resting. She held a patera* in her left hand. According to him, this fragment of inscription was certainly at the top of a temple. For him "this inscription, of large dimensions, must have been placed on the pediment of a monument, because letters of such size were to be read from far away or were to be placed on a high edifice. The statue of the goddess might have been part of the decoration of this public edifice - which could have been a temple, a theatre, a palace, a praetorium, a triumphal arch or a fountain."

¹⁹¹⁶ Dumuys, 1885, pp. 318-319 ; *CIL* XIII, 1388: *Batronos Nantonii filius Epa//atextorigi Leucullosa (?) locavit statuitque*. This inscription would be an ex-voto offered by Bratronos, son of Nantonios, to the god Epadatextorix Leucullos, who would have protected cart-horses and war-horses according to Mowat, 1878, pp. 94-108.

¹⁹¹⁷ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 163-164, 294, 260-261.

¹⁹¹⁸ Mowat, 1878, pp. 94-108.

¹⁹¹⁹ *CIL* XIII, 3065 ; Dumuys, 1885, p. 320 and fig. B ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 133, n°177.

¹⁹²⁰ Delamarre, 2007, p. 209.

from the IE **akuio-*, but Delamarre and Lambert do not list that term.¹⁹²¹ Even though this etymology* is dubious, it seems clear that Acionna is a goddess associated with water; since it is possible to establish a connection between her name and several names of rivers flowing near Orléans. The River Essone, which has its source in the north of the forest of Orléans and meets the River Seine at Corbeil-Essone (Essonne), was called *Exona* or *Axonia* in the 6th c. and *Essiona* in 1113.¹⁹²² Another river called The Esse or Stream of the Esse, which rises in the forest of Orléans and flows into the River Bionne, may be also related to the goddess name Acionna.¹⁹²³ Finally, the Aisne, which rises in Sommainse (Meuse) and joins the River Oise at Compiègne (Oise), was called *Axona* in the 1st c. BC, *Axuenna* in the 3rd c., *Axina* in 650 and *Axna* in 824.¹⁹²⁴

These various discoveries show that the fountain of L'Etuvée was worshipped in Gallo-Roman times and that it was presided over by the Celtic goddess Acionna. It is impossible to determine whether the waters of the well were believed to have medicinal properties and whether Acionna was revered as a healer, since anatomic ex-votos* evidencing such a cult were not found on the site. The phrase *V.S.L.M.* does not imply the fulfilment of a vow of recovery either. Moreover, the waters do not have any mineral or thermal virtues today.¹⁹²⁵ Acionna is probably best understood as a local water-goddess, since the three inscriptions were found in and around Orléans, and since her name has survived in two rivers rising in the forest of Orléans: the Essonne and the Esse. The fact that her name can be connected to the River Aisne, situated to the north-east of Paris, might nonetheless indicate a wider cult. Acionna being honoured by dedicators of Celtic origin, such as Capillius, son of Illiomarus, and Epadetextorix, her cult was pre-Roman. It also shows that the Gaulish traditions, beliefs and deities remained still vividly alive in people's minds for some time after the Roman conquest.

2) *Icovellauna* and the Spring of Le Sablon (Moselle)

The goddess name *Icovellauna* is known from two inscriptions and three fragments of inscriptions discovered in Le Sablon, a village situated to the south of Metz (Moselle), in the territory of the Mediomatrici, and from a dedication found in Trier (Germany), in the territory of the Treveri. The oppidum* of the Mediomatrici, called *Divodurum Mediomatricorum* ('the divine citadel of the Mediomatrici'), was situated in Metz on a hill called 'Le Haut de Sainte Croix', at the confluence of the River Seille and the River Moselle.¹⁹²⁶ Various indigenous deities were venerated around Metz,¹⁹²⁷ such as *Mogontia*, the horse-goddess *Epona*,¹⁹²⁸ *Rosmerta*,¹⁹²⁹ *Sucellus* and *Nantosuelta*¹⁹³⁰ and Mother Goddesses.¹⁹³¹

¹⁹²¹ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 426, 438 relates Acionna to a god *Aciannis* apparently honoured in a single inscription from Camaret (Vaucluse), but this divine name does not actually exist.

¹⁹²² Nègre, 1990, n°2140 ; Debal, 1996, p. 63 ; Soyer, 1979, p. 37.

¹⁹²³ Soyer, 1979, p. 37 ; Debal, 1996, p. 63.

¹⁹²⁴ Nègre, 1990, n°2139.

¹⁹²⁵ Bonnard, 1908, pp. 159-160 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 269.

¹⁹²⁶ Toussaint, 1948, p. 21 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 576.

¹⁹²⁷ Toussaint, 1948, pp. 201-209, 211-213.

¹⁹²⁸ Two steles* were discovered in Metz in 1854 and 1867, and seven in La Horgne at Le Sablon in 1903. See *RG* 4284, 4285, 4350-4356.

a) The inscriptions and the Nymphaeum*

The five inscriptions to the goddess Icovellauna were discovered in an underground octagonal well, six metres in diameter, dating from the Gallo-Roman period, excavated between 1879 and 1882 in the sand-quarry of Le Sablon (fig. 33).¹⁹³² About fifty stairs went down to a spring, contained in a polygonal basin situated in the middle of the edifice.¹⁹³³ Hundreds of votive offerings, such as coins, statuettes, animal bones and fragments of columns, were discovered in the rubble of the well.

The first inscription is engraved on a bronze plaque with two holes in the top left- and right-hand corners, which served to hang the plaque on the wall of the well, and leave it as an ex-voto for the goddess. It seems that it was originally gilded, but copper oxide almost entirely covered the plaque when it was discovered. The inscription is the following: *Deae Icovellaunae sanctissimo numini, Genialius Satu[r]ninus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the highly holy power of the goddess Icovellauna, Genialius Saturninus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁹³⁴ A hole, in which a coin could fit, is situated directly above the inscription. It might have been the coin at the effigy of Constantine (beginning of the 4th c. AD) found near to the bronze plaque.¹⁹³⁵ This space for fitting a coin or a medal is called 'case monétaire' or 'écrin à médailles'. Examples of this type are the famous patera* in gold from Rennes or 'the plaque of Hiéruple' dedicated to the god Visucius.¹⁹³⁶ The use of the votive formula *dea* proves that the inscription dates from the second half of the 2nd c. AD or the beginning of the 3rd c. AD.¹⁹³⁷ The dedicator has Latin names and bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. The phrase *v.s.l.m.* indicates that Genialius Saturninus is grateful to the goddess Icovellana for answering his vow and the expression *sanctissimo numini* attests his profound respect.

¹⁹²⁹ Three monuments were found in Metz: fragments of a stele*, fragments of an altar and a mutilated altar representing Rosmerta and Mercurius on one side and Apollo on the other side. *CIL* XIII, 4312 and *RG* 4288 ; *CIL* XIII, 4311 and *RG* 4288 ; *RG* 4346.

¹⁹³⁰ A bronze ring engraved with the inscription *deo Sucello* was found in Frescaty (Metz): *CIL* XIII, 4542. The altar representing the couple was found in Sarrebourg (Moselle): *RG* 4566 – see Chapter 2.

¹⁹³¹ Four steles* picturing triple Mother Goddesses were found in Metz: *CIL* XIII, 4303 ; *RG* 4291, 7234, 4358, 4360.

¹⁹³² Prost, 1882, pp. 276-278 ; Bourgeois, 1992, pp. 73-75 ; *CAG*, 57.2, *Metz*, 2005, p. 310.

¹⁹³³ When the nymphaeum* was unearthed, the spring was already dried up.

¹⁹³⁴ *CIL* XIII, 4294 ; *CAG*, 57.2, *Metz*, 2005, p. 310, n°1.

¹⁹³⁵ Mowat, 1888, pp. 226-227.

¹⁹³⁶ Mowat, 1888, pp. 220-238. The patera* from Rennes represents Bacchus and Hercules, surrounded by a procession of secondary characters. There are sixteen *aurei* (coins) at the effigy of the members of the family of Septimus Severus. 'The plaque of Hiéruple' – Hiéruple is a mountain south-west of Forbach (Moselle) - also has a space for fitting a coin. The inscription to the god reads: *[In h(onorem)] d(omus) d(ivinae), [deo Vi]sucio [? Jul(ius) Ac]ceptus [et...us] Mottio v(otum) s(olvit) libentes m(erito)*.

¹⁹³⁷ Raespeat-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.

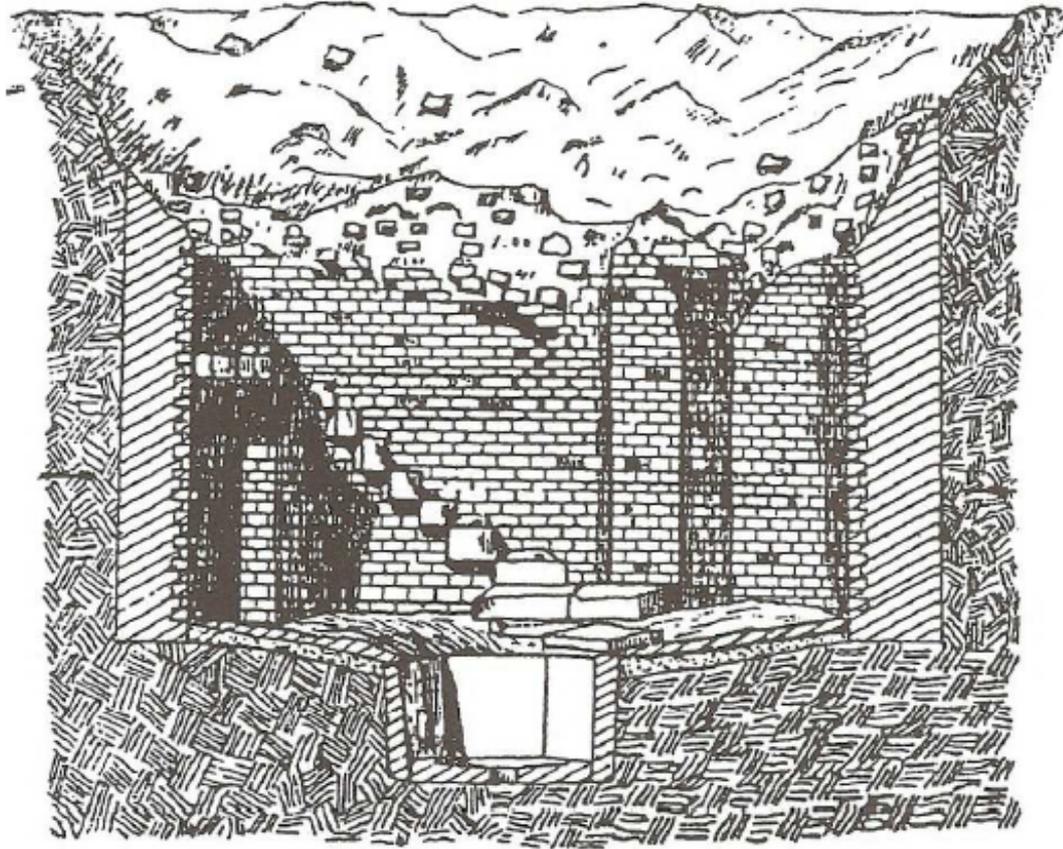


Fig. 33: The underground part of the fanum* of Le Sablon with its octagonal basin dedicated to the goddess Icovellauna. Lacroix, 2007, p. 56.

The second inscription is very similar to the first, for it is engraved on a fragment of a bronze tablet, which also has two holes at each top corner and a 'case monétaire', which might have been fitted with the coin at the effigy of Crispus (beginning of the 4th c. AD) found near the dedication. The reconstitution of the inscription, which is damaged on the left side, remains tentative: *[Deae] Icov(ellaunae maxi)mus Licini(us magister vic)i (?) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Icovellauna, Maximus Licinius, Master of the vicus* (?), paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁹³⁸ Charles Abel suggests that Maximus and Licinus are the names of two different Mediomatrici citizens, but it is more likely that they are the *duo nomina* of a single dedicator.¹⁹³⁹ Maximus Licinius was thus a Roman citizen and might have been in charge of governing and administering the vicus*.

¹⁹³⁸ CIL XIII, 4295 ; CAG, 57.2, Metz, 2005, p. 310, n°2.

¹⁹³⁹ Abel, 1894, pp. 197-203.

Three other fragments of dedications were discovered in the nymphaeum*. The first one is engraved on a slab: *[Deae Ic]ovellau[ae Ap]rili[s]*, 'To the Goddess Icovellauna Aprilis [...]';¹⁹⁴⁰ the second is engraved on a block in white stone, which seems to have belonged to a square pedestal: *D[ēae] Icov[ellaunae]*, 'To the goddess Icovellauna';¹⁹⁴¹ and the third one is inscribed on a piece of white marble: *Deae I[covellaunae]*, 'To the goddess Icovellauna'.¹⁹⁴²

Finally, a dedication engraved on a stone was discovered in 1891 in Trier, in the territory of the Treveri, who neighboured the Mediomatrici. The inscription reads: *Deae Icovel(aunae) M(arcus) Primius Alpicus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Icovellaune, Marcus Primius Alpicus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.¹⁹⁴³ The dedicator has Latin names and bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. He offers this stele* in recognition of the fulfilment of his vow.

The dedications prove that the spring of Le Sablon was under the patronage of the goddess Icovellauna, who probably healed people through the restorative qualities of her waters. This cannot however be ascertained with certainty, since anatomic ex-votos* evidencing such a cult were not found in or nearby the well. Icovellauna's cult was certainly quite important in the area, since a worshipper, probably a member of the Mediomatrici, honoured her in Trier. This inscription also suggests that Icovellauna was not only a local goddess protecting the spring of Le Sablon but a goddess presiding over waters in general.

b) Etymology of her name

Icovellauna's name has been the subject of some controversy. Without explaining their etymology*, Anwyl proposes 'protectress of health' and Maurice Toussaint 'good water'.¹⁹⁴⁴ As for Sterckx, he relates the first element of her name *ico* to Irish *icc*, 'act of curing' or 'recovery', Welsh *iach* and Breton *iac'h*, 'healthy', derived from the IE root **iēkko-*, an expressive expansion of **iēk-* 'to heal'. From this, he suggests to translate Icovellauna as 'the One who improves Health', but this etymology* does not take into account the second element of her name.¹⁹⁴⁵ Olmsted agrees with Sterckx as regards the meaning of *ico*, and adds that *vellauno* comes from the basic root **uel-*, 'foresight', which gave Irish *filli*, 'seer' and Welsh *gweled*, 'to see'.¹⁹⁴⁶ According to him, Icovellauna, who is etymologically related to the Celtic god Vellaunos, venerated with Mercurius in Hières-sur-Amby (Isère) and on his own in Caerwent (Wales),¹⁹⁴⁷ would mean 'the Healing Seer'. Lambert and Delamarre have however demonstrated that *vellaunos* means 'chief', 'commander'.¹⁹⁴⁸ As far as Jullian and Lacroix are concerned, the root *ic-*, also found in the name of the goddess Icauna, designates 'water'.¹⁹⁴⁹ Lacroix thus believes that Icovellauna is composed of *ico-*, 'water'

¹⁹⁴⁰ *CIL* XIII, 4296.

¹⁹⁴¹ *CIL* XIII, 4297.

¹⁹⁴² *CIL* XIII, 4298.

¹⁹⁴³ *CIL* XIII, 3644. Now in the Provincial Museum of Trier.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Anwyl, 1992a, p. 40 ; Toussaint, 1948, p. 207.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Sterckx, 2000, p. 57 ; Degraeve, 1998, p. 439 ; Polomé, 1997, p. 745.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Olmsted, 1994, p. 428.

¹⁹⁴⁷ *CIL* XIII, 2373 and *RIB* 309.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Lambert, 1995, p. 170 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 310.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Jullian, 1921, pp. 216-217 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 55-58 – see the part on Icauni in this chapter.

and *vellaunos*, ‘commander’ and means ‘the One who commands Water’.¹⁹⁵⁰ Delamarre, however, insists that the meaning of the word *ico-* remains obscure, for it cannot be related to any insular Celtic words.¹⁹⁵¹

The significations of ‘water’ or ‘healing’ for *ico-* are therefore highly unlikely and the attempts of scholars to link her name to the notion of water and cure, because of her association with the spring of La Sablon, are without substance. The meaning of *vellauna* tends to prove that she originally had military and war-like functions, but nothing in the goddess’s worship seems to support that idea. Like Segeta, whose name means ‘Victory’ and who is honoured in healing water contexts, Icovellauna might have been a goddess attached to protection and war in origin. This hypothesis, however, remains conjectural for lack of evidence.

3) *Mogontia* (Le Sablon?)

The goddess *Mogontia* is known from a single inscription engraved on a small quadrangular altar in white stone, found in 1880 in the sand quarry of Mey, situated about 100 metres to the west of the octagonal well of Le Sablon dedicated to goddess Icovellauna, in the territory of the *Mediomatrici*.¹⁹⁵² The altar was discovered among tiles, remains of the roof of an ancient public lavatory, vermiculated bricks, fragments of plaques, remains of the pavement of a temple, fragments of black and white marble and a winged statue representing the Roman goddess *Victory*.¹⁹⁵³ The inscription is very well preserved and must date from the time of *Titus Aelius Antoninus Pius*, which is to say from the middle of the 2nd c. AD. The inscription reads: *Deae Mogontiae Julius Pat[ter]nus tabellarius ex voto*, ‘To the goddess *Mogontia*, *Julius Paternus*, *tabellarius*, offered (this)’ (fig. 34).¹⁹⁵⁴ On the altar, above the inscription, there is an oblong cavity (24 cm x 8cm) with round tips, in which an undetermined object was apparently fixed by three tenons* - the holes can still be seen.

The dedicator *Julius Paternus* bears Latin names. He is a *tabellarius*, that is a messenger or bearer of letters.¹⁹⁵⁵ The *tabellarii* were generally men from a very modest background, such as slaves or emancipated slaves, who held a public or private position. The *public tabellarii* were hired by the tax department, either to work for the postal service - since its reorganization by Augustus - or in the service of some public offices, while the *private tabellarii* were servants, working for the emperors or particular people. Contrary to the private messengers, the public messengers generally bore a qualification indicating their specific role and position. As *Julius Paternus* does not have a particular qualification, he certainly belonged to the private class of the *tabellarii* and was the messenger of some private individual. It is worth noting that the name *Paternus* appears again on one of the stairs of the sacred well of Le Sablon presided over by *Icovellauna* – his name was roughly

¹⁹⁵⁰ Lacroix, 2007, p. 57.

¹⁹⁵¹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 187 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 223

¹⁹⁵² CAG, 57.2, Metz, 2005, pp. 311-312.

¹⁹⁵³ Abel, 1894, pp. 203-208.

¹⁹⁵⁴ *CIL* XIII, 4313 ; Abel, 1894, p. 203. Antoninus was Roman Emperor from 138 to 161 AD. He succeeded Hadrian and had the Wall of Antonine built at the north of Hadrian’s Wall.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Not to be confused with a *tabularius*, who was the writer and guardian of the acts. See Prost, 1880, pp. 266-268.

engraved, probably with a knife.¹⁹⁵⁶ Thus, Paternus was undeniably a faithful pilgrim coming regularly to the religious shrine of Le Sablon to venerate and pray to the local goddesses.

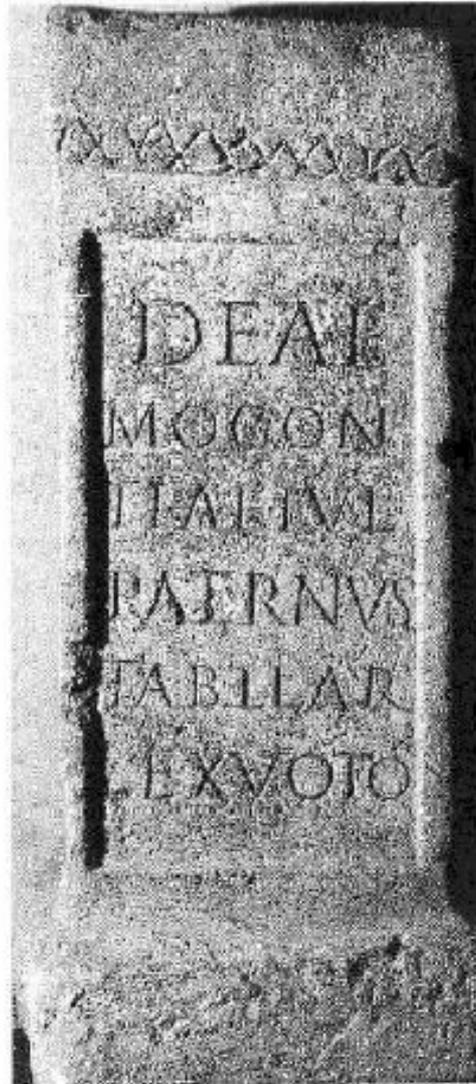


Fig. 34: Altar dedicated to the goddess Mogontia, discovered in the area of Le Sablon (Metz). In the Museum of Metz. CAG, 57.2, Metz, 2005, p. 311, fig. 288.

Olmsted proposes that Mongotia is based on a Celtic element *mogu-*, *mogo-*, a byform* of *magu-*, stemming from the IE **magho-*, signifying 'boy' or 'youth'.¹⁹⁵⁷ Accordingly, Mongotia would mean 'the Youthful'. She has some analogies with the names of certain British and Gaulish gods.¹⁹⁵⁸ In Britain, she is etymologically related to the god Mongoti venerated at Old Penrith, Plumpton Wall (Cumbria),¹⁹⁵⁹ the god Mongoti Vitiris honoured at Netherby,

¹⁹⁵⁶ Abel, 1894, p. 203.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 362, 390.

¹⁹⁵⁸ Vallentin, 1882, pp. 90-91 ; Prost, 1880, pp. 266-268 refers to a god Mogti who does not exist.

¹⁹⁵⁹ RIB 921: *Deo Mog(on)ti*.

Longtown (Cumbria),¹⁹⁶⁰ the god Mogunti worshipped at Chesterholm (Northumbria) and at Old Penrith (Cumbria),¹⁹⁶¹ the god Mogonitus or Mogonus mentioned in inscriptions from Risingham (Northumbria),¹⁹⁶² and the god Moguntibus known from a dedication from High Rochester (Northumbria).¹⁹⁶³ In Gaul, she may be etymologically cognate with the god Apollo Grannus Mogounus honoured in Horburg, near Colmar (Alsace),¹⁹⁶⁴ the god Mogounus revered in Ronchers (Meuse),¹⁹⁶⁵ and the god Mounus, who is mentioned in dedications from Beugnâtre (Pas-de-Calais) and Lezoux (Puy-de-Dôme) and from Risingham.¹⁹⁶⁶ Being recorded in northern Britain and in the centre, east and north of Gaul, the cult of the god Mogons, whose name has a wide variety of spellings, was clearly widespread. This convinces some commentators that Mogons was a title applied to several deities rather than the signifier of a single god.¹⁹⁶⁷ Scarcely anything is known about his possible attributes. As he is associated with Apollo Granus in one inscription, he might have been a healing god, but this remains to be proved. The god cannot thus shed light on the possible functions and character of the goddess Mogontia.

Mogontia is also cognate with the Mogontiones, who are honoured in a dedication engraved on a quadrangular stone found in Agonès (Hérault), now used as a base of a cross in the Church of Saint-Saturnin. The inscription is the following: *[Matris? M]ogontionibus Ocrac[ius] Fronto Ocraci f(i)lius posuit*, 'To the Mogontiones Ocracius Fronto son of Ocracius erected (this monument)'.¹⁹⁶⁸ The dedicator's father is a peregrine* with a Celtic name. According to Delamarre, Ocracius may be broken down as **Au-crac* and mean 'Spotless'.¹⁹⁶⁹ The dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. It is interesting to note that his gentilice* is the name of his father, while his cognomen* Fronto is Latin. In keeping the name of his father and in paying homage to Celtic goddesses, the dedicator shows that despite his Romanization he is still attached to his ancient cults and beliefs.

The place of discovery of the inscription and the dedication itself do not bring any significant information on the character of the goddess Mogontia. It is therefore difficult to determine what her functions were in ancient times. As the inscribed stone was unearthed near to the water shrine of Le Sablon, it is possible that both Icovellauna and Mongotia were worshipped at this spring. Mongotia could therefore have been a goddess of salutary waters. Her name signifying 'youth' might be evocative of such a cult, since waters were believed to be regenerative and to conserve youth and life, as the archetypal 'Fountain of Youth' illustrates. As for Jullian, Holder, Bourgeois and Olmsted, Mongotia would have been the eponymous goddess of the city of Mogontiacum, later called Mogontia (the present-day

¹⁹⁶⁰ RIB 971: *Deo Mogont(i) vitire san(cto)*.

¹⁹⁶¹ AE 1975, 567: *Deo Mogunti* ; RIB 922: *Deo Mo(g)unti*.

¹⁹⁶² RIB 1225, 1226: *[D]eo Mogonito Cad(...)* ; RIB 1226: *Deo Mo(g)uno Cad(...)*.

¹⁹⁶³ RIB 1269= CIL VII, 1036: *Dis Mo(g)untibus*.

¹⁹⁶⁴ CIL XIII, 5315: *Apollini Granno Mogouno*.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Holder, ACS, vol. 2, p. 616: *Mogounus*.

¹⁹⁶⁶ AE 1996, 1087: *M[oun]jo* ; RIG II-2, 70, pp. 185-189: *Calia ueio biusauniti ioberte Mouno. Caleni oficina* ; RIB 1226: *Deo Mouno Cad(...)* *Inventus do(no) vs.*

¹⁹⁶⁷ Green, 1992a, pp. 152-153 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 332-333 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 390.

¹⁹⁶⁸ AE 1986, 471 ; CAG, 34.3, *Le Montpellièrais*, 2003, p. 113.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 144.

Mayence, in Germany), which is located about 200 kms from Metz.¹⁹⁷⁰ This is a possibility, for some goddesses were indeed the personification and patroness of important cities, e.g. Bibracte, the eponymous goddess of the capital of the Aedui (Mont Beuvray, in Saône-et-Loire), or Tutela Vesunna, the eponymous goddess of the city of the Petrocorii (Périgueux, in Dordogne).

4) *Coventina's Well at Carrawburgh (Northumbria)*

Coventina is a goddess known by twelve inscriptions unearthed in a well excavated from 1876 by John Clayton to the west of Carrawburgh Fort, near Hadrian's Wall (Northumbria), in Britain (fig. 35).¹⁹⁷¹ To the south-east of the well were unearthed a Mithraeum* and a Nymphaeum*.¹⁹⁷² Lindsay Allason-Jones has given a comprehensive study of the well and its contents.¹⁹⁷³ Coventina remains an enigmatic goddess. Various etymologies have been proposed for her name, but it remains difficult to determine its significance and whether it is Celtic or not. Alfred Rivet and Colin Smith linked Coventina to Latin *cum*, 'with' and *vent*, 'market' or 'sale', and demonstrated that it was not derived from the Indo-European language and could not be related to any Celtic derivations.¹⁹⁷⁴ At the end of the 19th c., Dr. Wake Smart proposed to relate it to the Welsh word *gover* signifying 'a rivulet' or 'a head of rivulet', while Dr. Hoopell assumed it was based on *cov*, 'memory' or *cofen*, 'memorial', and concluded that the reservoir was a cenotaph*. This theory however clearly does not suit the nature and structure of the shrine.¹⁹⁷⁵ Charles Roach Smith then supposed the name was composed of *convenio*, 'a coming-together' and *tina*, which referred to the River Tyne quoted by Ptolemy.¹⁹⁷⁶ According to him, Coventina's name would refer to the confluence of the north and south rivers, but Allason-Jones rightly points out that it is located some distance away from Carrawburgh.¹⁹⁷⁷ Hylton Dyer Longstaffe, taking up Smith's idea, added that the first part of her name was composed of two parts *con* and *went*, which could refer to the stream Con and the River Went, which flow in Yorkshire.¹⁹⁷⁸ In his view, Coventina was the name of three goddesses: *con-went-tina*, pictured as three Nymphs on a relief* discovered in the well (fig. 38); a theory which has no basis in the archaeological evidence. Finally, Norah Jolliffe suggests that Coventina could be a goddess of a *conventus*, that is a community of German soldiers implanted at the Fort, but Allason-Jones argues that that is rather unlikely.¹⁹⁷⁹ Allason-Jones concludes that the significance of Coventina's name is undeterminable, but is undeniably Celtic.

¹⁹⁷⁰ Jullian, *HG*, vol. 6, p. 47, n° 6 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 2, p. 611 ; Bourgeois, 1992, p. 75 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 421.

¹⁹⁷¹ Hope, 1893, pp. 112-115.

¹⁹⁷² Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 11, fig. 2.

¹⁹⁷³ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985 ; Allason-Jones, 1996.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Rivet & Smith, 1979, pp. 262-265.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Clayton, 1880, p. 21.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Longstaffe, 1880, p. 107.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Allason-Jones, 1996, p. 109.

¹⁹⁷⁸ The Went has its source near Featherstone and meets the River Don at Reedholme Common.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Jolliffe, 1941, p. 58 ; Allason-Jones, 1996, p. 109.



Fig. 35: Discovery and excavations of Coventina's Well at Carrawburgh in 1876 by John Clayton. Watercolour by F. Mossman, 1878. Clayton, 1880, plate I.

Coventina's shrine consists of a large rectangular stone enclosure with a west door, in the centre of which is situated a rectangular reservoir, receiving the waters of several springs (fig. 36). The springs do not have particular medicinal properties and the votive offerings discovered in the reservoir do not point to a healing cult: anatomic ex-votos*, similar to those found at the Sources-de-la-Seine, have not been found. The various offerings are composed of inscriptions honouring the goddess; sculptures; jewellery such as brooches (10), finger-rings (14), hairpins (2), bracelets (5) and glass beads; animal bones; lead; leather and other objects. These clearly evidence that the waters were worshipped and placed under the patronage of Coventina.¹⁹⁸⁰ The 16,000 coins fished up in the well prove that the shrine was visited from 128-130 AD until 378-388 AD.¹⁹⁸¹

¹⁹⁸⁰ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 6-11, 19-50 ; Allason-Jones, 1996, pp. 115-118.

¹⁹⁸¹ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 11-12, 50-76 ; Allason-Jones, 1996, pp. 108, 112.

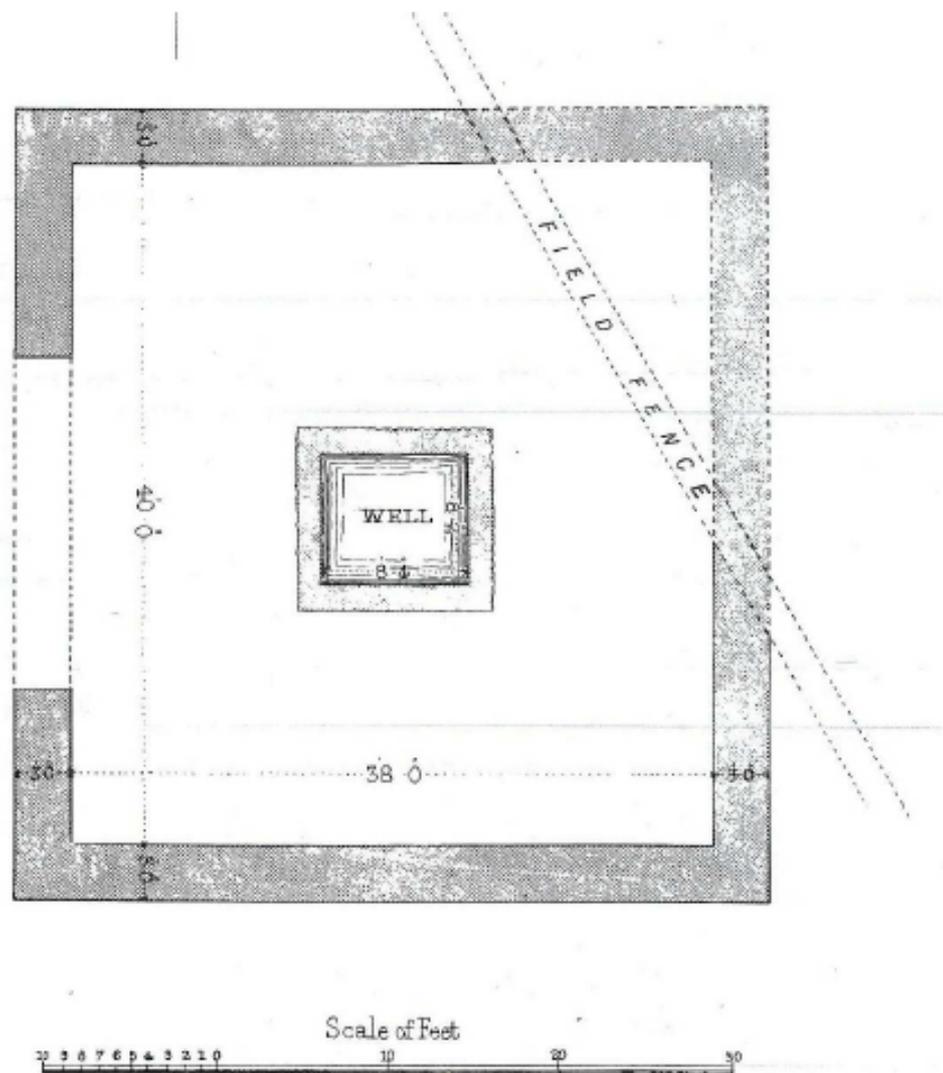


Fig. 36: Ground plan of the temple of Coventina at Carrawburgh (Northumbria). Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 94, pl. IV.

The inscriptions to Coventina are twelve in number. They are all listed and studied by Allason-Jones in her catalogue of sculpted stone and inscriptions.¹⁹⁸² One of them is particularly interesting, for it is combined with a representation of the goddess: *Deae Couuentinae T(itus) D(...)* *Cosconianus Pr(aefectus) Coh(ortis) I Bat(auorum) I(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Coventina, Titus D(...) Cosconianus, prefect* of the First Cohort of Batavians, willingly and deservedly (fulfilled his vow)' (fig. 37).¹⁹⁸³ The dedicator bears Latin names and is a prefect*, that is a commander of the Cohors I Batavorum equitata, which came from Germany and was stationed at Carrawburgh in the 3rd c. AD.¹⁹⁸⁴ Coventina is pictured half-naked with a cloth around her hips, holding a leaf in her right hand and lying

¹⁹⁸² Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 13-17.

¹⁹⁸³ *RIB* 1534 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 14, n°4.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Lassère, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 785, 788-789 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 14.

on an upside down urn from which water flows.¹⁹⁸⁵ The position, the garment and the water-pitcher are typical attributes of water-goddesses and nymphs. This representation is very similar to the relief* discovered at the springs of Allègre-les-Fumades (Gard) in Gaul,¹⁹⁸⁶ and to the other relief* discovered in the well, representing three Nymphs holding vases and pouring water from overturned pitchers (fig. 38).¹⁹⁸⁷ Those Nymphs might be a figuration of Coventina in triple form but, as the stone is anepigraphic, it cannot be stated with certainty. It is more likely that the relief represents the Nymphs of Carrawburgh, who had a shrine dedicated to them near Coventina's Well.



Fig. 37: Altar dedicated to Coventina with a relief representing the goddess as a nymph. Allason-Jones, 1996, p.100; fig. 8.1.*

¹⁹⁸⁵ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 14, n°4.

¹⁹⁸⁶ See Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 13, n°1 and p. 95, plate V, stone 1.



Fig. 38: Tree nymphs of Coventina's Well holding vases of water and pouring out streams of water: Coventina in tripled form? Allason-Jones, 1996, p. 111, fig. 8.2.

Out of the twelve inscriptions, Coventina is given the title of *deae* ten times, *nymphae* twice and *sanctae* once. This proves that she was a water-goddess presiding over the springs of Carrawburgh and that she was held in high respect by the population who came to visit the shrine and pray to her. Seven of the dedicators are Roman soldiers bearing Latin names: one is a *decurio**;¹⁹⁸⁸ two are *prefects** of the First Cohort* of Batavians;¹⁹⁸⁹ one is in the First Cohort* of Cubernians, which came from the Lower Rhineland and was garrisoned at Newcastle in the 3rd c.;¹⁹⁹⁰ one is an *optio** of the First Cohort* of Frixivones;¹⁹⁹¹ and one is a soldier in an undetermined Cohort*.¹⁹⁹² As for Aurelius Crotus, who declares himself as a German, he bears Latin names and the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens.¹⁹⁹³ Two dedicators specify that they are German people,¹⁹⁹⁴ and four dedicators are peregrines in view of their unique name: Vincentius bears a Latin name,¹⁹⁹⁵ Madutus a German name,¹⁹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁸⁸ RIB 1527 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 13-14, n°3.

¹⁹⁸⁹ RIB 1534, 1535 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 14, n°4 and p. 17, n°14.

¹⁹⁹⁰ RIB 1524 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 14-15, n°5.

¹⁹⁹¹ RIB 1523 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 15, n°6 ; Southern, 2006, p. 100. The First Cohort* of Frixivones was raised in the Scheldt area and was stationed at Ruschester at some time during the occupation.

¹⁹⁹² RIB 1529 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 15-16, n°7.

¹⁹⁹³ RIB 1525, 1532 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 16-17, n°10-11.

¹⁹⁹⁴ RIB 1525, 1526.

¹⁹⁹⁵ RIB 1533 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 17, n° 12.

¹⁹⁹⁶ RIB 1526 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 16, n°9.

and Vinomathus (?) and Bellicus have Celtic names.¹⁹⁹⁷ It seems thus that Coventina was particularly celebrated by Roman soldiers, some of whom were of Germanic origin. The peregrines are far less represented and very few bear Celtic names.

On account of her name and of her devotees, Coventina's Celtic character is therefore questionable. Given the various votive offerings discovered in the well, it remains clear, however, that she was a goddess presiding over the springs of this locality. Allason-Jones, referring to two inscriptions unearthed in Spain, in Os Curvenos¹⁹⁹⁸ and Santa Cruz de Loyo,¹⁹⁹⁹ and a dedication discovered in France, in Narbonne (Aude),²⁰⁰⁰ believes that Coventina was worshipped on a larger scale.²⁰⁰¹ However, it must be borne in mind that those inscriptions are obscure and the relation with British Coventina doubtful.

B) Healing Spring-Goddesses

1) *Damona* ('Cow Goddess')

The goddess *Damona* is known from sixteen inscriptions. She is partnered with the god of the healing springs *Borvo* ('the Bubbling one') in nine inscriptions from Bourbonnes-les-Bains (Haute-Marne) and in four dedications from Bourbon-Lancy (Saône-et-Loire). In Chassenay, near Aignay-le-Duc (Côte d'Or), she is coupled with the god *Albius*, while in Alise-Sainte-Reine (Côte d'Or), she is associated with the god *Moritasgus*. Finally, she is honoured on her own and given the epithet *Matuberginni* in an inscription from Saintes (Charente-Maritime).

The name *Damona* is based on a Celtic word *damos* meaning 'ox', 'cow' or 'stag', cognate with Old Irish *dam*, 'ox', 'cow', 'stag', Welsh *dafad*, 'sheep', 'ewe' and Breton *dañvad*, 'sheep'.²⁰⁰² *Damona* is therefore 'the Cow Goddess' or 'the Divine Cow', which indicates she was worshipped in bovine shape in ancient times. This relates her to the goddess *Borvoboendoa* honoured in Utrecht (Germany),²⁰⁰³ whose name can be broken down as **Borvo-bō-vinduā*, that is 'the Seething White Cow',²⁰⁰⁴ and related to the Irish river-goddess *Bóinn*, whose name was originally **Bou-vindā*, that is the 'Cow-White (Goddess)' or 'the Bovine Wise (Goddess)'.²⁰⁰⁵ As explained above, the cow-shaped motif seems to have been specific to water-goddesses, for in ancient times the cow was used as a metaphor

¹⁹⁹⁷ RIB 1528, 1522 ; Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, p. 16, n°8 and p. 17, n°13 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 39, 201.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Monteagudo, 1947, pp. 68-74: COVE/TENE/E.R.N.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Vives, 1971, n°785: CUHVETENAE/BERRAL/OGEGU/EX VOTO/FLAVIUS VALERIANUS.

²⁰⁰⁰ AE 1950, 49: IVCUNDUS CO(N)/VERTINE F(ILLIUS) MACER(IAM)/CIRCUM ARAM VOLK(ANI/MAGIS)TERIO SUO (REIP/D)IENSIUM DONAVIT.

²⁰⁰¹ Allason-Jones & McKay, 1985, pp. 4-6 ; Allason-Jones, 1996, pp. 111-112.

²⁰⁰² Holder, ACS, vol. 1, pp. 1221-1222 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 29 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 134-135, 425 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 356 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 59, 81-84 ; Bourcelot, 1968, pp. 3, 9-11.

²⁰⁰³ AE 1977, 539-540.

²⁰⁰⁴ Gutenbrunner, 1936, pp. 67-68, 211 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 79 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 46 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 355-356.

²⁰⁰⁵ Sergent, 2000a, p. 235 ; Sterckx, 1996, p. 38 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 148-149 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 110-111 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 38 ; Holder, ACS, vol. 1, pp. 646-647 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 354 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 79-80 ; O'Rahilly, 1970, p. 105 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 2-3. See *supra*.

for the river; its streams symbolizing the milk flowing from the goddess in the shape of a supernatural cow.²⁰⁰⁶

a) Bourbonnes-les-Bains (Haute-Marne)

Eight inscriptions dedicated to the divine couple Damona and Borvo and one inscription to Damona were discovered at Bourbonnes-les-Bains (Haute-Marne), a famous spa town in the valley of the River Borne, the healing spring of which gushes forth at 66° and is recommended for rheumatology and respiratory problems.²⁰⁰⁷ Bourbonnes-les-Bains, which was named Borbona in 846, was undeniably named after the god Borvo.²⁰⁰⁸ Excavations carried out from the beginning of the 18th c. to the end of the 19th c. and in 1977-1978 revealed the ruins of a huge complex of baths and swimming-pools erected at the site of the spring; a huge hypostyle* room of rectangular shape, divided in three parts by two rows of five columns each, which was interpreted as a temple by M.-F. Rigaud; and a cesspool called the 'Roman Well', where some of the inscriptions to Damona and Borvo were discovered, as well as votive offerings, such as rings, fibulas*, two wooden heads, thousands of nuts, acorns and fruit stones, along with 4,700 coins in bronze, silver and gold, forty-six of which were Gaulish silver coins.²⁰⁰⁹ This evidences that the healing spring was already known and used at the end of the 1st c. BC. Clearly, Borvo and Damona were the protectors and embodiment of the waters of Bourbonnes-les-Bains, which brought relief to sick pilgrims. The story which tells that, in 612 AD, Thierry II, King of Burgundy, built a fortification on the site of a Gallo-Roman temple dedicated to the divine couple, is apparently a complete fabrication from the pen of Docteur Chevallier in 1772.²⁰¹⁰ It is true that Aimoin, a monk from Sully-sur-Loire (Loiret), writing in the second part of the 10th c., did tell of this wall called 'Vernona Castrum', which Thierry II erected to protect his realm against his brother Theodebert II, but at no point did he indicate that this fortification was erected on top of a temple dedicated to Borvo and Damona. The existence of a temple at the location of the ancient medieval castle rests therefore on weak presumptions.

Inscriptions

The following inscription, engraved on a fragment of a stele* in grey oolitic limestone, dating to the 2nd c. AD, is the first dedication to Borvo and Damona which was discovered in Bourbonnes-les-Bains: *[B]orvoni et [Da]monae. C(aius) Ia[...].nius Romanus, [L])ing[o?], pro salu[t]e Cocillae, fil(iae), ex voto*, 'To Borvo and to Damona. Caius Ia[...].nius Romanus, Lingones citizen (?), (had this monument erected) for the protection of his daughter, Cocilla,

²⁰⁰⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 17-18 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 112 and notes 38, 44 and 45, p. 234 for references.

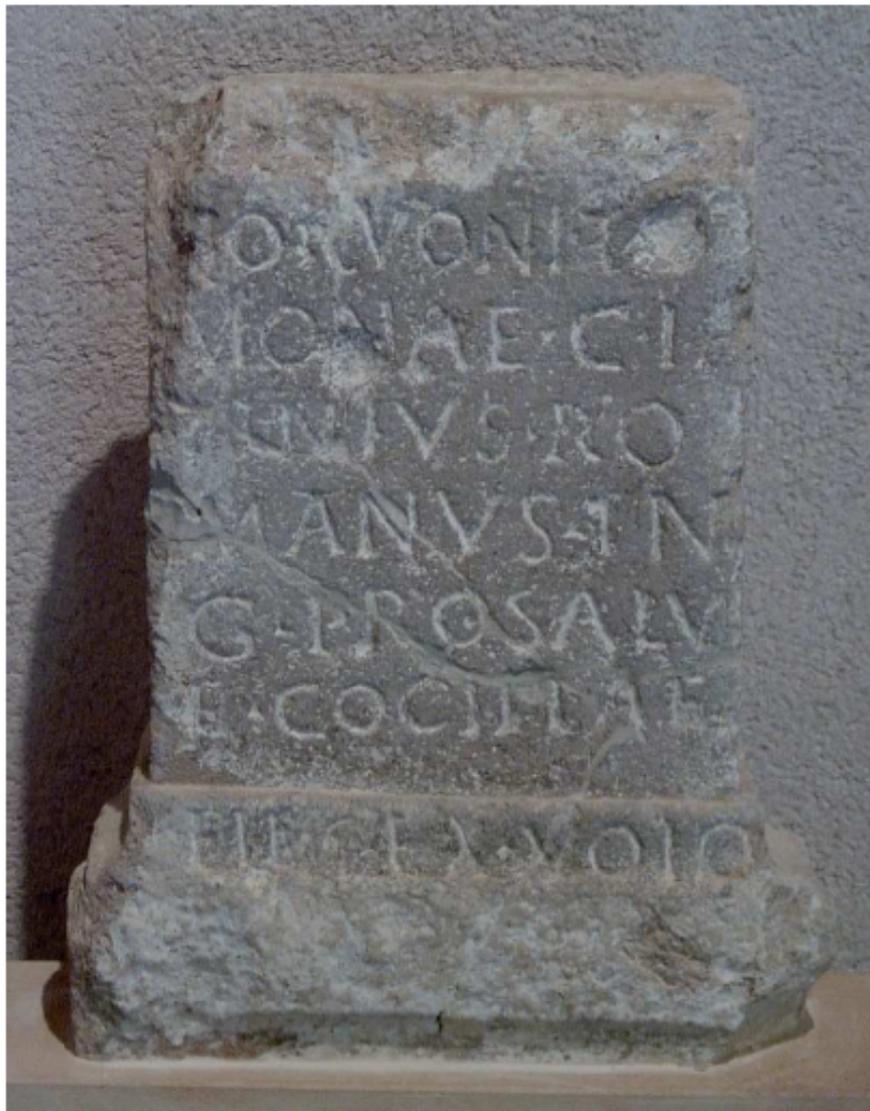
²⁰⁰⁷ Grenier, 1984, pp. 294-295 ; CAG, 52.1, *La Haute-Marne*, 1997, p. 125-126.

²⁰⁰⁸ Nègre, 1990, p. 107.

²⁰⁰⁹ CAG, 52.1, *La Haute-Marne*, 1997, pp. 127-132, 135-136 ; Grenier, t. 4, fasc. 2, pp. 445-449 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 31-33 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 146. According to Rigaud, the temple occupied the whole central part of the thermal establishment, and gave access to the baths. Pilgrims entered the temple by a door situated at the south-east corner of it and opening onto a vestibule, the entrance of which seemed to have been the main entrance to the temple-thermal baths grouping. Therefore, the pilgrims had to go through the temple to reach the baths.

²⁰¹⁰ Troisgros, 1975, p. 31. It is Docteur Chevallier who apparently added this information when mentioning the inscription of Caius Romanus, which was found, according to him, by Thierry II himself in 612 when building his fortification. Actually, nobody knows where this inscription was exactly discovered.

after making a vow' (fig. 39).²⁰¹¹ The inscription was already known in the 16th century, since Jean le Bon, the King's physician, mentioned it in 1590 in his work entitled *Des Bains de Bourbonnes-les-Bains*.²⁰¹² In 1765, the stone was embedded in a wall above the hot spring and in 1865 it was moved to the thermal establishment. The dedicator bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, while his daughter Cocilla has a Celtic name, based on *cocos* 'red'.²⁰¹³ Despite his Roman citizenship, it is interesting to note that the dedicator claims to be from the tribe of the Lingones. This sense of belonging to both nations at the same time is unsurprising, since many Gaulish people became Roman citizens after the Roman conquest of Gaul, and yet remained faithful to their roots and origins. The fact that the dedicator chose a Celtic name for his daughter and that he invoked Celtic deities for her safety supports that idea.



²⁰¹¹ *CIL* XIII 5916 ; Luquet, 1838, pp. 27-28 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 65-74, n°7 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 28 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 132-133, n° 203.

²⁰¹² Berger de Xivrey, 1833.

²⁰¹³ Dottin, 1920, p. 64 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 1058 & t. 3, p. 1248 ; Whatmough, 1970, pp. 641, 1119 ; Delmarre, 2003, p. 120.

Fig. 39: Inscription to Borvo and Damona for the safety of the Celtic woman Cocillia, discovered in Bourbonnes-les-Bains. Source: Musée de Bourbonnes-les-Bains.

Another inscription, engraved on a stele* in white marble, was discovered in 1833 in re-employment* in the wall of one of six houses destroyed by fire in 1832. It reads: *Deo Apollini Borvoni et Damonae, C(aius) Daminius Ferox, civis Lingonus, ex voto*, 'To the god Apollo Borvo and to Damona, Caius Daminius Ferox, Lingones citizen, for the accomplishment of a vow' (fig. 40).²⁰¹⁴ The use of the formula *deus* and the onomastics* indicate that the inscription dates from the second half of the 2nd c. AD.²⁰¹⁵ The dedicator claims to belong to the tribe of the Lingones, while he bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens: he is thus of Gaulish origin. This inscription is the only one which associates the Celtic god Borvo with the Roman god Apollo, who replaced many Celtic healing gods in Gaul through the process of the *interpretatio Romana*. This is an obvious manifestation of the syncretism of the Roman and Celtic religions.

²⁰¹⁴ *CIL* XIII, 5911 ; Luquet, 1838, p. 20 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 29 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 74-75, n°8 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 9-10 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 130-131, n° 200.

²⁰¹⁵ Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 130-131, n° 200 ; Raespeat-Charlier, 1993, p. 12.



Fig. 40: Dedication to the god Apollo Borvo and his partner Damona found in Bourbonnes-les-Bains. Source: Musée de Bourbonnes-les-Bains.

A third inscription, dating from the 2nd c. AD or the first part of the 3rd c. AD, found in 1874 in the mud of the 'Roman Well', is engraved on an altar in grey limestone, the bottom of which is missing: *Borvoni et Damonae, [Se]xtilia [S]exti fil(ia), med (...?)*, 'To Borvo and to Damona, Sextilia Med(...), daughter of Sextus' (fig. 41).²⁰¹⁶ The dedicator *Sextilia* and her father *Sextus* bear Latin names and are peregrines. The word *Med(...)* could be a cognomen*, an origo* or a term referring to the profession of the father's dedicator. Anatole Chabouillet indeed suggests that *med* could be the abbreviation of *medicus* ('doctor'), but he abandons this theory at the end of his analysis.²⁰¹⁷ According to Henry Troisgros, *Med* could be the abbreviation of the ethnonym* *Mediomatrici*, who lived near Metz in the north-east

²⁰¹⁶ CIL XIII, 5919 ; Chabouillet, 1880, p. 21, n° 2 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 14-15, n° 6 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 135, n° 206.

²⁰¹⁷ Chabouillet, 1880, p. 21 and 1881, p. 310, note 1.

of Gaul.²⁰¹⁸ Le Bohec dismisses both theories, arguing that professions were hardly ever mentioned in dedications and that it is generally a cognomen* which follows a gentile* and precedes the filiation*.²⁰¹⁹ Various cognomina* are possible for *Med(...)*, such as *Mediana*, *Mediata*, *Medica*, *Medulla* or *Medullina*.²⁰²⁰ This would indicate that *Sextilia Med(...)* was a Roman citizen, since she would have borne the *duo nomina*, composed of a gentile* and a cognomen*.



Fig. 41: Altar dedicated to Borvo and Damona by Sextilia. In the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Le Bohec, 2003, p. 135, fig. 97.

A fourth inscription, dating to the 2nd century AD, engraved on a small altar in grey limestone, the bottom of which is missing, was found with the previous one. It reads: *Deo Borvo(ni) et Damon(a)e, Verrea Veril[li]a, Lingo, [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)]*, 'To

²⁰¹⁸ Troisgros, 1975, p. 15.

²⁰¹⁹ Le Bohec, 2003, p. 135, n° 206.

²⁰²⁰ Solin & Salomies, 1994, p. 361.

the god Borvo and to Damona. Verrea Verilla, Lingones citizen, paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 42).²⁰²¹ The dedicator is a woman who bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens, but her gentilice* Verrea and her cognomen* Verilla are undeniably Celtic. They seem to be both based on *ver-*, 'super-' or 'over-'.²⁰²² In keeping Celtic names, specifying she belongs to the Lingones and paying homage to Celtic deities, she clearly displays her attachment to her indigenous beliefs and cults.

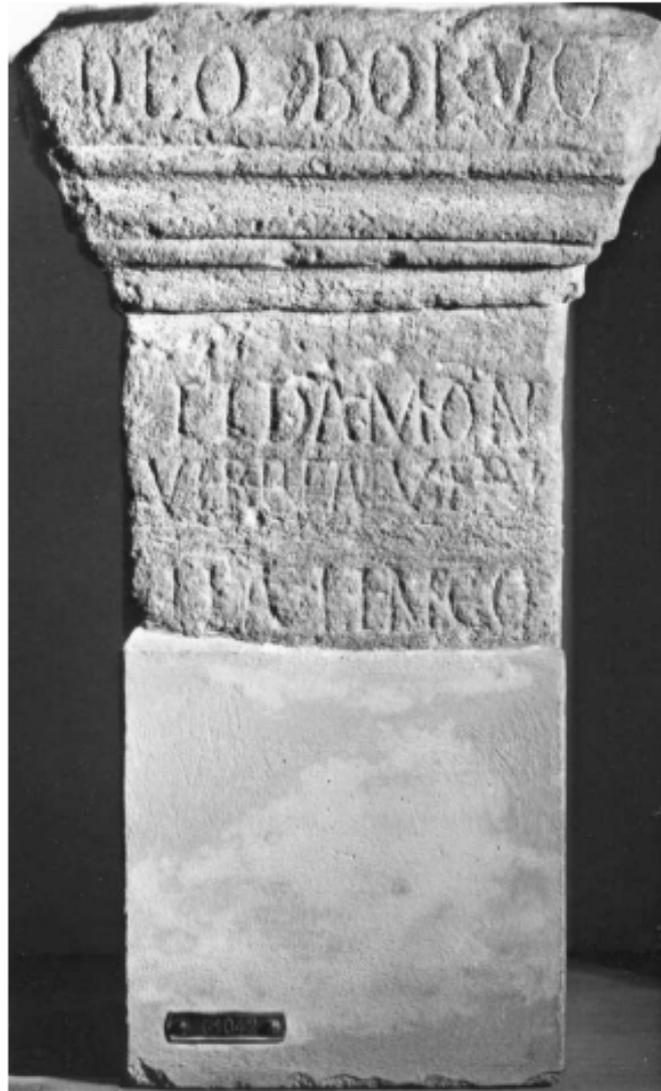


Fig. 42: Altar from Bourbonnes-les-Bains offered to Borvo and Damona by Verra. In the Musée des Antiquités de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Le Bohec, 2003, p. 135, fig. 98.

A fifth inscription, engraved on a small altar, the bottom part of which is also missing, was unearthed in 1875 in the garden of the thermal establishment. The dating of this altar is uncertain. Chabouillet suggests the end of the 1st c. AD to the beginning of the 2nd c. AD,

²⁰²¹ CIL XIII, 5920 ; Chabouillet, 1880, p. 22, n° 3 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 15-17, n° 8 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 135-136, n° 207.

²⁰²² Delamarre, 2007, pp. 196-197, 236 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 313.

while Le Bohec proposes the 2nd or 3rd c. AD.²⁰²³ The inscription is the following: *Borvoni et Damo(nae), Fro(n)t(o ?) Luci(i) [f(ilius)] libenter votum solvit fecit*, 'To Borvo and Damona. Fronton (?), son of Lucius, had this monument built' (fig. 43).²⁰²⁴ The dedicator is a peregrine* bearing a Latin name. The palaeography of this altar is interesting, for it has a particular provincial aspect which the other inscriptions from Bourbonnes-les-Bains do not have.²⁰²⁵ The letters are irregular, crude and clumsily formed.



Fig. 43: Dedication to Borvo and Damona offered by Fronto, discovered in Bourbonnes-les-Bains. In the Musée des Antiquités de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Le Bohec, 2003, p. 136, fig. 99.

The sixth inscription is engraved on a small altar of round shape, the bottom part of which is missing. It was excavated in 1878 when a gallery was dug underneath the Roman

²⁰²³ Chabouillet, 1880, p. 25 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 137.

²⁰²⁴ *CIL* XIII, 5915 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 22-25, n° 4 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 17-18, n° 9 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 136-137, n° 208.

²⁰²⁵ Chabouillet, 1880, p. 23.

baths. It reads: *Deo Borvoni et Damon(ae), Maturia Rustica v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the god Borvo and to Damona. Maturia Rustica paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 44).²⁰²⁶ The formula *deus*, the abbreviations and the onomastics* prove that this monument dates from the second half of the 2nd c. AD. The dedicator is a woman who bears Latin names and the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. The abbreviated formula *v.s.l.m.* indicates she thanks the divine couple for accomplishing a vow she had previously made.



Fig. 44: Round-shaped altar dedicated to Borvo and Damona by the Roman Maturia Rustica. It is kept in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Le Bohec, 2003, p. 134, fig. 96.

The seventh inscription, dating from the 2nd century AD, engraved on a small altar in grey limestone, was found in 1869 in the garden of the thermal establishment during the construction of a network of pipes.²⁰²⁷ It reads: *Borvoni et Damon[ae], Jul(ia) Tiberia*

²⁰²⁶ *CIL* XIII, 5918 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 26-27, n° 6 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 20-21, n° 11 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 134, n° 205.

²⁰²⁷ The inscription is now partly worn away.

Corisilla, Claud(ii) Catonis, Ling(onis), v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito), 'To Borvo and to Damona, Julia Tiberia Corisilla, wife of Claudius Caton, Lingones, paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²⁰²⁸ The letters are legible at the top of the inscription, but are hardly visible at the bottom. Four holes above the canopy* could indicate that a bronze statue had been sealed.²⁰²⁹ The dedicator is a woman who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. Contrary to what Troisgros maintains, Le Bohec asserts that Claudius Caton is not the name of her father, but the name of her husband.²⁰³⁰ Claudius Caton bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens and Latin names; and yet he mentions that he belongs to the Lingones, which proves he is of Celtic origin.

An eighth inscription, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, engraved on the basis of a broken altar in grey limestone, was found in 1870 in 'Rue de l'Hôpital' in Bourbonnes-les-Bains. The inscription is the following: *Borvoni et Damon[ae], Æmilia Sex(ti) fil(ia) M[...]s, [ex voto (?)]*, 'To Borvo and to Damona. Aemilia, daughter of Sextus, (had this monument built) after making a vow'.²⁰³¹ The dedicator is a woman who is a peregrine* with a Latin name. Since her father is Sextus, Aemilia may be the sister of Sextilia, the dedicator of inscription number 3. As Chabouillet explains, the last word *M[...]s* could either refer to the profession of Sextus, who might have been a *medicus* ('doctor'), or to the origin of the dedicator, who might have been from the tribe of the Mediomatrici.²⁰³² Troisgros and Le Bohec point out that these suggestions cannot be confirmed or refuted in view of the bad state of the stone – the inscription is now completely worn away.

The last inscription, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, is engraved on a damaged bronze tablet, which was discovered in 1875 in rooms excavated under the present-day thermal establishment. The rooms were heated in ancient times and the floor and the walls were entirely covered with marble.²⁰³³ The inscription reads: *Damonæ Aug(ustæ), Claudia Mossia et C(aius) Jul(ius) Superstes fil(ius), l(oco) d(ato) ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibentes) m(erito)*, 'To Damona Auguste, Claudia Mossia and her son Caius Julius Superstes, concessionaires of this area by decree of the decurios, paid their vow willingly and deservedly'.²⁰³⁴ The tablet is offered by two dedicators: Claudia Mossia and her son Caius Julius Superstes. They are Roman citizens, since they bear the *duo* and the *tria nomina*. While the son has Latin names, the mother has a Celtic cognomen*: Mossia.²⁰³⁵ The inscription indicates that the thermal establishment and estate belonged to the local public authority and that the men in charge of administering the town (decurio*) signed a concession contract with Claudia Mossia and her son.

Iconography?

- ²⁰²⁸ *CIL* XIII, 5917 ; Chabouillet, 1880, p. 76, n° 10 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 11-12, n° 4 ; Le Bohec, 2003, pp. 133-134, n° 204.
- ²⁰²⁹ Troisgros, 1975, p. 12.
- ²⁰³⁰ Troisgros, 1975, p. 12 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 134.
- ²⁰³¹ *CIL* XIII 5914 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 76-77, n°11 ; Toutain, 1948, pp. 213-214 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 13-13, n°5 ; Le Bohec, 2003, p. 130, n°199.
- ²⁰³² Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 76-77.
- ²⁰³³ Troisgros, 1975, p. 19.
- ²⁰³⁴ *CIL* XIII, 5921 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 25-26, n°5 ; Vaillat, 1932, p. 27 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 18-20, n°10 ; Le Bohec, 2003, Appendice II, M5 H.
- ²⁰³⁵ Delamarre, 2007, p. 136.

As regards the iconography of Damona, no statues combined with an inscription identifying the goddess have been discovered. Contrary to what Chabouillet maintains, the full-size bust of a woman in golden bronze, discovered in 1875 in the thermal establishment, is not a representation of Damona, but a portrayal of the empress Crispina, the wife of the Emperor Commodus.²⁰³⁶ The statue in white stone, depicting a half-naked goddess with a draped cloth around her hips, discovered in the thermal edifice, could be a representation of Damona, but, as it is anepigraphic, that cannot be asserted with certainty (fig. 45).



Fig. 45: Statue of a water-goddess from Bourbonnes-les-Bains: Damona? Source: Musée de Bourbonnes-les-Bains.

b) Bourbon-Lancy (Saône-et-Loire)

Two inscriptions and two fragments of inscriptions dedicated to the divine couple Borvo/Bormo and Damona were discovered in the territory of the Aedui, in the spa town of

²⁰³⁶ Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 27-30, n°2, 3, 4 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 36 ; Grenier, 1960, pp. 446-447 ; Babelon, & Blanchet, 1895, n° 861, p. 377.

Bourbon-Lancy, the name of which undoubtedly derives from the name of the healing god – it probably corresponds to ‘Aquae Bormonis’ mentioned on the 4th-century *Table de Peutinger*.²⁰³⁷ Bourbon-Lancy is nowadays a renowned water-cure centre, which uses five springs ranging from 48° to 60° for rheumatology and phlebology treatment.²⁰³⁸ Excavations undertaken at the end of the 16th c. and of the 17th c. revealed the ruins of an ancient thermal establishment, composed of basins and baths in white and grey marble, apparently adorned by statues in white marble and supplied by a spring gushing forth from the rock.²⁰³⁹ Fragments of mosaics, potteries, statues, terracotta figurines, columns and coins from Caesar’s and Augustus’s times were unearthed on the site. This proves that the curative spring was already known and used in Gallo-Roman times. Apart from the four dedications, no images of the couple or ruins of a temple erected in their honour have been discovered.

The first inscription is engraved on a fragment of stone, broken at the bottom. Abbot Courtépée, who was a celebrated eighteenth-century historian of Burgundy, saw it in 1774 at the Church of Saint-Nazaire, where it was used as a doorstep.²⁰⁴⁰ The exact place and date of discovery are unknown. The stele* is now housed in the Musée Rolin at Autun (Saône-et-Loire). It reads: *Borvoni et Damonae, T(itus) Severius Modestus...[om]nib[us] h[o]n[oribus] et] off[ic]iis*, ‘To Borvo and to Damona, Titus Severius Modestus [...] (who fulfilled) all the honours and all the municipal offices(?)’.²⁰⁴¹ The dedicator bears Latin names and the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens.

The second inscription, engraved on a stone, probably dating from the 1st c. AD, was found in 1792 in the foundations of Bourbon-Lancy castle. It was then embedded in one of the walls of the yard of the thermal establishment, and is now in the Musée Rolin at Autun. It reads: *C(aius) Julius Eporedirigis f(ilius) Magnus, pro L(ucio) Julio Caleno filio, Bormoni et Damonae, vot(um) sol(vit)*, ‘To Bormo and to Damona, Caius Julius Magnus, son of Eporedirix, for his son Lucius Julius Calenus, paid his vow off’.²⁰⁴² Bormo is a variant of the god name Borvo. The dedicator Caius Julius Magnus bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens and Latin names, while his father is a peregrine* with a Celtic name: Eporedirix is composed of *eporedo-*, *eporedia*, ‘horseman’, ‘cavalry’ and *rix*, ‘king’ and means ‘king of horsemen’.²⁰⁴³ The dedicator thanks the divine couple for accomplishing a vow he had previously made in the name of his son Lucius Julius Calenus, who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. Allmer draws attention to the fact that Eporedirix was the name of an Aedui chief at the time of the War of the Gauls.²⁰⁴⁴ As it was common to keep the name of one’s ancestors, it is likely that this inscription was dedicated by one of the descendants of the Aedui chief. Honoré Greppo adds that “the son of Magnus could be Julius Calenus, a

²⁰³⁷ Lacroix, 2007, p. 147 ; Bourgeois, 1991, p. 29 ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, pp. 78-79.

²⁰³⁸ Grenier, 1984, p. 292.

²⁰³⁹ Greppo, 1846, pp. 52-55 ; Bonnard, 1908, pp. 438-444 ; Grenier, 1960, pp. 443-445 ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, pp. 82-84.

²⁰⁴⁰ Courtépée, Claude, *Description générale et particulière du duché de Bourgogne*, L.N. Frantin, Dijon, t. 4, 1775-1881, p. 380.

²⁰⁴¹ CIL XIII, 2806 ; Greppo, 1846, pp. 55-56 ; RE, vol. 3, pp. 385-386 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 77-79, n°12 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 23, n°2 ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, p. 85 ; Musée Rolin, Autun, n° inv. 172, now M.L. 201.

²⁰⁴² CIL XIII, 2805 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 56 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 80-83, n°13 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 23, n°1 ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, p. 85.

²⁰⁴³ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 162-163, 254-255, 259-260 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 96.

²⁰⁴⁴ RE, vol. 3, p. 385.

tribune who, according to Tacitus, belonged by birth to the city of the Aedui, and who was in a legion which had followed the party of Vitellius.²⁰⁴⁵

A very damaged fragment was found in 1835 and embedded in the wall of the thermal establishment. The *Carte Archéologique de la Gaule, Saône-et-Loire*, proposes the following reconstitution: *Pr]aest(antissimis) sac[rum --- ba]silica u[etustate collaps(?) --- deo(?) Bo]rvoni et [Damonae]*.²⁰⁴⁶ A fourth fragment in white marble, now housed in the Musée Rolin, in Autun, could read: *[Praestanti]ssimis Nu[minibus] Deo Bor[voni et Damonae?]*, 'According to the divine higher wills, to the god Borvo and to Damona (?)'.²⁰⁴⁷ Finally, excavations carried out in 1912 on the site of the ancient Church of Saint-Martin, revealed important foundations dating from Gallo-Roman times, furniture, various objects and a fragment of inscription dedicated to Borvo and Damona. Archaeologists assume that the edifice was a temple erected in honour of the divine couple. The reading of the inscription is difficult and unsure: *[Borvoni et Da]monae [---]scent Bo[---]p sibi ab[-----] Sua do[rix-----]s[omnolen[tus---]rans*.²⁰⁴⁸ About five metres from the ancient church was unearthed a Roman well of twenty metres in depth, where different objects - such as an iron head of spear, fragments of a vase and a bucket - were discovered. It is likely that Borvo and Damona were worshipped in connection with that fountain.

c) Chassenay (Côte d'Or)

In 1896, an inscription, composed of dotted letters and engraved at the top of the belly of a golden bronze vase, was found forty-one-foot deep in a well at Chassenay, a village located near Aignay-le-Duc (Côte d'Or). It reads: *Aug(usto) sacr(um) deo Albio et Damonae Sext(us) Mart(ius) Cociliani f(ilius) ex jussu ejus [v(otum)] s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the god Albius and to Damona, Sextus Martius, son of Cocilianus, at his (the god's) order, willingly offers (this object) for accomplishing his vow'.²⁰⁴⁹ The dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens and Latin names, while his father is a peregrine* with a Latin name.

In this dedication, Damona is partnered with the god Albius, who is known by this single inscription: his character and functions are thus undetermined. Albius's name is derived from a Celtic root *alb-* signifying 'white', 'celestial'.²⁰⁵⁰ The significance of his name relates him to the indigenous healing god Vindonnus - associated with Apollo in various inscriptions from Essarois (Côte d'Or) - whose name comes from the Gaulish *vindo*, 'white' and *vindonos*, 'fair'.²⁰⁵¹ Another healing god with a Latin name, Candidus, mentioned with

²⁰⁴⁵ Greppo, 1846, pp. 56-57 ; Tacitus, *The Histories*, III, 35.

²⁰⁴⁶ CIL XIII, 2807 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 57 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 84-85, n°15 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 23, n°3 ; ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, p. 85

²⁰⁴⁷ CIL XIII, 2808 ; Chabouillet, 1880, pp. 83-84, n°14 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 23, n°4 ; CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, p. 85 ; Musée Rolin, Autun, n° inv. M.L. 99. The place of discovery of this inscription is unknown.

²⁰⁴⁸ CAG, 71.3, *Saône-et-Loire*, 1994, pp 84-85.

²⁰⁴⁹ CIL XIII, 2840 = CIL XIII, 11233 ; *RE*, vol. 3, p. 464, n°1198 and p. 435, n°1176 ; Vaillat, 1932, p. 27 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 27-28 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 145.

²⁰⁵⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 37-38 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 16, 210 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, p. 97 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 425, 231 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 27-28.

²⁰⁵¹ CIL XIII, 5644-5646 ; *RG* 3414, 3415 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 394 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 319-320. The Gaulish god *Vindonnus* and the mythical Irish hero *Fionn mac Cumhaill* are etymologically related. *Fionn mac Cumhaill*'s name is derived from Old Irish *find*,

Borvo in an inscription from Entrains-sur-Nohain (Nièvre),²⁰⁵² also has a name denoting brightness. As Vindonnus and Candidus are gods related to brightness and curative springs, it is probable that Albius's worship was attached to healing waters. This idea is supported by his association with Damona, the goddess presiding over salutary springs.

It might be possible that the waters of the well had some curative virtues or were regarded as sacred in ancient times.²⁰⁵³ This is highly likely, since, in addition to the inscribed bronze vase, many ancient objects were discovered in the well: various vases of different sizes, the bottom part of two small columns; several bronze dishes; Roman coins extending from Nero (1st c. AD) to Gratianus (4th c. AD),²⁰⁵⁴ a vase in bronze on which the signature of its bronzier appears;²⁰⁵⁵ a large heavy patera*, the handle of which is decorated with a ram's head; a statuette of a mother goddess wearing a heavy cloak and giving her breast to two nurslings; and pieces of a statue in marble, which has a snake coiled up around an arm, representing Hygia or Esculape.²⁰⁵⁶ In all likelihood, these objects come from a small temple, possibly erected in honour of the couple in the area of Chassenay. This remains nonetheless a hypothesis, since no archaeological evidence proves the existence of such a small place of devotion.

Damona and Albius may have been the deities presiding over the waters of this fountain or possibly over thermal waters in the area. The renowned thermal spring of Maizières, situated five kilometres from the village of Chassenay, might have been protected by the couple. A bronze statuette representing a character seated on a rock, as well as coins and potteries discovered on the site, prove that the spring was already known and used in Gallo-Roman times, but there is no evidence attesting to the worship of the couple on this site.²⁰⁵⁷

d) Alise-Sainte-Reine (Côte d'Or)

In Alise-Sainte-Reine, Damona is partnered with the god Moristasgus in an inscription discovered by Joël Le Gall in 1962 during excavations in the cemetery of Saint-Père situated on Mont-Auxois.²⁰⁵⁸ The dedication is engraved on the corner of a big cornice or on the pedestal of a statue: *Deo Apollini Moritasgo [et] Damonae P(ublius) Pontius Apollin[ar]is*, 'To the god Apollo Moristasgus and to Damona, Publius Pontis Apollinaris (had this monument erected)' (fig. 46).²⁰⁵⁹ The dedicator bears Latin names and is a Roman citizen.

Middle Irish *finn*, Modern Irish *fionn*, signifying 'fair', 'bright', 'white', similar to the Gaulish *vindos* 'bright', 'fair'. For more details about that etymology* and the hero, see Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 21-22, 24 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 238-249.

²⁰⁵² *CIL* XIII, 2901. A statue representing *Apollo* was also found in Entrains, see *RG* 2243.

²⁰⁵³ Lhote-Biro, 2004, vol. 1, p. 97.

²⁰⁵⁴ The Roman Emperor Lucius Domitius Claudius Nero reigned from 54 to 68 AD and Flavius Gratianus reigned from 375 to 383 AD.

²⁰⁵⁵ *RE*, vol. 3, pp. 435-436, n° 1177: *I(ulii) Ianuaris m(anu)*, i.e. 'by the hand of Julius Ianuaris'.

²⁰⁵⁶ *RE*, vol. 3, pp. 435, 464 ; Bourgeois, 1991, p. 120 ; Green, 1992a, pp. 75-76. This statue parallels the statue found in Alise-Sainte-Reine, representing a goddess associated with a snake. This snake might have been a symbol of curing through water.

²⁰⁵⁷ *RE*, vol. 3, p. 464 ; Grenier, 1984, p. 329 explains: "The thermal establishment is outside town, in the middle of a huge park crossed by the river Arroux (...). The spring of Maizières was already known and used in Gallo-Roman times, but no thermal buildings had been built before 1961."

²⁰⁵⁸ Le Gall, 1980, pp. 147-148.

²⁰⁵⁹ *AE* 1965, 181 ; Le Gall, 1980, p. 159.

Moritasgus is known from three other inscriptions discovered at a water sanctuary excavated at the eastern part of Mont-Auxois, above a cross called the 'Croix-Saint-Charles'.²⁰⁶⁰ Olmsted relates the first part of his name to a root **mori-* meaning 'sea' and the second part *tasgo-* to an Indo-European root **sāg-* signifying 'to tend toward', 'to seek'.²⁰⁶¹ According to him, Moritasgus would thus be 'the One approaching the Sea' or 'the Sea-Seeking One'. As for Delamarre, he suggests that his name is composed of Gaulish *mori*, 'sea' and *tasgos*, 'badger' and means 'Badger of the Sea'.²⁰⁶² The source sanctuary dedicated to Moritasgus was composed of a hexagonal temple, surrounded by a portico, where votive offerings, such as coins and wheels in bronze of different sizes, were discovered; two small square and hexagonal chapels; a basin in wood; a small swimming-pool; and important thermal buildings, consisting of two primitive rooms with heated and cold swimming-pools, two other rooms and a huge portico, which were erected on top of previous Gaulish installations.²⁰⁶³ The sacred waters were harnessed by a network of pipes supplying all the buildings of the sanctuary. The belief in the healing power of the local waters is attested by the numerous anatomic ex-votos* representing heads, legs, busts, breasts, fingers, male and female genital organs, eyes and swaddled children. The waters have no therapeutic properties today, but analyses carried out in 1899 revealed that they had medicinal virtues in ancient times.²⁰⁶⁴



Fig. 46: Dedication to Apollo Moritasgus and Damona discovered on Mont-Auxois, Alésia (Côte d'Or). In the Musée d'Alise-Sainte-Reine. Le Gall, 1980, p. 159.

In the small 2nd-century AD square chapel of Moristasgus's sanctuary, the head and the left hand of a female statue in white limestone were discovered in a central square basin, which was supplied by a spring.²⁰⁶⁵ The head is framed by abundant and wavy hair and is retained by a headband made of ears of corn, symbolizing fertility, while the hand

²⁰⁶⁰ CIL XIII, 2873, 11240, 11241.

²⁰⁶¹ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 399-400.

²⁰⁶² Delamarre, 2003, pp. 228, 291-292 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 202.

²⁰⁶³ Le Gall, 1980, pp. 126-145, 155-156.

²⁰⁶⁴ Le Gall, 1980, pp. 152-155.

²⁰⁶⁵ Troisgros, 1975, pp. 42-45 ; Le Gall, 1980, pp. 158-160.

holds a snake, a possible emblem of healing through water.²⁰⁶⁶ Originally, the statue was polychromous: the body was painted in white, the hair in red, the diadem in green and the ears of corn in yellow. In view of the inscription to Moritasgus and Damona, Le Gall assumes that the statue is a figuration of Damona and that the chapel was dedicated to her. No archaeological evidence has been uncovered so far to support this theory: the inscription was not discovered in the chapel and the statue is anepigraphic.

e) Saintes (Charente)

In the south-west of Gaul, Damona is venerated on her own in an inscription, engraved on a triangular slab broken in three pieces, found in 1918 on a hill at a place known as 'La Garenne', in Saintes (Charente). The dedication is the following: *Jullia Malla Malluronis fil(ia) Numinibus Augustorum et deae Damonae Matuberginni ob memoriam Sulpiciae Silvanae, filiae suae, de suo posuit*, 'To the divine powers of Augustus and to the goddess Damona Matuberginnis, Julia Malla, daughter of Malluro, had (this monument) erected in the memory of her daughter Sulpicia Silvana' (fig. 47).²⁰⁶⁷ Various objects from Gallo-Roman times, such as fragments of vases, roughly-hewed stones and a millstone, were discovered in the area. This could indicate that a small temple or shrine was erected on the hill, but this remains unconfirmed.



Fig. 47: Inscription to Damona Matuberginnis discovered in Saintes (Charente). In the Musée de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. ILA-S 108.

The dedicator's father is a peregrine* with a Celtic name, while Julia Malla bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. Her first name Julia is Latin, but her second name Malla is clearly Celtic. It is based on the same theme *mallos*, probably meaning 'slow', 'lazy', as her father's name Malluro.²⁰⁶⁸ Julia Malla prays to the goddess Damona for the memory of her daughter Sulpicia Silvana, who has two Latin names. She might have had a monument erected in honour of Damona, such as an altar or a temple, but no archaeological evidence has been discovered in the area. This inscription is interesting, for it illustrates the complete Romanization of a Celtic family in three generations.

²⁰⁶⁶ This statue can be connected to the statue of *Sirona*, found in the sanctuary of Hoscheid in Trier. *Sirona* is indeed represented wearing a heavy draped dress and holding a patera* in her left hand, while a snake is entangled around her right forearm.

²⁰⁶⁷ *AE* 1919, 49 ; *ILTG* 155 ; *ILA-S* 108, pp. 371-373 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 27.

²⁰⁶⁸ Delamarre, 2003, pp 213-214 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 125, 226.

Damona is given the epithet *Matuberginnis*, the significance of which can be interpreted in various ways. In the 19th c., Antoine Héron de Villefosse suggested that it was a localizing epithet designating the place where the goddess Damona was honoured.²⁰⁶⁹ *Matuberginis* may be composed of Celtic *matu-*, 'bear' and of Celtic *bergo -*, 'mountain' or 'hill'. Accordingly, the place of devotion to Damona would have been called 'the Hill of the Bear'. As explained in Chapter 2, *matu-* can also signify 'good' or 'favourable', for it was used as a circumlocution or a flattering epithet not to offend a potentially dangerous animal.²⁰⁷⁰ Olmsted thus proposes that *Matuberginnis* is a descriptive epithet qualifying the goddess as 'the Good or Favourable High One'.²⁰⁷¹ This root is found in other epithets of deities, such as *Diana Mattiaca* and *Apollo Matuacus* or *Matuicus*.²⁰⁷²

As Damona is attached to curative springs in the centre of Gaul, it is likely that she was related to a spring or a fountain in the area. Jules Lhomme, who investigated the place in 1918, did not find any springs, but he did discover a well supplied with a subterranean spring.²⁰⁷³ No archaeological discoveries yet provide evidence of a cult rendered to Damona at this well.

f) Conclusion

From all of this, it follows that Damona was a goddess venerated in relation to curative springs. She is indeed honoured in several famous spa towns, such as Bourbonnes-les-Bains and Bourbon-Lancy, the hot springs of which were already used in antiquity. In Chassenay and Alise-Sainte-Reine, she presided over waters which were held in high respect and probably worshipped for their medicinal virtues. Moreover, she is coupled with Gaulish gods of salutary waters, such as Borvo or Bormo, the renowned god of hot waters; Moritasgus, who personified the mineral waters of Mont-Auxois; and Albius, who might have been a protector of healing waters too. Being associated with different partners, Damona is a polyandrous* goddess. The two inscriptions from Bourbonnes-les-Bains and Saintes prove the independence of her cult: she was not the mere doublet of a healing god.

The sixteen inscriptions dedicated to her attest to the importance of her cult, seemingly concentrated in the north-east and centre of Gaul. The dedication from Saintes, situated in the south-west of Gaul, shows, however, that Damona was also worshipped elsewhere.

The archaeological context of water sanctuaries is Gallo-Roman, but Damona's name is Celtic, which proves that her cult is pre-Roman. The bovine shape illustrated by her name is a proof of its antiquity, since the cow is the animal metaphor of the river-goddesses in ancient Sanskrit literature.²⁰⁷⁴

From the study of the inscriptions, it emerges that Damona was often honoured by women. Out of fourteen inscriptions, seven are offered by women, such as Sextilia (n°3), Verrea Verilla (n°4), Maturia Rustica (n°6), Julia Tiberia Corisilla (n°7), Aemilia (n°8), Claudia Mossia (n°9) in Bourbonnes-les-Bains and Julia Malla in Saintes. This shows that women

²⁰⁶⁹ Héron de Villefosse, 1918, pp. 479-484.

²⁰⁷⁰ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 73, 220.

²⁰⁷¹ Olmsted, 1994, p. 356 does not refer to the relevant inscription: he mentions the inscription found in Chassenay instead of this one.

²⁰⁷² See Chapters 2 and 3 for *Diana Mattiaca* ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 356, 389-390 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 220.

²⁰⁷³ Héron de Villefosse, 1918, pp. 479-484.

²⁰⁷⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 1994, pp. 17-18 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 112 and notes 38, 44 and 45, p. 234 for references.

played an important part in local cults and devotions. Eleven inscriptions are offered by Roman citizens who intentionally specify that they are of Celtic origin. Some of them, such as Caius Iulianus Romanus (n°1), Caius Daminius Ferox (n°2), Verrea Verillia (n°4) and Julia Tiberia Corisilla (n°7), declare that they are from the tribe of the Lingones. Others, such as Verrea Verilla (n°4), Claudia Mossia (n°9) or Julia Malla (Saintes), kept Celtic names despite their Romanization. Some dedicators have fathers who are peregrines bearing Celtic names, such as Caius Julius Magnus, son of Eporedirix, in Bourbon-Lancy. This provides evidence of their indigenous origin. Finally, some are in the process of Romanization, such as Fronto (n°5), Aemilia (n°8) and Sextilia (n°3), for they bear a Latin name but do not have the Roman citizenship. Therefore, it appears that Damona was mainly honoured by Romanized people of Celtic origin, who were still profoundly attached to their ancient cults and beliefs after the Roman conquest.

2) *Bormana* ('the Bubbling One')

The goddess *Bormana* is known from two inscriptions discovered in Aix-en-Diois (Die), where she is partnered with *Bormanus*, and in Saint-Vulbaz (Ain), where she is honoured on her own. *Bormana* is obviously the feminine form of *Bormanus*, which is a variant of *Bormo/Borvo*. Other divine couples bearing the same name are known, such as *Visucius* and *Visucia*. *Bormana* can be therefore understood as a doublet of the healing god. In view of her name, which derives from Gaulish *borvo* or *bormo*, 'hot spring' and means 'the Bubbler' or 'the Boiler', *Bormana* is the literal personification of hot springs.²⁰⁷⁵

The inscription found in Saint-Vulbaz, anciently Saint-Bourbaz, situated near Belley (Ain), is engraved on two fragments of an altar, which are respectively housed in the rural museum of the village and embedded in the wall of a mill at nearby Convers.²⁰⁷⁶ The exact place of discovery of this stone is unknown. It was unearthed somewhere near the source of the stream La Bormane, the name of which is reminiscent of the cult of *Bormana*. The name of the goddess also survived in the ancient name of the locality *Saint-Bourbaz*, which derives from a Gaulish **bor□ā* possibly designating a 'muddy spring'.²⁰⁷⁷ The inscription reads: *Bormonae Aug(ustae) sacr(um) Caprii A[t]ratinus, [...] S]abinian[us] d(e) s(uo) d(onaverunt)*, 'Sacred to Augustus and to *Bormana*, *Caprius Atratinus* [...] (and) *Caprius Sabinianus* offered (this monument) at their own expense'.²⁰⁷⁸ The inscription is offered by two dedicators who bear Latin names and are Roman citizens, for they bear the *duo nomina*. The waters of Saint-Vulbaz are profuse, clear and fresh but are not known to have thermal virtues.²⁰⁷⁹ The Gallo-Roman remains discovered in the area tend to prove that the waters were known and used in Gallo-Roman times. These include a genius holding a cornucopia*, statues of *Diana*, *Minerva* and *Asklepius* - the Greco-Roman god of medicine - and many coins dating from the beginning of the Empire to *Julien l'Apostat* (1st c. BC-4th c. AD).²⁰⁸⁰

²⁰⁷⁵ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 82-83, 425 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 29, 37, 192 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 354-355, 388 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 149.

²⁰⁷⁶ Lhote-Ribot, 2004, vol. 2, p. 138.

²⁰⁷⁷ The French word *bourbe*, 'mud' is derived from this word. Delamarre, 2003, p. 83 ; Thévenot, 1968, p. 103 ; Rémy & Buisson, 1992, p. 241 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 149.

²⁰⁷⁸ *CIL* XIII, 2452 ; *RE*, vol. 2, p. 284 & vol. 3, pp. 383-384 ; Vallentin, 1879-1880, pp. 6-7 ; Troisgros, 1975, pp. 25-26 ; *CAG*, 01, *L'Ain*, 1990, p. 95.

²⁰⁷⁹ Bonnard, 1908, p. 190, note 2 ; Bourgeois, 1991, p. 30.

²⁰⁸⁰ Rodet, 1908, pp. 24-25.

The second inscription, engraved on a small altar, was discovered at the beginning of the 19th c. at a place known as 'L'Oche', in the cemetery of Aix-en-Diois (Drôme), sixty metres from a place known as 'Fontanelles', where a mineral spring gushes forth.²⁰⁸¹ Remains of a Gallo-Roman thermal establishment were unearthed in the area. Aix-en-Diois is besides a village which is famous for its saline waters. The inscription is the following: *Borman[o] et Borman[ae]. P(ublius) Saprin[ius] Eusebes votum solvit libens merito*, 'To Bormanus and to Bormana, Publius Saprinus Eusebes paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²⁰⁸² The dedicator, who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, thanks the divine couple for answering a vow he had previously made. It is now housed in the Musée Municipal de Die. It is clear that Bormanus and Bormana were revered in relation to the saline waters of Aix-en-Diois, which were believed to relieve pilgrims from their pains.

3) *Stanna / Sianna (?)*

The goddess Stanna is attested by an inscription composed of five fragments discovered in the buildings of the 'Vieilles Casernes' in Périgueux (Dordogne), in the territory of the Petrocorii, where she is partnered with the god Telo (fig. 48). Thanks to the comparison of the various fragments, the suggested restoration is certain, except for the end of the first line and the beginning of the second line: *Deo Telo et deae Stannae, solo A(uli) Pomp(eii) Antiqui, Per...ius, Silvani fil(ius) Bassus, c(urator) c(ivium) r(omanorum), consaeptum omne circa templum et basilicas duas, cum ceteris ornamentis ac munimentis, dat*, 'To the god Telo and to the goddess Stanna, Per[...]ius Bassus, son of Silvanus, curator of the Roman citizens, offers, at his own expense, this entire wall erected around their temple on the land of Aulus Pompeius Antiquus, and these two basilicas with the other embellishments and accessories'.²⁰⁸³ This inscription is of great interest, for it mentions the existence of a temple dedicated to Telo and Stanna. The dedicator Per[...]ius Bassus is a Roman citizen and holds official functions. He is a curator, which means he had been appointed by the emperor to manage and supervise the finances of the city. He offers a wall, two basilicas, ornaments and accessories extending and embellishing the sanctuary, which is built on the property of the Roman citizen Aulus Pompeius Antiquus. This wall and basilicas may correspond to the Gallo-Roman remains excavated in the surroundings of the 'Tour de Vésone', which was the temple dedicated to Tutella Vesunna, the eponymous goddess of the city (see Chapter 3).²⁰⁸⁴ The re-use* of the stone does not allow us to identify the origin of the inscription. The archaeological context and the possible functions of Telo and Stanna in Périgueux remain thus undeterminable.

The god Telo is known from another inscription discovered in Périgueux.²⁰⁸⁵ Telo and Stanna seem thus to be topical* or local deities. Telo's name nowadays survives in the name of a village situated 3 kms from Périgueux, called Le Toulon, which takes its name from a nearby spring gushing forth from an abyss. This spring was anciently named 'Fontaine de

²⁰⁸¹ Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 1, p. 97

²⁰⁸² *CIL* XII, 1561 ; Vallentin, 1879-1880, p. 48 ; *RE*, vol. 3, p. 382 & vol. 2, p. 284 ; Troisgros, 1975, p. 26 ; *CAG*, XI, *Drôme*, 1957, p. 71, n°78.

²⁰⁸³ *ILA-P* 19, 20, 21 ; *CIL* XIII, 950 = *RE*, vol. 1, pp. 40-41, n°56 = Espérandieu, 1893, n° 20, tab III, 2 ; *CIL* XIII, 951, = *RE*, vol. 1, p. 42, n°59 = Espérandieu, 1893, n°18, tab. IV, 1 ; *CIL* XIII, 952 = *RE*, vol. 1, p. 41, n°57 = Espérandieu, 1893, n°17, tab. IV, 2 ; *CIL* XIII, 953 = *RE*, vol. 1, p. 41, n° 58, Espérandieu, 1893, n°19 ; *CIL* XIII, 954 = Espérandieu, 1893, n°21.

²⁰⁸⁴ *ILA-P*, pp. 99-100.

²⁰⁸⁵ *CIL* XIII, 948: *Numinibus Augustorum et deo Telonij*.

Toulon' and is known today as 'Fontaine du Cluseau' or 'Fontaine de l'Abîme'.²⁰⁸⁶ Telo must have been originally a deity presiding over water. This is probably the reason why rivers and towns situated near a stream or a spring bear that name. According to Paul Aebischer, rivers and places named Toulon or Touron are derived from the same root as the name of the god. Those names are quite common in the toponymy* of the south of Gaul, from the Var to the Landes and from the Aude to the Périgord, where they are particularly numerous. In Dordogne, thirty-one springs, streams and places called Touron are recorded, such as the spring of the Touron, which gushes forth from a rock near the village of Font-Roquesuch, the spring of the Touron, in Saint-Sulpice-d'Eymet, and the fountain of the Touron in the village of Rouffignac.²⁰⁸⁷ In the area of Le Thonolet and Martigues (Bouches-du-Rhône), Bargème and Callians (Var) and Grasse (Alpes-Maritimes), many rivers, fountains and springs are called Touloun, Touroun, Touron, e.g. the spring of Thoulon in Martigues; the stream Toulon, a tributary of the River Touloubre in the département of the Bouches-du-Rhône; and the stream Toulou, a tributary of the River Braune in the département of Gard.²⁰⁸⁸

²⁰⁸⁶ *RE*, vol. 1, p. 14 ; Espérandieu, 1893, p. 42 ; Anwyl, 1906a, p. 43.

²⁰⁸⁷ De Gourgues, 1873, p. 326.

²⁰⁸⁸ Aebischer, 1930, pp. 430-432 ; Cléber, 1970, p. 253.

partner, Stanna does not survive in the local idiom.²⁰⁹² Her association with the water-god Telo in Périgueux, however, would indicate that she was a spring-goddess.

As regards the dedication engraved on an altar in white marble discovered in 1824 in the middle of the ruins of the Gallo-Roman baths excavated on the Mont-Dore (Puy-de-Dôme), in the territory of the Arverni, it is difficult to determine whether this stone is dedicated to the god Siannus or to the goddess Sianna, for the end of the name is missing. The inscription reads: *Julia Severa Siann[ae] / Siann[us] v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Sianna or Siannus, Julia Severa paid her vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 49).²⁰⁹³ The dedicator is a woman, who bears Latin names and the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. She thanks the deity for accomplishing a vow she had previously made. Because the inscription begins with the name of the dedicator, which was particularly in use in the 1st c. AD, the inscription must date from this time.²⁰⁹⁴ Most of the scholars, such as Jullian, Renel, Holder, Jüfer, Olmsted and Delamarre, are inclined to think that this inscription is dedicated to Siannus, because this god is known from another inscription discovered in Lyons (Rhône),²⁰⁹⁵ where he is linked to Apollo, who replaced many native healing water gods in Gallo-Roman times.²⁰⁹⁶ As the inscription was unearthed on the site of an ancient thermal establishment, it is likely that the healing god Siannus presided over the salutary springs of Mont-Dore. And yet, Vaillat and Rémy point out that the inscription was certainly dedicated to a goddess, since the sculpture of a draped and standing woman, holding an unidentified object in her left hand, was originally represented in bas-relief* right above the inscription.²⁰⁹⁷ Sianna may in fact be a variant of Stanna and refer to the same goddess, for the letters I and T, being very similar in shape, can be easily confused.²⁰⁹⁸ Before the last inscription was discovered, the goddess Bricta/Brixta in Luxeuil was for instance miscalled Bricia or Brixia, because the T was misread as an I.²⁰⁹⁹ Moreover, Périgueux is situated about 200 kms from Mont-Dore, which is not far away. Contrary to what Vaillat maintains, it is thus highly likely that Sianna and Stanna are the very same divine figure.²¹⁰⁰

²⁰⁹² Espérandieu, 1893, p. 42.

²⁰⁹³ *CIL* XIII, 1536 ; *RE*, vol. 1, p. 41, n° 56a ; *ILA-A* 43 ; *CAG*, 63.2, *Le Puy-de-Dôme*, 1994, p. 199 ; Durand-Lefebvre, 1926, pp. 37-38, 53-55, 59.

²⁰⁹⁴ *ILA-A* 43, p. 116.

²⁰⁹⁵ *CIL* XIII, 1669: Apollini Sianno stipe ann(ua).

²⁰⁹⁶ Jullian, *HG*, vol. 6, p. 40, n°2 ; Renel, 1906, p. 173 ; Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 1537 ; *RDG*, p. 62 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 393 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 168

²⁰⁹⁷ Vaillat, 1932, p. 55 ; *ILA-A* 43.

²⁰⁹⁸ *RE*, vol. 1, p. 41, n° 56a.

²⁰⁹⁹ See Bricta/Brixta in this chapter.

²¹⁰⁰ Vaillat, 1932, p. 55.

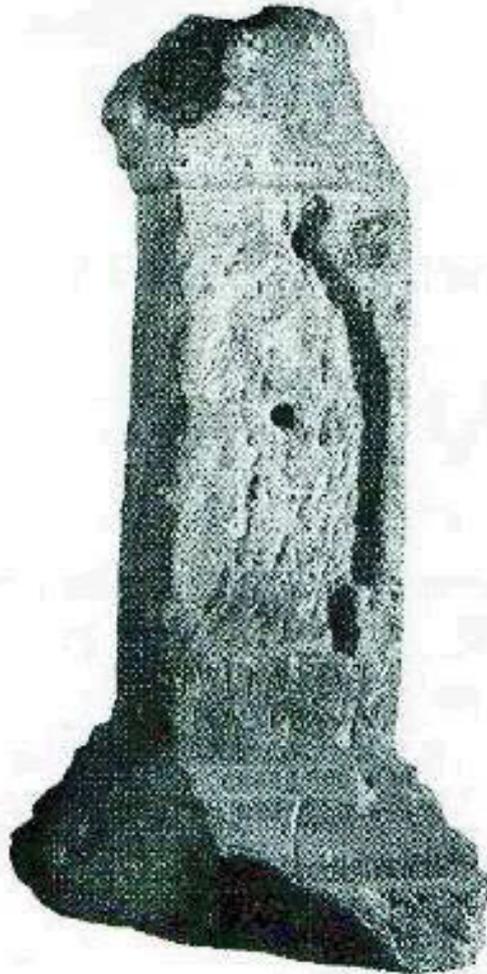


Fig. 49: Inscription to Sianna discovered on Mont-Dore (Puy-de-Dôme). The emplacement of an ancient statue representing a standing draped woman (the goddess?) is still visible. In the Musée Bargoin at Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme) (N° inv. 64.321.1). ILA-A, n°43, p. 116.

Sianna might have been the goddess protecting the waters of Mont-Dore, which were known and used in Gallo-Roman times, as proven by excavations carried out on the site in 1825. When Michel Bertrand started to build a thermal establishment in 1817, he discovered the remains of huge Gallo-Roman baths, preceded by a yard surrounded by columns and composed of two spacious galleries and rooms, where the baths and swimming-pools were supplied with the waters of several hot springs, harnessed by lead pipes.²¹⁰¹ A rectangular temple with six columns, known as a 'Pantheon', composed of a first portico giving access to a cella* followed by a smaller portico, was also discovered.²¹⁰² The remains of decorations

²¹⁰¹ Bertrand, 1819 ; Greppo, 1846, pp. 107-108 ; CAG, 63.2, *Le Puy-de-Dôme*, 1994, pp. 192-199.

²¹⁰² Durand-Lefebvre, 1926, pp. 26-31 ; Lhote-Birot, 2004, vol. 1, p. 96.

and ornaments testify that it was a religious edifice, very certainly erected in honour of the deity of the place.

The worship of the salutary waters of Mont-Dore may go back to Celtic times, for a very well-preserved quadrangular swimming-pool (4m long and 1.50m deep), made of fir-tree trunks - the bark of which had been stripped off - was excavated under the Gallo-Roman building and a thick layer of hard rock.²¹⁰³ The archaeologists also found a fir-tree trunk (15cm thick and 5m long), hollowed out in the middle, harnessing the thermo-mineral spring called 'Boyer' to the wooden swimming-pool, which could contain up to fifteen people.²¹⁰⁴ No other archaeological data have provided evidence of the cult of the goddess Sianna, apart from a lost sculpted socle which had a woman with a vestal costume surrounded by seven genii. Durand-Lefebvre suggests that the woman could be the representation of the main spring, and the seven genii the embodiment of the seven secondary springs.²¹⁰⁵ The genii are indeed often associated with mother goddesses and water on iconographical devices, but this theory remains conjectural.²¹⁰⁶

On account of her association with the god Telo, who was certainly attached to water, and the inscription to Sianna discovered in the Gallo-Roman thermal building of Mont-Dore, it can be suggested that Stanna/Sianna was a goddess presiding over salutary waters in south-central Gaul in ancient times.

4) *Bricta* ('the One who Exercises Magic?')

The goddess *Bricta* or *Brixta*²¹⁰⁷ is honoured with the god *Luxovius* in three inscriptions from Luxeuil-les-Bains (Haute-Saône), anciently called *Luxovium*, where warm springs (about 24°), heavily mineralised hot springs (40°), and ferruginous waters emanate.²¹⁰⁸ As excavations carried out on the site prove, the beneficial properties of the waters of Luxeuil-les-Bains were already known and exploited in Gallo-Roman times. They are nowadays renowned for the treatment of venous and gynaecological problems.²¹⁰⁹

a) Etymology

The god *Luxovius* gave his name to the city of Luxeuil and, with *Bricta*, presided over its curative springs.²¹¹⁰ His name is said to derive from **leuk* meaning 'light' - probably forming the name of the Irish god *Lugh* as well; hence his possible association with both light and water symbolism.²¹¹¹ As regards the name of the goddess, it is important to point out that its

²¹⁰³ Tardieu, 1911, pp. 1-6 ; Bertrand, 1844, pp. 265-276 ; Vaillat, 1932, pp. 54-55 ; Bourgeois, 1992, p. 261 ; CAG, 63.2, *Le Puy-de-Dôme*, 1994, p. 197.

²¹⁰⁴ Tardieu, 1911, p. 4 ; Rodet, 1908, p. 50 ; Jullian, *HG*, vol. 6, p. 403.

²¹⁰⁵ Durand-Lefebvre, 1926, p. 59.

²¹⁰⁶ Green, 1992a, pp. 104-105.

²¹⁰⁷ *Bricta/Brixta* is not to be confused with the city *Brixia*, in Brescia (Italy), mentioned in an inscription from Brescia, *CIL V*, 4202: [*Genio col.] Brix[ae et] Bergimo sacr[um] Alpi[nus]*.

²¹⁰⁸ Richard, 1991, p. 9.

²¹⁰⁹ CAG, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, p. 274 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 84.

²¹¹⁰ Bonnard, 1908, p. 97 ; Lerat, 1950, pp. 207-209 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 438.

²¹¹¹ Evans, 1967, pp. 358-359 ; Sterckx, 1996, pp. 13-15, 56 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 85.

correct spelling is *Bricta* or *Brixta*, and not *Brixia* or *Bricia*: the 18th-century archaeologists misread the T as an I.²¹¹² Pierre Wullemier explains that the alternation between *ct* and *xt* in *Bricta* or *Brixta* is consonant with the Gaulish language, for those groups of letters were phonetically identical.²¹¹³ Similarly, the names *Divixta* and *Divicta* are the same.²¹¹⁴ The suffix – *ta*, found in other goddess names, such as *Nantosuelta*, *Rosmerta* and *Segeta*, indicates *Bricta* is a noun of action.

Holder sees a connection between *Bricta*/*Brixta* and the name of the River Breuchin, which waters Luxeuil, for it is called *Brusca* or *Brisca* in the *Life of Saint Columbanus*.²¹¹⁵ The River Breuchin gave its name to two villages, situated on its banks: *Breuches* and *Breuchotte*, which are respectively situated four and eight kilometres from Luxeuil. *Bricta* might thus have been originally the personification of the River Breuchin and have been later attached to the salutary waters of Luxeuil.²¹¹⁶

As regards the significance of her name, Olmsted suggests that it derives from the IE root **bhrēk-* meaning ‘to shine’; hence *Bricta*, ‘the Shining One’,²¹¹⁷ but the etymology* advanced by Lambert, Delamarre and Leurat is far more convincing.²¹¹⁸ According to them, *Brixta*/*Bricta* is to be related to the Gaulish word *brixtom*/*brictom* or *brixta* signifying ‘magic’, ‘enchantment’, ‘charm’ or ‘spell’. The word *brixta* appears on line 3 of a twelve-line magical formula addressed to the god *Maponos*, inscribed on a lead tablet discovered in 1971 at a place known as the ‘Sources des Roches’ in Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme): *brixtia andiron*, that is ‘by the magic power of the infernal (deities)’.²¹¹⁹ It also repeatedly appears in the forms *brictom* and *brictas* in a magical text engraved on the two faces of a lead tablet called ‘Plomb du Larzac’, discovered in 1983 on the necropolis of Hodpitalet-du-Larzac (Aveyron), e.g. on face 1a, line 1: *in sinde se bnanom brictom*, i.e. ‘the magic of the women’, and line 9: *andernados brictom*, i.e. ‘the magic of the underworld’.²¹²⁰ Gaulish *brixta* must be cognate with the Old Irish *bricht*, ‘bewitchment’, Middle Welsh *lled-frith*, ‘charm’ and Old Breton *brith*, ‘magic’, all derived from an old IE theme **bhregh-* meaning ‘to declare ceremoniously’.²¹²¹ As *Bricta* ends with a suffix of action, **bhrgh-tá > *briktá > brixotá* would denote ‘magical activity’ and *Bricta* might be ‘the woman who exercises magic’, that is the ‘magician’ or the ‘witch’.²¹²²

b) Inscriptions

²¹¹² All the archaeologists misread the name of the goddess until the discovery of the third inscription in 1938. It was Lantier, 1943, p. 197 and Lerat, 1950, pp. 207-213 who restored the correct name of the goddess.

²¹¹³ *ILTG* 404 ; Dottin, 1920, p. 64.

²¹¹⁴ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 87.

²¹¹⁵ Holder, *ACS*, vol. 1, p. 616; Jonas de Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, Book IX.

²¹¹⁶ Toutain, 1920, p. 303 ; Delacroix, 1867, p. 74.

²¹¹⁷ Olmsted, 1994, p. 365.

²¹¹⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 90 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 154 ; Leurat, 1950, p. 213, note 1.

²¹¹⁹ Lambert, 1995, pp. 150-159 for a study of the lead tablet from Chamalières, and pp. 154-155 for a translation of the third line.

²¹²⁰ Lambert, 1995, pp. 160-172. See chapter 1 for more details.

²¹²¹ Lambert, 1995, p. 154 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 90.

²¹²² Lambert, 1995, pp. 57, 154 ; Leurat, 1950, p. 213, note 1.

Until the end of the 18th c., Luxovius and Bricta were known only by a lost inscription, reproduced in an 8th - or 9th -century manuscript of the Abbey of Luxeuil, entitled *Homilia SS. Patrum in Evangelia quattuor*.²¹²³ This inscription was discovered again together with a second dedication, coins and potteries, during excavations carried out in 1777 around the present-day yard of the thermal establishment. The stone was not linked at once to the inscription mentioned in the manuscript, which is why they used to be understood as two different inscriptions. The now lost dedication, probably dating from the 3rd c. AD, reads: *Luxovio et Brixtae C(aius) Jul(ius) Firmanius v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Luxovius and Brixta, Caius Julius Firmanius paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²¹²⁴ The dedicator is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *tria nomina*. The votive formula *v.s.l.m.* indicates he is grateful to the divine couple for granting his vow.

The second inscription, now housed in the 'Château de Filain', is the following: *[Lus]soio et Brictae, Divixtius Constans, v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Luxovius and to Bricta, Divixtius Constans paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 50).²¹²⁵ The dedicator bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens, but his gentilice* Divixtius is a typical Celtic name, based on *divic-*, 'to avenge'.²¹²⁶ In keeping a Celtic name, the dedicator shows that, despite his Romanization, he remains attached to his indigenous origins. In this inscription, the name of the god is spelt Lussoius instead of Luxovius, which is not surprising, as the letters x and ss were interchangeable in the Roman epigraphy.²¹²⁷

²¹²³ Delacroix, 1857, p. 385 & 1867, p. 72 ; Lerat, 1950, pp. 208-209. Luxovius and Bricta are mentioned on page 641 of the manuscript, which was first kept in the Library of the Benedictines of Luxeuil and was later sold to Britain by the famous 'Libri Carucci dalla Sommaia', the general inspector of the French National Libraries. This manuscript is called a 'lectionnaire', i.e. a book including Latin texts the chorus of which must be read or sung, sometimes enriched with miniatures, such as the one from Luxeuil. In 1950, Lucien Lerat had obtained a microfilm of the folio which allowed him to verify the text of the *CIL*.

²¹²⁴ *CIL* XIII, 5426 ; Desjardin, 1880, p. 151 ; *RE*, vol. 4, p. 27, n°1296 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 123, note 2 ; Lerat, 1950, pp. 208-209 ; *CAG*, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, p. 285.

²¹²⁵ *CIL* XIII, 5425 ; Desjardin, 1880, p. 3 ; Delacroix, 1857, p. 385 & 1867, p. 74 ; *ILTG* 403 ; *RE*, vol. 4, p. 26, n°1296 ; Greppo, 1846, p. 126 ; Richard, 1991, p. 50 ; *CAG*, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, p. 285.

²¹²⁶ Lerat, 1950, pp. 209-210 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 145 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 87, 220.

²¹²⁷ Dottin, 1920, p. 63.

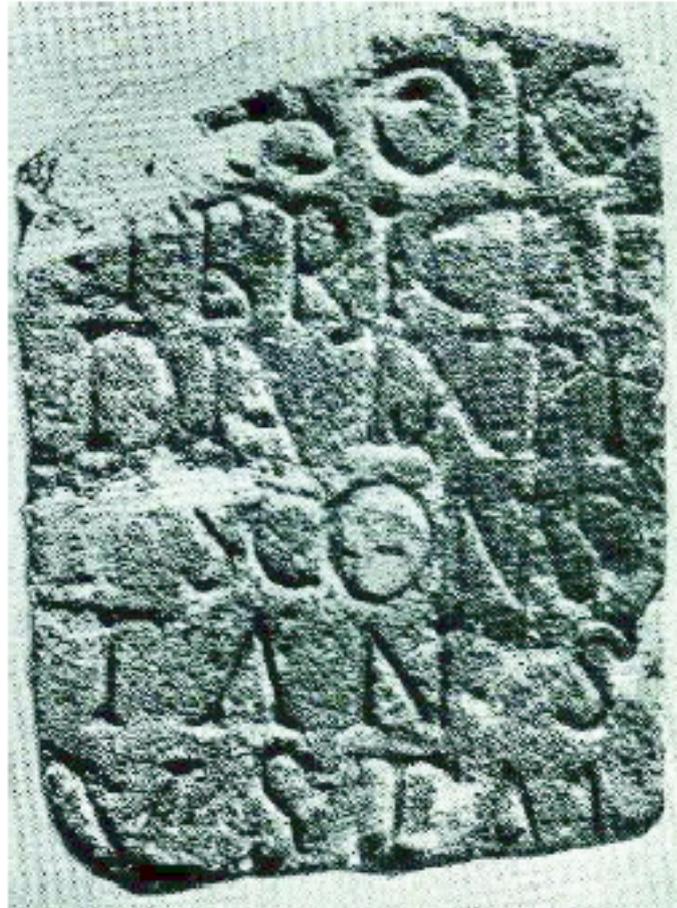


Fig. 50: Inscription to Lussoius and Bricta discovered around the present-day yard of the thermal establishment of Luxeuil. Lerat, 1950, plate XVIII, fig. b.

The last stone inscription, probably dating to the 1st c. AD, composed of four fragments, was fortuitously found in 1938 during earthworks undertaken to the west of the thermal establishment, where it can be seen nowadays. It reads: *Brixtae Firmanus [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)] m(erito)*, 'To Brixta, Firmanus paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 51).²¹²⁸ The dedicator Firmanus is certainly the same person who dedicated the first inscription. He may thus have been a pilgrim returning to the water sanctuary at Luxovium.

²¹²⁸ AE 1939, 48 ; AE 1951, 231 ; *ILTG* 404 ; Fromols, 1938, pp. 176-177 & 1939, p. 21 ; Lerat, 1950, pp. 210-211.



Fig. 51: Dedication to Brixia offered by Firmanus discovered in the thermal establishment of Luxeuil. Lerat, 1950, plate XVIII.

It should be pointed out that the inscription mentioning a temple erected in honour of the goddess Brixia in the reign of Caesar Augustus and the consulate of Tiberius and Cneius Calpurnius Pison, found in 1781 near the Roman baths, is an 'inscription falsae', that is a fake inscription made by a forger: *Divæ auxiliari Brixiae, regnante Cæsare Augusto, consulibus Tiberio et Pisone dedicatum templum.*²¹²⁹ It was discovered with a statue of a 'Cavalier à l'anguipède' type, representing a Gaulish Jupiter holding a cart-wheel in his left hand and riding a horse trampling on a human head.²¹³⁰ The meaning of this representation is still obscure, but it definitively has a connection to the worship of water and the sun.²¹³¹

c) Thermal baths and Votive offerings

The ancient name of Luxeuil-les-Bains is neither mentioned in the Classical texts nor in the 4th-century *Carte de Peutinger*, but in *The Life of Saint Columbanus*, written in the 7th c. by the Italian monk Jonas de Bobbio who describes the foundation of the monastery of Luxeuil (Luxovium) by Saint Colombanus around 590.²¹³² He refers briefly to the worship of the hot springs by the local pagan people, who offered ex-votos in stone to the deities of the place and performed rites and ceremonies in the nearby wood:

²¹²⁹ CIL XIII, 1038 ; Delacroix, 1867, p. 73 ; Desjardins, 1880, pp. 9-12 ; CAG, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, pp. 284-285. Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus (63 BC-14 AD) was Roman Emperor after Julius Caesar. Tiberius Julius Caesar (42 BC-37 AD), the son of Augustus's second wife Livie, was Roman Emperor from 14 AD to 37 AD and Cneius Calpurnius Pison was the governor of Syria under Tiberius.

²¹³⁰ RG 5357 ; Espérandieu, 1917, pp. 72-86 ; Mowat, 1882, pp. 348-354 ; Roussel, 1924, pp. 206-210 ; CAG, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, p. 286.

²¹³¹ Lambrechts, 1942, p. 419.

²¹³² Murray, 1998, pp. 99-120. Saint Columbanus (c. 543, Leinster, Ireland - 615, Bobbio, Italy) is one of the greatest missionaries who initiated a revival of monastic and lay spirituality on the Continent. Educated in the monastery of Bangor (Co. Down), he left Ireland for France in about 590 with twelve monks and established himself in the Vosges Mountains at Annegray (Haute-Saône). He built the nearby monasteries of Luxovium (c. 590-595) and of Fontaines for his disciples. He was unpopular among the clergy and was indicted before a synod of French bishops in 603 for keeping Easter according to the Celtic usage. A powerful conspiracy was organized against him at the court of King Theodoric II and he was forcibly removed from his monastery in Luxovium in 610. He went then to Switzerland with other monks, where he preached to the Alemanni, a pagan Germanic people. Compelled to leave, he went to Italy and founded the monastery of Bobbio in the Appenines, where he was buried around 612-614. His influence became widespread, and numerous miracles were attributed to him. His writings include poems, letters, sermons, a rule and a penitential.

Cum iam multorum monachorum societate densaretur, coepit cogitare, ut potioris loci in eodem heremo quereret, quo monasterium construxisset, invenitque castrum firmissimo munimine olim fuisse cultum, a supradicto loco distans plus minus octo millibus, quem prisca tempora Luxovium nuncupabant: ibique aquae calidae cultu eximio constructae habebantur. Ibi imaginum lapidearum densitas vicina saltus densabat, quas cultu miserabili rituque profano vetusta paganorum tempora honorabant, quibusque execrabiles ceremonias litabant; solae ibi ferae ac bestiae, ursorum, bubalorum, luporum multitudo frequentabant.²¹³³

As he was already hemmed in by the presence of many monks, he began to consider whether he might discover a suitable place in the same wilderness where he might find a monastery, and he discovered a fortress which had once been protected by the strongest of fortifications, approximately eight miles from the aforementioned place. Earlier times had called it Luxovium. There hot baths [lit. waters] had been built with considerable care; there a large number of stone images filled the neighbouring woodland: these, ancient pagan times had honoured with miserable ritual and profane rites, and for them they performed execrable ceremonies; the place was frequented only by wild animals and beasts, a multitude of bears, wolves and buffalo.²¹³⁴

This description is significant, for it coincides with the discovery of the stone inscriptions dedicated to Luxovius and Bricta and the Gallo-Roman thermal establishment, excavated from 1775 to 1785, and from 1857 to 1858.²¹³⁵ The Gallo-Roman building, situated on the site of the present baths, was composed of more than five vaulted rooms, cobbled with alabaster and adorned with mosaics, containing baths, basins and surrounded by galleries with porticos. A network of piping, including aqueducts in stone and hollowed oak trunks serving as channels for harnessing the spring water inside the establishment, was also discovered. Nearby the ferruginous springs, Félix Bourquelot unearthed remains of columns, which could indicate proof of the existence of a small temple dedicated to Luxovius and Bricta in this area.²¹³⁶ It is besides interesting to note that, in the 19th c., the ferruginous springs were called 'Springs of the Temple'.

In addition to Luxovius and Bricta, Apollo and Sirona, the renowned divine couple of healing springs, were also honoured in Luxeuil, since an inscription dedicated to them engraved on an altar in white marble sculpted on three sides comes from the site.²¹³⁷ Various votive offerings evidencing the worship of protective deities of the local springs have been discovered. In 1932, three wooden kegs containing about 20,000 coins in copper and silver, dating from 320 AD to 335 AD, were unearthed (fig. 52).²¹³⁸ In 1865, a hundred statues in oak, representing rough heads, busts and full-scale characters, and an anatomic ex-voto* in the shape of a leg, were discovered in a layer of black earth at the spring of the 'Pré-

²¹³³ *Vita Columbani, Book I, 10.*

²¹³⁴ *Murray, 1998, p. 103.*

²¹³⁵ Greppo, 1846, pp. 127-128 ; Bonnard, 1908, pp. 462-466 ; Roussel, 1924, pp. 39-41 ; Leurat, 1960, p. 101 ; CAG, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, pp. 274, 282-287 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 84-85.

²¹³⁶ Bourquelot, 1862, pp. 1-9.

²¹³⁷ *CIL* XIII, 5424 ; *RG* 5317 ; Delacroix, 1867, p. 77.

²¹³⁸ Richard, 1991, pp. 53-55.

Martin', situated 150 metres north of the thermal establishment.²¹³⁹ Except for nine of them, the rest crumbled into dust on contact with air when they were discovered.²¹⁴⁰ Despite the roughness and distortion of the statues, it is noticeable that some of the characters wear the bardocucullus* and the Celtic torque* around their neck (fig. 53 and 54). Those statues probably date from the end of the 1st c. BC or the beginning of the 1st c. AD, for a coin from the time of Augustus was found in the same layer of earth.²¹⁴¹ These votive offerings are similar to those found at the 'Fontaine Segrain' in Monthay-en-Auxois (Côte d'Or), at the sanctuary of the Sources-de-la-Seine (Côte d'Or), Essarois (Côte d'Or), Bourbonnes-les-Bains (Haute-Marne), Saint-Honoré-les-Bains (Nièvre), Saint-Amand-les-Eaux (Nord), Montbouy (Loiret), Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme), etc.²¹⁴² They attest of a cult rendered to curative water deities. They indeed represent the pilgrims who came to the sanctuary of Luxeuil-les-Bains to soothe their pains in taking the salutary waters and praying to the healing deities: Bricta and Luxovius. The ex-votos were offered to earn divine benevolence, to obtain the recovery of a sick person or to express one's gratitude after being granted a vow.

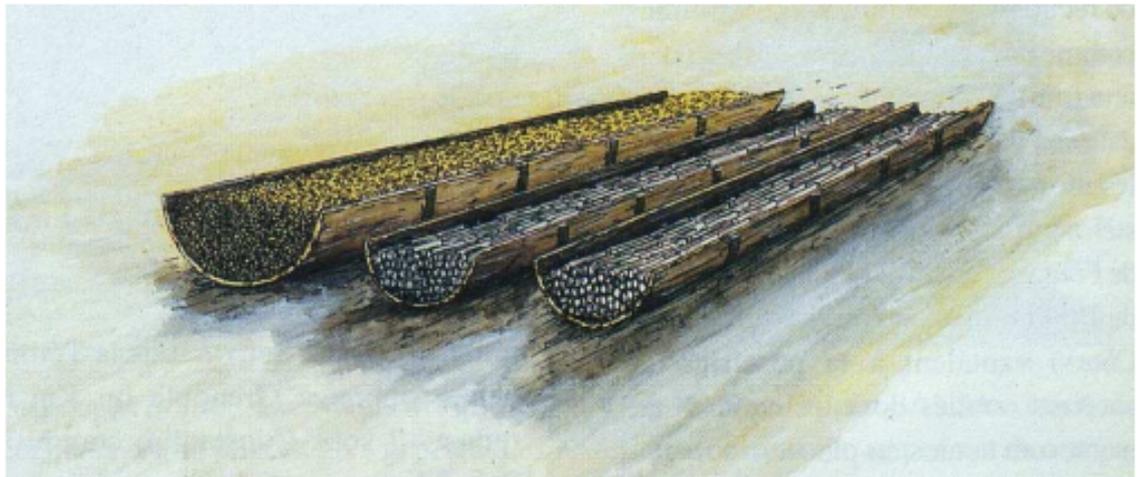


Fig. 52: Drawing of the three wooden kegs containing about 20,000 coins in copper and silver (320 AD - 335 AD), discovered at the spring of Pré-Martin, in Luxeuil. Richard, 1991, p. 53.

²¹³⁹ Bonnard, 1908, p. 462 ; Lerat, 1960, pp. 100-101 ; Richard, 1991, pp. 15-17 ; Deyts, 1983, pp. 185-188 ; CAG, 70, *La Haute-Saône*, 2002, pp. 276-282.

²¹⁴⁰ Eight are housed in the Musée de Luxeuil-les-Bains and one is in the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon.

²¹⁴¹ Lerat, 1960, p. 101.

²¹⁴² Green, 1999, pp. 92-100.

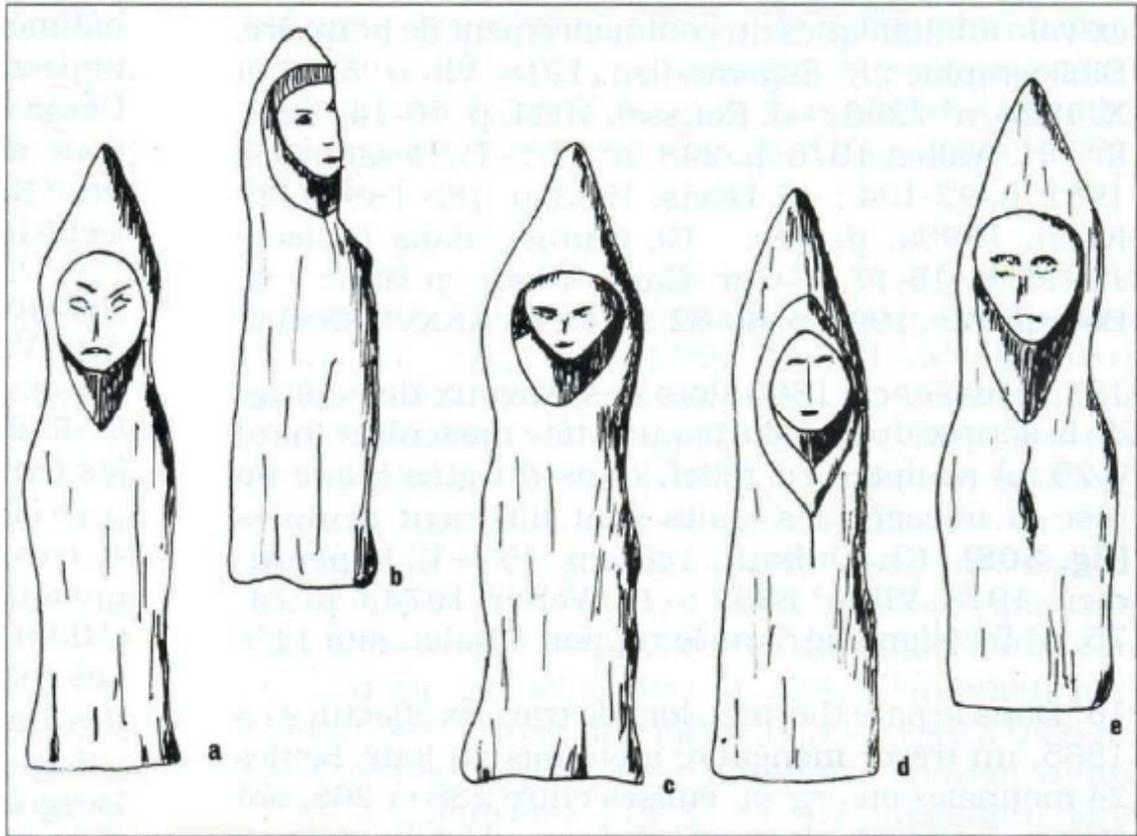


Fig. 53: Drawings of the wooden statues representing pilgrims wearing the hooded bardocucullus found at the spring of the Pré-Martin in Luxeuil. Deyts, 1983, plate XC.*

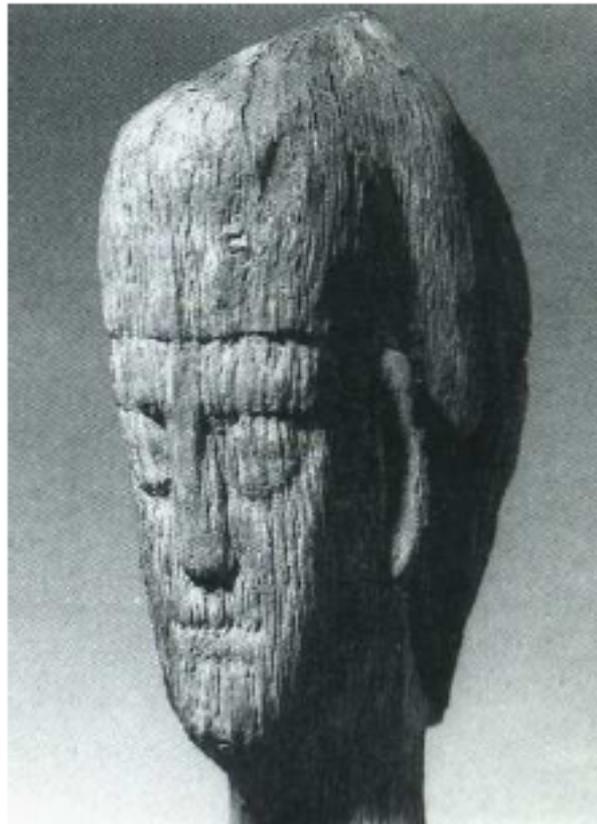


Fig. 54: Head in wood (wearing the Celtic torque) from the spring of the Pré-Martin, in Luxeuil. In the Musée de Besançon (Doubs). Richard, 1991, p. 16, fig. 9.*

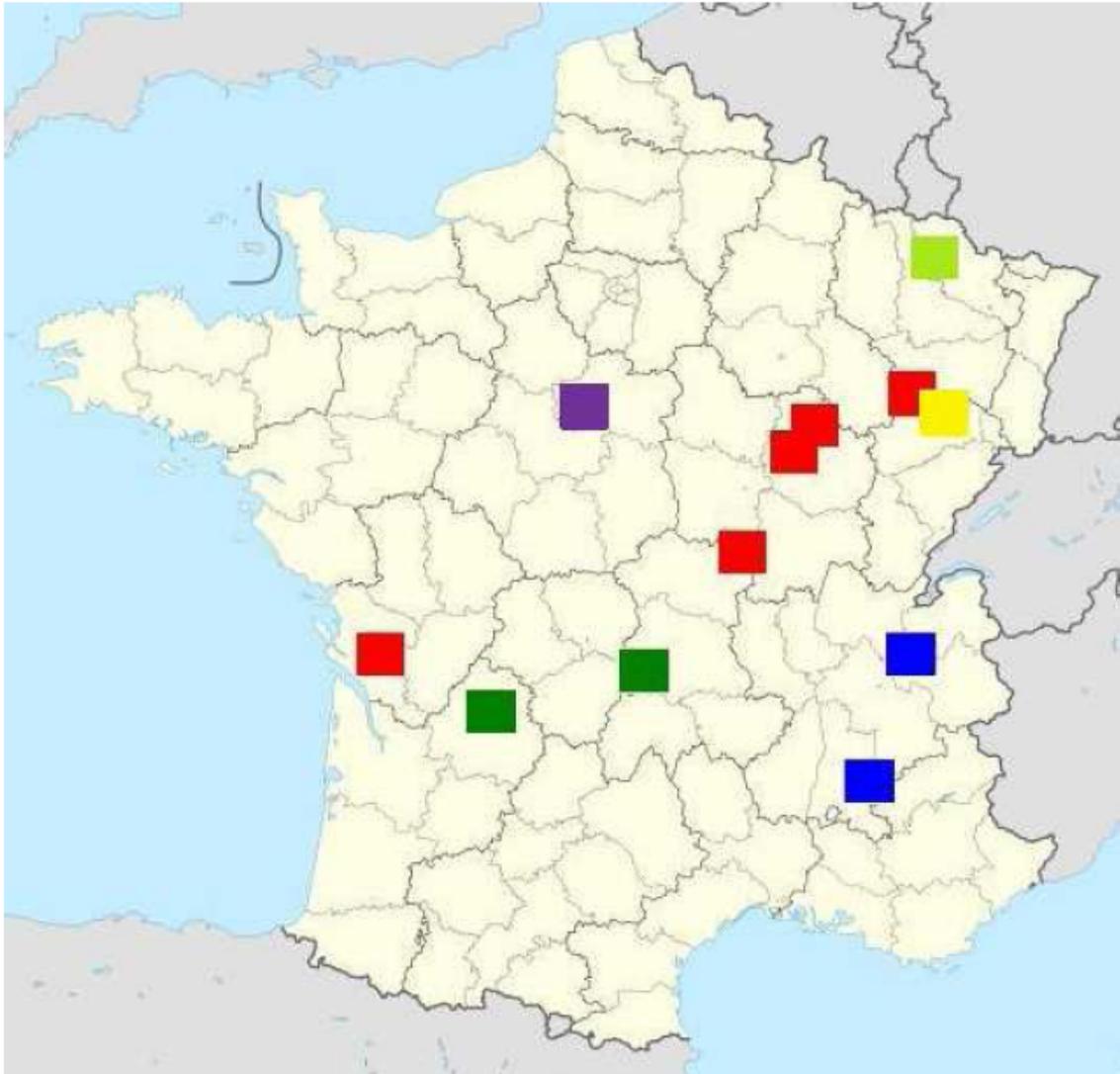


Fig. 55: Analytical map of the cult of fountain- and spring-goddesses: Acionna (purple), Icovellauna and Mogontia (light green), Bricta (yellow), Damona (red), principally attested in the centre-east of Gaul, Bormana (blue), in the south-east of Gaul, and Stanna/Sianna (dark green), in the south-west and centre of Gaul (Source: N. Beck).

5) *Sirona* ('the Heifer' or 'the Star')

The goddess *Sirona* is known from thirty inscriptions discovered in Gaul (see below), Germany (Mainz, Alzey, Augsburg, Gross-Bottwar, Ihn, Ihn-Niedalorf, Mühlburg, S. Avaud and Baumburg),²¹⁴³ Switzerland (Augst),²¹⁴⁴ Italy (Rome),²¹⁴⁵ Austria (Vienna),²¹⁴⁶ and

²¹⁴³ *CIL* XIII, 6753.; *AE* 1933, 140, 141 ; *AE* 1992, 1304 ; *CIL* XIII, 6458 ; *AE* 1994, 1256, 1257 ; *CIL* XIII, 4235c ; *CIL* XIII, 6327 ; *CIL* XIII, 4498 ; *CIL* III, 5588.

²¹⁴⁴ *CIL* XIII, 4129.

²¹⁴⁵ *CIL* VI, 36.

²¹⁴⁶ *AE* 1957, 114.

Romania (Bretea).²¹⁴⁷ She is sometimes partnered with the Celtic god of healing springs Apollo Grannus, such as in Bitburg (Germany), in the territory of the Treveri; in Baumburg (Germany), in Noricum*; and in Rome (Italy).²¹⁴⁸ His epithet is generally related to IE **gwher* -, 'warm', 'hot' and attested as meaning 'sun (god)' or '(god of) thermal waters',²¹⁴⁹ but Lambert, Delamarre and Sergent consider this etymology* dubious and suggest rather that it should be linked to the Old Irish *grend*, 'beard' or 'hair' and the Old Welsh *grann*, 'chin', 'beard' or 'hair', derived from the IE root **gher(s)-*, 'to bristle'.²¹⁵⁰ Grannus would thus be the 'Bearded or Haired One'. Jürgen Zeidler, who has studied the various etymologies advanced for Grannus, concludes that the god is never represented with a beard in the iconography and that his name may be connected with IE **gher-*, 'shine', 'gleam'.²¹⁵¹ Sirona is also coupled with the Gallo-Roman Apollo, who usually replaced Celtic gods presiding over curative waters, such as in Großbootwar (Germany), Nierstein (Germany), Luxeuil (Haute-Saône), Mâlain (Côte d'Or) and Tranqueville-Graux (Vosges).²¹⁵² Finally, Sirona is sometimes honoured on her own, such as in Corseul (Côtes d'Armor), Bordeaux (Gironde), Sainte-Fontaine (Moselle), Trier, Mühlburg, Mainz and Wiesbaden (Germany). This proves that she was not a mere partner of Apollo (Grannus) and that she had her proper cult. The sites linked to the dedications tend to prove that she was mostly worshipped in relation to thermal waters, springs or fountains. A bronze group from Mâlain also represents her as Hygeia, the Roman goddess of health and medicine. A full study of the thirty inscriptions honouring her is beyond the scope of this research; thus only the epigraphic and iconographical devices from Gaul will be studied.

a) Etymology

In the inscriptions, her name is generally written Sirona, but in Mâlain (Côte d'Or) it is spelt with *TH* (Thirona) and in Trier, Ihn and St-Avaud (Germany) with a crossed *D* (Ðirona). *TH* and *Ð* account for the sounds *ts*, *ds* or *st* in the Celtic language.²¹⁵³ Her name is thus to be read [tsi:rona] or [sti:rona]. As regards the meaning of her name, which remains uncertain, three etymologies have been suggested. Stokes, De Vries, Lambert and Delamarre derive it from an Old Celtic root **ster-* meaning 'star', which gave in Gaulish *stir-*, *sir-*, *ðir-*, in Old Irish *ser*, in Welsh *ser* and in Breton *ster*, *sterenn*.²¹⁵⁴ Sirona would thus signify and personify the 'Star'. Yet, apart from being partnered with the sun god Apollo, she is never represented with stellar symbols or images in the iconography. Being generally worshipped in the context of healing waters, Lacroix proposes to relate her name to an IE radical **sti-* designating 'an accumulation of water' or 'a concentration of drops', which he compares to Latin *stilla*, 'drop'

²¹⁴⁷ AE 1971, 376.

²¹⁴⁸ RDG, pp. 43-44 ; Lacroix, 2007, pp. 149-155 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 82-83 ; Green, 1992a, p. 32. For the three inscriptions mentioned in the text, see *CIL* XIII, 4129 ; *CIL* III, 5588 ; *CIL* VI, 36.

²¹⁴⁹ Olmsted, 1994, p. 389 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 82-83.

²¹⁵⁰ Lambert, 1995, p. 195 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 182-183 ; Sergent, 2000, p. 215.

²¹⁵¹ Zeidler, 2003, pp. 77-92.

²¹⁵² *CIL* XIII, 6458 ; *CIL* XIII, 6272 ; *CIL* XIII, 5424 ; *CIL* XIII, 4661.

²¹⁵³ Robert, 1879-1880, p. 137 ; Evans, 1967, pp. 410-419 ; De Vries, 1963, p. 143 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 43-44 ; Sterckx, 1996, pp. 53-54.

²¹⁵⁴ Stokes, 1894, p. 313 ; De Vries, 1963, pp. 82, 143 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 44 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 281 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 43 ; Koch, 2006, p. 1614.

and *stiria*, 'frozen drop', and to Breton *ster*, 'river', 'basin' or 'washtub'.²¹⁵⁵ As for Olmsted, he argues that Sirona may have been venerated in heifer shape, for her name can be derived from an IE root **ster-* meaning 'barren cow'.²¹⁵⁶ Sirona ('the Heifer') would thus fall into the same category of water-goddesses in cow shape as the Irish river-goddess Bóinn ('the Cow-White (Goddess)'), the British river-goddess Verbeia ('She of the Cattle?'), and the Gaulish spring-goddesses Damona ('the Cow (Goddess)') and Borvoboendoa ('the Seething White Cow') we considered above.

b) Inscriptions and Places of worship

Sirona was particularly worshipped in the north-east of Gaul, as inscriptions discovered in the départements of Moselle (1), Meurthe-et-Moselle (1), Vosges (1), Haute-Saône (1) and Côte d'Or (1) illustrate. Dedications to her have also been discovered in Germany, in the territory of the Treveri, notably in Trier (1), Mainz (1), Bitburg (1), Nietaltdorf (1) and Hochscheid (1), where a shrine linked to a spring was excavated. Her cult was probably extended to the whole of Gaul, since a dedication comes from the département of Cher, in the centre of Gaul, another from Côtes d'Armor, in the north-west of Gaul, and a last one from Gironde, in the south-west of Gaul.

In the Treveran territory, the close relationship between Sirona and curative waters stands out. In Bitburg, a dedication in two fragments reading *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Apollin[i] Granno] et Siro[nae]*, 'In Honour of the Divine House, to Apollo Grannus and Sirona', was discovered in 1824 near a perennial spring.²¹⁵⁷ The formula *in h.d.d.* indicates the inscription is from the 3rd c. AD.²¹⁵⁸ The most significant example is the water sanctuary of Hochscheid, where representations of Apollo and Sirona and dedications to them were discovered. Hochscheid is situated between Mainz and Trier, where an inscription was also found: *D(e)ae Sirona[e] L(ucius) Lugnius*, 'To the goddess Sirona Lucius Lugnius'.²¹⁵⁹ The dedicator is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *duo nomina*, but his cognomen* Lugnius is Celtic: it seems to be based on *lugu-*, found in the name of the Celtic god Lugus.²¹⁶⁰

The shrine at Hochscheid, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, was composed of a portico surrounding a square cella*, where the waters of the nearby spring were collected in a small central basin (fig. 56).²¹⁶¹ The temple was apparently built over an enclosure in wood predating Roman times.²¹⁶² The inscription to the divine couple is engraved on an altar: *Deo Apollini et Sancte Sirone R. C. Pro Con[...]*, 'To the god Apollo and to Sacred Sirona R. C. Pro con (?) [...]'.²¹⁶³ In the sanctuary were discovered various votive terracotta figurines picturing an Apollo with a lyre, a Silvanus, a Minerva, a Venus, a Diana, a Fortuna with a

²¹⁵⁵ Lacroix, 2007, p. 177.

²¹⁵⁶ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 356-357.

²¹⁵⁷ *CIL* XIII, 4129 ; *Roscher*, vol. 4, p. 951 ; Green, 1992a, p. 191 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 325, note 2.

²¹⁵⁸ Raepsaet-Charlier, 1993, pp. 9-11.

²¹⁵⁹ *CIL* XIII, 3662.

²¹⁶⁰ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 121, 225 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 210.

²¹⁶¹ Dehn, 1941, pp. 105-107.

²¹⁶² Thévenot, 1968, p. 110 ; Green, 1992a, p. 191 ; Green, 2001, p. 62.

²¹⁶³ *AE* 1941, 89.

patera*, and seated single mother goddesses with a diadem, a baby or an animal.²¹⁶⁴ A statue of Classical type, representing a standing goddess wearing a dress and a diadem and holding a patera* in her left hand, was also unearthed (fig. 57).²¹⁶⁵ The snake curled around her right forearm relates her to the bronze group from Mâlain: Sirona is depicted with the features of Hygeia, the Roman goddess of healing. The water sanctuary and the representation of the goddess clearly prove that Apollo and Sirona were associated with the spring gushing forth near the shrine and its possible curative virtues.

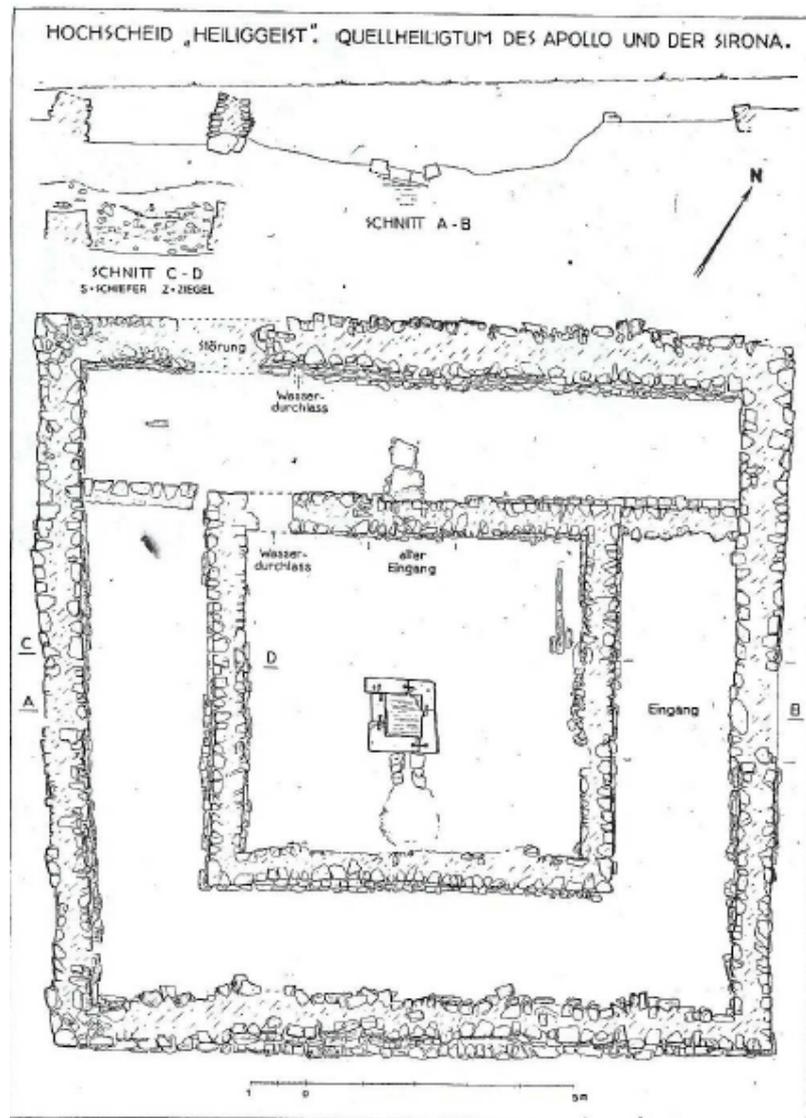


Fig. 56: Drawing of the water sanctuary of Hochscheid (Germany) dedicated to Apollo and Sirona. The spring is harnessed inside a small basin situated in the middle of a cella surrounded by a portico. Dehn, 1941, p. 108, fig. 2.*

²¹⁶⁴ Dehn, 1941, p. 110 and plate 16, n°1-11.

²¹⁶⁵ Dehn, 1941, p. 109 and plate 14 ; Green, 2001, pp. 43-44 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 326.



Fig. 57: Statue of Sirona with patera* and snake from Hochscheid (Germany). In *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier*. Dehn, 1941, plate 14.

In the territory of the *Mediomatrici*, an inscription to Sirona, probably dating from the 2nd c. AD, engraved under a schematized representation of the goddess, was discovered in 1751 on the bank of a pond in Sainte-Fontaine, near Saint-Avold (Moselle), where a sacred spring used to flow (fig. 58).²¹⁶⁶ The stele* was destroyed in the 1870 fire at Strasbourg Library, but casts are housed in the museums of Metz, Nancy, Epinal, Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Orléans. The dedication is the following: *Deae Sironae Maior Magiati filius v.s.l.m.*, 'To the goddess Sirona Maior son of Magiatus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²¹⁶⁷ The dedicator and his father are peregrines bearing Celtic names. Maior may be based on the same root *magio-*, 'big' as his father's name Magiatus – but Maior can be envisaged as a

²¹⁶⁶ Cravayat, Lebel, Thévenot, 1956, p. 325.

²¹⁶⁷ *CIL* XIII, 4498 ; *RG* 4470 ; *CAG*, 57.1, *La Moselle*, 2004, pp. 463-464 ; Bonnard, 1908, pp. 194-195.

Latin name too.²¹⁶⁸ The goddess is pictured with bulging eyes and wears her hair loose in Egyptian style. The two circles around her neck may represent a necklace or the collar of her dress.²¹⁶⁹ The seventeen fragments of lapidary monuments and dedications unearthed in the area - such as the statue of a naked man; a head of a young beardless man; an inscription to the god Apollo; and a headless and footless statue of a draped goddess holding a snake in her left hand, possibly representing Hygeia or Sirona - may indicate evidence of a place of devotion to Sirona and Apollo. However, the foundations of a potential temple dedicated to the divine couple have never been excavated.²¹⁷⁰



Fig. 58: Bust of Sirona combined with an inscription honouring her, discovered at Sainte-Fontaine (Moselle). Robert, 1879, p. 136.

²¹⁶⁸ Delamarre, 2003, p. 212 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 123-124

²¹⁶⁹ Robert, 1879-1880, pp. 136-137.

²¹⁷⁰ CIL XIII, 4496: *Apollini Flaccii*[...], 'To Apollo Flacci[...]' ; CAG, 57.1, *La Moselle*, 2004, pp. 464-466 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 325.

In the territory of the Leuci, a 2nd-century inscription, engraved on a stele* broken on the left, dedicated to Sirona and Apollo was discovered in 1823 at a place known as 'La Fontaine des Romains', 300 metres to the south-east of the village of Tranqueville-Graux (Vosges). It reads: *Apollini et Sironae Biturix Iulli f(ilius) d(onavit)*, 'To Apollo and Sirona, Biturix, son of Jullus offered (this altar)'.²¹⁷¹ The dedicator and his father are peregrines and bear Gaulish names. Iullus is known from an inscription discovered in Reims,²¹⁷² while Biturix, composed of *bitu-*, 'world' and *rix*, 'king', is a typical Celtic name meaning 'King of the World'.²¹⁷³ On the right hand-side of the inscription, a bust of Sirona appears in a niche (fig. 59). Her representation is classical - she wears a dress and her hair is done into a bun. The bust of Apollo must have originally been carved in another niche, the remains of which appear on the left-hand side of the inscription. Together with the stele* was unearthed a ten-metre basin containing a large amount of Roman coins and a fragment of sculpture representing seven heads, possibly symbolizing the seven days of the week.²¹⁷⁴ In view of those discoveries, it is clear that Sirona and Apollo presided over the waters of a fountain which used to flow in this basin. The name of the place 'La Fontaine des Romains' is beside indicative of a spring worshipped in Gallo-Roman times.



Fig. 59: Stele* dedicated to Apollo and Sirona from Tranqueville-Graux (Vosges) with a representation of the goddess on the right-hand side. A representation of Apollo must have originally appeared on the left-hand side but the stone is now broken. In the Musée d'Epinal (Vosges). RG 4828.

In the territory of the Sequani, a dedication to Apollo and Sirona engraved on an altar in two fragments was unearthed in 1858 in the garden of the thermal establishment at Luxeuil (Haute-Saône), the healing waters of which were presided over by Luxovius and Bricta in Gallo-Roman times: *Apollini et Sironae idem Taurus*, 'To Apollo and Sirona, Taurus the same' (fig. 60).²¹⁷⁵ The dedicator is a peregrine* bearing a Latin name; he is thus in the process of Romanization. The word *idem* at the end of the inscription indicates that Taurus had already previously made an offering to the gods. Emile Espérandieu and Charles Robert argue that the relief* carved under the inscription is not a snake but a wreath entwined with a ribbon, called a *lemniscus**.²¹⁷⁶ On the back panel can be seen a representation of Apollo

²¹⁷¹ CIL XIII, 4661 ; RG 4828.

²¹⁷² CIL XIII, 3253 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 113.

²¹⁷³ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 76-77, 259-260 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 43.

²¹⁷⁴ RG 4828, p. 163 ; CAG, 88, Vosges, 2004, pp. 360-361.

²¹⁷⁵ CIL XIII, 5424 ; RG 5317.

²¹⁷⁶ RG 5317, pp. 50-51 ; Robert, 1879-1880, pp. 139-141.

standing naked, possibly holding a plectrum*, with a lyre at his feet, while the lateral panels contain carvings of two gods, both bare-chested; one bearded and one clean-shaven.

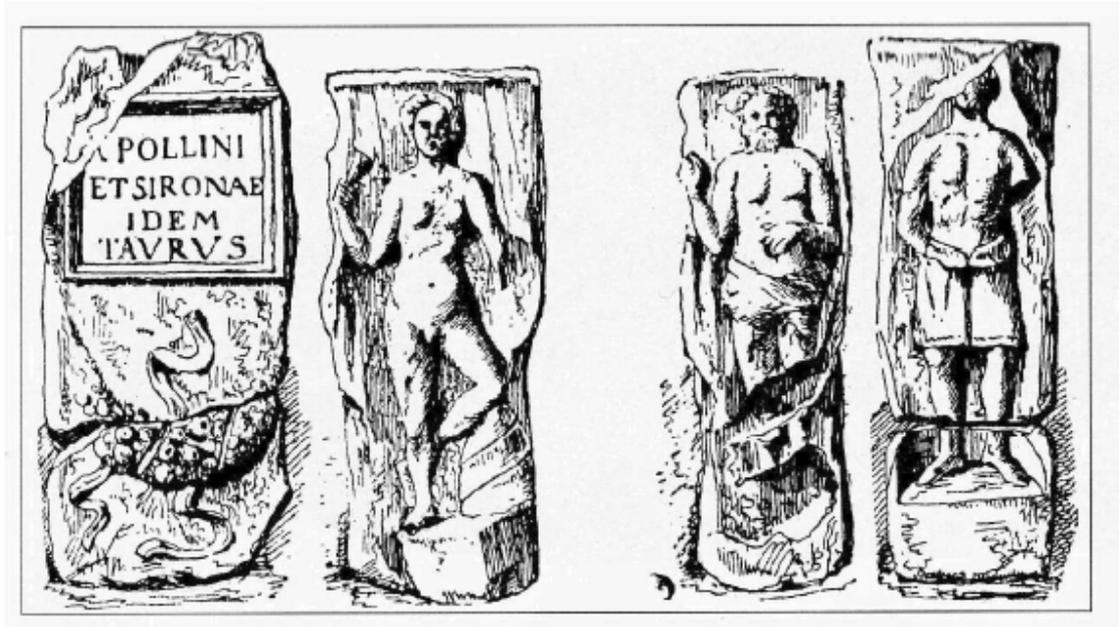


Fig. 60: Altar dedicated to Apollo and Sirona discovered in Luxeuil (Haute-Saône). CAG, 70, Haute-Saône, p. 278, fig. 303.

In the territory of the Lingones, a bronze group representing a half-naked goddess holding a snake in her right hand and a naked god holding a plectrum* in his right hand and the remains of a three-stringed cithara* in his left hand was discovered in 1977 in a hiding place, built around 280 AD, situated in an out-building adjoining a house, at a place known as 'Champ Marlot', in Mâlain (Côte d'Or), 300 metres to the west of a temple excavated in 1969 by Louis Roussel.²¹⁷⁷ It was found together with seven other bronze statues, representing a winged Victory, a young Bacchus, a standing Mercury, a lunar deity, a seated Fortuna and a group of Juno and the Genius. On the socle of the bronze group is engraved an inscription which identifies the couple as Apollo and Sirona: *THIRONEAPOLLO*, 'Sirona (and) Apollo' (fig. 61).²¹⁷⁸ On account of the snake she holds in her hand, Sirona can be compared to Hygeia, the Roman goddess of health and hygiene, whose main attribute was the snake.²¹⁷⁹ Deyts nonetheless points out that Hygeia is never pictured half-naked in the Roman iconography.²¹⁸⁰

²¹⁷⁷ Roussel, 1978, pp. 48-51 ; Roussel, 1976-1977, pp. 45-53 ; Roussel, 1978-1979, pp. 207-215 ; Goudineau, 1979, p. 440.

²¹⁷⁸ *AE* 1994, 1227.

²¹⁷⁹ *Brill's*, vol. 6, pp. 603-604 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 719 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 326, note 2. See the section on Verbeia in this Chapter for details about the snake symbolism.

²¹⁸⁰ Deyts, 1998, p. 47.



Fig. 61: Bronze group from Mâlain (Côte d'Or) of a goddess holding a snake and a god, identified as Thirona and Apollo by the inscription engraved on the socle. In *Musée archéologique de Dijon*. Deyts, 1998, p. 47, n°13.

In the centre of Gaul, in the territory of the Bituriges Cubi, a 2nd-century inscription, honouring Sirona and Apollo, was discovered in 1954 in the wall of a house located at a place known as the 'Hameau des Bertrands', in Flavigny (Cher).²¹⁸¹ The dedication reads: *Aug(usto) Apollini et deae Sironae ussibusque vicanorum Nogiomagie(n)suim M. Pieionius Rufus*, 'To the August Apollo and to the goddess Sirona, for the benefit of the inhabitants of the vicus* of Negeomagus, M. Pieionius Rufus reverently (erected) this monument' (fig. 62).²¹⁸² The dedicator, who bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens, offered an edifice in honour of the divine couple and for the usage of the inhabitants of a vicus*, the site of which

²¹⁸¹ Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 318, 325 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 471.

²¹⁸² *ILTG* 169 ; *CAG*, 18, *Cher*, 1992, p. 275.

remains undetermined.²¹⁸³ Paul Cravayat, who studied the dedication in 1955, assumed that the worship of Apollo and Sirona was linked to a neighbouring fountain. After investigating the area, he discovered two springs, called 'Grivin' and 'Monconsou', respectively emanating 1,200 metres and 700 metres to the north of the hamlet.²¹⁸⁴ Interestingly, the waters of those springs have some thermal virtues and continue to flow profusely. Moreover, fragments of pottery, Roman coins and stone seats, possibly dating from Gallo-Roman times, were discovered in the 19th c. in the fountain of 'Monconsou', which could indicate evidence of a cult devoted to the spring.²¹⁸⁵ In 1882, remains of foundations of a building and architectural fragments, notably comprising a piece of a capital, a drum of a column and a hand of a statue, were unearthed about a hundred metres to the north-west of Flavigny.²¹⁸⁶ Those remains might have belonged to a religious edifice. Even though those various discoveries are of interest, there is no tangible proof of a temple erected for Apollo and Sirona in the area. Indeed, there is no clear evidence of any kind confirming their worship at the spring of 'Monconsou' or 'Grivin'.

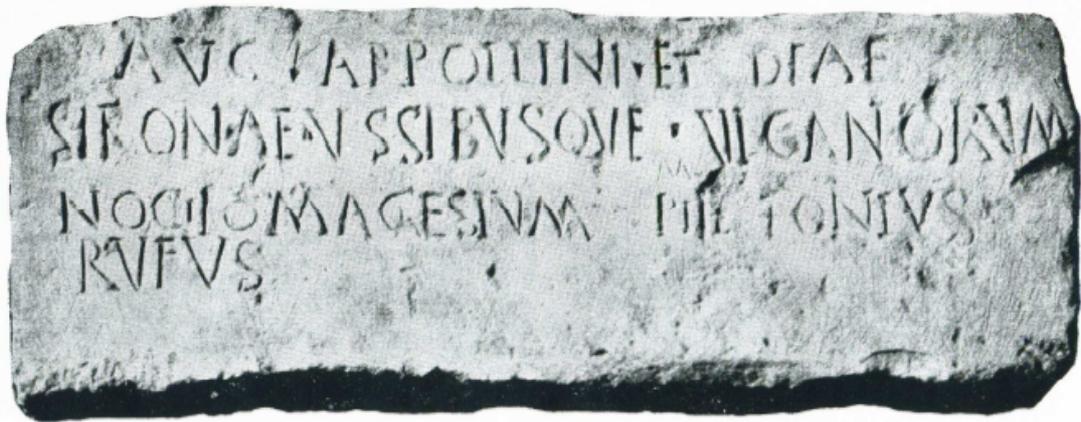


Fig. 62: Stele* dedicated to Apollo and Sirona discovered at 'Hameau des Bertrands' in Flavigny (Cher). It is housed in the Château de Fontenay. Cravayat, 1956, p. 319, fig. 136.

In the north-west of Gaul, in Corseul (Côtes-d'Armor), the county town of the civitas* of the tribe of the Coriosolites created by Augustus, an inscription dedicated to the goddess Sirona was discovered in 1834 in re-employment* in the chapel of the Castle of Montafilan: *Num(ini) Aug(usti) De(ae) Sirona(e) Cani(a) Magiusa lib(erta) v.s.l.m.*, 'To the divine power of Augustus and to the goddess Sirona, Cania Magiusa freed. She paid her vow willingly and deservedly'.²¹⁸⁷ The use of the formula *dea* indicates that the dedication is not prior to the mid-2nd c. AD. The dedicator is a woman and a freed slave, who bears Celtic names: Cania is based on Gaulish *cani-*, probably meaning 'good', 'beautiful', and Magiusa derives

²¹⁸³ Cravayat, 1955-1956, pp. 11-12 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 323 ; *ILTG* 169, p. 61.

²¹⁸⁴ Cravayat, 1955-1956, p. 9 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 321.

²¹⁸⁵ Cravayat, 1955-1956, pp. 10-11.

²¹⁸⁶ *CAG*, 18, *Cher*, 1992, p. 275.

²¹⁸⁷ *CIL* XIII, 3143 ; *AE* 1999, 1071 ; *CAG*, 22, *Côtes d'Armor*, 2002, pp. 70, 130. It is housed in the Musée du Château de Dinan.

from *magio-*, 'big', 'field'.²¹⁸⁸ Because of the re-employment* of the stone, it is impossible to determine its origin and, thus, in which context Sirona was worshipped.

In the south-west of Gaul, in Bordeaux (Gironde), an inscription engraved on an altar in hard stone, probably dating from the beginning of the 1st c. AD, discovered in 1756 in re-employment* in the foundations of a hotel, reads: *Sironae Abducietus Toceti fil(ius) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To Sirona, Abducietus, son of Tocetus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²¹⁸⁹ The devotee Abducietus and his father Tocetus are peregrines bearing Celtic names – Tocetus might come from *tucca*, *tucetta*, 'bottom' or *togi-*, 'oath'.²¹⁹⁰ Another altar found in Bordeaux, carved on four panels, might be dedicated to Sirona. Nevertheless, as the beginning of the inscription is unreadable, the name of the goddess ending in [...]*Jonae* could be dedicated to Divona, whose fountain in Bordeaux was famous in antiquity.²¹⁹¹

From this, it follows that the Celtic goddess Sirona was particularly worshipped in the north-east of Gaul, notably in the Treveran territory, but not confined to it, as the inscriptions from Flavigny (Cher), Corseul (Côte d'Armor) and Bordeaux (Gironde) show (fig. 63). Being partnered with Apollo (Grannus), the god of healing springs, and being revered in connection with curative waters - such as in Luxeuil (Haute-Saône) – or with springs and fountains - such as in Bitburg (Germany), Hochscheid (Germany), Saint-Avold (Moselle), Tranqueville-Graux (Vosges) and possibly Flavigny (Cher) - Sirona appears as a goddess presiding over waters in general - waters with or without curative properties. Outside Gaul, Sirona also protects salutary waters, such as in Nierstein (Germany), where a dedication to her and Apollo was discovered near sulphur springs,²¹⁹² and in Wiesbaden (Germany), where an inscription, mentioning the offering of a temple by a Roman curator, was unearthed in the ruins of the Roman thermal establishment.²¹⁹³ It is interesting to note that in Gaul, she is mostly worshipped by people of Celtic stock. This is significant, for it proves that her cult pre-dated the Roman conquest and that it was still extant among the local population in Gallo-Roman times. Most of them are peregrines bearing Gaulish names, such as Biturix, son of Iullus, in Tranqueville-Graux, Abducietus, son of Tocetus, in Bordeaux and Maior, son of Magiatus, in Saint-Avold. In Luxeuil, Taurus bears a Latin name but is a peregrine*. By invoking a Celtic goddess, he shows that, despite his Romanization, he is still attached to his original cults. Others, such as Cania Magiusa in Corseul and Lucius Lugnius in Trier, are Roman citizens who have Celtic names. This proves their desire to display their attachment to their indigenous origins and their profound respect for their ancient deities, whom they continued to honour and to pray to in spite of their Roman citizenship.

²¹⁸⁸ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 55, 123, 225.; Delamarre, 2003, p. 213.

²¹⁸⁹ *CIL* XIII, 582 ; Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 56-59, n°19.

²¹⁹⁰ Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, p. 59 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 11, 182, 234 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 303.

²¹⁹¹ *CIL* XIII, 586 ; Jullian, 1887, vol. 1, p. 82, n°23 ; *RG* 1077.

²¹⁹² *CIL* XIII, 6272 ; *Paulys*, vol. 3.1, p. 355.

²¹⁹³ *CIL* XIII, 7570 ; *Paulys*, vol. 3.1, p. 355 ; Cravayat, Lebel & Thévenot, 1956, p. 325, note 2.

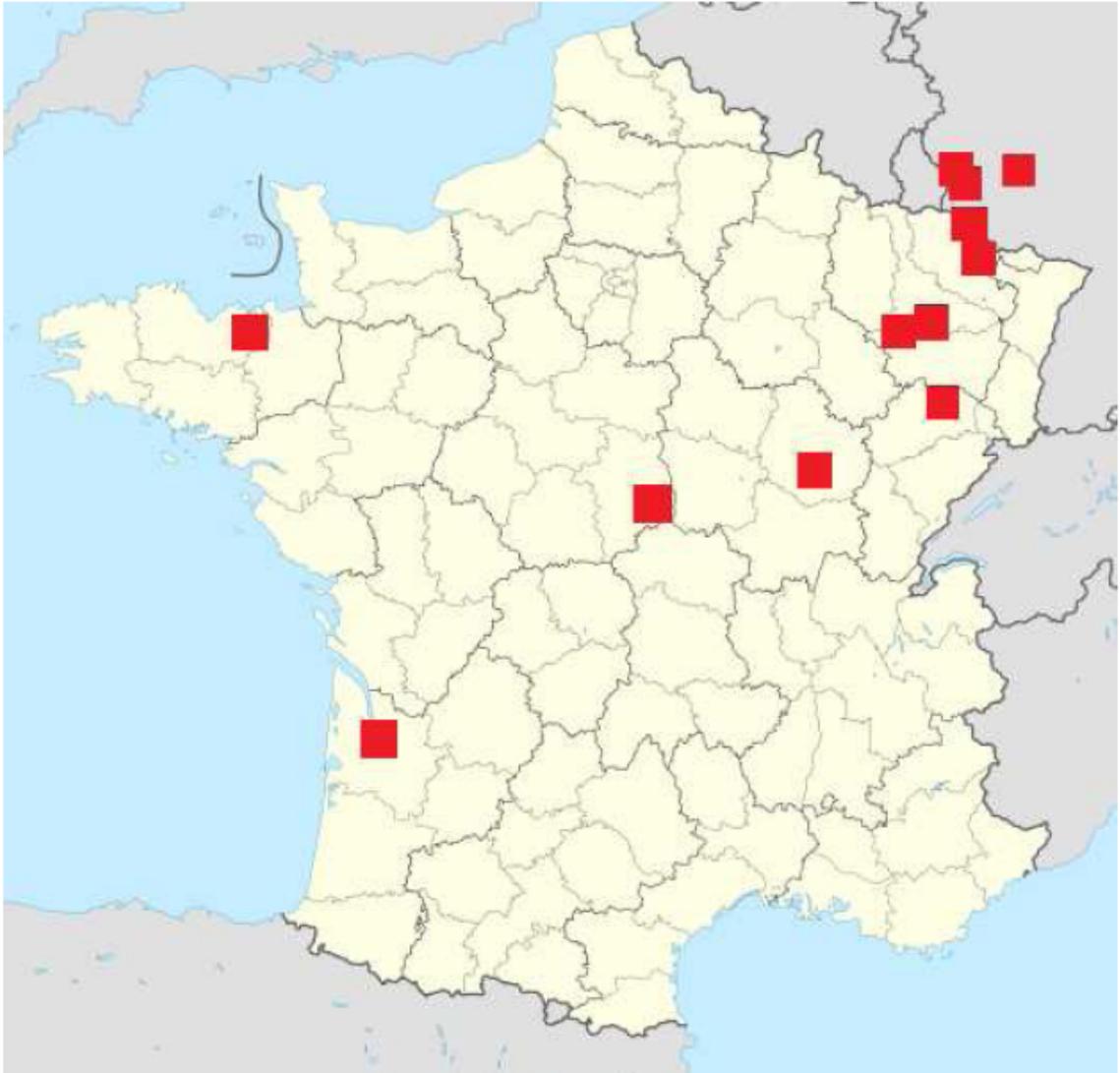


Fig. 63: Analytical map of the cult of the goddess Sirona in Gaul (Source: N. Beck).

Conclusion

Because of its life-giving aspect, water has been envisaged as a particularly sacred natural element since time immemorial. The prehistoric and proto-historic deposits of hoards of objects, such as weapons, jewels or coins, in rivers, lakes and bogs, must be understood as votive gifts offered to water-deities with the aim of earning their benevolence and ensuring the fertility of the land. In addition to the tradition of depositing objects in watery places, some rivers, springs and fountains were called *deva*, *divonna* and the later Irish *banna*, that is 'goddess', which clearly attest to the sacredness of water and its divinisation. Those hydronyms* prove that rivers, fountains and springs were worshipped as goddesses, who personified and protected the waters. The idea of a lady inhabiting and personifying the water is particularly well illustrated in Irish mythology. Beautiful divine ladies dwell in sumptuous

subaquatic otherworldly realms; the wavy hair of the Mórrígain shapes the sea; the River Boyne is described as the body of its eponymous goddess; and maidens, after drowning under the waters, become the river, the lake or the sea they inhabit: Clidna is turned into a wave of the sea, Bóinn into the River Boyne, Sionnan into the River Shannon, Eithne into the River Inny and Érne into the River or Lough Érne.

The tradition of the divine lady embodying the river is attested in Gaul by various archaeological discoveries of great importance. Gallo-Roman inscriptions reveal that the main rivers of France, such as the Seine, the Marne, the Saône and the Yonne, were deified as goddesses bearing their names: Sequana, Matrona, Souconna and Icauni. Interestingly, it seems that it was the spring of the river which was specifically sacralised, for sanctuaries and water edifices were unearthed at the sources of the Seine, the Marne and the Yonne – the source of the Saône has never been excavated. This is not insignificant: springs were primarily revered, for they mysteriously gushed forth from the earth and were directly related to the otherworld. Worship must have later extended to the whole river. The legends of Bóinn and Sionnan are also evocative of the sacredness of the source of the river, which is represented by the mystic Well of Segais.

What were the functions of those water-goddesses? From the study of the Irish texts, it emerges that water was closely related to wisdom, poetry and perceptiveness. The nuts containing the *imbas* are described falling into the Well of Nechtan and imbuing the river with the much sought-after 'all-encompassing knowledge'. A sip from the river in June was believed to give access to sacred knowledge and Fionn mac Cumhaill earns his mystical inspiration from the Salmon of Knowledge fished in the Boyne. Similarly, Sionnan is drowned in the river after trying to catch the mystical bubbles. The legends of Bóinn and Sionnan illustrate the fact that the search for wisdom is dangerous and is not within anyone's reach. By trying to accede to absolute knowledge, one is on the road to ruin.

In Gaul and Britain, water seems to have been worshipped in the context of healing. The wisdom-giving aspect of Irish river-goddesses is not reflected in the character of Gaulish and British water-goddesses, who clearly stand out as healers prayed to for their salutary and beneficial virtues. The most well-known example is the goddess Sequana, who had an important sanctuary and complex of baths built at her source, where pilgrims would come to take the curative waters, invoke the goddess and deposit votive offerings to have their vows granted. As for Sirona and Damona, who were both honoured in relation to thermal springs; the inscriptions prove that their cult transcended frontiers and peoples. Other goddesses seem to have protected specific local springs, wells and fountains, such as Bricta at Luxeuil-Bains, Stanna/Sianna at Mont-Dore, Acionna at the Fontaine l'Étuvée, Icovellauna and possibly Mongotia at the nymphaeum* of Le Sablon and Coventina at the well of Carrawburgh in Britain. While the springs of Luxeuil and Mont-Dore have thermal virtues, the waters of the Fontaine l'Étuvée, Le Sablon and Coventina's Well do not appear to have any mineral or therapeutic properties. The waters could have lost their curative virtues, either by drying up or by mixing with common waters, but it seems more plausible that it was actually, and more than anything else, the faith in the omnipotent healing power of the goddess which caused the pilgrims to be relieved of their pains. This explains how rivers, the waters of which do not have any salutary properties, were believed to have the capacity to cure, and were worshipped as divine female healers. Gaulish water-goddesses clearly fulfilled a function of regeneration and renewal.

The water-goddess plays the same role as the land-goddess: she ensures the survival of the peoples and the growth of crops and cattle. Like a mother, she gives birth, feeds and maintains her people. The goddess of the River Marne, Matrona, whose name means

'Mother', illustrates clearly that function. The life-giving aspect of the water-goddess is counterbalanced by a funerary dimension which is inherent in the mother-water complex: the dead were given back to the bosom of the mother-river to achieve rebirth in the afterlife. In Gaul, various proto-historic 'coffin-pirogues' exemplify this aspect. The voyage to the otherworld, metaphorically represented by the boat and the river, was placed in the care of the water-goddess, who, in taking the deceased back into her womb, ensured their renewal in the afterlife.

As for knowing whether it was the goddess who gave her name to the river or the river to the goddess, the Irish sources clearly state that the river was called after the maiden drowned in its waters, while in Gaul, it appears that it is the name of the river which was given to the goddess, for river names merely refer to the quality or nature of the water, like Sequana ('the Dripping One'). Actually, this question is wrongly framed, for, in the mind of the Celts, the river could not be dissociated from the goddess: the river was a divine entity; the river and the goddess were as one. Consequently, the goddess bore the name of the river like the river bore the name of the goddess.

It is interesting to note that the belief in a divine lady dwelling in the river has survived in the folklore of Ireland and France. A few legends, recorded in the *Irish Folklore Collection*²¹⁹⁴ and in Sébillot's *Folklore de France*,²¹⁹⁵ recount that rivers are inhabited by beautiful mermaids to whom are attributed macabre and terrifying deeds. Sébillot relates that, in the département of Gers, river mermaids were seen at night singing and combing their long hair. It was believed that "they sucked the brain and the blood, and ate the heart, the liver and guts" of any poor wretch who would pass by.²¹⁹⁶ As mermaids are generally creatures of the sea, their presence in fresh-water is not insignificant. The character of the river mermaid could be understood as the reminiscence of the ancient cult of the river-goddess. The transformation of the supernatural river ladies into evil and damned souls is due to Christian influence.

While healing spring-goddesses are numerous in Gaul and Britain, they are non-existent in Ireland, except for the fairy lady Áine who had a well called after her, Tobar Áine, in the parish of Lios Áine (Lissan, Co. Derry).²¹⁹⁷ The worship of healing springs is reflected in the folk tradition of the Christianized wells called 'holy wells', which hold a significant place in the customs and legends of Wales,²¹⁹⁸ Cornwall²¹⁹⁹ England²²⁰⁰ and Ireland. In Ireland, where about 3,000 wells have been recorded, almost every parish has its own sacred or blessed fountain.²²⁰¹ The wells are generally placed under the protection of a saint, specialized in the cure of a particular ailment: eyes, toothache, warts, etc. Some are visited on specific days, such as Feast Days or Patron Saint's Days, and the devotional practices generally consist of reciting Catholic prayers, making 'rounds', that is walking around the well clockwise (*deiseal*) on a fixed beaten path, taking sips from the well, bathing the diseased members and rubbing the afflicted part with a shred of cloth dipped into the water and hung

²¹⁹⁴ *IFC* 733: 111-114 (Westmeath) ; *IFC* 233: 568 (Roscommon) and *IFC* 1307: 258-259 (Kerry).

²¹⁹⁵ Sébillot, 2002, pp. 619-620.

²¹⁹⁶ Sébillot, 2002, p. 619.

²¹⁹⁷ O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 518

²¹⁹⁸ Jones, 1954.

²¹⁹⁹ Quillier-Couch & Quillier-Couch, 1894.

²²⁰⁰ Hope, 1893.

²²⁰¹ Ó Danachair, 1958, p. 35.

upon a nearby bush or tree.²²⁰² The sick person thus symbolically leaves his or her pain to the well. The appearance of a fish in the well ensures recovery, which somehow echoes the big black and white fish called 'skolopidos' of the River Saône, the head of which contained a tiny stone which could cure the quartan fever.²²⁰³ Various studies have demonstrated that the Christian tradition of the Holy Wells follows directly from pagan practices and customs.²²⁰⁴ The fountains, wells and springs, originally protected by indigenous deities, were progressively Christianized from Saint Patrick onwards and put under the patronage of different saints renowned for their miracles. Even though Irish mythology does not preserve evidence of healing goddesses presiding over curative springs, that does not necessarily mean that wells, fountains and springs were not worshipped and deified there also in Celtic times.

The four previous chapters have dealt with goddesses embodying the land and specific natural elements (animals, trees, mountains, rivers and springs). It has been demonstrated that these goddesses were invoked for different purposes: prosperity, defence of the territory, healing, mystical inspiration and protection in the afterlife. The subject of the last chapter deals with the religious rites pertaining to intoxication, performed with the aim of making contact with the divine world and entering into dialogue with the deities. Some goddesses appear to have personified those intoxicating rites, which were probably performed in various contexts, such as during rituals linked to leadership, healing, war and death.

²²⁰² Healy, 1884, pp. 85-93 ; Rhÿs, 1901, vol. 1, pp. 354-400 ; Wood-Martin, 1902, vol. 2, pp. 46-115 ; Ó Danachair, 1958, pp. 36-40 ; MacNeill, 1962, pp. 260-286 ; Logan, 1980 ; Brenneman & Brenneman, 1995 ; Rackard & O'Callaghan, 2001.

²²⁰³ De Belloget, 1872, p. 131.

²²⁰⁴ Jones, 1954, pp. 1-11 ; Gribben, 1992, pp. 15-20 ; Carroll, 1999, pp. 54-81.

Chapter 5 Goddesses of Intoxication

Introduction

As we have seen through the previous chapters, Celtic goddesses are generally difficult to define inasmuch as information about them comes down to a few inscriptions and to the significance of their names, which sometimes remains obscure. Irish mythology can sometimes throw light on the nature of the Gaulish and British goddesses, particularly when similarities between Irish, British and Gaulish goddess names can be established. Queen Medb, for instance, who is one of the most emblematic female figures of Irish mythology, is etymologically linked to two continental goddess types: Meduna and the Comedovae, respectively known from inscriptions discovered in Bad Bertrich (Germany) and in Aix-les-Bains (Savoy, France). An Ogam script engraved in a cave located in County Roscommon in the west of Ireland might also refer to the goddess Meduva, whose name might be the old form of Medb's name. The names of the Irish goddess Medb and the Gaulish goddesses Meduna and the Comedovae may be derived from an Indo-European word **médhu-* signifying 'honey', 'intoxication', and designate the fermented drink extracted from honey, that is 'mead'.²²⁰⁵ If this etymology is correct – other possibilities have been suggested –, their names may be therefore glossed as 'Goddess of Intoxication by Mead' or 'Mead Goddess'.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that these Mead Goddesses bear some resemblance to two British goddesses who also possessed the function of 'intoxication' according to the etymology* of their names: Latis, whose name, known from two inscriptions discovered in Cumbria, means 'the Intoxicating Drink (Purveyor)', and Braciaca, possibly 'Goddess of (malt-induced) Intoxication' or 'Goddess of Beer', whose name was revealed on a dedication found in Derbyshire. From these divine names, it can be inferred that the insular and continental Celts had a tradition of 'Intoxicating Goddesses' in common.

So as not to misunderstand the nature and functions of the Celtic Goddesses of Intoxication, it is worth emphasizing that the word *intoxication* does not have the same meaning in English as in French. In English, *intoxication* is literally 'the state of being drunk' or, in the figurative sense, which ensues from it, 'the state of being happy, excited, and unable to think clearly'.²²⁰⁶ It is thus a synonym of the word 'drunkenness' or 'inebriation', which is in French 'ivresse', 'ébrîété'. In addition, the word *intoxication* can denote the state of euphoria or delirium reached after consuming drugs or intoxicating plants, which is to say plants which alter, fuddle or addle the mind on account of their psychotropic properties. As for the French word *intoxication*, its meaning is far stronger, for it signifies 'poisoning' (from Greek *toxikon*, 'poison' and Latin *toxicum*, 'poison'), which is to say illness or death resulting from the swallowing, touching or breathing of a noxious substance:

²²⁰⁵ Dumézil, 1995, p. 330 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 165

²²⁰⁶ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995. Other examples: 'the driver was clearly intoxicated (drunk)' or 'an intoxicant is something that makes you feel drunk, especially an intoxicating drink'.

“introduction ou accumulation spontanée dans l’organisme d’une substance toxique ou nocive, c’est à dire qui empoisonne, qui provoque la mort”²²⁰⁷.

Therefore, *intoxication* connotes death in French, while in English it refers to the state of having one’s mind blurred after consuming alcoholic drinks, drugs or hallucinatory plants. Interestingly, the two languages seem to reflect the dual qualities of intoxicating substances, which can either modify the vision when absorbed in small quantities, or be poisonous and lethal if taken in large amounts. The subject of this chapter is not devoted to poisoning goddesses embodying death, but to goddesses furthering drunkenness, ecstasy or trance by purveying ‘intoxicating’ beverages, which they actually personify. This unusual function arouses surprise, curiosity and multiple questions, for it represents a strong contrast with the traditional land-, water- or animal-goddesses embodying nature or protecting the territory. What was ‘intoxication’ in antiquity and what was its aim and place in the society of the time? How could this cultural aspect be linked and represented by goddesses? The existence of several goddesses bearing the name of ‘mead’ in Gaul and in Ireland tends to reveal that this intoxicating drink played a significant role in Celtic times. Could mead have thus been a sacred beverage giving access to the divine world and purveying immortality like the Soma in Ancient India or the Haoma in Persia? Could the mead-goddesses have been the guardians, representatives or personifications of specific cults and rites among which mead-intoxication figures prominently? If so, which ones? Despite the time gap and the different nature of the sources, is the figure of Medb reminiscent of mead-intoxication and cults attached to it? May she cast light on some possible functions of the intoxicating goddess?

In order to clearly understand, reconstruct and penetrate the essence of these very singular goddesses, it is first necessary to define the meaning, techniques and functions of sacred intoxication in ancient times. The study of the archaeological and literary data in Gaul, Britain and Ireland, will then allow us to determine the place of mead in the religious life of the time and analyze the nature, role and possible functions of the mighty Celtic goddesses of intoxication.

I) Definition of ‘Sacred Intoxication’

A) The Opening to the Divine World

1) Intoxication and Trance: making contact with the divine world

As we have seen, ‘intoxication’ has to be understood in the broad sense of the word, which is to say the state reached, such as drunkenness, delirium or ecstasy, after consuming specific preparations or beverages made from vegetal or animal products altering the senses. In ancient times for instance, mandrake, bryone, datura, atropa belladonna, aconite, drosera, hemp, poppy and achillea were all renowned and used in the ‘rites of intoxication’ for their visionary and hypnotic virtues.²²⁰⁸ Intoxication allowed human beings to establish a connection with the otherworld, ensuring a dialogue with the deities and dead ancestors. Archaeology, ancient literature and ethnology prove that the rites of intoxication, be they connected with medicine, war, society, life or death, date from very ancient times and have,

²²⁰⁷ Larousse, 2005.

²²⁰⁸ Billimoff, 2003, pp. 41-57 ; Weil & Rosen, 2000, pp. 185-187.

throughout the world and civilisations, always born a relation to the divine, for human beings have always required the help, answers and advice of the gods in every domain.

Intoxication actually engendered a modification of the personal state and allowed the consumer to lose contact with reality, thus giving the impression of being freed from material links. In other words, it created a feeling of having one's soul separated from one's body, which, in specific ritual or socio-religious contexts, led to trances or astral projections, ensuring travels to the supernatural world and contact with the divine. It was even sometimes possible to be possessed by the deity itself.²²⁰⁹ Michel Meslin explains that "the very semantic field of the word 'trance' is fully indicative of an area crossed, a passage or change towards something else or towards somebody else; indeed, you say 'to get into a trance', 'to be in trance', 'to get out of a trance'".²²¹⁰ The crossed area, which Meslin comments on, is the frontier existing between the natural world and the supernatural world. And sacred intoxication is the 'key' which opens the door to the otherworld. It enables the human race to traverse the 'divine' boundary, because it changes the rational vision of human beings and allows them to 'see' another reality, another world (the other-world), which is to say the one living in parallel to the natural world: the world of the divine and of the dead ancestors.

Irish mythology is very representative of the belief of an invisible supernatural world living within the human world. The gods are indeed depicted living in the *sídh* or 'otherworld', which is subterranean and submarine. It is indeed believed to be situated under the earth, hills, lakes, rivers or the sea. Access to the otherworld is not an easy task and is made possible through visions, dreams, celestial fog, or long voyages across the sea. The respective *Echtraí* ('Adventures (to the Otherworld)')²²¹¹ of Cond Cétchathach ('Wise Leader of the Hundred Battles')²²¹² and Cormac Mac Airt,²²¹³ for instance, relate that the two hero-kings managed to enter the otherworld and meet the deities through a thick fog suddenly appearing from nowhere. Accordingly, this fog could be interpreted as the metaphor of the blurred vision reached after performing rites of intoxication, which aimed at 'seeing' the supernatural world. Similarly, it may be that the *Imrama*²²¹⁴ (literally meaning 'rowing' or 'sea voyaging'), that is 'travels' or 'voyages' of fictional characters, such as Bran in the 7th-century *Imram Brain maic Febail* ['The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febail'],²²¹⁵ or Máel Dúin in the 8th-century *Imram Curaig Maíle Dúin* ['The Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat'],²²¹⁶ to otherworld

²²⁰⁹ Bilimoff, 2003, pp. 41-57 ; Weil & Rosen, 2000, pp. 185-187.

²²¹⁰ Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, p. 2019.

²²¹¹ *Echtra* is an Old Irish word meaning 'adventure'. The theme of the *Echtra* is the setting of the hero's visit to the otherworld. His journey, whether in coracle or underground, is but a subordinate journey. Therefore, it is different from the *imram*, 'voyage'. Mackillop, 2004, p. 168 ; Dumville, 1976, pp. 73-94.

²²¹² The only surviving text of *Echtrae Chuind Chétchathaig* ['The Adventure of Conn of the Hundred Battles'] is contained in the *Book of Fermoy*, and was translated by Best, 1907, pp. 149-173. For more details about the story and the mythical king, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 115-118 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 101-102.

²²¹³ *Echtrae Cormaic I Tir Tairngire* ['Cormac's Adventure in the Land of Promise'] is preserved in the *Book of Ballymote* (14th c.), in the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (14th c.) and in the *Book of Fermoy* (15th c.), and was translated by Stokes, 1891b, pp. 203-229. For information about the mythical king and the story, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 121-129 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 105-106, 171-172.

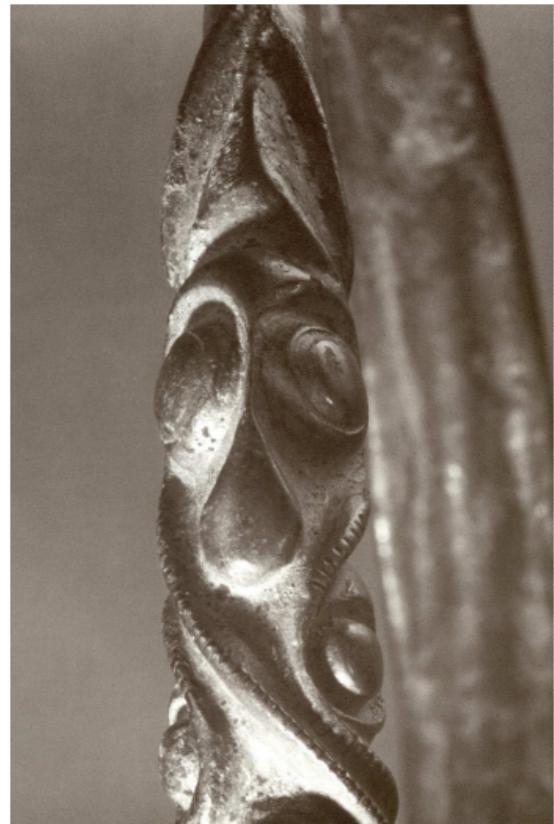
²²¹⁴ The *Imrama* are Old and Middle Irish narratives in which travellers reach the otherworld supposedly in the islands of the Western ocean. Medieval lists cite seven *Imrama* of which three survive. Mackillop, 2004, p. 270.

²²¹⁵ Meyer & Nutt, 1895-1897 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 39-40 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 270-271.

²²¹⁶ Stokes, 1888, pp. 447-495 and 1889, pp. 50-95 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 333-334 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 271-272.

islands, are a literary metaphor of the 'voyage of the soul to the supernatural world', made possible by sacred intoxication, which permitted one to enter into a trance, cross the frontier between the two worlds and encounter the deities.²²¹⁷

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, in Celtic art, some faces (masks) of divinities or possibly of druids in trance are represented with protruding, hallucinated and hypnotizing eyes, which could indicate their state of trance and ecstasy after intoxication (fig. 1 and 2). It is all the more probable since these hallucinated faces are usually found on sacred objects stamped with magic, such as fibulas* or torques* (fig. 1). In addition, some of them are portrayed with animal elements, such as horns, which must be indicative of a divine mutation believed to be furthered by the absorption of visionary substances (fig.1).²²¹⁸



²²¹⁷ Löffler, 1983 ; Carey, 1982, pp. 36-43 & 1987a, pp. 1-27 study the Otherworld's locations and the various symbolical and metaphysical aspects, functions and meanings of 'the voyage to the Otherworld'.

²²¹⁸ According to Kruta, 1989, pp. 7-22 : "The type of fibulas known as 'masked fibulas', because they are adorned with representations of the human face, and generally associated with animal or supernatural heads, are traditionally considered the most representative examples of early period La Tène art. About sixty instances have been recorded so far [...]."

Fig. 1: Left: End of 5th-century or beginning of 4th-century BC fibula* in bronze from Oberwittighausen (Germany) representing two superposed bearded faces - one of them has animal ears or horns - possibly representing druids in trance or gods? (Length: 0,031m). In Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum. Duval, 1977, p. 53. Right: Detail of a torque*, dated 4th c. BC, from Chouilly-les-Jogasses (Marne) (diam. 0,16 m). In the Musée municipal de Châlons-sur-Marne. Duval, 1977, p. 10.



Fig. 2: A piece of cart with masks in bronze, dated 3rd c. BC, discovered in Mezek (Bulgaria). In Narodnija Archeologiceski Muzej, Sofia. Duval, 1977, pp. 28, 115.

2) Intoxication to establish a 'dialogue'

a) The 'Listening Goddesses': *Clutoiθa* and the *Rokloisiabo*

To make contact with the divine, the absorption of alcoholic drinks or hallucinogenic substances was certainly often accompanied by specific rituals, dances, songs, incantations and musical instruments, which played the role of a physical stimulant and constituted a

mode of identification for the gods.²²¹⁹ Indeed, in Gaul, an inscription dedicated to *Dea Clutoiθa*, discovered in Etang-sur-Arroux (Saône-et-Loire), in the territory of the Aedui, was engraved on an ancient musical instrument, called a crotalum (fig. 3). The inscription reads: *Dea(e) Clutoidae Elatussio(?)*, 'To the goddess Clutoida Elatussio(?) (offered this)'.²²²⁰ The dedicator Elatussio has a Gaulish name and bears the unique name; he is thus a peregrine.²²²¹ A crotalum is composed of two small cymbals or castanets pierced in the middle on the upper scallop, which were used as percussion, by banging the two parts together. It was used to arouse and draw the attention of a deity, so that the pilgrims' prayers could be heard and then be granted. There are several other representations in Gaul of such an instrument, held by goddesses or by their believers,²²²² such as the statue of the goddess from Cosne, which has her laying her hand on a crotalum,²²²³ or the representation of a young boy, holding such an instrument in his right hand, on a funerary stele* from Autun.²²²⁴ The goddess Clutoiθa is honoured in another inscription discovered in Mesves-sur-Loire (Nièvre), in the territory of the Aedui: *Aug(usto) sacr(um) deae Cluto[i]dae et v(i)canis Masavensibu[s] Medius Acer Medianni [f(i)lius] murum inter acrus duos c[um] suis ornamentis d(e) s(uo) d(edit)*, 'Sacred to Augustus, to the goddess Clutoida and to the deities of the inhabitants of the vicus of Masava. Medius Acer, son of Mediannus, had this wall erected between two archways with its ornaments'.²²²⁵

²²¹⁹ Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, pp. 2020-2028.

²²²⁰ *CIL* XIII, 2802.

²²²¹ Delamarre, 2007, p. 94.

²²²² These various references were expertly gathered by Hatt, *MDG* 2, p. 107 ; See also Deyts, 1976, n° 43: in the Museum of Dijon, there is a crotale with its neck being held by a hand, which comes from a destroyed statue.

²²²³ Deyts, 1976, n° 118.

²²²⁴ *RG* 1959.

²²²⁵ *CIL* XIII, 2895 ; *CAG*, 58, *La Nièvre*, 1996, pp. 189, 192 and fig. 170.



Fig. 3: Crotale dedicated to the goddess Clutoiθa from Etang-sur-Aroux (Saône-et-Loire). *Mémoires de la Société Éduenne*, vol. 19, 1866, p. 6, fig. 165.

The divine name Clutoiθa is derived from the Gaulish *cluto-*, *clouto-*, ‘renowned’ or ‘famous’, cognate with Old Irish *clú* (genitive *cloth*), Welsh *clod*, ‘reputation’ or ‘famous’ and Greek *klutós*, ‘renowned’, all derived from the IE root **kleu-*, ‘to hear’ or ‘to listen to’.²²²⁶ *Kluto-* is an adjectival derivative with a suffix of passive participle *-to-*, which pertains to what is heard, that is ‘glory’ or ‘fame’, and thus means ‘renowned’ or ‘famous’.²²²⁷ The meaning of the second element of her name *iθa* remains unclear, because scholars do not know to which sound the Greek letter theta *θ* could correspond. Lambert and Delamarre suggest that *θ* might have stood for an affricate and that *iθa* could thus be read *issa*. *iθa* could be envisaged either as a suffix or as a second compound element.²²²⁸ If Clutoiθa is a compound, it may be understood as **kluto-wid-ta*, with *kluto-* ‘renowned’ and the IE root *wid-* signifying ‘to know’. Clutoiθa would thus mean ‘Of the Renowned Knowledge’. Lambert however underlines that the noun of action of the theme ‘knowledge’ is not *wid-ta* but *wid-tu-* in Celtic.²²²⁹ *Kluto-* could be based on another verbal root, such as the IE root *wedh-* ‘to lead’ and be split up as **kluto-wedh-to*, that is ‘the One who Leads to Glory’.

²²²⁶ Evans, 1967, pp. 180-181 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 118-119.

²²²⁷ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 365-366 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 119.

²²²⁸ Lambert: communication (December 2008) ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 68.

²²²⁹

Given that the inscription from Etang-sur-Aroux is engraved on a musical instrument aiming at awakening the deity, Hatt argues that Clutoiθα may have been associated with the gift of listening.²²³⁰ He relates her to the Rokloisiabo, the mother goddesses invoked in a Gallo-Greek inscription discovered in 1950 on the archaeological site of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) (fig. 4). The inscription, offered by a woman peregrine bearing a Latin name, is the following: *κορνηλια κλοισιαβο βρατουδεκαντ*, 'Cornelia, to the Roklosiabo, in gratitude, on the accomplishment of a vow (or with the tithe)'.²²³¹ Lejeune has suggested that Rocloisiabo is composed of an intensive *ro-*, signifying 'great'; of a root *kloisio-*, deriving from the IE **kleu(s)*, 'to hear'; and a plural dative *bo*.²²³² The Rokloisiabo would therefore be 'The Great Listeners' or 'The Ears'. It must be borne in mind, however, that, like Clutoiθα, their name may also mean 'The Very Renowned Ones'.



κορνηλια ρο-
κλοισιαβο
βρατουδεκαντ

"Cornelia, to the Listening Goddesses, (?) in gratitude, (?) with the tithe, or on the accomplishment of a vow"

Fig. 4: Gallo-Greek inscription dedicated to the Rokloisiabo from Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône). Lambert, 1995, p. 87.

While some goddesses would specifically personify the rites of intoxication, as we are going to show, it seems that other goddesses, such as Clutoiθα and the Rokloisiabo, the benevolent 'Listeners', could be the very representation of the belief that pilgrims could enter into dialogue with a deity, be listened to and have their vows granted. They may have been 'divine ears' which could be reached and awakened through the performance of various rites. They might have eventually been perceived or personified as ears. This is very probable since a 1st- or 2nd-century AD altar, bearing the inscription *Auribus*, 'To the Ears', accompanied with a figuration of two ears surrounded by a crown of laurels, was also discovered on the archaeological site of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) in 1937.²²³³ Here the Listening Goddesses are reduced to the figurative representation of the organ which enables listening: the ear. As Lejeune has pointed out, there is an obvious connection between this inscription in Latin, which is probably a Latinized version of a Celtic formula, and the Rokloisiabo. It seems that this idea of divine listeners is also pictured on a small obelisk from Pfalzfeld (Germany), dated 4th c. BC, on which we can see a god with two enormous 'leaves' coming from the two sides of his head, at the ear level (fig. 5). These 'leaves' could be the ears of the god, which are disproportionately represented on purpose, for it lays stress on the divine ability of listening to the pilgrims.

²²³⁰ Hatt, 1989a, pp. 263-265.

²²³¹ Lambert, 1995, pp. 87-88 ; *RIG I*, 65. They can be related to the Matres Glanicae ('Mother Goddesses of Glanum') invoked in two inscriptions discovered in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône): *RIG I*, 64 & *AE* 1954, 103. See Chapter 1.

²²³² Lejeune, Michel, in *EC*, 15, 1976-1977, pp. 95-96 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 119, 261 ; Lambert, 1995, p. 88.

²²³³ *AE* 1946, 153 ; Lejeune, Michel, in *EC*, 16, 1979, pp. 101-102 ; Lambert, 1995, pp. 87-88 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 262.

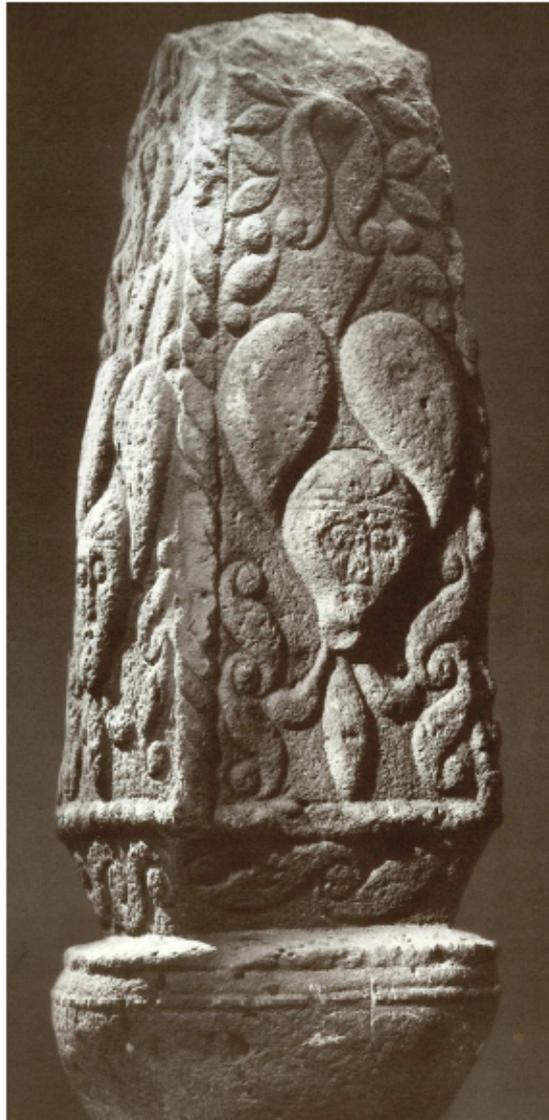


Fig. 5: Small truncated obelisk in sandstone with bas-reliefs* from Pfalzfeld (Germany), dated 4th c. BC (Height: 1.48m) In the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, in Bonn. Duval, 1977, p. 94.

b) The Fulfillers of Prayers

Such a belief of appealing to the goddesses so as to have one's prayers listened to and one's vows granted seems to be highlighted by other names of Celtic goddesses. According to Delamarre, the Mother Goddesses called Veditantiae, mentioned in two inscriptions discovered in Cimiez (Alpes-Maritimes), might be glossed as 'the Praying Mother Goddesses'. The inscriptions are the following: *Matronis Veditantibus P(ublius) Enistalium P(ubli) filium*, 'To the Mother Goddesses Veditantiae, Publius Enistalium, son of Publius' and *[--deab]us Veditantibus--*, 'To the Goddesses Veditantiae'.²²³⁴ The term

²²³⁴ See Chapter 3 for details about these two inscriptions. *CIL* V, 7872, 7873 ; Delamarre, 2007, pp. 192, 235 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 309-310: their name could also be derived from the IE root * *weid-*, 'to know' or * *wedh-*, 'to lead', 'to marry' - cognate with Old Irish *fedid*

vediantiae could indeed bear some relation to the verb (in the first person) known from the lead of Chamalières: *uediiumi*, 'I pray, I invoke' (Gaulish verb *gwhedhiō* 'I pray' > IE **gwhedh-*, 'to pray', 'to invoke' or 'to ask'), which is cognate with Old Irish *guidiu*, 'I pray', *guide*, 'prayer' and *geiss*, 'taboo', and Welsh *gweddi*, 'to pray'.²²³⁵ The Matronae Vediantiae, who are etymologically linked to the Gaulish tribe of the Vediantii, located in the area of Nice, would therefore have embodied this cult of soliciting the help and advice of the divine through prayers and various rites.²²³⁶

The Menmandutiae, revealed in an inscription from Béziers (Hérault): *Menmandútis M(arcus) Licinius Sabinus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the Menmandutiae, Marcus Licinus Sabinus fulfilled his vow willingly and deservedly',²²³⁷ and probably related to the goddess Menmanhia invoked on an dedication discovered in Rome,²²³⁸ may be 'the Ones who pay attention (to the prayers)', that is 'those who answer (the prayers)'. Their name can be related to the Gaulish *menman* 'thought', 'prayer' or 'intelligence', similar to Old Irish *menme*, 'mind, ability of thinking, intelligence, feeling, desire', Welsh *mynw* and Breton *meno*, 'opinion' and Sanskrit *mánman-*, 'thought', 'mind'.²²³⁹ Delamarre points out that their name could be composed like Latin *sacerdōs*, 'priest' or 'priestess' > **sakro-dhōts*, 'who accomplish the *sacra*'²²⁴⁰ : *menman-dut-* > **ménmn-dhōts*, 'who accomplish (fulfil) the thoughts (prayers)'. Like the Rokloisiabo, the Matres Menmandutiae may thus have been goddesses who had the ability of listening to the pilgrims' prayers.

Finally, the goddess Garmangabis mentioned in an inscription from north-west of Lanchester Fort (Co. Durham), in Britain, might be understood as 'She who Takes the Cries away' or the 'Cries-Taker'.²²⁴¹ The inscription is the following: *Deae Garmangabi et N(umini) Gor[dijani] Aug(usti) n(ostris) pr[o] sal(ute) uex(illationis) Sueborum Lon(gouicianorum) Gor(dianae) (uexillarii) uotum soluerunt m(erito)*, 'To the goddess Garmangabis and to the Deity of our Emperor Gordian for the welfare of the detachment of Suebians of Longovicum, styled Gordiana, the soldiers deservedly fulfilled their vow'. On the left side of the altar, a knife and a jug are engraved, while on the right side a patera* and a disk are represented. This divine name could be either of Germanic or of Celtic origin, depending on the interpretation of the stem *gabi-*, which means 'to give' or 'to offer' in Germanic and 'to take' in Celtic.²²⁴² If it is seen as a Celtic theonym, Garmangabis could be composed of the Gaulish *gabi-*, 'to

- and thus mean 'the Match-Macker Mothers', which is less probable. Olmsted, 1994, p. 423 only refers to the Matronae Vediantiae as the 'Matrons of Vediantia', situated in North Italy.

²²³⁵ The inscription on the lead tablet of Chamalières is: *andedion uediiumi diiuion...mapon(on)*, 'I invoke Maponos (...)'. See Lambert, 1995, pp. 150-159.

²²³⁶ See Chapter 3 for the Vediantiae as 'Mother Goddesses of the Vediantii tribe'.

²²³⁷ *CIL* XII, 4223 ; *RE*, vol. 1, p. 260, n°281 ; *RE*, vol. 4, p. 57, n°1320. The inscription was discovered on the 'Plateau des Poètes'.

²²³⁸ *CIL* VI, 31178: *D[E]JAE MENMANHIAE AVRELIVS P[IR?]ACIDVS V.S.L.L.M.*

²²³⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 190, 224-225.

²²⁴⁰ Religious cults or ceremonies, sacrifices or offerings.

²²⁴¹ *RIB* 1074 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 412-413 proposes 'Weaver of Fate' for Garmangabis, from an Irish word *garman*, 'weaver's beam', but this form would be in Gaulish **garmano-* or **karmano-* in view of the Brythonic forms.

²²⁴² See Chapter 1 for more details. Lambert, 1995, pp. 123, 173 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 173 ; Delamarre, 2007, p. 221 ; Spickermann, 2005, pp. 134, 140 ; Schmidt, 1987, p. 144 ; Neumann, 1987, p. 111 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 285-286, 412-414 ; Boyer, 1995, p. 64 ; Fleuriot, 1982, pp. 123-124 ; De Bernardo Stempel, 2005a, pp. 185-200.

take' and *garman* or *garo-*, 'cry', 'yell' or 'scream', cognate with Old Irish *gáir* and Welsh *gawr* 'shout', 'cry', or Old Irish *gairm*, Welsh and Breton *garm*, 'clamour', 'vociferation' or 'cries of rage', and be the 'Cries-Taker'.²²⁴³

These various names of mother goddesses are interesting for they might denote important functions concerning the Listening Goddesses. The *Matronae Veditantiae* ('the Praying Mother Goddesses') are the very embodiment of the custom of appealing to the divine in order to have one's prayers answered. As for the *Menandutiae* ('the Ones who pay attention to (the prayers)'), they represented the belief of being heard by the goddesses, who would benevolently aid and relieve the pilgrims by granting their vows. It is clear that the supplications of the believers must have often been filled with sorrow, distress, anxiety or regret, and thus mingled with tears, moans, screams and yells, which the goddess *Garmangabis* ('She who Takes the Cries away') seem to embody. They must have represented this divine function of symbolically taking pain, sadness and misfortune away when listening to the lamentations of the faithful and then fulfilling their orisons.

B) Contexts of Ritual Intoxication

Intoxication was pursued for various purposes and in different contexts. First of all, it was of great importance in socio-religious rites, which probably gathered together the important members of the tribe to deal with social or political matters, and initiate the youngest. The Indian healers from North America have, for instance, long been using the sacred *datura* and the *stramonium* to initiate the young men to the mysteries of the supernatural world and create collective visions for particular socio-religious rites.²²⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that wise men used visionary substances in the sphere of divination to foretell the future, solve problems or answer important questions in relation to the society of the time.²²⁴⁵ In his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder, for example, relates that the Gaulish peoples used the *verbena* in divination: "The people in the Gaulish provinces make use of them both [*peristereon*, 'pigeon plant' or *verbenaca*, 'vervain'] for soothsaying purposes, and for the prediction of future events".²²⁴⁶ As for the scholiast of Lucan, he stipulates that the druids were used to ingesting acorns to foretell the future: "the name of the druids come either from the trees (oaks), because they lived in remote sacred woods, or because they were used to practicing divination under the effects of an ingestion of acorns".²²⁴⁷

Moreover, intoxication is very likely to have been part of the funerary rites held in honour of important people in society, for hemp and *achillea* residues were discovered in various tombs dating from Neolithic.²²⁴⁸ The most striking examples as regards the Celts are the crater* of Vix (Côte d'Or, France), probably containing the remains of an intoxicating

²²⁴³ Delamarre, 2003, p. 176.

²²⁴⁴ Weil & Rosen, 2000, p. 186.

²²⁴⁵ Brunaux, 2000, p. 179.

²²⁴⁶ Book 25, 59, 2 ; Bostock, 1855. See Appendix 1. *Peristereon* and *verbenaca* were two sorts of *verbena* known in Antiquity.

²²⁴⁷ *Scholia* known as *Bernoises* to *The Pharsalia* of Lucan, commentum ad versum I 451. The *Scholia* known as *Bernoises* (unknown date: 9th c.?) are annotations or notes made in the margin of the manuscripts by the copyists of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages. The English translation proposed in the text is my own.

²²⁴⁸ Bilimoff, 2003, p. 51.

beverage, excavated in the tomb of a princess, and the cauldron of mead discovered in the tomb of the Prince of Hochdorf (Baden Württemberg, Germany), which will be the subject of the following part. It must have aimed at purifying the soul of the deceased and at making contact with the divine to ensure his or her voyage to the otherworld and guarantee eternal life in the hereafter.

As we will see in more detail below, intoxication was also part of war rites with the intention of earning and rallying the divine forces to the warriors, as well as gaining supernatural powers to attain invincibility and invulnerability to fight the foes.

Finally, the rites of intoxication were much used in medicine to heal, prevent illnesses and prolong life, for the intoxicating plants also had powerful curative virtues. Moreover, it was very necessary for the patients as well as for the doctors to make contact with the divine world, more particularly the healing gods and goddesses, for they could purvey the sick pilgrims with remedies or relieve them from their pain, as we will develop in the last part of this chapter.

C) The Holders of the Sacred Knowledge

Texts and archaeology tend to prove that sacred intoxication was generally reserved to the elite, which is to say the kings, hero-warriors, and more particularly the priests, on account of being the 'divine' representatives of the gods on earth or the intermediary between human beings and supernatural forces. It is all the more probable since it was quite necessary to perfectly know the properties of the various visionary plants, how to prepare, use and control them after consumption.

Indeed, every plant possessing such mysterious virtues could on the one hand be a remedy and on the other hand be a poison; such is reflected in Latin by the word *medicamen*, meaning 'remedy, drug, medicine' and 'poison' at the same time. Many a plant, such as datura, rye grass, hemlock, drosera and henbane, were used in medicinal remedies or in sacred beverages, but they could also kill or drive people insane if not carefully and correctly handled.²²⁴⁹ As a matter of fact, their use and absorption could turn out to be very dangerous if the consumer did not have a precise and high-level knowledge of the composition and powers of the plant itself as well as of the elaborate fabrication of the 'visionary sacred preparation', which generally combined several ingredients of different nature and virtues. It was also necessary to have a perfect knowledge and a wide experience of the effects incurred by the absorption of such powerful 'potions' so as to be able to control them and use them in order to reach the divine world and spirituality. For instance, Ernesta Cerulli underlines that the knowledge of the location, effects and dosage of the hallucinogenic plants, which were used in large amounts in the context of various rites in Amazonia, was only held by the Shamans.²²⁵⁰ Therefore, it would appear likely that, in Celtic times, the gathering of the plants, as well as the making of 'potions', were in the hands of the druids.

In ancient times, the plants, on account of being 'magical', ultimately pertained to the divine world, which explains why the plant was believed to be the embodiment of some deity. Thus, it seems quite natural that the picking of the plants was filled with sacredness and

²²⁴⁹ This explains why most of these toxic plants were demonized after Christianization, e. g. the rye grass and the hemlock were called 'plants of the demon', the datura, 'herb of the Devil', etc.

²²⁵⁰ Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, p. 1291 say that the Amazonian Shamans made use of intoxicating plants and beverages in medical treatments, pubertal initiatory rites, war and hunting, funerary rites, rites for the maturation of the most important vegetal species, etc.

surrounded by complex religious rituals reserved to the representatives of the gods, as the famous description by Pliny of the gathering of mistletoe by the druids illustrates.²²⁵¹ Pliny gives three other examples of magical plants, the gathering of which was ritualized, prone to various mysterious taboos* (*geasa* in Irish) and performed by the druids: vervain, samolus and selago.²²⁵² Vervain, for instance, had to be gathered with the left hand at the rise of the Dog-star, so as not to be seen by the sun or the moon, after offering honey-combs to the earth and tracing a circle around the plant with iron.²²⁵³

D) Absorbing the 'intoxicating plants'

To release the various beneficial aspects of the plants and become intoxicated through them to communicate with the gods and the dead relatives, different ways of proceeding, dating from ancient times, are known. Obviously, the one which particularly interests us, as regards our subject, is the fermentation of plants in liquids so as to obtain a sacred beverage. Unfortunately, the actual processes in Celtic times are very little known but are open to various hypotheses based on what is known about other ancient civilizations.

1) Fumigation, Inhalation

First of all, intoxication could be reached through inhalation or fumigation, which means the plants were dried and kindled in order to inhale the intoxicating fumes. The most famous examples are henbane, the smoke of which inspired the Pythia in Delphi to pronounce oracles;²²⁵⁴ willow bark and leaves, the fumes of which were famous for their prophetic virtues in many ancient civilisations of the European continent; rye ergot, used in initiatory rites; and incense, which has furthered communication with the divine world by creating a state of serenity in many religions since time immemorial.²²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Herodotus, in *The Histories*, dating from 440 BC, attested that the Scythians ritually put seeds of hemp on red hot stones to produce a steam by which they became intoxicated during funerary rites.²²⁵⁶ It is very likely that this process of intoxication was in use in Celtic times, but there is no evidence of it.

2) Ingestion: Acorns and the Matronae Dervonnae

It is a well-known fact that, in ancient times, intoxication could be attained by ingestion of the plants, either eaten raw or dried. For instance, in Mexican ethnic groups, the peyolt, a cactus, has been eaten raw or dried by the Shamans from immemorial times to allow the soul to travel to the supernatural world.²²⁵⁷

²²⁵¹ See Appendix 1. Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book 16, 95, 1-2.

²²⁵² See Appendix 1. Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book 24, 43 and 42.

²²⁵³ See Appendix 1. Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book 25, 49, 2.

²²⁵⁴ Bilimoff, 2003, pp. 45-46.

²²⁵⁵ Bilimoff, 2003, pp. 61-63. The incense is drawn from the resin of the oliban (*Boswellia Carteri*).

²²⁵⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 4, 75 ; Godley, 1920: *The Scythians then take the seed of this hemp, and, crawling in under the mats, throw it on the red-hot stones, where it smoulders and sends forth such umes that Greek vapour-bath could surpass it. The Scythians howl in their joy at the vapour-bath.* The Scythians were an ancient people of Iranian language, settled between the Danube and the Don, from the 12th c. to 2nd c. BC.

²²⁵⁷ Weil & Rosen, 2000, pp. 138-141 ; Retillaud-Bajac, 2002, p. 23 ; Bilimoff, 2003, p. 53.

It seems that the Celts had similar ritual practices, for the Scholiast of Lucan relates that the “[the druids] were used to practicing divination under the effects of an ingestion of acorns”.²²⁵⁸ It is yet difficult to understand how this natural product could have procured such an effect, for the hallucinatory virtues of the acorns remain mysterious to modern scholars. There are for instance no alkaloids in its composition, which could have produced evidence of some visionary properties. The alkaloid is indeed an organic compound which directly affects the nervous system and possesses stimulating, hypnotic, medicinal or toxic nay lethal properties when absorbed in large amounts.²²⁵⁹ There are several thousand types of alkaloids, the most famous ones being mescaline, found in peyolt, or caffeine, found in coffee or tea. Alkaloids are found in some plants, such as belladonna, yew, poppy or peyolt, which, as we saw, all procure visionary effects on account of the presence of this compound in their composition.

Even if there is every indication that, on account of the absence of alkaloids in the acorn, this fruit does not possess any possible hypnotic properties, it is interesting to note that it is yet attested as either having fortifying effects on stags or as being lethal to pigs when they ingest them in large amounts.²²⁶⁰ This must indicate that there is a toxic substance in the acorn, similar to the alkaloid - but which one? -, which might also generate some visionary virtues if taken in small amounts and prepared in a specific way. Because of their apparent indigestible nature, it can be assumed that the acorns might have either been grinded or mashed up and mixed with other ingredients so as to obtain a powder, a paste or a mash, which could be chewed and swallowed. It might also have been that the acorns were crushed and squeezed in order to obtain very small amount of juice. As for Brunaux, he suggests, with regard to the ancient technique of the Scythians, that the hypnotic virtues of the acorn might have been released by roasting, i.e. released in the smoke.²²⁶¹ It is also worth mentioning that, in Ireland, there was a practice of eating much indigestible food so as to reach a state of semi-unconsciousness and meet the deities in a dream.²²⁶²

It may also be that the acorn does not possess any particular hallucinatory properties. The ingestion of acorns by the druids before a divinatory session may have been purely and simply symbolical, for the oak was one of the most sacred trees of the Celts, probably representing strength and the mightiness of knowledge.²²⁶³ There are indeed ‘Mother Goddesses of the Oak’, known from a dedication discovered in Milan (Cisalpine Gaul), who must have embodied the sacredness of this tree and of its fruit: *Dervonnae Matronis Dervonnis C(aius) Rufinus Apronius vsIm*, ‘To the Dervonnae Matronae, C(aius) Rufinus Apronius paid his vow willingly and deservedly’.²²⁶⁴ Their name is Celtic, for it is based on the Gaulish root *dervo-*, ‘oak’, which is similar to Old Irish *daur*, genitive *darō/dara*, Welsh *dâr* and

²²⁵⁸ *Scholia* known as *Bernoises* to *The Pharsalia* of Lucan, commentum ad versum I 451.

²²⁵⁹ *Le Grand Larousse Encyclopédique*, t. 1, Paris, Larousse, 2007, p. 59.

²²⁶⁰ Interview in June 2007 with Madame Isabelle De Ridder, member of the equipage which hunts with hounds in the Forest of Fontainebleau: “Forests wardens and the venery know that stags are keen on eating acorns. The years when the oaks produce large amounts of acorns, it is difficult to hunt stags, for they run faster than ever, which proves that the acorn is a very energetic fruit.”

²²⁶¹ Brunaux, 2000, p. 179.

²²⁶² Vries, 1963, p. 239 ; Ryan, J., ‘Die Religion der Kelten’, in König, F. (ed.), *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, Wien, Herder, vol. 2, 1951, p. 259.

²²⁶³ Mackillop, 2004, p. 350 ; Green, 1992a, p. 164 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 59-64 ; Guyonvarc’h & Le Roux, 1995, p. 15.

²²⁶⁴ *CIL* V, 5791. See the section on the Matronae Dervonnae in Chapter 2 for more information.

Old Breton *dar* 'oak', derived from a common Celtic word **daru* designating oak.²²⁶⁵ These Celtic mother goddesses are also venerated in an inscription from Brescia (Italy) which gives them the Roman divine title of Fatae: *Fatis Dervonibus vsIm M(arcus) Rufinius Severus*, 'To the Fatae Dervonnae Marcus Rufinus Severus paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²²⁶⁶ In other words, the ingestion of acorns must have been part of a whole ritual aiming at going into a trance, which was certainly reached thanks to other ingredients possessing 'intoxicating' virtues.

Irish mythology is likely to be reminiscent of this ancient Gaulish custom of ingesting acorns to foretell the future, for it pertains to 'the nuts of wisdom', which are hazel nuts conveying wisdom, poetry, and esoteric knowledge. This idea is clearly evocated in the story of the river goddess Sionann. The legend, the two versions of which are contained in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, recounts that nine hazel trees, the crimson nuts of which were teemed with mystical knowledge, grew over the Well of Connla (see Chapter 4).²²⁶⁷ Later, the nuts fell into the waters of the fountain, producing red bubbles of mystic inspiration, which were fatal to Sionann who, mesmerized by them, tried to catch them and drowned. No sooner had the nuts dropped into the well than the salmon ate them, causing crimson spots to appear on their bellies. These spotted salmon, known as 'salmons of knowledge', were thought to have been filled with the wisdom contained in the mystic nuts they had eaten. The one who could catch such a salmon and eat it was believed to inherit the salmon's enlightenment. The most famous instance in Irish mythology is the legend of Fionn Mac Cumhaill, who gained the otherworldly wisdom by thrusting his thumb he had burnt on the salmon of knowledge - caught and cooked by the bard Finnéigeas - into his mouth.²²⁶⁸ Therefore, one could suggest that these nuts transmitting wisdom to the one who eats them are somehow a survival of the ancient belief that acorns could grant divination and mystic inspiration to its consumer. In addition to being the personification of the mighty tree dear to the Celts, could the Dervonnae Matronae 'Mother-Goddesses of the Oak' have been, to a certain extent, the embodiment of such a belief and custom, which consisted in acquiring divinatory and preternatural powers through intoxication by acorns?

3) Ointments

In addition, the plants, after being reduced into powder, could be blended with animal fat to make ointments or salves which would be applied to the skin.²²⁶⁹ This process must have particularly been used in medicinal rites to allow the patient to make contact with the healing gods and cure his or her pain at the same time. The mix of visionary plants with the fat of a venerable animal (ox, ewe, etc) must have added sacredness to the preparation.

4) 'Intoxicating' Containers: Yew and the Eburnicae

Finally, intoxication could be reached through the absorption of decoctions, that is infusions of plants, or of fermented drinks - various plants or honey being left to macerate and ferment

²²⁶⁵ Delamarre, 2007, pp. 84, 219 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 141 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 423. See the cognomen* *Dervorix* ('King of the Oak').

²²⁶⁶ *CIL* V, 4208.

²²⁶⁷ Gwynn, 1913, pp. 286-297, 529-530 ; Ford, 1974, pp. 67-74 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 111 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 265 ; O'Curry, 1873, pp. 142-144.

²²⁶⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 243, 254 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 376.

²²⁶⁹ Bilimoff, 2003, p. 57.

in some liquid. Before going into more details about sacred beverages, it is worth noting that the nature of the container, in which the drink was left to macerate, must have played a very important role in the composition and preparation of the drink itself, for it must have added some other intoxicating or visionary properties to it.

According to Matthieu Poux, more than 90 % of the wooden buckets used for the mix of the alcoholic beverages were made of yew (*taxus baccata*).²²⁷⁰ And it is noteworthy that buckets made of yew were excavated either in tombs or in 'offering wells' (sometimes 10-metre deep) on sacred Gaulish sites, such as the two yew buckets, probably dating from the end of the 2nd c. BC, discovered on the plateau of the Ermitage (Gaulish oppidum* of the Nitiobroges), in Agen; and the bucket, dating from the 2nd or 1st c. BC, which was part of a wine service, excavated on the site of Vieux-Toulouse (territory of the Tolosates).²²⁷¹ Modern scholars agree that the votive deposits in 'offering wells' are the reflection of ancient magic-religious rites in honour of the gods.²²⁷² Consequently, it is clear that the yew buckets discovered in sacred places contained sacred intoxicating beverages. As the choice of oak wood in the making of votive statues dedicated to water-goddesses was certainly not done by chance, the use of the yew in the making of bucket containing sacred liquids is certainly not insignificant.

Yew was known in ancient times for its healing powers as well as for its dangerous psychotropic and poisoning properties, and thus played an important role in various magic-socio-religious rites and medicine of the time.²²⁷³ The toxicity of the yew was known from the Celts, for Caesar reported that the chief of the Eburones, called Catuvolcus, poisoned himself with yew, preferring death to surrender to the Romans.²²⁷⁴ Pliny also alludes to the fact that its toxic sap was used in the making of specific ointments applied at the end of the spears or arrows of the Celtic warriors to create lethal weapons, like they did with *datura stramonium*.²²⁷⁵

As regards the buckets, the yew was used on account of its solidity, longevity, and imputrescibility, which allowed for the preserving of liquids. Beyond the technical approach, it is also possible that yew, the psychoactive effects of which are mentioned in the classical texts and attested by recent research, played a part in the making of some divine beverages.²²⁷⁶ If a beverage is made to ferment in a bucket of yew, it is, scientifically speaking, quite possible that the visionary properties of the wood are released in the drink. This possibility is attested by Pliny who denounced the specific intoxicating effects of wine preserved in barrels made of yew:

²²⁷⁰ Poux, 2004, p. 345.

²²⁷¹ Lacroix, 2007, p. 31.

²²⁷² See Chapter 1 (introduction) and Chapter 3 (sanctuaries of Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre).

²²⁷³ Lacroix, 2007, p. 30. Yew leaves are nowadays used in the treatment of breast, lung and prostate cancers.

²²⁷⁴ See Appendix 1. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book 6, 31.

²²⁷⁵ See Appendix 1. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, Book 16, 20 ; Amigues, 2001, pp. 207-217 ; Amigues, 2002, pp. 243-246. The practice of using the *datura* on weapons is mentioned by Diodorus and Strabo. Thanks to the description of the fruit, there is absolutely no doubt about the identity of the plant.

²²⁷⁶ Lacroix, 2007, p. 30 ; Wilson, Sauer & Hooser, 2001, pp. 175-185. Biochemical analyses showed that a very poisonous cardio-active alkaloid, provoking dangerous troubles, was present in the sap of the yew, confirming thus the sayings of the ancient writers.

Similis his etiamnunc aspectu est, ne quid praetereatur, taxus minime virens gracilisque et tristis ac dira, nullo suco, ex omnibus sola bacifera. mas noxio fructu; letale quippe bacis in Hispania praecipue venenum inest, vasa etiam viatoria ex ea vinis in Gallia facta mortifera fuisse compertum est.²²⁷⁷ **Not to omit any one of them, the yew is similar to these other trees in general appearance. It is of a colour, however, but slightly approaching to green, and of a slender form; of sombre and ominous aspect, and quite destitute of juice: it is the only one, too, among them all, that bears a berry. In the male tree the fruit is injurious; indeed, in Spain more particularly, the berries contain a deadly poison. It is an ascertained fact that travellers' vessels, made in Gaul of this wood, for the purpose of holding wine, have caused the death of those who used them.**²²⁷⁸

Marguerite Gagneux-Granade explains that the lethal alkaloid of the tree would have had a limited effect on a beverage contained in a yew bucket, given that it was made of cut-down wood.²²⁷⁹ Therefore, it can be suggested that an intoxicating beverage (mead, beer, wine), prepared for a religious occasion, is highly likely to have been left macerate in a yew bucket on purpose, for it to become infused with the psychotropic substances contained in the wood.

Interestingly, an inscription, engraved on a Gallo-Roman altar, discovered in Yvours-sur-le-Rhône, near Lyons (Rhône), in the territory of the Segusiavi, is dedicated to the Matres Eburnicae ('Mother Goddesses of the Yew'): *Matris Aug(ustis) Eburnicis Jul(ius) Sammo[...]* *et [...]*, 'To the August Mother Goddesses Eburnicae, Julius Sammo[...] and [...]' (fig. 6).²²⁸⁰ The first dedicator has Latin names and is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *duo nomina*.

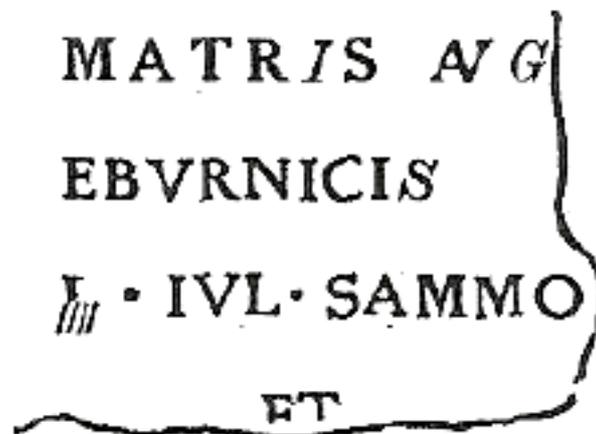


Fig. 6: Inscription from Yvours-sur-le-Rhône (Rhône), dedicated to the Matres Eburnicae. CIL XIII, 1765.

²²⁷⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, Book 16, 20.

²²⁷⁸ Bostock, 1855.

²²⁷⁹ Poux, 2004, p. 345, note 1143 ; Gagneux-Granade, 2003, p. 23.

²²⁸⁰ CIL XIII, 1765 ; Vendryes, 1997, p. 46. The inscription was discovered near the wall of the garden of the Castle of Yvourt, near Lyon. It had been re-used* in the wall of the castle. See Chapter 2 for more details.

Their name is based on Gaulish *eburos* signifying 'yew', similar to Old Irish *ibar*, 'yew', Breton *evor* and Welsh *efwr*, 'alder buckthorn'.²²⁸¹ The Celtic word is found in names of Celtic tribes, such as the Eburouices ('Combatants of the Yew')²²⁸² or the Eburones ('People of the Yew')²²⁸³ in Gaul, and the Eóganacht ('People of the Yew-Tree') in Munster, Ireland,²²⁸⁴ and in toponyms*, such as Eburo-briga ('Hill of the Yew') - modern Avrolles (Yonnes, France) - and Eburo-dunum ('Fort of the Yew') - modern Yverdon (Switzerland). It is besides interesting to note that there may be a homonymy between the place-name Yvours (**Eburnicum*, 'Place planted with Yew Trees?') and the divine epithet Eburnicae. Finally, the word is also found in proper names, such as in the Irish mythical name Eógan, which derives from a Celtic *lwo-genos*, literally meaning 'yew-conception', 'conceived by the yew-tree' or 'born of the yew' (*éó* is 'yew') indicates a divine filiation.²²⁸⁵

Olmsted considers these mother goddesses to be simple protective mothers venerated by the Eburones, and justifies the location of the inscription (Lyons) by the mobility of local peoples in Gallo-Roman times.²²⁸⁶ There may be an alternative explanation, for these mothers were certainly the very personification of the yew tree, which was highly revered by the Celts and used in war, social and religious contexts.²²⁸⁷ They must also have embodied the powerful intoxicating properties of the tree, as its wood was used in the making of ritual buckets, which were part of religious rites of intoxication in order to make contact with the divine. From all of this, it follows that the Matres Eburnicae could have had the functions of Intoxicating Goddesses.

5) Decoctions / Fermented Drinks

The Indian and Persian sacred texts describe precisely the making of some ancient intoxicating beverages which were consumed during very specific religious rites to make contact with the otherworld. For instance, the *Atharva Veda*, a collection of sacred Indian texts dating from around 1500-1300 BC, celebrates the mystic virtues of the 'Bhang', a

²²⁸¹ Guyonvarc'h, 1959, pp. 39-42 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 160: The semantic link between the Indo-European word *iuos* used for 'yew' and Celtic *eburos* ('yew') has not been demonstrated. The etymology* of the Celtic word *eburos* ('yew') being unknown, it has often given rise to preposterous or even imaginary etymologies.

²²⁸² The Eburouices inhabited the today French département of Eure, with Mediolanum (Évreux) as their main city in Gallo-Roman times. They are 'those who vanquish by yew' because yew was used all over Europe in ancient times to make weapons, such as arrows, bows and spears, e.g. *ibar-sciath* in Old Irish 'yew shield'. Yew being a sacred tree, the warriors probably believed that, the use of such weapons would bring them a sort of magical superiority to face the enemy and would put them under the protection of the gods. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 3, 17 & 7, 75 ; Kruta, 2000, p. 441 ; Delamarre, 2003, pp. 159-160 ; Lacroix, 2007, p. 30 ; Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, p. 518.

²²⁸³ The Eburones were situated in the area north of the Ardennes, between the Main and the Rhine, with Atuatuca for fortress, but this city has never been located. Catuvolcos and Ambiorix were their leaders in 54 BC. See Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 5, 24, 26 & 6, 31, 34-35. Kruta, 2000, pp. 526, 594 thinks that their name is derived from *eburos* ('boar').

²²⁸⁴ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 430-431 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 200-204: "the strongest sept* in the southern part of Ireland from about the 5th c. AD until the Middle Ages [...] The image of the yew tree as the sept's talisman is clear from the account of how one of their legendary figures, Conall Corc, established Caiseal (Cashel, Co. Tipperary) as their headquarters after a yew tree appeared on top of the great rock there."

²²⁸⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 200.

²²⁸⁶ Olmsted, 1994, p. 415.

²²⁸⁷ Irish mythology is reminiscent of such a veneration of the yew tree. For a description of the various myths and legends, see Ó hÓgáin, 2003, pp. 53-57 ; Macculloch, 1911, pp. 202-203 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 430-431.

beverage based on milk and spices, blended with a paste of cannabis leaves, which allowed the sacerdotal class to embrace the divine world.²²⁸⁸ Similarly, one hundred and twenty hymns of the *Rig Veda* are devoted to the rituals accompanying the fastidious preparation of the Soma ('jus' in Sanskrit), a divine fermented beverage drawn from the honey of a plant called 'soma' or 'ray of light',²²⁸⁹ which the Brahmins drank in Vedic times, for it led to ecstatic experiment and bestowed eternity of the soul.²²⁹⁰ In the mythology of Ancient India, the divine beverage is personified as Soma, a polymorphic god who reigns on the realm of the plants, cures illnesses and symbolizes the link between men and the divine world.²²⁹¹ In ancient Persia, the counterpart of the Soma was called the 'Haoma', a trance-inducing drink obtained by the distillation and fermentation of some plant or sacred herb, which was used in religious rites, for it fired spirituality and conveyed access to the otherworld.²²⁹² A god bearing its name, Haoma, who was the intermediary between earth and heaven in Persian mythology, also embodied the intoxicating beverage.²²⁹³

If other ancient civilisations had their own specific fermented beverage giving access to the divine world, spirituality, wisdom and eternity, it is likely that the Celts had their own sacred intoxicating drink. As there are no written sources in Gaul, and as Irish literature does not seem to record such a custom, the ultimate question which comes to mind is: what was the intoxicating beverage consumed in Celtic times to reach the divine world?

II) Mead: the Ambrosia of the Celts?

It is well-known that the Celts were great consumers of alcoholic beverages.²²⁹⁴ Before they discovered wine - after invading the north of Italy - the Celtic peoples had the knowledge and abilities to produce alcoholic drinks, made from local plants, cereals or animal products,

²²⁸⁸ Retaillaud-Bajac, 2002, pp. 14-15.

²²⁸⁹ The nature of this plant is still unknown: hemp, asclepias vincetoxicum or wild rhubarb? In the journal *L'Homme* (1970), the American ethnologist R. G. Wasson tended to demonstrate that the plant in question was a mushroom called 'Amanita muscaria' or 'fly agaric'; a theory approved by C. Lévi-Strauss. The *Amanita muscaria*, which could be eaten raw, boiled or dried or absorbed in decoction, was also traditionally consumed by ethnic groups of Siberia, who practiced shamanism like the peoples of North and South America. For more details, see Weil & Rosen, 2000, pp. 188-190.

²²⁹⁰ Also called Indou ('liquor'), the Soma is the counterpart of the Amrita. While the term Amrita only appears in mythology and is drunk by the gods, the Soma was prepared by human beings as a sacrificial offering to the gods. The Soma was also believed to stimulate the mind, assure fecundity, ward off illnesses and evil spells, and improve the force of the warriors. Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, pp. 892-893, 1447 ; Eliade, 1986, pp. 222-225 quotes a famous hymn of the *Rig-Veda* (VIII, 48, verse 3): "we have drunk the Soma, we have become immortal, arrived to the light, we have found the gods, who can henceforth harm us, which danger can reach us, ô immortal Soma!"

²²⁹¹ Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 413-414.

²²⁹² Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, p. 387. The *Avesta* was originally composed of 21 *nasks* or 'parts'. The only surviving texts are the *Vendidad*, the *Yaçna*, the *Vispered* and the *Khordaitvesta*. They have a purely liturgical character and describe the ancient religious legislation and rite of mazdeism. For the Haoma, see the text of the *Yaçna* (X, I), which reveals that, during the rites of the Haoma, incantations were recited to repel the evil spells and to open the reign of the Good. The Haoma was probably drawn from a flower called 'Harmala Perganum', which still grows on the Iranian plateau.

²²⁹³ Cotterell, 1997, p. 29.

²²⁹⁴ Brunaux, 2004, pp. 247-249.

which undeniably furthered intoxication. The two most popular indigenous fermented drinks in Celtic times were beer or ale,²²⁹⁵ and mead, a drink made of honey fermented in water.²²⁹⁶ In all likelihood, mead is, with beer, one of the most ancient beverages, which was common to all the Indo-European peoples, for the word, designating honey and mead, is present in all the ancient languages: Old Irish *mid*, gen. *meda*, Welsh *medd*, Breton *mez*, 'mead', cognate with Sanskrit *mádhu*, Old Norse *mjóðr*, Old High German *metu*, Luvianian *medùs*, 'honey', 'mead', which all derive from a common archaic Indo-European root **médhu*, meaning 'honey' and the fermented drink drawn from it, that is 'mead'.²²⁹⁷

In addition, various drinking objects, such as recipients, goblets or cauldrons, discovered in tombs, prove that ever since the Neolithic period the use of indigenous drinks based on honey and cereals was widespread. For instance, the biological analysis of a goblet found on the prehistoric site of Strathallan in Britain (c. 2300 BC) revealed pollens and traces of meadowsweet, while a recipient made of willow bark, excavated in a female's tomb, dating from the 11th c. BC, in Egtved (Denmark), contained residues of a drink made of linden honey, cereals and small fruit.²²⁹⁸ As demonstrated previously, it seems that the choice of wood in the making of buckets containing sacred beverages was significant, for the wood must have released some of its intoxicating virtues in the drink. Here it is interesting to note that the 11th-century recipient is made of willow bark, a type of wood which was recognized in Antiquity for its predictive virtues.²²⁹⁹ Therefore, one could wonder whether willow bark, like yew, could have played a part in the making of visionary beverages.

Besides, Plutarch indicates in his *Symposium* ['Table Talk'] that the ancient Greeks were wont to drink a beverage made from honey, i.e. mead, before the appearance of wine, and that it was also one of the favourite drinks of the indigenous peoples at his time:

And it was this substance [honey] of which we made libations* and which we drank before vine appeared. Even today, those of the Barbarians who do not use wine drink a beverage composed of honey of which they can modify the sweetness by some sourish and winey roots.²³⁰⁰

More than being a popular drink consumed in the everyday life for pleasure or entertainment (like beer), could mead have been a spiritual, sacred and divine beverage, drunk on very specific socio-religious occasions by priests, kings or hero-warriors with the aim of making contact with the divine? Could mead have been the intoxicating drink of the Celts giving access to the divine world? Could the intoxicating properties of this celestial drink have been personified by specific deities, like the Indian Soma or Persian Haoma?

²²⁹⁵ It is better to use the word 'ale' instead of 'beer' when speaking of Celtic times, because, at that time, this drink was not made from hops - which is systematically used today to brew beer - since hops were not known in Celtic times - they were brought in Ireland in the 16th c. -, but based on cereals, such as barley, wheat, buckwheat, sorghum, millet or manioc and was aromatised with diverse plants, such as fennel, willow bark, sage, cumin, juniper (berry), lime, Artemisia, etc. See Bündgen, 2002, pp. 46-49.

²²⁹⁶ Poux, 2004, pp. 234-237.

²²⁹⁷ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 222-223 ; Dumézil, 1995, p. 330 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 165 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 339.

²²⁹⁸ See Poux, 2004, pp. 236-237 for more details and examples.

²²⁹⁹ Bilimoff, 2003, pp. 62-63.

²³⁰⁰ ***Book 4, Question 6. Interestingly, Diodorus Siculus, in his Library of History (5, 34), explains that the usual beverage of the Celt-Iberians was mead. He also relates (5, 26, 3) that the Gaulish peoples drank a beverage obtained through "honeycombs which were cleaned" - which is obviously mead.***

A) The Purveyors of Intoxicating Drinks

Even though there are very few surviving examples of such practices among the Celtic peoples, it is possible to assert that intoxication held a very important place in the religious life of the Celts, for the names of several Celtic goddesses - known from inscriptions discovered in Britain and Gaul and from Irish literature - refer to sacred intoxication by means of alcoholic beverages and more particularly by mead.

1) Irish literature: *Medb*

Two different etymologies have been suggested for Medb's name. It is generally accepted that Medb (**medhuā-*) is derived from Indo-European **médhu-*, signifying 'honey' or 'mead'.²³⁰¹ This etymology has caused much controversy, and some scholars propose that it must be understood as 'the Intoxicated One' or 'the Drunken Woman', while others maintain that it should be glossed as 'the Intoxicating One', that is 'the one who provides intoxicating drinks'.²³⁰² There is indeed an Old Irish word *medb*, cognate with Welsh *meddw*, Breton *mezzo*, Gaulish *meduos* meaning 'drunk', 'intoxicated' (from IE **meduo-*).²³⁰³ However, in Irish mythical lore, Medb is never portrayed as being inebriated after ingurgitating some alcoholic drink, whereas she is described offering intoxicating drinks to men of her own will (see below). Moreover, Tomás Ó Máille underlines that "the word [*medb*] occurs in the *Amra Conruí, Ériu* II 5, 12, in the phrase *medb domun*, which is glossed *mesc dorcha*, 'intoxicating and dark'".²³⁰⁴ In addition, he translates the third name of the province of Connacht, *Cóiced (n-) Ólnécmacht*, mentioned in *Cóir Anmann* ['The Fitness of Names'] (§ 77), as 'the province of the drink which renders powerless', that is 'which intoxicates'. And this province is also called *Cóiced Meidbe* ('The Province of Medb').²³⁰⁵ Therefore, for all these reasons, it is generally agreed today that her name means 'the Intoxicating Goddess' or 'the Mead Goddess'. She is not the one who gets drunk but the one who makes men drunk by offering them intoxicating beverages, as illustrated in Irish mythology.

Indeed, the famous epic of the Ulster Cycle, the *Táin B ó Cúailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'],²³⁰⁶ the initial composition in both prose and verse of which dates from the 7th c. and 8th c. AD, portrays her as a mythical queen providing intoxicating drinks to the most renowned warriors, such as Fer Báeth, Láríne mac Nóis, Fer Diad mac Damáin and Fergus, her lover, so that they should accept to fight the invincible Ulster hero Cú Chulainn ('the Hound of Culann').²³⁰⁷ The pattern is repeatedly the same: the warrior is sent to the tent

²³⁰¹ Dumézil, 1995, p. 330 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 165 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 339.

²³⁰² For more details about the differing opinions, see Dumézil, 1995, p. 330 and Weisweiler, 1943, pp. 112-114, who gathered and analyzed the various opinions. Cf. for example Zimmer's interpretation of the name Medb as 'die Betrunkene', i.e. 'the Drunken One'.

²³⁰³ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 222-223.

²³⁰⁴ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 143.

²³⁰⁵ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 144 says that "*Écmacht* is from *ē-cumacht*, the negative prefix (n) + *cumacht* 'power'". Dumézil, 1995, p. 340, note 2, indicates that this interpretation was contested by O'Brien, 1932, pp. 163-164, who proposed for *Cóiced (n-) Ólnécmacht*, 'the province beyond the impassable tract of land'; Connacht being separated from Ulster by impassable lakes and swamps.

²³⁰⁶ It is the longest and most important tale of the Ulster Cycle. It is preserved in three recensions. *Recension I* is the oldest manuscript version, edited by O'Rahilly in 1976. For an account of the story and a bibliography, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 488-492 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 396-399, 422-423 ; Beck, 2003, pp. 98-125.

²³⁰⁷ For details about Cú Chulainn, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 137-146.

of Ailill and Medb, and first refuses to fight because he is Cú Chulainn's foster-brother, but each time Medb uses the same trickery. She offers the champion her daughter Finnabair ('Fair Eyebrows') in marriage and gets him inebriated with an intoxicating beverage - wine is mentioned in the text, but, originally, it was obviously mead on account of her name.²³⁰⁸ Under the influence of the drink, the warrior finally accepts to fight a duel with Cú Chulainn. She paints in glowing colours what they would get if they married her daughter: wealth, power and, above all, access to the forthcoming throne (kingship):

Dobretha Medb techta for cend Fir Diad [...] Tucad Findabair, ingen Medba 7 Ailella, fora leathláim. Is í ind Findabair sin no gobad láim ar ach cúach 7 ar cach copán d'Fir Diad ; is í dobeired teóra póc fria cach copán dí-sin dó ; is í no dáiled ubla fírchubra dar sedlach a léned fair. Is ed adberead-si bah é a leandán 7 a toga tochmairc do feraib in tsáegail Fer Diad. Inaim robo sáithech subach sofarbaillig Fer Diad, is and adbert Medb: 'Maith aile, a Fir Diad, in fetair-seo cia fáth ma radgoired isin pupull sa? [...] bith a Crúachain do grés, 7 fín do dáil fort and [...] Findabair m'ingen-sa 7 ingen Aililla do #enmnaí dait 7 comaid dom sliasaid-sea'.²³⁰⁹ Medb sent messengers for Fer Diad [...] Finnabair, the daughter of Medb and Ailill, was placed at his side. It was she who handed Fer Diad every goblet and cup; it was she who gave him three kisses with every one of those cups ; it was she who gave him fragrant apples over the bosom of her tunic. She kept saying that Fer Diad was her beloved, her chosen lover from among all the men of the world. When Fer Diad was sated and cheerful and merry, Medb said: 'Well now, Fer Diad, do you know why you have been summoned to this tent? [...] [You will be given ...] permission to remain all time in Crúachu [Medb's royal place] with wine poured for you there [...] and Finnabair, my daughter and Ailill's, as your wedded wife, and my own intimate friendship.²³¹⁰ Adfét Láeg dó uile aní sin. Ro congrad Fer Báeth hi pupull do Ailill 7 Medb, 7 asber fris suide for láim Findabrach 7 a tabairt dó ar ba hé a togu ar chomrac fri Coin Culaind. Ba hé fer a dingbála leó ar ba cuma dán díb línaib la Scáthaig. Doberar fín d# íarom corbo mesc, 7 asber fris bá cáem le#-som a llind sin, ní tobrad acht ere c#ecat fén le#. Ocus ba hí ind ingen no gebed láim fora c[h]uitseom de.²³¹¹ Láeg recounted it all to him [Cú Chulainn], telling him how Fer Báeth had been summoned to Ailill and Medb in their tent and told to sit beside Finnabair and that she would be given to him as a reward for fighting with Cú Chulainn, for he was her chosen lover. They considered that he was a match for Cú Chulainn for they had both learnt the same art of war with Scáthach. Fer Báeth was plied with wine until he was intoxicated. He was told that they prized that liquor for only fifty wagon-loads of it had been brought by them. And the maiden used to serve him his share of the wine.²³¹² Congairther dóib Láríne mac Nóiss olla n-aile bráthair side do Lugaid ríg Muman.

²³⁰⁸ Mackillop, 2004, pp. 227, 260, 262.

²³⁰⁹ O'Rahilly, 1976, pp. 78-79 [2577-2601].

²³¹⁰ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 196.

²³¹¹ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 54 [1750-1754].

²³¹² O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 174.

Ba mór a úallchas. Doberar fín dó 7 doberar Findabair fora desraid. Tossécai Medb a ndís. 'Is mellach lim ind lánamain ucut' ol sí. 'Ba coindme a comrac' 'Ní géb-sa dít ém' or Ailill. 'Ra mbia día tuca cend ind ríastairthe dam-sa.' 'Dobér immorro' ar Láríne.²³¹³ Láríne mac Nóis, brother of Lugaid King of Munster, was summoned to them [Ailill and Medb]. His pride was over-weening. He was plied with wine and Finnabair was placed at his right hand. Medb looked at the two. 'I think that couple well matched', said she. 'A marriage between them would be fitting.' 'I shall not oppose you', said Ailill. 'He shall have her if he bring me the head of the distorted one [Cú Chulainn].' 'I shall do so indeed' said Láríne.²³¹⁴ Is and gessa do Fergus mac R#ich techt ara c[h]end-som. Opaidside dano dul ar end a daltai .i. Con Culaind. Dobreth fín do 7 ro mescad co trén 7 ro guded im dula isin comrac. Téit ass íarom # ro bás ocá etargude co tromda.²³¹⁵ Then Fergus was begged to go against him [Cú Chulainn]. But he refused to encounter his foster-son, Cú Chulainn. He was plied with wine then until he was greatly intoxicated, and again he was asked to go and fight. So then he went forth since they were so earnestly importuning him.²³¹⁶

By the same token, in *Fled Bricrend* ['The Feast of Bricriu'], a story composed as early as the 8th c., and probably drawing on ancient antecedents, which recounts the competition, organised by Bricriu biltenga ('evil-mouthed'), between Lóegaire Buadach, Conall Cernach and Cú Chulainn, to get the *curadhmhír* ('the champion's portion'), Medb is described handing cups of wine - which obviously replaced mead - to the three champions: Lóegaire receives a cup of bronze, decorated with a silver alloy bird, full of luscious wine (*cúach créduma ocus én findruini for a lar [...] a lán do fín aicnetai and*), Conall is given a silver alloy cup with a gold bird on its bottom (*cúach findruini dano ocus én óir for a lar*) and Cú Chulainn is awarded a gold cup of wine with a bird of precious stone set in the goblet (*cúach dérgoir dó ocus a lán do fín sainemail and ocus én do lic lógmair for a lár*).²³¹⁷

Interestingly, it can be observed that Medb is etymologically cognate with the Indian goddess Mādhavī, the name of which comes from Sanskrit *mādhu*, 'spring', 'honey of flowers', 'honey', 'intoxicating beverage' or 'mead' (from IE **médhu*).²³¹⁸ According to Georges Dumézil, the word *mādhavī* can be understood as either 'spring flower abounding in honey' or 'intoxicating beverage drawn from honey or from this flower particularly rich in honey', which is to say 'mead'.²³¹⁹ Therefore, her name undeniably refers to the inebriation provoked by the *madhu*, of which she was undeniably its embodiment like Medb. And yet, the story of Mādhavī, recounted in the fifth hymn of the *Mahābhārata*, does not refer to an

²³¹³ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 56 [1818-1824].

²³¹⁴ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 177.

²³¹⁵ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 76 [2501-2504].

²³¹⁶ O'Rahilly, 1976, p. 193.

²³¹⁷ Henderson, 1899, pp. 74-79, § 62. For an account of this story, which is part of the Ulster Cycle, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 48-50 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 237-238 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 166 ; O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 16-17.

²³¹⁸ Stchoupakn, N., Nitti, L. & Renou, L., *Dictionnaire de Sanskrit-Français*, Paris, Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1972.

²³¹⁹ Dumézil, 1995, pp. 328-329.

intoxicating drink offered by the goddess to the four kings she marries.²³²⁰ The 'intoxication' emanating from her is not provoked by a drink but by her beauty which creates amorous desire. Anyhow, Georges Dumézil agrees that her name is inductive of some traces of an ancient religious cult glorifying the *madhu*, which was later personified into a goddess, Mādhavī. The existence of goddesses of mead-intoxication in Irish and Indian ancient literature is indicative of a very ancient religious pattern with regard to mead.

Medb's name may also be linked to the notions of power and sovereignty. Pinault, studying the Gaulish proper name Epomeduos ('the one who masters horses'), points to the homonymy between the IE roots **medwo-*, 'drunk, intoxicated' (from **medhwo-*) and **medwo-*, 'master, the one who rules', which gave the verbal theme *med-* 'to rule' and the word *medu-*, 'mead' in Celtic.²³²¹ Lambert infers from Pinault's analysis that the name of the goddess Medb can refer both to the intoxicating drink and to political power.²³²² The Ancients must have cultivated the ambiguity between the two homonymic words, because, as will be demonstrated, sovereignty and intoxication were interrelated: it was the drink, personified by the goddess, which granted sovereignty. The play on words between *laith*, 'ale' and *flaith*, 'sovereignty' in the Irish texts supports that idea. Various supernatural ladies are described offering the ale (*laith*) which confers sovereignty (*flaith*) on the new king. The name Gormflaith or Gormlaith, 'Black Blue Sovereignty' or 'Black Blue Intoxicating Drink', borne by many early Irish abbesses and noblewomen, and notably by the wife of King Brian Bóramha (AD 926-1014), are good examples of that equivocality.²³²³ Queen Medb is thus both the 'Intoxicating Goddess' and the 'Ruler'; two functions which she clearly embodies in the literature, as will be developed at the end of this chapter.

2) Ogam inscription: *Meduva*?

An Ogam inscription found at the site of Rathcroghan, near Tusk (Co. Roscommon, Ireland), in the cave of Cruachnu - which is a natural rock fissure, to which a drystone masonry porch was added – is worth mentioning, even though its reconstitution and meaning remains problematic and hypothetical (fig. 7).²³²⁴ The Ogam VRAICCI MAQI MEDVVI is engraved on the lintel just inside the entrance.

²³²⁰ For an account of the story, see Dumézil, 1995, pp. 316-327.

²³²¹ Pinault, 2007, pp. 291-307. The proper name Epomeduos is engraved on an Aveni coin (IIPOMIIDVOS), see *RIG IV*, 166. Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 339 suggests that his name could refer to a specific rite, linking kingship, mead and horses. There is a text which has Medb racing against horses, see Gwynn, 1924, pp. 366-367, 473.

²³²² Lambert, 2006a, p. 1522.

²³²³ Mackillop, 2004, p.259 ; Trindade, Ann, 'Irish Gormlaith as a sovereignty figure', in *EC*, 23, 1986, pp. 143-156 ; Ní Dhonnchadha, Máirín, 'On Gormflaith daughter of Flann Sianna and the lure of the sovereignty goddess', in Smyth, A. P. (ed.), *Seanchas: Studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne*, Dublin, 2000, pp. 225-237 ; Ní Mhaonaigh, Máire, 'Tales on three Gormlaiths in Medieval Irish Literature', in *Ériu*, 52, 2002, pp. 1-24.

²³²⁴ Macalister, 1996, p. 16. For more information about the Ogam script, see Appendix 2.

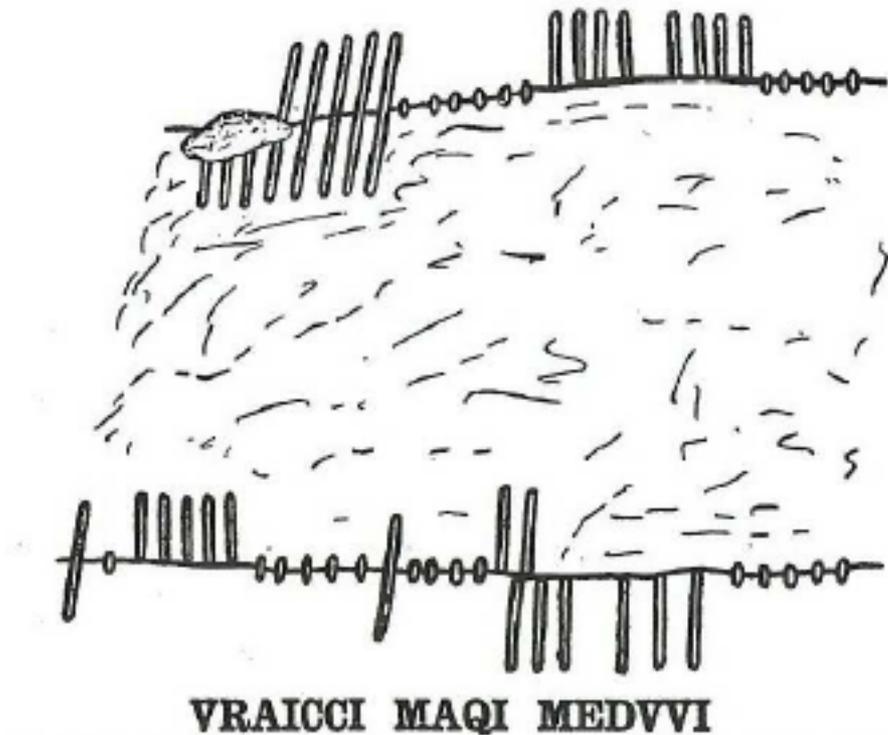


Fig. 7: Ogam inscription found in the Cave of Cruachnu at Rathcrogan (Co. Roscommon, Ireland). Macalister, 1996, vol. 1, p. 16.

Ó hÓgáin suggest that this Ogam means 'Vracos son of Meduva', and refers to the goddess Medb, the antique name of which would have been Meduva.²³²⁵ According to him, this Ogam can be dated from the 6th c. AD because the legend of Queen Medb, first attached to Teamhair (Tara, Leinster) was brought by the powerful Connachta sept* to the impressive site of Cruachain during the 5th c. AD. The Connachta gained possession of Teamhair in or about the 4th c. and decided to build another stronghold in the western part of Ireland at this time.²³²⁶ Vracos may have been a noble of the Connachta since his filiation is divine. An example of a personal name denoting divine filiation to the goddess of mead-intoxication is also found in Gaul. The proper name Medugenos can indeed mean 'Born of honey, mead, intoxication' or 'Descendant of the goddess of mead-intoxication'.²³²⁷ Olmsted points out that the use of the suffixes *geno-*, 'lineage' or 'born of' and *gnato-*, 'son of', usually expresses mythological filiation, such as in Boduo-gnatos and Boduo-genus, which can be either glossed as 'Son of the Crow', or more likely as 'Born of Bodua', that is the Irish crow war-

²³²⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 261.

²³²⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 118-119.

²³²⁷ CIL II, 162 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 222 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 371-372. Olmsted must be mistaken when he translates the proper name *Meddugmathos* by 'Son of the Goddess *Medua', for the Gaulish *meddu-*, *meddi-*, *messi-* means 'judgment' and *gnatos*, *gnata*, 'son', 'daughter'. Thus, *Meddugmathos* could be either 'Born of Judgment' (?), or 'Son of the Goddess *Medua' (?), cf. Delamarre, 2003, pp. 181-182.

goddess.²³²⁸ Likewise, the personal names Camulogenus, the leader of the Aulerici in Gallia Lugudensis,²³²⁹ and feminine Camulognata, mentioned in an inscription from Berthouville (Eure),²³³⁰ also give filiation from the god Camulos ('Warrior' or 'Of Conflict?').²³³¹ In view of these Gaulish personal names, the Ogam inscription of Rathcroghan could therefore mention the divine filiation of a man, Vracos, from the goddess Medb. The name Vracos might be related to the divine name Fraech, meaning 'heather' (from Irish *fraích*, *fróech*, 'heather'), which would have been in archaic Irish, Vraecah, from Celtic Vroecos.²³³² An epic tale, entitled *Táin Bó Fraích* ['The Cattle Raid of Fraech'], tells that Fraech died and was interred in this very cave of Cruachnu.²³³³ One is tempted to think that this VRAICCI was the name of the mythical hero, and yet, in Irish mythology, Fraech is not the son of Medb, but the son of Bé Find, sister of Boand. Ó hÓgáin suggests that the original oral story was probably invented when somebody came into that cave and read the inscription (late 7th c.).²³³⁴

The interpretation of the Ogam script as 'Vracos, son of Meduva' is, however, unlikely, for Lambert points out that it is generally not the name of the mother which follows *mac* ('son of'), but the name of the father.²³³⁵ Moreover, MEDVVI is uncontestedly a masculine genitive, and thus MAQI MEDVVI means 'son of Medvvos'. A feminine genitive could be conceivable after MAQI only if it is considered that the letters –AS are missing at the end of MEDVVI, for the genitive of Medb, which is *Meidbe*, is derived from a Celtic **Medwias*. As for the name VRAICCI, it is problematic from a philological point of view, and could refer to the genitive of Fracc or Froéach. From this analysis, it ensues that this Ogam script is certainly not to be understood as an ancient epigraphical reference to the goddess Medb.

3) Inscriptions from the Continent

a) The *Comedovae (Matrae, Dominae)*

An inscription, dedicated to the *Comedovae*, was discovered in Aix-les-Bains (Savoy) - the date and place of discovery are unknown. In the 16th c., Alphonse Delnène, a local historian, pointed out that the inscription was embedded in the wall situated to the right of the castle - which is today the town hall -, not very far away from the Gallo-Roman 'Temple de Diane', probably originally dedicated to an indigenous healing deity presiding over the curative waters of Aix-les-Bains, that is Borvo or the *Comedovae*.²³³⁶ In 1838, the inscription was brought to the property of the Marquis d'Aix-les-Bains in Sommariva, located in Piémont (Italy). The stone, lost for a long time, was rediscovered a few years ago by Giovanni Mennella in Sommariva Bosco, where it was embedded in one of the outside

²³²⁸ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 372, 411; Evans, 1967, pp. 207-208; Delamarre, 2003, p. 81.

²³²⁹ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book 7, 57, 3.

²³³⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 101; *CIL* XIII, 3183: *Camulognata Coici filia*, 'Camulognata, daughter of Coicus'.

²³³¹ For more details about this god, see Olmsted, 1994, pp. 334-335.

²³³² Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 242-243 and 244, note 113; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 261; Delamarre, 2003, p. 329.

²³³³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 261-263.

²³³⁴ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 261.

²³³⁵ Lambert (December 2008): personal communication.

²³³⁶ *MDSSHA*, 4, 1859, p. 53 and fig. 27.

walls of the castle.²³³⁷ The inscription is the following: *Comedovis Augustis M(arcus) Helvius Severi fil(ius) Iuventius ex voto*, 'To the August Comedovae, Marcus Helvius Iuventius, son of Severus, in accordance with a vow' (fig. 8). The dedicator has Latin names and bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens.

Various etymologies have been proposed for the theonym Comedovae. Rémy and De Vries have argued that their name is based on a theme **med-* which can mean 'to judge', 'to think about' or 'to recover (health)'.²³³⁸ Accordingly, the Comedovae may have been healing water-goddesses presiding over the thermal spring of Aix-les-Bains. Delamarre and Olmsted have suggested that it is a compound **co-medovis*, composed of the Celtic suffix *co* meaning 'with', 'together' or 'similar' and of the Celtic root **medu*, 'mead'.²³³⁹ The suffix *co* probably emphasizes the fact that these mother goddesses were envisaged as similar figures, deeply interrelated in their function of intoxicating, which tends to increase the image of their power. The Comedovae could therefore mean 'the Ones who all together intoxicate by means of mead'. Finally, Lambert, who disagrees with Delamarre's etymology, has demonstrated that the divine name Comedovae (**kom-med-wōs*) is based on the theme **med-* meaning 'to govern' or 'to command'.²³⁴⁰ According to him, the Comedovae may be 'the Ones who Rule', that is the 'Sovereign'. As explained above, these last two etymologies are acceptable, since **med-* and **medu-* are derived from two homonymic roots, respectively referring to intoxication and sovereignty; notions which were interrelated.

²³³⁷ *CIL* XII, 2445 ; Mennella, 2003, pp. 302-304 ; *ILN - V.1*, p. 62, n°662 ; Beck, 2007, p. 11.

²³³⁸ De Vries, 1963, pp. 130-131.

²³³⁹ Delamarre, 2003, pp. 121-122, 221-222 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 371.

²³⁴⁰ Lambert, 2006a, pp. 1515-1524.



Fig. 8: Inscription to the Comedovae from Aix-les-Bains (Savoie). Lambert, 2006a, p. 1516, fig. 1.A.

The Comedovae can be linked to the other two inscriptions discovered in Brison-Saint-Innocent - a village next to Aix-les-Bains -, honouring the *Dominae* and the *Matrae*. The inscription dedicated to the *Dominae* was discovered in the wall of the cemetery of Brison-Saint-Innocent. It reads: *Dominis, exs voto [v(otum)] s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito), Marcus Carminius Magnus pro salute sua et suorum*, 'To the *Dominae*, Marcus Carminius Magnus, paid his vow willingly and deservedly, for his salvation and (that of) his family' (fig. 9).²³⁴¹ The dedicator has Latin names and bears the *tria nomina* of Roman citizens. In Latin, the word *domina* refers to the woman in charge of the domestic aspects and means 'housewife' or 'mother', as well as 'ruler' or 'sovereign'. It is an epithet expressing affection and profound respect, usually employed for a queen or a housewife. The *Dominae* are thus the 'Rulers' or 'Sovereigns', which directly links them to the Comedovae. Lambert explains

²³⁴¹ *CIL* XII, 2448 ; Perrault-Dabot, 1934, p. 166 ; Bourquelot, 1862, pp. 57-59 ; Beck, 2007, p. 15.

that their name is certainly the Latin translation of the Gaulish theonym Comedovae.²³⁴² This translation process, which aimed at replacing the names of indigenous deities by Latin names of the same meaning, is attested in other parts of Gaul and has been studied by Fleuriot.²³⁴³ Lambert adds that the Dominae are very likely to be the same divine figures as the Comedovae, because the two stones are of same style and dimension, and come from the same stone carving workshop.

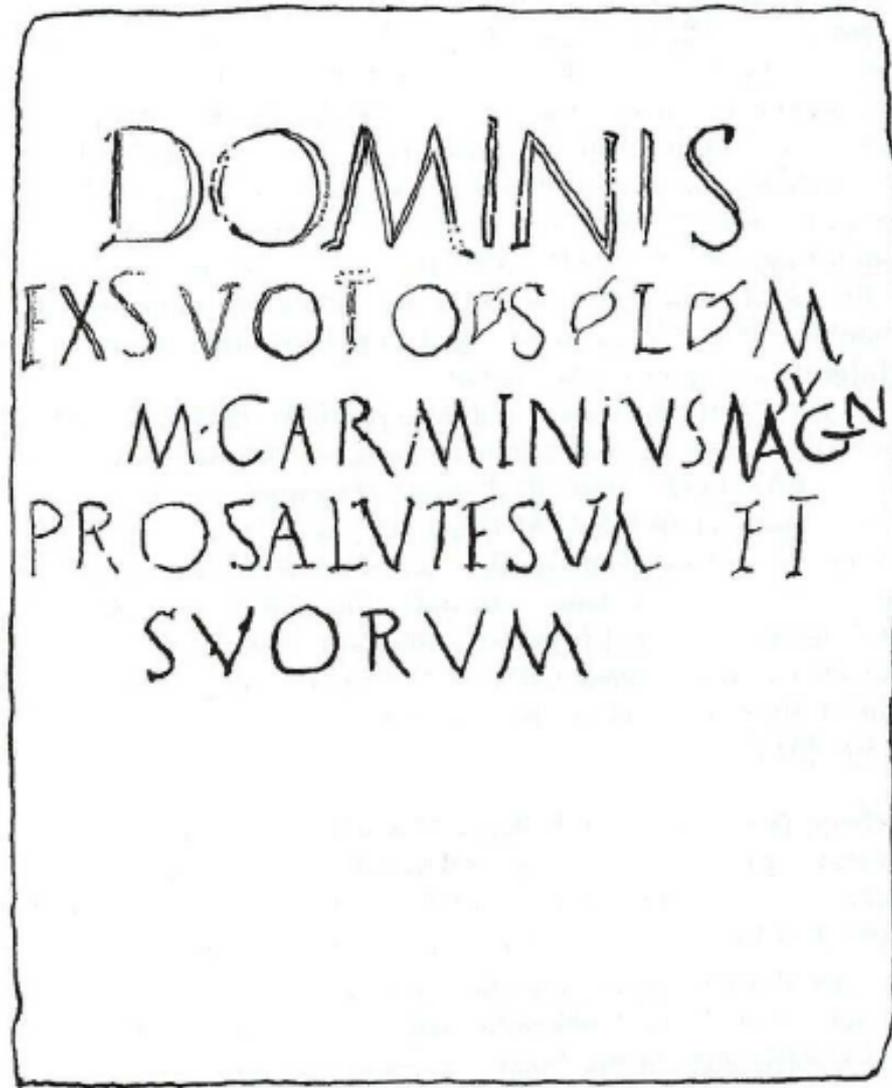


Fig. 9: Inscription to the Dominae from Brison-Saint-Innocent (Savoie). In the Musée Lapidaire d'Aix-les-Bains (Savoie). Lambert, 2006a, p. 1517, fig. 1.B.

The inscription dedicated to the Matrae, probably dating from 2nd c. AD, was discovered in 1866 in the steeple of the Church of Saint-Innocent. It reads: *Matris Au[gustis], L. Daverius [...] v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) [m(erito)]*, 'To the August Mother Goddesses, Lucius Daverius [...]

²³⁴² Lambert, 2006a, p. 1518.

²³⁴³ Fleuriot, 1982, pp. 121-131.

[...] paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (fig. 10).²³⁴⁴ The dedicator has Latin names and is a Roman citizen, for he bears the *duo* or *tria nomina*. As explained in Chapter 1, an epithet, endowing the mothers with a specific location, status or function, was often attached to the title *Matrae* or *Matronae*, such as in Moutiers, where a dedication to the *Matronae Salvennae* have been unearthed.²³⁴⁵ As a consequence, *Comedovae* could be envisaged as the epithet of the *Matrae* revered on that very inscription, giving *Matrae Comedovae*.²³⁴⁶ Therefore, *Comedovae*, *Dominae* and *Matrae* are certainly different names used to refer to the same mother goddesses.



Fig. 10: Inscription to the Matres, found in Brison-Saint-Innocent (Savoie). In the Musée Lapidaire d'Aix-les-Bains (Photo: N. Beck).

b) *Meduna*

An inscription discovered at the hot spring of Bad Bertrich near Trier (Germany) mentions a goddess called *Meduna*. The inscription, housed in the Museum of Trier, is the following: *De(abus) Vercan(a)e et Medun(a)e L(ucius) T(...) Acceptus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*, 'To the goddesses *Vercana* and *Meduna*, *Lucius T(...)* *Acceptus* paid his vow willingly and deservedly'.²³⁴⁷ The dedicator has Latin names and is a Roman citizen, since he bears the *tria nomina*. The goddess *Meduna* (**medu-ono* or **medu-ana*, with the dropping of

²³⁴⁴ The stone (0,25cmx0,30cm) was actually re-used* later on as rubble stone in the building of the church tower.

²³⁴⁵ Jüfer, 2001, p. 61 ; *AE* 1904, p. 140. This inscription is unfortunately lost.

²³⁴⁶ *CIL* XII, 2446. For the two inscriptions, see: Perrault-Dabot, 1934, p. 163 ; Bourquelot, 1862, pp. 57-59 ; Beck, 2007, p. 10.

²³⁴⁷ *CIL* XIII, 7667.

the *o* or *a*) is etymologically related to the Irish Goddess Medb and to the Comedovae. She may thus be understood as a goddess personifying mead and sovereignty. In this dedication, she is associated with the goddess Vercana ('Fury' or 'Rage'), who occurs in another inscription from Ernstweiler (Moselle), and must be a goddess embodying war-like feelings (see Chapter 3).²³⁴⁸ Vercana and Meduna may have been healing water-goddesses presiding over the curative springs at Bad Bertrich, where Gallo-Roman spa installations were excavated.²³⁴⁹ Moreover, the association in an inscription of a goddess of war and a goddess of mead-intoxication and sovereignty is not insignificant, for it can be taken to illustrate the close link between intoxication, sovereignty, war and protection of the territory.

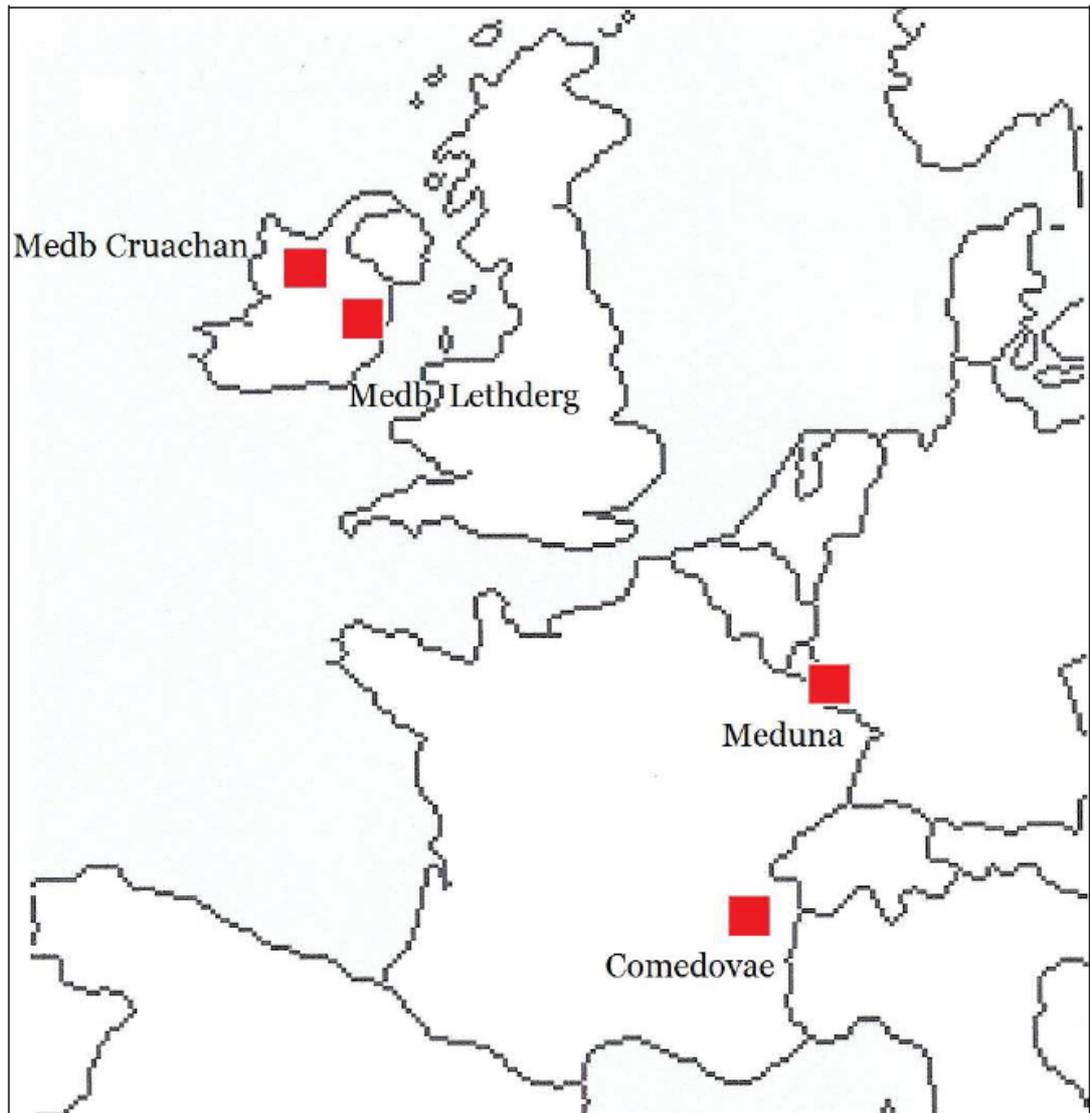


Fig. 11: Analytical map of the 'Mead Goddesses' distribution in Gaul and Ireland.

4) Britain

²³⁴⁸ *CIL* XIII, 4511.

²³⁴⁹ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 372-373, 412 ; Cramer, 1918, pp. 8-10; Wightman, 1970, pp. 138, 226.

It is worth noting that the function of conveying alcoholic drinks is also reflected in the names of two British goddesses: Latis, mentioned in two inscriptions from Cumbria, and Braciaca, honoured in a military dedication from Derbyshire (see map, fig. 19).

a) *Latis* ('Intoxicating Drink')

The first inscription to the goddess Latis is engraved on an altar discovered in 1843 near the ruins of a fort at Fallsteads, which is situated to the south of Burgh-by-Sands, near Hadrian's Wall: *Deae Lati Lucius Vrsei(us)*, 'To the goddess Latis, Lucius Urseius (set this up)' (fig. 12).²³⁵⁰ The dedicator has Latin names and bears the *duo nomina* of Roman citizens. The second inscription was found in 1873 at Birdoswald, which is also located near Hadrian's Wall: *Di(a)e Lat[i]*, 'To the goddess Latis' (fig. 12).²³⁵¹ On the back of the altar, a jug and a patera* are engraved.

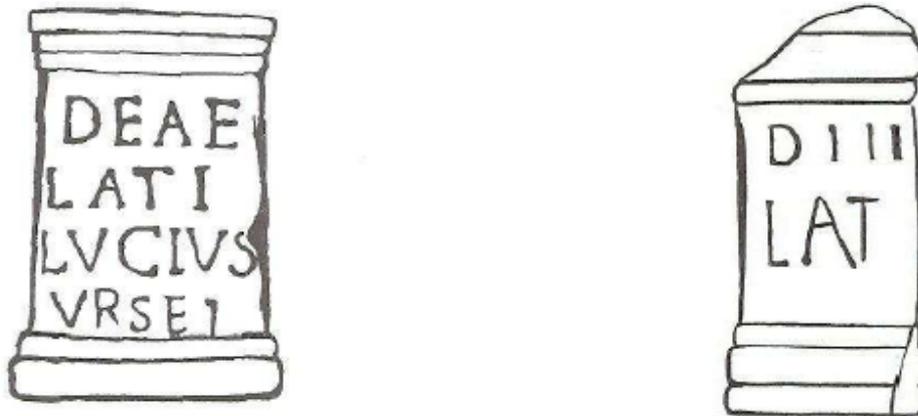


Fig. 12: Inscriptions to the goddess Latis, found in Fallsteads and Birdoswald (Hadrian's Wall). In Carlisle Museum. RIB 2043 & 1897.

It can be assumed that Latis, if based on *lāti-* with a short 'a', is to be related to Old Irish *laith*, 'ale, intoxicating drink' or 'swamp' and *laithirt*, 'drunkenness' or 'addicted to drunkenness'; Welsh *llad*, 'ale, intoxicating drink' or 'mud'-; Latin *latex*, 'liquid'; and Greek *látaks*, 'a glass of wine which is almost empty'. These words come from an IE root **lat-* which can either mean both 'wet', 'damp' or 'swamp', and 'drink' or 'fluid', which explains why the Irish, Welsh and Breton words have two different meanings, either referring to water, or to an intoxicating beverage.²³⁵² It follows that, on the one hand, Latis can mean 'Goddess of the Bog/Pool', and thus be a deity of watery places, which is quite conceivable since the two inscriptions were discovered in stations and since there is a River Latis in the Plain of the Po.²³⁵³ On the other hand, Latis can mean the 'Intoxicating Drink' and be a goddess of

²³⁵⁰ RIB 2043 = CIL VII, 938. The altar was found about a mile south of Kirkbampton, and about three miles south-west of Burg-by-Sands, to which it probably belongs. Burg-by-Sands is located to the west of Carlisle.

²³⁵¹ RIB 1897 = CIL VII, 1348.

²³⁵² Delamarre, 2003, p. 197 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 371 ; Anwyll, 1906, p. 47.

²³⁵³ Holder, ACS, t. 2, p. 150.

intoxication, like Medb.²³⁵⁴ It is even more probable, given that a jug, bespeaking her function of pouring drinks, is engraved on the back of the altar found at Birdoswald.

b) *Braciaca* ('Beer Goddess')

A military inscription engraved on a gritstone altar, discovered in 1695 in the grounds belonging to Haddon Hall near Bakewell (Derbyshire), associates the Roman war-god Mars with an indigenous theonym, *Braciaca*: *Deo Marti Braciacae Q. Sittius Caecilianus, Praef. Cohors I Aquitanorum*, 'To the God Mars Bracacia, Quintus Sittius Caecilianus, prefect* of the First Cohort of Aquitanians, fulfilled his vow' (fig. 13).²³⁵⁵

Most scholars, apart from Olmsted, regard *Braciaca* as being a local indigenous 'epithet' for the god Mars and conclude that *Braciaca* is a god.²³⁵⁶ And yet, *Braciaca* seems to be a feminine name, since *a*-endings are generally names of goddesses: *Sequana*, *Aventia*, *Bricta*, *Icovellauna* or *Nemetona*, while names of gods usually end with *-us* (*-o* in the inscriptions) or *-is/-ix* (*-i* in the inscriptions): *Demioncus Apollo* (*Apollini deo Demionco*), *Danuvius* (*Danuvio*), *Entarabus* (*deo Ent[ar]arabo*), *Randosatis Mars* (*Marti Randosati*), etc. In terms of epigraphy, it would appear that, if *Bracacia* had been a god, its name in the British inscription would have been: *Deo Marti Braciaco* or *Braciaci*, giving *Mars Braciacus* or *Braciacis*. Moreover, it is not rare in inscriptions to find the names of a god and a goddess placed side by side without the coordinating conjunction *and*. Thus, the inscription should perhaps be read: *Deo Marti [et] Braciacae*, 'To the god Mars and to (the goddess) Bracacia'.

²³⁵⁴ Olmsted, 1994, p. 371 ; Sterckx, 1995, p. 94 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 235, 276 ; Green, 1992a, p. 130.

²³⁵⁵ *RIB* 278 ; *CIL* VII, 176.

²³⁵⁶ Delamarre, 2003, p. 84 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 51 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 234-235 ; Poux, 2004, p. 348 ; Olmsted, 1994, p. 408.



Fig. 13: Inscription to Deo Marti [et?] Braciacae, found in Haddon Hall near Bakewell, in Derbyshire (Britain). The altar remained in the possession of the Duke of Rutland. RIB 278.

Lambert explains that Braciaca is not to be understood exactly as a divine name but possibly as a localizing epithet in *-iaco*, parallel to the formation, referring to a place or domain belonging to somebody.²³⁵⁷ Like Rosmertae Dubnocaratiaci is ‘Rosmerta from the place known as Dubnocaratiacum’, that is ‘the property of Dubnocaratus’,²³⁵⁸ the epithet Braciaca could be interpreted as ‘the goddess from the place called Braciacum (?)’, that is ‘a place owned by Bracius’; but the supposed place-name is open to other interpretations. This etymology is likely but not absolutely certain, for, compared with Gaul, there are very few occurrences of localizing epithets in Britain.²³⁵⁹

²³⁵⁷ Lambert, 2008, pp. 1-2.

²³⁵⁸ Lambert, 2008, p. 1.

²³⁵⁹ Lambert (March 2009): personal communication.

The name Braciaca may also be related to Gaulish *bracis*, which signifies 'malt' or 'grain used in beer brewing'. According to Pliny, *braci* was the Celtic name for a variety of cereal (barley?) used in the preparation of malt and the brewing of beer, called 'cervesia' or 'curmi'.²³⁶⁰ The Gaulish word *bracis* is similar to Welsh *brag*, 'malt', Old Cornish *brag*, 'bratium', Breton *bragez*, 'wheatgerm', Old Irish *mraich*, *braich*, 'malt', 'wort' (< **mraki-*), and Galician *émbrekton*, 'kind of beverage'.²³⁶¹ The French word *brasser*, 'to brew' comes from the same root (< **braciāre*). Therefore, Braciaca may mean 'Goddess of (malt-induced) Intoxication' or 'Goddess of Beer'. If this etymology is correct, she may have been closely linked to the cultivation of cereals and the brewing of beer or other local fermented drinks, which she personified, protected and purveyed to her people. She can thus be seen to be closely related, in function, to the other goddesses of intoxication, such as Latis, Medb, Meduna and the Comedovae. Even though this etymology remains conjectural, it is at any rate an interesting hypothesis, for intoxication seems to have been mainly linked to female deities in Celtic times.

The names of Irish Medb, Gaulish Meduna and Comedovae ('the goddesses of mead-intoxication'), and of British Latis ('Ale') and Braciaca ('Beer Goddess?') evidence that the tradition of goddesses purveying alcoholic drinks was important and common to the various Celtic peoples from Ireland, Britain and Gaul. The fact that three goddess names refer to mead-intoxication is not insignificant. It tends to prove that mead was a sacred beverage in Celtic times, consumed within the context of religion. Before considering in detail the archaeological and Irish literary data evidencing the consumption of mead within ritual contexts, it is necessary to explain why mead was envisaged as a sacred drink pertaining to the sphere of the divine and conferring immortality of the soul.

²³⁶⁰ Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 18, 62: *Galliae quoque suum genus farris dedere, quod illic bracem uocant, apud nos scandalam, nitissimi grani*, "The Gauls have also a kind of spelt peculiar to that country: they give it the name of 'brace', while to us it is known as 'scandala': it has a grain of remarkable whiteness." Kruta, 2000, p. 489 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 115: *ceruesia*, 'beer' & p. 133: *curmi*, 'beer' (same word in Insular Celtic: Old Irish *cuirm*, 'beer', 'alcoholic drink' (**curmi*), Old Welsh *curum*, Modern Welsh *cwrw*, Cornish *coruf*, 'beer'.)

²³⁶¹ Delamarre, 2003, p. 85 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 234-235. As far as Olmsted is concerned, 1994, p. 408, the goddess name *Braciaca* might mean 'the Brilliant', being derived from the projected root **bhrōk-*, the lengthened o-grade of IE **bhrēk*, 'shining' or 'brilliant', and the zero-grade **bhrk-*, giving Irish *brecc*, 'speckled' and the Gaulish proper name Briccios. Olmsted's etymology* is not convincing. Surprisingly, he does not relate the goddess name to Gaulish *bracis* and concludes by saying that this divine name remains obscure to him.

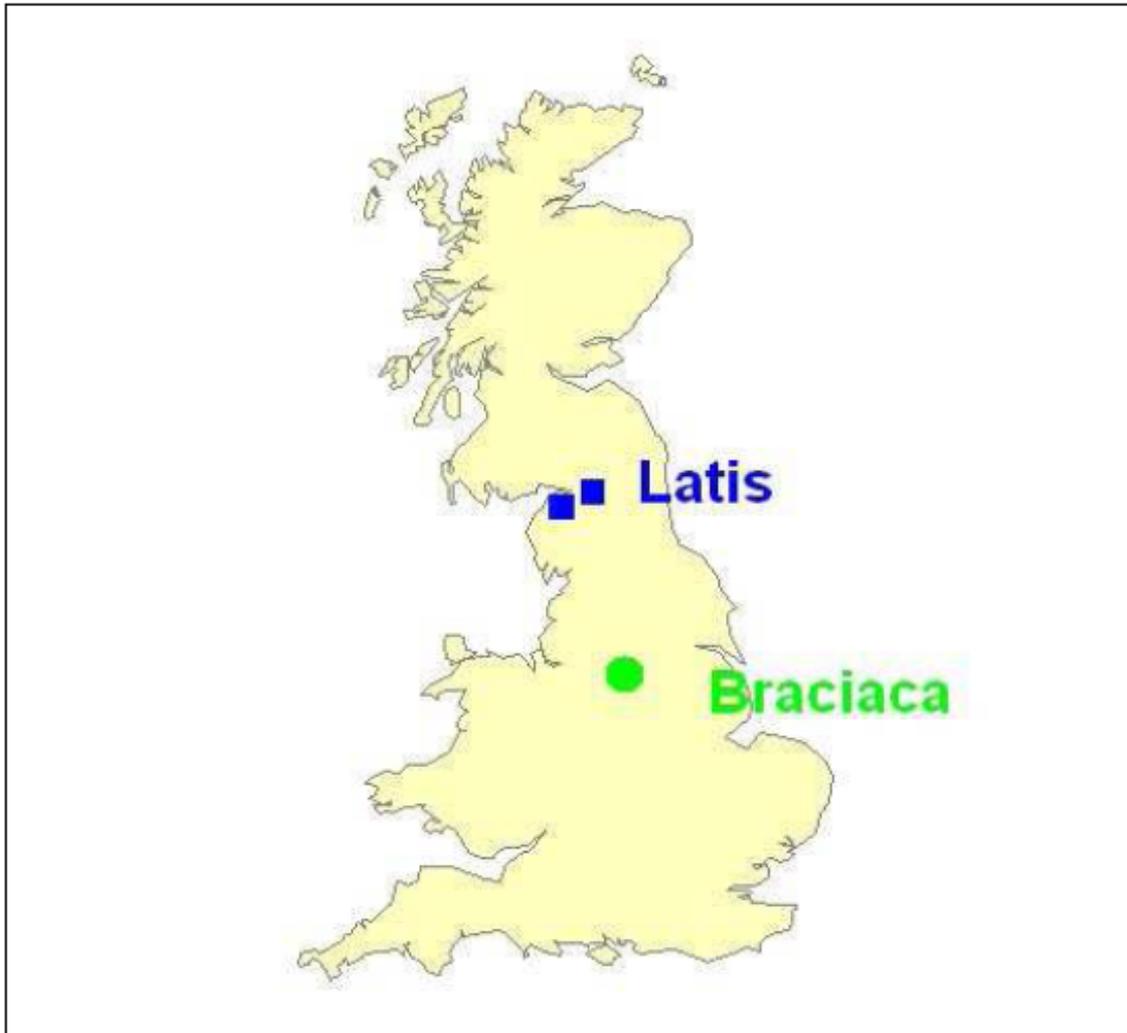


Fig. 14: Map of the inscriptions dedicated to British Goddesses of Intoxication: Latis and Braciaca.

B) The Sacredness of Mead

How could a drink simply made of honey and water, the taste of which is not necessarily appreciated today, have been regarded as sacred in ancient times? From a modern point of view, it is indeed quite difficult to understand how a drink which is nowadays not regarded as a valuable drink, in comparison with vintage wine or champagne, could have held such importance in the religious life of the time.

1) The Complex Fabrication of Mead

At first sight, the fabrication of mead does not seem to be a very difficult task because, nowadays, honey is a very easy foodstuff to get. The collecting of honey was already in practice in prehistoric times, as a 12,000 year-old rock painting, discovered in the 'Cueve de

la Arana' ['Cave of the Spider'], situated near Valencia (Spain), reveals.²³⁶² In Celtic times, honey certainly had to be collected from wild swarms, generally situated in rock holes or in trees, which must have turned out to be a difficult and often perilous task. Apiculture goes back to high antiquity (7th c. BC in Egypt); and the Celts must therefore have had some basic notions of it.²³⁶³ Early apiculture may have consisted in simply hollowing out tree trunks to further the formation of natural swarms which would then be placed near the village or habitations.²³⁶⁴ According to Green, the discovery of the head of a worker-bee in an Iron Age sump at Hardwick tend to suggest that bee-keeping was already in use in the 2nd or 1st c. BC in Britain.²³⁶⁵ Anyhow, the collection of honey must have required much time and deep knowledge of the functioning of nature, which can partly explain the notion of sacredness attached to the fabrication of mead.

Furthermore, as we will see presently, the flavours and beneficial properties of honey varied greatly, according to the geographical location of the wild swarms, possibly the type of tree in which they built their nests, the type of bees, and, more particularly, the plants on which the bees had fed. Some types of honey, collected in specific areas, were certainly much sought after for the particular virtues they would bring to mead. There were undoubtedly many types of meads, made from various honeys, which were reserved for different religious rites. In Rwanda, for instance, where mead still played, at the beginning of the 20th c., an important role in the religious rites of the tribes, groups of 'hunter gatherers' were sent in diverse areas to bring back a peculiar mountain honey, called 'tsama', which was used in the preparation of the *Inkangaza*, the 'Royal Mead', reserved for a very specific rite which consisted in bringing the king to an enclosure where he would drink alone.²³⁶⁶ In other words, the somewhat difficult collection of honey, principal ingredient in the fabrication of mead, in that case, helps account for the sacredness attached to the fermented drink.

The fermentation of honey and water also required time, patience and savoir-faire. Various ways of fermenting are known from ancient times. The recipe of Columelle shows that the fabrication of mead required a lot of care, patience, techniques and attention.²³⁶⁷ He explained that rainwater, kept for several years, had to be mixed with half a litre of honey and then bottled. After forty days of fermentation in the sun in midsummer heat, the bottles had to be stored to receive a certain smoke. Mead could apparently reach more than fifteen degrees - which is much more than beer - after one year of maturation of natural honeys.²³⁶⁸

2) Mead and Immortality of the Soul

a) Symbolical approach

²³⁶² Toussaint-Samat, 2009, pp. 16-17. A fossilised bee, unearthed in tertiary fields in Aix-en-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône), proved that bees appeared on the earth ten or twenty million years ago, which is to say far before human beings.

²³⁶³ Huetz de Lemps, 2001, p. 15. Excavations carried out in Crete revealed that bees became domesticated 2,400 years ago.

²³⁶⁴ Billiard, 1900, pp. 1-2 ; Huetz de Lemps, 2001, pp. 15-19.

²³⁶⁵ Green, 1992, pp. 34-35 ; Grant, 1984, p. 119.

²³⁶⁶ Huetz de Lemps, 2001, p. 27.

²³⁶⁷ Columelle, *De re rustica*, XII, 12 ; Billiard, 1900, pp. 83-84.

²³⁶⁸ Poux, 2004, p. 235.

When taking an interest in the elements composing mead, that is to say water, honey and the producers of the sweet nectar, i.e. the bees, it can be noticed that these three elements had a strong symbolism in ancient times. Throughout the world, the bee symbolized perfection, absolute knowledge, intelligence and poetry, and materially represented the Soul leaving the Body after death. Basically, the bee was the symbol of the passage to the otherworld or resurrection, which explains why bees were sometimes engraved on tombs or why their sweet production, honey, was offered in libation* to the gods.²³⁶⁹ Honey, seen as a divine product, was highly revered in Antiquity, for it was believed to confer mystical knowledge and wisdom. As for water, it symbolised the unconscious energies or powers of the soul and was a powerful means of purification (lustral water), repelling evil spells. Symbolically speaking, one can easily understand the mystical and spiritual importance of the combination of water and honey into a beverage ensuring the route to the otherworld.

b) Anthropological approach

This divine product of the bees was left to ferment in water, sometimes up to one year. Anthropologists interestingly point out that ‘fermentation’ was symbolically attached to immortality and resurrection in Antiquity, for it modified, developed and prolonged the life of inert foodstuffs or beverages in mysterious and arbitrary ways. Laurence Bérard explains: “La fermentation introduit dans la matière inerte une sorte d’animation spectaculaire [...], elle fait sortir la vie de la mort et symbolise parfaitement la résurrection”.²³⁷⁰ In other words, the passage from inert to fermented foodstuffs or beverages by the mysterious process of fermentation was a powerful symbol of resurrection, renewal, purification and immortality, which could be believed to be transferred to the people when consumed. For example, the transmutation of must, which is perishable, into wine by means of fermentation, was interpreted in Antique Greece as an allegory of the passage from the earthly life to eternal life.²³⁷¹ It can be inferred from this example that mead was also regarded as a beverage symbolising resurrection and immortality, explaining why it was divine and sacred.

C) The Cauldron of Hochdorf and the Cauldron of the Dagda

The use of sacred mead on the occasion of religious rites in Celtic times is confirmed by some archaeological discoveries, the most significant one being the 500-litre cauldron, discovered in 1978 in the sumptuous burial place of a Celtic prince, dated c. 550-500 BC, in Hochdorf (Baden Württemberg), Germany (fig. 15).

The cauldron, of Greek manufacture, was situated in the Prince’s funeral chamber, next to the bed, and rested on a specially-made wooden support (fig. 16). A gold cup, which originally lay on a piece of embroidered cloth, the remains of which were preserved on the brim of the cauldron, was discovered at the bottom of the cauldron. The Prince’s funerary furniture also included nine drinking horns (eight small ones made of aurochs and a 5.5-litre iron drinking horn), which were hung on the wall next to the funerary bed.²³⁷² The richly decorated elements of this drinking set are indicative of a carefully-prepared religious rite in relation to drinking.

²³⁶⁹ Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, p. 1 ; Ferro, 1996, pp. 11-15.

²³⁷⁰ Bérard & Marchenay, 2005, pp. 13-28.

²³⁷¹ Brun, 1999, pp. 19-23.

²³⁷² Biel, 1987, pp. 125-126 ; Birkhan, 1999, p. 66, n° 125, p. 125, n° 32-36, p. 325, n° 572.



Fig. 15: Cauldron discovered in the princely burial mound at Hochdorf (Baden Württemberg, Germany). Biel, 1987, p. 179.

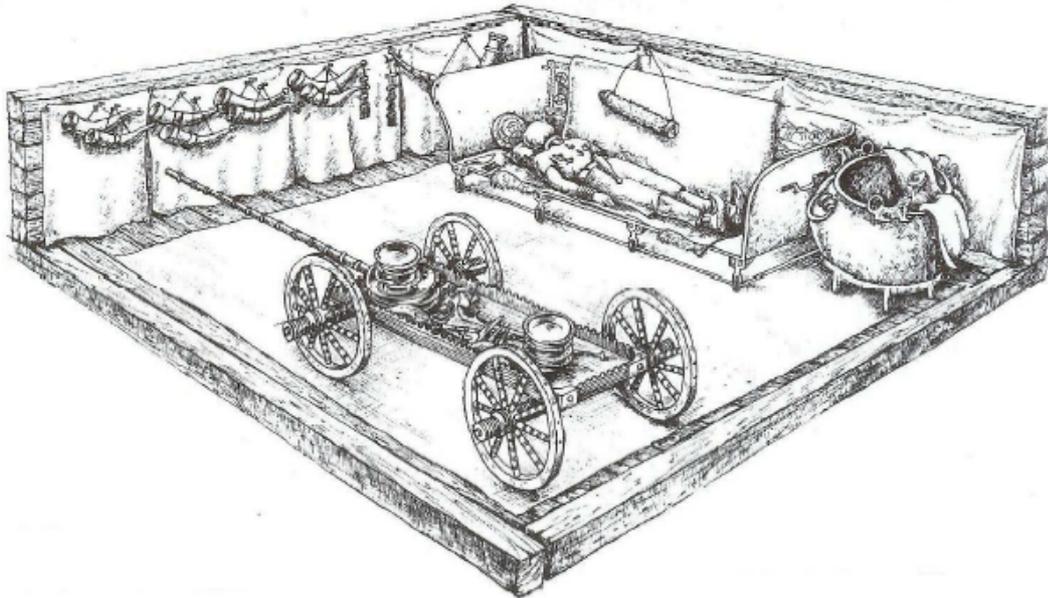


Fig. 16: Reconstitution of the central funerary room of the Prince of Hochdorf and his furniture. Biel, 1987, p. 136.

Botanical analysis, carried out by Dr. Haas of the Botanical Institute of Hohenheim, revealed that the residue was very rich in pollen grains which had been the components of a particular honey. This analysis proved that the cauldron did not contain southern wine but a liquid based on a maceration of honey and water, that is mead.²³⁷³ The gold cup was almost certainly used for drawing the liquid from the cauldron to fill in the drinking horns. The pollinic analysis revealed that the mead originally contained in the Cauldron of Hochdorf was composed of a relatively large amount of honey (between 73 and 292 kg), which meant that this mead was strong and of high quality. The honey used in the preparation of the beverage came from a surprising number of varieties of plants, growing in quite diverse terrains and areas. It was indeed a complex composition of thyme, jasmine of the mountains, plantains, centaurea jacea, anthyllis vulneraria, carex (acid herbs), ranunculus lingua, meadowsweet, succisa, several types of campanulas, sweet peas, papilionaceous plants, vetches, etc.²³⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that 98-99% of pollen grains come from herbaceous plants, while only 1-2% belong to tree essence. This means that the honey of Hochdorf was a summer flower honey and was not a simple honey, but an elaborate and very rich composition of different types of honeys, gathered from numerous bee colonies - given that a wild colony can produce up to 10kg of honey per year - situated in various areas on account of the impressive variety of flowers. The complexity of the preparation of the Hochdorf mead and its large quantity prove that we are in the presence of an intoxicating beverage of a sacred nature.

Furthermore, this discovery proves that mead was used on the occasion of religious and funerary rites. We have seen through the previous pages that intoxication was an ancestral custom specifically practiced in various religious contexts with the intention of reaching the divine. Here the drinking of mead must have aimed at making contact with the divine so as to assure the deceased a safe travel to the otherworld. The composition of the

²³⁷³ Biel, 1987, pp. 152-153 ; Poux, 2004, p. 235.

²³⁷⁴ Biel, 1987, p. 152.

drinking set - the enormous size of the cauldron and the nine drinking horns - attests to the sharing of mead in the context of a religious ceremony. The intoxicating rite must have been accompanied with prayers and songs to honour the dead and be heard by the deities. The priests (druids), intermediary of the deities on earth, were in charge of the preparation and course of the funerary rites. After carefully preparing the complex intoxicating beverage and consuming it, they must have gone into a trance, invoked the gods and prayed for the deceased to be accepted in the otherworld. In drinking the divine beverage, the priest would have symbolically ingested the deity itself, for mead, and its ensnaring powers, is personified by goddesses bearing its name. The goddesses of mead-intoxication must have consequently symbolized the cult of consuming intoxicating beverages on special occasions which required the presence of the divine, as well as its series of rituals.

According to Jörg Biel, the drinking set of Hochdorf is quite unusual for a Hallstatt funerary room, as regards the number of drinking horns and the cup in gold, which is quite rare. The singular number of drinking horns, and their size and location in the funerary room, is nevertheless highly significant, for it reinforces the idea of sacredness. It is noteworthy that the number of drinking horns (nine) was a 'magical' number possessing a ritual and sacral value in ancient times. The number nine is indeed the square of three, which was the Celtic magical number par excellence, emblem of the divine force (see Chapter 1). Nine therefore induces completeness and omnipotence of the divine powers.²³⁷⁵ Moreover, it is worth noticing that, being the last of the series of figures, it evokes the end of a cycle, both an end and a new beginning. In other words, it denotes the ideas of death and rebirth, which perfectly suits the death of a Prince who would rise from his ashes in the otherworld. The number of drinking horns, as part of a religious funerary rite in honour of the dead, is thus revealing and not insignificant. Moreover, the biggest horn, the content of which is atypical (5.5. litres), was probably destined for the dead Prince, for it was hung right above his head in the funerary room. He would have therefore been included in the rite of mead-intoxication.

The Cauldron of Hochdorf can be related to the enormous bronze crater*, holding 1,100 litres, discovered in 1953 in a female's tomb, dating from around 480 BC, in Vix (Côte d'Or), which could have also contained mead or some local sacred beverage (fig. 17).²³⁷⁶ One cannot help thinking that these huge cauldrons, containing intoxicating drinks ensuring contact with the divine and immortality, brilliantly echo the mythical huge cauldron of the Irish Dagda, the father god of the Tuatha Dé Danann. The main attribute of the 'Good God' was indeed a great inexhaustible cauldron (*coiri an Dagda*) from which "no company ever went away unsatisfied", as described in *Cath Maige Tuired* ['The Second Battle of Mag Tuired'].²³⁷⁷ The cauldron is the Celtic symbol of feasting par excellence. The text does not specify what the cauldron of the Dagda contained: was it food or was it drink?²³⁷⁸ The archaeological discoveries in Gaul and Germany, such as Vix and Hochdorf, tend to prove

²³⁷⁵ Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, pp. 663-665, 972-976.

²³⁷⁶ Kruta, 2000, pp. 863-864 ; Poux, 2004, p. 235. See Birkhan, 1999, p. 130, n° 53 for a reconstruction of the interior of the grave.

²³⁷⁷ Gray, 1982, pp. 24-25 ; Stokes, 1891a, pp. 58-59. For more details about the *Dagda*, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 151-154 ; Green, 1992a, p. 75 ; Mac Cana, 1983, pp. 64-66 ; Olmsted, 1994, pp. 43-47 ; Ross, 1996, pp. 213-214. *In Dagda* ('The Good God') is also called *In Rhuad Rofhessa* ('The Red One of Great Knowledge' and *Eochaid Ollathair* ('Eochaid the Great Father') - the name *Eochaid* is derived from *ech*, 'horse'. For a physical description of the Dagda and a mention of his staff, which can kill on one side of it and restore life on the other, see *Mesca Ulad* ['Intoxication of the Ultonians'], Hennessy, 1884, pp. 32-33.

²³⁷⁸ Green, 1992, p. 39 says that: "the Irish god, the Dagda, had an enormous cauldron in which whole oxen, sheep and pigs were boiled", which is never mentioned in the Irish texts.

that the cauldron was not necessarily a kitchen utensil as is generally believed, but rather a piece of crockery specifically used in religious and ceremonial contexts, containing offerings to the gods, such as animal or vegetal offerings, or intoxicating drinks which were served and shared in the context of peculiar ceremonies or rites aiming at making contact with the divine world.²³⁷⁹ The Dagda's cauldron of plenty and immortality is therefore the mythical reflection of ancient Celtic religious rituals, which are evidenced by archaeological discoveries, such as the Cauldron of Hochdorf.



Fig. 17: 1100-litre crater from Vix (Côte d'Or), dating from around 480 BC (Source: Musée du Pays du Châtillonnais, Châtillon-sur-Seine).*

D) The Feast of Goibhniu and the Feast of Samhain

If Irish mythology can sometimes shed light on archaeological discoveries, it has to be carefully and correctly handled. Too many facts or ideas which are supposed to come from Irish mythology are in fact not mentioned in the texts, on account of an extrapolation or a false interpretation of the original text. In other words, it is important to analyze the texts and advance hypotheses, but only when they remain faithful to original texts. As regards mead,

²³⁷⁹ Poux, 2004, p. 260 ; Green, 1992, pp. 13, 35, 39-40, 113, 141.

Irish mythology does not seem to refer directly to religious rites in relation to this intoxicating beverage, contrary to what is often suggested. Nonetheless, it is true that it is possible to deduce from the texts that mead was a divine and sacred beverage most certainly consumed on specific religious occasions.

1) The Feast of Immortality: Mead?

When comparing the various 'Indo-European' mythologies - among others, Vedic, Persian, Greco-Roman and Norse mythologies - it appears that the gods are, without exception, represented eating special food and drinking intoxicating beverages, bestowing on them immortality of the soul and eternal youth in the otherworld. The name designating the intoxicating drinks consumed by the gods varies from one mythology to another – that is Amrita in ancient Indian literature, Hoama in Persia, Nectar or Ambrosia (recognised as mead) in Classical mythology, and Mead in Norse mythology - but all seem to refer to the exact same notion of a sacred honey-based beverage purveying immortality, the generic term of which is 'Nectar of the Gods' or 'Ambrosia'.²³⁸⁰ It can be noticed that the otherworld drinking feast is present in every mythology, which is indicative of a very ancient pattern and belief. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Celts also represented their gods drinking a sacred beverage. Irish mythology is not very clear on that point and offers very few details. It is however possible to infer some reasonable interpretations.

It is often claimed that the Irish texts tell of the preparation of mead by Goibhniu, the Smith God, for the Tuatha Dé Danann. Irish mythology indeed refers to a feast of immortality gathering the gods in the otherworld, the chief occupation of which is drinking and eating. This feast, only mentioned in late texts, is called *fled Goibnenn* ('feast or banquet of Goibhniu'). It is very briefly mentioned in a text composed in the 12th c. and in a tale dating to the 13th or 14th c. They both relate that, after being defeated by the Clann Mhíleadh,²³⁸¹ the Tuatha Dé Danann were obliged to retreat into the *sídh*, underneath the hills. Manannán held a counsel in Brugh na Bóinne (New Grange) with the surviving chiefs to appoint the new king (Bodb Derg), and prepared for the champions:

[...] dorinneadh in feth fiadha 7 fleagh Goibhneann 7 muca Manannain dona mileadhaibh .i. in feth fiadha tar nach faici na flaithi, 7 fleadh Goibninn gan aeis gan urcra dona hardrighaibh, 7 muca Manannain re marbadh 7 re marthain dona mileadaibh. [...] the Feth Fiadha and the Feast of Goibhne and the swine of Manannán were made for the warriors, i.e. the Feth Fiadha through which the chiefs were not seen, and the Feast of Goibhne to ward off age and death from the high kings, and the swine of Manannán to be killed and to continue to exist for the warriors.²³⁸²

²³⁸⁰ See Appendix 3. Dumézil, 1924, analysed and compared the Vedic, Norse and Irish ancient literatures to find out to which real fermented drink the mythical intoxicating beverage could correspond in ancient times. He acknowledged, a few decades later, that the 'Cycle of Ambrosia' which he had developed was not convincing and that he was mistaken when he stated that beer was the sacred beverage of the Celts and Scandinavians.

²³⁸¹ After the two great battles of Tailten and Druim-Lighean (Drumleene in Co. Donegal).

²³⁸² *Duncan, 1932, pp. 188, 207. The legends are comprised in the Book of Lismore (folio 236, a, a) and in the Book of Fermoy (folio 3).*

Thus, the feast of Goibhniu has the property to “ward off age and death”, which is to say confer eternal youth and life.²³⁸³ And the other mythologies are clear on that point; immortality is conveyed by a fermented drink based on honey: Nectar or Ambrosia in Greek mythology, Amrita in Vedic mythology and Mead in Norse mythology. Therefore, the phrase ‘feast of Goibhniu’ implies that the smith god²³⁸⁴ was in charge of preparing the intoxicating drink conferring immortality on the Tuatha Dé Danann, which was undeniably mead in view of our previous researches and analyses.

Besides, another fanciful 12th-century text, entitled *Acallamh na Sen ó rach* [‘The Colloquy of the Old Men’], refers to the feast of Goibhniu as an ale possessing healing and curing properties, which, by extension, implies immortality. Indeed, this account tells of the encounter of St Patrick with an otherworld woman called Aillenn Ilchrothoch (‘Ailleann the Multishaped’) who spoke to him thus:

***Cach áen ro b#i ac #i fhleide Goibnind acaind, ní thic saeth ná galar ríu.
Everybody who would be drinking the feast of Goibhniu with us, neither illness
nor disease comes upon them.***²³⁸⁵

Likewise, in the same text, the old warrior Caoilte complains of an old wound and says that an otherworld woman called Bé Bind:

***is aicci atá deoch leighis ocus ícce Tuatha Dé Danann, ocus is aicci atá in deoch
mairis do fhleid Goibhnenn. has the drink of healing and curing of the Tuatha
Dé Danann, she having the drink which survives from the feast of Goibhniu.***²³⁸⁶

As these references are late, one could assume that the feast of Goibhniu was a borrowing from Classical mythology, for Hephaistos, the smith god, is also described serving the immortal beverage to the gods in the first chapter of the *Iliad*.²³⁸⁷ And yet, the fact that the Greek and Celtic smith-gods are both in charge of the preparation of mead may actually be indicative of an ancient belief and pattern. The actual drink would appear to have been part of indigenous Irish tradition, as Goibhniu himself is addressed as a healer in an early Irish prayer from the 8th century.²³⁸⁸

1) Samhain and Mead

It is also often said that the Irish texts tell of the practice of drinking mead at Samhain, which is one of the four ancient Celtic feasts held on October 31st celebrating the new year, but

²³⁸³ See O’Curry, 1862, p. 383 ; D’arbois de Jubainville, 1903, pp. 174-175 ; Dumézil, 1924, pp. 160-164.

²³⁸⁴ His name comes from Irish *goba, gobann*, ‘smith’. It is noteworthy that Goibhniu was already regarded as a sort of ‘kitchen god’ in the eighth and ninth century. A manuscript from the 8th or 9th c. indeed holds an incantation, which appeals to the ‘science’ of *Goibhniu*, chanted to preserve butter: “Science of Goibniu! Of the great Goibniu! Of the most great Goibniu!”. See *Manuscript number 1395* in the Library of Saint-Gall.

²³⁸⁵ *Stokes, 1900, p. 177. The Colloquy of the Old Men is set a long time after the death of Fionn Mac Cumhaill. St Patrick meets and discusses with the two survivors of the ancient Fianna troop, Caoilte and Oisín, who relate the antiquarian lore to the Saint. See Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 64-66 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 1-2.*

²³⁸⁶ *Stokes, 1900, p. 189 (with corrections to text).*

²³⁸⁷ *Iliad*, I, 597-600.

²³⁸⁸ Stokes & Strachan, 1901-1903, vol. 1, p. 248.

this is actually once again not specified.²³⁸⁹ One thing leading to another, it often results in the belief that Irish mythology recounts that the druids were used to drinking mead at Samhain. In reality, it seems that there are no texts mentioning such a custom. As Samhain was the only timeless mystic night of the year when the supernatural world opened up to the natural world, it is nevertheless possible that the druids consumed some sacred intoxicating beverages specifically at this time, so as to facilitate the communication with the divine, but this is not related in the Irish texts.

In fact, despite the persuasive account given in Christian-Jacques Guyonvarc'h's remarkable work on the subject, there is no clear evidence that mead was part of the feast of Samhain. He supports this idea by quoting the famous episode of *Mesca Ulad* ['The Intoxication of the Ulstermen'], preserved in the 12th century *Book of Leinster* (folios 261b-268b), describing the feast held by Conchobar in Eamhain Mhacha at Samhain, during which mead was flowing freely.²³⁹⁰ The Irish version actually does not precisely refer to 'mead'. The confusion may come from the mistranslation of the Old Irish word *mét* (Modern Irish *méad*), which Guyonvarc'h glossed as 'mead', whereas it actually signifies 'size', 'extent', as Watson specified in his glossary.²³⁹¹ The Old Irish word for 'mead' is *mid*, genitive *medo* or *meda* (Modern Irish *míodh*). The Irish text and its translation are the following:

Bliadain don chúiciud amlaid sin ina trí rannaib co ndernad feiss na Samna la Conchobar I nEmain Macha. Ba sed mét na fledi céit ndabach do cach lind. Atbertatar áes gráda Conchobair nar furáil mathi Ulad uile ic tomait na fledi sin ara febas.²³⁹² ***A year was the province thus, in three divisions, until the feast of Samhain was made by Conchobar in Emain-Macha. The extent of the banquet was a hundred vats of every kind of ale. Conchobar's officers aid that all the nobles of Ulad would not be too many to partake of that banquet, because of its excellence.***²³⁹³

However, it can be assumed that mead is highly likely to have been part of the "every kind of ale" mentioned in the legend.²³⁹⁴ The only reference to *Samhain* and the drinks consumed on that day is an adorable poem, dating from the 8th c., describing the specific foods and drinks ingested on the four Celtic feasts. This poem, which is given in Appendix 4, refers once again to 'ale', not to mead. When you come to think about it, this poem pertains to folklore and not to mythology. Thus, it seems quite normal that it does not refer to mead, for 'ale' was probably drunk by the folk, while 'mead' was reserved to the sacerdotal class.

²³⁸⁹ The four Celtic feasts are *Samhain* (1 November), *Imbolc* (1 February), *Beltaine* (1 May) and *Lughnasad* (1 August). For more details on those feasts and the legends attached to them, see Mackillop, 2004, pp. 377-378, 270, 39, 309-310 ; Guyonvarc'h, 1995a.

²³⁹⁰ Guyonvarc'h, 1960, p. 491 & 1986, p. 51: "L'année où l'on divisa la province d'Ulster en trois parts, on fit le festin de Samhain chez Conchobar à Emain Macha. Il y eut l'*hydromel* des festins: cent cuves pour chaque boisson. Les officiers de la maison de Conchobar dirent que tous les nobles Ulates ne seraient pas de trop pour la consommation de ce festin à cause de sa qualité."

²³⁹¹ Watson, 1967, p. 95.

²³⁹² ***Watson, 1967, p. 2.***

²³⁹³ ***Hennessy, 1889, p. 3.***

²³⁹⁴ Mahon, (unknown date), p. 86: explains that ale is an old type of beer, made of barley, though rye, wheat and oats. It was generally flavoured with herbs, plants and spices and could be drunk hot or cold. Beer, which requires hops in its brewing, dates from the introduction of these in the 16th c. In other words, 'ale' is sort of the ancestor of 'beer'. Bragget was made by fermenting ale and honey together.

From all of these etymological, archaeological and literary data, it can be concluded that mead was the intoxicating beverage consumed in religious contexts to make contact with the divine world. The Cauldron of Hochdorf proves that mead was for instance ritually used for funerary rites and that its complex composition and preparation certainly required much time and an immeasurable knowledge of Nature and its various virtues. There were different kinds of mead, depending on the various honeys of flowers, trees or even mushrooms, used in the composition. Mead was therefore the 'Ambrosia of the Celts', a counterpart of the Soma or the Haoma, the respective preparations of which were also based on honeys of various plants which are today unknown. Like the Indian and Persian intoxicating beverages were deified as gods bearing their very names, it can be noticed that mead was also deified as goddesses in Celtic religions: the ancient forms Meduna and Comedovae, mentioned in Gallo-Roman inscriptions, and the later form Medb, reminiscent of those old forms. These goddesses embodied the drink itself, symbolised the intoxicating powers of mead, and, to my mind, all the cults and rites attached to this divine beverage. What were then the functions of those intoxicating goddesses? Why did they purvey intoxicating drinks and in which context? What did it symbolize? In other words, what were the rites of mead-intoxication attached to?

III) Celtic Goddesses of Intoxication: Essence and Functions

Given that the data evidencing the cult of intoxicating goddesses is very scarce, the nature of their functions remains hypothetical and debatable. It is first intended to show that the goddesses of intoxication might have been worshipped in connection with health and war, embodying the various intoxicating cults and rites, performed within a religious context, which consisted of drinking alcoholic beverages within the context of healing to make contact with the goddess and obtain her cure, or before a battle to become possessed by the goddess and attain a sort of war fury, bestowing moral and physical strength to defeat the enemies. The last part of this chapter will study, though the character of Medb, one of the most vibrant and emblematic feminine figures in Irish mythology, the notions of intoxication and sovereignty. Many brilliant and comprehensive studies have already been done on Queen Medb, detailing all her stories and attributes.²³⁹⁵ As a consequence, this study shall largely confine itself to studying the earliest texts which could shed light on the possible role of intoxication in the granting of sovereignty.

A) Intoxicating Goddesses as Healers?

As seen above, the name of the Comedovae, mentioned in an inscription from Aix-les-Bains (Savoy), may refer to different notions, according to the various etymologies: health, sovereignty and mead-intoxication.²³⁹⁶ The nature and functions of the Comedovae, however, remain obscure. If we consider that they were 'Intoxicating Goddesses', what could they have protected, symbolised or embodied? What were their functions as regards mead?

1) Intoxicating Goddesses related to Healing Waters?

²³⁹⁵ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 339-342 (Meadhbh), 488-492 (Ulster Cycle) ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 326-328.

²³⁹⁶ *CIL* XII, 2445.

The goddesses of intoxication must bear some relation to curative waters, for the inscriptions dedicated to Meduna, Latis and the Comedovae were all discovered near thermal springs, and several rivers bear their name: the Meduna in Venetia, the Medu(a)na (now la Mayenne) in the region of the Loire, and the Meduacos (Latinized Meduacus, now La Brenta) in Northern Italy.²³⁹⁷

Concerning the Comedovae, it is possible to establish a link between the goddesses and the thermal waters of Aix-les-Bains, the healing virtues of which were already known and used in Celtic times, as the excavations, carried out by Alain Canal, in 1980, under the town council, situated in front of the Gallo-Roman spa, revealed.²³⁹⁸ Various objects dating from the last period of La Tène and indigenous structures were excavated, such as pot-holes the organisation of which suggested the presence of enclosures and constructions in the earth, probably houses, which at last provided a sound proof of pre-imperial occupation near the curative spring. This was already implied by the veneration of deities bearing Celtic names, such as Borvo, Bormanus, the Comedovae and the Matres, but it had never been archaeologically proved before.

Symbol of good health, honey has always been, from time immemorial, and throughout the civilisations, recognised for its purifying, preserving, protective, healing and soothing properties, so that it became the constitutive element of many a medicinal treatment and rite - such as in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, as well as China, India, Africa, etc.²³⁹⁹

2) Curative virtues of honey and mead

It is significant that honey, in addition of being rich in living constituents and composed of sugars which are immediately assimilated, has the quality of directly transferring the properties of the flower(s) from which it is made.²⁴⁰⁰ The ancients certainly knew that remedies could be found in nature, and more particularly in the plants. And the bees gather pollen and sugar from almost every plant,²⁴⁰¹ therefore honey is like a thousand-flower beneficial tea.

The belief in the transmission of the properties of the plants to honey is illustrated by examples in antiquity of men who got intoxicated or died after consuming a certain type of honey, coming from toxic plants.²⁴⁰² For instance, Aelian mentioned a type of honey, gathered on boxwood in Trébizonde du Pont, which drove people mad but which cured

²³⁹⁷ Olmsted, 1994, pp. 372-373 ; Delamarre, 2003, p. 222.

²³⁹⁸ Canal, 1992, pp. 172-173.

²³⁹⁹ Used in various medicinal preparations, ointments, decoctions or beverages, honey was generally combined with simples, which enhanced its beneficial action. See Chevallier & Gheerbrant, 1991, pp. 632-634. Diophanes of Nicaea, *Geoponica*, 15, tells that honey guaranteed good health, long life and old age. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 22, 50, describes the various curative properties of honey. Nahmias., 1975, pp. 14-15, 26-31 relates that the Egyptian papyrus from Ebers, dating from 1,600 BC (Museum of Leipzig), which is one of the most ancient treaties on the art of healing, shows that honey held a very important place in ancient medicine. In Mesopotamia, at Nippur, Irak, the most ancient written document on honey, dated 2,700 BC, was excavated. These clay tablets bear inscriptions describing the various drugs made from honey.

²⁴⁰⁰ Signorini, 1978, p.87 ; Hurpin, 1941, pp. 17-19.

²⁴⁰¹ For a list of the melliferous plants known in Antiquity, see Billiard, 1900, p. 55.

²⁴⁰² See Billiard, 1900, p. 56 for various examples.

epilepsy.²⁴⁰³ Similarly, Xenophon and Diodorus recount the story of some people who, after eating honey, gave the impression of being drunk, raving mad, and even dying.²⁴⁰⁴ The curative properties of the plants are, in the same way, transferred to the honey they constitute. For example, rosemary honey, like the plant itself, it is said to improve the functioning of the liver, while lime honey has the sedative properties of the lime flower. Heather honey is diuretic and anti-rheumatic, while fir, lavender and thyme honeys are antiseptics which soothe the bronchial tubes, for the plants have the very same virtues, etc.²⁴⁰⁵ In addition to integrally preserving all the vitamins, perfumes and therapeutic virtues of the plants, honey contains a small amount of formic acid added by the bees to ensure its preservation, which procures a supplementary natural anti-bacterial agent.²⁴⁰⁶

If honey contains the salutary virtues of the plants from which it is gathered, mead is also said to keep the properties of the honey from which it is made. As Jean Hurpin states, there is not one mead but multiple and diverse meads, possessing various tastes, colours, bouquets and beneficial properties, according to the type of honey you choose and the way of preparation and fermentation, or if you add other ingredients, such as spices or plants, to infuse in the drink before, during or after fermentation.²⁴⁰⁷ In Ireland, for instance, there are various recipes of mead, including herbs and spices, such as thyme, rosemary or sweet briar, which must add supplementary virtues to the drink.²⁴⁰⁸ This is the reason why mead has always been regarded as a popular beverage, possessing hygienic, fortifying, tonic, gastric and diuretic virtues, from which diverse curative concoctions could be made.²⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, it is interesting to note that to mead were attributed properties concerning fecundity, since an old custom, which consisted in giving mead to newly weds during a whole lunar month - from which the expression 'honeymoon' derives - was widespread in Northern Europe and Brittany.²⁴¹⁰

It is an acknowledged fact that medicine and religion were interrelated in Antiquity, and sacred intoxication must have held a special place in this religious healing context. The Comedovae could have therefore been the very representatives of some medicinal religious ceremonies during which mead was ritually absorbed, being a means of simultaneously contacting the divine (intoxication) and providing a curative treatment (therapeutic virtues).

Significantly, Irish mythology refers to the healing properties of mead. Indeed, the 12th-century text *Acallamh na Sen ó rach* ['The Colloquy of the Old Men'] explains that the ale of

²⁴⁰³ Aelien, *De Naturalis animalis*, 5, 42.

²⁴⁰⁴ See Appendix 1. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, IV, 8, 19-21 (Greek writer c. 431 – 355 BC) ; Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, XIV, 30, 1-2. Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708), who was a renowned botanist, explains in *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant, fait par ordre du Roy. Enrichie de descriptions & de figures d'un grand nombre de plantes rares, de divers animaux, et de plusieurs observations touchant l'histoire naturelle*, t. 2, 1718, that these accidents were due to the fact that the honey ingested had been gathered from toxic plants, such as the 'Azala Pontica', which the Greeks called 'Aegolthron'.

²⁴⁰⁵ For more details about the various types of honey, the plants from which they are obtained and their many beneficial effects, see Signorini. 1978, pp. 89-90, 105-122.

²⁴⁰⁶ Nigelle, 1968, p. 19-104, 119-127.

²⁴⁰⁷ Hurpin, 1941, pp. 22-29.

²⁴⁰⁸ Mahon, (unknown date), p. 86: *Methglin* is, for example, a spiced mead, which was famous in medieval times in Ireland.

²⁴⁰⁹ Laubenheimer, 1990, p. 74 ; Hurpin, 1941, p. 22.

²⁴¹⁰ Bayon, 1997, pp. 33, 37.

Goibhniu, which confers immortality on the gods, has the peculiarity to cure illnesses and heal wounds.²⁴¹¹

3) Oracular incubation

In Gallo-Roman times, it was a common procedure to 'incubate' sick people in thermal establishments. Incubation, known from the Greek and Roman worlds, was practiced in a specific room or in the temple dedicated to the healing deity, which consisted in a series of rites aiming at salving pilgrims' pains more quickly.²⁴¹² The sanctuary of Asclepius,²⁴¹³ erected around 500 BC at Epidaurus (Greece),²⁴¹⁴ was renowned for its practices of incubation, which was said to be quite effective for the patients in search of recovery. Some of the sick people, after praying and taking the waters, would remain overnight on the premises of the sanctuary to sleep. If they were lucky enough to come into contact with the healing god or goddess, who would appear to them in a dream or vision, they were believed to recover more rapidly.²⁴¹⁵ The deity would directly heal the patient during the night, or would procure recipes for salves and ointments to be applied externally, or would give advice on the peculiar foods or plants to be eaten or avoided, etc. The doctor-priests, who played the role of the intermediary between the pilgrims and the healing gods, had sometimes to interpret the riddles or obscure dreams which the patients had had the previous night, or expel the diseases by the use of specific spells or rites indicated by the deity. They also had to make the curative preparations, the formula of which had been revealed by the gods. Those remedial mixtures required deep knowledge of the essence and combination of the natural products, of which the priests were the only holders.

Incubation was not within the reach of everybody, since it touched the supernatural and esoteric sphere. It is indeed highly likely that intoxicating beverages, concocted by the priest-doctors, were ingested, so as to facilitate the connection with the healing deity during the night. It is all the more probable as intoxicating drinks, such as mead, had a double function, i.e. enabling the patient to establish a connection with the otherworld and purveying primary curative effects at the same time.

Even if oracular incubation is not attested for the Celts as regards the field of health, Nicandre stipulated that they had recourse to this practice near the burial places of their dead.²⁴¹⁶ It is actually the exact same tradition of sleeping near the burial of a deceased person or near the sanctuary of a god, with the intention of meeting the ancestors or the deities through a dream. If oracular incubation was accompanied with rites of intoxication facilitating the contact and the visit of the deity, the Comedovae could have been the embodiment of some religious customs which consisted in absorbing an intoxicating beverage (mead) in a medicinal context, so as to approach the divine, open the spirit, obtain

²⁴¹¹ See the section on the feast of Goibhniu in this Chapter. Stokes, 1900, pp. 177, 189 (with corrections to text on page 189).

²⁴¹² King, 2001, pp. 3-8 ; Nutton, 2004, pp. 103-114 ; Brunaux, 2000, pp. 178-179.

²⁴¹³ The god *Asclepius* was the son of Apollo and one of the most famous healing gods of the Classical world.

²⁴¹⁴ Epidaurus is an ancient city of Argolide, a mountainous region of Ancient Greece situated in the north-east of the Peloponnese, which is a peninsula in the south of Greece.

²⁴¹⁵ Nutton, 2004, p. 279 refers to Galen of Pergamum's *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, a prominent Roman physician and philosopher of Greek origin, who reported that many people had been cured through dreams and visions sent by Sarapis or Asclepius, at Epidaurus, Cos or Pergamum, his home city, and that "people in general bear witness to the fact that god has given them the craft of medicine through inspiration in dreams and visions."

²⁴¹⁶ Brunaux, 2000, p. 179.

answers or remedies to relieve the pains. In addition, mead could have at the same time been thought to act on the various illnesses, on account of its diverse beneficial virtues. Accordingly, the ingestion of curative-intoxicating beverages would have been concomitant with votive offerings, ablutions*, incantations and prayers addressed to the deities.²⁴¹⁷ And this medico-religious practice could have survived in the very name of the Comedovae, who personified the drink itself, as well as its powerful restorative virtues and the rites of intoxication attached to it.

B) Intoxicating Goddesses related to War?

In the inscription from Bad Bertricht (Germany), it is interesting to note that Meduna ('Mead Goddess') is associated with a goddess whose name, Vercana ('Fury'), indicates that she was related to war. The association in an inscription of a goddess of mead-intoxication and a goddess of war is not without significance. It can be taken to illustrate the close link between intoxication, war and protection of the territory. It is also worth pointing out that, in the inscription from Derbyshire, Braciaca is associated with the Roman war-god Mars and that the dedicator was a soldier in the Roman army. Even though this argument is weak, because the etymology of Braciaca is debatable, it could point to a connection with war. There are therefore two examples of goddesses of intoxication who might be linked to war on account of their association with war-deities in the inscriptions, not to mention Medb herself, a sovereign war-like figure par excellence in Irish mythology. In *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], Medb is indeed pictured as a warrior queen who is thirsty for power, which she cannot fully possess unless she seizes the greatest bull of Ireland, Donn Cuailnge in Ulster. She then summons the armies of Connacht and Leinster, of which she is the sovereign, and declares war on Ulster. In view of these examples, why were there goddesses of intoxication related to war in Celtic times? What were their functions?

1) 'War frenzy': the divine possession

It is not in itself surprising to find goddesses of intoxication correlated to war, for alcoholic drinks played an important role in the preparation of war and the course of the battle in Celtic times. Indeed, warriors were used to drinking fermented beverages before battles with the aim of acquiring mental and physical strength, as well as reaching a sort of 'war trance, fury or insanity', called in Latin *furor*, a word which denotes a state of 'divine possession' - it was used to designate the Roman mythical heroes as well as the Celtic and Germanic combatants. This 'war frenzy' apparently explained the strength and motive of the Celts in battle and explained how they could have settled all over Europe in the 3rd c. BC. As a matter of fact, the enemies were generally terror-stricken on seeing the madness possessing the Celts, which could engender the dispersion of the troops even before fighting. Brunaux states in *Les religions gauloises*:

For a Gallic warrior, fighting was not a human undertaking, until the Roman conquest of Gaul. War was a huge ordeal in which the warrior was only the hand of the deity. The strength of weapons and the subtleties of strategy were

²⁴¹⁷ Nutton, 2004, p. 269 ; King, 2001, p. 6 explains that ancient Egyptian medicine, known from the Edwin Smith papyrus, dating from the 7th c. BC (a copy of text from a thousand years earlier), was also composed of treatments and recipes based on medicinal herbs and accompanied with magical incantations and rites.

secondary preoccupations. It was only the means of placing oneself in the service of the divine force which counted.²⁴¹⁸

A battle was not engaged without the support of the gods, who also participated in the fighting. As we saw earlier, access to the otherworld was made possible through the consumption of sacred intoxicating beverages within the context of religious rites. One can easily imagine the warriors drinking so as to become heated and invoking the gods in various rites, such as war dances or incantations,²⁴¹⁹ before joining in the fighting. Interestingly, Caesar spoke of a *concilium armatum*, 'armed council', which was held before going into war. This was probably more a ritual drinking gathering than a council,²⁴²⁰ which aimed at making contact with the gods so as to be protected, helped and possessed by the supernatural forces. Poux, in *L'âge du vin*, points out that:

The war character of Gallic intoxication has been clearly testified by written sources and archaeological data. [...] The role of alcohol in the war sphere is well-known and acknowledged: stimulating moral courage and physical strength, it [alcohol] puts combatants in a state of self-transcendence, of surpassing of oneself and of sacred exaltation, which has always had its source in trance, drug and alcohol, throughout time and space.²⁴²¹

Concerning the Celts, the account by Orosius describing the Numantines²⁴²² besieged around 134 BC by the Romans explicitly mentions the traditional use of indigenous alcoholic beverages before fighting to reach a state of unconsciousness, leading to a sort of trance, establishing a connection between the warriors and the divine world, through which they would acquire a 'divine' force and invulnerability:

Igitur conclusi diu Numantini et fame trucidati deditioem sui obtulerunt si tolerabilia iuberentur; saepe etiani orantes iustae pugnae facultatem ut tamquam uiris mori liceret. ultime omnes duabus subito portis eruperunt, larga prius potione usi non uini, cuius ferax is locus non est, sed suco tritici per artem confecto, quem sucum a calefaciendo caeliam uocant. Suscitatur enim igne illa uis germinis madefactae frugis ac deinde siccatur et post in farinam redacta molli suco admiscetur; quo fermento sapor austeritatis et calor ebrietatis adicitur. Hac igitur potione post longam farnem recalescent bello ses obtulerunt.²⁴²³ **So when the Numantines had been besieged for a long time and were demolished by famine, they offered to surrender if tolerable conditions should be proposed, at the same time begging again and again for an opportunity to do regular battle that it might be permitted them to die like men. Finally, they all suddenly**

²⁴¹⁸ Brunaux, 2000, pp. 188-189 & 2005, pp. 130, 188.

²⁴¹⁹ Poux, 2004, p. 335 and note 1094, refers to archaeological artefacts and texts, which show that alcohol was very frequently absorbed during 'war dances', which were previous to the fighting.

²⁴²⁰ Brunaux, 2000, p. 189.

²⁴²¹ Poux, 2004, p. 334.

²⁴²² The Numantines were the inhabitants of Numantia, the most important city of the Arevaci tribe, in Celt-Iberia (province of Soria). The Numantine War, which lasted twenty years, was the last conflict of the Celtiberian Wars fought by the Romans to subdue those people along the River Ebro. It began in 154 BC as a revolt of the Celt-Iberians of Numantia on the River Douro. In 134 BC, the Consul Scipio Aemilianus was sent to end the war and subjugated Numantia.

²⁴²³ Orosius, V, 7, 12-14 (primary source: Livy).

*erupted from two gates, having first partaken of much drink, not of wine, for the cultivation of which the place is not fertile, but of a juice artfully concocted from wheat, which juice they called caelia because it caused heat. For the power of the moistened fruit bud is aroused by heat, and then it is dried and, when reduced to a powder, is mixed with a pleasant juice by which through fermentation a sour taste and the glow of drunkenness are added. So growing warm from this drink after a long fast, they offered themselves for battle.*²⁴²⁴

2) Welsh Literature: Y Gododdin

Y Gododdin ['The Gododdin'], the early sixth-century AD Welsh poem describing the Battle of Catteraeth, also illustrates the early Celtic tradition which consisted of liberally providing intoxicating drinks to the warriors before they go into battle - the text mentions mead, beer, bragget, ale, malt and wine. Some parts of the text describe the drinking of the 'ensnaring' intoxicant, which, when heated up and brought the warriors, means that the latter no longer care for their lives, and are ready to commit bloody deeds and carnage in battle:

*Gwyr a aeth gatraeth gan wawr / Dygymyrrws eu hoet eu hanyanawr / Med evynt melyn melys maglawr [...]. The heroes marched to Catteraeth with the dawn / Feelingly did their relatives regret their absence / Mead they drank, yellow, sweet, ensnaring [...].*²⁴²⁵ *Gwyr a aeth gatraeth buant enwawc / Gwin a med o eur vu eu gwirawt / Blwydyn en erbyn urdyn deuawt / Trywyr a thri ugeiut a thrychant eurdorchawc / Or sawl yt gryssyasant uch gormant wirawt / Ny diengis namyn tri o wrhydri fossawt / Deu gatki aeron a chenon dayrawt / A minheu om gwaetfreu gwerth vy gwennawt. The heroes who marched to Catteraeth were renowned / Wine and mead out of golden goblets was their beverage / That year was to them one of exalted solemnity / Three hundred and sixty-three chieftains, wearing the golden torques / Of those who hurried forth after the excess of revelling / But three escaped by valour from the funeral fosse / The two war-dogs of Aeron, and Cynon the dauntless / And myself, from the spilling of blood, the reward of my candid song.*²⁴²⁶ *Gwyr a gryssyasant buant gytneit / Hoedyl vyrryon medwon uch med hidleit / Gosgord mynydawc enwawc en reit / Gwerth eu gwled e ved vu eu heneit / Caradawc a madawc pyll ac yeuan / Gwgawn a gwiawn gwynn a chynvan / Peredur arveu dur gwawr-dur ac aedan / Achubyat eng gawr ysgwydawl angkyman / A chet lledessynt wy lladassan / Neb y eu tymhyr nyt atcorsan. The warriors marched with speed, together they bounded onward / Short lived were they,—they had become drunk over the distilled mead / The retinue of Mynyddawg, renowned in the hour of need / Their life was the price of their banquet of mead / Caradawg, and Madawg, Pyll, and Ieuan, / Gwgawn, and Gwiawn, Gwynn and Cynvan, / Peredur with steel arms, Gwawrddur, and Aeddan / A defence were they in the tumult, though with shattered shields / When they*

²⁴²⁴ Deferrari, 1964, pp. 187-188.

²⁴²⁵ Knoch, 1997, p. 62.

²⁴²⁶ Knoch, 1997, p. 76.

*were slain, they also slaughtered / Not one to his native home returned.*²⁴²⁷ *Nyt ef borthi gwarth gorsed / Senyllt ae lestri llawn med / Godolei gledyf e gared / Godolei lemein e ryuel / Dyfforthsei lynwyssawr oe vreych / Rac bedin ododin a brennych [...]. He would not bear the reproach of a congress / Senyllt, with his vessels full of mead / His sword rang for deeds of violence / He shouted and bounded with aid for the war / And with his arm proved a comprehensive support / Against the armies of Gododin and Bryneich [...].*²⁴²⁸

3) The Gundestrup Cauldron

This idea of getting intoxicated before battle to be divinely possessed may be illustrated in one of the plaques of the Gundestrup Cauldron (fig. 18),²⁴²⁹ which depicts a scene of warriors, divided into two parts by a vegetal motif - a tree, a pea or a bean. The lower part of the relief* shows a cortège of six soldiers with spears and shields, followed by a warrior holding a sword and wearing a helmet topped with a boar, and by three carnyx* players.²⁴³⁰ These ten warriors are making their way towards a colossal character who is plunging a man, with his two hands, into what seems to be a huge vat. On the upper part of the relief*, four soldiers riding sumptuously-harnessed horses are heading towards the right, possibly following the ram-head snake preceding them. Two of them are wearing helmets bearing a boar and a crow.

Recently, an astronomical interpretation has been proposed for this plaque. It could be the symbolic representation of the two equinoxes, the two solstices and the twelve lunar months (?), or of the passage from autumn to spring.²⁴³¹ Even though this interpretation is interesting, it is not convincing. It is indeed undeniable that this relief* is a scene depicting the preparation of soldiers heading for a forthcoming battle. The signification of the pre-war scene is nonetheless difficult to determine, especially because of the presence of this huge personage thrusting a man into a vat.

In view of our previous work, a plausible interpretation of this scene seems to be possible. First of all, it is clear that the disproportionate size of the character on the left is indicative of a being of divine origin, i.e. a god or a priest holding the sacred esoteric knowledge. The man he is plunging in the vat is undeniably a soldier, because the latter is wearing the exact same helmet and costume as the other warriors. Furthermore, the ten soldiers are represented, on the lower part, as going towards the huge personage, moving very slowly and even seem to be at a standstill, as though they were queuing, waiting their turn to be thrust into the vat. Unlike this motionless line of soldiers, the riders of the upper

²⁴²⁷ Knoch, 1997, p. 86.

²⁴²⁸ Knoch, 1997, p. 99.

²⁴²⁹ The cauldron, probably dating from the middle of the 1st c. BC, was discovered in 1880 in a peat bog near the village of Gundestrup (Aaras, north of Jutland, Denmark). It is in silver and was originally gilded. It is 14cm high, 25.5cm in diameter and weighs around 20 pounds. While some designs are ultimately Celtic, such as the ram-headed snakes, the boar-headed war trumpets (carnyx*) and the torques*, other stylistic elements are definitely oriental and exotic, such as the nature and disposition of the wild or domesticated quadruped animals. See Bergquist & Taylor, 1987, pp. 10-24.

²⁴³⁰ Goudineau, 2006, pp. 53-77 ; Duval, 1977, pp. 184-188, fig. 192, 193.

²⁴³¹ Goudineau, 2006, p. 73, plaque n°4. He proposes an astronomic interpretation of the various illustrations, which is interesting, for druids mastered the knowledge of the constellations. As for Olmsted, 1979, he suggests that the various plaques are a representation of the epic of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], which seems unlikely.

part are represented in motion, for their mounts seem to be galloping. It seems that, after being plunged into the vat, the soldiers have become heated and ready to set off for war. The vat could therefore contain the sacred beverage giving access to the divine world. Besides, the vegetal motif, i.e. the sacred tree or stem, separating the two lines of warriors, may mark the frontier between the supernatural and natural world, which would be crossed after ingurgitating the intoxicating drink. This scene could thus be suggestive of the rites of intoxication held before the battle to warm up the soldiers and make contact with the otherworld to require its help and strength.



Fig. 18: One of the thirteen plaques of the Gundestrup Cauldron, discovered in 1880 in a peat bog near the village of Gundestrup (Aaras, north of Jutland, Denmark). This plaque depicts a scene of warriors, divided into two parts by a vegetal motif - a tree, a pea or a bean. In the Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen. Goudineau, 2006, pp. 60-61, 73.

The goddesses of intoxication, embodiment of the sacred beverage, could thus have represented the ancient cult of achieving force and courage through the absorption of 'magical' beverages before going into the fighting. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that faces with protruding and hallucinated eyes are represented on some pieces of carts (see fig. 2). This may also be significant. These faces with spellbinding eyes could depict a state of trance and thus illustrate the effect of ritual intoxication on the warriors when waging war on their foes. It may be that these masks picture some divine figures symbolizing the rites of intoxication in the context of war. The goddesses of intoxication may have helped the tribes in the protection of their territory by giving them moral and physical strength to fight the foes. The intoxicant personified by the goddesses was the means through which divine force could be transmitted to the warriors. By ingesting the drink, the champions symbolically swallowed the goddess, which took possession of them. In this way, the Intoxicating Goddesses would represent this whole framework of complex religious beliefs and rites related to war and intoxication.

C) Intoxicating Goddesses conferring Sovereignty?

In the previous part, we saw that Medb was depicted several times in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'] offering a cup of intoxicating drink to warriors so as to achieve her ends, which is to subdue the invincible Ulster champion, Cú Chulainn. Each time, she also promises the warrior the hand of her daughter, which means access to the future throne of Connacht. Therefore, it can be noticed that the intoxicating drink, embodying Medb herself, is related to the notion of sovereignty, which Medb symbolises perfectly.

1) Medb: the Emblematic Figure of Sovereignty

Medb is represented in the ancient texts as a goddess of sovereignty, sometimes presiding over Leinster (Teamhair), under the name of Medb Lethderg, or presiding over Connacht, under the name of Medb of Cruachan (Rathcroghan, in Co. Roscommon).²⁴³² They appear as separate characters within narrative texts, and yet, all the scholars agree that they are the very same figure.²⁴³³ The tradition of Medb Lethderg may be older: hence, Medb of Cruachan is highly likely to be an emanation from the former.

Their respective stories stress on impressive number of husbands they had one after the other and reveal that it was Medb who granted sovereignty to the future king by coupling with him. In the *Book of Leinster*, Medb Lethderg is said to have successively been the wife of Cú Corb, then Feidlimid Rechtaid, father of Conn Cétchathach, then of his grandson Art, and later still of Cormarc Mac Airt:

Roba mor tra nert agus cumachta Meidhbhe insin for firu Erenn air isi na leigedh ri a Temair gan a beth fein aigi na mnái agus is le conrotacht in righ-raith for taeb Temra .i. raith Medhbhe [...]. Great indeed was the strength and power of that Medb over the men of Ireland, for she it was who would not allow a king in Tara without his having herself as a wife. And by her was built the royal rath on the side of Tara, i.e. Rath Medbae [...].²⁴³⁴

Another version, from the *R.I.A.*, says:

Doratsat Laighin na lann rigi do mac righ Eirenn nocor fhaidh Medb lesin mac nirbo righ Eirenn Cormac. The Leinstermen of the blades gave the kingship to the son of the king of Ireland - until Medb mated with the son, Cormac was not king of Ireland.²⁴³⁵

Like her namesake, Medb of Cruachan is the goddess of sovereignty. In *Cath Boinde* [The Battle of the Boyne], a text dating from the early 10th c., she is explicitly referred to as the one owning the crown of Cruachain, for her father gave her the throne:

Eochaid Feidleach [...] cuiris Meadb i n-inad rig i Cruachain. Eochaid Feidleach [...] set Meadb up in the royal seat of Cruachain.²⁴³⁶

The text also indicates that Medb married five husbands in a row: Cochonbar of Ulster, Fidech mac Féice, Tindi mac Con, Eochaid Dála, and finally Ailill mac Máta, who is Medb's husband in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley']. The important thing to note

²⁴³² See the section on 'Territorial Goddesses' in Chapter 3.

²⁴³³ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 340 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 327.

²⁴³⁴ Ó Máille, 1928, pp. 137-138 refers to the *Book of Leinster (LL) 380 a 53*.

²⁴³⁵ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 139 refers to *R.I.A. 23 H 6, 199a (=ZCP XI, p. 40ff)*.

²⁴³⁶ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 131 ; O'Neill, 1905, pp. 178-179.

is that each time Medb chooses a new husband, this one becomes the new king of the province by her own will and consent:

co rob i comairle do-ronsad:- rigi Condacht d'ainmneochad d'Eochaid Dala do deoin Meadba. Do deonaid Meadb sin dia m-beith na ceili di fein agus cen et, cen oman, cen neoidi do beith and, uair ba geis disi beith ac ceili na m-beidis na treideada sin. Do rigad Eochaid Dala trid sin co roibi trell i Cruachain na cheili ac Meidb. The counsel they decided on was to appoint Eochaid Dala to the kingship of Connacht with the consent of Meadb. Meadb consents to that on condition that he should marry her, and that he should have neither jealousy, fear, nor niggardliness, for it was a 'geis' [taboo*] to her to marry a man who should have these three qualities. Eochaid Dala was crowned through this, and was a while in Cruachan, as Meadb's husband.²⁴³⁷ cor gradaig Meadb é ar a sobésaib, cor æntaich ria, cor bo ceili di he tar cend Echaid Dala [...] Gabais Ailill rigi Connacht do deoin Meadba da eisi sin, corob é ba rig Conacht ac rigad Chonairi Moir agus ic tobairt thosaich na tana for Ulltaib. Meadb loved him [Ailill] for his virtues, and he was united to her, and became her lover in place of Eochaid Dala. [...] Ailill assumed the kingship of Connacht thereafter, with the consent of Meadb ; and it is he who was the king of Connacht at the time of the crowning of Conaire the great and the beginning of the cattle-raid against the Ulstermen.²⁴³⁸

In addition to these various literary references, it has been observed that Medb's name can be derived from two homonymic Indo-European roots, respectively meaning 'intoxicated' and 'master, ruler'.²⁴³⁹ Her name thus directly refers to the notion of sovereignty, like the meaning of her two epithets. Indeed, as regards Medb Lethderg, her epithet means 'Half-Red' or 'Red-Side' - Old Irish *derg* and Gaulish *dergo-* mean 'red' as well as 'bloody'.²⁴⁴⁰ This would hint that kingship was sometimes 'bloody', either because the sovereign had to fight to preserve or gain territory, or because there might have been bloody contests to gain access to the throne.²⁴⁴¹ As for Medb of Cruachan, her epithet may be derived from *crú*, genitive *cró*, 'blood' and thus signify 'With Red Skin' or 'Bloody Red'. Ó Máille proposes that Cruachan could designate a place of sun-worship and blood-sacrifices in ancient times, but this remains conjectural.²⁴⁴² At any rate, both Medbs have epithets which refer to the red colour, which obviously connotes blood, violence and war, which is to say sovereignty and the protection of the territory.²⁴⁴³ And Medb is clearly portrayed as a war-like female figure in Irish mythology. Moreover, it should be added that the red colour is generally used to refer to

²⁴³⁷ O'Neill, 1905, pp. 182-183.

²⁴³⁸ O'Neill, 1905, pp. 183-185.

²⁴³⁹ *ILN* - V.1, p. 62, n°662.

²⁴⁴⁰ Delamarre, 2003, p. 140.

²⁴⁴¹ Ó hÓgáin, 1999, p. 134 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 339 ; Ó Máille, 1928, pp. 142-143 ; Dumézil, 1995, p. 337. For another interpretation, see Wong, 1996, p. 240.

²⁴⁴² Ó Máille, 1928, p. 146 ; Dumézil, 1995, p. 337.

²⁴⁴³ Dumézil, 1954, p. 11.

the supernatural forces in Irish medieval literature.²⁴⁴⁴ This epithet consequently indicates that Medb was a divine personage in the origin, even if she was euhemerized as a mythical queen in the Irish texts.

According to this series of traditions, it is significant that Medb represents the sovereignty of Ireland and it is she only who grants kingship. These texts do not mention an intoxicating drink or a cup given to the forthcoming kings. Nonetheless, we have seen that, in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], she is pictured offering intoxicating drinks to the potential future sovereigns. Therefore, in view of these elements, it can be maintained that the libation*-element is implied by her name in those tales portraying her as the personification of sovereignty. Medb being the embodiment simultaneously of drink and sovereignty, it can be inferred that sovereignty was symbolically granted by an intoxicating drink - mead on account of her name. To support this idea, Ó Máille alludes to a difficult and corrupt poem contained in the 9th-century prose tale *Scéla Cano meic Gartnán* ['The Story of Cano son of Gartnán'], which says that:

***niba ri ar an Erind . mani toro coirm Chualand.*²⁴⁴⁵ *he will not be a king over Ireland, unless he gets the ale of Cualu.*²⁴⁴⁶**

And it might be significant that Medb Letherderg is called *ingen Chonain Cualann*, that is 'the daughter of Conān of Cualu' in the *Book of Leinster*, for it would mean that Medb is 'the ale of Cualu' which bestows kingship.²⁴⁴⁷

2) Intoxication and Sovereignty

With regard to this subject, it is worth mentioning that a reference to 'mead' is contained in the name of the great banqueting hall of Tara, which is in Old Irish *Tech Midchuarta* and in Late Medieval Irish *Teach Miodhchuarta*, literally 'the house where the mead went around', i.e. 'the mead (*miodh*) circling (*chuarta*) house (*teach*)' or 'the circular house of the (mead-) feast' - *cuairt* meaning a circular visit -, belonging to the myth of Cormac mac Art, the fourth husband of Medb Lethderg.²⁴⁴⁸ This name is highly likely to have been a fanciful interpretation by an Old Irish writer of the prehistorical structure - which is actually rectangular - unearthed at the sacral site of Tara, where religious ceremonies were undoubtedly held as shown by the archaeological evidence.²⁴⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that a mythical celebration, anciently known as *Feis Temro* ('Feast of Tara'), was held at Tara, which was the centre of the cult of sacred kingship presided over by Medb. Known in Irish literature as *banais ríge* ('wedding-feast of kingship'), with *banais* or *ban-fheis*, literally signifying 'sleeping with a woman', this feast was celebrated by each king during his reign and symbolised his union with the goddess of sovereignty, who embodied

²⁴⁴⁴ See the legend of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* ['The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel'] - *derg* means 'red' - which is an otherworld hotel or banqueting hall in Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 97-98 ; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 409-410. Many legends, such as the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], refer to cows with red ears, which indicates that they belong to the supernatural world, etc.

²⁴⁴⁵ *Anecdota from Irish MSS. I 14.*

²⁴⁴⁶ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 145.

²⁴⁴⁷ Ó Máille, 1928, p. 145 ; *Book of Leinster* (LL) 380 a 53.

²⁴⁴⁸ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 470 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 401 ; Mahon, (unknown date), p. 86. Cormac Mac Airt belongs to the King Lore. He is the most famous mythical king of Ireland and his reign is put down to the period 227-266 AD by medieval historians. For more details, see Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 121-129.

²⁴⁴⁹ Rafferty, 2006, pp. 63-68 ; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, p. 470 ; Mackillop, 2004, p. 401.

the territory over which he ruled.²⁴⁵⁰ An episode contained in *Cath Boinde*, mentions this festival in Tara organised by Eochaid Feidleach, gathering the provinces of Ireland, which could not be held without the presence of Medb:

Gnithis feis Temra la h-Eochaid Feidleach co cuicedaib Erend imi acht Meadb agus Tindu. Hirailid fir Erend ar Eochaid Meadb do breith sa n-aenach. Cuiris Eochaid Searbluath a bain-eachlach ar cend Meadba co Cruachain. Teid Meadb arna marach co Temraid cor cuiread graifne in aenaich leo co cend cæcaisi ar mis. The festival of Tara was held by Eochaid Feidleach, with the provinces of Ireland about him (all) except Meadb and Tindi. The men of Ireland bade Eochaid bring Meadb to the gathering. Eochaid sent Searbluath, his female messenger, to Cruachan for Meadb. Meadb goes on the morrow to Tara, and the fair-races were run by them for a fortnight and a month.²⁴⁵¹

The link between this feast and the goddess of mead-intoxication and the name of the banqueting hall of Tara, which directly refers to mead, must indicate that mead was consumed on very specific religious occasions, for instance in the context of ritual and sacral kingship, which ultimately implied the connection and participation of the divine world. The celebration was undeniably a drinking feast, celebrating the new representative of the gods, that is the king, in which sacred mead must have played an important role in contacting the otherworld - as mead was ritually drunk at the funerary ceremony of the Prince of Hochdorf.²⁴⁵² It may be that the king, in drinking the sacred beverage, symbolically swallowed the goddess, this marking his union with the goddess of sovereignty and conferring him his divine powers of king.

The pattern of the lady bestowing sovereignty on the future king by offering him a cup of alcoholic drink undoubtedly lays behind the early legend of the foundation of Massalia (Marseilles) related by Aristotle in the 4th c. BC. This text relates that Petta, the daughter of Nannus, King of the Segobriges, had to choose the man who would become her husband, i.e. the future king, by offering him a drink. It is significant that her name, Petta, means 'a portion (of land)'. This indeed indicates that she is the very representation of the land-goddess. Therefore, this early classical text echoes Irish mythology and attests of the antiquity of the Celtic belief of the goddess of intoxication embodying and purveying sovereignty. The legend is the following:

As Nannus was celebrating his daughter's marriage, Euxenes happened to arrive, and he was invited to the feast. The form of the marriage was thus – after the meal, the maiden was to enter and to give a bowl of drink which she had mixed to the man preferred by her among the assembled suitors. He to whom she offered it would be the bridegroom. When she came in, the maiden gave the bowl – whether by chance, or by design, to Euxenes. Her name was Petta. At this, her father considered that she had acted in accordance with divine will. Euxenes took her

²⁴⁵⁰ Mac Cana, 1955-1956, p. 86 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1999, pp. 133, 469; Mackillop, 2004, p. 33.

²⁴⁵¹ O'Neill, 1905, pp. 178-179.

²⁴⁵² O'Rahilly, 1946, pp. 14-15 and note 3. In *Tochmarc Emire* ['The Wooing of Emer'], § 47, refers to the *banais rígi* made by Lugh on his succeeding to the kingship after the death of Nuada. See Meyer, 1890, § 47. Similarly, in *Mesca Ulad* ['The Intoxication of the Ulstermen'], Conchobar's accession to kingship of Ulaid is signaled by a 'banquet of kingship' (*coibled rígi*), for which one hundred vats of liquor were provided. See Hennessy, 1884, p. 8. The access to the kingship was celebrated by a feast (*fled, coibled*) which was largely a matter of drinking (*comól*), which explains the often quoted phrase *ic ól na fleide* 'consuming (literally 'drinking') the feast'.

as wife and lived with her, changing her name to Aristoxene, and even still there is a family-line descended from this woman in Massilia.²⁴⁵³

There is therefore a very strong correlation between mead, the goddess of intoxication, and sacred kingship; a pattern which is present in many Irish medieval literary accounts belonging to the Cycle of the Kings.²⁴⁵⁴ The earliest and most relevant examples are as follows: *Baile Chuind Chétchathaig* ['The Frenzy of Conn of the Hundred Battles'], an obscure 8th-century text listing the High Kings of Tara in the form of prophecies, describes various kings 'drinking' the sovereignty, which is identified by significant female symbols.²⁴⁵⁵

In *Baile in Scáil* ['The Phantom's Frenzy'], composed at the beginning of the 11th c. AD, King Conn Cétchathach met Lugh Lámfhota and an otherworld lady, wearing a golden crown and seated on a crystal throne, who revealed herself as *Flaith Érenn*, 'the Sovereignty of Ireland'. While pouring the red ale (*derg-laith*), she asked to whom the cup should be offered, and Lugh answered by naming every monarch from the time of Conn onward.²⁴⁵⁶

This personification of sovereignty is generally identified as the land-goddess Ériu.²⁴⁵⁷ This legend reflects the close relationship between *flaith* 'sovereignty' and *laith* 'ale', a pun referring to the double function of the goddess of sovereignty, who simultaneously embodies the intoxicating drink and confers kingship on the future monarch by handing

him a cup of ale. Similarly, in the early 11th-century legend entitled *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* ['The Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedón'], Niall Noígíallach and his brothers met a hideous hag guarding a well, whom Niall accepted to kiss in return for water. The hag immediately turned into a beautiful lady, who identified herself as *in Flaithius*, 'Sovereignty'.²⁴⁵⁸

A similar story is recounted in the c. 13th-century *Cóir Anmann* ['The Fitness of Names'] about the five sons of Dáire Doimthech, each called Lugaid, who all except Lugaid Laigde refused to lie with a frightening hag who offered them ale. The following morning, the hag transformed into a beautiful maiden and declared "I am the sovereignty, and the kingship of Ireland will be obtained from you" (*missi in flaithius 7 gébthar ríge nÉrenn úat*).²⁴⁵⁹ The pattern is also reflected in the goddess figure associated with the Beara Peninsula in west Cork: Cailleach Bhéarra ('the Hag or Old Woman of Beara').

Significantly indeed, in a poem dating from the 8th c. or early 9th c.,²⁴⁶⁰ entitled *The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare*, which describes her as an miserable ugly old woman bemoaning her past youth and beauty and cursing her decay, she relates that she possesses her own ale, that is mead and wine, which she used to drink with the kings of Ireland:

²⁴⁵³ *Athenaeus 13.36 (576 - quoting Aristotle) & Justin 43.3. See Ó hÓgáin, 2002, pp. 27-28, 243; Koch & Carey, 1997, pp. 32-33.*

²⁴⁵⁴ Mac Cana, 1955-1956, pp. 84-86 & 1958-1959, pp. 50-65; Enright, 1996; Dillon, 1946; McCone, 1990, pp. 108-110; Byrne, 1973, pp. 7-69; Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 301-302.

²⁴⁵⁵ Murphy, 1952, pp. 146-159; Thurneysen, 1912, pp. 48-52.

²⁴⁵⁶ Meyer, 1901, p. 459 & 1921, p. 373; Dillon, 1946, pp. 11-14, 22.

²⁴⁵⁷ Mac Cana, 1958-1959, p. 63; O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 14.

²⁴⁵⁸ O'Grady, 1892, vol. 1, pp. 326-330 & vol. 2, pp. 368-372. See Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 377-379; Mackillop, 2004, pp. 168-169; McCone, 1990, p. 109; O'Rahilly, 1946, p. 17.

²⁴⁵⁹ Stokes, 1897, pp. 316-323. The same story is recounted in Gwynn, 1924, pp. 136-145.

²⁴⁶⁰ Murphy, 1953a, p. 84.

A-minecán ! már-úar dam; / cech dercu is erchraide. / #ar feis fri caindlib sorchuib / bith i ndorchuib derthaige ! Rom-boí denus la ríga / oc #l meda ocus fína; / in-díu ibim medcuisce / eter sentainni crína. Rop ed mo choirm coidin midc / / oc do guidi-siu, a Dé bí, / fri feirg. I am cold indeed; / every acorn is doomed to decay. / After feasting by bright candles to be in the darkness of an oratory ! I have had my day with kings, / drinking mead and wine; / now I drink whey-and-water / among shrivelled old hags. May my ale be cups of whey / / praying to thee, O living God / against anger.²⁴⁶¹

In this passage of the poem, she is clearly represented as an emanation of the land-goddess conferring sovereignty on the future king through the offering and consumption of mead, like Medb. Cailleach Bhéarra is undoubtedly a land-goddess in origin, more particularly associated with west Cork, and embodying the obscure or negative aspect of the earth goddess, like the Mórrígain. In the introduction to the poem, she is indeed described as the mother or ancestor of peoples, like Danu, and as having several husbands, like Medb:

Is de ro-bo# Caillech B#rre forre: co#ca dalta d# a mB#rri. Secht n-a#s n-aíted a ndechaid co d#ged cech fer #c cr#ne #ade, comtar t#atha 7 chen#la a hui 7 a #army, 7 c[h]#t mb#adna d# fo c[h]ailliu #arna s#nad do Chuimíniu for a cend. Do-sn-#nic-si #es 7 lobrae #arom. Is ant is-rubard-sii. This is why she was called the Old Woman [or 'Nun'] of Beare: she had fifty foster-children in Beare. She passed into seven periods of youth, so that every husband used to pass from her to death of old age, so that her grandchildren and great-grandchildren were peoples and races. And for a hundred years she wore the veil, after Cuimíne had blessed it and placed it on her head. Then age and infirmity came to her, and she said. [The poem follows here].²⁴⁶²

Admittedly, this early poem can be interpreted in various ways. Anne-Marie Chalendon indeed explains that:

The dying old woman symbolizes the Sovereignty of Ireland, whose lovers (the pagan kings) died without leaving heirs. The poem, a reflection of the inexorability of the passing of time, emphasizes the painful passage to Christianity, all the more so as the old woman is depicted as a religious figure, for the word cailleach derives from the Latin pallium, which signifies 'veil', and originally designated a nun.²⁴⁶³

The passing of time and the passage from paganism to Christianity are undeniably essential themes, but it cannot be denied that the ancient pattern of the land-goddess conferring sovereignty on kings by serving them an intoxicated drink is reflected in this early poem about Cailleach Bhéarra. From all of this, it follows that the Celtic goddess of intoxication must originally have presided over the religious ceremonies celebrating the new king and personified all the rites and cults attached to it. The early account of Athenaeus and the various surviving Irish medieval accounts lend support to this theory.

²⁴⁶¹ Murphy, 1953a, pp. 100-101.

²⁴⁶² Murphy, 1953a, pp. 83-84.

²⁴⁶³ Chalendon, 1994, p. 308.

Conclusion

It is clear then that the rites of intoxication, generally undertaken through the consumption of a sacred beverage, were of great importance in ancient times and most certainly very complex. Enabling human beings to make contact with the deities so as to require their help, they were held at different times, for various purposes and in various contexts. The drink was the only key to the otherworld because its intoxicating virtues allowed the 'natural world' to see another reality and to open up to the supernatural world. Even if there is little direct evidence concerning the Celts as regards this practice, it is clear from the names borne by goddesses that the rites of sacred intoxication in relation to the divine held a very important place in their society.

It has been argued here that the Goddess of Intoxication embodied the drink itself, its mighty ensnaring powers allowing human beings to shuffle off their mortal coil, as well as the complex framework of rites and cults attached to it. The intoxicating beverage must have been ritually consumed on various occasions which required the help and advice of the divine world, such as on the occasion of funerary rites to ensure the travel of the deceased to the otherworld, as the Cauldron of Hochdorf proves; and on the occasion of the inauguration of a new king, who, by drinking mead, would have swallowed the goddess - for she embodied the beverage - and thus symbolically mated with the one providing sovereignty. Mead-intoxication rites would also have been undertaken before battles so as to be divinely possessed. The Goddess of Intoxication would have therefore personified this 'war furor' reached after 'ingesting' her, and would have played a significant role in the preparation and course of the battle. Finally, the Goddess of Intoxication must have had a role of healer and must have represented all the rites of intoxication attached to curing, for she possessed some important beneficial virtues in her beverage.

Interestingly, in an obscure Irish text on poetic theory and methodology, dating from the late 7th c. or early 8th c., poetry, which is called "the words of fair-woman" (*briathra bhan bhfionn*), that is the otherworld woman, is simultaneously compared to mead and to a beautiful otherworld woman, which are both its metaphor and personification:

Fo-chen aoí iolchrothach, iolghnuisioc, ilbhrechtach, bé sháor shonaisg.

Welcome poetry multi-shaped, multi-faced, multi-magical, a woman noble easily joined. Aoi co baoi? [...] co delbh I ttadhbhas? [...] .i. riocht inghine macdhacht. Poetry what is it? [...] In what shape does it appear? [...] in the form of a beautiful maiden. Fo cen aoi. ingen tsoifis, siur chelle. inghen menman. [...] muchaidh ainbfhios [...] i ttigh medhrach miodhchuarta. Welcome poetry, maiden of good knowledge, sister of sense, daughter of intellect [...] she quenches ignorance [...] in the joyful mead circling house [the feast of Tara]. Áile tech miodhchuarta. miolsgothaibh. [...] Áile laith go meala maith, dotégh I ttech a clú clothach [...] fo chen laith ; Áile laith. Áile laith líoghach, fo chen laith lioghach. lán binn buadhach, brúctaidh fri híath nAnann. The beauty of the mead circling house (Tara) with best honey [...] the beauty of drink (liquid) with good honeys, it goes into a house with enduring fame [...] welcome drink, beautiful drink. Beautiful the colourful drink. Welcome colourful drink, full sweet sounding, splendid, it bursts over the land of Anu. Fo-chen easgra bélmhár. bledhmhár, deoghmhár, dermhár, dían a deogha, derg a luisi, lóichett a chloth. fo chen. Áile esgra n-udmall n-airgid. fledhmar, deoghmhár [...]. Welcome goblet of big mouth, plentiful fine

***drink big bobbed, strong its drink red its flushing valuable its fame. Welcome.
Beautiful the gobelet bronze golden feastful, drink-plenty [...].***²⁴⁶⁴

This archaic poem suggests several ideas. Poetry, mead and the otherworld woman being equivalent, it once again shows that mead was seen as a goddess, who was its very embodiment. Here it may be possible to see a reference to the Mead Goddess, who would have in this case provided the gift of poetry. This idea is highly likely, for poets must have used sacred intoxication to further the complex work of poetic creation, which, besides, required divine intervention.

²⁴⁶⁴ Gwynn, 1942, pp. 38-40 ; Ó hÓgáin, 1982, p. 196.

Conclusion

This study has aimed to show the complexity of determining and defining the goddesses worshipped by the Celts. The conclusions which can be drawn are multiple and do not necessarily align in any neat or coherent way. This ensues from the obvious lack of evidence, which, in addition, is indirect and often fragmentary – particularly as regards Gaul and Britain. Contrary to the situation for Classical belief systems, where there is a surviving corpus of mythological texts, there are no contemporary Celtic literary works describing the cosmogony, theogony and myths of the Celtic deities. In addition to being secondary, the surviving sources relating to the goddesses are heterogeneous, and are scattered over a wide variety of geographical and temporal contexts.

In Gaul and Britain, the material is sparse, fragmentary and scattered. It is evidenced by archaeological, epigraphic and iconographical data, which, with few exceptions, date from Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times; a time when Celtic religion had already been largely influenced, distorted or supplanted by Roman beliefs and practices. Celtic culture did not encompass a written language, and thus there are no votive dedications to their deities. This practice was Roman and only adopted by the Celts after the conquest, which is why it is impossible to identify the deities honoured in sanctuaries dating from Celtic times. The sanctuaries of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme) and Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise) were certainly devoted to war-deities, but naming them is beyond the bounds of possibility.

In Ireland, some myths related to the Celtic goddesses have survived in texts written in the vernacular language from the 7th c. AD by Christian monks. It is important to constantly bear in mind that these texts were composed from about two to seven centuries after the Christianization of Ireland by a learned community who had different religious beliefs, but the syncretism between pagan and Christian religions was such that Celtic traditions, legends and belief-system survived and were more or less harmoniously accommodated within the new religious faith. Because of the continuity in the traditions and the similarity between the Irish, British and Gaulish theonyms, the authenticity of the Irish material can in general be relied upon, as can the fact that the basis of legends is more or less genuine.

This study has confirmed that Irish evidence can be used to throw light on the Gaulish and British goddesses. Despite their disparity in nature, time and type, the sources often complement one another and constitute a unified body of material, which, when carefully, precisely and objectively compared and analyzed, allows the researcher to reconstruct some elements of the religious beliefs and cults of the Celts. In this sense, the various sources pertaining to the study of Celtic gods and goddesses should not be considered independently but as an inter-related whole. Indeed, it is clear that without this inter-disciplinary and comparative methodology, the reconstitution of the beliefs and practices surrounding the worship of Celtic goddesses would have been impossible.

Conclusions remain multiple, conjectural and tentative because of the limitations of the sources. There are various reasons for this. In addition to the scarcity and indirectness of the sources referred to earlier, it should also be emphasised that Celtic religious beliefs and practices evidence considerable regional variations; for the Celts did not form a homogeneous entity, but were rather a patchwork of different peoples. This goes a long

way to explain the multiplicity of goddesses and the typically local character of some. The difficulty of reaching unequivocal and irrefutable conclusions also derives from the multifaceted nature of Celtic goddesses, which makes it extremely difficult to establish a definitive portrait of their characteristics and the beliefs associated with them. It must always be borne in mind that Celtic beliefs did not constitute a single, coherent, standard system either in time or in space.

* * * * *

From the detailed analysis of the sources, it has emerged that, even though categorization is limited, problematic and intertwines in numerous ways, Celtic goddesses fall into five main groups: Mother-Goddesses, Land-Goddesses, Territorial- and War-Goddesses, Water-Goddesses and Intoxicating Goddesses.

Chapter 1 dealt with the controversial subject of the *Matres* and *Matronae*, who represent, as their name and iconography indicate, the concept of the Mother Goddess, that is the earth goddess who nourishes her people by providing them with natural products coming from her womb. Their cult is evidenced by about 250 inscriptions and 400 iconographical representations from Britain, northern Spain, Gaul, Germany and North Italy. Generally appearing in groups of three, their iconography is of Classical type, for they are represented with the Greco-Roman attributes of sovereignty and fertility – diadem, tunic, cornucopiae*, paterae*, fruit and swaddled babies. They were mainly worshipped by Roman citizens or soldiers and their generic names (*Matres* and *Matronae*) are Latinized Celtic forms, which are equivalent in meaning. The term *Matres* predominantly occurs in Britain, Gaul - particularly in the south-east – and northern Spain, while the term *Matronae* principally appears in northern Italy (without an epithet) and the Rhineland (with an epithet).

Despite the conspicuous Romanization of their cult, the Gallo-Greek inscriptions from Nîmes (Gard), Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Bouches-du-Rhône) and Istres (Bouches-du-Rhône), dating from about the 2nd or 1st c. BC, attest to the antiquity of their worship. Moreover, their indigenous character is reflected in their epithets, which are mainly of Celtic and Germanic origin. The cult of the *Matres* and *Matronae* was common to Celtic and Germanic peoples and determining the actual origin of certain Mother Goddesses is usually difficult. Goddesses whose epithet ends in *-henae*, *-ehae*, *-nehae*, *-eihae*, *-ahae*, *-ehiae*, *-anehae*, *-inehae*, *-ahenae* are generally attested as being Germanic, while goddesses bearing epithets of mixed character can be considered as 'Celto-Germanic'. The hybrid nature of some Mother Goddesses is interesting, for it reflects a certain syncretism resulting from the contiguity between the two peoples. Finally, a few inscriptions indicate that the *Matres* and *Matronae* were associated with Roman goddesses or epithets (*Domesticae*, *Campestres*, *Parcae/Fatae*, *Junones* and *Nymphs*), who, like them, possessed protective, domestic and motherly functions. This epigraphic *interpretatio Romana* proves that the *Matres* and *Matronae* did not belong to the Roman pantheon. From this, it follows that their cult was originally Celtic or Germanic.

Chapter 2 studied the belief in goddesses embodying the land and the natural elements. Irish mythology is evocative on that subject, for many goddesses are directly related to the earth by their names, legends or agrarian features. Ériu ('Land'), Banba ('[place of] women's death') and Fódla ('Swarded One') are the embodiment of Ireland, while Tailtiu ('Earth') and Macha ('Field') have their names on the places where they were reputedly buried: *Mag Tailtiu* in Co. Meath, *Mag Macha* and *Ard Macha* in Co. Armagh. Accounts also relate that the land is the body of the goddess. The river Boyne is described as the body of Bóinn, and the breasts of Anu and the Mórrígain can be seen in the landscapes of Co. Kerry and Co. Meath,

where hills are called after them: *Dá Chích Anann* and *Dá Chích na Mórrígana*. This belief is mirrored in the names of Gaulish goddesses, such as Litavi ('Earth') and Nantosuelta ('Winding Brook' or 'Meadows?'), which directly refer to the earth.

The land-goddess, in her role of mother purveying fertility, possesses significant agrarian features and functions. In Ireland, Tailtiu is said to have dug the plain of Brega, the Mórrígain is described ploughing a piece of land, Mór Muman is the 'Greater Nurturer' of the province of Munster, and Anu is the mother who nourishes the gods of Ireland. In Gaul, significant goddesses of prosperity are known. The cult of Atesmerta, Cantismerta and Rosmerta ('Great Purveyors'), is attested by thirty-two inscriptions and four iconographical figurations from the north-east of Gaul and Germany. It is significant that a large number of devotees are non-Romanized people of Celtic origin, for it testifies to the antiquity of the cult of bounteous goddesses, which was still vivid in the tradition despite the Romanization of the country. It is clear that land-goddesses were related to the cycle of the seasons, the rural community and the pastoral year. Invoked from sowing time to harvest time, they guaranteed the survival of the community, the maturing of the crops and the raising of cattle.

While the land was personified as a goddess purveying fertility, the natural elements, such as mountains, plants, trees and animals, were also individually deified. Some goddesses were indeed the personification and guardians of specific animals, such as Artio ('Bear'), Andarta ('Great Bear') and Carvonnia ('Deer'). It has been demonstrated that Irish Flidais, who is usually envisaged as a woodland-goddess, is most certainly a medieval invention, while the Gaulish Arduinna is not related to the boar as is often asserted. The antlered goddesses of Besançon (Doubs) and Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme) may be the representation of the belief in goddesses who could take both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic shapes. Of their metamorphosis, only the distinctive features of the animal they embody and protect remain. Other goddesses were the embodiment of plants, trees and forests, such as the Matres Eburnicae ('Yew Mother Goddesses'), the Matronae Dervonnae ('Oak Mother Goddesses'), the Duilliae ('Leaves'), the Vroicae ('Heather'), Abnoba, the goddess of the Black Forest, and possibly the Baginatiae ('Beech Goddesses?'). Finally, hills and mountains were particularly admired and revered. Various goddesses are etymologically related to sacred hills and mountains, such as Bergusia and Bergonia ('Hill'); Arduinna ('the High One'); Brigantia, Brigindona, the Matres Brigiatae and Brigit ('the High One(s)'). As for the goddesses Andei, Alambrima and Soio, they seem to have been presided over local mountains: the plateau of Plech (Ariège), Mont-Alambre (Hautes-Alpes) and the plateau of Malpas (Ardèche). These various land-, animal-, tree-, forest- and hill-goddesses attest to the numinous aspect of Nature in Celtic times.

Chapter 3 gathered and compared the literary and archaeological data evidencing the existence of territorial, protective and martial goddesses. The land-goddess became attached to different parts of the territory, inhabited by various tribes, and took on different names. Some were eponymous of the tribe they represented, ruled, nourished and protected. Examples are found in Britain and Gaul: Brigantia of the Brigantes, the Nervinae of the Nervii, the Matres Remae of the Remi, the Matres Treverae of the Treveri, the Matres/Matronae Senonae of the Senones, the Matres Eburnicae of the Eburones, the Matronae Veditantiae of the Veditantii, Dex(s)iva of the Dexivates, etc. Being known only by epigraphic evidence, the essence and functions of those 'tribal' goddesses remain uncertain, but the comparative study of the Irish territorial goddesses (Medb Lethderg, Medb Cruachan, Macha - the Mórrígain - and Mór Muman) suggests that they were simultaneously envisaged as purveyors of fertility, as sovereigns and as patronesses.

In her role of protectress of the territory and its inhabitants, the land-goddess had martial aspects attributed to her and was turned into a war-goddess, who took on different names and forms according to the relevant areas and septs. Irish mythology recalls a trio of powerful and terrifying war-goddesses, called Badb, Macha and the Mórrígain, who are characterized by their crow-shape, their terrifying and deadly shriek, their capacity to metamorphose, by their hideous appearance, their foresight and potent magical powers. They are sometimes depicted revelling in bloodshed, laughing at the carnage and washing the entrails or weapons of the warriors who are going to fall in the fighting. Their influence on the course of the battle seems to have been mystical rather than military, for they are never described taking up arms and fighting. Their role as a harbinger of death has survived in folklore in the Irish and Breton supernatural characters called 'Washer of the Ford' and 'Lavandières de Nuit', the *bean sí* (Banshee), and the fairy-lady Aoiibheall.

The crow-shaped war-goddess reflects the ancient Celtic tradition of leaving the corpses of the dead warriors on the battleground for them to be eaten by the sacred birds of prey, ensuring the voyage of the soul to the otherworld; a tradition which is attested by pre-Roman reliefs or drawings, notably coming from Celt-Iberia, and various Classical texts.

While Irish war-goddesses are particularly well-represented in Irish mythology, evidence of a cult rendered to martial goddesses in Gaul is almost non-existent. The material consists of a few figurations on c. 3rd/2nd BC coins, several theonyms referring to war and victory, two reliefs depicting Brigantia and Rigani with offensive weapons, and two inscriptions dedicated to crow-shaped goddesses, possibly related to war: [C]athubodua and Cassibodua. Dunisia, Ratis, Bibracte and Vesunna may have provided protection of the city, while the qualities needed in time of war, such as strength, aggression and courage, may have been linked to Belisama, Vercana, Exomana and Noreia. Certain goddesses are the literal personification of victory, for instance Segeta, Segomanna and Boudina/Boudiga, while others were envisaged as war-leaders ensuring triumph over the foe, for instance Camuloriga, Ricoria and Coriotana. Celtic war-goddesses were therefore endowed with both supernatural and military functions, and they offered protection and support to their people in time of conflict.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that water was a particularly sacred element for the Celts and their ancestors. The divinisation and deification of water is evidenced in Bronze and Iron Age Gaul, Britain and Ireland by the ritual deposition of hoards (weapons, jewels and domestic objects) in rivers, lakes and bogs. This tradition endured in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British times in the form of votive offerings, which consisted of dedications, personal objects, coins, anatomic ex-votos and reliefs depicting pilgrims or swaddled babies, offered to the healing deities of sacred springs, fountains or rivers. Moreover, the ancient names *Deva* ('Goddess'), *Divonna* ('Spring-Goddess') and *Bandea/Bandae* ('Goddess'), given to rivers in Ireland, Britain and Gaul, proves that rivers and springs were envisaged as divine female entities.

The tradition of a goddess embodying and inhabiting water is illustrated by Irish mythological accounts, which tell of subaquatic lands inhabited by beautiful supernatural maidens or describe the sea and the river as the body of the goddess: the hair of the Mórrígain are the waves of the sea, and the body of Bóinn is the River Boyne. Some Irish legends also recount how a deified sea, river or lake might have originated with the drowning of a woman. Such stories are known for Clidna, who became *Tonn Chlóna* ('the Wave of Clóna') after drowning at Cuan Dor (Co. Cork); Bóinn, the goddess of the River Boyne; Sionann, the goddess of the River Shannon; Eithne, the goddess of the River Inny; and Erne, the goddess of Lough Erne. This belief was common to Celtic peoples, since inscriptions

from Gaul and Britain prove that the River Seine, the River Marne, the River Saône, the River Yonne and the River Wharfe were deified as goddesses bearing their names: Sequana, Matrona, Souconna, Icauni and Verbeia. Many fountains, springs and wells were also presided over by a goddess, such as the spring of Luxeuil-les-Bains protected by Bricta, the spring of Mont-Dore by Stanna/Sianna, the Fontaine l'Étuvée by Acionna, the nymphem* of Le Sablon by Icovellauna and Mongotia, and the well of Carrawburgh by Coventina. As for Damona and Sirona, they were supra-regional healing goddesses, for their cult is attested at various curative springs in Gaul and Germany.

As the numerous water sanctuaries, votive offerings and anatomic ex-votos indicate, Gaulish and British water-goddesses perform functions of healing, while Irish water-goddesses are related to wisdom, poetry, clairvoyance and esoteric knowledge. The name of the goddess of the River Marne, Matrona ('Mother'), indicates that the water-goddess was also envisaged as a mother purveying fertility. Proto-historic 'coffin-pirogues' enclosing corpses of dead people, discovered in several Gaulish rivers, notably the Marne, point to a funerary character. This proves that the essence of the water-goddess was ambivalent. Having both a life-giving and funerary dimension, she could heal and grow the crops, as well as accompany the dead in their voyage to the otherworld, probably bringing them to be reborn in the afterlife. Therefore, the water-goddess has potent regenerative functions and represents the eternal cycle of life and renewal.

Chapter 5 studied goddesses related to rites of intoxication, which consisted in absorbing a sacred beverage to make contact with the supernatural world and enter into a dialogue with the deities. It was traditionally believed that goddesses listened to the prayers of pilgrims and granted their vows. Divine listeners and fulfillers of prayers are indeed known from various inscriptions: Clutoiθα and the Rocloisiabo are 'Listening Goddesses'; the Matronae Vediantiae may be 'the Praying Mother Goddesses'; the Matres Menmandutiae, 'the Mothers who answer the prayers'; and Garmangabis, 'She who takes the tears away'.

It has been established that ritual intoxication was part of Celtic religious practice. Even though some of the etymologies are uncertain, it would appear that several goddess names refer to the notion of intoxication through a sacred drink. Latis, who is mentioned in two inscriptions from Britain, literally means 'Drink (Conveyor)'. The British Braciaca, whose gender remains debatable, might be related to intoxication by beer. Finally, goddesses from Ireland and Gaul may be the personification of mead and of its rites. The Irish goddess Medb ('Mead Goddess'), who is described intoxicating soldiers and kings in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], is etymologically related to the Comedovae mentioned in an inscription from Aix-les-Bains (Savoy) and to Meduna honoured with Vercana in Bad Bertrich (Germany). Without dismissing the other possible etymologies, these theonyms may be the reflection of rites of intoxication.

Ritual intoxication is attested by archaeological and literary evidence. Irish mythology refers to *fled Goibnenn* ('feast or banquet of Goibhniu'), a feast consisting of food and drink conveying immortality to the gods. The sacred beverage of the Irish gods can be compared to the Indian Amrita, the Persian Hoama, the Greco-Roman Nectar or Ambrosia and the Norse Mead. The 500-litre Cauldron of Hochdorf (Baden Württemberg, Germany), discovered in the c. 550-500 BC tomb of a Celtic Prince, provides important archaeological corroboration. Botanical analyses have revealed that the crater contained a honey-based beverage. Interestingly, the Cauldron of Hochdorf can be related to the mythical cauldron of plenty of the Dagda, which symbolises immortality and regeneration. From the theonyms and the Hochdorf cauldron, it can be assumed that the sacred intoxicating drink of the Celts

was mead - Classical authors besides mention the consumption of mead by certain Celtic peoples.

Mead-intoxication rites were certainly performed in various contexts that required divine help. First, the Cauldron of Hochdorf indicates that mead-intoxication was practiced at funerals. The impressive size of the burial mound and the richness of the funerary room prove that burial was accompanied by sumptuous and elaborate ceremonies, which aimed at honouring the deceased and facilitating his rebirth in the afterlife. The voyage to the otherworld involved making contact with the deities, and this was accomplished through the absorption of a sacred beverage: mead. Furthermore, mead-intoxication rites might have been carried out in the context of war. The practice of drinking fermented beverages before going into battle to be divinely possessed and acquire strength is attested by Classical and Welsh texts. The association of Braciaca with the Roman war-god Mars, and of Meduna with the goddess of war-fury Vercana could also produce proof of such an idea, but this remains conjectural. The Comedovae, honoured near the thermal spring of Aix-les-Bains, might have been connected to healing and represented some intoxicating-cult aimed at making contact with the healing deities of the place and being granted a cure; a tradition known as 'oracular incubation' in the Classical world. Finally, Irish medieval literature indicates that mead conferred sovereignty: Medb, who married various kings, is the land-goddess of sovereignty *par excellence*. Mead-intoxication rites were certainly performed for the inauguration of new kings, who were the representative of the gods on earth and symbolically acquired sovereignty by uniting with the land-goddess through the consumption of the divine beverage she embodied.

* * * * *

Various key themes have emerged from this study of Celtic goddesses. Most important perhaps, the religious beliefs pertaining to the goddesses were essentially *animist*. Every single natural element was sacred and believed to be inhabited by a divine force: fields, animals, plants, trees, forests, rocks, hills, mountains, rivers, springs and lakes. As Green explains, "the nature-based character of Celtic religion pervades the whole spectrum of belief and worship".²⁴⁶⁵ The adoration of nature ensues from an instinctive respect for the natural elements and phenomena, perceived as inexplicable, unpredictable and essential for the survival of the human race. Everything that was beyond human comprehension and rationality was necessarily of a supernatural character. Water, which ensured the survival of the community, the irrigation of the harvested fields and the raising of cattle, miraculously and mysteriously gushed forth from the ground: it was accordingly a gift from the gods. The life-giving aspect of water and its particularly capricious nature – for it could suddenly destroy dwellings, crops and cattle – explain why it was highly respected and revered as a divine entity. Similarly, hills and mountains had a peculiar numinous character because they rose up out of the flat landscape, which was, as De Vries explains, "a sign of the idiosyncratic power that the earth had at this very place".²⁴⁶⁶ It was believed indeed that the ground was lifted up by a mysterious subterranean force and was the manifestation of a divine power. As for animals, plants and trees, they were particularly revered, because hunting, gathering and agriculture guaranteed the survival of the tribe.

It can be noted that the fertility of the land was mainly achieved and watched over by female deities. This is rooted in the biological fact that it is the female who gives birth to, and nurtures, new life. Metaphorically, the land was viewed as the womb of the goddess,

²⁴⁶⁵ Green, 1992a, p. 22.

²⁴⁶⁶ De Vries, 1963, p. 192.

from which all natural produce grew. The land-goddess represents thus the eternal cycle of life, renewal and regeneration. It is striking that all the goddesses, be they attached to healing, sovereignty or war, are closely related to prosperity and originally emanated from the land. Suggestive examples of this theory are the Irish Macha and the Mórrígain, who are war-goddesses *par excellence*, but have pronounced agrarian features in their characters. The legend, which relates the Mórrígain's sexual intercourse with the Dagda at the Ford of the river Uinsinn (Co. Sligo) at Samhain, presents her as the archetype of the land-mother-goddess, whose union with the sky-father-god symbolises the cycle of the seasons and the eternal renewal of the earth. In other words, this union ensures the fertility of the land. Indeed, the feast of Samhain marked the starting point of a pastoral new year. This belief is ancestral and was common to the various Celtic peoples from Gaul, Britain and Ireland. It lies for instance behind the Gaulish land-goddess Nantosuelta and her partner Sucellus, who is often compared to the Dagda because of their similar attributes – Sucellus's olla* and hammer can be compared with the Dagda's cauldron and staff. Similarly, Litavi ('Earth') and her consort (Mars) Cicolluis ('Fierce Striker') may be the representation of the same land-goddess/sky-god union pattern.

This theme is also reflected in the various Irish accounts which relate the coupling of the territorial goddess with the new king; a union granting him sovereignty. Medb Lethderg, Medb Cruachan, Macha, Mór Muman, Aoibheall and Áine are all archetypal figures of the land-goddess uniting with the father-god - represented by the king. Their agrarian character is clearly identifiable in their names and respective legends. These accounts also show that the notions of earthly bounty, territory, sovereignty and war were interrelated and ensued from one another. Medb Lethderg, Medb Cruachan, Macha and Mór Muman personified, ruled and defended territories and tribes: Leinster and the Laighin tribe, Connacht and the Connachta tribe, Ulster and the Ulaid tribe, and Munster and the Érainn tribe. Similarly, the British goddess Brigantia is a deity who simultaneously possesses land, territorial, tribal and war-like traits. Her name indeed indicates that she was originally the embodiment of sacred heights. She is also the eponymous goddess of the tribe of the Brigantes, and protective and martial functions can be deduced from her association with Roman war-goddesses in the epigraphy and from the relief picturing her with offensive weapons. She was thus simultaneously the provider, sovereign and patroness of the Brigantes and their territory.

The case of Brigantia illustrates the difficulty faced by researchers in determining with certainty the characteristics of Celtic goddesses. Thus, in addition to her attributes linked to the land, the tribe and war, she is also related to water and wisdom for she is given the title of Nymph in a dedication, and her Irish counterpart Brigit is said to have presided over *filidhecht* ('poetry, divination and prophecy'), smithcraft and curing. Therefore, Brigantia must also have possessed regenerative, healing and mystical abilities. Similarly, the Gaulish goddess *Segeta* could be understood as a healing water-goddess or a war-goddess. While her name, literally meaning 'Victory', relates her to war, the dedications honouring her come from curative spring sanctuaries. Another example of this complexity is the Gaulish goddess Atesmerta ('Great Provider'), who, on account of her name, can be viewed as a goddess of bounty or as the healing water-goddess of the spring of Corgebin – a small water sanctuary and anatomic ex-voto were excavated there. Was *Segeta* a water-goddess, as the archaeological record would suggest, or a war-goddess, as the etymology tends to indicate?

These problems of definition may ensue partly from the fact that the functions of the goddesses are often considered uniquely the point of view of individual disciplines. Archaeology, etymology and literature each have their own limitations. Archaeology reveals significant information, but it is often fragmentary and has to be interpreted in the light

of the present (incomplete) state of our knowledge. Equally, etymology is not always an exact science and various interpretations are often possible on the basis of the same inscriptions. Finally, Irish medieval literature reflects admittedly ancient Celtic beliefs, but beliefs perverted by time and largely expurgated by the medieval Church.

However, while the etymological, archaeological and literary material can sometimes be misleading, divergent or conflicting, it can also throw light, in its diversity, on different aspects of the personality of a goddess. This study has proved that Celtic goddesses were above all multi-faceted; they could fulfil different functions at the same time, according to the context, the time of the year or the needs of the devotees. We thus do not have to make a 'choice' as regards the functions of a goddess. Segeta, for instance, was certainly both a goddess of healing waters and a goddess of war. While general themes emerge from the study of goddesses, such as their personification of land and the natural elements, sovereignty and war, it is striking that goddesses generally do not fall into one single category - apart from the goddesses embodying a specific local natural element, such as Sequana. Indeed, their potency lies in this multiplicity, which combines, transcends and embraces a broad spectrum of activities. Celtic goddesses thus do not fall into a neat and stable structure and absolute clarity cannot be obtained. It is moreover in the very nature of Celtic mythology (and mythology in general) to be flexible and inconstant, and to cultivate ambiguity and mystery.

The answer to the question 'Can we speak of a Celtic pantheon?' is complex in view of the scarcity of the sources and the multiplicity of the deities. It is all the more difficult as the cult of some goddesses was local, attached to a specific natural element worshipped by the local population, while the cult of other goddesses was supra-regional and common to the various Celtic peoples of Gaul, Britain and Ireland – and other parts of the Celtic world. The use of the word *pantheon* (from the Greek *pan*, 'all' and *theos*, 'gods') for Celtic mythology is conceivable, for it designates the body of gods and goddesses of a polytheist religion. Nonetheless, some scholars, such as Christian Guyonvarc'h and Françoise Le Roux, consider that this term does not lend itself to Celtic mythology.²⁴⁶⁷ If we refer to Classical mythology, the word *pantheon* implies a theogony, that is to say a genealogy of the gods, who are all descended from the mother-earth and the sky-father. This theogonic system confusedly appears in Irish mythology. The land-goddess Dana is clearly attested as being the mother of the gods, for the Tuatha Dé Danann are 'the Tribe of the Goddess Dana', while the Dagda, called *Eochaid Ollathair* ('Eochaid the Great Father'), may be envisaged as their symbolical father. As explained above, Gaulish Nantosuelta and Sucellus, Litavi and Cicolluis, or Rosmerta and her primary partner (replaced by Mercurius in Gallo-Roman times), could also represent this ancestral couple.

As regards other possible 'divine filiations', the Irish texts tell us very little, and what they do tell us is obscure and confused: a genealogy cannot thus be established. In Gaul and Britain, the lack of evidence, the multitude of deities and their multiplicity at a local level, makes it impossible to reconstruct some parts of the genealogy. Caesar's vision of the 'Celtic pantheon', in which six main gods presided over commerce and arts (Mercury), medicine (Apollo), crafts (Minerva), war (Mars) and the sky (Jupiter), is obviously far too simplistic to reflect Celtic religious organisation. As we have seen, Celtic goddesses were multi-faceted, performed different functions and had many abilities in common. Many Celtic gods and goddesses could thus fit Caesar's description, which, in addition to be evasive and unclear, is actually a simplified vision of the Roman pantheon. For all these reasons, it is not in our view appropriate to speak of a Celtic pantheon. Celtic deities are far too numerous,

²⁴⁶⁷ Guyonvarc'h & Le Roux, 1990, p. 157.

intermingled and complex in character to be organized in a neat, structured and hierarchical pantheon. However, several pre-eminent goddesses emerge from the comparison of Irish, British and Gaulish sources.

Similarities between Irish, British and Gaulish goddesses can be noted in the names and functions of those goddesses. The British Brigantia ('the High One') is etymologically related to the Irish Brigit, the Gaulish Brigindona and the Celt-Iberian Matres Brigiatae. The Gaulish goddess of healing springs, Damona ('Cow Goddess'), is linked to the Irish river-goddess Bóinn ('the Bovine Wise Goddess'), the British river-goddess Verbeia ('She of the Cattle?'), the Gaulish spring-goddess Borvoboendia ('the Seething Wise Cow'), and possibly to the Gaulish goddess of healing springs Sirona ('Heifer?'). The name of the Irish Mórrígain ('Great Queen') is similar to the theonym Rigani ('Queen'), attested to in Britain, Gaul and Germany, and to the Gaulish Camuloriga ('Queen of the Champions') and Albiorica ('Queen of the World') – but her gender is questionable. The name of the Irish crow-shaped goddess Badb can be identified in two Gaulish goddess names: Cassibodua ('Sacred Crow') and [C]athubodua ('Battle? Crow'). Despite the scepticism of some scholars about the reconstitution of the initial letter 'C', it is striking that the Gaulish Cathubodua is the very same figure as the Irish Badb, who is called Cath-Bhadhbh (later Badb Catha, 'Battle Crow') – a theonym which would linguistically go directly back to a Celtic **Catubodua*. Moreover, the Irish goddess Medb, whose name pertains to ritual mead-intoxication (or power), is etymologically related to Gaulish Medu(a)na and the Comedovae. Her function also linked her to the British goddess Latis ('Drink'), and possibly to the British goddess Braciaca ('Beer?').

Those examples indicate that Celtic peoples honoured similar deities and shared common beliefs. Five main Celtic goddesses can be therefore identified: a goddess personifying sacred heights and the eminence of wisdom; a cow-shaped goddess related to water fertility and curing; a queen goddess, fulfilling the functions of sovereignty and protection of the territory; a crow-shaped goddess possessing martial and funerary functions; and a goddess embodying the rites of intoxication.

Similarities can also be noted in the characters of some goddesses, who do not bear the same name but refer to the same belief-concept. River-goddesses of Gaul and Ireland, even though they have divergent functions, represent the same religious concept: the goddess is eponymous of the river she personifies. The Celtic peoples also shared the belief in a deer-shaped goddess, for doe-goddess-metamorphoses are related in Irish mythology, a dedication to a goddess Carvonia ('Doe') was discovered in Croatia and two semi-zoomorphic antlered goddesses are known from Gaul. These goddesses (rivers, animals, trees, etc) are of lower rank, because they embodied a specific local natural element - such as Sequana goddess of the river Seine - or because they did not fulfil functions relating to sovereignty, war or healing, but simply personified a species of animal or plant.

Glossary

Aediculum: Latin word for a niche, tabernacle or small shrine, where the statue of a divinity was placed.

Anadyomede (Venus): from Greek *αναδυόμενος*, meaning 'which emerges, which rises from the water'; *Venus Anadyomene* is Venus 'Rising from the Sea'; the Venus Anadyomede type is the representation of a Venus in relation with the waters.

Anatomic ex-votos: images of painful or deceased body parts, such as legs, breasts, eyes, arms, heads, feet and internal organs, left as an offering to the healing deity.

Anepigraphic (reliefs): reliefs which are not combined with an inscription identifying the represented god or goddess.

Anthropomorphic: having the form of a human being.

Ara: Latin word for an 'altar' or a 'honorific monument'.

Ablutions: from Latin *ablution* ('to wash'); ritual purification which consists of immersing some parts of the body in water. It is generally accompanied by religious acts and prayers.

Bardocucullus: Latin name of Gaulish origin, literally meaning 'the cucullus of bards', referring to the traditional Gaulish long woolly warm hooded cloak or cape, worn by peasants in Gallo-Roman times. It would have been originally the costume of bards.

Bas-relief: in a bas-relief or low relief, the design projects only slightly from the ground and there is little or no undercutting of outlines. See *Relief**.

Byform: variant; closely related and sometimes less frequent form.

Byname: a secondary name; appellation, epithet.

Caduceus: herald's staff, wand of Mercury; the object generally consists of a winged staff with entwined serpents.

Canopy: in architecture, a projecting hood or cover suspended over an altar, statue, or niche and supported on pillars. It originally symbolized a divine and royal presence.

Carnyx: wind instrument of the Iron Age Celts, attested for c. 300 BC to 200 AD. It is a kind of bronze trumpet, held vertically, the mouth styled in the shape of a boar's head. It was used in warfare, probably to incite troops to battle.

Cella: Latin name meaning 'small chamber', referring to the inner chamber of a temple in Classical architecture. The *cella* is a simple, windowless and rectangular room, with a door or open entrance at the front, surrounded by a portico and situated at the centre of a religious building. It generally contained a cult image or statue representing the particular deity venerated in the temple and an altar where the votive offerings were deposited

Cenotaph: from the Greek *κενοτάφιον*, i.e. *kenos* ('empty') and *taphos* ('tomb'); a funerary monument commemorating deceased people whose remains are buried somewhere else. Although the vast majority of cenotaphs are erected in honour of individuals, many of the best-known cenotaphs are instead dedicated to the memories of groups of individuals, such as the war dead of a country or empire.

Centurion: commander of a century*, who had subordinate officers called *principales* and was replaced by the *optio** when he was absent.

Century: in the Roman army, each legion was composed of ten cohorts*, which were subdivided into six centuries, each supervised by a centurion.

Chiton: Name of an ancient Greek tunic worn by men and women from the 8th c. BC to the 4th c. BC. The *Dorian chiton* was a woollen shirt with no sleeves, buttoned at the shoulder, while the later *Ionic chiton* was made of a wider piece of fabric, buttoned all the way from the neck to the wrists and girdled at the waist.

Chthonic or *Chthonian*: from Greek *chthonos* ('earth'); pertaining to the underworld.

Cippus: small votive or funerary stele*.

Cithara: stringed musical instrument of ancient Greece and elsewhere, similar to the lyre and played with a plectrum*.

Civitas or 'city': Roman administrative unit, generally corresponding to the territory of a tribe. After the Roman conquest, the Allobroges tribe for instance became the city of Vienne and the Volcae Tectosages tribe became the city of Toulouse. Each *civitas* had a county town and was subdivided into rural districts, called *pagi* (singular *pagus*), and secondary towns, called *vici* (singular *vicus*).

Cognomen: third constitutive element of the official name of a Roman citizen. The first two elements were the *praenomen* [name] and the *nomen* or *gentilice* [surname].

Cohort: in the Roman army, a legion was composed of ten cohorts, numbered from I to X, which were subdivided into three maniples composed of two centuries each, i.e. six centuries. The cohort was supervised by a prefect (*praefectus*).

Cornucopia: a symbol of food and abundance; also referred to as 'horn of plenty'.

Crater: A wide, two-handled vase used in ancient Greece and Rome for mixing wine and water.

Cromlech: circle of standing stones.

Cucullus: Traditional Gaulish hooded woollen short mantle worn by peasants in Gallo-Roman times.

Decurio: 1) A *Decurio civitatis* was a member of the cury or 'council of decurions' in the cities. He administered the city and was in charge of public contracts, religious rituals, order, local tax collection, etc. 2) A subaltern cavalry officer in the Roman army, who had the same rank as a centurion and commanded a turma, composed of about forty soldiers.

Defixio: Latin name for a curse tablet or binding spell; process through which the *devotio* is executed: a person would ask the gods to harm another person. The cursing text was engraved on sheets of lead, then rolled or folded, and placed in tombs, thrown in wells or buried under the ground, or nailed to the walls of temples.

Devotio: bewitchment or cursing rite.

Dolmen: a group of stones consisting of one large flat stone supported by several vertical ones, containing a sepulchral chamber.

Epigraphy: from the Greek \square *πιγραφή*, 'on-writing', i.e. 'inscription'; the study of inscriptions engraved on various objects in stone and metal. Votive epigraphy concerns inscriptions dedicated and offered to the gods.

Ethnonym: name of ethnic groups or tribes.

Etymology: the study of the history of words, of their origin, evolution and meaning.

Ex-voto: Latin word referring to an offering made to the gods to have a vow granted or to thank the deity for fulfilling a previous vow. The objects can be in wood, stone, bronze, gold, iron or in sheet metal and may consist of representations of the pilgrims themselves, swaddled babies and protective deities (Venus Anadyomene* or Mother Goddesses); personal ornaments such as fibulas*, brooches, rings, bracelets and hairpins; coins; potteries; epigraphic altars and *anatomic ex-votos*.

Fanum (plural, *Fana*): temple of Gaulish tradition, usually composed of two square or rectangular rooms fitted into each other. The inner room, called *cella*, was open to the east and generally contained a cult image or statue representing the particular deity venerated in the temple and an altar where the votive offerings were deposited. The outer wall of the second room formed a gallery around the *cella*, where pilgrims would ritually walk around.

Favissa: pit or hiding-place where votive offerings were deposited.

Fibula: Latin word meaning 'to fasten'; ancient brooch, which was not only decorative but had a practical function: to fasten clothes, notably cloaks.

Filiation: in the epigraphy, the filiation of a dedicator is indicated by the abbreviated forms *fil(ius)*, 'son of', or *fil(iae)*, 'daughter of'.

Gentilice: or *nomen* ('second name') is the second constitutive element of the official name of a Roman citizen. It follows the *praenomen* and precedes the *cognomen*.

Gonfalon: a quadrangular piece of cloth, similar to the modern banner, used in cavalry charges.

Guttus (plural *gutta*): Vase with a narrow neck or a cruet.

Hierology: from Greek *ἱερός* ('sacred' or 'holy'), and *λόγος* ('word' or 'reason'); refers to analysis and explanation, through reasoned discourse of the sacred traditions and religions of the peoples of any time and place, which tries to reconcile faith with reason.

High-relief: in a high-relief, or *alto-relievo*, the forms project at least half or more of their natural circumference from the background and may in parts be completely disengaged from the ground, thus approximating sculpture in the round. See *Relief**.

Hydronyms: river-names.

Hydronymy: from Greek *hydor* ('water') and *onoma* ('name'); the study of river-names.

Hypostyle (room): a room which has a flat ceiling supported by columns.

Iconography: the study of plastic representations, such as statues, reliefs* or drawings.

Incubation: the act of sleeping in a temple or other holy place in order to have oracular dreams.

In-tale: a tale related within another tale.

Latin Right: civic status given by the Romans, intermediate between full Roman citizenship and non-citizen status (*peregrines**).

Legion: the Roman army was constituted of legions, which were numbered, named and sometimes given an epithet of various significations, e.g. *Legio XXX Vlpia Victrix*, based in Germania Inferior. Each legion was composed of ten *cohorts**.

Lemniscus: name of ribbons entwined around wreaths, palms of victors and supplicants.

Libation: a ritual pouring of a drink as an offering to a god.

Menhir: a large upright standing stone.

Mithraeum: sanctuary or temple dedicated to the cult of the oriental goddess *Mithra*. This type of sanctuaries developed in the Roman provinces in the 2nd c. AD.

Monoxylic pirogue: a pirogue which is carved out in a single tree trunk.

Nomen: or *gentilice* [surname] is the second constitutive element of the official name of a Roman citizen. It follows the *praenomen* and precedes the *cognomen*.

Noricum: in ancient geography, it was a Celtic kingdom or a federation of twelve tribes, stretching over the area of present-day Austria and a fraction of Slovenia. It became a province of the Roman Empire.

Nymphaeum or *Nympheum*: Latin word meaning 'fountain devoted to the Nymphs', referring to caves or grottos where a spring or a fountain rises. These water sanctuaries were presided over by female deities, called Nymphs in Classical mythology.

Oculist stamp: used as a stamp to mark medicines for eye diseases. Oculist stamps are made of stone and have the name of the doctor, illness and the ointment inscribed on the sides. As for their size and shape, the oculist stamps are generally square and about one or two centimetres wide and a few millimetres in depth. They are found in a number of sites throughout the empire, though the majority comes from the north-western provinces of Gallia Belgica and Lugdunensis.

Onomastics: from Greek *onoma* ('name'); branch of lexicology - i.e. study of the meaning and uses of words - which studies the origin of proper names. It is composed of anthroponomy –study of personal names - and toponymy –study of place-names.

Optio: subaltern commander of the century who replaced the centurion* in his absence.

Origo: origin or provenance of a person mentioned in an inscription, such as his or her country, region or tribe of origin.

Pagus (plural *Pagi*): rural district of the *civitas*.

Pallium: large rectangular cloak or mantle worn by men, especially by philosophers in Greece and by early Christian ascetics.

Patera: broad shallow dish or cup with a curving rim, which was used for drinking or offering drinks to the gods in ritual religious contexts.

Peregrine: in Gallo-Roman times, peregrines were free men who did not have Roman citizenship, rights and judicial status, and bore the 'unique name', i.e. a single name.

Peristyle: a columned porch or open colonnade in a building which surrounds a court or an internal garden in Greek and Roman architecture.

Petanus or *Petasos*: Winged hat; emblem of the Roman god Mercury.

Plectrum (plural *plectra* or *plectrums*): a small piece of metal, held between the fingers and thumb, and used for striking the lyre or the cithar.

Praenomen ('first name'): is the first constitutive element of the official name of a Roman citizen. It precedes the *nomen** or *gentilice** and the *cognomen**.

Prefect: commander of a cohort.

Re-employment or *re-use*: practice, in the 4th c. AD, which consisted in re-using an altar or an inscribed stone to build new monuments, houses and city walls.

Relief: from Italian *relievare*, 'to raise'; in sculpture, any work in which the figures project from a supporting background, usually a plane surface. Reliefs are classified according to the height of the figures' projection or detachment from the background. See *Bas-relief** and *High-relief**.

Runes: characters or letters composing the ancient alphabet of the northern and eastern Germanic languages (Gothic and Old Norse), known from inscriptions engraved on wood and stone.

Rupestral: composed of or inscribed on rock.

Sept: tribe.

Stamnos (plural *Stamnoi*): broad-shouldered, round-shaped Greek vessel, with a low foot and a low neck, and two stubby handles relatively high on its sides, used to store liquids.

Stele: slab of stone or terra-cotta, usually oblong, set up in a vertical position, for votive or memorial purposes.

Taboo: called a *geis* (plural *geasa*) in the Irish language; prohibition or obligation, comparable to a curse or, paradoxically a gift. If someone under a *geis* violates the associated taboo, the infractor will suffer dishonour or death. On the other hand, the observing of one's *geasa* is believed to bring power. For instance, the Ulster hero *Cú Chulainn* had a *geis* to never eat dog meat, and he was also bound by a *geis* to eat any food offered to him by a woman. When tree witches offered him dog meat, he had no way to emerge from the situation unscathed; this led to his death.

Tabularius: accountant. A *tabularius sevir augustalis* is a freed slave who was chosen to be an accountant and to supervise the Imperial cult of the city.

Tenon: a projecting piece of wood made for insertion into a mortise in another piece of wood.

Theonym: from Greek *theos* ('god'), and *nym* ('name'), the name of a god.

Thyrsus: staff or spear, tipped with an ornament like a pine cone, carried by Bacchus and his followers.

Topical: local; belonging to a particular place.

Topography: from Greek *topos* ('place') and *graphein* ('to describe'); science of describing an area of land or making maps of it, giving the natural and artificial details of its shape, disposition and relief (hills and valleys).

Toponyms: place-names.

Toponymy: from Greek *topos* ('lieu') and *onuma* ('name'); the study of place-names.

Torque: traditional Celtic necklace, dating from around the 8th c. BC to the 3rd c. AD, made from twisted metal, usually gold or bronze, which is open-ended at the front. The ends typically bore sculpted ornaments, such as globes, cubes or animal heads, and sometimes human figures.

Triad: collection of three deities, usually linked in some way.

Tumulus (plural *Tumuli*): burial mound.

Urceus: a single-handed jug.

Vicus (plural *Vici*): secondary town situated within the *civitas*, apart from the county town. It was characterized by agricultural, artisanal, commercial, religious and sometimes administrative activities.

Villa rustica: Roman 'country house'.

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A) Epigraphy

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CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , 17 vols (1853-)
CIL II	<i>Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae</i>
CIL III	<i>Inscriptiones Asiae</i>
CIL V	<i>Inscriptiones Cisalpiniae Latinae</i>
CIL VI	<i>Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae</i>
CIL VII	<i>Inscriptiones Britanniae</i>
CIL VIII	<i>Inscriptiones Africae Latinae</i>
CIL XI	<i>Inscriptiones Aemiliae, Etruriae et al.</i>
CIL XII	<i>Inscriptiones Galliae Narbonensis Latinae</i>
CIL XIII	<i>Inscriptiones trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae</i>
CIR	Barnbach, Guillaume, <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Rhenanarum: consilio et auctoritate societatis antiquariorum Rhenanae</i> , Paris, Klincksiek, 1867.
F.	Finke, Hermann, 'Neue Inschriften', in <i>BRGK</i> , 17, 1927, pp. 1-107, 198-231.
HEp	<i>Hispania Epigraphica</i> (Madrid, 1989-)
IACN	Christol, Michel (ed.), <i>Inscriptions antiques de la cité de Nîmes</i> , Nîmes, Musée archéologique de Nîmes, 1992.
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ILB 2	Demant, Albert & Raepsaet-Charlier, Marie-Thérèse, <i>Nouveau Recueil des Inscriptions latines de Belgique</i> , Bruxelles, Latomus, 2002.
ILGN	Espérandieu, Emile, <i>Inscriptions latines de Gaule (Narbonnaise)</i> , Paris, E. Leroux, 1929.
ILLPRON	<i>Inscriptionum Lapidarium Latinarum Provinciae Norici</i> (Berlin, 1986)
ILIS	Rémy, Bernard, <i>Inscriptions Latines de Haute-Savoie</i> , Annecy, Musée-Château d'Annecy, 1995.
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ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (New-York & Berlin, 1972-)
AW	<i>Antike Welt</i> (Mainz, 1970-)
BAF	<i>Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France</i> (Paris, 1804-)
BBCS	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> (Cardiff, 1922-1993)
BRGK	<i>Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission</i> (Mainz, 1904-)
Brill's	<i>Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World New Pauly</i> , Cancik, 20 vols (Leiden & Boston, 2002-)
BN	Muret, Ernest & Chabouillet, Anatole, <i>Catalogue des Monnaies gauloises de la Bibliothèque Nationale</i> , Paris, E. Plon, 1889.
CAG	<i>Carte archéologique de la Gaule</i> , 101 vols (Paris, 1988-)
CRAI	<i>Comptes-Rendus des Scéances. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i> (Paris, 1857-)
DAG	Galles, René, Le Men, René & Lefèvre, M. (eds), <i>Dictionnaire Archéologique de la Gaule</i> , Paris, Imprimerie Impériale, 1867-1923, 2 vols.
DNP	Cancik, Hubert, Schneider Helmuth & Pauly, August Friedrich (eds), <i>Der Neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> , Stuttgart, J. B. Metzler, 1996-2003, 16 vols.
EC	<i>Études Celtiques</i> (Paris, 1936-)
ERE	Hastings, James, Selbie John Alexander & Gray Louis (eds), <i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i> , Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1908-1926, 13 vols.
LEIA	Vendryes, Joseph, Bachellery, Edouard & Lambert, Pierre-Yves (eds), <i>Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien</i> , Dublin, Institute for Advanced Studies, Paris, CNRS, 1959-1978, 7 vols.
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , Zürich, München, Düsseldorf, Artemis Verlag, 1981-1999, 8 vols.
MCACO	<i>Mémoires de la Commission des antiquités du département de la Côte d'Or</i> (Dijon, 1834-)
MDSSHA	<i>Mémoires et Documents publiés par la Société savoisienne d'histoire et d'archéologie</i> (Chambéry, 1856-)
MSAF	<i>Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de France</i> (Paris, 1817-1850, 1855-1869)
Paulys	Pauly, August Friedrich (ed.), <i>Paulys Realencyclopädie, der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart, J.B. Metzlerscher Verlag, 1839-1980, 85 vols.
RA	<i>Revue archéologique</i> (Paris, 1844-)
RAE	<i>Revue Archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est</i> (Dijon, 1950-)
RAN	<i>Revue Archéologique de Narbonnaise</i> (Paris, 1968-)
RAP	<i>Revue Archéologique de Picardie</i> (Amiens, Compiègne, 1982-)
REA	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i> (Bordeaux, 1899-)
RC	<i>Revue Celtique</i> , vols 1-55 (Paris, 1870-1934)
RG	Espérandieu, Émile, <i>Recueil Général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule romaine</i> , Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1907-1938, 12 vols.
RG Germ. 546	Espérandieu, Émile, <i>Recueil Général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Germanie romaine</i> , Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1931, 1 vol.
RGA	<p>Sous contrat Creative Commons : Paternité-Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale</p> <p>Hoops, Johannes, <i>Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde</i>, Starsburg, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 1919, 4 vols (1st edition), Beck-Heimich, Gernrich, Dieter & Steuer, Heiko, <i>Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde</i>, Berlin & New York, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 1963-2008, 35 vols (2nd edition)</p>

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Appendix 1: Classical Texts

I) Plants, rituals and taboos*

In his Natural History, Pliny the Elder tells of the taboos* surrounding the gathering and use of the selago, samolus, mistletoe and verbena plants.

A) The gathering of the selago

vulgaris quoque haec spina, ex qua aenae fulloniae implentur, radicis usus habet. per hispanias quidem multi et inter odores et ad unguenta utuntur illa, aspalathum vocantes. est sine dubio hoc nomine spina silvestris in oriente, ut diximus, candida, magnitudine arboris iustae, sed et frutex humilior, aequè spinosus, in nisyro et rhodiorum insulis, quem alii erysisceptrum, alii phasganon, syri diaxylon vocant. optimus qui minime ferulaceus, rubens aut in purpuram vergens detracto cortice. nascitur pluribus locis, sed non ubique odoratus. quam vim haberet caelesti arcu in eum innixio diximus. sanat taetra oris ulcera et ozaenas, genitalia exulcerata aut carbunculantia, item rhagadia, inflationes potu discutit et strangurias. cortex sanguinem reddentibus medetur. decoctum eius alvum sistit. similia praestare silvestrem quoque putant.²⁴⁶⁸ Similar to savin is the herb known as ‘selago’. Care is taken to gather it without the use of iron, the right hand being passed for the purpose through the left sleeve of the tunic, as though the gatherer were in the act of committing a theft. The clothing too must be white, the feet bare and washed clean, and a sacrifice of bread and wine must be made before gathering it: it is carried also in a new napkin. The Druids of Gaul have pretended that this plant should be carried about the person as a preservative against accidents of all kinds, and that the smoke of it is extremely good for all maladies of the eyes.²⁴⁶⁹

B) The gathering of the samolus

spina et appendix appellata, quoniam baccae puniceo colore in ea appendices vocantur. hae crude per se et aridae decoctae in vino alvum citam ac tormina conpescunt. pyracanthae baccae contra serpentium ictus bibuntur.²⁴⁷⁰ The Druids, also, have given the name of ‘samolus’ to a certain plant which grows in humid localities. This too, they say, must be gathered fasting with the left hand, as a preservative against the maladies to which swine and cattle are subject. The

²⁴⁶⁸ Book 24, 42.

²⁴⁶⁹ Bostock, 1855.

²⁴⁷⁰ Book 24, 43.

*person, too, who gathers it must be careful not to look behind him, nor must it be laid anywhere but in the troughs from which the cattle drink.*²⁴⁷¹

C) The gathering of the mistletoe

amplissima arborum ad hoc aevi existimatur romae visa, quam propter miraculum tiberius caesar in eodem ponte naumachiaro exposuerat advectam cum reliqua materie, duravitque ad neronis principis amphitheatrum. fuit autem trabs ea e larice, longa pedes cxx, bipedali crassitudine aequalis, quo intellegebatur vix credibilis reliqua altitudo fastigium ad cacumen aestimantibus. fuit memoria nostra et in porticibus saeptorum a m. agrippa relicta aeque miraculi causa, quae diribitorio superfuerat, pedibus brevior, sesquipedali crassitudine. abies admirationis praecipuae visa est in nave, quae ex aegypto gai principis iussu obeliscum in vaticano circo statutum quattuorque truncos lapidis eiusdem ad sustinendum eum adduxit. qua nave nihil admirabilius visum in mari certum est. modium lentis pro saburra ei fuere. longitudo spatium obtinuit magna ex parte ostiensis portus latere laevo. ibi namque demersa est claudio principe cum tribus molibus turrium altitudine in ea exaedificatis obiter puteolano pulvere advectisque. arboris eius crassitudo quattuor hominum ulnas complectentium implebat, vulgoque auditur nummum et pluris malos venundari ad eos usus, rates vero conecti leftbracketxrightbracket sestertium plerasque. at in aegypto ac syria reges inopia abietis cedro ad classes feruntur usi. maxima ea in cypro traditur ad undecimem demetri succisa pedum, crassitudinis vero ad trium hominum complexum. germaniae praedones singulis arboribus cavatis navigant, quarum quaedam et homines ferunt. spississima ex omni materie, ideo et gravissima iudicatur hebenus et buxus, graciles natura. neutra in aquis fluvitat, nec suber, si dematur cortex, nec larix. ex reliquis spississima lotos, quae romae ita appellatur, dein robur exalburnatum. et huic nigricans color magisque etiam cytiso, quae proxime accedere hebenum videtur, quamquam non desunt qui syriacas terebinthos nigriores adfirmant. celebravit et thericles nomine calices ex terebintho solitus facere torno; perquam probatur materies. omnium haec sola ungui vult meliorque fit oleo. colos mire adulteratur iuglande ac piro silvestri tinctis atque in medicamine decoctis. omnibus quae diximus spissa firmitas. ab iis proxima est cornus, quamquam non potest videri materies propter exilitatem, sed lignum non alio paene quam ad radios rotarum utile aut si quid cuneandum sit in ligno clavisve figendum ceu ferreis. ilex item et oleaster et olea atque castanea, carpinus, populus. haec et crispa aceris modo, si ulla materies idonea esset ramis saepe deputatis. castratio illa est adimitque vires. de cetero plerisque horum, sed utique robori, tanta duritia, ut terebrari nisi madefactum non queat et ne sic quidem adactus avelli clavus. e diverso clavum non tenet cedrus. mollissima tilia. eadem videtur et calidissima. argumentum adferunt quod citissime ascias retundat. calidae et morus, laurus, hederiae et omnia, e quibus

²⁴⁷¹ Bostock, 1855.

*igniaria fiunt.*²⁴⁷² Upon this occasion we must not omit to mention the admiration that is lavished upon this plant by the Gauls. The Druids - for that is the name they give to their magicians - held nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree that bears it, supposing always that tree to be the robur. Of itself the robur is selected by them to form whole groves, and they perform none of their religious rites without employing branches of it; so much so, that it is very probable that the priests themselves may have received their name from the Greek name for that tree. In fact, it is the notion with them that everything that grows on it has been sent immediately from heaven, and that the mistletoe upon it is a proof that the tree has been selected by God himself as an object of his especial favour. The mistletoe, however, is but rarely found upon the robur; and when found, is gathered with rites replete with religious awe. This is done more particularly on the fifth day of the moon, the day which is the beginning of their months and years, as also of their ages, which, with them, are but thirty years. This day they select because the moon, though not yet in the middle of her course, has already considerable power and influence; and they call her by a name which signifies, in their language, the all-healing. Having made all due preparation for the sacrifice and a banquet beneath the trees, they bring thither two white bulls, the horns of which are bound then for the first time. Clad in a white robe the priest ascends the tree, and cuts the mistletoe with a golden sickle, which is received by others in a white cloak. They then immolate the victims, offering up their prayers that God will render this gift of his propitious to those to whom he has so granted it. It is the belief with them that the mistletoe, taken in drink, will impart fecundity to all animals that are barren, and that it is an antidote for all poisons. Such are the religious feelings which we find entertained towards trifling objects among nearly all nations.²⁴⁷³

D) The gathering of the verbena

*est et altera cyclaminos cognomine cissanthemos, geniculatis caulibus supervacuis a priore distans, circa arbores se volvens, acinis hederæ, sed mollibus, flore candido, specioso, radice supervacua. acini tantum in usu, gustu acres et lenti. siccantur in umbra tusique dividuntur in pastillos. mihi et tertia cyclaminos demonstrata est cognomine chamaecissos, uno omnino folio, radice ramosa, qua pisces necabantur.*²⁴⁷⁴ The people in the Gallic provinces make use of them both [two species of verbena] for soothsaying purposes, and for the predication of future events; but it is the magicians more particularly that give utterance to such ridiculous follies in reference to this plant. Persons, they tell us, if they rub themselves with it will be sure to gain the object of their desires; and they assure us that it keeps away fevers, conciliates friendship, and is a cure for every possible disease; they say, too, that it must be fathered about the rising

²⁴⁷² Book 16, 95, 1-2.

²⁴⁷³ Bostock, 1855.

²⁴⁷⁴ Book 25, 49, 2.

of the Dog-star - but so as not to be shone upon by sun and moon - and that honey-combs and honey must be first presented to the earth by way of expiation. They tell us also that a circle must first be traced around it with iron; after which it must be taken up with the left hand, and raised aloft, care being taken to dry the leaves, stem and root separately in the shade [...].²⁴⁷⁵

II) Yew used as a poison

In *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar reports that Catuvolcus, King of the Eburones tribe, poisoned himself with yew, preferring death to surrender to the Romans:

Catuvolcus, rex dimidiae partis Eburonum, qui una cum Ambiorige consilium inierat, aetate iam confectus, cum laborem aut belli aut fugae ferre non posset, omnibus precibus detestatus Ambiorigem, qui eius consilii auctor fuisset, taxo, cuius magna in Gallia Germanique copia est, se exanimavit.²⁴⁷⁶ Catuvolcus, King of one half of the Eburones, who had entered into the design together with Ambiorix, since, being now worn out by age, he was unable to endure the fatigue either of war or flight, having cursed Ambiorix with every imprecation, as the contriver of that measure, destroyed himself with the juice of the yew-tree, of which there is great abundance in Gaul and Germany.²⁴⁷⁷

In his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder relates that the toxic sap of yew was used in the making of specific ointments applied at the end of the spears or arrows of the Celtic warriors to create lethal weapons, like they did with datura stramonium:

Similis his etiam nunc aspectu est, ne quid praetereatur, taxus minime virens gracilisque et tristis ac dira, nullo suco, ex omnibus sola bacifera. mas noxio fructu; letale quippe bacis in Hispania praecipue venenum inest, vasa etiam viatoria ex ea vinis in Gallia facta mortifera fuisse compertum est. hanc Sextius milacem a Graecis vocari dicit et esse in Arcadia tam praesentis veneni, ut qui obdormiant sub ea cibumve capiant moriantur. sunt qui et taxica hinc appellata dicant venena — quae nunc toxica dicimus —, quibus sagittae tinguantur. repertum innoxiam fieri, si in ipsam arborem clavus aereus adigatur.²⁴⁷⁸ Not to omit any one of them, the yew is similar to these other trees in general appearance. It is of a colour, however, but slightly approaching to green, and of a slender form; of sombre and ominous aspect, and quite destitute of juice: it is the only one, too, among them all, that bears a berry. In the male tree the fruit is injurious; indeed, in Spain more particularly, the berries contain a deadly poison. It is an ascertained fact that travellers' vessels, made in Gaul of this wood, for the purpose of holding wine, have caused the death of those who used them.

²⁴⁷⁵ Bostock, 1855.

²⁴⁷⁶ Book 6, 31.

²⁴⁷⁷ De Quincey, 1923.

²⁴⁷⁸ Book 16, 20, 2.

Sextius says, that in Greece this tree is known by the name of 'smilax', and that in Arcadia it is possessed of so active a poison, that those who sleep beneath it, or even take food there, are sure to meet their death from it. There are authors, also, who assert that the poisons which we call at the present day 'toxica', and in which arrows are dipped, were formerly called taxica, from this tree. It has been discovered, also, that these poisonous qualities are quite neutralized by driving a copper nail into the wood of the tree.²⁴⁷⁹

III) Honey as a poison

Xenophon, in his *Anabasis*, recounts the story of some people who, after eating honey, gave the impression of being drunk, raving mad, and even dying:

hoi de Hellênes anabantes estratopedeuonto en pollais kômais kai tapitêdeia polla echousais. kai ta men alla ouden ho ti kai ethaumasân: ta de smênê polla ên autothi, kai tôn kêriôn hosoi ephagon tôn stratiôtôn pantes aphrones te eginonto kai êmoun kai katô diechôrei autois kai orthos oudeis edunato histasthai, all' hoi men oligon edêdokotes sphodra methuousin eôikesan, hoi de polu mainomenois, hoi de kai apothnêiskousin. ekeinto de houtô polloi hôsper tropês gegenêmenês, kai pollê ên athumia. têi d' husteraiâi apethane men oudeis, amphî de tèn autên pôs hôran anephronoun: tritêi de kai tetartêi anistanto hôsper ek pharmakoposias.²⁴⁸⁰ **After accomplishing the ascent the Greeks took up quarters in numerous villages, which contained provisions in abundance. Now for the most part there was nothing here which they really found strange; but the swarms of bees in the neighbourhood were numerous, and the soldiers who ate of the honey all went off their heads, and suffered from vomiting and diarrhoea, and not one of them could stand up, but those who had eaten a little were like people exceedingly drunk, while those who had eaten a great deal seemed like crazy, or even, in some cases, dying men. So they lay there in great numbers as though the army had suffered a defeat, and great despondency prevailed. On the next day, however, no one had died, and at approximately the same hour as they had eaten the honey they began to come to their senses; and on the third or fourth day they got up, as if from a drugging.**²⁴⁸¹

Similarly, Diodorus Siculus, in his *Library*, reports that people fell like dead men after eating wild honey:

heurisketo de kai smênê pamplêthê peri tous topous, ex hôn polutelê prosephereto kêria. toutôn d' hoi geusamenoî paralogôî perieipton sumptômati: hoi gar metalabontes autôn aphrones eginonto kai piptontes epi tèn gên homoioi tois teteleutêkosin hupêrchon. pollôn de phagontôn dia tèn glukutêta

²⁴⁷⁹ Bostock, 1855.

²⁴⁸⁰ Book 4, 8, 19-21.

²⁴⁸¹ Heinemann, 1980, vol. 3.

tês apolauseôs, tachu to plêthos egegonei tôn peptôkotôn hoionei tropês en polemôi gegenêmenês. ekeinên men oun tèn hêmeran êthumêsen hê dunamis, katapeplêgmenê to te paradoxon kai to plêthos tôn êtuchêkotôn: têt d' husteraiiai peri tèn autên hôran hapantes heautous anelambanon kai kat' oligon anaktômenoi to phronein anestêsan, kai to sôma dietethêsan homoiôs tois ek pharmakoposias diasôtheisin.²⁴⁸² There were found in the regions great numbers of beehives which yielded valuable honey. But as many as partook of it succumbed to a strange affliction; for those who ate it lost consciousness, and falling on the ground were like dead men. Since many consumed the honey because of the pleasure its sweetness afforded, such a number had soon fallen to the ground as if they had suffered a rout in war. Now during that day the army was disheartened, terrified as it was at both the strange happening and the great number of the unfortunates; but on the next day at about the same hour all came to themselves, gradually recovered their senses, and rose up from the ground, and their physical state was like that of men recovered after a dose of a drug.²⁴⁸³

IV) The Crow as a divine augur

Livy, in *Ab urbe condita* [*History of Rome*], tells of a duel between a Gaulish leader and a Roman tribune called Marcus Valerius, whose victory was augured by a crow perched on his head; hence his nickname *Corvus*:

ubi cum stationibus quieti tempus tererent , Gallus processit magnitudine atque armis insignis ; quatiensque scutum hasta cum silentium fecisset , prouocat per interpretem unum ex Romanis qui secum ferro decernat . M. erat Ualerius tribunus militum adulescens , qui haud indigniorem eo decore se quam T. Manlium ratus , prius sciscitatus consulis uoluntatem , in medium armatus processit . minus insigne certamen humanum numine interposito deorum factum ; namque conserenti iam manum Romano coruus repente in galea consedit , in hostem uersus . quod primo ut augurium caelo missum laetus accepit tribunus , precatus deinde , si diuus , si diua esset qui sibi praepetem misisset , uolens propitius adesset . dictu mirabile , tenuit non solum ales captam semel sedem sed , quotienscumque certamen initum est , leuans se alis os oculosque hostis rostro et unguibus appetit , donec territum prodigii talis uisu oculisque simul ac mente turbatum Ualerius obruncat ; coruus ex conspectu elatus orientem petit . hactenus quietae utrimque stationes fuere ; postquam spoliare corpus caesi hostis tribunus coepit , nec Galli se statione tenuerunt

²⁴⁸² Book 14, 30, 1-2.

²⁴⁸³ *Oldfather*, 1954, vol. 6.

et Romanorum cursus ad uictorem etiam ocior fuit . ibi circa iacentis Galli corpus contracto certamine pugna atrox concitatur . iam non manipulis proximarum stationum sed legionibus utrimque effusis res geritur . Camillus laetum militem uictoria tribuni , laetum tam praesentibus ac secundis dis ire in proelium iubet ; ostentansque insignem spoliis tribunum , ' hunc imitare , miles ' aiebat , ' et circa iacentem ducem sterne Gallorum cateruas .' di hominesque illi adfuere pugnae depugnatumque haudquaquam certamine ambiguo cum Gallis est ; adeo duorum militum euentum , inter quos pugnatum erat , utraque acies animis praeceperat . inter primos , quorum concursus alios exciuerat , atrox proelium fuit : alia multitudo , priusquam ad coniectum teli ueniret , terga uertit . primo per Uolscos Falernumque agrum dissipati sunt ; inde Apuliam ac mare inferum petierunt .²⁴⁸⁴

Whilst the Romans were passing their time quietly at the out- posts, a gigantic Gaul in splendid armour advanced towards them, and delivered a challenge through an interpreter to meet any Roman in single combat. There was a young military tribune, named Marcus Valerius, who considered himself no less worthy of that honour than T. Manlius had been. After obtain- ing the consul's permission, he marched, completely armed, into the open ground between the two armies. The human element in the fight was thrown into the shade by the direct interposition of the gods, for just as they were engaging a crow settled all of a sudden on the Roman's helmet with its head towards his antagonist. The tribune gladly accepted this as a divinely- sent augury, and prayed that whether it were god or goddess who had sent the auspicious bird that deity would be gracious to him and help him. Wonderful to relate, not only did the bird keep its place on the helmet, but every time they en- countered it rose on its wings and attacked the Gaul's face and eyes with beak and talon, until, terrified at the sight of so dire a portent and bewildered in eyes and mind alike, he was slain by Valerius. Then, soaring away eastwards, the crow passed out of sight. Hitherto the outposts on both sales had remained quiet, but when the tribune began to despoil his foeman's corpse, the Gauls no longer kept their posts, whilst the Romans ran still more swiftly to help the victor. A furious fight took place round the body as it lay, and not only the maniples at the nearest outposts but the legions pouring out from the camp joined in the fray. The soldiers were exultant at their tribune's victory and at the manifest presence and help of the gods, and as Camillus ordered them into action he pointed to the tribune, conspicuous with his spoils, and said: `Follow his example, soldiers, and lay the Gauls in heaps round their fallen cham- pion!' Gods and man alike took part in the battle, and it was fought out to a finish, unmistakably disastrous to the Gauls, so completely had each army anticipated a result corre- sponding to that of the single combat. Those Gauls who began the fight fought desperately, but the rest of the host who come to help them turned back before they came

²⁴⁸⁴ Book 7, 26.

within range of the missiles. They dispersed amongst the Volscians and over the Falernian district; from thence they made their way to Apulia and the western sea.²⁴⁸⁵

²⁴⁸⁵ Canon Roberts, 1912.

Appendix 2: The Ogam Alphabet

From the 4th c. AD, Irish and Welsh people invented and used an elaborate alphabet, called *Ogam* (in modern Irish, *Ogham*), which was the earliest form of writing. It was composed of twenty characters, classified in four groups of five characters, which could be written vertically as well as horizontally (fig. 1).²⁴⁸⁶ Approximately 400 Ogam inscriptions engraved on stone have been discovered in Ireland, Devon, South Wales, Cornwall and the Isle of Man - and possibly Scotland, but these specimens are contested. Most Ogam inscriptions are situated in Ireland (350), mainly in the South-West, notably in Co. Kerry (fig. 2 and 4).

Some of the Ogam inscriptions from Devon, South Wales and the Isle of Man are 'bi-graphic', which means that they are in Ogam and Latin letters. This allowed the specialists to date the Ogam epigraphically from the 4th or 5th c. AD down to the end of the 8th c. AD.

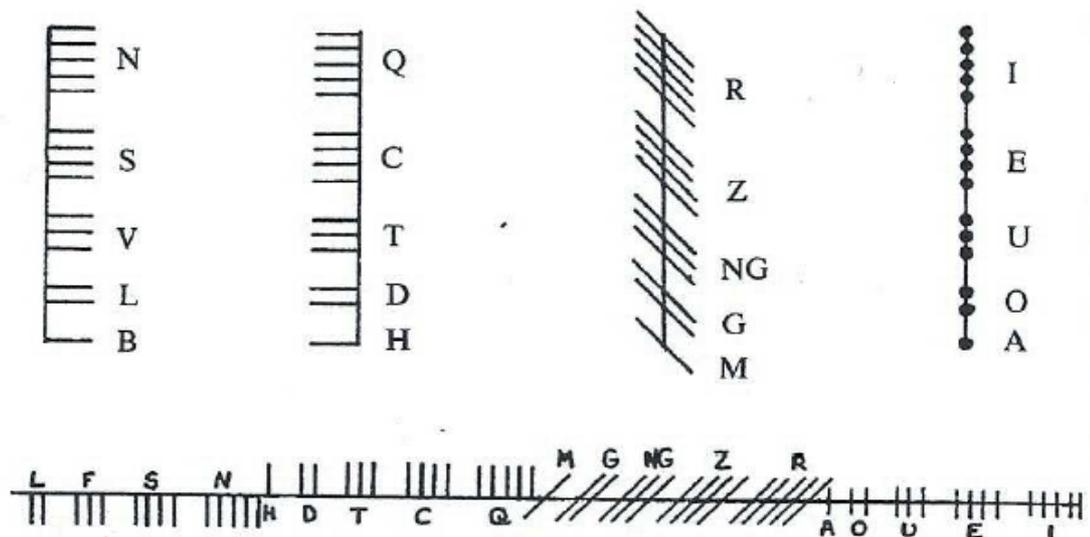


Fig. 1: The Ogam Alphabet composed of twenty characters, organised in four groups of five characters, written vertically and horizontally. Melmoth, 1996-1997, p. 14.

²⁴⁸⁶ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 409-410 ; Melmoth, 1996-1997, pp. 14-18 ; Vendryes, 1941-1945, pp. 82-115 ; McManus, 1991 ; Macalister, 1996 ; Freeman, 2001, pp. 17-27.

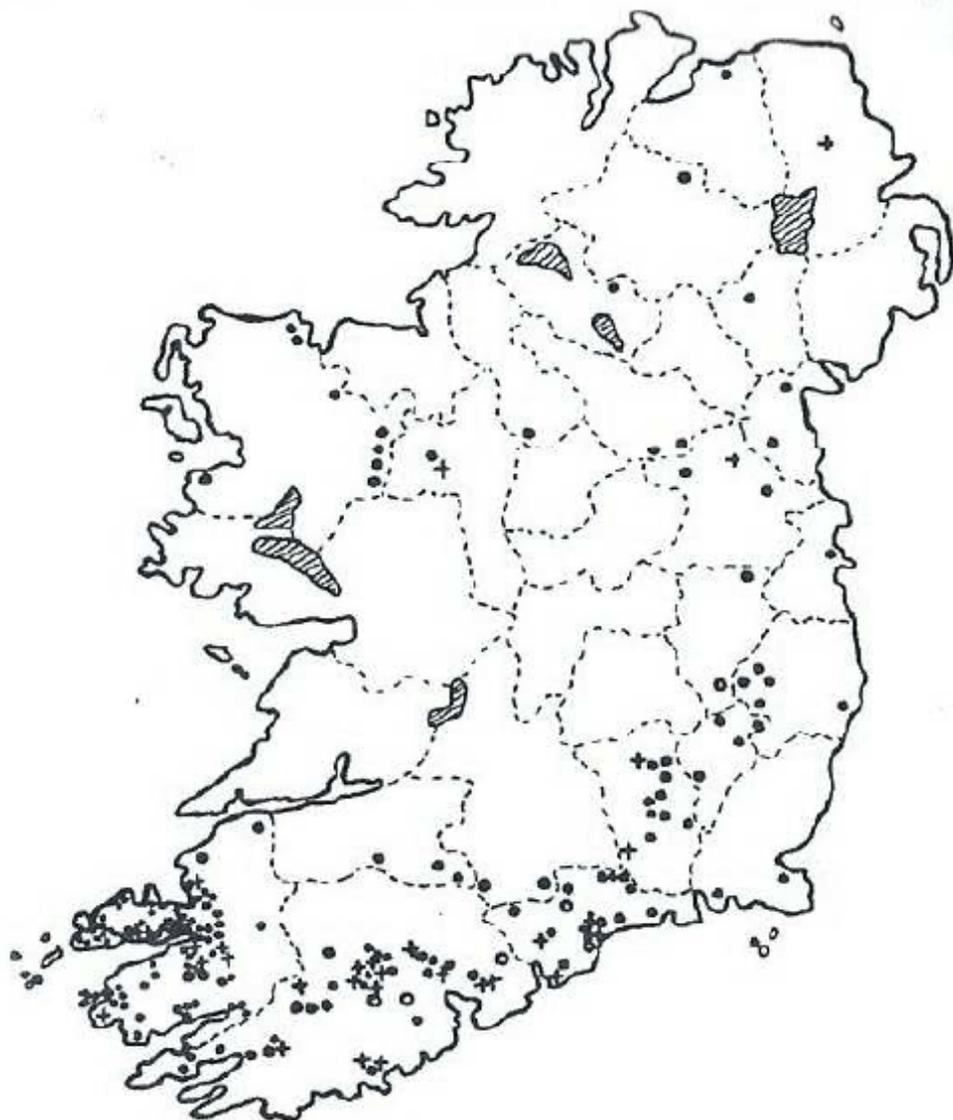


Fig. 2: Analytical map of the repartition of Ogamitic inscriptions in Ireland. [Black circles: single stone; crosses: group of 2-5 stones; white circles: group of 5 stones or more.] Melmoth, 1996-1997, p. 18.

Ogams were generally funerary inscriptions, and thus bore the name of a deceased person. Their use was however certainly not limited to a commemorative function, for Irish literature and folklore point to their powerful magical significance, particularly when carved on wooden sticks. In the *Táin B ó Cúailnge* ['The Cattle Raid of Cooley'], the Ulster hero *Cú Chulainn* ('The Hound of Culann') had recourse to Ogam to cast spells on his enemies.²⁴⁸⁷ Twice, he inscribed magical messages in Ogam script on oak sticks, which he turned into rings and put at the top of a pole in the centre of the ford where his enemies would pass. To decipher the message - which was an injunction to go further -, the enemies had to consult the druids, which proves the magical character surrounding this code writing.

Ogam is a cryptographic alphabet or code writing the meaning of which is to be deciphered. This means that each alphabetical sign is to be understood to mean 'synonym

²⁴⁸⁷ Ó hÓgáin, 2006, pp. 137-146.

of'. The key to the deciphering of Ogam is contained in a manuscript, dating from the 14th - 15th c., entitled the *Book of Ballymote*. To facilitate its learning, a name of a tree was attached to each Ogam character. For instance, the first character of the alphabet, B, is referred to as *beith*, meaning 'birch' in Irish; the second character, L, is designated by *luis* 'sorb'; F is *fearn* 'alder', etc (fig. 3).

Letter	Name	Tree	Letter	Name	Tree		
	B	Beith	Birch		M	Muin	Vine
	L	Luis	Rowan		G	Gort	Ivy
	F	Fearn	Alder		NG	nGéatal	Reed
	S	Sail	Willow		Z (st)	Straif	Blackthorn
	N	Nion	Ash		R	Ruis	Elder
	H	hÚath	Hawthorn		A	Ailm	Silver Fir
	D	Dair	Oak		O	Onn	Gorse
	T	Tinne	Holly		U	Úr	Heather
	C	Coll	Hazel		E	Eadha	Poplar
	Q	Quert	Apple		I	Iodhadh	Yew

Fig. 3: The Ogam Alphabet and its corresponding letters and tree names in Irish and English. Melmoth, 1996-1997, p. 14.



Fig. 4: Menhir with Ogamic inscriptions, facing the Great Blasket Island, Dingle Peninula, Co. Kerry, Ireland. (Source: N. Beck, April 2007.)*

Appendix 3: The Otherworld Feast

I) Greek mythology: Ambrosia and Nectar (Mead?)

In Greek mythology, the gods of Olympus are described absorbing two sorts of celestial dish on the occasion of grandiose feasts: 'Nectar', which is generally believed to be a sweet drink obtained through the refined distillation of some honeyed plants, and 'Ambrosia', which Homer interpreted as 'the food of the gods'.²⁴⁸⁸ A honey-based product, Ambrosia was used in various medicinal and magical preparations, as well as in the creation of sweet aromas or delicious liquors. The composition and nature of Nectar and of Ambrosia has caused a lot of ink to flow among scholars, particularly because Classical texts contradict each other. As a general rule, Ambrosia is accepted as being solid, while Nectar is liquid. Heinrich Roscher has convincingly, against Dumézil, demonstrated that the term 'Ambrosia' had the same meaning as 'Nectar', which both referred to honey or substances analogous to honey.²⁴⁸⁹ This is more than probable since honey, called 'the Nectar of the Gods' by Classical authors, was praised as a celestial dish for its incomparable sweetness and multiple virtues. It should be added that Ambrosia or Nectar, when referring to the divine beverage possessing magic properties which ensured invulnerability to the gods and eternal youth and happiness to the heroes, must be mead, the fermented drink of honey and water, which is one of the most ancestral of sacred drinks.²⁴⁹⁰

II) Vedic mythology: Amrita

In the mythology of Ancient India, the nectar conferring immortality on the gods is called *Amrita*, the name of which literally signifies 'non-dead'.²⁴⁹¹ The many and various versions of the myth tell of the fierce confrontation between the Asuras and the Devas to come into possession of the sacred beverage²⁴⁹². The myth recounts the temporary alliance of the two opposing forces to activate the cosmic pestle which churned the milk sea, from where a series of creations, notably Amrita, popped up. Then, the Devas seized the sacred beverage - subsequently confided to Vishnu - which procured for them eternal supremacy over the Asuras. Amrita is therefore the Vedic counterpart of the Greek Nectar or Ambrosia.

²⁴⁸⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, IV, 1-4 ; Guirand & Schmidt, 2006, pp. 130, 605, 726 ; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1991, p. 29 ; Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, p. 1447.

²⁴⁸⁹ Roscher, 1883 ; Dumézil, 1924, pp. 86-88.

²⁴⁹⁰ For reference to Ambrosia and Nectar in Classical mythology, see among others, Homer, *Iliad*, IV, 1-4 and Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 639-642.

²⁴⁹¹ Cotterell, 1997, p. 66.

²⁴⁹² Lenoir & Tardan-Masquelier, 2000, p. 1447. For versions of the myth of the churning of the sea, see *Rāmāyana*, I, XLV or *Mahābhārata*, I, XVIII, etc.

III) Scandinavian mythology: Mead

As regards Norse mythology, the intoxicating drink granting eternal life, wisdom and poetic inspiration to the deities is Mead. One of the most important myths, contained in the 10th-century *Hávamál*²⁴⁹³ and in the early 13th-century *Skáldskaparmál*²⁴⁹⁴, explains the origin of the sacredness of Mead and how the gods take possession of the ultimate beverage:

After the truce between the Aesir and the Vanir, each of them spat into a vessel, and from this fluid they made, as a token of peace, the man Kvasir, who was very wise. Kvasir was slain by two giants, Fjalarr and Galarr, who caught his blood in the kettle Othrerir and two vessels. The blood they mixed with honey, and from this arose the mead of the Scalds, [i.e. a divine beverage which procured 'Scaldship', i. e. poetry and knowledge]²⁴⁹⁵

Óðinn, the supreme god, set out to gain the mead to obtain immortality and supremacy. After all sorts of incidents, Óðinn managed to acquire the magic mead from *Gunnlöð* ('the one who incites to the battle'), who was in charge of protecting the precious drink. He turned into an eagle and flew away. When they saw Óðinn arriving, the Aesir brought their vessel outside so that Óðinn could regurgitate the inspiring beverage into it. This is how Óðinn and the Aesir obtained immortality, absolute knowledge and the gift of poetry. In this myth, it is interesting to note that mead is obtained through the fermentation of honey and the spit of the two divine races, which justifies the divinity of the liquid. Interestingly, spit or saliva, which plays the part of water in this myth, is believed to enhance fermentation.

Another noteworthy reference to mead concerns the nanny-goat *Heiðrún*,²⁴⁹⁶ who, perched on the roof of the magnificent banquet hall Valhöll, where Óðinn gave splendid feasts, grazed the young branches of the ash tree *Yggdrasill* (or *Læraðr*).²⁴⁹⁷ It is told that mead flew from *Heiðrún*'s udder in such quantities that it would fill a whole vat every day. The *Einherjar*, the divine warriors of Óðinn, would feast in Valhöll every night after fighting, and would rise from the dead thanks to the immortal properties of *Heiðrún*'s mead.²⁴⁹⁸

²⁴⁹³ verses 104-110, composed of six poems, the most ancient dating from the 10th c., the antiquity of the myth is certain.

²⁴⁹⁴ Chapters 5 and 6, part 2 of the *Edda* by Snorri Sturluson, 1220-1230.

²⁴⁹⁵ **Mortensen, 2003, pp. 66-68 ; Renaud, 1996, p. 45 ; Willis, 2007, p. 194.**

²⁴⁹⁶ *Heiðrún* is a female goat because its name ends with *-rún*, an element which appears in some Scandinavian female names and which could signifies 'bright secret'.

²⁴⁹⁷ Renaud, 1996, pp. 41-42.

²⁴⁹⁸ They would also eat the boar *Sæhrímnir*, cooked every day in the cauldron *Eldhrímnir* by the cook *Andhrímnir*.

Appendix 4: The Four Celtic Feasts

The text below is a fine poem describing the specific foods and drinks ingested on the four Celtic feasts. The poem is preserved in two manuscripts: *Bodleian codex Rawlinson B. 512*, folio 98b, 2 and in the British Museum *MS. Harleian 5280*, folio 35b, 2, written in the 16th c. by Gilla Riabach O'Clery, and edited and translated by Kuno Meyer in 1894. In his introduction, Meyer demonstrates that both transcripts are derived from one common source.²⁴⁹⁹ From the character of the Old-Irish forms, he deduces that the poem goes back to an original composed in the 8th c.

The four Celtic feasts are: *Beltaine* (May 1st), which now corresponds to May-Day; *Lughnasad* (1st Sunday of August), which is now Lammas-Day; *Samhain* (November 1st), which celebrates the end of summer and the return to cold and darkness, and is now Halloween; and *Imbolc* (February 1st), which has been replaced by the feast of St Brigit (Candlemas). In the Celtic world, the day begins with the onset of darkness, and thus each of these festivals begins their celebration on the night before the actual (modern) date.

***Atberim frib, lith saine, ada buada belltaine: coirm, mecoin, suabais serig,
ocus urgruth do tenid. I tell to you, a special festival, The glorious dues of May-
day: Ale, worts, sweet whey, And fresh curds to the fire. Lughnasad, luaid a
hada cecha bliadna ceimara, fromad cech toraid co m-blaid, biad lusraid la
Lughnasaid. Lammas-day, make known its dues, In each distant year: Tasting
every famous fruit, Food of herbs on Lammas-day. Carna, cuirm, cnoimes,
cadla, it e ada na samna[Samhain], tendal ar cnuc co n-grinde, blathach,
brechtan urimme. Meat, ale, nut-mast, tripe, These are the dues of summer's
end [Samhain]; A bonfire on a hill pleasantly, Buttermilk, a roll of fresh butter.
Fromad cach bíd iar n-urd, issed dlegair i n-Imbulc, díunnach laime I coissi is
cinn, is amlaid sin atberim. Tasting every food in order, This is what behoves at
Candlemas, Washing of hand and foot and head, It is thus I say.²⁵⁰⁰***

²⁴⁹⁹ Meyer, 1894, p. X.

²⁵⁰⁰ Meyer, 1894, pp. 48-49.