

Introduction to the Celtic Warrior Class Devotions

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Évariste-Vital Luminais, *The Gauls in View of Rome*, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy, Paris, 1896.

In the Gestes of most Indo-European mythical war episodes, the chief, or king, has the responsibility to instruct and lead his fellow warriors into battle in order to ensure the protection of the subjects he defends. In this situation, he acts as a military officer according to the duties of the first function of teachers and instructors. These duties and responsibilities were defined and conditioned by set statutory rules. As Georges Dumézil explained in *The Destiny of the Warrior*, the central motif of the Indo-European tripartite ideology was one of force, protection, sovereignty, prosperity, and fecundity. The main purpose of sacred royalty is to maintain organization and capitalization in order to maintain the kingdom's balance of power and justice. But before reaching chieftainhood, or kingship, the young warrior must undergo a series of ritual initiations. This, before he is to become an accomplished combatant tested in battle. This progress is well described in the Irish myths through the deeds of the hero Cuchulainn, who at a

very young age, travels to the frontiers of Ulster minded to defeat the three sons of King Nechta who constantly threatened the Ulates.

As for religious duties, the royal heroes of the second social royal function partake of theology and devotion which evidently contrast from those of the first and third social orders. As we should now fully understand, Indo-European society was originally structured in sets of three functional groups or classes. Accordingly, Dumézil has brilliantly demonstrated how these social classes were again broken into three legal duties. For the warriors, these aspects were declined as follows: contract, law, and friendship, along with its noble feminine aspects which included: sovereignty, strength, and fecundity.

In short, the Statutory laws of the Indo-European, which included the Celt, regulate the activities and civic duties of the man and woman of the majority since all those born into one of these three classes were under a contract and subjected to their pertaining rules and laws referred to as Dharma in Sanskrit, or Dedma in Old Celtic.

In short, philosophically phrased, it could be termed as follows:

- The duties of the first social function of the clerics were those of teaching, jurisprudence, and ministering;
- The duties of the second social function of the men of arms were those of tribal protection, law enforcement, and waring;
- The duties of the third function of producers, craftsmen, and merchants, were those of service, labor, production, maintenance, and material application.

In religious terms, the warrior's devotion was essentially dualistic, ritualistic, and ascetic, as opposed to the theological rationalism of the clerics which, in thought, deed, and belief, was philosophically monist and transcendental. Being that, much different from the cults of the lower classes which, prone to superstition, were pluralistic, polytheistic and mystical.

Devotional aspects of the three social orders:

1. The Nemed, or Nemedians, a derivative of the Old Celtic Nemetes, "the holy," were the elite clerical class of druids, physicians, jurors, clerical filid, and bards; the first social function assured protection against unseen ideological and alienating forces.

2. The Ulaid, the men of Ulster, "the sovereigns," the warrior class, Ulates in Old Celtic, or the Fianna, from Uicniioi, "fene warriors," punning with Uenoi, "heroes," Uenia, "war-band," or again, Catumanoi / Catuuiroi, "warriors;" were similar in function as those of the Roman Equites and Indo-Aryan Kshatriyas; the second social warrior and signiorial function assured protection against seen or known forces, both domestic and alien.

3. The Ueicoi, or Fiach, the crow-like “sedentary dwellers,” or the Broges, “country folk, peasants,” or again, Atectoi, “those under protection,” and all other workers and craftsmen from the manufacturing guilds, were those having the status of Andèuos, “non-divine,” such as the uassoï, “serfs,” and captoi / cactoi, “captives, war slaves.” Uassoï, singular uassos is akin to the Indo-Aryan Vaiçya and close in meaning to the Latin Plebs, Plebes; third social function of merchants, producers, laborers, and manufacturers assured trade and production of goods and services.

And, following the Roman interpretation, to each ethnic order was attributed a hierarchal godly patron: Jupiter, Mars, and Mercury. In Celtic terms, these warrior gods were: Taranis / Ruad Rofessa, Ogmios / Ogma, and Lugus / Lug / Lleu.

In light of this, Lug/Lleu/Lugus, the Celtic Mercury / Apollo, takes on the qualities of Mars / Ares and is much closer to the Vedic Indra who also has lordship over the other major gods of the pantheon. And as the French scholars Guyonvarc’h and Leroux remarked, as the multifaceted polytechnician warlord, Lugh transcends all of the other gods of the pan-Celtic pantheon.

Colors of the Orders:

1. Uindos, “white, splendid,” for the holy ones; in relation to the noon sky and the godly realm and was reserved for the members of the first social function;

2. Roudos, or coccus, “red,” is the color of blood and war, of the twilight skies, of dawn and dusk, was reserved for the members of the second social function;

3. Dubis, “black,” glastos, “blue-green,” melinos, “honey yellow,” and uiridios, “sappy green,” when not letos, “grey, livid,” are the colors of the night sky in relation to the earth, vegetation and water, and were reserved for the members of the third social function.

The Dual Functions of the Hero Warrior

1. Mystical Binding Power with Ogmios Trenouiros, “the magical champion strongman,” a solitary champion of the herculean type who restores moral and ethical order.

2. Royal, protection, regulation, and redistribution with Nodons / Nuada

Airgetlám, “the silver handed plutocrat,” who ensures right, and who reestablishes the order of the kingdom and rightful kingship.

The king represents the three classes of society;

- He is ministered by a high druid;
- He commands the other aristocrats and assures that producers, merchants, and artisans, are well protected and left to work and prosper freely.



The *Des Bolards Stele* from the Gallo Roman period. Gallic deities from left to right: Belenos (Apollo), Cernunnos as the triple-faced Aros Mars, and Lugus (Mercury). Animals figured on the stone: at the foot of the twins, a small viper, and below the throne: a bull, a dog, a badger, a boar, and a stag. Author’s drawing after a photo from the Musée municipal de Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy France.

The Theme of Aries (Mars) and the Dioscuri (Twins)

Another aspect of the Indo-European war god is that of duplicity. In the related myths, the king of gods is most often described accompanied with others, most often included in a trio while standing alone from the two others. In his Gallic War Commentaries, Julius Caesar identifies the major gods of the Celts as follows: Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva.

To quote from Caesar's *Gallic War Commentaries*, Book VI chapters 17 to 18, p. 343, Loeb Classical Library, 1917:

Among the gods, they most worship Mercury. There are numerous images of him; they declare him the inventor of all arts, the guide for every road and journey, and they deem him to have the greatest influence for all money-making and traffic. After him, they set Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Of these deities they have almost the same idea as all other nations: Apollo drives away diseases, Minerva supplies the first principles of arts and crafts, Jupiter holds the empire of heaven, Mars controls wars. To Mars, when they have determined on a decisive battle, they dedicate as a rule whatever spoil they may take. After a victory, they sacrifice such living things as they have taken, and all the other effects they gather into one place. In many states heaps of such objects are to be seen piled up in hallowed spots, and it has and often happened that a man, in defiance of religious scruple, has dared to conceal such spoils in his house or to remove them from their place, and the most grievous punishment, with torture, is ordained for such an offense. The Gauls affirm that they are all descended from a common Father, Dis, and say that this is the tradition of the Druids. For that reason, they determine all periods of time by the number, not of days, but of nights, and in their observance of birthdays and the beginnings of months and years day follows night.

The mention of Father Dis here refers to as Dis Pater in Latin, and Dits Ater in Gallic, which, as « father of dissolution, » was an equivalent of the Hindu god Rudra or Shiva.

In Gallic representation, Ogmios, an equivalent of the Roman Mars and Greek Aries, is most often described as a god of eloquence. He is depicted by the Gauls as a tanned bearded elder leading a band of captives fettered to their tongues with golden chains. In Indo-European sculpture, Mars was represented as triple-faced, that is, having additional features to the sides of his head. The Old Celtic names for Mars were: Aros, a cognate of the Greek Ares, and Teutates, or Toutatis. In the Irish Texts, Ogma is said to have had three names: Ogma-Gian-aineach, Ogma-Cermait, and Ogma-Trenfer, when not under the guise of Elcmar. Again, this qualifier of Elcmar, from Uolcomaros, "great wolf," brings us closer to the Scandinavian Fenrir, a hypostasis of Loki.

Etymologies for Ogma's Epithets

Ogma Grian-aineach,	< Grannos-Eneqos, "the sunny-faced"
Ogma Cermait	< Cermatis, "the service apple," punning with Carrameidus, "mead gums, the honey-mouthed"
Ogma Trenfer,	< Trenouiros, "the strong man"
Ogma Trendorn,	< Trenodornios, "the strong handed"

Let it be noted that Ogmios was the older spelling for Ogma. Likewise, Lugus has his assessors, the Lugoues, or lugones, also called Lugoui Emni, "the Lugian twins;" and which included female consorts called Lougiai, the "precious desired ones."

In symbolical terms, with all puns intended, Lugus represents the binding word lugios, "bonded, sworn by "oath, pledge, and testament," lugos, "glare, splendor, desire;" lugus, "desired;" leuxs, "light;" lougos, "price;" lougos, "dark, yellowish black;" lugus, "raven;" and lugxs, "lynx."

Etymologies for the epithets of Lugh / Lleu

Lugh Ildánach	< Ollodanacos, the all-talented, the polytechnician"
Lugh Lámfada	< Lamauada, the long hand / Lamiuada "the long ax"
Lugh Lonnbéimnech	Londobeimnicos, "the violent striker"
Lugh Samildánach	< Samollodanacos, "equally all-talented"
Lleu Llaw Gyffes	Lama Gabonts "the hand that takes"

1. The Lugoues, or Lugones, are those who accompany and come with Lugus. As assessors of Lugus, these war entities were similar to the Aśvinau, the twin sons of Surya the sun-god and who are described in the Rig Veda as cavaliers. In the Hellenic myths, these were the Dioskouroi called Kastor and Polydeukes, or Castor and Pollux. The assessors of Lugus, Mogetimaros, and Momoros, were also horsemen. In the Roman army, Mars was revered as the patron god of the infantry while Castor and Pollux were regarded as the patron protectors of cavaliers. The Gallic term Luguatica, that is, "luguatic," pertained to the warring activities of these avatars of Lugus.

2. The Roudioretoi, "red riders," also called Roudiacoi, "the red ones," were the Old Celtic equivalents of the Vedic Rudras. The Gallic Roudioboi were those who proceeded from Roudios, "the ruddy." In the Irish Texts, they were known as the Ruadcoin, the name was anglicized as Rudrican. This name derives from the Old Celtic Rudiaco, or

Roudiacoi, again meaning, “ruddy,” or “red ones.” Another Irish mythonym is Rudraidhe, from the Celtic Rudoretos, “the red rider,” and was a cognate of the Gallic Roudiobos, meaning “pertaining to Roudios, the red one,” that was, the Celtic god Mars. The Red Riders were said to have founded the northern kingdom of Ulster. The Ridire Ruadh knights were the founding rulers of the royal dynasty of Ulster referred to as Ulaid in Old Irish. The name is from the Old Celtic Ulatia, for “land of the sovereigns,” and the people of Ulster also went by the name of Clan Rudraidhe. In later legend, the Ridire Ruadh are described as moving in groups of threes and called the “mounts of the otherworld.” Again bringing us back to the Vedic Ashvins and Maruts.

As Dumézil explained, in the Rig Veda, the godly pair Mitra-Varuna was the allegory of Mars, seen as the oath, the contract, the covenant. The war god was one of eloquence and truthful to one’s word. Conversely, Varuna, more troublesome, was seen as the overpowering mystifying, tantric, shape-shifting, magic-maker. In the Celtic pantheon, these deities are identifiable to Lugos-Desumis, that is, desumis, “the righteous,” and implying Lugios, “the desired, he who is bound by pledges,” along with Ogmios, “the magical champion, the notcher, of magic bonds.”

According to the *Coir Anmann*, “The Fitness of Names,” there were three godly pillars in the Old Irish faith. This very archaic mythological and theological theme was hardly remembered in the myths of the other Indo-European peoples, but nevertheless, has miraculously survived under the pen of the medieval copyist monks. In this Irish account, these three Fothad emanated from a triad of sky gods linked to the qualities of daylight. Whitley Stokes edition of *The Fitness of Names*, section 220, mentioned that The three Fothad were named: Aendia, Trendia, and Caendia.

Much of the ethos surrounding these allegorical characters is obscured in bardic wordplay, but nevertheless, shines through magnificently. For better clarity, here is the entire passage following Stoke’s English translation from the Irish and which I have in part rewritten following Guyonvarc’h and Le Roux’s French version of the same text:

The three Fothads were called fó-suithi since they were “good offspring.” Or Fothaidh, as it is written, in that they were fotha suith, “the foundation of offspring,” Fuinche’s firstborn. Or Fothaidh, that is, fo thaidhe, “by stealth,” surreptitiously for Mac Niad, that is, Mac Con begat them with Fuinche, daughter of Béne Brit, king of Britain. Or Fothaidh, that is, from fi, “evil,” and aed, “fire,” because they were virulent fires destroying clans and kindreds. Or Fothaidh, that is, fó-thádi, for good thefts, are they since every illicit copulation is a theft. Hence said the druid: “Welcome the theft of whence the trio thus sprang.” From then on, the name Fothaidh stuck to them.

Their names were Oendia, “the one god,” Tréndia, “the strong god,” and Caendia, “the fair god.” Oendia was the herdsman, Tréndia the charioteer, and Caendia was the one called Fothad Canainne. Fuinche bore them for Mac Con at one birthing.

Fuinche gave birth to Oendia at nightfall (the name was given to him for the luck of having no king); Tréndia came at midnight (the name was given to him because of Trésse, the strength he had from the gods); and Caendia arrived in the morning. The name Caen-dia was given to him because of delightfulness and for the beauty of the red morning light. The name Fothad Cananne was after Canann from a hound that he had. By him also was named Dinn Chanann on Mag Lin. Or again, Fothad Cainidae, for cáin, since fair and beautiful were the dée, the gods, when he was born. Fothad Airgtech, “the moneyed,” because it is wealth that was dearest to him, as it was said. Fittingly were his possessions, his champion’s bracelet, his two rings, his golden torc, and his horse. Fothad of the Chariots, as he was named since horses and chariots were the portion he gave to his sons. Fergus Dolus was another of his names.

The Cóir Anmann, “Fitness of names,” entry 287, pp. 407-408.

The War-god’s Deicide

The Warrior God, in order to accomplish the duties of his dharma, must first kill the impious falter who threatens the balance and order of the cosmos. In the Rigveda, Indra slays Vritra while in The Second Battle of Mag Tuired it is Lugh who kills Balor.

As for the Eddas, on the onset of the Ragnarök, Loki’s son Fenrir, the wolf, is set loose devouring everything with his monstrous jaws there killing Odin who is avenged by his son Víðarr.

For better understanding, here is the passage from the Hymns of the Rigveda Chapter 11, verses 8 to 10:

Swelling the roar in the far distant limits, they have spread wide the blast sent forth by Indra.

Indra has hurled down the magician Vritra who lay beleaguering the mighty river.

Then both the heaven and earth trembled in terror at the strong hero's thunder when he bellowed.

Loud roared the mighty hero's bolt of thunder, when he, the friend of man, burnt up the monster,

And, having drunk his fill of flowing Soma, baffled the guileful Danava's devices.

Then, on the Celtic side, Lugh, the Irish equivalent of Indra, must kill his grand-father the Fomorian overlord Balor. Here is the quote from *The Second Battle of Moytura*, translated from the Irish Gaelic by Whiteley Stokes, p. 101:

Lugh and Balor of the Piercing Eye met in the battle. An evil eye had Balor. That eye was never opened save only on a battle-field. Four men used to lift up the lid of the eye with a (polished) handle which passed through its lid. If an army looked at that eye, though they were many thousands in number they could not resist a few warriors. Hence had it that poisonous power. His father's druids were concocting charms. He came and looked over the window, and the fume of the concoction came under it so that the poison of the concoction afterward came on the eye that looked. Then he and Lugh meet.

'Lift up mine eyelid, my lad', says Balor, 'that I may see the babbler who is conversing with me'.

The lid is raised from Balor's eye. Then Lugh cast a sling-stone at him, which carried the eye through his head. And so it was his own army that looked at it. And it fell on the host of the Fomorians, and thrice nine of them died beside it, so that the crowns of their heads came against the breast of Indech son of Dé Domnann, and a gush of blood sprang over his lips.

Says Indech: 'Let Loch Half-green my poet be summoned to me!' Half-green was he from the ground to the crown of his head. Loch goes to the king. 'Make known to me', saith Indech, 'who has (flung) this cast on me?'



The Cosmic Struggle for Order out of Chaos

The myths all agree that at the onsets and outsets of the Ages, an inevitable struggle must occur between the divine forces of order against those of chaos. For the Greeks, the Titanomachy defines the Thessalian wars between the Titan demiurges and the Olympian gods. From their respective seats, the Titans on Mount Othrys and the gods on Mount Olympus struggle for the control of the Cosmos. In the final outcome, Zeus leads the Olympian gods to victory by defeating the undisciplined Titans. In the Heroic Age of man, another mythological battle is fought at Troy opposing the Achaean king Menelaus and the Trojan prince Paris over the beautiful Hellen, “the Apple of Discord.” The theme of hostage taking was also featured In the Scandinavian Eddas. The first cosmic war fought at the start of the Ages opposing the Ases and the Vanes is left at a stalemate when a truce is decided and exchange of hostages is concluded. These myths differ slightly from the Vedic and Celtic myths where there is agreement concerning the Danavas and Dananns opposing a rival godly dynasty. In the Vedas, the Danavas, led by Bali, oppose the Devata, led by Vamana, for the contest of the balance of power. Similarly, in the Irish myths, the *Second Battle of Mag Tuired* is fought between the Tuatha Dé Danann led by Lugh who thus defeats the Fomorian king Balor.



Odin brandishing his spear at the Vannes, illustrated by Lorenz Frølich and published in *Den ældre Eddas Gudesange* by Karl Gjellerup (1895), p. 7.

Dualism and the Three Faults of the Warrior

Dumézil qualifies the warrior’s fault as “sin,” although indeed linked to religious considerations, because of its Christian overtones, this term does not translate the

nuances of Indo-European thought. In my mind, the term “fault” is more appropriate since it renders the Indo-European notion of courage and responsibility.

Given his strength, the first fault of the warrior is of unjustified and excessive violence naturally expressed through bouts of passion.

The second fault is one of perjury, of non-respect of civic duty, or that of the failure to enforce security. The ethics code which binds the warrior to his word does not permit him to waver freely or betray his oath or commit murderous acts.

Finally, the third fault is the crime of impiety or non-respect of the sacred statutory laws of his class. These being, failing the gods, or the crimes of rape and the murder of a member of the clerical class.

This joins the Vedic concept *ṛtá*, “truth,” which was subjected to the statutory law of dharma and of the personal works and deeds conditioned by karma.

This adherence to a set of ethical rulings comparable to Vedic dharma derived from the earlier form *dherma or *dhrēma, “to hold, to bear, to keep.” The Proto-Celtic root for the Gallic equivalent *dema* was *dedma, for “statute,” or “customary law.”

Another French scholar, Émile Bénéviste (1902-1976), clarified Dumézil’s notion of tripartition describing the role of dualism in IE thought. The divine is qualified by light, is positively charged, and all that which is not, is disorderly and destructive, therefore unproductive, unholy, unhealthy and death-inducing. This sacred godly order of dharma, although non-dogmatic, is organized and maintained through a set of detailed legal and moral codes. The name also has derivatives in other Indo-European languages which include: Old Greek *thrēskéuō*, Old Persian *dārayeiti*, Latin *firmus*, Old Baltic *darna* or *derna* and Old Slavic *dārītī*. This is what was termed “*Law of Manu*” in the Vedas. There was a Latin pun which played on *vir* “man”, *ver*, spring (*ver sacrum* “wish to consecrate to the gods everything to come”) and *veritas* “truth”, all that is truthful, sincere, honest and true to life, which is reality.” This ethic rule was also found in *Meditations*, the stoic philosophical work of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180 CE) which went as follows:

“Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one.”

In Roman society, the *vir*, the free man, the citizen, played an important role in the city. He was thus sworn and legally bonded as a person, a personality, and a husband and father and pious man. The pious man is faithful to his home, his temple, and dutifully fulfills all his responsibilities towards his household, wife, children, and parents as well as his sworn commitments to the gods and republic. At the time of Emperor Augustus, Roman piety, *pietas*, was expressed by the pious *uir*, which was the devotion of one who

showed fidelity to the family, familia, and the people Rome, the tota Roma. Therefore, the pious uir was the one who acted alongside the gods.

In light of this, gods and mortals were bound by certain laws, oaths, or agreements, which were codified in the laws of Man. That is, Manu in Sanskrit, Mannus, in Old Germanic, and Manos, in Old Celtic.

The Irish, who have preserved the notion of truth related to the domain of the gods, always can tell when a person dies Tá sé/sí in áit na fhirinne anois "He or she is now in the place of truth." There, the Irish status of dedm also implied buan fírinne, "the enduring truth" that was the antithesis neam fírinne, "the hostile truth."

The statute of dedm also infers buan fírinne (< *buuana uiriona), "lasting truth," which is the antithesis of neam fírinne (< *namantia uiriona), "the hostile truth."

Needless to add that this ethical notion of man and truth was also found with the Celts. And this was how truth elevated man, the mortal being, upwards to the levels of heroic and godly status. In this sense, man is a friend or an agent of the gods and never one their slaves. The Irish Culdees, an order of Medieval Christian monks, called themselves the "friends of God," but were, nevertheless, following the rule of the earlier druidical orders.

Finally, to conclude on the notion of dualism in second function devotion there are many instances in the various myths relating to the warrior's moral conflict when engaging the enemy into battle. To engage the enemy into battle was the dutiful right of the warrior, and it was considered an act of cowardice not to correct those who committed impiety and irreligion. A passage in the Bhagavad-gītā, a long poem from the Mahabharata, expresses it nicely.

At the onset of the mythological battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna, son of Indra, and of the Pandu queen Kunti, was troubled at the idea of combatting his Kaurava cousins and next to kin. There then followed a philosophical discussion between him and his chariot driver Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, on the moral duties of a Kshatriya warrior.

What follows is summarized from A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda's translation of the Bhagavad-gītā (a passage found in chapter one, entitled *Observing the Armies on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra*, verses 25 to 39):

In the presence of the otherworldly chieftains which included Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Krishna remarked to Pārtha Arjuna, that he noticed all of the Kurus of the northern tribes were assembled in the plain of Kurukshetra. In the midst of both armies, he could see his father, foster-father, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and also his fathers-in-law and a number of other well-wishers. When Arjuna realized this, he became extremely troubled as he quivered with his bow

slipping from his hand. He then shared this sentiment with Krishna, the killer of the Keśī demon. To quote:

“I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Kṛṣṇa, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom or happiness,” cried Arjuna.

He then goes on to add that he worries for all those arrayed on the battlefield, especially his relatives who were ready to give up their lives and properties. Arjuna was not prepared to fight with them even in exchange for the three worlds, let alone this earth and what pleasure would he derive from killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He feared much of the incumbent sin if he was to slay these belligerent opponents. “How could we be happy by killing our own kinsmen even though their hearts are overtaken by greed, and who see no fault in killing one’s family or quarreling with friends?” he questions Krishna. “Why risk the crime in destroying a family or engage in these sinful acts?” he added. The fear was that, with the destruction of the dynasty, the eternal family tradition was to be extinguished, and thus the rest of the family would become involved in irreligion.

What is to be made of this? The Sanskrit name for irreligion was adharma, and was a parallel term to the Old Celtic anedma. What Arjuna feared most was that he would be embroiled in karmic debt through failing to uphold the law of dharma. But as Krishna further explained, the dharmic rā of the warrior was rightfully to oppose those who did commit impious and criminal acts.

In the Vedic pantheon, Krishna, “the dark one,” was an avatar, or hypostasis, of Vishnu, and likewise, in the Gallic pantheon, Lugus, also connoting “dark one,” was the hypostasis of Esus.

The name Esus is in itself interesting. Stemming from the Proto-Celtic root word Aesus, “breath, spirit,” it is to be compared to the Sanskrit Asura, which Monier-Williams etymologically defined as deriving from asu-, “spirit.” It can also be likened to the Germanic ases, or aesir, the plural of áss, from ansuz, “vital force, spirit, god,” both probably derivatives from the Proto-Indo-European prefix ais-, “to be in awe, to worship,” which also yielded the Oscan aisusis, and the Umbrian esono-, for “divine, and sacred.”



Évariste Luminais, 1906, Gaulois revenant de la chasse, “Gaul returning from a hunt,” oil on canvas, 60,5 x 50 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes.

The Warrior’s Geis

The young warrior Setanta (from the Old Celtic Setantios, “the path walker,” and Cuchulainn, from Cu-Culantios “dog of the hazel one”) takes on the name Cu-Chulainn, which is “dog of Culann,” after having killed the smith’s terrible hound who had attacked him. Following this incident, a Geis, or interdiction, is put on him where he is forbidden to consume dog meat. Geis is from the Old Celtic Gessis, from Gestis, “injunction, commandment,” and coalesces with Guedtis, from Guedtis, “a religious, interdiction, or taboo.” Henceforth, his fate was sealed when he was sequestered and tied to a rock by the war-goddess Mórrígan who had an otter called dobar-cú, “water dog,” drink his blood. Here is how the story was related in *The Boyhood Deeds of Cuchulainn*:

“‘Well hast thou made the award,’ said Conchobar; and Cathbad the druid, chiming in, declared that not in his own person could he have done it better, and that henceforth the boy must bear the name Cu Chulainn, ‘Culann’s Hound.’ The

youngster, however, objected; 'I like my own name better: Setanta mac Sualtach.'

"'Say not so,' Cathbad remonstrated; 'for all men in the world shall have their mouths full of that name.'

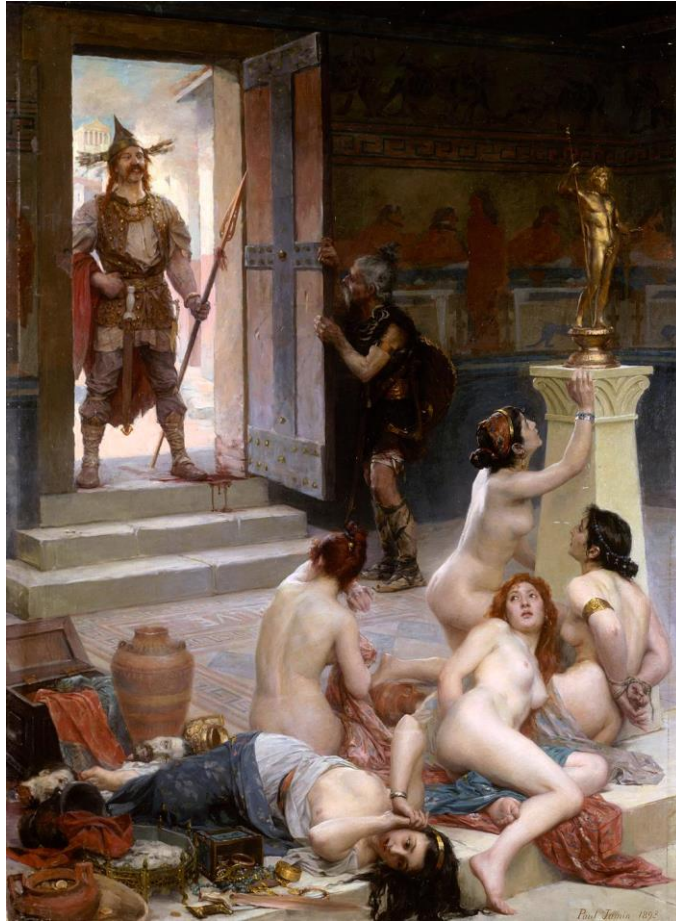
"The boy answered that on those terms the name would be well pleasing to him, and in this way, it came to pass that it stuck to him. Now the little fellow," continued Cormac Conlonges the narrator of all this, "who when just touching six years of age slew the dog which even a great company did not dare to approach, it was not reasonable to be astonished though the same at seventeen should come to the border of the province, and kill a man, or two, or three, or four, on the Cattle-Raid of Cooley."

And from the Táin Bó Cúalnge, Cattle Raid of the Cows of Cooley, p. 212:

As Medb made these promises, she spoke the following words and Fer Diad answered her:

Medb: "You shall have a reward of many bracelets and your share of plain and forest together with freedom for your posterity from to-day forever, O Fer Diad mac Damáin. You shall have beyond all expectation (?). Why should you not accept what others accept?"

Fer Diad: "I shall not accept it without surety, for no warrior without skill in casting am I. It will be an oppressive task for me to-morrow, great will be the exertion. A Hound called also of Culann, hard is the task, it is not easy to resist him. Great will be the disaster."



Painting by the French artist Paul Jamin, *Le Brenn et sa part de butin*, “The Brenn and his share of spoils,” oil on canvas, Musée des beaux-arts de La Rochelle 1893.

Members of The Warrior’s Class

These included what the Romans called the class of Equites: the caburtarioi, or eporedioi, “horsemen, knights, or cavaliers,” and their officers the tignoi, uelates, or ulates, ruling over vassals called uassoï, the ambactoi, “emissaries,” the cateruoi, “trouper,” the racates, “front line soldiers,” and the cinges, the “foot soldiers.”

Rixs, the king, was similar in name and function to the Roman Rēx, the Gothic reiki, or the Indo-Aryan Rāj. The noblemen, the Celtoi, or the bō-areioi, were freemen and cattle owners. Not unlike their Germanic cousins such as with the Vikings, they also practiced commerce, and this was well reported by the classical commentators at the time of the pre-conquest independent Gallic kingdoms.

Members of the Cavalry with Medieval Comparatives:

Brannos / Brennos, “the war-lord;”

Caburtarioi ou **Eporedioi**, “the cavalier, or knights;”

Dracos, “war-chief, head officer;”

Mogus or **Mogillos**, “the servant, the slave;”

Sceitarios (cf. Latin *scutarius*), “the shield carrier, the squire.”

Duties of the Celtic Warrior

The Celtic warrior, as *brigantos*, “morally noble,” must ensure the protection of the tribal members, and be at all times friendly, merciful, generous and charitable. He has the duty to participate in rituals, and on occasion, as the housekeeper, sponsors feasts and ceremonies.

Although warriors and merchants must show devotion to the gods, they never directly sacrifice to them. This is left to the members of the druidical class. And, as the classical authors commented, the Celtic warrior had this axiom: “Honor the gods, be brave, and do no wrong.”

Or again, as Julius Caesar wrote in his *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, Book VI, 13:

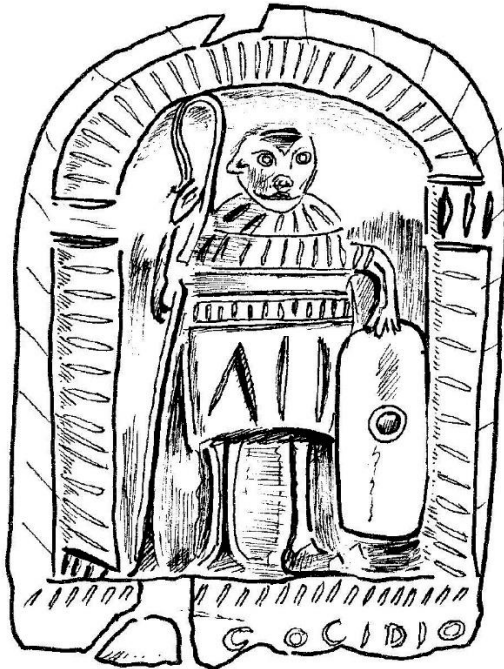
But of these two orders, one is that of the Druids, the other that of the knights. The former is engaged in things sacred, conduct the public and private sacrifices, and interpret all matters of religion.

War Gods of the Celts



Évariste Vital Luminais, *The Gaul*, detail, oil on canvas.

In the various Indo-European myths describing battles and conflicts, many of the war-gods are mentioned. More data can also be obtained from Celtic archaeology, epigraphy, and numismatics.



Silver repoussé plaque of the war-god Teutates Cocidius found at Bewcastle, Cumbria.

Epithets of the Celtic Mars from Gallo-Roman to Gallic

- Mars Alator** < Aros Aatoros, Mars the spotted, the freckled;"
- Mars Albiorix** < Aros Albiiorixs, "Mars king of the world, or cosmic king;"
- Mars Belatucadrus** < Aros Belatucadros, Mars the fair shining one;"
- Mars Camulus** < Aros Camulos, "Mars the dynamic, active servant, serviceman, general handyman;"
- Mars Caturix** < Aros Caturixs, "Mars king of combat;"
- Mars Condatis** < Toutatis Condatis / Condetis, "Tribal agent of confluence, the merger;"
- Mars Corotiacus** < Aros Corotiacos, Mars the circular;"
- Mars Lenus** < Aros Lenos, "Mars the flow, the wave;"
- Mars Loucetius** < Toutatis Loucetios, "the luminous national leader, the lighteous, or light-emitting tribal agent;"
- Mars Mullo** < Aros Mullo, "Mars the heap, the mound, the stack of spoils;"
- Mars Nabelcus** < Aros Nabelcos, "Mars the nebulous, the cloudy;"
- Mars Olludius** < Toutatis Olloudios, "tribal leader of all boons, of many gifts;"
- Mars Rudianus** < Aros Rudianos, "Mars the red, the ruddy;"
- Mars Segomo** < Toutatis Segomos, "the vanquisher, the empowering;"

Teutates Cocidius < Toutatis Cocidios, “the red tribal leader,” or Uernostonos, “the alder-like;” (was Latinized as Teutates Cocidius (Old Carlisle inscription), Tot < Tot(ates) (York), et Toutatis (graffito Kelvedon, Essex), all derivatives attested in epigraphy.

Toutatis Nodens, “the national plutocrat;”

Mars Rigisamus < Toutatis Rigisamos, “the ultimate tribal king or ruler;”

Rigonemetis < Rogonemetos, “royally hallowed, king of the holy shrine or sanctuary;”

Mars Uorocius < Toutatis Uorocios, “the holly tribal agent.”

Seven Epithets for the Gallic Mercury

Mercurius Artaius < Lugus Artaios, “Mercury the bear-like;”

Mercurius Arvenus < Lugus Aruenos, “Mercury the charioteer;”

Mercurius Cissonius < Lugus Cissonios, “Mercury the light chariot driver;”

Mercurius Gebrinius < Lugus Gebrinios, “Mercury the frosted;”

Mercurius Moccus < Lugus Moccus, “Mercury the boar, the pig;”

Lugus *Trianipos, “Mercury the triple-faced;”

Mercurius Visucius < Lugus Uisucios, “Mercury the crafty, the astute, the raven.”

The Triple War Goddess of Sovereignty - The Trimatrai or Three Mothers

Brigantia / Brigindo < Brigid, “the lofty, the noble, the elevated, the morally high;”

Matrona < Modron, “the matron;”

Nemetona ou **Nemetara**, “the holy one, the priestess;”

Epona, “the horse-like, the lady cavalier;”

Nantosuelta, “twirling over vales;”

Magosia < Macha, “the (deified) plain;”

Morigena, “born of the sea, mermaid,” and Mararigu, “the great queen,” or Rigantona, “the queenly;”

Bodua, the crow-hen, Catubodua, “the crow-hen of combat,” or Cassibodua, “the sweet crow-hen;”

Nametia < Nemain, “the novena.”

This study would not be complete if there was no mention of the Testament of Morann, on one of Celtdom’s greatest moral poems on the warrior’s ethos. It is absolutely miraculous that such an important testimony on the duties of the pre-Christian warrior’s code be so well preserved. Herewith, is the complete text of **The Testament of Morann** as translated by Fergus Kelly:

Here begins the Testament of Morann son of Moen to Feradach Find Fechnach son of Craumthann Nia Nar. He was the son of the daughter of Loth son of Derelath of the

Picts. His mother brought him away in her womb after the vassal tribes had destroyed the nobles of Ireland except for Feradach in his mother's womb. He came over afterward with hosts and Morann sent this Testament to him.

2. Arise, set forth

O my Neire accustomed to proclaiming
The virtue of dutifulness makes you known
Dutiful the journey you undertake
Announce, increase truth.
Fair [and] lasting
My words before my death
Bring him the virtue of rectitude
Which each ruler must have
If you go past every [other] king
I measure them for the protection of my kin.

3. If you go to a king

Hasten to Feradach
Find Fechnach
Good, vigorous
He will be long-ruling
In the seat of full sovereignty
He will move many tribes
Of thieves to the sea
He will increase his heir
Filled with valor.

4. Let him keep my advice which follows here.

5. Tell him before every [other] word

Bring him with every word this lasting justice.

6. Let him preserve Truth, it shall preserve him

7. Let him raise truth, it will raise him.

8. Let him exalt mercy, it exalts him

9. Let him care for his tribes, they will care for him

10. Let him help his tribes, they will help him

11. Let him soothe his tribes, they will soothe him

12. Tell him, it is through the truth of the ruler that plagues [and] great lightning are kept from the people

13. It is through the truth of the ruler that he judges great tribes [and] great riches.

14. It is through the truth of the ruler that he secures peace, tranquility, joy, ease, [and] comfort.

15. It is through the truth of the ruler that he dispatches (great) battalions to the borders of hostile neighbors.
16. It is through the truth of the ruler that every heir plants his house-post in his fair inheritance
17. It is through the truth of the ruler that abundances of great tree-fruit of the great wood are tasted.
18. It is through the truth of the ruler that milk-yields of great cattle are maintained.
19. It is through the truth of the ruler that there is abundance of every high, tall corn
20. It is through the truth of the ruler that abundance of fish swim in streams.
21. It is through the truth of the ruler that fair children are well begotten.
22. Tell him, since he is young, his rule is young.
 Let him observe the driver of an old chariot.
 For the driver of an old wheel rim does not sleep
 He looks ahead, he looks behind, in front and to the right and to the left.
 He looks, he defends, he protects, so that he may not break with neglect or violence the wheel-rims which run under him.
23. Tell him, let him not exalt any judge unless he knows the true legal precedents.
24. It is through the truth of the ruler that every man of art attains the crown of knowledge. After that he will sit to teach the good rule to which he has submitted.
25. It is through the truth of the ruler that the borders of every true lord extend so that each cow reaches the end of its grazing.
26. It is through the truth of the ruler that every garment of clothing is obtained for glances of eyes.
27. It is through the truth of the ruler that enclosures of protection of cattle [and] of every produce extend.
28. It is through the truth of the ruler that the three immunities of violence at every assembly protect every lord from the restraints of collision during the course of his noble rule.
 The first immunity [is] the racing of horses at assemblies.
 The second immunity of them [is] a hosting [of a military force]
 The third immunity [is] the privilege of the ale-house with friends and great abundances of mead-circuit, where foolish and wise, familiars and strangers are intoxicated.
29. Tell him, let him not redden many fore-courts, for bloodshed is vain destruction of all rule and of protection from one kin for the ruler.
30. Tell him, let him give any reciprocal service which is due from him, let him enforce any bond which he should bind, let him remove the shame of his cheeks by arms in

battle against other territories, against their oath, against all their protections.

31. Tell him, let not rich gifts or great treasures or profits blind him to the weak in their sufferings.

32. Tell him, let him estimate the creations of the creator who made them as they were made; anything which he will not judge according to its profits will not give them with full increase.

33 Let him estimate the earth by its fruits

34. Let him estimate the yew by its well-made articles

35. Let him estimate cattle by their winter-circuit of fame

36. Let him estimate milk-yield by its increase

37. Let him estimate corn by its height

38. Let him estimate streams by their clean washing

39. Let him estimate iron by its properties at disputes of tribes.

40. Let him estimate copper by its firmness [and] strength [and] dense artifacts.

41. Let him estimate silver by its durability [and] value [and] white artifacts.

42. Let him estimate gold by its foreign wonderful ornaments.

43. Let him estimate the soil by its services where people may seek out produce.

44. Let him estimate sheep by their covering which is selected for the garments of the people

45. Let him estimate pigs by the fat side, for it is freeing from the shame of every face

46. Let him estimate the war-bands which accompany a true lord, for the rule of his retinue belongs to every king; anything which he will not judge according to its profits will not summon them with full increase.

47. Let him estimate unfree persons [and] serving companies; let them serve, let them provide food-rent, let them measure [it], let them give [it] in return for the true grants of the ruler

48. Let him estimate old men in the seats of their ancestors with numerous benefits of respect.

49. Let him estimate fathers and mothers with benefits of maintenance [and] dutiful consistency.

50. Let him estimate the fees of every craftsman for firm articles [and] well-made objects

51. Let him estimate the right and justice, truth and law, contract and regulation of every just ruler towards all his clients.

52. Let him estimate the proper honor-price of every grade of free and base nemed-persons.

(I have failed, I am made to blush.)

53. Arise, set forth,
O my Neire accustomed to proclaiming
To Feradach Find Fechnach.
Announce to him the high points of my words

54. Darkness yields to light
Sorrow yields to joy
An oaf yields to a sage
A fool yields to a wise man
A serf yields to a free man
Inhospitability yields to hospitality
Niggardliness yields to generosity
Meanness yields to liberality
Impetuosity yields to composure
Turbulence yields to submission
A usurper yields to a true lord
Conflict yields to peace
Falsehood yields to truth.

55. Tell him, let him be merciful, just, impartial, conscientious, firm, generous, hospitable, honorable, stable, beneficent, capable, honest, well-spoken, steady, true-judging.

56. For there are ten things which extinguish the injustice of every ruler. (Beware that you do not do it, beware of everything, O rulers.) Announce from me the ten: rule and worth, fame and victory, progeny and kindred, peace and long life, good fortune and tribes.

57. Tell him: he may die, he will die, he may depart, he will depart; how he has been, how he will be, that is what will be proclaimed. He is not a ruler unless he performs these deeds.

58. Tell him, there are only four rulers: the true ruler and the wily ruler, the ruler of occupation with hosts, and the bull ruler.

59. The true ruler, in the first place, is moved towards every good thing, he smiles on the truth when he hears it, he exalts it when he sees it. For he whom the living do not glorify with blessings is not a true ruler.

60. The wily ruler defends borders and tribes, they yield their valuables and dues to him.

61. The ruler of occupation with hosts from outside; his forces turn away, they put off his needs, for a prosperous man does not turn outside.

62. The bull ruler strikes [and] is struck, wards off [and] is warded off, roots out [and] is rooted out, pursues [and] is pursued. Against him, there is always bellowing with horns.

63. Arise, set forth

O my Neire accustomed to proclaiming

To Feradach Find Fechnach

A noble, mighty ruler

To every ruler who rules truly.

Let him keep my words,

They will bring him to victory.

I measure them for the protection of my kin.

(I am forced) Finit.



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