
Celtic Comography

Part 3

Another feature of the Celtic calendar was that of the novena nine days period which was also carried over into the Catholic calendar. The monthly division of three nine days weeks is perfectly in tune with the old IE tripartite division. The seven days week was a Christian practice instituted in the later Roman calends. This practice was borrowed by the Germanic annalists at a very early stage, and no reasonable explanation can be given for this Roman-Teutonic agreement. However, all that can be said is that the etymology for the named week is from the proto-Germanic root *wikôm* meaning “sequence, series.” In short, as found on the *Coligny Calendar* the Celts divided their 29 or 30 days weeks into periods called *Noiolates*, a cognate of the Latin *Nundina*. The practice of the novena was perpetuated throughout the Middle Ages as a time of preparation for regulations, legal cases, litigation, commercial transactions, and liturgical prayer. The first Catholic novenas were those devoted to the cult of the Immaculate Conception and to Christmas devotion reserved to the Virgin Mary. Another particularity of the Gallic calendar was that of the separation of monthly time into two halves consisting of a series of fifteen or fourteen and/or fifteen days. In Old Celtic terminology, *lates* were the calendar days grouped in full half months called *mata*, “favorable, sufficient,” or missing a day: *anmata* “insufficient.” However, we should not conclude that the odd-numbered months were considered unfavorable or inauspicious. There was an old Roman expression which went as follows: *Numero Deus impare gaudet*, “God loves odd numbers!”

Concerning the Gallic calendar, the question generally asked by those interested is the following: at which phase of the moon did months start?

Strabo, in his *Geography, Book III, verse 278*, describes how the Celtic peoples of northern Iberia commemorated on the advent of the full moon an unnamed deity:

Some claim that the Galicians are atheistic, while the Celtiberians, and their northern neighbors [hold worship] to an anonymous god; every full moon, they dance nightly, all members of the household, before the gateways, and keep doing so throughout the night.⁷

But then again, in Pliny the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis*, there is another description of the Full moon celebrations by the Gallic Druids that nuances a bit Strabo’s comment:

The mistletoe, however, is but rarely found upon the robur; and when found, is gathered with rites replete with religious awe. This is done more particularly on the fifth day of the moon, the day which is the beginning of their months and years, as also of their ages, which, with them, are but thirty years. This day they select because the moon, though not yet in the middle of her course, has already considerable power and influence; and they call her by a name which signifies, in their language, the all-healing. Having made all due preparation for the sacrifice and a banquet beneath the trees, they bring thither two white bulls, the horns of which are bound then for the first time.⁸

Since this statement slightly contradicts the other sources we have on the Celtic full moon celebrations, I asked Joseph Monard what to make of this. Monard replied that Pliny

alluded to maximum saptime for tree pruning practiced only after the full moon. That is, the cutting of mistletoe had to occur around the fifth day of the new moon. He further explained that the phenomenon of the “strength of trees” was well known to woodcutters and easy to understand. This being said, all of this was in conformity with celebrations surrounding the bright lunar period since this mistletoe ceremony could not be a monthly celebration such as the one described by Strabo. There was no standard Pan-Hellenic calendar and each of the Greek cities maintained its own system. In Antiquity, those of Athens, Delos, Delphi, Crete, Ionia, Cyprus, and Macedonia, were among the most common. The best known of these is the Athenian calendar. Thus the expression “it will be left at the Greek calends” for something expected to never arrive or occur. This was in reference to the Roman practice of starting the month on the new moon which was never the custom with the Greek calendars. The Greeks of Athens first had a calendrical system based on the combined movements of the sun and moon. The year consisted of twelve lunar months overlapped by twelve zodiacal periods in phase with the moons. This yielded alternative twenty-nine and thirty months averaging twenty-nine and a half nychthemeral days. Again, the same IE time reckoning used: night comes before day. The Gallic calendar operated on the same lines. While the Celts counted weeks in novenas, the Greeks, as for tropical months, used decans.

On what phase did the month start, is the *Coligny Calendar* clear on this issue? Most certainly, since the related Gallic terminology is quite unequivocal:

Diuertomu⁹, from the Old Celtic Diui uertomu, a notation for the first of the month meaning “maximum of lunar brightness;” Atenoux¹⁰, from the Old Celtic Atenouxtio mid-month notation for “renewal,” punning with ate-noxs, “night again,” hinting at the absence of moonlight.

Names of the Months from the Gallic *Coligny Calendar*

November	Samonios	“the reunion, of the sower”
December	Dumannios	“darkening,” and punning with dumacos “smoke”
January	Riuos	“frost, cold”
February	Anagantios	“of inaction, calamitous”
March	Ogronios	“cooling, of cold-blooded animals”
April	Cutios	“fiery, ram”
May	Giamonios	“of shoots, germinating”
June	Simiuisonios	“Sprite breezes”
July	Equos < Aequos; and/or Equos / Epos	“adjusted, compensated;” “horse”
August	Elembiuos	“to bellow, of fawns”
September	Edrinios	“the hot flux, of the arbitrator”
October	Cantlos; connoting Cantla; and Cantlon	“buckling (of the annual cycle); “harvest songs;” “commemoration pillar”

It is not known if the other Brythonic peoples used this same calendar. What we do know, however, is that early on, the insular Goidelic peoples had a calendar of their own. Nevertheless, since most of the Welsh and Breton names are Latin borrowings, it is a reasonable assumption that the Gaulish names for the months were carried over into Britain and Pictish Caledonia. Here are names found in the late Welsh and Breton calends:

The Brythonic, Cornish, Breton, and Welsh, Months

April	Mys-Ebrel, miz Ebrel, mis Ebrill < mins Aprilis	Month of April (Latin Aprilis)
May	Mys-Mé, miz Mae, mis Mai < mins Maius	The month of Mai (Latin Maius)
June	Metheven, Mehefin, Mezheven < Mediosamosenos	“Mid-summertime”
July	Gortheren, Gourzheren < Gortus somareti; Gorffenhaf < Corpes Sami	“Summertime heat” “Body of summer”
August	Mys-Ést, miz Eost, mis Awst < mins Augusti	The month of August (Latin Augustus)
September	Gwygala, Gwengolo < Uindos Golouos; Medi < Medon	“White light” “reaping”
October	Hedra, Here, Hydref < Sutrebos	“autumnal”
November	Mys Du ken Nadelek < mins dubis cen Nataliciam; Kala-goañv < Calendae giami Mis Tachwedd < mins taxobatouos	A dark month before Christmas (Latin Nataliciam) Calends of winter (Latin Calendae) “Month of butchering”
December	Mys Du, miz Du < mins Dubis	“Dark month”
January	Kevardhu < Couiro Dubis; Kerzu < Certos Dubis	“Frankly dark, truly dark”
February	Mys-Whevrer, miz C’hwevrer, mis Chwefror < mins Februari	The month of February (Latin Februarius)
March	Mys-Mérth, miz Meurh, mis Mawrth < mins Martis	The month of March (Latin Martis)

As mentioned above, apart from Samonios = Samhain¹¹, the Gallic or continental Celtic names do not match those of the insular Gaels.

Here is a table of the Gaelic calendar names, along with their Goidelic Old Celtic etymologies:

Gaelic Months

April	An Giblean < Gegdoblonaos; and Cétean na h-òinnsich < Centos-samisenis anmatasacis	“Time of goose fat.” “Spring of the mad woman.”
May	Bealtaine < Belotennia < Belotepnia; and An Cèitean < Centos Samosenos	“Of bonfires, of bright fires.” “Fore summertime.”
June	Meitheamh < Mediosamosenos	“Midsummer time.”
July	Iuchar < Iecuorios; and later: Futhar < Uthar	“Spawning time.” From the Anglo-Scottish Fure-days, “dog days.”
August	Lúnasa, Lùnasdal, Luanistyn < Lugi Naissatios	“Commemoration of Lugh.”
September	An t-Sultine < Sultennos; and Gealach bhuide an abaicheid < Gelaca bodia adbagiocatis	“Of harvests.” “Moon of yellow ripening.”
October	An Dàmhair < Damodāris Gealach a’bhruic < Gelaca brocci; and Gealach bhuide nam broc < Gelaca bodia brocci	“Bellowing of Deer.” “Moon of the badger.” “Yellow moon of the badger (that dries the tuft in the badger’s sett).”
November	Samhain < Samonios	“The reunion, of the sower.”
December	Dubhlachd < Dubilectos	“Dark, damp.”
January	Faoilteach < Uailuticos	“Of wolves.”
February	Na Féile Brighde < Ueilias Brigindonos	“Feast of Brigit.”
March	An Gearran < Gerro	“Time of castration.”

For the history based classical Mediterranean societies, the notion of time is but a linear construct. However, for those of Western and Northern Europe, time was cyclical. It can be likened to a spoked wheel rather than to a ladder or a grid. Something much like to that of the wheel of a chariot or wain turning in spiraling motion. The following chart illustrates this metaphorical concept with much clarity.

The Celtic Year Wheel



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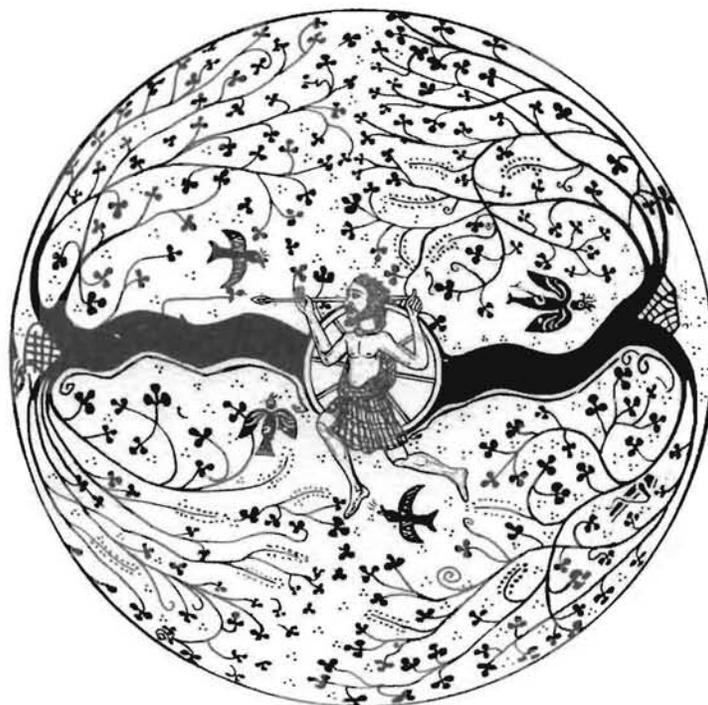
Please note that the four said "fire festivals" did not exactly fall on the seasonal alignments of the sun and were celebrated as popular holidays. These occurred on the full moon of the months of November, February, May, and August. The solar stations, the solstices, and equinoxes were not celebrated but reserved by the Druids as astronomical reminders. It is alleged that the four fabled druid-masters were commemorated at these moments. Graph by the author.

Chapter VI

Time Out of Time and Parallel Worlds

“We are from the beginning of creation
Without old age, without consummation of earth,
Hence we expect not that there should be frailty,
The sin has not come to us.”

(*Imram Brain maic Febail*, The Voyages of Bran, son of Febal, 44.)



Boutet_22

Author's drawing after a Greek ceramic painting.

The Flow of Time in Celtic Mythology

In Celtic myth, oral lore and legend, time is likened to outbranching streams flowing into rivers and then on into the majestic seas and ocean. As with cascading brooks and lazy meanders, their currents trickle forth or rush onwards in murmurs and resounding waves there causing ripples in reality. These different realities of time can be crossed by gods, heroes, and mortal beings at fords called *ath* or *ryd* in Gaelic and in Welsh.¹ These ethereal streams break from on high in the Milky Way in which the moon occasionally bathes. Moving with them in low places is mist and druidical winds. Crossing from one-dimensional time-space into another is not just the act of spirit beings but also given to mortals on specific places and occasions. Such as the ninth wave of Celtic myth and

folklore where it is believed that it has the properties to carry thoughts to and from the otherworld.

In Whitley Stokes's 1905 edition of the *Book of Leinster in The Colloquy of the Two Sages* or *Imcallam in da Thurad*, as it is called in Irish, is found the story of Adnae's son Néde who upon returning from schooling in Scotland, stayed by the sea a while to meditate. For the ancient poets, the seashore was a choice inspirational place and setting. Taking it on from Stokes's translation, it is made clear that the wave does not only carry the thoughts of the poet but acts as a transmission line between him and his departed father.

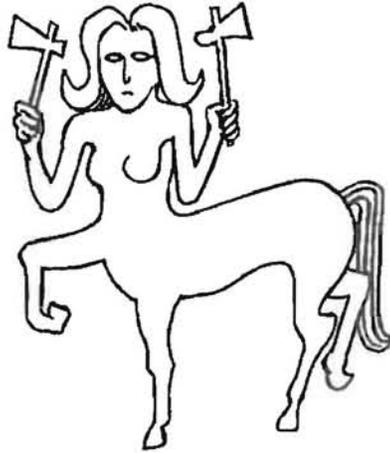
He heard a sound in the wave, to wit, a chant of wailing and sadness, and it seemed strange to him. So the lad cast a spell upon the wave, which it might reveal to him what the matter was. And thereafter it was declared to him that the wave was bewailing, his father Adnae, after his death and that Adnae's robe had been given to Ferchertne the poet, who had taken the ollaveship in place of Néde's father.²

As it is written in Taliesin's epic poem, *The Battle of Trees*, or *Cad Goddeu*: "When I was formed of the flower of nettles, of the water of the ninth wave."³

Let's remember that in Celtic mindset, time and space is neither linear nor stratified but moves cyclically in spiraling motion. This explains the Celts' obsession for knotwork and vine-like patterns.

As westerners, we are all familiar with the notions of time manipulation and time suspension evoked in childhood fairie tales. The examples that readily come to mind are those of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* written down by Charles Perrault and Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*. These literary works were directly inspired by older folk tales. And as the Grimm brothers had first suspected, these popular children's tales are reminiscent of much earlier myths and legends.

One such related tale is found in the Welsh *Mabinogion* translated by Lady Charlotte Best (c. 1877) in which the fairy-queen Rhiannon rides slowly a magnificent white mare that can never be caught by even the fastest of steeds. According to the myth, Pwyll, lord of Dyfed, sends his best riders to catch up with her as she struts along. They chase the lady for two days and although her mount never does more than an amble, she remains in the lead. On the third day, Pwyll decides to go after her with his best horse but does no better than his knights. Finally, she agrees to stride by him after she is addressed properly by Pwyll.



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Who in fact is this Rhiannon?

She was the wife of Arawn, king of Annwn, the Underworld. Her closest cognates were the Irish Macha and the Gallic Epona. This Epona was none other than the mare goddess, an aspect of the Moon Queen of mead. In this myth, the white mare is but an allegory for the moon in its course across the sky. Therefore, Rhiannon represents the moon as a time marker while the white mare should be taken as the full moon. An old Gallic pun for the full moon was *comepa* which literally meant “full mare,” meaning “pregnant mare.”

Thus, time could be halted or altered by certain gods, by those of the sky and especially those of the solar dynasty. For example, in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, Eochaid Ollathair (an alias of the Dagda, the Irish Jupiter) manipulates time to his own accord. It is also mentioned that after the defeat of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, Dagda allotted a residence or *sídhe* to each of the Danan high gods. Oenghus mac Oc, Dagda’s illegitimate son, was not given a *sídhe* because the Brugh na Boinne went to his father. Nevertheless, Oenghus gained the right to stay there for a day and a night. And in cosmological terms, a day spent on Samhain encompasses all of the days, thus meaning eternity. This is how Oenghus tricked the Dagda to abandon his claim over the *sídhe*.

From the *Wooing of Étaín*, much more is given on the relative notion of time entertained by the Irish. Here is the recount:

There was a famous king of Ireland of the race of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Eochaid Ollathair was his name. He was also named the Dagda, that is, the good God, for it was he that used to work wonders for them and control the weather and the crops. Wherefore, men said that he be called the Dagda. Elcmar of the Brug had a wife whose name was Eithne and another name for her was Boand. Not unlike Jupiter with Leda, the Dagda desired passionately to unite with her. The woman would have yielded to the Dagda’s advances had it not been for the fear of Elcmar, so great was his power. Thereupon the Dagda sent Elcmar away on a journey to Bres son of Elatha in Mag n’Inis. The Dagda

worked great spells upon Elcmar as he set about so that he might not return at betimes, that was, in the early morning hours before sunrise. Henceforth, he dispelled the darkness of night for him, and he kept hunger and thirst away from him. He sent him on long errands, so that nine months went by as one day. This because, he had said that he would return home again between early day and night fall. Meanwhile, the Dagda met with Elcmar's wife, and she bore him a son named Aengus. And Eithne was full with child when Elcmar returned to her. Because of the long time lapse, her condition went without notice and he did not suspect that she had lain with the Dagda.

And to quote on further in the original text:

“Pray, what counsel dost thou give this lad,” said Midir. “I have this for him,” said Eochaid. “On the day of Samain let him go into the Brug, and let him go armed. That is a day of peace and amity among the men of Ireland, on which none is at enmity with his fellow. And Elcmar will be in Cnoc Síde in Borga unarmed save for a fork of white hazel in his hand, his cloak folded around him and a gold brooch in his cloak, and three fifties playing before him in the playing field; and let Aengus go to him and threaten to kill him. But it is meet that he slay him not, provided he promises him his will. And let this be the will of Aengus, that he be king for a day and a night in the Brug; and see that thou not yield the land to Elcmar till he submit himself (?) to my decision; and when he comes let Aengus' plea be that the land has fallen to him in fee simple for sparing Elcmar and not slaying him and that what he had asked for is kingship of day and night, and' said he, “it is in days and nights that the world is spent.”⁴

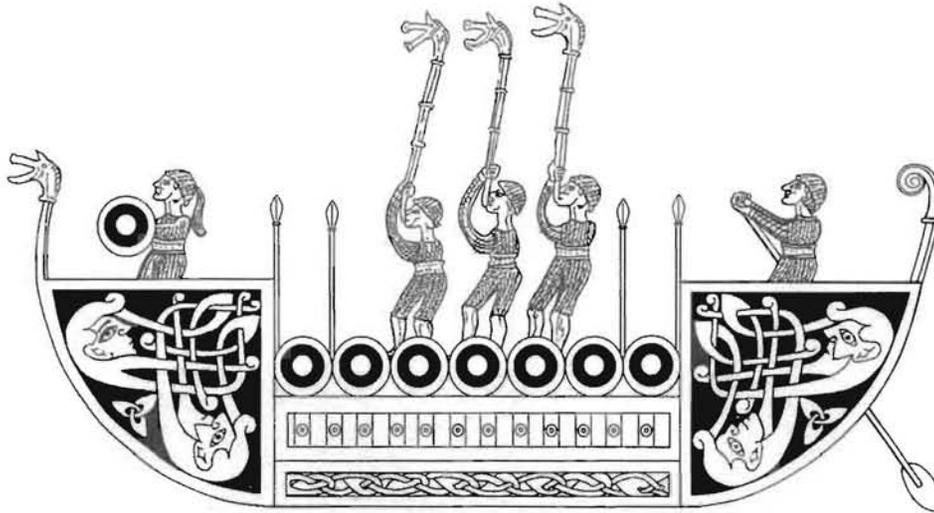
Appart from the Dagda, each of the major gods of the Irish pantheon had his Sidh. This being, that in turn, the Dagda was tricked into giving his abode to his illegitimate son Oenghus mac Oc upon the promise of staying at Bruigh na Boinne (New Grange) “for a day and a night” which in prosaic terms meant eternity.

Ruling gods and their abodes in the Sidhe

- 1- Lir (Moon): Sidhe Fionnachaidh; Sidhe Fionnachaidh < Sidos Uindiacates, the residence of the “splendid brilliant people;”
- 2- Ogma (March): Sidhe Airceltraí; Sidhe Airceltraí < Sidos Arioceltorioi, “the residence of the nobles, the leading Celtic scholars;”
- 3- Oenghus mac Oc (Sun): na Bruigh Boinne; Bruigh na Boinne > Brugden Boendas, “palace of the sustainable;”
- 4- Bodb Dearg (Jupiter): Sidhe Bodb; Sidhe Bodb < Sidos Boduon, “the residence of affairs;”
- 5- Lugh (Mercury): Sidhe Rodrubán; Sidhe Rodruban < Sidos Rodrubtonos, “the residence of the great dew;”

6- Gaiar Manannan Mac (Venus): Sidhe Ruaidh to Ilbreach; Sidhe Ruaidh to Ilbreach Sidos Roudios Brixias, “the residence of red magic;”

7- Midir (Saturn): Sidhe Bri Leith; Sidhe Bri Leith < Sidos Leita Briga, “the grey fort residence.”



Author's drawing.

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The Immrama and Ethereal Time

In Irish lore, the Immrama were a class of popular tales describing sea journeys to far-away places, islands of the sea and lands beyond the sea prosaically called *Tír na nÓg*, “the land of youth,” Mag mell, “the plain of joy,” Tír fo Thuinn, “land under the wave,” Tír na mBan, “land of women.”

Tír na mBeo, “land of life,” and Ablach, “apple-orchard.” In these adventures, their shores could be reached by traveling in all directions from west of Ireland’s coast. And in which, following terrible gales and tempests, ships were blown off course and left adrift to explore many other fantastic islands. And not unlike Ulysses, sailors are lost at sea for many years before returning home reaching their first destination. The heroes of the Immrama include Mael Dúin and Bran Mac Febal of the Voyage of Bran and in later Christian accounts as St-Brandan, also spelled Brendan. Although heavily Christianised, the story of St-Brandan is deeply rooted in pagan myth.

The tales describe a mythic land or realm where space and time have not experienced the way it is expected in reality.

Passages from *The Voyage of Bran*:

63. Home-sickness seized one of them, even Nechtan the son of Collbran. His kindred kept praying Bran that he should go to Ireland with him. The woman said to them their going would make them rue. However, they went, and the woman said that none of them should touch the land and that they should visit and take with them the man whom they had left in the Island of Joy.

64. Then they went until they arrived at a gathering at Srub Brain. The men asked of them who it was that came over the sea. Said Bran: "I am Bran the son of Febal," saith he. However, the other saith: "We do not know such a one, though the Voyage of Bran is in our ancient stories."

65. The man leaps from them out of the coracle. As soon as he touched the earth of Ireland, forthwith he was a heap of ashes, as though he had been in the earth for many hundred years.

Twas then that Bran sang this quatrain:

"For Collbran's son, great was the folly
To lift his hand against age,
Without anyone casting a wave of pure water
Over Nechtan, Collbran's son.

For Collbran's son, great was the folly
To lift his hand against age,
Without anyone casting a wave of pure water
Over Nechtan, Collbran's son."

66. Thereupon, to the people of the gathering, Bran told all his wanderings from the beginning until that time. And he wrote these quatrains in Ogam and then bade them farewell. And from that hour his wanderings are not known.⁵

In the realm of Celtic imagination, on the occasion, the world of fairies called Sidh⁶ can break into the real world. In fact, there exists a world parallel to ours. This magical place is traditionally referred to as the world of fairies. In short, legend has it that the magic of the long passed ancestors continues to act on our physical and temporal space. This belief in parallel worlds is not as absurd as one might at first think since contemporary science also speculates on the existence of parallel universes. In the fall of 2012, it was announced that a team of scientists from the University of Oxford, England, proved the existence of parallel worlds. Not that this theory was not already in the air... Indeed, in 1957, the American quantum physicist Hugh Everett (1930-1982), in his interpretation of quantum mechanics, explained his theory of wave-particle physics and multiple events paradox theory. According to the theories of Everett's parallel worlds, each new event in the universe can cause different timelines. Therefore, there is an infinite number of alternative worlds which can occupy the same temporal space or point in time. Thus, according to Everett's theory of multiple worlds, each new event in the universe can cause different timelines. Let's consider that there exists an infinite number of alternate worlds occupying the same temporal space. Needless to say that the notion of parallel

worlds was so absurd that it was rejected by sound academics. It will be only a half-century later before a research team from the University of Oxford would reconsider the theory and thus prove Everett right. New calculations show that outbranchings flowed from the original collapsing universe as it spewed forth into multiple parallel worlds. We, therefore, cannot speak of a universe, but of multiverses. In other words, there exist many simultaneous dimensions running parallel to our own. In such a world, certain events take place in one dimension and not in another. In other words, timelines are different from one reality to another. Following Everett's logic of parallel universes, time and space can be folded hence permitting travel beyond the speed of light. Time travel and displacement across great stellar spaces are thus theoretically rendered possible. The only limits are those that we perceive through our own eyes and mind via our five senses. So, if Everett is right, as it was demonstrated by the Oxford team, past and future are but an illusion.⁷

And in Celtic myths, the parallel world keeps encroaching on ours. This magical place is none other than the world of fairies. In short, the magic of the passed druids and gods continues to influence our physical and temporal space.

On this subject, the Celtic Druids generally agreed with the Greek philosophers as can be noticed through these three passages selected from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* written in 350 BCE:

That there are principles and causes which are generable and destructible without ever being in course of being generated or destroyed, is obvious. For otherwise all things will be of necessity since that which is being generated or destroyed must have a cause which is not accidentally its cause. Will A exist or not? It will if B happens; and if not, not. And B will exist if C happens. And thus if time is constantly subtracted from a limited extent of time, one will obviously come to the present. This man, then, will die by violence, if he goes out; and he will do this if he gets thirsty, and he will get thirsty if something else happens; and thus we shall come to that which is now present, or to some past event. For instance, he will go out if he gets thirsty; and he will get thirsty if he is eating pungent food; and this is either the case or not; so that he will of necessity die, or of necessity not die. And similarly if one jumps over to past events, the same account will hold good; for this, I mean the past condition is already present in something. Everything, therefore, that will be, will be of necessity; e.g. it is necessary that he who lives shall one day die; for already some condition has come into existence, e.g. the presence of contraries in the same body. But whether he is to die by disease or by violence is not yet determined, but depends on the happening of something else. Clearly then the process goes back to a certain starting-point, but this no longer points to something further. This then will be the starting point for the fortuitous and will have nothing else as the cause of its coming to be. But to what sort of starting-point and what sort of cause we thus refer the fortuitous-whether to matter or to the purpose or to the motive power, must be carefully considered.

Continuing on to *Metaphysics*, Book 12, Part 6,

Since there were three kinds of substance, two of them physical and one unmovable, regarding the latter we must assert that it is necessary that there should be an eternal unmovable substance. For substances are the first of existing things, and if they are all destructible, all things are destructible. But it is impossible that movement should either have come into being or cease to be (for it must always have existed), or that time should. For there could not be a before and an after if time did not exist. Movement also is continuous, then, in the sense in which time is; for time is either the same thing as movement or an attribute of movement. And there is no continuous movement except movement in place, and of this only that which is circular is continuous.

And finally from *Metaphysics*, Book 12, Part 7:

It is clear then from what has been said that there is a substance which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things. It has been shown also that this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible (for it produces movement through infinite time, but nothing finite has infinite power; and, while every magnitude is either infinite or finite, it cannot, for the above reason, have finite magnitude, and it cannot have infinite magnitude because there is no infinite magnitude at all). But it has also been shown that it is impassive and unalterable; for all the other changes are posterior to change of place.⁸

Thus, who are the gods? Aspects of our own selves overlapping in parallel time and space?

Another major theme belonging to the mythological Celtic area is that ethereal music of the gods, singing mermaids and fairies. This music is not hearing that sentient beings, poets and bards. Following the example of Ulysses tied to the mast of his ship so as not to answer the call of sirens, the one who hears the song of the fairies feels an irresistible attraction. According to what they say, the music seems to escape some hole in the ground, a hill or a dark and humid jungle. The music of Sid fairies of Ireland is described as an ethereal sound escaping from a hole from underneath the ground. And as the legend goes, bards go down through the entrance of a mound to the sound of beautiful music fairy and fall asleep for a year and a day.

Herewith, is a passage from the *Immram curaig Maile Dúin*, “The Sea travels in Mael Duin’s Coracle,” tales of the 8th century from the *Yellow Book of Lecan* translated by Whitley Stokes, chapter XII:

Early on the morning of the third day after that, they espy another island, with a brazen palisade over the middle of it which divided the island in two, and they espied great flocks of sheep therein, even a black flock on this side of the fence and a white flock on the far side. And they saw a big man separating the flocks. When he used to fling a white sheep over the fence from this side to the black sheep it became black at once. So, when he used to cast a black sheep over the fence to the far side, it became white at once. The men were adread at seeing that. “This were well for us to do” saith Máel

Dúin: “let us cast two rods into the island. If they change colour we also shall change if we land on it.” So they flung a rod with black bark on the side wherein were the white sheep, and it became white at once. Then they flung a peeled white rod on the side wherein were the black sheep and it became black at once. “Not fortunate was that experiment, saith Máel Dúin. “Let us not land on the island. Doubtless ours colour would not have fared better than the rods.”⁹

Phantom lands and ghost islands

The occasional disappearing and reappearing islands such as Hy Brasil in Irish lore and the sunken city of Is in Breton folk tales. In former years, as the records went, Breasal was the legendary king of the World, or more humbly, king of Leinster. One of the mythic kings called Breasal resided at Barc Bresail, “barn of Breasal,” a hill fort which was taken and destroyed by the high king of Ireland, Tuathal Teachtmaire, during the war that he led against king Eochaidh of Leinster. The name Breasal also reappears in later Irish tales as the king of a mythical island in the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest called Hy-Basil or Ó-Brasil in other versions. According to legend, the island intermittently appears and disappears every seven years.¹⁰ The notion of distant islands in the Atlantic is a common theme in Celtic lore, either in Ireland, Wales or Brittany in France. The motif of “islands from beyond the ninth wave,” is, therefore, a prevalent storyline of oral lore.

W.Y. Evans-Wentz, in *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, had this interesting comment on the Celtic Otherworld:

Even yet at rare intervals, like a phantom, Hy Brasil appears far out on the Atlantic. No later than the summer of 1908 it is said to have been seen from West Ireland, just as that strange invisible island near Innismurray, inhabited by the invisible 'gentry', is seen--once in seven years. And too many men of intelligence testify to having seen Hy Brasil at the same moment, when they have been together, or separated, as during the summer of 1908, for it to be explained away like an ordinary illusion of the senses. Nor can it be due to a mirage such as we know, because neither its shape nor position seems to conform to any known island or land mass. The Celtic Otherworld is like that hidden realm of subjectivity lying just beyond the horizon of mortal existence, which we cannot behold when we would, save with the mystic vision of the Irish seer. Thus in the legend of Bran's friends, who sat over dinner at Harlech with the Head of Bran for seven years, three curious birds acted as musicians, the Three Birds of Rhiannon, which were said to sing the dead back to life and the living into death;--but the birds were not in Harlech, they were out over the sea in the atmosphere of Rhiannon's realm in the bosom of Cardigan Bay. And though we might say of that Otherworld, as we learn from these Three Birds of Rhiannon, and as Socrates would say, that its inhabitants come from the living and the living in our world from the dead there, yet, as has already been set forth in chapter iv, we ought not to think of the *Sidhe*-folk, nor of such great heroes and gods as Arthur and Cuchulainn and Finn, who are also of its invisible company, as in any sense half-conscious shades; for they are always

represented as being in the full enjoyment of an existence and consciousness greater than our own.¹¹

The fabled island of Is of Breton lore is probably the best-preserved story on mythical lands and cities shifting in and out of everyday reality. Off the coast of Britany lies the island of Sein, which was once the home of a Gallic druidess community and is believed to be the site of a sunken city called Is. According to local story-tellers, a city was once built there by king Gradlon on the request of his daughter, the sorceress Dahud.

Here is a summary of the tale of *The Sunken City of Is*, as recounted by the Breton storyteller Prosper Pierre, Douarnenez:

One night, while the mariners of Douarnenez were returning from sea, they moored in the bay to fish. Once the fishing over, they proceeded to lift anchor. All efforts to lift the anchor were in vain since it was hooked to something great. It was finally agreed that it would be impossible to yank it loose since the tide was pulling against it. As he resurfaced, he screamed to his companions these words: “guess in what we are hooked into?” “In the crack of a stone, they replied.” “No, in the window of a wall,” he cried as he was climbing aboard. When they were about to conclude that he was somewhat perturbed, a cathedral with illuminated stained-glass windows slowly rose from the depth. And as they gazed at the arching windows, they could see a crowd of richly clad people gathered in the church. Before the altar, a priest was standing and was reciting with a choirboy. “This cannot be,” gasped the mariners. Then, they resolved to relate their experience with the parish rector and there, they went. He graciously accepted to meet with them to listen to their story. Upon conclusion, he said this to the fishermen: “What you have experienced where the apparition of the lost city of Is and its ghostly cathedral were. Had you accepted replied to the priest, the entire city of Is would have been restored and the capital of the kingdom of France would have changed places.”¹²

Anatole Le Braz comments further that on the road of Plogoff on the cape of Raz at Keryolet near Troguêr, can still be seen the cemented walls of the city of Is. In the past, the town of Is spread from Douarnenez to Port-Blanc. The seven îles before the coastline are its ruins and its finest church once stood where the reefs now stand. This is why they are called Trew gêr (Breton for Triagoz, or Trewger, Treoger, Traou-Ker, “literally lower town.”)

Chapter VII

Sacred Space and Orientation

“The good God made them. Five areas of land as long as it lasts.
Is a cold and a second is cold, and a third is hot, nasty, and ungrateful.
The fourth, paradise, people content.
The fifth is tempered with the doors of the universe.”

(Llyfr Taliesin LV, Kanu y Byt Mawr - Book of Taliesin LV, Song of the macrocosm)



Duckfooted goddess or priestess invoking the sun. On her breast are embroidered the four directions with the center. Drawing by the author.

Boutet_25

Sacred Ground

As we have seen, in Celtic imaginary, the faerie world, or Sidh, can occasionally break forth into the real world. Reality, as expressed in Celtic mythology, is not only a relative experience but also an endlessly shifting distorting reality. That is, in the old mythic mindset, sacred and temporal spaces were but one and the same. Traditionally, a country was defined by its borders, both geographical and political. Celtic kingdoms were divided into four parts or provinces and ruled from a central capital. According to Julius Caesar, the center of Gaul was at Chartres (near the site of the present cathedral dedicated to the Virgin Mary).

A chapter (of druids) is held on a fixed date each year at a sanctuary not far from Chartes (in finibus Carnutum), which is reckoned the center of Gaul; and litigants from all over the country meet there for final judgment upon their disputes.¹

A similar sacred earth concept is also found in the Irish texts with the four provinces of Ireland and Tara as its capital.

The three households of Ireland: the household of Tara, the household of Cashel, the household of Croghan. (...) Three things that constitute a king: a contract with other kings, the feast of Tara, abundance during his reign.²

The Romans, in their dealings with the British, speak extensively of the Isle of Mona where the Druids had many groves which the Roman general Gaius Suetonius Paulinus destroyed during his campaigns of invasion. One, in particular, favored by Queen Boudicca, was dedicated to the goddess of Victory, Andarta, whose name was misspelled as Andate by Dio Cassius. Here is the passage from *Roman History* in which he describes this British goddess of Victory:

All this they did to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets, and wanton behavior, not only in all their other sacred places but particularly in the grove of Andate. This was their name for Victory, and they regarded her with most exceptional reverence. Now it chanced that Paulinus had already brought Mona to terms, and so on learning of the disaster in Britain he at once set sail thither from Mona.³

Greek and Roman authors such as Lucan gave descriptions of druid groves set in forest retreats. For these dogmatic Mediterraneans accustomed to open settings, these sanctuaries were seen as quite sinister. The following comment by Lucan was evidently inspired by the ancient Gaulish sanctuary of Entremont located by an oppidum near Aix-en-Provence.

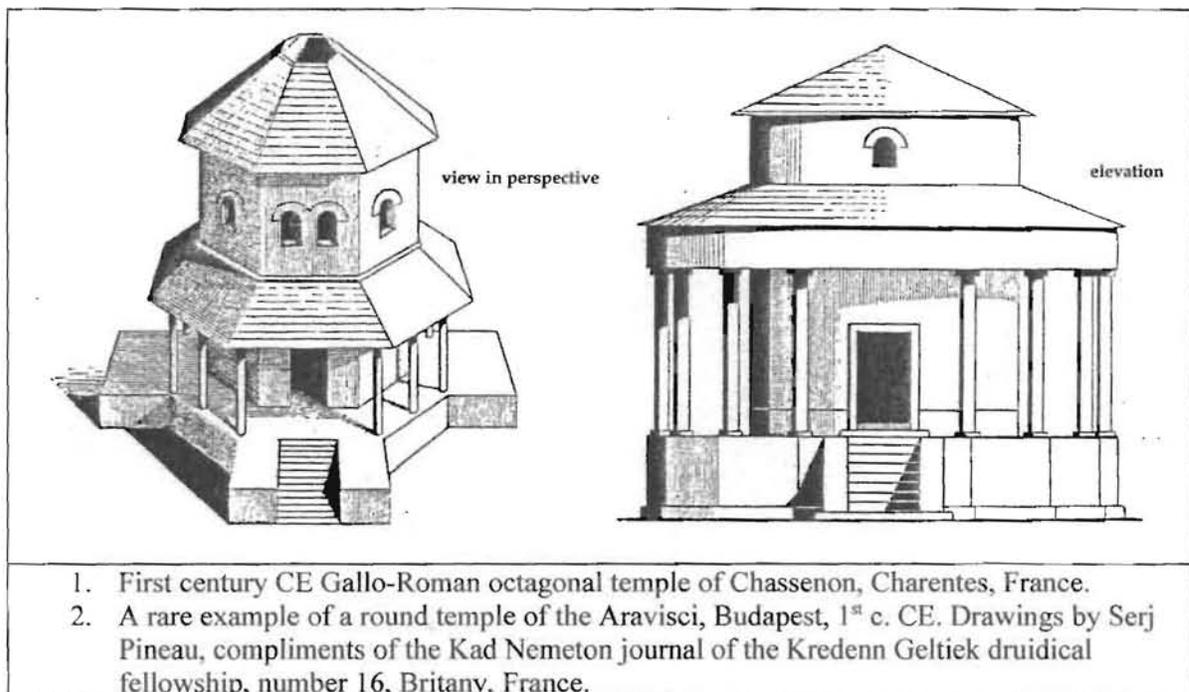
And the Druids, laying down their arms, went back to the barbarous rites and weird ceremonies of their worship. To them alone is granted knowledge — or ignorance, it may be — of gods and celestial powers; they dwell in deep forests with sequestered groves; they teach that the soul does not descend to the silent land of Erebus and the sunless realm of Dis below, but that the same breath still governs the limbs in a different scene.⁴

The original model for the civil-scale sanctuaries of Gaul was probably introduced from insular Britain where the Avesbury and Salisbury highlighted by the Stonehenge monuments. This would explain Caesar's comment wanting that "the druidical doctrine is commonly supposed to have reached Gaul from its original home in Britain, and it is a fact that to this day men going on for higher studies usually cross to Britain for the purpose."⁵

Great sanctuaries first appeared in Gaul around the third century BCE. These went by the Gallic names of uernemeton and drunemeton. Belgic Gaul had those of Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre, in Armorica, Saint-Jean-Trolimon, in western Celtic Gaul, Muron, Faye-l'Abesse, and Nallier, and in central-eastern Celtic Gaul, Mirebeau.

These continued to be active until the Roman conquest which included the sites of Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme) or Allones (Sarthes).⁶ The most frequented sanctuaries were later converted into major Christian cult centers such as Atricum, now Chartes, in the vicinity of Cenabon (Latin Cenabum), now Orléans in France.

Temple grounds were usually planed away from urban or active areas and buildings were disposed of in an ordinate concentric pattern. For the most part, temple entrances were oriented eastwards to the exception of certain archaeological examples where geographical limitations, such as waterways and other obstacles, were encountered during construction. The plan of the site, buildings, and architectural elements, columns, doors, and fenestration, was always prepared according to astronomical and astrological considerations.

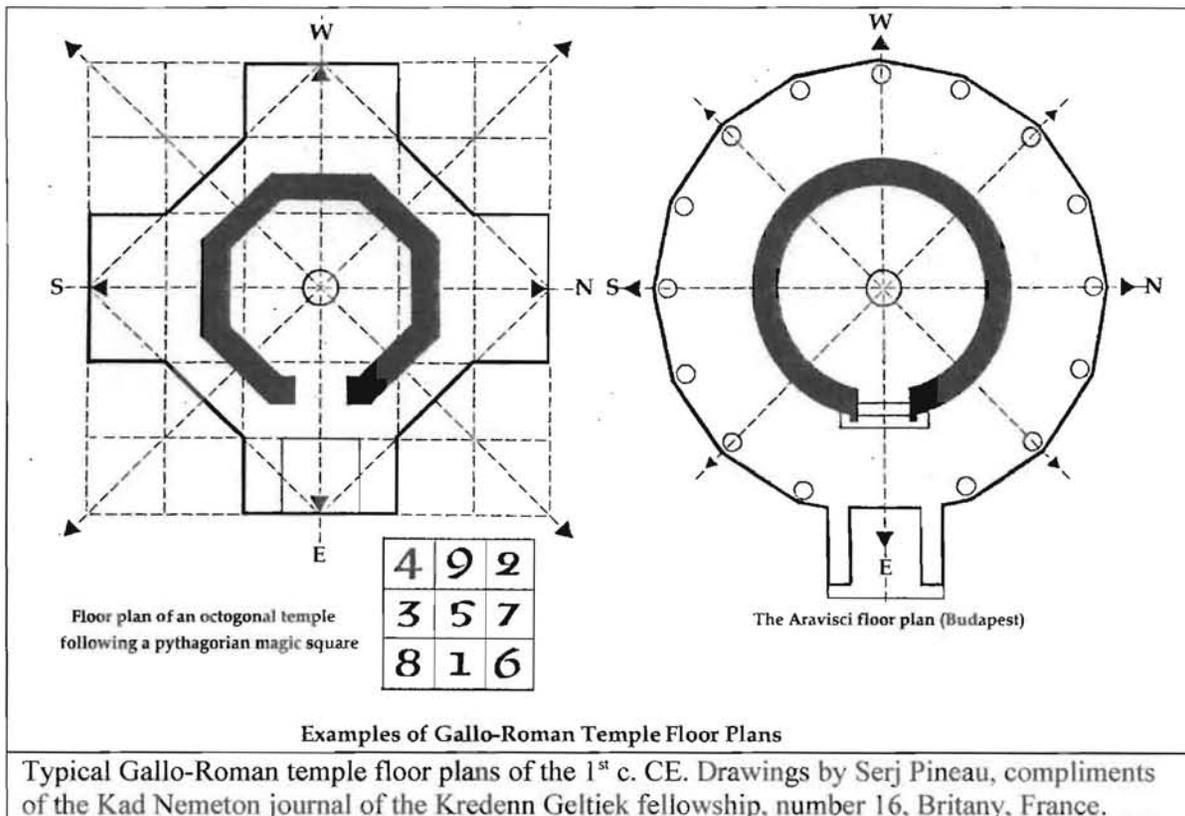


Boutet_26

Sacred Orientation and Temple Geometry

Gallic temples and fanums were oriented with the main doorway facing east. They were often square or polygonal and consisted of a cella, a room where the idols or statues of deities were placed, and surrounded by a manway with a strong wooden colonnade, left open or closed according to weather conditions. Temples were surrounded with roofed ambulatories permitting circular motion, as it was described by Strabo in *Geographies*. Most often square, hexagonal or octagonal, other temples could be circular having a spoke-shaped wheel floor plan with at their center, a small room featuring the deity's statue overlooking a fire altar. This configuration was called *rath* in the Irish texts. More often, the builders tried to avoid constructing circular edifices because of the woodcarving difficulties for neatly executed round walls and cornices. But because the

Celts were the masters of woodworking, porticos and bends were executed to high levels of craftsmanship. Rectangular buildings resembling classical temples in enclosed sanctuary grounds, without covered galleries and surrounding walkways, set the norm. Most often, these enclosed temples, protected by palisades or Gallic walls, were devoted to a major deity, usually Lugus, king of gods. Rectangular buildings housed craters and vessels for libations, sometimes kept in cellars or at ground level also staked with jars and imported wine and oil amphoras. The inner sanctuary yards were generally accessible by a footbridge leading to the east gate. To the north side of the temple grounds, were the living compounds of the clergy and their families, and domestics. Their apartments were grouped under a common roof. Other buildings housed the communal kitchen and other facilities. In general, the north side complex faced the wall with entries on the south side.⁷



Boutet_27

The Four Fabled Cities of the North

Excerpt from the *Cath Maige Tuired*, "The Second Battle of Mag Tured":

1. The Tuatha Dé Danann were in the islands of the north of the World, learning science and magic, druidism, wisdom, and art, and they surpassed all the sages in the arts of paganism.
2. There were four cities, namely Falias, Gorias, Murias, and Findias, in which they

learned science and knowledge, and all of the secrets arts.

3. From Falias was brought the Stone of Fal which was in Tara. It shouted at each king who took Ireland.

4. From Gorias was brought the spear that Lug had. No battle was won against it or the one who held it.

5. From Findias was brought the sword of Nuada that no one could resist, and nobody escaped it when it was drawn from Bodb's sheath.

6. From Murias was brought the cauldron of Dagda. No troops left it unsatisfied.

7. There were four Druids in these four cities, Morfesae was in Falias; Esras was in Gorias;

Uiscias was in Findias; and Semias was in Murias.

These were the four poets of the Tatha de Danann who were steeped in science and in wisdom.⁸

The Four Sages of the North

These four wise men, also called masters or sages, were in fact accomplished Druids, and were qualified ollams in Ireland, or gwyddoniaid, as they were called in Wales.

Geoffrey Keating in *The History of Ireland* gives more details on these legendary masters and on their attributes, whereabouts, and origins:

It is Nuadha Airgeadlámh son of Euchtach, son of Edarlámh of the posterity of Neimheadh who was chief over them at that time. Indeed, thy obtained four cities, so as to be teaching the young folk of that country in them. The names of the cities here: Fáilias Gorias, Finias, and Murias. The Tuatha Dé Danann place four sages in those cities to teach the sciences and the varied arts they had to the youths of the country; Semias in Murias, and Arias in Finias, and Eurus in Gorias, and Morias in Fáilias. After being a while of their time in these cities, they proceed to the north of Scotland, so that they were seven years at Dobhar and at Iardobhar. They had four noble jewels, which they brought from those cities, namely, a stone of virtue from Fáilias; it is it that is called "Lia Fáil;" and it is it that used to roar under each king of Ireland on his being chosen by them up to the time of Conchubhar (as we mentioned before), and it is to that stone is called in Latin "Saxum fatale." It is from it, moreover, is called Inis Fáil to Ireland. So that it is, therefore, a certain antiquary composed this verse: The stone which is under my two heels, From it, Inis Fáil is named; Between two shores of a mighty flood, The plain of Fál (is for the name) on all Ireland.⁹

Many have suspected that the *Four Masters'* story is but a variant of the *Four Apostles*, John, Peter, Mark and Paul. However, all indicates that the *Four Apostles* theme was in fact the euhemerism of an older pre-Christian one. In Greek mythology, the four assessors personify the winds of the four corners, these are Eurus, the East wind, Notos, the South wind, Zephyr, the West wind, and Boreas, the Northwind. For the Romans, in the same order, these were: Subsolanus, Auster, Favonius, and Septentrio or Aquilo. Apart from the cardinal points, the four winds also represented the breaths of wisdom and inspiration. These sages, teachers, or masters, were also similar to the four Kumaras of the Vedic texts and thus confirm the theme of an early Indo-European concept. As the

Vedic Siddhesvaras, the seer-poets, they represent the acme of scholarship. The four Kumaras, much like the Four Sages were born with innate wisdom. Born from out of the mind of Brahma, they embodied the potentiality of being and each of the four major teachings of Vedic wisdom. Forever young, they know neither fatigue, nor laziness, nor cowardice. They travel steadfastly by foot along the paths of the Milky Way without the assistance of the solar vehicle. In the Northern stars, these celestial sages were engaged in all forms of yogist practice. In turn, they act as educators of the legendary prime masters, Narada and Prithu. They were thus named as follows: Kumara Sanaka, "the youth elder," Kumara Sanandana, "the youth filled with joy," Sanatana Kumara, "the eternal youth," and Sanatkumara, "forever young." Needless to insist on the belief that these seers were said to reside in the stars of the Septentrion.

Indeed, the Septentriones, the seven Nordic rulers of Roman mythology, were also referred to as the Boves Icarii, the "bulls of Icarus," identifiable to the stars of Ursa Major.

In turn, each of the fabled cities was located on a celestial island of the same name positioned in the stars of Pegasus square which, seen from Earth, culminate on the eve of Samhain. The following passages from Irish manuscript and other literary sources further illustrate this concept of sacred space and geography as it was maintained by the Goidels of Ireland.

North-East

The Tuatha Dé Danann were from the islands north of the World. According to the *Book of Lecan*, a band of the people of Beothach, "the lively one," after much hardship in Ireland, left for the northeast and landed in Scandinavia. "There they learned the science of prophecy, druidism, witchcraft, and the knowledge of every poetic art that was in the world, and thence they went into Greece. After the mastery of many trades, they came from there toward Ireland in the footsteps of their fathers and of their grandfathers and in respect to their origin these were Túaitha Dé Danann."¹⁰

South-East

Out of Falias was brought the Stone of Fal which was at Tara (to the East). To the southeast lies the Island of the Mighty, which was the poetic name of Britain. The most powerful of Britons were to the south. "But as regards now the thirty warriors of Nemed's descendants who escaped, they divided Ireland into three parts. These were the three leaders which they had: Beothach mac Iarboineoil namely, the prophet meic Nemid and Semon mac Sdairn meic Nemid and Britan Mael mac Fergusa Lethdeirg meic Nemid." Britan, a Nemedian fled from Ireland after being defeated by the Fomorians and settled the island of Britain.¹¹

West, South-West

Out of Murias, the great fortress was shipped to Ireland a huge and powerful treasure, which was the cauldron of Dagda. No one who ate from it was left unsatisfied. The Morini, "the "maritime people," were a tribe of the Belgian coast. Lugh arrives at Tara from the west during the first battle of Magh Tured. To the south-west, was situated Tech

Duinn, the house of Donn, Lord of the dead.

“The first man of the seed of tuneful Bregon belonging to them, who died in great Ireland, was Dond, son of Mil, setting aside Ir, from whom is the name of Tech Duinn of retainers.”¹²

To the west was the island of Emain Ablach ruled by Manannan Mac Lir. The island, on which was an orchard, was said to be off of the coast of Alba, to the west of Scotland. According to the Irish *Immram Brain*, a tale of the fabulous sea voyages of Bran, while in Emain Ablach, a beautiful fairy gives him a silver apple blossomed branch.¹³

North-West

Out of Findias that was brought the sword of Nuada. Nuada Argetlám was high-king of Ireland and ruler of the Tuatha Dé Danann. He lost his hand during the first battle of Magh Tuireadh fought against the Fir Bolg and had a silver one made by the godly physician Dian Cécht.

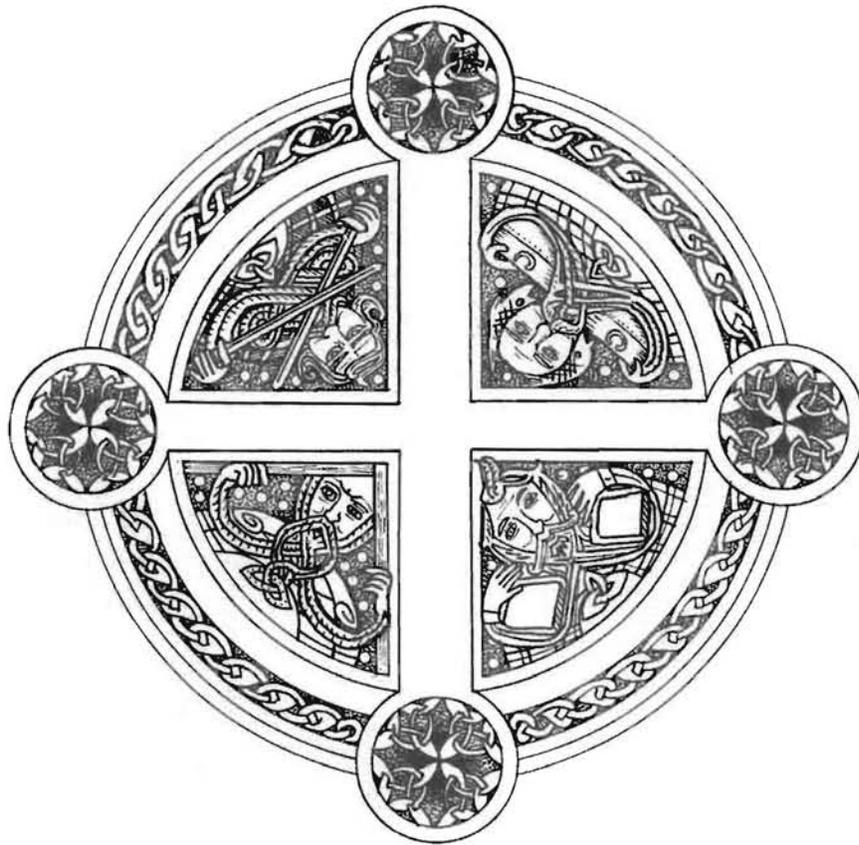
“After Bres, Nuada was again in sovereignty over the Tuath Dé. At that time he held for the Tuath Dé a mighty feast at Tara.”¹⁴

East, North-East

Out of Gorias was brought the spear that Lugh had. Lugh was the son of Cian and of Balor’s daughter Ethlinn. This made him half Dé Danann and half Fomorian, thus, part god and part titan.

“Now the Tuatha Dé made an alliance with the Fomorians, and Balor, grandson of Nét, gave his daughter Ethne to Cian son of Dian Cecht, and she brought forth the gifted child, even Lugh.”¹⁵

As a reminder, this mythologizing of the world was not unique to the Celts and was maintained on the other Indo-European horizons. Following Greek mythology, Colchis was the fabled land of the east, Ethiopia was to the south, the Hesperides or Elysium fields were seen as islands located at the western end of the Earth, and of course, Hyperborea or Arcadia was positioned to the north. In an orchard of the blessed islands of the Hesperides where the sun sets, there blossomed the golden apples guarded by the hundred-headed dragon Ladon, son of the titan Typhon and the nymph Echidna. And the setting sun was poeticised as a golden apple. The kingdom of the Titan Atlas was found by the Hesperides, sometimes counted as four, and often seven. In Germanic myths, the world tree, Yggdrasil, was rooted in the north of the world and its roots spread into the earth in all directions. Three of its roots reach the worlds of Ásgard, Midgard, and Niflheim. In the *Poetic Eddas*, the golden apples of the goddess Idun restored youth and granted longevity.



The four corners and the Irish masters with the ritual objects from the fabled cities. Author's drawing.

Boutet_28

The Four Druid-Masters

Much more than an Irish Medieval fancy, the Four Masters, or seers, the theme does match an older Indo-European mythological motif. Indeed, a reconstructed Old Celtic framework does weave an elegant tapestry. The Petrocores, or Petrocorii, were a Gaulish nation of Dordogne in the old French province of Perigord. The name derives from the Old Celtic roots petro-/petru- "four," and coros "circle, circuit." The four circuits is a fitting analogy for the Milky Way galaxy. In ancient Gaul, a college of four elected masters was referred to as petruuiroi, the fourth man being the petruuiros, and the Latin equivalents were the quatuorviri, a foursome of senators. In all accounts, the four seers make their way through the heavens on route to the stars of the Septentrion by means of the Milky Way track. As previously mentioned, these can be likened to the four Kumaras of Vedic literature or to the Four Druids or the Irish texts.

Four wizards (ie. druids) there were in those four cities. Mór-fesae was in Falias: Esras was in Gorias: Uscias was in Findias: Semias was in Murias. Those are the four poets of whom the Tuatha Dé learned lore and science.¹⁶

Esras went by another name, Urias of noble nature, and who also resided in the city of Gorias.



The Druid Master Morfessa
Boutet_29

Morfis of Faillias

Morfessa, Morfis < Marouesos, “of great knowledge,” also called Morias < Morios / Moriatos, “of the sea, maritime,” and Fessus < Uesos, “knowing, he who knows.”

Falias, Failias < Ualia, “of power, of authority, of skill.” Falias < Ualiassos, Markab, the delta star of Pegasus.

Ualia is a wordplay using balia “village people,” and Aballia, “wild apple-orchard,” the name of the mythical islands of the West: Ynys Afallach (Inicia Aballaci, “island of the apple-orchard”), that were, Avalon in Welsh and in Irish, Emain Ablach.



The Druid Master Esras
Boutet_30

Esrus or Urias of Goirias

Esrus, Esras < Esdrios / Esdratis, “who has the way, the means;” Urias < Urios, “of purity, freshness,” also Urus < Uros, “pure, original, fresh;” and puns with: Uros, “wild bull,” Ur / Uron, “fire.”

Goirias, Gorias < Gorias, “hot;” puns: Gortia, “enclosure,” Garria, “green oak.” Gorias < Goriassos, Algenib, the epsilon star of Pegasus.



The Druid Master Semias
Boutet_31

Semias of Murias

Semias > Semios / Semiatis, “the capricious, the frivolous, the thin one.”

Murias, Morias < Moria, “the sea,” Murias < Moriassos, Scheat the star beta Pegasus, and punning with muria, “brine.”



The Druid Master Uiscias
Boutet_32

Uiscias of Findias

Uscias / Uiscias < Udescios, “aqueous,” presumably from Uescios, “dressed,” if not Uisucios, “respectable, insightful,” or in wordplay: “cock raven,” the context, however, also suggests: Uiscimos, “petulant;” and who was also called Arias, from Arios < Areios / Areanos, “free man, landowner.”

Findias, Finias < Uindia, “of brightness, of splendor, of beauty, the gorgeous, the white.”

Findias < Uindiassos, Sirrah, the alpha star of Andromedae.

The Four Sacred Objects of the Tuatha Dé Danann

The Fal Stone

“It cried at every king who took Ireland.”

The Stone of Fal, or Stone of Destiny, was the symbol of earthly sovereignty and of divine kingship. The Stone of Destiny, that is to say, Lia Fail < Licca Ualeios, for "slab of might;" Fotla < uo-tala, literally means the "under-stone, the foundation stone, the hard base, the footing, of sacred royal power. It is also the sanctuary's offertory firestone. As a fire stone, as with the midday sun in the sanctuary, it contains and retains the heat of the hearth fire. In esoteric terms, it also symbolizes the fire of inner being, the live fire of the inner sun.

The Spear

"Never a battle was engaged against the man who held it in hand."

Much like a solar ray, this spear had the distinction of blinding those who gazed at it. It is an allegory of the three rays of the sun projected down into the world. The sunbeams radiate as the sun travels from east to west only to project upwards as the evening sun disappears beyond the horizon only to reappear again the next morning. Made of the wood of the sacred yew and tipped with shiny metal, it inevitably reaches its target only to return in the thrower's hand. And its possessor was none other but Lugh the Longhand. In short, it represents light beams traversing the night sky onway to the earth.

The Cauldron

"No troop left from the cauldron unsatisfied."

The cauldron was the most valued object from the four fabled cities of the Tuatha Dé Danann. As for choice possession of the Dagda, it was deemed the most sacred. It was seen as the instrument of the material transformation involving all of the elements, earth, fire, water, and air. And as for all of the other containers, the cup, the vase, the crater or the mixing bowl, it was regarded as the matrix, the womb of the mother goddess. Likewise, the Dagda's club was the symbol of temporal regulation, hence the phallus symbol.

The Sword

"Nobody escaped it when it was drawn from Bodb's sheath."

Much like the other objects brought from the four cities, such as the stone and the cauldron, the sword also had symbolical and cosmological qualities. Forged in the kiln of the Dé Danann smith-god Goibniu, the sword could be only held by the ruler of the gods. It, therefore, represents righteous rule and godly judgment. Once quenched, it becomes as hard as truth and as cutting as the north wind. It is self-evident that the blade is Nuada's phallus and that the sheath is Bodb's vagina. The goddess Bodb is the allegory of divine sovereignty, while Nuada embodies royal power.

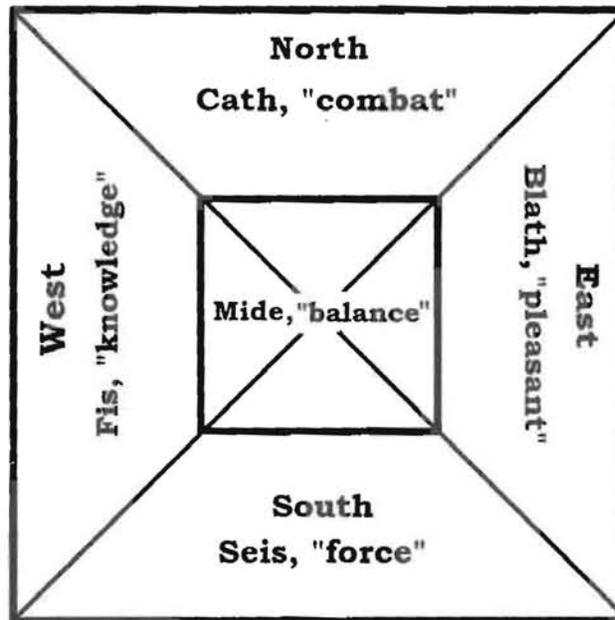
The Territorial Divisions of Ireland

And I was co-eval afterward with every generation that occupied it down to the day Trefuilngid came into the assembly of Conaing Bec-eclach, therefore it was Trefuilngid questioned me through his knowledge of interrogation:

“O Fintan,” said he, “and Ireland, how has it been partitioned, where have things been therein?”

“Easy to say,” said Fintan: “knowledge in the west, battle in the north, prosperity in the east, music in the south, kingship in the center (?)”.

“True indeed, O Fintan,” said Trefuilngid, “thou art an excellent shanachie”.¹⁷



Boutet_33

The five provinces of Ireland

East: LEINSTER < Lagenatia, “of spearmen or lancers;” for prosperity.

South: MUNSTER < Momonia, “the gracious;” for music.

Middle: MEATH < Midia, “the middle;” for royalty.

West: CONNACHT < Connaxtia, “conservative;” for knowledge.

North: ULSTER < Ulatia, “of the sovereigns;” for battle.

East:

Cessair came from the east, the woman, daughter of Bith, with her fifty maidens and her trio of men. Then Parthalon came to me from the east, from the Grecian land, and I lived on with his progeny though it was a long way.¹⁸

Leinster: Bruigh na Boinne - Tara

Blath < Blatis, “sweet, pleasant;”

The Southern Half:

Leth Moga < Letos Moguos, “the half of Mog;”

That was, Eogan Mor alias Mug Nuadat: Eogan < Eugenos / Sugenos < Esugenos, “of noble birth,” and Mor < Maros / moros “great, empowered;” Letos, “half,” and Moga <

Moguos, genitive of Mogus, "servant," Nuadat < Nodontos, genitive of Nodons, "fisherman."

South:

After that came the sons of Mil out of Spain from the south, and I lived along with them through mighty was their combat.¹⁹

Munster: Tlachtga Tech Duinn

Seis < Segisu, "force;" Seluos, "gain advantage;" Senmo, "music."

Median border:

Eiscir Riada < Adscarra Rigantas, "the ridge of the regal;"

Eiscir < Adscarra, "rocky ridge," and Rigantas, genitive of Riganta, "regal, royal."

Middle:

Meath

Mide < Meda, "balance, measure;" also referred to as Riada < Riganta, "regal;"

The king faces from the man gate to the east. Plans for ancient forts have the main gate facing east.

West:

The Fir Bolg and Fir Galion came, it was long [thereafter]. The Fir Domnann came, they settled in Irrus in the west.²⁰

Connacht

Uisnech Rath Cruachan (West)

On top of the mound Uisnech: the stone pillar of Fintan.

Fis < Uidtos, "acquired knowledge;" Uesus, "gay, light-hearted;"

The Northern half:

Leth Cuinn < Letos Conni, "half of Conn;"

Conn < Connos, "knowing, reason."

North:

Bith north in Sliab Betha, sad was the mystery, Ladru in Ard Ladrann, Cessair in her recess.²¹

Ulster

Tailtiu Emain Macha

Cath < Catus/Catu, "fight, battle;" Catus, "advised."



The "Buddha" of Oseburg, Irish enameled bronze piece from the ninth century CE. A booty found in a Viking burial ship at Mjklebostad, Norway. Author's drawing from a photo of the Bergen Museum.

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