
Astrology of the Ancient Druids

Part 5

Shooting stars

In classical Roman astronomy, the other category of wandering stars, known as comets or meteors, were called *stellae comans*, or “hairy stars.”

The Sanskrit term *Ketu* refers to any curious celestial object such as comets, meteorites and the southern lunar node. The term comet comes from the Greek *kômêtes* for “hairy”. The Celts called comets “star tails.” There were many variations of the name from one Celtic region to another: *combondna ðira*, *lostoca ðira*, *ersaballaca retla* and *retla con ersaballu*. There were also other designations such as: *loscontia ðira*, “smouldering star,” *scarbaca retla*, “ragged star,” *segorétana retla*, “wandering star,” *mongaca retla*, “star mane,” and *dregia* “trace.” In Old Celtic, a hairy star was called *Cnabetica ðira* or *Cnabetioðira*. The terms meteor and meteorite come from the Greek *Meteora*, meaning, “something high up in the air.” The Celts also had many names for these: *biua ðira*, “live star,” *ðira redona* or *redona retla*, “running star,” and *coris tenni*, “circle of fire.” In Antiquity, the first scientific speculation on the nature of comets was given by Aristotle in his *Meteorologica*, Book I, chapter VI, and pp. 342 – 343:

“Let us go on to explain the nature of comets and the 'milky way', after a preliminary discussion of the views of others. Anaxagoras and Democritus declare that comets are a conjunction of the planets approaching one another and so appearing to touch one another.

Some of the Italians called Pythagoreans say that the comet is one of the planets, but that it appears at great intervals of time and only rises a little above the horizon. This is the case with Mercury too; because it only rises a little above the horizon it often fails to be seen and consequently appears at great intervals of time. A view like theirs was also expressed by Hippocrates of Chios and his pupil Aeschylus. Only they say that the tail does not belong to the comet itself, but is occasionally assumed by it on its course in certain situations, when our sight is reflected to the sun from the moisture attracted by the comet. (...)

This is the case, first, with those who say that the comet is one of the planets. For all the planets appear in the circle of the Zodiac, whereas many comets have been seen outside that circle. Again more comets than one have often appeared simultaneously. Besides, if their tail is due to reflection, as Aeschylus and Hippocrates say, this planet ought sometimes to be visible without a tail since, as they it does not possess a tail in every place in which it appears. But, as a matter of fact, no planet has been observed besides the five. (...)

An objection that tells equally against those who hold this theory and those who say that comets are a coalescence of the planets is, first, the fact that some of the fixed stars too get a tail. For this we must not only accept the authority of the Egyptians who assert it, but we have ourselves observed the fact.”⁴

According to another of Aristotle's speculations, Seneca linking comets with wandering stars or planets, also speculated on the nature and frequency of their trajectories (Book XVII, p. 290):

“Apollonius of Myndus differs in his view from Epigenes. He asserts that a comet is not one star made up of many planets, but that many comets are planetary. A comet, he goes on, is not an illusion nor a trail of fire produced on the borders of two stars, but is a distinctive heavenly body, just as the sun or the moon is. Its shape is not limited to the round, but is somewhat extended and produced lengthwise. On the other hand its orbit is not visible. It cuts the upper part of the universe, but only emerges when at length it reaches the lowest portion of its course. There is no reason to suppose that the same comet reappears; for instance that the one seen in the reign of Claudius was the same as the one we saw in the reign of Augustus; or that the recent one which appeared during the reign of Nero Caesar which has redeemed comets from their bad character was similar to the one which burst out after the death of the late Emperor Julius Caesar, about sunset on the day of the games to Venus Genetrix. Comets are as varied as they are numerous. They are unequal in size, unlike in colour. Some are ruddy without any light; others are bright with a pure clear light; others are flame-coloured, but the flame is not a pure thin flame, but is enveloped in a mass of smoky fire. Some are blood-stained and threatening, bringing prognostication of bloodshed to follow in their train. They wax and wane like other planets. They are brighter when they come down toward us, and show larger from a nearer point, smaller when they depart from us, and dimmer when they retire to a greater distance.”⁵

Concerning the trajectories of comets, for example, Halley's Comet visits us every 75 years as it once did in ancient times that is, in July of 44 BCE.

In July -44, it was visible for seven days during the month dedicated to the great Julius. Normally, the appearance of such a comet is taken for a bad omen. For this event, it was decided that it announced the end of the tenth legendary age of Rome. The comet's passing was seen as a sign for the divinity of the Caesars that was subsequently claimed for Augustus, Caesar's step-son, in order to sanction his power over Rome.



“The Cauldron of Plenty” in which flows from the source of the heavenly waters. La Tène Art, of the third or second century BCE. Detail from an engraved weight scale.

Author's drawing from a photo by Lessing-Contrasto.

The Milky Way

Since the earliest times, the Milky Way was seen as a patch of white light, a bright trail, or path taken by celestial beings, elevated sages, dead heroes and gods. This cosmic view was well attested in Greek and Sanskrit vocabulary. However, the Celtic terminology is less known. Our word for the galaxy is from the Latin *Galaxias* which was borrowed from the Greek, *γαλαξίας*, literally for: “Milky One.” Sanskrit is quite evocative with its rich vocabulary: *Devapatha*, “the path of the gods,” *Svargapatha*, “the way of heaven,” *Somadhara*, “support of Soma,” and *Nabhahsarit*, “the river of heaven.” But then again, no less suggestive than these were the Celtic expressions.

Gaelic terminology abounds in similar imagery: *Bealach na bó finne*⁶, *Slighe bhainneach*⁷, and sleigh clan *Uisnich*⁸.

And on the Brythonic side, we have: *Hynt* or *Caer Gwydion* *Gwydion*⁹ *Llwybr Llaethog*, *Hent an neñvou* and *Hent ar stered*.¹⁰ *Gwidion* and *Uisnech* are interesting names in that they bring us back to the oldest Indo-European roots.

The mythic theme for the MilkyWay went as follows:

In short, the divine path of the sky was taken by the gods and the great sages on way north. For example, the Welsh term *Gwydion* comes from the Celtic root-word *uid-on/-ona/-ons* for, “knowing, and understanding.” It is also the name of the god Welsh *god Gwydion*, son of *Beli* and *Dôn*, the heavenly pair. He is the brother of *Gilvaethwy*¹¹, the embodiment of the light principle. As for the Gaelic name *Uisnech*, the idea of elevation is here expressed. The Hill *Uisnech* or *Uisneach*¹² was formerly *Balor's Hill* and was considered as the *Omphalos*, the navel or centre of Ireland. In this place was found the stone of *Aill na Mirenn* which marked the limits of the four provinces. *Usnach*, *Usnagh* or *Uisliu*¹³, is etymologically linked to *Uxouinos*, the Gallic goddess of high places. The god-hero, *Usnach*, had a wife called *Ebhla*¹⁴, a daughter of the Druid *Cathbad*.¹⁵ The sons of *Usnach* and *Ebhla* were three in number and were exiled warrior-heroes. If we go even further back in time, the *Uxonacoi* were the souls of the heroes on their way to the northern stars.

Another interesting mythological theme is that of the white cow and the Milky Way. The River *Boyne* in Ireland, like the mythical and mystical *Saraswati River* of India, was the embodiment of the great goddess. The name *Boyne* or *Boand* is reminiscent of the Indian cow-herder god *Govinda* but does not exactly share in the same meaning. The Celtic *Boand* is from *bou-inda* meaning, “ultimate cow,” connoting *bou-uinda*, “the white cow,” while *Govinda* is from *go-*, “cow” and *vinda*, “find.” Although these root stems are paronymous, the suffixes are of different etymologies.

This myth explains that Boand, while bathing in the pool of Segais, causes it to overflow, henceforth flooding the entire valley. The great or white cow was one the archaic Indo-European symbols of light and day. The Milky Way was said to be crossed by the “herds of Dawn” at the fords intersected by the ecliptic.

Celtic cosmology maintained this arcane representation with great detail.

The Athoi, or “fords,” are bright spots intersecting the Milky Way at certain points on the ecliptic. Irish mythology often refers to them. Here are the best known:

The Ford of Sagittarius:

Ath Mor < Maros Athos, the “big ford;”

The North Ford of the Ecliptic:

At Mhadra Alta < Athos Allti Madri, the “ford of the wild dog or wolf;”

The Ford South of the Ecliptic:

Ath Brassail < Brassellos Athos, the “very broad ford;”

The Ford of Taurus:

Ath Gabla < Athos Gabulas, the “ford of the fork;”

Ath Grenca < Athos Granacos, the “gravel ford;”

The Ford of Cassiopeia:

At Mhedbha < Athos Meduas, the “ford of Medb.”

The North Star

Alpha Ursa Minoris is the present star of first magnitude in the Little Dipper constellation.

In the early period of star reckoning, the Pole star was in Cepheus. This Cepheus pole star, Alderamin (Alpha Cephei), will again return to the north position in the year 7500. But from 2830 to 2700 BCE, the Pole star was Thuban, the alpha star of the Dragon. Then, around 1793 BCE, Thuban moved to the north of theta Boötis, “the clamorous, or ox driver.” Arcturus, alpha Boötis, was then called Artaios, “the Bear-keeper or watcher,” in Gaul. Artaios was an alias of the god Lugus assimilated to Mercury by the Romans.

Therefore, Polaris was not the Pole star in Antiquity more than two thousand years ago. In 2000 BCE, the North Pole was marked by the alpha star of the Dragon. It was called *Dhruva tāra*, the “Firm Star,” in Sanskrit. The Old Celtic form could have been *Drua dīra*, but from what can be surmised from the *Gundestrup cauldron*, it was probably called *Druuios*, “the Wren.” The Greeks called the Little Dipper *Arcas* or *Cynosūra*, “the dog’s tail.” Jupiter placed Arcas there and dislodged the old Polar Star Hera. The Old Norse name for it was *leiðarstjarna*, for “guiding star.” The top of the sky

was perceived by the Celts as the pinnacle of the world tree called Bile Medba¹⁶ where the Wren perched.

Polaris (Little Plough-tail or Little Dipper) was called Eburos, the Boar, in Old Celtic.

Herewith is a representation of the bear watcher (seen as a boar) on a Celtic coin of the third century BCE:



Author's drawing from a photograph by Erich Lessing, National Museum of Budapest.

Stars and Asterisms of the Zodiacal Band

Libra

Alpha Librae, Zuben Elgenubi, "South claw of the scorpion," and beta Librae Zuben Eschamali, the "northern claw of the scorpion."

Old Celtic, Sidos or Caruos, for "deer," and Gallic Cantlos, meaning "looping, buckling" and by connotation, Cantalon, "memorial pillar."

The ancient Deer constellation comprised of the constellations of Libra, Ophiuchus and Scorpio. The other modern Celtic names for these constellations and their asterisms were all modelled on Latin nomenclature.

Scorpio

Alpha Scorpii, Antares.

Celtic, Sidos / Caruos, "deer," as a region of the sky; Gallic Samonios, "the Sower."

Antares, a red giant, is the brightest star in Scorpio.

Its modern name comes from the Greek anti-Ares, that is, anti-Mars. In May, it is very visible on the

horizon when it dips under it in conjunction with the passage of the moon in the east.

Sagittarius

Alpha Sagittarii, Rucba; Gamma Sagittarii, Alnasl.

Gallic, Dumannios, "the Darkenning" or *Dumannos, the "dark horse;" Breton Gwareger < Uarcustos, "archer;" Boghadair in Gaelic and in Manx Gaelic, Boogheyder < * Bogdarios, the "archer."

Sagitta, the Arrow Asterism

Alpha Sagittae, Sham.

An asterism of the constellation Sagittarius.

Breton Birrêc < Beruacos, the "arrow;" Welsh Bwa'r Milwr, the "soldier's bow."

Capricorn

Alpha Capricorni, Algedi; Capricorni beta Dabikh.

Gallic, Riuros, "frozen," in wordplay with *Riuoros, "radiant," and connoting *Ariurocon, "before the bucket, or pot;" Breton Bouc'h < Boccas "goat;" Welsh Bwch Gafr < Boccas Gabros, "goat, billy-goat;" Gaelic, an Gabhar < Gabros, the "goat," and/or Bocan < Boccas, the "goat."

Aquarius

Alpha Aquarii, El Melik.

Gallic, Anagatios, "calamitous", *Anaxs, the "cup, pot;" Breton, Hoch < Succos, "pig;" Gaelic, Uiscioch < Udesciocos, "aqueous, watery."

Pisces

Alpha Piscium, El Rischa, beta Piscium, Fum al Samakah.

Gallic, *Ogronoi, "cold-blooded;" Breton Eoged < Esoxs, "salmon;" Welsh, Eogiaid < Esogate (collective case of esoxs); Gaelic, na hÉisc < eiscos, eisconos "fish, of fish."

Aries

Alpha Arietis, Gamal, beta Arietis, Sharatan.

Gallic, Qutios, "ram;" Breton, Tourz < * To-riiotios, "ram" (?); Gaelic, Reithe < Riitios, "ram."

Taurus

Alpha Gamma Tauri Tauri Tauri beta, delta Hyadum I Hyadum Tauri II.

Gallic, *Giamonos, the "germinator," and connoting, Gammos, "ox or deer buck," and Taruos, "bull."

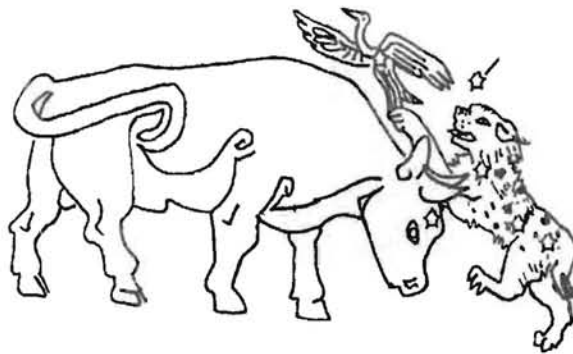
In Celtic mythology, it is called the bull with three horns, the bull with the three cranes, the seven cows or the hazel brown bull of the plain. The old Celtic name was without doubt Taruos

Donnotaruos, the "brown bull," in wordplay with "lord bull."

Maia, the Alpha star of the Pleiadean Asterism

The Pleiades asterism was called Treis Garannai, “three cranes.” The Greeks believed that the seven daughters of Atlas resided there.

An old belief was that the souls of the Celts came from this group of stars. This constellation is mainly composed of a remarkable set of six stars. The symbolism of the six stars is linked with the triple goddess Brigantia / Brigindu or Bouinda. Regardless of the name, it is in relation to the sovereign sky goddess and represents the creative forces of the universe. One of the attributes of the Pleiades is given in the Irish myths surrounding the legendary crane skin bag of the stormy Manannan mac Lir. In Celtic mysteries, the Pleiades are associated with destiny, fate and fatality. Cranes, of course are not just birds but also fate fairies. Manannan's bag contained magical items such as a knife, a shirt, a leather harness, a whale hook, blacksmith's tongs, a helmet and pig bones. These tools and objects are in the bag at high tide but then disappear at low tide. The bag was made from the skin of the fairy Aoife after she was killed in the guise of a crane. In the Hanes Taliesin, the Pleiades are called Group of Theodosius (Twr Tewdws). Theodosius was the name of a Roman Christian emperor. This Latin name is a later rendering of the older Celtic name, most likely a Christian gloss of Teutatis, “tribal agent.” The other names of this divine trinity were also identified as Gallic star names: Taranis and Esus. This godhead was linked to the symbolism of the three-horned bull as an aspect of the god of the Gallo-Roman god death Dis Ater. His alias was Belos (Bile in Beli Ireland and Wales). Caesar reported that the Gauls believed that Dis Pater (Dis Ater in Gaulish) fathered the Celtic race.



The stars of Taurus, the Pleiades (crane) and Hyades (cat).

Aldebaran, Alpha Tauri, the brightest star of Taurus

Alpha Tauri, or Aldebaran Palilicium; Beta Tauri, Alnath; gamma Tauri, Eta Tauri, Alcyone, Epsilon Tauri, Oculus Boreus.

Gallic, Donnotaruos, the “brown bull;” Breton Ruzan < Rudianos, “the red one;” Gaelic Donn Cuailnge < Donnos Caulinigos, the “brown of Cuailnge.” The Aldebaran star was called the Bull. In Irish stories, it is referred to as the Dun Bull of Cooley or Don Cooley. Aldebaran, a big bright red star, is the brightest of the asterism of the Hyades. The Greeks called it Omma Boos, the Romans,

Oculus Tauri, the “Eye of the Bull,” which in Old Celtic would yield: *Sulis Tarui. In the Vedic texts it was called Rohini, the “red deer.” In the Irish tale of the *Tain Bo Cualgne*, “The raid of Cooley cows,” it is mentioned that it was so big that fifty young people could jump on his back. The ancient Indo-Europeans saw the ox as the allegory for the heat of day, the bright time of day, as well as springtime and summer. In the various Indo-European myths, it is described as being attacked and eaten by a monstrous oversized cat when not a great lion.



Bottom of the Gundestrup Cauldron, a big cat attacking a bull. In former times, the cat was identified to Hyades. Drawing by the author.

The Hyades, the Cat star

Gamma Tauri, Hyadum I; Hyadum delta Tauri II.

Gallic, Catts Pilaxs, “the mouser cat;” Welsh, Cat Palug < Catts Pallucos, “the defective or customary cat (Hyades).”

Cat Palug was a big sized wild cat, possibly a lynx because it was described as a spotted cat. The Welsh tales relate on how it suddenly leaps out from the water on the island of Ynys Mon and then devours 180 warriors. The cat was eventually killed by the warrior Cei¹⁷ there putting an end to its terror. Planet Venus can also be compared to a feline. In Greek myths, Atalanta and Hippomenes were turned into lions after having failed to show gratitude to Aphrodite. The Hyades asterism is crossed from above the ecliptic in Taurus by approximately 24 degrees. And as the Roman astronomer Manilius (Book V, 118-130; Loeb pp.307-309) wrote these words on their rising:

“Those born at this time take no pleasure in tranquillity and set no store by a life of inaction; rather they yearn for crowds and mobs and civil disorders. Sedition and uproar delight them.... they welcome fights which break the peace and provide sustenance for fears.”¹⁸



The god of the Dioscuri. Detail of Gundestrup Cauldron. Drawing by the author.

Gemini

Alpha Geminorum (Apollo), beta Geminorum (Hercules); gamma Geminorum Alhena. Gallic, Semiuissonios / Simiuissonios, "capricious breeze," *Simiuisunoi, "the spirited, vivacious, dashing one," connoting Semiuesses, "small light, dashing pigs." The Dioscuri, "twins," were called Emnoi in Old Celtic, in Gallic: Diuanno, "daylight, illuminating" and Dinomogetimarus, the "protector or colossus of dawn" and/or Momoros, the "graceful," and Atepomaros, the "great sponsor or Cavalier." These characters were very popular in the whole of Gaul. One of these Dioscuri was also called Uintios and was compared to the Greek Poludeukès (Pultuke and Pollux in Latin and Etruscan), the twin brother of Castor (Kasutru in Etruscan). They guide travellers and navigators and provide protection for riders. They also play a role as guides for lost souls. The area intersecting the Milky Way with Gemini was called the Well of Sionan (genitive Siannas, Sianna "the binding"), a fabled fountain on the River Shannon in Ireland. Legend had it that the water nymph Sionan caused a great flood after having taken a dip into this forbidden pool. Sionan was a naiad identical to Boann.

The fiery eye (Gemini)

This sub-constellation Gemini, the twins bathing in the Milky Way, is composed of the stars Tejat and the star cluster of M 35. It was called Aedh (Aedus, "fire") in Gaelic. Aedus was the deified morning sun. According to Irish myth, Aedh was the father of Fand (Uednalo) and foster father of Mananann (Manauionos). His name, Aedh Abrat (Aedus Abruentios), meaning, "fire eyebrows," is a description to this asterism which is shaped like an eye.

Cancer

Alpha Cancri, Sartan, beta Cancri, Tarf, gamma Cancri Asellus Borealis.

Gallic Equos > Ecuos / Epos, "horse;" Breton, Gwiz < Uestis, "sow."

Leo

Alpha Leonis Al Kalb al Asad, beta Leonis, Deneb Aleet; gamma Algeiba.

Gallic, Elembos, "fawn."

Asterism of the front part of the Lion

Gaelic year Corran < Corranos, "the sharp sickle."

Virgin

Alpha Virginis, Corn, Beta Virginis, Minelauva; gamma

Arish, Celtic Edrinis, "judge-arbitrator."



For the druids, the constellation of Ophiuchus (Ophiuchus) once served as a marker for the start of the zodiacal cycle. That is, at just about the time the sun enters Scorpio. Author's drawing after a detail from the *Gundestrup cauldron*.

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Celtic Names of the non-Zodiacal Constellations

The northern circumpolar stars (including Ophiuchus)

The circumpolar stars reckoned in the past consisted mainly of the constellations surrounding the North Pole. These included: Draco, the Bees (the many small stars between Cepheus and Ursa Major, now called Camelopardus), Ursa Minor, Cepheus, Cassiopeia, Cygnus, Lyra, Hercules and Ursa Major, the Big Dipper. Further down to the ecliptic, there are eleven other constellations: Pegasus and Andromeda, the Triangle, Perseus, Auriga, Boötes, the Northern Crown, the Serpent, the Eagle, the Dolphin and the Small Horse.

Draco, the Dragon

Welsh, Afang Ddu < Dubis Abancos, "the black beaver."

Camelopardalis, the Giraffe

Welsh, Gwenyn < Beccena, "the bees," Modrydaf < Matridamon, "the honeycomb;" Breton, Ninian < Ninauos < Neinauos, "of the zenith."

Ursa Minor, the Little Bear

Gallic, Artulla, "little bear," Medwed, "honey bear," or "sweet knower," from mēdos, "sweet," + uidions, "knower, scientist)."

Ursa Major, the Great Bear

Gallic, Artaiio/Artaiona/Artio, "bear;" Welsh, Arth Vawr < Maros Artos, "the big bear;" Breton, Karr Arzhur < Carros Aretorii and Welsh, Cerbyd Arthur < Carbantos Aretorii or Artouiri, "Arthur's chariot;" Gaelic, Camchéachta < Cambon cexton, the "crooked plough."

Although the agrarian theme of the plough is of Indo-European origin, the Bear harks back to the Stone Age. Not only do we find the stellar bear theme with the Basques, Pelagian Greeks and Caucasians of Europe, but also with the Algonquians of North America. It would therefore be sage to conclude that this astral motif originated within the prehistoric shamanic culture of northern Eurasia. We can also assume that it was maintained as an archaic motif by the Indo-Europeans. The Celts knew it as Andarta while the Greeks knew it as Callisto or Artemis. In this case bear symbology is linked to the birthing process, pregnancy and wedding of young women. The Greeks maintained that the she-bear and her son Arcas resided in the constellations of Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. And Matus or Artos

were the two common names for bear in Old Celtic. There is no doubt that Artio was some sort of Celtic Artemis.

Arta was the she-bear, and Artulla was the bear-cub. All of these names reminisce of King Arthur, a medieval version of the older prototype Artaios. Artaios was an alias of the god Lugus, and his female counterpart was Artio, the Gaulish Bear goddess. The many other forms of the name were: Arduina, Andarta, Andrasta, and all attest to the popularity of the goddess. She was mostly celebrated as a war goddess from whom heroes and warriors sought protection. This Andarta was seen as the star mother known as the Great Bear or Big Dipper. Her cub, the Little Bear or Little Dipper was called Artulla. Then again, the stars below the Big Dipper were called Eburos, meaning, "boar," or the "yew." The M 97 nebula was called the "Owl" by the Anglo-Irish astronomer Lord Rosse in 1848. Was not the fairy Blodeuwedd of the Welsh myths changed into an Owl? Interestingly, Gwyddion, son of the goddess Dôn (Cassiopea) and the nephew of Math (Bear), was said to have changed Blodeuwedd (knower of blossoms) into a Night Owl (Minerva). Lord Rousse (William Parsons 1800 – 1867) probably knew more than expected!

The Bear cult is well attested since the early Magdalenian pre-Basque culture in the Pyrenean Mountains of Spain and France. We may also presume that the pre-Celtic highlanders of many areas of Gaul continued to practice the bear cult long after. The Breton saint, Saint-Ursula (from ursua, "bear" in Latin) was the Christianised form of Artio. According to legend, she was kept secluded underground. This of course in reference to the bear's den. It is a known fact that when the bears emerge from their retreats, that they crave for honey and berries. Berry pickers would often encounter hungry bears and often have to pray to the goddess for their safe return. Also, wine urns, kegs and barrels of mead and berry-wine were kept in underground cellars for the maturing process. This special wine was most likely used during sacred rituals commemorating Artaios / Lugus at the Lugi Naissatis celebrations or during victory celebrations to the goddess Artio. It seems that Artaios was another star altogether, possibly Arcturus in Boots since it was known by the ancients as "the Bear Watcher" (Arktouros), a giant fixed star of the first magnitude.

In the Pyrenean mountains a stele bearing the inscription; LEXIIA ODANNII ARTEHE VSLM, for Lexiia (daughter) of Odan to Artaha (Artio) accomplishing willingly a vow, was discovered in the small town of Saint-Pé, not far to the west of Lourdes in France.¹⁸ Few scholars will maintain as Jean Markale, that the etymology of the goddess Arduina or the Hills of Ardennes stem from Arta (she-bear). A better etymology for Arduinna or Arduinna, as Mr. Monard claims, could be, "steeped, sloped," for a mountain goddess.



Left: the head of Apollo (incarnated by Alexander the Great) with curls and torque bearing. Right: winged figure (Mercury or Cepheus, the bumble-bee?) holding a torque. Silver coin of the of the Vangiones Celtic nation found in Germany. Author's drawing from a photo of the Money Museum, Zurich, Switzerland.

Cepheus, the Head, the Chief

Breton, Marzhin < Myrddyn < Moridunios, "man of sea, seafarer," that is, Merlin.

Cassiopeia, Cassiopeia

Welsh: Llys Dôn¹⁹, "the "court of Don."

The "present," or the "gift," was the Brythonic name for the Irish goddess Danu. She was the mother goddess of the Celts, the Tuatha Dé Danann. She was also called Matrona in Gallic, Modron in Welsh and Ana or Anu in Ireland Modron. The mountains Da Chich Anand *Dá Chích Anann*, or Paps of Anu²⁰ were named after her. The name Paps of Anu in County Kerry, literally means, "The nipples of Anu," and could have been an earthly representation of this m-shaped constellation. The Celtic myths describe her as the wife of the god Bilé or Beli²¹, "the bright," as owner of the sacred tree. According

to Greek literature, for her beauty, Cassiopeia, wife of Southern King Cepheus, was to be sacrificed to a sea monster by Poseidon. She will then be delivered by Perseus, who marries her and takes her to the northern constellation named after her. Cassiopeia was also called the “chair” or “throne”. In short, this constellation is traditionally seen as the heavenly abode of the mother-goddess Ana, Anu and/or Danu, Dôn.

Cygnus, the Swan

Breton, Alarc'h < Alarcos, “the swan.”

Lyra, the Lyre

Gallic, Esus; Breton, Telenn and Welsh, Telyn, the “little harp,” or Telyn arthur²², “Arthur's little harp;” Gaelic, Uaithne²³, the name of Dagda's magic harp.

Vega, alpha Lyrae, is a star of the first magnitude. The genitive case lyrae meant “of the harp,” in reference to the harp's string. The Cad Godeu, the “battle of the trees,” states that Taliesin is “the magic harp string of nine years.” Its current name comes from the Arabic Vega, Al-Waki, and meaning “falling vulture.” It therefore has nothing to do with either Greek or Latin star names. The Etruscans called Mus, the “field mouse,” or “little rat.” The lyre star was called Uaithne in Gaelic, which was the name of Dagda's harpist. Indeed, if we are to compare, the Lyra was in the hands of Hercules as it seemed to float above this constellation. Was it not said that Dagda's enchanted harp flew to his hand when he called it? According to legend, Uaithne Harper Dagda had a love affair with the nymph Boann with whom he had three sons: Goltrade, Gentrade and Suantrade. Henceforth, Lyra the harp crosses the Milky Way (the path to cows Boann) by Cygnus on to Dagda's arm. Nymphs or fairies also had the power to transform themselves into a swan. Regarding the Dagda, he is in the same area as Hercules. His three sons were not far between these three constellations and found in the location of the two small asterisms between the Swan and the Arrow now called Vulpecula (Little Fox) and Anser (Goose) in Latin.

Vulpecula cum Anser (The little fox and the goose)

This small double constellation Vulpecula and Anser was named by Hevelius in 1660 to bridge the gap between the Lyre and the Arrow. The three major stars that form the asterism or Anser, the cluster of Brocchi and the Dumbbell Nebula, correspond to three sons of Boann and Uaithne: Goltrade, Gentrade and Suantrade.²⁴

Hercules

Gaelic, Ogme < Ogmios, the “champion,” or Dagda < Dagodeuos, the “good god.”



Gallic gold stater of the Aulerci and Cenomani tribes (80 to 50 BC). Drawing by the author.

Pegasus (Pegasus)

Welsh, Llyr Marc'h < Marcos Leronos, "the horse of Llyr," or Baedd Coed < Baedos Caiti, "the boar of the woods," or the "old boar."

The square of Pegasus stays firm in the autumn sky since it is not obscured by the Milky Way. Pegasus therefore serves as the starting point in order to find the other northern constellations.

The square of Pegasus: Pegasus and Andromeda

The Greeks regarded Pegasus square as a winged horse while the Welsh imagined it as a boar. This constellation, which forms an almost perfect square, incorporates Sirrah, the alpha star of Andromeda. According to Greek mythology, Pegasus, by the blows of his hooves, provoked a strong flow pouring from Mount Helicon. It was at the source of poetic inspiration. The horse was cared for by the naiad water nymphs and at maturity was mounted by Perseus and Bellerophon. Irish mythology also associated this constellation with poetry, each star being the residence of one of the four master poets of Ireland (*Cath Maige Turedh*, translated from Guyonvarc'h C. and F. Leroux, Ogham celticum). "There were four cities in which they learned science, knowledge and the diabolical arts, namely Fallias and Gorias Murias and Findias. (...) There were four Druids in these four cities. Morfesae was in Falias. Esras was in Gorias. Uiscias was in Findias. Semias was in Murias. These are the four poets from whom the Tuatha Dé learned science and knowledge."

In Irish cosmology, each of the four stars forming the square is one of the four mythical northern cities of the world ruled by a poet-seer.

Uiscias (< Uesciatis or Uindiassos)	From the city of Findias (Uindia)	The star Sirrah
Semias (< Semiuis, Semiatis or Moriassos)	From the city of Morias (Moria)	The star Scheat
Morfessa (< Marouesos or Ualiassos)	From the city of Fallias (Ualia)	The star Markabet
Esras (< Uros Esdratis or Goriassos)	From the city of Gorias (Goria / Gortia)	The star Algenib

On the advent of the equinoxes and solstices during the seasonal cycles, these druid-poets were posted at each of the four corners overlooking world affairs. They were later displaced by the four Evangelists.

Andromeda,

Welsh, Essylt and Breton, Eselt: Yseult < *Esueleda, the “noble lady-seer,” and/or *Adsilta, “looked upon.”

Triangulum, the Triangle

Gallic, Trigenacos; Gaelic, Triantàn, the “triangle”.

Perseus

Drestan Breton; Welsh Drostan < Drustannos/Drustennos, “vigorous fire;” Gaelic Nead < Nedos / Neòdòs, “close, close by, in proximity.”

Auriga, the Charioteer or Check

Breton, Saezh, from the Latin Sagitta, “arrow;” its true Celtic names were: Welsh, Cerbidwr < Carbantouiros, “charioteer;” Breton, Karr an Ankou < carros ancuous, “the carriage of death.”

Alpha Aurigae, Capella

Latin, Capella, “goat,” is a star of the first magnitude in the constellation of Auriga. It is located at approximately 46° north in the vernal sky between Perseus and Gemini. Its location makes it a useful marker for lunar adjustment for the winter solstice. It appears during the period set between the Irish holidays of Imbolc and Beltaine. In Celtic cosmology, the goat (in association with Capricorn) seems to be a borrowing of the Greek or Roman Zodiac. The ancient city of Rome was under the patronage of the god Silvanus. According to the Roman interpretation of the Gallic pantheon, Silvanus or Pan was identifiable to the god Uiducos.

Coma Berenices, Berenice’s Hair

Breton, Heulwenn < Ollouindas, Welsh, Olwen, the “all-white;” Llwyn Blodeuwedd < Luianos Blotiaueidonos, “the thicket of Blodeuwedd;” Gaelic, Eithne < Etiana, the “country,” punning with Etnia, the “acme” and Eithne Aitenchaitrech < Etiana Acstinocaitorixtio, the “country that looks like a gorse thicket.”

Bootes, the Herdsman

Gallic, Otis, the “bear catcher;” Welsh, Math < Matus, the “bear.”

Arcturus alpha Boötis

Gallic, Artaios, “bear-like;” Welsh, Arthur < Aretorios, the “charioteer.”

The Greek meaning of the name Arcturos is from the compound Arktos, “bear,” and ouros, “tail,” that is,

“tail of the Bear.” Thus, Arktophulax, the “guardian or keeper of the bear.” Arcturus is the star closest to the Bears (Ursa Major and Minor) in Boötes and was imagined as the chariot driver of the Big Dipper. In remote times, it was the closest star to the North Pole. The Ancients believed that Arcturus was the world's highest abode of the wise souls. Because of its high visibility in the May sky, the star Arcturus was also associated with the cattle of the Milky Way's high path. Its position north of the zodiacal band is a significant landmark for the year's seasonal changes. Moreover, according to Hesiod, the star marks the beginning of spring and sunrise upon late February evenings and fall in the morning at mid-September. Its presence corresponded to early spring and fall in Greece. Sirius brought the first warmth of spring and Arcturus prosaically carried the grain harvest in its chariot. In Gaul, Artaios, which the Romans identified to Mercury, represented the pastoral aspects of the god Lugh.

Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown

Breton, Arc'hanrod < Argantoreta, the “silver wheel;” Welsh, Caer Arianrhod < Qataira Argantoretas, the “citadel of Arianrhod,” Llys Arianrhod < Lettos Argantoretas, “Arianrhod's court.” The gate of the citadel was also guarded by two of Arianrhod's porters.

Ophiuchus, the Serpent

Breton, Naertaer < Natronouiros, the “snake;” Welsh, Peredur < Priteros, the “hesitant;” Gaelic, Diancecht < Deinacacteto, “of the hard grip,” the Goidelic equivalent of the Greek Aesculapius.



Coinage of the Meldi kingdom, depicting a spreading eagle. Museum of Troyes. Author's drawing after a photo from *Publication Art Gaulois, magazine d'art, Zodiaque*.

Aquila, the Eagle

Welsh, Eryr and Breton, Erer, Erur < Eruros, the “eagle;” Gaelic, Ochill < Uxellos, the “lofty,” the eagle or the hawk.

Aquila, Altair

Welsh, Yr Hebog, “the hawk.”

Delphinus, the Dolphin

Breton, Morhoc'h and Welsh, Morhwch < Morisuccos, the “porpoise.”



Stater of the Trevere tribe, Museum of Troyes, author's drawing after a photo by Blanchet.

Equuleus, the Colt

Breton, Ebeul and Welsh, Ebol < Epalos, the “colt.”

The Stars Around and Below the Ecliptic**Eridanus**

Welsh, Stêr < Stura, “the impetuous” or Dolen Teifi < Dola Tuerobios, “the meander of Teifi or Teifi's bend;” Afon Teifi, the Teifi River in south-west Wales; Gaelic, Fual Mhedba < Uoglon Medba, the “veil of Medb (cf. Latin velum);” or uoglon, there punning with “urine.”

Eridanus, Achernar

According to the Greek myths, the Eridanus River, is located in the Other World and cannot be seen by any mortal being. It is therefore a hidden mystical place.

Pisces Austrini, the Southern Fish

Breton, Pellez and Welsh, Pwyll < Peislos, “Psyche;” Ireland Fintan < Uindosenos, the “splendid/white (headed) elder.”

The name Fomalhaut, alpha star of the Southern Fish, is from the Arabic *Fom al-Hat* or *Fam al-Hut*, meaning “mouth of the fish.”

Some zodiacal charts show Aquarius pouring her pitcher into the mouth of a large fish. The Crane cluster was part of the Southern Fish until the astronomer Johann Bayer created Grus in the 17th

century as a distinct constellation. From an astral theme found in Greek mythology, Aphrodite and Eros were pursued by a monster on the bank of a river and were rescued by two fish. In Irish mythology, the Southern Fish was identified to Fintan seen as the “Salmon of Knowledge,” bathing in the pool of Segais.

Cetus, the Whale

Breton, Morvil and Welsh, Môrvyl < Morimilo, the “whale, a large marine mammal;” Gaelic, Miol Mór < Milo Morias, the “whale.”

Orion

Breton Ri or Roue < Rixs (cf. Latin Rex), “king;” Welsh, Cadlas Arthur < Catuletos Aretorii, “the Wall of Arthur;” Gaelic, Meadhan < Meduanos, the “soft middle;” and Nighean Ri < Neqtis Rigos, “the niece of the King,” and Fionn < Uindos, the “white, splendid (or perhaps Goibniu/Guibne < Gobanio/Gobannos (?)) “the blacksmith”).”

The Greek mythological theme surrounding Orion resembles that of the Fianna of Ireland. After his heroic earthly existence, the god hunter Orion was removed in the summer night sky. As with many other similar cases, it would be too simple to coin a Celtic equivalent for this Greek mythonym. With all caution, Monard offers Selgarios, “the hunter,” as a Celtic translation for Orion. This description also fits Fionn Mac Cumhail, who is also involved in a hunting spree accompanied with his two dogs, Bran (< Brannos for Canis Major) and Sceolan (< Scelonos for Canis Minor). They were in fact his two cursed nephews changed into dogs.



Bas-relief from the Musée St-Rémi of de Reims representing Cernunnos flanked by Belenos (left) and Lugus (right). Author's drawing.

The mythic Cosmological theme for Fionn's son Oisín.

The constellation of the Fawn (Elembiui Prinnios) is the same as the constellation of Leo. In Gaelic myths, the fawn was embodied by Oisín²⁵, son of Fionn. Legend has it that Fionn, after having retired to a cave, slumbered there for a day before his return in order to save Ireland. Like the salmon, Fionn embodies the warrior magician infused with innate knowledge. He possesses the same attributes and instruments as those given to Orion. His were given by the blacksmith-god Goibniu, and one of those attributes was the belt. As we will see, many other instruments were given to Fionn. Fionn can be seen as an avatar of Cernunnos, the horned lord of animals. Cernunnos was depicted as a serpent-bearer and as lord of beasts on the *Gundestrup cauldron*. Goibniu, the blacksmith has a girdle which ends up with a series of other magical objects contained in Manannan's crane-skin bag. This being said, Goibniu was one of the triplets along with Cian and Samhan (or Samhain). Judging from certain mythological themes, Fionn compares with Arthur. The expression "Arthur's wall, enclosure or pen," also hints at husbandry and animal keeping. The Welsh tradition clearly describes this constellation as being King Arthur's castle. The ancient Celtic theme of the walled domain or circular fortress is here felt.

The Asterisms of Orion: the Girdle or Belt, also called the Three Kings or Three Marys in Christian lore

(the three bright stars of Alnitak, Alnilam and Mintaka)

Orion's Belt

Gaelic, Crios Goibne < Cersua Gobanni, the "belt or body harness Goibnu," or Crios Fraoich < Cersua Ureccis, "the belt of Goibnu or Fraoch."

Lepus, the Hare

Breton, Kammed Heulwenn < Cambita Ollouindas, "Olwen's girdle;" Neuadd Olwen < Gnauosedon Ollouindas, "Olwen's palace." In the Constellation of the Hare, the alpha star is on the meridian at the end of January. Its Celtic name was Corbmacos > Corbmac > Cormac, the "light chariot driver," named after one of the three son of Conchobar Mac Nessa. It is among the brightest stars of the constellation, the others being: Leporis gamma (Corbmac Cond Longes), Alpha Leporis (Cairbre Caithean) and Leporis beta (Cuscraid Mend Machae).

Canis Major, the Great Dog

Breton, Ki Bras < Bratuos Cu, the "large dog;" Welsh, Ci Mawr < Maros Cu, the "great dog;" Gaelic, Madra Mór < Madros Maros, the "big dog."

Sirius, the star "dog," is so called because of its strategic position in the constellation of the same name (Canis Major). The ancient Celts most certainly called this star Cu, for "dog." The Bretons still call it Steredenn ar C'hi.²⁶ The Irish call it Reul na Madra,²⁷ "star of the dog." The Old Celtic names *Đira* and *Retla* were synonymous of "star" and *maddos* < *masdos* for "mastiff, bull-mastiff," was another name for "dog." There is also another Gaelic name for this star which is *Reul an Iuchar*²⁸, "the star of Iuchar," or "star of the key." Iuchar was a son of the *Dé Danann*, *Tuireann* (< *Toranis/Taranis*, "the thunderer"). Also note that there may be a confusion between the genitive of *cu*, "dog," *connos cunos*, and the nominative *cunos* "puppy," with the adjective *cun-/os/a/on*, meaning, "high and noble." This *cuno-* prefix is found in ancient Celtic names such as *Cunomaglos*, "noble prince," *Cunomarus*, "the great noble," *Cunocobarios*, "the highly helpful," are all related to *Cunobelinus* (*Cunobeleinos*, the "high glowing"). He appears in one of Shakespeare's as *Cymbeline*, the legendary British medieval king. The Latin term *Sirius* comes from the Greek *Seirios* and meant the "flamboyant." This principally because it is the brightest star in the sky and most visible in the winter in the northern hemisphere. In summer, it is virtually invisible since it is high up in the sky in broad daylight thus coinciding with the coming of dog days, the hottest time of year. No wonder if *Sirius* was identified to the flamboyant sun of summer. The Celts described it as the Great White dog with burnt red ears. The Hindus, who also shared this motif, called it *Cvan*, "dog," or more prosaically, *Maha Kamuka*, the "great lover." Also found in Vedic literature, was the bitch *Sarama* who kept the flock of *Indra* of seven bulls and fifty cows.

Canis Minor, the Small Dog

Breton, *Ki bihan*; Welsh, *Ci Fychan* < *Beccos Cu*, the "little dog;" Gaelic, *Madra Beag* < *Beccos Madros*, the "little dog."

Canis Minor or *Canicula*, the "little dog," shows up on the meridian just a few weeks after *Canis Major*. In Celtic culture, dog and wolf are inseparable, in that wolves are wild dogs. The time of Wolf winds marks the start of springtime and heralds the rise of the dog stars. In Rome, *Lupercus* was the name of an ancient priest caste called the twelve *Luperci*. The creation of this institution was believed to be prior to the days of *Romulus*. The *Luperci* were recruited from two great patrician families: the *Quinctilii* and the *Fabii*. Every year in February, the priests performed ceremonies in sheepfolds in hope of protection against the attack wolves. Afterwards, during the *Lupercalia*, they would roam the streets of Rome, half-naked, and with goat leather straps, strike all those who wanted children, livestock and good harvests. The *Lupercalia* rites were therefore fertility festivals celebrating the glory of *Lupercus*, the wolf god. *Lupercus* was also associated with the lynx and was an alias of *Faunus* who was later equated with the Greek god *Pan*.

Hydra, the Water Snake

Gallic, *Adrouantos* and Breton, *Aerouant* < *Aterouantos*, "aggressor, recurring monster, dragon;" Gaelic, *Abhainn Eascainne* < *Abon Eiscanguion*, "river eels."

Hydra was presumably called *Eiscanguis*, *Abon Eiscanguios* or *Segeandera* in Old Celtic. Irish legends speak of a monster from the River Shannon called the *Cata* (< *Catta*, "pugnacious"). It is

described as having a horse-like head with a mane, gleaming eyes, thick claws with nails of iron and a whale's tail. This description reminds us of Hydra.

Crater, the Mixing Bowl

Welsh, Pair Caridwen < Parios Gerradunias, the “cauldron of Ceridwen.”

Corvus, the Raven

Breton and Welsh, Bran < Brannos, “crow;” Gaelic, Bodbh < Bodua, “crow.” In all likelihood, the small constellation of Corvus, the “raven,” was called Bodua, “the crow,” when not, Brannos, the “raven.”

The small constellation of the Raven was known as Bodua, the female crow. It was imagined perched just above the waters where swam a water monster.

Lupus, the Wolf

Breton, Bleiz < Bleðios, the “wolf;” Welsh, Trosol Bleiddyd < Troudslios Bleðiation, the “lever of wolves.” The constellation of the Wolf culminates in late June just before the summer solstice. The wolf, like the bitch, symbolizes the hot flux and heat of summer. Not unlike the Indo-European astronomers, the Chinese maintained that wolf was a Cerberus identified to the star Sirius.

Star representation in Celtic coinage.



Footnotes:

1. *Ranna an Aeir*, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, The National Library of Ireland, microfilm copy n. 307, p. 452.

2. *Ptolemy's Almagest*, Translated and annotated by G.J. Toomer with a foreword by Owen Gingerich, Princeton University Press, 1998.

3. *Aristotle, Meteorology*, (Meteorological), Book I, Chapter VI, Comets, Opinions and explanations of Anaxagoras, Democritus, Hippocrates of Ceos and Aeschylus. Refutations of these misconceptions, verses 3 and 6.

The Works of Aristotle, translated into English under the editorship of D. Ross, M.A., Hon. LL.D. (Edin.), provost of Oriel College, honorary fellow of Merton College, fellow of the British Academy, Volume III, Meteorologica by E. W. Webster, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1931.

4. *Seneca, Book VII, Natural Questions, Which Treats of Comets*, verse 17.

Physical Science in the Time of Nero, Quaestiones Naturales of Seneca, translated by John Clarke, The MacMillan and Co. Of Canada, Ltd., Toronto, 1910.

5. Bealach na bó finne < Belca uindas bouccas, “crossing the white cow.”

6. Slighe bhainneach < Banniaca slegeta, “the Milky Way.”

7. Slighe chlann Uisnich < Slegeta qlandion Uxonaci, "the way of the son of Uisnech."
 8. Hynt Gwydion < Senton Uidionos, "Gwydion's pathway," or Caer Gwydion < Qataira Uidionos, "Gwydion's enclosure."
 9. Llwybr Llaethog < *(m)lactocos leispros, "Milky track," cf. Latin, *circulus lacteus/ lacteus via*, the "Milky Way;" Hent an nefvou < Senton nemeson, "pathway to heaven," or Hent ar Stered < Senton sdiratiom, "path of the stars."
 10. Gilvaethwy < * Golouatis, "light emitting one, emanating from the light."
 11. Uisneach < Usonacia, "that of the most lofty."
 12. Usnach/Usnagh/Uisliu < Uxonacos, the "very high one."
 13. Ebhla < Eblana, "free space."
 14. Cathbad < Catubatuos, "fighting killer."
 15. Bile Medba < bilion Meduas, "the (sacred) tree of Medb," if not, Bile Bith < Bitubilion, "the World tree."
 16. Cei < Ceaios, "the epiphany, the appearance, the presence."
 17. Artehe, Artahe, is the Latinized translation of Ataxei, dative of Artaxa, a Pyrenaeian variant of Artaio (feminine goddess) and not of Artaios (masculine god). VSLM = votum soluens libens merito, for "accomplishing willingly a vow as merited (J. Monard 1994)."
- Marcus Manilius was a Roman astrologer of the 1st century CE and author of the *Astronomica* or *Astronomicon libri V*.
18. Llys Don < Lettos Danonas, "the court of Don."
 19. Da Chich Anand < Cicoi Anende Duo, or in English, "the Paps of Anu," or "two breasts of Ana."
 20. Beli/Bile > Belios, "clear," punning with Bilios, "tree."
 21. Telyn < Talanon, "the little harp;" Telyn Arthur < Talanon Aretorii, "Arthur's little harp."
 22. Uaithne < Uatina, "harmony."
 23. The etymologies of these names are equally revealing: Gol-trade < Golos "tears;" Suan-trade < Suomno, "sleep;" Gen-trade < Genos < Gesnos, "smile." The radical trade > tradh in these names means shaft, spear-shaft in Old Irish, from the Celtic root *tragla* (cf. Latin *tragula*), "javelin."
 24. Oisin < Uxouinos, "fawn."
 25. Steredenn ar C'hi < Sōira Conos, the "dog star."
 26. Reul na Madra < Retla Maddi, "the dog star."
 27. This name suggests both "yew" and "clear," with Iuchar (< Iuocaros, "clear friend, friend of yew"), of a similar formation.

Chapter VII

The astral Cusps

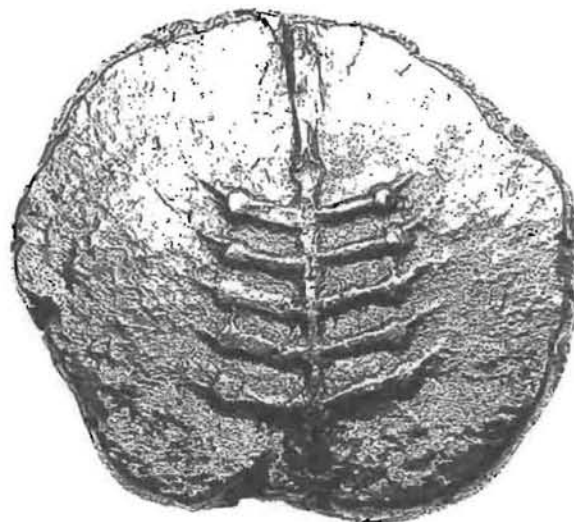
"The wise man of the primary science, the astrologer reasoned, about wrath, about the resolvent,
about the man describing windings.

About men well versed in praise. Let us proceed, God it is, through the language of Talhaearn,

Baptism was the day of judgement that judged the characteristics of the force of poetry.

He and his virtue gave inspiration without mediocrity, seven score Ogyrven are in the Awen."

(Taliesin, *Book of Taliesin VII, The Hostile Confederacy*)



The Cosmic tree depicted on a hammered British Gold Stater of the Dobunni, minted circa 10 BCE.

Author's digital drawing.

The Cosmic Origins of Sacred Key or Seed Sounds and Letters in the Early Indo-European Cultures

The link between syllables and writing is clear. However, for the non-initiated, more ambiguous is the relation between writing and cosmology. From Taliesin we have this passage explicitly stating that the astrologer intently and magically binds meaning and science: "The wise man of the primary science, the astrologer reasoned, about wrath, about the resolvent, about the man describing windings."

This magical binding is directly linked to letters and writing:

"He and his virtue gave inspiration without mediocrity, seven score Ogyrven are in the Awen."

Here, the poet mentions that there are "seven score" (140) Ogyrven (letters).¹ The Awen is the inspiration or the muse.² Seven score is for 140 days which represent the fleeing of Saturn deserting the others planets; meaning that Saturn is in retrograde motion for 140 days and is stationary for approximately another 10 days. Not surprisingly, the poet here insists on the wrathful qualities of these windings.

According to the Vedas: "When the four-headed Brahmâ projected the universe from his mind, the seed ingredient was Shabda, the sound. The prime sound was the original Ôm or Aum. And from that Ôm, the mantras were born. In the midst of this sound, the fourteen planetary worlds spew forth as expressions of pure sound. Therefore, the constellations and planets are also expressions of sound and each is an utterance of the Brahmâ."

And according to the traditions of the Lebor Gabala Erren (Book of the Taking of Ireland) and the Auraicept na N-Éces (The Scholars' Primer), the Irish peoples originated in Scythia and were the descendants of King Feinius Farsaid, a King of Scythia. This Feinius Farsaid and his son, Nel, went into Asia to work on the Tower of Nimrod (the fabled Tower of Babel in biblical texts) and were present at the subsequent dispersal of the races after the destruction of the tower. Feinius and his son, both learned of these new languages and after their dispersal, they returned to Scythia where Feinius opened a great school of languages on the Scythian plain.

And to quote the Scholars' Primer:

"Query, well, then, from whence were the Ogham vowels and consonants named? Not hard, *Secundum alios quidem*, it is from the school of Fenius Farsaidh, to wit, the school of poetry which Fenius sent throughout the world to learn the languages. There were five and twenty that were the noblest of them so that it is their names that were put for the *Bethe Luis Nin* of the Ogham, both vowels and consonants; and there were four who were the noblest of these again, so that it is their names that were given to the seven principal vowels: 15.

It is Gaedel Glas who fashioned the Gaelic language out of the seventy-two languages: there are their names, Bithynian, Scythian, etc. Under - poeta cecinit- who of the school went to it thither? Not hard. Gaedel, son of Ether, son of Toe, son of Baracham, a Scythian Greek.

To what is this beginning? Not hard. To the selection that was selected in Gaelic since this is the beginning which was invented by Fenius after the coming of the school with the languages from abroad, every obscure sound that existed in every speech and in every language was put into Gaelic so that for this reason it is more comprehensive than any language. "Er" then is every beginning, for this was the beginning with the poets that every obscure sound should come in the beginning, to wit, the *Beithe Luis* of the Ogham on account of obscurity.

Query, what is the reason why select language should be said of Gaelic?

Not hard. Because it was selected from any language; and for every obscure sound of every language a place was found in Gaelic owing to its comprehensiveness beyond every speech.

Query, how much did he bring of it? Not hard. The whole of it except what the poets added by way of obscuration after it had reached Fenius.

Query, what language of the seventy-two was published by Fenius first?

Not hard. The Irish language... for it is he whom he preferred of his school, and whom he had reared from his youth, and it is he that was the youngest of the school, and on account of its comprehensiveness beyond every speech, and it was the first language that was brought from the Tower. Fenius had Hebrew, Greek, and Latin before he came from Scythia, and he had no need to establish them at the Tower, wherefore on that account it was published first."

The seed sounds are the three first utterances of the god of eloquence, Ogma. Each of the strokes simultaneously represents a vowel and a consonant.

For example: -| = "A" and "M", -|| = "O" and "G" and -||| = "U" and "Nc > Ng". In this respect, the three strokes combined -||-: O/G, -|: M/A not only spell out the name of the god Ogma < Ogmios, the name of the signs of the Ogham < Ogmon, plural Ogma, but also O.G.A.M., the most sacred prime or seed sound expressly found in Vedic mysticism...

That is, Og-aM, acts as a mystic syllable comparable to the Vedic ÔM or AUM.

OAMos/-a/-on = “greatly, intact, mystic groove;”

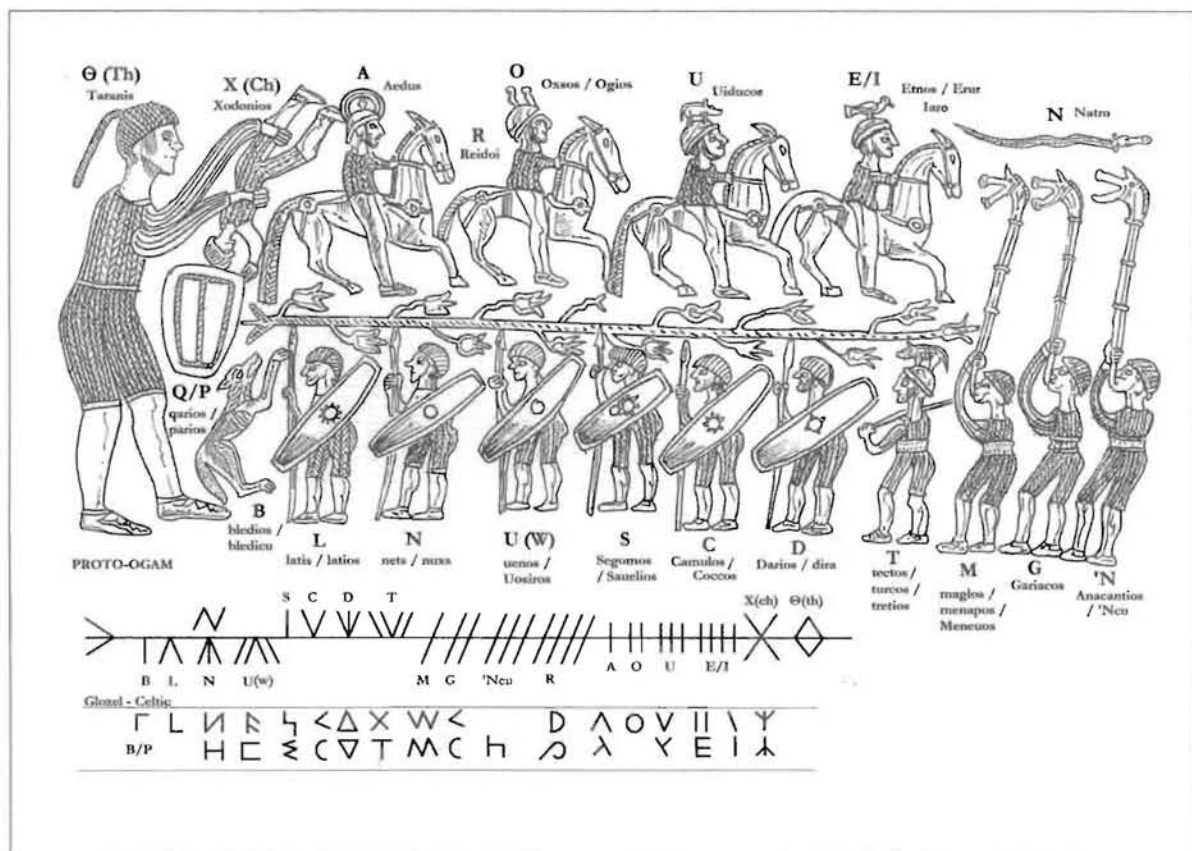
O:-||- Og- : Og-os/-a/-on, “pure, virginal, intact;” Ogios, the youth of sound;

A: -|- Am- : Am-os/-a/-on, “great, super, empowered;” Ama, the mother of sound;

M: -/- Ma- : Ma-/ios/-ia/-ion, “greater, much greater;” Maia, the home of sound.

Nc: -///- U: -||- : Ncu / ‘Ncu < Ancu < Ancouo, “fatality, fatal outcome, death.”

The Auraicept maintains that Soim was the first thing to be written in Ogham and that “R” is for Graif. What is the meaning of this? First, Soim, from soimos < soibos meaning “magic, illusion,” and Graif < grauon, “writing.” It couldn’t be clearer, Ogham is magic writing! Og-uaim < actusama, “perfect alliteration,” the Ogham, in accord with sound, comes from Ogma, if not Fenius, its prime inventor. And the learned are the prime agents who apply it to poetry. In the order of intellectual values, thought is superior to the spoken word, most often its imperfect expression. The spoken word is superior to writing, which kills it by fixing it forever. This fixing of word is nevertheless bonded by magic. Graif (grauon), writing, is superior to Delb (Old Celtic, delua, “image”), in that writing is the property of the learned, the initiated to the mysteries, while imagery is understood by the ignorant and unlearned, therefore the initiated. As Eochra ecsi (< Axario Axscas “Key to writing (grooves),” writing forces reflection. Only meditation generates intelligence. Therefore, voice and sign, through mystic binding, are forever fixed in eternity. This is why the Ogham belongs to the god Ogma, Lord of Yoga, magic, mystic sounds, and martial arts.



The World Tree, Cauldron of Transformation with the Lord of the Cosmos and warrior heroes. Each one represents a letter of the Celtic he alphabet. Detail from the Gundestrup Cauldron, author's drawing.

On the Antiquity of the Ogham

In strict archaeological terms, the Oghams are dated at best at the time of Ireland's Christianizing by St. Patrick and followers around the IVth and Vth centuries CE... This argument is solely based on epigraphical evidence provided from scattered bilingual inscriptions in Goidelic Oghams and Latin letters from the Isle of Man, Southern Wales and Devon. In this light, the Oghams are viewed strictly as an Irish invention and its diffusion restricted to parts of Man, Scotland and Wales. Its origin is explained as the alphabetization effort in the hope to recruit illiterate members of the druidical class. The problem with this theory is that the Druids were far from being illiterate, mastering Oghams, (apart from their Glozelian script from which the Coelbrenni, Celtiberian scripts derive) at least three of the four or five different alphabets known to the Celts: Greek, Etruscan and Roman.

"It is said that these young men have to memorize endless verses, and that some of them spend as long as twenty years at their books; for although the Druids employ Greek characters for most of their secular business, such as public and private accounts, they consider it irreverent to commit their lore to writing. I suspect, however, that a double motive underlies this practice; unwillingness to publicize their teaching and a desire to prevent students relying upon the written word at the expense of memory training; for recourse to text-books almost invariably discourage learning by heart and to dull the powers of memory." (Julius Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*, Book VI)

In most cultures of Antiquity, literacy was a guarded secret in that it was an instrument, the key of power. It was not only irreverent to commit teachings to writing but politically dangerous to disseminate the secret code of written language. The alphabetization effort of masses is a recent event in history.

The more informed sources (C. Sterckx, J. Monard) see the Oghams as a transitional sign system constructed from tally marks (Azilian Art) notched on wooden rods prior to the generalized use of the Latin script adapted to the Irish usage.

The most ancient Irish artifacts show that the Oghams were used in very short dedications of one or two words, most often the name of the deceased on the edge of commemorative gravestones. This practice leads to necessary upkeep of glossaries such as the "Auraicept Na n'Eces" and *the Leabhar Bhaile Mhota* or "*Book of Ballymote*" given in latter horizontal form. However, these myopic views are broadened by other experts such as Prof. Claude Sterckx of the Université Libre de Bruxelles and linguist Joseph Monard. Sterckx has demonstrated how the Ogham inscriptions were written in a standardized archaic Proto-Irish very close to Gaulish and Latin. For example, the inscription "Degos maqi Mocoli Toicaci" (singular genitive) reading (Grave) of Degos, "the studded," son (of) the descendant of Toicacos (or Togicocos, "the Charming Red", (Maqi and Toicaci being singular genitives and Mocoli, a plural genitive).³

According to J. Monard, the Oghams are (our translation) "writing solely of Celtic or of Goidelic origin most probably elaborated by the Druids from an analysis of sound, sorting out vowels from consonants: truly a systematic and original alphabet."⁴



Gallic gold stater attributed to Tasciovanos, first century BCE, showing the two crescent moons set by the solar orb along with ears of corn representing the ecliptic band.

Astrology and the Ogham Script

“As a mighty tree in the forest, so in truth is man, his hairs are the leaves, his outer skin is the bark. From his skin flows forth blood, sap from the skin (of the tree); and thus from the wounded man comes forth blood, as from a tree that is struck.”

(*Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishads*, Third Adhyaya, verse 28)

So this is how the Upanishads inform us on how Manu⁵ is to be likened to a tree for it is said that the self, the Atman⁶ is ruled by the mechanisms of the Atmakaraka (principle main Lord) as found in the Ashtakavarga system of prediction. The Ashtakavarga (eight sources of energy or acmes) set the lots of fortune for Man's growth and development. All this modelled on the Bharata (Tree) or Maha Bharata (Great tree) which is to be likened to the Scandinavian Ask Yggdrasils. In Celtic society the terms Coilu for “prediction” and Prennios, “wood,” set the divining mood to the mode of predicting with augural sticks. This very ancient system is described by many authors of Antiquity. “These sticks were tossed into the air by the vate, in order to make a reading following the order of their fall, and interpret the omens through answers. This technique was known to the Bretons as the Prenn-denn, the Crannachar to the Gaelic peoples, and the Talamatia to the Cisalpine Gauls.”⁹

Again, the Upanishads (Third Adhyaya, verse 26) give us further details on the cosmographical aspects of this system: “These are the eight abodes (the earth, etc.), the eight worlds (fire, etc.), the eight gods (the immortal food, etc.), the eight persons (corporeal, etc.). He who after dividing and uniting these persons, went beyond (the Samana), that person, taught in the Upanishads, I now ask thee (to teach me). If thou shalt not explain him to me, thy head will fall. Sakalya did not know him, and his head fell, nay, thieves took away his bones, mistaking them for something else.” This something else might very well be the omen sticks. “The lumps of his flesh are (in the tree) the layers of wood, the fibre is strong like the tendons. The bones are the (hard) wood within, the marrow is made like the marrow of the tree. But while the tree, when felled, grows up again more young from the root, from that root, tell me, does a mortal grow up, after he has been felled by death? Do not say ‘from seed’, for seed is produced from the living; but a tree,

springing from a grain, clearly rises again after death. If a tree is pulled up with the root, it will not grow again; from that root then, tell me, does a mortal grow up, after he has been felled by death? Once born, he is not born (again); for who should create him again?" The explanation is quite clear; like the tree, unless man does not bear seeds, he cannot be reborn in the world of the living. In de la Villemarqué's *Barzaz Breiz*, we read that there are three parts to the world: three beginnings and three ends, for man as well as the oak.

Henceforth, the primordial man is dismembered and his body parts are scattered across the world, and in the centre, his genitals seed the world to come. And according to the Irish myths, a vast plain called *Magh Elta*, which is not of any shoot, is cleared by the primordial man. Thereafter, Partholon, the ancestor agricultural god, fells and clears four plains, each marking the seasons and the solar stations. Nemed will clear it in twelve months that is, grouped in twelve zodiacal periods of thirty days. Then in March, Queen Medb with her army (*latis*, "calendar day," and punning with *latios*, "hero") devastate the land and turn it into a vast open plain formed of the 27 lunar mansions. The twenty four warriors in relation to a fifty months cycle is thus prosaically expressed (*Táin Bó Cúailnge*, from the *Book of Leinster*, translated by Cecile O'Rahilly):

"Then there met Cú Chulainn Buide mac Báin Blai from the land of Ailill and Medb, one of Medb's household. Twenty-four warriors *was the number of his company*. Each man wore a mantle wrapped around him. Donn Cúailnge was driven hastily and forcibly in front of them after he had been brought from Glenn na Samaisce in Sliab Culind together with fifty of his heifers."

Table of the elements of the macrocosm and the microcosm – the cosmos, the body of the giant or primordial man (according to the Irish sources):

Microcosm	Macrocosm
1. Colaind < colanis, "the body"	Talamh < talamu, "(sacred) Earth"
2. Cnaimh < cnama, "bone"	Cloch < clocca, "stone"
3. Folt < uoltos, "hair"	Luibeach < lubiaca, "plant life"
4. Fuil < ulasnos, "blood"	Mor < mori, "sea"
5. Drech < dricsma, "face"	Grian / grain < greina, "sun"
6. Imradud < ambirateia, "thought, reflection"	Gealach < gelaca, "moon"
7. Eanchainn < inqendos, "brain"	Nel < neblós, "cloud," pl. Nebloi, "clouds"
8. Anail < anatla, "spirit"	Neam < nemos / namos, "sky"
9. Feath < auentia, "(vital) breath, inspiration;"	Gaeth < auentos, "wind"

From the ruins of the battle grounds, the World Tree grows high up with its canopy forming the sky's vault. Around it, a wide stellar forest of star clusters shine brightly and in which swarms a menagerie of beast and birds (the Zodiac).

"The zodiacal constellations were also considered as "branching trees," Prinnioi, a cognate of Prennes (out-branching, tall tree, and tree) and it is probably for that particular reason that tree ascriptions were

given to the names of constellations.”⁷






The sun, the moon and other celestial bodies entering a constellar asterism emit light as beam of lights enter the clearing of a forest. These trees are seen as markers, boundaries or doors through which pass the luminaries and the planets. Or more precisely, the term fedha (< *uidu/*uidus, cf. Brythonic, brenn < prenn < prennos), for "wood, tree," in early Celtic astrology also had the meaning of "cusp" which in Western classical astrology marks the entrance or exit of a given heavenly body in a constellation. Moreover, it is a mathematical point marking by the ascendancy of an astral mansion. Therefore, it is not surprising that at times the forfedhas represent not only matters of cosmology, the five dimensional directions, but also at times the five elements.

Five forfedhas and their letter ascriptions:

X-Ch/Ea; Th/Oi; P/Ui, Ph/Ia; Xs/Ae.

The forfedhas > ueridoues, in addition of expressing the five elements, they also represent the 12 zodiacal cusps. The last forfedha, Xs-Ae, is set apart since it is a graphic representation of the sun grid. The cusps are the doorways through which the sun passes from one constellation to another.

Table for the Esoteric Meanings of the Forfedhas

Forfedha	Cosmology	Element
 X/EA	The Four Directions	Xdonion, "chthonic, earth (ground)"
 Th/OI	The Dragon's Head	Tepnia > tennia, "fire"
 P/UI	The Dragon's Tail	(P)idsca/udesca, "water"
 PH/IA	The Moon Grid	Auela, "air breaks, blasts;" aultos > uentos, "wind," auentia, "inspiration breath"
 XS/AE	The Sun Grid	Uxon "high," *uxdulon, "high element" (aether)

Therefore, the forfedhas have nothing artificial, awkward, or added on if we are to compare these with the other fews which were assumed to be much older.

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