

Herald: Come all in my midst and attend. Sharpen your ears and hear the call to celebrate our celebrated embroiderer, the honorable Lady Iofa Merch Macsen. We come together to celebrate and enrich our peerages, and thus add another verse to the song of our ways. The Order of the Laurel and our most august Majesties, Wulfstan and Thorkatla, raise her up in the sight of the known world. Artist, yes, but teacher too. Iofa's needle dances across her fabrics, painting the glories of nature and the drama of our history for all to see; generously sharing the secrets of her skill with all who ask. Habetrot's own threads would suit her skill, and Bright Brigid guides her eye and hand.

King: Iofa, will you accept membership in the Order of the Laurel, knowing what it costs?

Iofa: I will.

King: Will you honor and serve the kingdom and people of Meridies?

Iofa: I will.

King: Will you conduct yourself in all matters as befits a peer, with nobility and integrity?

Iofa: I will.

Queen: Will you continue to learn and teach your art, knowing full well that you must also cherish and preserve your own health and the health of your family?

Iofa: I will.

Queen: Will you promise to be courteous and kind to all of those with whom you deal?

Iofa: I will.

King: That said, we will recognize you as Mistress Iofa of the order of the Laurel. Bring forth the medallion.

King: We give you this medallion as a sign of your new role. It was forged in fire and shaped by art and passion like the work of your days and hands. It is a symbol of your accolades and your burdens as a Member of the Order of the Laurel. Let it remind you of what you have accomplished and the responsibilities you must carry henceforth. Will you accept it?

Iofa: I will.

Queen: Bring forth the wreath

We set this wreath on your brow as a sign of your excellence, so all may see that you are esteemed in our eyes. It was shaped by art and passion like the work of your days and hands, its stems intertwined as are the threads in your embroideries. We bid you wear it with honor and humility. Will you accept it?

Iofa: I will.

Queen: Bring forth the Cloak

We drape you in this cloak so all may know what your work and devotion have won you. All those who walk behind you will know you as a Laurel. We bid you wear it with honor and humility. Will you accept it?

Iofa: I will.

Iofa's Oath:

Tongu do dia toinges mo thuath.

I, Iofa, swear by the Gods my people swear by
To serve the Kingdom and the people of Meridies
With honor and dignity.

I will continue to learn from those who would teach me,
And I shall share my knowledge and the work of my hands and days.
I will teach those who would learn,
that they too may color garments with bright threads and sharp needles.

I will speak and walk these lands with grace and kindness
In my heart and on my lips.

For all of the days of my life.

If I break this oath, let the sky crush me,

Let the wind rip my words from the ears of all who would hear them;

Let the earth break beneath my feet and take me whole;

Let the sea rise and take me, washing my wrongs from the soil;

Let the crows clean my bones on the ground where I stand.

My Gods hear my words and hold them fast.

The Crown's Response:

I, Wulfstan, King of Meridies and I, Thorkatla, Queen of Meridies

Hear your oath, and shall remember it.

We shall reward your skill and sing your praises to all of our people

For as long as you uphold the promise you made today

or until the sky falls upon us all.

Rise, Mistress Iofa, and join your peers and fellow companions of the Order of the Laurel.

References:

Diodorus Siculus, Book V

(http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/5B*.html)

“Throughout Gaul there is found practically no silver, but there is gold in great quantities, which Nature provides for the inhabitants without their having to mine for it or to undergo any hardship. For the rivers, as they course through the country, having as they do sharp bends which turn this way and that and dashing against the mountains which line their banks and bearing off great pieces of them, are full of gold-dust. This is collected by those who occupy themselves in this business, and these men grind or crush the lumps which hold the dust, and after washing out with water the earthy elements in it they give the gold-dust over to be melted in the furnaces. In this manner they amass a great amount of gold, which is used for ornament not only by the women but also by the men. For around their wrists and arms they wear bracelets, around their necks heavy necklaces of solid gold, and huge rings they wear as well, and even corselets of gold. And a peculiar and striking practice is found among the upper Celts, in connection with the sacred precincts of the gods; as for in the temples and precincts made consecrate in their land, a great amount of gold has been deposited as a dedication to the gods, and not a native of the country ever touches it because of religious scruple, although the Celts are an exceedingly covetous people.”

“The Gauls are terrifying in aspect and their voices are deep and altogether harsh; when they meet together they converse with few words and in riddles, hinting darkly at things for the most part and using one word when they mean another; and they like to talk in superlatives, to the end that they may extol themselves and depreciate all other men. They are also boasters and threateners and are fond of pompous language, and yet they have sharp wits and are not without cleverness at learning. Among them are also to be found lyric poets whom they call Bards. These men sing to the accompaniment of instruments which are like lyres, and their songs may be either of praise or of obloquy. Philosophers, as we may call them, and men learned in religious affairs are unusually honoured among them and are called by them Druids. The Gauls likewise make use of diviners, accounting them worthy of high approbation, and these men foretell the future by means of the flight or cries of birds and of the slaughter of sacred animals, and they have all the multitude subservient to them. They also observe a custom which is especially astonishing and incredible, in case they are taking thought with respect to matters of great concern; for in such cases they devote to death a human being and plunge a dagger into him in the region above the diaphragm, and when the stricken victim has fallen they read the future from the manner of his fall and from the twitching of his limbs, as well as from the gushing of the blood, having learned to place confidence in an ancient and long-continued

practice of observing such matters. And it is a custom of theirs that no one should perform a sacrifice without a "philosopher"; for thank-offerings should be rendered to the gods, they say, by the hands of men who are experienced in the nature of the divine, and who speak, as it were, the language of the gods, and it is also through the mediation of such men, they think, that blessings likewise should be sought. Nor is it only in the exigencies of peace, but in their wars as well, that they obey, before all others, these men and their chanting poets, and such obedience is observed not only by their friends but also by their enemies; many times, for instance, when two armies approach each other in battle with swords drawn and spears thrust forward, these men step forth between them and cause them to cease, as though having cast a spell over certain kinds of wild beasts. In this way, even among the wildest barbarians, does passion give place before wisdom, and Ares stands in awe of the Muses."

Fled Bricrend (Bricriu's Feast) 1899 edition

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=XRWZx627PXAC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR5>

p 61.: "By my people's God, as a speckled fish is cut upon a shining red stone with flails of iron, such I swear will be the minuteness of the slaughter Conall the Victorious shall execute on us should he rage against us."

p. 40: "Tongu do dia toinges mo thuath." trans: "I swear to the God my people swear to"

Rolleston, Thomas. *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*. 1911.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/mlcr/>

from Chapter I: The Celts in Ancient History

"The most binding of oaths was to swear by the Wind and Sun, or to invoke some other power of nature; no name of any Danaan divinity occurs in an Irish oath formula. "

"Then Conor arose and swore a mighty oath, saying "The heavens are above us and the earth beneath us, and the sea is round about us; and surely, unless the heavens fall on us and the earth gape to swallow us up, and the sea overwhelm the earth, I will restore every woman to her hearth, and every cow to its byre."

"Alexander [the Great] first made a compact with the Celts "who dwelt by the lonian Gulf" in order to secure his Greek dominions from attack during his

absence. The episode is related by Ptolemy Soter in his history of the wars of Alexander. . . . As the Celtic envoys, who are described as men of haughty bearing and great stature, their mission concluded) were drinking with the king, he asked them, it is said, what was the thing they, the Celts, most feared. The envoys replied : "We fear no man : there is but one thing that we fear, namely, that the sky should fall on us; but we regard nothing so much as the friendship of a man such as thou." Alexander bade them farewell, and, turning to his nobles, whispered: "What a vainglorious people are these Celts !" Yet the answer, for all its Celtic bravura and flourish, was not without both dignity and courtesy. The reference to the falling of the sky seems to give a glimpse of some primitive belief or myth of which it is no longer possible to discover the meaning. . . . The national oath by which the Celts bound themselves to the observance of their covenant with Alexander is remarkable. If we observe not this engagement," they said, "may the sky fall on us and crush us, may the earth gape and swallow us up, may the sea burst out and overwhelm us." De Jubainville draws attention most appositely to a passage from the "Táin Bo Cuailgne," in the Book of Leinster, [The Book of Leinster is a manuscript of the twelfth century. The version of the " Táin " given in it probably dates from the eighth. See de Jubainville, " Premiers Habitants," ii. 316.] where the Ulster heroes declare to their king, who wished to leave them in battle in order to meet an attack in another part of the field "Heaven is above us, and earth beneath us, and the sea is round about us. Unless the sky shall fall with its showers of stars on the ground where we are camped, or unless the earth shall be rent by an earthquake) or unless the waves of the blue sea come over the forests of the living world, we shall not give ground." [Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Literary History of Ireland " (p.7) gives a slightly different translation] This survival of a peculiar oath-formula or more than a thousand years, and its reappearance, after being first heard of among the Celts of Mid-Europe, in a mythical romance of Ireland, is certainly most curious, and, with other facts which we shall note hereafter, speaks strongly for the continuity and persistence of Celtic culture.[It is also a testimony to the close accuracy of the narrative of Ptolemy.]