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## Celtic Cosmography

### Part 2

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#### The Master of the Wheel in the Indo-European Tradition

In short, for all of the major Indo-European cultures, the wheel is the fundamental symbol for the cycles of time. In their ancient Art, wheel representations were found in association with horses, yoked vehicles and armed anthropomorphic designs, especially battle axes and clubs. In that precise sense, wheels were highly regarded in high mystical symbolism.

Again, wheel symbolism was well featured on the *Gundestrup Cauldron*, at least twice. But in this second example, it is a double set of wheels and is overseen by a goddess and not by a god moving a flywheel. On this panel, along with the goddess are represented twice three leaves, apple perhaps, two elephants, two griffins with a wolf in the center, if not a wild-dog. Since the wheel symbolizes the cycles of time, it would not be an exaggeration to see an allusion to both solar and lunar cycles. It also shows a hunter, a wolf, and a lying bull. Could this depict the wolf-god Lugh? The wolf is indeed representative of the goddess, Brigid<sup>5</sup> particularly in connection with Imbolc<sup>6</sup>, the Irish festival of Lupercalia. Brigid was but one aspect of the triple Goddess, the other two being Macha and Bodb, among other doubles. Besides being the Muse of the Arts, the

main triple goddess was one of the Fate fairies. We could, therefore, interpret the wheels of her chariot as divining wheels similar to the *Chariot* and *Wheel of Fortune* of the Tarot cards, Arcanae VII and X. Was not the chariot motif, the Wain of the Big Dipper?

In Gallo-Roman Art, Taranis Jupiter is either depicted as holding a club or handling a wheel. A statuette found at Landouzy-la-Ville in Aine, France, bearing the caption Fulmen Jupiter, shows the god holding a spoked wheel. Another anepigraphic statue of the same type (Le Châtelet Haute-Marne) depicts him with the same attributes. Many other Jupiter figurines, with or without inscriptions, have been found throughout the Gallo-Roman cultural domain. Most experts readily identify these as Taranis<sup>7</sup>, “the thunder wheel god.” This Taranis is identifiable to the old Uranian Indo-European storm god of the night sky. Much more burlesque is the Irish Dagda described in the Irish texts carrying a giant wheeled penis-like club; this magical mace having the power to either kill or to restore the person it strikes. In all likelihood, Taranis and Dagda are but two culturally different names to qualify the same godly entity of an earlier pan-Celtic pantheon. What should we make of this silly contraption consisting of a canon like oaken beam carried on twin wheels? Only that these are but an allegory for the lunar-solar annual cycles. Its symbolism is better understood through the underlying mythological motif of Dagda’s wooing of Boand. Ogma Elcmar<sup>8</sup>, Dagda’s brother, had a lovely wife called Boand. In order to sleep with her, Dagda had nine months frozen into a single day. That day, Elcmar, the Ogma, kept himself so busy that he had not noticed the time lapse and that Boand had given birth to the Dagda’s illegitimate son.

The concept of time relativity was also found in other Indo-European traditions. In Greek Orphic literature, Chronos appears at the beginning of Time, self-formed and in the guise of an undulating serpent, the Ouroboros devouring its own tail when not its offspring. This mythological theme was to be interpreted as the destructive cyclical passage of the ages. The Hindu cosmic ruler was called Cakravarti, which in Sanskrit means “one who turns the wheel.” As lord of the wheel, he ensures time’s passing. The *Rig Veda* refers to him as Pûshan<sup>9</sup>, keeper of livestock and bringer of prosperity. His Greek counterpart was the god, Pan. In Aristotelian terms, Pusan, as master of the cosmic wheel and axis, was “the prime mover.” On the Celtic side, one of the most eloquent representations, apart from the Gallo-Roman statuettes, of this god are to be found on the *Gundestrup Cauldron* found in a Himmerland Danish peat bog in 1891. An interesting feature illustrated on one of the panels is that of a bearded god flanked by a wheel turned by a young helmeted warrior.



The Old Celtic Thunder god with his young servant turning the wheel of Time. Author's drawing after a photo of a detail of the Gundestrup Cauldron kept at the National Museum of Denmark

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### **Mog or Mug Ruith, the Servant of the Wheel**

In relation to wheels, Mog Ruith<sup>10</sup> cannot, as a warrior god, be the hypostasis or avatar of the high god Dagda. Therefore, he is not identifiable to the Gallic wheel god Taranis. In all likelihood, he is the Irish equivalent to the young figure who appears on the Gundestrup Cauldron by the bearded giant clutching his fists. Indeed, Mog Ruith, the young servant also turns the great time wheel. If the Dagda is the Taranis, how then was called the Gallic version the “servant of the wheel?” The insular traditions can indeed inform us about this. And the *Cóir Anmann* explains the name of Mog Ruith as follows:

Mogh Ruith, cid día tá? Ní ansa. Roth mac Ríghuill ron-alt. Druí amhra in Roth sin. Is de bá Mog Ruith eissium. Nó Mog Ruith .i. mágus rotarum, ar is a rothaib doníth a taiscéladh druidhechta. Uair is don Roth sin mac Ríghuill doríghne Mog Ruith moghsaine, día n-débhradh Mog Ruith riss. Tighernach a ainm ar tús go tugadh Mog Ruith fair.  
Finit.

Which translates as:

“Mog Ruith, whence is it from? Easy to say. Roth, the son of Rigoll fostered him. A famous druid was that one Roth. Hence he was (called) Mog Ruith, the servant of Roth. Or Mog Ruith, that is “magus rotarum,” for 'tis by wheels that he used to make his magical observation. Since Mog Ruith did service to that Roth, son of Rigoll, he was called Mog Ruith. Tigernach was his name at first till Mog Ruith was put upon him.  
It endeth.”<sup>11</sup>

In most Irish tales, Mog Ruith is given as the son Cethern, while in others he is said to be Fergus Fal's son. Nonetheless, all mentions confirm that Cacht was his mother's name. He takes two spouses, in the first bed, Dron gives him a daughter called Tlachtga, and in a second, Der-Droighen gives him two sons, namely Buan and Fercorp. In her own right, Tlachtga almost eclipses her father as a renowned druidess and wheelmaker. Turning back to the Mog, during the fabled and epic siege of Knocklong, he assists the chieftain Fiachu Muillethan in his conflict with King Cormac Mac Art. He arrives on the scene aboard the Roth Ramach flying wheel. In other accounts, his vehicle is called the Roth Fail. Or in other versions, he drives an ox-drawn chariot with glass sides which at night shine as bright as day. Onlookers are said to be blinded by the brilliance of his flying chariot. In the driver's position, he wears a winged helmet reminiscent of that of the Greek god Mercury, and which was called the Encennach in Gaelic. His other attributes were all just as impressive.

He had a jet-black silver rimmed shield which appeared starry as the night. He hurled a thunderous stone which had the power to shift into a toxic eel when dropped into water. He could shapeshift, become monstrous, and take on the form of a giant. Although blind, he has a projecting inner vision which he used to spy upon his enemies. A certain story recounts how he lost an eye while flying over the Alps hoping to stop the course of the sun for a few days. This account seems to be a very ancient Indo-European myth for it also appears in Vedic literature. To wit, the Mahabharata explains how the Deva Pandu's Vimana "that best of chariots became still more dazzling with its splendor and was incapable of being looked at by mortal beings, as with the midday sun surrounded by a thousand rays."

This has led some to believe that Ruith Mog was actually a Celtic equivalent to the Greek sun god Helios. Medieval Latinist monks later confused this mythological character with Simon Magus because of the homonymy with the Celtic name Mogus.

If we should trust Geoffrey of Monmouth, his old Welsh counterpart would be Bladud<sup>12</sup>. According to the Armorican Breton tradition, Blez the Druid was Merlin's initiator and former master of this ancient line. Blez lived as a hermit surrounded by wolves and other wild animals of the forest. This is how he got his name, the Wolf.

If we are to make a background check on Blez, he was euhemerized in Brittany as Saint Blaise and the name relates to Geoffrey of Monmouth's Bladud, also spelled Bleiddudd. The name was remotely associated to the British solar cult of Bath, where in Roman times a spa was found and called Aquae Sulis, the "waters of the Sun."

At the baths of Sulis in Somerset, erected in sixty CE, there stood an important temple complex dedicated to the sun deities Suliuia and Grannos. On a round centerpiece from the Minerva Temple pediment was found the representation of the sun god Grannos. In this carving, the god is depicted wearing a winged crown eclipsed with radiating hair, and a wavy beard and mustache. His eyes are beady like marbles and his forehead is marked with a trident. Could this winged crown be the same as that of Mog Ruith's Encennach? This would make Mog Ruith an older version of the young Celtic Apollo Oenghus mac Oc. That is, Mabon or Maponos as he is called in Welsh and Gaulish.

This character also appears as a giant in other medieval legends such as those surrounding the Breton and Welsh Hu Gadarn and French Hugon Gadars. Some authors believe that Hu Gadarn was the creation of Edward Williams, alias Iolo Morganwg mentioned in his *Welsh Triads*, but this seems very unlikely. Indeed, the name Cethern, Mog Ruith's father, is of the same etymology as Gadarn.<sup>13</sup>

Much like Mog Ruith, Merlin was also a warrior-druid and the supposed manufacturer of flying wheels. Legend has it that Merlin (Old French rendering of the Welsh Myrddyn and Breton Marzin) was Stonehenge's architect. It was believed that the stones were moved to the Avebury site through the air over land and water by the will of thought. Were not the Druids, the masters of the elements, of wind and mist, fire and brimstone? Merlin, as master of wheels and magic circles, was also the creator of Arthur's roundtable at which sat twelve of his valorous knights. It is fair to say that Merlin behaves much the way as did Mog Ruith. Some Irish texts described Mog Ruith as a defender of a false religion. Most likely a Christian gloss added on later to an older oral pagan tale defending the druidic crafts.

Indeed, when studying the Irish texts, it is very difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. That is, brush off the many overlays and comments the copyist scribes interjected into the earlier heathenistic corpus. Early modern scholars and philologists such as Sir John Rhys (1840 - 1915) of the British Academy were among the first to attempt to weed out this literary field.

In his *Lectures on Celtic paganism*, John Rhys explains in detail the reasons for the confusion between Mog Ruith and Simon Magus committed by the Irish commentators. Here is what he wrote:

But what, you will ask, does all this mean, and especially the introduction of Simon Magus? The appearance of Simon on the Celtic cultural ground is not very difficult to explain. He was known to the early Church as a notorious opponent of the apostles, and his name became identified with all that was pagan and anti-Christian: thus the ancient druidic tonsure usual among the clergy of the British Church till the latter half of the eighth century, and among those of the Irish Church not quite so late, was probably a druidic tonsure continued: at any rate, it was described by those who had adopted the Eoman tonsure as that of Simon Magus. As to Ireland in particular, all the fiercest opposition there to Christianity is described as headed by the Druids, who competed with Patrick and other saints in working miracles. So it would be natural enough for Christian writers to liken the chief Druids of Ireland to Simon, especially seeing that when they used the Latin tongue the native word *druiy* "druid," had to be rendered by the *magus*, "a magician." Vice versa, Simon Magus became in Irish *Simon Drui*, or Simon the Druid: "nay, he was, at last, claimed as an Irish ancestor," and as such he appears as *Simeon Brec*, or Simeon the Freckled, son of *Starn* or *Stariath*, of the family of *Nemid*, and as ancestor of the *Fir Bolg*, who, owing to Simon's eastern origin, are made to come from the East on one of the motiveless wanderings so common in the history of Ireland.<sup>14</sup>

Half a century later, Lewis Spence will pick up on Rhys's statement with but little nuance and with a slight twist in meaning:

In Irish legend Simon Magus is said to have aided the Druid Mog Ruith in making his celebrated wheel the Roth Fail, which had the property of bearing the Druid through the heavenly spaces. But like the flying machine of the British Badud, of whom we read in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, it met with an accident. Mog Ruith's daughter Tlachtga conveyed some of its fragments to Ireland. One of which she erected as the pillar-stone of Cnamchoill, near Tipperary. In Celtic tradition, its conveyance to Eire was looked upon as a dire calamity, and as fraught with extreme danger to the island's destinies. Rhys was of opinion that the fierce denunciation of Christianity by the Irish Druids resulted in the apostate Simon Magus becoming identified in a manner with the pagan druid caste. Again, the word "druid" was translated into Latin as "Magus," or magician, and as it was so frequently associated with Simon, the terms "druid" and "Simon Magus" appear to have become interchangeable. Indeed, Simon was familiarly known in Ireland as "Simon the Druid".<sup>15</sup>

In other words, Mog, the Druid, was likened to Simon Magus who opposed the first Christians. Again, contrary to what Rhys states, Simon Magus, or Simon the Druid, is not identifiable to the mythonym Simeon Brec since the name is an intentional misspelling of Samhain.<sup>16</sup>

This being said, apart from the fact that Mog Ruith was a pagan Celtic Druid and that Simon Magus was a Samarian Jewish critic of the Apostles, there are no other comparisons to be found with these two characters. Cognates for Mog Ruith have to be found elsewhere!

Self-evidently exposed in his legendary genealogy, Mog Ruith is certainly of pure Celtic Irish lineage.

### **Mog Ruith's Genealogy**

Mog Ruith's grandmother	Catmend <sup>17</sup>
His parents	Father: Cethern <sup>18</sup> or Fergus Fal <sup>19</sup> Mother: Cacht <sup>20</sup>
His 1 <sup>st</sup> spouse	Dron <sup>21</sup> , daughter of Laren <sup>22</sup>
His daughter	Tlachtga <sup>23</sup>
His 2 <sup>nd</sup> spouse	Der-Droighen <sup>24</sup>
His two sons	Buan <sup>25</sup> and Fercorp <sup>26</sup>

### **Tlachtga, Mog Ruth's Daughter**

Tlachtga, daughter of Mog Ruith had inherited from her father the secret of making magic wheels.

Tlachtga canas roainmniged? Ni ansa. Tlachtga ingen Moga Ruith meic Fergusa. Fordaroebleingatar tri meic Simoin druad. Doluid lie athair do foglaim druideachta in

betha. Ar bith is i do righni do Thriun in Roth Ramach & in lia i Forcarthu & in Coirthi hi Cnamcaill. Tarlai iarum anair & in déde sin lei co toracht Tulach Tlachtgai.

“Why was Tlachtga called so? It is not difficult. Tlachtga was the daughter of Mog Ruith, son of Fergus. The three sons of Simon the magician raped her. She went to study the Druidism practiced throughout the world. And it was she who made the rotating wheel for Trian, the stone pillar of Forcarthu by the stone of Coirthé at the ford of Cnamcaill. It came from the east with these things until his arrival in the hills of Tlachtga.”<sup>27</sup>

“The three sons of Simon the magician raped her?”

What should we think of this terrible statement? The story of the rapture or rape of the protected maiden was a major popular theme in ancient mythology. Let’s think of the rapture of the Sabine women, an eighth-century foundation myth of Rome. Therefore, this theme is much older than that attributed to the three sons of Simon Magus. A similar story is found in Irish legendary romance with the three sons of Tuireann Brian, Iuchar, and Iucharba are born after the rape of Brigid. Tuireann is identifiable to the Gallic wheel god Taranis. And in another story, Conchobar rapes the royal maiden Medb after an assembly in the citadel of Tara.

But then again, Mog Ruith and Tuireann are not the only characters associated with the wheel, think also of Cuchulainn<sup>28</sup> and Finn.<sup>29</sup>

Finn (also spelled Fin, Fionn and Find) is an occurrent mythonym mentioned in several stories such as the Fenian and Ossian Cycles. The Fenian tale of the *Boyhood Deeds of Fionn* specifically states that Fionn Mac Cumhaill’s birth name was Deimne or Demna. This links the white-headed hero to the sacred law of Celtic dharma termed dema in Gaulish, and stemming from the Proto-Celtic root \*dedma for “statutory rule.”

In other stories such as those of the *Ulsterian cycles*, Cuchulainn is described as having cheeks on which were painted in yellow, green, blue, and royal purple, four multicolored circles. In fine weather, he wore his best clothes: a purple fringed mantle fell in five folds on him, at his neck a golden torque along with a gold-white silver plated breastplate, red battle breeches, a fine royal silk tunic with brocades and fringed golden tassels. The tunic was tied with a purple belt buckle bearing an emblem showing five golden wheels emitting sun rays. In his belt, ready to draw was a keen sword with a golden hilt with ivory guards. In his chariot were rows of long spears and short javelins along with hurtling thongs and rivets. It was customary for him to hang by the hair nine severed heads.<sup>30</sup>

Cuchulainn, whose real name is Setanta<sup>31</sup>, is an avatar of the god Lugh which Julius Caesar compares to Mercury. This explains the hero’s connection to sun wheels.

In short, the wheel was an attribute of the Celtic Jupiter whose avatar was the young Mercury. This Mercury, identifiable to Lugh, was also nicknamed Mog Ruith, the “servant of the wheel.” His Welsh and Breton names were most likely Bleiddudd and Blez, the “wolf,” which the Greeks identified to Apollo. The twins Apollo and Mercury are interchangeable. Another Irish cognate was probably Samhain, the brother of Cian

and Goibhniu, who was later euhemerized as Simon Magus.

The theme of the wheel takes us back to the Roth Ramach<sup>32</sup>, the “rowing wheel.” An expression which implies two meanings:

1. As a cosmological symbol representing the contour of the ecliptic; a symbol that the Druids used in order to explain the aspect of the Cosmos; and by extension, the belt of the Zodiac;
2. As the Septentrion representing the sky’s vault, the stars of the Polar region seen as a turning wheel;
3. As a divining instrument called Tasgopeilas Reta, “the powerful thinking wheel,” a divining wheel or prayer wheel, the Wheel of Fortune.



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*The wheel of Fortune*, author’s drawing after a medieval illumination from the *Épître d’Othéa*, painted for Christine de Pisan (b. ca. 1363- d. ca. 1430) from around 1450 to 1475 C.E.

### **The Wheel of Fate or Wheel of Fortune**

Symbolism for the Wheel of Fortune was carried on into the medieval age and well into the Renaissance and Modern times. This expression is from the Latin *Rota Fortunae*, a name which is of the same etymology as that of the Irish Gaelic *ruith*. *Fortuna* was the Roman fate goddess, whose equivalent was *Tyche* and maybe the Irish *Tlachtga*. The name derives from the Latin *Fortuna* for “chance, fate, good luck,” from the genitive *fortis* of *fors*, “chance, luck.” It is probably suffixed form the Indo-European \**bher-* < *fer-*, “to carry, to bear, to bear children,” and from the compound root \**bhr-tu-* implying “a bringing, that which is brought, carried.” The Old Irish name for the wheel of Fortune was in all likelihood *Fege Finn*<sup>33</sup>.

## Chapter IV

# The Four Ages and the Great Cosmic Era

I will address the bards of the world since it is not told me what supports the world that it falls not into vacancy.

Or if the world should fall, on what would it fall? Who would uphold it?  
The world, how it comes again, when it falls in decay, again in the enclosing circle.  
(Taliesin, Book of Taliesin LVI, Song to the Little World)



Boutet\_13

Gallic coin depicting a solar wheel with four circles representing orbs or stars (from the second or third century BCE). Author's drawing.

### On the Notion of Hypothetical Druidical Ages

"Time, according to Pythagoras, is the soul of heaven." (Plutarch)

The notion of the "druidical age," a widespread conception within neo-druidic circles, is perhaps not the fruit of the imagination of poets, or after all the product of some fertile mind. Indeed, for those who know how to look, as Monard<sup>1</sup> recalls, the idea is not as absurd since we also encounter it in medieval lore. The two best examples for this are from the *Annals of the Four Masters*, the *Book of Leinster*, and excerpts from the *Book of Invasions of Ireland*.<sup>2</sup> In short, we have enough material to satisfy the skeptical minded. Again, the concept of great eras must surely be very ancient because we have it in all of the other Indo-European traditions, starting from the Hittites, the Vedas, the Classical authors, on to the Norse Eddas.

In short, there were two kinds of time reckonings, one for practical use, the calendrical

computing, and a second for spiritual use, that of defining mythical eras in an approach for dating the age of the world.

For each of these concepts, fragmentary data can be retrieved from the various Celtic records. Once collected, an overall picture can be recovered using the Dumézilian comparative studies methodology. And most evidently, elements do vary from one culture to another when comparing the Goidelic to the Brythonic corpora. Therefore, it is a good idea to respect these differences. This being, that themes and motifs are not always identical. And, in a nutshell, we can observe that:

1. It was relatively easy to determine the reality and validity of the calendrical era devised by the ancient Druids (still maintained in the late Welsh bardic tradition) after having identified the astronomical mathematical computations that were practiced in Antiquity before the Roman calendar was adopted. Thanks to the progress of linguistic science, it then became possible to consider all the issues raised from the lexical data recovered from the *Coligny Calendar*. Truly, this archaeological find is the key document to unlocking the mechanisms of the Druid calendar. Now that many of its linguistic mysteries have been largely resolved, an astounding feat of mathematics is exposed.

To wit:

1. Integration and reconciliation of both solar and lunar annual cycles;
2. A precise dating of the *Coligny Calendar* thanks to the identification of a lunar eclipse within a unique historical timeframe thus contextualizing astronomical observations there noted during a specific luster;
3. And finally, unexpectedly, the validation of the druidic era which was still maintained as an esoteric teaching within the bardic tradition.

All of this was eloquently detailed by Joseph Monard in a monograph of 1996 entitled *About the Coligny Calendar* (see bibliography).

The only remaining thing for which Monard was uncertain, pertained to the documented Gallic month names which were different from the ones found in early Irish terminology. Unfortunately, for the surviving Brythonic cultures, this nomenclature was heavily borrowed from Latin... And the same can be said concerning the other ancient Celts for which we have little data. These include the Celts of Iberia, of Lusitania, and of Lepontic Italy. Therefore, we are only left to wonder what in these names were in the other Celtic countries.

Most laborious still, was the task to reframe this quasi-mystical system of the great ages and druidical eras in its original pre-Christian mindset. In order to do this, one must put oneself in the mind of an ancient naked-eye observer, astronomer, and calendar maker. And this is essentially what we will hopefully attempt in this chapter. Considering this difficulty, there are, nevertheless, in these records, original telltale elements, themes, and motifs. The best fossil evidence is always specific nomenclature and terminology. One such a name is that of Bith and Byd found in the Irish and Welsh literature. Both mythonyms derive from the Old Celtic Bitu or Bitus for “world.”

As expected, in the Irish texts, Bith is made to be a son of Noah and father of Cesair, the mythic mother of the Irish people. Legend has it, that he took Barran (alias Barrhind) along with sixteen women to the north of Ireland where he founded the first kingdom. Bith is some kind of Prometheus identifiable to the Germanic Mannus and Hindu Manu. According to a clerical over gloss, Bith, the maker of idols, was not permitted by Noah to board the Ark. In the Irish *Annals of the Four Masters*, chronological entries are grouped according to two ages: Aes Beatha, the Age of the World, and Aes Crimthann<sup>3</sup>, the Age of Fear, corresponding to the Age of Christ. As expected, the annals begin with the Biblical Deluge.

According to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, author unknown, the Age of the World, starts 2,242 years before the Biblical Deluge.<sup>4</sup>

And quite surprisingly, the Age of Christ is initiated after year 5194 of the Age of the World with this enigmatic entry:

The first year of the age of Christ, and the eighth year of the reign of Crimthann Niadhnaig.

The Age of Christ overlaps the pagan era up until the year 430 in the annals where it is recorded that “Pope Celestinus the First sent Palladius to Ireland, to propagate the faith among the Irish, and he landed in the country of Leinster with a company of twelve men.”

Therefore, this Age of the World notion is a direct reference to the three entities Bith, Ladhra<sup>5</sup>, and Fintan<sup>6</sup> as a surviving theme of Indo-European social tripartition.

- Bith, the primordial good, represents the priestly class.
- Fintan represents the Finian heroes and the second warrior class.
- Ladhra, as the hearthstone, represents the third domestic class of producers and craftsmen.

According to the colloquy between Fintan and the hawk of Achill<sup>7</sup>, Fintan, as a mercurial prime mover, shapeshifts through time taking diverse forms: a hundred years as a salmon; fifty years as an eagle; a hundred years as a Falcon; and back to his old human self again.

### **The Druidical Saturnian Cycle**

In Plutarch’s *Morals, De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, “On the face which appears in the orb of the moon,” there is a mention concerning the thirty years cycle in the land of Ogygia. Of course, Ogygia was Plutarch’s name for Ireland and the astronomers living there were Druids. This druidic time reckoning began when Saturn entered in the stars of Taurus in conjunction with the moon in the Pleiades. This being that the moon travels the ecliptic in but one day while Saturn takes an entire year to do so. Thus, thirty moon days equal thirty years for Saturn.

An isle, Ogygia, lies far out at sea, a run of five days off from Britain as you sail westward; and three other islands equally distant from it and from one another lie out

from it in the general direction of the summer sunset. In one of these, according to the tale told by the natives, Cronus is confined by Zeus, and the antique Briareus, holding watch and ward over those islands and the sea that they call the Cronian main, has been settled close beside him. (...)

Therefore Heracles has the highest honors and Cronus the second. Now when at intervals of thirty years the star of Cronus, which we call Phaenon, "the Splendent," but they, our author said, call Nycturus, "the Nightwatchman," enters the sign of the Bull, they, having spent a long time in preparation for the sacrifice and the expedition, choose by lot and send forth a sufficient number of envoys in a correspondingly sufficient number of ships, putting aboard a large retinue and the provisions necessary for men who are going to cross so much sea by oar and live such a long time in a foreign land.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Druidical Metonic cycle**

Apart from the Saturnian cycle, the insular Celts were also acquainted with the Metonic cycle. This time computation reconciles the periods of the luminaries: 19 solar years for 235 synodic months, give or take a few hours depending on the elapsed years.

In his *Library of History*, Diodorus describes how the Hyperborean British Celts celebrate the year of Meton:

They say also that the moon, as viewed from this island, appears to be but a little distance from the earth and to have upon it prominences, like those of the earth, which are visible to the eye. The account is also given that the god visits the island every nineteen years, the period in which the return of the stars to the same place in the heavens is accomplished; and for this reason, the nineteen-year period is called by the Greeks the "year of Meton." At the time of this appearance of the god he both plays on the cithara and dances continuously the night through from the vernal equinox until the rising of the Pleiades, expressing in this manner his delight in his successes. And the kings of this city and the supervisors of the sacred precinct are called Boreades, since they are descendants of Boreas, and the succession to these positions is always kept in their family.<sup>9</sup>

This comment by Diodorus clearly demonstrates how certain initiated British families could have maintained precise astronomical observations which included the knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes. However, it is not clear whether the Greek astronomer and mathematician, Meton of Athens, did discover this principle, but he did introduce this notion in the Attic calendar in 432 BCE. Meton's observation was that the position of the vernal point was in continuous retrograde displacement from year to year. This because of the sun's intersection on the ecliptic plane with the Earth's orbit moving at a rate of 50.726 seconds per year. Due to the influence of the moon, and, to a lesser extent, to the planets' apparent movements, there is a slight varying obliquity of the ecliptic over a 40,000 years cycle. These combined Earth-based observations are the conceptual basis for the notion of the "zodiacal era" of 25.760 years. One cycle corresponds to an average vernal precession of 2146 years for each twelfth of the zodiacal belt. That is, a zodiacal era corresponds to the displacement of the vernal point through each of the astral signs.

It is also suspected, that early on, at a time when the precessions of the sun were perhaps not yet tabulated, the Indo-Europeans had already an abstract idea of mortal time versus divine time. The theme of the godly age lasting eons is shared in many of the IE myths. The stories surrounding the four ages found in Greek and Indian mythology were also present in the Celtic and Germanic ones. It is generally assumed that the Vedic literary collection forms the oldest corpus predating that of the Anatolians, or even the Greeks. But, as we will see, this is just an a priori hypothesis. And as the Indo-Europeanist David W. Anthony remarked in *The Horse, The Wheel, and Language*, that of the IE languages, Italic and Celtic were of the earliest to separate from the main trunk only to maintain archaic traits and elements that were no longer found in Indo-Iranian, Baltic, Slavic and Armenian lines, which stayed behind sharing a set of later innovations.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the Four Yugas of the *Mahabharata* and Hesiod's *Five Ages of Man* were probably drawing from older sources found in the mother culture. In light of this, the notion of great Ages in Celtic mythology could also be very archaic. This aside from the fact that many parallels can be drawn between druidism and vedism, mainly cultural, but with no direct geographical and temporal point of contact.

Thus, according to the ancient wisdom schools, the Four Ages, were grouped to comprise an era called *aeon* in Greek, *kalpa* in Sanskrit, *aes* or *aos* in Gaelic, *oed* in Welsh.<sup>11</sup>

The Hindus had Brahma begin each age with the throw of the dice. For the Gauls, it was Sucellos who beat the cycles of time with the blow of a mallet. The Greeks had another manner of chronological measure involving the Kouretes guardians of the infant Zeus at the entrance of the cave of Mount Dikte. Upon seeing Cronos, they beat their shields with their swords in order to prevent this saturnine god from hearing the cries of the baby. This mythic event was to initiate the beginning of the Silver Age, thus replacing the Golden Age represented by a sickle. The Norse have Heimdall sound the horn of Gjallar, there heralding the coming age. In the Vedic myths, the ages are measured with declining throws on the mark of four, three, two, and one. Norse myths specify that it was only after four resounding blows of the Gjallar that the Aesir gods deposited their arms on the tables of Valhalla; first their swords, then their axes and hammers. During this age, the lifespan of the gods was extended by drinking the elixir from the cup of immortality. This beverage was called soma in India, homa in Persia, and ambrosia in Greece. Mead was the sacred drink of the Celts and Germanics. The English name mead is from the same PIE root \*medhu- as the

Old Norse mjöðr, Old Irish mid, Welsh medd, and Breton mez.

Chronos, the Greek god of time, was nicknamed the Chronocrator, "the ruler of time."

The god who kept time was called Chronocrator by the Greeks. In Greece, a zodiacal age corresponded to 2,160 of Plato's years.



Boutet\_14

Gallo-Roman statuette of the god Sucellos, and Latinized as Sucellus Sylvanus, found at Orpierre, Hautes Alpes, France. In his right hand, the god holds a medulestron or “mead pot,” and in his left hand, an ordos, or a “mallet.” Author’s drawing after a photo from the Musée d’archéologie nationale de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines, France.

Moreover, quoting from the Mahabharata, a cosmic cycle covers an estimated 12,000 “divine years,” which, in “human time,” are equivalent to 4,320,000 earthly years. The age of Kali Yuga encompasses one-fourth of the world’s age. The duration of which is but one-tenth of godly time which amounts to 432,000 years. Therefore, the age of Kali includes two overlapping timelines, one for the gods of 200 years, and one for the mortals of 432,000 earthy years.

To summarise, in Vedic literature, the sum of “divine years” for a cosmic cycle was calculated as follows:  $12 \times 201 = 2412$ ,  $1,200 \times 380 = 456000$ , and  $1,200 \times 360 = 432,000$ .

I once asked Joseph Monard if there was any Celtic data for the Greek Ages of Man and the Hindu Yugas, and he answered to the affirmative. His suspicion was that the list of the peopling of the British Isles in *The Takings of Ireland* or *Book of Invasions* could not relate to any historical event, but rather, that the story was a garbled recount of much older Time myths. This because, the stories surrounding the successive eras could not fit into a set Biblical narrative and were thus historicized, as it was customary in the *Interpretatio Christiana*.<sup>12</sup> Monard’s hunch that the peoples mentioned in *Lebor Gabala Érin*, or *Book of Invasions*, corresponded to Hesiod’s Ages of Man. He suggested that I thoroughly investigate this.

#### **A comparative Table of the Ages in IE Myth**

Greek, Hesiod / Ovid	Vedic Mahabharata	Scandinavian Eddas
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Golden Age (under the rule of Cronos and the Titans)	Krita or Satya Yuga (the Golden Age of truth and unity, Monism)	The Golden Age (Time of the Aesir)
Silver Age (under the patronage of Zeus and the Olympians)	Trita or Treta Yuga (time of the Three, the Trimurti)	Age of Metal (Time of war and conflict)
Bronze Age (ruled by Ares – ending with Deucalion’s flood)	Dvapara Yuga (time of the two, Dualism)	Time of Winter (ice, cold and desolation)
Heroic Age (Trojan and Theban Wars – the reign of the demi-gods who retire in the Elysian Fields)	Kali Yuga (time of evil and destruction - Moksha)	Time of Wolves (darkness and betrayal)
Iron Age (Age of misery and dishonor – the reign of man, the mortal being)		Age of Ragnarok (Time of chaos and destruction)

Once again, Monard had set me on the right track for it was not long before I stumbled on the smoking gun. One of the peoples to take Ireland were the Milesians, the tribe of Míl, which in the genitive case is Mílidh, and Latinized as Milesius, for “soldier.” There is an entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters* which sums the story neatly. To wit, the events surrounding the Age of Bith, year 3500:

The fleet of the sons of Mílidh came to Ireland at the end of this year, to take it from the Tuatha De Dananns; and they fought the battle of Sliabh Mis with them on the third day after landing. In this battle fell Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, wife of Mílidh; and the grave of Scota is to be seen between Sliabh Mis and the sea. Therein also fell Fas, the wife of Un, son of Uige, from whom is named Gleann Faisi. After this, the sons of Mílidh fought a battle at Taitinn, against the three kings of the Tuatha De Dananns, Mac Cuill, Mac Ceacht, and Mac Greine. The battle lasted for a long time until Mac Ceacht fell by Eiremhon, Mac Cuill by Eimhear, and Mac Greine by Amhergin.<sup>13</sup>

What struck me were the similarities between the meanings of the Gaelic Míl with that of the Sanskrit Káli. Indeed, the Old Celtic root for Míl was Mileto for “havoc, damage, and devastation,” a term which is quite close to Káli meaning “strife, discord, quarrel, and contention.” But that is not all... Another coincidental detail that struck me, was the name of one of the sons of Partholón called Ferann from Ueranos “overly,” and punning with fírinne, from the Old Celtic uiriona, “truth.” In the Lebor Gabala Érin, the name Fir is given to three waves of invaders, namely the Fir Bolg, the Fir Domnan and the Fir Gallion. Most evidently, fir stems from uiros “man,” and thus puns with the adjective ueros / uiros for “true.” Moreover, these names are cognates of Latin vir “man,” and veritas “truth.” This compares well with the Sanskrit Satya meaning “true, real, actual, genuine, sincere, honest, and truthful.”<sup>14</sup>

Coincidence?

Another parallel found is that of the Daneans, the Dânavas, and the Tuatha Dé Danann, of the Greek, Vedic, and Irish texts. These stories seem to come from a much older stratum of myths and, therefore, could indicate a common IE theme. In Greek mythology, the Daneans were the children of Danaos, son of the god Belos and Anchimhoe. At the time of the Trojan War, all of the Hellenic peoples identified themselves as Daneans, and hence as descendants of Poseidon through Belos and Danaos. According to the *Rig Veda*, Dânu was the mother of the Dânavas, a legendary race of demons predating the Manavas, the children of Manu, the first mortal man. And on the Irish side, the Tuatha Dé Danann were the people of the goddess Danu who predated the Milesians. Her husband Bilé was the god of death and father of the gods and men. Let's note that the Irish Bilé is from the Old Celtic Belos and of the same etymology as the Greek Belos, both for "bright."

If we are to trust the timeline of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, the fabled ages were dated as follows:

The Deluge, the year 2242, coming of Cesair and her people;

Age of the World 2520, Partholon arrives ( $278 = 9.2 \times 30$  years);

Age of the World 2850, Nemedh arrives ( $330 = 11 \times 30$  years);

Age of the World 3266, the Fir Bolg take Ireland ( $416 = 13.8 \times 30$  years);

Age of the World 3303, the First Battle of Magh Tuireadh won by the Tuatha Dé Danann (37 years);

Age of the World 3330, Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh against Balor and the Fomorians won by Lugh Lamhfhada in 3331 (27 years).

Age of the World 3500, the people of Milidh arrive ( $169 = 5.6 \times 30$  years);

Age of the World, ends in 6000, on the eighth year of Crimhthann Niadhnaírg's reign ( $2500 = 83 \times 30$  years).<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the fact that all these dates yield multiples of thirty, no uniformity is to be noticed for there to be a discernable pattern for these *Four Masters* ages. From data found on the Gallic *Coligny Calendar*, Joseph Monard observed that a significant cyclic change had taken place exactly 4,374 years (since he realized this in 2001) in the past, thus occurring in 2373 BCE. Date not far from the Vedic date of -3102 (a discrepancy of 729 years). From that date, he understood that the Gaulish Druids had the Iron Age begin in 2373 BCE and end in 1293 BCE. This yielded an average 1,080 years for that era. That is, averaging 36 times 30 years' cycles. It was followed by an intermediary period of 360 years ending in 933 BCE. In all likelihood, this embolismic 360 period takes away from the previous Iron Age.

An astrological age is marked by the sun's movement from one zodiacal constellation to another approximately every 2,160 years.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that a full cosmic Age comprised of twelve 2,160 year cycles totaling 25,920 years.

Although preserving older mythological motifs, the timeline given for these ages in the *Annals of the Four Masters* faithfully follows Biblical chronology with its 6,000 years period. When calculating the generations mentioned in the Bible, James Ussher, Bishop in the Church of Ireland, had arrived at the precise date of Sunday, October 23rd, 4004 BCE for Earth's creation. This date is very close to that of the Irish annals with its 6000 years for the age of the world.



Boutet\_15

The four-time cycles with luminaries and cyclical cutoff symbolized by an ax. Gallic silver coin from the Garonne basin, southern Gaul. Author's drawing after a photo from the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

As above mentioned, the Gallic Druids counted in cycles of thirty years which they called *setlon*<sup>16</sup>. And as we all know, the Romans counted in centuries. From data recovered on the *Coligny Calendar*, Monard calculated that a Druid's *saitlon* of thirty years, multiplied by twelve, gives a great century of (360) years. In turn, twelve great centuries of 360 years ( $12 \times 360 = 4,320$ ) add up to two eras of 4,320 years each. That is, a double of the 2,160 years zodiacal cycle ( $72 \times 30$ ), or in other words, roughly equal to three cosmic eons.

So, according to this alleged scheme, five ages = 12, 600 years ( $4 \times 2,520 = 10, 080 + 1$  intermediate age in accord with this formula:  $10,080 + 2,520 = 12,600$ ) give a druidic era. Therefore, this great era was likely comprised of 12, 600 years (12, 600 divided by 10 = 1, 260). Although speculative, all of this makes perfect sense. However, a problem arises when considering the fact that the spaces between the constellations are not constantly equal as the sun yearly arcs there provoking the retrograde precession of the equinoxes along the zodiacal belt. When tackling this problem, Vedic pundits proposed an adapted model for the cosmic ages following a regressive sequential pattern of four, three, two, and one, time spans. The Golden Age was speculated to last 5,040 ( $1,260 \times 4$ ) years, the Silver Age, 3780 ( $1,260 \times 3$ ) years, the Bronze Age, 2,520 ( $1,260 \times 2$ ) years, and the Iron Age for 1,260 ( $1,260 \times 1$ ) years.

Thus, according to the Vedantist Swami Yukteswar, the calculations for the age of the world followed the logic of the ancient Aryans having time cycles start at the set of the dark period and at the break the light period. Or again, downward movements come before upward movements.

On this subject, Monard wrote back to me with this comment: "If we are to accept the proposal for an ascending druidical era, then there is the need for a corrected inverted sequence. The fact of the matter is that Clan Miled, or people of Milé (= the Goidel), come actually after the Tuatha Dé Danann, "the People of the goddess Danu." Or must we call them otherwise in better generic terms without any Irish prehistorical or mythical reference? Keep the order intact or reverse the order to better maintain the ascendancy of

the sequence. What we have here, is not a record of historical invasions, but rather, a mystic temporal construct.”<sup>17</sup>

What should we make of this? Simply that the names of these Celtic tribes carry a deeper symbolic meaning. Let’s not forget that the ancient seers were pundit punsters! Here is an example of this: Nemed < Nemetos “sacred;” Fir < uiros “man” uiros/ueros “true;” Ferann < ueranos “overly,” and punning with firinne < uiriona “truth;” Danann < Danuna “of Danu,” literally, “of powerful movement,” dano “destiny, gift, and boon;” Míl, Mílé < mileto “devastation, ruin, havoc, organized destruction, devastating attack.”

Just to summarize the content of Monard’s lengthy explanation of the great mythological ages versus historical events, here is my translation of his letter:

Sequencing likely druidic ages as invasions of Ireland: Bith, Cessair, Fintan and Ladra, Partholon, Nemed son of Agnomán, the Fir Bolg, the Fir Gaileoin, The Fir Domnan, the Tuatha Dé, and the Clan Miled.

The quotes from the *Annals of Four Masters* indicate a similar order of enumeration. On the other hand, Celtic protohistory allows us to consider the following sequence starting with the Fir Bolg, assuming that they were not identifiable to the Belgae. Their arrival is not datable unless we are to class them as pre-Celtic tribes seen as the manufacturers of earthen mound builders (including megaliths), and as equivalents of the Windmill Hill People of Britain maybe?

A list of names given by prehistorians:

The Tuatha De Danann, Proto-Celtic peoples known elsewhere as Denen or Danuna; arrival likely not prior to 1300 BCE.

The Cruithni Quretenoi or Pretanoi (not mentioned in the *Lebor Gabala Érenn*); the Picts’ arrival probably ranged from between 500 to 200 BCE.

The Clan Miled, in the Irish texts, is indicated as Iberian Goidels arriving circa 400 BCE.

Fir Galioin, Brythonic Gallic Celts coming either from Albion or the continent only after 200 on to 50 BCE.

The Fir Domnan were probably Dumnonioi Britons, whose arrival can be dated at around 50 BCE.

All populations living in Ireland prior to the successive proto-Celts were legendary. It can be surmised that the Formori may represent prehistoric Pre-Indo-European populations, who were no less mythologized than the fabled Corannieit of Albion. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, this I doubt much.

The reasoning for this is that if the Fir Bolg are identifiable to the Belgai mentioned by Caesar, they could only be among the last to come to Ireland contemporaneously with those who arrived in Albion at the end of the La Tène era. If we are to exclude awkward biblical and Greco-Latin overwritings, the *Lebor Gabala* in its medieval manuscript form represents a revised clerical distortion of the oral traditions thus upsetting the pre-Christian timeline.

Herewith, is the chronology of the settlement of Ireland after O'Rahilly in *The Goidels and Their Predecessors*:

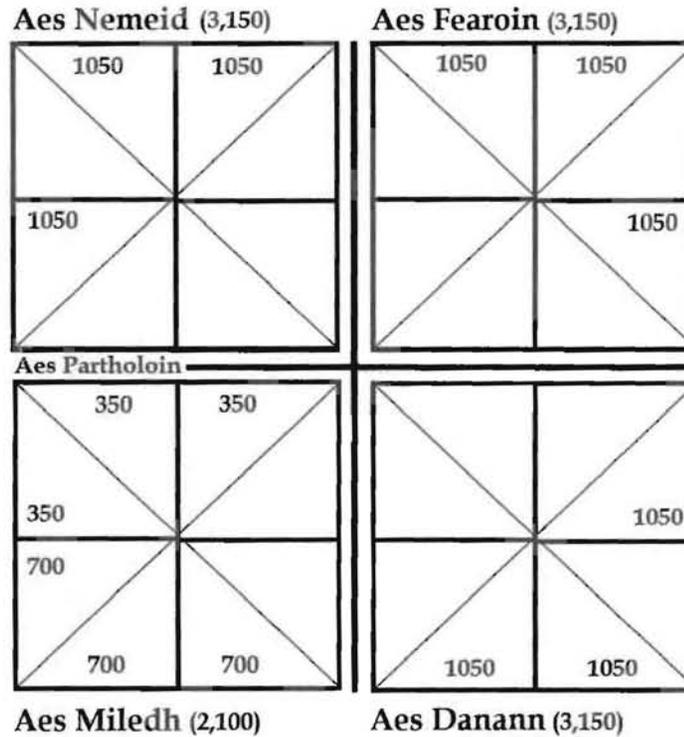
Cruthni, from Quretenoi, the Picts, approximately 530 BCE;

Fir Bolg Erainn, approximately 450 BCE;

Laigin, from Lagenates; Fir Fir Domnain, and Gaileoin Desi, approximately 250 BCE;

Clan Miled = Goidels, approximately 100 BCE.

**Proposed Table for the Irish Cosmic Ages**



Boutet\_16

Graphic by the author.

**Tripling of Time**

The custom for tripling numbers belonged to a conceptual mindset which in Indo-European culture was systematically pushed to the limit. That the ideology of triads was expressed in every aspect of conceptual thinking is but an understatement. For example, antique Celtic Art is an eloquent visual reminder of this maniacal tendency. And from the Arts, we know that the Druids had a firm grip on Pythagorean mathematics. This involved intricate compass work using the parameters of the radius of the circle. In Antiquity, Pi (radius 2Pi) was held as the most sacred number representing the constant ratio of the circumference of a circle on its diameter while the radius was divided into

360 degrees.

The circle was composed of twelve rays of  $30^\circ$ .

That is,  $2\pi = 63$  ( $7 \times 9 = 63$ ),  $6.3$  and  $\pi = 3.15$  (approximately  $3.1416$ ). The ideal circumference of  $360^\circ$  is translatable into the number of days in a normalized zodiacal year, taken five from the full tropical cycle. The zodiacal year is divided in twelve equal houses of 360 nychthemera (full 24 hour period). One zodiacal month is of thirty nychthemera or day-night periods, hence equal to 30 degrees of the ecliptic's radius. In turn, the zodiacal month was divided into three decans of ten nychthemera. The tropical year was previously estimated at 365.25 days instead of nowadays' precise calculation of 365.24219 days.

In order to adjust the lunar year of 12 lunations an extra month was inserted after thirty months. Twelve lunations of 354 to 355 days were needed to keep the astronomical average of the year's moon days. The "Metonic cycle," named after Meton, was probably introduced to the Druids by the Pythagoreans. Here is the computation: 19 years = 228 zodiacal months = 235 lunar months, time estimation of 6,930 days.

In fact, the discrepancy is only for 6930.602 against 6930.688 days. Not bad for an approximation!

### The Seven Sub-Ages or Mythological Eras

"I am a stag of seven tines, I'm a bull of seven battles." (Song of Amergin)

In Indo-European cultures, the numbers 3, 4 and 7 are traditionally associated with knowledge and wisdom.

In these ancient Celts approximations, the symbolism of 3 (druids), 4 (masters) and 7 (sages) had a cosmic significance. Symbolic space was expressed by the number 4, which indicated directions, the number 3, indicating the dimensions of the top, bottom, and middle ( $4 + 3 = 7$ ). The number 7 also meant the celestial spheres or planets known to the ancients. Or the number 11 ( $7 + 4 = 11$ ), mirror number multiplied by 3 (Trimurti) gives 33 major Indo-European deities. In short, according to this calculation, a perfect year on earth ( $360 \times 7 = 2520$ ) multiplied by seven gives a complete age.



The four masters of ages with the world axis and the lunar nodes. Author's drawing.  
Boutet\_17

### **The Pre-Diluvian Age, Illud Tempus, the Time of Origins**

The *Annals of the Four Masters* give a duration for the pre-diluvian age of 2,242 years. The authors make use of the Biblical expression of “forty days and forty” to set the mythological narrative surrounding the coming of Ceasair and her people to Ireland. The texts also give her as the daughter of Bith, son of Noah, and wife of Fintan. This contrived mythological theme is neither soundly biblical nor completely mythological.

Forty days before the Deluge, Ceasair came to Ireland with fifty girls and three men; Bith, Ladhra, and Fintan, their names. Ladhra died at Ard Ladhra, and from him, it is named. He was the first that died in Ireland. Bith died at Sliabh Beatha and was interred in the cairn of Sliabh Beatha, and from him, the mountain is named. Ceasair died at Cuil Ceasra, in Connaught, and was interred in Cairn Ceasra. From Fintan is named Feart Fintan, over Loch Deirdheirc.<sup>18</sup>

The mention of “fifty girls” refers to a well-known motif in IE mythologizing. In Greece, the Menai were the fifty monthly Selene goddesses presiding over the Olympic four-year cycle. This motif reoccurs in the Ulsterian cycles surrounding Cuchulainn with Emer and her fifty maidens, and with Dechtire and her fifty handmaids. In all likelihood, Ceasair, or Cesair, was a sky goddess associated with the Celtic uranian storm god. The name's etymology is from the Old Celtic root Cadtara, via the derivatives Cadara and Casara for “hailstorm with lightning.” The etymology for her consort's name is also informative: Fintan, from Uindonnos “dazzling, garish,” and punning with uindiados, “white salmon.” Fintan escapes the Deluge by metamorphosing himself into a salmon and takes other forms throughout the ages.

### **The Four Ages Motif from the Irish Texts**

1. Aes Nemeid < \*Aiuestu Nemeti (Krita Yuga / Golden Age), the age of Nemetos, “of the holy one”<sup>19</sup>  
Estimated time span, 3,150

Neimhidh came to Ireland. On the twelfth day after the arrival of Neimhidh with his people, Macha, the wife of Neimhidh, died. These were the four chieftains who were with him: Sdarn, Iarbhainel the Prophet, Fearghus Leithdheirg, and Ainninn. These were the four sons of Neimhidh. Medu, Macha, Yba, and Ceara, were the four wives of these chieftains.<sup>20</sup>

This is the good and sacred age, the time of the holy ones. Much like the Vedic Krita Yuga, this age is dominated by sacredness and goodness, hence the name of its founder, Nemetos, the “sacred.” The world begins with the downpour of celestial water. In this

first age, after the deluge, on the eve of Samhain, four great lakes are created, and twelve plains are cleared. World time is initiated on the eve of Samhain with the four lakes representing the four world quarters along with the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The names of the four chieftains or masters are indicative of moral ascendance: Starn<sup>21</sup>, Iarbhainel<sup>22</sup>, Fearghus<sup>23</sup>, alias Leithdheirg<sup>24</sup>, and Ainninn<sup>25</sup>. The names of the wives are also very telling: Medu or Medb<sup>26</sup>, Macha<sup>27</sup>, Yba<sup>28</sup>, and Ceara<sup>29</sup>. This being that the Nemedians were of the class of priests, *nemetoi*, “the holy ones,” to which the Druids and Bards belonged. The plot is set, the Fomorii, from Uomorioi, akin to the Greek Telkines, are confined to Andumnon, the Underworld, ruled by the dark goddess Dumnu, akin to the Hindu Kali, while Nemedh, rules over Mag Bith<sup>30</sup>.

2. Aes Fearoin < \*Aiestu Uirionas / Aiestu Uiras (Treta Yuga / Silver Age)  
Estimated time span, 3,150

The Firbolgs took possession of Ireland at the end of this year. Slainghe, Gann, Genann, Seangann, and Rudhraighe, were their five chieftains. These were the five sons of Deala, son of Loich. The other four and the Firbolgs, in general, elected Slainghe as king over them.<sup>31</sup>

The Age of Truth, for Fir, for uiros “true,” and uir/uiros, “man,” truth, was most evidently the age of uiriona, “truth.” The Fir Bolg<sup>32</sup>, from Uir Belgios/Bolgios, “bulky man,” from bolgos/belgos, “ample, bulky, hefty, baggy,” implies a prosperous and well-fed man. Bolg also connotes brilliance in that bolgsios was the Goidelic term for “flash of lightning, bright gleam of light.” The Fir Bolg are mentioned along with the Fir Galioin and the Fir Domnann who correspond to the historical tribes of the Belgians, the Gauls<sup>33</sup> and the British of Dumnonia. The five chieftains rule over the middle and its four corners. These are warrior names stemming from older etymons: Slainghe, Slanicos, “the healthy,” Gann, Gandos, “the rare,” Genann, Genanos, “of the birth,” Seangann, Senogenos, “born of the elder,” and Rudhraighe, Roudorixs, “the red king.” This age is under the patronage of the second function, the class of warriors. During the second battle of Cath Maige Tuired, the war was fought between the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha Dé Danann. The Fir Bolg were defeated with 100,000 killed including their king Eochaid mac Eirc. Eochaidh was much more than a legendary king of the Fir Bolg dynasty. He was indeed married to Tailtiu (Talatío Earth sacralized) in that she was earth goddess and foster mother of the god Lugh. Eochaidh Oll-Athair was one of the epithets of the high god Dagda. Therefore, this age, much like that of the Vedic Treta Yoga, was marked by warlike dualism much like the Greek Silver age which was said to be characterized by the deeds of war heroes.

3. Aes Danann < \*Aiestu Danonos (Dvapara yuga/bronze age or bronze), from \*aiestu Danuion, the age of the Toutai deuas Danunas, the Tuatha Dé Danann.  
Estimated time span, 3,150

The tenth year of the reign of Eochaidh, son of Erc; and this was the last year of his reign, for the Tuatha De Dananns came to invade Ireland against the Firbolgs; and they gave battle to each other at Magh Tuireadh, in Conmaicne Cuile Toladh, in Connaught, so that the King Eochaidh, son of Erc, was killed, by the three sons of Neimhidh, son of Badhrai, of the Tuatha De Dananns; Ceasarb, Luamh, and Luachra, their names. The Firbolgs were vanquished and slaughtered in this battle. Moreover, the hand of Nuadhat, son of Eochaidh, son of Edarlamh (the king who was over the Tuatha De Dananns), was cut off in the same battle. The aforesaid Eochaidh was the last king of the Firbolgs. Nine of them had assumed kingship, and thirty-seven years was the length of their sway over Ireland.<sup>34</sup>

The age of boons, donations, that is to say, that during this age, the people of the goddess Danu descend to earth through the mist aboard their ships on the eve of May Day. Master elements and druidic arts, they triumph over the Fir Bolg at the First Battle of Magh Tuireadh.<sup>35</sup> From the four fables cities of the North, they bring with them the four sacred objects which were: Nuada's sword, the stone Fal, Dagda's cauldron of abundance, and Lugh's spear. These objects, more than spoils of war, were the most precious divine attributes of the Tuatha Dé Danann gods.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. Aes Miled < \*Aiuestu Miletonion (Kali yuga/Iron Age) Estimated time span, 2,100

The fleet of the sons of Milidh came to Ireland at the end of this year, to take it from the Tuatha De Dananns; and they fought the battle of Sliabh Mis with them on the third day after landing. In this battle fell Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, wife of Milidh; and the grave of Scota is to be seen between Sliabh Mis and the sea. Therein also fell Fas, the wife of Un, son of Uige, from whom is named Gleann Faisi. After this, the sons of Milidh fought a battle at Tailtinn, against the three kings of the Tuatha De Dananns, Mac Cuill, Mac Ceacht, and Mac Greine. The battle lasted for a long time until Mac Ceacht fell by Eiremhon, Mac Cuill by Eimhear, and Mac Greine by Amhergin. Their three queens were also slain; Eire by Suirghe, Fodhla by Edan, and Banba by Caicher. The battle was at length gained against the Tuatha De Dananns, and they were slaughtered wherever they were overtaken. There fell from the sons of Milidh, on the other hand, two illustrious chieftains, in following up the rout, namely Fuad at Sliabh Fuaid, and Cuailgne at Sliabh Cuailgne.<sup>37</sup>

Since this age ends the cycle, it was shortened to make way for the embolismic intermediate age. The age of Miletus (also spelled Milé) which can be termed "Age of Chaos," and which is similar to the Greek Iron Age and Vedic Kali Yuga saw as the worst of ages. The people of Milesius arrive in Ireland on the eve of the Beltaine, May Day commemorations. The final battle against the Tuatha Dé Danann is fought at Tailtinn. Again, in reference to the Earth goddess Tailtiu. This age is under the auspices of the triple goddess, the main auroral fairies of Destiny. The triple goddess is the allegory of sovereignty and sacred space. Their Irish names were Tailtiu, "land," Macha, "plain," and Ethne, "land," when not Eriu, "west," Banba, "sow," and Fotla, "under-stone." So when the poet Amairgen secured peace for the Milesians, it was only after he

negotiated a truce with Eriu. These peoples were still subject to death and their souls resided in the house Donn<sup>38</sup>. After the conquest, the Tuatha Dé Danann withdrew the earth to their Sidhs in the hereafter. The world then poured into chaos and evil forces took over. *Age of the World*, 3502, the province of Leinster was ruled by King Crimhthann Sciathbhel of the Damnonians. Again, from the *Annals of the Four Masters*, Age of the World 5193, Crimhthann Niadhair, son of Lughaidh, reigns for sixteen years into year nine of the Age of Christ.

The sixteenth year of Crimhthann in the sovereignty of Ireland, when he died at Dun Crimhthainn, at Edair, after returning from the famous expedition upon which he had gone. It was from this expedition he brought with him the wonderful jewels, among which were a golden chariot, and a golden chess board, inlaid with a hundred transparent gems, and the Cedach Crimhthainn, which was a beautiful cloak, embroidered with gold. He brought a conquering sword, with many serpents of refined messy gold inlaid in it; a shield, with bosses of bright silver; a spear, from the wound inflicted by which no one recovered; a sling, from which no erring shot was discharged; and two greyhounds, with a silver chain between them, which chain was worth three hundred cumhals; with many other precious articles.

In Gaelic, *creim* is a pejorative term standing for “nibble, erosion, scab, sore, and disease.” At the Old Celtic level, the feminine name *cremo*, from *cremto*, and masculine *cremtos*, stood for fear. This confirms what a Gaulish mercenary once boastfully declared to Alexander the Great during his Thracian campaigns of 335 BCE. What he feared most was that the sky should fall upon his head.

5. Aes Partholoin < aes Bardoloin < \*Aiestu Bardoloni – “age of epic poetry,” or “the epic age;” connoting Bardaletonos, “of bardic or epic quality.”  
Intermediate Age, estimated time span, 1,050 years.

The age of the world when Parthalon came into Ireland, 2520 years. These were the chieftains who were with him: Slainge, Laighlinne, and Rudhraidhe, his three sons; Dealgnat, Nerbha, Ciochbha, and Cerbnad, their four wives.<sup>39</sup>

This intermediate age of Partholon<sup>40</sup> is appropriately inserted between the age of the holy, aes Nemeid, and the age of havoc, aes Miled.

The world is destroyed by a flood during this age of renewal. Then follows a founding period of growing and rebuilding marked by seasonal rites of fertility. Ladhra, the sea pilot, leads his people of sixteen women onto Ireland, who latter, all die in excess of labor. He is the progenitor of the first race of mortals of that age. They do not survive the age and are taken by the flood. Ladhra plays the same role as that of the Greek Prometheus, “the one who thinks ahead, who foresees,” Along with his brother Epimetheus, “who has an afterthought,” he is of the few survivors belonging to the race of Titans. Partholon can also be likened to the Vedic Purusha, the primordial giant whose body was dismembered to engender the world. The fact that this period is placed in the first period of the Irish Annals indicates that it could also be placed last. As Monard suspected, there is an inversion for the Partholonian period which should be placed at the

onset of the Christian era. In the annals, the Christian age is made to overlap the end of the Milesian period. This is rather fitting for the end of Celtic Antiquity since the Milesian age was one of havoc, destruction, and moral decay. But more than a beginning, this is an end time, a swan's lament, an epic Ragnarok. This explains why this intercalary period was named after bardaleto, "eulogical bardistry," bardacto, "bardism, epic poetry," and barditos, "funeral eulogy, war song."

The calendar used for the *Irish Annals* closely follows the Roman Julian calendar promulgated by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE and which chronology was the work of monks closely following the apparatus of kalends and ferias<sup>41</sup>. It was replaced in 1582 by the Gregorian calendar of Pope Gregory VIII. Here is an excerpt from the *Annals of the Four Masters* on the topic of calendar archivists:

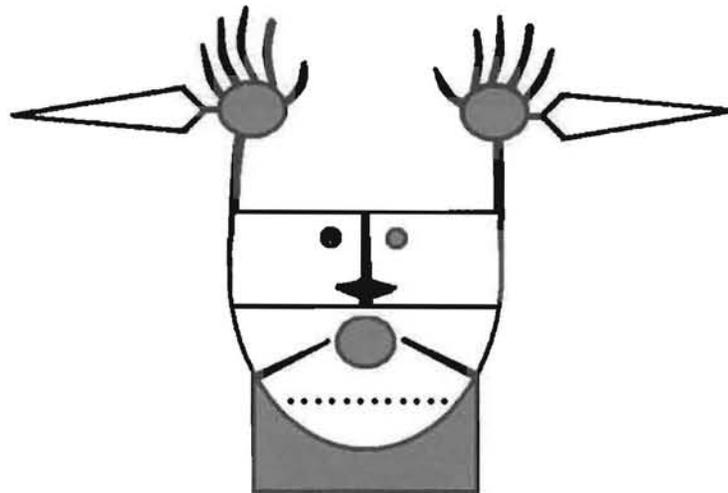
Maelisa Mac Maelcoluim, the chief keeper of the calendar of Ard-Macha, its chief antiquary and librarian, died, after good penance, on the night of Good Friday.<sup>42</sup>

Needless to add that the pre-Christian pagan Celts had their own distinct calendar schemes. This is what will see in the following chapter.

## Chapter V

# The Celtic Calendar

A bright festivity about the two lakes, the lake on my side.  
The side about the Caer, the Caer in urgency has been described.  
A comely flight from it; and the legion of the band augmented stones.  
The dragon will flow around, above the places, vessels of liquor, liquor in golden horns,  
golden horns in hand, hand on the knife, the knife on the rallying point.  
(Taliesin, Book of Taliesin, A Bright Festivity, XLIX)



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## Early Calendars

The Roman Julian calendar observed throughout the Christian up until the Renaissance periods lacked the precision that the previous pagan calendars had in Celtic time reckoning. This being, that the calendars devised by the Druids meticulously kept track of the lunar and solar cycles. In Old Celtic terms, *Sonnocinx*<sup>1</sup> was the tropical solar year while *Diuoblidnis* was the lunar monthly year. As with every other IE culture, the lunar-solar year consisted of twelve regular lunations or months overlapped by twelve zodiacal solar periods. Being that the solar tropical year is of 365 and a quarter and that a complete lunar year of twelve months is of 354, 367 days, cyclical adjustments had to be cyclically made. These values remain constant throughout the millenniums. Needless to say that these considerations were to be observed for anyone wishing to devise a calendar. In northern climates, calendars were an important tool on when to know the exact time to sow, but not as much as for the time to reap since crops reach maturity at different moments in the growing season. Thus, the Celto-Germanic systems diverged from the Mediterranean ones in that they directly continued IE astronomical reckoning practices inherited from the late Copper Age of the eastern steppes Yamna cultural horizon. The real astronomical time for the synodic period is of 29.53 days. To put it simply, the Almanac is to the moon what the Zodiac is to the sun. The Germanic calendar-keepers used wooden blocks called *allmônaxta*, literally, "all moons act," to keep track of monthly days. This was the origin for our word almanac which is generally falsy given as of Arabic etymology. The Germanic year differed slightly from the Celtic model in that the lunar and solar cycles were taken separately and did not necessitate adjustments for them to precisely overlap. The Celtic year started after the fall equinox while the Germanic year commenced at the winter solstice.

The lunar year was divided into two semestrial seasons: *Wentruz* and *Sumar* for the Teutonic and *Giiemorotlio* and *Semorotlio* for the Celtic scheme. The Germanic name for lunation or lunar month was *maenothaz* from *maenon* "moon."

To summarize, the year was divided into two halves: an initial dark and cold half followed by a clear and warm half.



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The two semesters. Graph by the author.

### Marking of Seasonal Time

The seasons as we know them came about after careful astronomical observations. First reckoning the two solstitial semesters, and secondly the two equinoctial periods marked by autumn and spring with its vernal point. As noted, the sun moves across the Zodiac in one tropical year while the moon takes but one month to accomplish the same apparent course.

In turn, the month was divided into halves: a dark waning period of fifteen days and a clear waxing period of fourteen to fifteen days depending on the ascribed months. Likewise, complete days of 24 hours, called nychthemeron in Greek, were also carefully indexed. In all logic, the day was to the month what the month was to the year, the microcosm replicated the macrocosm. And as Hesiod remarked in his *Theogony* (V, lines 124-125) how the day was born of the night:

From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; but of Night were born Aether and Day, whom she conceived and bore from union in love with Erebus.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Greek cosmographers, Aether, the higher sky was the upper bright atmosphere while the aer, the air, was the lower tainted atmosphere closer to the earth.

### The Dark and Bright Semesters

The dark winter semester marks the beginning of the Old Celtic annual cycle starting in autumn and not at the winter solstice as it was the case with the Julian and Gregorian calendars. This dark semester was called giamos, “winter,” there punning with giemos, literally “green shoots,” which marked the end of the cold season at the month of May

named Giamonios<sup>3</sup> in the Gallic *Coligny Calendar*. The month of May, the sprouting and flowering season which well followed the spring equinox truly implied giiemonios, “the time of shoots.”

As Joseph Monard brilliantly explained:

Various scholars have been trapped by the too obvious paronymy between the Gaulish month-names Samonios and Giamonios with the Gaelic seasons’ names Samradh, from the Old Irish Samrad, for “Summertime,” and Geimhreadh, Old Irish Geimrad, “wintertime.” The immediate deduction was to establish the link between Samonios and Samrad bringing things closer to the Old Celtic Samos, a cognate of the Germanic Sumar, both for “summer.” The natural reflex was to view Geimrad and Giamos symmetrically as cognates of the Latin Hiems and Greek Xeimon, also for “winter.” This makes Samonios, the Gallic equivalent of Samhain, made to fall at the beginning of summer with Giamonios at the start of winter. This, of course, this is an error and puts all the other Gallic months out of line!”<sup>4</sup>

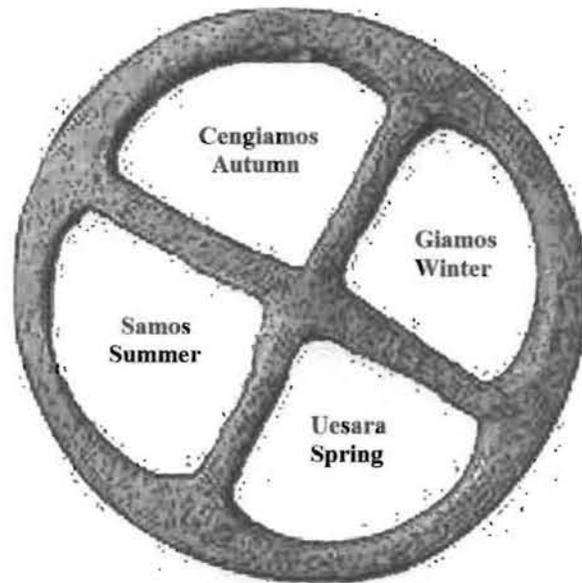
Therefore, Samrad<sup>5</sup> was Old Irish equivalent for the English name summertime and German sommertime.

Following this order, the end of the growing season was called Samoidon, which literally means “summer’s end.” Feil Samhain, the eve of Samhain, or Samonios in the Gallic calends, was formerly called Uegilia Samoni, and it marked the beginning of the New Year’s festivities which lasted three weeks. Samonios is a very ancient calendar name and cognates are found in the other related IE languages. In the Cimmerian calendar of Cappadocia, this month was called Osmonia and was synchronous with the Persian Avestic Vasumana.

Also, Samonios is a clever pun as only druid-clerics knew them. At the Old Irish level, it is easy to confuse saman- or samon- with sam, “summer.” Again, following crafty bardic word plays, Samonios carried several literal and implied meanings: “(time) of the gathering, or reunion,” and “(time) of the sower,” here punning with semonios which also implied “of reverence.” Here is but a short list of the related terms: samonia/samania, “reunion, gathering, meeting, ritual assembly,” samon/semon, “seed, grain,” semon / sebon, “reverend,” samos, summer.” At this moment in time, all the living mortals, the fallen heroes, the ancestral spirits, and the godly entities, were convened to the gathering. This holiday was carried over in the Catholic calendar as All-Saints-Day preceded by Hallowed-Eve, our modern Halloween.

The bright semester follows the vernal point and is marked by nature’s awakening as days get longer and warmer. Therefore, when the sun passes through Aries following the cold and wet month of March, vegetation springs forth and the agrarian activities of the growing season begin. Opposite to the Samhain celebrations on the yearly wheel, are found the May celebrations of Beltaine<sup>6</sup>. At the end of summer, or Samoidon, another parallel can be drawn with the month of September, which in Cimmerian was called Atharo, and was paronymous with the Gallic *Coligny Calendar* name Aedrinios.

## **The Four Seasons**



Author's graphic  
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In turn, the two semesters were re-divided into quarters corresponding to the four seasons. The four seasons consisted of three months overlapped by the tropical zodiacal periods. Since lunar months of 29 to 30 days were at odds with the equal solar houses of thirty days (30°), adjustments were periodically necessary. Hereby is the collection of Gaelic names pertaining to the embolismic months found on the *Coligny Calendar*: Ciallosbuis Sonnocingos, literally, “indexing of the sun’s course,” the spring adjustment; Santaranos Mins, “embolismic month,” the extra fall month. The optimal time for adding an embolismic month was during the equinoxes because there was greater opportunity to play around six or seven moons.

### Old Celtic Terminology for the Seasons

1. Cengiamos, “autumn,” from the compound term: cen-, “before,” and giamos, “winter;” sutrebos, the temperate season, uogiamos/uogiemos > uogemos, and uogiamaros, “sub-winter, fall season.”
2. Giamos / Giemos, geimos > gemos “winter,” from which derives the Old Irish geim and of the same PIE root as the Latin hiems and the Greek kheimon. The Gallic month name Giamonios is the dialectalized form of the Old Celtic root Giemonios, from giemo, “germination,” and giema, “sprout;” Giamoroto, giamaros, “wintertime.”
3. Uesara / uesera, “spring,” the PIE root is also apparent in the Latin prefix ver-, same as with the English word vernal, and vaguely close the Gaelic errach < esraca / esracos which is from the Old Celtic root uesraca / uesracos; uestnos, “spring,” uisantina / uesenteina, uesantenon / uesenteinon, “springtime.”

4. Samos, “summer,” haf in Welsh, hanv in Breton, hence the Gaelic compound Samhradh from the Old Celtic semorotio > semorotlio, “summertime;” mediosamanios, “mid-summer.”

From the ambiguity of the derivative nomenclature found in the various daughter languages of Celtic, it can be deduced that the notion of the equinoctial seasons of spring and autumn were not yet set in place, but only implicitly understood at the oldest level. Also, before Meton’s observations, the astronomical positions for the vernal and fall positions for the precession of the equinoxes were not that precise. The coinciding nineteen-year lunar-solar cycle is not always constant unless measured over thirty years. From the oldest models, those obtained from the Bronze Age Disc of Nebra found in Germany, the *Coligny Calendar* of Gallic Antiquity and the early literary data collected from Hesiod, we learn that the beginning of the seasons was placed between the equinoxes and solstices and that seasonal time was initiated and buckled by the rising and setting of the Pleiades.

For comparison’s sake, here is some data from two related Indo-European calendars:

Hesiod’s Calendar observations	Celtic Calendar notations
Fall arrives in mid-August, thus marking the end of summer.	The year begins in Autumn at the full moon of November for the Samonios celebrations. The end of the fall season is marked by the setting of the Pleiades.
Winter’s arrival is marked by the setting of the Pleiades in late October, early November.	Winter arrives at the end of December called Dumannios in Gallic when the sun hangs low above the horizon with the setting of the Pleiades.
Spring is marked by the vernal equinox arrives late February, early March.	Spring slowly arrives after the feast of Lustrations (Imbolc < Ambiuolcaia) in February during the cold at wet season under the sign of the wolf-bitch and milking of ewes. The sun takes a fiery jump with Ares the Ram.
Summer begins with the rising of the Pleiades in mid-May.	Summer’s start is expected in early May on the advent of the May Day celebrations of Beltaine < Belotennia bonfires. The heliacal rising of the Pleiades heralds the month of May. The late summer August celebration was called Lugnasad < Lugunaissatis is celebrated in honor of the high-god Lug/Lleu < Lugus. At the end of October Samoindon marks summer’s end.

### Celtic Months

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