# Modern Polytheism: A Journal of a Personal Practice by Choochoolain

## Purpose of this document

This is a document describing my religious beliefs. The first part of this document will discuss the starting assumptions and should act as an abstract of sorts. Subsequent version updates will detail the trials, progress, and results from practices undertaken from that point on in journal form.

I call myself a polytheist. The Cambridge Dictionary defines polytheism as follows:

*Polytheism (noun) : belief in many different gods* (1)

My purpose in writing this document is to explain how I came to the beliefs I hold and to display a level of transparency about the practices associated with them. I want to clarify, before going any further, this is not a guide on morality or how to live. I'm doing the best I can through trial and error and through observing the lives of others in relation to the world around me. This latter ability is essential in the philosophy of this polytheistic system, as it does not rely solely on divine inspiration and gazing at the sky above. Instead, it predominantly depends upon observations of, and events in, the world around us.

To embark on this practice, I started by utilizing scholarship in the Polytheistic Reconstructionist methodology, defined:

*Reconstructionism attempts to re-establish genuine polytheistic religions in the modern world through a rediscovery of the rituals, practices and contextual worldviews of pre-Christian Pagan religions. This method stands in contrast with other neopagan syncretic movements like Wicca, and ecstatic/esoteric movements like Germanic mysticism or Theosophy. While the emphasis on historical accuracy may imply historical reenactment, the difference between these two movements can be summarized as one of intent. Historical Reenactment seeks historical accuracy as a goal in and of itself. On the other hand, a Reconstructionist Neopagan views historical accuracy as a means to the end of establishing a harmonious relationship between a belief-community and the gods. In short, the guiding principles of the Reconstructionist approach to the practice of Pre-Christian religion can be broken down as follows: The pre-Christian Pagans had a harmonious relationship to their deities.The rites and rituals of those Pagans were an essential part of the navigation and mediation of that relationship.If modern-day Pagans wish to re-establish a harmonious relationship with these deities, then these rituals and rites must be properly performed.To properly perform the rituals in the present day, modern Pagans must discover how and why they were performed in the past.* (2)

In time, I found it restraining to limit my methodology to practices solely informed by the writings of the ancients and archaeology, but I still believe this to be the best starting point to the creation of a practice centered on a particular deity. Sources can be found in the ritualistic practices of the ancient Proto-Indo-Europeans (PIE) and commonalities between Indo-European (IE) cultures as a whole. There

also seems to be numerous commonalities between Indo-European polytheist systems and that of other cultural histories. However, I avoid incorporating elements of closed religions and practices that are specifically meant for a particular culture or divinity for the purposes of maintaining the integrity of those beliefs (as well as my own).

My desire is to worship the gods in the way that an ancient would do if they found themselves in the modern world. This approach is essential, in my opinion, because most of what we know has been altered by time, war, cultural change, and religious persecution. Even documents recounting Germanic or Celtic mythology are written by chroniclers with bias against the beliefs as primitive or contradictory to their own. The Celts, an ethno-linguistic (not racial) group who proliferated the belief in the gods and goddesses I worship across much of Europe through several thousand years, were nomadic and changed with time. The modern worshipper of the gods they worshipped is no less authentic or valid than the Celts of 100 CE or the proto-Celts before them. The "diaspora" of the Celtic Isles are an extension of that nomadic tradition.

This system is a modern faith relying on old beliefs informed by scholarship and modern shared gnosis. I have no delusion that this system will ever match the beliefs of our ancient forebears, even if the Abrahamic and Industrial influences of our society were eliminated in our cultural subconscious. More importantly, it should be essential to make these ideas known, as our very ability to exist openly as polytheists is regularly threatened.

In order to fill in the gaps left by time and strife, I utilize an eclectic approach and the study of Comparative Religion. Eclecticism is defined as:

*(Greek, eklegein, to choose)*

*An eclectic position in philosophy or religion is one that seeks to combine the best elements of other views.* (3)

That said, I usually object to taking "what works" from various faiths and applying them to other faiths simply because they work, as they may not be beneficial within that context. I also prefer to delineate what sources come from which faiths, in order to preserve the integrity of the cultures involved. This is where the study of Comparative Religion comes in:

*Comparative religion is defined as the study of the similarities and differences among the world's major religions, encompassing beliefs, practices, ethics, and historical contexts. It involves analyzing various religious traditions and movements to understand their unique and shared characteristics.(4)*

The primary use for Comparative Religion in my own process has been to understand the similarities in cosmological functions and hierarchy in polytheistic faiths. I've limited my eclecticism to practices like meditation or avoidance of blowing out candles, as there is a wealth of lore about these things and their reasoning in other traditions but very little within ancient Celtic sources. I refuse to believe that the conceptual similarities of these gods make them the same "Sky King", as I will discuss later.

## Personal Assumptions Considered

I want to start by addressing personal assumptions I am operating from**.** It is not necessary that one agrees with these assumptions to utilize the information within this document; I only want to explain the foundation of my own understanding of the mechanisms of the events arising from this practice. There is an essential distinction that must be made at this point. First, it should be noted that Western esoteric traditions such as Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, Thelema, and Wicca are very often descended from Abrahamic traditions mixed with the traditions of other cultures, many of which are Indo-European. The definition of Abrahamic is as follows:

*Abrahamic (adjective): relating to the religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, that recognize Abraham as part of their religion* (5)

The major difference between this system and Abrahamic-derived systems is that they are monotheistic, believing in one god. Even if some Western traditions arising from an Abrahamic viewpoint acknowledge multiple gods, there is still a "Most High", or highest god more powerful or older than the rest. Additionally, this highest-God is often depicted as omnipotent and perfect. In a polytheistic system, there are often King-Gods, but they are not necessarily the most powerful of the gods. They're leaders of their people, but there are many tribes of gods, each with their own kings and queens. To compare their position with power would be like asking "Is an Olympic swimmer higher than a Chess Master?" It may not seem like a huge distinction, but when someone discusses mysticism as "unifying with God", a polytheist would likely say "which one?", and I have often outright had New Age or Masonic practitioners reply to me, "The Highest God Above All" or "The First God". **My first assumption is that we are talking about beings outside of time and physics, and therefore it can be assumed that the earliest gods, of which there are several and of many different "species" and governances, *always existed*.** The two systems are incompatible at their core. My goal is to isolate the practices appropriated from polytheistic sources by Western esoteric authors and apply them to my practice.

A polytheist should not look at ethics in terms of good or evil. Nor should they look at ethics in terms of conflict and peace. Morality is in the eye of the beholder, and what is morally "good" or righteous for the devotee of one god may be a taboo for the devotee of another. A polytheist should not look at life in terms of what detracts from the things their god finds important and what fortifies, encourages, or adds to those things.

In regard to the concept of afterlife, there are likely many more than one single fate for a dead human. **My second assumption is that the universe may have always existed**. The condensed matter from which our universe sprang from may have been the death of another universe, or as in Norse mythology, from the death of Ymir. The soul may go to an afterlife at death and return to our realm in the next iteration of reality or in a future life in this current iteration. The universe may have contracted and expanded, torn asunder by entropy or united by the crushing gravitational force of hungry black holes, in many iterations of itself. The soul may remain in the realm of the dead and return when it decides it is ready to be reborn. This cycle seems to be reflected in the Hindu concept of Yugas, and in the scientific theories of the Big Bang and Big Slurp/Big Crunch. Each iteration of the universe is described as one lifetime of Brahma in Vedic lore. I believe that this reflects the infinite times the universe has been reborn and died before, and will die and be reborn again. The gods may have existed for all time as well,

though they are outside of this system and may not have needed to create it. In the absence of causality, there is no reason to assume creation needs to take place, as causality is a function of linear time. (See "On Cosmology")

Even Wicca, the most popular neo-Pagan religion, shares the belief that there is a highest god and goddess. In this sense, there are neither polytheistic or monotheistic; they are duotheistic, believing every male and female god is a reflection of the same male and female divinity. Per Scott Cunningham:

*"Every deity that has received worship upon this planet exists with the archetypal God and Goddess. The complex pantheons of deities that arose in many parts of the world are simply aspects of the two. Every goddess is resident with the concept of the Goddess; every god with the God."* (6)

This would make little sense for gods that freely change their genders, or for deities who are in direct conflict with each other despite sharing the same gender. In some pantheons, roles belonging to one gender are prescribed to the other gender in another pantheon. The variation of gods, and their intentions, seem to indicate distinct beings, not reflections of the same deities. I believe this is oversimplification on the part of Wicca. It also seems to reflect the Christian veneration of Jesus and Mary, which makes sense, since Wicca was formed in northern England in the 1950s by a former Rosicrucian and infamous nudist, Gerald Gardner.

**Another assumption in this practice that people seem to find quite shocking is that we may be only aware of a mere fraction of all the divine supernatural beings in existence.** In order to illustrate this point, let's look at a quote from physicist Michio Kaku:

*"...Imagine fish swimming in a shallow pond. They might never suspect the presence of a third dimension, because their eyes point to the side, and they can only swim forward and backward, left and right. A third dimension to them might appear impossible. But then imagine it rains on the pond. Although they cannot see the third dimension, they can clearly see the shadows of the ripples on the surface of the pond."* (7, Kaku)

Although Dr. Kaku used this analogy to describe how light travels in five dimensions, you could use the same analogy to describe multiple realms. To a koi fish in your neighbor's backyard pond, the world above the water must seem quite unreal. Lift the fish from the water, and it would have no notion of what it sees; only that it can't breathe. However, the hand that throws the food into the pond would seem to the fish as a god. The hand that reaches in and draws this fish out of the water would be as if a god grabbed a human and brought them into another realm, and interpreted as a bizarre near-death experience. However, it would be silly to think that the fish could possibly know every human that exists from its tiny pond in a backyard. Likewise, it would be silly to think that every human knows every god that exists. Yet if humanity doesn't know the god or its influence, the being doesn't really function as a god, and therefore **gods are defined as a supernatural being that mankind is privy to the individual existence of.** There may be an infinite number of gods, especially if they aren't subject to our lifespans and physics. It might not be the actual definition, but it is the one used in this document.

Would a dog who drinks from the pond be considered a god to the fish? Possibly, though perhaps not a benevolent one, especially if that dog should decide one of the fish looks tasty. It would be safe to

assume that the gods are not all the same species, background, or intent**.** This is especially noticeable in Norse mythology, where even the highest gods are divided into Aesir and Vanir.

Once more we can use this analogy to consider the power of the gods. For example, an owner of a koi pond can place antibiotic tablets in the water that help protect against infection, but cannot ultimately prevent infection from occurring 100% of the time. The owner of a koi pond can place heaters in the water that help prevent the koi from getting too cold, but they cannot control the weather. And the owner of a koi pond cannot stop a tornado. These are factors that arise from much larger and much smaller forces at work and depend upon randomness and chaos that the owner can plan for, but cannot prevent once in motion. It is the same with the gods: even if the gods control certain factors of reality, the gods cannot control every factor of reality and cannot prevent random events arising from chaos!

A pantheon, or a polytheistic culture's group of gods, may or may not have the same gods as those from another culture. The deities of each culture are usually distinct, except in a few cases. For example, I believe Thor is distinct from Perun and Taranis, who are also distinct from each other. This is not to say anything negative about any of these gods, but just because they're Gods of Thunder, it does not mean they are the same being. Think about a corporation or business. There are numerous positions, such as a President, CEO, Vice President, Treasurer, IT Supervisor, Janitor, etc. The CEO of one company is not the CEO of every corporation. This perspective is known as **Hard Polytheism**. I believe that Thor, Taranis, and Perun are distinct. Perun is quite stern and serious and Thor is playful and active. Conversely, I consider Brighid and the ancient goddess of Britain, Brigantia, to be names of the same being; but this is because there is a documented migration of her tribe, the Brigantes, that follow with the times and places her names appear. In that case, she's the same goddess but the language is changing. It only matters which name the practitioner calls to during prayers and when giving offerings, and which symbolism is formed in their head when doing so. By the chart below, that would define me as a "Hard-ish" Polytheist".



*Graphic courtesy of user Cinn#9859 on Discord*

It is also important to note that the gods of one pantheon may compete or work in tandem with the gods of another pantheon, just like in a corporation. Sometimes gods have been known to fight each other within their own pantheon, as was the case between Brighid and The Morrigan supporting opposite sides at the Battle of Dunbolg. Different people will have different needs, and if the gods choose a particular group of people, they may compete with the gods of their enemy, or might not. I don't trust the opinions of people about what their gods' wishes are, nor should you.

**The gods do not seem that interested in obtaining or keeping human capital**, much *unlike* businesses. While there have been occasions where gods have killed people, such as when Cormac mac Airt choked on a chicken bone for having converted to Christianity (although it could be said the druids did that) (8) or when the Morrigan turned a woman who tried to prevent her stealing a cow into a lake, they seem to only do so as acts of revenge for an individual slight or for a greater purpose, as Cormac had been previously blessed by the gods with his abilities and the cow needed to be stolen to start a necessary conflict. There does not seem to be any desire to unite the world under a single pantheon. They seem more interested in observing our own interactions and ways that we handle uncontrollable events, possibly to solve problems that they face. However, they seem to benefit from our worship in some way, and in return seem to aid with the things they are skilled in.

I also wish to stress that it is not my belief that the myths are actual tales of the gods, but instead reflect the nature of the gods. I believe the myths of the gods serve a dual-purpose. Firstly, the myths are symbolic tales of complex astronomical or scientific events guided by the gods. They are told in a manner ancient agrarian peoples would understand. This also explains the second purpose, which is that the myths teach best agricultural practices and create stories of the gods most relevant to the processes involved. It's evident, however, that these stories also reveal distinct personalities of each god as an individual, which I referenced in the earlier example with Perun and Thor. Mythology is ideally just a primer for identification and what to expect when working with the gods in question.

The reason I eventually came to move beyond strictly copying what we think the ancients did is because I believe the gods are living entities. However, it is still important to note which beliefs are attributed to the past and which beliefs are the result of modern gnosis in one's practice to prevent cultural erasure of, or misattribution to, the Ancestors.

## On Cosmology

There seems to be at least three classifications of entities, any of which can become gods by the definition of having meaningful interactions with humans. Gods of one classification may share aspects of another; they are by no means limited by their primary function. I've chosen to name these classifications after their Norse counterparts because that particular culture has already applied named classifications to their own deities, though I wish to reiterate that I do not necessarily consider gods of one culture to be the same as those of another.

The first of these beings is the Primordial class. Primordial beings consist of those entities before time and matter, and possibly even before the cycle of our cosmos existed (although I prefer to think that "what is" has *always* been). They are not even remotely human in nature, and almost never have direct interactions with humans, perhaps because some form of sacrifice of theirs was necessary for the creation of our realm. Examples of Primordials include Gaia and Uranus in Greek Mythology, Auðumbla and Aurgelmir in Norse Mythology, Geb and Nut in Egyptian mythology, the Kotoamatsukami in Shinto, etc. These deities are associated with basic physical properties, such as time, death, etc. In the Hindu dating of Yuga Cycles, the life of Brahma begins with the life of our universe and it ends at his death. (9) Likewise in Norse Mythology, the Middle-world (Midgard, our Earth) was created from the body of the giant Ymir when his three brothers slew him. (10) This last story can be interpreted as explaining how the world derived its elements, and the sum total of all matter in our universe could be described as the body of Ymir or Brahma/Purusha. I consider accounts of the Fomorians, the Titans, the Asura, and the Jotunn as matching the description of Primordial beings as well, but these entities are not aligned with the gods' ideals and are often described as adversaries.

The second group of deities is what I call the Aesir class, who are often members and progenitors of the "pantheon" deities and are often themselves offspring of primordials. This generation of deity often has incredibly developed primal power, but they seem more abstract and Otherworldly in their behavior. Odin, for example, seems to have complex associations with will and fate and primal forces. Odin is also one of the brothers of Ymir. The distinction is that these gods also seem to have suffered some form of sacrifice, such as death or extreme torture followed by rebirth in exchange for the creation of the gods that followed; or for enlightenment, wisdom, and knowledge. Odin hung on Yggdrasil for nine nights, pierced by his own spear after having given his eye in exchange for wisdom and knowledge of the future. Thereafter, he began to create other gods with his wife, Frigg. Osiris was slain by his brother's jealousy, then reassembled by his wife and thereafter became father to Horus before descending into the otherworld to become lord of that domain. (11) This role of Osiris is seemingly gender-swapped in the story of Izanagi and Izanami, in which it is Izanami who is slain, and Izanagi travels to the underworld to discover that she is a corpse and now goddess of the dead. Afterwards, he too begins to create the other deities. (12) This seems to be evidence that a ritual death is required in order for a god to create life, and that creation cannot exist without death and a realm for the dead to return to at the end of life. In Hinduism, the Celestial Being known as a Deva falls into this classification.

Vanir make up the third class of deity. I conflate these gods with being progenitors or members of the Fae or Fair Folk and embody the emotional and empathetic gods. Gods such as Idunn, Flidais, and Aphrodite belong in this class. They have associations with primal urges such as sexuality and fertility, but also have aspects such as love and fidelity that arise from emotive sources. They are also often associated with nature and instinct, but seem to operate with precognition and feeling.

There seems to be two major ruling subclasses of the Aesir class who in turn rule their perspective pantheon. I refer to them as the Sky King, which describes deities like The Dagda, Odin, and Zeus. These gods are the patriarchal "Father" deities and may also be associated with magic, wisdom, and royalty. Symbolism associated with each is often in turn related to Neolithic solar symbols, and this is found throughout Indo-European religion. The other major ruling subclass of the Aesir is what I call the Tri-fold Witch, which is a three-in-one female entity in a pantheon that often acts as a consultant and/or wife of

the Sun King. Her realm is magic, prophecy, and fate. The concept encompasses deities like The Norns, The Morrigan, and Hekate. This deity is associated with prophecy and fate. The Sky King must treat the Tri-fold Witch as an equal to gain the ability to influence, or even the simple knowledge of, fate itself. Therefore, the patriarchal and matriarchal powers in polytheistic systems are often of equal standing in each family of gods.

In addition to the ruling deity subclasses of Aesir, there are also the Liminal Deities, or deities of borders and boundaries. Heimdall, Terminus, and Manannan Mac Lir are liminal deities by this definition. They act as intermediaries between non-gods and gods. Another subclass is the Heraldic Mage, such as Hermes, Hermod, Thoth, Aengus, etc. These gods often act as representatives for the gods in affairs of the other realms and, due to their ability to move freely between realms, have a seemingly powerful grasp of magic. This is seen in the nature of many forms of magic, which have special veneration and emphasis on liminality.

On the subject of the Fair Folk or Gentry, these beings are not the same species as gods, but are also much older than man. They are possibly the same being as “elementals” and exist within the primal elements of our realm and those of the Otherworld. These beings seemingly have some form of relationship with the Vanir class, and may reside in the same realm, or perhaps the Vanir are the Fair Folk themselves. Generally, it is considered bad form to refer to these beings as “Faery/Fairy”, and it is extremely important to never thank the Gentry under any circumstance, as it is an insult in the utmost degree to them. Fair Folk are split between Seelie and Unseelie subclasses. Seelie classes are not enemies of man by nature, although it is best that one does not assume they are allies either. Unseelie Fae are the beings that many refer to as demons or monsters, and are most likely to attack a human if given the chance. The following list of entities is what this classification describes, which I have edited from the Wikipedia sub-article classifications of Fair Folk:

**Worldwide**
Little people

**Africa**
Abatwa
Asanbosam
Aziza
Bultungin
Eloko
Jengu
Kishi
Mami
Wata
Obayifo
Rompo
Tikoloshe

Yumboes

**Americas**
Alux
Canotila
Chaneque
Curupira
Encantado
Ishigaq
Jogah
Menehune
Nawao
Nimerigar
Nûñnë'hï
Pukwudgie
Saci
Yunwi
Tsunsdi

**Asia**
DiwataIrshi
Jinn
Kijimuna
Kodama
Korpokkur
Oni
Orangbunian
Peri
Tengu
Tennin
Yōsei

**Oceania**
Bunyip
Manaia
Mimis
Muldjewangk
Patupaiarehe
Taniwha
Tipua
Wandjina
Yara-ma-yha-who

**Europe**
**Celtic**

Tuatha Dé Danann (the Gaelic gods are sometimes literally called fae, but this could be an attribution of Christian scholars)
Seelie/Unseelie Sidhe

**Germanic**
Alberich
Dwarf
Elegast
Erlking
Hodekin
Hinzelmann
Imp
Goldemar
Weiße
Frauen

**Greek**
Dryad
Hamadryad
Kallikantzaros
Lampad
Naiad
Nereid
Nymph
Oceanid
Oread
Potamides

**Romanic**
Căpcăun
Doñas de fueralele
Sânzianǎ
Spiriduș
Squasc
Vâlvă Vântoase
Xana
Zânǎ

**Slavic**
Bagiennik & Bannik
Berehynia
Domovoi

Karzełek
Kikimora
Leshy
Likho
Polevik
Psotnik
Rusalka
Vila
Vodyanoy

**Cross-cultural**
Goblin

**Early & late modern**
Gnome
Gremlin

However, Fair Folk are but a single class of nature spirit. Animals and plant life are nature spirits themselves, and indeed, even humans draw their sustenance from the land.

Another venerable type of entity is the Honored Dead. Although ancestor veneration is very much a practice of honoring one's own dead relatives, I want to make the distinction that ancestors are not necessarily one's deceased family members alone. They can be any human being that helped make the world one lives in today, or any human who helped them become who they are now that they'd like to honor. Mankind has a rich history of exponential growth, not simply in population, but in innovation and technological achievements. Our comforts and our conveniences come from the designs of the long-dead, shaped and reshaped over countless generations. Plumbing was invented by the Romans, it is often said, and proves even now to be an essential for a healthy city-based population. The safety we experience and the horrors of new technologies in warfare both arise from the same industrious curiosity of man, and it should be our purpose in each generation to improve on the good inventions and creations of the dead while moving beyond those inventions, beliefs, and lifestyles that trend towards destruction.

I consider people like my deceased great-grandparents, Alan Turing, and Steve Irwin as venerable ancestors. Out of all the beings comprising the list of entities, the Honored Dead and Fair Folk are the nearest to the living at all times, and may even be seen as ghosts as they move through our realm. Therefore, they are often the most ideal to appeal to for issues in the day-to-day interactions with other people or for guidance and wisdom in dealing with the incidental struggles of the everyday man. Those who lived the lives and died the deaths of a human seem to know best in regards to the struggle that defines and shapes each person as an individual. Whether it be by formal meal offering or libation of spirits, offerings to the dead remind them that they have had an impact on the living.

The planet on which we reside is a single world in a universe of many. Our universe, for the sake of cosmological discussion, is best considered a single "realm". In Norse mythology, it is said that nine

realms reside along the trunk of the great ash tree Yggdrasil, and ours is the middle realm. Our realm is presently governed by its own physical laws and mathematical rules, but that doesn't necessarily mean other realms are governed by the same laws. I don't believe that the realms necessarily lie in a hierarchical order, although it may be possible. The realms in which the gods and various classifications of spirits reside could be just like ours; existing and interwoven in many directions at many points.

The important thing to stress here is that other realms exist outside of our own, and when I speak of realms, I speak of them with plurality. The gods exist in many realms, and there may be as many realms as there are gods. With regards to realms accessible to humans in the afterlife, one can say there are several classifications of these.

My first classification of afterlives is the Hero's Paradise. The Greek realm Elysium, the Norse Valhalla, and the Gaelic Mag Mell all fall under this classification. It is a paradise of feasting, of battle, and of glory to those who had died in battle; it is therefore only available to a select few. One must live the life of a heroic individual (and die the death of one) in order to achieve this realm after death. My views on this realm differ from mythology. The Hero's Paradise may actually be a place for warriors to dwell in order to heal and prepare for the next iteration of the cycle, in order to cleanse themselves of the inner and outer strife they constantly had to combat in life.

The second realm is the Land of the Aesir, which may or may not be accessible to humans. The Norse Asgard and the Greek Olympus fall into this classification. The Völuspá describes Asgard as having 12 lesser realms within it, and lists Valhalla as residing within. Therefore, the Hero's Paradise may simply be a sub-realm of the Land of the Aesir. Another lesser realm of Asgard is the Island of Youth, a land bearing apples that keep the gods young. The Gaelic Emain Ablach and the Orchard of Idunn match this description. What further complicates this notion is the third realm, the Land of the Vanir, which is known to be accessible to humans under certain conditions. It describes realms such as Tír na nÓg and Vanaheim. It is a land of flowers and animals, but seems to lie within Asgard as Fólkvangr, and functions almost exactly the same as Alfheim, the land of the elves, on Earth. It also appears to function in the underworld as well. This, I feel, supports the notion that all realms are interwoven within each other, and spirits that reside in one realm have the ability to enter others for a time.

Alfheim, the Land of the Elves, is the fourth realm and is where the fae reside. The British Fairyland and the hill-forts where the Aos Sí live fall into this description. This world shares many associations among nearly every human culture with hills and mounds, but many human cultures also buried their dead in these mounds. Yet the beings who primarily reside there are well known for being distinct from dead humans.

The Land of Decay is yet another realm that seems to be interwoven with the others. Donn's House in Gaelic lore, Annwyn in Welsh lore, Hel in Norse lore and the Underworld in Hellenic lore all seem to describe this concept. It is a realm in which the human dead exist as corpses or bodies, possibly as punishment but more than likely due to attachment to the previous realm. Those that lived dishonorable lives are said to go to the worst side of this realm, while those that lived good lives reside on the eternal "comfortable" side.

Regarding the concept of the afterlife, I subscribe to the notion that reincarnation and the immortality of the soul seems likely. Within Vedic beliefs, there is the concept of the Yuga Cycle, or the cycle of creation and destruction of the universe. (13) The materials for the cycle were born from the death of a Primordial; that is, all the elements, matter, and energy in our universe came from the body of a dead god, as in the myth of Ymir and Lord Brahma (14). From that death was born the cycle, and the time from our Big Bang to the inevitable death of our universe is just a single iteration of what has likely been an infinite number of such cycles. The afterlife is but a holding tank for a human until they either choose to return to the middle realm, or until the next iteration of the cosmos forces them into it. I have no way of knowing for certain because I haven't died yet.

**Why do the gods exist, and why did they create us (or did they)?**

Perhaps the gods always existed, possibly before the Yuga Cycle began or the Cycle itself is as old as the gods. I feel the answer to this question is best summed up in the Buddhist concept of *mu*. The concept of *mu* comes from a story in which a Buddhist student asks his master "Does a dog have a Buddha nature?" The teacher replies "*mu*", which is essentially a combination of "no" and "that's meaningless". (15) The reason for this answer is because the master knew the student was trying to ask him something he knew he couldn't answer, and also because it meant that the student didn't fully understand his teachings because there's no such thing as a Buddha nature. It is nonsense to give any form of answer to a question that is *mu*, because the reasons for asking the question will not be resolved by the answering thereof, or because there is no answer and the question itself is flawed.

To ask why the Yuga Cycle exists is effectively beyond human comprehension. We haven't even mapped the individual workings of every neuron and chemical in the typical human brain, yet we're expected to understand the reason for existence? Just like everything I've discussed thus far, it's a matter of opinion and gnosis, but a seeker should not expect to have all the answers in a single human lifetime. Chances are that if someone's asking this question, the best answer is the one that makes them want to keep living and striving to get through the day.

That said, we can look at our own use of simulations and scale models to understand things. Perhaps humanity is a mirror for the gods, and by viewing us and our own interactions, they can understand behaviors about themselves and facets that they wouldn't have noticed otherwise. They also may have created this world to see how few directions they can issue humanity in person before we take that knowledge and run with it, within the time of one Yuga Cycle. It's also entirely possible that humanity simply is for now, and perhaps when we decline or go extinct, another species will be uplifted to the dominant intelligence on this planet. Perhaps humanity was an accident, as could be everything we know in our universe; a strange side effect of the slaying of a deity. I don't think it matters.

On the subject of gods appearing in person in antiquity and myth, they truly can assume the form of a mortal, but must live a mortal life and die a mortal death. The gods in Gaelic myth appear to die many times, only to show up a century or so later in a new form. This may appear as only a few minutes of

time to reincarnate for them. Time in other realms progresses at a different rate than ours, as accounts of this can be found in mythology, fairy lore, and even modern accounts of alien abduction and Otherworldly events.

As I said before, the gods are not simple archetypes. They are literal beings of a different order than what resides in our realm. They could have lifespans, but I don't think beings outside of time or the Cycle would need them. However, humanity may not have been made in the gods' image. They could be formless, or could look very unlike humans.

The introduction is simply to give a general synopsis of my own opinions about the gods and the cosmology of the realms. Feel free to alter anything here that you as a reader feel differently about within your own practice. Ultimately, whether I am right or wrong about the cosmology has no actual bearing on your relationship with the gods.

## Practices & Tools

### Meditation

Meditation is the practice of regaining control of the base processes within one's own mind. This mastery is a skill that must be trained. It can be a useful tool in ritual and daily life, but it doesn't have to take a single form.

The Hermetic teacher Franz Bardon (1909-1958) describes a three-step process in controlling the subconscious, with the ultimate goal being the cessation of all thought. (16) This "void meditation" is exceedingly difficult, as one of our survival mechanisms as human beings is to live in a state of continuous thought.I find all three of these steps can be achieved at their easiest in complete silence and comfort, and at their most difficult in crowded streets and wilderness biomes.

The first step Bardon describes is that of passive observation of the mental process of thought. Just like watching a nature documentary, the goal is to sit and observe your thoughts throughout the day. Take mental note of what your mind latches onto, and how long. The benefit of doing so is that you learn how your brain behaves and the tendencies for each kind of thought. This is important for not only meditation, but for control of the psyche under stress or mood-based alterations of thought.

The next step is to maintain a single subject in your thoughts all day. Whenever your mind wanders as you go about the day, be sure to try to realign your thoughts with the chosen subject. By doing so, exercise is controlled over the direction that one's thoughts take. To be able to stop one's thoughts in mid-rumination is important for psychological wellbeing, and is the foundation of many forms of therapy, not least of which is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

The final step towards mastery of the subconscious is the emptiness of mind. The goal here, in void meditation, is to keep your mind activity to a minimum or complete emptiness. This may sound easy, but who can think of not thinking? Indeed, the mind will attempt to fight you tooth and nail to seek some form of response or stimulation. The goal is to admit that yes, you had that thought, but it is not the time to dwell on such things. From there, move on. Keep practicing this daily, and your brain will eventually adjust to the contentment of silence. I have achieved it for a short time in my own life, but the prior two steps I can practice easily if I remember to do so.

In my early days of my practice, I felt this was beneficial to pursue. Now, nine years in, I find that meditation can take the form of observation and reflection. I can view the natural world and think of the processes involved. I can ground myself by thinking only of the present instead of what I should be doing next. I can walk to a place instead of driving or some other very-fast method of transport. In doing so, I began to notice things more. I began to observe more. There is a great deal lost when taking the quickest path. As a man in his thirties with autism, I benefit from controlling the direction of my thoughts and hyper-fixative tendencies far more than I do from simply trying to stall them.

This is really all I have to say regarding meditation, as it's useful only if you discover the personal methods that are most useful.

## Devotion

Devotion is the foundational practice of my personal veneration of Brighid, though not essential or commonly encouraged in a polytheistic religion. To align oneself with the divine is the purpose of the mystic's pursuit, and this alignment can be discovered through regular practice and devotion. To devote oneself to higher beings of spirit and fate can be an intimate, raw, and emotional experience. It is much more than going through the motions of daily ritual. Instead, one should focus on maintaining a mindset of searching for the divine in everyday happenings.

The first step necessary to establish when pursuing a devotional practice is to identify the gods involved. In my case, my devotion is to Brighid as a **tutelary** deity. The concept of selecting a deity as a tutelary means that the devotee accepts that deity as a guide and guardian. A tutelary deity can be the guardian deity of a people, place, or occupation, and is in no way a new concept. The Roman Emperor Augustus named Apollo his patron (17). In Hinduism, Shiva is the Deva of Yogis and is given the epithet Adiyogi Shiva, although in this case he is revered as an ancestor of the yogic tradition (although in a similar way to how we view our Kindred as ancestors) (18). I consider Brighid my tutelary due to events I may detail later in this document following in this tradition.

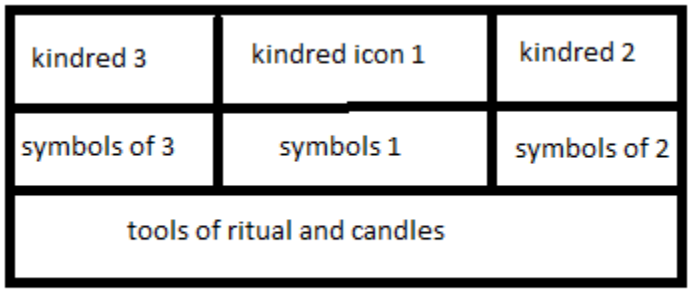
Selection of a tutelary deity is in no way required or even encouraged. It is a powerfully binding agreement with that god when one chooses to devote themselves to one. Most practitioners of devotional polytheism will either offer to many gods of a particular pantheon, or will offer to a selection of gods from several pantheons. I have a friend who offers to Athena and Thor on the same altar, and this is completely permissible in my view provided the gods do not oppose each other. What is important

is to develop a relationship with the deities one works with, and to develop a full understanding of their associations and functions.

It would not make sense to work with deities featuring associations and functions that one disagrees with or finds morally objectionable. To begin devotion to a deity is to become devoted to the concepts they represent, and to attempt to align oneself to these concepts. The gods often speak through symbolism and signs, and therefore if seeking the influence of the deity in everyday life, one must be able to identify these signs and assess whether the deity is attempting to speak through them.

This doesn't mean that every association is a sign. A common adage I hear in neopagan circles is "*Sometimes a raven is just a raven.*" This statement is in reference to how often a new Germanic pagan will begin to wonder if every raven is a sign from Odin, as Odin is associated with ravens through the two perched on his shoulders, Huginn and Muninn. Rest assured, the discernment of what is and isn't a sign tends to come in time, and may be different for each practitioner.

My devotional practice is designed with rich symbolism to honor Brighid and the other spirits that guide my walk.




*adjust as needed for your ritual

In my home I have an altar. The setup for my altar, and for all rituals henceforth, is as follows:

The highest Kindred should always be in the center, and Kindred should be called sunwise (clockwise). Brighid is my highest Kindred (being a deity), followed by Honored Dead and Nature Spirits. The symbol I use for Brighid is statuary, which I recognize is not a practice that my Gaelic ancestors would have done. In fact, the Celts rarely used statuary at all. However, I find it useful to utilize a statue that I painted myself as an act of devotion. I suggest using statues, symbols of the gods, or symbols of their associations to represent them on the altar. For the Honored Dead, I use a skull I bought at Michael's for Halloween. For the Nature Spirits, I use a root I found that was shed naturally by a tree that looks somewhat humanoid in appearance. In front of and around these three symbols, I have decorations of a semi-symbolic nature, such as pinecones and juniper sprigs for Nature Spirits, or torcs and hand tools for my ancestors. Finally, in front of these symbols and decorations are the tools of my practice, which in my case consist of an incense burner, candle, salsa dish that *kinda* looks like a cauldron, writing utensils, and a bag of ogham. My altar is pictured below:



*Note that I leave the lid to the jar candle around. This is because I follow the Indo-European taboo against blowing out candles, as it can be construed as spitting on the flame, which is an affront to the element of fire (something important to avoid for me, as Brighid is a fire deity).*

In the morning before I depart my home, I try to perform my morning devotional. The reason I prefer to perform my devotional at home indoors is because Brighid is a hearth goddess, and therefore goddess of the home. The reader would benefit to consider the symbolic nature of everything within my practice, as symbolism is essential when building one's own.

Before performing any form of ritual, it is *generally* encouraged to bathe, but this is not a hard requirement. We know that the ancients did not bathe daily, but there is evidence of bathing rituals in Greek, Roman, and Hindu religion. The Norse were said to bathe once a week, and in Eastern traditions such as Shinto, bathing is essential before approaching the *kami*. I generally try to bathe before ritual in my own practice, but I think it's better to perform a daily devotional in an unwashed state than to not perform one at all. In those times where I haven't the time to bathe first, I still ensure my hands are clean enough to prepare food with.

To begin my morning devotional, I dip my fingers in the aforementioned salsa dish which contains salt water. I anoint my forehead and face with it, stating "May the waters of the sea cleanse me." I light incense or a scented candle as an offering. This is an inexpensive daily offering that can be given to all

spirits involved in my practice and helps me establish the ritual mindset via olfactory stimulation. Then I light the ritual flame, which is a simple prayer candle that can be found at pretty much any major department store, but one I have decorated and consecrated for the practice. Then I sit with my legs crossed and hands on my knees, palms up; or I stand with my hands in an orans position or head bowed in prayer with hands clasped. These are all to illustrate vulnerability before the spirits being venerated, and to show lack of armament, an essential sign of respect.

At this point I begin my daily prayers. Essentially, I reaffirm my devotion to Brighid, recognize progress I've made due to her presence, and state my intent to achieve a constant mindset of seeking out the signs of Brighid and opportunities to further her purposes. The first prayer may go something like:

*"Goddess Brighid, woman of fire, I honor you. As the sun rises to shine on me, so too does my heart rise to greet you with joyful veneration. Watch over me as I go about my affairs, and may I give you no offense by my actions today. Goddess of the Forge, shape me on your anvil, and temper me in your flame. Goddess of the Healing Well, may I never overlook an opportunity to heal the wounds of others and of this world if it is within my power to do so. Goddess of Poetry, may my words express your beauty, and may I be able to adequately express my thoughts, never misrepresenting myself. Keep my heart and mind focused on you. I am grateful for the work you have done in my life, and for the change you have brought to my outlook."* I then make any prayers for people I know who need healing, and for any personal struggles I may need assistance with. I end with a "good morning".

Following these prayers, I perform divination, which I will discuss in the next chapter, and finally close with a prayer to all of the Kindred asking for their continued guidance and correspondence. I try to meditate after this if I have time, and then extinguish the flames and go about my day.

This practice is just an example, and should absolutely be altered to whatever the reader's personal life accounts for, as well as the spirits the reader chooses to work with. Beyond the daily devotionals declaring the intent of the practitioner during the day, an important part of devotion is a form of meditation throughout the day that involves attempting to remember the spirits and their associations. Prayer throughout the day is encouraged, as well, but not required if not needed. The goal here is to live as though one is walking *with* the deities in everyday life, and to adjust behavior accordingly. It's an easily stated intent, but very difficult to master. I can promise you, reader, I have not.

An excellent resource on devotional practices in polytheism is *One Heart, Many Gods: The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Devotional Polytheism* by Lucy Valunos, which currently has a free Kindle edition at the time of this writing. (19)

## Divination

I will begin this section with another definition. Here I much prefer the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition:

*divination (noun): 1. the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers, 2. unusual insight or intuitive perception* (20)

The divination I perform in my morning devotional is not an attempt to foretell future events, but it is absolutely a means of trying to prepare the proper mindset for the day under the direction of supernatural powers. I've found divination most successful when thought of as guidance from beings who are already aware of what you're about to confront as you go forth in your day. Interpreting how signs and their meanings foretell or prepare one for coming events is entirely up to the diviner, as every person is different.

It doesn't matter what divinatory system you use. Tarot or runes work well provided one knows the meaning of the symbols. I use ogham, and have decided upon certain meanings for them from experience. One can use tea leaves, weather, stars, and/or ideally a mixture of many things to create their own divinatory system. As long as there is a symbol, a corresponding meaning, and some way for the spirits to influence the diviner's discovery of the correct symbols, a divination system exists.

The way that I perform my daily general divination is with ogham burned onto circular discs of wood. I placed 25 ogham letters in a Crown Royal bag. I perform my morning devotional, then ask the Kindred that their wisdom and guidance be revealed by the sign I draw from the bag. I shuffle the ogham in the bag, and draw a symbol out via sortilege. I try to grab the disc that I feel drawn to before I even touch it. I record the letter and consider its symbolism before and after the day's events. During a ritual or for divination of periods longer than a day, I use three ogham. After drawing an ogham, I place it back in the bag and shuffle, then draw a new ogham. If a symbol comes up multiple times, I consider it a larger influence. I view the *forfeda* as influencing the other ogham drawn, and consider the three symbols in relation to each other to form a conclusion.

This system works for and resonates with me. Your mileage may vary. It is always best to use a system that works well for you.

**Ogham Meaning Comparison**

**Note that these are the works I have cited for the purposes of comparison:**
***Ogham: The Secret Language of the Druids* by Robert Lee Ellison (21)**
***Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom by Erynn Rowan Laurie (22)***
***Druidry Handbook: Spiritual Practice Rooted in the Living Earth* by John Michael Greer (23)**
***The Celtic Tree Oracle: A System of Divination* by Liz and Colin Murray (24)**
***Ireland's Trees: Myths, Legends & Folklore* by Niall Mac Coitir (25)**

***It is important to note that ancient Gaelic polytheists did not assign trees to each ogham symbol, and the idea of Robert Graves that there was a 13 month "tree calendar" is also complete garbage. However, the tree ogham has been in use by modern pagans for over a century, making it a living magical practice. Even attempts at more accurate reconstruction of the original ogham meaning, such as the system detailed in Erynn Rowan Laurie's* Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom*, use the extensive gnosis of their creators. Therefore, note that the ancients almost absolutely did not believe the ogham had any of the meanings listed below, but I find this system accurate to divination nonetheless. Remember that this is a modern faith with ancient gods, and the true manner that the ancient druids divined with ogham is lost to time.***

**1 -** Beith (□) - Commoner
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Birch
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Birch
**Meroney:** Birch
**McManus:** Birch
**Morann Mac Main -** "Faded trunk and fair hair."
**Mac ind Oic -** "Most silver of skin."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "of withered trunk fair-haired birch."
**Cuchulainn -** "beauty of the eyebrow"
**Mad Sweeney -** "oh birch, smooth and blessed, thou melodious, proud one, delightful each entwining branch in the top of thy brow."
**Murray -** A new start and beginning, cleansing.
**Ellison -** new beginnings
**Greer upright:** Beginnings, new possibilities, potentials; renewal and rebirth; a favorable sign in most matters, though there may be discomforts involved.
**Greer reversed:** Blind alleys, wasted effort; creative blockages; remaining fixated on the past or on things that have been lost; longing for the impossible.
**Mac Coitir-** Birth and rebirth, youthfulness, love and purity
**Laurie -** Purification, spiritual protection, origins, sources, precedence, warning, writing, eloquence, creativity, the deities.
**Number:** 1
**Color Ogham:** Ban, white (a dull white like birchbark; pure white is assigned to Ioho)
**Bird Ogham:** Besan, pheasant
**Animal Ogham:** Bo, cow
**Tool Ogham:** Biaill, axe
**Art Ogham:** Bethumnacht, livelihood (the basic skills of living)
**Elemental attribution:** Spirit of Air
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Arthuan to Imbolc

**Calendar attribution:** First month, 24 December–20 January

**2.** - Luis (□) - Commoner
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Rowan
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Rowan
**Meroney:** flame/blaze/radiance
**McManus:** flame/blaze/radiance
**Morann Mac Main -** "delight of eye"
**Mac ind Oic -** "friend of cattle, dear to the cattle s elm for its bloom and for down."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "delight of eye owing to the beauty of its berries."
**Cuchulainn -** "sustenance of cattle."
**Mad Sweeney -** "o quicken, little, berried one, delightful is thy bloom."
**Murray -** Protection against enchantment, control of all the senses.
**Ellison -** protection and control of the senses.
**Greer upright:** Clarity and attention to details; concentration on the task at hand; purification; danger avoided or overcome; a choice between two paths
**Greer reversed:** Confusion, uncertainty, deception, delusion; lack of defenses; something is not what it appears to be; someone may be misleading you, or you may be misleading yourself
**Mac Coitir -** protection
**Laurie -** Inspiration, sustenance, food, herbal healing, magical protection, animals and their protection, magical or spiritual teachers and teachings.
**Number**: 2
**Color Ogham:** Liath, gray
**Bird Ogham:** Lachu, duck
**Animal Ogham:** Luchog, mouse
**Tool Ogham:** Loman, rope
**Art Ogham:** Luamnacht, sailing
**Elemental attribution:** Fire of Air
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Arthuan to Alban Eiler
**Calendar attribution:** Second month, 21 January–17 February; includes Imbolc, 2 February

**3. -** Fearn (□) - Commoner
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Alder
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Alder
**Meroney:** Alder lumber
**McManus:** Alder lumber
**Morann Mac Main -** "shield of warrior bands owing to their redness or because alder is the material of the shield"
**Mac ind Oic -** "guarding of milk for it is it that guards the milk, for of it are made the vessels containing the milk"

**Fenius Farsaidh -** “the van of the Warrior-bands for therefore are the shields.”
**Cuchulainn -** “protection of the heart”
**Mad Sweeney -** “o alder, thou art not hostile, delightful is thy hue, thou art not rending or prickling in the gap where thou art”
**Murray -** Oracular and protective
**Ellison -** guidance, through its association with Bran the blessed
**Greer upright**: Protection and guidance, a bridge over deep waters; steadfastness; good advice received from others or your own inner depths; spiritual guidance and insight, the presence of the gods; an unexpected way past a difficulty
**Greer reversed:** Willful blindness, refusal to listen to advice; arrogance and lack of insight; you are out of your depth
**Mac Coitir -** Fire, war, death
**Laurie -** Physical and emotional protection, walls, containment, warriors or the military, hunters and the hunt, preparation and being prepared.
**Number:** 3
**Color Ogham:** Flann, red
**Bird Ogham:** Faelinn, seagull
**Animal Ogham:** Faol, wolf Tool
**Ogham**: Fidba, hedge-bill (a hooked iron blade with a handle used to trim hedges)
**Art Ogham**: Filidecht, bardic poetry
**Elemental attribution:**Water of Air
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Imbolc to Belteinne
**Calendar attribution:** Fourth month, 18 March–14 April; includes Alban Eiler, 20 Marc

**4. -** Saille (□) - Commoner
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Willow
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Willow
**Meroney:** Willow
**McManus:** Willow
**Morann Mac Main -** “hue of the lifeless, that is, hue of the dead, for denial, so that he is not living but dead”
**Mac ind Oic -** “activity of bees, for its bloom and catkin”
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “color of lifelessness, that is, it has no color owing to its hue of one deceased.”
**Cuchulainn -** “beginning of honey”
**Mad Sweeney -** “N/A
**Murray -** Night vision, lunar rhythms, female aspects
**Ellison -** mysteries and water related subjects/feminine attributes
**Greer upright**: Moving with the flow of events; intuition, dreaming, the unconscious; letting go of fixed ideas and responding to the moment; faith in a personal vision.
**Greer reversed:** Inability to move with the situation due to rigidity; Confusion or lack of awareness; unforeseen dangers; a difficult time that will pass eventually.

**Mac Coitir -** fertility, life
**Laurie** - Flow, ancestors and messages from the ancestors, death, the realm of the dead, time, tides, knowledge of time and proper timing, denial, impurity, music, honey and mead.
**Number:** 4
**Color Ogham:** Sodath, fine-colored (many modern Druids
use primrose yellow, serind in Irish; for Saille's color)
**Bird Ogham:** Segh, hawk
**Animal Ogham:** Sionnach, fox
**Tool Ogham:** Srathar, pack saddle
**Art Ogham:** Sairsi, handicrafts (all simple craft work using
hand tools)
**Elemental attribution:** Earth of Air
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Eiler to Belteinne
**Calendar attribution:** Fifth month, 15 April–12 May;
includes Belteinne, 1 May

**5. -** Nuin (□) - Commoner
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Ash
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Cherry
**Meroney:** unknown, many things
**McManus:** letter?
**Morann Mac Main -** "Checking of peace/a symbol of peace"
**Mac ind Oic -** "Fight of women, of the weaver's beam"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "A check of peace is ash, for with it spears and weaver's beams are made"
**Cuchulainn -** "Boast of beauty"
**Mad Sweeney -** "o ash-tree, thou baleful one, hand-weapon of a warrior"
**Ellison -** ancient knowledge and the weaver's beam
**Murray -** Inner and outer worlds linked, macrocosm and microcosm
**Greer upright:** Connection and transformation; relationship to a larger context; you are part of a wider world; events may be more important than they appear.
**Greer reversed:** Isolation and self-containment; you are separated from what is going on, for good or ill; boredom and lack of initiative may blind you to the possibilities of the present.
**Mac Coitir -** youthfulness, beauty, love
**Laurie** - Connection, peace, support, choices, letters and writing, contracts and agreements, weaving, harmony, women's power, networking, safety nets, a circle of friends.
**Number:** 5
**Color Ogham:** Necht, clear
**Bird Ogham:** Naescu, snipe
**Animal Ogham:** Naddair, adder
**Tool Ogham:** Nasc, ring
**Art Ogham:** Notaireacht, notary work (more generally, any

form of recordkeeping)
**Elemental attribution:** Air of Air
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Imbolc to Alban Eiler
**Calendar attribution:**Third month, 18 February–17 March

## **6.** - Huath (□) - Commoner

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Hawthorn
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Hawthorn
**Meroney:** Fear/Horror/Terror
**McManus:** Fear/Horror/Terror
**Morann Mac Main -** "Pack of wolves, for a terror to anyone is a pack of wolves, owing to the affinity of the name, for they are a thorn in the same way."
**Mac ind Oic -** "Blanching of face, for blanched is a man's face when he is encompassed with fear or terror."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "because it is formidable owing to its thorns"
**Cuchulainn -** "most difficult at night"
**Mad Sweeney** - only a passage, not written by Sweeney, that describes injury brought about by thorns when attempting to sleep
**Murray -** Cleansing and chastity, protection
**Ellison -** counseling, protection, and cleansing
**Greer upright:** Patience, reserve, retreat; a time of waiting and planning rather than action; obstacles and entanglements that can be overcome; success after a delay; temporary obstacles.
**Greer reversed:** Inappropriate action, rushing ahead when patience and planning are called for; a risk of failure; you need to stop and reconsider.
**Mac Coitir -** fear and respect, magical powers, fairies
**Laurie -** Despair, fear, misfortune, loneliness, nightmares, difficulty, anxiety, destruction, accidents, enemies, war, strife, battles, shock, feeling or being trapped.
**Number:** 6
**Color Ogham:** h-Uath, terrible (many modern Druids use deep violet for Huath's color)
**Bird Ogham:** Hadaig, raven
**Animal Ogham:** h-Aodh, sheep
**Tool Ogham**: Huartan, meaning uncertain (possibly a salt-box?)
**Art Ogham:** h-Airchetul, trisyllabic poetry (poetry in a meter of three syllables to a line)
**Elemental attribution:** Spirit of Fire
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Eiler to Alban Heruin
**Calendar attribution:** Sixth month, 13 May–9 June

**7** - Duir (□) - Noble

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Oak
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Oak
**Meroney**: Oak
**McManus**: Oak
**Morann Mac Main** - “Highest of bushes, with respect to its wood in the forest.”
**Mac ind Oic** - “carpenter’s work.”
**Fenius Farsaidh** - “higher than bushes is an oak.”
**Cuchulainn** - “most carved of craftsmanship.”
**Mad Sweeney -** “thou oak, bushy, leafy, thou art high beyond trees..” and later- “my aversion in woods - I conceal it not from anyone - is the leafy stirk of an oak swaying evermore.”
**Murray -** Solid protection, doorway to the mysteries, strength
**Ellison -** wisdom and strength
**Greer upright**: Success, forward movement, attainment; power and energy; you have all you need to accomplish your goals; a door opens in the outer world
**Greer reversed:** Help from those in positions of power or authority; success despite inadequate means; borrowed strength; a gift
**Mac Coitir -** strength, fertility, kingship, endurance
**Laurie** - Strength, stability, firmness, endurance, effort, skill, truth, leadership, justice, foundations, longevity, the deities, thresholds and gateways, sacred places.
**Number:** 7
**Color Ogham**: Dubh, black
**Bird Ogham**: Droen, wren
**Animal Ogham:** Damh, stag
**Tool Ogham:** Dabach, cask (that is, a small barrel or container)
**Art Ogham:** Druidheacht, Druidry
**Elemental attribution:** Fire of Fire
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Belteinne to Alban Heruin
**Calendar attribution:** Seventh month, 10 June–7 July; includes Alban Heruin, 21 June

**8.** - Tinne (□) - Noble

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Holly
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Holly
**Meroney:** Bar of Metal
**McManus:** Bar of Metal
**Morann Mac Main -** "another thing the meaning of that today"
**Mac ind Oic -** Fires of coal
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "a third of a wheel is holly, because holly is one of the three timbers of the chariot wheel."

**Cuchulainn -** "one of three parts of a weapon."
**Mad Sweeney -** "o holly, little sheltering one, thou door against the wind..."
**Murray -** Best in the fight
**Ellison -** justice and balance
**Greer Upright:** Conflict, challenge, struggle against opposing forces; victory against the odds; a change of fortune; decisive action is favored.
**Greer Reversed:** Inadequate strength or skill, the possibility of defeat; lack of direction and balance; you need to build your strength and understand the nature of the opposition
**Mac Coitir -** strength and ability, protection, magical power, purification
**Laurie -** Mastery, the Aes Dana, creative force, technical skill, making, the forge, arts and crafts, wealth or money, magical technologies, immediacy (time in a divination).
**Number:** 8
**Color Ogham:** Temen, dark gray
**Bird Ogham**: Truiteoc, starling
**Animal Ogham** : Torc, boar
**Tool Ogham:**Tal,adze
**Art Ogham:** Tornoracht, lathe work
**Elemental attribution:** Air of Fire
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Belteinne to Lughnasadh
**Calendar attribution:** Eighth month, 8 July–4 August;
includes Lughnasadh, 1 August

**9. -** Coll (□) - Noble
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Hazel
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Hazel
**Meroney:** hazel
**McManus:** hazel
**Morann Mac Main -** “fairest of trees, owing to its beauty in woods”
**Mac ind Oic -** “friend of cracking” (refers to hazelnut cracking divination)
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “fair wood, that is, everyone is eating its nuts”
**Cuchulainn -** “sweetest tree”
**Mad Sweeney -** “o hazelet, little branching one, o fragrance of hazelnuts”
**Murray -** Intuition, straight to the source
**Ellison -** wisdom and intuition
**Greer upright:** Knowledge, intelligence, talent; transformation and flexibility; the beginning of a new stage in life; communication and teaching, new information.
**Greer reversed:** Creative and intellectual blockages, lack of insight; often, fear of failure, leading to a retreat to familiar ground.
**Mac Coitir -** fertility, wisdom, kingshop, poetic inspiration, mystical knowledge
**Laurie -** Poetic inspiration, the well of wisdom, the world tree, sources of wisdom, tradition, the senses, visionary and creative ability, second sight, omen-taking, liminality.

**Number:** 9
**Color Ogham:** Cronn, brown
**Bird Ogham:** Corr, crane
**Animal Ogham:** Cat, cat
**Tool Ogham:** Carr, wagon
**Art Ogham:** Cruitireacht, harping
**Elemental attribution:**Water of Fire
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Heruin to Lughnasadh
**Calendar attribution:** Ninth month, 5 August–1 September

**10.** - Ceirt (□) - Noble
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Crab Apple
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Apple
**Meroney:** Rag
**McManus:** Rag
**Morann Mac Main -** "shelter of a hind i.e. a fold: lunatic, that is, death sense, it is then his sense comes to him when he goes to his death"
**Mac ind Oic -** "force of a man"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "shelter of a wild hind"
**Cuchulainn -** "dregs of clothing"
**Mad Sweeney -** "o apple-tree, little apple tree, thou art much shaken..."
**Murray -** Choice of beauty
**Ellison -** the Otherworld and choice
**Greer upright:** Happiness, healing, and recovery; awakenings and new experiences; an unexpected gift; the rewards of success; an opportunity to live more fully.
**Greer reversed:** An unavoidable choice among alternatives; mixed gain and loss; a temptation to scattered effort or procrastination that must be overcome.
**Mac Coitir -** delights of the otherworld, fertility, replenishment, healing
**Laurie -** Misfortune, poverty, illness, fleeing, retreat, madness, insanity, ill luck without total loss, psychological issues and problems, the hope for healing from illness or madness.
**Number: 10**
**Color Ogham:** Quiar, mouse-brown
**Bird Ogham :** Querc, hen
**Animal Ogham:** Cu, dog
**Tool Ogham:** Cual, stick
**Art Ogham:** Quislenacht, flute-playing
**Elemental attribution:** Earth of Fire
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Heruin to Alban Elued
**Calendar attribution:** (no calendar attribution)

**11. -** Muin (□) - Lower

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Vine
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Buckthorn
**Meroney:** Neck/Treachery/Love
**McManus:** Neck/Treachery/Love
**Morann Mac Main -** "Strongest of effort, owing to the identity of name with muin, back of man or ox, for it is they that are the strongest in existence as regards to labor or effort."
**Mac ind Oic -** "condition of slaughter, that is, a man's back."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "highest of beauty if vine, that is because it grows aloft."
**Cuchulainn -** "path of the voices."
**Mad Sweeney -** "o briar, little arched one, thou grantest no fair terms, thou ceases not to tear me, till thou hast thy fill of blood."
**Murray -** Prophecy
**Ellison -** prophecy or inhibitions, or the lack of them
**Greer upright:** Inspiration and prophecy; community; the influence of spiritual factors on the situation; unexpected truths; freedom from limits and restrictions.
**Greer reversed:** Burdens, difficulties; a need to relax and unwind; you have been trying too hard in unproductive ways.
**Mac Coitir -** protection from evil and the dead
**Laurie** - Communication, work, effort, carrying a heavy burden; falsehoods, tricks, lies, concealment or denial of facts or truth; love, respect, desire; speaking, persuasion, flattery, finding your voice.
**Number:** 11
**Color Ogham**: Mbracht, variegated (many modern Druids use plaid for Muin's color)
**Bird Ogham**: Mintan, titmouse (a small bird related to the chickadee)
**Animal Ogham:** Muc,sow
**Tool Ogham:** Machad (meaning uncertain—perhaps a milking bucket)
**Art Ogham:** Milaideacht, soldiering
**Elemental attribution:** Spirit of Water
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Lughnasadh to Alban Elued
**Calendar attribution:**Tenth month, 2 September–29 September; includes Alban Elued, 22 September

**12.** - Gort (□) - Bush

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Ivy
**Mac Coitir Tree -** Furze
**Meroney:** field
**McManus:** field

**Morann Mac Main -** “Sweeter than grasses, owing to the identity of the name with the cornfield”
**Mac ind Oic -** Ellison: “med nercc, to wit, ivy.” (Not really much to go on) Greer: “Size of a warrior”
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “greener that pastures is ivy.”
**Cuchulainn -** “sating of multitudes.”
**Mad Sweeney -** “o ivy, little ivy, thou art familiar in the dusky wood.”
**Murray -** The Spiral of the self, search for self
**Ellison -** the search for yourself and inner wisdom
**Greer upright:** Slow and indirect progress, movement by roundabout paths; purpose, determination, self-control; a difficult but viable path.
**Greer reversed**: Entanglement in circumstances, or in your own egotism; think twice about what you are doing, and why.
**Mac Coitir -** wealth and fertility of the harvest
**Laurie** - Growth, fertility, plenty, wealth, abundance, generosity, happiness, patience, waiting for fruition, cycles and cyclic time, sanctuary or a place of safety and peace.
**Number:** 12
**Color Ogham:** Gorm, sky blue
**Bird Ogham:** Geis, mute swan
**Animal Ogham:** Grainneog, hedgehog
**Tool Ogham:** Gat, withe (a flexible length of willow twig, used in place of cordage)
**Art Ogham:** Gaibneacht, blacksmithing
**Elemental attribution:** Fire of Water
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Lughnasadh to Samhuinn
**Calendar attribution:** Eleventh month, 30 September–27 October

**13. -** nGéadal (□) - Bush
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Broom
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Broom
**Meroney:** charm
**McManus:** wounds
**Morann Mac Main -** “Strength of a healer”
**Mac ind Oic -** “Robe of healers”
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “A Physician’s strength”
**Cuchulainn -** “Beginning of slaying”
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Direct action
**Ellison -** working and tools
**Greer upright:** Swiftness, sudden movement, instability; healing, change for the better; a message or an opportunity; you are not yet finished with your work.
**Greer reversed:** Stuck in a rut, inability to act; a need for healing; patience; you are not yet ready to begin.
**Mac Coitir -** Female beauty, purity, maidenhood

**Laurie** - Healing, wounding, death, beneficial magic, healers and doctors, good health, wellbeing, regeneration, hope.
**Number -** 13
**Color Ogham:** nGlas, grass green
**Bird Ogham:** nGeigh, goose
**Animal Ogham:** nGearr, hare
**Tool Ogham:** nGend, wedge
**Art Ogham:** nGibae, sculpting
**Elemental attribution:** Air of Water
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Elued to Lughnasadh
**Calendar attribution:** Twelfth month, 28 Oct–24 November; Includes Samhuinn, 1 November

**14.** - Straif (ᚃ) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree:** Blackthorn
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Blackthorn
**Meroney:** Sulphur
**McManus:** Sulphur
**Morann mac Main:** “Careful effort, strongest of red, for in the sloe red for dying the things is stronger, for it is it that makes the pale silver become azure, making it genuine silver. It is it, which is boiled through the urine into the white gold so as to make it red.”
**Mac ind Oic:** "increasing of secrets"
**Fenius Farsaidh:** "the hedge of a stream."
**Cú Chulainn:** “Mist of an arrow, that is, smoke rising from a fire, seeking of clouds”
**Mad Sweeney:** "O little blackthorn, little thorny one; o little black sloetree."
**Murray -** No choice however unpleasant, cleansing
**Ellison**: Trouble and Negativity
**Greer upright:** Necessity and inevitability; the hard realities of life; something that cannot be changed; the results of one’s own actions; the influence of fate.
**Greer reversed:** Pain, difficulty, retribution, unavoidable suffering; a difficult path that must be taken; every choice leads to unhappiness
**Mac Coitir -** fierceness, malevolence, strength, protection, beauty
**Laurie** - Transformation, spiritual work, secrets, magical or occult mysteries, mutability, shape-shifting, divination, taking of omens, transcendence.
**Number:** 14
**Color Ogham:** Sorcha, bright (many modern Druids use sil ver for Straif’s color)
**Bird Ogham:** Stmolach, thrush
**Animal Ogham:** Srianach, badger
**Tool Ogham:** Sust, flail (two sticks hinged together, used to separate grain from husks)
**Art Ogham:** Sreghuindeacht, deer hunting
**Elemental attribution:** Water of Water
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Elued to Alban Arthuan

**Calendar attribution:** (no calendar attribution)

**15.** - Ruis (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Elder
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Elder
**Meroney:** Red/Redness
**McManus:** Red/Redness
**Morann Mac Main -** "intensest of blushes, from the redding or shame according to fact, for by 'R' it is written, and it is a reddening that grows in a man's face through the juice of the herb being rubbed under it. An ingot of blush, again from shame or from reddening."
**Mac ind Oic -** "redness of face, again to wit the sap of the rose, which causes the redness of faces, so that is blushing, is in them. From the blush, or from the reddening."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "the redness of shame"
**Cuchulainn -** "glow of anger"
**Oengus:** reddening of faces
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** The end in the beginning and the beginning in the end
**Ellison -** entrance to the Otherworld and dealings with the Fair Folk
**Greer upright:** Healing, resolution, completion; transitions from one state of being to another; difficulties permanently overcome; an omen of success in most things.
**Greer reversed:** Endings and departures; the need to release things that are past their time; facing up to facts; embarrassment and shame; illness and disability.
**Mac Coitir-** witchcraft, evil, protection, power
**Laurie** - passion, shame, anger, embarrassment, jealousy, the warrior's frenzy, loss of control, obsession, sexuality and eroticism or their abuse, guilt, ecstatic trance.
**Number:** 15
**Color Ogham:** Ruadh, dark red
**Bird Ogham:** Rocnat, rook (a variety of crow)
**Animal Ogham:** Ron, seal
**Tool Ogham:** Rusc, basket
**Art Ogham:** Ronnaireacht, pharmacy (preparing any healing substance)
**Elemental attribution:** Earth of Water
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Samhuinn to Alban Arthuan
**Calendar attribution:** Thirteenth month, 25 November–22 December

**16. -** Ailm (□) - Noble
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree:** Silver Fir
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Pine
**Meroney:** (Unknown)

**McManus:** (Unknown)
**Morann mac Main:** “Loudest of groanings, that is wondering with him; for it is ailm or 'A' a man says while groaning in disease, or wondering, that is, marveling at whatever circumstance.”
**Cú Chulainn:** “Beginning of calling, beginning of weaver’s beams, that is, 'A'.”
**Mac ind Óic:** “Beginning of answers, for the first expression of every human being after his birth is 'A'.”
**Fenius Farsaidh:** "a fir tree, to wit, a pine tree."
**Mad Sweeney:** (not talked about)
**Murray -** High views and long sight
**Ellison:** far seeing and knowing the future.
**Greer upright:** Insight, transformation, expanded awareness; change for the better; the ability to see things in perspective; peak experiences, dreams and visions.
**Greer reversed:** Lack of perspective, ignorance of the broader picture; unrealistic ideas; you need to step back and assess the situation more carefully
**Mac Coitir -** Renewal, rebirth, eternal life
**Laurie** - Inception, birth and death as beginnings, the cycle of life, origination, inception, conception, creation, children, pregnancy, initial understanding, epiphany.
**Number:** 16
**Color Ogham**: Alad, piebald (that is, spotted black and white)
**Bird Ogham:** Aidhircleog, lapwing
**Animal Ogham:** Art, bear
**Tool Ogham:** Arathar, plow
**Art Ogham:** Airigeacht, leadership
**Elemental attribution:** Spirit of Earth
**Calendar attribution:** Alban Arthuan, 23 December

## **17.** - Onn (□) - Noble

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Gorse/Furze
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Ash
**Meroney**: Wheel
**McManus:** Ash tree
**Morann Mac Main -** “Helper of horses, wheels of the chariot”
**Mac ind Oic -** “Smoothest of work”
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “onn, that is, furze”
**Cuchulainn -** “sustaining equipment of hunter/warrior bands.”
**Mad Sweeney -** n/a
**Murray -** Good at collecting
**Ellison -** collecting things to you
**Greer upright:** Gathering together, combination of forces; energy, life, vigor, sexuality, and attraction; opportunities, though not without potential problems.
**Greer reversed:** Difficulties and delays, overconfidence; desires out of touch with the realities of the

situation; uncoordinated efforts; problems, but with potential benefits.
**Mac Coitir -** fertility, healing
**Laurie** - movement, travel, journeys, movement in static situations, spirit journey work, Otherworld workings, guidance and guiding spirits, foundations, the founding of new projects.
**Number:** 17
**Color Ogham:** Odhar, dun (that is, light yellowish brown)
**Bird Ogham:** Odoroscrach, cormorant
**Animal Ogham:** Os, deer
**Tool Ogham:** Ord, hammer
**Art Ogham:** Ogmoracht, harvesting
**Elemental attribution:** Fire of Earth
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Eiler to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution**: Alban Eiler, 20 March

## **18.** - Ur (□) - Commoner

Meanings:
**Murray Tree-** Heather
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Elm
**Meroney:** earth
**McManus:** earth
**Morann Mac Main** - "In cold dwellings, that is ur, fresh, with him, from the uir, the mould of the earth is the name derived."
**Mac ind Oic -** "growing in hearths, that is Ur, heath, 'U' with him, for it uir, the soil, that causes the growing of plants that are planted in it ."
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "Ur, that is, heath".
**Cuchulainn -** "shroud of a lifeless one."
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Links to inner self, all heal
**Ellison** - healing and homelands
**Greer upright:** Spiritual power, the forces of nature; fulfillment; the coming of new life; a door opens in the inner world; passion, power, and magic; creation.
**Greer reversed**: Weakness, dispersed energies, loss of contact with nature and the spirit; dreamy neglect of realities; a need for recuperation and reconnection.
**Mac Coitir -** durability, fertility
**Laurie** - death, graves and graveyards, burial, grieving, cycles of life and death, ghosts or hauntings, the end of cycles, inevitability and the inescapable, the body, physicality, embodiment of spiritual principles, the land or the earth, land spirits, caves or caverns, memories of the dead.
**Number:** 18
**Color Ogham:** Usgdha, resin-colored (a reddish amber
color)
**Bird Ogham:** Uiseoc, lark

**Animal Ogham:** Urcuil, cricket
**Tool Ogham:** Usca, heather brush (heather was used to make brushes in Ireland)
**Art Ogham:** Umaideacht, brasswork
**Elemental attribution:** Air of Earth
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Heruin to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Alban Heruin, 21 June

**19. -** Eadhadh (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Aspen
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Aspen
**Meroney:** ???
**McManus:** ???
**Morann Mac Main -** "Distinguished wood for the trembling tree"
**Mac ind Oic -** "Synonym for a friend"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "Horrible grief"
**Cuchulainn -** "brother of birch"
**Mad Sweeney -** "the aspen is a-trembling, by terms I hear its leaves a-racing - messems 'tis a foray!"
**Murray -** Helps rebirth, prevents illness
**Ellison -** communication
**Greer upright:** Courage and tenacity in the face of opposition; a struggle in which victory is possible but not certain; a quest for inner strength.
**Greer reversed:** Declining strength; compromise and negotiation; prudence; if you continue in your present path, the results will not be good.
**Mac Coitir -** Hearing, approach of death, Otherworld
**Laurie** - vision, divination, dreams, contracts, and relationships with spirits, vision-seeking, intoxication, discernment, enlightenment and the tools used to reach it, communication with the Sídhe and Otherworldly beings, connections with the Otherworld.
**Number:** 19
**Color Ogham:** Erc, rust red
**Bird Ogham:** Ela, whistling swan
**Animal Ogham:** Each, horse
**Tool Ogham:** Epit, billhook (a hooked blade on a handle, used to trim tree limbs)
**Art Ogham:** Enaireacht, bird hunting
**Elemental attribution:** Water of Earth
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Alban Elued to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Alban Elued, 22 September

20. - Iodhadh (□) - Noble

**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Yew
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Yew
**Meroney:** Unsure
**McManus**: Yew
**Morann Mac Main -** "Oldest of woods"
**Mac ind Oic - Greer:** "Abuse for an ancestor, or pleasing consent" **Ellison:** "most withered of wood, or sword"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "ido, that is, yew"
**Cuchulainn -** "Color of a sick man, that is, a people (or an age)" person"
**Mad Sweeney -** "o yew tree, little yew tree, in churchyards thou art conspicuous"
**Murray -** Rebirth and everlasting life
**Ellison -** death and rebirth
**Greer upright:** Enduring realities, that which remains unchanged; old age, legacies from the past; the consequences of present actions.
**Greer reversed:** Stagnation and immobility; things lingering past their time; the past as a burden not yet overcome.
**Mac Coitir Tree-** death, eternity, afterlife
**Laurie** - memory, history, lore, tradition, old tales, venerability, the past, age and aging, elders, the ancestors, endurance, permanence, reincarnation or past lives, survival.
**Number**: 20
**Color Ogham:** Irfind, very white (the color of newly fallen snow)
**Bird Ogham:** Illait, eaglet
**Animal Ogham**: Ialtog, bat
**Tool Ogham:** Indeoin, anvil
**Art Ogham:** Iascaireacht, fishing
**Elemental attribution:** Earth of Earth
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Samhuinn to Imbolc
**Calendar attribution:** Alban Arthuan, 23 December

**21. -** Eabhadh (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree -** Grove
**Ellison Tree-** White Poplar (Ellison)
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Aspen
**Meroney:** salmon?
**McManus:** salmon?
**Morann Mac Main -** "most buoyant of wood, to wit, that is ebad, aspen, with him, for fair swimming is wood: to wit, that is the for the great raven. Hence it was put for the letter named the Ogham ebad, for E is the name for a salmon, and it is written by EA like the alphabet of the fauna: i.e., by stag (deer), eo by eonasc (ousel)"

**Mac ind Oic -** “corrective of a sick man”
**Fenius Farsaidh -** “Ehbadh, that is, aspen”
**Cuchulainn -** “fairest fish”
**Mad Sweeney -** While he does not talk about white poplar specifically, his reference to aspen may refer to this tree as well
**Murray -** A sacred place, all knowledge, available past, present and future
**Ellison -** buoyancy and floating above problems
**Greer upright**: Complexity, the presence of many factors; possibility; capacity for freedom.
**Greer reversed:** Confusion and bewilderment; there may be too many factors at work to allow successful prediction.
**Mac Coitir -** Ears
**Laurie -** carrier of wisdom, vehicle of inspiration, spiritual nourishment
**Number:** 21
**Color Ogham**: Many shades of green
**Bird Ogham**: n/a
**Animal Ogham**: n/a
**Tool Ogham:** n/a
**Art Ogham:** n/a
**Elemental attribution:** Spirit of Spirit
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Central Grove of the Wheel
**Calendar attribution**: The whole cycle of the year

**22. -** Ór (□) - Lower
**Numeric Identity -** 22
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Spindle
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Spindle
**Meroney:** gold
**McManus:** gold
**Morann Mac Main - “**Most venerable fo structures according to fact”
**Mac ind Oic -** N/A
**Fenius Farsaidh - “**Oir, that is, spindle tree”
**Cuchulainn -** N/A
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Sweetness and delight, sudden intelligence
**Ellison -** community and working within the home
**Greer upright:** Radical transformation, the flash of the lightning bolt; sudden change, illumination or destruction, set in motion by forces outside the situation.
**Greer reversed:** Patience and preparation; the path before you is slow and cannot be hurried; wait for outside forces to act.
**Mac Coitir -** eye, sight, the sun
**Laurie -** worth, value, wealth

**Number:** 22
**Color Ogham:** Brilliant white (like lightning)
**Bird Ogham:** N/A
**Animal Ogham:** N/A
**Tool Ogham:** N/A
**Art Ogham:** N/A
**Elemental attribution:** Fire of Spirit
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Imbolc to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Imbolc, 2 February

**23.** - Uilleann (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray Tree-** Honeysuckle
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Gooseberry
**Meroney:** Elbow
**McManus:** Elbow
**Morann Mac Main -** "juicy wood is woodbine, that is woodbine with him, for it is a name for honeysuckle"
**Mac ind Oic -** "great equal length, that is, woodbine, a.k.a. honeysuckle"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "Uilleand, that is, honeysuckle"
**Cuchulainn -** N/A
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Hidden secret
**Ellison -** drawing things together and binding
**Greer upright:** Secrets and revelations, the influence of the subtle and seemingly insignificant; small causes with large effects; insight into the nature of the situation.
**Greer reversed**: The situation is not what it seems; hidden factors are a source of complications; the information you need is not available to you.
**Mac Coitir -** mouth, moon
**Laurie -** Flexibility, change, measurement
**Number:** 23
**Color Ogham:** Yellow-White
**Bird Ogham:** N/A
**Animal Ogham:** N/A
**Tool Ogham:** N/A
**Art Ogham:** N/A
**Elemental attribution:** Air or Spirit
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Beltane to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Belteinne, 1 May

**24. -** Ifín (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**

**Murray Tree -** Beech
**Ellison Tree-** Gooseberry
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Juniper
**Meroney:** Gooseberry
**McManus:** Gooseberry
**Morann Mac Main -** "sweetest of wood"
**Mac ind Oic -** "most wonderful of taste"
**Fenius Farsaidh -** "Iphin (pronounced ibin), that is, gooseberry)."
**Cuchulainn -** N/A
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Old knowledge, old writing
**Ellison -** The Kindreds, especially of Nature
**Greer Upright:** Knowledge and lore, learning, study, education; the wisdom of the past as a guide to the present and future.
**Greer Reversed:** Ignorance; lack of attention to existing knowledge; failure to learn from experience.
**Mac Coitir -** wind, air, nose, smell
**Laurie -** sweetness of life, divine influence
**Number-** 24
**Color Ogham:** Orange-brown
**Elemental attribution:**Water of Spirit
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Lughnasadh to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Lughnasadh, 1 August

**25. -** Eamhancholl (□) - Lower
**Meanings:**
**Murray -** The sea itself
**Ellison Tree-** Witch Hazel
**Mac Coitir Tree-** Hazel
**Meroney:** Double C
**McManus:** Double C
**Morann Mac Main -** "expression of a weary one, "Alas!""
**Mac ind Oic -** n/a
**Fenius Farsaidh -** n/a
**Cuchulainn -** N/A
**Mad Sweeney -** N/A
**Murray -** Sea, travel, maternal links
**Ellison -** magic and hidden knowledge
**Greer Upright:** Unexpected change, the arrival of a new influence; the effects of destiny.
**Greer Reversed:** Sudden endings and disruptions, the dissolution of the familiar.
**Mac Coitir -** Heart, earth
**Laurie -** illness, intensification of other fiodh
**Number-** 25

**Color Ogham:** Blue-green
**Elemental attribution:** Earth of spirit
**Path of the Wheel of Life:** Samhuinn to Central Grove
**Calendar attribution:** Samhuinn, 1 November

## Ritual

Now that the prerequisites have been discussed, it's time to discuss ritual magic. Formal rituals are often a means of commemorating certain holidays, especially of those celebrating deities that aren't involved with the daily devotion. They can also be used for specific magical workings, or for the purpose of simply giving the deities that one regularly works with a special offering distinct from the daily devotional. In my practice, I tend to perform such a ritual once a month.

Ritual veneration is very similar to the daily devotional, except every aspect of the process is either symbolic or calculated. Additionally, I make personalized offerings to the spirits involved. The reason for these offerings is not to give with the intent to receive. Rather, I offer from my stock to commemorate my relationship with the Kindred. I show my appreciation. Regardless of what I receive in return, I honor.

The offering itself should be symbolic. Gods tend to prefer alcohol, dairy, or bread as a standard. My suggestion is that if one is offering bread, it should be cooked and prepared at home, not purchased. Due to Brighid's associations with fertility and livestock, I offer her milk at least. On Imbolc, which is the holiday associated with her, I offer homemade bannock as well. For my ancestors, I offer an entire plate of a meal. For the nature spirits, I offer anything that I made out of earthen materials or anything organic from my food stores.

Here is an example ritual from Beltane:

A bell is tolled thrice to begin the rite

1. **Initiating the Rite** –

A table is brought out. The altar supplies are placed on the table. The ritual hearthfire candle is lit. A bowl of salt water is prepared. A deep offering bowl is made available as a representation of the well and placed on the ground.

*"Lady Brighid,*
*Whose flame burns on our hearth, in our home,*
*we call to you to join us here,*
*in our midst,*

*bringing our prayers to the gods,*
*forming the means by which we sacrifice.*
*May the holy arise in our midst,*
*the pure and the blessing."*

An offering of milk is made to Brighid.

The ritual party proceeds as one to the ritual site. Once arrived, the head of the rite says:

*"May all those assembled here be welcome. May the rite we perform honor the gods and spirits of the occasion, and let it be a blessing to those who are here to honor their own gods in turn."*

2. **Purification** –

A bowl of juniper water is carried around by an assistant to the head of the rite. Each participant of the rite anoints their forehead with water and the assistant says as they do so, *"With juniper and water, may you be purified."*

After each participant undergoes the purification, the head of the rite and the assistant do the same to each other. An omen is then taken, drawn by sortilege. If positive, the rite continues.

3. **Opening Prayer** –

The head of the rite then says:

*"We are here to celebrate the Festival of Beltane, a time of sensuality, fertility, and celebration. It is during this time that we honor the spirits of nature with the desire for a productive summer. With this rite, we seek to honor the gods, our ancestors, and the spirits of the land. Let our presence here be known to them, that we may honor them and give them praise. We ask that this rite please the gods and spirits here gathered, and that they give this rite their blessing."*

4. **Call to Silence** –

*"Be silent and reverent in the presence of the Shining Ones, so they may attend our flame tonight. Keep that which is not pertinent to this rite silent until it is ended."*

5. **Recreating the Cosmos** –

The head of the rite then says:

*"The waters support and surround us. The land extends about us. The sky reaches out above us. At the center burns a living flame."*

Logs are placed in a C shape with a gap to the east. The ritual fire is then lit. Once lit, the party circles the

flame, once clockwise.

**6. First Offering** –

The attendees are each given a bannock.

*"Earth mothers,*
*You who sustain and nurture us*
*Take now this offering that you might be nourished in return."*

A piece of bannock is broken off and participants are to turn around, throw the piece over the shoulder, towards the fire or onto the land, wherever it falls. .

The head of the rite returns, then says:

*"I call to Manannan mac Lir to act as messenger for this rite. I call to the god who finds footing as easily upon the sea as upon land. I give to this liminal being an offering so that he may aid us in relaying our messages to the other Kindred. "*

An apple is then offered to Manannan.

*"Manannan mac Lir, relay our prayers to the other Kindred!"*

**7. Inviting the Kindred** –

*"Gods and goddess, exalted beings of realms outside our own, you who are not bound by our realm's natural laws, you who are over all things, please be with us now so that we may honor you. Gods and Goddesses, we welcome you. Accept our offering."*

An offering of butter is made to the ritual fire.

*"Oh ancestors, we seek to honor you this day. The ground on which we stand, the starter block of the human race, the slate on which we write, the pattern behind our lives. You who lived in the times before us, who laid down the way on which we travel, who established traditions that guide humanity, whose blood flows red within us, whose genes have engendered us: a gift for you, a small one in return for the great ones you have given us. Even the greatest, life itself, is your gift to us. A gift, then, from the living to the dead. Ancestors, we welcome you. Accept our offering."*

An offering of food is made to the ritual fire.

*"Oh spirits of nature, we seek to honor you this day. Roam about our land at will, spirits, keeping it holy by your presence. Guardians of rocks and trees, of grass and garden, of wild places and tame, of outbuildings and outside, be benevolent to us, to those who tend your realm, and we will be benevolent to you. Nature spirits, we welcome you. Accept our offering."*

An offering of herbs is scattered towards the ritual fire, but allowed to scatter around the pit.

**8. Key Offerings** –

The head of the rite then says:

*"This is the festival of Beltane, the liminal time at the end point of spring and the eve of the summer. Let this be a time of grand renewal, of new life and abundant crops. We ask the kindred gathered here to bless us in this season of fertility and sensuality. May the summer bring warmth to our lives."*

An offering of butter is made to the ritual fire. The other participants echo:

*"Accept our offering."*

The head of the rite then says:

*"I now invite the participants gathered here to make any additional praise offerings to the gods or spirits of their choosing."*

Participants are now to approach the ritual fire, state what the offering is for, and end with *"Accept my offering"* when their offering is made. All other participants echo *"Accept their offering."*

**9. Prayer of Sacrifice** –

Once all of the participants have had the chance to make an offering, the head of the rite then says:

*"Blessed Kindred who have gathered here today, please let our praise reach your ears. Hear us, oh Kindred, and accept the offerings we've made. Accept this final offering we make now."*

A final, large libation of butter is poured into the ritual fire. The other participants echo:

*"Accept our offering."*

**10. Omen** –

An omen by ogham is taken for the rite and for any who request it.

**11. Calling for the Blessings/Sacred Drink** –

The head of the rite fills a cup with mead (or other ritual beverage). They hold the filled vessel up to the sky and say:

*"Kindred, we have come before you to honor and praise you. In return, let your blessings fill this cup so that we might receive them. Gods and Goddesses, Nature Spirits, Ancestors! Pour forth your blessings! Let this cup be filled with your enlightenment. Pour forth your blessings! Let your wisdom and your will manifest in this cup. Pour forth your blessings!"*

**12. Hallowing the Blessing** –

The head of the rite then says:

*"In the name of the Three Kindreds, we will now partake of the blessings of the sacred drink."*

The vessel is passed around, and each participant takes a sip.

**13. Affirming the Blessing** –

Once everyone has partaken of the sacred drink, the head of the rite says:

*"Let the inspirations of the Kindreds fill us and permeate every aspect of our lives."*

**14. Workings** –

This is the portion of the ritual in which that which remains in the vessel can be poured out into a bowl and used to anoint spiritual tools.The main Beltane celebration and revelry begins here.

**15. Piacular Sacrifice -**

*"Gods and Goddesses*
*Holy Ancestors*
*Spirits of this Place:*
*If anything we have done here has offended you*
*If anything we done here has been incomplete*
*Please accept this offering as a recompense."*

An offering is made to the fire once more.

**16. Thanking the Beings** –

Once everyone has anointed their tools, the head of the rite then says:

*"Thank you, Goddess Brighid, for your guidance and grace, and the hope you bring me."*

*"Thank you, Gods and Goddesses, for your blessings and the wisdom which you have imparted to us."*

*"Nature Spirits, I am most grateful for your intercedence and maintenance of the natural realm."*

*"Thank you, Ancestors, for the knowledge you have given us."*

*"Thank you, mothers of all, for the sustenance you provide."*

**17. Extinguishing the Flame –**

*"Fire of sacrifice, we give you our thanks"*

The bonfire is allowed to burn itself out.

*Lady of Fire, Queen of the hearth,*
*who by rights receives the last,*
*bless and guard all those who worship you*
*whether in their home or without*
*whether alone or with others*
*whether thinking of you or engaged in business.*
*Pure One, receive this offering.*

Milk is offering to Brighid, then the hearth fire is extinguished.

**18. Closing the Rite –**

The head of the rite then says:

*"As those before us have done, we have honored the three kindreds. As we close this rite, we ask that they guide us and impart to us their blessings as we embark upon the roads we are destined to walk. This rite is concluded."*

Note that this entire process can be modified to suit the festival being celebrated, just ensure that the modifications are symbolic in nature. The concept of walking *deiseal,* or sunwise, comes from Gaelic folklore, in which imitating the movement of the sun across the sky wards off evil. (26) It is a common practice in other esoteric traditions to this day, such as freemasonry. When performing a ritual, the ritual flame should always be to one's right when moving about the ritual space.

Many traditions feature specific practices relating to folklore and customs of the region. Incorporate as much as possible into your rituals, reader, and you may come to discover the true altered state that comes with ritual magic.

For a more detailed rite, I suggest the Ár nDraíocht Féin's Core Order of Ritual (27), which is a reconstructed Indo-European ritual format that I have found quite successful, if a tad difficult for beginners. It is best to find the ritual format that works best for you!

**What about the "The Wheel of the Year"**

I want to state here that I myself do not really follow the full Wheel of the Year, as it has little application to the Celtic deities I tend to work with. The Celtic cross-quarter holidays are Samhainn, Imbolc, Beltainne, and Lughnasadh. The other four are simply the astronomical solstices and equinoxes. I have ancestors from cultures that venerated both sets of holidays, and the Neolithic ancestors even built megalithic structures to celebrate the astronomical days. I used to celebrate all 8, but now I celebrate the holidays most closely associated with the culture of my tutelary.

The Eightfold Wheel of the Year, as it is called by the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD) (28) has its origins in the early 20th century attempts at reconstructing the old European religions. Margaret Murray describes festivals during which witches gathered as Sabbaths in her book *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*:

*It appears from the evidence that certain changes took place in course of time in the religion; and, as might be expected, this is shown very markedly in the festivals. The ancient festivals remained all through, and to them were added the festivals of the succeeding religions. The original celebrations belonged to the May–November year, a division of time which follows neither the solstices nor the agricultural seasons; I have shown below that there is reason to believe these festivals were connected with the breeding seasons of the flocks and herds.. The chief festivals were: in the spring, May Eve (April 30), called Roodmas or Rood Day in Britain and Walpurgis–Nacht in Germany; in the autumn, November Eve (October 31), called in Britain All Hallow Eve. Between these two came: in the winter, Candlemas (February 2); and in the summer, the Gule of August (August 1), called Lammas in Britain. To these were added the festivals of the solstitial invaders, Beltane at midsummer and Yule at midwinter; the movable festival of Easter was also added, but the equinoxes were never observed in Britain. On the advent of Christianity the names of the festivals were changed, and the date of one Roodmas was slightly altered so as to fall on May 3; otherwise the dates were observed as before, but with ceremonies of the new religion. Therefore Boguet is justified in saying that the witches kept all the Christian festivals. But the Great Assemblies were always held on the four original days, and it is this fact which makes it possible to distinguish with certainty between the Sabbath and the Esbat whenever dates are mentioned.* (29, Murray)

At some point later in the 1950s, Gerald Gardner and OBOD both adopted the Wheel of the Year in variations of its present format:

Samhain (31 October-1st November)

Yule (20-25 December)

Imbolc (1-2 February)

Ostara (20-23 March)

Beltane (30 April-1 May)

Litha (20-22 June)

Lughnasadh (1 August)

Mabon (20-23 September).

Note that these dates are given for the Northern Hemisphere, but they have entirely different dates to match the corresponding seasons, solstices and equinoxes in the Southern Hemisphere. Generally, I utilize the same practices as detailed in the Ritual Magic section with offerings, adjustments and additions tailored to the holiday in question. With this preface, I will henceforth describe the full Wheel of the Year:

**Samhain**

The Gaelic festival of the dead, Samhain (pronounced Sow-win), is often considered and believed to be the Celtic New Year. Because the Celts considered the day to start in the evening (much like we consider a new day to begin at midnight) the celebration of Samhain occurred on October 31st even though the actual date of the four fire festivals was on the first of the month; in this case, November 1st. From Ceasar's commentary:

*"All the Gauls assert that they are descended from the god Dis, and say that this tradition has been handed down by the Druids. For that reason they compute the divisions of every season, not by the number of days, but of nights; they keep birthdays and the beginnings of months and years in such an order that the day follows the night."* (30)

The offset between the Gregorian and Julian calendars amounts to roughly 12 days; some people celebrate these holidays on the 13th day to match the ancients..

Samhain and Beltane are when the border between our realm and the otherworld is at its thinnest. It is believed that this is one of the times when humans are at risk of being abducted or killed by denizens of the otherworld, and in order to hide one's fragile humanity, the Scottish youth and those venturing outside their homes would travel in monstrous disguise. This practice was referred to as "guising" and can be seen as the origin of Trick-or-Treating and the American Halloween traditions.

Another very common practice was divination by the use of hazelnuts heated over a fire to determine the compatibility with a lover or the presence of spirits, from which the holiday has the moniker "Nut-Crack Night". Fire itself is an important part of this festival, as the excess brush and waste products from the harvest were burned in large bonfires to help keep the evil spirits at bay and give light to travelers in the night.

This is also the night of the Dumb Supper, which is a silent feast held in honor of ancestors and more recently deceased family members. Usually during this Medieval ritual, a meal is prepared for the dead

and a chair prepared for them at the head of the table, and as one proceeds to sit at their own chair for a meal, they say a silent prayer to the dead at the spirits' chair.

The purpose of Samhain is best summarized as the veneration of the dead and the commemoration of the beginning of the darker and colder time of the year. As this celebration begins at the final harvest, when the leaves are being shed, corn stalks begin to fall and decay, and infant mortality is highest, the festival is very highly steeped in a recognition of the inevitability of death.

**Yule**

Yule is the Germanic celebration of the Longest Night, the Winter Solstice. This is the festival commemorating the time when the sun is furthest from the earth. It is often conflated with *Mōdraniht* or Mother's Night, an Anglo-Saxon holiday described by Bede in *The Reckoning of Time*, in which a sacrifice is made in honor of the female ancestors in one's family lineage. (31) Because it is the longest night, it is actually not a festival of the dead but instead the return of the sun. The daylight only increases from Yule onward, and therefore the sun is "returning". This holiday may also be the origin of the American Mother's Day.

The most essential celebration of this holiday is the blot, or a ritual offering made to the gods, held on the exact night of the solstice. Historically, the family sacrifices a pig during this time in a rite known as heitstrenging, where vows and oaths are sworn on the bristles of the fur and its bones and fat are given to the fire. It is from this form of sacrifice that blot is derived, meaning "blood". Most modern pagans do not sacrifice live animals during this time, but instead have ritual feasts and make libations or give food offerings to the ritual fire (although many families still eat their holiday ham at Christmas). Like Samhain, this is a time of increased supernatural activity. Odin/Wotan leads the Wild Hunt across the skies and the spirits of the dead walk the earth. The festival was traditionally celebrated over 12 days and gifts were given each day, which is the source of "The Twelve Days of Christmas".

Another tradition is the burning of the Yule Log, in which an entire tree is brought into the home and decorated or displayed until evening (which is the origin of the Christmas tree). At night, one end of the log is placed in the hearth and the rest of the tree remains outside of it. The flame was often lit with the remains of the previous year's Yule Log. This is symbolic of the liminality of the Longest Night and the border between worlds and seasons.

**Imbolc**

The most important holiday for those who work primarily with Brighid is Imbolc, as it is the celebration of Spring's return and is highly associated with this Gaelic (and likely pan-Celtic) goddess. Imbolc marks the optimal time for the agrarian ancients to bring cattle to calf in order to maximize the

survivability of the young and when the majority of wild plant life begins to peek through the melting snow.

On the eve of this holiday, January 31st, the three- or four-armed *cros bhrides*, or Brighid's crosses, are crafted and a doll known as a *Brideog* is crafted. Strips of cloth called clooties are tied to trees or bushes so that they may become *brat bhrides*, or Brighid's mantles. Spring cleaning often takes place and the hearth is swept clean. In front of the hearth, ashes are lightly spread. In the evening, bannock is often cooked and eaten with a few pieces thrown over the shoulder for the benefit of the earth. The youngest daughter of the household (or me, since I live alone) carries the Brigeog outside of the home. Then the members of the household yell "Welcome Brighid! Brighid, come in! Your bed is ready!" The Brigeog is brought in and tucked into a small bed or resting place prepared for it and the family goes to bed. In the morning, the ashes in front of the mantle are checked for footprints showing that Brighid had visited. The brat bhride, likely soaked with morning dew, is brought in and saved as a talisman for protection and healing.

Imbolc is a celebration of the receding of the winter and of rebirth, as evidenced in Scottish folktales of the return of Bride from the Cailleach's winter prison. While Yule celebrates the increasing sunlight, Imbolc celebrates the increasing abundance of life once again.

**Spring Equinox**

Just as Imbolc is the Celtic celebration of Spring and the rebirth it brings, Ostara is the Germanic celebration of the vernal equinox. Named after the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre (the namesake of Easter) attested to by Bede (31), it is similarly a celebration of the fertility and renewal of nature. From an agricultural standpoint, this was also the time in which the sowing of seeds and planting in the newly-fertile soil began.

Although there exists very few references to the goddess Eostre outside of Bede's writings, I have personally met Germanic Heathens who conflate Eostre with Idunn due to their shared symbolism in youth and renewal, although unlike Idunn's apples, Ostara is most commonly symbolized by the March Hare and the egg.

There aren't many ancient records detailing traditions of Ostara. Even Bede only lightly brushes over Eostre's existence and much of the data on her veneration seems primarily recent. Even so, there is much evidence of the celebration of solstices and equinoxes in Germanic tradition and we can look to the Easter traditions of baskets of candy and the painting of eggs as having their roots in Ostara. Any extension of these practices by a modern neopagan in relation to fertility and new life would be fitting for this season.

**Beltane**

Beltane, also known as May Day, is one of the two most important festivals in Gaelic traditions, as it symbolizes the height of the season of fertility and the beginning of summer. While cattle would be brought to calf during Imbolc, they'd be put to greener pastures for grazing around the time of Beltane. Like Samhain, this is also a season of threat from the Otherworld, although this seems to be when the threat comes from the nature spirits and Fair Folk at the height of their revelry and mischief. And just like Samhain, great bonfires would be traditionally lit to keep these forces at bay. This is also the Gaelic festival of the maypole, in which dancers wind ribbons around a pole in symbolism of weaving the increasingly longer daytime around an upright phallic symbol.

Beltane differs from Samhain in both the manner in which it is celebrated and the manner in which those who celebrate it protect themselves from the Otherworld. A common safeguard is the charm of rowan and red thread, worn to protect travelers as they made their journeys. In both Ireland and Scotland, butter was safeguarded and often made in abundance at this time, for it was said that theft of one's butter meant the theft of the household's prosperity. Unlike Ostara, hares at this time are viewed as an ill-omen. Like Imbolc, morning dew is collected during this festival and healing wells are visited for the purpose of imbuing oneself with health and vigor for the remaining seasons.

The festival of Beltane therefore symbolizes the abundance of nature, and the natural world at its height, when all is in full bloom. It is a festival filled with sensuality, allure, and recognition of the draws and dangers of beauty.

**Summer Solstice**

The Summer Solstice, also known as Litha or Midsummer in many neopagan traditions, is the Longest Day, the point where the pole of the hemisphere in which it is celebrated is most directly pointed at the sun. From a symbolic standpoint, it can be seen that this is the peak time of physical vigor, and likewise the beginning of life's decline and the trend towards darkness. This symbolism can be found in the tale of the death of Odin's son, Baldr, who represented the pinnacle of the Aesir's youth and vigor. Baldr was slain accidentally by his blind brother Hodr when Loki poisoned the arrows Hodr was playfully shooting at the immortal Baldr with mistletoe. Baldr was then burned upon a pyre on Midsummer, which is symbolic of blind Winter's slaying of the vigorous Summer.

This festival is therefore the time in which Germanic peoples collected mistletoe, which may have a link to the similar ritual of Oak and Mistletoe attested to by Pliny the Elder in his Natural History. Bonfires were made to keep vigil over the dying of the summer, a ritual which can be found in Germanic and Celtic cultures, although in the case of the latter it may have been brought to those lands via Viking invasion and Germanic settlement. The coals were preserved for the use of healing and protection of the harvest, and preparation for the upcoming harvest was discussed at this time. A modern neopagan can celebrate this festival in a likewise manner, and make their preparations for future projects through the winter at this time.

**Lughnasadh**

Lughnasadh, Lammas, or Lunastal is often referred to as the festival of the Gaelic god Lugh, although the story is a good deal more complex than that. It commemorates the death of Lugh's mortal foster-mother Tailtiu, who worked tirelessly to clear the fields for the first harvest and died in her effort to do so. In respect and admiration of the harvest god and his foster-mother, and in commencement of the first harvest, a great feast was held in the time of optimal agricultural abundance.

This festival is the original of the "Highland Games" tradition, as communities would gather together in their own revelry and engage in feats of strength. In recognition of this being the season of man's highest hopes, celebrants would climb up to the highest peaks in their immediate vicinity. Local markets would often begin selling produce and animals would be slaughtered for consumption and sacrifice. Culturally, this was also the festival in which marriages were held and laws established or enacted. For the modern neopagan, this is a great time to recognize the abundance in one's own life and an excellent time to have a feast in honor of Tailtiu's sacrifice.

**Fall Equinox**

Mabon, or the Autumnal Equinox, is the midway point between the transition from light to darkness. It is the time of the second harvest out of the three that would culminate in the final harvest of Samhain. The name Mabon comes from the Welsh Arthurian hero Mabon ap Modron, who is likely based on the prominent Mabinogian hero Pryderi fab Pwyll. Mabon was the son of Modron, who in turn is believed to be based on the Gaulish Earth goddess Dea Matrona. In turn, it is believed Mabon is related to the Gaulish and Britonic deity Maponos. Due to this long list of associations, the prominent Wiccan Aidan Kelly associated this festival with Mabon in the 1970s, and many neopagans still make this association. However, there doesn't seem to be very much evidence that the Fall Equinox was associated with Celtic deities at all.

What this festival actually seems to commemorate is the harvest of thankfulness, in which the abundance of the first harvest converges with the abundance of the second, and with yet another harvest in the making. It was a common practice in agrarian societies to show appreciation to the gods and laborers who made the harvest successful. A large feast was often held to enjoy the fruits of the new harvest and simultaneously use up the fruits of the previous harvest to prevent spoilage. The Fall Equinox can therefore be viewed as a "neopagan Thanksgiving" and incorporated into traditions already existing for American households at this time.

## Cleansing by Saining

Saining is the practice of cleansing an area, and arises from Scottish folk practices dating to very ancient times. It is similar to smudging, but it would be perhaps equally comparable to anointing a space with oil. (32) Although saining utilized such elements as fire and water, it was also commonly performed by means of burning juniper or as a combination of flame, water, and juniper smoke.

The manner with which I commonly sain my living space or operational lodging is by the juniper and water rite.

## **Juniper and Water Rite (Long Version)** (33)

### **Collecting the juniper**

Traditionally the juniper should be collected at night-time, with the plant pulled by hand (no iron). Based on the original prayer (above) and others like it (e.g. in the *Carmina Gadelica*) for collecting herbs or plants, along with the context of the saining itself, I've adapted it like so:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Buainidh mis an iubhar àigh*<br>*Mar bhuain Brighde le leth làimh*<br>*Buainidh mis an iubhar àigh*<br>*Air anrach, air anrath 's air gìomh.* | I will pull the bounteous yew<br>As Brigit pulled it with her one hand<br>I will pull the bounteous yew<br>Against distress, against misfortune, and fear [fault]. |

Leave an offering of thanks to the spirits of the plant before leaving.

### **Collecting the water**

The water of the "dead and living stream" is supposed to be collected in a "clay crock," and "you must not open your mouth to person nor to animal nor to any created thing from the time you go away till the time you return home. On the lower side of the bridge on which the living and dead go across, you shall go on your right knee, and you shall lift a palmful of water in the hollows of your hands into the crock…" So the whole process should be done in complete silence.

Whether you choose to use water collected in the traditional way from an actual stream (though it *must* be suitable for drinking), or spring water from a bottle that you know is safe to use, as you collect (or pour out) the water into a suitable container, say:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Tha mi togail boinnein burn*<br>*An ainm Brighde bean mhìn.* | I am lifting a little drop of water<br>In the name of Brigid gentle-woman. |

Leave an offering of thanks to the spirits of the burn before leaving (if applicable).

**The Saining**

When you are ready, light a candle or fire and say:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Fàilte ort féin, a Bhrighde!*<br>*Glòir dhuit fhéin gu bràth.* | I welcome you, o Brigit,<br>Glory to you, forever. |
| *Togaidh mi mo theine an diugh,*<br>*Mar a thogadh Brìghde féin.*<br>*Caim Bhrìde na brìg*<br>*Air an tula 's air an lar,*<br>*'S air an fhàrdaich uile.* | I will kindle my fire today,<br>As Brigit would raise hers.<br>The encirclement of Brigit of the peat-heaps<br>On the hearth, and on the floor,<br>And on the household all. |

Take a moment to gather your thoughts and prepare yourself. When you are ready, make an offering:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Seo dhut fhéin, a Bhrighde mhìn-gheal,*<br>*Taing dhut daonnan, agus cliù dhut féin gu brath.* | This is for you, o Brigit, gentle-fair,<br>Thanks to you, always, and praise to you forever. |

Then take a sip of the water and pass it around (moving *deiseal,* or sunwise), each person saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Gun dìonadh Bride mi,*<br>*Gun lìonadh Bride mi,*<br>*Gun gleidheadh Bride mi,*<br>*Gum faicheadh Bride mi.* | May Brigit shield me,<br>May Brigit fill me,<br>May Brigit keep me,<br>May Brigit watch me. |

Then sprinkle the rest of the water around the space/house (moving *deiseal,* or sunwise), saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| *A Bhrighde bhìth nam brot,*<br>*Beannaich an taigh agus a luchd.*<br>*Dha nar teasraig, Dha nar dìon,*<br>*Dh'ar còmhnadh, dh'ar cuanadh*. | O Brigit calm of the mantles,<br>Bless ye the house and all therein.<br>Protect us, shield us,<br>Aid us, strengthen us. |

Now start burning the juniper and let the smoke waft around the place (moving *deiseal,* or sunwise until you return back to your starting point), concentrating on thresholds, windows and beds especially, saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| *A Bhrighde, teasraig an taigh 's an fhàrdach,*<br>*Gach aon ta gabhail tamh an seo an nochd.*<br>*Seun sinn fo do bhrot riomach reidh;* | O Brigit shield the house, the household.<br>Every one who dwells herein tonight<br>Sain us beneath your own glorious mantle; |

| | |
|---|---|
| *O ghoimh, o ghiamh, o ghnìomh, o lochd.* | From hate, from harm, from act, from ill. |
| *Comraig Bhride mhìn dhuinn,* | The keeping of gentle Brigit on us, |
| *A sgéith dhidinn, dìon ri 'r mairionn.* | O shield of protection, guard us forever. |
| *Air an oidhche nochd 's gach aon oidhche.* | On this night and every night, |
| *An oidhche nochd 's gach aon oidhche.* | This night and every night. |

Keep repeating until the space has been thoroughly covered.

## Personal Experiences

### Brighid

#### Meeting Brighid

I was raised as a traveler, and I have always felt a sense of imprisonment when stationary. Since age 5, I have frequently traveled across the United States and even spent an amount of time in England. I have had 21 different addresses in 7 different states since then. By the time I've absorbed the culture of one place, I'd have to learn the culture of another.

My upbringing was purely Protestant Christian; somewhere between Baptist and Lutheran. I never enjoyed church gatherings or school functions due to a general lack of social skills from a life of traveling and a general lack of belief in the worldview and concept of deity in Christianity.

I spent ages 8 to 11 in Juneau, Alaska, and I learned much of the culture of Native Alaskans, including their beliefs. Tlingit stories urging respect and kindness towards other lifeforms, even the lowest, were taught in schools. I was taught that everything had a soul, and that all things should be respected in the same manner that I respect other people.  Around this same time, I read the entire story of Beowulf along with other Germanic tales and found similarities with the animist beliefs of the Tlingit people, but never understood it while living there. Still, ancient stories continued to fascinate me, as these symbols and stories came up many times in many forms and media during my maturity..

In my mid teens, I saw a necklace worn by an older woman at a department store and I instantly recognized it as something familiar. I asked her about it, and she informed me that it was a "Brigid cross".

I immediately asked, "You mean the Irish god?" and she replied quite abruptly "No, she's an Irish saint!" I was a bit unsettled by this encounter because my mom asked, "How do you know that?" I had no clue. I didn't ever recall being told anything about Brighid.

By the year 2016, I had been a nihilistic atheist for nearly 5 years and an alcoholic for two years. I scoffed at religion the way I saw my professors, colleagues, and intellectual heroes behave. I was a big fan of Richard Dawkins and Carl Sagan.

I started to have dreams where Odin told me that my father was going to call me, and that I was to forgive him. Shortly after, my father apologized for his part in some issues our family was going through at the time. I thought back to some events that occurred in my life that were distinctly spiritual and began to become convinced of the existence of a spiritual realm, even if I couldn't bring myself to believe in divinity the way that I was raised to believe in it.

I began to ask for signs from all gods and spirits in existence. I just wanted proof for myself that there was more to living and that the divinity I saw in nature and geometry was legitimate. I did not believe strongly in spirits, and at that point I probably wouldn't have cared if something horrible happened.

I asked for three very specific signs and in exchange, I would devote my life to whichever deity answered. I figured these signs should be reasonable, not outlandish, but things that I hadn't experienced in the last six months. I asked for a leaf to fall on my head and become entangled in my hair. It was the end of fall, so most of the leaves had fallen already and I found this occurrence unlikely. I asked that the second sign follow soon after and feature a symbol of the god in order to know who was contacting me. Finally, I asked for a fox to walk in front of me and lead my path for a while, since I had never seen one in that area.

One day, after roughly two months of prayer, the signs came.

Shortly before work one day, I went to fill out a gym membership form. As I bent down to sign the paper in their office (I am pretty tall), a leaf fell out of my hair and into my hand. I noted this immediately and prepared myself for the next sign. As soon as I walked outside, a man walked by with the cross of Brighid on his shirt. The next night, upon finishing my shift and embarking on the long commute back home, I encountered a fox. It ran in front of my car, waited for me to slow down, and then walked in front of my car, along the road, for *two miles*.

I thought it was very strange that Brighid, of all gods, should reach out to me, especially since I was mostly devoted to alcohol and hedonism at the time. I was prepared to do what I promised, but I spoke to a number of people who almost universally said, "I still wouldn't trust that as more than coincidence, ask for another sign". It created instant doubt in my mind and revealed my fear of being hurt by religion again. I asked Brighid to show me the symbol again, but another sign never came. I didn't keep my word, either way, and figured Brighid gave up on me.

After some major life event changes and a few self-imposed illnesses, I moved to Texas to stay with family, eager to abandon my way of living at that time. Almost immediately upon arrival, my dreams became extremely vivid and intense. I had a dream of Brighid and the Morrigan, and Brighid said "I will send you one more sign. Then you must keep your word." I dreamed of a game store that sold jewelry, specifically a gold cord-wrapped crystal sphere. I dreamed I was to go to a Christian church and meet with the daughters of Phorcys, presided over by the Morrigan, and hear a prophecy. In the dream, they fought over a stone with a hole in it. The next morning, I learned that The Morrigan appeared before Cú Chulainn in the form of three hags on the day of his death (34).

I was brand new in town and didn't know any of the local businesses. I went to the nearest game store, not expecting the dream to come true because homemade jewelry of that nature is not a game-associated item. However, right on the front counter was a display case featuring handmade jewelry from local artists. The same pendant from my dream was within.

I asked my parents if there were any events going on at their church, and they told me their church had a prophecy night planned. I went into the church and waited in line for my turn. I was instructed to enter this tiny, box-like room. Three women were sitting in chairs with their backs turned to me. I walked in and sat down behind them. There was a woman younger than me, a middle-aged woman, and an elderly lady. They began to pray, and for whatever reason, their message was to pursue God in the path I was on.

Such dream journeys exactly match the legend of Catumandus. From *The Exalted Ones - Brigidine Goddesses of Gaul and Britain* by Gilbride:

*According to a legend recorded by Trogus Pompeius, a Celtic army led by a warrior named Catumandus was besieging the Greek colony of Massilia in 390 BC when he had a dream or vision of a wrathful goddess, ordering him to make peace with the Greeks immediately. He went into the city under a flag of truce and visited their temples, hoping to see the goddess from his dream. At the temple of Minerva (or as the Greeks would have named her, Athena) Catumandus announced that he had found his goddess, made the deity an offering of a golden torc, and made a peace treaty with Massilia.*

*Massilia is now the city of Marseilles in southern France, so there was a Greek city in Gaul itself for hundreds of years. This raises the distinct possibility that Athena/Minerva was actually worshiped by Gauls before the Roman conquest. Ancient people do not seem to have been at all shy about borrowing deities from each other. The legend is also reminiscent of Brighid's role in Irish myth, where she seems to be virtually the only deity who is not "madly fond of war" (as Strabo describes the Celts).*

I fully dedicated myself to Brighid, keeping my promise after all. It was shortly after this that I had also learned that I was not mostly German, as I thought my entire life. My father began a genealogical search to build both his and my mom's family tree, for we only knew hearsay on both family lines. What I had come to learn was that my dad's lineage was largely O'Sullivan and Daneau, along with Hagmann and

Scholl. My mom is an Aherne, but also a direct descendant of Fermanagh castle's final Irish ruler who traced his lineage to Conn of the Hundred Battles, making me (definitely not uniquely) a super-great nephew of St. Brigit herself, were legendary genealogies a reliable source. The mystery of "why an Irish deity" seemed addressed, though I am not given to ideas that race permits or denies one the right to worship a god. I believe everyone has the right to worship the old gods, but it is their choice to whom they respond and how.

Since my devotion, synchronicities follow me when my intentions are "endorsed" by Brighid. I desired to perform some volunteer work, and made a request for it at my altar, since I was having a hard time finding an opportunity that fit my schedule and didn't involve a church. No less than an hour afterwards, I was filling up my gas tank at a station and a homeless man approached me with an injured blackbird in a box, asking me if I could help it. I took it with me in my car to a wildlife rehab place, who in turn were in dire need of volunteers. I began my first volunteer role there.

When I needed to get out of Texas, I looked for jobs elsewhere. I put in 800 applications all across the country using various job sites. I expressed a desire to return to Pennsylvania, where my devotion to Brighid began. Immediately thereafter I received a job offer in Bath, Pennsylvania, with headquarters in Bath, England; the latter being significant to the solar hotspring goddess, Sulis, who shares a great deal of overlap with Brighid. Later on, I obtained a new job with headquarters in Waterford Ireland, where Ptolemy placed the Brigantes outside of England.

I believe these events are not confirmation bias, but rather synchronicity. Synchronicity was defined by Jung as an acausal connecting principle, whereby internal, psychological events are linked to external world events by meaningful coincidences rather than causal chains. In his own words:

*"We must remember that the rationalistic attitude of the West is not the only possible one and is not all-embracing, but is in many ways a prejudice and a bias that ought perhaps to be corrected."*
— C.G. Jung, Synchronicity

It is here that I believe we see the influence of deities in our lives; deeper coincidences than astrology and angel numbers, those examples I would certainly consider vague prediction or confirmation bias. The experiences I have had since beginning on this path have been consistent, regular, and reality-defining.

**Who is Brighid? - UPG and SPG**

The most difficult thing in regards to establishing any kind of Celtic religious tradition is that we have very few (if any) reliable sources detailing how the ancient Celts knew them. Every single record of the beliefs of Celtic pagans, be they Gaulish, Breton, or Gaelic, have been recorded by their enemies. What

we know of the religion of the continental Celts arises from archaeology and the writings of Romans who were trying to use the “barbaric” practices of the people they were subjugating as proof of their right to rule (as in the case of Pliny the Elder in his Historia Naturalis). The same thing can be seen in Ireland and Scotland, where Christian monks recorded the beliefs of the people before them, although they’d often censor the true nature of the gods and instead refer to them as kings and queens, with their ultimate goal to show the “superiority” of Christianity (as is the case in the Book of Leinster). Knowing that, the entirety of modern Gaelic polytheism is based on informed assumption and, more often, verified and unverified gnosis.

Verified Gnosis, it is important to distinguish, arises from personal experience that is confirmed in some way from ancient writings about that deity. Unverified Personal Gnosis, often abbreviated UPG in pagan circles, arises from personal experience of that deity without any historical records to back up that belief or experience. Likewise, Shared Gnosis is UPG that many people who work with that deity have experienced in relation to that entity. I believe all three approaches are equally valid. I would not expect that the ancients knew everything about the gods, and I do not believe that mythology contains literal stories about them. It’s a great guidestone to know the nature of what or who one is working with, but modern experience is equally valid.

The first thing I should touch on in this section is the fact that Celtic cultures have various versions of Brighid, which translates to “exalted one” or “high one” (35), and I believe they all describe the same being due to their shared associations. The Irish have Bríd, the Scottish called her Bride; both are pronounced “Breed”. She is, I believe, Brigantia in England and Brigindo in Gaul.

The primary associations with the Goddess Brighid are healing and healing wells (36), smithcraft, fire, fertility, livestock and milk production, beer brewing, and poetry (37). Almost all of these traits can be seen with goddesses bearing the title “High One” in Celtic cultures, but the further east a scholar investigates, the more associations with battle are seen with Brighid-like beings. This seems to evidence the context of her battle association as protection from foreign invasion as opposed to simple war for its own sake.

As I mentioned in the story before, there is also a Chistian saint named Brigid (and the equivalent Welsh saint Ffraid). According to Irish Catholic tradition, she was either the daughter of a pagan king or a human druidess who had converted from paganism to Christianity, and I believe this to be literally true. However, many associations with the goddess were also thereafter associated with the saint as part of the Christianization, and this was seen with similar figures in Scotland and Wales. Yet stories about the associations and nature of the saint seem to line up with those of the goddess, and for that purpose I feel St. Brigid worthy of mention.

What lore we have that directly relates to the Goddess is almost entirely Gaelic, with the exception of records of the Romans, who equated and euhemerized Brigantia with their god Minerva. Statues and images discovered of Brigatnia are often seen holding a spear and a globe, although it is important to note that these were most likely not Briton-made images of the goddess. The Gaelic stories of Brighid tell

of how she is the daughter of The Dagda, and was married to the Fomorian king Bres in an attempt to unify their peoples. However, Bres sided with his own people instead of the Tuatha de Danann (as the Irish gods are called). They had a son together named Ruadan who favored the Fomorians over the Tuatha de. He attempted, by act of rebellion, to weaken the Tuatha influence in Ireland by assassinating their smith, Goibniu. Goibniu countered this attack and slew Ruadan. When Brighid found her son slain, it is said that she invented keening, an elaborate form of mourning, to cope with her grief. (38)

The Lebor Gabala Erenn also describes Brighid's status as daughter of The Dagda and describes her as a poet. (39) It is said that she has with her the two kings of the Oxen, the king of the Rams, and the king of the Boar.

Another association with Brighid is that of the hearth and the fire. On her festival of Imbolc or Là Fhèill Brìghde (the eve of February 1st), a Brideog, or effigy of Brighid, is made and given a place of honor in the home. (40) The hearth is to be swept and the ashes laid before the mantle. At night, the youngest woman of the household was expected to leave with the Brideog. The family members within the home would invite Brighid into their home, and the young woman would place the Brideog in a makeshift bed for the evening. The night before, bannock (a kind of bread) would be made and eaten out in the fields. During the consumption of this snack, a portion would be thrown over the shoulder to nourish the land. In Scotland, a *brat Bride*, or Brighid's mantle, would be left on a tree or shrub so that Brighid could anoint it as she moved through the realm, bringing with her the spring. In the morning, the ashes on the hearth would be checked for signs of Brighid's presence there overnight. The mantle would be collected from the shrub and used as a protective amulet, especially for mothers in childbirth. The Brideog would often be saved for many subsequent years of this celebration.

In this holiday, we can see her associations with fire, the home, the sun/spring, and new birth/motherhood as winter ended. The same association is captured by the story of how the Hag of Winter, the Cailleach, would lock Bride away until the coming of the Spring, when he brother Aengus would free her from her imprisonment. (41) Imbolc is also the origin of Groundhog Day in the United States (February 2nd), as there is a chant associated with the holiday that goes:

*"Early on Bride's morn,*
*the serpent shall crawl from the hole.*
*I shall not molest the serpent,*
*nor shall the serpent molest me."*

It was believed that if the serpent withdrew from the mound, the ground was already warm enough and winter was at its end. This chant is also why, by my personal choice, I refuse to kill snakes even if they're on my property.

An ancient practice relating to St. Brigid (and likely the goddess before her) is that of flametending. Per Morgan Daimler:

*“The perpetual flame at Brigid’s church in Kildare was thought to have burned until the 16th century. In 1993, the flame was relit by the Catholic Brigidine sisters and has been tended at Kildare since then. Another modern pagan practice for Brigid also involves flame tending….Modern flametending generally follows the same approach that ancient flametending was believed to have used, with 19 women - or men in those groups that allow mixed gender flametending - taking a day each tending her fire, usually represented in this case by a candle flame. On the 20th day Brigid is said to tend her own fire.”* (42)

I’m not a part of any flametending circles personally, but I do hold night-long flame vigils on holy days; or during times of danger, such as at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These are all those sources of Verified Gnosis I can think of at this time, although it may be expanded upon in subsequent versions of this document. The only Shared Gnosis that I have experienced thus far is that of Brighid’s associations with foxes. Whenever a particularly Brighid-related revelation is about to be issued to me, I begin to see wild foxes in places where I had never seen them before. Apart from my own introduction of Brighid with a fox, I have talked to others who have had a similar heralding by foxes of Brighid. The only lore of Brighid and foxes comes from a story about the St. Brigid, which goes:

*“The worst had happened. A man, working in the woods, saw a fox and killed it. Big error. It was the King of Leinster's pet fox not a wild one. The man was captured by the King's guard and imprisoned. His distraught wife begged for clemency and forgiveness for her husband as it was a genuine mistake. Unfortunately the King was too distressed at losing his fox and not disposed to release the man. In fact, as there had been one death it should be avenged by the death of the prisoner.*

*Friends of the family asked Brigid to intervene. Now Brigid, however much she valued the lives of animals, thought that the King's intentions were unjust and she set out for the Court to plead the case.*

*As she journeyed she took a path through a woodland. It was narrow and she walked along carefully, trying to compose her speech to the King. She prayed for the right words and guidance. As if in answer to her prayers, low and behold, she noticed, looking at her from behind a tree trunk, a young fox. She called to it and the cub happily trotted over to her. An idea came to her mind and she took up the fox, and it joined in the journey to the castle.*

*On arrival the King was not willing to pay heed to her protests and requests for the release of the killer. His pain at the loss of his fox was great and he wanted the death penalty. Brigid played her last card, the fox. She brought it out and started asking it to do tricks for the King and courtiers. It loved to do this for her and soon the coldest hearts were melted by its antics. Amazingly this new fox could do all the tricks that the King had taught his own pet. Slowly the bereaved man's displeasure eased and he finally relented and granted the prisoner a pardon. His joy with the new pet was great as he filled his days in pleasure at its games.*

*However, the day came when the King had to leave on business. The fox took no time in escaping back to the wood. The King's men sent out search parties for the animal but it was never seen again.”* (43)

The association with Saint Brigid as protector of those who are generally not aligned with society but live alongside humans are seen in the Saint's' associations with snakes and foxes instead of the goddess Brighid's oxen, boar, and ram. This move from Brighid the goddess as queen of domestic leaders and Brigid the Saint becoming queen of the untame leaders is further explained by Wikipedia's article on *fylgja*:

"*Other ideas of fylgjur are that the animals reflect the character of the person they represent, akin to a totem animal. Men who were viewed as a leader would often have fylgja to show their true character. This means that if they had a "tame nature", their fylgja would typically be an ox, goat, or boar. If they had an "untame nature" they would have fylgjur such as a fox, wolf, deer, bear, eagle, falcon, leopard, lion, or a serpent.*" (44)

It is my belief that the "king animals" of Brighid are reflected in the trifunctional hypothesis of IE culture, with the priest as ram, warrior as boar, and commoner as oxen. The move instead to Saint Brigid's association with snakes and foxes may reflect the older pagan society being forced out by the arrival of Christianity and its standards, and therefore Saint Brigid is a liminal human figure between the pagan and Christian Ireland.

When I pray to Brigid, it is never to the Saint.

## The Great Refutation - 01/26/2026

…Or rather, how research can hone prior understandings.

First, the article that began this refutation of some of this document:

**Brigid - Debunking the Meta-Myth of an Irish Goddess by Simon Tuite of Monumental Ireland**

Although it is generally accepted that Imbolc was originally a pagan festival celebrating the beginning of Spring, there is absolutely no direct testimony as to its original customs or rituals. Most of the traditions we now associate with Imbolc are specifically associated with St Brigid of Kildare, who was the dominant female figure in the late medieval Irish church.

While the Christian Saint Brigid does share some of her attributes with a literary/mythological character also called Brigid: this overlap has led many modern writers and scholars to assume that a specific goddess named Brigid also enjoyed similar prominence in pre-Christian Ireland. . .

. . . And while many of those same writers and scholars are quick to point out the lack of historical evidence that the Christian St Brigid ever actually existed, they are equally as quick to apply her traditions to a goddess for which there is even less evidence for.

The idea that saint and goddess are the same entity can be traced back, not to antiquity, but to the Celtic revivalists of the Victorian age. In fact the first explicit identification of the pagan goddess with the saint of Kildare is made by continental Celticist, Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville in his 1884 work, 'Le cycle mythologique irlandais et la mythologie celtique', where he makes the now-familiar claim that…

"... Brigit, goddess of the pagan Irish, was supplanted in the Christian era by Saint Brigit, and the Irish of the Middle Ages transferred in some way to this national saint the cult that their pagan ancestors had addressed to the goddess Brigit".

This theory has been embraced wholeheartedly by Neo-pagans ever since, often citing dubious texts to back up their claim. While there is no doubt that the traditions associated with St Brigid can be traced back to pre-Christian beliefs, it is likely that many of the ritual sites and customs now associated with her were originally focused on various, local goddess figures, not a singular deity as is the general consensus today.

The earliest text that references both the saint and the goddess Brigid is the 10th-century text, 'Sanas Cormaic' (Cormac's Glossary), which refers to each of the Brigids as separate entities; with neither associated with Imbolc.

"Brigid, a poetess, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigid the female sage or woman of wisdom, Brigid the goddess whom poets adored, for great was her protecting care. It is, therefore, they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigid woman of healing and Brigid woman of smith-work; from whose names with all Irishmen a goddess was called Brigid."

Interestingly the passage indicates that 'Brigid' was a name by which all goddesses were known in Ireland. This ties in with the view of many etymologists that the word 'Brigid', which comes from the Proto-Celtic word 'Briganti' meaning 'exalted one', was used as a title and not a name per se.

Although we cannot prove her existence, it is possible that the abbey at Kildare was founded by a woman in the late 5th Century who was given the title 'Brigid' by the mainly pagan population that she administered to. Remember this was the late 5th early 6th Centuries: Christianity wasn't yet an organised religion in Ireland, it was just the latest hoodoo for the pagan masses.

However, within a hundred years or so of her supposed death on the 1st of Feb c.525, we start seeing hagiographies being written that contain many of the stories and customs we now associate with St Brigid. Over the centuries as these traditions have coalesced around her, the legendary St Brigid has become a Christianised composite of various pre-Christian female deities and myths.

It is this composite of Christian and pagan traditions that the singular Neo-Pagan goddess Brigid has been over-layed onto, creating a self-referential, meta-mythical narrative that has no real basis in the historical or literary sources.

**The Goddess Brigid Is Not Ancient**

My own research and discussions following this article let to me rebuttal:

Six years ago, there was a post, linked here, originally posted on Monumental Ireland explaining that the meta-myth of St. Brigid being a continuation of the goddess Brigit is essentially based on Victorian ideas, and that Imbolc likely had nothing to do with the Goddess. Admittedly, I am not at all in the crowd that believes St. Brigid wasn't an actual historical entity, not am I in the crowd that believes the Goddess and St. Brigid were one.

However, I have some evidence I'd like to lay out here pointing to the cross of St. Brigid having an earlier origin in Brigantia, and therefore likely associated with the goddess of the same name as well. I made my case for a migration of Brigantes from Val Camonica/Brixen all the way to Ireland here

Apart from the Camunian Rose appearing in the region of Brigantia, which has stark similarity to the Brigid Cross, there is also the sun wheel motif found on the enameled designs of the Battersea Shield. I believe both of these can be considered precursors to the modern Brigid Cross design, as can any sunwheel design.

Likewise, in the book of Invasions, the daughter of the Dagda is described thus:

**Brigit banfile ingen in Dagda is oce ro baí Fe ocus Mean, dá ríghdamraidi, diatá Femen. Is oce ro baí Triath rí a torcraide, diatá Treithirne. Is oce ro baí ro clossa trí gotha diabul íar n-imarbus in Erinn, .i. Fet ocus Go locus Eigem. Ocus os lei ro baí Cirb rí moltraigi, diatá Mag cirb. Is leo ro boí Cerman ocus Cermat ocus In Mac Oc. (Macalister, 1940)**

**Brigit the poetess, daughter of the Dagda, with her were Fe and Men, the two kings of oxen, from whom is Femen [called]. And with her was Triath, king of her boars, from whom is Treithirne [called]. And with her were heard, the three demonic sounds after transgressions in Ireland, whistling and weeping and lamentation. And also with her was Cirb king of the rams, from whom is Mag Cirb [called]. With them were Cerman and Cermat and the Mac Oc. (Translation Daimler, 2015)**

Consider the Oxen, Torc Triath, and Mag Cirb, when reading St. Broccan's Hymn from The Irish Liber Hymnorum:

**...**

**She was no plunderer (?) of a mountain-slope;**

**she worked in the midst of a plain,**

**a wonderful ladder for pagan-folk**

**to climb to the Kingdom of Mary's Son!**

**...**

**The first dairying on which she was sent**

**with first butter in a cart,**

**she took nought from the gift to her guests, nor did she lessen her following.**

**Her portion of bacon, after that,**

**one evening-the victory was high,-**

**not merely was the dog satisfied with it, the company was not grieved,**

**...**

**(Another) wonder was bacon that she blessed;**

**and God's power kept it safely;**

**(though) it was a full month with the dog, the dog did not injure it.**

**It was a miracle greater than others:**

**a morsel she requested of the (kitchen-)folk did not spoil the colour of her scapular (though) it was flung, boiling, into her bosom**

**The leper begged a boon of her;**

**it was a good boon that befel him: she blessed the choicest of the calves, and the choicest of the cows loved it.**

**He directed her chariot afterwards northward to Bri Cobthaig Coil,**

**the calf being with the leper in the car, and the cow (following) behind the calf.**

**The oxen, (when thieves) visited them,**

**would have been pleased that anyone should hear them: against them rose up the river,**

**at morn they returned home.**

**Her horse parted head from head-stall**

**when they ran down the slope; the yoke was not flung out of balance, God's Son directed the royal hand.**

**A wild boar frequented her herd,**

**to the north he hunted the wild pig; Brigid blessed him with her staff, and he took up his stay with her swine.**

**Mug-art, a fat pig for her was given**

**beyond Mag Fea; it was wonderful how wild dogs hunted it for her,**

**till it was (close to her) in Uachtar Gabra.**

**She gave the wild fox**

**on behalf of her peasant, the wretched; to a wood it escaped**

**though the hosts hunted it.**

**She was open in her proceedings,**

**she was One-Mother of the Great King's Son:**

**she blessed the fluttering bird**

**so that she played with it in her hand.**

**...**

I almost never see St. Broccan's hymn mentioned while discussing the links between the Goddess and Saint.

I've admitted that the commonality of "Brig-" prefixed words seems to be because it means "high", or "exalted", so could easily be applied to place names or people. Granted, that alone would not lead me to believe in a migration or a continuation of a goddess. However, it's much more than that, which is a point I made in that post.

I feel like this is not an oft talked about stance regarding the Irish goddess Brigid as being brought over by the Brigantes, but I feel there is a venerable wealth of evidence for such a migration having taken place, which I've detailed and link here, once more.

**The comment from Steve_Ad on Reddit:**

There's a few problems with your evidence.

First off, looking at your other post & what you claim here regarding the Brigantes connection. Modern DNA research has full & completely debunked the idea of any significant "Celtic" migration later than c500BC & that is the most recent possible date of several theories with some as far back as c1250BC. Simply put, we now know there is no direct link between the Brigantes of Cis-Alpine Gaul & the Brigantes in Ireland beyinf the name.

Ptolemy didn't leave his library & all his details come through 2nd or 3rd hand information, from traders & travellers. While we have no alternative to disprove any of the information he provides, we should not take it as absolute fact. If you're going to pay me for information on a land you know nothing about, I'm going to tell you a lot of stuff. We have no idea how much of what Ptolemy tells us was cross-referenced or fa t checked from multiple sources. We also don't know how much attention to detail these travellers & traders paid to factually true information, whether the names they provided were simply how they referred to groups or how the people of Ireland referred to themselves.

In short, the evidence of Brigantes in Ireland proves almost nothing. It leaves us with a lot of questions to ponders but little that we can say with any great authority.

Regarding the Camuian Rose, the Swastika Stone in York & Brigid's cross. I'm not seeing it! Even the article you provided barely mentions Brigid's cross & provides no commentary or reason to believe the symbols are related. The fact that the article also shows similar patterns in Aztec art calls into question how there can be any link beyond humans favour simple patterns.

Now, for the literary stuff, you quote the Book of Invasions. The precise passage you quote is from the Book of Fermoy version, c14th century (The Book of Fermoy is actually 15th century, but the Lebor Gabála fragment is dated earlier). This passage doesn't appear in the earlier versions. In fact, there is no reference to Brigid in the Book of Leinster, c12th century. You could argue that the associations given to Brigid in Fermoy & later versions belong to Flidais in Leinster:

**Flidais, of whom is the "Cattle of Flidais"; her four (daughters were Argoen and Be Chuille and Dinand and Be Theite.**

**The two royal oxen were Fea and Fernen, of whom are the Plain of Fea and the Plain of Femen. Those were two faithful oxen.**

**Torc Triath was king of the boars, from whom is Mag Treitherne.**

**Cirba was king of the wethers, from whom is Mag Cirba.**

Macalister, Vol 4, Section 314, pg 123

Even if we take the sentences as separate from the line about Flidais, the absence of any mention of Brigid is notable. Furthermore, if we look at the Dindsenchas for Mag Femen, Mag Fera & Mag Fea we also find no mention of Brigid (or Flidais), the only goddess mentioned in relation to the cattle was Dil, daughter of Lug.

This brings us the 9th century hymn recorded in the 11th century about a saint from the 5th century. We know that the hagiography & poetry relating to saints of the 8th & 9th centuries were a part of a massive propaganda war between the Christian centres of Armagh, Kildare & Iona. If, & it's a big "IF", the sentiment we see in Lebor Gabála & the Dindsenchas of associating a sacred figure with oxen, Torc Triath & Mag Femem/Fea existed prior to the hymn, then it makes sense that St Brigid would take on that association. However, given the association with the goddess Brigid doesn't occur until centuries later, we can not draw a straight line of influence between the hymn & the passage you quote from the Book of Invasions.

So, as always, the problem with the goddess Brigid is that we do not have any mentions of her before the 14th century. Her artificial insertion into the Book of Invasions only appears from the Book of Fermoy, absent from the earlier versions. Her appearance in Cormac's Glossary only survives from the Yellow Book of Lecan, 14th/15th century. Earlier fragments exist but do not contain references to either Brigid, there is a memtion in the Book of Leinster fragment that associates a 'Torc' with Etan, daughter of Dian Cécht sorry it's only in Irish, from line 23300. Brigid's appearance in The Second Battle of Mag Turied only survives from the 16th century. There is no evidence of an ancient goddess Brigid. There is only

evidence of a late medieval character named Brigid that seems to crop up in various parts of mythology & in most cases looks like late interpolations.

So what can we say from this evidence? We have an association between St Brigid & oxen, boar & Mag Fea that appears in the 11th century. At the same time, we see that same association with specifically named oxen & boar, either associated with Flidais, a known goddess of cattle & farming (see Tain Bó Flidais) ir existing independent of any goddess & a version of Cormac Glossary that associates Etan with boar. We then have later sources assign that associations with Dil, daughter of Lug & Brigid, daughter of Dagda. That's not to mention Be Chuille & Diannan, the two she farmers (on the same page of Book of Invasions linked above) & the role The Morrigan plays in several Remscéla herding cattle.

The evidence shows us a strong pattern of association between sacred female figures (both Christian & Pagan) with agriculture. That's not at all surprising given the role of many Irish goddesses & saints in sovereignty, fertility & prosperity. What the evidence also shows us is that there is a whole network of influences happening that means it's a stretch to draw a straight line between St Brigid in St Broccan's Hymn & the goddess Brigid in the Book of Invasions. We stand on less certain ground if we claim the pagan tradition exists before the earliest written example in St Broccan's Hymn, but given the widespread examples, I would be willing to concede that it is likely an more ancient tradition.

So, I'm not convinced. I still think there is no evidence to show that a pagan goddess Brigid influenced the stories of the saint & it is, at least, as likely that the saint influenced the stories of the goddess. It doesn't mean I'm right, but the evidence doesn't convince me

**To which i replied:**

And yet there is quite an association with R-U152 haplogroup and the Brigantes/La Tene Celts, and there is a known migration of this haplogroup from Northern Italy. This haplogroup is present in Ireland, along the Eastern coast, which would confirm Ptolemy's findings and also point to an extant population from Britain, meaning the Goddess Brigid was a later addition.

Cormac's glossary lists Brigid, circa 12th century CE in the book of Leinster:

**Brigit i.e. a poetess, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigit the female sage, or woman of wisdom, i.e. Brigit the goddess whom poets adored, because very great and very famous was her protecting care. It is therefore they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigit the female physician [woman of leechcraft,] Brigit the female smith [woman of smithwork] ; from whose names with all Irishmen a goddess was called Brigit.**

This is where I begin to feel like your argument starts to fall apart. She's even mentioned elsewhere in the book of Leinster, Incallam In Da Thurad, 12th century CE:

The three sons of Brigit the woman-poet, that is Brian and Iuchar and Úar, the sons of Bress son of Eladan and Brigit the woman-poet, daughter of the Great Dagda, king of Ireland (was) their mother. And

the name Ruad Rofessa (Red One of Great Knowledge), is given to him [the Dagda] here, or Cermait, and Díarmuit, and Áed (fire). Brigit, daughter of Ruad Rofessa, that is, a name of the Dagda. Ruad Rofessa the son of all arts, that is a son who has all art.

**To which Steve_Ad replied:**

That's from Whitley Stokes edition of Cormacs Glossay, yes? He doesn't mention the Book of Leinster, I linked the entirety of the Leinster fragment above. It is only a short part of the text (less than a page in the manuscript) & doesn't include that specific reference.

I was mistaken in claiming it was from the Yellow Book of Lecan though. Stokes uses an unusual identifier for the manuscript he is working from, Codex A Hodges and Smith Collection no. 224, which we now identify as An Leabhar Breac, so actually 15th century, not 14th as I said. You can see Stokes introduction here: https://archive.org/details/cu31924026508238/page/n8/mode/1up

For the Colloquy of two Sages, I also presume you're reading Stokes version. The passage you quote is a footnote by Stokes himself, not a part of the original text. As well as that, it is a composite of several different manuscripts, not only the Book of Leinster. Sorry, but that reference dates to the 19th century, not the 12th

Stokes Footnote

His introduction describing the manuscripts used

**At which point I had to concede that Brigid, the goddess, was more likely a medieval "invention".**

**Or Was She?**

I've been beginning to suspect that the goddess I've been working with isn't Brigid, but Brigantia, even though it was St. Brigid's cross that led me to this path. So about two weeks before this discussion, I prayed for clarification as to whether I worship Brigid or Brigantia and what the proper name I should use. I made an offering and everything.

Then I discovered that the oldest usage of the Brigid Cross we know and recognize is by the RTE in 1922 as a nationalist and anti-imperialist symbol, which can be said of Brigantia in her own right. What we have referring to Brigid as a poetess and guardian of livestock seem to derive from the saint. Yet the association with healing waters and smithcraft/engineering is seen with both goddesses, but Brigantia is a goddess of victory and self-defense too. Should we discard the saintly associations derived from St. Brigid?

I am more miffed that I considered myself a reconstructionist, and now find that evidence of Brigid is not as ancient as Brigantia and suspected of being derived from the saint.

The narrative changed, and now we have to consider what should be incorporated in organized worship and what should be thrown out. Likewise, this might make this goddess even more relevant to present events, given the Imperialism we're witnessing.

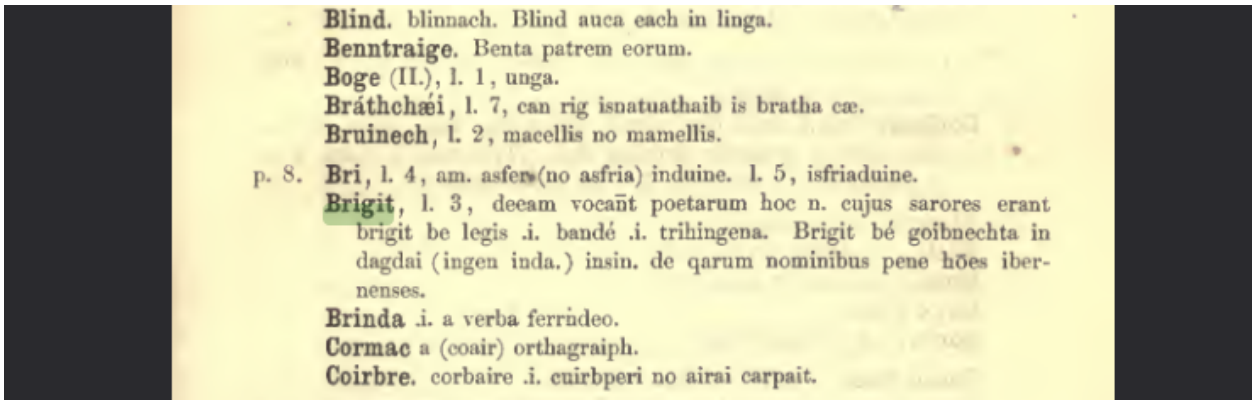
Instead of the statue on my altar featuring livestock and fire and stuff, the iconography of her reflects Minerva and Athena because of Roman syncretism.

My own walk with her fostered a calling for arts, crafts, poetry, adventures, hiking, independence, freedom, sun and steel, the dawn, fitness, etc. which seem in line with the inscriptions. The fact that I prayed for a god who I would oath myself to match the inscriptions of oathing to her, as well.

All that's changed is that the Irish portion of the lore is suspect.

Which means she's possibly not associated with spring and livestock and milk and fire.

The livestock association was rewritten as assigned as Brigid from two other goddesses: Flidais, goddess of the hunt, and Dil, daughter of Lugh, goddess of the fields. My own personal experience leads me to identify my goddess as Brigantia, though.



**Blind.** blinnach. Blind auca each in linga.
**Benntraige.** Benta patrem eorum.
**Boge** (II.), l. 1, unga.
**Bráthchæi**, l. 7, can rig isnatuathaib is bratha cæ.
**Bruinech**, l. 2, macellis no mamellis.

p. 8. **Bri**, l. 4, am. asfers (no asfria) induine. l. 5, isfriaduine.
**Brigit**, l. 3, deeam vocaīt poetarum hoc n. cujus sarores erant brigit be legis .i. bandé .i. trihingena. Brigit bé goibnechta in dagdai (ingen inda.) insin. de qarum nominibus pene hōes iber-nenses.
**Brinda** .i. a verba ferrndeo.
**Cormac** a (coair) orthagraiph.
**Coirbre.** corbaire .i. cuirbperi no airai carpait.

The 15th Century mention of Brigit from The Speckled Book's version of Cormac's Glossary

In 2024, I was also beginning to suspect that Brigid was Sulis, Coventina, etc. based on iconography shared between these entities. The linking aspect seems to be healing wells, crafting, and poetry. I prayed for a sign at that time too, and found this the very day I did:



A Swiss franc, featuring Helvetia, the embodiment of Switzerland. The name itself is taken from the Celtic Helvetii tribe, and of course the iconography reflects Minerva/Athena, though this too was a later addition.

After this more recent revelation, I found myself drawn back to that essay posted earlier, **The Exalted Ones - Brigidine Goddesses of Gaul and Britain**, by Gilbride.

Specifically, this passage:

*The Legend of Catumandus*

*According to a legend recorded by Trogus Pompeius, a Celtic army led by a warrior named Catumandus was besieging the Greek colony of Massilia in 390 BC when he had a dream or vision of a wrathful goddess, ordering him to make peace with the Greeks immediately. He went into the city under a flag of truce and visited their temples, hoping to see the goddess from his dream. At the temple of Minerva (or as the Greeks would have named her, Athena) Catumandus announced that he had found his goddess, made the deity an offering of a golden torc, and made a peace treaty with Massilia.*

*Massilia is now the city of Marseilles in southern France, so there was a Greek city in Gaul itself for hundreds of years. This raises the distinct possibility that Athena/Minerva was actually worshiped by*

*Gauls before the Roman conquest. Ancient people do not seem to have been at all shy about borrowing deities from each other. The legend is also reminiscent of Brighid's role in Irish myth, where she seems to be virtually the only deity who is not "madly fond of war" (as Strabo describes the Celts).*

The journey of Catumandus reflects my own dream journey with Brigid, where I was given a dream upon my arrival in Amarillo and told to visit various places, each of which had things from my dreams, as I related in the **Meeting Brighid** section.

Interestingly, Catumandus was of a tribe named the Segobrigii, which has the same "brig" in it and is also Celto-Ligurian. The genetic haplotype of the Brigantes is Celto-Ligurian as well, R-U152; more evidence for my idea of a migration.

My valuation of the "oldest" information is because I believe that gods are actual entities that mankind has encountered before, face-to-face. Much of Indo-European religion has remained the same throughout history in lore at least, which can be gleaned with comparative study between ancient Vedic lore, lore of ancient cultures who came after, various sects of modern Vedic beliefs, and groups like the Mari peoples of Russia.

Ultimately, in my mind, the Goddess I worship is the "Celtic Minerva". She may be Minerva/Athena herself, or an entirely different entity, or perhaps all Indo-European Dawn Goddesses are the same entity, and my earlier statements about HARD POLYTHEISM are called into question.

**I will call her Brigantia, to differentiate her from Brigid, depending on context. I will use the four armed Brigid cross while acknowledging it isn't likely ancient, as I believe she would approve of its history and usage. I will still celebrate her "day" on Imbolc, despite it possibly not being the goddess' day originally. I hold that her associations are poetry, craft, healing, pure waters, protection, and martial strength in a defensive, strategic light. This document will likely be edited as a result.**

## Other Deities

I have had a few encounters with other deities than Brighid, and will likely have many more. The list of deities I've offered to includes Heimdall, Odin, Thor, Inari, Amaterasu, Lugh, Aengus mac Og, Cernunnos, Maponos, and Manannan mac Lir. As I said before, Brighid is my tutelary and highest deity in my personal walk, and therefore I always invoke and offer to her first. There was one time that I was introduced by Brighid to another deity in a dream.

**The Amaterasu Story**

I had just finished painting the statue of Brighid that's on my altar. It had taken me a week to finish and it was finally done. I went to sleep right after I finished and had a dream. Brighid guided me to a mirror and told me to hold her hand. I placed my hand in hers and we walked through the mirror together. She told me to get on my knees and cast my eyes downward. I obviously obeyed, and was trying to speak but no words came so I just followed her instructions. As I knelt, I saw in my forward peripheral vision a tall woman in a kimono walking in front of me. I felt her smile on me and I tried to look up. I saw her holding the sun in her arms, and looked to try and get a glimpse of her face. And then I felt ashamed, because I had tried to see her face, and she laughed and said something to Brighid. Brighid looked over at me and said “you should make her an offering”.

The next morning, I joined a Japanese-English Discord server and asked if anyone practiced Shinto, or lived in Japan and knew someone who did. One user who lived in Japan said he had made an offering earlier that day and had a feeling someone was going to inquire about his beliefs. I told him of the dream I had and he replied with relative shock. He said that the reason I felt ashamed for trying to look at Amaterasu’s face was because it was considered rude to look a superior in the eyes in Japan, especially a *kami.* Additionally, I learned that mirrors were an important part of the Shinto practice. He said he lived near the Ise Grand Shrine, the main shrine to Amaterasu in Japan, and had made an offering to her earlier that day. I asked about the correct manner to offer to a Shinto *kami* and I wrote a haiku in Japanese as an offering. I said I’d planned to offer rice in addition to the haiku. He told me not to put chopsticks in the rice and to shower first, advised me to place a mirror on the altar, and not to look at the mirror during my prayer.

He then asked about my god who introduced me. I told him about Brighid and he said "I wonder if they know each other? Your dream makes me think so." He asked how to offer to her and said he would like to make her an offering too. My offering to Amaterasu went well, although I haven’t had much interaction with that deity since. It was really neat to learn that similar polytheistic practices still exist in other cultures.

**The Heimdall Story**

I was a very new polytheist, attending my very first Ár nDraíocht Féin retreat. As the event was ending, they decided to perform a ritual to the Norse god Heimdall, in a request for safe passage to our homes. Each person would come up to an altar, make a prayer to Heimdall for safe passage, throw some herbs upon a fire, and spill some booze in a cauldron.

As an autistic man, I can’t read social cues and body language very well. In compensation for that, I’ve developed some sort of “sixth sense”, or instinct, that I’ll sometimes feel in the absence of being able to

read the signs. This feeling might be a sense of imminent explosive outburst or the sudden need to guard against physical attack, and it is usually spot on.

This girl approached the altar to make an offering and I felt this sense, as though there was a sudden rage from someone. She was very well liked in that retreat, and it seemed like everyone was happy and smiling at this peaceful end to our retreat. She began to speak:

“Heimdall, I know we’ve had our differences in the past and difficulty in our relationship, but I would like to ask you for safe passage back home” and immediately the candles went out. There was no wind, no clear mechanism or movement from others to blow them out. The place we held the ritual was quite massive, a large dining hall. I doubt someone could have intentionally extinguished the candles so far away from them, but they absolutely went out.

Immediately the ritual leaders tried to relight the candle, but they REFUSED to be relit. The girl began to profusely weep in front of the altar, but the candles did not light back up again, until the moment she sat down in a chair, defeated. That very moment she sat down, the candles relit.

**The Cernunnos Incident**

When I was posting on a dating chat before I met my current girlfriend, my username referred to the horned god Cernunnos, with his likeness from the Gundestrup Cauldron as my profile picture.

After our second date, my now-girlfriend immediately messaged me and said “You will not BELIEVE what my friend just gave me, out of the blue. She didn’t even know what your username was!”

It was a candle that said on it “THE HORNED GOD”. My girlfriend is an atheist, but this incident unsettled her. I keep the candle on my altar now, next to my statue of Cernunnos himself.



## Otherworldly Occurrences

In addition to these tales of my religious practices, I have had many paranormal experiences long before I pursued this path. This section is for chronicling them from before and henceforth.

### The Williamsburg Swamp

When I was about 16 (in 2010), my family moved from Fairbanks, Alaska to Williamsburg, Virginia. We wound up in this strange neighborhood. I won't disclose this particular neighborhood or the coordinates of the exact place in question, though I can find them very easily with Google Maps. It's probably still there. This neighborhood gave me this really cursed vibe, like *Children of the Corn*, and the house we were staying in seemed doubly eerie. We had just moved in, and as I was always the adventurer and the goth kid, I liked to explore the woods surrounding the neighborhood. Back then, I was raised with having to entertain myself outside, and this translated even to my current adulthood years. I really enjoy getting intentionally lost. The incident felt so strange and uncomfortable, and still makes me feel that way to this day.

I went into the woods at the end of my street and around 20 minutes in I discovered a swamp. Steam or smoke rose out of it, and dead animal bones all around it. Instantly I'd had thought the swamp to be toxic, but I was relieved to see that there were two swans on the water, dunking their heads in as swans do. I scoped it out and decided to go back another day.

The second time I went, I decided a deer skull around the water's edge would look really cool in my room so I put one from the edge of the swamp in my bag and headed home. Something about that swamp just made me feel like I was being drained. It felt like nihilistic depression, but as a locale. It was unsurprisingly after these events that I also began to suffer from the depression that eventually led to my alcoholism.

As I headed out of the woods for home, everyone in the neighborhood on the way to my house was out on their front porch or lawn, just staring at me like ventriloquist dummies. They followed me with their gaze as I walked home. I felt like I shouldn't have taken the skull (as a polytheist later in life, I learned to trust this feeling). I dismissed it as childhood fear and superstition and placed this skull on my dresser in my room.

The next morning I woke up with sores all over my face. I had somehow come into contact with poison ivy on my face, which was a surprisingly common occurrence for a young teenage adventurer in Virginia. I just felt like it was a **BAD IDEA** to have taken the skull, but I figured it was just my own fascination with the uncomfortable feelings of confronting mortality that made me fear it. The same fascination, however, caused me to cling to it. And so it remained on my dresser, and sometimes I'd wake up in the middle of the night feeling something was caressing my face. I'd hear a voice wake me from a dead sleep. After a week, I could no longer sleep.

That's when the neighbors started showing up, wanting to welcome my family to the neighborhood. They brought cookies, and called one family at a time, once a day, for a week. They seemed very conservative and polite, but so was my family, and so was I. Every family that visited asked me the same thing. My parents made it a point to tell them that my now scarred-up and oozing face was not acne, but poison ivy from the woods. The visitors asked me "Oh, did you go to the swamp?" and I replied "Yeah, the one at the end of the street." And they'd say "Did you see the swans?"

At first I thought it was awesome that someone else knew about what I thought was my secret discovery in the woods, but then I started to realize after the second time that they were saying it with increasing fervor and implication in their voice, something my parents noticed. They asked me if I really did see any swans in the woods, and I told them I had. They thought it was weird, and shrugged.

I was heavily unnerved at this point, and slightly hallucinating due to the insomnia I was experiencing. The feeling of something standing by me or over me became very real and very scary in my room even while awake and even during the day. It occurred to me to try something a 16 year old Christian kid wouldn't usually do. I had a séance, in part because I was very lonely and hoped for a friend from beyond the veil, and in part because I wanted to try to smooth things over with whatever it was.

A few Google searches later and in the dark of my room, with only a candle lit, I started to close my eyes and address the entity directly. The room got really cold, and as I spoke to it, the television in my room turned on to display only static, my radio turned on by itself and played static too, and the skull fell off my dresser. I panicked, and the next morning (I didn't sleep much between then and the next morning) I stuffed the skull back into the bag and went out to the swamp.

The swans were still there on the swamp. I instantly placed the skull at the edge of the swamp, and apologized to whatever entity was angered that I took the skull. Like a man hypnotized, some strange insanity called me towards the center of the swamp, to a small peninsula in the middle of it where a tree grew. I spaced out and it seemed there was some element of missing time. I tried to walk back from the tree, the grass gave way to mud, and I began to sink. Luckily, giant six-foot teen boy that I was, I pulled myself out of the mud after quite a bit of struggle (it extended halfway up my waist) and I walked home.

The neighbors stared at me like they did when I took the skull as I walked home, muddied from the belly on down. I went into the house, and my parents asked what happened. I told them I had stepped in deep mud in the swamp and sunk. The creepy stuff slowed, but the next week, the landlord exploded with

anger at my family because he did not want to make repairs to the house and told us to leave. He did not evict us, of course, because he could not legally do so, but he said he would not be making any repairs and that he preferred that we leave, so he let my family out of the lease and we moved from there.

I was friends with a girl in the neighborhood, who was incidentally the first person to ask about the swans. We kept in touch until the day I moved out, and then she shut down her Facebook and I never heard from her again.

In March of 2020, I planned to go back. I wanted to see if there were swans still there, but with more fleshed out knowledge of the occult and my own belief in the goddess Brighid. I have wondered for a long time if the dead animals were offerings to the swamp, as ancient Celts used to do. However, I never got the chance. The day before I headed to the swamp, Virginia enforced a mandatory quarantine, and so I headed back home and barely managed to make it after six flight changes. A few days later, the airlines canceled all flights.

It seems much more likely that what was really going on here, though, was not the act of a cult or eldritch parish. It seems instead that this swamp was a dumping ground for illegal hunting, and either the neighbors knew and were afraid I'd report it, or that they recognized the environmental hazard posed by this and were curious if I was the one responsible. Either way, it was a dangerous situation.

**The Jersey Devil? Probably not!**

Location of sighting: 40°53'26"N 75°30'55"W

I lived in East Stroudsburg, PA and worked in Palmerton. I worked the late shift so I'd get out of work at 10p.m. One night as I was heading home late because I was covering someone's shift (I think it was about 1 AM) I was driving down the road at the above coordinates. I saw two red dots of light from far away but they seemed to be approaching my car very quickly. I slowed down and suddenly these massive bat or dragon-like leather wings came gliding with a single "flap" motion just over my car. It was so surreal and happened extremely quickly. As it was night, I didn't see its face or body details. It was a new moon and there's only my headlights out there. I slammed on the brakes and got out but it was just total darkness. I'd say its wingspan was about 6 or 7 feet. I've seen a condor before and it felt like it was pretty close to that size. I could hear it flying away after I stopped and got out. There was no moonlight so I couldn't see it, but it sounded like someone was shaking a massive tarp.

The only explanation that I could think of besides the Jersey Devil itself is a black vulture feeding at night (45). I tried my best to consider any alternate explanations, and I'm willing to consider this as a possibility, since it was such a fleeting sighting. It seemed larger than 5.5 feet, but I didn't have anything nearby to gauge size with. The wings could have looked leathery because of the reflection of my headlights on preened black vulture wings, which lack the white flight feathers of turkey vultures. It would also explain why the red eyes were near the road, since, black vultures' eyes turn red in headlights.

**Hollow Hills**

I should preface this by saying that I am a fervent believer in phenomena related to the Fair Folk. I have a common suspicion that sensationalized events such as poltergeists and Missing 411 cases in National Parks are related to the workings of the Fair Folk. House spirits such as boggarts and hobgoblins have always been a part of the lore of the British Isles. Abductions from fairy and changelings are a common and legitimate fear in Celtic societies even today.

*"Tradition says that abductions took place to increase the strength of fairy stock, and because they needed red blood in order to secure their place in Heaven. Sometimes, they were said to leave a fairy "changeling" in place of the person they had abducted: a sick, wizened fairy that merely resembled the human left behind. To prevent fairy abduction, parents sometimes dressed boys as girls to confuse the fairies. Fairies were believed to be frightened of iron, so a tongs was sometimes placed over the cradle. The colour red was said to remind them of their fate on Judgment Day, so the colour red was believed to ward them off. Babies could also be sprinkled with holy water or, sometimes, urine, because fairies did not like dirty babies."* (46)

This same belief about the color red seems present in tales about rowan and red thread (47), which is a traveler's charm said to keep the Fair Folk and witches at bay. It acts as a ward or charm against malediction and fae abduction. I always carry a charm of rowan sticks bound by red thread in an easily accessible place, often in a pocket over my heart.

I have had a number of encounters with forest spirits in my life with my aforementioned tendency to wander through the woodland. I have always believed in their existence, though as a young Christian I ascribed their existence as angels of God. This belief changed for a number of reasons, but walking through the woods and talking with the beings there was a common pastime for me.



As I mentioned in the Classifications of Gods section, the creatures known as Sidhe come in two varieties: Seelie and Unseelie. It is my belief that the sadness expressed by these creatures seems to be disappointment at man's exploitation of nature, or perhaps their own partial banishment from it. Seelie beings are not overtly enemies of humans, though they may not be friends. Often, they are tricksters or spirits of spritely play and utter boredom. Unseelie beings, such as the baobhan sith, are the very definition of vampires; they seduce humans for their blood. Both beings seem to prefer incorporeal forms, but may manifest partially or entirely. They all seem to share a fear of iron or steel.

The sightings I have experienced occurred in wooded areas near boulder fields or in perfectly circular clearings. There is a known belief that fae appeared in areas where perfectly circular groups of mushrooms appear.



Should the fair folk still be present among their rings or cairns, they may attempt to keep their victims there, which is by tradition a form of joke to them. The phenomenon is called being “pixie-led”. The victim may be unaware they are under the effect of a Sidhe *glamour*, and have the opinion that they’ve actually left these rings, only to return some time later.

*“Pixie-leading is a longstanding fairy practice that is well attested in literature. It can be traced back to the early fourteenth century. Jeremy Harte in Exploring Fairy Traditions (p.26) records a preacher’s sermon that describes one who has been “led at nyght with gobelyn, and erreth hider and thider.” The references multiply from the seventeenth century, for example from Francis Rous, who in his religious text Meditations of Instruction of 1616 compared those who pursue material wealth to:*

*“they [that] shall stumble into the same ditches, wherein they have seene many of their neighbours wallowing. This makes sport for the divel, and thus is man most truly fayry-led, even led aside by the spirits of darknesse…”*

*In an identical tone, Thomas Heyrick, in The New Atlantis of 1687, mentioned those who “Vainly like wilder’d men should wander round/ Be lost in senceless shapes on fairy ground” (p.51). Likewise, Beaumont and Fletcher in their play Wit at Several Weapons (c.1620), have a character complain:*

*“My ways are goblin led and the night elf still draws me from my home.”*

*Writing in the first half of the 1600s, poet Robert Herrick, a Devonshire parson, advised:*

*“If ye feare to be affrighted*
*When ye are (by chance) benighted,*
*In your Pocket for a trust*

*Carrie nothing but a Crust:*
*For that holy piece of Bread,*
*Charmes the danger, and the dread."*

*Christopher Clobbery, who wrote in 1659, warned of "fairy elves who thee mislead … in to the mire, then at thy folly smile/ Yea, clap their hands for joy." The remedy he advised was simple: "Old country folk, who pixie-leading fear/ Bear bread about them, to prevent harm."*

*In the English Midlands, we know from Jabez Allies that you were not pixie-led but 'poake-ledden,' something which seems to be confirmed by the experience of Bishop Richard Corbet (author of the poem Rewards and Fairies), who became lost near Bosworth in 1640. He and his party were advised then to "Turne your cloakes/ … for Pucke is busy in these oakes./ If ever wee at Bosworth will be found/ Then turn your cloakes, for this is fairy ground."* (50)

When I was about nine years old and lived in Juneau, Alaska I went hiking in the woods with my dad and sister. We were not long in the forest until we came to a circular clearing in which all the vegetation was dead and brown. As we attempted to continue along the trail past the clearing, we found that every route out of this clearing looped back to the same clearing, *including the trail that we arrived from!* As an act of bravery, I laughed away my fear with hysterical incredulousness, and soon after we were able to leave the clearing for good. We found that we were very close to a road, but a mile or so away from our point of entry into the forest. I later learned almost two decades later that laughing is an acknowledgement of the joke, and often releases the victim from the glamour.

I was also pixie-led in the woodlands of the Poconos, once again near a linear boulder field. I was quite deep into the woods and climbed a hill to gain a better view of the area around me. I attempted to walk back down the hill. As I walked down the path I came up, I began to notice that it was taking an awfully long time to walk down what took me 15 minutes to climb. I realized I was making no progress despite walking down what seemed to be a very short hill. I instantly addressed whatever was nearby (as I felt there was a presence that I couldn't see) and poured out a libation of my bottle water for it. Almost instantly I was back at the bottom of the hill after trying again, but I had apparently lost an hour or two in the span of what felt like 30 minutes. Fearfully, I headed back home. Time loss is another phenomenon associated with these beings, I learned later.

Very rarely are they visible. Once I've seen cloaking beings *(*like in the film *Predator (1987))* moving around in the distance while I was in the Poconos of Pennsylvania. It was very much like the scene at the beginning of *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring (2001)* when Frodo and Sam watched the procession of wood elves move through the forest, though they were blinking in and out of the visible spectrum. Yet instead of their voices raised in song, I heard a noise akin to the sound made when a wet finger traces the rim of a wine glass, yet more crystalline and harmonic. Their visible appearance was only for a split second, but the feeling that there was something there I couldn't visibly see still persisted. A similar situation is related in a tale from Ireland by Lady Wilde:

*"One day a gentleman entered a cabin in the County Clare, and saw a young girl about twenty seated by the fire, chanting a melancholy song, without settled words or music. On inquiry he was told she had once heard the fairy harp, and those who hear it lose all memory of love or hate, and forget all things, and never more have any other sound in their ears save the soft music of the fairy harp, and when the spell is broken, they die. It is remarkable that the Irish national airs; plaintive, beautiful, and unutterably pathetic; should so perfectly express the spirit of the Ceol-Sidhe (the fairy music), as it haunts the fancy of the people and mingles with all their traditions of the spirit world Wild and capricious as the fairy nature, these delicate harmonies, with their mystic, mournful rhythm, seem to touch the deepest chords of feeling, or to fill the sunshine with laughter, according to the mood of the players; but, above all things, Irish music is the utterance of a Divine sorrow; not stormy or passionate, but like that of an exiled spirit, yearning and wistful, vague and unresting; ever seeking the unattainable, ever shadowed, as it were, with memories of some lost good, or some dim foreboding of a coming fate; emotions that seem to find their truest expression in the sweet, sad, lingering wail of the pathetic minor in a genuine Irish air There is a beautiful phrase in one of the ancient manuscripts descriptive of the wonderful power of Irish music over the sensitive human organization:*
*'Wounded men were soothed when they heard it, and slept; and women in travail forgot their pains.'*
*There are legends concerning the subtle charm of the fairy music and dance, when the mortal under their influence seems to move through the air with the naked, fleshless feet of the spirit, and is lulled by the ecstasy of the cadence into forgetfulness of all things, and sometimes into the sleep of death."* (48)

This occurred near ancient rock walls in the Lehigh Valley, and archaeologists are still unsure who constructed these cairns. (49)

**UPDATE:** It seems that after I wrote this document, the cairns were found to be ceremonial landscapes developed by the Lenape tribe. They date between 2610 BCE and 1740 CE. More about the research being done here: https://watershedcoalitionlv.org/ceremonial-stone-landscapes/

In closing, if you ever decide to walk in the woods, bring a cross of a red wood bound in red thread and something made of iron, such as a horseshoe. If approached by anyone within, no matter how human-looking, do not give them your name until you depart the deeper parts of the forest. Keep a stopwatch with you and note the time between the beginning and ending of an event. Finally, keep in mind that they need the land for sustenance as much as we do, and do nothing to harm the land when alone in the woods!

*Ancient Earthwork fort and barrow*
*Discreetly hide their secret abodes*
*The most fearful hide deep inside*
*And venture not there upon Yuletide*
*For invasion of their hollow hills*

*That music hold and Oberon fill*
*Is surely recommended not*
*For fear of death, in fear of rot*
*Hollow hills*

*Baleful sounds and wild voices ignored*
*Ill luck disaster the one reward*
*Violated sanctity of supermen's hills*
*So sad, love lies there still*
*So sad*
*Hollow hills*

*Witches too and goblin too and speckled sills*
*Lament repent oh mortal you*
*So sad*
- Bauhaus, “Hollow Hills”

## Related Articles

### The Exalted Ones - Brigidine Goddesses of Gaul and Britain by Gilbride

*This essay represents the personal research and opinions of the author and is not an official statement of Clann Bhríde*

### Introduction

The name Brighid derives from the older Celtic form Briganti which in turn derives from the Proto-Indo-European root Bhrghnti, meaning “a high place” or any exalted or lofty quality. The name of the Brythonic goddess Brigantia comes from the same root, and the Continental Celts seem to have also worshiped goddesses named Brigindu, (or Brigindona) and the Matres Brigaecae, whose names all contain the same “Brig” root and can all be translated by the word “Exalted.”

After the Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain, Brigantia was equated with the Roman deity Minerva, as were other Celtic goddesses such as Sulis and Belisama. Academics refer to these goddesses as the “Celtic Minervas,” and the Irish Brighid is often included in the Celtic Minerva family even though she was never directly equated to Minerva because the Romans never conquered Ireland.

Brighid herself is associated with the sun, moon and stars, fire, fresh water, fertility and abundance, healing, knowledge and wisdom, the crafts necessary to society, poetry and justice. The other goddesses of the Celtic Minerva type usually manifest several of these qualities, and there are other goddesses who fall outside of the Celtic Minerva family as such but who still manifest several of the same qualities.

Some members of the Children of Brighid worship these goddesses as manifestations of the same underlying and exalted power. This work is intended as in-depth examination of these lesser-known "Exalted Ones."

Although every attempt has been made to present accurate information, this should be seen as a work of devotion rather than of scholarship. In matters of interpretation, we must be guided by our own personal relationships with the goddesses in question.

**Minerva, Goddess of Gaul**

According to Julius Caesar's commentary on his wars in Gaul:

> Among the gods, they most worship Mercury. There are numerous images of him; they declare him to be the inventor of all arts, the guide for every road and journey, and they deem him to have the greatest influence for all money-making and traffic. After him they set Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Of these deities they have almost the same idea as all other nations: Apollo drives away diseases, Minerva supplies the first principles of arts and crafts. Jupiter holds the empire of heaven; Mars controls wars.

Modern pagans frequently dismiss this passage as being completely in error, but in fact the archeological record of Gallo-Roman religion tends to bear out Caesar's words to some extent. There are more dedications to Mercury than to any other deity, but there are also frequent dedications to Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva- sometimes equated with native Gaulish deities and sometimes not.

A number of Gaulish goddesses tended to resist syncretization. For instance, the goddess Rosmerta must originally have been paired with a Gaulish god (quite possibly Lugus) but after the Roman conquest her consort was always Mercury. For whatever reason, the Gauls under Roman rule seem to have felt perfectly comfortable replacing their own god with Mercury but were unwilling to syncretize Rosmerta to any Roman goddess.

The most likely reason for this is either that the goddesses were so closely tied to the land and territory of their origin that synthesis with a Roman goddess was felt to be impossible, or that many of the Celtic goddesses had unique personality characteristics that could not be mapped onto any Roman goddess.

The Celtic Minerva is largely an exception to this tendency. Belisama is equated to Minerva, but there is only a single surviving inscription to her. Brigantia is equated to Minerva, but also to

Juno, Victory and Caelestis- and there are only seven inscriptions to Brigantia. Sulis is equated to Minerva, but there are only thirty-eight or thirty-nine inscriptions to her if we don't include the curse tablets.

According to the Deo Mercurio website, dedications to Minerva without any Celtic name attached number one hundred and thirty-six in Gaul and thirty-six in Britain. In other words, Minerva on her own was much more popular in Britain than Brigantia was, and nearly as popular as Sulis. Minerva on her own was much more popular in Gaul than Belisama, or any other Celtic goddess except the Matres. (Rosmerta, for instance, has only twenty-eight inscriptions.)[1]

This implies three things:

1- The worship of Minerva in Gaul must have taken over from the worship of one or more Celtic goddesses such as Belisama or Brigindu, who would presumably have many more surviving dedications if their cults had not been swallowed up by the cult of Minerva.

2- Minerva must have been considered similar enough to the various "Celtic Minervas" to allow for a complete synthesis, allowing Gauls to worship her enthusiastically without feeling the need to give her an additional Celtic name.

3- We can learn something about the unique characteristics of these Celtic goddesses if we examine the ways in which Minerva's worship in Gaul differed from her worship in Rome.

**The Legend of Catumandus**

According to a legend recorded by Trogus Pompeius, a Celtic army led by a warrior named Catumandus was besieging the Greek colony of Massilia in 390 BC when he had a dream or vision of a wrathful goddess, ordering him to make peace with the Greeks immediately. He went into the city under a flag of truce and visited their temples, hoping to see the goddess from his dream. At the temple of Minerva (or as the Greeks would have named her, Athena) Catumandus announced that he had found his goddess, made the deity an offering of a golden torc, and made a peace treaty with Massilia[2].

Massilia is now the city of Marseilles in southern France, so there was a Greek city in Gaul itself for hundreds of years. This raises the distinct possibility that Athena/Minerva was actually worshiped by Gauls before the Roman conquest. Ancient people do not seem to have been at all shy about borrowing deities from each other. The legend is also reminiscent of Brighid's role in Irish myth, where she seems to be virtually the only deity who is not "madly fond of war" (as Strabo describes the Celts).

**A Warrior-Healer**

Gaulish depictions of Minerva often depict her as a warrior with a spear and shield, and sometimes include symbols associated with Victoria such as the palm-branch. This combination of Minerva and Victoria is also found in the Birrens image of Brigantia, implying that the Celtic Minerva in general was a warrior goddess. The Deo Mercurio website suggests that the warrior symbolism associated with the Celtic Minerva is often symbolic, referring to her power to conquer disease[3].

**A Water Goddess**

Gaulish dedications to Minerva are sometimes found in association with water deities such as the Celtic goddess Ritona. The goddesses Brigantia and Sulis both have associations with sacred waters- Brigantia with rivers and Sulis with her hot springs. The Deo Mercurio website suggests that the Celtic Minerva in general would have been a water goddess[4].

**The Gorgon's Head**

Large monuments to Minerva in Gaul are generally classical in style, but small devotional statuary shows a much more abstract style typical of Celtic art. This indicates that the worship of Minerva was enthusiastically taken up by people who were still culturally Celtic and interested in representing the goddess in a Celtic way.

The Birrens image of Brigantia shows her wearing a medallion of the gorgon's head, while the temple of Sulis features a prominent male gorgon's head. One of the dedications to Brigantia includes a carving of a snake. Invocations spoken at Imbolc in the Scottish Highlands describe Bride's holiday as the day when the serpent comes from the hill. Some of these invocations describe a kind of nonaggression pact with the serpent, while others express the intention to throw the serpent into the sea to be swallowed up.

Given all of these references to serpents and serpent monsters in connection with related goddesses, it may be significant that some Gaulish depictions of Minerva overemphasize the gorgon's head on her breast, sometimes portraying it as being just as large as her own head. The visual effect is as if Minerva has two heads- her own head, and a gorgon head on her chest[5]. The myth of Medusa may have had a Celtic equivalent, with particularly strong symbolic importance to Celtic worshipers of Minerva.

**Many Minervas**

We know of at least three Celtic Minervas from Britain alone- Brigantia, Senuna and Sulis. We know of at least one more from Gaul- Belisama, who also seems to have been worshiped in Britain. We also know of a Gaulish equivalent to Brigantia named Brigindu or Brigindona.

In all likelihood, there were numerous different Celtic Minervas. Some of them may have been strongly associated with a particular tribe, like Brigantia with the Brigantes. Others might have been known over wide areas and by several peoples, as Belisama seems to have been, so they cannot strictly be considered "local goddesses."

We have no way of knowing for sure whether the ancient Celts would have considered these goddesses to be distinct entities, the same entity or some fluid combination, but evidence suggests the latter. Brigantia, for instance, was portrayed as being Minerva, Victoria, Juno and Caelestis simultaneously- suggesting a theology in which divine identity was a fluid thing.

Children of Brighid who wish to honor her in a Gaulish form could do so under the names Brigindu, Brigindona, Belisama or even simply Minerva. The ancient Gauls would most likely have been just as flexible.

**1- Belisama**

**Summer Bright or Very Powerful?**

The goddess Belisama is often described in confident terms as a fire goddess, a summer goddess and a consort of Belenus. All of these associations are basically speculative or in error, as no inscription links Belisama to either Belenus or fire, and her association with the summer depends on an etymology that may be fanciful.

The Nemeton website interprets Belisama as "Summer Bright," from Proto-Celtic *belo* or "bright" and *samo* or "summer." The site shows a picture of a statue identified as Belisama holding a snake, but the statue actually shows Sirona. Noémie Beck does not mention the existence of any statues of Belisama.

According to Beck, Belisama's name is more likely to mean "The Very Powerful One," as the Indo-European root *bhel* actually refers to force or power rather than brightness or brilliance. Beck also dismisses any link to Belenus as being based on nothing more than the *Bel* prefix.

So, if most of the publicly-available information about Belisama is unreliable, then what can we say for certain about this goddess?

**Belisama Minerva**

Belisama is mentioned in a single Latin inscription on a marble altar from Ariège, which has been interpreted to read *Minervae Belisamae sacrum Quintus Valerius Montanus ex voto*

*suscepto.* This means that a man named Quintus Valerius Montanus erected this altar, sacred to Minerva Belisama, in fulfillment of a vow[6].

**Belisama's Nemeton**

The only other known inscription to Belisama is in the Gaulish language, inscribed in Greek letters by a man named Segomaros son of Villoneos in dedication of a nemeton. A nemeton was an ancient Celtic religious sanctuary, and can mean anything from a sacred grove to a fenced enclosure of semi-rectangular shape with a small temple building and a few trees as if to symbolize a grove. According to Beck, the name Segomaros means either "Great Strength" or "Great by His Victories."[7]

**Belisama's River**

Aside from these two inscriptions, the only known reference to Belisama is the geographer Ptolemy's map of Britain, which shows the estuary of a river called the Belisama at a location corresponding to the estuary of the Ribble[8].

**Wisdom and Power**

There obviously isn't much to go on when it comes to Belisama, but there are a few things we can say with some confidence. One is that Belisama couldn't have been a localized tribal goddess. The Ribble river is in Lancashire, one of her inscriptions was found in Provence and the other was found in the Pyrenees. So, even if Belisama was a minor goddess she was still known across a very large area and by more than one Celtic tribe.

The name "Summer Bright" might be aesthetically appealing and reminiscent of Brighid's fire associations, but we shouldn't forget that the word *Bri* in Gaelic also means power or force or essence. So, if the name Belisama really means "the Very Powerful" it may carry essentially the same meaning as the word *Bri*.

The fact that Belisama was syncretized with Minerva tells us that she was probably a goddess of wisdom and crafts, and possibly of war as well. Her association with a river connects her with water, and the dedication of a nemeton in her honor connects her with the concept of sacred space.

**2- Bergusia**

**A Goddess of the Heights**

The goddesses Bergusia and Bergonia, known from only a few inscriptions, are included here under the same heading because they both have names that mean "The Hill" or "The Mount." According to Noémie Beck's landmark thesis *Goddesses in Celtic Religion*:

"*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 *bherĝh, 'high'. 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. They are thus goddesses of the same type and essence."*

There is only one known inscription to the goddess Bergonia. It was found on a height called the Monts de Vaucluse, in an area associated with the Celtic proto-cities known as *oppida*. The inscription has been interpreted to read *Bergoniae Gaius L Calvo votum solvit libens merito*, which means that a Roman citizen named Gaius L Calvus put up the inscription in fulfillment of a vow to Bergonia[9]. Roman citizenship does not necessarily imply Roman ethnicity, as Rome often granted citizenship to important or powerful people in conquered territories. However, where there is no Celtic element in a worshiper's name, we can assume that he either was a Roman or a highly-Romanized native.

The only known inscription to the goddess Bergusia was found on a bronze vase on Mont-Auxois, and has been interpreted to read *Deo Uceti et Bergusiae Remus Primi filius donavit v.s.l.m.,*which means that a man named Remus the son of Primus dedicated the vase to the god Ucuetis and the goddess Bergusia in fulfillment of a vow.[10]

**A Goddess of Smithcraft**

The vase was discovered in the guild hall of the smiths and metalworkers of Alesia, in an underground room that seems to have served as the guild's chapel. The name Ucuetis is in larger letters than the name Bergusia, suggesting that Ucuetis was the patron deity of the Alesian smith guild (a fact confirmed by other inscriptions to Ucuetis) and that Bergusia was of lesser importance although still sacred to the smiths. This parallels the Irish situation exactly, in which Goibniu was the patron god of smiths but one of the three Brighids was also a smith goddess.

The Nemeton website interprets Bergusia as *bero-gussou* or "She Who Brings Force to Bear," in reference to her smithcraft associations.[11] However, this seems more farfetched than Beck's interpretation of Bergusia as "The Hill" or "The Mount."

In the centuries prior to the Roman conquest, Celtic tribes all over Europe began to build fortified towns, of which Alesia was one. These towns are called *oppida*, and the largest were on their way to becoming cities when the Roman conquest occurred.

For any institution such as a guild of metalworkers, the proximity to the tribal ruling class would have made the *oppidum* an attractive place to set up shop, and the safety of the defensive structures would have been an additional incentive. Many *oppida* were built on hilltops, and it stands to reason that a goddess of the hilltop might be called Bergusia or Bergonia or by some other related theonym. By a process of association, this goddess could have become associated with the guild halls and important cultural activities centered at the *oppida*, such as smithcraft.

**3- Bricta**

**A Healing Goddess**

The goddess Bricta or Brixta[12] is not well-known, appearing in only a few inscriptions containing few clues as to her nature or origins. The Gaulish inscriptions were found at the hot-springs and healing sanctuary of Luxeuil, where there were said to have been many stone images scattered among the trees, along with a temple to the god Luxovius and the goddess Bricta.

One inscription has been interpreted as *Luxovio et Brixtae Caius Julius Firmanius votum solvit libens merito*, which means that a man named Caius Julius Firmanius made the inscription in fulfillment of a vow to Luxovius and Bricta. The name of the dedicator indicates Roman citizenship.

Another inscription, possibly by the same worshiper, has been interpreted as *Brixtae Firmanus votum solvit libens merito*, which means that a man named Firmanus made the inscription in fulfillment of a vow to Bricta.

Another inscription, interpreted as *Lussoio et Brictae, Divixtius Constans, votum solvit libens merito*, tells us that a man named Divixtius Constans made the inscription in honor of Lussoius (an alternative spelling of Luxovius) and Bricta, in fulfillment of a vow. According to Beck, this worshiper would have been a native Celt with Roman citizenship, as the name Divixtius is of Celtic origin.[13]

Some sources list another inscription found at a Roman bath, but according to Beck this inscription is a forgery. According to the Nemeton website, another inscription was found at Blackmoorgate in Derbyshire, England, invoking Bricta along with Hercules, Apollo, the Celtic agricultural god Arvalus and the underworld god Dis Pater.[14]

At the Luxeuil hotsprings where her temple was located, inscriptions have also been found to Apollo and Sirona. Apollo was generally syncretized with healing gods in Romano-Gaulish religion, so the Apollo invoked at Luxeuil may simply have been Luxovius under another name. If this is the case, then Bricta may have been an aspect or title of Sirona- perhaps a cthonic aspect, as her connection with Dis Pater would suggest. Francine Nicholson also suggested that Bricta was simply a title of Sirona's in her article "Brighid: What Do We Really Know?".

There are only two things we can say with some certainty about the goddess Bricta. One is that she was a healing goddess associated with hot springs (and therefore with the mystical power of "fire in water"). Two is that she was associated with (and possibly the consort of) a healing god named Luxovius.

**Exalted One, Witch – Or Both?**

When it comes to Bricta, the name is where things start to get interesting. There are competing explanations for what the name Bricta means, and at least two of them lead back to Brighid- although in very different ways.

If the name is derived from the word *Brig* then it must have originally meant "The High One" or "The Exalted One," just like Brighid. The Nemeton website derives Bricta from Proto-Celtic as *brigo-acti-a,* "She Who Is Beyond the Summit" or "The Highest."[15]

According to Olmsted, the name is derived from the Indo-European root *bhrek,* and means "The Shining One." According to Beck, Lambert, Delamarre and Leurat, the most likely derivation is from *brixta,* the Gaulish word for a magic spell or incantation, or the closely related word *brixtom*.[16]

All of the other explanations for Bricta's name seem more far-fetched by comparison, since there is a considerable difference between *bhrek* or *brigo-acti-a* and Bricta, but hardly any difference at all between Bricta and *brixta*. According to Beck, the most likely explanation of the name Bricta is probably "the witch" or "the magic user."

The famous Chamalieres curse tablet, one of the longest surviving texts in the Gaulish language,[17] refers to *brixtía andiron*, "the magic of the cthonic powers." The Larzac magical text, another surviving passage in Gaulish, refers to *bnanom brictom*, "the magic of women," and *andernados brictom,* "cthonic magic."[18]

Why would the goddess of a healing shrine carry a name associated with magic and the underworld? In this context it is worth noting that Sulis Minerva, the great goddess of the

hot-springs at Bath, was also invoked in curse tablets much like the Chamalieres text. The Chamalieres text is addressed to Maponos, the Gaulish equivalent of the Irish Aengus.

Surviving legends about Aengus and his Welsh equivalent Mabon both involve a period of time in which he was hidden away or imprisoned- in the case of Aengus, underground. If there was a similar myth in which Maponos was hidden away in the underworld, he may have been seen as having the ability to intercede with the cthonic powers. The Romans equated Maponos with Apollo, who as we have seen may also have been syncretized to Luxovius. It may be that Luxovius and Bricta formed a divine pair equivalent to Aengus and Brighid- brother and sister (as in the Irish lore) or lovers (as in the Scottish), with the power to curse as well as heal.

The word *brixta* refers not only to magic but to a specific type of poetic meter called the *brixtu* with eight syllables per line. This meter was used for the text of the Chamalieres curse tablet. This eight-syllable *brixtu* meter, associated with the use of incantations to invoke the magic of the underworld, was the root form of the elaborate syllabic meters used by the Irish *fili* and the Welsh bards of later centuries. In the Old Irish language, the same meter was known as *bricht*, which also meant a spell or enchantment.[19] All of the Scottish Gaelic ballads about the Fianna warriors are in this meter, and they are sung in a kind of free-form chant well-suited for an incantation.

If we examine all of Bricta's known or implied associations, then the links with Brighid would seem to be very strong.

1- Bricta and Brighid are both healing goddesses associated with fire and water.

2- Brighid's brother or lover is Aengus, the Irish version of Maponos. Bricta is associated with Luxovius, a "Celtic Apollo" god like Maponos.

3- Brighid is a goddess of poets. Bricta's name is associated with the most basic of Celtic poetic meters, used by bards in Gaul, Ireland and Wales.

However, there is another connection that may be even stronger.

**Possible Survivals**

Cerridwen, the sorceress from the legend of Taliesin, is usually interpreted by modern pagans as the Welsh goddess of poetry. The medieval Welsh bards certainly treated her as something like their patron goddess, but Hutton has argued that no pre-Christian inscriptions mention a goddess with a similar name and that the medieval bards probably invented Cerridwen themselves.

The derivation of the name Cerridwen is unclear. Sir Ifor Williams interpreted it as “the crooked woman,” but Rachel Bromwich interprets Cerridwen as “the fair loved one.” Could the name have been a euphemism or title for a goddess like Bricta? Cerridwen’s steaming cauldron would make a good match for Bricta’s steaming hot-springs, while Cerridwen’s herbal wisdom matches Bricta’s healing powers and Cerridwen’s status as the muse of the Welsh bards matches Bricta’s association with the bardic metrical forms.

There are also folk traditions from Germany and Austria about a fairy woman or “White Lady” with cthonic, nocturnal and Wild Hunt associations known as Berchta or Perchta. According to Morgan Daimler, Berchta is accompanied by frightening fairy spirits and the ghosts of dead children, but also protects living children while their parents are asleep. Some modern pagans believe that Berchta was originally Bricta.[20]

**4- Brigantia**

**Briganti**

The North British goddess Briganti (whom the Romans called Brigantia) is frequently described as being identical to Brighid and just as frequently described as having nothing to do with Brighid, depending on who is doing the describing. According to Beck, an Irish-speaker in ancient times could be expected to drop the unstressed n-sound in Briganti, making the name Brig or Brighde simply the Irish pronunciation of Briganti.[21]

Historically speaking, St. Brigid of Kildare was a Leinster saint, and Ptolemy tells us that there was a colony of Brigantes resident in Leinster in pre-Christian times. This raises at least the strong possibility that the Brigantes brought the worship of their tribal goddess with them to Ireland and that her cult was based in Leinster, later giving rise to legends of the saint.

However, even if Brighid was originally Briganti, the two goddesses continued to evolve in quite different directions and we shouldn’t think of the Romano-British goddess Brigantia as being identical with Brighid, nor should we expect them to have the same associations or characteristics. It’s hard to tell what characteristics Briganti originally had, because all the inscriptions to this goddess come from the period of Roman rule. However, by examining the seemingly meager evidence closely we can learn a lot more than is apparent at first glance.

**The Brigantes**

The Brigantes were the most powerful tribal grouping in what is now northern England. When the Romans invaded in 47, the Brigantes allied with them in an attempt to safeguard their own independence, but a strong anti-Roman faction in the tribe rebelled and forced the Roman governor to abandon his campaign in Wales to come north and suppress their rebellion.

The pro-Roman faction was led by Queen Cartimandua, who actually handed the resistance leader Caratacus over to the Romans when he sought sanctuary with her. Her husband Choochoolain must have sympathized with the anti-Roman faction, because he rebelled against her and started a civil war among the Brigantes. Cartimandua married her ex-husband's armor-bearer Vellocatus and declared him king, but was forced to flee into exile in 69. The Brigantes then waged a prolonged resistance campaign against Roman rule, possibly led by another queen- Tacitus mentions a Brigantian queen who almost defeated the Roman armies.

The Brigantes were not fully conquered until the reign of Antoninus Pius, probably some time in the 140s. This would have been about sixty years before the dedications to Brigantia, but the political situation in north Britain had changed radically by that time. High-ranking members of the Brigantes were granted Roman citizenship, and a Roman emperor came to the Brigantian kingdom to help defend them from raids by the Caledonians. By the time the dedications to Brigantia were made, prominent Brigantes were eager to display their loyalty to Rome and its emperor.

**The Dedications**

The surviving inscriptions to Brigantia were all created within a fairly short span of time during the reign of Rome's Severan dynasty in the third century. Seven inscriptions have been found:

1- An inscribed altar found at Adel in the area of Leeds, interpreted as *Deae Brigantia donavit Cingetissa.* This means "Presented by Cingetissa to the Goddess Brigantia."[22] According to Noemi Beck, the name Cingetissa is of Celtic origin and can be translated as either "the warrior" or "the attacker." There is a symbol of a snake on one side of the altar.[23]

2- An inscription from South Shields, interpreted as *Deae Brigantiae sacrum Congennicus votum solvit libens merito.* This means that the altar is sacred to the Goddess Brigantia, and that it was dedicated by a man named Congennicus in fulfillment of a vow.[24] According to Beck, Congennicus is a Celtic name. The altar also includes images of a bird, a jug and a libation bowl or patera.[25]

3- An inscribed altar from Greetland, interpreted as *Deae Victoriae Brigantiae et Numinibus Augustorum T. Aurelius Aurelianus dono dedit pro se et suis et macs….* This means that a man named T. Aurelius Aurelianus set up the altar as a gift on behalf of himself and his family to the Goddess Victory Brigantia and the imperial numen.[26]

4- An inscribed altar found near Castleford, interpreted as *Deae Victoriae Brigantiae aram dedicavit Aurelius Senopianus.* This means "Dedicated by Aurelius Senopianus to the Goddess Victory Brigantia."[27]

5- An inscribed altar from Northumberland, interpreted as *Iovi Aeterno Dolicheno et Caelesti Brigantiae et Saluti C. Iulius Apolinaris centurio legionis vi iussu dei.* This means that a centurion of the Sixth Legion named C. Julius Apolinaris erected this altar to Jupiter Eternal Dolichenus, Caelestis Brigantia and Health, by command of a god. The word translated as "health" could possibly mean "safety," and the initial interpreted as *dei* or "the god" could be *deorum* or "the gods." This altar also has a carving that may be a disk and crescent (a known symbol of Caelestis), a crowned spirit with a cornucopia pouring a libation on an altar stone, a cupid with a sickle and grapes and two faces that might be intended as the sun and moon.[28]

6- An inscribed carving from Birrens in Dumfriesshire, southern Scotland, interpreted as *Brigantiae sacrum Amandus arcitectus ex imperio imp….* This means that the image is sacred to Brigantia and that it was erected by an architect named Amandus, acting under orders. This is the famous carving of Brigantia holding a spear at her side and a globe in her left hand. She wears a medallion of the gorgon's head.[29]

7- An inscribed altar interpreted as *Deae Nymphae Brigantiae quod voverat pro salute et incolumitate domini nostri invicti imperatoris M. Aurelii Severi Antonini Pii Felicis Augusti totiusque domus divinae eius M. Cocceius Nigrinus procurator Augusti nostri devotissimus numini maiestatique eius votum solvit libens merito.* This means that M. Cocceius Nigrinus, an imperial procurator, dedicated the altar to the Nymph Goddess Brigantia in fulfillment of a vow he had made when requesting protection for the "invincible emperor M. Aurelius Severus Antoninus, pious, fortunate and august," and for the members of his family.[30]

There is also an inscribed altar from Longwood, interpreted as *Deo Breganti et numinibus Augustorum T. Aurelius Quintus dono dedit pecunia et sumptu suo.* This means that a man named T. Aurelius Quintus dedicated the altar at his own expense to the god Brigans and the imperial numen.[31]

Nothing is known about the god Brigans, but given the location it is plausible that Brigans could be a male form of Briganti or a male consort of Briganti.

Finally, there is an inscribed pillar from Auxey, Côte d'Or, France, reading *Iccavos Oppianicnos ieuru Brigindon cantalon.* According to Beck, this is a Gaulish-language inscription indicating that Iccauos son of Oppianos dedicated the pillar to Brigindona. There are no other identifying details about the nature of this goddess, but the location of the pillar suggests to Beck that

Brigindona was the goddess of a nearby high place.[32] The inscription could also be read as *Brigindoni*, which would be the dative form of Brigindu according to Anwyl, so references to Brigindu and Brigindona actually both relate to this one inscription. References to Berecynthia as a form of Brighid also relate to the same inscription, as Anwyl connected the Brigindu mentioned here to the Berecynthia mentioned by Gregory of Tours without giving any evidence for this speculation.[33] Whoever Brigindu or Brigindona was, no other inscriptions to her have been found.

**Dea Brigantia**

These inscriptions may not seem to tell us much, but there is a surprising wealth of detail if we examine them closely. First, we know that the original Celtic or Brythonic form of the name would have been Briganti. Given that the inscriptions are centered in the tribal territory of the Brigantes, it seems clear that Briganti must have been the tutelary deity of this tribe. Some historians of Roman Britain have suggested that the Roman government itself created the goddess Brigantia as a deified abstraction of North Britain. However, the use of a Celtic theonym and the fact that some of the inscriptions were created by people with purely Celtic names make this unlikely. According to Jolliffe, the use of the prefix Dea or "goddess" means that the goddess could not have been of Roman origins, because this prefix is used only for non-Roman goddesses.

However, some of the inscriptions to Brigantia show evidence of a complex and highly syncretistic form of worship, making it difficult to tell what the worship of Briganti might have been like before Roman influence. The two altars set up by worshipers with Celtic names show the least evidence of syncretism, possibly giving us some clues about Briganti's original nature.

Cingetissa's altar includes a carving of a snake. As there are no snakes in Ireland, the Irish Brighid has no traditional snake associations. However, the Scottish Bride is strongly associated with snakes, raising the possibility that Scottish lore about Bride may have been influenced by Brythonic lore about Briganti at some distant point in time. (The gorgon head in the Birrens carving may relate to the same symbolism.) Snakes are generally a cthonic symbol and are associated with healing. Cingetissa's martial name may imply that Briganti was a martial deity, and this role would be expected of a tribal goddess.

The altar set up by Congennicus shows a bird, a jug and a patera or libation bowl. The bird can be taken to mean that Briganti had celestial associations. The jug-and-patera was a generic symbol for religious piety in the Greco-Roman world, and despite the fact that Congennicus had a Celtic name he may have been using the symbol in this generic sense. Alternatively, the symbol may refer to the actual use of the jug and patera in worship. Everyday religious practice in ancient Greece and Rome included a simple ritual in which the worshiper would hold the

patera in the outstretched right hand and pour an offering of wine or some other liquid into the patera from a jug held in the left hand.

From these two inscriptions, we can infer that Briganti had cthonic and healing associations, as symbolized by the snake, celestial associations, as symbolized by the bird, and was worshiped via libation, as symbolized by the jug and patera.

**Victory Brigantia**

Out of the seven known inscriptions to Brigantia, two syncretize her with the Roman goddess Victory. The carving found at Birrens also depicts her with the wings of Victory on her back. So, three out of the seven known references to Brigantia equate her with Victory.

This raises the question- why would Brigantia be equated with a deified abstraction worshiped by Roman soldiers? The answer can be found in the history of the area during the years in which the inscriptions were made.

In 195, Britain's Roman governor Claudius Albinus rebelled against Septimius Severus and took his legions across the channel into Gaul. He was defeated at the Battle of Lugdunum and his legions were sent back to Britain in greatly weakened condition. Seeing an opportunity, Caledonian tribesmen from north of Hadrian's Wall began raiding across the border in great numbers.

In 208, Severus landed in Britain with an army of 40,000 men and rebuilt Hadrian's Wall before invading Caledonia in reprisal for the raids. For the next few years, he waged a costly and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to conquer the Caledonians before dying of illness at York. His son Caracalla, who became the second emperor of the Severan dynasty, was with him on his campaigns into Caledonia but returned to Rome when he died.

The inscriptions to Victory Brigantia have to be understood in the context of these events. The tribal territory of the Brigantes would have been under constant threat from Caledonian raids, and a Brigante warrior of that generation would not have seen the Roman soldiers as an occupying army but as a welcome defense against attackers from the north. Brigantia need not have been a particularly warlike goddess to be invoked as Victory in this context- as the tribal goddess of the Brigantes, she was naturally responsible for their success in battle. Many Brigante auxiliaries must have accompanied the Roman army as it struck north against the Caledonians, and even though the Romans failed to conquer Caledonia they did cause enough damage to discourage raiding for many years.

In the ancient world, worshipers would often vow to set up an altar to a deity if their prayers were answered. The altar would usually include a stock phrase reading "So-and-so set up this altar to deity such-and-such willingly and deservedly in fulfillment of a vow." From the

perspective of a Brigante tribesman of that era, the prayers and offerings to Victory Brigantia were a success. Caledonian raids were curtailed and the lands and homes of the Brigantes were made safe.

According to the *Nine Elements of Clann Bhríde*, our goddess "manifests in warrior form only to defend against open aggression." The inscriptions to Brigantia as Victory confirm this assertion, as the Brigantes cannot be held responsible for the imperialism of the Romans and were only fighting to defend their own lands from Caledonian attack.

**Celestial Brigantia**

The presence of a Roman emperor in Britain had a direct influence on the culture of the Brigantes and the worship of their goddess Brigantia. To encourage the Brigantes during the campaigns against the Caledonians, the Roman government seems to have actively encouraged the worship of Brigantia and the syncretism of the Celtic goddess with a North African goddess favored by the emperor himself.

This goddess was originally known as Tanit, the mother goddess of the Carthaginians. After the Roman conquest of Carthage, Tanit was worshiped as Juno Caelestis or "Celestial Juno," but the name of this syncretic deity was almost always shortened to Caelestis. The goddess Caelestis was a virgin mother, equated with Victory and Minerva as well as Juno. She was a sky goddess who rode on the back of a lion wielding a thunderbolt.

Under the name of Caelestis, Tanit continued to be the most important deity of North Africa for centuries, and was still worshiped for a time even after the Roman Empire became primarily Christian. The emperor who originally brought the worship of Caelestis to Rome was none other than Septimius Severus, the same emperor who came to Britain in 208 to help the Brigantes fend off the Caledonians. Severus himself was from North Africa, so his worship of a North African goddess is unremarkable. However, it does explain the remarkable circumstance of a Celtic goddess like Brigantia being equated to a Phoenician goddess like Caelestis.

C. Julius Apolinaris of the Sixth Legion was apparently a worshiper of Jupiter Eternal Dolichenus and Caelestis. Jupiter Eternal Dolichenus was the Roman name for the Syrian Ba'al of Dolichene, god of an initiatory mystery religion popular during this period. The empress herself was a Syrian woman whose family were hereditary priests, so a soldier wishing to demonstrate his loyalty to the imperial family might well have done so by worship of a Syrian Jupiter and the emperor's favorite North African goddess.

C. Julius Apolinaris seems to have been ill, and to have received a dream instruction from the deities to erect an altar to Jupiter Eternal Dolichenus, Caelestis and Health. The practice of seeking a dream instruction from a deity was called *incubatio* and was a popular practice at many ancient temples associated with healing deities. When the centurion followed the

instructions of the god and erected an altar, he equated Caelestis with the most powerful local goddess in the region in which he was stationed- the goddess Brigantia.

If that was the only reason for the equation of Brigantia and Caelestis, it wouldn't tell us much. We would probably be justified in inferring that Brigantia had a celestial aspect, or else the equation with Caelestis wouldn't make much sense, but otherwise the equation of the two could be explained as a matter of convenience.

However, Caelestis was not worshiped merely as a minor local variant on Juno but as a universal Goddess and "queen of heaven." Worshipers of Caelestis, like worshipers of Isis, interpreted local goddesses as aspects of their own supreme deity.

The carving of Brigantia found at Birrens suggests that the cult of Brigantia merged with that of Caelestis during the Severan campaigns in Britain, probably with strong encouragement from the imperial government. (The architect who put up the carving actually notes that he did so under orders, and the carving was found in the walls of the Roman fort rebuilt for the Severan campaign.)

The inscription on the Birrens carving refers only to the goddess Brigantia and does not equate her with any other deity. However, the symbolism of the carving itself is a complex syncretic mix. Brigantia is portrayed with the wings of Victory, armed and appareled like Minerva, holding the globe of the world in the palm of her left hand. She wears a medallion of the gorgon's head around her neck, further strengthening the identification with Minerva. Brigantia stands beside an omphaloid stone, a known symbol of North African goddesses such as Caelestis. She wears what has been interpreted as a horned helmet, most likely of Celtic type, and a mural crown. The mural crown probably symbolizes her status as the Sovereignty goddess of the Brigantes, as its usual symbolism in Roman religious art is to indicate the goddess who brings fortune to a particular territory. According to Jolliffe, the only other winged Minerva from the ancient world was found in North Africa and was probably intended as a statue of Caelestis.

The symbolism of this carving is obviously much richer and more complicated than most pagans have realized, and contains a strange mix of Celtic, Roman and North African concepts. Brigantia is portrayed as:

1- a warrior goddess (the Victory symbolism).

2- a virgin culture goddess (the Minerva symbolism).

3- a territorial goddess (the mural crown).

4- a world-ruler and universal goddess (the globe in her hand).

5- a cosmic and celestial goddess (the Caelestis symbolism).

This statue indicates that Brigantia was worshiped as a universal Goddess and ruler of the entire world, not simply as the goddess of the Brigantes. This interpretation of Brigantia may have reflected older Celtic beliefs (the Brigantes may well have seen their own tribal goddess as a world-ruler) or may be solely due to the Severan dynasty's fascination with Caelestis, and the desire of some members of the Brigante tribe to curry favor with the Roman emperor[34].

**Nymph Brigantia**

The dedication by M. Cocceius Nigrinus to the "Nymph Goddess Brigantia" is a little incongruous, as the rather severe image of Brigantia at Birrens hardly brings the word "nymph" to mind. However, the use of the word "nymph" here actually gives us a lot of information about the goddess Brigantia.

According to Beck, a nymph (in the original Greek or Roman context) is generally a beautiful young water goddess, often associated with healing shrines. Nymphs were usually portrayed either naked or only partially clothed, and were often represented in triple form.

After the Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain, native water goddesses and spirits were often described as nymphs, and many dedications to the nymphs have been found in Celtic areas. They were often syncretized with the Matres, the localized triple mother goddesses worshiped all over Gaul, Britain and Germany. Beck notes that this identification with the Matres was most common in association with healing waters[35].

Brigantia, in her original form as Briganti, must have been associated with rivers- otherwise rivers such as the Braint in Anglesey and the Brent in Middlesex would not have been named after her[36]. The dedication to the Nymph Goddess Brigantia suggests that she was seen as being a beautiful young woman, or at least that she could manifest in such a form, and that she was associated with healing waters.

The dedication by C. Julius Apolinaris of the Sixth Legion was also made in the context of a request for healing. It is likely that the martial imagery associated with Brigantia was often interpreted symbolically, with Brigantia as a warrior against diseases rather than against enemy soldiers. The Celtic Mars was often invoked for healing purposes, so this type of symbolism was well-known in ancient times. In addition, the Scottish Bride is invoked as Bride of the Victories in healing charms using distinctly martial imagery.

Although none of the North British dedications to Brigantia identify her with the Matres or portray her as a triple goddess, the identification of Brigantia as a nymph suggests (in a Celtic context) that we should expect such connections. The existence of a dedication to the Matres

Brigaecae from Celtiberia confirms this suggestion, and implies that the Matres Brigaecae were simply a triple form of the same deity.

This dedication was found at Peñalba de Castro, and has been interpreted as *Matribus Brigaecis Laelius Phainus votum solvit libens merito,* which means that a man named Laelius Phainus "willingly and deservedly" fulfilled the vow he had made to the Matres Brigaecae.

If the Matres Brigaecae were really a triple form of the goddess Briganti, they could be the origin of the three Brighids of Irish lore.

**New Evidence**

In 2014 (while this article was being written!) a volunteer archeologist discovered the carved head of a goddess from a Romano-British shrine at South Shields, a fragment from a small statue of Brigantia. The statue seems to have been broken up and disposed of around 208 AD, probably because it was in the way of renovations to the Roman fort at this location.

The carving depicts a smiling goddess wearing a crown in the shape of a city wall with battlements, indicating her role as a protective deity. Her face seems to have originally been painted pink, and her lips red. Her hair is wavy and her facial expression looks serene and gentle[37].

**Conclusions**

If we combine all of the evidence we have about Brigantia, a surprisingly complete picture emerges. Brigantia was a goddess of both the sky and the underworld (symbolized by a bird and a snake respectively). She was a goddess of rivers and healing waters who could manifest as a beautiful young woman or as a stern, spear-wielding warrior. She waged war against the spirits of disease, who may have been represented by snake-like monsters. When her people were under attack she protected them and brought them victory in battle. She was both a virgin goddess and a mother, and was probably seen (like Minerva with whom she was equated) as a goddess of wisdom and the arts. She could sometimes manifest in triple form, but could also appear as a universal, cosmic goddess holding the entire world in the palm of her hand.

**5- Coventina**

Coventina was the local but highly-revered goddess of a sacred spring located at Carrowburgh on Hadrian's Wall. Although she was never directly equated with Minerva in any inscription, a dedication to Minerva has been found at her shrine. This implies that Coventina herself was probably seen as one of the Celtic Minervas.

The dedications to Coventina describe her as “Augusta” or “august,” and “Sancta” or “holy,” two epithets usually reserved for the most important of Roman gods. Most of her dedications were left by Roman soldiers of Celtic or German ethnicity stationed on Hadrian’s Wall. However, the very large number of coins and pieces of jewelry left at the shrine imply that she also had a substantial number of civilian devotees from the local area.

**Depiction**

Coventina is depicted in two carvings. In one she is portrayed as a reclining woman holding a waterlily leaf and resting her arm against a pitcher out of which water is flowing. In the other, she is depicted as a triad of nymphs holding goblets. One of her dedications refers to her as a nymph, and all of the imagery associated with her emphasizes her connection with water. Coventina seems to have been a goddess of the local healing well, but one who was credited with great power and high status by those who worshiped her[38].

**6- Damona**

**A Gaulish Cow Goddess**

Damona is a goddess from ancient Gaul, associated with healing springs at several locations. According to Beck, her name probably means “The Cow Goddess.”[39] In Gaelic lore, Brighid is said to be accompanied by a white cow with red ears.

One of the inscriptions to Damona describes her as Damona Matuberginnis. According to Beck, this can mean either “Damona of the Hill of the Bear” or “Damona the Good High One,” depending on whether *Matu* shuld be read as meaning “bear” or “good.”[40]

As Damona is associated with cows and healing springs rather than bears and hills, it seems more likely that the second interpretation is correct, and that Damona’s epithet of Matuberginnis means something like “The Good High One” or “The Favorable Exalted One,” connecting her with the Brigidine goddesses[41].

**Depiction**

A damaged statue of a partially nude woman with wide hips and small breasts was found at Bourbonnes-les-Bains.

A small statue of a goddess wearing a cloak and nursing two infants was found at Chassenay, along with a fragment of a marble arm with a snake wrapped around it.

A statue of a goddess with wavy red hair, a green diadem and a corn headband was found at Alise-Sainte-Reine, holding a snake in her hand to symbolize her healing powers.

These images may or may not represent Damona[42].

**Associations**

Damona was associated with different gods at different locations, although they all seem to have been healing gods. At Bourbonnes-les-Bains she was associated with Borvo, the god of the hot springs whose name means "The Bubbling One." At Chassenay she was associated with Albius, and at Alise-Sainte-Reine with Moritasgus.

The hot-springs at Bourbonnes-les-Bains featured a large complex of public baths and swimming areas, at which eight dedications to Damona and Borvo have been found, along with one dedication to Damona on her own. One of the dedications equates Borvo with Apollo, and one gives Damona the epithet "August Damona." Several of the dedicators describe themselves as members of the Lingones tribe and one specifies that the dedication is made for the well-being of the dedicator's daughter.

Damona and Borvo were also worshiped together at Bourbon-Lancy, but the fragmentary nature of the surviving inscriptions makes interpretation difficult except to say that high-ranking members of the Aedui tribe were involved in their worship.

A dedication to Damona at Chassenay pairs her with a god named Albius whose name means "The White One" or "The Brilliant One." Beck suggests a connection between Albius and the god Vindonnus, whose name has the same meaning.

A dedication to Damona at Alise-Sainte-Reine pairs her with Apollo Moritasgus, whose Celtic epithet either means "The Sea Badger" or "The One Who Seeks the Sea."

The dedication to Damona Matuberginnis was found at Saintes in the southwestern part of Gaul. It has been interpreted as *Jullia Malla Malluronis filia Numinibus Augustorum et deae Damonae Matuberginni ob memoriam Sulpiciae Silvanae, filiae suae, de suo posuit,* which means that a woman named Jullia Malla made the dedication in memory of her daughter Sulpicia Silvana to the divine powers and to Damona Matuberginnis. Note that this is the second dedication to Damona on behalf of a daughter[43].

**Worship**

At Bourbonnes-les-Bains, worshipers of Damona and Borvo threw rings and other jewelry, two wooden sculptures of human heads and 4700 coins into the waters, along with acorns, fruit pits and nuts in great numbers.

At Chassenay, coins and vases were offered to Damona and Albius, along with a patera or libation bowl showing an image of a ram.

At Alise-Sainte-Reine, worshipers of Damona and Moritasgus left a number of images depicting the body parts they wanted healed.

Vases have also been found near the location of the Saintes inscription[44].

**7- Senuna**

**The Old One**

In 2002, a metal detectorist named Alan Meek stumbled on the Ashwell Treasure Hoard in Hertfordshire. The hoard consisted of 27 precious objects, including pieces of old jewelry, coins, gold and silver plaques containing dedications to a goddess named Senuna and a silver statue of the deity. Further excavations revealed a temple and several other buildings, including what were most likely temple shops and accommodations for pilgrims[45].

At some point in the 3rd or 4th century, someone took all of the temple's treasures and buried them very carefully as if with the intention of retrieving them later once danger had passed.

The dedications to Senuna are in the same form as other ancient dedications, for instance "Servandus Hispani willingly fulfilled his vow."

Most of the images of Senuna show Minerva's spear and owl, making it clear that she was a goddess of the Celtic Minerva type. Her silver statue shows a woman with her hair up in a bun, but the facial features have worn away.

It has been suggested that her name may be related to the River Senua, which ancient geography placed in southern Britain. If her name is derived from the reconstructed Proto-Celtic *seno* or "old," then her name may mean "the Old One." Some of the offerings to the goddess seem to bear this out. Not only do worshipers seem to have offered her heirloom jewelry, they also deposited coins that were already centuries out of date and even genuinely ancient weapons and tools from the Bronze Age, as if this goddess preferred the oldest and most treasured items for offerings.

Irish and Scottish lore about the Cailleach always emphasizes her immense age, and even the word *cailleach* is not a name but a euphemism for a very old lady[46]. The discovery of the Senuna shrine may be evidence for a Brythonic cult of a similar deity, a version of the Celtic Minerva as an ancient woman[47].

According to an article by Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel, Senuna may be the same goddess invoked at Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges as Sena or "the Old One," and at Noricum as the Senae, a plural form[48]. The ancient Roman writer Pomponius Mela described a religious order of nine sworn virgins dedicated to a Gaulish deity on the island of Sena near Brittany. Stempel suggests that these priestesses were in fact devotees of the goddess Sena. Mela describes these priestesses as having a range of occult powers including healing, prophesy and shapeshifting. According to *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, this story may have inspired the legends of the Isle of Avalon[49].

**8- Sirona**

**The Starry One**

The goddess Sirona was never syncretized with Minerva, nor did she have any version of the *Brig* prefix in her name. Still, there are certain elements in her worship that link her with Brighid or with some of Brighid's aspects, placing her in the extended family of Brigidine goddesses.

First, Sirona was a healing goddess associated with hot-springs and wells; Brighid has always been associated with healing wells

Second, Sirona is usually depicted with a snake in her hands or twining around her arms; the Scottish Bride is also associated with snakes.

Third, Sirona is sometimes depicted holding a bowl full of eggs; Brighid is closely associated with dairy products of all kinds.

Fourth, Sirona's name means "The Starry One,"[50]; Brighid is also associated with the nighttime sky through the custom of making pictures of the sun, the moon and the stars to celebrate Imbolc.

Fifth, Sirona is invoked along with Apollo at the temple of Bricta and Luxovius, implying that Bricta and Sirona may have been connected somehow or that Bricta may have been a title or aspect of Sirona's.

The biggest difference between Sirona and goddesses such as Sulis or Brigantia is that Sirona was equated with Hygeia[51] (a Roman healing goddess) or Diana[52] rather than Minerva or Victoria.

**Dedications**

Dedications to Sirona have been found scattered all over ancient Gaul (and even as far away as Hungary), but the far majority of them were in the territory of the Treveri in what is now northeastern France and western Germany. The Treveri were a somewhat unusual tribe, in that they were unquestionably Celtic-speakers and worshipers of Celtic gods, yet they tended to identify with their Germanic neighbors and to disdain the Gaulish tribes as being soft.

Sirona was usually invoked with Apollo or Apollo Grannus, a healing Apollo of the Celtic type. For instance, one dedication found at Bitburg has been interpreted to read *In honorem domus divinae Apollini Granno et Sironae.* This means that the dedication was made in honor of the Divine House, Apollo Grannus and Sirona. The temples and shrines dedicated to this divine pair are always or almost always found at healing springs.

Some of the dedications to Sirona spell her name as Ðirona or Thirona. This indicates that the first letter in her name was actually pronounced as a Ts or St sound, difficult to express with Roman letters: *Tsirona*[53].

**Depictions**

Several carvings and statues of Sirona have survived. The most famous depicts her standing next to Apollo holding a snake in her right hand. She is naked above the waist, and a length of cloth from her skirt is draped elegantly over her left hand. Apollo, who is shown completely naked, holds a plectrum and a cithara.

Another carving of Sirona from La Fontaine des Romains shows her wearing a dress, her hair in the bun typical of classical goddesses.

A bust of Sirona from Sainte-Fontaine shows her with prominent eyes and possibly a necklace, with her long hair hanging down. According to Beck, this was seen at the time as an Egyptian hairstyle.

The statue of Sirona from the temple at Hochscheid shows her wearing a diadem and a dress, with a snake coiled around her right arm and a patera or libation bowl in her left hand, which may contain several eggs. She appears to be pointing at the patera. This statue depicts Sirona as Hygeia[54].

According to the Nemeton website, a relief image of Sirona from Vienne-en-Val shows her holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a patera in her right. She appears to be offering the patera to a snake at her feet. The cornucopia indicates that she was a goddess of abundance and prosperity as well as healing.

The Nemeton website also mentions another image of Sirona from Alzey, which shows her with a patera in her right hand and a long scepter in her left, with snakes above her[55].

**Conclusions**

Sirona's name connects her to the nighttime sky, but nothing in her worship or iconography offers strong support for this association. The bowl of eggs in her hand could possibly be interpreted as a symbol for the stars, and the Nemeton website argues unconvincingly that her diadem is star-shaped. Beck argues that her name could actually mean "The Heifer" rather than "The Starry One," but it is possible that the name is actually a pun.

According to Dineen's massive dictionary of colloquial Irish, the phrase *Bóthar Bó Finne* or "Road of the White Cow" was a traditional term for the Milky Way[56]. If this goes back to ancient belief, then it could be that a cow goddess is a star goddess and a star goddess is a cow goddess.

In any case, Sirona's most common symbolic attribute is definitely the snake, and her worship was strongly associated with healing waters.

Brighid's association with healing incorporates the concept of fire in water, which usually means the sun in water. Perhaps Sirona represents a variation on this concept, based on the reflection of stars in water rather than the sun.

**9- Sulis**

**Aquae Sulis: The Waters of Sulis**

Although Brigantia is now just as well-known as Sulis, the cult of Sulis was probably much larger and more significant in ancient Britain. There are only seven surviving dedications to Brigantia, but thirty-eight or thirty-nine to Sulis, along with one hundred and thirty curse tablets.

Before the Romans came to Britain, Sulis was the goddess of the hot spring and healing sanctuary at Bath in Somerset. After the Roman conquest, she was syncretized with Minerva, but she still retained her own name as well. Some of the inscriptions refer to Sulis and some to Sulis Minerva, so the Minerva identification never completely took over.

When the Romans arrived, they would have found a Celtic sanctuary sacred to Sulis at the hot-springs near the River Avon. Early worshipers of Sulis seem to have venerated her by leaving votive deposits of coins in the water- exactly like the modern custom of throwing coins into wishing wells[57].

The Romans replaced the original sanctuary with a magnificent temple, including a life-sized bronze statue of the goddess (of which only the head now survives). The temple and Roman baths became the center of the Roman town, and a pilgrimage destination for worshipers seeking healing from the goddess. The temple supported a haruspex, a type of Roman priest otherwise unknown in Britain. This might imply that the temple priesthood was highly Romanized except for the fact that Lucius Marcius Memor, a haruspex of the temple, erected a monument to Sulis without even equating her to Minerva[58].

Along with coins, devotees also threw a number of libation bowls or *patera* into the water, many inscribed with the initials DSM or the abbreviation *Dea Sul Min* meaning "to the goddess Sulis Minerva." Pieces of jewelry and other items were also left as offerings[59].

Images of Minerva frequently include some representation of the Medusa, such as the image of Medusa's head hanging from Brigantia's neck in the carving found at Birrens. At the temple to Sulis, the gorgon head is present but is masculine instead of feminine- a round bearded face with snakes growing out of it. Nobody knows why the gorgon head should be portrayed as a man instead of a woman in this one location, but perhaps it relates to some forgotten myth about Sulis from before the Roman conquest[60].

Just like Brighid, Sulis appears to have been worshiped by flamekeepers tending a perpetual fire. According to the third century writer Solinus:

"*(T)here are many great rivers and hot springs richly adorned for the use of men. Over these springs the Minerva is patron goddess and in her temple the eternal flames never whiten into ash, but when the flame declines it turns into rocky lumps*[61]*."*

**Dedications to Sulis**

The dedications to Sulis are too numerous to analyze every one, but most of them follow the same pattern as the dedications to other deities. For instance, one dedication states that Gaius Curiatius Saturninus, a centurion in the Second Augustan legion, made the dedication to Sulis Minerva and the Imperial numen in fulfillment of a vow. Another states that Priscus son of Toutus, a stonecutter and member of the Carnutes tribe, made the dedication willingly and deservedly in fulfillment of a vow[62].

**Curse Tablets**

Celtic deities in general were usually seen as having the ability to either curse or heal. Brighid the Poet, for instance, would have been responsible for both praise poetry and satire, and a satire was a type of curse with the power to kill.

Worshipers who called on Sulis for her cursing powers were usually concerned with punishing theft, as in the curse on the Docilianus Tablet. This tablet asks Sulis to inflict death, insomnia and childlessness (presumably not in that order) on the thief of a hooded cloak "whether man or woman, whether slave or free." The only way for the thief to avoid these looming ills would be to return the stolen item to the temple of Sulis[63]. Many of the curse tablets specify that the item will be left as an offering to the goddess if recovered successfully.

The words on the curse tablets were often inscribed in reverse order, most likely for magical reasons. For instance, one tablet includes the words *uq ihim maibliv tivaloni.* This seems like gibberish unless you assume that the words are backwards and missing a few letters, in which case it becomes *qui mihi vilbiam involavit*, or "whoever has stolen my vilbia." Scholars have not been able to figure out what a vilbia is, but the person who made the curse tablet was certainly angry about the theft- the rest of the curse tablet is a request to Sulis to turn the thief to liquid[64].

**A Sun Goddess?**

The etymology of the name Sulis cannot be firmly established. According to Beck, it could derive from a Celtic root *suli*, meaning "sight," which could possibly derive from an older Celtic or Indo-European word for the sun as a great eye. Medieval Irish and Welsh texts about the Body of Adam do identify the eyes with the sun, so this symbol was known to the Celtic peoples of the British Isles. However, few Celtic scholars seem to be confident about this etymology. It is plausible that hot-springs such as Aquae Sulis would be associated with the concept of fire in water, a central religious symbol of the ancient Celts, and this could in turn have been associated with a myth about the sun sinking down into the waters to warm them. However, Beck suggests that the name may simply relate to the cure of eye ailments, as the find of an oculist's stamp at the temple would suggest[65].

**A Triple Goddess?**

Some scholars have interpreted the Matres Suleviae as a triple-goddess form of Sulis, but according to Beck the two are unrelated as "Suleviae" is not the plural form of "Sulis."[66] However, there are also dedications to the Sulei, and there is a possibility that this word is related to Sulis.[67]

**10- Invocation of the Exalted Ones**

**Opening Blessing**

This is a ritual in honor of the Exalted Ones of Gaul and Britain. You can use this ritual to offer worship to any one of the goddesses or to all of them at once. Begin by pouring a libation of clear, cold water and lighting a candle with a prayer to Brighid such as this one:

*I will light my candle as Brighid lights it; Her candle is the sun and Her altar the earth. And as this little candle lights my room, may Her great candle light the universe.*

*Hail to you, oh foster-mother! Your love is a flame. Give me the strength to bear Your tenderness; give me the power to bear Your light. Let my heart become like a perpetual fire tended by the priestesses of all my thoughts.*

*Hail to you, oh woman-comrade! Hail to you, oh trusted friend! I will share my confidences with You today for I know You will comfort me; I will kindle my heart with Your light until I glow like gold.*

**The Divine Names**

The ritual itself begins with a chant in the language of the ancient Celts[68]. The use of a dead language in this chant is intentional, as the chant is intended to take you beyond the surface meaning of the words, to their sound and even deeper. You can use this chant for meditation purposes as well.

When you sing this chant, use any simple melody with no time signature. Beginning in front of your altar or facing east, walk slowly and reverently in a sunwise circle as you chant the divine names of the Exalted Ones:

Uediiumi Belisaman

Uediiumi Bergusian

Uediiumi Brictan

Uediiumi Brigantin

Uediiumi Damonan

Uediiumi Senunan

Uediiumi Sironan

Uediiumi Sulin

Rough Pronunciation: WEDeeYUmee BELissAMahn, WEDeeYUmee BERGussEEahn, WEDeeYUmee BRIKTahn, WEDeeYUmee BRIGahnTEEN, WEDeeYUmee DAHmoNAN, WEDeeYUmee SENooNAHN, WEDeeYUmee TSEERohNAHN, WEDeeYUmee SULeen.

The meaning of "uediiumi" is "I invoke" or "I pray to." This word appears in ancient Celtic inscriptions invoking the gods. If you only wish to invoke one of the goddesses, simply repeat her line over and over again instead of chanting all of them.

If you wish to invoke Brigindu or the Matres Brigaecae, who are not included in the chant[69], you can use "Uediiumi Brigantin." If you wish to invoke Coventina, you can use "Uediiumi Coventinan."

**Offering and Incense**

To make an offering to one of the Exalted Ones, light a stick of incense and then reverently place the objects to be offered to the deity in the place of offering. Visualize the deity in front of you and respectfully make any request you may have. In very serious cases, you can make a vow to do something in particular for the deity if your request is granted.

If you wish to perform the full ritual, leave all of the offerings and perform all of the visualizations described below. If you wish to invoke only one of the goddesses, perform her offering and visualization without the others.

**Belisama**

Suggested Visualization: A woman walking through a sacred grove in high summer.

Suggested Offering: Clear water.

**Bergusia**

Suggested Visualization: A woman working at a forge.

Suggested Offering: A vase with flowers in it.

**Bricta**

Suggested Visualization: A woman singing an incantation over a steaming cauldron or pool.

Suggested Offering: A bowl of herbs.

**Brigantia**

Suggested Visualization: A shining young woman with a spear in her right hand, holding the world in the palm of her left hand.

Suggested Offering: A libation poured into a small bowl held out in the right hand from a jug held in the left hand.

*Visualization and Offering for Brigindu is the same.*

**Damona**

Suggested Visualization: A woman with long, wavy red hair, wearing a green diadem and a headband made of woven grain. She nurses two infants at the same time.

Suggested Offering: Grains.

**Matres Brigaecae**

Suggested Visualization: Three seated women holding baskets overflowing with bread and fruit.

Suggested Offering: Bread and fruit.

**Senuna**

Suggested Visualization: A wise old woman wearing ancient jewelry.

Suggested Offering: Old coins or antique jewelry.

**Sirona**

Suggested Visualization: A woman holding a basket of eggs in her left hand while a snake curls around her right hand. A star shines from her brow.

Suggested Offerings: Eggs.

**Sulis**

Suggested Visualization: A woman who shines like the sun, surrounded by the steam from her hot-springs.

Suggested Offering: Coins in water.

**Closing Blessing**

Put out the candle, bow reverently, and recite a prayer to Brighid such as this one:

*Hail to You, oh shining mother, radiant mother of stars and worlds. Hail to You, oh shining starsmith, radiant forger of worlds and suns. Hail to You, oh shining ocean, oh river of milk and light, oh queen of time.*

*Oh Brighid of the setting sun, You sleep in the ocean like a bed of flowers; the river of the heavens is the milk of Your cow and the roots of the Tree of Life are like a pillow for Your head.*

*Sun of the evening, Your steps are proud; the clouds of the heavens are the fields of Your wandering. The stars of the heavens are Your sisters and children; the ocean is Your bed and the world is Your garden.*

*Oh Brighid of the starlight, may my prayers rise up to You, may they rise like smoke to You, from the offering of my heart. Oh Brighid of the starlight, be ever near to me, so close that I cannot see where You end and I begin.*

*Guide me, oh Brighid, across the ocean of night, like a star above the deep roaring waters. As you once forged my body in the core of Your star, may the same star now guide me through the darkness.*

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2 http://www.deomercurio.be/en/minervae.html

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37http://www.hadrianswallquest.co.uk/news/northern-goddess-discovered

38Celtic Goddesses – Warriors, Virgins and Mothers; Miranda Green

39Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

40The word *matu* on its own meant "good," like the modern Gaelic word *math*. *Berg* is "high," from the same root as the other Brig names. *Matu* was sometimes used as a euphemism for *artos* or "bear" on the "speak of the devil" principle.

41Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

42Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

43Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

44Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

45http://www.nharchsoc.org/?page_id=26

46The word actually means "the veiled one," referring to a nun's veil, but was used for any very old woman. Therefore, it could not have been her original name in pre-Christian times.

47However, the Cailleach is frequently a horrific entity, and nothing about Senuna implies the same.

48"The Old Celtic Goddess Sena: A New Testimony from Aquitaine" by Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel, published in VELEIA, 24-25, 2007-2008

49Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia, Edited by John T. Koch, page 146

50http://www.celtnet.org.uk/gods_s/sirona.html

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65Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

66Beck, Noémie, *Goddesses in Celtic Religion,* 2009

67http://www.celtnet.org.uk/gods_s/sulevia.html

68Gaulish or Gallo-Brythonic.

69No one can say for sure whether Brigindu or Brigindona is the correct form, so it is difficult to construct a grammatically-correct chant for this goddess in Gaulish. Matres Brigaecae is also difficult because the name combines Gaulish and Latin elements and does not fit the octosyllabic Gaulish poetic meter used for the chant. For the purpose of this chant, I chose to treat these goddesses as being included in the invocation of Briganti, the original Brythonic version of the divine name Brigantia. Coventina may be substituted for Sulis or Bricta if preferred, as they are all healing spring goddesses. -Gilbride

**Choochoolain's Afterword**

I wish to preface, I am not a member of Clann Bhríde, although I was in their Facebook group for a time.

It is my opinion that Brighid, Brigantia, Sulis, and other Celtic and Celtic-adjacent goddesses are the same entity. However, I don't believe that Athena or Minerva are the same goddess as Brighid. I have a number of reasons to support this.

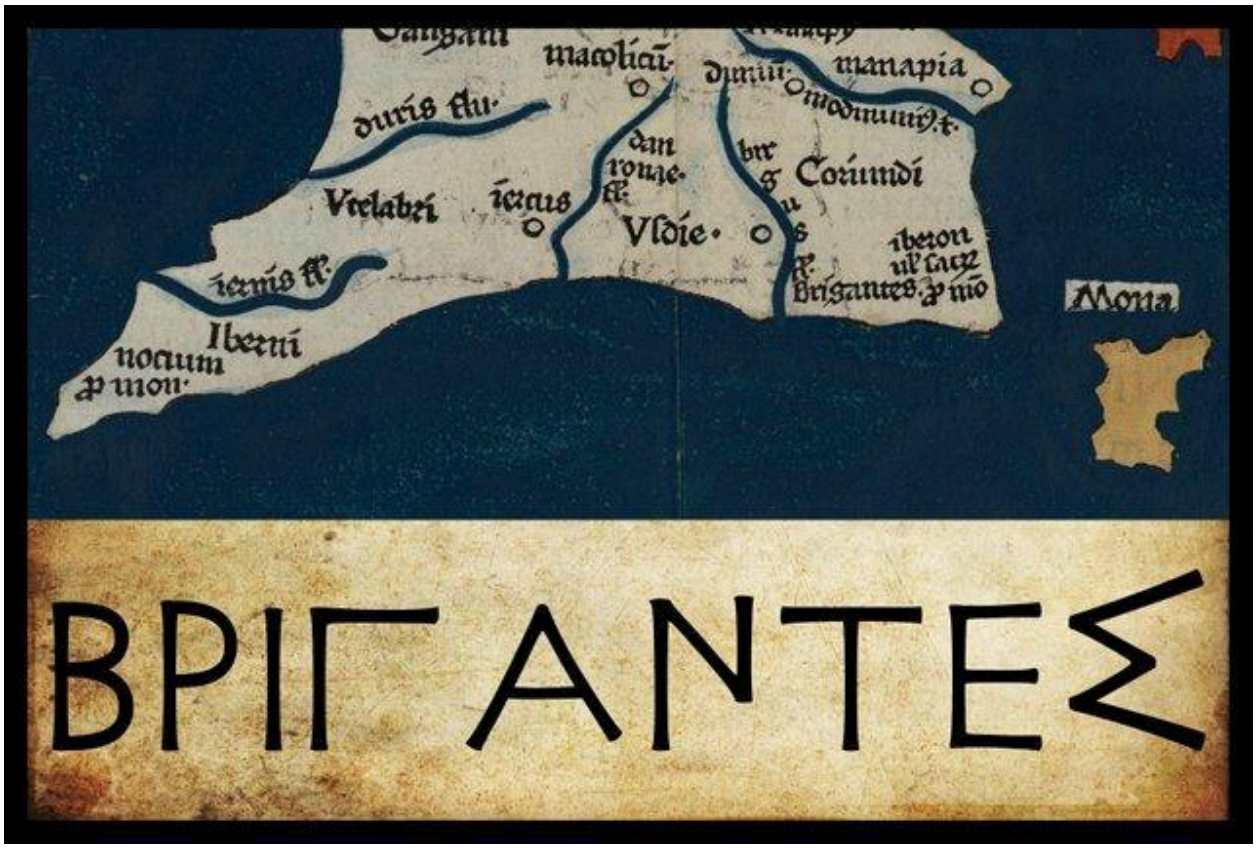
The Greek and Roman goddesses are known as virgin goddesses, while the Celtic "equivalents'' are never outright seen as virgins and sometimes depicted as mothers. The Romans had even noticed themselves that the Celtic equivalents appeared different in nature and as a believer in literal entities as deities, I believe this is important. In no place among the Celtic gods is there owl symbolism. As such an important animal to the other two deities, it seems odd that the

association would be missing from them. Lastly, neither Minerva nor Athena are water deities.

However, this belief is a matter of personal gnosis, and I recognize the wealth of associations these goddesses share, but as I said before, similarities between gods of different places may just be the fulfillment of a role within the pantheon by someone with those skills, much like corporations.

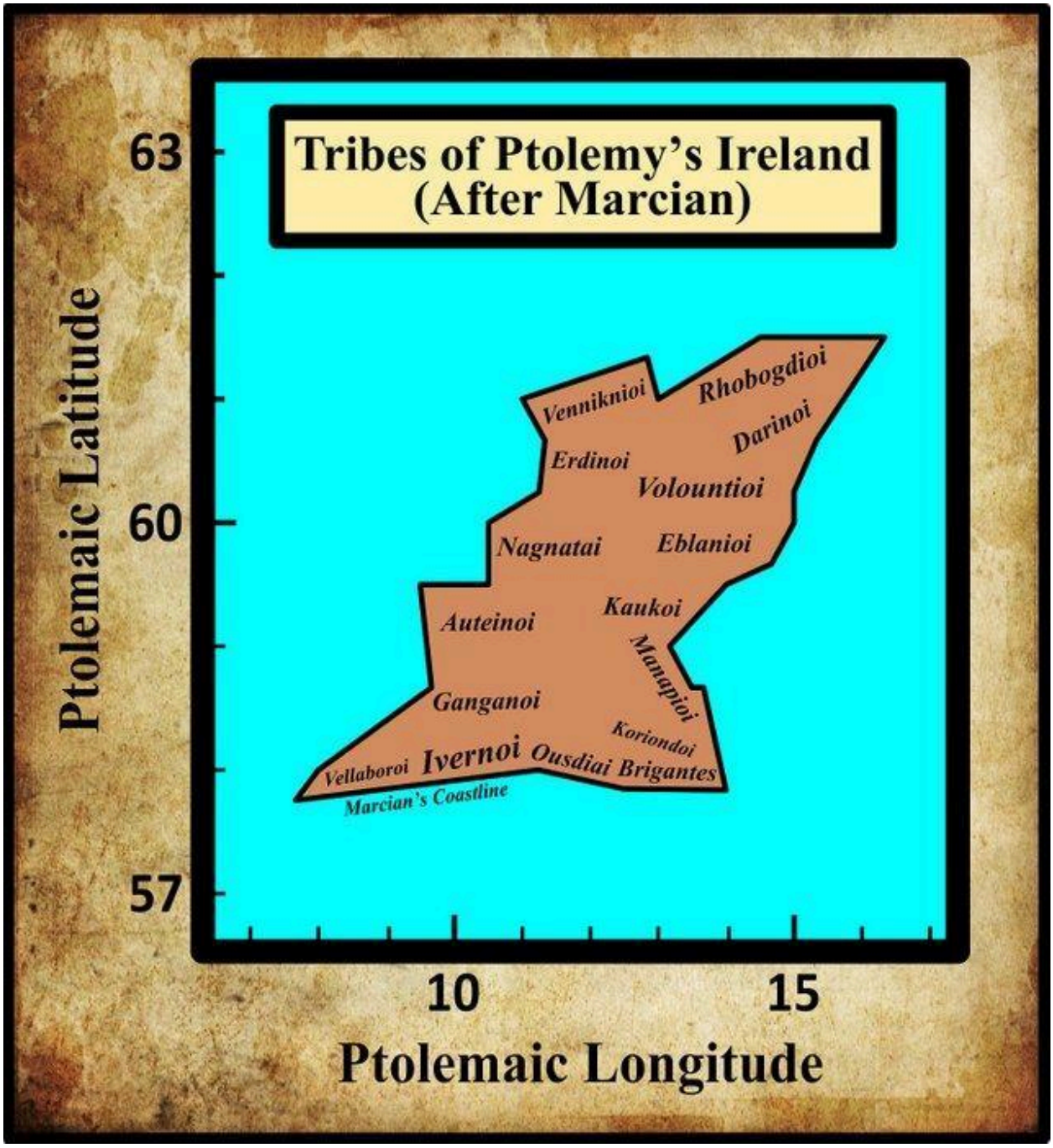
## Βριγαντες by harlotscurse

*Ptolemy's Map of Ireland – Part 43*




**Brigantes**

In his description of Ireland, *Geography* 2:2 §§ 1-10, Claudius Ptolemy records the disposition of sixteen native tribes. Beginning, as before, in the southeast corner of the island and proceeding in a counterclockwise direction, the first of these are the Brigantes. These people are described as lying to the east of the Ivernoi, who are placed on the south coast of the island, and to the south of the Koriondoi, who are placed on the east coast.




**Ptolemy's Tribes of Ireland (After Marcian)**

**Variants**

In his 1883 edition of Ptolemy's *Geography*, Karl Müller notes only one variant reading of this tribal name:

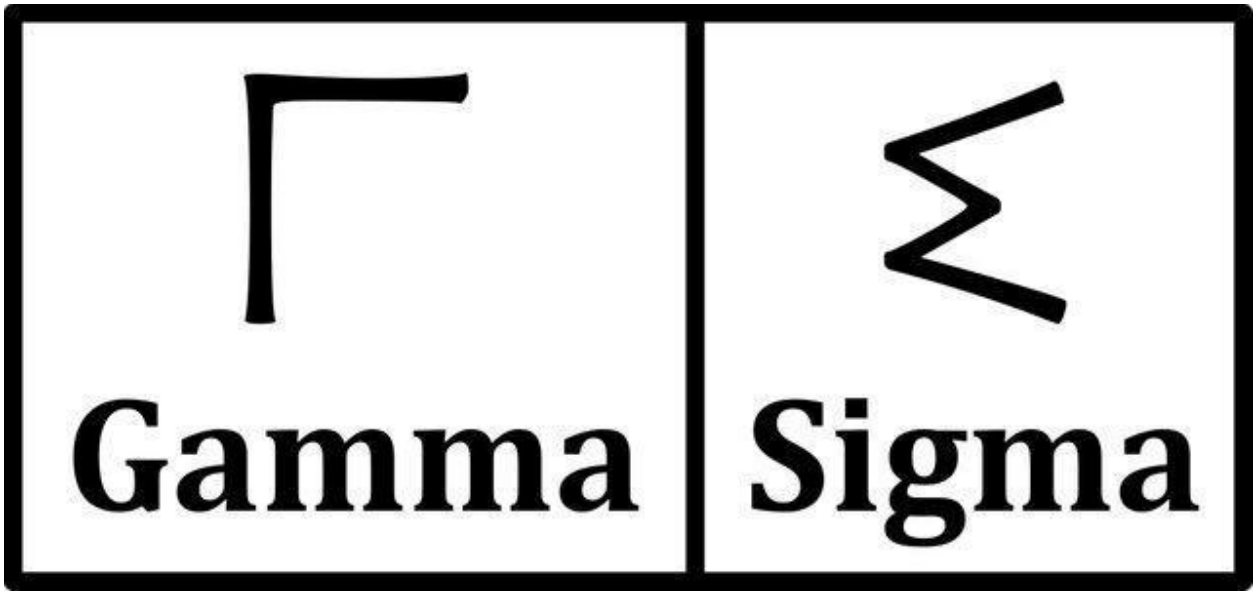
| Source | Greek | English |
|---|---|---|
| Most MS | Βριγαντες | Brigantes |
| Σ, Φ | Βρισαντες | Brisantes |
| X | Βριγαντας | Brigantas |

- **Σ** and **Φ** are two manuscripts from the Laurentian Library in Florence: **Florentinus Laurentianus 28, 9** and **Florentinus Laurentianus 28, 38**.
- **X** is Vaticanus Graecus 191, which dates from about 1296. It is believed that this manuscript preserves a very ancient tradition. Ptolemy's description of Ireland is on folia 138v–139r.

The first of these variants can be safely dismissed as a transcriptional error. There is some slight similarity between the Ptolemaic forms of the Greek letters gamma (*g*) and sigma (*s*), so there is nothing unusual in their being occasionally confused.

The second variant is not actually noted by Müller, but it is clearly legible in Vat Gr 191 and has been noted by other students of the *Geography*. Why Müller, who includes Vat Gr 191 among his sources, omits it I cannot say. Although there is not much similarity between the Ptolemaic forms of alpha and epsilon, their lowercase forms, introduced in the Middle Ages by Byzantine editors, are quite similar and could easily be mistaken for each other.

That Βριγαντες [Brigantes] is the correct form will be clear from the following analysis.




**Ptolemaic Forms of Gamma and Sigma**

**Briganties**

The identity of Ptolemy's Brigantes has been established beyond all conjecture by students of the *Geography*. Ptolemy also locates a tribe of Brigantes in northern Britain. Karl Müller thought that these were not actually related:

> Above, we surmised that this name, well known in Britain, is perhaps not applicable to Ireland. (Müller 78)

T F O'Rahilly, however, had no doubt that the British and Irish Brigantes were related:



**T F O'Rahilly**

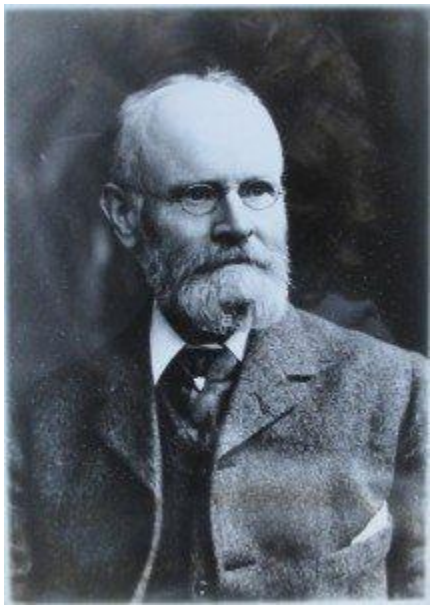
> Finally we have the Brigantes, in South Wexford, whom it is hardly possible to disassociate from the Brigantes of Britain. At the time of the Roman conquest the latter were located in what is now the north of England; but it is permissible to suppose that at an earlier period they had dwelt further to the south, and that they had moved northwards as a result of the displacement of population caused by later invasions of the south and south-west of Britain from the Continent. Inasmuch as the British Brigantes belonged beyond question to the Belgic (not the Pritenic) section of the population of Britain, we are safe in assuming that

> that section of them which settled in Co. Wexford belonged to the Builg or Érainn. (O'Rahilly 34)

He goes on to identify these Irish Brigantes with the Uí Bairrche, a Celtic tribe located in this part of the country in historical times:

> The Uí Bairrche, whose original home was in South Wexford, may be taken to be the historical representatives of Ptolemy's Brigantes. their traditional ancestor is Dáire Barrach ... their descent from Dáire can only mean that ... the Uí Bairrche regarded themselves as Érainn. *Bairrche* in *Uí Bairrche* might be genitive of Celt[ic] **Barrekā*, fem[inine], while *Barrach* could represent **Barrekos*. With this is to be compared the British deity-name **Barreks*, identified with Mars in a Latin dedication M(ARTI) BARREKI found at Carlisle, in the territory of the Brigantes. These names are obviously to be connected with Ir[ish] *barr*, W[elsh] *bar*, 'summit', and would mean 'the high god', 'the high goddess'. So the Brigantes take their name from **Brigantī*, 'the high goddess' (whence W[elsh] *Braint*, the name of a river in Anglesey), of which the Irish counterpart is *Brigit* (goddess and river name), < **Brigentī*; in inscriptions found in the territory of the Brigantes her name is latinized *Brigantia*. (O'Rahilly 37-38)

Goddard Orpen had already made the connection between the Brythonic Brigantes of northern Britain, Ptolemy's Irish Brigantes, and the Celtic goddess Brigit:



**Goddard Orpen**

> Finally on the south side we have the river Βίργος [Birgos], in the position of the Barrow (Ir. *Berbha*), and the people called Βρίγαντες [Brigantes] in the south-eastern corner. The pagan Irish had a goddess Brigit long before their Christian descendants rejoiced in a saint of that name. This name *Brigit*, genitive *Brigte*, implies a primitive *Brigentis*, which may be equated with the goddess *Brigantia*, whose name appears in Roman inscriptions found in

> the country of the Brigantes in England, and with the Gaulish *Brigindo* ... There is certainly no good ground for dissociating the name Brigantes from the goddess Brigit, but if we suppose that the Irish people of that name were an off-shoot from the well-known people of the same name who stretched across Britain, north of the Humber and the Mersey, we introduce a Brythonic element into Ireland which has not, I think, been hitherto recognised. (Orpen 123-124)

Orpen, however, was not the first to suggest a British element among the peoples of ancient pre-Goidelic Ireland. In the late 18th century, William Beauford had already drawn such a conclusion, though many of his ideas are impossible to accept today:

> Βριγαντες. Ware makes these the inhabitants of the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, and the Queen's County [Laois]. But no such name is mentioned by the Irish. The Romans therefore probably denominated them from their neighbouring river *Brigus* or *Bargus*, if they did not mistake *Brigus* for Brigantes, a nation in Britain. They seem to be the ancient inhabitants of the county of Waterford, called by the Irish *Hy Breoghan*, and the inhabitants *Breaghnach* or *Breoghnach*, that is *Breathach* or Britons. Admitting therefore that they extended farther inland, they might be the aboriginals from Britain, before the arrival of the *Ernai*, *Heremonii*, and other Gothic [*recte* Goidelic] tribes. But of this there is no certainty. However that the *Breoghnach* were Britons, is in some measure evinced from the mountains near which they dwelt in the county of Waterford, being denominated *Cummeragh* or Welsh Mountains to this day. (Beauford 63-64)

And Beauford was not the first either. Going back another half century to 1745, we find the following description in Walter Harris's edition of *The Whole Works of James Ware* (The passage in square parentheses is Harris's gloss):

> **Brigantes**, a People so called. They inhabited the Countries now called the Counties of *Carlow*, *Kilkenny*, and *Queen's County*. [These People are esteemed to be a Colony from a People of the same Name in *Yorkshire*, and are said to have retired into *Ireland* upon the Invasion of the *Romans* in the Reign of the Emperor *Vespasian*, about the Year of *Christ* 76, and in the Government of *Petilius Cerealis* in *Britain*; and they are said "to have fled into *Ireland*, some for the sake of Ease and Quietness, others to keep their Eyes untainted with the *Roman* Insolence, and others again, that they might not lose Sight of that Liberty in their old Age, which in their younger Years they had received pure and uncorrupted from Nature." Some have called these People *Birgantes* from the River *Birgus*, the *Barrow* about which they inhabited. (Ware & Harris 38)

While it is entirely possible that the Irish Brigantes were an offshoot of the British branch, the reign of Vespasian is much too late for their removal to Ireland. By that time, the southeast quarter of Ireland had been thoroughly conquered and colonized by the Lagin, from whom the province of Leinster in this part of the country takes its name. As O'Rahilly demonstrated at length, Ptolemy's description of Ireland does not contain a single trace of the Lagin, proving that Ptolemy based his description on data collected in Ireland before the Laginian invasion. The Irish Brigantes probably migrated to Ireland around 500 BC,

the approximate time of the Belgic or Ernean invasion. O'Rahilly surmises that the Laginian invasion took place in the third century BCE (O'Rahilly 116). As a working hypothesis, I posit 250 BCE.

The passage which Harris places within quotation marks above is taken from an even earlier reference to the Brigantes of Ireland in William Camden's *Britannia* (Camden 842), which was originally published in Latin in 1586. Elsewhere in this same work, Camden notes:



**William Camden**

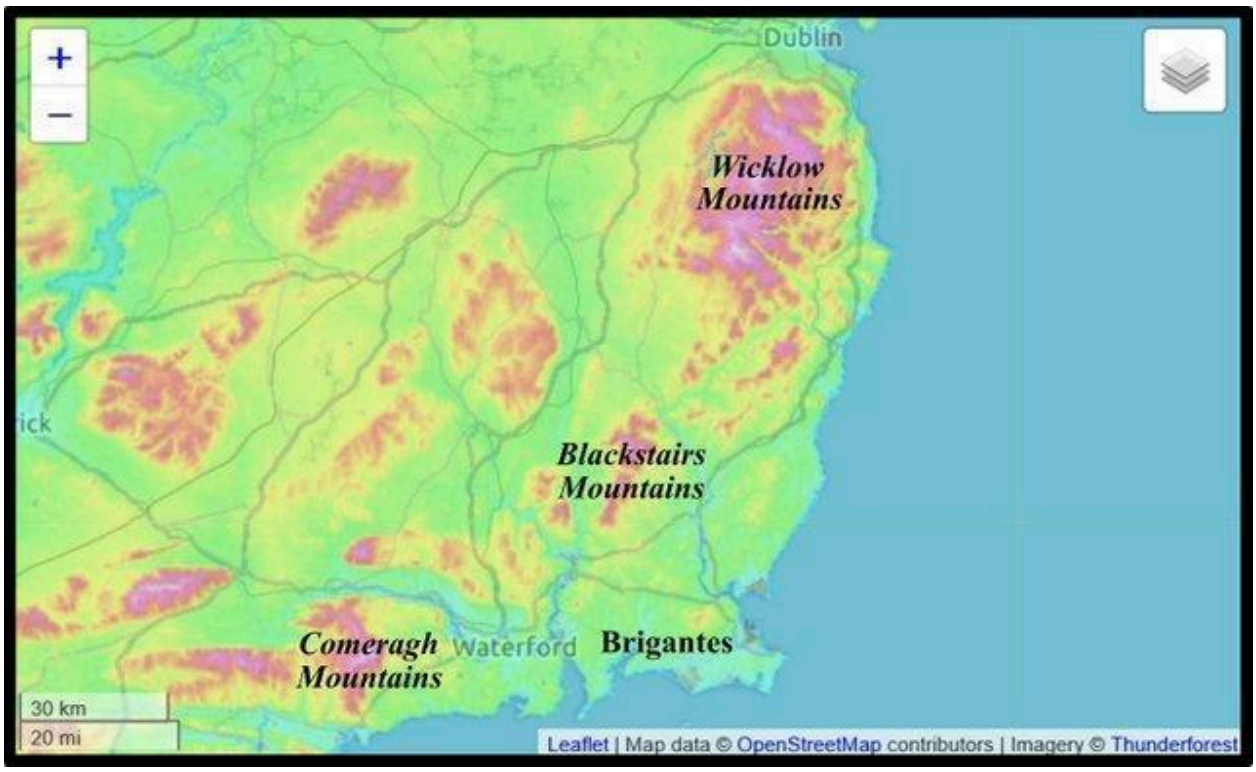
> Brigantes, or Birgantes: The Brigantes seem to have been seated between the mouth of the river Swire [Suir], and the confluence of the Neor [Nore] and Barrow; which last is call'd by Ptolemy *Brigus*. And because there was an ancient City of the *Brigantes* in Spain, call'd *Brigantia*, *Florianus del Campo* takes a great deal of pains to derive these *Brigantes* from his own country of Spain. But, if conjectures are to be allow'd, others may as probably derive them from the *Brigantes* of Britain, a Nation both near and populous. However, if what I find in some Copies be true, that these People were call'd *Birgantes*, both he and others are plainly under a mistake: for then they take their name from the river *Birgus* [now Barrow,] about which they inhabit; as appears from the affinity of the names. These *Brigantes* (or *Birgantes*, which you please) peopled the Counties of *Kilkenny*, *Ossery*, and *Caterlogh* [Carlow], all, water'd by the river *Birgus*. (Camden 1351)

The pre-Goidelic Celtic identity of the Brigantes is not in doubt. Recently, however, the etymology of their name has been revisited. From *Roman Era Names* we have the following:

> Βριγαντες (or Βριγαντας) (*Brigantes* 2,2,7 and 2,2,9) were 'hill people', presumably living in the Wicklow mountains, with a name that occurred across Europe in various forms. In Iberian early place names *-briga* is a marker for the zone of Indo-European speech. (*Roman Era Names*)

Unfortunately, this does not help us to pin down their territory in Ireland, as it is likely that they already bore this name when they colonized Ireland. Ptolemy's description places them in the lowlands in the extreme south of County Wexford. If, however, we concede that they were originally hill dwellers, then I

would be more inclined to locate them in the Blackstairs Mountains of County Wexford or the Comeragh Mountains of County Waterford.




**Territory of the Brigantes**

The Brigantes are mentioned by a number of other Classical sources, though none of them refers to the Irish branch of this nation. Among the more notable, the following may be mentioned:

- Tacitus, *The Annals* 12:32
- Tacitus, *The Histories* 3:45
- Tacitus, *Agricola* 17
- Juvenal, *The Satires* 14:191
- Strabo, *Geography* 4:6:8

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## The Goddess in Wharfedale by Gyrus

**NOTE:** *For the most up-to-date facts on Verbeia, please check out my Verbeia research page.*

This was my first attempt at getting my research surrounding the prehistoric rock art of Rombald's Moor, West Yorkshire, in print. It was first published in *HEAD* magazine issue 8 (1997), edited by Holly Mina, and has floated around the web in various forms since then.

After compiling this turbulent rush of investigation and inspiration, I realised that despite the wilfully idiosyncratic nature of the style that I loved, there were some genuine new discoveries about the history of the region emerging. These were compiled into the booklet *Verbeia: Goddess of Wharfedale* (originally published by Rooted Media in 1998; Norlonto published a revised edition in 2000), using the

pseudonym G.T. Oakley (mmm, a nice, warm, reassuring name that should disarm your average local researcher or academic!).

This booklet remains the most “accurate” source of information on the topics discussed here; though this article retains more of the original gnostic fire of discovery.

Many thanks to the Manor House Museum (Ilkley), the Local History Library (Leeds), the SEC Library (Avebury), Paul Bennett’s Library (Bennett’s bedroom), and UBIK Books (Leeds, RIP).

Dedicated to Harry Speight.



Romano-Celtic carving now to be found in All Saints Parish Church, Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Firewoman, river of life
Firewoman, mother and eye
Firewoman, seeding below
Firewoman, help my earth glow

Psychic TV, 'Firewoman'

At first it was just the stones.

The north side of Rombald's Moor, steep crags and patches of forest, towers over the town of Ilkley in West Yorkshire. Scattered over its hills are literally hundreds of prehistoric rock carvings that are still baffling archaeologists and students of the history of art. They are all seemingly abstract, dominated mainly by 'cup-and-ring' designs. Cup-like depressions carved into the rock, alone or clustered in groups, often surrounded by one or more rings. These rings may overlap with those radiating out from nearby cups; there may also be a straight groove running from the central cup, out across the rings.



Cup-and-ring carvings in Achnabreck, Scotland

After checking these out for a while, I was amazed to learn that nearly identical carvings exist in Northumberland, across Scotland and Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Scandinavia. Closely related 'primitive art' can also be found in the Canary Islands, Africa, India, Australia, the Americas, and many others places I'm sure. Across the globe, these enigmatic designs can date to anywhere from the Stone Ages to the present day (in the case of tribal cultures still making them). The ones in Ilkley are hard to date, because of their exposure to the elements, and guesses range from Neolithic times (5000-2000 BCE) to the late Iron Age (about 500 BCE).

I was initially attracted to these markings *because* of their enigma. The possible significance of megalithic sites like Stonehenge seemed to me to be all mapped out, exhaustively elaborated. Yet stabs at the

meaning of cup-and-ring marked rocks are generally half-hearted, quelled by a lack of reference points. Ronald Morris lists *104* possible interpretations, all extremely brief, in his book on the rock art of Galloway—from the stupidly prosaic ("stone age doodles") to the wildly improbable ("carved by lasers from outer space").

Several people have grappled with interpreting the carvings in an open-minded and intelligent way, but they are few. For good reason. *We will never know what these carvings were used for*. This is the bottom line of most prehistoric investigations. We'll never know, not exactly. How you proceed from this baseline of ignorance is a mark of your own psyche. Do you not even start to delve further, dismayed by the prospect of never being able to attain certainty? Do you meticulously catalogue that which you can be certain of, sites and sizes, recurrent features? Or do you, in wilful ignorance of the evidence that exists, treat prehistoric art as some sort of Rorschach for your own mind, projecting your desires onto them to suit your own needs?

Given that you're interested in rock art, the first option is an admission of despair, because ultimately nothing in life is certain. The second path is that of the academic, and such work is essential to any attempt at interpretation; but as an end in itself it is a petty cover-up for despair, and in omitting the realm of significance it removes genuinely human interests. The third tactic is a caricature of the independent 'mystical' researcher, and is how most academics would probably view my own work. But I think it has to be seen that an element of this subjective projection is unavoidable. As we have little concrete evidence about the meaning of prehistoric art, what else fills the gaps but our own minds? In the interests of 'objectivity', the psychology of the prehistorian is left out of academic texts. Yet they are still people, and no amount of rigorous methodology can, I believe, erase the person from the writing. The fantasy of objective science is a contradictory enterprise of reality-denial: "I want to see the world as it would be if I were not here." The reality of the situation is that you're always there. In denying their own personal presence, many writers leave themselves (and their readers) open to an *unseen* subjectivity, which can either be uncovered and made part of the picture, or left to grow more powerful and malignant, eventually rigidifying into dogma.

My own personal approach is… personal. I have to experience the place I'm involved in. I spend time there and immerse myself in it, meditate and do rituals, note dreams and synchronicities. I bathe in the mystery until intuitions that make contact with intellect bubble up. I study a lot, and greatly value the work of historians and archaeologists. But I am not overly concerned with 'methodology'. My method is: go from the concrete part of reality that interests me, that draws me to it, and branch out into whatever different directions I feel are relevant. The 'disciplines' I delve into—archaeology, history, religion, etymology, ethnography—are subservient to the reality I'm investigating.

A general problem for me, one left out by most academics because it prods at their own basic assumptions, is deciding where I stand in relation to history. I feel I'm moving slowly (and non-linearly) towards a radical non-linear approach. I've tried to trace many different things through history, mainly shifting archetypal myth-figures; and I find too many cross-cultural connections, too many links across space and time to really believe, deep down, that 'history' (when it embraces human experience) can be accurately represented by a straight line. Historical context is important, but a wider context exists, that of the nature of time.

‘Time’ is a single word, but what it refers to is profoundly diverse and chaotic.

Linear historical time

One day, year, century after another, ad infinitum.

Linear eschatological time

One day, year, century after another… BANG!!!

Cyclical time

Each day is created anew at daybreak; each year is, in a way, the first. The growing-older-and-dying world co-exists with the Dreamtime, where all the ancestors are still active and all myths and realities recur.

Cyclical eschatological time

“Anyone who can read history with both hemispheres of the brain knows that a world comes to an end every instant . . . And every instant also gives birth to a world—despite the cavillings of philosophers & scientists whose bodies have grown numb—a present in which all impossibilities are renewed, where regret & premonition fade to nothing in one presential hologrammatical psychomantric gesture.” (Hakim Bey)

Real time

No such thing!

All forms of time are potentially accessible. Many different gradations of these simplified categories are usually experienced in the course of a day by most people, but the subtle differences usually go unnoticed.

So history is not absolute. History as we know it is our own culture’s *construct* of time, our largely linear map of temporality, projected back onto the material artifacts left in the fabric of the world by our ancestors. Not to mention the psychological prejudices and models we leave unquestioned, and our lack of culturally sanctioned landmarks in the realm usually called the ‘spiritual’—a realm that was arguably a prime concern for ‘map-makers’ in prehistory. ‘Objective history’ is an illusion born of a lack of *true* context, our ontological context.

One of the stickiest problems in tracing mythology and religious practices through history is that of tracing influence and co-mapping meaning. Should we compare similar motifs and artifacts across time and space in our search for meaning? For example, could the rock art of the !Kung San bushmen in Africa today have any bearing upon the carvings left on Rombald’s Moor by people who lived thousands of years ago?

Things become stickier (for the linear historian) when times and places are closer together, but no direct evidence of cross-cultural interchange appears to exist. The Swastika Stone near Ilkley is pretty much identical to the ‘Camunian Roses’ in Val Camonica, Italy, and they were possibly carved within 500 years of each other. Did the two cultures that produced these designs interact? Was there a parallel, but separate evolution of the same basic pan-European design, the crossed circle? Was it *coincidence*? If so,

is the meaning of each necessarily as separate as the carvings themselves? And do we need to insult the critical judgement of readers by meticulously pointing out the subtle differences between similar symbols, and only tentatively making comparisons? It is ironic that, because of their pedantic methodologies, texts aimed at the academic community (a most discerning and critical bunch), demand the least amount of critical intervention on the part of the reader.

I do not unquestioningly believe in Jung's theory of 'universal archetypes', but I do believe in the uniformity of basic human physiology, and I think the body is one of the main aspects of the world from which maps of the spirit—shamanism, alchemy, yoga, tantra, whatever—unfold. So we may expect some recurring global motifs in art and myth, notwithstanding the infinite variations that similar body-minds interacting with different environments produce.

I also believe that we each need to ask ourselves why we are interested in these things. What do I get out of this? I have no illusions (OK, a few) that I'm trying to contribute to some ever-progressing body of human knowledge. The feeling that we're building up an increasingly accurate and 'truthful' picture of the world as time goes by is part of the linear history package. Look at the ridiculous ideas held by quite intelligent people in the past, and assume that your own ideas may be equally stupid in the end.

*In the end?* What end? The straight line is hard to shake off…

There's one thing I'm definitely not in this for. I don't claim to be *right*. I get enough out of it already, and don't need gaps in my enjoyment to be filled with the consensus of agreement. I have to write this, and hope some people get stimulated by it. But… "I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation." (Michel Foucault) I involve myself in the conscious recognition of what I project onto the past. My theories will have a different emphasis from others' because my transformation is different. Why shouldn't people print for themselves a license to steal from the past, as Hakim Bey phrases it, as long as they're conscious that they may have no 'real' connection to the culture they plunder, or to academic history? This is the Chaotic approach to history, the utilization of any and all human cultural artifacts for the purpose of making life *now* more interesting, stimulating and challenging. It can be abused by those who trivialize or entirely misappropriate other cultures, possibly affecting the general view of that culture; or by those who fail to keep a check on their ego and their connection with the here-and-now of their lives. It can also be used as the most adaptable and dogma-free map-making tool around. Flexible enough to cope with inevitable change, ontologically rigorous enough to realize it's never *right*, never authoritative, always capable of laughing at itself. As a friend once said, some people would rather be right than happy.



The Badger Stone on Ilkley Moor

The first time I visited the Badger Stone on Rombald's Moor, I walked alone across the moors with a map. As I crossed a small valley, clouds gathered and light rain fell. I put the map away and stumbled across the heather shrouded in mist. As I blindly approached the stone, the rain fell harder, and all I could see around me was thick white moving mist. By the time I reached it, and rounded it to see the carvings, I was too wet to care about the rain, a state which alters consciousness into a more receptive mode. Throughout my explorations of the moors, I've found that there has been a subtle interactivity between the land, my consciousness and the weather, as if all conspire to make me receptive to a new discovery. Standing in front of the ancient carvings on this stone, I was *struck* by the realization that something I considered exotic and alien, something only found in caves in remotest Australia, was actually here as well, just down the road. The rock carvings are always more impressive when they're wet, and this, one of the most impressive set of carvings on the moor, made quite an impression on me. I did some spontaneous chanting and whirling, then walked away. As I left the stone, the mists began to clear, and the rain stopped abruptly.

Later in the year, I was writing about my idea that the Christian Satan is a demonized remnant of prehistoric chthonic snake-goddesses. Flicking through a book on folklore, I found a picture of an altar stone showing the goddess Verbeia. She holds two snakes, and now stands in the All Saints Parish Church in Ilkley. The mythic irony was too much, I had to check it out. I had only the faintest idea that she would lead me back up on to the moors, and deeper into the stones.

# Verbeia

Known only through a dedication to her, carved by the Prefect of the Second Cohort of Roman troops stationed in Ilkley during 3rd century CE, and her depiction on a separate altar stone (shown at top of page). The All Saints Church stands on the remains of the Roman fort. The dedication (which can now be seen in the Manor House Museum behind the church) reads: “To Verbeia. Sacred. Clodius Fronto. Ded. Prefect of the Cohort, Second Lingones.” Goddess of the River Wharfe, which flows down from the Pennines in the northwest, through Ilkley at the bottom of the valley which the moor overlooks, and east to the Humber estuary. Snakes and flowing water have intimate archaic connections. The two snakes held by Verbeia probably represent the two streams that flowed from the moor in Roman times, past either side of the fort enclosure, and into the Wharfe.



The Mavilly goddess

The Roman troops stationed here were only Roman in political allegiance. Racially, the Lingones were Celtic Gauls recruited from the upper Marne in eastern France. A goddess image similar to Verbeia—she holds two snakes and has a pleated skirt—was found in Mavilly, which is in the region where the Lingones cohort were recruited from. In this area, Gaulish Celts are known to have been greatly concerned with water cults. Mavilly is only 35 miles south of the famous healing spring at the source of the Seine. Did the troops bring a goddess-related water cult with them to blend into the matrix of the Wharfedale environment?

Scholars argue against a Celtic origin for the word ‘Verbeia’. But a female water divinity holding snakes would, in nature if not in name, happily dovetail with the way in which the native Celts of northern England (the Brigantes) probably made their environment sacred. Water cults were very frequent among

the Celts: they cast offerings into wells and lakes, including human heads (Celts, like the Greeks, believed the head to be the seat of life-force, as the 'head' of a river is its source). Romans likewise would sanctify natural features; for them, "every grove, spring, cluster of rocks or other significant natural feature had its attendant spirit. Generally the locals gave such entities personal names, but a stranger ignorant of these would refer to each simply as *genius loci*, 'the spirit of the place'. Especially awe-inspiring or beautiful spots possessed proportionately powerful *genii*." (Ronald Hutton) Verbeia seems likely to be a fusion of existing Brigantian and imported Gaulish and Roman influences.

Sifting through languages to find the origins of 'Verbeia' proved to be a dizzying task. Even a firm knowledge of linguistic influences in the area at that time wouldn't stop your head from spinning. Two possibilities: Either language, like the universe, plays tricks, and leads you around in baffling cycles which appear connected to every other cycle; or the name 'Verbeia', for whatever reasons, happens to be an inexplicably polysemic (many-meaninged) cross-linguistic condensation of some of our most primal intuitions about nature. Follow me…

## Spring

Verbeia is often equated with Brighid, the Irish goddess, aka Bridget, Bride, Bríd or Bríg—possibly the origin of Brigantia, the goddess of the Brigantes. Bride's Day is Imbolc, 1st February, or when the ewes start to lactate. A goddess who heralds the coming warmth of spring. The Mavilly goddess is shown surrounded by rising vegetation. The Latin for spring is *ver*, from which our 'vernal', 'verdigiris' (green rust on copper) and 'verdant' (fresh, green) come. A botanical term, 'vernation', refers to the arrangement of leaves in a bud. This derives from the Latin *vernatio*: the flourishing renewal of plants in spring, and the snake's sloughing of skin in spring. All these spring-associated Latin words stem from the Indogermanic root ?WES, meaning "to shine".

## Fire

Brighid presides over fire. Goddess of blacksmiths. Brighid, from *brigh*, 'strength'. Welsh *bri* means 'power', and *brig* means 'hill-top' ('Brighid' and 'Brigantia' are often translated as 'The High One'). Ancient belief in the sacred power of hills and mountains… the lighting of fires on hill-tops at seasonal festivals… St Bridget (the Christian edition) was honoured by nuns at a monastery in County Kildare, who kept her sacred flame burning until the Reformation. The public shrine to Vesta, Roman goddess of fire, both domestic and ritual, was a sacred fire tended by the Vestal Virgins. Brighid, too, ruled over the domestic hearth, and in Gaelic Scotland her bird was the white swan. 'Swan Vestas' anyone?

'Vesta' and close-to-home words like 'vernacular' both derive from the same Indogermanic root as all the shining spring-like words—?WES can also mean 'dwell, live, be'. Home and fire, dwelling and light. From the temporary base-camp hearths of the first proto-human hunter-gatherers through to the Celts and the Roman Empire, these two are intertwined.

The most famous stones on the moor are the Cow and Calf—the 'Cow' is a vast part of a rocky outcrop overlooking Ilkley, the 'Calf' is a smaller, though still large boulder that has apparently separated from

the crags. The larger rock was once known as the ‘Inglestone Cow’. When Queen Victoria was crowned in 1838, “a great fire blazed on these famous stones, and Ilkley I am told, was ‘illuminated.'” (Harry Speight)



Cow & Calf rocks, Ilkley Moor – photo by Andy Hemingway

There is a history of beacon hills in Wharfedale. During the early 19th century, when a French invasion was feared, beacon fires were tended all along Wharfedale. The beacon signal was sent from Ingleborough, over in the northernmost reaches of Ribblesdale (close to the Wharfe’s source), down via various hills, including Beamsley Beacon just north of Ilkley, on to the Otley Chevin. Perhaps the prominent ‘Inglestone Cow’ was part of this network? The Scottish dialect word, *ingle*, ‘fire burning on a hearth’, may come from the Gaelic *aingeal*, meaning ‘fire’ or ‘light’. The Mavilly goddess holds a torch as well as snakes.

## Milk

Brighid is also a cow goddess; she was reared on the milk of a white, red-eared cow. In Ireland, churn-staffs were fashioned into the likeness of a woman called Brìdeog, ‘Little Bride’. ‘Verbeia’ may derive from the Old Irish root *ferb*, ‘cattle’, making her ‘She of the Cattle’. Like the Irish Boand, ‘She who has White Cows’, goddess of the river Boyne. Like Marsa of Latvian mythological songs, “Mother of Milk, the Mother of Cows” (Marija Gimbutas), who may appear in animal stalls as a black snake. The night before I read Gimbutas’ book, where she relates Verbeia to Marsa, and suggests the *ferb* derivation, I was staying with friends who have two daughters. I dreamt I had breasts and was breast-feeding their two-year old.

There is strong evidence of an old calendar custom in the British Isles, around Beltaine or springtime in general, where the old fires are extinguished and new ones are lit. Cattle are then driven between two

fires to divinely protect them from disease. ‘Imbolc’ means ‘purification’. Inglestone Cow… Fire-stone Cow.

Ronald Morris found three separate people in Scotland who remembered from their youth a ritual connected to cup-marks in rocks. They would be filled with milk each spring, lest the “wee folk” prevent the cattle from giving milk that summer.

## Water

“Springs, wells and rivers are of first and enduring importance as a focal point of Celtic cult practice and ritual.” (Anne Ross) Not far from the Badger Stone, at the top of Heber’s Gill, is a spring called Silver Well, “which it is not unlikely was an old Celtic tutelary spring, and bits of metal or other articles may have been thrown into it as offerings for protection from the saint or presiding genius of the well.” (Speight)

The source of all life. We come from the ocean, we need water to live, we *are* two-thirds water. Verbeia, goddess of the river, bearing the two serpentine streams flowing down from the moor. They flow from the area where one finds the White Wells, a Victorian spa building. The healing powers of the spring waters on the moor here were reputed in the last century, and probably long, long before as well. Certainly the Romans were obsessed with spa baths, and there was one in Ilkley. “Verbeia may be a Latinised form of the Goidelic *guerif*, to heal.” (Speight) *Geurir* is used in France with the same meaning.

(At the bottom of the bath in the White Wells today there is the familiar site of hundreds of coppers and ten pence pieces. You even find this in fountains in shopping malls. It is a remnant of the widespread Celtic practice, mentioned by Speight above, of casting offerings to water spirits into wells, lakes and rivers.)

> In Niederbronn, Alsace, where in Celtic times Diana was worshipped as the Goddess of sacred wells, to this day women carry water from the mineral spring to nearby mountains. There, they pour it over stones with circular depressions to ensure pregnancy. . . . Holy wells are recorded by the hundreds in 19th century literature. In Ireland, they mostly became St. Brigit’s wells, all visited on the first day of spring. Devotees perform the rounds at such wells, washing their hands and feet and tearing off a small rag from their clothes, which they tie on a bush or tree overhanging the well. According to a 1918 written account from Dungiven parish, after performing the usual rounds at the well, devotees proceed to a large river stone which has footprints; they perform an oblation and walk around the stone, bowing to it and repeating prayers as at the well. If there are hollows or cupmarks in stones, the country people stoop to drink.
>
> Marija Gimbutas

Ronald Morris’ survey of cup-and-ring marked stones in Argyll, Scotland, revealed that they “are nearly always carved where there is a fine open view. . . . more often than not it includes a *view of sea* or estuary.” They are “nearly always made on parts of rock which are nearly *horizontal*. Thus, in southern Scotland seven out of eight sites have carved areas which are within 20 degrees of horizontal, and nearly half the carved areas are absolutely horizontal. . . . Where there is a ‘tail’ or radial groove from near the

middle of the cup-and-ring (very often from the cup), in about seven out of eight cases, where there is any slope on the rock surface, *the tail runs downhill*." This all accords well with the Ilkley carvings, which are dominant on the north side of the moor overlooking the river, and are often clustered close to springs or streams. Before I had theorized about these glyphs, my intuitive 'offerings' to the Badger Stone consisted of pouring some of my drink (water or whiskey) into the cups and watching it stream down the grooves. There are *some* cups on near-vertical surfaces, but most were clearly meant to hold water, rain, or other fluids. Like wells, the water in cup-marks could be healing water. In regions where there are cup-marked rocks and peasant lore about them still survives, there are recurrent beliefs that water out of the cups is good for all manner of ailments, especially eye diseases.

The Greek Muses were water-nymphs, and poets drank from their springs on Mounts Helicon, Parnassus and Castalia for inspiration. To them, a poem was the water, honey or nectar of the Muses. Pythagoras gained prophetic insights from drinking spring water. Richard Onians, in his investigation of ancient Greek concepts about the body and soul, found that they believed 'life-essence' to be contained in a 'seed liquid' concentrated mostly in the cerebro-spinal marrow—"on tap in the genital and stored in the head", as Norman O. Brown puts it. They thought it came out of the body in the form of tears, sweat, and sexual fluids. Crying and sexual love are "repeatedly described as a process of 'liquefying, melting' . . . Aristotle tells us that the region around the eyes was the region of the head most fruitful of seed, pointing to . . . practices which imply that seed comes from liquid in the region of the eyes." Tears, sex, melting… I think of Wilhelm Reich's ideas about bodily armour, rigid musculature softened by crying and sex. Experiences of weeping at orgasm. Tears, eyes, seed… the repressive myth of masturbation and blindness. There is an Egyptian myth of people coming out of a creator-god's eyes. Cup-marks, rain, creation, life-force, healing…

The Slavic goddess Mokosh-Paraskeva Pyatnitsa "is the dispenser of the water of life. . . . The name *Mokosh* is connected with moisture, *mok-* or *mokr-* meaning 'wet, moist,' and her ritual was called *mokrida*. On the other hand, the root *mok-* appears as a name for stones. In Lithuanian, mokas is a 'standing stone,' always appearing in legends associated with lakes or rivers." (Gimbutas)

The significance of water and stones extends down into the rites of divine kingship. Pagan British kings usually had to symbolically wed the goddess of the land. Even as late as the 17th century, England's King James said, "I am the husband, and all the whole island is my lawful wife." Gerald of Wales (12th century) said that in County Donegal, for his *feis* (inauguration), the king would bathe in water then stand barefoot in a footprint carved in rock, or sit on a stone to be handed his rod of office. The *feis* site of the Irish king O'Donnell in western Ulster was used until the end of the 16th century. It is a rock with the holy well Tobar an Duin at its foot, where the king probably bathed. In early Scottish history the fort of Dunadd, in the Kilmartin valley of Argyll, was one seat of the kingdom of Dalriada, "and upon the summit of the fortress the modern traveller can still find the carved footprint. Next to it in the rock surface is a bowl-shaped hollow and a splendid figure of a wild boar . . . A ruler placing his foot in the print would be gazing north straight at the ancient row of megalithic monuments." (Hutton) "In Scandinavia engravings of human footprints are common—especially near the cupped stones. On the Bunsoh stones, indeed, footprints and cups are found together." (Herbert Kühn)

The king gains his power from his union with the goddess of the land, symbolized by his immersion in her waters and his body's shallow, but significant, penetration of her stones. Paul Devereux, in a persuasive

book that links divine kingship back to shamanism, quotes a !Kung man talking of his trance experiences: “When people sing. . . I dance. I enter the earth. I go in at a place like a place where people drink water. I travel a long way, very far. . . . You enter, enter the earth, and you return to enter the skin of your body. . .”. For the San people, snakes are significant because they enter the earth, go underground, like themselves when they go on ecstatic journeys.

J.D. Lewis-Williams suggests that rocks are ‘veils’ between this world and the spirit world, and that rock art is the destruction of this veil. “In many cultures, the shaman in his trance passes through the rock into the spirit world, and to communicate what had happened in the trance, the shaman depicts what had happened on the other side on the rock. . . . The Hupa of America have a concept of spirits responsible for precipitation that live in the rock, and are known as ‘Mi.’ In addition, several contemporary shamans have acknowledged that the rock art is a marker for where a shaman could enter the rock.” (Grant S. McCall)

## Procreation

The belief systems of the Australian aborigines, whose rock and totem-shield art is often compared to cup-and-ring markings, may be one of the most useful tools we have to approach the meaning of European petroglyphs (rock carvings). The Australian continent is their Bible; the earth, the physical landscape, embodies their spiritual understanding of the world, contains their history and knowledge. “Preliterate peoples are at pains to identify with their land as if it were a physiological or psychological ‘echo’ of themselves.” (James G. Cowan) Body and earth, psyche and landscape.

Some hunter-gatherer tribes, like archaic humans, do not see sex and birth as cause and effect. To explain birth, beliefs about the origin of children from the earth evolved. The spirits of unborn children dwell in the land, in rocks and pools, waiting to enter a receptive womb. Even after the connection between sex and birth is made, many, like the aborigines, favour the idea of earth-conception as ultimately essential to the creation of a child. Rocks or pools “*bore the spirit that would vitalise the baby*. It therefore seems likely that the purpose of cutting a circular cup in the surface of a rocky outcrop was to liberate a spirit and so ensure a complete and successful child-birth. . . . At some later date a ring would be circumscribed about the cup to guarantee a second child, and in this way, as the years passed, the ring systems built up.” (George Terence Meaden) This idea holds that the interlinking groups of cups and rings depict inter-family bonds. The ‘spirits’ released by carving the cup may have been those of ancestors as well as unborn children, for ancestors are frequently the source of divinatory and magical knowledge in shamanic cultures. For aborigines, the two types of spirit are interchangeable, as each person is a reincarnation of an ancestor.

Two apparent survivals of these notions in modern times. The Christian doctrine of baptism: a baby’s soul is not ‘saved’ (and may as well not have one as far as hardcore Christians are concerned) until it is baptized, with holy water from a cup-shaped font. And the folklore of the stork, which carries babies from marshes to drop them down the chimneys of expectant parents.

The ‘caged spirit’ theory of cup-marked rocks does not ‘explain’ all the carvings, but no one ‘explanation’ will. The carvings were probably used by different people through time for different purposes; by

different people across space for different purposes; and almost certainly by the *same* people for different purposes. Our culture and our psyches, outside the frames and boundaries of 'art', are conditioned to assign singular meanings to symbols. Before dictionaries, words were a lot more elastic. Proto-linguistic symbol systems such as hieroglyphs were even more amenable to polysemy, the existence of many meanings. Further back in the development of symbols, petroglyphs take us into a realm of signification almost alien to the industrialized west. Their meanings seem abstract and vague until they are bound to the concrete *feelings* and bodily, non-verbal perceptions they refer to. And many meanings happily co-exist, emanating from the same symbol without being stifled by fear of paradox.

## Vertex

Middle English *hwerfen*, 'turn, change'. Spelt in The Ormulum by Ormin (12th century Lincolnshire) as *wharfen*. The variations are endless: *hweorfa*, 'whirl, what is hastily turned around'; *hweorfan*, 'a turning, winding round', cognate with Norse *hvarf*, 'a sharp bend'; Old Norse *hwerfi*, 'bend, crook'. Among these words is certainly the origin of, or a major influence on 'Wharfe', which turns and winds along the valley floor before and after Ilkley.

'Verbeia' has always been related to 'Wharfe', and a trip back to the *ver-* words in Latin gives us, if not a confirmation of the link, at least some fruitful and irresistibly fascinating associations. Many of our own ver- words come from the Latin *vertere*, 'to turn'. 'Vertebra' means 'something to turn on', describing the backbone's interlocking pivotal structure. 'Vertex' is 'the highest point'; in anatomy it refers to the crown of the head, where hair spirals. Latin *vertex* literally means 'that which turns', but can refer to 'top, crown, summit, pole, whirl; whirlpool, eddy'. Properly it refers to the turning point, especially the Pole Star, around which all the others turn. 'Vertical' stems from these associations—straight up to, or down from, the crown or summit. 'Vortex' is a variant of 'vertex'. Dictionary definition: 'a mass of whirling fluid, whirlpool or whirlwind; a system viewed as swallowing up or engrossing those who approach it'. 'Whirl' is related to the Old Norse *hvirfill*, 'circle'; and, along with 'twirl', relates to the Gaelic *Tuirl*, 'to descend suddenly, to come down rapidly with a gyratory motion'. 'Vertigo' is from Latin *vertigo*, 'whirling', again from *vertere*.

The closest word I've found to 'Verbeia' in any language is from Anglo-Saxon, which couldn't have influenced the Roman altars in Ilkley—they invaded Britain after the Romans left. Nevertheless, the word *wer-bære* is 'a weir where fish are caught', which keeps the river connotations, as well as the idea of turning, as weirs (and wharves) redirect the flow of rivers.

'Verse' is another *vertere* word, because at the end of a line of poetry, one 'turns around' and starts a new one, unlike the linear flow of prose. Countless *-verse* words in English express contrary direction: converse, perverse, inverse, reverse, you get the idea.

Vertere itself comes from the Indogermanic root ?WERT, 'to turn, become'. Also root of the Old English *wyrd*, 'destiny, fate, that which happens'. Sanskrit *vrt* means 'to turn, turn oneself, exist, be'.

## Shamanism

Brighid, patroness of poets & writers, healers & doctors, and of blacksmiths. Goddess of fire. She appears to be a late pagan distillation of the core elements of archaic shamanism.

The shaman is the original poet, the tribal myth-maker who pulls up a 'secret language' from the depths of ecstasy, the hidden roots of language.

The shaman is the healer *par excellence*, the witch-doctor.

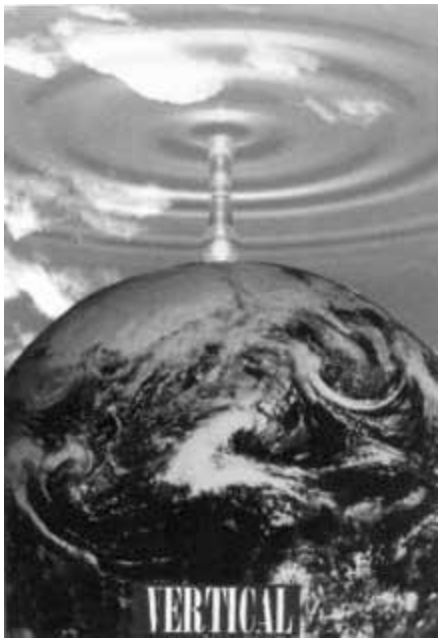
A Yakut proverb says that smiths and shamans are from the same nest. Shamans often meets a smith during initiatory trances, who dismembers and then re-forges the shaman's body in his furnace. Both smiths and shamans are respected and often feared in Siberian tribes, because both possess esoteric transformative knowledge.

Most importantly, both are masters of fire. "Mastery over fire . . . is a magico-mystical virtue that . . . translates into sensible terms the fact that the shaman has passed beyond the human condition and already shares in the condition of 'spirits.'" (Mircea Éliade) Firewalking, eating hot coals, generating 'inner heat' for magical use, melting snow with will, drying wet sheets wrapped around the body while sat outside in freezing weather… Many tribes express magical power in terms of heat; Hindus call powerful divinities *jvalit*, 'possessing fire'; Indian Mohammedans in communication with God become 'burning'. The !Kung dance for hours around a fire to awaken *num*, a primal life energy that rests at the base of the spine and in the pit of the stomach. When it 'boils', it ascends the backbone, and when it reaches the skull, the shamanic *kia* trance occurs. Those experiencing kia can feel compelled to leap into the fire or handle the glowing embers.

Verbeia's equation with Brighid is poetically supported by her forest of linguistic associations: verse is the 'turning' form of poetry; we have the Goidelic *guerif*, to heal; both these aspects are deepened by her undoubted link with spring waters, inspiring and healing. Her fiery nature should be obvious by now.

Further, Verbeia's possible links to all the spiralling *vertere* words echoes one of shamanism's most basic features. The Centre of the World, the World Tree, Mountain or Pole, the shaman's path to the lower and upper realms of the other world. Through kundalini yoga, and the Greeks' cerebro-spinal 'life-force', this may be equated with the human spine. Raise the kundalini serpent to the crown chakra, through the vertebrae, past the crown of the skull, where hair spirals round in a vertex.

One impulsive evening I went up to the moor and spent the night alone at the Badger Stone. While drifting off, I opened my eyes suddenly and was startled beyond belief. One star in the sky was motionless, and *all* the others were drifting rapidly north across the sky. This persisted, as I stammered and reeled, for about 10 seconds. Then, in a gratefully received shift of perspective back to reality, I realized that the single 'star' was a satellite arcing across the sky. My mind, for some reason, had played the 'relative motion' trick you often get on trains, where the station appears to be moving when the train sets off.



This is one of the few cards from the ‘Vertical Oracle’ divinatory deck that arrived from Antero Alli shortly after I finished this writing. Make your own connections! For more info, see Vertical Pool.

Later that week, I was playing with a toy planetarium at a friends’—a small light over which you place a clear perspex hemisphere with all the constellations marked on it. I put it in a dark cupboard, and played with it by spinning the dome around. Instantly the memory of dream (probably inspired by the shifting stars experience) from a night or two back flooded into me, and I had to stop turning the dome because of the dizzying memory rush. In the dream I was out in the open, and the entire night sky was revolving around one star above me, which was surrounded by bizarre light formations. Inspired by this, I searched out beliefs about the stars, particularly the Pole Star.

> The Turko-Tatars, like a number of other peoples, imagine the sky as a tent . . . In the middle of the sky shines the Pole Star, holding the celestial tent like a stake. The Samoyed call it the ‘Sky Nail’; the Chuckchee and the Koryak the ‘Nail Star.’ The same image and terminology are found among the Lapps, the Finns, and the Estonians. The Turko-Altaians conceive the Pole Star as a pillar; it is the ‘Golden Pillar’ of the Mongols, the Kalmyk, the Buryat, the ‘Iron Pillar’ of the Kirgiz, the Bashkir, the Siberian Tatars, the ‘Solar Pillar’ of the Teleut, and so on. A complementary image is that of the stars as invisibly linked to the Pole Star. The Buryat picture the stars as a herd of horses, and the Pole Star . . . is the stake to which they are tethered.
>
> Mircea Éliade

Macrocosm is reflected in microcosm for such peoples, who identify the Sky Pillar with the pole in the centre of their yurt or tent.

Ancient Saxons called the Pole Star *Irminsul*, termed ‘the universal column which sustains all’, and passed the idea of the ‘Pillar of the Sky’ or ‘Pillar of the World’ on to the Lapps of Scandinavia. Similar concepts

survive in Romanian folklore. For Chuckchee and Altaian shamans, the Pole Star is a hole in the sky through which they pass into the upper levels of the spirit world.



The Swastika Stone, Ilkley Moor

My attention shifted from these findings to the Swastika Stone. Nine cup-marks in a cross formation, surrounded by a whirling swastika groove, with a curious appendage to one arm. The north-south line of cups is aligned to less than a degree off magnetic north—pointing straight at the Pole Star. This connection was thrown a bit by the fact that the swastika appears to rotate in a clockwise direction, whereas the stars in the northern hemisphere go anti-clockwise round the pole, rising in the east and setting in the west. But if it was meant to be some sort of *connection* between the earth and the sky… Try pointing your finger and making an anti-clockwise circle in the air, following the stars. Imagine you are drawing a rotating disc. Now move your hand, the disc, downwards until you are looking at the 'other side' of the disc, looking down your finger instead of up it, but keeping it moving in the same direction. It will now appear to be moving clockwise. If the stone describes the base of a Sky Pillar, extending down from the Pole Star to the ground, the clockwise motion of the swastika makes perfect sense—it maps the motion of the stars down onto the rock. Cup-and-ring petroglyphs may be seen to echo the same image. The groove or 'tail' becomes the Sky Pillar, the cup the Pole Star, and the rings the paths of the revolving stars.

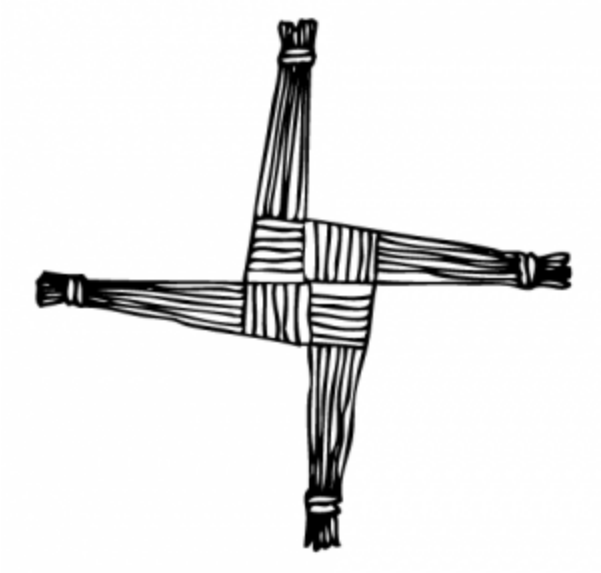
(I should note here that I'm not moving towards the general idea that cup-and-ring patterns are maps of stellar constellations. Perhaps some involved rudimentary attempts at this, but no one seems to have found accurate correspondences in any existing patterns. They seem to be more to do with the sky as an access point to *alternate realities*.)

The swastika is a near universal symbol that should be reclaimed from the Teutonic boot-boys of the mid-20th century. It is found in Buddhism and Hinduism, on goddess-related artifacts from Bronze Age Greece, and in British Celtic metalwork from the 1st century BCE. As a petroglyph, it is found in abundance in Val Camonica, northern Italy. Here there are 16 carvings almost identical to that near Ilkley, and 68 others with differing arm orientations, all spread over 27 rocks. They date from the 7th to the 1st century BCE. The symbol is also found in Sweden, along with many other designs based on the so-called Celtic Cross, the wheel with four spokes. "Across the Romano-Celtic world, from Britain to Czechoslovakia, the wheel was the symbol for the sky, representing either the sun alone, or the whole turning heaven." (Hutton) Most interpreters, indeed most surviving religions who still use it, see the swastika as a sun or fire symbol. Its connection with fire-oriented cults is strong, but the Ilkley carving is oddly positioned if it has anything to do with sun worship—it faces squarely north into the Wharfe valley. One possible sun connection exists, though. The 'appendage' cup, in relation to the central cup, is roughly aligned to the summer solstice sunrise in the northeast. The groove around it forms a sort of hook shape which, if turned in the same direction as the 'spin' of the swastika, would haul the solstice sun across the sky.



A Norse fylfot from the Isle of Man

On the Isle of Man a Norse cross from around the 10th century was found standing in a groove in a large round stone in a churchyard. At its bottom is a fylfot, or swastika-like design, incorporating four spirals bound together. Of course, the national symbol of Man, the Three Legs, is a three-legged swastika.



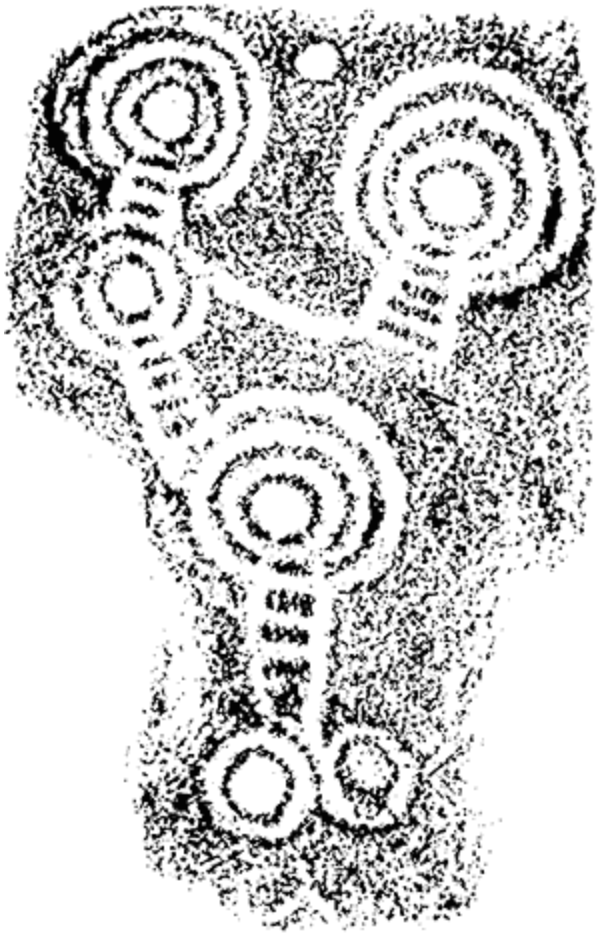
Bridget's Cross

February 1st in Man, until recently, was *Laa'l Breeshy*, 'Bridget's Feast Day' ('Wive's Feast Day' in northern England). A parish church, a nunnery, and no less than seven of the ancient *keeils* or cells on the Isle are named after the Irish saint. A favourite form of Bridget's Cross, central to Imbolc folk-rituals in Ireland, suggests a swastika.

Oddly, the Bible gives us a link between stones and ascension into the sky. Check out Genesis 28:10. Jacob spends the night in a place where he gathers stones together for pillows. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Vastly impressed by this place, he sets his pillow-stone up as a pillar, and anoints it with oil. He names the place *Beth-el*, 'sacred stone'.

"Throughout the world, certain images of ascent were used—the shaman's spirit could rise on smoke, ride along a rainbow, travel up a sunbeam and so on. But from northwest Europe to Tibet none was more ubiquitous than the ladder. . . . It shows the remarkably universal aspects of shamanism, then, that the image of a human figure atop a ladder occurs also in southern African rock art." (Devereux) The Zulu word form *-qab* associates trance-states with ascension and art: *ukutiqabu*, 'recovering from fainting'; *ukuqabela*, 'to climb to the top of a ladder, tree or mountain'; *ukuqabela*, 'to paint'.

In some cup-and-ring designs on Rombald's Moor, the single groove 'tail' becomes a ladder-like image. The interlocking cup-and-rings may be series of levels of the spirit world penetrated by a shaman's consciousness. These varied and sometimes messy patterns evoke shamanism still evolving, humans repeatedly grappling with deep trance states, plumbing the depths behind and ascending the heights above the rocks, attempting to haul descriptions of their journeys back to the earth.



Cup-and-ring carvings on the Panorama Stone, Ilkley Moor

If this shamanic idea holds water, the dating of the moor's petroglyphs poses problems for the orthodox study of their significance. Most of the comparable Italian and Scandinavian glyphs are dated to the late Bronze Age or the Iron Age, the latter half of the 1st millennium BCE. Was there a Celtic or proto-Celtic shamanism that continued the traditions of much older cultures? Cup-and-rings appear in Neolithic tombs in Ireland. Paul Bennett, a local researcher who knows the moors here better than anyone I've met, believes the Swastika Stone could date to 2000 BCE or earlier—and its complexity suggests that the simpler cup-and-rings are even earlier. People lived on Rombald's Moor from as early as 7000 BCE, so this is entirely possible.

More perplexing of all is the complex of shamanic associations constellated around Verbeia's possible etymologies. Possibly language playing tricks, but they're compelling tricks, evoking the vertical pillar up to the Pole Star… the ascent into the sky vortex, 'a system viewed as swallowing up or engrossing those who approach it'… the vertebrae of the spine, the vertiginous whirling motion of a fiery climb to the vertex…

**NOTE:** Evidence has surfaced that indicates the ladder designs attached to the cup-and-rings on the Panorama Stone may be Victorian additions. The "poetic" aspect of this piece obviously cares little about this, dealing as it does with the *constellation* of related motifs from different periods of time, resulting

from different intents, and the beauty of their relatedness in the landscape. But obviously any more specific argument about the Panorama Stone markings should now be read with caution. *Gyrus, 20/7/04*

## Liminality

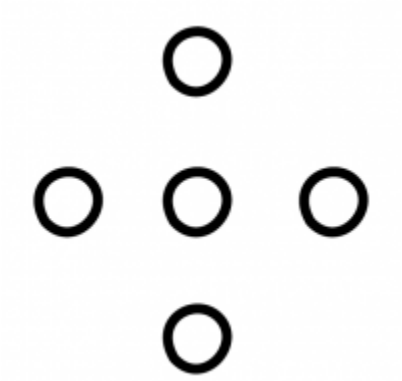
I approached the Badger Stone once to do a brief ritual. As I neared it, it started to rain. I was reminded of my first visit, but I tried to shift my attention back to the present to focus on my ritual. After I started, I was soon forced back to the present. The rain pelted harder and harder, the wind grew more fierce, and at the peak of the ritual the rain turned into savage hail. It was blowing hard from behind me, hurting my head, and coming in at an almost horizontal angle, creating a tunnel-like effect before me—and an extremely conducive state of mind! I wound down, and the hail returned to rain. I left the site, and the rain stopped.

When the sun rose after I had the 'shifting sky' experience, just before it cleared the clouds on the horizon, it started to rain lightly. I jumped up to run for cover, but decided to stay and see the sun up with some chanting. It was beautiful. Glowing sun bursting up, gentle rain, and behind me a magnificent rainbow. I finished chanting, left, and the rain stopped. I kid you not.

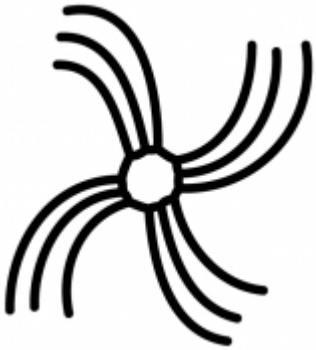
Memories of these experiences shouted for attention when I read Ruth Whitehouse's book on cave-based cults in Neolithic central Italy, *Underground Religion*. The apparent sacred significance of water in 'abnormal states' (stalactites and stalagmites, bubbling or hot water, steam) to these people led her to recognize the importance of 'liminal' (marginal, borderline, cross-over) states in their beliefs. Cave mouths, between dark and light… stalagmites, hard water… steam, gaseous water… and ultimately the shaman, between this world and the other, a mediator. For numerous shamanic cultures, the rainbow is a prime liminal phenomenon, produced in the conjunction of sun and rain, fire and water, bridging the gap. Fire and water. Brighid. Verbeia. Why should they preside over such contradictory elements?



Atl-tlachinolli, Aztec hieroglyph for burning water



A quincunx



Aztec ‘movement’ hieroglpyh from Teotihuatecan

The Aztecs, according to Laurette Séjourné’s *Burning Water*, believed that liberated consciousness could only be achieved through an internal bodily battle, a “blossoming war”. Victory is attained through the union of opposites; the Aztec “vision of Earth as Paradise is based on the concept of the dynamic harmony between water and fire.” Their hieroglyph for the “blossoming war” is called *atl-tlachinolli*, from *atl*, ‘water’, and *tlachinolli*, ‘something that has been burned’. This symbol always accompanies Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, the Aztecs’ mythic originator. Bird-and-snake figures are frequent in myths across the globe, and probably represent the union of chthonic earthly realms (snake) with the skies above (bird). The Aztec symbol for the union of heaven and earth is the cross, perhaps the most basic possible representation of liminality (cross-over). The quincunx (a cross formed by five points, the four cardinal points and a centre) is “the most frequently occurring sign in the Meso-american symbolic language.” The number 5 represents the centre, the point where heaven and earth meet, and the quincunx also symbolizes the heart, “the meeting-place of opposed principles”. Curiously, one of their symbols for the Fifth Sun (or Era), the Sun of Movement, the Era of Quetzalcoatl, the unifying “Law of the Centre”, is a swastika-like glyph.

How all this spiritual cartography relates to human experience is crystallized for me in the Aztec vision of the heart as the centre, where opposites unite. We are impoverished if we can only feel one emotion at a time. All pure emotion, I find, is profoundly ambiguous. Polysemic. Anger and exhilaration, joy and bittersweet sadness, sexual bliss and terror, tender love and fear, weeping at orgasm… ‘Emotions’ are the words and concepts we tack on to the chaotic flows of psycho-biological energy around the body, flows which have no anchors and no true boundaries.

Potent emotion, when cut loose from judgement and prejudice, becomes ecstasy.

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**Research on Verbeia by Gyrus**

This is a summary of research into the Romano-Celtic goddess found in Ilkey, West Yorkshire, England.

Verbeia is the name of an apparent Romano-Celtic deity, whose altar was found in Ilkley in England. She is not known anywhere else, although as will become clear, she is probably related to other Celtic goddesses. I've written an essay and a booklet about her, which should be consulted for more wide-ranging and speculative information on Verbeia; here I'd like to summarize the facts in an easily-updatable and referenced way.

## The altar stones


Romano-Celtic carving now to be found in All Saints Parish Church, Ilkley, West Yorkshire

The evidence for her consists of a pair of relief carvings and an inscription. The carvings are currently to be found behind a large Anglo-Saxon cross inside the All Saints Parish Church of Ilkley.

The church stands on the grounds of the old Roman fort that once occupied an area about three times the area of the present church grounds, just south of where the River Wharfe passes through Ilkley. The stones were found built into the northwest corner of the church, having been recut for use by the builders. The stone to the right of the Anglo-Saxon cross shows a pitcher and a patera, a type of flat dish with a handle which was used in ritual libations. The altar to the left (shown here) shows an apparently female figure wearing a long pleated robe, with what looks like a shaped head dress. She also holds two long wavy objects, described by the plaque next to the altar as torches. Anne Ross, however, says they were "undoubtedly meant to represent serpents."1 The plaque interprets the figure as the earth and barley goddess Demeter. Homer's invocation of Demeter as the "bringer of seasons"2 certainly fits with likely associations for Verbeia, but ultimately there is little to suggest Demeter *per se* is involved here.

The stone bearing the inscription was found by the historian Camden at the time of Elizabeth I, and was then being used to support some stairs in a house. It was removed to Middleton Lodge, north of the Wharfe from Ilkley, which is possibly close to the area where it was originally discovered by William Middleton.3 The inscription became illegible due to exposure, but Middleton made a copy of it, and a copy can now be seen in the Manor House Museum (just behind the church).

The inscription reads:

> VERBEIAE SACRVM CLODIVS FRONTO PRAEF COH II LINGON

This is translated[4] as:

> To holy Verbeia, Clodius Fronto, prefect of the Second Cohort of Lingones (dedicated this).

## The Roman fort

The town of Ilkley, and its name, has traditionally been associated with the supposed name of the Roman fort, Olicana. However, current opinion favours Verbeia as the name of the Ilkley fort, associating Olicana with a location near Skipton in North Yorkshire.[5]

If there is an identification here between the goddess and the fort itself, this could associate Verbeia with the warrior aspect of Brigantia, tutelary goddess of the Brigantes tribe, the native Celts of northern England at the time.

If we take on board the Celtic identification of snakes with rivers and streams, we may also see in the depiction of Verbeia holding a snake in each hand a representation of the fort with the two streams which once flowed down from the moors to the south, either side of the fort's location, into the Wharfe.

A.L.F. Rivet & Colin Smith, in *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, assert that the goddess altar we are studying here, the Roman fort where it was situated, and the river which flowed past it, all shared the same common name: Verbeia. Further, they trace the origins of this title to "a British base **Uerb-* 'to turn, twist', cognate with that found in Anglo-Saxon *weorpan* 'to throw', Latin *verbena*, etc.".[6] Verbena will be discussed later.

## The Lingones



The Mavilly goddess

The troops stationed in Ilkley, who erected the altar to Verbeia, were Celts recruited from the Lingones tribe. The Lingones originated in the Upper Marne region of modern France, near present-day Dijon.

Some sources,7 including myself, assumed that the Ilkley troops were recruited from this region. River and water cults abound in the region, and Anne Ross8 (without making the connection via the Lingones troops) compares the Verbeia relief carving to one found in Mavilly-Mandelot, just southwest of Dijon (right). This carving depicts a goddess in a similar pleated robe, holding two distinct serpents in one hand, and an indistinct object (possibly a torch) in the other. Rising vegetation is seen to her right. This seemed like a good candidate for Verbeia's Gaulish predecessor.

However, some sources5 claim that the Ilkley troops were recruited from elsewhere. In around 400 BCE, some of the Lingones migrated southeast, across the Alps, and settled across the Po estuary, along the Adriatic coast of northeast Italy.9 Were the Second Cohort of Lingones recruited from here?

## The Swastika Stone & the Camunian Rose


The Swastika Stone, Ilkley Moor

If the Ilkley troops came from the “Cisalpine”, Italian Lingones, this may shed some intriguing light on one of the most famous pieces of prehistory in the Ilkey area: the Swastika Stone (right)

The moors around Ilkley are rich in prehistoric rock art, mostly variants of a style known as “cup-and-ring” art. This is dated anywhere from the early Neolithic to the late Bronze Age, and is found in northern England, Scotland, and a few other places in northwest Europe (notably in Galicia, Spain). Despite its use of cup-marks, and a half-swastika form among the cup-and-ring art on the Badger Stone on Ilkley Moor, the Swastika Stone’s uniqueness and careful rendering has led to it usually being classed as separate from the moor’s cup-and-ring tradition.


A ‘Camunian Rose’ from Val Camonica, Italy

The design is unique in the British Isles, but a great number of similar – often identical – designs are to be found in the Val Camonica region of northern Italy. The example shown here (right) should make the comparison striking enough.

On the strength of this, together with the information about the possibility that the Lingones in Ilkley were recruited from northern Italy, it seems possible, if not probable, to me that the Romano-Celtic troops carved the Swastika Stone on the moor, as well as erected the Verbeia altars in the fort.

The migratory path across or around the Alps may well have taken the Lingones through Val Camonica itself. The Val Camonica art is so prolific and varied, it’s hard to date the “Camunian Rose” motif (as it’s

known). If the Lingones brought the swastika to Ilkley, it remains to be seen whether they also brought it to Val Camonica or (more likely it seems) adopted it from there on their travels.

The similarities between the Swastika Stone and the Camunian Roses are maybe slightly more emphatic than those between the Verbeia altar and the Mavilly goddess. However, the Mavilly altar also remains a significant part of the puzzle here; it's possible of course that the Lingones from Italy took with them from the Upper Marne a cult of this or a similar goddess, just as they may have taken the swastika design from Italy to Ilkley.

## The Wharfe

Verbeia is frequently associated, if not identified, with the River Wharfe, which flows through Ilkley from the Dales to the northwest, east to Wetherby, Tadcaster, and the Humber estuary.

There are many folk traditions associated female spirits with the river, often associated with potentially dangerous spots like the Strid near Bolton Abbey. It is said that sometimes the goddess of the river appears here as a white horse and claims a victim in her waters.[10] Such folk tales commonly surround British rivers, and although they should mostly be considered as 'nursery bogies', tales to warn children with, they may also be echoes, somewhat demonized echoes at that, of ancient aquatic cults – especially in areas where other evidence of such cults abound, such as in Wharfedale.

Most antiquarians after Camden accepted Verbeia as goddess of the Wharfe. The first recorded references to the river are in a letter by Simeon of Durham, where it is called 'Hwerver' and 'Hwerf'.[3] Middle English *hwerfen* means 'turn' or 'change', so these names obviously echo the winding of the river; also, *hwerfen* was spelt by Ormin in 12th century Lincolnshire as *wharfen*. If we want to try and trace 'Verbeia' back to Latin, there is nothing conclusive. However, we find that *vertere* also means 'to turn'.

The Anglo-Saxon *wer-bære* means 'a weir where fish are caught'. But the Anglo-Saxons invaded well after the Romans left, so although it has appropriately 'turning', watery connotations, this word couldn't have influenced the altar inscription. It is worth noting, though, that Wetherby, located further down the Wharfe from Ilkley, is thought to have inherited its name from Anglo-Saxon roots which referred to the town's position on a bend in the river.[11] This was one of the first conjectures about the origin of 'Wetherby'. An early Victorian writer said that the town was named by the Saxons *Wederbi*, which, he said, 'signifies to turn' . More recent researchers have suggested that this place-name is derived from the Scandinavian *vedr*, or Old English *weder*, both meaning 'sheep' – implying that Wetherby was formerly a sheep farm. There seems to be no evidence for this, though, and the town's name – which has been variously recorded as *Wargebi*, *Werebi*, *Wederby* and *Wedderby* – most likely derived from 'turning' words like the British root *uerb* ('wind, turn') and/or the Anglo-Saxon *wer* ('a fence of stakes or twigs set in a stream for taking fish'). The Wharfe has been an important fishing river through the ages, and *le Heckes* (signifying the same fishing device as *wer*) is in the earliest existing list of family names in the Wetherby township. 'Given its location on a bend, and if it is accepted that it was a *mansiones* (or posting station) during the Roman period, it is not inconceivable that the original place-name of Wetherby may have had within it the elements *uerb* or *Verbeiae*.'[12]

### “Living Rain”

A Celtic etymology for Verbeia has been suggested which maintains watery connotations, albeit with interesting variations:

> Based upon the reconstructed proto-Celtic lexicon it’s possible to derive the elements: **wera-* (rain) and **beja-* (strike) or *bei-e/o* (live). Thus Verbeia could be ‘Living Rain’ or ‘Rain-striker’. Living rain could well refer to a river, but the possible interpretation of the metaphor implied by ‘Rain-striker’ is a little more problematic. However, it could refer to what happens after a heavy rainfall when a river bursts its bank flooding the surrounding area. It is possible therefore that one interpretation of *Verbeia* links up with how the goddess’ name might have evloved in later Cymric.13

## Brigid

Many pieces of circumstantial evidence associate Verbeia with the Celtic goddess Brigid.14 15 16 If there is any truth to this, the minor cult of Verbeia would have been an interesting blend between an imported Lingones cult and the regional cult in northern England of Brigantia – often equated with Brigid.

Brigid is the goddess of smiths, poetry, inspiration, healing, and the domestic hearth. Like Verbeia, she is associated with snakes17 and rivers18. Her celebration is Imbolc – 1st February, or when dairy animals start to lactate, heralding the spring – and it’s interesting in this respect that Latin for spring is *ver*.

Most important, if we assume that Verbeia is associated with the Swastika Stone, is the Irish tradition of Brigid’s cross – a symbol fashioned from rushes or straw as part of spring celebrations that is related to the swastika. Tracing links back from this Irish tradition to the Lingones may be impossible, however.

## Verbena



A verbena flower

Verbeia’s name can hardly fail to bring to mind the herb verbena (commonly known as vervain). “Verbena” was actually the generic name in ancient Rome for herbs used in sacrifices that were considered especially potent; it is said that it was also used extensively by the Druids, for healing and divination.19 It seems possible that the five-petaled flora on the Mavilly altar (above) could be a stylized representation of the flower of *Verbena officianalis* (right, taken from Wikimedia Commons).

### The Cirencester altar



Further, there is a bas-relief found in Cirencester, Gloucestershire (right), which bears a striking similarity to Verbeia. Anne Ross20 argues that this altar stone depicts a stag-god, possibly related to the Gaulish Cernunnos, with ram-horned serpents forming his legs – supposedly depicting the traditional â€˜squattingâ€™ posture of Cernunnos. Ross speculates that the two objects either side of the head may be purses filled with coins (viewed from above), or ‘cornucopeia’ filled with grapes.

However, it’s interesting that these objects at the top are nearly identical to the potential â€˜verbena flowerâ€™ on the Mavilly stone. I would add that the figure seems to be of indeterminate sex, rather than definitely male. The possible derivation of Verbeia from the Mavilly goddess, her possible association with verbena, together with this figure associated with the same design, also holding two snakes, all add up to an inconclusive but fascinating constellation of circumstances, that may never be resolved into a clear picture.

## Further reading

For a good discussion of the historical problems around the evidence for Verbeia, see ilkleyrocks.com.

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**Revisiting the Fathers of the Three Guineveres by August Hunt**



Lancelot and Guinevere by Herbert James Draper

For Gwythyr son of Greidol, one of the fathers of the three Guineveres according to TRIAD 56, see my book THE MYSTERIES OF AVALON (see Chapter Six). I still hold that my earlier identification of Gwythyr with the popular northern god Vitires of the Romano-British period is correct, even though from a purely etymological standpoint the scholars continue to favor Victor.

I have, however, changed my mind on the true natures of both Cywryd of Gwent and Gogfran the Giant.

Cywryd cannot be a corruption, as I once thought. Bromwich in her notes to her revised version of the TRIADS notes that the name is found for other personages. Furthermore, she explains that 'Gwent' is in

this instance for the Afon Caint/Ceint on Anglesey. This fact meant nothing to me until I went and looked at the Ceint on the map. It is a small tributary of the Cefni, but lies very close to the Afon Braint. The Braint, in turn, preserves the name of the goddess Brigantia. Her name means 'the exalted one' and has been linked to Welsh brenin, Early Welsh breenhin, 'king.' Welsh has also brenhines, 'queen'. Could it be that Guinevere (= the Irish Find[si]abair, "White Phantom") as one of the three chief (pref) queens (riein) of Arthur is here being identified with Brigantia?

Gogfran is the most difficult of the three names to analyze. Why? Well, here are the discussions of his name from both P.C. Bartram's A CLASSICAL WELSH DICTIONARY and from Bromwich's note:

**OGRFAN GAWR.** (Legendary).

He was the father of one of Arthur's 'Three Great Queens', all named Gwenhwyfar according to a triad (TYP no.56). His name is variously spelt Ocuran, Ogyran, Ogyrvan, Gogyran, Gogfran. See TYP p.154. The testimony of the *Gogynfeirdd* is in favour of Ogrfan, but with the *cywyddwyr* Gogfran is the usual form. See TYP p.363. John Rhys preferred Ogrfan (*Arthurian Legend*, pp.49, 65), but he wrongly associated the name with the poetic term *ogyrwen* of obscure meaning (*ibid.* p.36; TYP p.364 n.1). See s.n. Caridwen. Lewis Morris said "Gogyrfan Gawr ... pronounced by the vulgar Gogfran Gawr". (*Celtic Remains*, p.204). The father of Gwenhwyfar is always called Ogrfan or Gogfran Gawr by the poets and in legends.

Under the name Gogfran Gawr he is said to have lived at Aberystwyt in Brycheiniog (Peniarth MS 118 of 16th century p.832; see Cy. 27 (1917) p.134). Several places were given the name Caer Ogrfan or the like. Thus Thomas Pennant says, "About a mile from Oswestry, in the parish of Selattyn,





lies a fine military post... This place is called Old Oswestry, Hen Ddinas, and anciently Caer Ogyrfan." (*Tours in Wales*, ed. John Rhys, I.330-1). A place called Caer Gogyrfan is mentioned by Hugh Derfel Hughes who says: 'Ot Heilyn, third son of Cynfrig, [and] brother of Edrylled Fychan, was the guardianship of these forts [*caereu*]; A.D.1230, from Pennauennawr, Caer Gogyrfan, and Caer Owen Goch, to Maen Melyn, Lleyn.' (*Rhyngliaethau Llandegai a Llanllechid*. 1866, p.17).

*Kayrogheren* is named among other Radnorshire estates of Cwm Hir Abbey in the Inspeximus Charter printed in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V.659. This is probably Sir Kaye Ogherren, and is probably the old name for Knucklas Castle (Castell y Cnwclas) [grid ref. SO 2574], near Knighton, with which Ogrfan Gawr, his daughter Gwenhwyfar, and Arthur are associated (OP II.332) in local traditions preserved in the 15th and 16th centuries. Thus William of Worcester said:

*Castrum de Knokelas prope villas de Knyghton ... ut dicitur rex Arthurus fundavit*

(*Itineraries*, ed. John H.Harvey, p.206). In Llanstephan MS.56, p.1 Dr.John David Rhys wrote:

C[astell] y Cnwclas.... And there was Arthur, of old, and from there he married Gwenhwyfar, daughter and heiress of Cogfranu Gawr.

Again in Peniarth MS.118 p.837 there is a tale connecting Arthur with the place, as follows:

There was a place on the frontier of the land of Shropshire called Bronn Wrgan, which was the abode of giants. They had imprisoned some brothers of Gwenhwyfar, the daughter of Gogfran Gawr, and this grieved Gwenhwyfar. But Arthur saved them, by killing the giants. He took the biggest head and placed it in the middle of the river as a stepping stone on the way to Castell y Cnwclas. As he stepped on it he said 'May the head grow *(tyfed yr ued)* in the river like a stone'. And henceforth the river was called Afon Tyfedaid.

See Cy. 27 (1917) p.148. Afon Tefeidiad is the Welsh name for the river Teme which flows past Knucklas (Rhosyr). Another name for the castle seems to have been Castell Pendragon. See Edward Lhuyd's *Parochialia*, II.39 and Edward Lhuyd in Peniarth MS.251, interleaved pp.62-63.

Cogfran Gawr appears as the fictitious ancestor of a family in Llandegfan, Maelorydd. See WG 1, Vol.1 p.159.

**(G)ocuran Gawr** 53 (NLW, Pen. 252), 56: *Gŵenhŷwar verch O.* 'G. the Giant.' See n. to *Gwenhŷwar*.

The normal lenition in MI. Welsh of personal names following *verch* (TC §43), and the analogy of the other patronymics in triad 56 (see n.), which are lenited after *verch*, allows for doubt as to whether *Ogfran* or *Gogfran* is the correct form of the radical of this name. R. J. Thomas (EANC 80–1) regards *Ogfran* as a compound of *ogr-* 'keen' and *-man* (as in the names *Caffan, Gwrfan* etc.), and suggests that this name may be present in that of the stream *Ogran* in Monmouthshire. He regards the forms with initial *G-* as due to the secondary growth of a prosthetic *g-* in this name. And the testimony of the *Gogynfeirdd* supports the contention that *Ogrfan(n)* represents the oldest form of this name:

> Cynddelw: *gwron gorhyd ogyruan* (H 116.27 = CBT III, no. 1.3n.).
> Einion Wan: *llit ogyruan* (H 187.26 = CBT VI, no. 3.5n.).
> Prydydd y Moch: *gorhydri ogyruan* (H 273.32 = CBT V, no. 23.76n.).
> Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd: *yn llys ogyruann* (H 319.23, 27 = *ogyruan* RBP col. 1428.22, CBT II, no. 9.11n.).

In each of these instances, except the last (*llys* is fem.), the name occurs as a genitive following a masculine noun; a position in which lenition is not normally found. *Ogrfan* may be the original form of this name, as suggested by the LI. 6 variant *Ogran* in GDG no.64.26. Pennant recalls that the old name for the ancient fort near Oswestry called Hen Ddinas was *Caer Ogyrfan* 'from Ogyrfan a hero co-existent with Arthur' (J. Rhŷs (ed.), *Tours in Wales*, I, p. 331; B III, p. 62). And in Owen Jones's *Cymru* (I, p. 585) it is said that 'Gogyrfan was the chief of a part of Powys in the sixth century.' Perhaps an early hero *Og(y)rfan*, known to tradition, became later confused with *Gogfran Gawr*, a giant who was the reputed father of *Gwenhwyfar* (see n.). But with the *cynyddwyr*, *Gogfran* is the usual form, and the occurrence of the name in TYP confirms the evidence that it was regarded as a compound of *brân* 'raven'; cf. *cogfran* 'jackdaw'. The following references are found in later poetry: *ail Gograu Gawr* (IGE² no. LXVII.4; see GSCyf p. 88, n. 81); Siôn Cent: *Mae Gwenhwyfar, gwawn hayweddi / Merch Gogfran Gawr, fawr a*



*fedd* (IGE², no. XC.19–20). It is found in the sixteenth-century tract on the Giants by Siôn Dafydd Rhys in Pen. MS. 118: *Goghfran gawr a oedh yn trigo yn Aber ysgyr yn y caer uch yr abhon (yghuclad Brycheiniawc yn agos i drehh Aber Hodhŵ)* (*Cy*: XXVII, p. 134); *Gwenhwyfhar hherch Goghfran Gawr* (ibid., p. 148). There is no connection between either of these names and the poetic term *ogyruen, ogrfen* = *awen*, 'inspiration, poetry' (GPC 2639), as used in early poetry (LIDC nos. 3.3, 3.35, 4.1 etc.) and by Cynddelw: *Mi gyndelw gerd ogyruen* (CBT III, no. 16.92n. and n. to no. 24.6).

John Rhŷs recorded a popular rhyme: *Gwenhwyfar ferch Ogrfan gawr i Drwg yn fechan, gwaeth yn fawr* 'G. the daughter of (G)ogfran the Giant, bad when little, worse when big' (J. Rhŷs, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, p. 49). On the folklore of *Ogrfan/Gogrfan* see Grooms, *The Giants of Wales*, pp. 208–10, and WCD 512.

The first thing we can do is dispense with R. J. Thomas's idea that the giant's name should be related to the Ogran in Monmouthshire. This stream is called the Ochram Brook and there are several Ochran place-names associated with it. The derivation is rather simple and straight-forward, though; it is from Welsh Gochrwm or Gogrwm (with the G- lost through the usual process of mutation), "bent, crooked, curved." I have this suggestion from James January-McCann of Historic Place-Names with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

Thomas also proproses for Ogrfan a meaning of 'keen-horse', with the first element being similar to Irish ochair and the second one from Celtic *mandu-. I note in the eDIL entry for ochair that Whitley Stokes sees the word in some contexts as meaning 'swift', which might make more sense than keen or sharp. The Welsh cognate of Irish ochair, viz. ochr, does not have the same range of definitions.

Some of the places linked to Gogfran are interesting, even if they are instances of late, spurious tradition. Aberyscir is very near to Nant Bran, indicating that the name was thought of as containing -bran, "raven." However, the Powell's of Castle Madoc on the Honddu River near the Yscir have long had the chough in

their coat of arms. For why this may be important, please see below. The unlocated castle between or immediately adjacent to Penmaenmawr in Arfon and the tip of the Lleyn Peninsula points to Nefyn, which I long ago showed was the Caer Nefenhir of the 'Cad Goddeu' poem, in which the god Bran plays a leading role.

The castle near Abbeycwmhir is probably meant to be the motte called Tomen Bedd *Ugre*, with Ugre being mistaken for the Ogr- of Ogrfan.

Perhaps more interesting for our purposes are Old Oswestry hillfort and Knucklas Castle. Why? The first is on Wat's Dyke, while the second is close to Offa's Dyke. Gogfran, if taken as is (all the other forms can be explained on the basis of a lost initial G- and/or a metathesis of -vran to -rvan), is the common Welsh word (see the GPC) for "chough, jackdaw, Cornish chough, crow, redshank." In Cornish folklore, Arthur's spirit left his body after he died at Camlan in the form of a chough. The Cornish word for the chough is palores (or balores; apparently the difference has to do with the gender of the bird), 'digger.' Welsh has a cognate word palwr, "digger, miner, builder of a bank of mud wall, hedger, excavator", to which may be compared cloddiwr, claddwr.

The chough's habit of digging for prey is well known. Here is a photo of this behavior in action:



What I'm wondering is whether Gogfran was thought of as a sort of giant supernatural digger of trenches? In Irish tradition, the god Dagda is forced to become a digger in the story "The Second Battle of Mag Tured:"

"Now when Bres had assumed the kingship, the Fomorians, --Indech son of Dea Domnann, and Elotha son of Delbaeth, and Tethra, three Fomorian kings, laid tribute upon Ireland so that there was not a smoke from a roof in Ireland that was not under tribute to them. The champions were also reduced to their service; to wit, Ogma had to carry a bundle of firewood, and the Dagda became a rath builder, and had to dig the trenches about Rath Bresse."

Interestingly, the Dagda is the father of Brigit, the Irish form of the British goddess Brigantia whose name is preserved in that of the Afon Braint. It would seem to be a stretch indeed to claim that Gogfran the Digger was a nickname for the Dagda, and that it was being claimed that he was the one responsible for digging both Wat's and Offa's Dykes! Yet there may be a relationship between Gogfran and the Dagda. In my book THE MYSTERIES OF AVALON, I referred to the well-known association of the god Lugh with ravens, and went so far as to identify the Welsh Bran ***with*** Lugh.

Regardless of any certain or even nebulous connection between Gogfran and another known divine figure, I'm at least satisfied - finally! - that the name itself as a designation for the chough is correct.

NOTE: While it may be of no significance, the territory of the Brigantes, the people of Brigantia, embraced the locations where dedications to the god Vitires were found. The Carvetii are usually considered part of the Brigantian confederacy who were later recognized as a separate civitas (see Rivet and Smith's THE PLACE-NAMES OF ROMAN BRITAIN). Viteres (and variants) was actually a Germanic deity whose name meant something like 'The White One.' Again, see my book THE MYSTERIES OF AVALON for details. There are Vitires inscriptions at the Roman fort of Ebchester or Vindomora, and I had earlier put forward the notion that a Latin spelling of Guinevere such as Geoffrey of Monmouths' Guanhumara may have been associated with the fort name.

An interesting article by Michelle Ziegler in THE HEROIC AGE compares the Brigantian queen Cartimandua and Guinevere (http://www.heroicage.org/issues/1/habcg.htm).

**Choochoolain's Afterword**

Sulis is found around the Bath region and in Alezy, Germany. Brigantia is only found in the Brigantes tribal territory, and it would make sense that if they chose Sulis as their patron deity, they would give her an epithet signifying her as such. Then, according to the above, they migrated to Leinster in 500BC where Brigantia became Brigid, goddess of Leinster. Extrapolating this, the Celtic goddess of the healing spring, regardless of name or tribe, is likely the same entity.

Brighid, Bride, Brigantia, Sulis, Belisama, Bricta, Brigindu, Coventina, and possibly the Lady of the Lake in Welsh Arthurian lore since there is a marsh named Afon Braint. This marsh is on Anglessey, the Isle of the

Druids, whose destruction was necessary because they were the biggest threat to the Roman conquest, which in turn links Arthurian legend to Celtic religious history in some ways that the Mabinogion does not.

## A Brief Comparanda On Ymir And Purusha – A Demon Dismembered versus the Sky Father As Cosmos Himself by Curwen Ares Rolinson

As we have frequently noted, there are some stubborn-to-shift shibboleths within our field that, despite all available evidence to the contrary, persist well beyond reason. One of these concerns the ongoing conflationism between Purusha of the Vedic cosmology & cosmogony – and the Ymir of the Germanic accounting.

Now on the surface of things, there is some sense to the matter – after all, in both cases, we have a very very large entity that effectively supplies the major elements to the cosmos. And I say 'the cosmos' acutely aware of the archaic Greek meaning to the term – a 'regime', a realm under Order, in the Divine Sense. Which, of course, Ymir can only 'contribute' to via virtue of having been slain – as Ymir is chaos (in the sense of anti-Order, not how it was meant in the Greek theogony) and therefore antithetical to such a sphere.

And that, I think, is the quite literally foundational point of distinction to be made between the myths of Ymir and Purusha. For whereas the former is killed by the Gods as an enemy – the latter is a God, and remains living and vital to this day. The former, dismembered as one would a bloodied carcas, something dead – the latter, with organic parts which are nevertheless interlocking and mutually engaging and reinforcing as part of the Cosmic Being (the Universe as God).

A few weeks ago, I ran into a person claiming that I had this all wrong – and that the accounts of Ymir's forcibly dysjunctive deconstruction had to be the same as the self-sacrifice of Purusha in the Purusha Sukta [i.e. RV X 90]; and that I was entirely aritificially distinguishing the two upon the basis of an allegedly false declaration of Ymir to be a demon, as well as a blatant ignoring of what they suggested to be a suite of direct 1:1 correspondences between these two accounts in terms of 'what became what'. They also, bizarrely, claimed that mention of Purusha had ceased in Hinduism post the Vedic age.

All of which are, obviously, false. But do bear some closer examination.

Now we shall start with the claim that Ymir's status as a demon and enemy of the Gods is somehow false.

The Gylfaginning puts the matter directly, in the mouth(s) of Odin: "And Jafnhárr answered: "By no means do we acknowledge him God; he was evil and all his kindred: we call them Rime-Giants."

And He, after all, should know !

Meanwhile, over here in the Hindusphere, we hold the exact opposite view for Purusha – being very definitely a God , very definitely not Evil , and very definitely still regarded in a hallowed light today. Indeed, strongly coterminous in various accountings with Lord Shiva – that is to say, with Odin, as we know Him.

The notion of the Sky Father deific forming the 'components' of the Universe is also not something unique to the Hindusphere, either –

The Orphic Rhapsodic Hymn to Zeus speaks of Zeus in strongly comparatively resonant terms:

The "Foundation of Earth and Starry Heaven", "One regal body in which everything revolves: Fire and Water and Earth and Aether, and both Night and Day";"Behold His head and handsome countenance, the radiant sky. Around His golden hair are the gleaming stars twinkling beautifully."

Further verses go on to extol the pathways of the rising and setting Sun as Golden Horns, the Sun and Moon as the Eyes of the Sky Father, and relate the additional array of cosmological layering (encompassing the Earth, Ocean, and even Tartarus) in bodily terms for the Sky Father deific.

This, I would contend, is part of a familiar series of similar archaic Indo-European notions of the Sky Father in such a role – as attested not only via RV X 90, but the literal litany of further such instances to be found amidst the broader Vedic canon. Including, of interest to us for other reasons, the large suite of the 15th Book of the AtharvaVeda – excellently titled by Griffith as "The hyperbolical glorification of the Vrātya", and in referency, of course, to Rudra.

To quote a small sample, because I find it stirring:

"In the eastern region Faith is his leman, the hymn his panegyrist, knowledge his vesture, day his turban,

night his hair, Indra's two Bays his circular ornaments, the splendour of the stars his jewel. Present and Future are his running footmen, mind is his war-chariot, Mātarisvan and Pavamāna are they who draw it, Vita is his charioteer, Storm his goad, Fame and Glory are his harbingers. Fame and Glory come to him who hath this knowledge."

[…]

"He, having become moving majesty, went to the ends of the earth. He became the sea.

Prajāpati and Parameshthin and the Father and the Great Father and the Waters and Faith, turned into rain, followed him.

The Waters, Faith, and rain approach him who possesses this knowledge.

Faith, and Sacrifice and the world, having become food and nourishment, turned toward him.

Faith Sacrifice, the world, food and nourishment approach him who possesses this knowledge."

[…]

"His first diffused breath is this Earth.

His second diffused breath is that Firmament.

His third diffused breath is that Heaven.

His fourth diffused breath are those Constellations.

His fifth diffused breath are the Seasons.

His sixth diffused breath are the Season-groups.

His seventh diffused breath is the year.

With one and the same object the Gods go round the Year and the Seasons follow round the Vrātya.

When they surround the Sun on the day of New Moon, and that time of Full Moon.

That one immortality of theirs is just an oblation."

[…]

"Of that Vrātya.

The right eye is the Sun and the left eye is the Moon.

His right ear is Agni and his left ear is Pavamāna.

Day and Night are his nostrils. Diti and Aditi are his head and

skull.

By day the Vrātya is turned westward, by night he is turned

eastward. Worship to the Vrātya!"

Frequently [as in, say, AV X 7 – although also found elsewhere right the way through the Vedas], we find the Sky Father in this Cosmological-composition role to be hailed as the Sacrificial Post, the Sthambha (most prominently, these days, the ShivLing – like an Irminsul) – that is to say, the Axis Mundi. And we can demonstrate the continued salience of this mytheme in the Greek and other such Indo-European mythic perspectives via the incredibly strong association of the Sky Father with these Sacral Posts and the World Tree or World Mount, as we have previously considered in various works upon the subject such as 'The Nyssian Zeus' within 'On The Indo-European 'Interpretatio' Of Dionysus – A Roaring Exaltation Of The Sky Father Comparatively Considered'.

But let us bring things back to a direct textual comparison.

First up, the Gylfaginning's account:

"They took Ymir and bore him into the middle of the Yawning Void, and made of him the earth: of his blood the sea and the waters; the land was made of his flesh, and the crags of his bones; gravel and stones they fashioned from his teeth and his grinders and from those bones that were broken." And Jafnhárr said: "Of the blood, which ran and welled forth freely out of his wounds, they made the sea, when they had formed and made firm the earth together, and laid the sea in a ring round. about her; and it may well seem a hard thing to most men to cross over it." Then said Thridi: "They took his skull also, and made of it the heaven, and set it up over the earth with four corners; and under each corner they set a dwarf: the names of these are East, West, North, and South. Then they took the glowing embers and sparks that burst forth and had been cast out of Múspellheim, and set them in the midst of the Yawning Void, in the heaven, both above and below, to illumine heaven and earth.

[…]

But on the inner earth they made a citadel round about the world against the hostility of the giants, and for their citadel they raised up the brows of Ymir the giant, and called that place Midgard. They took also his brain and cast it in the air, and made from it the clouds, as is here said:

Of Ymir's flesh | the earth was fashioned,

And of his sweat the sea;

Crags of his bones, | trees of his hair,

And of his skull the sky.

Then of his brows | the blithe gods made

Midgard for sons of men;

And of his brain | the bitter-mooded

Clouds were all created."

And then, RV X 90 [the Jamison/Brereton translation]

"1 The Man has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet.

Having covered the earth on all sides, he extended ten fingers' breadth beyond.

2 The Man alone is this whole (world): what has come into being and what is to be.

Moreover, he is master of immortality when he climbs beyond (this world) through food.

3 So much is his greatness, but the Man is more than this: a quarter of him is all living beings; three quarters are the immortal in heaven.

4 With his three quarters the Man went upward, but a quarter of him came to be here again.

From there he strode out in different directions toward what eats and what does not eat.

5 From him the Virāj was born; from the Virāj the Man.

Upon his birth, he reached beyond the earth from behind and also from in front.

6 When, with the Man as the offering, the gods extended the sacrifice, spring was its melted butter, summer its firewood, autumn its offering.

7 On the ritual grass they consecrated that sacrifice, the Man, born at the beginning.

With him the gods sacrificed, (also) the Sādhyas and those who were seers.

8 From that sacrifice, when it was offered in full, the clotted-butter mixture was collected.

It [=the sacrifice] was made into the animals: those of the air (and both) those that belong to the wilderness and those that belong to the village.

9 From this sacrifice, when it was offered in full, the verses and chants were born.

Meters were born from it. The sacrificial formula—from it that was born.

10 From it horses were born and whatever animals have teeth in both jaws.

Cows were born from it. From it were born goats and sheep.

11 When they apportioned the Man, into how many parts did they arrange him?

What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are said to be his two thighs, his two feet?

12 The brahmin was his mouth. The ruler was made his two arms.

As to his thighs—that is what the freeman was. From his two feet the servant was born.

13 The moon was born from his mind. From his eye the sun was born.

From his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vāyu was born.

14 From his navel was the midspace. From his head the heaven developed.

From his two feet the earth, and the directions from his ear. Thus they arranged the worlds.

15 Its enclosing sticks were seven; the kindling sticks were made three times seven,

when the gods, extending the sacrifice, bound the Man as the (sacrificial) animal.

16 With the sacrifice the gods performed the sacrifice for themselves: these were the first foundations.

These, its greatness, accompanied (it) to heaven's vault, where the ancient Sādhyas and the gods are."

Now straightaway we begin to notice that there are some rather glaring dissonancies between what's going on in the two texts.

One's a glorification. The other – an over condemnation.

But beyond what I have said before .. look at how the elements in question just simply don't line up very well.

Prior to the Sacrifice, Purusha is depicted as being the universe in salient scope – and, as explicated in Mahabharat CCCLII, the 'thousand-x' lines are in reference to the 'undifferentiated' infinity of possibilities and omnipotence that He possesses and represents. The Absolute must become 'differentiated' in order to have the universe come into being. [It would also be tempting to suggest that the 'ten fingers beyond' conceptry relates to the still-maintained connexion to the Infinite – and the fact that, as we see with the Shaivite understanding of the Lingodbhava occurrence , wherein an infinite pillar

is Shiva, well … just exactly that. The Infinite intersecting with our finite universe, and therefore being, becoming limitless at both ends. A World-Tree which, as the Vedas put it, rests upon 'roots no-one knows'.]

Now perhaps I have missed something, but I do not recall Ymir having a fourfold division with three parts of this being heavenly (although interestingly, the Orphic Rhapsodic Hymnal to Zeus may potentially have three 'Heavenly' layers above the Earth at the middle/stomach, contingent upon how it is read and interpreted). I also do not recall a 'Viraj' figure being begetted by Ymir [and it must be noted just Who and What it is that Viraj is] – quite the contrary, as aforenoted.

I also do not recall Ymir's flesh being turned into the various animals of the wild, of the village, and of the skies; particularly not the Horse . Or, for that matter, Ymir giving rise to various sacred liturgy.

I also do not recall (with the possible exception of dwarves) various clades of society coming out of a fourfold division of Ymir's flesh. Is there some mention of Ymir's mouth that I am overlooking? Or arms, etc?

Because the much less complicated Ymir conceptry seems to just have flesh into earth, bones into mountains, sweat/blood into sea, brows into Midgard ; a skull sky-dome, brain-clouds, teeth smashed in, one presumes, to make boulders, and trees from hair. Oh, and the Sun, stars etc. are not related to Ymir but are instead sparks from Muspelheim.

This contrasts with, as we have seen, the substance of Purusha's body going in rather different directions like those animals and other creatures aforementioned and the sacred forms of verse and liturgy. The feet do turn into earth, yes … but while the head and the high heaven are mentioned … that's also rather different. Remember that bit at the start of the Purusha Sukta about the lowest quarter being what's down here in the terrestrial sphere? Those next three up are atmospheric layers – as you can see via the reference for His navel/midriff being the 'mid-point' – the 'middle atmosphere' zone that we find mentioned in the (sensible) Vedic cosmology.

So yes, the Head as Heaven .. it's just that this is quite different from the Ymir-sourced 'Skull Dome' for the sky entire that's propped up on corners of the world. Because it's a lot further up, and it's both doing a lot more and a lot less – it's not around the entire sky. .

Meanwhile, there's some other interesting differences around the head likewise. The Brain of Ymir winds up being clouds. Purusha's mental element becomes the Moon. The Sun that we have met earlier as a spark from Muspelheim … in Vedic terms we have the Eye of Purusha [interestingly, this is also the Eye

of Varuna – but that is unsurprising .. ] so again, not alike. Especially if I am correct in my supposition that this 'brow' business being used as an enclosure in the Ymir story is in fact 'eye'. Because then it'd be .. well, Sun and Earth-settlement/enclosure (although as we have considered in our recent piece on the Eyes of the Sky Father – there is a rather intriguing double-up of meaning around the origins for 'Loka' in Sanskrit pertaining to 'Lewk' in PIE – Light].

We also have other key energies represented in the Purusha conceptry – in addition to the Sun (Surya), we have Indra and Agni and Vayu. I am not sure that I recall mention of an active breath for Ymir going on ? [Possibly because Ymir's , you know .. dead ] nor Ymir producing lightning, fire, radiant energy in general .. or, potentially if you want to read the verses that way, deities (and it must be remembered that as the words are shared, we are not always entirely sure whether the 'energy' or the Deity correlate to said energy is being hailed in a given Vedic occurrency. ).

That whole being dead thing also rather significantly contrasts Ymir with the Purusha description as "Lord of Immortality" – the undying.

I also don't seem to note some sort of catastrophic flood that wipes out a whole lot of life resulting from Purusha sacrifice … as contrasted with what we see quite prominently with Ymir. Although we DO find mention for, for instance, a sudden massive flood resultant from the slaying of Vritra – a demon who is regarded as being a begetter of just such a further-demonic brood. Perhaps we shall explore this potential comparanda in further depth another time.

I am sure there is quite a bit more that I am missing [including the dysjunction involved with the sea – because of course, in Vedic conceptry .. the Sea already exists as liminal sphere, no massive blood-letting required … ] ; but I think that I have probably gone on long enough for the moment ..

Phrased succinctly: I don't think that most of the parallels some might insist upon as "common ground" between the two myths (that of Purusha and that of Ymir) are really there. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that they are "minimal".

One's a demon being killed, causing the deaths of a great many other demons as he goes down due to drowning in blood etc. – and then chopped up to make some land and some cloud out of and a skull-dome.

The other's a God that is infinity, becoming 'differentiated' , and producing all life and all that sustains life, including radiating holy verse – still continuing to live and be nourished through sacral conduct, and expressing quite a different cosmology and with a suite of elements that just simply aren't there in the

Ymir materials, or come from entirely different sources, etc. [like Muspelheim sourcing the Sun – rather than, you know, the Eye of the God]

I have deliberately omitted to consider in any great depth … quite an array of Vedic materials which may feasibly be brought to bear upon this discussion – these include, obviously, the Sky Father as Axis Mundi references in various Hymnals, as well as the extensive Brahmana commentary layers which go significantly further in a number of these matters. I do not think that they should change the outcome significantly – although at some stage, somebody may wish to seek a greater concordancy with the Greek materials which have come down to us, particularly in the latter sphere.

I also do not expect this above recounting to prove entirely convincing to those absolutely determined to believe in a number of points we should perhaps consider 'heretical'.

For instance – if you are ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED, as some are, to falsely hold Ymir to be a God rather than a Demon, then the co-identification with Purusa is inestimably useful, because it affords the prospect of a purported Indo-European 'support' for those malefic and miasmatically mendacious notions. Never mind that, as I have said – we Hindus often hold Purusha and Shiva to be one and the same ; the Sky Father Deific Who, as we have seen via Odin, should slay such a creature as Ymir (and compare the situation of Zeus contra Typhon, Athena and Dionysus (and/or Zeus – but then I repeat myself) 'gainst Typhoeus, Brihaspati against certain Fiends – which interestingly, as we have previously mapped, incorporates direct scriptural concordancy with a Ynglinga Saga account of a deed of Odin's).

And, as is so often the case, there is a 'comfortable orthodoxy' all its own out there in academia which holds that all which is required for the co-identification of Ymir with … various of these figures aforementioned is some form of Killing. Never mind just WHO is doing the Killing – and why.

Nobody would seek to sensibly compare Lord Shiva voluntarily imbibing the Halahala Poison, Lord Odin Hanging Himself from Yggdrasil, etc. with Ymir being cast down and hacked to pieces by Odin, surely. Yet each of these is, in its own way, a foundational act of the Cosmos, the Cosmic Order – only, as we have seen … with Lord Shiva, He does not Die [although DOES wind up with a blue mark of asphyxia about His Neck … almost as if He had survived a Hanging ….], and with Odin, He comes back from this Self-Sacrifice [what, in truth, the Purusha Sukta must be regarded as], replete with the Empowered Speech and Wisdom represented resplendent via our Runes. Gosh, just like how the Hindu presentation has the emanation of the Songs which Sustain the Universe from Purusha in the course of His Self-Sacrificial Event.

Some may argue that the Ymir occurrence described by Sturluson may still represent some sort of 'derivation' from the archaic Indo-European conceptry for the Sky Father as Mundi … and I suppose that

this is not entirely disprovable. For all the considerable strong coterminity Sturluson's work still nevertheless demonstrates with the proper and more primary source Indo-European scriptural canons (see my previous works for details) – there are nevertheless some portions wherein something downright curious happens, and he mixes up or 'innovates' upon elements in manners which introduce incongruities to the referencing. A good example being his post-dating of the Slaying of Jormungandr to the War at the End of the World – rather than having already happened per an array of other Germanic source-material upon the subject, or for that matter what we know to be true from the broader Indo-European comparanda upon the subject of the Striker/Thunderer versus the Encircling Demon Dragon of the Water.

However, in order for this to actually be what has occurred – we should probably expect a grander suite of stronger comparative linkages to be set out between the accounting for Ymir and the slaying of same. I suspect, as I have intimated above, that there is far stronger probative value to be encountered in a cross-comparison of Ymir with Vritra and other such primeval adversaries of immense scale and scope, with something having 'shifted' in the myth between its authentic recounting amidst the Germanics and its (re-)collection via Sturluson. But as with so many things in the Nordic mythology – we simply have too little to go upon.

That awareness – that we HAVE too little to go upon – is an important consideration when it comes to the serious exploration of the comparative Indo-European mythology, with a view toward the resurrection, the reconstruction of same … especially in theological terms, and when it comes to Who and How we are worshipping. There are cases, of course, wherein we can be near-certain that some creature referred to ostensibly as a 'demon' is in fact one of our Gods – Who has become demonized in a quite literal sense via accident or malefic intonation: the Zoroastrian sphere is leavened through with exemplars for this sad trend in action, as we have previously analyzed. Yet I think it best to err upon the side of caution in such matters – and in situative scenarios such as the one presently under our gaze, wherein we have the presentation of Ymir as a demon slain by the Great God Himself … it makes fairly little sense, comparatively nor otherwise, to endeavour to 'tip the scales' (by which I mean – to tip them right over, and take with it the order, the 'measuring' ['Metis' – 'rulership' bound up with this likewise] thusly correlated with same) and set aside this declaration, deify Ymir (whether implicitly as his own destroyer ; or explicitly, as simply a deity, I suppose) , and begin carrying out consecrated offerings to this demon-spawning force of cosmic disorder as the evident result. And to do all of this, upon a set of purported 'parallels' which, upon closer examination, are at best highly, heavilly, hugely 'contestable' if not outright illusory once subjected to the probing gaze of Truth.

I am a simple man. If we have reasonably straightforward injunctives as to Who is Divine, and How it is that They are to be related to … I see precious little reason to go out upon a limb and start 'reading in' figures that are expressly, explicitly condemned as being the exact opposite to Their ranks.

Yet simple though I may be – I also have a habit of preferring the depth and complexity of vision which prioritizes the search for true underlying linkages , upon close cognates of essence and expression, rather than the simplistic singling out of surface-level occurrences in isolation of their proper, broader context in a bid to entirely artificially 'weld together' the unlike. A self-sacrifice which is returned from is not the same thing as the striking down of a demon – even though both may, technically, entail an act of lethality. The Immanency to the Cosmos of the Sky Father, of the Divine, is not a dead, dessicated, and decayed one – but an active, vital, and yet-living force. Homage and worship is aptly due to Him as part of the ongoing sustaining of the Cosmos and Cosmic Order, as we see every day via ShivLingPuja (or, for that matter, via the intriguing comparanda of milk(-and-honey) libations poured to nourish the Axis Mundi, the Sky Father, in each of Nordic and Greek myth – as we intend to explore in an upcoming (A)Arti-cle more directly upon this subject itself).

For this reason – I have no compunction in stating it proper to venerate the Cosmic Sky Father … and not some admittedly expansive demon whom He hath Slain.

Hail to the Cosmokrator

The (literally) Universal Sovereign

Jai Ishvara

**Choochoolain's Afterword**

First off, after a bit of digging I discovered that "Arya Akasha" is headed in part by Curwen Ares Rolinson, an alt-right politician in Auckland and former chairman of New Zealand First, so obviously I'm not going to see eye-to-eye with anyone associated with him.

As I said very early in this document, I do not believe in a Universal Sovereign, nor humor the idea that this realm is formed by design of the gods at all, but rather sprouted from the present will of the dead god, whatever it may be called. Evolution and the cyclic nature of time seem to both support this notion with the knowledge we have now, but please consider too that Hinduism is not the original Indo-European or even Vedic faith. Instead, there is an historical Vedic faith which may not even be the original version of our faith, and with more modern and correct translations of the Rigveda, there likely was not the concept of a Universal Sovereign in the original faith.

The Vedic period is held to have ended around 500 BCE. The period between 800 BCE and 200 BCE is the formative period for later Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. By then, proto-Celtic and proto-Germanic peoples had long since migrated out of the region, and the ideas of all gods arising from a central

Absolute is from, I'm guessing, Brahmanism. Thus, Hinduism is no more polytheistic than Celtic Christianity, and there are currently attempts to revive the old Vedic polytheistic religion, however difficult that proves, though it is not my goal. To contrast, the proto-Celtic linguistic era is from 800-1300 BCE. Proto-Germanic is from 500 BCE which is about when Hinduism formed, and the Zoroastrian faith formed in 1500-600 BCE as a protest to the violence in the historical Vedic faith (also called Vedism), which had its roots in the Indus Valley Civilisation (2600–1900 BCE).

The migrations in people groups are linked directly to religious moves to monotheism.

To compare even further, The Biblical Book of Genesis is from 500-600 BCE, and The Epic of Gilgamesh was written in 2100-2000 BCE. The vast changes in Semitic faith between those two works should be evidence enough that religion can change vastly within that time, and I believe this is where we see the differences in the understanding of Ymir/Purusha/Brahma between later Germanic and Vedic sources. The understanding of this entity was likely also shaped by the relationship people had to the land. Hinduism developed a more symbiotic respect for the land and belief in karma, while Germanic lands had harsh winters and a very high infant mortality rate.

The truth is that Ymir/Brahma/Purusha is neither a good god nor a bad god, but rather “the god everything is made out of; who nature and personality is present in all things arising from this realm; that which all elements, physics, evolution, and mathematics sprang from”, the truest neutral an entity can be, as it is sundered but still lives! However, I do not worship this entity, and seek a higher purpose in Brighid.

**Brigidine Prayers and Chants**

**Gabhaim Molta Bride**

[Gaol Naofa | Gaelic Polytheism » Gabhaim Molta Bride (I Praise Brigid)]

| Gaeilge (Irish) | Foghraíocht (Phonetics) | Béarla (English) |
| --- | --- | --- |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Gabhaim molta Bride*<br>*Ionmhain í le hÉireann*<br>*Ionmhain le gach tír í*<br>*Molaimis go léir í* | Gow-am mull-ta<br>Bree-jah<br>On-wan ee leh hAir-inn<br>On-wan leh gockh<br>tcheer ee<br>Mull-a-meesh guh lair<br>ee | I praise Brigid<br>Beloved in Ireland<br>Beloved in all countries<br>Let us all praise her |
| *Lóchrann geal na Laighneach*<br>*'Soilsiú feadh na tire*<br>*Ceann ar óghaibh Éireann*<br>*Ceann na mban ar míne* | Lockh-ran gyal nah<br>Lie-knock<br>Soul-shoe yal nah<br>tchee-ra<br>Kyann err owe-iv<br>Air-inn<br>Kyann na mon err<br>mien-ya | The bright torch of Leinster<br>Shining throughout the country<br>The pride of Irish youth<br>The pride of our gentle women |
| *Tig an gheimhreadh dian dubh*<br>*Gearradh lena ghéire*<br>*Ach ar Lá 'le Bríde*<br>*Gar dúinn Earrach Éireann* | Tig uhn gear-uh jean doo<br>Gyar-ah le-nah yeara<br>Ockh err law leh<br>Bree-jah<br>Gar dywin Are-ockh<br>Air-inn | The house of winter is very dark<br>Cutting with its sharpness<br>But on Brigid's Day<br>Spring is near to Ireland |

**Mantra (original)**

Goddess Brigid, temper my heart in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my soul in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my will in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my love in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my mind in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my actions in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my desires in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my resolve in your flame.
Goddess Brigid, temper my devotion in your flame.

**The Genealogy of Brighid - modified from**
**Living Liminally: Brighid (lairbhan.blogspot.com)**
**and Jenne Micale**

**The Descent of Brigid**

**The Descent of the holy goddess Brighid,**
**radiant ray of dawn, noble mother of Ruadan.**
**Brighid, the daughter of an Daghda the Good God,**
**An Daghda son of Elatha**

**Elatha, king of the Fomorians**

**Brighid of smithcraft,**
**Brighid of poetry,**
**Brighid of the healing well,**
**Brighid of the hearth.**

**Brighid of motherhood,**
**Brighid of calmness,**
**Brighid of compassion,**
**Brighid of the poor.**

**Brighid, woman-comrade,**
**Brighid of the war-spear,**
**Brighid, woman-helper,**
**Brighid, woman strong.**

**Each day and each night**
**That I say the Descent of Brighid,**
**I shall not be slain,**
**I shall not be wounded,**
**I shall not be put in a cell,**
**I shall not be gashed,**
**I shall not be torn asunder,**
**I shall not be despoiled,**
**I shall not be down-trodden,**
**I shall not be made naked,**
**I shall not be rent,**
**Nor will I**
**Be forgotten.**

**Nor sun shall burn me,**
**Nor fire shall burn me,**
**Nor beam shall burn me,**
**Nor moon shall burn me.**
**Nor river shall drown me,**
**Nor brine shall drown me,**
**Nor flood shall drown me,**
**Nor water shall drown me.**

**Nightmare shall not lie on me,**
**Black-sleep shall not lie on me,**
**Spell-sleep shall not lie on me,**
**Plague-sleep shall not lie on me.**

**I am under the shielding**
**Of good Brighid each day;**
**I am under the shielding**
**Of good Brighid each night.**

**I am under the keeping**
**Of the exalted one,**
**Each early and late,**
**Every dark, every light.**

**Brighid is my comrade-woman,**
**Brighid is my inspiration,**
**Brighid is my helping-woman,**
**The Exalted One, my guide.**

### The Snake Charm

Early on Bride's morn
The serpent shall come from the hole,
I will not molest the serpent,
Nor will the serpent molest me.

## Reference to Brighid in Historical Texts

### On Brigit the Goddess

- SANAS CORMAC, CORMAC'S GLOSSARY, O'Donovan Translation, from the Book of Leinster, completed 1160-1224CE

Brigit i.e. a poetess, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigit the female sage, or woman of wisdom, i.e. Brigit the goddess whom poets adored, because very great and very famous was her protecting care. It is therefore they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigit the female physician [woman of leechcraft,] Brigit the female smith [woman of smithwork] ; from whose names with all Irishmen a goddess was called Brigit.

BRIGIT i.e. a poetess, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigit the female sage, or woman of wisdom, i.e. Brigit the goddess whom poets adored, because very great and very famous was her protecting care. It is therefore they call her goddess of poets by this name. Whose sisters were Brigit the female physician [woman of leechcraft,] Brigit the female smith [woman of smithwork]; from whose names with all Irishmen a goddess was called *Brigit*. *Brĭgit*, then, *breo-aigit, breo-shaigit* 'a fiery arrow'.

B. omits the absurd etymology of *Brigit*, which name is certainly (as Siegfried thought) connected with the O.Celtic goddess-name *Brigantia* and possibly with the Skr. Brhaspati and O.Norse Bragi. The name of the *Dagda* (as to whom see infra s.v. *Ruadrofessa*) Siegfried thought was borrowed from Lat. *doctus*, as *augtor* from *auctor*, *legtóir* from *lector*. But why not then *Dogda?* I would rather regard it as a genuine Celtic part. pass. meaning *doctus*, but to be connected with the root DAGH in δι-δαχή, δε-δί-δαχ-α.—*Ed.*

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GODS AND FIGHTING MEN - THE MORRIGU by Lady Gregory

And if it was not the Morrigu, it was Badb that showed herself in the battle of Dunbolg, where the men of Ireland were fighting under Aedh, son of Niall; and Brigit was seen in the same battle on the side of the men of Leinster.

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THE CATH MAIGE TUIRED translated by Whitley Stokes

Now the Fomorians marvelled at one thing which was revealed to them in the battle. Their weapons, their spears and their swords, to wit, were blunted and broken and such of their men as were slain used not to come on the morrow. But it was not so with the Tuatha Dé. For though their weapons were blunted and broken to-day, they were renewed on the morrow, because Goibniu the Smith was in the forge making swords and spears and javelins. For he would make those weapons by three turns. Then Luchtaine the Wright would make the spearshafts by three chippings, and the third chipping was a finish and would set them in the ring of the spear. When the spearheads were stuck in the side of the forge he would throw the rings with the shafts, and it was needless to set them again. Then Credne the Brazier would make the rivets by three turns, and would cast the rings of the spears to them, and it was needless to [gap: meaning of text unclear/extent: one word] before them; and thus they used to cleave together.

This then is what used to put fire into the warriors who were slain there, so that they were swifter on the morrow. Because Dian-cecht and his two sons, even Octriuil and Miach, and his daughter Airmed were singing spells over the well named Sláine. Now their mortally wounded men were cast into it as they would be slain. They were alive when they would come out. Their mortally wounded became whole through the might of the chant of the four leeches who were about the well.

Now that was harmful to the Fomorians, so they told a man of them to inspect the battle and the (custom) of the Tuath Dea, namely Ruadán son of Bres and of Brígh the Dagda's daughter. For he was a son and a grandson of the Tuath Dé. Then he related to the Fomorians the work of the Smith and the Wright and the Brazier and the four Leeches who were around the well. He was

sent again to kill one of the artists, even Goibniu. From him he begged a spear, its rivets from the Brazier and its shaft from the Wright. So all was given to him as he asked. Now there was a woman there grinding the weapons, even Cron mother of Fianlug, she it is that ground Ruadán's spear. Now the spear was given to Ruadáin by a chief, wherefore the name 'a chief's spear' is still given to weavers' beams in Erin.

Now after the spear had been given him, Ruadán turned and wounded Goibniu. But he plucked out the spear and cast it at Ruadán, so that it went through him, and he died in the presence of his father in the assembly of the Fomorians. Then Brígh comes and bewailed her son. She shrieked at first, she cried at last. So that then for the first time crying and shrieking were heard in Erin. Now it is that Brígh who invented a whistle for signalling at night.

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THE BOOK OF INVASIONS, R. A. Stewart Macalister / Morgan Daimler

Brigit banfile ingen in Dagda is oce ro baí Fe ocus Mean, dá ríghdamraidi, diatá Femen. Is oce ro baí Triath rí a torcraide, diatá Treithirne. Is oce ro baí ro clossa trí gotha diabul íar n-imarbus in Erinn, .i. Fet ocus Go locus Eigem. Ocus os lei ro baí Cirb rí moltraigi, diatá Mag cirb. Is leo ro boí Cerman ocus Cermat ocus In Mac Oc. (Macalister, 1940)

Brigit the poetess, daughter of the Dagda, with her were Fe and Men, the two kings of oxen, from whom is Femen [called]. And with her was Triath, king of her boars, from whom is Treithirne [called]. And with her were heard, the three demonic sounds after transgressions in Ireland, whistling and weeping and lamentation. And also with her was Cirb king of the rams, from whom is Mag Cirb [called]. With them were Cerman and Cermat and the Mac Oc. (Translation Daimler, 2015)

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INCALLAM IN DA THURAD, THE COLLOQUY OF THE TWO SAGES, David Stifter Translation

na tri dei Dana. tri meic Brigti banfili.i. Brian & Iuchar & Úar tri meic Bressi meic Eladan & Brigit banfile ingen in Dagdai Móir ríg Herend a mmathair. & ainm dóside in Ruad Rofessa atberar sund. vel Cermait & Dermait & Aed. Brigit banfili ingen Rúaid Rofessa. .i. ainm don Dagda. Ruad Rofessa mac na n-ule ndana.i. {MS folio 188a 5} mac oca mbí in dán uile. Is aire dano beres Nede a genelach cosin luctsa ar is occu ro buí suithe na hécsi co comlán. A dualus a aíse dano atbeir Neide conid mac cech oen dibseo diaraile. ar is é in t-athair leis intí bís i rremthechtas. & is é in mac intí bís i tiarmoracht.

The three sons of Brigit the woman-poet, that is Brian and Iuchar and Úar, the sons of Bress son of Eladan and Brigit the woman-poet, daughter of the Great Dagda, king of Ireland (was) their mother. And the name Ruad Rofessa (Red One of Great Knowledge), is given to him [the Dagda] here, or Cermait, and Díarmuit, and Áed (fire). Brigit, daughter of Ruad Rofessa, that is, a name of the Dagda. Ruad Rofessa the son of all arts, that is a son who has all art.

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HAIL BRIGIT, an Old-Irish poem on the Hill of Alenn. ed. and trans. Kuno Meyer. Halle a.S., M. Niemeyer, 1912. from The Book of Leinster. l.7148-25.

Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúaid, for grúaid Lifi lir co tráig; is tú banfhlaith buidnib slúaig fil for clannaib Cathaír Máir.

Ba móu epirt i cach ré airle Dé fri hÉrinn úaig; in-diu cid latt Life líg ropo thír cáich ala n-úair...

Ba rí Loegaire co ler, Ailill Áne, adbol cor; mairid Currech cona lí ní mair nach rí ro boí for....

Ailend aurdairc, álaind fiss, ill mór flaithe fo a cniuss; ba móu foscnad tan ad-chess Crimthan Cosrach ina criuss.

Gáir a ilaig iar cach mbúaid im chúail claideb, comtaig drend; bríg a fían fri indna gorm, gloim a corn for cétaib cend.

Glés a hindéon cotad cúar, clúas a dúan di thengthaib bard, bruth a fer fri comlann nglan, cruth a ban fri hoenach n-ard.

A ól meda for cach mbruig, a graig ailmar, ilar túath, a seinm rond di rigaib fer fo duilnib sleg cóicrind crúach.

A céoil binni i cach thráth, a fínbarc for tonngur flann, a fross argait ordain móir, a tuirc óir a tírib Gall.

Adrad lítha ní flu clúas, solud ná sén síabras bás; is bréc uile iarna thúr indid Alend is dún fás.

Foglas a ngen tibes duitt a maig réid túaith Críchaib Cuirc, di cach lín ron alt a úair do-rigni lúaith Life Luirc.

Currech Lifi lir co hor, Currech Sétnai, síth co ler, is mór rig fris—rala cor Currech Corpri Niód Fer....

A Brigit 'sa tír ad-chíu, is cách a úair immud—rá, ro gab do chlú for a chlú ind ríg, is tú forda-tá.

Táthut bithfhlaith lasin Ríg cen a tír i fil do rúaim; a ué Bresail maic Déin, slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúaid.

TRANSLATION:

Sit thou safely enthroned, triumphant Brigit, upon the side of Liffey far as the strand of the ebbing sea!

Thou art the sovereign lady with banded hosts that presides over the Children of Cathair the Great.

God's counsel at every time concerning Virgin Erin is greater than can be told: though glittering Liffey is thine today, it has been the land of others in their turn.

When from its side I gaze upon the fair Curragh....The lot that has fallen to every king causes awe at each wreck

Logaire was king as far as the sea,--Ailill Áne, a mighty fate: the Curragh with its glitter remains--none of the kings remains that lived thereon.

Perfect Labraid Longsech lives no more, having trodden under foot his fair thirty years: since in Dinn Rig--`twas a wonted abode--he dealt doom to Cobthach the Slender.

Lore's grandson, Oengus of Róiriu, seized the rule of Erin,....sway; Maistiu of the freckled neck, son of Mug Airt, through princes across their graves.

Fair-famed Alenn! Delightful knowledge! Many a prince is under its girth: it is greater than can be fathomed when Crimthan the Victorious was seen in its bosom.

The shout of triumph heard there after each victory around a shock of swords, a mettlesome mass; the strength of its warrior-bands against the dark blue battle-array; the sound of its horns above hundreds of heads.

The tuneful ring of its even-colored bent anvils, the sound of songs heard there from the tongues of bards; the ardour of its men at the glorious contest; the beauty of its women at the stately gathering.

Drinking of mead there in every home-stead; its noble steeds, many tribes; the jingle of chains unto kings of men under blades of five-edged bloody spears.

The sweet strains heard there at every hour, its wine-barque upon the purple flood; its shower of silver of great splendor; its torques of gold from the lands of the Gaul.

Far as the sea of Britain the high renown of each king has sped like a meteor: delightful Alenn with its might has made sport of every law.

Bresal Bree was king over Elg, Fiachra Fobree with a fierce band of warriors; Ferus of the Sea, Finn son of Roth they loved to dwell in lofty Alenn.

Worship of auguries is not worth listening to, nor of spells and auspices that betoken death; all is vain when it is probed, since Alenn is a deserted doom.

Brigit is the smile that smiles on you from the plain...of Core's land; of each generation which it reared in turn Liffey of Lore has made ashes.

The Currah of Liffey to the brink of the main, the Curragh of Sétna, a land of peace as far as the sea,--many is the king whom the Curragh of Carbre Nia-fer has overthrown.

Catháir the Great-- he was the choicest of shapes --ruled Erin of many hues: though you cry upon him at his rath, his prowess of many weapons has vanished.

Fiachna of Fomuin, glorious Bresal ruled the sea with showers of spears: thirty great kings to the edge of the sea seized land around Tara of Bregia.

The Peaks of Iuchna, delightful place, around which many graves have settled behold in lofty Allen the abode of Tadg, son of Nuada Necht!

The apparel of Feradach--a goodly diadem--around whom crested bands would move; his blue-speckled helmet, his shining mantle,--many a king he overthrew.

Dunlang of Fornochta, he was generous, a prince who routed battles against the sons of Niall: though one were to tell the tale to all, this is not the world that was once.

Illann with his tribe launched thirty battles against every king, Enna's grandson, a rock against terror, it was not a host without a king's rule.

Ailill was a king that would bestow favour, against whom a fierce blood-dark battle-host would rise: Cormac, Carbre, Colman the Great, Brandub, a barque in which were hosts.

Faelan the Fair was a track of princeship, Fianamail with....; Braiin, son of Conall with many deeds, he was the wave over every cliff.

Oh Brigit whose land I behold, on which each one in turn has moved about, thy fame has outshone the fame of the king--thou art over them all.

Thou hast everlasting rule with the king apart from the land wherein is thy cemetery. Grand-child of Bresal son of Dian, sit thou safely enthroned, triumphant Brigit!

**On Brigid the Saint**

CARMINA GAEDELICA by Alexander Carmichael, compiled 1860-1909CE

THE Genealogy of Bride was current among people who had a latent belief in its efficacy. Other hymns to Bride were sung on her festival, but nothing now remains except the names and fragments of the words. The names are curious and suggestive, as: 'Ora Bhride,' Prayer of Bride, 'Lorg Bhride,' Staff of Bride, 'Luireach Bhride,' Lorica of Bride, 'Lorig Bhride,' Mantle of

Bride, 'Brot Bhride,' Corslet of Bride, and others. La Feill Bhride, St Bridget's Day, is the first of February, new style, or the thirteenth according to the old style, which is still much in use in the Highlands. It was a day of great rejoicing and jubilation in olden times, and gave rise to innumerable sayings, as:--

'Feill na Bride, feis na finne.'

'Bride binn nam bas ban.'

'A Bhride chaoin cheanail,
Is caoimh liom anail do bheoil,
'D uair reidhinn air m' aineol
Bu to fein ceann eisdeachd mo sgeoil.'

Feast of the Bride, feast of the maiden.

Melodious Bride of the fair palms.

Thou Bride fair charming,
Pleasant to me the breath of thy mouth,
When I would go among strangers
'Thou thyself wert the hearer of my tale.

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There are many legends and customs connected with Bride. Some of these seem inconsistent with one another, and with the character of the Saint of Kildare. These seeming inconsistencies arise from the fact that there were several Brides, Christian and pre-Christian, whose personalities have become confused in the course of centuries--the attributes of all being now popularly ascribed to one. Bride is said to preside over fire, over art, over all beauty, 'fo cheabhar agus fo chuan,' beneath the sky and beneath the sea. And man being the highest type of ideal beauty, Bride presides at his birth and dedicates him to the Trinity. She is the Mary and the Juno of the Gael. She is much spoken of in connection with Mary,--generally in relation to the birth of Christ. She was the aid-woman of the Mother of Nazareth in the lowly stable, and she is the aid-woman of the mothers of Uist in their humble homes.

It is said that Bride was the daughter of poor pious parents, and the serving-maid in the inn of Bethlehem. Great drought occurred in the land, and the master of the hostel went away with his cart to procure water from afar, leaving with Bride 'faircil buirn agus breacag arain,' a stoup of water and a bannock of bread to sustain her till his return. The man left injunctions with Bride not to give food or drink to any one, as he had left only enough for herself, and not to give shelter to any one against his return.

As Bride was working in the house two strangers came to the door. The man was old, with brown hair and grey beard, and the woman was young and beautiful, with oval face, straight nose, blue eyes, red lips, small ears, and golden brown hair, which fell below her waist. They asked the serving-maid for a place to rest, for they were footsore and weary, for food to satisfy their hunger, and for water to quench their thirst. Bride could not give them shelter, but she gave them of her own bannock and of her own stoup of water, of which they partook at the door; and having thanked Bride the strangers went their way, while Bride gazed wistfully and sorrowfully after them. She saw that the sickness of life was on the young woman of the lovely face, and her heart was sore that she had not the power to give them shade from the heat of the sun, and cover from the cold of the dew. When Bride returned into the house in the darkening of the twilight, what was stranger to her to see than that the bannock of bread was whole, and the stoup of water full, as they had been before! She did not know under the land of the world what she would say or what she would do. The food and the water of which she herself had given them, and had seen them partake, without a bit or a drop lacking from them! When she recovered from her wonderment Bride went out to look after the two who had gone their way, but she could see no more of them. But she saw a brilliant golden light over the stable door, and knowing that it was not 'dreag a bhais,' a meteor of death, she went into the stable and was in time to aid and minister to the Virgin Mother, and to receive the Child into her arms, for the strangers were Joseph and Mary, and the child was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to earth, and born in the stable of the hostel of Bethlehem. "D uair a rugadh an leanabh chuir Bride tri braona burna fuarain fioir-uisge air clar a bhathais ann an ainm De, ann an ainm Iosa, ann an ainm Spioraid.' When the Child was born Bride put three drops of water from the spring of pure water on the tablet of His forehead, in name of God, in name of Jesus, in name of Spirit. When the master of the inn was returning home, and ascending the hill on which his house stood, he heard the murmuring music of a stream flowing past his house, and he saw the light of a bright star above his stable door. He knew from these signs that the Messiah was come and that Christ was born, 'oir bha e ann an dailgneachd nan daoine gum beirte Iosa Criosda Mac De ann am Betlehem, baile Dhaibhidh'--for it was in the seership of the people that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born in Bethlehem, the town of David. And the man rejoiced with exceeding joy at the fulfilment of the prophecy, and he went to the stable and worshipped the new Christ, whose infant cradle was the manger of the horses.

Thus Bride is called 'ban-chuideachaidh Moire,' the aid-woman of Mary. In this connection, and in consequence thereof, she is called 'Muime Chriosda,' foster-mother of Christ; 'Bana-ghoistidh Mhic De,' the god-mother of the Son of God; 'Bana-ghoistidh Iosda Criosda nam bane agus nam beannachd,' god-mother of Jesus Christ of the bindings and blessings. Christ again is called 'Dalta Bride,' the foster-son of Bride; 'Dalta Bride bith nam beannachd,' the foster-son of Bride of the blessings; 'Daltan Bride,' little fosterling of Bride, a term of endearment.

John the beloved is called Dalta Moire,' foster-son of Mary, and 'Comhdhalta Chriosda,' the foster-brother, literally co-foster, of Christ. Fostership among the Highlanders was a peculiarly close and tender tie, more close and more tender even than blood. There are many proverbs on

the subject, as, 'Fuil gu fichead, comhdhaltas gu ceud,' blood to the twentieth, fostership to the hundredth degree. A church in Islay is called 'Cill Daltain,' the Church of the Fosterling.

When a woman is in labour, the midwife or the woman next her in importance goes to the door of the house, and standing on the 'fad-buinn,' sole-sod, doorstep, with her hands on the jambs, softly beseeches Bride to come:

'Bhride! Bhride! thig a steach,
Tha do bheatha deanta,
Tabhair cobhair dha na bhean,
’S tabh an gein dh’an Triana.'

Bride! Bride! come in,
Thy welcome is truly made,
Give thou relief to the woman,
And give the conception to the Trinity.

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When things go well, it indicates that Bride is present and is friendly to the family; and when they go ill, that she is absent and offended. Following the action of Bride at the birth of Christ, the aid-woman dedicates the child to the Trinity by letting three drops of clear cold water fall on the tablet of his forehead. (See page 114.)

The aid-woman was held in reverence by all nations. Juno was worshipped with greater honour than any other deity of ancient Rome, and the Pharaohs paid tribute to the aid-women of Egypt. Perhaps, however, appreciation of the aid-woman was never more touchingly indicated than in the reply of two beautiful maidens of St Kilda to John Macdonald, the kindly humorist, and the unsurpassed seaman and pilot of Admiral Otter of the West Coast Survey: 'O ghradhanan an domhain agus an t-saoghail, carson a Righ na gile ’s na greine! nach ’eal sibh a posadh is sibh cho briagh?' 'A ghaol nan daona, ciamar a phosas sinne? nach do chaochail a bheanghluin!' 'Oh! ye loves of the domain and of the universe, why, King of the moon and of the sun! are ye not marrying and ye so beautiful?' 'Oh! thou love of men, how can we marry? has not the knee-wife died!'

On Bride's Eve the girls of the townland fashion a sheaf of corn into the likeness of a woman. They dress and deck the figure with shining shells, sparkling crystals, primroses, snowdrops, and any greenery they may obtain. In the mild climate of the Outer Hebrides several species of plants continue in flower during winter, unless the season be exceptionally severe. The gales of March are there the destroyers of plant-life. A specially bright shell or crystal

is placed over the heart of the figure. This is called 'reul-iuil Bride,' the guiding star of Bride, and typifies the star over the stable door of Bethlehem, which led Bride to the infant Christ. The girls call the figure 'Bride,' 'Brideag,' Bride, Little Bride, and carry it in procession, singing the song of 'Bride bhoidheach oigh nam mile beus,' Beauteous Bride, virgin of a thousand charms. The 'banal Bride,' Bride maiden band, are clad in white, and have their hair down, symbolising purity and youth. They visit every house, and every person is expected to give a gift to Bride and to make obeisance to her. The gift may be a shell, a spar, a crystal, a flower, or a bit of greenery to decorate the person of Bride. Mothers, however, give 'bonnach Bride,' a Bride bannock, 'cabag Bride,' a Bride cheese, or 'rolag Bride,' a Bride roll of butter. Having made the round of the place the girls go to a house to make the 'feis Bride,' Bride feast. They bar the door and secure the windows of the house, and set Bride where she may see and be seen of all. Presently the young men of the community come humbly asking permission to honour Bride. After some parleying they are admitted and make obeisance to her.

Much dancing and singing, fun and frolic, are indulged in by the young men and maidens during the night. As the grey dawn of the Day of Bride breaks they form a circle and sing the hymn of 'Bride bhoidheach muime chorr Chriosda,' Beauteous Bride, choice foster-mother of Christ. They then distribute fuidheal na feisde,' the fragments of the feast--practically the whole, for they have partaken very sparingly, in order to have the more to give--among the poor women of the place.

A similar practice prevails in Ireland. There the churn staff, not the corn sheaf, is fashioned into the form of a woman, and called 'Brideog,' little Bride. The girls come clad in their best, and the girl who has the prettiest dress gives it to Brideog. An ornament something like a Maltese cross is affixed to the breast of the figure. The ornament is composed of straw, beautifully and artistically interlaced by the deft fingers of the maidens of Bride. It is called 'rionnag Brideog,' the star of little Bride. Pins, needles, bits of stone, bits of straw, and other things are given to Bride as gifts, and food by the mothers.

Customs assume the complexion of their surroundings, as fishes, birds, and beasts assimilate the colours of their habitats. The seas of the 'Garbh Chriocha,' Rough Bounds in which the cult of Bride has longest lived, abound in beautiful iridescent shells, and the mountains in bright sparkling stones, and these are utilised to adorn the ikon of Bride. In other districts where the figure of Bride is made, there are no shining shells, no brilliant crystals, and the girls decorate the image with artistically interlaced straw.

The older women are also busy on the Eve of Bride, and great preparations are made to celebrate her Day, which is the first day of spring. They make an oblong basket in the shape of a cradle, which they call 'leaba Bride,' the bed of Bride. It is embellished with much care. Then they take a choice sheaf of

corn, generally oats, and fashion it into the form of a woman. They deck this ikon with gay ribbons from the loom, sparkling shells from the sea, and bright stones from the hill. All the sunny sheltered valleys around are searched for primroses, daisies, and other flowers that open

their eyes in the morning of the year. This lay figure is called Bride, 'dealbh Bride,' the ikon of Bride. When it is dressed and decorated with all the tenderness and loving care the women can lavish upon it, one woman goes to the door of the house, and standing on the step with her hands on the jambs, calls softly into the darkness, 'Tha leaba Bride deiseal,' Bride's bed is ready. To this a ready woman behind replies, 'Thigeadh Bride steach, is e beatha Bride,' Let Bride come in, Bride is welcome. The woman at the door again addresses Bride, 'A Bhride! Bhride thig a stench, tha do leaba deanta. Gleidh an teach dh'an Triana,' Bride! Bride, come thou in, thy bed is made. Preserve the house for the Trinity. The women then place the ikon of Bride with great ceremony in the bed they have so carefully prepared for it. They place a small straight white wand (the bark being peeled off) beside the figure. This wand is variously called 'slatag Bride,' the little rod of Bride, 'slachdan Bride,' the little wand of Bride, and 'barrag Bride,' the birch of Bride. The wand is generally of birch, broom, bramble, white willow, or other sacred wood, 'crossed' or banned wood being carefully avoided. A similar rod was given to the kings of Ireland at their coronation, and to the Lords of the Isles at their instatement. It was straight to typify justice, and white to signify peace and purity--bloodshed was not to be needlessly caused. The women then level the ashes on the hearth, smoothing and dusting them over carefully. Occasionally the ashes, surrounded by a roll of cloth, are placed on a board to safeguard them against disturbance from draughts or other contingencies. In the early morning the family closely scan the ashes. If they find the marks of the wand of Bride they rejoice, but if they find 'long Bride,' the footprint of Bride, their joy is very great, for this is a sign that Bride was present with them during the night, and is favourable to them, and that there is increase in family, in flock, and in field during the coming year. Should there be no marks on the ashes, and no traces of Bride's presence, the family are dejected. It is to them a sign that she is offended, and will not hear their call. To propitiate her and gain her ear the family offer oblations and burn incense. The oblation generally is a cockerel, some say a pullet, buried alive near the junction of three streams, and the incense is burnt on the hearth when the family retire for the night.

In the Highlands and Islands St Bride's Day was also called 'La Cath Choileach,' Da y of Cock-fighting. The boys brought cocks to the school to fight. The most successful cock was called 'coileach buadha,' victor cock, and its proud owner was elected king of the school for the year. A defeated bird was called 'fuidse,' craven, 'coileach fuidse,' craven cock. All the defeated, maimed, and killed cocks were the perquisites of the schoolmaster. In the Lowlands 'La Coinnle,' Candlemas Day, was the day thus observed.

It is said in Ireland that Bride walked before Mary with a lighted candle in each hand when she went up to the Temple for purification. The winds were strong on the Temple heights, and the tapers were unprotected, yet they did not flicker nor fail. From this incident Bride is called 'Bride boillsge,' Bride of brightness. This day is occasionally called 'La Fheill Bride nan Coinnle,' the Feast Day of Bride of the Candles, but more generally 'La Fheill Moire nan Coinnle,' the Feast Day of Mary of the Candles--Candlemas Day.

The serpent is supposed to emerge from its hollow among the hills on St Bride's Day, and a propitiatory hymn was sung to it. Only one verse of this hymn has been obtained, apparently the first. It differs in different localities:--

'Moch maduinn Bhride,
Thig an nimhir as an toll,
Cha bhoin mise ris an nimhir,
Cha bhoin an nimhir rium.

Early on Bride's morn
The serpent shall come from the hole,
I will not molest the serpent,
Nor will the serpent molest me.

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Other versions say:--

La Feill na Bride,
Thig nighean Imhir as a chnoc,
Cha bhean mise do nighean
’S cha dean i mo lochd.' [Imhir,

'La Fheill Bride brisgeanach
Thig an ceann de in chaiteanach,
Thig nighean Iomhair as an tom
Le fonn feadalaich.'

'Thig an nathair as an toll
  La donn Bride,
Ged robh tri traighean dh’ an
  Air leachd an lair.' [t-sneachd

The Feast Day of the Bride,
The daughter of Ivor shall come from the knoll,
I will not touch the daughter of Ivor,
Nor shall she harm me.

On the Feast Day of Bride,
The head will come off the 'caiteanach,'
The daughter of Ivor will come from the knoll

With tuneful whistling.

The serpent will come from the hole
  On the brown Day of Bride,
Though there should be three feet of snow
  On the flat surface of the ground.

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The 'daughter of Ivor' is the serpent; and it is said that the serpent will not sting a descendant of Ivor, he having made 'tabhar agus tuis,' offering and incense, to it, thereby securing immunity from its sting for himself and his seed for ever.

'La Bride nam brig ban
Thig an rigen ran a tom,
Cha bhoin mise ris an rigen ran,
’S cha bhoin an rigen ran rium.'

On the day of Bride of the white hills
The noble queen will come from the knoll,
I will not molest the noble queen,
Nor will the noble queen molest me.

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These lines would seem to point to serpent-worship. One of the most curious customs of Bride's Day was the pounding of the serpent in effigy. The following scene was described to the writer by one who was present:--'I was one of several guests in the hospitable house of Mr John Tolmie of Uignis, Skye. One of my fellow-guests was Mrs Macleod, widow of Major Macleod of Stein, and daughter of Flora Macdonald. Mrs Macleod was known among her friends as "Major Ann." She combined the warmest of hearts with the sternest of manners, and was the admiration of old and young for her wit, wisdom, and generosity. When told that her son had fallen in a duel with the celebrated Glengarry--the Ivor MacIvor of Waverley--she exclaimed, "Math thu fein mo ghiullan! math thu fein mo ghiullan! gaol geal do mhathar fein! Is fearr bias saoidh na gras daoidh; cha bhasaich an gaisgeach ach an aon turas, ach an gealtair iomadaidh uair!"--"Good thou art my son! good thou art my son! thou the white love of thine own mother! Better the hero's death than the craven's life; the brave dies but once, the coward many times." In a company of noblemen and gentlemen at Dunvegan Castle, Mrs Macleod, then in her 88th year, danced the reel of Tulloch and other reels, jigs, and strathspeys as lightly as a girl in her teens. Wherever she was, all strove to show Mrs Macleod attention and to express the honour

in which she was held. She accepted all these honours and attentions with grace and dignity, and without any trace of vanity or self-consciousness. One morning at breakfast at Uignis some one remarked that this was the Day of Bride. "The Day of Bride," repeated Mrs Macleod meditatively, and with a dignified bow of apology rose from the table. All watched her movements with eager curiosity. Mrs Macleod went to the fireside and took up the tongs and a bit of peat and walked out to the doorstep. She then took off her stocking and put the peat into it, and pounded it with the tongs. And as she pounded the peat on the step, she intoned a "rann," rune, only one verse of which I can remember:--

"An diugh La Bride,
Thig an righinn as an tom,
Cha bhean mise ris an righinn,
Cha bhean an righinn rium."

This is the day of Bride,
The queen will come from the mound,
I will not touch the queen,
Nor will the queen touch me.

**********

'Having pounded the peat and replaced her stocking, Mrs Macleod returned to the table, apologising for her remissness in not remembering the Day earlier in the morning. I could not make out whether Mrs Macleod was serious or acting, for she was a consummate actress and the delight of young and old. Many curious ceremonies and traditions in connection with Bride were told that morning, but I do not remember them.'

The pounding in the stocking of the peat representing the serpent would indicate destruction rather than worship, perhaps the bruising of the serpent's head. Probably, however, the ceremony is older, and designed to symbolise something now lost.

Gaelic lore is full of sayings about serpents. These indicate close observation. 'Tha cluas nathrach aige,'--he has the ear of a serpent (he hears keenly but does not speak); 'Tha a bhana-bhuitseach lubach mar an nathair,'--the witch-woman is crooked as the serpent; 'Is e an t-iorball is neo-chronail dhiot, cleas na nathrach nimhe,'--the tail is the least harmful of thee, the trick of the serpent venomous.

'Ge min do chraicionn
Is nimheil gath do bheuil;
Tha thu mar an nathair lachdann,

Gabh do rathad fein.'

'Bean na maise te neo-fhialaidh,
’S i lan do na briathra blath,
Tha, i mar an nathair riabhach,
’S gath na spiocaireachd na dail.'

Though smooth be thy skin,
Venomous is the sting of by mouth;
Thou art like the dun serpent,
Take thine own road.

The beauteous woman, ungenerous,
And she full of warm words,
Is like the brindled serpent,
And the sting of greed is in her.

**********

The people of old practised early retiring, early rising, and diligent working:--

'Suipeir is soillse Oidhch Fheill Bride,
Cadal is soillse Oidhch Fheill Paruig.'

Supper and light the Night of St Bride,
Sleep and light the Night of St Patrick.

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The dandelion is called 'bearnan Bride,' the little notched of Bride, in allusion to the serrated edge of the petal. The linnet is called 'bigein Bride,' little bird of Bride. In Lismore the oyster-catcher is called 'gille Bride,' page of Bride:--

'Gille Bride bochd,
Gu de bhigil a th’ ort?

Poor page of Bride,
What cheeping ails thee?

**********

In Uist the oyster-catcher is called 'Bridein,' bird of Bride. There was once an oyster-catcher in Uist, and he was so elated with his own growing riches that he thought he would like to go and see something of the great world around him. He went away, leaving his three beautiful, olive-brown, blotched black-and-grey eggs in the rough shingle among the stones of the seashore. Shortly after he left the grey crow came hopping round to see what was doing in the place. In her peering she saw the three eggs of the oyster-catcher in the hollow among the rocks, and she thought she would like to try the taste of one of them, as a variant upon the refuse of land and shore. So she drove her strong bill through the broad end of an egg, and seizing it by the shell, carried it up to the mossy holm adjoining. The quality of the egg was so pleasing to the grey crow that she went back for the second, and then for the third egg. The grey crow was taking the last suck of the last egg when the oyster-catcher was heard returning with his usual fuss and flurry and hurry-scurry. He looked at his nest, but there were no eggs there--no, not one, and the oyster-catcher knew not what to do or say. He flew about to and fro, hither and thither in great distress, crying out in the bitterness of his heart, 'Co dh’ ol na h-uibhean? Co dh’ ol na h-uibhean? Cha chuala mi riamh a leithid! Cha chuala mi riamh a leithid!' Who drank the eggs? Who drank the eggs? I never heard the like! I never heard the like! The grey crow listened now on this side and now on that, and gave two more precautionary wipes to her already well-wiped bill in the fringy, friendly moss, then looked up with much affected innocence and called out in deeply sympathetic tones, 'Cha chuala na sinne sinn fhein sin, ged is sine is sine ’s an aite,' No, nor heard we ourselves that, though we are older in the place.

Bride is said to preside over the different seasons of the year and to bestow their functions upon them according to their respective needs. Some call January 'am mios marbh,' the dead month, some December, while some apply the terms, 'na tri miosa marbh,' the three dead months, 'an raithe marbh,' the dead quarter, and 'raithe marbh na bliadhna,' the dead quarter of the year, to the winter months when nature is asleep. Bride with her white wand is said to breathe life into the mouth of the dead Winter and to bring him to open his eyes to the tears and the smiles, the sighs and the laughter of Spring. The venom of the cold is said to tremble for its safety on Bride's Day and to flee for its life on Patrick's Day. There is a saying:--

'Chuir Bride miar ’s an abhuinn
La na Feill Bride
Is dh’ fhalbh mathair ghuir an fhuachd,
Is nigh i basan anns an abhuinn
La na Feill Padruig
Is dh’ fhalbh mathair ghin an fhuachd.'

Bride put her finger in the river
On the Feast Day of Bride
And away went the hatching mother of the cold,

And she bathed her palms in the river
On the Feast Day of Patrick
And away went the conception mother of the cold,
**********

Another version says:--

'Chuir Brighid a bas ann,
Chuir Moire a cas ann,
Chuir Padruig a chiach fhuar ann.' (?)

Bride put her palm in it,
Mary per her foot in it,
Patrick put the cold stone in it,

alluding to the decrease in cold as the year advances. In illustration of this is-- 'Chuir Moire meoirean anns an uisge La Fheili Bride is thug i neimh as, ’s La Fheill Padruig nigh i lamhan ann ’s dh’ fhalbh am fuachd uil as,' Mary put her fingers in the water on Bride's Feast Day and the venom went out of it, and on Patrick's Feast Day she bathed her hands in it and all the cold went out of it,

Poems narrating the events of the seasons were current. That mentioning the occurrences of Spring begins:--

'La Bride breith an earraich
Thig an dearrais as an tom,
Theirear "tri-bhliadhnaich" ri aighean,
Bheirear gearrain chon nam fonn.'

The Day of Bride, the birthday of Spring,
The serpent emerges from the knoll,
'Three-years-olds' is applied to heifers,
Garrons are taken to the fields.

In Uist the flocks are counted and dedicated to Bride on her Day.

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'La Fheill Bride boidheach
Cunntar spreidh air mointeach.
Cuirear fitheach chon na nide,
’S cuirear rithis rocais.'

On the Feast Day of beautiful Bride
The flocks are counted on the moor.
The raven goes to prepare the nest,
And again goes the rook.

Nead air Bhrighit, ugh air Inid, ian air Chasg,
Mar a bith aig an fhitheach bithidh am bas.'

Nest at Brigit, egg at Shrove, chick at Easter,
If the raven has not he has death.

**********

The raven is the first bird to nest, closely followed by the mallard and the rook. It is affirmed that--

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'Co fad ’s a theid a ghaoth ’s an dorus
La na Feill Bride,
Theid an cathadh anns an dorus
La na Feill Paruig.'

As far as the wind shall enter the door
On the Feast Day of Bride,
The snow shall enter the door
On the Feast Day of Patrick.

**********

In Barra, lots are cast for the 'iolachan iasgaich,' fishing-banks, on Bride's Day. These fishing-banks of the sea are as well known and as accurately defined by the fishermen of Barra as are the qualities and boundaries of their crofts on land, and they apportion them with equal care. Having ascertained among themselves the number of boats going to the long-line fishing, the people divide the banks accordingly. All go to church on St Bride's Day. After reciting the

virtues and blessings of Bride, and the examples to be drawn from her life, the priest reminds his hearers that the great God who made the land and all thereon, also made the sea and all therein, and that 'murachan na mara agus tachar na tire,' 'cuilidh Chaluim agus cuilidh Mhoire,' the wealth of sea and the plenty of land, the treasury of Columba and the treasury of Mary, are His gift to them that follow Him and call upon His name, on rocky hill or on crested wave. The priest urges upon them to avoid disputes and quarrels over their fishing, to remember the dangers of the deep and the precariousness of life, and in their fishing to remember the poor, the widow and the orphan, now left to the fatherhood of God and to the care of His people. Having come out of church, the men cast lots for the fishing-banks at the church door. After this, they disperse to their homes, all talking loudly and discussing their luck or unluck in the drawing of the lots. A stranger would be apt to think that the people were quarrelling. But it is not so. The simultaneous talking is their habit, and the loudness of their speaking is the necessity of their living among the noise of winds and waves, whether on sea or on shore. Like the people of St Kilda, the people of Barra are warmly attached to one another, the joy of one and the grief of another being the joy and grief of all.

The same practice of casting lots for their fishing-banks prevails among the fisher-folks of the Lofodin Islands, Norway.

From these traditional observations, it will be seen that Bride and her services are near to the hearts and lives of the people. In some phases of her character she is much more to them than Mary is.

Dedications to Bride are common throughout Great Britain and Ireland.

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BRIDE BAN-CHOBHAIR
BRIDE THE AID-WOMAN from the Carmina Gaedelica

THAINIG thugam cobhair,
Moire gheal is Bride;
Mar a rug Anna Moire,
Mar a rug Moire Criosda,
Mar a rug Eile Eoin Baistidh
Gun mhar-bhith dha dhi,
Cuidich thusa mise ’m asaid,
Cuidich mi a Bhride!

Mar a gheineadh Criosd am Moire
Comhliont air gach laimh,
Cobhair thusa mise, mhoime,

An gein a thoir bho ’n chnaimh;
’S mar a chomhn thu Oigh an t-solais,
Gun or, gun odh, gun ni,
Comhn orm-sa, ’s mor m’ othrais,
Comhn orm a Bhride!

**********

THERE came to me assistance,
Mary fair and Bride;
As Anna bore Mary,
As Mary bore Christ,
As Eile bore John the Baptist
Without flaw in him,
Aid thou me in mine unbearing,
Aid me, O Bride!

As Christ was conceived of Mary
Full perfect on every hand,
Assist thou me, foster-mother,
The conception to bring from the bone;
And as thou didst aid the Virgin of joy,
Without gold, without corn, without kine,
Aid thou me, great is my sickness,
Aid me, O Bride!

**********

SIAN BRIDE
ST BRIDE'S CHARM from the Carmina Gaedelica

SIAN a chuir Bride nam buadh,
M’a mise, m’a cire, m’a buar,
M’a capuill, m’a cathmhil, m’a cual,
Moch is anamach dol dachaidh is uaith.

Gan cumail bho chreagan, bho chleitean,
Bho ladhara ’s bho adhaircean a cheile,
Bho iana na Creige Ruaidh,
Is bho Luath na Feinne.

Bho lannaire liath Creag Duilionn,
Bho iolaire riabhach Beinn-Ard,

Bho sheobhag luth Torr-an-Duin,
Is fitheach dur Creag-a-Bhaird.

Bho mhada-ruadh nan cuireid,
Bho mhada-ulai a Mhaim,
Bho thaghan tocaidh na tuide,
’S bho mhaghan udail a mhais.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Bho gach ceithir-chasach spuireach,
Agus guireach da sgiath.

THE charm put by Bride the beneficent,
On her goats, on her sheep, on her kine,
On her horses, on her chargers, on her herds,
Early and late going home, and from home.

To keep them from rocks and ridges,
From the heels and the horns of one another
From the birds of the Red Rock,
And from Luath of the Feinne.

From the blue peregrine hawk of Creag Duilion,
From the brindled eagle of Ben-Ard,
From the swift hawk of Tordun,
From the surly raven of Bard's Creag.

From the fox of the wiles,
From the wolf of the Mam,
From the foul-smelling fumart,
And from the restless great-hipped bear.

* * * * *
* * * * *

From every hoofed of four feet,
And from every hatched of two wings.
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ST. BROCCAN'S HYMN from The Irish Liber Hymnorum
Victorious Brigid loved not the world;
she sat the seat of John on a cliff, she slept the sleep of a captive,- the saint, for the sake of her Son.

Not much of evil-speaking was got!
with lofty faith (in) the Trinity Brigid, mother of my high King,

of the kingdom of heaven best she was born.
She was not absent, she was not malicious,
she was not a mighty, quarrelsome, champion (?), she was not an adder striking, speckled ;
she sold not the Son of God for gain!
She was not greedy of treasures,

she gave, without poison, without abatement; she was not hard, penurious,
she loved not the world's spending.
To guests she was not acrimonious,
to miserable weaklings she was gentle;
on a plain she was built (as) a city ;
may
she protect us (in) hosts to the Kingdom.
TF] She was no plunderer (?) of a mountain-slope;
she worked in the midst of a plain,
a wonderful ladder for pagan-folk
to climb to the Kingdom of Mary's Son!
Wonderful was St. Brigid's congregation, wonderful, Plea to which it went;
but alone with Christ was maintained her frequent mission to the poor!
Good was the hour that Mac-Caille held
a veil over St. Brigid's head ;
she was clear in all her proceedings; in heaven was heard her prayer ;
God, I pray to Him against every battle,
in whatever way my lips can reach,
deeper than seas, vaster than count,
Three Persons, One Person, a wonder of a story!"
A challenge to the battle, renowned Kevin ! through a storm of snow that wind drives, in
Glendalough was suffered a cross, till peace visited him after labour.
St. Brigid was not given to sleep,
nor was she intermittent about God's love;
not merely that she did not buy, she did not strive for the world's wealth here below, the Saint!
That which the King wrought
of miracles for St. Brigid,
if they have been wrought for (any other) person,
in what place hath ear of any living being heard of it?
The first dairying on which she was sent
with first butter in a cart,
she took nought from the gift to her guests, nor did she lessen her following.
Her portion of bacon, after that,
one evening-the victory was high,-
not merely was the dog satisfied with it, the company was not grieved,

A day of reaping for her,-it was well reaped, no fault was found there with my pious one ;

it was dry-weather ever in her field,
through the world it poured heavy rain.
Bishops visited her,
not slight was the danger to her,
if there had not been,-the King helped,- milking of the cows thrice.
On a day of heavy rain she herded (?) sheep in the midst of a plain ;
she spread her upper garment afterwards in-doors across a sunbeam.
The cunning youth asked alms of her, Brigid, for the love of her King :
she gave away seven wethers,
but it did not lessen her flock's number.
It is of my poetic gift if I were to recount
what she did of good :
wonderful for her was the bath
that was blest about her,—it became red ale!
She blessed the pregnant nun,
who thereon became whole, without poison, without disease;
greater than others was the marvel, how
of the stone she made salt.
I record not, I enumerate not
all that the holy creature did :
she blessed the flat-faced one,
and his two eyes became quite apparent.
Some one brought a dumb girl
to Brigid, the miracle of it was unique,-- whose hand went not out of her hand till her utterances were clear.
(Another) wonder was bacon that she blessed;
and God's power kept it safely;
(though) it was a full month with the dog, the dog did not injure it.

It was a miracle greater than others:
a morsel she requested of the (kitchen-)folk did not spoil the colour of her scapular (though) it was flung, boiling, into her bosom
The leper begged a boon of her;
it was a good boon that befel him: she blessed the choicest of the calves, and the choicest of the cows loved it.
He directed her chariot afterwards northward to Bri Cobthaig Coil,
the calf being with the leper in the car, and the cow (following) behind the calf.
The oxen, (when thieves) visited them,
would have been pleased that anyone should hear them: against them rose up the river,
at morn they returned home.
Her horse parted head from head-stall

when they ran down the slope; the yoke was not flung out of balance, God's Son directed the royal hand.
A wild boar frequented her herd,
to the north he hunted the wild pig; Brigid blessed him with her staff, and he took up his stay with her swine.
Mug-art, a fat pig for her was given
beyond Mag Fea; it was wonderful how wild dogs hunted it for her,
till it was (close to her) in Uachtar Gabra.
She gave the wild fox
on behalf of her peasant, the wretched; to a wood it escaped
though the hosts hunted it.
She was open in her proceedings,
she was One-Mother of the Great King's Son:
she blessed the fluttering bird
so that she played with it in her hand.

Nine outlaws (whose weapons) she blessed
reddened those weapons in a pool of blood; the man whom they had ill-treated
was wounded, but hurt to him was not found there!
What she wrought of miracles
there is no one who could enumerate aright: wonderful how she took away Lugaid's appetite ; but the champion's strength she did not lessen.
An oak the multitude lifted not,
on another occasion,-excellent and famous (deed)! her Son brought it to her (on the prayer) of Brigid, to the place where she wished it to be (?).
The trinket of silver, which should not have been hidden
for mischief to the champion's hand-maid,
was flung into the sea the length of a mighty cast,- but even it was found, in the inner part of a salmon.
Another wonder of hers was the widow
who refreshed her in Mag Coil,
for she made fire-wood of the new (weaving)-beam, and that for cooking the calf;
A miracle greater than any other
which the saint effected,-
in the morning the beam was whole, with its mother was the missing calf.
The trinket of silver, which the smith
broke not, this was one of her miracles,— Brigid struck it against her hand
afterwards, so that it broke into three (parts)
It was flung into a scale at the smith's;
thereupon was found a wonder:
it was not discovered that by one scruple any third was greater than another.
What she wrought of miracles,
there is no man who can come at them; she blessed raiment for Condlaed,
when he was taken to Letha.

When she,-it was a danger for her,- her Son before her failed her not(?): he put raiment in the basket
of Roncend in a chariot of two wheels
The mead-vat that was brought to her ;
whoever brought it was not unrewarded (?);
for there was found (honey) in a wall of the house: it had not been found there up to that!
She gave for behoof of her servant
when he stood in need;
not merely was no surplus found there, but not a drop was wanting.
Upon us may Brigid's prayers rest!
and she against danger be our aid!
may they be on the side of her weaklings
before going into the presence of the Holy Spirit!
May she aid us with a sword of fire
in the fight against black swarms!
may her holy prayers protect us
past pains, into the kingdom of Heaven!
Before going with angels to the battle
let us reach the church with a run!
commemoration of the Lord is better than any poem: Victorious Brigid loved not the world.
Brigid loved not.

I beseech the patronage of St. Brigid
with the saints of Kildare ;
may they be between me and pain! may my soul not be lost!
The nun that drove over the Curragh,
may she be a shield against edges of sharpness! I have not found her like, save Mary: we honour my Brigid.

We honour my Brigid;

may she be a protection to our company! may her patronage assist me!
may we all of us deserve escape!
Praise of Christ, famous (such) speaking!
adoration of the Son of God, guarantee of victory! may it be without denial of God's Kingdom,
whoever recites it, whoever has heard it!
Whoever has heard, whoever recites it,
may the benediction of Brigid rest on him! the benediction of Brigid and of God rest upon us, together!
There are two nuns in the Kingdom,-
I implore their aid (?) with all my effort,-- Mary and St. Brigid;
may we be under the protection of these two

Sancta Brigita uirgo sacratissima
in Christo domino fuit fidelissima. Amen.
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A BRIGIT BENNACH AR SET from LL 308a

A Brigit bennach ar sét
nachar·tair bét ar ar cúairt;
a chaillech a l-Lifi lán
co·rísem slán ar tech úait.

Ním·thí bás for fecht,
ro·fírthar mo thecht!

O Brigit, bless our road,
that calamity may not overtake us as we travel;
O veiled one from the laden Liffey
may we reach home safely by your intercession.

May death not come to me on a journey,
may my return be realized!
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HAIL BRIGIT from The Book of Leinster, by Orthanach úa Cóilláma

Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúaid, for grúaid Lifi lir co tráig; is tú banfhlaith buidnib slúaig fil for clannaib Cathaír Máir.

Ba móu epirt i cach ré airle Dé fri hÉrinn úaig; in-diu cid latt Life líg ropo thír cáich ala n-úair...

Ba rí Loegaire co ler, Ailill Áne, adbol cor; mairid Currech cona lí ní mair nach rí ro boí for....

Ailend aurdairc, álaind fiss, ill mór flaithe fo a cniuss; ba móu foscnad tan ad-chess Crimthan Cosrach ina criuss.

Gáir a ilaig iar cach mbúaid im chúail claideb, comtaig drend; bríg a fían fri indna gorm, gloim a corn for cétaib cend.

Glés a hindéon cotad cúar, clúas a dúan di thengthaib bard, bruth a fer fri comlann nglan, cruth a ban fri hoenach n-ard.

A ól meda for cach mbruig, a graig ailmar, ilar túath, a seinm rond di rigaib fer fo duilnib sleg cóicrind crúach.

A céoil binni i cach thráth, a fínbarc for tonngur flann, a fross argait ordain móir, a tuirc óir a tírib Gall.

Adrad lítha ní flu clúas, solud ná sén síabras bás; is bréc uile iarna thúr indid Alend is dún fás.

Foglas a ngen tibes duitt a maig réid túaith Críchaib Cuirc, di cach lín ron alt a úair do-rigni lúaith Life Luirc.

Currech Lifi lir co hor, Currech Sétnai, síth co ler, is mór rig fris—rala cor Currech Corpri Niód Fer....

A Brigit 'sa tír ad-chíu, is cách a úair immud—rá, ro gab do chlú for a chlú ind ríg, is tú forda-tá.

Táthut bithfhlaith lasin Ríg cen a tír i fil do rúaim; a ué Bresail maic Déin, slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúaid.

**TRANSLATION:**

Sit thou safely enthroned, triumphant Brigit, upon the side of Liffey far as the strand of the ebbing sea!

Thou art the sovereign lady with banded hosts that presides over the Children of Cathair the Great.

God's counsel at every time concerning Virgin Erin is greater than can be told: though glittering Liffey is thine today, it has been the land of others in their turn.

When from its side I gaze upon the fair Curragh....The lot that has fallen to every king causes awe at each wreck

Logaire was king as far as the sea,--Ailill Áne, a mighty fate: the Curragh with its glitter remains--none of the kings remains that lived thereon.

Perfect Labraid Longsech lives no more, having trodden under foot his fair thirty years: since in Dinn Rig--`twas a wonted abode--he dealt doom to Cobthach the Slender.

Lore's grandson, Oengus of Róiriu, seized the rule of Erin,....sway; Maistiu of the freckled neck, son of Mug Airt, through princes across their graves.

Fair-famed Alenn! Delightful knowledge! Many a prince is under its girth: it is greater than can be fathomed when Crimthan the Victorious was seen in its bosom.

The shout of triumph heard there after each victory around a shock of swords, a mettlesome mass; the strength of its warrior-bands against the dark blue battle-array; the sound of its horns above hundreds of heads.

The tuneful ring of its even-colored bent anvils, the sound of songs heard there from the tongues of bards; the ardour of its men at the glorious contest; the beauty of its women at the stately gathering.

Drinking of mead there in every home-stead; its noble steeds, many tribes; the jingle of chains unto kings of men under blades of five-edged bloody spears.

The sweet strains heard there at every hour, its wine-barque upon the purple flood; its shower of silver of great splendor; its torques of gold from the lands of the Gaul.

Far as the sea of Britain the high renown of each king has sped like a meteor: delightful Alenn with its might has made sport of every law.

Bresal Bree was king over Elg, Fiachra Fobree with a fierce band of warriors; Ferus of the Sea, Finn son of Roth they loved to dwell in lofty Alenn.

Worship of auguries is not worth listening to, nor of spells and auspices that betoken death; all is vain when it is probed, since Alenn is a deserted doom.

Brigit is the smile that smiles on you from the plain...of Core's land; of each generation which it reared in turn Liffey of Lore has made ashes.

The Currah of Liffey to the brink of the main, the Curragh of Sétna, a land of peace as far as the sea,--many is the king whom the Curragh of Carbre Nia-fer has overthrown.

Catháir the Great-- he was the choicest of shapes --ruled Erin of many hues: though you cry upon him at his rath, his prowess of many weapons has vanished.

Fiachna of Fomuin, glorious Bresal ruled the sea with showers of spears: thirty great kings to the edge of the sea seized land around Tara of Bregia.

The Peaks of Iuchna, delightful place, around which many graves have settled behold in lofty Allen the abode of Tadg, son of Nuada Necht!

The apparel of Feradach--a goodly diadem--around whom crested bands would move; his blue-speckled helmet, his shining mantle,--many a king he overthrew.

Dunlang of Fornochta, he was generous, a prince who routed battles against the sons of Niall: though one were to tell the tale to all, this is not the world that was once.

Illann with his tribe launched thirty battles against every king, Enna's grandson, a rock against terror, it was not a host without a king's rule.

Ailill was a king that would bestow favour, against whom a fierce blood-dark battle-host would rise: Cormac, Carbre, Colman the Great, Brandub, a barque in which were hosts.

Faelan the Fair was a track of princeship, Fianamail with....; Braiin, son of Conall with many deeds, he was the wave over every cliff.

Oh Brigit whose land I behold, on which each one in turn has moved about, thy fame has outshone the fame of the king--thou art over them all.

Thou hast everlasting rule with the king apart from the land wherein is thy cemetery. Grand-child of Bresal son of Dian, sit thou safely enthroned, triumphant Brigit!

**********

THE LAKE OF BEER, Attributed to St. Brigid herself in the 10th Century
I'd like to give a lake of beer to God.
I'd love the heavenly
Host to be tippling there
For all eternity.

I'd love the men of Heaven to live with me,
To dance and sing.
If they wanted, I'd put at their disposal
Vats of suffering.

White cups of love I'd give them
With a heart and a half;
Sweet pitchers of mercy I'd offer
To every man.

I'd make Heaven a cheerful spot
Because the happy heart is true.
I'd make the men contented for their own sake.
I'd like Jesus to love me too.

I'd like the people of heaven to gather
From all the parishes around.
I'd give a special welcome to the women,
The three Marys of great renown.

I'd sit with the men, the women and God
There by the lake of beer.
We'd be drinking good health forever
And every drop would be a prayer.
**********

**On Brigantia**

FROM GREETLAND, SOUTH OF HALIXFAX: Probably from 208 CE, RIB 627
D(eae) Vict(oriae) Brig(antiae) et Num(inibus) Aug(ustorum) Titus Aur(elius) Aurelianus d(edit) d(edicavit) pro se et suis s(e) mag(istro) s(acrorum).

On the right side of the altar is written:

Antonin(o) III et Geta (II) co(n)s(ulibu)s.

‘To the Goddess Victory Brigantia and the Deities of the two Emperors, T. Aurelius Aurelianus gave and dedicated (this altar) for himself and his family, while he himself was master of the sacred rites, in the third consulship of Antoninus and the (second) of Geta.’

**********

FROM CASTLEFORD, No date, RIB628
Deae Victoriae Brigant(iae) a(ram) d(edicavit) Aur(elius) Senopianus.

‘To the Goddess Victory Brigantia Aurelius Senopianus dedicated this altar.’

**********

FROM ADEL, No date, RIB630
Deae Brigantiae donum Cinge|tissa posuit

To the goddess Brigantia, Cingetissa set up this offering.

**********

FROM BIRRENS, CE119-61, RIB2091
Brigantiae sacrum Amandus architectus ex imperio imperatum fecit

Sacred to Brigantia: Amandus, the engineer, by command fulfilled the order.

**********

FROM CORBRIDGE, 3rd Century CE, RIB1131.
Iovi aeterno Dolicheno et Caelesti Brigantiae et Saluti Gaius Iulius Ap|olinaris centurio legionis VI iussu dei

To eternal Jupiter of Doliche and to Caelestis Brigantia and to Salus Gaius Julius Apolinaris, centurion of the Sixth Legion, at the command of the god (set this up).

**********

FROM HADRIAN'S WALL, CE 212-7, RIB2066

Deae Nymphae Brigantiae quod voverat pro salute et incolumitate domini nostri Invicti imperatoris Marci Aureli Severi Antonini Pii Felicis Augusti totiusque domus divinae eius Marcus Cocceius Nigrinus procurator Augusti nostri devotissimus numini maiestatique eius votum solvit laetus libens merito

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 divinity and majesty, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled.

**********

FROM SOUTH SHIELDS, 3rd Century CE, RIB1053

Sacred to the goddess Brigantia: Congennicus willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********

FROM SOUTH SHIELDS, No date, Brit. 42. Falsum

'Sacred to the goddess Brigantia. Julius Sabinianus, bronze-smith, deservedly (fulfilled) his vow for himself and his family.'

**********

**On Sulis**

FROM BATH, No date, RIB150
Deae Suli Minervae Sulinus Maturi filius votum solvit libens merito

To the goddess Sulis Minerva Sulinus, son of Maturus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********
FROM BATH, No date, RIB149
Priscus Touti filius lapidarius cives Carnutenus Suli deae votum solvit libens merito

Priscus, son of Toutius, stonemason, a tribesman of the Carnutes, to the goddess Sulis willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********

FROM BATH, No Date, RIB3049
deae Suli L(…)ucius Marcius Memor harusp(…)ex d(…)ono d(…)edit

To the goddess Sulis, Lucius Marcius Memor, soothsayer, gave (this) as a gift.

**********

FROM BATH, No date, RIB144
Deae Suli  pro salute et incolumitate Aufidi Maximi centurio legionis VI Victricis Marcus Aufidius Lemnus libertus votum solvit libens merito

To the goddess Sulis for the welfare and safety of Aufidius Maximus, centurion of the Sixth Legion Victrix, Marcus Aufidius Lemnus, his freedman, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********

FROM BATH, No date, RIB147
Deae Suli ob salutem sacrum Gai Iavoleni Saturn|alis […] imaginniferi legionis II Augustae Lucius Manius Dionisias libertus votum solvit libens merito

To the goddess Sulis on behalf of the welfare of Gaius Javolenus Saturnalis, … imaginifer of the Second Legion Augusta, Lucius Manius Dionisias, his freedman, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********

FROM BATH, No date, RIB143
Deae Suli pro salute et incolumita|te Marci Aufidi Maximi centurio legionis VI Victricis Aufidius Eu|tuches lebertus votum solvit libens merito

To the goddess Sulis for the welfare and safety of Marcus Aufidius Maximus, centurion of the Sixth Legion Victrix, Aufidius Eutuches, his freedman, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

**********

FROM BATH, No date, Tab.Sulis 94
Uricalus Docilosa uxor sua Docilis filius suus et Docilina Decentinus frater suus Alogiosa nominaa eorum qui iuraverunt qui iuraverunt ad fontem deae Sulis pridie idus Apriles quicumque illic per|iuraverit deae Suli facias illum sanguine suo illud satisfacere

Uricalus, Docilosa his wife, Docilis his son and Docilina, Decentinus his brother, Alogiosa: the names of those who have sworn who have sworn at the spring of the goddess Sulis on the 12th of April. Whosoever has perjured himself there you are to make him pay for it to the goddess Sulis in his own blood.

**********

FROM BATH, No date, Brit. 18.3
'I, […]eocorotis, have lost (my) Italian/Greek/Gallic cloak (and) tunic, (which) I have given … Sulis, that (he) may bring it down in his snout before nine days [whether] free or slave, whether free woman or slave woman, [whether] boy or girl … horse blanket, [whether slave or free, whether] slave woman or free woman, whether boy [or girl], bring down in his snout.'

**********

FROM BATH, no date, RIB146
To the goddess Sulis Minerva and to the Divinities of the (two) Emperors Gaius Curiatius Saturninus, centurion of the Second Legion Augusta, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow for himself and his kindred.

**********

FROM ALZEY GERMANIA, 171-230 CE, CIL XIII 6266

Dea(e) Sul(eviae?) / Attonius / Lucanu[s]

**********

**Misc.**

CIL XIII 2638: Auxey, Côte d'Or:
ICCAVOS OPPIANICNOS IEURU **BRIGINDONI** CANTALON
Brigindone

**********

MISC CELTIBERIAN COINS:
BRIGANT_N
**********

Possible and confirmed locations of the Brigantes:
Brigantion, Camonica, Waterford and Leinster, Brigantium, and, of course, Briganti

## Daily Prayer

I celebrate the powers of Brigantia,
radiant ray of dawn, protectress of Brigantes,
Winged victory and aegis of her people,
She who guides to greater heights,
Inspiring and healing the weak

Lady of smithcraft,
Lady of poetry,
Lady of wisdom,
Lady of the arts.

Lady of safety,
Lady of protection,
Lady of the healing well,
Lady of the hearth.

Lady of victory,
Lady of the war-spear,
Lady of strategy,
Lady of strength.

Brigantia is my comrade-woman,
Brigantia is my inspiration,
Brigantia is my helping-woman,
My chieftain and my guide!

Exalted one, mighty and wise
Shape me on your anvil
Temper me in your flame
Guide me by your shafts

May my actions bring you glory
May your wisdom inform my choices
May my actions reflect your light
May my choices bring you honor

Protect and heal my loved ones
Vanquish illness and catastrophe
Convey us safely to our destinations
Guard the bonds that give life meaning

Help me to interpret your will
That I might aid your desires
That I might further your influence
That I might advance your triumph

I affirm my devotion to you
I await your counsel and direction
I endeavor to uphold your virtues
I seek to exalt your name

Glory evermore to high Brigantia!

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